

24 Past abilities

In the past simple, "can" becomes "could." You often use it to talk about things you "could" do in the past, but can't do now.

- ✿ **New language** Using "could" in the past simple
- ✿ **Vocabulary** Abilities and pastimes
- ✿ **New skill** Talking about past abilities

24.1 KEY LANGUAGE "COULD" FOR PAST ABILITIES

Use "could" to talk about an ability you once had. You can use "when" plus a time setting to say when you had the ability.



I can't climb trees now, but I could when I was younger.

You can use the present simple for contrast.

Set the time frame with a phrase about an age, day, or year.



The statement can be positive using "could" or negative using "couldn't." It doesn't change with the subject.



24.2 FURTHER EXAMPLES "COULD" FOR PAST ABILITIES

When I was a student, I could study all night before an exam.



I couldn't go to China last year because it was too expensive.



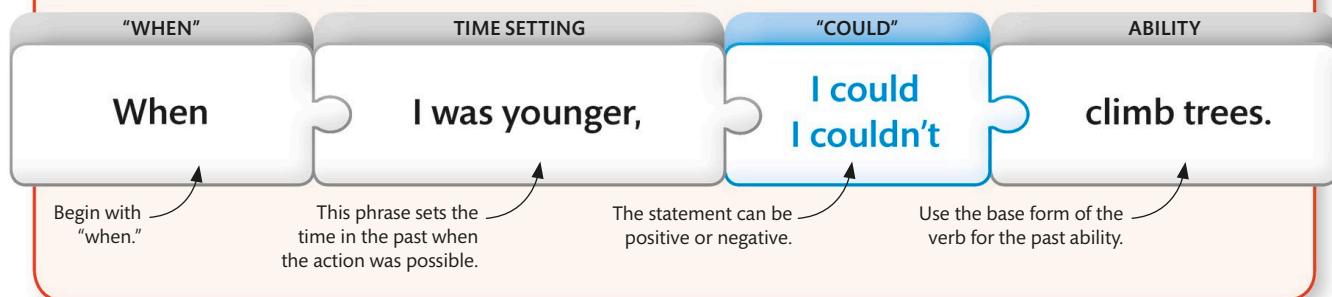
When Milo was eight, he could play the violin.



Last year, she couldn't run very far, but yesterday she ran a marathon.



24.3 HOW TO FORM "COULD" FOR PAST ABILITIES





24.4 REWRITE THESE SENTENCES IN THE PAST SIMPLE USING "COULD"

I **can** ski.

I **could** ski.

- 1 I **can** cook Italian food.
- 2 We **can't** play the piano.
- 3 She **can** paint a picture.
- 4 They **can't** make a cake.



24.5 LISTEN TO THE AUDIO AND MARK THE CORRECT ANSWERS

When Diana was five, she couldn't...

write music

read music

play the piano.

- 1 When Louis was four, he could...

read

write

do mathematics.

- 2 When Imelda was seven, she could...

ride a horse

drive a car

fly a plane.

- 3 When Irina was four, she could speak...

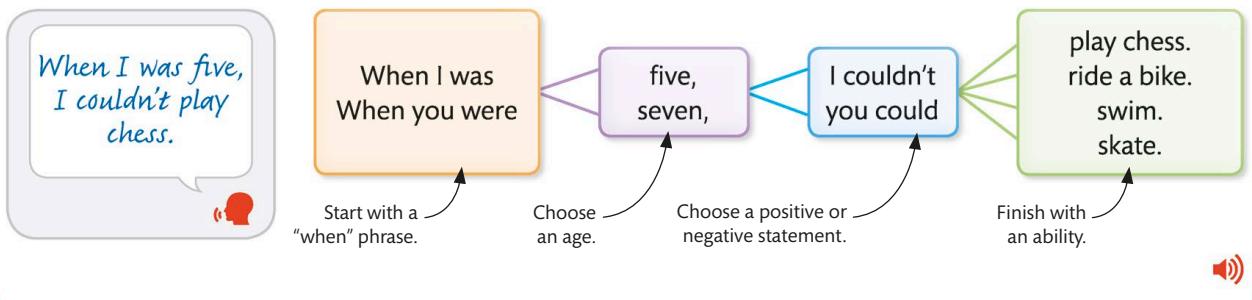
one language

two languages

three languages.



24.6 USE THE CHART TO CREATE 16 CORRECT SENTENCES AND SAY THEM OUT LOUD



24 ✓ CHECKLIST

Using "could" in the past simple

Aa Abilities and pastimes

Talking about past abilities