

Provisional German Descriptions—Writing

Novice—Low	No functional ability in writing German.
Novice—Mid	No practical communicative writing skills. Able to copy isolated words and short phrases. Able to transcribe previously studied words or phrases. Able to write name, address, dates and other numbers, as well as common expressions such as those used in greetings and leave-takings.
Novice—High	Able to write simple fixed expressions and limited memorized material. Can supply information when requested on forms such as hotel reservations and travel documents. Can write names, write out numbers from 1-20, dates (days of the week, months of the year), own nationality as well as other common adjectives of nationality, addresses, and other simple biographic information. Can write limited learned vocabulary for common objects, short phrases, and simple lists. Can write such expressions as <i>Guten Tag! Ich heiße ...</i> , <i>Wie geht es Dir? Wie geht es Ihnen?</i> and other fixed social formulae. Can name some common objects; knows some common adjectives and adverbs; can use the present tense of some common regular verbs, such as forms of the present tense of <i>haben</i> and <i>sein</i> ; can write simple negative sentences using <i>nicht</i> (but often in wrong place) and interrogative sentences with words such as <i>wo</i> , <i>wie</i> , <i>warum</i> , <i>wann</i> , etc. Writes in sentences or short phrases using very basic subject-verb-object word order. Can ask and answer very simple yes-no or information questions using limited memorized or very familiar sentence patterns, with frequent misspellings and inaccuracies. Usually forgets umlauts. Sometimes uses infinitives for conjugated verbs. Has a concept of gender, and can produce definite and indefinite articles, though often inappropriately. Often forgets to make adjectives agree with nouns. Generally cannot create own sentences in the language, but uses memorized material or transformations of familiar patterns.
Intermediate—Low	Has sufficient control of the writing system to meet limited practical needs. Can write short messages, such as simple questions or notes, postcards, phone messages and the like. Can take simple notes on material dealing with very familiar topics within the scope of limited language experience. Can create statements or questions, in the present tense using negative and interrogative constructions, within the scope of limited language experience. Material produced consists of recombinations of learned vocabulary and structures into simple sentences. Can express present and future by using the present tense and adverbs of time such as <i>morgen</i> , <i>heute</i> , <i>nächste Woche</i> , <i>nächstes Jahr</i> . For example: <i>Ich schreibe heute eine Prüfung. Wir fahren nächste Woche nach Berlin</i> . Generally cannot express past time by past tenses, but may incorrectly use the present tense and an adverb of time such as <i>gestern</i> , <i>gestern abend</i> , <i>heute morgen</i> to convey past meaning. Awareness of gender apparent (many mistakes). Awareness of case system sketchy. Some correct use of predicate adjectives and personal pronouns (<i>ich</i> , <i>wir</i>). Vocabulary is limited to common objects and cognates, and is inadequate to express anything but elementary needs. Can express numbers from 1-100 with some misspellings. Often inserts native-language vocabulary for unknown words, and is generally not capable of circumlocution to get meaning across. Writing tends to be a loose collection of sentences or sentence fragments on very familiar topics (likes and dislikes, general routine, everyday events or situations). Makes continual errors in spelling (<i>ei</i> vs. <i>ie</i> , often omits umlauts), grammar (incorrect adjective endings, incorrect subject-verb agreement), and punctuation. Word order is random, but writing can be read and understood by a native reader used to dealing with foreigners. Able to produce appropriately some fundamental sociolinguistic distinctions in formal and familiar style, (<i>Herr</i> , <i>Frau</i> , <i>Fräulien</i>), but no clear distinction between polite and familiar address forms (<i>Sie</i> , <i>du</i>), such as appropriate subject pronouns, titles of address and basic social formulae.
Intermediate—Mid	Sufficient control of writing system to meet some survival needs and some limited social demands. Able to compose short paragraphs or take simple notes on very familiar topics grounded in personal experiences. Can discuss likes and dislikes, daily routines, give dates and times, discuss everyday events, describe immediate surroundings (home, work, school), narrate simple events, and the like. Can use correctly the present tense of most regular verbs and some common irregular verbs, such as <i>haben</i> , <i>sein</i> , <i>tun</i> , <i>wollen</i> , <i>können</i> , <i>wissen</i> , <i>verstehen</i> , and <i>möchten</i> with occasional production errors. Can use <i>werden</i> plus infinitive to express future time. Has sporadic control of high frequency verbs in the compound past but may not attend to correct auxiliary verb or past participle agreement. Can use definite, indefinite, and partitive articles, but often uses them inappropriately, usually gets cases wrong. Frequent errors in gender-adjective agreement and cases may occur. Shows some ability to use some determiners other than articles, such as possessive adjectives or interrogative adjectives, but may make errors in appropriate choice of form. Tends not to use object pronouns, relative constructions, or their cohesive elements of discourse, rendering the written style somewhat stilted and simplistic. Generally good control of basic constructions and inflections, such as subject-verb agreement, noun-adjective agreement, and straightforward syntactic constructions in present and future time. Grammatical accuracy in some structures solidifies, e.g., word order in

simple statements (excluding adverbs) and interrogative forms, and imperative of separable prefix verbs (*Kommen Sie mit!*). May make frequent errors when venturing beyond current level of linguistic competence (such as when expressing opinions or emotions, where non-memorized conditionals, subjunctives, and other advanced concepts of grammar may come into play). When resorting to a dictionary, often is unable to identify appropriate vocabulary, or uses dictionary entry in uninflected form.

