

44 Ability: can, could and be able to

1 Can and can't

Vicky: How many instruments **can** you play, Natasha?
 Natasha: Three – the violin, the clarinet and the piano.
 Vicky: That's terrific. You haven't got a piano here, though.
 Natasha: No, but I **can** go to the music room in college and play the one in there.
 Vicky: I'm not musical at all. I **can't** even sing.

We use **can** to say that something is possible: that someone has an ability (Natasha **can** play the piano) or an opportunity (She **can** go to the music room). **Can** is usually pronounced /kən/ but sometimes we say /kæn/. The negative is **cannot** /'kænɒt/ or **can't** /kɑ:nt/.

2 Can and be able to

In the present tense, **be able to** is a little more formal and less usual than **can**.

Emma is good with computers. She **can** write/is **able to** write programs.
 But in some structures we always use **be able to**, not **can**.

To-infinitive: It's nice **to be able to** go to the opera. (NOT ~~to can~~ go)

After a modal verb: Melanie **might be able to** help us.

Present Perfect: It's been quiet today. I've **been able to** get some work done.

For the future we use **can** or **will be able to** but NOT ~~will can~~.

If we earn some money, we **can** go/we'll **be able to** go on holiday next summer.

I'm afraid I **can't** come/I **won't be able to** come to the disco on Friday.

But to suggest a possible future action, we normally use **can**.

Let's have lunch together. We **can** go to that new restaurant.

3 Could and was/were able to

For ability or opportunity in the past, we use **could** or **was/were able to**.

Natasha **could** play (OR **was able to** play) the piano when she was four.

In those days we had a car, so we **could** travel (OR **were able to** travel) very easily.

To say that the ability or opportunity resulted in a particular action, something that really happened, we use **was/were able to** but not **could**.

The plane **was able to** take off at eleven o'clock, after the fog had lifted.

Luckily Mark **was able to** get (OR **succeeded in getting**) the work done in time.

The drivers **were able to** stop (OR **managed to stop** ▷ page 60.3) before they crashed into each other.

Compare these two sentences.

The children **could** swim when they were quite young. (a past ability)

The children **were able to** swim across the river. (a past action)

In negative sentences and questions, we can use either form.

It was foggy, so the plane **couldn't/wasn't able to** take off.

The pool was closed, so they **couldn't/weren't able to** have a swim.

Could you/Were you able to describe the man to the police?

We normally use **could** (not **was/were able to**) with verbs of seeing etc., and with verbs of thinking.

We **could** see the village in the distance.

As soon as Harriet opened the door, she **could** smell gas.

I **couldn't understand** what was happening.

Practice

A Can and can't (1)

Look at the pictures and say what they can or can't do. Use these words: *climb trees, juggle, lift the weights, play the violin, walk on his hands*



▶ He can walk on his hands.

- 1 3
 2 4

B Can and be able to (2)

Harriet is visiting David, who hurt himself when he fell off a ladder. Complete the conversation using **can** or a form of **be able to**. Sometimes there is more than one possible answer.

Harriet: Hello, David. I'm sorry I haven't (▶) been able to come (come) and see you before. I've been really busy lately. How are you?

David: I'm OK, thanks. (1) (I / walk) around now.

The doctor says (2) (I / go) back to work soon.

It'll be nice (3) (get) out again. I hate being stuck

here like this. I haven't (4) (do) anything interesting.

C Could and was/were able to (3)

▶ Which is closer to the meaning of the sentence 'Years ago I could run a marathon'?

a) I ran a marathon at one particular time in the past.

b) I was once fit enough to run a very long way.

1 Which of these sentences is correct?

I was ill, so I couldn't go to the party.

I was ill, so I wasn't able to go to the party.

a) Only the first one. b) Only the second one. c) Both of them.

2 Which is closer to the meaning of the sentence 'Sarah was able to leave work early yesterday'?

a) Sarah left work early yesterday.

b) Sarah had the opportunity to leave work early yesterday, but we don't know if she took it.

D Could and was/were able to (3)

Put in **could** or **was/were able to**. Sometimes either is possible. Use a negative if necessary.

▶ Suddenly all the lights went out. We couldn't see a thing.

1 The computer went wrong, but luckily Emma put it right again.

2 There was a big party last night. You hear the music half a mile away.

3 I learnt to read music as a child. I read it when I was five.

4 People heard warnings about the flood, and they move out in time.

5 The train was full. I find a seat anywhere.

45 Permission: can, may, could and be allowed to

1 Asking permission

We use **can**, **could** or **may** to ask for permission.

Can I use your pen?

Could we borrow your ladder, please? ~ Well, I'm using it at the moment.

May I see the letter? ~ Certainly.

Could often sounds more polite than **can**. **May** is rather formal.

2 Giving and refusing permission

To give permission we use **can** or **may** (but not **could**).

You **can** wait in my office if you like.

Could I borrow your calculator? ~ Of course you **can**.

You **may** telephone from here. (a written notice)

May is formal and is not often used in speech.

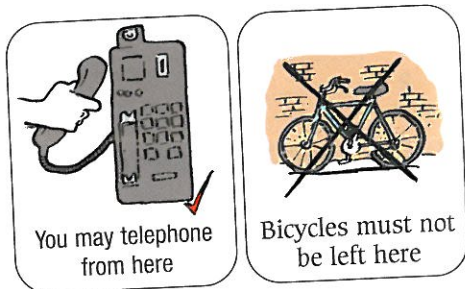
To refuse permission we use **can't** or **may not** (but not **couldn't**).

Could we picnic here? ~ I'm sorry. I'm afraid you **can't**.

