ROUTLEDGE REFERENCE GRAMMARS

SEVENTH EDITION

HAMMER'S
GERMAN
GRAMMAR AND USAGE

Martin Durrell

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Martin Durrell is Emeritus Professor of German at the University of Manchester, UK.

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Hammer's German Grammar and Usage

Seventh edition

Martin Durrell

Routledge
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Abbreviations and points for the user

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1. Lists of words are in alphabetical order, unless it appeared more helpful to the user to present them in a different order.
2. Where required, the plural of a noun is indicated within brackets after the noun, e.g. *das Lager (-)*, i.e. *die Lager*; *der Hut (¨e)*, i.e. *die Hüte*, etc. *(-en, -en)* or *(-n, -n)* indicate a weak masculine noun, e.g. *der Mensch*, *des Menschen*, *die Menschen* (see **1.3.2**).
3. If necessary, a stressed syllable in a word is indicated by the mark placed before the stressed syllable, and/or by the use of bold type, e.g. *die Dok' tor en*, *unter' schreib en*. Where it is required, a stressed word in context is shown by underlining, e.g. *Wie bist <u>du</u> denn gekommen?*
4. Sentences used for illustration which are ungrammatical in German are indicated by an asterisk, e.g. **Jedoch dann ist er nicht gekommen.*
5. Grammatical terms given in small capitals at the beginning of the relevant chapter or section are explained in the glossary.

Abbreviations

In principle, abbreviations have been kept to a minimum. The following have been used where required by considerations of space.

abbrev.	abbreviated
acad.	academic
A., acc.	accusative
adj.	adjective
arch.	archaic
Au., Austr.	Austrian
aux.	auxiliary
Bav.	Bavarian
ch.	chapter

cl.	clause
coll.	colloquial
conj.	conjunction
D., dat.	dative
elev.	elevated
esp.	especially
etw.	etwas
fem.	feminine
form.	formal
G., gen.	genitive
hist.	historical
indic.	indicative
inf.	informal
jd.	jemand
jdm.	jemandem
jdn.	jemanden
lang.	language
lit.	literary
masc.	masculine
N., nom.	nominative
neut.	neuter
N.G., N. Ger.	North German
obs.	obsolete
occ.	occasionally
o.s.	oneself
part.	participle
pej.	pejorative
pl.	plural
prep.	preposition
reg.	regional
S.G., S. Ger.	South German
sb.	somebody
sg., sing.	singular
sub. cl.	subordinate clause
sth.	something
Sw.	Switzerland, Swiss
techn.	technical

| vb. | verb |
| vulg. | vulgar |

Preface to the seventh edition

Following the publication of the sixth edition of *Hammer's German Grammar and Usage*, the publisher once more undertook a comprehensive survey of users of the work at schools and universities in Britain and the USA. From these helpful and detailed responses, for which I am immensely grateful, the decision was taken to reconsider the structure of the chapters in this book, in particular by improving the summaries of the content of each chapter or larger section and by increasing the number of tables and combining them into associated groups on a single page to improve accessibility and ease of consultation.

Aside from these changes, the opportunity has been taken, as with all previous revisions, to check the detail of all entries and ensure that statements about current usage are as accurate as possible. To this end all examples have been checked and any dated or inadequate examples have been replaced – it had been noted in particular that too many illustrative sentences used the past tense even though they appeared to be from speech where the perfect tense would reflect usage more appropriately. Information about specific points of grammar and usage has been checked fully against my own database of modern German, the most recent academic research (as reflected – necessarily selectively – in the bibliography) and the extensive *DeReKo* corpus of spoken and written German at the Institut für Deutsche Sprache in Mannheim. This invaluable resource has grown exponentially since the preparation of the first revision – from some two million words when I first undertook a revision of Mr Hammer's original work to nearly 60 billion at present. Information about it and other accessible internet resources is now listed in the bibliography. This corpus is naturally now complemented by the material which can be accessed through internet search engines, and these have also been consulted extensively – although with the appropriate degree of care, since they are not always representative of widespread usage. Nevertheless, they can be invaluable in tracing and attesting some of the most recent developments in the language which may not find their way into

conventional print media, notably demonstrating the continued vitality of the language in incorporating recent lexical material – often, although not only, from English. Thus, *der* (or sometimes *das*) *Blog* (section 1.1.9d) gives a verb *bloggen* (section 10.2.1k) and a whole range of possible derivations such as *ausbloggen*, *bebloggen*, *erbloggen* (Chapter 20). Particular attention has also been paid to the relative frequency in actual usage of variant inflectional forms, in particular the noun plurals in Chapter 1, the adjective endings after indefinite pronouns and quantifiers in Chapter 6, the strong verb forms on **Table 10.17**, and the use of the genitive case after prepositions in Chapter 18. Following further revisions and amendments to the spelling rules by the *Rat für deutsche Rechtschreibung*, notably in respect of permitted alternatives, the sections on the spelling of compound words have also been completely revised. Attention also needed to be paid (with due caution) to the current moves towards what has been termed *geschlechtergerechte Sprache* and the effect of these on usage.

Like all previous revisions, this revision is founded on the basic principle that the work should be a comprehensive descriptive account of modern German for the use of the advanced learner or student of the language whose first language is English – or who can approach German through English, since I am aware that the book has been widely used in other countries. This aim implies that it should cover the whole gamut of variation in usage within modern German, not simply the most prestigious written form which is still, unfortunately, used too exclusively in many teaching manuals, even when they purport to present examples of spoken language. Thus, considerable attention has been paid to giving information on usage in registers other than formal writing or literature, and details given on everyday speech. This also reflects the greater emphasis paid to oral skills, both active and passive, in modern language teaching. The distinction between everyday spoken usage (commonly, and often disparagingly, referred to as *Umgangssprache*) and the norms of formal writing (generally known as *Hochdeutsch* or *Hochsprache*) is particularly marked in German, and clear indications are given in this work as to where spoken and written usage diverge, as also in respect of forms which, although they are considered to be grammatically 'correct', are felt to be stilted outside formal writing (and sometimes even there). Similarly, forms which are frequently heard in everyday speech but widely thought of as 'non-standard' or 'incorrect' are included here, as the foreign learner will encounter them every day, with a clear indication of their status. Important regional variants within standard German are also included and

marked accordingly, especially those commonly found in Swiss or Austrian usage, but purely dialectal forms have been ignored. The basic intention is that a learner encountering an unfamiliar structure or feature should be able to consult the work in order to establish its status in the modern language.

All revisions have been incorporated as appropriate in the linked volume of grammatical exercises (Martin Durrell, Katrin Kohl & Claudia Kaiser, *Practising German Grammar*. Routledge: London & New York) and in the companion website: https://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/9781138187047/

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My debt to others in the preparation of this and previous revisions is massive, and I am immensely grateful, first, to all the native speakers of German, unfortunately too numerous to mention, who have answered questions, given advice and, often unwittingly, provided me with examples and other linguistic data. No little thanks are due, too, to generations of students in Manchester, London and Edmonton, since much of the detail in this book was assembled in an attempt to answer their questions and enquiries about German, and for the present revision I have been very grateful to the members of the Facebook Group 'Teaching German' for their queries and comments. Many friends, colleagues and acquaintances in Britain, Germany and many other countries – some, sadly, no longer with us – have also assisted me over the years in preparing this and previous editions, and I must express my thanks to all of them, notably to Prof. W. Abraham, Ms E. Adelseck, Prof. V. Ágel, Prof. J.O. Askedal, Prof. A. Auer, Dr J.S. Barbour, Ms S. Bayer, Mr J.-J. Becquer, Dr C. Beedham, Dr P. Bennett, Prof. D. Brée, Dr W. Brockhaus-Grand, Dr E.-M. Broomer, Mr P.A. Coggle, Prof. P. Colliander, Dr P. Cook, Prof. M. Dalmas, Prof W.V. Davies, Mr T. Despositos, Prof. D. Dobrovolsky, Dr B. Donaldson, Dr D. Duckworth, Prof. L. Eichinger, Prof. P. Eisenberg, Prof. S. Elspaß, Prof. A. Ensslin, Prof. C. Fandrych, Dr C. Fehringer, Prof K. Fischer, Prof. J.L. Flood, Prof. A. Gardt, Prof. S. Günthner, Dr P. Gupta, Prof. C. Gutknecht, Prof. C. Hall, Mr W. Hanson, Dr G. Hens, Mr P. Holgate, Mr D.H.R. Jones, Prof. R. Jones, Prof. W.J. Jones, Ms C. Kaiser, Prof. E. Knipf-Komlósi, Prof. K.M. Kohl, Ms A. Krawanja, Prof. E. Lang, Prof. N. Langer, Prof. O. Leirbukt, Prof. E. Leiss, Mrs G. Loftus, Dr J. Manton, Dr G.D.C. Martin, Dr V. Martin, Mr D.G. McCulloch, Prof. N. McLelland, Prof. U. Meinhof, Dr M. Minden, Dr K. Neuhaus, Prof. E. Neuland, Prof. H. Ridley, Prof. J. Roche, Prof. D. Rösler, Dr S. Scheible, Ms M. Schwab, Dr A. Scott, Dr R.W. Sheppard, Prof. H.G. Siefken, Prof. P. Stevenson, Prof. G. Stickel, Dr P. Storjohann, Ms S. Tebbutt, Mrs E. Teubert, Prof. J.K.A. Thomaneck, Mrs A. Thompson, Dr B. Thompson, Prof. M.R. Townson, Mr B.A. Watson, Dr S. Watts, Prof. H. Wegener,

The phonetic alphabet

On those occasions (especially in Chapter 21) where it is necessary to indicate precise pronunciation the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association (IPA) is used. The following table gives all the IPA symbols used in this book, with examples from German, (British) English or French. Phonetic symbols are conventionally given between square brackets, e.g. *Mann,* pronounced [man]. Long vowels are indicated by the symbol ː placed after the vowel sign.

