
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Take an English class on how to talk about ability



Language quiz

Choose the correct word from the brackets to complete the sentences.

Careful – sometimes both are possible!

Example

*I've never (**can/**~~been able to~~) swim.*

1. He can (**play/plays**) the guitar really well.
2. We (**'re able to/can**) come for dinner. Thanks for inviting us!
3. My daughter (**can't/couldn't**) sleep through the night when she was a baby!
4. They (**could/were able to**) ski when they were young because they lived in the mountains.
5. She's a great tennis player. She (**'s been able to/could**) beat every competitor she's ever had.
6. (**Were you able to/Could you**) find a present for Gill?

Well done! Now you can check your answers at the bottom of the next page.

Writing practice

Writing

Write down a list of abilities you had or didn't have in the past and compare them to abilities you have or don't have now.

Example

- *I **was** once **able to** ask for directions while on holiday in Japan. The problem was, I **wasn't able to** understand the answer! Now I **can** understand Japanese much better and I **would** probably **be able to** understand what someone told me.*

Answers to exercise on page 1

1. He can **play** the guitar really well.
2. We're **able to/can** come for dinner. Thanks for inviting us!
3. My daughter **couldn't** sleep through the night when she was a baby!
4. They **could** ski when they were young because they lived in the mountains.
5. She's a great tennis player. She's **been able to** beat every competitor she's ever had.
6. **Were you able to** find a present for Gill?