Members **may not** bring more than two guests into the club.

We can also use **must not**.

Luggage **must not** be left unattended.



3 Talking about permission

We sometimes talk about rules made by someone else. To do this we use **can**, **could** and **be allowed to**.

We use **can** to talk about the present, and we use **could** for the past.

Present: Each passenger **can** take one bag onto the plane.

Past: In the 1920s you **could** drive without taking a test.

We can also use **be allowed to**.

Present: Passengers **are allowed to** take one bag onto the plane.

Future: **Will I be allowed to** record the interview on tape?

Past: We **weren't allowed to** look round the factory yesterday.

For a general permission in the past we use either **could** or **was/were allowed to**.

I **could** always stay/I **was** always **allowed to** stay up late as a child.

But to say that the permission resulted in a particular action, something that really happened, we use **was/were allowed to** (but not **could**).

I **was allowed to** leave work early yesterday.

We **were allowed to** go into the control room when we looked around the power station.

Compare these questions with **may** and **be allowed to**.

ASKING FOR PERMISSION

May I take a photo of you?
(= Will you allow it?)

ASKING ABOUT PERMISSION

Are we allowed to take photos?
(= What is the rule?)

Practice

A Asking permission (1)

How would you ask for permission in these situations?

Use **Can I ...?**, **Could I ...?** or **May I ...?** and these verbs: *borrow, join, look at, use*

▶ You are at a friend's flat. You want to make a phone call.
Can I use your phone?

1 You need a calculator. The person sitting next to you has got one.

2 You have gone into a café. Three people who you know from work are sitting at a table. You go over to the table.

3 You had to go to a lecture, but you were ill. Your friend went to the lecture and took notes. Next day you are well again and you see your friend.

B Giving and refusing permission (2)

A policeman is telling you what the signs mean. What does he say?

Use **can** and **can't** and these verbs: *drop, go, have, park, play, smoke, turn*



Policeman:

▶ You **can't** go this way.

▶ You **can** park here.

1

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C Be allowed to (3)

Put in the correct forms.

Rita: I hear you've moved into a new flat with a couple of friends.

Emma: Yes, it's a nice flat, but the landlady is really strict. ▶ We **aren't allowed to do** (we / not / allow / do) anything. It was my birthday last month, and

(1) (I / not / allow / have) a party.

Rita: Oh, (2) (we / allow / have) parties at our place, luckily. (3) (we / allow / do) anything, more or

less. We're hoping to have an all-night party soon, but I'm not absolutely sure if

(4) (we / allow / hold) it.

D May I ...? or Am I allowed to ...? (3)

Are you asking for permission, or are you asking what the rule is? Put in **May I ...?** or **Am I allowed to ...?**

▶ **May I** use your computer?

▶ **Am I allowed to** smoke in this cinema?

1 cross the road here?

2 ask you a personal question?

3 rollerblade in this park?

4 drive a car without insurance?

5 read your magazine?

46 Possibility and certainty: may, might, could, must, etc.

1 May, might and could

Rachel: *Whose bag is that?*
 Daniel: *I don't know. It **may** belong to Maria's friend.*
 Vicky: *It **might** be a bomb. It **could** explode at any moment.*

We use **may** or **might** to say that something is possible or that it is quite likely. We can use them for the present or the future.

*It **may/might** be a bomb.* (= Perhaps it is a bomb.)
*I **may/might** go to the disco tomorrow.* (= Perhaps I will go to the disco.)

We can use **could** to say that something is possible.

*The story **could** be true, I suppose.* (= Possibly it is true.)

*You **could** win a million pounds!* (= Possibly you will win a million pounds.)

Sometimes **could** means only a small possibility. It is possible (but not likely) that you will win a million pounds.

In some situations we can use **may**, **might** or **could**.

*It **may/might/could** rain later.*

After **may**, **might** or **could** we can use a continuous form (be + an -ing form).

*That man **may/might be watching** us.* (= Perhaps he is watching us.)

*Sarah **may/might be working** late tonight.* (= Perhaps she will be working late.)

*I'm not sure where Matthew is. He **could be playing** squash.* (= Possibly he is playing squash.)

2 May, might and could in the negative

The negative forms are **may not**, **might not/mightn't**, and **could not/couldn't**.

MAY NOT AND MIGHT NOT

Something negative is possible.

*Daniel **may not** get the job.*

*Tom **might not** be in.*

*I **mightn't** finish the marathon tomorrow.*

(It is possible that I will not finish it.)

COULDN'T

Something is impossible.

*Vicky is afraid of heights. She **couldn't** climb onto the roof.*

*I'm completely unfit. I **couldn't** run a marathon.*

(It is impossible for me to run it.)

3 Must and can't

MUST

We use **must** when we realize that something is certainly true.

*She isn't answering the phone. She **must** be out.*

*I had my keys a moment ago. They **must** be here somewhere.*

*Andrew isn't here. He **must** be working in the library.*

CAN'T

We use **can't** when we realize that something is impossible.

*We haven't walked far. You **can't** be tired yet.*

*Life **can't** be easy when you have to spend it in a wheelchair.*

*Nick **can't** be touring Scotland. I saw him here this morning.*

▷ 53 **Might/could/must have been** ▷ page 379 **Mustn't** in American English

▷ 51.1 **Could** in suggestions

Practice

A Might be and might be doing (1)

Vicky and Rachel are at college. They're looking for their friend Natasha. Complete the conversation. Use **may** or **might** and the verb in brackets. Sometimes you need to use the continuous.

Vicky: I can't find Natasha. Have you seen her?

