Chapter 5

Expressing Ability Using *Can/Could* and *To Be Able To* (p. 110)

We use *can* + the base form of the verb to express ability. *Be able to* + the base form of the verb also expresses ability.

**Examples**
Sandy can speak English and Spanish.
Sandy is able to speak English and Spanish.

Ability in the past is expressed by *could* + the base form of the verb. *Was/were able to* + the base form of the verb also expresses ability in the past.

**Examples**
I could speak German when I was a child.
I was able to speak German when I was a child.
Could you swim when you were ten years old?
Were you able to swim when you were ten years old?
She couldn’t ride a bike until she turned twelve.
She wasn’t able to ride a bike until she turned twelve.

*Was/were able to* + the base form of the verb has a more extensive meaning than *could*. We use *could* when talking about ability in the past. We use *was/were able to* when expressing the idea of ability *and* accomplishment. We can use the negative with either *could* or *was/were able to* with no difference in meaning.

**Examples**
The fire fighters were able to save the child from the fire.
Mary was able to win first prize in the contest.
He wasn’t able to read the email. He couldn’t read the email.

**Exercise 1**
Fill in the blanks using the correct form of *can* or *be able to*.

1. I’m sorry but I **can’t** lift this package. It’s too heavy.
2. How well __________ you speak Italian? __________ you translate this letter?
3. Although she has studied French for many years, she has never __________ speak it well.
4. Merrill __________ fly a plane, but she doesn’t own one.
5. __________ you ever __________ find an answer to your question?
6. Janet ________ speak four languages as a child.
7. Cats ________ see colours. They’re colour-blind.
8. I ________ never ________ understand algebra.
9. He is the world champion. No one ______ ever ______ beat him at chess.
10. ______ you give me a hand? I ________ do this alone.
11. Sam used to ________ stay up all night when he was a teenager.
12. We hope you ________ find out the answer last night.
13. Doctors ________ treat that disease successfully last year.
14. Sherry used to ________ eat as much as she wanted to without gaining weight.
15. Madeleine ________ skate since she was a child. She ________ win the bronze medal at the Olympics.
16. Arthur ________ spell very well when he was in high school. He ________ win every spelling contest at school.

**Exercise 2**

Use could or was/were able to and the correct form of one of the verbs below to fill in the blanks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>build</th>
<th>complete</th>
<th>travel</th>
<th>construct</th>
<th>make</th>
<th>control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>frighten</td>
<td>control</td>
<td>improve</td>
<td>develop</td>
<td>ride</td>
<td>build</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1839, Kirkpatrick Macmillan, a Scotsman, **was able to build** the first modern bicycle. People ________ this bicycle without their feet touching the ground.

Macmillan ________ this bicycle because of his skill as a blacksmith. Unfortunately, Macmillan (not) ________ his passion for bicycles so people nicknamed him “Daft Pate” (“Crazy Head”). In June 1942, Macmillan ________ from Dumfries to Glasgow, Scotland, by bicycle. He ________ this 40-mile journey in two days. He (not) ________ better time because of the terrible roads and the state of the technology.

Macmillan did have some problems, however. He (not) ________ his primitive bicycle very well. He knocked someone down and almost ran over a child. He received a fine for this.

In 1845, another Scotsman, Gavin Dalzell, ________ the design of Macmillan’s bicycle. He ________ a bicycle with pedals below the seat, instead of under the handlebars. These first bicycles had extremely large front wooden wheels with iron rims. Riding a bicycle ________ all but the bravest and the most determined. It took another 45 years before bicycle enthusiasts ________ the safety bicycle with equal-sized wheels.

**Expressing Advisability Using Should** (p.111)
We use the modal auxiliary *should* to express advisability. We use *should* to give advice and make suggestions. *Should* is used for both present and future time. *Should* is a fairly strong expression of advice. We don’t use *should* when speaking to peers or people of higher status. It is only appropriate for use by someone like a teacher speaking to a student, a doctor speaking to a patient, or a coach speaking to a trainee.

**Examples**
Oliver should study more if he wants to pass.
He shouldn’t play video games all the time.
Should he ask the teacher for extra help? Of course he should!

We can also use *ought to* to express advisability. Both *ought to* and *should* are followed by the base form of the verb. We don’t use *ought to* in negatives or questions.

**Examples**
They should try to save some money.
They ought to try to save some money.

**Exercise 3**
The following are some suggestions for staying healthy. Write complete sentences using *should* and *ought to* alternatively.

