Talking about present and past ability bluff

Speaking
Choose one of the sentences below and make a true or made up sentence using those words. Perhaps after asking you for more details, the other students will guess if your sentence is true or false.

- I can…
- I (still) can't…
- I can't… yet.
- I could… but I can't anymore.
- I was able to… but I can't anymore.
- I couldn't… when I was… but I can now.
- I wasn't able to… when I was… but I can now.
- I couldn't… when I was…
- I wasn't able to… when…
- I couldn't… until I was…
- I wasn't able to… until I was….
- Luckily, I was able to… when…
- Luckily, I managed to… when…
- Unfortunately, I wasn't able to…
- Unfortunately, I couldn't…
- Unfortunately, I didn't manage to… when…

Language analysis

*Why can't you say "*Luckily, I could… when…*"?*

Why can't you say "I didn't manage to… when I was… but I can now"*?*

Which forms can be used to talk about past general abilities, e.g. when a certain age?

Which forms can be used to talk about particular moments in time, e.g. when telling a story? How about with negative verbs?

Which form is the most generally useable and so the safe choice if you aren't sure which ones are right?

Language analysis suggested answers

*Why can't you say "*Luckily, I could… when…*"?*
"Could" is only used for a general ability, not for doing something at a particular point in time as in a story.

Why can't you say "I didn't manage to… when I was… but I can now"*?*
"Manage to" is only used for doing something at a particular point in time, not for a general ability in the past.

Which forms can be used to talk about past general abilities, e.g. when a certain age?
"could", "was/were able to"

Which forms can be used to talk about particular moments in time, e.g. when telling a story?
"was/were able to", "managed to"

How about with negative verbs?
"couldn't", "wasn't/ weren't able to", "didn't manage to"

Which form is the most generally useable and so the safe choice if you aren't sure which ones are right?
"was/ were able to"