

# Modern German Grammar

A Practical Guide

Third Edition

**Ruth Whittle, John Klapper,  
Katharina Glöckel, Bill Dodd and  
Christine Eckhard-Black**



Modern Grammars

# Modern GERMAN Grammar

*Modern German Grammar: A Practical Guide, Third Edition* is an innovative reference guide to German, combining traditional and function-based grammar in a single volume.

The *Grammar* is divided into two parts. Part A covers grammatical categories such as word order, nouns, verbs and adjectives. Part B is organised according to language functions and notions such as:

- making introductions
- asking for something to be done
- delivering a speech
- possibility
- satisfaction.

The book addresses learners' practical needs and presents grammar in both a traditional and a communicative setting. New to this edition, and building on feedback from the previous edition:

- The rules of the latest (and so far final) spelling reform have been implemented throughout.
- Examples of usage have been updated and consideration given to Swiss and Austrian variants.
- The chapter on register has been expanded and now includes youth language and frequently used Anglicisms in German.
- The Index now has even more key words; it has also been redesigned to differentiate between German words, grammar terms, and functions, thus making it more user-friendly.

The *Grammar* assumes no previous grammatical training and is intended for all those who have a basic knowledge of German, from intermediate learners in schools and adult education to undergraduates taking German as a major or minor part of their studies.

The *Grammar* is accompanied by a third edition of *Modern German Grammar Workbook* (ISBN 978-0-415-56725-1) which features exercises and activities directly linked to the *Grammar*.

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# Modern GERMAN Grammar

*A Practical Guide*  
**Third Edition**

Ruth Whittle, John Klapper, Katharina Glöckel,  
Bill Dodd and Christine Eckhard-Black

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# Introduction

*Modern German Grammar: A Practical Guide* is a successful and proven reference grammar designed to be used with modern approaches to teaching and learning German as a foreign language. The book addresses learners' practical needs by combining a detailed description of the grammatical structures of German with a 'functional' approach to language. By functions we mean the specific uses to which we can put language in order to communicate effectively in particular situations, for example apologizing, accepting or declining an invitation, expressing regret, voicing an opinion or casting doubt on something.

The book is intended for all those who already have a basic knowledge of German and are seeking to become more independent users. This reference work will be most useful to you if you have reached level B1 as defined by the Council of Europe ([www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?L=E&M=/main\\_pages/levels.html](http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?L=E&M=/main_pages/levels.html)) or Intermediate-High according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines ([www.actfl.org/files/public/Guidelinespeak.pdf](http://www.actfl.org/files/public/Guidelinespeak.pdf)). You may be an undergraduate taking German as a major or minor part of your studies, or you may be an intermediate or advanced student in either a school or in adult education. It will also prove an invaluable resource for teachers seeking back-up to syllabuses organized around functions, or designers of German language courses and syllabuses in all sectors of education.

Before using the book the reader is advised to refer to pp. 3–4 on 'How to use this book'. There are two main parts. Part A (sections **1–59**) provides a detailed description of the structures of modern German, and is in this respect quite close to being a 'traditional' grammar. The explanations given in Part A are supported by a detailed glossary of grammatical terms that assumes no previous grammatical training. In contrast, the larger Part B (sections **60–121**) focuses on functions, explaining and illustrating the appropriate use of German in particular contexts, the specific ideas the learner wishes to express and the concrete situations in which he or she is likely to wish to use them. This part is intended to help learners negotiate written and oral situations idiomatically and in a way that is appropriate to the purpose in hand.

There is a comprehensive index, separated into three parts, at the back of the book. This is a very important section as the detailed entries on functions, structures and grammatical terminology allow the reader to approach the language in more than one way: he or she can either look up how to express a particular function or seek information on how a certain aspect of the language works. Having located the required function (e.g. 'Asking "where?"' **80.1**), the learner is referred to relevant structures in Part A (e.g. 'Interrogatives'). This approach avoids the difficulties learners have with traditional grammars, where, faced with expressing something in German, they frequently do not know which structure(s) they need to look up. In this book, the grammatical structures needed to perform the function successfully are highlighted in Part B and can be checked more fully in Part A. An

## INTRODUCTION

extensive system of cross-references within and between the two major parts of the book provides further information that the user may find helpful, especially when consulting individual functions.

A key factor in a book of this kind is the description of register. The term ‘register’ denotes the linguistic style appropriate to the relationship between the speaker or writer and the person he or she is speaking or writing to. Register is explained in detail in section **58**.

This third edition has adopted the rules of the ‘neue Rechtschreibung’ of 1 August 2006, which became binding for schools one year later. In this latest reform, alternatives for some spellings and for the use of the comma in certain instances have been allowed. The *Duden* is the authoritative reference work for German spelling rules, and where alternative spellings are permitted we will give the preferred or first form as listed in the *Duden* edition of 2009. If you are interested in looking up changes from the ‘alte’ to the ‘neue’ Rechtschreibung you can check these online ([www.duden.de/deutsche\\_sprache/sprachwissen/rechtschreibung/index.php?flip=%2Fdeutsche\\_sprache%2Fsprachwissen%2Frechtschreibung%2Findex.php](http://www.duden.de/deutsche_sprache/sprachwissen/rechtschreibung/index.php?flip=%2Fdeutsche_sprache%2Fsprachwissen%2Frechtschreibung%2Findex.php)). We have also introduced examples from Austrian and Swiss German, and refer to relevant spelling rules in the section on spelling and punctuation (**59**).

We have adopted the following conventions:

- within an English sentence bold type is used for German text, and single speech marks for English translations, e.g. **ein\*laden** ‘to invite’;
- as the above example shows, an asterisk indicates a separable prefix to a verb;
- the slash symbol (/) indicates an alternative word or expression;
- **-r, -e, -s** denote **der, die, das**, respectively; noun plurals are indicated via brackets, e.g. (e) or (en).

The following abbreviations are used:

acc. = accusative  
adj. = adjective  
adv. = adverb  
dat. = dative  
**etw.** = **etwas**  
gen. = genitive  
**jmd.** = **jemand**  
**jmdm.** = **jemandem**  
**jmdn.** = **jemanden**  
**jmds.** = **jemandes**  
*lit.* = literally  
nom. = nominative  
pl. = plural  
sb. = somebody  
sg. = singular  
sth. = something  
**usw.** = **und so weiter**

# How to use this book

Functional heading

General function

Specific function

Box summarizes main expressions and structures presented in this section

Information on register

Cross-reference to relevant grammatical function

German illustrations with English translations

**XIV**

**Conveying attitudes and mental states**

**100** **Asserting and denying the truth of something**

**100.1** **Commenting on the truthfulness of something**

**Das ist ganz/völlig richtig/falsch.** 'That's entirely correct/completely wrong.'  
**Das stimmt (eigentlich).** / **Das stimmt (eigentlich) nicht (ganz).** 'That is (in fact) correct.' / 'That isn't (really) (quite) correct.'  
**Das ist (wirklich)/(eigentlich) (nicht) wahr.** 'That's (really)/(actually) (not) true.'  
**Das ist die ganze Wahrheit.** 'That's the whole truth.'  
**Das ist nur die halbe Wahrheit.** 'That's only half the truth.'  
**So ein (völliger) Unsinn/Blödsinn (very derogatory)/Schwachsinn!** (*probably insulting*) 'That's (total) nonsense/rubbish!'

A dictionary will provide further reference for expressions with:

**wahr sein** 'to be true'  
**-e Wahrheit/Unwahrheit** 'truth/untruth'  
**gelogen** 'lied/a lie'  
**lügen** 'to lie'  
**-e Lüge** 'lie'

**100.2** **Expressing belief or disbelief**

The most common way to express belief or disbelief involves **jmdm. etw. glauben** 'to believe (sb.) sth.', and **an jmdn./etw. glauben** 'to believe in sb./sth.'

► See 12 for the order of noun and pronoun objects, and 42.3a–b for verb completion with one or two elements

**Ich glaube ihm seine Ausrede.**  
I believe (him) his pretext/excuse.

**Wir glauben an Gott.**  
We believe in God.

**Die Großmutter glaubt fest an sie.**  
The grandmother firmly believes in her.

**Sie glaubt an seinen Erfolg.**  
She believes in his success.

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Indicates alternative forms

Notes on meaning/usage

Index shows where to find various functions

deadline 81.15c  
Dear Mr/Mrs 60.7  
death 65.3a–b;  
110.9  
declaring sth.  
solemnly 100.4

Cross-reference to other related function

Indicates accusative of person

Shows case

Bold italic to highlight feature under discussion

CONVEYING ATTITUDES AND MENTAL STATES

100

Seine Erklärung war nicht sehr *glaubwürdig/glaubhaft*.  
His explanation was not very credible.

Die *Glaubwürdigkeit* ihrer Geschichte wurde angezweifelt.  
The credibility of her story was doubted.

-r **Glaube** refers to 'belief' in a general sense, whereas the much less common -r **Glauben** is used particularly when referring to 'faith'. -r **Unglaube** means 'lack of faith'.

100.3

**Saying that something is neither completely true nor untrue**

Er *verbreitete das Gerücht, dass sie heute käme*.  
He spread the rumour that she was to arrive today.

Diese Behauptung ist völlig *an den Haaren herbeigezogen/aus der Luft gegriffen*.  
This claim is extremely far-fetched. (*lit.* This claim has been pulled by its hair/grasped from the air)

Die Antwort ist nur *teilweise richtig*.  
The answer is only partially correct.

Diese Version der Geschichte *stimmt nicht ganz mit den Fakten überein*.  
This version of the story does not quite match the facts.

100.4

**Declaring something solemnly**

► For promises between people see 95.2

etw. (be)schwören 'to swear sth.'  
jmdn. beschwören, etw. zu tun 'to plead with sb. to do sth.'  
sich (= jdat.) schwören, etw. zu tun 'to be resolved to do sth.'  
einen Schwur leisten 'to swear an oath'  
einen Eid ab\*legen 'to swear an oath'

Sie *beschwor* ihre Unschuld.  
She swore she was innocent.

Sie *beschwor ihn, die Sache ernst zu nehmen*.  
She pleaded with him to take the matter seriously.

Er *schwor sich, diesen Fehler nicht noch einmal zu machen*.  
He swore/was resolved not to repeat this mistake.

Er *leistete einen Schwur, nicht eher zu ruhen, bis er dem Geheimnis auf die Spur käme*.  
He vowed not to rest until he had unveiled the mystery.

Alle Angeklagten müssen vor Gericht *einen Eid ablegen/leisten, die Wahrheit und nichts als die Wahrheit zu sagen*.  
All defendants have to swear an oath in court to tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

► See 42.3f for verb completion by an infinitive clause with **zu**; see also 8.7a for word order

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# Glossary

Small capitals indicate that the word is described elsewhere in the Glossary.

## Accusative object

Also known as the direct object, this denotes the person or thing the action of the VERB is being done to, and is in the accusative case in German:

**Sie kaufte *den* Rock.**  
She bought the skirt.

## Active

Also called the active voice, this is a grammatical construction in which the SUBJECT of a sentence performs the action of the VERB; the action usually affects a following ACCUSATIVE OBJECT:

**Er hat *den* Brief geschrieben.**  
He has written the letter.

See also PASSIVE.

## Adjective

This describes a NOUN. It can be a simple description such as **rot** 'red' or **langweilig** 'boring', or it can be a possessive such as **mein** 'my', **unser** 'our' or **Ihr** 'your':

**Das ist ein *schöner* Anzug.**  
That's a nice suit.

**Hast du *meine* Jacke gesehen?**  
Have you seen my jacket?

## Adjectival noun

A NOUN derived from an ADJECTIVE, which has the usual adjective endings: **der Angestellte** '(male) employee', **die Angestellte** '(female) employee', **die Angestellten** 'employees'.

## Adverb/Adverbial

Indicates, e.g., the manner in which something is done. It can consist of one word or a phrase: **schnell** 'quickly', **schlecht** 'badly', **am Abend** 'in the evening', **in der Schule** 'at school'.

## Auxiliary verb

Used in combination with the past participle (see PARTICIPLE) to form TENSES and the PASSIVE. The German auxiliaries are **haben**, **sein** and **werden**:

**Habt ihr es schon gemacht?**  
Have you already done it?

## GLOSSARY

**Er *ist* noch nicht angekommen.**

He has not arrived yet.

**Sie *wurden* in der Stadt gesehen.**

They were seen in town.

### Case

The function of NOUNS or PRONOUNS in a German sentence is shown by a change in their form or that of the DETERMINERS and ADJECTIVES used with them. The nominative indicates the SUBJECT of the VERB, the accusative indicates the ACCUSATIVE/DIRECT OBJECT, the dative indicates the DATIVE/INDIRECT OBJECT, and the genitive indicates possession or the relationship between nouns. PREPOSITIONS also require certain cases to be used. See 16–21.

### Clause

A subsection of a sentence containing a VERB. The main clause is that part of a sentence that does not depend on any other element in the sentence for its meaning. The subordinate clause depends on another clause, i.e. it cannot stand alone, and is usually introduced by a CONJUNCTION:

**Er weiß doch schon, *dass ich krank bin.***

He already knows that I'm ill.

Here the section in bold italics is the subordinate clause, while what precedes it is the main clause. A relative clause is a subordinate clause introduced by a relative PRONOUN (usually **der/die/das**) and relates back to a preceding NOUN or PRONOUN:

**Das ist die Schule, *die wir früher besuchten.***

That is the school we used to go to.

### Colloquial

An informal style of language more characteristic of spoken than written German, for example using the expression **Schwein haben** instead of **Glück haben** for 'to be lucky'; or simply using **Tschüs!** or **Tschau!** to say goodbye to a friend, rather than the more formal **auf Wiedersehen!**

### Comparative

The form of the ADJECTIVE or ADVERB used to compare things:

**eine *schwierigere* Aufgabe**

a more difficult exercise

**ein *besseres* Klima**

a better climate

***Fahr doch langsamer!***

Do drive more slowly!

See also SUPERLATIVE.

### Completion of the verb

The phrase or phrases that complete the meaning of the VERB, such as an ACCUSATIVE OBJECT or DATIVE OBJECT or a PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE:

**Er *klopfte an der Tür.***

He knocked on the door.

**Sie *gab ihrer Freundin das Buch.***

She gave her friend the book.

## GLOSSARY

***Dieser Bus fährt in die Stadtmitte.***

This bus goes to the town centre.

### Compound noun

A NOUN formed by joining together two or more words: **das Büro** ‘office’, **die Maschine** ‘machine’: **die Büromaschine** ‘office machine’.

### Conditional

The form **würde** is the subjunctive II form of the VERB **werden** and is sometimes referred to as the conditional tense, even though it is not strictly a tense. It is frequently used in conditional sentences, so called because they suggest some condition applies to the meaning of the main clause (see CLAUSE). The subordinate clause in a conditional sentence very often begins with the CONJUNCTION **wenn** ‘if’:

**Wenn es heute nicht regnete, würden wir im Garten arbeiten.**

If it weren’t raining today, we would work in the garden.

Another type of conditional sentence with **wenn** and the present tense of the VERB in both clauses denotes an open or real condition:

**Wenn sie heute Abend kommt, gehen wir ins Kino.**

If she comes this evening, we’ll go to the cinema.

### Conjugation

The changing of the PERSON, NUMBER, TENSE or MOOD of a VERB to indicate different meanings or grammatical functions: **Ich gehe, du gehst, sie ging, er ginge**, etc.

### Conjunction

A word that links CLAUSES, e.g. **dass, obwohl, weil, aber, und**.

### Dative object

Also known as the indirect object, this usually denotes a person or thing indirectly involved in the action of the VERB. In English it comes before the ACCUSATIVE/DIRECT OBJECT or after ‘to’ or ‘for’; in German it is always in the dative case (see CASE):

**Sie zeigte ihrem Bruder das neue Auto.**

She showed *her brother* the new car. / She showed the new car *to her brother*.

**Er hat es dir gekauft.**

He bought it *for you*.

### Declension

The changing of CASE and NUMBER of either a NOUN or ADJECTIVE to indicate different meanings or grammatical functions.

### Declension following *der*, etc.

Also sometimes called the ‘weak declension’, this is the pattern of ADJECTIVE endings before a NOUN when there is a preceding **der/die/das** or DEMONSTRATIVE:

**der alte Hut**

the old hat

**das neue Gebäude**

the new building



## GLOSSARY

**in jener teuren Wohnung**  
in that expensive flat.

See also DECLENSION FOLLOWING *EIN*, ETC. and ZERO DECLENSION.

### Declension following *ein*, etc.

Also sometimes called the ‘mixed declension’, this is the pattern of adjective endings before a NOUN when there is a preceding **ein/eine/ein**, **kein/keine/kein** or possessive adjective (see ADJECTIVE):

**ein alter Freund**  
an old friend

**kein gutes Zeichen**  
not a good sign

**meine jüngere Schwester**  
my little sister.

See also DECLENSION FOLLOWING *DER*, ETC. and ZERO DECLENSION.

### Definite article

The German equivalent of the word ‘the’ (i.e. **der**, **die** or **das**). See also DETERMINER.

### Demonstrative

A word indicating which NOUN is being referred to, usually in relation to another noun: **diese Frau** ‘this woman’, **jener Mann** ‘that man’, **jedes Haus** ‘every house’ (see also DETERMINER).

### Determiner

A word preceding a NOUN that indicates which noun is being referred to, how many of the nouns there are, or to whom the noun belongs. Determiners include DEFINITE ARTICLES (**der**, **die**, **das** ‘the’), INDEFINITE ARTICLES (**ein** ‘a’, **kein** ‘not a’), DEMONSTRATIVES (**dieser** ‘this’, **jener** ‘that’), INDEFINITES (**mancher** ‘some’, **viele** ‘many’), and possessive adjectives (**mein** ‘my’, **unser** ‘our’ – see ADJECTIVE).

**Direct object** see ACCUSATIVE OBJECT.

### Direct speech

The exact representation of someone’s actual words, usually in speech marks:

**‘Ruf mich doch morgen an,’ sagte er.**  
‘Give me a ring tomorrow,’ he said.

See also REPORTED SPEECH.

### Finite verb

The one VERB in a CLAUSE that has a SUBJECT and can be either singular or plural, in the present or past tense, in contrast to PARTICIPLES and INFINITIVES, which are the non-finite parts of the verb:

**Wir sind nach Paris geflogen.**  
We flew to Paris.

**Schwimmst du noch am Wochenende?**  
Do you still go swimming at the weekend?

## GLOSSARY

### Gender

A means of classifying NOUNS grammatically through the different forms of the DETERMINERS that precede them: *der Mann/das Haus, dieser Mann/diese Frau, in keinem Dorf/in keiner Stadt*. German has three genders – masculine, feminine and neuter. In most cases grammatical gender is not based on natural gender.

### Imperative mood

The form of the VERB used to express commands:

**Bring mir das Buch.**

Bring me the book.

**Gehen Sie nach Hause!**

Go home!

**Kommt mal her, Kinder.**

Come here, children.

See also INDICATIVE MOOD and SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD.

### Indefinite article

The German equivalent of the word ‘a/an’ (i.e. **ein, eine, ein**). See also DETERMINER.

### Indefinites

Words used to indicate how many of the NOUN there are without giving the exact number: *einige Kollegen* ‘a few colleagues’, *manche Studenten* ‘some students’, *viele Leute* ‘lots of people’. See also DETERMINER.

### Indicative mood

The form of the VERB used to make unconditional statements (see CONDITIONAL) or to ask questions:

**Die Arbeit war schon am Montag fertig.**

The work was finished on Monday.

**Wohnen Sie hier in der Nähe?**

Do you live near here?

See also IMPERATIVE MOOD and SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD.

**Indirect object** see DATIVE OBJECT.

### Infinitive

The form of the VERB found in a dictionary: **arbeiten** ‘to work’. The infinitive is also used in particular constructions, e.g. with a MODAL VERB:

**Wir müssen jetzt arbeiten.**

We have to work now.

### Inseparable verb

A VERB with an inseparable prefix: **vergeben** ‘to forgive’. The past participle (see PARTICIPLE) does not begin with **ge-**:

**Ich habe dir vergeben.**

I have forgiven you.

See also SEPARABLE VERB.

## GLOSSARY

### Interrogative

Any question word or phrase: **Wo?** ‘Where?’, **Warum?** ‘Why?’, **Aus welchem Grund?** ‘For what reason?’

### Intransitive verb

A VERB that needs only a SUBJECT to form a basic sentence:

**Sie schläft.**

She is asleep.

See also TRANSITIVE VERB.

### Irregular verb

A type of STRONG VERB that changes its stem in the **du** and the **er/sie/es** forms of the present tense, e.g. **geben** ‘to give’: **ich gebe, du gibst, er gibt**. See also WEAK VERB.

### Mixed verb

A category of VERBS, small in number, that combine aspects of WEAK VERBS and STRONG VERBS. See 33.6.

### Modal particles

Words that signal the speaker’s attitude towards what he or she is saying and help to involve the listener in what is being said. There is often no direct English equivalent:

**Das hast du *ja* selber gesagt.**

You said that yourself (after all).

### Modal verb

A VERB that can be used with another verb to modify the kind of statement being made: **Ich kaufe es** ‘I buy it’ can be modified to **Ich *will* es kaufen** ‘I want to buy it’, **Ich *muss* es kaufen** ‘I have to buy it’, etc.

**Mood** see IMPERATIVE MOOD, INDICATIVE MOOD, SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD.

### Noun

A word that names things, processes or concepts. In written German, all nouns begin with a capital letter: **der Brief** ‘letter’, **die Tiefe** ‘depth’, **das Schreiben** ‘(act of) writing’. All nouns in German have a GENDER.

### Number

A word denoting whether a NOUN or VERB is singular or plural: **ein Hund** ‘one dog’, but **zwei Hunde** ‘two dogs’; **du gehst** ‘you (singular) are going’, but **Sie gehen** ‘you (plural) are going’.

### Object

The object of the VERB is the person or thing affected by the action of the verb, as distinct from the person or thing responsible for the action (the SUBJECT). See ACCUSATIVE OBJECT and DATIVE OBJECT.

### Orthography

The conventions for correct spelling and punctuation.

## GLOSSARY

### Participle

A non-finite form of a VERB. The present participle is usually an ADJECTIVE: **führend** 'leading'. The past participle is used in forming various TENSES and signals the completion of an action:

**Er hat es schon gemacht.**  
He has already done it.

The past participle can also have an adjectival sense: **geteilt** 'divided'. See also FINITE VERB.

### Passive

Also called the passive voice, a grammatical construction in which the person or thing affected by the action of a VERB appears as the SUBJECT of the sentence. For example, the ACTIVE sentence **Er hat den Brief geschrieben** 'He has written the letter' can be expressed in the passive as **Der Brief ist (von ihm) geschrieben worden** 'The letter has been written (by him)'.

### Person

VERBS have three persons: the first (singular: **ich gehe**; plural: **wir gehen**), the second (singular: **du gehst**; plural: **ihr geht, Sie gehen**) and the third (singular: **er/sie/es geht**; plural: **sie gehen**).

### Preposition

A word that describes where things are in time or space. German prepositions always put the NOUN or PRONOUN into a CASE other than the nominative: **unter dem Tisch** 'under the table', **für mich** 'for me'.

### Prepositional phrase

Usually a phrase consisting of a PREPOSITION linked to a NOUN or ADJECTIVE and noun:

**neben der neuen Tür**  
next to the new door

**im alten Haus**  
in the old house

**dem Dom gegenüber**  
opposite the cathedral.

### Prepositional verb

A VERB that forms an idiomatic unit with a particular PREPOSITION: **glauben an** (+ acc.) 'to believe in sb. or sth.'

### Pronoun

A word that stands in for and refers to a NOUN. There are personal pronouns, e.g. **er**, which means 'he' when referring to a noun such as **der Abteilungsleiter** 'head of department', and 'it' when referring to a noun such as **der Computer** 'computer'. Relative pronouns introduce relative clauses (see CLAUSE):

**Das ist eine Frage, die mich interessiert.**  
That is a question which interests me.

Reflexive pronouns are used with REFLEXIVE VERBS. The possessive pronouns **meiner, meine, meins; deiner, deine, deins**, etc. correspond to 'mine', 'yours', etc. DEMONSTRATIVE

## GLOSSARY

pronouns point to something specific: **dieses Spiel** ‘this game’, **jene Frau** ‘that woman’. Informally **der/die/das** also act as demonstrative pronouns:

**Den haben wir heute nicht gesehen.**  
We haven’t seen him today.

### Reflexive verb

A VERB that is used with a form of PRONOUN known as a reflexive pronoun to indicate that the SUBJECT and the OBJECT of the verb are identical: **Ich rasiere mich** ‘I shave’. Some German verbs can only be used reflexively:

**Sie befindet sich in Bonn.**  
She is in Bonn.

### Reported speech

A way of showing that the words used by the speaker or the writer are someone else’s. (See also DIRECT SPEECH.) German uses a SUBJUNCTIVE form of the VERB for this, e.g. an original sentence such as **Ich bin krank** ‘I am ill’ can be reported as **Er sagte, er sei krank** ‘He said he was ill’.

### Separable verb

A VERB with a (stressed) separable prefix that appears separately from the main part of the verb in some structures:

**Der Zug kam pünktlich an.**  
The train arrived on time.

See also INSEPARABLE VERB.

### Strong verb

A VERB that undergoes a change to its stem in forming the simple past: **wir singen** ‘we sing’, **wir sangen** ‘we sang’. See also IRREGULAR VERB and WEAK VERB.

### Subject

The subject of the VERB is usually a NOUN or PRONOUN that denotes the person or thing doing the action expressed by the verb. The subject agrees with the verb in NUMBER:

**Die Maschine läuft.**  
The machine is running.

**Die Maschinen laufen.**  
The machines are running.

See also OBJECT.

### Subjunctive mood

A form of the VERB used to express an action, process or state that is not actually in existence at the time of speaking. The subjunctive is mainly used in REPORTED SPEECH and in conditional sentences (see CONDITIONAL) such as:

**Ich könnte morgen kommen(, wenn du Zeit hast).**  
I could come tomorrow (if you have time).

See also IMPERATIVE MOOD and INDICATIVE MOOD.

## GLOSSARY

### Superlative

The form of an ADJECTIVE used to denote the greatest intensity of a quality:

**Das war die beste Lösung.**

This was the best solution.

See also COMPARATIVE.

### Tense

A finite form of the verb (see FINITE VERB) that usually expresses whether the action takes place in the present, past or future. German has six tense forms.

### Transitive verb

A VERB that can have an ACCUSATIVE OBJECT:

**Ich verstehe dich.**

I understand you.

See also INTRANSITIVE VERB.

### Verb

A word describing an action or state of being: **wir schwimmen** 'we are swimming', **sich waschen** 'to get washed', **sie war traurig** 'she was sad'.

### Verbal prefix

A prefix added to a VERB in order to create a new verb with a different meaning. Verbal prefixes may be separable (**ankommen** 'to arrive') or inseparable (**vergeben** 'to forgive'). A few verbal prefixes can be separable or inseparable, with a distinction in meaning: see 36. See also INSEPARABLE VERB and SEPARABLE VERB.

### Weak verb

A regular VERB whose forms are completely predictable as they add standard endings to the verb stem. See also IRREGULAR VERB and STRONG VERB.

### Zero declension

Also sometimes called the 'strong declension', this is the pattern of adjective endings before a noun when there is no preceding **ein** or **der**: **italienischer Wein** 'Italian wine', **deutsches Bier** 'German beer'. See also DECLENSION FOLLOWING *EIN*, etc. and DECLENSION FOLLOWING *DER*, etc.



**Part A**

# **Structures**





# Letters and sounds

Sections 1–4 provide a reference guide to the correspondences between letters and the sounds they represent in German. Approximate versions of German pronunciation are given in square brackets. A stressed syllable is shown in *italic*.

## 1 Vowels

**1.1** The quality of a vowel depends on whether it is stressed or unstressed (see 4). In unstressed syllables vowels tend towards the neutral sound found in the unstressed syllables of English ‘farmer’, ‘armour’, ‘along’.

**1.2** The relationship between written vowels and spoken syllables is different in English and German in one important respect: ‘dame’ is one syllable in English, but **Dame** (lady) is two syllables in German: [*da:-me*].

**1.3** German vowels are pronounced either short or long. In this section, a vowel that is pronounced long is followed by a colon [:]. A doubled consonant following a vowel indicates that the vowel is short (**Lamm** [lam] ‘lamb’); an **h** and a **ß** (sharp s) following a vowel indicate that the vowel is long (**lahm** [la:m] ‘lame’; **Fuß** [fu:s] ‘foot’). German vowels are also much ‘purer’ than English vowels, which tend to be slight glides (see 2). The quality of German vowels is typically close to northern English pronunciation.

**1.4** The letters and sounds for vowels are as follows:

- a** Short, like the vowel in (northern) English ‘ham’: **Kamm** ‘comb’, **Lamm** ‘lamb’. Long, like the vowel in English ‘harm’: **kam** ‘came’, **lahm** ‘lame’.
- ä/e** These represent the same set of sounds. Short, like the first vowel in English ‘enter’: **Essen** ‘food/meal’, **Ämter** ‘offices, etc.’. Long, it has no equivalent in English. **Esel** ([e:zel] ‘donkey’) almost rhymes with ‘hazel’ but without the vowel glide of English.
- ee** This is always pronounced long: **Tee** ([te:] ‘tea’), rhymes with ‘hay’, but without the vowel glide of English.
- i** Short, like the vowel in English ‘it’: **List** ([list] ‘cunning’).
- ie** As a single syllable, this is always pronounced long, like the vowel in English ‘eat’: **liest** ([li:st] ‘reads’). But see also 4.3.
- o** Short, like the vowel in English ‘off’: **offen** ([ofen] open). Long, like the vowel in English ‘oaf’, but without the vowel glide of English: **Ofen** ([o:fen] ‘oven’).
- ö** Short [o], it has no near equivalent in English: **können** ([könen] ‘to be able to’). Long [o:], like the vowel in English ‘urn’, but with the tongue further forward, the lips rounded and without the glide of English: **Söhne** ([zö:ne] ‘sons’).

- u** Short [u], like the vowel in English ‘bully’: **Pulli** ([puli] ‘pullover’). Long [u:], like the vowel in English ‘tool’: **Puder** ([pu:der] ‘powder’).
- ü/y** These represent the same set of sounds as produced by performing English ‘ee’ in ‘green’ and pursing the lips. This produces a front vowel sound with rounded lips, long in **grün** ([grü:n] ‘green’) and **typisch** ([tʏ:pish] ‘typical’), and short in **Küsse** ([küse] ‘kisses’).
- j** This is pronounced ‘y’ in German: **Juli** ([yu:li] ‘July’).

**1.5**

Where unlauded vowels (**ä, ö, ü**) mark grammatical changes, e.g. in forming the plural of a noun or the subjunctive of a verb, the unlauded vowel has the same length as the vowel it replaces: both short in **Kamm, Kämme** ([kam] [keme] ‘comb’, ‘combs’); both long in **kam, käme** ([ka:m] [ke:me] ‘came’, ‘would come’). An umlaut basically takes a vowel produced at the back of the mouth [**a, a:, o, o:, u, u:**] and moves it to the front of the mouth [**e, e:, ö, ö:, ü, ü:**] but with the lips shaped as they were for the back vowel.

**2****Diphthongs****2.1**

Diphthongs are vowel glides. The tongue ‘glides’ from one position to another as the sound is produced.

- au** Like English ‘ow’ in ‘how now’. The vowel in German **braun** is very like the vowel in English ‘brown’.
- ai/ei** Both pronounced like the glide in English ‘ice’ (German **Eis**).
- au/eu** Both these combinations of letters represent the sound ‘oi’: **Mäuse** ([moize] ‘mice’); **Europa** ([oiro:pa] ‘Europe’).

Note that **äu** is the unlauded form of the back vowel glide au: **Haus** ([haus] ‘house’), **Häuser** ([hoizer] ‘houses’).

**2.2**

In German, **ei** is always pronounced ‘eye’, and **ie** is always pronounced ‘ee’. Thus, saying the second letter of the pair always produces the correct sound for English speakers: **Wein** ([vain] ‘wine’) sounds like English ‘vine’. **Bier** ([bi:r] ‘beer’) sounds like English ‘beer’.

**2.3**

Most English vowels have a slight tendency to be pronounced as glides, i.e. the tongue moves from one position to another nearby. However, most German vowels are pronounced with the tongue in a constant position.

**3****Consonants****3.1**

German has one consonant letter not found in English: **ß**. Called ‘sharp s’ or ‘s-tset’, this letter is always pronounced voiceless, i.e. as in ‘hiss’ as opposed to ‘his’. It is always written instead of double **-s (ss)** when preceded by a long vowel. Thus:

*Long:* **Maße** [ma:se] **Füße** [fʏ:se] **stoße** [sh̥to:se] **Stöße** [sh̥tö:se]  
*Short:* **Masse** [mase] **Flüsse** [flʏse] **Sprosse** [sh̥prose] **Schlösser** [sh̥lösser] **Hass** [has].

**3.2**

Most consonants are pronounced as they are in English, with the following principal exceptions:

- b, d** These are pronounced ‘p’ and ‘t’ respectively when at the end of a word or syllable: **ab** ([ap] ‘away’), **Rad** ([ra:t] ‘wheel’).

- ch** (a) This is pronounced hard, midway between 'k' and 'h' (as in Scots English 'loch') when it follows a back vowel [**a, a:**, **o, o:**, **u, u:** and **au**]: **Bach** ([bakh] 'stream'), **Loch** ([lokh] 'hole'), **Buch** ([bu:kh] 'book'), **Bauch** ([baukh] 'stomach'). (b) This is pronounced soft, rather like 'sh' (but halfway between English 'sh' and the above sound) when it follows a consonant or a front vowel [**i, i:**, **e, e:**, **ä, ä:**, **ö, ö:**, **ü, ü:** and **äu, eu, ai, ei**]: **Milch** ([milch] 'milk'), **Löcher** ([löcher] 'holes'), **Bücher** ([bü:cher] 'books'), **Bäche** ([beche] 'streams'), **Bäuche** ([boiche] 'stomachs'). It is the first sound in the English word 'huge'.
- ig** The **g** is pronounced like soft **ch** (see above) when at the end of a word or syllable. In some parts of Germany it is, however, pronounced 'k' in these positions: **billig** ([billich, billik] 'cheap').
- ng** The **g** is never pronounced in German. Like standard English 'singer'.
- st, sp** These are pronounced 'sht', 'shp' at the beginning of a word or syllable: **Stuttgart** [shtutgart], **Spiel** ([shpi:l] 'game'). In some parts of Germany, e.g. in Hamburg, these are pronounced without the 'sh' sound: [stutgart] [spi:l].
- s** This is pronounced 'z' preceding a vowel: **so** [zo:], **versammeln** ([ferzameln] 'gather'), but is pronounced as an 's' in some words imported from English: **sexy** [seksi], **Suzy** [su:zi].
- z** This is pronounced 'ts', also at the beginning of a word or syllable: **Skizze** ([skitse] 'sketch'), **zu** ([tsu:] 'to'), **hinzu** ([hintsu:] 'in addition'), **zusammen** ([tsuzamen] 'together').
- v** This is usually pronounced 'f' at the beginning of words and syllables: **viel** ([fi:l] 'a lot'); and at the end of words: **brav** ([bra:f] 'well behaved').
- w** This is pronounced 'v' at the beginning of words and syllables: **weil** ([vail] 'because').
- sch** This is pronounced 'sh': **Schule** ([shu:le] 'school').
- qu** This is pronounced 'kv': **quer** ([kve:r] 'diagonal').
- age** At the end of some nouns imported from French, this has a French pronunciation, but it is pronounced with two syllables, the first one of which carries the stress: **Garage** [gara:zhe].
- tion** At the end of a word this is pronounced as two syllables, the last one of which carries the stress: **Inflation** [inflatsi-o:n]. This may be pronounced faster, almost as a single syllable: [infla-tsyo:n].

Any consonant clusters not listed above are pronounced in full. For example: **Knie** ([kni:] 'knee'), **Pfad** ([pfa:t] 'path'), **Psychologie** ([psüchologi:] 'psychology').

## 4 Stress

**4.1** It is only in stressed syllables that vowels have their full value.

**4.2** Many words that look like English words have a different stress: **Student** [shtudent], **Altar** [alta:r], **Hierarchie** [hi:ra:chi:], **Diskothek** [diskote:k].

**4.3** **ie** is usually pronounced as a single syllable, but in some nouns and adjectives imported from other languages **ie** is pronounced as two syllables [i:-e]: **Familie** ([fami:li-e] 'family'). Sometimes, the second of these syllables carries the main stress in the word: **hygienisch** ([hügie:nish] 'hygienic').

**4.4** Where two vowels meet at an internal boundary in a word they are not pronounced as a single sound but remain in separate syllables, e.g. **geehrt** ([ge-e:rt] 'honoured'), **geimpft** ([ge-imft] 'inoculated'), **beeilen** ([be-ailen] 'hurry').



# Word order

Although German certainly has several strict rules on word order, the order in which words appear in a sentence does not by itself determine meaning. The rules that follow therefore need to be considered alongside the case system (see 16–21).

## 5

### Simple sentences and main clauses

#### 5.1

A simple sentence is a statement that contains no questions or direct commands (see 7 and 41 on imperatives). The basic rule to remember about word order in simple sentences or main clauses is that the finite verb is always the ‘second idea’ (see 5.2). The finite verb is the one verb that can be either singular or plural, in the present or past tense:

**Sie *spielen* mit meiner kleinen Schwester.**

They are playing with my little sister.

**Mein Mann *schwimmt* jeden Tag mindestens 500 Meter.**

My husband swims at least 500 metres every day.

Here **spielen** and **schwimmt** are the finite verbs.

There can be only one finite verb in each German sentence; infinitives and past participles (see 33.1), for example, are not finite verbs:

**Sie *werden* wohl erst nachts ankommen.**

You’ll probably not arrive until night-time.

**Wir *hatten* den Film schon gesehen.**

We had already seen the film.

Here **werden** and **hatten** are the finite verbs.

(For exceptions to the ‘verb second’ rule, see 7.2 on direct questions, 7.3 on commands, and 58.3 on informal conversational responses.)

#### 5.2

The verb’s second position applies even when some element other than the subject stands in first position. This other element can be:

- (a) one or more adverbs or adverbial phrases (for explanations on adverbs and adverbial phrases, see also 50):

***Morgen* wird es schon zu spät sein.**

Tomorrow it will be too late.

***Letzten Samstag gegen drei Uhr nachts* starb er an einem Herzinfarkt.**

He died of a heart attack at about 3 a.m. last Saturday.

**Vor zwei Wochen kaufte ich mir ein neues Auto.**

Two weeks ago I bought myself a new car.

- (b) a noun phrase (see 42.3a–b):

**Diesen alten VW kaufst du?!**

You're buying that old VW?!

- (c) a pronoun (see 30):

**Uns war das Haus zu teuer.**

The house was too expensive for us.

- (d) a nominative noun or phrase (see 17) complementing the verbs **sein**, **werden** or **bleiben**:

**Ein berühmter Politiker ist er bestimmt nicht geworden.**

He certainly didn't become a famous politician.

- (e) an infinitive or infinitive phrase (see 5.4):

**Fernsehen kannst du ja später; zuerst musst du aber die Hausaufgaben machen.**

You can watch television later. First you must do your homework.

**Um Missverständnissen vorzubeugen, sollten Sie ihn sofort anrufen.**

To avoid any misunderstanding you ought to phone him at once.

► See also 42.3f on the use of infinitive clauses with 'zu'

- (f) a past participle:

**Unterschrieben ist der Vertrag allerdings noch nicht.**

The contract has not, however, been signed yet.

► See also 33.1 and 35.3

- (g) an adverb and some other part of speech together:

**Dadurch freilich wurden all unsere Pläne zunichte gemacht.**

Admittedly that ruined all our plans.

- (h) a subordinate clause: see 8.1–2.

► See 15 for the nuances and emphases associated with these various examples of 'flexible' word order

### 5.3

Introductory words such as the following are not considered first ideas:

**ja** 'yes'

**nein** 'no'

**also** 'therefore'

**so** 'thus'

**nun** 'now/well'

**na** 'well'

**ach** 'oh'

**das heißt** 'that is, i.e.'

**im Gegenteil** 'on the contrary'

**wissen Sie/weißt du** 'you know'

**sehen Sie/siehst du** 'you see'

**verstehen Sie/verstehst du** 'you understand'  
**wie gesagt** 'as I say'  
**mit anderen Worten** 'in other words'  
**unter uns gesagt** 'between you and me'.

Note that each of these is followed by a comma (see 59.6 on rules for the use of commas):

**Ja, ich komme um acht vorbei.**  
 Yes, I'll call in at eight o'clock.

**Das heißt, Sie sind die ganze Woche verreist?**  
 That means you're away all week?

#### 5.4

The usual position for past participles, or for infinitives dependent on modals (see 35) or the verb **werden**, is at the end of the clause or sentence:

**Das habe ich ihm schon öfters gesagt.**  
 I've often told him that.

**Könntest du nicht bis Dienstag bleiben?**  
 Couldn't you stay until Tuesday?

An infinitive dependent on a finite verb (see 5.1) precedes a past participle at the end of a sentence. This applies particularly to modal verbs which, when used in combination with other verbs, employ the infinitive as the past participle:

**Er hat es nicht *machen dürfen* (Compare: Er hat es nicht gemacht).**  
 He wasn't allowed to do it (he hasn't done it).

► See 35.1 and 35.3 for modal verbs and the past participles of modal verbs

In passive constructions (see 40, especially 40.4d) the past participle precedes **werden**:

**Muss der Vertrag heute noch *unterschrieben werden*?**  
 Does the contract have to be signed today?

#### 5.5

Separable prefixes (see 36) are placed in final position:

**Er steht immer um sieben Uhr *auf*.**  
 He always gets up at seven o'clock.

## 6

### Two main clauses

#### 6.1

In a sentence with two or more main clauses linked by the co-ordinating conjunctions **aber, denn, oder, sondern, und**, the finite verb (see 5.1) is always the second element in each clause:

**Rudi fiel auf den Boden, *und* Peter lachte laut.**  
 Rudi fell on the floor and Peter laughed loudly.

**Ich habe sie eingeladen, *aber* sie wollte nicht mitkommen.**  
 I invited her but she did not want to join us.

#### 6.2

If the subjects of such clauses are the same, the second subject may be omitted:

**Wir spielten jeden Tag Fußball *oder* (wir) gingen spazieren.**  
 We played football or went for a walk every day.

## 6.3

If the second clause has another element in first position, the subject must be included:

**Ich wusch mich, dann ging ich in die Küche.**

I had a wash, then I went into the kitchen.

As this example shows, the ‘finite verb second’ rule also applies following the conjunction **dann**, which is not to be confused with **denn** (see 6.1).

► See 59.5 for the use of commas in German clauses, and 8.3 for conjunctions in subordinate clauses

## 6.4

There is a range of other co-ordinating conjunctions to note.

- (a) **allein**, **doch** and **jedoch** are alternatives to **aber** and are mainly found in written German. With **allein**, the word order is the same as with **aber**:

**Wir haben Herrn Moder schon informiert, allein er scheint zur Zeit verreist zu sein.**

We have already informed Herr Moder but he seems to be away at present.

**Jedoch** carries greater force than **doch** but both are usually followed immediately by the finite verb:

**Ich höre gern Musik, doch kann ich ihre neue CD einfach nicht leiden.**

I like listening to music but I simply cannot stand their new CD.

**Die Verkaufszahlen steigen zwar nun endlich wieder, jedoch müssen wir leider vier weitere Mitarbeiter entlassen.**

Sales figures are finally rising again, however we unfortunately need to let another four employees go.

It is also not uncommon, however, for **jedoch** to follow the finite verb:

**Sie hat sich entschuldigt, das heißt jedoch nicht, dass sie es nicht wieder tun würde.**

She has apologized, however that doesn’t mean she wouldn’t do it again.

- (b) In order to suggest that alternatives exclude each other, German either follows **oder** with **aber** or uses the conjunction **beziehungsweise** (often abbreviated to **bzw.**):

**Sie dürfen hier unten frühstücken, oder aber auf Ihrem Zimmer essen.**

You may have breakfast down here or (else) eat in your room.

**Der Bus fährt um 14.00 Uhr ab bzw. sonntags um 17.00 Uhr.**

The bus leaves at 2.00 p.m., or 5.00 p.m. on Sundays.

- (c) **Entweder . . . oder** (‘either . . . or’) presents two clear alternatives:

**Entweder wir finden eine Lösung, oder wir müssen aufgeben.**

Either we find a solution or we’ll have to give up.

- (d) **weder . . . noch** (‘neither . . . nor’) tends not be used a lot in spoken German where the phrase **und auch nicht/kein** is preferred:

**Es gab weder Wasser noch Saft zu kaufen.**

You could buy neither water nor juice.

**Er will in den Sommerferien weder zu seinem Großvater noch zu seinem Onkel fahren.**

He does not want to go to his grandfather’s or his uncle’s in the summer holidays.



Note the word order when this phrase links two clauses:

**Er will weder zu seinem Onkel fahren, noch will er zu Hause bleiben.**  
He wants neither to go to his uncle's nor to stay at home.

Slightly less commonly, this might be rendered:

**Weder will er zu seinem Onkel fahren, noch will er zu Hause bleiben.**

Compare these with the following:

**Es gab kein Wasser und auch keinen Saft zu kaufen.**  
**Er will nicht zu seinem Großvater fahren und auch nicht zu seinem Onkel.**

## 7 Direct questions and commands

► For indirect questions, see [9](#)

### 7.1

After interrogative words, such as **wer, was, wie, warum, wo, wann, womit, wovon**, etc., the verb retains second position:

**Wo sind meine Schuhe?**

Where are my shoes?

**Warum hat er es dir denn nicht gesagt?**

Why didn't he tell you then?

**Worüber ärgert er sich so?**

What's he so annoyed about? (See also [50.5](#).)

► For identifying and seeking information, see [73](#)

### 7.2

With all other direct questions, however, the finite verb is the first element in the sentence:

**Ist er immer noch nicht angekommen?**

Has he still not arrived?

### 7.3

In direct commands and suggestions/exhortations the finite verb is again always first element:

**Gehen Sie sofort nach Hause!**

Go home at once!

**Zieh doch den Mantel aus!**

Take your coat off!

**Vergessen wir das!**

Let's just forget about it!

► See [41](#) for imperatives; for making, accepting and declining suggestions using this pattern, see [98](#)

## 8 Subordinate clauses

### 8.1

A subordinate clause is one that requires another, main, clause to make it fully meaningful. For example:

**Ich habe mich geärgert, weil er so spät gekommen ist.**  
I was annoyed that he arrived so late.

Here, **weil er so spät gekommen ist** is the subordinate clause, which cannot stand on its own without the preceding main clause **ich habe mich geärgert**.

A subordinate clause is separated by a comma from the main clause. (See also [10](#) on relative clauses.)

**8.2**

The finite verb (see [5.1](#)) in subordinate clauses is almost always in final position (but see [58.4](#)), and main and subordinate clauses are linked by a subordinating conjunction such as **dass** ('that'):

**Wir wussten nicht, dass er die Arbeit schon gemacht hatte.**

We didn't know that he had already done the work.

The finite verb thus follows the past participle in a subordinate clause.

► See [33.1b](#) and [35.3](#) on past participles; for the use of subordinate clauses in functions giving reasons and purpose, see [79.1](#)

**8.3**

Quite often the subordinate clause comes before the main clause. Where this happens, the subordinate clause is the first idea and the verb in the main clause retains second position:

**Da wir nun mitten in einer Großstadt wohnen, gehen wir selten wandern.**

Since we now live in the middle of a city we rarely go walking.

**Wenn er mir morgen die CD gibt, sage ich euch Bescheid.**

If he gives me the CD tomorrow, I'll let you know.

Note that **wenn** can be omitted from the subordinate clause by putting the verb first:

**Gibt er mir morgen die CD, sage ich dir Bescheid.**

► See also [39.8](#); see [10.4](#) on the position of relative clauses

**8.4**

Subordinating conjunctions can be grouped under the following headings:

(a) Clause complement:

the principal conjunctions used to complement the main verb in a sentence are: **dass** 'that', **ob** 'whether/if' and **wenn** 'if':

**Es freut mich, dass wir endlich nach Spanien fahren.**

I am pleased that we are finally travelling to Spain.

**Dass sie schon siebzig ist, finde ich ganz erstaunlich.**

I'm quite amazed that she is already 70.

In both spoken and written German, the conjunction **dass** is often omitted. On such occasions the verb does not go to the end of the clause:

**Ich glaube, dass er gestern krank war.**

but:

**Ich glaube, er war gestern krank.**

I think he was ill yesterday.

However, where the main verb is negated, a **dass** is usual:

**Wir wussten nicht, dass er seine Stelle schon gekündigt hatte.**

We didn't know he had already resigned his post.

Omission of **dass** is especially common after verbs of saying, believing, feeling, hoping and thinking, etc. (**sagen, ahnen, denken, fühlen, glauben, meinen**).

When **dass** is omitted, the verb in the subordinate clause is often put into the subjunctive, especially in written German, in order to indicate that the statement in question is being reported:

**Er meinte, sie habe zur Zeit keine Chance, ihre Wohnung zu vermieten.**  
He said she had no chance at present of renting out her flat.

**Hans sagt, er wolle nächstes Jahr nach Australien fahren.**  
Hans says he wants to go to Australia next year.

► For expressing assumptions using a **dass** construction, see **89.1**

**Wenn** can be used as both a time conjunction (see below) and as a complement in conditions:

**Wenn der Chef es genehmigt, nehme ich im August vier Wochen Urlaub.**  
If my boss allows me, I'll take four weeks holiday in August.

**Ich weiß nicht, ob wir noch Zeit haben.**  
I don't know if we still have time.

**Ob es ihr gelingt, dort einen Studienplatz zu bekommen, ist noch nicht klar.**  
It's not clear yet whether she'll manage to get a place to study there.

In spoken German, **ob** clauses on their own can be used to frame a question:

**Ob das noch zutrifft?**  
Is that still the case?

**Ob der Zug in Kaufbeuren hält?**  
Does the train stop in Kaufbeuren?

This structure is also used in 'stream of consciousness' narratives without any preceding verb to indicate the speaker or thinker. In this case it would be rendered in English by a formulation such as: 'She/he wondered whether . . .':

**Ob ihr Bruder pünktlich ankommt? Ob er an das Geld gedacht hat?**  
She wondered whether her brother would arrive on time and whether he had remembered the money.

(b) Time:

**als** 'when' (one occasion in the past)  
(see **48.6** and **51.2** for use of  
**als** in comparisons; see also  
**23.1c**)

**bevor** 'before'

**bis** 'until'

**ehe** 'before' (formal)

**indem** 'while/as'

**indes/indessen** 'while/whilst'  
(formal)

**nachdem** 'after' (see also **34.6c** and  
**34.8**)

**seit/seitdem** 'since' (of time)

**sobald** 'as soon as' (see also **59.4**)

**solange** 'as long as' (see also **59.4**)

**sooft** 'as often as'

**während** 'while'

**wenn** 'whenever' (refers to more than  
one occasion and is not restricted  
to the past)

**Die Gäste waren schon alle da, als der Fotograf kam.**

The guests were already there when the photographer arrived.

**Ich warte hier, bis ich mit meiner Tochter gesprochen habe.**

I'll wait here until I've spoken to my daughter.

Compare this with the other use of **bis**, meaning ‘by the time’:

**Bis du heute abend anrufst, habe ich den Vertrag gelesen.**

I’ll have read the contract by the time you phone this evening.

Note that **indem** links actions that occur at the same time and usually expresses English ‘by -ing’:

**Meine Eltern helfen mir, indem sie mir €5.000 für die Kautions für die neue Wohnung leihen.**

My parents are helping me by lending me 5,000 euros for the deposit on the new flat.

**Sie haben einen schweren Fehler begangen, indem sie ihn nicht um Rat gebeten haben.**

They made a serious error by not asking him for advice.

**Sobald ich ihn wieder einmal an der Straßenecke sah, rief ich die Polizei an.**

As soon as I saw him on the street corner again, I telephoned the police.

**Mir wird immer ganz warm, wenn ich die Treppe zu meinem Büro hinauflaufe.**

I always get quite warm when I climb the stairs to my office.

**Während ich im Ausland unterwegs war, verbesserte sich die Lage im Büro.**

While I was travelling abroad, the situation in the office improved.

Note that **während** (like English ‘while’) can also denote a contrast:

**Sonja war sechzehn, während ihre Schwester Anke erst dreizehn Jahre alt war.**

Sonja was 16 while her sister Anke was only 13.

(c) Interrogatives:

**wann** ‘when’, **warum** ‘why’, **was** ‘what’, **was für ein** ‘what sort of’, **welcher** ‘which’, **wer** ‘who’, **wessen** ‘whose’, **wo** ‘where’, **wie** ‘how’, when used as conjunctions, act as indirect questions:

**Der Polizist hat gefragt, was wir gesehen haben.**

The policeman asked what we saw.

**Weißt du, warum er heute so kurzfristig abgesagt hat?**

Do you know why he cancelled today at such short notice?

**Wir müssen noch entscheiden, was für ein Geschenk wir ihr kaufen sollen.**

We still have to decide what sort of present to buy her.

(d) Causation:

**da** ‘since/as/because’, **weil** ‘because’, **zumal** ‘especially as/since’:

**Weil es heute früh geregnet hat, wird der Rasen wohl noch ganz feucht sein.**

As it rained this morning, the grass will probably still be quite damp.

**Das wird aber zu knapp werden, zumal er erst um 20.00 Uhr bei uns ankommt.**

That will be too tight, especially since he is only going to arrive at our place at 8.00 p.m.

(e) Purpose and result:

**damit** ‘so that’ (in order to), **so dass** ‘so that’ (as a result), **um . . . zu** ‘in order to’:

**Ich habe mir einen neuen PC gekauft, damit ich zu Hause besser arbeiten kann.**

I’ve bought myself a new computer so I can work better at home.

**Die Firma ist zu schnell gewachsen, so dass sie bei der jetzigen Flaute Probleme hat.**

The company grew too quickly and as a result is facing problems during the current economic downturn.

**Ältere Leute sollten viel lesen und neue Fertigkeiten lernen, um geistig aktiv zu bleiben.**

Old people should read a lot and learn new skills in order to stay mentally active.

(f) Concession:

all the following can be used to express English ‘although’: **obgleich/obwohl**, **obschon** (Swiss variant), **trotzdem** (colloquial), **zwar . . . aber**:

**Uli ging gestern Abend in die Kneipe, obwohl er kein Geld hatte.**

Uli went to the pub yesterday evening even though he didn’t have any money.

**Der Markt ist zwar zur Zeit ein bisschen ruhig, aber wir erwarten ab dem Sommer bessere Verkaufszahlen.**

Although the market is a little quiet at present, we are expecting better sales figures from the summer onwards.

**Trotzdem wir kein Geld haben, machen wir dieses Jahr noch Urlaub.**

Although we’ve not got any money, we’re still going on holiday this year. (*Informal. Obwohl* is generally preferred in standard language.)

(g) Manner and degree:

**als** ‘as’, **als ob** ‘as if’, **(an)statt** ‘instead of’, **außer dass** ‘except that’, **außer wenn** ‘except if/when’, **insofern/insoweit** ‘in as much as/so far as’, **ohne dass/ohne . . . zu** ‘without’, **sofern** ‘provided that/if’, **soweit** ‘as far as’, **wie** ‘as’:

**Sie sieht jeden Abend fern, außer wenn sie geschäftlich unterwegs ist.**

She watches TV every evening except when she is away on business.

**Ich weiß nichts über ihn, außer dass er mit Sabine verheiratet ist.**

I know nothing about him except that he’s married to Sabine.

**Sie gingen nach Hause, ohne sich zu verabschieden.**

They went home without saying goodbye.

**Wir werden ihr helfen, soweit wir können.**

We’ll help her as far as we can.

Note the conditional use of **sofern**:

**Sofern ich die Stelle bekommen kann, werden wir nächstes Jahr nach Amerika auswandern.**

Provided I can get the job, we’ll be moving to America next year.

Less commonly **soweit** is also used in this way:

**Soweit das Angebot noch besteht, sollten wir weitere Exemplare davon bestellen.**

Provided the offer is still on, we ought to order more copies.

Note the use of **als** and **wie** in comparatives:

**Ich habe es viel schneller gelesen, als man denken würde.**

I read it much *more* quickly *than* you might expect.

**Die Chinareise war nicht so ermüdend, wie wir erwartet hatten.**

The trip to China was *not as* tiring *as* we had expected.

► For conjunctions in direct clauses, see [6](#)

### 8.5

When modal verbs (see [35](#)) are used in subordinate clauses in tenses other than the present and simple past, two or three verbs may be grouped together at the end of the clause. If this happens, the finite verb (usually **haben** but also in the future tense **werden**) is placed in front of the other verbs:

**Ich bin sicher, dass wir uns die Reise nächstes Jahr werden leisten können.**

I am sure we will be able to afford the trip next year.

**Sie schreibt, dass sie die ganze Arbeit allein hat machen müssen.**

She writes to say she has had to do all the work herself.

**Wenn er uns wirklich hätte sehen wollen, wäre er wohl ein bisschen früher aufgestanden, oder?**

If he'd really wanted to see us, he'd have got up a little earlier, don't you think?

**Bist du sicher, dass die neue Regelung hat eingeführt werden müssen?**

Are you sure the new regulation had to be introduced?

If **lassen** ([35.6b](#)) is used with another modal verb, there may (exceptionally) be three infinitives at the end of the clause:

**Meinst du, dass ich die Umzugskosten von der Firma hätte bezahlen lassen können?**

Do you think I could have got the firm to pay the removal costs?

► See also [5.4](#) and [35.3](#)

### 8.6

(a) Infinitive clauses (that is, clauses containing verbs preceded by **zu**) are usually placed outside the main clause:

**Ich habe versucht das Buch zu lesen.**

I've tried to read the book.

Rather than:

**Ich habe das Buch zu lesen versucht.**

**Ich habe aufgehört zu rauchen.**

I have given up smoking.

Rather than:

**Ich habe zu rauchen aufgehört.**

However, you will still hear this form when there is no direct object.

NOTE On the use of commas before **zu** see [59.6a](#).

► See also [42.3f](#) for verb completion by an infinitive clause with **zu**; see [8.4e](#) for **um . . . zu**

(b) With separable verbs, a dependent infinitive (see [5.4](#)) is normally placed outside the main clause. For example, with **auf\*hören etwas zu tun** and **an\*fangen etwas zu tun**:

**Er hörte auf zu singen.**

He stopped singing.

**Sie fingen an zu tanzen.**

They began dancing.

NOTE

If **als** or **wie** is used in a comparison, it is usually placed after the finite verb:

**Du weißt ja, dass er schneller läuft als ich.**

You know he can run faster than I can.

**Der Lehrer sagte, dass mein Aufsatz genauso gut war wie Silvias.**

The teacher said my essay was just as good as Silvia's.

► See use of **als** as a subordinating conjunction, [8.3](#); see [48.6](#) and [51.2](#) for comparisons

## 9

## Indirect questions

► For direct questions see [7](#).

When the interrogative adverbs (**wann**, **wo**, **wie**, etc.), pronouns ([30](#)) (**wer**, **wessen**), adjectives ([44.2](#)) (**welcher**) and determiners ([24](#)) (**was für ein**) introduce an indirect question, the finite verb ([5.1](#)) must go to the end of the clause:

**Wir fragten ihn, wie lange er bleiben möchte.**

We asked him how long he would like to stay

**Meine Mutter möchte wissen, wer am Wochenende dorthin fährt.**

My mother would like to know who's going there at the weekend.

**Bitte sagen Sie mir, welche Kollegen diesen Kurs schon besucht haben.**

Please tell me which colleagues have been on this course.

► See also [30.4b](#)

## 10

## Relative clauses

## 10.1

These are subordinate clauses that relate back to a noun ([25](#), [28](#)), noun phrase ([42.3a–b](#)), pronoun ([30](#)) or determiner ([24.1c](#)) in the main clause. They are introduced by an appropriate form of the relative pronoun (**der**, **die**, **das** or plural **die**). The relative pronoun sends the finite verb (see [5.1](#)) to the end of the clause, and must agree in number ([29](#)) and gender ([25](#), [27](#)) with the noun or phrase it refers to. (In the plural, of course, it only needs to agree in number.) The case of the relative pronoun is decided by its role in the subordinate clause (see [8](#)):

**Haben Sie den Mann gesehen, der das Paket abgeholt hat?**

Did you see the man who picked up the package?

**Die Frau, *der* ich diesen Auftrag gegeben habe, arbeitet schon lange bei uns.**

The woman I gave this job to has been working for us for a long time.

► See also [30.1](#); for functions using relative clauses see [73.3](#) on referring to people

## 10.2

As the following table shows, the relative pronouns decline like the definite articles (see [22.2](#)), with the exception of the highlighted forms, i.e. the masculine and neuter genitive singular (**dessen**), the feminine genitive singular (**deren**), the genitive plural (**deren**) and the dative plural (**denen**):

	<i>Singular</i>			<i>Plural</i>
	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>All genders</i>
Nominative	<b>der</b>	<b>das</b>	<b>die</b>	<b>die</b>
Accusative	<b>den</b>	<b>das</b>	<b>die</b>	<b>die</b>
Dative	<b>dem</b>	<b>dem</b>	<b>der</b>	<b>denen</b>
Genitive	<b>dessen</b>	<b>dessen</b>	<b>deren</b>	<b>deren</b>

**Dieses Unternehmen, *dessen* Arbeiter schon öfters gestreikt haben, hat große finanzielle Probleme.**

This firm, whose workers have often been on strike, has serious financial problems.

**Die Studenten, *deren* Tutor ich bin, sollen mindestens zweimal im Jahr in meine Sprechstunde kommen.**

The students whose personal tutor I am are supposed to come to see me at least twice a year during my office hours.

## 10.3

Relative pronouns are sometimes preceded by a preposition. Here the case of the pronoun is determined by the preposition, and the finite verb is still placed at the end of the clause:

**Kennst du die Mädchen, *mit denen* Elke gerade spricht?**

Do you know the girls Elke is talking to?

**Das alte Gebäude, *in dem* wir arbeiten, wird gerade umgebaut.**

The old building that we work in is at present being renovated.

## 10.4

As the last example shows, the relative clause is usually placed within the main clause immediately after the item(s) it refers to. Occasionally, however, lengthy relative clauses may follow the main clause:

**Sie kann nun jeden Tag mit ihrem Freund verbringen, *der nach zehn schwierigen Monaten in Brasilien endlich nach Hause gekommen ist.***

She can now spend every day with her boyfriend, who has finally returned home after ten difficult months in Brazil.

► See [18.2–3](#), [19.4](#) and [20.7](#) on the use of prepositions with different cases; see [8](#) on subordinate clauses



## 10.5

When a relative clause refers back to one of the following, 'which' is conveyed by **was** and the finite verb is again sent to the end of the clause:

- (a) A neuter indefinite:

**alles** 'everything'  
**einiges** 'some things'  
**etwas** 'something'  
**folgendes** 'the following'  
**manches** 'many things'  
**nichts** 'nothing'  
**vieles** 'lots'  
**weniges** 'few things'.

***Alles, was ich hier mache, ist falsch.***  
 Everything I do here is wrong.

***Manches, was du neulich gesagt hast, ist ganz richtig.***  
 Some of the things you said recently were quite right.

Following **etwas**, **das** may also be used.

- (b) The demonstrative **das** 'that':

***Ich bin mit dem, was er uns anbietet, gar nicht zufrieden.***  
 I'm not at all pleased with what he's offering us.

- (c) An indefinite neuter adjective, e.g. **das Schlimmste** 'the worst thing', **das Erste** 'the first thing', **das Neue** 'the new (thing)':

***Ist das wirklich das Beste, was er bieten kann?***  
 Is that really the best he can offer?

- (d) The whole of a preceding clause:

***Sie behauptet, sie habe das Haus um neun Uhr verlassen, was nicht stimmen kann.***  
 She claims to have left the house at nine, which cannot be true.

## 10.6

Relative clauses can also be introduced by indefinite relative pronouns that refer to the idea contained in the whole of the preceding clause (rather than a particular word). These forms are a compound of **wo** + preposition, such as **wodurch**, **womit**, **wovon**. Note that, when the preposition begins with a vowel, **r** is inserted: **woraus**, **worin**, **worüber**. Once again, the finite verb is placed at the end of the clause:

***Es waren nur acht Leute da, woraus man schließen kann, dass die Kollegen wenig Interesse an diesem Thema haben.***

There were only eight people there, from which one can conclude that colleagues have little interest in the subject.

***An dieser Stelle ist die Straßenbeleuchtung besonders schlecht, worüber sich schon viele beklagt haben.***

The street lighting is especially bad at this spot, something many people have complained about.

## 11 Order of adverbials

By adverbial we mean a single word (**sofort, neulich, freilich**) or a phrase (**aus voller Kraft, unter diesen Umständen, die ganze Woche**), indicating either the time, the manner, the place or the attitude that characterizes an action. Adverbials describe how, where, when, why or how long something happens, or where to/from something or someone is moving. The order of adverbials can vary a lot and consequently you will encounter several exceptions to the following rules, usually because the speaker or writer wishes to emphasize one element or another (see 11.4 and 15).

### 11.1

A common word order in a sentence with several adverbs is time–manner–place:

**Sie war gestern (TIME) im Schwimmbad (PLACE).**

She was at the swimming pool yesterday.

**Ich frühstücke morgens (TIME) gerne (MANNER) draußen im Garten (PLACE).**

In the morning I like to have breakfast outside in the garden.

However, it is not at all unusual to also find the order time–place–manner if the writer/speaker wishes to emphasize how the action is performed:

**Der FC Bayern München hat am Samstag (TIME) in Stuttgart (PLACE) besonders gut (MANNER) gespielt.**

Bayern Munich played particularly well on Saturday in Stuttgart.

**Die Polizisten haben ihn gestern (TIME) auf der Polizeiwache (PLACE) ganz aggressiv (MANNER) behandelt.**

The police treated him really roughly at the police station yesterday.

NOTE

Adverbs of attitude are placed before all other adverbs:

**Du rauchst doch (ATTITUDE) nicht etwa immer noch (TIME) heimlich (MANNER) im Arbeitszimmer (PLACE), oder?**

You're not still secretly smoking in your study, are you?

**Sie spricht leider (ATTITUDE) nicht immer (TIME) deutlich genug (MANNER) im Klassenzimmer (PLACE).**

Unfortunately she doesn't always speak clearly enough in class.

### 11.2

One or more adverbs can be placed in initial position. This is especially common with a time expression:

**Morgens begrüßen sie sich immer herzlich.**

They always greet each other warmly in the morning.

**Abends solltet ihr eure Sachen für den nächsten Tag zusammensuchen.**

You ought to gather together your things for the following day in the evening.

**Jeden Morgen pünktlich um 8.15 rief sie ihre Schwester an.**

She phoned her sister every morning at 8.15 on the dot.

If other adverbs are placed first, this usually lends emphasis to them:

**Nach Edinburg ist er doch erst gestern gefahren.**

He only went to *Edinburgh* yesterday.

## 11.3

Unless it is placed in initial position, the adverb follows all pronouns:

**Meine Frau schenkte mir zu Weihnachten diese Uhr.**

My wife gave me this watch for Christmas.

**Meine Frau schenkte sie mir zu Weihnachten.**

My wife gave me it for Christmas.

## 11.4

Adverbs are often placed before simple accusative (also known as direct) noun objects:

**Er wollte trotzdem das Geld nicht annehmen.**

He wouldn't accept the money all the same.

But they are usually placed between dative (also called indirect) and accusative noun objects:

**Er warf dem Mädchen plötzlich einen letzten Blick zu und verschwand.**

He suddenly threw the girl a final glance and disappeared.

► See 18 and 19

However, this order can vary depending on which element in the clause the speaker or writer wishes to emphasize:

**Sie hat ihren alten VW im Herbst verkauft.**

She sold her old VW car in the autumn.

What is being emphasized is *when* she sold the car.

**Sie hat im Herbst ihren alten VW verkauft.**

This emphasizes *what* she sold.

**Den Betrieb hat der Finanzdirektor im Januar seinem Nachfolger gezeigt.**

The Finance Director showed his successor the factory in January.

The word order here is neutral.

**Den Betrieb hat der Finanzdirektor seinem Nachfolger im Januar gezeigt.**

Emphasis here is being given to *when* he was shown it.

**Seinem Nachfolger hat der Finanzdirektor den Betrieb im Januar gezeigt.**

The emphasis here is on *who* was shown it.

► See also 15

## 11.5

Adverbs are placed before any adjectives they qualify (as in English):

**Das Klima hier ist wesentlich besser.**

The climate here is much better.

**Für ihr Alter ist sie relativ groß.**

She's quite big for her age.

► For functions using several adverbial expressions, see, e.g., 81

## 12

## Noun and pronoun objects

## 12.1

When both objects are nouns, the dative precedes the accusative:

**Sie gab *ihrer Freundin* das Kleid.**  
She gave her friend the dress.

## 12.2

When both objects are personal pronouns, the accusative precedes the dative:

**Sie gab *es* *ihr*.**  
She gave her it.

## 12.3

When one object is a noun and the other a personal pronoun, the pronoun comes first, regardless of case:

**Sie gab *es* *ihrer Freundin*.**  
She gave it to her friend.

**Sie gab *ihr* das Kleid.**  
She gave her the dress.

NOTE

When a noun in the accusative is placed in initial position for the purpose of emphasis, the accusative precedes the dative, and when a dative pronoun is similarly emphasized, the dative precedes the accusative:

***Das Kleid* wollte sie *ihrer Freundin* nicht geben.**  
She didn't want to give her friend the dress.

***Uns* hat sie *es* nicht gegeben.**  
She didn't give it to us.

► See [15.1](#)

## 12.4

In direct questions (see [7](#)), the object pronoun (here a dative) normally comes before the subject:

**Wie hat *Ihnen* der Rotwein geschmeckt?**  
(How) did you like the red wine?

With two pronoun objects the noun subject tends to come first:

**Deshalb wollte *der Vorarbeiter* *es* *ihnen* nicht glauben.**  
That's why the foreman would not believe them.

Note also that personal pronouns come before demonstrative pronouns:

**1989 war *uns* das noch nicht klar.**  
In 1989 that was not yet clear to us.

## 12.5

Nouns and pronouns are normally placed before adjectives and take the dative:

**Ich bin *Ihnen* sehr dankbar.**  
I'm very grateful to you.

**Du siehst *deinem Vater* sehr ähnlich.**  
You look very much like your father.

**Wir waren *uns* der Gefahr bewusst.**  
We were aware of the danger.

► See also [19.9](#) and [20.3](#)

**13** Position of *nicht***13.1**

If a whole clause or sentence is being negated, **nicht** is placed at the end or as near to the end as possible:

**Solche Probleme hast du bei uns *nicht*.**

You won't have problems like that with us.

**Um halb zehn war der Zug immer noch *nicht* abgefahren.**

At half nine the train still had not left.

When used in this way, **nicht** is placed after objects or adverbials but before adverbs of manner (see **11** and **50**):

**Er ist heute wegen des schlechten Wetters *nicht* sehr schnell (MANNER) vorangekommen.**

He didn't get on very quickly today because of the bad weather.

**13.2**

Otherwise, the general rule is that **nicht** comes immediately before the individual element that it negates:

**Das Essen hat er *nicht* für uns vorbereitet.**

It wasn't for us that he made the meal.

**Das ist doch *nicht* dein Schlüssel.**

That's not your key.

**13.3**

It is important to note that **nicht** precedes all elements that complete the sense of the verb:

**Stell die heiße Tasse *nicht* auf den Tisch.**

Don't put the hot cup on the table.

**Sie meint, ich soll mich *nicht* darüber ärgern.**

She says I shouldn't get annoyed about it.

**Er ist heute *nicht* nach London gefahren.**

He hasn't gone to London today.

Note in the third example that, if stress is placed on 'London', the implication is that he travelled somewhere other than London. More explicitly this would be:

**Er ist nicht nach London gefahren, sondern nach Paris.**

It's Paris he's gone to, not London.

**Er ist dorthin nicht gefahren, sondern geflogen.**

He didn't drive there; he flew.

**13.4**

The word **kein** is used to express *nicht ein*:

**Das ist ja *keine* leichte Aufgabe.**

That is not an easy task.

(The forms of **kein** are identical to those of **ein**. See **22.3**.)

## 14 Position of reflexive pronouns

► For forms see [30.2b](#)

**14.1** The reflexive pronouns (**mich/mir, dich/dir, sich, uns, euch**) are placed immediately after the finite verb (see [5.1](#)) in a main clause:

**Er schaute *sich* dann die Bücher an.**

He then had a look at the books.

**Setzt *euch* einen Augenblick.**

Have a seat for a moment.

**14.2** When some element other than the subject is in initial position in a main clause (see [5.2](#)), the reflexive pronoun is placed after a pronoun subject, but it can be placed before or after a noun subject:

**Dann schaute *er sich* die Bücher an.**

Then he had a look at the books.

**Dann schaute *sich* Wolfgang die Bücher an.**

or:

**Dann schaute *Wolfgang sich* die Bücher an.**

Then Wolfgang had a look at the books.

**14.3** This word order also applies in a subordinate clause (see [8](#)):

**Ich wusste nicht, ob *sie sich* schon kennengelernt hatten.**

I didn't know whether they had already met.

**Ich wusste nicht, ob *sich die Studierenden* schon kennengelernt hatten.**

I didn't know whether the students had already met.

or:

**Ich wusste nicht, ob die *Studierenden sich* schon kennengelernt hatten.**

**14.4** In infinitive phrases the reflexive pronoun is placed at the head of its clause:

**Es ist ja ganz interessant, *sich mit ihm über seine Jugendtage in Deutschland zu unterhalten*.**

It's really interesting talking to him about his youth in Germany.

## 15 Flexible word order and emphasis

In spite of the above rules there is more flexibility to word order in German than in English. This flexibility allows for subtle shifts of emphasis and shades of meaning.

### 15.1 First position

As seen in [5.2](#), the first element in a sentence can be one of a wide range of parts of speech.

► For examples of functions where this type of flexible word order is common, see [112.2](#) on satisfying needs and demands

- (a) This first element is the item that the speaker/writer wishes to explain or elaborate on:

**Die Regierung hat ihre neuen Reformen nicht durchsetzen können.**

The government was unable to carry through its new reforms.

(This communicates something about the government.)

► See 35.3 for the past participle of modal verbs

**Den alten Mann hat er im Garten gefunden.**

He found the old man in the garden.

(This conveys something about the old man as opposed to someone else – e.g. **Aber die junge Frau fand er im Wohnzimmer.** ‘But he found the young woman in the living room.’)

**In seiner Wohnung ist die Heizung kaputt.**

The heating has broken down in his apartment.

(This tells us something about his flat.)

**Nach den Ferien werde ich das Haus streichen.**

I shall paint the house after the holidays.

(Here we learn what will happen after the holidays.)

- (b) The first element is unlikely to contain new information as it usually either refers back to something mentioned before or hints at information that is already familiar:

**Abgesehen von den üblichen Schwierigkeiten an der Grenze, war die Reise ein großer Erfolg.**

Apart from the usual difficulties at the border the trip was a great success.

(The new element here is the success of the trip; the difficulties are already well known.)

**In fast all diesen Städten leidet die Bevölkerung unter den Folgen der Luftverschmutzung.**

In almost all these towns the population is suffering from the effects of air pollution.

(The towns are familiar because they have been referred to before – what is new is the information on pollution.)

- (c) The use of the dummy subject **es** (see 42.3g) helps to emphasize the subject when it is this element that conveys new or significant information:

**Es fehlten vierzehn Bücher.**

Fourteen books were missing.

**Es besteht ja die Gefahr, dass sie die Wahl verlieren könnte.**

There is, of course, a danger that she might lose the election.

- (d) This principle of familiar or shared information coming first can result in some emphatic formulations. This is especially the case when infinitives or past participles (33.1) come first:

**Sprechen will ich ihn nicht. Ich möchte ihm nur diesen Brief geben.**

I don't want to *talk* to him. I would just like to give him this letter.

**Gesehen habe ich sie nicht, nur gehört.**

I didn't *see* her. I just heard her.

Here the speaker uses this word order to contrast what is expected or assumed (i.e. talking to him, seeing her) with what is actually the case.

► See also [12.3](#)

## 15.2 Final position

- (a) Elements can be placed at the end of a sentence for the purposes of emphasis:

**Heute Abend sah mich zum Glück keiner.**

Fortunately no one saw me this evening.

The resultant style is often quite formal:

**Nach vielen erfolgreichen Jahren als Personalleiter der Firma tritt nun in den Ruhestand unser alter Freund und langjähriger Kollege Willi Ruttkamp.**

After many successful years as the firm's Personnel Director our old friend and long-time colleague Willi Ruttkamp is now retiring.

The same emphasis can be applied to elements that complete the verb:

**Nach langem Streben und Warten wurde Emil Hauptmann in seiner alten Heimatstadt endlich Bürgermeister.**

After much effort and having waited for so long, Emil Hauptmann finally became mayor in his old home town.

► See [28.6](#)

- (b) This practice may sometimes override accepted rules such as the indirect object preceding the direct object (see [12.1](#)):

**Wir zeigten unsere Arbeit den Besuchern aus Japan.**

We showed the visitors from Japan our work.

(Here the people being shown the work are considered more important than the work itself.)

In a subordinate clause this final position excludes any infinitives ([33.1](#)), finite verbs ([5.1](#)) or separable prefixes ([36.2](#)). Thus, in the following two examples, the phrases in italics are being emphasized:

**Es war klar, dass auf uns *etwas ganz Unangenehmes* wartete.**

It was clear something very unpleasant awaited us.

**Ich weiß nicht, ob sie ihre Eltern *dem neuen Direktor vorgestellt* hat.**

I don't know whether she introduced her parents to the new head teacher.

- (c) The flexibility of German word order is reflected in the following. Apart from the neutral **Sie hat dem neuen Direktor ihre Eltern vorgestellt**, these variations are also possible: **Dem neuen Direktor hat sie ihre Eltern vorgestellt**, with its mild emphasis on **Eltern** as the people of particular interest to whom she introduced the head teacher; and **Ihre Eltern hat sie dem neuen Direktor vorgestellt**, with its slight emphasis on **Direktor** as the person of particular interest to whom she introduced her parents.





# The case system

## 16 The cases

Although English retains a few examples of its earlier case system, an English word's grammatical role is usually determined by its position in the sentence. Thus, the meaning of the sentence 'The dog bit the man' is changed entirely by swapping the position of the two nouns to give: 'The man bit the dog'.

In German, the case system is more fully developed and allows a slightly more flexible approach to subject–object word order. Thus, the first of the above sentence could be quite accurately translated as: **Den Mann biss der Hund**; and the second as: **Den Hund biss der Mann**. This use of case endings on articles, and also on nouns, pronouns and adjectives to indicate the role these words play in a sentence, depends on a system of four distinct grammatical cases (the nominative, accusative, dative and genitive). Each of these has a number of clearly defined functions.

► For an overview of the various case endings see [22.2–3](#) on the article, [28](#) on noun declension, [30–32](#) on pronouns, and [44–47](#) on adjectives

## 17 The nominative

This is the form in which nouns are presented in reference books and in which they need to be learnt. The nominative is used as follows.

**17.1** For the subject of the finite verb (see [5.1](#) on finite verbs):

***Die Bundeskanzlerin ist nach Washington geflogen.***

The German Chancellor has flown to Washington.

***Heute Morgen hat dein japanischer Freund angerufen.***

Your Japanese friend phoned this morning.

**17.2** Following the verbs **bleiben**, **heißen**, **scheinen**, **sein**, **werden** and, in the passive (see [40](#)), **nennen**:

***Mein Nachbar ist ein bekannter Schriftsteller.***

My neighbour is a well-known writer.

***Er wurde bald ein verlässlicher Kollege.***

He soon became a reliable colleague.

***Sie blieb meine beste Freundin.***

She remained my best friend.

**Ich wurde von meinen Lehrern immer *ein Faulenzer* genannt.**

I was always called a lazy-bones by my teachers.

► For relevant functions see [61.5](#)

## 17.3

For nouns and pronouns independent of a verb, as in exclamations or when addressing people:

**Ach, der alte Schuft!**

The old rascal!

**Du frecher Junge!**

You naughty boy!

**Eine ganz schön stürmische Überfahrt, nicht?**

It's a really stormy crossing, isn't it?

► For similar functions see [99.1c](#)

## 18

**The accusative**

The accusative is used as follows.

## 18.1

To indicate the direct or, as it is sometimes called, accusative object:

**Sie zeigte uns *den großen Garten*.**

She showed us the large garden.

**Er suchte *den empfohlenen Stadtführer*.**

He looked for the guide book that had been recommended.

► See also [42.3a](#)

## 18.2

After the prepositions **bis**, **durch**, **für**, **gegen**, **ohne**, **um** and **wider**:

**Das machst du aber *ohne mich*.**

You can do that on your own (*lit.* without me).

**Wir sind *durch einen langen Tunnel* gefahren.**

We drove through a long tunnel.

**Wir liefen *um den Sportplatz* herum.**

We ran around the sports ground.

► See also [33](#), [38.1–2](#), [42.3e](#) and [50.6](#)

## 18.3

After the prepositions **an**, **auf**, **in**, **neben**, **über**, **unter**, **vor** and **zwischen** when motion towards the following noun or pronoun is implied. Compare this with the dative (see [19.5](#)), which denotes position:

**Sie setzte sich *vor die Tür*.** (*Compare the dative: Sie saß vor der Tür.*)

She sat down in front of the door. (She was sitting in front of the door.)

**Sie setzten sich *neben ihre Freunde*.** (*Sie saßen neben ihren Freunden.*)

They sat down next to their friends. (They were sitting next to their friends.)

Soll ich das Plakat *an die Wand* hängen? (Das Plakat hängt *an der Wand*.)  
Should I hang the poster on the wall? (The poster is/hangs on the wall.)

► See also 32, 35.2, 42.3e and 19.5

NOTE The preposition **entlang** follows the noun in the accusative case:

**Gehen Sie *die Fußgängerzone entlang*.**  
Go along the pedestrian area.

Notice the abbreviated prepositional forms:

**an + das = ans**  
**in + das = ins**  
**auf + das = aufs**  
**um + das = ums.**

Also, but usually only in spoken German: **durchs, fürs, gegens, hinters, nebens, übers, unters** and **vors**.

► See 19.5

#### 18.4

To indicate a particular point in time or a length of time in phrases without a preposition:

***Letzten Samstag* war das Wetter ganz furchtbar.**

The weather last Saturday was really terrible.

***Einen Augenblick, bitte.***

Just a moment, please.

***Wir wollten noch *einen Tag* bleiben.***

We wanted to stay another day.

***Die ganze Woche* ging er nicht zur Uni.**

He didn't go to uni all week.

But note the exception is the genitive in the expressions **eines Tages** 'one day', **eines Nachts** 'one night' and **eines Morgens** 'one morning':

***Eines Tages* möchte ich nach Australien fahren.**

I'd like to go to Australia one day.

#### 18.5

To denote direction or distance with motion verbs:

**Sie lief *die Treppe* hinauf.**

She ran up the stairs.

**Ich wohne nur *einen Kilometer* von der Schule entfernt.**

I live only one kilometre from school.

#### 18.6

For adverbial expressions of measurement or value:

**Er wiegt schon *einen Zentner*.**

He already weighs 50 kilograms/100 kilograms (in AU and CH).

**Bern ist *eine Reise* wert.**

Bern is worth a visit (*lit.* trip).

## The dative

18.7

In wishes and greetings:

**Herzlichen Glückwunsch!**

Many congratulations!

**Guten Tag.**

Hello. / Good day.

▶ For further wishes see [66](#)

18.8

The verbs **kosten** and **nennen** require two accusative objects:**Sie nannte ihn ihren Liebling.**

She called him her darling.

**Das kostet ihn eine Menge Geld.**

That will cost him a lot of money.

▶ See [42.3b](#)

19

## The dative

The dative case is employed widely in both spoken and written German. It is used as follows.

19.1

To convey the indirect or dative object, expressed in English by word order (i.e. indirect object first) or by 'to':

**Sie zeigte uns den neuen Laptop.**

She showed us the new laptop. / She showed the new laptop to us.

**Er hat seinen Kollegen das Problem erklärt.**

He explained the problem to his colleagues.

**Ich gab es meinem Bruder.**

I gave it to my brother.

▶ See [12](#)

19.2

For the so-called dative of advantage, i.e. to indicate the person for whom the action of the verb is done:

**Kauf mir bitte etwas zu lesen.**

Please buy me something to read.

**Kannst du uns die Tür aufmachen?**

Can you open the door for us?

**Zieh ihr bitte den Mantel an.**

Help her on with her coat, please.

Note that, with reflexive verbs, the pronoun may be omitted:

**Du hast (*dir*) das Gesicht noch nicht gewaschen.**

You haven't washed your face yet.

## 19.3

For the dative of disadvantage, usually indicating something unpleasant:

**Die Behörden haben *ihr* das Kind weggenommen.**  
The authorities have taken the child away from her.

**Er hat *mir* den Geldbeutel gestohlen.**  
He's stolen my purse.

**Die Sonne scheint *ihm* in die Augen.**  
The sun is shining in his eyes.

## 19.4

After certain prepositions:

**ab** 'from/as from'

**aus** 'out of'

**außer** 'apart from'

**bei** 'by/near/with'

**gemäß** 'in accordance with'

**laut** 'according to'

**mit** 'with'

**nach** 'after'

**seit** 'since'

**von** 'from/of'

**zu** 'to'

► See also [38.1](#)

***Außer uns und unseren Freunden wurde niemand eingeladen.***  
No one else was invited apart from us and our friends.

***Sie liefen aus der Wohnung.***  
They ran out of the flat.

***Ich wohne bei meinen Eltern.***  
I live with my parents.

***Wir fahren mit dem Nachtzug.***  
We travel by night train.

***Zu welchem Zweck wurde dies eingeführt?***  
For what purpose was this introduced?

***Nach dem Frühstück putze ich mir immer die Zähne.***  
After breakfast I always brush my teeth.

► See also [32](#), [38.2](#), [42.3e](#) and [50.6](#)

The prepositions **entgegen** 'against/contrary to' and **gegenüber** 'opposite' usually precede the noun, **nach** in the sense of 'according to' usually follows the noun:

***Sie wohnt gegenüber dem Stadion.***  
She lives opposite the stadium.

***Meiner Meinung nach ist das falsch.***  
In my opinion that's wrong.

When used with a pronoun, **gegenüber** can follow a pronoun.

***Mir gegenüber saß ein älterer Herr.***  
Opposite me sat an elderly gentleman.

NOTE In spoken German (**an**)**statt**, **dank**, **trotz**, **während** and **wegen** are also used with the dative. They are, however, more commonly followed by the genitive (see [20.7](#)).

## 19.5

After certain prepositions when rest or movement *at a place* is implied. This includes:

**an** ‘on/at/by’

**auf** ‘on (a horizontal surface)’

**hinter** ‘behind’

**in** ‘in’

**neben** ‘near/next to’

**über** ‘over/above’

**unter** ‘under/among’

**vor** ‘in front of’

**zwischen** ‘between’.

**Jeden Sonntag gehen wir auf dem Schulgelände spazieren.** (Compare the accusative: **Ich gehe gerade mit dem Hund aufs Schulgelände.**)

We go for a walk in the school grounds every Sunday. (I’m just going (in)to the school grounds with the dog.)

**Das Bild hing über dem Bett.** (Compare the accusative: **Er hängt das Bild über das Bett.**)

The picture was hanging over the bed. (He hung the picture over the bed.)

**Ich saß zwischen meinem Stiefbruder und seiner Frau.** (Compare the accusative: **Ich setzte mich zwischen meinen Stiefbruder und seine Frau.**)

I was sitting between my stepbrother and his wife. (I sat down between my stepbrother and his wife.)

Note the contrasting verb pairs involved in this direction versus situation usage:

*Motion to*

**sich stellen** + acc. ‘to place oneself next to’

**sich setzen** ‘to sit down’

**sich (hin)legen** ‘to lie down’

**hängen** + prep. + acc. ‘to hang sth. (on to sth.)’

*Position at*

**stehen** to be standing

**sitzen** ‘to be seated’

**liegen** ‘to be lying’

**hängen** + prep. + dat. ‘to be hanging’.

► See also [18.3](#), [32](#), [38.2](#), [42.3e](#) and [50.6](#)

Notice the abbreviated prepositional forms:

**an + dem = am**

**bei + dem = beim**

**in + dem = im**

**von + dem = vom**

**zu + dem = zum**

**zu + der = zur.**

► See [18.3](#)

## 19.6

With several verbs, the vast majority of which only ever have a dative object. The most common include:

**ähneln** ‘to resemble’

**antworten** ‘to answer’

**begegnen** ‘to meet’

**danken** ‘to thank’

**dienen** 'to serve'  
**drohen** 'to threaten'  
**entsprechen** 'to correspond to'  
**folgen** 'to follow'  
**gehörchen** 'to obey'  
**gelten** 'to be meant for/aimed at'  
**genügen** 'to suffice'  
**geschehen** 'to happen to'  
**glauben** 'to believe'  
**gleichen** 'to be like'  
**gratulieren** 'to congratulate'  
**helfen** 'to help'  
**kündigen** 'to dismiss (sb.)/give (sb. their) notice'  
**sich nähern** 'to approach'  
**nutzen/nützen** 'to be of use'  
**passen** 'to fit/suit'  
**passieren** 'to happen to'  
**schaden** 'to harm'  
**trauen** 'to trust'  
**vertrauen** 'to have trust in'  
**vor\*kommen** 'to seem (to sb.)'.

**Ich habe *ihm* nicht geantwortet.**

I didn't answer him.

**Die Atmosphäre kam *uns* ein bisschen seltsam vor.**

The atmosphere seemed a little strange to us.

**Wann ist das denn *Ihren* Freunden passiert?**

When did it happen to your friends?

**Sie näherten sich *dem* Gebäude.**

They approached the building.

**Die Chefin hat *meinem ältesten Kollegen* gestern gekündigt.**

The boss gave my eldest colleague his notice yesterday.

► See [42.3a](#)

## 19.7

With a number of verbs that either have an **es** as their subject and/or whose dative object corresponds to the subject of the equivalent English sentence. They include:

**auffallen** 'to strike/occur to'  
**einfallen** 'to occur to'  
**fehlen** 'to be missing'  
**gefallen** 'to like' (for liking sb. + this construction see [104.2a](#))  
**gehören** 'to belong to'  
**gelingen** 'to succeed'  
**leidtun** 'to be sorry' (for functions using 'leidtun' see [65.1](#), [91.2b](#) and [93.4](#))  
**schmecken** 'to taste (good)'  
**wehtun** 'to hurt'.

**Es tut *uns* leid, dass du nicht kommen kannst.**

We're sorry that you cannot come.

**Ist es *euch* gelungen, das Problem zu lösen?**  
Did you succeed in solving the problem?

**Das Stück hat *ihr* gar nicht gefallen.**  
She didn't like the play at all.

**Mir tut der Arm weh.**  
My arm is hurting.

**Hat *den Kindern* der Kuchen geschmeckt?**  
Did the children like the cake?

► See [42.3h](#)

## 19.8

With verbs prefixed by **bei-**, **ent-**, **entgegen-**, **nach-**, **wider-** or **zu-**:

**Der Dieb lief *uns* entgegen.**  
The thief ran towards us.

**Hast du schon wieder *dem Vorsitzenden* widersprochen?**  
Did you contradict the chairman again?

**Sie ist *ihrer Mutter* nachgelaufen.**  
She's run after her mother.

**Ich stimme *dem Plan* zu.**  
I agree with/to the plan.

**Er ist *den Grünen* beigetreten.**  
He's joined the Green Party.

► See [36.2](#) on inseparable and [57.2](#) on separable prefixes

## 19.9

With a large number of adjectives combined with **sein** or **werden**. To denote an excess or a sufficiency of a certain quality, appropriate adjectives may be preceded by **zu** or **genug** respectively:

***Ihm* war immer noch schlecht/übel/unwohl.**  
He was still feeling bad/ill/unwell.

***Dem Alten* wurde plötzlich schwindlig.**  
The old man suddenly began to feel dizzy.

**Das wird *uns* ja ganz nützlich/schädlich sein.**  
That will be quite useful/harmful to us.

**Es ist *mir* ja gleich/egal.**  
I don't care about it.

**Ich bin *Ihrem Kollegen* sehr dankbar.**  
I am very grateful to your colleague.

**Das britische Klima ist *uns* zu unzuverlässig.**  
The British climate is too unreliable for us.

***Den Kindern* ist es zu heiß/kalt.**  
It is too hot/cold for the children.

**Der Wein ist *meinem Mann* zu süß.**  
The wine is too sweet for my husband's taste.



**Ist Ihnen das Essen noch warm genug?**

Is the food still warm enough for you?

► See also [12.5](#), [42.3j](#) and [42.3k](#); for adjectives with the genitive see [20.3](#)

In such expressions the dative is often replaced by **für** + accusative:

**Das Essen ist für meinen Geschmack zu würzig.**

The food is too spicy for my taste.

## 20 The genitive

The genitive case is nowadays less common in spoken German, where the use of prepositions tends to be preferred. Thus, **das alte Auto des Herrn Zeiler**, ‘Mr Zeiler’s old car’, is more likely to be rendered **das alte Auto von Herrn Zeiler**. Informally, you might also encounter the form **Herrn Zeiler sein altes Auto**. The so-called Anglo-Saxon genitive with **s** (**Herrn Zeilers altes Auto**) is found in both spoken and written German. In general, the genitive is still very widely used in the written or formal language (see [58.4](#)). The normal position for the genitive in modern German is after the noun it relates to. It is used as follows.

### 20.1

To denote possession:

**Die neue Wohnung meiner Schwester ist ganz schön.**

My sister’s new flat is really nice.

**Kennst du Helmut’s Freundin? (or: die Freundin von Helmut)**

Do you know Helmut’s girlfriend?

**Wart ihr schon in Herrn Schmidts Büro? (or: im Büro von Herrn Schmidt)**

Have you been in Mr Schmidt’s office?

**Ich fahre mit Frau Schmidts Auto. (or: dem Auto von Frau Schmidt)**

I’ll go in Mrs/Ms Schmidt’s car.

**Das Schloss der Habsburger finde ich hässlich.**

I think the Habsburgs’ castle is ugly.

**Ich liebe die Schlösser Frankreichs/Frankreichs Schlösser.**

I love French castles.

### 20.2

After collective nouns or nouns denoting proportion:

**Er hat eine große Sammlung deutscher Bierdeckel (or: von deutschen Bierdeckeln)**

He has a large collection of German beer mats.

**Ich unterrichte eine Klasse vierzehnjähriger Jungen (or: von vierzehnjährigen Jungen)**

I teach a class of fourteen-year-old boys.

**Die Hälfte des Geldes (or: von dem Geld) ist schon weg.**

Half the money has already gone.

► For the case after **von** see [19.4](#)

## The genitive

## 20.3

With some adjectives, the most common of which are:

**bewusst** 'aware of'

**fähig** 'capable of'

**gewiss** 'certain of'

**schuldig** 'guilty of'

**sicher** 'assured/sure of'

**voll** 'full of'.

**Unser Projekt ist nun *des Erfolges* sicher.**

Our project is now assured of success.

**Ich bin mir *des Problems* bewusst.**

I am aware of the problem.

**Er ist *des Mordes* einfach nicht fähig.**

He's simply not capable of murder.

► See [19.9](#) for adjectives with the dative; see also [12.5](#) on word order

## 20.4

With a small number of verbs. The more common include:

**an\*klagen** (with accusative and genitive object) 'to accuse (someone) of'

**bedürfen** 'to be in need of'

**gedenken** 'to remember/commemorate'

**sich bedienen** 'to make use of'

**sich entsinnen** 'to remember'

**sich erfreuen** 'to enjoy'

**sich freuen** 'to be pleased about' (*formal*)

**sich rühmen** 'to boast of'

**sich schämen** 'to be ashamed of'

**sich schuldig fühlen** 'to feel guilty'

**sich vergewissern** 'to make sure about/of'

**versichern** (with accusative and genitive object) 'to assure'.

**Wir bedürfen *Ihrer Unterstützung*.**

We need your support.

**Ich schämte mich *meiner Feigheit*.**

I was ashamed of my cowardice.

**Sie sollten sich *der finanziellen Lage der Firma* vergewissern.**

You ought to ascertain the firm's financial position.

► See [42.3a](#)

## 20.5

Following the verb **sein** in a number of set expressions:

**Wir sind *der Meinung/der Auffassung*, dass . . .**

We are of the opinion that . . .

**Er ist *der Ansicht*, dass wir es falsch gemacht haben.**

He is of the opinion that we have done it wrong.

**Sie ist *der Überzeugung*, dass es sich nicht lohnt.**

She is convinced it is not worth it.

**Sie war *schlechter/guter* Laune.**  
She was in a bad/good mood.

**Sie war *gestern guter Dinge*.**  
She was in good spirits yesterday.

► For functions using these expressions, see [107](#) on voicing opinion

**20.6**

In set adverbial expressions:

**meines Wissens** ‘to my knowledge’  
**meines Erachtens** ‘in my judgement/opinion’  
**letzten Endes** ‘after all’  
**allen Ernstes** ‘in all seriousness’  
**eines Tages** ‘one day’.

**20.7**

After the following prepositions:

**angesichts** ‘in view of’  
**(an)statt** ‘instead of’  
**anstelle** ‘in place of’  
**aufgrund** ‘on the strength of’  
**außerhalb** ‘outside’  
**beiderseits** ‘on both sides of’  
**diesseits** ‘this side of’  
**infolge** ‘as a consequence of’  
**inmitten** ‘in the middle of’  
**innerhalb** ‘within’  
**jenseits** ‘on the far side of’  
**oberhalb** ‘above/higher up’  
**trotz** ‘in spite of’  
**um . . . willen** ‘for the sake of’  
**unterhalb** ‘beneath/lower down’  
**unweit** ‘not far from’  
**während** ‘during’  
**wegen** ‘because of’.

(An)statt, dank, trotz, während and wegen can also be used with the dative, especially in spoken German (see also [58.3a](#)).

In the spoken language, **außerhalb**, **innerhalb**, **jenseits** and **unweit** are very often replaced by expressions that avoid the genitive:

**Jenseits der Berge liegt die alte römische Festung.** > *Hinter den Bergen liegt die alte römische Festung.*

On the other side of the mountains is the ancient Roman fort.

**Innerhalb des Ortes darf man nur 50km fahren.** > *Im Ort darf man nur 50km fahren.*

You can only do 50 km/h in the built-up area/town.

**Unweit der Brücke kann man campen.** > *Nicht weit von der Brücke kann man campen.*

You can camp not far from the bridge.

► See [19.5](#)

## Apposition

## 20.8

While **von** is increasingly preferred in spoken German, in *written* German it is more usual in the following circumstances:

- (a) Before single unqualified nouns:

**die Entwicklung von Windturbinen**

the development of wind turbines

**ein Hauch von Knoblauch**

a hint of garlic

- (b) With qualified nouns describing people or things:

**ein Mensch von altem Charme**

a person of old-world charm

**eine Geschichte von verratener Treue**

a story of betrayed trust

- (c) With expressions involving indefinite words, indeclinable words and numbers:

**der Lärm von zwanzig Autos**

the noise of 20 cars

**Ich habe wenig/viel/nichts von dem Vortrag gehört.**

I heard little/a lot/nothing of the talk.

- (d) With personal pronouns:

**zwei von ihnen**

two of them

**ein Fehler von mir**

my mistake/a mistake on my part

## 21

## Apposition

## 21.1

A noun placed after another in order to expand on, or qualify, its meaning is in apposition to the first noun. In German, the noun in apposition is always in the same case as the one it refers to:

**Das ist mein Freund, *der Werbefotograf*.**

That's my friend the commercial photographer.

**Haben Sie schon meinen Freund, *den Werbefotografen*, kennengelernt?**

Have you met my friend the commercial photographer?

**Könnten Sie bitte meinem Freund, *dem Werbefotografen*, helfen?**

Could you please help my friend the commercial photographer?

**Das ist die Wohnung meines Freundes, *des Werbefotografen*.**

That is the flat of my friend the commercial photographer.

Note that the noun in apposition is separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. However, titles of books, films, plays, etc. that are in apposition to a noun that describes them do not have the same case as the latter and are not separated by commas:

**Kennst du den Film 'Der Baader Meinhof Komplex'?**

Do you know the film 'The Baader Meinhof Complex'?

**Das kommt im Stück ‘Die Drei Schwestern’ mehrmals vor.**  
That occurs several times in the play ‘The Three Sisters’.

► See [59.5a](#)

## 21.2

Apposition also applies in noun phrases denoting measurements and quantities, where English uses ‘of’:

**Ein Glas kalte Milch, bitte.**  
A glass of cold milk, please.

**Eine Tasse indischen Tee, bitte.**  
A cup of Indian tea, please.

► See also [63](#) on eating and drinking

In the last two examples **Milch** and **Tee** are in the accusative to agree with **Glas** and **Tasse**, respectively, which are the objects of an (implied) verb such as ‘Give (me)’ or ‘I would like’.

**Haben Sie meine Tasche mit den zwei Dosen grünen Bohnen gesehen?**  
Have you seen my bag with the two tins of green beans?

Here, **Bohnen** is in the dative plural to agree with dative plural **Dosen**.

► See [18](#) and [19](#)

## 21.3

Following a numeral or some other expression of amount, masculine and neuter nouns denoting measurement, quantity or value are only used in the singular:

**Bringen Sie uns zwei Glas Bier, bitte.**  
Bring us two beers (*lit.* two glasses of beer), please.

**Bei 35 Grad Hitze bleibe ich in der Wohnung.**  
When it’s 35 degrees (*lit.* of heat), I stay indoors.

Feminine nouns, however, use plural forms:

**Sechs Flaschen Weißwein.**  
Six bottles of white wine.

but:

**Das kostete damals sechzehn Mark.**  
That cost sixteen marks in those days.

► See [25](#)

## 21.4

With place names, German has no equivalent of English ‘of’:

**Wir studieren an der Universität Marburg.**  
We’re studying at the University of Marburg.

**Kennen Sie die Stadt Donaueschingen?**  
Do you know the town of Donaueschingen?

## 21.5

When the nouns **das Dutzend** ‘dozen’, **das Hundert** ‘hundred’, **die Million** ‘million’ and **die Milliarde** ‘billion’ are preceded by another numeral, the noun they relate to is in apposition:

**Wir hatten damals fast drei Millionen *Arbeitslose*.**

At that time we had nearly three million unemployed.  
(**Arbeitslose** is accusative to agree with **Millionen**.)

► See also [28.5](#)

**Er ist mit zwei Dutzend *spanischen Apfelsinen* nach Hause gekommen.**

He came home with two dozen Spanish oranges.  
(**Apfelsinen** is dative plural to agree with **zwei Dutzend**.)

But if these numerals do not have a preceding numeral, **von** is commonly used:

**Tausende *von Leuten* kamen zur Kundgebung.**

Thousands of people came to the demonstration.

**Wir haben Millionen *von Ameisen* gesehen.**

We saw millions of ants.

(*Duden* also suggests that the form **Tausende/tausende** + genitive is acceptable:

**Tausende/tausende und abertausende bunter Laternen**

thousands and thousands of brightly coloured lanterns)

► See also [20.2](#)

## 21.6

Apposition is also seen with **als** ‘than’ and **wie** ‘as’ in comparisons:

**Er ist genauso alt wie *ich*.**

He’s just as old as I am.

**Der läuft doch viel schneller als *du*.**

He can run a lot faster than you.

**Er ist viel ehrgeiziger als *mein Bruder*.**

He’s a lot more ambitious than my brother.

**Sie kennt ihn länger als *mich*.**

She’s known him longer than she has me.

► See also [48.6](#) and [51.2](#); for use of **als** as a conjunction, see [8.3](#) and [23.1c](#)

# IV

## Nouns

### 22 The article

#### 22.1

Just as English employs two different articles, namely ‘the’ and ‘a’, German also distinguishes between a definite and indefinite article. The German case system (16–21) means that these articles, along with nouns (28) and adjectives (43–49), must be in the appropriate case.

#### 22.2

The definite article ‘the’ is declined as follows:

	<i>Singular Masculine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Plural All genders</i>
Nominative	<b>der</b>	<b>das</b>	<b>die</b>	<b>die</b>
Accusative	<b>den</b>	<b>das</b>	<b>die</b>	<b>die</b>
Dative	<b>dem</b>	<b>dem</b>	<b>der</b>	<b>den</b>
Genitive	<b>des</b>	<b>des</b>	<b>der</b>	<b>der</b>

► See 17–21 for examples of the use of the articles in the various cases

Below is the same table but with boxes drawn to highlight some important patterns. Note, for example, how:

- (a) the accusative case is different from the nominative form only in the masculine singular;
- (b) masculine and neuter forms are the same in the dative and genitive singular;
- (c) the feminine singular forms and the plural forms (all genders) are the same, except in the dative.

	<i>Singular</i>			<i>Plural</i>
	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>All genders</i>
Nominative	<b>der</b>	<b>das</b>	<b>die</b>	<b>die</b>
Accusative	<b>den</b>	<b>das</b>	<b>die</b>	<b>die</b>
Dative	<b>dem</b>	<b>dem</b>	<b>der</b>	<b>den</b>
Genitive	<b>des</b>	<b>des</b>	<b>der</b>	<b>der</b>

► See also 24.1

## 22.3

The indefinite article 'ein' is declined as follows:

	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	<i>Feminine</i>
Nominative	<b>ein</b>	<b>ein</b>	<b>eine</b>
Accusative	<b>einen</b>	<b>ein</b>	<b>eine</b>
Dative	<b>einem</b>	<b>einem</b>	<b>einer</b>
Genitive	<b>eines</b>	<b>eines</b>	<b>einer</b>

Although the indefinite article has no plural form, the negative form **kein** 'no', 'not any', does:

Nom. **keine**      Acc. **keine**      Dat. **keinen**      Gen. **keiner**

Below is the same table with boxes drawn to highlight the important patterns. Note the difference between this table and the table in 22.2: the indefinite article carries no ending in the masculine and neuter nominative and the neuter accusative:

	<i>Singular</i>			<i>Plural</i>
	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>All genders</i>
Nominative	<b>(k)ein</b>	<b>(k)ein</b>	<b>(k)eine</b>	<b>keine</b>
Accusative	<b>(k)einen</b>	<b>(k)ein</b>	<b>(k)eine</b>	<b>keine</b>
Dative	<b>(k)einem</b>	<b>(k)einem</b>	<b>(k)einer</b>	<b>keinen</b>
Genitive	<b>(k)eines</b>	<b>(k)eines</b>	<b>(k)einer</b>	<b>keiner</b>

► See also 13.4, 24.2, 30.3 and 45

## 23

## Use of the articles

German and English use articles in similar ways. Note, however, the following exceptions.

## 23.1

No article is used in German:

(a) with instruments:

**Er spielt Gitarre.**

He plays the guitar. (*i.e. any guitar*)

► For relevant functions see 74.5a

(b) with professions, religions and nationalities following the verbs **sein**, **werden** and **bleiben**, unless an adjective is inserted:

**Sie ist Ingenieurin.**

She's an engineer.

**Er ist Katholik.**

He's a Catholic.

**Sie ist Engländerin.**

She is English.



but:

**Er war *ein guter Arzt*.**

He was a good doctor.

The article is also used if one is referring to a specific person and does not wish to emphasize particularly the person's job:

**Das ist *die Lehrerin meines Sohns*.**

That's my son's teacher.

- (c) following **als** in the sense of 'as a':

**die Bedeutung der Stadt als *Handelszentrum***

the importance of the town as a centre for trade

**Als *Weihnachtsgeschenk* bekamen die Kinder einen Hamster.**

The children received a hamster as a Christmas present/for Christmas.

- (d) in certain idiomatic expressions:

**Wir haben *großen Hunger*.**

We are very hungry.

**Gestern war er *sehr guter Laune*.**

He was in a very good mood yesterday.

► See [20.5](#)

**Wir haben gerade *Besuch*.**

We have visitors at the moment.

**Sie hat *Kopfschmerzen*.**

She's got a headache.

***Tatsache* ist, dass die Firma große Gewinne erzielt hat.**

It's a fact that the firm has achieved big profits.

***Schweren Herzens* ist er nach Hause gegangen.**

He went home with a heavy heart.

► See [20.6](#); for talking about professions, see [74.7](#)

- (e) where English uses the indefinite determiners 'some' or 'any':

**Wir hatten *Schwierigkeiten*.**

We had (some) difficulties.

**Haben Sie *Brot*?**

Have you got (any) bread?

**Hast du *Milch* gekauft?**

Did you buy (any) milk?

Note, however, that in the negative **kein** is used:

**Ich esse *keinen Salat*.**

I don't eat salad.

**Wir haben *keine Cola* mehr im Kühlschrank.**

We don't have any coke left in the fridge.

► See [22.3](#)

## 23.2

Articles are used in German but not in English in the following expressions:

- (a) With periods of time and with meals, especially after prepositions:

**Es ist *im Herbst/im August/am Dienstag/in der Nacht* passiert.**

It happened in the autumn/in August/on Tuesday/at night.

**Der *Frühling* ist immer schön.**

Spring is always nice.

**Das *Abendessen* ist fertig.**

Tea/supper is ready.

**Ich werde *vor dem Mittagessen/nach dem Frühstück* keine Zeit haben.**

I will not have time before lunch/after breakfast.

- (b) Before many abstract nouns denoting specific and familiar concepts, phenomena, movements or interests:

**Das *Leben* ist hart.**

Life is hard.

**Die *Zeit* vergeht so schnell.**

Time passes so quickly.

**Sie liest gerade ein *Buch über den Kommunismus*.**

She's reading a book on communism at the moment.

**Wir nehmen an einem *Seminar über den Ersten Weltkrieg* teil.**

We are taking part in a seminar on the First World War.

- (c) With infinitives used as nouns (see 28.6):

**Das *Laufen* ist ihr größter Zeitvertreib.**

Her favourite pastime is running.

**Er hat das *Rauchen* aufgegeben.**

He's given up smoking.

- (d) With the feminine or plural names of countries:

**die *Hauptstadt der Niederlande***

the capital of Holland

**Wir fahren *in die Schweiz*.**

We travelled to Switzerland.

With masculine country names the article is optional. It is, however, more common to use it:

**Er wohnt *im Irak* (but also *in Irak*).**

He lives in Iraq.

- (e) With parts of the body and clothes (see 37.3–4):

**Er hat sich *am Kopf* verletzt.**

He's injured his head.

**Sie machte *die Augen* zu.**

She closed her eyes.

**Zieh *den Mantel* aus.**

Take your coat off.

**Er zog seinem Sohn *das Hemd* aus.**  
He took his son's shirt off him.

► See 19.2

Where there is a qualifying adjective, however, the possessive adjective is used, as in English:

**Er hob *seinen* verletzten Arm.**  
He raised his injured arm.

- (f) When giving an amount or a price:

**hundert Kilometer *die Stunde***  
a hundred kilometres an hour

► See 59.1f

**sechzehn Euro *das Kilo***  
sixteen euros per/a kilo

**zehn Euro *das Stück***  
ten euros each.

- (g) With the names of performers or famous people, and with personal names in spoken German:

***Der Beckenbauer* war ein begabter Spieler.**  
Beckenbauer was a gifted player.

***Die Dietrich* war damals unsere beste Schauspielerin.**  
Dietrich was our best actress in those days.

**Kennst du *den Felix*?**  
Do you know Felix?

► See 58.3

- (h) Before the names of countries, towns, etc. when they are preceded by an adjective:

***das heutige* Österreich**  
present-day Austria

***das schöne* Schottland**  
beautiful Scotland

***das alte* Freiburg**  
old Freiburg.

► See 25.6d

- (i) With geographical names for features such as lakes and mountains, as well as with the names of planets:

***am* Bodensee**  
by/near Lake Constance

***östlich des Genfer Sees***  
to the east of Lake Geneva

***auf dem* Mars**  
on Mars

- (j) With the names of streets and buildings:

**Fahren Sie *die Beethovenallee entlang.***

Drive along Beethoven Avenue.

**Er ging über *den Potsdamer Platz.***

He crossed Potsdam Square.

In addresses, however, the article is omitted:

**Wir wohnen *Bahnhofstraße 57.***

We live at 57 Bahnhofstraße.

But note that some streets include the article in the name: **An den Fichten 2.**

- (k) With certain medical conditions:

**Er leidet an *einer Lungenentzündung.***

He suffers from pneumonia.

► See 38

- (l) In several common phrases:

**aus dem Bett** ‘out of bed’

**im Allgemeinen** ‘in general’

► See 59.7

**in der Kirche** ‘in church’

**in der Schule** ‘at school’

**in der Stadt** ‘in town’

**in der Tat** ‘in (actual) fact’

**mit dem Bus, Zug, usw.** ‘by bus, train, etc.’

**mit der Post** ‘by post’

**zur Kirche** ‘to church’

**zur Schule** ‘to school’

## 24

## Determiners

Determiners that decline like the definite article will be referred to here as ‘**der** words’; and those that decline like the indefinite article as ‘**ein** words’ (see also section 46).

## 24.1

*der* words

► See 22.2

- (a) **dieser** ‘this’, **jeder** ‘each/every’ and **jener** ‘that’ can be used either as pronouns (see 31.1) or determiners.

When the determiners **dieser** and **jener** are used together, **dieser** denotes relative proximity and **jener** relative remoteness:

***Dieses Lied ist interessanter als jenes.***

This song is more interesting than that one.

Where this contrast is not important, **dieser** often corresponds to English ‘that’:

***Dieses Fahrrad würde ich nicht kaufen.***

I wouldn’t buy that bike.

Another meaning is ‘former’ (**jener**) and ‘latter’ (**dieser**):

**Thomas und Hans arbeiten schon lange hier. Dieser ist 56 Jahre alt, jener 58.**

Thomas and Hans have worked here a long time. The latter is 56, the former 58.

- (b) **welcher** ‘which/what’, **mancher** ‘many’ and **solcher** ‘such’ are all declined as **der** words:

**Aus welcher Stadt kommen Sie?**

Which/What town are you from?

**Manche Studenten haben auch finanzielle Probleme.**

Many students have financial problems too.

**In solchen Fällen muss man vorsichtig sein.**

One has to be careful in such cases.

- (c) **derjenige** ‘that one’ is written as one word but both parts decline. It is usually linked to a relative clause (see 10):

**Wir suchen diejenigen in der Firma, die Interesse an einer zusätzlichen Qualifikation haben.**

We are looking for people in the company interested in gaining an additional qualification.

**Ich möchte denjenigen sehen, der bei dieser Kälte im Meer schwimmen möchte.**

I’d like to see the person who would want to go swimming in the sea when it is this cold.

**Meinst du diejenige, die hier ohne Seil hochgeklettert ist?**

Do you mean the girl/woman who climbed up here without a rope?

