63 *can, could, may*

1 Asking for permission

	ASKING FOR PERMISSION	GIVING PERMISSION	REFUSING PERMISSION
informal	*Can I use your pen?*	*Yes, you can.* *Yes, of course (you can).* *Yes, sure.*	*No, you can't.* *No, I'm sorry.*
formal/ polite	*Could I use your bathroom?* *May I make a suggestion?*	*Yes, you can/may.* *Yes, of course/certainly.*	*No, you can't/may not.* *No, I'm sorry/I'm afraid not.*

We use *can I/we* to ask for permission to do something:
*'**Can I have** a shower here?' 'No, I'm sorry, **you can't**! It's for women.'*
*'Dad, **can we borrow** the car this evening?' 'Yes, **you can.** I don't need it.'*

If we want to be very polite or formal, we use *could* or *may*:
*'**Could I use** your bathroom, please?' 'Of course **you can.** It's over there.'*
*'**May I make** a suggestion?' **'Certainly.'***

Pronunciation ➤ 1.25

NATURAL ENGLISH We only use *may* or *may not* in written instructions or very formal situations:
*Students **may not take** bags into the exam.*
*You **may start** writing now.*

2 Making a request

	MAKING A REQUEST	REPLYING
informal	*Can you lend me some money?*	*Sure, how much do you need?* *No, I'm sorry. I don't have enough.*
formal/ polite	*Could you pass me the salt?*	*Yes, of course.* *Certainly.*

We use *can you* to make a request in an informal way:
*'**Can you help** me with these bags?' **'Yes, of course.'***
*'**Can you tell** Tom I called?' **'Yes, sure.'***

If we want to be more polite or formal, we use *could*:
*'**Could you pass** me the water, please?' **'Yes**, here you are.'*

NATURAL ENGLISH We use *please* with *can* or *could* to ask for something or make a request in a polite way:
*'**Please could you** be quiet?'*
or *'**Could you** be quiet, **please**?'*