

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 can't drive, but she doesn't have a car.
- 4 I used to be able to stand on my head, but I can't do it any more.
- 5 I can't understand Mark. I've never been able to understand him.
- 6 I can't see you on Friday, but I will be able to meet you on Saturday morning.
- 7 Ask Katherine about your problem. She might be able to help you.
- 8 You have to be careful in this part of the city. It isn't safe to walk here.
- 9 Michael has lived in Italy a long time, so he should be able to 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 to be able to do something.

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

I hope to be able to do something.

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

I haven't been able to do something.

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

- I'm afraid I can't come to your party next week.
- When Dan was 16, he 100 metres in 11 seconds.
- 'Are you in a hurry?' 'No, I've got plenty of time. I
- I don't feel good this morning. I last night.
- Can you speak a little louder? I you very well.
- 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**

- A: Did everybody escape from the fire?
B: Yes. The fire spread quickly, but everybody was able to escape
- A: Did you finish your work this afternoon?
B: Yes, there was nobody to disturb me, so I
- A: Did you solve the problem?
B: Yes, we did. It wasn't easy, but we
- 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**.

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