

Grammar

can, be able to, manage, succeed

1 Choose the correct alternative in *italics* in these sentences. In which two sentences are both options correct?

- How long *could* you / *have* you *been able* to drive?
- I *can't* / *'m not able* to understand a word he's saying, can you?
- The teacher told me he *couldn't* / *didn't manage* to correct my essay because he *couldn't read* / *didn't succeed in reading* my writing.
- Has your brother *managed to* / *been able* to find a job?
- I *could* / *was able* to beat you at chess any day of the week.
- A tall man stood in front of me at the concert, so I *couldn't* / *wasn't able* to see a thing.
- I *can't* / *'m not able* to believe it. I got an 'A' in maths!
- Fortunately, they *could* / *were able* to rescue the children from the burning building.

2 Complete these questions with an appropriate form of *can* or *be able to*. In which sentences are both forms correct?

- _____ come to my party on Saturday, or have you made other plans? (you)
- _____ speak Spanish before you went to live in Spain? (you)
- _____ ever _____ do everything people do, do you think? (robots)
- _____ get the sofa in if we took the door off? (we)
- _____ find out Richard's new phone number yet? (David)
- My jeans are torn. _____ repair them? (you)
- _____ picked us up if we'd asked you sooner? (you)

3 Complete these sentences with the correct form of *can*. If it is not possible to use *can*, use the correct form of *be able to*. You may need to use the negative.

- When you give your speech at tomorrow's conference, nobody _____ understand you unless you speak more clearly.
- I'm afraid I _____ go to the party. I was busy on Saturday.
- Janet _____ read before she was three years old. I think that's amazing!
- They _____ eat any more. They were full.
- Despite the delay, the passengers _____ get their connecting flights.
- I _____ tell Darren yet, but I will as soon as I see him.
- Sara _____ walk for a long time after the accident. She had to use a wheelchair.
- When the chip pan caught fire, John _____ put the fire out with a wet cloth.

4 Complete these sentences with *can*, *be able to*, *manage* or *succeed* in an appropriate form. You may need to use the negative.

- That's as fast as I can run. I _____ run any faster even if I tried.
- Despite setting off late, Karen _____ to catch the train.
- Even if the fire fighters had arrived sooner, they _____ saved the building.
- I'd like to _____ play a musical instrument.
- He _____ play tennis since he hurt his back.
- The high jumper finally _____ in clearing the bar on his third attempt.

