

Adapted from: Elementary Language Practice by Michael Vince

Explanations

Past ability

- **could**

<i>I could hear.</i>	<i>He could hear.</i>	<i>We could hear.</i>
<i>You could hear.</i>	<i>She could hear.</i>	<i>They could hear.</i>
	<i>It could hear.</i>	

Jane could swim when she was six. (She knew how to swim.)

- **couldn't**

could not = couldn't

<i>I couldn't hear.</i>	<i>He couldn't hear.</i>	<i>We couldn't hear.</i>
<i>You couldn't hear.</i>	<i>She couldn't hear.</i>	<i>They couldn't hear.</i>
	<i>It couldn't hear.</i>	

I looked for my wallet but I couldn't find it.

Past obligation

- **had to** (*must* does not have a past form – use **had to**)

<i>I had to go.</i>	<i>He had to go.</i>	<i>We had to go.</i>
<i>You had to go.</i>	<i>She had to go.</i>	<i>They had to go.</i>
	<i>I had to go.</i>	

I had to do a lot of homework yesterday.

- **didn't have to** *did not = didn't*

<i>I didn't have to go.</i>	<i>He didn't have to go.</i>	<i>We didn't have to go.</i>
<i>You didn't have to go.</i>	<i>She didn't have to go.</i>	<i>They didn't have to go.</i>
	<i>I didn't have to go.</i>	

Tom didn't have to go to school today.