Rachel: (▶) *She **might be** (she / be) in the music room.* (▶) *She **may be practising** (she / practise).*

Vicky: No, she isn't there. I thought (1) (she / be) with you.

Rachel: It's a nice day. (2) (she / be) on the lawn.

(3) (she / sit) out there reading the paper. Or

(4) (she / have) a coffee.

(5) (you / find) her in the canteen.

Emma: No, I've looked there.

Rachel: Well, here comes Jessica. (6) (she / know).

B May and might (1-2)

Add a sentence with **may** or **might** (both are correct).

▶ I'm not sure if it's going to rain. *It **might** rain.*

▶ I don't know if we'll see an elephant. *We **may** see one.*

1 I can't say whether Daniel will win.

2 I haven't decided if I'm having a holiday.

3 I don't know if we'll get an invitation.

4 I've no idea whether Sarah will be late.

5 I'm not sure if my friends are visiting me.

C Mightn't and couldn't (2)

Put in **mightn't** or **couldn't**.

▶ I've got one or two things to do, so I **mightn't** have time to come out tonight.

▶ David **couldn't** work as a taxi driver. He can't drive.

1 We're going to need lots of glasses. We have enough, you know.

2 Mark be in the office tomorrow. He thinks he's getting a cold.

3 We possibly have a dog, living in a small flat like this.

4 How can you work with all this noise? I work in such conditions.

5 Don't come tomorrow because I be in. I'm not sure what I'm doing.

D Must, can't and might (1, 3)

A reporter is interviewing Mrs Miles for a TV news programme.

Complete the conversation. Put in **must**, **can't** or **might**.

Mrs Miles: My name's Nora Miles, and I'm going to do a parachute jump.

Reporter: Mrs Miles, you're seventy-three, and you're going to jump out of an aeroplane.

You (▶) **must** be mad. You (1) be serious.

Mrs Miles: It really (2) be wonderful to look down from the sky. I've always wanted to try it.

Reporter: But anything could happen. You (3) be injured or even killed. I wouldn't take the risk.

Mrs Miles: Well, young man, your life (4) be much fun if you never take risks. You ought to try it. You never know - you (5) enjoy it.

Reporter: Enjoy it? You (6) be joking!

47 Necessity: must and have to

1 Present, past and future

We use **must** and **have to/has to** to say that something is necessary.
*You'll be leaving college soon. You **must** think about your future.*
*We're very busy at the office. I **have to** work on Saturday morning.*
*Mark **has to** get the car repaired. There's something wrong with the brakes.*

When we use the past, or the future with **will**, we need a form of **have to**.
*Emma **had to** go to the dentist yesterday.* NOT *She ~~must~~ go to the dentist yesterday.*
*That wasn't very good. We'll **have to** do better next time.*

And in other structures we also use a form of **have to**, not **must**.

To-infinitive: *I don't want **to have to** wait in a queue for ages.*
 After a modal verb: *Emma **has to** go to the dentist. She **might have to** go to the dentist.*
 Present Perfect: *Mark **has had to** drive all the way to Glasgow.*

For negatives and questions with **have to/has to** and **had to**, we use a form of **do**.
*I **don't have to** work on Sundays. Why **does** Andrew **have to** study every evening?*
***Did** you **have to** pay for your second cup of coffee? ~ No, I didn't.*
*I **don't have to** work means that it is not necessary for me to work (see Unit 48.2).*

2 Must or have to?

Both **must** and **have to** express necessity, but we use them differently.



MUST

We use **must** when the speaker feels that something is necessary.

*You **must** exercise. (I'm telling you.)*
*We **must** be quiet. (I'm telling you.)*

I/we **must** can also express a wish.

*I **must** buy a newspaper. I want to see the racing results.*
*We **must** invite Claire. She's wonderful company.*



HAVE TO

We use **have to** when the situation makes something necessary.

*I **have to** exercise. (The doctor told me.)*
*We **have to** be quiet. (That's the rule.)*

*I **have to** buy a newspaper. The boss asked me to get one.*

*We **have to** invite Trevor and Laura. They invited us last time.*

3 Have got to

Have got to means the same as **have to**, but **have got to** is informal. We use it mainly in the present.

*I **have to**/I've **got to** make my sandwiches. My father **has to/has got to** take these pills.*
*Do we **have to** apply/**Have** we **got to** apply for a visa?*

▷ 48 Mustn't and needn't

Practice

A Have to (1)

Complete the conversations. Use the words in brackets and a form of **have to**.

- ▶ Melanie: David's broken his leg. *He's had to go* (he's / go) to hospital.
 Harriet: Oh no! How long *will he have to stay* (will / he / stay) there?
 Melanie: I don't know.
- 1 Claire: I parked my car outside the hairdresser's, and while I was in there, the police took the car away. I've got it back now. But (I / pay) a lot of money.
 Henry: How much (you / pay)?
 Claire: Two hundred pounds!
- 2 Trevor: That door doesn't shut properly. (you / slam) it every time.
 Laura: (you / will / fix) it then, won't you?
- 3 Jessica: You're always taking exams. Why (you / take) so many?
 Andrew: (I / will / take) a lot more if I want a good job.
- 4 Mike: We're in a new house now. (we / move). The old place was too small.
 Nick: Did it take you long to find a house?
 Mike: No, we found one easily. (we / not / look) very hard. But it was in bad condition. (we've / do) a lot of work on it.
- 5 Nick: My brother (start) work at five o'clock in the morning.
 Melanie: That's pretty early. What time (he / get) up?
 Nick: Half past three.

B Must and have to (2)

Write a sentence with **must**, **have to** or **has to**.

