ENGLISH STORY PODCAST

Could, Would & Should

Speak politely. Make offers. Give helpful advice.

EPISODE 06 | LEVEL A2-B1

Listen and read with Mia and Jake. Then use the exercises to practise requests, offers, suggestions, possibilities, and advice.

Today's Small Win
Ask one person for something using *could*: “Could you pass me that, please?”

Episode Guide

What you will learn

• **Could** for polite requests, suggestions, and possibilities.

• **Would** for offers, polite wishes, and imaginary situations.

• **Should** for advice.

• The base-verb rule: could, would, or should + the simple verb.

Word Box

polite	speaking in a kind and respectful way
request	asking someone to do something
advice	a helpful idea you give to someone
suggestion	an idea the other person can choose to follow

Say It Like This

“Could you help me, please?”

“Would you like some tea?”

“You should try it.”

“We could go for a walk.”

“What should I do?”

Listen & Read Transcript

Read along while you listen. Audio-performance tags have been removed for easier reading.

JAKE	Mia, give me the salt.
MIA	Jake. Is that how we ask?
JAKE	Okay, okay. Please give me the salt.
MIA	Better. But still a little strong. What about, "Could you pass the salt, please?"
JAKE	That sounds like I'm at a fancy restaurant.
MIA	It sounds friendly. Hello everyone, and welcome to the English Story Podcast. I'm Mia.
JAKE	And I'm Jake, the man who needs salt.
MIA	Today we're talking about three small words with a big job. Could, would, and should.
JAKE	They make your English polite, soft, and helpful. By the end of this episode, you'll know how to ask for things, make offers, and give advice, without sounding rude or too strong.
MIA	And before we start, a quick tip. You can read the full transcript of this episode on our website, and listen to the audio while you read. The link is in the description, along with our free ebooks.
JAKE	Lots of valuable help, and all of it is free. So make yourself comfortable. Get a cup of tea, or coffee, or water, and just listen to us talk.
MIA	Let's start with a small idea. In English, the words you choose change the feeling. Listen to these two sentences. "Give me water." And, "Could I have some water, please?"
JAKE	The first one sounds like an order. The second one sounds kind.
MIA	Exactly. And the small helper words, could, would, and should, are a big reason why.
JAKE	Okay, it's time for our Word Box. These are four useful words for today. Listen, and then repeat after us.
MIA	The first word is polite. When you are polite, you speak in a kind and respectful way.
JAKE	Polite. For example, the waiter was very polite.
MIA	The next word is request. A request is when you ask someone to do something.
JAKE	Request. For example, I made a small request. I asked my neighbor to close the window.
MIA	The next word is advice. Advice is a helpful idea that you give to someone.

JAKE	Advice. For example, my grandmother always gives good advice.
MIA	And the last word is suggestion. A suggestion is an idea that you offer, and the other person can decide.
JAKE	Suggestion. For example, I have a suggestion. Let's have lunch outside.
MIA	Let's say them one more time. Polite.
JAKE	Polite.
MIA	Request.
JAKE	Request.
MIA	Advice.
JAKE	Advice.
MIA	Suggestion.
JAKE	Suggestion.
JAKE	Great job, everyone. You will hear these words again in the story.
MIA	Let's begin with the first word. Could.
JAKE	Could is a busy word. We use it in three main ways today.
MIA	The first way is a polite request. "Could you help me, please?" "Could I borrow your pen?" "Could you open the window?"
JAKE	And I can use it with I, too. "Could I sit here?"
MIA	Yes. "Could you" asks someone else to do something. "Could I" asks for permission.
JAKE	But Mia, I always say "Can you help me?" Is that wrong?
MIA	Not wrong. "Can you" is very common with friends. But "Could you" is a little softer, and it's perfect with a stranger, a teacher, or your boss.
JAKE	So can is for friends, and could is extra kind.
MIA	That's a great way to remember it. The second way to use could is a suggestion. "We could go for a walk." "You could try the soup."
JAKE	It means, here's an idea, but it's your choice.

