PURPOSES The Reference Grammar serves a variety of purposes. Above all, it supplements the Strukturen/Structures presentations in the Wie, bitte? Kontexte, which are short treatments of German structure that that present “just-in-time” – just what is needed for the current communicative tasks. The Reference Grammar, which is intended for study outside class, gives more complete explanations and examples of spoken and written German. It is intended both for expanded treatment of the points presented in the Kontexte, and for review in longer sections.

ORGANIZATION The red links take you the main parts of the Reference Grammar. From each page you can return to this page and thus branch out to any of the parts. The body of the Reference Grammar is organized according to the relative importance of linguistic features at the introductory level, from nouns to word order. The TOPIC SUMMARY lists the main sections and their individual items. Each section – nouns, pronouns, and so on – begins with basic structures and proceeds to more complex ones. In this way you can always review a topic or read ahead in it, according to your needs or curiosity. The WIE, BITTE? KONTEXT INDEX shows which items are appropriate for each part of the Strukturen/Structures presentations. PAGE 1 takes you to the first page of the topic presentations. COMMON GERMAN GRAMMAR ERRORS is a checklist of the relatively few grammar errors that most often trouble beginning learners of German.

HOW TO USE – AND WHETHER Be sure to read the Strukturen/Structures section in the Kontext first. Then you may want to consult the keyed Reference Grammar section(s), either directly from the Strukturen/Structures sections, or by using the WIE, BITTE? KONTEXT INDEX. Some students may find that the Strukturen/Structures presentations are complete enough that they can get along very well without the Reference Grammar. Here is can be helpful to have an assessment of your learning styles. It is also good to remember that explanation of grammar are not the same thing as the language itself, any more than the cookbook is the same things as the food itself. If you concentrate on the Reference Grammar so much that you fail to use the language for real communicative purposes, you have missed the point.

SOME TECHNICAL TERMS The parts of speech referred to in the Reference Grammar are defined in their individual sections, but here are some quick definitions for ready reference.

• Nouns name persons, places, things, qualities, or states, and are often the subjects of sentences: Mr. Holmes, Arkansas, cave, darkness, panic.
• Pronouns replace or substitute for nouns: she (Mrs. Holmes), they (the journalists), we (you and I).
• Adjectives describe nouns: dark, forthright, ambivalent, hairy.
• Adverbs tell more about verbs, adjectives, and even other adverbs: She sings well, he is extremely worried, they ran too fast.
• Verbs show action, state, or relation. They also indicate time: She falls/fell, he is/was afraid, it becomes/became chilly.
• Prepositions define relationships and precede nouns and adjectives: in her heart, between the two friends, with anxiety.

SCOPE We do not intend this Reference Grammar to be an exhaustive grammar of German. However, it does contain all the structural information required for solid performance at a fairly advanced level. You will probably want to keep the Reference Grammar for use in your subsequent study of German.
**TOPIC SUMMARY**

The numbers below refer to sections within the topic, not to page numbers

### NOUNS
1. Function of nouns
2. Noun spelling
3. Gender of nouns
4. Guessing noun gender
5. Plurals
6. Plural formation patterns
7. Dictionary symbols
8. Gender in the plural
9. Number and case (see Adjectives §§3-7)
10. Possession in nouns: von; the genitive
11. Compound nouns
12. Irregular nouns
13. Adjectival nouns
14. Dative plurals in -n
15. Accusative of definite time
16. Infinitives as nouns

### PRONOUNS
1. Definition and function of pronouns
2. Pronouns replace noun phrases
3. Kinds of pronouns
4. Demonstrative pronouns
5. Personal pronouns
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10. Endings of possessive pronouns
11. *du, dich, dir, dein*
12. *ihr, euch, euer*
13. Personal pronoun summary
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15. Relative pronouns
16. Definite and indefinite pronouns
17. *man*
18. *jemand, niemand*
19. *nichts, etwas, alles*
20. Interrogative pronouns
21. *wem, wen*
22. Reflexive pronouns

### ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS
1. Adjectives and adverbs defined
2. *der/die/das* as gender markers
3. Subjects; *-d-* in the nominative case
4. Direct objects; *-d-* in the accusative case
5. Indirect objects; *-d-* in the dative case
6. Possession; *-d-* in the genitive case
7. Summary of the definite article
8. Summary of the indefinite article; *kein*
9. *ein-, kein-* as pronouns
10. Endings of unpreceded adjectives
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35. Superlative adverbs ending in *am -sten*
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38. *noch, nicht mehr, kein- . . . mehr*
39. *schon, erst, noch nicht, noch kein-gern, lieber, am liebsten*
40. *hin*
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### VERBS
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16. *er, sie, es hat*
17. *du hast*
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16 subordinate word order in compound tenses
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Reference Grammar Topic Summary
The chart below organizes the Reference Grammar according to *Wie, bitte?* Kontexte (chapters). The left column shows the *Wie, bitte?* Kontext number. The middle column lists the topics that are presented briefly on the *Strukturen / Structures* pages of *Wie, bitte?* The right column tells which sections of the Reference Grammar expand on that topic. Links to the appropriate pages and sections within the Reference Grammar are in red. From those pages there are always link back to the Reference Grammar Introduction, its Topic Summary, and this page. For an explanation of the overall organization of the Reference Grammar, and a discussion of how to employ it in language learning, read the Reference Grammar Introduction (link at top left of this page).

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3  |  3 Endings on words like d- (der / die / das), dies-, ein-, mei-, kein-, Ihr-, and unser- also mark objects (and subjects) in German |  Adjectives & Adverbs §§2-8  
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RG Topics by WB Kontext

Link to Main TOC

Kontext 1: read the RG tutorial etc.; learn about nouns (but never mind der/die/das worries) and verbs
Kontext 2: verbs; to be; other parts of speech (read definitions?); word order

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*The numbers and the symbol “§” refer to topics, NOT page numbers.*
NOUNS

§1 Nouns identify. They may identify something animate (a person, a tree) or inanimate (a rock, a city), including abstract concepts such as difficulty or justice. A noun may stand by itself:

\[ \text{power corrupts} \]

or it may be part of an entire noun phrase:

\[ \text{the tall woman with the Great Dane} \]

§2 Nouns in written German can be identified readily; they all begin with capital letters:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{der Amerikaner} & \quad \text{die Österreicherin} \\
\text{der Paß} & \quad \text{die Fahrkarte} \\
\text{das Gepäck} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

A spelling note: When a word ends in -ss or -sst, the -ss is written ß: Paß, heißt. ss is also written ß after long vowels and double vowels (diphthongs): stoßen, heißen.

§3 Gender of nouns

All German nouns are classified by gender. You will note that each noun in the chapter vocabulary lists appears with der, die, or das:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{der Paß} & \quad \text{die Fahrkarte} & \quad \text{das Gepäck} \\
\end{align*}
\]

In form and function, der, die, and das all correspond to English ‘the’. In German, however, the differences among the three forms der, die, das play an important grammatical role. They indicate whether a noun is “masculine”, “feminine”, or “neuter”.

- **Der** represents masculine nouns such as Paß.
- **Die** signifies feminine nouns such as Fahrkarte.
- **Das** represents neuter nouns such as Gepäck.

The correct forms of the nouns are der Paß, die Fahrkarte, and das Gepäck. *Die Paß, *das Fahrkarte, and *der Gepäck are impossible combinations for a native speaker of German. Obviously, there is nothing especially masculine about a passport, or feminine about a ticket. These words have what is called grammatical gender. But nouns referring to humans generally show natural gender, such as der Kanadier or die Frau.

No doubt you can confidently predict natural gender. After more exposure to German you may begin to predict grammatical gender. For now, though, **you must memorize the gender of each noun**. If you do not know the gender, you will be unable to use the noun correctly, and you may confuse your listeners.

Nouns in the dictionary of this text are grouped by der, die, or das in order to encourage their identification with one of these three gender signs.

§4 In some instances it is possible to make an intelligent guess about the gender of a noun. Especially important may be the ending of the noun. Here are some principles:

a) **Characteristic endings**: Nouns that end in -er and denote nationality are masculine: der Amerikaner ‘American (man)’, der Kanadier ‘Canadian (man)’.

Also masculine are nouns that end in -er and denote professions: der Lehrer ‘teacher’, der Schaffner ‘conductor’.

Corresponding feminine nouns are derived from these masculine forms. They end in -in: die Amerikanerin, die Kanadierin, die Lehrerin, die Schaffnerin.

Most nouns ending in -e are feminine: die Fahrkarte ‘ticket’, die Straße ‘street’. These include nouns formed from adjectives such as die Länge ‘length’ and die Breite ‘width’.
b) Characteristic suffixes: Nouns ending in the suffixes -heit, -keit, -schaft, and -ung are always feminine: *die Schönheit* ‘beauty’ (from *schön* ‘beautiful’), *die Wichtigkeit* ‘importance’ (from *wichtig* ‘important’), *die Freundschaft* ‘friendship’, *die Hoffnung* ‘hope’ (from the verb *hoffen* ‘hope’).

All nouns ending in the suffixes -chen and -lein are neuter; the two suffixes suggest smallness: *das Häuschen* ‘small house’, *das Kindlein* ‘little child’.

§5 Just as in English, German nouns generally have both singular and plural forms. English noun plurals usually end in ‘-s’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plurals</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tables</td>
<td>parties</td>
<td>cats</td>
<td>houses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note that the sound represented by the written ‘s’ may vary, and that spelling changes can be complicated!)

But there are also many nouns whose plurals do not end in ‘-s’:

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mice</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>oxen</td>
<td>children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some nouns do not even show distinctive plural forms:

| sheep      | fish     | moose    | a ten-foot pole |

And some nouns have no plural forms at all:

| evidence  | milk     | inflation | darkness |

Long ago German nouns could be identified by groups, and plural forms were reasonably predictable. Today, however, it is very difficult to guess what a noun’s plural form might be.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann</td>
<td>Männer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flasche</td>
<td>Flaschen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wurst</td>
<td>Würste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engländer</td>
<td>Engländer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket</td>
<td>Tickets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanadierin</td>
<td>Kanadierinnen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the variety of plural forms, the plural of each noun must be learned along with the singular.

§6 There are several common patterns of plural formation in German.

- Feminine nouns ending in -e add -n: *die Fahrkarte, die Fahrkarten; die Schule, die Schulen* ‘school, schools’.
  -er nouns of nationality or profession have no additional ending: *der Engländer, die Engländer* ‘Englishman, Englishmen’, *der Bäcker, die Bäcker* ‘baker, bakers’.

- The feminine -in nouns of nationality or profession add -nen: *die Amerikanerin, die Amerikanerinnen, die Autorin, die Autorinnen*.


- Some German noun plurals end in -s. They are usually words borrowed from other languages, such as English or French:
  
  - die Hobbys   die Hotels   die Autos

- Masculine and neuter nouns that end in -el, -en, -er, -chen, and -lein have no additional plural ending:
  
  - der/die Schlüssel   key/keys
  - der/die Wagen       car/cars
  - der/die Arbeiter    worker/workers
  - das/die Hündchen    puppy/puppies
  - das/die Häuslein    cottage/cottages
NOTE: In the dative plural all nouns (other than those whose plurals end in -s) end in -n.

**NOMINATIVE PLURAL:** die Tage **DATIVE PLURAL:** nach zehn Tagen

§7 Many dictionaries show noun plurals by using a kind of shorthand:

der Mann, -er

This entry means that the word Mann is masculine (der Mann), that the plural adds an -er to the stem, and that the stem vowel (Mann) is umlauted (Männer). (Note the similarity to English ‘man—men’.) Dictionary entries for the other words listed above are

die Flasche, -n
die Wurst, -e
der Engländer, -
das Ticket, -s
die Kanadierin, -nen

§8 Gender is irrelevant in the plural. That is, regardless of gender, the dictionary forms of all plural nouns are identified by *die*: *die Männer, die Tickets, die Kanadierinnen*. This does not mean that all nouns somehow “become” feminine in the plural!

§9 In addition to gender (masculine, feminine, neuter) and number (singular, plural), all German nouns appear in one of four different **cases** according to their function within a sentence. For a discussion of the case system, see Adjectives §§3-7. Be sure to read that section before proceeding with this discussion of nouns.

§10 Nouns can show **possession** in a number of ways:

a) **Personal names** add an -s, just as English names do. This is true of both masculine and feminine names: Karls Freundin, Martinas Mutter.

b) Phrases such as ‘my father’s friend’ are expressed in the form

the friend of my father

One common equivalent uses the dative preposition von:

der Freund von meinem Vater
meiner Schwester
meinen Eltern

c) Written German often uses the **genitive case** (without von!) to express possession. The genitive case is sometimes encountered in spoken German as well:

der Freund
meines Vaters
meiner Schwester
meiner Eltern

• In the genitive case, most singular **masculine and neuter nouns** end with an -s. An -e- is often inserted before the -s after nouns of one syllable. The article or other limiting word also ends in -es:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOMINATIVE</th>
<th>GENITIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>der Vater</td>
<td>Vorname des Vaters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>der Großvater</td>
<td>Freunde meines Großvaters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>das Jahr</td>
<td>Ende des Jahres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• **Feminine nouns** have no characteristic genitive ending. The article or other limiting word, if there is one, ends in -er:

die Kinder meiner Tante der Preis der Fahrkarte

• **Plural nouns** have no characteristic genitive ending. The article or other limiting word, if there is one, ends in -er:

die Eltern meiner Freunde

• **Spoken German** tends to avoid genitive constructions. Speakers most often paraphrase by using the preposition von with the dative. See Nouns §10b above.
NOTE: The genitive is commonly used to express indefinite past and future time, time about which the speaker is not certain. The most common such expression is eines Tages ‘one day’, a staple of storytelling or planning:

Eines Tages wurde der König aber krank und ließ seine drei Söhne zu sich kommen.  
But one day the king became sick and bade his three sons come to him.

Wir müssen unbedingt eines Tages zusammen Kafee trinken!  
We’ll just have to get together for coffee sometime!

§11  Compound nouns  are formed from two or more nouns, or from nouns and other parts of speech such as adjectives or verbs. The last element of a compound noun is always a noun, and this noun always determines the gender of the compound:

- noun + noun: der Sport + das Fest ⇒ das Sportfest
- die Kartoffel + der Salat ⇒ der Kartoffelsalat
- verb + noun: fahren + die Karte ⇒ die Fahrkarte
- sprechen + die Stunde ⇒ die Sprechstunde  
  (office hours)
- adjective + noun: weiß + der Wein ⇒ der Weißwein
- groß + die Mutter ⇒ die Großmutter
- verb + 2 nouns: braten + die Wurst + der Stand ⇒ der Bratwurststand

§12  A very few singular nouns add an -n or -en in the accusative, dative, and genitive cases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOMINATIVE</th>
<th>but</th>
<th>ACCUSATIVE, DATIVE, GENITIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herr</td>
<td>Herr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Studenten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldat</td>
<td>Soldaten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junge</td>
<td>Jungen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mensch</td>
<td>Menschen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§13  Adjectival nouns  (See Adjectives §16) One of the nouns in §12, der Junge ‘boy’, is really a noun formed from an adjective (jung ‘young’, hence ‘the young one’). This is a very common principle of word formation in German, and extends to neuter nouns as well as masculines and feminines:

- der Deutsche  the German (man)  
  die Deutsche  the German (woman)  
  die Deutschen  the Germans
- der Alte  the old man  
  die Alte  the old woman  
  das Alte  that which is old; old stuff

Because these words are nouns, they are all capitalized, and because they are also adjectives, they have the appropriate endings:

- ein Bekannter von mir  an acquaintance of mine  
  (masculine nominative singular)
- ich habe einen Bekannten in . . .  I have an acquaintance in . . .  
  (masculine accusative singular)
- Das sind unsere Verwandten.  Those are our relatives.  
  (nominative plural)

§14  With few exceptions, all nouns in the dative plural  end in -n. If no -n is present in the normal plural form, one must be added. The addition of the -n causes no changes in the rest of the noun. Looking at the group of six nouns in §5, we see that Flaschen and Kanadierinnen already end in -n. Therefore, no additional -n is necessary in the dative plural. But the other four nouns do not end in -n. Three of the plurals seen in context are:

- die Männer  mit den Männern
- die Würste  mit den Würsten
- die Engländer  mit den Engländern
Das Ticket / die Tickets presents a special case. Those nouns that have plurals ending in -s do not add an -n in the dative plural. Typically, these words are of foreign origin, usually English or French. The most common ones are:

- das Taxi
- das Radio
- das Hotel
- das Restaurant
- das Baby
- die Kamera

In the dative plural: mit den Taxis / Hotels / Babys, etc.

§15 The **accusative case** is used to express **definite time**. Common expressions of definite time — time about which the speaker is certain — are found in:

- Es hat einen Tag / zwei lange Tage gedauert.
- Wir spielen den ganzen Tag.
- Wir bleiben eine Woche in Berlin.
- Das dauert wenigstens eine Stunde.

§16 **Infinitives** (See **Verbs §1**) may function as nouns. When they do, they are always **neuter nouns** and are capitalized. They have the meaning ‘the act of ___-ing’.

- Das Schwimmen macht mir immer Spaß.
  
  *I always like swimming.*

The word for ‘food’, das Essen, is formed in this way, and no longer means just ‘the act of eating’.

Infinitival nouns are often used as the object of the preposition bei in a phrase meaning ‘in the act of ___-ing’. Bei then combines with dem, the neuter dative definite article, as beim:

- Beim Bergsteigen kann er nicht so gut atmen.
  
  *He can’t breathe very well when he’s mountain climbing.*

- Beim Aufwachen ist sie immer müde.
  
  *She’s always tired when she wakes up.*

Colloquial German even makes prepositional phrases into nouns:

- ins Bett gehen > das Insbettgehen
- Vor dem Insbettgehen trinkt er eine Tasse Tee.
  
  *He drinks a cup of tea before going to bed.*
PRONOUNS

§1 Pronouns refer to something or someone that has already been mentioned.

Where's Margaret? Margaret's in town.
What's Margaret doing there? Margaret's buying Margaret some clothes.
Well, Margaret's mother is looking for Margaret.

Obviously, this conversation sounds more natural if pronouns such as she, herself, and her substitute for the name Margaret. Similarly, the statement ‘She’s in town’ makes no sense unless the listener knows who ‘she’ is.

§2 Pronouns can replace entire noun phrases:

What ever happened to that nice young man who used to come over to mow your lawn?

He moved to Tennessee.

§3 There are several kinds of pronouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinds of pronouns</th>
<th>§4</th>
<th>§5</th>
<th>§9</th>
<th>§15</th>
<th>§16</th>
<th>§20</th>
<th>§22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§4 Demonstrative pronouns have the same forms as the definite article (der, die, das) in all cases except the genitive singular and the dative plural, where they are identical to the relative pronouns (See Pronouns §15). Demonstrative pronouns point to things or people, demonstrating (often visually) what or whom the speaker is referring to.

The “all-purpose” demonstrative pronoun das can be used to point to tangible objects or to something abstract:

Das ist mein Vater. Das ist eine gute Idee.

The object of reference can be either singular (as in these two examples) or plural:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Das ist Luise.</td>
<td>Das sind Ueli und Luise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Das ist Rotwein.</td>
<td>Das sind gute Menschen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When demonstrative pronouns refer to people, the context is usually quite casual:


. . . He’s a great guy.

