Can / Can’t

Talking about ability

Asking for and giving permission

Making a request
Modal verbs **can** and **can’t** have the following characteristics:

1. They are followed by the base form of another verb to indicate **ability**.

   *For Example;*

   - **Wrong**: We can to swim. ❌
   - **Correct**: We can swim. ✅
Modal verbs can and can’t have the following characteristics:

2

-s is not added to the third person singular.

For Example;

Martin cans drive. ✗  Martin can drive. ✓
Modal verbs **can** and **can’t** have the following characteristics:

We do not use *do/don’t* to form questions and negatives.

**For Example:**

Do you **can** swim? ✗ Can you swim? ✓

I **don’t can** sing. ✗ I can’t sing. ✓
**Positive (Affirmative) Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>can</th>
<th>can</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td>swim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td></td>
<td>see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td></td>
<td>walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td></td>
<td>play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td></td>
<td>run.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td></td>
<td>can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td></td>
<td>can</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Negative Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>can’t</th>
<th>swim.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>(cannot)</td>
<td>see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td></td>
<td>walk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td></td>
<td>play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td></td>
<td>run.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>swim?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question (Interrogative) Form**
## Can / Can’t

### Short Answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Answers</th>
<th>Negative Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I you he she it we they</td>
<td>can. I you he she it we they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh- Question Forms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What</strong></td>
<td>can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How</strong></td>
<td>can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where</strong></td>
<td>can</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Can / Can’t

Talking about ability
We use can/ can’t to talk about ability in the present time.

For Example;

- I can play the piano.
- Jack can speak English.
- My sister can run very fast.
- Babies can’t talk.
Can you speak any foreign languages?
Yes, I can speak English and French.

Catherine can play the piano but she can’t play the guitar.

He can’t swim very well, but he can run.
Can / Can’t

More Examples

- Members can use this car park.
- My grandfather can’t see very well.
- Dogs can hear much better than humans.
- Can you run five kilometres?
Asking for and giving permission
We use *can*/*can’t* to say if something is **possible** or **allowed** in the present.

- You can leave your car in that parking space.
- You cannot smoke in here.
- Students can use dictionaries in the exam.
- Can I use your telephone?
Can / Can’t

Making a request!
We use *can* when we ask people to do things or when we ask for something.

- Can you open the door, please?
- Can you meet me here at nine o’clock on Sunday?
- Can I have these pencils, please?
- Can you answer the phone, please?
Can  Can’t
Exercise 1. Find the mistakes in the sentences and correct them.

1. I don’t can play chess very well.
2. Jack cans cook amazing meals.
3. We are can have a party next week.
4. Jason can to speak five languages.
5. Can you to help me with my homework?
6. My grandmother doesn’t can see very well.
7. Cans you ride a horse?
8. Can I using your car this weekend?
9. My mother can don’t cook very well.
10. He can’t playing football or baseball.
Exercise 2. Fill in the blanks with “can” or “can’t”.

1. I’m not busy. I ……… come with you.
2. It’s very cold in here. …….you close the window, please?
3. Alice ……… play chess but she ……… play tennis. She’s too bad at playing tennis.
4. Murat was born in Turkey but he ……… speak Turkish much.
5. A: ‘……… Sue speak Spanish?’ B: ‘Yes, she ……….’
“Can” has two forms:

Present ➔ Can
Past ➔ Could
Could / Couldn’t

- Talking about past ability
- Asking for and giving permission
- Making a request
Positive (Affirmative) Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>You</th>
<th>He</th>
<th>She</th>
<th>It</th>
<th>We</th>
<th>They</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>could</td>
<td>swim.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>see.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>play.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>run.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Could’t (could not)</td>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td>swim.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td></td>
<td>see.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>He</td>
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<td>We</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Could / Couldn’t

### Question (Interrogative) Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Could</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>swim?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you</td>
<td>see?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>he</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>she</td>
<td>play?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>it</td>
<td>run?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>they</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Short Answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Answers</th>
<th>Negative Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes,</td>
<td>No,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I, you, he, she, it, we, they</td>
<td>I, you, he, she, it, we, they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could.</td>
<td>couldn’t.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Talking about past ability!
Could is the past form of can.