- don’t smoke
- take vitamins
- don’t drink a lot of alcohol
- don’t eat a lot of red meat
- have an annual medical checkup
- exercise at least three times a week
- protect yourself from the sun by wearing sunscreen
- go to the dentist regularly
- don’t put on a lot of weight
- maintain a work/life balance
- walk instead of drive as often as possible
- drink at least eight glasses of water every day
- laugh a lot and don’t take yourself too seriously
- get plenty of sleep

1. **If you want to stay healthy you shouldn’t smoke.**
2. __________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________
4. __________________________________________________________
5. __________________________________________________________
6. __________________________________________________________
7. __________________________________________________________
Exercise 4

We use *should* or *ought to* to give advice and to make suggestions. The following are statements about health problems followed by suggestions to remedy each situation. Rewrite the suggestions using *should* or *ought to*.

1. I’ve got a bad cough.
   Why don’t you ask the doctor to give you some antibiotics?
   **You ought to ask the doctor to give you some antibiotics.**

2. I’ve got stiff leg muscles.
   Why don’t you do some stretches and leg exercises?

3. Martha often gets bad headaches.
   Why doesn’t she stop drinking red wine?

4. Andrea doesn’t have any family and she often feels lonely.
   Why doesn’t Andrea get a pet or make some new friends?

5. My friend has a terrible memory. She can’t remember anything.
   Why doesn’t your friend write everything down? That will help.

6. I get stomachaches all the time because I eat too much junk food.
   How about cutting down on eating junk food and cooking meals from scratch once in a while?

7. Marsha has insomnia. She watches TV and can’t fall asleep at night.
   How about not watching TV before bed and taking a warm bath instead?

8. I am worried because my parents often get the flu in the winter time.
   Why don’t they get flu shots in the fall and take vitamins?
9. I can’t stop putting on weight.  
   How about not eating between meals and cutting down on how much you eat at meals?

10. My husband has pain in his lower back.  
   How about his not sitting for too long at a time and going to see a physiotherapist?

**Exercise 5**
Proverbs are wise sayings which exist in every language. The purpose of a proverb is to give advice. Match the list of proverbs with the list of meanings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Don’t cry over spilled milk.</td>
<td>a. It’s not a good idea to put all your resources into one undertaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Look before you leap.</td>
<td>b. Don’t worry about problems until they actually happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The early bird catches the worm.</td>
<td>c. Don’t make judgments based on appearances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Don’t cross your bridges before you come to them.</td>
<td>d. It’s a good idea to save even a little bit of money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.</td>
<td>e. If you start something early, you have a better chance of success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Don’t judge a book by its cover.</td>
<td>f. Be careful before you take any action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A penny saved is a penny earned.</td>
<td>g. After something has happened, it’s too late to feel bad about it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use *should* to write the advice each proverb gives.

1. Don’t cry over spilled milk.

2. Look before you leap.

3. The early bird catches the worm.

4. Don’t cross your bridges before you come to them.

5. Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.

6. Don’t judge a book by its cover.
7. A penny saved is a penny earned.
___________________________________________________________________________

Exercise 6
Use should or have to, shouldn’t or don’t have to to complete these sentences.

1. You **should** thank your friend for giving you such a lovely gift.
2. Because you work here, you **should** get permission to park in the staff parking lot.
3. You **should** tip the waiter, but you **shouldn’t** if you think the service is good.
   You **shouldn’t** leave about 15 per cent tip.
4. If you want to be healthy, you **should** smoke.
5. You **should** have a driver’s licence if you want to rent a car.
6. If you want to get a driver’s licence, you **should** pass a written test and a road test.
7. You **should** give your friends a call before you drop in on them.
8. Joan **shouldn’t** pay rent because she lives with her family.
9. The nurse says I **should** leave about 15 per cent tip.
10. I **should** get up early tomorrow because it’s Saturday and there are no classes, so I **shouldn’t** turn off my alarm clock.
11. This school is a public building. You **should** leave anything valuable in the classroom.
12. You **should** pass the admission test before you can register for this program.
13. He **should** get a passport if he wants to travel abroad.
14. Younger passengers **should** offer their seats to the elderly or people with disabilities on buses.
15. A driver **should** buy automobile insurance or else he can’t drive in Ontario.

Expressing Advisability/Inadvisability, Regretting, and Reprimanding Using the Past Form of Should (p.112)

We use **should have + past participle** as the past form of should. There is a change in meaning in the past form of should. We use **should have + past participle** when talking about an action that did not happen. We use **shouldn’t have + past participle** when talking about an action that did happen.
Affirmative | Negative | Interrogative
---|---|---
We should have saved some money. (But we did not save any money.) | We shouldn’t have spent all our money. (But we spent all our money.) | Should we have saved some money?
He should have made friends. (But he didn’t make friends.) | He shouldn’t have been unfriendly. (But he was unfriendly.) | Should he have been friendlier?

Exercise 7
Rewrite these sentences using *should have* + *past participle* or *shouldn’t have* + *past participle*.

