

# Could, Would & Should

Difficulty Level: ★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

Many students struggle with when to use **could**, **would**, and **should**. In this simple lesson we will help you better understand how to use them correctly.

## Use Could & Couldn't For Past Abilities:

Since could and couldn't are the past tense of can and can't, we can use them to express our past abilities.

- 1.) *When I was young, I **could** play the guitar very well.*
- 2.) *A few generations ago Koreans **could** barely speak any English at all. However, now many can speak English.*
- 3.) *My family **couldn't** afford to send me to a private school when I was growing up.*

## Incorrect:

- 1.) *Last year I can't speak any English at all.*
- 2.) *When I was young I can't swim, but now I can swim very well.*

**Make a sentence using could and couldn't to show past abilities.**

## Use Could For Future Possibilities:

We can use could for ideas and possibilities as well as **missed opportunities**.

- 1.) *I **could** have had a better job if I picked a better major.*

2.) We *could* promote our business by creating a website to sell our products online.

3.) I *could* be healthier and happier if I didn't drink so much soju.

**Make your own examples showing future possibilities.**

## Use Could To Make Polite Requests:

Using could to ask for something or for help is much more polite and respectful.

1.) *Could* you please pass the salt?

2.) *Could* you please speak slower? English isn't my first language.

3.) This beer is so delicious. *Could* I please have another? Thank you.

**Make your own examples by requesting for something politely.**

## Incorrect:

1.) Give me more salt please.

2.) Speak slower. My English is no good.

3.) This beer is delicious. I want another one please.

## Use Would Or Wouldn't If You Are Talking About Hypothetical Situations:

We can use would when we are talking about unreal situations or if we are talking about being in someone else's shoes.

1.) If I was you I *would* consider finding a new job.

2.) If I were the president I *would* stop sending manufacturing jobs overseas.

3.) I *wouldn't* have called him back if I were you.

**Make your own hypothetical examples using would.**

## Use Would To Make Polite Offers:

If we are offering something to someone it is always polite to start with "would you like..."

- 1.) *Would you like to join us for dinner?*
- 2.) *Would you like something to drink?*
- 3.) *Would you like some help with your Korean studies?*

**Make a polite offer using "would you like..."**

## Use Should & Shouldn't When Asking For And Giving Advice:

Always use should when asking and especially when giving advice. If you don't use should when giving advice people will think you are **bossy** or very controlling.

- 1.) *Should I stick with Hynix or should I look for a job with more flexibility?*
- 2.) *You should stick with Hynix. It's a good company with a bright future.*
- 3.) *Should I take the KTX or the bus to Seoul? You should take the bus it's cheaper and takes about the same time to get there.*

**Make a sentence using should to ask for advice, and use shouldn't to give advice.**

## Incorrect

- 1.) *You take the bus to Seoul it's faster.*
- 2.) *You want to stay with Hynix it's a good company with a bright future.*

## Tips:

Students often think that by adding the word "please" to the end of their sentences that they are automatically being polite. If we say *"give me more chicken please"* or *"I want more chicken please."* it is often considered rude because it is very demanding. "Could I please have more chicken." is more polite and respectful.

Another tip to consider is that many people use could and would **interchangeably** when making a polite request. *"Could you please pass the salt."* and *"Would you please pass the salt."* mean the same thing. However, for the sake of the lesson try to use would for offering and could for requesting.

## Quiz

- 1.) When I was young, I \_\_\_\_\_ bench press over 100 kilograms.
- 2.) \_\_\_\_\_ I quit my job or stay with Hyundai Mobis?
- 3.) My mother said women \_\_\_\_\_ smoke because it's not ladylike.
- 4.) I was wondering if you \_\_\_\_\_ help me with my English assignment.
- 5.) If I were you I \_\_\_\_\_ marry her. Songi is beautiful!
- 6.) I \_\_\_\_\_ always go back to school and try to get a better job.
- 7.) Everyone \_\_\_\_\_ respect their parents and take care of them into their old age.
- 8.) If I were President Park I \_\_\_\_\_ have increased the minimum wage.
- 9.) \_\_\_\_\_ you please close the window. It is cold.
- 10.) Are you cold? \_\_\_\_\_ you like me to close the window?

## Vocabulary:

- **Missed opportunities:** Means a chance is no longer available or being offered. "Not studying abroad was a missed opportunity I will never forget."
- **Hypothetical:** Means not real or a theory. An unreal example. "Mark Zuckerberg could hypothetically make 30,000 new millionaires if he was generous."
- **Bossy:** Means to give people orders when you are not in fact the boss. "Ever since he got a promotion he has been acting very bossy."

- **Interchangeable:** Means identical or very similar. "Big and huge can be used interchangeably."

### Questions:

- 1.) What would you change about your life if you were a millionaire?
- 2.) Should I visit China or Japan on my next vacation? Why?
- 3.) What could you do in the past that you can no longer do now.
- 4.) What can you do now that you couldn't do in the past?
- 5.) What could your company do to develop a better relationship with its employees?
- 6.) What could your university do to improve the experience for its students?
- 7.) Should I focus on my career or try to find a spouse?

### Daily Expressions & Idioms:

- 1.) **"Stick with":** Means to not give up and keep trying.

*"English is hard in the beginning but if you stick with it, eventually you'll get the hang of it."*

- 2.) **"Get the hang of it":** Means to succeed at something after you practice or study a lot.

*"Even though golf was difficult at first I am finally starting to get the hang of it." "I don't think I will ever get the hang of speaking Korean. It's just too difficult."*