We use could or couldn’t (could not) when we talk about abilities in the past. (last year, when I was a child…)

For Example;

- He could play football when he was young. (=he can’t play football now.)
- When Jane was 16, she could run 100 metres in 11 seconds.
- He couldn’t speak English last year.
Could / Couldn’t

More examples;

- She could swim when she was ten years old.
- I could run very fast.
- I couldn’t watch horror films when I was a child.
- We couldn’t write when we were three years old.
Could / Couldn’t

Asking for and giving permission
We also use **could** if we want to ask for permission “politely” or in a formal way.

For Example:

- A: ‘**Could** I sit down here, please?’ B: ‘Yes, of course.’
- A: ‘**Could** I use your telephone?’ B: ‘Yes, you can.’
- A: ‘**Could** I borrow your bicycle?’ B: ‘No, I’m afraid not.’
Could / Couldn’t

Making a request!
We often use **could** when we ask someone to do something in a very formal and polite way.

For Example;

- Could you be quiet, please? (= Please could you be quiet?)
- A: ‘Could you pass me the sugar?’ B: ‘Certainly.’
- Could you lend me some money?
- Could you tell me how to get to the school?
EXERCISES

Could

Couldn’t
Exercise 1. Find the mistakes in the sentences and correct them.

1. I am couldn’t read English books in my childhood.
2. Could to you carry these bags for me, please?
3. My grandfather could speaks five languages.
4. We couldn’t playing chess four years ago.
5. Could Mozart writing music when he was a child?
Exercise 2. Fill in the blanks with “could” or “couldn’t”.

1. James ……………. buy the ring because it was too expensive.
2. Picasso …………… paint amazing pictures when he was young.
3. A: ‘Excuse me! ………. I use your pen, please?’
   B: ‘Yes, of course. Here you are.’
4. My sister ………… swim. She hated water.
5. They played well but they ……………… beat their rivals.
### Talking about ability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can play the guitar.</td>
<td>I could play the guitar ten years ago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t read.</td>
<td>I couldn’t read when I was a child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you drive?</td>
<td>Could you drive 3 years ago?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He can speak Spanish perfectly.</td>
<td>He could speak Spanish in his childhood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Can & Could

## Asking for permission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Asking for permission</th>
<th>Giving permission</th>
<th>Refusing permission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal</strong></td>
<td>Can I use your phone?</td>
<td>Yes, you can. Yes, of course. Yes, sure. Certainly.</td>
<td>No, you can’t. No, I’m sorry. I’m afraid not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal / Polite</strong></td>
<td>Could I use your phone?</td>
<td>Yes, you can. Yes, of course. Yes, sure. Certainly.</td>
<td>No, you can’t. No, I’m sorry. I’m afraid not.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Making a request

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Can you lend me some money?</th>
<th>Sure. Yes, of course. Certainly.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal / Polite</td>
<td>Could you lend me some money?</td>
<td>Yes, of course. Certainly. Yes, here you are.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 1. Fill in the blanks with ‘can’, ‘can’t’, ‘could’, ‘couldn’t’.

1. You …… make a lot of Money if you are both lucky and hardworking.
2. ‘Dad, ……… I watch the beauty contest on TV tonight?’
3. Children ……… play in the streets years ago but now they ………
4. I’m not busy. Of course I ……… come with you.
5. Babies …………… walk or run.
6. Two hundred years ago, women ........... vote in many countries.
7. I .............. help you. I haven’t got enough time.
8. When I was a baby, I ........ sleep most of the day.
10. Owls ............. see in the dark.
12. ............... you swim when you were six?
13. We ............ buy the car because it was too expensive.
14. They ............ open the door because it was locked.
15. My grandmother was a bilingual, so she ............. speak both Turkish and German.

Exercises
Exercise 2. Choose the correct option.

1) She screamed a lot but nobody ........ heard her voice.
   a) could    b) can        c) couldn’t    d) can’t

2) You are 17 years old, you .... enter the club at this age.
   a) can       b) can’t      c) couldn’t    d) could

3) My mother ........ play the guitar very well when she was young.
   a) can       b) could      c) can’t       d) may

4) She ........ understand five language and ........ speak three language
   a) Can/can’t  b) can/can    c) could/can    d) could/could

5) I ........ play tennis now. I have got a terrible headache.
   a) may       b) can        c) can’t       d) couldn’t
Exercise 3. Write if the sentence includes “ability”, “permission” or “request”.

1. Can I use your laptop this weekend? __________________
2. Can you help me with these bags? _________________
3. Karen could speak Russian in her childhood. ______________
4. Could I use your pencil, please? _________________
5. They can dance for long hours. _________________