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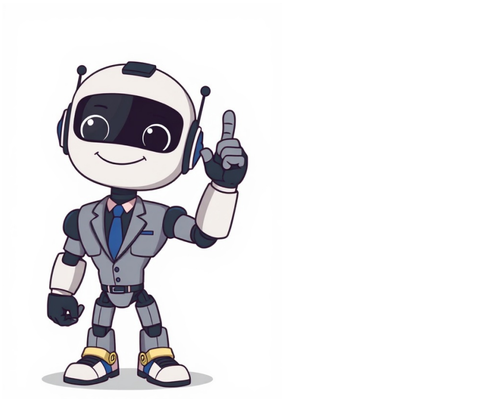

modal verb Verb Formscannot cant past simple could could notcouldnt Idioms jump to other results used to say that it is possible for somebody/something to do something, or for something to happenI can run fast.Can you call back tomorrow?He couldn't answer the question.The stadium can be emptied in four minutes.I can't promise anything, but I'll do what I can.Please let us know if you cannot attend the meeting. used to say that somebody knows how to do somethingShe can speak Spanish.Can you cook?I could drive a car before I left school. used with the verbs feel, hear, see, smell, tasteShe could feel the warmth of the sun on her face.I can hear music.Grammar Point Talking about abilityTalking about abilityCan is used to say that somebody has the ability to do something because they have learned how to do it: Can is also used to talk about things you do with your senses, such as seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting:I can hear someone calling. Can is also used with passive infinitives to talk about what it is possible to do:The podcast can be downloaded here.Can or be able to is used to say that something is possible or that somebody has the opportunity to do something:Can you/are you able to come on Saturday?You use be able to to form the future and perfect tenses and the infinitive:Youll be able to get a taxi outside the station.I havent been able to get much work done today.Shed love to be able to play the piano.Could is used to talk about what somebody was generally able to do in the past:Our daughter could walk when she was 9 months old.You use was/were able to or managed (but not could) when you are saying that something was possible on a particular occasion in the past:I was able to/managed to find some useful books in the library.I could find some useful books in the library. In negative sentences, could not can also be used:We werent able to/didnt manage to/couldnt get there in time. Could is also used with this meaning with verbs of seeing, noticing, understanding, etc:I could see there was something wrong.Could have is used when you are saying that it was possible for somebody to do something in the past but they did not try:We could have won the game but decided to let them win. used to show that somebody is allowed to do somethingYou can take the car, if you want.We can't wear jeans at work.Topics Permission and obligationa2 used to ask permission to do somethingCan I read your newspaper?Can I take you home?Grammar Point Talking about permissionTalking about permissionCan and cannot (or cant) are the most common words used for asking for, giving or refusing permission:Can I borrow your bike?You can come with us if you want to.You cant park your car there.May (negative may not) is used as a polite and fairly formal way to ask for, give or refuse permission:May I borrow your pen?You may come if you wish. It is often used in official signs and rules:Visitors may use the swimming pool between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.Students may not use the college car park. The form maynt is hardly ever used in modern English. used to ask somebody to help youCan you help me with this box?Can you feed the cat, please? used to make suggestionsWe can eat in a restaurant, if you like.I can take the car if necessary.Topics Suggestions and advicea2 used in the negative for saying that you are sure something is not trueThat can't be Maryshe's in New York.He can't have slept through all that noise.Topics Doubt, guessing and certaintyb1 used to express doubt or surpriseWhat can they be doing?Can he be serious?Where can she have put it? used to say what somebody/something is often likeHe can be very tactless sometimes.It can be quite cold here in winter. (informal) used to say that somebody must do something, usually when you are angryYou can shut up or get out!Grammar Point Modal verbsModal verbsThe modal verbs are can, could, may, might, must, ought to, shall, should, will and would. Dare, need, have to and used to also share some of the features of modal verbs.Modal verbs have only one form. They have no -ing or -ed forms and do not add -s to the 3rd person singular form:He can speak three languages.She will try and visit tomorrow.Modal verbs are followed by the infinitive of another verb without to. The exceptions are ought to, have to and used to:You must find a job.At your age you ought to know better.I used to work there too.Questions are formed without do/does in the present, or did in the past:Can I invite Mary?Should I have invited Mary?Negative sentences are formed with not or the short form -nt and do not use do/does or did:It may not be anything to worry about.You shouldn't say a word to her about it.You will find more help with how to use modal verbs at the dictionary entries for each verb. Word OriginOld English cunnan know (in Middle English know how to), related to Dutch kunnen and German knnen; from an Indo-European root shared by Latin gnoscere know and Greek gignskein know. Idioms as happy, simple, sweet, etc. as can be as happy, etc. as possible cant be doing with somebody/something | can't be doing with somebody doing something (informal) used to say that you do not like something and are unwilling to accept itI can't be doing with people who complain all the time.I cant be doing with you moaning all the time. (informal) used to say that you are not able or willing to do somethingSorry, no can do. I just don't have the time. See can in the Oxford Advanced American DictionarySee can in the Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic Englishto be able to; have the ability, power, or skill to.She can solve the problem easily, I'm sure.to know how to.He can play chess, although he's not particularly good at it.to have the power or means to.A dictator can impose his will on the people.to have the right or qualifications to.He can change whatever he wishes in the script.may; have permission to.Can I speak to you for a moment?to have the possibility.A coin can land on either side. can, can, canst, can, can, could, could, couldst, could, could, can, can, could, cunning.a sealed container for food, beverages, etc., as of aluminum, sheet iron coated with tin, or other metal.a receptacle for garbage, ashes, etc..a bucket, pail, or other container for holding or carrying liquids.a drinking cup; tankard.a metal or plastic container for holding film on cores or reels.Slang: