

Can / Can't

Ability

We use **can/can't** to talk about **abilities** in the present, things that we know how to do.

They can sing and dance very well.

Then I discovered I can't speak the language.

Permission

We use **can/can't** when we want to ask for **permission** to do something, and when we answer someone's request too, by allowing them to do what we were asked for, or not.

Can I get my money back?

You can talk to her in person.

You can't sit there and wait for somebody to invite you to do it.

Possibility

We use **can/can't** to talk about **possibilities** in the present, things that are possible or not.

I can't come to the work party on Friday.

Bruce, can you join us?

Maybe we can meet up and catch a movie!

Ordering / Asking for something

We use **can/can't** when we are **ordering or asking for something** in the present, and this usage is totally informal/casual, which means that you need to know the person to ask for something using **can**.

Can I have something to drink?

So can you help me with this?

Formation

We use **can/can't + verb (base form)** - *infinitive form without "to"*.

There's no -s after he, she, it. **Can** is the same for all persons.

We don't use *do/don't* to make negative sentences and questions. **Can** is a modal verb, so it means that *can* has its own negative and interrogative forms.


Affirmative

Subject	Can	+ Verb (base form)	+ rest of the sentence
I	can	cook	dinner
You		eat	pasta
He		sleep	early
She		stay	home
It		be	amazing
We		read	a book
You		watch	TV
They		run	at the park

Negative

Subject	Cannot can't	+ Verb (base form)	+ rest of the sentence
I	cannot can't	cook	dinner
You		eat	pasta
He		sleep	early
She		stay	home
It		be	amazing
We		read	a book
You		watch	TV
They		run	at the park

Interrogative

(WH)	Can	Subject	+ Verb (base form)	+ rest of the sentence
(WHAT)		I	cook	dinner?
(WHEN)		you	eat	pasta?
(HOW)		he	sleep	early?
(WHO)		she	stay	home?
		it	be	amazing?
		we	read	a book?
		you	watch	TV?
		they	run	at the park?

Short answer

	Subject	can
Yes,	I	
	you	
	he	
	she	can.
No,	it	can't.
	we	
	you	
	they	

NOTE: affirmative short answers nunca terão contração; negative short answers sempre terão contração.

Common mistakes!

-s after he, she, it

Can has one presentation only. It doesn't have any sort of inflection according to the person

She can swim. (NOT *She cans swim.*)

do/don't for negative and questions

Can is a modal verb, so it has its own form in negative and questions.

Can you speak Italian? (NOT *Do you can speak Italian?*)

We can't do it. (NOT *We don't can do it.*)

using to after can and before the verb

We use *can* + the verb in the base form, which is the infinitive form without "to".

They can visit you. (NOT *They can to visit you.*)

I can come. (NOT *I can to come.*)