When a difference must be made between something near and something far, a contrast between dies ‘this’ and das ‘that’ is common:

Dies ist meine Wurst, und das ist Ihre Wurst.

§5 Personal pronouns are found in first, second, and third person, both singular and plural:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>ich</td>
<td>wir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>Sie</td>
<td>Sie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>er / sie / es</td>
<td>sie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal pronouns are used to refer to nouns when no special emphasis is called for:

Wann beginnt denn die Oper? Sie beginnt schon um 7.
§6 Be sure to consider **perspective** when you use personal pronouns. That is, consider who is speaking or being spoken about:

**Ich** glaube, **ich** gehe nach Hause. **ich** bin furchtbar müde.

Wie, bitte? **Sie** gehen schon? Aber es ist noch früh!

Arthur und **ich** fahren nach Rom. **Wir** bleiben eine Woche dort.

So? **Sie** und **Arthur**? und was machen **Sie** denn in Rom?

**Ich** habe eine gute Idee: **Sie** kommen um 5 und bleiben bis 6.

**Ich** komme um 6, und dann gehen ** wir** zusammen ins Kino.

Gut. Also **ich** komme um 5 und bleibe bis 6.

**Sie** kommen um 6 — das ist eine gute Idee — und dann gehen ** wir**. Prima!

§7 Many **accusative** forms of the personal pronouns are identical to the nominative forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accusative</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td><strong>mich</strong></td>
<td><strong>uns</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td><strong>Sie</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sie</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td><strong>ihn / sie / es</strong></td>
<td><strong>sie</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§8 **Dative** personal pronouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dative</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td><strong>mir</strong></td>
<td><strong>uns</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td><strong>Ihnen</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ihnen</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td><strong>ihm / ihr / ihm</strong></td>
<td><strong>ihnen</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§9 **Possessive pronouns** exist in first, second, and third person forms in the singular and the plural. They establish the relationship between someone and something “possessed” or “owned” by that person:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
<th>“OWNER”</th>
<th>“OWNED”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>my cows</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>cows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your father</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her dark eyes</td>
<td>she</td>
<td>eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their semester grades</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>grades</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here the relationships are between

I and my, you and your, she and her, they and their.

In German the relationships are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pronoun</td>
<td>possessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td><strong>ich</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td><strong>Sie</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td><strong>er / sein</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§10 The possessive pronouns, which derive from pronoun forms, are often called possessive adjectives. This is so because they are base forms, to which **endings** may be added to indicate the gender, number, and case of the following noun:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MASCULINE</th>
<th>FEMININE</th>
<th>NEUTER</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ihr Paß</td>
<td>meine Fahrkarte</td>
<td>Ihr Gepäck</td>
<td>Ihre Tickets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The endings for all possessive adjectives are the same as those for *ein-* and *kein-* and for this reason many German grammars refer to this entire group of words as the *ein-*words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EIN / KEIN</th>
<th>POSS. ADJS. (EX.: IHR='HER')</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIVE</td>
<td>ein, eine, ein, keine, ihr, ihre, ihr, ihr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENITIVE</td>
<td>eines, einer, eines, keiner, ihres, ihrer, ihres, ihrer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATIVE</td>
<td>einem, einer, einem, keinen, ihrem, ihrer, ihrem, ihren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSATIVE</td>
<td>einen, eine, ein, keine, ihren, ihre, ihr, ihre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§11 The forms of *du*, the second person familiar pronoun, are similar to those of *ich*.

| NOMINATIVE | ich | du |
| DATIVE     | mir | dir |
| ACCUSATIVE | mich | dich |
| POSSESSIVE PRONOUN | mein- | dein- |

§12 The plural of *du* is *ihr*, ‘my (two or more) good friends’. *ihr*, like the other personal pronouns, appears in various forms according to its function in the sentence:

| NOMINATIVE | ihr |
| DATIVE     | euch |
| ACCUSATIVE | euch |
| POSSESSIVE PRONOUN | euer- |

NOTE: When endings are added to *euer-* the stem reduces to *eur-*:

Das ist *euer-* Zimmer BUT: mit *eur*em Vater für *eure* Freunde

§13 SUMMARY: paradigms of personal pronouns, singular & plural

FIRST PERSON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIVE</td>
<td>ich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENITIVE</td>
<td>mein-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATIVE</td>
<td>mir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSATIVE</td>
<td>mich</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SECOND PERSON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIVE</td>
<td>du</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENITIVE</td>
<td>dein-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATIVE</td>
<td>dir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSATIVE</td>
<td>dich</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THIRD PERSON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MASCULINE</th>
<th>FEMININE</th>
<th>NEUTER</th>
<th>(ALL)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIVE</td>
<td>er</td>
<td>sie</td>
<td>es</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENITIVE</td>
<td>sein-</td>
<td>ihr-</td>
<td>sein-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATIVE</td>
<td>ihm</td>
<td>ihr</td>
<td>ihm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSATIVE</td>
<td>ihn</td>
<td>sie</td>
<td>es</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§14 Like nouns, pronouns can be combined with prepositions, and personal pronouns are no exception. Typical short phrases using dative and accusative prepositions are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATIVE</th>
<th>ACCUSATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mit uns</td>
<td>für mich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bei ihr</td>
<td>ohne ihn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>von ihm</td>
<td>gegen uns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zu Ihnen</td>
<td>durch sie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Combinations of this sort are common when the pronouns refer to people.
When the pronouns refer to objects, they occur as the form *da-* in combination with the
preposition, with *da-* being the equivalent of English ‘it’ or ‘that’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>damit</td>
<td>with it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dabei</td>
<td>along with that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>danach</td>
<td>after that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>davon</td>
<td>from that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dafür</td>
<td>for it, for that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dadurch</td>
<td>through that, thereby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dagegen</td>
<td>against that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All prepositions are combined with *da-* without showing case.
If the preposition begins with a vowel, the first part of the *da-* construction becomes *dar-*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>daraus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daran</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darüber</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relative pronouns are pronouns that refer to a person or thing already mentioned.
Their equivalents in English are ‘who’, ‘whom’, ‘that’, and ‘which’. As in English, they
come after the words they refer to (their antecedents) and stand at the beginning of a
relative clause.

\[
\text{ANTECEDENT} \downarrow \downarrow \text{RELATIVE PRONOUN} \quad \text{The fellow \textit{who} wore the hat \textit{is my brother}.} \\
\text{↑ RELATIVE CLAUSE}
\]

**FORM:** Relative pronouns have the same forms as the demonstrative pronoun:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masculine</strong></td>
<td>der</td>
<td>dessen</td>
<td>dem</td>
<td>den</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feminine</strong></td>
<td>die</td>
<td>deren</td>
<td>der</td>
<td>denen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neuter</strong></td>
<td>das</td>
<td>dessen</td>
<td>dem</td>
<td>denen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plural</strong></td>
<td>die</td>
<td>deren</td>
<td>denen</td>
<td>denen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**USAGE:** Relative pronouns establish a direct link between their antecedents and the
additional information supplied in their clause, and must occur in the same number and
gender as their antecedents. The case in which relative pronouns occur is determined by
their usage within the relative clause. The case of the antecedent is irrelevant to the case
of the relative pronoun. Because relative clauses are also subordinate clauses, the finite
verb is placed at the end of the clause.

- **nominative** Das war der Junge, \textit{der} immer so schön \textit{singt}.  

The relative pronoun is masculine and singular because \textit{Junge} is masculine and singular;
it is nominative because it is the subject of \textit{singt}, the verb in its own clause.

- **genitive** Die Frau, \textit{deren} Hand meine Katze gebissen \textit{hat}, heißt Marx.  

The pronoun is feminine and singular because \textit{Frau} is feminine and singular; it is

genitive because of possessive relationship between \textit{Frau} and \textit{Hand}.

- **dative** Wo ist denn das Kind, \textit{dem} ich die DM 20 gegeben habe?  

The pronoun is neuter and singular because \textit{Kind} is neuter and singular; it is
dative because it is the indirect object in its own clause: I gave the money to the child.

- **accusative** Der Berg, \textit{den} du siehst, heißt die Zugspitze.  

The pronoun is masculine and singular because \textit{Berg} is masculine and singular; it is
accusative because it is the direct object of \textit{du siehst}.

**NOTE:** English often omits relative pronouns:

- \textit{The man} \{I saw} \textit{The child} \{I gave the money to}  

but relative pronouns must be used in all relative clauses in German.

All the pronouns you have seen so far are **definite** ones. They refer to real people or
things. There are a number of **indefinite pronouns** that do not refer to anyone or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jemand</td>
<td>someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niemand</td>
<td>no one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nichts</td>
<td>nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etwas</td>
<td>something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alles</td>
<td>everything</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
§17 The most important of these pronouns is *man*, the equivalent of ‘one, people, they, you’ in English. If speakers of North American English used the word ‘one’ as a pronoun very often, the correspondence would be clear. But we have a variety of colorful ways of avoiding ‘one’ on this side of the Atlantic Ocean.

*People aren’t as nice as they used to be.*
*They say it’s going to rain tomorrow.*
*You just can’t get a good cigar anymore.*

All of these homespun expressions have equivalents using *man* in German. But this pronoun is by no means confined to casual conversation down at the courthouse square. *Man*, which is derived from *der Mann*, refers to any person of either sex, and is always accompanied by a third person singular verb:

Man muß nicht lange auf die Straßenbahn warten.

*Man* is used in generalizations and never refers to someone specific. Often a sentence with *man* replaces one in which the passive voice or an infinitive phrase is used:

Das wird leicht gemacht.
Man muß nicht lange auf die Straßenbahn warten.

Das ist leicht zu machen.
*Man* is used in generalizations and never refers to someone specific. Often a sentence with *man* replaces one in which the passive voice or an infinitive phrase is used:

Das kann man leicht machen.
*Man* is used in generalizations and never refers to someone specific. Often a sentence with *man* replaces one in which the passive voice or an infinitive phrase is used:

Das macht man leicht.
*Man* is used in generalizations and never refers to someone specific. Often a sentence with *man* replaces one in which the passive voice or an infinitive phrase is used:

Jemand and *niemand* contain the word *man*, and both also refer to people. *Jemand* is simply ‘someone or other’ — the identification of a single human being, rather than ‘they, people’, as the source of the action. Both pronouns, like *man*, are used with third person singular verb forms.

Jemand hat das Fenster aufgemacht.
*Jemand* is the opposite of *jemand*, ‘nobody, no one in particular’:

Niemand hat das Fenster aufgemacht.

Nichts, *etwas*, and *alles* all refer to things: ‘Nothing’, ‘something’, and ‘everything’. Again, the accompanying verb is in the third person singular.

Nichts ist so gut wie italienisches Eis.

*Möchten Sie etwas essen? Nein, danke. Ich habe Eis gegessen.*

Wo ist denn das italienische Eis? *Rainer hat alles gegessen!*

When used as a pronoun, *etwas* can be defined by a following neuter adjectival noun, whose case is determined by the usage of the phrase within the entire sentence. Most frequently that adjectival noun has the nominative or accusative ending *-es*:


Mutti! Der Hansjürgen hat etwas Dummes gesagt!

*Etwas* is also an adverb meaning ‘somewhat’.

Heute ist es *etwas* kalt, nicht? *Ja, etwas kälter als gestern.*

Like *etwas, nichts* is often followed by an adjectival noun:


*Alles* is often found in the phrase *Alles Gute!* — ‘Best wishes’, literally ‘I wish you everything that is good’.
§20 **Interrogative pronouns**, as their name suggests, are used to ask questions. They may refer to people (‘Who?’ ‘Whom?’ ‘Whose?’) or to things (‘What?’). The interrogative pronouns do not show gender, and are both singular and plural.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEOPLE</th>
<th>THINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOMINATIVE</strong></td>
<td><strong>GENITIVE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wer</td>
<td>wessen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DATIVE</strong></td>
<td><strong>ACCUSATIVE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wem</td>
<td>wen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All these forms are used in either direct or indirect questions. A direct question ends with a question mark; an indirect question is concealed within a statement or another question.

**DIRECT:** Who are you?

**INDIRECT:** I don’t know who you are. Do you know who that is?

*Wer*, the nominative form, is used when the interrogative is the subject of a question:

Wer ist das? Wer sind denn diese Leute?

*Wessen*, the genitive form, is the equivalent of English ‘Whose?’.

Wessen Mantel ist das? Ist das Heidis Mantel?

*Wem* shows that the identity of the recipient of an action is unknown:

↓ SUBJECT (nominative)

Wem hat er denn das Geld gegeben?

↑ RECIPIENT (dative)

Wen asks a question in which the direct object of the verb is an unknown person:

Wen hast du am Bahnhof gesehen? War das Hildegard?

§21 Both *wem* and *wen*, which are the equivalents of English ‘whom’, can be the objects of prepositions, just as English ‘whom’ can:

Mit *wem* bist du eigentlich zum Zoo gegangen?

Für *wen* haben Sie denn in Köln gearbeitet?

Colloquial English places the prepositions at the end of such questions:

*Who*(m) did you work for?

But standard German does not permit this. If there is a connection between preposition and interrogative pronoun, as there is in this English question, the two words must appear together. The English written standard requires the same form as the German:

For *whom* did you work?

*Was*, the neuter interrogative pronoun, does not have dative or genitive forms. Colloquial German allows speakers to say *Von was*? and *Mit was*?, using the accusative form as a dative. The standard language requires that the *was* be couched in a *wo-*construction, in which the *wo-* does not mean ‘where’:

Womit spielst du denn? What are you playing with?

Weißt du, wovon er erzählte? Do you know what he was talking about?

If the preposition begins with a vowel, the *wo-* becomes *wor-*: *woraus*, *woran*.

Older forms of English used the equivalent of *wo-* constructions in ‘where-’, still present in the word ‘whereby’ (‘by what’) and ‘wherein’ (‘in what’).

§22 **Reflexive pronouns** refer back, or reflect back, on the subject of a sentence. By definition they cannot appear in either the nominative or the genitive case. The subject may be doing something on her own behalf, in which instance the reflexive pronoun appears in the dative case. If the subject does something to himself directly (‘He bit himself’), the reflexive pronoun appears in the accusative case. (See the discussion of verbs used with reflexive pronouns in Verbs §41ff.)
**Forms:** The reflexive pronouns are identical in form to the personal pronouns with the exception of the second person polite (*Sie*) and the third person singular (*er, sie, es*) and plural (*sie*), where the pronoun is *sich* 'him-/her-/itself, themselves'.

**Usage:** The action in the sentence reflects back on the subject. Subject and object must be the same person.

- reflexive: Der Wolf beißt *sich* (himself) in den Fuß.
- not reflexive: Der Wolf beißt *ihn/sie* (someone else) in den Fuß.
- reflexive: Ich kaufe *mir* später einen neuen Pullover.
- not reflexive: Ich kaufe *ihm/ihr* später einen neuen Pullover.

**NOTE:** Many verbs have special meanings when they are used with reflexive pronouns. See **Verbs §41ff.**

**Caution:** *Selber* also means ‘self’. It is not a reflexive pronoun, however, but rather an intensifier. It puts greater emphasis on a person already referred to:

↓ **DIRECT OBJECT**

Gib mir den Hammer. Ich mache *das selber*.

↑ **INTENSIFIER**
ADJECTIVES & ADVERBS

§1 Adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words. Adjectives tell us more about nouns: how big they are, how colorful, important, tasty, obtuse, and so on. Adverbs give more information about verbs (how well someone sings, how high she flies, when they will arrive, where the party will be), about adjectives (they’re unusually calm, incredibly rich), and even about other adverbs (he ran extremely fast).

§2 In Nouns §3 you read about der, die, and das as gender markers of nouns: der-nouns are masculine, die-nouns are feminine, and das-nouns are neuter. Der, die, and das are three of the forms of the definite article, the most important and useful adjective in German. ‘Definite’ means ‘known, obvious, old information’, ‘the one we all know about’. There is an indefinite article in German as well, expressing ‘new or unspecified information’. (See Adjectives §8). The German definite article d-, with all its forms, is an essential tool in the manipulation of the language. If the forms of d- are not handled with precision, then communication will be severely inhibited and some grave misunderstandings can occur. LEARN THESE FORMS!

§3 Der, die, and das identify masculine, feminine, and neuter nouns when used as the subject of a sentence:

Der Kartoffelsalat kostet DM 2,20.
Die Fahrkarte ist nicht zu teuer.
Das Zimmer hat keine Dusche.

When a noun is the subject of a sentence, it appears in what is called the nominative case. Der Kartoffelsalat, die Fahrkarte, and das Zimmer are all nominative forms. The subject directs the action of a sentence and fits the verb ending (See Verbs §7). Nouns that are not the subject of a sentence, but are identical with the subject, also appear in the nominative case:

↓SUBJECT NOUN ↓PREDICATE NOUN
Ihre Mutter ist Universitätsprofessorin.

When the definite article is used in the plural, all nouns — regardless of gender — that appear in the nominative case are identified by the article die:

der Paß: Bitte, wo sind die Pässe?
die Fahrkarte: Die Fahrkarten kosten DM 36,—.
das Hotel: Die Hotels in Frankfurt sind sehr elegant.

SUMMARY: definite articles in the nominative case

MASCULINE    FEMININE    NEUTER    PLURAL
der        die        das          die

§4 German nouns may appear in four different grammatical cases, according to their sentence usage. For example, subject nouns or pronouns can act with the verb to have a direct effect on objects in the rest of the sentence, the predicate. These nouns in the predicate are direct objects, and almost without exception they appear in the accusative case.

↓ SUBJECT ↓ DIRECT OBJECT
Meine Mutter kauft immer Schokolade mit Nüssen.

When a noun has a nonsubject function in a sentence, the form of its definite article may change. Before feminine and neuter nouns in the accusative (direct object) case, the definite articles die and das do not change. Before masculine nouns, however, the definite article appears as den in the accusative.

Haben Sie den Kartoffelsalat?
Morgen kaufe ich die Fahrkarte nach Berlin.
Wir möchten das Zimmer für heute und morgen.
When the definite article is used in the accusative plural, it appears for all genders in the form *die*:

- **der Paß:** Haben wir *die* Pässe?
- **die Fahrkarte:** Heute kaufe ich *die* Fahrkarten.
- **das Hotel:** Ich finde *die* Hotels in Salzburg sehr komfortabel.

**SUMMARY:** definite articles in the accusative case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Die</th>
<th>Das</th>
<th>Die</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td><em>den</em></td>
<td><em>die</em></td>
<td><em>das</em></td>
<td><em>die</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td><em>den</em></td>
<td><em>die</em></td>
<td><em>das</em></td>
<td><em>die</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td><em>dem</em></td>
<td><em>des</em></td>
<td><em>des</em></td>
<td><em>die</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td><em>den</em></td>
<td><em>die</em></td>
<td><em>die</em></td>
<td><em>die</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** The accusative is used to express definite time. See Nouns §15.

Sometimes a noun or pronoun is neither the subject of a verb nor its object, but rather a beneficiary, or recipient, of the action in a sentence.