Usually Vulgar., toilet; bathroom.Slang., jail.He's been in the can for a week.Slang: Sometimes Vulgar., buttocks.Slang., cans, a set of headphones designed to cover the ears.Military Slang.a depth charge.a destroyer.to preserve by sealing in a can, jar, etc.Slang., to dismiss; fire.Slang., to throw (something) away.Slang., to put a stop to.to record, as on film or tape.a container, esp for liquids, usually of thin sheet metalanother name (esp US) for tinAlso called: canful.the contents of a can or the amount a can will holda slang word for prisona slang word for toilet or buttocks See toiletnavy a slang word for destroyerslang, navy a depth chargea shallow cylindrical metal container of varying size used for storing and handling filminformal, a complicated problemSee carry(of a film, piece of music, etc) having been recorded, processed, edited, etcinformal, arranged or agreedthe contract is almost in the canCollins English Dictionary Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012to put (food, etc) into a can or cans; preserve in a canslang, (tr) to dismiss from a jobinformal, (tr) to stop (doing something annoying or making an annoying noise) (esp in the phrase can it!)informal, (tr) to reject or discardCollins English Dictionary Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012used as an auxiliary to indicate ability, skill, or fitness to perform a taskI can run a mile in under four minutesused as an auxiliary to indicate permission or the right to somethingused as an auxiliary to indicate knowledge of how to do somethinghe can speak three languages fluentlyused as an auxiliary to indicate the possibility, opportunity, or likelihoodmy trainer says I can win the race if I really work hardCollins English Dictionary Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012Collins English Dictionary Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012Can but and cannot but are formal and now somewhat old-fashioned expressions suggesting that there is no possible alternative to doing something. Can but is equivalent to can only: We can but do our best. Cannot but is the equivalent of cannot help but: We cannot but protest against these injustices. See also help.Can1 and may1 are frequently but not always interchangeable in senses indicating possibility: A power failure can (or may) occur at any time. Despite the insistence by some, that can means only to be able and may means to be permitted, both are regularly used in seeking or granting permission: Can (or May) I borrow your glue gun? You can (or may) use it tomorrow. Sentences using can occur chiefly in spoken English. May in this sense occurs more frequently in formal contexts: May I address the court, Your Honor? In negative constructions, can't or cannot is more common than may not : You can't have it today. I need it myself. The contraction mayn't is rare.Origin of can1First recorded before 900; Middle English, Old English, present indicative singular 1st, 3rd person of cunnan to know, know how; cognate with German, Old Norse, Gothic kann; ken, know 1Origin of can2First recorded before 1000; Middle English canne, can(e), Old English canne, cognate with German Kanne, Old Norse kanna, all perhaps from West Germanic; compare Late Latin canna small vesselOrigin of can1Old English canne; related to Old Norse, Old High German kanna, Irish gann, Swedish kana sledOrigin of can2Old English cunnan; related to Old Norse kunna, Old High German kunnan, Latin cognscere to know, Sanskrit jnti he knows; see ken , uncouthExamples are provided to illustrate real-world usage of words in context. Any opinions expressed do not reflect the views of Dictionary.com.The judge then set a follow-up hearing for Jan. 22 so she could look over the pending paperwork and make a decision.A sharp decline in volatility last week could also have contributed to bitcoins latest falls, XTB research director Kathleen Brooks said in a note.Read more on The Wall Street JournalRecent models are pointing to warmer-than-expected temperatures in Europe, which could weigh on demand for gas, analysts at ANZ Research say.Read more on The Wall Street JournalSpread by midges, bluetongue poses no threat to the public or food safety but can affect cloven-hoofed animals like sheep and cattle.In Wood's absence, England could again go for an all-pace attack and bring Josh Tongue into the side.bottlebucketcanisterjarpackageDefinitions and idiom definitions from Dictionary.com Unabridged, based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, Random House, Inc. 2023Idioms from The American Heritage Idioms Dictionary copyright 2002, 2001, 1995 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.camwoodCanaBrowse#aabbccddeeffgghhiijjkkllmmnnooppqqrrssttuuvvwwxxyyzzAboutCareersContact usCookies, terms, & privacyHelpFollow usGet the Word of the Day every day! 2025 Dictionary.com, LLC WordReference Random House Learner's Dictionary of American English 2025can1/kn; unstressed kn/USA pronunciation auxiliary (modal) verb. All present tense forms:can,past:could.auxiliary verb[~+root form of a verb]to be able to; have the ability to: She can solve the problem easily. to know how to: I can play chess, but not very well. to have the right or qualifications to: He can change whatever he wants to in the script. may; have permission to: Can I speak to you for a moment? to have the possibility to: A coin can land on either side. (used in questions) (used to ask if something is possible):Can that be the chairman on the phone? (= Is it possible that the chairman is on the phone?) (used to urge or request someone to do something; often: ~+[not]):Can't we just sit down and discuss this instead of fighting? (=I request that we sit down and discuss this.) (used in negative statements) must not:They're getting married? It can't be true! Idioms Idioms can but, to be able to do nothing else except; can only:We can but try. can and may are both often used in the sense of possibility: A power failure can (or may) occur at any time. Traditional grammar books insist that only may conveys "permission,'' but both words are now regularly used with this meaning: Can (or May) I borrow your tape recorder? can occurs this way chiefly in spoken English; may occurs more frequently in formal speech and writing. In negative constructions, can't or cannot is more common than may not; the contraction mayn't is rare: You can't park in the driveway. can but and cannot but are formal and old-fashioned expressions suggesting that there is no other way to do something. can2/kn/USA pronunciation n., v.,canned, canning.n.