- (d) **derselbe** ‘same’ is again declined like two words but written as one:

**Wir machen immer dieselben Aufgaben.**

We are always doing the same jobs.

With a shortened preposition (see 18.3, 19.5) the two constituent parts are written separately:

**am selben Ort/im selben Gebäude**

at the same place/in the same building.

► See also 44

## 24.2

### ein words

► See 22.3 and 30.3

- (a) **kein** ‘not a/not any’, **irgendein** ‘any’. The negative **kein** is an **ein** word, as is **irgendein**:

**Ich habe keine Lust, ins Kino zu gehen.**

I don’t want to go to the cinema.

**Wir wollen doch nicht irgendein Auto kaufen.**

We don’t want to buy any (old) car.

Note the use of **was für ein** 'what sort of'. The case of **ein** here depends on the phrase's function in the sentence:

**Was für ein Mensch war er?**

What sort of a person was he?

**Was für einen Schläger hast du gekauft?**

What sort of racket have you bought?

**In was für einem Büro arbeitet ihr?**

What sort of an office do you work in?

**Mit was für einem Pinsel soll ich den Fensterrahmen streichen?**

What kind of brush shall I use to paint the window frame?

- (b) **beide** 'both', **irgendwelche** 'some/any' (the plural of **irgendein**) and **sämtliche** 'all' are used only in the plural:

**Sie kennt beide Schwestern.**

She knows both sisters.

**Sie freut sich auf den Besuch der beiden Schwestern.**

She is looking forward to the visit of the two sisters.

**Hast du hier irgendwelche Freunde?**

Do you have any friends here?

**Sie haben sämtliche Brötchen gekauft.**

They bought all the bread rolls.

► For the use of **alle** see [44.2–4](#)

- (c) The undeclined **solch** is used before **ein** (usually only in fairly formal written style):

**Solch einen Film sieht man nicht jeden Tag.**

It is not every day that one sees a film like that.

Alternatively **ein** can come first, in which case the declined form of **solch-** is used:

**Einen solchen Film sieht man nicht jeden Tag.**

The undeclined **manch** is rarely found in modern German.

► See also [58](#)

## 25

## Gender

German has three genders: masculine, feminine and neuter. In most instances grammatical gender is not based on natural gender and grammatical gender can be counterintuitive to a speaker of English. Although there are a few rules that can help predict the gender of a noun, the following can only ever serve as guidelines; many exceptions will be found. The safest approach to gender is always to learn each noun with the appropriate definite article (**der**, **die** or **das**).

## 25.1

Most nouns with the following endings are masculine:

-ant	<b>der Lieferant</b> 'distributor'
-ast	<b>der Palast</b> 'palace'
-ent	<b>der Dirigent</b> 'musical conductor'

-er	<b>der Sprecher</b> 'speaker'
-ich	<b>der Teppich</b> 'carpet'
-ig	<b>der König</b> 'king'
-ing	<b>der Ring</b> 'ring'
-ismus	<b>der Kapitalismus</b> 'capitalism'
-ist	<b>der Komponist</b> 'composer'
-ling	<b>der Häftling</b> 'prisoner'
-or	<b>der Motor</b> 'engine'
-us	<b>der Modus</b> 'mode'.

► See also [54.3](#)

## 25.2

The following groups of nouns are mostly masculine:

- (a) Days of the week, months, seasons:

**der Tag** 'day', **der Mittwoch** 'Wednesday', **der November** 'November', **der Frühling** (*but: das Frühjahr* 'spring')

- (b) Points of the compass and vocabulary relating to weather:

**der Westen** 'west', **der Nordosten** 'north east', **der Wind** 'wind', **der Nebel** 'fog', **der Schnee** 'snow', **der Regen** 'rain'

- (c) Mountains and ranges:

**der Brocken**, **der Montblanc**, **der Balkan**, **der Harz**, **der Taunus**

But note these exceptions: **die Zugspitze**, **die Eifel**, **das Erzgebirge**.

- (d) Non-German rivers:

**der Mississippi**, **der Nil**, **der Kongo**

But note several exceptions: **die Loire**, **die Themse**, with rivers ending in **-e** tending to be feminine.

- (e) Male persons and male animals:

**der Bruder** 'brother', **der Ingenieur** 'engineer', **der Hund** 'dog', **der Löwe** 'lion'

- (f) Makes of car:

**der Mercedes**, **der Opel**, **der VW**, **der BMW**

- (g) Rocks and minerals:

**der Granit** 'granite', **der Ton** 'clay', **der Diamant** 'diamond' (*but: die Kohle* 'coal')

- (h) Alcoholic and many other drinks:

**der Schnaps**, **der Wein** 'wine', **der Whisky** (*but: das Bier* 'beer'), **der Tee** (tea), **der Kaffee** (coffee), **der Saft** (juice)

- (i) Units of currency:

**der Dollar**, **der Franken** 'franc', **der Cent**, **der Euro** (*but: das Pfund* 'pound')

## 25.3

The following endings indicate that the noun is feminine:

-age	<b>die Garage</b> 'garage'
-anz	<b>die Allianz</b> 'alliance'
-ei	<b>die Druckerei</b> 'printing works'
-enz	<b>die Existenz</b> 'existence'
-ette	<b>die Diskette</b> 'disk/diskette'
-heit	<b>die Gesundheit</b> 'health'
-ie	<b>die Melodie</b> 'melody'
-ik	<b>die Kritik</b> 'criticism'
-in	<b>die Lehrerin</b> 'teacher'
-ion	<b>die Fusion</b> 'merger/fusion'
-keit	<b>die Schwierigkeit</b> 'difficulty'
-schaft	<b>die Freundschaft</b> 'friendship'
-sis	<b>die Skepsis</b> 'scepticism'
-tät	<b>die Sexualität</b> 'sexuality'
-ung	<b>die Forschung</b> 'research'
-ur	<b>die Figur</b> 'figure'.

► See also [54.3](#)

## 25.4

The following groups of nouns are mostly feminine:

- (a) Female persons and animals (but see also [25.5](#) for **Mädchen** and **Fräulein**):

**die Frau** 'woman', **die Mutter** 'mother', **die Katze** 'cat', **die Gans** 'goose'

- (b) Most trees and flowers:

**die Eiche** 'oak', **die Buche** 'beech', **die Tulpe** 'tulip', **die Narzisse** 'narcissus'  
(*but: der Ahorn* 'maple')

- (c) Nouns derived from measurement or size adjectives:

**die Ferne** 'distance', **die Länge** 'length', **die Höhe** 'height', **die Stärke** 'strength'

But note the exceptions: **das Gewicht** 'weight', **das Volumen** 'volume'.

- (d) Numerals used as nouns:

**die Fünf** 'five', **die Hundert** 'hundred', **die Million** 'million', **die Milliarde** 'billion'

► See [59.1f](#)

- (e) Motorcycles, ships and aeroplanes:

**die Harley-Davidson**, **die Titanic**, **die Concorde**, **die Boeing**

- (f) The native German names of rivers:

**die Donau** 'Danube', **die Elbe**, **die Memel**, **die Oder** (e.g. **Frankfurt an der Oder**), **die Ruhr**

But note the exceptions: **der Main** (e.g. **Frankfurt am Main**), **der Rhein**



## NOUNS

## 25.5

Most nouns with the following endings are neuter:

-at	<b>das Quadrat</b> 'square'
-chen	<b>das Mädchen</b> 'girl'
-ett	<b>das Lazarett</b> 'military hospital'
-icht	<b>das Gewicht</b> 'weight'
-il	<b>das Ventil</b> 'valve/outlet'
-it	<b>das Dynamit</b> 'dynamite'
-ium	<b>das Laboratorium</b> 'laboratory'
-lein	<b>das Fräulein</b> 'young woman/miss' ( <i>now obsolete</i> )
-ma	<b>das Schema</b> 'scheme/plan'
-ment	<b>das Experiment</b> 'experiment'
-sal	<b>das Schicksal</b> 'fate'
-tel	<b>das Viertel</b> 'area of a town/quarter'
-tum	<b>das Beamtentum</b> 'civil servants'
-um	<b>das Datum</b> 'date'

► See also [54.3](#)

The vast majority of collective nouns with the prefix **Ge-** are also neuter:

**das Gebäck** 'cake and biscuits', **das Gepäck** 'luggage', **das Gemüse** 'vegetables'.

## 25.6

The following groups of nouns are neuter:

(a) Young persons and animals:

**das Baby** 'baby', **das Kind** 'child', **das Küken** 'chick', **das Lamm** 'lamb'

(b) Diminutives:

**das Kätzchen** 'little cat', **das Bäumchen** 'little tree', **das Väschen** 'small vase',  
**das Kindlein** 'baby/toddler' (*archaic*), **das Ringlein** 'small ring' (*e.g. for a child*)

(c) Adjectives, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions and infinitives used as nouns (see also [28.5](#)):

**Das Grün des Meeres**

The green of the sea

**Gern nehme ich *das Du* an.**

I'm happy for us to call each other 'du'.

► For further explanations about '**du**' and '**Sie**', see [60.1c](#)

**Ich höre nur *das Wenn und Aber*.**

All I hear are ifs and buts.

**Ich habe *mein Gegenüber* besucht.**

I visited my opposite number.

**Das Laufen macht fit.**

Running gets you fit.

(d) Cafés, restaurants, hotels and cinemas:

**das Kempinski, das Kaiser Wilhelm, das Savoy, das Radisson, das Odeon**

(e) Names of towns, countries and continents:

**das alte Dresden** ‘old Dresden’, **das heutige Bayern** ‘present-day Bavaria’, **das antike Griechenland** ‘ancient Greece’, **das neue Europa** ‘the new Europe’ (see [23.2h](#))

But note the common exceptions:

**die Arktis** ‘the Arctic’, **die Antarktis** ‘the Antarctic’, **die Schweiz** ‘Switzerland’, **die Türkei** ‘Turkey’; also: **der Irak, der Iran, der Libanon** ‘Lebanon’

(f) Letters of the alphabet:

**das ABC, mit kleinem ‘p’** ‘with a small “p”’, **ein großes Ypsilon** ‘a capital “y”’ (*compare Swiss usage: der X, der Y*)

(g) Chemical elements and metals:

**das Blei** ‘lead’, **das Gold** ‘gold’, **das Kupfer** ‘copper’, **das Silber** ‘silver’

(h) Scientific units and measurements:

**das Atom** ‘atom’, **das Elektron** ‘electron’, **das Neutron** ‘neutron’, **das Pfund** ‘pound’, **das Gramm** ‘gram’, **das Kilo** ‘kilogram’

But note:

**das/der Meter** ‘metre’, **das/der Liter** ‘litre’, and only **der Kilometer** ‘kilometer’, **der Quadratkilometer** ‘square meter’, **der Kubikmeter** ‘cubic meter’

## 26

### Compound nouns and acronyms

#### 26.1

The last part of a compound noun decides the overall gender and number:

**der Kupferstich** ‘copper engraving’ is made up of **das Kupfer** and *der Stich*;  
**die Studentenkneipe** ‘student pub’ is made up of **der Student** and *die Kneipe*;  
**das Kopfsteinpflaster** ‘cobblestones’ is made up of **der Kopfstein** and *das Pflaster*;  
**die Busreise** ‘bus trip’ is made up of **der Bus** and *die Reise*.

► See also [54.1](#)

#### 26.2

Acronyms take their gender from the principal noun:

**der DGB** ‘Federation of German Trade Unions’: **der Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund**;  
**die SPD** ‘Social Democratic Party’: **die Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands**;  
**das BAFöG** ‘National Law on Support for Education and Training’: **das Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz**.

► See also [29.7b](#)

## 27

## Gender variations

## 27.1

A few nouns have alternative genders:

**das/die E-Mail** ‘email’  
**der/das Gummi** ‘elastic’, ‘rubber’  
**der/das Liter** ‘litre’

Recent loan words from English can often be used with more than one gender:

**die/das SMS** = **die Textnachricht** ‘sms’  
**der/das Ketchup** ‘ketchup’  
**der/das Blackout** ‘blackout’  
**der/das Virus** ‘virus’

NOTE

In Germany and Switzerland **der Keks** ‘biscuit’, but in Austria **das Keks**.

## 27.2

There are several nouns that are identical in form in the singular but whose gender depends on their meaning. These often have different plural forms:

**der Band**, plural **die Bände** ‘volume/book’  
*but:* **das Band**, plural **die Bänder** ‘ribbon/tape’  
*and:* **das Band**, plural **die Bande** ‘bonds’ (between people)  
*also:* **die Band**, plural **die Bands** ‘band/pop group’

**der Leiter**, same plural, ‘leader’  
*but:* **die Leiter**, plural **die Leitern** ‘ladder’

**der Pony**, no plural, ‘fringe (of hair)’  
*but:* **das Pony**, plural **die Ponys** ‘pony’

**der See**, plural **die Seen** ‘lake’  
*but:* **die See**, no plural, ‘sea’.

► See also [29.9](#)

## 28

## Noun declensions

## 28.1

General rules for noun declension are that:

- (a) Feminine nouns do not change their ending in the singular:  
**die Tat** (nom.), **die Tat** (acc.), **der Tat** (dat.), **der Tat** (gen.)
- (b) Masculine and neuter nouns add **-(e)s** in the genitive singular (see also [28.1e](#)):  
**des Tag(e)s**, **des Flughafens**, **des Baums**
- (c) All nouns add **-n** in the dative plural if the nominative plural does not already end in **-n** or **-s**:  
**auf den Tischen** ‘on the tables’  
**mit den Katzen** ‘with the cats’

but:

**bei Lehmanns** ‘at the Lehmanns’  
**in den Autos** ‘in the cars’

► See also [29](#)

- (d) The basic, regular pattern of noun declension (sometimes called the ‘strong’ declension) is thus as follows:

	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	<i>Feminine</i>
<i>Singular</i>			
Nominative	<b>der Ring</b>	<b>das Brot</b>	<b>die Frau</b>
Accusative	<b>den Ring</b>	<b>das Brot</b>	<b>die Frau</b>
Dative	<b>dem Ring</b>	<b>dem Brot</b>	<b>der Frau</b>
Genitive	<b>des Rings</b>	<b>des Brotes</b>	<b>der Frau</b>
<i>Plural</i>			
Nominative	<b>die Ringe</b>	<b>die Brote</b>	<b>die Frauen</b>
Accusative	<b>die Ringe</b>	<b>die Brote</b>	<b>die Frauen</b>
Dative	<b>den Ringen</b>	<b>den Broten</b>	<b>den Frauen</b>
Genitive	<b>der Ringe</b>	<b>der Brote</b>	<b>der Frauen</b>

- (e) Nowadays the **-es** genitive ending is usually used only in monosyllabic nouns where pronunciation might otherwise prove difficult (**des Jahres**), but it must be used in nouns or syllables ending in:

**-s (des Hauses)**  
**-sch (des Tisches)**  
**-ß/ss (des Fußes, des Flusses)**  
**-st (des Dienstes)**  
**-z (des Schmerzes)**  
**-zt (des Arztes).**

With neuter nouns ending in **-is** the genitive singular is always **-isses (des Ergebnisses)**.

- (f) The genitive **-s** is often not used at all with:

seasons and months: **des elften Februar(s)** ‘of the 11th February’, **wegen des späten Winter** ‘because of the late winter’;

artistic periods: **des Barock(s)**, **des Rokoko(s)**, **des Klassizismus**;

foreign words: **des Establishment**, **des Fallout**, **des Genitiv**, **des Chaos** – unless the word is now regarded as a German word, like **der Bus**: **des Busses**;

abbreviations: **des PKW(s)** ‘of the car’, **des Bafög(s)** ‘of the state grant’.

- (g) The use of the dative singular ending **-e** with some masculine and neuter nouns is very old-fashioned and is rarely found except in certain set phrases:

**nach Hause** ‘home’  
**zu Hause** ‘at home’  
**im Laufe** ‘in the course of’  
**im Grunde genommen** ‘basically’  
**in gewissem Maße** ‘to a certain degree’  
**in diesem Sinne** ‘in this sense’.

## 28.2

## Weak declension

- (a) The term ‘weak’ denotes masculine nouns that add **-n** or **-en** to the nominative singular form in the accusative, dative and genitive singular, and in the plural. Weak nouns need to be learnt when they are first met (see 28.4):

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
Nominative	<b>der Mensch</b>	<b>die Menschen</b>
Accusative	<b>den Menschen</b>	<b>die Menschen</b>
Dative	<b>dem Menschen</b>	<b>den Menschen</b>
Genitive	<b>des Menschen</b>	<b>der Menschen</b>

There are relatively few weak nouns; they include mostly masculine nouns denoting living beings:

**der Herr** ‘gentleman’  
**der Affe** ‘monkey’  
**der Chirurg** ‘surgeon’  
**der Franzose** ‘Frenchman’  
**der Chinese** ‘Chinese’

(but not: **der Schweizer** ‘Swiss’, **der Österreicher** ‘Austrian’)

**der Junge** ‘boy’  
**der Neffe** ‘nephew’  
**der Oberst** ‘colonel’  
**der Spatz** ‘sparrow’.

- (b) A small number of mostly masculine weak nouns have an **-ns** ending in the genitive singular. The most common are:

**der Buchstabe** ‘letter (of alphabet)’  
**der Friede** ‘peace’  
**der Funke** ‘spark’  
**der Gedanke** ‘thought’  
**der Glaube** ‘faith’  
**der Name** ‘name’  
**der Wille** ‘will’.

NOTE

The neuter noun **das Herz** ‘heart’ has a weak ending in all forms except the accusative singular (**das Herz**) and also has genitive singular **des Herzens**.

## 28.3

## Variations

A fairly small number of nouns feature the normal masculine/neuter genitive singular in **-(e)s** but the weak plural in **-n**. For example:

**das Bett, des Bett(e)s, die Betten** ‘bed’  
**der Staat, des Staat(e)s, die Staaten** ‘state’  
**der See, des Sees, die Seen** ‘lake’.

► See also 29

## 28.4

Like strong verbs (see 33) and noun gender (see 27), irregularities in noun declension need to be learnt when the noun is first met, since there is no way of knowing just by looking at the noun whether it is of weak or regular declension. The three key elements to learn are a noun's nominative singular, its genitive singular and its nominative plural. These, along with the gender, will usually be given in any good dictionary: e.g. '**Tisch**, m., -es, -e' indicates that the noun is masculine, that the genitive form is **des Tisches** and that the plural is **die Tische**.

## 28.5 Adjectival declension

A large number of adjectives can serve as nouns when spelt with an initial capital letter. They always take the appropriate adjective endings following the definite article and the determiners (see 22, 24, 44), the indefinite article (see 22, 45) or the adjective without any preceding defining word (see 46):

**Sehen Sie *den Alten* in der Ecke?**

Do you see the old man in the corner?

**She spricht mit einer *der Kranken*.**

She's talking to one of the (female) patients.

**Er wohnt bei *einer Deutschen*.**

He lives with a German (woman).

**Arbeitslose haben in dieser Region wenig Chancen.**

Unemployed people don't have much of a chance in this area.

► See also 10.5c, 54.3 and 59.1c

## 28.6 Infinitives as nouns

The infinitive of almost any verb can be given an initial capital letter and turned into a regular (*i.e. strong*) neuter noun:

**das Essen** 'food/meal', **das Lesen** 'reading', **das Rauchen** 'smoking',  
**das Schwimmen** 'swimming'.

► See also 54.4

## 29 Plurals

## 29.1

There are several different ways to form noun plurals in German. It is very difficult to predict plural endings with complete certainty and, therefore, once again, learners are strongly advised to learn the plural form when they first encounter the noun.

There are five clear types of plural ending, some of which are typical of certain genders or suffixes. These are listed below.

29.2 Plural in *-n* or *-en*

A very large number of nouns fall into this category, including:

(a) feminine nouns ending in:

-e            **die Schulen** 'schools'  
-ei           **die Metzgereien** 'butchers' shops'

<b>-heit</b>	<b>die Weisheiten</b> ‘wise sayings’
<b>-in</b>	describing job titles; a second <b>n</b> is inserted before the plural ending: <b>die Ärztinnen</b> ‘doctors’
<b>-keit</b>	<b>die Schwierigkeiten</b> ‘difficulties’
<b>-schaft</b>	<b>die Errungenschaften</b> ‘achievements’
<b>-ung</b>	<b>die Empfindungen</b> ‘feelings’

(b) all nouns ending in:

<b>-ant</b>	<b>die Diamanten</b> ‘diamonds’
<b>-ent</b>	<b>die Präsidenten</b> ‘presidents’
<b>-enz</b>	<b>die Referenzen</b> ‘references’
<b>-ie</b>	<b>die Batterien</b> ‘batteries’
<b>-ik</b>	<b>die Kritiken</b> ‘criticisms’
<b>-ion</b>	<b>die Informationen</b> ‘information’

(*but: der Spion, die Spionin* ‘spy’)

<b>-ist</b>	<b>die Sozialisten</b> ‘socialists’
<b>-oge</b>	<b>die Biologen</b> ‘biologists’
<b>-tät</b>	<b>die Universitäten</b> ‘universities’

► See also [54.3](#)

### 29.3 Plural in -e or umlaut + -e

(a) The -e ending is taken by a large number of masculine and neuter monosyllabic nouns:

<b>der Blick, die Blicke</b>	‘looks’
<b>der Film, die Filme</b>	‘films’
<b>der Hund, die Hunde</b>	‘dogs’
<b>der Schuh, die Schuhe</b>	‘shoes’
<b>der Tag, die Tage</b>	‘days’.

(b) In many such nouns an umlaut appears on the stressed vowel: **Stühle** ‘chairs’, **Pläne** ‘plans’. These plural forms simply have to be learnt when the noun is first met. The **umlaut + -e** ending is found in a number of feminine nouns too: **Hände** ‘hands’, **Städte** ‘towns/cities’, **Würste** ‘sausages’.

(c) Nouns ending in:

<b>-är</b>	<b>die Millionäre</b> ‘millionaires’
<b>-eur</b>	<b>die Jongleure</b> ‘jugglers’.

► See also [54.3](#)

### 29.4 No change in the plural

(a) Most masculine nouns ending in:

<b>-el</b>	<b>die Deckel</b> ‘lids’
<b>-en</b>	<b>die Reifen</b> ‘tyres’
(but: <b>die Öfen</b> ‘ovens’)	
<b>-er</b>	<b>die Koffer</b> ‘suitcases’.

(b) Diminutives in:

- chen** **die Häuschen** 'small houses'  
**-lein** **die Entlein** 'ducklings' (*archaic*).

► See also [25.6a](#) and [54.3](#)

## 29.5 Plural in umlaut only

The stressed vowel receives an umlaut in the plural without any other change being made:

- die Äpfel** 'apples'  
**die Brüder** 'brothers'  
**die Läden** 'shops'  
**die Töchter** 'daughters'  
**die Öfen** 'ovens'.

## 29.6 Plural in *-er* or umlaut + *-er*

(a) The *-er* ending appears mostly in monosyllabic neuter nouns and a few monosyllabic masculine ones:

- das Ei, die Eier** 'eggs'  
**das Kleid, die Kleider** 'dresses'  
**das Lied, die Lieder** 'songs'  
**der Geist, die Geister** 'spirits'.

(b) Wherever there is a vowel that can take an umlaut, there is an umlaut with the *-er* plural ending:

- das Dach, die Dächer** 'roofs'  
**der Mann, die Männer** 'men'  
**der Reichtum, die Reichtümer** 'riches'  
**der Wald, die Wälder** 'forests'.

## 29.7 Plural in *-s*

(a) Nouns taken from English, French and Italian over the past hundred years:

- die Babys**  
**die Hotels**  
**die Parks**  
**die Radios**  
**die Schecks**  
**die Shows.**

(b) Acronyms and words that have been shortened:

- die LKWs** 'lorries'  
**die Muttis** 'mums'  
**die PKWs** 'cars'  
**die CDs** 'CDs'  
**die DVDs** 'DVDs'.

► See also [26.2](#)



**29.8 Other miscellaneous plural forms**

- (a) Greek and Latin derivations ending in **-os**, **-us** or **-um** usually take **-en** in the plural:

**das Epos, die Epen** 'epics'  
**das Museum, die Museen** 'museums'  
**der Mythos, die Mythen** 'myths'  
**das Visum, die Visen** 'visas'.

- (b) Certain other nouns derived from Latin retain their Latin plural form:

**das Tempus, die Tempora** 'tenses'  
**das Tempo, die Tempi** 'tempi' (in music)  
**das Genus, die Genera** 'genuses/genders'  
**das Korpus, die Korpora** '(linguistic) corpora'.

- (c) Nouns ending in **-ma** have plurals in **-men**:

**die Firma, die Firmen** 'firms'  
**das Thema, die Themen** 'topics'  
*(but: das Komma, die Kommas/Kommata* 'comma').

**29.9 Double plural forms**

A number of nouns that are identical in form in the singular, but whose gender depends on the meaning, have different plural forms (see 27.2 for these).

There are also a few nouns with two meanings whose singular form and gender are identical but that have divergent plural forms:

**die Bank, die Bänke** 'benches' and **die Banken** 'banks'  
**die Mutter, die Mütter** 'mothers' and **die Muttern** 'nuts' (*i.e. for bolts*)  
**der Rat, die Räte** 'councils' and **die Ratschläge** 'pieces of advice'  
**der Stock, die Stöcke** 'sticks' and **die Stockwerke** 'storeys'  
**das Wort, die Wörter** 'individual words' and **die Worte** 'connected words', 'sayings'.

**29.10 Use of singular and plural**

- (a) Agreement of verb

Singular nouns take singular verbs, and plural nouns take plural verbs. Usage therefore sometimes disagrees with English:

**Die deutsche Regierung hat neue Maßnahmen zur Bekämpfung der Arbeitslosigkeit vorgelegt.**

The German government *have* proposed new measures to combat unemployment.

- (b) Singular noun in German/plural noun in English

A number of nouns are used only in the singular in German where a plural noun is needed in English:

**der Besuch** 'visitors'  
**die Schere** 'scissors'  
**das Mittelalter** 'middle ages'  
**die Hose, also Unterhose, Trainingshose**, etc. 'trousers', 'underpants', 'track suit bottoms'

With parts of the body, the singular is the common form, although the plural form occurs occasionally:

**Die ganze Klasse soll *den Kopf* nach rechts drehen.**  
The whole class should turn *their heads* to the right.

NOTE

German does not normally use a possessive with parts of the body.

Some weights and measurements, particularly when they are preceded by a numeral:

**2 Euro** ‘2 euros’

**4 Kirscheis mit Sahne** ‘4 cherry-flavour ice creams with cream’

**bei 5 Grad Kälte** ‘at minus 5 degrees’

but:

**4 Becher Kirscheis mit Sahne** ‘4 cups of cherry ice cream with cream’

**2 Flaschen Rotwein** ‘2 bottles of red wine’

**3 Franken das Pfund** ‘3 Swiss francs per pound’

**5 Tassen Kaffee** ‘5 cups of coffee’

Essentially, these combinations need to be committed to memory as vocabulary items.

(c) Plural noun in German/singular in English

**die Zinsen** ‘interest’

**die Nachrichten** + pl. verb, ‘news’ + sg. verb:

**Die Nachrichten werden heute von Steffen Seibert moderiert.**

The news is read today by Steffen Seibert.

# V

## Pronouns

### 30 Pronoun reference and forms

#### 30.1

German pronouns preserve the gender and number (singular or plural) of the nouns to which they refer. For example:

**Der Tisch ist zu klein. > Er ist zu klein.**  
The table is too small. > It is too small.

**Die Tür ist auf. > Sie ist auf.**  
The door is open. > It is open.

**Das Fenster ist zu. > Es ist zu.**  
The window is closed. > It is closed.

**Die Fenster sind zu. > Sie sind zu.**  
The windows are closed. > They are closed.

However, the case of the pronoun depends on its role in the sentence:

**Der Tisch war teuer. Wir haben ihn nicht gekauft. Er war aber schön.**  
The table was expensive. We didn't buy it. But it was nice.

#### 30.2

The personal pronoun system is set out below. Note that there is a formal and a familiar second person mode of address (see 60.1), and that the second person formal is identical for the singular and the plural.

► See also 37.2 for reflexive pronouns

(a) The nominative forms are:

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
First person	<b>ich</b> 'I'	<b>wir</b> 'we'
Second person (familiar)	<b>du</b> 'you'	<b>ihr</b> 'you'
Third person	<b>er, sie, es</b> 'he, she, it'	<b>sie</b> 'they'
Second person (formal)	<b>Sie</b> 'you'	<b>Sie</b> 'you'

- (b) Each pronoun also has an accusative and a dative form:

Singular			Plural		
Nom.	Acc.	Dat.	Nom.	Acc.	Dat.
ich	mich	mir	wir	uns	uns
du	dich	dir	ihr	euch	euch
er	ihn	ihm	sie	sie	ihnen
sie	sie	ihr	sie	sie	ihnen
es	es	ihm	sie	sie	ihnen
Sie	Sie	Ihnen	Sie	Sie	Ihnen

- (c) The genitive forms (**meiner, deiner, seiner, ihrer, seiner, Ihrer; unser, euer, ihrer, ihrer, ihrer, Ihrer**) are very rare and are only found with verbs governing the genitive case (see 20.4):

**Wir gedenken ihrer.**  
We commemorate them.

**Ich bin mir seiner sicher.**  
I am sure of him.

The forms **meinetwegen, deinetwegen, seinetwegen, ihretwegen, ihretwegen, Ihretwegen; unsertwegen, euretwegen, ihretwegen, ihretwegen, ihretwegen, Ihretwegen** mean ‘because of me (etc.)/for my (etc.) sake’:

**Sie musste meinerwegen warten.**  
She had to wait on my account/because of me.

**Euretwegen haben wir den Zug verpasst.**  
We missed the train because of you.

Compare the formal with the informal way of expressing ‘because of me (etc)’:

**meinetwegen – wegen mir**  
**deinetwegen – wegen dir**  
**seinetwegen – wegen ihm, etc.**

## 30.3

Possessive adjectives (corresponding to ‘my’, ‘your’, ‘his’, ‘her’, etc.) are closely related to these pronoun forms. Their endings change according to case. Their stems are:

	Singular	Plural
First person	<b>ich – mein</b>	<b>wir – unser</b>
Second person	<b>du – dein</b>	<b>ihr – euer</b>
Second person (formal)	<b>Sie – Ihr</b>	<b>Sie – Ihr</b>
Third person	<b>er – sein</b>	<b>sie – ihr</b>
	<b>sie – ihr</b>	<b>sie – ihr</b>
	<b>es – sein</b>	<b>sie – ihr</b>

All possessive adjectives follow the **ein** declension (see 22.3 and 24.2; see 45 for the declension of adjectives following these forms):

**Das ist mein neuer Wagen.**  
This is my new car.

**Haben Sie *meinen* neuen Wagen gesehen?**

Have you seen my new car?

**Wir sind mit *meinem* neuen Wagen gefahren.**

We drove in my new car.

When used predicatively (see 43), however, the possessive pronoun has two distinct forms. These are **meiner** (masculine nominative) and **meins** (neuter nominative and accusative):

**Ist das *dein* Wagen? Ja, das ist *meiner*.**

Is that your car? Yes, that's mine.

**Ist das *deine* CD-ROM? Ja, das ist *meine*.**

Is that your CD-ROM? Yes, that's mine.

**Ist das *dein* E-Book? Ja, das ist *meins*.**

Is that your ebook? Yes, that's mine.

**Ich nehme *mein* E-Book mit auf die Zugfahrt. Soll ich *deins* auch einpacken?**

I am taking my ebook on the train journey. Shall I also pack yours?

Otherwise the same endings are used as for attributive use (see 43.2):

**Hast du *meinen* Hausschlüssel gesehen? Nein, ich habe *deinen* nicht gesehen.**

Have you seen my house key? No, I haven't seen yours.

**Hast du *meine* CD gesehen? Nein, ich habe *deine* nicht gesehen.**

Have you seen my CD? No, I haven't seen yours.

**Fahren wir mit *deinem* Wagen? Ja, mit *meinem*.**

Shall we go in your car? Yes, in mine.

**Kann ich mit *deiner* CD-ROM arbeiten? Nein, nicht mit *meiner*.**

Can I work with your CD-ROM? No, not with mine.

In order to emphasize the personal pronoun ('myself', 'yourself', 'himself', etc.), German uses **selbst** or **selber** with the appropriate pronoun:

**Er hat *selbst/selber* die Sache erledigt.**

He has dealt with the issue himself.

**Sie hat *selbst/selber* den Zeugen verhört.**

She questioned the witness herself.

When used before a pronoun or noun, unstressed **selbst** means 'even':

***Selbst* die Wirtschaftsministerin hat nichts davon gewusst.**

Even the the Economics Minister knew nothing about it.

Note that, in this final example, **selbst** could not be replaced by **selber**.

► See also 37.2 for reflexive pronouns

## 30.4

There are two interrogative pronouns: **wer** 'who' and **welcher** 'which'.

(a) **wer** has all four case forms:

Nom.	<b>wer</b>
Acc.	<b>wen</b>
Dat.	<b>wem</b>
Gen.	<b>wessen</b>

**Wer ist das? Wen heiratest du? Mit wem hast du gesprochen?**

Who is that? Who are you marrying? Who did you speak to?

The genitive form **wessen** is rather formal and German speakers tend to avoid it by using an alternative structure:

**Wessen Schuld ist das? > Wer ist daran schuld?**

Whose fault is that? > Who is to blame for it?

**Wessen USB-Stick ist das? > Wem gehört der USB-Stick?**

Whose memory stick is it? > Who does the memory stick belong to?

► See also [58](#)

(b) **welcher** tends not to be used in the genitive:

Nom. **welcher**

Acc. **welchen**

Dat. **welchem**

**Welcher Politiker ist das?**

Which politician is that?

**An welchem Projekt arbeitest du?**

Which project are you working on?

► See also [9](#) and [44.2](#)

### 30.5

The word **es** is used in a number of distinctive ways beyond its normal use as a pronoun:

(a) It can refer back to a situation, idea, sentence or phrase:

**Wir müssen noch Holz holen > Petra macht es gerade.**

We need to get wood as well. > Petra's just doing it.

**Er ist bei sämtlichen Prüfungen durchgefallen. Aber sag's nicht weiter: Sein Vater weiß es noch nicht.**

He has failed all his exams. But please don't say anything as his father doesn't know about it yet.

(b) **Es** is used as a dummy subject at the beginning of a sentence with the actual subject coming later (see also [15.1](#) and [42.3g](#)). In such cases verbal agreement is with the actual subject, not **es**:

**Es kam eine verdächtige Figur auf ihn zu.**

A suspicious-looking figure approached him.

**Es standen drei Flaschen auf dem Tisch.**

There were three bottles on the table.

(c) **Es** can refer back to an idea that forms the complement of the verbs **sein** or **werden**. This usage needs to be rendered idiomatically in English:

**Sie meinen, Dieter sei manchmal unberechenbar, und ich bezweifle es nicht.**

They say Dieter is sometimes unpredictable and *I don't doubt it*.

**Sein Bruder ist Profi-Fußballspieler geworden, und er wird es bestimmt auch.**

His brother is a professional footballer and he'll definitely *be one too*.

- (d) While **es** can be used as the subject of **sein** and **werden**, in parallel with English usage (**Es ist die Frau von nebenan**, 'It is the woman from next door'), it can also be used with a plural verb:

**Es sind die Kinder von nebenan.**

They are the kids from next door.

**Es waren die Kommilitonen, die es versteckt haben.**

It was my classmates who hid it.

**Sind es deine Freunde?**

Are they your friends?

- (e) If **es** is used with the verb **sein** and a personal pronoun, it corresponds to English 'It is me/you/us, etc':

**Hallo, ich bin es.**

Hello, it's me.

**Anke, bist du es?**

Anke, is it you?

**Ist sie es gewesen?**

Was it her?

- (f) A so-called 'anticipatory' **es** is commonly used to refer forward to a **dass** or infinitive clause acting as the object of the main verb. Note the often more economic way of rendering this in English:

**Hast du es noch geschafft, bei Schäfer vorbeizuschauen?**

Did you also manage to call into Schäfer's?

**Wir haben es endlich fertiggebracht, die ganze Wohnung neu zu streichen.**

We have finally managed to paint the whole flat again.

**Bitte verzeihen Sie es uns, dass wir Sie im Herbst bei unserer Deutschlandreise nicht haben besuchen können.**

Please forgive us for not having been able to visit you during our trip to Germany in the autumn.

- (g) **Es** is also used as the object of a number of idiomatic phrases:

**es bei etwas belassen**

to leave it at something (*i.e. not to do any more*)

**es mit etwas bewenden lassen**

to leave it at/be content with something

**es mit etwas versuchen**

to try one's hand at/luck with something

**es gut/warm/gemütlich haben**

to be on to a good thing/warm/comfortable

**es zu etwas bringen**

to make it to/attain some position

**es sich schwer machen**

to make things difficult for oneself

**es mit jemandem treiben** (*informal; might cause offence*)

to have an affair with somebody

**Dabei müssen wir *es* wohl heute belassen.**  
We'll probably have to leave it at that for today.

**Ich werde *es* mit der Umschulung versuchen.**  
I'm going to try my luck with retraining.

**Ihr habt *es* aber gut!**  
You're really on to a good thing!

**Sie hat *es* zur Direktorin gebracht.**  
She has attained the post of Director/Head.

**Du machst *es* dir ganz schön schwer.**  
You're certainly making things very difficult for yourself.

## 31 Other forms used as pronouns

Note the following, some of which can also be used as determiners.

► See also [24](#) for determiners

### 31.1 *dieser/diese/dieses* is sometimes used in place of *er/sie/es*:

**Dann hat der Vater angerufen. Und *dieser* sagte, . . .**  
And then his/her father rang. And he said . . .

*dieser* and *jener* are also used for 'the latter' and 'the former' respectively (see [24.1](#)).

### 31.2 The definite article *der/die/das* is often used in place of personal pronouns, especially in the spoken language:

***Die* wohnt drüben.**  
She lives over there.

***Den* kenne ich schon lange.**  
I've known him for a long time.

***Das* wissen wir schon.**  
We already know that.

**Ich bin mir *dessen* bewusst.**  
I am aware of that.

**Mit *dem* kann man handeln.**  
With him one can do business.

### 31.3 *einer/eine/eins* 'one' declines like the predicative ([43](#)) *meiner/meine/meins* (see [30.3](#)):

**Hast du *einen/eine/eins*?**  
Have you got one?

Often it is used with a degree of emphasis:

**In der Schweiz spricht man nicht nur *eine* Sprache.**  
They don't just speak one language in Switzerland.

► See [15](#)



## 31.4

**man** is used for ‘one’, ‘people in general’, ‘they’:

**Man versteht das schon.**  
People understand that.

In the accusative and dative **man** becomes **einen** and **einem** respectively:

**Wenn man arbeitslos wird, trifft das einen hart.**  
If you become unemployed it affects you badly.

**Ich kenne einen, der fährt schon seit seiner Kindheit nach Mallorca.**  
I know somebody who has been going (on holiday) to Mallorca since he was a child.

**Und das soll einem jemand glauben?**  
Is anybody supposed to believe that?

► See also [40.4a](#)

**Ich kenne einen, der fährt jeden Sommer nach Mallorca.**  
I know somebody who spends each summer holiday in Mallorca.

**Und die Geschichte soll einem jemand glauben?**  
And somebody is supposed to believe this story?

## 31.5

**jemand** ‘someone’ and **niemand** ‘no one’ decline as follows:

Nom.	<b>jemand</b>	<b>niemand</b>
Acc.	<b>jemanden</b>	<b>niemanden</b>
Dat.	<b>jemandem</b>	<b>niemandem</b>
Gen.	<b>jemandes</b>	<b>niemandes.</b>

► See also [42.3d](#)

In spoken German the accusative and dative are frequently left uninflected, as **jemand** and **niemand**:

**Ich suche niemanden/niemand.**  
I’m not looking for anyone.

**Sie spricht gerade mit jemandem/mit jemand am Telefon.**  
She’s speaking to someone on the phone at the moment.

In relative clauses **jemand** is construed as masculine, i.e. **jemand, der ...** ‘someone who ...’. However, in feminist usage, **jemand, die ...** is found (see [10](#)).

## 31.6

The demonstrative pronoun **selbst** ‘self’ usually puts emphasis on the word it follows; it expresses identity. It does not decline and is stressed in spoken language.

**Fanni selbst hat es mir erzählt.**  
Fanni told me herself.

**Der Ort selbst interessiert mich.**  
The place itself interests me.

**selbst** can also appear in other positions in the sentence:

**Die Kinder dürfen *selbst* entscheiden.**

The children are allowed to decide for themselves.

**Meine Brüder machen alles *selbst*.**

My brothers are doing it all themselves.

**Sie hat das *selbst* repariert.**

She fixed it herself.

**Das regelt sich alles von *selbst*.**

That'll sort itself out.

Note also **selbst** in the meaning of 'even'. When **selbst** is used in this way, the following word or phrase is stressed in spoken language. **Selbst** can be replaced by **sogar**:

***Selbst/Sogar* in London war das Wetter besser als hier!**

Even in London the weather was better than here!

***Selbst/Sogar* ich kenne die Nummer inzwischen auswendig.**

Even I know the number by heart by now.

Note that the demonstrative pronouns **selbst** and **selber** have the same meaning, but that **selbst** is the preferred form in standard German, while **selber** is used mostly in spoken language:

**Den Vertrag hat der Bundespräsident *selbst* unterschrieben.**

The Federal President himself signed the treaty.

**Das habe ich *selber* gebacken.**

I baked it myself.

**selbst** can also stand alone after **sich**, etc., in which case it emphasizes the reflexive meaning of the verb:

**Er redete mit *sich selbst*.**

He talked to himself.

**Redest du manchmal mit *dir selbst*?**

Do you sometimes talk to yourself?

Note also the use of the noun **Selbst**:

**mein wahres *Selbst***

my true self

Finally, note also that **selber** may sometimes be used to avoid confusion:

***Selbst* streichen ist billiger.**

This could mean either 'Painting for oneself is cheaper' or 'Even painting is cheaper'. To avoid doubt, **selber** would be used here: ***Selber* streichen ist billiger.**

31.7

**derselbe, dieselbe** and **dasselbe** usually indicate a one-to-one identity, whereas **der/die/das gleiche** indicates a group identity. In general, you can infer the identity from the context, which is why many speakers do not differentiate between the two forms.

**derselbe, dieselbe, dasselbe** ‘the very same’  
**der gleiche, die gleiche, das gleiche** ‘the same’.

**Ich werde morgen *denselben* Anzug tragen wie letzten Samstag.**  
 Tomorrow I’ll wear the same suit as last Saturday.

**Es ist immer *dasselbe* mit dir!**  
 It’s always the same with you!

**Max und ich benutzen *das gleiche* Rasierwasser.**  
 Max and I use the same aftershave. (*i.e. the same brand but not the same bottle*)

**Wir haben *denselben* Zahnarzt.**  
 We go to the same dentist.

**Ich habe *den gleichen/denselben* Fehler gemacht wie du.**  
 I made the same mistake as you did.

The first part of **derselbe** is declined like the definite article, and the second part is declined like an adjective after the definite article.

	<i>Singular</i>			<i>Plural</i>
	<i>Masc.</i>	<i>Neut.</i>	<i>Fem.</i>	<i>All genders</i>
<b>Nom.</b>	<b>derselbe</b>	<b>dasselbe</b>	<b>dieselbe</b>	<b>dieselben</b>
<b>Acc.</b>	<b>denselben</b>	<b>dasselbe</b>	<b>dieselbe</b>	<b>dieselben</b>
<b>Dat.</b>	<b>demselben</b>	<b>demselben</b>	<b>derselben</b>	<b>denselben</b>
<b>Gen.</b>	<b>desselben</b>	<b>desselben</b>	<b>derselben</b>	<b>derselben</b>

31.8

**miteinander** and **untereinander** are interchangeable and emphasize that something is happening within a group:

**Sie haben das zwar *untereinander/miteinander* besprochen, aber mir hat niemand etwas davon gesagt.**  
 Although they talked about this with each other, nobody told me anything.

32

**Pronouns used after prepositions**

(a) The correct use of pronouns with prepositions depends on distinguishing between people and things. The preposition plus personal pronoun is always used to refer to individual people:

**Peter wird Jura studieren. Sein Vater hat einen großen Einfluss *auf ihn* gehabt.**  
 Peter is going to study Law. His father has been a big influence on him.

Less commonly, and mostly in written German, the preposition + pronoun is also found when reference is to specific concrete objects:

**Er hat einen neuen VW gekauft und freut sich sehr *über ihn* (or: *darüber*).**  
 He has bought a new VW and is really pleased with it.

- (b) More commonly used to refer to inanimate objects is the form **da(r)** + preposition (see 38.2 and 50.6):

**Es war keine leichte Entscheidung und sein Großvater hat einen großen Einfluss *darauf* gehabt.**

It was no easy decision and his grandfather had a great influence on it (*i.e. the decision*).

**Wir haben einen neuen Plan entworfen und der Chef hat uns *dazu* gratuliert.**

We designed a new plan and our boss congratulated us on it (*i.e. the plan*).

- (c) The **da(r)** + preposition form is also used to refer to a general state of affairs and to whole statements or sentences:

**Der Zug nach Bonn kam gestern mit dreißig Minuten Verspätung an und Hedda hat sich *darüber* sehr geärgert.**

The Bonn train arrived 30 minutes late yesterday and Hedda got really annoyed about it (*i.e. the fact of it being late*).

**Mein Onkel will nächsten Monat endlich aus unserer Wohnung ausziehen. *Darüber* freut sich ja die ganze Familie.**

My uncle is finally going to move out of our flat next month. The whole family is pleased about it (*i.e. the fact that he is moving out*).

# VI

## Verbs

### 33 Verb forms

#### 33.1 Finite verb, infinitive and participle

All verbs have (a) an infinitive form, (b) a present and a past participle, and (c) several finite forms:

- (a) The infinitive form is the form found in dictionaries. It is the usual way of referring to the verb as a concept. Thus, **arbeiten** means ‘to work’ and **sagen** means ‘to say’.

Infinitives are also used in certain types of instructions and commands (see [86.1b](#), [92](#), [99](#)).

- (b) The present participle is an adjective derived from the infinitive by adding a ‘d’ (and, where necessary, the relevant adjectival ending). Thus, **eine arbeitende Frau** is ‘a working woman’ and **ein nichts sagender Brief** is ‘a letter that says nothing.’

► See [49](#)

The past participle is used in forming two of the past tenses (see [33.3](#)): the perfect and the pluperfect. Thus, **ich habe gearbeitet** means ‘I have worked’ and **Was hattest du gesagt?** means ‘What did you say?’ The past participle is also used in the formation of the passive (see [40](#)).

- (c) The finite forms of a verb (see [5.1](#)) carry specific information about:

*person*: whether the verb is in the ‘I’ form or the ‘you’ form, for example;

*number*: whether the verb is in the singular or the plural, e.g. whether it is in the ‘I’ form or the ‘we’ form;

*tense*: whether the verb is in the present, past or future.

For example, **studiere** reveals that the verb is first person singular (‘I’) and present tense (‘I study’); and **studiertest** reveals that it is second person (familiar) singular, and past tense (‘you studied’).

Infinitives and participles do not carry this information. They each have only one fixed form. Where they are used as part of the verb they must be accompanied by a finite form, such as the forms in **ich habe gearbeitet und du hast auch gearbeitet** ‘I have worked and you have worked too’.

### 33.2 Weak, strong and irregular verbs

There are regular patterns that most verbs follow, although some verbs follow irregular patterns and a special effort must be made to learn these. Many of the most frequently used verbs are not regular. It is useful to distinguish the following types of verb:

- Weak verbs (see 33.4) are entirely regular and their forms are therefore completely predictable. They always add the standard endings to the verb stem, which never changes. The following are all forms of the weak verb **machen** 'to make/do': **mache**, **machst**, **machte**, **gemacht**.
- Strong verbs (see 33.5) have a change in the verb stem when forming the simple past tense and the past participle. The following are forms of **singen** 'to sing'. The forms with the change in the verb stem are past tense: **singe**, **singst**, **sang**, **sangst**, **gesungen**.
- A small number of verbs combine aspects of the weak and the strong patterns. These are known as 'mixed' verbs (see 33.6).
- Irregular verbs (see 33.7) are typically strong verbs that also change the verb stem in some of the present tense forms. The verb **nehmen** 'to take' has present tense forms based on the stem **nehm-** such as **nehme** and **nehmt**, but it also has **nimmst** and **nimmt** in the present tense.

Note the very different uses of the terms 'weak' and 'strong' in relation to nouns (see 28.1–2).

### 33.3 The six tenses

All verbs have forms corresponding to the six basic tenses. In the examples below, all the finite forms of the verbs (see 33.1c) are in italics. The examples show one weak verb (**studieren**) and one strong verb (**kommen**):

There are two simple tense forms:

<i>Present:</i>	<b>sie <i>studiert</i></b> 'she studies/is studying' <b>sie <i>kommt</i></b> 'she comes/is coming'
<i>Simple past:</i>	<b>sie <i>studierte</i></b> 'she studied/was studying' <b>sie <i>kam</i></b> 'she came/was coming'

and four compound tense forms:

<i>Perfect:</i>	<b>sie <i>hat studiert</i></b> 'she has studied/she studied' <b>sie <i>ist gekommen</i></b> 'she has come/come'
<i>Pluperfect:</i>	<b>sie <i>hatte studiert</i></b> 'she had studied' <b>sie <i>war gekommen</i></b> 'she had come'
<i>Future:</i>	<b>sie <i>wird studieren</i></b> 'she will study' <b>sie <i>wird kommen</i></b> 'she will come'
<i>Future perfect:</i>	<b>sie <i>wird studiert haben</i></b> 'she will have studied' <b>sie <i>wird gekommen sein</i></b> 'she will have come'.

► See also 89.1

The compound tenses are formed as follows:

<i>Perfect:</i>	a finite form of either <b>haben</b> or <b>sein</b> ,* in the present tense, + the past participle of the main verb;
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- Pluperfect:* a finite form of either **haben** or **sein**,\* in the simple past tense, + the past participle of the main verb;  
*Future:* a finite form of **werden**, in the present tense, + the infinitive of the main verb;  
*Future perfect:* a finite form of **werden**, in the present tense, + the past participle of the main verb, + either **haben** or **sein**.\*

NOTE

\*See 33.8; see also 34 for the use of tenses; see 35.2 for tenses of modal verbs.

33.4

Weak verbs

Weak verbs are completely regular and always retain the verb stem. The majority of verbs follow this pattern and any new verbs that enter the language are ‘weak’, e.g. **privatisieren** ‘privatize’, **harmonisieren** ‘harmonize’, **testen** ‘test’, **interviewen** ‘interview’.

- (a) In the present tense, the regular endings are added to the stem of the verb. Where the stem of the verb ends in **-d** or **-t**, an extra **-e** is introduced in some positions to ease pronunciation. The present tense forms of **machen** ‘to do/make’ and **arbeiten** ‘to work’ are:

<b>ich</b>	<b>mache</b>	<b>arbeite</b>
<b>du</b>	<b>machst</b>	<b>arbeitest</b>
<b>Sie</b> (sg. and pl.)	<b>machen</b>	<b>arbeiten</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>macht</b>	<b>arbeitet</b>
<b>wir</b>	<b>machen</b>	<b>arbeiten</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>macht</b>	<b>arbeitet</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>machen</b>	<b>arbeiten.</b>

- (b) In the simple past, weak verbs add a **-t** and a slightly different set of regular endings to the verb stem. Note that the **ich** form and the **er/sie/es/man** forms are identical in the simple past. Where the stem of the verb ends in **-d** or **-t**, an extra **-e** is introduced in all positions to ease pronunciation:

<b>ich</b>	<b>machte</b>	<b>arbeitete</b>
<b>du</b>	<b>machtest</b>	<b>arbeitetest</b>
<b>Sie</b> (sg. and pl.)	<b>machten</b>	<b>arbeiteten</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>machte</b>	<b>arbeitete</b>
<b>wir</b>	<b>machten</b>	<b>arbeiteten</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>machtet</b>	<b>arbeitetet</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>machten</b>	<b>arbeiteten.</b>

- (c) The perfect and pluperfect tenses of weak verbs are formed with the past participle, and this is formed by adding **ge-** to the beginning of the verb stem, and **-(e)t** to the end.

The verbs **arbeiten** ‘to work’, **machen** ‘to make/do’ and **testen** ‘to test’ have the following forms:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Past participle</i>	<i>Perfect tense</i>	<i>Pluperfect tense</i>
<b>arbeiten</b>	<b>gearbeitet</b>	<b>ich habe gearbeitet</b>	<b>ich hatte gearbeitet</b>
<b>machen</b>	<b>gemacht</b>	<b>ich habe gemacht</b>	<b>ich hatte gemacht</b>
<b>testen</b>	<b>getestet</b>	<b>ich habe getestet</b>	<b>ich hatte getestet</b>

► For the use of **sein** and **haben** in these tenses, see 33.8

NOTE

Verbs ending in **-ieren** and verbs beginning with an inseparable prefix (see 57.2) do not add **ge-** in forming the past participle (see 33.1b). For example, the verbs **studieren** 'to study', **privatisieren** 'to privatize' and **verreisen** 'to depart' have the following forms:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Past participle</i>	<i>Perfect tense</i>	<i>Pluperfect tense</i>
<b>studieren</b>	<b>studiert</b>	<b>ich habe studiert</b>	<b>ich hatte studiert</b>
<b>privatisieren</b>	<b>privatisiert</b>	<b>ich habe privatisiert</b>	<b>ich hatte privatisiert</b>
<b>verreisen</b>	<b>verreist</b>	<b>ich bin verreist</b>	<b>ich war verreist</b>

## 33.5

## Strong verbs

The main feature of strong verbs is that the form of the verb stem itself undergoes a change in the simple past and often in the past participle too.

- (a) In the present tense most strong verbs follow the regular pattern of endings found in weak verbs (see 33.4a). For example, the verbs **gehen** 'to go' and **kommen** 'to come' have the following predictable forms:

<b>ich</b>	<b>gehe</b>	<b>komme</b>
<b>du</b>	<b>gehst</b>	<b>kommst</b>
<b>Sie</b> (sg. and pl.)	<b>gehen</b>	<b>kommen</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>geht</b>	<b>kommt</b>
<b>wir</b>	<b>gehen</b>	<b>kommen</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>geht</b>	<b>kommt</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>gehen</b>	<b>kommen.</b>

► See 80.7d and 76.1b–c

- (b) In the simple past, strong verbs have a change within the stem of the verb, usually a vowel change, and they add a different set of endings to those found in weak verbs.

The simple past forms of **gehen** and **kommen** are:

<b>ich</b>	<b>ging</b>	<b>kam</b>
<b>du</b>	<b>gingst</b>	<b>kamst</b>
<b>Sie</b> (sg. and pl.)	<b>gingen</b>	<b>kamen</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>ging</b>	<b>kam</b>
<b>wir</b>	<b>gingen</b>	<b>kamen</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>ginget</b>	<b>kamt</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>gingen</b>	<b>kamen.</b>

NOTE

The **ich** form and the **er/sie/es/man** forms are simply the changed verb stem without any ending at all. The change in the verb stem needs to be learnt for all strong verbs:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Simple past</i>
<b>gehen</b>	<b>ging</b>
<b>kommen</b>	<b>kam</b>
etc.	etc.

Thus, once we know that the verb **singen** 'to sing' has the simple past **sang**, we can predict the following forms: **ich sang** 'I sang', **du sangst** 'you (familiar) sang', **sie sang** 'she sang', **wir sangen** 'we sang', etc.



- (c) The perfect and pluperfect tenses of strong verbs are formed with the past participle (33.1b), and this is formed by adding **ge-** to the beginning of the verb stem and **-(e)n** to the end. The verbs **gehen** ‘to go’, **kommen** ‘to come’ and **singen** ‘to sing’ have the following forms:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Past participle</i>	<i>Perfect tense</i>	<i>Pluperfect tense</i>
<b>gehen</b>	<i>gegangen</i>	<b>ich bin gegangen</b>	<b>ich war gegangen</b> (see 80.7a, d)
<b>kommen</b>	<i>gekommen</i>	<b>ich bin gekommen</b>	<b>ich war gekommen</b> (see 80.7a)
<b>singen</b>	<i>gesungen</i>	<b>ich habe gesungen</b>	<b>ich hatte gesungen</b>

NOTE Verbs beginning with an inseparable prefix (see 57.2) do not add **ge-** in forming the past participle. For example, the verbs **bekommen** ‘to receive’ and **vergehen** ‘to pass’ (of time) have the following forms:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Past participle</i>	<i>Perfect tense</i>	<i>Pluperfect tense</i>
<b>vergehen</b>	<i>vergangen</i>	<b>es ist vergangen</b>	<b>es war vergangen</b>
<b>bekommen</b>	<i>bekommen</i>	<b>ich habe bekommen</b>	<b>ich hatte bekommen</b>

### 33.6 Mixed verbs

There are a few so-called ‘mixed’ verbs that combine features of the weak and the strong patterns by adding the regular endings to a changed vowel stem in the simple past. The most common ‘mixed’ verbs are:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Simple past stem</i>
<b>bringen</b>	<b>brachte</b> ‘to bring’ (see 80.7d)
<b>denken</b>	<b>dachte</b> ‘to think’
<b>brennen</b>	<b>brannte</b> ‘to burn’
<b>kennen</b>	<b>kannte</b> ‘to know’ (a person or place) (see 101.1)
<b>nennen</b>	<b>nannte</b> ‘to name/call’
<b>rennen</b>	<b>rannte</b> ‘to race’
<b>wissen</b>	<b>wusste</b> ‘to know’ (a piece of information) (see 101.1)

- (a) In the present tense these verbs are entirely regular except for **wissen**, which has an irregular pattern (see 33.7a).
- (b) In the simple past the regular weak endings are added to the simple past stem. Thus, present tense forms include **ich bringe, du denkst, es brennt**, etc., and simple past forms include **ich kannte, du nanntest, er rannte**, etc.
- (c) The perfect and pluperfect tenses of mixed verbs are formed with the past participle, and this is formed by adding **ge-** to the beginning of the simple past stem and **-t** to the end.

The forms are:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Simple past stem</i>	<i>Perfect tense</i>
<b>bringen</b>	<b>brachte</b>	<b>ich habe gebracht</b> (see 80.7d)
<b>denken</b>	<b>dachte</b>	<b>ich habe gedacht</b>
<b>brennen</b>	<b>brannte</b>	<b>ich habe gebrannt</b>
<b>kennen</b>	<b>kannte</b>	<b>ich habe gekannt</b>
<b>nennen</b>	<b>nannte</b>	<b>ich habe genannt</b>
<b>rennen</b>	<b>rannte</b>	<b>ich bin gerannt</b>
<b>wissen</b>	<b>wusste</b>	<b>ich habe gewusst</b>

## 33.7

## Irregular verbs

Irregular verbs (see 33.2d) fall into several different categories, but they share one basic feature: they have an irregular pattern in the present tense. In addition, most irregular verbs are strong verbs. These are very common verbs and are part of the basic vocabulary of all speakers of German. A special effort needs to be made to learn them.

- (a) The verbs **sein** 'to be', **werden** 'to become', **wissen** 'to know', **haben** 'to have' take the following forms:

*Present tense*

	<i>sein</i>	<i>werden</i>	<i>wissen</i>	<i>haben</i>
<b>ich</b>	<b>bin</b>	<b>werde</b>	<b>weiß</b>	<b>habe</b>
<b>du</b>	<b>bist</b>	<b>wirst</b>	<b>weiß</b>	<b>hast</b>
<b>Sie</b> (sg. and pl.)	<b>sind</b>	<b>werden</b>	<b>wissen</b>	<b>haben</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>ist</b>	<b>wird</b>	<b>weiß</b>	<b>hat</b>
<b>wir</b>	<b>sind</b>	<b>werden</b>	<b>wissen</b>	<b>haben</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>seid</b>	<b>werdet</b>	<b>wisst</b>	<b>habt</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>sind</b>	<b>werden</b>	<b>wissen</b>	<b>haben</b>

*Simple past*

	<i>sein</i>	<i>werden</i>	<i>wissen</i>	<i>haben</i>
<b>ich</b>	<b>war</b>	<b>wurde</b>	<b>wusste</b>	<b>hatte</b>
<b>du</b>	<b>warst</b>	<b>wurdest</b>	<b>wusstest</b>	<b>hattest</b>
<b>Sie</b> (sg. and pl.)	<b>waren</b>	<b>wurden</b>	<b>wussten</b>	<b>hatten</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>war</b>	<b>wurde</b>	<b>wusste</b>	<b>hatte</b>
<b>wir</b>	<b>waren</b>	<b>wurden</b>	<b>wussten</b>	<b>hatten</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>wart</b>	<b>wurdet</b>	<b>wusstet</b>	<b>hattet</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>waren</b>	<b>wurden</b>	<b>wussten</b>	<b>hatten</b>

*Perfect*

*Pluperfect*

<b>ich bin gewesen</b> 'I have been/was'	<b>ich war gewesen</b> 'I had been'
<b>ich bin geworden</b> 'I have become/became'	<b>ich war geworden</b> 'I had become'
<b>ich habe gehabt</b> 'I have had/had'	<b>ich hatte gehabt</b> 'I had had'
<b>ich habe gewusst</b> 'I have known/knew'	<b>ich hatte gewusst</b> 'I had known'

- (b) All modal verbs are irregular (see 35).
- (c) A number of common strong verbs (see 33.5) have a vowel change in the stem of the verb in the **du** and the **er/sie/es/man** forms of the present tense. This means that there is an extra feature to learn when studying the principal parts of these verbs (see 33.9). In the early stages of learning, the principal parts of each verb must be learnt individually. The following is a guide to some common patterns. Note that the change to the stem in the present tense is always found in the **du** and **er/sie/es/man** forms only (printed in italic):

- (i) Stem vowel changes from **e** to **i**: **geben** 'to give', **nehmen** 'to take', **helfen** 'to help':

<b>ich</b>	<b>gebe</b>	<b>nehme</b>	<b>helfe</b>
<b>du</b>	<i><b>gibst</b></i>	<i><b>nimmst</b></i>	<i><b>hilfst</b></i>
<b>Sie</b>	<b>geben</b>	<b>nehmen</b>	<b>helfen</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<i><b>gibt</b></i>	<i><b>nimmt</b></i>	<i><b>hilft</b></i>
<b>wir</b>	<b>geben</b>	<b>nehmen</b>	<b>helfen</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>gebt</b>	<b>nehmt</b>	<b>helft</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>geben</b>	<b>nehmen</b>	<b>helfen.</b>

Other verbs that follow this pattern include: **brechen** 'to break' (**er bricht**), **essen** 'to eat' (**du isst, er isst**), **gelten** 'to be valid' (**es gilt**), **messen** 'to measure' (**er misst**), **sprechen** 'to speak' (**er spricht**), **treten** 'to step/kick' (**er tritt**), **treffen** 'to meet', **vergessen** 'to forget' (**er vergisst**), **werfen** 'to throw' (**er wirft**).

- (ii) Stem vowel changes from **e** to **ie**: **sehen** 'to see', **empfehlen** 'to recommend', **lesen** 'to read':

<b>ich</b>	<b>sehe</b>	<b>empfehle</b>	<b>lese</b>
<b>du</b>	<i><b>siehst</b></i>	<i><b>empfiehlst</b></i>	<i><b>liest</b></i>
<b>Sie</b>	<b>sehen</b>	<b>empfehlen</b>	<b>lesen</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<i><b>sieht</b></i>	<i><b>empfiehlt</b></i>	<i><b>liest</b></i>
<b>wir</b>	<b>sehen</b>	<b>empfehlen</b>	<b>lesen</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>seht</b>	<b>empfehlt</b>	<b>lest</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>sehen</b>	<b>empfehlen</b>	<b>lesen.</b>

Other verbs that follow this pattern include: **befehlen** 'to order/instruct', **stehlen** 'to steal', **geschehen** 'to happen' (**es geschieht** 'it happens').

- (iii) Stem vowel changes by umlaut: **fahren** 'to travel/drive', **schlafen** 'to sleep', **fallen** 'to fall':

<b>ich</b>	<b>fahre</b>	<b>schlafe</b>	<b>falle</b>
<b>du</b>	<i><b>fährst</b></i>	<i><b>schläfst</b></i>	<i><b>fällst</b></i>
<b>Sie</b>	<b>fahren</b>	<b>schlafen</b>	<b>fallen</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<i><b>fährt</b></i>	<i><b>schläft</b></i>	<i><b>fällt</b></i>
<b>wir</b>	<b>fahren</b>	<b>schlafen</b>	<b>fallen</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>fahrt</b>	<b>schlaft</b>	<b>fallt</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>fahren</b>	<b>schlafen</b>	<b>fallen.</b>

Other verbs that follow this pattern include: **halten** ‘to stay/halt’ (**er hält**), **laden** ‘to load’ (**er lädt**), **raten** ‘to advise’ (**du rätst, er rät**), **tragen** ‘to carry’ (**er trägt**), **wachsen** ‘to grow’ (**er wächst**).

Note also:

**stoßen** ‘to hit/bump into’: **du stößt, er/sie/es/man stößt**

**laufen** ‘to run/walk’: **du läufst, er/sie/es/man läuft**

**saufen** ‘to drink alcohol’: **du säufst, er/sie/es/man säuft**.

► See 33.9

### 33.8 Using *haben* or *sein* with the past participle

The use of **haben** or **sein** as the auxiliary in the perfect and pluperfect (33.3) is determined mainly by the following factors:

(a) The auxiliary is **haben**:

(i) When the verb is transitive, i.e. takes an accusative object (18):

**Sie hat ihn gefragt.**

She asked him.

(ii) When the verb has a transitive sense even though the object is not expressed in the accusative. The verb may take a dative object (see 19.6), for example, or be a prepositional verb (see 38):

**Wir haben ihm geholfen.**

We helped him.

**Der Fall der Mauer hat zu dieser Entwicklung beigetragen.**

The fall of the Wall has contributed to this development.

(iii) When the verb is intransitive and expresses an ongoing state:

**Wir haben lange gestanden und gewartet.**

We (have) stood and waited for a long time.

**Es hat lange gedauert.**

It lasted a long time. / It took a long time.

**Es hat geregnet, geschneit und gedonnert.**

It (has) rained, snowed and thundered.

(iv) When the verb is reflexive:

**Er hat sich gewaschen.**

He had a wash.

**Wir haben uns sehr gefreut.**

We were very pleased.

**Ich muss mich geirrt haben.**

I must have been wrong.

(v) With most impersonal expressions involving **es**:

**Es hat geregnet/geschneit.**

It rained/snowed.

**Es hat Ärger gegeben.**

There was trouble.

**Es hat nach faulen Eiern gestunken.**

It stank of rotten eggs.

**Es hat plötzlich geklopft.**

There was a sudden knock at the door.

**Es hat geklappt.**

It worked out/went well.

But compare: **Es ist mir gelungen** 'I succeeded'. (See 42.3h.)

(b) The auxiliary is **sein** when the verb is used intransitively and:

(i) When the verb is **sein** or **bleiben**:

**Vor dem Krieg ist er Polizist gewesen.**

He was a policeman before the war.

**Es ist sehr warm geblieben.**

It remained very warm.

**Schon nach hundert Metern ist der verletzte Läufer zurückgeblieben.**

After only a hundred metres the injured runner fell behind.

(ii) When the verb denotes motion or change of state:

**Sind Sie nach Köln gefahren oder geflogen?**

Did you drive or fly to Cologne?

**Wir sind auf die Turmspitze geklettert.**

We climbed to the very top of the tower.

**Warst du 1999 zum ersten Mal arbeitslos geworden?**

Had you been made unemployed for the first time in 1999?

**Erst nachmittags ist es richtig warm geworden.**

It only warmed up properly in the afternoon.

**Sie ist Lehrerin geworden.**

She has become a teacher.

**Sie sind schon eingeschlafen.**

They've already gone to sleep.

**Das Eis ist jetzt geschmolzen.**

The ice has now melted.

**Unser Geld ist verschwunden.**

Our money has disappeared.

**Die Leitung ist geplatzt.**

The pipe has burst.

(iii) When the verb expresses something that has happened to people that is outside their control rather than something that people have done:

**Sie ist 1954 geboren, 2002 erkrankt, und 2004 gestorben.**

She was born in 1954, fell ill in 2002, and died in 2004.

**Es ist passiert.** (See 69.2, 76.1g.)

**Es ist geschehen.**

**Es ist vorgekommen.** (See 69.2.)

It happened.

- (iv) When the verb denotes success or failure, such as **fehl\*schlagen** ‘to fail/go wrong’, **gelingen** ‘to succeed’, **misslingen** ‘to fail’:

**Der Versuch ist leider fehlgeschlagen.**

The attempt failed unfortunately.

**Es ist uns gelungen, ihn zu überreden.**

We managed to persuade him.

- (c) These guidelines offer a substantial aid to using **haben** and **sein** correctly. Note, however, the following:

- (i) There are a small number of verbs that are used with **sein** even though they are transitive verbs. Note especially **los\*werden** ‘to get rid of’ and **durch\*gehen** ‘to go through something’:

**Endlich bin ich ihn losgeworden!**

At last I have got rid of him!

**Er war die ganze Zeitung durchgegangen.**

He had been through the whole newspaper.

► See 36.3c

- (ii) Also, **haben** can be used with intransitive verbs of motion when the focus is on the general activity rather than on the specific question of where you went. Usage varies here:

**Ich bin heute geschwommen.**

**Ich habe heute geschwommen.**

I had a swim today.

**Ich bin in das kleine Becken geschwommen.**

I swam into the small pool.

**Ich habe im kleinen Becken geschwommen.**

I swam in the small pool.

**Wir sind an das andere Ufer gerudert.**

We rowed to the opposite bank.

**Wir haben eine Stunde lang gerudert.**

We rowed for an hour.

Other verbs in this category include: **reiten** ‘to ride’, **segeln** ‘to sail’ and **tanzen** ‘to dance’.

- (d) As the previous example shows, some verbs can be used with both **haben** and **sein**, with a change in meaning:

**Wir sind nach Köln gefahren.**

We drove (travelled) to Cologne.

**Sie hat den BMW gefahren.**

She drove (has driven) the BMW.

**Ich bin nach Salzburg geflogen.**

I flew (have flown) to Salzburg.

**Die Versicherungsfirma hat ihn nach Zürich zurückgeflogen.**

The insurance company flew him back to Zürich.

**Er hat heute zum ersten Mal den neuen Airbus geflogen.**

Today he flew the new Airbus for the first time.

**Der Detektiv ist ihm nach Hause gefolgt.**

The private investigator followed him home.

**Ich bin den Anweisungen gefolgt.**

I followed the instructions.

but:

**Die Soldaten haben dem General gefolgt.**

The soldiers followed (*i.e. obeyed*) the general.

**Der Fluss ist gefroren.**

The river has frozen over.

but:

**Es hat schon gestern abend gefroren.**

The temperature reached freezing as early as yesterday evening.

**Das Essen ist verdorben.**

The food has spoiled/gone off.

but:

**Wir haben ihnen den Spaß verdorben.**

We've spoiled their fun.

Some verbs have more than one meaning, and this is reflected in the use of **haben** and **sein**:

**Hast du mein Paket bekommen?**

Did you receive my parcel?

**Es ist ihm schlecht bekommen, dass er nicht gearbeitet hat.**

Not working did him no good.

**Ein Unfall ist gestern passiert.** (See 76.1g.)

An accident happened yesterday.

**Wir haben den Zoll noch nicht passiert.**

We haven't gone through customs yet.

► See also 42.3a

Any two verbs sharing the same stem (e.g. **kommen** and **bekommen**) follow the same strong or weak pattern. But the use of **haben** or **sein** as auxiliary depends on the meaning:

**Sie ist um halb acht gekommen.**

She came at half past seven.

**Sie hat meine E-Mail bekommen.**

She received my email.

► See 36.2

## 33.9

## Principal parts of the verb

The principal parts of the verb that need to be learnt are thus:

- 1 the infinitive;
- 2 for those verbs that have a change in the stem in the present tense: the present tense third person singular (the **er/sie/es/man** form);
- 3 the simple past first/third person singular (the **ich/er/sie/es/man** form);
- 4 **haben** or **sein** as auxiliary;
- 5 the past participle.

► See 33.1–3

Most dictionaries list these for strong verbs, together with the subjunctive II forms (see 39.2). For weak verbs, the forms are absolutely predictable:

1	2	3	4	5
<b>machen</b>	<b>macht</b>	<b>machte</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>gemacht</b> 'to make/do'
<b>reisen</b>	<b>reist</b>	<b>reiste</b>	<b>ist</b>	<b>gereist</b> 'to travel'
<b>studieren</b>	<b>studiert</b>	<b>studierte</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>studiert</b> 'to study'

For mixed verbs, the change in the stem must be learnt:

1	2	3	4	5
<b>bringen</b>	<b>bringt</b>	<b>brachte</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>gebracht</b> 'to bring'
<b>rennen</b>	<b>rennt</b>	<b>rannte</b>	<b>ist</b>	<b>gerannt</b> 'to race'

Most attention should be given to strong verbs. Here is a partial list showing some important patterns of vowel change. Where there is no entry in column (2) this means that the present tense is regular.

1	2	3	4	5
<b>(a &gt; ä &gt; ie &gt; a)</b>				
<b>schlafen</b>	<b>schläft</b>	<b>schlief</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>geschlafen</b> 'to sleep'
<b>fallen</b>	<b>fällt</b>	<b>fiel</b>	<b>ist</b>	<b>gefallen</b> 'to fall'
<b>(a &gt; ä &gt; i &gt; a)</b>				
<b>fangen</b>	<b>fängt</b>	<b>fang</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>gefangen</b> 'to catch'
<b>(e &gt; i &gt; a &gt; o)</b>				
<b>sprechen</b>	<b>spricht</b>	<b>sprach</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>gesprochen</b> 'to speak'
<b>brechen</b>	<b>bricht</b>	<b>brach</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>gebrochen</b> 'to break'
<b>helfen</b>	<b>hilft</b>	<b>half</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>geholfen</b> 'to help'
<b>nehmen</b>	<b>nimmt</b>	<b>nahm</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>genommen</b> 'to take'
<b>(e &gt; i &gt; a &gt; e)</b>				
<b>geben</b>	<b>gibt</b>	<b>gab</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>gegeben</b> 'to give'



## VERBS

(ie > - > o > o)				
fliegen	flog	ist/hat	geflogen	'to fly'
bieten	bot	hat	geboten	'to offer'
schließen	schloss	hat	geschlossen	'to close'
(ei > - > ie > ie)				
bleiben	blieb	ist	geblieben	'to remain'
schreiben	schrrieb	hat	geschrieben	'to write'
(ei > - > i > i)				
greifen	griff	hat	gegriffen	'to grab'
schneiden	schnitt	hat	geschnitten	'to cut'
(i > - > a > u)				
singen	sang	hat	gesungen	'to sing'
gelingen	gelang	ist	gelungen	'to succeed' (see 36.2c)
(i > - > a > o)				
beginnen	begann	hat	begonnen	'to begin'
schwimmen	schwamm	ist/hat	geschwommen	'to swim'

Note especially the following common verbs, which do not conform exactly to these patterns and should be learnt individually:

1	2	3	4	5
sein	ist	war	ist	gewesen 'to be'
werden	wird	wurde	ist	geworden 'to become'
tun		tat	hat	getan 'to make/do'
gehen		ging	ist	gegangen 'to go'
kommen		kam	ist	gekommen 'to come'
laufen	läuft	lief	ist	gelaufen 'to run'
fahren	fährt	fuhr	ist/hat	gefahren 'to travel/drive'
sitzen		saß	hat	gesessen 'to sit'
liegen		lag	hat	gelegen 'to be lying'
stehen		stand	hat	gestanden 'to be standing'
heißen		hieß	hat	geheißen 'to be called'
essen	isst	aß	hat	gegessen 'to eat'
saufen	säuft	soff	hat	gesoffen 'to drink alcohol'
stoßen	stößt	stieß	hat	gestoßen 'to strike/bump into'
ziehen		zog	hat/ist	gezogen 'to move/pull'

## 34

## Use of tenses

► See 81; see also 33.3

## 34.1

German has only one form of the verb in each tense, unlike English. Compare:

**Er findet es schwer.**

He finds it hard.

He is finding it hard.

He does find it hard.

**Er fand es schwer.**

He found it hard.

He was finding it hard.

He did find it hard.

**34.2 Present tense**

- (a) Describes events or states belonging in the present time:

**Ich verstehe Ihre Frage nicht.**

I do not understand your question.

- (b) Describes eternal truths and scientific facts (see [76.11](#)):

**Die Zeit vergeht schnell.**

Time passes quickly.

**Öl schwimmt auf Wasser.**

Oil floats/will float on water.

- (c) Describes events in the near or foreseeable future (where the context makes the future reference obvious, see [81.8](#)):

**Ich finde es morgen.**

I'll find it tomorrow.

► See also [39.8a](#) for use of present tense in conditions

- (d) Describes events or states that started in the past but are still going on (note the use of **seit** + dative):

**Sie wohnt seit zwei Jahren in Dresden.**

She has lived in Dresden for two years.

**34.3 Future**

As well as expressing future time, the future often conveys a prediction, a statement of intent (see [103](#)) or desirability, or a supposition (see [89.1](#)):

**Wir werden gewinnen.**

We are going to win.

**Das wird (wohl) die Post sein.**

That'll be the post.

**34.4 Future perfect**

- (a) Expresses a completed action envisaged at a point in the future, often with an element of determination or desirability ([103](#)):

**Vor meinem vierzigsten Jahr werde ich mein eigenes Haus gebaut haben.**

Before I am forty I will have built my own house.

- (b) Can also express supposition ([89.1](#)):

**Er wird in die Kneipe gegangen sein.**

He'll have gone to the pub (I suppose).

## 34.5

## Simple past

► See also [34.7](#)

- (a) Describes completed actions:

**Sie spielten Tennis und dann fuhren sie in die Stadt.**  
They played tennis and then went into town.

- (b) Describes incomplete or continuing actions and states in the past:

**Er surfte (gerade) im Netz, als ich anrief.** (See [76.4c](#).)  
He was (just) surfing the internet when I phoned.

- (c) Describes actions and states that precede a focal point in the past:

**Ich lernte ihn 2004 kennen. Er wohnte (schon) seit zwei Jahren in Berlin.**  
I got to know him in 2004. He had been living in Berlin for two years.

- (d) Expresses habitual actions in the past:

**Jeden Samstag machten wir einen Spieleabend.**  
We used to have a games evening every Saturday.

## 34.6

## Perfect

► See also [34.7](#)

- (a) Conveys individual or isolated actions in the past:

**Sie sind nach München geflogen.**  
They flew/have flown to Munich.

- (b) Often implies that the action in the past has some continuing relevance to the present situation:

**Das haben wir erst gestern erfahren.**  
We only just found that out yesterday.

**Die Wiedervereinigung hat schwere Folgen für die deutsche Wirtschaft gehabt.**  
Reunification has had serious consequences for the German economy.

- (c) Can have future reference, referring to an event that will have been completed before another one begins:

**Nachdem wir den Tisch abgeräumt haben, spülen wir ab/werden wir abspülen.** (See [81.7](#).)  
After we have cleared the table we will wash up.

**Bis morgen habe ich es geschafft.** (See [81.7](#), [103](#).)  
I will have done it by tomorrow.

## 34.7

## Simple past or perfect?

► See also [34.5–6](#)

- (a) Often there is no distinction in meaning between these two tenses. Thus, **sie spielten Tennis** and **sie haben Tennis gespielt** can convey exactly the same sense.

- (b) There is a tendency in northern Germany for the simple past to be the preferred past tense, whereas in southern Germany the perfect is preferred in spoken German.
- (c) Where the focus is on the present result of an action, the perfect is used (as it is in English):

**Die Gäste kamen an.**

The guests arrived/were arriving.

**Die Gäste sind angekommen.**

The guests have arrived. (*i.e. they are here now!*)

Compare:

**Sie schrieb gerade den Brief, als ich anrief.**

She was (just) writing the letter when I phoned.

and:

**Sie hat den Brief gerade geschrieben, als ich anrief.**

She had just written the letter when I phoned.

- (d) There may also be a tendency for the opening (and closing) statement in a narrative to be in the perfect, with the rest in the simple past:

**Wir sind also einkaufen gegangen. Aber im ersten Geschäft hatten sie nur billige Sachen, und im nächsten war alles viel zu teuer. Da gingen wir zu Meyers in der Gartenstraße . . . Wir sind ja halb tot in den Zug gefallen.**  
(See [121.2](#), [117.1](#).)

So we went shopping. But in the first shop they only had cheap stuff, and in the next everything was much too dear. So we went to Meyers in the Gartenstraße . . . We fell into the train half dead.

## 34.8

**Pluperfect**

Expresses an action or event that took place before another began:

**Nachdem sie ein Glas Wein bekommen hatten, gingen sie in den Garten.**

After they had received a glass of wine they went into the garden.

## 35

**Modal verbs**

## 35.1

**Modal + infinitive**

A modal verb is one that combines with another verb to modify the statement:

**Sie kommt morgen.**

She is coming tomorrow.

**Sie will morgen kommen.**

She wants to come tomorrow.

German modal verbs combine with another verb in the infinitive (see [33.1](#)):

**Sie kann später kommen.**

She can (is able to) come later.

**Sie muss später kommen.**

She must (has to) come later.

**Sie will später kommen.**

She wants to (intends to) come later.

**Sie darf später kommen.**

She can/is permitted to come later.

**Sie mag später kommen.**

She may (possibly) come later.

**Sie soll später kommen.**

She is expected to (is supposed to) come later.

**Sie möchte später kommen.**

She would like to come later.

In this last example, **möchte** is actually a subjunctive form (see 39) of the modal verb **mögen**.

Note also (**nicht brauchen** ‘(not) need to’, which is widely used as a modal verb in colloquial German but is still generally found with **zu** + infinitive in formal and written contexts (see 58):

**Sie brauchen nicht später kommen.** (*informal*)

**Sie brauchen nicht später zu kommen.** (*standard*)

You don’t need to come later. (See also 35.7.)

Most of these verbs can also be used on their own, with an accusative object. In this case they do not function as modal verbs:

**Ich mag diesen Herrn.**

I like this gentleman.

**Ich brauche einen neuen Kühlschrank.**

I need a new fridge.

A small number of verbs are completed by both an accusative object (see 18) and an infinitive. Of these, **lassen** ‘allow, let’ is often regarded as a modal:

**Sie lässt ihn warten.**

She lets him wait. / She has him wait. / She makes him wait.

This verb, too, can be used on its own with an accusative object:

**Lasst die Finger davon, das ist gefährlich!**

Keep out of/Don’t get involved in this, it’s dangerous.

**Das lässt du lieber!**

You’d better leave that be.

► See also 35.6b and 40.4b

Verbs of perception, such as **hören** ‘hear’, **sehen** ‘see’, **fühlen** ‘feel’, also follow this pattern, but are not normally regarded as modal verbs:

**Kaum einer sah das Ende der DDR kommen.**

Hardly anyone saw/could see the end of the GDR coming.

**Ich höre sie gern singen.**

I like listening to her sing/singing.

**Ich hörte/sah/fühlte/spürte ihn atmen.**

I heard/saw/felt him breathe/breathing.

▶ See [35.3c](#), [35.6](#) and [42.3b](#)

**35.2**

**Tense forms**

The present and simple past forms are as follows. Irregular forms are in italics:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>können</i>	<i>müssen</i>	<i>wollen</i>	<i>dürfen</i>
<i>Present tense</i>				
<b>ich</b>	<b>kann</b>	<b>muss</b>	<b>will</b>	<b>darf</b>
<b>du</b>	<b>kannst</b>	<b>musst</b>	<b>willst</b>	<b>darfst</b>
<b>Sie (sg. and pl.)</b>	<b>können</b>	<b>müssen</b>	<b>wollen</b>	<b>dürfen</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>kann</b>	<b>muss</b>	<b>will</b>	<b>darf</b>
<b>wir</b>	<b>können</b>	<b>müssen</b>	<b>wollen</b>	<b>dürfen</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>könnt</b>	<b>müsst</b>	<b>wollt</b>	<b>dürft</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>können</b>	<b>müssen</b>	<b>wollen</b>	<b>dürfen</b>
<i>Past tense</i>				
<b>ich</b>	<b>konnte</b>	<b>musste</b>	<b>wollte</b>	<b>durfte</b>
<b>du</b>	<b>konntest</b>	<b>musstest</b>	<b>wolltest</b>	<b>durftest</b>
<b>Sie (sg. and pl.)</b>	<b>konnten</b>	<b>mussten</b>	<b>wollten</b>	<b>durften</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>konnte</b>	<b>musste</b>	<b>wollte</b>	<b>durfte</b>
<b>wir</b>	<b>konnten</b>	<b>mussten</b>	<b>wollten</b>	<b>durften</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>konntet</b>	<b>musstet</b>	<b>wolltet</b>	<b>durftet</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>konnten</b>	<b>mussten</b>	<b>wollten</b>	<b>durften</b>
<i>Infinitive</i>				
<i>mögen</i>	<i>mögen</i>	<i>sollen</i>	<i>lassen</i>	<i>möchten</i>
<i>Present tense</i>				
<b>ich</b>	<b>mag</b>	<b>soll</b>	<b>lasse</b>	<b>möchte</b>
<b>du</b>	<b>magst</b>	<b>sollst</b>	<b>lässt</b>	<b>möchtest</b>
<b>Sie (sg. and pl.)</b>	<b>mögen</b>	<b>sollen</b>	<b>lassen</b>	<b>möchten</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>mag</b>	<b>soll</b>	<b>lässt</b>	<b>möchte</b>
<b>wir</b>	<b>mögen</b>	<b>sollen</b>	<b>lassen</b>	<b>möchten</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>mögt</b>	<b>sollt</b>	<b>lasst</b>	<b>möchtet</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>mögen</b>	<b>sollen</b>	<b>lassen</b>	<b>möchten</b>
<i>Past tense</i>				
<b>ich</b>	<b>mochte</b>	<b>sollte</b>	<b>ließ</b>	No past tense
<b>du</b>	<b>mochtest</b>	<b>solltest</b>	<b>liebest</b>	
<b>Sie (sg. and pl.)</b>	<b>mochten</b>	<b>sollten</b>	<b>ließen</b>	
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>mochte</b>	<b>sollte</b>	<b>ließ</b>	
<b>wir</b>	<b>mochten</b>	<b>sollten</b>	<b>ließen</b>	
<b>ihr</b>	<b>mochtet</b>	<b>solltet</b>	<b>ließt</b>	
<b>sie</b>	<b>mochten</b>	<b>sollten</b>	<b>ließen</b>	

### 35.3 Past participle of modal verbs

► See 33.1

- (a) The past participle form of these modal verbs is identical to the infinitive, and the auxiliary is **haben**, resulting in a ‘double infinitive’ pattern. Note the distinctive pattern:

**Er hat später kommen wollen.**

He wanted to come later.

**Ich habe später kommen sollen.**

I was supposed to come later.

**Sie hat mich lange warten lassen.**

She made me wait for a long time.

► See 5.4, and also 8.6 for the word order in subordinate clauses; see 39.5d for modals and reported speech

- (b) However, when used as full verbs in their own right, i.e. with an accusative object (see 18) not with another verb, they have a different set of past participles:

<b>können</b>	<i>gekonnt</i>	<b>mögen</b>	<i>gemocht</i>
<b>müssen</b>	<i>gemusst</i>	<b>sollen</b>	<i>gesollt</i>
<b>wollen</b>	<i>gewollt</i>	<b>lassen</b>	<i>gelassen</i>
<b>dürfen</b>	<i>gedurft</i>		

**Ich kann kein Französisch.**

I can't speak French.

**Ich habe Französisch nicht *gekonnt*.**

I couldn't speak French.

**Ich mag ihn sehr.**

I like him a lot.

**Ich habe ihn sehr *gemocht*.**

I liked him a lot.

**Ich will das Geld nicht.**

I don't want the money.

**Ich habe das Geld nicht *gewollt*.**

I didn't want the money.

**Ich lasse das Trinkgeld auf dem Tisch.**

I'm leaving the tip on the table.

**Ich habe das Trinkgeld auf dem Tisch *gelassen*.**

I (have) left the tip on the table.

- (c) Note that the ‘double infinitive’ pattern (35.3a) is also found with the verbs of perception listed in 35.1, with the meaning ‘to hear/see/feel something happen/happening’:

**Kaum einer hat das Ende der DDR *kommen sehen*.**

Hardly anyone saw the end of the GDR coming.

**Hast du sie *singen hören*?**

Have you heard her sing/singing?

**Haben Sie ihn *atmen sehen*?**

Have you seen him breathe/breathing? (Did you see him breathe/breathing?)

### 35.4 Word order of modal verbs

► For the word order used in modal constructions see [5.2e](#), [5.4](#), [8.5](#) and [35.3](#)

### 35.5 Omitting the infinitive

Note the tendency for the infinitive to be omitted when the meaning is obvious from the context:

**Nächste Woche muss ich nach Graz.**

Next week I have to go to Graz.

**Ich kann ein bisschen Spanisch.**

I can speak a little Spanish.

► See also [42.3i](#)

### 35.6 Meanings of the modal verbs

► See [35.1](#)

The modal verbs have a range of general and special meanings:

(a) The general meanings are:

**können** 'to be able to/have the ability to' (see [87](#) and [97](#))

**müssen** 'to have to/be obliged to' (see [85](#))

**wollen** 'to intend to/want to' (see [103](#))

**dürfen** 'to be allowed/permitted to' (see [86.1](#))

**mögen** 'to like to' (see [63.6b](#), [104.2](#))

NOTE The use of **mögen** as a modal is actually quite rare in this meaning; other constructions such as **gern(e) machen** are much more common: **Ich gehe gern(e) nach Paris** 'I like going to Paris' (see also [39.3d](#)).

**sollen** 'to be expected to/thought to/believed to' (see [86.1e](#))

(Note that this verb expresses other people's anticipation or expectation.)

**lassen** 'to allow/cause something to happen or someone to do something'

**möchten** 'would like to'.

NOTE **möchten** is actually a subjunctive II form (see [39.2](#)) of **mögen**, and is a common polite alternative to **wollen**.

(b) In addition to their main meanings, the following idiomatic meanings should be noted:

(i) **können** often covers the meaning of **dürfen**:

**Kann ich morgen zum Fußballspiel?**

Can/May I go to the football match tomorrow?

► See [42.3i](#)

Or it can express supposition:

**Das kann die Antwort sein.**

That may be the answer.



- (ii) **müssen** with a negative (**nicht, kein**) means 'doesn't have to':

**Das müssen Sie nicht sagen.**

You don't have to say that.

▶ See also [86.4](#)

**müssen** can express an assumption or a deduction:

**Er muss schon gegessen haben.**

He must already have eaten.

**Er muss schon gegangen sein.**

He must already have gone.

**Das müsste reichen.**

That should/ought to be enough.

▶ See also [35.7](#), [39.3d](#) and [89.1](#)

- (iii) **wollen** in a question can express an invitation or suggestion:

**Wollen wir ins Kino gehen?**

Let's go to the cinema.

▶ See also [60.1c](#)

**wollen** can express the meaning 'claims to':

**Sie will mich gestern am Strand gesehen haben.**

She claims to have seen me yesterday on the beach.

▶ See [85.1](#)

- (iv) **dürfen** with a negative (**nicht, kein**) means 'must not/not allowed to':

**Das dürfen Sie nicht sagen – ich darf kein Bier trinken.**

You mustn't say that – I can't (am not allowed to) drink beer.

**dürfte** (the subjunctive II form of **dürfen**) can mean 'may (very) well be':

**Das dürfte der Fall sein.**

That may (very) well be the case.

▶ See also [39.3d](#) and [89.1](#)

- (v) **mögen** more often means 'may' or 'might':

**Das mag (wohl) wahr sein.**

That may (well) be true.

▶ See [89.1](#)

- (vi) **sollen** always expresses the idea of an expectation or belief on the part of someone else. There are various English translations:

**Er soll hereinkommen!**

Tell him to come in!

**Sie soll eine Ferienwohnung in Italien haben.**

They say she has a holiday flat in Italy.

▶ See [85.4](#)

The simple past (33.3 and 34.5), **sollte**, is either a past tense of the main meaning or expresses the idea ‘ought to, but doesn’t’. In this sense it often occurs with **eigentlich**:

**Diese neuen Maschinen sollten eigentlich keine Wartung brauchen.**

These new machines shouldn’t really need servicing (but they do).

Another use of **sollte** expresses surprise or reservation:

**Sollte das wahr sein?**

Can this be true?

► See also 39.3d and 114

(vii) **lassen** is quite common with reflexive constructions (see 37):

**Ich lasse mich sehen.**

I let myself be seen.

**Die Abiturnoten dieser Schule lassen sich dieses Jahr wirklich sehen.**

One can really be proud of this school’s A-level results this year.

**Er lässt sich nicht raten.**

He won’t take advice.

**Das lässt sich nicht machen.**

That can’t be done.

**Ließe sich das machen?**

Could that be done?

► See 39.3d for the subjunctive II forms of modal verbs and 40.4b

### 35.7 **muss + negative and darf + negative**

As noted above (35.6b), these have meanings that are easily confused by English speakers: ‘must’ is rendered by **müssen**, ‘must not’ by **nicht dürfen**, while **nicht müssen** means ‘does not have to’:

**Sie darf kein Darlehen aufnehmen.**

She must not/is not allowed to take out a loan.

**Sie muss kein Darlehen aufnehmen.**

She doesn’t have to take out a loan (*but she can if she wants to*).

► For this use, see 86.4

Note an alternative to **nicht müssen** is **nicht brauchen zu** + infinitive (‘does not need to’):

**Sie braucht das Darlehen nicht zurückzuzahlen.**

She doesn’t need to repay the loan.

► See also 86.4 on this use and 39.3d on **müsste**

## 35.8

## Two different patterns involving modal verbs

**muss/soll/kann (etc.) gewesen sein** vs. **hätte sein müssen/sollen/können (etc.)**  
**muss/soll/kann (etc.) gesagt haben** vs. **hätte sagen müssen/sollen/können (etc.)**

Note the existence of these different patterns and their completely different functions. They are a source of difficulty because English speakers often use the same construction 'would have/could have/must have' etc. for two distinct purposes: 'He could have gone to Oxford', for example, could mean 'I think it is possible that he did' or 'There was the possibility, but it didn't happen'. In German these two meanings are expressed using two different structures.

- (a) The **muss gewesen sein/muss gesagt haben** pattern expresses an assumption or a deduction on the part of the speaker about an event assumed to have taken place in the past. The speaker voices the possibility or the probability that something *really did happen* in a certain way. This pattern basically follows this special use of the future perfect for expressing assumptions (e.g. **wird gewesen sein/wird gesagt haben**, see [34.4](#), [89.1](#)), but uses a modal verb instead of **werden**.

The structure is as follows:

Modal verb (usually in the present tense) + past participle of the main verb (e.g. **gewesen, gesagt**) + **haben** or **sein** depending on the main verb.

Examples:

**Sie kann die Inhaberin des Hotels gewesen sein.**

She may have been the owner of the hotel (I suppose).

(= It is possible that she was the owner of the hotel.)

**Sie muss das gleich am Anfang gesagt haben.**

She must have said that right at the outset (I suppose).

(= It must be the case that she did so. That is what I suppose/deduce/expect.)

**Er soll die Stelle bekommen haben.**

He is believed to have got the job. / They say he got the job.

**Sie können diese Tat begangen haben.**

They may/could/would have been able to commit this crime (I suppose).

► On the range of meanings each of the modal verbs can have, see [35.6](#)

- (b) The pattern **hätte sein müssen/hätte sagen müssen** expresses an unrealized possibility attaching to an event in the past. The speaker is effectively asserting or implying that a particular eventuality *did not happen*.

The structure is as follows:

**hätte/hättest/hätten/hättet** + infinitive of the main verb + infinitive of the modal verb.

Note that this structure is actually the simpler of the two, because it always uses a form of **hätte** even when the main verb is one that forms the perfect and pluperfect tense with **sein**.

Examples:

**Sie hätte die Inhaberin des Hotels werden können.**

She could have been the owner of the hotel (*but it didn't happen*).

**Sie hätte das gleich am Anfang sagen müssen.**

She would have had to say/ought to have said that right at the outset (*but she didn't*).

**Er hätte die Stelle bekommen sollen.**

He ought to have got the job (*but he didn't*).

► See also [39.3d](#) and [39.8](#)

## 36 Separable and inseparable verbs

► See [57](#) for meaning

### 36.1 Verbs with a separable prefix

Separable verbs consist of a verb and a verbal prefix, e.g. **ab\*fahren** 'to drive off'. The prefix is typically, but not always, a preposition.

- (a) The meaning of a separable verb is often obvious from the meaning of its parts (see [57](#)):

**fahren** 'to drive/travel'

**ab\*fahren** 'to drive off/depart'

but the meaning of many separable verbs is not transparent:

**fangen** 'to catch'

**an\*fangen** 'to begin'

- (b) It is possible to hear when a verb is separable because the stress is always on the separable prefix, i.e. **ab\*fahren**, **an\*fangen**.
- (c) The verbal prefix separates from the rest of the verb in the present tense and the simple past (see [5.5](#)):

**Die Vorstellung fängt um halb acht an.**

The performance begins at half past seven.

**Die Vorstellung fing um halb acht an.**

The performance began at half past seven.

and in infinitive constructions with **zu** (see also [42.3f](#) and [8.7](#) for word order):

**Es ist nötig, mit der Vorstellung sofort anzufangen.**

It is necessary to begin the performance straightaway.

In the past participle ([33.1](#)) the two parts of the verb are separated by **-ge-** (written as one word):

**Die Vorstellung hat um halb acht angefangen.**

The performance began at half past seven.

► See also [5.4](#) on word order

- (d) Common verbal prefixes that are always separable include: **ab-**, **an-**, **auf-**, **aus-**, **ein-**, **fern-**, **mit-**, **nach-**, **vor-**, **weg-**, **zu-**, **zurück-**, **zusammen-** (see [57](#) for a list of their meanings):

**Der Zug ist abgefahren.**

The train has departed.

**Rufen Sie mich bitte an.**

Please ring me.

**Sie nimmt das Konzert auf.**

She is recording the concert.

**Vergessen Sie nicht, auch die Benzinkosten einzukalkulieren.**

Don't forget to include the cost of the petrol as well.

**Ich sehe kaum noch fern.**

I hardly watch TV any more.

**Machen Sie mit, wenn Sie wollen.**

Join in if you want.

**Ich brauche mehr Zeit, um die Details nachzuschlagen.**

I need more time to look up the details.

**Heute habe ich etwas Besonderes vor.**

Today I've got something special planned.

► See 46.3 for etwas

**Werfen Sie die Verpackung bitte nicht weg!**

Please don't throw the packaging away.

**Die Banken machen um zwölf zu.**

The banks close at twelve.

**Er kommt in einer Stunde zurück.**

He is coming back in an hour.

**Wir haben unser ganzes Geld zusammengelegt.**

We pooled all our money.

Virtually any preposition can become a verbal prefix and will be separable if the literal meaning of the preposition features in the meaning of the verb as a whole. For example, **entgegen** means 'in the opposite direction' and **entgegenkommen** is a separable verb meaning 'to come towards':

**Sie ist mir entgegengekommen.**

She came towards me./ She met me halfway. (*also in a metaphorical sense*)

► See 18.2–3, 19.4–5 and 20.7 on prepositions

(e) Some separable verbs obviously began as verb + noun combinations:

**Die Konferenz findet in Buenos Aires statt.**

The conference is taking place in Buenos Aires.

Note also the tendency for some verb + noun combinations to behave like separable verbs in some respects:

**Der Teppich fängt bald Feuer!**

The carpet will catch fire soon!

**Ich fahre jeden Tag Auto.**

I drive (a car) every day.

However, these phrases are always written as two distinct words:

**Er fängt Feuer.**  
It catches fire.

**Er fing Feuer.**  
It caught fire.

**Er hat Feuer gefangen.**  
It caught fire.

**Er kann Feuer fangen.**  
It can catch fire.

**Er begann Feuer zu fangen.**  
It began to catch fire.

**Sie fährt Auto.**  
She drives.

**Sie fuhr Auto.**  
She drove.

**Sie ist Auto gefahren.**  
She has been driving/drove.

**Sie kann Auto fahren.**  
She can drive/go driving.

**Sie begann Auto zu fahren.**  
She began to drive.

## 36.2 Verbs with an inseparable prefix

Some verbal prefixes are always inseparable, i.e. they always form a single word with the verb to which they are attached. (See also 57.2)

- (a) It is possible to hear when a verb is inseparable because the stress is typically on the main verb (not on the prefix), i.e. **bestehen**, **genießen**.
- (b) The past participle is without **ge-**, and in infinitive constructions with **zu**, the **zu** comes before the verb:

**Er bestand das Examen.**  
He passed the exam.

**Er hat das Examen bestanden.**  
He passed/has passed the exam.

**Man kommt nicht weiter, ohne das Examen zu bestehen.**  
You cannot progress any further without passing the exam.

► See 42.3f for verb completion by an infinitive clause with **zu**; see also 8.7 for word order

- (c) The inseparable prefixes are **be-**, **emp-**, **ent-**, **er-**, **ge-**, **miss-**, **ver-**, **zer-**:

**beschreiben** ‘to describe’:

**Er hat dich sehr genau beschrieben.**  
He described you exactly.

**empfinden** ‘to feel/sense’:

**Ich habe das als unfair empfunden.**  
I felt that was unfair.

**entlasten** ‘to relieve/lighten the burden’:

**Ist es möglich, mich ein bisschen zu entlasten?**  
Is it possible to lighten my load a little?

**erfüllen** ‘to fulfil’:

**Sie haben den Vertrag nicht erfüllt.**  
You have not fulfilled the contract.

**genießen** ‘to enjoy/have the benefit of’:

**Sie hat die Ferien in Irland *genossen*.**  
She enjoyed the holidays in Ireland.

**misslingen** ‘to go wrong’:

**Es *misslingt* mir. (Es ist mir *misslungen*.)**  
It’s going wrong (it went wrong) for me.

**verstehen** ‘to understand’:

**Ich habe alles ganz gut *verstanden*.**  
I understood everything very well.

**zerschlagen** ‘to smash (to pieces)’:

**Das Mädchen *zerschlug* das Fenster und rannte davon.**  
The girl broke the window and ran off.

► See also [57.2](#)

Some verbs have a ‘double prefix’, and where the first prefix is inseparable, the verb as a whole is inseparable:

**Sie *beanspruchen* Kindergeld.**  
They are making a claim for child allowance.

**Er *vernachlässigt* seinen Garten.**  
He neglects his garden.

- (d) Note, however, that **missverstehen** ‘misunderstand’ is basically inseparable, but has the stress on the prefix and has **zu** inside the infinitive:

**Sie *missverstehen* mich.**  
You misunderstand me.

**Sie *haben* mich *missverstanden*.**  
You have misunderstood me.

**Es ist *unmöglich*, diese Warnung *misszuverstehen*.**  
It is impossible to misunderstand this warning.

Note that the verb **anerkennen** ‘to recognize/acknowledge’ is used both as a separable verb and (less commonly) as an inseparable verb:

**Ich *erkenne* das als richtig an.**  
**Ich *anerkenne* das als richtig.**  
I acknowledge that as right.

### 36.3

#### Verbs with a variable prefix

► See also [57.3](#) for further examples

- (a) A few verbal prefixes can be separable or inseparable: **durch-**, **über-**, **um-**, **unter-**, **voll-**, **wider-**.
- (b) Where the same verb + prefix combination can be both separable and inseparable, there is a subtle distinction in meaning. Usually, the separable verb retains the literal meaning of the preposition, while the inseparable verb contains an extended or figurative meaning (the stressed part of each verb is underlined):

**um\*gehen** ‘to circulate/go round’:

**Diese Gerüchte gehen seit Monaten um.**

These rumours have been going around for months.

**umgehen** ‘to circumvent/avoid’:

**Die neue Straße umgeht das Dorf.**

The new road avoids the village.

**Diese neue Verkaufsmethode hat das Gesetz umgangen.**

This new sales method has got round the law.

**um\*schreiben** ‘to rewrite/change’:

**Es ist jetzt nötig, das Dokument umzuschreiben.**

It is now necessary to rewrite the document.

**umschreiben** ‘to paraphrase’:

**Es ist jetzt nötig, das Dokument kurz zu umschreiben.**

It is now necessary to paraphrase the document briefly.

- (c) Note how separable verbs often trigger a repetition of the preposition elsewhere in the sentence or add **hin-** or **her-** to the preposition to give it a clear directional meaning:

**durch\*schauen** ‘to look through’:

**Ich habe durch das Fernglas durchgeschaut.**

I looked through the binoculars.

**durchschauen** ‘to see through’ (not be fooled):

**Ich habe ihn sofort durchschaut.**

I saw through him straightaway.

**auf\*steigen** ‘to climb (on top)’:

**Wir sind auf das Rothorn hinaufgestiegen.**

We climbed the Rothorn.

**über\*fahren** ‘to travel/drive across’, **jmdn. hinüberfahren** ‘to drive/take across’:

**Wir sind über den Kanal nach Frankreich übergefahren.**

We crossed the Channel to France.

**Mein Bruder hat mich abends zu unserem Hotel hinübergefahren.**

In the evening my brother took me (across) to our hotel.

► See 50.4

**überfahren** ‘to run (someone) over’:

**Wir sind durch Paris gefahren, ohne jemanden zu überfahren.**

We drove through Paris without running anyone over.

- (d) Other verbs to note include:

*Inseparable:*

**überbieten** ‘to outbid/go one better than’

**überfordern** ‘to overwork/ask too much of’

**übergehen** ‘to pass over’

**überschätzen** ‘to overestimate’



- übersetzen** ‘to translate’
- übertreiben** ‘to exaggerate’
- umfahren** ‘to drive around’
- umreißen** ‘to outline’
- unterbieten** ‘to bid less than’
- unterfordern** ‘to underwork/ask too little of’
- unterschätzen** ‘to underestimate’
- untertreiben** ‘to understate’
- widersprechen** ‘to contradict’
- widerstehen** ‘to resist’
- widerstreben** ‘to oppose/go against’
- wiederholen** ‘to repeat’ (the only inseparable verb beginning with **wieder-** ‘again’).

*Separable:*

- über\*fahren** ‘to cross over’ (usually water)
  - über\*gehen** ‘to transfer to’
  - um\*reißen** ‘to pull down (buildings, trees, people)’
  - unter\*bringen** ‘to accommodate/find a place for’
  - wider\*hallen** ‘to echo’
  - wider\*spiegeln** ‘to reflect/mirror’.
- (The latter are the only two separable verbs beginning with **wider-** ‘against’.)

**37 Reflexive verbs**

**37.1** These are verbs with a reflexive object, i.e. an object that refers back to the subject of the verb:

**Ich wasche mich.**  
I wash (myself).

However, not all German reflexives can be translated by ‘myself’, ‘yourself’, etc.

**37.2** The reflexive pronoun has an accusative and a dative form. Note how the pattern is basically the same as for the personal pronoun (see **30.2b**) except for the use of **sich**:

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Reflexive</i>	
	<i>Accusative</i>	<i>Dative</i>
<b>ich</b>	<b>mich</b>	<b>mir</b>
<b>du</b>	<b>dich</b>	<b>dir</b>
<b>sie</b> (sg. and pl.)	<b>sich</b>	<b>sich</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>sich</b>	<b>sich</b>
<b>wir</b>	<b>uns</b>	<b>uns</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>euch</b>	<b>euch</b>
<b>sie</b>	<b>sich</b>	<b>sich</b>

## 37.3

Most verbs that can be used reflexively can also be used as normal transitive verbs (see 33.8a). Note the following patterns:

- (a) **Er rasiert *sich*.**  
He shaves (himself).

but also:

**Er rasiert *mich*.**  
He shaves me.

**Er rasiert *dich*.**  
He shaves you.

**Er rasiert *ihn*.**  
He shaves him. (*i.e. another person*)

The basic pattern here is subject + verb + accusative form of the personal pronoun (when the action is performed on someone else, see 42.3a) or subject + verb + accusative form of the reflexive pronoun (when the action is performed on oneself or the verb can only be used reflexively).

- (b) **Sie stellt *sich* das neue Büro vor.**  
She imagines the new office.

but also:

**Sie stellt *mir* das neue Büro vor.**  
She shows the new office to me.

**Sie stellt *dir* das neue Büro vor.**  
She shows the new office to you.

**Sie stellt *ihr* das neue Büro vor.**  
She shows the new office to her.

The basic pattern here is subject + verb + dative form of the personal pronoun (when someone else is the beneficiary of the action) or subject + verb + dative form of the reflexive pronoun (when the subject is also the beneficiary or when the verb can only be used reflexively). **Sich/jmdm. (dat.) etwas (acc.) vor\*stellen** literally means 'to place sth. in front of oneself/sb.'

- (c) **Sie hat *sich* einen Computer gekauft.**  
She (has) bought (herself) a computer.

but also (see 19.2):

**Sie hat *mir* einen Computer gekauft.**  
She (has) bought me a computer.

**Sie hat *dir* einen Computer gekauft.**  
She (has) bought you a computer.

**Sie hat *ihnen* einen Computer gekauft.**  
She (has) bought them a computer.

The basic pattern here is subject + verb + accusative object + pronoun in the dative, which explicitly shows the recipient or beneficiary of the action (see 42.3b).

## 37.4

The dative reflexive pronoun is used to express washing and cleaning oneself when a part of the body is mentioned:

**Ich muss mir die Hände waschen.**  
I must wash my hands.

► See also [23.2e](#) and [110.11](#)

## 37.5

A number of verbs can only be used reflexively, i.e. they always have a reflexive pronoun.

(a) Most reflexive verbs have the reflexive pronoun in the accusative (see [18](#)):

**sich befinden** ‘to be situated’:

**Die britische Botschaft befindet sich jetzt schon seit Jahren in Berlin.**  
The British embassy has now been in Berlin for years.

► For this formal use of **sich befinden**, see also [69.3](#)

**sich über etw. (acc.) freuen** ‘to be pleased about’:

**Freust du dich über dein Weihnachtsgeschenk?**  
Are you pleased with your Christmas present?

**sich auf etw. (acc.) freuen** ‘to look forward to’:

**Freust du dich auf dein Weihnachtsgeschenk?**  
Are you looking forward to your Christmas present?

**sich ereignen** ‘to happen’ (this is always used in the third person, usually describing a mishap):

**In der Nacht hat sich ein Flugzeugunglück ereignet.**  
There was a plane crash in the night.

► See also [76.1g](#) for referring to unplanned events

**sich um etw. bewerben** ‘to apply for sth.’:

**Ich bewerbe mich um die Stelle.**  
I am applying for the job.

**sich um etw. oder jmdn. drehen** ‘to revolve around sth. or sb.’:

**Alles dreht sich um das Geld.**  
Money is at the centre of everything.

**sich nach etw. oder jmdm. erkundigen** ‘to enquire about sth. or sb.’:

**Sie erkundigt sich nach dir.**  
She is asking after you.

**sich vor etw. oder jmdm. fürchten** ‘to be afraid of sth. or sb.’:

**Fürchten Sie sich vor ihm?**  
Are you afraid of him?

**sich für jmdn./etw. interessieren** ‘to be interested in sb./sth.’:

**Ihr interessiert euch doch für schweizerdeutsche Dialekte, oder?**  
You are interested in Swiss dialects, aren't you?

**sich in jmdn. verlieben** ‘to fall in love with sb.’:

**Sie hat sich in ihn verliebt.**  
She has fallen in love with him.

**sich irren** ‘to be mistaken’:

**Vielleicht irre ich mich.**  
Maybe I am mistaken.

**sich mit jmdm. über etw. (acc.) unterhalten** ‘to have a conversation with sb. about sth.’:

**Er hat sich mit mir über das Wetter unterhalten.**  
He talked to me about the weather.

Also:

**Wir haben uns über das Wetter unterhalten.**  
We talked about the weather.

► See 18.2–3 for prepositions with the accusative; see 19.4–5 for prepositions with the dative

(b) Verbs with the reflexive pronoun in the dative (see 19) include:

**sich etw. (acc.) ein\*bilden** ‘to imagine wrongly’:

**Du hast dir diese Krankheit eingebildet.**  
You have imagined this illness.

**sich etw. (acc.) überlegen** ‘to reflect on sth./think it over’:

**Ich überlege mir dieses Angebot.**  
I am considering this offer.

(c) Note also the impersonal reflexive:

**es handelt sich um etw. oder jmdn.** ‘it concerns sb. or sth./it is a matter of sth.’:

**Es handelt sich hier um ein dringendes Problem.**  
This is an urgent problem.

► See 42.3h

## 38 Prepositional verbs

► See also 18.2–3 and 19.4–5

### 38.1

A large number of verbs are linked idiomatically to a particular preposition, i.e. are always used with the same preposition. For example, **glauben an** ‘believe in’, **warten auf** ‘wait for’. Some verbs can be used with more than one preposition, with a change in meaning (e.g. **bestehen auf** ‘to insist on’, **bestehen aus** ‘to consist of’). German prepositional verbs need to be learnt as a unit: verb + preposition + case. Some common prepositional verbs are listed overleaf according to the preposition they take and the case governed by the preposition:

## VERBS

**an** (+ acc.):

**glauben an** 'to believe in'

**denken an** 'to think of/about'

**erinnern an** 'to remind sb. of/about'

**sich erinnern an** 'to remember'

**(sich) gewöhnen an** 'to get used to'.

**Wir haben an dich gedacht.**

We were thinking of you.

**an** (+ dat.):

**liegen an** 'to be because of/be the reason for'

**teil\*nehmen an** 'to participate in'.

**Es lag an mir, dass er nicht gekommen ist.**

It was because of me/my fault that he didn't come.

**auf** (+ acc.):

**reagieren auf** 'to react to'

**warten auf** 'to wait for'

**verzichten auf** 'to go without'

**an\*kommen auf** 'to depend on'

**sich freuen auf** 'to look forward to'.

**Wie haben sie auf die Nachricht reagiert?**

How did they react to the news?

**auf** (+ dat.):

**bestehen auf** 'to insist on'

**beruhen auf** 'to rest on/be built on'.

**Sie hat auf ihrem Recht bestanden.**

She insisted on her rights.

**aus** (+ dat.):

**bestehen aus** 'to consist of'.

**Unser Team besteht aus einer Frau und zwei Männern.**

Our team consists of one woman and two men.

**für** (+ acc.):

**sich interessieren für** 'to be interested in'

**jmdm. danken für** 'to thank sb. for'.

**Ich interessiere mich sehr für die Musik der zwanziger Jahre.**

I am very interested in the music of the twenties.

