

Be able to instead of can

Be able to often has the same meaning as can.

He can walk on his hands. OR He is able to walk on his hands.

I am unable to understand his motive. OR I can't understand his motive.

They were able to catch the thief. OR They could catch the thief.

Be to instead of will or shall

The structure be + to can be used to express simple futurity.

He is to retire next year. = He will retire next year.

The President is to visit Japan next month. = The President will visit Japan next month.

We are to get a wage rise in June. = We will get a wage rise in June.

Be + to instead of must

The structure be + to is also used to give orders. In this case, it means almost like must.

You are to complete the work in two days. (= You must complete the work in two days.)

He is to report for duty within a week.

Had better instead of should or ought to

You had better consult a good doctor. = You should consult a good doctor.

Had better may also express a threat.

He had better be careful.

Have to instead of must

I have to be there at 10 o'clock. (= I must be there at 10 o'clock.)