

ASKING FOR PERMISSION

While doing the topic *I Can/ I Can't ... Can I?* was used to ask for permission. Explain to the children that *may* is more polite than *can*. Give them examples of different situations so that they understand formal and informal contexts.

FOR TEACHERS

"Can" Or "May"?

People are **often** uncertain about whether there is any difference between **can** and **may** when these verbs are used to ask for or **grant** permission. For example, is one of these two sentences 'more correct' than the other?

Can I ask you a few questions?

May I ask you a few questions?

There is a **widespread** view that using **can** to ask for permission is wrong and that it should only be used in **expressions** to do with ability or **capability**, e.g.:

Can she swim?

Can you speak Italian?

But the permission use of **can** is not in fact incorrect in standard English. The only difference between the two verbs is that one is more polite than the other. In **informal** contexts it's perfectly **acceptable** to use **can**; in formal **situations** it would be better to use **may**.

TAKEN FROM:

<https://www.lexico.com/grammar/can-or-may>

FOR STUDENTS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVGMLMRuGs8>

May I Borrow Your Phone? (Sing-along)

Oxford University Press ELT

Excuse me. May I borrow your phone/book?

Sure. Here you are.

Thanks!

You're welcome!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIWgAKs1L08>

Asking For Permission - May I...?

Mark Kulek

May I turn on the light? Yes, you may.
May I open the door? Yes, you may.
May I have some paper? Yes, you may.
May I have another cup? Yes, you may.
May I borrow your pencil? Yes, you may.
May I play in the sandbox? Yes, you may.
May I turn off the light? Yes, you may.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdNQpdUaEFs>

May I Go to the Bathroom? Song
BINGOBONGO Kids

May I go to the bathroom?
May I play with my baseball?
May I come into the classroom?
May I have your pencil?
May I sit down in my chair?
May I stand on my desk?
May I go home with my backpack?
May I eat my homework*?

Yes, you may.
No, you may not.

* Explain that this is supposed to be funny.

Let the children practise using the *May I...?* pattern.
Let them also reply using *Yes, you may/No, you may not.*