Intermediate—High

Sufficient control of writing system to meet most survival needs and limited social demands. Can take notes in some detail on familiar topics (autobiographical information, preferences, daily routine, simple descriptions and narration of everyday events and situations) and respond to personal questions on such topics using elementary vocabulary and common structures. Can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data and work experience, and short compositions on familiar topics. Can create sentences and short paragraphs relating to most survival needs (food, lodging, transportation, immediate surroundings and situations) and limited social demands. Can express fairly accurately present and future time, using the future and the present tense of most common regular and irregular verbs, including reflexive verbs. Can use the compound past with both *haben* and *sein* auxiliaries, but does not always use it correctly or appropriately. Past tense is also attempted with common simple past forms (*sagte, hatte, war*). Several high frequency separable prefix verbs appear in the indicative (*ich gehe mit*). There is inconsistent coding of proper dative and accusative cases following prepositions in singular and plural. Shows good control of elementary vocabulary and some control of basic syntactic patterns (some object pronouns, and determiners, usually use of negative in past tenses and future with correct placement, etc.). Still has problems in inverted word order and in proper placement of time, place, and manner phrases. Major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts. Dictionary usage may still yield incorrect vocabulary or forms, although can use a dictionary to advantage to express simple ideas. Generally does not use basic cohesive elements of discourse to advantage (relative constructions, object pronouns, connectors) and the like. Writing, though faulty, is comprehensible to native speakers used to reading German written by non-natives. Is able to express a few thoughts for which vocabulary is unknown via circumlocution, but may insert native-language equivalents for unknown words or use native-language syntactic patterns when expressing ideas beyond current level of linguistic competence.

Advanced

Able to write routine social correspondence and simple discourse of at least several paragraphs on familiar topics. Can write simple social correspondence, take notes, and write cohesive summaries, resumés, and short narratives and descriptions on factual topics. Able to write about everyday topics by using adjectives, with mostly correct gender and case. Genders of high frequency words are mostly correct. Able to narrate events using present, compound past, some simple past, and future forms, although the contrast between uses of the two past tenses may not be consistently accurate. Occasional use of some subjunctive forms to express politeness and preference. Has sufficient writing vocabulary to express oneself simply with some circumlocutions. Can write about a very limited number of current events or daily situations and express personal preferences and observations in some detail using basic structures. Is able to recycle new but meaningful phrases whether lexical or structural, i.e., lifts phrases appropriately, writing appears more sophisticated. When writing own thoughts is more likely to paraphrase according to native language at times. Controls many separable and reflexive verbs and double infinitive construction in main clauses. Good control of morphology in verb tenses; correct endings for regular and irregular verbs in tenses mentioned above. Often uses correct endings for adjectives. Controls frequently used structures such as interrogatives, negatives (but still not always correctly placed), prepositions with some rest/motion distinction but not always proper cases for the distinction, and choice of determiners (*der* vs. *ein*). Preposition use after verbs or adjectives is often inaccurate. Writing is understandable by a native speaker not used to reading German written by non-natives. Writer uses a limited number of cohesive devices such as a single object pronoun (direct or indirect). Some use of relative pronouns to combine sentences and some common conjunctions are used (*denn, weil, wann, wo*, etc.). Mistakes in subordinate clause auxiliary verb placement and double infinitive order. Able to join sentences in limited discourse, but has difficulty and makes frequent errors producing complex sentences. Paragraphs are reasonably unified and coherent.

Advanced Plus

Shows ability to write about most common topics with precision and in some detail. Can write fairly detailed resumés and summaries and take accurate notes. Can handle most informal and business correspondence. Can describe and narrate personal experiences and explain simply point of view in prose discourse by using introductory phrases (e.g., *meiner Meinung nach, ich glaube, dass...*, *ich bin sicher, dass...*). Can write about concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Normally controls general vocabulary with circumlocution or modification where necessary, e.g., may use negation plus lexical item for an unknown antonym, or modify words with *sehr, viel*, etc., if a more specific term is unknown, or resort to a category label for unknown components. Often shows remarkable fluency or ease of expression, but under time constraints (e.g., no opportunity to rewrite), and pressure (e.g., testing), language

