Could, Couldn't and Was Able To Worksheet

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NAME

DATE

Remember

Form	Example
could / couldn't + verb: general ability in the past	She could read when she was four.
was / were able to: one specific success	The exam was hard, but I was able to pass.
couldn't = wasn't able to (both fine in the negative)	I couldn't / wasn't able to sleep.
will be able to: ability in the future	You'll be able to speak fluently soon.

Typical mistakes

× Learners often say	✓ Say instead
I could to swim when I was six.	I could swim when I was six.
The flight was full, but I could get a seat. (one success)	The flight was full, but I was able to get a seat.
I will can help you tomorrow.	I will be able to help you tomorrow.

1. Complete

Complete with could, couldn't, was / were able to or will be able to.

1. When I was a child, I _____ climb trees really fast.
2. The door was locked, so we _____ get in.
3. After six months of classes, you _____ order food in English.
4. The traffic was terrible, but she _____ arrive on time.
5. My grandfather _____ speak three languages.
6. I _____ find my keys anywhere.
7. It was difficult, but they _____ finish the project.
8. When the new road opens, we _____ drive there in an hour.

2. Choose

Circle the best option.

1. I (could / was able to) ride a bike when I was five.
2. The test was hard, but I (could / was able to) answer every question.
3. She (couldn't / can't) come yesterday.
4. Next year I (can / will be able to) drive.
5. (Could / Can) you swim when you were a child?
6. We were tired, but we (managed / could) to finish.
7. He (could / could to) play the piano very well.
8. I (wasn't able / couldn't able) to sleep.

3. Correct the mistakes

Each sentence has one mistake. Write it correctly.

1. I could to read at four.
2. She can't come to the party last night.
3. I will can speak English better soon.
4. We weren't able open the window.
5. Could you speak French when you was young?
6. He managed find a job.

Writing

Write 6 sentences about your abilities: what you could do as a child, something difficult you were able to do, and what you will be able to do in a year.

Speaking

- What could you do as a child that you can't do now?
- Tell me about a time something was difficult but you were able to do it.
- What will you be able to do when your English is better?
- Was there anything you couldn't do at school?

Answer key

1. Complete: 1 could · 2 couldn't · 3 will be able to · 4 was able to · 5 could · 6 couldn't · 7 were able to · 8 will be able to

2. Choose: 1 could · 2 was able to · 3 couldn't · 4 will be able to · 5 Could · 6 managed · 7 could · 8 wasn't able

3. Correct the mistakes: 1 I could read at four. · 2 She couldn't come to the party last night. · 3 I will be able to speak English better soon. · 4 We weren't able to open the window. · 5 Could you speak French when you were young? · 6 He managed to find a job.

Writing, model answer: When I was a child, I could run very fast, but I couldn't swim. I learned to swim when I was twelve. Last year I ran my first race, and I was able to finish it in under an hour. I couldn't speak English well five years ago. In a year I will be able to have meetings in English without notes.