In the sentence **He bought the old horse some medicine.**

the subject is ‘He’, the direct object is ‘medicine’, and the animal for which it was bought, ‘the old horse’, is different from the subject. ‘The old horse’ is the one for which the action is performed, and appears in the indirect object case, called the **dative**. By no means does this example mean that ‘horse’ is always in the dative case, or that ‘medicine’ must always be an accusative. This action took place at the veterinarian’s office. If ‘some medicine’ is stricken from the sentence, the meaning changes entirely:

**He bought the old horse.**

Now ‘He’, the subject, acted directly on ‘the old horse’, the accusative object of the verb ‘bought’. This action took place at the sale barn.

A person hearing or reading a noun that appears in the dative case can tell immediately what its function is by the form of the preceding article:

- **der Mann:** Ich gebe *dem* Mann einen Reiseführer.
- **die Frau:** Wir kaufen *der* Frau zwei Pfund Äpfel.
- **das Kind:** Schenken wir *dem* Kind eine Modellbahn?

When the definite article precedes nouns in the dative plural, it has the form *den*, regardless of the gender of the noun:


The dative is not used just as an indirect object case. Many prepositions govern the dative case as well. (See Prepositions §4ff. and §20ff.)

Gehen Sie mit *der* Frau da.

— Mit ihr?

— Gut, also mit *ihr*, nicht mit *ihm*.

**SUMMARY:** definite articles in the dative case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Den</th>
<th>Der</th>
<th>Dem</th>
<th>Den</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td><em>den</em></td>
<td><em>der</em></td>
<td><em>dem</em></td>
<td><em>den</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td><em>den</em></td>
<td><em>der</em></td>
<td><em>dem</em></td>
<td><em>den</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td><em>dem</em></td>
<td><em>des</em></td>
<td><em>des</em></td>
<td><em>den</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td><em>den</em></td>
<td><em>der</em></td>
<td><em>dem</em></td>
<td><em>den</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**§6 Genitive**

Another set of forms of the definite article shows that a noun is in possession of something. That possession may be tangible, as in

*the doctor’s children*

or it may be intangible, as in

*the end of the day.*

In these examples, the nouns that show possession — the doctor and the day — appear in the **genitive case**, also called the **possessive case** in English grammar. The definite articles that precede genitive nouns have characteristic forms:
der Arzt: Der Sohn des Arztes wohnt in Salzburg.
die Tante: Die Kinder der Tante heißen Vetter.
das Hotel: Die Zimmer des Hotels sind wunderschön.

For an explanation of the -(e)s ending on genitive nouns, see Nouns §10.

When the definite article appears in the genitive plural, all genders have the form der:
der Computer: Der Preis der Computer ist zu hoch.
die Maus: Es ist unmöglich, eine der Mäuse zu fangen.
das Problem: Das war nur der Anfang der Probleme.

SUMMARY: definite articles in the genitive case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MASCULINE</th>
<th>FEMININE</th>
<th>NEUTER</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>des</td>
<td>der</td>
<td>des</td>
<td>der</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: The genitive is used to express indefinite time. See Nouns §10.

§7 Definite articles in all cases, singular and plural

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MASCULINE</th>
<th>FEMININE</th>
<th>NEUTER</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIVE</td>
<td>der</td>
<td>die</td>
<td>das</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENITIVE</td>
<td>des</td>
<td>der</td>
<td>des</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATIVE</td>
<td>dem</td>
<td>der</td>
<td>dem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSATIVE</td>
<td>den</td>
<td>die</td>
<td>das</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§8 Indefinite articles, forms of ein-, precede nouns that introduce new information or describe any member of a category. They correspond to English ‘a’ or ‘an’, as opposed to the definite article ‘the’. The paradigm of the indefinite article bears a strong resemblance to that of the definite article (§7):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MASCULINE</th>
<th>FEMININE</th>
<th>NEUTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIVE</td>
<td>ein</td>
<td>eine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENITIVE</td>
<td>eines</td>
<td>einer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATIVE</td>
<td>einem</td>
<td>einer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSATIVE</td>
<td>einen</td>
<td>eine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that ein- has no ending in the masculine and neuter nominative or in the neuter accusative. Note also that, by definition, ein has no plural forms. Moreover, the absence of an article in the plural signals an indefinite plural. Plural endings do exist, however, for kein, the negative of ein:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENITIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSATIVE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kein has singular forms also, since it negates singular nouns as well as plural ones. These endings are the same as those for ein. As the negative of ein, kein has the meaning ‘none, not any, -n’t . . . any’.

§9 Sometimes ein and kein follow nouns that have been used in a previous clause. Here they are similar to ‘one’ and ‘none’ in English, and take on the function of pronouns.

Where did my pet turtles go? Here’s one!
Do you have some money? No, I don’t have any.

In these situations ein and kein add the endings that would be present if the nouns in question were there:

Wo sind meine Schildkröten? Hier ist eine [Schildkröte]!
Haben Sie einen 10-Mark-Schein? Nein, ich habe keinen [Schein].

This principle applies even in those cases where ein and kein do not have endings themselves, in the masculine nominative and the neuter nominative and accusative. Here ein and kein borrow endings from the definite article, with eines shortened to eing:

↓ der Bleistift

MASULINE NOMINATIVE: Wo ist ein Bleistift? Hier ist einer.
Ein can also anticipate an understood noun in the German equivalent of ‘one of . .’. Here, too, ein borrows endings from the definite article if they are not already part of the ein declension. The ‘of’ phrase is rendered either by von and the dative or by the genitive:

\[ \begin{align*}
&\text{Wer ist das?} & \text{Das ist einer von meinen Freunden.} \\
& & \text{Das ist einer meiner Freunde.} \\
\end{align*} \]

\( \text{§10} \) Definite and indefinite articles always come before the nouns they modify. Other adjectives, however, may either precede or complement the nouns they modify — just as in English.

**preceding:**

- the old gray mare

**complementary:**

- the mare is old and gray

When adjectives follow the nouns they modify, their form stays the same in German:

- kalt: Das Wetter ist kalt.
- schön: Die Autos waren sehr schön.

But when adjectives precede the nouns they modify, they carry endings according to the function of the nouns in the sentence. When the adjectives stand alone in front of nouns, these endings correspond closely to the endings of the definite article. The examples show nominative forms:

**MASCULINE:**

- der Wein
- kühler Wein

**FEMININE:**

- die Milch
- frische Milch

**NEUTER:**

- das Obst
- gutes Obst

**PLURAL:**

- die Kinder
- liebe Kinder

**§11** One of the adjectives preceding a noun must indicate the function of that noun in the sentence. When the adjective is a form of the definite article der, that task has been performed. (Der before Mann shows, for example, that the following noun is masculine and nominative and singular.) When the adjective is a form of the indefinite article ein-, however, it fails in three instances to indicate the function of the following noun:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOMINATIVE</th>
<th>ACCUSATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ein</td>
<td>ein</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these situations the adjective following ein takes over and says something about the noun that follows according to the principle outlined in §10:

**MASCULINE**

- ein alter Mann

**NEUTER**

- ein altes Haus

**§12** In the feminine the adjective following eine also carries the -e ending:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOMINATIVE</th>
<th>ACCUSATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eine alte Frau</td>
<td>eine alte Frau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**§13** In all other situations the adjectives following variations of ein- and the other ein- words (kein and the possessive pronouns) have the ending -en. The full paradigm of endings for the nominative, dative, and accusative is
In the **genitive** case the endings on adjectives following *ein-* words are all *-en*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MASCULINE</th>
<th>FEMININE</th>
<th>NEUTER</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIVE</td>
<td>eines alte Mann</td>
<td>einer alte Frau</td>
<td>eines lieben Kindes</td>
<td>meiner lieben Kinder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENITIVE</td>
<td>eines alten Mann</td>
<td>einer alten Frau</td>
<td>einem lieben Kind</td>
<td>meinen lieben Kindern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATIVE</td>
<td>einem alten Mann</td>
<td>einer alten Frau</td>
<td>einem lieben Kind</td>
<td>meinen lieben Kindern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSATIVE</td>
<td>einem alten Mann</td>
<td>einer alten Frau</td>
<td>einem lieben Kind</td>
<td>meinen lieben Kindern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUMMARY: ENDINGS ON ADJECTIVES FOLLOWING EIN- WORDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MASCULINE</th>
<th>FEMININE</th>
<th>NEUTER</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIVE</td>
<td>-er</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-es</td>
<td>-en</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENITIVE</td>
<td>-en</td>
<td>-en</td>
<td>-en</td>
<td>-en</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATIVE</td>
<td>-en</td>
<td>-en</td>
<td>-en</td>
<td>-en</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSATIVE</td>
<td>-en</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-es</td>
<td>-en</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjectives that follow the definite article take endings that are either *-e* or *-en* in the nominative and accusative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MASCULINE</th>
<th>FEMININE</th>
<th>NEUTER</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIVE</td>
<td>der alte Mann</td>
<td>die alte Frau</td>
<td>das alte Auto</td>
<td>die alten Autos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSATIVE</td>
<td>den alten Mann</td>
<td>die alte Frau</td>
<td>das alte Auto</td>
<td>die alten Autos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Genitive and Dative adjectives after the definite article** have an *-en* ending:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MASCULINE</th>
<th>FEMININE</th>
<th>NEUTER</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GENITIVE</td>
<td>des alten Mann</td>
<td>der alten Frau</td>
<td>des alten Autos</td>
<td>der alten Autos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATATIVE</td>
<td>dem alten Mann</td>
<td>der alten Frau</td>
<td>dem alten Auto</td>
<td>den alten Autos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wir müssen schon am elften wegfahren.

*... in der dritten Reihe*

Die Fußgängerzone in der Hohen Straße . . .

The adjectives *welch-* ‘which’ and *dies-* ‘this’ take endings that are identical to those of the definite article. The adjectives that follow them are declined according to the paradigms illustrated in §16 and §17.

*Welcher Student war denn das?*

— Ach, das war *dieser* junge Student aus den USA.

*Wirklich? Was machen wir denn mit *diesen* amerikanischen Studenten?*

— *Welche* meinen Sie denn? Die sind nicht alle so schlimm.

The same endings are used with *jed-* ‘every’ and *solch-* ‘such’.

Once an adjective ending pattern has been established in a phrase, the endings on all adjectives are the same:

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ein böser alter Mann</td>
<td>eine nette alte Frau</td>
<td>ein liebes kleines Kind</td>
<td>mit einem großen, schweren, schwarzen Hammer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An adjective may refer to a person without a following noun. In this case the adjective itself becomes a noun, and is capitalized. Except in the plural, the form of the definite article leaves no doubt about the gender of the person. The adjective maintains its proper ending.

*der alte Mann ⇒ der Alte*  
*die alte Frau ⇒ die Alte*  
*die alten Leute ⇒ die Alten*
mit dem Alten ‘with the old man’
mit der Alten ‘with the old woman’

This is the origin of the word for ‘boy’, der Junge, literally ‘the young male’.

Note the similarity to English adjectival nouns: the old, the just, and so on.

_The rain it raineth on the just_
_And also on the unjust fella._
_But mostly on the just because_
_The unjust steals the just’s umbrella._

Reflecting on this crime, we also find neuter nouns made from adjectives:

das Böse = _evil, that which is evil, the evil thing,_ etc.
das Gute = _the good, that which is good, the good thing,_ etc.

Other common parallels are das Positive, das Negative, das Interessante.

§21 Adjectival nouns showing national identity follow the principle established in §20. Although there are abundant examples of nouns of national origin such as der Amerikaner, die Amerikanerin, many such nouns are really formed from adjectives and thus must have adjective endings to reflect their gender and function within a sentence. Identical to the pattern of der Junge, therefore, are der Deutsche and die Deutsche, with datives

mit dem Deutschen (masc.)               mit der Deutschen (fem.),

accusatives

für den Deutschen (masc.)               für die Deutsche (fem.),

and plurals

die Deutschen                         mit den Deutschen               für die Deutschen.

§22 Adjectives are frequently used to compare one thing to another, or to establish a hierarchy including “standard” quality, the **positive** form, “better” quality, the **comparative** form, and “best” quality, the **superlative** form.

**Positive**
The **positive** form of an adjective is the form in which it appears in glossaries: _gut, alt, neurotisch, weitsichtig_, and so on.

NOTE: When endings are added to _hoch_, the stem becomes _hoh-_.

**Comparative**
The **comparative** form of an adjective compares one thing to another, the equivalent of English adjectival forms ending in ‘-er’ (‘higher’) or preceded by ‘more’ (‘more interesting’). Of these two forms, German uses only the first: All adjectives form their comparative by adding _-er_.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>schön</td>
<td>schöner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weit</td>
<td>weiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interessant</td>
<td>interessanter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Although many speakers of English use the superlative (best, highest, etc.) to compare two things, German must use the comparative.
§25 An important variation in the comparative form is the umlauting of a stem vowel, especially in one-syllable adjectives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alt</td>
<td>älter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>warm</td>
<td>wärmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kurz</td>
<td>kürzer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hoch has a special comparative form: höher.

There are a few “irregular” comparative forms, the most notable of which is besser, from the positive gut. (Note English ‘good-better’.)

§26 The comparative forms of adjectives are still adjectives, which may come after a noun:

Ich glaube, das Kotelett ist heute besser.

—or before it, in which case they must have appropriate adjective endings according to §§10-19:

Ich finde, der längere Mantel ist schöner.

These endings provide essential signals and are never abbreviated, even where redundancy seems likely with adjectives ending in -er:

↓ comparative suffix
ein tapfererer Soldat  a braver soldier

↑ adjective ending

§27 Comparison can be carried out without the -er ending. If object A is better than object B, then object B is not as good as object A. The formula used to compare two things from the perspective of the lesser of the two is so . . . wie, the equivalent of English ‘as . . . as’:

Die Berge sind schön, aber das Meer ist schöner.

— Ja, ich finde die Berge auch nicht so schön wie das Meer.

§28 Another way of stating the comparison in §26 would be from the perspective of the greater of the two. Here the word als is used after the word describing the greater:

Das Meer ist schöner als die Berge.

— Ja, ich finde das Meer auch schöner.

§29 Comparison strategy: If for some reason you do not know a specific word you want to use in a comparison, think of an antonym and use another kind of comparative construction:


— So, in Wyoming sind die Berge also höher — sehr interessant.

§30 Not all things that are compared differ to an equal degree. One thing may be marginally better than another, or better by far. The hierarchy of adverbs used to lend greater precision to the comparison is

etwas besser  ein bißchen besser
noch besser  viel besser

§31 The superlative form of an adjective, ending in -st in German as it does in English, compares the accompanying noun to others and finds it superior to all the rest. The superlative is used when three or more unequal things are being compared.

Adjectives with stems ending in a t- or s- sound normally add an -e- before the -st ending: interessantest-. A conspicuous exception is the superlative of groß; größt-.

There are two environments for superlative forms: one before nouns and one after nouns. When a superlative adjective comes after the noun it modifies (‘Alpine milk is the richest’) it is couched in the formula am . . . -sten:
When the superlative adjective comes before the noun it modifies, it must have the appropriate adjective ending:

kleinste - Christina ist die kleinste Tänzerin in der Gruppe.
teuersten - Die teuersten Diamanten finde ich nicht schön.

This rule also applies when there is no apparent following noun, but one is strongly implied:

Die teuersten Diamanten sind auch die schönsten [Diamanten].
Ja, Hunde sind gute Haustiere. Aber die besten [Haustiere] sind Fische.
— Wie, bitte? Die besten Hunde sind Fische??
— Nein, nein. Die besten Haustiere sind Fische.

§32 Adjectives that umlaut their stem vowels in the comparative do so as well in the superlative. Note the following common irregular comparative and superlative forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gut</td>
<td>besser</td>
<td>best-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viel</td>
<td>mehr</td>
<td>meist-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nahe</td>
<td>näher</td>
<td>nächst-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoch, höh-</td>
<td>höher</td>
<td>höchst-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>groß</td>
<td>größer</td>
<td>größt-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES: 1. Mehr does not take adjective endings; viel takes endings only in the plural.

§33 Adverbs

It was stated in §1 that adverbs modify adjectives, verbs, and other adverbs. Adverbs generally do not have forms that are different from the forms of adjectives. In English, most adverbs have a characteristic suffix ‘-ly’. Whereas German does have an equivalent suffix -lich, it is used for both adjectives and adverbs (möglich ‘possible’, ‘possibly’). English speakers sometimes have difficulty coming to terms with adverbs such as gut, whose equivalent, ‘good’, we learn as an adjective only: Her voice is good (adjective), but she sings well (adverb).

Adverbs answer the questions ‘When?, ‘Where?, ‘How?, ‘How far?’, ‘To what extent?’, etc. That is, they tell time, location, direction, manner, extent, cause, and purpose. They may be one-word adverbs, such as doch, immer, auch, heute, or adverb phrases which combine adverbs with each other or with prepositional phrases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>QUESTION WORD</th>
<th>ADVERB</th>
<th>PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>wann</td>
<td>heute</td>
<td>vor der Klasse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION</td>
<td>wo</td>
<td>hier</td>
<td>vor dem Haus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTION</td>
<td>wohin</td>
<td>dorthin</td>
<td>in die Stadt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>woher</td>
<td>hierher</td>
<td>aus der Stadt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANNER</td>
<td>wie</td>
<td>schnell</td>
<td>mit dem Auto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTENT</td>
<td>wie</td>
<td>sehr</td>
<td>durch die ganze Welt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUSE</td>
<td>womit</td>
<td>damit</td>
<td>mit einem Hammer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE</td>
<td>warum</td>
<td>deshalb</td>
<td>wegen dem Wetter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or REASON</td>
<td>wozu</td>
<td>wieso</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even if adverbs are several words long, their function in a sentence does not change. In this first sentence, both adverbs modify the verb *spielt*:

- ↓ adverb tells when
  - Der Cellist spielt am 29. März im Auditorium Maximum.
- ↑ adverb tells where
  - In der Stadthalle am linken Ufer des Rheins gibt es am Freitag ein tolles Konzert.

Although there are no differences in form between the positive and comparative forms of adjectives and adverbs, the superlative form of adverbs exists only in the *am . . . -sten* framework described in §31.

Von allen Sängerinnen singt Barbara weitaus am schönsten.

Adverbs of time are often placed first in a sentence.

*Morgens* isst er ganz wenig.

Other kinds of adverbs show emphasis in first position — in English as in German.

*Mit meinem Hund* gehe ich im Stadtpark spazieren.

Often there is more than one adverb in a sentence, in which case the more or most important one comes first, with the verb following. Of course, the importance of an adverb is determined by the speaker, not by some abstract set of rules.

The rule of thumb “time—manner—place” is often cited for the order of adverbs in a German sentence.

- ↓ how
  - Am Donnerstag gehe ich mit meinem Hund im Stadtpark spazieren.
- ↑ when
  - ↑ where

But this assumes that no single adverbial element is emphasized over any other. All things being equal, this is an appropriate order, but in the real world of daily communication the “rule” is probably broken more often than it is obeyed. The principle of “most important first” is the one to remember.

Adverbs can be doubled, as in English, to lend greater precision to a statement. Obviously, ‘tonight’ does not say as much as ‘tonight at 8’. Generally the more general statement is made first, then the more specific:

- ↓ general
  - Wir kommen **morgen Abend** um sieben Uhr.
- ↑ specific

- ↓ general
  - Er findet uns **im Park neben dem Rathaus**.
- ↑ specific
  - Ihr Koffer ist **oben im zweiten Stock**.

