

Modals of Ability Exercise 1

Put in 'can' / 'can't' / 'could' / 'couldn't'. If none is possible, use 'be able to' in the correct tense:

1. _____ you swim when you were 10?
2. We _____ get to the meeting on time yesterday because the train was delayed by one hour.
3. He _____ arrive at the party on time, even after missing the train, so he was very pleased.
4. He's amazing, he _____ speak 5 languages including Chinese.
5. I _____ drive a car until I was 34, then I moved to the countryside so I had to learn.
6. I looked everywhere for my glasses but I _____ find them anywhere.
7. I searched for your house for ages, luckily I _____ find it in the end.
8. She's 7 years old but she _____ read yet – her parents are getting her extra lessons.
9. I read the book three times but I _____ understand it.
10. James _____ speak Japanese when he lived in Japan, but he's forgotten most of it now.

11. I _____ understand the chapter we had to read for homework. It was so difficult.
12. I _____ lift this box – it's too heavy! Would you help me?
13. Lucy _____ make it to our meeting after all. She's stuck in traffic at the moment.
14. John _____ play tennis really well. He's champion of his club.
15. Unfortunately, I really _____ sing at all! No-one in my family is musical either.
16. When the car broke down I was really pleased because I _____ solve the problem.
17. Julian _____ play excellent golf when he was only ten.
18. My grandmother _____ use a computer until last month. Since then, she's been taking lessons at the library.
19. I _____ open this window. I think it's stuck!
20. Gill _____ play the piano. She's never studied it.

Answers:

1. **Could** you swim when you were 10?
2. We **couldn't** get to the meeting on time yesterday because the train was delayed by one hour.
3. He **was able to** arrive at the party on time, even after missing the train, so he was very pleased.
4. He's amazing, he **can** speak 5 languages including Chinese.
5. I **couldn't** drive a car until I was 34, then I moved to the countryside so I had to learn.
6. I looked everywhere for my glasses but I **couldn't** find them anywhere.
7. I searched for your house for ages, luckily I **was able to** find it in the end.
8. She's 7 years old but she **can't** read yet – her parents are getting her extra lessons.
9. I read the book three times but I **couldn't** understand it.
10. James **could** speak Japanese when he lived in Japan, but he's forgotten most of it now.
11. I **couldn't** understand the chapter we had to read for homework. It was so difficult.
12. I **can't** lift this box – it's too heavy! Would you help me?
13. Lucy **can't** make it to our meeting after all. She's stuck in traffic at the moment.
14. John **can** play tennis really well. He's champion of his club.
15. Unfortunately, I really **can't** sing at all! No-one in my family is musical either.
16. When the car broke down I was really pleased because I **was able to** solve the problem.
17. Julian **could** play excellent golf when he was only ten.
18. My grandmother **couldn't** use a computer until last month. Since then, she's been taking lessons at the library.
19. I **can't** open this window. I think it's stuck!
20. Gill **can't** play the piano. She's never studied it.