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THE MODAL VERB CAN

The modal 'can' is a commonly used modal verb in English. It is used to express; ability, opportunity, a request, to grant permission, to show possibility or

CAN

- PERMISSION**: ask for or give permission. *You can use my pencils.*
- POSSIBILITY**: to express possibility. *He can guess why she is a...*
- ABILITY**: talk about ability to do in the present or future. *We can dance very well.*
- REQUEST**: to make requests (in quest). *Can we have her addre...*
- GENERAL TRUTHS**: to talk about sth that is usually true, not always. *Exercise can help reduce stress.*
- OFFER**: to make offers (in quest). *Can I do anything for ye...*
- SUGGESTION**: to make suggestion. *If you want, we can drink...*

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impossibility. It is this large amount of functions and the fact that 'can' is replaced by other modals when it is used to express future or past time that often lead to certain errors.

MODAL VERBS

CAN

- Permission (give and ask): *Can I be of any help? Can you put over there?*
- Ability (present): *I can drive a car.*
- Possibility: *He can be really sad.*
- Request: *Can you be quiet?*

COULD

- Suggestion (more polite): *We could write a letter to the president.*
- Permission (more polite): *Could I ask you a permission question?*
- Ability (past): *When I was a child, I could speak German.*
- Possibility: *He could be the one with the money.*
- Request (more polite): *Could I borrow your pen, please?*

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EXAMPLES

He can play the piano.
Can I borrow your pen?
You cannot (can't) use my car.

Modal Verbs: Probability can't

Expressing near certainty that something is false

This can't be Tim's house. His house is brown, and this house is blue.

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AFFIRMATIVE

Subject + can + verb in simple form + complement

EXAMPLES: I can swim.
You can take a biscuit.

NEGATIVE

Subject + can not + verb in simple form + complement
(contraction can't)

EXAMPLES: You can't go to the cinema.



INTERROGATIVE

Question word + can + Subject + verb in simple form + complement + ?

EXAMPLES: Can you come here?

GLOSARY

1. Baseball = béisbol



2. Boxing = boxeo



3. Cycling = ciclismo



4. Tennis = tenis



5. Bowling = bolos



6. Diving = buceo



7. Fencing = esgrima



8. Stretching = estiramiento



9. Surfing = surf



10. Ice hockey = hockey sobre hielo