[countable]a sealed container for food, etc., such as of aluminum:He opened several cans of beer. the contents of, or the quantity or amount of things inside:a can of mushroom soup. a usually large bucket or container for garbage, etc.:Throw that away in the trash can. Slang Terms[usually singular: the+~](usually vulgar). toilet; bathroom. Slang Termsjail:[usually singular: the+~]sent to the can for twenty years. Slang Terms[usually singular: the+~](sometimes vulgar). buttocks. v.[~+object]to preserve (food) by sealing in a can, jar, etc.:She canned the strawberries in summer. Slang TermsSlang. to dismiss (someone) from a job; fire:They canned him after nearly twenty years on the job. Slang TermsSlang. to put a stop to: Can that noise! Idioms Idioms, Cinema, Show Business in the can, (of a task, etc.) completed; finished. can., an abbreviation of: WordReference Random House Unabridged Dictionary of American English 2025can1 (kan; unstressed kn),USA pronunciationauxiliary v.andv.,pres. sing. 1st pers.can,2ndcan or (Archaic) canst,3rdcan,pres. pl.can;past sing. 1st pers.could,2ndcould or (Archaic) couldst,3rdcould,past pl.could.For auxiliary v.: imperative, infinitive, and participles lacking. For v. (Obs.): imperative can;infinitive can;past part. could;pres. part. cunning.auxiliary verb.to be able to; have the ability, power, or skill to:She can solve the problem easily, I'm sure. to know how to:He can play chess, although he's not particularly good at it. to have the power or means to:A dictator can impose his will on the people. to have the right or qualifications to:He can change whatever he wishes in the script. may; have permission to:Can I speak to you for a moment? to have the possibility:A coin can land on either side. v.t., v.i. bef. 900; Middle English, Old English, present ind. singular 1st, 3rd person of cunnan to know, know how; cognate with German, Old Norse, Gothic kann; see ken, know Can1 and may1 are frequently but not always interchangeable in senses indicating possibility:A power failure can (or may) occur at any time. Despite the insistence by some, that can means only "to be able'' and may means "to be permitted,'' both are regularly used in seeking or granting permission:Can (or May) I borrow your tape recorder? You can (or may) use it tomorrow. Sentences using can occur chiefly in spoken English. May in this sense occurs more frequently in formal contexts:May I address the court, Your Honor?In negative constructions, can't or cannot is more common than may not:You can't have it today.I need it myself.The contraction mayn't is rare. Can but and cannot but are formal and now somewhat old-fashioned expressions suggesting that there is no possible alternative to doing something. Can but is equivalent to can only:We can but do our best.Cannot but is the equivalent of cannot help but:We cannot but protest against these injustices.See alsocannot, help. can2 (kan),USA pronunciationn., v.,canned, canning.n.a sealed container for food, beverages, etc., as of aluminum, sheet iron coated with tin, or other metal:a can of soup. a receptacle for garbage, ashes, etc.:a trash can. a bucket, pail, or other container for holding or carrying liquids:water can. Winea drinking cup; tankard. Cinema, Show Businessa metal or plastic container for holding film on cores or reels. Slang Terms(usually vulgar). toilet; bathroom. Slang Termsjail:He's been in the can for a week. Slang Terms(sometimes vulgar). buttocks. Military a depth charge. a destroyer. British Terms, Idioms carry the can, and Canadian Slang. to take the responsibility. Cinema, Show Business in the can, recorded on film; completed:The movie is in the can and ready for release. v.t.to preserve by sealing in a can, jar, etc. Slang Termsto dismiss; fire. Slang Termsto throw (something) away. Slang Termsto put a stop to:Can that noise! Show Businessto record, as on film or tape. WGmc; compare Late Latin canna small vessel Middle English, Old English canne, cognate with German Kanne, Old Norse kanna, all perh. bef. 1000 Can., Place NamesCanada. Place NamesCanadian. can., Collins Concise English Dictionary HarperCollins Publishers::can /kn/; (unstressed) kn/ vb (past could)takes an infinitive without to or an implied infinitive: (intransitive) used as an auxiliary to indicate ability, skill, or fitness to perform a task: I can run a mile in under four minutes used as an auxiliary to indicate permission or the right to something: can I have a drink? used as an auxiliary to indicate knowledge of how to do something used as an auxiliary to indicate possibility, opportunity, or likelihoodEtymology: Old English cunnan; related to Old Norse kunna, Old High German kunnan, Latin cognscere to know, Sanskrit jnti he knows; see ken, uncouthUSAGE: See may1can /kn/ n a container, esp for liquids, usually of thin sheet metal: a petrol can, a beer can another name (esp US) for tinAlso called: canful the contents of a can or the amount a can will hold a slang word for prison US Canadian a slang word for toilet US Canadian slang the buttocks US a slang word for destroyer a shallow cylindrical metal container of varying size used for storing and handling filmcan of worms informal a complicated problemcarry the can See carryin the can (of a film, piece of music, etc) having been recorded, processed, edited, etc informal arranged or agreed: the contract is almost in the cankick the can down the road See kick vb (cans, canning, canned) to put (food, etc) into a can or cans; preserve in a canEtymology: Old English canne; related to Old Norse, Old High German kanna, Irish gann, Swedish kana sledCollins Concise English Dictionary HarperCollins Publishers::Can. abbreviation for "Can" is one of the most commonly used modal verbs in English. It can be used to express ability or opportunity, to request or offer permission, and to show possibility or impossibility. Examples: I can ride a horse. We can stay with my brother when we are in Paris. She cannot stay out after 10 PM. Can you hand me the stapler? Any child can grow up to be president. Most modal verbs behave quite irregularly in the past and the future. Study the chart below to learn how "can" behaves in different contexts. Modal Use Positive Forms1. = Present 2. = Past 3. = Future Negative Forms1. = Present 2. = Past 3. = Future Also use: can 1. I can speak Chinese. 2. SHIFT TO "COULD" I could speak Chinese when I was a kid. 3. