

A Student Grammar of

German

PAUL STOCKER

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A Student Grammar of German

A Student Grammar of German is an invaluable reference guide for undergraduates and all intermediate and advanced students. It sets out the grammar of the language in a clear and jargon-free way. Every point is illustrated with numerous examples, accompanied by translations, drawn from a wide variety of printed and electronic media to reflect contemporary usage across a range of registers.

Key features:

- An overview at the start of each chapter to provide a survey of the chapter's contents and the terms used
- Layout designed to facilitate ease of reference
- 'Tip' boxes containing aids to understanding and learning difficult points
- Authentic examples drawn from a wide range of printed and electronic sources
- A glossary of grammatical terms with clear explanations and cross-references
- A full index

Paul Stocker is currently Head of German at Uppingham School, UK, where he was also Head of Modern Languages for twenty years; many of the school's alumni continue with their study of German at university level. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Linguists and has written numerous books for A-level students and others, including *Wort für Wort* (5th edition 2010), *German for Edexcel* (with others, 2008), *Einsicht* (1988 and 1995), and various titles for the "Teach Yourself" series.

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Introduction

German is a language of huge cultural and economic significance. It is the language of some of the greatest writers, scientists, composers, theologians and philosophers. Those who gain fluency in German gain access to cultural and academic riches beyond measure. It is also the language of one of the world's most vibrant and important economies and is an official language of the European Union. The ability to speak and write German with precision is essential for those who wish to be influential and effective in European business and political spheres. And, indeed, the greater the fluency in a language, the easier and more pleasurable it is to communicate with native speakers. Approximately 100 million people speak German as their first language, and many more across Eastern Europe speak it as a *lingua franca*. Linguistic competence is one thing, but real confidence and effectiveness come with the ability to understand the subtleties of a language and to express one's ideas accurately.

Grammar is not usually associated with glamour, though the two words have the same root. Getting to grips with the complexities of a language may feel at times like trying to master a never-ending and definitely unglamorous maze of new structures. The user of this volume will be relieved to know that the author's aim is, if not to make German grammar glamorous, then at least to make it as straightforward and accessible as possible. Learners are often surprised to discover that the grammar of German is simpler than that of many other languages and has fewer exceptions to the 'rules'. Its main structures can be gathered under just three headings:

- verbs and tenses
- prepositions and cases
- word order (especially verb position).

Almost everything else is a subdivision of one of these.

This book, which covers all the grammar required by undergraduates and other intermediate and advanced learners, has been written to help the student of the language to develop fluency and accuracy. It takes as its basis modern standard German (*Hochdeutsch*), but it also includes differences between spoken and written language, as well as variations found in German-speaking countries such as Austria and Switzerland, where these differences are significant and common. Although the emphasis is on contemporary usage, older forms that may still be encountered with some regularity are also noted.

The main features of *A Student Grammar of German* are as follows:

- **Overview** Each chapter starts with an outline of the contents, and with definitions and examples of the terms and structures described in the following pages.
- **'TIP' boxes** Short summaries of difficult points, or useful ways of remembering patterns appear throughout the text.
- **The main rules** are printed in **bold**, to highlight the key points.
- **Examples** Each point is illustrated by several examples, with translations, to enable the reader to get a feel for current usage. They are drawn from a wide variety of sources, including the press and the internet.
- **List of strong and irregular verbs**
- **Summary of tenses**
- **Glossary** A list of grammatical terms used, with brief definitions and examples.

Cases

OVERVIEW

► What are cases?

Cases show how certain classes of words, such as nouns, pronouns and determiners (such as articles) function within a sentence or clause. In English, case is unmarked on nouns and determiners, but is clearly marked on the forms of the pronoun:

She likes me *I like her* but not: *Her like I*

- ♦ The group (or **case**, to give it its proper name) of personal pronouns we can use in the subject (or 'doer') position is

I, you, he, it, she, we, they

They are said to be in the **nominative** case.

- ♦ The group of pronouns we can use in the object (or 'done to') position is

me, you, him, her, it, us, them

These are said to be in the **accusative** case. Only *you* and *it* have identical forms in both nominative and accusative cases.

► Cases in German

The marking of case is vital to the structure of German. Changes to the forms of words affect not only personal pronouns, as in English, but also articles (*der, die, das; ein, eine, ein*), adjectives and other words. There are four cases: nominative, accusative, genitive and dative.

However, it is not quite as complicated as it at first looks.

- ♦ There are many similarities between the endings in each group of words:
e.g. masculine accusative: **den, einen, meinen, ihn, welchen?**
- ♦ Because the role of a pronoun or noun phrase is usually clear from its case ending, other aspects of the language, such as word order, are often more flexible than in English (once some basic rules have been mastered).

The four cases

Here is a summary of the main functions of cases (excluding their use with prepositions):

Case	Function	Example
Nominative	Subject ('doer') of the verb	Der Mann läuft über die Straße <i>The man is crossing the street</i>
Accusative	Object ('done to') of the verb	Ich kenne den Mann <i>I know the man</i>
Genitive	Possession between two nouns	Das Haus meines Freundes <i>My friend's house</i>
Dative	Indirect (additional) object of the verb	Ich schicke meinem Freund einen Brief <i>I'm sending a letter to my friend</i>

1.1 The cases

You will find grids of the case endings in the chapters on determiners (Chapter 3), pronouns (Chapter 4) and adjectives (Chapter 5).

TIP Deciding which case to use

- Whenever a noun phrase or a pronoun is used, a decision must be made about which case it is in.
- If the noun phrase or pronoun is not in the plural, you will need to know the gender of the noun.
- For the plural, there is a single set of endings for all genders.

Then ask yourself this question, which will serve in most instances:

*Does the noun or pronoun
come after a preposition (e.g. auf, in)?*

*If YES –
the **preposition**
determines the case*

*If NO –
check whether it is the
subject (Nominative)
or the
object (Accusative)
of the verb*

Other factors which determine the case

- Certain verbs and adjectives are used with a particular case; see 13.3 (verbs) and 5.3 (adjectives).

▶ 1.1.1 The **nominative** case

a The **nominative case** indicates the subject of the verb (the 'doer' of the action)

Meine Mutter hört Musik	<i>My mother is listening to music</i>
Der Lehrer unterrichtet Deutsch	<i>The teacher teaches German</i>
Was hat er gesagt?	<i>What did he say?</i>
Woher kommst du ?	<i>Where do you come from?</i>

Remember that the subject does not necessarily stand before the verb (as happens in English); see 18.1.

Diesen Wein finde ich nicht so gut	<i>I don't think this wine is all that good</i>
---	---

b The **nominative** is used after certain verbs

The nominative is used after the 'copular' verbs: **sein** (to be), **werden** (to become), **bleiben** (to stay, remain) and a few other verbs. This is because the noun phrase after the verb refers to the same person (or thing) as the subject.

Peter ist mein bester Freund	<i>Peter is my best friend</i>
Er ist ein berühmter Politiker geworden	<i>He became a famous politician</i>
Sie ist und bleibt die Größte	<i>She is and will remain the best</i>

Note Other verbs require **als** before the nominative – (see also 1.1.2e):

Er erwies sich als ein guter Freund	<i>He proved himself a good friend</i>
Er bezeichnet sich als freier Photograph	<i>He describes himself as an independent photographer</i>

▶ 1.1.2 The **accusative** case

a The **accusative case** indicates the direct object (the thing or person on the receiving end of the action)

Ich kenne ihn seit Jahren	<i>I've known him for years</i>
Sie hat den Ball hart geschlagen	<i>She hit the ball hard</i>
Ich suche meinen Schlüssel , aber ich finde ihn nicht	<i>I'm looking for my key, but I can't find it</i>

Note The direct object does not have to stand after the verb. (See also the note about the position of the subject in 1.1.1a above.)

Diesen Wein finde ich nicht so gut	<i>I don't think this wine is all that good</i>
--	--

b The **accusative** is used after certain prepositions (see 9.1 and 9.3)

Dieser Brief ist für dich	<i>This letter is for you</i>
Sie ist ohne ihn in Urlaub gefahren	<i>She went on holiday without him</i>
Ich gehe in die Stadt	<i>I'm going into town</i>
Bitte stell die Flasche auf den Tisch	<i>Please put the bottle on the table</i>

c The **accusative** is used with certain adjectives (see 5.3)

Endlich sind wir den Hund los	<i>At last we're rid of the dog</i>
Ich bin die Arbeit satt	<i>I'm fed up with work</i>
Ich bin das Stadtleben nicht gewohnt	<i>I'm not used to city life</i>

d Certain verbs, sometimes of naming and calling, have a second accusative (see 13.3.3)

Ich nannte ihn einen Idioten	<i>I called him an idiot</i>
Sie schimpfte ihn einen Faulpelz	<i>She called him a lazybones</i>
Das hat ihn das Leben gekostet	<i>It cost him his life</i>

e The accusative after als is used with certain verbs of regarding, considering, etc.

Damals sah ich ihn als meinen besten Freund	<i>At that time I saw him as my best friend</i>
Jetzt betrachte ich ihn als meinen Feind	<i>Now I regard him as my enemy</i>
But halten für <i>to consider to be</i>	
Ich halte ihn für einen Faulpelz	<i>I think he's a lazybones</i>

f The accusative is used in certain phrases

• After es gibt:

In meinem Zimmer gibt es einen Tisch und einen Fernseher	<i>In my room there's a table and a television</i>
--	--

• Greetings and wishes (i.e. short for „Ich wünsche dir/Ihnen ...“ ‘I wish you ...’):

Guten Tag!	<i>Hello!</i>
Herzlichen Glückwunsch!	<i>Congratulations!</i>
Schönen Tag noch!	<i>Have a nice day!</i>

• **Many phrases of time** which denote a definite period of time or a point in time (cf. 1.1.3d below) not governed by a preposition:

Sie blieb den ganzen Tag zu Hause	<i>She stayed at home all day</i>
Hast du nächsten Dienstag Zeit?	<i>Are you free next Tuesday?</i>
Ich war nur einen Tag in München	<i>I only spent one day in Munich</i>
Einen Augenblick mal, bitte!	<i>Just a moment, please!</i>

• **Distance covered or direction** with verbs denoting motion, and prices and measures:

Sie ging einen Schritt weiter	<i>She went a step further</i>
Er stieg den Berg hinauf	<i>He climbed the mountain</i>
Dieses Stück ist einen Meter lang	<i>This piece is one metre long</i>
Das hier kostet nur einen Euro	<i>This one only costs a euro</i>

▶ **1.1.3 The genitive case**

a The genitive indicates possession (= whose?) between two nouns

Das ist das Büro meines Vaters	<i>That's my father's office</i>
Dieser Teil der Aufgabe ist leicht	<i>This part of the task is easy</i>
Peters Haus; Goethes Werke	<i>Peter's house; Goethe's works</i>

b The genitive is used after certain prepositions (see 9.4)

während der Sommerferien	<i>during the summer holidays</i>
trotz des Wetters	<i>despite the weather</i>
fünf Kilometer außerhalb der Stadt	<i>five kilometres outside town</i>

Note Colloquial German often prefers the dative (often after von) both to indicate possession and after prepositions:

das Büro **von meinem** Vater
trotz **dem** Wetter
fünf Kilometer außerhalb **von der** Stadt

c The genitive is used with certain adjectives and verbs (see 5.3.2 and 13.3.4)

Ist er dieses Verbrechen **fähig**? *Is he capable of this crime?*
Es ist nicht der Mühe **wert** *It's not worth the trouble*
Haustiere **bedürfen** der täglichen *Animals require daily care*
Pflege

But simpler constructions or vocabulary are often preferred:

Ist er zu diesem Verbrechen *fähig*? *Is he capable of this crime?*
Haustiere brauchen tägliche *Pflege* *Animals require daily care*

d The genitive is used in certain expressions

• **Phrases** of indefinite time not governed by a preposition (cf. 1.1.2f above):

eines Tages *one day*
eines schönen Morgens *one beautiful morning*
dieser Tage *recently; soon*

Note Nacht, though feminine, takes masculine/neuter genitive endings:

eines Nachts *one night*
Des Nachts konnte er nicht schlafen *He couldn't sleep at night*

• **Other phrases**, often involving opinions:

Ich bin der Meinung, dass ... *I'm of the opinion that ...*
Ich bin der Ansicht, dass ... *It's my view that ...*
meines Erachtens *in my opinion*
Ich fahre erster Klasse *I travel first class*

▶ **1.1.4 Genitive replaced by dative**

Even in formal German, there are instances when the genitive cannot be used; invariably, its place is taken by the dative, often after von.

a The genitive cannot be used with personal pronouns and some other constructions

ein Freund von mir *a friend of mine*
viele von ihnen *many of them*
Welches von diesen Bildern gefällt dir *Which of these pictures do you*
am besten? *like best?*

But a genitive construction is possible if no pronoun is used:

einer meiner Freunde *one of my friends*

Note also the genitive construction:

viele derer, die ... *many of those who ...*

b The genitive cannot be used if the case of the noun would be unclear (because it or the word it stands with does not add a case ending):

der Verkauf **von** Häusern *the sale of houses*
(der Verkauf Häuser would be so unclear as not to make sense)

c The genitive cannot be used in consecutive genitive noun phrases

(because it is regarded as clumsy):

die Karosserie vom Auto meines Vaters	<i>the bodywork of my father's car</i>
(rather than die Karosserie des Autos meines Vaters)	
Sie streiten sich wegen des neuen	<i>They're arguing about her</i>
Spielzeugs von ihrem Bruder	<i>brother's new toy</i>
(rather than ... wegen des neuen Spielzeugs ihres Bruders)	

▶ **1.1.5 The dative case**

a The dative indicates the indirect object of the verb (see 13.3.2)

Er schickte seinem Bruder das	<i>He sent his brother the book</i>
Buch	
Reichst du mir bitte das Salz?	<i>Could you please pass me the salt?</i>
Ich habe meiner Schwester eine	<i>I bought my sister a CD</i>
CD gekauft	
Du musst es mir kaufen!	<i>You must buy it for me!</i>
Sie hat mir Geld gestohlen	<i>She stole money from me</i>

TIP What are direct and indirect objects?

- Think of the sentence as a sequence, with the action passing from the subject to the object. In this sentence

Er schickte seinem Bruder das	<i>He sent his brother the book</i>
Buch	

the book has to be sent before *his brother* can receive it; it is therefore the direct object of the verb, and is in the accusative case. *His brother* is the indirect object and is in the dative case.

- Another 'test' for the indirect object is that the word **to** or **for** (or even **from**) can be placed in front of it (*I bought a CD **for** my sister*). In fact, the third example in 1.1.5a could be expressed (especially in spoken German) as:

Ich habe eine CD für meine	<i>I bought my sister a CD/a CD for</i>
Schwester gekauft	<i>my sister</i>

- The indirect object is an additional object, and even if it is left out, the sentence still makes sense: *I bought a DVD* makes sense; *I bought my sister* does not.

b The dative is used with some prepositions (see 9.2 and 9.3)

Ich habe bei Freunden gewohnt	<i>I stayed with friends</i>
seit meinem Besuch	<i>since my visit</i>
Die Kirche steht unserem Haus	<i>The church stands opposite our</i>
gegenüber	<i>house</i>
Ich arbeite in der Stadt	<i>I'm working in town</i>
Die Flasche ist auf dem Tisch	<i>The bottle is on the table</i>

c The dative is used after certain verbs (see 13.3.1)

Verbs such as danken, folgen, gefallen and helfen are followed by the dative; their English equivalents are followed by the accusative:

Dieser Musik gefällt meinem	<i>My father really likes this music</i>
Vater gut, aber nicht mir	<i>but I don't</i>
Kann ich Ihnen helfen?	<i>Can I help you?</i>

d The dative is used after certain adjectives (see 5.3.3)

The adjective usually follows the noun or pronoun in these constructions:

Kann ich Ihnen behilflich sein?	<i>May I help you?</i>
Ist es dir klar?	<i>Is that clear to you?</i>

e The dative object is often used to indicate possession

For the possessive, especially with parts of the body or items of clothing, German often uses a dative pronoun (as an indirect object) plus the definite article, where English usually uses a possessive determiner (see also 3.2.3a):

Ich habe mir das Bein gebrochen	<i>I broke my leg</i>
Sie haben sich die Hände gewaschen	<i>They washed their hands</i>
Sie hat ihm die Hände gewaschen	<i>She washed his hands</i>
Er schlug dem Mann ins Gesicht	<i>He hit the man in the face</i>

f The dative is also used to indicate the person affected by the verb

This is often an event to their advantage or disadvantage. This is sometimes called a 'free dative', meaning that the dative pronoun or phrase, though still an indirect object, is not essential to the construction of the predicate:

Die Tasse ist ihm beim Abwaschen zerbrochen	<i>The cup broke while he was washing it</i>
Der Bus ist ihr vor der Nase weggefahren	<i>She missed the bus by a whisker</i>

g Other expressions with the dative

Wie geht es Ihnen/dir ?	<i>How are you?</i>
Mir geht's gut/schlecht	<i>I'm fine/not so good</i>
Es geht mir gut/schlecht	<i>I'm fine/not so good</i>
Es ist mir viel zu warm/kalt	<i>It's much too warm/cold for me</i>
Es ist mir egal	<i>It's all the same to me</i>
Mir ist, als ob ich ihm schon mal begegnet wäre	<i>I have the feeling that I may have met him somewhere before</i>

1.2 Apposition

a A noun or noun phrase in apposition explains or adds information about the noun or pronoun which precedes it; it therefore appears in the same case to establish the grammatical link

Helmut Schmidt, der große Staatsmann	<i>Helmut Schmidt, the great statesman</i>
Ich besuchte Richard, meinen Freund aus Berlin	<i>I visited Richard, my friend from Berlin</i>
Sie wohnen in Lübeck, einer schönen Stadt an der Ostsee	<i>They live in Lübeck, a pretty town on the Baltic</i>

Besucher bestaunen die Fossilien
eines *Argentinosaurus*
huinculensis, **des größten**
Sauriers aller Zeiten

Visitors marvel at the fossil
remains of an Argentinosaurus
huinculensis, the largest
dinosaur of all time

Note The case use in the noun phrase in apposition is often ignored in colloquial German:

„Er wohnt im Adler, **ein**
bescheidenes Hotel“

'He's staying at the Adler, a
modest hotel'

b Days and dates: phrases with am + weekdays may be followed by the dative or the accusative

am Mittwoch, **dem** (or **den**) 19.
Juli

on Wednesday 19 July

c With names and titles that include an article, the article does not change its case in apposition

in der Zeitschrift **Der Spiegel**
in Manns Roman **Der Zauberberg**

in Der Spiegel magazine
in Mann's novel Der Zauberberg

d With geographical and other names, German often uses apposition where English uses of

die Hansestadt Lübeck
die Universität Tübingen
die Insel Poehl
die Regierung Angela Merkel

the Hanseatic city of Lübeck
the University of Tübingen
the Island of Poehl
the government of Angela Merkel

2

Nouns

OVERVIEW

Nouns are naming words – they identify animals, people, places, things and concepts.

- German nouns always begin with a **capital letter**, which makes recognition simple.
- Nouns always have a **gender** – masculine (*der*), feminine (*die*), neuter (*das*). A few nouns exist only in the plural (e.g. *die Leute* – *people*). A very few nouns change their meaning depending on the gender.
- The noun is usually (but not always) preceded by a **determiner** (e.g. *der* or *ein*), and often by an **adjective**; the adjective may take the form of an adjectival phrase.

Determiner + noun:	der Mann
Determiner + adj. + noun	ein neues Auto
Determiner + adj. phrase + noun	das soeben erschienene Buch <i>the recently published book</i>

- The **plurals** of German nouns do not usually end in *-s*, as is the case with most English nouns. Nonetheless, there are certain patterns to the system of plurals.

der Arm – zwei Arme
das Buch – einige Bücher
das Auto – viele Autos

- A few nouns take case endings (apart from the common genitive singular *-s* on masculine and neuter nouns). They are weak masculine nouns (2.3.2) and adjective nouns (5.2).
- If you get the gender or plural wrong in conversation, it will affect the meaning only in very rare instances; the context will make things clear. However, German speakers set great store by getting genders and plural forms correct!

2.1 The gender of nouns

▶ 2.1.1 Which gender?

a Nouns denoting masculine people and animals are usually masculine; feminine persons and animals are usually feminine

- There are some strange (to the eyes of English-speakers, at any rate) exceptions to this pattern, e.g.:

die Geisel	<i>hostage</i>	das Genie	<i>genius</i>
das Mädchen	<i>girl</i>	der Mensch	<i>human being</i>
das Mitglied	<i>member</i>	die Person	<i>person</i>
das Pferd	<i>horse</i>	die Waise	<i>orphan</i>

- The reasons for this are often historical: *der Mensch* is from *der Mann*, for instance. Or the reason may be grammatical: *Mädchen* is neuter, as are all nouns ending with the diminutive *-chen* (*Magd* = *young girl*).
- Usually, there is no apparent logic behind genders, especially for things and concepts; they simply need to be learned with the noun and its plural.

b New nouns entering German often gain their gender in different ways, e.g.

- by association with the type of thing to which they refer:

die E-Mail by association with *die Post*
das Notebook by association with *das Buch*
das Handy by association with *das Telefon*
das Baby by association with *das Kind*

- or because they have the grammatical ending of a German noun:

der Computer has a masculine *-er* ending
die Hotline has a feminine *-e* ending
das Mobbing *bullying* is akin to a neuter infinitive noun.

TIP The gender of compound nouns

The gender of a compound noun is always the gender of the last element:

der Kindergarten

der Weltkrieg

die Briefmarke

▶ 2.1.2 Masculine nouns

a Nouns with these meanings are normally masculine

Meaning	Examples			Exceptions
Male persons/professions	der Junge	der Vater	der Arzt	die Wache <i>sentry</i>
Male animals¹	der Hund	der Kater <i>male cat</i>	der Stier <i>bull</i>	
Days of the week, months, seasons	der Montag	der Juli	der Herbst	
Many non-German rivers These German rivers:²	der Amazonas der Rhein	der Ganges der Main	der Nil der Neckar der Inn	<i>See feminine nouns</i>
Compass points, many aspects of weather	der Norden	der Schnee	der Wind	e.g. <i>das Wetter, das Gewitter, die Brise</i>
Makes of car³	der Mercedes	der Porsche	der Nissan	
Alcoholic and many other drinks	der Kaffee der Tee	der Wein der Schnaps	der Saft	das Bier

¹ i.e. as opposed to the generic words for animals, which may be any gender (*die Katze, die Kuh/das Rindvieh, das Pferd*).

² Most German river names are feminine – see below.

³ Masculine by association with the generic term *der Wagen*.

b Nouns with these endings are usually masculine

Ending	Examples	Ending	Examples
-ant	Konsonant, Brillant	-ig	Käfig, Honig
-ast	Kontrast	-ismus	Idealismus, Egoismus
-ent	Dirigent, Student	-ist	Polizist, Kommunist
-er (people)¹	Lehrer, Autofahrer	-ling	Frühling
-ich	Teppich, Rettich	-or	Katalysator, Reaktor, Motor

¹ Exceptions: die Mutter, die Schwester, die Tochter, das Opfer.

Nouns ending in **-er** that refer to things may be any gender: die Butter, das Wetter, das Messer, das Fenster, das Wasser).

▶ **2.1.3 Feminine nouns**

a Nouns with these meanings are usually feminine

Meaning	Examples			Exceptions
Female persons/ professions¹	die Mutter	die Oma	die Lehrerin	das Mädchen das Fräulein
Female animals	die Kuh	die Sau		
All rivers that are not masculine	die Donau	die Themse	die Elbe	
Fruits and trees, and many flowers	die Rose	die Eiche	die Pflaume	der Apfel; trees ending in -baum , e.g. der Eichenbaum
Names of ships, motorbikes, planes²	die <i>Titanic</i>	die BMW	die Boeing	der Airbus
Names of numerals	die Eins	die Million	die Milliarde	

¹ Many feminine nouns for professions are formed by adding **-in** to the masculine noun.

² Feminine by association with the generic term for bikes and planes, which is *die Maschine*; *der BMW*, on the other hand, designates a car made by BMW.

b Nouns with these endings are usually feminine

Ending	Examples	Ending	Examples
-a	Aula, Pizza	-schaft	Landschaft, Freundschaft
-anz, -enz	Konferenz, Eleganz	-ion	Station, Qualifikation, Region
-ei	Partei, Bücherei	-sis	Dosis, Skepsis
-heit, -keit	Faulheit, Schönheit	-tät	Universität, Qualität
-ie	Industrie (but das Genie)	-ung	Meinung, Einstellung

Ending	Examples	Ending	Examples
-ik ¹	Musik, Physik, Fabrik	-ur	Kultur, Temperatur
		-e ²	Liebe, Nähe

¹ But der Atlantik, der Pazifik (from der Ozean).

² This applies to about 90 per cent of nouns ending in -e, but there are some common exceptions, such as:

- ♦ **weak masculine nouns**, e.g. der Junge, der Affe, der Name (see 2.3.2)
- ♦ **adjective-nouns**, e.g. der Alte, der Deutsche, das Gute (see 5.2)
- ♦ **neuter nouns beginning with Ge-** (see below), e.g. das Gebirge, das Gemüse
- ♦ **a few other nouns**, e.g. der Käse, das Auge, das Ende, das Interesse

▶ 2.1.4 Neuter nouns

a Nouns with these meanings are neuter

Meaning	Examples			Exceptions
Young humans/animals	das Baby	das Kind	das Kalb	
Continents, most towns/countries ¹	das schöne Deutschland	das alte Berlin	das neue Europa	See below ¹
Letters, musical notes	das A, B, C	das H-Moll <i>B minor</i>		
Metals, scientific units, many elements ²	das Eisen	das Silber	das Kilo das Volt das Atom	der Stahl, die Bronze, der Wasserstoff
Infinitives, adjectives, pronouns, etc. used as nouns	das Aussehen	das Blau	das eigene Ich	
Many product names ³	das Mars	das Aspirin	das Persil	die/das Nutella

¹ The **article** is used with countries only when:

- ♦ there is an **adjective** before the **noun** or some other qualification:

das wiedervereinigte Deutschland; das Berlin des Kaisers

- ♦ the **country is one of the very few feminine countries and regions**; these are always used with the definite article:

die Schweiz, die Türkei, die Bretagne, die Normandie, die Arktis, die Antarktis

- ♦ the **noun is one of the very few masculine countries**; these are sometimes used with the definite article:

der Irak, der Iran, der Jemen, der Kongo, der Libanon, der Sudan

² A few elements are masculine; they are the 'atmospheric' nouns ending in -stoff (Wasserstoff *hydrogen*, Sauerstoff *oxygen*, Stickstoff *nitrogen*), plus Kohlenstoff *carbon*, along with der Phosphor, der Schwefel *sulphur*.

³ The **gender** is often decided by what the product is: die Aspirin designates an individual tablet (= die Tablette) as opposed to the generic term above, die Nivea (= die Crème), das Warsteiner (= das Bier), die Colgate (= die Zahnpasta). See also note on die BMW in 2.1.3 above.

b Nouns with these endings are neuter

Ending	Examples	Ending	Examples
-chen	Mädchen, Brötchen	-tel	Viertel, Drittel
-lein	Ringlein	-tum¹	Datum, Eigentum
-ma	Klima, Komma	-um	Studium, Gremium
-ment²	Parlament, Abonnement	-o³	Büro, Konto

¹ But der Irrtum *error*, der Reichtum *wealth*.

² But der Moment, der Zement.

³ About 30 per cent of nouns ending in -o are exceptions to this rule, e.g. der Euro, die Avocado and abbreviated forms of nouns, e.g. die Disko (Diskothek), die Limo (Limonade), der Zoo (der zoologische Garten).

▶ 2.1.5 Other endings and prefixes

Apart from the endings listed above, there are some other indicators of gender.

a Nouns with the prefix Ge- are mostly neuter

das Gebäude	<i>building</i>	das Gebirge	<i>(range of) mountains</i>
das Gelächter	<i>laughter</i>	das Gepäck	<i>luggage</i>
das Gesetz	<i>law</i>	das Geschirr	<i>crockery</i>

Exceptions:

- A few masculine nouns, e.g. der Gebrauch *use*, der Gefallen *favour*, der Gehorsam *obedience*, der Geruch *smell*
- A few feminine nouns, e.g. die Gebühr *fee*, die Geduld *patience*, die Gefahr *danger*, die Geschichte *history*

b Nouns formed from the infinitives of verbs and ending in -en are almost all neuter

das Autofahren	<i>motoring, driving</i>	das Einkaufen	<i>shopping</i>
das Lesen	<i>reading</i>		

Exceptions:

der Braten	<i>roast joint</i>	der Gefallen	<i>favour</i>
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c Nouns ending with -nis or -sal are mostly neuter

das Ereignis	<i>event</i>
das Gefängnis	<i>prison</i>
das Schicksal	<i>fate</i>

Exceptions:

- Some nouns ending in **-nis** or **-sal** are feminine, e.g. die Erkenntnis *realisation*, die Erlaubnis *permission*

▶ 2.1.6 Homonyms: identical nouns with different genders/meanings**a A few nouns may look and sound identical, but have different meanings, genders and, usually, different plurals**

Note In English, homonyms sound the same, but have different meanings and may have different spellings, e.g. *to / too / two*

der Band ¹ (¨er) <i>volume, book</i>	das Band (¨er) <i>ribbon, conveyor belt</i>
	das Band (-e) <i>bonds, ties (of friendship)</i>
der Bund (¨e) <i>union</i>	das Bund (-e) <i>bunch</i>
der Ekel (no pl) <i>disgust, loathing</i>	das Ekel (¨) <i>obnoxious person</i>
der Erbe (-n) <i>heir</i>	das Erbe (no pl) <i>inheritance</i>
der Golf (-e) <i>gulf</i>	das Golf (no pl) <i>golf</i>
der Hut (¨e) <i>hat</i>	die Hut (no pl) <i>guard, watch</i>
der Junge (-n) <i>boy</i>	das Junge (adj.n.) <i>young (animal)</i>
der Kiefer (¨) <i>jaw(-bone)</i>	die Kiefer (-n) <i>pine-tree</i>
der Kunde (-n) <i>customer</i>	die Kunde (no pl) <i>knowledge, study of e.g. Erdkunde</i>
der Leiter (¨) <i>manager</i>	die Leiter (-n) <i>ladder</i>
der Marsch (¨e) <i>march</i>	die Marsch (-e) <i>marsh, fen</i>
der Messer (¨) <i>gauge</i>	das Messer (¨) <i>knife</i>
der Pack (-e or ¨e) <i>stack, pile</i>	das Pack (-s) <i>package</i>
	das Pack (no pl) <i>rabble</i>
der Pony (no pl) (<i>hair</i>) <i>fringe</i>	das Pony (-s) <i>pony</i>
der Schild (-e) <i>shield</i>	das Schild (-er) <i>sign</i>
der See (-n) <i>lake</i>	die See (-n) <i>sea</i>
die Steuer (-n) <i>tax</i>	das Steuer (¨) <i>steering-wheel, helm</i>
der Tau (no pl) <i>dew</i>	das Tau (-e) <i>rope, hawser</i>
der Verdienst (-e) <i>earnings</i>	das Verdienst (-e) <i>merit, contribution</i>
der Weise (adj.n.) <i>wise man</i>	die Weise (-n) <i>way, means</i>

¹ Note also die Band (-s) pronounced [bent] *rock group*.

- A few other nouns look and sound identical, and have the same gender, but different meanings and different plurals (see 2.2.7 below).

b In addition, there are a few nouns (mostly of foreign origin) where more than one gender may be used, but where the meaning does not vary

der/das	Bonbon	sweet
der/das	Cartoon	
der/das	Curry	
das/die	Elastik	
der/das	Fakt	
der/das	Filter	
der/die	Gischt	<i>spray (e.g. on road)</i>
der/das	Joghurt	
der/das	Keks	<i>biscuit, cookie</i>
der/das	Ketchup	
der/das	Liter	
der/das	Teil ¹	<i>part</i>
der/das	Virus ²	
der/das	Zubehör	<i>accessories</i>

¹ Mostly masculine, except in technical uses: das Ersatzteil *spare part*.

² Originally neuter, but colloquially masculine, by analogy with other nouns ending in -us.

c There are some regional variations in gender, including

das Foto (Germany, Austria)	die Foto (Switzerland)
der Keks (Germany, Switzerland)	das Keks (Austria)
das Match (Germany)	der Match (Austria, Switzerland)
das Radio (Germany, Austria)	der Radio (Switzerland)
der Sakko <i>jacket</i> (Germany, Switzerland)	das Sakko (Austria)
das Taxi (Germany, Austria)	der Taxi (Switzerland)

▶ **2.1.7 Gender agreement with nouns and pronouns**

If the gender of the noun is not the same as the natural gender of the person or animal, German-speakers will often use a pronoun that is in keeping with the natural gender. Determiners and adjectives always agree with the grammatical gender.

a In formal German, the pronoun referring back to the noun reflects the gender of the noun

Sie ist ein unartiges Kind	<i>She's a naughty child</i>
Er ist eine starke Person	<i>He's a strong person</i>

But

Er ist eine Person, die alles kann	<i>He's a person who can do anything</i>
Er blickte nach dem Kind; es schlief noch	<i>He looked at the child; it was still asleep</i>

b In colloquial German, this rule is often ignored, and the natural gender is used, especially if the speaker has in mind the person rather than the noun

Wenn ich sie (dieses Mädchen) wäre ...	<i>If I were her (that girl), I'd ...</i>
Er wusste, dass er das Mädchen nie wieder sehen wird, und er umarmte sie das letzte Mal	<i>He knew that he'd never see the girl again, and he embraced her for the last time</i>

▶ **2.1.8 Gender issues with nouns and pronouns**

Just as in English, where certain nouns, particularly those which end in *-man* (e.g. *chairman*), may be thought to lack inclusivity towards women, a number of ways have come into use to render the German language more egalitarian, some more readily accepted than others.

a Some nouns, especially adjective-nouns, can be used with either gender:

der/die Jugendliche	<i>young person</i>
der/die Vorsitzende	<i>chairman/chairwoman</i>
der/die Deutsche	<i>German</i>

b Feminine forms of other nouns may be distinguished in several ways

♦ **By natural gender:**

der Bruder/die Schwester	<i>brother/sister</i>
der Neffe/die Nichte	<i>nephew/niece</i>

der Krankenpfleger/die Krankenschwester	<i>male nurse/(female) nurse</i>
meine Damen und Herren	<i>ladies and gentlemen</i>

• By adding a feminine **suffix**:

der Arzt/die Ärztin	<i>doctor</i>
der Cousin/die Cousine	<i>cousin</i>
der Verkäufer/die Verkäuferin	<i>salesman/saleswoman</i>

c With other nouns, German-speakers sometimes try to avoid apparent sexism, especially in formal language and in the media, in several ways

• By referring to both masculine and feminine forms, where in the past the masculine plural would have been used for mixed groups:

Kollegen und Kolleginnen	<i>colleagues</i>
Mitbürger und Mitbürgerinnen	<i>citizens</i>

• By combining the masculine and feminine forms into one word, sometimes with an upper-case T for emphasis; this, of course, only works in print:

KollegInnen, MitbürgerInnen (or Kolleg/innen, Mitbürger/innen)

• This can occasionally lead to verbose formulations, especially in lists, and bizarre inventions which, however, have not come into general use:

Frauschaft (for Mannschaft)	<i>Gästin (female guest)</i>
Menschin (<i>female human</i>)	

• However, some speakers point out that the gender of many nouns does not indicate the gender of the designated person or animal (see 2.1.1.b):

die Giraffe, das Kind, die Person, das Pferd, die Wache (*sentry*)

While the issue still arouses controversy, most people now accept that it is unnecessary to use clumsy double nouns repeatedly, or invented gender-neutral forms such as Lesende (instead of Leser), or Studierende (instead of Student). Instead, a writer may

- use a **gender-neutral noun** if one is available (such as das Mitglied *member*)
- use an **adjective-noun**, as in 2.1.8a above, if one is available; see 5.2
- make it clear at the outset that where one form is used, both males and females are designated.

d Indefinite pronouns such as jeder, man, niemand and wer have to be used with masculine forms of the possessive

This can appear odd, but can only be avoided by using, for instance, the definite or indefinite article; the writer must judge whether the change in meaning is acceptable.

Jemand hat seinen Lippenstift auf den Boden fallen lassen (or: einen Lippenstift)	<i>Someone's dropped their (lit: his) lipstick on the floor</i>
Man muss seine BHs nicht immer im teuersten Geschäft kaufen	<i>You don't always have to buy your bras at the most expensive shop</i>
Wer kann seinen Rock nicht finden?	<i>Who can't find their (lit: his) skirt?</i>

2.2 The plural of nouns

As mentioned at the start of the chapter, the plural should be learned along with the noun and its gender. It may help to realise that there are only a limited number of patterns for forming the plurals for each gender of noun.

TIP Noun plurals

A rough guide to the commonest plural endings:

- **Masculine nouns** often add **-e**, and an umlaut to one-syllable words with a, o, u. Beware weak nouns! They add **-en**.
- **Feminine nouns** mostly add **-en**, or **-n** if they end with an **-e**.
- **Neuter nouns** usually add **-e** with many of the rest adding **-er** (and an umlaut if possible).

▶ 2.2.1 Summary of plural endings

Plural	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
-e or -e	Many nouns, often single-syllable Krie g e Sin n e Rom a n e Arm e B ä ll e F ü ss e	Some single-syllable nouns add -e H ä nd e St ä d t e M ä us e W ä nd e Ken n ts i ss e	Many nouns, often single-syllable, add -e Bein e Schaf e Geschen k e Meer e Jahr e System e Erleb n iss e
-en or -n	Weak nouns (see p. 000) Student e n Aff e n Mensch e n Jung e n	Most nouns Blum e n Tasch e n Brück e n Gabel n Kartoffel n Flasch e n Uhr e n Tür e n Lehrer in nen	A few nouns Bet t e n Oh r e n Hem d e n Aug e n
-	Most nouns ending in -el, -en, -er Onkel Arbeiter Kuchen Fehler		Nouns ending in -el, -en, -er, -chen Fenster Opfer Segel Zimmer Zeichen Mäd ch e n
-er	A few nouns ending in -el, -en, -er V ä t e r L ä d e n V ö g e l Br ü d e r		
-er or -er	A few nouns (add " if possible) Skier W ä ld e r Reicht ü mer M ä n n e r		Most nouns which don't add -e (add " if possible) Eier Kinder Lichter Bilder H ä us e r L ä nd e r R ä d e r Sch l öss e r
-s	Nouns borrowed from other languages Autos Pizzas Babys Abonnements Plurals of abbreviations and family names LKW s PKW s Schmid t s		
Misc	Words from Latin, Greek, etc. Viren Dramen Museen Praktika Material e n		

▶ 2.2.2 Masculine nouns

a Many masculine nouns add -e

der Arm – Arme *arm*

der Ingenieur – Ingenieure
engineer

Other examples:

der Abend *evening*
der Bleistift *pencil*
der Brief *letter*
der Film *film, movie*
der Freund *friend*
der Hund *dog*

der Krieg *war*
der Monat *month*
der Schuh *shoe*
der Tag *day*
der Tisch *table*
der Unterschied *difference*

Note der Bus – Busse

b Many, mostly single-syllable, nouns with a, o or u add -e

der Fuß – Füße

der Zahn – Zähne

Other examples:

der Arzt *doctor*
der Ball *ball*
der Baum *tree*
der Entschluss *decision*
der Fall *case, matter*
der Flug *flight*
der Fluss *river*

der Grund *reason*
der Gruß *greeting*
der Plan *plan*
der Sohn *son*
der Stuhl *chair*
der Traum *dream*
der Vorwand *excuse*

c A small number of masculine nouns add -(e)n, including weak masculine nouns (see 2.3.2)

der Mensch – Menschen

der Junge – Jungen

Other examples:

der Buchstabe *letter*
der Gedanke *thought*
der Muskel *muscle*

der Präsident *president*
der Schmerz *pain*
der Staat *state*

d Most masculine nouns ending in -el, -en or -er (like their neuter equivalents) remain unchanged in the plural

der Finger – Finger

der Lehrer – Lehrer

Other examples:

der Fehler *mistake*
der Gipfel *summit, peak*
der Koffer *suitcase*
der Kuchen *cake*

der Löffel *spoon*
der Schlüssel *dish*
der Teller *plate*

• A very few nouns ending in -el, -en or -er simply add an umlaut:

der Apfel – Äpfel

der Bruder – Brüder

Other examples:

der Garten *garden*
der Hafen *harbour*
der Laden *shop, shutter*
der Mangel *lack*

der Mantel *coat*
der Schaden *damage*
der Vater *father*
der Vogel *bird*

e A few masculine nouns add -er or -er (with the umlaut if possible)

der Mann – Männer der Ski – Skier *skis*

Other examples:

der Geist *spirit* der Wald *forest*
der Gott *god* der Wiking *Viking*
der Irrtum *mistake* der Wurm *worm*
der Rand *edge*

▶ **2.2.3 Feminine nouns**

a Most feminine nouns add the plural -(e)n

die Familie – Familien die Frau – Frauen

Other examples:

die Antwort *answer* die Gefahr *danger*
die Apotheke *chemist's shop* die Kartoffel *potato*
die Bank *bank* die Mauer *wall*
die Birne *pear*

Note Feminine nouns ending in **-in** double the **n** before the **en** to form the plural:

die Dozentin – die Dozentinnen *lecturer*
die Lehrerin – die Lehrerinnen *teacher*

b A few single-syllable feminine nouns add ë

die Hand – Hände die Maus – Mäuse

Other examples:

die Angst *fear, anxiety* die Nuss *nut*
die Bank *bench* die Stadt *town*
die Faust *fist* die Wand *wall*
die Kuh *cow* die Wurst *sausage*
die Nacht *night*

Also nouns ending in **-kunft**, e.g.

die Ankunft *arrival* die Auskunft *information*

c There are a few other possible (but rare) feminine noun plurals

- Add **-n** – only two feminine nouns: die Mutter (Mütter) and die Tochter (Töchter)
- Add **-(s)e**: die Kenntnis (Kenntnisse)
- Change in ending (see 2.2.6): die Firma – Firmen

▶ **2.2.4 Neuter nouns**

a Most neuter nouns (about 75 per cent) add the plural ending -e

das Boot – Boote *boat* das Haar – Haare *hair*

Other examples:

das Bein *leg* das Paar *pair*
das Ding *thing* das Paket *packet, parcel*
das Gebet *prayer* das Pferd *horse*
das Gedicht *poem* das Problem *problem*
das Gefühl *feeling* das Schaf *sheep*
das Geschäft *shop, business* das Schiff *ship*
das Geschenk *present* das Spiel *game*
das Jahr *year* das Tier *animal*
das Konzert *concert* das Ziel *aim, destination*

Note Nouns ending in **-is** double the **s** before the **e**:

das Ereignis – Ereignis**e** *event*
 das Gefängnis – Gefängnis**e** *prison*
 das Verhältnis – Verhältnis**e** *relation(-ship)*

b Most of the remainder add -er/-er, with umlaut added if possible

das Kind – Kinder *child* das Buch – Bücher *book*

Other examples:

das Bild <i>picture</i>	das Glas <i>glass</i>
das Blatt <i>leaf</i>	das Glied <i>limb</i>
das Dach <i>roof</i>	das Haus <i>house</i>
das Dorf <i>village</i>	das Lied <i>song</i>
das Ei <i>egg</i>	das Land <i>country</i>
das Fach <i>subject</i>	das Rad <i>wheel</i>
das Gespenst <i>ghost</i>	das Schloss <i>castle, palace</i>

c Neuter nouns ending in -el, -en, -er, like their masculine equivalents, and with those ending in -chen and -lein do not change in the plural

This includes infinitives used as nouns, though most of these are not used in the plural.

das Fenster – Fenster *window* das Mädchen – Mädchen *girl*

Other examples:

das Gebäude <i>building</i>	das Segel <i>sail</i>
das Leiden <i>suffering</i>	das Theater <i>theatre</i>
das Märchen <i>fairy story</i>	das Ufer <i>bank</i>
das Messer <i>knife</i>	das Wunder <i>miracle</i>
das Mittel <i>means</i>	das Zeichen <i>sign</i>
das Opfer <i>victim</i>	das Zimmer <i>room</i>

• Two neuter nouns do not change their endings, but add an umlaut:

das Kloster – Klö**ö**ster *monastery* das Wasser – Wä**ä**sser *water, fluid*

d A few common neuter nouns add -(e)n

das Auge – Augen *eye* das Bett – Bett**e**n *bed*

Other examples:

das Ende <i>end</i>	das Insekt <i>insect</i>
das Fakt <i>fact</i>	das Interesse <i>interest</i>
das Hemd <i>shirt</i>	das Ohr <i>ear</i>
das Herz <i>heart</i>	das Verb <i>verb</i>

e One neuter noun takes the plural -e

das Floß – Flö**e** *raft*

▶ 2.2.5 Plurals ending with -s

a The plural ending -s is usually used with words which have been borrowed from other languages

Note that the **-y** ending does not change to **-ies** in the plural as in English:

das Auto – Autos *car* das Hobby – Hobby**s** *hobby*

Other examples:

der Balkon <i>balcony</i>	das Komma <i>comma</i>
das Büro <i>office</i>	das Labor <i>lab</i>
das Café <i>café</i>	die Party <i>party</i>
der Chef <i>boss</i>	die Pizza <i>pizza</i>
das Deck <i>deck (of ship)</i>	das Pony <i>pony</i>
das Handy <i>mobile, cell-phone</i>	das Restaurant <i>restaurant</i>
das Hotel <i>hotel</i>	der Streik <i>strike</i>
der Karton <i>carton</i>	das Team <i>team</i>

b The ending -s is also often used with abbreviations or shortened words, especially in colloquial or slang use

Azubis	<i>trainees (= Auszubildende)</i>
Jungs und Mädels	<i>guys and girls</i>
LKWs und PKWs	<i>lorries/trucks and cars</i>
Opas und Omas	<i>granddads and grandmas</i>
Ossis und Wessis	<i>East and West Germans</i>
Profis	<i>pros (professionals)</i>
Promis	<i>VIPs</i>

c The -s plural is also used with surnames

bei Neitzels	<i>at the Neitzels' house</i>
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▶ 2.2.6 Other plural forms

a Other plural forms mostly concern words of foreign origin, especially those ending in -um, -us or -ma

• **-um, -us**

das Album	Alben	<i>album</i>
das Antibiotikum	Antibiotika	<i>antibiotic</i>
das Gymnasium	Gymnasien	<i>grammar school</i>
das Museum	Museen	<i>museum</i>
das Praktikum	Praktika	<i>practical training</i>
das Virus	Viren	<i>virus</i>
das Zentrum	Zentren	<i>centre</i>

• **-ma**

das Drama	Dramen	<i>drama</i>
die Firma	Firmen	<i>firm, company</i>
das Thema	Themen	<i>subject</i>

b Other plural forms

das Adverb	Adverbien	<i>adverb</i>
der Atlas	Atlasse/Atlanten	<i>atlas</i>
das Fossil	Fossilien	<i>fossil</i>
der Kaktus	Kakteen/Kaktusse	<i>cactus</i>
das Konto	Konten/Kontos	<i>(bank) account</i>
das Lexikon	Lexika	<i>encyclopaedia</i>
das Material	Materialien	<i>material</i>
das Mineral	Mineralien	<i>mineral</i>
das Prinzip	Prinzipien	<i>principle</i>

das Privileg	Privileg ien	<i>privilege</i>
das Risiko	Risik en	<i>risk</i>
das Stadion	Stadi en	<i>stadium</i>
die Villa	Vill en	<i>villa, large house</i>

c Some German nouns do not have their own plural form, and add another noun in order to make the plural

das Gemüse ¹	Gemüses orten	<i>vegetables</i>
der Käse	Käses orten	<i>cheese</i>
das Obst	Obst sorten	<i>fruit</i>
der Sport	Sport arten	<i>sport</i>
der Stock	Stock werke	<i>storey (of building)</i>
der Tod	Todes fälle	<i>death</i>
das Unglück	Unglücks fälle	<i>accident</i>
<i>also:</i> das Essen	Mahlzeiten	<i>meal</i>

¹ Gemüsesorten is used to emphasise variety; otherwise use singular Gemüse:

Im Supermarkt sind viele Gemüsesorten zu finden	<i>In the supermarket you can find lots of (sorts of) vegetables</i>
Man sollte viel Gemüse essen	<i>One should eat lots of vegetables</i>

▶ **2.2.7 Nouns which have two plural forms**

a A very few nouns look and sound identical, and have the same gender, but have different meanings and different plurals

die Bank	<i>bank</i> <i>bench</i>	Banken Bänke
der Block	<i>block (e.g. stone)</i> <i>notepad (paper)</i>	Blöcke Blocks (Wohnblocks <i>blocks of flats</i>)
die Mutter	<i>mother</i> <i>nut (for bolts)</i>	Mütter Muttern
der Strauß	<i>bunch of flowers</i> <i>ostrich</i>	Sträuße Strauße
das Wort	<i>individual word</i> <i>speech</i>	Wörter (as in Wörterbuch) Worte (as in Churchills Worte)

This list does not include words from 2.1.6 above (homonyms).

▶ **2.2.8 Nouns which are plural in German but singular in English**

die Flitterwochen	<i>honeymoon</i>
die Haare	<i>hair</i>
die Immobilien	<i>property, real estate</i>
die Lebensmittel	<i>food, groceries</i>
die Möbel	<i>furniture</i>
die Schmerzen	<i>pain</i>
die Trümmer	<i>rubble</i>
die Zinsen	<i>interest (on bank account)</i>

Note die Eltern *parents* has no singular form; however, die Einelternfamilie *single parent family*, and ein Elternteil *a parent* are used (the latter in official German especially).

▶ 2.2.9 Nouns which are usually plural in English but singular in German

a These nouns do have plural forms for more than one item

die Brille (-n)	<i>(a pair of) spectacles</i>
das Fernglas (-er)	<i>binoculars</i>
die Hose (-n)	<i>(a pair of) trousers</i>
die Kaserne (-n)	<i>barracks</i>
das Mittel (-)	<i>means</i>
der Pyjama (-s)	<i>pyjamas</i>
die Schere (-n)	<i>(a pair of) scissors</i>
das Spielzeug (-e)	<i>toy(s)</i>
die Treppe (-n)	<i>stairs</i>
die Umgebung (-en)	<i>surroundings</i>
die Waage (-n)	<i>scales</i>

b Some other nouns are not normally used in the plural in German

das Aussehen	<i>looks, appearance</i>
das Benehmen	<i>manners, behaviour</i>
der Inhalt	<i>contents</i>
die Politik	<i>politics</i>

▶ 2.2.10 Nouns which have singular and plural forms in German

These nouns are singular in English, but are often used in the plural in German

die Auskunft (-e)	<i>(piece of) information</i>
die Hausaufgabe (-n)	<i>(piece of) homework</i>
die Information (-en)	<i>(piece of) information</i>
die Kenntnis (-se)	<i>(piece of) knowledge</i>
die Nachricht (-en)	<i>(piece of) news</i>
der Rat (Ratschläge)	<i>(piece of) advice</i>
Ich habe eine Nachricht für Sie	<i>I have (a piece of) news for you</i>

Examples:

Seine Deutschkenntnisse sind besser als meine	<i>His knowledge of German is better than mine</i>
Bitte schicken Sie weitere Informationen	<i>Please send further information</i>

▶ 2.2.11 Plural agreement

There are a few instances where German uses a singular where English usage might lead one to expect a plural.

a Parts of the body/items of clothing are often used in the singular when referring to groups of people

The noun is singular because each person has only one of the designated items!

Ich sah auf das Gesicht der Passanten	<i>I looked at the faces of the passers-by</i>
Zwei Spieler hatten sich am Kopf verletzt	<i>Two players had injured their heads</i>
Sie schüttelten sich die Hand	<i>They shook hands</i>

Das Leben der Anderen
Alle Angestellten tragen **einen**
Anzug

The Lives of Others (film title)
All the employees wear suits

b Weights, measures, values

Masculine and neuter nouns usually stay in the singular; feminine nouns take a plural. See also 20.1.4.

Masculine / neuter

zwei **Glas** Wein
mehrere **Stück** Kuchen
dreißig **Euro**
viele **Paar** Schuhe

Feminine

zwei **Tassen** Kaffee
einige **Scheiben** Brot
ein paar **Flaschen** Bier

c Festivals: Weihnachten and Ostern

While Weihnachten *Christmas* and Ostern *Easter* are followed by a verb in the singular, they are preceded by an adjective in the plural:

Frohe Weihnachten!
letzte Ostern

Bald ist Weihnachten
Ostern fällt nächstes Jahr früh

TIP Collective nouns with singular verbs

Some collective nouns in English, although singular, are often used with a plural verb. In German, a singular noun must always be used with a singular verb:

Die Polizei **will** den Verbrecher
festnehmen

The police want to arrest the criminal

Nach dem Training **duischt** sich die
ganze Mannschaft

*After the training session the whole team
take(s) a shower*

2.3 The declension of nouns

▶ 2.3.1 Case endings on nouns

Apart from the plural endings described above, there are few changes to the endings of German nouns. For most nouns, the endings are as follows:

a Dative plural forms (all genders) add -n if possible

mit den Männern, in den Städten

But not if the noun already ends with -n, or adds -s in the plural:

in den Büros, bei seinen Eltern

b Genitive singular of masculine and neuter nouns add -s or -es

Whether to use -s or -es is mostly a matter of common sense and 'feel' regarding ease of pronunciation, style and rhythm. As a rough guide:

- -s is often used with words of more than one syllable

des Abends, des Ingenieurs, des Problems, des Wagens, des Autos, des Monats, and also, for instance, des Weins, des Films

- ♦ **-es** is frequently used with single-syllable nouns

des Kopf**es**, des Hemd**es**, des Arzt**es**, des Fluss**es**, des Freund**es**, des Kind**es**, des Mann**es**, des Jahr**es**

- c **Dative singular -e on the dative singular of masculine and neuter nouns is now found in only a few set phrases**

Even here it is often regarded as unnecessary:

nach Hause	<i>home(-wards)</i>
zu Hause	<i>at home</i>
im Lauf(e) des Abends	<i>in the course of the evening</i>
im Grund(e) genommen	<i>basically</i>
zu Grunde gehen	<i>to decay</i>
aus diesem Grund(e)	<i>for this reason</i>

- d **Adjective-nouns. Adjectives may often be used as nouns, taking the gender and case endings of adjectives (see 5.2)**

▶ 2.3.2 Weak masculine nouns

- a **Weak masculine nouns add -(e)n in all forms except the nominative singular** 'Weak' masculine nouns (there is no real reason for the designation 'weak') add -(e)n not only in the plural, but in all singular forms except the nominative. Almost all refer to male humans or animals. Do not confuse these with adjective-nouns, which are all based on adjectives or participles of verbs (see 5.2).

	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nom.	der Mensch	die Menschen	der Herr	die Herren
Acc.	den Menschen en	die Menschen en	den Herr n	die Herr en
Gen.	des Mensch en	der Mensch en	des Herr n	der Herr en
Dat.	dem Mensch en	den Mensch en	dem Herr n	den Herr en

Some of these nouns are masculine nouns which end with **-e**; others are foreign words which end with **-at**, **-ent**, **-ist**, **-krat**, **-nom.**, and others. However, there are many other weak masculine nouns which do not fall into either of these categories.

Common examples are:

der Affe	<i>ape</i>	der Graf	<i>count</i>
der Architekt	<i>architect</i>	der Held	<i>hero</i>
der Bär	<i>bear</i>	der Herr ¹	<i>gentleman</i>
der Bauer	<i>farmer</i>	der Hirt	<i>shepherd</i>
der Bayer	<i>Bavarian</i>	der Jude	<i>Jew</i>
der Chinese	<i>Chinese</i>	der Junge	<i>boy</i>
der Chirurg	<i>surgeon</i>	der Kamerad	<i>comrade</i>
der Christ	<i>Christian</i>	der Kunde	<i>customer</i>
der Demokrat	<i>democrat</i>	der Lieferant	<i>supplier</i>
der Elefant	<i>elephant</i>	der Löwe	<i>lion</i>
der Experte	<i>expert</i>	der Mensch	<i>human being</i>
der Franzose	<i>Frenchman</i>	der Nachbar	<i>neighbour</i>
der Fürst	<i>prince</i>	der Neffe	<i>nephew</i>

¹ Herr takes -n in the singular and -en in the plural – see grid above.

der Papagei	<i>parrot</i>	der Sklave	<i>slave</i>
der Photograph	<i>photographer</i>	der Soldat	<i>soldier</i>
der Präsident	<i>president</i>	der Spatz	<i>sparrow</i>
der Psycholog	<i>psychologist</i>	der Student	<i>student</i>
der Riese	<i>giant</i>	der Zeuge	<i>witness</i>
der Schotte	<i>Scot(-sman)</i>		

TIP How to recognise a weak masculine noun in a dictionary

- When referring to a dictionary, a weak masculine noun can be recognised by the genitive and plural forms given immediately after it, e.g.
der Junge (-n, -n) der Mensch (-en, -en).
- Other masculine nouns will have the genitive -s and the appropriate plural.

b The feminine forms of these nouns are formed in the usual way by adding -in, and sometimes an umlaut

die Bäuerin	die Französin
die Kundin	die Löwin
die Sklavin	die Studentin

Note Herr and Mensch have no feminine forms.

c There are a few weak masculine nouns which refer to things, e.g.

der Automat	<i>cash machine</i>
der Diamant	<i>diamond</i>
der Komet	<i>comet</i>
der Paragraph	<i>paragraph</i>
der Planet	<i>planet</i>

d There are a few weak nouns which add not only -(e)n in all forms but also -s to the genitive singular

	Singular	Plural
Nom.	der Name	die Namen
Acc.	den Namen	die Namen
Gen.	des Namens	der Namen
Dat.	dem Namen	den Namen

There are only eight nouns in this group:

der Buchstabe	<i>letter (alphabet)</i>	der Glaube	<i>belief</i>
der Friede ^{1,2}	<i>peace</i>	der Name	<i>name</i>
der Funke	<i>spark</i>	der Same	<i>seed</i>
der Gedanke	<i>thought</i>	der Wille ²	<i>will (as in will-power)</i>

¹ May also be found with the nominative der Frieden.

² Friede and Wille are rarely used in the plural.

e One weak noun, das Herz, is neuter. It may also be declined as a normal noun, especially in medical communications and colloquial German

das Herz	<i>heart</i>
schweren Herzens	<i>with a heavy heart</i>

But Sie hat ein schwaches Herz *She has a weak heart*

▶ 2.3.3 Declension of names and proper nouns

a In the genitive singular, most names and proper nouns add -s

Goethes Werke	<i>Goethe's works</i>
Christa Wolfs Romane	<i>Christa Wolf's novels</i>
die Novellen Theodor Storms	<i>the novellas of Theodor Storm</i>
das Reich Karls des Großen	<i>the empire of Charlemagne</i>
die Frauen des Königs Heinrich des Achten	<i>The wives of King Henry VIII</i>
Richards Haus; Annas Familie	<i>Richard's house; Anna's family</i>
die Schönheit des Rheins	<i>the beauty of the Rhine</i>

But das Wort Gottes *God's Word*

b Personal names preceded by adjectives or articles are not usually declined

die Siege des Alten Fritz	<i>The victories of 'Old Freddy'</i> <i>(=Frederick the Great)</i>
----------------------------------	---

But die Siege König Friedrichs *King Frederick's victories*
(no article or adjective)

c Nouns which end with a sibilant (-s, -ß, -ss, -x, -z) use an apostrophe, or von

Felix' Mutter (or die Mutter von Felix)
Brahms' Werke (or die Werke von Brahms)

d Titles of books, magazines, etc. take case endings unless the full title is given in quotation marks

Ich lese den Spiegel	or	Ich lese <i>Der Spiegel</i>
in Kleists Zerbrochenem Krug	or	in Kleists <i>Der zerbrochene Krug</i>
die Hauptfigur des Lebens des Galilei	or	die Hauptfigur des Stücks <i>Das Leben des Galilei</i>

e Geographical names, if masculine or neuter, add -s in the genitive

This may be omitted if there is an adjective:

die Schönheit des Rheins	<i>the beauty of the Rhine</i>
die Grenzen des neuen Deutschland(-s)	<i>the borders of the new Germany</i>

• If the place name ends with a sibilant, **von** must be used:

die Alleen von Paris	but	die Alleen Berlins/die Alleen von Berlin
----------------------	------------	--

f The plural of surnames is usually shown by adding -s (or -ens if a sibilant)

die Schmidts, die Fischers, die Schulzens

3

Determiners

OVERVIEW

Determiners are words used *with* nouns. They fall into the following groups:

♦ **definite and indefinite articles**

e.g. der, die, das, die *the*
ein, eine, ein *a, an*
kein, keine, kein *not a, not an, not any*

♦ **demonstratives**

e.g. dieser *this*
jener *that*

♦ **possessives**

e.g. mein, meine, mein *my*
unser, unsere, unser *our*

♦ **interrogatives**

e.g. welcher? *which?*
was für (ein)? *what sort of?*

♦ **indefinites**

e.g. einige *several*
viel, viele *a lot, many*

Note

- 1 Unlike English, the endings of German determiners change according to gender, number and case; the only exceptions are some singular indefinites such as *viel* and *mehr*.
- 2 Many determiners can also be used as pronouns (words used *in place of* noun phrases) – see [Chapter 4](#) and the summary at the end of this chapter.

3.1 The definite and indefinite articles

▶ 3.1.1 The definite article: der, die, das

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural
Nom.	der	die	das	die
Acc.	den	die	das	die
Gen.	des	der	des	der
Dat.	dem	der	dem	den

▶ 3.1.2 The indefinite article: ein, eine, ein, and kein, keine, kein, plural keine

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural (kein only)
Nom.	(k)ein	(k)eine	(k)ein	keine
Acc.	(k)einen	(k)eine	(k)ein	keine
Gen.	(k)eines	(k)einer	(k)eines	keiner
Dat.	(k)einem	(k)einer	(k)einem	keinen

a Like its English equivalent *a, an*, the German indefinite article *ein* has no plural

Indefinite plural nouns are used without an article, or with an indefinite determiner (see 3.6):

Hast du Orangen gekauft?

Did you buy (any) oranges?

Brötchen sollen immer frisch sein

Rolls should always be fresh

b *Ein* has a negative form, *kein* (*not a, not any*) which has both singular and plural forms

Er hat **eine** Schwester, aber

He has a sister, but not a brother

keinen Bruder

Wir haben Äpfel, aber **keine**

We have (some) apples, but no

Bananen

bananas

Note The English *not a* is never translated by *nicht ein*.

▶ TIP *some or any + noun*

- German normally omits the article altogether where English uses the indefinite determiners *some* or *any*:

Hast du Geld?

Have you got any money?

Er kaufte Brötchen

He brought some rolls

Möchtest du Kaffee?

Would you like some coffee?

Ich möchte noch Tee

I'd like some more tea

- To emphasise the idea of a limited number or quantity, determiners such as **etwas** (with singular nouns), **einige** (with plural nouns), or **manche** (with plural nouns, to emphasise 'certain') may be used:

einige Bücher

some (=a number of) books

Manche Leute glauben ...

Some (=certain) people believe

Manche Fragen sind leicht

Some questions are easy

Möchtest du (etwas) Milch?	<i>Would you like some milk?</i>
Sie spricht etwas Englisch	<i>She speaks some (=a little) English</i>

- *Some* may also be used in English as an intensifier:

Es ist ziemlich weit von hier	<i>It's some distance from here</i>
Es könnte einige Zeit dauern	<i>It could take some time</i>

See also *einige* (3.6.4, 4.5.5), *etwas* (3.6.7, 4.5.6), *irgendeiner* (3.6.8, 4.5.7), *manche* (3.6.10, 4.5.11) and *welcher* (4.6.2).

