

会 (huì) VS 能 (néng)

会 means 'to know how to', and 能 means 'be able to'.

会 (huì) denotes the knowledge of how to do something as in

- 他会说阿拉伯语。 (*Tā huì shuō ālābó yǔ.* / *He can speak Arabic*)

or

- 你不会唱歌 (*Nǐ bú huì chànggē.* / *You can't sing*).

能 (néng) expresses having the ability to do something.

- 他能跑得很快。 (*Tā néng pǎo de hěn kuài.* / *He can run very fast*).

能 can also be used to ask for permission.

- 我能不能借你的笔? (*Wǒ néng bu néng jiè nǐ de bǐ?* / *Can I borrow your pen?*).

Although similar, the main difference between 能 and 会 is that 能 indicates a physical ability to do something whereas 会 implies having had to learn something in order to be able to do something. For instance:

- 他会说英语，但是上中文课时他不能说英语。 (*Tā huì shuō yīngyǔ, dànshì shàng zhōngwén kèshí tā bùnéng shuō yīngyǔ.* / *He knows how to*

speak English, but he can't speak English when he having the Chinese class.)

He knows how to speak English, but maybe he is not allowed to speak English when having a Chinese class, so he can't speak English.

Let's review with the following exercises!

Please fill in the blanks with 能 or 会.

1. Can I ask you a question?

我_____问你一个问题吗?

(Wǒ _____ wèn nǐ yí gè wèntí ma?)

2. You can't swim here.

你们不_____在这儿游泳。

(Nǐmen bù _____ zài zhè'er yóuyǒng.)

3. He had a sore throat, so he can't talk today.

他嗓子疼，今天不_____说话。

(Tā sǎngzi téng, jīntiān bù _____ shuōhuà.)

4. Do you know how to play piano?

你_____弹钢琴吗?

(Nǐ_____tán gāngqín ma?)

5. I know you know how to play piano. Can you teach me?

我知道你_____弹钢琴。你_____教我吗?

(Wǒ zhīdào nǐ_____dàn gāngqín. Nǐ_____jiào wǒ ma?)

6. The teacher has told him five times and now he finally knows how to answer this question.

老师教了他五遍，他终于_____回答这个问题了。

(Lǎoshī jiāo le tā wǔ biàn, tā zhōngyú_____huídá zhège wèntíle..)

7. Can you help me?

你_____帮帮我吗?

(Nǐ_____bāng bāng wǒ ma?)

Key

1. 我能问你一个问题吗?
2. 你们不能在这儿游泳。
3. 他嗓子疼，今天不能说话。
4. 你会弹钢琴吗?
5. 我知道你会弹钢琴。你能教我吗?
6. 老师教了他五遍，他终于会回答这个问题了。
7. 你能帮帮我吗?