

CAN

Making affirmative statements with *can*

Take a look at these sentences.

Samantha **can** speak French very well.

“I **can** help you mow the lawn, Dad.”
“Great.”

“You **can** have some of my Coke®, Andy. I don’t want it all.”
“Oh, thanks.”

Take a look at this chart. Notice that **can** is a special verb. We don’t add *-s* to **can** with *he*, *she*, and *it*.

I	can play outside. It’s not raining.
You	
He	
She	
It	
We	
You	
They	



REMEMBER THIS:

- We use **can** with all persons — we don’t add an *-s* to **can** with *he*, *she*, and *it*.
- The verb that comes after **can** does not take *to*.

Here are some more examples.

Vincent knows all about computers. He **can** fix all kinds of computers.

We **can** have band practice at Matt's house on Saturday afternoon. It's OK with his parents.

Lauren is away this week. Your friends **can** sleep in her room.

Making negative statements with *can*

Take a look at these transformations.

My little cousins can swim.	—————▶	AFFIRMATIVE
My little cousins cannot swim.	—————▶	NEGATIVE
I can cook dinner this evening.	—————▶	AFFIRMATIVE
I cannot cook dinner this evening.	—————▶	NEGATIVE
You can borrow my guitar.	—————▶	AFFIRMATIVE
You cannot borrow my guitar.	—————▶	NEGATIVE

Now compare these sentences and notice how **cannot** is contracted.

My little cousins **cannot** swim.

My little cousins **can't** swim.

I **cannot** cook dinner this evening.

I **can't** cook dinner this evening.

You **cannot** borrow my guitar.

You **can't** borrow my guitar.

Look at this chart.

I	cannot	play outside. It's raining.
You		
He		
She		
It		
We	can't	
You		
They		

Now take a look at some more examples.

Alex can play the drums, but he **can't** play the guitar.

Kevin **can't** go to the movies with his friends this evening. He has band practice.

"Great! Apple pie. My favorite."

"That apple pie's for dessert, Allison. You **can't** have any now."

Asking questions with *can*

Look at these transformations.

Emily can play the guitar.	→	AFFIRMATIVE
Can Emily play the guitar?	→	QUESTION

Sarah can have a cookie now.	→	AFFIRMATIVE
Can Sarah have a cookie now?	→	QUESTION

Bill and Tyler can join the team.	→	AFFIRMATIVE
Can Bill and Tyler join the team?	→	QUESTION



Now take a look at this chart.

Can	I you he she it we you they	swim?
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Look at these questions and answers. Note the complete answers.

“Can I have a hamburger, please?”

“I’m afraid not. There aren’t any hamburgers left.”

“Can I borrow your bike?”

“Sure. It’s in the garage.”

“Can Elizabeth Lewis run well?”

“Yes, she’s an excellent runner.”

Here are some more questions and answers. Note the short answers.

“Can you help out at the store today?”

“Yes, I **can**.”

“No, I **can’t**.”

“Can Ruby and Alexander swim well?”

“Yes, they **can**.”

“No, they **can’t**.”