3.2 The use of the article

- **Mostly, English and German use and omit the definite and indefinite articles in the same way**

Ein Buch liegt auf dem Tisch	<i>A book is lying on the table</i>
Bücher und Zeitschriften lagen überall	<i>Books and magazines were lying everywhere</i>

There are some variations to this pattern, however, and [sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3](#) explain these.

▶ 3.2.1 Article used in German but omitted in English

- a **The article is often used with abstract nouns**

der Krieg; die Schönheit	<i>war; beauty</i>
die erste Liebe	<i>first love</i>
die moderne Kunst	<i>modern art</i>
das Christentum	<i>Christianity</i>
So ist das Leben!	<i>Life's like that!</i>
Die Zeit vergeht	<i>Time flies</i>

See also [3.2.2.d](#) below.

- b **The article is used with infinitives used as nouns**

Sie hat ihm das Lesen beigebracht	<i>She taught him to read</i>
beim Einkaufen	<i>(while) shopping</i>

- c **The article is used with the names of feminine, masculine or plural countries and regions**

der Iran; der Irak	<i>Iran; Iraq</i>
die Schweiz; die Türkei	<i>Switzerland; Turkey</i>
die USA; die Niederlande	<i>the USA; the Netherlands</i>
die Bretagne; die Toskana	<i>Brittany; Tuscany</i>
das Elsass	<i>Alsace</i>

Note Most countries are neuter and are used without the article:
England, Deutschland, Amerika

- d **The article is used with mountains, lakes, streets, squares, buildings**

der Mount Everest	<i>Mount Everest</i>
der Bodensee	<i>Lake Constance</i>
der Alexanderplatz	<i>(name of square in Berlin)</i>

der Kölner Dom *Cologne Cathedral*
Er wohnt in **der** Bahnhofstraße *He lives in Bahnhofstraße*

But Er wohnt Bahnhofstraße 27

e The article is used with seasons, months, days, etc. after the prepositions an, bis zu, in, and when referring to meals

der November *November*
im Frühling; **im** Juli *in spring; in July*
am Montag *on Monday*
nach **dem** Mittagessen *after lunch*
zum Frühstück *for breakfast*
einmal **im** Monat *once a month*
im Jahre 2000 *in 2000*

But months and seasons omit the article in other constructions:

Ende Juni *at the end of June*
letzten/nächsten Sommer *last/next summer*
Anfang nächsten Jahres *at the beginning of next year*

f The article is used with names preceded by an adjective

die arme Franzi! *Poor Franzi!*
das heutige Deutschland *modern Germany*

g The article is used colloquially with names

Kennst du **den** Klaus auch? *Do you know Klaus too?*
„Ist **die** Frau Neitzel zu sprechen?“ *'Can I speak to Mrs Neitzel?'*

h The article is always used with the adjective meist (most)

die meisten Deutschen *most Germans*
die meisten meiner Lehrer *most of my teachers*
die meiste Zeit *most (of the) time*

i The article is used in many idiomatic phrases, usually after a preposition

in **der** Schule *in school*
nach **der** Schule *after school*
mit **dem** Bus, mit **dem** Auto *by bus, by car*
Ich gehe in **die** Stadt *I'm going into town*
im Allgemeinen *in general*
in **der** Tat *indeed*
in **der** Praxis *in practice*

▶ 3.2.2 Article omitted in German but used in English

a The article is omitted before nouns of nationality, profession, religion and rank used after the verbs sein, werden, bleiben

Er ist Deutscher, Amerikaner *He's (a) German, (an) American*
Ich bin Christ. Sie ist Muslimin *I'm a Christian. She's a Muslim*
Sie wurde Lehrerin *She became a teacher*
Er ist Offizier geblieben *He remained an officer*

But the article is used if there is an adjective before the noun:

Er ist **ein** guter Lehrer *He's a good teacher*

b The article is omitted after als (as) and ohne (without)

Seine Aufgabe als Arzt ist es ...	<i>His job as a doctor is to ...</i>
Sie arbeitet als Krankenschwester	<i>She's working as a nurse</i>
Er benutzte seine Mappe als Regenschirm	<i>He was using his briefcase as an umbrella</i>
Geh nicht ohne Jacke aus dem Haus!	<i>Don't leave the house without a jacket!</i>

c The article is omitted in some set phrases

Ich habe Fieber, Schnupfen mit lauter Stimme	<i>I've got a temperature, a cold with a loud voice</i>
--	---

d The article is omitted in German with nouns (including abstract nouns) used in pairs or groups

Sie hat ihm Lesen und Schreiben beigebracht	<i>She taught him to read and write</i>
Es geht um Leben und Tod	<i>It's a matter of life and death</i>

e The article is omitted in certain constructions, mostly set phrases, and always with haben

Ich habe Hunger; er hat Angst	<i>I'm hungry; he's frightened</i>
Höflichkeit kostet nichts	<i>Courtesy costs nothing</i>

▶ 3.2.3 Other variations**a The article is used rather than a possessive determiner with clothing and parts of the body where these belong to the subject of the sentence**

Ich zog den Pullover aus	<i>I took off my pullover</i>
Er hat den Arm gebrochen	<i>He broke his arm</i>
Sie sanken sich in die Arme	<i>They fell into one another's arms</i>
Er schüttelte den Kopf	<i>He shook his head</i>
Mach die Augen zu!	<i>Close your eyes!</i>
Das habe ich mit eigenen Augen gesehen!	<i>I saw it with my own eyes!</i>

But a dative pronoun or a possessive is used to avoid ambiguity, or where the relevant person is not the subject of the sentence, or where there is a preposition before the clothing or part of the body:

Mein Bein tut weh	<i>My leg hurts</i>
Er hat sich am Kopf verletzt	<i>He has injured his head</i>
Sie schüttelte mir die Hand	<i>She shook my hand</i>
Er küßte ihren Mund	<i>He kissed her mouth</i>

See also [1.1.5e](#).

b The definite article is used with certain measures or amounts, where English may use the indefinite article

3 Euro die Flasche	<i>3 Euros a bottle</i>
zweimal in der Woche	<i>twice a week</i>

c ein used to mean a or one

Ein can mean both *a* and *one* in number when followed by a noun; the distinction between them is made by emphasis:

Hast du **einen** Euro dabei?
Ich habe nur noch **einen** Euro

*Have you got a euro?
I've only got one euro left*

3.3 Demonstrative determiners

▶ 3.3.1 dieser *this, these*; jener *that, those*

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural
Nom.	dieser jener	diese jene	dieses jenes	diese jene
Acc.	diesen jenen	diese jene	dieses jenes	diese jene
Gen.	dieses jenes	dieser jener	dieses jenes	dieser jener
Dat.	diesem jenem	dieser jener	diesem jenem	diesen jenen

- **dieser and jener can be used both as determiners and as pronouns with no change of form**
- jener is uncommon except in formal written German; dieser (or, colloquially, der/die/das) is used almost without exception for both meanings:
 - Dieses** Auto kostet viel mehr als *This car costs a lot more than that*
das andere *one/the other*
 - Diese** Idee kannst du dir gleich *You can put that idea out of your*
aus dem Kopf schlagen *mind straight away*
 - Von **jenem** Tage an ... *From that day onwards ...*
 - Das** Haus würde ich gerne kaufen! *That's the house I'd like to buy!*
 - Den** Kerl will ich nie wieder sehen *I never want to see that guy again*

▶ 3.3.2 solcher *such (a)*

- a Solcher declines like dieser (see 3.3.1), and is usually used in the plural**
- in **solchen** Fällen *in such cases*
 - Solche** Leute finde ich doof *I find people like that stupid*

Note It may also be used in the singular, but this sounds formal:

solches herrliche Wetter *such wonderful weather*

- b Solcher may also be used as an ordinary adjective after the indefinite article ein in the singular**

Sie arbeitet mit einer **solchen** Hektik *She works at such a hectic pace*
Eine **solche** Frau würde ich auch gern *I'd like to marry a woman like that*
heiraten *too*

- c A more colloquial way of expressing such a is so ein**

So eine Frau würde ich auch gern *I'd like to marry a woman like that*
heiraten *too*

So ein Mist!
So einen tollen Film habe ich seit
langem nicht gesehen

*What a pain/nuisance!
I haven't watched such a good
film for ages*

▶ 3.3.3 derjenige/diejenige/dasjenige *the one who/which*

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural
Nom.	derjenige	diejenige	dasjenige	diejenigen
Acc.	denjenigen	diejenige	dasjenige	diejenigen
Gen.	desjenigen	derjenigen	desjenigen	derjenigen
Dat.	demjenigen	derjenigen	demjenigen	denjenigen

a derjenige has the forms of a definite article + adjective, but is written as one word

It may be used as a determiner or as a pronoun (see 4.3.4).

b derjenige is usually followed by a relative pronoun

derjenige Schauspieler, **der** ... *the actor who ...*
diejenigen Studenten, **die** sich *those students who are interested*
für Kunst interessieren *in art*

c derjenige is often replaced by der, die, das in colloquial German

der Schauspieler, der die Rolle von *the actor who played the role of*
Faust spielte *Faust*

▶ 3.3.4 derselbe/dieselbe/dasselbe *the same*

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural
Nom.	derselbe	dieselbe	dasselbe	dieselben
Acc.	denselben	dieselbe	dasselbe	dieselben
Gen.	desselben	derselben	desselben	derselben
Dat.	demselben	derselben	demselben	denselben

a derselbe, like derjenige, has the forms of a definite article + adjective, but is written as one word

It can be used as a determiner or as a pronoun:

Er fährt immer **dasselbe** Auto *He always drives the same car*
Es handelt sich um ein und *It's about one and the same*
dieselbe Person *person*
Ihr PIN-Code bleibt **derselbe** *Your PIN code remains the same*

b derselbe can be used with a preposition which has a contracted form; the two words are then written separately

im selben Gebäude *in the same building*
zur selben Zeit *at the same time*

c Note that derselbe means *the (very) same*; der gleiche (which is not written as one word) means *the same (similar)*

Er trägt **dieselbe** Krawatte jeden *He wears the same tie every day*
Tag

Beide Männer tragen die **gleiche**
Krawatte

*Both men are wearing the
same tie*

Note In colloquial German this distinction is often ignored:

Sie sind auf **derselben/der**
gleichen Wellenlänge

They're on the same wavelength

3.4 Possessive determiners

a The possessives **mein, dein, sein, etc.** are often called **possessive adjectives**. However, the designation sometimes used in German – *Possessivartikel* (possessive articles) – is a better description in terms of how they work grammatically.

Singular			Plural		
ich	mein	<i>my</i>	wir	unser	<i>our</i>
du	dein	<i>your</i>	ihr	euer	<i>your</i>
er	sein	<i>his</i>	sie	ihr	<i>their</i>
sie	ihr	<i>her</i>	Sie	Ihr	<i>your (polite)</i>
es	sein	<i>its</i>			
man	sein	<i>one's</i>			

- The polite form **Sie** *you* and its possessive **Ihr** *your* are used for one person or any number of people.
- Possessives may also be used, with some changes to endings, as pronouns (see 4.4).

b All the **possessives** take the same endings as **ein** (3.1.2)

The table below shows the endings for **mein**:

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural
Nom.	mein	meine	mein	meine
Acc.	meinen	meine	mein	meine
Gen.	meines	meiner	meines	meiner
Dat.	meinem	meiner	meinem	meinen

sein Bruder, **seine** Schwester
der Freund **seiner** Schwester
mit **seiner** Schwester
mit **seinen** Eltern

*his brother, his sister
his sister's boyfriend
with his sister
with his parents*

- When **unser** and **euer** add an ending, they often lose **-e-** from the root word, especially in spoken German:
Unser Haus ist auf dem Land *Our house is in the country*
In **uns(e)rem** Haus ist es immer kalt *In our house it's always cold*
Eu(e)re Eltern sind lustig *Your parents are funny*

c The **genitive determiner** may be used instead of the possessive to avoid ambiguity

Meine Mutter, meine Schwester
und **deren** Kinder

*my mother, my sister, and her [i.e.
my sister's] children*

3.5 Interrogative determiners

▶ 3.5.1 welcher/welche/welches *which*

a welcher takes the same endings as dieser (see 3.3.1 above)

Welches Buch hast du gewählt?	<i>Which book did you choose?</i>
In welchem Haus wohnt sie?	<i>Which house does she live in?</i>
Welcher deutsche Sportler hat die Medaille gewonnen?	<i>Which German sportsman won the medal?</i>

b welcher may also be used in exclamations

This occurs mostly in formal German, sometimes without case endings if followed by ein or an adjective:

Welcher Blödsinn!	<i>What nonsense!</i>
Welch traurige Geschichte!	<i>What a sad tale!</i>
Welch ein Glück!	<i>What good luck!</i>
Welches Glück!	<i>What good luck!</i>

Note Spoken German usually prefers *was für* (ein) or *so ein*:

Was für ein Glück! / So ein Glück!	<i>What good luck!</i>
--	------------------------

▶ 3.5.2 was für *what kind of*

• The case of the following noun phrase is decided not by *für* but by the rest of the clause

In was für einem Haus wohnst du?	<i>What sort of a house do you live in?</i>
(<i>einem</i> is dative because of the preposition <i>in</i>)	
Was für ein Mann ist er?	<i>What sort of a man is he?</i>
(<i>ein</i> is nominative because it is the complement of <i>er ist</i>)	
Sie hat nicht gesagt, was für Wein ich kaufen soll	<i>She didn't say what sort of wine I should buy</i>
Was für Bücher liest du gern?	<i>What sort of books do you like reading?</i>

3.6 Indefinite determiners

▶ 3.6.1 all, alles, alle *all, everybody*

a Inflected all takes the same endings as dieser (see 3.3.1), with the alternative masculine and neuter genitive singular form *allen*

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural
Nom.	aller	alle	alles	alle
Acc.	allen	alle	alles	alle
Gen.	allen	aller	allen	aller
Dat.	allem	aller	allem	allen

b all used as a determiner

- It is always inflected, and is commonly used in the plural:

alle Studenten	<i>all (of the) students</i>
Die Karten aller Gäste wurden kontrolliert	<i>The tickets of all the guests were checked</i>
- In the singular it is sometimes used in set phrases and with adjective-nouns:

Aller Anfang ist schwer	<i>The first step is always the hardest</i>
in aller Frühe	<i>at the crack of dawn</i>
Alles Gute!	<i>All the best!</i>
allen Ernstes	<i>in all seriousness</i>

Note If this inflected form of **all** is followed by an adjective, the adjective takes weak endings (i.e. as it does after *der, die, das*) – see 5.1.1:

alle guten Sachen	<i>all good things</i>
trotz allen guten Willens	<i>in spite of all the good will</i>

c all followed by a definite article or other determiner

- both inflected and uninflected forms are used:

alle die Schuld	<i>all the guilt</i>
alle die Häuser	<i>all (of) the houses</i>
all die Studenten	<i>all the students</i>
all der Wein	<i>all the wine</i>
mit all dem Essen	<i>with all the food</i>
all mein Wein	<i>all my wine</i>
all dieses Bier	<i>all this beer</i>
mit all dem Stress	<i>with all the stress</i>
all/alle diese Teller	<i>all these plates</i>
mit all/allen seinen Zweifeln	<i>with all his doubts</i>
- **all** is never followed by the genitive case to indicate *all of*:

alle meine besten Freunde	<i>all (of) my best friends</i>
alle Anwesenden	<i>all (of) those present</i>
all der Wein	<i>all (of) the wine</i>
- **all** may itself, of course, be used *in* the genitive case:

trotz allen Fleißes	<i>despite all (of) the hard work</i>
----------------------------	---------------------------------------
- **all** (inflected) does not have to precede the noun:

Meine Freunde sitzen alle draußen im Garten	<i>My friends are all sitting outside in the garden</i>
--	---

TIP When to add case endings to **all**

There is great flexibility in deciding whether **all** used as a determiner should take case endings. If the following rules are followed, the user will make few mistakes.

- **Do not** add endings when **all** is followed by a determiner. (Note that **all** and **alle** are never followed by the genitive):

all meine Freunde	<i>all (of) my friends</i>
mit all dem Geld	<i>with all the money</i>
- **Add** endings in both singular and plural when **all** is used as a determiner:

alle Kinder	<i>all (of the) children</i>
Sie hat allen Grund dazu	<i>She has every reason to do so</i>
Er wünschte mir alles Gute	<i>He wished me all the best</i>

▶ 3.6.2 ganz *all, whole*♦ **Instead of all, Germans often use the adjective ganz**

This avoids altogether the question of whether and how **all** and any following adjective inflect. Colloquially, **ganz** may also be used with a plural noun:

Ich habe mein ganzes Geld ausgegeben	<i>I've spent all my money</i>
Er hat die ganze Zeit nur gemeckert	<i>He just complained all the time</i>
Ganz Deutschland	<i>all of Germany</i>
Den ganzen Sommer über war es kalt und windig	<i>It was cold and windy all summer</i>
die ganzen Kinder	<i>all the children</i>

▶ 3.6.3 beide *both*a **beide takes the same endings as dieser (see 3.3.1)**

Ich habe beide Filme gesehen	<i>I've seen both films</i>
Beide älteren Schwestern leben im Ausland	<i>Both older sisters live abroad</i>

b **beide can be used as an adjective**

Seine beiden Eltern sind gestorben	<i>Both his parents are dead</i>
die ersten beiden Romane or: die beiden ersten Romane	<i>the first two novels</i>

▶ 3.6.4 einige *some*♦ **einige is almost always used in the plural. It takes the same endings as dieser (see 3.3.1)**

einige Autofahrer	<i>some car-drivers</i>
mit einigen alten Freunden	<i>with some old friends</i>
nach einiger Zeit	<i>after some time</i>

▶ 3.6.5 ein bisschen, ein wenig *a little, a bit*a **ein bisschen and ein wenig are invariable and always followed by a singular noun**

Hast du ein wenig Zeit für mich?	<i>Can you spare a moment?</i>
Ich habe nur noch ein wenig Geld	<i>I only have a little money left</i>
mit ein bisschen Geduld	<i>with a little patience</i>

b **bisschen is occasionally used with a determiner other than ein**

Ich habe kein bisschen Hunger	<i>I'm not the least bit hungry</i>
mit dem bisschen Geld, das ich noch habe	<i>with the little money I still have</i>

▶ 3.6.6 ein paar a few

a ein paar does not take case endings. It is always followed by a plural noun

Ich gehe mit ein paar Freunden ins Kino	<i>I'm going to the cinema with a few friends</i>
nach ein paar Tagen	<i>after a few days</i>
ein paar Tausend Euro	<i>a few thousand Euros</i>

b paar is sometimes used with another (declinable) determiner

alle paar Minuten	<i>every few minutes</i>
die paar Euro, die es kostet	<i>the few Euros it costs</i>
mit seinen paar Siebensachen	<i>with his few belongings</i>

▶ 3.6.7 etwas some, any

♦ etwas does not take case endings. It is often used with a neuter adjective-noun (see 5.2e)

Wir brauchen noch etwas Zeit	<i>We need some more time</i>
Etwas frische Sahne dazugeben	<i>Add some fresh cream</i>
etwas Interessantes	<i>something interesting</i>

▶ 3.6.8 irgendeiner, irgendwelcher some ... or other

♦ irgend is added to emphasise vagueness

Irgendein Passant muss das gesehen haben	<i>Some passer-by or other must have seen it</i>
aus irgendeinem Grund	<i>for some reason or other</i>
Hat jemand irgendwelche gute Ideen?	<i>Does anyone have any good ideas?</i>

▶ 3.6.9 jeder each, every

♦ jeder is always singular, and is inflected like dieser (see 3.3.1)

Wie jede moderne Frau weiß ...	<i>As every modern woman knows ...</i>
Jeder Jugendliche will sein eigenes Auto	<i>Every young person wants their own car</i>
Er rief jeden Tag an	<i>He phoned every day</i>
Jedes Mal, wenn ich ihn sehe ...	<i>Every time I see him ...</i>

▶ 3.6.10 manche(r) some, many a

♦ manche(r) can be singular or plural and is usually inflected like dieser (see 3.3.1)

When it precedes the indefinite article ein, manch remains uninflected:

Mancher Student/ manch ein Student	<i>Many a student</i>
manch eine Nacht	<i>many a night</i>
Manche junge Leute sehen nicht ein, dass ...	<i>Some young people just don't realise that ...</i>

▶ 3.6.11 mehrere *several*

- **mehrere is used in the plural and is inflected like dieser (see 3.3.1 above)**

Er war mehrere Tage bei uns	<i>He was with us for several days</i>
mehrere nagelneue Autos	<i>several brand new cars</i>
Mütter mit mehreren kleinen Kindern	<i>Mothers with several small children</i>

▶ 3.6.12 sämtliche *all*

- **sämtliche is used in the plural and indicates all the members of a particular group or set**

It takes the same endings as dieser (see 3.3.1 above):

sämtliche Jungen in dieser Klasse	<i>all the boys in this class</i>
die Meinung sämtlicher anwesenden Mitglieder	<i>the opinion of all the members present</i>
Schillers sämtliche Werke	<i>Schiller's complete works</i>

▶ 3.6.13 viel/viele *lots/many*, wenig/wenige *a little/a few*

- a **Both viel and wenig add endings in the plural (where they take the same endings as dieser, see 3.3.1), but not in the singular**

Er hat wenig Geduld	<i>He doesn't have much patience</i>
Es nimmt zu viel Zeit in Anspruch	<i>It takes up too much time</i>
Sie hat viele/wenige Verwandte	<i>She has lots of/few relatives</i>
Er hat nur wenige gute Bücher	<i>He only has a few good books</i>
die Meinungen vieler Wähler	<i>the opinions of many voters</i>

- b **viel and wenig are also used with adjective-nouns**

Ich habe viel Gutes von ihm gehört	<i>I've heard many good things about him</i>
Sie hat nur wenig Schönes gesehen	<i>She saw only a little that was beautiful</i>

- c **viel and wenig can be used as a normal adjective after a determiner**

die vielen Bücher, die er gelesen hat	<i>the many books he's read</i>
seine wenigen Freunde	<i>his few friends</i>
das wenige Geld, das wir noch haben	<i>the little money we still have</i>

▶ 3.6.14 welcher/welche/welches *which*

- See Interrogative determiners (3.5.1 above).

▶ 3.6.15 Indefinite **determiners** + adjectives + noun

Although there is considerable flexibility with the endings of indefinite determiners and following adjectives, the following patterns often apply.

a Where indefinite numbers (or ‘quantifiers’) are followed by an adjective and a noun, both the determiner and the adjective take the same Group 3 (strong) ending (see 5.1.3)

einige	einige alte Freunde; mit einigen alten Freunden
einzelne	einzelne kurze Regenmacher
etliche	die Taten etlicher guter Menschen
manche (pl)	manche junge Leute
mehrere	trotz mehrerer langer Arbeitstage
viele	viele tolle Geschenke

Note Singular quantifiers (e.g. viel, wenig, etwas) are usually invariable, but any adjectives which follow them take Group 3 endings:

viel	viel guter Wein
wenig	mit wenig wirklichem Interesse

b Other indefinite determiners, including a few indefinite numbers (or ‘quantifiers’), work like Group 1 determiners, and the following adjective takes the appropriate weak ending (see 5.1.1)

These occur most frequently in the plural:

alle	alle interessanten Nachrichten; mit aller möglichen Eile
beide	beide alten Nachbarn
folgende	folgendes erstaunliche Ereignis; folgende erstaunlichen Ereignisse
manch (sing)	mancher junge Mann
sämtliche	sämtliches vorhandenes Material; sämtliche deutschen Politiker
solche	bei solcher täglichen Hektik; solche interessanten Bücher

c These rules also apply to indefinite determiners used with plural adjective-nouns (see 5.2)

- Indefinite numbers (3.6.15a above):

einige Arbeitslose	<i>several unemployed (people)</i>
mit mehreren Bekannten	<i>with several acquaintances</i>
viele Jugendliche	<i>many young people</i>
- Other indefinite determiners (3.6.15b above):

alle Arbeitslosen	<i>all (the) unemployed</i>
solche Deutschen	<i>such Germans; Germans like that</i>

3.7 Determiners and pronouns: a summary

The table below summarises the use of determiners and pronouns, and provides cross-references between Chapter 3 (Determiners) and Chapter 4 (Pronouns).

- Mostly, these words decline in an identical way, and any variations concern their use rather than their form.

- ✦ The reference is underlined if there is some variation in the way the two forms are declined; these variations are always minor, however.

Used as pronouns and determiners		Determiner	Pronoun
Definite article/demonstrative	der, die, das	3.1.1	<u>4.3.1</u>
Demonstratives	dieser, jener	3.3.1	4.3.2
	derjenige	3.3.3	4.3.4
	(ein) solcher	3.3.2	4.3.3
Indefinite article	ein, eine, ein; kein, keine, kein	3.1.2	<u>4.5.4</u>
Possessives	mein, meine, mein	3.4	4.4
Interrogatives	welcher	3.5.1	4.6.2
	was für (ein-)	3.5.2	
Indefinites/pronouns	all-/ganz	3.6.1, 3.6.2	<u>4.5.1</u>
	beide	3.6.3	4.5.2
	einige	3.6.4	4.5.5
	ein bisschen, ein wenig	3.6.5	4.5.3
	ein paar	3.6.6	4.5.3
	etwas	3.6.7	4.5.6
	irgendeiner	3.6.8	4.5.7
	jeder	3.6.9	4.5.8
	manche(r)	3.6.10	4.5.11
	mehrere	3.6.11	4.5.12
	sämtliche	3.6.12	
	viel/viele, wenig/wenige	3.6.13	4.5.14
Used as pronouns only			
	jemand/niemand		4.5.9
	man		4.5.10
	nichts		4.5.13
Interrogatives	wer(?), was(?)		4.6.1/4.6.3
Personal pronouns	ich, mich, mir		4.1/4.2
Relative pronouns	..., der; ..., die; ..., das		4.7

Pronouns

OVERVIEW

Pronouns are words *in place of* a noun phrase which is known or understood. They include:

- ♦ **personal** pronouns
e.g. ich, mich, mir *I, me*
- ♦ **reflexive** pronouns
e.g. sich *himself, herself, itself*
- ♦ **demonstrative** pronouns
e.g. dieser, der, jener *this one, that one, these, those*
- ♦ **possessive** pronouns
e.g. meiner, unserer *mine, ours*
- ♦ **indefinite** pronouns
e.g. jemand, man *someone, one*
- ♦ **interrogative** pronouns
e.g. wer?, was? *who?, what?*
- ♦ **relative** pronouns
e.g. der Mann, **der** ... *the man who*

The forms of most pronouns change according to gender, number and case. It is important to choose the form carefully, as these words are vital to the structure of the language

e.g. er, ihn, ihm du, dich, dir

The English pronoun **it** is expressed by the given form of er, sie, es depending on gender, number and case.

Many pronouns are identical in use and form with the corresponding determiners – see [Chapter 3](#).

4.1 Personal pronouns

▶ 4.1.1 The forms of the personal pronouns

Singular/plural	Person	Nom.	Acc.	Dat.
Singular	1st	ich	mich	mir
	2nd	du	dich	dir
	3rd	er	ihn	ihm
		sie	sie	ihr
		es	es	ihm
Plural	1st	wir	uns	uns
	2nd	ihr	euch	euch
	3rd	sie	sie	ihnen
		Sie	Sie	Ihnen

▶ TIP How to remember the 3rd person pronouns

Note that both singular and plural forms of the 3rd person pronouns have the same endings as the parallel case forms of **der**, **die**, **das**, and plural **die**.

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural
Nom.	der – er	die – sie	das – es	die – sie
Acc.	den – ihn	die – sie	das – es	die – sie
Dat.	dem – ihm	der – ihr	dem – ihm	den – ihnen

▶ 4.1.2 The use of the personal pronouns

a *It is not always expressed by es; the pronoun depends on the gender and case of the noun referred to*

der Wagen > er die Garage > sie das Haus > es

Der Wagen ist neu – ich habe **ihn**
gestern gekauft

*The car is new – I bought it
yesterday*

Kennst du die Brücke im Dorf?

*Do you know the bridge in the
village? It's 400 years old!*

Sie ist 400 Jahre alt!

Das alte Haus da drüben – **es**
gehörte früher meiner Oma

*The old house over there – it used
to belong to my grandma*

b *Some nouns have a gender which is different from the 'natural' gender of the person or animal referred to*

e.g. das Mädchen, die Person, der Hund. See 2.1.7 for more details.

Wir haben einen Hund – **sie**
(formal: er) ist 6

We've got a dog – she's 6

„Kennst du das Mädchen?“ „Ja,
sie (formal: es) heißt Alex“

*'Do you know the girl?' 'Yes, she's
called Alex'*

c The definite article (der, die, das) is often used colloquially in place of a personal pronoun

It is often placed first for emphasis; the genitive form cannot be used in this way:

Der Richard? Den habe ich seit langem nicht mehr gesehen	<i>Richard? I haven't seen him for ages</i>
Kathrin? Die ist aber doof!	<i>Kathrin? She's really stupid!</i>

d The genitive forms of personal pronouns (meiner, deiner, seiner, ihrer, unser, euer, ihrer, ihrer) exist, but are rarely used

- This applies even in formal written language, and an alternative construction is almost always preferred.
- With prepositions which take the genitive, the dative pronoun is often used instead, when referring to persons; if things are being referred to, adverbs such as **stattdessen, trotzdem** or **deswegen**, are used:

wegen dir	<i>because of you</i>
Er hat eine Panne gehabt;	<i>He's had a breakdown; because of</i>
deswegen kann er nicht kommen	<i>that he can't come</i>

TIP du/ihr or Sie?

du and its plural **ihr** are used between relatives, close friends, fellow students at school or university, work colleagues (though not in the professions), and when talking to God, children and animals.

Sie is used when addressing all adult strangers, whether singular or plural, and colleagues in the professions.

- It is quite common for people to work in the same office for years and still address one another as **Sie**; it does not denote a lack of friendliness. Even insults can be traded using the **Sie** form:

Sie Sau! You bastard!

- Outside the workplace, Germans are quick to suggest replacing **siezen** (calling someone **Sie**) with **duzen**, and the person's first name:

Wollen wir uns duzen? Shall we call each other du?

4.1.3 The pronoun es – some special uses

As well as its use in referring to a neuter noun, the following less obvious uses of **es** should be noted:

a To refer to a preceding noun or adjective (used with sein, werden, bleiben)

Du bist müde? Ich bin es auch	<i>You're tired? I am too</i>
„Wer ist das?“ „ Es ist mein Sohn“	<i>'Who's that?' 'It's my son'</i>
„Wer ist da?“ „Ich bin s “	<i>'Who's there?' 'It's me'</i>
„Was sind das für Bücher?“ „ Es sind Romane“	<i>'What sort of books are those?' 'They're novels'</i>
Ihr Vater ist Anwalt, und sie wird es auch	<i>Her father's a lawyer, and she's going to become one too</i>

b To refer to a preceding clause or action

Sie kann schwimmen; ich kann es auch	<i>She can swim, and so can I</i>
Kommt sie mit? Ich hoffe es	<i>Is she coming too? I hope so</i>
Jemand hat das Fenster zerbrochen, aber keiner will es getan haben	<i>Somebody broke the window, but nobody will own up to it</i>

c As a temporary subject (or 'placekeeper'); its role is to ensure that the finite verb stands in second position

The real subject often follows the verb, and is also in the nominative:

Es wartet jemand auf ihn	<i>There's someone waiting for him</i>
Es standen viele Leute an der Tür	<i>There were lots of people standing at the door</i>
Es freut mich sehr, dich wieder zu sehen	<i>I'm really pleased to see you again</i>
Es hat sich niemand gemeldet	<i>Nobody has volunteered</i>
Es geschah ein Unfall	<i>An accident occurred</i>
Es war einmal ein schöner Prinz...	<i>Once upon a time there was a handsome prince...</i>

But if another element is placed first, **es** is usually not required:

Jemand wartet auf ihn
Viele Leute standen an der Tür
Bisher hat sich niemand gemeldet

d As the subject of many impersonal or passive constructions (where, as in 4.1.3c above, it acts as a 'placekeeper' to keep the verb in second position)

Es regnet	<i>It's raining</i>
Es ist kalt/Freitag/8 Uhr	<i>It is cold/Friday/8 o'clock</i>
Es klopfte an der Tür	<i>There was a knock at the door</i>
Hier wohnt es sich gut	<i>It's great living here</i>
Es wird heute Abend gefeiert	<i>There will be a celebration this evening</i>
Es darf nicht geraucht werden	<i>No smoking is allowed</i>

But if another element is placed first in a passive construction, **es** is not needed:

Heute Abend wird gefeiert
Hier darf nicht geraucht werden

See also 12.6 (impersonal constructions), and 12.6.3 (*es ist/sind, es gibt*).

e As an indeterminate object

Hier habt ihr es gut!	<i>You've got it good here!</i>
Ich habe es eilig	<i>I'm in a hurry</i>
Ich finde es unfair, dass ...	<i>I think it's unfair that ...</i>
Ich finde es nicht gut, dass du so viel Geld ausgegeben hast	<i>I don't think it's good that you've spent so much money</i>

▶ 4.1.4 Pronouns used with prepositions

- If the pronoun refers to a **person or persons**, use preposition + pronoun.

- If the pronoun refers to a **thing** or **things**, use **da(r)-** + preposition. (This form is called the prepositional adverb.)

Note außer, gegenüber, ohne and seit cannot be used with da(r)- ; they are used with a pronoun.

Pronoun refers to person	Pronoun refers to thing
Use preposition + pronoun	Use da-/dar- in front of preposition
Mein Freund:	Der Wagen:
Dieser Brief ist von ihm	Ich kaufe Öl dafür
Das Geschenk ist für ihn	Ich fahre damit nach Salzburg
Ich gehe mit ihm ins Kino	Meine Schlüssel sind darin (<i>inside it</i>)
	But Ohne ihn komme ich nicht zur Arbeit

4.2 Reflexive pronouns

▶ 4.2.1 Reflexive object pronouns

- A reflexive object pronoun is used when the object refers to the same person as the subject. See 12.7 (reflexive verbs).
- The reflexive pronouns are, with one exception, the same as the direct and indirect object pronouns (e.g. **mich/mir**).
- The exception is in the third person (**er, sie, es, sie/Sie**); to avoid ambiguity, the pronoun **sich** is used for both accusative and dative of all three genders and the plural.

Accusative pronoun	Dative pronoun
ich wasche mich	ich wasche mir die Hände
du wäschst dich	du wäschst dir die Hände
er/sie/es wäscht sich	er/sie/es wäscht sich die Hände
wir waschen uns	wir waschen uns die Hände
ihr wascht euch	ihr wascht euch die Hände
sie/Sie waschen sich	sie/Sie waschen sich die Hände

Ich habe mich gewaschen	<i>I had a wash</i>
Ich will mir einen Laptop kaufen	<i>I want to buy myself a laptop</i>
Er hat sich gewaschen	<i>He had a wash</i>
Sie will sich einen Laptop kaufen	<i>She wants to buy herself a laptop</i>
Ich singe vor mich hin	<i>I sing to myself</i>
Sie haben keine Kreditkarte bei sich	<i>They haven't got a credit card on them</i>

See also 1.1.5e-f (for object pronoun used in place of possessive determiner).

▶ 4.2.2 selbst/selber *myself, yourself, himself*

♦ **selbst/selber are emphatic**

Den Kuchen habe ich **selbst/selber** gebacken

I baked the cake myself

Small children say „**Selber** machen!!“

'Me do it!!'

▶ 4.2.3 sich/einander *each other, one another* (the reciprocal pronoun)

♦ **sich is more common in speech; einander is the only possibility after a preposition**

Sie lieben **sich/einander**

They love one another

Sie denken oft **aneinander**

They often think of each other

Cf. Sie denken nur an sich

They only think of themselves

4.3 Demonstrative pronouns

Most demonstrative pronouns are also used as determiners. Notes on the declensions of these (apart from the pronouns *der, die, das* – see below) can be found in 3.3.

▶ 4.3.1 *der, die, das that*

- ♦ **In spoken German, *der* is commonly used as a demonstrative determiner or pronoun in place of *dieser***
- ♦ It is always pronounced stressed.
- ♦ Its forms are mostly identical to the definite article, except in the genitive singular and plural and the dative plural (shown in bold below). It is completely identical to the relative pronoun (see 4.7.1 below).

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural
Nom.	der	die	das	die
Acc.	den	die	das	die
Gen.	dessen	deren	dessen	deren
Dat.	dem	der	dem	denen

Käse? – Also, ein Stück von **dem** hier, bitte

Cheese? – Er, a piece of this one, please

So was kann nur **die** gemacht haben

Only she could have done something like that

Sein Computer ist besser als **der**, den ich gekauft habe

His computer is better than the one I've bought

Das sind alles Sachen, die nicht gut sind

Those are all things which aren't good

Doch **das** sind Details

But those are (just) details

▶ 4.3.2 dieser *this (one)*, jener *that (one)*

a **dieser and jener used as pronouns have the same declensions as the determiners**

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural
Nom.	dieser jener	diese jene	dieses jenes	diese jene
Acc.	diesen jenen	diese jene	dieses jenes	diese jene
Gen.	dieses jenes	dieser jener	dieses jenes	dieser jener
Dat.	diesem jenem	dieser jener	diesem jenem	diesen jenen

- jener is uncommon except in formal written German.
- dieser or, colloquially, der/die/das (see 4.3.1 above), is used almost without exception to mean both *this* and *that*:

Die Polizei fand einen Schuh.

Dieser stamme von dem
Vermissten, erklärte sie

Sie wollte nicht dieses Kleid
anprobieren, sondern **jenes**

*The police found a shoe. This
belonged to the missing man
they said*

*She didn't want to try this dress
on, but that one*

b **dieses used as a pronoun is often shortened to dies**

Dies war jedoch wegen des Sturms
nicht möglich

*However, this was impossible
owing to the storm*

▶ 4.3.3 solcher *such (a)*

- **solcher declines like dieser (see 4.3.2 above). In the singular it is usually replaced with so einer**

Das Problem als **solches**

Lehrer gibt es **solche** und **solche**

So eines wollte ich schon immer
haben

The problem as such

There are teachers and teachers

I always wanted one like that

▶ 4.3.4 derjenige/diejenige/dasjenige *the one who/which*

a **derjenige has the forms of a definite article + adjective, but is written as one word**

See 3.3.3 for its declension; it may be used as a determiner or as a pronoun.

b **derjenige is usually followed by a relative pronoun**

diejenigen, die mitkommen
möchten

Er ist **derjenige**, der ...

Those who would like to come

He is the one who ...

Diese Straftaten kosten
diejenigen Geld, denen
Graffiti an die Hauswand
gesprüht wird

*These criminal acts cost those who
find graffiti sprayed on the
walls of their houses a lot of
money*

c derjenige is colloquially often replaced by der, die, das

Der, der angerufen hat, sollte ... *The one who phoned up should ...*
Der, den du mir gegeben hast ... *The one you gave me ...*

4.4 Possessive pronouns

a The possessive pronoun is used when no noun follows the possessive
It must agree with the number and gender of the noun to which it refers.

b The forms of the possessive pronoun are identical to the possessive adjectives/articles (3.4) except in the basic masculine and neuter forms (shown in bold in the table below)

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural
Nom.	meiner	meine	mein(e)s	meine
Acc.	meinen	meine	mein(e)s	meine
Gen.	meines	meiner	meines	meiner
Dat.	meinem	meiner	meinem	meinen

Das ist mein Buch – das hier ist
dein(e)s

That's my book – here's yours

Die zwei Kulis – **meiner** ist rot,
seiner ist blau

*Those two pens – mine's red, his is
blue*

Wenn du keinen Taschenrechner
hast, gebe ich dir **meinen**

*If you haven't got a calculator, I'll
give you mine*

c The e in mein(e)s etc. is often dropped in speech and informal writing

4.5 Indefinite pronouns

♦ **An indefinite pronoun refers to a non-specific person or thing**

Note Many indefinite pronouns are also used as determiners. Notes on the declensions of these may be found in 3.6; a summary is in 3.7. The notes below describe the differences encountered when these words are used as pronouns.

▶ 4.5.1 all, alles *all, everything, everyone*

a all used as a pronoun inflects like dieser (see 4.3.2 above), though there is no genitive singular form. English everything is translated by alles

Alles wurde gegessen
Das sind **alles** Sachen, die nicht
gut sind

*Everything was eaten
All of those are things which
aren't good*

Warst du mit allem zufrieden?	<i>Were you satisfied with everything?</i>
Sind alle da?	<i>Is everybody here?</i>
Die Spiele waren toll – wir waren bei allen dabei	<i>The matches were great – we went to all of them</i>
zu aller Erstaunen (genitive plural)	<i>to everyone's amazement</i>

b all is often used inflected with a personal pronoun

Er kannte uns alle bei Namen	<i>He knew us all by name</i>
Wir alle bleiben hier	<i>We're all staying here</i>
Seid ihr alle bescheuert?	<i>Are you all crazy?</i>

▶ **4.5.2 beide, beides both**

a beide is used in the plural and takes the same endings as dieser (4.3.2). It may stand before or after the verb

Wir sahen zwei Filme – beide waren interessant	<i>We saw two films – both were interesting</i>
Sie gingen beide ins Haus	<i>They both went into the house</i>

b beides refers to two things and is singular

Beides ist teuer	<i>They're both expensive</i>
„Was trinkst du lieber, Wein oder Bier?“ „ Beides! “	<i>'What do you prefer drinking – wine or beer?' 'Both!'</i>

▶ **4.5.3 ein bisschen, ein wenig a little, a bit, ein paar a few**

♦ **None of these phrases changes its endings**

Er verlangt ein bisschen viel, finde ich	<i>He's asking for a bit much, I think</i>
„Hast du Geld dabei?“ „Nur noch ein wenig “	<i>'Have you any money with you?' 'Only a little'</i>
Ich hatte früher sehr viele davon; jetzt habe ich nur noch ein paar	<i>I used to have a lot of those; now I only have a few left</i>

▶ **4.5.4 einer one (of them)**

a einer takes the same endings as the possessive pronouns meiner, meine, meines (see 4.4 above), though of course there is no plural

Its negative is *keiner none*, which does have a plural.

Die zwei Kulis – einer gehört mir	<i>Those two pens – one of them is mine</i>
Ich habe keinen Taschenrechner – leihst du mir bitte einen ?	<i>I don't have a calculator – can you lend me one, please?</i>
Er ist einer meiner besten Freunde	<i>He's one of my best friends</i>
Keiner meiner Freunde war zu Hause	<i>None of my friends was at home</i>

b einer is often used as a synonym for jemand

Einer muss ihn gesehen haben!	<i>Someone must have seen him!</i>
Für so eine würde ich das nicht machen	<i>I wouldn't do that for somebody (a woman) like her</i>

c one of my ..., one of the ... ; a ... of mine

- Note that the second part of the phrase is always in the genitive plural:

einer meiner Freunde	<i>one of my friends</i>
mit inem meiner Freunde	<i>with one of my friends</i>
Das ist ines der besten Restaurants, die ich kenne	<i>That's one of the best restaurants I know</i>
- In spoken German, von + dative is often used instead:

ein Freund von mir	<i>a friend of mine</i>
eine Bekannte von uns	<i>an acquaintance of ours</i>

▶ **4.5.5 einige some**

- einige takes the same endings as dieser (see 4.3.2 above)**

Er hat noch einiges zu erledigen	<i>He's still got a few things to</i>
Da spricht einiges dafür	<i>There's quite a lot in favour of it</i>
Hast du schon einige gefunden?	<i>Have you found some already?</i>

▶ **4.5.6 etwas some(-thing)/any(-thing)**

- etwas is invariable and is often abbreviated to was**

Sonst noch etwas ?	<i>Anything else?</i>
Suchen Sie sich etwas aus!	<i>Take your pick!</i>
Er wird es nie zu etwas bringen	<i>He'll never get anywhere</i>
Kann ich dir was helfen?	<i>Can I do anything to help you?</i>

▶ **4.5.7 irgend- some ...or other**

- irgend can be added to emphasise vagueness**

irgendetwas <i>something (or other)</i> irgendetwas <i>someone (or other)</i>	
irgendein <i>some (sing.) ... (or other)</i> irgendwelche <i>some (pl.) ... (or other)</i>	
Er ist nicht irgendwer	<i>He's not just anybody</i>
Irgendetwas hat mich geweckt	<i>Something (or other) woke me up</i>
Vermisst irgendjemand einen Schlüssel?	<i>Has someone lost a key?</i>

▶ **4.5.8 jeder each/every, everybody**

- jeder is always singular and declines like dieser (see 4.3.2)**
- If used in a general way to mean *everyone*, the masculine form is used.
- If a possessive is required, forms of sein are used, where English uses *their* to avoid *his/her*.

Er gab jedem von beiden 20€	<i>He gave each of them 20€</i>
Jeder will sein eigenes Auto	<i>Everybody wants their own car</i>
Hier kennt jeder jeden	<i>Here everyone knows everyone else</i>

▶ 4.5.9 jemand/niemand *somebody/nobody*

a jemand and niemand may be used with or without case endings in both spoken and written German

The endings are as follows:

Nom.	jemand	niemand
Acc.	jemanden	niemanden
Gen.	jemandes	niemandes
Dat.	jemandem	niemandem

Niemand glaubt dir!	<i>Nobody believes you!</i>
Hast du jemand(en) im Gebäude gesehen?	<i>Did you see anyone in the building?</i>
Erinnert Sie der Name an jemand(en) ?	<i>Does that name remind you of someone?</i>
Das habe ich bisher niemand(em) erzählt	<i>I've never told anyone that before</i>
Außer mir ist niemand zu Hause	<i>Apart from me there's nobody at home</i>
Es ist niemand da	<i>There isn't anybody there</i>

b If followed by an adjective, jemand and niemand usually add no endings

The adjective itself is treated as a noun, and can add the ending -es in all cases:

War er jemand Berühmtes?	<i>Was he someone famous?</i>
Seine Freundin hat jemand Neues/Neuen kennengelernt	<i>His girlfriend has met someone new</i>
Ich habe soeben mit jemand sehr Interessantes/Interessantem gesprochen	<i>I've just been talking to somebody really interesting</i>
Jemand anders hat es gefunden	<i>Someone else found it</i>

▶ 4.5.10 man *one*

a man is equivalent to one in English, but is much more commonly used

English often prefers *you, we, they, or people* (German does not use *Leute* or another noun in this sense), or a passive construction (see 15.2). The possessive form of *man* is *sein*.

Man sagt, er sei stinkreich	<i>People say (It's said) he's rolling in it</i>
Vom Dach hat man eine schöne Aussicht	<i>From the roof you have a lovely view</i>
Man darf seine Tischmanieren nie vergessen	<i>People should always remember their table manners</i>
Wenn man auf ihren Vorschlag eingeht ...	<i>If we consider her suggestion ...</i>
Das tut man einfach nicht	<i>That just isn't done</i>
Man kann nicht bestreiten, dass ...	<i>There's no denying that ...</i>

b man is also used as a polite form of address

Darf man fragen, was Sie damit genau sagen wollen?	<i>May one/we/I ask exactly what you meant by that?</i>
--	---

c man exists only in the nominative

In the accusative and dative the pronouns *einen* and *einem* are used:

Das würde er **einem** nie vergeben! *He'd never forgive someone for that!*

▶ **4.5.11 manche(r) some, many**

♦ **manche(r) is used in the singular or plural and is inflected like dieser (see 4.3.2 above)**

Manche sehen nicht ein, dass ...	<i>Some (people) just don't realise that ...</i>
Ich habe noch manches zu tun	<i>I've still got a number of things to do</i>
Mancher lernt's nie	<i>Some people never learn</i>
Die Qualität mancher ihrer Waren ist hervorragend	<i>The quality of many of their goods is excellent</i>

▶ **4.5.12 mehrere several**

♦ **mehrere is used in the plural and is inflected like dieser (see 4.3.2 above)**

Mehrere meiner Freunde können nicht kommen	<i>Several of my friends can't come</i>
mehrere hundert Autos	<i>several hundred cars</i>

▶ **4.5.13 nichts nothing, not ...anything**

♦ **nichts never inflects**

Alles oder nichts !	<i>It's all or nothing!</i>
Mir fällt nichts ein	<i>I can't think of anything</i>
Das macht nichts	<i>That doesn't matter</i>

▶ **4.5.14 viel/viele lots/many, wenig/wenige a little/a few**

♦ **Both viel and wenig decline in the plural, but not normally in the singular**

However, *viel* may add *-es* in more formal writing:

Ich habe viel/wenig gegessen	<i>I've eaten a lot/a little</i>
Vieles deutet darauf hin, dass ...	<i>There's (plenty of) evidence to suggest that ...</i>
Es waren nicht viele im Kino	<i>There weren't many (people) in the cinema</i>
in vielen dieser Fälle	<i>in many of these cases</i>
Ihr Buch enthält viel Interessantes	<i>Her book contains much that is interesting</i>

4.6 Interrogative pronouns

▶ 4.6.1 was *what*

a was does not change its endings

Was ist los?

Was suchst du?

Sage, **was** du willst!

Na, so **was**!

What's up?

What are you looking for?

Say what you like!

Well, I never!

b was is not used with prepositions

In place of *was* plus a preposition, *wo(r)- + preposition* is used. This is called an interrogative adverb (see 4.1.4 – prepositions with *da(r)-*).

Note that the preposition is not left at the end of the sentence or question as in English:

Wofür interessierst du dich?

Wovor hat sie Angst?

Ich weiß nicht, **wozu** er das alles macht

Worüber schreibt sie?

Worauf wartest du?

What are you interested in?

What is she frightened of?

I don't know what he's doing all that for

What is she writing about?

What are you waiting for?

c In colloquial language, the preposition + was is often used instead of the interrogative adverb

Um was (for **Worum**) handelt es sich?

An was (for **Woran**) denkst du?

What's it about?

What are you thinking about?

• For *wofür*, *worauf*, etc. as relative pronouns, see 4.7.2d.

▶ 4.6.2 welcher *some, any*

a welcher takes the same endings as *dieser* (see 4.3.2 above). It is more colloquial than *einige, manche, etwas*

„Ich habe keinen Wein mehr. Ist noch

welcher im Kühlschrank?“

„Nein, ich muss morgen noch

welchen kaufen“

Diese Kulis – **welcher** gehört dir?

'I've run out of wine. Is there some in the fridge?'

'No, I've got to get some more tomorrow'

These pens – which (one) is yours?

b welcher may also be used as a relative pronoun (see 4.7.1f) and as an interrogative determiner (see 3.5.1)

▶ 4.6.3 wer *who*

a The endings on *wer* change depending on its case, but there is only one set of endings for all genders

Nom.	wer	<i>who</i>
Acc.	wen	<i>who(m)</i>
Gen.	wessen	<i>whose</i>
Dat.	wem	<i>(to) who(m)</i>

Wer möchte ins Kino gehen?	<i>Who would like to go to the cinema?</i>
Wer sind die Männer da drüben?	<i>Who are the men over there?</i>
Für wen hast du die CD gekauft?	<i>Who did you buy the CD for?</i>
Wen sollten wir fragen?	<i>Who should we ask?</i>
Wessen Auto ist das?	<i>Whose car is that?</i>
Wessen Idee war das?	<i>Whose idea was that?</i>
Mit wem geht sie ins Kino?	<i>Who is she going to the cinema with?</i>
Ich möchte wissen, wer dahinter steckt	<i>I'd like to know who's behind it</i>

b Wessen is often avoided in modern German, and another way of expressing the idea is found

Wem gehört das Auto?	<i>Whose car is that?</i>
Wer ist auf diese Idee gekommen?	<i>Whose idea was that?</i>

- For other uses of **was** and **wer**, see 4.7.2 and 4.7.3 (relative pronoun) and 18.2.2f (conjunctions).

4.7 Relative pronouns

▶ 4.7.1 der, die, das *who, which*

e.g. der Mann, der ...	<i>the man who</i>
die Bücher, die ...	<i>the books which</i>

- a The forms of the relative pronoun are mostly identical to the definite article, except in the genitive singular and plural and the dative plural; these forms are in bold below. It is completely identical to those of the demonstrative pronoun (see 4.3.1 above)**

	Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Plural
Nom.	der	die	das	die
Acc.	den	die	das	die
Gen.	dessen	deren	dessen	deren
Dat.	dem	der	dem	denen

▶ TIP The relative pronoun cannot be omitted

It is often dropped in spoken English but never in German:

das Auto, das ich letztes Jahr gekauft habe...	<i>the car (which) I bought last year...</i>
der Mann, den du kennst ...	<i>the man (whom) you know ...</i>

b Gender and number (singular or plural) are determined by the noun to which the relative pronoun refers

♦ **The case is decided by the role of the relative pronoun in its own clause**

Der Mann, der gestern ankam, ... (masculine; subject of verb ankam)	<i>The man who arrived yesterday ...</i>
Der Mann, den ich sah, ... (masculine; object of verb sah)	<i>The man (whom) I saw...</i>
Der Mann, dem ich geholfen habe, ... (masculine; dative object of verb helfen)	<i>The man (whom) I helped ...</i>
Der Mann, dessen Eltern in Ulm wohnen, ... (masculine; genitive of possession)	<i>The man whose parents live in Ulm ...</i>
das ideale Auto für Sportfans, denen ... Lamborghini zu protzig ist (plural; dative indirect object of verb sein)	<i>The ideal car for sports car fans for whom ...Lamborghinis are too showy</i>

c A preposition before the relative pronoun determines its case

Der Mann, neben dem ich saß, ...	<i>The man I sat next to/next to whom I sat...</i>
Der Mann, für den ich arbeite, ...	<i>The man I work for/for whom I work...</i>

d When the relative pronoun refers to a first person pronoun, it is usually followed by the personal pronoun in the nominative

Sie mochte ihren Hund, ganz im Gegensatz zu mir, die ich mir oft gewünscht hatte, er wäre tot	<i>She liked her dog, quite unlike me, who often wished to myself that it was dead</i>
---	--

e whose (genitive case) is always expressed by a genitive relative pronoun, even after a preposition

Der Mann, dessen Tochter ich kenne, ...	<i>The man whose daughter I know ...</i>
Der Mann, mit dessen Tochter ich ins Kino gehe, ...	<i>The man with whose daughter I'm going to the cinema...</i>

f welcher, welche, welches, etc. are found very occasionally as a synonym of der, die, das, but only in formal written language

Firmen, welche unsere Dienste in Anspruch nehmen	<i>companies which utilise our services</i>
--	---

g Word order in relative clauses

- ♦ A relative pronoun introduces a subordinate clause; the verb therefore stands at the end.

- ♦ The relative clause stands as close as possible to the noun it refers to, though other elements (usually verbs) may interpose so that they are not isolated:

Kennst du den Mann, der gestern ankam?	<i>Do you know the man who arrived yesterday?</i>
Der Mann, der gestern ankam, ist ein Freund von meinem Vater	<i>The man who arrived yesterday is a friend of my father's</i>
Ich habe den Mann gesehen , von dem du mir nur erzählt hast	<i>I've seen the man you've only told me about</i>
Wenn ich die E-mail finden kann , die sie mir geschickt hat, ...	<i>If I can find the e-mail which she sent me...</i>

▶ 4.7.2 was as a relative pronoun

- a was is used as a relative pronoun when referring back to an indefinite pronoun such as nichts, alles, etwas, vieles or a demonstrative pronoun such as das**

Es gibt nichts, was ich lieber tun würde	<i>There's nothing I'd rather do</i>
Ich kaufte alles, was ich brauchte	<i>I bought everything I needed</i>
Etwas, was er gesagt hat, hat mich tief beeindruckt	<i>Something he said impressed me deeply</i>
Ich sehe etwas, was du nicht siehst	<i>I spy with my little eye (children's game)</i>
Vieles, was wir gesehen haben, war nicht zu kaufen	<i>Much of what we saw wasn't for sale</i>
Sie haben nichts, außer dem, was sie am eigenen Leibe tragen	<i>They have only what they stand up in (i.e. their clothes)</i>

- b was can also refer back to a whole clause, whereas der, die, das, etc. refer back to a specific noun**

Compare these two sentences:

Ich arbeite in einem Büro, was ich langweilig finde	<i>I work in an office, which I find boring (i.e. it's the whole idea of working in an office which bores me)</i>
Ich arbeite in einem Büro, das ich langweilig finde	<i>I work in an office that I find boring (i.e. it's this specific office that bores me)</i>

- c was is also used after neuter adjective-nouns**

Das ist das Einzige, was wir noch machen können	<i>That's the only thing we can do now</i>
Das Allerbeste, was mir je passiert ist, war ...	<i>The very best thing that ever happened to me was ...</i>

- d If was requires a preposition, a wo(r)- construction is used**

Etwas, wovon ich geträumt habe ...	<i>Something I've dreamed of ...</i>
Alles, worauf ich mich gefreut habe ...	<i>Everything I've been looking forward to ...</i>

▶ 4.7.3 wer anyone who, those who; was that which

Wer schweigt, stimmt zu	<i>Silence equals consent</i>
--------------------------------	-------------------------------

Wer das glaubt, ist dumm
„Nur **wer** die Sehnsucht kennt,
weiß, was ich leide“ (Goethe)
Was Preis und Qualität betrifft, ...

*Anyone who thinks that is stupid
'Only those who know longing
understand what I suffer'
As far as price and quality are
concerned...*

▶ 4.7.4 Relative pronouns with places and times

a For places, a form of wo is often used

das Haus, wo (or in dem) ich wohne	<i>the house where / in which I live</i>
die Stadt, wohin (or in die) ich fahren sollte	<i>the town I was supposed to go to</i>

b With time expressions, a preposition + der, etc. is usual; however, als (past time) or wenn (present, future), or (colloquially) wo may be used

der Tag, an dem Kennedy ermordet wurde	<i>the day when Kennedy was murdered</i>
am Tag, als er ermordet wurde	<i>on the day he was murdered</i>
die Zeit, in der wir leben	<i>the time in which we live</i>
eine Zeit, wo die Risiken steigen	<i>a time in which the risks are increasing</i>
Das erinnert an eine Zeit, als ...	<i>It reminds us of a time when ...</i>
eine Zeit in der Zukunft, wenn Roboter alles machen	<i>a time in the future when robots will do everything</i>
Jetzt, wo wir nichts mehr machen können, ...	<i>Now, when there's nothing more we can do,...</i>

5

Adjectives

OVERVIEW

An **adjective** describes a noun – a **red** car; the book is **interesting**.

- The adjective can be used, as in English, in one of two positions:

- **before the noun** ('**attributive**').

Adjectives used in this way add endings depending on the gender, case and number of the noun:

das **rote** Auto
guter Wein

ein kleines Kind
mein älterer Bruder

- **after the verb sein**, or occasionally **werden** or **bleiben** ('**predicative**').

Adjectives used in this way never add endings:

Das Auto ist **rot**

Das Wetter bleibt **warm**

Note The adjective never stands after the noun, as it may in French or Spanish.

- There are no irregular adjectives in German. However, there are a few small variations in spelling, and a few irregular comparative and superlative forms:

alt, älter, älteste
gut, besser, beste

*old, older, oldest/eldest
good, better, best*

- A few adjectives are indeclinable – that is, they do not add endings, even when they stand before a noun:

lila, rosa
in einer live Sendung

*purple, pink
in a live broadcast*

5.1 The declension of adjectives

a Adjectives add case endings only when they stand before the noun; in this position they are called *attributive* adjectives.

b There is a logical pattern to the endings and a very limited number of variations.

Note how, in the examples below, the nominative masculine -er ending, or the nominative neuter ending -s is present in one element each time, either the article or the adjective.

Masculine

der gute Wein
 ein **guter** Wein
guter Wein

Neuter

das gute Buch
 ein **gutes** Buch
kaltes Wasser

c Adjective endings do not affect the meaning of the following noun, and while it is important to check their accuracy in written German, they are often unemphasised in colloquial spoken German

„Ich habe einen kleinen Bruder“ usually sounds more like „Ich hab ein klein Bruder“, or even „Ich hab ‘n’ klein Bruder.“

▶ 5.1.1 Group 1: weak endings

- a The adjectives are said to have ‘weak’ endings because they do not show the gender and case clearly; that is the role of the definite article**
- The adjectives have only two possible endings: **-e** with the basic forms, **-en** with the rest.

Case	Singular			Plural
	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	
Nom.	der alte Mann	die junge Frau	das gute Buch	die jungen Frauen
Acc.	den alten Mann	die junge Frau	das gute Buch	die jungen Frauen
Gen.	des alten Mannes	der jungen Frau	des guten Buchs	der jungen Frauen
Dat.	dem alten Mann	der jungen Frau	dem guten Buch	den jungen Frauen

b Group 1 declensions are used when the noun phrase starts with the definite article (der, die, das) and determiners which decline like it

dieser	<i>this, these/that, those</i>	manch- (<i>sing</i>)	<i>many a</i>
welcher?	<i>which?</i>	all- ¹	<i>all</i>
irgendwelcher	<i>some ... or other</i>	sämtlich-	<i>all</i>
jeder	<i>each, every (+ sing noun)</i>		
jener	<i>that, those (formal)</i>		

¹ When inflected (see 3.6.1).

Bei welcher **deutschen** Firma
 arbeitet er?
 irgendwelches **dumme** Zeug
 Dieses **neue** Auto gehört mir
 Mancher **junge** Mann ...

*Which German company does he
 work for?
 some rubbish or other
 This new car belongs to me
 Many a young man ...*

▶ 5.1.2 Group 2: mixed endings

- a The adjectives are said to have ‘mixed’ endings because they clearly show the gender in the nominative singular forms but not elsewhere**
- The adjectives end with **-en** in all forms apart from with the basic **ein, eine, ein**.

Case	Singular			Plural
	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	
Nom.	ein alter Mann	eine junge Frau	ein gutes Buch	keine alten Männer
Acc.	einen alten Mann	eine junge Frau	ein gutes Buch	keine alten Männer
Gen.	eines alten Mannes	einer jungen Frau	eines guten Buchs	keiner alten Männer
Dat.	einem alten Mann	einer jungen Frau	einem guten Buch	keinen alten Männern

b Group 2 declensions are used when the noun phrase starts with the indefinite article (ein, eine) and its negative (kein), and after the possessive adjectives

These are sometimes more accurately called possessive articles:

mein	<i>my</i>	unser	<i>our</i>
dein	<i>your</i>	euer	<i>your</i>
sein	<i>his</i>	ihr	<i>their</i>
ihr	<i>her</i>	Ihr	<i>your</i>
sein	<i>its</i>		

Wir haben euren letzten Brief erst
gestern bekommen

*We received your last letter only
yesterday*

Er arbeitet bei irgendeiner kleinen
Firma in Bonn

*He works for some little company
(or other) in Bonn*

Ich habe keine guten Freunde

I have no close friends

▶ **5.1.3 Group 3: strong endings**

a The adjectives are said to have 'strong' endings because they show the gender, case and number of the noun

- all as a determiner can be declinable or invariable (see 3.6.1).
- Group 3 endings are essentially the same as those on the article **der/die/das**, with the exception of the genitive singular of the masculine and neuter forms.

