

I'm not a robot



"Can" is one of the most commonly used modal verbs in English. It can be used to express ability or opportunity, to request or offer permission, and to show possibility or impossibility. Examples: I can ride a horse. We can stay with my brother when we are in Paris. She cannot stay out after 10 PM. Can you hand me the stapler? Any child can grow up to be president. Most modal verbs behave quite irregularly in the past and the future. Study the chart below to learn how "can" behaves in different contexts. Modal Use Positive Forms1. = Present 2. = Past 3. = Future Negative Forms1. = Present 2. = Past 3. = Future Also use: can 1. I can speak Chinese. 2. SHIFT TO "COULD" I could speak Chinese when I was a kid. 3. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" I will be able to speak Chinese by the time I finish my course. 1. I can't speak Swahili. 2. SHIFT TO "COULD" I couldn't speak Swahili. 3. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" I won't be able to speak Swahili. be able to can 1. With a burst of adrenaline, people can pick up cars. 2. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" With a sudden burst of adrenaline, he was able to lift the car off the child's leg. 3. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" With a sudden burst of adrenaline, he will be able to lift the car. 1. Even with a burst of adrenaline, people can't pick up something that heavy. 2. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" Even the weight lifter, wasn't able to lift the car off the child's leg. 3. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" Even three men working together won't be able to lift the car. be able to can 1. I have some free time. I can help her now. 2. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" I had some free time yesterday. I was able to help her at that time. 3. I'll have some free time tomorrow. I can help her then. 1. I don't have any time. I can't help her now. 2. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" I didn't have time yesterday. I wasn't able to help her at that time. 3. I won't have any time later. I can't help her then. be able to can 1. I can drive Susan's car when she is out of town. 2. SHIFT TO "BE ALLOWED TO " I was allowed to drive Susan's car while she was out of town last week. 3. I can drive Susan's car while she is out of town next week. 1. I can't drive Susan's car when she is out of town. 2. SHIFT TO "BE ALLOWED TO " I wasn't allowed to drive Susan's car while she was out of town last week. 3. I can't drive Susan's car while she is out of town next week. may can Can I have a glass of water? Can you give me a lift to school? Can't I have a glass of water? Can't you give me a lift to school? could, may can Anyone can become rich and famous if they know the right people. Learning a language can be a real challenge. It can't cost more than a dollar or two. You can't be 45! I thought you were about 18 years old. could Can Exercises Learn English at Englishpage.com!to be able to; have the ability, power, or skill to.She can solve the problem easily, I'm sure!to know how to.He can play chess, although he's not particularly good at it.to have the power or means to.A dictator can impose his will on the people.to have the right or qualifications to.He can change whatever he wishes in the script.may; have permission to.Can I speak to you for a moment?to have the possibility.A coin can land on either side. can, can, canst, can, can, could, couldst, could, could, can, can, could, cunning-a sealed container for food, beverages, etc., as of aluminum, sheet iron coated with tin, or other metal.a receptacle for garbage, ashes, etc.a bucket, pail, or other container for holding or carrying liquids.a drinking cup; tankard.a metal or plastic container for holding film on cores or reels.Slang: Usually Vulgar toilet; bathroom.Slang: He's been in the can for a week.Slang: Sometimes Vulgar buttocks.Slang:cans, a set of headphones designed to cover the ears.Military Slang.a depth charge.a destroyer to preserve by sealing in a can. jar, etc.Slang.to dismiss; fire.Slang.to throw (something) away.Slang.to put a stop to.to record, as on film or tape.a container, esp for liquids, usually of thin sheet metalanother name (esp US) for tinAlso called: canful the contents of a can or the amount a can will holda slang word for prisona slang word for toilet or buttocks See toiletnavy a slang word for destroyerslangnavy a depth chargea shallow cylindrical metal container of varying size used for storing and handling filminformala complicated problemSee carry(of a film, piece of music, etc) having been recorded, processed, edited, etcinformalarranged or agreedthe contract is almost in the canCollins English Dictionary Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012to put (food, etc) into a can or cans; preserve in a canslang(tr) to dismiss with a jobinformal(tr) to stop (doing something annoying or making an annoying noise) (esp in the phrase can it!) informal(tr) to reject or discardCollins English Dictionary Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012used as an auxiliary to indicate ability, skill, or fitness to perform a taskI can run a mile in under four minutesused as an auxiliary to indicate permission or the right to somethingused as an auxiliary to indicate knowledge of how to do somethinghe can speak three languages fluentlyused as an auxiliary to indicate the possibility, opportunity, or likelihoodmy trainer says I can win the race if I really work hardCollins English Dictionary Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012Collins English Dictionary Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012Can but and cannot but are formal and now somewhat old-fashioned expressions suggesting that there is no possible alternative to doing something. Can but is equivalent to can only. We can but do our best. Cannot but is the equivalent of cannot help but. We cannot but protest against these injustices. See also help.CanI and mayI are frequently but not always interchangeable in senses indicating possibility. A power failure can (or may) occur at any time. Despite the insistence by some, that can means only to be able and may means to be permitted, both are regularly used in seeking or granting permission: Can (or May) I borrow your glue gun? You can (or may) use it tomorrow. Sentences using can occur chiefly in spoken English. May in this sense occurs more frequently in formal contexts: May I address the court, Your Honor? In negative constructions, can't or cannot is more common than may not : You can't have it today. I need it myself. The contraction mayn't is rare.Origin of can1First recorded before 900; Middle English, Old