- ▶ The sign says: 'Passengers must show their tickets.'
 So *passengers have to show their tickets.*
- ▶ The children have to be in bed by nine.
 Their parents said: '*You must be in bed by nine.*'
- 1 Laura has to get to work on time.
 Her boss told her:
- 2 The police told Nick: 'You must keep your dog under control.'
 So Nick
- 3 The pupils have to listen carefully.
 The teacher says:
- 4 The new sign says: 'Visitors must report to the security officer.'
 So now

C Must or have to? (2)

Put in **must** or **have to/has to**. Choose which is best for the situation.

- ▶ I *have to* go to the airport. I'm meeting someone.
- 1 You lock the door when you go out. There've been a lot of break-ins recently.
- 2 Daniel go to the bank. He hasn't any money.
- 3 I work late tomorrow. We're very busy at the office.
- 4 You really make less noise. I'm trying to concentrate.
- 5 I think you pay to park here. I'll just go and read that notice.
- 6 You really hurry up, Vicky. We don't want to be late.
- 7 I put the heating on. I feel really cold.

48 Necessity: mustn't, needn't, etc.

1 Mustn't or needn't?

We use **must** to say that something is necessary (see Unit 47).
 You **must** be careful with those glasses. I **must** remember my key.

Now compare **mustn't** and **needn't**.

MUSTN'T

We use **mustn't** /'mʌsnt/ to say that something is a bad idea.

You **mustn't** drop those glasses. They'll break.
 I **mustn't** forget my key, or I won't get in.
 You **mustn't** wear your best clothes. You'll get them dirty.

NEEDN'T

We use **needn't** when something is not necessary.

You **needn't** wash those glasses. They're clean.
 We **needn't** make sandwiches. There's a café.
 You **needn't** wear your best clothes. You can wear what you like.

2 Don't have to and don't need to

We can use **don't have to** and **don't need to** when something is not necessary.

The meaning is the same as **needn't**.

You **don't have to** / **don't need to** wash those glasses. They're clean.

Mark **doesn't have to** / **doesn't need to** finish the report today. He can do it at the weekend.

For American usage see page 379.

For the past we use **didn't**.

The food was free. We **didn't have to** pay/We **didn't need to** pay for it.

3 Didn't need to or needn't have?



Daniel hadn't booked a seat, but luckily the train wasn't full. He **didn't need** to stand.

DIDN'T NEED TO

We use **didn't need to** when something was not necessary. Standing was not necessary because there were seats.

Mark **didn't need** to hurry. He had lots of time.

He drove slowly along the motorway.

We **didn't need** to go to the supermarket because we had plenty of food.



Trevor and Laura booked a table for dinner. But the restaurant was empty. They **needn't have** booked a table.

NEEDN'T HAVE

We use **needn't have** + a past participle for something we did which we now know was not necessary, e.g. booking a table.

Mark **needn't have** hurried. After driving at top speed, he arrived half an hour early.

We **needn't have** gone to the supermarket. We already had a pizza for tonight.

Sometimes we can use **didn't need to** when the action happened, even though it was not necessary.

Mark **didn't need to** hurry, but he drove at top speed. He likes driving fast.

Practice

A Must, mustn't or needn't? (1)

Put in **must**, **mustn't** or **needn't**.

- ▶ Laura: You **needn't** take an umbrella. It isn't going to rain.
 Trevor: Well, I don't know. It might do.
 Laura: Don't lose it then. You **mustn't** leave it on the bus.
- 1 Vicky: Come on. We hurry. We be late.
 Rachel: It's only ten past. We hurry. There's lots of time.
- 2 Claire: My sister and I are going a different way.
 Guide: Oh, you go off on your own. It isn't safe. We keep together in a group.
- 3 David: I'll put these cups in the dishwasher.
 Melanie: No, you put them in there. It might damage them. In fact, we wash them at all. We didn't use them.
- 4 Secretary: I forget to type this letter.
 Mark: Yes, it go in the post today because it's quite urgent. But the report isn't so important. You type the report today.

B Don't have to (2)

An old woman is talking to a reporter from her local newspaper. She is comparing life today with life in the past. Complete her sentences using **don't have to**, **doesn't have to** or **didn't have to**.

- ▶ We had to make our own fun in the old days. There wasn't any television then. These days people **don't have to make their own fun**.
- 1 There's so much traffic now. You have to wait ages to cross the road. In those days you
- 2 I had to work long hours when I was young. But children today have it easy. They
- 3 My father had to work in a factory when he was twelve. Just imagine! Today a twelve-year-old child
- 4 There's so much crime today, isn't there? People have to lock their doors now. It was better in the old days when people
- 5 We had to wash our clothes by hand. There weren't any washing-machines, you know. Nowadays people

