

Could and did ★★★

This is about a) the difference between having an **ability** in the past, and actually **doing something** in the past, and ...
b) the difference between *could* (past) and *could* (conditional).

1 Could



“When I was 20 I could play tennis well.”

(He says he **could**, but did he?)

2 Did (past tense of a verb)



Maria won the competition!

(Yes, she **did**!)

(If it was difficult, you can also say *She managed to win*)

Note:

Could is for a general ability, not a specific event.

3 Could (conditional)



You could climb it if you tried

Also polite requests:

“Could you wait a moment, please?”

“Sorry, could I ask you to sit over here?”

Quick check

Fill each blank with the right word or phrase:

walked *could walk*

1 Before his operation, Mike _____ long distances, and sometimes did.

In fact, he _____ from Brighton to Seaford last summer.

could 1 [ability] could 2 [conditional] did

2 “I _____ n’t know that you _____ play the piano!

You _____ play professionally if you wanted to.”

