

16.4 ASKING FOR AND GIVING/REFUSING PERMISSION

16.4A We use *can/can't* for permission granted or refused by the person being asked and for Present/future permission subject to some external authority such as the law:
 'Can I use your phone?' Yes, of course you can./No, I'm afraid you can't.
 (I give/refuse permission.)
You can't smoke on the underground. (The law doesn't allow you to do this.)
 In more formal situations we can use *may* and *may not* in the same way:
May I interrupt?
Candidates may not bring calculators into the examination room.
 We use *could* or *might* to ask for permission in a more tentative way (*might* is very formal):
Excuse me, could I leave my coat here?
Might I ask the court for an adjournment at this point?

16.4B To describe general permission in the past we use *could/couldn't*:
In the 1950s British children could leave school at the age of fourteen.
 But to talk about permission on a specific occasion in the past, we do not use *could*, we use *was/were allowed* to:
~~*I could leave early yesterday.*~~ ✓ *I was allowed to leave early yesterday.*

2 16.1, 16.2

Match the situations (A-D) with the sentences (1-4).

- A Samantha is going to work at a ticket agency next year.
 B Judy went to the theatre yesterday and told the box office clerk that she was a theatre critic.
 C Liz went to the theatre yesterday to buy some tickets. They didn't tell her about the special 'free ticket' offer.
 D Carol works at a ticket agency.
- 1 She was able to get free tickets. 2 She can get free tickets.
 3 She will be able to get free tickets. 4 She could have got free tickets.
- A B C D

3 16.1, 16.2

Match the two parts (1-4 and A-D) to form sentences.

- 1 He could do it
 2 He couldn't do it
 3 He might have done it
 4 He can't have done it
- A - he had plenty of opportunity.
 B - he wasn't even in the country.
 C - he seems a very capable person.
 D - he doesn't look old enough.

5 16.3, 16.4

Choose the correct description, A or B.

- 1 They allowed me to bring my dog. A They usually allow dogs. B They don't usually allow dogs.
 2 The doctor could see you at eleven. A I'm not sure if she's free at eleven. B I'm suggesting a time for an appointment.
 3 Might I borrow your calculator for a moment? A Talking to your best friend. B Talking to a clerk at the bank.
 4 Well, we could always go on the bus. A I don't really mind how we get there. B I really want to go on the bus.
 5 I could wear anything I liked. A When I worked as a secretary. B On the day I took my secretarial exams.
 6 We can have a look at the shops. A I'm making a suggestion. B I'm describing a future ability.
 7 May I interrupt? A At a formal business meeting. B At a family lunch.
 8 You may not bring drinks into the auditorium during the performance. A It's up to you to decide. B It's forbidden.
 9 I might see you after the show. A I probably will see you. B I'm not sure if I'll see you or not.
 10 We might as well go straight home. A There's nothing better to do. B I really want to go home.

2	A 3	B 1	C 4	D 2
3	1 C	2 D	3 A	4 B
6	1 B	2 B	3 B	4 A
6	A	7 A	8 B	9 B
				10 A