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" I will be able to speak Chinese by the time I finish my course. 1. I can't speak Swahili. 2. SHIFT TO "COULD" I couldn't speak Swahili. 3. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" I won't be able to speak Swahili. be able to can 1. With a burst of adrenaline, people can pick up cars. 2. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" With a sudden burst of adrenaline, he was able to lift the car off the child's leg. 3. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" With a sudden burst of adrenaline, he will be able to lift the car. 1. Even with a burst of adrenaline, people can't pick up something that heavy. 2. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" Even the weight lifter, wasn't able to lift the car off the child's leg. 3. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" Even three men working together won't be able to lift the car. be able to can 1. I have some free time. I can help her now. 2. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" I had some free time yesterday. I was able to help her at that time. 3. I'll have some free time tomorrow. I can help her then. 1. I don't have any time. I can't help her now. 2. SHIFT TO "BE ABLE TO" I didn't have time yesterday. I wasn't able to help her at that time. 3. I won't have any time later. I can't help her then. be able to can 1. I can drive Susan's car when she is out of town. 2. SHIFT TO "BE ALLOWED TO " I was allowed to drive Susan's car while she was out of town last week. 3. I can drive Susan's car while she is out of town next week. 1. I can't drive Susan's car when she is out of town. 2. SHIFT TO "BE ALLOWED TO " I wasn't allowed to drive Susan's car while she was out of town last week. 3. I can't drive Susan's car while she is out of town next week. may can Can I have a glass of water? Can you give me a lift to school? Can't I have a glass of water? Can't you give me a lift to school? could, may can Anyone can become rich and famous if they know the right people. Learning a language can be a real challenge. It can't cost more than a dollar or two. You can't be 45! I thought you were about 18 years old. could Can Exercises Learn English at Englishpage.com! Also found in: Thesaurus, Medical, Financial, Acronyms, Idioms, Encyclopedia, Wikipedia. to be able to, have the power or skill to: I can take a bus to the airport. She can paint very well.Not to be confused with:may to have permission to: you may go in now; to express possibility: The storm may turn into a hurricane.Abused, Confused, & Misused Words by Mary Embree Copyright 2007, 2013 by Mary Embree (kn; kn when unstressed)aux.v. past tense could (kood) 1. a. Used to indicate physical or mental ability: I can carry both suitcases. Can you remember the war?b. Used to indicate possession of a specified power, right, or privilege: The president can veto congressional bills.c. Used to indicate possession of a specified capability or skill: I can tune the harpsichord as well as play it.2. a. Used to indicate possibility or probability: I wonder if my long lost neighbor can still be alive. Such things can and do happen.b. Used to indicate that which is permitted, as by conscience or feelings: One can hardly blame you for being upset.c. Used to indicate probability or possibility under the specified circumstances: They can hardly have intended to do that.3. Usage Problem Used to request or grant permission: Can I be excused?[Middle English, first and third person sing. present tense of connen, to know how, from Old English cunnan; see gn- in Indo-European roots.]Usage Note: Generations of grammarians and teachers have insisted that can should be used only to express the capacity to do something, and that may must be used to express permission. But children do not use can to ask permission out of a desire to be stubbornly perverse. They have learned it as an idiomatic expression from adults: After you clean your room, you can go outside and play. As part of the spoken language, this use of can is perfectly acceptable. This is especially true for negative questions, such as Can't I have the car tonight? probably because using mayn't instead of can't sounds unnatural. While the distinction between can and may still has its adherents in formal usage, the number appears to be falling. In our 2009 survey, 37 percent of the Usage Panel rejected can instead of may in the sentence Can I take another week to submit the application? But more than half of these said can was only "somewhat (rather than completely) unacceptable" in this use, and the overall percentage of disapproval fell from more than 50 percent in an earlier survey. The heightened formality of may sometimes highlights the speaker's role in giving permission. You may leave the room when you are finished implies that permission is given by the speaker. You can leave the room when you are finished implies that permission is part of a rule or policy rather than a decision on the speaker's part. For this reason, may sees considerable use in official announcements: Students may pick up the application forms tomorrow. Like may, can is also used to indicate what is possible: It may rain this afternoon. Bone spurs can be very painful. In this use, both can and may often have personal subjects: You may see him at the concert. Even an experienced driver can get lost in this town. (kn)n.1. A usually cylindrical metal container.2. a. An airtight container, usually made of tin-coated iron, in which foods or beverages are preserved.b. The contents of such a container: ate a can of beans.3. Slang A jail or prison.4. Slang A toilet or restroom.6. Slang A naval destroyer.v. canned, canning, cans v.tr.1. To seal in an airtight container for future use; preserve: canning peaches.2. Slang To make a recording of: can the audience's applause for a TV comedy show.3. Slang a. To end the employment of; fire. See Synonyms at dismiss.b. To put an end or stop to: canned the TV show after one season; told the students to can the chatter.v.intr. To solicit cash donations for a charity or other organization such as a club or amateur sports team by holding out a can or other container in a public place.Idioms: can of corn Sports Something that is easily accomplished, especially a routine catch of a fly ball in baseball. can of worms A complex or difficult problem. in the can Completed and ready for release, as a film or scene of a film.