Vowels

iː   Ger b*ie*ten, Engl be*a*t

ɪ   Ger b*i*tten, Engl b*i*t

eː   Ger b*e*ten, Fr *é*couter

ɛ   Ger B*e*tt, Engl b*e*d

ɛː   Ger w*ä*re, Fr sc*è*ne

a   Ger B*a*nd, Fr p*a*s

aː   Ger V*a*ter, Engl f*a*ther

ɔ   Ger k*o*mmen, Engl h*o*t

oː   Ger B*oo*t, Fr *eau*

ʊ   Ger B*u*tter, Engl b*u*tcher

uː   Ger K*u*h, Fr tr*ou*

ʏ   Ger F*ü*lle

yː   Ger M*ü*hle, Fr m*u*r

œ   Ger H*ö*lle

ø   Ger H*ö*hle, Fr p*eu*

aɪ   Ger fe*i*n, Engl f*i*ne

aʊ   Ger M*au*s, Engl m*ou*se

œʏ   Ger M*äu*se

ə   Ger bitt*e*, Engl chin*a*

ɐ   Ger bitt*er*

Consonants

p   Ger *p*assen, Engl *p*ass

b   Ger *b*itte, Engl *b*it

t   Ger *t*un, Engl *t*on

d   Ger *d*umm, Engl *d*umb

k   Ger *k*ommen, Engl *c*ome

g   Ger *g*ut, Engl *g*ood

f   Ger *f*aul, Engl *f*oul

v   Ger *w*ann, Engl *v*an

s   Ger la*ss*en, Engl *s*at

z   Ger *s*aß, Engl *z*ero

ʃ   Ger *sch*ießen, Engl *sh*eet

x   Ger Bu*ch*, Scots lo*ch*

ç   Ger mi*ch*, Engl *H*ugh

h   Ger *h*olen, Engl *h*ole

m   Ger *m*ich, Engl *m*ine

n   Ger *n*eun, Engl *n*ine

ŋ   Ger hi*ng*, Engl hu*ng*

l   Ger *l*aut, Engl *l*oud

ʁ   Ge*r r*ot

j   Ger *j*a, Engl *y*ear

1 Nouns

NOUNS are words which name living creatures, things, places, ideas or processes. In German they are written with an **initial capital letter** (see **21.2**).

A noun is often preceded by an ARTICLE or another DETERMINER (see **Chapters 4** and **5**), and also by one or more ADJECTIVES or a longer adjectival phrase (see **Chapter 6**). Together, these form the NOUN PHRASE, illustrated in *Table 1.1*.

TABLE 1.1   The noun phrase: nouns

Determiner	Adjective/adjectival phrase	NOUN
		Gott
die		**Erde**
ein	flottes	**Auto**
unser	seit vorgestern vermisster	**Hund**

Details on the GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES of German nouns are given in the following sections:

1.1 GENDER: whether a noun is MASCULINE, FEMININE or NEUTER
1.2 NUMBER: how German nouns form their PLURAL
1.3 CASE: how German nouns change to show ACCUSATIVE, DATIVE or GENITIVE case

1.1 Noun gender

Every German noun belongs to one of the three genders: MASCULINE, FEMININE or NEUTER.

Grammatical GENDER is a system for classifying nouns. It is **not** the same as 'natural' gender (i.e. 'males', 'females' and 'things', as in English), and so the

names of the genders in German are rather misleading and the classification can seem arbitrary, especially as words for 'things' can have any gender:

MASCULINE: **der** Tisch FEMININE: **die** Wand NEUTER: **das** Fenster

Gender differences are only relevant in the **singular** of nouns in German, not the **plural**:

die Tische, **die** Wände, **die** Fenster

Foreign learners are usually recommended to learn German nouns together with the definite article as this shows the gender: **der** Tisch, **die** Wand, **das** Fenster. This is still an ideal method, but in practice the form (especially the ending) of a noun or its meaning often gives a clue to its gender, as does the way the plural is formed. The gender of about 80% of German nouns can be predicted in this way, and knowing these clues (even if there are some exceptions) helps with learning and remembering the gender of nouns.

The following sections give information about German noun gender as indicated:

1.1.1–1.1.2 The **form** of a noun as a clue to **gender**
1.1.3–1.1.6 The **meaning** of a noun as a clue to **gender**
1.1.7 Nouns referring to humans and animals – special cases
1.1.8 The gender of compound words and abbreviations
1.1.9 The gender of loan-words from English
1.1.10–1.1.11 Nouns with varying or double gender
1.1.12 Problems with **gender agreement**

1.1.1 Noun gender and endings

The gender of many nouns can be recognized from their form. In particular, most noun endings (especially DERIVATIONAL SUFFIXES, see section **20.2.1**) are invariably linked with a particular gender, as summarized in *Table 1.2*.

TABLE 1.2 Gender and endings

Masculine endings

-ant	der Konsonant	*-ismus*	der Sozialismus
-ast	der Kontrast	*-ling*	der Schmetterling
-ich	der Teppich	*-or*	der Motor
-ig	der Honig	*-us*	der Rhythmus

Feminine endings

-a	die Pizza	*-is*	die Praxis
-anz	die Eleganz	*-keit*	die Herrlichkeit
-ei	die Bücherei	*-schaft*	die Herrschaft
-enz	die Existenz	*-sion*	die Explosion
-heit	die Krankheit	*-tät*	die Universität
-ie	die Biologie	*- tion*	die Revolution
-ik	die Politik	*-ung*	die Bedeutung
-in	die Freundin	*-ur*	die Natur

Neuter endings

-chen	das Mädchen	*-ment*	das Appartement
-ett	das Tablett	*- sel*	das Rätsel
-in [iːn]	das Benzin	*-tel*	das Viertel
-lein	das Büchlein	*-tum*	das Eigentum
-ma	das Drama	*-um*	das Album

There are very few common exceptions:

- masculine endings: *das Labor*, *das Genus* 'gender', *das Tempus* 'tense'.
- feminine endings: *das Sofa*, *das Genie*, *der Atlantik*, *der Pazifik*, *das Mosaik*, *das Abitur*, *das Futur*, *der Purpur*.
- neuter endings: *die Firma*, *der Streusel*, *der Irrtum*, *der Reichtum*, *der Konsum*.

1.1.2 Other clues to noun gender given by the form of the noun

The form of some other nouns gives a clue to the gender, as summarized in *Table 1.3*, and it is worth knowing about these, although they are tendencies rather than rules, and the common exceptions given in this section need to be noted.

TABLE 1.3   Other clues to noun gender by form

Most nouns formed from **strong verbs** without a suffix (but often with a vowel change) are **masculine**	der Betrieb, der Bruch, der Fall, der Gang, der Schlaf, der Zug
Most nouns ending in *-t* **from verbs** are **feminine**	die Ankunft, die Bucht, die Fahrt, die Flucht, die Schlacht, die Sicht
Nouns in *-el*, *-en* and *-er* are predominantly (60%) **masculine**	der Apfel, der Flügel, der Fehler, der Hammer, der Garten, der Schatten

Nouns in *- e* are mainly (90%) **feminine**	die Blume, die Bühne, die Ernte, die Garage, die Liebe, die Sprache
Nouns with the **prefix** *Ge-* are mainly (90%) **neuter**	das Gebäude, das Gebirge, das Gedicht, das Geschlecht, das Gesetz, das Gespräch
Nouns with the **suffixes** *-nis* and *-sal* are mainly **neuter** (about two-thirds)	das Bedürfnis, das Ereignis, das Gefängnis, das Zeugnis, das Rinnsal, das Schicksal
Monosyllabic nouns are predominantly (67%) **masculine**	der Arm, der Fuß, der Lärm, der Punkt, der Rauch, der Schuh, der Stein

(a) Nouns formed from strong verbs without a suffix are masculine

These often have a change in the vowel:

> der Beginn, der Betrieb, der Biss, der Bruch, der Einlass, der Ersatz, der Fall, der Gang, der Griff,
> der Halt, der Klang, der Sprung, der Treff, der Verdruss, der Vortrag, der Wurf, der Zug

There are a few common exceptions: *das Grab*, *das Maß*, *das Schloss*, *das Verbot*.

(b) Most nouns ending in *-t* from verbs are feminine

> die Ankunft, die Fahrt, die Flucht, die Gunst, die Last, die Macht, die Schlacht, die Schrift, die Sicht

Common exceptions are: *der Dienst*, *der Durst*, *der Frost*, *der Verdienst*, *der Verlust*; *das Gift*.

(c) Nouns in *-el*, *-en* and *-er* are predominantly masculine

i.e. 60% of those in *-el* and *-er*, but 80% of those in *-en* (as no feminine nouns end in *-en*):

> der Balken, der Fehler, der Flügel, der Körper, der Schatten, der Tunnel

All nouns in *- er* from verbs (see **20.2.1d**) are masculine: *der Bäcker*, *der Bohrer*, *der Lehrer*.

The other nouns in *-el, -en* and *-er* which are not masculine fall into four groups:

(i) About 25% of those in *-el* and *-er* are feminine: *die Butter*, *die Regel*, *die Wurzel*.

(ii) Nouns from verb infinitives in *-en* are neuter (see **1.1.6e**): *das Essen, das Kaffeetrinken*.

(iii) Nouns in *-sel* and *-tel* are neuter (see **1.1.1**): *das Rätsel, das Viertel, das Achtel*.

(iv) About 15% of other nouns in *-el*, *-en* and *-er* are neuter: *das Segel, das Zeichen, das Fieber*.

(d) Nouns in *-e* are mainly (90%) feminine

die Biene, die Blume, die Bühne, die Garage, die Gruppe, die Lerche, die Reihe, die Sahne

There are five main groups of exceptions:

(i) The 'weak' masculines which are names of male persons and animals (see **1.3.2**), e.g.:
der Affe, der Bote, der Junge, der Löwe

(ii) Nine irregular masculines (see **1.3.3**):
der Buchstabe, der Friede, der Funke, der Gedanke, der Glaube,
der Haufe, der Name, der Same, der Wille

(iii) Two other masculine nouns: der Charme, der Käse

(iv) Most nouns with the prefix *Ge-* are neuter, even if they end in *-e* (see **1.1.2e**), e.g:
das Gebirge, das Gefälle, das Gemüse

(v) A few other neuters:
das Auge, das Ende, das Erbe *inheritance* (see **1.1.11**), das Finale,
das Image, das Interesse, das Prestige, das Prozedere, das Regime

(e) Most nouns (90%) with the prefix *Ge-* [gə] are neuter

Some of these end in *-e*, but in this case the prefix (see **20.2.2b**) points to the gender:

das Gebäude, das Gebirge, das Gebot, das Gelübde, das Gemüse, das Gesetz, das Gespräch

The exceptions fall into three groups:

(i) Names of male or female humans:

der Gehilfe/die Gehilfin	*assistant*	der Genosse/die Genossin	*comrade*
der Gemahl/die Gemahlin (*elev.*)	*spouse*	der Gevatter (*arch.*)	*godfather*

(ii) Eleven other masculines:

der Gebrauch	*use*	der Gehorsam	*obedience*	der Geschmack	*taste*
der Gedanke	*thought*	der Genuss	*enjoyment*	der Gestank	*stink*
der Gefallen	*favour*	der Geruch	*smell*	der Gewinn	*profit*
der Gehalt	*content*	der Gesang	*singing*		

Gefallen and *Gehalt* are neuter in other meanings, see **1.1.11**.

