

## 3.1 Ability

### GR3.1 )))

- 1 The researchers discovered that some children **are able to wait** for fifteen minutes to eat the marshmallow.
- 2 I **could ride** a bike by the age of six.
- 3 She **was able to speak** French in the restaurant because she'd studied it for years at school.
- 4 We **weren't able to get** tickets for the concert. They'd sold out.
- 5 **Will you be able to finish** the report on time?
- 6 They **didn't succeed in winning** the prize.
- 7 I'm sure you'll **manage to** resist the temptation.

### Can, could and be able to

We generally express ability using *can*, *could* and *be able to*.

#### Present

- We use *can/can't* + infinitive or *am/are/is(n't) able to* + infinitive to express general ability.  
*I can wait for things I want. I can't resist chocolate.*  
*Some people are able to resist most temptations.*

#### Past

- We use *could/couldn't* + infinitive or *was(n't)/were(n't) able to* + infinitive to express general ability in the past.  
*I could run 100 metres in twelve seconds when I was younger.*  
*I was able to swim when I was about four.*
- We use *was(n't)/were(n't) able to* to talk about ability on a specific past occasion.  
*We were able to ski even though there wasn't much snow.*  
*Alex wasn't able to help me.*

#### Future

- We can use *will/won't be able to* + infinitive to express general ability and ability on a particular future occasion.  
*I'll be able to help you in a few minutes.*  
*I won't be able to give you a lift tomorrow, I'm afraid.*

### Manage to and succeed in

- We can use *manage to* + infinitive or *succeed in* + *-ing* when there is some difficulty in achieving the task.

#### Present

*She usually manages to achieve her ambitions.*  
*She usually succeeds in getting what she wants.*

#### Past

*I didn't manage to speak to the boss.*  
*He succeeded in getting a place at university.*

#### Future

*I'm sure you'll manage to get a ticket.*  
*I'm sure she'll succeed in persuading you.*

### 1 Choose the correct options.

- 1 My parents say I *can* / *could* walk when I was about nine months old.
- 2 The DVD player wasn't working, but in the end we *could* / *managed to* fix it.
- 3 Do you think you'll *manage to* / *succeed in* finish your assignment by the weekend?
- 4 How many languages *do you manage* / *can* you speak?
- 5 I *couldn't* / *won't be able to* meet you tomorrow, I'm afraid.
- 6 Some people *can* / *succeed in* learn languages easily.
- 7 Did they *manage to* / *succeed in* reaching the top of the mountain?
- 8 Anyone *is able* / *can* to learn a musical instrument if they try.

### 2 Complete the sentences with the verbs in the box.

can can't could couldn't manage (x2)

- 1 **A** Are you able to resist temptation?  
**B** No, I never *manage* to stick to a diet!
- 2 When I was a child, I \_\_\_\_\_ never resist eating all the biscuits as soon as we got them.
- 3 **A** We \_\_\_\_\_ decide where to go on holiday. Can you recommend anywhere?  
**B** Yes, I \_\_\_\_\_. I went to Rome last year, it was beautiful.
- 4 **A** I usually \_\_\_\_\_ to resist temptation. Apart from video games, that is. Last night I just \_\_\_\_\_ stop playing a game. I stayed awake until well after midnight trying to finish it!

### 3 Complete the text with the words and phrases in the box.

is able was able can could managed to succeeded in

Daniel Tammet has an amazing ability for mathematical calculations, memorizing facts and language learning. He holds the European record for memorizing pi ( $\pi$ ). In 2004, he <sup>1</sup>*succeeded in* writing the numbers in pi up to 22,514 in just over five hours, without error. He has entered the World Memory Championships twice, but he has never <sup>2</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ win. Tammet <sup>3</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ also speak eleven languages. Because of his incredible memory, he <sup>4</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ to learn new languages very quickly. To prove this for a television documentary, he was challenged to learn Icelandic in one week. Seven days later he appeared on television in Iceland and he <sup>5</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ to have a conversation in Icelandic. Tammet's abilities first became clear as a child. He <sup>6</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ read and do complex mathematics at a very early age and he says he has always loved counting.

