

# werden – Deutsch 101-326

## Werden

### Indicative

There are three possibilities if the sentence contains the verb *werden* in the indicative:

#### (a) Become

If the clause contains **no other verb**, *werden* is being used as an independent verb. In this case it means *to become*:

Ach, wie klein du **geworden bist**! My, how small you've **become**! [try this on growing kids]  
Was möchtest du einmal **werden**? What would you like to **become** one day?

#### (b) Future

If the clause contains **another verb in the infinitive**, *werden* is being used as an auxiliary to indicate the **future tense**. Note that the other verb could be a modal, or a modal + infinitive (third example), or it could even be *werden* itself (see the second example).

Mehr und mehr Leute <b>werden</b> Computer <b>kaufen</b> .	More and more people <b>will buy</b> computers.
Computer <b>werden</b> immer besser <b>werden</b> .	Computers <b>will become</b> better and better.
Eines Tages <b>werden</b> Computer uns Deutsch <b>beibringen können</b> .	One day, computers <b>will be able to teach</b> us German.

If the sentence contains *haben* or *sein* in the **infinitive** together with a **past participle**, *werden* is being used as an auxiliary to indicate the future perfect tense [what **will have** happened]. Do not confuse this with option (c) below, where *werden*+ a **past participle** (but **no** infinitive of *haben* or *sein*) indicates the **passive**! We don't talk much about the future perfect tense, but here are two examples:

Wenn du ankommst, <b>wird</b> das gute Essen schon <b>verschwunden sein</b> .	When you arrive, the good food <b>will already have disappeared</b> .
Die anderen <b>werden</b> schon alles <b>gegessen haben</b> .	The others <b>will already have eaten</b> everything.

#### (c) Passive

If the clause contains a **past participle**, *werden* is being used to indicate the **passive**.

Das Essen <b>ist</b> in der Kantine <b>gekocht worden</b> . [perfect tense]	The food <b>was cooked</b> in the cafeteria.
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Dann **wurde** es von den Studenten **gegessen**. [narrative/  
simple past]

Im Moment **wird** es **verdaut**. [present]

Morgen **wird** wieder etwas anderes **gekocht werden**.  
[future]

Then it **was eaten** by the students.

At the moment it is **being digested**.

Tomorrow, something else **will be cooked**.

[Zurück nach oben](#)

## Subjunctive II

All of the above applies in the same way if *werden* is in the subjunctive. By itself, it then means “*would become*”; with a past participle it indicates the various passive tenses (now in the subjunctive). To say “**would become**,” use *würde* by itself or *würde werden*. *Würde* + *infinitive* indicates the **present subjunctive** (what someone would do), and so can refer to what someone would do now **or** what s/he would do in the future, depending on the context. Subjunctive forms of *werden* combined with **past participles** indicate subjunctive forms of the **passive voice**. We don’t emphasize this much in class and so there will be just one example here, but it should make sense in principle.

“Was **würdest** du **werden**, wenn Geld  
egal wäre?”  
– “Ich **würde** Touristenführer.”

Was **würdest** du **tun**?

“Was **würde passieren**, wenn Rodney  
Dangerfield Präsident **würde**?” – “Er  
**würde** immer noch nicht **respektiert  
werden**!”

“What **would** you **become** if money didn’t matter?”  
– “I **would become** a tourist guide.”

What **would** you **do**? [now or in the future, depending  
on the context]

“What **would happen** if Rodney Dangerfield  
**became** President?” – “He still **wouldn’t be  
respected**!” [Falls [=in case] Sie Rodney Dangerfield  
nicht kennen: er sagt immer “Ich bekomme keinen  
Respekt!”]

[Zurück nach oben](#)

## Conjugation Tables

### Präsens [Present Tense]

ich werde	wir werden
du wirst	ihr werdet
er/sie/es wird	sie/Sie werden

### Perfekt [Perfect Tense/Conversational Past]

ich bin geworden	wir sind geworden
du bist geworden	ihr seid geworden
er/sie/es ist geworden	sie/Sie sind geworden

When “werden” is used to form the passive voice in the perfect tense, “**geworden**” is shortened to

**“worden“:**

Röntgenstrahlen **sind** 1895 von Wilhelm Röntgen **entdeckt worden**.

X-rays were discovered by Wilhelm Röntgen in 1895.

Das Erhaltungsgesetz der Energie ist 1847 von Hermann Helmholtz offiziell **formuliert worden**.

The law of conservation of energy was officially formulated by Hermann Helmholtz in 1847.

Das erste Auto mit einem Verbrennungsmotor [=internal combustion engine] **ist** 1885 von Carl Benz **gebaut worden**.

The first car with an internal combustion engine was built by Carl Benz in 1885.

**Präteritum [Narrative Past, Simple Past, Imperfect]**

Remember that this tense does not differ in meaning from the perfect tense, but is used in more formal writing, whereas the perfect tense is for more informal conversation.

ich wurde            wir wurden  
du wurdest        ihr wurdet  
er/sie/es wurde    sie/Sie wurden

**Plusquamperfekt [Past Perfect]**

Remember that this is the tense that is used to emphasize that a past event **had** happened **before** another past event (and so you don't need it very often). It is formed just like the Perfekt above, using the Präteritum forms of *sein* as an auxiliary verb instead of the present tense of *sein*:

ich war geworden        wir waren geworden  
du warst geworden      ihr wart geworden  
er/sie/es war geworden    sie/Sie waren geworden

As with the perfect tense, when “*werden*” is used to form the passive voice in the past perfect tense, “**geworden**” is shortened to “**worden**“:

Im Jahre 1811, lange bevor man bei ABC die Sendung “The Mole” sehen konnte, **war** die Idee des Mols von dem italienischen Physiker Avogadro **formuliert worden**. [Es gibt  $6.02 \times 10^{23}$  Moleküle in einem Mol von einer Substanz]

In the year 1811, long before one could see the show “The Mole” on ABC, the idea of the mole had been formulated by the Italian physicist Avogadro. [There are  $6.02 \times 10^{23}$  molecules in one mole of a substance.]

**Futur**

The future of any verb is formed by conjugating the verb *werden* in the present tense, and leaving the main verb in the infinitive. When *werden* is used as an independent verb to mean “to become,” its meaning already implies the future, so you almost never need to use the future tense of *werden*, but for completeness' sake, and also because it becomes useful in the passive voice, here is how the

conjugation of *werden* would look like in the future tense:

ich werde werden	wir werden werden
du wirst werden	ihr werdet werden
er/sie/es wird werden sie/Sie werden werden	

In the passive voice, the above forms of *werden* are combined as always with the past participle of the verb to form the future tense:

Das Hubble Teleskop **wird** noch bis etwa 2010  
**benutzt werden.**

Danach **wird** es zurück zur Erde **gebracht  
werden.**

Es **wird** dann im Smithsonian Institute  
**ausgestellt werden.**

The Hubble telescope will still be used until  
roughly the year 2010.

After that it will be brought back to Earth.

It will then be exhibited at the Smithsonian  
Institute.

[Zurück nach oben](#)