(iii) Eleven other feminines:

die Gebärde	*gesture*	die Gefahr	*danger*	die Gestalt	*figure*
die Gebühr	*fee*	die Gemeinde	*community*	die Gewähr	*guarantee*
die Geburt	*birth*	die Geschichte	*history*, *story*	die Gewalt	*force*, *violence*
die Geduld	*patience*	die Geschwulst	*tumour*		

(f) Most nouns with the suffixes *-nis* **and** *-sal* **are neuter (about two-thirds)**
das Bedürfnis, das Ereignis, das Ergebnis, das Erlebnis, das Gedächtnis, das Geheimnis,
das Hindernis, das Verhältnis, das Verständnis, das Zeugnis; das Scheusal, das Schicksal

About a third are feminine, e.g.:

die Besorgnis, die Erkenntnis, die Erlaubnis, die Ersparnis, die Kenntnis, die Wildnis; die Mühsal

The feminine nouns in *-nis* include most which are derived from adjectives, e.g.:
die Bitternis, die Finsternis

(g) Nouns with some endings of foreign origin are mostly neuter if they refer to things

-al	das Lineal	**-at**	das Sekretariat	**-iv**	das Adjektiv
-an	das Organ	**-ent**	das Talent	**-o**	das Büro
-ar	das Formular	**-ett**	das Etikett	**-on**	das Mikrophon
-är	das Militär	**-ier**	das Papier		

Nouns with these endings referring to persons are masculine, and there are a few other common exceptions:

der Altar, der Apparat, der Automat, der Kanal, der Kanton, der Kommentar;
die Manier, die Moral, die Person, der Salat, der Senat, der Skandal

(h) Nouns of one syllable are predominantly masculine

Most other German nouns are words of one syllable. In principle, the gender of these is best learned by heart, but it is worth bearing in mind how these nouns are distributed between the three genders, i.e.:

- **67% masculine**, e.g. der Arm, der Lärm, der Punkt, der Schuh
- **19% neuter**, e.g. das Buch, das Dach, das Jahr, das Kinn
- **14% feminine**, e.g. die Angst, die Hand, die Nuss, die Stadt

With the words of one syllable, it has been noted that the more consonants there are at the beginning or the end of a word, the more likely it is to be masculine, e.g. *der Strumpf*.

1.1.3 Noun gender and meaning

There are many nouns whose gender is determined by their meaning. The most important of these regularities are summarized in *Table 1.4*, and further details are given in sections **1.1.4–1.1.6.**

TABLE 1.4   Noun gender and meaning

Masculine	
male humans and animals	**der** Arzt, **der** Bock, **der** Hahn, **der** Löwe
seasons, months, days of the week	**der** Sommer, **der** Januar, **der** Montag
winds, weather, compass points	**der** Föhn, **der** Nebel, **der** Schnee, **der** Norden
rocks, minerals	**der** Diamant, **der** Granit, **der** Lehm, **der** Ton
alcoholic and plant-based drinks	**der** Gin, **der** Kaffee, **der** Kakao, **der** Tee
makes of car	**der** Audi, **der** BMW, **der** Mercedes
rivers outside Germany	**der** Ganges, **der** Nil, **der** Shannon, **der** Severn
monetary units	**der** Euro, **der** Dollar, **der** Franken
mountains, mountain ranges	**der** Brocken, **der** Harz, **der** Spessart, **der** Taunus
Feminine	
female humans and animals	**die** Frau, **die** Henne, **die** Löwin, **die** Sau
aeroplanes, motorbikes, ships	**die** Boeing, **die** BMW, **die** „Bismarck"
rivers in German-speaking countries	**die** Aare, **die** Oder, **die** Spree, **die** Weser
names of numerals	**die** Eins, **die** Vier, **die** Tausend, **die** Milliarde
Neuter	
young humans and animals	**das** Baby, **das** Kind, **das** Ferkel, **das** Lamm
metals, chemicals, scientific units	**das** Gold, **das** Eisen, **das** Aspirin, **das** Volt
letters of the alphabet, musical notes	**das** A, **das** Ypsilon, **ein** groß**es** D, **das** hohe C

other parts of speech used as nouns	**das** Stehen, **das** Aber, **das** moderne Deutsch
hotels, cafés, restaurants, cinemas	**das** „Hilton", **das** „Kranzler", **das** „Kapitol"
continents, countries, towns	**das** alte Europa, **das** neue Polen, **das** geteilte Berlin

In this context, it should be noted that determination of gender by form almost invariably overrides determination by meaning, so that, for example, *das Mädchen* is neuter because words with the suffix *-chen* are neuter without exception.

1.1.4 Masculine nouns by meaning

(a) Male persons and male animals (see also **1.1.7**)
der Arzt, der Bock, der Eber, der Hahn, der Ingenieur, der König, der Student, der Vater

(b) Seasons, months and days of the week
der Frühling, der Sommer, der Herbst, der Januar, der Mai, der Mittwoch, der Sonnabend

However, compounds have the gender of the second element (see **1.1.8**), e.g. *das Frühjahr*, *die Jahreszeit*.

(c) Points of the compass and words referring to winds and kinds of weather
der Norden, der Osten, der Süden, der Westen
der Föhn, der Passat, der Taifun, der Wind
der Frost, der Hagel, der Nebel, der Regen, der Schnee, der Sturm, der Tau

There are a few exceptions: *die Brise*, *das Eis*, *das Wetter*.

(d) Rocks and minerals
der Diamant, der Granit, der Lehm, der Quarz, der Ton

Common exceptions: *das Erz*, *die Kohle*, *die Kreide*, *das Mineral*.

(e) Alcoholic and plant-based drinks
der Cocktail, der Gin, der Kirsch, der Schnaps, der Wein, der Wodka
der Kakao, der Kaffee, der Most, der Saft, der Tee

A notable exception is *das Bier*.

(f) Makes of car
der Audi, der BMW, der Citroën, der Polo, der Rolls-Royce, der Trabant

(g) Rivers outside Germany
der Ganges, der Jordan, der Kongo, der Mississippi, der Nil, der Po, der Shannon, der Severn

However, those ending in *-a* or *-e* are usually feminine, e.g. *die Seine, die Themse, die Wolga*, as is *die Liffey*.

(h) Monetary units
der Cent, der Dollar, der Euro, der Franken, der Pfennig, der Rappen, der Schilling

Notable exceptions are *die Mark, das Pfund*.

(i) Mountains and mountain ranges
der Ätna, der Brocken, der Montblanc, der Mount Everest, der Säntis
der Balkan, der Harz, der Himalaja, der Jura, der Spessart, der Taunus

There are some common exceptions, in particular compounds like *das Erzgebirge, das Matterhorn, die Zugspitze* and a few others, e.g. *die Eifel, die Rhön, die Sierra Nevada.*

1.1.5 Feminine nouns by meaning

(a) Female persons and animals
die Frau, die Gans, die Henne, die Kuh, die Mutter, die Sau, die Tante

Notable exceptions are the archaic or derogatory *das Weib* as well as diminutives in *-chen* and *-lein* like *das Fräulein* (rarely used nowadays) and *das Mädchen*. The loan-word *das Girl* (see **1.1.9**) is probably neuter by analogy with *das Mädchen*.

(b) Aeroplanes, motorbikes and ships
die Airbus A320, die Boeing 737
die BMW, die Honda
die „Bismarck", die „Bremen"

However, names of aeroplanes and ships often keep the gender of the base word, e.g. *der Airbus, der Storch; der „Albatros", das „Möwchen".*

(c) Native German names of rivers

Including many rivers in Central or Eastern Europe where German has been widely spoken in the past:

> die Donau, die Elbe, die Ems, die Fulda, die Isar, die Lahn, die Maas, die Memel, die Moldau, die Mosel, die Neiße, die Oder, die Ruhr, die Saale, die Spree, die Weichsel, die Werra, die Weser

There are a few important exceptions: *der Inn*, *der Lech*, *der Main*, *der Neckar*, *der Rhein*.

(d) Names of numerals
die Eins, die Vier, die Tausend, die Million, die Milliarde

Note, as quantity expressions: *das Dutzend*, *das Hundert*, *das Tausend* (see **8.1.5b**).

1.1.6 Neuter nouns by meaning

(a) Young persons and animals
das Baby, das Ferkel, das Fohlen, das Junge (but see **1.1.11**), das Kalb, das Kind, das Lamm

(b) Metals and chemical elements
das Blei, das Eisen, das Gold, das Kobalt, das Kupfer, das Messing, das Uran, das Zinn

Common exceptions: *die Bronze*, *der Phosphor*, *der Schwefel*, *der Stahl* and compounds like *der Sauerstoff*.

(c) Scientific units
das Ampere, das Atom, das Elektron, das Molekül, das Pfund, das Volt, das Watt

Liter and *Meter* can be masculine **or** neuter, see **1.1.10b**.

(d) Letters of the alphabet and musical notes
das A, ein großes D, das Ypsilon
das hohe C, das Cis, das Ges

In Swiss usage letters are masculine, e.g. *der A*.

(e) Other parts of speech used as nouns

(i) verb infinitives (see **11.4**), e.g.: das Benehmen, das Fussballspielen, das Zeitunglesen

(ii) other parts of speech: das Ach, das Durcheinander, das vertraute Du, das Jenseits, sein ewiges Nein
(iii) colours and languages (see also **6.2.4**): das Blau des Himmels, das österreichische Deutsch
(iv) English -ing forms: das Doping, das Meeting

(f) Hotels, cafés, restaurants and cinemas
das Hilton, das „Kranzler", das „Roxy"

(g) Names of companies with no article

In practice the gender only becomes apparent with pronouns or determiners in agreement:

Samsung weist darauf hin, dass **seine** Smart-TVs dank Spracherkennung private Gespräche mitschneiden können (*Zeit*)	*Samsung points out that its Smart-TVs can record private conversations by means of language recognition software*

Less frequently, these names are used with feminine agreement, e.g. *Nokia hat ihre Umsatzprognose geändert.*

(h) Names of continents, countries, provinces, towns and cities

For the use of the article with these neuter names, see **4.4.1c**.

> das südliche Afrika, das viktorianische England, das wilhelminische Deutschland, das alte Bayern, das zerstörte Frankfurt, das historische Neustadt (*despite*: die Stadt)

There are two groups of exceptions to this rule:

(i) Several feminines (used with the definite article, see **4.4.1b**):
die Arktis, die Lausitz, die Pfalz, die Schweiz and most ending in *-a*, *-e*, *-ei* or *-ie*, e.g.: die Riviera, die Bretagne, die Türkei, die Normandie.