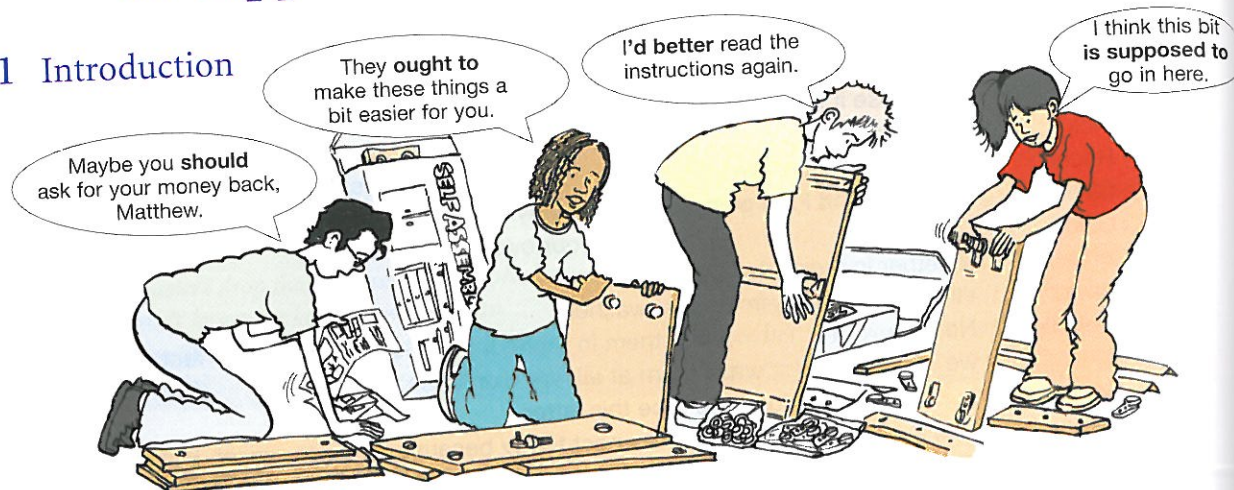
C Didn't need to or needn't have? (3)

Write the sentences using **didn't need to** or **needn't have**.

- ▶ The previous owners had already decorated the flat, so **we didn't need to decorate it ourselves** (we / decorate / it / ourselves).
- 1 Luckily we were able to sell our old flat before we bought the new one, so (we / borrow / any money).
- 2 It was very hot yesterday, so I watered all the flowers. And now it's pouring with rain. (I / bother).
- 3 We've done the journey much more quickly than I expected. (we / leave / so early).
- 4 A friend had already given me a free ticket to the exhibition, so (I / pay / to go in).
- 5 Service was included in the bill, so (you / tip / the waiter). It was a waste of money.

49 Should, ought to, had better and be supposed to

1 Introduction



2 Should and ought to

We use **should** and **ought to** to say what is the best thing or the right thing to do. There is no difference in meaning.

*You're not very well. Perhaps you **should** see a doctor.*
*Your uncle was very kind to me. I **ought to** write him a letter of thanks.*
*People **shouldn't** break/**oughtn't to** break their promises.*

We can also use **should** and **ought to** in questions to ask for advice.
*Where **should** I put this picture, do you think?*
*It's a difficult problem. How **ought we to** deal with it?*

After **should** or **ought to** we can use a continuous form (be + an -ing form).
*It's half past six already. I **should be cooking** the tea.*
*Why are you sitting here doing nothing? You **ought to be working**.*

3 Had better

We use **had better** to say what is the best thing to do in a situation.
*It's cold. The children **had better** wear their coats.*
*The neighbours are complaining. We'd **better** turn the music down.*
*My wife is waiting for me. I'd **better not** be late.*

We could also use **should** or **ought to** in these examples, although **had better** is stronger. The speaker sees the action as necessary and expects that it will happen.

4 Be supposed to

We use **be supposed to** when we are talking about the normal or correct way of doing things.
*The guests **are supposed to** buy flowers for the hostess.*
*Look at these cars. This area **is supposed to** be kept clear of traffic.*
*The bus driver needs to concentrate. You're **not supposed to** talk to him.*
*How **am I supposed to** cook this? ~ It tells you on the packet.*

We can use **was/were supposed to** for the past.
*It's eleven o'clock. You **were supposed to** be here at ten thirty, you know.*

▷ 52.4 Shall used to ask for advice

Practice

A Should and ought to (2)

Put in **should**, **shouldn't**, **ought** or **oughtn't**. (Look for the word **to**.)

Vicky: I can't come out tonight, Rachel. I (▶) **ought** to do some more work. I'm behind with everything. I've got so much to do.
 Rachel: You (1) worry so much, Vicky. Don't panic. You (2) to relax sometimes. You (3) take a break.
 Vicky: I know I (4) panic, but I do. I can't help it.
 Rachel: Anyway, you're doing OK, aren't you? Your results have been good.
 You (5) be pleased. You (6) to invent problems for yourself.

B Had better (3)

What would you say in these situations? Add a sentence with **'d better (not)** and the words in brackets.

- ▶ Vicky doesn't feel well. She's got a headache. What might you say to her? (an aspirin)
You'd better take an aspirin.
- 1 You and Daniel are meeting Rachel. You've both arrived, but she isn't there yet. She is usually late. (wait)
- 2 Ilona is leaving her bike outside the swimming-pool. You know it won't be safe if she leaves it unlocked. (lock)
- 3 Some friends are going to visit you today. Your room is in a mess. What do you think? (tidy)
- 4 Nick is giving you a lift in his old sports car. There's a speed limit, and there's a police car behind you. (too fast)
- 5 There's an exam tomorrow. Neither you nor Rachel have done any work for it. (some revision)

C Be supposed to (4)

Add a sentence using **be (not) supposed to** and these words:

leave it outside, report to the police, stand in a queue, take two before meals, watch it

- ▶ You shouldn't bring your bike in here. *You're supposed to leave it outside.*
- 1 I've got some pills.
- 2 Foreign visitors can't travel freely here.
- 3 Be careful waiting for a bus in England.
- 4 This film isn't for under-sixteens.

D Should, ought to, had better and be supposed to (1-4)

Complete the conversation. Use **should**, **ought to**, **had better** or **be supposed to** and the verbs in brackets. Usually there is more than one correct answer.