Case	Singular			Plural
	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	
Nom.	guter Wein	frische Milch	kaltes Wasser	gute Weine
Acc.	guten Wein	frische Milch	kaltes Wasser	gute Weine
Gen.	guten Weins	frischer Milch	kalten Wassers	guter Weine
Dat.	gutem Wein	frischer Milch	kaltem Wasser	guten Weinen

b Group 3 declensions are used when there is no article before the adjective, and after numbers (including indefinite determiners – see list below), except ein

guter Rat
zwei schöne Häuser
viele alte Autos
Sie trinkt viel frische kalte Milch
trotz dichten Nebels

*good advice
two lovely houses
lots of old cars
She drinks lots of fresh cold milk
despite (the) thick fog*

c Common examples of these indefinite determiners (see 3.6) are

- ♦ invariable; followed by singular noun:

ein bisschen	<i>a little, a bit</i>
ein wenig	<i>a little</i>
etwas	<i>some, a little</i>
viel	<i>a lot, much</i>
wenig	<i>little</i>

- ♦ declinable; followed by plural noun:

andere	<i>other</i>
ein paar	<i>a few</i>
einige	<i>several</i>
einzelne	<i>individual</i>
etliche	<i>several</i>
manche (pl)	<i>a good number of</i>
mehrere	<i>several</i>
sonstige	<i>other, further</i>
verschiedene	<i>various</i>
viele	<i>many, lots of</i>
wenige	<i>few</i>

▶ **5.1.4 Indeclinable adjectives**

A few adjectives do not change their endings, even when they stand before a noun. They fall into the following categories.

a Some adjectives which are foreign in derivation; many refer to colour

beige	<i>beige</i>	creme	<i>cream</i>	klasse; prima; spitze	<i>great</i>
lila	<i>mauve</i>	live	<i>live (broadcast)</i>	orange orange purpur	<i>purple</i>

Ich habe ein klasse Buch gelesen *I've read a great book*
 Sie trug ein lila Kleid *She was wearing a purple dress*

b Adjective + noun compounds

Some adjectives have become attached (without case ending) to the noun to form new compound nouns; these are best learned as individual vocabulary items:

die Altstadt	<i>the old (part of the) town</i>
die Fremdsprache	<i>foreign language</i>
die Großstadt	<i>the big town, city</i>
der Neubau	<i>new building</i>
die Privatschule	<i>private school</i>
der Rotwein	<i>red wine</i>

c Noun prefixes

Some adjectives in English are noun prefixes in German. The commonest are Haupt- *main* and Lieblings- *favourite*:

mein Lieb lingsfilm	<i>my favourite film</i>
der Haupt bahnhof	<i>the main station</i>

d Adjectives from place names or decades (e.g. *the twenties*) add -(e)r and are invariable

die Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	(name of newspaper)
der Kölner Dom	Cologne Cathedral
im Kölner Dom	in Cologne Cathedral
die Berliner Polizei	the Berlin police
Karlsru her Einwohner	inhabitants of Karlsruhe
die sechz iger Jahre	the sixties
Mitte der siebz iger Jahre	in the mid 1970s

Note

Sie ist in den Sechz igern	She's in her sixties
Er ist Mitte vierz ig	He's in his mid forties

▶ **5.1.5 Adjectives in titles**

- ♦ **Adjectives in titles, as in the names of kings and queens, are declined 'weak' (see 5.1.1 above) and written with a capital letter**

Nom.:	Karl der Große	Charlemagne
Acc.:	Karl den Großen	
Gen.:	Karls des Großen	
Dat.:	Karl dem Großen	

▶ **5.1.6 Irregular adjectives**

- a There are no irregular adjectives in German (i.e. ones which have different feminine or neuter forms), although there are several irregular comparative and superlative forms (see 8.1.2)**

- b A few adjectives modify slightly when they are used with an ending**

This change reflects the pronunciation:

- ♦ Adjectives which end in **-el** or **-er** lose the **-e-** before an ending.
- ♦ **hoch** *high* becomes **hoh-** when followed by a vowel.

hoch:	der Berg ist hoch	ein hoher Berg
dunkel:	die Nacht ist dunkel	eine dunk le Nacht
teuer:	das Auto ist teuer	ein teure s Auto

5.2 Adjective-nouns

- a Almost any adjective or participle can be used as a noun. The masculine and feminine forms refer to people, while the neuter refers to abstract ideas**

der Gute <i>the good man</i>	die Gute <i>the good woman</i>
das Gute <i>goodness; the good thing</i>	die Guten <i>good people</i>

Other common examples:

der/die Angestellte	employee
der/die Arbeitslose	unemployed (person)
der Beamte	civil servant

But die Beamtin (not: die Beamte)

der/die Bekannte	acquaintance
der/die Deutsche	German
der/die Erwachsene	adult
der/die Fremde	stranger
der/die Gefangene	prisoner
der/die Jugendliche	young person
der/die Kranke	patient
der/die Reiche	rich (man)
der/die Reisende	traveller
der/die Verwandte	relative
der/die Verlobte	fiancé(e)
der/die Vorsitzende	chair(man)
das Äußere	exterior
das Interessante	the interesting thing
das Böse	evil
das Neue	(what's) new
das Alte	(what's) old

Note + Because neuter adjective-nouns refer to abstract ideas, they have no plural.

+ Die Linke *The Left* (name of political party) is a feminine adjective-noun which refers to a thing (die Partei) rather than a person.

b German does not usually require a noun such as Ding *thing*, Mann *man* or Leute *people* after an adjective

etwas Gutes	a good thing
das Gute daran	the good thing about it
die Jugendlichen	(the) young people

c Adjective-nouns decline as though there were a following noun (see sections 5.1.1, 5.1.2 and 5.1.3 above)

The example in the table below is for the noun *der Blinde the blind man*, *die Blinde the blind woman*; the neuter noun is *das Neue the new (thing), that which is new*.

Singular						
	Masc.		Fem.			Neuter
Nom.	der Blinde	ein Blinder	die Blinde	eine Blinde	das Neue	
Acc.	den Blinden	einen Blinden	die Blinde	eine Blinde	das Neue	
Gen.	des Blinden	eines Blinden	der Blinden	einer Blinden	des Neuen	
Dat.	dem Blinden	einem Blinden	der Blinden	einer Blinden	dem Neuen	
Masc./Fem. plural						Neut. singular ¹
Nom.		die Blinden	Blinde		Neues	
Acc.		die Blinden	Blinde		Neues	
Gen.		der Blinden	Blinder		Neuen	
Dat.		den Blinden	Blinden		Neuem	

¹When no article present; see also 5.2e below.

Sie half dem Blinden	<i>She helped the blind man</i>
ein Verwand ter von mir	<i>a relative of mine</i>
Was ist das Neu e an diesem Buch?	<i>What's new about this book?</i>
von Neu em	<i>from the beginning, from scratch</i>
Er ist Deutsch er	<i>He's German</i>
Es waren keine Deutsch en unter	<i>There were no Germans among</i>
den Fluggä st en	<i>the passengers</i>
meine Bekann t en	<i>my acquaintances</i>

d If an adjective-noun is preceded by an adjective, both have the same ending

This is because both words are adjectives, even though one is used as a noun:

ein alter er Deutsch er	<i>an old German (man)</i>
bei einer alten en Deutsch en	<i>at the house of an elderly German</i>
	<i>(lady)</i>
mit einem jung en Deutsch en	<i>with a young German (man)</i>
Es waren keine jung en Deutsch en	<i>There were no young Germans</i>
unter den Fluggä st en	<i>among the passengers</i>
berühm t e Deutsch e	<i>famous Germans</i>

TIP How to recognise an adjective-noun in a dictionary

An adjective-noun will be shown in the dictionary as:

- ending in -e or -e(r)
- dual gender: der/die or MF (depending on the dictionary)
e.g. Jugendliche(r) MF; Alte(r) MF

Do not confuse adjective-nouns with weak masculine nouns (see TIP on p. 28):

- adjective-noun: der/die Jugendliche, ein Jugendlicher
- weak noun: der Junge, den Jungen, ein Junge

e After etwas, nichts, wenig, viel, allerlei, neuter adjective-nouns are used (see above); after alles they take Group 1 (weak) neuter endings (see 5.1.1)

	Group 3 endings (after nichts, viel, etc.)	Group 1 endings (after alles)
Nom.	nichts Neu s	alles Gute
Acc.	nichts Neu s	alles Gute
Gen.	nichts Neu en	alles Guten
Dat.	nichts Neu em	allem Guten

Nom. <i>Im Westen nichts Neues</i> (title of novel)	All Quiet on the Western Front (literally: Nothing New...)
Acc. Das Buch enthält viel Interessant es Was gibt's Neu s ?	<i>The book contains much of interest/many interesting ideas What's new?</i>
Gen. anstatt etwas Neu en	<i>instead of something new</i>
Dat. Er ist immer auf der Suche nach etwas Neu em Wir wünschen dir alles Gute	<i>He's always on the lookout for something new We wish you all the best</i>

TIP Adjective-noun or adjective referring to a noun?

- Take care not to confuse an adjective-noun with an adjective used alone because the noun is understood (and therefore does not need to be repeated).

Das **Beste** an ihrem Roman ist ...
Dieser Apfel ist sauer – hast du
noch einen **süßen**?
„Welches Auto gefällt dir am
besten?“ „Das **blaue**.“

*The best thing about her novel is ...
This apple is sour – have you got
another sweet one?
‘Which car do you like best?’ ‘The blue
one.’*

5.3 Adjectives used with particular cases

- A number of adjectives can be used with a dependent noun in the accusative, genitive or dative case

The adjectives used in this way usually follow the noun:

Acc. Sie war das Stadtleben nicht gewohnt	<i>She was unused to city life</i>
Gen. Er war des Kämpfens überdrüssig	<i>He was weary of fighting</i>
Dat. Es ist mir bewusst , dass ...	<i>I'm aware that ...</i>

▶ 5.3.1 Adjectives governing the accusative

gewohnt	<i>used to</i>	schuldig	<i>to owe</i>
los	<i>rid of</i>	wert	<i>worth</i>
satt	<i>sick of, fed up with</i>		

Ich habe die Büroarbeit satt	<i>I'm fed up with working in an office</i>
Erst nach drei Stunden wurde ich ihn los	<i>I couldn't get rid of him for three hours</i>

▶ 5.3.2 Adjectives governing the genitive

bewusst	<i>aware of</i>
fähig	<i>capable of</i>
gewiss	<i>certain of</i>
müde	<i>tired of</i>
schuldig	<i>guilty of</i>
sicher	<i>certain of</i>
überdrüssig	<i>weary of</i>
wert	<i>worthy of</i>
würdig	<i>worthy of</i>

Er war mehrerer Straftaten schuldig	<i>He was guilty of several crimes</i>
Nicht der Rede wert!	<i>Don't mention it!</i>
Sie ist des Lebens müde	<i>She's tired of life</i>

- Several of these adjectives have alternatives to the genitive which are often preferred in colloquial German

Er ist zu keinem Gedanken fähig	<i>He's incapable of thought</i>
Es ist nicht die Mühe wert	<i>It's not worth the trouble</i>

▶ 5.3.3 Adjectives governing the dative

This list contains a selection of common adjectives used with the dative:

ähnlich	<i>similar</i>
behilflich	<i>helpful</i>
bekannt	<i>familiar</i>
bequem	<i>comfortable</i>
bewusst	<i>aware</i>
böse	<i>cross, angry</i>
dankbar	<i>thankful</i>
fern	<i>distant</i>
fremd	<i>strange</i>
gehorsam	<i>obedient</i>
gemeinsam	<i>general</i>
gerecht	<i>just, fair</i>
heilig	<i>sacred</i>
klar	<i>clear</i>
leicht	<i>easy</i>
möglich	<i>possible</i>
nahe	<i>near, close</i>
nötig	<i>necessary</i>
nützlich	<i>useful</i>
peinlich	<i>embarrassing</i>
schwer	<i>hard</i>
teuer	<i>expensive</i>
treu	<i>loyal</i>
überlegen	<i>superior</i>
verständlich	<i>comprehensible</i>
wichtig	<i>important</i>
widerlich	<i>disgusting</i>
willkommen	<i>welcome</i>
zugänglich	<i>accessible</i>
Sei mir nicht böse!	<i>Don't be cross with me!</i>
Sie ist ihrer Mutter ähnlich	<i>She's like her mother</i>
Es wurde mir langsam klar, dass ...	<i>It gradually became clear to me that ...</i>
Wie dir wohl bewusst ist, ...	<i>As you are well aware ...</i>
Diese Nachricht ist mir willkommen	<i>This piece of news is welcome to me</i>

But willkommen heißen *to welcome* (a normal verb construction + accusative):

Ich heiße Sie herzlich willkommen bei unserer Firma	<i>I'd like to welcome you to our company</i>
--	---

5.4 Adjectives used with particular prepositions

♦ **Some adjectives are used with particular prepositions; these need to be learned with the adjective**

▶ 5.4.1 Adjective + preposition + pronoun or noun phrase

a The adjective may stand before or after the prepositional phrase

Sie war ganz böse auf ihn	<i>She was cross at him</i>
Er war in sie verliebt	<i>He was in love with her</i>

b auf and über take the accusative when used with an adjective; an and in usually take the dative – but beware of exceptions!

This list contains a selection of common adjectives and their prepositions:

abhängig von	<i>dependent on</i>
allergisch gegen	<i>allergic to</i>
arm an (+ dat.)	<i>poor in, lacking in</i>
aufgeregt über (+ acc.)	<i>excited about</i>
bedeckt mit	<i>covered with</i>
begeistert von/über	<i>enthusiastic about</i>
bekannt wegen	<i>known for</i>
bereit zu	<i>ready for</i>
besorgt um	<i>worried about</i>
böse auf (+ acc.)	<i>angry at</i>
charakteristisch für	<i>characteristic of</i>
eifersüchtig auf (+ acc.)	<i>jealous of</i>
einverstanden mit	<i>in agreement with</i>
empfindlich gegen	<i>sensitive to</i>
empört über (+ acc.)	<i>indignant about</i>
enttäuscht von	<i>disappointed by</i>
erstaunt über (+ acc.)	<i>astonished by</i>
fähig zu	<i>capable of</i>
fertig mit	<i>finished with</i>
freundlich zu	<i>friendly towards</i>
geeignet für	<i>suitable for</i>
gespannt auf (+ acc.)	<i>very curious about</i>
gewöhnt an (+ acc.)	<i>used to</i>
gierig nach	<i>greedy for</i>
gut in (+ dat.)	<i>good at</i>
höflich zu/gegenüber	<i>polite to</i>
neidisch auf (+ acc.)	<i>envious of</i>
neugierig auf (+ acc.)	<i>curious about</i>
reich an (+ dat.)	<i>rich in</i>
schuld an (+ dat.)	<i>at fault</i>
schlecht in (+ dat.)	<i>good at</i>
stolz auf (+ acc.)	<i>proud of</i>
typisch für	<i>typical of</i>
überzeugt von	<i>convinced by</i>
umgeben von	<i>surrounded by</i>
verglichen mit	<i>compared to</i>
verheiratet mit	<i>married to</i>
verliebt in (+ acc.)	<i>in love with</i>
verwandt mit	<i>related to</i>
vorbereitet auf (+ acc.)	<i>prepared for</i>
wütend auf (+ acc.)	<i>furious with</i>
So einer ist zu allem fähig	<i>People like that are capable of anything</i>
Sie sind stolz auf ihre Kinder	<i>They're proud of their children</i>
Ich bin allergisch gegen Nüsse	<i>I'm allergic to nuts</i>

▶ 5.4.2 Adjectives + preposition followed by a clause

- ♦ **Where there is a clause instead of a noun, the preposition becomes a prepositional adverb beginning with da(r)- (see 13.2)**

Ich bin davon überzeugt, dass ...	<i>I'm convinced that ...</i>
Sie ist darauf gespannt, ihn wiederzusehen	<i>She's really keen to see him again</i>
Wer ist daran schuld, dass ...?	<i>Whose fault is it that ...?</i>
Er war dazu fähig, sich durchzusetzen	<i>He was capable of asserting himself</i>

5.5 Adjectival phrases

- ♦ **Long adjectival phrases, which in English would often have to be expressed using a relative clause, may precede the noun in formal German; they are most often found in the printed news media**

Similar phrases may be based on participles, also used as adjectives (see 14.2.2b, 14.3.2a).

Der erst seit 10 Jahren unabhängige Staat hat ...	<i>The state, which has only been independent for ten years, has ...</i>
In seinem über die Wirtschaftsprognosen eher pessimistischen Bericht...	<i>In his report, which is rather pessimistic regarding the economic outlook ...</i>

Adverbs

OVERVIEW

- ♦ **Adverbs** tell us the *when, where, how* and *why* of the verb. Adverbs consist of a single word, while adverbial phrases contain several words, often starting with a preposition:

Er spricht schnell	<i>He speaks quickly</i>
Ich fahre mit dem Bus	<i>I'm going by bus</i>

- ♦ They may also qualify (i.e. give information about) adjectives, or other adverbs, or the sentence as a whole:

Er spricht furchtbar schnell	<i>He speaks terribly quickly</i>
ein sehr spannender Film	<i>a very exciting film</i>
Natürlich kannst du hier bleiben	<i>Of course you can stay here</i>

- ♦ Adjectives and adverbs are usually (but not always) identical in German; only rarely is there an equivalent of the *-ly* ending routinely used on English adverbs:

Das Essen ist gut	<i>The food is good (adjective)</i>
Er singt gut	<i>He sings well (adverb)</i>
Er war ganz normal	<i>He was quite normal (adjective)</i>
Normalerweise darf man ...	<i>Normally one can ... (adverb)</i>

- ♦ Adverbs may be classified in different ways. In this chapter they have been grouped as follows:

Time	(= <i>when</i>)	gestern, um 7 Uhr, manchmal
Manner	(= <i>how</i>)	mit dem Auto, schnell, irgendwie
Place	(= <i>where</i>)	in die Stadt, dort, überall
Comment	(= <i>attitude</i>)	natürlich, leider
Degree	(= <i>to what extent</i>)	sehr, ziemlich, äußerst
Reason	(= <i>why</i>)	deshalb, folglich
Interrogative	(= <i>questions</i>)	wie? wann? woher?

- ♦ The order of adverbs when used together is dealt with in [18.3.3](#); however, the order Time–Manner–Place provides a useful basic rule.

6.1 Adverbs of time

- ♦ Adverbs of time indicate when, or how often, or for how long the action takes place

▶ 6.1.1 One-word adverbs of time

a Common one-word adverbs of time

bald	soon
damals	then, at that time
dann	then, next
endlich	at last
früher	formerly (used to...)
gestern	yesterday
heute	today
jetzt	now
manchmal	sometimes
morgen	tomorrow
neulich	recently
nie	never
oft	often
noch einmal	again
noch nicht	not yet
schließlich	finally
schon	already
sofort	immediately
vorher	beforehand
wieder	again

b One-word adverbs of time may be formed by adding a suffix to a noun

- ♦ adding -s to a noun (indicating 'every ...')
morgens, nachmittags, abends, nachts, sonntags, mittwochs, wochentags
- ♦ adding -lang to a plural noun (indicating 'for...'; 'for ... on end')
stundenlang, tagelang, wochenlang, sekundenlang, jahrelang

▶ 6.1.2 Prepositional phrases of time

♦ Many of these phrases begin with the preposition **an**, **in** or **zu**

am Montag, am Abend	on Monday, in the evening
am Wochenende, am 19. Juli	at the weekend, on 19 July
an Sonn- und Feiertagen	on Sundays and public holidays
in der Nacht, im Winter	in/during the night, in winter
in den Sommerferien	in the summer holidays
heute in einer Woche	a week today
zu Weihnachten, zu Ostern	at/for Christmas, at Easter
zum Geburtstag	for one's birthday
zur Zeit	at the moment
um 7 Uhr	at 7 o'clock
gegen 7 Uhr	at about 7 o'clock
nach dem Essen	after the meal
vor dem Spiel	before the match
vor zwei Wochen	two weeks ago

▶ 6.1.3 Adverbial phrases without prepositions

These may be in the accusative or the genitive.

a Accusative

jeden Morgen	<i>every morning</i>
jeden Tag, jeden Samstag	<i>every day, every Saturday</i>
letzten Montag	<i>last Monday</i>
den ganzen Tag	<i>all day</i>
den ganzen Monat	<i>the whole month</i>
den ganzen Sommer	<i>all summer</i>

Note Feminine and neuter nouns do not vary in the accusative, of course:
jede Woche, das ganze Jahr

b Genitive

eines Tages	<i>one day</i>
eines Abends	<i>one evening</i>
eines Nachts	<i>one night (feminine, but case ending by correlation with eines Abends, etc.)</i>

▶ **6.1.4 'For' + time**

a Starting now (i.e. at the point of speaking) and continuing: für + accusative

As well as a period of time, this may also refer to a point in time:

Ich fahre für zwei Tage nach Köln	<i>I'm going to Cologne for two days</i>
(i.e. that's how long I'm going to stay there; without für it implies that the driving (fahren) will take two days)	
Ich bin für zwei Tage nach Köln gefahren	<i>I went to Cologne for two days</i>
(i.e. I went to Cologne; it was for a two-day visit)	
Sie ist für ein paar Tage verreist	<i>She has gone away for a few days</i>

b Referring to the completed past: 'for' is not translated, but lang may be added to the phrase

Ich war zwei Tage (lang) in Köln	<i>I spent two days in Cologne</i>
Er hat ein Jahr (lang) dort gelebt	<i>He lived there for a year</i>

c Starting in the past and continuing at the time of speaking: seit + dative

- schon may be used as an alternative to seit, or together with it.
- Note that the German verb is one tense further forward than in English: the emphasis is on the continuing action rather than on time elapsed.

Seit wann wohnst du hier?	<i>How long have you been living here?</i>
Ich wohne seit zwei Jahren hier	<i>I've been living here for two years</i>
Ich wohne (schon) seit 2009 hier	<i>I've been living here since 2009</i>
Ich wohnte seit zwei Jahren dort, als ich sie kennenlernte	<i>I had been living there for two years when I met her</i>

But seit is used with the perfect tense in negative statements, unless they describe a state of affairs. Compare these two sentences:

Ich habe ihn seit Oktober nicht mehr gesehen	<i>I haven't seen him since October</i>
--	---

(i.e. the action hasn't taken place)

Seit seiner Operation **geht** er nicht
mehr aus dem Haus
(i.e. that's how things are)

*Since his operation he hasn't left
the house*

6.2 Adverbs of manner

- Adverbs of manner indicate *how* an action takes place

▶ 6.2.1 Common one-word adverbs of manner

anders (als)
auswendig
ausnahmsweise
gut
hoffentlich
schnell
schön
so
teilweise
toll
traurig
umsonst

*differently (to)
by heart
as an exception
well
hopefully
quickly
nicely, beautifully
like this
partly
well
sadly
in vain*

Das hast du **gut** gemacht!
Sie kann **schön** singen

*You did that well!
She can sing beautifully*

▶ 6.2.2 Adverbial phrases of manner

mit dem Auto
mit Freunden
zu Fuß
mit viel Geduld

*by car
with friends
on foot
with a lot of patience*

6.3 Adverbs of place

- Adverbs of place indicate the *place* or *direction* of an action

▶ 6.3.1 One-word place/direction adverbs

geradeaus
heim
herum
unterwegs
weg
zurück
zusammen

*straight on
home (direction)
round/around
on the way
away
back
together*

▶ 6.3.2 Prepositional adverbs of place

in die Stadt/in der Stadt	<i>into town/in (the) town</i>
aufs Land/auf dem Land	<i>into the country/in the country</i>
an die Küste/an der Küste	<i>to the coast/on the coast</i>

▶ 6.3.3 The suffixes **-hin** and **-her**, and the prepositions **nach** and **von**

a These are common ways used to indicate direction

Place		Direction	
dort	<i>there</i>	dorthin/dorther	<i>(to) there/from there</i>
da	<i>there</i>	dahin/daher	<i>(to) there/from there</i>
draußen ¹	<i>outside</i>	nach draußen	<i>outside</i>
drinnen ¹	<i>inside</i>	nach drinnen	<i>inside</i>
oben	<i>upstairs</i>	nach/von oben	<i>(to)/from upstairs</i>
unten	<i>downstairs</i>	nach/von unten	<i>(to)/from downstairs</i>
hinten	<i>at the back</i>	nach/von hinten	<i>to/from the back</i>
vorn	<i>at the front</i>	nach/von vorn	<i>to/from the front</i>
links	<i>to/on the left</i>	nach/von links	<i>to/from the left</i>
rechts	<i>to/on the right</i>	nach/von rechts	<i>to/from the right</i>
mitten in / auf etc	<i>in the middle of</i>		
überall	<i>everywhere</i>	überallhin	<i>(to) everywhere</i>
		überallher	<i>from everywhere</i>
irgendwo	<i>somewhere</i>	irgendwohin	<i>(to) somewhere (or other)</i>
		irgendwoher	<i>from somewhere</i>
anderswo	<i>somewhere else</i>	anderswohin	<i>(to) somewhere else</i>
		anderswoher	<i>from somewhere else</i>

oben auf dem Berg	<i>at the top of the mountain</i>
unten rechts auf dem Foto	<i>at the bottom right in the photo</i>
Er musterte mich von oben bis unten	<i>He looked me up and down</i>
Ich fahre irgendwohin , wo es warm ist	<i>I'm going somewhere where it's warm</i>
Ich würde so gern mit dir dorthin fahren	<i>I'd really like to go there with you</i>
Ich arbeite mitten in der Stadt	<i>I work in the middle of town</i>

¹ **Compare** draußen/drinnen (*inside/outside*) with außen and innen (*on the outside/on the inside*):

Der Becher war draußen im Garten	<i>The mug was outside in the garden</i>
Außen ist der Becher ganz sauber	<i>On the outside the mug is quite clean</i>

b **hin** and **her** are directional adverbs

hin indicates direction *away from*, and **her** direction *towards* the speaker (or point of reference).

- **hin** and **her** are often used with the interrogative adverb **Wo?** or with the separable prepositional prefixes of verbs to emphasise movement:

Woher kommen Sie? }	<i>Where do you come from?</i>
Wo kommen Sie her ? }	
Wohin fährst du in Urlaub? }	<i>Where are you going on holiday?</i>
Wo fährst du in Urlaub hin ? }	
Er ging aus dem Zimmer hinaus	<i>He went out of the room</i>
Er kam in das Zimmer herein	<i>He came into the room</i>
Sie steigt den Berg hinauf	<i>She's climbing the mountain</i>
Sie steigt den Berg herunter	<i>She's coming down the mountain</i>

Note The prepositions which are commonly used in this way are **ab**, **auf**, **aus**, **ein** (from in), **über** and **unter**.

- **hin** and **her** may stand alone (for instance when used as a separable prefix):

Er deutete auf das Schild hin	<i>He pointed at the sign</i>
Sie legte sich hin	<i>She lay down</i>
Halte dein Glas her !	<i>Hold your glass out!</i>
- **hin** and **her** may be used with adverbs of place such as *irgendwo*, *überall* (see others in 6.3.3a above):

Die Kinder laufen überallhin	<i>The children run around everywhere</i>
Irgendwoher muss ich das Geld kriegen	<i>I've got to get the money from somewhere</i>

c hin and her are often used with figurative meanings

Er gab sich seinen Studien hin	<i>He devoted himself to his studies</i>
Sie machten sich über die Arbeit her	<i>They got on with their work</i>
In Stuttgart stellt man Autos her	<i>In Stuttgart they manufacture cars</i>
Er rief großes Erstaunen hervor	<i>He caused great astonishment</i>

d In colloquial German, hin and her are often abbreviated to r-

Komm rein !	<i>Come in!</i>
Sie ging zu ihren Freunden rüber	<i>She went over to her friends</i>

e Some other constructions use hin and her

hin und her	<i>to and fro</i>
hin und wieder	<i>now and again</i>
Die Katze kam unter dem Sofa hervor	<i>The cat came out from under the sofa</i>
Sie sah zum Fenster hinaus	<i>She looked out of the window</i>
Ich singe gern vor mich hin	<i>I like singing to myself</i>
Sie sah vor sich hin	<i>She looked straight in front of her</i>
Er kam hinter mir her	<i>He walked along behind me</i>
Seine Kindheit ist schon lange her	<i>His childhood was a long time ago</i>
auf seinen Rat hin	<i>on his advice</i>

6.4 Adverbs of comment/attitude

- ♦ **Adverbs of comment indicate an attitude to the rest of the statement.**
- ♦ See also [Chapter 7](#) (Modal particles).

Common examples include:

eigentlich	<i>actually</i>
freilich	<i>admittedly</i>
gern	<i>= to like</i>
glücklicherweise	<i>fortunately</i>
hoffentlich	<i>hopefully, I (etc.) hope so</i>
leider	<i>unfortunately, I'm afraid that</i>
möglicherweise	<i>possibly</i>
natürlich	<i>naturally, of course</i>
normalerweise	<i>normally</i>
selbstverständlich	<i>of course</i>
sicher	<i>certainly</i>
vielleicht	<i>perhaps</i>
wahrscheinlich	<i>probably</i>
zum Glück	<i>fortunately</i>
zweifellos	<i>undoubtedly</i>
Dazu habe ich wahrscheinlich keine Zeit	<i>I probably won't have time for that</i>
Leider ist sie nicht zu Hause	<i>I'm afraid she's not at home</i>
Ich spiele gern Fußball	<i>I like playing football</i>

6.5 Adverbs of degree

- ♦ **Adverbs of degree indicate the extent or intensity of an adjective or adverb**

Common examples include:

äußerst	<i>extremely</i>
besonders	<i>especially</i>
etwas	<i>rather, a bit</i>
fast	<i>almost</i>
ganz	<i>quite</i>
gar	<i>at all</i>
keineswegs	<i>not at all</i>
nicht	<i>not</i>
sehr	<i>very</i>
total	<i>very</i>
überhaupt	<i>anyhow, anyway</i>
viel	<i>much</i>
wesentlich	<i>considerably, significantly</i>
wirklich	<i>really</i>
ziemlich	<i>quite</i>
zu	<i>too</i>

Ihr neuester Film ist **besonders**
gut
Sie spricht **zu** schnell
Das Essen ist **gar nicht** schlecht
Er hat **viel** mehr Geld als ich

*Her latest film is especially
good
She speaks too quickly
The food isn't at all bad
He has much more money
than I do*

6.6 Adverbs of reason

- ♦ Adverbs of reason indicate a reason for or a qualification to the rest of the clause

▶ 6.6.1 Reason or consequence

also
darum
daher
deshalb
deswegen
folglich

so
that's why, because of that

consequently, therefore

Ich habe kein Geld, **also** bleibe ich
zu Hause
Ich habe kein Geld, ich bleibe
deswegen zu Hause
Du meinst **also**, wir sollten hier
bleiben?

*I haven't got any money, so I'll
have to stay at home
I haven't got any money, so I'll
have to stay at home
So you think we should stay here,
then?*

▶ 6.6.2 Qualification or contrast

a One-word examples

allerdings
außerdem
dennoch
jedenfalls
sonst
trotzdem
übrigens

*though, mind you
in addition, as well
nevertheless
in any case
otherwise
in spite of that, nevertheless
incidentally, by the way*

Es regnet in Strömen, wir gehen
trotzdem spazieren
Ich rufe ihn an, ich muss
allerdings erst seine
Telefonnummer heraussuchen

*It's pouring with rain, but we're
going for a walk anyway
I'll phone him up, but I'll need
to look his phone number up
first*

b Prepositional phrases which fall into this category include those starting with **wegen** or **trotz**

Wegen des Wetters bleiben wir
zu Hause
Trotz seiner Probleme wollte er
wieder arbeiten

*Because of the weather we're
staying at home
In spite of his problems he wanted
to work again*

6.7 Interrogative adverbs

a Interrogative adverbs are used to introduce questions

This list does not include *wer?* or *was?*, which are pronouns (see 4.6), nor the determiners *welcher?* (see 3.5.1, 4.6.2) or *was für* (see 3.5.2):

wann?	<i>when?</i>	Wann fahren wir ab? Bis wann muss ich den Aufsatz schreiben? Seit wann lernst du Deutsch?
warum? ¹	<i>why?</i>	Warum hast du das gemacht?
wie?	<i>how?</i>	Wie geht's? Wie heißen Sie? Wie oft besuchst du ihn? Wie viel Geld hast du? Wie ist ihr neues Haus?
wieso?	<i>what ... like?</i>	Wieso hast du das gemacht?
wo?	<i>why?</i>	Wo hast du es gefunden?
woher?	<i>where?</i>	Woher kommen Sie?
	<i>where ... from?</i>	Woher soll ich das Wissen?
wohin?	<i>where... to?</i>	Wohin gehst du?
wozu?	<i>what... for?</i>	Wozu braucht man so was?

¹ *Weshalb?* and *weswegen?* are more formal versions of *warum?*

Note also these two interrogatives, which do not begin with **w-** and are largely interchangeable:

inwiefern?	<i>in what way?</i>	Inwiefern hat sich die Lage verbessert?
inwieweit?	<i>to what extent?</i>	Inwieweit kann man ihr helfen?

b **Wo** + preposition forms an interrogative adverb (see Pronouns 4.6.1)

Worauf wartest du?

What are you waiting for?

Wofür interessierst du dich?

What are you interested in?

c Interrogative adverbs may be used to introduce indirect questions. As such, they are subordinating conjunctions, and so send the verb to the end of the clause (see 18.2.2f)

Er wußte nicht, bis **wann** wir den Aufsatz schreiben mussten
Ich sollte ihn fragen, **wie** lange wir hier bleiben müssen

*He didn't know when we had to have written the essay by
I ought to ask him how long we have to stay here*

Modal particles

OVERVIEW

- **Modal particles** are **adverbs** such as *mal*, *schon*, *doch*, *nun*.
- They are used in spoken German to indicate something of the speaker's attitude to what she is saying – surprise, disbelief, annoyance, for instance. Modal verbs (*müssen*, *dürfen*, etc.) also help to express attitude to an action – see 12.2.
- Modal particles are sometimes difficult to translate into English, where the speaker will often use tone of voice to achieve a similar effect. But compare the following pairs of sentences:

Come on!

That was fun!

Can you pass the salt?

Oh, do come on!

That was such fun!

Can you just pass the salt?

Notice the emphasis added by the use of the auxiliary *do* and the adverb *such*, and the politeness (or frustration!) added by *just*.

- Many modal particles will be familiar from other uses – *aber* *but* (conjunction), *ja* *yes* (interjection). The list in this chapter is not exhaustive, but includes all the common ones, and those words which are likely to appear unusual or difficult to English-speakers.

7.1 Characteristics of modal particles

a Modal particles indicate something of the attitude of the speaker to the action – politeness, surprise, urgency, and so on

Compare these pairs of statements:

Sei nicht so laut!

Sei **doch** nicht so laut!

(**doch** adds emphasis)

Kannst du mir bitte helfen?

Kannst du mir bitte **mal** helfen?

(**mal** makes the request more polite)

Don't be so noisy!

For goodness' sake, don't be so noisy!

Can you help me, please?

Could you just help me, please?

b Modal particles share three main characteristics

- They always relate to the whole sentence or clause.
- They cannot form the point of a question.
- They cannot stand in first position before the verb.

c Modal particles are often used in pairs, or occasionally even in threes

War das aber auch schön!	<i>That was absolutely fantastic!</i>
Das ist ja wohl ein Blödsinn!	<i>That's just complete rubbish!</i>
Na, hilf mir doch mal !	<i>Come on! Help me, for goodness' sake!</i>
Ruf doch ruhig mal bei mir an!	<i>Do feel free just to give me a call</i>
Sie hätte ihn ja doch wohl besuchen können, als er so krank war	<i>She really might have visited him while he was so ill</i>

d Individual modal particles are often associated with a particular type of expression, sometimes more than one

Statements:	aber, doch, eben, ja, halt, schon
Questions:	denn, eigentlich, mal, wohl
Commands:	doch, eben, mal, schon
Exclamations, wishes:	aber, bloß, doch, nur, vielleicht

Because they may appear in more than one category, the modal particles are dealt with individually below.

7.2 Modal particles

▶ 7.2.1 aber

a aber expresses surprise or emphasis

Das war aber ein toller Abend!	<i>That was a really good evening!</i>
War das aber schön!	<i>Wasn't that just fantastic!</i>
Oh! Das Geschenk ist aber schön!	<i>Oh! What a lovely present!</i>
Der Tee ist aber stark!	<i>This tea is really strong (=more so than expected; cf. ja)</i>

b aber expresses a contradiction (as when used as a conjunction)

Er ist nett, sein Bruder aber nicht	<i>He's nice, but his brother isn't</i>
--	---

▶ 7.2.2 auch

♦ auch stresses the reason for or against something

„Sie sieht nett aus.“ – „Sie ist es ja auch .“	<i>'She looks nice.'</i> – <i>'Well, she really is nice.'</i>
„Der ist aber auch dumm!“	<i>'Wow – he's really stupid!'</i>

▶ 7.2.3 bloß

♦ bloß only, just is identical in use to nur

Wenn er bloß hier bleiben würde!	<i>If only he would stay here!</i>
Gib mir bloß das Ding zurück!	<i>Just give me that thing back!</i>

▶ 7.2.4 denn

♦ denn then makes questions less direct (and therefore more polite or tentative)

OK – fangen wir denn an?	<i>OK – shall we start, then?</i>
---------------------------------	-----------------------------------

Warum hast du **denn** das gesagt?
Was ist **denn** los?

*Why did you say that, then?
What's up then?*

▶ 7.2.5 doch

a In statements, **doch** *but/however* expresses **disagreement**

„Du bist erst 16.“ – „Ich bin **doch** kein Kind mehr.“
'You're only 16.' – 'But I'm not a child any more.'

b **doch** invites agreement with a statement, often with **nicht wahr?** or **oder?** added – *'didn't you?', 'wasn't it?'*

Das haben Sie **doch** gesagt, oder?
I think it was you who said that, wasn't it?

c **doch** makes requests or demands more urgent – or less urgent, depending on the tone of the demand

Hört bitte **doch** endlich mit dem Lärm auf!
Will you please just stop that racket!
Ruh dich **doch** mal aus – ich hole Kaffee
Just relax – I'll go and get some coffee

d In exclamations, **doch** expresses surprise or other strong feeling (like **nur**, **bloß**)

Wenn sie **doch** nur anrufen würde!
Sie ist **doch** blöd!
*If only she would phone!
She's really stupid!*

▶ 7.2.6 eben

♦ **eben** emphasises the truth of a statement or command, often with a hint of resignation

So ist es **eben**
Na, bleib doch **eben** allein zu Hause
*Well, that's just how things are
Well, stay alone at home, then*

▶ 7.2.7 eigentlich

♦ In questions, **eigentlich** expresses *actually, in reality*

Was hältst du **eigentlich** von ihr?
Wer ist denn dieser Kerl **eigentlich**?
Er sieht vielleicht dumm aus, aber er ist **eigentlich** sehr intelligent
Das Kuriose daran ist, dass sie **eigentlich** gute Freunde waren
*What do you really think of her?
Who is this guy really then?
He may look stupid, but actually he's very intelligent
The strange thing about it is that they were actually good friends*

▶ 7.2.8 erst

♦ **erst** as a modal particle is used as an intensifier

Abends geht es **erst** recht los!
Wäre er doch **erst** zu Hause!
*Things really come alive in the evenings!
If only he were at home!*

▶ 7.2.9 etwa

♦ **etwa** emphasises the possibility of the (undesirable) statement or question

Ist dein Reisepass **etwa** schon abgelaufen?
Has your passport really expired?

Er sollte nicht **etwa** denken, dass
er so etwas unbestraft tun
darf!

*He shouldn't think that he can do
that and get away with it!*

▶ 7.2.10 gleich

• **gleich expresses just now, just then and often indicates resignation**

Was hast du noch **gleich** gesagt?
Wenn du mir nicht hilfst, kann
ich **gleich** aufgeben

*What did you just say?
If you're not going to help me, I
might as well give up now*

▶ 7.2.11 halt

• **halt is identical to eben and expresses 'just'**

So ist es **halt**
Dann kommen wir **halt** spät an

*Well, that's just how it is
We'll just have to arrive late then*

▶ 7.2.12 ja

• **ja invites and expects agreement with a statement (cf. doch):**

Das haben Sie **ja** gestern gesagt
Ihr kennt ihn **ja** schon
Der Tee ist **ja** stark

*Of course, you said that yesterday
You know him already, I know
Oh, the tea is strong (= I was
expecting it not to be. cf. aber)*

▶ 7.2.13 mal

• **mal just makes statements and commands less blunt**

Moment **mal**!
Ich muss **mal** kurz in den
Supermarkt
Besuchen Sie uns doch **mal**!
Versuch's doch **mal**!
Gibst du mir bitte **mal** das Salz?

*Just a minute!
I just need to nip into the
supermarket
Do come to visit us!
Go on – try it!
Could you just pass the salt,
please?*

▶ 7.2.14 nur

• **nur intensifies the statement**

Vergiss **nur** nicht die Flugkarten!

Wie kam er **nur** dazu?
Zum Geburtstag bekommt er
alles, was er **nur** will

*Whatever you do, don't forget the
tickets!

What on earth made him do that?
For his birthday, he gets absolutely
everything he wants*

▶ 7.2.15 schon

a **schon emphasises the probability of a statement**

Es wird **schon** gut gehen
Das hört sich **schon** besser an!
Das ist **schon** ein Problem

*It will be fine, I'm sure
Now you're talking!
That really is a problem*

b **In commands, schon emphasises impatience**

Na, komm **schon**!

Oh, do come on!

c schon expresses a reservation, often followed by aber

Das stimmt schon , aber ...	<i>That's true, but ...</i>
Das Geld dafür hätte ich schon , leider aber keine Zeit	<i>I might have the money for it but I just don't have the time</i>
Wer hätte so was schon erwartet?	<i>Well, who'd have thought it?</i>

▶ **7.2.16 überhaupt****• Used as a particle, überhaupt is similar in meaning to eigentlich, with the sense of at all, anyhow**

Er ist überhaupt ein ganz seltsamer Typ	<i>He's a strange guy anyway</i>
Wie konnte er das überhaupt sagen?	<i>How could he possibly say that?</i>

▶ **7.2.17 vielleicht****• vielleicht adds emphasis**

Er war vielleicht wütend!	<i>Boy, was he angry!</i>
Das ist vielleicht ein toller Wein!	<i>That's a really good wine!</i>
Du glaubst nicht vielleicht , dass er das getan hat, oder?	<i>You really don't think he did that, do you?</i>

▶ **7.2.18 wohl****a In statements, wohl expresses probability**

Dein Vorschlag wird wohl der beste sein	<i>You're suggestion's likely to be the best</i>
Das mag wohl stimmen, aber ...	<i>That may well be true, but ...</i>
Wie dir wohl bewusst ist, ...	<i>As you well know ...</i>
Bei dir piept's wohl !	<i>You're crazy!</i>
Der Markt wird wohl noch einen tiefen Sturz verkraften müssen	<i>The stock-market is likely to have to face another steep fall</i>
Sie machen wohl Witze!	<i>You're kidding!</i>

b In questions, wohl expresses uncertainty

Wer kann es wohl gewesen sein?	<i>Who could it have been?</i>
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------

▶ **7.2.19 zwar****a zwar expresses although when followed by aber or a similar word; indicates or concedes a level of agreement, with reservation expressed in the other clause**

Das Buch ist zwar interessant, aber es ist viel zu lang	<i>Although the book's interesting, it's much too long</i>
Er ist zwar arm, aber ehrlich	<i>He may be poor, but he's honest</i>
Zwar gibt es die Klassiker der Weltliteratur längst zum kostenlosen Download im Internet, trotzdem ...	<i>Even though the classics of world literature have been available as free downloads on the internet for quite a while, they still ...</i>

b Used with und, zwar introduces further detail on something just mentioned

Ich habe ein Auto gekauft, und zwar einen nagelneuen BMW	<i>I've just bought a car – a brand new BMW, in fact</i>
---	--

8

Comparative and superlative of adjectives and adverbs

OVERVIEW

The **comparative** and **superlative** forms of adjectives and adverbs are used to draw a comparison between the attributes and qualities of people, things and actions.

- The **comparative** is used when comparing two items or people:

*This car is **better** than that one*

*Can you drive a little **more slowly**? (i.e. than at present)*

- The **superlative** is used when comparing more than two items or people:

*This car is better than that one but the blue one is the **best** of the three*

*That was the **worst** film I've ever seen*

*He drives **fastest***

- The comparative and superlative are also used in other ways:

Equality

*She is **as** tall **as** her sister*

Progression

*Things just got **worse** and **worse***

Proportion

The longer** they waited, **the colder

it became

Relative

*an **older** lady*

Absolute

*She sends her **best** wishes*

*At **least** it's not raining*

8.1 The comparative and superlative forms of adjectives

Adjectives and adverbs form the comparative and superlative in similar ways, with the exception of the superlative of the adverb (see [section 8.2](#) below).

▶ 8.1.1 The regular formation of the comparative and superlative

- a Adjectives form their comparative and superlative forms by adding **-er** and **-(e)st-**

schön

schöner

am schön**sten**/der schön**ste**

interessant

interessant**er**

am interessant**esten**/der interessant**teste**

langweilig

langweilig**er**

am langweilig**sten**/der langweilig**ste**

- In English, there are two ways of forming the comparative and superlative: short words add **-er** to form the comparative and **-(e)st** to one syllable words, while longer words use **more** and **most**:

long – longer – longest

interesting – more interesting – most interesting

But German has only the one form for each, however long the word.

- b A number of single-syllable adjectives with the vowel -a-, -o-, or -u- (but not -au-) add an umlaut in the comparative and the superlative**

alt – älter – am **ältesten**/der **älteste**

alt	<i>old</i>	kalt	<i>cold</i>	rot	<i>red</i>
arm	<i>poor</i>	klug	<i>clever</i>	scharf	<i>sharp</i>
dumm	<i>stupid</i>	krank	<i>ill, sick</i>	schwach	<i>weak</i>
grob	<i>coarse</i>	kurz	<i>short</i>	schwarz	<i>black</i>
hart	<i>hard</i>	lang	<i>long</i>	stark	<i>strong</i>
jung	<i>young</i>	oft	<i>often</i>	warm	<i>warm</i>

- See also** nah, hoch in section 8.1.2a below.

mein **jüngerer** Bruder

my younger brother

Das waren finanziell noch **härtere**
Zeiten als jetzt

*Financially, those were even harder times
than now*

In der Sonne ist es am **wärmsten**

It's warmest in the sun

- c A few adjectives form their comparative and superlative forms sometimes with an umlaut and sometimes without (the latter are usually in written German)**

bang	<i>scared</i>
blass	<i>pale</i>
fromm	<i>pious</i>
gesund	<i>healthy</i>
glatt	<i>smooth</i>
krumm	<i>crooked</i>
nass	<i>wet</i>
schmal	<i>narrow</i>
zart	<i>tender</i>

Die Nebenstraße war noch

The side street was even narrower

schmaler/schmäler

das **zarteste/zärteste** Fleisch

the tenderest meat

- d The many other single-syllable adjectives with the vowels -a-, -o- or -u- which do not add an umlaut include**

bunt	<i>colourful</i>
falsch	<i>wrong</i>
flach	<i>flat</i>
froh	<i>glad, pleased</i>
hohl	<i>hollow</i>
klar	<i>clear</i>
rund	<i>round</i>
schlank	<i>slim</i>
stolz	<i>proud</i>
stumpf	<i>blunt</i>

toll	great
voll	full
wahr	true
Sie will noch schlanker sein	She wants to be even <i>slimmer</i>
Welches Glas ist das vollste/am vollsten ?	Which glass is the <i>fullest</i> ?
die klarste Antwort	the <i>clearest</i> answer

e Rules regarding case endings on comparative and superlative forms are identical to those for normal adjectives

- **add** case endings if the adjective is **attributive** (i.e. stands before the noun):

eine ruhigere Atmosphäre	a more <i>peaceful</i> atmosphere
Das kälteste Wetter war im Februar	The <i>coldest</i> weather was in <i>February</i>
Das ist das interessanteste Buch	This is the <i>most interesting</i> book
Dieser See ist der schönste von allen	This lake is the <i>loveliest</i> (lake) of all

- **do not add** case endings if the adjective is **predicative** (i.e. stands after the verb sein):

Der See ist schön	The lake is <i>beautiful</i>
Dieser See ist noch schöner	This lake is even <i>more beautiful</i>
Hier ist es etwas ruhiger	This room is a bit <i>quieter</i>
Hier ist der See am schönsten	The lake is <i>most beautiful</i> here
Ich finde dieses Buch am interessantesten	I think this book is the <i>most interesting</i>

▶ 8.1.2 Irregular forms of the comparative and superlative

a A few adjectives/adverbs have irregular comparative and superlative forms

groß	<i>big</i>	größer	der größte/am größten
gut	<i>good</i>	besser	der beste/am besten
hoch	<i>high</i>	höher	der höchste/am höchsten
nah	<i>near(by)</i>	näher	der nächste/am nächsten
viel	<i>a lot, much</i>	mehr	der meiste/am meisten

In addition, *mehr* and *weniger* do not decline when followed by a noun:

Ich habe mehr/weniger Zeit als er	<i>I have more/less time than he does</i>
--	---

b Adjectives which end in -haft, -s, -ß and -z add -e- before the superlative ending -st

This is to make for ease of pronunciation:

der zaghaft este /am zaghaft esten	the <i>most timid</i>
der hilflos este /am hilflos esten	the <i>most helpless</i>
der süß este /am süß esten	the <i>sweetest</i>
der kürz este /am kürz esten	the <i>shortest</i>

c Adjectives which end with -d, -t, or -sch, or which end with a long vowel or diphthong often add -e- before -st-

This makes the word easier to pronounce:

der breit este /am breit esten	the <i>widest</i>
der bekannt este /am bekannt esten	the <i>best known</i>
der neu este /am neu esten	the <i>newest</i>
der genau este /am genau esten	the <i>most exact</i>

But longer words ending with **-d, -t** or **-sch**, which have an unstressed final syllable, don't add **-e-**:

der praktischste/am praktischsten	<i>the most convenient</i>
der bedeutendste/am bedeutendsten	<i>the most significant</i>

d The sense of a comparative or superlative is sometimes achieved by a prefix (see 19.3.4b)

messers scharf	<i>as sharp as a knife</i>
super intelligent	<i>superintelligent</i>
ultra modern	<i>ultramodern</i>

▶ 8.1.3 Compound adjectives

• Compound adjectives that are thought of as a single word form their comparative and superlative in the usual way

das altmodisch ste Kleid	<i>the most old-fashioned dress</i>
Das war noch leichtsinnig er	<i>That was even more foolish</i>
Deutschland ist weltweit die viert größte Hersteller der Atomenergie	<i>Germany is the fourth largest producer of atomic energy in the world</i>
„Blizzard“ ist der weltweit leistungsfähig ste Klimarechner	<i>'Blizzard' is the world's most powerful climate computer</i>

8.2 The comparative and superlative forms of adverbs

a The rules for the formation of the comparative and superlative of adverbs are largely identical to those for adjectives – see above

• The only real difference is that the superlative of all adverbs is always the **am ...-sten** form:

Maria singt laut er als er, aber ich singe immer am laut esten	<i>Maria sings louder than he does but I always sing loudest</i>
--	--

b A few adverbs have irregular comparative and superlative forms

bald <i>soon</i>	eher	am ehesten
gern <i>with pleasure</i>	lieber	am liebsten
oft <i>often</i>	öfter	am häufigsten
viel <i>much, a lot</i>	mehr	am meisten

8.3 Using the comparative and superlative

a Comparison (**größer als ... bigger than ...; weniger ... als ... less...than...**)

Sie ist größer als ich	<i>She's taller than I am</i>
Die Donau ist ein noch längerer Fluß als der Rhein	<i>The Danube is an even longer river than the Rhine</i>
Er ist weniger begabt als seine Schwester	<i>He's less gifted than his sister</i>

einer der weniger interessanten Filme	<i>one of the less interesting films</i>
Er war besser bezahlt als ich	<i>He was better paid than I was</i>
Weil er noch größer ist ¹ als ich, ...	<i>Because he's even taller than me ...</i>

¹ Note the position of the verb in a subordinate clause!

TIP *als* or *wie* in comparisons?

- **als** is the equivalent of **than**; **wie** is used for **as**:

fauler als	<i>lazier than</i>
so faul wie	<i>as lazy as</i>
nicht so faul wie	<i>not as lazy as</i>
- **wie** will occasionally be heard colloquially in place of **als**. This is, however, generally regarded as sub-standard.

b Superlative (der größte ... / am größten the biggest)

- If the adjective is before the noun, the **der/die/das ...-ste** form must be used:

Das ist der beste Tag der Woche	<i>That is the best day of the week</i>
die billigsten Karten	<i>the cheapest tickets</i>
Das ist der beste aller seiner Filme/von allen seiner Filme	<i>That's the best of all his films</i>
Das war der allerbeste Film, den ich je gesehen habe!	<i>That's absolutely the best film I've ever seen</i>
Er ist einer der besten in der Klasse	} <i>He's among the best in the class</i>
Er ist mit ¹ der beste in der Klasse	
Kafka hat mit ¹ die klarste und schönste deutsche Prosa geschaffen	<i>Kafka was the creator of some of the clearest and most beautiful prose in the German language (or: was among the creators of)</i>
die größte je konstruierte Maschine	<i>the largest machine ever built</i>

¹ i.e. 'mit anderen'; used with following superlative.

- If the noun is being compared with itself, or there is no 'understood' noun, the **am ...-sten** form is used:

Die Berge sind im Sommer am schönsten	<i>The mountains are (at their) most beautiful in summer</i>
--	--

- If the noun is being compared with others, or there is an 'understood' noun (i.e. the noun is omitted to avoid repetition), either form may be used:

Von allen Gebirgen sind die Alpen die schönsten/am schönsten	<i>Of all mountains, the Alps are the most beautiful</i>
--	--

- As described in 8.2a above, only the **am ...-sten** form is possible for the superlative of adverbs:

Sie singt am lautesten	<i>She sings (the) loudest</i>
Er spricht am leisesten	<i>He speaks (the) quietest</i>
Sie läuft am schnellsten	<i>She runs fastest</i>
Am besten kommen Sie zu uns	<i>The best thing is for you to come to our house</i>

c Equality (**so...wie... as big as...**)

Du bist **so** groß **wie** er *You're as tall as him/he is*
 Wenn ich **so** alt¹ bin **wie** er, ... *When I'm as old as him / he is ...*

¹ Note position of verb in subordinate clause!

Er ist **genauso** groß **wie** sie *He is just as tall as her/she is*
 Ich bin **nicht so** groß **wie** du *I'm not as tall as you*

• **Note** other ways of expressing equality:

Er ist **ebenso** dumm **wie** faul *He's as stupid as he is lazy*
 Sie sind **gleich** dumm *They're as stupid each other*

d **Progression (immer größer bigger and bigger)**

Das Wetter wird **immer kälter** *The weather is getting colder and colder*

Der Film wird **immer spannender** *The film gets more and more exciting*

e **Proportion (je ... desto ... the bigger ..., the more ...)**

Je schneller man mit diesem Auto fährt, **desto/umso** gefährlicher wird es *The faster you drive this car, the more dangerous it becomes*

Je kälter es wird, **desto** mehr Kleider muss man tragen *The colder it gets, the more clothes you have to wear*

f **Relative comparative (größere a fairly big ... quite a big ...)**

The comparative can be used in an 'absolute' sense (i.e. where no comparison is being made with anything else):

eine **ältere** Dame *quite an elderly lady*
 eine **kleinere** Stadt *a fairly small town*
 seine **neueren** Romane *his more recent novels*

g **'Absolute' superlative**

The superlative is sometimes used in an 'absolute' sense (i.e. where no comparison is being made with anything else), mostly in the adverbial form, but occasionally, as in the first two examples, adjectivally:

Es ist **höchste** Zeit, dass ... *It's high time that ...*
 Die **wenigsten** Leute merken, dass ... *Almost no one notices that ...*

Er lief **möglichst** schnell *He ran as quickly as possible*
 Er war **höchst** erstaunt *He was very surprised*
 Das ist **äußerst** interessant *That's extremely interesting*
 Das Schloss ist schon **längst** verschwunden *The castle disappeared a long time ago*

Ich bin in **höchstens** einer Stunde da *I'll be there in an hour at the latest*

Meistens fahren wir an die Küste *Mostly we go to the coast*
 Sie lässt **bestens** grüssen *She sends her very best wishes*
Wenigstens schneit es nicht mehr *At least it's not snowing any more*

Ich brauche **mindestens** drei davon *I need at least three of those*

Prepositions

OVERVIEW

► What is a preposition?

- Prepositions tell us the relationship between one noun phrase or pronoun and another – often a physical position.

Compare

*The shoe is **on** the chair*

*The shoe is **under** the chair*

*This present is **from** my brother*

*This present is **for** my brother*

- Prepositions are so called because they stand before the pronoun or phrase to which they refer, as in the examples above. In German there are also a few postpositions (words which stand after the pronoun or phrase), such as *entlang* and *gegenüber*. These are also dealt with in this chapter.

► Prepositions can indicate

- **position**

Die Milch ist **in** dem Kühlschrank

*The milk is **in** the fridge*

- **direction**

Sie fährt heute **nach** Berlin

*She is travelling **to** Berlin today*

- **manner**

Wir fahren **mit** dem Bus

*We're going **by** bus*

- **time**

Wir fahren **um** neun ab

*We leave **at** nine*

- **reason**

Sie konnte **wegen** des Schnees
nicht fahren

*She couldn't travel **because of**
the snow*

► Prepositions and cases

The pronoun or noun phrase after the preposition is always in the accusative, genitive or dative – never the nominative. We say that the preposition 'governs' or 'takes' a particular case. The accusative and the dative are the most common cases.

The most common prepositions

The commonest prepositions and their main English equivalents are:

Accusative	Dative	Accusative/Dative	Genitive
bis <i>by, until</i>	aus <i>from, out of</i>	an <i>at, on</i>	statt <i>instead of</i>
durch <i>through, by</i>	außer <i>apart from</i>	auf <i>on</i>	trotz <i>in spite of</i>
entlang <i>along</i>	bei <i>at, by (near)</i>	hinter <i>behind</i>	während <i>during</i>
für <i>for</i>	gegenüber <i>opposite</i>	in <i>in, into</i>	wegen <i>because of</i>
gegen <i>against, about</i>	mit <i>with, by (bus)</i>	neben <i>next to</i>	
ohne <i>without</i>	nach <i>to, after</i>	über <i>over, above</i>	
um <i>at, around</i>	seit <i>since, for (time)</i>	unter <i>under, among</i>	
wider <i>against</i>	von <i>from, of</i>	vor <i>before, in front of, outside</i>	
	zu <i>to</i>	zwischen <i>between</i>	

9.1 Prepositions followed by the accusative

bis	<i>till, by, as far as</i>	gegen	<i>against, towards</i>
durch	<i>through, by (means of)</i>	ohne	<i>without</i>
entlang	<i>along</i>	um	<i>round, at (time), by</i>
für	<i>for</i>	wider	<i>against</i>

TIP How to remember the accusative prepositions

- One way of remembering the accusative prepositions is by their first letters:

FUDGEBOW

- Another way of remembering them is to learn each preposition with an accusative pronoun, e.g. für mich, ohne mich, gegen mich.

9.1.1 bis

- bis** is used alone only before names and adverbs; otherwise it is followed by another preposition, which determines the case of the following phrase.

a as far as (referring to place)

von oben **bis** unten
Wir fahren **bis (nach)** Lübeck
bis zur Hauptstrasse
bis ans Ende der Welt

from top to bottom
We're going as far as Lübeck
as far as the main street
to the end of the world

b by, until (time)

Bis dann!

Bis wann bist du fertig?

bis Montag/**bis** 5 Uhr/**bis zum**
Wochenende

vom 1. **bis zum** 20. Januar

See you then!

When will you be ready by?

*by/until Monday/5 o'clock/the
weekend*

from 1st to 20th January

▶ **9.1.2 durch**

a through

Er ging **durch** die Tür

durch dick und dünn

Sie reist **durch** viele Länder

durch den Winter

He went through the door

through thick and thin

*She's travelling through many
countries*

through the winter

b By (means of) (also with the passive – see 15.1.2a)

Sie hat es **durch** harte Arbeit
geschafft

Durch ihre Freundin hat sie ihren
Mann kennengelernt

Die Fabrik wurde **durch** Bomben
zerstört

„Vorsprung **durch** Technik“

She managed it by hard work

*Through her friend she got to
know her husband*

*The factory was destroyed by
bombs*

*‘(Taking the) lead through
technology’ (Audi
advertising slogan)*

▶ **9.1.3 entlang**

♦ **along; usually follows the noun**

Sie läuft die Straße **entlang**

Ich gehe den Fluß **entlang**

Ich segle den Fluß **entlang**

She runs down the street

I walk along the river

I sail along the river

Note entlang is also sometimes used with an + dative:

Ich gehe **an** dem Fluß **entlang**

I walk along(side) the river

▶ **9.1.4 für**

a for

Ich habe ein Geschenk **für** dich

Er trainiert **für** die Olympiade

Für einen Ausländer spricht er
ausgezeichnet Deutsch

I have a present for you

He's training for the Olympics

*For a foreigner he speaks excellent
German*

b for + time extending forward from the point of speaking

Wir fahren **für** drei Wochen nach
Amerika

Er fuhr **für** eine Woche nach Berlin

*We're going to America for three
weeks*

He went to Berlin for a week

Note If the time has already elapsed, use the accusative without a preposition:

Wir waren drei Wochen in
Amerika

*We went to America for three
weeks*

See Adverbs 6.1.4 for a fuller discussion of *for* + time in German.

c by in double-word idioms

Tag **für** Tag
 Wort **für** Wort
 Schritt **für** Schritt

day by day
word for (by) word/verbatim
step by step

▶ 9.1.5 gegen**a against (position)**

Sie lehnte sich **gegen** die Wand
 Er fuhr **gegen** die Schranke

She leaned against the wall
He drove into the barrier

b against (opposition to); contrary to

Heute spielt Schalke 04 **gegen**
 Bayern München
 Haben Sie etwas **gegen**
 Kopfschmerzen?
Gegen meine Erwartungen
 haben wir gewonnen

*Today Schalke 04 is playing
 against Bayern München*
*Have you got anything for
 headaches?*
*Contrary to my expectations we
 won*

c at about (time)

Wir sind **gegen** halb eins da

 Erst **gegen** Morgen schlief sie ein

*We'll be there at about half past
 twelve*
*She didn't fall asleep till towards
 morning*

▶ 9.1.6 ohne**+ without**

Sie fährt **ohne** ihn nach Amerika

 Das habe ich **ohne** Absicht
 gemacht

*She's going to America without
 him*
I did that without intending to

▶ 9.1.7 um**a round, around, about (place)**

Um die Ecke finden Sie sein Haus

*You'll find his house round the
 corner*

b at (with clock time); at around (with more general times; often with herum)

Wir sind **um** halb eins da
Um Weihnachten (herum) hat
 alles angefangen

We'll be there at half past twelve
*It was around Christmas when it
 all started*

c about, concerning

Sie streiten sich immer **um** nichts

 Er kämpft **um** sein Leben

*They're always arguing about
 nothing*
He's fighting for his life

d by (a difference of)

Man hat den Preis **um** 10%
 reduziert
 Dieses ist **um** 2 cm länger
 Ich habe **um** ein Haar den Bus
 verpasst

They've reduced the price by 10%
This one is longer by 2 cm
I missed the bus by a whisker

▶ 9.1.8 wider *against*

- **wider** is uncommon except in a few set phrases and as part of compounds such as *widersprechen to contradict* (see 19.5.3b).

wider *Erwarten* *contrary to expectations*
wider *Willen* *against (his, my) will*

9.2 Prepositions followed by the dative

aus	<i>out of, made of</i>	nach	<i>to, after, according to</i>
außer	<i>besides, except</i>	seit	<i>since, for (time)</i>
bei	<i>at, near, in</i>	von	<i>from, of, by (someone)</i>
gegenüber	<i>opposite</i>	zu	<i>to, on, for</i>
mit	<i>with, by</i>		

▶ TIP How to remember the dative prepositions

- One way of remembering the dative prepositions is by the nonsense phrase **MABZ VANS**, which is made up from the first letters of all of them, excluding *gegenüber*.
- Another method is to learn each preposition with a pronoun which is clearly dative, e.g. *bei mir, mit mir*.

