

Ability and Possibility

Can/could or be able to + infinitive

- *Can* is a modal verb. It only has a present and past form.

I **can** Spanish very well.

She **could** play the violin when she was three.

She **can't** come tonight. She is ill.

They **couldn't** wait because they were in a hurry.

- For other tenses use *be able to*.
- You can use *be able to* in the present, past, future and present perfect.

I **am able to** accept your invitation.

They **weren't able to** come.

I **will be able to** practice my English in London.

She **has been able to** speak French since she was a child.

Complete the sentences with the correct form of *can*, *could*, or *be able to*.

- 1 After three months living here, I _____ understand quite a lot of Russian.
- 2 I'm free tonight, so I'll _____ come and help you if you like.
- 3 I'd love _____ play a musical instrument.
- 4 _____ you lend me a pen, please?
- 5 I've never _____ draw well, but my sister is brilliant.
- 6 What does this label say? I _____ see without my glasses.

Read the article and tick (✓) A, B, or C.

Dreaming of Africa

Luke

I'm studying philosophy, art and history for my A levels at a state secondary school, and I have to make a decision soon about which university I want to apply to. If I were better at science, I would study zoology as I have always had an interest in animals. I might study anthropology (the study of different people around the world) as at least that will give me the chance to travel abroad. As soon as I finish my exams I'm really keen to go to Uganda. If I could find an animal conservation charity that would let me work for them, I would like to stay there for a few months. My dream is to work with gorillas one day.

Naomi

Although I spent three months revising for these exams, I'm still worried about the results, which are coming out soon. Unless I get A grades for all my subjects (maths, chemistry and biology), I won't get into university to study medicine.

I've had to be really disciplined about everything and I'm not going to celebrate until I know I've been successful. I'm also working at an old people's home as a volunteer because if I can get lots of practical experience, that will also improve my chances. When I graduate, I'm determined to work for the medical charity, Doctors Without Borders, and work in Africa

Jake

It's my last term at school and I'm taking my A level exams in a month. If I don't pass them, I don't really mind because I'm not very motivated to go on to get a degree. Seven years of secondary education is enough in my opinion!

If my mum wasn't so strict about revision, I would be practising the guitar, which I love. When I finish my exams, I'm going to take up the drums. I'm doing geography, French and music and they're all subjects that will be useful in the real world. My dream is to travel around French West Africa and to play and sing with Youssou N'Dour!

7. Jake _____ about his A level results.

A is worried B isn't worried C doesn't talk

8. He is going to learn to _____ after his exams.

A play the guitar B speak French C play the drums

9. He would love to _____ in the future.

A travel to America B travel to part of Africa

C go all over Africa

Write *L* for Luke, *N* for Naomi or *J* for Jake.

- 1 I'm not very interested in the idea of university. _____
- 2 I want to work with animals. _____
- 3 I'd like to work as a doctor in Africa. _____
- 4 I haven't been out having fun since my exams. _____
- 5 I'm thinking about studying anthropology. _____
- 6 I want to work for a medical charity. _____