## 3.2 obligation, permission and possibility

### must, have to, need to

#### GR3.2a )))

- Raúl is unhappy because he **has to work** very long hours.
- Must** you **leave** so soon?
- I **don't have to work** on Saturdays or Sundays.
- In my last job we **had to ask** permission if we wanted to work at home.
- Before I became the team leader, I didn't **need to set** other people's goals.

#### Present

- We use *must* and *have to* to say that something is necessary or an obligation. We often use *must* to talk about the feelings and wishes of the speaker and *have to* to talk about obligations that come from someone or somewhere else.  
*You **must work hard** to be successful in life.*  
*In my job, I **have to manage** a team of twenty people.*  
*Do you **have to wear** a suit and tie at work?*
- We use *mustn't* to say it is necessary or an obligation NOT to do something.  
*You **mustn't be** late for work.*
- We use *don't have to* and *don't need to* to say something isn't necessary or an obligation.  
*We **don't have to wear** a suit and tie at work.*  
*We **don't need to be** at work until nine o'clock.*

#### Past

- We use *had to* to say something was necessary or an obligation in the past.  
*We **had to wear** a uniform when I was at school.*
- We use *didn't have to* and *didn't need to* to say something wasn't necessary or an obligation in the past.  
*We **didn't have to wear** a uniform when I was at school.*

### can, could

#### GR3.2b )))

- In my present job I **can set** my own goals.
- Employees **can't make** personal calls while at work.
- At school we **could choose** which foreign languages we studied. I chose German and Spanish.
- Women **couldn't study** to become doctors in the UK until 1876.

#### Present

- We use *can* to say something is allowed or is OK and *can't* to say something isn't allowed or isn't OK.

#### Past

- We use *could* to say something was allowed or was OK in the past and *couldn't* to say something wasn't allowed or wasn't OK.

#### 1 Complete the sentences with the words in brackets.

- I can usually choose my own hours at work, but I have to work at least forty hours a week. (have to, can)
- You \_\_\_\_\_ use your mobile. It \_\_\_\_\_ be switched off. (must, can't)
- You \_\_\_\_\_ pay in pounds. You \_\_\_\_\_ also pay in euros or dollars if you prefer. (can, don't have to)
- The main requirements in my job are that you \_\_\_\_\_ be good at making decisions and you \_\_\_\_\_ be a good leader. (must, have to)
- Sorry I'm late home. I \_\_\_\_\_ stay at work and finish a report. I \_\_\_\_\_ leave until I'd sent it to my boss. (couldn't, had to)
- You \_\_\_\_\_ have a university degree to work here, but you \_\_\_\_\_ have a lot of relevant experience. (don't need to, must)
- We \_\_\_\_\_ study at least one foreign language at school, but we \_\_\_\_\_ study English. We \_\_\_\_\_ choose from English, Russian, German and Chinese. (could, didn't have to, had to)

#### 2 Choose the correct options to complete the job description.

A PA (personal assistant) gives support to managers or directors. To be a PA, you <sup>1</sup> *mustn't* / *don't have to* have any specific qualifications, but you <sup>2</sup> *can* / *must* have the right skills and personal qualities. PAs <sup>3</sup> *must* / *can* have good knowledge of the organization in which they work, and they <sup>4</sup> *can* / *have to* know who the important people in the company are. Managers often communicate with customers and colleagues through their PA, so they <sup>5</sup> *must* / *can* be good communicators. In the past, PAs <sup>6</sup> *must* / *had to* have good typing skills, but today this isn't as important.

#### 3 Rewrite the sentences using the verbs in the box. Begin with the words given.

could couldn't **have to** don't have to had to must mustn't

- It's the law to wear a seatbelt in a car in the UK.  
You have to wear a seatbelt in a car in the UK.
- It's not necessary to book a ticket for the concert.  
You \_\_\_\_\_.
- In all jobs, being reliable is extremely important.  
In all jobs, you \_\_\_\_\_.
- I missed the bus, so my only option was to get a taxi.  
I missed the bus, so \_\_\_\_\_.
- It's not OK to take photos in the museum.  
You \_\_\_\_\_.
- Sorry I'm late. I wasn't allowed to leave work early.  
Sorry I'm late. I \_\_\_\_\_.