The adverb *noch* has to do with time that has begun in the past and has continued into the present. It is an adverb that looks back, saying that a prior condition **still** exists.

*Sind Sie noch hier? Ich dachte, Sie sind schon lange weg.*

*Are you still here? I thought you’d left long ago.*

The combination of *noch* with *immer* as *noch immer* or *immer noch* provides special emphasis:

*Ist er denn immer noch in Bonn? Don’t tell me he’s still in Bonn!*

One **negative** of *noch* is *nicht mehr*, used to negate an **entire idea**. The condition that began in the past **no longer** exists.
Ja, also, er war heute hier — jetzt aber nicht mehr. Ich weiß nicht, wo er ist.

(IDEA: ist er noch hier?)

Another negative of noch is kein-. . . mehr. This phrase is used to negate nouns:

— Nein, jetzt habe ich keine Zeit mehr. Warum waren Sie nicht früher hier?

§39 In a sense the adverb schon is the opposite of noch, because schon often has to do with time that is beginning in the present and extending into the future. A question using schon asks whether an expected (future) condition already exists. Elaboration often contains the adverb erst ‘just, not until’.

Sind Sie schon hier? Ich dachte. Sie kommen erst um 8 Uhr.
— Ja, ich weiß. Es ist jetzt erst 7 Uhr 30. Hoffentlich ist das nicht zu früh.

NOTE: In combination with other adverbs of time, schon points not forward, but back in time. The continuity with present time is still firmly established.

Sie wohnt schon lange (zwei Jahre, zehn Monate) in Köln.
She’s been living in Cologne for a long time (two years, ten months) now.

The negative forms of schon parallel those of noch (§37). Noch nicht ‘not yet’ negates an entire idea:

Ist sie schon hier? Ach, ich hoffe es!
— Nein, sie ist noch nicht hier. Ich sage es Ihnen, wenn sie kommt.

(IDEA: ist sie hier?)

NOTE: Noch nicht is not the negative of noch!

Noch kein- negates nouns:

Haben Sie Ihren Brief schon?
— Nein, ich habe noch keine Post bekommen. (noun: Post)

Aber warum nicht?
— Nun, ich war noch nicht bei der Post. (idea: bei der Post sein)

§40 The adverb gern shows that the action of a verb is gladly or willingly undertaken. By extension, it is used in sentences that tell what someone’s interests or hobbies are. Gern also reinforces möchte.


Ja, mein Franz spielt so gern mit seiner Modelleisenbahn. Schade!
— Warum schade? Es ist schön, daß Ihr Enkel gern spielt.

Aber Franz ist mein Mann! Er ist doch 87 Jahre alt!
— Nun, seien Sie nicht so. Ich möchte auch gern so lange leben.

Lieber, the comparative of gern, is used to show preference for one thing over another.

Tennis ist ein schöner Sport. Aber ich schwimme lieber.

Was möchten Sie lieber machen? Reiten oder im Gummiboot paddeln?
Ich glaube, ich möchte lieber paddeln. Es ist doch so furchtbar heiß.

Am liebsten is the superlative of gern, showing a preference for one thing over several others.


So. Jetzt haben wir ein ganzes Wochenende. Was möchten Sie am liebsten machen?

§41 The adverb hin shows motion away from the speaker. It often reinforces another directional adverb in the sentence, and is frequently a part of a separable verb prefix. Combining with wo it means ‘Where to?’.

Wo gehen Sie hin, bitte? or Wohin gehen Sie, bitte?

Hin can combine with prepositions to indicate a more precise direction:

Steigen Sie nur hinauf. Go ahead and climb up. Ach, mein Hut ist von der Turmspitze hinuntergefallen!

↑ down away (from me)

§42 The adverb her is used to indicate motion toward the speaker. Combining with wo it means ‘Where from?’.

Wo kommen Sie her, bitte? or Woher kommen Sie, bitte?

In this function it is often combined with prepositions to indicate more precisely the direction taken.

Kommen Sie bitte her!

Please come in. Please come down here (toward me).

In spoken German, the difference between hin and her is frequently obscured, with a variant of her being used more often and simply with the meaning ‘with motion’.

Und plötzlich ist der Bergsteiger in die Gletscherspalte heruntergefallen. And suddenly the mountain climber fell down into the crevasse. (The speaker would have to be down in the glacier for the strict her rule to apply.)

‘Raus! Get out of here!

Understandably, the phrase hin und her means ‘back and forth’.

§43 The adverbial suffix -lang attaches to noun plurals in order to indicate distance or duration of time.

der Tag, -e tagelang
die Woche, -en wochenlang
der Monat, -e monatelang
das Jahr, -e jahrelang
das Meter, - meterlang
die Meile, -n meilenlang
VERBS

§1 Verbs appear in the glossary of this text in their infinitive forms, and consist of a verb stem plus an ending. The ending of the infinitive is either -en or -n:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEM</th>
<th>ENDING</th>
<th>INFINITIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>komm-</td>
<td>+ -en</td>
<td>kommen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wander-</td>
<td>-n</td>
<td>wandern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§2 Verbs identify the time of the action in a sentence relative to the speaker’s own time. This time can be in the past, the present, or the future. The present is the fine line between the past (extending from a second ago back into prehistory) and the future (extending from now into all time to come).

§3 Verbs indicate time by signals in their structure. Present time is signaled by the stem vowels and their specific variants. Past time is revealed by special changes or additions to the verb stem. Future time is most often expressed by the present tense in German.

§4 Most verbs show present time through their stems, with the stem vowel unchanged:

komm: ich komme

§5 Verbs also identify the subject of a sentence, or its actor. They do so by means of endings that conform to the subject. These endings match only the subject of the verb, never other elements in the sentence.

§6 Subjects are identified by person. The person may be first person, or “I”. (Remember this by considering that many people always think of themselves first.) If “I” is the first person, then “you” is the second person. “I” could be called the speaker and “you” the listener, the one whom “I” addresses directly. Everyone and everything else — that is, “he”, “she”, and “it” — is considered third person. If “I” is the speaker and “you” the listener, then the others are the ones talked about: those “over there”, not included in our little circle.

Subjects are also identified by number. “I” is singular in number, since there’s only one of me. If another individual is included, then the “I” becomes plural: “we”.

In English the second person “you” can be either singular or plural, according to the number of people meant: “you, my friend” or “you, my friends”. (The phrase “you all [y’all]” is a handy way of illustrating a second person plural form.)

The third person pronouns all have “they” as their plural form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§7 This is the pattern of German pronouns used in Chapters 1-10, and of the present tense verb endings that show agreement with the subject:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON ich komm-e wir komm-en</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON Sie komm-en Sie komm-en</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON er komm-t sie komm-t es komm-t sie komm-en</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You must learn that the pronoun ich matches the verb ending -e, the pronoun er matches the verb ending -t, and so on. There is no such thing as *er kommen or *ich kommt; these are impossible forms.
Of course, these correspondences hold true for nouns as well: *Er kommt* could be *Karl kommt*, and *wir kommen* could be *Erika und ich kommen* (See Pronouns §6).

Verbs with stems ending in -t, -d, or certain groups of consonants add an -e- before the third person singular ending -t:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFINITIVE</th>
<th>3RD PERSON SINGULAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>essen</td>
<td>er ißt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vergessen</td>
<td>er vergißt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sprechen</td>
<td>sie spricht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treffen</td>
<td>er trifft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nehmen</td>
<td>sie nimmt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geben</td>
<td>es qßt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sehnen</td>
<td>sie s i g h t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§8 The second person singular familiar pronoun *du* is always paired with the verb ending -st: *du kommst, du studierst, du bringst*. Just as *du* has a close relative in archaic English ‘thou’, the -st ending is historically the same as in older English forms ‘thou hast’, ‘thou preparest’, ‘thou anointest’.

§9 The second person plural pronoun *ihr* is always paired with the verb ending -t: *ihr geht, ihr kommt, ihr fährt ab*.

§10 The verb conjugation illustrated in §7 is the standard pattern for most present-tense verbs. The present tense is used to describe actions or situations in present time. It is also used to refer to time in the near future, especially when the sentence includes a future time expression:

*Ich treffe Sie um 4 Uhr am Rathausplatz.*
*Wir fahren morgen abend mit dem Rheindampfer.*

These two German sentences could be translated with the English present tense:

*I’m meeting you at 4. . . . Tomorrow evening we’re taking. . . .*

But we also commonly use the helping verbs ‘will’ and ‘going to’ to show future time:

*I’ll meet you . . . / I’m going to meet you . . .
We’ll leave . . . / We’re going to leave. . . .*

§11 The patterns described in §10 are easily understood by speakers of English. But the German present tense can also refer to actions that began in the past and are continuing in the present. The preposition *seit* (with the dative case) is used to tell how long the action has been taking place:

*Er wohnt seit März in Innsbruck.*
*He’s been living / has lived in Innsbruck since March.*
*Ich spiele Poker schon seit 20 Jahren.*
*I’ve been playing / have played poker for 20 years.*

This structure is used only if the action is continuing in the present. If it is not, then it belongs to the past, and a past tense must be used.

§12 A number of verbs change their stem vowels in the third person singular (er/sie/es form). Most of these verbs have the stem vowel -e-:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFINITIVE</th>
<th>3RD PERSON SINGULAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fahren</td>
<td>sie fährt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tragen</td>
<td>er trägt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>schlafen</td>
<td>sie schläft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A very few of these stem-changing verbs have the stem vowel -a-:

German is not alone in changing the pronunciation of stem vowels in the third person singular. Note that the vowels in the English infinitives ‘say’ and ‘do’ differ from those in the third person forms ‘he says’ (‘sez’) and ‘she does’ (‘dzu’).
§13 Those verbs that change their stem vowel in the third person singular make the same change for the second person familiar (du) form as well. Because du is used, the verb ending is -st:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
du \text{ ißt} \\
du \text{ sprichst} \\
du \text{ nimmst} \\
du \text{ fährst}
\end{array}
\]

Note that $ß + s \Rightarrow ß$ in the du form of essen.

§14 The verb sein ‘to be’ has forms unlike those in the standard pattern seen in §7. Its present tense paradigm is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>ich bin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>Sie sind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>er/sie/es ist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The function of sein is to join other sentence elements. This coupling, or linking function is like the equal sign in mathematics. Two things are seen to be related, or placed in the same light. This is also true of werden ‘become’ and heißen ‘be called’.

Das ist mein Vater. Es ist Annemarie Wir sind Studenten.

If two things are to be seen as the same, then they also appear in the same grammatical case. Because Das, Es, and Wir are all the subjects in the examples above, and therefore appear in the nominative case, then Vater, Annemarie, and Studenten are also nominative. The phrase mein Vater shows clearly that Vater is a nominative form (See Pronouns §10).

§15 Two other forms of sein are not included in the chart above. They are the second person familiar forms, matching the pronouns du and ihr:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>du bist</td>
<td>ihr seid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Du bist nicht mehr so jung.</td>
<td>Seid ihr schon wieder hungrig?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§16 Haben, another high-frequency verb, also has irregular forms in the singular. The third person singular of haben is hat, not habt.

Sie möchte kommen, aber sie hat keine Fahrkarte.

§17 Matching the third person form hat is the du form hast:

Wieviel Geld hast du denn heute? Genug für das Kino?

§18 There are other important verbs whose present tense is “irregular”, that is, whose conjugation does not fit the pattern in §7. These include möchten, the other modal verbs, and wissen. Möchten is used here to establish the pattern for these essential verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>ich möchte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>Sie möchten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>er/sie/es möchte</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that the third person singular form does not have the familiar -t ending. In this group of verbs, the ich form and the er/sie/es form are identical.

§19 The modal verbs are normally used in combination with the infinitive forms of other verbs. They impart a special tone to a statement or question, establishing a “mood” in which the action of the main verb is carried out.

Used by itself, möchten is the German equivalent of ‘would like’ in English:

Ich möchte eine Weißwurst, bitte.

But when möchte is combined with another verb, it means ‘would like to’:

Wir möchten in die Schweiz fahren.

Here möchten, the modal verb, agrees with the subject of the sentence, wir, but it is clear that the main action of the sentence has to do with traveling to Switzerland. Möchten imparts a special mood or tone to what is said.
§20 The other modal verbs and their special meanings are

- **Können** (can, may, be able to)  (action is possible)
- **Müssen** (must, have to, gotta)  (action is physically necessary)
- **Sollen** (supposed to)  (action is morally necessary)
- **Wollen** (want to)  (action is very desirable)
- **Dürfen** (may, be allowed to)  (action is permissible)

§21 Two major patterns apply to the use of the modal verbs:

1. Modals are followed by infinitives, and these infinitives appear at the end of the clause in which the modal appears. (This means that the infinitive normally comes at the end of a sentence.) Be careful not to conjugate the infinitive to agree with the subject of the sentence! Once you have conjugated one main verb (here the modal) to agree with the subject, further conjugation is downright wrong.

2. The infinitive appears by itself at the end of the sentence without any other word that might be thought to equal English ‘to’. Note the difference between the two languages:

   - Wir wollen im Herbst nach Österreich fahren.  
   - We want to go to Austria in the fall.

   In addition to the verbs listed in §20, the common verbs *sehen*, *hören*, and *lassen* may function as modals, with complementary infinitives.

   - Endlich sehe ich ihn kommen.  
   - I finally see him coming.

   - Hörst du sie singen?  
   - Do you hear her singing?

   - Lassen Sie mich doch gehen!  
   - Let me go!

§22 **Können**: Action is possible. Someone ‘is able to’ do something.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ich kann kein Spanisch verstehen.</td>
<td>Wir können Sie um 11 sehen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sie können mich später finden.</td>
<td>Können Sie es morgen kaufen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Er/Sie kann es nicht sagen.</td>
<td>Sie können es schon vergessen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§23 **Müssen**: Action is physically necessary. Someone ‘has to’ do something.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ich muß einfach mehr schlafen.</td>
<td>Müssen wir schon gehen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sie müssen hier bleiben!</td>
<td>Müssen Sie das wissen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Er/Sie muß weiter arbeiten.</td>
<td>Sie müssen um 10 Uhr fliegen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: The negative of *müssen* does not mean ‘must not’, but rather ‘do(es) not have to’. (See Verbs §26)

   - Das müssen Sie nicht essen.  
   - You don’t have to eat that if you don’t want.

   - (not You mustn’t eat that.)

§24 **Sollen**: Action is morally necessary. One ‘is obligated to’ do something.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ich soll zu Hause bleiben.</td>
<td>Wir sollen immer nett sein.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sie sollen keine Angst haben.</td>
<td>Sie sollen Ihre Eltern fragen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Er/Sie soll das wissen.</td>
<td>Sollen sie immer ruhig bleiben?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sollen* is also used in the sense ‘is said to be’:

- Innsbruck soll sehr schön sein.  
  - Innsbruck is said to be very beautiful.

- People say that Innsbruck is very beautiful.

§25 **Wollen**: Action is desirable. Someone ‘wants to’ do something.
§26 **dürfen**: Action is permissible. Someone ‘is allowed to’ do something.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Darf ich hier Platz nehmen?</td>
<td>Wir dürfen nicht mitkommen. Schade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ja, das dürfen Sie machen</td>
<td>Natürlich dürfen Sie ein Taxi nehmen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Er/Sie darf nicht gehen</td>
<td>Darf sie alle zum Zoo kommen?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: In the word ‘dare’, English retains the old meaning commonly expressed by its close relative **dürfen**:

_Dare_ I mention the credit card bill?
_We dare not say anything to Mother._

NOTE: The negative of **dürfen** means ‘must not’:

Das dürfen Sie nicht essen! _You mustn’t eat that!_

§27 The last of these unusual, but very common, verbs is **wissen**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Das weiß ich nicht mehr</td>
<td>Danke, wir wissen es schon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Wissen Sie die Adresse?</td>
<td>Sie wissen seinen Namen, ja?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Er/Sie weiß, wo ich wohne</td>
<td>Wissen sie, wieviel das kostet?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Wissen** is used to indicate knowledge of something as a fact. It is not used in the sense of ‘know a person’. The verb **können** is used for that:

Ich weiß seinen Namen. _I know that fact._
Aber ich kenne ihn nicht gut. _I don’t know him well._

§28 The second person singular familiar (du) forms of the modals and **wissen** add an -st to the singular stem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFINITIVE</th>
<th>SINGULAR STEM</th>
<th>DU FORM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>möchten</td>
<td>möchte</td>
<td>möchtest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>können</td>
<td>kann</td>
<td>kannst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>müssen</td>
<td>muß</td>
<td>müßt (note spelling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sollen</td>
<td>soll</td>
<td>sollst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wollen</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>willst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dürfen</td>
<td>darf</td>
<td>darfst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wissen</td>
<td>weiß</td>
<td>wißt (note spelling)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§29 The second person plural familiar (ihre) forms of these verbs add -(e)t to the plural stem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFINITIVE</th>
<th>PLURAL STEM</th>
<th>IHR FORM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>möchten</td>
<td>möchtet</td>
<td>möchten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>können</td>
<td>könntt</td>
<td>könntt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>müssen</td>
<td>müßtet</td>
<td>müßt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sollen</td>
<td>sollt</td>
<td>sollt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wollen</td>
<td>wollt</td>
<td>wollt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dürfen</td>
<td>dürft</td>
<td>dürft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wissen</td>
<td>wiss(e)t</td>
<td>wißt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§30 Many verbs change their meaning by adding prefixes to the infinitive. These changes can be very subtle, and they can also be quite dramatic.

_She looked over the contract._
_She overlooked the fine print._

Some of the prefixes are found connected to the verbs in their infinitive forms, but unconnected to the verbs when they are used in the normal process of description in present tense. These prefixes are called **separable prefixes**.
Other prefixes remain attached to the verbs in all forms. These are called **inseparable prefixes**.

English has a number of verb prefixes as well. Notice how the meaning of the verb ‘pass’ changes when the preposition ‘by’ is added as a prefix, or how ‘construct’ is changed by the prefix ‘re-’. In these examples, ‘by’ is something like a separable prefix in that it is often used in its own right; some other English examples are ‘out-’, ‘with-’, ‘over-’, and ‘under-’. On the other hand, ‘re-’ acts as an inseparable prefix because it cannot stand alone as an independent word. Other prefixes of this sort in English are ‘inter-’, ‘de-’, ‘dis-’, ‘ab-’, and ‘pre-’.

Most **separable prefixes** are taken from the inventory of prepositions found in Prepositions §4, §13, and §20. Sometimes they change the meaning of verbs in very predictable ways, as in the case of *ausgehen*, *durchgehen*, and *untergehen*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aus</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>gehen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>durch</td>
<td>through</td>
<td>gehen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unter</td>
<td>under</td>
<td>gehen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In other instances the meaning of the separable prefix verb cannot necessarily be guessed by knowing the meaning of the individual elements, for many words have figurative as well as literal meanings. For example, the combination of *an* ‘on, at’ and *nehmen* ‘take’ produces *annahmen* ‘take on, accept, assume’ — but from the literal meaning of a ‘taking on’, as in

*He assumed his new duties as division chief.*

we also derive a figurative meaning:

*He assumed his new duties would be easy.*

And in the case of some separable prefix verbs, all we can do is scratch our heads and wonder how they came to have their current meanings — although there are usually perfectly good historical reasons. A case in point is the combination of the prefix *auf* ‘up, on’ with the verb *hören* ‘hear, listen’: *Aufhören* means ‘stop’. Clearly you must learn the special meaning of each new prefixed verb, for the whole is sometimes quite different from its parts.

