

## A Asking people to do things (requests)

We use **can** or **could** to ask people to do things:

- Can you wait a moment, please?
- or  Could you wait a moment, please?
- Liz, can you do me a favour?
- Excuse me, could you tell me how to get to the airport?

Note that we say **Do you think you could ... ? (not can)**:

- Do you think you could lend me some money until next week?

We also use **will** and **would** to ask people to do things (but **can/could** are more usual):

- Liz, will you do me a favour?
- Would you please be quiet? I'm trying to concentrate.

Could you open the door, please?



## B Asking for things

To ask for something, we use **Can I have ... ?** or **Could I have ... ?**:

- (*in a shop*) Can I have these postcards, please?
- (*during a meal*) Could I have the salt, please?

**May I have ... ?** is also possible:

- May I have these postcards, please?

## C Asking to do things

To ask to do something, we use **can**, **could** or **may**:

- (*on the phone*) Hello, can I speak to Steve, please?
- 'Could I use your phone?' 'Yes, of course.'
- Do you think I could borrow your bike?
- 'May I come in?' 'Yes, please do.'

**May** is more formal than **can** or **could**.

To ask to do something, you can also say **Do you mind if I ... ?** or **Is it all right / Is it OK if I ... ?**:

- 'Do you mind if I use your phone?' 'Sure. Go ahead.'
- 'Is it all right if I come in?' 'Yes, of course.'

## D Offering to do things

To offer to do something, you can use **Can I ... ?**:

- 'Can I get you a cup of coffee?' 'That would be nice.'
- 'Can I help you?' 'No, it's all right. I can manage.'

## E Offering and inviting

To offer or to invite, we use **Would you like ... ? (not Do you like)**:

- 'Would you like a cup of coffee?' 'Yes, please.'
- 'Would you like to come to dinner tomorrow evening?' 'I'd love to.'

**I'd like ...** is a polite way of saying what you want:

- (*at a tourist information office*) I'd like some information about hotels, please.
- (*in a shop*) I'd like to try on this jacket, please.

Can and could → Units 26–27 Mind -ing → Unit 53 Would like → Units 55A, 58B

Modal verbs (can/could/will/would etc.) → Appendix 4

37.1 Read the situations and write questions beginning **Can ... or Could ...**.

- 1 You're carrying a lot of things. You can't open the door yourself. There's a man standing near the door. You say to him: Could you open the door, please?
- 2 You phone Sue, but somebody else answers. Sue isn't there. You want to leave a message for her. You say: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 You're a tourist. You want to go to the station, but you don't know how to get there. You ask at your hotel: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 You are in a clothes shop. You see some trousers you like and you want to try them on. You say to the shop assistant: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 You have a car. You have to go the same way as Steve, who is on foot. You offer him a lift. You say to him: \_\_\_\_\_

## 37.2 Read the situation and write a question using the word in brackets.

- 1 You want to borrow your friend's camera. What do you say to him?  
(think) Do you think I could borrow your camera?
- 2 You are at a friend's house and you want to use her phone. What do you say?  
(all right) Is it all right if I use your phone?
- 3 You've written a letter in English. Before you send it, you want a friend to check it for you. What do you ask?  
(think) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 You want to leave work early. What do you ask your boss?  
(mind) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 The woman in the next room is playing music. It's very loud. You want her to turn it down. What do you say to her?  
(think) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 You're on a train. The window is open and you're feeling cold. You'd like to close it, but first you ask the woman next to you.  
(OK) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 You're still on the train. The woman next to you has finished reading her newspaper, and you'd like to have a look at it. You ask her.  
(think) \_\_\_\_\_

## 37.3 What would you say in these situations?

- 1 Paul has come to see you in your flat. You offer him something to eat.  
YOU: Would you like something to eat ?  
PAUL: No, thank you. I've just eaten.
- 2 You need help to change the film in your camera. You ask Kate.  
YOU: I don't know how to change the film. \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
KATE: Sure. It's easy. All you have to do is this.
- 3 You're on a bus. You have a seat, but an elderly man is standing. You offer him your seat.  
YOU: \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
MAN: Oh, that's very kind of you. Thank you very much.
- 4 You're the passenger in a car. Your friend is driving very fast. You ask her to slow down.  
YOU: You're making me very nervous. \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
DRIVER: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realise I was going so fast.
- 5 You've finished your meal in a restaurant and now you want the bill. You ask the waiter:  
YOU: \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
WAITER: Right. I'll get it for you now.
- 6 A friend of yours is interested in one of your books. You invite him to borrow it.  
FRIEND: This looks very interesting.  
YOU: Yes, it's a good book. \_\_\_\_\_ ?