English, present indicative singular 1st, 3rd person of cunnan to know, know how; cognate with German, Old Norse, Gothic kann; ken, know 1Origin of can2First recorded before 1000; Middle English canne, can(e), Old English canne, cognate with German Kanne, Old Norse kanna, all perhaps from West Germanic; compare Late Latin canna small vesselOrigin of can1Old English canne; related to Old Norse, Old High German kanna, Irish gann, Swedish kana sledOrigin of can2Old English cunnan; related to Old Norse kanna, Old High German kunnan, Latin cognoscere to know, Sanskrit jñti he knows; see ken , uncouthExamples have not been reviewed.The government suspended 30 out of 350 arms export licences to Israel in 2024 covering equipment which could have an "offensive" use.And it could have been worse again before the break as Kinghorn was intercepted for a second time.She said she could no longer justify Conservative policies on the doorstep, and that her former party found out she was leaving as the press conference was unfolding.But Worldpanel said that around a fifth of households in the UK are "struggling" with grocery bills, with some of those in a situation where they can not cut food costs any more. "Perhaps, members of the jury, the smile you can clearly see form as he gets on that bus is as a result of him thinking at that point he's getting away: the smiling killer."hotlebucketcanisterjarpackageDefinitions and idiom definitions from Dictionary.com Unabridged, based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, Random House, Inc. 2023Idioms from The American Heritage Idioms Dictionary copyright 2002, 2001, 1995 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.camwoodCanabrowse#aabbccddeeffgghhijjjklmmnnooppqrrsstuuuvvwwxyzzAboutCareersContact usCookies, terms, & privacyHelpFollow usGet the Word of the Day every day! 2025 Dictionary.com, LLC modal verb NAME//kn//. NAME//kn//jump to other resultsused to say that it is possible for someone or something to do something, or for something to happen I can run fast. Can you call back tomorrow? He couldn't answer the question. The stadium can be emptied in four minutes. I can't promise anything, but I'll do what I can. Please let us know if you cannot attend the meeting. 2used to say that someone knows how to do something She can speak Spanish. Can he cook? She could read before she started kindergarten. 3used with the verbs feel, hear, see, smell, taste She could feel the cool air on her face. I can hear music. 4used to show that someone is allowed to do something You can take the car if you want. We can't wear jeans at work. 5(informal) used to ask permission to do something Can I read your newspaper? Can I take you home? 6(informal) used to ask someone to help you Can you help me with this box? Can you feed the cat, please? 7used in the negative for saying that you are sure something is not true That can't be Maryshe's in New York. He can't have slept through all that noise. 8used to express doubt or surprise What can they be doing? Can he be serious? Where could she have put it? 9used to say what someone or something is often like He can be very tactless sometimes. It can be really cold here in the winter. 10used to make suggestions We can eat in a restaurant if you like. I can take the car if necessary. 11(informal) used to say that someone must do something, usually when you are angry You can be quiet or get out! Grammmarmodal verbsThe modal verbs are can, could, may, might, must, ought to, shall, should, will, and would. Dare, need, have to, and used to also share some of the features of modal verbs.Modal verbs have only one form. They have no past or present participles and do not add -s to the 3rd person singular form:He can speak three languages. She will try and visit tomorrow.Modal verbs are followed by the infinitive of another verb without to. The exceptions are ought to and used to:You must find a job. You ought to stop smoking. I used to smoke, but I quit two years ago. Questions are formed without do/does in the present or did in the past:Can I invite Mary? Should I have invited Mary?Negative sentences are formed with not or the short form -nt and do not use do/does or did:You shouldn't invite Mary. The error will not have affected our results.You will find more help with how to use modal verbs at the dictionary entries for each verb. Idioms as happy, etc. as possible Shopping online is as simple as can be. used to say that you are not able or willing to do something Sorry, no can do. I just don't have the time. Which Word?can / mayCan and cannot (or cant) are the most common words used for asking for, giving, or refusing permission:Can I borrow your calculator? You can come with us if you want to. You cant park your car there.May (negative may not) is used as a polite and fairly formal way to ask for or give permission:May I borrow your newspaper? You may come if you wish.It is often used in official signs and rules:Visitors may use the swimming pool between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Students may not use the college car park.The form maynt is hardly ever used in modern English. Grammarcan / could / be able to / manageCan is used to say that somebody knows how to do something:Can you play the piano?It is also used with verbs of seeing, noticing, etc:I can hear someone calling, and with passive infinitives:The DVD can be found online.Can or be able to are used to say that something is possible or that somebody has the opportunity to do something:Can you/Are you able to come on Saturday?You use be able to to form the future and perfect tenses and the infinitive:You'll be able to get a taxi outside the station. I havent been able to get much work done today. Shed love to be able to play the piano.Could is used to talk about what someone was generally able to do in the past:Our daughter could walk when she was nine months old.You use was/were able to or manage (but not could) when you are saying that something was possible on a particular occasion in the past:I was able to/managed to find some useful books in the library. I could find some useful books in the library.Manage is more formal and less frequent than be able to. In negative sentences, could not can also be used:We werent able to/didnt manage to/couldnt get there in time.Could is also used with this meaning with verbs of seeing, noticing, understanding, etc.:I could see there was something wrong.Could have is used when you are saying that it was possible for somebody to do something in the past but they did not try:I could have won the game but decided to let him win instead.See can in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

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