MIA	Exactly. And the third way is possibility. "It could rain later." "He could be at home."
JAKE	So it means maybe.
MIA	Yes. Maybe, but not sure.
JAKE	Let's practice. Imagine you're in a cafe, and you want to ask for water. What could you say?
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	Here's one idea. "Could I have a glass of water, please?"
JAKE	Short, polite, and perfect.
MIA	Now, our second word. Would.
JAKE	Would is my favorite in a restaurant.
MIA	Of course it is. We use would in two easy ways today. The first is an offer or an invitation. "Would you like some tea?" "Would you like to join us?"
JAKE	And the answer can be, "Yes, please." Or, "No, thank you."
MIA	Right. The second way is to say what you want, politely. "I would like a coffee, please." Most people say, "I'd like a coffee, please."
JAKE	I'd like. That sounds smooth.
MIA	And there's a third use, for imaginary situations. "If I had more time, I would learn the guitar."
JAKE	So it's something that isn't real now, but I'm imagining it.
MIA	Exactly. "If I had a bigger kitchen, I would cook more."
JAKE	And if I had a bigger kitchen, I would bake bread every day.
MIA	And you would eat all of it.
JAKE	That is also true.
MIA	Let's practice again. Imagine a friend visits your home. What would you say to offer something to drink?
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
JAKE	Here's my offer. "Would you like some tea or coffee?"

MIA	Perfect. Now, our third word. Should.
JAKE	Should is for advice.
MIA	Exactly. "You should drink more water." "You should sleep early tonight." And the negative is "shouldn't." "You shouldn't eat that much sugar."
JAKE	That one is for me.
MIA	It's for all of us. And we can also ask for advice. "What should I do?" "Should I take the bus or walk?"
JAKE	And I can soften advice. If I say, "You should go home," it sounds strong. But "Maybe you should go home and rest" sounds kinder.
MIA	Very good. Maybe is a small word with a big help.
JAKE	I have a question. What if my friend doesn't want my advice?
MIA	Then you can say, "It's just a suggestion." Or, "You could try it, but it's your choice."
JAKE	Oh, that's useful.
MIA	And that brings us to a very important rule. After could, would, and should, we use the base verb. That means the simple verb, with no s, no ed, and no ing.
JAKE	So, "She should go," not "She should goes."
MIA	Exactly. And not "She should to go." We don't say "to" after should.
JAKE	Could, would, should, and then the simple verb. Easy.
MIA	Easy, and very useful. Let's say a few examples together. "You could ask her."
JAKE	You could ask her.
MIA	"I would help you."
JAKE	I would help you.
MIA	"We should leave now."
JAKE	We should leave now.
MIA	Let's put them all together in a short conversation. Imagine we're friends, and we're planning a picnic this weekend.
JAKE	Hi, Mia. We could have a picnic on Saturday. What do you think?

MIA	That's a great idea. Would you like to invite Emma too?
JAKE	Yes, I would. I'll ask her. Could you bring some sandwiches?
MIA	Of course. And you should bring a blanket, because the grass can be wet.
JAKE	Good advice. What should we do if it rains?
MIA	We could stay at my place, and we could play a board game.
JAKE	Perfect. Would you like me to bring a game?
MIA	Yes, please. Could you bring that funny card game?
JAKE	Of course. And I'd like some lemonade, so I should bring some.
MIA	Great plan.
JAKE	Did you notice? In a short conversation, we asked for help, made an offer, gave advice, and made a suggestion.
MIA	And it sounded friendly, not strong.
JAKE	And now it's time for our segment called Say It Like This.
MIA	Here are five phrases you can use every day. Repeat after us. Could you help me, please?
JAKE	Could you help me, please?
MIA	Would you like some tea?
JAKE	Would you like some tea?
MIA	You should try it.
JAKE	You should try it.
MIA	We could go for a walk.
JAKE	We could go for a walk.
MIA	What should I do?
JAKE	What should I do?
MIA	Very good. Now you have five small phrases, and each one helps you speak kindly and clearly.