Notable exceptions are *Afrika* and *China*.

(ii) A few masculines (used with the definite article, see **4.4.1a**):
der Irak, der Iran, der Jemen, der Kongo, der Libanon, der Sudan

The names of these countries are sometimes used as neuter nouns, with no article, e.g. *die beunruhigende politische Situation in Irak, das anscheinend im Chaos zu versinken droht* and this is now the form officially preferred by the German *Auswärtiges Amt*. However, everyday usage generally keeps to the traditional norm of masculine gender, with the article.

1.1.7 The gender of nouns for humans and animals: special cases

(a) Feminine forms of nouns denoting professions, occupations or nationality, etc.

Feminine nouns with the suffix *-in* (see **20.2.1f**) can be formed for many names denoting professions, occupations or nationality:

der Arzt – die Ärzt**in**	der Engländer – die Engländer**in**	der Lehrer – die Lehrer**in**
der Beamte – die Beamt**in**	der Koch – die Köch**in**	der Türke – die Türk**in**

These forms are used to refer to female persons:

Sie gilt als die beste **Kundin** von unserem Geschäft	*She is considered our business's best customer*
Heute habe ich deine **Freundin** Anna gesehen	*I saw your friend Anna today*

A feminine form in *-frau* corresponds to names in *-mann*, e.g.:

der Fachmann – die Fach**frau**   der Geschäftsmann – die Geschäfts**frau**

(b) The use of masculine and feminine forms

(i) In the past undifferentiated 'generic' masculine nouns were often used to refer to both men and women:

Alle **Studenten** sind herzlich eingeladen	*All students are cordially invited*
Alle deutschen **Politiker** teilen diese Meinung	*All German politicians share this opinion*

This usage has now come to be seen as unacceptably discriminatory and to be avoided as far as possible, especially (but not only) in public or official communication. Much attention has been devoted in recent years to establish acceptable ways of eliminating this problem and to develop a 'geschlechtergerechte Sprache', commonly referred to as 'gendern', and some commercial publishers and government agencies have produced manuals which detail possible means of achieving this. However, some of the suggested alternatives are tricky or complex, the uncertainty has resulted in much inconsistency in practice and some proposals which have been made are still the subject of intense criticism, as they are seen – rightly or wrongly – as attempts to manipulate the language or to dictate change.

(ii) If reference is to men and women, the 'generic' masculine should be avoided and both forms used.

liebe Zuschauerinnen und Zuschauer

die Studentinnen und Studenten der Humboldt-Universität Berlin

meine Kolleginnen und Kollegen in diesem Betrieb

Such phrasing is, of course, by no means new, as can be seen from the first example above which has been the norm on television broadcasts for many years.

However, it is vital for English-speaking learners to be alert to the fact that both feminine and masculine forms should be used where English only needs a single word. Thus, for example, the acceptable German equivalent of 'my colleagues in this firm' is not *meine Kollegen in diesem Betrieb*, but the last example above.

However, in informal speech the 'generic' masculine is still used if gender is considered irrelevant in context:

> Wir haben die neuen **Nachbarn** noch nicht kennen gelernt
> Astrid und Christian sind unsere besten **Freunde**

It has been observed that the use of the 'generic' masculine in speech in other contexts (e.g. *die Lehrer*, *die Schüler*, *die Studenten*) is rather more prevalent with younger than with older speakers.

(iii) If the reference is to a woman or women the feminine form is used in all cases:

> Die neue Lehrer**in** scheint sehr beliebt zu sein
> Meine beiden Schwestern sind Ärzt**innen** (*not*: Ärzte)
> Hanne Frisch, die Ärzt**in** (*not*: der Arzt), die ihn behandelt hatte
> Sie wurde die erste Professor**in** an einer deutschen Universität

The 'generic' masculine was formerly often used to refer to either sex, especially with titles and 'newer' professions (i.e. those which were previously predominantly or exclusively male). However, this is no longer usual:

> Frau Meier ist Informatiker**in**, Ingenieur**in**, Rechtsanwält**in**
> Die Oberbürgermeister**in** wird heute um 16 Uhr im Kongresssaal erwartet
> Bundespräsident**in** der Schweiz Doris Leuthard
> Ute Hartmann ist Professor**in** für Neuere Deutsche Literatur

In this way, on the election of Angela Merkel as Federal Chancellor, it was established (after some debate) that the official form of address for her would be *Frau Bundeskanzlerin*.

However, although a woman professor, for example, would be referred to as *Frau Professorin Dr. Hartmann*, when speaking to her it is still usual for her to be addressed as *Frau Professor*. Similarly, the address *Frau Doktor* is still the norm (although *Frau Doktorin* is not unusual in Austria)

(iv) In advertisements for jobs, both forms can be given in an abbreviated form:

Wir suchen ab sofort **eine(n) Musiklehrer(in)**	*We have an immediate vacancy for a music teacher*
Wir brauchen **eine/n Mitarbeiter/-in** für Gemeinde- und Jugendarbeit	*We require an employee for social and youth work*

However, these abbreviations can be awkward, and it may be preferable for both forms to be spelled out in full:

Wir suchen **eine erfahrene Webdesignerin**/**einen erfahrenen Webdesigner**

(v) In writing, a number of typographical options have come to be used frequently to indicate both genders, although they are at variance with official spelling rules and many people, including leading figures in major political parties, object to them strongly, i.e.

- using the feminine form with a capital *I* (sometimes spoken as long [iː]):
  die **StudentInnen** der Westfälischen Wilhelmsuniversität Münster
- using an asterisk before the feminine suffix
  die **Student*innen** der Westfälischen Wilhelmsuniversität Münster
- using an underscore before the feminine suffix
  die **Student_innen** der Westfälischen Wilhelmsuniversität Münster

(vi) The problem can sometimes be avoided in the plural by using words which are not gender-specific, in particular present participles or neutral terms, e.g.:

die **Studierenden** der Westfälischen Wilhelmsuniversität Münster
Zum nächsten Schuljahr erhält das Gymnasium drei neue **Lehrkräfte** (*BrZ*)
Im Osten lernen deutlich weniger **Jugendliche** Latein als im Süden (*SZ*)

This option is now widely used if one is available. However, the use of present participles is largely restricted to official writing, and innovations like *Zu Fuß Gehende* or *Rad Fahrende* are felt to be stilted and awkward, although they are used in the official *Straßenverkehrsordnung* of 2013. Using abbreviations like *die Studis* 'the students' also avoids the problem, and these are often heard in colloquial speech although they are not considered acceptable in more formal registers.

(vii) When no feminine form is available, the masculine must be used despite the anomaly:

> der Säugling heißt Anna
> der Teenager war schwanger
> unser werter Gast, Frau Dr. Schilling

(viii) In written German, the feminine form in *-in* is sometimes used to refer back to feminine nouns denoting things:

Die ehemalige Sowjetunion war die größte Produzent**in** von Personenwagen im Ostblock	*The former Soviet Union was the largest producer of private cars in the Eastern bloc*

This usage is not obligatory, and the masculine form (e.g. *der größte Produzent*) would be equally acceptable.

(c) Animals

The names of species of animals can be masculine, feminine or neuter, e.g.:

> **der** Dachs, **die** Ratte, **das** Pferd

Many familiar or domesticated animals have distinct masculine and feminine forms:

> **der** Fuchs – **die** Füchsin   **der** Gänserich – **die** Gans
>
> **der** Hahn – **die** Henne   **der** Kater – **die** Katze

Usually, one of these designates the species, e.g. *der Fuchs*, *die Gans*, *die Katze* (but note *das Huhn*) and the other is only used if the sex is known or relevant in context. In the absence of a specific term, male or female animals and birds can be indicated by *das Männchen* or *das Weibchen*, e.g.:

> das Zebra**männchen**   das Frosch**weibchen**

(d) Anomalous genders of names of human beings

The gender of the following nouns is fixed and used to refer to both men and women:

die Geisel *hostage*	das Mannequin *mannequin*	das Mündel *ward*
das Genie *genius*	die Memme *sissy*	die Person *person*
das Haupt *head* (of state, family)	der Mensch *human being*	die Wache *sentry*
das Individuum *individual*	das Mitglied *member*	die Waise *orphan*

Exceptionally, in legal language *der Mündel* is usual, see **1.1.10**, and *Waise* is masculine in the phrase *jdn. zum Waisen machen* 'to make sb. an orphan'.

In addition, all words in *-ling* are masculine and those in *-chen* and *-lein* are neuter, irrespective of natural gender (see **1.1.1**), e.g. *der Flüchtling*, *der Zwilling*; *das Söhnchen*, *das Fräulein*, *das Mädchen*.

Problems of agreement if grammatical and natural gender are in conflict are dealt with in **1.1.12**.

1.1.8 The gender of compound words and abbreviations

(a) Compound nouns usually have the gender of the last component

 der Fahr**plan**   **die** Bushalte**stelle**   **das** Hallen**bad**

There are a few exceptions to this rule:

(i) Some compounds of *der Mut* are feminine:

die Anmut *grace*	die Armut *poverty*	die Demut *humility*	die Großmut *generosity*
die Langmut *forbearance*	die Sanftmut *gentleness*	die Schwermut *melancholy*	die Wehmut *melancholy*

(ii) For the compounds of *der/das Teil*, see **1.1.10c**.
(iii) A few others:

das Gift	*but* die Mitgift *dowry*	die Woche	*but* der Mittwoch *Wednesday*
der Grat	*but* das Rückgrat *backbone*	das Wort	*but* die Antwort *answer*

(b) The gender of abbreviations is determined by the base word

> der HSV (der Hamburger Sportverein)die CDU (die Christlich-Demokratische Union)
> das BAFöG (das Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz)

(c) Shortened words have the gender of the full form

der Akku (Akkumulator)	das Labor (Laboratorium)
der Krimi (Kriminalroman)	die Lok (Lokomotive)

A common exception is *das Foto*, despite *die Fotografie* (but *die Foto* is usual in Switzerland).

1.1.9 The gender of English loan-words

Large-scale borrowing of words from English is a feature of modern German, and the nouns have to be allocated a gender. This tends to be determined by the following principles (which sometimes conflict, often resulting in uncertainty and variation):

(a) Many English words adopt the gender of the nearest German equivalent

der Airbag (der Sack)	das Bike (das Fahrrad)	das Girl (das Mädchen)
der Airport (der Flughafen)	der Bob (der Schlitten)	der Lift (der Aufzug)
das Baby (das Kind)	die Box (die Büchse)	der Smog (der Nebel)
die Band (die Kapelle)	die Crew (die Mannschaft)	der Shop (der Laden)

This principle also applies with pseudo-loans like *das Handy* (by analogy with *das Telefon*). It can sometimes result in a word having two genders in different meanings, e.g. *der Service* 'service' (by analogy with *der Dienst*); *das Service* '(dinner/tea) service' (by analogy with *das Geschirr*).