**in** (+ acc.):

**sich verlieben in** 'to fall in love with'.

**Er hat sich sofort in sie verliebt.**

He fell in love with her straight away

## Prepositional verbs

**mit** (+ dat.):

**rechnen mit** 'to reckon with'

**sprechen mit** 'to talk to/with'

**beginnen mit** 'to begin (with)'

**an\*fangen mit** 'to begin (with)'

**auf\*hören mit** 'to stop'

**(sich) beschäftigen mit** 'to occupy oneself with/work on'

**sich befassen mit** 'to work on'.

**Ab Mai müssen Sie mit einem höheren Preis rechnen.**

From May you have to reckon with a higher price.

**nach** (+ dat.):

**fragen nach** 'to enquire after/about'

**sich erkundigen nach** 'to enquire about'

**riechen nach** 'to smell of'

**schmecken nach** 'to taste of'.

**Meine Frau fragt nach Ihrer Mutter.**

My wife asks after your mother.

**über** (+ acc.):

**reden über** 'to talk about'

**sprechen über** 'to talk about'

**nach\*denken über** 'to think about/reflect on'

**streiten über** 'to argue about'

**jmdn. informieren über** 'to inform sb. about'

**sich freuen über** 'to be pleased about'.

**Ich möchte über dieses Problem ein bisschen nachdenken.**

I would like to think over this problem for a while.

**um** (+ acc.):

**kämpfen um** 'to fight for'

**werben um** 'to try to recruit/persuade/win over'

**sich bewerben um** 'to apply for'

**jmdn. bitten um** 'to ask sb. for'

**jmdn. bringen um** 'to deprive sb. of'.

**Er hat sich um die Stelle in Aachen beworben.**

He has applied for the job in Aachen.

**von** (+ dat.):

**reden von** 'to talk of/about'

**sprechen von** 'to talk of/about'

**träumen von** 'to dream of/about'

**ab\*hängen von** 'to depend on'

**jmdn. überzeugen von** 'to convince sb. of'.

**Das Picknick hängt natürlich von dem Wetter ab.**

The picnic depends on the weather, of course.

**vor** (+ dat.):

**jmdn. warnen vor** 'to warn sb. about'

**jmdn. retten vor** 'to save/rescue sb. from'

**jmdn. schützen vor** 'to protect sb. from'

**Angst haben vor** 'to be afraid of'.

**Die Wettervorhersage warnt vor einem Unwetter morgen.**

The weather forecast is warning of a storm tomorrow.

**zu** (+ dat.):

**gehören zu** 'to belong to/be part of'

**passen zu** 'to go with/match'

**etw. (acc.) bei\*tragen zu** 'to contribute to'.

**Deutschland trägt eine Menge zur Europäischen Union bei.**

Germany contributes a lot to the European Union.

## 38.2

### da + preposition

The preposition in prepositional verbs is often found in a form beginning **da-**: **daran, darauf, daraus, dafür, darin, damit, danach, davon, davor, darüber, darum, dazu**, etc.

The preposition is preceded by **da-** or **dar-** (see [50.6](#)) when:

- (a) the prepositional verb is completed by a clause:

**Sie hat mich davor gewarnt, dass die Preise hier höher sind.**

**Dass die Preise hier höher sind, davor hat sie mich gewarnt.**

She warned me that the prices here are higher.

► See [42.3e](#) for completion of a prepositional verb by a clause; see also [18.2–3](#), [19.4–5](#) and [50.6](#)

- (b) the prepositional verb refers back to the meaning of a previous clause:

**Wir brauchen einen Urlaub. Du hast mich davon überzeugt.**

We need a holiday. You've convinced me of it.

## 39

### The subjunctive

#### 39.1

#### Overview

- (a) German has two subjunctive forms of the verb, called subjunctive I and subjunctive II. They are used to describe actions or states that might happen or that are reported to have happened.
- (b) The subjunctive forms are used in the following contexts:
- Subjunctive I is used most often in reported speech ([39.6](#) and [85](#)).
  - Subjunctive II is used in contexts where there is a suggestion that the event described by the verb may not or did not happen. Subjunctive II can also substitute for subjunctive I in reported speech ([85.1d](#), [89](#)).

Subjunctive II is more frequent, so it will be described first (see [39.2–3](#)).

### 39.2 Use of subjunctive II

- (a) The main use of this form of the verb is to express hypothetical or conditional actions (see also 39.8) or states. Note that the present tense forms can and often do refer to future states and actions:

**Es wäre schön, wenn wir morgen zusammen fahren könnten.**

It *would be* nice if we could travel together tomorrow.

**Ich hätte morgen mehr Zeit, mit dir zu essen.**

I *would have* more time tomorrow to eat with you.

**Wenn sie Millionärin wäre, würde sie sicher eine Weltreise machen.**

If she *were* a millionaire she *would* certainly go on a trip around the world.

- (b) With **als (ob)** 'as if', the subjunctive II is also used to express pretence or uncertainty about whether a certain impression is real or pretended:

**Er hat so getan, als ob er die Geschichte schon gehört hätte.**

**Er hat so getan, als hätte er die Geschichte schon gehört.**

He pretended to have/acted as if he had already heard the story.

**Sie sah aus, als ob sie geweint hätte.**

**Sie sah aus, als hätte sie geweint.**

She looked as if she *had been* crying.

► For making hypotheses see 89.4

- (c) Subjunctive II is also used to soften the directness of a question or a suggestion out of politeness:

**Ich hätte eine Frage . . .**

I'd *like* to ask a question if I may . . .

**Ich möchte noch ein Stück Kuchen.**

I *would like* another piece of cake.

► For this use see 91.1–4; for attracting the attention of a person who is busy, see 90.2

### 39.3 Formation of subjunctive II

- (a) The present tense of the second subjunctive is formed from the simple past by adding **-e** to the simple past **ich/er/sie/es/man** form. Strong and irregular verbs also add an umlaut where possible.

► See 33.4b, 33.5b and 33.6–7

Examples of strong verbs are:

Infinitive	3rd person sg. past tense	3rd person sg. present subjunctive II
sein	war 'was'	wäre 'would be'
haben	hatte 'had'	hätte 'would have'
gehen	ging 'went'	ginge 'would go'
geben	gab 'gave'	gäbe 'would give'
sehen	sah 'saw'	sähe 'would see'



The second subjunctive forms of most weak verbs are indistinguishable from the normal past tense forms:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>3rd person sg. simple past indicative and subjunctive II</i>	
<b>machen</b>	<b>machte</b>	‘did/would do’
<b>arbeiten</b>	<b>arbeitete</b>	‘worked/would work’
<b>üben</b>	<b>übte</b>	‘practised/would practise’
<b>reisen</b>	<b>reiste</b>	‘travelled/would travel’

One mixed verb, however, can add an umlaut:

**brauchen**      **bräuchte** ‘would need’.

(b) The past tense of subjunctive II is a combination of **wäre** or **hätte** + the past participle (depending on whether the verb takes **sein** or **haben** in the perfect: see 33.8):

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Past subjunctive II in the 3rd person sg.</i>	
<b>sein</b>	<b>er/sie/es/man wäre gewesen</b>	he/she/it/one would have been
<b>werden</b>	<b>er/sie/es/man wäre geworden</b>	he/she/it/one would have become
<b>gehen</b>	<b>er/sie/es/man wäre gegangen</b>	he/she/it/one would have gone
<b>haben</b>	<b>er/sie/es/man hätte gehabt</b>	he/she/it/one would have had
<b>geben</b>	<b>er/sie/es/man hätte gegeben</b>	he/she/it/one would have given
<b>machen</b>	<b>er/sie/es/man hätte gemacht</b>	he/she/it/one would have done

Examples:

<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>
<b>Es wäre schön.</b> It would be nice.	<b>Es wäre schön gewesen.</b> It would have been nice.
<b>Ich hätte mehr Zeit.</b> I would have more time.	<b>Ich hätte mehr Zeit gehabt.</b> I would have had more time.

(c) The forms of **sein** and **haben** are as follows:

<i>Person</i>	<i>Tense</i>			
	<i>Present</i>		<i>Past</i>	
<b>ich</b>	would be <b>wäre</b>	would have <b>hätte</b>	would have been <b>wäre gewesen</b>	would have had <b>hätte gehabt</b>
<b>du</b>	<b>wär(e)st</b>	<b>hättest</b>	<b>wärest gewesen</b>	<b>hättest gehabt</b>
<b>Sie</b>	<b>wären</b>	<b>hätten</b>	<b>wären gewesen</b>	<b>hätten gehabt</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>wäre</b>	<b>hätte</b>	<b>wäre gewesen</b>	<b>hätte gehabt</b>
<b>wir</b>	<b>wären</b>	<b>hätten</b>	<b>wären gewesen</b>	<b>hätten gehabt</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>wär(e)t</b>	<b>hättet</b>	<b>wäret gewesen</b>	<b>hättet gehabt</b>
<b>Sie/sie</b>	<b>wären</b>	<b>hätten</b>	<b>wären gewesen</b>	<b>hätten gehabt</b>

(d) The modal verbs have the following subjunctive II forms:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>3rd person sg. present</i>		<i>3rd person sg. past</i>	
<b>können</b>	<b>könnte</b>	would be able to	<b>hätte . . . können</b>	would have been able to
<b>müssen</b>	<b>müsste</b>	would have to	<b>hätte . . . müssen</b>	would have had to
<b>wollen</b>	<b>wollte</b>	would want to	<b>hätte . . . wollen</b>	would have wanted to
<b>sollen</b>	<b>sollte</b>	would have to	<b>hätte . . . sollen</b>	would have had to
<b>dürfen</b>	<b>dürfte</b>	would be allowed to	<b>hätte . . . dürfen</b>	would have been allowed to
<b>mögen</b>	<b>möchte</b>	would like	<b>hätte . . . mögen</b>	would have liked
<b>lassen</b>	<b>ließe</b>	would let/allow	<b>hätte . . . lassen</b>	would have let/would have allowed

► See [35.8](#)

Some of these forms carry special meanings. They are widely used as polite or tactful forms when making requests. (See also [91.1](#).) Note the following:

**könnte** ‘would be able to’:

**Könnten Sie bitte lauter sprechen?**

Could you please speak up?

**Das könnte die Antwort sein.**

That could be the answer.

► See also [35.6b](#)

**müsste** ‘would have to’:

**Wenn ich keine Kreditkarte hätte, müsste ich jetzt auf die Bank.**

If I didn’t have a credit card I would have to go to the bank now.

► See [5.2](#) on word order here

**Das müsste die Antwort sein.**

That must be (would have to be) the answer.

► See also [35.6b](#) and [89.1](#)

**dürfte** ‘would be allowed to/is probably’:

**Wenn du älter wärst, dürftest du mit den anderen spielen.**

If you were older you could play with the others.

► See [39.8](#) on conditionals, and [89.1](#)

**Das dürfte die Antwort sein.**

That could well be (*probably is*) the answer.

► See also [35.6b](#)

**sollte** ‘ought to’ (often used with **eigentlich** to suggest that something has not happened which should have happened, or vice versa):

**Er sollte eigentlich schon hier sein.**

He really should be here by now (*but he isn’t*).

**Er sollte eigentlich nicht hier sein.**  
He really shouldn't be here (*but he is*).

► See also [35.6b](#)

**möchte** 'would like to':

**Ich möchte heute im Restaurant zu Mittag essen.**  
I would like to have lunch in a restaurant today.

► See also [35.6b](#)

**wollte** 'wanted to' (often implying an intention that now looks unlikely to be fulfilled; also often used with **eigentlich** in this sense):

**Ich wollte eigentlich heute Abend ins Kino gehen.**  
I wanted to go to the cinema this evening.

► See also [35.6b](#)

### 39.4 Use of subjunctive I

- (a) The main use is to characterize a stretch of speech as a report, i.e. not necessarily voicing the speaker's own words or opinions:

**Er sagte, er habe jetzt keine Zeit.**  
He said he had no time right now.

► See also [85](#)

But, in fact, both subjunctive I and subjunctive II are used for this purpose.

- (b) Subjunctive I is also used in expressions with the sense of 'let it be so':

**Es lebe die neue Demokratie!**  
Long live the new democracy!

**ABC sei ein gleichschenkliges Dreieck.**  
Let ABC be an isosceles triangle.

► For assumptions in a scientific context using this construction, see [89.2](#)

### 39.5 Formation of subjunctive I

- (a) The present tense of subjunctive I is formed from the infinitive by removing the final **-n** to obtain the **er/sie/es/man** form:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Subjunctive I 3rd person sg.</i>
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<b>sein</b>	<b>er/sie/es/man sei</b>
<b>haben</b>	<b>er/sie/es/man habe</b>
<b>gehen</b>	<b>er/sie/es/man gehe</b>
<b>sagen</b>	<b>er/sie/es/man sage</b>

Subjunctive I is rarely used outside the **er/sie/es/man** form (for the forms of **man** see [31.4](#)), and there are usually no clear subjunctive I forms in other persons of the verb (e.g. in the **wir** or the third person plural **sie** forms). Where subjunctive I forms are not clearly recognizable, the appropriate subjunctive II is used instead.

Hence in the third person singular **habe** is possible:

**Er sagte, der Minister *habe* verantwortungsvoll gehandelt.**

He said the minister had acted responsibly.

But in the third person plural, the subjunctive and the normal present tense form, **haben** are identical, thus the differentiating **hätten** is used:

**Er sagte, die zuständigen Polizeibeamten *hätten* alles getan, was man tun konnte.**

He said the police officers in charge had done everything possible.

Indeed, some speakers tend to favour subjunctive II as the preferred form for much reported speech, so usage varies considerably (see also 39.6b). Learners should certainly know the subjunctive I forms but should listen carefully to German speakers to find out whether and to what extent native speakers are using subjunctive I.

- (b) The past tense of subjunctive I is a combination of **sei** or **habe** + the past participle (depending on whether the verb takes **sein** or **haben** in the perfect: see 33.8):

*3rd person sg.*

**sei gewesen**

**sei gegangen**

**sei geschwommen**

**habe gesagt**

**habe gehabt**

**habe gekauft**

**Der Angeklagte sagte, das Opfer *sei* gewalttätig gewesen.**

The accused said that the the victim had been violent.

**Es wird berichtet, dass der Präsident über Neuwahlen gar nichts gesagt *habe*.**

It is being reported that the president did not say anything about new elections.

- (c) The forms of **sein** and **haben** are as follows:

<i>Person</i>	<i>Present</i>		<i>Past</i>	
<b>ich</b>	<b>sei</b>	<b>habe</b>	<b>sei gewesen</b>	<b>habe gehabt</b>
<b>du</b>	<b>seiest</b>	<b>habest</b>	<b>seiest gewesen</b>	<b>habest gehabt</b>
<b>Sie</b>	<b>seien</b>	<b>haben</b>	<b>seien gewesen</b>	<b>haben gehabt</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man</b>	<b>sei</b>	<b>habe</b>	<b>sei gewesen</b>	<b>habe gehabt</b>
<b>wir</b>	<b>seien</b>	<b>haben</b>	<b>seien gewesen</b>	<b>haben gehabt</b>
<b>ihr</b>	<b>seiet</b>	<b>habet</b>	<b>seiet gewesen</b>	<b>habet gehabt</b>
<b>Sie/sie</b>	<b>seien</b>	<b>haben</b>	<b>seien gewesen</b>	<b>haben gehabt</b>

(d) The subjunctive I forms of the modal verbs are:

Person	<i>können</i>	<i>müssen</i>	<i>sollen</i>
ich	<b>könne</b>	<b>müsse</b>	<b>solle</b>
du	<b>könnest</b>	<b>müssest</b>	<b>sollest</b>
Sie	<b>können</b>	<b>müssen</b>	<b>sollen</b>
er/sie/es/man	<b>könne</b>	<b>müsse</b>	<b>solle</b>
wir	<b>können</b>	<b>müssen</b>	<b>sollen</b>
ihr	<b>könnet</b>	<b>müsset</b>	<b>sollet</b>
Sie/sie	<b>können</b>	<b>müssen</b>	<b>sollen</b>

Person	<i>wollen</i>	<i>dürfen</i>	<i>mögen</i>
ich	<b>wolle</b>	<b>dürfe</b>	<b>möge</b>
du	<b>wollest</b>	<b>dürfest</b>	<b>mögest</b>
Sie	<b>wollen</b>	<b>dürfen</b>	<b>mögen</b>
er/sie/es/man	<b>wolle</b>	<b>dürfe</b>	<b>möge</b>
wir	<b>wollen</b>	<b>dürfen</b>	<b>mögen</b>
ihr	<b>wollet</b>	<b>dürfet</b>	<b>möget</b>
Sie/sie	<b>wollen</b>	<b>dürfen</b>	<b>mögen</b>

**Sie meinte, sie *müsse* diese Rolle im Stück spielen.**

She said she had to act this part in the play.

**Die Kinder berichteten, dass ihre Betreuerin während des Gewitters bei ihnen *bleiben wollte*.**

The children reported that their carer wanted to stay with them during the thunderstorm.

*Past:* **er/sie/es/man habe** + infinitive of verb + modal verb in the infinitive:

**Sie sagte, sie *habe* diese Rolle immer spielen *müssen*.**

She said she always had to act this part.

**Die Kinder berichteten, dass ihre Betreuerin während des Gewitters bei ihnen *habe bleiben wollen*.**

The children reported that their carer had wanted to stay with them during the thunderstorm.

► See 35.3a for the perfect tense forms of modal verbs; see 8.6 for the word order in subordinate clauses

**39.6**

**Reported speech**

(a) Subjunctive I keeps the tense of the original words that are being reported. German differs from English here. In English, the tense of the reported verb is influenced by the tense of the introductory verb:

*Original words:* I am the mayor of this town  
*Report:* He *says* he *is* the mayor of this town.  
 He *said* he *was* the mayor of this town.

*Original words:* I was (have been) the mayor of this town.  
*Report:* He *says* he *was* the mayor of this town.  
 He *said* he *had been* the mayor of this town.

German keeps the tense of the original but shifts the form of the verb into subjunctive I:

*Original words:* **Ich bin hier der Bürgermeister.**  
*Report:* **Er sagt, er sei hier der Bürgermeister.**  
**Er sagte, er sei hier der Bürgermeister.**

*Original words:* **Ich bin hier der Bürgermeister gewesen/war hier der Bürgermeister.**  
*Report:* **Er sagt, er sei hier der Bürgermeister gewesen.**  
**Er sagte, er sei hier der Bürgermeister gewesen.**

- (b) Where German speakers use both subjunctive I and subjunctive II for reported speech, the use of the second subjunctive usually implies a greater distance between the speaker and the truth of what is being reported, even an air of doubt and scepticism (see 85.1):

*Actual words:* **Ich habe keine Zeit.**  
*Neutral report:* **Er sagte, er habe keine Zeit.**  
*Report with possible doubt:* **Er sagte, er hätte keine Zeit.**  
 ‘He said he didn’t have any time.’

### 39.7 Using *würde* + infinitive

**Würde** + infinitive is a very common alternative to subjunctive II (39.2–3) in conditional sentences (see 39.8).

- (a) The forms of **würde** are:

<b>ich würde</b>	<b>wir würden</b>
<b>du würdest</b>	<b>ihr würdet</b>
<b>er/sie/es/man würde</b>	<b>sie würden</b>
<b>Sie (sg. and pl.)</b>	<b>würden.</b>

- (b) A combination of **würde** + infinitive is quite commonly used instead of a subjunctive II form and has exactly the same meaning:

**Ich ginge zur Party. = Ich würde zur Party gehen.**  
 I would go to the party.

This is especially so for some of the strong verbs (33.5) that have irregular and unpredictable subjunctive II forms:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Simple past</i>	<i>Subjunctive II</i>
<b>helfen</b>	<b>half</b>	<b>hülfe = würde helfen</b>
<b>stehen</b>	<b>stand</b>	<b>stünde = würde stehen</b>

The following common subjunctive II forms are not normally replaced by **würde** + infinitive:

the modal verbs  
**wäre** 'would be'  
**hätte** 'would have'.

Also, some subjunctive II forms tend to be part of fixed expressions:

**Es gäbe** 'There would be' (from **es gibt** 'there is/are': see also 69.1)  
**Es ginge** 'It would be OK' (from **es geht** 'it is OK')  
**Nicht dass ich wüsste** 'Not that I'm aware of/Not that I know of'.

For other verbs, **würde** + infinitive is increasingly used, especially in spoken German.

► See also 58

- (c) The subjunctive II forms of weak verbs (e.g. **arbeitete**, **verdiente**) are indistinguishable from ordinary simple past tenses. In a conditional sentence (39.8), at least one of the two verbs (either one) needs to be marked as a conditional and this is done using **würde** + infinitive. For this reason, the **würde** construction is widely used with weak verbs:

**Wenn ich länger arbeitete, würde ich kaum mehr Geld verdienen.**  
**Wenn ich länger arbeiten würde, verdiente ich kaum mehr Geld.**  
 If I worked longer I would hardly earn any more money.

As long as one of the two verbs in this kind of 'if . . . then' construction is clearly marked as conditional, this is enough to show that the whole sentence is a conditional, and the other verb may appear in the (ambiguous) subjunctive II form. However, the use of **würde** + infinitive in both halves of such a sentence is ungainly and tends to be avoided. Frequently a modal verb in subjunctive II is found here:

**Wenn ich länger arbeiten würde, könnte ich kaum mehr Geld verdienen.**  
 If I worked longer I could hardly earn any more money.

- (d) The **würde** construction is also frequently used with strong verbs, since many German speakers are uncomfortable with the subjunctive II forms of some verbs, feeling that they sound archaic:

**Wenn sie langsamer reden könnte, verstünde ich sie besser.**  
**Wenn sie langsamer reden könnte, würde ich sie besser verstehen.**  
 If she could talk more slowly I would understand her better.

**Er helfe ihnen, wenn sie Probleme hätten.**  
**Er würde ihnen helfen, wenn sie Probleme hätten.**  
 He would help them if they had problems

- (e) The **würde** construction is commonly used when there are several main verbs in a sequence, some of which may be weak and some of which may be strong:

**Wenn er jetzt käme, würden wir Feierabend machen, ein Bier trinken, und ins Kino gehen.**  
 If he came now we would knock off work, have a beer, and go to the cinema.

## 39.8

## Conditionals

- (a) Although conditional expressions (of the kind ‘if . . . then . . .’) often have the verb in the subjunctive, this is not always the case. Using a verb that is not in the subjunctive implies that the event being described is being viewed as probable, in some sense ‘real’:

**Wenn ich morgen Zeit habe, komme ich.**

If I have time tomorrow I will come.

**Wenn er mir morgen die CD gibt, sage ich euch Bescheid.**

If he gives me the CD tomorrow, I’ll let you know.

► See also [34.2c](#)

- (b) Present subjunctive II in both clauses is used to express a hypothesis about an event that may or may not occur:

**Wenn wir beim Lotto gewinnen würden, wären wir nicht unbedingt glücklicher.**

If we won the lottery we would not necessarily be any happier.

- (c) Subjunctive II in the past in both clauses denotes something that can no longer take place, an unrealistic condition:

**Wenn er fleißiger wäre, hätte er sicherlich die Prüfung bestanden.**

If he had been more hardworking, he would surely have passed the exam.

► See [84.4](#) and [89.3](#)

- (d) Note that it is possible to have conditional expressions without **wenn**. In this case the verb in the subordinate clause comes at the beginning of the clause (see [8.5](#)). The main clause can be introduced by **dann** or **so**, but this is not essential:

**Habe ich morgen Zeit, (dann) komme ich.**

If I have time tomorrow I will come.

**Hätte ich morgen Zeit, (dann) käme ich.**

If I had time tomorrow I would come.

**Gibt er mir morgen die CD, (so) sage ich dir Bescheid.**

If he gives me the CD tomorrow I will let you know.

## 40

## The passive

► See [77](#) for avoiding describing the agent of processes and actions

## 40.1

## Active and passive sentences

The subject of a passive construction is not the doer of the action but the object of the action:

*Active:*

**Jeden Tag bauen wir zehn neue Häuser.**

Every day we build ten new houses.

*Passive:*

**Jeden Tag werden zehn neue Häuser (von uns) gebaut.**

Every day ten new houses are built (by us).



In German, only transitive verbs (33.8a) that can have an accusative object (see 18.1 and 18.8) can be used in this kind of passive sentence.

## 40.2 The passive with werden

- (a) The most common passive construction uses **werden** as an auxiliary (where English uses the verb ‘to be’). The forms of **werden** are given in section 33.7a. Note the special past participle **worden**, which is used only for passive constructions:

*Present:* a present tense form of **werden** + past participle (see 33.1):

**Es wird gemacht.**

It is (being) done.

*Simple past:* a simple past tense form of **werden** + past participle:

**Es wurde gemacht.**

It was (being) done.

*Perfect:* **ist** + past participle + **worden**:

**Es ist gemacht worden.**

It has been done.

*Pluperfect:* **war** + past participle + **worden**:

**Es war gemacht worden.**

It had been done.

*Future:* **wird** + infinitive + **werden**:

**Es wird gemacht werden.**

It will be done.

But see 34.2c for the common use of the present tense in obvious contexts:

**Das wird morgen gemacht.**

That will be done tomorrow.

*Future Perfect:* **wird** + past participle + **worden sein**:

**Es wird gemacht worden sein.**

It will have been done.

- (b) German can distinguish between the process of an action, using the passive with **werden**, and the resulting state on completion of an action, using **sein** + past participle, a structure that is sometimes called the ‘statal passive’:

**Der Flug wird gebucht.**

The flight is (being) booked. (*focus on the process*)

**Der Flug ist gebucht worden.**

The flight has been/was booked. (*focus on the process*)

**Der Flug ist gebucht.**

The flight is booked. (*focus on the resulting state*)

The focus in the last example is on the status of the flight: is it or is it not booked? Because English uses the verb ‘to be’ as an auxiliary for both senses, English-speaking learners of German may tend to use the ‘statal’ construction with **sein** + past participle when they mean to focus on the process of the action. The following example shows how failing to distinguish between these constructions could lead to misunderstandings:

**Diese Frage wird beantwortet.**

This question is (being) answered.

**Diese Frage ist beantwortet.**

This question is (has been) answered.

The second of these sentences has a finality about it. It asserts, as an indisputable fact, that the matter is settled, and there is nothing more to discuss.

- (c) Verbs with a dative or genitive object (see 19 and 20) behave in a special way in the passive. An impersonal subject, **es**, is introduced. Note that **es** is singular (so that **werden** always appears in a singular form), and that **es** disappears when another word occupies first position in the sentence:

► See 5.2 on word order

*Active:*

**Sie haben ihm nicht geglaubt.**

They didn't believe him.

*Passive:*

**Es wurde ihm nicht geglaubt.****Ihm wurde nicht geglaubt.**

He was not believed.

**Mir wurde gesagt, dass . . .**

I was told that . . .

**Ihr wurde der erste Preis verliehen.**

She was awarded the first prize.

Verbs taking a genitive object are rare (see 20.4):

**Wir haben der Opfer gedacht.**

We commemorated the victims.

**Es wurde der Opfer gedacht.****Der Opfer wurde gedacht.**

The victims were commemorated.

► See also 42.3g

**40.3****von and durch**

- (a) The person who carries out the action can be expressed in a passive sentence using **von** 'by':

**Meine Mutter hat den Flug gebucht.**

My mother (has) booked the flight.

**Der Flug wurde von meiner Mutter gebucht.****Der Flug ist von meiner Mutter gebucht worden.**

The flight was booked (has been booked) by my mother.

- (b) **durch** (see 18.2) is also used where English uses 'by', but tends to express an action as opposed to an agent:

**Dieser Entschluss hat alles geändert.**

This decision (has) changed everything.

**Durch diesen Entschluss wurde alles geändert.**  
**Durch diesen Entschluss ist alles geändert worden.**  
 Everything was (has been) changed by this decision.

- (c) Note, however, that **durch** can be used when an action is performed by someone acting on someone else's instructions:

**Der Tisch wurde durch die Sekretärin gebucht.**  
 The table was booked by the secretary. (*i.e. acting for the boss*)

**Die Stadt wurde durch die alliierten Truppen zurückerobert.**  
 The town was retaken by the allied troops.

#### 40.4 Alternative constructions

Note the following alternative constructions, which carry the same kind of focus as the passive with **werden**:

- (a) The impersonal pronoun **man** (see 31.4), which is widely used in everyday spoken and written German:

**Man hat die Frage gestellt.**  
 People asked the question. / Someone asked the question. / The question was asked.

- (b) **lassen + sich + verb** taking an accusative object. Literally, this construction means 'something allows itself to be done'. Its use suggests a fairly formal, usually written style (see 58):

**Diese Frage lässt sich leicht beantworten.**  
 This question can easily be answered. / This question is easy to answer.

► See also 35.6b

- (c) An adjective ending in **-bar** or **-lich** derived from a verb (see 55.1a):

**Das ist leicht verständlich.**  
 That is easy to understand. / That is easily understood.

**Es ist nicht machbar.**  
 It is not do-able. / It cannot be done.

Note, however, that this process of word formation is highly irregular and unpredictable (see 52.3).

- (d) Modal verbs (35) in combination with the passive. It is worth noting how often modal verbs occur in passive and related constructions:

**Das muss gemacht werden.**  
 That must be done.

**Das kann/sollte man machen.**  
 It can/ought to be done.

► See also 5.4

## 41 Imperatives

► See also [86.1](#), [99.1c](#)

### 41.1

The imperative forms of the verb are used to give direct commands or instructions to someone. The imperative has a formal and a familiar form corresponding to whether the correct form of address is **Sie** or **du** (plural **ihr**; see also [58](#)). The imperative forms of **sein** and **haben** are:

Sie form	sein Sie!	haben Sie!
<b>du</b> form of address	<b>sei!</b>	<b>hab!</b>
<b>ihr</b> form of address	<b>seid!</b>	<b>habt!</b>

Thus, **Sei ruhig!**, **Seid ruhig!** and **Seien Sie bitte ruhig!** all mean 'Be quiet!'.

► See [7.3](#) for word order in commands

### 41.2

The various imperatives are formed as follows. Note that, in written German, the exclamation mark is normal usage (see also [59.6](#)):

For the **Sie** form, invert subject and verb:

**Machen Sie das!**

Do that!

For the **ihr** form, use the normal present tense form on its own:

**Schlaft gut!**

Sleep well!

For the **du** form, take the **-(e)st** ending off the **du** form, present tense:

**Mach das!**

Do that!

► See [33](#) for basic verb forms

However, note the following points about the imperative **du** form:

- (a) Verbs that add an umlaut in the present tense for the **du** form (see [33.7c](#)) lose it in the imperative:

**Du schläfst.**

You are sleeping.

**Schlaf gut!**

Sleep well.

**Du fährst nicht nach London.**

You are not going to London.

**Fahr nicht nach London!**

Don't go to London!

- (b) Verbs that have the vowel change **e > i** in the present tense (see 33.7c) retain this change in the imperative:

**Du gibst es mir.**  
You give it to me.

► See 12 for word order here

**Gib es mir!**  
Give it to me!

**Du nimmst es nicht.**  
You're not taking it.

**Nimm es nicht!**  
Don't take it!

- (c) An extra syllable (-e) may be added to the imperative **du** form, especially when the verb stem ends in -b, -g, -d or -t:

**Sag/sage ihm nichts!**  
Don't tell him anything!

**Schneide es hier!**  
Cut it here!

**Arbeite nicht so viel!**  
Don't work so much!

**Beschreibe es mir!**  
Describe it to me!

Note also that **du** and **ihr** can be used together with an imperative in order to give an emphatic contrast:

**Mach *du* das!**  
*You* do it!

► See 66.6b

**41.3**

Some examples of imperative forms are:

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>ihr</i>	<i>Sie</i>	
geben	<b>gib</b>	<b>gebt</b>	<b>geben Sie</b>	to give
haben	<b>hab</b>	<b>habt</b>	<b>haben Sie</b>	to have
kommen	<b>komm</b>	<b>kommt</b>	<b>kommen Sie</b>	to come
laufen	<b>lauf</b>	<b>lauft</b>	<b>laufen Sie</b>	to run
machen	<b>mach</b>	<b>macht</b>	<b>machen Sie</b>	to make
nehmen	<b>nimm</b>	<b>nehmt</b>	<b>nehmen Sie</b>	to take
sagen	<b>sag</b>	<b>sagt</b>	<b>sagen Sie</b>	to say
schlafen	<b>schlaf</b>	<b>schlaft</b>	<b>schlafen Sie</b>	to sleep
schreiben	<b>schreib</b>	<b>schreibt</b>	<b>schreiben Sie</b>	to write
sprechen	<b>sprich</b>	<b>sprecht</b>	<b>sprechen Sie</b>	to speak

► For other ways of giving instructions, see 35 on modal verbs, 39 on the subjunctive, 90.4 on requesting patience, and 92 on asking for something to be done

## 42 Basic sentence patterns: verbs and their completion

This section describes the basic sentence patterns for constructing simple sentences (see also 5–10 and 15). It is the choice of verb that determines these patterns. The following key explains the notation used:

- S The subject of the sentence, typically a noun, noun phrase or pronoun in the nominative case (e.g. **der Computer, mein Computer**).
- = The verbs **sein, bleiben, werden**. These verbs are followed by a complement that has the form of a noun, noun phrase, or pronoun in the nominative case, or an adjective. The complement characterizes the subject, hence this kind of sentence is like an equation: **Mein neuer Computer ist mein bester Freund** ‘My new computer is my best friend’, **Mein neuer Computer ist klasse** ‘My new computer is super’.
- V The verb.
- Vp A prepositional verb (see 38), such as **warten auf** + acc. ‘to wait for’, **bestehen auf** + dat. ‘to insist on’. Here it is necessary to specify which case is used after the preposition.
- O Object of the verb, in one of the three non-subject cases:
  - Oa A noun, noun phrase, or noun in the accusative case, e.g. **den Computer, einen Computer**.
  - Od A noun, noun phrase, or noun in the dative case, e.g. **dem Computer, einem Computer**.
  - Og A noun, noun phrase, or noun in the genitive case, e.g. **des Computers, eines Computers**.
- loc A word or phrase denoting a location in time or space, e.g. **auf dem Tisch** ‘on the table’, **nach dem Vortrag** ‘after the lecture’, **dort** ‘there’, **dann** ‘then’.
- dir A word or phrase denoting direction through time or space, e.g. **auf den Tisch** ‘on to the table’, **zum Bahnhof** ‘to the station’, **in den nächsten Vortrag** ‘into the next lecture’, **dorthin/dahin** ‘to there’.
- ext A word or phrase denoting extent in time or space, e.g. **einen Monat** ‘for a month’, **einen Kilometer** ‘for a kilometre’.

### 42.1

It is useful to learn the whole of the basic pattern needed to use a verb properly in order to make a simple statement. Nearly all simple sentences consist of a subject (S) and a verb (V). For some verbs this is all that is needed to produce a simple sentence:

SV

**Sie schläft.**

She is sleeping.

**Sie ruht.**

She is resting.

### 42.2

Most verbs require some kind of element apart from S and V in order to complete the sense. The verbs **sein, bleiben, werden** equate two things or persons and so each side of the equation is in the subject case, nominative (see 19). Or the completion may be an adjective (43):

S = S

**Sie ist Wirtschaftsprüferin.**

She is a chartered accountant.

**Er bleibt ein guter Freund.**

He remains a good friend.

**Sie wird Wirtschaftsprüferin.**

She is going to be a chartered accountant.

► See 17.2

S = adj.

**Sie ist intelligent.**

She is intelligent.

**Er ist ihr ähnlich.** (See 19.9.)

He is like her.

### 42.3

The vast majority of verbs require one or two further elements in order to complete their sense, and these cannot be in the nominative (subject) case if they are nouns or pronouns. The basic patterns are:

(a) Completion with one element:

SVOa

**Ich kaufe den Computer.** (See 18.1.)

I buy the computer.

SVOd

**Der Test dient einem wichtigen Zweck.** (See 19.6.)

The test serves an important purpose.

SVOg

**Dieses Ergebnis bedarf einer Erklärung.** (See 20.4.)

This result requires an explanation.

SVpOa

**Ich warte auf den günstigsten Augenblick.** (See 38.)

I am waiting for the most favourable moment.

SVpOd

**Ich bestehe auf meinem Recht.** (See 38.)

I insist on my rights.

SVloc

**Das Theaterstück beginnt bald.** (See 50.)

The play begins soon.

**Das Theaterstück beginnt in einer Stunde.**

The play begins in one hour.

**Das Theaterstück beginnt nach dem Konzert.**

The play begins after the concert.

**Das Geld liegt dort.** (See 80.2.)

The money is there.

**Das Geld liegt auf dem Tisch.** (See 19.5.)

The money is on the table.

**Wir wohnen dort.**

We live there.

**Wir wohnen in der Stadtmitte.**

We live in the town centre.

**Wir wohnen auf dem Land.**

We live in the country.

► See 19.5

SVdir

**Wir fahren dorthin.**

We're driving there.

**Wir fahren in die Stadtmitte.**

We're driving into the town centre.

► See 18.3

**Wir fahren aufs Land.**

We're driving into the country.

► See 18.3

SVext

**Das Theaterstück dauert lange.**

The play lasts a long time.

► See 18.4

**Das Theaterstück dauert den ganzen Abend.**

The play lasts the whole evening.

**Sie ist (um) einen Kopf kleiner als ihr Halbbruder.**

She is a head smaller than her half-brother.

► See 48.6

(b) Completion with two elements:

SVOaOd/SVOdOa

**Sie zeigt dem neuen Kollegen die Arbeitsmethode.**

She shows the routine to the new colleague.

**Sie zeigt ihm die Arbeitsmethode.**

She shows him the routine.

**Sie zeigt sie ihm.**

She shows it (to) him.

She shows him it.

► See 12 for noun and pronoun objects



SVOaOa

**Der Fragebogen hat mich den ganzen Abend gekostet.**  
The questionnaire took me the whole evening.

▶ See 18.8 for the use of the accusative

SVOaOg

**Sie beschuldigte ihn des Mordes.**  
She accused him of murder.

▶ See 20.4 on verbs taking the genitive

SVpOaOa/SVpOaOd

▶ See 38 on prepositional verbs

**Die Experten schätzen den Schaden auf eine Million Euros.**  
The experts estimate the damage at one million euros.

**Die Experten schätzen ihn auf eine Million Euros.**  
The experts estimate it at one million euros.

**Die Experten warnen die Regierung vor der Inflationsgefahr.**  
The experts warn the government of the danger of inflation.

**Die Experten warnen sie vor der Inflationsgefahr.**  
The experts warn them of the danger of inflation.

**Die Experten warnen sie davor, dass Inflationsgefahr besteht.**  
The experts warn them that there is a danger of inflation.

▶ See 42.3e, 50.6 and 38.2

**Die Experten warnen sie davor.**  
The experts warn them about it.

**Die Experten warnen sie vor diesem Mann.**  
The experts warn them about this man.

**Die Experten warnen sie vor ihm.**  
The experts warn them about him.

SVOa[=]Oa

**Ich nannte ihn einen Lügner.**  
I called him a liar.

▶ See 18.8

SVOa[=]adj.

**Die Zutaten machen das Essen interessant.**  
The ingredients make the meal interesting.

SVOaloc

**Ich habe meine Brieftasche in der Schublade gefunden.**  
I found my wallet in the drawer.

▶ See 19.5

**Ich habe *sie* dort gefunden.**

I found it there.

**Er hat *die Konferenz für diesen Mittwoch* anberaumt.**

He has called the conference for this Wednesday.

**Er hat *sie für dann* anberaumt.**

He has called it for then.

► See 18.2

SVOadir

**Sie legt *das Geld dorthin*.**

She puts the money there.

**Sie legt *das Geld auf den Tisch*.**

She puts the money on (to) the table.

► See 18.3

**Sie legt *es dorthin*.**

She puts it there.

**Sie legt *es auf den Tisch*.**

She puts it on (to) the table.

► See 18.3

**Wir haben *die Konferenz auf nächsten Freitag* verschoben.**

We have postponed the conference till next Friday.

**Wir haben *sie auf nächsten Freitag* verschoben.**

We have postponed it till next Friday.

► See also 35.1

- (c) It is sometimes difficult to be sure which pattern a particular reflexive verb fits. It all depends on whether the reflexive pronoun is seen as an integral part of the verb or as just one of the possible object completions of the verb (see 30):

**Ich stelle *mir die Zukunft* vor. (SVOa)**

I imagine the future.

**Ich stelle *Ihnen meinen neuen Freund* vor. (SVOdOa)**

I introduce my new friend to you.

► See 12

**Er stellte *sich der Polizei*. (SVOd)**

He gave himself up to the police.

**Sie vergewissert *sich der finanziellen Lage*. (SVOg)**

She assures herself of the financial situation.

► See 20.4

**Ich erinnere *mich an letztes Jahr*. (SVpOa)**

I remember last year.

**Die Reeperbahn befindet sich in Hamburg.** (SVploc)

The Reeperbahn is in Hamburg.

**Ich begeben mich hinein/ins Theater.** (SVpdir)

I'm going in/(in)to the theatre.

► See 18.3

**Die neue Siedlung erstreckt sich bis zum Wald.** (SVext)

The new housing estate stretches to the wood.

► See 37

- (d) Dictionaries and grammars often provide 'shorthand' guides to these completion patterns using general words such as **jemand-** (in the appropriate case form) and **etwas**. Where the verb is completed by 'someone or something', the case required can be deduced from the form of **jemand-**. Thus **jemandem oder etwas dienen** 'to serve someone or something' requires any noun or pronoun to be in the dative: **es dient keinem Zweck** 'it serves no purpose', **ich habe Ihnen gedient** 'I have been of service to you'. Often, the forms **jemanden**, **jemandem** and **jemandes** are abbreviated (e.g. to **jmdn.**, **jmdm.** and **jmds.**), but they always show the required case ending.

► See 31.5

Here is a representative list of the basic patterns:

Subject + verb:

**schlafen** 'to sleep/be sleeping'

**intelligent sein** 'to be intelligent'

**Wirtschaftsprüfer sein** 'to be a chartered accountant'

**ein guter Freund sein** 'to be a good friend'

**jmdm. ähnlich sein** 'to be like someone'.

► See 23

Subject + verb + one completion:

**jmdn. kennen** 'to know sb.'

**jmdm. oder etw. (dat.) dienen** 'to serve sb./sth.' (19.6)

**jmds. oder etw. (gen.) bedürfen** 'to be in need of sb./sth.' (20.4).

Subject + prepositional verb + one completion:

**auf jmdn. oder etw. (acc.) warten** 'to wait for sb. or sth.'

**auf etw. (dat.) bestehen** 'to insist on sth.'

► See 38

Subject + verb + two completions:

**jmdm. etw. (acc.) zeigen** 'to show sb. sth.' (12)

**jmdn. einer Sache (gen.) beschuldigen** 'to accuse sb. of sth.' (20.4)

**jmdn. etw. (acc.) nennen** 'to call sb. sth.' (18.8)

**jmdn./etw. (acc.) interessant machen** 'to make sb./sth. interesting'.

Subject + prepositional verb + two completions:

**etw.** (acc.) **auf etw.** (acc.) **schätzen** 'to estimate sth. at so much'  
**jmdn. vor jmdm. oder etw.** (dat.) **warnen** 'to warn sb. about sb./sth.'

► See also [38](#)

Subject + verb + location:

**irgendwo liegen** 'to be lying somewhere'  
**sich irgendwo befinden** 'to be situated somewhere' (see [37](#)).

Subject + verb + direction:

**irgendwohin gehen** 'to go somewhere'  
**sich irgendwohin begeben** 'to go somewhere' (*formal, lit.* to betake oneself somewhere).

Subject + verb + object + direction:

**jmdn./etw.** (acc.) **irgendwohin tun** 'to put sb./sth. somewhere'.

Subject + verb + object + location:

**jmdn. oder etw.** (acc.) **irgendwo finden** 'to find sb./sth. somewhere'.

Subject + verb + extent:

**einen Augenblick dauern** 'to last a moment' (see [18.4](#))  
**um einen Kopf größer oder kleiner sein** 'to be a head taller or shorter' (see [48](#)).

(e) Completion by a clause

In many of the above patterns the verb can be completed by a clause instead of a noun or pronoun. The subject can also be a clause. For example, instead of noun phrases in the SVOa pattern:

**Diese Tatsache erklärt seine gute Laune.**  
 This fact explains his good mood.

the object completion can be a clause:

**Diese Tatsache erklärt, warum er jetzt den ganzen Tag singt.**  
 This fact explains why he sings all day now.

or the subject can be a clause:

**Dass er bald eine Gehaltserhöhung bekommt, erklärt seine gute Laune.**  
 The fact that he is getting a rise in salary soon explains his good mood.

or both can be clauses:

**Dass er bald eine Gehaltserhöhung bekommt, erklärt, warum er jetzt den ganzen Tag singt.**  
 The fact that he is getting a rise in salary soon explains why he sings all day now.

► See [5.2](#) for word order

(d) Prepositional verbs make a clause completion using **da** + preposition (see [32](#), [38.2](#) and [50.6](#)):

**Sie hat darauf bestanden, dass sie das Wochenende frei haben müsste.**  
 She insisted that she had to have the weekend free.

- (f) Completion by an infinitive clause with **zu**

Some verbs can be completed by an infinitive clause with **zu**, either on its own:

**Ich habe vor, in den Ferien Spanisch zu lernen.**

I intend to learn Spanish in the holidays.

► See 36

**Sie beabsichtigt, nächstes Jahr nach Japan zu fahren.**

She intends to go to Japan next year.

or as one of two completions:

**Er half mir, diese Wohnung zu finden.**

He helped me to find this apartment.

**Sie ermahnte ihn, langsamer zu fahren.**

She urged him to drive more slowly.

► See also 8.7a for word order in infinitive clauses

- (g) Sometimes a ‘dummy subject’ **es** occupies first position, when the real subject (in italics in the examples below) comes later in the sentence. This pattern is a variation on the standard SV pattern. Compare English ‘There is . . ./There are . . .’:

**Es fehlt ein Hunderteuroschein.** (= *Ein Hunderteuroschein fehlt.*)

A hundred euro note is missing.

There is a hundred euro note missing.

**Es besteht die Gefahr, dass . . .** (= *Die Gefahr besteht, dass . . .*)

There is the danger that . . . (*lit.* The danger exists that . . .)

Note that the dummy **es** can also be used with a plural subject:

**Es kommen bald bessere Verkaufszahlen.** (= *Bessere Verkaufszahlen kommen bald.*)

Better sales figures are coming soon.

► See also 15.1 on word order, and 40.2c on usage with the passive

- (h) Impersonal verbs with **es** as the subject are best learnt as a unit:

**Es gelingt** (+ dat.) ‘to succeed’:

**Es ist mir gelungen, nach Amerika zu kommen.**

I succeeded in coming to America.

► See also 19.7

**Es handelt sich um** (+ acc.) ‘it concerns/it is about’:

**Es handelt sich um eine ehemalige Angestellte.**

It concerns a former (female) employee.

► See also 37

**Es geht um** (+ acc.) ‘it concerns/the issue is/what is at issue is’:

**Es geht um die Zukunft Europas.**

The future of Europe is at issue.

► See 38

**Es stellt sich heraus, dass** 'it turns out that':

**Es stellte sich heraus, dass er gelogen hatte.**

It turned out that he had been lying.

► See also [36](#) and [37.5](#)

- (i) It is quite common for some completing elements to be omitted when the meaning is obvious from the context. For example:

**Wie geht es dir?**

How are things with you?

**Wie geht es?**

How are things?

**Es geht mir gut, danke.**

**Es geht ganz gut, danke.**

I am fine, thank you.

**Es geht, danke.**

OK, thanks.

**Das hat uns kaum überrascht.**

That hardly surprised us.

**Das hat kaum überrascht.**

That was hardly a surprise.

**Wir haben doch schon Geld an die Kirche gegeben.**

**Wir haben doch schon an die Kirche gegeben.**

**Wir haben doch schon gegeben.**

But we have already given (money) (to the church).

► See also [35](#) and [39.8b](#) for omission of **wenn**

- (j) It is often possible to introduce a dative into some of these patterns to express the person involved or interested in the action:

**Ich kaufe (mir) ein neues Klavier.**

I buy (myself) a new piano.

► See [19.2](#) for the dative, and [37.3](#) on reflexive verbs

Note especially the S=adj. pattern, usually with **zu**, with the meaning 'too ... for me/him, etc.' / 'as far as I/he, etc., is concerned' (see [19.9](#) on the dative):

**Das ist mir (zu) wichtig.**

That is (too) important for/to me.

**Sie ist mir zu klug.**

She is too clever for my liking.

- (k) The following unusual completion patterns should be noted:

**mich friert** 'I am freezing'

**mir ist kalt** 'I am cold'

**mir ist warm** 'I am warm'

**mir ist heiß** 'I am hot'.

► See [30](#)

**Er ist warm/kalt** is a statement about a person's character, not about temperature, and **Ich bin heiß** means 'I am sexually aroused', and should only be used of animals in polite discourse (**die Hündin ist heiß** 'the bitch is on heat'). Be careful!

# VII

## Adjectives and adverbs

### 43 Predicative and attributive adjectives

**43.1** Adjectives describe nouns. If used predicatively, i.e. if they are placed after the finite verb (see 5.1), very often some form of **sein**, they do not take any endings:

**Die DVD war ganz *interessant*.**

The DVD was really interesting.

**Die Äpfel sind jetzt *reif*.**

The apples are ripe now.

**Ihre Stimme klingt *fröhlich*.**

Her voice sounds cheerful.

**43.2** However, if used attributively, i.e. before the noun they describe, adjectives are declined:

**Hast du das *neue* Plakat gesehen?**

Have you seen the new poster?

**Die *reifen* Äpfel schmecken wirklich gut.**

The ripe apples taste really nice.

**43.3** Attributive adjectives can have a **der**, **ein** or zero declension. All three declensions are regular and involve no more than minor variations in endings. The particular declension used depends on what determiner (if any) precedes the adjective (see 24).

### 44 Declension following *der*, etc.

In this section and sections 45 and 46 it should be noted that the declension we are concerned with is not that of **der**, **ein**, etc., but that of the following adjective.

**44.1** The ‘declension following **der**’ is sometimes also referred to as the ‘weak’ declension, since the adjective does not carry much information about the case and gender of the noun: this information is given to a greater extent by the form of **der**, **ein**, etc. (not to be confused with the ‘weak’ declension of nouns, see 28.2). The various forms of the adjective ending following **der** are shown in italics.



	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	<i>Feminine</i>
<i>Singular</i>			
Nominative	<b>der große Hut</b>	<b>das kleine Dorf</b>	<b>die schöne Stadt</b>
Accusative	<b>den großen Hut</b>	<b>das kleine Dorf</b>	<b>die schöne Stadt</b>
Dative	<b>dem großen Hut</b>	<b>dem kleinen Dorf</b>	<b>der schönen Stadt</b>
Genitive	<b>des großen Hutes</b>	<b>des kleinen Dorfes</b>	<b>der schönen Stadt</b>
<i>Plural (all genders)</i>			
Nominative	<b>die sportlichen Kinder</b>		
Accusative	<b>die sportlichen Kinder</b>		
Dative	<b>den sportlichen Kindern</b>		
Genitive	<b>der sportlichen Kinder</b>		

## 44.2

These adjective endings are used after **der** words.

► See [24.1](#)

**Dieser große Mann wohnt bei uns im Gebäude.**

This/That tall man lives in our building.

**Sie arbeiten in jenem baufälligen Haus.**

They are working in that tumbledown house.

**Er kommt immer mit vielem guten Stoff.**

He always comes with a lot of good material.

**Welchen Film habt ihr gesehen?**

Which film did you see? (See [30.4b](#).)

**Sie beschrieb die wirtschaftlichen Probleme sämtlicher europäischen Länder.**

She described the economic problems of all the European countries.

Following **beide**, **irgendwelche** and **solche**, **der**-declension endings are usual but the zero declension (see [46](#)) is also found:

**Wir haben beide verletzten (or: verletzte) Soldaten gesehen.**

We saw both injured soldiers.

**Solche komischen (or: komische) Leute findet man hier öfters.**

You quite often get funny people like that here.

► See [24.2](#)

Note the **der**-declension ending after personal pronouns (see [30](#)):

**Wir Deutschen wollten ja unsere D-Mark behalten.**

We Germans wanted to hold on to our deutschmark.

## 44.3

The plural **alle** 'all' is also followed by **der**-declension adjective endings, but note that any following possessive adjectives (e.g. **mein**, **dein**, **sein**, etc. – see [30.3](#)) or demonstrative adjectives (e.g. **dieser**, **jener** – see [24.1](#)) take the same endings as **alle**:

*Nominative:*      **alle deine guten Freunde** 'all your good friends'  
                          **alle jene guten Freunde** 'all those good friends'

Declension following *ein*, etc.

<i>Accusative:</i>	<b>alle deine guten Freunde</b> <b>alle jene guten Freunde</b>
<i>Dative:</i>	<b>allen deinen guten Freunden</b> <b>allen jenen guten Freunden</b>
<i>Genitive:</i>	<b>aller deiner guten Freunde</b> <b>aller jener guten Freunde</b>

***Alle diese schönen Sommertage nutzen mir nichts, wenn ich die ganze Zeit arbeiten muss.***

All these lovely summer days are no good to me if I have to work all the time.

***In allen unseren Büros ist es furchtbar kalt.***

It's terribly cold in all our offices.

***Kennst du alle jene neuen Spieler?***

Do you know all those new players?

## 44.4

After **alles** 'everything', the adjective declines like a **der**-declension neuter adjective but usually has an initial capital letter:

<i>Nominative:</i>	<b>alles Gute</b> 'all the best'
<i>Accusative:</i>	<b>alles Gute</b>
<i>Dative:</i>	<b>alles Gutem</b>
<i>Genitive:</i>	<b>alles Guten</b>

***Ich wünsche euch alles Gute.***

I wish you all the best.

▶ See 10.5 for **alles** as a relative pronoun, and 62.4c and 66 for its use in good wishes

## 45

Declension following *ein*, etc.

## 45.1

This is also sometimes called the 'mixed' declension (since the adjective endings are a mix of 'strong' (see 46) and 'weak' (see 44) patterns). The various forms of the adjective ending following **ein** and **kein** are shown in italics:

	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	<i>Feminine</i>
<i>Singular</i>			
Nominative	<b>ein neuer Wagen</b>	<b>ein altes Haus</b>	<b>eine leere Dose</b>
Accusative	<b>einen neuen Wagen</b>	<b>ein altes Haus</b>	<b>eine leere Dose</b>
Dative	<b>einem neuen Wagen</b>	<b>einem alten Haus</b>	<b>einer leeren Dose</b>
Genitive	<b>eines neuen Wagens</b>	<b>eines alten Hauses</b>	<b>einer leeren Dose</b>
<i>Plural (all genders)</i>			
Nominative	<b>keine reichen Leute</b>		
Accusative	<b>keine reichen Leute</b>		
Dative	<b>keinen reichen Leuten</b>		
Genitive	<b>keiner reichen Leute</b>		

## 45.2

The **ein**-declension endings are used after **ein**, **kein** and the possessive adjectives **mein** ‘my’, **dein** ‘your’, **sein** ‘his’, **ihr** ‘her/its/their’, **unser** ‘our’, **Ihr** ‘your’ (polite form), **euer** ‘your’ (pl. of **dein**):

**Das Haus braucht ein neues Dach.**

The house needs a new roof.

**Ein junger Mann namens Ehlers sucht dich.**

A young man called Ehlers is looking for you.

**Er ist mein bester Freund.**

He’s my best friend.

**Wir können unsere schweren Koffer nicht mehr tragen.**

We cannot carry our heavy bags any longer.

## 46

## ‘Zero’ declension

## 46.1

The term ‘zero’ here denotes the absence of a preceding **der** or **ein** word. It is also sometimes called the ‘strong’ declension since, in the absence of a **der**, **ein**, etc. word, the adjective ending carries a lot of information about the gender and the case of the noun. The term ‘strong’ here is not to be confused with ‘strong declension’ of nouns (see **28.1d**). The forms of the adjective ending in this pattern are shown in italics:

	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	<i>Feminine</i>
<i>Singular</i>			
Nominative	<b>französischer Wein</b>	<b>helles Bier</b>	<b>frische Sahne</b>
Accusative	<b>französischen Wein</b>	<b>helles Bier</b>	<b>frische Sahne</b>
Dative	<b>französischem Wein</b>	<b>hellem Bier</b>	<b>frischer Sahne</b>
Genitive	<b>französischen Weins</b>	<b>hellen Biers</b>	<b>frischer Sahne</b>
<i>Plural (all genders)</i>			
Nominative	<b>reiche Leute</b>		
Accusative	<b>reiche Leute</b>		
Dative	<b>reichen Leuten</b>		
Genitive	<b>reicher Leute</b>		

## 46.2

The so-called zero-declension endings are used:

(a) when an adjective is not preceded either by an article (**22**) or by a determiner (**24**):

**Roter Wein schmeckt mir am besten.**

I like red wine best.

**Ich empfehle Ihnen frisches Obst.**

I recommend you eat/buy fresh fruit.

**Ich mag den Geschmack frisch gebackenen Brotes.**

I like the taste of freshly baked bread.

**Bei schönem Wetter gehen wir oft baden.**

In nice weather we often go swimming.

## 'Zero' declension

(b) after **ein paar** 'a few':**Ich habe ein paar gute Freunde in Wien.**

I have a few good friends in Vienna.

▶ See also [59.1e](#) for the spelling of numerals

(c) after any numeral other than one:

**Ich habe sechs alte Weinflaschen gefunden.**

I've found six old wine bottles.

▶ See [75.5](#)

## 46.3

Following **etwas** 'something', **viel** 'much', **wenig** 'little', **nichts** 'nothing' and **allerlei** 'all kinds of', the adjective declines like a zero-declension neuter adjective and begins with a capital letter:

*Nominative:*       **nichts Interessantes** 'nothing of interest'

*Accusative:*       **nichts Interessantes**

*Dative:*           **nichts Interessantem**

*Genitive:*       **nichts Interessanten.**

The genitive form is rarely found.

**Ich habe wenig Neues zu berichten.**

I have little new to report.

**Wir brauchen etwas Konkreteres.**

We need something more concrete.

▶ See [48](#) on comparison of adjectives**Er ist mit allerlei Neuem nach Hause gekommen.**

He came home with all sorts of new things.

▶ See [10.5a](#) for **nichts**, **vieles** and **weniges**

## 46.4

After the indefinites **einige** 'some/a few', **etliche** 'several', **folgende** 'following', **manche** 'some', **mehrere** 'several', **viele** 'many' and **wenige** 'few', the adjective also takes zero-declension endings (although **manche** can have a following adjective with a **der**-declension ending):

**Wir haben wenige kalte Tage gehabt.**

We had few cold days.

**Einige ärmere Rentner müssen auf den Urlaub verzichten.**

Some less well-off pensioners have to do without going on holiday.

**Dank vieler guter Ratschläge hat sich unser Geschäft erfolgreich entwickelt.**(See [19.4](#) and [20.7](#).)

Thanks to much good advice our business has developed successfully.

▶ See [10.5a](#) for **einiges**, **folgendes** and **manches**

## 46.5

When **viel** and **wenig** precede singular, so-called ‘uncountable’ nouns, or when they are used as adverbs, they are not declined, and the following adjective takes zero-declension endings:

**Viel guter Käse ist verschwendet worden.**

A lot of good cheese has been wasted.

**Dieser Sessel ist aus wenig haltbarem Stoff gemacht.**

This armchair is made of not very hard-wearing material.

► See also [48.4](#)

## 46.6

Note that a string of adjectives before a noun all have the same endings, whether they take **der-**, zero- or **ein-**declension endings:

**In dem Moment ist ein freundlicher alter Polizist vorbeigekommen.**

At that moment a friendly old policeman came by.

**Hast du schon die schönen, runden spanischen Apfelsinen gegessen?**

Have you eaten the beautiful, round Spanish oranges yet?

**Trockener französischer Wein schmeckt mir gar nicht.**

I don't like dry French wine at all.

In the masculine or neuter dative singular the second element may take the **der-** declension ending **n** rather than the zero-declension **m**:

**Der Anzug ist aus teurem italienischen Stoff.**

The suit is made of expensive Italian material.

## 47

## Other adjective types

## 47.1

Invariable **-er** ending

- (a) German readily forms adjectives from the names of cities and towns by adding **-er** to the place name. Adjectives thus formed have an initial capital letter and do not decline (see [80](#)):

**Hast du denn das Berliner Stadtschloss schon besucht?**

Have you been to Berlin Castle yet?

**Die Basler Fastnacht ist ein echtes Erlebnis.**

The Basel Carnival is a real experience.

**Wegen des Londoner Gipfeltreffens ist diese Straße heute gesperrt.**

This street is closed today because of the London summit.

**Waren Sie schon im Ulmer Dom?**

Have you ever been to Ulm Cathedral?

- (b) Adjectives formed from numerals also end in **-er** and do not decline:

**In den fünfziger Jahren hatten wir ja wenig Geld.**

Of course we had little money in the fifties.

► See [81.4](#)

## 47.2

## Spelling of certain adjectives

- (a) The adjective
- hoch**
- loses its
- c**
- in declined forms:

**Die Kosten sind zu hoch.**

The costs are too high.

but:

**Sie erstiegen den *hohen* Fernsehturm.**

They climbed the high television tower.

**In den *hohen* Bergen ist es immer viel kühler.**

Up in the (high) mountains it's always a lot cooler.

- (b) The
- e**
- preceding the final
- 1**
- ,
- n**
- and
- r**
- is lost in declined forms:

**Die Firma ist nicht mehr rentabel.**

The firm/business is no longer viable.

but:

**die *unrentable* Firma**

the unviable firm/business

**Er erzählt *ungeheure* Lügen.**

He tells outrageous lies.

**Das war ein *miserables* Spiel.**

That was a rotten game.

**Der Mann in der *dunklen* Jacke.**

The man in the dark jacket.

**Infolge des *sauren* Regens sind hier viele Bäume gestorben.**

Many trees have died here as a result of acid rain.

▶ See also [20.7](#)Note also **Basler** from **Basel** in [47.1a](#) above.

## 47.3

## Non-declinable adjectives

Certain adjectives do not take case endings. There are three main categories here:

- (a) Adjectives used exclusively in spoken German, such as
- klasse**
- ,
- prima**
- ,
- super**
- , all of which have similar meanings:

**Der ist ein *prima* Typ.**

He's a smashing/really nice person.

▶ See [74.4](#)**Wir hatten eine *super* Zeit bei euch.**

We had a great time at your place.

But compare: **Er ist ein *cooler* Typ.** 'He's a cool guy.'

- (b) The colour adjectives
- beige**
- ,
- lila**
- ,
- rosa**
- :

**Sie trug ein *rosa* Kleid.**

She wore a pink dress.

**Sie liebt die lila Hose.**  
She loves the purple trousers.

- (c) **ganz** and **halb** when used before place names without a preceding article or determiner:

**Ganz Deutschland war in Trümmern.**  
The whole of Germany was in ruins.

**In ganz Frankreich finden morgen Wahlen statt.**  
There are elections tomorrow in the whole of France.

**Durch halb Europa sind wir gereist.**  
We've travelled halfway round Europe.

#### 47.4 Adjectives with prepositions

Adjectives are often used in combination with specific prepositions, which ought to be learnt along with the adjective. A few examples of this widespread phenomenon are:

**bereit zu** (+ dat.) 'ready for'  
**eifersüchtig auf** (+ acc.) 'jealous of'  
**gleichgültig gegenüber** (+ dat.) 'indifferent towards'  
**interessiert an** (+ dat.) 'interested in'  
**reich an** (+ dat.) 'rich in'  
**typisch für** (+ acc.) 'typical of'  
**verwandt mit** (+ dat.) 'related to' (see 74.9).

**Er ist eifersüchtig auf mich.**  
He is jealous of me.

**Das ist ja typisch für diese Leute.**  
That's typical of those people.

**Antje ist, glaube ich, mit dem Bernd verwandt.**  
Antje is related to Bernd, I think.

► See also 18.2 and 19.5

#### 47.5 The negative prefix un-

The German prefix **un-** can correspond to a variety of English negative prefixes:

**undiszipliniert** 'undisciplined'  
**unhöflich** 'discourteous/impolite'  
**unmöglich** 'impossible'  
**unverständlich** 'incomprehensible'.

► See also 54.1

### 48 Comparison of adjectives

► See 105

- 48.1** The majority of the simple adjectives in 43–47 can be used to compare one thing or person with another. German comparatives (the form of the adjective used to compare things or persons with each other) and superlatives (the form used to denote the greatest intensity

of a quality) are formed by appending **-er** and **-est/-st**, respectively, to the basic adjective and then adding the appropriate adjective endings (see 51 for comparison of adverbs):

**Ich lese ein interessanteres Blog als dieses.**

I'm reading a more interesting blog than that.

**Das muss wohl das interessanteste Blog sein.**

That must be the most interesting blog.

**Die breitere Straße bringt ja nur noch mehr Verkehr.**

The wider road will only bring more traffic.

**Wir landeten auf der breitesten Landebahn.**

We landed on the widest runway.

Care must be taken with **-er** endings as some adjectives end in **-er**. For example:

**Das Essen war lecker.**

The meal was tasty.

**ein leckeres Essen**

a tasty meal

but:

**ein leckereres Essen**

a tastier meal (see 43).

## 48.2

Most common adjectives of one syllable add an umlaut to **a**, **o** or **u** in the comparative and superlative. These include:

**alt** 'old'

**dumm** 'stupid'

**grob** 'coarse/rough'

**hart** 'hard/harsh'

**kalt** 'cold'

**klug** 'clever'

**krank** 'ill'

**kurz** 'short'

**lang** 'long'

**scharf** 'sharp'

**schwach** 'weak'

**schwarz** 'black'

**stark** 'strong'

**warm** 'warm'.

**Das ist ja eine viel längere Strecke.**

That's a much longer distance.

**Wir möchten in einem wärmeren Klima leben.**

We'd like to live in a warmer climate.

**Die jüngste Tochter ist schon berufstätig.**

The youngest daughter is already employed.

▶ See 44–46 for rules on adjective endings



## 48.3

The superlative with **-est** is usually employed with adjectives whose simple or basic form ends in **-d, -s, -sch, -ß, -t, -tz, -x** or **-z**:

**Warum habe ich das härteste Bett?**

Why have I got the hardest bed?

**Sie hat das blasseste Gesicht, das ich je gesehen habe.**

She's got the palest face I've ever seen.

**Damals hatten wir immer die wildesten Partys.**

We always had the wildest parties in those days.

► See also [105.1](#)

## 48.4

Common irregular comparative and superlative forms include:

<b>groß</b> 'big'	<b>größer</b> 'bigger'	<b>das größte</b> 'the biggest'	<b>am größten</b> 'biggest'
<b>gut</b> 'good'	<b>besser</b> 'better'	<b>das beste</b> 'the best'	<b>am besten</b> 'best'
<b>hoch</b> 'high'	<b>höher</b> 'higher'	<b>das höchste</b> 'the highest'	<b>am höchsten</b> 'highest'
<b>nah</b> 'near'	<b>näher</b> 'nearer'	<b>das nächste</b> 'the nearest'	<b>am nächsten</b> 'nearest'
<b>viel</b> 'much'	<b>mehr</b> 'more'	<b>das meiste</b> 'the most'	<b>am meisten</b> 'most'
<b>wenig</b> 'little'	<b>weniger</b> 'less/fewer'	<b>das wenigste</b> 'the least'	<b>am wenigsten</b> 'least/ fewest'
	<b>minder</b> 'less'	<b>das mindeste</b> 'the least'	

Note that the alternative comparative forms of **wenig** are indeclinable:

**Ich habe weniger Chancen im Leben gehabt als meine Schwester.**

I've had fewer opportunities in life than my sister.

► See also [46.5](#)

The word **minder** is only used in formal written German and serves to qualify an adjective:

**Unsere Gruppe war nicht minder benachteiligt als eure.**

Our group was no less disadvantaged than yours.

## 48.5

Adjectives used predicatively (see [43](#)) do not decline. In the superlative ([48.5](#)), the predicative form is **am** + superlative ending in **-en** ([48.3](#)). For example, **am schnellsten** 'the quickest', **am besten** 'the best', etc.:

**Dieses Haus ist am schönsten.**

This house is the nicest.

**Das erste Mädchen war am klügsten.**

The first girl was the cleverest.

## 48.6

(a) English 'than' and 'as' in comparisons are expressed by **als** and **so . . . wie**, respectively. The following noun, pronoun or adjective agrees in case with the thing or person being compared:

**Sie ist älter als ich.**

She's older than I am.

**Eure Wohnung ist größer als unsre.**

Your flat is bigger than ours.

► See [83](#) for use of **als** as a conjunction; see also [23.1c](#)

**Die Webers sind nicht *so reich wie die Müllers.***

The Webers are not as rich as the Müllers.

**Birgit ist fast *so groß wie Maria.***

Birgit is almost as tall as Maria.

The comparison can be reinforced by **genauso** or **ebenso** (see also [105.2](#)):

**Dieser Film ist *genauso langweilig wie der von letzter Woche.***

This film is just as boring as last week's.

**In Italien ist es im Sommer *ebenso heiß wie in Griechenland.***

Italy is just as hot in summer as Greece.

Comparatives can also be reinforced by the use of a preceding **noch** or **viel**, and superlatives by the use of **aller-** or **bei weitem**:

**Dieser Anzug ist *noch preiswerter.***

This suit is even less expensive.

**Diese Aufgabe ist *viel langweiliger.***

This task is much more boring.

**Sie ist zur Zeit die *allerschnellste Radfahrerin der Welt.***

She is currently the fastest cyclist in the world.

**Das ist *bei weitem* seine beste Leistung.**

That is by far his best performance.

- (b) In the superlative, English 'of' is expressed by **von** or the genitive case:

**Unser Kaninchen war *das schönste von allen.***

Our rabbit was the prettiest of them all.

**Das ist ja *das schwierigste* unsrer vielen Probleme.**

That is certainly the most difficult of our many problems.

- (c) When used in the comparative, attributive adjectives can express the sense of 'fairly' or 'quite':

**Sie haben eine *kleinere* Summe verlangt.**

They demanded a fairly small sum. (*of money*)

- (d) 'More and more' in a comparative phrase is conveyed by German **immer** and the predicative comparative adjective (see [43](#)):

**Die Situation wird *immer ernster.***

The situation is getting more and more serious.

**Die Nächte werden *immer kälter.***

The nights are getting more and more cold/colder and colder.

- (e) English 'the more . . . the more' is expressed in German by **je + -er . . . , umso – er/desto –er** (see [82.1](#)):

***Je schneller du es machst, umso früher kriegst du das Geld.***

The quicker you do it, the sooner you get the money.

***Je länger wir die Antwort hinausschieben, desto schwieriger wird es für sie sein.***

The longer we delay answering, the more difficult it will be for them.

## 49 Extended adjectival phrases

► See 58.1

Also known as ‘extended participial phrases’, adjectival phrases consist of a participle (33.1) used as an attributive adjective (see 43) placed before the noun it describes. The participle can either be present or past:

► For the use of adjectival phrases in definitions, see 75.1

***Dieses von Siemens entwickelte Verfahren ist sehr bedeutend.***

This process developed by Siemens (*lit.* This by Siemens developed process) is very significant.

***Die das Streikrecht verteidigenden Arbeiter suchen die Unterstützung ihres Abgeordneten.***

The workers who are defending the right to strike (*lit.* The the right to strike defending workers) are seeking the support of their MP.

***Die sich auch in Großbritannien schnell entwickelnde ökologische Bewegung übt einen großen Einfluss auf die Wähler aus.***

The ecology movement, which is also growing quickly in Great Britain (*lit.* The also in Great Britain quickly developing ecological movement), has a great influence on voters.

As the last two examples show, the adjectival phrase may be extended by objects (18.1, 19.1), adverbs (50) and reflexive pronouns (37.2), with the result that article and noun are separated by several other elements. Note that English uses a phrase or subordinate clause (8) placed after the noun to render these German phrases.

NOTE

These extended adjectival phrases are generally not used in spoken German but occur frequently in newspapers, magazines, legal and other official documents (see 58).

## 50 Adverbs

### 50.1

Adverbs qualify verbs and tell us how, why, at what time or in what place the action of the verb was performed (see 11). There are several categories of adverb, including ones of:

- time (e.g. **schließlich** ‘finally’, **noch einmal** ‘once again’, **unterdessen** ‘meanwhile’) (see 81 and 76.3–6);
- degree (e.g. **fast** ‘almost’, **genug** ‘enough’, **teilweise** ‘partly’);
- manner (e.g. **gründlich** ‘thoroughly’, **schnell** ‘quickly’, **umsonst** ‘in vain’);
- place (e.g. **draußen** ‘outside’, **drüben** ‘over there’, **oben** ‘up/upstairs’) (see 80);
- attitude (e.g. **leider** ‘unfortunately’, **erfreulicherweise** ‘fortunately’).

Some separable prefixes (**los-**, **weg-**, **zurück-**, etc.) are adverbs too (see also 36.1, 57.1).

### 50.2

The simple, i.e. uninflected, form of the adjective (43) can usually be used as an adverb:

**Sie haben die Arbeit gut gemacht.**

You’ve done the job well.

**Der Zug ist pünktlich angekommen.**

The train arrived on time.

## 50.3

There are, in addition, a number of characteristic adverbial endings that are added to the simple adjective. The most common are: **-e**, **-erweise**, **-lang**, **-lich**, **-s**, **-wärts**, **-weise**:

**Wie lange wohnen Sie schon in Bonn?**

How long have you lived in Bonn?

**Glücklicherweise ist nichts passiert.**

Fortunately nothing happened.

**Sie haben stundenlang darüber diskutiert.**

They spent hours discussing it.

**Das hast du aber sicherlich schon gemacht, oder?**

But you've surely done that already, haven't you?

**Wir treffen uns meistens abends/vormittags/montags.** (Note: small letters are used because they are adverbs.)

We usually meet in the evenings/mornings/on Mondays.

**Er fuhr rückwärts in die Garage.**

He reversed (the car) into the garage.

**In der 9. Klasse lernt man Französisch, wahlweise auch Russisch.**

You study French in Year 9 and you can also take Russian as an option.

► See also [56](#)

## 50.4

**Hin** and **her** are added to several prepositions as a prefix (e.g. **hinüber**, **herbei**, **hingegen**, **herauf**) and to a small number of adverbs of place as a suffix (e.g. **dorthin**, **hierher**). They indicate motion to (**her**) or motion away from (**hin**) the speaker (see also [80.7](#)):

**Kommen Sie herein.**

Come in.

**Wir gingen die Treppe hinauf.**

We went up the stairs.

**Gehen Sie hier die Straße hinunter.**

Go down this street.

**Sie liefen dorthin.**

They ran there.

**Komm hierher!**

Come here!

Notice also the hybrid form **gehen Sie 'raus!** 'get out!' (see [58](#)).

Often **hin** and **her** simply serve to reinforce the meaning of the preposition:

**Sie rannte aus dem Haus hinaus.**

She ran out of the house.

► See [18.2–3](#) and [19.4–5](#)

**Wir liefen um den Sportplatz herum.**

We ran around the sports ground.

## 50.5

- (a) Interrogatives, or question words, represent another type of adverb. Some are formed with the suffix **hin** or **her**:

**wann** 'when?'  
**warum** 'why?'  
**was** 'what?'  
**wer** 'who?'  
**wie** 'how?'  
**wo** 'where?'  
**woher** 'where from?'  
**wohin** 'where to?'

- (b) Several interrogatives consist of **wo** + preposition. Note that, if the preposition begins with a vowel, **r** is inserted:

**wodurch** 'by/through what?'  
**wohin** 'where to?'  
**womit** 'with what?'  
**woraus** 'out of what?'  
**worin** 'what in?'  
**worüber** 'what about?'  
**wovon** 'about what?'

**Wohin fahrt ihr morgen?**

Where are you going tomorrow?

**Wovon handelt der Artikel?**

What's the article about?

**Worüber haben Sie sich unterhalten?**

What did you talk about?

► See 10.6 for these forms as relative pronouns; see also 7 on direct questions and 9 on indirect questions

## 50.6

For each of the interrogatives in 50.5b there is a corresponding adverb:

**dadurch** 'through it/that'  
**danach** 'after it/that'  
**daraus** 'out of it/that'  
**davor** 'before/in front of it', etc.

**Dahin** 'to there' and **daher** 'from there' (also 'therefore') are the corresponding forms for **wohin** and **woher** respectively:

► See 32 and 38

**Ich bin danach sofort nach Hause gegangen.**

I went straight home after that.

**Siehst du das rote Schild davor?**

Can you see the red sign in front of it?

**Daher habt ihr keine Alternative. Ihr müsst mitkommen.**

You therefore have no choice. You must come with us.

► For the order of adverbials in a sentence or clause, see 11

The **wo** + preposition words and the **da** + preposition words stand in a relationship of question–answer:

**Worüber haben sie sich unterhalten?**

‘What did they talk about?’

**Über Elektroautos.**

‘About electric cars.’

**Darüber, dass Elektroautos immer erschwinglicher werden.**

‘About the fact that electric cars are becoming more and more affordable.’

► See [42.3e](#)

**Darüber!** (*pointing to the cars*)

Note also **darum**, corresponding to **warum** ‘why?’, as well as **worum** ‘about what?’:

**Worum geht es?** ‘What’s it about?’

**Darum.** ‘About that!’

**Warum?** ‘Why?’

**Darum!** ‘Because!’

**Darum** also sometimes has the meaning ‘for this reason’:

**Darum wollte ich ja nicht hingehen.**

That’s the reason why I didn’t want to go.

► See also [32](#), [38.2](#) and [42.3e](#)

## 51

### Comparison of adverbs

#### 51.1

The comparative of adverbs is essentially the same as that of adjectives (see [105](#)):

**schnell** ‘quickly/fast’, **schneller** ‘more quickly/faster’

**gut** ‘well’, **besser** ‘better’

**effizient** ‘efficiently’, **effizienter** ‘more efficiently’.

#### 51.2

As with adjectives, ‘than’ in a comparison is expressed by **als**:

**Tobias behauptet, er habe die Situation besser als alle anderen verstanden.**

Tobias claims that he (had) understood the situation better than all the others.

► See [8.3](#) for use of **als** as a conjunction; see also [23.1c](#)

#### 51.3

The superlative form of the adverb is the same as that of the predicative adjective ([43](#) and [48](#)):

**Sie läuft am schnellsten.**

She runs the fastest.

**In unsrer Familie spricht mein Vater Englisch am besten.**

My father is the best English speaker in our family.

#### 51.4

The superlative of adverbs can also be formed in other ways:

(a) Through the use of **äußerst**, **höchst** or **möglichst**:

**Er hat die Sache äußerst schnell erledigt.**

He dealt with the matter extremely quickly.

**Die Studierenden haben *höchst* leichtsinnig reagiert.**

The students reacted in a most thoughtless manner.

**Teilen Sie uns bitte *möglichst* bald mit, ob Sie unsere Kampagne unterstützen werden.**

Please let us know as soon as possible whether you will support our campaign.

- (b) An alternative to **am schnellsten**, **am besten**, etc. is the use of **aufs Schnellste**, **aufs Beste**, etc.:

**Wir haben ihm per Brief *aufs Wärmste* gratuliert.**

We sent him a letter with our warmest congratulations.

**Die Tagung war *aufs Beste* organisiert.**

The conference was extremely well organized.

The sense here is 'could not be warmer/better'.

## 51.5

There are a small number of irregular comparative and superlative adverbial forms:

<b>bald</b> 'soon'	<b>eher/früher</b> 'sooner'	<b>am ehesten/am frühesten</b> 'soonest'
<b>gern</b> 'gladly/keenly'	<b>lieber</b> 'more gladly/rather'	<b>am liebsten</b> 'most gladly/most of all'
<b>nah</b> 'closely'	<b>näher</b> 'more closely'	<b>am nächsten</b> 'most closely/closest'
<b>viel</b> 'much'	<b>mehr</b> 'more'	<b>am meisten</b> 'most'
<b>oft</b> 'often'	<b>öfter</b> 'more often'	<b>am öftesten (or am häufigsten)</b> 'most often'

Note the adverbial superlative forms in **-ens**, the most common of which are:

**bestens** 'very well'

**höchstens** 'at (the) most'

**meistens** 'mostly'

**mindestens** 'at least'

**nächstens** 'shortly'

**schnellstens** 'as quickly as possible'

**strengstens** 'strictly'

**wärmstens** 'most warmly'

**wenigstens** 'at least'.

**In der U-Bahn ist das Rauchen *strengstens* verboten.**

Smoking in the underground is strictly forbidden.

**Der Aufsatz wird *höchstens* vier Seiten lang sein.**

The essay will be four sides long at most.

**Mein Kollege in Bochum hat Sie *wärmstens* empfohlen.**

My colleague in Bochum has given you the warmest of recommendations.

# VIII

## Word structure and word formation

### 52 Principles of word formation

**52.1** This section describes the main ways in which complex words are formed by combining vocabulary elements. For example: **Umweltfreundlichkeit** ‘environmental friendliness’ is composed of **Umwelt** ‘environment’ + **Freundlichkeit** ‘friendliness’. Each of these in turn is built up as follows:

**um** ‘around’ + **Welt** ‘world’ > **Umwelt** ‘environment’  
**Freund** ‘friend’ + **-lich** > **freundlich** ‘friendly’ + **-keit** > **Freundlichkeit** ‘friendliness’.

The patterns of word formation are listed in this section simply according to whether they involve elements added to the beginning of a word (prefixes), to the end of a word (suffixes) or some other process.

**52.2** It is important to realize that you cannot generalize from most of these patterns to predict other words. This is as true of English as it is of German. Note the following three pairs of words:

**tief** > **Tiefe**; **schön** > **Schönheit**; **schnell** > **Schnelligkeit**  
deep > depth; beautiful > beauty; fast > speed.

Learning English involves knowing that the noun formed from the adjective ‘steep’ is not ‘stepth’. Similarly, learning German involves knowing that the word for ‘speed’ is not **Schnelle**.

**52.3** The irregularity of these patterns makes them largely unpredictable for someone in the early stages of learning the language. It is advisable not to coin words you have not met before on the basis of one of these patterns. But a knowledge of them will prove very useful in recognizing the meaning of words encountered for the first time and is therefore important in building vocabulary.

**52.4** Some word formations have acquired specialized meanings. Thus, **die Höhle** (derived from **hohl** ‘hollow’) ought to mean ‘hollowness’ but actually means ‘cave’, and **hitzefrei** might mean ‘free from heat’ but actually means ‘on official holiday from school because of extremely hot weather’.

**52.5** The umlaut (see 1.5) is sometimes involved in the process of word formation in German, but it is not always possible to predict when it will be present.

The most important patterns are listed below.



**53 Forming verbs****53.1 Without a prefix**

All the verbs in this section are weak (see 33.4).

(a) **-ieren** can form verbs from nouns:

**die Analyse** ‘analysis’ > **analysieren** ‘to analyse’  
**die Kontrolle** ‘check/control’ > **kontrollieren** ‘to check/control’  
**das Telefon** ‘telephone’ > **telefonieren** ‘to speak on the phone’.

(b) **-en** can be added to a noun to form a verb, sometimes following a pattern that begins with an adjective:

**warm** ‘warm’ > **die Wärme** ‘warmth’ > **wärmen** ‘to warm’  
**stark** ‘strong’ > **die Stärke** ‘strength’ > **stärken** ‘to strengthen’  
**die Farbe** ‘colour’ > **färben** ‘to colour’.

(c) Many verbs recently imported from English add **-en** to the English word:

**boxen** ‘to box’, **checken** ‘to check/make sure’.

▶ See 36 on separable and inseparable prefixes; see 57 on the meaning of verbal prefixes

**54 Forming nouns**

▶ See also 58.4 on formal nominal style

**54.1 Using prefixes**

Common prefixes include:

**Fehl-** ‘false/wrong/mistaken’:

**der Fehlstart** ‘false start’, **die Fehleinschätzung** ‘mistaken estimate’, **die Fehlprognose** ‘false prognosis’.

**Grund-** ‘basic/essential’:

**die Grundregel** ‘basic (ground) rule’, **die Grundlage** ‘basis’, **die Grundhaltung** ‘basic attitude’, **die Grundschule** ‘primary (elementary) school’.

**Haupt-** ‘main’:

**das Hauptargument** ‘main argument’, **die Hauptsache** ‘main thing’, **das Hauptfach** ‘main subject of study’.

**Miss-** ‘wrong’ (like English ‘mis-’):

**der Misserfolg** ‘failure/fiasco’, **der Missbrauch** ‘abuse/improper use’, **das Missverständnis** ‘misunderstanding’.

**Neben-** ‘secondary/incidental’:

**das Nebenargument** ‘secondary argument’, **das Nebenfach** ‘subsidiary subject of study’, **die Nebenwirkung** ‘side effect’.

**Nicht-** ‘non-’:

**der Nichtraucher** ‘non-smoker’, **der Nichtschwimmer** ‘non-swimmer’, **der/die Nichtversicherte** ‘uninsured person’.

**Riesen-** ‘enormous’:

**der Riesenerfolg** ‘huge success’, **das Riesenproblem** ‘huge problem’, **die Riesensumme** ‘huge amount (of money)’.

**Schein-** ‘illusory/not real’:

**das Scheinargument** ‘bogus argument’, **der Scheinerfolg** ‘illusory success’, **die Scheinehe** ‘fictitious marriage’.

**Scheiß-** (colloquial, potentially offensive) expresses contempt and dislike (see also [58.3](#) and [104.2](#)):

**das Scheißargument** ‘rotten/poor argument’, **die Scheißschule** ‘rotten school’.

**Teil-** ‘part/partial’:

**der Teilerfolg** ‘partial success’, **die Teilzeitarbeit** ‘part-time work’.

**Un-** gives a negative (see also [47.5](#) and [75.5](#)):

**der Unsinn** ‘nonsense’, **das Unglück** ‘unhappiness’. Some of the words it forms have unusual nuances: **das Ungewitter** ‘thunderstorm’, **der Unmensch** ‘inhuman person/monster’, **die Unmenge** ‘huge quantity’.

**Ur-** ‘original/ancient’:

**die Urquelle** ‘original source’, **der Urgroßvater** ‘great-grandfather’.

## 54.2

### Meaning and gender of compound nouns

(a) The final element in a compound determines the meaning and gender of the whole (see [26.1](#)):

**die Maschine** ‘machine’

**das Büro** ‘office’

**die Büromaschine** is a particular kind of machine: an ‘office machine’

**der Büromaschinenhersteller** is a particular kind of **Hersteller** ‘manufacturer’: a ‘manufacturer of office machines’.

(b) A ‘linking’ letter, **(e)s** or **(e)n**, is sometimes found between the main elements of the compound word:

**Büromaschine~~n~~hersteller** ‘manufacturer of office machines’

**Geschwindigkeits~~n~~grenze** ‘speed limit’.

## 54.3

### Using suffixes

► See also [25.1](#), [25.3](#), [25.5](#), [29.2](#) and [29.4](#)

Common suffixes are shown below. Note that all nouns formed by adding the same suffix have the same gender. Where an umlaut can be added as part of this process, this is added only where there is a vowel that can take an umlaut (**a**, **o**, **u**, **au**; see [1.5](#)).

- chen/-lein** (with umlaut on the stressed vowel) form neuter nouns denoting diminutives:  
**das Häuschen** 'little house'.
- e** (with umlaut on the stressed vowel) forms feminine nouns from adjectives, denoting an abstract quality:  
**die Tiefe** 'depth', **die Größe** 'size', **die Schärfe** 'sharpness'.
- e** forms feminine nouns from some verbs, denoting a concrete event:  
**die Durchsage** 'announcement', **die Anfrage** 'enquiry'.
- ei** forms feminine nouns denoting collections of things:  
**die Datei** 'data bank', **die Kartei** 'card index', **die Bummellei** 'laziness'.
- er** forms masculine nouns denoting a person (or thing) who performs the action described in a verb:  
**der Verteidiger** 'defender', **der Fahrer** 'driver', **der Kopierer** 'photocopier'.
- erei** forms feminine nouns denoting a repeated and/or annoying action:  
**die Angeberei** 'idle boasting', **die Schweinerei** 'dirty trick/awful mess', **die Paukerei** 'revision (for exams)'.
- heit/-keit/-igkeit** form feminine nouns from adjectives and other nouns, usually denoting an abstract concept:  
**die Kindheit** 'childhood', **die Sicherheit** 'safety/security', **die Klugheit** 'cleverness', **die Eitelkeit** 'vanity', **die Geschwindigkeit** 'speed', **die Minderheit** 'minority', **die Möglichkeit** 'possibility'.
- ik** forms feminine nouns, usually denoting academic disciplines:  
**die Informatik** 'information technology', **die Statistik** 'statistics', **die Mathematik** 'mathematics'.
- But:  
**der Atlantik**, **der Pazifik** (because these are oceans: **der Ozean**).
- in** forms feminine nouns identifying a person as female:  
**die Verteidigerin** 'defender/defence counsel', **die Professorin** 'professor', **die Amerikanerin** 'American woman'.
- ling** forms masculine nouns denoting a person:  
**der Säugling** '(suckling) infant', **der Feigling** 'coward'.
- nis** forms mostly neuter nouns:  
**das Hindernis** 'obstacle' but **die Finsternis** 'darkness'.
- schaft** forms feminine abstract nouns:  
**die Bruderschaft** 'brotherhood', **die Mutterschaft** 'motherhood'.
- tum** forms mainly neuter nouns denoting an abstract category or a collective group:  
**das Wachstum** 'growth', **das Bürgertum** 'middle classes', **das Altertum** 'antiquity' but **der Reichtum** 'wealth'.

**-ung** forms feminine nouns from verbs, and denotes either a process or the result of a process:

**die Behandlung** ‘treatment’, **die Betreuung** ‘supervision’, **die Bestrafung** ‘punishment’, **die Bohrung** ‘drilling/hole’, **die Verfilmung** ‘filming/filmed version of a book’ but **die Sitzung** ‘session (of a meeting)’.

**-wesen** forms neuter nouns denoting a system or organism:

**das Bankwesen** ‘banking (system)’, **das Verkehrswesen** ‘transport (system)’, **das Lebewesen** ‘living organism’.

Adjectival nouns with the gender **das** denote a general or abstract quality:

**das Mögliche** ‘what is possible’, **das Gemeinte** ‘what was intended’, **das Vergangene** ‘what is past’, **das Aktuelle** ‘what is topical’.

► See also 28.5; see 25–27 for rules on the gender of compound nouns

#### 54.4 Forming nouns from the principal parts of verbs

There are four patterns for forming nouns from verbs:

- (a) From the infinitive, with the gender **das**, usually denoting the act of performing the activity described by the verb:

**das Warten** ‘waiting’  
**das Reden** ‘talking’  
**das Trinken** ‘drinking’.

Any infinitive can be turned into a noun in this way. Occasionally, the noun formed in this way can have an additional meaning. For example, **das Schreiben** can mean both ‘(act of) writing’ and ‘written document’.

► See also 28.6

- (b) From the present participle (see 33.1), usually denoting the person or thing performing the action:

**der, die Studierende** ‘student’  
**der, die Mitsingende** ‘person singing along’  
**der, die Mitmachende** ‘person who participates’  
**der, die Umziehende** ‘person who is moving house’.

- (c) From the past participle (33.1). The past participle of transitive verbs (i.e. those that take an accusative object) usually has a passive sense (40):

**der, die Angeklagte** ‘the accused’ (**jmdn. an\*klagen** ‘to accuse sb.’)  
**das Vereinbarte** ‘that which has been agreed’ (**etw. vereinbaren** ‘to agree on sth.’).

► See also 28.5

The past participle of intransitive verbs (i.e. those that do not take an accusative object) simply denotes an action that happened in the past:

**das Ausgedruckte** ‘printout’ (**aus\*drucken** ‘to print out’).

- (d) Using the vowel changes in the strong verb pattern (see 33.5) to form masculine nouns. The principal parts involved are the present tense stem, the simple past stem and the past participle (see 33.9):

<b>beginnen</b>	<b>i – a – o</b>	‘to begin’	<b>der Beginn</b>	‘beginning’
<b>springen</b>	<b>i – a – u</b>	‘to jump’	<b>der Sprung</b>	‘jump’
<b>greifen</b>	<b>ei – i – i</b>	‘to grab’	<b>der Griff</b>	‘handle’
<b>schneiden</b>	<b>ei – i – i</b>	‘to cut’	<b>der Schnitt</b>	‘cut’
<b>sitzen</b>	<b>i – a – e</b>	‘to be sitting’	<b>der Sitz</b>	‘seat’
<b>stehen</b>	<b>e – a – a</b>	‘to stand’	<b>der Stand</b>	‘stand/state’
<b>stoßen</b>	<b>o – ie – o</b>	‘to push’	<b>der Stoß</b>	‘push/collision’.

Some nouns are formed using an additional vowel change:

<b>brechen</b>	<b>i – a – o</b>	‘to break’	<b>der Bruch</b>	‘break/fracture’
<b>fliegen</b>	<b>ie – o – o</b>	‘to fly’	<b>der Flug</b>	‘flight’
<b>ziehen</b>	<b>ie – o – o</b>	‘to pull’	<b>der Zug</b>	‘train/draught’
<b>schließen</b>	<b>ie – o – o</b>	‘to close/ to conclude’	<b>der Schluss</b>	‘conclusion/ending’.

## 55 Forming adjectives

► See also 43

### 55.1 Using suffixes

- (a) The following suffixes form adjectives from nouns:

**-arm** ‘poor in/low in’:

**kinderarm** ‘with not many children’, **phosphatarm** ‘low in phosphates’.

**-bar** ‘-able/-ible’:

**machbar** ‘doable/viable’, **erreichbar** ‘reachable/attainable’, **sichtbar** ‘visible’.

► See also 40.4c

**-en/-ern** (sometimes with umlaut on the preceding vowel):

**golden** ‘golden’, **eisern** ‘made of iron’, **hölzern** ‘wooden’.

**-feindlich** ‘hostile towards/bad for’:

**umweltfeindlich** ‘bad for the environment’, **kinderfeindlich** ‘anti-children/not catering for children’, **familienfeindlich** ‘hostile to the family’.

**-fern** ‘distant from’:

**bürgerfern** ‘remote from ordinary people’, **praxisfern** ‘not very practically oriented/too theoretical’.

**-frei** ‘free from’:

**phosphatfrei** ‘phosphate-free’, **koffeinfrei** ‘caffeine-free’, **ideologiefrei** ‘free from ideology’.

**-freundlich** ‘friendly towards/good for’:

**umweltfreundlich** ‘environmentally friendly’, **kinderfreundlich** ‘good for children’, **familienfreundlich** ‘good for the family’.

**-haft** ‘like’ (see 74):

**lehrerhaft** ‘schoolmasterly’, **meisterhaft** ‘masterful’.

**-ig** (sometimes with umlaut on the preceding vowel):

**eisig** ‘icy’, **brüchig** ‘fragile’, **dreistündig** ‘lasting three hours’, **zweitägig** ‘lasting two days’, **dreiwöchig** ‘lasting three weeks’, **viermonatig** ‘lasting four months’, **sechsjährig** ‘lasting six years’.

**-isch** (sometimes with umlaut) (see 74):

**kindisch** ‘childish’, **exemplarisch** ‘exemplary’, **spöttisch** ‘mocking’.

**-lich** (sometimes with umlaut):

**kindlich** ‘childlike’, **freundlich** ‘friendly’, **vertraglich** ‘contractual’ (but **verträglich** ‘agreeable, digestible’), **täglich** ‘daily’, **wöchentlich** ‘weekly’, **monatlich** ‘monthly’, **jährlich** ‘yearly’, **zweijährlich** ‘biennially’.

► See also 40.4c

**-los** ‘without’:

**kinderlos** ‘childless’, **ideenlos** ‘without ideas’, **rücksichtslos** ‘thoughtless/inconsiderate’.

**-mäßig** ‘pertaining to’:

**gefühlsmäßig** ‘emotional’, **planmäßig** ‘according to (the) plan’, **geschäftsmäßig** ‘businesslike’.

**-nah** ‘close to’:

**bürgernah** ‘close to ordinary people’, **praxisnah** ‘applied’ (rather than theoretical).

**-reich** ‘rich in/high in’:

**kinderreich** ‘having many children’, **ideenreich** ‘with lots of ideas’, **phosphatreich** ‘high in phosphates’.

- (b) The present participle (see 33.1) and the past participle of all verbs can be used adjectivally. Here are some examples:

*Past participle:*

**geeignet** ‘suitable’, **gefragt** ‘popular (often asked for)’, **gelernt** ‘trained/qualified’, **erfahren** ‘experienced’.

*Present participle:*

**führend** ‘leading’, **fragend** ‘questioning’, **stehend** ‘standing’, **durchgehend** ‘continuous/non-stop’.

## 55.2 Using prefixes

There are many prefixes that alter the meaning of an adjective, including **un-** ‘not’ and **ur-** ‘original/very old’; and several that intensify the meaning, such as **hoch-** ‘very’ and **höchst-**, **riesen-**, **super-** ‘extremely’:

**uninteressant** ‘uninteresting’ (see 47.5)

**uralt** ‘ancient’

**hochinteressant** 'extremely interesting'  
**höchstwahrscheinlich** 'most probably'  
**riesengroß** 'enormous'  
**superfit** 'super fit'.

## 56 Forming adverbs

**56.1** Most adjectives can be used as adverbs without a change in their form (see 50.2). For patterns forming distinct adverbs, see 50.3.

**56.2** Where an adjective form exists alongside an adverbial form ending in **-erweise**, the adverb is almost always a sentence adverb, i.e. it relates to the sentence as a whole rather than to a specific word:

**Das hat er glücklicherweise nicht erfahren.**  
 Fortunately, he didn't find that out.

**56.3** Note that the adverbial form ending in **-weise** is occasionally used adjectivally, with the full range of adjective endings (see 44–46):

**Das stimmt teilweise.**  
 That is partly true.

**Ist das nicht ein teilweiser Widerspruch?**  
 Isn't that a partial contradiction?

**Das ist eine teilweise Erklärung.**  
 That is a partial explanation.

► See also 50.3

## 57 Verbal prefixes

### 57.1 Prefixes that are always separable

► See 36.1

**ab-** 'away/off/finish off, de-, dis-':

**ab\*fahren** 'to depart'  
**etw. ab\*schließen** 'to finish off/conclude'  
**jmdn./etw. ab\*tun** 'to discard/dismiss/put aside'.

**an-** 'on, onto/a little bit':

**jmdn./etw. an\*schauen** 'to look at sb./sth.'  
**ein Gerät an\*machen** 'to switch on an appliance'  
**jmdn./etw. an\*brennen** 'to burn slightly, singe sb./sth.' (see 76.3).

**auf-** 'up/open':

**etw. auf\*hängen** 'to hang sth. up'  
**etw. auf\*wärmen** 'to warm sth. up'  
**etw. auf\*machen** 'to open'.  
**aus-** 'off/out (of), from':  
**ein Gerät aus\*machen** 'to switch off an appliance'  
**jmdn./etw. aus\*machen** 'to make sb./sth. out (see clearly)'.

**ein-** ‘in, into/get used to’:

**ein\*schränken** ‘to constrain/limit (contain within a limit)’  
**sich ein\*arbeiten** ‘to get used to the work’.

**entgegen-** ‘towards/in the opposite direction’:

**jmdm. entgegen\*kommen** ‘come towards sb./be accommodating’.

**fern-** ‘distant’:

**fern\*sehen** ‘to watch TV’  
**fern\*bleiben** ‘to stay away’.

**hinzu-** ‘in addition’:

**etw. hinzu\*schreiben** ‘to add sth. (in writing)’  
**etw. hinzu\*sagen** ‘to say sth. in addition’.

**mit-** ‘as well’:

**mit\*machen** ‘to join in’  
**mit\*singen** ‘to sing along’.

**nach-** ‘after/follow, imitate, repeat’:

**etw. nach\*holen** ‘to catch up on sth.’  
**jmdm. etw. nach\*machen** ‘to imitate/copy sb.’  
**jmdm. nach\*singen** ‘to sing what sb. else has just sung’.

**vor-** ‘before, in front of/show how to’:

**etw. vor\*zeigen** ‘to show, present sth.’  
**jmdm. etw. vor\*werfen** ‘to accuse sb. of sth.’ (*lit.* to throw sth. in front of sb.)  
**jmdm. etw. vor\*machen** ‘to show sb. how to do sth.’

**weg-** ‘away’ (see 80.7):

**weg\*fahren** ‘to drive off’  
**weg\*bleiben** ‘to stay away’.

**wieder-** ‘again’ (see 36.3d):

**jmdn. wieder\*sehen** ‘to see someone again’  
**wieder\*kehren** ‘to return’.

**zu-** ‘to, towards/closed’:

**zu\*schauen** ‘to watch (as a spectator)’  
**jmdm. etw. zu\*flüstern** ‘to whisper sth. to sb.’  
**etw. zu\*machen** ‘to close/shut’.

**zurück-** ‘back/return’:

**zurück\*blättern** ‘to flick back through the pages’.

**zusammen-** ‘together/collapse’:

**etw. zusammen\*tun** ‘to pool, put sth. together’  
**zusammen\*brechen** ‘to collapse’ (*lit.* break together)  
**jmdn. zusammen\*schlagen** ‘to beat sb. up’.



## 57.2

## Prefixes that are always inseparable

► See 36.2

**be-** and **be-**...**-ig-** (sometimes with umlaut) produce verbs with an accusative object (see 18.1) from nouns and adjectives:

**der Nachteil** 'disadvantage' > **jmdn. benachteiligen** 'to disadvantage sb.'

**die Vollmacht** 'power of authority' > **jmdn. bevollmächtigen** 'to give sb. power of authority'

**die Schranke** 'barrier' > **jmdn./etw. beschränken** 'to restrict sb./sth.'

**rein** 'clean' > **etw. bereinigen** 'to clear sth. up (misunderstanding, etc.)/put straight'.

**be-** also forms verbs with an accusative object that can be used instead of a verb + preposition sequence:

**auf eine Frage antworten** > **eine Frage beantworten** 'to answer a question'.

**ent-** often suggests removing something (compare English 'dis-', 'de-'):

**jmdn. entmutigen** 'to discourage/make sb. feel dispirited'

**entkommen** 'to escape'.

**er-** produces verbs with an accusative object, and suggests going through to the final consequence of an action:

**jmdn. ermutigen** 'to encourage/cheer up sb.'

**eine Lohnerhöhung erstreiken** 'to get a wage increase by striking'

**jmdn. erschießen** 'to shoot a person dead'.

**miss-** 'wrong':

**misshandeln** 'to maltreat'

**missverstehen** 'to misunderstand'.

**ver-** (sometimes ending in **-ern**) can form verbs from nouns and adjectives with a variety of meanings, usually denoting some kind of process:

**der Stein** 'stone' > **versteinern** 'turn to stone/ossify'

**die Ursache** 'cause' > **verursachen** 'to cause' (with a negative consequence)

**tief** 'deep' > **vertiefen** 'to deepen'

**groß** 'large' > **größer** 'larger' > **vergrößern** 'to enlarge'.

**ver-** sometimes marks the process as a negative one:

**jmdn. verleiten** 'to lead sb. astray'

**verkommen** 'to go to ruin'

**etw. verlernen** 'to forget sth. you have learnt'.

**sich ver-** 'make a mistake':

**sich versprechen** 'to make a slip of the tongue'

**sich verirren** 'to stray/get lost'

**sich vertun** 'to make an error' (informal).

**zer-** 'into small pieces':

**etw. zertreten** 'to break sth. by standing on it'

**etw. zerlegen** 'to disassemble carefully/analyse sth.'

## 57.3

## Prefixes that can be separable or inseparable

▶ See 36.3

**durch-** ‘through’**jmdn./etw. durchschauen** ‘to see through/not be fooled by sb. or sth.’**durch etw. durch\*schauen** ‘to look through sth.’**hinter-** ‘behind’ (nearly always inseparable verbs)**etw. irgendwo hinterlegen** ‘to deposit sth. somewhere for safe keeping’**über-** ‘over, across/too much/do again’**etw. oder jmdn. über\*setzen** ‘to ferry sb. or sth. across’**etw. übersetzen** ‘to translate sth.’**etw. oder jmdn. überschätzen** ‘to overestimate sb. or sth.’**etw. überarbeiten** ‘to rework sth.’**um-** ‘around/change’**(her-)um\*gehen** ‘to walk round’**jmdn./etw. umgehen** ‘to evade sth. or sb.’**etw. um\*schreiben** ‘to rewrite sth.’**etw. umschreiben** ‘to paraphrase sth.’**unter-** ‘under, underneath/too low’**jmdn./etw. irgendwo unter\*bringen** ‘to put sb. up/provide accommodation for sb./find a place for sth.’**etw. unternehmen** ‘to undertake sth.’**etw. unterschreiben** ‘to sign a document’**jmdn./etw. unterschätzen** ‘to underestimate sb. or sth.’

There are also a number of inseparable verbs beginning with **unter-** that now have only a remote connection to the meaning ‘under’, e.g. **unterrichten** ‘to teach/instruct’, **unterbrechen** ‘to interrupt’.

**voll-** ‘complete/full’**voll\*tanken** ‘to fill up with petrol’**etw. vollbringen** ‘to succeed in doing sth./accomplish sth.’**wider-** ‘against’**jmdm./etw. widersprechen** ‘to contradict sb. or sth.’

There are only two separable verbs beginning with **wider-**:

**etw. wider\*spiegeln** ‘to reflect/mirror sth.’**wider\*hallen** ‘to echo’.

# IX

## Style and orthography

### 58 Register and regional variation

#### 58.1

All languages are characterized by variations in use. German varies according to whether it is being spoken or written, the geographical area in which it is being spoken, and the purpose to which it is being put. This section explains and illustrates the variations associated with 'register', a style of language used for a particular purpose, in a particular social setting or when discussing a particular topic. It also draws attention to regional variations in the use of modern German.

Native speakers build up an almost instinctive appreciation of register and what is 'appropriate' language use in a given context, but for the foreign language learner this is a necessarily more laborious and conscious process. Despite huge changes in recent years in the way language is presented in communicative settings in many modern foreign language textbooks, it remains the case that in the early stages of learning a foreign language we are mostly exposed to a stylistically uniform version of the language. The more advanced learner needs to gain an appreciation of register variety, to recognize variations and why they occur, and gradually to learn when to use different forms of the language in their own spoken and written German.

#### 58.2

The stylistic level used will depend on the following:

(a) Spoken or written:

Spoken language can vary considerably according to the situation in which it is used, and certain grammatical rules (relating, for example, to complete utterances or connected syntax) may not always be rigidly applied. It also rarely features complex sentences with subordinate clauses, and often includes regional expressions. Written language, on the other hand, is more precise, more organized and coherent. It closely observes grammatical rules, is syntactically more complex with longer and, at times, multiple-clause sentences, and features structures rarely encountered in the spoken language, such as the genitive case or the present/first subjunctive. There tend to be few regional variations, usually limited to occasional items of vocabulary.

(b) The situation:

The context will determine to a large extent how formal language use is. Thus the words and expressions used in a debate in the Bundestag will differ from a discussion on the same topic among colleagues in an office; similarly, people tend to speak with greater formality in the setting of a business meeting than they would when negotiating over the telephone. In writing, the degree of formality can vary considerably. Personal letters will always tend towards the informal, while communications from public

authorities will usually be very formal. Work-related correspondence is generally becoming less formal, but reports, minutes of meetings, etc. still tend to be characterized by a formal register.

A key determinant of register use is the relative age of the speakers/writers. There is still a tendency to adopt more formal language when addressing an older person, a mark of respect that is particularly expected when children or youngsters are communicating with adults. This is closely tied to the use of **Sie** when addressing adults beyond the immediate family. Conversely, children up to the age of 15 or 16 tend to be spoken to in a more informal manner with use of **du** (see 60.1 for a full discussion).

Another issue to consider is status and whether one speaker/writer wishes to acknowledge their professional standing in relation to another. For example, a secretary addressing a boss is likely to use more formal language than when addressing his or her peers; similarly, a student writing to a lecturer is likely to adopt a formal, deferential register, including a formal mode of address such as **Sehr geehrter Herr Dr Denkler**, and a lecturer is also likely to use formal language when responding, since to do otherwise might be seen as impolite or disrespectful.

(c) The topic under discussion:

All specialist areas of activity have their own particular set of terms and expressions that tend to be used in all contexts, regardless of whether the medium is spoken or written; for example, language relating to the environment, education or politics. However, in certain areas (e.g. IT, medicine) practitioners will use specialist terms with other professionals but different ones with customers or patients. The variations here are less extensive than those determined by medium of communication or context but they can nevertheless be quite marked.

Register cannot easily be divided into discrete categories and it is better to think of it in terms of a sliding scale from extreme informality to extreme formality, with numerous intermediate registers whose boundaries often merge with one another. This absence of clear rules and categories makes the learner's task a difficult one and, to help simplify the situation, this section distinguishes between three fundamental register groupings: informal or colloquial; formal or written; and neutral. In so doing, it follows the model established in R.E. Batchelor and M.H. Offord, *A Guide to Contemporary French Usage* (Cambridge, 1982) and exemplified in Martin Durrell, *Using German: A Guide to Contemporary Usage* (2nd edition, Cambridge, 2006).

### 58.3 Informal or colloquial

This is characterized by non-standard pronunciation and by a relaxed approach to grammatical and syntactical norms. Although you might sometimes find informal German in literature, tabloid newspapers or comics, generally it is rarely written down. It is the normal style of conversation for the vast majority of people and thus usually features everyday topics. The examples in the following sections apply mostly to spoken rather than written language.

Key features of informal style include:

(a) Reduction of unstressed syllables:

**ich mach es morgen**  
I'll do it tomorrow

**ich geb dir einen guten Rat**  
I'll give you some good advice

**Schau'n Sie mal!**  
Have a look.

Imperatives in the **du** form can also be made to sound more informal by dropping the final **-e** from the verb where there is one (see [41.2c](#)):

**Bitt doch ihn!**  
Go on, ask him!

► See [59.5c](#); see also [60.1](#) on using **du** and **Sie**

(b) Reduction of articles, determiners and possessive adjectives:

**Mit 'nem alten Kumpel**  
with an old mate

**so 'n schöner Tag!**  
what a lovely day!

**durch 'n Tunnel**  
through the tunnel

**dies neue Büro**  
this new office

**von unsem Onkel**  
from our uncle.

(c) Elision and fusion:

**Bring's ruhig rein.**  
Do bring it in.

**Mi'm Auto**  
by car

**Haste noch Zeit?**  
Do you have time?

**HabenSe Geschwister?**  
Do you have any brother and sisters?

(d) Assimilation of consonants:

**hundert fuffzig Jahre alt**  
a hundred and fifty years old

**inner Tasche**  
in a bag.

(e) Omission: in informal conversation, especially when speaking quickly, many German speakers omit the pronouns **ich**, **du** and **es**:

**Kannst (du) mir die Zeitung holen?**  
Can you get me the paper?

**(Es/Das) Müsste eigentlich reichen.**  
That ought to be enough.

**(Ich) Weiß es net/nit.**  
Don't know.

Where the context makes the meaning obvious, it is also quite common to omit the object of the verb or some other completion when responding to what the other person has just said. This leads to sentences in which the finite verb appears to be in first position (compare 5.1–2):

**Kennst du den Harald? > Nein, kenn ich nicht.**

Do you know Harald? > No, don't know him.

► See also 23.2g

**Hast du das Bier schon kaltgestellt? > Hab' ich schon heute morgen gemacht.**

Have you chilled the beer? > Did it this morning.

**Kannste morgen bei mir vorbeikommen? > (Nein,) geht (leider) nicht.**

Can you come round tomorrow? > (No,) (unfortunately I) can't.

**Mir ist kalt, und dir? > Mir auch.**

I am cold, and you? > Me too.

► See 19.6 and 42.3a

**Die Musik stört die ganze Nachbarschaft. > Uns nicht.**

The music is disturbing the entire neighbourhood. > Not us.

(f) Repetition:

**Dann wollte sie . . . ja, dann wollte sie nicht nach Hause gehen.**

Then she . . . then she didn't want to go home.

**Wir haben doch nichts darüber gesagt, nichts.**

We really didn't say anything about it, nothing at all.

(g) Fillers:

**siehst du**

you see

**wissen Sie**

you know.

► See also 116.1

(h) Self-correction:

**Nee, da lieg' ich doch falsch.**

No, I've got that wrong.

**Ach, was sag' ich denn da?**

Oh, what am I saying?!

(i) Incompleteness/trailing off:

**Da hatten wir ja keine Chance, na ja . . .**

We just didn't have a chance. Oh well . . .

(j) Use of the definite article with names:

**Du kennst ja die Bärbel, oder?**

You know Bärbel, don't you?

**Der Manfred wollte das nicht einsehen.**

Manfred wouldn't recognize that.

► See 23.2g

- (k) A relaxed approach to grammar, especially sentence structure (see also below for grammar variations specific to German-speaking regions). For example:

In subordinate clauses, verbal elements that normally appear at the end of the clause in careful, formal speech (see 8.1–2) are often brought forward:

**Susi ist krank *geschrieben* erst seit Ende Januar.**

Susi has only been off sick (officially) since the end of January.

(Compare formal syntax: **Susi ist erst seit Ende Januar krank geschrieben.**)

**Ich war nicht da, weil ich ein paar Stunden aufräumen *musste* nach der Party.**

I wasn't there because I had to tidy up for a few hours after the party.

(Compare formal syntax: **Ich war nicht da, weil ich nach der Party ein paar Stunden aufräumen musste.**)

Often this is a result of the speaker trying to make it easier for the listener to pick up the whole verb complex without having to wait until the end of a long clause.

Note also the even more informal variant: **Ich war nicht da, weil nach der Party *musste ich* ein paar Stunden aufräumen.**

Use of **wie** in place of **als** in comparisons:

**Ich bin *älter wie* du.**

I'm older than you.

(See 48.6 for standard use of **als** and **wie**, i.e. **älter als** 'older than' but **so alt wie** 'as old as'.)

Use of repetition in order to emphasize a point:

**Aber der Aufschwung, *der* kann nicht früh genug kommen.**

The upturn cannot come soon enough.

Use of **tun** as an auxiliary verb or, with infinitive, as an alternative to the present tense:

**Das *tät ich* nicht sagen.**

I wouldn't say that.

**Er *tut gerade* duschen.**

He's just having a shower.

Widespread use of **da** in initial position in sentence:

**Da kann man *dagegen* nichts einräumen.**

You can't object to that.

Also splitting of prepositional adverbs:

**Da weiß ich *nichts von*.**

I don't know anything about that.

**Da stimme ich *mit überein*.**

I agree with that.

Use of definite article as demonstrative:

**die da** (for **jene**)  
that one/woman there

**der hier** (for **dieser**)  
this one/man here.

Preference for the dative rather than the genitive after certain prepositions:

**trotz dem schlechten Wetter**  
in spite of the bad weather

**statt ihr**  
instead of her

**wegen dir**  
because of you.

► See also [20.7](#)

(l) Imprecise words when the correct term cannot be found or remembered:

**das Dingsda/das Dingsda/das Dingsbums/das Dingskirchen**  
the what'sit/thingummyjig/do-dah

**das Ding/Dings da**  
that thing over there.

► See [116.2–3](#)

(m) Vulgar formulations: these are words or phrases that are considered taboo in polite everyday speech, although you will often hear the less offensive items in informal speech. Foreign language learners need to be aware of these words and expressions but would be well advised not to use them in their own German until they have a full appreciation of their potential to cause offence.