JAKE	And now it's time for our Mini Story. This is a short story with today's new words inside it.
MIA	Our story today is about a woman called Hana. Hana moved to a new apartment, and she didn't know anyone in the building. On the first day, she had many boxes, and they were very heavy.
MIA	She saw a neighbor in the hall, a man called Ben. Hana felt a little shy. But she remembered her English lesson, and she made a polite request. "Hello, I'm Hana. Could you help me with these boxes, please?"
MIA	Ben smiled and said, "Of course." When the boxes were inside, Hana said, "Would you like some tea? I'm sorry, I don't have much, but I have tea." Ben laughed and said, "Tea is perfect."
MIA	While they were drinking tea, Hana asked for advice. "I'm new here. What should I do on the weekend?" Ben gave her a suggestion. "You could visit the market on Saturday. And you should try the bread. It's the best in town."
MIA	The next Saturday, Hana went to the market. She tried the bread, and Ben was right. And that day, a polite request and a cup of tea turned a stranger into a friend.
JAKE	I love that story. Poor Hana, with all those heavy boxes.
MIA	And lucky Ben, with a cup of tea.
JAKE	Did you notice our words? Polite, request, advice, and suggestion were all in the story.
MIA	That is why we tell stories. When you hear new words inside a story, they are easier to remember.
JAKE	Can you remember what Hana said to ask for help?
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	She said, "Could you help me with these boxes, please?" Simple, polite, and perfect.
JAKE	And now it's time for our last segment, called Your Turn.
MIA	Okay, now it's your turn. I will describe a situation, and you will answer in your head, or out loud. Use could, would, or should.
JAKE	Ready. Question one. You're in a shop, and you want to ask the assistant for a different size. What could you say?
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	Here's one idea. "Could I try a bigger size, please?"
JAKE	Question two. A friend comes to your home. How would you offer something to drink?

YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	"Would you like some water or tea?"
JAKE	Question three. Your friend has a headache. What advice would you give?
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	"You should drink some water and rest."
JAKE	Question four. You want to make a plan for the weekend. What suggestion could you make?
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	"We could go for a walk, or we could watch a movie."
JAKE	And one last question. Think of a request you can make today, to a friend, a family member, or a coworker. How would you ask?
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	If you answered even a little in English, then you just used could, would, and should. Congratulations.
JAKE	Before we finish, let's remember the three words.
MIA	Could. Use it for polite requests, suggestions, and possibilities.
JAKE	Would. Use it for offers, polite wishes, and imaginary situations.
MIA	Should. Use it for advice.
JAKE	And after all three, we use the simple verb.
MIA	And remember, you don't have to be perfect. These small words help you sound kind, and kindness is always a good start.
MIA	Before we go, here is Today's Small Win. A small win is a very small task that you can finish today, and it makes you feel good.
JAKE	Today's Small Win is this. Today, ask one person for something using "could." For example, "Could you pass me that, please?" It only takes ten seconds.
MIA	And if you don't have anyone nearby, you can say it out loud to yourself, three times.

JAKE	Now, we have a question for you in the comments. Write three sentences. One with could, one with would, and one with should. For example, "Could you help me, please?" "Would you like some tea?" "You should try it."
MIA	We read the comments, and we love to see your sentences. So please write them, even if you feel shy. You can do it.
JAKE	And remember, you can read the full transcript of this episode on our website, and listen to the audio while you read. The link is in the description, with our free ebooks.
MIA	If this episode helped you today, please give it a like, and share it with a friend who is learning English. And if you haven't subscribed yet, please subscribe to the English Story Podcast, so you can find our next episode.
JAKE	Thank you so much for spending this time with us.
MIA	Keep listening, keep practicing, and remember, your English is already better than it was yesterday.
JAKE	Take care, everyone.
MIA	And Jake, could you pass the salt?
JAKE	Of course. Here you are.
MIA	Goodbye, and see you in the next episode.