▶ 9.2.1 aus

a **out of, from (direction, starting point, origin)**

Sie kam aus ihrem Büro	<i>She came out of her office</i>
Er erwachte aus einem Traum	<i>He awoke from a dream</i>
Er kommt aus Köln	<i>He comes from Cologne</i>
ein Junge aus unserer Schule	<i>a boy from our school</i>
Musik aus dem 19. Jahrhundert	<i>Music from the nineteenth century</i>
Ich weiß aus Erfahrung, dass ...	<i>I know from experience that ...</i>
aus dem Englischen übersetzt	<i>translated from English</i>
Ich trinke Bier aus der Flasche	<i>I'm drinking beer from the bottle</i>

▶ TIP **from: aus or von?**

- **aus** *from (origin)*
 Er kommt **aus** Köln *He comes from Cologne*
 Gewürze **aus** dem Osten *spices from the East*
- **von** *from the direction of – (its opposite is nach or zu)*
 der Zug **von** Köln nach Berlin *the train from Cologne to Bonn*

b **out of (reason, cause)**

aus diesem Grund	<i>for this reason; that's why</i>
aus Mangel an Zeit/Geld	<i>for lack of time/money</i>
aus Mitleid/Liebe	<i>out of sympathy/love</i>

c made of (materials)

eine Tasche aus Leder	<i>a bag made of leather</i>
Sie hat es aus einer alten Jacke gemacht	<i>She's made it from an old jacket</i>

▶ **9.2.2 außer****a except (for), apart from**

Außer ihm war niemand da	<i>Apart from him there was no one there</i>
Man sah nichts außer dem Schnee	<i>You could see nothing apart from the snow</i>
Er hat alle gesehen außer mir	<i>He saw all of them except me</i>

b out of, outside, no longer in... (used in set phrases)

der Fahrstuhl ist außer Betrieb	<i>The lift is out of service</i>
Ich war außer mir vor Angst	<i>I was beside myself with fear</i>
außer Gefahr/Atem/Kontrolle	<i>out of danger/breath/control</i>

▶ **9.2.3 bei****a at (the house of), for (employer), with (person)**

Er wohnt bei seinen Großeltern	<i>He lives with his grandparents</i>
Essen wir bei dir?	<i>Shall we eat at your house?</i>
Er ist bei der Armee	<i>He's in the Army</i>
Sie arbeitet bei Siemens	<i>She works for Siemens</i>
beim Arzt, beim Metzger	<i>at the doctor's, at the butcher's</i>
Das Buch erschien bei Suhrkamp	<i>The book was published by Suhrkamp</i>
Ich kaufe normalerweise bei Aldi ein	<i>I normally shop at Aldi</i>
Bei Shakespeare sind die Helden anders	<i>With Shakespeare the heroes are different</i>
Ich habe kein Geld bei mir	<i>I haven't got any money on me</i>
Er hatte kein Glück bei ihr	<i>He had no luck with her</i>
Das findet man nicht oft bei einem so kleinen Kind	<i>You don't find that often in such a young child</i>

Note bei never means **to** the house of; instead, **zu** must be used:

Gehen wir zu dir?	<i>Shall we go to your house?</i>
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b at, near (place), equivalent to in der Nähe von

Bonn liegt bei Köln	<i>Bonn lies close to Cologne</i>
Ich bleibe beim Gepäck; du kannst Kaffee holen	<i>I'll stay with the luggage; you can get some coffee</i>
Sie saß bei uns	<i>She was sitting near us</i>
Sie wohnt beim Rathaus	<i>She lives near the town hall</i>

c in view of, considering (attendant circumstances)

bei schlechtem Wetter	<i>in bad weather</i>
Bei meinem Gehalt kann ich mir keinen Urlaub leisten	<i>On my salary I can't afford a holiday</i>

Das kann man bei 20 Grad unter null nicht machen	<i>You can't do that at 20 degrees below</i>
Dutzende Tote bei Bombenanschlag	<i>Dozens killed in bomb attack (newspaper headline)</i>

d on ... -ing on the occasion of, while ...-ing (time)

Ich habe sie bei der Hochzeit zum ersten Mal gesehen	<i>The first time I saw her was at the wedding</i>
Bei Ebbe ist das Wasser nicht tief genug	<i>At low tide the water is not deep enough</i>
Bei meiner Ankunft regnete es	<i>It was raining when I arrived</i>
Sie ist bei einem Eisenbahnunglück ums Leben gekommen	<i>She was killed in a railway accident</i>
Ich rufe dich bei der ersten Gelegenheit an	<i>I'll phone you at the first opportunity</i>
Man darf sein Handy beim Fahren nicht benutzen	<i>It's illegal to use a mobile phone while driving</i>
Wir sind beim Essen	<i>We're just having a meal</i>

▶ 9.2.4 gegenüber

- gegenüber follows a pronoun, but may stand before or after a noun.

a opposite (place)

gegenüber unserem Haus	<i>opposite our house</i>
meiner Frau gegenüber	<i>opposite my wife</i>
mir gegenüber	<i>opposite me</i>

Note gegenüber can also be used on its own:

Sie wohnen schräg gegenüber	<i>They live diagonally opposite</i>
------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

b in relation to, with regard to

Er ist seinem Boss gegenüber immer sehr höflich	<i>He's always very polite to his boss</i>
Seine Blindheit gegenüber diesem Problem macht mir Sorgen	<i>His blindness with regard to this problem is worrying</i>

▶ 9.2.5 mit

a with in most senses of the English word

Kaffee mit Milch	<i>coffee with milk</i>
Ich gehe mit ihm ins Kino	<i>I'm going to the cinema with him</i>
mit freundlichen Grüßen	<i>(with) best wishes/yours sincerely</i>
Sie wohnt mit ihrem Freund in Bonn zusammen	<i>She lives with her boyfriend in Bonn</i>

b by (transport)

mit dem Bus/Auto/Rad	<i>by bus/car/bike</i>
mit der Bahn	<i>by rail</i>
But zu Fuß/ zu Pferd	<i>on foot/on horseback</i>

c **Idiomatic and colloquial phrases using mit**

mit der Zeit	<i>in the course of time</i>
Er ging mit 40 in die Rente	<i>He retired at 40</i>
Das hast du mit Absicht getan!	<i>You did that on purpose!</i>
Er nickte mit dem Kopf	<i>He nodded his head</i>
Sie ist mit die beste in der Gruppe	<i>She's one of the best in the group</i>

(colloquial; the word *anderen* *others* would be the object of mit and in the dative, but is omitted; see 8.3b for another example)

▶ 9.2.6 nach

a **to a named place, neuter country,¹ compass direction, or adverb of place**

nach Deutschland	<i>to Germany</i>
nach Wien	<i>to Vienna</i>
nach Norden	<i>northwards</i>
nach oben	<i>upstairs</i>
nach Hause	<i>home(wards)</i>

¹Note feminine and plural countries use **in** – see 9.3.4.

b **in the direction of, towards (often with hin)**

Er griff nach seinem Revolver	<i>He reached for his gun</i>
Sie tastete im Dunkeln nach dem Lichtschalter	<i>In the darkness she felt for the light switch</i>
Das Wasser spritzte nach allen Seiten	<i>The water sprayed in all directions</i>

c **after (time, sequence)**

nach dem 1. Januar, nach dem Mittagessen, nach 5 Uhr, nach dem Krieg	
70 Jahre nach Christus (n.Chr.)	<i>70 AD</i>
einer nach dem anderen	<i>one after the other</i>
Bitte nach Ihnen!	<i>Please, after you!</i>

d **according to, judging by (often follows the noun)**

nach meiner Meinung } meiner Meinung nach }	<i>in my opinion</i>
Hähnchen nach französischer Art	<i>chicken cooked French style</i>
der Größe nach	<i>according to size</i>
der Reihe nach	<i>in turn</i>
das Evangelium nach Johannes	<i>the Gospel according to John</i>
der Karte nach	<i>according to the map</i>
nach dem Gesetz	<i>according to the law</i>

▶ 9.2.7 seit

a **since or for (time up to now)**

Ich wohne seit 1987 hier	<i>I've been living here since 1987</i>
Ich kannte sie seit sechs Wochen, als...	<i>I had known her for 6 weeks when...</i>

See Adverbs 6.1.4 for notes on *for* + time in German.

▶ 9.2.8 von

a from a place or person

eine Email **von** meinem Bruder
 der Zug **von** Hamburg nach Berlin
 Mein Haus ist nur zehn Minuten
von der Schule

*an email from my brother
 the train from Hamburg to Berlin
 My house is only ten minutes from
 the school*

b from a time – often with an

von Montag/diesem Zeitpunkt **an**
von Montag bis Freitag

*from Monday/this point onwards
 from Monday to Friday*

c of

der Vater **von** drei Kindern
 einer **von** ihnen
 eine Art **von** Tier
 ein Gedicht **von** Goethe
 Das war sehr nett **von** dir

*the father of three children
 one of them
 a sort of animal
 a poem by Goethe/of Goethe's
 That was very nice of you*

d von often replaces the genitive to express the possessive of, especially in spoken German (see also Cases 1.1.4)

das Auto **von** meinem Vater
 (= das Auto meines Vaters)

my father's car

e by with the passive – (see 15.1.2)

Die Stadt wurde **von** den Römern
 gegründet

*The city was founded by the
 Romans*

f Idiomatic phrases with von – a selection

von mir aus
 Er ist Ingenieur **von** Beruf
 Ich kenne ihn nur **vom** Sehen
Von der Form her finde ich es
 schön
von wegen! (colloq.)

*as far as I'm concerned/if you like
 He's an engineer by profession
 I only know him by sight
 From the shape I think it's
 beautiful
 no way!*

• Genitive prepositions are sometimes also used with von + dative (see 9.4.5).

▶ 9.2.9 zu

a to a place, person or event

Kommen Sie **zu** uns!
 Wie komme ich **zum** Bahnhof?
 Sie geht **zu** ihrem Vater
von Tag zu Tag
 Komm **zu** meiner Party!

*Come to our house!
 How do I get to the station?
 She goes to her father
 from day to day
 Come to my party!*

b at + time (festival, or with Zeit or Mal)

zu Ostern, **zu** Weihnachten
zu dieser Zeit, **zur** Zeit
zum ersten Mal
zu Bismarcks Zeiten

*at/for Christmas, Easter
 at that time/at the moment
 for the first time
 in Bismarck's day*

c for a purpose, often used with an infinitive noun (compare with bei above)

Zum Geburtstag hat sie mir ein Buch geschenkt	<i>For my birthday she gave me a book</i>
Hast du etwas zum Lesen?	<i>Have you got anything to read?</i>
Haben wir Zeit zum Einkaufen?	<i>Have we got time to go shopping?</i>

d Idiomatic uses of zu – a selection

Ich habe schon zu Mittag/ zu Abend gegessen	<i>I've already had lunch/dinner for breakfast</i>
zum Frühstück	<i>They won 3:0</i>
Sie haben drei zu null gewonnen	<i>5 90-cent stamps</i>
5 Briefmarken zu 90 Cent	<i>on foot</i>
zu Fuß	<i>at home</i>
zu Hause	<i>to finish, end</i>
zu Ende sein	<i>for example</i>
zum Beispiel	<i>at a special price</i>
zum Sonderpreis	

▶ 9.2.10 Less common prepositions which take the dative**a ab from ... onwards**

ab dem 1. Januar/ ab neun Uhr	<i>from 1 January/from 9 o'clock onwards</i>
---	--

b dank thanks to

dank dem Computer	<i>thanks to the computer</i>
♦ dank is usually used with genitive if the following noun is plural:	
dank seiner Computerkenntnisse	<i>thanks to his computer skills</i>

c entgegen 'contrary to'

♦ entgegen occasionally follows the noun:	
entgegen aller Wahrscheinlichkeit	<i>against the odds</i>
entgegen der akzeptierten Ansicht	<i>contrary to accepted opinion</i>
entgegen seinem Wunsch/ seinem Wunsch entgegen	<i>against his wishes</i>

d gemäß, laut, zufolge according to

♦ These prepositions are more or less interchangeable, though each has a slightly different emphasis, which may be deduced from the word itself:	
gemäß	<i>'in accordance with' instructions, the law, etc.; usually follows the noun</i>
laut	<i>'according to what has been stated by'; usually used without an article, but often followed by genitive if there is an article or adjective</i>
zufolge	<i>indicates a consequence; follows the noun</i>

den Richtlinien **gemäß**
laut Gesetz
laut amtlicher Mitteilung
 Einem Gerücht **zufolge** hat er das
 Land verlassen

*in accordance with the guidelines
 according to the law
 according to the official report
 According to a rumour he's left
 the country*

e zuliebe for the sake of

- zuliebe follows the noun:

Meinem Bruder zuliebe bin ich zu
 Hause geblieben

*I stayed at home for my brother's
 sake*

9.3 Prepositions followed by the accusative or dative

an *at, to, by, on (up against)*
 auf *on (top of)*
 hinter *behind*
 in *in, into*
 neben *next to, near*

über *above, via*
 unter *under, among*
 vor *in front of, before, ago*
 zwischen *between*

- **Accusative indicates movement forward, towards:**

Ich gehe in **die** Stadt

I'm going into town

- **Dative indicates where something is or is happening:**

Ich arbeite in **der** Stadt

I work in town

Note The important thing is to decide how the motion of one noun relates to the movement of the other.

Accusative

Wir gehen in **den** Wald
 Wir gehen **im** Wald spazieren

Der Hubschrauber flog über **die**
 Stadt

Der Hubschrauber flog über **der**
 Stadt

Dative

We're going into the forest

*We're going for a walk in the
 forest*

*The helicopter flew over the town
 (...on its way to somewhere
 else)*

*The helicopter was flying above
 the town
 (... hovering or searching)*

▶ 9.3.1 an

a to, on the side of/edge of

Er hängt das Poster **an** die Wand
He hangs the poster on the wall
 Ich gehe **an** die Haltestelle
I go to the bus-stop
 Wir fahren **an** die Küste
We're going to the sea-side
 Sie setzte sich **an** den Kamin
She sat down by the fire

on, at the side of/by edge of

Das Poster hängt **an** der Wand
The poster is hanging on the wall
 Ich warte **an** der Haltestelle
I wait at the bus-stop
 das Licht **an** dem Auto
the light on the car
 Frankfurt **am** Main
Frankfurt on (the River) Main
am Stadtrand, **an** der Grenze
*on the edge of town, on the
 border*

*Accusative**Dative*

Note The choice of case is usually, but not always, as obvious as one might think:

Sie klopfte **an** die Tür
She knocked at the door

c Idiomatic uses of an

Ich habe eine Bitte **an** Sie
I have a request to make of you
viele Grüße **an** deine Eltern
best wishes to your parents

b on, in days or part of days

am Montag *on Monday*
am Abend *in the evening*
am 1. Mai *on 1 May*
am Wochenende *at the weekend*
But in der Nacht *in the night*

Ich arbeite **am** Computer/**an**
einem Projekt
*I'm working at the computer/on a
project*

Du bist **an** dem Unfall schuld
The accident was your fault
das Interessante **an** dem Buch
*The interesting thing about the
book*

an Krebs sterben
to die of cancer

Note an (+ dat.) ... vorbei *past*:

Er fuhr **an** mir vorbei
He drove past me

▶ 9.3.2 auf**a on (-to, top of) horizontal surface**

Er stellt die Flasche **auf** den Tisch
He puts the bottle on the table

on (top of)

Die Flasche steht **auf** dem Tisch
The bottle is standing on the table

b Idiomatic uses of auf – a small selection

auf das Land
into the country
auf die Toilette gehen
to go to the toilet
mit Blick **auf** den Fluß
with a view of the river
auf den ersten Blick
at first sight
auf diese Weise
in this way, that's how
auf jeden Fall
in any case, anyhow
eine Antwort **auf** die Frage
an answer to the question
ich bin stolz **auf** ihn
I'm proud of him

auf dem Land
in the country
auf Deutsch
in German
auf dem Bild siehst du...
in the picture you can see...

Accusative

Dative

Note auf (+ acc.) ... zu *towards, up to:*
 Er kam **auf** mich zu
He came up to me

▶ 9.3.3 hinter

a **behind**

Er lief **hinter** das Haus
He ran behind the house

behind

Der Garten ist **hinter** dem Haus
The garden is behind the house
 Er lebt **hinter** dem Mond
He's behind the times

▶ 9.3.4 in

a **in(-to)**

Er geht **ins** Haus
'He goes into the house
 Tu das Geschirr **in** den Schrank!
Put the crockery in(-to) the cupboard
 Wir gehen **ins** Theater/Kino
We're going to the theatre, cinema
 Ich muss **in** die Schule gehen
I have to go to school

in

Er sitzt **im** Haus
He's sitting in the house
 Das Geschirr ist **im** Schrank
The crockery is in the cupboard
in der Schule/Kirche, **im** Kino
in school, in church, in the cinema

b **to feminine or plural countries**

in die Schweiz, **in** die USA

in feminine or plural countries

in der Schweiz, **in** den USA

c **Idiomatic uses – a selection**

Wir fahren **ins** Ausland
We're going abroad
 Er verliebte sich **in** sie
He fell in love with her
 Was ist **in** dich gefahren?
What's got into you?

Wir leben **im** Ausland
We live abroad
im Fernsehen
on television
 Meine Wohnung ist **im** ersten Stock
My flat is on the first floor
in der Nähe
near(-by), in the vicinity
im Freien
in the open air
 2000 Euro **im** Monat
2000 Euros a month
 Er kommt um 8 Uhr **im** Büro an
He arrives at the office at 8
im Gegenteil
on the contrary
im Moment
at the moment
 heute **in** drei Wochen
three weeks today

*Accusative**Dative*

▶ 9.3.5 neben

a **next to**

Ich setzte mich **neben** sie
I sat down next to her

next to

Ich saß **neben** ihr
I was sitting next to her
 Er ging **neben** mir (her)
He walked along next to me

b **apart from, compared to**

Neben Geld braucht man auch Zeit
Apart from money you also need time
Neben dir bin ich ganz intelligent
Compared to you I'm quite intelligent

▶ 9.3.6 über

a **over, above, across**

Ich hänge das Bild **über** das Bett
I'm hanging the picture above the bed
 Ich gehe **über** den Marktplatz
I'm going across the market place

over, above

Das Bild hängt **über** dem Bett
The picture is hanging above the bed
 ein Gewitter **über** den Bergen
a storm over the mountains

b **about, concerning**

ein Film **über** den Präsidenten
a film about the president

c **over, more than**

Kinder **über** 16 Jahre
children over the age of 16
 Es kostet **über** 2000 Euro
It costs over 2000 Euros
 Sie lebt **über** ihre Verhältnisse
She lives beyond her means

d **by way of, via**

Wir fahren **über** Leipzig nach
 Dresden
We're going to Dresden via Leipzig

▶ 9.3.7 unter

a **under, below**

Er fährt **unter** die Brücke
He drives under the bridge

under(neath), below

Er steht **unter** der Brücke
He's standing under the bridge
unter dieser Regierung
under this government
unter britischer Flagge
under the/a British flag

Accusative

Dative

b 'among'

einer **unter** vielen Bewerbungen

one among many applications

unter anderem (often shortened to u.a.)

among other things

unter Freunden

among friends

▶ **9.3.8 vor**

a in front of, outside

Er trat **vor** die Tür

He stepped outside (the door)

Er stellte das Glas vor mich hin

He put the glass down in front of me

in front of, ahead of, outside

Sie wartete **vor** dem Kino

She waited outside the cinema

Vor uns war ein Stau

Ahead of us there was a traffic jam

vor allem

above all

b ago, before

vor zehn Jahren

ten years ago

vor den Ferien

before the holidays

vor Christus (v. Chr.)

before Christ (BC)

Es ist zehn **vor** eins

It's ten to one (time)

c because of, due to

Er zitterte **vor** Kälte

Ich habe Angst **vor** Hunden

Note vor sich (acc.) hin 'to oneself'

Ich singe oft **vor** mich **hin**

I often sing to myself

Er träumt **vor** sich **hin**

He's day-dreaming

▶ **9.3.9 zwischen**

a between

Sie setzte sich **zwischen** ihre Freunde

She sat down between her friends

between

Sie sitzt **zwischen** ihren Freunden

She's sitting between her friends

zwischen April und Oktober

between April and October

9.4 Prepositions followed by the genitive

The many prepositions which take the genitive can conveniently be divided into three groups:

- The four common prepositions (9.4.1).
- Several others which denote position (9.4.2).
- Others which are used only in formal language (9.4.3).

▶ 9.4.1 Four common prepositions followed by the genitive

statt/anstatt	<i>instead of</i>	wegen	<i>because of</i>
trotz	<i>in spite of</i>	während	<i>during</i>

- The genitive is almost always used in written or formal German with these prepositions; in colloquial language they are often followed by the dative.

a **statt** *instead of* (**anstatt** is more formal)

Statt meines Bruders sah ich	<i>Instead of my brother I saw my</i>
meinen Vater	<i>father</i>
Er trägt eine Jacke statt eines	<i>He's wearing a jacket instead of a</i>
Pullovers	<i>jersey</i>

Note the adverb *stattdessen* *instead of that*.

- If there is no determiner before a masculine or neuter noun after *statt*, the normal genitive *-s* ending is not added to the noun:

Wir trinken alle Bier statt Wein	<i>We're all drinking beer instead of wine</i>
---	--

- *statt* is often used to join two noun phrases with the meaning '*and not...*'. It is then not followed by the genitive; the second noun phrase is in the same case as the first:

Ich habe meinen Bruder statt	<i>I visited my brother instead of my</i>
meinen Vater besucht	<i>father</i>
Wir kaufen Fleisch beim Metzger	<i>We buy meat at the butcher's</i>
statt im Supermarkt	<i>instead of at the supermarket</i>

b **trotz** *in spite of, despite*

trotz des furchtbaren Wetters	<i>in spite of the terrible weather</i>
trotz aller Versuche	<i>despite all attempts</i>

Note *trotz* is often followed by the dative in southern Germany, Austria and Switzerland; elsewhere the dative is found in expressions such as

trotzdem	<i>nevertheless</i>
trotz allem/alledem	<i>in spite of everything</i>

c **während** *during*

während der Sommerferien	<i>during the summer holidays</i>
während des Krieges	<i>during the war</i>

d **wegen** *because of, due to*

wegen des schlechten Wetters	<i>because of the bad weather</i>
-------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

- *wegen* is often followed by the dative if the noun stands alone, but if there is an accompanying article or adjective the genitive is considered better style:

wegen Umbau/Umbaus geschlossen	<i>closed for renovation</i>
wegen des kompletten Umbaus geschlossen	<i>closed for complete renovation</i>

- A pronoun after **wegen** is often in the dative, especially in spoken German, even though there is a genitive form

wegen dir/deinetwegen	<i>because of you, for your sake</i>
wegen mir/meinetwegen	<i>for my sake/as far as I'm concerned</i>
meinetwegen!	<i>If you like!</i>

- Note** The other forms of the genitive pronoun are:

seinetwegen	<i>because of him, for his sake, on his account</i>
ihretwegen	<i>because of her, etc.</i>
unseretwegen	<i>because of us, etc.</i>
euretwegen	<i>because of you, etc.</i>
ihretwegen	<i>because of them, etc.</i>
Ihretwegen	<i>because of you, etc.</i>

▶ 9.4.2 Prepositions denoting position followed by the genitive

außerhalb/innerhalb	<i>outside/inside</i>
oberhalb/unterhalb	<i>above/below</i>
diesseits/jenseits	<i>on this/the other side of</i>
beiderseits	<i>on both sides</i>
unweit	<i>not far from</i>

Ich wohne etwas außerhalb des Dorfes	<i>I live just outside the village</i>
Außerhalb der Saison ist es billiger	<i>Outside the holiday season it's cheaper</i>
jenseits des Flusses	<i>across/on the other side of the river</i>
beiderseits der Grenze	<i>on both sides of the border</i>
innerhalb der nächsten 10 Jahre	<i>within the next ten years</i>
unweit Münchens	<i>not far from Munich</i>

- Note** This group of prepositions is often used with **von** + dative.

unweit von München	<i>not far from Munich</i>
innerhalb von zwei Wochen	<i>within two weeks</i>
Jenseits von Gut und Böse	<i>Beyond Good and Evil (title of book by Nietzsche)</i>

▶ 9.4.3 Prepositions followed by the genitive which occur only in formal language

These are found only in official or formal (usually written) German. A selection of the most common is given here – there are many others.

angesichts	<i>in view of</i>	halber	<i>for the sake of</i>
anhand	<i>with the aid of</i>	hinsichtlich	<i>with regard to</i>
anlässlich	<i>on the occasion of</i>	seitens	<i>on the part of</i>
aufgrund	<i>on the basis of</i>	um ... willen	<i>for the sake of</i>
dank	<i>thanks to</i>		

angesichts der aktuellen Situation	<i>in view of the current situation</i>
anhand eines Skizzes	<i>with the aid of a sketch</i>
anlässlich unseres Firmenjubiläums	<i>on the occasion of our company's anniversary</i>
aufgrund der zu hohen Kosten	<i>due to excessive costs</i>
dank seiner Computerkenntnisse	<i>thanks to his knowledge of computers</i>
der Fairness halber	<i>for the sake of fairness</i>
seine Entscheidung hinsichtlich dieser Sache	<i>his decision regarding this matter</i>
Beschwerden seitens des Kunden	<i>complaints on the part of the customer</i>
um der Klarheit willen	<i>for the sake of clarity</i>

9.5 The translation of **to** with places, countries and people

▶ 9.5.1 **to** + places, buildings, events

▶ TIP The prepositions for **to** with places

- The notes in 9.5.1a–d may be summarised as follows:
 - + **in** if *into* is implied
 - + **zu** general movement to or towards (sometimes *auf*)
 - + **an** *up to*

See also *to* countries and geographical regions in 9.5.2.

a **in**

The emphasis is on going **into** the place (not just *to* it):

Ich gehe ins Kino, in die Kirche	<i>I'm going to the cinema, to church</i>
in die, Schule, in die Stadt	<i>to school, to town</i>
in die Bäckerei	<i>to the baker's</i>
in ein Konzert	<i>to a concert</i>

Note After arrival, *in* + dative is used for *at/in*:

Wir waren in einem Konzert	<i>We were at a concert</i>
Das haben wir in der Schule gelernt	<i>We did that at school</i>

b **zu**

- The emphasis is on **direction or going to** the place (not necessarily *into* it).
- Note that *zu* is also sometimes used as a synonym of *in* + accusative:

Ich gehe zur Kirche	<i>I'm going to the church</i>
Fährt dieser Bus zum Rathaus?	<i>Does this bus go to the town hall?</i>
Ich gehe zur Bäckerei, zu einem Konzert, zu einer Party	<i>I'm going to the baker's, to a concert, to a party</i>

- **to** a person, or somebody's house or place:

Kommst du heute Abend **zu** uns? *Would you like to come to our house this evening?*

Als ich bei meinem Bruder war, sind wir **zu** seiner Freundin gegangen *While I was staying with my brother, we went to his girlfriend's house*

Note After arrival, bei + dative is used for 'at':

Er ist **bei** seiner Freundin *He's at his girlfriend's house*

- **to** public buildings:

Ich gehe **zum** Bahnhof, **zum** Postamt *I'm going to the station, to the post office*

Note After arrival, use auf + dative for at:

Ich begegnete ihm auf dem Bahnhof *I met him at the station*

c auf

- **auf** is sometimes used instead of zu in more formal registers:

Ich gehe **auf** eine Party, **auf** die Post *I'm going to a party, to the post office*

- **auf** is used in a small number of set phrases:

Wir fahren **aufs** Land, **auf** die Straße, **auf** die Jagd *We're going into the country, on to the street, hunting*

Note After arrival, use auf + dative for 'in', 'on':

Wir wohnen **auf** dem Land *We live in the country*
 Sie spielen **auf** der Strasse *They're playing in the street*

d an

- **up to**

Ich gehe **an** die Haltestelle, **an** das Fenster, **an** die Tür, **ans** Meer, **an** die Grenze *I go to the bus-stop, to the window, to the door, to the sea, to the border*

Note After arrival, an + dative is used for at:

Ich warte **an** der Haltestelle *I wait at the bus-stop*
 ein Haus **am** Meer *a house at (or by) the sea*

▶ 9.5.2 to + countries, geographical regions, etc.

a nach

- Continents, countries, towns, etc. are used **without an article**:

Wir fahren **nach** Afrika, **nach** Deutschland, **nach** Flensburg, **nach** Norden *We're going to Africa, to Germany, to Flensburg to the north /northwards*

b in

- Countries and regions are used **with an article**:

Wir fahren **in** die Schweiz, **in** die USA, **in** die Bretagne, **in** den Schwarzwald, **in** die Alpen *We're going to Switzerland, to the USA, to Brittany to the Black Forest, to the Alps*

Note 1 With other geographical names, other prepositions may be found:

an den Bodensee, **an** den Rhein *to Lake Constance, to the Rhine*

Note 2 After arrival at or in the place, the preposition will be used with the dative:

in der Schweiz, **in** den USA *in Switzerland, in the USA*

am Bodensee *by Lake Constance*

▶ 9.5.3 to + people

a Dative case or an + accusative (indirect object)

Ich schicke meinem Vater eine Email	}	<i>I'm sending an email to my father</i>
Ich schicke eine Email an meinen Vater		

b After geben, the dative must be used for to

Ich gebe **meinem** Vater ein Geschenk *I give my father a present*

• For 'to someone('s house)', see 9.5.1b above.

9.6 Contraction of prepositions with the definite article

Some prepositions may contract to a single word with certain forms of the definite article.

▶ 9.6.1 Prepositions which contract

a Prepositions which contract with certain forms of the definite article are

an das > ans	von dem > vom
an dem > am	zu dem > zum
bei dem > beim	zu der > zur
in das > ins	
in dem > im	

im Moment, **im** Büro, **ins** Haus, **zur** Schule, **am** Samstag, **zur** Zeit

b Where stress or emphasis is required, the preposition and article are not contracted

In dem Moment, als ich ihn sah, ... *Just at the moment when I saw him...*

In dem Haus, wo wir jetzt wohnen, ... *In the house where we now live, ...*

c Other contractions are possible, found mostly in spoken German

auf das > aufs		
durch das > durchs		
hinter den > hintern	über das > übers	hinter dem > hinterm
über den > übern		über dem > überm
um das > ums		
unter den > untern	unter das > unters	unter dem > unterm
außer dem > außerm		
vor dem > vorm		

Er kletterte **durchs** Fenster
 Sie ist **ums** Leben gekommen
 Du lebst ja **hinterm** Mond!
Unterm Birnbaum

He climbed through the window
She lost her life
You're really behind the times!
Under the Pear-Tree (title of a novel by Fontane)

10

Verbs: the indicative tenses – formation

OVERVIEW

What is a verb?

- A verb is a word that expresses the 'action' of the sentence or clause; it may indicate a state or process:

He **ate** dinner; then, because it **was getting** late and he **was** tired, he **fell** asleep

Infinitives and finite verbs

- The **infinitive** is the basic, dictionary form of the verb.
- In English, it is usually preceded by *to*; in German, it ends with *-en* or *-n*:

kaufen *to buy* sammeln *to collect*

- A **finite verb** is one which is in a particular past, present or future tense:

ich kaufe *I buy* ich kaufte *I bought* ich habe gekauft *I (have) bought*

Types of verb

The five categories of German verbs are almost identical to those found in English. This chapter deals with the first two.

- **Weak verbs:** only the endings change. Most verbs fall into this category, e.g.

er öffn**e**t *he opens* ich öffn**e**te *I opened*

- **Strong verbs** change their endings, and frequently their stem vowels; as these changes happen in predictable patterns, they are not classed as irregular verbs, e.g.

ich schwimm**e** *I swim* ich schwamm *I swam*
ich sing**e** *I sing* ich sang *I sang*

- **Mixed verbs** (all with stems end in **-nn-** or **-nd-**): weak verb endings, but the stem vowel changes like strong verbs See 12.1 e.g.

er kenn**t** *he knows* er kann**t**e *he knew*

- **Modal verbs** indicate something of the 'mood' or attitude of the speaker to the main verb. The main verb is always in the infinitive. There are six modal verbs: dürfen, können, mögen, müssen, sollen and wollen (see 12.2).

Du **solltest** Deutsch lernen *You should learn German*
Du **kannst** Deutsch lernen *You can learn German*

- **Irregular verbs** are 'one-off' verbs: there are about fourteen of these, depending on how they are categorised. Apart from parts of *sein*, they all use weak or strong verb tense endings; many parts of these verbs are regular, e.g.

gehen <i>to go</i>	er geht	er ging	er ist gegangen
werden <i>to become</i>	ich werde	du wirst	du bist geworden

Tenses

This chapter deals with tenses of the **indicative** mood; these indicate an action that really happens or is likely to happen. See also Imperative (Chapter 16) and Subjunctive (Chapter 17).

TIP Transitive and intransitive verbs

- All verbs are either **transitive** (they take a direct object) or **intransitive** (they have no direct object). Often, verbs can be used in either way without any change in form, but sometimes a different form or verb is required (see 12.5).

- **Transitive**

Ich esse Schokolade	<i>I eat chocolate</i>
Ich wecke meine Schwester	<i>I wake my sister up</i>

- **Intransitive**

Ich esse in guten Restaurants	<i>I eat in good restaurants</i>
Ich wache um 7 Uhr auf	<i>I wake up at 7.00</i>

- When using a dictionary, check which type of verb is required in your sentence – this can save time. Transitive verbs are marked VT, and intransitive VI. Verbs that can be used transitively or intransitively are marked VTI.

10.1 The present tense

▶ 10.1.1 Weak verbs

a Formation of the present tense

Present tense – weak verbs

- Add these endings to the stem of the infinitive

sagen to say

ich	sage	wir	sagen
du	sagst	ihr	sagt
er/sie/es	sagt	sie/Sie	sagen

b Irregularities

There are a few, slight irregularities in the formation of the present tense of weak verbs, mostly to enable the word to be pronounced clearly.

- Stems which end in **-t, -d** (or **-m, -n** after a consonant) add an **-e** before the **-st** and **-t** endings, e.g. *warten to wait*:

ich	warte	wir	warten
du	wartest	ihr	wartet
er/sie/es	wartet	sie/Sie	warten

Compare this with the rule for strong verbs whose stems end similarly in 10.1.2b below.

Other verbs like *warten* include:

abtrocknen	<i>to dry up</i>	mieten	<i>to hire, rent</i>
arbeiten	<i>to work</i>	öffnen	<i>to open</i>
antworten	<i>to answer</i>	ordnen	<i>to put in order</i>
atmen	<i>to breathe</i>	rechnen	<i>to calculate</i>
baden	<i>to have a bath/to bathe</i>	reden	<i>to speak, talk</i>
bedeuten	<i>to mean</i>	retten	<i>to rescue</i>
bilden	<i>to form</i>	richten	<i>to judge</i>
dichten	<i>to write poetry</i>	schaden	<i>to harm, damage</i>
fürchten	<i>to fear</i>	töten	<i>to kill</i>
heiraten	<i>to get married</i>	trösten	<i>to comfort/console</i>
kosten	<i>to cost</i>	zeichnen	<i>to draw</i>

- Stems which end in **-el** or **-er** (i.e. verbs whose infinitive ends with **-n**) have *wir* and *sie/Sie* forms ending in **-n**. This follows the pattern that the *wir* and *sie* forms are identical with the infinitive for all verbs. The *ich* form always loses the **-e-** of the stem with **-el** stem verbs, and sometimes with **-er** stem verbs, e.g. *segeln to sail*:

ich	seg le	wir	segeln
du	segel st	ihr	segel t
er/sie/es	segel t	sie/Sie	segel n

Other verbs include:

bummeln	<i>to wander, stroll</i>	sammeln	<i>to collect</i>
handeln	<i>to act, bargain</i>	schütteln	<i>to shake</i>
klingeln	<i>to ring</i>	wechseln	<i>to change</i>
lächeln	<i>to smile</i>		

Note Verbs which end with **-ern** generally keep the **-e-** before the ending in the *ich* form. *Ich wandere* (I like, go walking) is the normal form, rather than *ich wandre*.

Other verbs like *wandern* include:

ändern	<i>to change</i>	rudern	<i>to row (a boat)</i>	zittern	<i>to shiver</i>
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- Stems which end with **-s, -ss/ß, -x, -z**, drop the **-s-** from the **du -st** ending. This rule also applies to strong verbs (see 10.1.3b).

putzen <i>to clean</i> – du putzt (not du putz st)	lösen <i>(to solve)</i> – du lö st
faxen <i>(to fax)</i> – du fax t	rasen <i>(to race)</i> – du ras t
grüßen <i>(to greet)</i> – du grüß t	setzen <i>(to put)</i> – du setz t
küssen <i>(to kiss)</i> – du kü sst	tanzen <i>(to dance)</i> – du tanz t

▶ 10.1.2 Strong verbs

a Formation of the present tense

- Weak and strong verbs both take the same endings in the present tense. The only real differences between weak and strong verbs in the present tense concern strong verbs with **-a-** or **-e-** in the stem.
- In the **du** and **er** forms only, strong verbs undergo the following changes:
 - Stem vowel **-a-** changes to **-ä-**
 - Stem vowel **-e-** changes to **-ie-** or **-i-**

Note Other vowels do not change.

Present tense – strong verbs singular		
a > ä:	e > i	e > ie
fahren <i>to go</i>	geben <i>to give</i>	sehen <i>to see</i>
ich fahre	ich gebe	ich sehe
du fährst	du gibst	du siehst
er/sie/es fährt	er/sie/es gibt	er/sie/es sieht

a > ä

fallen (*to fall*) – er fällt
 fangen (*to catch*) – er fängt
 laufen (*to run*) – er läuft

schlafen (*to sleep*) – er schläft
 tragen (*to wear, carry*) – er trägt
 waschen (*to wash*) – er wäscht

e > i

helfen (*to help*) – er hilft
 nehmen (*to take*) – er nimmt
 sprechen (*to speak*) – er spricht
 treffen (*to meet*) – er trifft
 werfen (*to throw*) – er wirft

e > ie

lesen (*to read*) – er liest
 stehlen (*to steal*) – er stiehlt
 empfehlen (*to recommend*) – er empfiehlt
 geschehen (*to happen*) – es geschieht

b Irregularities

- Stems which end with **-t** or **-d** add an **-e-** before **-st** or **-t** endings, but *only* if the stem vowel does not change:

halten (*to hold*) – du hältst, er hält
 laden (*to load*) – du lädst, er lädt
 raten (*to advise*) – du rätst, er rät
 treten (*to tread, kick*) – du trittst,
 er tritt

but ihr haltet
but ihr ladet
but ihr ratet
but ihr tretet

- Stems which end with **-s**, **-ss/ß**, **-z** drop **-s** from the **du -st** ending. (The same rule applies to weak verbs; see 10.1.1b above.)

lesen (*to read*) – du liest (**not** du liessst)

Similarly

beißen (*to bite*) – du beißt
 essen (*to eat*) – du isst
 gießen (*to pour*) – du gießt
 heißen (*to be called*) – du heißst

lassen (*to let*) – du lässt
 sitzen (*to be sitting*) – du sitzt
 vergessen (*to forget*) – du vergisst

TIP Present tense endings common to all verbs

- These patterns for the present tense apply to all verbs except *sein*:
 - The **wir** and **sie/Sie** forms of the verb are always the same as the infinitive.
 - The **ich** form of the verb is always the infinitive less **-n** (except with modal verbs and verbs which end with **-eln** or **-ern**; see 10.1.2b).
- For modal verbs see 12.2.2a.
- For mixed verbs see 12.1.
- For irregular verbs see 12.4.

10.2 The simple past tense**▶ 10.2.1 Weak verbs****a Formation of the simple past tense**

Simple past – weak verbs		
• To the stem of the infinitive, add these endings		
sagen to say		
ich sag te		wir sag ten
du sag test		ihr sag tet
er/sie/es sag te		sie/Sie sag ten

b Irregularities

- Stems which end in **-t**, **-d** or **-m**, **-n** after a consonant add **-e** before the simple past tense ending:

arbeiten	to work	ich arbeit ete , du arbeit etest , ihr arbeit etet
öffnen	to open	ich öff nete , er öff nete , wir öff neten
reden	to speak	ich red ete , du red etest , sie red eten

Note Stems which end in **-el** or **-er** (i.e. those with infinitives ending in **-n**) do not require an extra **-e**:

segeln	to sail	ich segel te
wandern	to hike, go walking	er wand erte

▶ 10.2.2 Strong verbs**a Formation of the simple past tense**

Simple past – strong verbs		
• The following endings are added to the stem of the infinitive.		
• The stem vowel always changes from the infinitive, and does so in all persons.		
fahren to go, travel		
ich fu hr		wir fu hren
du fu hrst		ihr fu hrt
er/sie/es fu hr		sie/Sie fu hren

- ♦ The patterns of stem vowel changes for the simple past tense and perfect tenses.

Infinitive	Present	Past	Perfect	Examples
a	ä	u	a	tragen: trägt – trug – hat get ra gen
	ä	i	a	fangen: fängt – fi ng – hat gef an gen
	ä	ie	a	halten: hält – hi elt – hat geh al ten
e	i	a	e	geben: gibt – gab – hat ge ge ben
	ie	a	e	sehen: sie ht – sah – hat ges eh en
	i	a	o	helfen: hilft – half – hat geh ol fen
	ie	a	o	stehlen: stie ht – stah l – hat gest oh len
ei	ei	ie	ie	steigen: stei gt – stie g – ist gest ie gen
	ei	i	i	beißen: bei ßt – biss – hat geb is sen
i	i	a	u	singen: singt – sang – hat ges un gen
	i	a	o	brechen: bricht – brach – hat geb ro chen
ie	ie	o	o	bieten: bie tet – bot – hat geb o ten

b Irregularities

- ♦ Strong verbs never add **-e-** before the simple past tense endings, even those which do so in the present tense; this follows the rule that **-e-** can be added only if the stem vowel does **not** change.

halten *to hold*

laden *to load*

raten *to advise, guess*

treten *to tread*

du hieltst, ihr hielt

du ludst, ihr ludt

du rietst, ihr riet

du tratst, ihr trat

- ♦ Stems ending in **-s**, **-ss/ß** or **-z** lose an **-s-** in the du form:

beißen *to bite*

lesen *to read*

lassen *to leave*

sitzen *to be sitting*

du bist (not du bisst)

du last

du ließt

du saßt

- ♦ For modal verbs see 12.2.2b.
- ♦ For mixed verbs see 12.1.
- ♦ For irregular verbs see 12.4.

10.3 The perfect tense

▶ 10.3.1 Formation

- ♦ The perfect tense is formed from part of the present tense of **haben** or **sein** plus the past participle of the main verb.
- ♦ The past participle is formed as follows:

Weak verbs: **ge-** + stem of the infinitive + **-t**

Strong verbs: **ge-** + stem of the infinitive (vowel may change) + **-en**

- ♦ With separable verbs, the **ge-** is placed between the prefix and the verb:

an**ge**kommen

ein**ge**reist

vor**ge**lesen

haben or sein		Past participle	
		Weak ge- (stem) -t	Strong ge- (stem*) -en (*vowel may change)
ich habe du hast er/sie/es hat	wir haben ihr habt sie/Sie haben	gearbeitet gesagt gewohnt	gelesen getragen getrunken
ich bin du bist er/sie/es ist	wir sind ihr seid sie/Sie sind	geëilt gereist gesegelt	abgefahren angekommen geflogen

▶ 10.3.2 Irregularities in the formation of the past participle

a Weak verbs whose stem ends with -d-, -t- (or with -m- or -n- after a consonant) add an -e- before the final -t

Ich habe gearbeitet	<i>I worked</i>
Er hat sehr lange geredet	<i>He spoke for a long time</i>
Sie hat tief geatmet	<i>She breathed deeply</i>
Sie hat gezeichnet	<i>She drew</i>

b ge- is not added to the past participles of certain verbs

Note A characteristic shared by all of these verbs is that their initial syllable is unstressed in pronunciation.

- Verbs whose infinitive ends with **-ieren** (these verbs are all weak).

The stress in pronunciation falls on **-ier-**:

e.g. gratulieren <i>to congratulate</i>	hat ... gratuliert
organisieren <i>to organise</i>	hat ... organisiert
probieren <i>to try out</i>	hat ... probiert
reparieren <i>to repair</i>	hat ... repariert
reservieren <i>to reserve</i>	hat ... reserviert
studieren <i>to study</i>	hat ... studiert
Ich habe Plätze für heute Abend reserviert	

- Verbs with an inseparable prefix (see 19.5.2, 19.5.3) such as **be-, ver-, zer-, ent-**.

These verbs may be weak or strong

e.g. besprechen <i>to discuss</i>	hat ... besprochen
entkommen <i>to escape</i>	ist ... entkommen
übersetzen <i>to translate</i>	hat ... übersetzt
verkaufen <i>to sell</i>	hat ... verkauft
zerbrechen <i>to smash</i>	hat ... zerbrochen

Note Unlike separable verbs, the first syllable of inseparable verbs is always pronounced unstressed (see 19.5.2a).

- A few other verbs which are foreign in origin:

prophezeien <i>to prophesy</i>	hat ... prophezeit
recykeln <i>to recycle</i>	hat ... recykelt

c hören, lassen and sehen use the infinitive as past participle when combined with another verb in the infinitive

Wir haben ihn abfahren hören	<i>We heard him leave</i>
Hast du ihn spielen sehen ?	<i>Did you see him play?</i>

Ich **habe** mir die Haare schneiden lassen

I had my hair cut

Weil er sein Auto nicht **hatte** reparieren lassen, ...

Because he hadn't had his car repaired, ...

- Notice the position of the auxiliary **hatte** in the last example, where it is used with two infinitives (see 18.1.4b).

▶ 10.3.3 haben or sein as auxiliary?

Although the majority of verbs form the perfect tense with **haben**, a number of very common verbs do so using **sein**.

a sein is used only with verbs which are both intransitive (i.e. have no direct object) and describe movement or a change of state

- Verbs which describe **movement** towards a place:

aufstehen	Ich bin um Mittag aufgestanden	<i>I got up at midday</i>
fahren	Er ist mit dem Zug gefahren	<i>He went by train</i>
laufen	Wir sind sehr schnell gelaufen	<i>We ran very fast</i>
reisen	Sie ist um die Welt gereist	<i>She travelled round the world</i>

- Verbs which show **a change of state**:

sterben	Der König ist gestern gestorben	<i>The king died yesterday</i>
auftauen	Das Eis ist in der Sonne aufgetaut	<i>The ice melted in the sun</i>
werden	Sie ist alt geworden	<i>She has become old</i>
einschlafen	Ich bin erst um 3 eingeschlafen	<i>I didn't get to sleep until three</i>
verschwinden	Sie sind im Dschungel verschwunden	<i>They've disappeared in the jungle</i>

Note Some of the verbs above may also be used **transitively** (i.e. with a direct object). They then form the perfect tense with **haben**. Compare these examples:

fahren	Sie ist mit dem Auto gefahren	<i>She went by car</i>
	Sie hat das Auto gefahren	<i>She drove the car</i>
fliegen	Wir sind nach Basel geflogen	<i>We flew to Basel</i>
	Der Pilot hat das Flugzeug geflogen	<i>The pilot flew the plane</i>

b Some other common verbs also take sein, many indicating *happen, succeed, fail*

begegnen *to meet (by chance)*
gedeihen *to prosper*

bleiben *to stay*
gelingen/missglücken *to succeed/fail*

geschehen *to happen*

glücken/missglücken *to succeed/fail*

passieren *to happen*
vorkommen *to happen*

sein *to be*
zustoßen *to happen*

Er **ist** oft deprimiert **gewesen**
Ich **bin** gestern zu Hause **geblieben**

He's often been depressed
I stayed at home yesterday

Sie **ist** ihm zufällig in der Stadt **begegnet**

She met him in town quite by chance

Der Garten **ist** bei der vielen
Sonne **gediehen**
Wann **ist** der Unfall **passiert**?
Der neue Roman **ist** dem
Schriftsteller **gelungen/**
misslungen

*The garden flourished in all the
sunshine*
When did the accident happen?
The author's new novel did (not)
turn out well

c Compounds of gehen and werden continue to be used with sein, even if they have a direct object

durchgehen *to go over*

loswerden *to get rid of*

Der Lehrer **ist** den Aufsatz mit
dem Schüler **durchgegangen**
Ich **bin** mein altes Auto endlich
los geworden

d All other verbs, both transitive and intransitive, use haben to form the perfect tense. This includes reflexive verbs

anrufen	Ich habe meine Eltern angerufen	<i>I phoned my parents</i>
glauben	Ich habe kein Wort geglaubt	<i>I didn't believe a word</i>
sich verlaufen	Er hat sich in der Altstadt verlaufen	<i>He got lost in the old town</i>
sich waschen	Sie hat sich gewaschen	<i>She had a wash</i>
wohnen	Wir haben in einem bequemen Hotel gewohnt	<i>We stayed in a comfortable hotel</i>

TIP Verbs which take sein

- The German equivalents of all the French verbs which form the perfect tense with **être** (except reflexive verbs) take **sein**, e.g. abfahren (*partir*), ankommen (*arriver*), bleiben (*rester*), sterben (*mourir*), werden (*devenir*).
- Like their French equivalents, they are all intransitive verbs denoting movement or change of state.
- There are, of course, other verbs which take **sein** in German; see 10.3.3b above.

10.4 The pluperfect tense

▶ 10.4.1 Formation

- The pluperfect tense is formed in the same way as the perfect tense, but using the simple past of haben or sein with the past participle of the main verb (see 10.3.1 above).

haben or sein		Past participle	
		Weak ge- (stem) -t	Strong ge- (stem*) -en (*vowel may change)
ich hatte	wir hatten	gewohnt	getrunken
du hattest	ihr hattet	gesagt	gelesen
er/sie/es hatte	sie/Sie hatten	gearbeitet	getragen

haben or sein		Past participle	
ich war du warst er/sie/es war	wir waren ihr wart sie/Sie waren	gese g elt gere is t	abgef ah ren gef lo gen ange ko mmen

- The rules governing the use of **haben** or **sein** with the pluperfect tense are exactly the same as for verbs in the perfect tense. (see 10.3.3 above).

10.5 The future tense

▶ 10.5.1 Formation

- The future tense is formed using **werden** + the infinitive.

werden		+	Infinitive
ich werde du wirst er/sie/es wird	wir werden ihr werdet sie/Sie werden	...	kaufen segeln abfahren

10.6 The future perfect tense

▶ 10.6.1 Formation

- The future perfect is formed using **werden** + past participle + **haben** or **sein**.
 Bis Montag **werde** ich das Buch **gelesen haben** *By Monday I will have read the book*
 Trotz des Nebels **wird** sie schon zu Hause angekommen sein *Despite the fog she will probably have arrived home by now*

Verbs: the indicative tenses – uses

OVERVIEW – TENSES, MOODS AND VOICES

► What is a ‘tense’?

‘Tense’ is grammar terminology for ‘time’. The tense of the verb indicates the time when the action takes place – in the past, the present or the future.

► Tenses in German

The main tenses in German are very similar in use to those in English. Note that whereas English has both simple (*‘I work’*) and continuous or progressive (*‘I am working’*) forms for all tenses, German has just the one form for each tense:

Present	ich arbeite	<i>I work// am working</i>
Perfect	ich habe gearbeitet	<i>I worked// have worked</i>
Simple past/ imperfect	ich arbeitete	<i>I have been working// was working</i>
Pluperfect	ich hatte gearbeitet	<i>I had worked// had been working</i>
Future	ich werde arbeiten	<i>I will work// will be working</i>
Future perfect	ich werde gearbeitet haben	<i>I will have worked// will have been working</i>

► ‘Indicative’ and ‘subjunctive’ moods

- ‘Mood’ relates to the attitude of the speaker to what is being said (as do ‘modal’ verbs and ‘modal’ particles). The tenses above are said to be in the ‘indicative mood’, used for statements and questions where the action is certain or probable.
- Some actions are mere wishes, or they express something which is unreal or dependent on a condition being fulfilled, or polite requests. These forms of the verb are said to be in the ‘subjunctive’ mood, e.g.

Conditional	Ich würde arbeiten, wenn ... Könntest du mir helfen?	<i>I would work if ... Could you help me?</i>
Conditional perfect	Ich hätte gearbeitet	<i>I would have worked</i>

▶ **'Imperative' mood**

- The third mood in both English and German is the 'imperative' mood – the form of the verb used when giving commands:

Bleiben Sie hier!

Stay here!▶ **'Active' and 'passive' voices**

- All the verb forms at the top of this page are in the 'active' voice, i.e. the subject carries out the action of the verb. In the 'passive' voice the subject of the verb becomes the object of the action:

Active

Maria verkauft ihr Auto

*Maria is selling her car***Passive**

Das Auto wird verkauft

The car is being sold

The subjunctive, imperative and passive are dealt with in **Chapters 17, 16 and 15** respectively.

11.1 The present tense▶ **11.1.1 Example**

ich fahre

*I travel/am travelling**I will travel/will be travelling*▶ **11.1.2 Uses****a Repeated, habitual actions in the present**Ich **fahre** jeden Tag in die Stadt*I go into town every day*Ich **lese** immer *Die Welt**I always read Die Welt***b Actions that are taking place at the moment of speaking**Ich **suche** meine Schuhe*I'm looking for my shoes*Im Moment **wohnt** sie in Berlin*At the moment she's living in**Berlin*Der Mann, der da drüben **steht**,*The man who's standing over*

ist ...

*there is ...***c Future actions**

- In German, the present tense is the normal means of referring to the future, as long as the context makes the idea of the future clear, often by an adverb of time:

Morgen **fahre** ich nach Dresden*Tomorrow I'm driving to Dresden*Er **kommt** um 7 Uhr an*He'll be arriving at 7*Vielleicht **besuche** ich sie*Perhaps I'll visit them***Sehen** wir uns in Leipzig?*Shall we see one another in**Leipzig?* ■

- Using the future tense when the context makes it possible to use the present tense is perfectly permissible; its use then emphasises the intention or prediction:

Morgen werde ich nach China fahren	<i>Tomorrow I'll be going to China</i>
Meinst du, es wird heute Abend schneien ?	<i>Do you think it'll snow this evening?</i>
Ich werde euch bald besuchen !	<i>I'll certainly visit you soon!</i>
- For examples of when the future tense *must* be used, see 11.4.2a below.

d Actions which began in the past and are continuing at the moment of speaking

The verb is usually used with *seit – since/for*, *seitdem – since*, *schon – up to now*:

Ich wohne seit 2001 hier	<i>I've been living here since 2001</i>
Er wartet schon lange auf sie	<i>He's been waiting for her for ages</i>
Seitdem er zu Hause ist , sieht er die ganze Zeit fern	<i>Since he's been at home, he's watched TV all the time</i>

See also 6.1.4 (*for* with time phrases).

e In fiction and in newspaper headlines (as in English) to lend immediacy to the narrative

Weißer Hai spuckt Opfer wieder aus!	<i>White shark spits out victim!</i>
Ein Aufschrei zerreißt die Luft	<i>A scream rends the air</i>

TIP Continuous action in German – I am reading, I was reading

- There are no continuous or progressive tenses in German; the context normally makes it clear whether the action is continuous. However, to emphasise continuous action, an adverb such as *gerade* may be added, or *gleich* may be added to verbs of motion:

Sie liest gerade ein Buch	<i>She's just reading a book</i>
Ich komme gleich	<i>I'm just coming</i>
- Alternatively, (*gerade*) *dabei sein* + *zu* + infinitive may be used:

Er war gerade dabei , zu Hause anzurufen	<i>He was just (in the process of) phoning home</i>
--	---
- A noun, often based on an infinitive, may also be used with *beim* (see 14.1.3a):

Sie ist beim Lesen	<i>She's reading</i>
---------------------------	----------------------

11.2 The perfect and simple past tenses

- In English, the perfect tense is used for past events which are linked to the present time, while the simple past is used for events which are fully in the past:

<i>He's had an accident (...and is in hospital)</i>	
<i>He had an accident (...but is now back at work)</i>	
- In German, however, the distinction is much less clear-cut, and the two tenses are often interchangeable. In fact, the tense used depends more on region (in the south, the perfect is used almost exclusively, in the north less so), style and even

just simplicity of expression than on difference in meaning. German-speakers move from perfect to simple past, even within a single sentence. This principle must be borne in mind when consulting the following 'rules', which are denoted by context rather than tense.

▶ 11.2.1 Examples

ich habe gesehen	} <i>I saw</i> <i>I have seen</i> <i>I have been seeing</i> <i>I did see</i>
ich sah	

▶ 11.2.2 Uses of the simple past and perfect tenses

a Spoken German, personal letters, etc.

- The **perfect tense** is the main past tense, for events completely in the past as well as those linked to the present:

Gestern habe ich den neuen Film gesehen	<i>I saw the new film yesterday</i>
Hast du den Film gesehen ?	<i>Have you seen the film?</i>
Jeden Tag bin ich ins Büro gegangen	<i>I went/used to go to the office every day</i>
Ich habe dir oft gesagt , du kannst uns zu jeder Zeit besuchen	<i>I've often told you that you can visit us any time you like</i>

- The **simple past** is, however, more often used with the auxiliaries (haben, sein, werden, and the modals, e.g. können, müssen):

Ich war letzte Woche in London	<i>I went to/was in London last week</i>
Er hatte viel Arbeit und konnte uns bisher nicht besuchen	<i>He's had a lot of work and has been unable to visit us up to now</i>
Er musste ganz schnell in die Stadt	<i>He's had to nip into town</i>
Die Firma wurde letztes Jahr verkauft	<i>The company was sold last year</i>
Die Straßen wurden erst vor kurzem repariert	<i>The roads have only recently been repaired</i>

- The **simple past** is often used in spoken German in other instances:

- To describe a **state or repeated action in the past**:

Sie lag wie tot auf dem Boden	<i>She lay on the floor as if dead</i>
Als ich jung war , ging ich oft in den Park	<i>When I was little, I often went to the park</i>
Es gab noch viele, die das glaubten	<i>There were still many who believed that</i>
Damals fuhr ich mit dem Rad dorthin	<i>I used to go there by bike</i>

- With **some common verbs**, e.g. gehen, kommen, sagen, stehen as well as the perfect, especially in north Germany. In southern Germany, the perfect tense is almost always preferred:

Sie stand vor dem Kino und hat auf ihn gewartet	<i>She stood outside the cinema and waited for him</i>
--	--

Or Sie **hat** vor dem Kino

gestanden ...

Er **sagte** nichts mehr

He said no more

Or Er **hat** nichts mehr **gesagt**

b Printed material, literature, news media

- The **simple past** is the main tense for all verbs in narrative in books and other printed media:

Vor dem Kaufhaus **lief** Vater
bereits unruhig auf und ab,
stürzte auf uns zu, als er uns
kommen **sah**, und **fragte**: ...

*Outside the department store
father was already pacing
impatiently up and down; he
rushed up to us when he saw
us coming and asked: ...*

- The **perfect tense** is used with all verbs except haben, sein and modals for:
 - events continuing up to the present (but see also notes on seit in Adverbs 6.1.4):

Es **hat** so viel **geregnet**, dass wir
jetzt Überschwemmungen
haben

*It's been raining so hard that
we've now got floods*

Bisher **habe** ich es **geschafft**,
alles Notwendige zu erledigen

*Up to now, I've managed to do
everything necessary*

- events taking place in the immediate past:

In den letzten paar Monaten **hat**
der Bundeskanzler Amerika
dreimal **besucht**

*In the last few months the
Chancellor has visited America
three times*

In letzter Zeit **sind** die Preise stark
gestiegen

Recently prices have risen sharply

- past events that are felt to have an effect on the present:

Die Regierung **hat** um
internationale Hilfe **gebeten**

*The government has asked for
international aid*

- Newspaper reports often begin with the perfect tense, then continue in the simple past:

Bei einem Selbstmordanschlag auf
ein Luxushotel **sind** nach
Polizeiangaben mindestens 60
Menschen **getötet worden**.
Das in Flammen stehende
Marriott-Hotel **drohte**
einzustürzen ...

*According to police statements, at
least 60 people have been
killed in a suicide attack on a
luxury hotel. The Marriott Hotel
was ablaze and in danger of
collapse...*

c Other uses of the simple past tense

- The simple past is used with **seit** to indicate an action which had started before another past event took place. In English the pluperfect would be used.

Er **wohnte** schon seit 10 Jahren in
unserer Straße, als wir ihn
kennen gelernt haben

*He had been living in our road for
10 years when we first met him*

See 6.1.4 (for in adverbs of time).

d Other uses of the perfect tense

- To indicate a state which has been achieved by a particular course of action:
Wer keine Karten mehr hat, **hat gewonnen** *The player who has no more cards is the winner*
- See also **future perfect** (11.5.2 below).

11.3 The pluperfect tense**▶ 11.3.1 Example**

ich hatte gesehen *I had seen*
I had been seeing

▶ 11.3.2 Use

- **The pluperfect is used to describe an event which took place before some other past occurrence**
Als er ankam, **hatten** wir schon **gegessen** *When he arrived, we had already eaten*
Ich habe ihn angerufen, aber er **war** um 9 Uhr **abgefahren** *I phoned him, but he had left at 9 o'clock*

11.4 The future tense**▶ 11.4.1 Example**

ich werde fahren *I will travel*
I will be travelling
I am going to travel

▶ 11.4.2 Use

- a The future tense is used to make it quite clear that an action will take place in the future. It must be used where the present tense would lead to ambiguity**
Das **werde** ich nie **vergessen!** *That's something I'll never forget!*
Weißt du, dass sie in London **arbeiten wird?** *Did you know she'll be working in London?*
- b The future tense is used to emphasise the intention or prediction of the speaker**
Meinst du, es **wird** heute abend **regnen?** *Do you think it'll rain this evening?*
Ich **werde** euch bald **besuchen!** *I'll certainly visit you soon!*
Wir **werden** uns bestimmt **wiedersehen!** *We'll certainly meet again!*
- c The future tense is often replaced by the present tense as long as the context makes it clear that the future is being referred to (see present tense 11.1.2c above)**

11.5 The future perfect tense

▶ 11.5.1 Example

Er wird angekommen sein

He will have arrived

▶ 11.5.2 Use

a The future perfect is used for an event which will take place before another future event

Bis Montag **wird** sie den Brief
bekommen haben

*By Monday she will have received
the letter*

Note If the future action has already been completed, the perfect tense is used:

Wenn du morgen erst um 11 Uhr
ankommst, **sind** wir schon
abgefahren

*If you don't arrive till 11 o'clock
tomorrow, we'll already have
left*

b However, German-speakers rarely use the future perfect; the perfect tense is almost always preferred if the context makes it clear that the future is referred to

Bis Montag **habe** ich das Buch
gelesen

*By Monday I will have read the
book*

Trotz des Nebels **ist** sie
wahrscheinlich schon zu Hause
angekommen

*Despite the fog she will probably
have arrived home by now*

c The use of the future perfect tense, rather than the perfect, emphasises the supposition or intention behind the statement, rather than the fact

Keine Ahnung, wo sie ist – sie
wird den Termin **vergessen**
haben

*No idea where she is – she'll have
forgotten the appointment*

In ein paar Jahren **wird** der Eisbär
ausgestorben sein

*In a few years' time the polar bear
will be extinct*

12

Verbs: other types and forms

OVERVIEW

Chapter 11 described the forms of weak and strong verbs. This chapter first discusses the forms of the other three types:

- **mixed verbs** (e.g. brennen)
- **modal verbs** (e.g. müssen)
- **irregular verbs** (e.g. sein)

In addition, the chapter covers three other aspects of verbs:

- **transitive/intransitive forms** (e.g. liegen/legen)
- **impersonal verbs** (e.g. es regnet)
- **reflexive verbs** (e.g. sich waschen)

▶ Transitive and intransitive verbs

Transitive verbs are those which have a direct object; intransitive verbs do not. Sometimes their forms are different, sometimes the same. See TIP box p. 115.

