

I CAN

Learners of Finnish often wonder WHY there are so many verbs for this. I don't really have an answer for this. However, I usually like to point out that – in English – it's hard to come up with a good infinitive for "I can". There is no "to can". There is "to be able to", "to be allowed to" and "to be capable of", but no universal verb "to can". Interesting, right?

Minä osaan versus Minä voin

The verb **osata** means "to know how to do something". It involves a skill that you've learned (e.g. swimming, driving a car). The verb **voida** means "to be able to do something", in the sense that there is nothing obstructing/restricting you from doing it. Possible obstructions could be e.g. a broken leg when trying to ride a bicycle, or lack of a pen when trying to write.

In other words, you could say you **know how** to do something (**minä osaan**), but still not **be able to** do something (**en voi**).

Minä osaan ajaa autoa.	I can drive a car.	I know how to drive a car, I've had lessons.
Minä voin ajaa autoa.	I can drive a car.	I'm able to drive a car. Nothing is restricting me.
Minä en osaa ajaa autoa.	I can't drive a car.	I haven't mastered the driving skill.
Minä en voi ajaa autoa.	I can't drive a car.	I e.g. broke my leg, it's physically impossible.
Minä osaan uida.	I can swim.	I know how to, I've learned how to swim.
Minä voin uida.	I can swim.	I'm currently unrestricted, so I can swim.
Minä en osaa uida.	I can't swim.	I don't know how to, I've never learned how to swim.
Minä en voi uida.	I can't swim.	I can't e.g. because I don't have a swimming suit.

HARJOITTELE OSATA vai VOIDA

1. _____ soittaa kitaraa.
2. _____ ko soittaa minulle?
3. Tottakai, mitä minä soitan? _____ soittaa Brahmsia?
4. Valitettavasti _____ sitä. Voin soittaa Beethovenia.

5. Liisa on 3-vuotias. Hän _____ puhua hyvin!
6. _____ ko hän laittaa auton hyllylle? Ei, koska hylly on korkealla. Minä _____ laitan sen.

7. _____ ko auttaa minua? Tämä on painava.
8. En _____, koska minun selkä on kipeä.
9. Ei se mitään, pyydän _____ mies nostaa sen illalla.

10. Kuinka monta kieltä sinä _____?
11. _____ vain kolmea.
12. _____ auttaa minua oppimaan sinun kieltä?
13. Tottakai, _____ auttaa sinua!