

# Da-Compounds – Da-Verbindungen – Deutsch 101-326

## Da-(& Wo-)compounds–Da-(& Wo-)Verbindungen

[Diagnostic Exercises](#) You will be asked 20 questions. IF YOU GET A QUESTION WRONG, KEEP TRYING UNTIL YOU GET IT RIGHT. THE PROGRAM WILL ONLY CALCULATE YOUR SCORE IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS. Incorrect guesses will reduce your score. When you are finished, click “Submit” if you are satisfied with your score. Remember you need a score of at least 80% in order to get a “check” for this assignment.

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### Practice Exercises

[Da-compound, or preposition + pronoun?](#) Pick the correct da-compound if what’s being referred to is a thing; use a “preposition + pronoun,” if what’s being referred to is a person or a “higher” animal.

[Preposition or anticipatory da-compound?](#)

### Forms

Prepositions  
starting with consonants      dabei, danach, damit, dafür, davon, dazu, etc.

Prepositions  
starting with vowels      daran, darin, darauf, darüber, darunter, daraus, etc.

### Exceptions:

1. Da-compounds *cannot* be formed from außer, ohne, seit, gegenüber, or from any of the [less common prepositions](#) listed on our preposition review. They also *cannot* be formed from [any genitive prepositions](#). Trust your instincts: e.g. darohne just sounds wrong!
2. Hin and her, which are *not* prepositions, also form da-compounds: dahin=*to there*, daher=*from there*, dahinein=*into there*.
3. Certain da-compounds have developed independent meanings. In particular, damit means “*with it*” as a da-compound, but can also be the familiar conjunction meaning “*so that*”; daher means “*from there*” as a da-compound, but can also mean “*therefore*,” and dabei can also mean “*and yet*.”
4. In speaking, the “a” is sometimes dropped: drauf, drin, drunter; “*into there*” can become darein [via “daherein,” which is never said or written]. Sometimes a “d” is added: dadrauf, dadrunter.

### Use

1. Da-compounds replace “preposition + accusative/dative pronoun”:
2. Da-compounds *cannot* be used to refer to people or most animals (“most” means: start using da-compounds at the point where assuming any kind of personality for the animal would be absurd, e.g. for

insects):

Was weißt du über David Hasselhoff?—Er ist mein Idol. Ich weiß alles über ihn/**darüber**. Ich möchte gern ein Duett mit ihm/**damit** singen.

Kennst du Arnold Schwarzenegger?—Ja, ich gehe oft mit ihm/**damit** in die Disco. Er tanzt wie ein Mädchen. Keiner will mit ihm/**damit** tanzen.

Linus: Wo ist Snoopy? Ich habe einen Knochen [=bone] für ihn/**dafür**. [Snoopy is a dog ==> can't use a da-compound to refer to him]

Lucy: Charlie Brown ist im Kürbisfeld [=pumpkin patch] spazieren gegangen. Er glaubt immer noch an den "Großen Kürbis".

Linus: Glaubst du an ihn/**daran**? [Use "an ihn" if you think the Great Pumpkin is a sentient being; use "**daran**" if you think of it as a "thing"]

Lucy: Nein! Ich habe keine Zeit für so einen Quatsch [=nonsense].

3. Da-compounds also *cannot* replace [relative pronouns](#). In these situations, you can use "preposition + relative pronoun" or wo-compounds (formed just like da-compounds). "[Was + preposition](#)" is *always* replaced by a wo-compound (3rd and 4th examples below). If you are reading this for German 221/231, you will be reviewing relative pronouns later, so consider this a preview!

Das ist der Löffel, mit dem/ <b>damit</b> Friedrich der Große seine Suppe aß.	That's the spoon with which Frederick the Great ate his soup.
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Wir möchten das Bett kaufen, in dem/ <b>darin</b> Beethoven geschlafen hat.	We want to buy the bed in which Beethoven slept.
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Barney ist tot, über was/ <b>worüber</b> / <b>darüber</b> ich sehr traurig bin. [Rel. pron. refers to entire clause "Barney ist tot"]	Barney is dead, which I'm very sad about.
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In diesem Museum gibt es nichts, für was/ <b>wofür</b> / <b>dafür</b> ich mich interessiere. [Rel.pron. refers to " <u>nichts</u> "]	There is nothing in this museum that (which) I'm interested in.
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If you're not comfortable with recognizing relative clauses at the moment, think of the "which" or "that" in the English translations as a clue that you are dealing with a relative clause.

