

UNIT 48 Modals: *Can / Could*

Usage and alternative verbs.

The modal **can / could** is used to:

A

- say that it is possible to do something.

*Yes, I'm free tomorrow, so I can come to your house.
It's warm and sunny. We can eat outside in the garden.*

- make a request.
Can I / Can we / Can you...? informal
Could I / Could we / Could you...? more formal

*Can you bring me your diary, please?
Could we have two coffees, please?
'Could you please call for a taxi?' 'Certainly, sir.'
Can I have a sandwich, Mum?*

C

- offer help.

*'Can I help you?' 'Yes, please. I'd like...'
'Can I do something for you?' 'No, thanks, I'm all right.'*

D

- ask permission and allow / not allow.

'Can I invite some friends home, Mum?' 'Yes, of course you can. / Sorry, you can't. Not today.'

E

- express ability, skill.

*I can speak two languages – English and Spanish.
I couldn't use this software, but I've learnt now.*

F

- express disbelief, say that something is impossible based on the evidence.

*I can't believe that!
She couldn't be 40. She looked much younger.*

G

Verbs that can substitute **can** not only in the missing tenses (infinitive, participles, etc.) but also in the present simple and past simple are:

- be able to / be unable to

*I'm sorry not to be able to come.
Will you be able to get there by nine?*

- manage to

'Have you managed to talk to Mr Ross?' 'No, I haven't managed to talk to him yet. He's always so busy.'

- be allowed to / be permitted to

*You won't be permitted to come back so late.
She wasn't allowed to bring her dog.*

Student's notes

EXERCISES

Modals: *Can / Could* – Usage and alternative verbs **UNIT 48**

NAME: student code DATE: / /

LEVEL: CEFR L TIME: -

48.1 Write sentences using *can* and *could* to express possibility.

- 1 Say that you are able to go to Paul's house tomorrow.
.....
- 2 Say that Steve isn't able to arrange the party room next Saturday.
.....
- 3 Say that Susan was unable to finish preparing the party food last night.
.....
- 4 Explain that you are unable to go dancing tomorrow because of your bad leg.
.....
- 5 Say that Dan was unable to put up the Christmas tree last night because he was very tired.
.....

48.2 Write formal (F) or informal (I) requests using the verbs in brackets.

- 1 You want a glass of orange juice. Ask your mum. (I: have)
.....
- 2 You want a plate of chips. Ask the waiter. (F: have)
.....
- 3 You want to use your classmate's red pen. (I: borrow)
.....
- 4 You need 20 euros. Your mum is out. Ask your neighbour. (F: lend)
.....
- 5 You want a pizza Napoli delivered to your flat. (F: bring)
.....

48.3 Write what they weren't able to do in the past (*couldn't*), but can do now (*can*).

- 1 I / ride a bike / be four
.....
- 2 Mike / speak English / start school
.....
- 3 Jane / cook / go to university
.....
- 4 They / play tennis / start lessons
.....
- 5 I / swim / go to the seaside
.....

48.4 Rewrite the sentences by replacing *can / could* with the verb in brackets.

- 1 I'm sorry I can't come to your party. I'm busy that day. (be able to)
.....
- 2 He couldn't go to the school fête last week. He had a cold. (be able to)
.....
- 3 I couldn't see the exhibition. I was out of town. (manage to)
.....
- 4 I couldn't park my car in front of the restaurant. It's private. (be allowed to)
.....
- 5 I'm sorry, sir, but you can't smoke inside this building. (be permitted to)
.....

48.5 Write offers of help using *Can I...?*

- 1 Offer to do the shopping for your mother.
- 2 Offer to carry your friend'
.....
- 3 Offer to make to your dad a cup of coffee.
.....
- 4 Offer to take your friend's books back to the library.
.....

Teacher's observations