



TALKING ABOUT ABILITY

Introduction to Modal Verbs of Ability

Modal verbs of ability are used to talk about what someone **can** or **cannot** do. The main modal verb for ability is "**can**". We use "**can**" to talk about things we are able to do now or in the future, and we use "**could**" to talk about abilities in the past.

Examples

1. Present ability (now):
 - I **can** swim. (I know how to swim.)
 - She **can** speak English. (She knows how to speak English.)
2. Past ability (before):
 - When I was younger, I **could** run fast. (I was able to run fast before.)
 - He **could** play the piano when he was a child. (He had the ability to play the piano.)
3. **Negative ability** (something we can't do):
 - I **can't** drive a car. (I do not know how to drive.)
 - She **couldn't** swim when she was little. (She did not have the ability before.)

How to Use Them:

- **Can** + verb (to talk about present/future ability)
 - I **can** play the guitar.
- **Could** + verb (to talk about past ability)
 - When I was five, I **could** ride a bike.



Quick Practice

- What can you do now?
- What could you do when you were younger?

Fill the Gaps: Modal Verbs of Ability

Complete the sentences with **can**, **can't**, **could**, or **couldn't**.

1. When I was younger, I _____ run very fast.
2. She _____ speak three languages fluently.
3. He _____ swim when he was 5 years old, but now he's a great swimmer.
4. I _____ play the piano when I was a child.
5. My brother _____ cook very well; he makes delicious food.
6. Last year, they _____ travel because of the pandemic.
7. I _____ ride a bike when I was younger, but I forgot how.
8. We _____ see the mountains from our house.
9. She _____ read when she was 4 years old.
10. I _____ find my keys this morning, but I finally found them in my bag.

Teacher's Key

Fill the Gaps: Modal Verbs of Ability

Complete the sentences with **can**, **can't**, **could**, or **couldn't**.

1. When I was younger, I **could** run very fast.
2. She **can** speak three languages fluently.
3. He **couldn't** swim when he was 5 years old, but now he's a great swimmer.
4. I **could** play the piano when I was a child.
5. My brother **can** cook very well; he makes delicious food.
6. Last year, they **couldn't** travel because of the pandemic.
7. I **could** ride a bike when I was younger, but I forgot how.
8. We **can** see the mountains from our house.
9. She **could** read when she was 4 years old.
10. I **couldn't** find my keys this morning, but I finally found them in my bag.