

Grammar

1 Asking for permission

When we ask for permission to do something, we use the modals *can*, *could*, *may*, and *might*. These words have different levels of formality.

Can *we join you for lunch?* (informal)

Could *we join you for lunch?* (less informal)

May *we join you for lunch?* (more formal)

Might *we join you for lunch?* (very formal)

We can also use *would* / *do you mind* to ask for permission.

Would *you mind my joining you for dinner?*

Do you mind *if I join you for dinner?*

2 Making a request

When we request someone else do something, we use the modals *can*, *could*, *will*, and *would*.

Can / Will *she take the minutes for the meeting?* (informal)

Could / Would *you get me that towel?* (more formal)

We can ask someone else to do something without using the modals. These are normally more formal and impersonal forms that we don't use in conversation.

We ask *the members to turn off their cell phones.*

Please *show me your photo album.*

We can also use *would* / *do you mind* to make a request.

Would *you mind lending me your pen?*

Do you mind *showing me the way to the post office?*

3 We can offer to do something in several ways using the modals *can* and *could*.

I can / could *make some sandwiches for the meeting.*

Can / Could *I bring you a glass of pineapple juice?*

How can *we help you?*

4 Making a suggestion

We can make a suggestion to do something in several ways using the modals *should*, *can*, and *could*.

Should *we tell him the truth?*

We can/could *hire a part-time nanny.*

Can't / Couldn't *you bring that point up with the team leader?*

We can also make a suggestion to do something without using a modal. **Why**

don't *we take up a collection for the typhoon victims?*

Let's *buy some wall décor for the office.*

How about *having dinner at the new restaurant today?*

What about *taking on a new salesperson over the summer?*

Grammar exercises

1 Complete these sentences with one of the phrases in the box.

a asking for permission

c making an offer

b making a request

d making a suggestion

1 "Why don't you take a 30-minute break?" *The speaker is* _____

2 "Could you bring two more glasses of iced tea, please?" *The speaker is* _____

3 "May I go home early today?" *The speaker is* _____

4 "Can you get me on an early morning flight out of Manila tomorrow?" *The speaker is* _____

5 "How about adding some music to our advertisement?" *The speaker is* _____

6 "Can I take a copy of this newsletter?" *The speaker is* _____

7 "I could fix that broken window for you." *The speaker is* _____

2 Complete Mr. Hirano's part of a phone conversation with a customer using phrases from the box.

Can I book

Can I

Could I suggest

Could you speak

Let me look

Would you like

Would you mind

Good morning, Tyler's Bistro. **1** Can I help you? ... **2** Hello, hello.

2 _____ a little louder, please? Oh, hello Mr. Clark.... You can't make it? OK, I'm sorry to hear that. I'll cancel your reservation then ... **3** _____

another reservation for a different day? ... Yes, of course. **4** _____ you a table on Thursday night at 6:30 P.M.? Yes, good.... I'll make the reservation for five people.... Ah, I see. You would like a table for seven.

5 _____ holding the line for a second? I'll just check the reservation book.... I'm sorry, Mr. Clark. I'm afraid I can't reserve a table for seven at that time. We're fully booked. **6** _____ to be sure. Ah, here's a free table.

7 _____ 7:30 P.M.? ... Good. That's excellent. I'll have a table ready for you at 7.30 on Thursday, for a party of seven then.

3 Anita and Evelyn are discussing going out to eat. Their suggestions contain errors. Find the errors and correct them.

Ada: I Why do we go out for a meal and a movie after work today?

Marybeth: That's a good idea. **2** How about to going to that Chinese restaurant that everyone's talking about?

Ada: **3** Yes, let's can go there. It's within walking distance of the movie theater as well.

Marybeth: **4** Should we be look at the website to see what's playing?

Ada: **5** Couldn't we just to pass the movie theater on our way to the restaurant?

Marybeth: Yes, that sounds like a great idea. **6** What about invite the new trainee?

Ada: Sure. Why not? She seems really nice.