1. I’m really sorry that I didn’t study harder for the test. **I should have studied harder for the test.**
2. Ellen is sorry that she gossiped about her classmates.
3. The students are sorry that they cheated on the test.
4. Mary Ann is sorry that she didn’t take a trip last summer.
5. Fred is sorry that he didn’t finish university.
6. May is sorry that she didn’t answer her emails promptly.
7. They are sorry they didn’t visit Hong Kong when they were in China.
8. Allen is sorry that he stayed up so late the night before his test.
9. I’m sorry I called you names.
10. John’s sorry he made Jennifer angry.
11. I’m sorry I bought that expensive pair of boots.
12. Thelma’s sorry she argued with her husband.
Exercise 8
Read the story. Then answer the questions with sentences using *should have + past participle* and *shouldn’t have + past participle*.

**Lady Luck**
George Hart was a bank teller who believed he was lucky. He used to buy lottery tickets every weekend and dream of winning the big one. He dreamed of winning the jackpot, quitting his job, and mingling with the rich and famous people in society. Then one Monday morning George checked his ticket against the winning numbers. He could hardly believe his eyes! He had won! He had won $50,000,000.00. George didn’t even bother finishing his coffee. He walked out of the bank for good. That very same day he moved into the most luxurious hotel in town. He didn’t bother selling his house. He gave it away to an acquaintance from the bank. He bought new clothes, new watches, new everything. He didn’t ask about the cost. He used to laugh and say that people who asked about the cost of something couldn’t afford it.

He became a different person. He didn’t have anything to do with his old friends. They weren’t wealthy enough! He made new friends who were like him. They enjoyed flaunting their wealth. Together they traveled around the world. George would take the plane to London just to treat some of his friends to lunch.

George refused to see a lawyer or a financial advisor. He thought he was much smarter than lawyers and advisors. They weren’t as wealthy as he was. What did they know about money? In addition to travelling, entertaining, and shopping George became very fond of gambling. He used to spend weekends in Las Vegas. When he got tired of Las Vegas, he went to Monaco. At first George was winning money. Then slowly he started to lose. Sometimes he lost more in one evening than the manager of a bank made in a year.

George’s family tried to warn him about the consequences of his spending and his gambling, but he wouldn’t listen to them. In fact he stopped seeing them. George’s former bank manager tried to set up an appointment to discuss his financial situation, but George refused to see him. What did a bank manager know about real wealth?

George’s spending spree ended as suddenly as it began. It was truly a terrible shock when George found out that he had spent all of his money in just under a year. What was worse, he had no friends, no family, nothing of value except some beautifully tailored suits. And now George had no future.
What shouldn’t George have done? Write sentences about the following:
1. His house

2. His job

3. His old friends

4. Seeing a lawyer or financial advisor

5. Gambling

6. His new friends

What should George have done? Write sentences about the following:
7. His family

8. His former bank manager

9. His old friends

10. His new money

11. His spending

Expressing Possibility and Speculating Using *Might, May, and Could* (p.118)

We use the modals *might, may,* or *could* + the base form of the verb to express that an action is possible in the present or future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affirmative</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Interrogative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The earth might grow warmer in the future.</td>
<td>The earth might not grow warmer in the future.</td>
<td>____________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The earth could grow warmer.</td>
<td>____________________________</td>
<td>Could the earth grow warmer in the future?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The earth may grow warmer.</td>
<td>The earth may not grow warmer.</td>
<td>____________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 9
Rewrite the sentences using *might, may, or could.*

1. It’s possible that violence in TV programs will decrease.
   *Violence in TV programs might decrease.*
2. It is possible that there will be less violence in real life.

3. It’s possible people will decide that showing violence has a bad effect on children.

4. Is it possible that TV programs which show fewer murders and deaths will still be interesting?

5. Perhaps in the future video games won’t contain as much violence as they do today.

6. Is it possible that video games will be just as exciting without violence?

7. It’s possible that in future people will not find violence as entertaining as they do today.

8. Is it possible that comedy could be just as interesting as violence in attracting viewers?

9. Perhaps people will grow tired of seeing so much violence in the media.

10. Perhaps it will not take a long time to find a substitute for the attraction of violence in the media.

Exercise 10
Restate the following sentences using *might, may, or could.*

1. Perhaps there are extraterrestrials in our universe.
   *There might be extraterrestrials in our universe.*
2. Perhaps they come from other solar systems.

3. Perhaps they don’t look like us at all.

4. Perhaps they are more intelligent than we are.

5. Perhaps they are observing us at this very moment.
6. Perhaps they are trying to get in touch with us.

7. Perhaps they don’t know how to communicate with us.

8. Perhaps they belong to a much older and much more developed civilization.

9. Is it possible that they are interested in us?

10. Is it possible that they think we are too primitive to understand them?

11. Is it possible that they are afraid of us?

12. Perhaps they are not interested in communicating with us.

13. Perhaps they don’t trust our species.

14. Perhaps they are waiting for us to communicate with them.

Exercise 11
Here are some of the changes and breakthroughs that might happen in the world of medicine and science in the future. Write them out in complete sentences using modals of possibility.