Vulgar language falls under a number of headings:

(i) Crude terms denoting sexual acts or genitalia:

**ficken** 'to fuck'  
**vögeln/bumsen** 'to shag, screw'  
**-r Schwanzlutscher** 'cock sucker'  
**-r Wichser** 'wanker'  
**-r Arsch** 'arse'  
**-e Fotze** 'cunt'  
**-r Schwanz** 'cock'.

(ii) Terms relating to defecation:

**-e Scheiße/-r Mist** 'shit'  
**scheißen** 'to shit'.

(iii) Terms denoting physical or mental handicap:

**-r Spasti** 'spastic'  
**-r Denkwerg** 'dipstick/simpleton'.

(iv) Homophobic terms of abuse:

**-r Homo** 'queer'  
**-r Schwuchtel** 'queen'



**schwule Sau** ‘bloody poof’  
**-e Lesbe** ‘dyke’  
**-e Transe** ‘tranny’.

(v) Curses and insults:

**(Verdamnte) Scheiße!/Mist** ‘Shit!’  
**Du Arschloch!** ‘You arsehole!’  
**Verpiss dich!** ‘Piss off!’  
**Du Schlampe/Hure!** ‘You slut/whore!’

Calling someone an animal is a common form of abuse in German:

**Hund!/Schweinehund!** ‘Animal/bloody animal!’  
**Schwein!/Drecksau!** ‘You pig!/Bloody pig!’  
**Zicke!** ‘Bitch/cow!’

The prefix **Scheiß-** and another noun (usually not much stronger than English ‘bloody’) is often used to form new swear words, e.g. **Scheißbulle** ‘bloody policeman’, **Scheißhandy** ‘bloody mobile’.

Dismissing someone is often done via the phrase **Er kann mich am Arsch lecken** (‘He can kiss (*lit.* lick) my arse’), which is often simply abbreviated to the elliptical: **Er kann mich (mal) . . . , Du kannst mich (mal) . . . ,** etc.

You will also sometimes hear **Leck mich am Arsch!** In Bavaria this can serve as a crude expression of surprise: **Ja, da leckst mi am Arsch!** (comparable to English ‘Well, bugger me!’).

(n) Vocabulary largely restricted to the informal register:

**kapieren** (for **verstehen**) ‘to understand’  
**die Klamotten** (for **Kleider**) ‘clothes’  
**klauen** (for **stehlen**) ‘to steal’  
**kotzen** (for **sich übergeben**) (*vulgar*) ‘to be sick’  
**kriegen** (for **bekommen**) ‘to get’  
**latschen** (for **gehen**) ‘to walk’  
**losgehen** (for **beginnen**) ‘to get going’  
**pennen** (for **schlafen**) ‘to sleep’  
**die Pinte** (for **das Wirtshaus / die Kneipe**) ‘pub’  
**die Pulle** (for **Flasche**) ‘bottle’  
**saufen** (for **Alkohol trinken**) ‘to booze’  
**Schiss haben** (for **Angst haben**) ‘to be scared’  
**schmeißen** (for **werfen**) ‘to throw’.

(o) Youth language:

Youth language is frequently characterized by an attempt to play or be creative with language, as a way to differentiate oneself from grown-ups and their conventions. With time, however, youth language can enter the language use of other age groups. It also changes quite quickly and so all we can consider here are a few current examples in order to give you a flavour:

(i) Alternative words are often used, e.g. **-r Kürbis** (*lit.* pumpkin) for **-r Kopf** ‘head’ or **packen** ‘to get/understand sth.’ for **verstehen, begreifen** ‘to understand’:

**Ich pack das nicht!**  
 I just don’t get it.

(ii) Meanings are added to existing words:

**fett** ‘brilliant/great/nice’  
**hip** ‘in/cool/modern’  
**null Problem** ‘no problem’.

(iii) Words are given paradoxical meanings:

**-e Massage** ‘beating’  
**-e Kopfmassage** (*lit.* head massage) ‘blow on the head/punch’  
**-e Fußmassage** ‘kick’  
**-r Korkenknaller** ‘tired old joke’.

(iv) Words are changed:

**ödig** (from **öde**) ‘boring’  
**-r Randalo** ‘thug’ (from **-r Randalierer** ‘hooligan, trouble-maker’)  
**vorgestern** more emphatic way of saying **vorgestern** ‘yesteryear’.

(v) New words or phrases are coined:

**-r Halbbomber** – derogatory term for ‘dimwit/weakling/failure’; also with similar meanings: **-r Schwachkopf**, **-r Blödmann**, **-e Dumpfbacke**, **-e Pfeife**, **-e Flasche**, **-s Hirni** (all derogatory)  
**kultig** ‘quirky/cool/iconic’  
**Ötzis** ‘parents’ (from the remains of ancient humans found in the Ötz Valley)  
**zero problemo** (from **null Problem**) ‘no problem/all fine’  
**sich aufbretzeln** ‘to get all dressed up’  
**Wozu bretzelst du dich denn heute auf?**  
 What are you dressing up for today?  
**sich anschönen** ‘to dress up’ is used in a similar way.

(vi) Superlative forms are employed:

**superlustig**, **urkomisch** ‘really funny’.

(vii) Foreign words are germanicized:

**abcoolen** ‘to cool/calm down’  
**händeln** ‘to handle, sort out’  
**Hast du dich jetzt endlich abgecoolt?**  
 Have you finally calmed down?  
**Das hast du gut gehändelt.**  
 You handled that well.

(viii) And, of course, many anglicisms are used:

**beachen** (for **baden gehen**) ‘to go swimming/hang around in the pool/at the beach’  
**chillen** (for **sich entspannen**) to chill out, relax  
**Wann gehen wir endlich wieder gemeinsam beachen?**  
 When are we going swimming again?  
**Willst du heute Abend bei mir chillen?**  
 Do you want to chill at my place this evening?

(ix) Some others are:

**-r Internetjunkie, -r Newsjunkie, etc.**

**-s Tool** ‘computer tool/facility’

**-s Feature**

**-e Online-Community**

**-r Hype**

**-s Streetlabel** ‘designer label’

**-e Supporter** ‘parents’

**-r Manager/-e Managerin** ‘the best/strongest/most dominant/group leader’

**Frag doch irgendeinen *Internetjunkie* aus der *Online-Community*, wenn du nicht weißt, wie dieses *Tool/Feature* funktioniert.**

If you don't know how this tool works, just ask some internet junky about it online.

**Wie mich dieser *Twitter-Hype* nervt!**

This Twitter hype is really getting on my nerves.

**Dieses *Streetlabel* ist echt der Wahnsinn!**

This designer label is quality!

(p) Language of emails and SMS text-speak:

(i) **-e E-Mail** (in Austria, Switzerland and southern Germany also **-s E-Mail, -e elektronische Post**):

**Bitte schicken Sie mir *eine E-Mail* mit den nötigen Daten.**

Please send me an email with the necessary dates.

(ii) **e-mailen, emailen, mailen:**

**Sie hat mir noch immer nicht *gemailt*.**

She hasn't emailed me yet.

(iii) **-e E-Mail-Adresse:**

**Hast du dir schon eine neue *E-Mail-Adresse* zugelegt?**

Have you got a new email address yet?

(iv) **-e Massenmail:**

**Ich finde diese *Massenmails* so unpersönlich.**

I find these mass emails so impersonal.

(v) **-e Spam-Mail, -e unerwünschte Werbe-E-Mail** ‘spam, unsolicited email advertising’ and **forwarden, weiterleiten, weiterschicken** ‘to forward electronically’:

**Bitte *forwarden* Sie mir diese Mail. / Bitte *leiten* Sie diese Mail an mich *weiter*.**

Please forward me this email.

(vi) **-s Attachment, -r Anhang** ‘email attachment’:

**Im *Attachment/Im Anhang* finden Sie die versprochenen Dokumente.**

I attach the documents I promised to send you.

- (vii) **-s Handy, -s Mobiltelefon** (in Switzerland **-s Natel**) and **-s Wertkartenhandy** ‘pay-as-you-go phone’:

**Im Ausland benutze ich ein Wertkartenhandy.**  
‘When I’m abroad I use a pay-as-you-go phone.’

**Hast du einen fixen Vertrag oder ein Wertkartenhandy?**  
Do you have a contract (phone) or pay-as-you-go?

- (viii) **-e SMS** (in Austria and Switzerland **-e/-s SMS**) ‘text message’:

**Wie viel zahlst du pro SMS?**  
How much do you pay for a text?

- (ix) **simsen** (informal), **SMSen** (informal) (for **eine SMS versenden/verschicken**) ‘to text’:

**Wenn du so viel *simst*, brauchst du dich nicht über deine hohe Telefonrechnung zu wundern.**  
You send so many texts you shouldn’t be surprised at the size of your phone bill.

**Etwa 51 Milliarden SMS-Nachrichten *simsen* die Deutschen pro Jahr.**  
The Germans send about 51 billion text messages a year.

**Mit dem *Simsen* entstand eine neue Sprachkultur.**  
Texting created a whole new linguistic culture.

**Deutsche *SMSen* viel; für die Mobilfunkanbieter sind diese Kurznachrichten ein Milliardengeschäft.**  
Germans text a great deal; text messaging is a billion-euro business for mobile phone operators.

- (x) Note the following common text messaging abbreviations (from: [www.sms-sprache.de](http://www.sms-sprache.de)):

**(G)LG, (Ganz) liebe Grüße** ‘Best wishes’

**HDL, Hab dich lieb** ‘Love you’

**ILD, Ich liebe dich** ‘I love you’

**AS, Antworte schnell** ‘Reply soon’

**BB, Bis bald** ‘See you soon’

**BRADUHI, Brauchst du Hilfe?** ‘Do you need help?’

**DAD, Denk an dich** ‘Thinking of you’

**GN8, Gute Nacht** ‘Goodnight’

**Q4, Komme um vier** ‘I’m coming at 4.00’

**WAUDI, Warte auf dich** ‘I’m waiting for you.’

**10MIN2LATE, Verspäte mich um 10 Minuten** ‘I’ll be 10 minutes late.’

- (xi) Note the following internet-related terms:

**googeln** ‘to google’

**-r Podcast** (for **-r (Radio)beitrag zum Herunterladen als Audiodatei**) ‘podcast’  
(a radio item that can be downloaded as an audio file)

**podcasten, einen Podcast bereitstellen** ‘to make a podcast, prepare a podcast’

**downloaden, herunterladen** ‘to download’

**uploaden, hochladen** ‘to upload’

**-s/-r Blog, -s/-r Weblog** ‘blog’

**-r Blogger, -e Bloggerin** ‘blogger’

**bloggen, an einem Blog (mit)schreiben** ‘to blog, to write a blog (with someone)’

**posten** ‘to post online’

**twittern** ‘to twitter’

**adden, andere Nutzer/Nutzerinnen von sozialen Netzwerken als „Freunde“ hinzufügen** ‘to add someone, to add other users of social network spaces as “friends” to your site’

**-r Freundschaftsantrag** ‘friend request’ (on Facebook).

**Ich goog(e)le das, sobald ich online bin.**

I’ll google that as soon as I’m online.

**Möchtest du das Interview *podcasten*?**

Do you want to put the interview up as a podcast?

**Hast du den Beitrag *gepodcastet*?**

Have you put the item up as a podcast?

**Ich habe die Datei *downgeloadet/heruntergeladen*.**

I’ve downloaded the file.

**Kennst du ihren Berlin-Blog?**

Do you know her/their Berlin blog?

**Er ist ein unglaublich guter *Blogger*.**

He’s an incredibly/really good blogger.

**Im Urlaub hat er jeden Tag *gebloggt*.**

He was blogging on holiday every day.

**Bei den Grünen wird auf [www.gruene.at](http://www.gruene.at) *gebloggt*.**

The Greens’ blog can be found at [www.gruene.at](http://www.gruene.at)

**In welchem Forum hast du das *gepostet*?**

On what forum did you post that?

***Twittern* bedeutet per Website oder Handy gerade mal 140 Zeichen „in die Welt“ zu schreiben.**

To twitter means sending ‘the world’ via a website or mobile phone a message of at most 140 characters.

**Wie kann ich auf Facebook Leute *adden*?**

How can I add people to Facebook?

**Hat er dich auch auf Facebook *geaddet*?**

Has he added you to Facebook?

**Ich habe heute zwei neue *Freundschaftsanträge* bekommen.**

I got two new friend requests today.

Note also:

**-r Chat** ‘chat’

**-r Chatraum** ‘chat room’

**chatten** ‘to chat online’

**ins Internet stellen** ‘to upload on to the internet’.

**Diese *Chaträume* sind nach Themen organisiert.**

These chatrooms are organized by topic.

**Mich nervt, dass sie den ganzen Tag *chatten*.**

It really annoys me that they chat online all day long.

**Erklärst du mir bitte, wie ich diese Videos *ins Internet stellen* kann?**

Can you tell me please how to stream these videos?

## 58.4 Formal or written

Like the informal or colloquial category, this register actually covers a wide range of different styles, with differing degrees of formality. For the sake of practicality, however, these are subsumed here under the one label since they have many features in common. In general, the register is characterized by observance of grammatical norms, relatively complex syntax, a wide-ranging and often finely nuanced vocabulary, and, as far as oral delivery is concerned, by clear and careful pronunciation, regional variations notwithstanding. It is used in a variety of modern prose forms, including the press, official reports, writing for non-specialists on the arts, science, politics, health, philosophy, etc., business correspondence, many internet texts, user manuals, instructions, guidebooks, and similar texts. Subsets of this register are: literary language, in particular fiction; specialized texts with their subject-specific variations; academic or scholarly writing; and the jargon texts of ‘bureaucratese’ or ‘Beamtendeutsch’.

- (a) Formal German is characterized by its greater syntactical complexity, with frequent use of subordinate clauses and multiple-clause sentences. For example:

**Am Ende des abenteuerlichen Märchens, als der Konflikt zwischen den Weltrettern, die an Mitmenschlichkeit glauben, und den Weltzerstörern, die eine Gewaltherrschaft wollen, unentrinnbar wird, siegt gegen jede poetologische Regel das Böse.**

At the end of the fairy tale adventure, when the conflict between the saviours of the world with their faith in humane behaviour, and the destroyers of the world with their desire for global dominance, becomes unavoidable, against all the rules of poetry evil triumphs.

- (b) A particular feature of formal German is the use of a noun + verb construction in which the noun is derived from a verb (see 54). For example, **die Buchung** ‘booking/reservation’ is derived from the verb **buchen** ‘to book’. The phrase ‘to make a booking’ is, in German, **eine Buchung vor\*nehmen**. Note that the verb in this kind of construction (here **vor\*nehmen**) simply has the meaning ‘to carry out the action expressed in the noun’. This is a feature commonly found in formal written German, but note that, in spoken German, it sounds extremely formal.

- (i) A compound noun may be found as part of this formal style:

**Unsere Rezeption übernimmt es gerne, die Flugbuchung für Sie vorzunehmen.**

Our reception staff will gladly make the flight reservation for you.

Compare this with the more neutral:

**Unsere Rezeption übernimmt es gerne, Ihren Flug zu buchen.**

Our reception staff will gladly book your flight for you.

► See 26

- (ii) Such phrasal verbs can sometimes involve prepositional expressions:

**Die geplante Vergrößerung der Firma fiel der Finanzkrise zum Opfer.**

The planned extension of the business was a victim of the financial crisis.

- (iii) The preference in this formal kind of style for nouns over other word classes sometimes produces a chain of nouns with, for example, the second noun in the genitive:

**Das Austauschprogramm dient der Förderung der deutsch–amerikanischen Beziehungen.**

(*lit.*) The exchange programme serves the furtherance of German–American relations.

► See 19.6 for verbs with a dative object

Compare this with the less formal construction with a simple verb:

**Das Austauschprogramm fördert die deutsch–amerikanischen Beziehungen.**

The exchange programme furthers German–American relations.

(iv) The verb most commonly found in this kind of formal construction is **treffen**:

**etw./sich auf etw. (= acc.) vor\*bereiten**

to prepare sth. or oneself for sth.

**Vorbereitung(en) für etwas treffen**

to make preparation(s) for sth.

**eine Auslese/eine Auswahl treffen** (from **etw. aus etw. aus\*lesen** and **etw. aus etw. aus\*wählen**)

to make a selection.

However, not all such phrases can be traced back to a verb:

**Maßnahmen treffen**

to introduce measures/to take action

**Vorkehrungen treffen**

to take precautions.

(v) The use of such phrasal verbs is a sign of linguistic sophistication and, as your competence develops, you should be aiming to enrich your style by including them occasionally. However, you would be well advised to do this gradually and not to overdo phrasal verbs since, used to excess, they can make your style appear unduly ‘heavy’ or stilted.

(c) The genitive case is usually only found in formal German:

**Das ist der Wagen meines Onkels.**

That is my uncle’s car.

More informally, one might say: **Das ist der Wagen von meinem Onkel**, or very informally: **Das ist meinem Onkel sein Wagen**. (The latter is also a regional variant.)

Similarly, prepositions taking the genitive tend to be restricted to formal German:

**jenseits/innerhalb der Stadt**

beyond/inside the town

**angesichts des Wetters**

in view of the weather

**anstatt des Außenministers**

instead of the foreign minister

**einschließlich der älteren Einwohner des Dorfs**

including the older citizens of the village.

► See 20.7

Formal written German also commonly features a collection of consecutive genitive forms, where less formal German would prefer the use of **von**:

**angesichts der Baufälligkeit der Mauern der Altstadt**  
in view of the dilapidated state of the old town's walls.

- (d) A typical feature of formal written German is the extended adjectival phrase (see 49):

**Die angesichts der wirtschaftlichen Krise um ihre Arbeitsplätze besorgten VW-Arbeiter haben am Freitag für einen Warnstreik gestimmt.**  
VW workers, concerned about their jobs because of the economic crisis, voted on Friday for a token strike.

In less formal written contexts a relative clause would be preferred here:

**Die VW-Arbeiter, die angesichts der wirtschaftlichen Krise um ihre Arbeitsplätze besorgt sind, haben am Freitag für einen Warnstreik gestimmt.**

- (e) While all registers of German feature the compound subjunctive II with **würde** + infinitive (see 39.7), the simple forms are more likely to feature in formal written German:

**Wenn er pünktlich ankäme, könnten wir die Pläne noch gründlich besprechen.**  
If he arrived on time we could still discuss the plans thoroughly.

Only in literary varieties of formal German will you find less common forms of subjunctive II, as these are nowadays considered awkward or stilted:

**Er wusste es genau: Beföhle es der König, so flöhen die Soldaten sofort aus der Stadt.**  
(*In modern German: Wenn der König es befehlen würde, so würden die Soldaten sofort aus der Stadt fliehen.*)

He knew full well that the soldiers would flee the town as soon as the king commanded them to.

- (f) Formal written German is usually characterized by coherence markers and adverbs that serve to enhance the structure and cogency of the writer's argument:

**Einerseits . . . andererseits**  
On the one hand . . . on the other

**Zum Einen . . . zum Zweiten . . . zum Dritten**  
First . . . second . . . third

**Gleichwohl/nichtsdestoweniger**  
All the same/nevertheless

**Nicht nur . . . sondern auch**  
Not only . . . but also

**Zwar . . . aber**  
Although . . .

**Zwar waren die Metallarbeiter noch nicht bereit die Lohnverhandlungen wieder aufzunehmen, deren Gewerkschaftsvertreter riet ihnen *aber* gegen eine solche hartnäckige Einstellung.**  
Although the metal workers were not yet prepared to resume wage negotiations, their union representatives advised them not to adopt such a stubborn position.



(g) Formal German is further characterized by more frequent use of the passive (see 40):

**Die Minister wurden aufgefordert, ihre Plätze im Konferenzsaal einzunehmen.**

The ministers were requested to take their seats in the conference hall.

**Vor der Verschiffung wird der Rasensprenger von unseren Fachexperten gründlich geprüft.**

The (garden) sprinkler is carefully checked by our experts prior to shipping.

**Der Antrag ist am 07.06.2010 von unserem Finanzamt bearbeitet worden.**

The application was processed by our Finance Section on 7 June 2010.

(h) Formal German is also more likely to employ compound nouns, again often with foreign elements:

**verkehrsmäßig** ‘relating to traffic’

**schwefelsäurehaltig** ‘containing sulphuric acid’

**-s Unkrautbekämpfungsmittel** ‘weed killer’

**-e Evaluierungsfunktion** ‘the function of evaluation’

**-e Managermentalität** ‘the mindset of a manager’

**-e Outsourcing-Gelegenheiten** ‘opportunities to outsource (production, etc.)’

**-e Airbrush-Technik** ‘airbrushing’.

The following is an example of formal German containing several of the above stylistic features:

**Einmal eingeschriebene Studierende erklären für jedes weitere Semester innerhalb einer bestimmten Frist, dass sie weiterhin Mitglied der Universität Heidelberg bleiben möchten. Diese Absichtserklärung wird Rückmeldung genannt.**

**Die Rückmeldung erfolgt durch die Überweisung der entsprechenden Gebühren (Verwaltungsgebühr, Sozialbeitrag, i.d.R. Studiengebühr). Eine Bareinzahlung über die Universitätskasse ist nicht möglich. Im Fall einer Bareinzahlung empfehlen wir Ihnen unser Konto bei der Sparkasse Heidelberg.**

Students already enrolled at the University must state in each subsequent semester within a specified period that they wish to remain a member of the University. This declaration of intent is called re-registering.

Re-registering is via payment of the relevant fees (administrative fee, social contribution, and usually a tuition fee). The University Payments Office cannot accept cash payments. If you wish to pay by cash, we recommend you use our account at the Sparkasse Heidelberg.

(From: Universität Heidelberg,

[www.uni-heidelberg.de/studium/imstudium/formalia/rueckmeldung.html](http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/studium/imstudium/formalia/rueckmeldung.html))

The formal register outlined above tends to be *spoken* only in very formal situations such as public talks, lectures and speeches, and is often read out from a script (see 121).

## 58.5

### Neutral

This ‘normal’ or unmarked use of German represents a central point on the register continuum. It is the type of language that the beginner learner of German encounters in most textbooks and manuals. It avoids regionalism and the extremes of colloquial forms and syntactical complexity. In this book it is considered the ‘default’ register and consequently only categories ‘informal/colloquial’ and ‘formal’ are flagged up.

The neutral register is characterized by (mainly lexical) differences in usage in Germany (D), Austria (A) and Switzerland (CH). The following table provides an overview of some of the most important examples:

<i>D</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>CH</i>
-r Abfalleimer	-r Mistkübel	-r Kehrrichteimer
-s Abitur	-e Matura	-e Matur(a)/-e Maturität
-s Altersheim	-s Altersheim	-s Altersasyl
anfassen	angreifen (also used in Bavaria)	anfassen
-r Anlieger	-r Anrainer	-r Anwohner/-r Anstösser
auswärts	auswärts	ausserorts
-r Autofahrer	-r Autofahrer	-r Führer/-r Automobilist
-r Bahnsteig	-r Bahnsteig	-r Perron
-r Blumenkohl	-r Karfiol	-r Blumenkohl
Bratkartoffeln	Braterdäpfel/-s Geröstete	-e Rösti
-r (Brief)umschlag	-s Kuvert	-s Couvert
-r Bürgersteig/-r Gehweg	-r Gehsteig	-s Trottoir
-e Decke	-r Plafond	-r Plafond
-r Eckball	-r Corner	-r Corner
einige	einige	etwelche
-s Enkelkind/-r Enkel/-e Enkelin	-s Enkelkind/-r Enkel/-e Enkelin	-s Grosskind
sich erkälten	sich verkühlen	sich verkälten
-e Fahrkarte	-e Fahrkarte/-r Fahrschein	-s Billett
-s Fahrrad	-s (Fahr)rad	-s Velo
-r Friseur	-r Friseur	-r Coiffeur
-s Frühstück	-s Frühstück	-s Morgenessen
-s Gehalt	-s Gehalt	-s Salär
-r Geldautomat	-r Bankomat	-r Geldautomat
-e Geldstrafe	-e Geldstrafe	-e Busse
-e Grundschule	-e Volksschule	-e Primarschule
-s Handy/-s Mobiltelefon	-s Handy/-s Mobiltelefon	-s Natel
-s Hackfleisch/-s Gehackte	-s Faschierte	-s Gehackte
hässlich	hässlich	wüst
-r Hausbesitzer	-r Hausherr/-e Hausherrin	-r Hausmeister
-r Hausmeister	-r Hausmeister	-r Abwart
dieses Jahr	heuer	heuer
im Voraus	im Vorhinein	zum Vornherein
Januar	Jänner	Januar
-r Junge	-r Bub/-r Bube	-r Bub/-r Bube (also in southern Germany)
Kartoffeln	Erdäpfel	Kartoffeln
-e Kasse	-e Kassa	-e Kasse
-s Kissen	-r Polster	-s Kissen
-e Klinke/-e Türklinke	-e Schnalle	-e Türfalle
-s Krankenhaus	s Krankenhaus/-s Spital	-s Spital
langweilig	fad	fad
-r Lastwagen	-r Lastwagen	-r Camion
-r Meerrettich	-r Kren	-r Meerrettich
-r Nachname	-r Zuname (dated)	-r Geschlechtsname
parken	parken	parkieren

-r Personalausweis	-r Personalausweis	-e Identitätskarte
-r Pilz	-s Schwammerl	-r Schwamm
im Radio (-s Radio)	im Radio (-r Radio)	am Radio (-r Radio)
-r Rechtsanwalt	-r Rechtsanwalt	-r Fürsprech
-s Regal	-e Stellage	das Gestell
-r Reifen	-r Reifen	-r Pneu
-r Reisebus	-r Reisebus	-r Car
-r Rosenkohl	-e Kohlsprosse	-r Rosenkohl
-e Rückfahrkarte	-e Retour(fahr)karte	-e Retour(fahr)karte/ -s/Retourbillett
-e Sahne	-r (Schlag)obers/-r Schlag	-r/-e Nidel
-r Schaffner	-r Schaffner	-r Kondukteur
-s Schaufenster	-e Auslage	-e Auslage
schick/flott	fesch	fesch
-r Schlitten	-e Rodel	-r Schlitten
-r Schornstein	-r Rauchfang	-r Kamin
-r Schrank	-r Kasten	-r Kasten (also in southern Germany)
-r Sessel	-r Fauteuil	-r Fauteuil
-s Spülbecken	-e Abwasch	-s Abwaschbecken
-e Stehlampe	-e Stehlampe	-e Ständerlampe
-e Straßenbahn	-e Tram/-e Bim/ -e Straßenbahn	-s Tram (also in Bavaria)
-r Stuhl	-r Sessel	-r Stuhl
-e Tomate	-r Paradeiser	-e Tomate
-s Tor	-s Goal	-s Goal
-e Treppe	-e Stiege	-e Treppe
übernachten	nächtigen	nächtigen
Überstunden	Überstunden	-e Überzeit
-e Umleitung	-e Umfahrung	-e Umfahrung
umziehen (übersiedeln)	umziehen/übersiedeln	zügeln
(past participle übergesiedelt) only used for longer distances, e.g. abroad)	(past participle übersiedelt) used for both long and short distances	
-e Unterbrechung	-e Unterbrechung	-r Unterbruch
-e Vorfahrt	-e Vorfahrt	-r Vortritt
-s Waschbecken	-s Waschbecken	-s Lavabo
-r Wissenschaftler	-r Wissenschaftler	-r Wissenschaftler
in Zukunft	in Hinkunft	inskünftig
100g	-s Deka/100g	100g/10 Dezigramm

It should also be noted that **ß** is spelt **ss** in standard Swiss German.

58.6

Regional features of German

It is important to understand that accents and regionalisms are not disparaged in German-speaking countries, so learners should be prepared to hear a lecturer or a senior figure in business speaking with a regional accent, even in otherwise formal settings. Dialects are usually spoken with pride and the use of a dialect is not necessarily indicative of a speaker's level of education. Particularly in small communities, the ability to speak the local dialect is important for being accepted.

The language spoken in the German-speaking areas of Switzerland (**Schwyzerdütsch/Schwyzertüitsch** or **Schweizerdeutsch**) is not a single language but a wide variety of local accents and dialects that are used as the normal spoken language in almost all situations in daily life and among all social classes. There is no social or educational stigma attached to their use, indeed great pride is often taken in using them.

(a) Regional features of vocabulary:

Regional words and words restricted to informal German are often difficult to distinguish from each other. The following can give only a slight flavour of variations you will encounter in informal German.

In southern German-speaking areas you will often hear the following forms:

- arg** (for **sehr**) ‘very’
- gell?** (for **nicht wahr?**) ‘Isn’t it?/Wasn’t it?/Didn’t she?’, etc.
- lugen** (for **gucken**) ‘to look’ (*mainly in the south west*)
- das Mädle** (for **das Mädchen**) ‘girl’
- der Bub** (for **der Junge**) ‘boy’
- schaffen/schaffen gehen** (for **arbeiten/arbeiten gehen**) ‘to work/go to work’.

In northern areas you will hear:

- doof** (for **dumm**) ‘stupid’
- der Pott** (for **der Topf**) ‘pot’ (increasingly accepted by many as standard German)
- der Kasten** (for **die Schublade**) ‘drawer’
- kloppen** (for **schlagen**) ‘to hit’
- die Stulle** (for **das Butterbrot**) ‘bread and butter’.

(b) Regional features of pronunciation:

pronunciation of **be** as **b** and **ge** as **g** (in southern German-speaking areas):

- bsetzt** (for **besetzt**), **gsehen** (for **gesehen**), **gstanden** (for **gestanden**)

-**st-** (mid-word) as **scht** (southern):

- die beschten Äpfel** (for **die besten Äpfel**)
- hascht du noch Zeit?** (for **hast du noch Zeit?**)

final **ig** as **ik** (southern):

- sechzik** (for **sechzig**), **Danzik** (for **Danzig**)

initial **ch** as **k** (southern):

- Kemiker** (for **Chemiker**), **Kiemsee** (for **Chiemsee**)

use of **mir** for **wir** (southern):

- Mir lassen ihn erstmal in Ruhe.**  
We’ll leave him be for the moment.

omission of unstressed **e** (central and southern):

- auf der Straß’, viel’ Leut’**

**p, t, k** as **b, d, g** (central and southern):

**lauder alde Leude** (for **lauter alte Leute**)  
nothing but old people

**midden im Graftweg** (for **mitten im Kraftwerk**)  
in the middle of the power station

**nicht** as **net** or **nit** (several areas, especially central and southern):

**das ist net schön, er wollte nit mitkommen**

Final **ch** and **g** as **sch** (central):

**misch** (for **mich**), **wirklich** (for **wirklich**), **zwanzisch** (for **zwanzig**)

Final **g** as **ch** (central and northern):

**mit dem Zuch** (for **mit dem Zug**)

Initial and middle **g** as **j** (northern, especially in Berlin):

**jehen** (for **gehen**), **jesehen** (for **gesehen**) **abjemacht** (for **abgemacht**)

Long vowels as short in monosyllabic words (northern):

**Täg** (for **Ta:g**), **zög** (for **zo:g**)

**pf** as **f** (northern):

**zehn Fund** (for **Pfund**), **Afelkuchen** (for **Apfelkuchen**)

Initial **sp** as [sp], as in English ‘spoon’, and **st** as [st], as in English ‘stress’:

**sparen** is pronounced [spa:ren] rather than [shpa:ren], and **Stunde** is pronounced [stunde] rather than [shtunde].

This particular usage is very widespread in northern Germany and is not restricted to informal registers.

Final **ung** as **unk** (northern):

**Öffnunk** (for **Öffnung**), **Heizunk** (for **Heizung**).

(c) Regional features of grammar:

The unexpected use of **sein** with certain verbs (e.g. **liegen, sitzen, stehen**) (southern Germany):

**Wir sind die ganze Zeit gestanden.**  
We stood for the whole time

Splitting **da** + preposition (especially in northern Germany):

**Da weiß ich nix von.** (Compare: **Davon weiß ich nichts.**)  
I know nothing about that.

Using **am/im** + verbal noun for continuous action (northern Germany but increasingly common in southern Germany and Austria too):

**Sie ist gerade am Telefonieren.**  
She’s just on the phone.

## 59 Spelling and punctuation

Over the past decade a major revision of spelling and punctuation has been carried out in the German-speaking countries of Europe. Following a transition period ending on 31 July 2006, this has now become binding. Sections 59.1–5 give an outline of the current spelling and punctuation conventions. A detailed account of the rules and principles on which German spelling is based can be found in *Die deutsche Rechtschreibung*, Duden Verlag, Mannheim/Leipzig/Wien/Zürich 2009, which also comes with a CD. You are recommended to use a modern dictionary such as this, which not only gives spellings but also provides hints on the production of different kinds of (mainly written) texts.

### 59.1 Capital letter or small letter?

The choice of capital or small letter can matter a great deal, as the following product guarantee shows:

**Wir fertigen *Sie* in unserem Hause täglich frisch von Hand und verzichten ganz auf Konservierungsmittel.**

(*lit.*) We hand-produce *you* daily in-house and do not use any preservatives at all.

- (a) Generally, a word begins with a capital letter when it is:
- (i) the first word in the sentence, except at the beginning of a letter (see 60.7b). This includes the first letter after a colon if a complete sentence follows.
 

**Es war ihm klar: Nur einer könnte gewinnen.**  
He was clear: only one person could win.
  - (ii) a noun of any kind, including adjectival nouns (see 28.5), e.g. **der Versicherte** ‘the person insured’, **das Baden** ‘bathing’, **die Sieben** ‘the number seven’.
 

**Auf dieser Seite des Sees ist Baden verboten.**  
On this side of the lake swimming is forbidden.
  - (iii) any form of the formal second person pronoun **Sie** (see 30.2) and the related possessive adjective **Ihr** (see 30.3).
 

**Ich hoffe, wir stören Sie nicht.**  
I hope we aren’t disturbing you (sg.).

**Ist das Ihre Frau?**  
Is this your wife?

**Darf ich Ihnen noch eine Tasse Kaffee einschenken?**  
May I pour you (sg. or pl.) another cup of coffee?
  - (iv) an adjective that is part of a title, often indicating an institution, e.g. **die Europäische Union** ‘the European Union’, **Friedrich der Große** ‘Frederick the Great’, **der Deutsche Bundestag**, ‘the German Bundestag’, **das Rote Kreuz** ‘the Red Cross’, **die Erste Hilfe** ‘first aid’.
  - (v) an adjective derived from a place name, e.g. **das Münchner Hofbräuhaus** ‘the Munich Hofbräuhaus’, **die Berliner Mauer** ‘the Berlin wall’ (see 47.1).
  - (vi) an adjective derived from a name, e.g. **das Ohm’sche Gesetz** ‘Ohm’s Law’.
  - (vii) two words that frequently go together and form a concept: **Arm und Reich** ‘(the) poor and (the) rich’, **durch Dick und Dünn** ‘through thick and thin’, **im Großen und Ganzen** ‘on the whole’.

► See 119.4

- (viii) the first part of a street name even if it is not a noun: **In der Lehmkuhle**.
- (ix) two or more words that form a noun and are linked by a hyphen: **der Daten-Diebstahl** ‘data theft’, **das Pro-Kopf-Einkommen** ‘income per head’.

However, where the adjectival character of a component is still strong, the adjective will be spelt with a small letter:

**Washington-freundlich**

having a friendly attitude towards Washington

**das Auf-der-faulen-Haut-Liegen**

lazing around.

NOTE

Some adjectives that form part of an institution or concept can also be spelt with a small letter: **die Erste/erste Hilfe** ‘first aid’, **das ohmsche Gesetz** ‘Ohm’s Law’.

- (b) All other words in a sentence begin with a small letter, including adjectives denoting nationalities, e.g. **die europäischen Regierungen**, ‘the European governments’, **die britische Wirtschaft** ‘the British economy’, **die österreichischen Meisterschaften** ‘the Austrian championships’.
- (c) Note, however, the following cases concerning the use of adjectives:

- (i) The adjective has a capital letter if it has the gender **das** and has a general reference, e.g. **das Wichtigste** ‘the most important thing’, **das Gute an der Sache** ‘the good thing about the matter’ (see 28.5).
- (ii) The adjective also has a capital letter if it has a specialized meaning as a noun, but the same adjective will be written with a small letter if it has a particular reference and if the noun to which it refers can be deduced from the context:

**Dann kam der Alte und sagte . . .** (*informal*)

Then the old man (or someone’s father) came and said . . .

**Der neue Zaun gefällt mir nicht so gut wie der alte.**

I don’t like the new fence as much as the old one.

► See also 105.2

**Der Einzelne kann da nur machtlos zusehen.**

The individual can only look on helplessly.

but:

**Jeder einzelne Mitarbeiter zählt hier.**

Every single member of staff counts here.

- (d) Note also the following instances where words that may look like nouns are written with a small letter. This is because they are seen as part of an adverbial, or some other kind of construction:

**abends und nachmittags**

in the evenings and afternoons.

► See 50 on adverbs and 81 for use

Otherwise nouns that are used as part of an adverbial expression retain their capital letter:

**heute Nachmittag, heute Abend, morgen Vormittag**  
this afternoon, this evening, tomorrow morning

**in/mit Bezug auf**  
concerning/with reference to

**im Allgemeinen**  
in general

**im Voraus**  
in advance.

► See [61.11](#), [119.4](#), [59.7](#) and [62.3](#)

- (e) A word can sometimes have a capital letter or small letter, with a change in meaning. Note the following, where the same word form occurs either with a capital letter or with a small letter, but the two are not interchangeable:

**ein paar** means ‘several/a few’, **ein Paar** means ‘a pair’ (see [46.2b](#))  
**deutsch sprechen; Deutsch sprechen.**

With a capital letter, **Deutsch** refers to the German language as a whole, and has the same sense as **das Deutsche**. (But as part of the phrase ‘**die deutsche Sprache**’ the adjective is written with a small letter.):

**in deutscher Sprache**  
in German (*usually referring to a written text or the performance of a written text*)

**auf Deutsch**  
in German

**Er spricht kaum Deutsch.**  
He can hardly speak German.

**Du sprichst gut (gutes) Deutsch.**  
You speak good German.

**Das Buch wurde aus dem Englischen ins Deutsche übersetzt.**  
The book was translated into German from the English.

**deutsch** is written with a small letter when it functions as an adverb, adding an important detail to a sentence:

**Ich fühle mich (gar nicht) deutsch.**  
I (don’t) feel German (at all).

**Sie denkt deutsch.**  
She thinks like a German (in a German way).

**Wir können uns deutsch/auf Deutsch unterhalten.**  
We can talk in German.

**Ich habe mit ihr (auf) Deutsch, nicht (auf) Englisch gesprochen.**  
I talked German, not English with her.

► See also [36.1e](#) and [50](#)



- (f) **hundert, tausend; Hundert, Tausend** (see 75.5) are written with a small letter and are undeclined when used as a standard numeral (like **zwanzig, dreißig**, etc.):

**nach hundert Kilometern**  
after a hundred kilometres

**nach zweihundert Kilometern**  
after two hundred kilometres

**nach vielen hundert Kilometern**  
after many hundred kilometres.

They can be written either with a small or capital letter and are plural nouns when used as nouns of quantity in contexts such as:

**mit Tausenden/tausenden von Mitgliedern**  
with thousands of members

**mit Zehntausenden/zehntausenden von Mitgliedern**  
with tens of thousands of members

**mit mehreren Tausenden/tausenden von Mitgliedern**  
with several thousands of members.

## 59.2 Splitting up words

When dividing up a word at the end of a line, the hyphen is generally placed before the consonant that begins the next syllable:

**in-teressant**  
**Va-ter**.

However, single vowels at the beginning or end of a word, and the component parts of complex words, are never separated off in this way:

**a-tonal** ‘atonal’  
**Ru-he** ‘peace and quiet’.

► See 1 and 3

The component parts of complex words, e.g. words with a prefix or compound words, remain intact when the word is split:

**ver-einigt** ‘unified’  
**aus-atmen** ‘breathe out’.

Double consonants are generally split down the middle:

**Mit-te** ‘middle’  
**Mil-lion** ‘Million’.

But **ck**, **sch** and **ch** are not split in simple words:

**drü-cken** ‘to press’  
**wa-schen** ‘to wash’  
**Bü-cher** ‘books’.

Prefixes and other meaningful parts of a word are preserved intact (see 57):

**Aus-tausch** ‘exchange’

**Diens-tag** ‘Tuesday’.

**ß** can be split either as **-ß** or as **s-s**:

**So-ße, Sos-se** ‘sauce’.

Where a sequence of three identical consonants occurs as a result of word formation (see 52.1), the three consonants are split to observe the spelling of the component words. For example, **still** ‘quiet’ + **legen** ‘to lay’ = **stilllegen** (the separable verb **still\*legen**) ‘to close down (a factory)’. When split at the end of a line, this is written **still-legen**.

Words that derive from other languages can be split both according to their morphological components or the phonemes as the speaker experiences them:

**Di-plom** *or* **Dip-lom**

**Fe-bru-ar** *or* **Feb-ru-ar**

**In-te-res-sant** *or* **in-ter-es-sant**.

This is also true for a number of ‘native’ words where the syllables are ambiguous:

**ein-an-der** *or* **ei-nan-der**

**wa-rum** *or* **war-um**.

### 59.3 Spelling of long and short vowels

► See 1

- (a) A double consonant (see 3) following a vowel indicates that the vowel is pronounced short. An **h** following the vowel indicates that it is pronounced long.

**stellen** [shtelen] ‘to place’

**stehlen** [shte:len] ‘to steal’

However, this is not an absolute guide to pronunciation. Not all long vowels are indicated by the presence of an **h** in the spelling:

**Kamel** [kame:l] ‘camel’

**ewig** [e:vig] ‘eternal’.

► See also 1–4

- (b) **ss** or **ß**?

The spelling depends on whether the preceding vowel is pronounced long or short (see 1.4). **ss** and **ß** are always pronounced voiceless (see 3.1).

**ss** is written after a short vowel, e.g. **Fluss** [flus] ‘river’, **Flüsse** [flüse] ‘rivers’, **Misserfolg** [miserfolk] ‘failure’.

**ß** is written after a long vowel and after the diphthongs [au], [oi] and [ai], e.g. **Fuß** [fu:s] ‘foot’, **Füße** [fü:se] ‘feet’, **außer** [au:ser] ‘outside, except for’, **äußerlich** [oi:serlich] ‘external’, **heiß** [hai:s] ‘hot’, **dreißig** [drai:sig] ‘thirty’ (see 2).

These spelling conventions are observed when words combine to form complex words (see 52.1). Thus: **Hass** [has] ‘hatred’, **hasserfüllt** [haserfült] ‘full of hatred’, **hässlich** [heslich] ‘ugly’; but **Maß** [ma:s] ‘measure’, **maßgebend** [ma:sg:e:bend] ‘standard, authoritative’, **mäßigen** [me:sigen] ‘to moderate, reduce’.

Note that umlauted vowels can be pronounced long or short: **lässig** [lesig] ‘casual, nonchalant’, but **mäßig** [me:sig] ‘moderate’ (adj.) (see 1.5).

NOTE **ß** is not used in Switzerland, and is rarely used when writing capitals.

## 59.4 One word or two?

As with the use of small or capital letters, writing an item of vocabulary as one word or two can make all the difference to its meaning. Thus the advert in a laundry shop: **Hemd gewaschen + hand gebügelt\*** seems to suggest that the shop not only washes shirts but also irons hands (rather than doing the ironing by hand).

NOTE \* Quoted in Bastian Sick, *HappyAua: Ein Bilderbuch aus dem Irrgarten der deutschen Sprache*, Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch 2007, p. 60.

(a) Sometimes whether one writes one word or two depends on a difference in meaning:

**so lange** ‘for such a long time’:

**Ihr seid schon so lange nicht mehr hier gewesen.**

You have not been here for such a long time.

**solange** ‘as long as’ (conjunction: see 8.3):

**Solange du hier wohnst, musst du dich an unsere Regeln halten.**

As long as you live here you need to abide by our rules.

**so bald** ‘so soon’:

**Wir wussten nicht, dass Monika schon so bald nach Amerika gehen würde.**

We did not know that Monika was going to the States so soon.

**sobald** ‘as soon as’ (conjunction: see 8.3):

**Sobald ich etwas weiß, melde ich mich.**

As soon as I know something, I will be in touch.

**wo möglich** ‘if possible’:

**Wo möglich, richten wir uns nach den Wünschen unserer Patienten.**

Where(ever) possible we arrange things to suit our patients.

**womöglich** ‘perhaps/possibly’:

**War er womöglich der Täter?**

Could he possibly have been the one who committed the crime?

**wie weit** ‘how far (away)’:

**Wie weit ist es von Basel nach Genf?**

How far is it from Basel to Geneva?

**wieweit** 'to what extent':

**Mir ist nicht klar, wieweit man dem wirtschaftlichen Aufschwung trauen kann.**

I am not sure how far one can trust the economic upturn.

- (b) Two words are written as one if the first one is not used on its own; for the learner of German this is difficult to decide, and the spelling of such vocabulary items should therefore be committed to memory when first encountered:

**übereinstimmen** 'to agree'

**abhandenkommen** 'to get lost'.

- (c) Activities where the first part is a noun and the second part a verb are spelt as two words, with the first word capitalized:

**Rad fahren** 'to go by bicycle, cycle'

**Auto fahren** 'to go by car, drive'

**Geige spielen** 'to play the violin'

**Schlange stehen** 'to queue'

**Fußball spielen** 'to play football'

but:

**eislaufen** 'to skate'.

## 59.5 Hyphen, no hyphen or one word?

- (a) A hyphen **must** be used:

- (i) when groups of words are put together that form one new concept:

**der 200-m-Lauf** '200 metre sprint'

**die Mund-zu-Mund Beatmung** 'mouth to mouth resuscitation'

**das Make-up** 'make up'

- (ii) when figures are put together:

**der 18-Tonner** 'the 18 ton (lorry)'

**10-mal** 'ten times'

- (iii) when single letters are put together with nouns, or in titles:

**das T-Shirt** 't-shirt'

**die x-Achse** 'the x-axis'

**der Dipl.-Ing. 'Diplom-Ingenieur[in]'** 'Engineering graduate'.

- (b) A hyphen **can** be used:

- (i) with loan words:

**Centre-Court** or **Centrecourt**

**Come-back** or **Comeback**

- (ii) with longer compound words to ease readability:

**die Lotto-Annahmestelle** or **Lottoannahmestelle**

**der Fußball-Bundestrainer** or **Fußballbundestrainer**

**der Daten-Diebstahl** or **Datendiebstahl**.

## 59.6

## Use of commas, colons and apostrophes

- (a) The main use of the comma in German is to mark clause boundaries. It is used to separate a main clause from a subordinate clause (see 5 and 8).

A comma immediately follows the subordinate clause as in:

**Dass sie so gut singt, hat mich überrascht.**

That she can sing so well surprised me.

A comma immediately precedes the conjunction as in:

**Ich glaube nicht, dass sie kommt.**

I don't think that she'll come.

A comma separates items in a list, except for the last two:

**Ich habe Rindfleisch, Kartoffeln, Gemüse und Rotwein gekauft.**

I bought beef, potatoes, vegetables and red wine.

A comma separates nouns in apposition (see 21):

**Wir haben unserem Nachbarn, dem Rechtsanwalt, den Brief gezeigt.**

We showed the letter to our neighbour, the lawyer.

However, commas are not used when a series of subordinate clauses is linked by **und**, **oder**, **bzw. (beziehungsweise)**, **entweder . . . oder**, **sowie**, **sowohl . . . als auch**, **weder . . . noch**, **entweder . . . oder**:

**Sie wusste nicht, dass sie sein Handy mitgenommen hatte und ihr eigenes auf dem Tisch gelassen hatte.**

She didn't know that she had taken his mobile phone and left her own on the table.

► See 6 and 8

And a comma is optional with infinitive clauses introduced by **zu**, **um . . . zu**, **ohne . . . zu**, **statt . . . zu**:

**Ich gehe früher, um einen guten Platz zu bekommen.**

**Ich gehe früher um einen guten Platz zu bekommen.**

I am going earlier (in order) to get a good seat/place.

**Ich habe mehr gezahlt, ohne einen besseren Platz zu bekommen.**

**Ich habe mehr gezahlt ohne einen besseren Platz zu bekommen.**

I paid more without getting a better seat.

In instances where the comma is optional, one has to decide whether not using a comma might lead to ambiguities:

**Er empfahl ihnen zu folgen.**

This could be understood as:

*either*: He recommended that they should follow (i.e. the speaker/writer or someone else). (A comma makes this sentence unambiguous: **Er empfahl ihnen, zu folgen.**)

*or*: He recommended following them. (With a comma as a guide for understanding: **Er empfahl, ihnen zu folgen.**)

If the infinitive clause is introduced by one of the following, a comma needs to be used:

- (i) reference to a previously identified element (often via a pronoun):

**Diesen Mist anhören zu müssen, ist wirklich eine Zumutung.**

It's really a bit much to have to listen to this load of rubbish.

- (ii) **als, anstatt, außer, ohne, statt, um:**

**Statt heute in die Stadt zu gehen, mache ich lieber mein Referat fertig.**

Instead of going into town today, I'd rather finish my essay.

- (iii) a noun:

**Meiner Bitte, noch einen Moment zu warten, wurde entsprochen.**

My request to wait another moment was accepted.

► See 8.7 and 42.3f

A comma is also optional after participial phrases:

**Von meinem Standpunkt aus, muss man die Frage anders stellen.**

**Von meinem Standpunkt aus muss man die Frage anders stellen.**

From my point of view you have to put the question differently.

NOTE

The practice in the rest of this book is to mark commas even where they may be optional.

- (b) The main use of the colon is to introduce direct speech:

**Er sagte sofort: „Ich bezahle das.“**

Straightaway he said, 'I'll pay for that'.

- (c) The apostrophe is used to show omitted letters:

**Ich versteh's nicht. (Ich verstehe es nicht.)**

I don't understand it.

but it is not supposed to be used (as it is in English) to indicate possession:

**Georgs Wohnung**

Georg's flat.

► See also 58.2

- (d) When writing numbers, a space is left between units of a thousand (where English has a comma), and a comma is used to show decimal values (where English has a point; see 75.5):

**1 000 (eintausend)**

1,000 (one thousand)

**1,5 (eins komma fünf)**

1.5 (one point five)

**€1 234,56 (eintausendzweihundertvierunddreißig Euro sechshundfünfzig Cent)**

€1,234.56 (1,234 euros and 56 cents).

When writing large numbers, a point is sometimes used instead of a space:

**17.450.263**

17,450,263.

## 59.7 Other punctuation

A point (full stop) is used with ordinal numbers; for example with dates:

**der 3. Juni**

The 3rd of June

**18.08.2010**

18 August 2010.

Quotation marks open on the line and close above the line:

**Er sagte sofort: „Herzlich willkommen!“**

Straightaway he said ‘Welcome!’

► See [84.1c](#)

Quotation marks are often of the inverted type and single or double quotation marks may be used:

**„Zu Hilfe!“ or „Zu Hilfe!“**

In printed texts quoted material is often found enclosed between single or double chevrons

**<Herzlich willkommen!>.**

The use of the exclamation mark, as the above examples show, follows English usage (see also [41.2](#)).

**Part B**

# **Functions**





# X

## Social contact

### 60 Greeting

The following are the most common expressions for 'to greet' in German:

**jmdn. grüßen** 'to greet sb.'  
**viele Grüße/einen schönen Gruß (an jmdn.)** 'many/best wishes (to sb.)'  
**jmdm. einen schönen Gruß sagen** 'to give/send sb. (one's) best wishes'  
**jmdm. Grüße bestellen** 'to give/send regards to sb.'  
**jmdm. Wünsche aus\*richten** 'to convey (good) wishes to sb.'  
**jmdn. jmdm. empfehlen** 'to convey sb.'s respects to sb.' (*formal*)  
**sich jmdm. empfehlen** 'to send one's regards to sb.' (*formal*)  
**jmd. lässt jmdn. grüßen** 'sb. sends his/her regards'  
**jmdn. von jmdm. grüßen** 'to pass on sb.'s good wishes'

### 60.1 Using *du*, *ihr* and *Sie*

For greeting, and indeed any interaction with Germans, it is very important that English-speaking learners of German become familiar with the following guidelines on the use of the familiar pronoun **du** (with its plural **ihr**) and the polite or distant **Sie**. Failure to use the correct form can cause offence.

(a) Use of **du** and **ihr**:

**du/ihr** is used when addressing:

- (i) relatives and close friends
- (ii) children up to about the age of 14 or 15
- (iii) fellow pupils and students
- (iv) colleagues in manual or blue-collar jobs
- (v) animals, objects and God.

(b) Use of **Sie**:

**Sie** is used in all other circumstances, of which the following should be particularly noted:

- (i) with adults who are strangers
- (ii) by teachers when addressing pupils in the senior classes of secondary school
- (iii) for all student–lecturer communication in higher education.

(c) When to start using **du**:

**du** is usually associated with first-name terms, but first names are, for example, used with **Sie** in the senior classes of secondary school. This is especially true in **Gymnasien**

(grammar schools), although in other secondary schools the use of **Sie** with a first name is now becoming more common. Students will always use **du** when addressing each other. Increasingly, **du** is also coming to be used more in the workplace, partly as a reflection of a more democratic society. The point in a relationship at which the **du** form becomes appropriate is very difficult to define. Native English speakers are advised to follow the lead of Germans on this matter. It is normal for the older/more senior person to offer the **du** form to the younger/junior person. If ever in doubt, use **Sie**. The verbs corresponding to the pronouns **du** and **Sie** are **jmdn. duzen** and **jmdn. siezen** respectively:

**Wollen wir uns duzen?**

Shall we use the **du** form?

► See [35.6b](#); for **das Du** see [25.6c](#)

(d) Spelling of **du/ihr** and **Sie**:

**du/ihr** and the related possessive adjectives, i.e. **dein**, etc. and **euer**, etc. (see [30.3](#)), are written with small letters in all circumstances:

**Ich danke dir für deine Hilfe.**

Thank you for your help.

**Was habt ihr im Sommer vor?**

What do you have planned for the summer?

In all contexts the various forms of **Sie** and the possessive adjective **Ihr** are written with a capital letter:

**Wann fahren Sie in die Stadt?**

When are you going to town?

**Wie geht es Ihnen/Ihrem Mann?**

How are you? / How is your husband?

► See [59.1](#) for spelling

## 60.2

### Initial greeting

- (a) In spoken German a simple **Hallo!** is very common, especially among friends, colleagues and young people (see also [90.1](#)). **Grüß dich!** ‘greetings’ is also frequently heard.
- (b) **Guten Tag** ‘Good day’ is the standard greeting for a stranger or informal acquaintance and can be used throughout the day. In the morning **Guten Morgen** might be used, while in the evening **Guten Abend** is likely to be preferred (see [18.7](#) for this use of the accusative). These forms might be reinforced by **schön**:
- Schön(en) guten Morgen!**  
A very good morning to you!
- (c) In southern Germany and Austria **Grüß Gott!** is frequently employed, as is **Servus!** (*lit.* your servant), which can also mean ‘cheerio’ (see also [62.1](#) on saying goodbye). In Switzerland and the very south of Germany **Grüß Sie!** and **Grüzi!** are standard greetings when talking to people with whom one is not on first-name terms.

## 60.3

## Conveying greetings

► See also [85.3](#)

- (a) If passing on personal greetings via a friend to a third person, either in speech or writing, one of the following would be appropriate:

**Sag ihm einen schönen Gruß von mir.**

Give him my best wishes.

**Einen schönen Gruß an deine Schwester.**

Give your sister my best wishes.

**Grüß deinen Vater (von mir)!**

Say hello to your father (for me).

**Grüß mir deine Mutter!**

Say hello to your mother for me.

► See [19.2](#) for this dative usage

**Bestell Raimund viele Grüße von mir.**

Give Raimund my best regards.

The above can also be used in the **Sie** form for less informal occasions:

**Bitte grüßen Sie Ihre Kollegin (vielmals) von mir!**

Please send your colleague my (very) best regards.

**Viele Grüße an Ihren Mann.**

Kind regards to your husband.

In very formal usage the following might occur:

**Bitte richten Sie ihm meine besten Wünsche aus.**

Please convey my best wishes to him.

► See [12.3](#) for word order with noun and pronoun objects

- (b) If passing on someone else's greetings, use the following:

**Manfred lässt grüßen/lässt euch schön grüßen.**

Manfred sends his regards/sends you his best regards.

**Ich soll Sie von Herrn Auer grüßen. / Ich soll Grüße von Herrn Auer bestellen.**

Herr Auer says to send you his best wishes.

► See [35.1](#) for the use of these modal verbs

## 60.4

## Responding to requests to pass on greetings

The greetings in [60.2](#) can simply be returned in the same form. One of the following would be an appropriate response to [60.3a](#):

**Ja, (das) mach ich (gern).**

Yes, I'll (gladly/certainly) do that.

**Auf jeden Fall.**

Certainly/I certainly will.

**Ja! / Jawohl! / Ja, (aber) natürlich/selbstverständlich.**

Of course (I will).

**Gerne.**

Gladly.

**(Ganz) bestimmt. / Ja, (ganz) sicher.**

I (most) certainly will.

**Na klar. /Aber sicher.**

Sure, of course.

## 60.5 Enquiring about well-being

- (a) To ask someone how they are, use:

**Wie geht's? / Wie geht es Ihnen? / Wie geht's dir?**

How are you?

**Wie geht es deiner/Ihrer Mutter? / Wie geht es euren/Ihren Kindern?**

How is your mother? / How are your children?

This structure requires the dative of the person, when mentioned, and the subject of the verb is always **es**. Responses could include:

**Danke, gut/es geht.**

Thanks, I'm well/I'm OK.

**Es geht mir/uns/ihnen sehr gut/bestens.**

I am/we are/they are very well/extremely well.

**Wir sind alle ganz gesund/wohlauf.**

We are all very well/in good health.

Note that **wohlauf** is now considered a little old-fashioned.

**Na ja, es geht!**

Oh, all right.

**Danke, einigermaßen.**

Not so bad, thanks.

**Danke, ich bin nur im Moment etwas angespannt.**

Thanks, I'm just a little stressed at the moment.

Alternatively, if things are not so good:

**Mir geht's schlecht.**

I'm not well. / I'm ill.

**Es geht (mir) nicht so gut/gar nicht gut.**

I'm not too well/not at all well.

- (b) To return the question, use:

**Und (wie geht es) dir/euch/Ihnen?**

And how are you? / What about you?

- (c) When asking about a third person, use:

**Und wie geht es Ihrem Mann?**

**Und wie geht es Ihrem Gatten?** (*formal*)

And how is your husband?

**Und was macht (die) Petra?**

And how's Petra?

**Und was machen die Kinder?**

And how are the children (doing)?

► See [19.7](#) and [42.3h](#) for the use of impersonal verbs

## 60.6 Welcoming

(jmdm.) **willkommen sein** 'to be welcome'

**jmdn. willkommen heißen** 'to welcome sb.'

**jmdn. begrüßen** 'to greet sb.'

**jmdn. auf\*nehmen/empfangen** 'to receive sb.'

(a) The standard welcome is **Willkommen!** but there are a number of variations:

**Seien Sie/Sei/Seid herzlich willkommen.**

A warm welcome to you.

**Ein herzliches Willkommen!**

Welcome indeed!

**Herzlich willkommen (in Berlin/im Hotel 'Rostock')!**

Welcome (to Berlin/the Hotel 'Rostock')!

**Sie sind uns (= dat.) jederzeit willkommen.**

You are always welcome here.

► See [19.9](#) for the use of the dative; see also [96](#) on invitations

(b) Following the initial welcome one of the following may be used:

**Bitte, kommen Sie herein!**

Please, do come in.

► See [50.4](#) for the use of **herein**

**Haben Sie eine gute Reise gehabt?**

Did you have a good journey?

**Wie war die Fahrt?**

How was the journey?

(c) A more formal welcome might be expressed:

**Im Namen der Stadt Mainz möchte ich Sie herzlich willkommen heißen.**

I would like to offer you a warm welcome on behalf of the city of Mainz.

► See [28.2](#) for the declension of **Name** and weak nouns in general

(d) Other ways of expressing welcome include:

**Ein großes Kaminfeuer begrüßte ihn bei seiner Ankunft.**

A large fire welcomed him on his arrival.

**Ein Glas Wein stand zu ihrer Begrüßung auf dem Tisch.**

There was a glass of wine on the table to greet her.

**Man hat mir dort ein herzliches Willkommen bereitet.** (*formal*)

I was given a very warm welcome there.

**Wir wurden dort sehr freundlich empfangen.**

We were received there in a most friendly manner.

**Man hat ihn sehr freundlich aufgenommen.**

He was received/accommodated in a most friendly manner.

**Die Gelegenheit, die Entscheidungen des Finanzrates zu überprüfen, ist uns**  
(= dat.) **sehr willkommen.**

We very much welcome the opportunity to review the finance committee's decisions.

## 60.7 Beginning a letter

► See 62.3 for finishing a formal letter; for finishing an informal letter see 62.4

(a) Formal letters:

If the name of the addressee is known, use:

**Sehr geehrter Herr Rösler, / Sehr geehrte Frau Simon,**

Dear Mr Rösler, / Dear Mrs/Ms Simon,

(For the pronunciation of **geehrter** see 4.4.)

NOTE 'Ms' is conveyed by **Frau**, which is now also the usual rendering of 'Miss', with **Fräulein** considered a relic of more sexist days.

If the person you are writing to has a title, it will follow **Herr** or **Frau**:

**Sehr geehrter Herr Professor Wegener, / Sehr geehrte Frau Dr. Matthäus,**

Dear Professor Wegener, / Dear Dr Matthäus,

If a person has more than one title, only the highest one is used at the start of a letter – i.e. as above, not **Herr Professor Dr Wegener**.

If the person's name is not known, use:

**Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Sehr geehrte Herren,** 'Dear Sirs,' is only used if it is known that the addressees are exclusively male.

NOTE **Damen und Herren** is plural whereas the usage in English is singular.

(b) Informal letters

The normal form of address here is:

**Lieber Paul, / Liebe Heidi,**

Dear Paul, / Dear Heidi,

If addressing two people it is usual to repeat the 'Dear':

**Lieber Paul, lieber Harald, / Liebe Elke und lieber Paul,**

Dear Paul and Harald, / Dear Elke and Paul,

To address a whole family, simply write:

**Liebe Familie Huber,**  
Dear Huber family,

If the addressees are close friends or relatives, **Ihr Lieben**, 'Dear All,' could be used.

A comma will usually follow all these openings and the letter proper will begin with a small letter (unless the first word is a noun). It is accepted practice not to begin a letter with **ich**.

## 60.8 Postcard greetings

The following formulations might be used either to begin or end a postcard message:

**Einen schönen Gruß aus München (von/schickt dir Bea).**  
Best wishes from Munich (from Bea).

**Grüße/Herzliche Grüße/Liebe Grüße aus dem Schwarzwald.**  
Greetings/warmest greetings/good wishes from the Black Forest.

## 60.9 Compliments

A compliments slip (**-r Empfehlungszettel**) will normally bear the words:

**mit den besten Empfehlungen**  
with (the) compliments.

This will be followed by the person's title, e.g. **vom Direktor** 'of the Director'. Some business cards (**-e Visitenkarte**) will have the same wording.

## 61 Making introductions

Introductions can be expressed as follows:

**sich vor\*stellen** 'to introduce oneself'  
**jmdn. jmdm. vor\*stellen** 'to introduce sb. to sb.'  
**jmdn. kennen\*lernen** 'to be introduced to/get to know sb.'  
**jmdn. mit jmdm. bekannt machen** 'to introduce sb. to sb.'  
**mit jmdm. bekannt sein** 'to know/be acquainted with sb.'  
**das ist/sind . . .** 'this is/here are . . .'  
**jmdn. kennen** 'to know sb.'  
**sich (= acc.) kennen** 'to know each other'  
**heißen** 'to be called'

## 61.1 Making initial contact

(a) To attract someone's attention say:

**Entschuldigung! / Verzeihung!**

Excuse me! / I'm sorry! (See also [68.1](#) on 'Apologizing and seeking forgiveness'.)

**Entschuldigen Sie bitte, wo ist hier der Bahnhof?**

Excuse me, please, can you tell me where the station is?



- (b) To attract someone's attention or to hail someone from afar, **Hallo!** might be used. Alternatively, if the aim is to attract attention urgently or to warn someone, the following would be more appropriate:

**Vorsicht, passen Sie (doch) auf!**

(Be careful), watch out!

**Heh! / Heh, du! Pass mal auf.** (*informal*)

Hey! / Hey you! Listen. / Watch out.

Depending on the tone of voice, the second of these may sound rude or mildly threatening.

**Vorsicht! / Achtung!**

Look out! / Watch it!

**He, du da!** 'Oi, you!' is distinctly rude.

## 61.2 Reacting when spoken to

- (a) Appropriate responses to the above include:

**Bitte?**

I'm sorry?

**Ja, (bitte)?**

Yes (what is it)?

**Ja, was gibt's?**

Yes, what's the matter?

- (b) More informally and abruptly one could say:

**Na, was denn?**

Well, what is it?

## 61.3 Formal introductions

- (a) When introducing oneself, say:

**Darf ich mich vor\*stellen?**

May I introduce myself?

It is quite common for people to introduce themselves in formal and business situations by their surname only: **Guten Tag, Meier.** 'Hello, my name's Meier.'

- (b) In responding to a formal introduction, say **angenehm** (*lit.* pleasant) or:

**(Es) freut mich(, Sie kennenzulernen).**

I'm pleased to meet you.

► See [42.3g](#) for impersonal verbs with the dummy subject **es**

Remember that, in Germany, it is customary to shake hands with people each time one meets them, not just when being introduced to them for the first time.

- (c) When introducing two people to each other, it is considered good form first to tell a woman a man's name or a more senior person a younger person's name. Expressions for introductions include:

**Darf ich (Ihnen) Herrn Arnold vor\*stellen?**

May I introduce Mr Arnold (to you)?

► See [28.2](#) for the declension of **Herr**

***Ich möchte (Ihnen) Frau Pühmeyer vor\*stellen.***

I'd like to introduce Mrs Pühmeyer (to you).

***Darf ich (Sie) bekannt machen? Frau Pühmeyer, das ist Herr Arnold.***

May I introduce you? Mrs Pühmeyer, this is Mr Arnold.

***Frau Pühmeyer, darf ich Sie mit Herrn Arnold bekannt machen?***

Mrs Pühmeyer, may I introduce you to Mr Arnold?

► See also [61.6b](#) on 'Making acquaintances'

The following are used on less formal occasions:

***Frau Weingarten, kennen Sie Herrn Zeisig?***

Mrs Weingarten, do you know Mr Zeisig?

***Herr Doktor Gutmann, kennen Sie schon Manfred Seeler?***

Dr Gutmann, do you know Manfred Seeler?

***Das sind Herr und Frau Demir.***

This is Mr and Mrs Demir.

***Kennen Sie sich schon?***

Do you already know each other?

## 61.4 Official introductions

- (a) In dealing with officialdom, either in person or by letter, there are a few variations on the above:

***(Wie ist Ihr) Vorname/Familiennamenachname/Mädchenname?***

(What is your) first name/surname/maiden name?

***Wie heißen Sie mit Vornamen und (mit) Familiennamenachnamen?***

What is your first name and your surname?

***Sind Sie Herr Schwarz?***

Are you Mr Schwarz? (*Answer: Ja, das bin ich.* 'Yes I am.')

► See also [73.2](#) on supplying personal details

- (b) On forms and in other documents the following may be found in connection with a woman's married name:

***Angelika Hauptmann geb. (geborene) Freud***

Angelika Hauptmann, née Freud.

## 61.5 Informal introductions

- (a) Introducing oneself:

The verb **heißen** can be used in all contexts to ask a person's name and to supply one's own:

***Wie heißen Sie/heißt du?***

What is your name?

***Wer sind Sie/bist du?***

Who are you?

**Guten Tag, ich heiße/mein Name ist Bruno (Wegener).**

Hello, my name is Bruno (Wegener).

Among young people, in particular, **Hallo** followed by a first name often serves as an introduction:

**Hallo, Uli, ich bin (die) Marlies/(der) Wolfgang.**

Hello, Uli, I'm Marlies/Wolfgang.

► See 23.2g for the use of the definite article with names in German, and 17.2 for the case following **sein** and **heißen**

- (b) Introducing someone else. Expressions here include many mentioned under 61.3c, but in the **du** or **ihr** forms of the verb:

**Peter, kennst du (die) Gabi/(den) Martin?**

Peter, do you know Gabi/Martin?

**Das hier ist (der) Frank/mein Mann.**

This is Frank/my husband.

**Hans, du kennst doch sicher die Dani?**

Hans, you know Dani, don't you?

**Sabine, du kennst doch schon die Antje?**

Sabine you already know Antje, don't you?

**Kennst du meinen Bruder Stephan?**

Do you know my brother Stephan?

**Er heißt Stephan, aber alle nennen ihn Steff.**

He's called Stephan but everyone calls him Steff.

**Das ist meine Cousine. Sie heißt Karin.**

That's my cousin. She's called Karin.

**Ihr kennt euch ja schon, oder?**

You already know each other, don't you?

## 61.6 Making acquaintances

- (a) The verb **kennen\*lernen** can be used in almost all contexts:

**Ich habe sie schon vor Jahren kennengelernt.**

I met them (several) years ago.

**Sie hatten sich in Biel kennengelernt.**

They had met in Biel.

- (b) The word **bekannt** can be used to express existing acquaintance or, with **machen**, the act of introducing someone else:

**Sie sind schon lange miteinander bekannt.**

They have known each other for a long time.

► See 34.2d for this use of the present tense

**Ich werde ihn mit meinem Vetter bekannt machen.**

I'll introduce him to my cousin.

- (c) A rather more formal way to express acquaintance is with the noun **Bekanntschaft**:

**Wo haben Sie seine *Bekanntschaft gemacht*?**

Where did you make his acquaintance?

- (d) Alternatively, the less formal **begegnen** can be used:

**Wir sind ihm zum ersten Mal in München *begegnet*.**

We first met him in Munich.

Note the difference between **jmdm. begegnen** und **jmdn. treffen**. While the former denotes meeting someone by chance, the latter usually suggests the meeting has been planned.

## 61.7 Introductions on the telephone

**jmdn. sprechen** 'to speak to sb.'

**mit jmdm. sprechen** 'to speak to sb.'

**jmdn. melden** 'to announce (a caller)'

**mit jmdm. verbunden sein** 'to be connected/through to sb.'

**jmdn. (mit jmdm.) verbinden** 'to put sb. through (to sb.)'

- (a) When answering the telephone a simple **Hallo!** or **Ja, bitte** 'Yes, how can I help you?' will suffice. To identify oneself, it is usual to give one's surname or, less commonly, both first name and surname. Children may also give both first name and surname:

**Erschens/Neumann/Heinz Meyer**

Hello, Erschens/Neumann/Heinz Meyer (speaking).

Alternatively, one of the following could be used:

**Ich bin's, der Manfred (Tobler).**

It's me, Manfred (Tobler).

**Hallo, hier ist Horst (Kaiser).**

Hello, Horst (Kaiser) speaking.

**Hier (ist) Birgit.**

Birgit (speaking).

In a family the following might be used:

**Familie Meyer**

Hello, the Meyers/the Meyer household.

Another way of announcing the family name, or of answering someone's telephone for them, is:

**Hier bei Bauer.**

The Bauer's (home).

NOTE On letters **bei Bauer** means 'c/o the Bauers'.

If the caller has asked to speak to you personally, say:

**Am Apparat. / Ja, bitte?**

Speaking. / How can I help?

To speak to someone else, say:

***Kann ich bitte (den) Günther sprechen?***  
Can I speak to Günther, please?

► See [23.2g](#) for the use of the definite article here

(b) To find out who is on the line, ask:

***Mit wem spreche ich, bitte?***  
Who am I speaking to/To whom am I speaking, please?

***Wer spricht? / Wer ist am Apparat, bitte?***  
Who's calling? / Who is it, please?

***Sabine, bist du es? (informal)***  
Is that you Sabine?

A possible response upon discovering who is calling might be:

***Ach, du bist es!***  
Oh, it's you!

A firm will identify itself as follows:

***Hier Firma Hahn.***  
This is the firm of Hahn & Co.

***Hahn und Co., guten Morgen.***  
Good morning, Hahn & Co.

An individual may identify himself or herself:

***Hahn und Co., hier Schneider.***  
This is Hahn & Co., Mr/Ms Schneider speaking.

(c) When calling a switchboard or some other contact person, the following will be useful:

***Ich möchte bitte Apparat 671 (sechs sieben eins).***  
Can you give me extension 671, please?

***Mit wem bin ich verbunden?***  
Who am I through to? / To whom am I speaking?

► See [30.4a](#) for the full declension of **wer**

***Verbinden Sie mich bitte mit der Personalabteilung.***  
Please put me through to Personnel.

***Kann ich bitte den Personalleiter sprechen?***  
Can I speak to the Head of Personnel, please?

***Kann ich bitte mit Herrn Maibaum sprechen?***  
Can I speak to Mr Maibaum, please?

(d) A telephonist or secretary is likely to ask:

***Wen soll/darf ich melden, bitte?***  
Who shall I say is calling, please?

Or a caller may be asked to wait briefly:

**Einen Augenblick, ich verbinde (Sie).**  
Just a moment, I'll put you through.

- (e) When calling a company's answering machine, the following type of message may be heard:

**Hier ist der automatische Anrufbeantworter, Firma Carl Dan Pedinghaus.**  
You are through to the answering machine of the firm Carl Dan Pedinghaus.

A more typical message for a domestic answering machine might be:

**Guten Tag, Sie haben den Anschluss von Anke Weber gewählt.**  
Hello, you have dialled Anke Weber's number.

Since many people prefer not to put their name on the tape, the following is becoming more typical:

**Wir können im Moment nicht zum Telefon kommen. Bitte hinterlassen Sie Ihre Nachricht, Ihren Namen und Ihre Rufnummer nach dem Signal und wir rufen so bald wie möglich zurück.**

We cannot take your call at present. Please leave your message, name and number after the beep and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

- (f) To indicate a wrong number say:

**Es tut mir leid, Sie sind falsch verbunden.**  
I'm sorry, you've got the wrong number.

## 61.8 Entering a room

When entering a room or someone's office, it would usually be appropriate to say one of the following:

**Kann ich/Darf ich (rein\*kommen)?**  
Can/May I (come in)?

**Störe ich?**  
Am I disturbing you?

**Sind Sie frei?**  
Are you free?

**Hast du einen Moment Zeit für mich?**  
Do you have a moment?

## 61.9 Inviting someone in

- (a) When responding positively to a knock on the door, say:

**Herein! / Ja! / Ja, bitte!**  
Come in!

- (b) More generally:

**Kommen Sie (bitte) (rein).**  
(Please) come (in).

**Sie können ruhig rein\*kommen.**  
Do come in.

► See 50.4 for the use of **hin** and **her**; see also 80.7 on the speaker's perspective

- (c) To invite a person to sit down, say:

**Setzen Sie sich doch. / Setz dich doch.**  
Have a seat.

**Bitte, nehmen Sie doch Platz.**  
Please do sit down.

**Möchten/Wollen Sie sich nicht setzen?**  
Wouldn't you like to sit down?

- (d) A more general welcome (see also 60.6 on 'welcoming') could include:

**Fühlen Sie sich wie zu Hause.**  
Please make yourself at home.

**Machen Sie es sich bequem.**  
Make yourself comfortable.

When offering refreshment, say:

**Bedienen Sie sich, bitte.**  
Please help yourself.

## 61.10 Exchanging personal details

► See also 73.2 on supplying personal details

**kommen/stammen aus** (+ dat.) 'to come from'

- (a) To swap addresses and numbers, say:

**Wie ist Ihre/deine Adresse/Telefonnummer?**  
What is your address/telephone number?

- (b) To discover a person's place of origin, ask:

**Wo bist du geboren?**  
Where were you born?

**Woher kommen Sie/kommst du?**  
Where are you from?

**Woher stammen Sie/stammst du?**  
Where do you come from (originally)?

The verb **stammen** has a slightly formal ring to it.

Possible responses are:

**Ich komme aus Schottland/aus den USA/aus dem Libanon/aus der Türkei.**  
I'm from Scotland/the USA/Lebanon/Turkey.

**Wir stammen aus Düsseldorf.**  
We come from Düsseldorf (originally).

**Ich bin Engländer(in).**  
I'm English.

► See 23.1 for the omission of the indefinite article

**Ich bin in Paris geboren.**

I was born in Paris.

- (c) If discussing families, the following will be useful (see also [74.9](#) on family relationships):

**Haben Sie/Hast du Geschwister?**

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

**Ich habe zwei Schwestern aber keinen Bruder.**

I have two sisters but no brother.

**Wir sind zu dritt/zu viert/zu fünft in der Familie.**

There are three/four/five of us in our family.

A family of four, five, etc. is **eine vierköpfige/fünfköpfige Familie.**

- (d) Typical questions and answers when meeting a foreigner include:

**Waren Sie/warst du schon einmal in Deutschland/im Ausland?**

Have you been to Germany/abroad before?

**Nein, ich bin zum ersten Mal hier.**

No, it's my first time here.

**Sind Sie/Bist du zum ersten Mal in der Schweiz?**

Is this your first visit to Switzerland?

**Nein, ich bin öfters hier.**

No, I often come here.

- (e) If talking about foreign languages, note the following:

**Sprechen Sie Deutsch?**

Do you speak German?

**Können Sie auch Französisch?**

Do you speak French too?

- See [35.5](#) for the omission of the infinitive with modal verbs

**Ich spreche nur sehr wenig Deutsch.**

I speak very little German.

**61.11 Formal letter openings**

- See also [60.7a](#) on formal letters, [60.7b](#) on informal letters, [62.3](#) on finishing a formal letter, and [67.3](#) on thanking in a formal letter

**bezugnehmend auf** (+ acc.) 'with reference to' (see [59.1d](#))  
**mit Bezug auf** (+ acc.) 'with reference to'  
**sich beziehen auf** (+ acc.) 'to refer to'  
**auf etw.** (= acc.) **aufmerksam machen** 'to draw attention to sth.'  
**auf etw.** (= acc.) **hin\*weisen** 'to indicate/point sth. out'  
**aufgrund** (+ gen.) 'on the basis/strength of'  
**in Beantwortung** (+ gen.) 'in reply to'  
**gemäß** (+ dat.) 'further to'



Referring back to previous correspondence can be expressed by any of the following:

**bezugnehmend auf/mit Bezug auf Ihr Schreiben/Ihre Anfrage vom 10. Januar . . .** (+ verb)

with reference to your letter/enquiry of 10 January . . .

**Ich beziehe mich auf Ihren/meinen Brief vom 23. September.**

I refer to your/my letter of 23 September.

► See **42.3c** for reflexive verb completion

**Wir möchten auf unser Schreiben vom 16. Februar aufmerksam machen/hin\*weisen.**

We would like to draw your attention to our letter of 16 February.

**aufgrund Ihres Schreibens vom 1. Juni . . .** (+ verb)

on the basis of your letter of 1 June . . .

**in Beantwortung Ihres (freundlichen) Schreibens . . .** (+ verb)

in reply to your (kind) letter . . .

Alternatively, if the previous contact was by telephone:

**gemäß unserem Telefonat . . .** (+ verb) (*formal*)

further to our telephone conversation . . .

**gemäß unserer telefonischen Abmachung . . .** (+ verb) (*formal*)

as we agreed on the telephone . . .

**wie heute am Telefon besprochen . . .**

as discussed today on the telephone . . .

## 62

## Taking leave

## 62.1

## Saying goodbye

**sich** (= acc.) **verabschieden von** (+ dat.) ‘to take one’s leave from’

- (a) ‘Goodbye’ can be expressed by **(Auf) Wiedersehen!** or **(Auf) Wiederschauen** (except on the telephone; see **62.1d**). Very late in the evening **Gute Nacht** ‘Goodnight’ is preferred.

In spoken German one of the following is more likely to be heard:

**Tschüss! / Tschau!**

Bye. / See you.

In southern Germany and Austria you will often hear **Servus!** (which can also mean ‘hello’; see also **60.2c**) and **Ade!** (pronounced ‘Ah-day’, with the stress on the second syllable).

Other options include:

**Bis später/dann.**

See you later.

**Bis bald/demnächst.**

See you soon.

**Bis morgen/Mittwoch/nächstes Jahr/irgendwann mal.**

See you tomorrow/on Wednesday/next year/some time.

▶ See 18.2 for **bis** and other prepositions taking the accusative

(b) Preparing to leave can require a number of preliminary phrases such as:

**Wir müssen jetzt wirklich gehen.**

We really must be going now.

**Es wird langsam Zeit, dass wir nach Hause gehen.**

It's about time we were going home.

**Es wird Zeit für uns.**

It's time for us to go.

Or, very formally:

**Ich darf mich verabschieden.**

I'll say goodbye, then.

Much more informally one might say:

**Du, ich muss weg/gehen/los.**

I've got to go/I must be off.

▶ See 35.5 for the omission of the infinitive with modal verbs

(c) Asking someone to call again can be conveyed by:

**Bitte schauen Sie in acht bis zehn Tagen wieder vorbei.**

Please call back in 8 to 10 days' time.

**Sie wissen, Sie sind hier jederzeit herzlich willkommen.**

You know you are very welcome here any time.

Or, more informally:

**Komm doch mal wieder vorbei.**

Call in again sometime.

**Lass dich mal wieder (bei uns) sehen.**

Come and see us again some time.

▶ See 35.6b for this use of **lassen**(d) On the telephone the standard 'goodbye' is **(Auf) Wiederhören!** or, more informally, **Tschüss** 'bye'. Other options are:**Danke für den/Ihren/deinen Anruf.**

Thanks for calling.

**Ruf doch mal wieder an.**

Call again some time.

NOTE **Auf Wiederhören** is also used on the radio.

## 62.2

## Wishes for the journey

- (a) Wishing someone a pleasant trip:

**Gute Reise! / Gute Fahrt! / Gute Heimfahrt!**

Hope you have a good journey (home).

**Fahren Sie bitte vorsichtig.**

Drive carefully.

**Kommen Sie/Komm gut nach Hause! / Kommen Sie/Komm gut an!**

(Have a) safe journey.

- (b) Checking everything has been taken:

**Haben Sie alles mit/dabei?**

Have you got everything?

**Hoffentlich habe ich nichts vergessen/liegenlassen/dagelassen.**

I hope I haven't forgotten anything/left anything behind.

- (c) Asking to confirm safe arrival:

**Bitte ruf uns an, wenn du zu Hause bist.**

Please give us a ring when you get home.

**Bitte schick uns eine SMS, wenn du zu Hause bist.**

Please send us a text when you get home.

## 62.3

## Finishing a formal letter

**sich (bei jmdm.) bedanken** 'to thank (sb.)'**jmdm. dankbar sein** 'to be grateful to sb.'**in Erwartung** (+ gen.) 'in the expectation of'**hoffen auf etw.** (= acc.) 'to hope for sth.'**sich** (= acc.) **freuen auf** (+ acc.) 'to look forward to'**etw.** (= dat.) **entgegen\*sehen** 'to look forward to sth.'**jmdm. weiter\*helfen** 'to help sb.'**jmdm. dienen** 'to be of service to sb.'**bei etw.** (= dat.) **bei\*liegen** 'to be enclosed with sth.'**etw.** (= dat.) **bei\*legen** 'to enclose sth. with/attach sth. to'**den Empfang bestätigen** 'to confirm receipt'**mit freundlichen Grüßen/Empfehlungen** 'yours sincerely/with kind regards'**i.A.** (= **im Auftrag**)/**i.V.** (= **in Vertretung**) 'pp.'

- (a) Thanking in advance:

**Vielen Dank im Voraus.**

Thank you very much in advance.

**Ich bedanke mich/Wir danken Ihnen im Voraus.**

Thank you/we thank you in advance.

▶ See 59.1d. See also 67.2a on expressing formal thanks

- (b) Closing the letter:

If the writer wishes to encourage a response, one of the following may be appropriate:

**Für eine baldige Antwort wäre ich (Ihnen) sehr dankbar.**

I would be grateful (to you) for an early reply.

► See 39.2 on the use of the subjunctive

***In Erwartung einer baldigen Antwort verbleibe ich . . .***

In the expectation of a prompt reply I remain, yours . . .

A firm is likely to write:

***Wir hoffen auf baldige Antwort.***

We hope for a prompt reply.

***Wir freuen uns auf Ihre baldige Antwort.***

We look forward to (receiving) your prompt reply.

► See 42.3a and 42.3c for the above two verb completion patterns

***Wir sehen Ihrer baldigen/umgehenden Antwort gern entgegen.***

We look forward to your prompt/immediate reply.

***Wir sehen Ihrer Stellungnahme/Ihrem diesbezüglichen Schreiben gern entgegen.***

We look forward to (hearing) your view/(receiving) your letter on this matter.

***Wir sehen Ihrer wertigen Bestellung gern entgegen.***

We look forward to receiving your valued order.

If the letter has provided information, **weiter\*helfen** (*lit.* to help further) may well be used, as well as, less commonly nowadays, the verb **dienen** (*lit.* to serve):

***Wir hoffen Ihnen damit weitergeholfen zu haben.***

We hope this will have helped you.

***Wir hoffen Ihnen hiermit gedient zu haben.***

We hope to have been of help to you.

***Ich hoffe Ihnen damit wenigstens etwas dienen zu können.***

I hope this has been of at least some help to you.

► See 19.6 for verbs taking the dative; see 42.3f for verb completion by infinitive clause with **zu**; see also 8.6 for word order

(c) Enclosures:

If something is enclosed with the letter, **bei\*legen** or **bei\*liegen** (followed by the dative) is likely to be used:

***Einen adressierten Rückumschlag haben wir diesem Brief beigelegt.***

We enclose an addressed envelope with this letter.

***Ein internationaler Antwortschein liegt diesem Brief bei.***

An international reply coupon is enclosed with this letter.

► See 42.3a–b for verb completion with the dative, and verb completion with the accusative and dative

***Anbei erhalten Sie mein Manuskript.***

My manuscript is enclosed.

At the end of the letter, following the signature, the word **Anlage(n)** or the abbreviation **Anl.** denotes 'enclosures' ('Enc.'). This may be accompanied in the body of the letter by:

**In der Anlage finden Sie eine Kopie des Briefes.**

A copy of the letter is enclosed.

A request such as the following will be made if receipt has to be acknowledged:

**Bitte bestätigen Sie den Empfang des Paket(e)s.**

Please acknowledge receipt of the parcel.

(d) Signing off:

The standard closure to a business or formal letter is:

**Mit vielen/freundlichen Grüßen,**

Yours sincerely/faithfully,

Less common is:

**Mit freundlichen/(den) besten Empfehlungen,**

With kind/best regards,

Less formal, but still not informal, endings would be:

**Mit bestem Gruß, / Mit herzlichem Gruß, / Mit (den) besten Grüßen,**

With best wishes,

**Es grüßt Sie herzlich,**

Very best wishes,

► See [42.3g](#) for the use of the dummy subject **es**

NOTE

**Hochachtungsvoll**, 'Yours faithfully,' is now considered rather old-fashioned.

Finally, if the letter is signed on behalf of someone, the abbreviations **i.A. (im Auftrag)** or **i.V. (in Vertretung)** will be found; these are the equivalents of English 'pp.'

## 62.4 Finishing an informal letter

► See also [60.7b](#) for opening an informal letter

**Schluss machen/schließen** 'to close/finish'

**sich melden** 'to get in touch/write'

**von sich (= dat.) hören lassen** 'to get in touch' (*lit.* to let sb. hear about oneself)

(a) Preparing to sign off:

**Ich muss jetzt Schluss machen/schließen.**

I must close now.

**Das wär's dann für heute.**

That's enough for today then.

► See [39.2](#) for the use of the subjunctive

## Eating and drinking

(b) Requests to keep in touch:

**Bis bald.**

See you soon.

**Schreib bald.**

Write soon.

**Schreib mal wieder.**

(Do) write again.

**Melde dich bald.**

Get in touch soon.

**Lass bitte bald (et)was von dir hören.**

Get in touch soon/write soon.

► See 35.6a for the modal verb **lassen**

(c) Signing off (see also 60.8 on postcard greetings):

**Alles Liebe, / Alles Gute,**

All the best,

► See 44.4

**Viele liebe Grüße, dein/deine ...**

Very best wishes, yours ...

(d) In emails the following abbreviations are common:

**Mfg (Mit freundlichen GrüÙe)**

**Vg (Viele GrüÙe)**

**Mlg (mit lieben GrüÙen).**

## 63

## Eating and drinking

These can involve any of the following expressions:

**Hunger/Durst haben** 'to be hungry/thirsty'  
**etw. (= acc.) möchten** 'to want sth. (to eat)'  
**zum Essen ein\*laden** 'to invite sb. to have sth. to eat'  
**eine Runde aus\*geben/spendieren** 'to buy a round'  
**essen gehen** 'to go (for sth.) to eat'  
**wollen wir (+ infinitive) ...** 'shall we ...'  
**gehen wir (+ infinitive) ...** 'let's go to ...'

## 63.1

## Expressing hunger and thirst

(a) Personal wishes:

**Ich habe (keinen) Hunger/Durst. (informal)**

I am (not) hungry/thirsty.

**Ich trinke ein Glas Rotwein, bitte.**

I'll have a glass of red wine, please.

**Er möchte ein Glas Weißwein.**

He would like a glass of white wine.

► See 21.2 for the use of cases in apposition; for the case of nouns qualifying another noun, such as **ein Glas Rotwein**, see 21

(b) Proposing/inviting:

***Darf ich Sie zum Essen ein\*laden?***

May I invite you to eat/have something to eat with me?

***Was darf ich dir (an\*)bieten?***

What can I offer you?

***Möchten Sie etwas essen/trinken?***

Would you like something to eat/drink?

***Was möchtest du essen?***

What would you like to eat?

***Wollen wir was trinken?***

Shall we have something to drink?

***Sie gibt heute einen aus.***

She's buying everyone a drink today.

***Sie haben uns ein Bier/eine Runde ausgegeben.***

They bought us a beer/a round of drinks.

***Ich möchte euch ein Eis/eine Runde spendieren.***

I'd like to buy you an ice cream/buy you all an ice cream.

► See 19.2 for the use of the dative here

***Gehen wir einen trinken. (informal)***

Let's go and have a drink.

***Gehen wir heute Abend essen?***

Shall we go (out) for something to eat this evening?

***Komm, ich lade dich zum Kaffee ein.***

Come on, I'll buy you a coffee.

In addition a waiter might ask:

***Was darf ich Ihnen bringen?***

What can I bring you?

***Und zum Trinken?***

And what would you like to drink?

***Trinken Sie noch ein Bier?***

Would you like another beer?

***Haben Sie sonst noch einen Wunsch?***

Can I get you anything else?

## 63.2

### Finding somewhere to sit in a café/restaurant

(a) In certain restaurants a waiter or a cloakroom attendant may offer to take a guest's coat:

***Darf ich Ihnen den Mantel ab\*nehmen?***

May I take your coat?

(b) Asking about availability:

**Haben Sie einen Tisch frei?**

Do you have a spare table?

**Haben Sie einen Tisch für zwei?**

Do you have a table for two?

**Haben Sie einen Hochstuhl für unsere kleine Tochter?**

Do you have a high-chair for our young daughter?

**Ich habe reserviert.**

I've booked.

**Wir haben einen Tisch für vier Personen für Keller reserviert.**

We ordered a table for four in the name of Keller.

(c) Asking if something is occupied:

**Ist dieser Tisch/Stuhl/Platz noch frei?**

Is this table/chair/seat free?

**Ist hier noch frei?**

Is this (chair/table) free?

**Ist hier noch Platz?**

Is there room/space here?

(d) Discussing location:

**Gibt es hier eine Raucherecke?**

Is there a smoking section here?

**Haben Sie einen Tisch am Fenster/auf der Terrasse?**

Do you have a table by the window/on the terrace?

**Ich möchte drinnen/draußen/in der Ecke sitzen.**

I'd like to sit inside/outside/in the corner.

## 63.3

## Ordering food and drink

**etw. wählen** 'to choose/order sth.'

**etw. empfehlen** 'to recommend sth.'

**etw. nehmen/probieren** 'to have/try sth.'

**jmdm. etw. bringen/reichen** 'to bring/pass sb. sth.'

(a) Getting the menu:

**Die (Speise)Karte bitte!**

(I'd like) the menu, please.

**Die Weinliste bitte!**

(Bring us) the wine list, please.

**Ich hätte gern die Getränkekarte.**

I'd like the drinks list.

► See 39.2 for this subjunctive form



It should be noted, however, that wine is usually ordered after food has been chosen. To place an order tell the waiter:

**Wir möchten (gern) bestellen.**  
We'd like to order.

Or, if more time is required:

**Wir haben noch nicht gewählt.**  
We haven't chosen yet.

(b) Consulting the waiter:

The waiter or waitress will probably ask:

**Haben Sie schon gewählt?**  
Have you decided what you want?

**Was darf es sein? / Was möchten Sie?**  
What is it to be? / What would you like?

If help is needed choosing, say:

**Was empfehlen Sie?**  
What do you recommend?

This is likely to elicit a response such as:

**Ich empfehle Ihnen das Brathähnchen.**  
I would recommend the roast chicken.

► See [42.3b](#) on verb completion

Other questions one is likely to want to ask are:

**Was ist denn Eisbein?**  
What is 'Eisbein'?

Or, more formally:

**Können Sie erklären, was ein Eisbein ist?**  
Can you explain what 'Eisbein' is?

**Sauerkraut – was ist das?**  
What is 'Sauerkraut'?

**Haben Sie ein Schinkenbrot, bitte?**  
Do you have a(n open) ham sandwich?

**Was für Suppen haben Sie?**  
What soups do you have?

► See [24.2a](#) for the determiner **was für ein**

**Welche Eissorten haben Sie?**  
What ice cream flavours do you have?

To check on a dish's ingredients, ask:

**Sind in dieser Torte Nüsse?**  
Are there any nuts in this gâteau/flan?

**Enthält dieser Obstsalat Kiwi?**  
Is there kiwi in this fruit salad?

**Ist das hier Bio-Rindfleisch?**

Is this organic beef?

(c) Ordering:

It should be noted that, in German restaurants, it is not uncommon to order all courses in one go at the start of the meal:

**Ich nehme Menü drei. / Ich nehme das Menü zu 15 Euro.**

I'll have menu number 3/the 15 euro menu.

**Als Hauptgericht/Vorspeise möchten wir . . .**

For our main course/starters we would like . . .

**Zum Nachtisch/Als Nachspeise nehmen wir Eis.**

For sweet we'll have ice cream.

If more of something is required:

**Ich möchte noch etwas Reis/Salat.**

I'd like some more rice/salad.

**Kann ich Ihnen noch etwas bringen?**

Would you like anything else?

**Noch einen (= acc.) Kaffee?**

Another coffee?

**Noch ein kleines (= acc.) Bier, bitte.**

Another small beer, please.

To tell the person serving how much is wanted, say:

**Ich nehme eine kleine/große Portion Kartoffeln.**

I'll have a small/large helping of potatoes.

► See 21.1 for the use of cases in apposition

**Danke, das reicht.**

Thank you, that's enough.

**Bitte nicht so viel.**

Not so much, thank you.

A waiter may ask:

**Haben Sie noch einen Wunsch?**

Would you like anything else?

**(Darf es) sonst noch etwas (sein)?**

(Would you like) anything else?

When the wine is about to be served, the waiter will probably ask:

**Möchten Sie den Wein probieren?**

Would you like to try the wine first?

Note that **Danke** as a response to this question would mean 'no, thank you'.

When the food arrives a group will be asked:

**(Wer bekommt) die Zwiebelsuppe?**

(Who is having) the onion soup?

A possible response would be:

**Ja, die bekomme ich.**  
Yes, that's me/for me.

If condiments are wanted, ask:

**Können Sie uns bitte Salz/Pfeffer/Senf/Zucker bringen/geben?**  
Could you please bring/pass us (some) salt/pepper/mustard/sugar?

This request can be rendered more formal by substituting **reichen** for **bringen** or **geben**. If buying a snack from an **Imbissstube** (café or snack-bar), the following would be a more appropriate way to order:

**Einmal/Zweimal Bratwurst mit Pommes frites und Curryketchup, bitte.**  
One lot/two lots of (fried) sausage with chips and curry ketchup, please.

## 63.4

## Dealing with problems when eating out

**es fehlt** (+ noun) 'there's a . . . missing'  
**etw. brauchen** 'to need sth.'  
**etw. aus\*wechseln** 'to change/replace sth.'  
**etw. um\*tauschen** 'to swap/change sth.'

(a) If the order is delayed the waiter/waitress might be asked:

**Müssen wir noch lange warten?**  
Will we have to wait much longer?

**Warum dauert es denn so lange?**  
Why is it taking so long?

**Ich habe schon vor einer halben Stunde bestellt.**  
I ordered half an hour ago.

A placatory waiter will probably reply:

**Ihre Suppe kommt sofort/gleich.**  
Your soup will be here very shortly/in just a moment.

(b) If, when it finally arrives, the order is incorrect or there is something else wrong with it, one of the following might be appropriate:

**Das habe ich aber nicht bestellt.**  
That's not what I ordered.

**Das Essen ist ja kalt.**  
The food is cold.

**Das Schnitzel ist nicht durch.**  
The schnitzel is not done/cooked properly.

(c) Alternatively, more utensils may be required or something dirty may need replacing:

**Es fehlt ein Löffel.**  
There's a spoon missing.

▶ See 42.3g for this use of the dummy subject **es**; see also 70 on talking about absence

**Wir brauchen noch ein Glas, bitte.**

We need another glass, please.

**Bringen Sie mir bitte einen anderen Teller!**

Bring me another (*i.e. a different*) plate, please.

**Mein Glas ist nicht sauber. Könnten Sie es bitte auswechseln?**

My glass isn't clean. Could you change it, please?

► See 39.3d for the subjunctive of modal verbs

(d) Alternatively, reference may need to be made to the menu again:

**Bitte bringen Sie mir nochmal die Speisekarte.**

Could I see the menu again, please.

(e) If the bill is not what was expected, say:

**Ich glaube, die Rechnung stimmt nicht.**

I think the bill is wrong.

**Könnten Sie bitte gerade noch einmal die Rechnung durch\*gehen/prüfen?**

Could you just go through/check the bill again, please?

► See also 94.1 for putting someone right

## 63.5 Paying the bill

(a) To attract the waiter's attention at the end of the meal, call:

**(Wir möchten) zahlen bitte! / Die Rechnung bitte!**

We would like to pay, please! / The bill, please!

**Könnten Sie uns bitte die Rechnung bringen!**

Could you bring us the bill, please!

(b) If there are two or more at the table, the waiter/waitress is likely to ask:

**(Geht das) zusammen oder getrennt?**

Is the bill for everyone or is it to be paid separately?

To identify what you have to pay for, say:

**Ich bezahle den Salatteller und zwei Bier.**

I'm paying for the salad and two beers.

If feeling flush, you might then offer:

**Zusammen. / Ich bezahle.**

All together. / I'll pay.

(c) Leaving a tip:

To find out if service is extra, ask:

**Ist die Bedienung/der Service inbegriffen?**

Is service included (in the price)?

The waiter will say what the bill comes to:

**Das macht 37 Euro 50.**

That's/comes to €37.50.

The normal method of tipping is to pay a slightly larger amount and round the bill up. For example, if the bill comes to €37.50:

**40 Euro. Stimmt so.**

40 euros. It's OK as it is. (*i.e. keep the change*)

**Das stimmt so. / Danke, das stimmt.**

That's OK as it is. / Thanks, that's fine (as it is). (*i.e. keep the change*)

## 63.6

## Talking about food and drink

**etw. kochen** 'to cook sth.'

**zum Frühstück/Mittagessen essen** 'to have for breakfast/lunch'

**etw. gern essen** 'to like eating sth.'

**etw. (= nom.) schmeckt jmdm.** 'sb. likes sth.'

(a) Talking about eating habits:

**Ich koche immer selbst.**

I do all my own cooking.

**Wer kocht bei euch?**

Who does the cooking in your house?

**Was kochst du am Sonntag?**

What are you cooking on Sunday?

**Was isst du zum Frühstück/zu Mittag/zu Abend?**

What do you eat for breakfast/lunch/tea?

**Zum Mittagessen/Mittags esse ich immer etwas Warmes.**

I always have something hot for lunch.

► See [46.3](#) for the use of **etwas**

**Zum Abendessen essen wir heute Suppe mit Brot und Käse.**

We're having soup with bread and cheese for tea this evening.

(b) Talking about general likes and dislikes (see also [104](#)):

**Was ist dein Lieblingsessen?**

What is your favourite food?

**Ich esse gern Nudeln.**

I like (eating) pasta.

**Ich trinke gern Mineralwasser.**

I like (drinking) mineral water.

**Wir trinken keinen Alkohol.**

We don't drink alcohol. / We are teetotal.

**Salzkartoffeln mag ich nicht. (informal)**

I don't like boiled potatoes.

**Ich esse lieber Kartoffelsalat.**

I prefer potato salad.

► See [51.5](#) for irregular comparative adverbs; see also [105](#) on indicating preferences

**Rosenkohl esse ich sehr gern.**

I really like Brussels sprouts.

- (c) Talking about reactions to food and drink:

Enquiring about specific likes and dislikes usually involves the verb **schmecken**, which literally means 'to taste' but has the implication 'to taste good':

**Wie schmeckt dir der Apfelkuchen?**

How do you like the apple cake?

► See 19.7 for impersonal verbs; see also 115 on enjoyment and pleasure

**Hat es geschmeckt?**

Did you like it?

**Es war sehr gut/ausgezeichnet/zu salzig/leider nicht so gut.**

It was very good/excellent/too salty/not so good, I'm afraid.

To express a food's particular quality one might say:

**Das Essen ist zu kalt/heiß.**

The food is too cold/hot (in temperature).

**Das ist zu scharf/süß/sauer.**

That is too hot (*i.e. in flavour*)/sweet/sour.

To find out if someone has tried a particular item, ask:

**Hast du den Kuchen schon versucht/probiert?**

Have you tried the cake yet?

- (d) Making plans to eat and drink:

If offering to prepare food and drink, one might say (see also 96.2 on making an offer):

**Soll ich Kaffee/etwas zu essen machen?**

Should I make some coffee/something to eat?

**Was sollen wir kochen?**

What shall we cook/make?

To find out when food will be ready, ask:

**Wie lange dauert es noch?**

How much longer will it take?

**Wann ist das Essen fertig?**

When will the meal be ready?

**Wann gibt es Essen?**

At what time are we eating?

► See 34.2c for this use of the present tense

## Giving and receiving compliments

British students should note that many Germans do not appreciate the implications of understatement and are likely to interpret it as lack of interest. On the other hand, American students should be aware that the majority of Germans view overstatement with some suspicion.

## 64.1

## Complimenting

**jmdm. ein Kompliment machen** ‘to pay sb. a compliment’  
**etw. (= nom.) gefällt jmdm.** ‘sb. likes sth.’

- (a) To pay a compliment is **ein Kompliment/Komplimente machen**. It takes the dative of the person being complimented (see 19.1–2):

**Sie hat ihr ein großes Kompliment gemacht.**  
 She paid her a great compliment.

**Wenn Sie das sagen, ist das wahrhaftig ein Kompliment/heißt das schon etwas.**

From you, that’s quite a compliment.

Many of the following expressions can be applied to different subjects. The subsections are intended to be illustrative only.

- (b) On a performance:

**Wie gut du das kannst!**  
 You are really good at that!

**Das hast du (aber) gut/prima gemacht.**  
 You’ve done that well/really well.

**Spielt die gut!**  
 She certainly plays well.

- (c) On a house/flat:

**Es ist wirklich gemütlich bei euch.**  
 Your flat/house is really comfortable/cosy.

**Ich finde eure neue Wohnung sehr schön.**  
 I think your new flat is really beautiful.

- (d) On clothes:

**Der Rock ist sehr hübsch/super/toll/schick.**  
 The skirt is very pretty/great/brilliant/elegant.

**Er steht dir gut.**  
 It suits you.

**Dein Kleid gefällt mir sehr.**  
 I really like your dress.

**Dieser Anzug sitzt super.**  
 This suit fits (you) superbly.

► See 31.2 for the emphatic (and often colloquial) use of **der, die, das** as personal pronouns

**(Das war) eine Glanzleistung!**  
 That was a superb performance!

**Bravo!**  
 Bravo! / Well done!

- (e) On use of language:

**Sie sprechen aber sehr gut Deutsch.**  
You speak German very well.

**Sie sprechen ja schon fast fließend.**  
You are almost fluent already.

- (f) On cooking:

**Mein Lob/Kompliment dem Koch/der Köchin.**  
My compliments to the chef (*used both in restaurants and humorously among friends and relatives*).

- (g) General expressions of delight/approval (see also 104 on likes and dislikes; 112 on satisfaction and dissatisfaction; and 109 on expressing agreement and disagreement):

**(Oh) wie schön!**  
(Oh) how lovely!

**Mensch ist das schön!**  
That really is nice/beautiful.

**Das ist ja großartig/fantastisch/ausgezeichnet/Klasse/fein!**  
That is really great/fantastic/excellent/tremendous/superb!

**Alle Achtung!**  
Good for you/him/her, etc.!

## 64.2 Responding to compliments

- (a) The simplest response will usually be
- Danke!**
- 'Thank you'; but depending on the type of compliment one of the following may be more appropriate:

**Das freut mich.**  
I'm pleased. (*i.e. that you like it*)

**Das ist sehr freundlich/nett von Ihnen/dir.**  
That's very kind/nice of you.

**Gleichfalls.**  
You do too. / Yours does too. / The same to you. (*i.e. the meaning depends on context*)

- (b) As in English, a token question may be offered in response to a compliment:

**Das Kleid ist schön. – Ja, gefällt's dir?**  
The dress is beautiful. – Do you like it?

**Ja, nicht?**  
Yes, it is, isn't it?

- (c) An explanation of the origin of something may be given:

**Das habe ich von Peek & Cloppenburg. / Das habe ich schon lange.**  
I got it at Peek & Cloppenburg. / I've had it a long time.



## 65

## Expressing commiseration

## 65.1

## Sympathizing

To express sympathy or empathy any of the following might be used:

**jmd. tut jmdm. leid** ‘sb. feels sorry for sb.’ (see also 19.7)  
**Pech haben** ‘to be unlucky’  
**Mitleid mit jmdm. haben** ‘to have sympathy with sb.’  
**mit jmdm. mit\*fühlen** ‘to sympathize with sb.’  
**Verständis für etw. haben** ‘to show understanding for sth.’  
**jmdm. Verständnis entgegen\*bringen** ‘to show sb. understanding’  
**jmdm. etw. nach\*fühlen/nach\*empfinden** ‘to understand sb.’s feelings’  
**sich in jmds. Lage (hinein\*)versetzen** ‘to put oneself in sb.’s position’

► See also 111 on expressing happiness, fear and sadness

(a) To express sorrow at something, use:

**Es tut mir (wirklich) leid.**  
 I’m (really) sorry.

► See also 68.1a–b on apologizing and seeking forgiveness

(b) But with people use:

**Er/Sie tut mir leid.**  
 I feel sorry for him/her.

**Die Kinder tun mir leid.**  
 I feel sorry for the children.

Alternatively, ‘poor’ might be placed before the person or after **du/Sie**:

**Der arme Willi! / Die arme Frau!**  
 Poor Willi! / The poor woman!

► See 23.2g for the use of the definite article in German

**Du Arme(r)! / Sie Arme(r)!**  
 Poor you!

► See 28.5 on adjectival nouns

(c) There is a wide range of possible exclamations that convey sympathy. The most common are:

**Schade!**  
 What a pity!

**Das ist (aber) schlimm/schrecklich/schade!**  
 That’s bad/terrible/a pity.

**Pech (gehabt)! (informal)**  
 Bad luck!

**So ein Pech! / Was für ein Pech!**  
 What bad luck.

**Du bist ein echter Pechvogel!**

You really are unlucky/a walking disaster area.

- (d) To express sympathy with someone's situation, German speakers might use one of the following: **Mitleid** 'pity/compassion' and the adjectives **mitleidvoll/mitleidig** 'compassionate/pitying/sympathetic', or **Mitgefühl** 'sympathy' and the verb **mit\*fühlen** 'to feel for somebody/sympathize with someone':

**Ich kann mit dir mit\*fühlen.**

I can sympathize with you.

**Ich habe großes Mitleid mit ihr.**

I have a lot of sympathy with her.

- See 46.1–2a for the use of the zero declension

**Er hat sein Mitgefühl ausgesprochen.**

He expressed his sympathies.

**Frau Debus hat viel Mitgefühl für meine Sorgen gezeigt.**

Mrs Debus showed a lot of sympathy for my concerns.

- (e) Understanding for someone or something is expressed by means of **Verständnis**:

**Sie müssen Verständnis für seine Probleme haben.**

You must show some understanding for his problems.

**Wir müssen ihnen Verständnis entgegen\*bringen. (formal)**

We must show them some understanding.

- (f) Limits to sympathy can be expressed by:

**Ich kann Ihnen das nach\*fühlen/nach\*empfinden, aber ich kann ja nichts dafür.**

I can understand your feelings/empathize with you but there's nothing I can do about it.

- See 35.5 for the omission of the infinitive with modal verbs

**Erwarte kein Mitleid von ihnen.**

Don't expect any pity from them.

- (g) To persuade someone to see something from another point of view, use:

**Versuch doch einmal, dich in meine Lage zu versetzen. / Stell dir vor, du wär(e)st in meiner Lage.**

Do try to see it from my point of view.

## 65.2

**Consoling**

**jmdn. trösten** 'to console sb.'

**sich trösten** 'to console oneself'

**jmdn. über etw. (= acc.) hinweg\*trösten** 'to help sb. over sth.'

**jmdm. Trost zu\*sprechen/bringen** 'to console sb.'

**jmdm. Trost spenden** to bring consolation

- (a) To console a person immediately after he or she has accidentally damaged something, say:

**Es macht nichts. / Es ist schon OK.**

It's doesn't matter. / It's OK.

**Es ist doch (gar) nicht so schlimm.**

It's not (at all) so bad.

- (b) To encourage someone who is feeling 'down', one might say:

**Kopf hoch!**

(Come on) cheer up!

**So lange nichts Schlimmeres passiert ist!**

As long as nothing worse has happened!

- (c) The words **Trost**, **trösten** and **tröstlich** are the common means of expressing consolation.

To express the act of consoling someone, use:

**Der Pfarrer hat ein paar tröstende Worte gesagt.**

The priest/minister said a few words of comfort.

**Meine Freundin hat mich über die Krise hinweggetröstet.**

My friend helped me over (*lit.* consoled me over) the crisis.

**Mit ein paar Trost spendenden Worten ist es hier aber nicht getan.**

A few consoling words won't do it here.

**Er hat der Frau Trost zugesprochen/Trost gebracht.**

He consoled/comforted her.

The means of consolation following **trösten** is expressed by **mit**:

**Er tröstet sich mit dem Gedanken an das Geld.**

He's consoling himself by thinking about the money.

► See 38.1 for prepositional verbs

Feeling comforted or consoled by something is expressed by means of **Trost** or **tröstlich**:

**Es ist ein Trost/tröstlich zu wissen, dass du immer da bist.**

It's a comfort/comforting to know you are always there.

► See 42.3e for verb completion by a clause

**Ein Trost, dass jetzt alles vorbei ist.**

It's a relief that everything is now over.

**Das Kind ist unser einziger Trost.**

The child is our only comfort.

**Zum Trost kann ich Ihnen sagen, dass wir zur Zeit ähnliche Probleme haben.**

It may comfort you to know that we are currently having similar problems.

Fairly common ironic expressions are:

**Das ist ein schwacher/schöner/schlechter Trost.**

That's some comfort. (*i.e.* not much comfort)

**Das ist ja sehr tröstlich!**

Some comfort that is.

**Trösten Sie sich!** or **tröste dich!** are used in an ironic sense when telling a person with a problem about someone else's similar difficulty – in the sense of 'console yourself with the thought that you are not the only one'.

### 65.3 Bereavement

**an etw.** (= dat.) **Anteil nehmen** 'to feel sorry about sth.'

**jmdm. sein Beileid aus\*drücken/aus\*sprechen** 'to express one's sympathy to sb.'

**zutiefst erschüttert sein** 'to be deeply shocked'

**Mitgefühl entgegen\*nehmen** 'to accept sympathy'

**mit jmdm. (mit\*)fühlen** 'to feel for sb.'

**(jmds.) Leid teilen** 'to share (sb.'s) sorrow'

**sterben/entschlafen/hin\*scheiden** 'to pass away/die'

**um jmdn. trauern** 'to mourn sb.'

- (a) Sympathies to someone, either personally or in writing, could be conveyed by one of the following:

**Mein herzliches/aufrichtiges Beileid zum Tode deiner Schwester.**

My deepest/sincere condolences on the death of your sister.

**Wir sind in Gedanken bei euch.**

You are in our thoughts.

Rather more formally one might write:

**Wir nehmen Anteil am Tode Ihres Mannes.**

We are/feel deeply sorry about the death of your husband.

**Wir möchten Ihnen unser aufrichtiges Beileid ausdrücken/aussprechen.**

We would like to express our sincere condolences.

**Zutiefst erschüttert hörten wir vom Tode Ihrer Frau.**

We were deeply shocked to hear of the death of your wife.

► See also [111.3j](#) on grief and mourning, and [111.3k](#) and [114.6](#) on expressing shock

Most formally of all:

**Bitte nehmen Sie mein tiefempfundenes Mitgefühl zu Ihrem schweren Verlust entgegen.**

Please accept my deeply felt sympathy at your terrible loss.

- (b) On a card one might write:

**Mit tiefstem Beileid.**

With deepest sympathy.

► See [46.1](#) for the zero declension

**Wir fühlen mit Ihnen.**

We feel for you.

**Wir teilen Ihr Leid.**

We share your sorrow.

► See also [111.3j](#) on grief and mourning

- (c) An obituary notice in the paper might employ the highly formal and literary verbs **entschlafen** and **hin\*scheiden**:

**Gestern *entschlief* nach langem Leiden mein lieber Gatte, Rudolf Engel. In tiefer/stiller Trauer, Katharina Engel.**

My dearly beloved husband, Rudolf Engel, passed away yesterday following a long illness. Sadly missed by Katharina Engel.

**Am Freitag *schied* nach kurzer Krankheit meine liebe Frau, Mechthild Sammer, hin. In stiller Trauer, Alois Sammer.**

My dearly beloved wife, Mechthild Sammer, died on Friday following a short illness. Sadly missed by Alois Sammer.

**Wir *trauern um* unseren verstorbenen Bruder, Michael Jenisch.**

We mourn the loss of our recently departed brother, Michael Jenisch.

