

a·bil·i·ty

S2 W1

/ə'bil_iti/

noun

(plural **abilities**)

1 [countable] CAN the state of being able to do something:

ability to do something

the ability to walk

The health center serves all patients, regardless of their ability to pay.

2 LEVEL [uncountable and countable] someone's level of skill at doing something:

The test measures your mathematical ability.

mixed ability classes

of high/low etc ability

students of average ability

There are musicians of all abilities.

somebody's abilities as something

He showed his abilities as a leader.

3 to the best of your ability TRY TO DO OR GET SOMETHING

as well as you can:

He completed the job to the best of his ability.

COLLOCATIONS – Meanings 1 & 2

adjectives

high/low/average ability *a group of low ability pupils |*

Many of these students are of above average ability. |

Children of high ability demand more absorbing tasks.

great/considerable ability *He was a young man of great*

ability. |

These drawings required considerable ability on the part of the artist.

remarkable/ outstanding/ exceptional ability *a writer of remarkable ability* |

The company aims to select people of outstanding ability. | *his exceptional ability as a swimmer*

mixed ability (= at different levels) *a mixed ability class*

uncanny ability (= an unusual ability that is difficult to explain) *He has an uncanny ability for spotting investment opportunities.*

natural ability (also innate ability (formal)) (= an ability that you are born with) *He didn't have the natural ability of his brother.* | *Babies have an innate ability to do simple maths.*

physical/ athletic ability *He has considerable athletic ability.*

artistic/ creative ability *You do not need to have any artistic ability.*

musical ability *Tim showed musical ability at an early age.*

acting ability *Her acting abilities were obvious straightaway.*

mental ability *The exercises are supposed to help you improve your mental ability.*

intellectual/ academic ability *No one doubts his intellectual abilities.* |

A degree is evidence of your academic ability in a particular subject area.

verbal/ linguistic ability (= language skills) *The test is intended to measure the children's linguistic ability.*

mathematical ability *These students have a higher level of mathematical ability.*

proven ability (= that you have proved through your achievements) *Companies often value the proven ability and reliability of older employees.*

verbs

have the ability to do something (*also possess the ability to do something (formal)*) *She has the ability to make people feel relaxed.*

show/demonstrate the ability to do something *a chance for candidates to demonstrate their abilities*

lack the ability to do something *As a young man, he lacked the ability to say no.*

phrases

a level of ability/ability level *The children were of the same age and ability level.*

a range of ability/ability range *There is a wide range of ability within the class. |*

Disruptive behaviour is more prominent in the lower ability range.

a test of ability/an ability test *Examinations are not always a good test of ability. |*

The class was given a verbal ability test.

an ability group (= a group that students are taught in, based on their level of ability) *Children are divided into different ability groups.*

Word origin

Date: 1400–1500

Language: Old French

Origin: *habilité*, from Latin *habilitas*, from *habilis*; → ABLE

-ability

/əbɪlɪˈti/

(also **-ibility**)

suffix

makes nouns from adjectives ending in -ABLE and -IBLE:

manageability

Word origin

Language: Old French

Origin: *-abilité*, from Latin *-abilitas*, from *-abilis*; → -ABLE

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

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