

Ability

CAN – COULD – BE ABLE TO

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I CAN SPEAK ENGLISH.

I CAN'T SPEAK RUSSIAN.

CAN YOU SPEAK RUSSIAN?

YES, I CAN // NO, I CAN'T.

P
A
S
T

WHEN I WAS YOUNGER,
I **COULD** SOLVE A RUBIK'S CUBE.

WHEN I WAS YOUNGER,
I **COULDN'T** DANCE LINDY-HOP.

COULD YOU RIDE A HORSE
WHEN YOU WERE 8?

YES, I **COULD** // NO, I **COULDN'T**.

PRESENT,
PAST
AND
OTHER
TENSES

BE ABLE TO

WHEN USING CAN AND COULD
IS NOT POSSIBLE, USE BE ABLE TO.

Note: when we want to express
ability in the past on a specific occasion
(not in general), use *be able to*.

I was able to walk 50 km in one day
(I managed to do it that day).

PRESENT,
PAST
AND
OTHER
TENSES

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BE ABLE TO

Present: You **are** able to speak English.

Past: I **was** able to solve the Rubik's cube.

Future: I **will be** able to speak French more fluently when I practise more regularly.

Present perfect: I **haven't been able** to become a good driver.

Conditional: If I needed it, I **would be able** to learn to drive.

Other tenses...

PRESENT,
PAST
AND
OTHER
TENSES

BE ABLE TO

Complete with your examples

Present: I **am** able to ...

Past: I **was** able to ...

Future: I **will be** able to ...

Present perfect: I **haven't been** able to ...

Conditional: If I had more time, I **would be able** to ...