

First-year German • Individual Project for Kontext 05 “Wir und unsere Familien” • “About Us and Our Families”

Due (for “on-time” score of 4): 2 weeks from start of assignment

NOTE: If privacy concerns or unpleasant family circumstances make it uncomfortable for you to do this project as specified, you can use a different set of personal circumstances (an imaginary family, some other family than your own, your roommate/ housemate arrangement, etc. But you should be careful to learn the core family vocabulary, since it is essential to everyday communication.

Activity: begin a simulated written exchange of personal information with a German speaker (or speakers) whom you might host for a few weeks

Result: a half-page letter and an interesting picture or two with 3 or more chatty captions

Level: K5 (with vocabulary added from “Survival Vocabulary” or similar resource, and student’s own specialized searches)

Time: ca. 4 hours over 2 weeks; additional 10 minutes to 1 hour for optional revision

Resources (other than basic course materials): family picture(s) or “cute” drawing(s), showing part of your residence; simple A-Z dictionary or pictorial dictionary; WWW personal résumés (see advice below)

Objectives

1. learn and use, in simple sentences, terms from the following content areas: family and friendship; immediate personal environment (house, rooms, yard); basic personal physical characteristics, perhaps customized (brown eyes, tall);
2. learn and use basic expressions of possession and belonging (my, our)
3. solidify simple verb management (I am / play, my brother is / plays; Are you...? Do you play basketball?)
4. acquire skill of “stealing:” plugging own terms into framework provided by others (example: modify a WWW personal résumé with own bio-information)

Procedure

1. Find (or draw) some pictures of yourself and some other persons or creatures you are close to. One picture is enough if there are several people in it, if they are all doing interesting things, and if it clearly shows your residence. If you have any doubts, use more—at most 3.
2. Consult your resources (see above) for basic family / friend terms (“sister,” “puppy,” etc.) and some simple words to describe their appearance and, perhaps, activities and personalities. Avoid colorful expressions, such as “a little spacy” or “thinks he’s God’s gift to women,” since they likely won’t convert to another language easily. To find personal résumés on the internet: search under the word “Lebenslauf”, which means “résumé” or “CV”; then look for personal / private documents, rather than business resumés, which tend to be dry and use headings and brief phrases rather than the “chatty” language of personal bio-descriptions; you can increase your chances of getting personal résumés by combining “Lebenslauf” and “ich über mich” or just “über mich” (“about me”), but *not* “Lebenslauf” and one of the others together within one set of quotation marks.
3. Label your picture(s) with at least 3 captions to describe what is happening. Avoid simple labels, and aim instead for juicy phrases (“little guy, but big ears, huh?”) or even sentences (“We’re fishing on my birthday.”) Not all the captions should be just about yourself.
4. Compose the short letter and put it together with the picture and captions. Aim for 8-10 sentences of 5-10 words (“My house is old and we have a lot of rooms.”). Deal with perhaps 3 topics (ex: something about your family, something about your town / neighborhood / house, and one other topic—maybe leisure interests). If you’re wondering how to begin and end a letter in German, look at how we did it when we replied to your initial e-mails to us. Please write / type / print your letter clearly, and fit it and your picture with captions onto just one page. For “pretend” purposes that is so it would go as one FAX page or at the cheapest postal rate; for “German class” purposes that is so we can keep our records and maintain your portfolios more conveniently.