Following similar principles the gender may also be determined by analogy with the gender of the general term in German, e.g.:

das Hockey, das Rugby, das Tennis (cf *das Spiel*) – der Jive, der Rap, der Techno (cf *der Tanz*)

(b) The ending or the form of some English words can determine the gender

(i) Words with endings similar to German endings often adopt the gender associated with that ending:

> der Beamer, der Container, der Computer, der Oldtimer (-*er* is a masculine ending)
> der Konduktor, der Monitor, der Rotor (-*or* is a masculine ending)
> die Animation, die Supervision (-*sion* and -*tion* are feminine endings)
> die Cleverness, die Fairness, die Wellness (nouns in -*nis* from adjectives are usually feminine)
> die City, die Lobby, die Publicity, die Party, die Story (-*ie* is a feminine ending)
> (However, some recent loans in -*ie* or -*y* are neuter, e.g. *das Selfie*, *das Smiley*)
> das Klosett, das Pamphlet, das Ticket (-*ett* is a neuter ending)
> das Advertisement, das Realignment, das Treatment (-*ment* is a neuter ending)

(ii) Nouns from English -ing forms are neuter (see **1.1.6e**):

> das Aquaplaning, das Meeting, das Online-Banking, das Training, das Walking

(iii) Words which are shortened from a longer compound can take the gender of the missing part:

> das Au-Pair (-mädchen), die Holding (-company/-gesellschaft), der Intercity (-zug)

Words like these can look like exceptions, as words in -ing are normally neuter and *die City* is feminine.

(iv) Nouns from prefixed or phrasal verbs can be either maculine or neuter (and several vary):

der Check-up, der Countdown, der Download, der Fallout, der Input, der Lockdown
das Blow-up, das Check-in, das Feedback, das Handout, das Hashtag, das Teach-in, das Upgrade

(c) If there is no other indication, monosyllabic nouns are predominantly masculine

der Chip, der Lunch, der Sex, der Spot, der Trend, der Tweet

This is in particular the case with monosyllabic nouns from verbs (see **1.1.2a**), e.g.:

der Boom, der Crash, der Deal, der Drink, der Hit, der Hype, der Link, der Look, der Rock

However, a few frequent monosyllabic words are feminine or neuter, e.g.:

die Bar, die Couch, die Farm das Quiz, das Steak, das Team

(d) In many cases no gender has yet become firmly established

Some common examples:

die/das App	der/das Cartoon	der/die Forehand	der/das Poster
der/das Blackout	die/das Cola	der/das Ketchup	der/das Radar
der/das Blog	der/das Event	der/das Laptop	der/das Spam
der/das Break	die/das Flipchart	der/das Movie	der/das Tablet

Sometimes different German countries or regions have a preference for different genders, so that *Match* is *das Match* in Germany and Austria, but *der Match* in Switzerland. *Die E-Mail* (often simply *die Mail*) is usual in Germany (presumably because of *die Post*), but *das (E-)Mail* is usual in Switzerland and Austria.

1.1.10 Nouns with varying gender

The gender of a few nouns is not fixed, although the variation may be linked to regional or register differences.

(a) Some common examples

Abscheu *repulsion*	**die** (*occ*. **der**)	Keks *biscuit*	**der** (*esp. Au*. **das**)
Backbord *port side*	**das** (*Au*. **der**)	Knäuel *ball* (*wool*)	**das** or **der**
Barock *Baroque*	**der** or **das**	Meteor *meteor*	**der** (*esp. tech*. **das**)
Bereich *area*	**der** (*occ*. **das**)	Mündel *ward*	**das** (*esp. legal* **der**)
Bonbon *sweet*	**der** (*Bav./Au*. **das**)	Nutella *nutella®*	**die** or **das**
Dotter *yolk*	**der** or **das**	Puff *brothel* (*vulg.*)	**der** (*Au*. **das**)

Fakt *fact*	**der** (*occ*. **das**)	Pyjama *pyjamas*	**der** (*Au./Sw*. **das**)
Filter *filter*	**der** (*esp. techn*. **das**)	Radio *radio*	**das** (*S.Ger*. **der**)
Foto *photo*	**das** (*Sw*. **die**)	Sakko *jacket*	**das** (*occ*. **der**)
Gelee *jelly*	**das** *or* **der**	Schrot *grain; (gun-)shot*	**der** *or* **das**
Gischt *spray*	**die** (*esp. techn*. **der**)	Sims (*window-*)*sill, mantelpiece*	**der** *or* **das**
Gulasch *goulash*	**das** (*occ*. **der**)	Steuerbord *starboard*	**das** (*Au*. **der**)
Gummi *rubber*	**das** (*occ*. **der**)	Taxi *taxi*	**das** (*Sw*. **der**)
Joghurt *yoghurt*	**der** (*Au./Sw*. **das**; *Au* **die**)	Tüpfel *dot* (on *i*)	**der** *or* **das**
Katapult *catapult*	**das** *or* **der**	Virus *virus*	**der** (*medic*. **das**)
Kehricht *sweepings*	**der** *or* **das**		

(b) *Liter and Meter*

In predominant current usage these words and their compounds, e.g. *Zentimeter*, are now regularly masculine, i.e. *der Liter*, *der Meter*, but the neuter (i.e. *das Liter*, *das Meter*) is still sometimes used in scientific and technical contexts.

(c) *Teil*

The masculine, *der Teil*, is used to refer to a part of a whole:

dies**er** Teil von Deutschland; er behielt **den** größten Teil für sich

The neuter *das Teil* refers to a detached part, especially (but not only) in technical language:

jed**es** einzelne Teil, ein defekt**es** Teil

Either *der* or *das Teil* can be used in a few set phrases:

ich für **mein** (*or* **meinen**) Teil; **das bessere** (*or* **den besseren**) Teil wählen

sie trug **ihr** (*or* **ihren**) Teil dazu bei; er hat **sein** (*or* **seinen**) Teil getan

Compounds of *Teil* are mostly masculine, e.g. *der Elternteil*, *der Körperteil*, with the following exceptions:

das Abteil *compartment*	das Gegenteil *opposite*
das Einzelteil *separate part*	das (*less frequent*: der) Oberteil *upper part*
das (*legal* der) Erbteil *inheritance*	das Urteil *verdict*

das Ersatzteil *replacement part*

1.1.11 Words with two meanings differentiated by gender

der Balg (¨e) *animal skin*   das Balg (¨er) *naughty child*

der Band (¨e) *volume, book*   das Band (¨e) *ribbon, tape* /

die Band (-s) ([bɛnt]) band, *(pop) group*   das Band (-e) *bond, fetter* (see **1.2.6**)

der Bauer (-n, -n) *farmer, peasant*   das Bauer (-) *birdcage*

der Bulle (-n, -n) *bull*; *cop* (coll.)   die Bulle (-n) *(papal) bull*

der Bund (¨e) *union; waistband*   das Bund (-e) *bundle, bunch*

der Ekel (*no pl.*) *disgust*   das Ekel (-) *nasty person* (coll.)

der Erbe (-n, -n) *heir*   das Erbe (*no pl.*) *inheritance, heritage*

der Flur (-e) *entrance hall*   die Flur (-en) *meadow* (elev.)

der Gefallen (-) *favour*   das Gefallen (*no pl.*) *pleasure*

der Gehalt (-e) *content*   das Gehalt (¨er) *salary*

der Golf (-e) *gulf*   das Golf (*no pl.*) *golf*

der Harz *Harz (mountains)*   das Harz (*no pl.*) *resin*

der Heide (-n, -n) *heathen*   die Heide (-n) *heath*

der Hut (¨e) *hat*   die Hut (*no pl.*) *guard* (*auf der Hut sein* 'be on one's guard')

der Junge (-n, -n) *boy*   das Junge (adj.) *young (of animals)*

der Kiefer (-) *jaw*   die Kiefer (-n) *pine*

der Kre'dit (-e) *credit*; *good standing*   das 'Kredit (-s) *credit* (on bank balance)

der Kunde (-n, -n) *customer*   die Kunde (*no pl.*) *knowledge, news* (elev.)

der Lama (-s) *lama*   das Lama (-s) *llama*

der Laster (-) *lorry* (coll.)   das Laster (-) *vice*

der Leiter (-) *leader*   die Leiter (-n) *ladder*

der Mangel (¨) *lack*   die Mangel (-n) *mangle*

die Mark (-) *mark (coin)*   das Mark (*no pl.*) *marrow (bone)*

die Marsch (-en) *fen, marsh*   der Marsch (¨e) *march*

die Maß (-) *litre of beer* (Bav., Austr.)   das Maß (-e) *measure*

der Mensch (-en, -en) *human being*   das Mensch (-er) *slut* (coll., pej.)

der Messer (-) *surveyor*; *gauge*   das Messer (-) *knife*

der Militär (-s) *military man*   das Militär (*no pl.*) *the military*

der Moment (-e) *moment*   das Moment (-e) *(determining) factor*

der Otter (-) *otter* (also: *der Fischotter*)   die Otter (-n) *adder* (also: *die Kreuzotter*)

der Pack (-e *or* ¨e) *package*   das Pack (*no pl.*) *mob, rabble*

der Pony (*no pl.*) *fringe (of hair)*   das Pony (-s) *pony*

der Schild (-e) *shield*   das Schild (-er) *sign, plate*

der See (-n) *lake*	die See (*no pl.*) *sea*
die Steuer (-n) *tax*	das Steuer (-) *steering-wheel*, *helm*
der Stift (-e) *pen*, *stripling* (coll.)	das Stift (-e) *foundation*, home (e.g. *for aged*)
der Tau (*no pl.*) *dew*	das Tau (-e) *rope*, *hawser*
der Tor (-en, -en) *fool* (lit.)	das Tor (-e) *gate*
der Verdienst (*no pl.*) *earnings*	das Verdienst (-e) *merit*, *achievement*
die Wehr (*no pl.*) *defence*	das Wehr (-e) *weir*

1.1.12 Problems of gender agreement

Difficulty with gender agreement can arise if grammatical gender and natural gender do not correspond, as in the nouns dealt with in **1.1.7**.

