

44 Polite requests

Use "can," "could," and "may" to ask permission to do something, or to ask someone to do something for you. Some constructions are more formal than others.

✿ **New language** "Can," "could," and "may"

Aa Vocabulary Good manners

Π New skill Asking permission

44.1 KEY LANGUAGE "CAN," "COULD," AND "MAY"

Use "can I" plus the verb to make a request. "Can" is mostly used in informal situations.

Ben, **can** I have some popcorn?



Yes, you **can**.

Informal answers use "can" as well.

"Could" replaces "can" for more formal situations, such as in business or to talk to strangers.

Excuse me, **could** I sit here, please?

Include "please" in polite requests.



I'm sorry, but that seat is taken.

Make negative answers more polite by adding "I'm sorry" or "I'm afraid."

"May" can also be used in formal situations.

May I take your coat?



Yes, thank you.



44.2 FURTHER EXAMPLES "CAN," "COULD," AND "MAY"

Can I borrow your pen?



Sure! Here you go.

Excuse me, **could** I have a glass of water?



Of course.

Good evening.
May I reserve a table for 7pm?



I'm afraid we're completely full this evening.

TIP

"Could" and "may" are rarely used in short answers to polite questions.





44.3 MARK THE BEST REPLY TO EACH REQUEST

All of these replies are correct, but some are more appropriate for formal or informal situations.

Can I borrow your car, Harry?



No you can't, Joe.
I need it today.

No, you may not.

1

Excuse me,
do you know
where the
station is?



I'm afraid
I don't know.

No, I don't.

2

Can we go
soon? The
show starts
at 8pm.



Yes, when I've
finished my coffee.

I'm afraid that
won't be possible.

3

May I suggest
we meet in
the restaurant
at 7pm?



Yes, see you later!

Yes, that sounds
perfect Ms. Eliker.

4

Could we
postpone our
meeting until
tomorrow?



I'm sorry, but I have
meetings all day.

No, we can't.

44.4 RESPOND OUT LOUD TO THE AUDIO USING THE WORDS IN THE PANEL

Can I have some cake, Auntie Mel?

Yes, you can.

1

Could I please order a dozen red roses?

 , but I've sold out.

2

Could I please have the last sandwich?

 . Enjoy it.

3

Can I borrow your laptop?

No, you . I need it.

4

Excuse me, may I sit next to you?

Yes, you .

5

Could I speak to Rangit Singh, please?

 he's busy.

6

May I offer you a cup of coffee, Mrs. Soto?

Yes, .

can I'm afraid may can't

I'm sorry please Of course



44 ✓ CHECKLIST



"Can," "could," and "may"



Aa Good manners



Asking permission