► See 38.1 for prepositional verbs

- (d) Another typical newspaper notice is:

**Wir bedanken uns für alle *Beileidsbeweise*.**

Thank you for all expressions of condolence.

- (e) The reason for someone's absence or for the cancellation of an event may be given as:

***Wegen eines Trauerfalls* in der Familie muss die heutige Veranstaltung leider aus\*fallen.**

Owing to a family bereavement today's event has had to be cancelled.

► See 65.1–3 for acknowledging commiseration

## 66

## Expressing good wishes

The following cover a wide range of reasons for wishing someone well:

**jmdm. etw. wünschen** 'to wish sb. sth.'  
**viel Glück/Spaß** 'good luck/have a good time'  
**viel Erfolg/Vergnügen** 'every success/hope you enjoy yourself'  
**viel Freude** 'much joy/happiness'  
**alles Gute** 'all the best' (see 44.4)  
**gute Besserung** 'get well soon'  
**Gesundheit!** 'Bless you!'  
**sich (= dat.) etw. schmecken lassen** 'to enjoy food'  
**guten Appetit!** 'enjoy your meal'  
**zum Wohl!** 'Cheers!'

► For good wishes see 18, particularly 18.7

Almost all the greetings and expressions of good wishes that follow are assumed to be preceded by **Ich wünsche Ihnen/dir . . .** 'I wish you . . .' and, as a result, expressions are in the accusative case. Inclusion of the verb is more typical of fairly formal style, as in the third example of 66.8a.

## 66.1

## General wishes

- (a) The following may be used when wishing someone well for a forthcoming activity or event:

**Viel Glück!**

Good luck!

**Viel Spaß (beim Autorennen)!**

Hope you have fun/a good time (at the motor racing).

► See also [115.3](#) on enjoying oneself

**Viel Vergnügen!**

Hope you enjoy it.

- (b) In spoken German between friends, and at the end of informal letters, good wishes may be conveyed by:

**Mach's gut! / Ich wünsche dir was.**

(I wish you) all the best.

**Mit den besten Wünschen**, however, can only be used in letters.

- (c) At work, colleagues might wish each other **Mahlzeit!** 'Bon appetit!' at lunchtime (see also [66.5](#) on food and drink). You should say the same (or **Guten Appetit!**) when passing people who are eating. After work it is normal to say (**Schönen**) **Feierabend!** 'Have a nice evening. / Enjoy your evening off.' On Fridays **Schönes Wochenende!** 'Have a nice weekend!' is more likely to be used.
- (d) To return good wishes simply say **Gleichfalls** or **Ihnen/dir auch** 'To you too'.

► See [67.1–3](#) for thanking people for their good wishes

- (e) To wish someone joy of something:

**Ich wünsche dir viel Freude an dem Auto.**

I hope you enjoy the car. / I wish you much pleasure with the car.

## 66.2

## For good health

- (a) To wish someone a speedy recovery from illness, say or write:

**Gute Besserung!**

Get well soon.

**Werde schnell wieder gesund.**

Get well/better soon.

**Ich hoffe, du bist bald wieder gesund.**

I hope you're better soon.

Slightly more formally one might write:

**Alles Gute/Beste Wünsche für eine baldige Genesung.**

All the best/best wishes for a speedy recovery.

► See [44.4](#) for the adjective declension after **alles**

- (b) If someone sneezes, say **Gesundheit!** 'Bless you!' (*lit.* good health).

**66.3 For an examination**

The normal way of expressing good luck is:

**Viel Glück bei der Prüfung.**

Good luck in the exam.

**Alles Gute zum Examen.**

All the best for the examination.

A more formal variant is:

**Viel Erfolg bei der bevorstehenden Prüfung.**

(I wish you) every success in the forthcoming exam.

**66.4 For a new home**

**Alles Gute im neuen Heim.**

All the best in your new home.

**Viel Glück in eurem neuen Haus.**

Good luck in your new house.

**66.5 With food and drink**

- (a) The standard thing to say before starting a meal is **Guten Appetit!** ‘Bon appetit! / I hope you enjoy your meal.’ This is used a great deal in Germany. The normal response would be **Danke.** / (**Danke,**) **gleichfalls.** ‘Thanks. / (Thanks,) you too.’

Another option is:

**Lassen Sie es sich schmecken. / Lass es dir (gut) schmecken.**

I hope you enjoy it.

► See [35.6b](#) for the use of **lassen**

- (b) If offering a toast, choose one of the following:

**Prost!** (*informal*)

Cheers!

**Prosit! / Zum Wohl!**

Cheers! / Good health!

**Auf Ihr Wohl!** (*formal*)

To your good health!

If responding to a toast, simply reply in kind: (**Ja,**) **zum Wohl!**

When toasting a particular occasion or activity use **auf**:

**Auf ein gutes neues Jahr!**

Here’s to a happy New Year!

► See also [66.8d](#) on New Year celebrations

**Auf gute Zusammenarbeit!**

Here’s to a fruitful collaboration.

**Lasst uns auf Paul/auf gute Gesundheit im Neuen Jahr anstoßen.**

Let us drink (*lit.* chink glasses) to Paul's health/to good health in the New Year.

Generally speaking, a guest should not start drinking until the host or hostess has offered a toast. Clinking of glasses is by no means universal but it is rather more common in Germany than in Britain or the USA.

**66.6****At night**

- (a) To wish someone goodnight, you could say:

**Schlafen Sie gut!**

Sleep well.

**Ich hoffe, Sie haben eine ruhige Nacht.**

I hope you have a peaceful night.

Or simply:

**Gute Nacht!**

Goodnight.

- (b) To a child one might say:

**Schlaf gut.**

Sleep well.

**Träum süß!**

Sweet dreams.

Dropping the final **-e** from the imperative form is a sign of greater informality (see **41.2c**).

**66.7****Congratulating**

**jmdn. zu etw. (= dat.) beglückwünschen** 'to congratulate sb. on sth.'

**herzliche Glückwünsche zu etw. (= dat.)** 'many congratulations on sth.'

**jmdm. zu etw. gratulieren** 'congratulate sb. on sth.'

**jmdm. etw. zu etw. wünschen** 'to wish sb. sth. on the occasion of sth.'

- (a) Congratulations are usually expressed by the verb **beglückwünschen** 'to congratulate' or the phrase **herzliche Glückwünsche** 'many congratulations':

**Herzliche Glückwünsche zu eurem Erfolg.**

Many congratulations on your success.

- (b) Congratulations on a new job or a promotion:

**Herzlichen Glückwunsch zur neuen Stelle.**

Congratulations on the new job.

**Ich beglückwünsche Sie zur Beförderung.**

I congratulate you on your promotion.

► See **38.1** for prepositional verbs

- (c) Congratulations on a birth:

**Wir gratulieren (Ihnen) zum Baby/zur Geburt Ihres ersten Kindes.**

We send our congratulations on the arrival of the new baby/the birth of your first child.

► See **19.6** for verbs that take the dative



- (d) Congratulations on examination success:

**Ich gratuliere zur bestandenen Prüfung.**  
Congratulations on passing your exam.

- (e) An official wedding announcement in the newspaper is also a form of congratulation:

**Wir geben die Vermählung unseres Sohnes bekannt.**  
We have pleasure in announcing the marriage of our son.

- (f) In Catholic families the First Communion is an important event on which children are congratulated, particularly by godparents:

**Zu deiner Erstkommunion wünscht dir alles Gute und Gottes Segen, dein Taufpate/deine Taufpatin.**  
All the best and God's blessing to you on the occasion of your First Communion, your godfather.

Similarly, children are congratulated by their sponsors on their Confirmation (the Catholic **Firmung** or Protestant **Konfirmation**):

**Zu deiner Firmung, Florian, wünscht dir alles Gute dein Firmpate/deine Firmpatin.**  
All the best to you, Florian, for your Confirmation, your sponsor.

- (g) In Jewish families, congratulations on a 12- or 13-year-old child assuming responsibility for Jewish law and tradition is expressed as follows:

**Gratulation zu deiner Bat-Mizwa/Bar-Mizwa!**  
Congratulations on your bar mitzvah/bat mitzvah!

► See 67.1–3 for responding to good wishes

## 66.8

## Celebrations

- (a) Along with **herzlichen Glückwunsch zu . . .** (see 66.7a–b on congratulating), **alles Gute zu . . .** is the most common means of wishing someone well on a personal celebration, such as a birthday or anniversary:

**Alles Gute zum (60.) Geburtstag.**  
Best wishes on/All the best for your (60th) birthday.

**Alles Gute zum Namenstag.**  
Best wishes on your name day/Saint's day.

**Zu eurer Hochzeit wünsche ich (euch) alles Gute/viel Glück.**  
I wish you all the best/good luck on your wedding day.

A more formal greeting for this last example, such as might appear on a card, would be:

**Dem glücklichen Paar viel Freude am Hochzeitstag und für das Leben zu zweit.**  
Much joy to the happy couple on their wedding day and in their (future) life together.

- (b) Good wishes for public holidays of any kind can be conveyed by:

**Schöne Feiertage! / Schönen Feiertag!**  
Enjoy the/Have a good holiday.

NOTE

Holidays spent away from home would normally elicit the wish **Schönen Urlaub!** 'Have a good holiday!', while for longer holidays away from, say, school, you could wish someone **Schöne Ferien!**

- (c) At Christmas one of the following would be appropriate in either spoken or written German:

**Frohe/Fröhliche/Gesegnete Weihnachten!**

Merry/Happy/Blessed Christmas!

**Frohes Weihnachtsfest! / Frohes Fest!**

Merry Christmas!

- (d) At New Year the most idiomatic greeting is **Guten Rutsch (ins neue Jahr)!**, meaning literally 'have a good slide into the New Year'. Other possibilities are:

**Ein Glückliches Neues Jahr! / (Ein) Gutes Neues Jahr!**

Happy New Year!

**Frohes/Glückliches Neujahr!**

Happy New Year!

**(Frohe Weihnachten) und die besten Wünsche zum Neuen Jahr!**

(Merry Christmas) and best wishes for the New Year.

**Alles Gute zum Neuen Jahr!**

All the best for the New Year.

The following could be used as a toast:

**Pros(i)t Neujahr!**

Here's to the New Year!

- (e) Easter greetings are usually conveyed by:

**Frohe Ostern! / Ein frohes Osterfest!**

Happy Easter!

► See 46.1 for the zero declension of adjectives

## Giving and receiving thanks, and expressing appreciation

There are many ways in which thanks and appreciation can be expressed:

**vielen/herzlichen Dank für etw.** (= acc.) 'many thanks for sth.'

**jmdm. für etw.** (= acc.) **danken** 'to thank sb. for sth.'

**sich bei jmdm. für etw.** (= acc.) **bedanken** 'to thank sb. for sth.'

**jmdm. (zu Dank) verpflichtet sein** 'to be indebted to sb.'

**jmdm. Dankbarkeit zeigen** 'to show sb. gratitude'

**Verdienst/Leistung an\*erkennen** 'to recognize sb.'s merit/performance'

**etw. zu schätzen/würdigen wissen** 'to value/appreciate sth.'

**es ist das Verdienst von (+ dat.)** 'it is thanks to'

**etw. dankend erhalten** 'to be grateful for (receiving) sth.'

**etw. dankend bestätigen** 'to acknowledge receipt gratefully'

**jmdm. einen Dienst erweisen** 'to do sb. a service'

**etw. dankend an\*nehmen** 'to take/accept gratefully'

## 67.1

## Thanking someone informally

- (a) Simple thanks can be expressed by **Danke**. More emphatically, say:

**Danke sehr. / Vielen/Herzlichen Dank.**

Thank you very much. / Many/sincere thanks.

Alternatively, the verb **danken** may be used:

**Wir danken euch sehr.**

Thank you very much.

► See 19.6 for verbs that take the dative

In very informal usage some people might say **tausend Dank** ‘thanks a million’.

- (b) To thank someone for something use **für**:

**Danke sehr für die Einladung.**

Thank you very much for the invitation.

But to thank someone for having done something, a clause with **dass** is required (see 8.2):

**Vielen Dank (dafür), dass Sie das Auto repariert haben.**

Many thanks for mending the car.

- (c) Other ways to thank people informally include:

**Danke, das war doch wirklich nicht nötig.**

Thanks, but it really wasn't necessary.

**Es war sehr nett/freundlich von dir, uns einzuladen.**

It was very nice/kind of you to invite us.

► See 42.3f for verb completion by infinitive clauses with **zu**; see also 8.6 for word order

**Wir wissen nicht, wie wir euch danken können.**

We don't know how we can thank you.

**(Es/das ist) nett, dass Sie an mich gedacht haben.**

(It is) nice of you to think of me.

► See 38.1 for prepositional verbs

**Das ist/Ich finde das sehr lieb/freundlich/nett (von Ihnen).**

That is/I think that is very nice/kind (of you).

And, slightly more formally:

**Das ist sehr liebenswürdig von Ihnen.**

That is very kind of you.

- (d) Thanks to deity or to providence (often with no religious connotation) can be expressed as follows:

**Gott sei Dank!**

Thank God/heavens!

► See 39.5 for this subjunctive form

**Zum Glück ist nichts passiert.**  
Fortunately nothing happened.

## 67.2

**Thanking and expressing appreciation formally**

- (a) The verb **sich** (=acc.) **bedanken** is frequently used, particularly in written communications (see also 67.3 on thanking in a formal letter):

**Wir möchten uns bei Ihnen bedanken.**

We would like to thank/express our thanks to you.

**Ich bedanke mich herzlich/recht herzlich für Ihre Hilfe.**

Thank you very much/most sincerely for your help.

This expression would also be used in front of an audience; note the use of **bei** before the person being thanked:

**Wir möchten uns bei Ihnen für Ihre Unterstützung bedanken.**

We would like to thank you for your support.

- (b) A very formal but quite common expression is (**zu Dank**) **verpflichtet sein**:

**Ich bin Ihnen zu Dank verpflichtet.**

I am indebted to you. / I owe you a debt of gratitude.

**Wir sind Ihnen sehr verpflichtet.**

We are indebted to you/very grateful.

- (c) On official occasions and when awards are to be made, e.g. in the work situation, the following may be said:

**Darf ich mich auch im Namen des Geschäftsführers für Ihr Engagement bedanken.**

Allow me to thank you on behalf of the manager as well for your commitment.

Note that **Engagement** is pronounced as in French.

- See 28.2b for the declension of **Name** and other weak nouns

**Wir möchten Ihnen unsere Dankbarkeit zeigen.**

We should like to show you our gratitude.

- See 12.3 for the order of noun and pronoun objects

**Wir schätzen ihren Beitrag sehr.**

We value her contribution highly.

**In Anerkennung Ihrer großen Leistungen bei uns in der Firma möchten wir Ihnen diese Uhr schenken.**

We would like to present you with this clock in recognition of your great achievements in the firm.

- See 5.2a for the position of the verb here

**Wir möchten Ihr Verdienst/Ihre Leistung auf folgende Weise an\*erkennen.**

We would like to recognize your contribution/performance in the following way.

**Alle Kollegen wissen sein Verdienst zu schätzen.**

All his colleagues value his contribution.

**Die Firma weiß Ihre Arbeit zu würdigen.**

The firm greatly appreciates your work.

**Es ist das Verdienst der indischen Regierung, dass die Überflutungen so schnell unter Kontrolle gebracht wurden.**

It is thanks to the Indian government that the floods were controlled so quickly.

**Sie haben uns einen großen Dienst erwiesen.**

You have done us a great service.

- (d) A notice of thanks in the newspaper might take the following form:

**Herzlichen Dank allen, die uns zu unserer Hochzeit so reichlich mit Geschenken und Glückwünschen erfreut haben.**

Sincere thanks to all those who sent so many delightful gifts and good wishes on the occasion of our wedding.

### 67.3 Thanking in a formal letter

Thanks in a letter usually refer back to a previous communication (see also 61.11 on formal letter openings):

- (a) Letters:

**Wir danken Ihnen für Ihr Schreiben vom 24. August.**

Thank you for your letter of 24 August.

**Wir bestätigen dankend den Eingang Ihres Briefs.**

We acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter.

**Wir haben Ihren Brief dankend erhalten.**

We are grateful for your letter.

- (b) Enquiries:

**Wir bedanken uns für Ihre Anfrage vom 11. April.**

Thank you for your enquiry of 11 April.

- (c) Orders:

**Besten Dank/Wir danken bestens für Ihre Bestellung.**

Many thanks for your order.

**Hiermit möchte ich mich für die Zusendung der Materialien bedanken.**

I would (hereby) like to thank you for sending the materials.

This can be rendered more informally by adding **recht herzlich**:

**Hiermit möchte ich mich recht herzlich für die Zusendung der Materialien bedanken.**

I would like to thank you very much for sending the materials.

**Wir bestätigen dankend den Erhalt/Empfang Ihrer wertigen Bestellung.**  
(formal)

We gratefully acknowledge receipt of your valued order.

- (d) Offers/quotes:

**Ich danke für die Übermittlung Ihres Angebots vom 3. Januar.**

Thank you for forwarding/sending your offer dated 3 January.

## 67.4

## Acknowledging thanks

- (a) German speakers are far more likely than the British to acknowledge explicitly someone's expression of thanks. **Bitte** 'Don't mention it' / 'You're welcome' is rarely omitted in response to **Danke**. Slightly more forcefully you might use **Bitte schön!**, **Bitte sehr!** or **Aber bitte!**
- (b) Other possible responses are:

**Nichts zu danken!**

Don't mention it.

**Keine Ursache!**

Not at all. / Think nothing of it. (*lit.* no cause)

**Gern geschehen!**

You're welcome.

**Das ist doch nicht der Rede wert. / Das ist doch selbstverständlich.**

Don't mention it. (*lit.* That's hardly worth mentioning)

► See 20.3 for the use of the genitive with certain adjectives

**Schon gut!**

That's all right.

Note that **Schon gut!** is also used in response to a suggestion or a complaint in the sense of 'Yes, all right'.

- (c) To say that something was received gratefully, use **dankend** or **mit Dank**:

**Sie nahm das Buch mit Dank/dankend an.**

She accepted the book with gratitude/gratefully.

## 67.5

## Declining help and offers

- (a) To turn down an offer of material help of some sort, say:

**Das darf/kann ich nicht (von Ihnen) an\*nehmen.**

I am not allowed/cannot accept that (from you).

This might be followed by:

**Trotzdem vielen Dank.**

Thanks all the same.

- (b) When telling someone not to meddle (declining help when it has not been requested, as it were), say:

**Das geht Sie gar nichts an.**

That's none of your business.

This rather rude formulation can be rendered less harsh by adapting it slightly:

**Entschuldigen Sie, aber das geht Sie wirklich nichts an!**

Excuse me, but that really isn't any of your business.

Alternatively, use the fairly neutral:

**Das betrifft Sie doch nicht.**

That doesn't concern you.

Another, less forceful expression is:

**Entschuldigen Sie, aber überlassen Sie das bitte mir.**  
Please leave that to me, if you don't mind.

On the other hand, to be more abrupt and peremptory one could use:

**Halten Sie sich da (ganz) raus.**  
Keep (well) out of it.

- (c) Note that a simple **Danke** in response to an offer of some sort will mean 'No, thank you'. In order to accept the offer, say either **Ja, bitte.** 'Yes, please.' or **Ja, gerne.** 'Yes, gladly.' / 'Yes, I would.'

## 68

**Expressing apologies and regret**

The most common expressions include:

**jmdm. leid tun** 'to be sorry'  
**sich (= acc.) bei jmdm. entschuldigen** 'to apologize to sb.'  
**etw. mit etw. (= dat.) entschuldigen** 'to excuse sth. with sth.'  
**sich bei jmdm. entschuldigen lassen** 'to send one's apologies to sb.'  
**jmdn. bei jmdm. entschuldigen** 'to convey sb.'s apologies to sb.'  
**sich (= dat.)/jmdm. verzeihen** 'to forgive oneself/sb.'  
**jmdn. um Verzeihung bitten** 'to ask sb. for forgiveness/apologize'  
**jmdm. etw. vergeben** 'to forgive sb. sth.'

## 68.1

**Apologizing and seeking forgiveness**

- (a) To say sorry for a slight mishap or some minor misdemeanour, a simple **Verzeihung!** or **Entschuldigung!** 'Sorry!' will suffice:

**Entschuldigung, falsch verbunden.**  
I'm sorry, I've got the wrong number. (*on the telephone*)

**Verzeihung, ich habe mich verwählt.**  
I'm sorry, I've dialled the wrong number.

**Tut mir leid**, short for **es tut mir leid** (see 68.1b), is also used in this sense. In German border regions with France, in particular, the form **Pardon** (pronounced as in French) may well be heard, while in informal spoken German **Sorry!** is now frequently heard.

- (b) The expression **leid tun** is very commonly used to convey apologies and regret, often with an adverb for reinforcement. Note that the verb is always used impersonally (see 19.7 for impersonal verbs):

**Es tut mir furchtbar/aufrichtig leid, dass ich den Schlüssel schon wieder vergessen habe.**

I am terribly/sincerely sorry for having forgotten the key again.

**Es tut uns sehr/wirklich leid, dass ihr nicht mitkommen könnt.**

We are very/really sorry that you can't come with us.

**Ihr hattet letztes so viel Pech, ihr könnt einem wirklich leid tun.**

You've had so much bad luck recently, I really feel sorry for you.

► See also 113.3 on disappointment

- (c) A slightly stronger request for forgiveness than the one-word expressions in **68.1a** is conveyed by the verb **entschuldigen** 'to excuse/forgive' and its reflexive variant:

**Entschuldige, ich hab's nicht gewusst.**

I'm sorry, I didn't know.

**Entschuldigen Sie, bitte.**

Please excuse (me).

**Entschuldigen Sie bitte, dass ich zu spät gekommen bin.**

I am sorry I came too late.

**Er entschuldigte sich für die zusätzliche Arbeit.**

He apologized for the extra work.

In combination with a direct object this is the verb normally used to request forgiveness for something:

**Entschuldigen Sie bitte meine Verspätung.** (*formal*)

Please forgive my late arrival.

In formal style:

**Meine Abwesenheit bitte ich zu entschuldigen.** (*very formal*)

Please excuse my absence.

With **mit** the excuse can be offered too:

**Die Studierenden entschuldigten ihre schlechten Noten mit Geldsorgen.**

The students gave financial worries as the reason for their bad marks.

**Entschuldigung** and **zu** can also be employed to explain a reason or excuse:

**Zu seiner Entschuldigung sagte er, dass er kein Geld gehabt habe.**

To excuse himself/In his defence he said he didn't have any money.

Note also the expression:

**Er wusste keine Entschuldigung vorzubringen.**

He was unable to produce an excuse.

► See also **36.1c** for the use of **zu** with separable verbs

- (d) Certain constructions with **entschuldigen** are used to convey someone else's apologies for absence (note the use of **bei** + dat. with the reason or event):

**Sie musste gestern den Kollegen bei dem Treffen entschuldigen.**

She had to present her colleague's excuses (for absence) to the meeting yesterday.

**Können Sie mich bitte bei dem Direktor entschuldigen?**

Can you send my apologies (for absence) to the director/head teacher?

In combination with the modal verb **lassen** (see **35.6b**), **sich entschuldigen** is also used to pass on apologies for absence:

**Meine Frau lässt sich entschuldigen. Sie muss heute arbeiten.**

My wife sends her apologies. She has to work today.

**Entschuldigen** is further used to excuse someone from an activity, e.g. in school:

**Ich möchte meinen Sohn Jonas für morgen entschuldigen.**

I would like to have my son Jonas excused for tomorrow.



A more formal way of offering an excuse for someone's absence is:

**Ich möchte meine Tochter wegen ihres Fehlens entschuldigen.**  
I would like to excuse my daughter for being absent.

- (e) Another verb used to seek forgiveness is **verzeihen** 'to pardon/forgive':

**Verzeihen Sie, dass ich so spät an\*rufe.**  
I'm sorry for ringing so late.

**Verzeih die Störung. (informal)**  
I'm sorry for disturbing you.

► See 41.2c for the informal dropping of the -e in imperatives

Note that **verzeihen** takes a dative object of the person (see 19.1):

**Sie hat ihm endlich verzeihen.**  
She finally forgave him.

**Es sei dir noch einmal verzeihen!**  
You're forgiven! / We'll forgive you one more time! (*ironic*)

► See 39.4 for the use of subjunctive I

**Wir können es uns nicht verzeihen, dass wir ihm nicht geholfen haben.**  
We cannot forgive ourselves for not helping him.

A much more formal and emphatic request for forgiveness is expressed by **um Verzeihung bitten**:

**Er bat sie (vielmals) um Verzeihung.**  
He apologized to her (profusely).

► See 38.1 for the use of prepositional verbs

- (f) The verb **vergeben** is less commonly used. It too takes a dative of the person:

**Sie hat ihm seine Rücksichtslosigkeit vergeben.**  
She has forgiven him his thoughtlessness.

The verb is also used in the religious sense of forgiveness:

**Vergib uns unsere Sünden.**  
Forgive us our sins.

► See 19.2 for this use of the dative, and 12.3 for the order of noun and pronoun objects

## 68.2

### Expressing regret

► See also 71 for expressing availability, and 72 for non-availability

**etw. bedauern** 'to regret sth.'  
**zu (jmds.) Bedauern** 'to (sb.'s) regret'  
**bedauerlicherweise** 'regrettably'  
**um Verständnis bitten** 'to ask for understanding'  
**Verständnis für etw. haben** 'to show understanding for sth.'

- (a) The majority of expressions of regret in formal letters involve the verb **bedauern** or the corresponding verbal noun:

**Wir bedauern, nicht früher geantwortet zu haben.**

We regret not having replied sooner.

**Wir bedauern, Ihnen mitteilen zu müssen, dass diese Veröffentlichung immer noch nicht lieferbar ist.**

We regret to inform you that this publication is still not available.

► See 42.3f for verb completion by infinitive clause with **zu**, and 8.6 on word order

**Zu unserem großen Bedauern müssen Sie mit einer Verzögerung von ca. 10 Wochen rechnen.**

Much to our regret you can expect (*lit.* you must reckon on) a delay of about 10 weeks.

- (b) The adverb **bedauerlicherweise** is also frequently found in formal style:

**Bedauerlicherweise ist das nun nicht mehr möglich.**

Unfortunately that is now no longer possible.

- (c) Regret may also involve asking for someone's understanding:

**Wir bitten um Ihr Verständnis, aber die gewünschte Broschüre ist zur Zeit vergriffen.**

We would ask for your understanding as the brochure you require is currently out of print.

**Bitte haben Sie Verständnis für unsere schwierige Lage.**

Please show some understanding/sympathy for our difficult position.

- (d) In all styles, regret can be conveyed by **leider**:

**Leider kann ich heute nicht ins Kino.**

Unfortunately I can't come to the cinema today.

**Ihr Brief ist hier leider zu spät eingetroffen.**

Your letter unfortunately arrived here too late.

- (e) For affirming that the mistake/slip was a one-off, use:

**Das kommt nicht wieder vor. / Das soll nicht wieder vorkommen.**

That won't happen again.

### 68.3 Accepting an apology

- (a) To acknowledge a person's apology, a simple **Bitte!** 'That's OK.' will often suffice. It can be reinforced as **Bitte bitte!** 'That's perfectly all right.'

- (b) There are a number of other possible responses for informal usage:

**Ist schon gut/OK.**

It's all right/OK.

**(Das) macht doch nichts.**

That's no problem.

**Das ist doch nicht so schlimm/tragisch.**

That's not so bad/tragic.

**Mach dir nichts daraus.**

Don't worry about it.

**Keine Sorge. / Mach dir keine Sorgen.**

No problem. / Don't worry about it.

**(Das) spielt keine Rolle.**

That is of no importance.

(c) Less informal are:

**Das kann ja (jedem) passieren.**

These things happen. / It could happen to anyone.

► See 19.6 for the use of the dative

**Das ist nicht Ihre Schuld.**

That's not your fault.

**Es ist nicht der Rede wert.**

It's not worth mentioning. / Don't even mention it.

► See 20.3 for other adjectives that require the genitive

**Das ist vergeben und vergessen.**

That's all over and done with.

(d) To indicate a conciliatory mood one might use:

**Vergessen wir das!**

Let's just forget about it.

**Schon vergessen!**

I've already forgotten (about) it.

# XI

## Giving and seeking factual information

### 69 Talking and enquiring about existence

#### 69.1 Presence

**sein** 'to be'  
**da sein** 'to be present/here'  
**-s Dasein** 'presence'  
**existieren** 'to exist'  
**bestehen** 'to exist'  
**anwesend sein** 'to be present'  
**dabei sein** 'to be involved'  
**zur Stelle sein** 'to be on the spot'  
**-e Gegenwart** 'present'  
**es gibt** 'there is/are'

(a) Being around/about:

**sein** and **existieren** are the obvious verbs to indicate presence. **Sein** is usually complemented by an adverb:

**Er ist da.**

He is here.

**Herr Yildiz ist hier.**

Mr Yildiz is here.

**Wer ist da? Ich bin's.**

Who is there? It's me.

**Von der Urgroßmutter existiert noch ein Foto aus ihrer Kindheit.**

There is a photo of great-grandmother (in existence) from her childhood.

When talking about somebody's presence, use **-s Dasein**:

**Sein Dasein gab ihr Trost.**

His presence comforted her/consoled her.

(b) Being present (for a specific purpose):

The idiomatic way to express occurrence is **es gibt** 'there is/are'. **Es gibt** is followed by the accusative form of the person/thing or the persons/things that exist(s):

**Heute gibt es Fisch zum Mittagessen.**

There's fish for lunch today.

**Gibt es den Begriff ‘Handy’ im Englischen?**

Do you have the term ‘handy’ in English?

**Es gibt mehrere Schüler in der Klasse, die schon 18 sind.**

Several students in the class are already 18.

**Zur Abstimmung im Bundestag müssen mindestens zwei Drittel der Abgeordneten anwesend sein.**

At least two thirds of the MPs/delegates must be present for the vote in (the German) Parliament.

**Ist hier an Bord ein Arzt anwesend?**

Is there a doctor on board?

**Bei einem Unfall sind nicht immer gleich Sachverständige zur Stelle.**

In an accident there are not always experts available/on the spot straightaway.

**Die Verlosung muss in (der) Gegenwart eines Juristen vollzogen werden.**

The draw must be conducted in the presence of a lawyer.

(c) Being involved:

**dabei sein** ‘to be present/involved’:

**Viele Veteranen waren dabei, als die letzten russischen Soldaten aus Berlin abzogen.**

Many veterans were present when the last Russian soldiers moved out of Berlin.

**Wenn Fußball gespielt wird, ist er immer dabei.**

If there is football being played he is always there/involved.

► See 5–15 for word order

## 69.2

## Occurrence

**es gibt** ‘there is/are’

**vor\*kommen/passieren** ‘to occur’ (see 33.8b)

**-s Vorkommen von** ‘presence/occurrence/deposit of’

**-r Bestand** ‘stock/supply’

**-e Gegebenheit** ‘condition’

**gegenwärtige Lage** ‘present/current situation’

(a) When talking about occurrence in certain places or at certain times:

**Es gibt über 90 Millionen deutsche Muttersprachler auf der Welt.**

There are more than 90 million native speakers of German in the world.

**Damals, in den 20er Jahren, gab es schon viele Autos.**

At that time, in the 1920s, there were already many cars.

(es stays with the verb)

**Am Anfang des Krieges gab es noch kein Penizillin in den deutschen Krankenhäusern.**

At the beginning of the war there was no penicillin in German hospitals.

(b) Things that can/cannot happen:

**Es kann natürlich gelegentlich vorkommen, dass die Spuren verwischt sind.**

Obviously it can happen on occasions that the traces have been covered up.

**Es ist noch nie passiert, dass eine Datei unwiderruflich verlorenging.**

It has never happened that a file has been irretrievably lost.

**So eine Schlamperei darf doch nicht vorkommen!**

Such sloppiness simply should not (be allowed to) happen!

**Das hat es doch noch nie gegeben!**

That has never happened before!

(c) Natural resources:

**Das Vorkommen von Bodenschätzen bedeutet, dass dieses Gebiet besonders umstritten ist.**

The presence of natural deposits means that this area is particularly disputed.

**Die Abbildung stellt das Erdölvorkommen in diesem Kontinent dar.**

The illustration shows the location of oil/where oil is to be found on this continent.

**Der Baumbestand im Schwarzwald ist stark dezimiert.**

The stock of trees in the Black Forest has been drastically reduced.

(d) Given conditions:

**Die Wege richten sich nach den natürlichen Gegebenheiten des Geländes.**

The paths follow the natural features of the land.

**Bei der gegenwärtigen Wirtschaftslage ist eine Investition nicht angebracht.**

In the current economic climate investment is not appropriate.

### 69.3 Locating things and people

**sich** (= acc.) **befinden** 'to be located' (see 37.5)

**zu finden sein** 'can be found'

**-r Fundort(e)** 'place where sth. was found'

**es gibt** 'there is/are'

**Die Personalabteilung befindet sich in der dritten Etage.**

The personnel department is on the third floor.

► See 37 for reflexive verbs

**Der Reporter befindet sich in einem Krisengebiet.**

The reporter is in an area of crisis.

**Das Automobilwerk befindet sich im Industriegebiet.**

The car factory is situated on an industrial estate/in an industrial area.

**Die Seitenangabe ist im Sachregister zu finden.**

The page number can be found in the subject index.

**Der Fundort des Homo Sapiens ist auf der Karte gekennzeichnet.**

The place where Homo sapiens was found is indicated on the map.

**In diesem Stadtteil gibt es nicht einmal eine Bäckerei.**

There isn't even a bakery in this part of town.

**In manchen Teilen von Berlin gibt es viele soziale Probleme.**

In some parts of Berlin there are many social problems.

## 69.4

## For events taking place

► See 70.5 for cancellation

**ab\*halten** 'to hold'

**statt\*finden** 'to take place'

**Sprechstunde halten** 'to hold surgery/one's office hour'

**eine Vorlesung/ein Seminar/einen Kurs halten** 'to deliver a lecture/seminar/course'

**Die Veranstaltung findet in der Messehalle statt.**

The event takes place at the exhibition centre.

**Der Ärztekongress soll wieder in Davos abgehalten werden.**

The medical conference is to be held in Davos again.

**Sie hält ihre Goethe-Vorlesung immer am Mittwoch morgen.**

She always delivers her Goethe lecture on Wednesday mornings.

**Halten Sie heute Sprechstunde?**

Do you have your office hour/surgery today?

## 69.5

## For accompanying someone to a place or on an instrument

**jmdn. an (+ dat.) begleiten** 'to accompany sb. on (an instrument)'

**jmdn. zu (+ dat.) begleiten** 'to accompany sb. to (a place)'

**-e Begleitung** 'company'

**mit jmdm. an etw. (= acc.)/zu etw./jmdm. gehen** 'to go to sth./sb. with sb.'

**Er begleitete sie am Klavier/zum Arzt.**

He accompanied her on the piano/to the doctor's.

**Er war in Begleitung eines berühmten Tennisspielers.**

He was in the company of/He was accompanied by a famous tennis player.

**Ich gehe mit dir zum Arzt/an den Flughafen.**

I'll go with you to the doctor's/to the airport.

## 70

## Talking and enquiring about absence and non-existence

## 70.1

## Negation of existence and occurrence

Absence and non-existence are conveyed by means of **nicht** or **kein** with expressions of existence.

The structures are analogous to the ones described in 69.1–4:

**nicht da sein** 'not to be there'

**weg sein** 'to be away/gone'

**abwesend sein** 'to be absent'

**-e Abwesenheit** 'absence'

**nicht/kein . . . besteht** 'does not exist'

**es gibt nicht/kein** 'there is/are no'

**Die Geschäftsführerin ist heute leider nicht da.**

The manager is unfortunately not here today.

**Der Schüler war wegen einer schweren Erkrankung vom Unterricht *abwesend*.**

The pupil missed classes owing to a serious illness.

**Der Verkauf wurde *in seiner Abwesenheit* beschlossen.**

The sale was agreed in his absence/while he was away.

**Es besteht in diesem Fall *keinerlei* Ansteckungsgefahr.**

In this case there is no danger of contagion whatsoever.

► See 42.3g for the use of the dummy subject **es**

**Im Vereinigten Königreich *gibt es keine* Tollwut.**

There is no rabies in the United Kingdom.

**Es *gibt keine* Dinosaurier mehr auf der Erde: Sie sind ausgestorben.**

There are no more dinosaurs on earth: they are extinct.

► See 70.4 for things that have ceased to exist

## 70.2 Being missed and missing something

(a) Being missed:

**fehlen** 'to be missing, lacking/to be absent'  
**jmdn/etw.vermissen** 'to miss sb./sth.'

**Hier *fehlt ein* Messer/*eine* Seite.**

There is a knife/a page missing here.

**Wir *vermissen unsren* treuen Hund.**

We miss our faithful dog.

**Fehlen** is used with the dative of disadvantage (see 19.3; see also 19.7 for the use of impersonal **es**). The person who is lacking/missing something is in the dative form, whereas the person/item that is missing is in the nominative:

**Er *fehlt ihr*.**

She misses him.

**Mir *fehlen noch* 50 Euro.**

I am still 50 euros short.

**Was *fehlt dir*?**

What's wrong with you?

(b) Missing an event:

**fehlen** 'to be absent'  
**etw. verpassen/versäumen** 'to miss sth.'

**Wegen der Haushaltskürzungen *fehlen uns für dieses Projekt qualifizierte* Mitarbeiter.**

Due to the budget cuts we are short of qualified employees for this project.

**Ich *habe den* Film/*das* Spiel *verpasst*.**

I missed the film/play.



(c) (Only just) missing or avoiding something:

**etwas verfehlen um** 'to miss sth. by (an amount)'  
**(knapp) etwas/jmdm. entgehen** 'to (just) miss/avoid sth.'

**Er verfehlte ein 'A' um zwei Punkte und kann jetzt nicht in Bristol studieren.**  
 He missed an 'A' by two points and now cannot study in Bristol.

**Der Stuttgarter FC schoss in letzter Minute das entscheidende Tor und entging damit dem schon fast sicheren Abstieg.**  
 Stuttgart scored the decisive goal in the last minute, thus avoiding almost certain relegation.

## 70.3

## Lack and shortage

Lack and shortage can be rendered by **mangeln an** (+ dat.) and **-r Mangel** 'lack/dearth'. 'Not/hardly enough' is expressed by **nicht/kaum genug/zu wenig**.

**jmdm.** (= dat.) **mangelt es an** (+ dat.) 'to be lacking sth.'  
**knapp an etw.** (= dat.) **sein** 'to be short of sth.'  
**knapp bei Kasse sein** 'to be short of money'

Here again, the person in need is in the dative, but this time the item he or she is missing is also in the dative following **an**.

**Es mangelte ihr an nichts; trotzdem war sie unzufrieden.**  
 She wanted for nothing, but she was still dissatisfied.

**In diesem Betrieb mangelt es an ausgebildeten Arbeitskräften.**  
 In this firm there is a lack of trained workers.

► See 42.3h for the use of impersonal verbs such as **mangeln**

**Es herrscht (ein) Mangel an Studierenden in den Naturwissenschaften.**  
 There is a shortage of students in the natural sciences.

**Er hatte kaum Geld.**  
 He did not have much money.

**Sie hatte kaum Freunde.**  
 She did not have many friends.

**Wir sind im Moment knapp an Personal.**  
 We are short-staffed at present.

Note the idiomatic expression:

**Diesen Monat sind sie knapp bei Kasse.**  
 They are short of money this month.

## 70.4

## Having ceased to exist

(a) Having disappeared without a trace:

The adverbs and prefixes **ab** and **weg** are often used to indicate that something has been done away with or put off or has gone/disappeared. **Ab** has the same function as the prefix 'de-' or 'dis-' in English, **weg** the same as 'away' or 'off'.

**ab sein** 'to be off'  
**weg sein** 'to be gone'  
**verschwinden** 'to disappear'  
**verschwinden in** 'to disappear into'

**Der Knopf an meiner Anzugsjacke ist ab.**

The button on the jacket of my suit has come off/is missing.

**Mein Geldbeutel ist weg/verschwunden.**

My purse is gone/has disappeared.

**Das Flugzeug verschwand in den Wolken.**

The plane disappeared in(to) the clouds.

**Ich kann mein Jackett nicht finden. Es kann sich doch nicht in Luft aufgelöst haben!**

I cannot find my jacket. It can't have vanished into thin air!

(b) Being dismantled, demolished:

**abgebaut** 'dismantled'  
**abgerissen** 'demolished'  
**abgetragen** 'mined'

**Die unrentablen Fabriken wurden abgebaut.**

The unprofitable factories were dismantled.

**Das alte Theater ist jetzt abgerissen.**

The old theatre has been demolished.

**In manchen Gebieten wird die Braunkohle immer noch über Tage abgetragen.**

In some areas (brown) coal is still mined above ground.

(c) Having been abolished or eradicated:

**abgeschafft** 'abolished'  
**ausgerottet** 'eradicated, exterminated/extinct'  
**gestrichen** 'cancelled/abolished'

**Die Todesstrafe ist in Deutschland seit 1949 abgeschafft.**

The death penalty has been abolished in Germany since 1949.

**Auch diese Krankheit ist leider noch nicht ausgerottet.**

Unfortunately this disease has not been eradicated yet either.

**Der religiöse Feiertag soll gestrichen werden.**

The religious holiday is to be abolished.

(d) For people and things that have gone away:

**weg\*fahren** 'to leave/to go away'  
**weg\*ziehen aus/nach** 'to move away from/to'  
**(jmdm.) weg\*laufen** 'to run away' (from sb.)  
**jmdn./etw. verlassen** 'to leave sb./sth. (behind)'

**Fahrt ihr dieses Jahr weg?**

Are you going away this year? (*i.e. on holiday*)

**Meine Nachbarn sind nach Berlin weggezogen.**

My neighbours have moved (away) to Berlin.

**Meiner besten Freundin ist ihre Katze weggelaufen.**

My best friend's cat has run away. (*i.e. from her*)

► See 19.3 on the dative of disadvantage

**Sie will ihre Familie verlassen und auswandern.**

She wants to leave her family and emigrate.

(e) For things that are out-dated and therefore obsolete:

**veraltet** 'obsolete/out of date'

**altmodisch** 'old-fashioned'

**Dieses PC-Handbuch ist veraltet.**

This PC manual is out of date.

**Diesen altmodischen Anzug kannst du aber nicht zur Preisverleihung tragen.**

You can't possibly wear this old-fashioned suit at the awards ceremony.

(f) For things that have been destroyed:

The prefix **zer-** before a past participle indicates something has been completely destroyed.

► See 36.2 for inseparable prefixes, and 57.2 for the meaning of verbal prefixes

**zerschlagen** 'shattered'

**zerstört** 'destroyed'

**zertrümmert** 'reduced to ruins/shattered'

**Ihre Hoffnung hatte sich zerschlagen.**

Her hopes were shattered.

**Die alte Wasserleitung ist total zerstört.**

The old water pipe is completely destroyed.

**Beim Boxen wird dem Gegner ab und zu auch mal ein Zahn zertrümmert.**

In boxing, fighters can even occasionally smash one of their opponent's teeth.

**Ein gewaltiger Felssturz zertrümmerte ihr Haus.**

A huge rockfall crushed their house.

(g) For things that are consumed or exhausted:

**aufgebraucht/verbraucht** 'used up'

**alle/aus** 'run out/used up' (*informal*)

**erschöpft** 'exhausted'

► See 72.2b for consumables no longer available

**Das Papier für das Faxgerät ist aufgebraucht.**

The paper for the fax machine has run out.

**Die Milch ist alle.** (*informal*)

The milk is finished.

**Die Mineralvorkommen in diesem Boden sind erschöpft.**

The mineral deposits in this ground have been exhausted.

(h) For items free from or low in something:

The following suffixes indicate lack or absence (see 55.1 on adjective formation):

**-los** 'without'  
**-frei** 'free from/of'  
**-leer** 'empty of'  
**-arm/-reduziert** 'low/poor in'

**parteilos** 'without party affiliation'  
**bargeldlos telefonieren** 'to telephone without using cash'  
**arbeitslos** 'unemployed'  
**beschwerdefrei** 'free from any ailment'  
**koffeinfrei** 'caffeine-free, decaffeinated'  
**inhaltsleer** 'without content' (*of an idea, etc.* 'vacuous/superficial')  
**menschenleere Straßen** 'deserted streets'  
**fettarme Kost** 'low-fat food'  
**kalorienarm/kalorienreduziert** 'low/reduced in calories'  
**nikotinarm im Rauch** 'low nicotine' (*for cigarettes, etc.*)

(i) Doing without/choosing not to:

**auf etw. (= acc.) verzichten** 'to do without sth.'

**Der Preisträger hat auf den Geldbetrag verzichtet.**

The prize-winner chose not to accept the money.

**In ihrem sechsbändigen Wörterbuch verzichten die Verfasser darauf Normen zu setzen.**

In their six-volume dictionary the authors choose not to lay down norms.

► See 38.2 for clause links with **darauf**, etc.

(j) Absence of speech/comment/action:

**schweigen** 'to be silent'  
**sich eines/jeden Kommentars enthalten** 'to refrain from commenting'

**Die Presse schweigt lieber zu dieser peinlichen Situation.**

The press prefers not to comment on this embarrassing situation.

**Die Waffen schwiegen.**

The weapons/arms fell/were silent.

**Der Manager des FC Bayern enthielt sich nach dem Fiasko am letzten Samstag jeden Kommentars.**

After last Saturday's fiasco the manager of FC Bayern refrained from commenting.

► For these types of reflexive verbs see 20.4

## 70.5

### Cancelled or failing to happen

**etw. (= acc.) ab\*sagen** 'to cancel sth.'  
**etw. (= nom.) fällt aus** 'sth. is cancelled'  
**etw. (= acc.) ein\*stellen** 'to discontinue sth.'  
**etw. (= nom.) bleibt aus** 'sth. fails to happen'

**Das Konzert musste leider *abgesagt werden/ausfallen*.**  
Unfortunately, the concert had to be cancelled.

**Der Straßenbahnverkehr ist jetzt *eingestellt*.**  
There are no more trams in use now.

**Der Erfolg *blieb leider aus*.**  
Unfortunately, success did not come.

► For more expressions of absence, see also 72 on non-availability and 113.3 on disappointment

## 71

**Expressing and enquiring about availability**

It is not always possible to draw a clear line between presence and availability, thus all expressions listed for presence (see 69.1) can also be used for availability. The items in this section imply that something is present elsewhere and that someone wants to get hold of it.

## 71.1

**Making or having something available**

- (a) For making something available to someone, use **jmdm. etw. leihen** ‘to let sb. have (the use of) sth.’ in informal contexts:

**Ich leihe Ihnen gern meinen Wagen.**  
I’ll be happy to let you have the use of my car.

Note that in colloquial usage **borgen** can be used here instead of **leihen**:

**Ich borge Ihnen gern meinen Wagen. (colloquial)**  
I’ll be happy to let you have the use of my car.

► See also 71.6 on borrowing

- (b) More formally, one of the following can be used:

**jmdm. etw. zur Verfügung stellen** ‘to make sth. available to sb.’  
**jmdm. steht etw. (= nom.) zur Verfügung** ‘sth. is available to sb.’  
**über etw. (= acc.) verfügen** ‘to have sth. at one’s disposal’  
**jmdm. etw. aus\*händigen** ‘to hand over/issue sth. to sb.’

**Verfügung** also means ‘permission’ or ‘authority’; **jmdm. etw. zur Verfügung stellen** means ‘to make something available to somebody/put something at someone’s disposal’:

**Ich stelle Ihnen meinen Wagen gern zur Verfügung.**  
You can have my car willingly (*lit.* I’ll gladly make my car available to you).

► See 12 for the word order of noun and pronoun

**Die Gemälde wurden freundlicherweise von der Tate Gallery in London zur Verfügung gestellt.**

The paintings were kindly made available by the Tate Gallery in London.

**Mein Wagen steht Ihnen jederzeit zur Verfügung.**  
You can use my car any time.

**Als Dolmetscher muss man über einen großen Wortschatz verfügen.**

As an interpreter one must have a large vocabulary at one's disposal.

A more official and formal way of expressing the handing over of something is **jmdm. etw. aus\*händigen**:

**Ich händige Ihnen die Schlüssel zu Ihrem neuen Wagen aus, sobald wir Ihren Scheck haben.**

I shall issue the keys to your new car as soon as we have (received) your cheque.

## 71.2 For items in stock

**auf Lager haben** 'to have in stock/store'  
**auf Vorrat kaufen/an\*schaffen** 'to stock up'  
**vorrätig sein/haben** 'to be/have in stock'  
**-r Bestand an** (+ dat.) 'the stock of'

**Wir haben/Es sind zur Zeit alle Campingartikel auf Lager.**

We have all camping accessories. / All camping accessories are in stock.

**Bevor das Heizöl wieder teurer wird, sollte man genügend auf Vorrat kaufen.**

One ought to stock up on fuel oil before it gets more expensive.

**Haben Sie auch Übergrößen vorrätig?**

Do you also have outsizes in stock?

**Der Bestand an Nahrungsmitteln muss nachgefüllt werden.**

Food stocks must be replenished.

## 71.3 Being within reach or at hand

**etw. zur Hand haben** 'to have sth. to hand'  
**vorhanden sein** 'to be at hand/available'  
**parat haben** 'to have ready'

**Haben Sie zufällig sein Adressbuch zur Hand?**

Do you by any chance have his address book to hand/handy?

**Ist in diesem Gebäude ein Speicher vorhanden?**

Is there an attic (for storing things) available in this building?

**Haben Sie einen Feuerlöscher parat?**

Do you have a fire extinguisher at the ready?

## 71.4 Reaching for or getting something

**bekommen** 'to get'  
**an etw. (heran\*)kommen** 'to get hold of sth.' (often implying that sth. is hard to get)  
**etw. erreichen** 'to reach sth./manage sth.'

**Was muss ich tun, um in Deutsch eine bessere Note zu bekommen?**

What do I have to do (in order) to get a better grade in German?

**Es ist sehr schwierig, an diese seltenen Münzen heranzukommen.**

It is very difficult to get hold of these rare coins.

**Wie kommst du denn an so einen Job? Braucht man da Beziehungen?**

How do you get a job like that? Do you need contacts?

**Ich habe *es erreicht*, dass wir mehr Wohngeld bekommen.**  
I've managed to get us more housing benefit.

### 71.5 Availability through purchase

**kaufen** 'to buy'  
**bekommen** 'to get'  
**erhalten** 'to receive'  
**erhältlich** 'available'  
**etw. von/bei jmdm. bestellen** 'to order sth. from sb.'  
**etw. über jmdn. beziehen** 'to purchase sth. from sb.'  
**zu haben sein** (colloquial) 'to be had'  
**es gibt . . . (zu kaufen)** 'can be (bought)'

**Das Vorlesungsverzeichnis ist online oder auch in der  
Universitätsbuchhandlung *erhältlich*.**

The list of lectures (and seminars, etc.) is available online or in the university bookshop.

**Tabakwaren und Zeitschriften sowie Briefmarken *bekommen* Sie am Kiosk.**  
Tobacco, magazines and stamps are available at the kiosk.

► See 5–15 on word order

**Dieses Produkt kann nur *beim* Fachhandel *bestellt* werden.**

This product can only be ordered from a specialist shop.

**Alternative Heilmittel kann man *über* eine Reihe von Apotheken *beziehen*.**

Alternative remedies can be purchased from a number of pharmacies.

**Plastiktüten *sind* an der Kasse *zu haben*.**

Plastic bags are to be had at the checkout.

The idiomatic expression **es gibt . . . zu** (+ infinitive) expresses the presence of things e.g. 'to be bought/seen', etc.:

**Wo *gibt es* Briefmarken *zu kaufen*?**

Where can you buy stamps?

### 71.6 Availability through borrowing, rental

**sich** (= dat.) **etw. leihen/borgen** 'to borrow sth.'  
**jmdm. etw. (aus\*)leihen** 'to lend sth. to sb.'  
**mieten** 'to rent'  
**vermieten** 'to let'

**Wir können *euch* leider nicht so viel (Geld) *leihen*.**

Unfortunately, we can't lend you so much (money).

**Möchtest du *dir* mein Rad *leihen/borgen*?**

Would you like to borrow my bike?

**In Deutschland *werden* die meisten Wohnungen *gemietet*.**

In Germany most flats are rented.

## 71.7

**Establishing if something is free to be used or if someone is free to do something**

**frei sein** 'to be free'  
**frei haben** 'to be free/off duty'  
**Zeit haben** 'to have time'

**Der Fensterplatz ist frei.**

The seat/place at the window is free.

**Wann hast du abends wieder einmal frei?**

When are you free again in the evening? / When do you next have an evening off?

**Hast du heute Zeit, um mir das Regal zu reparieren?**

Do you have time today to repair the bookshelf for me?

## 71.8

**Fitness for consumption**

To indicate for how long an item is fit for consumption, **haltbar** and **zum baldigen/sofortigen Verbrauch bestimmt** are used. On all perishable foods you will find **das Haltbarkeitsdatum** ('the best-before date'):

**Dieses Milchprodukt ist noch zwei Tage haltbar.**

This dairy product should be used within two days.

**Dieses Filet ist zum baldigen Verbrauch bestimmt.**

This fillet is intended for immediate consumption/should be eaten immediately.

## 72

**Talking about non-availability**

## 72.1

**Negating availability**

Non-availability can be expressed by the negation of the structures used in 71.1–3:

**jmdm. etw. nicht zur Verfügung stellen** 'not to make sth. available to sb.'  
**jmdm. steht etw. nicht zur Verfügung** 'sth. is not available to sb.'  
**nicht auf Lager haben** 'not to have in stock/store'  
**etw. nicht vorrätig haben** 'not to have sth. in stock'  
**etw. nicht zur Hand haben** 'not to have sth. to hand'  
**etw. nicht/kein . . . da haben** 'not to have sth. here'  
**jmdm. kommt etw. abhanden** 'sb. loses sth.'  
**etw. verlegt haben** 'to have misplaced sth.'

**Ich kann Ihnen den Parkplatz nicht mehr zur Verfügung stellen. (formal)**

I can no longer let you have the parking space.

Less formally, this could be expressed:

**Sie können meinen Parkplatz nicht mehr benutzen.**

You can no longer use my parking space.

**Wir haben im Moment keine neuen Fahrpläne vorrätig.**

At the moment we haven't got any new timetables in stock.

**Ich hatte keinen Atlas zur Hand.**

I didn't have an atlas to hand.



**Wir haben heute kein Bargeld da.**

We have no cash (here) today.

**Die Urkunde ist mir irgendwie abhanden gekommen.**

I have somehow lost the certificate.

► See 19.3 for the dative of disadvantage

**Er kann seinen Pass nicht finden. Er muss ihn wohl verlegt haben.**

He cannot find his passport. He must have misplaced it.

## 72.2

**Being out or having run out of something**

- (a) If a person is out of something, the prefix **aus-** is usually used in conjunction with the past participle.

► See 40.2b for the passive with **sein**

**ausgebucht** 'booked up'

**ausgegeben** 'spent'

**ausgetrunken** 'drunk up/empty'

**ausverkauft** 'sold out'

**aus\*laufen** 'to run out/be discontinued'

**Er hat sein ganzes Taschengeld im Buchladen ausgegeben.**

He spent all his pocket money in the bookshop.

**Die Flasche Weinbrandt war völlig ausgetrunken.**

The bottle of brandy was completely empty.

**Das Modell läuft im Herbst aus.**

The model will be discontinued in the autumn.

For further examples using past participles, including **ausgerottet**, see 70.4 on non-existence. For further past participles with **aus-**, refer to your dictionary.

- (b) With consumables that are finished:

**auf\*brauchen** 'to use up'

**alle** 'gone/finished'

**leer** 'empty'

**Die Kartoffeln sind/der Kaffee ist alle. (informal)**

We've no more/We've run out of potatoes/coffee.

**Die Kartoffeln sind/der Kaffee ist aufgebraucht.**

The potatoes have/the coffee has all been used up.

**Der Einbrecher fand die Kassen leer.**

The intruder found the tills empty.

► See 42.3b and 70.4g for more examples of things consumed

## 72.3

## Indicating something is temporarily unavailable

- (a) For occupied/booked seats or engaged lines:

**Die Toilette/das Telefon ist besetzt.**

The toilet/telephone is engaged.

**Die Flüge sind alle ausgebucht.**

The flights are all booked (up).

- (b) If an item cannot be bought for some reason:

**nicht zu kaufen/nicht käuflich** 'not for sale'**unverkäuflich** 'not for sale'**ausverkauft** 'sold out'**vergriffen** 'out of print'

- ▶ See also 71.2 for things in stock

**Das Ausstellungsstück ist leider nicht käuflich/nicht zu kaufen.**

Sorry, the display item/exhibit is not for sale.

**Diese Warenprobe ist ein unverkäufliches Muster.**

This sample is not for sale.

**Die Sonderangebote sind seit gestern alle ausverkauft.**

All the special offers have been sold out since yesterday.

- ▶ See 34.2d for the use of
- seit**
- with the present tense

**Man sollte rechtzeitig auf den Markt gehen, bevor alles ausverkauft ist.**

One should go to the market early, before everything is sold out.

**Dieser Titel ist schon lange vergriffen.**

This book has been out of print for a long time.

## 72.4

## Saying that someone is not available for a caller

- (a) Indicating a person is engaged in something:

**mit etw. beschäftigt sein** 'to be busy with sth.'**anderweitig beschäftigt sein** 'to be busy with sth. else'**unterwegs sein** 'to be out/en route (elsewhere)'**keine Zeit haben** 'to have no time'**alle Hände voll zu tun haben** 'to be busy'**verhindert sein** 'to be unable to make it'**gerade** 'at the moment'**Er ist mit den Kindern beschäftigt und kann nicht ans Telefon kommen.**

He is busy with the children and cannot come to the phone.

**Sie konnte sich nicht um den Gast kümmern. Sie war anderweitig beschäftigt.**

She couldn't look after the guest. She was busy with something else.

**Der Klempner ist noch unterwegs. Er wird Sie später zurückrufen.**

The plumber is still out. He'll call you back later.

**Ich habe jetzt leider keine Zeit, um mich mit Ihnen zu unterhalten.**

I am sorry, I have no time to chat with you right now.

**Mein Mann telefoniert gerade/spricht gerade mit einer Kundin.**

My husband is on the phone/is talking to a (female) customer at the moment.

► See also [76.4c](#) for indicating that someone is in the process of doing something

(b) Indicating that a person is already ‘attached’:

**nicht zu haben sein** ‘not to be had/not available’ (*colloquial, often jokingly*)  
**(schon) vergeben sein** ‘to be (already) spoken for’

**Diese junge Dame ist nicht zu haben, sie ist verlobt.**

This young lady is not ‘available’; she is engaged.

**Und die andere ist auch schon vergeben.**

And the other one is also (already) spoken for.

## 73

## Identifying and seeking identification

► For word order in direct questions, see [7.1](#)

## 73.1

## Means of identification

In Germany everybody has to carry some form of identification (**-r Personalausweis/-e Kennkarte** ‘identity card’ or, alternatively, **r-Reisepass/Pass** ‘passport’). An ID card is needed, for example, to open a bank account, to prove your age or to gain admittance to somewhere.

**Darf ich bitte Ihren Ausweis/Ihre Leserkarte sehen?**

May I see your ID card/your reader’s card, please?

**Können Sie sich ausweisen?**

Can you prove your identity? / Have you got some form of identification on you?

The card carries information, **Angaben zur Person** ‘personal particulars’, on the subjects in the following sections.

## 73.2

## Supplying personal details

(a) Names:

On official forms the following items are listed:

**-r Name** ‘name’

**Familienname/Nachname** ‘surname’

**Vorname** ‘first name/Christian name’

**Geburtsname/Mädchenname** ‘name at birth/maiden name’ (*usually abbreviated geb. for geborene* ‘née’)

**Künstlername** ‘stage name/nom de plume’

The following questions would be asked by officials and could sound rather brusque unless they are softened with **denn**:

► See [117.1c](#) for the use of modal particles

**Wie heißen Sie denn?**

What is your name, please?

**Wie heißen Sie mit Nachnamen?**

What is your surname?

**Ich heiße . . .**

My name is . . .

**Wie ist Ihr Mädchenname?**

What is your maiden name?

**Müller.**

Müller.

**Haben Sie einen Künstlernamen?**

Do you have a pseudonym?

**Mein Künstlername ist . . .**

My nom de plume is . . .

Checking the spelling of names, etc.:

**Wie schreibt man das?**

How do you spell that?

**Bitte buchstabieren Sie Ihren Nachnamen. (formal)**

Please spell your surname.

► See [118.3](#) for the spelling alphabet

(b) Place and date of birth:

On official forms:

**-r Geburtsort** ‘place of birth’**-s Geburtsdatum** ‘date of birth’

The convention for writing dates is date, month, year:

**26.09.2002**

26 September 2002.

Asking directly:

**Wo sind Sie geboren?**

Where were you born?

**Wann sind Sie geboren?**

When were you born?

**Wann haben Sie Geburtstag?**

When is your birthday?

(c) Nationality:

On forms:

Nationality (**-e Nationalität/-e Staatsangehörigkeit**) on an official document is indicated by an (underlined) adjective:**amerikanisch** ‘American’**US-amerikanisch** ‘US-American’ (to avoid possible confusion with inhabitants of other parts of the American continent)

**chinesisch** 'Chinese'  
**deutsch** 'German'  
**britisch** 'British'  
**türkisch** 'Turkish'

Asking directly:

**Welche Staatsangehörigkeit haben Sie?**  
 What nationality are you?

The answer in spoken German could be either with the undeclined adjective, or with a noun (see 28.5 on adjectival nouns):

**Ich bin Deutsche/Deutscher.**  
 I am German (female/male).

**Ich bin Brite/Amerikaner/Australier.**  
 I am British/American/Australian.

**Kommen Sie aus einem Land der Europäischen Union?**  
 Do you come from a European Union country?

(d) Special characteristics:

On forms:

**-e Größe** 'height' (in metres, e.g. **1,63m** = 5'4")  
**-e Augenfarbe** 'colour of eyes'  
**-s Geschlecht** 'sex'  
**-r Fingerabdruck** 'fingerprint'  
**genetische Merkmale** 'genetic marks/birthmarks'  
**biometrische Angaben** 'biometric information'

Asking directly:

**Wie groß bist du?**  
 How tall are you?

**Was für eine Farbe haben seine Augen?**  
 What colour are his eyes?

► See 24.2a for **was für ein**

**War der Autofahrer männlich oder weiblich/ein Mann oder eine Frau?**  
 Was the driver male or female/a man or a woman?

(e) Further details in documents:

**-s Ausstellungsdatum/-r Tag der Ausstellung** 'date of issue'  
**gültig bis** 'valid until'

Asking directly:

**Wie lange ist Ihr Pass noch gültig?**  
 How long is your passport valid for?

(f) Residence:

People resident in Germany and Austria have to register with the local registration office (**-s Einwohnermeldeamt**). Registration is compulsory (**-e Meldepflicht**; see 86.2 for **-pflicht**).

A registration form contains the following sections:

**-r Wohnort** 'place (town) of residence'  
**-r Wohnsitz** 'residence'  
**wohnhaft in** 'resident in'

A passport would only carry the name of the town of residence, whereas the ID card would have the full address:

**-e gegenwärtige Adresse** 'current address'  
**polizeilich gemeldet in . . .** 'registered with the police in . . .' (for people on limited visas)

Asking directly:

***Wo wohnen Sie?***

Where do you live?

***Wo ist Ihr Hauptwohnsitz?***

Where is your main residence?

### 73.3 Referring to people

People can be referred to by means of personal pronouns (see 30.2 and 32) and can be identified through a relative clause (see 10). In pointing to someone, **der/die/das** (see 31.2) or **dieser/dieses/diese** (see 24.1a) might be used:

***Ist das der Mann, der hier gestern ein neues Konto eröffnet hat?***

Is that the man who opened a new account here yesterday?

***Diese junge Dame war gestern schon einmal hier.***

This young lady was here yesterday.

► See 74 for how to describe people

## 74 Describing people

### 74.1 Descriptions in general

**beschreiben** 'to describe'  
**-e Beschreibung** 'description'  
**-e Personenbeschreibung** 'description of a person'

***Bitte beschreiben Sie mir diese Person.***

Please describe this person.

### 74.2 Introducing description

(a) A description can be introduced by referring to someone's features or characteristics, **-e Eigenschaft(en)**:

***Dieser Mensch hat ganz besondere Eigenschaften.***

This person has very special characteristics/features.

- (b) Recognizing people by their characteristics is expressed by **erkennen** 'to recognize' and **-s Kennzeichen(-)** 'characteristic':

**Den Bademeister erkennt man an seiner weißen Uniform.**

The swimming-pool attendant/lifeguard can be recognized by his white uniform.

► See 77.2 for **man**

### 74.3 Physical appearance and looks

- (a) General appearance:

**aus\*sehen** 'to look'  
**-s Aussehen** 'looks'  
**-s Äußere** (adjectival noun) 'outward appearance'  
**aus\*sehen wie** 'to look like'  
**jmdm. ähnlich sehen** 'to resemble sb.'

► See 110.1b for looking well, and 110.8a for looking unwell

**Das Fotomodell sieht in diesem Anzug sehr elegant aus.**

The (photo) model looks very elegant in this outfit.

**Dem Äußeren nach zu urteilen, muss sie eine recht ordentliche Person sein.**

To judge by her outward appearance she must be quite an orderly/tidy person.

**Er achtet sehr auf sein Äußeres.**

He takes care of his appearance.

- (b) Comparing with others:

**Dein Freund sieht aus wie ein Westernheld.**

Your friend looks like a hero in a Western.

► See 5–15 for word order

**Mit seinen buschigen Augenbrauen ähnelt er stark seinem Großvater.**

With his bushy eyebrows he strongly resembles his grandfather.

- (c) For adjectives of physical appearance, refer to a dictionary. The following is a short selection of common descriptive terms:

**körperlich** 'physical'  
**durchschnittlich** 'average'  
**körperlich stark** 'physically strong'  
**schwach** 'weak'  
**behindert** 'handicapped, disabled'  
**unreif** 'immature'  
**groß** 'tall'

**Er ist über 1,86m groß.**

He is over 1.86 m tall.

► See 75.3 on size and parameters

## 74.4

## Character

(a) General terms:

**-r Charakter** 'character'  
**charakterlich** 'of character/personal'  
**-e Eigenschaft** 'property/characteristic'

**Diese Führungskraft hat wichtige charakterliche Stärken/Schwächen.**  
 This executive has important personal strengths/weaknesses.

(b) Positive traits of character:

**erfahren** 'experienced'  
**jmdm. sympathisch sein** 'to be likeable to sb.'  
**mitfühlend** 'sympathetic'  
**eigenartig** 'peculiar/idiosyncratic'

**Der Verunglückte war ein erfahrener Skiläufer.**  
 The casualty was an experienced skier.

**Die neue Lehrerin ist mir besonders sympathisch.**  
 I think the new teacher is especially nice.

**Als Krankenschwester darf man nicht zu mitfühlend sein.**  
 As a nurse one mustn't be too sympathetic.

**Was hältst du von seinem eigenartigen Führungsstil?**  
 What do you think about his peculiar style of management?

(c) Habits and tendencies:

**eine Veranlagung zu etw. haben** 'to have a (genetic) disposition towards sth.'  
**veranlagt sein (zu etw.)** 'to have a talent/gift (for sth.)/be good at sth.'  
**einen Hang zu etw. haben** 'to have a tendency towards sth.'  
**zu etw. neigen** 'to tend towards'  
**etw. zu tun pflegen** 'to have a habit of doing sth.'

The nouns **Veranlagung** and **Hang** tend to be used in particularly formal contexts.  
**Einen Hang zu etw. haben** suggests a state of mind:

**Er hat noch diesen Hang zur Abhängigkeit von seiner Mutter.**  
 He still has this tendency to be dependent on his mother.

Alternatively, **eine Veranlagung (zu etw.)/eine Vorbelastung haben** suggest a physiological condition:

**Bei Krebsberatungszentren kann man eine DNA-Untersuchung machen lassen, um herauszufinden, ob man erblich vorbelastet ist.**  
 In cancer advice centres you can be DNA-screened to see if the disease runs in the family.

**Erbliche Veranlagung wird bei Brustkrebs immer noch oft ignoriert.**  
 Genetic predisposition to breast cancer is still often ignored.

The following are used in less formal contexts:

**Schon als sie klein war, konnte man sehen, dass sie sportlich veranlagt war.**  
 When she was only little one could already see that she had a gift for sports.



**Man sagt, dass Dalmatiner zu Taubheit *neigen*.**

Dalmatian dogs are said to be liable to go deaf.

**Er machte sonntags *gewöhnlich* einen langen Spaziergang.**

**Er *pflegte* sonntags einen langen Spaziergang zu machen. (*slightly formal*)**

He had a habit of taking/He used to take a long walk on Sundays.

## 74.5 Capabilities and talents

(a) Capabilities and skills:

**sich (= acc.) mit etw. aus\*kennen** 'to know how to handle/to be familiar with sth.'

**-e Fähigkeit/-e Fertigkeit** 'capability/skill'

**Fähigkeiten besitzen/über Fähigkeiten verfügen** 'be skilled/able'

**eine Sprache können** 'to be able to speak/have a language'

**eine Sprache sprechen können** 'to be able to speak/to have a language'

**-s Talent** 'talent'

**Talent für etw. haben** 'to be talented at sth.'

**für etw. talentiert/begabt sein** 'to be talented/gifted at sth.'

**-e Begabung** 'gift'

**eine Begabung für etw. haben** 'be gifted at sth.'

**-s Vermögen** 'ability'

**ein Instrument spielen** 'to play an instrument'

► See [101.1a](#) for the difference between **kennen** and **wissen**; for **können**, see [35.6](#) on modal verbs

Expressing familiarity with something involves the use of **kennen** in some form:

***Kennst du dich mit diesen Anweisungen aus?***

Are you familiar with these instructions?

Being capable:

***Ein Schreiner muss über gute Handfertigkeiten verfügen.***

A carpenter must have good manual skills.

► See [87.3b](#) on the difference between **Fertigkeit** and **Fähigkeit**

Speaking a language:

***Könnt ihr Französisch/Arabisch/Spanisch?***

Can you speak French/Arabic/Spanish?

Playing an instrument or sports:

***Meine Nachbarin spielt Geige.***

My neighbour plays the violin.

► See [23.1a](#) for omission of the article

***Spielt dein Freund Squash?***

Does your boyfriend play squash?

(b) Talents:

Talents or gifts are referred to as **-s Talent/-e Begabung**:

***Sie hat großes Talent.***

She has great talent.

**Der Musikstipendiat hat eine seltene *Begabung* für Komposition.**

The music scholar has a rare gift for composition.

**Die *hochbegabten/weniger begabten* Schüler werden in einem besonderen Programm gefördert.**

The highly gifted/less gifted pupils are encouraged/promoted/taught in a special programme of study.

**Er hat ein stark ausgebildetes *Analysevermögen*.**

He has a very thoroughly developed analytical ability.

## 74.6

## Making an impression on others

**einen guten/schlechten Eindruck auf jmdn. machen** 'to make a good/bad impression on sb.'

**einen Eindruck bei jmdm. hinterlassen** 'to leave an impression with sb.'

**jmdn. (mit etwas) beeindrucken** 'to impress sb.'

**beeindruckt sein von (+ dat.)** 'to be impressed by'

**jmdm. etw. an\*sehen** 'to tell sth. from sb.('s face)'

**scheinen/wirken** 'to seem/make an impression'

**Sie machte heute einen niedergeschlagenen Eindruck auf mich.**

She seemed dejected to me today.

**Meinst du, dass deine Schnippigkeit einen guten Eindruck bei ihr hinterlässt?**

Do you really believe that your offhandedness will make a good impression on her?

**Sie beeindruckt alle mit ihrer Virtuosität.**

Her virtuosity impresses everyone.

**Wir waren von dem Interesse der Kinder stark beeindruckt.**

We were very impressed with the children's interest.

**Man sieht es ihr (an den Augen) an, dass sie völlig übermüdet ist.**

One can tell (from her eyes) that she is completely overtired.

**Der alte Herr scheint heute besonders gut aufgelegt zu sein.**

The old gentleman seems to be in a particularly good mood today.

**Der Nachrichtensprecher wirkt heute Abend etwas niedergeschlagen.**

The newsreader seems somewhat depressed this evening.

## 74.7

## Talking about professions

**etw. von Beruf sein** 'to be sth. by profession'

**tätig sein als** 'to be working as'

**angestellt sein als** 'to be employed as'

**im Beamtenverhältnis stehen** 'to be a (permanent) civil servant'

**im Angestelltenverhältnis stehen** 'to be a salaried employee'

**Mein Vater ist Lehrer.**

My father is a teacher.

► See 23.1b for omission of the article

**Sie ist von Beruf Wirtschaftsprüferin.**

She is an auditor by profession.

**Bisher war sie als Vorarbeiterin in einem Betrieb tätig.**

Until now she has been working as a supervisor in a firm.

**Möchten Sie nicht lieber als Vollzeitkraft angestellt sein?**

Wouldn't you rather be employed full-time?

## 74.8

## Social relationships

► See also 61.3–5 on introductions, etc.

(a) 'To be familiar with someone' or 'to know someone' is rendered by **jmdn. kennen**:

**jmdn. kennen** 'to know sb.'

**jmdn. kennen\*lernen** 'to get to know sb.'

**Kennst du den Kandidaten der neuen Partei?**

Do you know the candidate of the new (political) party?

**Wir kennen uns schon seit zwanzig Jahren.**

We've known each other for twenty years.

**Wie habt ihr euch eigentlich kennengelernt?**

How did you meet/get to know each other?

**Beim Tennisspielen.**

Playing tennis.

(b) Friends and acquaintances:

**-r Freund** 'friend'

**mit jmdm. befreundet sein** 'to be friends with sb.'

**-r/-e Bekannte** (adjectival noun) 'acquaintance/casual friend'

Only close friends are called **-r Freund/-e Freundin**.

► See 30.3 and 45.2 for possessive adjectives

Possessive adjectives are very significant here, especially when talking about the other sex, e.g. **mein Freund** 'my boyfriend'. If a male teenager says **meine Freundin**, he is implying his (one and only) 'girlfriend'.

**Die beiden waren gut miteinander befreundet.**

They were good friends (with each other).

► See 28.5 for adjectival nouns

**Das sind gute Bekannte aus der Studienzeit.**

They are good friends from university/college days.

(c) People are often described in their professional relationships to others:

**-r Kollege/-e Kollegin** 'colleague'

**-r Arbeitskollege** 'colleague at work'

**-r Mitarbeiter/-e Mitarbeiterin** 'colleague/collaborator'

**-r/-e Vorgesetzte** (adjectival noun) 'superior'

**Mein Mitarbeiter und ich betreuen zusammen das neue Projekt.**

My colleague and I are looking after the new project together.

(d) Contemporaries:

**-r Schul-/Klassenkamerad, -in** 'schoolfriend/classmate'  
**-r Schulfreund, -in** '(close) schoolfriend'  
**ein Schüler/eine Schülerin aus meinem Jahrgang** 'pupil from my year (at school)'  
**-r Studienkollege, -in/-r Kommilitone, -in** 'fellow student'

**Zum 25. Jahrestag seines Examens waren fast alle früheren Studienkollegen gekommen.**

Almost all his former fellow students had come to the 25th anniversary of his exams.

## 74.9 Family relationships

General terms:

**e Familie** 'family'  
**-e Patchworkfamilie** 'blended family'  
**-r/-e Verwandte** (adjectival noun) 'related person'  
**mit jmdm. verwandt sein** 'to be related to sb.' (see 47.4)  
**ein enger/entfernter Verwandter** 'a close/distant (male) relative'  
**-r/-e Angehörige, -en** 'relative' (adjectival noun)  
**die engsten Angehörigen** 'the closest relatives'  
**der nächste Angehörige** 'next of kin'

**Wir sind miteinander verwandt.**

We are related to each other.

**Sie wurde im engsten Familienkreis beigesetzt.**

She was buried and only her closest family attended.

In formal circumstances, e.g. funerals, **-r/-e Angehörige** (short for **-r/-e Familienangehörige**) is used.

(a) Immediate family:

Parents and spouses:

**-e Eltern** (pl.) 'parents'  
**-s Elternteil** 'parent'  
**-r Vater/-e Mutter** 'father/mother'  
**-r (Ehe)mann/-e (Ehe)frau** 'husband/wife'

**Seine Eltern sind schon ziemlich alt.**

His parents are quite old.

Children:

**-s Kind** 'child'  
**-r Sohn/-e Tochter** 'son/daughter'

**Unsre Söhne studieren schon.**

Our sons are already at university/college.

Brothers and sisters:

- r **Bruder**/-e **Schwester** ‘brother/sister’
- s **Einzelkind** ‘only child’
- s **Geschwister(kind)** ‘sibling’
- e **Geschwister** (pl.) ‘brothers and sisters/siblings’

**Der jüngste Bruder war erst sechs, als die Eltern nach Köln zogen.**  
The youngest brother was only six when the parents moved to Cologne.

**Sie war die Älteste von drei Geschwistern.**  
She was the eldest of three brothers and sisters.

Grandparents and grandchildren:

- die Großeltern** (pl.) ‘grandparents’
- r **Großvater**/-e **Großmutter** ‘grandfather/grandmother’
- r **Enkel**/-e **Enkelin** ‘grandson/granddaughter’
- e **Enkel** (pl.) ‘grandchildren’

**Viele Großeltern sehen ihre Enkel nur selten.**  
Many grandparents see their grandchildren only rarely.

Cousins:

- r **Cousin** (French pronunciation) ‘(male) cousin’
- e **Cousine** ‘(female) cousin’

**Gestern kam die Cousine von meinem Vater zu uns zum Kaffee.**  
Yesterday my father’s (female) cousin had coffee with us.

(b) Once removed:

For family relationships that are once removed by a generation, the prefix **Groß-** ‘grand-’ is used:

- r **Großonkel**/-e **Großtante** ‘great uncle/aunt’
- r **Großneffe**/-e **Großnichte** ‘great nephew/niece’
- zweiten Grades** ‘once removed’
- eine Cousine zweiten Grades** ‘a cousin once removed’ (*formal*)

**Tante Margret ist sehr stolz auf ihre Großnichte.**  
Aunt Margret is very proud of her great niece.

(c) In-laws:

- r **Schwiegersohn** ‘son-in-law’
- e **Schwiegermutter** ‘mother-in-law’
- angeheiratet** ‘related by marriage’
- ein angeheirateter Vetter** ‘a cousin by marriage’

The prefix **Schwieger-** is used for all ‘in-laws’, except -r **Schwager**/-e **Schwägerin** ‘brother-in-law/sister-in-law’:

**Mit seinem Schwager kommt Thomas besonders gut aus.**  
Thomas gets on especially well with his brother-in-law.

(d) Second marriages:

Stief- as a prefix works just like 'step-' in English:

-r Stiefsohn/-e Stieftochter 'stepson/daughter'  
**mein Sohn aus erster Ehe** 'my son from my first marriage'  
 -e Halbschwester/-r Halbbruder 'half-sister/brother'  
 -r Exmann/ -e Exfrau 'ex-husband/ex-wife'

**Ihre Tochter aus erster Ehe kann schon auf die kleine Halbschwester aufpassen.**

The daughter from her first marriage can already look after her little half-sister.

(e) Foster and adoptive arrangements:

Pflege- 'foster'  
 Adoptiv- 'adoptive'  
**jmdn. adoptieren** 'to adopt sb.'  
 -e Pflegeeltern 'foster-parents'  
 -s Adoptivkind/angenommene Kind 'adoptive child'

**Es wird immer schwieriger, Babies zu adoptieren.**

It is getting harder and harder to adopt babies.

(f) Family status:

ledig 'single'  
**sich** (= acc.) **mit jmdm. verloben** 'to get engaged to sb.'  
**jmdn. heiraten** 'to get married to sb.'  
 verheiratet 'married'  
 geschieden 'divorced'  
**von jmdm. getrennt sein/leben** 'to be separated from sb.'  
 verwitwet 'widowed'

**Sie hat sich am 21. Juni mit Hans Richter verlobt.**

She got engaged to Hans Richter on 21 June.

Husbands, wives or partners are occasionally referred to as **meine bessere Hälfte** (*lit.* my better half).

## 74.10 Dating and meeting each other casually

**mit jmdm. gehen** 'to go out with sb.' (*young people's colloquial speech*)  
 (**mit jmdm.**) **flirten** 'to flirt (with sb.)'  
**ein (enges) Verhältnis mit jmdm. haben** 'to have a (close/amorous) relationship with sb.'

**Geht der Paul eigentlich immer noch mit der Heidi aus der zehnten Klasse?**

Is Paul still going out with/dating Heidi from the tenth form?

Arranging to meet someone:

**sich** (= acc.) **mit jmdm. treffen** 'to meet (with) sb.'  
**sich** (= acc.) **mit jmdm. (zu etw.) verabreden** 'to make a date with sb. (for sth.)'

**Ich habe mich mit ihr an der Bar getroffen.**

I met her at the bar.

► See 33.8c

**Wir hatten uns zum Abendessen verabredet.**

We had arranged to meet for supper.

Meeting someone by chance:

**jmdn. (zufällig) treffen/jmdm. begegnen** ‘to meet sb. by chance’

**Ich habe sie zufällig in der Stadt getroffen/Ich bin ihr zufällig in der Stadt begegnet.**

I bumped into her in town.

► See [33.8c](#)

**Weißt du, wer mir neulich auf dem Markt begegnet ist? Der Andreas.**

Do you know who I bumped into the other day at the market? Andreas.

## 75 Describing objects

### 75.1 Definitions

In order to ask for a definition of an object, use **Was versteht man unter** (+ dat.)? ‘What is meant/understood by . . .?’

Definitions are given in the following form:

**Ein Dreieck ist eine von drei Geraden begrenzte geometrische Figur.**

A triangle is a geometrical shape bordered by three straight lines.

► See [49](#) for extended adjectival phrases

### 75.2 Shape

(a) A ‘line’ (**-e Linie**) can be described as **krumm/gerade** ‘crooked/straight’ or **direkt** ‘direct’.

► See [80.3](#) on describing distances

(b) Geometrical forms are **-e Gestalt/-e Form**:

**Kreise, Quadrate und Dreiecke sind geometrische Formen.**

Circles, squares and triangles are geometric forms.

(c) An ‘object/body’ (**-r Körper**) could be described as **fest/weich** ‘solid/soft’.

(d) For the names of particular shapes and forms, consult your dictionary.

### 75.3 Size and parameters

(a) Basic terms:

**-e Größe** ‘size’

**Größe** can be both ‘size’ and ‘parameter’ (e.g. *time/force*)

**kleine Größen** are ‘small sizes’ (e.g. *clothes*)

**Hier haben wir es mit messbaren Größen zu tun.**

We are dealing here with measurable amounts.

'Height' for people is also given using **groß**, even if the person is in fact small:

**Er ist 1,75m groß.**

He is 1.75 m tall.

**Bei ihrer Geburt war Ulrike nur 42cm groß.**

At birth Ulrike measured only 42 cm.

- (b) Measurements in German-speaking countries are metric. Refer to any large cookbook, DIY book or the internet for conversion tables (**-e Umrechnungstabelle**). Remember that commas instead of full stops are used to divide decimals.

► See **59.6d** for the use of punctuation in decimals

In geometry, measurements are given as:

**A sei 4cm, B sei 7cm.**

A is/Let A be 4 cm and B 7 cm.

(**cm** is pronounced **Zentimeter**.)

► See **39.4** and **39.5** on the subjunctive I

Sizes are often compared to those of common fruits and the like, e.g. **erbsengroß/haselnussgroß** 'pea-/hazelnut-size':

**Die Hagelkörner waren fast erbsengroß.**

The hailstones were almost as big as peas.

- (c) Dimension:

'dimension' is rendered as **-s Ausmaß(e)/-e Dimension(en)**.

Area (**-e Fläche**) is measured in **Quadratmeter** (= cm<sup>2</sup>)/**Quadratmeter** (= m<sup>2</sup>)/**Quadratkilometer** (= km<sup>2</sup>) 'square centimetre/metre/kilometre':

**Meine Wohnung hat 60 Quadratmeter/ist 60 Quadratmeter groß.**

My flat is 60 square metres (in area).

In order to describe, for example, an indoor pool, say:

**Das Schwimmbecken hat olympische Maße/Ausmaße: Es ist 50m lang und 10m breit. / Es ist 50 mal 10m groß.**

The pool is Olympic size: it is 50 m long and 10 m wide. / It is 50 metres by 10.

To cover an area, **sich erstrecken/aus\*dehnen über** 'to stretch/extend' is used.

► See also **80.4d** for covering an area

**Das Industriegelände erstreckt sich über 25 Hektar.**

The industrial site extends over 25 hectares.

Volume is measured in **-r Kubikzentimeter** (= cm<sup>3</sup>)/**-r Kubikmeter** (= m<sup>3</sup>), etc., 'cubic centimetre/cubic metre', etc.

To describe a three-dimensional object, use **lang/breit/hoch** 'long/wide/high':

**Der Tisch ist 1,40m lang, 70cm breit und 74cm hoch.**

The table is 1.40 m long, 70 cm wide and 74 cm high.

To describe the depth of something (e.g. cupboards, wardrobes, drawers, etc.), use **tief**:

**Die Schublade ist 50cm breit, 10cm hoch und 60cm tief.**

The drawer is 50 cm wide, 10 cm high and 60 cm deep.



Corresponding nouns (see 53.1 and 54 for word formation) are **-e Länge/-e Breite/-e Höhe/-e Tiefe** 'length/breadth/height/depth':

**Der Münchner Fernsehturm hat eine Höhe von 290 Metern.**

The television tower in Munich has a height of 290 metres.

► See 47.1a for adjectives derived from place names

In order to describe something that is 'x' cm wide by 'y' cm long, **mal** or **auf** ('times') is used:

**Diese Holzplatte ist zwei mal drei Meter lang und zwei Zentimeter dick.**

This wooden board is two metres wide, three metres long and two centimetres thick.

**Ich brauche eine Tischdecke von 2,40 auf 1,70m.**

I need a tablecloth measuring 2.4 m by 1.7 m.

(d) Fitting and matching:

**passen** 'to fit/suit/match'

**etw. passt zu etw.** 'sth. goes with/matches sth.'

**etw. passt jmdm.** 'sth. suits/fits sb.'

**jmdm. stehen** 'to suit'

**etw. steht jmdm.** 'sth. suits/looks nice on sb.'

**Dieser Schrank passt genau in die Ecke.**

This cupboard fits exactly into the corner.

**Diese Gardinen passen im Farbton genial zum Teppich.**

The colour of the curtains matches the carpet perfectly.

**Diese Hose passt aber gar nicht zu der Bluse, die du anhast.**

These trousers don't go at all with the blouse you are wearing.

**Deine Frisur passt zu dir.**

Your hairstyle suits you.

**Die grüne Farbe von dem Kleid steht dir gut.**

The green colour of your dress really suits you.

(e) Alterations:

**ändern** 'to alter'

**-e Änderung** 'alteration'

► For more expressions on alterations, see 76.8a

**Diese Hose muss geändert werden. Sie ist zu lang.**

These trousers must be altered. They are too long.

In order to be more specific, comparative adjectives are used in verbs with a **ver-** prefix:

**verändern** 'to change' (for the difference between **ändern** and **verändern** see 76.8d)

**vergrößern** 'to enlarge'

**verkleinern** 'to reduce' (in size)

**verlängern** 'to lengthen'

**verkürzen** 'to shorten' (time)

**kürzen** 'to shorten' (length, budgets)

**verdoppeln** 'to double'

**verdreifachen** (etc.) 'to treble' (etc.)

► See 57.2 for the meaning of verbal prefixes

**Mit dem neuen Haarschnitt sah der Siebenjährige ganz verändert aus.**

The seven year old looked completely different with his new haircut.

**Noch in den 90ern dachte man, dass die Arbeitswoche verkürzt werden sollte, damit mehr Leute Arbeit haben können.**

In the 1990s it was still thought the working week should be reduced so that more people could be employed.

**Die Hose muss gekürzt werden.**

The trousers need shortening.

**Nach den nächsten Wahlen wird das Sozialbudget bestimmt erheblich gekürzt.**

The welfare budget will certainly be severely cut after the next election.

**Soll ich das Foto von dir vergrößern lassen?**

Shall I have your photograph enlarged?

**Sein Einkommen hat sich in den letzten drei Jahren verdoppelt.**

His income has doubled in the last three years.

More informally, you can use **machen** with a comparative:

**Kleiner/gerader/fester/weicher machen** 'to make smaller/straighter/stronger/softer'

**Kannst du mir schnell das Kleid kürzer machen?**

Could you quickly shorten my dress?

(f) Expressing strength/power:

**stark** 'strong'

**-e Stärke** 'strength' (especially in a compound noun)

**-e Pferdestärke (PS)** 'horsepower'

**-e Lautstärke** 'volume'

**Er ist schon fast so stark wie sein großer Bruder.**

He is already almost as strong as his big brother.

**Könnten Sie bitte die Lautstärke reduzieren?**

Could you reduce the volume, please?

(g) Expressing weight:

'Weight' is rendered as **-s Gewicht** and 'to weigh' as **wiegen** or, more precisely but less frequently, as **wägen**, and is measured in **-s Gramm/Kilogramm**, etc. The terms **-r Zentner** 'hundredweight' and **-e Tonne** 'ton' are also commonly used.

**-s Gewicht** 'weight'

**wiegen** 'to weigh'

**Übergewicht haben** 'to be overweight'

**schwer** 'heavy'

**leicht** 'light'

**Der Ringkämpfer wiegt über zwei Zentner.**

The wrestler weighs more than two hundredweight.

**Die FlugbegleiterInnen sollen weder Über- noch Untergewicht haben.**

Stewards/Stewardesses are supposed to be neither under- nor overweight.

In order to ask about weight, use **wie schwer/was wiegt**:

**Wie schwer ist dein Koffer?**

How heavy is your suitcase?

**Was hat das Baby bei der Geburt gewogen?**

How much did the baby weigh at birth?

► See also [110.4c](#) on gaining and losing weight

## 75.4

## Describing a state

(a) General terms:

**-r Zustand** 'condition'  
**fest** 'solid'  
**flüssig** 'liquid'  
**gasförmig** 'gaseous'  
**verdampfen** 'to evaporate'  
**kochen** 'to boil'  
**gefrieren** 'to freeze'

**Die neue Brücke ist noch im Planungs**z**ustand.**

The new bridge is still at the planning stage.

**Das Fleisch ist noch in gefrorenem/rohem Zustand.**

The meat is still in a frozen/raw state.

**Die Wohnung ist in einem Zustand!**

The flat is in a (right) state!

Chemicals are referred to as being **fest/flüssig/gasförmig**, etc. or in **festem/flüssigem/gasförmigem Zustand** 'in a solid/liquid/gaseous form'.

(b) Changing state:

**Bei einer bestimmten Temperatur wird dieses Metall flüssig.**

This metal becomes liquid at a certain temperature.

**Wasser kocht bei 100°C (= Celsius) und verdampft.**

Water boils at 100°C and evaporates.

**Bei 0°C gefriert das Wasser.**

Water freezes at 0°C.

Temperatures are measured in **-s Grad Celsius**.

► See also [110.8e](#) on running a temperature

## 75.5

## Quantity

► See [31.3](#) for the use of **ein** to denote the number one; see [46.2–6](#) for countables and uncountables

(a) 'Amount' is rendered as:

**-e Menge** 'amount'  
**-e Anzahl/-e Zahl** 'number'  
**mengenmäßig** 'by amount'

**zahlenmäßig** ‘by number’  
**quantitativ** ‘quantitatively’  
**-e Unmenge von** ‘tremendous number/hundreds of’  
**unzählig viele** ‘countless many’  
**zahllose** ‘innumerable’

**Die Polizeibeamten waren den Demonstrierenden zahlenmäßig unterlegen.**  
 The police were outnumbered by the demonstrators.

For quantities that are better not counted or seem too large to be counted, use **-e Unmenge (von)/unzählig viele/zahllose** ‘innumerable’:

**Sie hat wieder einmal eine Unmenge Geld ausgegeben.**  
 She has spent an awful lot of money again.

**In dem Teich waren unzählig viele Fische und Kaulquappen.**  
 There were innumerable fish and tadpoles in the pond.

- (b) Unlike in English, there is no ‘of’ between units of packaging and the description of contents, e.g. **-e Flasche/-e Tasse/-r Kasten** ‘bottle/cup/(large) box of’:

**ein Becher Milch / eine Schachtel Pralinen / eine Portion Pommes frites**  
 a carton of milk / a box of chocolates / a portion of chips.

- (c) Consumption:

**Ein durchschnittliches Elektroauto verbraucht 10 Kilowattstunden.**  
 An average electric car uses 10 kilowatt hours.

**Dieser Betrieb verbraucht 100 000 Kilowattstunden pro Tag.**  
 This factory/business consumes 100,000 kilowatt hours every day.

► See [59.5d](#)

Fuel consumption is calculated in litres of fuel per 100 km:

**Mein alter Mini verbraucht 10 Liter auf 100km.**  
 My old Mini uses 10 litres per 100 km.

## 75.6

### Fractions

All fractions other than **-e Hälfte** ‘half’ are neuter (the suffix **-tel** is short for **-s Teil** ‘part’):

**Möchtest du die Hälfte von meiner Pizza?**  
 Would you like half of my pizza?

► See [23.2f](#) for the use of the article here

**Ein Sechstel des Waldes soll gefällt werden.**  
 A sixth of the wood is to be felled.

**Hier lebt ein Viertel der Gesamtbevölkerung vom Tourismus.**  
 Here a quarter of the population lives from tourism.

## 75.7

### Patterns

A pattern (**-s Muster/-r Schnitt/-s Schnittmuster**) can be either **regelmäßig** ‘regular’ or **unregelmäßig** ‘irregular’.

This is a short list of common patterns:

(**quer-/längs-**)**gestreift** ‘(horizontally/vertically) striped’  
**gepunktet/geblümt** ‘dotted/flowered’  
 (**rot/blau**) **karriert/schraffiert** ‘(red/blue) checked/hatched’

**Der quergestreifte Schlips sieht zu dem geblünten Hemd unmöglich aus.**  
 The horizontally striped tie looks awful with the flowered shirt.

**Auf diesem Ausdruck lässt sich der schraffierte Hintergrund gut erkennen.**  
 On this print-out the hatched background is clearly visible.

## 75.8

## Referring to quality

(a) High quality (**-e Qualität**) can be indicated by the following adjectives:

**perfekt** ‘perfect’  
**best-** ‘best’ (+ another adjective)  
**höchst-** ‘highest’ (+ another adjective)  
**von jmdm. empfohlen sein/werden** ‘to be recommended by sb.’  
**empfehlenswert** ‘advisable, recommended’

**Unter diesen Umständen ist das die bestmögliche Lösung.**  
 Under the circumstances this is the best possible solution.

**Welches Pferd ist denn das höchstdotierte?**  
 Which horse has won the most prize money?

**Diese Beratungsstelle ist mir von Kolleginnen empfohlen worden.**  
 This counselling service has been recommended to me by some colleagues.

**Es ist empfehlenswert, sich vor einer größeren Investition bei verschiedenen Banken zu erkundigen.**  
 It is advisable to enquire with several banks before making bigger investments.

Other expressions of high quality are:

**1A** ‘first class/A1’  
**von erster Klasse sein/erstklassig sein** ‘to be of top quality’  
**Qualität haben** ‘to be of high quality’  
**von erster Güte sein** ‘to be top quality’  
**von einer guten/besonderen Qualität sein** ‘to be of good/special quality’

**Dieses Öl hat wirklich Qualität.**  
 This oil is of really high quality.

**Der reinrassige Hund ist von erster Güte.**  
 The pedigree dog is top quality.

**Dieser Stoff ist von einer besonders guten/von einer besonderen Qualität.**  
 This material is of particularly high quality.

(b) High quality is also implied by **Marken-** ‘brand’, where products are labelled with **-s Markenzeichen** ‘mark of quality’:

**-s Markenzeichen** ‘mark of quality’  
**-e Markenbutter** ‘best butter’  
**-r Markenname** ‘brandname’  
**-r Markenartikel** ‘proprietary article’  
**-e Hausmarke** ‘own brand’  
**-e Qualitätsmarke** ‘mark of quality’

- (c) Lists of contents and ingredients often feature **enthalten** or **beinhalten**:

**enthalten/beinhalten** 'to contain'  
**-r Inhalt** 'contents'  
**-r Bestandteil** 'constituent'  
**-e Zutaten** (pl.) 'ingredients'  
**aus etw. sein** 'to be (made) of sth.'  
**aus etw. bestehen** 'to consist of sth.'

**Das Produkt *enthält* einen künstlichen Farbstoff.**

The product contains artificial colouring.

**Für den Kuchen brauchen Sie die folgenden *Zutaten*.**

For the cake you will need the following ingredients.

In order to explain what things are made of, **aus** is used:

**Der Fallschirm ist *aus* Seide.**

The parachute is made from silk.

**Dieses Produkt ist *aus* Rohstoffen/wiederverwertetem Glas.**

This product is made from raw materials/recycled glass.

**Wasser *besteht aus* Wasserstoff und Sauerstoff.**

Water consists of hydrogen and oxygen.

- (d) In order to describe what something tastes/smells of or looks like, **nach** is used:

**Die Suppe *riecht/schmeckt nach* Spülwasser.**

The soup smells of/tastes of dishwasher.

**Es sieht *nach* Regen aus.**

It looks like rain.

- (e) Price/cost is described as:

**preiswert** 'inexpensive' (*lit.* worthy of its price)  
**billig** 'cheap'  
**teuer** 'expensive'  
**das macht** 'that makes/adds up to' (*referring to total cost*)  
**zusammen** 'together/in total'  
**Bedienung/Mehrwertsteuer *inbegriffen*** 'service/VAT included'

**Nein, diese Reise ist mir *viel zu teuer*/ist viel zu teuer für mich.**

No, this journey is much too expensive for me.

**Mit Mehrwertsteuer *macht das* 14,95.**

That is 14.95, including VAT.

- (f) Standards and levels:

**-r Standard** 'standard'  
**-s Niveau** 'level'  
**-s Bildungsniveau** 'standard/level of education'  
**ein Niveau erreichen** 'to reach a level'  
**-r Wasserspiegel/Wasserpegel** 'water table'

Meeting requirements or being up to standard is rendered by **Ansprüchen** (= dat.) **genügen/gerecht werden/entsprechen**:

**Dieser Service entspricht nicht den Ansprüchen unserer Kunden.**

This service does not come up to the standard demanded by our customers.

► See **112** for satisfaction

Being almost up to standard is rendered by **so gut wie/fast/beinahe** 'as good as/almost/nearly'.

## 75.9

## Giving statistical information

(a) For describing a graph or statistical data, use:

**Diese Statistik/dieses Schaubild zeigt** 'These statistics show/this graph shows'

**In dieser Statistik geht es um** (+ acc.) 'These statistics deal with'

**Was x** (= acc.) **betrifft** 'as far as x is concerned'

***Diese Statistik zeigt die Entwicklung des Bruttoinlandprodukts von 1949 bis heute.***

These statistics show the development of the gross domestic product from 1949 to today.

***In dieser Statistik geht es um den Konjunkturverlauf seit den siebziger Jahren.***

These statistics deal with the economic ups and downs since the seventies.

***Was das Kosten–Leistungsverhältnis betrifft, so zeigt diese Statistik, wie es sich ständig verbessert hat.***

As far as the cost–benefit ratio is concerned, these statistics demonstrate how it has continuously improved.

► See also **121.5** on presenting visual material

(b) For explaining ranking, use:

**an der Spitze liegen/stehen** 'to be at the top'

**an erster/zweiter/dritter usw. Stelle liegen/stehen/folgen** 'to be in first/second/third, etc. place'

**auf Platz zwei/drei usw. befindet sich/folgt** 'in second/third, etc. place is/follows'

**der ... größte/zweitgrößte/drittgrößte usw.** 'the biggest/second biggest/third biggest, etc.'

Other superlative adjectives can also be attached to this 'zweit-' prefix, e.g.:

**zweitteuerste** 'second most expensive'

**zweitbilligste** 'second cheapest'

**zweitkleinste** 'second smallest'

**zweitschnellste** 'second fastest'

***Als Exportland lag Deutschland lange an der Spitze.***

Germany was the leading export country for a long time.

***An zweiter Stelle/Auf dem zweiten Platz folgt wahrscheinlich Japan.***

Japan is probably in second place.

(c) For describing changes, use:

**steigen, stieg, gestiegen** (intransitive, irregular, strong) ‘to rise, rose, risen’  
**steigen um** ‘to rise by’  
**steigen auf** ‘to rise to’  
**sinken, sank, gesunken** (intransitive, irregular, strong) ‘to go down, went down, gone down’  
**fallen, fiel, gefallen** (here: intransitive, irregular, strong) ‘to fall, fell, fallen’  
**sinken um** ‘to go down by’  
**sinken auf** ‘to go down to’  
**sich senken/sich erhöhen** ‘to fall/to rise’  
**senken** (transitive, regular, weak) ‘to lower’  
**stabil bleiben** ‘to remain stable’  
**sich verändern um** (+ acc.) ‘to change’

**Die Inflationsrate ist zwischen 2010 und 2011 um 3% gestiegen.**  
 Between 2010 and 2011 the inflation rate rose by 3 per cent.

**Der Zinssatz ist auf 7% gestiegen.**  
 The interest rate has risen to 7 per cent.

**Die Zahl der Arbeitslosen ist um 15.000 gesunken.**  
 The number of unemployed went down by 15,000.

**Im vergangenen Jahr ist die Zahl der Arbeitslosen auf 150.000 gesunken.**  
 Last year the number of unemployed went down to 150,000.

**Die Inflationsrate hat sich um 5% erhöht/gesenkt.**  
 The inflation rate has risen/fallen by 5 per cent.

► For reflexive verbs, see [37](#)

**Meine Bank hat die Zinsen um 1% gesenkt.**  
 My bank cut its interest rate by 1 per cent.

**Die Gefahr einer Deflation war gering; die Preise schienen stabil zu bleiben.**  
 There was little danger of deflation; prices appeared to be remaining stable.

**Auch der Wert des Euro sollte sich kaum verändern, so dachte man.**  
 Even the value of the euro was not supposed to change much, it was thought.

► For verändern, see [76.8d](#)

(d) For talking about amounts, use:

**betragen (betrug, betragen)** ‘to amount to, to be’  
**sich belaufen (belief, belaufen) auf** ‘to amount to, to come to’  
**ausmachen (machte aus, hat ausgemacht)** ‘to amount to, to account for’  
**entfallen (entfiel, ist entfallen) auf** ‘to be spent on’

**Vor 15 Jahren hatte der Anteil der Ausgaben für Nahrungsmittel noch rund ein Drittel betragen.**

Fifteen years ago the share spent on food still amounted to one third.

**Die Ausgaben für Miete und Heizung machen 16,4% der Gesamtausgaben aus.**

Spending on rent and heating amounts to 16.4 per cent of the total expenditure.

**Die Ausgaben für Kleider und Schuhe beliefen sich auf 265 Euro.**

The total expenditure for clothes and shoes amounted to 265 euros.



Von den Gesamtausgaben *entfiel* ungefähr ein Fünftel *auf* Nahrungsmittel.  
Of the general expenditure, around one fifth went on food.

## 76

## Describing actions and processes

## 76.1

## Basic words for actions and processes

(a) Doing things:

**tun/machen** 'to do'

There are two essential verbs to convey 'doing': **tun** and **machen**. As translations for 'to do' they are interchangeable as long as they are not used with a direct object.

The verb **machen** with a direct object is often translated idiomatically:

**Jetzt mache ich erst mal Pause.**

First of all I'll take a break.

**Könntest du heute das Essen machen? Ich habe keine Zeit.**

Could you prepare the meal today? I haven't got time.

**Wenn du deine Hausaufgaben gemacht hast, kannst du Fußball spielen.**

When you've done your homework you can play football.

The verb **tun** with a direct object has similarly idiomatic meanings:

**Sie wollte ihm etwas Gutes tun.**

She wanted to do something nice/good for him.

**Er hatte doch nichts Böses getan.**

He had not done anything bad/evil.

Also, **tun** may be slightly more elevated in style:

**Was soll ich tun/machen, damit das Kind schläft?**

What can I do to make the child sleep?

(b) For processes occurring naturally or of their own accord, use the verb **gehen** and its derivatives:

**gehen** 'to go (on)'

**-r Vorgang (Vorgänge)** 'process'

**-r Rückgang** 'decline/fall'

For ongoing processes:

**Was geht hier vor?**

What's going on here?

**Die Produktion von Chlorophyll ist ein natürlicher Vorgang unter Einfluss von Sonnenlicht.**

The production of chlorophyll is a natural process under the influence of sunlight.

**Ein Rückgang der Bevölkerungszahl ist zu befürchten.**

A fall in the population is feared.

(c) Saying that things, usually machines and mechanisms, are running/working:

**gehen** 'to go/work'

**laufen** 'to run'

**funktionieren** 'to function'

**Es geht.**

It works. / It's OK.

**Die Uhr geht.**

The clock/watch is working.

**Testen Sie, ob die elektronische Waage geht.**

Check if the electronic scales are working.

**Es geht nicht ohne elektrischen Strom.**

It doesn't work without current.

**Der VW Käfer läuft und läuft und läuft.**

The VW beetle just keeps on running and running (and running).

**Können Sie mir sagen, wie dieser Drucker funktioniert?**

Could you tell me how this printer works?

**Ich habe gerade das Virus-Programm laufen.**

I am just running the virus checker.

(d) Production processes:

**-s Verfahren** 'process/method/technique'

**-e Verarbeitung** 'processing'

**-e Textverarbeitung** 'word processing'

**-e Datenverarbeitung** 'data processing'

**Die Medikamente werden nach dem neuesten Verfahren hergestellt.**

The medication is produced using the latest techniques.

(e) Referring to courses of events:

**laufen** 'to run'

**-r Ablauf (Abläufe)** 'course'

**-r Ablauf der Ereignisse** 'the course of events'

**-r Handlungsablauf** 'action/development of the plot'

**im Verlauf der Zeit/des Tages** 'in the course of time/the day'

**im Verlauf der Verhandlungen/der Krankheit** 'in the course of the negotiations/  
the illness'

**Ablauf** as opposed to **Verlauf** is possibly more predictable in running its course:

**Der Versuchsablauf war genau festgeschrieben und konnte nicht geändert werden.**

The way the experiment was to be conducted was laid down precisely and could not be altered.

**Beschreiben Sie den Tagesablauf eines Politikers.**

Describe a typical day in the life of a politician.

(f) Describing procedures:

**-s Verfahren** 'process/procedure/proceedings'

**-s Vorgehen** 'action'

**-r Durchgang** 'round' (also in a competition)

**-r Wahlgang** 'round' (in action)

**-s Bewerbungsverfahren** 'application procedure'

**-s Gerichtsverfahren** 'legal proceedings'

*Im zweiten Durchgang war er Sieger.*

He won in the second round/phase/stage.

*Der Bundespräsident wurde im dritten Wahlgang gewählt.*

The (German) President was elected in the third round/phase/ballot.

► See 40 for the use of the passive

- (g) To refer to unplanned events that merely ‘happen’, use **geschehen** or **passieren**. The two verbs are interchangeable in meaning. **Passieren**, however, sometimes has a negative connotation:

**Was ist denn geschehen/passiert?**

What has happened?

**Ein Wunder ist geschehen. / Es ist ein Wunder geschehen.**

A miracle has occurred.

**Ein Unfall ist passiert. / Es ist ein Unfall passiert.**

An accident has happened.

► See also 37.5

The structure starting with the impersonal **es** is more idiomatic.

► See 15.1c for the dummy subject **es**

## 76.2

### Describing the process of something

- (a) Ongoing processes can be described by using nouns formed from infinitives:

-s **Begreifen** ‘understanding’  
 -s **Schneiden** ‘cutting’  
 -s **Kaufen** ‘purchasing’  
 -s **Funktionieren** ‘functioning’

► See 54.4a for word formation and 25, and 28.6 on noun genders

- (b) For the finished process, nouns formed from other parts of the verb, particularly past participles (see 54.4c), are sometimes used:

-r **Begriff** ‘concept’  
 -r **Schnitt** ‘cut’  
 -r **Kauf** ‘purchase’

## 76.3

### Starting a process

- (a) General expressions for starting a process, many of which begin with **an-**:

**jmdn./etw.anbrennen** ‘to singe, burn slightly’ (see 57)  
**an\*fangen/beginnen** ‘to begin’  
**mit etw.an\*fangen/beginnen** ‘to begin with sth.’  
 -r **Anfang/-r Beginn** ‘the beginning’  
**los\*gehen** ‘to start/get under way’  
**aus\*gehen von** ‘to start from/take as a point of departure’  
 -r **Ausgangspunkt** ‘point of departure’

*Am Anfang war das Wort.*

In the beginning was the Word.

**Wir fangen mit den Vorbereitungen an. / Wir beginnen mit den Vorbereitungen.**

We are starting with the preparations.

► See 36.1 for separable verbs

**Vielleicht solltest du in deiner Beziehung einen neuen Anfang machen.**

Maybe you should make a fresh start in your relationship.

**Jetzt geht das Gewitter richtig los.**

Now the thunderstorm is really getting under way.

For starting a race:

**Achtung, fertig, los!**

On your marks, get set, go!

For starting from a false assumption:

**Sie gehen von den falschen Voraussetzungen aus.**

You are starting from the wrong assumptions.

- (b) For starting an engine or machine **an\*machen/an\*stellen** ‘to turn/switch on’ are generally used:

**Kannst du mir sagen, wie man die Alarmanlage *anmacht*?**

Can you tell me how to set the alarm?

**Ich habe die Spülmaschine schon *angestellt*.**

I have already turned on the dishwasher.

More technical expressions tend to refer to specific types of engines:

Car: **Mein Wagen *springt* einfach nicht an, wenn es kalt ist.**

My car simply does not start when it is cold.

Aeroplane: **Wir werden in wenigen Minuten die Motoren *starten*.**

We will be starting the engines in a few minutes.

- (c) Compounds with **-los** also imply that a process is being started:

**los\*brechen** is usually chosen in connection with bad weather:

**Kaum waren wir zu Hause, ist das Gewitter/der Sturm *losgebrochen*.**

We were only just arriving home when the thunderstorm/storm started.

**los\*düsen/los\*brausen** implies that a car is being used (colloquial use):

**Am Abend bin ich dann nochmal in die Stadt *losgedüst/losgebraust*.**

In the evening I went into town again.

**los\*legen** usually refers to somebody starting to talk, possibly scream, or walk very fast (colloquial use):

**Als der Vater nein sagte, hat Otto erst so richtig *losgelegt*.**

When his father said no, Otto really started to complain (vocally).

**Nach Mitternacht hat das Orchester richtig *losgelegt*.**

After midnight the orchestra really let rip.

– **Du, ich habe das Neuste aus dem Büro gehört.**

– Listen, I’ve heard the latest gossip from the office.

– **Ja? Dann leg mal los.**

– Really? Then go on, tell me. / Spill the beans.

**los\*machen** in the sense of ‘get going’ is colloquial and often used in the form of a demand:

**Nun mach mal los, ich hab es eilig.**

Get on with it now, I am in a hurry.

**los\*platzen mit etw.** refers to somebody who cannot wait to tell others news or gossip (colloquial use):

**Viele Zeitungen platzen mit Skandalen los, bevor sie die Fakten recherchiert haben.**

Many newspapers blurt out scandals before having researched the facts.

**los\*tigern** and **los\*ziehen** imply that somebody marches off with a purpose (colloquial use).

Refer to your dictionary for the use of:

**los\*ballern** ‘to start shooting’ (colloquial use)

**los\*bellen** ‘to start barking’

**los\*brüllen** ‘to start shouting/roaring’

**los\*gehen** ‘to start walking, to go off’

**los\*fahren/los\*laufen** ‘to set off (by means of a vehicle/on foot)’

**los\*flitzen** ‘to run’

**los\*heulen** ‘to burst out crying’

**los\*krabbeln** ‘to start crawling’

**los\*kommen** ‘to get off’ (also: to get free)

**los\*schicken** ‘to send off (to somewhere)’

**los\*schießen** ‘to start shooting’

## 76.4

**Continuation of a process**

- (a) The continuation of a process is often indicated by the separable prefixes **weiter-** or **fort-**. These can also be used as adverbs.

Encouraging or ordering someone to carry on doing something:

**(Machen Sie) Weiter! / Weiter so!**

Carry on! / Go on!

Asking someone (politely) to carry on:

**Bitte lesen Sie weiter!**

Please carry on reading!

Asking someone formally:

**Bitte fahren Sie in Ihrem Vortrag fort.**

Please continue with your lecture.

Continuing one’s education:

**Man sollte sich ständig weiterbilden/fortbilden.**

One should never stop furthering one’s education.

- (b) Carrying on an activity can be further emphasized by inserting **immer**:

**Er spielte immer weiter.**

He played on and on.

**Gehen Sie immer geradeaus.**

Carry on straight ahead.

► See 48 for comparison of adjectives; see also 76.10a on repeating actions and processes, for further uses of **immer** and **wieder**

- (c) To indicate that someone is in the process of doing something, use **gerade** 'just' or **gerade dabei sein, etw. zu tun** 'to be in the process of doing something' (see 34.5b):

**Die Aufnahmen laufen gerade.**

The recording is in progress.

**Er ist gerade dabei, die Papiere durchzusehen.**

He is just looking through the papers.

► See 8.6 for infinitive clauses and 36.2 for inseparable verbs

- (d) To refer to something done regularly and at a steady pace in order to continue a project, use the adverb **stetig** 'continuously':

**Die Wissenschaftlerin sammelte ihre Daten stetig.**

The scientist collected her data continuously.

Otherwise use 'ständig':

**Unterbrich mich bitte nicht ständig.**

Please don't interrupt me all the time.

**Das Ozonloch wird ständig größer.**

The hole in the ozone layer is getting bigger and bigger.

## 76.5 Next step in a process

- (a) The next step in a process is introduced by the adverbs **anschließend** and **dann** or the verb **folgen**:

**erst** 'first'

**anschließend** 'afterwards/following'

**dann** 'then/after that'

**jmdm./etw. (= dat.) folgen** 'to follow sb./sth.'

**auf etw. (= acc.) folgen** 'to follow sth.'

**Anschließend an den Vortrag möchten wir Sie um Diskussionsbeiträge bitten.**

Following the lecture we would like to ask you for your contributions to the discussion.

**Dann** counts as the first idea and is followed by a verb. However, to ensure good style it should be used as infrequently as possible. It simply links a list of actions:

**Erst frühstücke ich, dann putze ich meine Zähne, dann . . .**

First I have breakfast, then I clean my teeth, then . . .

**Auf sieben magere Jahre folgen sieben fette.**

Seven lean years are followed by seven plentiful years.