(a) In principle, pronouns agree with the grammatical gender of the noun they refer to

i.e. grammatical gender takes precedence over natural gender:

ein**es** der Mitglieder dieses Vereins	*one of the members of this club*
Wir suchen eine männliche Fachkraft. **Sie** muss im Besitz eines Führerscheins sein	*We are looking for a skilled male worker. He must have a clean driving licence*
Lorenz war die einzige männliche Geisel, **die** an diesem Tag auf freien Fuß gesetzt wurde.	*Lorenz was the only male hostage to be released that day*
Es war einmal ein Mädchen aus Alaska, **das** war Sängerin in einem Club in San Diego. Vor drei Jahren, mit 19, nahm **es seine** erste CD auf (*Kurier*)	*There was once a girl from Alaska, she was a singer in a club in San Diego. Three years ago, at the age of 19, she recorded her first CD*

In practice, this rule is rarely adhered to consistently, even in formal writing. Although the relative pronoun almost always agrees for grammatical gender, personal pronouns and other words in agreement often have the form appropriate to the natural gender of the person referred to (i.e. *sie* or *er*), especially in everyday speech, and this is the case even in written German the further away the pronoun is from the noun it refers to, especially (but not only) if it is in a different clause or sentence.

Müssten wir nicht zur Polizei gehen, damit das Mädchen **seine** Aussage machen kann? Immerhin hat **sie** der Typ gekidnappt (*Ani*)	*Shouldn't we go to the police, so that the girl can give them her statement? After all, the guy did kidnap her*
Er bemerkte das Mädchen, **das** auf dem Weg zum See war. Er sprach **es** vom Auto aus an, **sie** stieg ein, weil er mit **ihr** reden wollte (*Ani*)	*He noticed the girl, who was on her way to the lake. He spoke to her from the car, she got in because he wanted to talk to her*

Neuter pronouns may be used more often to refer to younger girls.

Fräulein (if it is still used) is treated in the same way, i.e. as a neuter noun, when it is used on its own, e.g. *das Fräulein, das ihn bedient hat*. However, when followed by a name, feminine pronouns are used: *Fräulein Müller, die mich gestern bedient hat*.

(b) Neuter singular pronouns are used to refer to male and female persons

Sie stehen eine Weile schweigend, **jedes** die Hand auf der Schulter des anderen (*Fallada*)	*They stand silent for a while, each with their hand on the other's shoulder*
Die anderen Schüler sind **alles** Ausländer	*The other pupils are all foreigners*

(c) Adjectives and determiners always agree for grammatical gender

ein jung**es** Mädchen, **das** unartig**e** Bübchen, ein**e** männlich**e** Person

This also applies with *Fräulein* followed by a name, for instance at the start of a letter: *Liebes Fräulein Müller* (although the address *Fräulein* is rarely used nowadays). Adjectives and determiners also agree with neuter names in *-chen*, e.g. *das kleine Karlchen, das fleißige Lieschen*.

1.2 Noun plurals

There are **seven** regular ways of making a noun plural in German, as shown in *Table 1.5*. The traditional recommendation is for foreign learners to learn the PLURAL of each noun together with the noun and its GENDER, e.g.:

TABLE 1.5   The plural of German nouns

Plural formation	Singular	Plural
no ending (-)	der Lehrer	die Lehrer
	das Segel	die Segel
no ending, with *Umlaut* (¨)	der Bruder	die Brüder
	der Vogel	die Vögel
add *-e* **(-e)**	der Arm	die Arme
	das Jahr	die Jahre
add *-e*, **with** *Umlaut* (¨e)	die Hand	die Hände
	der Stuhl	die Stühle
add *-er*, **with** *Umlaut* **if possible (-er)/(¨er)**	das Kind	die Kinder

Plural formation	Singular	Plural
	das Tal	die Täler
add -*n* **or** -*en* **(-n)/(-en)**	die Frau	die Frauen
	die Wiese	die Wiesen
add -*s* **(-s)**	das Auto	die Autos
	der Streik	die Streiks

der Stuhl ~ **die Stühle   die Wiese** ~ **die Wiesen   das Jahr** ~ **die Jahre**

However, there are some clear links between the gender of a noun and how it forms its plural, and these are shown in *Table 1.6*, and in practice, it is worth being aware that the **plural of nearly three quarters** of German nouns is formed according to the following rules:

TABLE 1.6   Noun plurals and gender

Plural formation	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
no ending (-)	most ending in - *el* , - *en* , - *er*	NONE	nouns in -*el, -en, -er* nouns in -*chen* and -*lein* nouns in *Ge ... e*
no ending, with *Umlaut* (¨)	about TWENTY ending in -*el, -en, -er*	TWO : *Mutter, Tochter*	TWO : **Kloster, Wasser**
add -*e* **, without** *Umlaut* **(-e)**	about a THIRD not in other groups	all in - *nis* and - *sal*	MOST
add -*e* **, with** *Umlaut* **(¨e)**	about TWO THIRDS not in other groups	about THIRTY	ONE : **Floß**
add - *er* **, with** *Umlaut* **if possible (-er)/(¨er)**	about TWELVE	NONE	about a QUARTER (mainly monosyllables)
add -*n* **or** -*en* **(-n)/(-en)**	all in -*e* (and a few others)	MOST	about TWELVE
add -*s*	many **foreign words**		

- **Masculine** and **neuter** nouns in - *el, - en, - er* have no ending
- Other **masculine** nouns add - *e* **with** *Umlaut* if possible
- Other **neuter** nouns add - *e* **without** *Umlaut*
- **Feminine** nouns add -*(e)n*

However, that still leaves about a quarter of nouns which do not follow these rules, and as many of these are frequent, the advice to learn the plural separately with each noun is still sound – and it is particularly important to make a careful note of those nouns whose plurals are an exception to the rules given above.

The following sections give details about the formation of noun plurals, as indicated:

1.2.1–1.2.3 The **regular plural** of **masculine**, **feminine** and **neuter nouns**
1.2.4 The **plural ending** -*s*
1.2.5 Unusual plurals
1.2.6 Words with **two plurals** with **different meanings**
1.2.7 Differences between English and German in the use of the plural
1.2.8 The use of the plural with nouns of **weight**, **measurement and value**

1.2.1 The plural of masculine nouns

(a) Most masculine nouns have a plural in -*e* or ¨*e*

der Arm – die Arme	der Bart – die Bärte
der Hund – die Hunde	der Bock – die Böcke
der Punkt – die Punkte	der Fuß – die Füße
der Versuch – die Versuche	der Stuhl – die Stühle

About two thirds of the most frequently used masculine nouns have *Umlaut* in the plural if possible, in particular those of one syllable. However, many common masculine nouns have a plural in **-***e* without *Umlaut* even though the vowel could have *Umlaut*, especially the following:

der Aal	*eel*	der Huf	*hoof*	der Lachs	*salmon*
der Arm	*arm*	der Hund	*dog*	der Schuh	*shoe*
der Beruf	*profession*	der Laut	*sound*	der Star	*starling*
der Besuch	*visit*	der Monat	*month*	der Stoff	*material*
der Dolch	*dagger*	der Mond	*moon*	der Tag	*day*
der Dom	*cathedral*	der Ort	*place*	der Takt	*beat (music)*
der Druck	*pressures*	der Pfad	*path*	der Thron	*throne*
der Erfolg	*success*	der Punkt	*point*	der Verlag	*publishing house*
der Grad	*degree*	der Ruf	*call*	der Verlust	*loss*
der Gurt	*belt*	der Schluck	*gulp*	der Versuch	*attempt*

Most nouns ending in stressed *-al*, *-an*, *-ar*, *-on* and *-or* have the plural ending *-e*, without *Umlaut*:

der Bibliothekar – die Bibiothekare *librarian* der Major – die Majore *major*

However, the following do have *Umlaut* in the plural.

der Altar – die Altäre   *altar*   der Kardinal – die Kardinäle *cardinal*
der Kanal – die Kanäle *canal* der Tenor – die Tenöre   *tenor*

There are a few irregularities and exceptional cases.

(i) *der Admiral* and *der General* can have either *-e* or ¨*e* in the plural, e.g. *die Generale* or *die Generäle*.
(ii) *der Rest* has the standard plural *-e*, but *-er* is frequent in informal registers.
(iii) *der Erlass* has a plural in *-e*, i.e. *die Erlasse*, in Germany, but ¨*e*, i.e. *die Erlässe*, in Austria.
(iv) The plural of *der Saal* is *die Säle*, see **21.4.2b**.

(b) Most masculine nouns ending in *-el*, *-en* or *-er* form their plural without an ending

der Onkel – die Onkel   der Bäcker – die Bäcker
der Haken – die Haken   der Computer – die Computer

Exeptions to this rule are the words which have no ending, but with *Umlaut* of the stressed vowel (see **1.2.1c**), and the following (see also **1.2.1e**).

der Bauer (-n, -n) *farmer*, *peasant* der Muskel (-n) *muscle*   der Vetter (-n) *cousin*
der Bayer (-n, -n) *Bavarian*   der Pantoffel (-n) *slipper*
der Charakter (-e) *character*   der Stachel (-n) *thorn; sting*

(c) About twenty masculine nouns ending in *- el* , *- en* or *- er* form their plural with no ending, but with *Umlaut* of the stressed vowel

der Apfel – die Äpfel der Garten – die Gärten der Vater – die Väter

These are:

der Acker   *field*   der Hafen   *harbour*   der Ofen   *stove*
der Apfel   *apple*   der Hammer *hammer*   der Sattel   *saddle*

der Boden	*floor*	der Kasten	*box*	der Schaden	*damage*
der Bruder	*brother*	der Laden	*shop*; *shutter*	der Schnabel	*beak*
der Faden	*thread*	der Magen	*stomach*	der Schwager	*brother-in-law*
der Garten	*garden*	der Mangel	*lack*	der Vater	*father*
der Graben	*ditch*	der Mantel	*coat*	der Vogel	*bird*

There are a few further irregularities and exceptional cases.

(i) *der Laden* is regularly used without *Umlaut* in the plural in North Germany, e.g. *die Laden*, but only in the meaning 'shutter', and the plural form *die Magen*, without *Umlaut*, from *der Magen*, occurs occasionally.
(ii) In South Germany *der Bogen*, *der Kragen* and *der Wagen* can form the plural with *Umlaut*, especially in speech, e.g. *die Bögen*, *die Krägen*, *die Wägen*, and these forms are regularly used in writing in Austria and Switzerland. The compound *der Ell(en)bogen* always forms the plural without *Umlaut*.