**Word order:** In normal use in the present tense, the separable prefix appears not in combination with the verb, but at the **very end of the clause**. If the infinitive is called for — at the end of a clause after a modal verb, for example — the prefix attaches to it. Separated or attached, the prefix is thus in final position. Example — *einkaufen* ‘go shopping’:

```
↓ end of clause
Kaufen Sie später ein, oder kommen Sie jetzt mit?
Ich kaufe heute Nachmittag ein.
Ich möchte später einkaufen.
```

For an account of separable prefix verbs in infinitive phrases, see Verbs §39.

**Inseparable verb prefixes** are just that: They never separate from their verbs. Also, only rarely can a meaning be associated with an inseparable prefix. This means that the inseparable verbs created by the addition of the prefix must simply be memorized as individual vocabulary items without regard to the larger word family to which they belong historically. Examples of this sort of unpredictability are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inseparable</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kommen</td>
<td>come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bekommen</td>
<td>get, receive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entkommen</td>
<td>escape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hören</td>
<td>hear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gehören</td>
<td>belong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verhören</td>
<td>interrogate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In at least one common pair the inseparable verb means the opposite of its base form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kaufen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verkaufen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, the inseparable prefix remains with the verb at all times:
§33 One relatively small group of prefixed verbs contains verbs with prefixes that look separable (i.e., are identical to a few prepositions), but may or may not be, according to the meaning of the verb. Understandably, these verbs can be confusing, since their written form gives no hint about the nature of their prefixes.

For example, übersetzen and übersetzen are two verbs with the same written form, but different meanings. The first, which the underlining shows to be accented on the verb stem, is the more common of the two and means ‘translate’. It is an inseparable verb.

Sie übersetzt nicht gern. Sie liest einfach lieber.

The second, which is accented on the prefix, is separable. It means ‘set over’.

Sie setzt ihren Koffer auf den Gepäckkarren über.

In verb pairs of this sort, the pronunciation of the verbs gives the clue to their meaning and usage. If the prefix is stressed, then the verb has the more literal or physical meaning (here literally ‘set across’ or ‘transfer’) and is separable. If the verb stem is stressed, then the verb has a figurative or nonphysical meaning (here ‘set across from one language into another’) and is inseparable. Dictionaries use conventional means of differentiating the two kinds of verbs, usually with a mark before the stressed syllable: über’setzen ‘translate’ vs. ‘übersetzen ‘set across’.

§34 Verb complements are words or phrases that complete an idea begun by a verb. In their simplest form, they are single words:

Jetzt ist Hannelore wieder gesund.

Here the meaning of the sentence is unclear until the last word. The sense of the statement could be changed completely with the substitution of krank, hier, or müde. The single word could also be changed to in Stuttgart, auf einer Reise, or böse auf ihren Mann, and in each instance the impact of the sentence hinges on the last phrase.

Note that the verb complement appears at the end of the sentence. In subordinate clauses (after subordinating conjunctions such as wenn) the verb complement appears near the end, just before the verb:

Es macht ihm immer eine große Freude, wenn er im Café sitzt.

§35 In many instances the verb complement is a prepositional phrase, introduced by a preposition that combines with the verb to create a special meaning. Using the English verb work, we can construct sentences of very different meanings using the different phrases work with, work at, work under. In addition, we can work under pressure and work under a supervisor, and even work under cover or under an assumed name or under a tent — all with different meanings that cannot be anticipated or perceived when we hear merely the word work.

These combinations of verbs and prepositions contribute much to our flexibility as speakers and writers of English. We wait for things, speak about them, and are interested in them. In German, as in English, the preposition that combines with the verb is important in determining the meaning of the whole sentence. However, because German prepositions are used with specific cases (See Prepositions §4, §13, §20), these cases must be kept in mind in constructing the prepositional phrase that completes the idea begun by the verb. Of course, those prepositions that are always used with specific cases continue to govern those cases only.

von dative Sie spricht immer von ihrer Reise nach Österreich.

für accusative Ich interessiere mich für die Buchdruckkunst.

However, the prepositions used with either the dative or the accusative (Prepositions §20) provide some difficulties. When these prepositions are used as verb complements
to give special meaning to verbs, the “motion toward” vs. “location or motion within” distinction no longer applies. Now the verb and preposition combination must be learned with a specific case to be associated with a special meaning. For example, the preposition auf means ‘on, onto’. When combined with the verb warten and used with the accusative case, it means ‘for’:

Er wartet am Bahnhof auf seinen Bruder.

He’s waiting for his brother at the station.

Thus we must learn warten auf with accusative as the equivalent of ‘wait for’. If this seems inconvenient, it is also absolutely necessary. For if warten auf is used not with the accusative, but with the dative, auf maintains its literal meaning of ‘on’.

Er wartet am Bahnhof auf seinen Bruder.

He’s waiting on top of his brother at the station.

Understandably, serious miscommunication can arise if the cases governed by verbal complements are not scrupulously learned. To facilitate your learning, dictionaries indicate these cases either by giving clear examples (Er wartet auf den Zug, in which den is clearly an accusative form) or by supplying the case: warten auf/acc. or warten auf w/acc.

§36 Sometimes the verb complement is a verb itself. As in English ‘go’, the German verb gehen can be supplemented by an infinitive of another verb to indicate an activity about to take place. As with the other complements, the infinitive that completes the idea comes at the end of the clause:

Heute morgen gehe ich mit meiner Mutter einkaufen.

After a modal verb, the complement can no longer come at the very end of the clause, because another infinitive is there:

Ich möchte mit dir einmal einkaufen gehen.

Other verbal complements include stehenbleiben and kennenlernen.

Bitte, bleiben Sie noch einen Moment stehen.
Ich lernte ihn in einer Jugendherberge kennen.

§37 A number of verbs govern not the accusative case, but the dative. Generally, the verb phrases are ones in which a condition or an action on behalf of someone is either explicit or implied. Two clear examples are the verbs helfen ‘help’ and dienen ‘serve’:

Bitte, helfen Sie mir!
Womit kann ich Ihnen dienen?

Please help me! (Give aid to me)
What can I help you with?

(help = give service to)

The group of verbs that govern the dative case includes gehören ‘belong to’. Since something must belong to someone, it seems natural that that person should appear in the dative case:


Gefallen is the verb most commonly used to indicate liking. Because it is used so often, its special meaning must be understood: it does not mean ‘like’, but rather ‘be pleasing to’. When we use gefallen, we must rethink our English inclination to say ‘I like it’ and say instead ‘It is pleasing to me’. This may sound stiff in English, but

Es gefällt mir

is perfectly normal to a German speaker. Other examples:

Gefällt Ihnen das?
Der Film hat uns wirklich sehr gut gefallen.

Do you like that?
We really liked the movie.

Note that what appears as the object in the English ‘I like it’ is really the subject when the action of liking is seen from the German perspective, and that the English subject ‘I’ turns into the German dative object mir.
Similarly, one expression with the verb *gehen* and two with the verb *tun* are used to indicate physical well-being:

- **Wie geht es Ihnen/dir heute?** How “does it go with you” today? (How are you?)
- **Danke, es geht mir gut.** I’m fine, thanks.

**NOTE:** Never respond to *Wie geht’s?* with *Ich bin gut*, which is an assertion of superiority.

- **Ach, das tut mir/uns furchtbar leid.** Oh, I’m/we’re terribly sorry. (literally: That does sorrow to me/us.)
- **Mein Fuß tut mir weh.** My foot hurts. (‘does woe’ to me.)

Other verbs using the dative case include *antworten* ‘answer’ and *schmecken* ‘taste (good)’.

- **Antworte mir!** Answer me! (Give an answer to me.)
- **Das schmeckt mir nicht.** That doesn’t taste good (to me).

### §38

We make a distinction in English between the verb forms ‘he eats’, ‘he is eating’, and ‘he does eat’:

- *He eats bread* (habitually)
- *He is eating bread* (at this very moment)
- *He does eat bread* (but he’d rather not)

Standard German does not have equivalent verbal forms, but deals with these matters by other means. (The verbal forms are present in colloquial German, however.) This feature of English, and its absence in the German standard, suggests why German speakers learning English make characteristic mistakes such as

- **I eat my toast now.**
- **Go we now home, yes?**

English also sets traps for English speakers learning German. Beginning students often make the mistake of translating word for word such phrases as

- **I am eating** ≠ **Ich bin essen**
- **I don’t drink milk** ≠ **Ich tue nicht trinken Milch.**

English speakers must recognize that an entire verb form in English is rendered by an entire verb form in German. Here ‘am eating’ is the equivalent of German *esse*, and ‘do drink’ is *trinke* in German. Whatever you want to say, be careful not to formulate your thoughts in English and then transfer them bit by bit into German.

### §39

You have seen that infinitives do not show tense: They are “infinite” in their meanings in the same way that “finite” forms such as *geht* and *trägt* signify a specific person, number, and tense. Infinitives are used not just in dictionary glossaries, and not just as complements to modal verbs, but also as the focus of action in **infinitive phrases**.

**Es macht immer Spaß, bei Hans und Irma zu übernachten.**

Here the infinitive *übernachten* combines with *zu* to describe an activity that is not restricted to any specific tense or person. An individual could say this sentence with reference to himself, or the action of spending the night could be described by an entire swarm of Hans and Irma’s relatives. Also, the person saying the sentence could indicate that it was always fun or will always be fun to spend the night at that house. The tense of the entire sentence is determined by the tense of the verb in the main clause (here *macht*), and the infinitive never needs to change its form.

The structure of an infinitive phrase is illustrated by the sentence above: an introductory comma separates the phrase from the rest of the sentence, and the infinitive preceded by *zu* comes at the very end of the phrase. If the infinitive has a **separable prefix** (See **Verbs** §31), the *zu* is enclosed between the infinitive and the prefix:

**Es ist immer schön, unsere Eltern anzufragen.**
An infinitive phrase that is introduced by the particle *um* expresses purpose. That is, something is done for a specific reason. The equivalent in English is ‘in order to’, with the ‘to’ showing that we also have the infinitive phrase in English:

Sie geht in die Stadt, *um* ihren Bruder bei der Polizei abzuholen.

The infinitive phrase introduced by *um* answers the question *Warum?*

The preposition *ohne* may also begin an infinitive phrase, the resulting construction showing how something is done: namely, without some specific other activity:

Jörg ging einkaufen, *ohne* sein ganzes Geld *auszugeben.*

*Jörg went shopping without spending all his money.*

The equivalent construction in English is ‘without-ing’.

**§41 Reflexive constructions** involve actions that are directed back upon the subject of the verb: He *bit himself*, they *threw themselves* at her feet. In English reflexive constructions involve a pronoun ending in *-self/-selves*. In German the pronoun is identical to the personal pronoun except for the second person polite (*Sie*) and the third person singular (*er, sie, es*) and plural (*sie*), where it is *sich*.

In their simplest form, reflexive actions involve doing something for oneself: buying oneself a cold drink or a new hat, doing oneself a favor, finding oneself a seat on a bus. Here the reflexive pronoun is in the dative case, since the action is performed for oneself, in one’s own interest:

Ich kaufe mir morgen einen neuen Mercedes.

There is nothing inherently reflexive about these constructions. They could be used in the same way without specifying the person for whom an action is taken. (*Ich kaufe morgen einen neuen Mercedes.*) But the situation itself is reflexive: The subject is the beneficiary of the action.

**§42 Reflexive constructions** often have direct equivalents in English. We are often called upon to introduce or identify ourselves:

Darf ich mich vorstellen? (May I introduce myself?)
Sie kann sich nicht ausweisen. (She can’t identify herself.)

These constructions both include a verb and a reflexive pronoun in the accusative case, because the verb is understood to be acting directly back upon the subject.

**§43** Most reflexive constructions, however, do not have direct equivalents in English and must therefore be learned as specific vocabulary items including verb and reflexive pronoun. In the glossary to this text, verbs that are used with a reflexive pronoun are identified by a *sich* accompanying their infinitives. Common verb-pronoun combinations include

- **sich (hin)setzen** sit down
- **sich beeilen** hurry
- **sich waschen** wash
- **sich erinnern** remember
- **sich umschauen** look around
- **sich anziehen** get dressed
- **sich fühlen** feel
- **sich erkälten** catch cold
- **sich entscheiden** decide
- **sich lohnen** be worth it
- **sich freuen** be happy

**§44** A number of reflexive verb/pronoun combinations are used with specific prepositions, just as in English. Remember that the case governed by the preposition must be learned so that you can use the expression effectively. Among the most common combinations are
sich freuen auf (acc.) look forward to
ich freue mich immer auf Weihnachten.
sich freuen über (acc.) be happy about
Er freut sich über sein neues Baby.
sich erinnern an (acc.) remember
Erinnerst du dich an deinen alten Freund Max?
sich interessieren für (acc.) be interested in
Interessieren Sie sich für Jazz?
sich beschäftigen mit (dat.) be busy with
Sie hat keine Zeit. Sie beschäftigt sich mit ihren Steuern.
sich wundern über (acc.) be amazed about
Wir wundern uns über dein Glück.
sich gewöhnen an (acc.) get used to
Man gewöhnt sich eigentlich an alles.

§45 In some reflexive constructions the subject is not the direct goal of the verb’s action, but the indirect goal. In these situations there is an accusative object of the verb, but the subject is still involved as a point of reference. One example of this sort of construction has already been cited in §41.

Ich kaufe mir morgen einen neuen Mercedes.
Here Mercedes is the direct object of the verb, and mir tells for whom the action is being undertaken. The car could just as well be bought for someone else.

Some common verbs are used with dative reflexive objects. Here the reflexive is dative, and the other object is accusative.

sich etwas überlegen consider something
sich etwas anschauen take a look at something
sich etwas vorstellen imagine something
sich etwas anhören (take a) listen to something

In each of these, the etwas reflects an accusative object of the verb, and the sich reflects a dative object referring back to the subject of the sentence.

Ich möchte es mir anschauen
thus means ‘I’d like to look at it (es) for myself (mir)’. The verb cannot be used with another dative object: I cannot look at something with someone else’s eyes. Similarly, I cannot take note of something or listen to music or consider something for anyone other than myself. Others will have to do their own taking note, listening, and considering. Other sentences with these verbs:

Nun, überlegen Sie es sich mal. Well, think about it a bit.
Schau es dir doch an. Take a look at it.
Ich möchte mir deine neue Kassette anhören. I’d like to listen to your new tape.
Das kann ich mir gut vorstellen. I can well imagine that.

§46 An important group of reflexive constructions deals with parts of the body: washing hands, brushing teeth, and so on. When the specific parts of the body are mentioned, one does not simply perform these acts — one does them on one’s behalf, thus calling for a dative reflexive pronoun. The functions include, but are not limited to

sich die Hände/das Gesicht/die Füße (etc.) waschen
sich die Haare kämmen / trocknen
sich die Zähne putzen
This formula extends to clothing as well:

sich das Hemd (etc.) anziehen / umziehen / ausziehen

Obviously, it is possible to use the verbs waschen, kämmen, trocknen, putzen, and anziehen as simple active verbs taking an object other than oneself, especially when parents are performing these duties for young children:

Diese Eltern waschen ihre Kinder nicht oft genug.
Ich muß meinen Sohn wieder anziehen.

But when reference is made to specific parts of the body or items of clothing, then a dative noun or pronoun must be used to show whose body or clothing is involved. Note the difference between a nonreflexive function and a reflexive one:

NONREFLEXIVE: Mutter trocknet ihr (the daughter) die Haare zu lange.
REFLEXIVE: Mutter trocknet sich (herself) die Haare zu lange.
NONREFLEXIVE: Ich putze meinem Sohn die Zähne.
REFLEXIVE: Ich putze mir die Zähne.

All the verb forms discussed so far have been in what is called the indicative mood. Mood has to do with the attitude of the speaker toward what he is saying. Statements in the indicative mood are made in a straightforward and nonrestrictive fashion in a variety of tenses. The imperative mood, on the other hand, is used to give commands. Imperative forms do not indicate time — we cannot command others to ‘have done’ or to ‘will do’ something, but just to ‘do’ it in present time.

§47

yes: Please buy me a Toblerone (present)
no: Please bought me a Toblerone. (past)
no: Please will buy me a Toblerone. (future)

When individuals are being addressed, both English and German place the verb in first position to give commands.

§48

Signs in public places usually warn or inform by simply using an infinitive at the end of the imperative statement:

Bitte nicht mit dem Wagenführer sprechen.
Bitte nicht hinauslehnen.
Nicht öffnen, bevor der Zug hält!
Nicht rauchen.

§49

When commands are directed at people known to the speaker as Sie, German uses the Sie form of the verb:

Bringen Sie uns bitte zwei Glas Rotwein. (Please) bring us . . . .
Bleiben Sie bitte zwei Nächte! (Please) stay . . . .

The verb sein is an exception to this pattern, but the difference between the infinitive and the Sie imperative form is insignificant in the spoken language:

Seien Sie bitte vorsichtig! Please be careful!

The prefix of a separable verb appears at the end of the command:

Bitte, rufen Sie mich später am Nachmittag an.

§50

Understandably, there are also special imperative forms that apply to individuals well known to the speaker as du. Almost all verbs use just the verb stem for this purpose. Note that the pronoun du itself does not appear:

Komm schnell! Schlaf nicht ein! Sei bitte ruhig!

Verb stems ending in -d or -t and stems of -n infinitives (wandern, handeln) add an -e in the du imperative:
Finde deinen Bruder und bring ihn hierher.  
Arbeite mit beiden Händen.  
Wandre nicht so weit!

Some other verbs, those with stems ending in -ieren or in certain groups of consonants, also frequently add an -e in the du imperative:

Studiere Philosophie, das ist interessanter.  
Öffne das Fenster, bitte.

Verbs with stems in -e that normally change in the du and er/sie/es forms make the change in the du imperative as well:

Nimm die Linie 7 zum Stadion.  
Öffne das Fenster, bitte.

Gib der Oma diese Plätzchen, und sprich nicht mit dem bösen Wolf!

Other stem-changing verbs, those with stems in -a-, do not make the vowel change in the du imperative:

Lauf schneller, sonst verpassen wir die Tram!  
Schlaf gut, meine Liebe.

§51 The ihr imperative simply uses the ihr form of the verb. As in the du form, the pronoun does not appear in the imperative:

Wartet doch, ich komme schon!  
Nehmt mir diesen Brief bitte mit zur Post.  
Seid lieb zueinander, Kinder!

§52 When we give orders to ourselves, we speak as if we were speaking to a second person.

Come on, bear down, fella!  
Stop that twitching and play it right for once!

But sometimes our commands include another person as well as ourselves, so that the people involved are wir, not just ich. In English these commands take the form of suggestions, couched in tones that may range from gentle to severe:

Let’s go have some ice cream.  
Let’s pay attention to what we’re doing for once!

In German these suggestions use the first person plural form of the verb and add the personal pronoun wir:

Fahren wir doch in die Stadt zum Zirkus.  
Bleiben wir heute zu Hause.

The verb sein, as in the formal imperative, has a distinctive wir imperative form:

Seien wir jetzt freundlicher zueinander, ja?