- (b) Taking turns is expressed by **an der Reihe sein/an die Reihe kommen**. Other expressions are:

**der Reihe nach** 'in turn'

**sich (bei etwas) abwechseln/etwas abwechselnd tun** 'take turns doing sth.'

**einer nach/hinter dem anderen** 'one after the other'

**eine nach/hinter der anderen** 'one girl/woman after the other'

**Du bist noch nicht an der Reihe.**

It's not your turn yet.

**Der nächste Spieler *kommt an die Reihe.***

The next player has his/her turn.

**Immer *der Reihe nach.***

Do take turns.

**Wir *wechseln uns beim Fahren ab: Du fährst bis Hamburg, dann fahre ich.***

We'll take turns with the driving: you drive to Hamburg and then I'll take over.

► See 38.1 for prepositional verbs with the dative

**Jetzt *bin ich aber dran!***

Now it's my turn!

(c) Giving turns is expressed by **an die Reihe/dran\*nehmen** or by **auf\*rufen**:

**Schwester, Sie können jetzt den nächsten Patienten *drannehmen/aufrufen.***

Nurse, you can now take/call up the next patient.

► See 38.1 for prepositional verbs with the accusative.

## 76.6

**Simultaneity**

If several processes occur concurrently, the following expressions can be used:

(a) In doing something, something else happens:

**bei/dabei** 'in doing so'

**Beim Messen/Dabei muss man darauf achten, dass das Gerät nicht beschädigt wird.**

When taking measurements/In doing so, one has to be careful not to damage the instrument.

**Versuchen Sie, die Flüssigkeit in die Flasche zu füllen, ohne dabei etwas zu verschütten.**

Try to put the liquid into the bottle without spilling any.

(b) Achieving something by doing something else:

**indem** 'while/by doing so'

► See 8 for subordinating conjunctions

**Butter wird gemacht, indem man die Sahne so lange schlägt, bis sie dick ist.**  
Butter is made by beating the cream until it is thick.

**Du kannst ihm eine Freude bereiten, indem du ihn mal im Altersheim besuchst.**

You can cheer him up by visiting him in the old people's home.

(c) Under certain conditions (weather/mood, etc.):

**bei (+dat.)** 'with/in/during'

**Bei gutem Wetter können wir an dem Zaun weiterarbeiten.**

Weather permitting, we can continue working on the fence.

**Das kann ich beim besten Willen nicht verantworten.**

With the best will in the world I cannot accept responsibility for this.

**Er ist bei Nacht und Nebel gegen einen Baum gefahren.**  
He crashed into a tree at night and in fog/in the dead of night.

NOTE **am helllichten Tage** 'in broad daylight'.

► See also [69.2d](#) for given conditions

## 76.7 Expressing speed

(a) Speed in general is **-e Geschwindigkeit**:

**Geschwindigkeit ist die zurückgelegte Strecke pro Zeit.**  
Speed is the distance covered in a certain time.

**Eine Geschwindigkeitsbegrenzung von 130km/h sollte eingeführt werden.**  
A speed limit of 130 km/h should be introduced.

(b) Doing something as quickly as possible:

**Verarbeiten Sie das Fleisch so schnell es geht.**  
Process the meat as quickly as possible.

**Das Gebäude muss so schnell wie möglich gedeckt werden.**  
The building must be roofed as quickly as possible.

(c) Immediacy:

**sofort/umgehend** 'straightaway'  
**so bald wie möglich** 'as soon as possible'

**Bitte fahren Sie sofort in die Ulmenstraße. Da ist ein Unfall.**  
Please drive to Elm Street straightaway. There's been an accident there.

**Bitte antworten Sie so bald wie möglich.**  
Please answer as soon as possible.

(d) Slowness:

**langsam** 'slow'  
**mit Verzögerung** 'with delay/time-lag'  
**zögernd/zögerlich** 'hesitant/hesitating'

**Seine Genesung von der Grippe macht nur langsam(e) Fortschritte.**  
His recovery from the flu is only very slow (*lit.* is only making slow progress).

**Über Satellitentelefon hört man seinen Partner mit einer gewissen Verzögerung.**

When you use satellite telephone there is a bit of a delay before you hear the other person.

**Er antwortete nur zögernd/zögerlich.**  
He answered only hesitantly.

## 76.8 Denoting alterations and change

(a) Alterations can be described by using the prefix **ver-** in combination with a comparative adjective, e.g. **besser, schöner**.



► See 36.2 and 57.2 for word formation, and 75.3e for alterations

verbessern 'to improve'  
 -e Verbesserung 'improvement'  
 verschönern 'to beautify'  
 -e Verschönerung 'improvement/beautification'  
 vergrößern 'to enlarge'  
 -e Vergrößerung 'enlargement'  
 verkleinern 'to reduce' (*in size*)  
 -e Verkleinerung 'diminution/reduction'  
 verlängern 'to extend/to lengthen'  
 -e Verlängerung 'extension' (*in time, etc.*)  
 (um)ändern 'to alter'  
 -e Änderung 'alteration'

These verbs of alteration can either be used reflexively or else they can take an object.

► See 37 for reflexive verbs

**Ihre Deutschkenntnisse *haben sich*/Das Wetter *hat sich* verschlechtert.**  
 Her German/The weather has deteriorated.

**Ich *habe mich* in Mathematik verbessert.**  
 I have improved in maths.

**In manchen Autobetrieben hat man die Betriebschaft vergrößert.**  
 The workforce has been increased in some car factories.

**Die Schneiderin muss meinen Rock ändern. Er soll verlängert werden.**  
 The dressmaker must alter my skirt. It is to be lengthened.

(b) (Radical) change:

-r (Um)sturz 'radical/sudden change'  
 um\*schlagen 'to change'

**Vom Wettersturz bekommen viele Leute Kopfschmerzen.**  
 Many people get a headache from a sudden change in the weather.

**Als die Polizei dazukam, schlug die Stimmung plötzlich um.**  
 When the police arrived the mood suddenly changed.

(c) Turning into something else (gradual or sudden change so that a transformation results), is rendered by **zu etw. werden**:

**Der Rhein wurde um ca. 250 n. Chr. zur Grenze des Römischen Reiches.**  
 In about 250 AD the Rhine became the boundary of the Roman empire.

**Das Wasser wurde zu Wein.**  
 Water turned to wine.

**Selbst kleine Kinder können zu kleinen Teufeln werden.**  
 Even small children can turn into little devils.

(d) **ändern** or **verändern**?

It is very difficult to give hard and fast rules about this to the language learner. There are some fixed idiomatic expressions that will always use **ändern**:

**Da kann man nichts daran ändern.**  
 It cannot be helped.

**Auch die Gehaltserhöhung wird kaum etwas daran ändern, dass ihm die Arbeit zu langweilig ist.**

Even the rise in salary is hardly going to change the fact that the work is too boring for him.

**Wie soll man das ändern?**

How is one supposed to change this?

**Daran dürfte sich nichts mehr ändern.**

This is unlikely to change any more.

In a number of collocations **ändern** and **verändern** are used nearly interchangeably. Here **verändern** may hint at a slightly more radical change:

**Die Situation hat sich seit damals geändert/verändert.**

Since then the situation has changed.

**Wird sich die Lage in Afghanistan jemals (ver)ändern?**

Will the situation in Afghanistan ever change?

**Der Fahrplan hat sich seit dem letzten Jahr ziemlich geändert/verändert.**

The timetable has changed a lot since last year.

**Seit der Einführung des Euro haben sich die Preise doch ziemlich stark geändert/verändert.**

Since the introduction of the euro prices have changed a lot.

**Das Naturschutzgesetz wurde erst kürzlich geändert/verändert.**

The law for the protection of nature has only recently been changed.

**ändern** is the most likely verb in the following collocations:

**die Absicht ändern** 'to change one's intention'

**eine Gewohnheit ändern** 'to change a habit'

**ein Verhalten ändern** 'to change behaviour'

**etw. an etw. ändern** 'to change sth.'

**die Richtung ändern** 'to change direction'

**seinen Charakter ändern** 'to change one's character'

**die Anforderungen ändern** 'to change the requirements'

**An seinen abstehenden Ohren kann man heute nichts mehr ändern.**

Nothing can be done about his protruding ears any more.

**verändern** is the most likely verb in the following collocations:

**sich verändern** 'to change (referring to a person)'

**die Landschaft verändert sich** 'the landscape changes'

**der Raum verändert sich** 'space changes'

**sich durch Licht/Sonne/Kälte usw. verändern** 'to change through light/sun/cold, etc.'

**ein Rezept verändern** 'to change a recipe (by adding or substituting something)'

**die Struktur verändern** 'to change the structure'

**Du hast dich aber gar nicht verändert, seit wir uns das letzte Mal gesehen haben.**

You have not changed at all since we last saw each other.

(e) **verschieden** or **unterschiedlich**?

Both **verschieden** and **unterschiedlich** are used to denote differences.

However, **unterschiedlich** emphasizes differences within a group of objects that are thought of as a group:

**Hier habe ich 2kg Bananen. Die sind alle *unterschiedlich* groß.**

Here I have 2kg of bananas. They are all of different sizes.

While **verschieden** emphasizes the difference between different objects:

**Wie viele *verschiedene* Farben hat ein Regenbogen?**

How many different colours does a rainbow have?

There are instances where **verschieden** and **unterschiedlich** can be used interchangeably:

**Studierende reagieren auf Stress ganz *verschieden/unterschiedlich*.**

Students react to stress in all kinds of different ways.

Here, **verschieden** emphasizes the high number of reactions, whereas **unterschiedlich** describes how each student (within the group of students) reacted differently.

(f) **anders, ander-**:

**anders** and its declined form are used to differentiate one group of (similar) objects from another group:

**Unsere Ferien waren bisher immer ziemlich gleich verlaufen, aber diesmal war alles *anders*.**

Our holidays had always been similar but this time everything was different.

**Ich sehe, Sie haben da blaue Schirme. Haben Sie auch noch *andere*?**

I see you have blue umbrellas. Do you have any others/any different ones?

**Man sollte sich über das, was *andere* Leute sagen, nicht so aufregen.**

One should not get so upset about what other people say.

NOTE

May I have *another* glass of wine? **Kann ich *noch ein* Glas Wein haben?** (see [63.3c](#)).

## 76.9

### Denoting the end of a process

**-s Ende** 'end'

**enden** 'to end' (intransitive)

**beenden** 'to end' (transitive)

**aus\*gehen** 'to end/come out'

**-r Ausgang** 'outcome'

**schließlich** 'in the end/finally' (see [121.3a](#))

**Das Ende der Verhandlungen ist noch nicht abzusehen.**

There is no end in sight to the negotiations.

**Der Ausgang des Versuches war anders als erwartet.**

The outcome of the experiment was different from what had been expected.

**Das wird böse ausgehen.**

That will end badly.

**Wie ist die Wahl ausgegangen?**

What was the result of the election?

**Er ist schließlich ausgezogen.**

In the end he moved out.

- (a) Breaking off/interrupting processes or relations:

**ab\*brechen** 'to break off'  
**unterbrechen** 'to interrupt'  
**stören** 'to disturb'

**Die diplomatischen Beziehungen wurden abgebrochen.**

Diplomatic relations were broken off.

**Wir unterbrechen die Sendung mit einer Sondermeldung.**

We interrupt this programme with a news flash.

- (b) Turning off machines, etc.:

**ab\*stellen/aus\*machen** 'to turn off'

**Bitte bei Brandgefahr den Motor abstellen.**

Please switch off the engine when there is a danger of fire.

**Hast du das Radio/das Bügeleisen ausgemacht?**

Have you turned off the radio/the iron?

- (c) Bringing a process to an end:

**ab\*schließen** 'to bring to an end/finish'  
**etw. beenden** 'to end sth.'  
**-r Abschluss** 'end/finish'

**Die Bergungsarbeiten sind vorläufig abgeschlossen.**

The rescue operations have been brought to an end for the time being.

**Der Bewerber hat ein abgeschlossenes Hochschulstudium.**

The applicant has a degree. (*lit.* finished university studies)

**Sie musste ihre Beamtenlaufbahn vorzeitig beenden.**

She had to end her career as a civil servant prematurely.

Refer to a dictionary for compounds with **Abschluss-**.

- (d) Stopping a process by intervention:

**an\*halten** 'to stop'

**Der Polizist hält den Verkehr an, indem er den rechten Arm hebt.**

The policeman stops the traffic by lifting his right arm.

- (e) Hindering a process:

**behindern** 'to hinder/impede'  
**jmdn. (bei etw.) auf\*halten** 'to hold up sb. (doing sth.)'  
**jmdn./etw. von etw. ab\*halten** 'to keep sb./sth. from doing sth.'

**Die Baustelle behindert den Verkehrsfluss.**

The construction site hampers the traffic flow.

**Dieses ständige Fragen hält mich beim Arbeiten auf.**

This constant questioning prevents me from getting on with my work.

**Wir konnten ihn nur mit Mühe vom Springen abhalten.**

We could only just (*lit.* with difficulty) prevent him from jumping.

- (f) Stopping of its own accord is conveyed by **stehen\*bleiben** or **auf\*hören**. Note that both are intransitive and that **stehen\*bleiben** takes **sein** as its auxiliary:

**Das Rad ist stehengeblieben.**

The wheel has stopped (turning).

**Der Regen hörte gegen 14.30 auf.**

The rain stopped at about 2.30 p.m.

- (g) Stopping work for good; retirement:

**-r Ruhestand** 'retirement'

**in den (Vor-)ruhestand versetzt werden** 'to be given (early) retirement'

**in den (Vor-)ruhestand treten** 'to retire (early)'

**pensioniert werden** 'to retire (on a pension)'

**Rentner/-in werden** 'to become a pensioner'

**Er geht in den Ruhestand.**

He is retiring.

**Sie wurde in den Vorruhestand versetzt.**

She was given early retirement.

**Viele Lehrer möchten vorzeitig in den Ruhestand treten.**

Many teachers would like early retirement.

**Sein Großvater wurde mit 65 pensioniert.**

His grandfather retired at 65.

**Ab Januar wird Frau Debus Rentnerin.**

From January Mrs Debus will be an old age pensioner.

► See [23.1b](#) for omission of the article

## 76.10 Repeating actions and processes

**wiederholen** 'to repeat'

**immer wieder** 'again and again'

**noch einmal** 'once again'

**-e Zugabe** 'encore'

**-r Refrain** 'chorus'

- (a) Doing things again:

**Bitte wiederholen Sie das Ganze langsam und deutlich.**

Please repeat the whole thing slowly and clearly.

**Der Kleine wollte immer wieder Karussell fahren.**

The little boy wanted to go on the roundabout/merry-go-round again and again.

**Spielen Sie den dritten Satz noch einmal bitte.**

Please play the third movement (once) again.

- (b) Asking for an encore (e.g. at a concert):

**Zugabe, Zugabe!**

Encore!

(c) Repeating verses, e.g. of songs:

**-r Refrain** 'chorus' (*of a song, etc.*)

**Der Refrain des Kirchenliedes ist ein fröhliches Halleluja.**  
The chorus of the hymn is a cheerful Hallelujah.

► See 82 for cause and effect of actions and processes

## 76.11 Describing processes or states in nature (scientific facts)

When emphasizing their status as timeless or 'eternal' truths, the present tense of the verb is used (see 34.2):

**Öl schwimmt auf Wasser.**

Oil floats/will float on water.

**Wasser findet immer einen Weg.**

Water finds its own way.

**Die Erdplatte verschob sich um zwei Zentimeter.**

The tectonic plate moved by 2 centimetres.

**Wenn der Druck zwischen zwei Erdplatten zu groß wird, bebt die Erde.**

When the pressure between two tectonic plates becomes too great, the earth shakes.

**Gewitter entsteht durch rasches Aufsteigen feuchtwarmer Luft und ihrer Abkühlung.**

Storms are caused by damp warm air rising rapidly and then cooling.

**Als Gefrierpunkt bezeichnet man die Temperatur, bei der ein Stoff vom flüssigen in den festen Zustand übergeht.**

Freezing point is the name given to the temperature at which a substance changes from a fluid to a solid state.

**Ebbe und Flut werden durch die Gravitation von Mond und Sonne verursacht.**

Tides are caused by the gravitational pull of the moon and the sun.

**Dürre ist ein Zustand, in dem über einen längeren Zeitraum weniger Wasser verfügbar ist als erforderlich.**

Drought is a condition in which, over a long period of time, less water is available than is required.

**Nichts bewegt sich so schnell wie Licht.**

Nothing moves as quickly as light.

## 77 Avoiding describing the agent of processes and actions

► See 40 and 76 for actions and processes

### 77.1 Using the passive

In descriptions of processes the agent of the action need not necessarily be mentioned. For this, the passive is commonly used.

- (a) If neither the agent nor the object of the action is to be named, **es wird** (singular) together with the past participle is used. Here the focus is entirely on the action or process itself. Compare the impersonal use of the passive (see 40.2c).

**Gegenüber dem Bahnhof wird jetzt gebaut.**

There is building going on across from the station.

**In der Kneipe an der Ecke wird jeden Freitag getanzt.**

There is dancing every Friday at the pub on the corner.

**Vor dem Fest musste gekocht und gebacken werden.**

Before the festival we had to cook and bake.

► See 40.2b for the distinction between the process of an action and the resulting state; for the use of **von** and **durch** to express agents of an action, see 40.3

In addition to the passive there are several other ways of not mentioning the agent:

- (b) Using ‘man’:

The agent of the action can be replaced by **man**.

► See also 31.4 on **man**

English uses the passive:

**Man hat mir den Mantel verspritzt.**

My coat got splashed.

**Man erkennt die richtige Anwendung am Erfolg der Behandlung.**

The correct application can be seen by the success of the treatment.

Some feminists insist on replacing **man** with **frau**, or at least writing **man/frau**, but the latter is also frequently used in a joky manner:

**Jetzt kann man/frau wieder an dieser Küste baden.**

Bathing is now possible again at this beach.

## 77.2

### Use of es

For the workings of nature and sensory perceptions, constructions with **es** can be used.

► See 42.3g for the dummy subject **es**

**Es regnet.**

It is raining.

**An der Bergstraße blüht es ganz herrlich.**

On the Bergstraße the blossom is quite beautiful.

**Hier riecht es so gut nach warmem Brot.**

There is such a lovely smell of warm bread here.

## 77.3

### Indicating that something can be done

- (a) **lässt sich** (plus infinitive):

**Ein deutlicher Unterschied ließ sich feststellen.**

A distinct difference could be noticed/was noticeable.

**Das lässt sich am besten damit erklären, dass das Wasser vorne eingedrungen war.**

That can best be explained by the fact that the water had entered from the front.

**Mit dem Betrieb von Windkraft lässt sich viel Geld verdienen.**

A lot of money can be made from the operation of wind energy.

- (b) the suffix **-bar** of the adjective (see [55.1a](#) for word formation with **-bar**):

**Das Verlängerungsteil ist abnehmbar.**

The extension can be taken off/is removable/detachable.

## 77.4

**Needs to be done or is possible**

If it is either possible or necessary for something to be done, **ist zu** (+ infinitive) ‘can be/must be’ (+ past participle) is used:

**Die Korrespondenzen sind bis spätestens Freitag zu erledigen.**

The post/letters have to be dealt with by Friday at the latest.

The exact English translation has to be inferred from the context and the use of adverbs or modal particles (see [117.1c](#) for modal particles):

**Die Handlung ist wohl zu rechtfertigen.**

The action is probably justified. / The action probably can be justified.

**Manche Spesen sind noch zu rechtfertigen.**

Some of the expenses still have to be justified.

**Ihre Entscheidung ist unbedingt zu rechtfertigen.**

Her decision is definitely justified.

**Die Mauer war vom Innern des Forums aus zu sehen/sichtbar.**

The wall could be seen/was visible from the inside of the forum.

## 78

**Describing origins and provenance**

► See [75.8c](#) for describing what things are made of, and [82.2](#) for further vocabulary relating to origins

## 78.1

**Geographical origin**

Geographical origin can be rendered by **kommen aus**, **her\*kommen aus/von** or its related noun **-e Herkunft**.

- (a) Asking where something is from:

**Die Herkunft dieser Antiquität lässt sich nicht mehr feststellen.**

The place of origin/provenance of this antique can no longer be ascertained.

**Man kann nicht mehr feststellen, woher diese Vasen kommen.**

We can no longer be sure where the vases came from.

**Die Äpfel kommen aus der Steiermark.**

The apples come from Styria.



- (b) Asking about someone's place of origin:

**Woher kommen Sie?**

Where do you come from?

(The question usually implies 'What is your country/town, etc. of origin?' unless there is reference to a specific place or time.)

**Woher kommen Sie gerade?**

Where have you (just) come from?

- (c) Places where something started:

**-r Ausgangspunkt(e)** 'starting point'**Exeter war Ausgangspunkt einer berühmten Entdeckungsreise.**

Exeter was the starting point of a famous voyage of discovery.

- (d) Direction something/someone is coming from:

**aus Richtung** 'from the direction of'**Der Zug aus Richtung Darmstadt hat heute zehn Minuten Verspätung.**

The train from Darmstadt is ten minutes late today.

- (e) Things that originally came from or were situated elsewhere:

**ursprünglich** 'originally'**Das Sprachinstitut befand sich ursprünglich in einer alten Villa.**

The language institute was originally housed in an old villa.

- (f) Tracing the origin back to somewhere can be expressed by a number of verbs with the prefix
- zurück-**
- :

**zurück\*verfolgen** 'to trace back to'**zurück\*gehen auf** 'to go/date back to'**Der Grundplan für diese Kapelle lässt sich bis ins achte Jahrhundert zurückverfolgen.**

The basic plan for this chapel can be traced back to the eighth century.

**Diese Tradition geht auf heidnische Bräuche zurück.**

This tradition dates back to heathen customs.

**78.2****Chronological origin**

**Entstehung/entstehen:** it is difficult to find a single translation for this verb. Possible translations include 'arise/come about/originate/be created': **die Entstehung der Erde** could therefore translate as: 'the origin/creation of the earth/world':

**Der Keil ist in der Steinzeit entstanden.**

The arrowhead originated in the Stone Age.

**Die Entstehung der Arten ist nach wie vor nicht ganz geklärt.**

The origin of the species has still not been completely clarified/explained.

## 78.3 Origin by birth and descent

- (a) Birthplace and nationality:

**von Geburt, von Geburt her/aus** ‘by birth’  
**stammen von/aus** ‘come from’  
**-e Staatsangehörigkeit** ‘nationality’  
**-e Geburtsland** ‘native country’

**Er ist von Geburt (aus/her) Schweizer. / Er ist gebürtiger Schweizer.**  
 He is Swiss by birth.

**Mein Kollege stammt ursprünglich aus der Ukraine.**  
 My colleague originally comes from the Ukraine.

**Diese Karte zeigt die Bevölkerung nach Staatsangehörigkeit und Geburtsland.**

This map indicates population by nationality and country of birth.

If alluding to ethnic origin **seiner** (etc.) **Herkunft nach** is used:

**Sie ist ihrer Herkunft nach Weißrussin.**  
 She is of Belorussian descent.

► See 23.1b for omission of the article

- (b) Genetic origin:

**-r Ursprung/-e Abstammung** ‘origin’  
**von etw. (= dat.) ab\*stammen** ‘to be descended from’

**Der Titel des Werkes heißt: ‘Der Mensch von seinen Ursprüngen bis zur Gegenwart’.**

The title of this work is: ‘Man from his origins to the present day’.

**Stammt der Mensch vom Affen ab?**

Is man/Are human beings descended from the apes?

► See 28.2 for the declension of **-r Affe**

- (c) Descent is recorded in the family tree (
- r Stammbaum**
- ) or a book that contains all official registrations, e.g. birth, marriage, death certificates of a family (
- s Stammbuch der Familie**
- ).

- (d) Ancestry:

Specific ancestors are referred to as follows:

**-e Urgroßeltern** ‘the great-grandparents’  
**-r Urahn(en)/-e Urahne(n)** ‘ancestor’  
**-r Vorfahr(en)/-r Vorfahre(n)** ‘(non-specific) ancestor’

**Die Vorfahren des Präsidenten kamen ursprünglich aus dem Süden.**  
 The President’s ancestors originally came from the South.

► See 28.2 on weak noun declension for **-r Präsident**

## 78.4

## Foundation

**Die NATO wurde 1949 von zwölf Staaten gegründet.**

NATO was founded in 1949 by twelve states.

**Hamburg und Bremen sind durch Kaiser Karl den Großen gegründet worden.**

Hamburg and Bremen were founded by Charlemagne.

**Um einen Hausstand zu gründen, musste man im 19. Jahrhundert oft erst ein beträchtliches Einkommen nachweisen.**

In order to (be allowed to) set up house in the 19th century one frequently had to first prove a considerable income.

Where a foundation is of an intellectual nature, 'begründen' is used alongside 'gründen'.

**Helene Lange war (eine) Mitbegründerin des deutschen Frauenvereins 1865.**

Helene Lange was a co-founder of the German women's movement in 1865.

## 78.5

## Origin of action

Initiatives and actions starting in a certain place or with a certain person are rendered by **von** (somewhere) **aus**:

**Die Phönizier gründeten vom Libanon aus Kolonien im westlichen Mittelmeer.**

Starting from Lebanon the Phoenicians founded colonies in the western Mediterranean.

**Von diesem Büro aus leitet er das ganze Unternehmen.**

He manages the entire enterprise from this office.

**aus\*gehen von** is also used for the origin of an initiative or idea:

**Die Initiative ging von einem Angestellten aus.**

The initiative came from an employee.

► See 28.5 for adjectival nouns

## 78.6

## Inheriting

**etw. von jmdm. erben** 'to inherit sth. from sb.'

**-s Erbe/-e Erbschaft** 'inheritance/heritage'

**-r Erbe/-e Erbin** 'heir'

**Er hat den Sekretär von seinem Onkel geerbt.**

He inherited the bureau from his uncle.

**Sie hatte das väterliche Erbe angetreten, musste aber hohe Erbschaftssteuern zahlen.**

She had come into his father's inheritance, but had to pay high inheritance tax/death duty.

**Sie war die rechtmäßige/mutmaßliche Erbin des Verstorbenen.**

She was the rightful/presumptive heir of the deceased.

## 78.7

## Passing things on

**jmdm. etw. vermachen** ‘to bequeath/to leave sth. to sb.’  
 -s **Vermächtnis** ‘legacy’  
**hinterlassen** ‘to leave behind (after death)’  
 -s **Geschenk(e)** ‘present/gift’  
**überliefern** ‘to pass on/down’

**Das Schriftstück war ihr vermacht worden.**  
 The document had been bequeathed to her.

► See 40.2a for the passive

**Er hinterließ seinen Enkeln ein großes Vermächtnis.**  
 He left a large legacy for his grandchildren.

► See 12.1 for word order of noun objects.

**Der Ring war ein Geschenk zum zehnten Hochzeitstag.**  
 The ring was a gift for (her) tenth wedding anniversary.

**Das Märchen wurde den Brüdern Grimm mündlich überliefert.**  
 The fairy tale was passed (down) to the brothers Grimm orally.

## 78.8

## Authorship

**stammen von** ‘to stem/come from’  
**jmdm. etw. zu\*schreiben** ‘to attribute sth. to sb.’  
 -r **Urheber(-)/-e Urheberin(nen)** ‘author/creator/originator’  
 -s **Urheberrecht(e)/-s Copyright** ‘copyright’

(a) Attributing something to an author:

**Dieser Aphorismus stammt von Lichtenberg.**  
 This aphorism comes from (Georg Christoph) Lichtenberg.

**Das Gedicht wird dem schottischen Dichter Burns zugeschrieben.**  
 The poem is attributed to the Scottish poet Burns.

(b) Referring to an author as the originator and owner of copyright:

**Der Urheber besitzt das Copyright.**  
 The author owns the copyright.

**Das Urheberrecht liegt beim Verlag.**  
 Copyright is with the publisher.

**Bei den gratis im Netz erhältlichen Büchern, handelt es sich um Werke, deren Urheberrechte abgelaufen sind.**  
 The books available for free on the internet are works that are out of copyright.

# XII

## Putting events into a wider context

### 79 Giving reasons and purpose

#### 79.1 Giving reasons and explaining why in general terms

(a) For giving reasons and explaining why, the conjunctions **denn**, **weil** and **da** are used.

NOTE **denn** is a co-ordinating conjunction (see 6.1), whereas **weil** and **da** are subordinating conjunctions (see 8.1 and 8.3).

**denn** 'for/because/since'

**weil** 'because'

**da** 'since/because'

**Ich habe es gemacht, denn es war notwendig.**  
I did it because it was necessary.

**Ich habe es gemacht, weil er es wollte.**  
I did it because he wanted it.

**Wir haben es geschrieben, da es geschrieben werden musste.**  
We wrote it because it had to be written.

**Weil/Da es gesagt werden muss, sage ich es.**  
Since it has to be said, I'll say it.

► See 8 for subordinate clauses

(b) The prepositions **wegen** and **aufgrund** are used to apportion blame or responsibility. Both take the genitive:

**Wegen des schlechten Wetters mussten die Ausgrabungsarbeiten unterbrochen werden.**  
The excavations had to be interrupted because of bad weather.

**Aufgrund eines Todesfalles in der Familie bleibt das Geschäft heute geschlossen.**  
The shop remains closed today owing to a family bereavement.

## 79.2

## Giving detailed reasons

- (a) Explaining and emphasizing that there was a good reason:

**deswegen, deshalb** (. . . , **weil** . . .) ‘for that reason/therefore/that’s why’  
**daher** (. . . , **dass** . . .) ‘therefore/that’s why’  
**also** ‘so/therefore’  
**nämlich** ‘namely/you see’  
**infolgedessen** ‘consequently’  
**demnach/demzufolge** ‘accordingly’

**Ich habe es nur *deshalb* gemacht, *weil* es notwendig war.**

The only reason I did it was because it was necessary.

**Es ist *deswegen* misslungen, *weil* wir nicht das richtige Werkzeug hatten.**

It went wrong because we didn’t have the right tool.

**Gestern kam ich nicht zum Ausdrucken, *deshalb/also* muss ich es heute machen.**

Yesterday I didn’t get round to printing, therefore I must do it today.

**Er musste dringend weg. *Deshalb/Also* müsst ihr auf seine Kinder aufpassen.**

He had to go away urgently. That’s why you have to look after his children.

**Inflation kommt *daher*, *dass* die Leute zu viel Geld ausgeben.**

Inflation is a result of people spending too much money.

**nämlich** also expresses reason, but it is not usually translated. It adds the flavour of ‘you see’:

**Du solltest ihm bei der Auswahl der Vorhangstoffe helfen. Er ist *nämlich* farbenblind.**

You should help him with the selection of curtain materials. He is colour-blind, you see.

- See [117.1c](#) for the modal particle **nämlich**

- (b) Something was done in order to make something else possible:

**damit** ‘so that’  
**um . . . zu** ‘in order to’  
**demzufolge** ‘therefore’  
**infolgedessen** ‘that’s why’

**damit** is often used with **können**:

**Er empfiehlt ihr, ein neues Computerprogramm zu kaufen, *damit* sie ihre Abrechnung schneller machen kann.**

He advises her to buy a new computer program so that she can do her accounts more quickly.

**Du bist unter 1,40m. *Demzufolge* kannst du noch nicht mit diesem Rollercoaster fahren.**

You are under 1m 40cm. Therefore you cannot go on this rollercoaster yet.

**Zu viele Menschen haben in den letzten Jahren über ihre Verhältnisse gelebt. *Infolgedessen* gibt es jetzt eine Rezession.**

In recent years too many people have been living beyond their means. That’s why/Consequently we now have a recession.

► See 8 for word order in subordinate clauses

If the subject of both main and dependent clause is identical, **um zu** is preferred to **damit**.

Unlike in English, the **um** cannot be omitted. **Um zu** is followed by an infinitive at the end of the clause.

► See 8.6 for infinitive clauses

**Arbeitet man, um zu leben, oder lebt man, um zu arbeiten?**

Does one work in order to live, or (does one) live in order to work?

**Was soll man bei einer Bruchlandung tun, um einen möglichen Brand zu überleben?**

What should one do during a crash landing (in order) to survive a (possible) fire?

If there is another **zu** in the previous clause, **um zu** usually means ‘too . . . to be . . .’.

► See also 82.1c for this use of **zu**

NOTE

**Es ist zu schön, um wahr zu sein.**

It is too good to be true.

### 79.3

### Asking about reasons

**warum?** ‘why?’

**wieso?** ‘why?/how come?’

**weshalb?** ‘why?’

**wozu?** ‘to what purpose?/what . . . for?/why?’

**aus welchem Grund?** ‘for which reason?/why?’

– **Warum hast du so große Zähne?** – **Damit ich dich besser fressen kann.**

– What big teeth you have! – All the better to eat you with. (*Little Red Riding Hood*)

**Wieso willst du nicht mitspielen?**

How come you don’t want to play with us?

(**Wieso**, particularly the short question **Wieso nicht** ‘why not’, sometimes sounds impatient and challenging.)

**Weshalb fahren Sie denn immer an den gleichen Ferienort?**

Why do you always go to the same holiday resort?

**Wozu bist du denn in die Stadt gefahren?**

Why (*lit.* To what purpose) did you go into town then?

**Wozu soll das gut sein?**

What is the point of it? / What is it in aid of?

**Aus welchem Grund musste Rolls Royce im Herbst 2010 einige seiner Flugzeugmotoren zurückrufen?**

Why did Rolls Royce have to call back some of its aircraft engines in Autumn 2010?

## 79.4 Naming the reason

-r **Grund (Gründe)** ‘reason’  
 etw. mit etw. **begründen** ‘to justify/give reason’  
 -e **Begründung** ‘reason/justification’

-r **Grund** and derivatives are used to give a straightforward reason for doing something:

**Er hatte sie eingestellt *aus dem einfachen Grunde*, dass sie gute Beziehungen in der Wirtschaft hatte.**

He had hired her for the simple reason that she had good contacts/was well connected in the business world.

**Er wollte sein Vorgehen *damit begründen*, dass er seinen Konkurrenten beseitigen musste.**

He tried/wanted to justify his action by claiming he had to get rid of his competitor.

***Mit welcher Begründung* wollen Sie eigentlich diese Straße absperren?**

What is your justification in wanting/On what grounds do you want to block off this road?

## 79.5 Explaining an action

-e **Erklärung** ‘explanation’  
**erklären** ‘to explain’ (giving reasons)  
**unerklärlich** ‘inexplicable’  
**sagen** ‘to say’  
**erläutern** ‘to explain’ (how)

**Ich bin ihm *eine Erklärung* schuldig.**

I owe him an explanation.

► See [12.3](#) for the order of noun and pronoun

**Das Presseamt möchte *eine Erklärung abgeben*.**

The press office would like to make/release a statement.

**Das Loch in der Wasserleitung *erklärt*, warum wir schon so lange diese Geräusche hören.**

The hole in the water pipe explains why we have been hearing these noises for such a long time.

► See [9](#) for word order in indirect questions

**Es ist mir völlig *unerklärlich*, wieso mein Handy kein Guthaben mehr hat.**

I really can't see/it's a mystery to me why my mobile does not have any more credit.

**Sie hat mir genau *erläutert*, wie man Genmanipulationen an Tomaten durchführt.**

She explained (to me) exactly how gene manipulations on tomatoes are carried out.



The verb **sagen** can cover the meaning of both **erklären** and **erläutern** in everyday conversation:

**Sag mir doch, warum du schon wieder zu spät kommst.**  
Tell me why you are late again.

## 79.6 Justifying an action

**rechtfertigen** 'to justify'  
**es ist (völlig) gerechtfertigt** 'it is (quite) justifiable'  
**es ist vertretbar** 'it is tenable/defensible/justifiable'  
**es ist zu verantworten** 'it can be justified'  
**etw. vor/gegenüber jmdm. verantworten** 'to answer to sb. for sth.'

**Sie brauchen diese Handlung nur vor Gott und Ihrem Gewissen zu rechtfertigen.**

You need to justify this action only before God and your conscience.

**Es ist nicht zu verantworten, dass wir einen großen Teil des Etats für die Wartung der alten Geräte ausgeben.**

We cannot justify spending a large part of the budget on the maintenance of the old equipment.

► See also 79.4 on **begründen mit**

**Wenn den Kindern etwas passiert, müssen wir das vor/gegenüber ihren Eltern verantworten.**

If something happens to the children we will have to answer to their parents (for it).

## 79.7 Taking on responsibility

**etw. verantworten** 'to answer for sth.'  
**etw. /sich für etw. verantworten müssen** 'to be liable for sth.'  
**sich (=acc.) verantworten** 'to defend oneself/defend a course of action'  
**verantwortlich sein** 'to be responsible'  
**-e Verantwortung übernehmen** 'to take over/on responsibility'  
**-e Führung/-s Amt übernehmen** 'to take on the leadership/office'

**Ich kann diese Schluderei nicht länger verantworten.**

I cannot be responsible for this sloppiness any longer.

**Unsere Spesenabrechnung müssen wir gegenüber den Steuerzahlern verantworten.**

We are accountable to taxpayers for our expenses.

**Dafür musst du dich vor der Standesorganisation verantworten.**

You must defend/justify yourself (for this) before the professional association.

**Als Kassenwart unseres Vereins verantwortest du die Kosten dieses finanziellen Abenteuers.**

As the treasurer of our club you are responsible for the cost of this financial adventure.

**Der Projektleiter ist für die Durchführung des gesamten Projekts allein verantwortlich.**

The project leader is in sole charge of the entire project.

Herr Brandes *hat dankenswerterweise das Amt des Kassenwarts übernommen.*  
We are grateful that Mr Brandes has taken over the position of treasurer.

### 79.8 Explaining the purpose (what for)

-r Zweck/-r Sinn 'purpose'  
-s Mittel zum Zweck 'means to an end'  
mit dem Zweck 'with the purpose'

**Der Zweck heiligt die Mittel.**

The end justifies the means.

**Das ist nicht der Zweck der Übung.**

This is not the point of the exercise.

**Dieser Koffer erfüllt seinen Zweck.**

This (suit)case serves its purpose.

Refer to a dictionary for further expressions with **zweck-**, e.g. **zweckmäßig** or **zweckgebunden** (**zweckgebundene Gelder** 'ear-marked money'), etc.

**Der Sinn dieser Übung ist, dass Sie den Zusammenhang zwischen den Wörtern verstehen.**

The point of this exercise is that you understand the connection/relationship between the words.

### 79.9 Explaining a particular use

**dienen zu** 'to serve as sth.'  
**benutzen** 'to use'  
**nützlich sein** 'to be useful'  
**jmdn./etw. zu etw. brauchen** 'to need sb./sth. for sth.'  
**etw. zu etw. gebrauchen** 'to use sth. for sth.'

**Die Zinsen von seinem Sparkonto dienen zu seinem Altersunterhalt.**

The interest from his savings account serves as his old age pension.

**Diese Allzwecktücher können Sie auch zum Fensterputzen benutzen.**

You can also use these all-purpose cloths for window-cleaning.

► See **5.2b** on word order

**Ich brauche schnell etwas zum Schreiben.**

I need something to write with quickly.

### 79.10 Explaining intention

-e Absicht 'intention'  
**absichtlich** 'intentionally'  
**extra** 'deliberately'  
**beabsichtigen, etw. zu tun** 'to intend to do sth.'  
**etw. vor\*haben** 'to plan/intend to do sth.'  
**etw. tun wollen** 'to want/intend to do sth.'

**Dies geschah ausschließlich mit der Absicht, dass er hinausgeekelt werden sollte.**

This happened solely so that he would be hounded out.

**Er hat sie *absichtlich* übersehen.**

He overlooked her intentionally/deliberately.

The word **extra** could be used instead of **absichtlich**, but it is informal:

**Hast du das *extra* gemacht?**

Did you do that deliberately?

**Der Vorsitzende zog die Sitzung *absichtlich* in die Länge.**

The chairperson deliberately prolonged the meeting.

## 79.11 Explaining that something happened unintentionally/by mistake

-s **Versehen** 'oversight'

**aus Versehen/versehentlich** 'by mistake'

**nicht absichtlich** 'not intentionally'

**nicht extra** 'not deliberately'

**etw. übersehen** 'to overlook sth.'

**jmdm. ist ein Fehler unterlaufen** 'sb. has made a mistake unintentionally'

**Ich habe diese Datei *aus Versehen* gelöscht.**

I deleted this file by mistake/unintentionally.

**Sie hat *versehentlich* den falschen Mantel mitgenommen.**

She took the wrong coat with her by mistake.

► See 36.2 for inseparable verbs

**Die Studenten *hatten total übersehen*, dass die Dozentin bereits im Seminarraum war.**

The students had completely failed to notice that the tutor was already in the seminar room.

## 80 Providing spatial context

### 80.1 Asking 'where?'

► See 7, 9 and 50.5 on interrogatives; see 69 and 71 on existence and availability

(a) For simply asking 'where?' use **wo**:

**Wo habe ich diese Datei gespeichert?**

Where did I save this file?

(b) When asking for the specific location of one item out of a group of items, use **welch-** with the appropriate ending. (See 24.1b for the declension of **welcher**.)

– **Welchen Computer soll ich reparieren?**

– **Den da drüben, bitte.**

– Which computer am I to repair?

– The one over there, please.

**Welch-** can be used with a preceding preposition:

**Bei welchen deutschen Firmen hast du gearbeitet?**  
Which German companies have you worked for?

## 80.2 Expressing 'here' and 'there'

**hier** 'here'  
**da** 'there' (sth. fairly close)  
**dort** 'there' (sth. further away)

NOTE **da sein** is also used to denote presence (see 69.1).

To pinpoint a place, use:

**an dieser Stelle** 'at this spot'  
**an diesem Ort** 'at this place'  
**an diesem Punkt** 'at this point'  
(**genau hier/da** 'right here/there')

**An dieser Stelle stand einmal eine Kapelle.**  
There used to be a chapel on this spot.

**Bitte hier unterschreiben.**  
Please sign here.

**Das gehört nicht hierher.**  
That doesn't belong here.

## 80.3 Describing distances

(a) Distances from 'A' to 'B' are conveyed by **von** (+ dat.) **bis zu** (+ dat.):

**Von meinem Haus bis zum Marktplatz sind es ungefähr drei Kilometer.**  
From my house to the market square is about three kilometres.

(b) Describing distance from a certain point:

**Wie weit ist es von Frankfurt bis Berlin Luftlinie?**  
How far is it from Frankfurt to Berlin as the crow flies?

(c) Describing distance between two points:

**Zwischen Erde und Mond liegen etwa 390.000km Entfernung.**  
There is a distance of about 390,000 km between the earth and the moon.

**Wie weit ist Potsdam von Berlin entfernt?**  
How far is it from Berlin to Potsdam?

## 80.4 Covering distances and areas

(a) In order to express distance covered between two towns or countries, use **von** (+ dat.) **nach** (+ dat.):

**Wie lange braucht man mit dem Auto von Heidelberg nach Dresden?**  
How long is it by car from Heidelberg to Dresden?

- (b) For distances between specific places (from ‘X’ to ‘Y’), use **von** (+ dat.) (**bis**) **zu** (+ dat.):

**Vom Bahnhof bis zum Hotel sind es nur wenige Minuten.**  
It only takes a few minutes from the station to the hotel.

- (c) A formal way to express ‘to cover a distance’ is **eine Strecke zurück\*legen**:

**Diese Strecke kann man kaum zu Fuß zurücklegen.**  
It is virtually impossible to cover this distance on foot.

- (d) For covering an area:

**sich** (= acc.) **erstrecken über** ‘to extend over’  
**sich** (= acc.) **aus\*dehnen über** ‘to stretch across’  
**über etw.** (= acc.) **ausbreiten** ‘to spread (over)’  
**bedecken** ‘to cover so that whatever is/was underneath is not visible any more’  
**ab\*decken** ‘to cover sth.’ (so that it is protected, when used in literal sense)  
**zu\*decken** ‘the act of covering sth.’  
**flächendeckend** ‘covering the entire area’

**Das Naturschutzgebiet erstreckt sich über mehrere tausend Quadratkilometer/dehnt sich über mehrere tausend Quadratkilometer aus.**

The nature reserve extends over several thousand square kilometres.

**Die Tollwut hat sich bis jetzt noch nicht weiter ausbreiten können.**  
Rabies hasn’t so far been able to spread any further.

**Das Staubecken bedeckt eine große Fläche, die früher Weideland war.**  
The reservoir covers a large area that used to be grazing land.

The term **ab\*decken** can be used to describe something abstract rather than physical:

**Diese Theorie deckt aber nicht alle möglichen Fälle ab.**  
However, this theory doesn’t cover all possible cases.

**Die Mordwaffe war wochenlang vom Schnee zugedeckt.**  
The murder weapon was covered by snow for weeks.

**Über das Satellitennetz können die Nachrichten flächendeckend ausgestrahlt werden.**  
The news can be broadcast across the entire area via the satellite network.

80.5

**Direction**

- (a) To indicate coming ‘from’ somewhere, **aus Richtung** ‘from (the direction)’ is used, while ‘in the direction of’ is rendered by **in Richtung**:

**Der Heißluftballon wird aus Richtung Süden/aus Richtung Bayern über den Berg fahren.**  
The hot-air balloon will travel from the south/from the direction of Bavaria across the mountain.

**Fahren Sie in Richtung Messegelände.**  
Drive in the direction of the exhibition centre.

- (b) Being able to see or reach something from somewhere is conveyed by **von** (+ dat.) **aus zu sehen/zu erreichen sein**:

**Die Schweizer Alpen sind vom Südschwarzwald aus zu sehen.**

The Swiss Alps can be seen from the southern Black Forest.

**Vom Bahnhof aus gesehen liegt die Uni östlich.**

Looking from the station, the university is to the east.

**Von Ihrem Hotel aus ist das Stadtzentrum leicht zu Fuß zu erreichen.**

From your hotel you can easily reach the city centre on foot.

- (c) To carry on in the same direction, use (**immer**) **geradeaus** ‘keep straight on’:

**Fahren Sie immer geradeaus bis zum Arbeiterdenkmal.**

Keep driving straight on as far as the workers’ memorial.

- (d) To emphasize movement, use **her-**.

► See 50.4, 80.7 and 81.5f for further uses of **her-**

For going around a place, **um** (+ acc.) **herum** is used:

**Die Sportler müssen eine Ehrenrunde um den ganzen Sportplatz herum drehen.**

The athletes must run a lap of honour around the entire stadium/sports field.

For coming out of a place, **aus** (+ dat.) **heraus** or **hinter** (+ dat.) **hervor** is used:

**Er kam hinter dem Vorhang hervor.**

He came out from behind the curtain.

**Die Maus kroch aus dem Loch heraus/hervor.**

The mouse crept out of the hole.

- (e) Taking aim, pointing at:

For taking aim, use **zielen auf**:

**Zielst du auf die Flasche dort?**

Are you aiming at the bottle there?

**abzielen auf etwas** means ‘to be aimed at, to be designed to, to intend to’:

**Sein Argument zielte darauf ab, die Zeugen zu diffamieren.**

His argument was designed to discredit the witnesses.

For indicating responsibility, use:

**Alle Indizien sprechen für die Schuld des Firmenmanagements an diesem Unglück.**

All the evidence points to the responsibility of the company’s managers for this disaster.

**In diesem Fall wiesen alle Indizien auf ihre Schuld.**

In this case all the evidence pointed to her guilt.

## 80.6

## Following and preceding someone/something

- (a) In order to express that someone is following someone else, **jmdm. folgen** ‘to follow sb.’ or the prefixes **nach-** or **hinterher-** before verbs of movement are used. The person being followed is in the dative:

**Ist es Ihnen auch unangenehm, wenn Ihnen nachts jemand nachgeht?**

Do you also find it unpleasant when someone follows you at night?

**Du findest unser Haus am einfachsten, wenn du mir einfach hinterherfährst.**

It is easiest to find our house if you simply follow me (by car).

These expressions can also be used in an abstract sense:

**Diese Sache müssen Sie verfolgen./Dieser Sache müssen Sie nachgehen.**

You must follow up this matter.

(b) **voraus-** denotes going ahead of or preceding someone:

**Da ich mich nicht in der Stadt auskannte, bat ich einen Taxifahrer, mir vorauszufahren.**

Since I didn't know my way about town I asked a taxi driver to drive ahead of me.

**Die Nachricht wird ihr schon vorausgeeilt sein.**

The news will have gone before her/preceded her.

**Meine Bücher hatte ich schon vorausgeschickt.**

I had sent my books on ahead. (*i.e. before I went myself*)

## 80.7

## The speaker's perspective

The prefixes **her-** and **hin-** indicate the speaker's perspective.

**her\*kommen** is used to refer to someone coming towards the speaker, while **hin\*gehen** refers to someone going away from the speaker towards someone or something else.

► See also 50.4 for adverbs such as **hierher** and **dorthin**

(a) Towards the speaker:

**Komm jetzt bitte (zu mir) herunter!**

Please come down (to me) now.

**Woher kommt denn dieser Tee?**

Where does this tea come from?

► See 117.1c for the modal particle **denn**

(b) Away from the speaker:

**Ich gehe jetzt zur Nachbarin hinüber.**

I'm just going over to my neighbour.

**Wo hast du das Buch hingelegt, das ich dir geliehen habe?**

Where did you put the book that I lent you?

**Schaffen Sie es bitte weg!**

Please remove it!

► See 57.1

(c) Both directions:

► See 41 for imperatives

**Geh jetzt hinauf und hol mir die schmutzige Wäsche herunter.**

Go upstairs now and bring me down the dirty washing.

- (d) Note, however, that **gehen** and **bringen**, unlike ‘go’ and ‘bring’, do not always imply that the perspective is centred on the speaker:

**Ich bringe dich zum Bahnhof.**

I’ll take you to the station.

**Ein Knopf vom Jackett ist abgegangen.**

A button came off my jacket.

In these examples, the verbs assume a focal point other than the speaker’s (see [33.5a](#), [33.5c](#) and [33.6c](#)).

## 80.8 Spatial sequences

- (a) Actions that happen in spatial sequence can be expressed with **erst** ‘first’ and **dann** ‘then’:

**Erst kommt man an dem neuen Supermarkt vorbei, dann stößt man auf das Freizeitzentrum.**

First you pass the new supermarket, then you come to the leisure centre.

- (b) Systematic sequence is often referred to by **-e Reihe**.

**-e Reihe** ‘row’

**-e Reihenfolge** ‘sequence’

**der Reihe nach** ‘one after the other’

**Die Namen der Gewinner sind in alphabetischer Reihenfolge aufgeführt.**

The names of the winners are listed in alphabetical order.

**Ich gehe jetzt die Teilnehmerliste der Reihe nach durch.**

I am going through the list of participants, one after the other.

► See also [76.5b](#) for taking turns

- (c) To imply that something is right next to something without a gap in between, use **anschließend an** (+ acc.) ‘adjacent to’:

**Anschließend an den Versorgungsraum finden wir die Empfangsräume der römischen Villa.**

Next to the supplies room we find the reception rooms of the Roman villa.

► See [81.13b](#) for temporal uses of **anschließend**

## 81 Providing temporal context

► See [50.1](#)

### 81.1 Now

- (a) The present moment in time is expressed as:

**im Moment/im Augenblick/momentan** ‘at the moment’

**gerade** ‘at the moment/just now/just then’

**jetzt/nun** ‘now’



**bis jetzt/bisher** ‘until now/hitherto’  
**gegenwärtig** ‘currently/at present’  
**zur Zeit** ‘at present’  
**heute** ‘today’  
**dieses Jahr** ‘this year’  
**dieses Jahrzehnt** ‘this decade’

► For use of adverbs and adverbial phrases, see 5.2 and 50; for order of adverbs see 11.1–4

**Wir haben momentan hier sehr viel zu tun.**  
 We are very busy here at the moment.

**Wo seid ihr gerade?**  
 Where are you at the moment/just now?

► See 81.2 on another use of *gerade*

**Jetzt/Nun geht es aufwärts mit der Wirtschaft.**  
 The economy is picking up now.

(b) ‘Until now’ is rendered by **bis jetzt/bisher**:

**Bis jetzt gibt es keine Cholera in dem Lager.**  
 Until now there has been no cholera in the camp.

► See 81.7 for ways to express ‘not yet’, and 34.2d for this use of the present tense

(c) More general terms for ‘currently/at present’ are **gegenwärtig/zur Zeit** (abbreviated to **z.Zt.**): as an adjective, **gegenwärtig** occurs in expression such as **-e gegenwärtige Finanzlage** ‘the current financial situation’:

**Die Bundeskanzlerin befindet sich zur Zeit/gegenwärtig in Washington.**  
 The Federal Chancellor is currently in Washington.

**Die gegenwärtige politische Lage in Griechenland ist äußerst kritisch.**  
 The current political situation in Greece is extremely critical.

## 81.2 A few moments ago

The terms **gerade/eben/soeben**, used with either the simple past or the perfect (see 34.5–6 for tenses), imply that something has just happened:

**Tut mir leid, der Chef ist gerade aus dem Haus gegangen.**  
 Sorry, the boss has just left the building.

**Eben waren sie noch da; jetzt sind sie weg.**  
 They were here a minute ago, now they’ve gone.

The term **vorhin** lies a little bit further back in time; it refers to the same afternoon, morning, etc., but other events may have happened in the meantime:

**Vorhin habe ich noch daran gedacht; dann kam mir ein Anruf dazwischen.**  
 I remembered it a little earlier, then a phone call intervened.

## 81.3

## Recently

- (a) For referring to recent events without specifically giving a date, the following can be used:

**vor kurzem** ‘a short time ago/the other day’ (*implying days, rather than minutes or hours ago*)

**kürzlich/neulich** ‘recently’

**Neulich stand in der Zeitung, dass sich Peter verlobt hat.**

It was in the paper recently that Peter has got engaged.

- (b) In order to refer to a specific point in the recent past, the following can be used:

**letzten/vorigen Montag/Mittwoch** ‘last Monday/Wednesday’

**letzte/vorige Woche** ‘last week’

**vorletzten Dienstag** ‘(the) Tuesday before last’

## 81.4

## At some time in the past

- (a) For a non-specific time in the past:

**vor x Jahren** ‘x years ago/before’

**Das sind jetzt schon Jahre her.** ‘That was years ago.’

**vor Jahren konnte man . . .** ‘years ago one could . . .’

**vor einem Menschenalter** ‘an age ago’

**in der ersten/zweiten Hälfte des (18.) Jahrhunderts** ‘in the first/second half of the (18th) century’

**im letzten Jahrhundert** ‘last century’

**in den neunziger Jahren** ‘in the 1990s’

- See [47.1b](#) for adjectives formed from numerals

**Vor zehn Jahren lebten sie noch in Bozen.**

Ten years ago they still lived in Bolzano.

- (b) For a specific time in the past:

**Dienstag vor einer Woche** ‘a week ago last Tuesday’

**letzten Freitagabend** ‘last Friday evening’

**in der Nacht zum Donnerstag** ‘on Wednesday night’

(Note here that German links ‘night’ to the following day rather than to the day it concludes.)

**heute Nacht**, if mentioned in the morning, however, refers to the previous night:

**Wie hast du heute Nacht geschlafen?**

How did you sleep last night?

## 81.5

## Events in the distant past

- For adverb vs. adjective, see [43.2](#) and [47.2](#)

**damals** ‘at the time’

**einst** ‘once’

**damalig** (adj.) ‘then’

**einstig** (adj.) ‘former’ (*formal*)  
**früher** (adj.) ‘former/earlier’  
**früher** (adv.) ‘in the old days’  
**einmal** ‘once’  
**es war einmal** ‘once upon a time’  
**eines Tages** ‘one day’  
**irgendwann** ‘at some (unknown) time’  
**als ich klein war** ‘when I was little’  
**es ist lange her** ‘it has been a long time’  
**alt** ‘old’  
**jung** ‘recent/young’

- (a) When talking about events in the distant past, **damals** ‘then’ and **einst** ‘one day/once’ are used:

**Damals gab es noch kein elektrisches Licht.**

Then/In those days there was no electric light.

**Der damalige Bürgermeister von Berlin war W. Brandt.**

The mayor of Berlin at that time was W. Brandt.

**Die Baracken dienten einst zur Unterbringung von Flüchtlingen.**

The huts once served as accommodation for refugees.

**Die einstigen Beziehungen zu den osteuropäischen Staaten waren durch den eisernen Vorhang abgebrochen worden.**

The Iron Curtain had put an end to earlier relations with Eastern European states.

Note that **einstig** tends to be more formal than **früher** (used as an adjective).

► See 43 for adjectives and 50 for adverbs

- (b) Older people use **früher** ‘in the old days/then’ to refer to their own past:

**Früher war der Main oft zugefroren, und wir konnten darauf Schlittschuh laufen.**

The (river) Main used to get frozen over and we were able to ice skate on it.

- (c) For a single occurrence, **einmal** ‘once’ is used, which is also found at the beginning of fairy tales:

**Es war einmal ein alter König.**

There was once/Once upon a time there was an old king.

**Da bin ich einmal allein im Wald spazierengegangen.**

Once I went walking alone in the woods.

**Eines Tages kam der Gerichtsvollzieher zu ihm.**

One day the bailiff came to him.

► See 20.6 for this use of the genitive

- (d) At some (unknown) time:

**Irgendwann kam dann die Gemeindegeschwester und schaute nach dem Neugeborenen.**

Some time (we never knew when) the district nurse would come and look in on the new-born child.

**Kannst du mir *irgendwann* den Koffer vom Speicher holen?**

Could you get the suitcase down from the attic for me some time?

- (e) ‘When I was young’:

**Als ich noch klein war, wurden die Kinder viel strenger erzogen.**

When I was little, children were brought up much more strictly.

- (f) ‘A long time ago’:

**Es ist *eine Ewigkeit her/schon lange her*, seit wir uns das letzte Mal getroffen haben.**

It’s been ages since we last met.

- (g) When talking about history, **jung** and **alt** mean, respectively, chronologically more recent and chronologically more distant:

**Die *alten Funde* stammen aus dem zweiten Jahrhundert n. Chr., die *jüngeren* aus dem vierten Jahrhundert.**

The older finds are from the second century AD, the more recent ones from the fourth century.

## 81.6 No longer possible or out of date

► See also [70.4e](#) for things out of date and obsolete

- (a) For things that have ceased to apply or are no longer possible:

**nicht mehr** ‘no longer’

**längst nicht mehr** ‘not for a long time’

**schon lange nicht mehr** ‘not for a long time’

**Seit seinem schweren Unfall darf er *nicht mehr* Rad fahren.**

Since his bad accident he is no longer allowed to ride a bike.

**Nach dem Kurs werden Sie *keine Angst mehr* vor dunklen Räumen haben.**

After the course you will no longer be afraid of dark rooms.

**Orchideen gibt es in dieser Wiese *schon längst nicht mehr*.**

There haven’t been orchids in this meadow for a long time.

**Du hast *schon lange nicht mehr* mit mir Schach gespielt.**

You haven’t played chess with me for a long time.

- (b) For something or somebody that is no longer up to date:

**Dieses Textverarbeitungsprogramm ist (*längst*) *veraltet/überholt*.**

This word processing programme has been out-dated/obsolete (for a long time).

**Unsere Sicherheitsanlage ist *nicht am neuesten Stand* der Technik.**

Our security system isn’t up to the latest technological standard.

**Ich bin diesbezüglich *nicht auf dem Laufenden*.**

I’m not up to date with this/in this regard.

**Er ist *nicht mehr up to date*.**

He is no longer up to date/familiar with current affairs.

## 81.7

## Yet to occur

► See [34.6c](#)

**Die Rechnung ist immer noch nicht bezahlt.**

The bill still hasn't been paid.

**Schreibt er immer noch an seinem Bericht?**

Is he still writing his report?

**Ist die Umgehungsstraße immer noch nicht fertig?**

Is the bypass still not ready/finished?

► See also [70.5](#) for cancelled events

## 81.8

## Right away/very soon

**sofort** 'straightaway/without delay'

**gleich** 'in a minute'

**bald** 'soon'

**von nun/jetzt an** 'from now on'

**sobald** 'as soon as'

(a) Immediately, from now on:

**sofort** implies 'straightaway/without delay':

**Bitte kommen Sie sofort zum Chef!**

Please come to see the boss right away.

**ab sofort** denotes 'from this moment onwards':

**Der Vertrag gilt ab sofort.**

The contract/treaty has immediate effect.

(b) **gleich** 'straightaway/in a minute' leaves a few moments to finish another job first:

**Ich komme gleich.**

I'll come straightaway/be right there.

► See [34.2c](#)

(c) **bald** 'soon' reassures someone that something is going to happen, maybe later that day or in the next few days, depending on context:

**Wann sind wir endlich da? Ganz bald.**

When will we be there? Very soon. / Quite soon. / Not long.

(d) **von nun/jetzt an** is a slightly pompous way of indicating that from now on things are going to be different:

**Versprich mir, dass du von jetzt an nie wieder ohne Geld ausgehst.**

Promise me that you will never go out without money again.

(e) As soon as something is done:

**Sobald ich das Manuskript erhalten habe, werde ich es überarbeiten.**

As soon as I have received the manuscript I'll revise it.

## 81.9

## Eventually

- (a) In the near future:

**in Kürze** 'shortly'  
**demnächst** 'shortly'  
**in nächster Zeit** 'in the very near future/shortly'

NOTE

**kürzlich** is used to mean 'recently/lately' (see 81.3a).

***In Kürze/Demnächst* wird in diesem Theater ein neues Musical von Lloyd Webber aufgeführt.**

There will be a production of a new musical by Lloyd Webber in this theatre soon.

***Wegen der Sparmaßnahmen* wird es hier *in nächster Zeit* keine neuen Bücher geben.**

Because of the economy measures there will be no new books here in the near future.

- (b) For longer term planning:

**mit der Zeit** 'with time'  
**irgendwann** 'eventually'  
**allmählich** 'gradually'

***Mit der Zeit* werden die Schmerzen vielleicht abklingen.**

With time the pains may ease.

***Vielleicht* sollten wir *irgendwann* einmal eine Party veranstalten.**

Maybe we should organize/arrange a party some time/eventually.

- ▶ See 81.5d for
- irgendwann**
- 'some time ago'

***Wir* werden *allmählich* immer mehr Computerpapier benötigen.**

We will gradually require more and more computer paper.

## 81.10

## A specified time in the future

- (a) The following are used to refer to a specific point in the future:

**heute Mittag/Nachmittag/Abend** 'this lunchtime/afternoon/evening'  
**morgen** 'tomorrow'  
**morgen früh/Abend** 'tomorrow morning/evening'  
**übermorgen/überübermorgen** 'the day after tomorrow/in three days' time'  
**diesen/nächsten Sonntag** 'this (the following)/next Sunday'  
**Montag in einer Woche** 'a week on Monday'  
**in der kommenden Woche** 'next week'  
**in ein paar Stunden/Tagen/Monaten/Jahren** 'in a few hours'/days'/months'/years' time'  
**wenn du groß/erwachsen/in der Schule bist** 'when you are grown up/an adult/at school'

***Übermorgen* fangen die Sommerferien an.**

The summer holidays start the day after tomorrow.

***Nächsten Sonntag* fahren wir in die Berge.**

Next Sunday we'll take a drive into the mountains.

- (b) To express a certain length of time until something is to happen, the following are used:

**in acht Tagen** 'in a week's time'  
**in vierzehn Tagen** 'in two weeks' time'  
**in zwanzig Jahren** 'in twenty years' time'

**Die Handwerker werden in acht Tagen mit den Fenstern fertig sein.**  
 The builders will have finished the windows in a week's time.

### 81.11 Expressing duration

Addition of the adverb or suffix **-lang** emphasizes the length of time:

**lang** 'long' (*after time expressions*)  
**fünf Jahre lang** 'for five years'  
**stundenlang** 'for hours'  
**jahrzehntelang** 'for decades'  
**eine Zeit lang** 'for a while'  
**tagsüber** 'during the day'  
**an Werktagen/werktags** 'on working days'  
**sonntags** 'on Sundays'  
**an Feiertagen** 'on public holidays'

**Sie hatten fünf Jahre lang im Chor gesungen, bevor sie austraten.**  
 They had sung in the choir for five years before they left it.

**Stundenlang/Tagelang/Jahrelang habe ich auf ihn gewartet.**  
 I've waited for him for hours/days/years.

**Jahrzehntelang/Jahrhundertlang war dieses Land besetzt.**  
 This country was occupied for decades/centuries.

**Wir werden eine Zeit lang/Zeitlang ohne Hausmeister auskommen müssen.**  
 We'll have to manage without a caretaker/janitor for a while.

### 81.12 Expressing simultaneous events

**gleichzeitig/zur gleichen Zeit** 'at the same time/simultaneously'  
**am gleichen/selben Tag wie** (+ nom.) 'on the same day as'

► See 31.6 for **selbst** 'self'; for indicating identity see 31.7

**Man kann doch nicht gleichzeitig Radio hören und Rechenaufgaben machen!**  
 But surely you can't listen to the radio and do your maths homework at the same time!

**Er ist am gleichen/selben Tag in die Schule gekommen wie ich.**  
 He started school on the same day as me.

► See 76.6 on simultaneity

**81.13 Before and after**

- (a) 'Before' is rendered by:

**vor** 'before'  
**vor dieser Zeit** 'before this time'  
**vorher/bisher/bis jetzt** 'until now'

**Bitte nicht vor acht Uhr morgens anrufen.**  
 Please do not phone before 8 a.m.

**Vor dem Schlafengehen Zähne putzen!**  
 Before going to bed clean your teeth!

**Das haben wir aber bisher/bis jetzt anders gemacht!**  
 But we did this differently up until now!

- (b) 'After' is conveyed by:

**nach** (+ dat.) 'after'  
**anschließend an etw.** (= acc.) 'following sth.'

**Nach sieben Uhr sind die meisten Leute zu Hause.**  
 Most people are at home after 7 (p.m.).

**Nach der Schule sollen gleich die Hausaufgaben gemacht werden.**  
 Homework is supposed to be done straight after school.

**Anschließend an den Vortrag gab es einen sehr netten Empfang für alle Teilnehmer.**  
 Following the lecture there was a very nice reception for all participants.

**81.14 Frequency**

- (a) Doing things very frequently:

**sehr oft** 'often'  
**öfters/oft** 'often'  
**häufig** 'frequently'

**Die Windeln müssen häufig gewechselt werden.**  
 The nappies/diapers have to be changed frequently.

- (b) Doing things infrequently:

**manchmal** 'sometimes'  
**gelegentlich** 'occasionally'  
**ab und zu/ab und an** 'infrequently'  
**hin und wieder** 'every now and again'  
**(nur) selten** '(only) seldom/rarely'  
**(fast) nie** '(almost) never'

**Wir gehen fast nie tanzen.**  
 We hardly ever go dancing.

- (c) Doing things regularly:

**regelmäßig** 'regularly'  
**monatlich** 'every month'



**jährlich** 'every year/annually'  
**jede Stunde/jedes Jahr** 'every hour/every year'  
**einmal/zweimal die Woche** 'once/twice a week' (*informal*)  
**einmal/zweimal in der Woche** 'once/twice a week'  
**alle vierzehn Tage** 'every fortnight'  
**alle vier Wochen** 'every four weeks'  
**jeden zweiten Tag** 'every other day'

**Ich muss mir *jeden zweiten Tag* die Haare waschen.**  
 I have to wash my hair every other day.

**Das Gerät sollte *alle vier Wochen* überprüft werden.**  
 The equipment ought to be checked every four weeks.

### 81.15 Punctuality and deadlines

(a) Just at the right time is rendered by:

**rechtzeitig** 'at the right time'  
**gerade zur rechten Zeit** 'just in time'  
**gerade noch** 'just in time'  
**in letzter Sekunde/Minute** 'at the last second/minute'  
**mit knapper Not** 'in the nick of time'  
**pünktlich** 'in time'

**Die Karte kam *rechtzeitig* zum Geburtstag an.**  
 The card arrived in time for the birthday.

**Die Bewerbungsunterlagen wurden *gerade noch* vor Einsendeschluss eingereicht.**  
 The application forms were handed in just before the deadline.

**Er hat ihn *gerade noch* retten können.**  
 He was able to save him just in time.

**Wir waren *gerade noch* am Hafen angekommen, bevor das Schiff auslief.**  
 We arrived at the harbour just before the boat left.

**Die Hilfe war *in letzter Sekunde* eingetroffen.**  
 Help had arrived at the last minute.

**Sie erreichten das Ziel *mit knapper Not*. (*informal*)**  
 They reached the goal in the nick of time.

**Der Zug nach Hamburg kam *pünktlich*.**  
 The train to Hamburg came on time.

(b) Not at the right time is rendered by:

**zur falschen Zeit** 'at the wrong time'  
**zu spät/früh** 'too late/early'  
**verfrüht/verspätet** '(too) early/late'  
**sich (= acc.) verspäten** 'to be late'  
**Verspätung haben** 'to be delayed/late'  
**etw. mit Verspätung tun** 'to do sth. with delay'  
**mit zwei Tagen Verspätung** 'two days late'

**Du hättest früher kommen sollen, jetzt ist es *zu spät*.**  
 You should have come earlier. Now it is too late.

**Der Flug aus Moskau hat zwei Stunden Verspätung.**

The flight from Moscow is delayed by two hours.

**Das Dokument hat uns zwei Tage zu spät erreicht.**

The document reached us two days late.

**Das Dokument wurde mit zwei Tagen Verspätung abgeliefert. (formal)**

The document was delivered two days late.

- (c) Doing something by a certain time:

**Das Manuskript muss bis (zum) Jahresende abgegeben werden.**

The manuscript must be handed in by the end of the year.

- (d) Within a certain time:

**Die Wohnung muss innerhalb von 10 Tagen/innerhalb Jahresfrist geräumt werden.**

The flat must be vacated within 10 days/within a year.

**Wir bitten um Ausgleich unserer Rechnung in 20 Tagen nach Rechnungserhalt.**

We request settlement of our invoice within 20 days of receipt.

- (e) Asking for an extension:

**Vielleicht sollten wir um eine Verlängerung/Gnadenfrist bitten.**

Maybe we should ask for an extension/reprieve.

► See 76.5 for temporal sequences

## Talking about cause and effect

### Linking cause and effect

- (a) ‘If . . . then . . .’:

Cause and effect can be expressed with the pair of conjunctions **wenn** and **dann**.

**wenn** is a subordinating conjunction (see 8.3), whereas **dann** keeps the verb as second idea (see 6.3):

**Wenn man auf den Knopf drückt, dann wird der Blitz ausgelöst.**

If you press the button, the flash is activated.

**wenn** can be omitted and the subject and verb inverted, resulting in a more idiomatic style (see 8.5 for the omission of **wenn**):

**Drückt man auf den Knopf, dann wird der Blitz ausgelöst.**

If you press the button, the flash is activated.

In this case **dann** can be replaced with **so**:

**Drückt man auf den anderen Knopf, so wird der Blitz ausgeschaltet.**

If you press the other button, the flash is turned off.

- (b) ‘The more, the better’:

**je . . . , desto** ‘the . . . , the . . .’ (as in ‘the more, the better’, see 48.6e):

**Je höher der Stromverbrauch, desto höher (ist) die Rechnung.**

The higher the electricity consumption, the higher the bill.

► See 48 for comparison of adjectives, and 51 for comparison of adverbs

(c) **zu ... sein, (um) zu ...** ‘to be too ... to do sth.’:

**Du bist jetzt zu groß, um im Sandkasten zu spielen.**  
You are too big now to play in the sand-pit.

(d) **sobald** ‘the moment/as soon as’:

**Sobald der Kontakt unterbrochen wird, ertönt die Alarmanlage.**  
As soon as the contact is broken, the alarm system sounds.

► For **so dass** ‘so that’, and **so ... , dass ...** ‘so ... that ...’ see 83.2

**82.2 Cause**

(a) General causes:

**-e Ursache** ‘cause’  
**verursachen** ‘to cause (a negative consequence)’  
**hervor\*rufen** ‘to bring about’  
**-r Anlass** ‘occasion’  
**veranlassen** ‘to cause’  
**jmdm. Schwierigkeiten bereiten** ‘to cause sb. difficulties’  
**aus\*lösen** ‘to trigger (bad things)’

**Die Luftverschmutzung wird als Ursache aller Übel angesehen.**  
Air pollution is seen as the root of all evil.

► See 23.1 for omission of the definite article in German

**Der Unfall war durch fahrlässiges Handeln verursacht worden.**  
The accident had been caused by negligence.

**Anlass der Unruhen war eine Preissteigerung.**  
The cause of the unrest/riots was an increase in prices.

**Ein Attentat in Sarajewo löste den ersten Weltkrieg aus.**  
An assassination in Sarajevo triggered the First World War.

► See also 110.10 on passing on disease

(b) Causing danger:

**gefährden** ‘to endanger’  
**jmdn. in Gefahr bringen** ‘to put sb. in danger’  
**gefährlich sein für** ‘to be dangerous for’

**Die Gesundheitsminister warnen: Rauchen gefährdet die Gesundheit.**  
Health ministers warn: smoking endangers/(English: damages) health. (*Warning on cigarette packs*)

(c) Promoting/fostering:

**fördern** ‘to encourage/promote/foster’ (*not of children*)  
**-e Förderung** ‘promotion/fostering’

**Das Austauschprogramm dient der Förderung der englisch-deutschen Beziehungen.** (*formal*)  
The exchange programme serves to promote Anglo-German relations.

## 82.3

## Effect

Effect in general:

-e **Wirkung** 'effect'  
**wirken** 'to work/have an effect'  
**seine Wirkung (nicht) verfehlen** '(not) to fail to have the desired effect'  
**bewirken** 'to cause/produce an effect'  
-r **Effekt** 'effect'  
-e **Folge** 'consequence'

(a) Having an effect:

**Der Beschwerdebrief hatte *seine Wirkung nicht verfehlt*.**

The letter of complaint did not fail to have the desired effect.

**Nebenwirkungen sind keine bekannt.**

There are no known side effects.

**Höhere Temperaturen *bewirken* ein schnelleres Wachsen der Bakterien.**

Higher temperatures cause bacteria to grow more quickly.

**Das Medikament *wirkt* innerhalb von 20 Minuten gegen Kopfschmerzen.**

The medicine is effective against headaches within 20 minutes.

(b) Special effects:

**wirkungsvoll** 'effective'

-r **Effekt** 'effect'

**Die Hintergrundbeleuchtung war besonders *wirkungsvoll*.**

The background lighting was especially effective.

-r **Effekt** is used to designate well-known (scientific) effects:

-r **Treibhauseffekt** 'greenhouse effect'

-r **Dopplereffekt** 'Doppler effect'

-r **Verfremdungseffekt** 'alienation effect'

**Brecht benutzte den *Verfremdungseffekt*, um seine Zuschauer zum Denken aufzurütteln.**

Brecht used the alienation effect in order to rouse his audience and make them think.

► For consequences, see [83.2](#)

## 82.4

## Tracing events back to their causes

► See also [76.1](#) on basic words for actions and processes, and [79.1–4](#) on reasons and purpose

**etw. auf jmdn./etw. zurück\*führen** 'to trace sth. back to sb./sth.'

**Der Absturz des Airbus wurde *auf* menschliches Versagen *zurückgeführt*.**

The cause of the crash of the Airbus was traced back to human error.

## 82.5

## Interdependence

**es liegt an** (+ dat.)/**es liegt bei jmdm.** 'it is up to sb.'  
**es hängt von etw. ab** 'it depends on sth.'

***Es liegt ganz an dir, ob du diese Verantwortung auf dich nehmen willst oder nicht.***

It is entirely up to you whether you take on this responsibility or not.

***Ich weiß noch nicht, ob wir am Familientreffen teilnehmen können. Es hängt davon ab, wie viel Zeit wir haben.***

I don't know yet if we can take part in the family reunion. It depends how much time we have.

► For further expressions see [78](#) on origins

## 83

## Drawing conclusions with reference to sources

► See [89.1](#) for expressing assumptions

## 83.1

## Concluding from evidence

(a) Evidence is rendered by nouns such as:

**-r Fund** 'finding'  
**-r Befund** 'finding(s)/data'  
**-r Beweis** 'proof'  
**-s Beweismaterial** 'evidence'  
**Daten** (plural) 'data'  
**Fakten** (plural) 'facts'  
**-e Fundstelle/-r Fundort** 'place of discovery'

**An der *Fundstelle* wurde eine Untersuchung vorgenommen.**  
 An investigation was carried out at the site (of the find).

**Das *Beweismaterial* der Kriminalpolizei ist noch unvollständig.**  
 The CID's evidence is still incomplete.

**Die *Daten/Fakten* müssen überprüft werden.**  
 The data/facts have to be double-checked.

**Was war der *Befund* der (klinischen) Untersuchung?**  
 What were the findings of the (clinical) examination?

**Kein Befund. / Ohne Befund.**  
 (There are) no significant findings.

► See also [110.8c](#) for the use of **Befund**

(b) Drawing conclusions from a source:

**(aus etw.) einen Schluss ziehen** 'to draw a conclusion (from sth.)'  
**etw./ (aus/von) etw. entnehmen** 'to infer sth. from sth.'  
**etw. aus etw. ersehen** 'to see/conclude sth. from sth.'  
**aus etw. hervor\*gehen** 'to emerge from sth.'  
**folglich** 'consequently'

**Anhand der gesammelten Daten kann man *den Schluss ziehen*, dass hier eine Siedlung gewesen sein muss.**

From data collected one can conclude that there must have been a settlement here.

**Ich habe (*aus*) *den Unterlagen entnommen*, wie viele Landarbeiter damals ausgewandert waren.**

I have inferred from the documents how many agricultural workers emigrated at the time.

***Aus den Anschuldigungen geht hervor*, wie sehr sie ihrem Mann misstraut hat.**

It emerges from the accusations how much she mistrusted her husband.

## 83.2 Talking about consequences

- (a) Similar to the English ‘so that’, German uses ‘**so dass**’ for describing consequences:

**Das Erdbeben hatte viele Leute obdachlos gemacht, *so dass* schnell Notunterkünfte gebaut werden mussten.**

The earthquake had made many people homeless, so that emergency housing had to be built quickly.

In the example above, **so dass** gives the consequences of the action in the main clause. However, if the **so** is inserted in front of the adjective or adverb of the main clause, the consequence is specific to the intensity/severity of the adjective or adverb. In spoken language, **so + adj./adv.** is then stressed:

**Die Nachfrage nach dem neuen Handy war *so stark*, *dass* die Produktion nicht nachkam.**

Demand for the new mobile phone was so strong that production could not keep pace.

Alternatively, **derart**, **derartig** or **dermaßen** can be used. These are somewhat stronger than **so**. They are normally used when the context is negative:

**Die Mitarbeiter hatten *derart/derartig/dermaßen* viel Arbeit, *dass* sie ihren Urlaub stornieren mussten.**

The employees had such a lot of work that they had to cancel their holidays.

**Das Essen war *dermaßen* schlecht, *dass* die Gäste nicht zahlen wollten.**

The food was so bad that the guests did not want to pay.

- (b) Alternatively, expressions with **folgen** can be used. These tend to be used mostly in a formal context:

**Die Krankheitssymptome haben sich immer noch nicht verändert. *Folglich* muss die Behandlung geändert werden.**

The symptoms (of the illness) have not changed. Consequently the treatment needs to be changed.

**Die Studentin hat ein ausgezeichnetes Examen gemacht. *Infolgedessen* hat sie gute Aussichten, ein Stipendium zu erhalten.**

The student has achieved an excellent degree classification. She therefore stands a good chance of winning a scholarship.

**Als Folge des Attentates vom 11. September 2001 sind die Sicherheitsmaßnahmen an den Flughäfen verschärft worden.**

As a consequence of the attack of 11 September 2001, security measures at airports have been increased.

**In Folge der schlechten Halbjahresergebnisse wurden noch mehr Angestellte entlassen.**

Following the poor half-year results, even more employees were made redundant.

**Der Ausgang der nächsten Bundestagswahlen kann folgeschwer für die deutsche Wirtschaft sein.**

The results of the next (German) elections may have serious consequences for the German economy.

**Die Folgeerscheinungen des Industrieunfalls sind schwer abzuschätzen.**

The consequences of the industrial accident are difficult to estimate.

**Wenn Wasser gefriert und sich ausdehnt, hat das oft einen Rohrbruch zur Folge.**

If water freezes and expands, the consequence is often a burst pipe.

The expression **daraus folgt** is usually reserved for logical deductions and gives the following statement an air of rationality:

**Die Zinsen sind im letzten Jahr um zwei Prozentpunkte gestiegen. Daraus folgt, dass die Verbraucher weniger Geld für Luxusgüter in der Tasche haben.**

Interest rates rose by two percentage points in the past year. Consequently consumers have less money for luxury items in their pockets.

(c) Using **Konsequenzen**, etc.:

**Konsequenzen** ‘consequences’

**die Konsequenzen ziehen** ‘to come to the obvious conclusion/to take the appropriate step’

**die Konsequenzen tragen** ‘to take/accept the consequences’

**konsequent sein** ‘to be consistent/strict with sth.’

**Ist die Arbeit bis Freitag nicht fertig, musst du die Konsequenzen tragen.**

If the work is not finished by Friday, you will have to accept the consequences.

**Sie haben den Fall konsequent untersucht.**

They investigated the case thoroughly.

**Die Reform wurde konsequent durchgeführt.**

The reform was strictly implemented.

(d) **damit** ‘therefore’:

**Fünf sind für den Vorschlag und drei dagegen. Damit ist er mehrheitlich angenommen.**

Five are in favour of the suggestion and three against. It is therefore carried with a majority.

NOTE **so dass** (see above) refers to result, whereas **damit** (see 79.2b) refers to purpose.

- (e) To explain a previous statement, use **deshalb/daher/deswegen** (or, more informally, **darum**), all meaning ‘that’s why/for that reason’:

**Er wollte seinen Bruder nicht belasten. Deshalb/Daher/Deswegen/Darum verweigerte er die Aussage.**

He didn’t want to incriminate his brother. That’s why he refused to give a statement.

- (f) To infer from a previous statement, **also** ‘so/therefore’ is inserted:

**Sie haben *also* noch nie an einer Safari teilgenommen?**

So you have never taken part in a safari?

**Im Labor war er auch nicht zu finden, *also* suchten wir ihn in der Kantine.**

He wasn’t to be found in the lab either, so we looked for him in the canteen.

## 84

## Referring to sources of information

## 84.1

## Written/literary sources of information

In academic research, sources of information are referred to as **-e Quelle(n)**:

**-e Quellenangabe(n)** ‘reference’

**-r Quellennachweis(e)** ‘reference in footnote’

**-s Quellenverzeichnis(-se)** ‘bibliography/list of works consulted/list of references/acknowledgements’

- (a) When citing a source, **nach** or **laut** (+ dat.) is used:

***Nach Goethe irrt der Mensch, solange er strebt.***

According to Goethe, man errs as long as he strives.

***Laut Schiller kämpfen selbst die Götter vergebens mit der Dummheit.***

According to Schiller, the gods themselves struggle in vain with stupidity.

***Laut dem Verkehrsministerium ist die Zahl der Unfälle leicht gestiegen.***

According to the Department of Transport, the number of accidents has slightly increased.

For further expressions with **nach** and **laut** see below.

- (b) Referring to written sources:

To give reference to any written source, **stehen** is used:

***Steht das im Text?***

Is that (written) in the text?

***Das steht bei Karl Marx.***

That is from Karl Marx.

***Das steht im Grundgesetz.***

That’s in the Basic Law (*i.e. German Constitution*).

***So steht es in der Bibel/in der Zeitung/im Lexikon.***

That’s what it says in the Bible/in the newspaper/in the encyclopaedia.

- (c) For quoting statements verbatim (formal):

**lauten** ‘to read/say’

**-r Wortlaut** ‘the exact wording’



**Der genaue Text/Die Stelle lautet (wie folgt): „Am Anfang war das Wort.“**  
 The exact text/the passage reads (as follows): 'In the beginning was the Word.'

► See 59.6

**In dem Testament des Verstorbenen finden wir folgenden Wortlaut: . . .**  
 In the will of the deceased we find the following (wording): . . .

► See 28.5 for adjectival nouns

(d) To introduce a quotation, use **zitieren** 'to quote' or **-s Zitat** 'quotation':

**Zitat/Ich zitiere: . . .**  
 I quote: . . .

or:

**Ich zitiere nach Böll.**  
 I quote Böll. / To quote from Böll.

**Wir zitieren aus der Textstelle.**  
 We quote from the (place in the) text.

(e) The beginning and ending of a lengthy excerpt in an oral presentation are indicated by:

**-r Zitatanfang** 'beginning of quote'  
**-s Zitatende** 'end of quote'

(f) For dictation purposes one can use **Anführungsstriche unten/oben** 'quotation marks at the bottom (which is the traditional place for initial quotation marks)/at the top (for the end)'.  
 (g) All of the above are fairly formal and are used in academic contexts. It is, of course, also possible to indicate the source of the information very informally:

**Der Chef hat gesagt/geschrieben, wir müssen länger arbeiten.**  
 The boss has said/written that we have to work longer.

## 84.2

### Invoking/calling on authority

**sich** (= acc.) **beziehen auf** 'to refer to'  
**bezugnehmend auf** (+ acc.) 'with reference to'  
**sich** (= acc.) **stützen auf** 'to base oneself on'  
**sich** (= acc.) **berufen auf** 'to refer/appeal to'

**Ich beziehe mich auf die Verfassung.**  
 I refer to/base myself on the constitution.

**Bezugnehmend auf Heidegger möchte ich Folgendes erwähnen: . . .**  
 With reference to Heidegger I would like to mention the following: . . .

**Mit dieser Annahme stützen wir uns auf die Untersuchungen des Psychologischen Instituts.**  
 We base this assumption on the investigations of the Institute of Psychology.

**Die Finanzminister stützen sich auf die neuesten Wirtschaftsdaten.**  
 The finance ministers base their thinking (etc.) on/are relying on the latest economic data.

**Er hat sich nur auf das Buch seiner Professorin gestützt.**

He supported what he said by referring only to his professor's book.

**sich berufen** has the sense of invoking great authority to strengthen one's own position:

**Er berief sich ständig auf Konrad Adenauer.**

He kept invoking Konrad Adenauer.

### 84.3 Enquiring about sources

In informal dialogue **haben aus** is used to convey a source of information:

**Woher hast du denn diesen Ausspruch?**

Where did you get that saying/remark from?

**Den habe ich aus dem Spiegel.**

I got it from *Spiegel* magazine.

► See also [85](#) on reporting other people's words

### 84.4 Reporting facts

For reporting facts, **nach**, **laut** and **zufolge** are used. They all translate as 'according to':

**nach/laut** (+ dat.) 'according to'

**nach Angaben von** (+ dat.)/**nach Angaben** (+ gen.) 'according to data from' (*formal*)

(+ dat.) **zufolge** 'according to/following (evidence)' (*formal*)

**Nach Angaben des deutschen Wetterdienstes soll es heute kalt werden.** (*formal*)  
According to information from the German weather service, it is supposed to get cold today.

**Laut Fahrplan müsste der Bus eigentlich gleich kommen.**

According to the timetable, the bus should be here/be coming quite soon.

**Augenzeugenberichten zufolge soll der Täter über die Mauer geflohen sein.**  
(*formal*)

According to eyewitness reports, the culprit/perpetrator (is supposed to have) fled over the wall.

► See [35.6b](#) for the use of **sollen**

**Ihrem Bericht zufolge hätte dieses Gespräch gar nicht stattgefunden.**

According to her report, the conversation didn't take place at all.

Note that **zufolge** is preceded by the dative.

### 84.5 Writing footnotes

-e **Fußnote** 'footnote'

-e **Anmerkung** 'remark'

-e **URL** 'URL'

- (a) For conventions on academic referencing, google: "Anleitung zum wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten" and you will find a large number of useful manuals, usually hosted by academics for their students.

(b) Selection of useful abbreviations:

<b>a.a.O.</b>	<b>am angegebenen Ort</b>	'in the place cited'	'loc. cit./op. cit.'
<b>Anm.</b>	<b>Anmerkung</b>	'note/footnote/annotation'	
<b>Bd./Bde.</b>	<b>Band/Bände</b>	'volume/volumes'	'vol./vols'
<b>ebd.</b>	<b>ebenda</b>	'in the same place'	'ibid.'
<b>f./ff.</b>	<b>und die folgende(n)</b>	'and the following'	'f./ff.'
<b>s.</b>	<b>Seite/Seiten</b>	'page/pages'	
<b>Hrsg.</b>	<b>Herausgeber</b>	'editor(s)'	'ed./eds'
<b>o.g.</b>	<b>oben genannt</b>	'mentioned above'	
<b>s.</b>	<b>siehe</b>	'see'	'see/cf.'
<b>s.a.</b>	<b>siehe auch</b>	'see also'	
<b>s.o./s.u.</b>	<b>siehe oben/siehe unten</b>	'see above/see below'	
<b>u.a.</b>	<b>und andere</b>	'and others'	'et al.'
<b>Verf.</b>	<b>Verfasser</b>	'author'	
<b>vgl.</b>	<b>vergleiche</b>	'compare'	'comp./cf.'

85

**Reporting other people's words and claims**

For reported speech the subjunctive is usually used (see 39 for subjunctives I and II):

*Er sagt, er habe kein Geld/er habe angerufen.*

He says he has no money/he phoned.

In what follows 'speaker' denotes the user of both spoken and written language.

► See 39.4a

85.1

**Questioning the truth of what someone said**

There are several ways of implying that the speaker doubts the truth of what has been said:

**gesehen haben wollen** 'to claim to have seen'  
**angeblich** 'supposedly'  
**behaupten** 'to claim'

(a) **wollen**:

► See 35.6b for this special use of **wollen**

**Der Alte will das Opfer zum letzten Mal gesehen haben.**

The old man claims to have seen the victim for the last time.

(b) **angeblich** 'supposedly' adds a note of disbelief:

**Der Angriff auf die Demonstranten war angeblich von der Polizei ausgegangen.**

The attack on the demonstrators was supposedly initiated by the police.

(c) **behaupten** can imply the speaker is not telling the truth:

**Er behauptet, nichts (Alkoholisches) getrunken zu haben.**

He claims to have drunk nothing (alcoholic).

- (d) In order to imply severe doubts about the truth of what has been said, subjunctive II may be employed:

***Er sagt, er hätte kein Geld/er hätte angerufen.***

He says he has no money/he called (but I don't believe it).

► See 39.6b for this use of the subjunctive II

## 85.2

## Reaffirming the truth of what someone has said

**tatsächlich** 'indeed'

**wirklich** 'really'

**eigentlich/in der Tat** 'actually/really' (contrary to expectations)

- (a) To imply that the speaker believes what he or she has heard, **tatsächlich** 'indeed' or **wirklich** 'really' is used:

**Es ist kaum zu glauben, aber das neue Ausstellungsgebäude soll *tatsächlich* sieben Millionen Euro gekostet haben.**

It is hard to believe, but they say the new exhibition hall really did cost seven million euros.

**Die Flüchtlinge waren *wirklich/in der Tat* mit dem Schlauchboot über die Grenze gekommen.**

The refugees really had crossed the border/frontier in a rubber dinghy.

- (b) To imply that something was the case contrary to expectations, **eigentlich** 'really' is used:

***Eigentlich* war er der Besitzer der Bar, aber als die Polizei kam, wollte er das nicht zugeben.**

He really was the owner of the bar, but when the police came he wouldn't admit it.

## 85.3

## Passing on messages

► See also 60.3

- (a) The passing on of verbal messages is conveyed by:

**wieder\*geben** 'to convey/repeat'

**etw. an jmdn. weiter\*leiten** 'to pass sth. on to sb.'

**jmdm. etw. aus\*richten** 'to pass on a message/tell sb.'

**Können Sie mir die *genauen* Worte *wiedergeben*, die der Anrufer benutzt hat?**

Can you repeat the exact words that the caller used?

**Ich habe Ihr Anliegen *an den* Personalchef *weitergeleitet*.**

I have passed on your request to the Personnel Manager.

**Ist *irgendwas* für mich *ausgerichtet* worden?**

Have any messages been left for me?

**Kannst du *ihr* etwas *ausrichten*?**

Can you give her a message?

- (b) For recorded messages:

**Bitte hinterlassen Sie Ihre Nachricht nach dem Piepton.**  
Please leave your message after the tone.

**Sprechen Sie nach dem Pieps.**  
Speak after the tone.

► See [61.7e](#) for messages on telephone answering machines

- (c) For writing messages, notes and memos:

**Bitte notieren Sie sich diesen Termin.**  
Please make a note of this appointment.

**Habt ihr bei der Exkursion auch genügend Notizen gemacht?**  
Did you take enough notes during the field trip?

**85.4****Second- and third-hand knowledge**

To report rumours, hearsay and general gossip, the following are used:

- (a) In order to indicate that the speaker distances himself or herself from what he or she is reporting,
- sollen**
- is employed (see
- [35.6b](#)
- for this special use of the modal verb):

**Der Abgeordnete soll schon vor der Trennung untreu gewesen sein.**  
The MP is said to have been unfaithful even before the separation.

- (b) To report gossip:

**Es hat sich herumgesprochen, wie schnell die Firma Pleite gemacht hat.**  
Word has spread about how quickly the company went bust.

- (c) For rumours:

**Ich halte die Sache mit der Brandstiftung für ein Gerücht.**  
I consider this thing about the arson attack to be a rumour.

- (d) Reporting things from hearsay:

**Das weiß ich nur vom Hörensagen.**  
I only know this from hearsay.

**85.5****Not naming sources**

In order to avoid naming the person one has information from, the following are used:

**sich** (= dat.) **etw. sagen/raten lassen** 'to have sb. tell/advise one (of) sth.'

**sich** (= acc.) **(in etw.) beraten lassen** 'to seek advice on sth.'

**sich** (etw./zu etw.) **raten lassen** 'to seek advice on sth.'

**Ich habe mir sagen lassen, dass die Hormontherapie doch unbekannte Nebenwirkungen haben könnte.**

I have heard that hormone therapy could have unknown side effects after all.

**Wir haben uns ärztlich/juristisch beraten lassen.**

We have sought medical/legal advice.

► See also [84](#) on sources of information; for **lassen** see also [35.6](#) and [77.4](#)

## 86

## Expressing necessity

## 86.1

## Commands, instructions and public notices

Instructions and notices are usually phrased in a neutral and impersonal style. They can occasionally sound off-putting and hence most of the constructions to be discussed in this section are for understanding rather than speaking. They are mostly found in written form, e.g. on noticeboards or in written communication from the authorities.

► See also [92](#) and [99](#)

- (a) Personal instructions tend to be given in the imperative (see [41](#)):

**Nehmen Sie die Tabletten dreimal täglich.**

Take the tablets three times a day.

- (b) General instructions and formal public notices often use impersonal infinitive constructions (see [33.7](#) for parts of the verb):

**Hier nicht parken.**

Do not park here. / No parking.

► See [33.1c](#)

**20 Minuten bei mittlerer Hitze backen.**

Bake in a medium oven for 20 minutes.

**Skier nur im Skiraum abstellen.**

Skis must only be kept in the ski room.

A number of these instructions also use a participle:

**Parken verboten.**

No parking. / Parking prohibited.

**Zutritt nicht gestattet.**

Access not permitted. / No access.

- (c) Instructions that demand some form of action frequently use **ist** (etc.) + infinitive with **zu**:

**Die Fahrkarten sind unaufgefordert vorzuzeigen.**

All tickets must be shown (without being demanded). (*on a train or bus*)

**Der Anspruch auf Arbeitslosenunterstützung ist nachzuweisen.**

The right to unemployment benefit must be demonstrated.

- (d) Instructions that are issued emphatically can also be expressed by means of the passive. Such instructions are likely to be used by someone in a position of authority:

**Hier wird nicht geschlafen!**

No sleeping allowed here!

With the emphasis on **wird**, this can sound much more forceful and unforgiving than the equivalent imperative construction (see [41](#) for imperatives). It indicates a general restriction for everyone.

- (e) Commands and instructions can be expressed more politely by using the modal verbs **dürfen**, **sollen** and **müssen** (see 35.2, 35.6):

Use the modal verb + infinitive in the active:

**Hier darf man nicht parken.**

You must not park here.

**Der Brief soll heute noch weggehen.**

The letter is to go off today.

Or use the passive with a modal verb (see 40 for the passive). This tends to sound more formal:

**Hier darf nicht geraucht werden. (Hier darf man nicht rauchen.)**

Smoking is not allowed here.

**Die Papiere müssen an der Grenze vorgezeigt werden. (Man muss die Papiere an der Grenze vorzeigen.)**

Documents must be shown at the border.

**Der Kuchen muss bei 200 Grad gebacken werden. (Man muss den Kuchen bei 200 Grad backen.)**

The cake has to be baked at 200 degrees.

## 86.2

## Expressing and enquiring about obligation

- (a) The most straightforward way of expressing obligation is to use **müssen** and **sollen** together with a full verb (see 35 for modal verbs):

**Du musst heute noch den Brief fertig schreiben.**

You still have to finish the letter today.

**Soll ich diesen Bericht heute noch fertigmachen?**

Shall I finish this report today?

**Du sollst deinen Nächsten lieben wie dich selbst.**

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (*Matthew 23.39*)

**Müssen** as used in the first example expresses an obligation that has to be met. **Sollen** in the second example leaves room for a different course of action; the speaker could still decide not to do it. In the third example, **sollen** has a moral implication. It only acquires this meaning in a formal context, especially in the Bible.

- (b) To express fulfilment of duty, use the following expressions:

**-e Pflicht** 'obligation'

**Pflichten haben** 'to have obligations'

**die Pflicht haben, etwas zu tun** 'to have the obligation to do sth.'

**meine (etc.) Pflicht sein, etwas zu tun** 'to be my (etc.) duty to do sth.'

**seine (etc.) Pflichten (+ adv.) erfüllen** 'to fulfil one's duties'

**-e Verpflichtung** 'obligation/(professional) engagement/commitment'

**Eltern haben viele Pflichten.**

Parents have a lot of duties.

**Ich habe die Pflicht, Sie darüber zu informieren.**

I have the duty to inform you about this.

**Es ist meine Pflicht, Sie zu warnen.**

It is my duty to warn you.

**Es ist unsere traurige Pflicht, den Tod unseres Mitarbeiters, Alexander Klein, anzuzeigen.**

It is our sad duty to announce the death of our colleague, Alexander Klein.

► See also [65.3](#) on bereavement

**Er erfüllte immer treu seine Pflichten.**

He always carried out his duties loyally.

**Verpflichtung** also means ‘duty’ but in the sense of ‘committing oneself to sth.’. **Eine Verpflichtung** is not as unavoidable as **eine Pflicht**. In elevated style it is often found with the verb **nach\*kommen** (+ dat.) ‘to fulfil’:

**Wegen Krankheit ist er leider verhindert, seinen Verpflichtungen nachzukommen.**

Because of illness he is unfortunately unable to honour his commitments.

**Die Charta von Helsinki beinhaltet die Verpflichtung zur Achtung der Menschenwürde.**

The Helsinki Charter contains a commitment to respect the dignity of man.

- (c) When somebody is relieved of their duties, use **von seinen** (etc.) **Pflichten entbunden werden**:

**Alle leitenden Angestellten der Werft wurden zum 1. Dezember von ihren Pflichten entbunden. (formal)**

All the shipyard managers were relieved of their duties from 1 December.

- (d) The verb derived from **Pflicht** is **verpflichten** ‘to oblige sb./place sb. under an obligation’. There are a number of structures and also fixed idiomatic expressions that use **verpflichten** in its participial form, i.e. **verpflichtet** (see [49](#)):

**sich verpflichtet fühlen, etw. zu tun** ‘to feel obliged to do sth.’

**verpflichtet sein, etw. zu tun** ‘to be obliged to do sth.’

**zu etw. verpflichtet sein** ‘to be obliged/committed to sth.’

**Ich fühle mich verpflichtet, ihm zu helfen.**

I feel obliged to help him.

**Wir sind verpflichtet, Sie vor den Konsequenzen Ihrer Handlung zu warnen.**

We are obliged to warn you of the consequences of your action.

**In diesem Fall sind Sie nicht zum Handeln verpflichtet.**

In this case you are not obliged to act.

NOTE

In the above three patterns **verpflichtet** may be replaced by **sich gezwungen fühlen; zu etw. gezwungen sein; gezwungen sein, etw. zu tun**. **Gezwungen** implies an obligation that cannot be refused.

- (e) **verpflichten** can also be used as a full verb with personal endings. There are a number of different constructions:

**etw./jmd. (= nom.) verpflichtet/zwingt jmdn. zu etw.** ‘sth/sb./forces sb. to (do) sth.’  
**sie (= nom.) verpflichtet sich (= reflexive, acc.) für etw./zu etw.** ‘she commits herself to sth.’

**jmdn. zu etw. verpflichten**

**Die Lage verpflichtet/zwingt uns zum Handeln.**

The situation forces us to act.



**Sie verpflichtete sich, zwei Jahre als Entwicklungshelferin nach Lateinamerika zu gehen.**

She signed up to go to Latin America for two years as a development aid worker.

**Wir verpflichten uns für/auf zwei Jahre zur Bundeswehr.**

We are signing on with the (German) army for two years.

**Es gelang uns, den berühmten Musiker zu einem Konzert zu verpflichten.**

We managed to book the famous musician for a concert.

(f) Different types of obligation:

Liability is commonly expressed using **haften für** (+ acc.) 'to be liable for' and **-e Haftung für etw./jmdn.** 'liability for sth./sb.':

**Eltern haften für ihre Kinder.**

Parents are legally liable for their children.

**Wir übernehmen keine Haftung für Feuerschäden.**

We do not accept liability for fire damage.

There are many compound nouns based on **-pflicht-** and these are used in formal or official contexts, e.g. in a legal text. Where an adjective ending in **-pflichtig** exists, this is shown below:

**In manchen Seminaren herrscht Anwesenheitspflicht/Präsenzpflicht.**

Attendance is obligatory in some seminars.

**Jeder Autofahrer muss mindestens eine Haftpflichtversicherung für seinen Wagen haben/haftpflichtversichert sein.**

Every driver has to have third party insurance at least.

**Widerrechtlich geparkte Fahrzeuge werden kostenpflichtig abgeschleppt.**

Cars parked illegally will be towed away at the owner's expense.

**Jeder Bürger in Deutschland unterliegt der Meldepflicht (= dat.)/ist meldepflichtig.**

Every German citizen is obliged to register at a public registration office.

**Eltern sind schadenersatzpflichtig/müssen Schadenersatz leisten, wenn ihre Kinder etwas angestellt haben.**

Parents are liable for damages if their children get into mischief.

**Die Untersuchungsergebnisse unterliegen der Schweigepflicht (= dat.).**

The results of the enquiry are subject to the rules of confidentiality.

**Wir haben als Gewerkschaftsvertreter eine Solidaritätspflicht gegenüber den Streikenden.**

As union representatives we have a duty to show solidarity with the people on strike.

**Alle Instrumente sind auf dieser Reise versicherungspflichtig.**

On this journey all instruments must be insured.

**Zahlungspflicht besteht, wenn Sie die Ware länger als 14 Tage behalten. / Sie sind zahlungspflichtig, wenn Sie die Ware länger als 14 Tage behalten.**

You are liable for payment if you retain the goods longer than 14 days.

**Zollpflichtige Waren sind anzumelden.**

Goods subject to duty have to be declared.

- (g) The idea of being bound to something and being liable can be expressed in a number of ways:

**binden, bindend, gebunden sein** ‘to bind, binding, be bound/be obliged’  
**sich binden** ‘to tie oneself (down)’  
**ungebunden sein** ‘not to be bound/be free’  
**jmdm. verbunden sein** ‘to be obliged to sb.’  
**jmdn. in etw. ein\*binden** ‘to commit sb. to sth.’  
**verbindlich, unverbindlich** ‘binding, not binding/without any obligation’

**Der Vertrag ist *bindend*.**

The contract is binding.

**Das Team ist vertraglich an die Bedingungen *gebunden*.**

The team is bound by contract to the conditions.

**Viele Eltern möchten nicht, dass ihre Kinder *sich zu früh binden*.**

Many parents don’t want their children to tie themselves down (*i.e. get married*) too early.

**Sie ist noch *ungebunden*.**

She is not yet committed. (*meaning, in most contexts, she is not married yet*)

**Wir sind Ihnen für Ihre Hilfe sehr *verbunden*.**

We are much obliged to you for your help.

**Soll man die ehemaligen Ostblockstaaten *in* das Westliche Bündnis *einbinden*?**

Should one allow the former Eastern Bloc states to join (and be committed to) the Western Alliance?

**Darf ich Ihnen ein *unverbindliches* Angebot machen?**

May I make you an offer without any obligation on your part?

- (h) Expressing legal or contractual obligation:

All of the following are inherently formal:

**-r Vertrag, vertrag(s)-** ‘contract, according to contract’  
**vertraglich/laut Vertrag/vertragsgemäß** ‘according to account’  
**gesetzlich** ‘by law/lawful/statutory’  
**nach dem/laut Gesetz** ‘by law’  
**jmdm. Rechenschaft (über etw.) schuldig sein** ‘to be accountable to sb. (for sth.)’

**Er ist *vertraglich verpflichtet/gebunden*, die Arbeit zu beenden.**

He is contractually obliged to complete the work.

**Die Höhe der Steuern wird *gesetzlich festgelegt*.**

The level of taxes is set by law.

***Nach dem Grundgesetz herrscht in der Bundesrepublik Pressefreiheit.***

According to the German Constitution there is freedom of the press in the Federal Republic.

**Ich bin Ihnen *über* meine Freizeitaktivitäten überhaupt keine *Rechenschaft schuldig*.**

As far as my leisure activities are concerned, I am not accountable to you at all.

- (i) Commitment of a less binding nature can be expressed by using **fest\*legen**. Its literal meaning is 'to tie down' and it is used in two principal patterns:

**sich** (= acc.) **auf etw.** (= acc.) **fest\*legen/jmdn. auf etw. fest\*legen** 'to commit oneself/sb. to sth.'

**etw.** (= acc.) **fest\*legen** 'to lay down/stipulate sth.'

**jmdn. fest\*nageln** 'to commit sb. to sth./to pin sb. down' (*colloquial*)

**Wir hatten uns darauf festgelegt, am Wochenende nach Paris zu fahren.**  
We had committed ourselves to going to Paris at the weekend.

**Der Chef legte seine Mitarbeiter auf diese Vorgehensweise fest.**  
The boss committed his staff to this way of proceeding.

**Sie legte fest, dass nur sechs Teilnehmer in einer Gruppe zusammen sein sollten.**  
She stipulated that there should only be six participants in one group.

**Es wurde ein Kostenbeitrag festgelegt.**  
A contribution to the costs was agreed.

The first three examples above place the emphasis on the doer, whereas in this last example, which employs the passive voice, the doer remains anonymous.

► See 42.3g for the dummy subject **es**; for the passive voice, see 40

**Als er mich traf, hat er mich gleich festgenagelt, ihm bei seinem Umzug zu helfen.**  
When he met me he immediately made me (firmly) promise to help him move house.

**Sie lässt sich nicht festnageln, ob sie nächstes Wochenende kommt.**  
She won't be pinned down as to whether she is coming next weekend.

## 86.3

**Acting contrary to obligation**

All of the following are inherently formal:

(s)eine **Pflicht/Verpflichtung verletzen/vernachlässigen** 'to neglect/act contrary to one's/a duty'

**pflichtvergessen sein** 'to neglect one's duties'

**gegen eine Pflicht verstoßen** 'to fail to carry out a duty'

**gegen ein Gesetz verstoßen** 'to break/contravene a law'

**Er vergisst seine** (etc.) **Pflichten/ist pflichtvergessen.**  
He forgets his duties.

**Sie vernachlässigt/verletzt ihre Pflichten.**  
She neglects/acts contrary to her duties.

**Ihre Handlung verstößt gegen Paragraph 221.**  
Your act contravenes paragraph 221.

Actions contrary to contracts, duties or laws can be described in the following way:

**gesetzeswidrig** 'contrary to (the) law/illegal'

**vertragswidrig** 'in breach of contract'

**sittenwidrig** 'against good manners/immoral'

**vertragsbrüchig werden** 'to default on one's contract'  
**der Vertragsbruch** 'breach of contract'  
**einen Vertrag brechen** 'to break a contract'  
**gegen einen Vertrag verstoßen** 'to break/contravene a contract'

## 86.4 Absence of obligation

**nicht verpflichtet sein, etw. zu tun** 'to not have to do sth.' (*formal*)  
**nicht gezwungen sein, etw. zu tun** 'to not be forced to do sth.'  
**etw. nicht zu tun brauchen** 'not need to do sth.'

The expressions **nicht verpflichtet sein**, **nicht gezwungen sein** and words ending in **-pflichtig** tend to be rather formal:

**Ich bin nicht verpflichtet, mir das anzuhören.**  
 I don't have to listen to this.

**Sie waren nicht gezwungen, mir zu helfen.**  
 You were not forced to help me.

**Diese Waren sind nicht zollpflichtig/sind zollfrei.**  
 These goods are not dutiable/are exempt from duty.

A common way of expressing that there is no obligation is to use **nicht brauchen** (see also 35.7):

**Du brauchst den Artikel heute nicht mehr fertigzuschreiben.**  
 You don't need to/don't have to finish the article today.

**Ich brauche heute nicht länger im Büro zu bleiben.**  
 Today I don't need to do overtime at the office.

**Nicht müssen** (see 35.6b and 35.7) is ambiguous, and depending on context can imply either the absence of obligation or an obligation in the negative. Which meaning is implied becomes clear from the context and, in the spoken language, from the tone of voice.

Here, we are dealing with an absence of obligation:

**Du musst das Referat heute nicht mehr fertig schreiben.**  
 You don't need to/don't have to finish the paper today.

Here, a clear obligation is implied (*compare: Ihr dürft nicht immer zu spät kommen*), although it is expressed indirectly:

**Ihr müsst nicht immer zu spät kommen.**  
 You *mustn't* always be late.

## 86.5 Freeing somebody from obligation

**jmdn. von etw. frei\*stellen** 'to exempt sb. from sth./to second sb.'  
**jmdm. etw. (= acc.) erlassen** 'to let sb. off sth./waive sth.'  
**jmdn. von etw. befreien** 'to free sb. from sth.'

For military service and jobs:

**Er wurde vom Militärdienst freigestellt.**  
 He was exempted from military service.

For tasks, sins, debts where exceptional concessions are implied:

**Sie haben mir die Hausaufgaben erlassen.**  
I was let off the homework.

Where a formal act by somebody in authority is required:

**Die Schülerin war für Donnerstag vom Unterricht befreit.**  
The pupil was excused from school for Thursday.

## 87

**Expressing ability to do something**

► See 74.5 on capabilities and talents, 101.1 for **wissen/kennen**, and 35 for modal verbs

## 87.1

**Physical and mental ability**

(a) These can both be expressed by using **können** and **-s Können** (see 35.1–6):

**Er konnte schon mit sechs Jahren Flöte spielen.**  
He could already play the recorder when he was six.

**Das große Können des Geigers beeindruckte die Zuhörer.**  
The violinist's great skill impressed the audience.

In some instances, **können** has no accompanying verb where it must take one in English:

**Kannst du jetzt das Zehner Einmaleins?**  
Can you do the ten times table now?

**Ich kann das Stück jetzt.**  
I can play the (musical) piece now.

**Könnt ihr den Text alle?**  
Do you all know the text by heart?

**Sie kann Spanisch.**  
She can speak Spanish.

(b) Sensual ability is expressed using **-s -vermögen**:

**-s Sehvermögen/Hörvermögen/Sprechvermögen** '(physical) ability to see/hear/speak'

(c) Expressing stamina:

In this context, **-s -vermögen** is occasionally used in a figurative sense:

**-s Stehvermögen, Standvermögen** 'staying power'  
**-s Durchhaltevermögen** 'endurance'

Where means or power to bring something about rather than physical or mental ability are to be stressed, the following expressions can be used for precision:

**Die Familie war nicht in der Lage, das Haus zu kaufen.**  
The family was not in a position to buy the house.

**Er wäre imstande, so eine Dummheit zu begehen. (formal)**  
He would be capable of such a blunder.

**Sie erklärten sich außerstande, einen Kompromiss zu finden.** (*formal*)  
They said that they were not in a position to find a compromise.

## 87.2 Managing to do something

When the result of an effort is referred to, the verb **schaffen** (*schaffte, geschafft*) ‘to get done’ is used:

**Die Läuferin schaffte einen neuen Weltrekord über 100 Meter.**  
The sprinter achieved a new world record over 100 metres.

**Die Kinder konnten ihre Hausaufgaben kaum schaffen.**  
The children could hardly manage their homework.

Alternatively, **etwas fertig\*bringen** and **etwas gelingt jmdm.** emphasize that something has been achieved against odds or expectations:

**Die Vierjährige hatte es doch fertiggebracht, die ganze Tapete in ihrem Kinderzimmer bunt zu malen.**  
The four-year-old had managed to paint all the wallpaper in her room.

**Es gelang uns, den Kaufpreis um 10% herunterzuhandeln.**  
We managed to negotiate the purchase price down by 10 per cent.

## 87.3 Skills and ability

- (a) Where skills that result from training are emphasized, **fähig** ‘able’ and its derivatives are employed:

**Sie ist eine unserer fähigsten Mitarbeiterinnen.**  
She is one of our most capable employees.

It can also be used in more general contexts:

**Er war so schockiert, dass er unfähig war, etwas zu tun.**  
He was so shocked that he was incapable of doing anything.

- (b) **Fähigkeiten** and **Fertigkeiten** are often mentioned together and it is difficult to distinguish between the two terms. **Fertigkeiten** may, depending on context, refer to manual skills, whereas **Fähigkeiten** can be of a more complex nature. **Handwerkliche Fertigkeiten** are the skills the craftsman (**der Handwerker**) needs to handle the tools. However, his **Fähigkeiten** consist in planning, carrying out, finishing and checking the job. A few compounds where the distinction is less clear-cut are given below:

**-e Schreibfertigkeit** ‘ability to produce letters physically’

**-e Schreibfähigkeit** ‘ability to think out a text and write it down’

**Lesefertigkeiten** ‘basic reading skills’: the operation of putting letters together and the ability to recognize a word and its sense

**Lesefähigkeiten** ‘higher reading skills’: the skill to differentiate the visual and acoustic shape of a letter; the ability to recognize the structure of a text and, for example, read it out loud in a meaningful way

## 88

## Conveying doubt and certainty

## 88.1

## Defining the degree of certainty

Adverbs can qualify the degree to which something is certain (here arranged in approximate order of increasing probability):

**auf keinen Fall, in keinem Fall, keinesfalls, keineswegs** ‘no way, on no account’  
**kommt nicht in Frage** ‘out of the question’  
**kaum, unwahrscheinlich** ‘hardly, unlikely’  
**ungewiss** ‘uncertain’  
**unklar** ‘unclear’  
**einigermaßen wahrscheinlich** ‘quite possible’  
**(ziemlich) wahrscheinlich** ‘(quite) probable’  
**wahrscheinlich** ‘probable’  
**fast sicher** ‘nearly certain’  
**bestimmt** ‘certain’  
**sicher, gewiss** ‘certain’  
**klar** ‘clear’  
**auf jeden Fall, in jedem Fall** ‘most certainly’

Accordingly, predictions can be made:

**etw. mit ziemlicher Wahrscheinlichkeit an\*nehmen** ‘to assume sth. with reasonable probability’  
**etw. mit ziemlicher Sicherheit/ziemlich sicher wissen** ‘to know sth. with reasonable certainty’  
**etw. mit Bestimmtheit/bestimmt wissen** ‘to know sth. for certain’

## 88.2

## Disclaiming personal responsibility

► See [84](#) and [85](#) for further functions in this context

- (a) Personal responsibility can be disclaimed by using the subjunctive mood (see [39](#)). Thus the newscaster will report:

**Die Politikerin meinte, dass die Regierung die Steuern jetzt senken müsste.**  
 The politician said that the government should lower taxes now.

