ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Can or May Quiz: 20 Questions with Answers

English Vocabulary Tests · 20 questions · Online test and questions PDF:
https://englishtestsonline.com/can-or-may-quiz-with-answers/

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11	**A**	12	**C**	13	**B**	14	**A**	15	**B**	16	**B**	17	**C**	18	**B**	19	**D**	20	**D**

Explanations

1. Look! My little brother ___ ride a bike without any help now.
✔ **C) can**
This is ability, so we use can. May never means “is able to”.

2. Which question is the most formal way to ask for permission?
✔ **A) May I open the window?**
May I …? is the formal, polite way to ask. Can I …? is also correct, but it is everyday English.

3. It ___ be very windy on this beach, even in summer.
✔ **C) can**
Can is used for things that are generally possible or sometimes true. No to after can.

4. In careful writing: take an umbrella. It ___ rain this afternoon.
✔ **D) may**
For one particular possibility careful writers use may (or might or could). Dictionaries record can for possibility too, but it usually describes what is generally possible.

5. “___ I help you?” asked the shop assistant with a smile.
✔ **A) May**
May I help you? is a polite offer in shops and offices. Can I help you? is also common.

6. You ___ swim here: the water is too deep and there is no lifeguard.
✔ **C) can’t**
Can’t is the everyday way to say that something is not allowed. You may not or you mustn’t would also work.

7. A sign in the library says: “Visitors may not bring food inside.” What does it mean?
✔ **D) Visitors are not allowed to bring food.**
On a notice, may not refuses permission. In another context it can mean “perhaps not”.

8. Liam isn’t answering his phone. He ___ be asleep.
✔ **B) may**
We are guessing about one situation now, so we use may (or might or could), not can.

9. That ___ be Sam at the door: he’s on holiday in Spain.
✔ **B) can’t**
We are sure it is impossible, so we use can’t. May not would only mean “perhaps it isn’t”.

10. When I was five, I ___ already read short books.
✔ **D) could**
Could is the past of can for ability.

11. “Could I borrow your ruler?” “Yes, of course you ___.”
✔ **A) can**
Could makes the question polite, but the answer uses can (or may). “Yes, you could” is not a natural answer.

12. I’m not sure about Saturday. I ___ not be free.
✔ **C) may**
May not here means “perhaps I won’t be”. Can not be free is not used for this.

13. I’d love to ___ play the piano one day.
✔ **B) be able to**
Can has no to-form, so after would love to we use be able to.

14. I ___ open this jar: the lid is stuck.
✔ **A) can’t**
This is about ability, so we use can’t. May not would mean “I’m not allowed to” or “perhaps I won’t”.

15. Which sentence uses can for permission?
✔ **B) You can sit anywhere you like.**
You can sit anywhere you like gives permission. The others are about ability, general possibility and certainty.

16. ___ you both have a long and happy life together!
✔ **B) May**
May at the start of a sentence can make a formal wish. Only may works in this pattern.

17. We ___ to stay up late last night because it was New Year’s Eve.
✔ **C) were allowed**
Can, may and might are never followed by to. For permission in the past we use was or were allowed to.

18. Look at those dark clouds. It ___ well rain before lunch.
✔ **B) may**
May well means quite likely. Can is not used for one particular possibility like this.

19. I ___ wait for the school trip next week! I’m so excited.
✔ **D) can’t**
Can’t wait is a fixed phrase that means very excited. The other options don’t make this phrase.

20. My sister ___ speak Spanish and French, and she’s learning Italian.
✔ **D) can**
This is ability, so we use can. Can never adds -s and is never followed by to.