Vicky: What time (▶) **are we supposed to be** (we / be) at the coffee morning?
 Rachel: The invitation says ten o'clock.
 Vicky: Well, it's ten now. (1) (we / hurry).
 (2) (we / not / be) late.
 Rachel: Oh, it won't matter if we're a bit late.
 Vicky: I think it would be rude, wouldn't it? I don't think people
 (3) (arrive) late when they've been invited to something.
 Rachel: You worry too much. (4) (you / not / take)
 everything so seriously, Vicky. It's a coffee morning, not a job interview.
 (5) (we / not / get) there exactly on time.

50 Asking people to do things

1 Polite requests

We can use **can** or **could** in a request, when we ask someone to do something.

Can you keep me informed? ~ Yes, of course.

Could you lend me ten pounds until tomorrow? ~ Sorry, I haven't got ten pounds.

I wonder if you could explain something to me. ~ I'll try.

Could is often more polite than **can**.

In a request we can also use **Do you mind ...?** or **Would you mind...?** with an -ing form.

Do you mind waiting a moment? ~ No, I can wait.

Would you mind sitting in the back? ~ No, not at all.

We can also use **Would you like to ...?**

Would you like to lay the table for me? ~ Yes, of course.

We do not use **Do you like ...?** for a request. NOT ~~Do you like to lay the table for me?~~

It is always worth taking the trouble to use one of these request forms in English. We do not normally say ~~Lay the table for me.~~ This can sound very abrupt and impolite without a phrase like **Could you ...?**

2 The imperative

We can sometimes use the imperative form to tell someone what to do.

Bring another chair. **Hurry up** or **we'll be late.**

We form the negative with **don't**.

Don't be silly. **Don't make so much noise.**

We can use an imperative when we are with friends in an informal situation. But we do not use it to tell a stranger what to do in a more formal situation.

Excuse me. Could you tell me the way to Oxford Street, please?

Would you mind sending me a copy of your catalogue?

NOT ~~Send me a copy of your catalogue.~~

Even people in authority often avoid using the imperative to give orders. Instead they can use **I want/I'd like you to ...**, **You must ...**, or a polite request form.

Manager: **I want you all to be at the meeting.**

Policeman: **You must wait until you see the green light.**

Doctor: **Could you lie down on the bed, please?**

But we use an imperative in instructions and directions, in offers and invitations, and to express good wishes.

Turn right at the crossroads. **Have a biscuit.**

Enjoy your holiday.

3 Asking for things

We use **Can I/we have...?** and **Could I/we have ...?** when we ask someone to give us something.

Can we have our room key, please? **Could I have a receipt, please?**

We can also say **Could you give me a receipt, please?** but we do not use the imperative.

When we ask for something in a shop or a café, we can simply name what we want, but we must say **please**.

A large white loaf, please. **Two coffees, please.**

We can also use **I'd like ...** or **I'll have ...**

I'd like a chicken sandwich, please. **I'll have a coffee.**

▷ 45 Can and could for permission ▷ 52.2 Would like

Practice

A Asking people to do things (1-3)

Complete these sentences and write them in: **Can I ... a fork, please?** **Could ... have a towel, ...?** **Could you ... the ... for me?** **Would you ... answering the phone?**



- ▶ **Could you open the door for me?** 2
1 3

B Asking people to do things (1-3)

Mr Atkins is the boss at Zedco. He tells everyone what to do. Complete his sentences. Use these words: **can, could, have, like, mind, must, want, wonder, would**

- ▶ **Would you mind** making some tea, Alan?
1 You inform me of any developments.
2 **Could I** the latest sales figures, please?
3 **Would you** to arrange a meeting some time next week, Fiona?
4 I everyone to read the report.
5 I see the file, please, Mark?
6 you mind putting this in writing?
7 I if you could translate this letter, Linda.
8 you meet our customer at the airport?

C Asking people to do things (1-3)

Read about each situation and then make a request. Use the word in brackets.

- ▶ It is cold in the restaurant. Ask the waiter to shut the window. (could)
Could you shut the window, please?
- 1 You are buying a coat. Ask the assistant for a receipt. (can)
.....
- 2 You want to know the time. Ask someone in the street. (could)
Excuse me.
- 3 You need someone to help you. Ask a friend. (can)
.....
- 4 You have bought some food, but you haven't got a bag. Ask the assistant. (could)
.....
- 5 You are carrying a tray. Ask someone to clear a space on the table. (mind)
.....
- 6 You are on the phone. You want to speak to the manager. (could)
.....

51 Suggestions, offers and invitations

1 Suggestions

We can use **Shall we ...?** or **Let's** to make a suggestion.

It's a lovely day. Shall we go for a walk? ~ Yes, OK.

Let's play some music. ~ Good idea.

We can also use **could** for a suggestion.

We could watch this comedy on TV tonight. ~ Well, actually I've seen it before.

You could invite a few friends around. ~ Yes, why not?

We can also use **Why don't ...?**

Why don't we have a look round the market?

To ask for a suggestion we use **shall, should** or **can**.

Where shall/should we go for our holiday? ~ What about Spain?

What can I get Claire for her birthday? ~ I've no idea.

2 Offers

We can use **will** or **can** to offer to do something.

I'll carry your bag. ~ Oh, thanks.

We can give you a lift. ~ Oh, that would be great. Thank you.

We can also use question forms with **shall** or **can**.

Shall we pay you the money now? ~ Oh, there's no hurry.

Can I get a taxi for you? ~ Yes, please.

To offer food or drink, we use **would like**.

Would you like one of these chocolates? ~ Yes, please. Thank you.

Would anyone like more coffee? ~ No, thanks.

We can also use **Will/Won't you have ...?**

Will you have a biscuit? ~ Thank you.

Won't you have something to drink? ~ Not for me, thank you.

In informal speech we can use the imperative.

Have a biscuit. ~ Thank you.