4. Da-compounds can refer *back* to entire clauses. Compare the Barney sentence below to the one under (3) above:

Barney ist tot, und ich bin <b>darüber</b> sehr traurig. [Not a relative clause: these two clauses are connected by und]	Barney is dead, and I am very sad about that. [about his being dead]
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Manchmal erholt sich ein Ökosystem von alleine, aber man kann sich nicht <b>darauf</b> verlassen.	Sometimes an ecosystem recovers by itself, but one cannot rely on that. [on the ecosystem recovering by itself]
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Wie der Urknall passierte ist immer noch ein Rätsel. Es gibt viele Theorien <b>darüber</b> .	How the big bang happened is still a riddle. There are many theories about it. [about how the big bang happened]
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5. In jokes, "darauf" or "daraufhin" is often used as a short way of saying "Er/Sie antwortet darauf, dass..." [= "In response to that, s/he replies..."]. Sometimes it also just means "then":

Zwei Wurmfrauen [=female worms, or maybe "worm wives"] treffen sich im Garten. Sagt die eine zur anderen: "Wo ist denn heute dein Mann?" **Darauf** die andere: "Ach, der ist beim Angeln [=gone fishing]!"

Ein kleiner Junge raucht [=smokes] auf offener Straße.

Ein alter Herr tadelt [=scolds] ihn: "Wenn das deine Lehrerin wüsste." **Darauf** der Kleine: "Keine Sorge [=don't worry], ich geh ja noch gar nicht zur Schule."

Anglerwitz [=joke for people who like to fish]: Zwei Angler [guys who are fishing] sitzen regungslos [=motionless] am See. Nach drei Stunden schlägt einer der beiden die Beine übereinander [=crosses his legs]. **Darauf** der andere [=the other one]:  
“Was ist los? Angeln wir oder tanzen wir?”

6. An interesting detail we are not requiring you to learn: We have learned on this page that for inanimate objects, the combination “preposition + pronoun” MUST be replaced by a da-compound:

Was machst du mit deinem Handy? – Ich mache Fotos mit ihm/**damit**.

The interesting detail is that the prepositions that **cannot** form da-compounds, such as **ohne**, also cannot be used with pronouns referring to inanimate objects. Instead, the noun must be repeated:

Ich liebe mein Handy! Ich kann ohne es/ohne mein Handy nicht leben.

Ich liebe SPAM®! Ich kann ohne ihn/ohne SPAM® nicht leben.

Ich liebe Mücken [=mosquitoes]! Ich kann ohne sie/ohne Mücken nicht leben.

In informal speech, this rule can be violated: Ich liebe Pronomen. Ich kann ohne sie/ohne Pronomen nicht leben 😊

## Wo-Compounds

Wo-compounds are primarily used in questions and indirect questions: Womit = with what, wovon = from what, woraus = out of what, worüber = on what (or: about what), worin = in what, wohin = to where, woher = from where....

Woher kommen Sie?

Wohin gehen Sie?

Wofür ist das?

Worüber spricht er?

Womit kann man das reparieren?

Woraus ist das gemacht?

Wohin soll ich das stellen?

Wonach suchst du?

Ich weiß nicht, wofür das ist. [indirect question: implies the question: “Wofür ist das?”]

Ich möchte wissen, wohin diese Straße führt [indirect question: implies the question “Wohin führt diese Straße?”]

Where do you come from?

Where are you going to?

What’s that for?

What’s he talking about?

What can one repair that with?

What’s that made out of?

Where should I put that?

What are you looking for?

I don’t know what that’s for.

I’d like to know where this street goes to.

## Anticipatory Da-Compounds

Da-compounds can anticipate subsequent clauses. They are then called anticipatory da-compounds. This happens with prepositional verbs and adjectives, i.e. verbs and adjectives that require a preposition [a list of such verbs and adjectives is given [below](#) for reference]. Compare the following examples:

a. Ich freue mich auf die Klasse. Du freust dich auf das Konzert. Wir freuen uns auf dich.

b. Freust du dich auf das Konzert? Ja, ich freue mich **darauf**.  
Freust du dich auf die Klasse? Ja, ich freue mich **darauf**.

c. Ich freue mich **darauf**, dass du kommst. Ich freue mich **darauf**, in das Konzert zu gehen.

In (a), the object of the preposition (what you are looking forward to) is a **noun** or **pronoun** (die Klasse, das Konzert, dich). No need for an anticipatory da-compound. In (b), the object of the preposition is a noun that was previously referred to (das Konzert, die Klasse). For the combination of preposition + pronoun, a da-compound is used, but it refers *back* to something, so it is **not** an anticipatory da-compound. In (c), the object of the preposition, the “thing” you are looking forward to, is not a noun, but a **whole clause**: **not** you, but “that you are coming”; **not** the concert, but “going to the concert.” This is where anticipatory da-compounds are used. The literal English equivalents are: “I am looking forward to it, that you are coming,” and “I am looking forward to it, to go to the concert.” In decent English: “I am looking forward to your coming,” and “I am looking forward to going to the concert.” More examples:

Ich freue mich **darauf**, Kafkas *Die Verwandlung* zu lesen.

I’m looking forward to reading Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*.

Gregor Samsa freut sich nicht **darüber**, dass er sich in ein Ungeziefer verwandelt hat.

Gregor Samsa is not happy that he turned into a bug.  
[Gregor Samsa is the protagonist of *Die Verwandlung*]

Für Peter Parker ist es auch schwer, sich **daran** zu gewöhnen, ein Spinnenmann zu sein.

