

Modals of Ability Exercise 1

Put in 'can' / 'can't' / 'could' / 'couldn't'. If none is possible, use 'be able to' in the correct tense.

1. _____ you swim when you were 10?
2. We _____ get to the meeting on time yesterday because the train was delayed by one hour.
3. He _____ arrive at the party on time, even after missing the train, so he was very pleased.
4. He's amazing. He _____ speak 5 languages including Chinese.
5. I _____ drive a car until I was 34, then I moved to the countryside so I had to learn.
6. I looked everywhere for my glasses but I _____ find them anywhere.
7. I searched for your house for ages. Luckily, I _____ find it in the end.
8. She's 7 years old but she _____ read yet – her parents are getting her extra lessons.
9. I read the book three times but I _____ understand it.
10. James _____ speak Japanese when he lived in Japan, but he's forgotten most of it now.
11. I _____ understand the chapter we had to read for homework. It was so difficult.
12. I _____ lift this box – it's too heavy! Would you help me?
13. Lucy _____ make it to our meeting after all. She's stuck in traffic at the moment.
14. John _____ play tennis really well. He's champion of his club.
15. Unfortunately, I really _____ sing at all! No-one in my family is musical either.
16. When the car broke down, I was really pleased because I _____ solve the problem.
17. Julian _____ play excellent golf when he was only ten.
18. My grandmother _____ use a computer until last month. Since then, she's been taking lessons at the library.
19. I _____ open this window. I think it's stuck!
20. Gill _____ play the piano. She's never studied it.



Answers

1. Could you swim when you were 10?
2. We couldn't get to the meeting on time yesterday because the train was delayed by one hour.
3. He was able to arrive at the party on time, even after missing the train, so he was very pleased.
4. He's amazing. He can speak 5 languages including Chinese.
5. I couldn't drive a car until I was 34, then I moved to the countryside so I had to learn.
6. I looked everywhere for my glasses but I couldn't find them anywhere.
7. I searched for your house for ages. Luckily, I was able to find it in the end.
8. She's 7 years old but she can't read yet – her parents are getting her extra lessons.
9. I read the book three times but I couldn't understand it.
10. James could speak Japanese when he lived in Japan, but he's forgotten most of it now.
11. I couldn't understand the chapter we had to read for homework. It was so difficult.
12. I can't lift this box – it's too heavy! Would you help me?
13. Lucy can't make it to our meeting after all. She's stuck in traffic at the moment.
14. John can play tennis really well. He's champion of his club.
15. Unfortunately, I really can't sing at all! No-one in my family is musical either.
16. When the car broke down, I was really pleased because I was able to solve the problem.
17. Julian could play excellent golf when he was only ten.
18. My grandmother couldn't use a computer until last month. Since then, she's been taking lessons at the library.
19. I can't open this window. I think it's stuck!
20. Gill can't play the piano. She's never studied it.