3 Invitations

The words we use in invitations are similar to those we use in offers of food and drink (see 2).

To invite someone, we often use **Would you like to ...?**

Would you like to have lunch with us? ~ Yes, I'd love to. Thank you.

Would like can have a verb with **to** after it, or an object with a noun.

Would you like to stay the night. ~ Oh, that's very kind of you.

Would you like a bed for the night? ~ Are you sure it's not too much trouble?

We can also use **Will/Won't you ...?**

Will you join us for coffee? ~ Yes. Thanks. Won't you sit down?

In informal speech we can use the imperative.

Come and have coffee with us. Please sit down.

▷ 52 Will, would, shall and should

Practice

A Suggestions, offers and invitations (1-3)

Put the words in the right order and write in the sentences:

*post / for you / I'll / that letter
for a minute / shall / stop / we*

*have / one of these / won't / you
a game / like / would / you*



▶ Won't you have one of these?

1

2

B Suggestions and offers (1-2)

Complete the conversation. Put in **could, shall, will** or **would**.

Daniel: Where (▶) shall we have our picnic, then?

Rachel: This looks all right. (1) we sit here?

Emma: Oh, I've forgotten the sausages. They're in the car.

Matthew: (2) I get them?

Emma: Oh, thanks, Matthew.

Vicky: We (3) sit by those trees. It looks nicer over there.

Rachel: No, it's fine here.

Daniel: Yes, it's better here, I think.

Emma: (4) you like a sandwich, Vicky?

Vicky: Oh, thank you.

Emma: (5) you have one, Rachel?

Matthew: And here are the sausages. (6) anyone like one?

C Suggestions, offers and invitations (1-3)

What would you say? There is more than one correct answer.

▶ A friend has called at your flat. Invite him to come in.

Would you like to come in?

1 Offer your visitor a cup of tea.

2 You don't know what to say in your letter. Ask your friend for a suggestion.

3 You are walking in town with a friend. Suggest having a cup of coffee.

4 A woman you know is afraid to walk home alone. Offer to walk home with her.

5 You are writing to a friend. Invite her to visit you one weekend.

52 Will, would, shall and should

1 Will and would for predictions

We can use **will** for a prediction (see Unit 25.3).

*It's midnight, and Sarah is still working. She'll be tired tomorrow.
We're going to Cornwall for the weekend. ~ That'll be nice.
Wait a minute while I send this e-mail. It won't take long.*

We use **would** for a past prediction or a prediction about a possible situation.

Past: *At midnight Sarah was still working. She would be tired the next day.*
Possible: *How about going to Cornwall next weekend? ~ That would be nice.
I wouldn't enjoy a camping holiday.*

We can use **shall** instead of **will**, and **should** instead of **would**, but only in the first person, after I and we.

I will/shall be twenty-five in June.

We would/should like to meet your family. But NOT ~~My friend should like ...~~

Shall and should are a little formal here.

2 Would like

We can use **would like**, usually shortened to 'd like, when we ask for something.

*I'd like a brochure, please. We'd like to order our drinks first.
This is a more polite way of saying I want a brochure, for example.*

We also use **would like** in offers and invitations.

Would you like a free gift? Would you like to visit the museum with us?

3 Decisions and refusals

We can use **will** for an instant decision or for an offer.

Decision: *Tea or coffee? ~ I'll have coffee, please. (see Unit 23.2)*
Offer: *I'll wait for you if you like. ~ Oh, thanks. I won't be long.*

We use **won't** and **wouldn't** for a refusal.

*The strikers won't go back to work until they get a pay increase.
The key went in the lock, but it wouldn't turn.*

I won't ... is a strong refusal.

I won't listen to any more of this nonsense.

4 Shall and should

We use **Shall I ...?** in offers and **Shall we ...?** in suggestions.

Offer: *Shall I wait for you? ~ Oh, thanks. I won't be long.*
Suggestion: *Shall we go to the park? ~ Good idea.*

We also use **shall** to ask for a suggestion.

What shall we have for lunch?

We use either **shall** or **should** to ask for advice.

I'm in terrible trouble. What shall/should I do?

We use **should** to say what is the best thing or the right thing to do.

People should exercise regularly.

You shouldn't spend all your money as soon as you've earned it.

▷ 23 Will and shall ▷ 49 Should ▷ 51 Suggestions, offers and invitations

Practice

A Will and would (1-2)

Complete the conversation. Put in *will, won't, would or wouldn't*.

Emma: We (▶) *won't* be here next September. It's hard to believe, isn't it?
In a few months our student days (1) be over.

Matthew: It (2) be long now. I wish I had a job. Then I
(3) know where I was going.

Emma: Who knows what the future (4) bring?

Matthew: Why don't we get married, Emma? Then at least we (5) be together.

Emma: I don't think so, Matthew. It (6) be a good idea.

Matthew: I couldn't live without you, Emma.

Emma: I really (7) like to believe you, Matthew.

B Some other uses of will and would (2-3)

Complete the conversations. Put in *will, won't, would or wouldn't* with these verbs:

eat, give, go, help, let, like, open, stand

▶ Vicky: Have you noticed how thin Jessica has got?

Rachel: She's on a diet. She *won't eat* anything except carrots.

1 Harriet: Mike and I you get everything ready.

Mike: Yes, we're quite willing to lend a hand.

2 Laura: You're late. I thought you were going to leave work early today.

Trevor: Sorry. The boss me go.

3 Mark: Sarah and I you a lift, Mike.

Sarah: Yes, we're going your way.

4 Harriet: I heard Rita has quarrelled with her boyfriend.

Melanie: That's right. If he's invited to the party, she

5 Vicky: I've had enough of table tennis for one day.

Rachel: OK. Maybe Daniel a game with me.

