

**PURPOSE** — The **Reference Grammar** on the following pages serves a variety of purposes. Above all, it supplements the *Structures* presentations in the *Wie, bitte? Kontexte*, which are short treatments of German structure that promote lively class sessions applying new linguistic features to real-life contexts. The **Reference Grammar**, which is intended for study outside class, gives more complete explanations and examples of spoken and written German.

**ORGANIZATION** — 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” on the next two pages 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. A master list, after the “Topic Summary,” shows which items are appropriate for each part of the *Structures* presentations.

**USE** — Be sure to read the *Structures* section in the *Kontext* first. Then you may want to consult the keyed **Reference Grammar** paragraph(s). Some students may find that the *Structures* presentations are complete enough that they can get along very well without the **Reference Grammar**. 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.

**CURIOS ?** — If you want to learn more about the structures of German, there are a number of linguistic discussions available in English. Herbert Lederer's *Reference Grammar of the German Language* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969) is the most complete. John Waterman's *History of the German Language* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1976) is a good introduction to the origins of modern German. If you are curious about your progress in German, and about the process of learning a second language in general, read the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*, the “Bible” of professional language teachers. These standards of communicative ability are the foundation of *Wie, bitte?* The *Guidelines*, and much else of interest too, are available on the website ([www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)) of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Use the “ACTFL Quick Find” button on the home page to go to “Proficiency Guidelines.”