[Middle English canne, a water container, from Old English.]American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. (kn; unstressed kn) vb (intr) , past could1. used as an auxiliary to indicate ability, skill, or fitness to perform a task: I can run a mile in under four minutes. 2. used as an auxiliary to indicate permission or the right to something: can I have a drink?. 3. used as an auxiliary to indicate knowledge of how to do something: he can speak three languages fluently. 4. used as an auxiliary to indicate possibility, opportunity, or likelihood: my trainer says I can win the race if I really work hard. [Old English cunnan; related to Old Norse kunna, Old High German kunnan, Latin cognscere to know, Sanskrit jnti he knows; see ken, uncouth] (kn) n1. a container, esp for liquids, usually of thin sheet metal: a petrol can; a beer can. 2. another name (esp US) for tin23. Also called: canful the contents of a can or the amount a can will hold4. a slang word for prison5. US and Canadian a slang word for toilet or buttocks. See toilet6. (Military) navy US a slang word for destroyer7. (Military) navy slang a depth charge8. (Film) a shallow cylindrical metal container of varying size used for storing and handling film9. can of worms informal a complicated problem10. carry the can See carry3711. (Film) (of a film, piece of music, etc) having been recorded, processed, edited, etc12. informal arranged or agreed: the contract is almost in the can. vb, cans, canning or canned13. to put (food, etc) into a can or cans; preserve in a can14. (tr) slang US to dismiss from a job15. (tr) informal US to stop (doing something annoying or making an annoying noise) (esp in the phrase can it!)16. (tr) informal to reject or discard[Old English canne; related to Old Norse, Old High German kanna, Irish gann, Swedish kana sled]Collins English Dictionary Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014 HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014 (kn; unstressed kn) auxiliary verb. 1. to be able to; have the ability, power, or skill to: She can solve the problem easily. 2. to know how to: I can play chess, but not very well. 3. to have the power or means to: a dictator who can impose his will on the people. 4. to have the right or qualifications to: He can change whatever he wishes in the script. 5. may; have permission to: Can I speak to you for a moment? 6. to have the possibility: A coin can land on either side. v.t., v.i. Idioms: can but, to be able to do nothing else except; can only: We can but try. [before 900; Middle English, Old English, present indic. singular 1st, 3rd person of cunnan to know, know how] usage: can and may are often interchangeable in the sense of possibility: A power failure can (or may) occur at any time. Despite the traditional insistence that only may conveys permission, both words are regularly used in this sense: Can (or May) I borrow your tape recorder? can occurs this way chiefly in spoken English; may occurs more frequently in formal speech and writing. In negative constructions, can't or cannot is more common than may not; the contraction mayn't is rare: You can't park in the driveway. can but and cannot but are somewhat formal expressions suggesting that there is no alternative to doing something. See also cannot, help. (kn) n., v. canned, canning. n. 1. a sealed container for food, beverages, etc., as of aluminum, sheet iron coated with tin, or other metal. 2. a receptacle for garbage, ashes, etc. 3. a bucket or other container for holding or carrying liquids. 4. a metal or plastic container for holding film on cores or reels. 5. Slang: Sometimes Vulgar. toilet; bathroom. 7. Slang: Sometimes Vulgar. buttocks. 8. Mil. Slang. v.t. 9. to preserve by sealing in a can, jar, etc. 10. Slang. to dismiss; fire. 11. Slang. to put a stop to: Can that noise! 12. to record, as on film or tape. Idioms: in the can, (of a commercial film, scene, etc.) completed. [before 1000; Middle English, Old English canne, c. Old High German channa, Old Norse kanna] Can. can. Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary, 2010 K Dictionaries Ltd. Copyright 2005, 1997, 1991 by Random House, Inc. All rights reserved. could be able toThese words are used to talk about ability, awareness, and possibility. They are also used to say that someone has permission to do something. These uses are dealt with separately in this entry. Can and could are called modals.Both can and could are followed by an infinitive without to.I envy people who can sing.I could work for twelve hours a day.1. negative formsThe negative form of can is cannot or can't. Cannot is never written 'can not'. The negative form of could is could not or couldn't. To form the negative of be able to, you either put not or another negative word in front of able, or you use the expression be unable to.Many elderly people cannot afford telephones.It was so dark you could not see anything.We were not able to give any answers.We were unable to afford the entrance fee.2. ability: the presentCan, could, and be able to are all used to talk about a person's ability to do something. You use can or be able to to talk about ability in the present. Be able to is more formal than can.You can all read and write.The animals are able to move around, and they can all lie down.Lisa nodded, unable to speak.Could is also used to talk about ability in the present, but it has a special meaning. If you say that someone could do something, you mean that they have the ability to do it, but they don't in fact do it.We could do much more in this country to educate people.3. ability: the pastYou use could or a past form of be able to to talk about ability in the past.He could run faster than anyone else.A lot of them couldn't read or write.I wasn't able to answer their questions.If you say that someone was able to do something, you usually mean that they had the ability to do it and they did it. Could does not have this meaning.After two weeks in bed, he was able to return to work.The farmers were able to pay their employees' wages.If you want to say that someone had the ability to do something but did not in fact do it, you say that they could have done it.You could have given it all to me.You could have been a little bit more careful.If you want to say that someone did not do something because they did not have the ability to do it, you say that they could not have done it.I couldn't have gone with you, because I was in London at the time.If you want to say that someone had the ability to do something in the past, although they don't now have this ability, you say that they used to be able to do it.I used to be able to sleep anywhere.You used to be able to see the house from here.4. ability: the futureYou use a future form of be able to to talk about ability in the future.I shall be able to answer that question tomorrow.5. ability: reporting structuresCould is often used in reporting structures. For example, if a woman says 'I can speak Arabic', you usually report this as 'She said she could speak Arabic'.She said I could bring it back later.6. ability: 'be able to' after other verbsBe able to is sometimes used after modals such as might or should, and after verbs such as want, hope, or expect.I might be able to help you.You may be able to get extra money.You should be able to see that from here.She would not be able to go out alone.Do you really expect to be able to do that?Don't use can or could after any other verbs.7. 