6 Trevor: What's wrong with the washing-machine?

Laura: When I tried to use it earlier, the door

7 Mike: This lamp is always falling over.

Harriet: It up properly.

C Will, would, shall and should (1-4)

What would you say? Use *will, would, shall or should*.

▶ Offer to make the tea.

Shall I make the tea?

1 Suggest going to the swimming-pool.

2 Refuse to take any risks.

3 Say politely that you want a shower.

4 Tell someone it's best they don't decide in a hurry.

5 Predict the end of the world in the year 3000.

53 It may/could/must have been, etc.

1 Introduction

Vicky, Emma and Matthew are at a club in town.
 Vicky: Where's Daniel? He **should have been** here half an hour ago.
 Emma: He **may have got** lost. It isn't easy to find this place.
 Matthew: He **could have forgotten** all about it, I suppose.
 Emma: He **can't have forgotten**. We were talking about it this morning.
 Matthew: Well, something **must have delayed** him.
 We can use a modal verb with the perfect (have + a past participle).
 We use this structure to talk about possible past events.

2 May have, might have and could have

We use these forms to say that possibly something happened in the past.
 He **may have got** lost. (= Perhaps he has got lost.)
 You **might have left** your keys at work. (= Perhaps you left them at work.)
 Someone **could have stolen** them. (= It is possible that someone stole them.)
 We also use **could have** for an opportunity that we didn't take or a possible result that didn't happen.
 We **could have gone** out somewhere, but we were too tired.
 You were very lucky. There **could have been** a terrible accident.

3 May not have, might not have and couldn't have

Compare these different uses.

MAY/MIGHT NOT HAVE

Possibly something did not happen.
 Daniel **may not have caught** the bus. I expect he missed it.
 (Perhaps he didn't catch it.)
 I **might not have locked** the door.
 (Perhaps I didn't lock it.)

COULDN'T HAVE

It is impossible that something happened.
 Daniel **couldn't have caught** the bus. It doesn't run on Sundays.
 (It is impossible for him to have caught the bus.)

4 Must have and can't have

Must and can't are opposites.

MUST HAVE

My watch says it's only ten past two. It **must have stopped**.
 I realize it is certainly true that my watch has stopped.

CAN'T HAVE

You've only spent five minutes on that job. You **can't have done** it properly.
 I realize it is impossible that you did the job properly.

5 Should have and ought to have

We use these forms when someone didn't do the right thing.
 We **didn't play** very well. We **should have played** better.
 I got lost. ~ Sorry. I **ought to have drawn** you a map.
 It was a lovely old building. They **shouldn't have knocked** it down.

- ▷ 29.1 Will have done
- ▷ 46 May, might, could, must, can't
- ▷ 48.3 Needn't have
- ▷ 49 Should, ought to
- ▷ 146 Would have

Practice

A It may/could/must have been, etc. (2-4)

Look at each conversation and choose the best sentence, a) or b).

- ▶ Has the car broken down? ~ Well, we may have run out of petrol.
 a) I'm sure there's no petrol left. b) I think there's no petrol left.
- 1 You could have had a free holiday. ~ Yes, we could, but the dates weren't convenient.
 a) We had a free holiday. b) We didn't have a free holiday.
- 2 Did you record the programme? ~ I can't remember. I might not have done.
 a) I'm not sure if I recorded it. b) I certainly didn't record it.
- 3 Can't you find that newspaper? ~ No, someone must have thrown it away.
 a) It was necessary to throw it away. b) I realize now that it was thrown away.

B Should and ought to (5 and Unit 49.2)

Complete the replies. Use *should/ought to* or *should have/ought to have*.

- ▶ Rita: Tom's car was stolen. He hadn't locked it.
 David: I suppose it's his fault then. He should have locked it.
- ▶ Tom: I can't sleep sometimes. My neighbours play music all night.
 Melanie: That's a nuisance. They shouldn't play music all night.
- 1 Mark: The picnickers left litter everywhere.
 Sarah: That's awful.
- 2 Emma: Jessica isn't very friendly, is she? She never says hello to people.
 Matthew: I know.
- 3 Rachel: I don't think Daniel's going to get that job. He was late for the interview.
 Natasha: That can't have looked very good.
- 4 Daniel: Did you see Vicky crossing the road? She didn't look.
 Emma: She could have been killed.

C It may/could/must have been, etc. (2-5)

Complete the conversation. Use *can't have*, *might have*, *must have* and *shouldn't have*.

- Harriet: There's a parcel outside. The postman (▶) must have left (leave) it.
- Mike: Well, (1) (he / leave) it outside. He isn't supposed to do that. Someone (2) (take) it. Why didn't he ring the bell?
- Harriet: He always rings. (3) (you / be) out when he came.
- Mike: I haven't been out. So (4) (he / ring) the bell.

D It may/could/must have been, etc. (2-5)

Complete the sentences. The second person agrees with the first. Use *might have*, *couldn't have*, etc.

- ▶ Matthew: I'm sure the computer didn't make a mistake. That's impossible.
 Emma: No, of course the computer couldn't have made a mistake.
- 1 Mark: I can't see the letter here now. So clearly someone posted it.
 Alan: Yes,
- 2 Natasha: It's possible Emma didn't hear the alarm.
 Rachel: Well, I suppose
- 3 Sarah: Henry drove at 100 miles an hour. Don't you think that's dangerous?
 Mark: Yes, I do.
- 4 Daniel: I just don't believe that Andrew has failed the exam.
 Vicky: Andrew? Impossible!