

The modal verb Can/Could

Meaning	Forms of the modal verb	Forms of the Infinitive	Types of sentences	Lexical equivalents	Russian equivalents	Sentence patterns
Ability	can (can't) – Present Indefinite; could – (couldn't) – Past.	Indefinite	Positive Negative Interrogative	to be able to; to be good at; to be capable of; to have the ability to do smth.	мочь; уметь; не уметь; не мочь	She can dance well. I could guess what he wanted. They couldn't save the patient. Can you drive a car?
Possibility	can (can't) – Present Indefinite; could – (couldn't) – Past.	Indefinite	Positive Negative Interrogative	It's possible for smb./smth. to do smth.	может; можно; не может	Anybody can make a mistake. Can I have a cup of tea? (=Is the place open?)
Permission	can – Present; could - Past	Indefinite	Positive	to allow; to permit; to be allowed; to be permitted	можно; разрешать; позволять	You can pay by your credit card
Request	can – Present; could – Past; could – Subjunctive II form (polite)	Indefinite	Interrogative	Do you allow...? Do you permit...? Am I allowed...?	Можно...? Мне разрешено...? Вы мне разрешаете...?	Can I have some more cake? He asked me if he could use my car. Could I ask you something if you are not too busy?

Prohibition	can't – Present; couldn't – Past	Indefinite	Negative	not to be allowed to; not to be permitted to	Нельзя; Не разрешено	You can't sit on the grass. He said that we couldn't take so many things with us.
Unreality	could – Subjunctive II form	Indefinite Perfect	Positive Negative Interrogative	would be able to do smth; would have been able to do smth.	Мог бы; Могли бы	He could borrow my car if he asked. He could have been Prime Minister if he hadn't decided to leave politics.
Surprise, astonishment	could – Subjunctive II form; can	Indefinite; Continuous; Perfect; Perfect Cont.	Interrogative (general questions)	Is it possible that...? Do you believe that...?	Неужели; Может ли быть, чтобы; Возможно ли	Can/Could she be a doctor? Can/Could they be working together?
Incredulity	could - Subjunctive II form; can	Indefinite; Continuous; Perfect; Perfect Cont.	Negative	It's hardly possible that; I refuse to believe that; It's doubtful that	Невероятно, чтобы; Не может быть, чтобы; Вряд ли...	They can't/couldn't be married; She can't/couldn't be sleeping now
Supposition implying uncertainty, doubt	could - Subjunctive II form	Indefinite; Continuous; Perfect; Perfect Cont.	Positive	Maybe; Perhaps; Possibly; It's possible	Возможно; Может быть	She could work as an actress, but I'm not sure.
Criticism	could - Subjunctive II form	Indefinite; Perfect;	Positive	You might (have)...; Why don't (didn't) you?	Мог(ла) бы...	You could have told me you were leaving for the United Kingdom.
Emotional colouring	could - Subjunctive II form can	Indefinite; Continuous; Perfect; Perfect Cont.	Interrogative (special questions)	What Where When How	И что это; И как он; И где она	What can/could she mean? How could/can you be so silly, James?

Note: Note the following set phrases with can:

1. Cannot (can't) help doing smth. – Не могу не делать что-либо.
2. Cannot (can't) but do smth. – Мне ничего другого не остается, как....

Материал подготовлен интернет ресурсом по самостоятельному изучению Английского языка EnglishMix.ru