Transitive	Sie beantwortete meinen Brief	<i>She answered my letter</i>
Intransitive	Sie antwortete nicht	<i>She didn't answer</i>

▶ Impersonal verbs

Impersonal verbs are used only (or almost always) in the third person, often with **es**:

Es regnet	<i>It is raining</i>
Das gefällt mir nicht	<i>I don't like that</i>

▶ Reflexive verbs

Reflexive verbs are verbs in which the subject and the object refer to the same thing or person:

Ich wasche mich	<i>I have a wash</i>
Sie zieht sich an	<i>She's getting dressed</i>

12.1 Mixed verbs

- There are six mixed verbs, all with **-nn-** or **-nd-** in the stem. They are called 'mixed' verbs because they change their stem vowel in the past tenses (like strong verbs), but their endings are the same as those of weak verbs. The principal parts are:

Infinitive	Present	Imperfect	Perfect
brennen (to burn)	er brennt	er brannte	er hat ... gebrannt
kennen (to know)	er kennt	er kannte	er hat ... gekannt
nennen (to name)	er nennt	er nannte	er hat ... genannt
rennen (to race)	er rennt	er rannte	er ist ... gerannt
senden ¹ (to send)	er sendet	er sandte	er hat ... gesandt
wenden ² (to turn)	er wendet	er wandte	er hat ... gewandt

¹ *senden* may also be used to mean *to broadcast*, when it uses only the weak forms in the past tenses: *sendete*, *hat gesendet*.

² *wenden* may also be used to mean *to turn over* (e.g. pages) or *to turn round* (e.g. car), when it uses the weak forms in the past tenses: *wendete*, *hat gewendet*.

12.2 Modal verbs

- There are six modal verbs; they are so called because, rather like the modal particles in [Chapter 7](#), they indicate something about the attitude of the speaker to the action ('Can I go?' – 'You must go!') rather than the occurrence of the action itself.
- wissen to know* was once also a modal verb, and is still conjugated like one. It has been included in [12.4](#) (Irregular verbs).
- English modal verbs exist only in the present (e.g. *can*, *must*, *may*) and occasionally in the past/conditional (e.g. *could*, *should*); for other tenses other words have to be found (*had to*, *will be able to*, etc.). German modal verbs, however, have a full range of tenses.
- Note that only the main English equivalents of modal verbs are given in the table below; see [12.3](#) for further details of individual verbs.

▶ 12.2.1 Examples of the tenses (müssen)

Tense		
Present	Er muss das Buch kaufen	<i>He must buy the book</i>
Note also	Er muss das Buch gekauft haben	<i>He must have bought the book</i>
Simple past	Er musste das Buch kaufen	<i>He had to buy the book</i>
Perfect	Er hat das Buch kaufen müssen	<i>He has had to buy the book</i>
Pluperfect	Er hatte das Buch kaufen müssen	<i>He had had to buy the book</i>
Future	Er wird das Buch kaufen müssen	<i>He will have to buy the book</i>
Conditional (Konjunktiv II)	Er müsste das Buch kaufen	<i>He would have to buy the book</i>

Tense		
	Er müsste das Buch gekauft haben	<i>He would have to have bought the book</i>
Cond. perfect	Er hätte das Buch kaufen müssen	<i>He should have bought the book</i>
Reported speech (Konjunktiv I)	Er sagte, er müsse das Buch kaufen	<i>He said he must buy the book</i>

▶ 12.2.2 Formation of the tenses of modal verbs

a The present tense

	dürfen	können	mögen	müssen	sollen	wollen
	<i>may, to be allowed to</i>	<i>can, to be able to</i>	<i>to like</i>	<i>must, to have to</i>	<i>ought, should</i>	<i>to want</i>
ich	darf	kann	mag	muss	soll	will
du	darfst	kannst	magst	musst	sollst	willst
er, sie, es	darf	kann	mag	muss	soll	will
wir	dürfen	können	mögen	müssen	sollen	wollen
ihr	dürft	könnt	mögt	müsst	sollt	wollt
sie, Sie	dürfen	können	mögen	müssen	sollen	wollen

▶ TIP How to remember the present tense of modal verbs

- Only the singular forms of modal verbs are irregular.
- The **ich** and **er** forms are identical, as are the **wir** and **sie** plural forms.

b The simple past tense

- Use the stem of the infinitive (without the umlaut); add weak verb endings.

e.g. können <i>can, to be able to</i>					
ich	konnte	<i>I could, was able to</i>	wir	konnten	
du	konntest		ihr	konntet	
er, sie, es	konnte		sie, Sie	konnten	

- The other modal verbs work similarly:

dürfen	ich durfte, du durftest, etc.	<i>I was allowed to</i>
mögen	ich mochte, du mochtest, etc.	<i>I liked</i>
müssen	ich musste, du musstest, etc.	<i>I had to</i>
sollen	ich sollte, du solltest, etc.	<i>I should, ought to</i>
wollen	ich wollte, du wolltest, etc.	<i>I wanted to</i>

c The perfect and pluperfect tenses

- Germans usually prefer the simple past tense of a modal verb to its perfect tense form. However, the perfect tense is to be found quite frequently, especially in written forms and in southern Germany.
- Modal verbs always form the perfect and pluperfect tenses with **haben**.

- Modal verbs are almost always used with another verb; the past participle of the modal verb is almost always identical to its infinitive (but see 12.2.2d below).

Ich habe ihn seit langem nicht mehr sehen wollen	<i>I haven't wanted to see him for a long time</i>
Er hat leider nach Hause gehen müssen	<i>Unfortunately, he has had to go home</i>
Weil ich den Aufsatz nicht habe schreiben können ¹ , ...	<i>Because I've been unable to write the essay...</i>
Nachdem sie nach Hause hatte gehen müssen ¹ , ...	<i>After she had had to go home, ...</i>

¹ Note the word order with the perfect and pluperfect tenses in a subordinate clause (see 18.1.4b).

d Perfect tense of modal verbs used without a following infinitive

- Occasionally, a modal verb will be used without another verb; in such cases, the past participle of modal verbs is as follows:

gedurft	gekonnt
gemocht	gemusst
gesollt	gewollt
Hast du diese Musik gemocht ?	<i>Did you like that music?</i>
Meine Mutter hat 's gewollt	<i>It was my mother's wish (Title of poem by Storm)</i>
Weil er die Vokabeln nicht gekonnt hatte	<i>Because he hadn't known the vocabulary ...</i>

e The future tense

- The future tense of modal verbs is formed, as with other verbs, by using **werden** + infinitive:

Wirst du mich besuchen **können**? *Will you be able to visit me?*

- As with other verbs, the present tense may be used with an adverb of time which indicates the future (see 11.1.2c):

Ich **kann** morgen **kommen** *I can come tomorrow*

f Conditional tense/*Konjunktiv II*

- Modal verbs form the conditional/*Konjunktiv II* in the normal way using *Konjunktiv II* form of the modal verb + infinitive.

Note that *sollen* and *wollen* do not add umlauts to the stem vowel:

Könntest du mir bitte helfen ?	<i>Could you please help me?</i>
Solltest du sie anrufen ?	<i>Should you phone them?</i>
Was möchten Sie?	<i>What would you like?</i>
Wenn er mir helfen könnte , ...	<i>If he could help me, ...</i>

g Conditional perfect

- The conditional perfect of modal verbs is formed in the usual way with the *Konjunktiv II* of *haben*: *hätte* + past participle:

Das hätte er nicht tun dürfen !	<i>He should not have been allowed to do that!</i>
Obwohl ich die Jacke nicht hätte kaufen sollen ¹ , ...	<i>Although I shouldn't have bought the jacket ...</i>

Weil ich sie sonst nie wieder **hätte**
besuchen **können**¹, ...

*Because I otherwise would never
have been able to visit her
again ...*

¹Note the word order in the subordinate clause (see 18.1.4b).

▶ 12.2.3 Modal constructions

- ♦ **Note the difference between the meanings of these modal constructions, which English modal verbs do not distinguish**

'External view'

Sie **könnte** ihn anrufen haben
She could have phoned him

(It's possible that she did
phone him)

Sie **müsste** ihn anrufen haben
She must have phoned him

(It's likely that she phoned
him)

Sie **sollte** ihn anrufen **haben**
She ought to have phoned him

(One would have expected her
to phone him)

'Internal motive'

Sie **hätte** ihn anrufen **können**
*(She would have been capable
of phoning)*

(She would have been capable
of phoning)

Sie **hätte** ihn anrufen **müssen**
(She should have, but didn't)

(She should have, but didn't)

Sie **hätte** ihn anrufen **sollen**
(She ought to have, but didn't)

(She ought to have, but didn't)

▶ 12.2.4 Using two modals in the same clause

- ♦ **Two modal verbs may be used in the same clause, following standard word order rules**

Das **sollte** er nicht tun **dürfen**

Ich **will** nicht nach Hause gehen
müssen

He shouldn't be allowed to do that

I don't want to have to go home

Note In a subordinate clause, a simpler construction is often preferred:

Weil ich nicht nach Hause gehen **will**, ...

▶ 12.2.5 Omitting the infinitive after a modal verb

- ♦ **The infinitive may be omitted after a modal verb in several contexts**
- a **If the infinitive is a verb of motion (usually *gehen* or *fahren*), and the sentence contains another indication of movement (an adverbial phrase or prefix)**

Ich **muss** in die Stadt

Wo **willst** du denn hin?

I've got to go into town

Where are you going?

- b **When the verb is *tun to do***

Kannst du das?

Was **kann** ich dafür?

Can you do this?

What do you want me to do about it?

- c **In some idiomatic phrases**

Was **soll** das?

Ich **kann** nicht mehr

What's this all about?

I just can't do any more

- d **Where the main verb is understood from the context**

Ich **wollte** ihr helfen, aber ich

konnte es nicht

I wanted to help her, but I couldn't

12.3 The uses of modal verbs

▶ 12.3.1 dürfen

a *may* (permission); *to be allowed to*

Darf ich hier sitzen?

May I sit here?

Er **darf** heute abend ausgehen

He's allowed to go out this evening

Ich **durfte** erst mit sechzehn rauchen

I wasn't allowed to smoke until I was sixteen

b *dürfen* + *nicht* = *must not, may not* (see also *müssen* + *nicht*)

Hier **darf** man nicht rauchen

You're not allowed to smoke here

c *may* (probability) – stronger than *können*

Das **darf** nicht wahr sein!

That just can't be true!

Da **darf** er sich nicht wundern

He shouldn't be surprised

d Polite suggestions or requests

Dürfte ich }
Darf ich } Ihren Ausweis sehen?

May I see your ID?

Der Wein **dürfte** etwas kühler sein

The wine could be a little cooler

▶ 12.3.2 können

a *can, to be able*

Man **kann** alles, wenn man nur will

Where there's a will there's a way

Man **konnte** ihn retten

They were able to rescue him

Wenn du mir **hättest** helfen

If you could have helped me ...

können¹, ...

¹ Note word order here; see 18.1.4b.

b *may, might* (possibility)

Das **könnte** stimmen

That might be true

Note German often prefers to use the adverb *vielleicht* instead of *können* in this sense:

Vielleicht hast du recht

You might be right

TIP können or dürfen?

- Colloquial English tends to use *can* in preference to *may* except in polite requests; German is more likely than English to distinguish between *können* (ability) and *dürfen* (permission):

Darf Ralf auch mit?

Can/may Ralph come too?

Man **darf** schon mit achtzehn

You may/are allowed to drive a car at eighteen, but I still can't do it

Auto fahren, aber ich **kann** es immer noch nicht

c Polite requests

Könntest du bitte hier warten? *Could you please wait here?*

d *to know, to have learned*

Er **kann** sehr gut Deutsch *He can speak German very well*

Ich **kann** dieses Lied *I know (=how to play/sing) this song*

cf. ich kenne dieses Lied *I know (=heard before) this song*

e Note that **could** means both **was able to** (ich konnte) and **would be able to** (ich könnte)

Ich **konnte** schon mit vier Jahren schwimmen *I could swim when I was only four*

Ich **könnte** schwimmen, wenn ich meine Badesachen dabei hätte *I could swim if I had my swimming things with me*

f **können** is often not used with verbs of sensation (sehen, hören) where English uses **can**

Siehst du ihn noch? *Can you still see him?*

Sch! Hörst du etwas? *Shh! Can you hear something?*

g *I couldn't help ...* is usually translated by **ich musste ...**

Ich **musste** lachen *I couldn't help laughing*

▶ 12.3.3 mögen

a *to like*

Ich **mag** keinen Wein *I don't like wine*

Ich **habe** ihn nie **gemocht** *I've never liked him*

Ich **möchte** lieber Kaffee *I'd rather have coffee*

Möchtest du nach Hause? *Would you like to go home?*

b *I would have liked* is often expressed with **hätte gern** instead of **mögen**

Ich **hätte** ihn **gern** besucht *I would have liked to have visited him*

c *may* (probability)

Das **mag** er wohl gesagt haben *He may well have said that*

Das **mag** wohl sein, aber ... *That may well be true, but ...*

Sie **mochte** etwa zwanzig sein *She was about twenty*

Es **mochte** vielleicht ein Jahr später sein, als ... *It was probably a year later, when ...*

d **möchte**: polite requests and enquiries

Möchten Sie Bier oder Wein? *Would you prefer beer or wine?*

Ich **möchte** bitte Franzi sprechen *I'd like to speak to Franzi, please*

e Concessive clauses

Wie dem auch sein **mag**, ... *However that may be, ...*

Was du auch sagen **magst**, ... *Whatever you say, ...*

▶ 12.3.4 müssen

a **must, to have to, to have got to**

- müssen implies an external obligation, while sollen has more to do with an internal sense of obligation, often a moral one

Wann musst du abfahren?	<i>When do you have to leave?</i>
Ich mus s den Artikel bis heute Abend geschrieben haben	<i>I have to have written the article by this evening</i>
Ich musste einfach lachen	<i>I couldn't help laughing</i>
Wir sollten mehr für die Dritte Welt tun, aber ich mus s leider ein neues Auto kaufen	<i>We ought to do more for the Third World, but I'm afraid I have to buy a new car</i>

b **müssen + nicht = don't have to, don't need to**

Du musst nicht alles essen!	<i>You don't have to eat everything!</i>
------------------------------------	--

Note brauchen + nicht is more common: Du brauchst nicht alles essen.

- Compare dürfen + nicht = *must not, may not*:

Du darfst nicht alles essen!	<i>You mustn't eat everything!</i>
-------------------------------------	------------------------------------

c **Likelihood or logical conclusion**

Das mus s ein Problem gewesen sein	<i>That must have been a problem</i>
So musste es ja kommen	<i>It was bound to turn out like that</i>
Es mus s in der Nacht geregnet haben	<i>It must have been raining in the night</i>

d **Konjunktiv II müsste = should, ought**

- müsste suggests likelihood, sollte suggests obligation:

So was müsste er schon wissen	<i>That's the sort of thing he's bound to know</i>
So was sollte er wissen	<i>He ought to know that</i>
- müsste is also used for (unrealisable) wishes:

Geld müsste man haben!	<i>If only I had money!</i>
-------------------------------	-----------------------------

e **English have to does not always suggest obligation**

Compare:

Ich mus s viel lernen	<i>I have to learn a lot</i>
Ich habe viel zu lernen	<i>I have a lot to learn</i>

▶ 12.3.5 sollen

a **should, ought (obligation)**

Soll ich dir helfen?	<i>Shall I help you?</i>
Ich weiß nicht, was ich tun soll	<i>I don't know what to do</i>
Das sollte man nicht tun	<i>People shouldn't do that</i>
Du sollst nicht töten	<i>Thou shalt not kill</i>
Das hättest du nicht tun sollen	<i>You shouldn't have done that</i>

b **is said to be, is supposed to be**

Er soll sehr reich sein	<i>He's supposed to be rich</i>
Sie soll es ihm gegeben haben	<i>She's said to have given it to him</i>

frisch und knackig, wie ein guter Salat sein soll	<i>fresh and crispy, just like a good salad is supposed to be</i>
Was soll denn das?	<i>What's this all about?</i>

c to be to (command)

Du sollst auf uns warten	<i>You're to wait for us</i>
Sag ihm, er soll/solle draußen warten	<i>Tell him, he's to wait outside</i>

d What was destined to happen (prediction)

Er sollte seine Familie nie wieder sehen	<i>He was never to see his family again</i>
---	---

e sollte is also a form of the conditional (see 17.2.3)

Falls er heute ankommen sollte , ...	<i>If he should/were to arrive today ...</i>
Sollte er schon heute ankommen, ...	<i>Should he/lf he were to arrive today ...</i>

▶ 12.3.6 wollen**a to want, wish, intend**

- Note that, unlike English *I will* + infinitive, German *ich will* + infinitive does not indicate future, except insofar as intentions have a future aspect to them.

Willst du dieses Buch lesen?	<i>Do you want to read this book?</i>
Ich wollte dich fragen, ob ...	<i>I wanted to ask you whether ...</i>
Was will man da schon machen?	<i>What are they intending to do about it?</i>
Was willst du damit sagen?	<i>What do you mean (by that)?</i>
Sie will nur dein Bestes	<i>She only wants the best for you</i>
Was willst du mit dem Hammer?	<i>What are you going to do with that hammer?</i>
Ich wollte , ich hätte es nie gekauft	<i>I wish I'd never bought it</i>
(wollte here is the <i>Konjunktiv II</i> form – see 17.2.3 note 2)	

b wollen + eben/gerade to be about to, to be on the point of

Wir wollten eben in die Stadt gehen	<i>We were about to go into town</i>
--	--------------------------------------

c to claim, pretend

Er will nichts gesehen haben	<i>He claims not to have seen anything</i>
Er will immer alles besser wissen	<i>He thinks he knows it all</i>
Keiner will es gewesen sein	<i>Nobody owns up to it</i>
Dies wollen Mediziner nachgewiesen haben	<i>Doctors claim to have proved this</i>

d wollen + nicht to refuse, fail

Der Motor wollte nicht anspringen	<i>The engine wouldn't start</i>
--	----------------------------------

e Polite imperatives

Wollen wir jetzt gehen?*Shall we go now?***Wollen** wir uns nicht setzen?*Shall we take a seat?*f As a synonym for **müssen must**Tomaten **wollen** viel Sonne*Tomatoes need a lot of sun*Wein genießen **will** gelernt sein*The enjoyment of wine has to be learned*g **would** means both **would** (conditional) and **wanted** (past tense). German distinguishes between these two usesIch **würde** dieses Auto nicht verkaufen*I wouldn't sell the car (if I were you)*Ich **wollte** das Auto nicht verkaufen*I wouldn't sell the car (I wanted to keep it)*

12.4 Irregular verbs

- There are only a very few verbs in German which fall into the category of irregular, or 'one-off', verbs.
- With the exception of *sein to be*, it is almost always obvious which verb an irregular form belongs to, as the stem consonants rarely change.
- No irregular verb (not even *sein*) is irregular in all forms.

In the list of the irregular verbs below, only the irregular forms are given; all other forms are regular (e.g. **haben**: ich habe, wir haben; **werden**: ich werde, wir werden; **wissen**: wir wissen, ihr wisst).

The irregular verbs			
Infinitive	Present	Simple past	Past participle
sein <i>to be</i>	ich bin wir sind du bist ihr seid er ist sie sind	ich war du warst, etc. <i>strong verb endings</i>	ist gewesen
haben <i>to have</i>	du hast er hat	ich hatte du hattest, etc. <i>weak verb endings</i>	hat gehabt
werden <i>to become</i>	du wirst er wird	ich wurde du wurdest, etc. <i>weak verb endings</i>	ist geworden
wissen ¹ <i>to know</i>	ich weiß du weißt er weiß	ich wusste du wusstest, etc. <i>weak verb endings</i>	hat gewusst
• In addition, the following verbs have certain irregularities, mostly in their past tense forms			
bringen <i>to bring</i>		ich brachte du brachtest, etc. <i>weak verb endings</i>	hat gebracht
denken <i>to think</i>		ich dachte, du dachtest, etc. <i>weak verb endings</i>	hat gedacht

The irregular verbs			
Infinitive	Present	Simple past	Past participle
gehen <i>to go</i>		ich ging, du gingst, etc. <i>strong verb endings</i>	ist gegangen
leiden <i>to suffer</i>		ich litt du littst, etc. <i>strong verb endings</i>	hat gelitten
nehmen <i>to take</i>	du nimmst er nimmt	ich nahm du nahmst, etc. <i>strong verb endings</i>	hat genommen
schneiden <i>to cut</i>		ich schnitt du schnittst, etc. <i>strong verb endings</i>	hat geschnitten
sitzen <i>to sit</i>		ich saß, du saßt, etc. <i>strong verb endings</i>	hat gesessen
stehen <i>to stand</i>		ich stand, du standst, etc. <i>strong verb endings</i>	hat gestanden
tun <i>to do</i>	ich tue wir tun du tust ihr tut er tut sie tun	ich tat, du tatst, etc. <i>strong verb endings</i>	hat getan
ziehen <i>to pull, move</i>		ich zog, du zogst, etc. <i>strong verb endings</i>	hat/ist gezogen

¹ **wissen** works in the same way as a modal verb, which it in fact once was (and its French equivalent *savoir* still is).

12.5 Verbs with different transitive and intransitive forms

a Most verbs can be used transitively (i.e. with a direct object) or intransitively (i.e. without a direct object) with no change of form

Transitive:	Ich lese eine Zeitung	<i>I'm reading a paper</i>
Intransitive:	Ich lese im Wartezimmer	<i>I'm reading in the waiting room</i>

b Some verbs, however, have different but related transitive and intransitive forms

• All the verbs in the list below are weak unless stated (the strong vowel changes are given in brackets).

	Intransitive	Transitive
answer	antworten – (<i>give an</i>) answer	beantworten – answer (<i>letter, question</i>)
blind	erblinden – <i>go blind</i>	blenden – <i>blind, dazzle</i>
change	sich ändern	ändern

	Intransitive	Transitive
climb	steigen (ei-ie-ie) – <i>climb, rise</i>	besteigen (ei-ie-ie) – <i>climb (hill)</i>
continue	fortfahren (ä-u-a)	fortsetzen – <i>continue</i>
drop/fall	fallen (ä-ie-a)	fallen lassen (ä-ie-a) – <i>to drop something</i>
drown	ertrinken (i-a-u)	ertränken – <i>drown</i>
fall/fell	fallen (ä-ie-a) – <i>fall, drop</i>	fällen – <i>fell (tree)</i>
frighten	erschrecken (i-a-o) – <i>be frightened</i>	erschrecken – <i>frighten</i>
hang	hängen (ä-i-a)	hängen
lay/lie	liegen (ie-a-e) – <i>lie, be lying</i>	legen – <i>lay / sich hinlegen – to lie down</i>
open	sich öffnen – <i>open</i>	öffnen – <i>open</i>
remember/ remind	sich erinnern an – <i>remember</i>	erinnern – <i>to remind</i>
sell	sich verkaufen	verkaufen
sink/lower	sinken (i-a-u) – <i>sink, drop</i>	senken – <i>lower / versenken – to sink (ship)</i>
sit/set/seat	setzen – <i>place / sich hinsetzen – to sit down</i>	sitzen (irreg) – <i>sit, be sitting</i>
stand	stellen	stehen
wake	aufwachen – <i>wake up</i>	wecken – <i>to wake (s.o.)</i>

• Examples

Intransitive:	„Ich weiß nicht“, antwortete er	<i>'I don't know', he answered</i>
Transitive:	Sie hat meinen Brief nicht beantwortet	<i>She didn't answer my letter</i>
Intransitive:	Das Bild hing an der Wand	<i>The picture hung on the wall</i>
Transitive:	Sie hängte das Bild an die Wand	<i>She hung the picture on the wall</i>
Intransitive:	Ich bin um 7 aufgewacht	<i>I woke up at 7 o'clock</i>
Transitive:	Er weckte mich um 7 Uhr.	<i>He woke me up at 7 o'clock</i>
Intransitive:	Bücher lagen überall auf dem Boden	<i>Books were lying all over the floor</i>
Transitive:	Sie legte sich auf das Bett (hin)	<i>She lay down on the bed</i>
Intransitive:	Das Buch verkauft sich gut	<i>The book is selling well</i>
Transitive:	Ich verkaufe mein Fahrrad	<i>I'm selling my bicycle</i>

c Note also the following pairs of verbs

sich bewegen to <i>move (oneself)</i>	bewegen <i>move (sthg), induce</i>
schaffen (<i>weak</i>) to <i>manage to do</i>	schaffen (a-u-a) to <i>create</i>
springen (i-a-u) to <i>jump</i>	sprengen to <i>blow up</i>
weichen (ei-i-i) <i>yield, give way</i>	weichen to <i>soak</i>

12.6 Impersonal verbs

- Impersonal verbs are verbs which are typically used in the third person only – usually the singular, but sometimes the plural – rather than in the full range of forms. They often concern the weather (es regnet, es friert, der Schnee taut – *the snow is melting*), or health („Wie geht es Ihnen?“ – „Es ist mir schlecht“).

▶ 12.6.1 Impersonal **sein** and **werden** constructions

a Impersonal **sein** and **werden** phrases can be used in two ways

- ♦ es + ist/wird + dative object + adjective
- ♦ Dative object + ist/wird + adjective (es omitted)

This is because es is a 'placeholder', i.e. it occupies first position to ensure that the verb comes second; if the dative object is in first position, es is no longer required.

es ist mir übel	mir ist übel	<i>I feel ill</i>
es ist ihr warm/kalt	ihr ist warm/kalt	<i>she feels hot/cold</i>
es ist ihm schwindelig	ihm ist schwindelig	<i>he's dizzy</i>
es wurde mir kalt	mir wurde kalt	<i>I began to feel cold</i>

▶ 12.6.2 Other impersonal constructions

- ♦ Other impersonal constructions usually contain **es** or a subject in the **nominative**

es ekelt mich vor +dat. du ekelst mich	<i>I'm disgusted at ... you disgust me</i>
es fällt mir ein , dass ... } mir fällt ein, dass ... }	<i>it occurs to me that ...</i>
es fällt mir auf , dass ...	<i>it strikes me that ...</i>
es fehlt mir an +dat.	<i>I'm short of</i>
es gefällt mir diese Musik gefällt mir Bücher gefallen mir	<i>I like it I like this music I like books</i>
es geht Geht das?	<i>it's OK/not bad How's it going?/Everything OK?</i>
es geht ihm gut/schlecht	<i>he's fine/not well</i>
es geht um +acc.	<i>it's about, it concerns</i>
es gelingt mir, ... zu tun	<i>I succeed in doing sth</i>
es ist mir gelungen	<i>I succeeded</i>
es geschieht dir recht	<i>it serves you right</i>
es graut mir vor + dat. } mir graut vor ... }	<i>I have a horror of ...</i>
es handelt von + dat.	<i>it's on the subject of</i>
es heißt , dass ...	<i>it's said that ...</i>
es klingelte an der Tür	<i>the doorbell rang</i>
es klopfte an der Tür	<i>there was a knock at the door</i>
es kommt auf +acc. an es kommt darauf an, was ...	<i>it depends on ... it all depends on what ...</i>
es liegt daran, dass ...	<i>It's due to the fact that ...</i>
es macht nichts	<i>it doesn't matter</i>
es schaudert mich vor + dat. } mich schaudert vor ... }	<i>I shudder at ...</i>
es schmeckt mir Schokolade schmeckt mir	<i>it tastes good I like the taste of chocolate</i>
es tut mir leid sie tun mir leid	<i>I'm sorry I'm sorry for them</i>
es wundert mich, dass ...	<i>I'm surprised that ...</i>
es zieht	<i>it's draughty</i>

▶ 12.6.3 **es gibt, es ist/es sind** *there is/are*

- While there is in practice a certain amount of overlap in the use of **es gibt** and **es ist/es sind**, the following rules apply in almost all instances.

a **es gibt** indicates the *existence* of things or people in general

- It is always followed by the accusative:

Es gibt viele Leute, die das glauben	<i>There are many people who believe that</i>
In Köln gibt es zwölf romanische Kirchen	<i>In Cologne there are twelve Romanesque churches</i>
Es gab früher zwei Kinos in der Stadt	<i>There used to be two cinemas in the town</i>
Was gibt es in Berlin zu sehen?	<i>What is there to see in Berlin?</i>
Das gibt's doch nicht!	<i>I don't believe it! (lit: such things don't exist!)</i>

b **es gibt** is also used for events and occurrences

- This is especially the case when the speaker has in mind the unusual nature or the consequences of the event, or when referring to the future:

Plötzlich gab es einen lauten Knall	<i>Suddenly there was a loud crash</i>
Morgen gibt es noch mehr Schnee	<i>Tomorrow there will be more snow</i>
Wenn ich spät nach Hause komme, gibt es immer Streit mit meinen Eltern	<i>When I arrive home late, there is always an argument with my parents</i>

c **es ist** and **es sind** indicate the presence of things or people in a more limited place or for a temporary period

- These constructions are followed by the nominative:

Es ist ein Paket für dich da	<i>There's a parcel for you</i>
Es sind zwei Männer an der Tür	<i>There are two men at the door</i>
Es war niemand da, der mir helfen konnte	<i>There was no one there who could help me</i>

Note **es** is omitted with **ist/sind** if it is not in the initial position in the sentence:

Niemand **war** da, der mir helfen konnte
Zwei Männer **sind** an der Tür

▶ **TIP** Avoiding **es gibt** and **es ist/es sind**

- German frequently prefers to use neither **es gibt** nor **es ist/es sind**, and it is easy for an English-speaker to overuse these constructions. Instead, a more specific verb is often used. Compare the following sentences with the forms above:

Zwei Männer **stehen** an der Tür
Die Stadt **hatte** früher zwei Kinos
Viele Leute **glauben** das
Plötzlich **hörte** man einen lauten Knall
Ich **bekomme** immer Streit mit meinen Eltern

12.7 Reflexive verbs

▶ 12.7.1 Reflexive verbs – an outline

a Reflexive verbs do not exist in the same way in English as they do in German

The closest equivalent is the use of e.g. *myself, yourself* in constructions such as

Let yourself in and make yourself at home!
I'm going to buy myself a new car

b Where German uses a reflexive verb English usually uses a normal intransitive verb

Die Tür öffnete sich	<i>The door opened</i>
Wo treffen wir uns ?	<i>Where shall we meet?</i>
Ich will mich ausruhen	<i>I want to rest</i>
Ich frage mich , ob ...	<i>I wonder if ...</i>
Das hört sich aber schön an	<i>That sounds beautiful</i>

♦ Occasionally, English uses a passive construction:

Das Buch verkauft sich gut	<i>The book is selling well</i>
Das Problem erklärt sich leicht	<i>The problem is easily explained</i>

c There are two forms of the reflexive in German

♦ The pronoun is in the accusative as the direct object of the verb; see 12.7.2 below. (This is much the most common of the two):

Ich wasche mich	<i>I wash/have a wash</i>
Er zieht sich an	<i>He gets dressed/is getting dressed</i>

♦ The pronoun is in the dative as the indirect object of the verb; see 12.7.3 below. (These pronouns differ from the accusative only in the *ich* and *du* forms):

Ich wasche mir die Hände	<i>I wash my hands</i>
Wann hast du dir das Bein gebrochen?	<i>When did you break your leg?</i>

▶ 12.7.2 The pronoun **sich**

♦ With most pronouns there is no possibility of confusion; e.g. *dich* (or *dir*) refer back to *du*; *uns* refers back to *wir*. Only with the third person pronouns (singular *er, sie, es*, plural *sie, Sie*) is a special pronoun, *sich*, needed to show that the verb refers to *himself, herself, itself, themselves, yourself/yourself*.

Wenn ein Kind sehr jung ist, müssen seine Eltern es anziehen, bis es sich selbst anziehen kann	<i>When a child is very young, it must be dressed by its parents until it can dress itself</i>
--	--

▶ 12.7.3 Accusative reflexive

♦ The verb parts of reflexive verbs are identical to normal weak and strong verbs in all forms and all tenses

Only the fact that they have a reflexive pronoun (a pronoun which refers to the same person or thing as the subject) makes them any different.

Accusative reflexive verbs	
ich wasche mich	wir waschen uns
du wäschst dich	ihr wascht euch
er/sie/es wäscht sich	sie/Sie waschen sich
Perfect tense: ich habe mich gewaschen	
Simple past tense: ich wusch mich	
Future tense: ich werde mich waschen	

a Some verbs are always reflexive

Common examples:

sich auskennen	<i>to know one's way around</i>	sich bewerben um	<i>to apply for</i>
sich erholen	<i>to recover</i>	sich ereignen	<i>to occur, happen</i>
sich bedanken	<i>to thank</i>	sich erkälten	<i>to catch cold</i>
sich beeilen	<i>to hurry</i>	sich irren	<i>to be mistaken</i>
sich befinden	<i>to be situated</i>	sich verabschieden	<i>to say goodbye</i>
sich benehmen	<i>to behave</i>	sich verlieben in	<i>to fall in love</i>
sich beschweren	<i>to complain</i>	sich weigern	<i>to refuse</i>

Ich habe **mich** von ihm verabschiedet
 Sie haben **sich** ineinander verliebt
 Er weigerte **sich**, mir zu helfen
 Benimm **dich**!

I said goodbye to him
They fell in love with one another
He refused to help me
Behave yourself!

b Many other verbs are used reflexively when the object and subject refer to the same thing or person, but are otherwise used as normal transitive verbs

Refl.:	Er wäscht sich	<i>He washes/has a wash</i>
Non-refl.:	Er wäscht das Auto	<i>He washes the car</i>
Refl.:	Ich interessiere mich für Musik	<i>I'm interested in music</i>
Non-refl.:	Diese Musik interessiert mich	<i>This music interests me</i>
Refl.:	Erinnerst du dich daran, wie wir ...?	<i>Do you remember how we ...?</i>
Non-refl.:	Er erinnert mich an meinen Bruder	<i>He reminds me of my brother</i>

- Examples of other verbs that work in the same way (note that the two forms may be expressed in slightly different ways in English):

Non-reflexive

ärgern	<i>to annoy</i>
beherrschen	<i>to master (e.g. language)</i>
beruhigen	<i>to calm s.o.</i>
beschäftigen	<i>to employ</i>
entschuldigen	<i>to excuse</i>
fürchten	<i>to fear sthg</i>
hinlegen	<i>to lay down</i>
langweilen	<i>to bore</i>
treffen	<i>to meet (unexpectedly)</i>
verstehen	<i>to understand</i>

Reflexive

sich ärgern	<i>to get annoyed</i>
sich beherrschen	<i>to control oneself</i>
sich beruhigen	<i>to calm down</i>
sich beschäftigen	<i>to deal with</i>
sich entschuldigen	<i>to apologise</i>
sich fürchten	<i>to be frightened</i>
sich hinlegen	<i>to lie down</i>
sich langweilen	<i>to be/get bored</i>
sich treffen mit	<i>to meet (arranged)</i>
sich verstehen mit	<i>to get on with</i>

▶ 12.7.4 Dative reflexive

Dative reflexive verbs

ich wasche mir die Hände	wir waschen uns die Hände
du wäschst dir die Hände	ihr wascht euch die Hände
er/sie/es wäscht sich die Hände	sie/Sie waschen sich die Hände

Perfect tense: ich habe **mir** die Hände gewaschen

Simple past tense: ich wusch **mir** die Hände

Future tense: ich werde **mir** die Hände waschen

Note Only the dative pronouns in the first and second person singular differ in form from the accusative pronouns.

There are three types of construction in which the reflexive pronoun may be found in the dative. All are considered to be reflexive because the object pronoun refers back to the subject:

a Indirect object of the verb (and therefore automatically in the dative); this is often used when referring to parts of the body

Ich wasche mir das Gesicht	<i>I wash my face</i>
Er hat sich den Arm gebrochen	<i>He's broken his arm</i>
Ich kann mir kein neues Auto leisten	<i>I can't afford a new car</i>
Hast du dir das Schloss angesehen?	<i>Have you had a look at the castle?</i>
Sie muss sich einen Wagen kaufen	<i>She's got to buy (herself) a new car</i>

b Verbs that take a dative object (see 1.1.5), which here is a reflexive pronoun

Das lasse ich mir nicht gefallen	<i>I won't stand for it</i>
Ich wusste mir nicht zu helfen	<i>I didn't know what to do</i>
Ich erlaube mir ein Glas Wein pro Tag	<i>I allow myself one glass of wine a day</i>
Ich komme mir dumm vor	<i>I feel stupid</i>

c Verbs where the dative reflexive pronoun is a fixed part of the construction

Das habe ich mir nur eingebildet .	<i>I only imagined it (i.e. wrongly)</i>
Stell dir vor , du gewinnst in der Lotterie!	<i>Just imagine you win the lottery!</i>
Ich verbitte mir dieses Benehmen!	<i>I won't tolerate this behaviour!</i>
Ich habe mir vorgenommen , das Rauchen aufzugeben	<i>I intend to give up smoking</i>

▶ 12.7.5 Other translations of the reflexive pronoun

a to oneself is expressed in German by the construction vor sich hin

Er murmelte vor sich hin	<i>He was mumbling to himself</i>
Singst du immer vor dich hin , wenn du arbeitest?	<i>Do you always sing to yourself when you're working?</i>

b one another may also be rendered by the reflexive pronoun (see 4.2.3)

Sie lieben sich	<i>They love one another</i>
Hasst ihr euch ?	<i>Do you hate each other?</i>
Wir kennen uns seit Jahren	<i>We've known one another for years</i>
Damals hat man sich geholfen	<i>People used to help one another in those days</i>

▶ 12.7.6 Impersonal constructions with reflexive verbs

- Reflexive verbs may also be used in certain impersonal constructions. These may also be expressed with können

Mit einem Kuli schreibt es sich schnell	<i>It's fast writing with a ball-pen</i>
(or Mit einem Kuli kann man schnell schreiben)	
Hier wohnt es sich schön	<i>This is a good place to live</i>
Es fährt sich bequem in so einem Wagen	<i>Driving a car like this is comfortable</i>

Verbs with prepositional objects or unexpected cases

OVERVIEW

There are many differences between English and German from verb to verb – one language may have a preposition before the object, or the German verb may use a separable prefix instead. Here are a few examples:

Ich bezahle das Essen	<i>I'm paying for the meal</i>
Er trat in das Zimmer ein	<i>He entered the room</i>
Schrei mich nicht so an !	<i>Don't shout at me like that!</i>
Ich will seine Aussage nicht kommentieren	<i>I don't want to comment on his statement</i>

This chapter examines how German verbs relate to their objects.

► Verbs + prepositions

- Verbs are often connected to an object by a preposition:

*He waited **for** me*
*She is interested **in** science*

- In German, the preposition which goes with a particular verb is often different from what an English-speaker might expect; both it and the case it takes must be learned. The German for the sentences above would be

Er wartete **auf** mich
 Sie interessiert sich **für** Naturwissenschaften

- As well as noun phrases or pronouns, the prepositional object may be, for instance, a subordinate or infinitive clause. The preposition becomes a **prepositional adverb**, made up from da(r)- + the preposition:

Es kommt darauf an, was sie dazu sagen wird	<i>It all depends on what she's going to say about it</i>
Sie hörte damit auf, ihn jeden Tag anzurufen	<i>She stopped phoning him every day</i>

Verbs + cases other than the accusative

The direct object of a transitive verb is usually in the accusative, and its indirect object is usually in the dative. However, a few verbs vary from this pattern:

- ♦ verbs followed by the dative
- ♦ verbs followed by the genitive
- ♦ verbs where both objects are in the accusative

13.1 Verbs followed by prepositional objects

- ♦ The lists in sections 13.1.1 to 13.1.14 contain the commonest verbs used with particular prepositions.
- ♦ See also section 13.2 for what happens when the preposition is followed by something other than a noun phrase or pronoun.

TIP Accusative or dative with 'double case' prepositions?

- ♦ If in doubt as to whether prepositional objects such as *an*, *auf*, *in* should be followed by the accusative or the dative, remember that the majority govern the accusative.

▶ 13.1.1 an

a Followed by the accusative; many of these verbs relate to mental processes

denken an	<i>to think of</i>
erinnern an	<i>to remind of</i>
sich erinnern an	<i>to remember</i>
sich gewöhnen an	<i>to get used to</i>
glauben an	<i>to believe in (sthg)</i>
grenzen an	<i>to border on</i>
schreiben an	<i>to write to</i>
sich wenden an	<i>to turn to</i>

Erinnerst du dich an ihn?	<i>Do you remember him?</i>
Ich denke oft an meine Freundin	<i>I often think about my girlfriend</i>
Sie gewöhnt sich langsam daran , im Ausland zu leben	<i>She's gradually getting used to living abroad</i>

b Followed by the dative

arbeiten an	<i>to work at</i>
erkennen an	<i>to recognise by</i>
erkranken an	<i>to fall ill with</i>
sich freuen an ¹	<i>to take pleasure in</i>
hindern an	<i>to prevent from</i>
leiden an	<i>to suffer from</i>
sterben an	<i>to die of (illness)</i>
teilnehmen an	<i>to take part in</i>

vorbeigehen an	<i>to go/walk past</i>
zweifeln an	<i>to doubt</i>

¹See also sich freuen auf and sich freuen über.

Sie ist an einem Herzinfarkt gestorben	<i>She died of a heart attack</i>
Er ging an mir vorbei	<i>He walked past me</i>

▶ 13.1.2 auf

a Followed by the **accusative** (i.e. almost all verbs with auf)

achten auf	<i>to pay attention to</i>
ankommen auf	<i>to depend on</i>
antworten auf	<i>to answer</i>
aufpassen auf	<i>to look after</i>
sich beziehen auf	<i>to refer to</i>
blicken auf	<i>to look at</i>
sich freuen auf ¹	<i>to look forward to</i>
hinweisen auf	<i>to point sthg out to s.o.</i>
hoffen auf	<i>to hope for</i>
kommen auf	<i>to think of</i>
sich konzentrieren auf	<i>to concentrate on</i>
reagieren auf	<i>to react to</i>
rechnen auf	<i>to count on</i>
schießen auf	<i>to shoot at</i>
sehen auf	<i>to look at</i>
sich spezialisieren auf	<i>to specialise in</i>
sich verlassen auf	<i>to rely on</i>
verzichten auf	<i>to do without</i>
warten auf	<i>to wait for</i>
zeigen auf	<i>to point to/at</i>
zukommen auf	<i>to come up to (s.o.)</i>
zurückkommen auf	<i>to return to (a matter)</i>

¹See also ich freuen an and sich freuen über.

Ich warte auf den Bus	<i>I'm waiting for the bus</i>
Sie wies uns auf die Gefahr hin	<i>She pointed out the danger to us</i>
Wie kommst du auf diese Idee?	<i>What made you think of that idea?</i>
„Kommt er?“ „ Darauf kannst du dich verlassen“	<i>'Will he come?' 'You can depend on it'</i>

b Followed by the **dative**

basieren auf	<i>to be based on</i>
beharren auf	<i>to insist on</i>
bestehen auf ¹	<i>to insist on</i>

¹See also bestehen aus.

Sie beharrt auf ihrem Standpunkt	<i>She insists on her point of view</i>
---	---

▶ 13.1.3 aus

♦ Followed by the **dative**

bestehen aus¹
entstehen aus
kommen aus
stammen aus
übersetzen aus
werden aus

to consist of
to arise from
to come from
to come/date/derive from
to translate from
to become of

¹See also bestehen auf + **dative**.

Was ist **aus** ihm geworden?
Diese Münze stammt **aus** dem 18.
Jahrhundert

What became of him?
This coin dates from the
eighteenth century

▶ 13.1.4 bei

♦ Followed by the **dative**

sich bedanken bei
sich entschuldigen bei
helfen bei
nehmen bei
wohnen bei

to thank s.o.
to apologise to
to help with
to take by (e.g. the hand)
to live with (i.e. at s.o.'s place)

Er wohnt immer noch **bei** seinen
Eltern
Sie hilft mir **bei** meiner Arbeit

He still lives with his parents
She's helping me with my work

▶ 13.1.5 für

♦ Followed by the **accusative**

sich begeistern für
danken für
sich entscheiden für
gelten für
halten für
sich interessieren für
sich schämen für
sorgen für¹

to be enthusiastic about
to thank for
to decide on
to apply to/be applicable to
to consider to be
to be interested in
to be ashamed of
to look after

¹See also sich sorgen um.

Das Gesetz gilt **für** alle
Wir halten ihn **für** intelligent
Jetzt schämt sie sich **dafür**, dass
sie so etwas gesagt hat

The law applies to everyone
We think he's intelligent
Now she's ashamed of having said
that

▶ 13.1.6 in

a Usually followed by the **accusative**

ausbrechen in
einbrechen in
einsteigen in
eintreten in
sich ergeben in

to burst into
to break into, burgle
to get onto, in (e.g. bus, car)
to enter (e.g. room)
to resign o.s. to

geraten in	<i>to get into (difficulties)</i>
sich mischen in	<i>to get involved in</i>
übersetzen in	<i>to translate into</i>
sich verlieben in	<i>to fall in love with</i>
sich vertiefen in	<i>to become engrossed in</i>
(sich) verwandeln in	<i>to change, turn into</i>

Sie stieg in den Bus ein	<i>She got on the bus</i>
Er verliebte sich in das Mädchen	<i>He fell in love with the girl</i>

b Followed by the dative

ankommen in	<i>to arrive in, at</i>
sich irren in	<i>to be mistaken about</i>
sich täuschen in	<i>to be wrong about</i>

Wir kamen in der nächsten Stadt an	<i>We arrived in the next town</i>
Er täuscht sich in seiner Erinnerung	<i>His memory is at fault</i>

▶ **13.1.7 mit**♦ **Followed by the dative**

sich abfinden mit	<i>to be satisfied with</i>
anfangen mit	<i>to start sthg</i>
aufhören mit	<i>to stop doing sthg</i>
sich beschäftigen mit	<i>to occupy o.s. with</i>
handeln mit	<i>to deal, trade in</i>
nicken mit	<i>to nod</i>
rechnen mit	<i>to reckon on</i>
sprechen mit	<i>to speak, talk to</i>
telefonieren mit	<i>to phone</i>
übereinstimmen mit	<i>to agree with</i>
sich unterhalten mit	<i>to converse with</i>
verbinden mit	<i>to connect to, with</i>
vergleichen mit	<i>to compare with</i>
sich verheiraten mit	<i>to marry</i>
versehen mit	<i>to provide with</i>

Hör mit dem Lärm auf!	<i>Stop that noise!</i>
Hör bitte damit auf!	<i>Please stop doing that!</i>
Sie nickte mit dem Kopf	<i>She nodded (her head)</i>

▶ **13.1.8 nach**♦ **Followed by the dative; many of these verbs relate to perception**

aussehen nach	<i>to look like (e.g. rain)</i>
sich erkundigen nach	<i>to enquire about</i>
fragen nach	<i>to enquire about, ask after</i>
graben nach	<i>to dig for</i>
greifen nach	<i>to clutch at, grab at</i>

riechen nach	<i>to smell of</i>
rufen nach	<i>to call for s.o.</i>
schicken nach	<i>to send for</i>
schmecken nach	<i>to taste of</i>
sich sehnen nach	<i>to long for</i>
stinken nach	<i>to smell of</i>
streben nach	<i>to strive for</i>
suchen nach	<i>to look for</i>
sich umsehen nach	<i>to look around for</i>
urteilen nach	<i>to judge by</i>
verlangen nach	<i>to long for</i>
Es sieht nach Regen aus	<i>It looks like rain</i>
Sie erkundigte sich nach dem Weg	<i>She asked the way</i>
Ich sehne mich danach , sie wiederzusehen	<i>I'm longing to see her again</i>

▶ 13.1.9 über

♦ With verbs, always followed by the accusative

sich ärgern über	<i>to get annoyed about</i>
sich beklagen über	<i>to complain about</i>
erfahren über	<i>to learn, find out about</i>
sich freuen über ¹	<i>to be pleased, happy about</i>
herrschen über	<i>to rule over</i>
lachen über	<i>to laugh about</i>
nachdenken über	<i>to think over</i>
reden über	<i>to talk about</i>
schimpfen über	<i>to grumble about</i>
schreiben über	<i>to write about</i>
sprechen über	<i>to speak about</i>
streiten über	<i>to argue about</i>
sich streiten über	<i>to quarrel about</i>
sich täuschen über	<i>to be mistaken about</i>
sich unterhalten über	<i>to converse about</i>
verfügen über	<i>to have at one's disposal</i>
sich wundern über	<i>to be surprised at</i>

¹See also sich freuen an, sich freuen auf.

Sie hat sich bei dem Manager über ihr Zimmer beklagt	<i>She complained to the manager about her room</i>
Er verfügt über viel Geld	<i>He has a lot of money</i>
Wir müssen darüber reden, wie wir das ohne sie schaffen	<i>We must talk about how we're going to manage that without them</i>

▶ 13.1.10 um

♦ Followed by the accusative

sich bemühen um	<i>to try to help</i>
beneiden um	<i>to envy s.o. sth</i>
sich bewerben um	<i>to apply for</i>
bitten um	<i>to ask for, request</i>
bringen um	<i>to deprive, defraud of</i>

es geht um	<i>it's about, to do with</i>
sich handeln um	<i>to be a question/matter of</i>
kommen um	<i>to lose, be deprived of</i>
sich kümmern um	<i>to worry about</i>
ringen um	<i>to struggle for</i>
Ich beneide ihn um sein Vermögen	<i>I envy him his fortune</i>
Sie hat sich um die Stelle beworben	<i>She applied for the job</i>
Es handelt sich darum , eine Lösung zu finden	<i>It's a question of finding a solution</i>

▶ 13.1.11 von

♦ Followed by the dative

abhängen von	<i>to rely on</i>
abraten von	<i>to advise against</i>
denken von	<i>to think, have an opinion about</i>
erzählen von	<i>to tell about</i>
halten von	<i>to think of, have an opinion about</i>
leben von	<i>to live on</i>
sagen von	<i>to say/tell about</i>
sprechen von	<i>to speak about</i>
träumen von	<i>to dream about</i>
überzeugen von	<i>to convince of</i>
verstehen von	<i>to understand about</i>
weichen von	<i>to budge from</i>
wimmeln von	<i>to be teeming with</i>
wissen von	<i>to know about</i>
Was hältst du von ihm?	<i>What do you think of him?</i>
Was hältst du davon , dass wir sie einfach anrufen?	<i>What do you think of the idea of just phoning them up?</i>
Von seinem Gehalt kann er nicht leben	<i>He can't live on his salary</i>

▶ 13.1.12 vor

♦ Always followed by the dative when used with verbs. These verbs are often to do with (physical) reactions to, or protecting from, something

Angst haben vor	<i>to be frightened of</i>
sich fürchten vor	<i>to be frightened of</i>
fliehen vor	<i>to flee from</i>
retten vor	<i>to save from</i>
sich schämen vor	<i>to be ashamed of</i>
schützen vor	<i>to protect from</i>
sterben vor	<i>to die of</i>
(sich) verbergen vor	<i>to hide, conceal (o.s.) from</i>
verstecken vor	<i>to hide from</i>
warnen vor	<i>to warn of</i>

weichen vor
weinen vor
zittern vor

*to give way to
to weep with/for
to shake, shiver with*

Sie schämt sich **vor** ihrer Familie
Er weinte **vor** Freude
Der Tod? Ich habe keine Angst
davor!

*She's ashamed of her family
He was weeping with joy
Death? I'm not frightened of it!*

▶ 13.1.13 wegen

♦ Followed by the genitive

loben wegen
tadeln wegen
schelten wegen
Man lobte sie **wegen** ihres Mutes
Sie tadelte mich **wegen** meiner
Faulheit

*to praise for
to criticise, rebuke for
to scold for
She was praised for her courage
She criticised me for my laziness*

▶ 13.1.14 zu

♦ Followed by the dative

beitragen zu
bestimmen zu
brauchen zu
bringen zu
dienen zu
einladen zu
führen zu
gehören zu
gratulieren zu
machen zu
meinen zu
neigen zu
passen zu
provozieren zu
raten zu
treiben zu
überreden zu
verführen zu
wählen zu
sich wenden zu
zwingen zu

*to contribute to
to designate as, destine for
to need for (a purpose)
to achieve sthg.
to serve/be used as
to invite to
to lead to
to belong to, be part of
to congratulate on
to make
to think of
to tend to
to match, go with
to provoke to
to advise
to drive/force to
to persuade to
to seduce to
to elect as
to turn round to
to force to*

Sie hat es bis **zum** Chef gebracht
Kann ich dich **zu** einem Kaffee
überreden?
Ich fühle mich **dazu** gezwungen,
ihn finanziell zu unterstützen
Was meinst du **dazu**?

*She got to be boss
Can I persuade you to have a cup
of coffee?
I feel obliged to support him
financially
What do you think about it?*

13.2 Prepositional adverbs

▶ 13.2.1 Prepositional adverb: da(r)- + preposition

- Normally, prepositions are followed by noun phrases or pronouns. When they are followed by an infinitive clause or subordinate clause instead, the preposition changes from e.g. an, auf, zu to daran, darauf, dazu by the addition of the prefix **da(r)-**. This form is called a **prepositional adverb**.
- The clause which follows the main clause containing daran, darauf, etc. may be:
 - **zu** + an **infinitive clause** – if the subject applies to both clauses
 - a **subordinate clause** beginning with e.g. **dass** – if the subject of each clause is different, or if the writer repeats the subject.

The second example in each pair below uses dass as it has a different subject in each clause, except in the last example:

Ich freue mich darauf , Köln zu besuchen	<i>I'm looking forward to visiting Cologne</i>
But ..., dass du uns besuchst	<i>...to you visiting us</i>
Sie hat sich daran gewöhnt, ihn nur ab und zu zu sehen	<i>She got used to seeing him only occasionally</i>
But ..., dass er sie nie besuchte	<i>... that he never visited her</i>
Er entschuldigte sich dafür , so spät angekommen zu sein	<i>He apologised for having arrived so late</i>
Or ..., dass er so spät angekommen war	<i>... that he had arrived so late</i>

Note As an alternative to the subordinate clause beginning with e.g. dass, a simple object may often be used:

Ich freue mich auf deinen Besuch.
Er entschuldigte sich für seine späte Ankunft

The prepositional adverb is also used in place of a preposition + pronoun (see 4.1.4).

▶ 13.2.2 Omission of the prepositional adverb

- **In colloquial German, the prepositional adverb may often be omitted; this is most common with verbs used with zu**

Er riet mir (**dazu**), ihn anzurufen *He advised me to phone him up*

13.3 Verbs used with unexpected cases

Most transitive verbs take an object in the accusative case. There are a few, however, which take a dative or even a genitive object, or which are followed by two objects in the accusative, instead of a direct (accusative) and an indirect (dative) object.

▶ 13.3.1 Verbs which take a dative object

- a These verbs govern the dative in German**

Common examples:

antworten	<i>to answer</i>
begegnen	<i>to meet (by chance)</i>
beistehen ¹	<i>to support</i>

beitreten ¹	to join
danken	to thank
drohen	to threaten
einfallen	to occur (idea)
entkommen ¹	to escape
entgegenkommen ¹	to accommodate (requests)
folgen	to follow
gehorchen	to obey
gehören	to belong to
geschehen	to happen
glauben	to believe
gratulieren	to congratulate
helfen	to help
imponieren	to impress
nachlaufen ¹	to run after
sich nähern	to approach
nutzen	to be of use
passen	to suit
schaden	to harm
trauen	to trust
vertrauen	to trust
wehtun	to hurt
widersprechen ¹	to contradict
widerstehen ¹	to resist
zuhören ¹	to listen
zusehen ¹	to watch
zustimmen ¹	to agree

¹Verbs with the prefixes **bei-**, **entgegen-**, **nach-**, **wider-** and **zu-** always take the dative, as do some with the prefix **ent-** when the verb signifies escape.

Ich glaube dir kein Wort	<i>I don't believe a word you say</i>
Diese Musik gefällt meinem Vater gut, aber nicht mir	<i>My father really likes this music but I don't</i>
Er antwortete mir kurz	<i>He answered me briefly</i>
Ich bin ihm in der Stadt begegnet	<i>I met him in town</i>
Gehört dir dieser Wagen?	<i>Does this car belong to you?</i>
Kann ich ihnen helfen?	<i>Can I help you?</i>
Du sollst mir endlich zuhören!	<i>Now you listen to me!</i>

b Note also these verbs, several impersonal, where the dative object in German is the subject in English

fehlen	<i>to be short of</i>	leidtun	<i>to feel sorry (for)</i>
gefallen	<i>to please (= to like)</i>	schmecken	<i>to taste</i>
gelingen	<i>to succeed</i>		
Du fehlst mir !		<i>I'm missing you!</i>	
Mir fehlt das Geld für ein Auto		<i>I haven't got enough money for a car</i>	
Diese Schuhe gefallen mir		<i>I like these shoes</i>	
Es ist ihm gelungen, sie zu finden		<i>He succeeded in finding her</i>	
Er tut mir Leid		<i>I'm sorry for him</i>	
Der Wein schmeckt mir		<i>I like this wine</i>	
Lass es dir schmecken!		<i>Enjoy it!</i>	

See also 12.6 (impersonal verbs) and 12.7.3 (dative reflexive pronouns).

▶ 13.3.2 Verbs which take a dative and an accusative object

Many verbs take not only a direct object in the accusative but also an indirect object in the dative. For obvious reasons, many of the verbs relate to giving and taking, or to communicating something to someone.

Note The difference between direct and indirect objects is explained in TIP, p. 8.

The following list contains a few examples:

anbieten	<i>to offer</i>
beibringen	<i>to teach</i>
bringen	<i>to bring</i>
empfehlen	<i>to recommend</i>
erklären	<i>to explain</i>
erlauben	<i>to allow, permit</i>
erzählen	<i>to tell, relate</i>
geben	<i>to give</i>
leihen	<i>to lend</i>
mitteilen	<i>to inform of</i>
nehmen	<i>to take (away)</i>
raten	<i>to advise</i>
reichen	<i>to pass</i>
sagen	<i>to say</i>
schicken	<i>to send</i>
schreiben	<i>to write</i>
stehlen	<i>to steal, rob</i>
verkaufen	<i>to sell</i>
versprechen	<i>to promise</i>
vorlesen	<i>to read aloud</i>
vorstellen	<i>to introduce</i>
wünschen	<i>to wish</i>
zeigen	<i>to show</i>

Er erklärte mir das Problem	<i>He explained the problem to me</i>
Sie hat ihrem Kind Schwimmen beigebracht	<i>She taught her child to swim</i>
Ich gab ihr ein tolles Geschenk	<i>I gave her a lovely present</i>
Ich schreibe ihnen einen Brief	<i>I'm writing them a letter</i>
Das hat mir den ganzen Spaß genommen	<i>That's taken all my fun</i>
Er las seinen Kindern eine Geschichte vor	<i>He read his children a story</i>

▶ 13.3.3 Verbs with two accusative objects

♦ **With a small number of verbs, both objects are in the accusative, where they might reasonably be expected to have one dative and one accusative object**

The most common are:

fragen <i>to ask</i>	Er fragte mich, wo ich wohne	<i>He asked me where I live</i>
	Ich fragte ihn etwas	<i>I asked him something</i>
kosten <i>to cost</i>	Das hat mich eine Menge Geld gekostet	<i>That cost me a lot of money</i>
lehren <i>to teach</i>	Er hat mich Mathe gelehrt	<i>He taught me maths</i>
nennen <i>to call</i>	Man nennt ihn einen Idioten	<i>They call him an idiot</i>

▶ 13.3.4 Verbs which take a genitive object

a A small number of verbs (some of them reflexive) take an object in the genitive

Most of these are now regarded as formal or are used in legal language. In everyday German, the more common equivalents given in brackets (where given) are preferred:

sich annehmen	<i>to take care of, attend to</i>	(more usual: sich kümmern um)
berauben	<i>to rob s.o. of</i>	(more usual: jm etw rauben)
bedürfen	<i>to need, require</i>	(more usual: brauchen)
sich bemächtigen	<i>to seize hold of</i>	(more usual: ergreifen, nehmen)
sich enthalten	<i>to abstain from</i>	(more usual: verzichten auf)
sich erwehren	<i>to escape, avoid</i>	
sich freuen	<i>to enjoy</i>	(more usual: geniessen)
gedenken	<i>to remember (the dead)</i>	(more usual: denken an)
sich schämen	<i>to be ashamed of</i>	(more usual: sich schämen für)

Sie bedürfen unserer Hilfe	<i>They need our help</i>
Sie konnte sich der Tränen nicht enthalten	<i>She couldn't keep back her tears</i>
Man kann sich des Eindrucks nicht erwehren, dass ...	<i>You can't help feeling that ...</i>
Sie freuen sich des Lebens	<i>They enjoy life</i>
Sie gedachten ihrer toten Freunden	<i>They remembered their dead friends</i>

b A few other verbs govern an accusative and a genitive object

anklagen	<i>to accuse of</i>
beschuldigen	<i>to charge with (crime)</i>
entheben	<i>to relieve of</i>
verdächtigen	<i>to suspect of</i>
Die Polizei verdächtigt sie des Verbrechens	<i>The police suspected her of the crime</i>
Man entthob ihn seiner Stellung	<i>He was relieved of his job</i>
Er wird des Mordes beschuldigt	<i>He's charged with murder</i>

The infinitive and participles

OVERVIEW

The **infinitive** and the **participles** are parts of the verb which do not change their endings to agree with the subject.

The infinitive

- The **infinitive** is the basic, dictionary form of the verb. In English, it is usually preceded by *to* (*to eat, to run*); in German, it usually ends with *-en* (*essen, laufen*). A few infinitives end with *-n*, mostly verbs whose stems end in *-el-* and *-er-*:

sein <i>to be</i>	klingseln <i>to ring</i>
tun <i>to do</i>	wandern <i>to go walking</i>
ausgehen <i>to go out</i>	

- An **infinitive clause** is the infinitive together with *zu*, and objects or adverbs, if any:

Ich hoffe, nach London **zu fahren** *I'm hoping to go to London*

The past and present participles

- There are two participles, present and past.

Present:	English:	infinitive + <i>-ing</i>	<i>eating, dancing</i>
	German:	infinitive + <i>-d</i>	<i>essend, tanzend</i>
Past:	English:	past participle	<i>eaten, danced</i>
	German:	past participle	<i>gegessen, getanzt</i>
- There are some similarities between the ways the participles are used in English and German, notably as adjectives. However, German does not have the 'continuous' tenses found in English, and the English *-ing* form is only rarely translated by the German present participle:

das schlafende Kind	<i>the sleeping child</i>
das gestohlene Auto	<i>the stolen car</i>

But

Ich warte auf dich; ich könnte schon zu Hause sitzen	<i>I'm waiting for you; I could be sitting at home</i>
--	--

14.1 The infinitive

♦ The infinitive is almost always used with a finite verb

Normally, the infinitive is preceded by **zu**, although there are exceptions – see 14.1.2 below.

TIP Finite verb + **zu** + infinitive, or omit **zu**?

