**Can – Be able - for Ability**

Both can and be able have the same meaning, they both talk about ability.

**Can** is the most commonly known modal verb, it is used to talk about: possibilities ask and give permission, request something.

\*I can talk about my favorite movie all day.

\*I can star overtime tomorrow.

**Be able to:** we use ‘’to be able to’’ to talk about abilities. The presence of the auxiliary verb **to be** allows us to use the phrase in both present and past tense.

\*Present: He is able to jump really high.

\*Past: He was able to jump really high.

**Tip!** Both can and be able to are parts of speech, can is a modal verb and be able to is a phrasal verb.

**Negation:**

When we want to make it negative we use: Cannot – not able to – unable to.

\*I cannot learn English.

\*I am not able to learn English.

\*I am unable to learn English.

**Past tense:**

**\***I could jump really high.

\*I was able to jump really high.

**Future tense:**

We use ‘’will be able to’’ to talk about:

-A future skill (which is not available right now but will be available in the future):

\*I will be able to see again after the operation.

- We use both can and will be able to talk about future decisions.

\*I can give you a hand tomorrow.

\*I will be able to give you a hand tomorrow.

**Questions:**

-Can is simply inverted to create a question.

\*I can cook …..Can I cook?

\*You can make an example…..Can you make an example?

-For to be able to we only invert ‘’be’’ and do not change the position of ‘’able to’’.

\*He is able to jump high….Is he able to jump high?

\*They are able to make it to the meeting….Are they able to make it to the meeting?

**Could:**

Could is the past of can, and it can do everything that ‘’can’’ can do. It has several other more advanced functions in English too, but to stay focused, we will not address those uses here.

Could is used to talk about past abilities and possibilities. You use it to talk about what abilities, skills, or talents you had or developed in the past, and what was possible for you to do in the past. For example:

"I could read when I was three years old." (This means I had the ability to read when I was three years old.)

The negative of ‘’could’’ is could not or couldn't. Couldn't is more common in spoken English. If you couldn't do something in the past, it was not possible and/or you did not have the ability to do it. Note the examples:

"I couldn't read until I was nine years old." (I did not have the ability to read until I was nine years old.)

"He couldn't swim well when he was a kid." (He did not have the physical ability to swim well when he was a child. Or maybe he never learned how to swim well.)

Just like can, you can also use could to make offers and requests. Could is a more neutral word in these cases. Note the examples:

"Could you hold the door for me, please?" (I am asking you to hold the door for me.)

"Could I offer you a ride to the train station?" (You are offering to drive someone to the train station.)