1. Discover a cure for cancer
   **Doctors might discover a cure for cancer in the future.**

2. Find a way to extend human life

3. Find remedies for the aging process

4. Find methods of replacing or renewing worn-out organs such as the heart

5. Enable the blind to see

6. Repair brains of people who have had strokes or have Alzheimer’s

7. Use genetic engineering to create perfect, intelligent, talented, human beings

8. Develop self-driving automobiles
9. Understand everything about the human brain

10. Develop non-polluting, green fuels

11. Discover ways to control the climate

Expressing Possibility in the Past and Speculating about Past Events (p.119)

To express possibility in the past or to speculate about past events we use *may have, might have,* or *could have* + past participle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affirmative</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Interrogative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They might have gone to the movies.</td>
<td>They might not have gone to the movies.</td>
<td>Might they have gone to the movies? (rare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They could have gone to a restaurant.</td>
<td>______________________________</td>
<td>Could they have gone to a restaurant?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They may have gone shopping.</td>
<td>They may not have gone shopping.</td>
<td>______________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exercise 12
Answer the questions in this exercise with statements using *may have, might have,* or *could have* in the past.

1. Did Diane catch the flu?
   
   **I’m not sure. She might have caught the flu.**

2. Did she make an appointment to see the doctor?

3. Did she not get a flu shot this past fall?

4. Wasn’t she careful about washing her hands frequently?

5. Did she go to the hospital emergency department?

6. Did the nurse take her temperature?

7. Did they do blood tests at the hospital?
8. Did her mother make her some chicken soup and special foods?

___________________________________________________________________________

9. Did she stay in bed and have plenty of fluids?

___________________________________________________________________________

10. Did she take aspirin and cough syrup?

___________________________________________________________________________

Exercise 13
The following sentences are about unexplained mysteries of the world. Write an explanation for each using *might have*, *may have*, or *could have* and the suggestions given.

1. The Great Pyramid of Cheops is built of thousands of two- to five-ton stones brought from the opposite side of the Nile. How did the ancient Egyptians build it? (Half a million men and 50 years / help from outer space)

   The Egyptians **might have** built the Great Pyramid using half a million men and it might have taken fifty years. Or they **could have** had help from creatures from outer space.

2. In the Himalayan Mountains, people believe that Yeti, a huge ape-like creature covered with hair, exists. In North America, there is a similar creature, called Sasquatch or Bigfoot, which people have seen in the Rocky Mountains. How did these creatures survive without being noticed by humans? (Hide in remote areas / avoid all contact with humans / perhaps people imagined them)

   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________

3. People have claimed that they have seen UFOs in almost all countries. What could they have seen? (real space ships from other galaxies / airplanes, helicopters, weather balloons, meteors)

   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________

4. Stonehenge was built of huge rocks, some of which were transported from Wales, 240 miles away. Later these stones were arranged to form an incomplete double circle, aligned perfectly with the midsummer sunrise. Why did people who lived in ancient Britain build Stonehenge? (temple, gigantic calendar, burial ground, observatory)

   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
5. The Loch Ness Monster is a prehistoric creature which people think lives in Loch Ness in the Scottish Highlands. It has been seen a number of times. What did people see? (a prehistoric creature that survived / a fake monster to lure tourists to Scotland) ____________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

6. The Bermuda Triangle is one of the great unexplained phenomena of the 20th century. Some people believe it is responsible for the disappearance of countless airplanes and boats in the ocean between Florida, San Juan, and Bermuda. Why did so many boats and planes disappear there? (special forces in that area which destroy boats, planes / disappearances due to human error, equipment failure, natural disasters) ________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

7. The Mayan Prophecy states that the world as we know it will change on December 12, 2012. Some people think this will be the end of the world. What could the Mayans have meant when they stated this prophecy? (people will change and become more spiritual / natural disaster) _____________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

8. John Titor was a man who, during 2000 and 2001, posted messages on Internet bulletin boards and claimed to be a time traveller from the year 2036. In March 2001, he announced that he was returning to his own time and was never heard from or seen again. Who was he? (time traveller / imposter) ________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

9. While the majority of human beings have five senses, some people claim to have another sense. They call it the sixth sense. This sense has allowed them to understand things which science can’t explain. Some of these people have stated that they knew events would happen before they did. How did they know these things? (guessed / noticed clues and other information subconsciously) ________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
10. Ghosts are souls that do not go to heaven or hell, after their bodies have died. It’s believed that they have some unfinished work left on earth and they need to finish it up first. What did those people who say they have seen ghosts see? (energy, matter, souls of the dead / imagined all this)
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________