Practice Exercises

1. Match the Word

1. polite 2. request 3. advice 4. suggestion

A. a helpful idea B. respectful and kind C. an idea someone may choose D. asking someone to do something

2. Choose Could, Would, or Should

1. _____ you help me carry this box, please?
2. _____ you like some tea?
3. You _____ drink more water.
4. We _____ go to the market on Saturday.
5. If I had more time, I _____ learn the guitar.
6. It _____ rain later, so take an umbrella.
7. What _____ I do about my headache?
8. _____ I try a bigger size, please?
9. You _____ not stay up so late.
10. _____ you like to join us for lunch?
11. She _____ be at home, but I am not sure.
12. I _____ like a coffee, please.

3. Make the Request More Polite

1. Give me the salt. → _____
2. Open the window. → _____
3. Help me with these boxes. → _____
4. I want water. → _____
5. Bring a blanket. → _____
6. Let me sit here. → _____

Practice Exercises - Continued

4. Correct the Mistake

1. She should goes home. → _____
2. Could you to help me? → _____
3. I would liking some tea. → _____
4. We could went for a walk. → _____
5. He should sleeps early. → _____
6. Would you likes some coffee? → _____
7. It could raining later. → _____
8. You should to try the bread. → _____

5. Mini Story Comprehension

1. Why did Hana need help?

_____

2. What polite request did Hana make?

_____

3. What did Hana offer Ben?

_____

4. What advice did Hana ask for?

_____

5. What suggestion did Ben give?

_____

6. How did Hana and Ben become friends?

_____

6. Complete the Conversation

Use could, would, should, or should not. Some answers may be used more than once.

A: We _____ have a picnic on Saturday.

B: Great idea! _____ you like to invite Emma?

A: Yes. _____ you bring some sandwiches?

B: Of course. You _____ bring a blanket.

A: What _____ we do if it rains?

B: We _____ stay at my place.

A: _____ you like me to bring a game?

B: Yes, please. We _____ forget the lemonade!

Your Turn

7. Speak

1. Ask politely for a different size in a shop.

_____

2. Offer a visitor tea or water.

_____

3. Give advice to a friend who has a headache.

_____

4. Suggest a weekend activity.

_____

5. Make one polite request to a coworker or family member.

_____

8. Write

Write one sentence with each word.

Could: _____

Would: _____

Should: _____

Today's Small Win
Use one polite request today. Say it aloud three times before you use it.

Answer Key

1. Match the Word

1-B, 2-D, 3-A, 4-C.

2. Choose the Modal

1. Could 2. Would 3. should 4. could 5. would 6. could 7. should 8. Could 9. should 10. Would 11. could 12. would.

3. Polite Requests - Sample Answers

1. Could you pass the salt, please? 2. Could you open the window, please? 3. Could you help me with these boxes, please? 4. Could I have some water, please? 5. Could you bring a blanket, please? 6. Could I sit here, please?

4. Correct the Mistake

1. She should go home. 2. Could you help me? 3. I would like some tea. 4. We could go for a walk. 5. He should sleep early. 6. Would you like some coffee? 7. It could rain later. 8. You should try the bread.

5. Mini Story - Sample Answers

1. Her boxes were heavy. 2. “Could you help me with these boxes, please?” 3. Tea. 4. She asked what she should do on the weekend. 5. Visit the market and try the bread. 6. A polite request and a cup of tea helped them start a friendship.

6. Complete the Conversation

1. could 2. Would 3. Could 4. should 5. should 6. could 7. Would 8. should not.

Keep listening. Keep practising.
Your English is already better than it was yesterday.