'being able to'You can use an -ing form of be able to.He liked being able to discuss politics with Veronica.There is no -ing form of can or could.8. awarenessCan and could are used with verbs such as see, hear, and smell to say that someone is or was aware of something through one of their senses.I could see a few stars in the sky.9. possibility: the present and the futureCould and can are used to talk about possibility in the present or future.You use could to say that there is a possibility that something is or will be true.Don't eat it. It could be a toadstool.He was jailed in February, and could be released next year.Might and may can be used in a similar way.Kathy's career may be ruined.Be Careful!Don't use 'could not' to say that there is a possibility that something is not true. Instead you use might not or may not.It might not be possible.If you want to say that it is impossible that something is true, you use cannot or could not.You cannot possibly know what damage you caused.It couldn't possibly be true.You use can to say that something is sometimes possible.Sudden changes can sometimes have a negative effect.10. possibility: the pastYou use could have to say that there is a possibility that something was true in the past.He could have been in the house on his own.Might have and may have can be used in a similar way.She might have found the information online.It may have been a dead bird.You also use could have to say that there was a possibility of something being true in the past, although it was not in fact true.It could have been worse.He could have made a fortune as a lawyer.Be Careful!Don't use 'could not have' to say that there is a possibility that something was not true. Instead you use might not have or may not have.She might not have known the password.If you want to say that it is impossible that something was true, you use could not have.The decision couldn't have been easy.The man couldn't have seen us at all.11. permissionCan and could are used to say that someone is allowed to do something.You can take out money at any branch of your own bank.He could come and use my computer.Cannot and could not are used to say that someone is or was forbidden to do something.You can't bring strangers in here.Her dad said she couldn't go out during the week.Collins COBUILD English Usage HarperCollins Publishers 1992, 2004, 2011, 2012Past participle: cannedGerund: canningImperativePresentPreteritePresent ContinuousPresent PerfectPast ContinuousPast PerfectFutureFuture PerfectFuture ContinuousPresent Perfect ContinuousFuture Perfect ContinuousPast Perfect ContinuousConditionalPast ConditionalCollins English Verb Tables HarperCollins Publishers 2011 Noun1.can - airtight sealed metal container for food or drink or paint etc.beer can - a can that holds beercaddy, tea caddy - a can for storing teacoffee can - a can for storing ground coffeecontainer - any object that can be used to hold things (especially a large metal boxlike object of standardized dimensions that can be loaded from one form of transport to another)milk can - large can for transporting milkoilcan - a can with a long nozzle to apply oil to machinerysoda can - a can for holding soft drinks2.can - the quantity contained in a cancontainerful - the quantity that a container will hold3.can - a buoy with a round bottom and conical topbuoy - bright-colored; a float attached by rope to the seabed to mark channels in a harbor or underwater hazards4.can - the fleshy part of the human body that you sit on; "he deserves a good kick in the butt"; "are you going to sit on your fanny and do nothing?"arse, ass, behind, buttocks, derriere, fanny, hind end, hindquarters, keister, nates, posterior, prat, buns, rear end, tooshie, tush, seat, fundament, backside, bottom, rump, stern, tail end, tail, butt, rear, bumbody part - any part of an organism such as an organ or extremitytorso, trunk, body - the body excluding the head and neck and limbs; "they moved their arms and legs and bodies"5.can - a plumbing fixture for defecation and urinationcommode, crapper, potty, pot, throne, toilet, stoolbathroom, bath - a room (as in a residence) containing a bathtub or shower and usually a washbasin and toiletflushless toilet - a toilet that relies on bacteria to break down waste matter (instead of using water)plumbing fixture - a fixture for the distribution and use of water in a buildingtoilet bowl - the bowl of a toilet that can be flushed with watertoilet seat - the hinged seat on a toilet6.can - a room or building equipped with one or more toiletsjohn, lav, lavatory, privy, toilet, bathroomhead - (nautical) a toilet on board a boat or shiproom - an area within a building enclosed by walls and floor and ceiling; "the rooms were very small but they had a nice view"washroom - a lavatory (particularly a lavatory in a public place)loo, W.C., water closet, closet - a toilet in BritainVerb1.can - preserve in a can or tin; "tinned foods are not very tasty"cookery, cooking, preparation - the act of preparing something (as food) by the application of heat; "cooking can be a great art"; "people are needed who have experience in cookery"; "he left the preparation of meals to his wife"preserve, keep - prevent (food) from rotting; "preserved meats"; "keep potatoes fresh"2.can - terminate the employment of; discharge from an office or position; "The boss fired his secretary today"; "The company terminated 25% of its workers"retire - make (someone) retire; "The director was retired after the scandal"pension off - let go from employment with an attractive pension; "The director was pensioned off when he got senile"clean out - force out; "The new boss cleaned out the lazy workers"furlough, lay off - dismiss, usually for economic reasons; "She was laid off together with hundreds of other workers when the company downsized"squeeze out - force out; "Some employees were squeezed out by the recent budget cuts"remove - remove from a position or an officeBased on WordNet 3.0, Farlex clipart collection. 