

Ability: *can* and *could*

1 Change the words in **bold** from affirmative to negative, or negative to affirmative, to make sentences.

- Most children **can** read until they're six.
- Mozart **couldn't** compose music when he was five.

2 Look at the sentences in exercise 1 again and choose the correct words in the Rules.

## RULES

- We use *can* to talk about the **present / past** and *could* to talk about the **present / past**.
- We use a base form **with / without to** after *can* and *could*.
- The *he / she / it* form of *can* is ***can / cans***.
- The negative forms are ***don't can* and *didn't can / can't* and *couldn't***.
- We use / ***don't use do* and *did*** to make questions with *can* and *could*. For example:  
At what age ***can*** most people talk?  
When ***could*** you first speak English?

3 Complete the text with affirmative and negative forms of *can* and *could*.



## William Sidis Supergenius

Most people **can't** read until they're six and they <sup>1</sup>..... usually speak one, two or maybe three languages as children. William Sidis was born in 1898, and when he was eighteen months old, he <sup>2</sup>..... read. Before he was eight he wrote four books and <sup>3</sup>..... speak eight languages. William was a genius with a very high IQ, but in the end he lived a lonely life. He went to university at eleven, but he <sup>4</sup>..... make friends and was very unhappy. William died in 1944. Prodiges <sup>5</sup>..... do special or amazing things, but they <sup>6</sup>..... always find a place in society. Life is sometimes difficult when you're different.

Questions with *How ... ?*

4 Match 1–6 with a–f to make questions. Can you remember the answers? Ask and answer the questions with your partner.

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 1 How much  | a. should a bodybuilder have eggs per day?    |
| 2 How fast  | b. potassium does a banana contain?           |
| 3 How high  | c. words can Twista rap in a minute?          |
| 4 How often | d. was William Sidis when he started reading? |
| 5 How many  | e. is Mount Everest?                          |
| 6 How old   | f. could Carl Lewis run?                      |



5 **USE IT!** Make questions with *How ... ?* and the words in the table. Then ask and answer the questions with your partner.

How ...	high	words can you say in ten seconds?
	far	can you keep your eyes open?
	many	is your teacher?
	strict	are you?
	tall	is your town in winter?
	often	does a burger cost?
	cold / hot	are you late for school?
	much	can you run and swim?
	long	can you jump?

How high can you jump?

Just over a metre, I think.

**Finished?**

Write sentences about things you **couldn't** do in the past, but that you **can** do now.