

can, could and (be) able to

can – possible, allowed, has ability in present

- We *can* see the lake from our hotel.

can't = cannot

- I'm afraid I *can't* come to the party on Friday.

be able to = can (in different tenses, with modal verbs)

- I've *been able to* sleep well recently.
- Tom *might be able to* come tomorrow.

could – was allowed, had the ability in the past

- We *had* a lovely room in the hotel. We *could* see the lake.

was / were able to or **managed to** – had the ability and succeed

- The fire spread quickly, but everybody *was able to* escape.
- Jack and Andy played a match yesterday. Andy played well, but Jack *managed to* beat him.



1

can / be able to

Complete the sentences using *can* or *(be) able to*. If *can* is not possible, use *(be) able to*.

- 1 Gary has travelled a lot. He *can* speak five languages.
- 2 I haven't *been able to* sleep very well recently.
- 3 Nicole drive, but she doesn't have a car.
- 4 I used to stand on my head, but I can't do it any more.
- 5 I can't understand Mark. I've never understand him.
- 6 I can't see you on Friday, but I meet you on Saturday morning.
- 7 Ask Katherine about your problem. She might help you.
- 8 You have to be careful in this part of the city. It be dangerous.
- 9 Michael has lived in Italy a long time, so he should speak Italian.

2

be able to

Write sentences about yourself using the ideas in brackets.

- 1 (something you used to be able to do)

I *used to be able to* sing well.

- 2 (something you used to be able to do)

I used

- 3 (something you would like to be able to do)

I'd

- 4 (something you have never been able to do)

I've

3

can / can't / could / couldn't

Complete the sentences with **can/can't/could/couldn't** + the following:

believe ~~come~~ hear run sleep wait

- 1 I'm afraid I can't come to your party next week.
- 2 When Dan was 16, he 100 metres in 11 seconds.
- 3 'Are you in a hurry?' 'No, I've got plenty of time. I
- 4 I don't feel good this morning. I last night.
- 5 Can you speak a little louder? I you very well.
- 6 I was amazed when I heard the news. I it.

4

was / were able to

Complete the answers to the questions with **was/were able to** ...

- 1 A: Did everybody escape from the fire?
B: Yes. The fire spread quickly, but everybody was able to escape.
- 2 A: Did you finish your work this afternoon?
B: Yes, there was nobody to disturb me, so I
- 3 A: Did you solve the problem?
B: Yes, we did. It wasn't easy, but we
- 4 A: Did the thief get away?
B: Yes. No-one realised what was happening and the thief

5

could / couldn't / managed to

Complete the sentences using **could, couldn't** or **managed to**.

- 1 My grandfather travelled a lot. He could speak five languages.
- 2 I looked everywhere for the book, but I couldn't find it.
- 3 They didn't want to come with us at first, but we managed to persuade them.
- 4 Jessica had hurt her foot and walk very well.
- 5 There was a small fire in the kitchen, but fortunately I put it out.
- 6 The walls were thin and I hear people talking in the next room.
- 7 I ran my first marathon recently. It was very hard, but I finish.
- 8 My grandmother loved music. She play the piano very well.
- 9 We wanted to go to the concert, but we get tickets.
- 10 A girl fell into the river, but some people pull her out. She's all right now.