

Ability

CAN – COULD – BE ABLE TO -
MANAGE

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D
A
L
S

CAN OR BE ABLE TO
OR THEIR NEGATIVE FORMS

CAN IS LESS FORMAL AND MORE
COMMON IN CONVERSATION

He **can't** swim that distance.
I **am not able** to help you in that respect.

COULD WHEN SPEAKING IN GENERAL

When I was a child, I **could** do a handstand.

WAS/WERE ABLE TO

WHEN SPEAKING IN GENERAL AND ON ONE PARTICULAR OCCASION

Although I had missed my flight,
I **was able to/could** get on another plane the same day.

NEGATIVE

COULDN'T AND WASN'T/WEREN'T ABLE TO

WHEN SPEAKING IN GENERAL AND ON ONE PARTICULAR OCCASION

The kid **wasn't able to/couldn't** do all the questions in the exam.

When talking about ability, we use *can* only in the present form and *could* only in the past. For perfect and future tenses, we use



REMEMBER:

BE ABLE TO IS FOLLOWED BY INFINITIVE

I WILL BE ABLE TO TAKE A DAY OFF ON FRIDAY.

BE
ABLE
TO

BE ABLE TO

- FOR PERFECT AND FUTURE TENSES

You **will be able** to pass the B2 exam.

I **haven't been able** to send all the emails.

- AFTER MODAL VERBS

We **might be able to** travel abroad this summer.

PRESENT,
PAST
AND
OTHER
TENSES

MANAGE

WHEN WE SUCCEED IN
DOING SOMETHING VERY DIFFICULT TO DO

In spite of my lack of experience, I **managed**
to secure a job after several tough interviews.

~~Could~~ is not possible here.

N T
O H
T I
C E
S

WITH THE VERBS: SEE, HEAR, SMELL, FEEL AND TASTE

- We usually use CAN or COULD

We **could** hear the distant lightning.

I **can** smell your baking from outside.