may be inaccurate and/or incomprehensible, especially if important lexical items are missing or if inaccurate tense usage interferes with meaning. Generally strong in either grammar or vocabulary, but not in both. Weaknesses and unevenness in one of the foregoing or in spelling result in occasional miscommunication. Areas of weakness may involve detail in the use of simple constructions: irregular plurals of nouns, adjectives; determiners (usage rather than form); prepositions (after verbs or adjectives); negatives (still has problems with subtleties of placement and form, *nicht ein* vs. *kein*). Weaknesses are also observed in more complex structures: tense usage; compound past vs. simple past after *als*; avoidance where possible of *würde* in *wenn* clauses; passive constructions (rarely uses *man* or reflexive but tends to parallel English with consequent use of *sein*); statal and real passive confused; word order still a problem, sometimes with inversion, reflexive and auxiliary placement in dependent word order. Good control of simple dependent word order, subordinating and coordinating conjunctions (*denn* vs. *weil*), and relative pronouns. Irregular control of infinitive clauses with *zu*. Uses wide range of tenses as time indicators including hypothetical subjunctive (with *würde* plus infinitive, *hätte*, *wäre*, *könnte*). Uses *da(r)-* and *wo(r)-* compounds. Better control of prepositions, adjectives and case endings, but mistakes still occur. Some misuse of vocabulary still evident, especially when using dictionary for words with multiple meanings or where related words carry various functions, but does use a dictionary to advantage where a fairly direct bilingual translation and no intralingual ambiguity exists. Shows ability to use circumlocution. Writing is understandable to native speakers not used to reading material written by non-natives, though the style is still obviously foreign.

Superior

Able to use written German effectively in most formal and informal exchanges on practical, social, and professional topics. Can write most types of correspondence, such as memos, social and business letters (with appropriate formulaic introductions and closings), short research papers, and statements of position. Can express hypotheses and conjectures, and present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively. Can write about areas of special interest and handle topics in special fields. Has good control of a full range of structures so that time, description, and narration can be used to expand upon ideas. Errors in basic structures are sporadic and not indicative of communicative control. In addition to simple tenses, can use compound tenses to show time relationships among events and to express coordinate and subordinate ideas clearly and coherently. Has lexical control of subordinate conjunctions. Controls dependent word order with auxiliary and reflexive placement such as: *ich weiss, dass er hatte gestern kommen sollen* and *er sagte, dass sich der mann umzog*. Able to use quotative subjunctive (subjunctive I) consistently, as well as passives plus modals. Can use hypothetical subjunctive (subjunctive II) correctly, as well as directional adverbs (*hinauf, hinunter, herüber*, etc.) and the *lassen* construction. Has a wide enough vocabulary to convey the message accurately, though style may be foreign. Uses dictionary to a high degree of accuracy to supplement specialized vocabulary or to improve content or style. Although sensitive to differences in formal and informal style, still may not tailor writing precisely or accurately to a variety of audiences (except for personal vs. business correspondence) or styles.

Provisional German Descriptions—Culture

Novice

Limited interaction. Behaves with considerateness. Is resourceful in nonverbal communication, but does not interpret reliably gestures or culturally-specific nonverbal behavior, such as physical contacts with greetings. Is limited in language (see listening/speaking guidelines) but may be able to use short phrases of courtesy (*Danke, Danke schön, Bitte, Bitte schön, Entschuldigung, Verzeihung*) and basic titles of respect (*Herr, Frau, Fräulein*). Lacks generally the knowledge of culture patterns requisite for survival situations.

Intermediate

Survival competence. Can deal with familiar survival situations and interact with a culture bearer accustomed to foreigners. Is able to use conventional phrases when being introduced, such as *Es freut mich* or *Sehr erfreut*, as well as proper greetings at different times of day, such as *Guten Tag, Guten Abend, Grüss Gott* (in Bavaria) and leave-taking, *Auf Wiedersehen, Bis bald*. Shows comprehension of distinction between *Sie* and *du* form of address. Can provide background material in the standard form of the culture, such as a personal address (street name followed by number—*Leopoldstrasse 30*—zip code preceding name of city, zone within large city following name of city—*8000 München 23*) telephone number in many areas in groups of two: *23 23 67*. Is able to express wants in routine situations with simple phrases, such as *Ein Zimmer ohne Bad, bitte; Ein Bier, bitte; Wieviel kostete eine Postkarte nach U.S.A. per Luftpost?* and to ask directions such as *Wo ist hier die Schellingstrasse?* Understands the need to go to specialty shops such as *die Metzgerei, die Bäckerei, die Konditorei* to buy certain foods but is also aware of the offerings in supermarkets and department stores. Is aware of the use of the metric system and can function in it, using such phrases as *Ein Kilo Orangen* and *200 Gramm Leberwurst*. Is aware of different meal schedules as well as the usual content of each: breakfast, light, without either warm cooked meats or eggs other