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 .....

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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.

LIVEWORKSHEETS