Asking questions about ability

The most common structure used is ‘Can you...?’

Read the following sentences. They are all questions about ability. Sample answers are also given.

‘Can you speak English?’ ‘Yes, I can.’
‘Can you sing a song?’ ‘No, I can’t. I have a terrible voice.’
‘Can you play the piano?’ ‘No, I can’t.’
‘Can you translate this document into German?’ ‘Yes, I can.’
‘Can you sing that song again?’ ‘Yes, I can.’
‘Can you help me?’ ‘Of course. What can I do for you?’
‘Can you lift this box? It is heavy.’ ‘No, I have a bad back.’
‘Can you solve this problem?’ ‘Yes, I can.’
‘Can he ride a bicycle?’ ‘Yes, he can.’
‘Can you make a tea?’ ‘No, I can’t.’
‘Can you climb a tree?’ ‘Yes, I can.’
‘Can she dance?’ ‘No, she can’t.’
‘Can they repair the roof?’ ‘Yes, they can.’

Notes

To show inability, we use cannot (can’t) or could not (couldn’t).

Things to remember

**Can is followed by an infinitive without to.**

I can play the piano. (NOT I can to play the piano.) (NOT I can played the piano.)

**Can** does not take the marker -s when the subject is a singular noun or third person pronoun.
She can dance. (NOT She cans dance.) (NOT She can dances.)

I can dance.

They can dance.

It can dance.

We can dance.