§53 Subjunctive

In addition to the indicative and the imperative, German has a third mood, the subjunctive. The subjunctive is commonly used to express politeness or tentativeness, especially in a few very high-frequency verbs such as sein, haben, werden, wissen, and the modals. This is the subjunctive function that beginners are most likely to encounter first. English equivalents of polite expressions are “Would you have . . . ?” or “Do you suppose you could . . . ?” The body language that accompanies this kind of language is often cautious and tentative rather than forthright or aggressive.

The subjunctive is also used to express hypotheses — to guess what would be true if certain other things were to be one way or another. The sentence “If it rained right now, we’d be drenched” contains two verbs in the subjunctive mood. It is a hypothesis: ‘In fact, it is not raining right now, and we are not being drenched’. Since the adverb ‘right now’ implies that we are dealing with present time, the use of the verb forms ‘rained’ and ‘(would) be drenched’ instead of the present tense ‘is raining’ and ‘are being drenched’ tells us that the speaker is supposing what might be the result of some hypothetical action.
§54 **Subjunctive forms.** We have seen that English resorts to the use of past tense forms ('rained') to talk about a contrary-to-fact situation in present time. German does the very same thing — to no one's surprise, perhaps, since the two languages are closely related. In fact, English also uses apparently past forms in order to express politeness or tentativeness: “Could you perhaps . . .?”

In dealing first with the most common German subjunctive forms, it will be helpful to list the past tense forms from which they are derived:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFINITIVE</th>
<th>PAST STEM</th>
<th>PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sein</td>
<td>war-</td>
<td>wär-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haben</td>
<td>hatt-</td>
<td>hätt-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>werden</td>
<td>wurd-</td>
<td>würd-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wissen</td>
<td>würt-</td>
<td>würd-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>können</td>
<td>konnt-</td>
<td>könnt-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>müssen</td>
<td>mußt-</td>
<td>müßt-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dürfen</td>
<td>durft-</td>
<td>dürft-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sollen</td>
<td>sollt-</td>
<td>sollt-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wollen</td>
<td>wollt-</td>
<td>wollt-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The characteristic difference between the past stem and the present subjunctive is the umlauted stem vowel, which immediately says to the listener 'hypothesis! politeness! tentativeness!' (*Sollen* and *wollen* are obvious exceptions to the pattern, but because of other clues built into an entire subjunctive sentence, their non-umlauted stem vowels still do not hinder the transmission of the important subjunctive message.) To these present subjunctive stems are then added endings that match the subject. Example: *hätt-*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>ich hätte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>du hättest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>er/sie/es hättest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just as in the simple past tense, the third person singular has no -t ending.

§55 Although it is the “polite” subjunctive that one encounters, recognizes, and uses first, it is the subjunctive of **hypothesis** that is more widespread and that gives greater flexibility to both the written and spoken language. The forms listed above are used to hypothesize as well as to express politeness or tentativeness, and other verbs (virtually all can be used to hypothesize) also have subjunctive forms that are derived from their past stems. Although functions may differ, the forms are the same.

In its capacity to express hypotheses, the subjunctive exists in two **tenses**, the **present** and the **past**. The **present subjunctive** is used to describe those things that might be, but are not:

**PRESENT**  
*If he saw a bear now,* he'd run.

The sentence is contrary to fact: He doesn’t see a bear now, and he’s not running now. The statement is pure hypothesis. The **past subjunctive** describes things that might have been, but were not:

**PAST**  
*If he had seen a bear then,* he would have run.

This is also contrary to fact: He didn’t see a bear then, and he didn’t run. Note that each of these sentences consists of a clause beginning with *If...* and a clause stating a result. Appropriately, these are called the “if clause” and the “result clause”. Subjunctive forms are used in each one, because contrary-to-fact situations are stated in each. The verb is placed at the end of its clause because *wenn*, a subordinating conjunction, is used in German if clauses.
The present subjunctive, in English as well as German, is formed from the simple past stem, as seen in the examples rained and saw above. In the case of the regular verbs, those that form their past stems by adding -te to the present stem, the past is identical to the present subjunctive. Exceptions are, as ever, the high-frequency verbs listed in §54.

Note the close correspondence to English forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAST INDICATIVE</th>
<th>PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ich kaufte ein Geschenk.</td>
<td>Wenn ich ein Geschenk kaufte, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I bought a present.</em></td>
<td><em>If I bought a present,</em> . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er holte mir ein Bier.</td>
<td>Wenn er mir ein Bier holte, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>He fetched me a beer.</em></td>
<td><em>If he fetched me a beer,</em> . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich hatte einen Porsche.</td>
<td>Wenn ich einen Porsche hätte, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I had a Porsche.</em></td>
<td><em>If I had a Porsche,</em> . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Das wußte sie schon.</td>
<td>Wenn sie das schon wußte, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>She knew that already.</em></td>
<td><em>If she knew that already,</em> . . .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to establish a realistic context for the subjunctive, however, there must be some clear factual situation to which the subjunctive provides an alternative. The second column above is more properly compared to some real situation in the present tense:

*I'm not buying a present. But if I bought (were buying) one,* . . .

Er holt mir kein Bier. Aber wenn er mir ein Bier holte, . . .
*He's not fetching me a beer. But if he fetched (were fetching) me one,* . . .

Note that there are various possibilities for the English subjunctive here: 'If I bought', 'if I were buying', 'if I were to buy', 'if I happened to buy', 'if I should buy' — all expressing a hypothesis. In German the single form *kaufte* functions for all these English equivalents.

For irregular verbs, those that do not form their past stem with -t, the same principle of usage applies. As opposed to the regular verbs, however, these normally umlaut the vowel of the past stem before adding the characteristic subjunctive endings. Of course, only a, o, and u can be umlauted.

<table>
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</thead>
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<td>wär-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>werden</td>
<td>wurde</td>
<td>würd-</td>
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<tr>
<td>heißen</td>
<td>hieß</td>
<td>hieß-</td>
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<tr>
<td>kommen</td>
<td>kam</td>
<td>käm-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gehen</td>
<td>ging</td>
<td>ging-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laufen</td>
<td>lief</td>
<td>lief-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§57 ‘If’ clauses can be used alone to express wishes (‘If my prince would come . . .’). However, they are usually not left unfinished, as they are in §56 above, but are completed by a result clause. When the ‘if’ clause is the first syntactical element, the verb in the main clause must come next as the second element in the entire sentence:

1 Wenn ich ein Geschenk kaufte, hätte ich kein Geld mehr.

2 *If I bought a present, I wouldn't have any more money.*

This sentence can be rearranged — in German as in English — by placing the result clause first:

1 Ich hätte kein Geld mehr, wenn ich ein Geschenk kaufte.

2 *I wouldn't have any more money if I bought a present.*
§58  

**Würde: the all-purpose subjunctive form.** *Würde*, the present subjunctive of *werden*, is used widely for all functions of the subjunctive — polite, tentative, and hypothetical.

**POLITE:** Würden Sie mir bitte das Salz reichen?  
**TENTATIVE:** Würden Sie vielleicht eine Nummer größer vorziehen?  
**HYPOTHETICAL:** Würden Sie es kaufen, wenn Sie das Geld hätten?

The combination of *würde* and an infinitive produces the same result as the present subjunctive form of that infinitive. That is,

- *würde* + haben = hätte  
- *würde* + sein = wäre  
- *würde* + gehen = ginge  
- *würde* + kaufen = kaufte

Ich *würde* ins Theater gehen, wenn ich das Geld hätte.  
Ich *ginge* ins Theater, wenn ich das Geld hätte.

**Style and level of diction** are important factors in the use of the subjunctive in modern German. In colloquial speech, the use of *würde* with an infinitive to form the present subjunctive is widespread in both if clauses and result clauses.

**COLLOQUIAL:** Wenn ich den Bären *sehen* würde, *würde* ich weglauen.

In less colloquial speech *würde* is not used in if-clauses, but frequently occurs in result clauses:

**FORMAL:** Wenn ich den Bären *sehen* würde, *würde* ich weglauen.  
**MORE FORMAL:** Wenn ich den Bären *sehen* würde, liefe ich weg.

Even allowing for differences in level of speech, most German speakers today do not choose to combine *würde* with *sein*, *haben*, or the modal verbs.

§59  

**The past subjunctive,** as stated above, is used to describe those actions that might have taken place, but did not:

**PAST:** *If he had seen a bear, he would have run.*

In English the past subjunctive is formed by combining the past participle of the main verb with the present subjunctive form of its helping verb. In this sentence the verbs in question are *sehen*, which takes the helping verb *haben*; and *laufen*, which takes the helping verb *sein*. Again, because *wenn* is used, the finite verb — here the helping verb that agrees with the subject — comes at the very end of the clause:

Wenn er einen Bären *gesehen* hätte, *wäre* er gelaufen.

Just as with the present subjunctive, the order of clauses can be reversed without changing the meaning. As ever, the main verb is in second position:

Er *wäre* gelaufen, wenn er einen Bären *gesehen* hätte.

The past subjunctive with modals combines *hätte* with a double infinitive.

Wenn ich es hätte sehen können, hätte ich keine Angst gehabt.  
*If I’d been able to see it, I wouldn’t have been afraid.*

Note that, although *wenn* normally places the auxiliary in final position, a double infinitive is always the very last element in a sentence. (See Verbs §75)

§60  

The subjunctive mood is used to report what someone else has said. Typically, such **indirect discourse** is introduced by a phrase such as *sie sagte* or *sie meinte*, in order to make it clear that the statement is someone else’s opinion. When the original statement is in the present tense, the present subjunctive is used to relate it:

original statement by Marta:  
“Hans ist eigentlich ganz nett.”

related by another person:  
Marta sagte, Hans *wäre* eigentlich ganz nett.

or:  
Marta sagte, daß Hans eigentlich ganz nett *wäre.*
When the original statement is in past time, then it is related by the past subjunctive:

original: "Der Winter war doch furchtbar kalt."
retold: Er sagte, der Winter wäre furchtbar kalt gewesen.
or: Er sagte, daß der Winter furchtbar kalt gewesen wäre.

original: "Jemand hat unseren Wagen gestohlen."
retold: Sie sagten, jemand hätte ihren Wagen gestohlen.
or: Sie sagten, daß jemand ihren Wagen gestohlen hätte.

§61 Future tense

German normally uses the present tense with an adverb of time to indicate future action. A formal future tense does exist, however, occurring frequently in writing and occasionally in speaking. It is formed with the verb werden as a helping verb, followed at the end of the clause by an infinitive — similar in construction to modal clauses.

Morgen werden wir alle mit dem Postbus nach Trimmis fahren.

Werden is the finite verb, agreeing with the subject and holding second place in the sentence unless used in a subordinate clause:

Er sagte, daß wir alle morgen mit dem Postbus fahren werden.

NOTE: In the future tense a modal verb occurs in final position, after its dependent infinitive.

Morgen wirst du es besser verstehen können.

§62 Past tense

The past tense, sometimes called the narrative past, is used to describe events — usually a series of events — that occurred in past time. By its very nature, the past tense is heavily used in newspapers and other sources that report and analyze past occurrences. With the exception of the common verbs sein, haben, wissen, denken, werden, and the modals, the past tense is not frequently used in normal conversation.

§63 These high-frequency past tense forms are some of the most important ones commonly used in both writing and speaking:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFINITIVE</th>
<th>PAST STEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sein</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>haben</td>
<td>hatte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wissen</td>
<td>wußte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>konnen</td>
<td>konnte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>müssen</td>
<td>mußte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dürfen</td>
<td>dürfte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sollen</td>
<td>sollte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wollen</td>
<td>wollte</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§64 The formation of the past tense depends on the kind of verb involved — regular or irregular. The regular verbs form the past stem by the addition of a -te to the present stem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFINITIVE</th>
<th>PRESENT STEM</th>
<th>PAST STEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kaufen</td>
<td>kauf-</td>
<td>kaufte-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>studieren</td>
<td>studier-</td>
<td>studierte-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kosten</td>
<td>kost-</td>
<td>kostete-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The conjugation of the past tense is similar to that of the present tense, with the exception of the third person singular forms, which are identical to those of the first person:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>ich kauf te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>du kauf te st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>er/sie kauf te</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
§65 Irregular verbs

The irregular verbs do not have past stems with -te. Instead, their past is formed by vowel change, and sometimes with a slight difference in consonant structure as well. There are good historical reasons for each of these past forms, and with more exposure to German you will develop a “feel” for what the past tense of an irregular verb might be. The only way to learn these forms at the beginning is to memorize them along with their infinitives. The infinitive is called the first principal part of a verb, and the past stem is called the second principal part.

### Table: Infinitive vs. Past Stem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFINITIVE</th>
<th>PAST STEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sein</td>
<td>war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heißen</td>
<td>hieß</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>essen</td>
<td>aß</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trinken</td>
<td>trank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bleiben</td>
<td>blieb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gehen</td>
<td>ging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional examples of irregular verbs with all their principal parts are listed in the Wie, bitte? Survival Grammar.

The conjugation of the irregular verbs in the past is identical to that of the regular verbs:

### Table: Singular vs. Plural

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PERSON</td>
<td>ich blieb</td>
<td>wir blieb en</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND PERSON</td>
<td>du blieb st</td>
<td>ihr blieb t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD PERSON</td>
<td>er/sie/es blieb</td>
<td>sie blieb en</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§66 In addition to the regular and irregular verbs, there are a few that seem to be combinations of the two kinds. Again, there are good historical reasons for their forms, but from a modern viewpoint they appear to be anomalies. These verbs combine the -te suffix of the regular verbs with the vowel change of the irregular ones:

### Table: Infinitive vs. Past Stem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFINITIVE</th>
<th>PAST STEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bringen</td>
<td>bring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>denken</td>
<td>think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kennen</td>
<td>know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nennen</td>
<td>call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rennen</td>
<td>run</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wissen</td>
<td>know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§67 As you have already seen in the discussion of the present perfect, English and German verbs, especially the most common ones, tend to be remarkably similar in form. Regular verbs in English have past stems ending in -d (such as said from say), a sound that is a close relative of German -t. Irregular verbs in English generally show the vowel change characteristic of their German cognates (words with which they share a common origin):

| tragen — trug | draw — drew |

Some useful examples:

### Table: Irregular vs. Regular

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IRREGULAR (vowel change)</th>
<th>REGULAR (-d [Eng.] / -t [Ger.])</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>drink — drank</td>
<td>trinken — trank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eat — ate</td>
<td>essen — aß</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forget — forgot</td>
<td>vergessen — vergaß</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>find — found</td>
<td>finden — fand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come — came</td>
<td>kommen — kam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sleep — slept</td>
<td>schlafen — schlief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see — saw</td>
<td>sehen — sah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have — had</td>
<td>haben — hatte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dare — dared</td>
<td>dürfen — durfte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make — made</td>
<td>machen — machte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>love — loved</td>
<td>lieben — liebte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>say — said</td>
<td>sagen — sagte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hear — heard</td>
<td>hören — hörte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play — played</td>
<td>spielen — spielte</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
§68 The present perfect tense, sometimes called the conversational past, is used in everyday speaking about events in past time. It does not describe a time different from that described by the past tense. Both tenses can talk about the same time, illustrating that “tense” and “time” are not one and the same. When the telling involves a single event in past time, then the present perfect is usually the tense chosen for the job. When a chain of events is discussed, then the past tense is frequently used. The term “conversational past” says a good deal about the usage of this new tense: It is used in speaking — but is also very common in writing. Very often the small group of high-frequency words listed above — sein, haben, wissen, and the modals — are used in the past tense while the other verbs in a discussion appear in the present perfect.

§69 The formation of the present perfect requires the use of the past participle of a verb in combination with either haben or sein as a helping verb. The past participle is the name for the third principal part of a verb. If ‘drink’ and ‘drank’ are the first and second principal parts of ‘drink’, then ‘drunk’ is the third. It is used in combination with a form of the helping verb ‘have’, which is the only helping verb in modern English:

*They have drunk all the tea! What do we do now?*

Past participles of regular verbs are formed by combining the present stem (the infinitive minus the -n or -en ending) with 1) the prefix ge- and 2) the suffix -t.

holen: ge + hol + t

The principal parts of holen are thus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST</th>
<th>SECOND</th>
<th>THIRD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>holen</td>
<td>holte</td>
<td>geholt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only additional information needed to use the verb holen in all its tense forms is the helping verb, which — as for virtually all regular verbs — is haben. Traditionally, the helping verb is learned in its third person singular form along with each verb’s past participle:

holen — holte — hat geholt

For both regular and irregular verbs, the past participle comes at the very end of the clause.

Wir haben heute keine Bananen gekauft.
Sie hat in der Stadtmitte nur Rockmusik gehört.

NOTE: The past participles of separable verbs include the ge- prefix between the prefix and the stem:

Sie hat das Brot schon eingepackt.

The past participles of inseparable verbs do not add the ge- prefix:

Müllers haben ihr Haus schon verkauft.

NOTE: The past participles of verbs ending in -ieren do not add the prefix ge-. All -ieren past participles end in -t.

Sie hat studiert. Wir haben schon telefoniert. Haben Sie es reserviert?

§70 Irregular verbs form their past participle by adding to the verb stem the ge- prefix and the suffix -en. Usually the vowel of the verb stem is changed as well.

singen: ge + sung + en

Most verbs use haben as a helping verb.

Herr Fischer-Dieskau hat wunderschöne Lieder gesungen.
Endlich haben sie oben auf dem Berg gestanden.

§71 There are a number of irregular verbs that use sein as a helping verb, just as an older form of English once used the verb ‘be’:

*Lo! An angel is come . . . .*
These verbs in German are intransitive — they do not take objects. They also show a change of location or condition. A change of location includes verbs such as laufen, kommen, gehen, fahren, and steigen. A change of condition includes not only sterben ‘die’ (some would say this implies a change of location!), but the common einschlafen ‘go to sleep’, werden ‘become’, and aufwachen ‘wake up’, which is a regular verb.

Er ist früh am Abend eingeschlafen und erst spät am Morgen aufgewacht.

Two common verbs that do not fit this pattern, but that are used with sein, are sind itself and bleiben:

Wir sind nur kurz im Westerwald gewesen.
Wie lange sind Sie eigentlich in der Steiermark geblieben?

§72 The past participles of a few unusual verbs are noteworthy. They seem to be regular in having a -t suffix, yet their stems show a vowel change:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFINITIVE</th>
<th>PAST PARTICIPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bringen</td>
<td>hat gebracht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>denken</td>
<td>hat gedacht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kennen</td>
<td>hat gekannt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nennen</td>
<td>hat genannt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>senden</td>
<td>hat gesandt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wissen</td>
<td>hat gewußt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§73 It is impossible to tell from the infinitive form of a verb whether it is regular or irregular, a feature shared by English. (This is a dilemma that inspired the poet E. Scumas Rory to pen the verse at the end of this paragraph.) Fragen ‘ask’ and sagen ‘say’, for example, are both regular verbs, with the past participles gefragt and gesagt. But tragen ‘carry’ is irregular, with the past participle getragen. Should you have to guess what a verb’s past participle might be, then use English as your guide. Remember: English and German are closely related, and the most common verbs tend to be old and therefore similar in both languages. Note the similarity between the first two verbs in the list above, bringen and denken, and their English counterparts, ‘bring/brought’, ‘think/thought’.