2003-2012 Princeton University, Farlex Inc.nounSlang. A place for the confinement of persons in lawful detention:brig, house of correction, jail, keep, penitentiary, prison.Chiefly Regional: calaboose.verb1. To prepare (food) for storage and future use:conserve, preserve, put up.2. Slang. To end the employment or service of:cashier, discharge, dismiss, drop, release, terminate.Informal: ax, fire, pink-slip.Slang: boot, bounce, sack.The American Heritage Roget's Thesaurus. Copyright 2013, 2014 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. plechovkamocismtumtkonevDoseknnenknnteKonserveKonservenbchseenladigiladskatolomaldungincesejopispotopoderlatasaberenlatarboteosatapurkittaapurkkipystysaadapouvoirbidonbote de conservecanettecannette dsgetakunnamega, getaniursjalattinapoterebarattolosaperescatolettadrksttkannakonservtkonservu krbaprastblikkunnenmogenstil houdentoiletbokshermetikkbokskannekonserverekunnemcpuszkaumiewiadropotrafi burkkunnalgga insparkastnga igen-e bilmek-ebilirconserve yapmakkutukutulamak1 [kn] MODAL AUX VB (cannot (can't (neg)) (could (condit, pt)))1. (= be able to) poderhe can do it if he tries hard puede hacerlo si se esfuerzaI can't or cannot go any further no puedo seguirI'll tell you all I can te dir todo lo que puedahe will do all he can to help you har lo posible por ayudarteyou can but ask con preguntar no se pierde nadathey couldn't help it ellos no tienen la culpa"have another helping" - "I really couldn't" -otra racin? -no puedo2. (= know how to) saberhe can't swim no sabe nadarcan you speak Italian? sabes (hablar) italiano?3. (= may) podercan I use your telephone? puedo usar su telfono?can I have your name? me dice su nombre?could I have a word with you? podra hablar contigo un momento?can't I come too? puedo ir tambin?5. (expressing disbelief, puzzlement) that cannot be! eso no puede ser!, es imposible!he can't have said that no puede haber dicho esothey can't have left already! no es posible que ya se han ido!how could you lie to me! cmo pudiste mentirme?how can you say that? cmo te atreves a decir eso?you can't be serious! lo dices en serio?it can't be true! no puede ser!what can he want? qu querr?where on earth can she be? dnde demonios puede estar?6. (expressing possibility, suggestion etc) he could be in the library puede que est en la bibliotecayou could try telephoning his office por qu no le llamas a su despacho?they could have forgotten puede (ser) que se hayan olvidadoyou could have told me! podas habrmelo dicho!it could have been a wolf poda ser un lobol reckon you could have got a job last year creo que podas obtener un trabajo el ao pasado2 [kn]C. CPD can opener N abrelatas m invCollins Spanish Dictionary - Complete and Unabridged 8th Edition 2005 William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1971, 1988 HarperCollins Publishers 1992, 1993, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2003, 20051 [kn] vt [+ food] mettre en conserve2 [kn](STRONG) [kn] [cannot, can't] (negative) [could] (conditional and pt) modal aux vb (= be able to) pouvoirYou can do it if you try Vous pouvez le faire si vous essayez.I can't come Je ne peux pas venir.I can't hear youBUT Je ne t'entends pas.I can't rememberBUT Je ne m'en souviens pas. (= know how to) savoirI can swim Je sais nager.He can't drive Il ne sait pas conduire.I can play tennis Je sais jouer au tennis.Can you speak French?BUT Parlez-vous franais?. (expressing disbelief, puzzlement)That can't be true! Ce n'est pas possible!What CAN he want? Qu'est-ce qu'il peut bien vouloir?see also couldCollins English/French Electronic Resource. HarperCollins Publishers 2005 in cpds Bchsen-, Dosen-1 pret modal aux vb (defective parts supplied by to be able to) (= be able to) knnen; can you come tomorrow? kannst du morgen kommen?; I cant or cannot go to the theatre tomorrow ich kann morgen nicht ins Theater (gehen); Ill do it if I can wenn ich kann(, tue ich es); hell help you all he can er wird sein Mglichstes tun, er wird tun, was in seinen Krften steht; as soon as it can be arranged sobald es sich machen lsst; could you tell me knnen or knnten Sie mir sagen, ; can you speak German? knnen or sprechen Sie Deutsch?; we can but hope that, we can only hope that wir knnen nur hoffen, dass ; they could not (help) but condemn it sie konnten nicht anders, als das zu verurteilen (= may) drfen, knnen; can I come too? kann ich mitkommen?; can or could I take some more? darf ich mir noch etwas or noch einmal nehmen?; you can go now Sie knnen jetzt gehen; can I help? darf or kann ich Ihnen helfen?; could I possibly go with you? knnte or drfte ich vielleicht mitkommen?; Id like to go, can I? no, you cant ich wrde gerne gehen, darf ich? nein, du darfst nicht; can I use your car? no, you cant kann or darf ich dein Auto nehmen? nein (expressing surprise etc) knnen; how can/could you say such a thing! wie knnen/konnten Sie nur or blo so etwas sagen!; where can it be? wo kann das blo sein?; where can they have gone? wo knnen sie denn nur hingegangen sein?; you cant be serious das kann doch wohl nicht dein Ernst sein (expressing possibility) knnen; it could be that hes got lost vielleicht hat er sich verlaufen, (es ist) mglich, dass er sich verlaufen hat; could he have got lost? ob er sich wohl or vielleicht verlaufen hat?; he could be on the next train er knnte im nchsten Zug sein; and it could have been such a good party! und es htte so eine gute Party sein knnen!; to think he could have become a doctor wenn man bedenkt, dass er htte Arzt werden knnen (with verbs of perception) knnen; can you hear me? hren Sie mich?, knnen Sie mich hren? (= be capable of occasionally) knnen; she can be very nice when she wants to wenn sie will, kann sie sehr nett sein (indicating suggestion) knnen; you could try telephoning him Sie knnten ihn ja mal anrufen; you could have been a little more polite Sie htten etwas hflicher sein knnen; you could have told me das htten Sie mir auch sagen knnen (= feel inclined to) knnen; I could have murdered her ich htte sie umbringen knnen 2 vt foodstuffs einmachen, eindosen ? canned (inf) can it! Klappe! (inf)Collins German Dictionary Complete and Unabridged 7th Edition 2005. William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1980 HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1997, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2007Collins Italian Dictionary 1st Edition HarperCollins Publishers 1995 (kn) negative can't (kant) cannot (knt) verb1. to be able to. You can do it if you try hard. kan conseguir moci knnen kunne poder vima, suutma voida pouvoir moi tud, -hat, -het mampu geta potere, essere capace* (~) galti vart boleh kunnenkunnemc conseguir a putea, a i se permite mc moi moi kan ...