(d) About a dozen masculines have a plural in ¨ er/-er

der Geist – die Geister   der Mann – die Männer   der Wald – die Wälder

The vowel takes *Umlaut* if possible. These are:

der Bösewicht	*villain*	der Mann	*man*	der Strauch	*shrub*
der Geist	*spirit*	der Mund	*mouth*	der Wald	*forest*
der Gott	*god*	der Rand	*edge*	der Wiking	*viking*
der Irrtum	*error*	der Reichtum	*wealth*	der Wurm	*worm*
der Leib	*body*	der Ski	*ski*		

der Bösewicht has an alternative plural in *-e*, i.e. *die Bösewichte*, which is in practice now more frequent.

For the plural of compounds in *-mann*, see **(f)** below.

(e) Some masculine nouns have the plural *-en* / *-n*

The shorter form of the ending, i.e. *-n*, is used with nouns ending in *-e*, *-el* or *-er*. There are three groups of these nouns, depending on the inflection of the singular:

(i) The so-called 'weak' masculines (see **1.3.2**) which have *-(e)n* in the accusative, genitive and dative singular as well as in the plural, e.g:

der Affe – die Affen   der Mensch – die Menschen   der Student – die Studenten

(ii) Some irregular masculines (see **1.3.3**). The following occur in the plural:

der Buchstabe	*letter (of alphabet)*	der Funke	*spark*	der Name	*name*
der Friede	*peace*	der Gedanke	*thought*	der Same	*seed*

(iii) A few other masculines with the regular ending *-(e)s* in the genitive singular:

der Dorn	*thorn*	der Nerv	*nerve*	der Stachel	*prickle*
der Fasan	*pheasant*	der Pantoffel	*slipper*	der Strahl	*ray*
der Fleck	*spot*	der Pfau	*peacock*	der Typ	*type; bloke*, *guy*
der Lorbeer	*laurel*	der Schmerz	*pain*	der Untertan	*subject*
der Mast	*mast*	der See	*lake*	der Vetter	*cousin*
der Muskel	*muscle*	der Staat	*state*	der Zeh	*toe*

Words in unstressed *-on* and *-or* also belong to this group, with a plural in *-en*, but the stress moves in the plural, see **21.1.6d**:

der ′Dämon – die Dä′monen   der Pro′fessor – die Profes′soren

There are a few irregularities and exceptional cases:

(i) *der Bau* 'building' (see also **1.2.6**) and *der Sporn* 'spur' have the irregular plurals *die Bauten* and *die Sporen*.
(ii) *die Seen* is pronounced *See-en* [zeːən], see **21.4.2a**.
(iii) *der Fleck* has an alternative singular form *der Flecken*.
(iv) Some compounds of *der Strahl*, i.e. *der Lampenstrahl*, *der Lichtstrahl* and *der Wasserstrahl*, are occasionally found in writing with the non-standard plural ending *-e*, e.g. *die Lichtstrahle*, *die Wasserstrahle*.
(v) *der Zeh* has the alternative (mainly North German) singular *die Zehe*.
(vi) In the meaning 'bloke', 'guy' *der Typ* may have 'weak' singular forms, e.g. *dem Typen*, in colloquial speech, see **1.3.2c**.

(f) The plural of nouns in *-mann*

Compounds of *-mann* usually replace this by *-leute* in the plural when they refer to the occupation as such or to the group as a whole in an abstract way, especially if the group typically includes both men and women:

der Fachmann – die Fachleute   der Kaufmann – die Kaufleute   der Privatmann – die Privatleute

In cases where we are thinking in terms of individuals rather than a group, where the occupation is (still) typically taken by men, or where we are not dealing with persons, the plural is formed with *-männer*:

die Dunkelmänner, Ehrenmänner, Froschmänner, Müllmänner, Schneemänner

With an increasing number of nouns both are used:

die Feuerwehrleute/-männer   die Kameraleute/-männer   die Geschäftsleute/-männer

There is a difference between these since plurals in *-männer* are normally taken to refer to a set of male individuals, whereas those in *-leute* can be used to refer to a collection of people which may include women (and for these there can be a distinct singular form in *-frau*, e.g. *die Fachfrau*). A similar distinction applies with the following, where the forms in *-leute* typically denote groups including women:

die Ehemänner *husbands*, **but** die Eheleute *married couples* (i.e. *Ehemänner + Ehefrauen)*

die Seemänner *seamen* (as individuals), *but* die Seeleute *seafaring folk* (general)

1.2.2 The plural of feminine nouns

(a) Over 90% of all feminine nouns have the plural *-en* / *-n*

The shorter form of the ending, i.e. *-n*, is used with nouns ending in *-e*, *-el* or *-er*:

die Arbeit – die Arbeiten   die Wiese – die Wiesen
die Frau – die Frauen   die Regel – die Regeln
die Last – die Lasten   die Kiefer – die Kiefern

Nouns in *-in* double the final *n* in the plural, e.g. *die Studentin – die Studentinnen*

Exceptionally, *die Werkstatt* has an irregular plural with the suffix *-en* **and** *Umlaut: die Werkstätten*.

(b) About a quarter of feminine monosyllables have a plural in ¨*e*

die Angst – die Ängste   die Hand – die Hände   die Nuss – die Nüsse

The following are the most common. Note that over half end in *-t*:

die Angst	*fear*	die Haut	*skin*	die Nacht	*night*
die Axt	*axe*	die Kraft	*strength*	die Naht	*seam*
die Bank	*bench*	die Kuh	*cow*	die Not	*need, distress*
die Braut	*fiancée*	die Kunst	*art*	die Nuss	*nut*
die Brust	*breast*	die Laus	*louse*	die Sau	*sow*
die Faust	*fist*	die Luft	*air; breeze*	die Schnur	*string*
die Frucht	*fruit*	die Lust	*desire*	die Stadt	*town, city*
die Gans	*goose*	die Macht	*power*	die Wand	*wall*
die Gruft	*vault, tomb*	die Magd	*maid*	die Wurst	*sausage*
die Hand	*hand*	die Maus	*mouse*	die Zunft	*guild*

Some compounds, in particular those in *-brunst*, *-flucht* and *-kunft*, also have a plural in ¨*e*:

die Feuersbrunst – die Feuersbrünste die Auskunft – die Auskünfte

die Ausflucht – die Ausflüchte   die Geschwulst – die Geschwülste

die Sau and *die Schnur* can have the plural ending *-en* in technical registers.

(c) Feminine nouns in *-nis* **and** *-sal* **have the plural -** *e*

In practice not many of these nouns are used in the plural. Those in *-nis* double the final *-s*:

die Kenntnis – die Kenntnisse die Mühsal – die Mühsale

(d) Two feminine nouns have a plural with *Umlaut* **and no ending (¨)**

die Mutter – die Mütter (see **1.2.6**) die Tochter – die Töchter

1.2.3 The plural of neuter nouns

(a) About three quarters of neuter nouns have the plural *-e*

This group includes most neuters of more than one syllable, especially foreign words.

das Bein – die Beine   das Jahr – die Jahre   das Ventil – die Ventile

das Gefäß – die Gefäße das Schaf – die Schafe das Verbot – die Verbote

Nouns ending in *-nis* double the consonant in the plural: *das Zeugnis – die Zeugnisse*.

The nouns *das Knie* and *das Regime* belong to this group in practice, although their plural forms are spelled identically to the singular. However, the pronunciation differs since their plurals are *die Knie*, pronounced *Knie-e* [kniːə] (see **21.4.2a**) and *die Regime*, pronounced [rɛʒiːmə].

(b) About a quarter of neuter nouns have the plural ¨er/-er

Umlaut is used if possible. Most are monosyllabic, e.g.:

das Blatt – die Blätter	das Dorf – die Dörfer	das Tal – die Täler
das Buch – die Bücher	das Kind – die Kinder	das Volk – die Völker

A few neuter nouns of more than one syllable have this ending. The following are common:

das Denkmal *monument*	das Geschlecht *sex*	das Hospital *hospital*
das Gehalt *salary*	das Gesicht *face*	das Regiment *regiment*
das Gemach *chamber* (elev.)	das Gespenst *ghost*	
das Gemüt *mood*	das Grabmal *gravestone*	

In addition, all nouns in *-tum* take this plural, e.g. *das Altertum – die Altertümer*.

There are a few irregularities and exceptional cases:

(i) In elevated registers *das Denkmal* and *das Grabmal* sometimes have the plural forms *die Denkmale* and *die Grabmale*.
(ii) *das Ross* 'steed' (usual plural *die Rosse*) often has the plural ¨er, i.e. *die Rösser*, in Austria and Bavaria, where it is the everyday word in speech for 'horse'.
(iii) A few words are used colloquially with a plural form in *-er/¨er* in a derogatory or facetious sense, e.g. *die Dinger* (see **1.2.6**), *die Scheusäler*, *die Stücker*.

(c) Neuter nouns ending in *-el*, *-en*, *-er*, diminutives in *-chen* and *-lein* and words in *Ge…e* have no ending in the plural (-)

das Segel – die Segel	das Messer – die Messer	das Büchlein – die Büchlein
das Kissen – die Kissen	das Mädchen – die Mädchen	das Gebäude – die Gebäude

The only exceptions are *das Kloster* and *das Wasser* (see **1.2.3d**).

(d) Two neuter nouns have plurals in (¨)

 das Kloster – die Klöster   das Wasser – die Wässer

The plural *die Wässer* is used for types or sorts of water (e.g. mineral waters). To refer to masses of water a plural form without *Umlaut*, i.e. *die Wasser*, is used, see **1.2.6**. Compounds of *Wasser*, e.g. *das Abwasser* 'sewage' always have a plural with *Umlaut*, i.e. *die Abwässer*.

(e) A few neuter nouns have the plural - *en / -n*

The shorter form of the ending, i.e. *-n*, is used with nouns ending in *-e*:

 das Auge – die Augen   das Hemd – die Hemden   das Ohr – die Ohren

The following are the most frequent:

das Auge	*eye*	das Fakt	*fact*	das Insekt	*insect*	das Ohr	*ear*
das Bett	*bed*	das Hemd	*shirt*	das Interesse	*interest*	das Statut	*statute*
das Ende	*end*	das Herz	*heart*	das Juwel	*jewel*	das Verb	*verb*

Scientific terms in *-on* also have the plural *-en*, but the stress shifts in the plural: *das E'lektron – die Elek'tronen*.

There are a few irregularities and exceptional cases:

(i) *das Herz* has an irregular singular, i.e. *das Herz*, *des Herzens*, *dem Herzen* (see **1.3.3b**).
(ii) *das Kleinod* 'jewel' has the irregular plural *die Kleinodien*.

(f) One neuter noun has the plural ¨e

das Floß *raft* – die Flöße

1.2.4 The plural ending *-s*

The plural ending *-s* occurs with nouns of all three genders, but it is restricted to special cases.

