

Present Perfect Tense with Modal Verbs

Introduction to the *double infinitive* construction

- Past Time with a Modal Verb (using Present Perfect Tense) requires three verbs!!!
- The conjugated auxiliary is always a form of *haben* regardless of what other verbs appear. Even if a verb that normally would take *sein* appears, the conjugated auxiliary is still always *haben*. (See examples 2, 7, 9 & 14 below, these verbs would normally take *sein* in the present perfect.)
- There is never a participle in this construction even though the meaning is past time. The lexical verb appears as an infinitive and the modal verb also appears as an infinitive.
- Both the lexical and the modal verbs always appear in the final verb field (the non-conjugated verb field). The order of these two verbs is always: 1-lexical 2-modal (You can remember this by thinking that *L* comes before *M* in the alphabet.)
- These two infinitives at the end of the sentence take the place of what would normally be a participle. This construction is known as the *double infinitive*. *Haben + double infinitive* indicates past time.

Here is the layout of the four fields for a sentence employing the double infinitive (present perfect with modal)

fore-field	conj vb <i>haben</i>	s e n t e n c e f i e l d	lexical (infin)	modal (infin)
Ich I	habe (past time)	gestern meine Oma yesterday my Grandma	besuchen visit	können able to

Example Sentences in German with approximate English translations

examples with *können*

1. Ich habe gestern meine Oma besuchen können.
2. Ich habe auch ins Kino gehen können.
3. Hast du letzte Woche den Film sehen können?
4. Als Kind hat er immer viel Bier trinken können.
5. Ich habe dir letzte Woche keinen Brief schreiben können.
6. Die Studenten haben gestern lange arbeiten können.
7. Habt ihr nach Berlin fahren können.

were/was able to do something

- I was able to visit my Grandma yesterday.
I was also able to go to the movies.
Were you able to see the movie last week?
As a child, he was always able to drink a lot of beer.
I wasn't able to write a letter to you last week.
The students were able to study for a long time yesterday.
Were you guys able to go to Berlin?

examples with *mögen*

8. Ich habe immer Briefe schreiben mögen.
9. Ich habe immer im Sommer reisen mögen.
10. Hat Heinrich studieren mögen?
11. Hast du bei Siemens arbeiten mögen?
12. Wir haben in Köln wohnen mögen.
13. Ich habe jeden Tag Zeitung lesen mögen.
14. Als Kind habe ich zur Schule gehen mögen.

liked/used to like doing something

- I used to always like writing letters.
I always liked travelling in the summer.
Did Heinrich like being a student?
Did you like working at Siemens?
We liked living in Cologne.
I used to like reading the newspaper every day.
As a child, I liked (used to like) going to school.