

PRACTICAL ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONALS

LESSON 27

PAST ABILITY & POSSIBILITY

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| To talk about general abilities in the past | COULD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He could speak fluent French when he was 5. • I could read before I started school. |
| To talk about ability on one occasion. | WAS ABLE TO MANAGED TO | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The burglar was able to get in through the bathroom window. • The burglar managed to get in through the bathroom window. |
| | With verbs that refer to the five senses (see, smell...) and to thought processes (remember, believe...) we normally use COULD . | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was standing very close to me and I could smell the garlic on his breath. • He asked me when Julie's birthday was, but I couldn't remember. |
| To talk about ability on one occasion (NEGATIVE) | WASN'T-WEREN'T ABLE TO DIDN'T MANAGE TO COULDN'T | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The burglar wasn't able to get in through the window. • The burglar didn't manage to get in through the window. • The burglar couldn't get in through the window. |

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Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs:

1. I _____ understand a word she said. She spoke too quickly.
2. We were surprised when Chris _____ pass his driving test first time.
3. The music from Beth's house was really loud, I'm sure everyone for miles around _____ hear it.
4. I _____ speak Italian really well when I lived in Venice.
5. It was quite difficult but I _____ get it all done.
6. It was very frustrating. I _____ make her understand what I wanted.
7. For once, I _____ get up early today. It was an effort!
8. I _____ do the Times crossword ten years ago but I can't nowadays. I'm getting too old!
9. There were very few seats left but I _____ get us two tickets.
10. I looked everywhere but I _____ find it.
11. When I was young, I _____ run fast but now I can't.
12. It was getting dark, but I _____ see my son's car in the driveway.