



Remember to watch the video first! Then read the conversation between Sophie and Mei, a student she met in Hong Kong. Sophie's helping Mei understand how to use *can*, *could* and *would* for invitations, offers, requests and permission.



**Grammar
Snacks**

We use the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *would* to offer to do things for people or to invite them to do something. We also use them to make requests or ask permission to do something.



Mei

What are *modal verbs*?

They are a type of *auxiliary verb* we use with other verbs to add more meaning to the verb. After modal verbs we use the infinitive form *without to*.

Modals are *not* used with the auxiliary verb *do*; to form the *negative*, we add *not* after the modal. To ask questions, we put the modal *in front of* the subject.

*Hey, you **couldn't** pass me that plate, could you?*
Can I have a taste?

Modals do not change in the third person singular form (*he/she/it*) in the present simple.

*Sophie **can** send photos.*



Sophie



Modals seem quite easy to use. What do we use them for?

We use them for lots of different things, and the same modal verbs can have several different uses. Today we are just going to look at offers, invitations, requests and permission.



Right, fire away! I mean, you *can* fire away if you like.

Oh, you're giving me permission. Thank you. We use *would + like* a lot for offers. It's very useful for different situations.

Would you like to come to our house for dinner?
Would you like some cake?
Would you like to celebrate Chinese New Year with us?



For more informal invitations you can use *can + get*. *Get* means buy in this context.

Can I get you a drink?

We also use *would* and *can* for offering to help someone.

Would you like some help?

Can I help you?

Can I give you a hand with that?



That sounds very strange, *Can I give you a hand?*.

It just means *Can I help you?*.

We also use modals for asking for something (making a request or asking permission).

Can you do me a favour? (more informal)

Could you say thanks to your mum for me? (more polite)

I've finished my homework. Can I go now? (more informal)

Could I speak to Amy, please? (more polite)



What's the answer? *Yes, you can. / No, you can't.?*

Not normally. Usually the positive answer is:

Yes, sure. / Yes, of course. / Certainly.

We usually avoid a direct *No* in the negative answer. We'd say something like:

Well, I'm not sure. / Tomorrow night's a bit difficult. / Um, actually, she's not here at the moment.



Ah, so you need to listen carefully to see if the answer is *yes* or *no*.

Absolutely. We don't like saying *no* in English.

We also like to use longer structures in more formal situations:

*Do you think you **could** do me a favour?*

Would you mind closing the window, please?

Could you tell me how to get to the town centre, please?





Yes, but isn't the pronunciation important too?

Ah, you mean the intonation? Yes, that's very important, I'm glad you mentioned that. It can make all the difference between sounding polite and rude. It's very important to get it right if you want a stranger to do something for you. You need to get 'up and down' movement in your voice.



Right. One more thing, do you think you *could* help me with my homework now? It *would* only take about an hour.

Um, well, actually



Watch the video on our website!

