

Activity Type

Speaking Activity:
survey, asking and
answering questions from
prompts, freer practice
(group work)

Focus

Modal verbs of ability

Can you...?

Yes, I can. / No, I can't.

Could you...?

*Yes, I could. / No, I
couldn't.*

Aim

To find out about
classmates' past and
present abilities using
the modal verbs *can* and
could.

Preparation

Make one copy of the
cards for every ten
students and cut as
indicated.

Level

Pre-intermediate (A2)

Time

25 minutes

Introduction

In this *can* and *could* speaking activity, students find out about their classmates' past and present abilities.

Procedure

Divide the students into groups of up to ten.

Give one card to each student.

Go through the language on the cards and check the students understand each ability.

Explain that each student is responsible for finding out the information on their card by speaking to everybody in their group.

Students then go around their group finding out about their classmates' past and present abilities by asking questions with *Can you...?* and *Could you...?*

Students put a tick on the back of the card each time a classmate answers 'Yes, I can' or 'Yes, I could'.

If possible, the classmate should also prove their ability by completing the task on the card.

When everyone has finished, students sit down in their groups and take it in turns to talk about the information they found out.

Afterwards, students give feedback to the class on their findings.



Find out how many people...

- can remember the last present they received
- could walk when they were two years old
- can work better in the evening than in the morning

Find out how many people...

- can wake up on time without an alarm clock
- can write neatly with their left hand
- could speak two languages when they were young

Find out how many people...

- can eat a lot without putting on weight
- could ride a bicycle before they were seven
- can remember what they ate for lunch yesterday

Find out how many people...

- can whistle a song
- could swim before they were ten
- can name three Australian cities in ten seconds

Find out how many people...

- can save money
- can say the alphabet backwards
- can remember what they did on their last birthday

Find out how many people...

- can remember their best friend's birthday
- can name five countries in South America
- can remember the name of the first teacher they ever had

Find out how many people...

- can name five vegetables in ten seconds
- can hold their breath for 30 seconds
- could play a musical instrument at an early age

Find out how many people...

- can fall asleep in a chair
- could read before they started school
- can remember what they were doing at 10 o'clock last night

Find out how many people...

- can spell the word 'generosity'
- can say 'goodbye' in five languages
- can see the same film twice without getting bored

Find out how many people...

- can type without looking at their fingers
- can make an origami bird
- can name five types of music in ten seconds