

'Could' can be used to talk about the past, the present or the future.

'Could' is a past form of 'can'

- When I lived in Boston, I could walk to work.
- He said he couldn't come to the party.
- I could see him clearly but I couldn't hear him well.

'Could' is used to make polite requests. We can also use 'can' for these but 'could' is more polite.

- Could you help me, please?
- Could you lend me some money?
- Could I have a lift?
- Could I borrow some quarters?

If we use 'could' in reply to these requests, it suggests that we do not really want to do it. If you agree to the request, it is better to say 'can'

- I can help you.
- I could help you later, but I'm really busy right now.
- I could lend you some money but I don't have a lot of money to lend.
- I could give you a lift to the university, but no farther.

'Could' is used to talk about possibility and is similar in meaning to 'might'.

- It could rain later. Take an umbrella.
- He could be with Michael.
- Could he stay at your house?
- It could be Sarah's umbrella.

Match the Answer to the Request:

Could I speak to Philip, please.	Certainly sir. I'll bring it now.
Could I have a pound of apples, please?	Yes, is it Algebra?
Could you pass the water, please?	Sure. Where do you want to put it?
Could I have the check, please?	Yes, I'll get him.
Could you help me with my homework?	Yes, do you want red ones or green ones?
Could I have a ride to school?	Here you are.
Could you help me carry this box?	Yes, I'll pick you up at 7.

Fill in the blanks with "could" or "couldn't".

1. Shane was very clever. He _____ when he was only four.
2. When I was young, I _____ speak Spanish well.
3. The math test was hard because we _____ use our calculators.

4. After his accident, he _____ run for over a year.
5. I _____ find my car keys this morning.
6. He _____ fix the printer, so he bought a new one.
7. She took driving lessons, but she still _____ pass the driving test.
8. He was embarrassed that he _____ remember her name.
9. We _____ understand what she was saying because we don't speak Spanish.
10. I _____ pick you up at two o'clock if you want.

**Get together in small groups to read the story and answer the questions.
Teachers: Make sure that everyone in the group is participating, not just one person.**

Harry was artistic. He could draw very well. He liked to paint the scenery near his home. He painted trees and fields of flowers. Everyone said Harry was talented. But Harry did not do well at school. He couldn't understand math. He couldn't read or write well. All he wanted to do was draw or paint.

Jan was Harry's friend. She was not artistic at all. She loved to look at Harry's paintings. Jan did very well in school. She could do all the math problems in the book. She read well and she wrote wonderful stories.

One day Jan asked Harry to teach her to draw. Harry said, "I will teach you to draw if you will help me with school work." Jan agreed. Now Jan helps Harry with reading, writing and math. He is doing better in school. On weekends, Harry takes Jan to the country. They draw fields of flowers. Jan is getting better at drawing. They are happy together.

1. How did Harry and Jan solve their problems?
2. Are you artistic? Do you draw or paint?
3. Are you better at math or writing?
4. Do you enjoy reading?
5. Do you like to go to the country to see beautiful scenery?