

TD 01: Expressing Ability

Exercise 1 Compare could and was able to. Infer the meaning of each sentence.

- Jack was an excellent tennis player. He **could** beat anybody.

(=)

- But once he had a difficult game against Bob. Bob played very well, but in the end Jack **was able to** beat him.

(=)

Exercise 2 : Complete the information with the words and phrases from the box

are able to ~~can~~ could
hardly couldn't have managed
to be able to were only able to



Do athletes really run faster these days?

Yes. Long-distance runners these days
(0) can complete marathons in the time
that fifty years ago their predecessors
(1) run 10,000 metres.

Why should this be?

Well, technology is a factor: athletes today
(2) use the most
aerodynamic materials in their running shoes
or swimsuits. But even if earlier athletes had had
these innovations, they (3)
improved their results significantly, for various
other reasons. For example, athletes these days
are professional; in the past they were unpaid

amateurs. They had to combine their sport with
paid work, so they (4) find
enough time to train. Athletes' careers these days
also last longer; they (5)
compete until they are older. Facilities also make a
difference: in the 1950s and 60s, swimmers from
the US (6) to dominate
their sport because few other nations had
Olympic-sized pools. Now it's easy for swimmers
everywhere (7) train more
efficiently as they have the correct pools.

Given these conditions today, there's no reason
to believe that athletes (8)
continue to smash records.

Exercise 3 : Use can or be able to. Sometimes it is possible to use either; sometimes only be able to is possible.

Examples: George has traveled a lot. He **can** (is able to) speak four languages.
I haven't **been able** sleep very well lately.

1. Tomdrive, but he doesn't have a car.
2. I can't understand Martin. I've never understand him.
3. I used to stand on my head, but I can't do it now.

4. Ask Ann about your problem. She should help you.

Exercise 4 Complete each sentence with **could, was/were able to, or couldn't.**

Examples:

- My grandfather was very clever. He *could (was able to)* speak five languages.
- I looked everywhere for the book, but I ***couldn't*** find it. The fire spread quickly, but everyone ***was able to*** escape.

1. He had hurt his leg, so he walk very well.
2. She wasn't at home when I called, but I contact her at her office.
3. I looked very carefully, and I see a figure in the distance.
4. They didn't have any tomatoes in the first store I went to, but I get some in the next store.
5. My grandmother loved music. She play the piano very well.
6. The boy fell into the river, but fortunately we rescue him.

Exercise 5 The following situations take effort to accomplish, the result would be surprising. Take turns, your classmate asks a question and you Answer *them with was/were able to.*

- a) Persuading a person
- b) Finding your classmate' house
- c) Winning a Match
- d) Chasing a thief

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| <p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Did you persuade them?- Yes. It was difficult, but we <i>were able to persuade</i> |
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