The peeping Tom designed to peep
On Miss Godiva when she’s sleep,
Wherefore on hands and knees he crept
And underneath her curtain pept.

Behind him, though, a watchman crepe,
Pursuing peepers while she slope
And pounced on Tom because he pope. (Thunks, 7)

§74 The past perfect tense is used to refer to events that took place before another past tense already referred to in a discussion. The past perfect can exist only with reference to this other tense, and cannot stand alone. The statement “She hadn’t seen him for years” makes no sense unless we know that she was just visiting him or was looking for him. The statement “She hasn’t seen him for years” does make sense, since it is firmly established in present time. Normally our frame of reference is present time — time before present time.

If we establish our frame of reference in the past instead of the present, then this scheme is shifted to become

past time — time before past time.

The English past perfect tense refers to time before past time by using the past tense of the helping verb ‘have’, just as it was seen above to use the present tense of ‘have’ for the present perfect tense:

PRESENT PERFECT: We have met the enemy, and he is ours.
PAST PERFECT: We had met the enemy, and he was ours.

German operates the way English does, using the past tense forms of the helping verb haben and sein, as appropriate to the individual verb. This means that in the German past perfect tense, war and hatte are the helping verbs instead of ist and hat.
Als ich ihn sah, hatte er das Geschenk schon bekommen.

TIME: 1. He received the present. 2. I saw him.

Als ich in Dübendorf ankam, war die Familie schon abgefahren.

TIME: 1. The family departed. 2. I arrived in Dübendorf.

Because the past perfect tense has to exist within a past context, German sentences using the past perfect often contain the word nachdem, a subordinating conjunction meaning ‘after’ and establishing the time relationships:

Nachdem er den Fisch gekauft hatte, fuhr er schnell nach Hause.
Sie stieg in den Sportwagen, nachdem sie Max geküsst hatte.

§75 When modal verbs are used in the present perfect tense, they appear in their infinitive form at the end of the clause in combination with the infinitive form of the verb that is used to complete their meaning. This construction is called a double infinitive. The same construction is used in the future tense. Note the differences in the four tenses:

PRESENT Sie will nicht zum Zirkus mitgehen.
PAST Sie wollte nicht zum Zirkus mitgehen.
PRESENT PERFECT Sie hat nicht zum Zirkus mitgehen wollen.
FUTURE Sie wird nicht zum Zirkus mitgehen wollen.

NOTE: Sehen, hören, and lassen, which can function as modals (See Verbs §21), use the double infinitive construction in the perfect.

Hast du sie singen hören? Did you hear her singing?
Er hat mich nach einer Stunde gehen lassen. He let me go after an hour.

§76 The verbs discussed up to this point have all been in one of three moods: the indicative, the imperative, and the subjunctive. They have also occurred in a variety of tenses that described time relationships. Verbs also have voices, the active voice and the passive voice. Paragraphs §§1-75 have treated verbs in the active voice, in which the subject of each sentence was performing an action. In the passive voice the subject of a sentence is acted upon by someone or something else in the sentence. Note the difference:

ACTIVE: They took him to the station in a Volkswagen.
PASSIVE: He was taken to the station in a Volkswagen.

The first sentence is in the active voice: ‘They’ is the subject, and ‘him’ is the object of the verb took. The second sentence is in the passive voice: the subject does not act, but is acted upon.

§77 The passive voice combines a form of the verb werden, acting as a helping verb, with a past participle. In the English passive illustration in §76, ‘was’ is the helping verb and ‘taken’ is the past participle. In German the passive sentence would be

Er wurde in einem Volkswagen zum Bahnhof gebracht.
He was (being) taken to the station in a Volkswagen.

Wurde, of course, is a past tense form of the verb werden, and the sentence says that an action took place in the past. If the helping verb were wird, in the present tense, the action would be taking place in the present:

Er wird in einem Volkswagen zum Bahnhof gebracht.
He’s being taken to the station in a Volkswagen.

In this sentence the true actors are missing; we do not know who is taking him to the station. If the agents were to be added to the sentence, they would be in a dative phrase with the preposition von:

Er wird von drei Männern in Schwarz zum Bahnhof gebracht.
He’s being taken to the station by three men in black.

§78 Other passive tenses are encountered less frequently in spoken German. They are the present perfect, the past perfect, and the future.
In the **present perfect** the verb *werden* still functions as a sign of the passive, but must have the helping verb *sein*. *Werden* appears in the form *worden* after the past participle:

Er ist schon zum Bahnhof gebracht worden.

*He's already been taken to the station.*

In the **past perfect** the helping verb changes from the present to the past tense, according to the principle established in §74:

Er war schon zum Bahnhof gebracht worden, als ich ihn sah.

*He had already been brought to the station when I saw him.*

The **future** tense of the passive voice causes casual observers to throw up their hands in dismay because the sign of the future tense and the sign of the passive voice are one and the same verb, *werden*. Bear in mind, however, that the future is simply a form of *werden* plus an infinitive at the end of the clause.

↓ future sign ↓ passive sign

Er wird zum Bahnhof gebracht werden.

Here the infinitive in the sentence is not an active infinitive, *bringen* ‘bring’, but rather a passive infinitive, *gebracht werden* ‘be brought’.

§79 When the passive voice is used with **modals**, the construction is parallel to that of the future passive (§78). The modal verb is used in combination with a passive infinitive, and the construction parallels exactly that in English. As in all modal constructions, the infinitive comes at the end of the sentence:

↓ modal ↓ past part. ↓ passive sign

Das kann schnell gemacht werden.

That can be done quickly.

↑ modal ↑ past part.

§80 English speakers tend to avoid heavy use of the passive voice, and German speakers often seek substitutes for the passive as well. One mechanism for replacing the passive voice, of course, is a switch to the active. Where no agent is present in the passive version (as in many of the sentences in §78), *man* is added to provide an active subject. Remember that *man* does not specify an individual, but simply ‘they, someone’.

PASSIVE: Er wurde zum Bahnhof gebracht.
ACTIVE: Man brachte ihn zum Bahnhof.

A different substitute for the passive is the use of an infinitive phrase, the combination of *zu* and an infinitive:

PASSIVE: Er wird nur schwer verstanden.
ACTIVE: Er ist schwer zu verstehen.

He can be understood only with difficulty.

He's hard to understand.

§81 After an action has been performed, it can be described as a completed action. A door that has been closed (passive construction) is a closed door (adjectival description). A piece of cheese that has been melted (passive construction) is properly described as melted cheese (adjectival description). On the one hand we have a true passive voice, and on the other we have what is often called the **false passive**, or **statal passive**. The false passive is really just the use of an adjective, which may come before or after a noun:

That door is now closed.

*We discuss those things behind closed doors.*

Grammatically, all participles are adjectives, and here they can be seen clearly in that function. Because they are adjectives, they must agree with the nouns they precede:

Das ist eine geschlossene Tür.
Note the different ways of describing the same object:

PASSIVE: Die Tür ist geschlossen worden.
PASSIVE SUBSTITUTE: Man hat die Tür geschlossen.
FALSE PASSIVE: Die Tür ist geschlossen.
ADJECTIVE: Das ist eine geschlossene Tür.

Note also the fundamental difference between a door that is just swinging shut at the moment

Die Tür wird geschlossen

and one that is already closed:

Die Tür ist geschlossen.

Confusion can arise from the English equivalent, since the English verb ‘be’ is both a sign of the passive and a simple descriptor:

*The door is closed every day at four. (It swings shut then.)*

*The door is closed every day at four. (When we come at four, it is shut tight.)*
PREPOSITIONS

§1 Prepositions are words that provide information about how something or someone — the object of the preposition — is related to the fundamental action of a statement or question. The groups of words in which prepositions appear — the prepositional phrases — tell how, where, when, in what direction, or even why something happens.

He went shopping with his brother. (how)
They bought clothes at Clyde's. (where)
That was in the afternoon. (when)
Then they went into the city. (in what direction)
They walked because of the weather. (why)

§2 Prepositions always have objects, words that follow them. That object is always either a noun or a pronoun. Other words, most often adjectives, may provide more information about the object.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREPOSITION</th>
<th>OBJECT OF PREPOSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>with (his) brother</td>
<td>at Clyde's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in (the) afternoon</td>
<td>into (the) city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because of (the) weather</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§3 Prepositions cause their objects to appear in specific grammatical cases. (For an explanation of cases, see Adjectives §§3-7.) Some prepositions are always followed by the dative case, some are always used with the accusative case, and some can govern either of the two cases depending on the nature of the action in the sentence. In these instances, the use of the dative or the accusative has nothing to do with the other function of these cases as indirect or direct object cases. The object of a preposition is never an indirect object or a direct object.

§4 Common prepositions always used with the dative case are:

- aus bei mit nach seit von zu.

They govern the dative case whether their meaning is literal or figurative:

- ... aus dem Haus out of the house
- ... aus dem Jahre 1907 dating from the year 1907
- ... aus den Vereinigten Staaten from the U.S.A.

§5 As the examples above show, aus has a broad range of meaning within the framework of ‘out of’. Perhaps the most common use is in combination with the name of a city or country, indicating “point of origin”. If someone is aus Berlin, then that person is taken to be a native of Berlin.

The point of origin can also be in time, mainly in discussing historical origins:

Der Dom stammt aus dem 14. Jahrhundert. dates from the 14th century
Diese Kirche ist aus dem Jahre 1766.

Aus can also indicate a source, or original material.

Hatte George Washington wirklich Zähne aus Holz?
Did George Washington really have wooden teeth?

§6 Bei often indicates spatial proximity — nearness, or presence.

A town can be located near another (usually larger) one:

Beutelsbach bei Stuttgart.

If someone lives next to (or by) a church, then

Er wohnt bei der Kirche.
When I am at the barber shop, then
Ich bin beim (=bei dem) Friseur.

If I live with my parents in their house, then
Ich wohne bei meinen Eltern.

If I have no money with (or on) me, then
Ich habe kein Geld bei mir.

Bei can also indicate occasion, circumstance, or condition, as in
bei diesem Wetter in this weather bei 40 Grad Kälte at -40°
Berlin bei Nacht Berlin at night beim Fußballspiel at the soccer game

Bei often appears with a verbal noun to show simultaneous action:
Beim Singen macht er oft die Augen zu.
While/When he sings, he often closes his eyes.

Verbal idiom: helfen bei ‘help with’:
Hilf ihr bei der Arbeit. Help her with her work.

§7 Mit implies accompaniment or instrument.
Bitte, kommen Sie mit mir nach Hause.
Das ist der Mann mit dem roten Bart.
Schlagen wir es mit einem Hammer.

§8 Nach means ‘to, toward’ when used with the names of cities or countries:
Annegret fährt morgen nach Hannover.
Wann kommen Sie denn nach Amerika?

It also means ‘after’ in either a spatial sense:
Das Mädchen springt nach dem Fußball. (where to?)
or a temporal sense:
Nach dem Konzert gehen wir essen. (when?)
Es ist schon 10 Minuten nach zwei.

Nach is also part of the common idioms:
nach Hause (in the direction of) home
Meiner Meinung nach in my opinion
fragen nach inquire/ask about/after
Er fragte nach ihrer Mutter. He asked about her mother.

§9 Seit has exclusively temporal meaning — ‘since’. 
Seit dem Krieg wohnt sie allein.

In this sense it figures prominently in combination with present tense verbs to indicate activity that began in the past and is still continuing (See Verbs §11):
Wir studieren schon seit sieben Jahren.
We’ve been studying for seven years now.

§10 Von implies separation of something from something else.
Wir fliegen von Amsterdam nach Vancouver.
Das ist ein Brief von meiner Schwester.

Von also is used with nouns and pronouns as a substitute for the genitive (possessive) case (‘of’):
Ist das nicht die Mutter von Ihrem Mann?
Das war ein Teil von der Altstadt.
Die Bedeutung von diesem Artikel verstehe ich einfach nicht.
Er ist ein guter Freund von mir.
NOTE: You can avoid misunderstandings in the use of the words Freund and Freundin (either 'male/female friend' or 'boy/girlfriend') by contrasting

Das ist mein Freund / meine Freundin  
That's my boyfriend / girlfriend

with

Das ist ein Freund / eine Freundin von mir  
. . . a friend of mine

Von contracts with dem to produce vom.

Hedwig kommt gerade vom Büro.

§11  Zu shows direction toward someone or something that is not a city or country:

Komm zu mir, Hänschen!
Gehen wir zur Post.
Ich möchte zum Zirkus.

Zu is frequently used to mean 'to the house of':

Kommen Sie um acht Uhr zu mir, heute Abend gibt's eine kleine Fete.

Zu contracts with following dem and der to produce zum and zur.


Note the following special uses of zu:

Was möchtest du zum Frühstück?  for breakfast
Den möchte ich gern zum Freund haben.  as a friend
Mit der Zeit wurde sie zu einer guten Schriftstellerin.  became a good writer
Egon gehört zu den besten Pianisten.  is one of the best pianists

§12  The prepositions bei, von, and zu appear with definite articles in the following contractions:

bei + dem ⇒ beim
von + dem ⇒ vom
zu + dem ⇒ zum  zu + der ⇒ zur

The contraction is normally made unless the definite article is emphasized for a good reason:

Bei dem Wetter gehe ich nicht.  I'm not going in this weather.

§13  Another group of prepositions is used only with the accusative case:

bis  durch  für  gegen  ohne  um

§14  Bis ‘until, up to’ occurs in many time expressions without a following article:

bis Dienstag  bis nächste Woche  bis 1990

When a following article is present, bis is most often supplemented with zu in the expressions bis zum . . . and bis zur . . . :

Bis zum Krieg wohnten wir in Danzig.
Die Straßenbahn Linie 12 fährt bis zur Kasernenstraße.

§15  Durch closely parallels the English word ‘through’ in both literal and figurative senses:

Fahren Sie ganz durch die Stadt, und fragen Sie noch einmal dort.
Durch die Zimmervermittlung finden wir immer gute Hotelzimmer.

§16  Für is most often the equivalent of English ‘for’.

Hier ist ein Geschenk für dich.  —Für mich? Ach, wie schön.
Be careful in time expressions, however, where English ‘for’ is usually not the equivalent of für:

Wir waren drei Wochen in Wien.

*We were in Vienna for three weeks.*

Er studierte ein ganzes Jahr in Bonn.

*He studied in Bonn for a whole year.*

When used with time expressions, für has the meaning ‘with the intention of staying for ___’:

Sie fliegen für ein Semester nach München.

*They’re flying to München, where they’ll be staying for a term.*

Wir sind für 14 Monate nach Chur gezogen.

*We moved to Chur, where we spent 14 months.*

§17 **Gegen** means ‘against’ in both physical and nonphysical senses:

Das Auto ist **gegen** den Baum gefahren und ist jetzt wertlos.

Nein, ich bin **gegen** Ihren Plan. Tut mir leid.

§18 **Ohne** is the equivalent of English ‘without’.

Ich, glaube, wir machen es **ohne** Ihre Hilfe.

Gehen Sie wirklich **ohne** uns? Ach, schade.

§19 **Um** means ‘around, about’ in a physical sense:

Die Kinder laufen **um** das Haus und suchen Ostereier.

. . . **around the house** (either inside or outside)

When used with clock time, **um** means ‘at’:

Wir treffen uns **um** drei Uhr vor dem Glockenturm.

Ihr Zug fährt **um** 17 Uhr 40.

**Um** Viertel vor acht sehe ich Sie im Cafe Wollmer.

Note the use of **um** in the verbal idiom **bitten um** ‘ask for’.

Peter hat seine Mutter **um** hundert Schilling gebeten.

*Peter asked his mother for 100 ÖS.*

§20 A special group of prepositions is used with either the dative or the accusative, depending on the action expressed in the sentence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dat. — Acc.</th>
<th>an</th>
<th>auf</th>
<th>hinter</th>
<th>in</th>
<th>neben</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>über</td>
<td>unter</td>
<td>vor</td>
<td>zwischen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the prepositional phrase answers the question **Wo?** ‘Where?’, these prepositions are used with the **dative** case. If the prepositional phrase answers the question **Wohin?** ‘Where to?’, then they are used with the **accusative**.

wo = dative  wohin = accusative

The crucial distinction between accusative and dative is not one of motion versus no motion, but of motion **toward** something (accusative) versus either location or motion **within** something (dative). It is possible for lots of movement to be taking place within a confined area — a child chasing a cat **around** in a room, for example. Because this is within a confined area, the preposition **in** would be used with the dative.

§21 **An** expresses physical location on or movement onto a **vertical** surface. It contracts with **dem** to yield **an**:

In der Mensa hängen die Annoncen immer **am** Schwarzen Brett.

*dat.*

Wollen wir den Zettel **an das** Schwarze Brett hängen?  

*acc.*
An is also used to indicate location next to or movement toward something, usually a vertical surface:

Wer steht an meiner Tür?  
Gehen Sie bitte an das Fenster.

But note this exception, decidedly a horizontal surface:

Wir fahren morgen ans Meer.

An is an important part of verbal idioms. Note case usage:

teilnehmen an  
denken an  
glauben an

Am introduces dates and days, telling when things are happening:

Erich kommt am 22. Juli wieder nach Hause.

§22 Auf expresses physical location on or movement onto a horizontal surface.

Ich glaube, ich schlafe heute Nachmittag auf dem Sofa.

Auf is also often used to indicate location at or motion toward a place, usually a building in a town.

Mein Vater arbeitet immer noch auf der Post.

Brigitte muß schnell auf die Post.

Note the use of auf (acc.) in warten auf:

Wartet auf mich!  

§23 Hinter indicates location or movement behind something:

Die Arbeiter bauen etwas hinter dem Bahnhof.

Gehen Sie hinter den Bahnhof. Da finden Sie den Kiosk.

§24 In shows location within or movement into something:

Arbeiten Sie gern in der Stadt?

Ich muß schnell in die Stadt fahren.

NOTE: As a separable verb prefix, in assumes the form ein:

ein'treten  
step in, enter

§25 Neben expresses location or movement next to something:

Mein Büro steht neben der neuen Aula der Universität.

Ach, stellen Sie die Lampe bitte neben die Couch.

§26 Über indicates location or movement over something:

Der weiße Mond hängt über dem Garten.

Der flinke braune Fuchs springt über den faulen Hund.

When the meaning is ‘about’, über is always used with the accusative:

Das ist eine Geschichte über eine schöne Prinzessin.

§27 Unter shows location or movement under something:

Die Maus hat unter dem Schreibtisch geschlafen.

Die Katze ist unter den Schreibtisch gesprungen.

§28 Vor expresses location or movement in front of something:

Zwei große Polizisten stehen vor der Tür.

