

Posse – to be able

In Latin, you can use 'posse' plus an infinitive verb to show when someone is able to do something. In the present tense, it looks like this:

possum I am able	possumus we are able
potes you are able	potestis y'all are able
potest he/she/it is able	possunt they are able

In English, you can translate the posse + infinitive verb pair as 'able to do' or 'can do'.

Exercise 1 – What can I do?

Translate the sentence into English using 'I am able' or 'I can'. The first one is done for you.

1. dormire possum.

I am able to sleep (or I can sleep).

2. cantare possum.

3. finire possum.

4. navigare possum.

5. gladium portare possum.

6. canem invenire possum.

7. fortiter pugnare possum.

8. bene legere possum.

9. celeriter currere possum.

10. undas videre possum.

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Exercise 2 – Who can do what?

These sentences contain all six variations of 'posse'. Translate the sentence into English working out who is able and then what they're able to do. The first one is done for you.

1. clamare potest.

He/she is able to shout (or he/she can shout).

2. per silvam ambulare possumus.

3. dei urbem delere possunt.

4. navem construere potestis.

5. infantem curare possum.

6. tacere non potes.

7. regina fortiter pugnare potest.

8. "montem facile ascendere possumus!" dixit dux.

9. equi celeriter currere possunt.

10. aquamne portare potes?
