



Native Examples

Can

Everyday Ability

I can drive, but I hate parking in the city.
I can cook a few basic things — pasta, omelettes, that's it.
I can never remember people's names!
I can't work without coffee in the morning.
I can type pretty fast now — I've had enough practice.

Permission / Offers

Can I grab a seat here?
Can I borrow your charger for a sec?
Can we talk about it later?
Can you pass the salt, please?
Can I just say something?

Informal Possibility

We can go by train if it's cheaper.
You can get really nice coffee there.
That can be tricky if you're not careful.

Emotional / Idiomatic Uses

Can you believe this weather?
I can't wait for the weekend!
I can't thank you enough.
I can't stand horror films.

Could

Polite Requests / Offers

Could you give me a hand for a minute?

Could I just ask you something quickly?

Could you please turn the music down a bit?

Could we meet earlier tomorrow?

Could I borrow your phone charger?

Suggestions

We could go for lunch if you're free.

You could try calling them later.

It could be a good idea to double-check that.

You could always ask for help if you're not sure.

Hypothetical or Uncertain Possibility

It could rain later, so bring a jacket.

Things could have been worse

I could get used to this!

That could be true, I suppose.

Past Ability (general)

When I was younger, I could stay up all night.

I could run much faster when I was 18.

I couldn't speak a word of English when I moved here.

Be Able To

Past Success or Specific Achievement

I was finally able to fix my laptop.

We were able to find the perfect venue for the event.

She wasn't able to make it to the meeting yesterday.

Were you able to get tickets in the end?

Future Ability

I'll be able to send you the report tomorrow.

We'll be able to finish by Friday if we hurry.

I won't be able to join the call this afternoon.

Perfect Tenses (Life experience or ongoing situation)

I've never been able to understand chess.

Have you ever been able to fix that printer?

He's been able to keep up with all his deadlines so far.

Formal or Planned Contexts

Being able to communicate clearly is essential in my job.

I'd like to be able to travel more next year.

We need to be able to respond quickly to customers.