- ♦ As a general guide, **zu** is omitted in the same instances as **to** in English:
 - ♦ after modal verbs:

Kannst du mir helfen?	<i>Can you help me?</i>
Ich sollte früher aufstehen	<i>I should get up earlier</i>

- ♦ after some common verbs such as *gehen*, *lassen* and *sehen*:

Er ging einkaufen	<i>He went shopping</i>
Ich lasse mir das Auto reparieren	<i>I'm having the car repaired</i>
Sie lässt alles herumliegen	<i>She leaves everything lying around</i>
Hast du sie ankommen gesehen?	<i>Did you see her arrive?</i>

- ♦ Otherwise, the infinitive is usually preceded by **zu**:

Ich hoffe in die Stadt zu gehen	<i>I'm hoping to go into town</i>
Er vergisst oft mich an zu rufen	<i>He often forgets to phone me</i>

▶ 14.1.1 The infinitive with **zu**

a **zu** always stands directly in front of the infinitive

- ♦ If the infinitive is a separable verb, **zu** stands between the prefix and the verb, and the whole is written as one word:

Ich habe viel zu tun	<i>I have lots to do</i>
Das ist kaum zu glauben!	<i>I can hardly believe it!</i>
Wir hoffen um 7 Uhr ab zu fahren	<i>We're hoping to leave at 7 o'clock</i>
Medikamente sind kühl auf zu bewahren	<i>Medicines are to be stored in a cool place</i>

- ♦ The infinitive may be the auxiliary of a compound verb form such as the perfect or passive:

Ich hasse es, so angeschrien zu werden	<i>I hate being shouted at like that</i>
Es freut mich, ihn kennengelernt zu haben	<i>I'm really pleased to have met him</i>

b Verbs commonly linked to an infinitive by using **zu**

anfangen	<i>to begin</i>
anbieten	<i>to offer</i>
aufhören	<i>to stop</i>
beabsichtigen	<i>to intend</i>
beginnen	<i>to begin</i>
beschließen	<i>to decide</i>
bitten	<i>to ask</i>
bleiben	<i>to remain</i>

brauchen ¹	<i>to need</i>
entscheiden	<i>to decide</i>
erlauben	<i>to allow</i>
haben	<i>to have</i>
hoffen	<i>to hope</i>
raten	<i>to advise</i>
scheinen	<i>to seem</i>
verbieten	<i>to forbid</i>
vergessen	<i>to forget</i>
versprechen	<i>to promise</i>
versuchen	<i>to try</i>
vorhaben	<i>to intend</i>
vorschlagen	<i>to suggest</i>
wissen	<i>to know how to</i>

Er bat mich, ihm zu helfen	<i>He asked me to help him.</i>
Sie hat beschlossen, nichts zu sagen	<i>She decided to say nothing</i>
Es bleibt abzu warten, ob ...	<i>It remains to be seen whether ...</i>
Ich rate dir, sie sofort anzu rufen	<i>I advise you to phone her immediately</i>
Er weiß das Leben zu genießen	<i>He knows how to enjoy life</i>

¹ In formal and written German, brauchen requires zu. In colloquial German, it is often used without zu. Note also that in colloquial usage braucht nicht is more common than muss nicht.

Du brauchst nicht allein hier (zu) bleiben	<i>You don't need to stay here on your own</i>
--	--

c Verbs + **daran, darauf, etc.** + **zu** + infinitive clause

- For verbs which are always used with a prepositional object, the preposition becomes a prepositional adverb (da(r)- + preposition) before zu + an infinitive clause:

Ich freue mich darauf , dich zu besuchen	<i>I'm looking forward to visiting you</i>
Sie hat Angst davor , ihn anzurufen	<i>She's frightened of phoning him</i>

See 13.2 for further details.

d Conjunctions with **zu** + infinitive

(an)statt ... zu <i>instead of</i>	} + infinitive clause
außer ... zu <i>without, apart from</i>	
ohne ... zu <i>without, except</i>	
um ... zu <i>in order to</i>	

- If the two clauses linked by one of these conjunctions have the **same subject**, these conjunctions may be used with **zu** + infinitive clause. **dass** + a finite verb may be used instead, though this is not regarded as such good style.
- If the clauses have **different subjects**, **dass** + a finite verb is used with all except um ... zu ... (see 13.2.1).
- **(an)statt ... zu...**

Er sah fern, (an)statt zu arbeiten	<i>He watched TV instead of working</i>
---	---

- Or ... , anstatt dass** er arbeitete
But Du könntest mit dem Bus fahren, **anstatt dass ich** dich zum Bahnhof bringe
You could go by bus, instead of me taking you to the station
- ♦ **außer ... zu ...**
Außer sie **anzurufen**, können wir nur warten
Apart from phoning her, we can only wait
Or Außer dass wir sie anrufen, ...
But Ich habe von dem Dieb nichts gesehen, **außer dass er** eine Mütze trug
I didn't see anything of the thief except that he was wearing a cap
- ♦ **ohne ... zu ...**
 Sie hat die Tür geschlossen, **ohne** ein einziges Wort **zu** sagen
She closed the door without saying a single word
Or ... , ohne dass sie ein einziges Wort sagte
But Sie hat die Tür geschlossen, **ohne dass er** sie hörte
- ♦ **um ... zu ...**
 Ich ging in die Stadt, **um** ein Lineal **zu** kaufen
I went into town (in order) to buy a ruler
 Ich habe ihm eine E-mail geschickt, **um** ihm **zu** sagen, dass ...
I sent him an e-mail (in order) to tell him that ...
- ♦ - um ... zu ... is also used after an adjective with zu or genug, as long as the subject of both clauses remains the same:
 Ich verdiene zu wenig Geld, **um** mir ein Auto leisten **zu** können
I earn too little money to be able to afford a car
 Er ist nicht stark genug, **um** dieses Gewicht heben **zu** können
He isn't strong enough to lift that weight
- But** If the two clauses have different subjects, another construction must be used in place of um ... zu
Ich habe eine E-mail bekommen, **in der man** mir sagte, dass ...
I received an e-mail to tell me that ...
Ich verdiene zu wenig Geld, **als** **dass sie** mit mir ausgehen würde
I earn too little money for her to go out with me
- ♦ Colloquially, simpler constructions would be preferred:
 ... also würde sie nicht mit mir ausgehen

▶ 14.1.2 The infinitive without zu

- ♦ **The infinitive is used without zu in the same categories of verb as in English constructions without to**
- a **After modal verbs (e.g. können + infinitive)**
- ♦ dürfen, können, mögen, müssen, sollen and wollen are used without zu before a following infinitive:
 Ich **kann** meine Schlüssel nicht **finden**
I can't find my keys

Sie **wollte** uns nicht **besuchen** *She didn't want to visit us*
 Man **kann** sich auf ihn **verlassen** *You can't rely on him*

- The infinitive may be the auxiliary of a compound verb form such as the perfect or a passive:

Das **muss** man mal **gesehen haben!** *It's something you just have to see!*

Er **soll** gestern **abgefahren sein** *Apparently he left yesterday*

Das **könnte** gestohlen **werden** *That might be stolen*

b After lassen

Sie **lässt** mich nie ruhig **arbeiten** *She never lets me work in peace*

Diese Vokabeln **lassen** sich leicht *This vocabulary is easy to learn*

lernen

Ich **lasse** mir den Rasenmäher *I'm having the lawnmower*

reparieren *repaired*

Sie **lässt** alles **herumliegen** *She leaves everything lying around*

c After bleiben with a verb denoting position (see also 14.1.1b)

Wer nicht fleißig arbeitet, **bleibt sitzen** *Anyone who doesn't work hard has to repeat the year*

Meine Uhr ist schon wieder *My watch has stopped again*

stehengeblieben

Er **blieb** wie angewurzelt **stehen** *He stopped as if rooted to the spot*

d After verbs of perception – sehen, hören, fühlen, spüren (see also 14.1.3b)

Wir **hörten** sie **abfahren** *We heard them leave*

Er **sah** sie **ankommen** *He saw her arrive*

- A common alternative to the above is wie + a subordinate clause:

Wir hörten, **wie** er das Haus *We heard him leave the house*
 verließ

e After some verbs of motion – gehen, fahren, kommen

Er **ging einkaufen** *He went shopping*

Kommst du mit **radfahren?** *Are you coming for a cycle ride with me?*

f After the verbs helfen, lehren, lernen, zu is optional, though preferred if the clause is long

Schon mit drei Jahren **lernte** sie *At three she was already learning*
schreiben *to write*

Er **hilft** mir die Hausaufgaben *He helps me to do my homework*

machen

But Er hilft mir, die Hausaufgaben besser und schneller **zu** machen

▶ 14.1.3 Other uses of the infinitive

a The infinitive can be used as a noun; it is always neuter

- Nouns formed in such a way often equate to an English noun ending in *-ing*:

ein einziges **Kommen** und **Gehen** *a constant coming and going*

das **Hinundherfahren** *driving around aimlessly*

das **Autofahren** *driving, motoring*

das **Fürsichleben** *living for oneself*

- Infinitive nouns are often used with *beim* (*while -ing, on -ing*), or *zum* (*for, to*):
 Ich trinke Kaffee **beim Fernsehen** *I drink coffee while watching television*
 Das ist ja **zum Totlachen!** *That's so funny!*

- b The infinitive is also used instead of a past participle**
- For modal verbs used with another infinitive (which is the norm):
 Sie hat es nicht finden **können** *She's been unable to find it*
 Du hättest ihn besuchen **sollen!** *You should have visited him!*
- After *lassen*:
 Ich habe das Auto **reparieren lassen** *I've had the car repaired*
 Menschen, die bereits sehr viel Geld besaßen, haben sich **bestechen lassen** *People who already had a lot of money have accepted bribes*
- For verbs of perception, e.g. *sehen, hören*, used with another infinitive:
 Wir haben sie abfahren **hören** *We heard them leave*
 Er hat sie ankommen **sehen** *He saw her arrive*

- c The infinitive is also used in some forms of the imperative (see 16.2)**
- See also 18.5 (Word order with infinitive clauses).

14.2 The past participle

▶ 14.2.1 Formation of the past participle

- See notes on the perfect tense 10.3.1–2.

▶ 14.2.2 Uses

a The main use of the past participle is in the formation of the perfect and pluperfect tenses (see 10.3 and 10.4), as well as the passive voice (see 15.1.1)

b It is also used as an adjective, and, like any other adjective, takes case endings

das gestohlene Auto	<i>the stolen car</i>
ein gestohlenes Auto	<i>a stolen car</i>
gestohlene Autos	<i>stolen cars</i>

- The single participle-adjective can be extended into an adjectival phrase before the noun; in English, this would often be expressed by a relative clause. Adjectival phrases are much loved by journalists, but are not used in everyday German:

das gestern gestohlene Auto	<i>the car (which was) stolen yesterday</i>
das von Jugendlichen gestohlene Auto	<i>the car (which was) stolen by youths</i>

- If the verb has a reflexive pronoun, this is omitted in an adjectival phrase based on the past participle:

sich anstrengen	<i>to make a real effort</i>
angestrengte Schüler	<i>pupils who have made a real effort</i>

sich vorstellen	<i>to imagine</i>
das oft vorgestellte Problem	<i>the problem which is often envisaged</i>

14.3 The present participle

▶ 14.3.1 Formation

- ♦ **The present participle is formed by adding -d to the infinitive**

fahren	fahrend
werden	werdend

▶ 14.3.2 Uses

- a **The present participle is *never* used in the formation of tenses**

- ♦ Its main use is as an **attributive adjective** (i.e. an adjective placed before the noun), and, like any other adjective, it takes case endings:

ein führender Politiker	<i>a leading politician</i>
mangelnde Sicherheit	<i>lack of safety precautions</i>

- ♦ The single participle-adjective can be extended into an adjectival phrase before the noun; in English, this would often be expressed by a relative clause:

das marktführende Auto	<i>the car which leads the field</i>
ein nicht zu unterschätzendes Problem	<i>a problem which should not be underestimated</i>
mit einem immer lauter werdenden Lärm	<i>with a noise (which was) growing louder and louder</i>

- ♦ If the verb has a reflexive pronoun, this is retained in an adjectival phrase based on the present participle (compare this with the past participle used as an adjective, 14.2.2b).

die sich anstrengenden Schüler	<i>the pupils who are making a real effort</i>
der sich viele Probleme vorstellende Lehrer	<i>the teacher envisaging many problems</i>

- b **The adjectival form of the present participle can be used as a noun**

- ♦ It can be any gender, and continues to take adjective endings:

der/die Auszubildende	<i>trainee</i>
der/die Vorsitzende	<i>chairman</i>
das Spannende	<i>the exciting thing</i>
das Interessante daran ist ...	<i>the interesting thing about it is ...</i>

- c **The present participle can be used as an adverb**

Er sah mich lächelnd an	<i>He looked at me, smiling</i>
Sie spricht verwirrend schnell	<i>She speaks confusingly fast</i>

14.4 The translation of English *-ing* forms

With the exception of the few present participle uses given above, German has no direct equivalent of English *-ing* constructions. The examples given below simply show the main possibilities. You will notice that almost all of these constructions are

mentioned elsewhere in the book, and the student is advised to concentrate on the German modes of expression rather than trying to learn exact equivalents for each one; in any case, there are almost always several ways to express the same idea.

▶ 14.4.1 Present participle

- ♦ **The present participle may be used as an adjective, adverb or noun (see 14.3.2.b above)**

ein spannender Film	<i>an exciting film</i>
eine gutaussehende Frau	<i>a good-looking woman</i>
das Hervorragende	<i>the outstanding thing</i>

▶ 14.4.2 Infinitive

- a **The infinitive may be used as a verbal noun (= gerund). Such nouns are always neuter**

Meine Hobbys sind Lesen und Kanufahren	<i>My hobbies are reading and canoeing</i>
Das Rauchen ist verboten	<i>Smoking is forbidden</i>
Beim Lesen bin ich eingeschlafen	<i>While reading I fell asleep</i>
Beim Autofahren bekomme ich immer Kopfschmerzen	<i>I always get a headache when driving</i>
Durch Schwimmen bleibe ich fit	<i>I keep fit by swimming</i>

▶ TIP -ing words: gerund (=verbal noun) or present participle?

- ♦ If the word ending in -ing can be replaced by the question 'What?', the word in question is a gerund.
What is your hobby? *My hobby is **cycling***
- ♦ If, however, the question must be formed using more than one word, or with the verb *to do*, it is a present participle.
What is he doing? *He is cycling*
What is the film like? *It's exciting*

- b **The infinitive is used after verbs of perception (e.g. sehen, hören) (see 14.1.2d above)**

Er fühlte sein Herz schlagen	<i>he felt his heart beating</i>
-------------------------------------	----------------------------------

- c **An infinitive clause may be used with zu when there is no change of subject (see 14.1.1d above)**

Es ist schön, dich zu sehen	<i>It's lovely seeing you</i>
Ohne zu fragen , hat er das Haus verlassen	<i>He left the house without asking</i>
Er versuchte, mir zu helfen	<i>He tried helping me</i>

▶ 14.4.3 Subordinate clause

- a **A subordinate clause beginning with one of the following conjunctions often indicates *while... -ing, by ...-ing***

während	= two actions occurring simultaneously
----------------	--

wobei	<i>as (he) did so; (=at the same time as the action just mentioned)</i>
indem or dadurch, dass	<i>by... -ing (= the means by which)</i>
Während er zu Abend isst, sieht er fern	<i>He watches TV while eating his dinner</i>
Sie bediente den Kunden, wobei sie mit ihrer Kollegin plauderte	<i>She served the customer, chatting to her colleague as she did so</i>
Er lernt Deutsch, indem er jedes Jahr nach Kiel fährt	<i>He learns German by going to Kiel every year</i>
Er lernt Deutsch dadurch, dass er jedes Jahr nach Kiel fährt	

b Many other subordinating conjunctions may also give rise to English -ing constructions

Es ist toll hier, wenn wir alle miteinander plaudern	<i>It's great here, with us all chatting away to each other</i>
Als ich das Haus betrat, sah ich den Einbrecher	<i>On entering the house, I saw the burglar</i>
Bevor ich ins Bett ging, sah ich fern	<i>Before going to bed, I watched TV</i>
Nachdem sie das Haus verlassen hatte, ...	<i>After leaving the house, she ...</i>
♦ wie after verbs of perception: Er fühlte, wie sein Herz schlug Ich sah, wie sie aus dem Haus ging	<i>He felt his heart beating I watched her leaving the house</i>

c A relative clause may also sometimes be translated by an -ing construction

ein Wort, das mit s beginnt	<i>a word beginning with s</i>
ein Mann, der eine Krawatte trägt	<i>a man wearing a tie</i>

▶ **14.4.4 Other forms**

a Main clauses joined by und Ich betrat das Haus und sah den Einbrecher Sie öffnete die Tür und verließ das Haus	<i>On entering the house, I saw the burglar Opening the door, she left the house</i>
b Past participle after kommen Er kam die Straße entlang gelaufen	<i>He came running down the street</i>
c weiter + verb – to keep on ...-ing Er schlief ruhig weiter Wir müssen weiterfahren	<i>He carried on sleeping peacefully We'll have to keep on driving</i>

The passive voice

OVERVIEW

- In the **active voice**, the subject 'acts' or performs an action on the object. This is the normal way of speaking and writing about actions:

Shakespeare schrieb <i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Shakespeare wrote Hamlet</i>
Meine Eltern kaufen dieses Haus	<i>My parents are buying that house</i>

- In the **passive voice**, the subject is the receiver of the action. In the examples above, the direct object of the active sentence ('*Hamlet*', or '*that house*') becomes the subject. The original subject ('*Shakespeare*', or '*my parents*'), called the '**agent**' of the action, is now introduced by the word *by*, or in German by *von*:

<i>Hamlet</i> wurde von Shakespeare geschrieben	<i>Hamlet was written by Shakespeare</i>
Dieses Haus wird von meinen Eltern gekauft	<i>That house is being bought by my parents</i>

- The passive is useful because it emphasises the action rather than the thing or person who is doing it. In fact, the 'doer' of the action may not even be mentioned:

Die Straße wird endlich repariert	<i>At last the road is being repaired</i>
---	---

- German passive forms can distinguish between the process and the resulting state of affairs, which English cannot:

Die Brücke wurde zerstört	<i>The bridge was destroyed (... by a bomb)</i>
Die Brücke war zerstört	<i>The bridge was destroyed (... and could not be used)</i>

- German makes less use of the passive than English:

Endlich repariert man die Straße	<i>At last the road is being repaired</i>
---	---

15.1 The passive voice: formation and use

15.1.1 Formation of the passive

a The passive is formed using **werden** + **past participle**

The 'agent' (when included) is often introduced by *von* + dative (but see below).

Present	Er wird von seinem Vater abgeholt	<i>He's being picked up by ...</i>
Simple past	Er wurde von seinem Vater abgeholt	<i>He was picked up by ...</i>
Perfect	Er ist von seinem Vater abgeholt worden ¹	<i>He has been picked up by ...</i>
Pluperfect	Er war von seinem Vater abgeholt worden ¹	<i>He had been picked up by ...</i>
Future	Er wird von seinem Vater abgeholt werden ²	<i>He will be picked up by ...</i>

¹ The past participle **geworden** loses its prefix **ge-**.

² The future passive is rarely used; just as in many active sentences German prefers to use the present tense together with an adverb of time:

Dieser Brief wird morgen geschickt	<i>This letter will be sent tomorrow</i>
Er wird später von seinem Vater abgeholt	<i>He will be picked up later by his father</i>

b The passive may also be formed with a **modal verb** + **past participle** + **werden** (used as an infinitive)

Tenses other than present and past are extremely rare.

♦ Present:

Er will von seinem Vater abgeholt werden	<i>He wants to be picked up by his father</i>
---	---

♦ Simple past:

Er wollte von seinem Vater abgeholt werden	<i>He wanted to be picked up by his father</i>
Der Wiederaufbau nach dem Krieg konnte in beschleunigtem Tempo fortgesetzt werden	<i>Post-war rebuilding could be continued at a faster rate</i>

♦ Perfect:

Er muss von seinem Vater abgeholt worden sein	<i>He must have been picked up by his father</i>
--	--

Note Germans normally prefer a less formal construction than the one above:

Sein Vater hat ihn bestimmt abgeholt

♦ **wollen** in an active sentence often becomes **sollen** in the passive:

Man will hier eine neue Straße bauen	<i>They're intending to build a new road here</i>
Hier soll eine neue Straße gebaut werden	<i>A new road is intended here</i>

▶ 15.1.2 The agent *by*

a **The agent of the action (i.e. what would be the subject of the sentence in the active voice) is introduced by *von*, *durch*, or *mit***

von	usually persons, or an inanimate force
durch	'the means by which' – usually things, or person as intermediary
mit	the instrument: 'by using'

In other words, *von* and *durch* are to some extent interchangeable.

• Agent: person, inanimate force:

Das Auto wird von dem Mechaniker repariert	<i>The car was repaired by the mechanic</i>
Koblenz wurde von dem (or durch den) Rhein überschwemmt	<i>Koblenz was flooded by the Rhine</i>

• Agent: means:

Das Haus ist durch eine Bombe zerstört worden	<i>The house has been destroyed by a bomb</i>
Die Flugkarte wurde von Herrn Braun durch seine Sekretärin reserviert	<i>The air-ticket was booked by Mr Braun through his secretary</i>

• Instrument: 'by using':

Dieses Buch wurde mit einem Computer geschrieben	<i>This book was written with a computer</i>
---	--

Note The instrument ('by using') keeps this role in both active and passive sentences:

Ich habe das Buch **mit dem Computer** geschrieben

b **The agent is often omitted completely**

This may be because the perpetrator of an action is not known or is considered unimportant in that particular statement.

Dieses Haus wurde im 16. Jahrhundert gebaut	<i>This house was built in the sixteenth century</i>
Ein neues Kaufhaus wird heute eröffnet	<i>A new store is being opened today</i>

Note The active subject **man** *one*, *they*, *people*, never becomes the agent in a passive sentence.

▶ 15.1.3 The subject of the passive sentence

a **Only the direct object of an active sentence can be used as the subject (i.e. in the nominative case) of a passive sentence**

• The **indirect object** of an active sentence remains in the **dative**. It cannot be used as the subject – note how what appears to be the subject does not agree with the verb in the second example below.

This is different from English, where the direct or indirect object may often be used as the subject of the passive sentence.

Active:	Man gab meinem Freund ein Auto	
Passive:	Meinem Freund wurde ein Auto gegeben	<i>My friend was given a car (lit: 'To my friend was given...')</i>
Not	Mein Freund wurde ...	
Active:	Man sagte ihnen , sie müssten ...	
Passive:	Ihnen wurde gesagt, sie müssten ...	<i>They were told they would have to ...</i>
Not	Sie wurden ...	

- Similarly, prepositional phrases and dative noun phrases remain unchanged in a passive clause:

Mir wurde nicht erlaubt, mit ihm zu sprechen	<i>I was not allowed to speak to him</i>
Uns wird nicht geglaubt	<i>We are not believed</i>
Über mich wurde viel gelacht	<i>I was laughed at a lot</i>
Darüber wird in dieser Zeitung nicht geschrieben	<i>Nothing is written about that in this newspaper</i>

▶ 15.1.4 'Subjectless' or 'impersonal' passive

a The passive is frequently used without a subject

If there is no other introductory idea, such as an adverb, **es** is inserted (to ensure that the verb stands in second position), but it is better style to avoid this.

Den ganzen Abend wurde gefeiert	<i>There were celebrations all evening</i>
Or Es wurde den ganzen Abend gefeiert	
Nachmittags wird immer Kaffee getrunken	<i>In the afternoons people always drink coffee</i>
Hier wird nicht geraucht!	<i>There's to be no smoking here!</i>
Jetzt wird bitte gegessen und nicht gealbert!	<i>Stop messing around and eat your meal! (instruction to child)</i>

b In subordinate clauses containing a passive, **es** is never used, as the conjunction (**weil, dass, etc.**) occupies the first position

Wir waren froh, dass den ganzen Abend **gefeiert wurde**

▶ 15.1.5 The passive using **sein**

a By using **sein** instead of **werden**, German can distinguish between a state and the action which led to it

The **werden** passive is more common, but the choice depends on the emphasis the speaker wishes to place on the statement.

Das Auto wird repariert	<i>The car is being repaired</i>
(=Someone is repairing the car)	
Das Auto ist repariert	<i>The car is repaired</i>
(=The repairs are complete)	
Als wir es fanden, war mein Auto schwer beschädigt , aber ich weiß immer noch nicht, wie es beschädigt wurde	<i>When we found it, my car was badly damaged, but I still don't know how it was damaged</i>

(The *sein* passive emphasises the damaged state, the *werden* passive emphasises the event.)

b The *sein* passive may indicate an existing or permanent state of affairs

This state is not necessarily the result of an action.

Das Geschäft **ist** durchgehend *The shop is open all hours*
geöffnet

Der Staatsvertrag **wurde** erst *The international treaty only came*
zustande **gebracht** als der *into being when the war had*
Krieg bereits seit zehn Jahren *already been over for ten years*

beendet war
Deutschland **wäre** viel Zerstörung *Germany would have been spared*
erspart **geblieben** *much destruction*

c Note the use of *sein* and *werden* passives with *geboren*

Ich **bin** in Köln **geboren** *I was born in Cologne*
(place of birth only)

Ich **wurde** 1983 in Köln **geboren** *I was born in 1983 in Cologne*
(date or other details mentioned)

Bach **wurde/war** 1685 in *Bach was born in 1685 in Eisenach*
Eisenach **geboren**
(For people now dead, either form may be used)

▶ **15.1.6 Verbs which cannot be used in the passive**

a A number of transitive verbs may form a passive in English but not in German

The active voice must be used, or a different verb chosen:

- Verbs of perception when used with an infinitive

e.g. hören *to hear*, sehen *to see*

- A few other verbs:

haben	<i>to have</i>	enthalten	<i>to contain</i>
besitzen	<i>to own</i>	kennen, wissen	<i>to know</i>
bekommen	} <i>to receive</i>		
erhalten			
kriegen			

Dieser Schauspieler ist nicht sehr *This actor is not well known*
bekannt

Not ... wird nicht gekannt
Das Gemälde gehört meiner *The painting has been owned by*
Familie seit jeher *my family for years*

Not wird ... besessen
Er wurde vor kurzem in London *He was seen recently in London*
gesehen

But
Der Polizist hat gesehen, wie er bei *He was seen by the policeman*
Rot über die Kreuzung *crossing the junction on red*
gefahren ist

Not Er wurde ... fahren gesehen

Ihre Mail ist gestern eingetroffen	<i>Your e-mail was received yesterday</i>
Not wurde ... bekommen	

▶ 15.1.7 The passive in infinitive constructions

a The passive may also be used in infinitive clauses, as long as the main and subordinate clause share the same subject

Er hofft, um 9 Uhr abgeholt zu werden .	<i>He's hoping to be picked up at 9 o'clock</i>
--	---

Er hoffte, um 9 Uhr abgeholt zu werden .	<i>He was hoping to be picked up at 9 o'clock</i>
---	---

• The two sentences above could also be expressed as passives in normal subordinate clauses:

Er hofft, dass er um 9 Uhr abgeholt wird	<i>He is hoping that he'll be picked up at 9 o'clock</i>
---	--

Er hoffte, dass er um 9 Uhr abgeholt wurde	<i>He was hoping that he'd be picked up at 9 o'clock</i>
---	--

Note the use of the **past participle + worden zu sein**

Er behauptete, um 9 Uhr abgeholt worden zu sein	<i>He claimed to have been picked up at 9 o'clock</i>
--	---

Or

Er behauptete, dass er um 9 Uhr abgeholt worden war	<i>He claimed that he had been picked up at 9 o'clock</i>
--	---

15.2 Alternatives to the passive

• The passive is often used in English in order to rearrange a sentence so that it can begin with an idea other than the subject, or to avoid using a pronoun such as 'one':

This computer program can be learned easily

• In German, however, it is easy to place the object of the sentence before the verb, and the pronoun **man** is frequently used. These, together with a number of other common constructions, mean that the passive tends to be used less frequently than in English, though it is not at all uncommon, especially in formal writing.

• Here is a passive sentence followed by several common ways of expressing the same idea without using the passive:

Das Computerprogramm kann leicht gelernt werden	<i>The computer program can be learned easily</i>
---	---

or Das Computerprogramm **lässt sich** leicht **lernen**

or Das Computerprogramm **ist** leicht **lernbar**

or Das Computerprogramm **ist** leicht **zu lernen**

or **Man kann** das Computerprogramm leicht **lernen**

a The passive can be avoided by using man as the subject

This is very much more common than *one* in English.

Da hat **man** die Straße schon wieder gesperrt *The road's been closed off yet again*

b The subject and the object can be inverted

Diese Landschaft beschreibt der Schriftsteller in seinen Romanen *This landscape is described by the writer in his novels*

c A reflexive verb can sometimes be used

Das Buch **verkauft sich** sehr gut *The book is selling very well*
Dieser Wein **trinkt sich** gut *This wine slips down easily*
Eine Lösung wird **sich finden** *A solution will be found*

d sein + zu + infinitive is often used to indicate possibility or obligation

Ist diese Idee **zu rechtfertigen**? *Can this idea be justified?*
Es **ist zu befürchten**, dass viele Leute gestorben sind *It is to be feared that many people have died*

e In formal German, an adjectival phrase based on a participle may be used (see 14.2.2. and 14.3.2)

ein nicht zu unterschätzendes Problem *a problem which should not be underestimated*

f sich lassen + infinitive is often used to indicate possibility

Das Fenster **ließ sich** nur schwer **öffnen** *The window could only be opened with difficulty*
Es **lässt sich** nicht **leugnen**, dass ... *It cannot be denied that ...*

g bekommen or kriegen + past participle is sometimes used

Sie **bekam** das Auto **geschenkt** *She was given the car*
Er will das **übersetzt kriegen** *He wants to get this translated*

The imperative mood

OVERVIEW

The imperative mood

The imperative is one of three 'moods', or forms of the verb which express the **attitude** of the speaker to the action.

- The **indicative mood** indicates real events and is for that reason the most common:

Ich arbeite fleißig *I'm working hard*

- The **subjunctive mood** is used, for instance, for wishes and hypothetical events:

Wenn er nur fleißig wäre! *If only he were hard-working!*

- The **imperative mood** is used for commands:

Setz dich!	}	<i>Sit down!</i>
Setzt euch!		
Setzen Sie sich!		
Setzen wir uns!		
		<i>Let's sit down</i>

Types of imperative

There are two main types of imperative, just as there are in English, depending on who is being given the command:

- The **you** imperative. There are three forms in German, corresponding to the **du**, **ihr** and **Sie** forms of the pronoun. See examples above.
- The **we** imperative, expressed in English by *Let's ...* and in German by the **wir** form of the verb. See example above.
- Other forms of the verb, notably the infinitive, are also used to give instructions or commands:

Stehenbleiben!	<i>Halt!</i>
Die Eiweiße steif schlagen	<i>Beat the egg whites until stiff</i>

16.1 The imperative: formation and use

▶ 16.1.1 Example

(du)	Hör auf!	<i>Stop doing that!</i>
(ihr)	Wartet auf mich!	<i>Wait for me!</i>
(Sie)	Warten Sie bitte einen Augenblick!	<i>Please wait a moment!</i>
(wir)	Gehen wir nach Hause!	<i>Let's go home!</i>

- See also [section 16.2](#) below.

▶ 16.1.2 Formation

du:	weak verbs:	du form of present tense less –st
	strong verbs:	as above, retaining vowel change (But ä becomes a)
ihr:	all verbs:	ihr form without ihr
Sie:	all verbs:	Sie form, inverted (i.e. Sie after the verb)
wir:	all verbs:	wir form of verb, inverted (i.e. wir after the verb)

	Infinitive	du	ihr	Sie	wir
Weak	<i>machen</i> <i>aufhören</i> <i>sich setzen</i>	mach! hör auf! setz dich!	macht! hört auf! setzt euch!	machen Sie! hören Sie auf! setzen Sie sich!	machen wir! hören wir auf! setzen wir uns!
Strong	<i>geben</i> <i>lesen</i> <i>fahren</i>	gib! lies! fahr!	gebt! lest! fahrt!	geben Sie! lesen Sie! fahren Sie!	geben wir! lesen wir! fahren wir!
Irregular	<i>sein</i> <i>haben</i> <i>werden</i>	sei! habe! werde!	seid! habt! werdet!	seien Sie! haben Sie! werden Sie!	seien wir! haben wir! werden wir!

▶ 16.1.3 The du form

a Most verbs form the imperative simply by dropping the -st from the du form

Bring einen Freund mit!	<i>Bring a friend with you!</i>
Spiel das bitte noch einmal vor!	<i>Please play that again!</i>
Gib ihm noch eine Chance!	<i>Give him another chance!</i>

b The du forms of some verbs always add an -e in the imperative

- verbs with stems ending in -d, -t, or -m, -n after another consonant (i.e. verbs which have an -e- before the ending in the standard du form):

Warte!	<i>Wait!</i>	Öffne die Tür!	<i>Open the door!</i>
		Arbeite fleißiger!	<i>Work harder!</i>

- verbs whose infinitives end in -eln or -igen:

Entschuldige!	<i>Excuse me!</i>
---------------	-------------------

c Other verbs may add -e in the du form of the imperative

- In written German, the du form of the imperative (**except** for verbs whose stem vowel changes from -e- to -i- or -ie-) sometimes appears with the ending -e. This addition is not obligatory, even in formal German.

Schicke mir dein Foto!	<i>Send me your photo!</i>
Or Schick mir ...	
Fahre mit mir in die Schweiz!	<i>Come with me to Switzerland!</i>
Or Fahr mit mir ...	

d Strong verbs with a stem vowel which changes to i or ie in the du and er/sie/es forms never add -e in the du form of the imperative

Nimm dieses Buch!	<i>Take this book!</i>
Gib mir das Buch!	<i>Give me the book!</i>
Lies diesen Artikel!	<i>Read this article!</i>

▶ **16.1.4 Polite commands and requests**

- The imperative used alone can sound blunt or imperious. Where English often prefers a different form ('*Could you ...?*') German almost always makes a command or request more polite in one or more of the following ways:

a Adding a particle such as mal or doch

Ruf mich mal an!	<i>Just give me a call!</i>
Hör doch damit auf!	<i>Do stop doing that!</i>
Bringt mir mal eure Bücher!	<i>Just bring me your books!</i>

b Making a request instead of using the imperative, often with bitte please

- It is the intonation which gives the request its politeness:

Gibst du mir bitte das Salz?	<i>Could you pass the salt, please?</i>
Sagst du es bitte mal lauter?	<i>Could you just say it louder, please?</i>
- Among friends or family, bitte may be omitted without loss of politeness:

Gibst du mir mal die Mayo, Mama?	<i>Could you pass the mayonnaise please, Mum?</i>
----------------------------------	---

c Very polite requests can be expressed in the form of a suggestion by using können in the present tense or in its Konjunktiv II form, or würden Sie ...

Können Sie mir bitte mal helfen?	<i>Can you help me please?</i>
Könnten Sie mich bitte morgen anrufen?	<i>Could you please phone me tomorrow?</i>
Würden Sie bitte einen Moment warten?	<i>Would you wait just one moment, please?</i>

Note In business communications German does not use its counterparts of *could* or *would* to the extent required in polite formal English:

Bitte schicken Sie mir Ihren neuen Katalog	<i>I should be grateful if you would send me a copy of your latest catalogue</i>
--	--

▶ **16.1.5 Adding emphasis to a command or request**

a Although normally omitted, du or ihr are sometimes included for emphasis

Sprich du doch mit ihm!	<i>You go and talk to him yourself!</i>
Ruft ihr sie selber an!	<i>You phone her yourselves!</i>

b A request uttered with the intonation of a command makes it sound more definite than a simple imperative

Compare these two examples:

Hör endlich damit auf!	<i>Just stop that!</i>
Hörst du jetzt endlich damit auf?!	<i>STOP that this instant!</i>

▶ **16.1.6 wir forms of the imperative**

♦ **Let's ... is usually expressed by the inverted wir form**

OK, gehen wir!	<i>OK, let's go!</i>
Machen wir uns auf die Socken!	<i>Let's get going!</i>
Seien wir froh, dass ihm nichts Schlimmeres passiert ist!	<i>Let's be glad that nothing worse happened to him</i>

See also 16.3g below.

16.2 The infinitive in general and official instructions

a The infinitive is often used for general and official commands and instructions

♦ It is also used in instructions for, for instance, equipment and cooking recipes. It is used because it does not focus on a particular person or group.

Nicht rauchen!	<i>No smoking</i>
Bitte lächeln!	<i>Smile, please!</i>
Bitte einsteigen und Türen schließen! (at a railway station)	<i>Please get in and close the doors</i>
Nur Siemens-Originalfilter verwenden	<i>Use only original Siemens filters</i>
Die Äpfel in kleine Würfel schneiden ...	<i>Cut the apples into small cubes...</i>

b Reflexive verbs used in this way lose the reflexive pronoun

Nicht hinauslehnen! (on windows of railway trains)	<i>Do not lean out!</i>
Bitte anschnallen!	<i>Fasten your seatbelts!</i>

c The Sie form is sometimes used instead of the infinitive in instruction manuals

Erneuern Sie den Bürstenkopf alle sechs Monate	<i>Renew the brush head every six months</i>
--	--

16.3 Other ways of expressing commands

a Nouns, adjectives, and particles can be used in short commands

Vorsicht!	<i>Look out!</i>
Herein!	<i>Come in!</i>
Entschuldigung!	<i>Excuse me!</i>

b In cafés and restaurants, the ich form is often used when placing an order

Ich bekomme ein Schnitzel mit Salat, bitte	<i>I'll have a schnitzel with salad, please</i>
---	---

c Sollen (also with reported speech)Du **sollst** mir zuhören!*You're to listen to me!*Die Chefin sagte ihm, er **sollte/**
soll eine neue Stelle suchen*The boss told him to look for a
new job***d Statements****Sie sind** so nett und bleiben hier!*Please be so kind as to wait here!***e The use of haben or sein + zu + infinitive**Diese Aufgabe **ist** sofort **zu***This task is to be carried out***erledigen**, verstanden?*immediately – understood?*Du **hast** mir **zuzuhören!***You're to listen to me!***f The verb is omitted (because the meaning is quite clear without it)**

Bitte nicht!

Please don't!

Herein!

*Come in!***g An impersonal passive**Jetzt **wird** hier **gearbeitet!***Let's have some work done here!*Jetzt **wird** bitte nicht mehr*No more messing around, please!***gealbert!**

The subjunctive mood

OVERVIEW

► The subjunctive mood

There are three **moods** (or modes of expression): the **indicative mood** (e.g. present, perfect, simple past and future tenses), which is the most common, and describes actual, real or likely events, the **imperative mood**, used for commands, and the **subjunctive**.

The **subjunctive** (in German, *Konjunktiv*) is the forms of the verb used, in essence, to take a step back from the actual or likely events described by the indicative. It is used to describe, for example,

- events which *would* happen *if* ...
- events which *might* happen
- events which we *wish* would happen
- or events or statements which we are merely reporting from someone else.

► Subjunctive 1/*Konjunktiv I*

• Reported speech

The main use of **Subjunctive 1** is for reported speech; the subjunctive is required, as what is reported may or may not be true:

Er sagte, er sei nach Amerika gefahren	<i>He said he's been to America</i>
Sie sagt, sie habe keine Zeit	<i>She says she has no time</i>
(...but I'm just reporting that – it may or may not be true)	

► Subjunctive 2/*Konjunktiv II*

• If statements

The main use of **Subjunctive 2** is for unlikely or hypothetical events:

Wenn ich genug Geld hätte, würde	<i>If I had enough money, I would go</i>
ich nach Amerika fahren	<i>to America</i>
(...but I don't have enough, so it's unlikely or hypothetical)	

• Wishes

Ich wünschte, ich könnte nach	<i>I wish I could go to America</i>
Amerika fahren	
(... but I can't, so it's hypothetical)	

• Polite requests

Könnten Sie mir bitte helfen?	<i>Could you help me, please?</i>
--------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

17.1 Subjunctive 1/*Konjunktiv I*: formation and summary

▶ 17.1.1 Example

Sie sagte, sie **sei** krank und **bleibe**
zu Hause

*She said she was ill and was
staying at home*

▶ 17.1.2 Main use

- Reported speech in formal and written language. See 17.3.

▶ 17.1.3 Formation

- **Stem of the infinitive + subjunctive endings (see table below), also called 'present subjunctive'**
- The only irregular verb is *sein*.

	Weak	Strong	Modal	Auxiliaries		
	machen	halten	können	werden	haben	sein
ich	mache	halte	könne	werde	habe	sei
du	machest	haltest	könnest	werdest	habest	seiest
er/sie/es	mache	halte	könne	werde	habe	sei
wir	machen	halten	können	werden	haben	seien
ihr	machtet	haltet	könnet	werdet	habet	seiet
sie/Sie	machen	halten	können	werden	haben	seien

Note Only the *er/sie/es* forms of Subjunctive 1 are still in common use for most verbs, except for *sein* and the modals, where all forms are used.

▶ 17.1.4 Reporting present, past and future statements

- For statements in the **present tense** (whatever the tense of the introductory verb), use **Subjunctive 1** of the finite verb.

Er sagt, er **kaufe** ... *He says he's buying ...*
 Er hat gesagt, er **kaufe** ... *He said he bought ...*
- For statements in any of the **past tenses** (past, perfect or pluperfect), there is only one form: use **Subjunctive 1** of **haben** or **sein** + **past participle**.

Er sagt, er **habe** ... **gekauft** *He says he bought ...*
 Sie sagt, sie **habe** ... **müssen** *She says she had to ...*
 Sie sagt, er **sei** ... **gefahren** *She says he went ...*
- For statements in the **future**, use the **Subjunctive 1** of *werden* + **infinitive**.

Er sagt, er **werde** ... **kaufen** *He says he'll buy ...*

17.2 Subjunctive 2/Konjunktiv II: formation and summary

▶ 17.2.1 Example

Wenn ich krank **wäre, würde** ich zu Hause **bleiben** *If I were ill, I would stay at home*

▶ 17.2.2 Main uses

- ✦ Unreal, hypothetical or possible events and wishes (17.4.2)
- ✦ Polite requests (17.4.4)
- ✦ After *als ob (as if)* (17.4.6)

▶ 17.2.3 Formation

a Stem of the simple past + subjunctive endings

- ✦ Strong, irregular and modal verbs add an umlaut if possible (except *wollen* and *sollen*: *er wollte, er sollte*).
- ✦ Weak verbs do not add an umlaut and are identical with the indicative simple past forms.

	Weak	Strong ¹	Modal ²	Auxiliaries ²		
	machen	halten	können	werden	haben	sein
ich	machte	hielte	könnte	würde	hätte	wäre
du	machtest	hieltest	könntest	würdest	hättest	wärest
er/sie/es	machte	hielte	könnte	würde	hätte	wäre
wir	machten	hielten	könnten	würden	hätten	wären
ihr	machtet	hieltet	könntet	würdet	hättet	wäret
sie/Sie	machten	hielten	könnten	würden	hätten	wären

¹ In practice, only a few strong and irregular verbs are still relatively common in this simple (one-word) past form. Apart from *halten*, they are:

finden	ich fände	heißen	ich hieße	nehmen	ich nähme
geben	ich gäbe	kommen	ich käme	tun	ich täte
gehen	ich ginge	lassen	ich ließe	wissen	ich wüsste

² The auxiliaries are always used in the simple (one-word) form:

- ✦ *haben, sein, werden* (listed above)
- ✦ the modal verbs; apart from *können* (listed above), these are:
dürfen: ich dürfte *mögen*: ich möchte *müssen*: ich müsste *sollen*: ich sollte *wollen*: ich wollte

b würde + infinitive (sometimes called the conditional)

- ✦ These forms are identical in use and meaning to the one-word forms.
er ginge/er würde gehen *he would go*
- ✦ The *würde* + infinitive forms of the modals are also used in colloquial German.
Er wusste, dass er bis 3 Uhr das Buch zu Ende gelesen haben würde *He knew that he would have finished reading the book by 3 o'clock*
Ich würde dorthin fahren können, *I'd be able to go there if ...*
wenn ...

▶ 17.2.4 Conditional in the past (or pluperfect subjunctive)

- ♦ To refer to past hypothetical events; hätte or wäre + past participle. See 17.5.
 Sie hätte ... gemacht *She would have done ...*
 Er wäre ... gefahren *He would have gone ...*

17.3 Subjunctive 1/*Konjunktiv I*: use

TIP Remembering the Subjunctive 1/*Konjunktiv I* forms for reported speech

- ♦ Mostly, one reports what one other person has said. For the **er/sie/es** form, simply take the infinitive, and remove the **-n**. This works with all verbs, including strong verbs, modals, irregulars, and **sein**.
- ♦ Verbs which end in **-eln** or **-ern** lose the **-e** from the stem.
 Er sagt, er **segle** nach Island *He says he's sailing to Iceland*

▶ 17.3.1 Statements in reported or indirect speech

- a The tense of the reported statement remains in the tense of the original direct statement, and Subjunctive 1 of the reported finite verb is used (but see 17.3.1b below)**

- ♦ In English, by contrast, the tense of the reported statement changes according to the tense of the introductory verb. Compare the German and English in these pairs of statements:

Direct: Sie hat gesagt: „Ich fahre morgen in die USA“ *She said, 'I'm going to the USA tomorrow'*

Reported: Sie sagt, sie **fahre** morgen in die USA *She says she **is going** to the USA tomorrow*

Sie hat gesagt, sie **fahre** morgen in die USA *She said she **was going** to the USA tomorrow*

Direct: Er meint: „Ich habe kein Geld mehr“ *He says, 'I've got no more money'*

Reported: Er meint, er **habe** kein Geld mehr *He says he **has** no more money*

Er meinte, er **habe** kein Geld mehr *He said he **had** no more money*

Direct: Ihre Mutter sagte: „sie sind krank“ *Their mother said, 'they're ill'*

Reported: Sie sagt, sie **seien** krank *She says they're ill*

Sie hat gesagt, sie **seien** krank *She said they **were** ill*

Direct: „Die Ausgangssperre **ist** eine Vorsichtsmaßnahme und **gilt** bis 18.00 Uhr“, meldete die Nachrichtenagentur *The news agency reported, 'The curfew **is** a security measure and **is in force** until 6 p.m.'*

Reported: Die Ausgangssperre **sei** eine Vorsichtsmaßnahme und **gelte** bis 18.00 Uhr, meldete die Nachrichtenagentur *The curfew **was** a security measure and **was in force** until 6 p.m., the news agency reported*

b However, if the Subjunctive 1 form is the same as the indicative, German uses the Subjunctive 2 form

- The **würde** + **infinitive** form is common here, as the one-word Subjunctive 2 form is now limited to a very few verbs (see 17.2.3a above). Care must be taken not to confuse this with English *would*.

Sie sagen, sie **hätten** (*not* haben) keine Zeit *They say they have no time*

Er sagt, sie **könnten** es sich nicht leisten (*not* können) *He says they can't afford it*

Sie sagten, sie **würden** nach Hause **gehen** *They said they were going home*

Or ...sie **gingen** (*but not* gehen) nach Hause

Er sagte, ich **würde** zu viel Geld **ausgeben** (*not* ich gebe) *He said I was spending too much money*

c Pronouns and possessives must be changed to the sense of the reported statement

Direct: Sie sagte: „Ich habe meiner Mutter mein Auto geliehen“ *She said: 'I lent my mother my car'*

Reported: Sie sagte, sie habe **ihrer** Mutter **ihr** Auto geliehen *She says she lent her mother her car*

TIP German makes clear when speech is being reported

- It is not necessary to repeat phrases such as *sie sagte* in every sentence to remind the reader that the speech is reported, as the verb form itself makes this clear, even in longer passages found in news coverage in the press or on television. Note also the use of *soll* – *is said to*.

Der Ministerpräsident **soll** gewusst haben, dass der Geheimdienst auch Flughäfen in Spanien benutzt hat. Die USA **hätten** die Regierung um Erlaubnis **gebeten**, den spanischen Luftraum zu durchfliegen *The prime minister is said to have known that the secret service had also used airports in Spain. The USA had, it is said, requested permission from the government to use Spanish air-space*

d To report statements in any of the past tenses, German uses Subjunctive 1 of **haben or **sein** with the past participle**

- If the form of **haben** is the same as the indicative (a problem which cannot arise with **sein**), Subjunctive 2 is used.
- There is only one form for reporting any of the past tenses, whether perfect, imperfect (simple past), or pluperfect:

Direct:

Er schrieb: „Ich **bin** nach Berlin **gefahren**“

Er schrieb: „Ich **fuhr** nach London“

Er schrieb: „Ich **war** nach London **gefahren**“

Reported:

Er schrieb, er **sei** nach London **gefahren**

Direct:

Sie sagten: „Wir **haben** den Film **gesehen**“
 Sie sagten: „Wir **sahen** den Film“
 Sie sagten: „Wir **hatten** den Film **gesehen**“

Reported:

Sie sagten, sie **hätten**
 den Film **gesehen**
 (**not**: ..., sie haben den
 Film gesehen)

e To report statements in the future tense, German uses Subjunctive 1 of werden plus the infinitive

- If this is identical to the indicative, the Subjunctive 2 of werden is used:

Direct: Sie sagte: „Ich werde auf die Uni gehen“

Reported: Sie sagte, sie **werde** auf die Uni **gehen**

She said she would go to university

Direct: Sie sagten: „Wir werden bestimmt dorthin fahren“

Reported: Sie sagten, sie **würden** bestimmt dorthin **fahren** (**not**: sie werden)

They said they would definitely go there

▶ 17.3.2 Commands in reported speech

- **Commands are usually expressed in reported speech by using sollen**

As in other forms of reported speech, the Subjunctive 2 form is used if necessary to avoid ambiguity.

Direct: Er sagte ihm: „Warten Sie einen Augenblick“

Reported: Er sagte ihm, er **solle** einen Augenblick warten

He told him to wait for a moment

Direct: Er sagte uns: „Warten Sie einen Augenblick“

Reported: Er sagte uns, wir **sollten** einen Augenblick warten

He told us to wait for a moment

▶ 17.3.3 Questions and requests in reported speech

- a **Reported questions become subordinate clauses introduced by the interrogative**

Direct: „Wann fährt der Zug?“, fragte er

Reported: Er fragte, **wann** der Zug **abfahre**

He asked when the train left

- b **If there is no interrogative, the reported question is introduced with ob if**

Direct: „Ist der Zug schon abgefahren?“, fragte er

Reported: Er fragte, **ob** der Zug schon **abgefahren sei**

He asked if the train had already left

▶ 17.3.4 Avoiding the use of reported speech

- a While formal usage usually requires the Subjunctive 1, dass plus a subordinate clause in the indicative is acceptable, even in formal German, and will often be found alongside the subjunctive**

Sie wies darauf hin, **dass** die Ausländer einen bedeutenden Faktor **darstellen** *She pointed out that foreigners were a significant factor*

Sie kommt zu dem Schluss, **dass** Arbeitsplätze nicht beliebig getauscht werden **können** *She concludes that jobs cannot simply be exchanged at will*

- ♦ If **dass** is omitted, the subjunctive must be used:

Sie wies darauf hin, die Ausländer **stellten** einen bedeutenden Faktor **dar** *She pointed out that foreigners were a significant factor*

- b Colloquial German mostly avoids the Subjunctive 1 completely**

Er sagt, er **hat** einfach keine Zeit *He says he just doesn't have the time*

Sie sagt, sie **wird** uns bald besuchen *She says she'll visit us soon*

- ♦ Used in colloquial language, the choice of Subjunctive 1 implies considerable doubt on the part of the speaker:

Sie sagt, sie **sei** krank *She says she's ill (...but I think she's probably pretending)*

▶ 17.3.5 Subjunctive 1 in wishes and commands

- ♦ **This use is mostly restricted to the third person**

Es **lebe** die Freiheit! *Long live freedom!*

Gott **sei** Dank! *Thank goodness!*

Seien¹ wir froh, dass... *Let's be happy that ...*

¹ The normal **wir** form of the imperative is in fact a Subjunctive 1. However, **sein** is the only verb where this is clear.

17.4 Subjunctive 2/Konjunktiv II: use

- ♦ **Note** The English use of *would* for repeated actions in the past (*Every day, he would go to the park*) is not a subjunctive, but a past tense.

▶ 17.4.1 One-word and two-word forms and register

- a German today uses the würde + infinitive almost exclusively, apart from the auxiliaries, the modals, and a few strong and irregular verbs listed in 17.2.3a above, though even here würde + infinitive is now used colloquially**

- ♦ This is acceptable even if **würde** is used twice, separated only by a comma:

Wenn ich dort **arbeiten würde**, **würde** ich **versuchen**, eine neue Stelle zu finden *If I worked there, I would try to find a new job*

- würde may be used in wenn clauses, unlike English, where *would* cannot usually appear in the same clause as *if*:

Wenn er morgen **ankommen**
würde, würde ich mich **freuen** *If he arrived tomorrow, I'd be really pleased*

TIP Simple (one-word) Subjunctive 2 or würde + infinitive?

An easy to remember rule is:

- One word forms: auxiliaries, modal verbs and geben
hätte, wäre, würde, könnte, müsste, dürfte, möchte, es gäbe
- Two-word forms: all other verbs
er würde ... kaufen, sie würde ... gehen

b In formal language, the one-word forms of weak verbs are occasionally found

Wenn er nicht **rauchte**, wäre er
viel gesünder *If he didn't smoke, he would be much healthier*

Wenn ich dort **arbeitete**, müsste
ich versuchen, eine neue Stelle
zu finden *If I worked there, I would have to try to find a new job*

Note If the one-word form of the verb is used, it is important that the statement is clearly subjunctive, if that is what is required. Compare these two sentences; the weak verb in the first clause could be either indicative or conditional; the verb in the following clause makes it clear:

Wenn ich ihn **besuchte**,
versuchte ich ihm zu helfen *Whenever I visited him, I tried to help him*

Wenn ich ihn **besuchte, würde**
ich **versuchen**, ihm zu helfen *If I visited him, I would try to help him*

▶ 17.4.2 'Real' and 'unlikely' conditions and events

- Conditions are usually introduced by **wenn**; alternatively, **falls** may be used, as it is completely unambiguous in meaning **if, in case**. For other possibilities see 17.4.2e below.

a 'Real' conditions and events. For events and conditions which are quite possible, the indicative is used

Wenn ich Zeit **habe, gehe** ich ins
Kino *If I have the time, I'll go to the cinema*

Falls du in den Supermarkt **gehst,**
kannst du bitte Milch holen? *If you happen to go to the supermarket, can you get some milk?*

Nimm den Regenschirm mit, falls
es **regnet** *Take the umbrella with you in case it rains*

b 'Unlikely' conditions and events. For events which are felt to be less likely, or are less certain, the Subjunctive 2 is used

Wenn ich Zeit **hätte, würde** ich
öfter ins Kino gehen *If I had the time, I'd go to the cinema more often*

An deiner Stelle **würde** ich nein
sagen *If I were you, I'd say no*

Es wäre toll, wenn du uns besuchen könntest	<i>It would be great if you could visit us</i>
Wenn ich in Berlin leben würde , würde ich oft in die Oper gehen	<i>If I lived in Berlin, I would go to the opera often</i>

• This also includes tentative statements:

Das dürfte wohl die beste Lösung sein	<i>That might well be the best solution</i>
Er dürfte sechzehn sein	<i>He is perhaps sixteen</i>

c **even if ...**

- Auch wenn.../ selbst wenn ... / sogar wenn .../wenn...auch... **all mean** 'even if...'
Auch wenn ich das **wüsste**,
würde ich es dir nicht **sagen**
- | |
|---|
| <i>Even if I knew that, I wouldn't tell
you</i> |
|---|

TIP Conditional in both wenn clause and main clause

- While English uses the simple past tense in the *if* clause (apart from *to be* as in: *If I were ...*) and the conditional in the main clause, **German uses Subjunctive 2 in both clauses.**

Wenn ich ihn besuchte/besuchen würde, könnte ich ihm helfen	<i>If I visited him, I could help him</i>
--	---

d **wenn** is sometimes omitted, though not normally in everyday speech

- The condition is stated first, with the verb at the start. The second clause quite often starts with *so* or *dann*:

Hätte ich genug Geld, (so) würde ich nach Amerika fahren	<i>If I had enough money, I would go to America</i>
Hätte ich das gewusst, (so) wäre ich zu Hause geblieben	<i>Had I known that, I'd have stayed at home</i>
Wäre ich so reich wie du, ...	<i>If I were as rich as you, ...</i>

e Other phrases may introduce unreal or unlikely conditions

An deiner Stelle würde ich sie sofort anrufen	<i>If I were you, I would phone her immediately</i>
In so einem Fall könnte ich dir vielleicht helfen	<i>In such a case I might be able to help you</i>

▶ 17.4.3 Wishes

- Wishes are also hypothetical conditions, so Subjunctive 2 may be used

Ich würde so gerne hier bleiben!	<i>I'd really love to stay here!</i>
Wenn es doch nicht so kalt wäre!	<i>If only it weren't so cold!</i>
Wenn ich doch mehr Geld verdiente!	<i>If only I earned more money!</i>

(Or ... verdienen würde)

▶ 17.4.4 Polite requests and statements

- ♦ **As in English, Subjunctive 2 is used to make requests, statements, etc. sound more polite**

Könntest du mir helfen?	<i>Could you help me?</i>
Ich möchte ein Pfund Butter	<i>I'd like a pound of butter</i>
„ Hätten Sie noch einen Wunsch?“	<i>'Is there anything else?'</i>
„Nein, danke. Das wär's “	<i>'No thanks. That's all'</i>
Ich hätte noch eine Frage	<i>I'd like to ask another question</i>
Ich würde sagen , dass ...	<i>I'd say that ...</i>

Note With friends and family, **bitte** gives quite enough politeness to a request made with a rising, querying tone; Subjunctive 2 is not necessary.

Gibst du mir bitte das Salz?	<i>Could you pass the salt, please?</i>
Kannst du mir bitte mal helfen?	<i>Could you just help me, please?</i>

▶ 17.4.5 Future in the past

- ♦ **The conditional is often used for a future event from the point of view of the past**

Ich wusste schon mit sechzehn, ich würde Politiker werden	<i>Even at sixteen, I knew that I would become a politician</i>
Niemand glaubte, dass wir ihn nie wiedersehen würden	<i>Nobody believed that we would never see him again</i>

▶ 17.4.6 als ob + Subjunctive 2

- a **als ob (as if) must be followed by the subjunctive – usually Subjunctive 2. See 17.4.6b below**

Er sieht aus, als ob er weinen würde	<i>He looks as if he's crying (or: about to cry)</i>
Er sah aus, als ob er krank wäre	<i>He looked as if he were (or: was) ill</i>
Er tat, als ob er nichts hörte	<i>He pretended not to hear anything</i>

- ♦ Occasionally, for the sake of clarity, the indicative may be used:

Es scheint, als ob fast alles, was der Bursche anfasst, zu Gold wird	<i>It seems as if everything the youngster touches turns to gold</i>
---	--

- b **ob can be omitted; als is then followed by the verb**

- ♦ This usually occurs only in written German:

Er tat, als wüsste er nichts davon	<i>He pretended he knew nothing about it</i>
Sie vermitteln keineswegs den Eindruck, als stünde der Niedergang bevor	<i>They do not give the least impression that they are facing defeat</i>
Man behandelt sie, als seien sie Untermenschen	<i>They're treated as if they were subhuman</i>

c In spoken German, the indicative is often used after *als ob*, instead of Subjunctive 2

Er sieht aus, als ob er schläft	<i>He looks as if he's asleep</i>
Er sah aus, als ob er krank war	<i>He looked as if he were ill</i>

d The Subjunctive 2 is also sometimes used after *als dass*, *nicht dass* and *ohne dass*, for events which were possible, but which did not take place

- It is not obligatory, however, and the indicative is also acceptable:

Das Haus ist zu teuer, als dass wir es kaufen könnten (or: können)	<i>The house is too expensive for us to buy it</i>
---	--

Nicht dass ich geizig wäre , aber ... (or: bin)	<i>Not that I'm stingy, but ...</i>
--	-------------------------------------

Er hat mir geholfen, ohne dass ich ihn darum gebeten hätte (or: gebeten hatte)	<i>He helped me without me asking him</i>
---	---

17.5 'Conditional in the past': uses

- The 'conditional in the past' is sometimes called the 'pluperfect subjunctive'.
- The conditional in the past is used for events which might have been possible but did not in the end happen.
- Where there is a condition (often introduced by *wenn*), German uses the Subjunctive 2 of *haben* or *sein* + past participle in both clauses:

Wenn ich Zeit gehabt hätte , wäre ich öfter ins Kino gegangen	<i>If I had had time, I would have gone to the cinema more often</i>
--	--

Ich hätte viel Geld sparen können , wenn ich einen Diesel gekauft hätte	<i>I could have saved a lot of money if I had bought a diesel</i>
--	---

Was wäre geschehen, hätte Hitler im November 1939 den Bürgerbräukeller eine halbe Stunde später verlassen und wäre von der Bombe getroffen worden ?	<i>What would have happened if Hitler had left the Bürgerbräukeller half an hour later and had been hit by the bomb?</i>
---	--

Deutschland wäre viel Zerstörung erspart geblieben	<i>Germany would have been spared much of the destruction</i>
--	---

Viele der Opfer wären zu retten gewesen	<i>Many of the victims could have been saved</i>
---	--

Deutschland hätte das Spiel fast verloren	<i>Germany nearly lost the match (but didn't)</i>
---	---

Word order

OVERVIEW

Clauses

- ♦ A **clause** is a group of words with a subject and a verb. There may also be an **object** or an **adverbial phrase**. The following are clauses:

Richard schläft Ich fahre mit dem Bus Wenn es kalt ist, ...

- ♦ A **main clause** is a clause which in a longer sentence would make sense standing alone; a sentence may consist of just one such clause, as in the first two examples above. The following example contains two main clauses joined by **und**:

Ich fahre in die Stadt **und** sie geht in die Uni

- ♦ A **subordinate clause** is one which will not make sense standing alone, because it starts with a subordinating conjunction, e.g. *weil because, wenn if, when*:

Wenn ich in die Stadt fahre, ...
..., **weil** sie auf die Uni geht

- ♦ A **conjunction** is a word used to join two clauses, e.g. *wenn, weil, und, oder*

Sentences

- ♦ A **simple sentence** consists of one clause with a finite verb:

Ich bleibe zu Hause Sie muss arbeiten Er hat ein Auto gekauft

- ♦ A **compound sentence** consists of two clauses joined by a co-ordinating conjunction:

Ich bleibe zu Hause, **aber** sie muss arbeiten

- ♦ A **complex sentence** consists of a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses, joined by a **subordinating conjunction**:

Ich bleibe zu Hause, **weil** ich arbeiten muss

Word order

- ♦ In German, it is case endings which indicate the subject and the object of the verb, not always, as in English, the relative position of subject – verb – object. These two sentences have the same meaning, because of the sense and the accusative ending on **den**:

Mein Bruder will den Wagen kaufen
Den Wagen will mein Bruder kaufen

- Most issues of word order concern the position of the finite verb.
 - **Main clause:** verb second
 - **Subordinate clause:** verb at the end
 - **Questions:** subject and verb inverted
 - **Commands:** verb first

18.1 The position of the verb

- In **statements** (i.e. any sentence that is not a question or command), there are only two positions for the verb: as the **second idea** in a main clause, or **at the end** of a subordinate clause.
- For word order in **questions** and **commands** see 18.1.3 below.

▶ 18.1.1 Main clauses

a Word order Rule 1. In a main clause, the finite verb¹ is the second idea

- The **first idea** may be the **subject**, an **adverbial**, the **object** of the verb, or a **subordinate clause** (see section 18.1.4 below).
- **Any other part of the verb** (which may be a separable prefix, a past participle or an infinitive) stands **at the end of the clause**. This characteristically German pattern is called the **verbal bracket**, and the position after the verb is often referred to as the *Mittelfeld* (central position).

¹The **finite verb** is the conjugated verb with its tense and personal endings added, i.e. not the infinitive or a participle.

First idea (<i>Vorfeld</i>)	Finite verb (second idea)	Central section (<i>Mittelfeld</i>)	Prefix, infinitive, past participle
Am liebsten	esse	ich Fisch	
Ich	habe	diesen Film noch nicht	gesehen
Diesen Film	müssen	wir unbedingt	sehen!
Mein Freund	ruft	mich jeden Abend	an
Auch gestern	bin	ich viel zu spät	abgefahren
Weil es spät war,	musste	er bei uns	übernachten

b Interjections – ja, nein, ach, nun, etc. – and names as forms of address have no effect on the word order

Nein, ich kann dir nicht helfen

No, I can't help you!

Peter, da bist du ja!

Peter, there you are!

Du meine Güte, es schneit!

My goodness, it's snowing!

Aua, das tut weh!

Ouch! That hurts!

▶ 18.1.2 The first position in a main clause (*Vorfeld*)

- German word order is highly flexible. As long as the verb stands in the second position, almost any element of a statement can stand in the first position. No verb forms or other grammar need be changed.