- (b) A further way of distancing oneself is to use the modal verb **sollen** (see [35.6b](#)). Compare the following pairs of examples, those on the left expressing certainty, those on the right expressing doubt:

**Er ist ein fanatischer Fußballfan.**      **Er soll ein fanatischer Fußballfan sein.**  
 He is a football fanatic.                      He is supposed to be a football fanatic.

**Sie war eine berühmt-berüchtigte Frau.**      **Sie soll eine berühmt-berüchtigte Frau gewesen sein.**  
 She was a notorious woman.                      She is said to have been a notorious woman.

- (c) Particularly when you want to repeat something that has been stated as a fact but for which there is no real proof, you may want to use the modal verb **müssen** (see 35.6b). The insertion of **wohl** 'probably' emphasizes that an assumed fact is being reported:

**Dieser Historiker hat einen klaren Verstand.**

This historian has a clear mind.

**Nach dem, was man hört, muss dieser Historiker (wohl) einen klaren Verstand haben.**

Going by what one hears, this historian must have a clear mind.

**Die Königin war eine stolze Frau.**

The queen was a proud woman.

**Nach Presseberichten muss die Königin eine stolze Frau gewesen sein.**

According to press reports the queen must have been a proud woman.

- (d) Direct responsibility for information or opinions given can also be avoided by showing that one's knowledge is limited or by giving the source of the information. The indicative usually follows:

**Soweit mir bekannt ist, wusste sie nichts von dem Plan.**

As far as I am aware she didn't know anything about the plan.

**Nach Augenzeugenberichten hat der Fahrer des Wagens die Ampel bei Rot überfahren.**

According to eyewitness accounts the driver of the car jumped the lights.

**Den Berichten zufolge muss man sich auf einen längeren Eisenbahnstreik einrichten.**

According to reports people have to prepare themselves for quite a long railway strike.

**Man sagt allgemein, dass es eine Krise in der Europapolitik gibt.**

It is being said generally that there is a crisis in European politics.

**Wir wissen aus sicherer Quelle, dass alle Passagiere die Notlandung unverletzt überstanden haben.**

We know from reliable sources that all passengers have survived the emergency landing unhurt.

## 88.3

## Expressing surprise at something improbable or unexpected

► See also 114 on expressing surprise

Formal expressions include:

**Das kommt völlig überraschend für mich!**

It comes as a total surprise to me!

**Ich kann das kaum glauben!**

I can hardly believe it!

**Das ist doch einfach nicht zu fassen/zu glauben!**

It is simply unbelievable!

More informally the following expressions are useful without causing offence:

**Das gibt es doch nicht! / Das darf doch nicht wahr sein!**

It cannot be true! / Oh no!



**So etwas darf es doch einfach nicht geben!**  
Something like this is simply not supposed to happen!

**Er hat *sage und schreibe* 500 Euro für vier Stunden Arbeit verlangt.**  
He charged, would you believe, 500 euros for four hours of work.

## 89

## Expressing assumptions, and discussing possibility, probability and conditions

► See [35.8](#)

## 89.1

### Simple assumptions

These can be introduced in a number of ways:

- (a) By using the modal verb **müssen** ([35.6b](#)):

**Das muss wahr sein.**  
That must be true.

**Er muss es gewusst haben.**  
He must have known it.

- (b) The following constructions can also be used:

***Es kann/könnte sein, dass er nichts über den Plan gewusst hat.***  
It may/could be that he didn't know anything about the plan.

***Ich nehme an, dass er davon weiß.***  
I assume that he knows about it.

***Es ist/wäre möglich, dass er nichts von der Affäre gewusst hat.***  
It is conceivable that he knew nothing of the affair.

► See [8.4](#) for the conjunction **dass**

- (c) These introductory clauses can be avoided by using the future or future perfect (see [34.3–4](#)). There is no particular difference in stylistic level; the degree of certainty about the assumption made is introduced by inserting adverbs such as **sicher** 'certainly', **wohl** 'probably', **möglicherweise** 'possibly' or **vielleicht** 'perhaps':

**Er wird wohl nichts über den Plan gewusst haben.**  
He will probably not have known about the plan.

► See [39.1b](#)

**Ihr werdet wohl davon wissen.**  
You will probably know about it.

► See [34.3](#)

**Du wirst möglicherweise nichts von der Affäre gewusst haben.**  
You will possibly not have known anything about the affair.

- (d) The modal verbs **mögen**, **dürfte** and **müsste** (the last two are in the subjunctive, see [39.3d](#)) can also be used in these senses:

**Das mag die Antwort sein.**  
That may be the answer.

**Das dürfte die Antwort sein.**

That may (very) well be the answer.

**Das müsste die Antwort sein.**

That must/would have to be the answer.

(e) A statement such as:

**Am Sonntag wird es ja wieder regnen.**

On Sunday it is bound to rain again.

is an expression of resignation (emphasized by **ja** and **wieder**) – in the context here this means that the following Sunday is expected to be as rainy (and hence as boring and uneventful) as all the previous ones.

## 89.2 Assumptions in a scientific context

These are conveyed by subjunctive I or II, depending on the construction.

► See 39.4b for this use

**‘A’ sei die Länge einer Seite im Dreieck.**

Let ‘A’ be the length of one side of a triangle.

Such a hypothesis, particularly where it is not strictly scientific, can also be introduced as follows:

***Gesetzt den Fall, die Theorie stimmt/stimmte, dann würde sich die Erde jedes Jahrzehnt um ein paar Grad erwärmen.***

Assuming the theory is correct, the earth would get a few degrees warmer every decade.

***Angenommen, er hat alles gewusst, dann hätte er ihr Bescheid sagen müssen.***

Assuming he knew everything he should have let her know.

The conclusion deduced from the assumption must be in the conditional. Instead of a conclusion there may be a question:

***Angenommen, sie hat Recht mit ihrer Behauptung, was würdest du ihr raten?***

Assuming she is right in her assertion, what would you advise her to do?

## 89.3 Expressing a condition when it can and is likely to be fulfilled

► See 39.8

A condition that can be fulfilled is expressed through a **wenn** clause. In English, such a condition could be introduced by either ‘if’ or ‘when’:

***Wenn es regnet, gehen wir nicht in die Berge.***

If it rains we won’t go walking in the mountains.

***Wenn sie den Manager ruft, kommt er sofort.***

When she calls for the manager he comes immediately.

► See also 82 for cause and effect

**Wenn** can be avoided by beginning the subordinate clause with the verb and introducing a **so** at the beginning of the main clause. This results in a much more formal style that tends to be found in written German:

**Sinkt die Nachfrage, so sinkt auch der Preis.**

If demand falls, so will the price.

**Ruft sie den Manager, so kommt er gleich.**

When she calls for the manager he comes immediately.

► See also 8.5 for this construction

## 89.4 Making hypotheses

Hypotheses fall into two categories:

- (a) About an event that may or may not take place, using subjunctive II with present or future reference (see also 39.2–3):

**Wenn du mich liebtest, würdest du mich heiraten.**

If you loved me you would marry me.

**Wenn er in der Stadt wäre, würde er uns besuchen.**

If he was in town he would visit us.

**Wäre er in der Stadt, so würde er uns besuchen.**

It is probable that **du** doesn't love him and that 'he' is not in town, but in principle these conditions could be fulfilled or the event could still happen.

► See 8.5 and 89.3 for the construction without **wenn**

- (b) About an event that can no longer take place, using the subjunctive II in the past with past reference (see also 39.2–3):

**Wenn du mich geliebt hättest, hättest du mich geheiratet.**

**Wenn du mich geliebt hättest, würdest du mich geheiratet haben.**

If you had loved me you would have married me.

**Wenn er in der Stadt gewesen wäre, hätte er uns besucht.**

**Wenn er in der Stadt gewesen wäre, würde er uns besucht haben.**

If he had been in town he would have visited us.

**Wäre er in der Stadt gewesen, so würde er uns besucht haben.**

The conditions under which a certain (desired) event could have taken place (i.e. a wedding and a visit) were not fulfilled at the time and hence the event did not happen.

The verb of the **wenn** clause needs to be in the past tense of the second subjunctive. In the main clause there is a choice between either another second subjunctive in the past tense (e.g. **hätte gemacht, wäre gewesen**), or **würde** with the past participle of the main verb plus **haben** or **sein**.

► See 8 for word order in subordinate clauses

# XIII

## Transactions: getting things done

### 90 Attracting attention

► See also [61.1](#) on making initial contact

#### 90.1 Attracting attention in a dangerous situation

**Hilfe!**

Help!

**Feuer!**

Fire!

**Vorsicht!**

Be careful!

**Hallo!**

Hello!

(**Hallo!** is not necessarily understood as a request for rescue but as a casual greeting. Only when shouted out with a prolonged [a:] does it mean a call for help in dire circumstances.)

► See also [60.2a](#)

**Achtung!**

Beware! / Watch out!

#### 90.2 Attracting attention when a person is busy

**Darf ich mal kurz stören.** (*polite*)

May I interrupt you for a moment.

**Entschuldigen Sie bitte.** (*polite*)

Excuse me, please.

**Hallo, Sie da! / He, Sie da!** (*rude*)

Hey, you there!

**Sie, hören Sie mal!** (*rude*)

You, listen!

Requests for attention using the subjunctive II are particularly polite though not deferential (see 39.2b):

**Dürfte ich mal kurz stören.**

If I might interrupt you for a moment.

**Wenn Sie einen Moment Zeit für mich hätten.**

If you could spare me a moment.

**Wenn ich Sie gerade unterbrechen dürfte.**

If I could just interrupt you for a moment.

**Entschuldigen Sie, ich hätte eine Frage.**

Excuse me, I'd like to ask a question.

### 90.3 Turning one's attention to somebody

(a) In order to help:

**Ja, bitte?**

Yes? (How can I help you?)

**Was kann ich für Sie tun?**

What can I do for you?

**Worum handelt es sich?** (*formal*)

What is it about?

**Worum geht es?** (*informal*)

What is it about?

**Worum geht's?** (*very informal*)

What is it about?

**Was gibt es?** (*can sound impatient*)

What is it?

**Womit kann ich (Ihnen) dienen?** (*very formal, in a shop or an office*)

How can I help/serve you?

**Was darf's sein?** (*in a shop or restaurant*)

What would you like?

**Was möchten/wollen Sie?** (*can easily sound off-putting*)

What do you want?

**Was ist denn nun wieder los?** (*abrupt, expressing annoyance*)

What is wrong now?

(b) In order to send somebody away:

**Nicht jetzt, bitte.**

Not now, please.

**Bei mir sind Sie da falsch.** (*can be indifferent or rude, depending on tone*)

I am not the person you need to see (about the matter).

**Ich bin (leider) nicht für Sie/dafür zuständig.**

(I'm sorry but) I am not the person responsible (for you/for the matter).

## 90.4

## Requesting patience

► See also 103 and 81.8–11 for expressions of time referring to future intentions

- (a) **der Augenblick/der Moment** ‘moment’ suggest a wait of a few minutes at most:

**Einen Moment/Augenblick, bitte.**

Just a moment, please.

**Wenn Sie bitte einen Augenblick warten würden.** (*very polite*)

If you wouldn’t mind waiting for a moment, please.

**Moment noch!** (*fairly informal*)

Just another moment! I won’t keep you much longer.

**Bitte nehmen Sie im Wartezimmer Platz.** (*at the doctor’s*)

Please have a seat in the waiting room.

- (b) Requesting more patience:

**-e Geduld, sich gedulden** ‘patience, be patient’ (*formal*)

**Darf ich noch um ein paar Minuten Geduld bitten.**

May I ask you to be patient for just a few more minutes.

**Sie müssen sich leider noch ein wenig gedulden.**

You’ll have to be patient a little longer, I am afraid.

Putting in **leider** ‘unfortunately’ makes the request for patience more polite:

**Es dauert (leider) noch ungefähr eine Stunde.**

It’ll take about another hour(, I am afraid).

**Ihr Wagen ist leider erst in etwa einer Stunde fertig.**

Your car will not be ready for about an hour, I am afraid.

## 90.5

## Non-verbal ways of attracting attention

- (a) When you are about to propose a toast or make a speech before or after dinner it is common to clink a spoon against your glass, thus attracting everybody’s attention.
- (b) When you want to attract a waiter’s/waitress’s attention in a restaurant, lift your hand when the waiter/waitress next comes by your table. She or he will probably say **Sofort** ‘I’ll be right there’ or **Einen Moment, bitte** ‘Just a moment, please’.
- (c) When you want to stop a bus at a request stop (**-e Bedarfshaltestelle**), lift your arm vertically and show your palm in the direction from which the bus is coming.

## 91

## Helping and advising

## 91.1

## Asking for help

- (a) To ask for practical help use expressions with the noun, **-e Hilfe**, or the corresponding verb **helfen**:

**jmdm. helfen** ‘to help sb.’

**jmdm. bei/mit etw. helfen** ‘to help sb. with sth.’

**jmdm. helfen, etw. zu tun** ‘to help sb. to do sth.’

**-e Hilfe** ‘help’

**Hilfe leisten** ‘to help’ (*formal*; see 91.5)

As in English, you can ask for help by using a modal verb in the indicative or, more politely, in the subjunctive II (see 39.2b). Inserting **bitte** 'please' in a request is always a good idea:

**Könn(t)en Sie mir bitte bei/mit diesem Problem helfen.**

Can/Could you please help me with this problem?

**Würden Sie mir bitte helfen, den schweren Karton in meinen Wagen zu heben.**

Would you please help me to lift this heavy box into my car?

**Darf/Dürfte ich Ihre Hilfe in Anspruch nehmen. (very formal)**

May/Might I make use of your help.

**Wenn Sie einen Unfall sehen, müssen Sie Hilfe leisten.**

If you see an accident you must assist.

- (b) To request a favour rather than help, use **jmdm. einen Gefallen tun**:

**Kannst/Könntest du mir bitte einen Gefallen tun und heute einkaufen gehen.**

Can/Could you please do me a favour and do some shopping today.

- (c) **bitten** 'to ask' can be used as a stylistically versatile introduction to requests:

(jmdn.) **um etw. (= acc.) bitten** 'to ask (sb.) for sth.'

**jmdn. bitten, etw. zu tun** 'to ask sb. to do sth.'

(jmdn.) **um Hilfe (etc.) bitten** 'to ask sb. for help (etc.)'

**Darf ich um Ihren Beitrag bitten?**

May I ask for your contribution?

**Darf ich Sie bitten, unsere Partei bei den nächsten Wahlen zu unterstützen?**

May I ask you to support our party in the next elections?

**Darf/Dürfte ich Sie um Hilfe bitten?**

May/Might I ask you for help?

- (d) Although requests using the subjunctive II are already very polite and leave the addressee a sufficient amount of breathing space, you may feel you want to be even less direct. This can be done by introducing your request with a variety of **würde** constructions:

**Würde es Ihnen etwas ausmachen, wenn ich heute erst später käme?**

Would you mind if I came later today?

**Würde es Ihnen etwas ausmachen, heute später zu kommen?**

Would you mind coming a little later today?

**Würden Sie bitte so freundlich sein und mir beim Ausfüllen dieses Formulars behilflich sein.**

or:

**Würden Sie bitte so freundlich sein, mir beim Ausfüllen dieses Formulars zu helfen.**

Would you be so kind as to help me fill in this form.

**Würdest du bitte so nett sein und meine Mutter anrufen.**

Would you please be so kind as to ring my mother.

## 91.2 Replying to a request for help

(a) As a positive reply to a direct request for help, you might say:

**Ja, gern(e).**

Yes, with pleasure.

**Ja, natürlich. / Aber natürlich.**

Yes, of course.

**(Aber) selbstverständlich.**

But of course.

**Klar doch!** (*informal*)

Of course.

**Ja sofort.**

Yes, right away.

**Ja, ich komme gleich.**

Yes, I'm just coming.

In reply to a request asking whether you would mind (doing) something, use:

**Nein, das macht mir gar nichts/wirklich nichts aus.**

No, I wouldn't mind at all.

**Nein, das mache ich doch gern (für Sie/dich).**

No, I'll gladly do it (for you).

**Doch** emphasizes **gern** here.

(b) As a negative reply to a direct request for help, you may say:

**Nein, ich kann Ihnen leider nicht helfen.**

No, unfortunately I cannot help you.

**Nein, im Moment nicht.**

No, not right now.

**Es tut mir leid, aber ich kann Ihnen da nicht helfen.**

I am sorry, but I cannot help you there.

► For this construction, see [19.7](#)

**Leider weiß ich selbst nicht, wie man das Formular ausfüllt.**

Unfortunately I don't know how to fill in the form myself.

**Tut mir leid, aber ich habe selbst keine Ahnung.**

I am sorry, I haven't got a clue myself.

To give a negative reply to a request asking whether you would mind (doing) something, you might say:

**Nein, das ist leider (heute) nicht möglich. / Nein, das geht (heute) leider nicht.**

No, it is unfortunately not possible (today).

**Nein, das ist mir im Moment nicht recht.**

No, it's a little inconvenient at the moment.

**Nein, das passt mir heute nicht/schlecht.**

No, it's inconvenient today. (*lit.* suits me badly today)

NOTE In German you need to be more direct than in English to be understood.



## 91.3

## Offering advice

Advice and suggestions can be offered bluntly by using the indicative, or more sensitively by employing the suggestive mode of the subjunctive II (see 39.2b). Alternatively, a rhetorical question may be used; this would be less formal.

Compare:

**Wir raten Ihnen zu diesem Kauf.**

We advise you to accept this deal.

**Wir würden Ihnen zu diesem Kauf raten.**

We would advise you to accept this deal.

**Warum kaufen Sie nicht!?**

Why don't you accept the deal!?

As it is polite not to force one's own views on a stranger or semi-stranger, a structure involving the subjunctive II would normally be the most appropriate:

**jmdm. raten etwas zu tun** 'to advise sb. to do sth.'

**(jmdm.) von etw. ab\*raten** 'to advise (sb.) against sth.'

**(jmdm.) zu etw. zu\*raten** 'to advise (sb.) to do sth./to advocate sth.'

**Ich würde Ihnen raten, das Angebot anzunehmen.**

I would advise you to accept the offer.

**Wir würden (Ihnen) von diesem Angebot abraten.**

We would advise (you) against this offer.

**Unser Anwalt würde (Ihnen) nicht zu diesem Vorgehen zuraten.**

Our solicitor would not advocate this procedure.

Further introductory phrases include:

**In Ihrer Situation/In Ihrem Fall würde ich erst mal abwarten.**

In your situation/case I would wait and see.

**Ich würde sagen, da muss man einen Fachmann fragen.**

I would say you ought to ask an expert in this matter.

**An Ihrer Stelle würde ich jetzt kein großes Risiko eingehen.**

If I were you I would not take any big risks now.

**Wie wäre es, wenn Sie doch noch einmal mit Ihrer Chefin sprächen?**

How about talking to your boss again?

Alternatively, start your question with a modal verb in the subjunctive II (see 39.2b and 39.3d) and use **nicht**:

**Sollten Sie nicht einmal mit Ihrem Rechtsanwalt sprechen?**

Shouldn't you talk to your solicitor first?

**Könnten Sie nicht mit der Bahn fahren, wo Ihr Auto kaputt ist?**

Couldn't you take the train as your car has broken down?

**Dürfte das nicht etwas teuer sein?**

Might that not be a little too expensive?

**Müssten Sie da nicht erst eine staatliche Genehmigung haben?**

Wouldn't you have to have/Shouldn't you have a state permit first?

**Möchten Sie nicht doch lieber warten, bis Sie mit Ihren Eltern gesprochen haben?**

Wouldn't you rather wait until you have talked to your parents?

## 91.4 Accepting help or advice

► See 67.1–5 on thanking for help and declining help as well as responding to thanks

Comments on advice offered could take the following forms, in approximate order from slight hesitation to enthusiastic approval:

**Hm, das wäre vielleicht möglich.**

Hm, that might be possible.

**Ja, das könnte gehen.**

Yes, that could work.

**Danke, dass Sie mich darauf aufmerksam machen. Daran hatte ich noch gar nicht gedacht.**

Thank you for drawing my attention to this. I hadn't thought of that at all.

**Das ist eine gute/eine prima/keine schlechte Idee.**

That is a good/an excellent/not a bad idea.

**Ja, stimmt, da haben Sie völlig recht.**

Yes, true, you are quite right there.

**Mensch, dass ich darauf nicht selbst gekommen bin. Du liegst da genau richtig!** (*informal, between good friends*)

(Oh) yes, I wonder why I didn't think of that myself. You are spot on there!

## 91.5 Different types of help and support

The English term 'help' and its partial synonyms 'aid' and 'support' have quite a wide range of German equivalents.

(a) Financial support:

**-e Arbeitslosenhilfe** money received by people who no longer qualify for 'unemployment benefit' (**-s Arbeitslosengeld**)

**-e Sozialhilfe** 'income support'

**Sozialhilfe beziehen** 'to be on income support'

**-e Hilfe, -e Unterstützung beantragen** 'to claim benefits'

**-e Beihilfe** financial contribution paid, for example, by the state on civil servants' health insurance

**-e Starthilfe** 'jump start/pump priming' (*either of a car or a business venture*)

**-e Unterstützung, unterstützend** 'support, supporting'

**-e Arbeitslosenunterstützung** 'unemployment benefits' (*in general*)

**Hartz IV** German unemployment benefit

**unterstützende Maßnahmen treffen** 'to take measures in order to support sth.'

**-e Subvention** 'subsidy'

**jmdn./etw. subventionieren** 'to subsidize sb./sth.'

**Er bezieht jetzt schon seit drei Monaten Sozialhilfe.**

He has been receiving income support for three months now.

**Hast du schon Beihilfe für deine letzte Arztrechnung beantragt?**

Have you already claimed for your last doctor's bill?

**Die osteuropäischen Länder brauchten bei der Umstellung ihrer Wirtschaft Starthilfe vom Westen.**

The countries of Eastern Europe needed pump priming to reform their economies.

**Werden Sie Hartz IV beantragen?**

Are you going to apply for unemployment benefit? (*named after the Hartz IV unemployment and welfare reforms introduced in Germany in 2005*)

**Wenn keine unterstützenden Maßnahmen für die Kohlenindustrie getroffen werden, ist sie in Deutschland bald tot.**

If no measures are taken to support the German coal industry it will soon be dead.

**Sollte man die europäische Windenergieindustrie mit Steuergeldern subventionieren?**

Should one subsidize the European wind power industry by means of taxpayers' money?

(b) Providing moral support:

**-r Beistand** 'support'  
**jmdm. bei\*stehen** 'to support sb.'

**Ich bin nur mitgekommen, um meinem Sohn moralischen Beistand zu leisten.**

I've only come along to give my son moral support.

**Danke allen, die mir nach meinem schweren Verlust so treu beigestanden haben.**

Thank you to all those who have supported me so loyally after my tragic loss.

(c) Promoting or supporting somebody:

**-e Erste Hilfe** 'First Aid'  
**jmdn./etw. fördern** 'to promote/give special attention to sb./sth.'  
**-e Förderung** 'promotion/support'  
**Förder-** 'promoting'  
**fördernde Maßnahmen** supportive measures designed to help a person, a region, a company, etc. that has difficulties coping or deserves encouragement; synonyms include: **-e Förderungsmaßnahme, -e Fördermaßnahme** (*bureaucratic*)

**Jeder sollte wissen, wie man Erste Hilfe leistet.**

Everybody should know how to administer First Aid.

**In Deutschland muss man einen Verbandskasten im Wagen haben.**

In Germany you have to have a First Aid kit in your car.

**Eliteförderung ist für manche politischen Gruppen ein rotes Tuch.**

Measures to further an elite are anathema to some political groups.

**Das Bafög (Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz) sollte Chancengleichheit für alle Studierwilligen schaffen.**

The Bafög (*federal law guaranteeing aid to financially worse-off students*) was intended to provide equal opportunities for all those who wanted to study.

**Welche fördernden Maßnahmen sind in dieser Schule für lernschwache Kinder vorgesehen?**

Which supporting measures are provided for children with learning difficulties in this school?

## 92

## Asking for something to be done

## 92.1

## Errands and similar activities

(a) Specific terms:

**etw. besorgen** 'to go on an errand (in order to get sth.)/to acquire sth.'  
**etw. erledigen** 'to get sth. done (possibly on an errand)/carry out sth.'  
**eine Erledigung/Besorgung machen** 'to go on an errand'  
**(bitte) helfen!** 'please help!'  
**(bitte) Türe schließen!** 'please close the door'

General terms use **tun, machen** (and other verbs) 'to do'.

Requests for errands are best made with a polite question using the subjunctive. Using the subjunctive II of a modal or other verb is very polite (see **38.2b** and **38.2d**):

**Würden Sie das bitte für mich tun/erledigen.**

Would you please do this for me/attend to this for me.

**Könnten Sie bitte die Post erledigen.**

Could you please deal with the post.

**Würden Sie mir bitte noch Schweizer Franken besorgen. / Würden Sie bitte noch Schweizer Franken für mich besorgen.**

Would you please also get me some Swiss francs.

**Könnten Sie den Brief bitte noch heute für uns schreiben?**

Could you please write the letter for us (as early as) today?

Using the infinitive of the verb is a more direct way of asking people (not) to do things. Depending on the context, the effect can be either very informal/intimate as in:

**Jetzt auch noch eine Tasse Kaffee, du!**

And now (I'd really like you to make me) a cup of coffee!

or formal and abrupt:

**Jetzt nicht stören!**

Don't disturb me now!

**(Bitte) DVD einlegen!**

(Please) insert the DVD!

► See **33.1c** and **86.1b**

(b) Giving someone responsibility for doing something:

**zuständig sein für etw.** 'to be responsible for sth.'  
**zu\*sehen, dass etw. geschieht** 'to ensure that sth. gets done'

**Herr Kleinschmidt, Sie sind heute für den Empfang der ausländischen Gäste zuständig.**

Mr Kleinschmidt, you are responsible for welcoming the foreign guests today.

**Er kann das nicht unterschreiben. Das *liegt nicht in* seinem Zuständigkeitsbereich/ Kompetenzbereich.**

He cannot sign this. It is not within his remit/authority.

**Bitte *sehen Sie zu, dass der Kostenvoranschlag bis morgen beim Kunden ist.***

Please see to it that the estimate is with the client by tomorrow.

## 92.2 Emphasizing the importance of a task

**Wir *wären dankbar, wenn Sie sich den Fehler gleich ansehen könnten.***

We would be grateful if you could look at the fault immediately.

**Es *ist für uns wichtig, dass dieser Auftrag noch heute ausgeliefert wird.***

It is important for us that this order goes out today.

**Der Kunde *legt großen Wert darauf, dass wir die Anleitung in Deutsch, Englisch und Französisch liefern.***

It is very important for the client that we deliver the manual in German, English and French.

**Es *ist unabdingbar/unerlässlich, dass die Qualität bei jedem Einzelstück überprüft wird.***

It is essential that the quality of every single item gets checked.

## 92.3 Refusing something

The following can be used to refuse something that one has no authority to grant. They are fairly abrupt:

**Das *müssen Sie (selbst) wissen.***

You should know (not me). / That is your concern, not mine.

**Da *musst du selbst zusehen.***

You'll have to take care of that yourself.

**Sehen Sie *erstmal selbst zu, wie Sie zurecht kommen.***

First see how you manage on your own.

**Dafür *sind wir hier nicht zuständig.***

We don't deal with that here.

**Die *Entscheidung liegt nicht bei mir.***

The decision is not up to me.

They can be toned down by introducing **leider**, **doch** and/or **aber**:

**Das *müssen Sie **doch** aber selbst wissen.***

You must know that yourself. / That really is your concern.

**Da *musst du **leider** selbst zusehen.***

Unfortunately, you'll have to take care of that yourself.

**Sehen Sie *aber **doch** erstmal selbst zu, wie Sie zurecht kommen.***

You really should see how you manage on your own first.

**Die *Entscheidung liegt **leider** nicht bei mir.***

Unfortunately, it's not up to me. / It's not my decision.

## 92.4

## Asking somebody else to do something

The most common way of saying that somebody else is charged with something is to use **lassen** as a modal verb.

► See also [35](#) and [77.4a](#) for other uses of **lassen**

- (a) Having something done to oneself:

**Er lässt sich die Haare jede Woche schneiden.**  
He has his hair cut every week.

- (b) Having something done by somebody else:

**Sie ließ die ganze Geschichte von einem Journalisten ausarbeiten und veröffentlichen.**

She had a journalist write up and publish the whole story.

**Die Polizei ließ alle Papiere überprüfen.**

The police had all documents checked.

- (c) Ordering somebody else to do something:

**Der Direktor ließ die Finanzabteilung die Verkaufszahlen noch einmal überprüfen.**

The director required the finance office to check the sales figures again.

- (d) Letting somebody else do something (without interfering):

**Wir ließen den neuen Chef mal machen.**

We let the new boss get on with it (without giving him support).

A more bureaucratic way of asking somebody to do something is implied when using **an\*weisen** 'to instruct':

**Sie wies das Personal an, die Kunden freundlicher zu behandeln.**

She instructed her personnel to treat the clients in a more friendly manner.

The verb **instruieren** for **an\*weisen** does exist but is now rarely used. Rather more common would be **Instruktionen geben/hinterlassen** 'to give/leave instructions':

**Ich hatte Instruktionen hinterlassen, dass das Essen um 1 Uhr fertig sein sollte.**

I had left instructions that lunch was to be ready at 1 o'clock.

## 93

## Expressing needs, wishes and desires

► See [104](#) for expressing likes and preferences, and [113](#) for conveying hopes, wishes and disappointment

## 93.1

## Verbs for expressing need

The obvious verbs to express needs and wishes are:

**brauchen** 'need'  
**möchte** 'would like (now)'  
**mögen** 'to like to (generally)'  
**sich** (= dat.) **wünschen** 'to wish (for)'

Both **möchte** and **mögen** can be reinforced by using **gern(e)** 'a lot':

**In Deutschland brauchen Sie im Winter Winterreifen.**

In Germany you need winter tyres in winter.

**Meine amerikanischen Freunde mögen am liebsten Jacobs Kaffee.**

My American friends like Jacob's coffee best.

**Jetzt möchte ich gerne eine Tasse Kaffee.**

Now I'd love a cup of coffee.

► See **104.2** for further examples with **möchte** and **mag**

**Zum Geburtstag wünsche ich mir eine Überraschung.**

I'd like to have a surprise on my birthday.

Where one has a justified claim on something, use:

**-r Anspruch** 'claim'

**einen Anspruch auf etw.** (= acc.) **haben** 'to have a claim on sth.'

**einen Anspruch auf etw.** (= acc.) **geltend machen** 'to lay claim to (and get) sth.'

**etw. beanspruchen** 'to claim sth.'

**Er hat dieses Jahr noch Anspruch auf zwei Wochen Urlaub.**

He still has two weeks' holiday left this year.

**Die Nachbarn machten ihre Ansprüche auf Schadenersatz geltend.**

The neighbours claimed damages.

**Sie beanspruchte die Hälfte des Hauses.**

She claimed half the house.

The verb **bedürfen** 'need' takes the genitive. It tends to be found only in formal letters or reports as well as in the quality press:

**Diese Gründe sind nicht stichhaltig. Sie bedürfen der näheren Erklärung.**

These reasons are not valid. They need a more detailed explanation.

**Es bedurfte aller Überredungskünste, um die Koalitionspartei zum Zustimmung zu bewegen.**

It took all manner of persuasion to get the coalition party to agree.

## 93.2

### Different types of need

► See also **112.1** on being satisfied and dissatisfied, and **112.2** on satisfying needs and demands

Common words include:

**-bedürftig** 'in need of sth.'

**hilfsbedürftig** 'in need of help'

**ruhebedürftig** 'in need of rest/quiet'

**anlehnsbedürftig** 'in need of (sb.) to lean on'

**reparaturbedürftig** 'in need of being repaired'

**-r Bedarf an** (+ dat.) 'need for'

**-r tägliche Bedarf an Brot** 'daily requirement for bread'

**Lebensmittel** (= plural) **des täglichen Bedarfs** 'staple foods'

**Wir bekamen das Haus zu einem guten Preis, da es stark *reparaturbedürftig* war.**

We got the house at a good price as it was badly in need of repair.

**Kennen Sie Ihren täglichen *Kalorienbedarf*?**

Do you know how many calories you need daily?

The phrase **sein Bedürfnis verrichten** 'to go to the toilet' is today only found in literary contexts. Where it occurs in spoken language, it is probably meant jokingly and often refers to dogs and other pets.

**-r Anspruch** 'claim'

**Anspruch auf etw.** (= acc.) **erheben/haben** 'to lay claim to sth.'

**Anspruch auf jmdn. erheben/haben** 'to lay claim to sb.'

**-r Rechtsanspruch** 'legal (right to) claim', legal entitlement

**-r Unterhaltsanspruch** 'legal right to maintenance'

**anspruchsvoll** 'demanding'

**anspruchlos** 'undemanding/modest'

**-s Anspruchsdenken** critical word in contemporary German referring to people's claims on rights and wealth without working hard for them

**Ich erhebe Anspruch auf das gesamte Vermögen.**

I lay claim to the entire assets.

**In dieser Situation haben Sie Anspruch auf einen Rechtsanwalt.**

You have a right to a lawyer in this situation.

**Es gibt manchmal Kinder, die ihren *Unterhaltsanspruch* an die Eltern vor Gericht einklagen.**

Sometimes there are children who take their parents to court over their right to maintenance.

**Der Vortrag war geistig *anspruchsvoll*.**

The talk was intellectually demanding.

## 93.3

## Wishes and desires

► See also [113.2](#) for wishes

**-r Wunsch** 'wish'

**-r Heiratswunsch** 'desire to get married'

**-r Kinderwunsch** 'desires that children have' or 'wish of a person or couple to have children'

**-s Wunschdenken** 'wishful thinking'

**-e Wunschvorstellung** *lit.* 'wishful idea/dream'

**wunschlos glücklich** *lit.* 'happy without any further needs/blissfully happy'

**wunschgemäß** 'according to plan/wish'

**wünschenswert/wünschbar** (*Swiss German*) 'desirable'

**Viele Ehepaare können sich ihren *Kinderwunsch* nie erfüllen.**

Many couples can never fulfil their desire to have children.

**Bei der Partnersuche hat er eine ganz bestimmte (*Wunsch*)vorstellung.**

When looking for a partner he has a certain ideal in mind.

**Eine schnelle Erholung der Wirtschaft ist jetzt *wünschenswert*.**

A quick economic recovery is now desirable.



## 93.4

## Enquiring after need

► See also [113.1](#) for hopes, and [90.3](#) on turning one's attention to somebody

Note the following for polite inquiries where a positive answer is often expected:

<i>Question</i>	<i>Reply</i>
<b>Darf ich euch heute Abend zum Essen einladen?</b> (For this construction see <a href="#">19.7</a> .) May I invite you to dinner tonight?	<b>Es tut uns leid, aber heute passt es uns leider nicht.</b> I'm sorry, unfortunately it isn't convenient tonight. <b>Ja, gerne.</b> Yes, thank you.
<b>Möchten Sie noch ein Glas Wein?</b> Would you like another glass of wine?	<b>Ja, gern. / Nein, danke.</b> Yes, please (Thank you). / No, thank you.
<b>Noch Käse?</b> More cheese?	<b>Danke, ich bin schon ganz satt. (informal)</b> No, thank you, I am already quite full.

NOTE

Do not use **voll** instead of **satt** as that either means you have had too much to drink or implies that you didn't enjoy what you have been eating.

► See [67.1–4b](#) for thanking somebody, [112.2](#) for satisfying needs and demands, [112.4](#) for saying that something is sufficient, and [112.5](#) for saying you have had enough to eat

## 94

## Expressing objections and complaints

## 94.1

## Putting somebody right in a polite way

Germans may sound less apologetic than many British speakers when they put somebody right about something. Although they can therefore sound rude to the faint-hearted Briton abroad, this is merely a cultural phenomenon and not meant to give offence. If you have reason to complain, do so in a straightforward manner or you won't be understood.

The most common polite introduction is:

**Entschuldigen Sie bitte, . . .**

Excuse me . . .

This can be followed by:

. . ., **aber ich sehe, dass hier etwas nicht stimmt.**

. . ., but I can see that something is not right here.

. . ., **aber Sie müssten sich dies hier, glaube ich, nochmal ansehen.**

. . ., but I think you should have another look at this.

. . ., **aber ich glaube, hier liegt ein Irrtum vor.**

. . ., but I think there is a mistake here.

. . ., **aber hier ist Ihnen wohl ein Fehler unterlaufen.**

. . ., but I think you've made a mistake here.

In turn, you can then add **Wenn Sie . . . machen wollen/würden** ‘if you’d do . . .’:

**Wenn Sie das bitte noch einmal überprüfen wollen.**

If you could please check this again.

**Wenn Sie dies hier bitte noch einmal durchgehen würden.**

If you could please go through this again.

► See also 63.4 on dealing with problems

## 94.2

## Making complaints

- (a) If something is not right and you want to complain without giving offence, use **das geht nicht** ‘it is not on’:

**Das geht doch nicht, dass Sie einfach vor meiner Garagenszufahrt parken.**

You can’t just park in front of my drive (like that).

**Was, du hast in der Klassenarbeit von deinem Nachbarn abgeschrieben?**

**Das geht wirklich nicht!**

What, you copied from your neighbour in the test? That’s simply not on!

- (b) If something has not been satisfactory:

**sich (bei jmdm.) (über etw./jmdn.) beschweren** ‘to complain (to sb.) (about sb./sth.)’

**sich (bei jmdm.) (über etw./jmdn.) beklagen** ‘to complain (to sb.) (about sb./sth.)’

**-e Beschwerde** ‘(official) complaint’

**Beschwerde ein\*legen** ‘to make a(n) official complaint’

**(über etw. (=acc.)/jmdn.) klagen** ‘to complain (about sth./sb.)’

(Note that **klagen** cannot take an accusative object.)

**(über etw./jmdn.) meckern** ‘to complain/moan (about sth./sb.)’ (often used in situations when a complaint is felt to be unfair)

**Er beschwerte/beklagte sich über den Krach im Hotel.**

He complained about the noise in the hotel.

**Die Reisegruppe beschwerte/beklagte sich beim Reiseleiter, weil das Hotel nicht dem Standard entsprach, den sie erwartet hatte.**

The tourist group complained to the courier because the hotel was not up to the standard they had expected.

**Wir haben Ihre Beschwerde vom 15. Juli erhalten.**

We have received your complaint of 15 July.

**Sie klagten, dass das Essen meistens kalt war.**

They complained that the food was mostly cold.

**Warum müsst ihr eigentlich immer über das Essen meckern?**

Why do you always have to go on/complain about the food?

- (c) The following informal expressions for complaining rudely have a varying potential for offence, depending on the geographical region where they are used, the tone of voice and the speaker’s general demeanour:

**-e Sauerei lit.** ‘sth. of a sow’ can refer to dirt or to treatment that is perceived to be unfair

**-e Schweinerei lit.** ‘sth. of a pig’ has the same meaning

**-r Mist!** ‘damn!’ means literally ‘manure’ and is not particularly offensive in public usage

**Scheiße!** ‘shit!’ on the other hand, is genuinely vulgar, although an extremely common expletive

**Was ist denn das für eine Sauerei!**

What a bloody mess!

**Unerhörte Schweinerei!**

It's a bloody disgrace!

**So eine Scheiße!**

Oh, shit!

**Da haben Sie einen Riesenmist gebaut!**

You have made a right ruddy mess of this.

**Das ist (doch) eine bodenlose Frechheit!**

What an incredible disgrace! / You've gone too far!

**Das ist einfach unverschämt!**

That is simply outrageous!

**Unverschämtheit, Sie!**

What an outrage!

- (d) Taking a complaint to court or other official authorities:

The formalities:

**-e Anklage** 'accusation'

**jmdn. an\*klagen** 'to charge sb.'

**jmdn. (bei Gericht) verklagen** 'to press (legal) charges against sb.'

**gegen jmdn. (eine) Anzeige erstatten** 'to report sb.'

**eine Klage ein\*reichen** 'to institute/start legal proceedings'

**eine Klage vor(s) Gericht bringen** 'to take a matter to court'

**jmdn. vor(s) Gericht ziehen** 'to take sb. to court'

**einen Verteidiger bestellen** 'to appoint a defence lawyer'

**eine Vorladung (vor Gericht) erhalten** 'to receive a summons (to appear in court)'

**-e Verhandlung/-r Prozess** 'trial/hearing'

**Widerspruch (gegen etw.) ein\*legen** 'to protest (against sth.)'

**Berufung (gegen ein Urteil) ein\*legen** 'to appeal (against a verdict)'

**in die Berufung gehen** 'to appeal'

**in die nächste Instanz gehen** 'to appeal'

**durch die Instanzen gehen** 'to go through the courts (of appeal)'

**Die Nachbarn hatten bei Gericht eine Klage eingereicht, weil der Hund immer die ganze Nacht bellte.**

The neighbours had started legal proceedings because the dog always barked all night long.

**Die Eltern wollten eine offizielle Beschwerde beim Direktor einlegen, weil ihre Tochter in der Schule ungerecht behandelt worden war.**

The parents wanted to lodge an official complaint with the head teacher as their daughter had been unfairly treated in school.

**Sie legte bei der Zeitung Widerspruch gegen den Abdruck der privaten Bilder ein.**

She made an official complaint to the newspaper about the publication of the private photographs.

**Der Anwalt des Angeklagten legte Berufung gegen das Urteil ein.**

The defendant's solicitor appealed against the verdict.

More informal ways of talking about legal proceedings include:

**Ich bringe Sie deswegen vors Gericht** (*formal*)/**vor den Kadi** (*informal*).  
I am going to take you to court for that.

**Dafür mache ich Ihnen einen Prozess.**  
I'll take you to court for that.

**Er hängt ihm einen Prozess an den Hals.** (*informal*)  
He took him to court. (*lit.* He hung a trial round his neck.)

**Der Prozess war durch alle Instanzen gegangen, bevor sie schließlich vom Bundesverfassungsgericht Recht bekam.**  
The case had gone through all the appeals before it was finally decided in her favour by the Federal Constitutional Court.

The parties:

**-r Angeklagte** 'accused, defendant'

**-r Kläger** 'plaintiff'

**eine Aussage zu etw./über etw. (= acc.) machen** 'to give evidence on sth.'

**-e Aussage zu etw./über etw. verweigern** 'to refuse to give evidence on sth.'

**-e Anklage verlesen** 'to read out the charges'

**Anklage wegen (+ gen.) (gegen jmdn.) erheben** 'to bring charges of . . . (against sb.)'

**jmdn. zu etw. befragen** 'to ask sb. about sth.'

**Die Zeugen sollten Aussagen zum Tathergang machen.**

The witnesses were supposed to give evidence about what happened.

**Der Angeklagte verweigerte die Aussage.**

The accused refused to give evidence.

**Die Zeugen machten widersprüchliche Aussagen.**

The witnesses gave contradictory evidence.

**Der Staatsanwalt verlas die Anklage.**

The prosecution read out the charge.

**Die Staatsanwaltschaft erhob Anklage wegen Mordes.**

The Crown Prosecution Service brought a charge of murder.

**Die Verteidigung befragte die Zeugen zum Tathergang.**

The defence counsel asked the witnesses about the events.

**Diese Anwaltskanzlei übernimmt hauptsächlich Scheidungsfälle.**

This solicitors' practice deals mainly with divorce cases.

**Der Richter verkündete schließlich das Urteil.**

The judge finally pronounced judgment.

The sentence:

**jmdn. einer Tat schuldig sprechen** 'to find sb. guilty of a crime'

**lebenslänglich/fünf Jahre bekommen** 'to receive life/five years'

**das Urteil lautet auf (+ acc.)** 'the sentence is for . . .'

**auf Bewährung entlassen** 'to suspend the sentence'

**Die Geschworenen *sprachen* den Angeklagten (des Mordes) *schuldig*.**  
The jury found the accused guilty (of murder).

**Der Angeklagte *bekam lebenslänglich*.**  
The accused received life.

**Das Urteil lautete auf zwei Jahre Freiheitsentzug mit Bewährung.**  
She/he got a two-year suspended sentence.

## 94.3

## Demanding one's rights

-s Recht 'right'  
sein Recht verlangen 'to demand one's rights'  
sein Recht bekommen 'to get justice'  
Recht haben 'to be right'  
im Recht sein/im Unrecht sein 'to be right/wrong'  
rechtens sein 'to be legal'  
auf etw. (= dat.) bestehen 'to insist on sth.'

**Ich verlange mein Recht/mein Geld zurück.**  
I demand my rights/my money back.

**Wenn ich mein Recht nicht sofort bekomme, gehe ich mit Ihnen vor Gericht.**  
If I don't get justice immediately I'll take you to court.

**Natürlich hat sie wieder mal Recht gehabt. (informal)**  
Of course she was right again.

**Das ist mein gutes Recht.**  
That's my right.

**Ich bin im Recht und Sie sind im Unrecht.**  
I am right and you are wrong.

**Das ist nicht rechtens, dass Sie uns ständig nachts mit Ihrer Musik belästigen.**  
You have no right to bother us continually with your music at night.

**Er bestand auf seinem Recht, die Kinder regelmäßig zu sehen.**  
He insisted on his right to see the children regularly.

## 94.4

## Different types of rights

(a) Speaking about rights in general terms:

sein Recht auf etw. (= acc.) aus\*üben 'to exercise one's right to sth.'  
ein Recht auf etw. (= acc.) haben 'to have a right to sth.'  
ein Vorrecht genießen 'to enjoy a privilege'

**Sein Wahlrecht sollte man unbedingt ausüben.**  
One should really exercise one's right to vote.

**Ich habe auch ein Recht auf ein bisschen Freizeit.**  
I also have a right to some leisure time.

**Wer Vorrechte genießt, hat oft auch viele Pflichten.**  
Those who enjoy privileges often also have many obligations.

(b) Human and civil rights and liberties:

-e **Menschenrechte** (pl.) ‘human rights’  
**Bürgerrechte** ‘civil rights’  
 -s **Recht auf freie Entfaltung der Persönlichkeit** ‘right to develop freely as a person’  
 (i.e. choose work, place of residence, etc.)  
 -s **Asylrecht** ‘right of asylum’  
 -e **Freiheit** ‘freedom’  
 -e **Bewegungsfreiheit** ‘freedom to move/of movement’  
 -e **Pressefreiheit** ‘freedom of the press’  
 -e **Meinungsfreiheit** ‘freedom of speech’  
 -e **akademische Freiheit** ‘academic freedom (to teach, research and publish freely)’  
 -e **Versammlungsfreiheit** ‘freedom to gather (as a group or party)’  
 -e **Religionsfreiheit** ‘freedom of religion’

(c) Parental rights:

-s **Elternrecht** ‘parental right’  
 -s **Sorgerecht (für jmdn.)** ‘custody (of sb.)’  
 -r/-e **Erziehungsberechtigte** person responsible for bringing up a child and taking decisions on its behalf  
 -r **Vormund** ‘legal guardian’  
 -e **Vormundschaft** ‘guardianship’

## 94.5 Finding a solution

► For opinion, agreement and disagreement, see 107–9

(a) Looking for a solution:

**sich um etw. bemühen** ‘to make an effort to do sth.’

**etw. vor\*schlagen** ‘to suggest sth.’

**nach etw. suchen** ‘to search for sth.’

**Alle Delegierten bemühten sich um die Lösung des Konflikts.**

All the delegates made an effort to solve the conflict.

**Der französische Delegierte schlug eine Kompromisslösung vor.**

The French delegate suggested a compromise solution.

**Auf der Konferenz suchte man nach einer Einigung in der Frage der Urwaldnutzung.**

At the conference an agreement was sought on the use of the tropical forest.

(b) Arriving at a solution:

**zu einer Einigung über etw. (= acc.) kommen/gelangen** ‘to come to an agreement about sth.’

**sich auf etw. (= acc.) einigen** ‘to agree on sth.’

**etw. akzeptieren/an\*nehmen** ‘to accept/adopt sth.’

**Der Vorstand kam/gelang erst um Mitternacht zu einer Einigung.**

The board only came to an agreement at midnight.

**Man einigte sich darauf, den gegenwärtigen Vertrag zu verlängern.**

Agreement was reached that the present treaty should be extended.

**Der Vorschlag des Präsidenten wurde (einstimmig/mehrheitlich) angenommen.**

The suggestion of the president was accepted (unanimously/by a majority).

**Der Einigungsvorschlag wurde schließlich akzeptiert.**

The agreement/compromise was finally accepted.

## 95

## Giving and seeking promises and assurances

## 95.1

## Assurance of services

An assurance of service will usually take place in a fairly formal setting. Short exchanges are given here to cover a variety of common situations:

(a) At a garage:

**selbstverständlich** 'of course'  
**das geht** 'it's OK/that will work'  
**ist (etc.) fertig** 'is (etc.) ready'  
**geht in Ordnung** 'right you are'

*Query*

**Ich möchte meinen Wagen nächsten Dienstag zum großen Kundendienst bringen. Geht das?**

I'd like to book my car in for a major service next Tuesday. Would that be OK?

**Wann kann ich den Wagen abholen? /**

**Wann ist er fertig?**

When can I pick the car up? / When is it going to be ready?

*Reply*

**Ja, selbstverständlich, das geht.**

**Bringen Sie ihn gegen 8.30 Uhr.**

Yes, of course, that's OK. Bring it in about 8.30 a.m.

**Er ist gegen 16 Uhr fertig. / Wir**

**haben ihn gegen 16 Uhr für Sie bereit.**

It will be ready around 4 p.m. / We will have it ready for you around 4 p.m.

► See 34.2 for use of the present tense

(b) When ordering something from stock:

**etw. vorrätig haben** 'to have sth. in stock'

**etw. bestellen** 'to order sth.'

**etw. für jmdn. zurück\*legen** 'to put sth. aside for sb.'

**jmdm. etw. liefern** 'to deliver sth. to sb.'

**etw. liefern lassen** 'to have sth. delivered'

**etw. für jmdn. bereit\*halten** 'to have sth. ready for sb.'

**jmdm. etw. zu\*sichern** 'to assure sb. of sth.'

**jmdm. etw. zu\*sagen** 'to promise sth. to sb.'

► See 71 and 72 for availability and non-availability

<i>Query</i>	<i>Reply</i>
<b>Haben Sie Modell 453 vorrätig?</b>	<b>Ja, das ist da. / Nein, das müssten wir bestellen.</b>
Have you got model 453 in stock?	Yes, we've got it. / No, we'd have to order it.
<b>Könnten Sie das für mich zurücklegen/ bestellen/bis zum 15. liefern?</b>	<b>Selbstverständlich, wir halten es für Sie zum Abholen bereit. / Wir rufen Sie an, sobald es eintrifft. / Ja, wir können Ihnen das zusichern/zusagen.</b>
Could you put it to one side for me/ order it for me/deliver by the 15th?	Of course. We will have it ready for you to collect. / We will call you as soon as it arrives. / Yes, we can assure you (of that).
<b>Könnten Sie mir das nach Hause liefern? / Kann ich mir das liefern lassen?</b>	<b>Ja, selbstverständlich.</b>
Can you deliver this to my home address? / Yes, of course.	
Can I have this delivered?	

(c) Talking about guarantees and warranties:

**-e Garantie, -e Garantiezeit** 'warranty (period)  
**Garantie auf etw.** (= acc.) **haben** 'to have a warranty on sth.'  
**etw. gewährleisten** 'to guarantee sth.'  
**Gewähr/Haftung für etw. übernehmen** 'to guarantee sth./accept liability for sth.'

**Wie lange läuft die Garantiezeit bei diesem Föhn? / Wie lange habe ich Garantie auf diesen Föhn?**

How long is the warranty period on this hairdryer?

**Sie haben ein Jahr Garantie auf alle Teile und zwei Jahre auf Wartung.**

You have a one-year guarantee on parts and two years on labour.

**Können Sie mir die höchste Qualität gewährleisten?**

Can you guarantee me the highest quality?

**Wir können keine Gewähr für dieses Produkt übernehmen.**

We cannot accept liability for this product.

(d) Declining responsibility, withholding a guarantee (formal):

**Die Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr.**

No responsibility is accepted for the accuracy of this information.

**Wir übernehmen keine Haftung.**

No responsibility is accepted.

**Die Garantie ist doch schon voriges Jahr abgelaufen.**

The warranty period ran out last year.

## 95.2 Promises between people

For binding promises, such as those concerned with getting married, use the verb **versprechen** 'to promise' and its derivatives:



**sich einander die Treue versprechen** ‘to promise to be faithful to each other’  
**das Eheversprechen** ‘marriage vows’  
**-s Heiratsversprechen** ‘engagement’  
*but: sich mit jmdm. verloben* ‘to get engaged to sb.’

Further promises can be made by using:

**jmdm. etw. versprechen** ‘to promise sth. to sb.’  
**ein Versprechen (jmdm. gegenüber) ablegen** ‘to make a promise (to sb.)’  
**jmdm. ein Versprechen geben/jmdm. sein (etc.) Ehrenwort geben** ‘to make sb. a promise/give sb. one’s word of honour’  
**jmdm. das Blaue vom Himmel versprechen** ‘to promise sb. the earth’ (*lit.* the blue from the sky)  
**sein (etc.) Versprechen halten/brechen** ‘to keep/break one’s promise’

**versichern** means ‘to promise’ in the sense of assuring, insuring or confirming:

**(jmdm.) versichern, etw. zu tun** ‘to promise (sb.) that you will do sth.’  
**(jmdm.) etw. versichern** ‘to assure (sb.) of sth.’  
**etw. versichern** ‘to insure sth.’  
**eine Versicherung ab\*schließen** ‘to get an insurance’  
**eine Versicherung kündigen** ‘to cancel an insurance’

**Er versicherte (ihr), pünktlich zu kommen.**

He promised (her) to be on time.

**Sie versicherte ihm, dass sie es ernst meinte.**

She assured him that she was serious about it.

**Sie versicherten ihnen ihre Unschuld.**

They assured them of their innocence.

**Ich habe gestern meinen neuen Wagen versichert.**

I insured my new car yesterday.

**Haben Sie schon eine Hausratsversicherung abgeschlossen?**

Have you already got home contents insurance?

**Hiermit möchte ich meine Gebäudeversicherung zum 1. März kündigen.**

I hereby wish to cancel my building insurance as of 1 March.

The phrase **(jmdm.) etw. beteuern** means ‘to promise (sb.) sth’ in the sense of ‘to protest’ where the sincerity of the assurance is in doubt:

**Er beteuerte ihr seine Unschuld.**

He protested his innocence/promised her that he was innocent.

**Alle Beteuerungen seines guten Willens halfen nichts.**

All protestations of his good will were to no avail.

**Sie beteuerte, ihn nie belogen zu haben.**

She assured (him) that she had never lied to him.

Note the expression **ein Geschäft mit Handschlag ab\*machen** ‘to shake hands on a deal’.

## 96

## Issuing, accepting and declining invitations and offers

## 96.1

## Issuing invitations

► See also 60.6 on welcoming, 61 on making introductions, 63 on eating and drinking, and 66.7 on congratulating

## (a) Inviting:

More informal invitations are extended over the phone:

**Wir wollten euch fragen, ob ihr nächsten Samstag zu einem Glas Wein zu uns kommen wollt.**

We wanted to ask you whether you would like to join us for a glass of wine next Saturday.

Formal invitations may be printed or issued in a handwritten letter:

**Hiermit möchten wir dich und deine Freundin zu Pauls fünfzigstem Geburtstag einladen.**

We'd like to invite you and your girlfriend to Paul's fiftieth birthday (party).

**Wir würden uns freuen, wenn du und Hannelore zu Peters Taufe kämt.**

We would be glad if you and Hannelore could come to Peter's christening.

Printed invitations often have the abbreviation **u.A.w.g.** printed in the left-hand bottom corner. Fully spelt out this is **um Antwort wird gebeten** 'RSVP' and requires a written reply.

## (b) Occasions:

If the invitation is **zu einem Glas Wein** 'for a glass of wine', it is more than likely that there will be other drinks and snacks, but your hosts won't serve dinner. This is a very common form of invitation in Germany.

**zum Abendessen** 'for dinner' means that there will be a meal, but not necessarily a hot one.

**zum Kaffee** 'for coffee' means that you should come between 3 and 4 o'clock in the afternoon. There will be coffee, tea and cakes. You will probably be expected to leave around 6 o'clock at the latest.

**zum Geburtstag** 'for a birthday' is probably a bigger occasion with food and drinks served.

**zu einer Party** 'for a party' is probably an occasion for the younger generation, including music and a larger number of guests but probably not much food.

**zu einer Disco** 'for a disco' is a party given by hosts as young as 10 or 11 years old, probably with quite a number of friends and including music.

For all other occasions of a more personal nature the invitation will give some indication of what to expect.

## (c) Presents:

When presenting the present or flowers, you might say:

**Hier ist eine Kleinigkeit für Sie.**

Here is a little gift for you.

**Darf ich dir/Ihnen diesen Strauß geben.**

May I give you this bunch of flowers.

**Hier ist etwas für die Kinder.**  
Here is something for the children.

**Bitte schön!**  
Here you are.

Appreciative replies can be phrased in the following ways:

**Vielen Dank, aber das war doch wirklich nicht nötig.**  
Many thanks, but that was really not necessary.

**Danke, das ist sehr nett von dir/Ihnen.**  
Thank you, that is very kind of you.

To which polite people might reply:

**Gern geschehen.**  
You are welcome.

**Nichts zu danken!**  
Not at all.

► See 67 on giving and receiving thanks

(d) At a dance:

In the ballroom one could say:

**Darf ich bitten.**  
*lit.* May I ask you (for a dance).

If you want to decline, you say:

**Ich tanze leider nicht.**  
I am afraid I am not dancing.

If, as a woman, you don't take up the offer to dance or if you reject a date, the comment may be:

**Sie hat mir einen Korb gegeben.**  
She has turned me down.

## 96.2 Making an offer

(a) To buy or sell something:

Common ways of talking about offers include the verb **an\*bieten** 'to offer' and its noun **-s Angebot**:

**Wir können Ihnen diese gebrauchte Kamera zu einem besonders günstigen Preis anbieten.**  
We can offer you this second-hand camera at a particularly favourable price.

**Können Sie uns Ihre Angebote zeigen?**  
Can you show us what you have on offer?

**Wir möchten ein Angebot auf dieses Grundstück machen.**  
We would like to put in an offer on this plot of land.

**Der potentielle Käufer bleibt bei seinem Angebot/erhöht sein Angebot/senkt sein Angebot.**

The potential buyer is sticking to his offer/is increasing his offer/is reducing his offer.

**Sie nahmen das Angebot von 500.000 Euro an/lehnten das Angebot ab.**

They accepted the offer of 500,000 euros/rejected the offer.

(b) Special offers:

**-s Sonderangebot** 'special offer'  
**-s Schnäppchen** 'good buy/bargain' (*informal*)

**Gurken sind heute im Sonderangebot.**

Cucumbers are on special offer today.

**Im Sommerschlussverkauf habe ich heute ein wirklich gutes Schnäppchen gemacht.**

I got a really good bargain in the summer sales today.

(c) Offering to do something:

In the form of a question:

**Möchtest du, dass ich heute auf deine Tochter aufpasse?**

Would you like me to babysit your daughter today?

**Soll ich für dich einkaufen gehen?**

Should I go shopping for you?

**Kann ich dir etwas aus der Stadt mitbringen?**

Can I get you something from town?

**Was kann ich für Sie tun?**

What can I do for you?

► See also [63.6d](#) for offering to prepare food

With an introduction:

**Es macht mir wirklich nichts aus, für dich miteinzukaufen.**

I really don't mind doing your shopping as well.

**Melde dich/Lass es mich wissen, wenn ich dir irgendwie helfen kann.**

Let me know if I can help you in any way.

**Sagen Sie mir, was ich für Sie tun kann.**

Tell me what I can do for you.

**Ich helfe dir gerne, den Rasen zu mähen.**

I am quite willing to help you mow the lawn.

► See [42.3f](#) for verb completion by an infinitive clause with **zu**; see also [8.7](#) for word order

## 96.3

## Accepting and declining an invitation or offer

► See [111.2c](#) for looking forward to something

## (a) Accepting:

Informally:

**Das ist nett von euch, wir kommen gern.**

That is nice of you. We'd like to come.

More formally:

**Wir nehmen Ihre freundliche Einladung zum Faschingsball gerne an.**

We would like to accept your kind invitation to the carnival ball.

**Ich komme gerne zu Peters Taufe.**

I'd be glad to come to Peter's christening.

## (b) Declining:

► See also [67.5](#) on declining help and offers

Informally:

**Leider geht es am nächsten Freitag nicht. Wir haben schon etwas vor.**

Unfortunately we cannot make it next Friday. We've already got something else on.

More formally:

**Wir können Ihre freundliche Einladung zur Jubiläumsfeier leider nicht annehmen, da wir an diesem Wochenende schon Gäste eingeladen haben.**

We unfortunately cannot accept your kind invitation to the anniversary celebration as we have already invited some guests for that weekend.

**Danke, aber wir sind leider schon verabredet.**

Thank you but we already have a previous engagement.

**Ich komme gerne, aber mein Mann hat leider Dienst und kann daher nicht (mit)kommen.**

I'd be glad to come but my husband is unfortunately on duty/at work and will therefore not be able to come (along).

Very formally:

**Es tut uns leid, Ihnen mitteilen zu müssen, dass wir Ihr Angebot nicht annehmen können.**

We are sorry to have to tell you that we are unable to accept your offer.

**Er hat das Angebot abgelehnt/ausgeschlagen.**

He rejected the offer.

**Wir haben Ihr Angebot reiflich erwogen, können Ihnen aber leider nicht zusagen.**

We have seriously considered your offer but are unfortunately unable to accept it.

## 97

## Seeking, granting and denying permission

## 97.1

## Seeking permission

The most common way to seek permission is to use **dürfen** 'may'. As in English, this is often replaced by **können** 'can' in everyday conversation, even though strictly speaking this expresses ability rather than permission.

► See [35](#) for modal verbs, and [39.2b](#) for the use of the subjunctive to make requests for permission more polite

**Darf/Dürfte ich mal kurz telefonieren?**

May I make a brief phone call?

► See [35.1–6](#)

**Kann/Könnte ich vielleicht Ihr Fahrrad ausleihen?**

Could I possibly borrow your bicycle?

Another way of asking for permission involves **es geht lit.** 'it goes, it is OK':

**Geht es, dass/wenn ich heute länger wegbleibe?**

Is it OK if I stay out a little longer today?

**Ginge es, dass Sie mir die Zahlungsfrist um einen Monat verlängern?**

Would it be possible for you to extend the repayment period by a month?

Informal replies are normally quite idiomatic. For limited consent use:

**Na gut. / Also gut.**

Well, OK then.

**Wenn es (denn) sein muss.**

If it has to be.

**Also, ich bin (nicht) dagegen.**

Well, I am (not) against it.

*Consent*

**Ja, das geht.**

Yes, that's OK.

**Ja, das geht auf jeden Fall.**

Yes, that's certainly OK.

**Das passt mir (gut).**

That suits me (fine).

**Das ist mir (sehr) recht.**

That's (certainly) OK with me.

**Gut, einverstanden.**

OK, agreed.

**Ja, ich bin einverstanden damit.**

OK, I agree.

*Refusal*

**Nein, das geht nicht.**

No, that's not OK.

**Nein, das geht auf keinen Fall.**

No, that's certainly not OK.

**Das passt mir (gar) nicht.**

That doesn't suit me (at all).

**Das ist mir (gar) nicht recht.**

That's not (at all) OK with me.

**Nein, das kommt überhaupt nicht in Frage.**

No, that is out of the question.

**Nein, das geht wirklich nicht (an).**

No, that is really too much.

## 97.2

## Granting and denying permission

(jmdm.) **etw. genehmigen** 'to permit sb. to do sth.'

**jmdm. etw. erlauben** 'to allow sb. to do sth.'

**-e Erlaubnis** 'permission'

**verbieten** 'to forbid'

**-s Verbot** 'ban/prohibition'

**zu\*lassen** 'to allow (to happen)/register'

The verb **genehmigen** and its derivatives imply permission or consent of an official nature:

**Der Direktor hat schließlich die Versetzung des Schülers genehmigt.**

The headmaster finally permitted the pupil to move up to the next class.

**Habt ihr schon die Baugenehmigung für euer Haus?**

Have you already got planning (*lit.* building) permission for your house?

The verb **erlauben** and its noun **-e Erlaubnis** refer to permission given or denied to somebody by a person or institution in authority. The opposite of **erlauben** is **verbieten**, together with its noun **-s Verbot**:

**Wenn ich abends ausgehen will, muss ich mir erst die Erlaubnis meiner Eltern holen.**

When I want to go out in the evening I first need to get permission from my parents.

**Wer hat ihm denn erlaubt, einfach aus der Schule wegzubleiben?**

Who allowed him simply to stay away from school?

**Es ist streng verboten, in den Klassenräumen zu rauchen.**

It is strictly forbidden to smoke in the classrooms.

**Meine Eltern haben es mir (= dat.) erlaubt/verboten, in diese Disco zu gehen.**

My parents allowed/forbade me to go to this disco.

**Sie haben ihm (= dat.) ihr Haus (= acc.) verboten.**

They forbade him to enter their house.

The verb **zu\*lassen** has both a very restricted meaning of 'to register' and a more general meaning of 'to permit/let happen'. It is more often used with **nicht** and can imply intolerance:

**Das Motorrad war nicht einmal zugelassen.**

The motorbike wasn't even registered.

**Ich kann es nicht zulassen, dass so ein Lehrer meine Kinder unterrichtet.**

I cannot allow a teacher like that to teach my children.

A number of near-synonymous expressions fall into the same category of formal permitting or empowering:

**jmdn. zu etw. ermächtigen** 'to empower sb. to do sth.'

**jmdm. die Befugnis zu etw. geben** 'to give sb. permission to do sth.'

**jmdm. die Befugnis zu etw. entziehen** 'to withdraw permission for sb. to do sth.'

**jmdm. sein Einverständnis zu etw. geben** 'to give one's approval/consent to sb. doing sth.'

**jmdm. sein Einverständnis zu etw. verweigern** 'to deny one's approval to sb. doing sth.'

**-e Vollmacht über etw. (= acc.) erhalten** 'to be granted authority to do sth./receive probate'

**Du bist gar nicht *dazu ermächtigt/bevollmächtigt*, so eine Entscheidung zu treffen.**

You haven't got the authority to take such a decision.

**Ich *gebe dir die Befugnis*, den geheimen Raum zu betreten.**

I'll give you permission to enter the secret room.

**Er *hat gar keine Befugnis*, auf das Konto zuzugreifen.**

He does not have permission to access this account.

**Sie hat das *ohne mein Einverständnis/mit meinem Einverständnis* getan.**

She did this without my approval/with my approval.

**Zu diesem Vertrag *verweigere ich mein Einverständnis*.**

I refuse to approve this treaty/contract.

**Die Erben haben *Vollmacht über die Geldangelegenheiten der Großmutter erhalten*.**

The heirs have been granted power of attorney for their grandmother's financial affairs.

## Making, accepting and declining suggestions

There are three basic ways of expressing suggestions:

- (a) Making a suggestion using **vor\*schlagen**:

**jmdm. etw. vor\*schlagen** 'to suggest sth. to sb.'  
**-r Vorschlag** 'suggestion'

**Ich *schlage vor*, dass wir uns nächste Woche wieder treffen.**

I suggest that we meet again next week.

**Er *schlug vor*, den Plan anzunehmen.**

He suggested that they adopt the plan.

► See 42.3f for verb completion by infinitive clauses with **zu**; see also 8.7a for word order

**Darf ich mal einen *Vorschlag machen*?**

May I make a suggestion?

**Wie *lautet Ihr Vorschlag denn*?**

And what is your suggestion?

**Sie müssen Ihre *Vorschläge bis zum Ende des Monats bei uns einreichen*.**

You have to submit your suggestions to us by the end of the month.

- (b) Being for or against a suggestion:

**etw. (einstimmig) an\*nehmen/ab\*lehnen** 'to accept/refuse sth. (unanimously)'  
**für/gegen etw. sein** 'to be for/against sth.'  
**sich für/gegen etw./jmdn. aus\*sprechen** 'to speak for/against sth./sb.'

**Der *Vorschlag des Vorsitzenden wurde einstimmig angenommen/abgelehnt*.**

The chairman's suggestion was unanimously accepted/rejected.

**Die *Mehrheit war für/gegen den Plan*.**

The majority was for/against the plan.



**Nur eine Minderheit sprach sich für/gegen das Projekt aus.**

Only a minority spoke in favour of/against the project.

- (c) Making a suggestion using the subjunctive or conditional:

**Wie wäre es, wenn . . . ?** 'How about if . . . ?'

**Wie wäre es mit . . . ?** 'How about . . . (+ noun)?'

These constructions require subjunctive II or a conditional (which may make the suggestion sound a little more formal):

**Wie wäre es, wenn wir erst einmal einen Spaziergang *machten/machen würden*?**

How about if we went for a walk first?

**Wie wäre es, wenn du schon heute zu uns *käme*st?**

How about if you came to us today?

**Wie wäre es jetzt mit einem Kaffee?**

How about a coffee now?

Appropriate replies to such a suggestion are:

**Das wäre eine gute Idee/wäre toll!**

That would be a good idea/wonderful!

**Ich glaube, das wäre nicht so sinnvoll/keine gute Idee.**

I think that wouldn't be sensible/such a good idea.

- (d) Suggestions in the form of a question using a modal verb:

**Könnten wir nicht schon morgen in die Ferien fahren?**

Couldn't we go on holiday tomorrow?

**Sollte er nicht erst den Professor fragen?**

Shouldn't he ask the professor first?

**Müsste man nicht mehr Geld mitnehmen?**

Wouldn't one have to take more money?

- (e) Suggestions using **lassen**:

**Lass mich nochmal über dein Angebot schlafen, bevor ich mich entscheide.**

Let me sleep on your offer (again) before I decide.

**Lass uns doch mal in die neue Boutique gehen.**

Let us have a look at the new boutique.

► For **lassen** see [35.2](#) and [35.6](#)

## Issuing and responding to warnings

### Public and semi-public warnings

- (a) Weather warnings:

-e **Hochwasserwarnung** 'flood warning'

-e **Sturm-/Gewitterwarnung** 'storm/thunderstorm warning'

-e **Schlechtwetterwarnung** 'severe weather warning'

-e **Terrorwarnung** 'terror warning'

**jmdn. warnen, etw. nicht zu tun/jmdn. davor warnen, etw. zu tun** 'to warn sb. not to do sth./against doing sth.'

**In den Nachrichten wurde gerade eine *Sturmwarnung* gesendet/  
*durchgegeben*.**

A storm warning has just been broadcast on the news.

**Der ADAC hat gerade bekannt gegeben, dass wir *mit schlechtem Wetter rechnen müssen*.**

The ADAC (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Automobil-Club, similar to the AA*) has just announced that we can expect bad weather.

**Laut Wetterbericht sollen wir uns *auf Hochwasser gefasst machen*.**

According to the weather forecast we should prepare ourselves for flooding.

**Die Medien warnen vor den schlechten Straßenzuständen.**

The media are warning of bad road conditions.

**Wegen der Lawinengefahr werden alle Gäste gewarnt, *nicht abseits der Pisten Ski zu fahren*.**

**Wegen der Lawinengefahr werden alle Gäste *davor gewarnt, abseits der Pisten Ski zu fahren*.**

Because of the danger of avalanches all guests are warned not to ski off piste.

**Nach Veröffentlichung zweier Drohvideos warnen Sicherheitsbehörden vor Terroranschlägen.**

Following the broadcasting of two threatening videos, the security services are warning about possible terrorist attacks.

► See 42.3f for verb completion by infinitive clauses with **zu**; see also 8.7a for word order

(b) Warnings and alarms in emergencies and wartime:

**Die *Flutwarnung* wurde sechs Stunden vor der Springflut durchgegeben.**

The flood warning was broadcast six hours before the spring tide.

**Heute Morgen gab es wieder einen *Tieffliegeralarm*.**

There was another low-flying aircraft alarm this morning.

**Die Bevölkerung war ständig in *Alarmbereitschaft*. (formal)**

The population was continuously in a state of alert.

**Sogar in London gibt es manchmal einen *Bombenalarm*.**

Even in London there is occasionally a bomb scare.

**In einem *Notfall* muss man die *Polizei/die Feuerwehr alarmieren*. (formal)**

In an emergency you must call the police/the fire brigade.

**Bei einem *Unfall* muss man, wenn möglich, die *Warnblinkanlage einschalten*.**

In case of an accident you must, if possible, switch on hazard lights.

**Wenn der *Notdienst* mit *Blaulicht* und *Martinshorn* kommt, muss man die *Straße räumen*.**

When the emergency vehicle arrives with lights flashing and its siren sounding, you must get off the road.

(c) Warnings of further potentially unsafe conditions:

**jmdn. warnen** ‘to warn/caution sb.’  
**jmdn. ermahnen, etw. zu tun** ‘to urge sb. to do sth.’ (*formal*)  
**-e Ermahnung** ‘exhortation’ (*formal*)  
**sei vorsichtig** ‘beware/be careful’  
**pass auf/aufgepasst** ‘beware/watch out’  
**es besteht . . . Gefahr** ‘there is a danger of . . .’  
**es gibt Gefahren** ‘there are dangers’

**Alle Autofahrer wurden von der Polizei gewarnt, nicht alkoholisiert zu fahren.**  
 All motorists were warned by the police not to drink and drive.

**Vor Taschendieben wird gewarnt!** (*formal*)  
 Beware of pickpockets.

**Der Fußgänger wurde von der Polizei verwarnet, weil er bei Rot über die Straße gegangen war.**  
 The pedestrian was given a warning by the police because he had crossed the road when the lights were on red.

**Er kam mit einer Verwarnung weg/davon.**  
 He got off with a caution.

**Sie ermahnte den Fahrer immer wieder, langsamer zu fahren, weil die Straßen vereist waren.**  
 She urged the driver again and again to go more slowly, as the roads were icy.

► See 42.3f for verb completion by infinitive clauses with **zu**; see also 8.7a for word order

**Vorsicht, Baustelle! Eltern haften für ihre Kinder.**  
 Caution, construction site. Parents are legally liable for their children.

**Vorsicht, bissiger Hund. / Cave canem. (Latin)**  
 Beware of the (*lit.* biting) dog.

► For the case in these constructions, see 17.3

**Seid vorsichtig, es könnte glatt sein.**  
 Be careful, it could be slippery/icy.

► See 41.1

**Achtung aufgepasst, da kommt ein Wagen!**  
 Watch out, a car is coming.

**Es besteht Explosionsgefahr/Feuergefahr.**  
 There is a danger of explosion/fire.

**Für kleine Kinder gibt es in der Küche viele Gefahren.**  
 There are many dangers in the kitchen for small children.

(d) Warnings in games and at school:

**-e gelbe Karte** ‘yellow card’  
**-e rote Karte** ‘red card’  
**einen blauen Brief bekommen** ‘to receive a letter (in a blue envelope)’ from school indicating to parents that their child is in danger of not moving up to the next grade/year; now also used in political contexts

(e) Reacting to warnings:

**eine Warnung befolgen** 'to heed a warning'  
**eine Warnung missachten/aus\*schlagen** 'to ignore a warning'  
**eine Warnung (nicht) ernst nehmen** 'to (not) take a warning seriously'  
**sich vor\*sehen, etw. nicht zu tun** 'to be careful not to do sth.'  
**auf etw. (= acc.)/jmdn. auf\*passen** 'to pay attention to sth./sb.' or 'look after sth./sb.'  
**auf etw. (= acc.) achten** 'to pay attention to sth.'  
**etw. beachten** 'to respect sth.'  
**sich (= acc.) vor etw. hüten/in Acht nehmen** 'to beware of sth.'  
**auf etw. (= acc.) achtgeben** 'to pay attention to sth.'

**Der Skifahrer hatte die Warnung nicht befolgt.**

The skier had not heeded the warning.

**In den Bergen sollte man Warnungen von Einheimischen ernst nehmen/nicht ausschlagen.**

In the mountains one should take seriously/not ignore the locals' warnings.

**Ich sah mich vor, nicht zu schnell zu fahren.**

I took care not to drive too fast.

**Sie passten auf die Kinder auf.**

They looked after the children/paid attention to the children.

**Ich kann mich jetzt nicht unterhalten, denn ich muss auf die Straße achten.**

I cannot chat now because I have to concentrate on the road.

**Die Familie beachtete die Sturmwarnung nicht.**

The family didn't heed the storm warning.

**Vor großen Hunden sollten sich besonders Kinder in Acht nehmen.**

Children especially should beware of big dogs.

**Beim Nähen musst du auf die Nadel achtgeben. Sonst kannst du dich/dir in den Finger stechen.**

When you sew you need to be careful with the needle. Otherwise you might prick your finger.

► See 37 for the use of reflexive verbs

## 99.2 Threat-like warnings

**wenn ... nicht, (dann) ...** 'if ... not, (then) ...'

**jmdn. warnen** 'to warn sb.'

**jmdn. mit etwas drohen** 'to threaten to do sth. to sb.'

**eine Drohung wahr machen** 'to carry out a threat'

**Wenn du das nicht bis nächste Woche kannst, bekommst du Probleme.**

If you cannot do it by next week you will have problems.

**Ich warne Sie, bringen Sie die Sache jetzt in Ordnung oder sie wird Folgen für Sie haben.**

I warn you, deal with this matter now or it will have serious consequences for you.

**Ihm drohte eine Haftstrafe.**

He was in danger of receiving a prison sentence.

**Er drohte ihm, ihn bei der Polizei anzuzeigen, wenn er nicht zahlte.**  
He threatened to report him to the police if he did not pay.

**Er nahm die Drohung nicht ernst.**  
He didn't take the threat seriously.

**Du willst es nicht anders. Ich muss meine Drohung wahr machen.**  
You leave me no choice. I shall just have to carry out my threat.

**Jetzt gibt's aber Krach! / Jetzt schlägt's aber dreizehn! (very informal)**  
That's the limit! I won't put up with this any longer!

# XIV

## Conveying attitudes and mental states

100

Asserting and denying the truth of something

100.1

Commenting on the truthfulness of something

**Das ist ganz/völlig richtig/falsch.** ‘That’s entirely correct/completely wrong.’

**Das stimmt (eigentlich).** / **Das stimmt (eigentlich) nicht (ganz).** ‘That is (in fact) correct.’ / ‘That isn’t (really) (quite) correct.’

**Das ist (wirklich)/(eigentlich) (nicht) wahr.** ‘That’s (really)/(actually) (not) true.’

**Das ist die ganze Wahrheit.** ‘That’s the whole truth.’

**Das ist nur die halbe Wahrheit.** ‘That’s only half the truth.’

**So ein (völliger) Unsinn/Blödsinn (very derogatory)/Schwachsinn!** (*probably insulting*)  
‘(That’s) (total) nonsense/rubbish!’

A dictionary will provide further reference for expressions with:

**wahr sein** ‘to be true’

**-e Wahrheit/Unwahrheit** ‘truth/untruth’

**gelogen** ‘lied/a lie’

**lügen** ‘to lie’

**-e Lüge** ‘lie’

100.2

Expressing belief or disbelief

The most common way to express belief or disbelief involves **jmdm. etw. glauben** ‘to believe (sb.) sth.’, and **an jmdn./etw. glauben** ‘to believe in sb./sth.’

► See [12](#) for the order of noun and pronoun objects, and [42.3a–b](#) for verb completion with one or two elements

**Ich glaube ihm seine Ausrede.**

I believe (him) his pretext/excuse.

**Wir glauben an Gott.**

We believe in God.

**Die Großmutter glaubt fest an sie.**

The grandmother firmly believes in her.

**Sie glaubt an seinen Erfolg.**

She believes in his success.

**Seine Erklärung war nicht sehr glaubwürdig/glaubhaft.**  
His explanation was not very credible.

**Die Glaubwürdigkeit ihrer Geschichte wurde angezweifelt.**  
The credibility of her story was doubted.

**-r Glaube** refers to 'belief' in a general sense, whereas the much less common **-r Glauben** is used particularly when referring to 'faith'. **-r Unglaube** means 'lack of faith'.

### 100.3 Saying that something is neither completely true nor untrue

**Er verbreitete das Gerücht, dass sie heute käme.**  
He spread the rumour that she was to arrive today.

**Diese Behauptung ist völlig an den Haaren herbeigezogen/aus der Luft gegriffen.**

This claim is extremely far-fetched. (*lit.* This claim has been pulled by its hair/grasped from the air)

**Die Antwort ist nur teilweise richtig.**  
The answer is only partially correct.

**Diese Version der Geschichte stimmt nicht ganz mit den Fakten überein.**  
This version of the story does not quite match the facts.

### 100.4 Declaring something solemnly

► For promises between people see [95.2](#)

**etw. (be)schwören** 'to swear sth.'

**jmdn. beschwören, etw. zu tun** 'to plead with sb. to do sth.'

**sich (= dat.) schwören, etw. zu tun** 'to be resolved to do sth.'

**einen Schwur leisten** 'to swear an oath'

**einen Eid ab\*legen** 'to swear an oath'

**Sie beschwor ihre Unschuld.**

She swore she was innocent.

**Sie beschwor ihn, die Sache ernst zu nehmen.**

She pleaded with him to take the matter seriously.

**Er schwor sich, diesen Fehler nicht noch einmal zu machen.**

He swore/was resolved not to repeat this mistake.

**Er leistete einen Schwur, nicht eher zu ruhen, bis er dem Geheimnis auf die Spur käme.**

He vowed not to rest until he had unveiled the mystery.

**Alle Angeklagten müssen vor Gericht einen Eid ablegen/leisten, die Wahrheit und nichts als die Wahrheit zu sagen.**

All defendants have to swear an oath in court to tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

► See [42.3f](#) for verb completion by an infinitive clause with **zu**; see also [8.7a](#) for word order

## 101 Expressing knowledge

### 101.1 *wissen* and *kennen*

German has two verbs for 'to know': **wissen** (which usually refers to facts) and **kennen** (which refers to people and places). There are many derivatives that have precise meanings in German, but often have no exact equivalents in English (see also [87.1](#)).

(a) (er)**kennen** and **wissen**:

**jmdn./etw. kennen** 'to know sb./sth.'  
**jmdn./etw. erkennen** 'to recognize sb./sth.'  
**-e Erkenntnis** 'finding/insight'  
**zu der Erkenntnis kommen** 'to come to understand'  
**-e Kenntnis** 'knowledge'  
**-r Kenntnisstand** 'level of knowledge'

**Er erkannte seinen Bruder nach den vielen Jahren kaum noch.**  
 He hardly recognized his brother after all those years.

**Sie musste erkennen/kam zu der Erkenntnis, dass sie in diesem Fall nicht helfen konnte.**  
 She had to realize/came to understand that she could not help in this case.

**Und Er erkannte, dass es gut war.**  
 And he saw that it was good. (*Bible: Genesis*)

**Die Forschung bringt uns viele Erkenntnisse, die für die Bekämpfung von schweren Krankheiten nützlich sind.**  
 Research produces many findings that are useful for fighting serious diseases.

**Es ist gar keine so neue Erkenntnis, dass der Mensch für seine Umwelt mitverantwortlich ist.**  
 It is not such a new finding/insight that man shares responsibility for his environment.

**Die Kenntnis dieses Buches ist für die Prüfung unbedingt wichtig.**  
 It is essential to know this book for the exam.

**Wie beurteilen Sie Ihren Wissensstand zum Thema deutscher Nachkriegsgeschichte?**  
 How do you rate your knowledge of (the topic of) post-war German history?

**etw. wissen** 'to know sth.'  
**von etw. wissen** 'to know of/about sth.'  
**um etw. wissen** 'to know about sth.'  
**das Wissen** 'knowledge'  
**über etw. Bescheid wissen** 'to know about sth.'

**Er musste doch wissen, dass sein Fahrstil gefährlich war.**  
 He must have known that his driving was dangerous.

**Die Parlamentarier wussten schon lange von der Affäre.**  
 The members of parliament had known about the affair for a long time.

**Wir wissen um deine Geldsorgen und möchten dir gerne helfen.**  
 We know about your financial worries and would like to help you.



**Trotz unseres großen medizinischen Wissens können wir immer noch nicht alle Krankheiten heilen.**

Despite our vast knowledge of medicine we still cannot cure all diseases.

**Der heutige Kenntnisstand wäre vor fünfzig Jahren undenkbar gewesen.**

The present state of knowledge would have been unthinkable fifty years ago.

## 101.2 Talking about arts and sciences

(a) Using **die Wissenschaften**:

-e **Geisteswissenschaften** (pl.) ‘humanities’  
 -r **Geisteswissenschaftler**, -e **Geisteswissenschaftlerin** ‘person working in the field of the humanities/arts’  
 -e **Gesellschaftswissenschaften** (pl.) ‘social sciences’  
 -r **Gesellschaftswissenschaftler**, -e **Gesellschaftswissenschaftlerin** ‘person working in the field of social sciences’  
 -e **Naturwissenschaften** (pl.) ‘(natural) sciences’  
 -r **Naturwissenschaftler**, -e **Naturwissenschaftlerin** ‘person working in the field of (natural) sciences’

(b) Care needs to be taken when using **akademisch**, **der Akademiker**, **die Akademie**:

**Da Japan schon ein Patent für unser neues Motorenmodell hat, ist unsere Entwicklungsarbeit akademisch.**

As Japan already has a patent for our latest engine model our development work has become academic (*i.e. superfluous*).

**Das Diplom wurde ihr mit allen akademischen Würden verliehen.**

The diploma was given to her with full academic ceremony.

**In Deutschland gibt es seit Jahren eine hohe Akademikerarbeitslosigkeit.**

In Germany there has been high graduate unemployment for years.

NOTE

-e **Akademie** ‘academy/school/college’. The **Akademie der Wissenschaften** is a German institution similar to the Royal Society (in the different academic disciplines), but a (**Sommer-**) **Akademie** is a ‘(summer) conference/school’.

## 102 Remembering and forgetting

### 102.1 Remembering

The verb **erinnern** ‘remember’ and its derivatives can be used in a number of ways:

**etw. erinnern** ‘to remember sth.’ (emphasizes the process of deliberately trying to recall sth.)

**sich an etw./jmdn. erinnern** ‘to remember sth./sb.’ (emphasizes that a certain piece of information comes to mind – this is the standard verb for ‘to remember’)

-e **Erinnerung** ‘memory/memories’

**Er erinnerte bestimmte Kindheitserlebnisse, die jetzt eine neue Bedeutung für ihn annahmen.**

He recalled certain childhood events that were now taking on a new meaning for him.

**Erinnerst du dich noch an den schönen Abend neulich im Löwen?**

Do you remember the lovely evening we had in the Löwe (pub) recently?

**Die Erinnerung an ihre Tage in Wien bedrückte sie.**

Memories of her days in Vienna depressed her.

## 102.2 Commemoration

**gedenken (gedachte, gedacht)** (+ gen.) 'to remember respectfully'  
**etw./jmdn. ehren** 'to honour sth./sb.'

**1995 gedachten wir des Kriegsendes vor fünfzig Jahren.**

In 1995 we commemorated the end of the war fifty years ago.

**Wir ehren das Gedenken der Toten.**

We honour the memory of the dead.

Other useful expressions are:

**-e Gedenkfeier** 'commemoration'  
**-e Gedenkminute** 'minute's silence'  
**-e Gedenkstätte** 'memorial'  
**-r Gedenktag** 'commemoration day/day of remembrance'  
**-e Gedenktafel** 'memorial plaque'

## 102.3 Memory

The (imaginary) place where memories are stored is **das Gedächtnis** 'memory':

**(klar/deutlich) im Gedächtnis sein/haben** 'to remember (clearly)'  
**etw. im Gedächtnis behalten** 'to keep sth. in one's memory'  
**sich etw. ins Gedächtnis zurückrufen** 'to recall sth.'  
**etw. aus dem Gedächtnis verlieren** 'to forget' (*lit.* to lose sth. out of one's memory)  
**an Gedächtnisschwund leiden** 'to suffer from memory loss' (*often used jokingly among younger people*)

**Mir ist doch deutlich im Gedächtnis, dass wir uns heute treffen wollten.**

I remember clearly that we wanted to meet today.

**Legastheniker müssen sich Regeln, die die meisten instinktiv kennen, immer wieder aktiv ins Gedächtnis zurückrufen.**

Dyslexic people need to actively recall rules that most others know instinctively.

**Das war mir total (aus dem Gedächtnis) entfallen.**

I had completely forgotten about it.

In connection with **Gedächtnis**, other expressions are also common:

**jmdm. gegenwärtig sein** 'to remember' (*lit.* to be present in one's memory)  
**etw. parat haben** 'to remember off the cuff/have a piece of information to hand'  
**in den Sinn kommen** 'to remember' (*lit.* to come into one's mind)  
**etw. im Kopf haben/etw. behalten** 'to remember sth. (and know by heart)'  
**etw. auswendig wissen/können** 'to remember sth./know sth. by heart (without looking it up)'

**Die Reise war ihm noch ganz klar/gar nicht mehr gegenwärtig.**

He still clearly remembered the journey/didn't remember the journey at all any more.

**In ihrer Physikprüfung hatte sie alle mathematischen Formeln parat.**

In her physics exam she was able to remember all the mathematical formulas.

**Ihm war wieder in den Sinn gekommen (literary)/eingefallen (neutral), dass er heute Abend Besuch bekäme.**

He remembered that he was going to have visitors this evening.

**Hast du Marias Telefonnummer im Kopf/behalten? / Kennst du Marias Telefonnummer auswendig?**

Do you know Maria's telephone number (by heart/without looking it up)?

**Stell dir vor, er weiß auswendig, wann seine Kollegen Geburtstag haben.**

Imagine, he knows all his colleagues' birthdays by heart.

NOTE

A computer's memory is **-r Speicher**.

## 102.4 Acquiring and forgetting knowledge and skills

(a) **lernen** is used for the process of acquiring knowledge as well as for the result:

**Lernst du schon eine Fremdsprache?**

Do you already study a foreign language?

**Haben Sie Ihren PIN (auswendig) gelernt?**

Have you learnt your PIN (by heart)?

(b) German makes a distinction between **vergessen** and **verlernen** *lit.* 'to de-learn'. **Vergessen** is used when one has forgotten information that has been learnt. Acquired behaviour, skills and attitudes cannot be forgotten in the same way, and **verlernen** is used in these instances:

**Fahrrad fahren verlernt man nie.**

You never forget how to ride a bicycle.

Distinguish **-e Vergesslichkeit** 'forgetfulness' and **-e Vergessenheit** 'oblivion', which is only used in a few set phrases:

**Diese Episode der Geschichte fiel der Vergessenheit anheim/geriet in Vergessenheit.**

This historical episode sank into oblivion.

## 103 Expressing future intentions

Future intentions can be expressed by **werden** (34.3–4) or a modal verb (**möchte, wollen**, see 35):

**Wir möchten/wollen nächsten Sommer nach Italien fahren.**

We'd like to/want to go to Italy next summer.

The future tense with **werden** often implies a particularly firm intention or even a threat:

**Ich werde ihm zeigen, was wir leisten können.**

I'll show him what we can achieve.

**Er wird das nicht noch einmal machen.**  
He won't do that again.

**Ich werde das Darlehen zurückzahlen.**  
I will repay the loan.

**Ich werde den Aufsatz vor dem Examen gelesen haben.**  
I will have read the essay before the exam.

There are other verbal expressions implying intention. Where they are followed by a clause, an infinitive + **zu** construction is required (see 42.3f):

**etw. planen/vor\*haben** 'to plan/intend to'  
**etw. im Auge haben** 'to have one's eye on sth.'  
**etw. (für . . .) ins Auge fassen** 'to intend to do sth. (for . . .)'  
**sich (= dat.) etw. vor\*nehmen** 'to have the intention of doing sth.'

**Wir haben nächsten Sommer eine Reise vor.**  
**Wir haben nächsten Sommer vor, eine Reise zu machen.**  
We intend to go on a trip next summer.

**Ich hatte mir vorgenommen, dort nie mehr hinzufahren.**  
I had resolved never to go there again.

**Für die kommenden Ferien haben wir noch nichts Bestimmtes ins Auge gefasst.**  
We haven't made any concrete plans for the next vacation.

## 104

## Expressing likes and dislikes: people, things and situations

## 104.1

## Praise and criticism

► See also 112 for satisfaction and dissatisfaction

In German, neither understatement nor exaggeration is taken as a serious comment and can at best confuse the person you are speaking to. To some extent what is appropriate depends on the situation. For example, imagine you have just booked into a hotel, and reception has asked whether everything is OK:

(a) Satisfaction – expressions ranging from indifference to high praise:

**Ja, danke. (Das Zimmer ist in Ordnung.)**  
Yes, thank you. (The room is fine.)

**Ja prima. (Das Zimmer gefällt mir.)**  
Yes, very good. (I like the room.)

**Danke, alles bestens. (can occasionally sound a bit short)**  
Thank you, fine.

**Danke, es ist sehr bequem.**  
Thank you, it is very comfortable.

**Danke, es ist wunderbar. Mir gefällt besonders die Aussicht.**  
Thank you, it is wonderful. I particularly like the view.

- (b) Dissatisfaction – expressions ranging from slight dismay to complete dissatisfaction and anger:

**Es ist leider ein bisschen kalt/nicht ganz sauber . . .**

It is unfortunately a little cold/not quite clean . . .

**Es lässt (doch) einiges zu wünschen übrig.**

It leaves something to be desired.

**Es ist (einfach) unmöglich.**

It is (simply) unacceptable.

**So ein Zimmer können Sie unmöglich Gästen anbieten.**

How can you possibly offer such a room to your guests?

**So ein Lärm/Dreck . . . ist einfach unzumutbar.**

Such noise/dirt . . . is completely unreasonable/just too much.

## 104.2 Likes and dislikes

Expressions for likes and dislikes can be classified according to whether they are used only for people or for people and things.

- (a) People and things:

► For the meaning of modal verbs, see [35.6](#)

With the accusative:

**mögen (mag), mochte, gemocht** ‘to like’ (see [35.1–6](#))

**etw./jmdn. (sehr) gern mögen** ‘to like sth./sb. a lot (very much)’

**etw./jmdn. nicht gern mögen** ‘to not like sth./sb.’

**etw./jmdn. so gern mögen** ‘to like sth./sb. so much’

**(nicht) gern(e) etw. tun** ‘to (not) like doing sth.’

Note that **mögen** can be ‘graded’ in the positive and in the negative:

*Positive*

**mögen**

**gern(e) mögen**

**sehr gern(e) mögen/besonders**

**mögen**

*Negative*

**nicht so (gern(e)) mögen**

**nicht (gern(e)) mögen**

**gar nicht/überhaupt nicht (gern(e))**

**mögen.**

**Sie mochte ihn, aber eine Beziehung wollte sie nicht mit ihm.**

She liked him but didn’t want to have a relationship with him.

**Ich mag Rosenkohl überhaupt nicht.**

I don’t like sprouts at all/hate sprouts.

**Oma wäscht gar nicht gerne ab.**

Granny hates doing the washing up.

**Das habe ich nicht so gern, dass du in deinem Alter nach 10 Uhr abends nach Hause kommst.**

I really don’t like you coming home after 10 o’clock at your age.

**Im Sommer fahren wir immer gerne ans Meer.**

In summer we always like to go to the seaside.

With the nominative:

**gefallen** 'to please'  
**etw./jmd. gefällt jmdm.** 'sb. likes sb./sth.' (*but not for food and drink*)  
**etw./jmd. gefällt jmdm. gut** 'sb. really likes sb./sth.'  
**etw./jmd. gefällt jmdm. sehr gut** 'sb. likes sth./sb. a lot'  
**etw./jmd. gefällt jmdm. nicht** 'sb. does not like/dislikes sth./sb.'

**Die Frau gefällt mir!**

I like that woman!

**Die Musik heute Abend gefällt uns besonders gut.**

We particularly like the music tonight.

► For verbs taking the dative, see [19.7](#)

NOTE

**Du gefällst mir nicht** refers to someone's health and indicates that the speaker is concerned that you are looking ill. Similarly, **deine heiße Stirne gefällt mir nicht** is not a comment on your (lack of) beauty but implies that you may be running a temperature.

► See [110.8e](#) for temperature

**Gefallen** is not used in connection with food.

(b) People only:

**jmdn. lieben** 'to love sb.'  
**jmdn. hassen** 'to hate sb.' (conveys a much stronger feeling in German than in English and is therefore to be used with discretion)

**Werther liebte Charlotte, aber sie war schon verheiratet.**

Werther loved Charlotte but she was already married.

**Die Schweiz ist ein gutes Beispiel für ein Land, wo sich Völker verschiedenen Ursprungs nicht hassen.**

Switzerland is a good example of a country where people of different origins do not hate each other.

Significantly there seem to be more expressions for dislike than for like:

**jmdn. nicht (so gut) leiden können** 'to not (really) like sb./not be able to bear sb.'  
**jmdn. nicht ausstehen können** 'to not be able to bear sb. at all'  
**nichts/nicht viel für jmdn. übrig haben** 'to not care for (*i.e. about*) sb./not to care much for sb.'

**Für solche arroganten Verkäufer habe ich überhaupt nichts übrig.**

I don't care at all for such arrogant salespeople.

*Idiom:* **Du kannst mich gern haben! / Du kannst mich mal!** (*rude*)

Get lost.

**Die können mich gern haben. / Die können mich mal.** (*informal to rude*)

They can get lost.

► See [58.3m](#) on informal register

## 105 Indicating preferences

### 105.1 Degrees of preference

There is a simple gradation pattern for stating degrees of preference:

*Positive: gern – lieber – am liebsten* (see 48 and 51):

<b>Wir gehen <i>gern</i> in die Oper.</b>	We like to go to the opera.
<b>Wir gehen <i>lieber</i> ins Konzert.</b>	We prefer to go to a concert.
<b>Wir gehen <i>am liebsten</i> ins Schauspiel.</b>	We most enjoy going to the theatre/a play.

*Negative: nicht gern – weniger gern – am wenigsten gern/gar nicht gern/überhaupt nicht gern:*

<b>Wir gehen <i>nicht gern</i> in die Oper.</b>	We don't like going to the opera.
<b>Wir gehen <i>weniger gern</i> ins Konzert.</b>	We are less keen on going to concerts.
<b>Wir gehen <i>am wenigsten gern</i> ins Schauspiel.</b>	We like going to the theatre least of all.
<b>Wir gehen <i>gar nicht gern/überhaupt nicht gern</i> ins Schauspiel.</b>	We don't like going to the theatre at all.

### 105.2 Making comparisons

- (a) Where two things are equally liked: **genauso** (+ adverb) . . . **wie** 'as . . . as'; **nicht so** (+ adverb) . . . **wie** 'not as . . . as' (see also 48.6a for the comparative):

**Ich gehe *genauso* gerne ins Theater *wie* ins Konzert.**  
I like going to the theatre (just) as much as to a concert.

**Mein Bruder trinkt Rotwein *nicht so gern wie* Weißwein.**  
My brother does not like red wine as much as white wine.

▶ See 59.1c for upper and lower case spelling

- (b) Expressing a preference: comparative + **als**:

**Wir arbeiten *lieber* im Büro *als* in der Bibliothek.**  
We prefer working in the office to working in the library.

**Sie trinkt *lieber* australischen *als* portugiesischen Rotwein.**  
She prefers (drinking) Australian red wine to Portuguese red wine.

**Er hat seine Katzen *lieber als* seinen Hund.**  
He likes his cat more than his dog.

▶ See 48.6a for the case after **als**

- (c) The prefix **vor-** can often express a preference:

**eine Vorliebe für etw./jmdn. haben** 'to have a preference (taste) for sth./sb.'  
**mit Vorliebe etw. tun** 'to particularly like doing sth.'  
**etw./jmdm. den Vorzug vor etw./jmdm. geben** 'to prefer sth./sb. to sth./sb.' (*formal*)  
**etw./jmdn. bevorzugen** 'to prefer sth./sb.' (*may imply unfair preference*)

**es vor\*ziehen, etw. zu tun** 'to prefer doing sth.'

**jmdn./etw. jmdm./etw. vor\*ziehen** 'to prefer sb./sth. to sb./sth.' (*formal, mostly written language*)

**bevorzugt behandelt werden** 'to be given preferential treatment'

**Er hörte mit Vorliebe nachts Musik, wenn alle anderen Hausbewohner schlafen wollten.** (*formal*)

He particularly liked to listen to music at night, when all the other tenants wanted to sleep.

**Bei Stellenanzeigen wird oft immer noch gesagt, dass jüngere Bewerber bevorzugt werden.**

Many job adverts still state that younger applicants stand a better chance.

**Er zog den alten Shakespeare dem Romantiker Wordsworth vor.**

He preferred the old Shakespeare to the Romantic Wordsworth.

**Wir ziehen unser altes kleines Haus dem großen neuen vor.**

We prefer our small old house to the big new one.

**Sie zogen es vor, kein Risiko einzugehen.**

They preferred not to take any risk.

**Käufer, die bar bezahlen können, werden bevorzugt behandelt.**

Customers able to pay in cash are given preferential treatment.

## Expressing indifference

German is not rich in expressions of indifference:

**Das ist mir (völlig) gleich/egal/wurst** (*informal*)/**scheißegal** (*rude*).

It's all the same to me. / I couldn't care less. / I couldn't give a damn.

**Das schert mich nicht/einen Teufel** (*rude*).

That doesn't concern/bother me at all.

**Um solche Gerüchte schere ich mich nicht.**

I don't bother listening to such rumours.

**Das interessiert mich nicht die Bohne.**

I couldn't give a damn.

If you want to leave the decision to someone else or have to concede victory to someone else, you might also say:

**Ganz wie du meinst/Sie meinen.**

Just as you think.

**Das überlasse ich dir/Ihnen.**

I'll leave that to you (to decide).

**Machen Sie das, wie Sie wollen.** (*potentially impatient*)

Do as you please.

**Machen Sie, was Sie wollen.**

Do as you please.



## 107 Voicing opinion

The most common words and constructions involve the verb **meinen** 'to think' and the noun **-e Meinung** 'opinion':

**Ich meine, das sollten wir machen.**

I think we should do it.

**Welcher (= gen.) Meinung sind Sie? / Was meinen Sie dazu? / Was denken Sie?**

What is your opinion? / What do you think about that?

**Was ist Ihre Meinung dazu?**

What do you think about it?

**Wessen Meinung sind Sie?**

Of whose opinion are you? / Who do you agree with?

► For expressions taking the genitive case see [20](#), particularly [20.5](#)

A number of verbs can be used with **-e Meinung** (see also the following section), which can be replaced by **-e Ansicht** 'view', often by **-e Position** 'position', as well as by **-r Standpunkt** 'point of view':

(s)eine **Meinung/Ansicht/Position vertreten** 'to be of an opinion/to hold/defend a view/position'

(s)eine **Meinung/Ansicht/Position verfechten/verteidigen** 'to defend one's/an opinion/view/position'

(s)eine **Meinung/Ansicht zum Ausdruck bringen** 'to express one's/an opinion/view'

(s)einer **Meinung/Ansicht** (= dat.) **Ausdruck verleihen** 'to express one's/an opinion'

**bei** (s)einer **Meinung/Ansicht/Position bleiben** (also **auf etw.** (= dat.) **beharren**) 'to stick to one's guns'

(s)eine **Meinung/Position ändern** 'to change one's/an opinion/position'

(fest) **hinter einer Meinung/Ansicht stehen** 'to back (firmly) an opinion/view'

**zu einer Meinung/Ansicht stehen** 'to support an opinion/to defend an opinion/view'

**seine eigene Meinung/eigenen Ansichten** (in einer Sache) **haben** 'to have one's own opinion/views (in a matter)'

eine **vorgefasste Meinung gegenüber etw./jmdm. haben** 'to be prejudiced against sth./sb.'

**der festen Meinung/Überzeugung** (= gen.) **sein, dass ...** 'to be firmly convinced that ...' (*lit.* to have the firm opinion that)

**sich** (= dat.) **eine Meinung über etw.** (= acc.) **bilden** 'to come to an opinion about sth./form a view on sth.'

**Viele Politiker vertraten die Ansicht, dass Korruption von Ministern nur die Ausnahme sei.**

Many politicians were of the view that ministerial corruption was exceptional (*lit.* the exception).

**Rechtsextremisten haben eine vorgefasste Meinung gegenüber Ausländern.**

Right-wing extremists are prejudiced against foreigners.

► See [85.1](#) for the mood of verbs when expressing opinion rather than fact

For compound words with **Meinung-**, consult your dictionary:

- e **Meinungsverschiedenheit** ‘difference of opinion/argument’
- r **Meinungskonflikt** ‘conflict of opinions’
- e **Meinungsmache** ‘manipulation of (public) opinion’ (e.g. by the media or by political groups)
- Eltern-, Lehrer-, Schülermeinung** ‘opinion of parents, teachers, pupils’, etc.

Other verbs expressing opinion are **finden** ‘to find’, **glauben** ‘to believe’ and **denken** ‘to think’. However, **denken** is far less frequently used than **meinen** and **finden**:

**Ich glaube nicht, dass du in diesem Buch eine Antwort auf deine Frage findest.**

I don’t think you will find an answer to your question in this book.

**Finden Sie auch, dass man etwas gegen die zunehmende Umweltverschmutzung tun muss?**

Do you too think something must be done about the increasing environmental pollution?

**Er dachte nicht, dass seine Abwesenheit solche Konsequenzen haben würde.**  
He didn’t expect his absence to have such consequences.

## Expressing firm convictions

Some believe that **Meinung** is an attitude based on emotions rather than reason. In order to stress conviction, **halten von** ‘think of/have an opinion about’ may be used:

- **Was halten Sie von der neuen Regierung?**
- **Ich halte nicht viel von ihren wirtschaftlichen Plänen.**
- What do you think of the new government?
- I don’t think much of their economic plans.

-e **Haltung** ‘attitude’ or, alternatively, -e **Einstellung** ‘view/attitude’ refer to something deeper than **Meinung** or **Ansicht**:

**Die Schule hat die Aufgabe, Schüler zu einer demokratischen Haltung zu erziehen.**

It’s the school’s task to educate pupils to a democratic attitude.

**Haltung** can also refer to behaviour:

**Während der Beerdigung haben die Familienangehörigen Haltung bewahrt.**  
During the funeral the family maintained their composure.

Compare also the participle **eingestellt** ‘oriented/biased’:

**In den siebziger Jahren galt es als modern, links eingestellt zu sein.**  
In the 1970s it was considered fashionable to be leftist.

-e **Überzeugung** ‘conviction’/überzeugt ‘convinced’ can be an even more deeply rooted attitude, often founded on moral grounds:

**Sie waren aus Überzeugung Christen. / Sie waren überzeugte Christen.**  
They were devout Christians. (*lit.* out of conviction)

Sie brachte ihren Standpunkt *mit Überzeugung* vor.  
She presented her point of view with conviction.

109

## Expressing agreement and disagreement

► See also 119 on shaping the course of a conversation

109.1

## Expressing agreement or disagreement

(a) Agreement:

**für etw. sein** ‘to be for/in favour of sth.’  
**der gleichen/gleicher Meinung/Ansicht sein** ‘to be of the same opinion’  
**sich (= acc.) einer Meinung/Ansicht/Position an\*schließen** ‘to come to back an opinion/position’  
**zu der Meinung von jmdm. stehen** ‘to support the opinion of sb.’  
**mit der Meinung/Ansicht/Position von jmdm. überein\*stimmen** ‘to agree with the opinion/position of sb.’  
**mit jmdm. einer Meinung/Ansicht sein** ‘to agree with (the opinion of) sb./be of the same opinion as sb.’

**In der Frage der Kinderbetreuung war das Ehepaar der gleichen Ansicht.**  
As far as childcare was concerned the couple were in agreement.

**Ich stimme mit deiner Meinung in der Frage der Rentenfinanzierung überein.**  
I agree with you on the issue of how to finance the pensions.

**Die SPD hat sich in Umweltfragen dann doch der Meinung der Grünen angeschlossen.**  
Concerning environmental questions the SPD has come to agree with the Greens (Green Party).

(b) Disagreement:

**doch!** ‘not at all!/Yes, they are!’, etc. (*i.e. contradicting a negative*)  
**gegen etw. sein** ‘to be against sth.’  
**etw. ab\*lehnen** ‘to refuse sth./be opposed to sth.’  
**anderer Meinung/anderer Ansicht/einer anderen Meinung/einer anderen Ansicht über etw. (= acc.)/in etw. sein** ‘to be of a different opinion about sth.’  
**unterschiedlicher/verschiedener Meinung/Ansicht über etw. (= acc.)/in etw. sein** ‘to be of a different opinion about sth.’  
**über etw. (= acc.) geteilter Meinung sein** ‘to have different opinions/be in two minds about sth.’  
**eine Meinungsverschiedenheit über etw. (= acc.) haben** ‘to be of a different opinion about sth./have a dispute about sth.’  
**Differenzen (pl.) zwischen** ‘differences of opinion between’

A common way of indicating disagreement with what someone has said is **doch**, but it is only used to contradict an actual or implied negative (see 117.1). **Doch** can be the first word of the response, or it may be used later in the sentence:

- **Du hast wohl kein Geld.**
- **Doch, ich habe zwanzig Euro. / Ich habe doch zwanzig Euro.**
- But you haven’t got any money
- Yes, I have. I’ve got twenty euros.

**Manche Eltern sind dagegen, ihre Kinder von fremden Leuten betreuen zu lassen.**

Some parents are against having their children minded by strangers.

**Wir lehnen solche Privilegien grundsätzlich ab.**

We are fundamentally opposed to such privileges.

Use **unterschiedlich** or **verschieden** when at least two different opinions are being discussed; use **ander-** when a second opinion is being introduced (for the difference between **verschieden**, **unterschiedlich** and **ander-**, see also **76.8e-f**).

**Sie war für den Kauf des Hauses. Er war aber anderer Ansicht.**

She was in favour of buying the house but he disagreed. (*i.e. he was of a different opinion*)

**Premierminister und Schatzkanzler sind in finanzpolitischen Fragen oft verschiedener/unterschiedlicher Meinung.**

The Prime Minister and the Chancellor often differ over questions of finance policy.

**In finanzpolitischen Fragen gibt es oft Differenzen zwischen den beiden.**

In matters of finance policy there are often differences between the two of them.

**Ich bin geteilter Meinung darüber, ob wir mit den Kindern wirklich eine so große Reise machen sollten.**

I am in two minds about whether we should really go on such a big trip with the children.

**Wir waren geteilter Meinung über das Wahlergebnis.**

We couldn't agree on the outcome of the election.

(c) **Meinung, Ansicht** and **Position** can be characterized further by the following verbs:

**(stark/weit) divergieren** 'to diverge (significantly) (from each other)'

**auseinander\*gehen** 'to diverge'

**auseinander\*klaffen** 'to diverge widely'

**jmdn. mit etw. überzeugen** 'to convince sb. with/because of sth.'

**etw. richtig\*stellen** 'to correct sth.'

**Während der Waffenstillstandsverhandlungen wurde klar, dass die Ansichten der beiden Verhandlungspartner stark (voneinander) divergierten.**

During the ceasefire negotiations it became apparent that the views of the two sides diverged significantly.

**Bei der Frage, ob Kinder schon mit vier Jahren in die Schule gehen sollten, gehen die Meinungen der Eltern total auseinander.**

On the question of whether children should start school as early as age four, parents' opinions differ widely.

**Er ist ziemlich unpopulär, überzeugt aber manche Wähler durch seine feste Haltung/mit seiner festen Haltung.**

He is rather unpopular but convinces some voters with his firm stance.

**Lassen Sie mich die Ansicht, hier sei nur der Staat verantwortlich, mal richtigstellen.**

Allow me to correct the opinion that only the state is responsible (in this matter).

(d) **Meinung, Ansicht** and **Position** can also be:

**kontrovers** ‘controversial’  
**unvertretbar** ‘indefensible’  
**unhaltbar** ‘untenable’  
**klug** ‘intelligent/smart’  
**überzeugend** ‘convincing’  
**entscheidend** ‘decisive’

### 109.2 Agreement and concession

Constructions with **einigen** ‘to come to an agreement’ and **-e Einigung** ‘agreement/process of agreeing’ are used as follows:

**sich auf (eine Lösung) einigen** ‘to come to agree on (a solution)’  
**Einigung (in einer Frage) erzielen** ‘to reach agreement (on a question)’  
**-r Einigungsprozess** ‘process of agreeing’; in German politics, process of unification

The participial form of **stehen** ‘to stand’ as well as the derived noun form **-ständnis** are often used figuratively and can have different meanings in conjunction with different prefixes:

**mit etw. einverstanden sein** ‘to agree with/give one’s consent’  
**sein Einverständnis zu etw. geben** ‘to agree/consent (*in a formal context, e.g. marriage*) to sth.’  
**über eine Frage im Einverständnis sein** ‘to be agreed on a matter’  
**jmdm. (widerwillig) etw. zu\*gestehen** ‘to concede sth. (reluctantly) to sb.’  
**ein Zugeständnis machen** ‘to make a concession’  
**jmdm. etw. ein\*räumen** ‘to concede sth. to sb.’

**Die Verhandlungspartner waren über das Problem der FCKW Emissionen im Einverständnis, wollten sich aber bei der Lösung gegenseitig keine Zugeständnisse einräumen.**

The partners in the negotiations about CFC emissions were agreed on the problem but in finding a solution did not want to make any unilateral concessions.

### 109.3 Expressing agreement with the verb *stimmen* and the noun *-e Stimmung*

These can occur with a number of prefixes, and the meaning is determined by the respective prefix:

**für etw. stimmen** ‘to vote in favour of’

**Die Mehrheit stimmte für eine Kabinettsumbildung.**

The majority voted in favour of a cabinet reshuffle.

