

Unit 27

Could (do) and could have (done)

a We use **could** (do) in a number of ways. Sometimes it is the past of **can** (do) (see **Unit 26**), but sometimes it has a *present* or *future* meaning. For example, we sometimes use **could** to talk about possible future actions, especially when we make suggestions:

- 'What shall we do this evening?' 'We **could go** to the cinema.'
- When you go to New York, you **could stay** with Linda.

Can is also possible in these sentences. ('We **can** go to the cinema.') **Could** is more unsure than **can**.

We also use **could** to talk about possible future happenings:

- There **could be** another rise in the price of petrol soon. (= It is possible that there will be.)

Sometimes **could** means **would be able to**:

- Why doesn't Tom apply for the job? He **could get** it.
- I don't know how she works 14 hours a day. I **couldn't do** it.