

# ABILITY & POSSIBILITY

by Seda Sürel

## INTRODUCTION

The suffix -(y)Abil expresses ability, potential, or possibility. It attaches to the verb stem and follows vowel harmony. The meaning depends on the verb and the surrounding context.

### 1. Function

-(y)Abil indicates:

- capacity or skill
- external possibility
- feasibility or permission

The suffix does not inflect; tense and personal markers follow it.

### 2. Forms

The suffix harmonizes with the vowel of the verb stem:

**Back vowels (a, ı, o, u) → -abil**

**Front vowels (e, i, ö, ü) → -ebil**

If the stem ends in a vowel, y may occur between the stem and the suffix:

oku → okuyabil-  
ye → yiyebil-  
ara → arayabil-

If the stem ends in a consonant, no buffer appears:

gel → gelebil-  
bak → bakabil-  
sev → sevebil-

### 3. Position in the Verb Structure

-(y)Abil appears immediately after the verb stem and before tense, aspect, and personal endings.

**Sequence:**

**verb stem → -(y)Abil → tense/aspect → personal ending**

**Examples:**

gel-e-bil-ir  
yap-a-bil-ecek  
oku-y-a-bil-di  
ara-y-a-bil-iyor

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## 4. Interaction with Tense

-(y)Abil combines with all tense and aspect markers.

### Present:

gelebilir, yapabilir

### Future:

yapabileceğim, alabileceksiniz

### Past:

yapabildim, görebildik

### Continuous:

görebiliyordum, yapabiliyorsunuz

The ability suffix retains its position regardless of tense.

## 5. Negation

The negative of ability is formed with -AmA (the suffix -mA fused with the ability marker). The form surfaces as -ama / -eme according to vowel harmony. Unlike other negatives, the -bil part disappears in the affirmative-to-negative shift.

Back vowel stems → -ama Front vowel stems → -eme

Sequence: verb stem → -AmA → tense → person

### Examples:

- yap → yapamam — I cannot do it
- gel → gelemem — I cannot come
- gör → göremezsin — you cannot see
- git → gidemez — he/she cannot go
- al → alamayız — we cannot take
- koş → koşamazlar — they cannot run

Full negative present: gidemem, gidemezsin, gidemez, gidemeyiz, gidemezsiniz, gidemez(ler)

**Note:** A second, more complex form exists, -AmAyAbil (gidemeyebilir), which combines inability with possibility ("might not be able to"). This belongs to the possibility lesson, not to basic ability negation.

### Examples

- Yapabilirim. — I can do it.
- Gelebilirsin. — You can come.
- O görebilir. — He/She can see.
- Biz yapabileceğiz. — We will be able to do it.
- Siz alabilirsiniz. — You can take it.
- Onlar duyabildiler. — They were able to hear.
- Koşamadım ama yürüyebildim. — I could not run, but I was able to walk.

### Notes

- The ability marker follows the stem and precedes tense and personal markers.
- The negative marker surfaces as -ama / -eme before -(y)Abil.
- Buffer y appears only with vowel-final stems.