**mit jmdm/etw. überein\*stimmen** ‘to agree with sb./on sth.’  
**mit jmdm. in einer Sache überein\*stimmen** ‘to agree with sb. on sth.’  
**Übereinstimmung erzielen** ‘to reach (an) agreement’  
**zur Übereinstimmung bringen** ‘to bring to an agreement’ (*also in a mathematical sense*)

**In der Frage der Obdachlosen stimmen wir mit Ihnen überein.**  
We agree with you on the question of the homeless.

**jmdm./einer Sache zu\*stimmen** 'to agree with sb./on a matter'  
**einer Sache die Zustimmung verweigern** 'to refuse to agree to sth.'  
**einer Sache die volle Zustimmung geben** 'to agree totally on a matter'  
**Zustimmung finden** 'to meet with approval'  
**nur teilweise Zustimmung finden** 'to meet with partial approval'  
**Zustimmung zu einer Sache erhalten** 'to receive/achieve approval in a matter'

**Der Gesetzesvorschlag fand die volle Zustimmung der Abgeordneten.**  
The bill was approved by all the members of parliament.

**über eine Sache ab\*stimmen** 'to take a vote on a matter'  
**eine Sache zur Abstimmung bringen** 'to put sth. to the vote'

**Der Gesetzesvorschlag über die Neuklassifizierung bisher legaler Drogen sollte noch vor der Sommerpause zur Abstimmung gebracht werden.**  
The bill on the reclassification of drugs that had so far been legal was to be put to the vote before the summer recess.

NOTE

**über etw. (= acc.) überein\*kommen** 'come to an agreement about sth.', **-s Abkommen** 'agreement/treaty':

**Man kam schließlich überein, sich noch einmal in der folgenden Woche zu treffen.**  
It was finally agreed they would meet again the following week.

## 109.4 Negating actions and objects

(a) With **nicht** and **nichts**:

Actions are negated using **nicht** (for position of **nicht** see 13):

**Sie kauft heute nicht ein.**  
She is not going shopping today.

**Ich brauche davon nichts.**  
I don't need any of this.

**Davon will er nichts wissen.**  
He doesn't want to know about it.

(b) With **kein**:

Objects are negated using **kein** and its declined forms (see 24.2):

**Er hat keine Zeit für seine Frau.**  
He has no time for his wife.

**Hast du denn kein Geld?**  
Do you not have any money?

## (c) Grading the negation:

Negation can be graded by using:

<b>fast nicht</b>	hardly (at all)	<b>fast kein</b>	hardly any
<b>überhaupt nicht</b>	not at all	<b>überhaupt kein</b>	none/not a single
<b>fast überhaupt nicht</b>	hardly at all	<b>fast überhaupt kein</b>	hardly any
<b>nicht mehr</b>	no more	<b>kein . . . mehr</b>	no . . . more
<b>überhaupt nicht</b>	not at all	<b>überhaupt kein</b>	no . . . more/not a
<b>mehr</b>	any more/ever again	<b>mehr</b>	single . . . any more
<b>gar nicht</b>	not at all	<b>gar kein</b>	none/not a single.

**Die Gruppe hatte *fast nicht* geschlafen.**

The group had hardly slept at all.

**Am Monatsende haben Studenten oft *überhaupt kein* Geld mehr.**

At the end of the month students often have no money left.

**Kannst du dir das denn *gar nicht* vorstellen?**

Can you not imagine this at all?

**Manche Leute haben eben *gar keine* Geduld mit ihren Mitmenschen.**

Some people simply have no patience whatsoever with their neighbours.

► See also [22.3](#) and [24.2](#) for **kein**, and [70.1](#) and [104.2](#) for **nicht**

## 110

## Talking about physical well-being

## 110.1

## Feeling and looking well

- (a) Physical well-being is usually expressed by means of **fühlen** or **gehen**. **Fühlen** is used reflexively: **sich fühlen**, the reflexive pronoun being in the accusative.

► See [37](#) for reflexive verbs, and [110.8a](#) for feeling unwell

To express how well you are feeling, the following adverbs can be used:

**gut** 'well'  
**prima** 'splendid'  
**bestens** 'very well'  
**gesund** 'healthy'  
**wohl** 'well'  
**ausgezeichnet** 'splendid'

**Bei diesem warmen Wetter *fühle ich mich* so richtig *wohl*.**

In this warm weather I feel really well.

**In diesem gemütlichen Ferienhaus mit dem köstlichen Essen und netter Gesellschaft *fühlten wir uns* *pudelwohl*.**

We felt on the top of the world in this cosy holiday home with its splendid food and nice company.

**Gemütlich**, incidentally, is difficult to translate. It is inherent in the German mentality, and suggests a mixture of cosiness, informality and friendliness.

Another way to express well-being is **jmdm. geht es gut** 'someone is well'.

► See 110.2 for **gehen** + dat

**Er fühlt sich ausgezeichnet, besser könnte es ihm gar nicht gehen.**  
He feels great. He couldn't feel any better.

(b) Looking well:

► See 74.3 on physical appearance and looks, and 110.8a on feeling unwell

**Du siehst gut/gesund/prima aus.**  
You look well/healthy/great.

## 110.2

**Enquiring about someone's health and responding**

To enquire after physical (and general) well-being, the question **Wie geht es Ihnen?** 'How are you?' is used.

► See 60.5 on enquiring about well-being

This is usually meant as a real, not a rhetorical, question and requires a true answer. The answer would also use, or at least imply, **gehen** with the dative:

- **Wie geht es Ihnen?** – (**Mir geht's**) **gut, danke.**
- How are you? – Well, thank you.

To elaborate on this:

**Mir geht es prima/recht gut/den Umständen entsprechend gut.**  
I feel great/quite well/well, under the circumstances.

Germans don't tend towards understatement as much as Anglo-Saxons. Therefore **nicht schlecht** literally implies 'not ill', etc., rather than 'really quite well'.

If concerned that someone might look unwell, ask:

**Fehlt dir etwas? / Was fehlt dir denn?**  
Is anything wrong/the matter?

## 110.3

**Talking about health**

Health is referred to as:

**-e Gesundheit** 'health'  
**sich** (= acc.) **bester Gesundheit erfreuen** 'to be in the best of health'  
**bei bester Gesundheit sein** 'to be in the best of health'  
**gesund sein** 'to be healthy'

(a) Saying that someone/something is healthy:

**Er ist bei/Er erfreut sich bester Gesundheit.**  
He is in/enjoys the best of health.

**Er ist gesund/kerngesund.**  
He is healthy/really healthy/fit as a fiddle.



**Wandern an der frischen Luft soll besonders gesund sein.**

Walking in the fresh air is supposed to be especially healthy.

- (b) Wishing someone good health when he or she sneezes:

**Gesundheit!**

Bless you! (*lit.* Good health!)

## 110.4 Healthy lifestyle

- (a) Exercising and keeping fit:

**sich** (= acc.) (**körperlich und geistig**) **fit halten** 'to keep fit' (physically and mentally)  
**fit sein** 'to be fit'

**Sport treiben** 'to play sport'

**sich bewegen** 'to exercise' (*lit.* move oneself)

**regelmäßig** 'regularly'

**Mit seinen 65 Jahren ist er noch richtig fit.**

At 65 he is still really fit.

**Wir wollen regelmäßig schwimmen/joggen gehen.**

We want to go swimming/jogging regularly.

- (b) Keeping a balanced diet:

**sich** (= acc.) **ernähren** 'to eat' (*lit.* to nourish oneself)

(-e) **Diät halten** 'to be on/keep to a diet'

**etw. zu sich nehmen** 'to eat'

**eine Kost zu sich nehmen** 'to keep to a diet'

**Man soll sich vernünftig/gut ernähren.**

We should eat sensibly/well.

-e **Diät** traditionally means a medically prescribed special diet. The meaning of low-fat/low-calorie diet is more recent:

**Sag bloß nicht, du musst schon wieder Diät halten/machen!**

Don't say you are on a diet/following a diet again!

-e **Kost** is a more general term for 'diet':

**Die Weltgesundheitsorganisation empfiehlt, dass wir eine ausgewogene/fettarme/kalorienarme/vitaminreiche/ballaststoffreiche Kost zu uns nehmen.**

The World Health Organization recommends maintaining a balanced/low-fat/low-calorie/vitamin-rich/high-fibre diet.

- (c) Gaining and losing weight:

**-s Gewicht** 'weight'

**ab\*nehmen** 'to lose weight'

**zu\*nehmen** 'to gain weight'

**Er hat trotz der vielen Medikamente sein Gewicht (niedrig) halten können.**  
Despite the numerous medicines he had to take he was able to keep his weight down.

**Bis zu meinem Strandurlaub will ich unbedingt zehn Pfund abnehmen.**

I definitely want to lose ten pounds before my beach holiday.

**Sie dürfen auf keinen Fall mehr zunehmen.**

You mustn't gain any more weight, whatever happens.

## 110.5 Prevention of disease and accidents

**etw. (= dat.) vor\*beugen** 'to prevent sth.'  
**vorbeugende Maßnahmen treffen** 'to take preventative measures'  
**vor\*sorgen** 'to make provisions'  
**-e Vorsorge** 'precaution/provision'  
**sich vor etw. (= dat.) schützen** 'to protect oneself from sth.'

(a) Taking precautions:

**Vorbeugen ist besser als heilen.** (*proverb*)

Prevention is better than cure.

**Wenn man mit Feuer umgeht, sollte man immer vorbeugende Maßnahmen treffen.**

You should always take precautionary measures when dealing/working with fire.

(b) Preventing disease:

**Die Krankenkassen empfehlen regelmäßige Vorsorgeuntersuchungen zur Früherkennung von Krebs.**

The health insurance companies recommend regular preventative check-ups for the early diagnosis of cancer.

**Er soll einem Herzinfarkt vorbeugen, indem er täglich 75mg Aspirin nimmt.**

He is supposed to prevent a heart attack by taking 75mg of aspirin a day.

(c) Protecting oneself:

**Es ist notwendig, dass man sich auch im Winter vor starkem Sonnenlicht schützt.**

It is important to protect yourself from strong sunlight even in winter.

**Diese Sonnenmilch hat einen Lichtschutzfaktor von 20.**

This suntan lotion is factor 20.

## 110.6 Habits

(a) Getting used to something:

**sich (= acc.) an etw. (= acc.) gewöhnen** 'to get used to sth.'

**Wir müssen uns erst an die neue Umgebung gewöhnen.**

First of all we must get used to the new environment.

**Die Augen müssen sich an die Dunkelheit gewöhnen.**

The eyes must adapt to the darkness.

(b) Giving up (bad) habits:

**sich (= dat.) etw. ab\*gewöhnen** 'to kick the habit (of sth).'

**Er will sich das Rauchen abgewöhnen.**

He wants to stop smoking.

(c) Addictions:

**-e Sucht** 'addiction'  
**-e Nikotin-/Drogen-/Alkoholsucht** 'nicotine/drug/alcohol addiction'  
**die Anonymen Alkoholiker** (pl.) 'AA/Alcoholics Anonymous'  
**-wütig/-süchtig** '-aholic'  
**arbeitswütig/arbeitssüchtig** 'workaholic'

**Mein Mitarbeiter ist *arbeitswütig*.**  
 My colleague is a workaholic.

(d) Starving/stuffing oneself:

**-e Magersucht** 'anorexia'  
**magersüchtig** 'anorexic'  
**-e Fresssucht** '(morbid) craving for food/gluttony'  
**ab\*magern** 'to become thin'  
**ab\*specken** 'to slim down'

**Die Schulleitung will etwas gegen *Magersucht* unternehmen.**  
 The school management is trying to do something about anorexia.

**Sie *sieht total abgemagert aus*.**  
 She looks really emaciated.

**Vor der Operation *muss er erst einmal abspecken*. (informal)**  
 He must slim down before the operation.

## 110.7 Relaxation and stress

(a) Resting and getting sufficient sleep:

**sich** (= acc.) **aus\*ruhen** 'to rest'  
**sich** (= acc.) **entspannen** 'to relax/unwind'  
**relaxieren/relaxen** 'to relax'  
**schlafen** 'to sleep'  
**sich** (= acc.) **aus\*schlafen** 'to have a lie-in/to sleep until you wake naturally'  
**etw.** (= acc.) **aus\*schlafen** 'to sleep sth. off'

**Nach einem heißen Bad sollten Sie *sich richtig ausruhen*.**  
 After a hot bath you should have a proper rest.

**Es ist sehr wichtig, dass *die Frau sich* während der Schwangerschaft *entspannt*.**  
 It is very important that a woman relaxes during pregnancy.

**Im Urlaub möchte er nur in der Sonne liegen und *relaxieren/relaxen*.**  
 In the holidays he only wants to lie in the sun and relax.

***Ich möchte mich mal wieder so richtig lange ausschlafen*.**  
 I would love to have a really good lie-in again some time.

**Er musste *seinen Rausch erst ausschlafen*.**  
 He had to sleep it off. (i.e. the drink)

Getting things off your chest:

**Sie fühlte sich erleichtert, nachdem sie sich mit ihrem Hausarzt über das Problem ausgesprochen hatte.**

She felt relieved after she had talked frankly with her GP about the problem.

Feeling (psychologically) balanced:

**Trotz der vielen Sorgen scheint er doch recht ausgeglichen.**

Despite his many worries he does seem to be quite well-balanced.

**Selbst die ernstesten Erwachsenen können manchmal ziemlich ausgelassen sein.**

Even the most serious adults can sometimes be rather boisterous/high-spirited.

Recovering from something:

**Er brauchte lange, bis er sich von dem anstrengenden Semester/der Virusinfektion erholt hatte.**

It took him a long time to recover from the exhausting term/the viral infection.

(b) Stress:

**nicht ein\*schlafen können** 'not to be able to fall asleep'  
**nicht durch\*schlafen können** 'not to be able to sleep through the night'  
**gereizt sein** 'to be irritated'  
**aufgeregt sein** 'to be excited'  
**etw. nervt jmdn.** 'sth. irritates sb.'  
**stressig sein** 'to be stressful'  
**jmdm. auf die Nerven gehen** 'to get on sb.'s nerves'

**Es wundert mich nicht, dass Sie bei Ihren Sorgen nicht einschlafen können.**  
 I am not surprised you can't go to sleep with all your worries.

**Während seiner Probezeit war er besonders gereizt/aufgeregt.**  
 During the probation period he was particularly irritable/excited.

**Der ständige Lärm hatte ihn total genervt/war ihm sehr auf die Nerven gegangen.**

The constant noise had been completely wearing on his nerves/had got on his nerves.

**Sie findet die Situation am Arbeitsplatz äußerst stressig.**  
 She finds the situation at work terribly stressful.

## 110.8 Ill health

**-e Krankheit** 'illness'  
**krank sein** 'to be ill'  
**krank werden** 'to become ill'  
**sich eine Krankheit zuziehen** 'come down with a disease' (*formal*)  
**es geht jmdm. schlecht** 'sb. is unwell'  
**an etw. (= dat.) erkranken** 'to fall ill with sth.'  
**sich mit Grippe ins Bett legen** 'to come down with flu'  
**sich (= acc.) erkälten** 'to catch cold'  
**-r Befund/-e Diagnose** 'diagnosis'  
**eine Diagnose stellen** 'to diagnose'  
**leiden an (+ dat.)** 'to suffer from'

**seekrank sein** 'to be seasick'  
**sich (= acc.) mit etw. quälen** 'to struggle with/be plagued by sth.'  
**-s Fieber haben** 'to run a temperature'

## (a) Feeling unwell:

There are several expressions indicating ill health that use the dative of disadvantage (see 19.3) with an optional **es** and a form of **sein**.

Feeling sick:

**Es ist mir nicht gut. / Mir ist (es) nicht gut. / Mir ist nicht wohl.**  
 I am not well.

**Ihm ist schlecht/übel.**  
 He is sick. (*meaning he is about to vomit*)

Feeling cold:

**Ist dir kalt/heiß?**  
 Are you cold/hot?

(The above could just refer to the air temperature but quite often means body temperature.)

Feeling dizzy:

**Mir schwindelt.**  
 I am dizzy.

Looking unwell:

**Du siehst schlecht aus. Bist du krank?**  
 You look unwell. Are you ill?

## (b) Falling ill:

**Er ist an Gelbsucht/Hepatitis/einer Halsentzündung erkrankt.**  
 He has fallen ill/come down with jaundice/hepatitis/a throat infection.

**Zieh dich warm an, damit du dich nicht erkältest.**  
 Dress warm so that you don't catch a cold.

**Als wir in Afrika waren, haben wir uns eine Leberinfektion zugezogen.**  
 When we were in Africa we caught a liver infection.

(c) Medical results are referred to as **-r Befund(e)**:

**Der medizinische Befund im Urin ist negativ.**  
 The urine results are negative.

**Die Leber des Patienten war ohne Befund.**  
 The liver of the patient was clear.

(d) Suffering is rendered by **leiden** and **sich quälen**:

**Der Patient leidet an Herzrhythmusstörungen.**  
 The patient is suffering from palpitations.

**Sie quält sich schon seit Jahren mit ihrer Neurodermitis.**  
 She has been struggling with/suffering from eczema for years.

## (e) Running a temperature:

Temperature in German-speaking countries is measured in degrees Celsius: **Grad Celsius**. Normal body temperature would be about 37°C (98.4°F); 39°C (102°F) would be considered **hohes Fieber**, a 'high temperature':

**Nach der Impfung hatte der Kleine hohes Fieber.**  
After the inoculation the little boy had a high temperature.

## 110.9 Death

-r Tod 'death'  
-e Todesursache 'cause of death'  
tot sein 'to be dead'  
sterben 'to die'  
verunglücken 'to have an accident'  
tödlich verunglücken 'to be killed in an accident'  
ums Leben kommen 'to die'  
um\*kommen 'to die'

### (a) Dying:

Dying of something is rendered by **sterben an** (+ dat.):

**Das Unfallopfer war an den Folgen seiner Verletzungen gestorben.**  
The accident victim had died as a result of his injuries.

**Die Skifahrer sind bei einem Lawinenunglück ums Leben gekommen.**  
The skiers were killed by an avalanche.

**Der Popstar ist am Nachmittag tödlich verunglückt.**  
The pop star was killed in an accident in the afternoon.

### (b) Dead:

**Er wurde noch am Unfallort für tot erklärt.**  
He was pronounced dead at the scene of the accident.

### (c) Fatal consequences:

**Sie hat tödliches Gift geschluckt.**  
She has swallowed deadly poison.

**Er war bei der Schlägerei tödlich verwundet worden.**  
He had been fatally injured during the fight/punch-up.

► See [65.3a](#) for expressing sympathy

## 110.10 Passing on disease

sich (= acc.) bei jmdm. an\*stecken 'to catch (a disease) from sb.'  
jmdn. an\*stecken 'to infect someone'  
sich bei jmdm. mit etw. an\*stecken 'to catch sth. from sb.'  
ansteckend 'contagious'  
übertragen 'to transmit'  
sich (= acc.) mit/an (+ dat.) etw. infizieren 'to infect oneself with sth.'  
verunreinigen 'to contaminate/pollute'  
hervor\*rufen 'to cause/bring about'

### (a) Catching a disease:

**Er hatte sich bei seinem Klassenkameraden mit den Masern angesteckt.**  
He had caught measles from his classmate.

Sie *hatte sich an einer Spritze infiziert*.  
She had infected herself with a syringe.

- (b) Transmitting a disease:

**Eine Infektionskrankheit kann durch die Luft oder durch Wassertröpfchen übertragen werden.**

An infectious disease can be transmitted via the air or water droplets.

**Eine ansteckende Krankheit wird durch Körperkontakt übertragen.**

A contagious disease is transmitted by bodily contact.

**Halte die Hand vor den Mund, wenn du hustest, damit du niemanden ansteckst.**

Cover your mouth with your hand when you cough so that you don't infect anybody.

- (c) Contamination:

**Der Durchfall war durch das verunreinigte Wasser hervorgerufen worden.**

The diarrhoea had been caused by the contaminated water.

## 110.11 Pain

... **tut mir weh** 'my . . . hurts' (*informal*) (see 37.4)

**Schmerzen haben** 'to have pains'

-s **-weh** '-ache'

**sich** (= dat.) (**an etw.** (= dat.)) **weh\*tun** 'to hurt oneself (on sth.)'

-s **Leid(en)** 'suffering'

**leiden an** (+ dat.) 'to suffer from'

**Schmerzen lindern** 'to alleviate/relieve pain'

-e **Linderung** 'alleviation/relief'

- (a) The main way of referring to pain is by using **Schmerzen haben** 'to have pain' (*lit.* pains).

To indicate the exact place of pain, say:

**Ich habe Schmerzen am Rücken/an der Hand/im Unterleib.**

I have a pain in my back/on my hand/in my lower abdomen.

**Schmerzen** (always plural) is usually the last component in a compound, following the part of the body that is causing pain:

**Ich habe Magenschmerzen/Kopfschmerzen/Zahnschmerzen.**

I have stomach pains/a headache/toothache.

► See 54.2 for the formation of compounds

- (b) In informal speech, **Schmerzen** is often replaced by (**sich**) **weh\*tun** or by **-s Weh** 'ache', which is used in the singular:

**Ach, mein Arm tut mir weh.**

Oh, my arm hurts.

**Mutti, ich habe Bauchweh.**

Mummy, I have a tummy ache.

**Vati, ich habe mir am Zaun wehgetan.**

Daddy, I've hurt myself on the fence.

(c) Suffering:

**Er litt an einer schweren Lungenentzündung.**  
He suffered from severe pneumonia.

► See [23.2a](#) for the use of the German article; see also [110.8d](#) on the use of **leiden**

(d) Alleviating pain:

**Zur Linderung des Juckreizes wird ein Kamillenbad empfohlen.**  
A camomile bath is recommended to alleviate the itching.

## 110.12 Doctors, treatment and medication

(a) Doctors:

A medical doctor is usually referred to as **-r Arzt**; a female doctor is **-e Ärztin**.

In informal speech **-r Doktor** is also used. A patient would address his doctor as **Herr/Frau Doktor** or the professor in a hospital as **Herr/Frau Professor** (normally without a surname).

Patients are normally registered with their 'general practitioner' (**-r Hausarzt/praktische Arzt**), although they could, theoretically, choose a new doctor every three months by taking their 'health insurance card' (**Versichertenkarte**) to someone else. This card could also be taken directly to a 'specialist' (**Facharzt**), but the 'patient', **-r Patient(en)**, would be better advised to get a 'transfer note' (**-e Überweisung**) from his/her doctor and take it to the recommended consultant.

Consultants usually work in their own practices and one would arrange for 'an appointment' (**-r Termin**) directly with his/her 'secretary' (**-e Sekretärin**) or 'doctor's receptionist and nurse' (**-e Arzthelferin**).

The official titles for consultants are:

**-r Facharzt für Allgemeinmedizin** 'specialist for general medicine/GP'  
**Facharzt für Kinder-/Frauen-/Nerven-/Lungenheilkunde** 'specialist for paediatrics/gynaecology/neurology/lung diseases'

NOTE **-r Kassenarzt** 'doctor who treats members of compulsory health insurance schemes'.  
(For further specialist areas refer to a dictionary.)

In informal speech, single-word compounds are preferred:

**-e Kinderärztin** 'paediatrician'  
**-e Frauenärztin/Gynäkologin** 'gynaecologist'  
**-e Nervenärztin/Neurologin** 'neurologist'

Other medical staff include:

**-e Krankenschwester/der Krankenpfleger** 'nurse'  
**-e Stationsschwester** 'ward sister'  
**-e Gemeindeschwester** 'district nurse'  
**-r Sanitäter(-)** 'first-aid attendant'  
**-e medizinisch-technische Assistentin (MTA)** 'medical laboratory assistant'  
**-r Heilpraktiker** 'practitioner of complementary medicine'



(b) Treatment:

**jmdn./etw. heilen** 'to heal sb./sth.'  
**(un)heilbar** '(in)curable'  
**jmdn./etw. behandeln** 'to treat sb./sth.'  
**-e Behandlung(en)** 'treatment'  
**sich (= acc.) behandeln lassen** 'to be treated'  
**-e Heilung** 'healing/cure'  
**-s Heilverfahren** 'course of treatment'  
**-e Heilkunde** 'medicine'

**Krebs ist oft *heilbar*, solange er frühzeitig erkannt wird.**

Cancer is often curable, as long as it is diagnosed early.

**Er ist seit drei Jahren bei einem Psychiater *in Behandlung*.**

He has been treated by a psychiatrist for three years.

***Sie lässt sich lieber von einer Frau behandeln.***

She prefers to be treated by a woman.

(c) Medical investigation:

**-e Untersuchung durch\*führen** 'to do an investigation/a medical'  
**jmdn. untersuchen** 'to examine sb.'  
**sich (= acc.) untersuchen lassen** 'to (let oneself) be examined'  
**sich (= acc.) röntgen lassen** 'to have an X-ray'  
**ärztlich** 'medical/by the doctor'

**Vor der Weltreise müssen *wir uns noch ärztlich untersuchen lassen*.**

Before the round-the-world trip we have to undergo a medical examination.

**Die Infusion darf nur *unter ärztlicher Aufsicht gegeben werden*.**

The drip may only be given under medical supervision/in the presence of a doctor.

(d) Medication:

**e Medizin/-s Medikament** 'medicine'  
**-e Pille** 'pill' in general  
 but: **die Pille (= Antibabypille)** 'the (contraceptive) pill'  
**etw. zu etw. brauchen** 'to need sth. for sb.'  
**-s (Heil)mittel gegen** 'remedy for'  
**-s Schmerzmittel** 'painkiller'  
**-s Rezept** 'prescription'  
**verschreiben** 'to prescribe'  
**-e Dosis (Dosen)** 'dose'

**Baldrian ist ein gutes *(Heil)mittel gegen Stress*.**

Valerian is a good remedy for stress.

**Ich brauche etwas *zur Beruhigung*.**

I need something to calm (my nerves).

**Prophylaktisches Aspirin wird *in sehr kleinen Dosen/Mengen eingenommen*.**

Prophylactic aspirin is taken in very small doses/amounts.

To get a prescription:

**Der Arzt hat Antibiotika verordnet.**

The doctor prescribed antibiotics.

**In Deutschland kann man Antibiotika nicht in der Apotheke kaufen, sondern man muss sie sich vom Arzt verschreiben lassen.**

In Germany you cannot buy antibiotics in a pharmacy. You have to go to the doctor's to get a prescription.

**Dieses Medikament ist rezeptpflichtig.**

This medicine is available only on prescription.

Medically tested medication:

**Diese Salbe wurde medizinisch geprüft.**

This ointment has been medically tested.

(e) Operations:

**jmdn. an etw. (= dat.) operieren** 'to operate on sb.'s sth.'

**Meine Nachbarin wird morgen an der Galle operiert.**

My neighbour is having an operation on her gall bladder tomorrow.

► See 66.2a for expressing good wishes for health and speedy recovery

## 111

### Expressing happiness, fear and sadness

#### 111.1

#### Describing mood in general

**-e Stimmung/Laune** 'mood'

**guter/schlechter Laune sein** 'to be in a good/bad mood'

**gut gelaunt sein** 'to be in a good mood'

**Heute war mein Fahrlehrer besonders gut gelaunt.**

My driving instructor was in a particularly good mood today.

The word **-e Laune(n)** also means mood, but has a slightly negative connotation:

**Er hat seine Launen.**

He has his moods.

**Er ist meistens recht launisch.**

He is quite bad-tempered most of the time.

The idiomatic expression **vor lauter** indicates that someone does something 'for sheer ...' **vor lauter Freude/Ärger/Schreck** 'for sheer joy/out of sheer annoyance/ fright':

**Die Kellnerin ließ vor lauter Schreck die Weingläser fallen.**

The waitress dropped the wine glasses out of sheer fright.

#### 111.2

#### Positive moods: joy and happiness

Many expressions of positive mood are based on **freuen** and **Freude**:

**sich (= acc.) freuen** 'to be pleased'

**-e Freude** 'joy'

**sich über etw. (= acc.) freuen** 'to be glad/happy about sth.'

**erfreulich** 'pleasing/gratifying'

**glücklich** 'happy'

**sich auf etw./jmdn. freuen** 'to look forward to sb./sth.'

**jmdm. eine Freude machen** 'to bring joy to sb./make sb. happy'

**Freude an etw. (= dat.) haben** 'to enjoy/get pleasure from/take pleasure in sth.'

**-s Glück** 'happiness/luck/fortune'

**zum Glück** 'fortunately'

**glücklicherweise** 'fortunately/happily'

**Glück haben** 'to be lucky/fortunate'

**Glück im Unglück haben** 'to be lucky under the circumstances'

**jmdm. den/die Daumen halten/drücken** 'to keep one's fingers crossed for sb.'  
(*colloquial*)

(a) Being pleased:

**Es freut mich, dich wiederzusehen.**

I am pleased to see you again.

**Wir würden uns ganz besonders über Ihren Besuch freuen.**

We would be very pleased if you came to visit (us).

**Sie freute sich darüber, ein Schnäppchen gemacht zu haben.** (*informal*)

She was pleased to have got a bargain.

**Der Sieg seiner Mannschaft war besonders für den Trainer erfreulich.**

The team's victory was especially pleasing for their manager.

(b) Being happy and showing joy:

**Sie war so glücklich wie noch nie.**

She was happier than she had ever been.

**Der Teenager war im siebten Himmel.**

The teenager was on cloud nine.

**Als sie das gute Zeugnis bekam, ist sie vor Freude in die Luft gesprungen.**

When she received her good report she jumped for joy.

**Sie ist ihm vor Freude um den Hals gefallen.**

She embraced him joyfully.

**Er hat einen Freudenschrei ausgestoßen.**

He gave a shout of joy.

The happy ending of a fairy tale is rendered as follows:

**Sie lebten glücklich und zufrieden bis ans Ende ihrer Tage.**

They lived happily ever after.

(c) Looking forward to something:

**Ich freue mich auf meine Geburtstagsparty.**

I am looking forward to my birthday party.

**Er freut sich darauf, mit ihr auszugehen.**

He is looking forward to going out with her.

► See 42.3e for completion by a clause

- (d) Pleasing someone:

**Ich würde euch gerne *eine Freude zum Jahrestag machen*.**  
I would like to treat you for your wedding anniversary.

- (e) Enjoying something:

**Die beiden *haben große Freude an ihrem Garten*.**  
The two of them get a lot of pleasure out of their garden.

- (f) Being lucky:

**Glück** can mean both ‘happiness’ and ‘luck’ in English. Its exact meaning has to be gleaned from context. When used with a form of **haben**, **Glück** means ‘to be lucky’:

**Mit dem guten Wetter *haben wir wirklich Glück gehabt*.**  
We were really lucky with the (good) weather.

**Unser Auto war total ausgeraubt worden. *Zum Glück hatten die Kinder noch etwas Geld dabei*.**

Our car had been completely cleaned out. (Everything had been taken/stolen from our car.) Fortunately the children had some money with them.

**Der hintere Wagen war auf unseren draufgefahren. *Glücklicherweise ist uns nichts passiert*.**

The car behind ran into ours. Fortunately we were all right. (*lit.* nothing (bad) happened to us)

► See 76.1g for **passieren**

Hoping for luck:

**Drücke mir den Daumen, wenn ich meine Fahrprüfung mache.**  
Keep your fingers crossed for me when I take my driving test.

### 111.3 Negative moods

- (a) Negative moods can be expressed in terms of positive ones by negating them:

<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
-e Freude ‘joy’	-s Leid ‘sorrow’
freudig ‘joyful’	freudlos ‘without pleasure’
Glück haben ‘to be lucky’	Pech haben ‘to be unlucky’
über etw. (= acc.) froh sein ‘to be happy about sth.’	über etw. (= acc.) traurig sein ‘to be sad about sth.’
	über etw. (= acc.) deprimiert sein ‘to be down about sth./be depressed/feel down’

- (b) Sadness:

**über etw. (= acc.) traurig sein** ‘to be sad about sth.’  
**etwas betrauern** ‘to mourn sth.’  
**über etw. (= acc.) betrübt sein** ‘to be saddened by/sorrowful about sth.’  
**über etw. (= acc.) weinen** ‘to cry about sth.’

**Der Tod von Jackson wurde überall in der Welt betrauert.**  
Jackson’s death was mourned all over the world.

**Sie war in tiefster Seele *betrübt* über die Scheidung ihrer Enkelin.**  
She was deeply grieved about the divorce of her granddaughter.

**Er *weinte*, als sein Hund starb.**  
He cried when his dog died.

(c) Yearning:

**Sehnsucht (f.) nach jmdm./etw. haben** 'to have a yearning/longing for sb./sth.'  
**Heimweh nach etw. haben** 'to be homesick for sth.'  
**Fernweh haben/vom Fernweh gepackt werden** 'to feel wanderlust/yearning to wander'  
**Lust auf etw. (= acc.) haben** 'to fancy sth.' (*colloquial, informal*)

**Als er in Amerika war, *hatte* er solche *Sehnsucht nach* deutschem Brot.**  
When he was in America he had such a yearning for German bread.

**Hat *dich* das *Fernweh* wieder *gepackt*?**  
Have you been caught by the travel bug again?

**Manche Schüler *haben* auf einer Schulfahrt schon in der ersten Nacht *Heimweh nach* Hause.**  
Some students are already homesick on the very first night of their school trip.

**Ich habe *Lust auf* ein Stück Kuchen/auf Volleyball.**  
I fancy a piece of cake/playing volleyball.

(d) Suffering:

**leiden an/unter (+ dat.)** 'to suffer from/under'

**Er hatte sehr *unter* seinem strengen Vater *gelitten*.**  
He had suffered greatly under his strict father.

► See 110.8 for suffering from a medical condition

**Während ihres Auslandsjahres *leiden* manche Studenten *an* Heimweh.**  
Some students suffer from homesickness during their year abroad.

(e) Feeling down or depressed:

**deprimiert sein** 'to be depressed'  
**sich (= acc.) überflüssig fühlen** 'to feel superfluous'  
**sich (= dat.) wie ein Versager vor\*kommen** 'to feel a failure'  
**keinen Sinn mehr im Leben sehen** 'to see no more sense/point in life'  
**keinen Lebenssinn/Lebensinhalt mehr haben** 'to have no more meaning in life/  
*raison d'être*'  
**sich (= acc.) einsam fühlen** 'to feel lonely'  
**ein trostloses Dasein führen** 'to lead a wretched/bleak existence'

**Sie *hat* immer wieder einmal *Depressionen*.**  
She does suffer from depression every now and again.

**Er *hat sich* als Arbeitsloser *überflüssig* gefühlt.**  
He felt superfluous as an unemployed person.

**Viele Menschen *führen* im Altersheim *ein trostloses Dasein*.**  
Many people in old people's homes lead a bleak existence.

(f) Sorrow:

**-r Kummer** 'grief/sorrow'**jmdm. Kummer machen/bereiten** 'to cause sb. grief/sorrow'**Das Schicksal ihrer einzigen Tochter bereitete ihr großen Kummer.**

The fate of her only daughter caused her much grief.

**Vor Kummer konnte sie kaum denken.**

She could hardly think for all her sorrow.

(g) Worry:

**-e Sorge** 'worry'**sich** (= dat.) **um etw.** (= acc.) **Sorgen machen** 'to worry about sth./sb.'**sich** (= dat.) **Sorgen machen wegen** (+ gen.)/**um** (+ acc.) 'to worry because of'**sich** (= dat.) **um etw.** (= acc.) **Gedanken machen** 'to worry about sth.'**sich** (= acc.) **um etw./jmdn. sorgen** 'to worry about sth./sb.'**etw. macht jmdm. zu schaffen** 'sth. worries sb./sb. finds sth. hard'**jmdm. am Herzen liegen** 'to be important to sb.' (*lit.* to lie close to sb.'s heart)**jmdm. schwer auf der Seele/dem Gewissen liegen** 'to weigh heavily on sb.'s mind/conscience'**Er machte sich Sorgen um seine Frau, die bei Nacht und Nebel alleine unterwegs war.**

He was worried about his wife, who was out on her own at night/in the dark.

**Wir machen uns große Sorgen wegen unserer unbezahlten Rechnungen.**

We are very worried about our unpaid bills.

**Der Schulwechsel macht vielen Kindern zu schaffen.**

Many children are worried about changing school.

**Wir machen uns Gedanken/Sorgen über das Drogenproblem an der Schule.**

We are worried about the drugs problem at the school.

**Ich Sorge mich um deine Gesundheit.**

I worry about your health.

**Es lag ihm sehr am Herzen, dass seine Eltern sich wieder versöhnten.**

It was very important to him that his parents should become reconciled.

**Der Streit in seiner Abteilung lag ihm schwer auf der Seele.**

The argument in his department weighed on his mind.

(h) Fear:

**sich** (= acc.) **vor etw./jmdm. fürchten** 'to be afraid of sth./sb.'**etw.** (= acc.) **befürchten** 'to fear sth.'**Angst haben vor etw./jmdm.** 'to be afraid of sth./sb.'

Being afraid of specific things:

**Ich fürchtete mich vor einer Begegnung mit seiner Freundin.**

I was afraid of a (chance) meeting with his girlfriend.

**Sie fürchtet sich vor Spinnen/der Fahrprüfung.**

She is afraid of spiders/the driving test.

**Das schlechte Ergebnis war zu befürchten.**

The bad result was to be expected/feared.

**Er hatte *Angst vor der Abschlussprüfung*.**

He was afraid of the final exam.

General feeling that cannot be pinpointed to a specific fear:

**Er hat *Angst, im Beruf zu versagen/vor der Zukunft*.**

He is afraid of failing in his profession/of the future.

(i) Frustration:

**-e Frustration** 'frustration'

**etw. frustrierend finden** 'to find sth. frustrating'

**frustriert sein über** (+ acc.) 'to be frustrated about'

**auf etw. (= acc.) einen Frust haben** (only in spoken language) 'to be frustrated about sth.'

***Frustrationen, die nicht ausgedrückt werden, können leicht zu Aggressionen führen.***

Frustrations that are not expressed can easily lead to aggression.

(j) Grief and mourning:

**-e Trauer** 'sorrow/mourning'

**um jmdn./etw. trauern** 'to mourn for sb./sth.'

**etw./jmdn. betrauern** 'to mourn sb./sth.'

**in stiller/tiefer Trauer** '(much loved and) sadly missed'

**jmdn. vermissen** 'to miss sb.'

**Sie *trauerte um ihren verlorenen Sohn*.**

She grieved for her lost son.

**Wir *trauern um unsere Toten*.**

We mourn our dead.

**Wir *betrauern unseren langjährigen Kollegen*.**

We mourn (the loss of) our colleague of many years.

**Seit seinem Tode *wird er schmerzlich vermisst*.**

He has been sadly/sorely missed since his death.

**Der Witwer *vermisst seine Frau*.**

The widower misses his wife.

Black is the colour for mourning in German-speaking countries and is still widely worn at a funeral (**-e Beerdigung**) or less commonly at a cremation (**-e Feuerbestattung**). Widows, **-e Witwe(n)**, of the older generation tend to wear dark colours for a suitable period of time, and obituary notices and responses to them usually carry a black edging.

► See also [65.1–3](#) for expressing commiseration, and [110.9](#) on death and dying

(k) Shock and fright:

**jmdn. schockieren** 'to shock sb.'

**erschrecken (erschrickt, erschrak, erschrocken)** (intransitive) 'to be shocked/frightened'

**jmdn. erschrecken (erschreckte, erschreckt)** (transitive) 'to frighten sb.'

**Die traurige Nachricht *hat uns sehr schockiert*.**

The sad news shocked us very much.

**Bei dem nächtlichen Schuss erschrak sie furchtbar.**

She was terribly frightened by the shot in the night.

**Der plötzliche Aufschrei hat sie erschreckt.**

The sudden cry shocked/frightened her.

► See **114.6** for more expressions of shock

(l) Anger:

**wütend sein auf** (+ acc.) 'to be angry/furious'

**zornig sein auf** (+ acc.) 'to be angry'

**vor lauter Zorn** 'in a fit of anger'

**sich** (= acc.) **über etw./jmdn. ärgern** 'to be annoyed about sth./sb.'

**über etw./jmdn. verärgert sein** 'to be annoyed about sth./sb.'

**Er war immer noch wütend auf den Dieb, der ihm sein iPhone gestohlen hatte.**

He was still really angry/furious with the thief who had stolen his iPhone.

**Er ist zornig auf seinen Bruder, der ihn beim Lehrer verpetzt hat.**

He is angry with his brother for telling on him to the teacher.

**Sie ärgerte sich über die hohe Telefonrechnung.**

She was annoyed about the high phone bill.

**Sie waren sehr verärgert über die misslungene Darbietung.**

They were very annoyed about the failed presentation.

**Vor lauter Zorn warf er ihm den Teller an den Kopf.**

In a fit of anger he threw the plate at his head.

(m) Feeling insulted:

**beleidigt** 'insulted'

**gekränkt** 'hurt/insulted'

**jmdn. kränken** 'to hurt sb.'

**verletzt** 'hurt/insulted'

**Obwohl er versucht hatte, das Missverständnis zu beseitigen, war sie doch noch stark beleidigt.**

Even though he had tried to clear up the misunderstanding, she was still very offended/insulted.

**Dass du nicht gekommen bist, hat deine Mutter sehr gekränkt.**

Your mother was very hurt that you didn't come.

(n) Saying that one has had enough:

**die Nase voll haben** 'to be fed up' (*colloquial, informal*)

**die Schnauze voll haben** 'to be fed up' (*very informal*)

**es reicht/langt** 'that's enough'

**Jetzt habe ich aber die Nase voll!**

Now I am really fed up!

**Das reicht/fehlt mir gerade noch. (*ironic*)**

That's all I need.

**Jetzt langt/reicht es aber!**

That's enough now!

► See also **104.2b** for expressions of dislike



**111.4 Sharing feelings**

Making people feel something:

**jmdn. zum Lächeln/Lachen/Weinen/Verzweifeln bringen** ‘to make someone smile/laugh/cry/despair’  
**jmdn. auf\*heitern** ‘to cheer sb. up’

**Er kitzelte sie, um sie zum Lachen zu bringen.**  
 He tickled her to make her laugh.

**Wir erzählten uns Witze, um uns gegenseitig aufzuheitern.**  
 We told each other jokes in order to cheer each other up.

**112 Expressing satisfaction and dissatisfaction****112.1 Being satisfied and dissatisfied**

The main word for expressing satisfaction is **zufrieden** ‘satisfied’ and its derivatives:

**mit etw./jmdm. zufrieden sein** ‘to be satisfied with sth./sb.’  
**unzufrieden** ‘dissatisfied’  
**sich (= acc.) mit etw. zufrieden\*geben** ‘to accept sth.’  
**-e Zufriedenheit** ‘satisfaction’  
**endlich!** ‘at last’

► See also **104** for more expressions of satisfaction

**Er ist mit seinem Leben völlig zufrieden.**  
 He is completely satisfied with his life.

**Die Sekretärin war mit ihrem Chef unzufrieden.**  
 The secretary was dissatisfied with her boss.

**Sie wollte sich nicht mit der Antwort zufrieden geben.**  
 She would not accept the answer.

**Er fand die schönste Befriedigung darin, seine Rosen für den Wettbewerb zu züchten.**  
 He derived the greatest satisfaction from growing his roses for the competition.

**Endlich!** expresses frustration or annoyance when something has finally been put right (better late than never . . .):

**Ja, endlich hab’ ich mein Geld!**  
 I finally have my money!

**112.2 Satisfying needs and demands**

**(Ansprüche/Bedürfnisse) befriedigen** ‘to satisfy (demands/needs/expectations)’  
**-e Befriedigung** ‘satisfaction/gratification’  
**-e Befriedigung (von Bedürfnissen)** ‘satisfaction/gratification (of needs)’  
**-e Neugierde/-s Verlangen/Hunger/Durst stillen** ‘to satisfy a curiosity/a desire/hunger/thirst’

► For word order here refer to **15**

**Seine hohen Ansprüche an seine Mitarbeiter sind kaum zu befriedigen.**

His high demands/expectations of his colleagues can hardly be satisfied.

**Zur Befriedigung ihres Heißhungers wollte sie unbedingt den ganzen Kuchen essen.**

To satisfy her ravenous hunger she was determined to eat the entire cake.

**Zur Befriedigung deiner Neugier kannst du ja mein Tagebuch lesen.**

To satisfy your curiosity you can always read my diary. (*could be ironic*)

**Ihr großes Verlangen nach Sonnenuntergängen konnte an der Westküste gestillt werden.**

She was able to satisfy her great desire for sunsets on the west coast.

► See 112.5 on **stillen**

### 112.3 Satisfactory achievements

(a) When describing someone's achievements as satisfactory, use:

**befriedigend** 'satisfactory'

**zur vollen Zufriedenheit** (+ gen.) 'to the full satisfaction (of)'

**zufrieden stellend** 'satisfactory'

On a scale from least to most satisfactory, the following adverbs are used with **zufrieden sein mit**:

**einigermaßen** 'somewhat'

**ziemlich** 'rather'

**recht** 'quite/pretty'

**Die Lehrerin ist mit seinem Fortschritt zufrieden.**

The (female) teacher is satisfied with his progress.

**Der Lehrling hatte seine Probezeit zur vollen Zufriedenheit seines Meisters abgeschlossen.**

The apprentice had finished his probationary period to the full satisfaction of his boss/foreman.

(b) Achievements are expressed by:

**-r Fortschritt** 'progress'

**-e Leistung** 'achievement'

**-s Ergebnis** 'result'

**Seine Leistungen waren stets befriedigend.**

His performance was always satisfactory.

**Das Ergebnis der Untersuchungen war zufriedenstellend.**

The result of the investigations was satisfactory.

(c) Official grades at school are usually scaled as follows (from best to worst):

<b>1 (eins)</b>	<b>sehr gut</b>	'very good'
<b>2 (zwei)</b>	<b>gut</b>	'good'
<b>3 (drei)</b>	<b>befriedigend</b>	'satisfactory'
<b>4 (vier)</b>	<b>ausreichend</b>	'adequate'
<b>5 (fünf)</b>	<b>mangelhaft</b>	'defective/fail'
<b>6 (sechs)</b>	<b>ungenügend</b>	'unsatisfactory/fail'.

**In Mathematik hat er 'befriedigend' bekommen.**

In maths he got a 'C'.

- (d) The difference between **Zufriedenheit** and **Befriedigung** is that **Zufriedenheit mit etw.** usually implies satisfaction with the status quo, whereas **Befriedigung von etw.** means satisfaction of needs/desires:

**Der Vorarbeiter ist mit seinem Lohn zufrieden.**

The foreman is satisfied with his wages.

**Sein Bedürfnis nach Wärme und Liebe ist unbefriedigt.**

His desire for warmth and love is unsatisfied/has been frustrated.

#### 112.4 Saying that something is sufficient

This is expressed with **(aus)reichen** and **genügen** (often with the dative of the person concerned):

**(aus\*)reichen/genügen** 'to suffice'

**genug/genügend** 'enough/sufficient'

**nicht genug kriegen können** 'to not be able to get enough/to be greedy' (*colloquial*)

**reichlich** 'plentiful'

**ausreichend** 'sufficient'

**Die dünne Decke reicht/genügt mir völlig.**

The thin blanket is quite sufficient for me.

**Hast du genug/genügend Getränke für unsere Gäste eingekauft?**

Have you bought enough/sufficient drink for our guests?

**Wir konnten nicht genug von dem Sekt kriegen.**

We couldn't get enough of the sparkling wine.

#### 112.5 Saying one has had enough to eat

► See [63](#) for further expressions on food and drink

– **Möchtest du noch etwas essen? – Nein danke, ich bin satt.**

– Would you like anything else to eat? – No thank you, I've had enough/I am full.

► See also [67.5c](#) and [93.4](#) for thanking in response to polite enquiries

To eat/drink all one wants:

**An dem köstlichen Salatbuffet kann man sich so richtig satt essen.**

You can really eat all you want (your fill) at the delicious salad buffet.

To get enough:

**Mit dem spärlichen Essen kann man nicht satt werden.**

This meagre meal isn't enough (to fill you up).

► See also [93.4](#) for the use of **voll**

Having enough to drink:

The word **gestillt** is an alternative to **satt**, also meaning ‘satisfied’ with food or drink. It is derived from **stillen**, which primarily means ‘to quench (a thirst)’ and ‘to breastfeed’:

**Auf der Wanderung konnte er seinen starken *Durst* am Brunnen *stillen*.**  
On the walk he was able to quench his thirst at the spring/well.

## 112.6 Coming to terms/putting up with things that are unsatisfactory

**sich** (= acc.) **damit ab\*finden, dass** ‘to put up with the fact that/reluctantly acknowledge’  
**sich** (= acc.) **mit etw. zufrieden geben** ‘to accept sth./go along with/acquiesce in sth.’

**Er hat sich immer noch nicht damit abgefunden, dass seine Villa in Mecklenburg jetzt jemand anderem gehört.**

He has still not come to terms with the fact that his villa in Mecklenburg now belongs to someone else.

**Du musst dich mit dem geringen Taschengeld zufrieden geben; mehr gibt es nicht.**

You’ll have to make do with the small amount of pocket money you get; you are not getting any more.

## 113 Expressing hopes, wishes and disappointment

### 113.1 Hopes

Hopes in general are conveyed by the following:

- (a) Hoping for better things can be expressed in the following ways:

**Lasst uns auf eine bessere Zukunft hoffen.**

Let’s hope for a better future.

**Es besteht begründete Hoffnung, dass sich diese Vogelart wieder hier einnistet.**

There is justification/good reason for hoping that this type of bird will nest here again.

- (b) Hoping for a good outcome, that nothing bad has happened or is going to happen:

**Hoffentlich ist ihm nichts passiert/geschehen/zugestoßen.**

Hopefully nothing (bad) has happened to him.

Note here that **passieren**, **geschehen** and **zu\*stoßen** have a connotation of something bad happening.

► See also [76.1g](#)

**Wenn das bloß/nur alles gut geht!**

If only it/I do hope it all goes well!

- (c) Hoping to overcome present difficulties:

**etw./jmdn. überleben** ‘to survive sth./sb.’

**etw. überstehen** ‘to overcome/get through sth.’

**etw. aus\*halten** ‘to stick/endure sth.’

**etw. überwinden** 'to overcome sth.'  
**etw. durch\*halten** 'to endure sth.'  
**zusammen\*halten** 'to stick together'  
**-s Durchhaltevermögen** '(power of) endurance'  
**etw. schaffen** 'to manage sth.'  
**über die Runden kommen** 'to manage'  
**etw. gelingt jmdm.** 'sth. can be managed by sb.'

► See 36.2 for inseparable verbs

**Wir werden auch diesen Winter überleben/überstehen.**

We will survive/get through this winter all right.

(**Auch** has a soothing effect. See 117.1c.)

**Sie brauchen die Schmerzen nicht mehr lange auszuhalten.**

You won't have to suffer/bear the pains much longer.

**Wenn alle zusammenhalten, sind diese Schwierigkeiten zu überwinden.**

If (we) all stick together, these difficulties can be overcome.

**Das schaff(e) ich/krieg(e) ich schon hin!**

I'll manage that.

**Er wird auch mit dem geringeren Gehalt über die Runden kommen.**

He will manage even on the lower salary.

**Weißt du, ob es ihnen gelungen ist, den Keller frei von Wasser zu halten?**

Do you know whether they managed to keep the cellar/basement free of water?

(d) Hoping against hope:

**Er darf jetzt auf keinen Fall die Hoffnung aufgeben.**

He mustn't give up hope now, whatever happens.

(e) Being hopeful and excited:

**Seid ihr auch so gespannt darauf, wie der Wettbewerb ausgeht?**

Are you as excited about the outcome of the competition as we are?

## 113.2 Wishes

The most common way to express wishes involves **wünschen** 'to wish' and its derivatives.

(a) Wishing for things:

**sich** (= dat.) **etw. wünschen** 'to wish for sth.'  
**jmdm. etw. wünschen** 'to wish sb. sth.'

**Ich wünschte, ich hätte mehr Zeit zum Klavierspielen.**

I wish I had more time for playing the piano.

► See 39.2–3 for subjunctive II

**Wilhelm wünscht sich einen großen Mercedes.**

William would like to get a big Mercedes.

Wishing something for someone else on a certain occasion:

**Zum Geburtstag wünschen wir dir alles Gute, Gesundheit und Gottes Segen.**  
For your birthday we wish you all the best, good health and God's blessing.

► See 66 on expressing good wishes

(b) Granting and denying wishes:

**jmdm. einen Wunsch erfüllen/versagen** 'to grant/deny a wish to sb.'  
**ein Wunsch geht (nicht) in Erfüllung** 'a wish is (not) fulfilled'

**Wenn ich dir doch nur diesen Wunsch erfüllen könnte.**  
If only I could make this wish come true for you.

**Es wäre schön, wenn alle Wünsche in Erfüllung gehen könnten.**  
It would be nice if all wishes could come true.

**Ab und zu muss man den Kindern auch einen Wunsch versagen, sonst werden sie zu verwöhnt.**  
Every now and again one should say no to children's wishes, or they'll be spoilt.

### 113.3 Disappointment

**-e Enttäuschung** 'disappointment'  
**jmdn. enttäuschen** 'to disappoint sb.'  
**etw. enttäuscht jmdn.** 'to be disappointed about sth.'  
**enttäuscht sein über etw. (= acc.)** 'to be disappointed about sth.'  
**von jmdm./etw. enttäuscht werden** 'to be disappointed by sb./sth.'  
**verletzt sein** 'to be hurt'  
**leider** 'unfortunately'

(a) These expressions can be modified by the use of adverbs/adjectives such as:

**furchtbar** 'frightfully'  
**schrecklich** 'terribly'  
**schwer** 'badly'  
**tief/zutiefst** 'profoundly/badly'  
**leicht** 'slightly'

**Wenn du gemeint hast, ich könnte dir das Geld vorstrecken, muss ich dich leider enttäuschen.**  
If you thought that I could advance you the money, I regret to have to disappoint you.

**Die Musik bei der Disco gestern hat mich echt enttäuscht.**  
I was really disappointed about the music at the disco yesterday.

**Er wird über ihre Note in Kunst schwer enttäuscht sein.**  
He will be really disappointed about her grade in art.

**Kinder werden von ihren Eltern manchmal enttäuscht.**  
Children are sometimes disappointed by their parents.

**Das undankbare Verhalten ihres Sohnes hatte sie tief verletzt.**  
Her son's ungrateful behaviour had hurt her badly.

**Verletzt sein** expresses a much stronger feeling than **enttäuscht**.

(b) Failed hopes:

**Seine Hoffnungen auf einen neuen Lebensanfang hatten sich völlig zerschlagen.**

His hopes for a new start in life had failed completely.

**Seine Hoffnung, eine Frau zu finden, die mit ihm den Hof bewirtschaftet, ging nicht in Erfüllung.**

His hope of finding a wife who would run the farm with him was not fulfilled.

(c) Disappointed expectations:

Where there was a firm expectation that something was supposed to happen but did not, use a subjunctive II in the past with a modal verb (see 35.6b and 39.3d):

**Die Freunde hätten den Saal nach der Party zusammen aufräumen sollen.**

The friends should have tidied up the room together after the party.

**Die Zuschauer hätten den Verletzten helfen müssen.**

The spectators should have helped the injured.

**Das hätte doch wirklich nicht sein müssen.**

That should not have happened.

**Hätte man denn keine Lösung finden können, der alle zustimmten?**

Could one not have found a solution on which everybody agreed?

**Wäre eine Verlängerung nicht besser gewesen?**

Would an extension not have been better?

The word **eigentlich** can emphasize that something happened contrary to expectations:

**Eigentlich hätte das Experiment klappen müssen.**

The experiment should really have worked.

**Die Kinder hätten eigentlich vorne sitzen sollen.**

The children should have sat/been able to sit at the front.

(d) Not having had a chance to do something (on a particular day):

**Sie war einfach nicht dazu gekommen, einmal mit ihm zu tanzen.**

She simply didn't get a chance to have a single dance with him.

Not to have the opportunity:

**Wir werden leider keine Gelegenheit zu einem persönlichen Gespräch haben.**

Unfortunately we will have no opportunity to talk in private.

**Er hatte eben nicht die Chance gehabt, schon als Kind eine bessere Allgemeinbildung zu bekommen.**

As a child he had simply not had the chance to get a better general education.

► See 117.1c for the modal particle **eben**

(e) Failing to do something (correctly) is often expressed through a verb with the prefix **ver-**:

**eine Gelegenheit/einen Bus verpassen/versäumen** 'to miss an opportunity/a bus (by one's own neglect)'

**einen Namen/einen Jahrestag vergessen** 'to forget a name/an anniversary'

**einen Verstorbenen/den Geliebten vermissen** 'to miss a dead person/a loved one'

**einen Ring/den Weg verlieren** 'to lose a ring/the way'

**ein Buch/eine wichtige Akte verlegen** 'to mislay a book/an important document'

**(etw./jmdn. mit etw./jmdm.) verwechseln** 'to confuse (sth./sb. with sth./sb.)'

**sich verirren** 'to lose one's way'

► See 57.2 for word formation

**Sie bedauerte, dieses Andenken an ihre Patentante verloren zu haben.**  
She regretted having lost this souvenir/memento of her godmother.

**Habt ihr uns auch wirklich nicht mit denen aus der anderen Gruppe verwechselt?**

Are you sure you haven't confused us with (those from) the other group?

## 114 Expressing surprise

### 114.1 Surprise in general

**überraschen** 'to surprise'

**jmdn. überraschen** 'to surprise sb.'

**bei etw. überrascht werden** 'to be surprised/caught doing sth.'

**jmdn. bei etw. erwischen** 'to catch sb. doing sth.' (*usually sth. illicit, informal*)

**von etw./jmdm. überrascht werden/sein** 'to be surprised by sth./sb.'

**-e Überraschung(en)** 'surprise'

► See 36.2 for inseparable verbs

(a) To be surprised:

**Die Kinder waren überrascht, wie groß der Spielplatz war.**

The children were surprised how big the playground was.

► See 40 for the passive

**Wir wurden von dem plötzlichen Unwetter überrascht.**

We were surprised by the sudden thunderstorm.

**Der Einbrecher wurde beim Knacken des Safes überrascht.**

The intruder was caught (while) cracking the safe.

**Habe ich dich wieder dabei erwischt, wie du in meinen Notizen gelesen hast?**  
(*informal*)

Have I caught you reading my notes again?

**Alle Dorfbewohner wurden von der Flut überrascht.**

All the villagers were surprised by the flood.

(b) Different sorts of surprise:

**-e Überraschung** can be both positive and negative, and also lends itself to the formation of compounds:

**-e schöne/böse Überraschung (erleben)** '(to have) a nice/bad/nasty surprise'

**-s Überraschungsgeschenk** 'surprise gift'

**-e Überraschungsparty** 'surprise party'

**Zu meiner großen Überraschung waren auch die Verwandten aus Übersee zu der Familienfeier gekommen.**

To my great surprise even the relatives from overseas had come to the family celebration.

(c) When visiting someone it is nice to take them a little something as a surprise:

**Ich habe Ihnen eine kleine Überraschung mitgebracht.**

I've brought you a little something as a surprise.



### 114.2 Unforeseen events

To indicate that something was not foreseeable, one of the following expressions is used. These expressions are usually linked to the conditional:

**nicht ahnen** ‘to have no inkling’  
**nicht vorher\*sehen** ‘to not foresee’  
**nicht vorhersehbar** ‘not foreseeable’  
**nicht rechnen mit** ‘to not reckon with’  
**unerwartet** ‘unexpected(ly)’  
**erstaunlicherweise** ‘surprisingly’  
**überraschend** ‘surprising(ly)’

► See 39.7 for **würde** construction

- (a) When there was no idea/inkling of what was going to happen:

**Wir konnten nicht ahnen, dass er sich das so zu Herzen nehmen würde.**  
 We had no idea that he would take it to heart so much.

- (b) If something was not foreseeable:

**Es war nicht vorherzusehen, wie schnell sich das Feuer ausbreiten würde.**  
 One could not have foreseen how quickly the fire would spread.

For something that was not reckoned with:

**Wir hatten zwar mit dem Abriss der Häuser an der Autobahn gerechnet, aber dann geschah es doch plötzlich und unerwartet.**  
 We had indeed reckoned with/expected the demolition of the houses next to the motorway, but then it happened so suddenly and unexpectedly.

- (c) Unexpected events:

**Dem Patienten geht es unerwartet gut.**  
 The patient is surprisingly (*lit.* unexpectedly) well.

**Die Aktien waren überraschend gestiegen.**  
 The shares had risen unexpectedly.

**Die Nachricht von seiner Beförderung kam überraschend.**  
 The news of his promotion came as a surprise.

### 114.3 Hardly believing the news

Expressing pleasant or unpleasant surprise:

**Er konnte kaum glauben, dass er das große Los gewonnen hatte.**  
 He could hardly believe that he had won the jackpot.

**Der Krankenwagen kam unglaublich schnell zum Unfallort.**  
 The ambulance got to the scene of the accident incredibly quickly.

**Es ist nicht zu fassen, wie schrecklich abgemagert die Flüchtlinge sind.**  
 It is unbelievable how terribly emaciated the refugees are.

**114.4 Astonishment and awe**

The verbs **staunen** ‘to be astonished’, and **jmdn. erstaunen** ‘to astonish sb.’, convey astonishment or even awe about something great or miraculous:

**Es hat mich erstaunt, dass am Feiertag so wenig Leute im Museum waren.**  
I was surprised to see so few people in the museum on a public holiday.

**Über die sieben Weltwunder wird immer wieder gestaunt.**  
The seven wonders of the world never cease to amaze people.

**Seine Erfindung hatte das Staunen der Nachwelt erregt.**  
His invention had astonished (*lit.* excited the astonishment of) future generations.

**114.5 Incomprehension**

(a) **sich** (= acc.) **über etw.** (= acc.) **wundern** ‘to be surprised about something’ is also used for total incomprehension, for something that cannot be understood:

**Er wunderte sich über ihr eigenartiges Verhalten.**  
He could not understand her strange behaviour.

(b) Where an interrogative clause follows, **ich frage mich** is used:

**Ich frage mich, ob/warum hier eine Radarfalle ist.**  
I wonder whether/why there is a speed trap here.

(c) **verwundert sein** denotes an even more confused state of surprise:

**Wir waren völlig verwundert, wie sehr sie sich zu ihrem Vorteil verändert hatte.**  
We were completely surprised by how much she had changed for the better.

**114.6 Shock and dismay**

To express shock at an event:

**Die Gemeinde war über die Zahl der Kirchenaustritte schockiert.**  
The parishioners were shocked at the number of people leaving the church.

**Die Wanderer waren über das Waldsterben sehr bestürzt.**  
The walkers were most alarmed about the forest dying.

► See 111.3k for more expressions of shock and fright

**114.7 Irony**

In order to be ironic about a real mess caused by some sort of disaster, **schöne Bescherung** ‘that’s just great’ (*lit.* giving of Christmas presents) is used:

**Der Keller steht ein Meter unter Wasser; das ist vielleicht eine schöne Bescherung.**

The cellar is under a metre of water; that’s just great.

**115** Expressing enjoyment and pleasure**115.1** General expressions of enjoyment and pleasure

These tend to derive from the following:

-r **Spaß** 'fun'  
 -s **Vergnügen** 'pleasure'  
 -r **Genuss** 'enjoyment'  
 -e **Freude** 'joy/fun'  
 -e **Lust** 'fun'

**115.2** Giving pleasure

**jmdm. Spaß machen** 'to give sb. pleasure'  
**es macht jmdm. Spaß, etw. zu tun** 'sb. enjoys doing sth.'  
**erfreulich** 'pleasing/gratifying'  
**über etw. (= acc.) entzückt sein** 'to be delighted at/about sth.'

**Der Urlaub mit dir hat wirklich Spaß gemacht.**

I really enjoyed my holiday with you.

**Es hat Spaß gemacht, die alten Fotos durchzusehen.**

It was fun looking through the old photos.

**Es macht ihm großen Spaß, im Regen barfuß über die Wiese zu laufen.**

He gets great pleasure from running barefoot across the meadow in the rain.

**Die Königin war entzückt über die erfreuliche Nachricht.**

The queen was delighted by the good news.

**115.3** Enjoying oneself

**sich (= acc.) bei etw. vergnügen** 'to enjoy oneself doing sth.'  
**vergnügend** 'amusing/entertaining'  
**etw. (in vollen Zügen) genießen** 'to enjoy sth. (to the full)'  
**Spaß/Freude machen** 'to be fun'

**Er wollte sich beim Discotanzern vergnügen.**

He wanted to have a good time disco dancing.

**Wir wollen uns einen vergnüglichen Abend auf der Alpenhütte machen.**

We want to have a fun evening at the alpine cabin.

**Sie hatte den Aufenthalt in den Bergen in vollen Zügen genossen.**

She had enjoyed the stay in the mountains to the full.

**Macht dir deine neue Stelle Freude?**

Do you enjoy your new job?

Places where one might enjoy oneself are often expressed using compounds of **vergnügen**:

-r **Vergnügungspark** 'amusement park'  
 -s **Vergnügungsviertel** 'pleasure district/entertainment area of a town/red light district'  
 -s **Vergnügungsort** 'night bar/bar providing entertainment'

► See **111.2c** for looking forward to something

**115.4 Enjoying the taste of things**

► See also [63.6](#) and [63.4](#) on food and drink

**schmecken** 'to taste (nice)'

**jmdm. schmeckt etw.** (= nom.) 'sb. (= dat.) is enjoying sth. (= nom.)'

**genüsslich** 'with relish'

**Wie hat Ihnen der Kirschlikör geschmeckt?**

How did you like/did you enjoy the cherry brandy?

**Die vornehme alte Dame konnte so ganz genüsslich aus der Meißner Tasse ihren Kaffee trinken.**

The elegant old lady really relished drinking her coffee out of a Meissen cup.

**115.5 Being cheerful and having pleasant feelings**

**Er ist ein besonders lustiger Spielkamerad.**

He is an especially amusing/funny/cheerful playmate.

**Auf seinen Kellerpartys war es immer sehr lustig.**

We always had a lot of fun at his basement parties.

**Bei euch scheint es sehr lustig zuzugehen.**

You seem to be having a lot of fun/really enjoying yourselves.

**Dr Hoffmann hatte sich durch die Einnahme von LSD in einen anfänglich angenehmen Zustand versetzt.** (*formal*)

Dr Hoffmann had at first made himself feel quite pleasant by taking LSD.

**Mir gefällt die angenehme Atmosphäre in einem englischen Pub.**

I like the pleasant atmosphere in an English pub.

**115.6 Doing things for fun/pleasure**

This is rendered by (so) **zum Vergnügen/zum Spaß**:

**Ich möchte nur einmal so zum Vergnügen/zum Spaß mit der Straßenbahn fahren.**

I would like to go by tram just once for the fun of it.

**Bergsteigen macht richtig Spaß.**

Climbing mountains is really fun.

**115.7 Feeling like doing something/fancying something**

This is expressed by **Lust haben**:

**Lust haben, etw. zu tun** 'to feel like doing sth.'

**Lust haben auf** (+ acc.) 'to fancy sth.' (*often associated with food*)

**wanderlustig** 'keen on hiking'

**Hast du Lust, mit ins Schwimmbad zu gehen?**

Do you feel like coming to the swimming pool?

**Ich habe nicht die geringste Lust dazu, den ganzen Tag lang aufzuräumen.**

I don't feel in the slightest like tidying up all day long.

**Ich hätte große Lust auf eine Grillplatte.**  
I would really like/I really fancy a mixed grill.

**Die Urlauber im Gebirge sind besonders *wanderlustig*.**  
Holiday-makers in the mountains are especially keen on hiking.

### 115.8 Treating oneself to something

**sich** (= dat.) **etw. gönnen** 'to indulge in sth./to allow oneself sth.'

**sich** (= dat.) **etw. leisten können** 'to afford sth.'

**sich** (= acc.) **verwöhnen lassen** 'to let oneself be spoiled'

**jmdm. etw. gönnen** 'not to begrudge sb. sth.'

**Nach all den Jahren, in denen sie so sparsam sein musste, sollte sie *sich endlich einmal einen richtigen Urlaub gönnen*.**

After all the years of having to be so careful with her money, she should finally treat herself to a proper holiday.

**Ich kann *mir jetzt eine gute Digitalkamera leisten*.**

I can afford a good digital camera now.

**Auf der Schönheitsfarm können Sie *sich so richtig verwöhnen lassen*.**

At the health farm you can really let yourself be spoiled.

Not begrudging something to someone:

**Ich *gönne ihm das prächtige Haus*.**

I don't begrudge him the splendid house.

### 115.9 Joking

**(einen) Spaß machen** 'to joke'

**einen Witz machen/erzählen** 'to make/tell a joke'

**einen guten Witz machen/reißen** 'to make/crack a good joke'

**eine witzige Bemerkung machen** 'to make a funny remark'

**jmdn. auf den Arm nehmen** 'to pull sb.'s leg'

**Er *macht gerne Spaß*.**

He likes to joke.

***Machst du Spaß, oder ist es dir ernst?***

Are you joking or are you serious?

**Sie hat wieder einmal eine *witzige Bemerkung gemacht*.**

She's made a funny remark again.

**Das hat er nicht so gemeint. Er *hat dich nur auf den Arm genommen*.**

He didn't mean it. He was just pulling your leg.

# XV

## Communication strategies

### 116 Using fillers

#### 116.1 Bridging a pause

Fillers are words or sounds that can be inserted in pauses while the speaker is thinking of what to say next. They have little or no meaning of their own. In German, common ‘fillers’ include the following:

**äähm, hmm, nun, und, ja, eben, also, tja, na ja** ‘now then’  
**eigentlich** ‘actually’  
**sozusagen** ‘so to speak’  
**wissen Sie/weißt du** ‘you know’  
**sehen Sie/siehst du** ‘you see’

**Das war . . . äähm . . . vor vielen Jahren und . . . wissen Sie . . . ich habe einiges vergessen, und, ja, nun, mein Vater hatte damals eine Stelle bei Siemens, das war . . . also . . . in Erlangen, sehen Sie, . . .**

That was . . . umm . . . a long time ago and . . . you know . . . I can’t remember everything, and, well, now, my father had a job at Siemens at the time, that was . . . errr . . . in Erlangen, you see, . . .

#### 116.2 Searching for the right word

When searching for the right word, the following can be used:

**Wie ist . . . noch?** ‘What is . . . again?’  
**Es liegt mir auf der Zunge.** ‘It’s on the tip of my tongue.’  
**Wie heißt es noch?** ‘What is the word again?’  
**Wie war das noch?** ‘What was it again?’  
**nicht finden** ‘can’t find’  
**mir fällt es nicht (mehr) ein** ‘it won’t come to me’  
**Ich komme (gerade) nicht darauf** ‘I can’t think of it (right now)’

**Wie ist das Wort noch? / Wie heißt es noch?**  
What’s the word again?

**Ich finde das Wort nicht.**  
I can’t find the word.

**Ach, das Wort fällt mir nicht (mehr) ein.**  
Oh, the word won’t come to me.

This could be followed by **Moment noch** or **Augenblick noch** 'just a moment', to signal that the speaker is asking for a little time to think of the word.

► See also **118** on asking for linguistic cues

### 116.3 Not knowing the right word

The following may be useful when pointing to something or describing something for which the speaker does not know the exact word:

**so ein Ding** 'like that'  
**so aus\*sehen** 'to look like that'  
**so machen** 'to go like that'  
**aus\*sehen wie** 'to look like'  
**klingen wie/sich** (= acc.) **anhören wie** 'sound like'

- (a) General words can be used such as **das Ding** 'thing', **die Sache** (which usually refers to a situation or a state of affairs) and **der Ort** 'place'. The meaning of 'like this/like that' is conveyed in German by **so**, when one can imitate the thing or point to something by way of explanation.

► See **74** on describing people, and **75** on describing objects

**Das war so ein Ding.**  
 It was (a thing) like this (like that).

NOTE **Das ist so eine Sache** as an expression on its own usually means 'It's a bit tricky. / It's a complicated state of affairs.'

- (b) When describing or imitating the way something looks, **so aus\*sehen** can be used:

**Es sieht so aus.**  
 It looks like this.

- (c) When describing the way something moves or sounds, **so machen** can be used:

**Es macht so.**  
 It goes like this/does this.

**Es machte 'brr brr'.**  
 It went 'brr brr'.

**Er machte so (mit der Hand).**  
 He went like this (with his hand).

### 116.4 Comparing things

When the speaker is able to compare the thing to something for which he or she knows the word, **wie** is used:

**Es sieht aus wie eine kleine Gitarre.**  
 It looks like a small guitar.

Alternatively, a relative clause may be used:

**Das ist das Ding, das man mit einem Hammer schlägt.**  
 It's the thing you hit with a hammer.

► See **8** on subordinate clauses

## 117 Keeping the channel open

### 117.1 Expressions to involve the listener

Even when someone carries a conversation for a fairly long time, he or she does not speak in a monologue (see 121). There are a number of words and phrases a speaker can use in a conversation to ‘keep the channel open’: acknowledging the presence of the listener, checking that the listener is following, and involving him or her in what is being said. Many of the German expressions used for this purpose do not have straightforward equivalents in English:

**nicht wahr? nicht? gell? was? oder? Stimmt’s?** ‘isn’t it/aren’t they?’, etc.  
**ja, eben, gerade, nun, nämlich** ‘you see’  
**sehen Sie? siehst du?** ‘(you) see’  
**verstehen Sie? verstehst du?** ‘(you) understand?’  
**doch** ‘surely/after all’ (*rejecting an actual or anticipated resistance*)  
**freilich** ‘admittedly’ (*making some kind of concession*)  
**allerdings, immerhin** can function like **doch** or like **freilich**

- (a) The commonest of these is **nicht wahr?** ‘isn’t it/aren’t they?’, etc. This is often abbreviated to **nicht?** or (very informally) in northern Germany to **ne?** In southern Germany **gell?** is common; and **was?** is also colloquial and informal:

**Komisch, was?**  
 Strange, eh?

- (b) The slightly more demanding **oder?** usually invites the listener in a fairly direct way to agree with what has just been said:

**Das ist (doch) unverschämt, oder?**  
 That is disgraceful, don’t you think?

**Wissen Sie?** (or **weißt du?**) said like a question is a fairly neutral way of including the listener in what is being said:

**Sie hat das Examen bestanden, weißt du, und jetzt geht sie auf die Uni.**  
 She passed the exam, you know, and now she’s going to university.

It can, however, be quite assertive and challenging, especially when said with a level intonation (i.e. without sounding overtly like a question):

**Das ist unverschämt, wissen Sie!**  
 That is really disgraceful!

Other phrases used in this way include **sehen Sie?** or **siehst du?** ‘(do you) see?’ and **verstehen Sie?** or **verstehst du?** ‘(do you) understand?’

- (c) German has a lot of modal particles, part of whose function is to ‘keep the channel open’ to the other person in the conversation. The most common ones are listed below alphabetically:

**allerdings** introduces a point that reasserts the validity of an earlier point despite some argument to the contrary. It can thus be used to limit the validity of the speaker’s (or the listener’s) viewpoint:

**Das ist allerdings wahr.**  
 That’s true, admittedly.



**Ich muss *allerdings* zugeben, dass du Recht hast.**

I have to admit, though, that you are right.

**Du musst *allerdings* zugeben, dass ich Recht habe.**

You have to admit, all the same, that I am right.

But it can also be used to counter an implied negative:

– **Hast du vielleicht seine Telefonnummer?**

– You wouldn't have his telephone number by any chance?

– ***Allerdings!***

– I certainly have!

**auch** can signal the speaker's sympathy for the position of the listener:

**Das ist *auch* nicht dein Problem.**

That's not your problem.

**Du konntest es *auch* kaum selbst bezahlen.**

You could scarcely be expected to pay for it yourself.

**bloß/nur** implies that something is not very important. It can be used to agree with the listener's viewpoint or (with **doch**) to play down something that the listener thinks is important:

**Das ist *bloß* eine Kleinigkeit.**

That's not important.

**Das ist *doch* *bloß* eine Kleinigkeit.**

That's really not important.

**denn** signals some kind of shared relevance between the speaker and the listener. It can express surprise or add a note of informality:

**Was kann ich *denn* sonst machen?**

What else can I do, then?

**Was ist *denn* das?**

What's this, then?

**Was machst du *denn* heute Abend?**

So what are you doing this evening?

**doch** has two main uses, depending on whether it is stressed or unstressed. When unstressed, it adds an emphatic note to what one is saying:

**Das ist *doch* ganz klar.**

That is absolutely clear.

**Ich weiß. Du hast es mir *doch* gesagt.**

I know. You've already told me.

or it can express exasperation:

**Das gibt es *doch* nicht!**

I don't believe it! / You must be joking!

and in questions it can express hope for a positive response:

**Du hast *doch* den Brief abgeschickt?**

You did send the letter (didn't you?)

When stressed, **doch** can be used to reject an actual or implied negative (see 109.1b on expressing disagreement). With even greater emphasis, it can be used to confirm an unexpected turn of events, often with **dann** or together with **noch** (**doch noch**):

**Trotz der Panne ist der Zug dann doch pünktlich angekommen.**

Despite the breakdown the train still arrived on time.

**eben** usually highlights a potential problem that the speaker can reasonably expect the listener to understand and sympathize with:

**Das ist es eben.**

That's just it.

**Das ist eben klar.**

That is clear, after all (as everyone surely accepts).

**freilich** signals that the speaker acknowledges the force of some argument that detracts from the argument he or she is making:

**Die Mitglieder dieser Regierung sind freilich keine Engel, aber sie tun ihr Bestes.**

The members of this government are no angels, admittedly, but they are doing their best.

**gerade** highlights a particular point, draws the listener's attention to something, and gives it a particular prominence. In a conversation, this may imply that the speaker and the listener need to talk about this further. **Eben** can also be used in this way:

**Das ist gerade/eben das Problem.**

That is exactly the problem (which you may not fully appreciate).

**halt** is used colloquially and generally invites the listener to agree that something is a fact and cannot easily be changed:

**Es ist halt so. (informal)**

That's (just) the way it is.

**Heutzutage gibt es halt nur Staus.**

These days there are only traffic jams.

**immerhin** functions very like **allerdings** (see above):

**Wir haben das Spiel verloren. Immerhin hätte es schlimmer sein können.**

We lost the game. It could have been worse, though.

**Mein Deutsch war immer schwach. Ich war aber immerhin der Beste in der Klasse.**

My German was always weak. I was the best in the class all the same.

**ja** usually implies that the speaker regards what he or she is saying as self-evident and does not expect the listener to disagree:

**Das ist ja ganz klar.**

That is absolutely clear (as everyone knows).

**mal** often implies that the speaker has a strong expectation that the listener ought to or will do what is asked. The effect can be informal and friendly, but it can also be demanding and manipulative. Generally, **einmal** is a slightly more formal version of **mal**:

**Rechnen Sie *mal* nach!**

Go on, add it up!

**Könntest du *mal* für mich anrufen?**Could you phone for me? (*i.e. instead of me*)**Geben Sie *mal* zu, dass ich Recht habe!**

Why don't you just admit that I'm right (for a change)!

**Lassen Sie mich *einmal* ausreden!**

Just let me finish, will you?

**Kommen Sie *mal* her!**

Come here!

**nämlich** often signals that the speaker realizes that the listener needs to have something explained a little further. As well as having the sense of 'you see', it usually signals that the speaker is about to elaborate a point:

**Du hast *nämlich* zwei Möglichkeiten: Entweder . . . oder . . .**

So you have two possibilities: either . . . or . . .

**Es ist *nämlich* so: Ich habe diesen Monat fast kein Geld.**

Well you see, it's like this: I have practically no money this month.

**nun** can be used like **halt** (see above). It can also be used to introduce an idea in such a way that the speaker acknowledges that the listener also has an interest in the matter:

***Nun (ja)*, das ist eine wichtige Frage.****Das ist *nun* eine wichtige Frage.**

Well yes, that is an important question.

**schon** has two main uses. When stressed, it can be used to reject an actual or implied negative. In this usage it is milder than the equivalent use of **doch**:

– **Hier dürfen Sie nicht parken!** – **Quatsch, hier darf man *schon* parken.**

– You can't park here! – Rubbish, of course you can park here.

Alternatively, it can signal consent or reassurance. In this case it is unstressed:

**Keine Angst, es wird *schon* gut gehen.**

Don't worry, it'll be all right.

– **Vati, kann ich mit Elli spielen?** – **Ja, meine Kleine, das darfst du *schon*.**

– Daddy, can I play with Elli? – Yes, little one, of course you can.

**wohl** 'probably' often signals a supposition or expectation on the part of the speaker. It has a wide range of uses, from signalling an awareness that there may be other views on the subject, to an intimidating challenge:

**Entschuldigen Sie bitte die Störung. Sie haben *wohl* viele wichtige Sachen zu erledigen.**

Please excuse the interruption. You've probably got a lot of important things to see to.

**Sie haben *wohl* eine Erklärung?**

I suppose you have an explanation?

► See also [88.2c](#) for **wohl**

## 117.2 Verbal signals from the listener

It is usual for the listener to give little verbal signals to show that he or she is following what the speaker is saying and is involved. In German this can be done using the following expressions. Some of them also express reservation or disagreement:

**ja/ja, ja/mmm/so/so, ja**  
**ach** 'oh'  
**Sagen Sie bloß!** 'You don't say'  
**tatsächlich? wirklich? echt?** 'really'  
**(ganz) klar** 'of course'  
**OK, alles klar!** 'OK, no problem'  
**eben!/genau!** 'exactly'  
**richtig!** 'right'  
**jawohl!** 'yes, indeed'  
**naja, aber . . .** 'well OK, but . . .'  
**naja, vielleicht . . .** 'well, maybe'  
**nein doch!** 'certainly not'

- (a) A fairly low level of interest, without particular involvement, can be conveyed with **ja** (or **ja, ja**), **mmm** or **so**, said with a low and slightly falling intonation. Combinations of these are possible, e.g. **so, ja**.
- (b) A greater degree of involvement can be signalled by producing the previous set of words with an appropriately emphatic manner, such as a high falling intonation. Alternatively, the use of **ach!** or **tatsächlich!** implies a degree of interest and possibly surprise at learning something. Other responses that could be appropriate here include **Sagen Sie bloß!** and **Was Sie nicht sagen!** 'you don't say!'
- (c) To signal explicitly that he or she understands and/or agrees with the speaker, the listener can say **alles klar!** or **OK!** Combinations with the words listed above are also possible, e.g. **so, ja, alles klar!**
- (d) Strong agreement can be indicated by saying **genau!** 'exactly', **richtig!** 'right', **ja eben!** 'exactly!' or **jawohl!** 'yes, indeed'. Alternatively, one can say:

**(Das) stimmt (ja)!**

That's right!

- (e) Reservation can be indicated in a variety of ways. In approximate order of forcefulness: **naja, aber . . .** 'well OK, but . . .'; **ja, das schon, aber . . .** 'yes, of course, but . . .'; **naja, vielleicht** 'well, maybe'; **wirklich?** 'really?'; **tatsächlich?** 'really?' Alternatively, one can say **Meinst du (wirklich)?** 'You really think so?' More abrupt responses include:

**(Wohl) kaum!**

Hardly!

**Nein doch!**

Certainly not!

**Ach was!**

Come off it!

► See 109 on expressing disagreement

### 117.3 Indicating lack of comprehension

There are several ways in which the listener can show that he or she has not understood what has just been said:

**Wie bitte?** 'Could you please repeat that?'

**Könnten sie das bitte noch mal wiederholen?** 'Could you please repeat that?'

**Was?** 'What?'

**etw. nicht mit\*bekommen/nicht mit\*kriegen** 'to not get/understand sth.'

(*etw.*) **kapieren** 'to "twig" (sth.)'

**schalten, schnallen** 'to catch on, "twig"'

- (a) The most common and perfectly polite way to ask someone to repeat what they have just said is (**Wie**) **bitte?** The following may also be used:

**Könnten Sie das bitte wiederholen?**

Could you please repeat that?

**Könnten Sie bitte (etwas) langsamer sprechen?**

Could you please speak (a little) more slowly?

**Was haben Sie gesagt?**

What did you say?

**Langsamer, bitte!** (*informal, potentially rude*)

More slowly, please!

**Noch einmal bitte!** (*informal, potentially rude*)

Again, please.

The abbreviated form **noch mal!** is likely to be offensive unless said to a friend, and **was?** is either very informal or rude. These expressions can of course be accompanied by expressions such as **Es tut mir leid** 'I'm sorry' and **Das habe ich nicht mitbekommen** 'I didn't catch that'.

- (b) Alternatively **nicht verstehen** or **nicht mit\*bekommen** can be used:

(**Es tut mir leid.**) **Das habe ich nicht verstanden.**

(I am sorry.) I didn't understand that.

**Das habe ich nicht (ganz) mitbekommen.**

I didn't (quite) get that.

**Nicht mit\*bekommen** can also imply that the listener did not properly hear what was said, e.g. because of intruding noise.

- (c) In colloquial German **mit\*kriegen** is found for **mit\*bekommen**; and **schalten, schnallen** and (*etwas*) **kapieren** are also used, with the meaning 'to twig':

**Hast du das mitgekriegt?**

Did you get that?

**Ich kapiere/schalte/schnalle heute schlecht.** (*informal*)

I'm a bit slow today.

**Das habe ich nicht kapiert/nicht mitgekriegt.** (*informal*)

I didn't get that/I didn't twig.

- (d) If the listener realizes that he or she has misunderstood something, he or she can signal this with **Ach so!** or **Ach so, ja!** 'I see!':

**Er ist krank? Ach so! Das habe ich nicht gewusst/nicht mitbekommen.**  
He is ill? Oh I see! I didn't know that/I didn't get that.

### 117.4 Checking understanding

There are a number of ways in which the listener can check that he or she has understood exactly what the other person means:

**jmdn. oder etw. richtig verstehen** 'to understand sb. or sth. correctly'

**Wie meinen Sie das?** 'What do you mean?'

**Was wollen Sie damit sagen?** 'What are you trying to say?'

These expressions can also be used to challenge or correct what someone has said. The more abrupt and challenging expressions for doing this are listed in points (d) and (e).

- (a) Using **richtig verstehen**:

**Habe ich Sie richtig verstanden?**

Have I understood you correctly?

- (b) Using a construction with **meinen** 'to mean, intend':

**Wie meinen Sie das (genau)?**

What do you mean (exactly)?

**Ich weiß nicht, was Sie (damit) meinen.**

I don't know what you mean (by that).

- (c) Using a construction with **wollen** 'to intend':

**Was wollen Sie damit sagen?**

What are you trying to say?

A slightly more elaborate way of saying this is:

**Worauf wollen Sie hinaus?**

What is the point you are trying to make?

These are rather more challenging than **Wie meinen Sie das?**

- (d) Where speaker A is implying something about speaker B that speaker B objects to because it is unfair or incorrect, speaker B can object by using the following:

**jmdm. etw. (= acc.) unterstellen** 'to imply (wrongly) sth. about sb.'

**e Unterstellung** 'a false or unjustified implication'

**Was unterstellen Sie mir?**

What are you implying (wrongly) about me?

**Was wollen Sie mir unterstellen?**

What are you trying to imply about me?

**Nein, das ist eine Unterstellung.**

No, that's unjustified.

- (e) A very forthright way of challenging what someone has said is:

**Was soll denn das heißen?** (*with the stress on das*)

What is that supposed to mean?

**118 Asking for spoken linguistic cues**

Common expressions include:

**Wie heißt das auf Deutsch?** ‘How do you say that in German?’

**Wie sagt man auf Deutsch: memory stick? / Wie sagt man ‘memory stick’ auf Deutsch?** ‘How do you say “memory stick” in German?’

**wiederholen** ‘to repeat’

**langsamer sprechen** ‘to speak more slowly’

**etw. anders sagen** ‘to say sth. differently’

**Wie schreibt man das?** ‘How do you spell that?’

**buchstabieren** ‘to spell’

**A wie Anton?** ‘A for Anton?’

**118.1 Asking for a translation**

When lost for a word, the help of a German speaker can be sought by asking:

**Wie heißt das auf Deutsch?**

What is it called in German?

**(Nun,) (Also,) wie sagt man (auf Deutsch) ‘memory stick’?**

(Now then), how do you say ‘memory stick’ in German?

**118.2 Requesting reformulation**

Asking someone to reformulate what they have said to make it easier to understand can be done using **anders sagen** or **anders formulieren** (often with an introductory sentence such as **Das habe ich nicht verstanden**):

**Könnten Sie das bitte anders sagen/formulieren?**

Could you please say/formulate that in another way?

**118.3 Asking for a spelling**

- (a) There may be occasions (on the telephone, writing notes) when it is useful to ask for a word or name to be spelt out. To ask someone to do this, one of the following can be used:

**Wie schreibt man das?**

How do you spell that?

**Wie schreibt sich das?**

How is that spelt?

**Könnten Sie (mir) das bitte buchstabieren?**

Could you please spell that (for me)?

- (b) The letters of the alphabet are listed below with an approximate pronunciation in brackets (see also 1.4) and the identifying word that most Germans are likely to use. Note that **wie** is used to introduce the identifying word:

**A** [ah] **wie Anton**

**B** [be:] **wie Bertha**

**C** [tse:] **wie Cäsar**

**D** [de:] **wie Dora**

**E** [e:] **wie Emil**  
**F** [ef] **wie Friedrich**  
**G** [ge:] **wie Gottfried**  
**H** [ha:] **wie Heinrich**  
**I** [i:] **wie Ida**  
**J** [yot] **wie Johann**  
**K** [ka:] **wie Kaufmann**  
**L** [el] **wie Ludwig**  
**M** [em] **wie Martha**  
**N** [en] **wie Nordpol**  
**O** [o:] **wie Otto**  
**P** [pe:] **wie Paula**  
**Q** [ku:] **wie quer**  
**R** [air] **wie Richard**  
**S** [es] **wie Siegfried**  
**T** [te:] **wie Theodor**  
**U** [u:] **wie Ulrich**  
**V** [fau] **wie Viktor**  
**W** [ve:] **wie Wilhelm**  
**X** [iks] **wie Xaver**  
**Y** [ipsilon] **wie Ypsilon**  
**Z** [tset] **wie Zeppelin.**

NOTE The letter **ß** is called **Eszett**.

(c) Note that the following German letters can sound misleadingly like English letters:

[ah] is a German A (not an R)  
 [e:] is a German E (not an A)  
 [i:] is a German I (not an E).

(d) If one is in doubt about the exact letter, it can be solicited by asking **wie** + identifying word? (or just **wie?** with a level intonation, which invites the other person to supply the identifying word):

**Das habe ich nicht mitbekommen. Wie Richard?**  
 I didn't catch that. As in 'Richard'? (*i.e. R*)

**Nein, wie Anton!**  
 No, as in 'Anton' ! (*i.e. A*)

**Es tut mir leid, das habe ich nicht mitbekommen. Wie . . . ?**  
 I'm sorry, I didn't catch that. As in . . . ?

**Wie Heinrich.**  
 As in 'Heinrich'.

## 119 Shaping the course of a conversation

### 119.1 Developing the current topic

(a) A speaker can use a number of phrases to reiterate and explain what has just been said:

**das heißt** 'that is to say'  
**mit anderen Worten** 'in other words'



**anders gesagt** 'in other words'  
**nämlich** 'namely/that is to say'  
**oder besser** 'or more appropriately'

**Er arbeitet jetzt unter Hochdruck. Das heißt, er spielt morgen bestimmt nicht Tennis.**

He is working under enormous pressure at the moment. In other words, he certainly won't be playing tennis tomorrow.

**Sabine ist kein Einzelkind. Sie hat nämlich einen Bruder und eine Schwester.**  
 Sabine is not an only child. You see, she has a brother and a sister.

**Sie kann morgen nicht. Oder besser, sie will morgen nicht.**  
 She can't make it tomorrow. Or rather, she doesn't want to.

- (b) A speaker can use one of the following to expand on what he or she has been saying and to introduce a new point:

**und zwar** (see 119.5)  
**mehr noch** 'and that's not all'  
**dazu gehört (auch) lit.** 'to this belongs'  
**dazu kann man sagen, dass** 'I can add that . . .'  
**außerdem, sonst, ansonsten** 'otherwise'  
**in diesem Zusammenhang** 'in this connection' (*formal*)  
**Hinzuzufügen wäre (noch), dass** 'One could add that . . .'  
**darüber hinaus** 'over and beyond that/what is more' (*formal*)

**Sie heiratet. Und zwar einen Australier. Mehr noch, sie wandert nach Australien aus!**

She's getting married. To an Australian. And that's not all. She's emigrating to Australia!

**Ja, es gab ein paar kleinere Probleme im ersten Jahr, aber ansonsten ist alles bestens gelaufen.**

Yes, there were a few minor problems in the first year, but apart from that everything went smoothly.

**Ich kann Ihnen ein Anfangsgehalt von 5.000 Euro im Monat versichern. Darüber hinaus besteht die Möglichkeit, dass Sie ab Januar im Ausland arbeiten könnten.**

I can assure you of a starting salary of 5,000 euros a month. Also, there is the possibility that you could be working abroad from January.

## 119.2 Changing the topic

- (a) **übrigens** 'by the way' and **nebenbei (gesagt)** 'incidentally' are useful for introducing a new direction into a conversation. So is the more direct **Wissen Sie was?** 'Do you know what?' A combination of these is possible:

**. . . ja, ja. Übrigens, wissen Sie was? Mein Bruder kommt übermorgen.**

. . . yes, yes. By the way, do you know what? My brother is coming the day after tomorrow.

**Nebenbei (gesagt), wir haben eine Einladung bekommen.**

Incidentally, we've had an invitation.

- (b) Where a speaker does not want to talk about a particular topic any more, he or she can say so explicitly. The following expressions are arranged in approximate order of increasing explicitness:

**(Aber) reden wir nicht mehr darüber!**

(But) let's not talk about that any more.

**Reden wir (aber) von etwas anderem!**

(But) let's talk about something else.

**Ich würde lieber über etwas anderes sprechen.**

I would rather talk about something else.

**Das hatten wir schon.**

We've already covered that.

**Ja, ja, das weiß ich (doch) (alles) schon!**

Yes, yes, I know all that!

**(Aber) ich bitte Sie!**

Please, no more!

**Das Thema ist abgeschlossen.**

The topic is closed.

**Strich darunter! (informal)**

Matter closed!

### 119.3 Resisting a change of topic

Where a conversation partner is trying to change the topic or has changed the topic, this can be resisted or registered in the conversation in a number of ways:

- (a) By trying to steer the conversation back to the desired topic, using one of the following:

**(Aber) was wollte ich (gerade) sagen?**

Now what was I going to say?

**Aber wie ich (schon) gesagt habe, . . .**

But as I was saying (before), . . .

**(Aber) wie Sie schon/vor kurzem gesagt haben, . . .**

(But) as you were saying before/just now, . . .

- (b) By explicitly pointing out that the topic has been changed without one's agreement, using:

**das Thema** 'the topic'

**beim Thema bleiben** 'to keep to the point'

**vom Thema ab\*kommen** 'to get off the point'

**zum Thema zurück\*kommen** 'to get back to the point'

**(nicht) zum Thema gehören** *lit.* 'to (not) belong to the topic'

**mit dem Thema nichts zu tun haben** 'to have nothing to do with the topic'

**(Aber) bleiben wir beim Thema.**

(But) let's keep to the point.

**(Aber) wir kommen vom Thema ab.**

(But) we're getting off the topic.

**Aber zurück zum Thema! Kommen wir aber zum Thema zurück!**

But let's get back to the topic.

**(Aber) das gehört nicht zum Thema.**

(But) that's not what we're talking about.

**(Aber) das hat mit dem Thema nichts zu tun.**

(But) that's got nothing to do with it.

More impatiently, one could say:

**Aber könnten wir jetzt mal endlich zum Thema zurückkommen!**

But could we now please finally get back to what we were talking about?

#### 119.4 Broadening the topic

The following are some of the ways in which the topic of a conversation can be broadened, moving from the particular to the general:

**im Großen und Ganzen** 'on the whole' (59.1d)

**in der Regel** 'as a rule'

**im Allgemeinen** 'in general' (59.1d)

**sonst** 'otherwise/apart from that'

**solche Dinge/solche Sachen** 'such things'

**solche Fragen** 'such questions' (etc.)

- (a) The expressions **im Großen und Ganzen** 'on the whole', **im Allgemeinen** 'in general', **alles in allem** 'all in all', **in der Regel** 'as a rule' are widely interchangeable:

**Im Großen und Ganzen kann man sagen, dass Frauen heutzutage bessere Berufschancen haben.**

On the whole one can say that women have better career prospects today.

**Wir sind diesen Monat überzogen, aber in der Regel haben wir genug Geld auf der Bank.**

We are overdrawn this month but as a rule we have enough money in the bank.

- (b) **sonst** and **im Übrigen** (formal) mean 'otherwise, apart from that':

**Dieses Bild gefällt mir nicht, (aber) sonst finde ich die Ausstellung gut.**

I don't like this picture, (but) otherwise I think the exhibition is good.

**Sie hat eine leichte Erkältung? Wie geht es ihr sonst?**

She has a slight cold? How is she otherwise?

**Die Regierung hat einige Probleme in der Außenpolitik. Im Übrigen läuft alles bestens.**

The government has a few problems in foreign affairs. Otherwise everything is going smoothly.

- (c) With phrases using **solch-** or (formal) **derartig-** 'such a':

**Solche (derartige) Dinge findet man überall . . .**

You find that kind of thing everywhere . . .

**Solche Leute findet man überall.**

You find people like that everywhere.

**119.5 Narrowing the topic**

The following are some of the ways in which the topic of a conversation can be narrowed, moving from the general to the particular:

(**ganz**) **besonders** ‘especially/in particular’  
**insbesondere** ‘especially/in particular’  
**vor allem** ‘above all/especially’  
**und zwar/nämlich** ‘to be precise’

**Aber was mich (*ganz*) *besonders* daran interessiert, ist . . .**  
 But what particularly interests me about it is . . .

**Die Elektronik, *insbesondere* die Computerindustrie, erfährt jetzt einen Boom.**

Electronics, and in particular the computer industry, is experiencing a boom at the moment.

**Mir gefällt das Haus, *vor allem* die Küche und das Wohnzimmer.**  
 I like the house, especially the kitchen and the living room.

*Und zwar* and *nämlich* can be used to specify a point of detail:

**Zwei Leute sind dagegen, *und zwar* der Robert und die Sabine.**  
**Zwei Leute sind dagegen, *nämlich* der Robert und die Sabine.**  
 Two people are against – Robert and Sabine.

(Note the use of the informal indefinite article with names; cf. 23.2g.)

**Es gibt ein kleines Problem, *und zwar* ist die Espresso-Maschine kaputt.**  
**Es gibt ein kleines Problem. Die Espresso-Maschine ist *nämlich* kaputt.**  
 There is a little problem: the espresso machine is broken.

**119.6 Requesting more detail**

There are several ways of asking for further information or more detail:

- (a) By asking **wo?**, **wer?**, **wann?**, **warum?**, etc., often with **genau** ‘exactly’:

**Wo wohnt er *genau*?**  
 Where exactly does he live?

**Wann fährt der Zug *genau*?**  
 When exactly does the train leave?

Alternatively, **eigentlich** can be used instead of **genau**:

**Was macht er *eigentlich*?**  
 What does he do exactly?

**Wissen Sie *Genaueres* über den Unfall?**  
 Do you have more (precise) details about the accident?

- (b) Using **noch** ‘again’ with **die Frage**, **die Bitte** or **die Auskunft**:

**Ich habe (hätte) *noch eine Frage* (*noch eine Bitte*).**  
 May I ask another question/make another request?

**Ich möchte (brauche) *noch eine Auskunft*, bitte.**  
 I would like (I need) some more information, please.

- (c) When asking for more detailed information about something, the adjectives **weiter** and **näher** are often used:

**Haben Sie *weitere* Information über das Hotel?**

Have you got further information on the hotel?

**Könnten Sie das Haus *näher* beschreiben?**

Could you describe the house in more detail?

► See also **51** on comparison of adverbs

**Näheres (über etwas)** ‘more exact information (about sth.)’ is a very useful term for eliciting further information:

**Könnten Sie mir *Näheres* darüber sagen?**

Could you tell me more about that?

**Ich möchte (gern) *Näheres* über diese Wohnung erfahren.**

I would like to find out more about this apartment.

Alternatively **die Einzelheiten** ‘details’ can be used:

**Könnten Sie mir noch ein paar *Einzelheiten* geben/erklären?**

Could you give me/explain a few more details?

## 120 Turn-taking in conversations

### 120.1 Intonation

Generally a rising intonation implies that a speaker is intending to continue speaking (unless it is a direct question). A falling intonation implies that the speaker is anticipating the possibility that the other person will say something. In this section, [ / ] marks the point at which a rising intonation begins, and [ \ ] marks the point at which a falling intonation begins. For example:

- **Wie viele Kinder haben Sie?**
- [ \ ]Drei.
- **Wie viele Kinder haben Sie?**
- [ / ]Drei. Zwei Mädchen und einen [ \ ]Jungen.
- How many children do you have?
- Three – two girls and a boy.

### 120.2 ‘Please don’t interrupt me’

There are various ways in which a speaker can signal that he or she does not wish to be interrupted, even though he or she may have paused for a moment:

- (a) By using rising intonation (see **120.1**):

**Ich bin nach [ / ]Hause gekommen ... (und ...)**

I came home ... (and ...)

- (b) By starting a sentence with a construction that points forward to a following clause for its completion (see **38.2** for clause links with **da** + preposition, and **42.3b** for verb completion with two elements):

**Das hat [ / ]damit zu tun ... (dass sie nicht zu Hause war).**

It has to do with the fact that (she was not at home).

[/]Damit hängt zusammen ... (dass die Firma in Helsinki eine Filiale eröffnet).

Related to this is the fact (that the firm is opening a branch in Helsinki).

- (c) Explicitly, by saying so, perhaps after someone else has started to speak. One of the following might be used:

**Augenblick noch!**

**Moment noch!**

Just a moment!

**Eine Sekunde noch!**

Just a second!

**Kann (darf) ich noch etwas sagen?**

Can I say something else?

**Ich bin (noch) nicht fertig.**

I am not finished (yet).

**Ich bin gleich (bald) fertig.**

I'm almost finished.

**Darf ich noch ausreden?**

May I finish?

**Lassen Sie mich bitte ausreden!**

Please let me finish!

### 120.3 Inviting someone to speak

There are various ways in which a speaker can signal that he or she is prepared to be or expects to be interrupted, even though he or she may not have finished what he or she was saying:

- (a) By using falling intonation (see 120.1):

**Und dann bin ich nach [/]Hause gekommen und ... [/]ja**

And then I came home and ... yes?

- (b) By explicitly telling the other person that he or she can take over the conversation at this point:

[/]Bitte!

Your turn!

A rising intonation here (e.g. [/]Bitte) could sound impatient or reluctant. Other possible expressions include:

**Nein, Sie zuerst!**

No, you first!

**Bitte, nach Ihnen!**

Please, go ahead, after you!

Of course, a direct question is usually an open invitation to respond:

**Sie langweilen sich, nicht?**

You are bored, aren't you?

**Ich komme aus Berlin, und Sie?**

I am from Berlin, and you?

**Wann macht die Bank auf?**

When does the bank open?

#### 120.4 Interrupting someone

Breaking into a conversation when the speaker is not prepared or is not expecting to be interrupted needs to be done with some confidence. Among the more explicit techniques there are the following:

- (a) Using the inseparable verb **unterbrechen** 'to interrupt', or the more informal **ein\*haken**:

**Darf ich Sie (mal) (kurz) unterbrechen?**

Can I (just) interrupt you (briefly)?

**Darf ich einhaken?**

Can I butt in?

- (b) Using a similar construction with another verb:

**Kann/Darf ich etwas sagen?**

May I say something?

**Kann/Darf ich (Sie) etwas fragen?**

Can I ask you something?

Or, more impatiently:

**Darf ich jetzt mal etwas sagen?**

Can I just say something now?

All of the above tend to sound assertive and forthright when said with a falling intonation: **unter[\\]brechen**, [**]sagen**, [**]fragen**. A rising intonation makes these interruptions seem more polite and tentative: **unter[/]brechen**, [**]sagen**, [**]fragen**.

- (c) Other ways of interrupting, which draw less attention to themselves as interruptions, include:

**Ja, [/]wissen Sie, . . .**

Ah, you know . . .

**(Ja) dazu kann ich [/]sagen . . .**

*lit.* To that I can say . . .

With a strong stress on **da-**, this claims a close relevance to what has just been said, and the rising intonation signals that the speaker wishes to continue:

**[/]Dazu kann ich sagen, dass . . .**

I can tell you that . . .

Alternatively, a more assertive intervention uses a falling intonation, inviting the other person to stop and listen:

**(Ja) dazu kann ich etwas [\\]sagen.**

Ah, I can tell you something on that score.

- (d) Where the person interrupting wishes to challenge or amend what has just been said, the following might be used (in addition to those listed above):

**Aber** [/]wissen Sie . . .

But you know . . .

**Das** [/]stimmt zwar, aber . . .

That's right, but . . .

A direct contradiction of what has just been said can be achieved by using **Nein!** or (where one wishes to correct a negative assertion) **Doch!** (possibly together with **schon**):

– **Sie machen eigentlich keine Fehler.**

– You don't really make any mistakes.

– **Doch, ich mache schon Fehler.**

– That's not so. I do make mistakes.

## 121

## Delivering monologues (formal speaking)

► See 60.6c on welcoming, 66.5b on proposing a toast, 66.7–8 on congratulating and celebrating, and 67.1–2 on expressing thanks

Situations in which a person speaks on his or her own without interruption are usually formal or semi-formal occasions, e.g. giving a speech (**eine Rede halten**), a lecture (**einen Vortrag halten**), a report or 'paper' (**ein Referat halten**). Some of the vocabulary and structures given in this section are found only in such formal or semi-formal contexts, and are identified as 'formal'.

## 121.1

## Formally introducing a speaker

The usual way to hand over formally to a speaker is **jmdm. das Wort geben**. Alternatively, **das Wort haben** can be used:

(Damit) **gebe ich Ihnen, Herr Manojlovic, das Wort.**

(And with that) I hand over to you, Mr Manojlovic.

**Herr Manojlovic, Sie haben das Wort.**

Mr Manojlovic, over to you.

## 121.2

## Opening words

► See 34.7d

- (a) The first word may be an introductory 'filler' (see 116) such as **also**, **nun**, or even **ja**.
- (b) In a speech this might be followed by **Liebe Freunde!** 'dear friends' or **Meine (sehr geehrten) Damen und Herren!** 'Ladies and gentlemen'. In a lecture or a report, some kind of introductory remark might follow, such as **Thema dieses Vortrags (dieses Referats) ist (lautet) . . .** 'the subject of this lecture (this paper) is . . .'



## 121.3

## Closing words

- (a) Once again, a simple ‘filler’ such as **also**, after a pause, could mark the beginning of the conclusion. It is also quite common to mark the final part of a monologue with **schließlich**:

*Also, ich komme schließlich zu meinem letzten Punkt, . . .*

**Schließlich also komme ich zu meinem letzten Punkt, . . .**

Finally, then, I come to my last point, . . .

► See also [76.9](#)

A slightly more formal word is **abschließend** ‘in conclusion’:

*Abschließend möchte ich sagen, dass . . .*

In conclusion I would like to say that . . .

**Ich komme abschließend zu der Finanzfrage.**

I come finally to the financial question.

- (b) More formal expressions meaning to summarize include **zusammen\*fassen, das Fazit ziehen** and **Bilanz ziehen**:

**Ich möchte also jetzt zusammenfassen . . .**

So, I would now like to sum up . . .

**Welches Fazit ziehst du aus deinen Beobachtungen?**

What conclusion do you draw from your observations?

**Die Veranstalter haben eine positive Bilanz gezogen.**

The organizers concluded the event had been a success.

► See also [121.4](#)

- (c) The speaker can signal that he or she is nearly finished speaking as follows:

**Ich bin gleich am Ende/gleich fertig.**

I am almost finished.

**Ich nähere mich dem Ende dieses Referats. (formal)**

I am drawing to a close (coming to the end) of this lecture, etc.

**Ich möchte zum Schluss kommen.**

To conclude.

**Kommen wir zum Schluss.**

In conclusion.

- (d) In a formal situation it is customary to finish by thanking the audience for their attention. Possibilities, in rising order of formality, include:

**Ich danke fürs Zuhören.**

Thanks for listening.

**Ich danke Ihnen für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit.**

Thank you for your attention.

**Ich möchte Ihnen für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit danken.**

I would like to thank you for (giving me) your attention.

Using **sich bei jmdm. für etwas bedanken** gives this a slightly more formal ring, and **danken** can also be expanded by **recht herzlich**:

**Ich möchte mich bei Ihnen für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit recht herzlich bedanken.**  
I would like to thank you most sincerely for (giving me) your attention.

► See 67.1–2 on thanking somebody

## 121.4 Giving an overview

- (a) A person delivering a lecture or paper usually provides an outline of the whole (-e **Gliederung**) at the beginning. The following might be used to explain that a talk has three main parts:

**Mein Vortrag befasst sich mit drei Fragen.**

**Mein Vortrag hat drei Teile.**

**Mein Vortrag hat drei Schwerpunkte.**

**Mein Vortrag ist in drei Teile unterteilt (gegliedert).**

- (b) There are various ways of talking about the order things will come in:

**Zunächst** ‘first of all’ could be followed by **zweitens . . .**, **drittens . . .**, **viertens . . .**, **fünftens . . .**, etc. Other words for ‘next’ are **dann** and **anschließend**. ‘Finally’ is **schließlich** or **zum Schluss**. A combination of these is possible:

**Zunächst gebe ich einen kurzen Überblick über die Situation in den beiden Firmen.**

First, I will give a brief outline of the situation in both companies.

**Anschließend werde ich die Logik einer Fusion untersuchen.**

Following that I will examine the logic of a merger.

**Drittens befaße ich mich mit der Haltung des ABC-Vorstands.**

Third, I discuss the attitude of the ABC board.

**Dann werden die strukturellen Vorteile einer Fusion erörtert.**

Then the structural benefits of a merger will be discussed.

**Und schließlich komme ich zu der Frage, ob das Hauptquartier der neuen Gruppe in Düsseldorf oder Leipzig sein sollte.**

And finally I come to the question of whether the headquarters of the new group should be in Düsseldorf or Leipzig.

A combination of these is possible:

**Zunächst . . ., dann . . ., anschließend . . ., viertens . . ., und schließlich . . .**

First . . ., then . . ., next . . ., fourth . . ., and finally . . .

- (c) Other ways of saying what will come first are **Als Erstes**, **Gleich am Anfang** and **In dem/meinem ersten Teil**. Any combination of the following will say that the first part of the talk discusses X:

**Zunächst kommt X.**

**Als Erstes werde ich über X sprechen.**

**Gleich am Anfang werde ich X behandeln (erörtern).**

**Im ersten Teil wird X behandelt.**

- (d) When moving from one part of a talk to the next a speaker might say:

**Das war also der erste Punkt. Ich komme/Wir kommen jetzt zu dem zweiten Punkt, der Finanzfrage . . .**

That was the first point, then. I come/we come now to the second point, the financial question . . .

► See 21.1 on noun apposition

**Soviel (also) zu diesem Aspekt/zu dieser Frage, ich gehe jetzt zu dem nächsten/zweiten/dritten Punkt über.**

So much for that aspect/that question. I now come to the next/second/third point.

More formally:

**Soweit zu dem ersten Teil. Ich wende mich jetzt dem zweiten Teil zu.**

So much for the first part. I now turn to the second part.

Expressions that also explain the logical relation of the previous part to the next part include:

**Während in dem letzten Teil (meines Referats) X im Vordergrund stand, gehe ich jetzt auf Y ein.**

Whereas the focus was on X in the last part (of my talk), I will now look at Y in some detail.

► See 76.5 on expressing the next step in a process

- (e) Indicating that something will not be dealt with in a talk can be done as follows:

**Aus Zeitgründen kann ich (leider) X hier nicht behandeln.**

There is (unfortunately) not enough time for me to deal with X here.

**Aus Zeitgründen kann (leider) X hier nicht behandelt werden.**

There is (unfortunately) not enough time for X to be dealt with here.

**X zu behandeln, würde über den Rahmen dieses Vortrags hinausführen.**

To deal with X would exceed the remit of this talk.

**X muss/musste (leider) (aus Zeitgründen) ausgeklammert werden.**

(Un fortunately) since time is short X could not be included in the talk. (*lit.* has to be/has had to be excluded from the talk)

Another reason for excluding something is that it is not sufficiently relevant:

**. . . weil X hier uns nur am Rande interessiert.**

. . . because X is only of marginal interest here.

## 121.5 Presenting and analysing visual material

Talks supported by, for example, PowerPoint require the speaker to be able to refer to the material being shown. This may be a table (**die Tabelle**) or some kind of pictorial representation (**die Abbildung, das Schaubild, die Graphik**), which could be a diagram (**das Diagramm**), a matrix (**die Matrix**), a graph (**die Kurve, die Graphik**) or some kind of picture (**das Bild**). Common ways of referring to slides (**die Folie(n)**) include:

**die Abbildung macht deutlich, dass . . .** ‘the illustration clearly shows that . . .’  
**wie die Abbildung (etc.) zeigt** ‘as the picture (etc.) shows’

**sich** (= dat.) **etw.** (= acc.) **an\*sehen/an\*schauen** 'to look at sth.'  
**etw.** (= acc.) **an etw.** (= dat.) **sehen** 'to see sth. from sth.'  
**etw.** (= acc.) **(von) etw. entnehmen** 'to deduce sth. from sth.'  
**aus etw. hervor\*gehen** 'to be evident from'

For example, all of the following could say that the visual aid shows a rise in the rate of inflation:

**Die *Abbildung*/Das *Schaubild* macht die steigende Inflationsrate *deutlich*.**

The diagram shows clearly the rising rate of inflation.

**Die steigende Inflationsrate wird in dieser *Abbildung*/in diesem *Schaubild* *veranschaulicht*.**

The rising rate of inflation is shown in this diagram.

**Wie die *Abbildung*/das *Schaubild* *zeigt*, ist die Inflationsrate *gestiegen*.**

As the diagram shows, the rate of inflation has risen.

**Wie Sie der *Abbildung*/dem *Schaubild* *entnehmen* können, ist die Inflationsrate *gestiegen*.**

As you can see from the diagram, the rate of inflation has risen.

**Wie *aus* der *Abbildung*/dem *Schaubild* *hervorgeht*, ist die Inflationsrate *gestiegen*.**

As is clear from the diagram, the rate of inflation has risen.

**Wie Sie *an* der *Abbildung*/dem *Schaubild* *sehen*, ist die Inflationsrate *gestiegen*.**

As you can see from the diagram, the rate of inflation has risen.

**Wenn wir uns *die* *Abbildung*/*das* *Schaubild* *anschauen*, (*dann*) wird *deutlich*, *dass/wie* die Inflationsrate *gestiegen* ist.**

When we look at the diagram it becomes clear that/how the rate of inflation has risen.

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# Index of functions

Functions are listed by their keyword(s) and do not include auxiliary verbs, i.e. ‘apologizing’ rather than ‘making apologies’, ‘condolences’ rather than ‘sending condolences’, ‘necessity’ rather than ‘expressing/conveying necessity’, etc. All references are to sections, not pages.

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