Quiz

1) Can I ____ your pen?
   A. give me  
   B. borrow  
   C. lend

2) Could you ____ me your pen, please?
   A. lend  
   B. make  
   C. borrow

3) Thanks. I'll ___ it back to you later.
   A. let  
   B. lend  
   C. give
Transcript

Callum
Hello, and welcome to How To. I'm Callum Robertson. In today's programme I'm going to look at some of the language you can use when you want to borrow something.
Have a listen to my colleague Elena describing a time when she needed to borrow something. What did she need to borrow and why?

Elena
A couple of months ago, unfortunately I'd locked myself out of my flat. I'd just popped downstairs, wearing my slippers, to put the rubbish out, and the door banged shut behind me and I was left outside. But I'd left my upstairs window open.
So I went and asked my next-door neighbour to see if he had a ladder that I could borrow, to see if I could reach this window. And he offered to lend me his.
So I borrowed it and I said I'd get it back to him as soon as I was in, but he said not worry and to keep it until the next morning because his young children were already asleep in bed and he didn't want me to come back and ring the doorbell again.

Callum
That was Elena telling us about a time when she had to borrow something. What was it? It was a ladder. Why did she need to borrow a ladder? Because she had locked herself out of her flat.
When talking about borrowing, there's a related verb we also need to think about: to lend.
Listen to Elena again and compare the way these two verbs are used.

Elena
He offered to lend me his. So I borrowed it.
Callum
Elena needed to borrow a ladder. She borrowed one from her neighbour. Her neighbour lent her a ladder.
To borrow is to take something; to lend is to give something. You borrow something from someone and someone lends something to you.
You can use both these verbs when asking to borrow something but the structure for each is a little different.
First let's look at to borrow. This is generally the most polite way to ask. You'll notice also in a number of these examples, the speakers give a reason why they need to borrow something and also how long they want to borrow it for.

EXAMPLES
• Can I borrow your pen for a moment, please?
• I've forgotten my purse; could I borrow some money until tomorrow?
• Could I borrow your bike? I need to nip to the shops at lunchtime.
• Have you got a pair of scissors I could borrow for a second?

Callum
Let's listen to these examples again. Pay attention to the tone of voice and intonation. When you want to borrow something you are asking someone to do you a favour, so it's a good idea to sound friendly and polite.

EXAMPLES
• Can I borrow your pen for a moment, please?
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Callum
Today we're looking at the language of borrowing. We've seen how we can use the verb to borrow to ask for something. Now let's look at another way, using the verb to lend.

EXAMPLES
• Could you lend me your pen for a moment, please?
• I've forgotten my purse; could you lend me some money until tomorrow?
• Could you lend me your bike? I need to nip to the shops at lunchtime.
• Have you got a pair of scissors you could lend me for a second?
Callum

Listen again.

EXAMPLES

• Could you lend me your pen for a moment, please?
• I've forgotten my purse; could you lend me some money until tomorrow?
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Callum

Both of these ways of asking - using lend or borrow - are fine.
Now before we go, there's one more piece of language to talk about. When you borrow something it's only temporary - you plan to return it - so it's often a good idea when asking to say how long you need something for. In the examples above we heard some of ways of doing that.

EXAMPLES

For a moment
Could you lend me your pen for a moment, please?
Until tomorrow
Could I borrow some money until tomorrow?
For a second
Have you got a pair of scissors I could borrow for a second?

Callum

As well as saying how long you might need something for, there's also a useful phrasal verb you can use to say when you will return something. Listen to this passage from Elena's story again. What phrasal verb does she use to talk about when she will return the ladder?

EXAMPLE

Elena
So I borrowed it and I said I'd get it back to him as soon as I was in.

Callum

That was a little fast, so let's listen one more time.

EXAMPLE

Elena
So I borrowed it and I said I'd get it back to him as soon as I was in.
Callum
I said I'd get it back to him as soon as I was in.
Get it back to - to get something back to someone means to return something to them. Here are some more examples of how you can use this.

EXAMPLES
Could I borrow your cycle tools? I'll get them back to you on Monday, if that's alright.
Can I borrow your ruler? I'll get it back to you in a few minutes.
Can I borrow your Beatles CD? I'll get it back to you tomorrow, if that's OK.

Callum
Well that's all from this How To. Today we've looked at how to use the verbs to borrow and to lend. To finish with, let's hear the end of Elena's story. Remember; she had to borrow a ladder from a neighbour as she'd locked herself out of her flat. Did she get back in?

EXAMPLE
Elena
So I took his ladder, but unfortunately the ladder was too short and my window was just too high up. So I didn't end up getting in that way anyway. I ended up being locked out for several hours and I had to go and sit in the café at the bottom of my road, in my big pink fluffy slippers, and wait until one of my flatmates came home.