So habe ich es nicht gemeint Erst mit sechzehn durfte ich ...	<i>That's not how I meant it It was only when I reached sixteen that I was allowed to ...</i>
Das habe ich auch gesagt!	<i>That's what I said too!</i>

a There can be only one idea in the Vorfeld

- In English, by contrast, several elements may appear before the verb:
Dann hat er die Tür langsam aufgemacht *Then, slowly, he opened the door*
Or Langsam hat er dann die Tür aufgemacht

b The first element is usually the link to what is already known to the listener/reader

- It usually refers to something already mentioned, and about which the writer/speaker wishes now to say something new, such as about Peter in the examples below. It is not 'for emphasis', as is often assumed; that is achieved in a different way (see 18.3.4c).

Kennst du Peter ? ... (subject) Er ist gestern abgefahren (adverb) Mit ihm gehe ich ins Kino (object) Ihn will ich nie wieder sehen! (subordinate clause) Wenn er Zeit hat , treffen wir uns	<i>He left yesterday I'm going to the cinema with him I never want to see him again! If he has the time, we'll meet</i>
Ich esse gern Fleisch, aber am liebsten esse ich Fisch	<i>I like eating meat, but I like fish best</i>
Hier ist das Kinoprogramm . Diesen Film müssen wir unbedingt sehen!	<i>Here's the cinema programme. We just have to see this film!</i>
Deine Freundin lässt dich manchmal in Ruhe. Mein Freund ruft mich jeden Abend an	<i>Your girlfriend leaves you in peace sometimes. My boyfriend phones me every evening</i>

▶ 18.1.3 Questions and commands

a In questions, the verb comes before the subject; it may be preceded by an interrogative

Hat sie Geschwister?	<i>Does she have brothers or sisters?</i>
Kennst du Peter?	<i>Do you know Peter?</i>
Wo wohnen Sie ?	<i>Where do you live?</i>
In welcher Stadt hat er früher gearbeitet?	<i>In which town did he used to work?</i>

b In commands, the verb stands in first position

Bleib hier!	<i>Stay here!</i>
Warte auf mich!	<i>Wait for me!</i>
Bedient euch!	<i>Help yourselves!</i>
Rufen Sie mich an!	<i>Give me a call!</i>
Kommen Sie herein!	<i>Come in!</i>
Gehen wir!	<i>Let's go!</i>

- ✦ The only exception to this rule is with the infinitive used as imperative in formal instructions, when it must come last.

Nicht **rauchen!**

No smoking!

▶ 18.1.4 Subordinate clauses

- ✦ Any clause which starts with a subordinating conjunction (wenn, weil, etc.) would not make sense as a sentence on its own; it is therefore *subordinate* to a main clause. For the same reason it is sometimes called a *dependent clause*.
- a **Word order Rule 2. In a subordinate clause, the finite verb stands at the end of the clause.**
- ✦ All other elements remain the same as for a main clause; it is normal, however, for the subject of the clause to follow immediately after the conjunction.

Main clause	Conjunction	Subject		Infinitive or past participle	Finite verb
...	obwohl	ich	am liebsten Fisch		esse
	weil	ich	diesen Film nicht	gesehen	habe
	da	wir	diesen Film unbedingt	sehen	müssen
	dass	mein Freund	mich jeden Abend		anruft
	so dass	ich	gestern viel zu spät	abgefahren	bin

b **But in a subordinate clause which contains two infinitives, the finite verb stands before the infinitives**

- ✦ One of the two infinitives is always that of a **modal verb**; or, more rarely, the infinitive of **lassen** or a **verb of perception** (e.g. sehen) used as a past participle. The finite verb in the clause is always an auxiliary (haben, sein, werden or another modal verb):
- | | |
|---|--|
| Weil er mir nicht hätte helfen können, ... | <i>Because he couldn't have helped me, ...</i> |
| Der Teller, den ich habe fallen lassen, ... | <i>The plate which I've dropped, ...</i> |
| Obwohl er diesen Aufsatz sollte schreiben können, ... | <i>Although he ought to be able to write this essay, ...</i> |
| Da er das Buch wird kaufen müssen, ... | <i>As he'll have to buy the book ...</i> |
| Da ich sie nicht hatte abfahren sehen, ... | <i>As I hadn't seen them leave, ...</i> |
| Es gibt genug Beispiele, dass Menschen sich haben bestechen lassen | <i>There are plenty of examples of people who have accepted bribes</i> |

▶ 18.1.5 Verb position in compound or complex sentences

- ✦ A sentence always contains a main clause; it may also contain another main clause and/or a subordinate clause or two. Beyond three clauses in length, it becomes unwieldy. In all instances, however, the rules outlined above still apply.

a Main clause + subordinate clause (= Rule 1 + Rule 2)

Ich kaufe manchmal Steak, obwohl ich am liebsten Fisch esse	<i>I sometimes buy steak, although I like eating fish most of all</i>
Wir sind ins Kino gegangen, weil wir den neuen Film sehen wollten	<i>We went to the cinema because we wanted to see the new film</i>

b Subordinate clause + main clause (= Rule 2 + Rule 1)

- The subordinate clause counts as the first idea, and is therefore followed by the verb of the main clause. Note the characteristic **verb – comma – verb** pattern in the middle of the sentence:

Obwohl ich am liebsten Fisch esse, kaufe ich manchmal Steak	<i>Although I like eating fish most of all, I sometimes buy steak</i>
Weil wir den Film sehen wollten, sind wir ins Kino gegangen	<i>Because we wanted to see the new film we went to the cinema</i>

c Two main or two subordinate clauses

- Conjunctions such as **und**, **aber**, **oder**, and **denn** join two main (usually) or (occasionally) two subordinate clauses. (See also co-ordinating conjunctions 18.2.1.) They retain their usual main or subordinate clause word order:

Ich bleibe zu Hause, und er geht einkaufen	<i>I'm staying at home and he's going shopping</i>
Ich habe Hunger, weil ich zu Mittag nichts aß und den ganzen Nachmittag Fussball spielte	<i>I'm hungry because I had no lunch and played football all afternoon</i>

TIP Keep clauses separate

- Always complete one clause before introducing the next:

Ich stehe **auf**, wenn der Wecker klingelt

Not Ich stehe wenn der Wecker klingelt auf

Er verlässt das Haus, weil er vor **hat**, in die Stadt zu fahren

Not Er verlässt das Haus, weil er in die Stadt zu fahren vor hat

Ich hoffe, dass ich es **kaufen kann**, wenn ich genug Geld habe

Not Ich hoffe, dass wenn ich genug Geld habe ich es kaufen kann

- For the two small exceptions to this rule, see 18.5b below.

18.2 Conjunctions**▶ 18.2.1 Co-ordinating conjunctions****a Co-ordinating conjunctions, as their name implies, join two main or two subordinate clauses**

They are in 'zero position' – i.e. they have no effect on word order; when joining main clauses they are followed by the subject of the clause (not an adverb) and then the verb.

- ♦ The common co-ordinating conjunctions used to join clauses are:

aber ¹	<i>but</i>	oder	<i>or</i>
denn ²	<i>because</i>	sondern ³	<i>but (after a negative)</i>
doch	<i>but</i>	und	<i>and</i>
jedoch	<i>but</i>		

See also Correlative conjunctions, 18.2.3 below.

¹ **aber** does not have to stay as the first idea:

Sie darf am Samstag ausgehen, **aber** sie muss am Freitag zu Hause bleiben
 Sie darf am Samstag ausgehen, sie muss **aber** am Freitag zu Hause bleiben
 Sie darf am Samstag ausgehen, am Freitag **aber** muss sie zu Hause bleiben

² **denn** is not used as the first word in a sentence.

³ **sondern** is used after a clause with a negative (nicht, kein):

Er fährt nicht nach Paris, **sondern** (er) bleibt in Berlin

b Co-ordinating conjunctions may join two main clauses (see 18.1.5c)

Wir fahren nicht ins Ausland, sondern wir verbringen zwei Wochen an der Nordsee	<i>We're not going abroad, but spending two weeks by the North Sea</i>
--	--

c Co-ordinating conjunctions may join two subordinate clauses (see 18.1.5c)

This is much less common than joining two main clauses.

Obwohl ich kein Geld habe und mein Freund zuviel Arbeit hat , gehen wir ins Kino	<i>Although I have no money and my friend has too much work, we're going to the cinema</i>
--	--

TIP Verb position in clauses joined by co-ordinating conjunctions

When two clauses are joined with a co-ordinating conjunction, the verb in the second clause will be in exactly the same position as the verb in the first clause, either second (if the first clause is a main clause), or at the end (if the first clause is a subordinate clause). Compare the sentences in 18.2.1b and 18.2.1c above.

- ♦ Two main clauses joined by a co-ordinating conjunction:

Ich **habe** kein Geld und mein Freund **hat** zuviel Arbeit
 Ich **habe** kein Geld und (ich) **kann** nicht ausgehen

Two subordinate clauses joined by und:

Obwohl ich kein Geld **habe** und mein Freund zuviel Arbeit **hat**, ...
 Weil ich kein Geld **habe** und nicht ausgehen **kann**, ...

- ♦ This correspondence is also true of other items joined by coordinating conjunctions, e.g. noun phrases:

mit **meinem** Bruder und **meiner** Mutter

▶ **18.2.2 Subordinating conjunctions**

- ♦ As their name implies, subordinating conjunctions make the following clause subordinate to, or dependent on, a main clause to complete their meaning

✦ The main subordinating conjunctions are:

Time		Manner and degree	
als	<i>when, than</i>	als	<i>than</i>
bevor, ehe	<i>before</i>	als ob	<i>as if</i>
bis	<i>until, till, by the time</i>	(an)statt dass	<i>instead of</i>
erst als/wenn	<i>not until</i>	außer wenn	<i>except when, unless</i>
seit, seitdem	<i>since (time)</i>	dadurch, dass	<i>by ...-ing</i>
indem	<i>while, as, by -ing</i>	indem	<i>by ...-ing</i>
indes, indessen	<i>while</i>	je ... desto ¹ ...	<i>the more, the more</i>
nachdem	<i>after</i>	nur dass	<i>only that</i>
während	<i>while, whereas</i>	ohne dass	<i>without ... -ing</i>
wenn	<i>when, whenever</i>	sofern	<i>provided that</i>
sobald	<i>as soon as</i>	soweit	<i>as far as</i>
sowie	<i>as well as</i>	wie	<i>as, like</i>
solange	<i>as long as</i>		
sooft	<i>as often as</i>		
kaum dass	<i>hardly, scarcely</i>		
		Condition	
		wenn	<i>if</i>
		falls	<i>if, in case</i>
Cause, reason			
da	<i>as, since, because</i>	Other	
um so mehr, als/da/ weil	<i>all the more because</i>	als ob	<i>as if</i>
weil	<i>because</i>	anstatt dass	<i>instead of</i>
zumal	<i>especially as</i>	außer dass	<i>except that</i>
		außer wenn	<i>except when</i>
		dass	<i>that</i>
		ob	<i>if, whether</i>
Purpose, result		ohne dass	<i>without ...-ing</i>
damit	<i>so that (purpose)</i>	vorausgesetzt, dass	<i>provided that</i>
so dass	<i>so that (result)</i>	was ... auch	<i>whatever</i>
		wie	<i>when, as</i>
Concession		wenn ... nicht	<i>unless</i>
obwohl	<i>although</i>	wer ... auch	<i>whoever</i>
obgleich	<i>although</i>	wo ... auch	<i>wherever</i>
obschon	<i>although</i>	wohingegen	<i>whereas (contrast) (formal)</i>

¹See correlative conjunctions, section 18.2.3 below

a als, wie

Er ist nicht so intelligent, **wie** ich
gedacht hatte
Er ist noch intelligenter, **als** ich
gedacht hatte

*He is not as intelligent **as** I had
thought
He is even more intelligent **than** I
had thought*

See also 18.2.2e *when* below.

b als ob is the one conjunction which always requires the use of the Subjunctive 2 (see 17.4.6)

Er fährt das Auto immer, **als ob**
er Rennfahrer wäre

*He always drives the car
as if he were a racing driver*

c dass may sometimes be omitted; the word order then reverts to normal Rule 1 (main clause)

- ...colloquially after verbs of perception, thinking, etc.:

Ich meine, du hast recht *I think you're right*

- ...in reported speech:

Sie sagte, sie habe eine Erkältung *She said she had a cold*

- dass should not be followed immediately by another conjunction:

Er sagte, **dass** er mir helfen
würde, **wenn** er Zeit hätte *He said he would help me if he
had the time*

Not Er sagte, dass, wenn er Zeit
hätte, er mir helfen würde

d anstatt dass/ohne dass are usually replaced by anstatt ... zu + inf or ohne ... zu + inf (see 14.1.1d)**e when may be expressed by one of three conjunctions**

- **als:** once in the past:

Als ich um 7 Uhr aufgestanden
bin, ... *When I got up at 7 o'clock ...*

Als ich ein kleiner Junge war, ... *When I was a young boy ...*

- **wann:** questions (direct or indirect):

Ich weiß nicht, **wann** ich sie zum
letzten Mal sah *I don't know when I last saw her*

- **wenn:** all other uses (i.e. present, future, repeated actions in any tense):

Jeden Tag, **wenn** ich mit dem Bus
fuhr, *Every day when I went on the
bus...*

Wenn ich früh aufstehe, ... *When(ever) I get up early...*

Wenn du uns im Sommer
besuchst, ... *When you visit us next summer...*

f Interrogatives are also used as subordinating conjunctions

inwiefern	<i>in what way</i>	wie	<i>how</i>
inwieweit	<i>to what extent</i>	wie viel	<i>how much</i>
wann	<i>when</i>	wie viele	<i>how many</i>
warum	<i>why</i>	wo	<i>where</i>
was	<i>what</i>	woher	<i>where ... from</i>
wer, wen, wem	<i>who, whom</i>	wohin	<i>where ... to</i>
weshalb	<i>why</i>	womit, wozu	<i>what ... with/for, etc.</i>
wessen	<i>whose</i>		

Ich weiß nicht, wo er jetzt wohnt	<i>I don't know where he's living now</i>
Sie hat mir nicht gesagt, mit wem sie ins Kino geht	<i>She didn't tell me who she's going to the cinema with</i>

g Relative pronouns also introduce subordinate clauses (see 4.7)

Kennst du den Mann, der in der Ecke sitzt ?	<i>Do you know the man who's sitting in the corner?</i>
Das ist der Freund, mit dem ich gestern gesprochen habe	<i>That's the friend I was talking to yesterday</i>

▶ 18.2.3 Correlative (two-part) conjunctions

✦ **Note the word order in the following two-part constructions**

a je ... desto/um so ... the more ... the more...

je introduces a subordinate clause, and desto/um so ... a main clause:

Je länger er arbeiten muss, desto schlechter gelaunt ist er	<i>The longer he has to work, the worse his mood becomes</i>
Je öfter ich diese Musik höre, um so besser gefällt sie mir	<i>The more I listen to this music, the more I like it</i>

b entweder ... oder either ... or...

Entweder bleibst du bei uns, oder du gehst nach Hause	<i>Either you stay with us or you go back home</i>
Du bleibst entweder bei uns oder bei seinen Eltern	<i>You can stay either with us or with his parents</i>

c weder ... noch neither ... nor

Er hatte weder Geld, noch konnte er Arbeit finden	<i>He had no money, nor could he find any work</i>
Er hatte weder Geld noch Arbeit	<i>He had neither money nor work</i>
Weder hat sie uns besucht, noch hat sie von sich hören lassen	<i>She has neither visited us nor been in touch</i>

d nicht nur ... , sondern ... auch not only ..., but also

Er war nicht nur deprimiert, sondern er hatte auch finanzielle Probleme	<i>He was not only depressed, but also had financial problems</i>
--	---

e bald ... bald now ... now

Bald lachte sie, bald weinte sie	<i>Now she was laughing, now crying</i>
--	---

f mal ... mal sometimes ... sometimes

Mal arbeite ich im Haus, mal im Garten	<i>Sometimes I work in the house, sometimes in the garden</i>
--	---

▶ 18.2.4 Variations from the verb-position rules for main clauses (18.1.1) and subordinate clauses (18.1.4)

a Certain two-part conjunctions + main clause

was... auch...	<i>whatever</i>
welche ... auch...	<i>whichever</i>
so/wie ... auch...	<i>however</i>
ob ... oder...	<i>whether or not</i>

- Note that the subject and verb in the main clause are not inverted:

In welche Richtung man auch sehen mag, man kann ...	<i>In whatever direction you look, ... you can...</i>
Ob es kalt ist oder nicht, ich gehe ...	<i>Whether it's cold or not, I go ...</i>

b Parenthetical clauses

- Subject and verb invert only in very short parenthetical clauses:

Sie sei, heißt es , sehr intelligent	<i>She is, it's said, very intelligent</i>
Er ist, glaube ich , sehr reich	<i>He is, I believe, very rich</i>

- With longer constructions, there is no inversion:

Er ist – ich habe es oft gehört – sehr reich	<i>He is – I've often heard – very rich</i>
---	---

▶ 18.2.5 Adverbs used to link main clauses

a In colloquial German, as in English, a conjunction is not always needed, and an adverb will suffice to link main clauses

- Common adverbs used to link main clauses:

also	} <i>and so, therefore</i>	danach	} <i>then</i>
daher		dann	
darum		dennoch	<i>yet, nevertheless</i>
deshalb		kaum	<i>hardly</i>
deswegen		sonst	<i>otherwise</i>
auch	<i>also</i>	trotzdem	<i>in spite of that</i>
außerdem	<i>besides</i>	übrigens	<i>moreover, besides</i>
da	<i>so, then (cf.: da – conjunction)</i>	zwar	<i>it's true</i>

b The adverb is always followed by the verb

Ich muss mich beeilen, sonst verpasse ich den Bus	<i>I must hurry, otherwise I'll miss the bus</i>
Wir verbringen zwei Wochen an der Küste, danach fahren wir in die Schweiz	<i>We're spending two weeks at the coast, then we're going to Switzerland</i>
Zwar war ich da, aber ich habe fast nichts gesehen	<i>It's true I was there, but I saw almost nothing</i>

c also, daher, darum, deshalb, deswegen have almost identical meanings, and usually answer the question 'Why?'

Morgen habe ich eine Prüfung, also muss ich heute viel lernen	<i>I have an exam tomorrow so I'll have to work hard today</i>
---	--

d In more formal German, a conjunction and a subordinate clause can be used

Ich muss heute viel lernen, weil ich morgen eine Prüfung habe	<i>I have to work hard today, because I have an exam tomorrow</i>
Wenn ich mich nicht beeile, verpasse ich den Bus	<i>If I don't hurry, I'll miss the bus</i>
Obwohl ich da war, habe ich fast nichts gesehen	<i>Although I was there, I saw almost nothing</i>

18.3 The position of elements within the clause**▶ 18.3.1 Predicative adjectives**

- ♦ **Predicative adjectives usually stand at the end of the main clause, except with compound verbs; in subordinate clauses the verb stands last**

Das Wetter ist heute schlecht	<i>The weather is bad today</i>
Das Museum ist auch für Kinder interessant	<i>The museum is interesting even for children</i>
Das Wetter ist heute schlecht gewesen	<i>The weather has been bad today</i>
Weil das Wetter heute schlecht gewesen ist, ...	<i>As the weather has been bad today...</i>

▶ 18.3.2 Pronouns and nouns

- a **Two or more pronouns (including reflexive pronouns): object pronouns usually stand straight after the finite verb, accusative then dative**

- ♦ The subject pronoun (nominative), if it is not in first position, precedes them:

„Diesen Film müssen wir unbedingt sehen!“	<i>'We really just have to see this film!'</i>
„Morgen sehen wir ihn im Kino“	<i>'Tomorrow we're going to see it at the cinema'</i>
Dann setzte er sich	<i>Then he sat down</i>
Heute schickt er ihn seinem Freund	<i>Today he's sending it to his friend</i>
Er schickt ihn ihm	<i>He's sending it to him</i>
Wenn er ihn ihm schickt, ...	<i>If he's sending it to him, ...</i>
Setzen Sie sich , bitte!	<i>Please sit down!</i>
Hoffentlich erholst du dich schnell	<i>I hope you'll feel better soon</i>

- ♦ In infinitive clauses, pronouns precede the infinitive, obeying the rule that infinitives stand at the end:

Sie ging in ihr Zimmer, um sich umzuziehen	<i>She went to her room to get changed</i>
--	--

- b **A pronoun and a noun phrase: pronouns (including reflexive pronouns) come first, immediately after the verb of the main clause**

Heute schickt der Junge seinem Freund den Brief	<i>Today the boy is sending his friend the letter</i>
– Heute schickt ihm der Junge den Brief	<i>– Today the boy is sending him the letter</i>

– Heute schickt ihn der Junge seinem Freund	– <i>Today the boy is sending it to his friend</i>
– Er schickt ihm den Brief	– <i>He's sending him the letter</i>
– Er schickt ihn seinem Freund	– <i>He's sending it to his friend</i>
Gestern sahen ihn meine Freunde im Kino	<i>Yesterday my friends saw him at the cinema</i>
Mein Sohn wäscht sich die Hände	<i>My son is washing his hands</i>
Jetzt wäscht sich mein Sohn die Hände	<i>Now my son is washing his hands</i>

- In a subordinate clause, the verb of course stands at the end, and the subject follows the conjunction; otherwise the word order is as above:

..., dass der Junge ihm (heute) den Brief schickt
..., dass mein Sohn sich (jetzt) die Hände wäscht

c Demonstrative or indefinite pronouns come after personal pronouns, even if they are the subject

Hat dir das niemand erklärt?	<i>Did no one explain it to you?</i>
Sofort hat ihm dieser gefallen	<i>He liked this one immediately</i>
Gestern habe ich ihm so einen gekauft	<i>Yesterday I bought him one like that</i>

- This word order (personal pronoun + demonstrative/indefinite pronoun) is retained in subordinate clauses:

Wenn dir das niemand erklärt hat, ...	<i>If no one's explained it to you, ...</i>
..., weil ihm dieser sofort gefallen hat	<i>..., because he liked this one immediately</i>

d Two or more nouns: nominative before dative before accusative

- This pattern is as in English if the word *to* is not used:

Heute schickt der Junge seinem Freund einen Brief	<i>Today the boy is sending his friend a letter</i>
Er schickt seinem Freund einen Brief	<i>He's sending his friend a letter</i>
Als der Junge seinem Freund einen Brief schickte, ...	<i>When the boy sent his friend a letter, ...</i>

e Prepositional phrases usually follow other objects

Er schickt den Brief an seinen Freund	<i>He's sending the letter to his friend</i>
Sie wäscht sich die Hände mit Seife	<i>She's washing her hands with soap</i>

- This includes the prepositional objects of verbs such as *warten auf* to wait for (see Chapter 13). These prepositional objects stand as close as possible to the end of the main clause – either at the very end, or directly in front of the infinitive, past participle or infinitive clause:

Man kann sich immer auf ihn verlassen	<i>You can always rely on him</i>
Man muss manchmal stundenlang auf den Bus warten	<i>Sometimes you have to wait hours for the bus</i>

Natürlich freue ich mich immer
darauf, dich wiederzusehen

*Of course I always look forward to
seeing you again*

▶ 18.3.3 The order of adverbs

a Adverbs used together: as a rule of thumb, adverbs usually stand in the order Time – Manner – Place

Ich bin letzte Woche mit dem Bus nach Frankfurt gefahren
Last week I went by bus to Frankfurt

- However, it is common practice to place one of these adverbs (often that of time) before the verb:

Letzte Woche bin ich mit dem Bus nach Frankfurt gefahren

- The English pattern of placing an adverb of time between the article and the verb is not found in German, as the verb must come second:

Ich stehe **immer** früh auf *I **always** get up early*

b When two adverbs of time occur together, the more general adverb stands before the specific

Ich stehe jeden Tag um sieben Uhr auf *I get up every day at 7 o'clock*

c The Time – Manner – Place rule is, however, rather more flexible in practice than the above might suggest

- Time adverbs are usually preceded by comment adverbs and followed by reason adverbs:

Er muss leider heute wegen des Wetters zu Hause bleiben
comment time reason place (complement)

Unfortunately he has to stay at home today because of the weather

d The complement of the verb (i.e. elements which complete the meaning of the verb) stands next to the verb, even if this means ignoring the Time – Manner – Place rule:

Man kann in unserer Stadt gut einkaufen
Place (adverb) manner
There's good shopping in our town

- See also section 18.3.4c below.

▶ 18.3.4 Adverbs in relation to the objects of the verb

a Adverbs stand after subject/object pronouns

Seine Freundin hat ihm **letzte** *His girlfriend gave him a present*
Woche ein Geschenk gegeben *last week*
Nach dem Essen hat er mir **schnell** *After the meal he quickly made*
einen Kaffee gekocht *me a coffee*

b Adverbs often stand between noun objects

Anna hat ihrem Freund **letzte** *Anna gave her boyfriend a present*
Woche ein Geschenk gegeben *last week*

c The order of adverbs and objects may be changed to emphasise different elements

- The order of the elements after the verb can be changed, with the emphasis falling on the one which comes later:

Sie hat ihm das Geschenk letzte Woche gegeben	Emphasis on when
Sie hat ihm letzte Woche das Geschenk gegeben	Emphasis on the gift
Sie hat das Geschenk letzte Woche ihrem Mann gegeben	Emphasis on recipient

18.4 The position of nicht

a nicht goes before

- a predicative adjective:

Deutsch zu lernen ist nicht schwierig	<i>Learning German isn't hard</i>
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- an adverb of manner or place:

Sie ist heute nicht im Büro	<i>She's not in the office today</i>
Ich interessiere mich nicht für diese Musik	<i>I'm not interested in this music</i>

- parts of the verb which are not the finite verb (infinitive, past participle, prefix):

Wir haben den Film nicht gesehen	<i>We haven't seen the film</i>
Fährst du nicht mit?	<i>Aren't you coming with us?</i>
Man darf hier nicht rauchen	<i>You're not allowed to smoke here</i>

b If these are not present, nicht goes to the end

Sie kommt heute nicht	<i>She's not coming today</i>
Er hilft uns nicht	<i>He's not helping us</i>
Ich finde es nicht	<i>I can't find it</i>

c nicht can be placed elsewhere in order to emphasise a particular word or phrase

Normal: Sie will es mir nicht geben	<i>She won't give it to me</i>
But: Sie will es nicht mir geben, sondern meinem Bruder	<i>It's not me she wants to give it to, but my brother</i>

d In subordinate clauses, nicht remains in the same position as above; only the position of the verb changes

Da sie heute nicht kommt, ...	<i>As she's not coming today...</i>
Weil ich mich nicht für diese Musik interessiere, ...	<i>Because I'm not interested in this music, ...</i>
Wenn Sie nicht kommen können, ...	<i>If you can't come, ...</i>
Wenn sie nicht hätten kommen können, ...	<i>If they hadn't been able to come...</i>

18.5 Word order with infinitive clauses

a The infinitive clause must almost always be kept separate from the main clause

In other words, one verbal idea must be completed before introducing the next. When an infinitive clause forms the subject of the verb, it is placed at the beginning of the sentence; otherwise at the end:

So was zu tun ist nicht meine Sache	<i>Doing that sort of thing isn't for me</i>
Ihm dieses Buch zu geben hieße Perlen vor die Säue werfen	<i>Giving him this book would be like casting pearls before swine</i>
Hast du Lust ins Kino zu gehen ?	<i>Would you like to go to the cinema?</i>
Sie wiederzusehen wäre fantastisch!	<i>It would be wonderful to see her again!</i>

- It is tempting for English learners to combine the infinitive clause into the main clause, especially when there is a past participle or another infinitive in the sentence. This temptation must be avoided (see TIP on p. 197).

Ich habe versucht, das alles zu lernen (Not Ich habe das alles zu lernen versucht)	<i>I tried to learn all of it</i>
Er muss mir helfen, alles aufzuräumen (Not Er muss mir aufzuräumen helfen)	<i>He must help me clear it all up</i>

b There are two exceptions to this rule

- If the infinitive clause consists *only* of **zu** plus the infinitive it can, in formal German, occasionally be found incorporated into the main clause:

Er hat zu schreiben angefangen	<i>He began to write</i>
Or Er hat angefangen zu schreiben	

- An infinitive clause which follows on from a relative clause becomes part of the relative clause. This is an exception to the rule above, although in colloquial German this form is avoided:

... die Frau, deren Tochter ich anzurufen versucht hatte	<i>... the woman whose daughter I had tried to phone</i>
... sondern ich sah den Knaben, den abzuholen sie gekommen waren	<i>... but I saw the boy whom they had come to fetch</i>

Word formation

OVERVIEW

Simple and complex words

- **Simple words** consist of just one element:

das Kind *child* reich *rich*

- **Complex words** consist of more than one element, created by the addition of a prefix or suffix or joining two or more words together to form a **compound word**:

kindisch *childish*
 der Kindergarten *kindergarten*
 steinreich *really rich*
 der Reichtum *wealth*
 bereichern *to enrich*

- Often, more than one of these means is used:

Um / welt / freund / lich / keit *ecofriendliness*

- The root word may be **modified**, usually by changes to the vowel, e.g. sprechen *to speak*:

der Sprecher <i>speaker</i>	der Spruch <i>saying</i>
die Sprache <i>language</i>	das Gespräch <i>conversation</i>
die Besprechung <i>discussion</i>	das Sprichwort <i>proverb</i>
sprachlich <i>linguistic</i>	deutschsprachig <i>German-speaking</i>

- One of the characteristics of German is the ease with which new complex words are constantly formed – a true ‘Lego language’; it is vital that the learner understands how this happens, as new combinations are encountered all the time.

- It is often easier to understand complex and compound words in German than in English. Start with the root word; in nouns this is usually the last element:

der Kinder**arzt** *paediatrician* (= children’s doctor)
 der Frauen**arzt** *gynaecologist* (= women’s doctor)
 unter**schreiben** *to sign* (= to under-write)

19.1 General points

- Learners of German quickly learn that all long words (and it is possible to form some very long words indeed!) are made up from little words or other elements;

breaking a long word down into its component parts usually makes even a daunting word relatively easy to understand. German is highly flexible on this count, and English (which is quite capable of producing its own compounds such as *bookshop* and *caretaker*) sometimes borrows German compounds such as *Schadenfreude* *schadenfreude* (*gloating over someone's misfortune*), or even translates them element by element (*Autobahn* *motorway*, *Verkehrsberuhigung* *traffic calming*).

- Not that compound words are necessarily all that long: it is easy to work out from its elements that a *Parkhaus* is a *multi-storey car park*, or that an *Atomsperrvertrag* is a *nuclear non-proliferation treaty* (from *sperr* to *block* and *Vertrag* *treaty, contract*).

▶ 19.1.1 Root words

- **'Root' words are the base words from which 'complex' (=more than one element) words may be formed**

e.g.

die **Liebe** *love*:

lieben *to love*

sich **verlieben** *in to fall in love with*

beliebt *popular*

die **Beliebtheit** *popularity*

die **beliebig** (*viel*) *as many (as you wish)*

die **Vorliebe** *predilection, preference*

lieblos, **lieb**voll, **lieblich** *loveless, loving, lovely*

die **Tierliebe** *love of animals*

der/die **Geliebte** *lover*

der **Liebling** *favourite*

liebhaben *to be fond of*

die **Hassliebe** *love-hate relationship*

▶ 19.1.2 Complex words

- **'Complex' words may be formed in several ways**

	Root word	Complex word
Prefix	Geduld <i>patience</i> alt <i>old</i> sprechen <i>to speak</i> einfach <i>simple</i>	Ungeduld <i>impatience</i> uralt <i>ancient</i> besprechen <i>to discuss</i> vereinfachen <i>to simplify</i>
Suffix	Geduld <i>patience</i> schön <i>lovely</i> meinen <i>to think</i> faul <i>lazy</i>	geduld ig <i>patient</i> Schön heit <i>beauty</i> Mein ung <i>opinion</i> faul enzen <i>to laze about</i>
Vowel change	sprechen <i>to speak</i> ander <i>other, different</i> Gruß <i>greeting</i>	die Spr a che <i>language</i> ä n dern <i>to change</i> begrü ß en <i>to greet</i>

	Root word	Complex word
Compounding	fahren + Plan <i>to travel + plan</i> klein + Geld <i>small + money</i> Liebe + voll <i>love + full</i> um + Arme <i>around + arms</i>	Fahrplan <i>timetable</i> Kleingeld <i>(loose) change</i> liebepoll <i>affectionate</i> umarmen <i>to embrace</i>

19.2 Formation of nouns

- **Adjective-nouns:** the formation, declension and use of adjectives used as nouns are covered in detail in 5.2. Adjectives may form part of many other nouns, usually by the addition of a suffix – see 19.2.2a, c, g, h, and l–o below.

▶ 19.2.1 Nouns from verbs

a Infinitives as nouns

- Almost all infinitives (including those of compound verbs) can be used as nouns. They are always neuter, and refer to the action of the verb (English *-ing* form) (e.g. Lesen refers to the action of reading, while Lektüre refers more to the reading material):

das Einkaufen <i>shopping</i>	(cf. die Einkäufe <i>purchases</i>)
das Frühaufstehen <i>getting up early</i>	
das Singen <i>singing</i>	
das Komasaufen <i>binge drinking</i>	
das Wandern <i>hiking, walking</i>	(cf. die Wanderung <i>walk, hike</i>)

b Present and past participles as nouns

Participles used as nouns may be masculine, feminine or neuter; they have the endings of adjectives (see 5.2c).

• Present participles as nouns

These usually refer to the person or thing performing the action:

der/die Vorsitzende <i>chair(man)</i>
der/die Reisende <i>traveller</i>
der/die Auszubildende <i>trainee</i>
das Entscheidende <i>the decisive factor</i>

• Past participles as nouns

These usually have a passive sense – the person or thing to whom something is being done – or denote a past action:

der/die Geliebte <i>beloved, sweetheart</i>
der/die Abgeordnete <i>delegate</i>
der/die Angeklagte <i>accused</i>
der/die Verwandte <i>relative</i>
der/die Interessierte <i>interested person</i>
der/die Gefallene <i>the person who has fallen</i> (e.g. soldier)
das Bekannte <i>what's familiar</i>

c Nouns from the stem of verbs• **Verb stem, often with a vowel change**

Most nouns so formed are masculine:

befehlen – der Befehl <i>command</i>	schießen – der Schuß <i>shot</i>
fliegen – der Flug <i>flight</i>	schreiten – der Schritt <i>step</i>
fließen – der Fluß <i>river</i>	werfen – der Wurf <i>throw</i>
laufen – der Lauf <i>run, course</i>	ziehen – der Zug <i>pull, train, draught</i>

• **Verb stem less the last letter of the infinitive (most end in -e)**

These nouns are all feminine, with the plural:

feiern – die Feier <i>celebration</i>	pflanzen – die Pflanze <i>plant</i>
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Other examples:

die Ausrede <i>excuse</i>	die Frage <i>question</i>
die Decke <i>cover, ceiling</i>	die Rede <i>speech</i>
die Durchsage <i>announcement</i>	die Regel <i>rule</i>
die Eile <i>haste</i>	die Ruhe <i>rest</i>
die Fliege <i>fly</i>	

▶ **19.2.2 Nouns formed using suffixes****a A few adjectives can be used as nouns without modification**

blau – das Blau <i>blue</i>
fett – das Fett <i>fat</i>
gehorsam <i>obedient</i> – der Gehorsam <i>obedience</i>
hoch <i>high</i> – das Hoch <i>three cheers</i>
ideal – das Ideal <i>ideal</i>

- However, most nouns formed from adjectives, adverbs, other nouns and verbs (apart from those dealt with above) are formed by the addition of a suffix; each suffix is linked to a particular gender, mostly feminine, noted below in brackets.

b -chen/-lein (neuter) with umlaut on stem vowel if possible

- Added to nouns; denotes diminutive. -lein is usually poetic.

das Bächlein	<i>small stream</i>
das Brötchen	<i>bread roll</i>
das Häuschen	<i>little house, cottage</i>
das Mädchen	<i>girl (from die Magd maid (obsolete))</i>

c -e (feminine)

- Added to adjectives, often with an umlaut:

die Ferne	<i>distance</i>	die Nähe	<i>vicinity</i>
die Frische	<i>freshness</i>	die Stärke	<i>strength</i>
die Größe	<i>size</i>	die Tiefe	<i>depth</i>
die Kälte	<i>cold(-ness)</i>	die Wärme	<i>warmth</i>

d -ei (feminine)

- Denotes where something takes place (often a shop), or a collection of things; or repeated and often tiresome activity:

die Bäckerei *bakery*
 die Datei *data bank*
 die Meckerei *griping, moaning*
 die Nörgelei *nagging*

die Bücherei *library*
 die Heuchelei *hypocrisy (from
 heucheln to be a hypocrite)*
 die Metzgerei *butcher's shop*

e -er (sometimes -ler or -ner)/-erin (feminine)

- Added to verb stem, sometimes with an umlaut. These nouns usually denote the person or thing performing the action, or, with place names, an inhabitant.
- Masculine forms (-er) have the plural -; feminine nouns (-erin) form the plural with -nen.

der Bäcker *baker*
 der Berliner *Berliner*
 der Bohrer *drill*
 der Einwohner *inhabitant*
 der Lehrer *teacher*
 der Richter *judge*
 der Schweizer *Swiss*

der Bastler *DIY enthusiast*
 der Besucher *visitor*
 der Einbrecher *burglar*
 der Korkenzieher *corkscrew*
 der Rentner *pensioner*
 der Schriftsteller *writer*
 der Zuschauer *spectator*
 der Weimaraner

Note der Hannoveraner

f -erei (feminine)

- Added to nouns or verbs; denotes repeated or annoying actions:
 die Schlägerei *brawl, punch-up*
 die Schluderei *sloppiness*
 die Schweinerei *complete mess, scandal*

g -heit (feminine)

- Added to past participles, and many adjectives, including those ending in -en and -ern. Denotes a quality (-iness, -ity, etc.):

die Albernheit *silliness*
 die Einzelheit *detail*
 die Gesundheit *health*
 die Kindheit *childhood*
 die Verlegenheit *embarrassment*
 die Wahrheit *truth*

die Beliebtheit *popularity*
 die Freiheit *freedom*
 die Gleichheit *equality*
 die Schönheit *beauty*
 die Verlassenheit *desolation*
 die Sicherheit *safety*

h -igkeit (feminine)

- Added to adjectives ending in -haft and -los and a few others:

die Arbeitslosigkeit *unemployment*
 die Ernsthaftigkeit *seriousness*
 die Häufigkeit *frequency*
 die Müdigkeit *tiredness*
 die Süßigkeit *sweet, sweetness*

i -in (feminine)

- Added to a masculine noun to denote the feminine form. Apart from the examples noted in 19.2.2e and j, note, for instance, the following:
 der Koch – die Köchin
 der Zahnarzt – die Zahnärztin

j -ist (masculine), -istin (feminine)

- Denotes a person by their associated skill, activity or belief.
- The resulting masculine noun is a weak noun (see 2.3.2); feminine: nouns add plural -nen:

der Kommunist *Communist*

der Polizist *police officer*

die Terroristin *terrorist*

der Komponist *composer*

der Rassist *racist*

die Touristin *tourist*

k -ismus (masculine)

- Denotes an ideology, a movement or sometimes a disease:

der Alkoholismus *alcoholism*

der Impressionismus *Impressionism*

der Darwinismus *Darwinism*

der Kapitalismus *capitalism*

Note that the base word sometimes modifies:

totalitär – der Totalitarismus *totalitarianism*

l -keit (feminine)

- Added to adjectives (especially to those ending in -bar, -ig, -isch, -lich, -sam, and some adjectives ending with -el and -er).
- Denotes a quality:

die Aufmerksamkeit *attention*

die Dankbarkeit *gratitude*

die Eitelkeit *vanity*

die Höflichkeit *politeness*

die Mürrischart *moroseness*

die Schwierigkeit *difficulty*

die Bitterkeit *bitterness*

die Einsamkeit *loneliness*

die Freundlichkeit *friendliness*

die Langsamkeit *slowness*

die Sauberkeit *cleanliness*

die Wichtigkeit *importance*

m -ling (masculine)

- Added to adjectives or the stem of verbs.
- Usually denotes a person, often negatively:

der Däumling *thumb (of glove);*

Tom Thumb

der Liebling *darling*

der Widerling *repulsive creep*

der Feigling *coward*

der Schwächling *weakling*

n -nis (neuter or occasionally feminine)

- Added to adjectives or verb stems to form abstract nouns:

bilden – das Bildnis <i>image</i>	finster – die Finsternis <i>darkness</i>
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- Other examples:

das Bedürfnis <i>requirement</i>	das Erlebnis <i>experience</i>
die Fäulnis <i>decay, rot</i>	das Geheimnis <i>secret</i>
das Hindernis <i>obstacle</i>	die Wildnis <i>wilderness</i>

o -schaft (feminine)

- Added to nouns and adjectives.
- Often denotes a group of persons:

die Eigenschaft *characteristic*

die Gesellschaft *society*

die Nachbarschaft *neighbourhood*

die Wirtschaft *economy*

die Freundschaft *friendship*

die Landschaft *landscape*

die Studentenschaft *student body*

die Wissenschaft *knowledge, science*

p -tum (neuter)

- Added to nouns or stems of verbs:

der Beamte – das Beamtentum *civil service, civil servants*

- Other examples:

das Bürgertum *middle classes*

das Eigentum *property*

das Wachstum *growth*

das Christentum *Christianity*

das Fürstentum Liechtenstein *The*

Principality of Liechtenstein

Note There are two masculine nouns:

der Irrtum *error*

der Reichtum *wealth*

q -ung (feminine)

- Added to verb stem; often denotes an action (e.g. English *-ing, -tion*).

- All nouns formed in this way are feminine, with the plural *-en*:

heizen – die Heizung *heating* zahlen – die Zahlung *payment*

- Other examples:

die Ausbildung *training*

die Betreuung *supervision*

die Einladung *invitation*

die Erklärung *explanation*

die Prüfung *examination*

die Behandlung *treatment*

die Bestellung *order*

die Entschuldigung *excuse*

die Hoffnung *hope*

▶ **19.2.3 Nouns formed using prefixes**

- Another way of modifying the meaning of a noun is by the use of prefixes. For the sake of clarity, the only prefixes listed here are those which either have no independent meaning or which might cause confusion. Most prefixes whose meanings are clear from the original (such as *nicht*, prepositions or verb prefixes) have been omitted.

a Erz- arch-, out and out

der Erzbischof *archbishop*

der Erzfeind *arch enemy*

der Erzverbrecher *out and out*

criminal

b Ge- often denotes collections of something, or a lot of activity

das Gebirge *range of mountains*

das Gelächter *laughter*

das Gekicher *giggling*

das Gepäck *luggage*

c Haupt- main

das Hauptfach *main subject*

die Hauptsache *main thing*

das Hauptquartier

headquarters

die Hauptstadt *capital city*

d Miss- indicates opposite or negative

der Misserfolg *failure, flop*

der Missbrauch *misuse, abuse*

das Missverständnis *misunderstanding*

e Un- not- , un-, abnormal

die **Un**geduld *impatience*
 das **Un**kraut *weeds*
 die **Un**moral *immorality*

das **Un**heil *disaster*
 die **Un**menge *vast number*
 der **Un**sinn *nonsense*

f Ur- original, ancient

die **Ur**aufführung *première (of film, play)*
 der **Ur**großvater *great grandfather*
 die **Ur**sache *cause*

die **Ur**einwohner *original inhabitants*
 der **Ur**knall *big bang (astronomy)*
 der **Ur**sprung *origin*

▶ 19.2.4 Compound nouns

- The gender of a compound noun is always the gender of its last component.

a Compound nouns may be formed as follows

- **Noun + noun**¹

der Zahn + die Pasta:	die Zahnpasta <i>toothpaste</i>
die Schule + die Uniform:	die Schuluniform <i>school uniform</i>
- **Adjective + noun**²

fremd + die Sprache:	die Fremdsprache <i>foreign language</i>
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- **Adverb + noun**

wieder + die Gabe:	die Wiedergabe <i>reproduction</i>
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- **Preposition + noun**

aus + der Gang:	der Ausgang <i>exit</i>
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- **Numeral + noun**

vier + das Eck :	das Viereck <i>square</i>
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- **Verb + noun**

fahren + die Karte:	die Fahrkarte <i>ticket</i>
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¹ Care must be taken with the noun + noun group, as there is often an extra letter or syllable added to the first noun; see 19.2.4c below.

² Care must be taken with the adjective + noun group, as the resulting noun may mean something quite different from its elements, e.g.

groß (*big*) + der Vater – der Großvater *grandfather*

hoch (*high*) + die Zeit – die Hochzeit *wedding*

weich (*soft*) + das Ei – das Weichei *weakling, wimp*

b Compound nouns may consist of two, three or more elements – rarely more, as more than three put the noun in danger of becoming unintelligible, unless one or more of the elements can be recognised as words in their own right

die Luft / ab / wehr / rakete *anti-aircraft missile*

(die Abwehr *defence*)

die Verkehrs / beruhigungs / maß / nahmen *traffic calming measures*

(die Maßnahmen *measures*)

TIP Understanding a new compound noun

- The last word in a compound noun is the root or key word, and provides the gender for the whole noun; the words which precede the root word define it:

der Arzt *doctor*

der **Frauen**arzt *gynaecologist*

der **Tier**arzt *vet*

der **Kinder**arzt *paediatrician*

der **Zahn**arzt *dentist*

c Noun + link + noun compound words

As outlined at the beginning of the chapter, one of the characteristics of German is the ease with which nouns can be joined together without the need for linking words such as 'of' or 'for'. However, a word of warning: while unknown compound nouns are usually easy to understand, making up new ones accurately can (for beginners at least) be difficult because of the ending, such as -en or -s, which is sometimes added to the first noun. These endings almost always relate to plural or genitive singular endings associated with the first noun.

- ♦ **-(e)n-** is used especially on nouns with genitive and plural -en, and nouns ending in -e:

der Bauern**n**hof *farm*
 das Brillen**n**etui *glasses case*
 das Greisen**n**alter *extreme old age*
 die Präsident**n**wahl *presidential election*
 die Straß**n**bahn *tram*
 die Student**n**wohnung *student flat/apartment*

- ♦ **-(e)s-** relates to the genitive of masculine or neuter nouns; it is also added to some feminine nouns:

die Ansicht**s**karte *picture postcard*
 die Bundes**s**bank *federal bank*
 das Einheits**s**format *standard format*
 der Geburt**s**tag *birthday*
 die Jahres**s**zeit *season (but: das Jahrbuch – yearbook)*
 das Regierung**s**system *system of government*
 das Tages**s**licht *daylight*

- ♦ **-e-** usually relates to plural -e of the first noun, or to a verb:

das Gästeb**e**zimmer *guest room*
 der Getränke**e**automat *drinks machine*
 das Leseze**e**ichen *bookmark*
 der Schweine**e**braten *roast pork*
 das Tage**e**buch *diary*
 der Wartesaal *waiting room*

- ♦ **-er-** is used with nouns which form their plural with -er or -er:

die Hühner**e**rbrühe *chicken soup*
 der Kinder**e**rgarten *kindergarten*
 das Länd**e**rspiel *international match*
 (cf. die Landes**e**rgrenze *national border – here Land is thought of as singular*)
 der Män**e**nersport *men's sport*

19.3 Formation of adjectives

▶ 19.3.1 Adjectives from the participles of verbs

- ♦ **Present and past participles of verbs may be used as adjectives**

bedeutend *significant* durchgehend *continuous*
 eingebildet *conceited* einladend *inviting, welcoming*

erfahren *experienced*
gefragt *in demand*
verlassen *deserted*

geeignet *suitable*
regierend *governing*
wohlhabend *well-off*

▶ 19.3.2 Suffixes added to form adjectives

- Adjectives may be formed by adding a suffix to a verb stem or noun

a -bar -able, -ible

- added to the stem of a verb:

brauch**bar** *usable*
 ess**bar** *edible*

erreich**bar** *attainable*
 furcht**bar** *terrible*

b -(e)n, -ern (sometimes with umlaut added to base word) made of

eis**ern** *made of iron*
 hölz**ern** *made of wood*

gold**en** *golden*
 led**ern** *made of leather*

But Plastik- or aus Plastik *made of plastic*

c -haft

- added to nouns; denotes a quality:

ernst**haft** *serious*
 mädchen**haft** *girlish*

mangel**haft** *unsatisfactory*
 vorteil**haft** *advantageous*

d -ig (sometimes with an umlaut on the root word)

- may indicate a quality, or forms adjectives from time-expressions or other parts of speech:

bald**ig** *in the near future*
 durst**ig** *thirsty*

damal**ig** *of those days*

fleiß**ig** *conscientious*

ein**ig** *united, agreed*

heut**ig** *modern, of today*

geschäfts**mäßig** *business-like*

neugier**ig** *curious*

mächt**ig** *powerful*

unabh**ängig** *independent*

sonst**ig** *other*

vierzehn**jährig** *(lasting) fourteen years / fourteen years old*

viert**ägig** *(lasting) four days*

- -(e)**rig** is a variant of -ig:

klebr**ig** *sticky* schläfr**ig** *sleepy*

e -isch (sometimes with an umlaut on the root word)

- indicates a quality (sometimes pejorative), or forms an adjective from a geographical or proper name; note the use of lower-case letters with these:

alkohol**isch** *alcoholic*

amerikan**isch** *American*

ausl**ändisch** *foreign*

bayr**isch** *Bavarian*

europ**äisch** *European*

heuchler**isch** *hypocritical*

mörder**isch** *murderous*

prakt**isch** *practical, convenient*

Note Some names lose the **i**: freud**sch** *Freudian*, hannovers**sch** *Hanoverian*.

f -lang indicates a substantial length of time

stundenlang *lasting for hours*

tagelang *lasting for days*

g -lich (with umlaut if possible)

ehrl**ich** *honest*
 gemüt**lich** *cosy*
 jähr**lich** *annual*
 natür**lich** *natural*

nörd**lich** *northern*
 ordent**lich** *tidy*
 röt**lich** *reddish*
 schreck**lich** *terrible*

h -los un-, non-, -less

arbeits**los** *unemployed*
 bedingungs**los** *unconditional*
 hoffnungs**los** *hopeless*
 gewalt**los** *non-violent*

le**blo**s *lifeless*
 obdach**los** *homeless*
 sprach**los** *speechless*

i -mäßig in accordance with

alters**mä**ßig *corresponding to
 one's age*

gesetz**mä**ßig *legal*
 plan**mä**ßig *according to plan*

j -sam added to verb stems and adjectives

biegs**am** *flexible*
 gemeins**am** *mutual, joint*

schweigs**am** *silent*
 unaufhalts**am** *unstoppable*

▶ **19.3.3 Prefixes added to adjectives**

• **The meaning of adjectives can be varied by prefixes**

This list does not include, for instance, prepositional prefixes such as nach-, über-, unter-, or foreign prefixes such as the negative in-, or multi-, prä-, etc., where the meaning is already clear.

a a-: negative prefix, often with specialist words of foreign origin

amoral**isch** *amoral, immoral*
 anormal *abnormal*
 asozial *asocial, antisocial*

b un-: negative prefix

unabhängig *independent*
 unabsichtlich *unintentional*
 unecht *fake*
 unehelich *illegitimate*
 unpraktisch *impractical, inconvenient*

c ur-: original; also used as intensifier

uralt *ancient*
 urdeutsch *ancient Germanic*
 urig *ethnic, special (e.g. pub)*
 urkomisch *extremely funny*
 urplötzlich *very sudden*
 ursprünglich *original*

▶ **19.3.4 Compound adjectives**

a Like nouns, adjectives are often formed from more than one element

• **Noun + adjective**

The noun element sometimes adds -(e)s-, -(e)n- in the same way as compound nouns:

- der Affe + artig – affenartig *ape-like*
- der Bund + deutsch – bundesdeutsch *German Federal*
- der Hund + müde – hundemüde *dog-tired*
- das Kind + sicher – kindersicher *child-safe*
- das Wetter + fest – wetterfest *weatherproof*

♦ **Verb + adjective:**

- gehen + behindert – gehbehindert *disabled*
- pflegen + leicht – pflegeleicht *easy-care*

♦ **Adjective + adjective:**

- minder + wertig – minderwertig *inferior*
- voll + schlank – vollschlank *plump*

♦ **Adverb + adjective:**

- anders + gläubig – andersgläubig *of a different faith*
- rechts + radikal – rechtsradikal *right-wing extremist*
- selbst + bewusst – selbstbewusst *self-confident*

♦ **Pronoun + adjective:**

- all + seitig – allseitig *all-round, general*
- ich + bezogen – ichbezogen *self-centred*

b A prefix or other word may be added to intensify the sense of an adjective

allers schönste <i>most beautiful of all</i>	hyper aktiv <i>hyperactive</i>
erz faul <i>bone idle</i>	super leicht <i>incredibly easy/light</i>
extra fein <i>superfine</i>	über sensibel <i>oversensitive</i>
grund falsch <i>utterly wrong</i>	ultra modern <i>ultra-modern</i>
hoch aktuell <i>highly topical</i>	ur komisch <i>really funny</i>

♦ Some intensifiers are nouns associated with particular adjectives:

affengeil <i>brilliant, amazing</i>	mausetot <i>dead as a dodo</i>
blitz blank <i>clean as a new pin</i>	messers scharf <i>very sharp</i>
blitz schnell <i>lightning fast</i>	nagel neu <i>brand new</i>
felsen fest <i>rock solid</i>	

19.4 Formation of adverbs

♦ **Adverbs and adjectives are normally grammatically identical, at least in their single-word forms, e.g. natürlich *natural, naturally*. There are, however, a number of suffixes that are used specifically to form adverbs**

♦ -ens	(with superlative)	erstens <i>firstly</i> , höchstens <i>at most</i>
♦ -falls	<i>in the case of</i>	jedenfalls <i>in any case</i> , gleichfalls <i>and the same to you</i>
♦ -halber	<i>for the sake of</i>	sicherheits halber <i>for safety's sake</i>
♦ -lich		lediglich <i>merely</i> , neulich <i>recently</i>
♦ -lings	(with parts of body)	bäuchlings <i>on one's stomach</i>
♦ -mal	<i>frequency</i>	manch mal <i>sometimes</i> , zweim al <i>twice</i>
♦ -mals	<i>time</i>	dam als <i>in those days</i> , niem als <i>never</i>

♦ -(er)massen		einigerm assen <i>to some extent</i> zugegebener massen <i>admittedly</i>
♦ -s		morgens <i>in the mornings</i> , größtenteils <i>in the main</i>
♦ -seits	<i>from this point of view</i>	meiner seits <i>from my point of view</i> anderer seits <i>on the other hand</i>
♦ -wärts	<i>-wards</i>	auf wärts <i>upwards</i> , heim wärts <i>homewards</i>
♦ -wegen	<i>as far as ... is concerned</i>	meinet wegen <i>as far as I'm concerned</i>
♦ -(s)weise	<i>by (way of)</i>	ausnahme sweise <i>as an exception</i> beispiels weise <i>for example, for instance</i> beziehung weise <i>or, rather</i> möglich erweise <i>possibly</i> tage weise <i>by the day</i> seinet willen <i>for his sake</i>
♦ -willen	<i>for the sake of</i>	

19.5 Formation of verbs

- ♦ Verbs in English often change or expand their basic meaning when they are used with another word, commonly a preposition. For instance, *to look* may become *to look after*, *to look for*, *to look out for*, *to look out*, *to look up*, *to look to*, *to overlook*.
- ♦ German verbs can modify in a very similar way by adding a range of **separable and inseparable prefixes** to the verb, e.g.
'sehen' *to look, to see* may be changed to:

aus sehen <i>to appear</i>	bese hen <i>to take a look at</i>
ein sehen <i>to understand</i>	über sehen <i>to overlook, to see clearly</i>
ver sehen <i>to provide/see to</i>	voraus sehen <i>to foresee</i>

Verbs may also be formed from **adjectives** and nouns (see [section 19.5.4](#) below).

TIP What sort of prefix is it?

- ♦ **Separable prefixes** are usually words in their own right, commonly prepositions. In the infinitive, the emphasis in pronunciation falls on the prefix:
aufräumen *to tidy up* **ausgehen** *to go out*
Pronounced: ausgehen, aufräumen
- ♦ **Inseparable prefixes** are not usually words in their own right. In the infinitive, the emphasis in pronunciation falls on the stem of the verb:
bestellen *to order* **verkaufen** *to sell*
Pronounced: bestellen, verkaufen
- ♦ **Variable prefixes.** There are, however, some exceptions to the above; some prefixes that are words in their own right may (or may not) be inseparable. The most common are *über* and *unter*. These two verbs are inseparable:
überholen *to overtake* **unters**chreiben *to sign*

▶ 19.5.1 Separable prefixes

- ♦ **Separable prefixes are those which may be detached from the verb (see word order 18.1.1a and 18.1.4a)**

Wir fahren um 6 Uhr ab	<i>We're leaving at 6 o'clock</i>
Wir wollen um 6 Uhr ab fahren	<i>We want to leave at 6 o'clock</i>
Wir hoffen, um 6 Uhr ab zufahren	<i>We're hoping to leave at 6 o'clock</i>
Wir sind um 6 Uhr ab gefahren	<i>We left at 6 o'clock</i>
Wenn wir um 6 Uhr ab fahren, ...	<i>If we leave at 6 o'clock ...</i>

- ♦ **Verbs are often used without the prefix if a corresponding preposition is used in the same clause**

Wir müssen in Köln **aussteigen**
 but *Wir müssen aus dem Bus steigen*

a Common separable prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Examples	
ab-	<i>away off, finish, down</i>	ab fahren to leave ab sagen to call off ab schleppen to tow away	ab legen to put down, lay down ab schalten to switch off ab seilen to abseil (let down on a rope)
an-	<i>on, at, starting, approach, reach, do partially</i>	an fangen to start an frieren to start to freeze an kuscheln to snuggle up to an schalten to switch on	an faulen to begin to rot an kommen to arrive an probieren to try on an sehen to look at
auf-	<i>on, up, upon, open</i>	auf decken to uncover auf machen to open	auf pumpen to pump up auf stehen to get up, stand up
aus-	<i>off, out, complete</i>	aus füllen to fill in (form) aus schalten to switch off	aus trinken to finish drinking aus ziehen to undress, pull out
ein-	<i>in, get used to</i>	sich ein arbeiten to get used to a job sich ein lesen to get into a book	ein geben to enter, key in (data) ein steigen to get in, on
entgegen-	<i>against, towards</i>	entgegen arbeiten to work against entgegen treten to oppose	entgegen fahren to drive towards, to meet
fort-	<i>away,¹ (carry) on</i>	fort bestehen to continue to exist fort kommen to get away fort setzen to continue	fort wollen to want to leave
her-²	<i>towards</i>	her bringen to bring here	her laufen to come running
hin-²	<i>away, down</i>	hin fahren to go there	hin fallen to fall down
hinzu-	<i>addition</i>	hinzu bekommen to receive as extra	hinzu fügen to add
los-	<i>off, starting</i>	los fahren to set off	los schießen to open fire
mit-	<i>with</i>	mit arbeiten to cooperate	mit fahren to go with
nach-	<i>after, imitating</i>	nach ahmen to imitate nach gehen to follow	nach prüfen to check nach sprechen to repeat
vor-	<i>ahead, in front, demonstrating</i>	vor lesen to read aloud vor sagen to recite vor sehen to plan, schedule	vor machen to demonstrate vor schlagen to suggest
weg-	<i>away</i>	weg werfen to throw away	weg wollen to want to leave

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
weiter-	<i>carry on</i>	weiter fahren <i>to carry on driving</i> weitere sagen <i>to pass on</i>
zu-	<i>to, towards, closing, addition</i>	zu fahren <i>to drive towards</i> zu kleben <i>to stick down</i> zu machen <i>to close</i> zu nehmen <i>to increase</i> zu wenden <i>to turn towards</i> zu zahlen <i>to pay extra</i>
zurück-	<i>back</i>	zurück geben <i>to give back</i> zurück treten <i>to resign</i>
zusammen-	<i>together, down, up</i>	zusammen fassen <i>to unite, summarise</i> zusammen fallen <i>to collapse</i> zusammen leben <i>to live together</i> zusammen rollen <i>to roll up</i>

¹ In the sense of 'away', fort is a more refined synonym for weg.

² hin and her are most often found attached to another prefix to indicate the direction of the movement in relation to the speaker. See Adverbs, 6.3.3.

Gehen Sie **hinein**!

Go in!

Kommen Sie **herein**!

Come in!

Er lief die Treppe **hinunter/herunter**

He ran down the stairs

b Less common separable prefixes

bei-	<i>with, to</i>	bei legen <i>enclose</i> bei tragen <i>contribute</i>
da-	<i>there</i>	da haben <i>have in stock</i>
dabei-	<i>near</i>	dabei sein <i>be present, involved</i>
daneben-	<i>miss</i>	daneben liegen <i>be quite wrong</i>
dar-	<i>there, for a purpose</i>	dar stellen <i>represent, depict</i>
davon-	<i>away</i>	sich davon machen <i>make off, get away</i>
empor-	<i>up</i>	sich empor arbeiten <i>work one's way up</i>
fest-	<i>tight, firm</i>	fest stehen <i>to be certain</i> fest halten <i>tie up</i>
frei-	<i>free</i>	frei setzen <i>set free</i>
inne-	<i>inside</i>	inne halten <i>pause</i>
nieder-	<i>down</i>	sich nieder lassen <i>settle down, set up business</i>
überein-	<i>agree</i>	überein stimmen <i>agree</i>
voraus-	<i>in advance</i>	voraus sagen <i>predict</i>
vorbei-, (vorüber-)	<i>past</i>	vorbei fahren <i>drive past</i>

c Other separable verb prefixes may be formed using adjectives, adverbs or nouns

• Adjectives/adverbs

fern sehen	<i>to watch TV</i>	wahr nehmen	<i>to perceive</i>
gering schätzen	<i>to think little of</i>	weiter machen	<i>to carry on (doing)</i>
los lassen	<i>to let go</i>	wieder sehen	<i>to meet again</i>

• Nouns

acht geben ¹	<i>to take care</i>	teil nehmen	<i>to participate</i>
halt machen ¹	<i>to call a halt</i>	stand halten	<i>to stand firm</i>
preis geben	<i>to expose</i>	statt finden	<i>to take place</i>

¹ These verbs are also written as noun + verb: Acht geben, Halt machen.

▶ 19.5.2 Inseparable prefixes

a Inseparable prefixes share several characteristics

- Most have no existence as separate words. The commonest of them are **ver-** and **be-**.
- In pronunciation inseparable prefixes are always unstressed:

bestellen, *verkaufen*

- Inseparable prefixes remain attached to the verb in all forms and tenses:

Ich **verkaufe** mein Auto *I'm selling my car*
 Ich hoffe mein Auto zu *I'm hoping to sell my car*

verkaufen

- The past participle does not add *ge-*:

Ich habe mein Auto **verkauft** *I sold my car*

b The inseparable prefixes

Each of the inseparable prefixes except **ge-** and **ver-** has a specific main sense which it brings to the verb, as may be seen in the list below.

