

TIP 3 “Abilities”



Remember!

How to express ability

To express that someone has the power or skill to do something, *can* and *be able* are used.

Examples:

- I can't help you. I am busy.
- I'm unable to help you.
- When I was young I was able to earn my living pretty well; I could work hard. Now I can't. I'm too old.
- I can stand on my head for five minutes.
- Can you speak Arabic?
- Yes, I can.

Expressing ability

In the present:

Express ability in the present as follows:

- I can speak good English.
- I can't stand on my head.

In the past

Express ability in the past as follows

- I was unable to visit him.
- I couldn't eat at all when I was ill.

In the future

Express ability in the future as follows

- I will be able to buy a house when I get a good job.
- The teacher can assist you after class if you have any questions.

Things to remember:

- *Can* is always followed by an infinitive without "to."
Examples:
I can ride my bike and I can drive a car, but I can't drive a lorry.
- *Can* in the past is *was able* or *could*
Examples:
When I was young I was able to earn my living pretty well. Now I can't; I'm too old.
I couldn't hear what he was saying.
- *Can* in the future is *will be able*.
Example:
When I finish my studies, I will be able to find a job.



- Can vs. Will be able to

Example:

I can't speak English now, but I will be able to speak it fluently soon.