-ebilir kh nng 2. to know how to. Can you drive a car? kan saber umt knnen kunne () saber oskama osata savoir - znati, umjeti tud bisa kunna sapere (~) mokti prast boleh kunnenkunnepotrafi saber a ti vedie znati umeti kan ...-ebilir ch kh nng 3. (usually may) to have permission to. You can go if you behave yourself. kan poder smt drfen f lov ( ) poder, estar permitido vima saada pouvoir smjeti szabad, -hat, -het boleh mega, geta potere (~) galti drkstt dibenarkan mogen f lov til, kunnemc, mie zezwolenie poder a putea smie lahko moi kan f, fr ...-ebilir , ch s cho php 4. used in questions to indicate surprise, disbelief etc. What can he be doing all this time? kan poder moci knnen gide vide ...( ) poder vima voida, olla (epusko, yllttyminen) pouvoir moi -hat, -het bisa geta potere (~) ? ( ) galt vartu boleh videorecorder mon tro, gadd vite mc poder a putea mc neki uopte kan ...-e bilmek () , , , ' s dng trong cu hi m ch s ngc nhin (kn) noun a metal container for liquids and many types of food. oil-can; beer-can; six cans of beer. blik, blikkie lata plechovka, ndoba die Kanne, die Dose kande; dse , lata, bote kann, purk, kanister tlkki bidon, bote de conserve limenka, konzerva kanna kaleng ds bidone; barattolo; lattina skardin kanna; skrda trauks; konservu krba tin blikboks; kannepuszka lata cutie (de conserve/de rcoritoare/ de bere) plechovica konzerva, ploevinka konzerva burk, kanna teneke kutu ci hp verb past tense, past participle canned to put (especially food) into cans, usually to preserve it. a factory for canning raspberries. blik enlatar naloit eindosen fylde i kande; komme p dse enlatar konservima sil mettre en conserve konzervirati konzervl mengalengkan niursja (dsir ea krukkur) mettere in scatola*, inscatolare konservuoti konservt mengetin inblikkenhermetisere, konservere puszkowa enlatar a conserva da do plechovice, konzervova konzervirati konzervirati konservera, lgga in kutulamak, conserve yapmak ng hp canned adjective put in cans. canned peas. geblikte enlatado v konzerv Dosen-... dse- en conserva konserv- purkitettu en conserve konzerviran konzerv-/-konzerv kalengan dsa- in scatola konservuotas konservts ditinkan ingeblikthermetisert, bokse- w puszkach enlatado conservat konzervovan konzerviran konzerviran konserverad konserve c ng hp cannery plural canneries noun a factory where goods are canned. inmaakfabriek fbrica de enlatados konzervrna die Konservenfabrik konservesfabrik fbrica de conservas konservitehas silyketehdas conserverie tvornica konzerva konzervgyr pengalengan niursuuverksmija conservificio konserv fabrikas konservu fabrika kilang pengetinan conservenfabriekhermetikkfabrikk fabryka konserw fbrica de enlatados fabric de conserve konzervre tovarna konzerv fabrika konzervi konservfabrik konserve fabrikas nh my hp Kernerman English Multilingual Dictionary 2006-2013 K Dictionaries Ltd. , moci, plechovka dse, kan Dose, knnen , lata, poder osata, tlkki cannette, pouvoir limenka, moi lattina, sapere , ... , blik, kunnen boks, kan mc, puszka lata, poder , burk, kunna , kutu, yapabilmek bnh ng, c th , Multilingual Translator HarperCollins Publishers 2009v. aux could (de able to) poder. English-Spanish Medical Dictionary Farlex 2012Collins Multilingual Translator HarperCollins Publishers 2009 Want to thank TFD for its existence? Tell a friend about us, add a link to this page, or visit the webmaster's page for free fun content. Link to this page: "And I shall not go so far but what I can get back before night.AND rushed into the toolshed, and jumped into a can. It would have been a beautiful thing to hide in, if it had not had so much water in it.Last night he take me for see, and I can understand very much talk."But I can't see the use of your working for a living.As soon as I can after I come back, I will come and see you.""She can eat out of my skillet the rest of her life."Good-bye, mother, I can't stay," said Adam, putting on his hat and going out.You can feel them in the air round about him, capering frenetically; with their invisible feet they set the pace, and the hair of the leader of the orchestra rises on end, and his eyeballs start from their sockets, as he toils to keep up with them.How can one like and have an aversion to a person at the same time?And thus, though Tess kept repeating to herself, "I can never be his wife," the words were vain.What can I do to repay you for all that you have done for me?For before your head has time to spoil you can have it canned, and in that way it may be preserved indefinitely." Modals are special verbs, such as can or must, which behave very irregularly in English. Englishpage.com's in-depth modal tutorial will help you learn what makes modal verbs special. Study the modal descriptions and complete the exercises to take another step towards English fluency. 1. Read the introduction titled What are Modal Verbs?2. Complete the exercises below. Each exercise has links to the modals covered. And don't miss our Modal Final Test. Modal Verb Exercises What are Modal Verbs?Modal verbs are special verbs which behave very differently from normal verbs. Here are some important differences: 1. Modal verbs do not take "-s" in the third person. Examples: He can speak Chinese. She should be here by 9:00. 2. You use "not" to make modal verbs negative, even in simple present and simple past. Examples: He should not be late. They might not come to the party. 3. Many modal verbs cannot be used in the past tenses or the future tenses. Examples: He will can go with us. Not Correct She musted study very hard. Not Correct Can Could May Might Must Ought to Shall Should Will Would For the purposes of this tutorial, we have included some expressions which are not modal verbs including had better, have to, and have got to. These expressions are closely related to modals in meaning and are often interchanged with them.Learn English at Englishpage.com!

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