



# TALKING ABOUT ABILITY

## Negative Forms

The negative form of **can** is **cannot** or **can't**.

The negative form of **could** is **could not** or **couldn't**.

To form the negative of **be able to**, you either put **not** or another negative word in front of **able**, or you use the expression **be unable to**.

Teenagers **cannot** get married.

My sister **can't** swim very well.

I **could not** find my keys this morning.

I **couldn't** understand the rules.

I am **not able to** help you.

I was **unable to** afford the trip.



Talk about  
Ability  
**Can, Could,  
Be able to**

Talk about  
Ability -  
Negative Forms  
**Cannot, Can't,  
Could not,  
Couldn't,  
Not able to,**

## Make sentences about "Your Life".

- Cannot \_\_\_\_\_
- Can't \_\_\_\_\_
- Could not \_\_\_\_\_
- Couldn't \_\_\_\_\_
- Not able to \_\_\_\_\_
- Unable to \_\_\_\_\_

## Negative Forms of Modal Verbs of Ability

**A. Fill the Gaps** - Complete the sentences with the correct negative form of **can** or **could** (**can't** or **couldn't**).

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ swim when I was five years old.
2. They \_\_\_\_\_ come to the party because they were busy.
3. She \_\_\_\_\_ finish her homework last night because it was too hard.
4. We \_\_\_\_\_ find the restaurant, so we had to ask for directions.
5. He \_\_\_\_\_ drive a car until he turned 18.
6. I \_\_\_\_\_ hear you clearly. Could you repeat that, please?
7. My dog \_\_\_\_\_ understand my commands when he was a puppy.
8. I \_\_\_\_\_ lift the heavy box on my own. It was too heavy.
9. You \_\_\_\_\_ bring food into the library.
10. She \_\_\_\_\_ attend the meeting because of a family emergency.

## B. Correct the Sentences

Find the mistakes in these sentences and correct them.

1. I couldn't to understand the question.

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2. They can't playing the piano very well.

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3. She couldn't to go to the party last night.

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4. We couldn't find the place.

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5. He can't to speak French fluently.

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## C. Choose the correct form of the modal verb in parentheses to complete each sentence.

1. She \_\_\_\_\_ (can) lift that heavy box.
2. By the time I was 10, I \_\_\_\_\_ (could) ride a bike without training wheels.
3. My grandmother \_\_\_\_\_ (can) see very well without her glasses.
4. When I was younger, I \_\_\_\_\_ (could) run 10 kilometers without getting tired.
5. He \_\_\_\_\_ (can) swim when he was 5 years old.
6. The patient \_\_\_\_\_ (can) walk after the surgery.
7. My little brother \_\_\_\_\_ (can) read chapter books yet.
8. By next year, I \_\_\_\_\_ (will be able to) speak fluent French.
9. She \_\_\_\_\_ (could) play the piano when she was 8 years old.
10. The new employee \_\_\_\_\_ (can) use the software without training.

## Additional Exercises

- Write your own sentences using the negative forms of modal verbs of ability.

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- Ask a partner: "What things can/can't you do?" Discuss.

# Teacher's Key

## Negative Forms of Modal Verbs of Ability

**A. Fill the Gaps** - Complete the sentences with the correct negative form of **can** or **could** (**can't** or **couldn't**).

1. I **couldn't** swim when I was five years old.
2. They **couldn't** come to the party because they were busy.
3. She **couldn't** finish her homework last night because it was too hard.
4. We **couldn't** find the restaurant, so we had to ask for directions.
5. He **couldn't** drive a car until he turned 18.
6. I **can't** hear you clearly. Could you repeat that, please?
7. My dog **couldn't** understand my commands when he was a puppy.
8. I **can't** lift the heavy box on my own. It was too heavy.
9. You **can't** bring food into the library.
10. She **couldn't** attend the meeting because of a family emergency.

## B. Correct the Sentences

Find the mistakes in these sentences and correct them.

1. I **couldn't** understand the question.
2. They **can't play** the piano very well.
3. She **couldn't go** to the party last night.
4. We couldn't find the place.
5. He **can't speak** French fluently.

## C. Choose the correct form of the modal verb in parentheses to complete each sentence.

1. She **can't** (can) lift that heavy box.
2. By the time I was 10, I **could** (could) ride a bike without training wheels.
3. My grandmother **can't** (can) see very well without her glasses.
4. When I was younger, I **could** (could) run 10 kilometers without getting tired.
5. He **couldn't** (can) swim when he was 5 years old.
6. The patient **can't** (can) walk after the surgery.
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