Der Schauspieler tritt vor das Publikum.
Vor is also used in time phrases to mean ‘ago’. It precedes its object:

\[ \text{Vor 5 Minuten / 2 Wochen / einem Tag / einer Stunde war er hier.} \]

\[ \text{He was here 5 minutes / 2 weeks / a day / an hour / ago.} \]

Note the important verbal idioms dealing with fear: \text{angst haben vor} and \text{sich fürchten vor} (dat.).

\[ \text{Wer hat angst vor dem großen bösen Wolf?} \]

\[ \text{Who’s afraid of the big bad wolf?} \]

\[ \text{Rotkäppchen fürchtet sich nicht vor ihm.} \]

\[ \text{Little Red Riding Hood’s not afraid of him.} \]

\[ \text{Zwischen} \] shows location or movement between two things:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Der Junge schläft gern zwischen seinen Eltern.} & \quad \text{dat.} \\
\text{Der Hund lief zwischen meine Beine und aus dem Haus.} & \quad \text{acc.}
\end{align*} \]

\[ \text{§29} \]

\[ \text{IMPORTANT: Remember that the location/movement toward} \] distinction between dative and accusative applies only to the group of prepositions discussed in §§20-29. Do not apply this rule to the prepositions that take only the dative or only the accusative. Many beginning students believe, for example, that the prepositional phrase in “All our canaries flew out the window” should use the accusative case because of the obvious motion implied. But no matter how much motion is involved, \text{aus} still takes the dative case: \text{aus dem Fenster}. 
WORD ORDER

§1 Human language is **sequential**. Sounds (or their written versions) precede and follow each other. All languages have principles of word order. Such principles describe how speech elements can be combined. Some principles of word order tell what must be done, others what can but need not be done, and still others what is downright impossible in a language.

Many speakers of a language do not have a conscious, analytic knowledge of its principles of word order, but all normal human beings acquire a detailed working knowledge of the structural patterns of their native language. Typically we absorb notions of word order unconsciously, by trial, error, and example, before we learn conscious rules. Certain patterns just “sound right”.

Learners of foreign languages acquire their knowledge in many different ways, in accord with their personalities and with the method of instruction or exposure. Students with informal exposure to a language, perhaps through family background or travel abroad, may approach word order “by ear”. Some language classes emphasize that attitude. Other students may prefer to work with carefully formulated “textbook” rules of word order.

Both approaches have their benefits, and we hope that in your study of German the notion of what “feels right” will go hand in hand with a clear knowledge of what “is right”. The important thing to remember is that principles of word order are not abstract, pointless formulas to be memorized and parroted back, but rather descriptions of how genuine human speech works. Thus it is important that you consider not only what the language looks like on the printed page, but also what it sounds like when it is spoken and heard. Rhythm, pitch, intonation, and pace are all vital factors in the understanding of word order. When you study, be sure to pay attention to SOUND as well as sight.

§2 The basic principle of English word order is that in statements (or “declarative sentences”) the subject immediately precedes the verb (and objects follow the verb).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>VERB</th>
<th>OBJECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The dog</td>
<td>bit</td>
<td>the man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>threw</td>
<td>a party for the emperor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His son</td>
<td>loved</td>
<td>a famous economist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From these sentences it would be impossible to understand that the man was doing the biting, or to be sure that the famous economist returned the son’s love. In the second sentence, the form *they* confirms for speakers of English that the *party* cannot be the subject of the sentence.

Sometimes the subject is the second element of an English sentence:

- Generally it rains on our picnic.
- With a heavy heart, I’ve decided to resign.

Note that **subject — verb — object** is a basic principle of English word order, and only that. There are sentences with object — subject — verb order, such as “**Him I like, but her I don’t**”, but it is hard to imagine an English sentence with object — verb — subject order: “The **ball kicked she** in front of the bus”. In English, it is the **sequence** of forms that gives meaning to a sentence. If that were not true, then “The dog bit the man” could be understood in two ways.
§3 The most important feature of declarative sentences in German is that the verb comes second.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST</th>
<th>SECOND</th>
<th>REST OF STATEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ich</td>
<td>habe</td>
<td>keine Pommes frites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heute</td>
<td>fahren</td>
<td>wir nach Freiburg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mein Gepäck</td>
<td>ist</td>
<td>das nicht.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgen um 14 Uhr 52</td>
<td>sind</td>
<td>wir in Köln.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In German the subject often precedes the verb, but that is not by any means a hard and fast rule. The first element may be the subject, or it may be an object of some kind, or even a long phrase telling when, where, or how the action of the sentence will take place. In the last example above, the verb is the sixth word in the sentence, but it is the second element. The first five words are a long adverb phrase telling ‘when’. Placement in first position lends emphasis to a word or phrase that would not command such attention if it were placed in the middle or at the end of a sentence. If this first element is not the subject of the sentence, then the subject must follow the verb immediately.

§4 Word order in German questions is very similar to that in English ones. In each language, a form of the verb must come first in a question — unless there is an introductory question word, or interrogative, present.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERROGATIVE</th>
<th>VERB</th>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>REST OF SENTENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fahren</td>
<td>Sie</td>
<td>heute nach Stuttgart?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>traveling to Stuttgart today?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warum</td>
<td>fahren</td>
<td>Sie</td>
<td>heute nach Stuttgart?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>traveling to Stuttgart today?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§5 In German, as in English, it is often true that “the tone makes the music”. That is, it is possible to say a sentence with normal declarative word order (See Word Order §2), but with intonation that says “This is a question” to the listener. Listen carefully to the intonation patterns in the sentences

She likes him. (He’s nice.) She likes him? (Yuk!)
She likes him? (What a mismatch!)
Das ist mein Gepäck. (Yep, that’s mine, all right.)
Das ist mein Gepäck? (Yeek! It didn’t look like that before!)

§6 There can be more than one verb in a German sentence, but in each independent clause — in each clause that can stand alone in the sentence — only one of those verbs is the finite verb, one that agrees in number with the subject. In the case of the modal verbs, those that are used with a following infinitive, the modal itself comes in second position, thus obeying this firm word order rule (See Verbs §21).

↓ modal  ↓ infinitive
Ich kann ihn nicht so gut verstehen.
2 end

The finite verb in second position may be an auxiliary (sein or haben); see Verbs §69.

§7 Conjunctions are used to tie — or conjoin — two sentence elements.

Möchten Sie Bier oder Apfelsaft?
Ich nehme ein Zimmer mit Dusche und eins ohne Dusche.

Sometimes the second element is an entire sentence, and the result is a compound sentence:

Wir fahren am Dienstag. Sie fahren am Donnerstag.
Wir fahren am Dienstag und sie fahren am Donnerstag.
The word order of the second sentence is unchanged if one of the following common coordinating conjunctions is used:

- **und** and
- **aber** but
- **oder** or
- **denn** because
- **sondern** but (rather)

§8 The coordinating conjunction **sondern** deserves special mention. Like **aber**, it has the English equivalent ‘but’, and it does appear when two sentence elements are being compared. However, **sondern** is used when the two elements are mutually exclusive.

> Ich finde ihn ganz nett, aber er ist doch sehr krank, nicht wahr?
> Gut, ich komme mit, aber es wird schon spät.

In these examples, it is certainly possible for someone to be sick and nice at the same time; it is also possible for someone to come along even if it is getting late. In neither of these cases are the possibilities mutually exclusive. The use of **sondern** rejects any compatibility between two choices, and is therefore often reinforced by **nicht** or **kein**:

> Nein, sie liebt nicht Helmut, sondern Jürgen.
> Im deutschen Süden ist das Klima nicht hart, sondern mild.
> Es ist nicht wichtig, was man sagt, sondern was man macht.

§9 There is a group of conjunctions that change the word order of the clauses in which they appear. Unlike the coordinating conjunctions (§§6-7), the subordinating conjunctions place the main verb at the very end of the clause. A common example of these conjunctions is **wenn** ‘if, whenever’.

> Ich bleibe noch eine Weile, wenn Sie schnell kommen.

Note that **kommen**, the verb that matches the subject (the finite verb), appears at the end of the clause. The use of the subordinating conjunctions might seem to violate that supreme principle of German word order explained in §3, but it does not. The main verb in this sentence is **bleibe**. It appears in the main clause, which can stand alone as an independent unit:

> Ich bleibe noch eine Weile.

The **wenn** clause, on the other hand, cannot stand alone. For good reason, it is called a dependent (or subordinate) clause because it needs another clause, an independent (or main) clause, for support.

The **wenn** function can be managed without **wenn**:


but **wenn** expresses conditions more clearly and efficiently:

> Wir gehen einkaufen, wenn du Geld hast.

§10 Another high-frequency subordinating conjunction is **dafß** ‘that’. Again, **dafß** cannot stand alone. The clause

> that she’s staying all day

requires introduction by ‘She said’, ‘I hear’, or another similar phrase.

> Sie bleibt den ganzen Tag.
> Wir wissen, dafß sie den ganzen Tag bleibt.

The **dafß** function can be managed without **dafß**:

> Vater kommt am Mittwoch wieder. Wir wissen das.

but **dafß** relates one action to another more clearly and efficiently:

> Wir wissen, dafß Vater am Mittwoch wieder kommt.
§11 The subordinating conjunction *als* ‘when’ is used to relate two events in past time. It, too, places the finite verb at the very end of its clause.

Es regnete immer, als wir im Nordwesten lebten.

Note that there are two subordinating conjunctions with the apparent meaning ‘when’. However, there is a fundamental difference between *wenn* and *als*. *Wenn* is used in the sense of ‘whenever’ — that is, in describing a repeated action in past, present, or future. *Als*, on the other hand, occurs only in sentences dealing with past time, and specifically a single event in past time. If the context of the above sentence were such that the speaker lived in the Northwest on several different occasions, then *als* would be incorrect; *wenn* would be the proper word, indicating repeated action in past time.

The *als* function can be managed without *als*:

Wir waren 2 Jahre in der Schweiz. Das Wetter war immer schön.

but *als* better expresses that two things happen at the same time:

Das Wetter war immer schön, als wir in der Schweiz waren.

§12 Another subordinating conjunction, *ob*, is frequently confused with *wenn*, and again English is the source of the confusion — for ‘if’ is the meaning most commonly assigned to both. Whereas *wenn* means ‘if’ in hypothetical situations, however, — ‘If I only had some worms, I’d go fishing’. — *ob* means ‘if’ in the sense of ‘whether’, a word used much less frequently today than ‘if’. The simple test is thus: in cases where ‘whether’ can be substituted for ‘if’, use *ob*. *Ob* is often used in subordinate clauses following main clauses containing the verb *wissen*.

Daniela? Moment, bitte — ich weiß nicht, ob sie zu Hause ist.

Wissen Sie, ob es heute regnen soll?

The *ob* function can be managed without *ob*:


but *ob* eliminates the need to formulate artificial questions:

Ich weiß nicht, ob ich heute abend arbeite.

§13 There are many other subordinating conjunctions, but the ones given in the above paragraphs are the most important. Some others:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>obwohl</em></td>
<td>although</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nachdem</em></td>
<td>after (See Verbs §74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>seitdem</em></td>
<td>since (involving time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bis</em></td>
<td>until</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>während</em></td>
<td>while</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

§14 A number of the conjunctions above have English equivalents that are identical in form to the corresponding English prepositions. Be sure to make the distinction between the two parts of speech. *Prepositions* take a noun or pronoun object, and *conjunctions* introduce an entire clause.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREPOSITION:</th>
<th>CONJUNCTION:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nach dem Krieg . . .</td>
<td><em>after the war</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nachdem der Krieg vorbei war,</td>
<td><em>after the war was over,</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seit dem Jahre 1949</td>
<td><em>since the year 1949</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seitdem wir hier wohnen . . .</td>
<td><em>since we’ve been living here</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bis nächste Woche</td>
<td><em>until next week</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bis du wiederkommst, . . .</td>
<td><em>until you come back again</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vor dem Konzert</td>
<td><em>before the concert</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bevor wir ins Konzert gehen, . . .</td>
<td><em>before we go to the concert</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
§15 **Interrogative words** can also function as subordinating conjunctions. That is, they can introduce clauses that give more information about something in the main clause; and they can place the verb at the end of the subordinate clause.

Weißt du, wann er von den Wanderferien zurückkommt?
Können Sie mir bitte sagen, wie viel das alles kostet?
Wissen Sie, wo ich die Meierstraße finden kann?

§16 When the compound tenses — that is, those tenses that consist of more than one verbal element — are used in subordinate clauses, it is the **finite verb** that is placed at the very end of the clause. This takes precedence over the rule that places past participles and dependent infinitives at the very end.

Wann hast du sie eigentlich das letzte Mal gesehen?
— Ich weiß nur, daß ich sie seit Jahren nicht mehr gesehen habe.

Kann er das wirklich tun?
— Ich weiß nicht, ob er das wirklich tun kann. Mal sehen!

§17 Subordinate clauses occur not only as a second element of a longer sentence, as in the examples above, but can be in first position as well. When they do appear in first position, remember that the **finite verb in the main clause must be in second position**.

Als wir in der Schweiz waren, war das Wetter immer schön.
Wenn Sie schnell kommen, bleibe ich noch eine Weile.

§18 When **two nouns** occur together, the one that is **definite** comes first.

Zu Weihnachten gebe ich meinem Bruder einen Pullover.
Zu weihnachten gebe ich meinen Pullover einem Freund.

§19 When **a noun and a pronoun** occur together, it is the pronoun that has word order priority and comes closer to the verb. When there are two pronouns, it is the **accusative pronoun** that comes first.

Bitte, bringen Sie es mir später.
§20  **Word order of nicht.** *Nicht* generally follows both noun and pronoun objects, and adverbs of time. When it negates a whole clause, it comes at the end of the clause.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{↓ object} \\
\text{Nein, er hat *es* meinem Vater *nicht* gesagt.} \\
\text{↑ object} \\
\text{Es ist heute *nicht* so schön.} \\
\text{↑ adverb of time} \\
\text{Wir sehen ihn heute abend *nicht*.}
\end{align*}
\]

*Nicht* precedes other sentence elements, including predicate nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verb complements.

- **noun:** Das ist *nicht* mein Gepäck.
- **adjective:** Es wird heute *nicht* so regenisch.
- **adverb:** Fahr *nicht* so schnell.
- **verb complement:** Wir haben *nicht* Fußball gespielt.

*Nicht* also negates what it immediately precedes. (See **Word Order §8**)

Ich kaufe heute *nicht* Käse, sondern Joghurt.

*Nicht* may also appear at the very end of a sentence in order to invite confirmation of something that has been said. It has a wide variety of English equivalents, all of which are simply *nicht (wahr)?* in German.

- Hm. Sie sind Kanadierin, nicht wahr? *...aren't you?*
- Er kommt aus Wien, nicht? *...isn't he?*
- Sie wohnen alle in Madrid, nicht? *...don't they?*
Reference Grammar

CHECKLIST OF COMMON ERRORS

• confusion of sounds or spelling; capitalization

  • *Ich* siet Zeit
  • Amerikanisch
  • Amerikanisch
  • *Was* was
  • *Nur* nur

• wrong vocabulary choice

  1. A word may have several distinct equivalents in another language.

     - right: *[thing is]* correct = *richtig*  not left = *rechts*;
     - *[person]* is right = *recht haben*  right, privilege = *das Recht*

  2. Words that look or sound alike may not mean the same thing at all.

     - *stay* ≠ *stehen*  ≠ *for*

Remedies: Look up the word in an English-German dictionary, and then look it up in the German-English part of the dictionary. If you don’t have time for that, use simpler words or constructions that you are sure of.

• failure to consider gender of nouns

  1. Use of “*duh*” for all articles — *duh* die Frau, *duh* der Mann, *duh* das Kind

  2. German article, but wrong gender — *der* die Fahrkarte, *die* der Paß

Remedies: In speaking you may just have to guess, since you can’t take time to check a dictionary. Otherwise, failure to check gender is inexcusable. Learn major patterns of noun formation.

• failure to conjugate verbs according to both subject and tense

  - *Ich gehen* gestern nach Hause.  Ich bin gestern nach Hause gegangen.

  The error is especially likely when the subject and verb are separated from each other in a manner not encountered in English.

  - *Ich rufe Sie gestern nicht an, weil ich arbeiten müssen.*
  - Ich habe Sie gestern nicht angerufen, weil ich arbeiten mußte.

• incorrect verb placement

  1. The main conjugated verb must appear in second position in all statements.

     - *Heute ich gehe zum Bahnhof*.

     - Heute gehe ich zum Bahnhof.

     The error is most likely when the statement begins with a time or location phrase.

  2. Verb complements appear at the end of main clauses.

     - *Ich muß gehen nach Hause um zwei Uhr*.
     - Ich muß um zwei Uhr nach Hause gehen.

  3. The verb appears last in subordinate and relative clauses.

     - *Ich glaube, daß wir gehen ins Restaurant*.
     - Ich glaube, daß wir ins Restaurant gehen.

• imitation of the English progressive form of verbs (to be + [verb]-ing)

  - *Wir sind zum Bahnhof gehen*.
  - Wir gehen zum Bahnhof.

     *We’re going to the station.*

• Incorrect formation of the past tense

  - *Ich habe geschriebt.*
  - *Sie hat nichts gesagt.*

  - *Ich habe geschrieben.*
  - *Sie hat nichts gesagt.*

Remedies: Note which verbs are regular, and memorize irregular verbs. Trust English; related verbs often follow the same patterns: leben, lebte, habe gelebt / live, lived, have lived; trinken, trank, getrunken / drink, drank, drunk.
• **wrong verb tense**

  1. Action that continues from the past into the present must be expressed in the present tense; *seit* introduces the related time phrase.

    Ich habe hier für zwei Monate gewohnt.
    Ich wohne seit zwei Monaten hier.
    *I've lived (been living) here for two months.*

  2. Overuse of the one-word past tense in imitation of English, especially in ordinary conversation.

    Heute morgen aßen wir im Hotel.
    Heute morgen haben wir im Hotel gegessen.
    *This morning we ate in the hotel.*

• **use of *haben* where *sein* is required in the present perfect**

    Ich habe nach Hause gegangen.  Ich bin nach Hause gegangen.

• **neglect of differences among grammatical cases**

  1. use of the nominative as the universal case

    Ich nehme den Bus zu dem Bahnhof.

  2. confusion of pronouns (especially *Sie* ‘you’/ *sie* ‘she’/ *sie* ‘they’)

    Ist sie hier?  Ja, ich bin sie ist hier.

  3. confusion of accusative and dative objects

    Ich kaufe meinen meinem Bruder ein T-Shirt.

  4. use of the accusative case after *sein*

    Das ist einen ein Fahrplan.

• **confusion of *du* and *Sie***

    Bitte, sagen Sie mir deine Ihre Telefonnummer.
    (or: Bitte, sag mir deine Telefonnummer.)

• **confusion of pronouns, especially *Sie/sie***

    *sie* = she, her (accusative); they, them (accusative)
    *ihr* = her (dative, genitive); you (familiar plural, nominative only)

• **Incorrect negation ( *nicht* / *kein* - / *nichts* ; placement of *nicht* )**

  1. use of *nicht* as a universal negation, with no provision for *kein*

    Wir haben nicht keine Bananen.

  2. confusion of *nicht* and *nichts*

    Ich wußte nichts.  *I didn’t know anything.*
    Ich wußte nicht.  *I didn’t know.*

  3. incorrect placement of *nicht*

    negation of entire action:

    Wir sind gestern nicht nach Hamburg gefahren.
    *We didn’t go to Hamburg at all, anytime.*

    negation of part of the action:

    Wir sind nach gestern nach Hamburg gefahren.
    *Whether or not we went to Hamburg, we didn’t go yesterday.*

• **Incorrect choice of *wann*, *wenn*, *als*, *ob***

    Wenn Wenn es 6 Uhr ist, können wir essen.
    Wenn Als ich 12 Jahre alt war, . . .
    Können Sie mir sagen, *wenn* *ob* Sie Wienerschnitzel haben?