• **be-**

- **makes intransitive verbs transitive.** The verb is then used with a direct object in the accusative:

bedienen <i>to serve</i>	instead of	jm dienen
beraten <i>to advise</i>		jm raten
besprechen <i>to discuss</i>		sprechen über
betreten <i>to enter</i>		treten in
bewohnen <i>to inhabit</i>		wohnen in
Wir haben das Problem		<i>We discussed the problem</i>
besprochen		

- **is used to form verbs from nouns or adjectives.** Behind these is the sense of providing with something or a quality. The base word sometimes adds the suffix *-ig-* before the verb ending:

befreien <i>to free</i>	from	frei
befreunden <i>to befriend</i>		der Freund
befristen <i>to limit (time)</i>		die Frist
begünstigen <i>to favour,</i>		die Gunst
<i>encourage</i>		
benachteiligen <i>to disadvantage</i>		der Nachteil
berücksichtigen <i>to take into</i>		die Rücksicht
<i>account</i>		
beruhigen <i>to calm</i>		ruhig
beschädigen <i>to damage</i>		der Schaden
Sie versucht, ihn zu beruhigen		<i>She's trying to calm him down</i>

• **emp-**

- **is used in just three verbs:**

empfangen <i>to receive</i>	empfehlen <i>to recommend</i>
empfinden <i>to feel, perceive</i>	

• **ent-**

- **suggests escaping from, or removing something.** Verbs implying movement used in this way often take the dative:

entdecken <i>to discover</i>	entfernen <i>to remove</i>
-------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

ent fliehen + dat. to flee from	ent führen to hijack, abduct
ent kommen + dat. to escape from	ent lassen to release
ent menschlichen to dehumanise	ent schuldigen to excuse

♦ **er-**

– **suggests a change of state or the successful completion of an action.** Verbs may be formed from other verbs or from adjectives:

er frischen to refresh	er klären to explain
er leben to experience	er schießen to shoot someone

♦ **ge-**

– **has no particular meaning:**

ge brauchen to use, apply	ge raten in + acc. to get into (e.g. trouble)
ge fallen to please	ge währleisten to ensure
ge horchen to obey	ge winnen to win, earn
ge hören + dat. to belong to	sich ge wöhnen an + acc. to get used to

♦ **miss-**

– **is often equivalent to English mis-, indicating ‘wrongly’, ‘inappropriately’:**

miss brauchen to misuse	miss trauen to mistrust
miss handeln to mistreat	miss verstehen to misunderstand

♦ **ver-**

– **indicates change of state (‘become’ or ‘make into’) and is formed from nouns or adjectives:**

ver alten to go out of date (= become old)	from	alt
ver ändern to alter (= make different)		anders
ver bleichen to fade (= become pale)		bleich
ver deutlichen to clarify, explain (= make clear)		deutlich
ver grössern to enlarge		grösser
ver kleiden to dress up, disguise		das Kleid
sich ver lieben in to fall in love with		die Liebe
ver nichten to destroy (= make nothing)		nichts
ver schärfen to intensify (= make strict)		schärf
ver schmutzen to pollute (= make dirty)		der Schmutz
ver sichern to insure, assure		sicher
ver sklaven to enslave		der Sklave
ver späten to delay (= make late)		spät

– **means add or provide with something (formed from nouns):**

ver körpern to embody	from	der Körper body
ver nageln to nail up		der Nagel nail
ver siegeln to seal		der Siegel seal

– **means finish, complete**

ver brauchen	to consume
ver hungern	to starve, die of hunger

– **indicates ‘away’; to use all one’s time or resources to do something:**

ver führen to seduce, lead astray	ver rauchen to spend (money) on smoking
ver reisen to go away (on a trip)	ver schlafen to oversleep, miss by oversleeping
ver setzen to transplant, transfer	ver spielen to gamble away
ver trinken to drink away	

- **intensifies the meaning of the base verb:**

ver folgen to <i>pursue, persecute</i>	from	folgen to <i>follow</i>
ver hören to <i>interrogate, quiz</i>		hören to <i>hear</i>
ver sprechen to <i>promise</i>		sprechen to <i>speak</i>
ver zweifeln to <i>despair</i>		zweifeln to <i>doubt</i>
- **means do something wrongly or too much:**

ver bilden to <i>bring up (child) badly</i>	sich ver hören to <i>mishear</i>
sich ver kaufen to <i>make a bad buy</i>	ver kochen to <i>overcook</i>
sich ver laufen to <i>lose one's way</i>	ver salzen to <i>oversalt</i>
sich ver sprechen to <i>mispronounce</i>	
- **gives opposite meaning of base verb (only a few verbs):**

ver achten to <i>despise</i>	from	achten to <i>respect</i>
ver kaufen to <i>sell</i>		kaufen to <i>buy</i>
ver mieten to <i>hire out, rent out</i>		mieten to <i>rent, hire</i>
- **zer-**
 - **'into pieces', or sometimes intensifies base meaning:**

zer brechen to <i>smash</i>	zer knüllen to <i>scrumple up</i>
zer fallen to <i>disintegrate</i>	zer stören to <i>destroy</i>
zer fressen to <i>corrode</i>	zer reißen to <i>tear</i>

▶ 19.5.3 Variable prefixes

a Characteristics of variable prefixes

- A small group of prefixes can be separable or inseparable. There is a difference in meaning between the two; the sense of the separable verb is usually literal, while the inseparable verb is more figurative in use.
- As with other prefixes, separable verbs are stressed on the prefix, while inseparable verbs are stressed on the verb itself.

b The common variable prefixes

Prefix	Separable	Inseparable
durch ¹	durch +blicken to <i>look through</i> durch +fallen to <i>fail</i> durch +halten to <i>survive</i> durch +kommen to <i>get through, succeed</i> sich durch +finden to <i>find one's way through</i>	durch leben to <i>live through</i> durch löchern to <i>make holes in, shoot down (argument)</i> durch tränken to <i>soak</i>
hinter -	hinter +haken to <i>follow sthg up</i> hinterher +laufen to <i>run after</i>	hinter gehen to <i>deceive</i> hinter lassen to <i>bequeath</i>
über -	Most intransitive; über with literal meaning of 'over' über +fahren to <i>cross over</i> über +gehen to <i>change, merge into</i> sich etw. über +hören to <i>be sick of hearing sthg</i> über +lassen to <i>leave it (up) to s.o.</i> über +laufen to <i>overflow</i>	Mostly transitive über fahren to <i>run over</i> über gehen to <i>skip, leave out</i> über hören to <i>ignore, fail to hear</i> über lassen to <i>leave sthg for s.o.</i> über laufen to <i>overrun</i> über setzen to <i>translate</i> über treten to <i>infringe (law)</i>

Prefix	Separable	Inseparable
um-	<p>über+setzen to ferry across über+treten to change to</p> <p>Usually indicating <i>turning round/over</i>, or change of state um+bauen to rebuild um+fahren to run over um+gehen to circulate; get on with um+schreiben to rewrite, adapt um+fallen to fall over um+gestalten to alter, remodel um+kippen to overturn, knock over um+leiten to divert um+lernen to retrain</p>	<p>überfallen to attack überholen to overtake übernachten to stay the night überraschen to surprise übertreiben to exaggerate überwinden to overcome</p> <p>Oftentimes indicating <i>around</i></p> <p>umbauen to enclose umfahren to drive round, detour umgehen to avoid, bypass umschreiben to paraphrase, outline umfassen to embrace; cover, deal with umgeben to surround umsegeln to sail round</p>
unter-	<p>unter usually has literal meaning of <i>under</i> unter+halten to hold underneath unter+legen to put underneath; to attribute unter+schlagen to cross (one's legs) unter+bringen to accommodate (i.e. bring under one's roof) unter+gehen to decline, sink unter+kommen to find accommodation</p>	<p>unterhalten to entertain unterlegen to underlay, line unterschlagen to embezzle unterbrechen to interrupt unterdrücken to oppress unterlassen to refrain from unterliegen to lose to, be subject to unternehmen to do, undertake unterrichten to teach untersagen to prohibit unterschätzen to underestimate unterscheiden to distinguish, tell apart unterschreiben to sign unterstützen to support untersuchen to investigate untertauchen to submerge</p>
voll-	<p>usually with literal meaning of <i>fully</i> voll+schmierem to mess up voll+stopfen to stuff voll+tanken to fill up car with fuel</p>	<p>vollenden to complete vollstrecken to carry out, execute vollziehen to carry out, execute</p>
wider-	<p>usually indicates <i>against</i> wider+hallen to echo wider+spiegeln to reflect, mirror</p>	<p>widerlegen to refute, disprove widerrufen to cancel, revoke widersprechen to contradict widerstehen to resist widerstreben to oppose</p>
wieder-	<p>wieder+sehen to see again wieder+erkennen to recognise wieder+geben to give back; reproduce (sound)</p>	<p>wiederholen to repeat</p>

Er hat den Igel **über**fahren
 Er ist mit der Fähre **über**gefahren
 Wir hoffen, die Küche
umzubauen

He drove over the hedgehog
 He crossed by ferry
 We're hoping to change the
 kitchen

Wir hoffen, den Garten zu
umbauen

*We're hoping to build a wall
round the garden*

▶ 19.5.4 Verbs formed from adjectives and nouns

- ♦ **Verbs can be formed from adjectives and nouns by adding -(e)n to the noun or adjective**

Occasionally a link is added, such as **-ig-** to an adjective, and an umlaut to the root word.

beginnen <i>to begin</i>	from	der Beginn	fertigen <i>to manufacture</i>	from	fertig
frösteln <i>to shiver</i>		der Frost	kürzen <i>to shorten</i>		kurz
kochen <i>to cook</i>		der Koch	öffnen <i>to open</i>		offen
teilen <i>to share</i>		der Teil	reinigen <i>to clean, purify</i>		rein

20

Numbers, spelling and punctuation

20.1 Numbers

▶ 20.1.1 Cardinal numbers

0 null	10 zehn	20 zwanzig	80 achtzig
1 eins	11 elf	21 einundzwanzig	90 neunzig
2 zwei	12 zwölf	22 zweiundzwanzig	100 hundert
3 drei	13 dreizehn	26 sechsundzwanzig	101 hundert(und)eins
4 vier	14 vierzehn	27 siebenundzwanzig	
5 fünf	15 fünfzehn	30 dreißig	102 (ein)hundertzwei
6 sechs	16 sechzehn	40 vierzig	
7 sieben	17 siebzehn	50 fünfzig	
8 acht	18 achtzehn	60 sechzig	
9 neun	19 neunzehn	70 siebzig	
120 (ein)hundertzwanzig		1000 (ein)tausend	
121 hunderteinundzwanzig		1066 tausendsechsendsechzig	
215 zweihundertfünfzehn		1300 (ein)tausenddreihundert/ dreizehnhundert	
		2010 zweitausendzehn	
1 000 000 eine Million		1 000 000 000 eine Milliarde (Eng: billion)	
2 000 000 zwei Millionen		1 000 000 000 000 eine Billion	

a eins becomes the indefinite article ein when used with a dependent following noun, and declines according to gender, number and case (see 3.1.2)

Exceptions to this rule are a few idiomatic phrases:

ein Uhr *one o'clock* (cf. eine Uhr *a clock, one clock*)

vor ein oder zwei Tagen *one or two days ago*

b zwei and drei have a genitive form, zweier and dreier

These are used in formal written German; less formal language uses von + dative:

die Aussagen **zweier** *the statements of two reliable*

zuverlässiger Augenzeugen *eyewitnesses*

Or... von zwei zuverlässigen Augenzeugen

das Leben **dreier** Kinder *the lives of three children*

Or das Leben von drei Kindern

c zwo is sometimes used in speech instead of zwei where its sound might be confused with drei (e.g. on the phone or in radio communications)

d Phone numbers are usually given in pairs after the dialling code

Null zwei vier acht, *0248 82 39 14*
 zwoundachtzig,
 neununddreißig, vierzehn
 Die Vorwahl ist null null vier neun *The dialling code is 0049*

e Years up to 1999 are given in hundreds

im Jahr neunzehnhundertachtundneunzig *in 1989*

Note in + year: im Jahr 1989, or simply: 1989

f Long numbers are written out in full only on cheques; most numbers are normally written as numerals**g Numbers from 10 000 upwards are usually written with a space every three digits; occasionally, a point is used instead: 120 372 or 120.372****h eine Million (-en), eine Milliarde¹ (-n) and eine Billion² (-en) always stand as separate nouns**

drei Millionen Euro *zweieinhalb Milliarden Dollar*

eine Million Euro

But eins Komma zwei Million**en** Euro

¹ eine Milliarde = a thousand million

² eine Billion = a million million

i Cardinal numbers may be used as nouns; they take the feminine gender

Im Abi hat er eine glatte **Eins** *He got a straight A in his Abitur*
 bekommen

Wir fahren mit der **Sechzehn** *We go on the (number) 16 (bus/*
Or ... mit der Linie sechzehn *tram)*
 die Nationalelf *the national (football) team*

j Multiplication

Vier **mal** zwei ist acht *four twos are eight*
 Der Teppich ist drei **mal** sechs *The carpet is three metres by six*
 Meter

Das habe ich dir schon *I've told you that a hundred times*
hundertmal gesagt! *already!*

eine **einfache** Karte *a single ticket*
 der **dreifache** Sieger *the three-times winner*

Dieses Buch habe ich **dreifach** *I've got three copies of this book*
zweimal die Woche *twice a week*

alle zehn Minuten *every ten minutes*

k Other constructions with cardinal numbers

ihre beiden Söhne *their two sons*
 welcher von beiden? *which of the two?*

Hast du einen Zwanziger? *Have you got a 20-euro note?*
 die sechziger Jahre *the sixties (i.e. 1960s)*

eine Frau in den Sechzigern *a woman in her sixties*

Gehen wir zu dritt? *Shall we go as a (group of) three?*

Sie gehen zu viert *They go in groups of four*

Sie gehen auf allen vieren *They walk on all fours*

▶ 20.1.2 Ordinal numbers

- Ordinal numbers are the adjectival forms of numbers, and are used when placing things in numerical order; they take the appropriate adjective endings:

am neun ten Oktober	am dreißig sten Mai
zum vier ten Mal	der zwanzig ste Präsident

a Numbers 1–19 add -te, followed by the adjective ending

der fünf te <i>fifth</i>	der siebzehn te <i>seventeenth</i>
am fünf ten März	der hundertzwei te <i>hundred-and-second</i>

- There are four irregular forms:

der **erste** *first* der **dritte** *third* der **siebte** *seventh* der **achte** *eight*

- Note also:

der viertgrößte Staat	the fourth largest state
die zweitbeste Sportlerin	the second best sportswoman

b Numbers 20 and above add -sten, followed by the adjective ending

der einundvierzig ste <i>forty-first</i>	der tausend ste <i>thousandth</i>
am einundzwanzig sten Juli	<i>on 21 July</i>

c In their written form, ordinal numbers are followed by a point

am 1. November	zum 40. Geburtstag
die 13. Klasse	im 2. Stock

d Ordinal numbers may be used as nouns; as they are adjective-nouns they may be any gender

jeder Zehnte	<i>one in ten</i>
heute ist der Zweite	<i>today is the second (of the month)</i>
die Vierzigste von Mozart	<i>Mozart's 40th (symphony)</i>
Die Chinesen waren die Ersten ,	<i>the Chinese were the first to ...</i>
die ...	

▶ 20.1.3 Fractions and decimals

a Fractions are usually formed by adding -el to the ordinal number to form a neuter noun

ein Viertel	<i>a quarter</i>
ein Drittel	<i>a third</i>
zwei Drittel	<i>two thirds</i>
ein Dritteliter	<i>a third of a litre</i>
or ein drittel Liter }	
eine Viertelstunde	<i>a quarter of an hour</i>
eine Dreiviertelstunde	<i>three quarters of an hour</i>

b The exception is *half a*, for which the adjective *halb* is used

eine halbe Flasche Wein	<i>half a bottle of wine</i>
Das habe ich zum halben Preis gekauft	<i>I bought it at half price</i>
Der Bus kommt alle halbe Stunde	<i>The bus comes every half an hour</i>

- With place names not requiring the article, uninflected *halb* is used:

halb Österreich	<i>half (of) Austria</i>
------------------------	--------------------------
- The noun **half (of) the** is **die Hälfte** + genitive:

die Hälfte des Brotes	<i>half (of) the loaf</i>
die Hälfte aller Engländer	<i>half of all English people</i>
die Hälfte seines Vermögens	<i>half (of) his fortune</i>
Ich habe das Buch nur zur Hälfte gelesen	<i>I've only read half the book</i>
- **one and a half, two and a half** are expressed by the indeclinable **eineinhalb/anderthalb, zweieinhalb, etc.:**

nur noch eineinhalb/anderthalb Wochen!	<i>Only one and a half weeks to go!</i>
Ich habe sie seit viereinhalb Jahren nicht mehr gesehen	<i>I haven't seen her for four and a half years</i>

c Decimals are written with a comma, not a point

0,8 null Komma acht
 1,3 eins Komma drei
 5,75 fünf Komma sieben fünf

▶ **20.1.4 Expressions of quantity and money**

a Masculine and neuter quantities retain their singular forms even in plural quantities

hundert Cent ergeben einen Euro zehn Euro; vier Pfund; drei Dollar	<i>a hundred cents make a/one euro ten euros; four pounds; three dollars</i>
ein Glas Bier; drei Glas Bier	<i>a glass of beer; three glasses of beer</i>
mit zwei Paar Schuhen zehn Euro das Meter Er gab uns je zehn Euro fünf Euro neunzig alle paar Meter	<i>with two pairs of shoes ten euros a metre He gave us ten euros each five euros ninety (cents) every few metres</i>

b Feminine nouns take plural forms in plural quantities (see also 2.2.11b)

wir trinken eine Flasche deutschen Wein	<i>We're drinking a bottle of German wine</i>
zwei Flaschen Wein	<i>two bottles of wine</i>
eine Tasse Kaffee; zwei Tassen Kaffee	<i>one cup of coffee; two cups of coffee</i>
drei Briefmarken zu einem Euro	<i>three one-euro stamps</i>

20.2 Spelling

▶ **20.2.1 Capitals or small letters?**

Students will already be familiar with the use of initial capital letters for:

- **proper names** (Köln *Cologne*, der Schwarzwald *The Black Forest*, Karl der Große *Charlemagne*, der Blaue Planet *The Blue Planet (Earth)*)

- ♦ **nouns** (der Mann, die Alte)
- ♦ the polite word for **you** and all its forms (Sie, Ihnen, Ihr-)
- ♦ the **first word in a sentence**.

The following points can, however, cause confusion.

a Any word used as a noun starts with a capital letter

eine Eins	das Ich	im Großen und Ganzen
das Aus	das Beste	im Voraus
beim Essen	im Allgemeinen	das Nichts
Recht haben	das Autofahren	
Radfahren	nichts Neues	

b Adjectives referring to ‘understood’ (i.e. non-repeated) nouns do not start with a capital letter

Er fährt ein blaues Auto, und sie ein graues	<i>He drives a blue car, and she a grey one</i>
Ist das dein erster Besuch?	<i>Is this your first visit?</i>
– Nein, mein zweiter	<i>– No, my second (one)</i>

c Adjectives of nationality start with a small letter, unless they apply to a proper noun

deutsche Romane	<i>German novels</i>
französische Weine	<i>French wines</i>
die Deutsche Bahn	<i>German railways</i>
der Deutsch-französische Krieg	<i>The Franco-Prussian War</i>

TIP Deutsch with a capital or a small letter?

- ♦ When referring to a language, **Deutsch** and words for other languages start with a capital letter when used as a noun, including where the idea of learning the language is concerned:

ich lerne Deutsch	<i>I'm learning German</i>
ein Buch auf Deutsch	<i>a book in German</i>
Sie kann gut Deutsch	<i>She can speak German well</i>
Auf Deutsch sagt man ...	<i>In German we say ...</i>
Ich habe eine Eins in Deutsch	<i>I've got an A grade in German</i>

- ♦ **But** they start with a small letter when used as an adverb in combination with a verb (i.e., they answer the question ‘how?’):

Sollen wir deutsch oder englisch reden?	<i>Should we speak German or English?</i>
Die E-mail ist deutsch	<i>The e-mail is in German</i>

d Adjectives formed from the names of persons may be written in two ways

die einsteinsche Relativitätstheorie	Or die Einstein'sche Relativitätstheorie
die wagnerschen Oper	Or die Wagner'schen Oper

- ♦ Often, however, a simpler form of language will be preferred altogether:

Einsteins Relativitätstheorie	Wagners Oper
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e The pronoun Sie and its related forms (Ihnen, Ihr-) always begin with capitals

Vielen Dank für **Ihren** Brief

Wie wir **Ihnen** schon mitgeteilt haben, können wir **Sie** ...

- This rule formerly applied also to *du, ihr* and their various forms (*dich, dir, dein-; euch, euer-*) in letter-writing, and although this is no longer the rule since the recent spelling reform, many German-speakers continue to write them the old way:

Vielen Dank für deinen (formerly: Deinen) Brief

Wie geht es euch? (formerly: Euch)

f Infinitives as nouns: it is usually obvious where infinitives are being used as nouns (and therefore start with a capital letter)

Note these examples, where the infinitive may start with either a capital or a small letter:

Sie liebt reiten/Reiten

Ich lerne segeln/Segeln und windsurfen/Windsurfen

20.3 One word or two?

- Deciding whether words should be written as one word or two can be problematic, especially as older German writers and books will use forms which are no longer current since spelling reform.
- While the rules are rather more flexible than there is space to describe here, the basic principle is this:

If compounds are viewed as a single idea, they are written together; otherwise they are written separately:

Die Autos sind

zusammengefahren

Wir sind zusammen gefahren

The cars collided

We travelled together

▶ 20.3.1 Separable verbs

Separable verbs are normally written with the prefix and verb as one word in the infinitive. See 19.5.1 and 19.5.3. The following notes cover those verbs where it may be unclear whether the prefix should be a completely separate word.

a Noun + verb compounds are usually written separately

Rad fahren *to cycle*

Ski laufen *to ski*

Schlange stehen *to queue*

Note When these infinitives are used as nouns, they are written as one word:

das Radfahren, das Skilaufen, das Schlangestehen

Note Noun prefixes which are now regarded as part of the verb idiom are prefixed to the infinitive, e.g.

eislaufen *to ice skate*

leidtun *to feel sorry for*

preisgeben *to betray, expose*

standhalten *to stand firm*

stattfinden *to take place*

teilnehmen *to take part*

verbs beginning with heim-, and irre-:

heimfahren	to drive home
heimkehren	to return home
heimkommen	to come home
heimleuchten	to give a piece of one's, mind
heimzahlen	to pay back
irreführen	to mislead
irreleiten	to mislead
irrereden	to rave

b Adjective + verb compounds are written together in the infinitive and participles with the adjective as separable prefix, if together they form a new idiomatic verb

rotsehen	to be furious, see red	schwerfallen	to be hard for
sich totlachen	to laugh one's head off	schwarzfahren	to travel without paying

• They are written *separately* if the adjective is complex (i.e. has more than one element), or is qualified by an adverb, or is linked to an already separable verb:

complex:	bewusstlos schlagen	to knock out
adj. + adverb:	sehr fein mahlen	to grind very finely
adj. + separable vb:	schwarz fernsehen	to watch television without a licence

• In some instances they may be written *together* or *separately*:

feinmahlen or fein mahlen	to grind finely
kaputtmachen or kaputt machen	to smash
liebhaben or lieb haben	to love, to be fond of
rotstreichen or rot streichen	to paint red

c Verbs formed from an adjective + sein are written separately

aus sein	to be over, out
los sein	to be rid of
zu sein	to be shut
zufrieden sein	to be satisfied

d Verbs formed from verb + verb are usually written separately

fallen lassen	to drop
kennen lernen	to meet, get to know
liegen lassen	to leave
sitzen bleiben	to repeat a year
spazieren gehen	to go for a walk

▶ 20.3.2 Nouns

a Nouns which involve a name may be written together or, for clarity or emphasis, joined with a hyphen

das Goethehaus or	das Goethe-Haus
der Suezkanal or	der Suez-Kanal
die Bordeauxweine or	die Bordeaux-Weine

Compounds formed with longer geographical names are linked by hyphens:

der Rio-de-Janeiro-Flug

Note Geographical names used adjectivally and ending in -er never become part of the noun:

Wiener Schnitzel

Genfer See *Lake Geneva* (but Swiss German: Genfersee)

b Longer phrases used as nouns are usually joined by hyphens

in einem Dritte-Welt-Land

in a Third World country

ein Atom-U-Boot

an atomic submarine

Das ist zum Aus-der-Haut-Fahren!

It's enough to drive you up the wall!

20.4 ss or ß ?

a ss is used after a short vowel

der Fluss, die Flüsse, müssen, er muss, die Massage, wissen, der Pass, essen

b ß is used after a long vowel or a diphthong

der Fuß, die Füße, groß, weiß, sie weiß, die Maße, die Straße, sie aß

Note ß is not normally used in words written in capitals:

Er wohnt in Gießen **but** GIESSEN

20.5 Punctuation

▶ 20.5.1 The comma

a The comma is used to mark off clauses

Als er nach Hause kam, war es
schon spät

*When he got home, it was already
late*

Ich gehe ins Kino, aber er bleibt
hier

*I'm going to the cinema, but he's
staying here*

Note The comma is *not* used to provide a breathing space or to mark off adverbs as in English:

Um 5 Uhr verließ er das Haus und
ging zum Bahnhof

*At 5 o'clock, he left the house and
walked to the station*

Es war aber schon zu spät für mich

It was, however, too late for me

b A comma is needed between two or more adjectives where both relate equally to the noun, but not where one adjective qualifies the other

• The key is that, where both adjectives qualify the noun equally, they could be joined by **und**:

eine nette, interessante Frau

or eine nette und interessante Frau

Ein neuer deutscher Film

(Not possible: ein neuer und deutscher Film)

Compare the following:

neue, umweltfreundliche Autos (i.e. the new cars are environmentally friendly, unlike the old ones)

neue umweltfreundliche Autos (i.e. there are new cars which are environmentally friendly, just like some already on the market)

c A comma is needed before conjunctions introducing a contrast, e.g. aber, doch, jedoch, sondern

Der Tag war schön, aber kalt	<i>The day was beautiful but cold</i>
Mein Bruder blieb nicht zu Hause, sondern (er) ging ins Kino	<i>My brother didn't stay at home, but went to the cinema</i>
Ich wollte ihn besuchen, aber er war nicht zu Hause	<i>I wanted to visit him, but he wasn't at home</i>

d Clauses beginning with co-ordinating conjunctions und and oder need no comma

Ich gehe ins Kino und sie bleibt hier
 Peter kann hier bleiben oder er kann mitkommen
 Wir fahren entweder mit der Bahn oder mit dem Flugzeug

However, the writer may choose to add a comma for the sake of clarity:

Sie trank nur Wasser, und den Wein ließ sie im Kühlschrank	<i>She drank only water, and left the wine in the fridge</i>
(i.e. to make it clear that she didn't drink the wine as well)	
Im Dorf, und das ist allgemein bekannt, leben zwei Hundertjährige	<i>In the village – and this is well known – live two centenarians</i>

e Exclamations, clauses and phrases in apposition, explanations, etc. are marked by commas

Ja, natürlich!	<i>Yes, of course!</i>
Peter, kannst du mir bitte mal helfen?	<i>Could you help me please, Peter?</i>
Bach, der große Komponist, lebte in Leipzig	<i>Bach, the great composer, lived in Leipzig</i>
Ich trinke gern Wein, besonders Rotwein	<i>I enjoy drinking wine, especially red wine</i>
Wir fahren am Montag, und zwar um 10 Uhr	<i>We're going on Monday, at 10 o'clock, in fact</i>

f A comma is needed before clauses with zu + infinitive

Ich habe vor, ins Kino zu gehen	<i>I'm intending to go to the cinema</i>
Er verließ das Haus, ohne mich zu sehen	<i>He left the house without seeing me</i>
Ich gehe in die Stadt, um Milch zu kaufen	<i>I'm going into town to buy milk</i>
Wir freuen uns darauf, euch zu besuchen	<i>We're looking forward to visiting you</i>
Es war uns möglich, ihm zu helfen	<i>It was possible for us to help him</i>

- Compare how the placing of the comma affects the meanings of these two sentences:

Er versuchte, täglich 10 Km zu laufen	<i>He tried to run 10 km every day</i>
Er versuchte täglich, 10 Km zu laufen	<i>He tried every day to run 10 km</i>

▶ 20.5.2 Inverted commas (speech marks) and colons

- a The opening set of inverted commas is placed at the bottom of the line, facing outwards, while the closing set is placed at the top, also facing outwards**

A colon is used after a verb of saying, and it is followed by a capital letter:

Dann sagte er mir: „Ich verstehe kein Wort davon.“	<i>Then he said to me, 'I don't understand a word of it.'</i>
Ich fragte sie: „Woher kommst du?“	<i>I asked her, 'Where do you come from?'</i>

- If the verb of saying stands after the speech marks, a comma is used and stands after the speech marks:

„Woher soll ich das wissen?“, fragte er	<i>'How am I supposed to know that?' he asked</i>
„Es ist schön“, dachte er, „dass sie zurückgekommen ist.“	<i>'It's nice', he thought, 'that she's come back.'</i>

▶ 20.5.3 The apostrophe

- a The apostrophe is used to denote an abbreviated es or an omitted beginning of a word in written representations of colloquial spoken German**

Wie geht's?	<i>How are you?</i>
Sie hat 'nen Bruder	<i>She's got a brother</i>
's ist nicht leicht mit 'nem Kater	<i>It's not easy with a hangover</i>

- b. The apostrophe is not used for the omitted ends of words, or for the possessive**

Ich hab keine Zeit	<i>I have no time</i>
Stefans Weinkeller	<i>Stefan's wine cellar</i>
Bachs Werke	<i>Bach's works</i>
bei Theissens	<i>at the Theissens' house</i>

▶ 20.5.4 The exclamation mark

- a The exclamation mark is used, as expected, for exclamations and commands**

Oh nein!	Hallo!	Du meine Güte!
Gib mir das Buch!	Bleiben Sie hier!	

However, the exclamation mark is gradually being replaced with a full stop, unless the command is a forceful one.

- b It is also used after the opening address of a letter. The first word of the letter after the exclamation mark begins with a capital letter**

Lieber Theo!	Sehr geehrte Frau Oswald!
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Here too, the exclamation mark is being replaced by a comma, as in English, and then the first word of the letter starts with a small letter.

List of strong and irregular verbs

- See 12.4 for a list of irregular verbs and 12.1 for mixed verbs; their irregular parts are also noted below.
- It is worth remembering that, with the exception of **sein**, the present tense plural forms of verbs (**wir, ihr, sie/Sie**) are never irregular.

In the following list:

- The present tense form is included only if the stem vowel changes from the infinitive.
- Vowel changes from the infinitive are in bold; where there are other changes (e.g. singling or doubling of the following consonant or some other change to the following consonant), the whole word is in bold.
- Verbs marked with * are always intransitive, and so are conjugated with **sein** in the perfect tense.
- Verbs marked with (*) are conjugated with **sein** in the perfect tense if they are intransitive and with **haben** if they are transitive. See 10.3.4.

Infinitive	er - Present	er - Imperfect	Past participle	Meaning
backen	bä ck t	backte	gebacken	<i>to bake</i>
befehlen	befie h lt	befahl	befohlen	<i>to command/order</i>
beginnen		begann	begonnen	<i>to begin</i>
beißen		biss	gebissen	<i>to bite</i>
bergen	bir g t	bar g	geborgen	<i>to save/shelter</i>
bersten	bir st	bar st	* gebor st en	<i>to burst</i>
betrügen		betrog	betrogen	<i>to deceive/cheat</i>
biegen		bog	(*) gebog e n	<i>to bend/turn</i>
bieten		bot	gebote n	<i>to offer</i>
binden		band	gebunden	<i>to tie/bind</i>
bitten		bat	gebeten	<i>to ask/request</i>
blasen	blä st	blie s	geblasen	<i>to blow</i>
bleiben		blie b	* geblie b en	<i>to stay/remain</i>
braten	brät	briet	gebraten	<i>to roast</i>
brechen	bric h t	brac h	(*) gebroc h en	<i>to break</i>
brennen		bran n te	gebrannt	<i>to burn</i>
bringen		brachte	gebracht	<i>to bring</i>

Infinitive	er - Present	er - Imperfect	Past participle	Meaning
denken		dachte	gedacht	to think
dringen		drang	(*) gedrungen	to force one's way
dürfen	darf	durfte	gedurft / dürfen	to be allowed to
empfangen	empfängt	empfang	empfangen	to receive, welcome
empfehlen	empfiehlt	empfohl	empfohlen	to recommend
empfinden		empfund	empfunden	to feel
erlöschen	erlischt	erlosch	* erloschen	to go out (fire)
erschrecken	erschrickt	erschrak	* erschrocken	to be frightened
essen	isst	aß	gegessen	to eat
fahren	fährt	fuhr	(*) gefahren	to go (by vehicle)/ to drive
fallen	fällt	fiel	* gefallen	to fall
fangen	fängt	fang	gefangen	to catch
fechten	ficht	focht	gefochten	to fence/fight
finden		fand	gefunden	to find
fliegen		flog	(*) geflogen	to fly
fliehen		floh	(*) geflohen	to flee, run away
fließen		floss	* geflossen	to flow
fressen	frißt	fraß	gefressen	to eat (of animals)
frieren		fror	(*) gefroren	to freeze /be cold
gären		gor	* gegoren	to ferment
gebären	gebirt	gebar	geboren	to give birth to/bear
geben	gibt	gab	gegeben	to give
gedeihen		gedieh	* gediehen	to prosper, thrive
gehen		ging	* gegangen	to go/walk
gelingen		gelang	* gelungen	to succeed/manage
gelten	gilt	galt	gegolten	to be valid/worth
genießen		genoss	genossen	to enjoy/relish
geschehen	geschieht	geschah	* geschehen	to happen
gewinnen		gewann	gewonnen	to win/gain
gießen		goss	gegossen	to pour
gleichen		glich	geglichen	to resemble
gleiten		glitt	* geglitten	to glide/slide
graben	gräbt	grub	gegraben	to dig
greifen		griff	gegriffen	to grasp/seize
haben	hat	hatte	gehabt	to have
halten	hält	hielt	gehalten	to hold/stop
hängen		hing	gehangen	to hang (intrans.)

Infinitive	er - Present	er - Imperfect	Past participle	Meaning
hauen		haute/ hieb	gehauen	<i>to hit, clobber</i>
heben		hob	gehoben	<i>to lift/raise</i>
heißen		hieß	geheißen	<i>to be called</i>
helfen	hilft	half	geholfen	<i>to help</i>
kennen		kannte	gekant	<i>to know (person/place)</i>
klingen		klang	geklungen	<i>to sound</i>
kneifen		kniff	gekniffen	<i>to pinch</i>
kommen		kam	* gekommen	<i>to come</i>
können	kann	konnte	gekonnt/können	<i>can/to be able</i>
kriechen		kroch	* gekrochen	<i>to creep/crawl</i>
laden	lädt	lud	geladen	<i>to load</i>
lassen	lässt	ließ	gelassen	<i>to let/leave</i>
laufen	läuft	lief	* gelaufen	<i>to run</i>
leiden	.	litt	gelitten	<i>to suffer</i>
leihen		lieh	geliehen	<i>to lend/borrow</i>
lesen	liest	las	gelesen	<i>to read</i>
liegen		lag	gelegen	<i>to lie</i>
lügen		log	gelogen	<i>to (tell a) lie</i>
mahlen		mahlte	gemahlen	<i>to grind</i>
meiden		mied	gemieden	<i>to avoid</i>
melken		melkte	gemolken	<i>to milk</i>
messen	misst	maß	gemessen	<i>to measure</i>
mögen	mag	mochte	gemocht/mögen	<i>to like</i>
müssen	muss	musste	gemusst/müssen	<i>to have to/must</i>
nehmen	nimmt	nahm	genommen	<i>to take</i>
nennen		nannte	genannt	<i>to name</i>
pfeifen		pfiff	gepfiffen	<i>to whistle</i>
preisen		pries	gepriesen	<i>to praise</i>
quellen	quillt	quoll	* gequollen	<i>to gush out/spring</i>
raten	rät	riet	geraten	<i>to advise</i>
reiben		rieb	gerieben	<i>to rub</i>
reißen		riss	(*) gerissen	<i>to tear</i>
reiten		ritt	(*) geritten	<i>to ride</i>
rennen		rannte	* gerannt	<i>to run/race</i>
riechen		roch	gerochen	<i>to smell</i>
ringen		rang	gerungen	<i>to wrestle/struggle</i>
rinnen		rann	* geronnen	<i>to run, flow</i>
rufen		rief	gerufen	<i>to call</i>

Infinitive	er - Present	er - Imperfect	Past participle	Meaning
saufen	säuft	soff	gesoffen	<i>to drink (of animal)</i>
schaffen ¹		schuf	geschaffen	<i>to create</i>
scheiden		schied	(*) geschieden	<i>to part/separate</i>
scheinen		schien	geschienen	<i>to shine/seem</i>
scheißen		schiss	geschissen	<i>to shit</i>
schelten	schilt	schalt	gescholten	<i>to scold</i>
schieben		schob	geschoben	<i>to push/shove</i>
schießen		schoss	(*) geschossen	<i>to shoot/fire</i>
schlafen	schläft	schief	geschlafen	<i>to sleep</i>
schlagen	schlägt	schlug	geschlagen	<i>to hit/strike/beat</i>
schleichen		schlich	* geschlichen	<i>to creep</i>
schleifen		schliff	geschliffen	<i>to grind, sharpen</i>
schließen		schloss	geschlossen	<i>to shut</i>
schlingen		schlang	geschlungen	<i>to coil; to gulp</i>
schmeißen		schmiss	geschmissen	<i>to fling/chuck</i>
schmelzen	schmilzt	schmolz	(*) geschmolzen	<i>to melt</i>
schneiden		schnitt	geschnitten	<i>to cut</i>
schreiben		schrieb	geschrieben	<i>to write</i>
schreien		schrie	geschrie(e)n	<i>to shout/scream</i>
schreiten		schritt	* geschritten	<i>to stride/proceed</i>
schweigen		schwieg	geschwiegen	<i>to be silent</i>
schwellen	schwillt	schwoll	*geschwollen	<i>to swell</i>
schwimmen		schwamm	(*) geschwommen	<i>to swim</i>
schwinden		schwand	* geschwinden	<i>to disappear</i>
schwingen		schwang	geschwungen	<i>to swing</i>
schwören		schwor	geschworen	<i>to swear (an oath)</i>
sehen	sieht	sah	gesehen	<i>to see</i>
sein	ist	war	* gewesen	<i>to be</i>
senden ²		sandte	gesandt	<i>to send</i>
singen		sang	gesungen	<i>to sing</i>
sinken		sank	*gesunken	<i>to sink</i>
sitzen		saß	gesessen	<i>to sit/be seated</i>
sollen	soll	sollte	gesollt/sollen	<i>should</i>
spalten		spaltete	gespalten	<i>to split</i>
speien		spie	gespien	<i>to spew, vomit</i>
spinnen		spann	gesponnen	<i>to spin/be crazy</i>
sprechen	spricht	sprach	gesprochen	<i>to speak</i>
springen		sprang	* gesprungen	<i>to jump</i>

Infinitive	er - Present	er - Imperfect	Past participle	Meaning
stechen	sticht	stach	gestochen	to sting/prick
stehen		stand	gestanden	to stand
stehlen	stiehlt	stahl	gestohlen	to steal
steigen		stieg	* gestiegen	to climb/mount
sterben	stirbt	starb	* gestorben	to die
stinken		stank	gestunken	to stink, smell bad
stoßen	stößt	stieß	(*) gestoßen	push; knock, encounter
streichen		strich	(*) gestrichen	stroke/roam/paint
streiten		stritt	gestritten	to argue/quarrel
tragen	trägt	trug	getragen	to carry/wear
treffen	trifft	traf	getroffen	to meet; hit (target)
treiben		trieb	(*) getrieben	to drive/do; drift
treten	tritt	trat	(*) getreten	to step/go
trinken		trank	getrunken	to drink
trügen		trog	getrogen	to deceive
tun	tut	tat	getan	to do
verbergen	verbirgt	verbarg	verborgen	to hide
verderben	verdirbt	verdarb	(*) verdorben	to spoil/ruin/go bad
vergessen	vergisst	vergaß	vergessen	to forget
verlieren		verlor	verloren	to lose
vermeiden		vermied	vermieden	to avoid
verschwinden		verschwand	* verschwunden	to disappear
verzeihen		verzieh	verziehen	to pardon
wachsen	wächst	wuchs	* gewachsen	to grow
waschen	wäscht	wusch	gewaschen	to wash
weichen		wich	gewichen	to give way, yield
weisen		wies	gewiesen	to point/show
werben	wirbt	warb	geworben	to advertise
werden	wird	wurde	* geworden	to become
werfen	wirft	warf	geworfen	to throw
wiegen		wog	gewogen	to weigh
winden		wand	gewunden	to wind
wissen	weiß	wusste	gewusst	to know (fact)
wollen	will	wollte	gewollt / wollen	to want to/wish
ziehen		zog	(*) gezogen	to pull; move (away)
zwingen		zwang	gezwungen	to force/compel

¹ cf. schaffen as a weak verb (schafft, schaffte, hat ... geschafft) = to manage, work.

² cf. senden as a weak verb (sendet, sendete, hat ... gesendet) = to broadcast.

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Guide to tenses

	Weak	Strong	Modal		
Infinitive	sagen	geben	können	sein	werden
Present	ich sage du sag st er sag t wir sagen ihr sag t sie sagen	ich gebe du gib st er gib t wir geben ihr geb t sie geben	ich kann du kann st er kann wir können ihr könnt sie können	ich bin du bist er ist wir sind ihr seid sie sind	ich werde du w ir st er w ir d wir werden ihr werdet sie werden
Simple past	ich sagte du sag test er sagte wir sag ten ihr sag tet sie sag ten	ich gab du gab st er gab wir gaben ihr gab t sie gaben	ich kon nte du kon ntest er kon nte wir kon nten ihr kon ntet sie kon nten	ich war du war st er war wir wa ren ihr wa rt sie wa ren	ich wu rde du wu rdest er wu rde wir wu rden ihr wu rdet sie wu rden
Perfect	ich habe gesagt du hast gesagt er hat gesagt wir haben gesagt ihr habt gesagt sie haben gesagt	ich habe gegeben du hast gegeben er hat gegeben wir haben gegeben ihr habt gegeben sie haben gegeben	ich habe ... können du hast ... können er hat ... können wir haben ... können ihr habt ... können sie haben ... können	ich bin gewesen du bist gewesen er ist gewesen wir sind gewesen ihr seid gewesen sie sind gewesen	ich bin geworden du bist geworden er ist geworden wir sind geworden ihr seid geworden sie sind geworden
Pluperfect	ich hatte gesagt du hattest gesagt er hatte gesagt wir hatten gesagt ihr hattet gesagt sie hatten gesagt	ich hatte gegeben du hattest gegeben er hatte gegeben wir hatten gegeben ihr hattet gegeben sie hatten gegeben	ich hatte ... können du hattest ... können er hatte ... können wir hatten ... können ihr hattet ... können sie hatten ... können	ich war gewesen du warst gewesen er war gewesen wir waren gewesen ihr wart gewesen sie waren gewesen	ich war geworden du warst geworden er war geworden wir waren geworden ihr wart geworden sie waren geworden

	Weak	Strong	Modal		
Infinitive	sagen	geben	können	sein	werden
Future	ich werde sagen du wirst sagen er wird sagen wir werden sagen ihr werdet sagen sie werden sagen	ich werde geben du wirst geben er wird geben wir werden geben ihr werdet geben sie werden geben	ich werde ... können du wirst ... können er wird ... können wir werden ... können ihr werdet ... können sie werden ... können	ich werde sein du wirst sein er wird sein wir werden sein ihr werdet sein sie werden sein	ich werde en werden du wirst werden er wird werden wir werden werden ihr werdet werden sie werden werden
Future perfect	ich werde gesagt haben du wirst gesagt haben er wird gesagt haben wir werden gesagt haben ihr werdet gesagt haben sie werden gesagt haben	ich werde gegeben haben du wirst gegeben haben er wird gegeben haben wir werden gegeben haben ihr werdet gegeben haben sie werden gegeben haben		ich werde gewesen sein du wirst gewesen sein er wird gewesen sein wir werden gewesen sein ihr werdet gewesen sein sie werden gewesen sein	
Subjunctive 1/ Konjunktiv I	ich sage du sag est er sage wir sag en ihr sag et sie sag en	ich gebe du geb est er gebe wir geb en ihr geb et sie geb en	ich könne du könn est er könne wir könn en ihr könn et sie könn en	ich sei du se ist er sei wir se ien ihr se iet sie se ien	ich werde du wer dest er werde wir wer den ihr wer det sie wer den
Subjunctive 1/ Konjunktiv II	ich sag te du sag test er sag te wir sag ten ihr sag tet sie sag ten	ich gä be du gä best er gä be wir gä ben ihr gä bet sie gä ben	ich könn te du könn test er könn te wir könn ten ihr könn tet sie könn ten	ich wä re du wä rst er wä re wir wä ren ihr wä ret sie wä ren	ich wü rde du wü rdest er wü rde wir wü rden ihr wü rdet sie wü rden

	Weak	Strong	Modal		
Infinitive	sagen	geben	können	sein	werden
würde-conditional	ich würde sagen du würdest sagen er würde sagen wir würden sagen ihr würdet sagen sie würden sagen	ich würde geben du würdest geben er würde geben wir würden geben ihr würdet geben sie würden geben			ich würde werden du würdest werden er würde werden wir würden werden ihr würdet werden sie würden werden
'Conditional in the past' (pluperfect subjunctive)	ich hätte gesagt du hättest gesagt er hätte gesagt wir hätten gesagt ihr hättet gesagt sie hätten gesagt	ich hätte gegeben du hättest gegeben er hätte gegeben wir hätten gegeben ihr hättet gegeben sie hätten gegeben	ich hätte ... können du hättest ... können er hätte ... können wir hätten ... können ihr hättet ... können sie hätten ... können	ich wäre gewesen du wärest gewesen er wäre gewesen wir wären gewesen ihr wäret gewesen sie wären gewesen	ich wäre geworden du wärest geworden er wäre geworden wir wären geworden ihr wäret geworden sie wären geworden
Imperative	Sag! Sagt! Sagen Sie!	Gib! Gebt! Geben Sie!		Sei! Seid! Seien Sie!	Werde! Werdet! Werden Sie!

Glossary

accusative	One of the four CASES (Chapter 1); it indicates the DIRECT OBJECT (1.1.2a), and is used after certain PREPOSITIONS (1.1.2b, 9.1): Meine Schwester ruft ihren Freund an.
active voice	One of two VOICES (Chapter 15 overview) in German; the most common is the active voice, in which the person or thing which performs the action is the SUBJECT of the VERB: Mein Bruder fährt das Auto.
adjective	A word which describes a noun (Chapter 5). An attributive adjective stands before the noun: Der alte Mann. A predicative adjective stands after a verb such as sein: Der Mann ist alt .
adjective-noun (or adjectival noun)	An adjective used as a noun (5.2): der Fremde , das Gute .
adverb	A word which modifies a VERB, ADJECTIVE, another adverb, or a clause (Chapter 6), often indicating when, where, how or why : Sie spielt ganz toll . Er ist sehr alt. Leider geht das nicht .
adverbial	A word or phrase used as an ADVERB: Sie spielt im Garten . Er hat Hunger, wenn er nach Hause kommt .
agent	The person or thing performing the action of the VERB in the PASSIVE (15.1.2): Das Stück wurde von Shakespeare geschrieben.
agreement	Matching appropriate grammatical characteristics of one item with another; for example, DETERMINERS and attributive ADJECTIVES 'agree' with the NOUN in gender, number and case (5.1): der alte Mann; die alten Männer. VERBS 'agree' with their SUBJECTS: ich gehe , wir gehen .
apposition	A noun phrase which explains or adds information about the noun next to which it stands (1.2): die Musik von Bach, dem großen Komponisten .
article	A type of DETERMINER; der, die, das, etc. (the definite article) (3.1.1), and ein, eine, etc. (the indefinite article) (3.1.2).
auxiliary verb	A verb used with the INFINITIVE or PAST PARTICIPLE of another verb, often to form a COMPOUND TENSE (10.3, 10.4, 10.5, 10.6) or the PASSIVE (15.1): Ich habe gelesen; Sie musste ins Haus gehen; Er wurde verletzt. The auxiliaries are haben, sein, werden and the MODAL VERBS such as wollen and können.
case	DECLENSIONS which indicate how certain words (e.g. PRONOUNS, NOUN PHRASES) function in a CLAUSE (Chapter 1). German has four cases: NOMINATIVE (der Mann), ACCUSATIVE (den Mann), GENITIVE (des Mannes) and DATIVE (dem Mann).

clause	A verb with its COMPLEMENTS such as SUBJECT and OBJECT (18.1): Ich lese ein Buch . A main clause makes sense on its own: Ich habe kein Geld. A subordinate clause needs a main clause in order to make sense, and starts with a CONJUNCTION: Weil ich kein Geld habe, ... See also PHRASE.
comparative	A form of the adjective or adverb used when comparing people and things (Chapter 8): ein besserer Film; ich koche langsamer .
complement	Sometimes called the completion ; the word or group of words, especially the SUBJECT or OBJECT, required to complete the meaning of the VERB.
compound tense	A tense made up of an auxiliary plus an INFINITIVE or PAST PARTICIPLE, specifically, the PERFECT, PLUPERFECT and FUTURE. See also SIMPLE TENSE.
compound word	A word made by joining two or more other words (Chapter 19): Autobahn, altmodisch.
conditional	A form of SUBJUNCTIVE 2 (KONJUNKTIV II) made up of würde + INFINITIVE (17.2.3b, 17.4.1): Ich würde kaufen.
conjugation	The pattern of forms of a VERB in each TENSE and for each person. The main conjugations in German are WEAK and STRONG (Chapter 10).
conjunction	A word which links CLAUSES in a SENTENCE. Co-ordinating conjunctions (und, aber, oder, etc.) usually link MAIN CLAUSES (18.2.1); subordinating conjunctions (wenn, weil, dass, etc.) link a SUBORDINATE CLAUSE to a MAIN CLAUSE (18.2.2).
copular verb	Sometimes called a linking verb. It does not describe an action, but connects the SUBJECT to its nominative COMPLEMENT, e.g. sein, werden (1.1.1b): Er war ein alter Mann.
dative	One of the four CASES; it indicates the INDIRECT OBJECT of a VERB (Sie gibt mir ein Geschenk) (1.1.5); it is also used after certain PREPOSITIONS (9.2, 9.3), VERBS (12.6.1, 13.3.1) and ADJECTIVES (5.3.3).
declension	The pattern of endings on a DETERMINER, ADJECTIVE or NOUN used to indicate GENDER, NUMBER and CASE.
demonstrative	A word which indicates a particular person or thing as if in answer to the question 'Which one?' (3.3, 4.3): e.g. dieser, jener.
determiner	A word used with a NOUN, such as the ARTICLE (der, ein) or DEMONSTRATIVE (dieser) (Chapter 3).
diphthong	A pair of vowels sounded as one: Haus, mein, viel.
direct object	The person or thing directly affected by the action of the verb (1.1.2a): Ich esse Käse .
direct speech	Statements, questions, and IMPERATIVES given in their original form inside quotation marks: „ Wie spät ist es? “ fragte er. See also INDIRECT QUESTION, INDIRECT SPEECH.
ending	The suffix added to a DETERMINER, ADJECTIVE or NOUN to help show the CASE, GENDER or NUMBER; or to the verb STEM to indicate the TENSE, PERSON, NUMBER and MOOD of the word.

finite verb	The conjugated form of the VERB with its ending for PERSON, TENSE, NUMBER and MOOD: ich kaufe , wir kaufen . See also INFINITIVE.
future perfect	The TENSE that refers to an event which will have happened before another (10.6, 11.5): Sie wird schon nach Hause gekommen sein. It is not much used in German.
future tense	A TENSE referring to the future, formed from the AUXILIARY werden + an infinitive (10.5.1, 11.4): Ich werde nach Berlin fahren. See also PRESENT TENSE.
gender	All NOUNS fall into one of three groups depending on the word used for <i>the</i> : der (masculine), die (feminine) and das (neuter).
genitive	One of the four CASES; it is used to show possession (1.1.3a) and after some PREPOSITIONS (9.4).
gerund	The INFINITIVE used as a NOUN. It is always neuter (14.1.3, 14.4.2a): das Wandern, das Autofahren.
imperative	The MOOD used when giving commands, etc. (Chapter 16): Bleiben Sie hier!
indefinite	A PRONOUN (e.g. etwas) (4.5) or DETERMINER (e.g. eine) (3.6) which is not specific to one thing or person.
indicative	The most common of the three MOODS in German; it is used for straightforward factual statements and questions (Chapter 11): Ich gehe ins Bett.
indirect object	If a VERB (such as geben) has two OBJECTS, one of them will usually be indirectly affected by the action; this is the indirect object (1.1.5a, 18.3.2): Ich gebe meinem Bruder ein Geschenk. See also DIRECT OBJECT.
indirect question	A question that is reported rather than given in the original (17.3.3): Er fragte mich, wie spät es sei . See also DIRECT SPEECH.
indirect speech	A statement that is reported rather than given inside quotation marks (17.3.1). Compare DIRECT SPEECH: „Es ist schon spät,“ sagte er with INDIRECT SPEECH: Er sagte, es sei schon spät .
infinitive	The basic, dictionary form of the verb: haben, sehen, abfahren.
infinitive clause	A clause in which the verb is an infinitive rather than a conjugated form (14.1, 18.5): Ich habe vor, in die Stadt zu fahren .
inflection	A general word for CONJUGATION (applied to VERBS) and DECLENSION (for NOUNS).
inseparable verb	A verb that has a prefix which is not separated from the verb when conjugated (19.5.2): bestellen, verkaufen.
interrogative	DETERMINERS, ADVERBS and PRONOUNS used to ask questions (3.5, 4.6, 6.7). Welches Haus ist deins? Woher kommst du? Wer ist das?
intransitive verb	A verb with no DIRECT OBJECT (12.5): Ich schlafe . Er folgte mir. Du siehst dumm aus. Denkst du an mich?
irregular verb	A verb whose CONJUGATION does not follow fully the patterns of one of the standard WEAK or STRONG groups of verbs (12.4, Chapter 21), e.g. sein, werden.
Konjunktiv	The German word for the SUBJUNCTIVE.
mixed verb	One of a small group of verbs which have WEAK VERB endings and certain STRONG VERB vowel changes (12.1), e.g. brennen, nennen.

modal particle	A small word such as <i>doch</i> , <i>eben</i> or <i>mal</i> used particularly in spoken German to indicate the attitude of the speaker (Chapter 7): <i>Hilf mir doch mal!</i>
modal verb	The verbs <i>dürfen</i> , <i>können</i> , <i>mögen</i> , <i>müssen</i> , <i>sollen</i> and <i>wollen</i> ; usually used as AUXILIARY verbs together with an INFINITIVE (12.2, 12.3).
mood	Verbs are used in one of the three moods to indicate the attitude of the speaker or writer to the action described. See INDICATIVE , IMPERATIVE and SUBJUNCTIVE .
nominative	One of the four CASES; it is usually used to indicate the SUBJECT of the verb (1.1.1): Meine Schwester ruft ihren Freund an.
non-finite	The INFINITIVE and the PRESENT and PAST PARTICIPLES, i.e. the forms of the verb that do not vary according to the SUBJECT: <i>parken</i> , <i>parkend</i> , <i>geparkt</i> .
noun	A word for a person, thing or idea (Chapter 2): <i>das Kind</i> , <i>die Stadt</i> , <i>die Liebe</i> .
noun phrase	The NOUN with its connected words, e.g. a DETERMINER and/or an ADJECTIVE.
number object	NOUNS, PRONOUNS, etc. are all either singular or plural in number. COMPLEMENTS of the VERB. See DIRECT OBJECT , INDIRECT OBJECT and PREPOSITIONAL OBJECT .
participle	One of the NON-FINITE forms of the verb. German verbs have two participles, the PRESENT PARTICIPLE (14.3) and the PAST PARTICIPLE (14.2).
passive voice	One of the two VOICES in German. In the passive, the SUBJECT of the VERB is the object of the action (Chapter 15), e.g. <i>Das Auto wird von meinem Bruder gefahren</i> .
past participle	The NON-FINITE form of the verb used to form some COMPOUND TENSES such as the PERFECT TENSE: <i>gewohnt</i> , <i>gefahren</i> (10.3.1, 10.3.2, 14.2) and the PASSIVE (15.1).
past tense	The tense (usually called the SIMPLE PAST) which indicates actions or states in the past (10.2, 11.2, 12.2.2b, Chapter 22): <i>Ich fuhr</i> nach Hamburg; <i>es war</i> kalt.
perfect tense	A COMPOUND TENSE used to indicate past actions or states (10.3, 11.2, Chapter 22): <i>Ich habe</i> früher in Berlin gewohnt . <i>Sie sind</i> nach Berlin gefahren .
personal pronoun	A word which refers to or replaces a NOUN PHRASE or referring to persons (4.1): <i>ich</i> , <i>mich</i> , <i>mir</i> .
phrase	A meaningful group of words which does not contain a FINITE VERB: <i>um sechs Uhr</i> ; <i>vor dem Bahnhof</i> . See also CLAUSE .
pluperfect tense	A COMPOUND TENSE used to indicate an action which preceded another in the past (10.4, 11.3): <i>Als ich</i> angekommen bin, waren sie schon abgefahren .
possessive	A DETERMINER or PRONOUN which indicates possession (3.4, 4.4): <i>Das ist mein</i> Haus; <i>seines</i> ist größer.
prefix	One or more syllables added to the front of a word to form another (Chapter 19): ver kaufen, an kommen, Alt stadt, un wichtig.

preposition	A word which usually stands before a NOUN PHRASE and which indicates the relationship of the noun phrase to another in terms of time, place, etc. (Chapter 9): um 6 Uhr/ vor 6 Uhr; mit ihm/ für ihn.
prepositional adverb	A word formed from da(r)- and a PREPOSITION, and used in place of a PREPOSITION plus a PRONOUN to refer to things (13.2): damit <i>with it, with them</i> , darunter <i>underneath it, among them</i> .
prepositional object	A COMPLEMENT of the verb beginning with a PREPOSITION which is required by the individual verb: Ich interessiere mich für Musik. Das schmeckt nach Zitronen.
prepositional phrase	A PHRASE made up of a PREPOSITION followed by a NOUN PHRASE: mit ihrem Vater; am Donnerstag.
present participle	The INFINITIVE with the suffix -d . Unlike English -ing forms, it is used mostly as an ADJECTIVE (14.3): die tanzenden Teenager.
present tense	The SIMPLE TENSE which indicates an event which is taking place now, or which takes place regularly (10.1, 11.1): Normalerweise trinke ich Kaffee, aber heute trinke ich Tee.
pronoun	A word which refers to or replaces a NOUN PHRASE (Chapter 4). See also DEMONSTRATIVE, INTERROGATIVE, PERSONAL PRONOUN, REFLEXIVE PRONOUN and RELATIVE PRONOUN.
reflexive pronoun	A PRONOUN which refers back to the SUBJECT of the VERB (4.2): Ich wasche mich . Ich wasche mir die Hände.
reflexive verb	A verb used with a REFLEXIVE PRONOUN (4.2, 12.7): sich interessieren, sich ausruhen.
register	The forms and vocabulary of language used depending on whether the language is, for instance, spoken or written, and whether the situation is formal or informal.
relative clause	A CLAUSE which starts with a RELATIVE PRONOUN and is used to describe the preceding noun (4.7): das Kind, das im Garten spielt ; mein Bruder, mit dem ich ins Kino gehe .
relative pronoun	The PRONOUN which starts a RELATIVE CLAUSE; cf. <i>who, which, what</i> in English (which sometimes omits the relative pronoun) (4.7): das Kind, das im Garten spielt; mein Bruder, mit dem ich ins Kino gehe.
reported speech separable verb	See INDIRECT SPEECH. A verb which, in the INFINITIVE form, has a PREFIX which is detached from the VERB in MAIN CLAUSES (19.5.1): aufstehen : ich stehe früh auf .
simple tense	A tense formed from a single word (cf. COMPOUND TENSE). The two simple tenses in German are the PRESENT and the PAST.
stem	The root part of the VERB which contains the meaning; to this is added the ENDING, which indicates the PERSON, NUMBER, TENSE and MOOD: the stem of sagen, sagst, sagt, etc. is sag- .
strong verb	A verb which changes not only its endings but also its STEM vowel in certain forms, notably in the PAST TENSE, and whose past participle has the ending -en (10.1.2, 10.2.2, 10.3): fahren: fährt – fuhr – ist gefahren.
subject	The person or thing carrying out the action expressed by the VERB: Ich spiele Fußball.

subjunctive (<i>Konjunktiv</i>)	The MOOD used to indicate that the action or state may not be factual, e.g. in INDIRECT SPEECH, where <i>Konjunktiv I</i> is used (17.1, 17.3): Er sagte, sie sei krank. <i>Konjunktiv II</i> is usually used to express possibility, wishes or conditions which are unlikely to be met (17.2, 17.4): Ich könnte dir helfen; Ich würde gern dorthin fahren; Wenn er nur hier wäre , ...
suffix	An addition to the end of a word, resulting in a new word or different forms of a given word (Chapter 19): Schmutz – schmutzig; unhöflich – Unhöflichkeit; kommen – kommt – komme.
superlative	The form of ADJECTIVES and ADVERBS expressing the highest (or lowest) degree (Chapter 8): der faulste Student; sie singt am schönsten .
tense	The form of the verb which expresses the particular time of the action. See COMPOUND TENSE, SIMPLE TENSE.
transitive verb	A verb which takes a DIRECT OBJECT: Ich sehe einen Film.
verb	A word which indicates an action, state or process: laufen, geschehen, werden, sein.
voice	Denotes the relationship between the VERB and its SUBJECT. See ACTIVE VOICE and PASSIVE VOICE.
weak masculine noun	One of a small group of nouns which add -(e)n in all cases except the NOMINATIVE SINGULAR (2.3.2): der Junge, den Jungen, des Jungen, dem Jungen, pl. die Jungen.
weak verb	A regular VERB which changes only its endings, and has a past participle ending in -t (10.1.1, 10.2.1, 10.3): sagen, sagt, sagte, hat gesagt.

Further study

This list contains a selection of books and websites which may be found useful for further study.

Grammars

Dodd, Bill, Eckhard-Black, Christine, Klapper, John and Whittle, Ruth, *Modern German Grammar*, Routledge, 2003 (particularly for its coverage of language functions)

Dreyer, Hilke and Schmitt, Richard, *A Practice Grammar of German*, Verlag für Deutsch, 2001 (particularly useful for its grammar exercises; the exercise key has to be purchased separately)

Duden 4, *Grammatik der deutschen Gegenwartssprache*, Dudenverlag, 2009 (for the most advanced students; comprehensive, and with interesting articles on many aspects of language, not just grammar, but not easily accessible)

Durrell, M., *Hammer's German Grammar and Usage*, Hodder Headline, 2011 (exhaustive; for advanced users)

www.ids-mannheim.de/grammis (a useful website, in German, maintained by the Institut für deutsche Sprache)

Usage

Duden, *Im Zweifel für den Genitiv*, Dudenverlag, 2008 (FAQs on German language usage; in German, but not difficult)

Duden 9, *Richtiges und gutes Deutsch*, Dudenverlag, 2007 (a handbook of German usage; much more comprehensive than the volume above – and more difficult)

Duden 2, *Stilwörterbuch*, Dudenverlag, 2010 (brief dictionary definitions followed by numerous examples of how words are used in context)

Durrell, M., *Using German*, Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn, 2003 (with a focus on contemporary usage, including register, i.e. levels of language)

Sick, B., *Der Dativ ist dem Genitiv sein Tod*, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2006 (four collections of witty and sometimes controversial observations on German grammar and usage, taken from the *Babelfisch* columns of *Der Spiegel* online)

Dictionaries

Collins German Dictionary, Collins, 2007; regularly updated (excellent coverage and clear explanations)

Duden, *Deutsches Universalwörterbuch*, 6th edn, Dudenverlag, 2006 (the standard monolingual dictionary)

www.leo.de (needs to be used with caution, like all on-line dictionaries, but is particularly interesting for the discussions of language usage and new vocabulary)

General

Johnson, Sally and Braber, Natalie, *Exploring the German Language*, 2nd edn, Cambridge University Press, 2008 (an excellent introduction to the German language in its linguistic and cultural context)

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