For Peter Parker it’s also hard to get used to being a spider-man.

Einer staunte **darüber**, wie leicht er den Weg der Ewigkeit ging; er raste ihn nämlich abwärts.  
[Aphorismus von Franz Kafka]

One man was amazed at how easily he was walking the path of eternity; for he was speeding along it downwards.

Mutige Leute überredet man **dadurch** zu einer Handlung, dass man dieselbe gefährlicher darstellt, als sie ist. [Aphorismus von Friedrich Nietzsche]

One persuades courageous people to carry out an action by representing it as being more dangerous than it is.

Es kommt nicht **darauf** an, was man hat, sondern was man ist.  
[Aphorismus von Jeremias Gotthelf (1797 – 1854)]

It’s not important [literally: it doesn’t depend on] what one *has*, but rather, what one *is*.

Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden interpretiert; es kommt **darauf** an sie zu verändern. [Karl Marx]

Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; what’s important [literally: it depends on] is changing it.

And two tasteless examples:

Ich freue mich **darauf**, mir den Rücken zu rasieren.

I’m looking forward to shaving my back.

Kommst du heute Abend mit in die Disco?– Ich weiß nicht.  
Es kommt **darauf** an, wie lange ich brauche, mir den Rücken zu rasieren.

Are you coming along to the disco tonight?–I don’t know.  
It depends on how long it takes me to shave my back.

## Short list of prepositional verbs & adjectives

This list is given here for reference, as a list of verbs and adjectives you’re likely to use in combination with da-compounds. If you’re reading this page as part of an assignment for German 102/103/231/232, it does not mean you will be tested on this list (unless you’re explicitly told otherwise by your instructor), but it is a very useful list to know.

**Prepositional verbs** [Hyperlinks refer to the [usage notes](#) below]

abhängen* von	to depend on
achten auf (A)	to pay attention to
anfangen*/aufhören mit	to start/stop (preposition optional)
sich anpassen an (A)	to adapt to
bestehen* aus	to consist of
<a href="#">denken* an (A)</a>	to think of (as in: be aware of)
<a href="#">denken* von</a> / halten* von	to think of (as in: have an opinion)
nachdenken* über (A)	to think about, ponder
sich/jemanden erinnern an (A)	to remember/remind
erkennen* an (D)	to recognize [someone] by
fragen nach	to ask about
sich fürchten vor (D)	to be afraid of
gehören zu	to belong to [a category or group]
glauben an (A)	to believe in
<a href="#">es geht* um</a>	it is a matter/question of; it's about
<a href="#">sich interessieren für</a>	to be interested in
es kommt* auf (A) ... an	it depends on
es liegt* an (D)	it is because of
rechnen mit	to count on [something happening]
schreiben* über (A)	to write about
sorgen für	to take care of; to make sure that
sprechen* über (A)/von	to talk about
staunen über (A) / sich wundern über (A)	to be amazed at/about
suchen nach	to search for
etwas zu tun haben* mit	to have something to do with
sich verlassen* auf (A)	to rely on
vertrauen auf (A)	to trust in
verzichten auf (A)	to do without, to forgo
jemanden warnen vor (D)	to warn someone about
warten auf (A)	to wait for
zweifeln an (D)	to doubt

### **Prepositional Adjectives [Hyperlinks refer to the [usage notes](#) below]**

arm an (D)	lacking in
aufmerksam auf (A)	attentive to
begeistert von	enthusiastic about
bereit zu	willing/prepared/ready to
fähig zu	capable of
frei von	free of
froh/glücklich über (A)	happy about
gewöhnt an (A)	accustomed to
<a href="#">interessiert an (D)</a>	interested in
nützlich für	useful for
reich an (D)	rich in
schädlich für	harmful for

überzeugt von                      convinced of

### Usage Notes on these Prepositional Verbs and Adjectives

1. The difference between *denken an* / *denken von* on the one hand and *denken* (no preposition) on the other hand is like the difference in English between *think of* and *think*. *Denken an* means “think of” in the neutral sense of having something in one’s mind; *denken von* (and *halten von*) means “think of” in the sense of having an opinion on something.
2. The verb *sich interessieren für* and the adjective *interessiert an* can be used to say essentially the same thing, but don’t confuse the prepositions. OK are “Ich interessiere mich *für* Physik” & “Ich bin *an* Physik interessiert”; no tOK are “Ich interessiere mich *an* Physik” & “Ich bin *für* Physik interessiert.”
3. *Es geht um* is an impersonal expression, i.e. it must always be used with *es* ==> “In dem Artikel geht es um meinen Pinguin” [=the article is about my penguin], but not “Der Artikel geht um meinen Pinguin.” If the topic is described by a clause with a verb (as opposed to just a noun phrase), you need to use it with “es” and an anticipatory da-compound: e.g. “In dem Artikel geht es darum, wie das Universum entstand.”