(a) *-s* **is used with many loan-words from English or French**

das Atelier – die Ateliers	das Hotel – die Hotels	der Scheck – die Schecks
der Chef – die Chefs	das Labor – die Labors	der Streik – die Streiks
das Detail – die Details	der/das Laptop – die Laptops	das Team – die Teams
der Download – die Downloads	der Park – die Parks	der Waggon – die Waggons

Some loan-words from English and French have been assimilated and have German plural forms. This is especially the case with English nouns in *-el* and *-er*, which almost always have the regular endingless plural, e.g. *der Tunnel – die Tunnel*; *der Computer – die Computer*, although there can be some variation, and other forms with *-s* or *-n* (e.g. *die Tunnels*, *die Tunneln*) occur occasionally. Some loans from French like *der Balkon* may have a plural with *-s* if they are given a pseudo-French pronunciation, i.e. [balkoŋ], but *die Balkone* is now more frequent.

English loan-words in *-y* have a plural in *- ys* (not *-ies*), e.g. *die Babys*, *die Handys*, *die Partys*, etc.

(b) *-s* **is used with most words ending in a vowel other than unstressed** *-e*

das Auto – die Autos	das Genie – die Genies	der Ossi – die Ossis
der Euro – die Euros	die Oma – die Omas	der Uhu – die Uhus

Some foreign words with unusual plurals are exceptions to this rule (see **1.2.5**), as are most feminine nouns in *-ee* and *-ie*, which have regular plurals, e.g. *die Allee – die Alleen*, *die Galerie – die Galerien*.

(c) *-s* **is used with abbreviations and shortened words**

die AG – die AGs	der Akku – die Akkus
der PKW – die PKWs	die Lok – die Loks

This ending is sometimes omitted with some abbreviations, especially *die LKW*, *die PKW*, since the full form of the word in the plural (*die Lastkraftwagen*) has no ending.

(d) *-s* **is used with some North German seafaring words**

The most frequent are:

das Deck – die Decks	der Kai – die Kais
das Dock – die Docks	das Wrack – die Wracks

(e) *-s* **is used in colloquial speech with some words referring to persons**

die Bengels, die Doktors, die Fräuleins, die Jungs (*older:* die Jungens),
die Kerls, die Kumpels, die Mädels, die Onkels

This usage is typical of colloquial speech, especially in North Germany, where some of them are very frequent. The standard plural form (*die Jungen*, *die Kumpel*, *die Mädel*, etc.) is normally used in writing.

(f) - *s* **is used with some monosyllabic nouns derived from verbs**

(see **20.2.3a**) This group consists of masculine words recently formed from verbs, e.g:

 der Dreh – die Drehs der Stau – die Staus der Treff – die Treffs

(g) *-s* **is used with family and other names**

die Müllers, die Buddenbrooks, zwischen den beiden Deutschlands (*Zeit*)

With geographical names it is also possible to use an endingless plural, e.g. *die beiden Korea(s)*.

1.2.5 Unusual plurals

A few words, particularly those borrowed into German from the classical languages or Italian, have unusual plural forms. Some are restricted to formal written language.

(a) Most words in *-us* **or** *-um* **replace this by** *-en* **in the plural**

das Album – die Alben (*coll*. Albums)	der Organismus – die Organismen
der Genius – die Genien	der Rhythmus – die Rhythmen
der Globus – die Globen (*rarely* die Globusse)	das Zentrum – die Zentren
das Museum – die Museen	der Zyklus – die Zyklen

Some foreign words in *-us* have adopted a native plural in *-e* (spelled with double *-ss-*):

der Bonus – die Bonusse (*also commonly* die Boni)	der Krokus – die Krokusse (*rarely* die Krokus)
der Bus – die Busse	der Zirkus – die Zirkusse

There are a few irregularities and exceptional cases:

> der ′Kaktus – die Kak′teen, pronounced [kakteːən] (*coll.* die Kaktusse)
> der Kasus *(grammatical) case* – die Kasus, pronounced [kaːzuːs]
> das Tempus *tense* – die Tempora
> der Terminus *term* – die Termini
> das Visum – die Visa *or* die Visen

(b) Most words in *-ma* have a plural in *-men*

das Dogma – die Dogmen   das Drama – die Dramen   die Firma – die Firmen

A few can have a plural in *-mata*, but the plural ending *-en* or *-s* is now more frequent with most of them:

das Aroma – die Aromen
(*less often*: Aromas *or* Aromata)

das Dilemma – die Dilemmas (*occ.*: Dilemmata)

das Komma – die Kommas *or* Kommata

das Klima – die Klimas (*rare:* die Klimata
or Klimate)

das Schema – die Schemen *or* Schemata
(*less often*: Schemas)

das Thema – die Themen (*also* Themas,
occ. Themata)

das Trauma – die Traumata *or* Traumas
(*occ.* Traumen)

(c) A few words replace *-a* with *-en*

die Pizza – die Pizzen (*or* die Pizzas)   die Skala – die Skalen

die Razzia – die Razzien (*or* die Razzias) die Veranda – die Veranden

die Regatta – die Regatten   die Villa – die Villen

(d) Other frequent words with unusual plurals

Some of these have alternatives, with the foreign plural typically used in more formal registers.

das Adverb – die Adverbien

der Atlas – die Atlanten (*coll.* Atlasse)

die Basis – die Basen

das Cello – die Celli *or* Cellos

die Dosis – die Dosen

das Epos – die Epen

der Espresso – die Espressos *or* Espressi

das Examen – die Examen (*older*: Examina)

das Fossil – die Fossilien

der Mythos – die Mythen

das Partizip – die Partizipien

die Praxis – die Praxen

das Prinzip – die Prinzipien

das Privileg – die Privilegien

das Prozedere – die Prozedere

das Reptil – die Reptilien

das Risiko – die Risiken (*coll.* Risikos)

der Saldo – die Salden *or* Saldos *or* Saldi

das Fresko – die Fresken

der Index – die Indizes (*occ.* Indices, *rare* Indexe)

das Konto – die Konten (*rare* Konti *or* Kontos)

das Lexikon – die Lexika (*coll.* Lexikons)

das Material – die Materialien

das Mineral – die Mineralien (*occ.* Minerale)

das Solo – die Soli *or* Solos

das Stadion – die Stadien

das Tempo – die Tempi (*coll.* Tempos)

das Textil – die Textilien

das Utensil – die Utensilien

1.2.6 A few nouns have two plural forms with different meanings

der Abdruck	die Abdrucke *offprints* die Abdrücke *impressions*
das Band	die Bande *bonds* (elev.) die Bänder *ribbons*
die Bank	die Bänke *benches* die Banken *banks*
der Bau	die Bauten *buildings* die Baue *den*, *burrow* (*of animal*)
der Block	die Blöcke *lumps*, *blocks* die Blocks *blocks* (*houses*, *paper*)
das Ding	die Dinge *things* die Dinger *things* (coll.); *girls* (vulg.)
der Effekt	die Effekte *effects* (*results*) die Effekten *effects* (*valuables*)
das Gesicht	die Gesichter *faces* die Gesichte *visions*
das Land	die Länder *countries*, *provinces* die Lande *regions* (*esp. in historical contexts*)
der Mann	die Männer *men* die Mannen *vassals* (hist.)
die Mutter	die Mütter *mothers* die Muttern *nuts* (*for bolts*)
der Rat	die Räte *councils*, *officials* die Ratschläge *pieces of advice*
der Stock	die Stöcke *sticks* die Stockwerke *storeys* (sg. also: das Stockwerk)
der Strauß	die Strauße *ostriches* die Sträuße *bunches* (*of flowers*)
das Wasser	die Wasser *masses of water* (e.g. die Wasser des Nil) die Wässer *types of water* (e.g. *mineral water*)
das Wort	die Wörter *words (in isolation)* die Worte *words* (*connected words*, *i.e. sayings*)

NB: (i) The plural *die Blöcke* can be used for any meaning of *der Block*, but *die Blocks* can only be used in the meaning 'blocks' of paper, houses, etc. In practice, it is less common.

(ii) Although purists have long insisted on it, the distinction between *die Wörter* and *die Worte* is not always clear and may not be maintained consistently.

1.2.7 Differences between English and German in the use of the plural

(a) German singular for English plural

In several cases the nearest equivalent to an English plural noun is a German singular:

das Archiv	*archives*	die Politik	*politics*
die Asche	*ashes*	das Protokoll	*minutes (of meeting)*
das Aussehen	*looks*	der Pyjama	*pyjamas*
das Benehmen	*manners*	der Reichtum	*riches*
der Besitz	*possessions*	im Rückstand	*in arrears*
der Bodensatz	*dregs*	der Schadenersatz	*damages (legal)*
die Brille	*spectacles*	die Schere	*scissors*
der Dank	*thanks*	das Schilf	*reeds*
das Fernglas	*binoculars*	die Treppe	*(flight of) stairs*, *steps*
der Hafer	*oats*	die Umgebung	*surroundings*
das Hauptquartier	*headquarters*	die Waage	*scales*
die Hose	*trousers*	die Wahl	*elections*
der Inhalt	*contents*	das Werk	*works (factory)*
die Kaserne	*barracks*	die Zange	*tongs*
der Lohn	*wages*	der Ziegenpeter	*mumps*
das Mittel	*means*	der Zirkel	*(pair of) compasses*
das Mittelalter	*the Middle Ages*		

Most of these German words can be used in the plural in appropriate contexts:

Warum hast du zwei Brillen gekauft?	*Why did you buy two pairs of spectacles?*
Die meisten Löhne sind erhöht worden	*Most wages have been raised*
Er wohnt zwei Treppen hoch	*He lives on the second floor*

(b) Some German nouns are only used in the plural

This often corresponds to English usage, e.g. *die Ferien* 'holidays', *die Leute* 'people', but there are some exceptions.

(i) With the following, the usual equivalent of German plural nouns is an English singular:

die Flitterwochen	*honeymoon*	die Möbel	*furniture*
die Immobilien	*property, real estate*	die Pocken	*smallpox*
die Kosten	*cost(s)*	die Trümmer	*rubble*
die Kurzwaren	*haberdashery*	die Wirren	*turmoil*
die Lebensmittel	*food*	die Zinsen	*interest (on a loan)*

Note that *die Eltern* has no commonly used singular corresponding to English 'parent', although *ein Elternteil* can be used in formal German, and German has *die Geschwister*, for which the most usual English equivalent would be 'brothers and sisters'.

(ii) The names of the festivals *Ostern*, *Pfingsten* and *Weihnachten* are generally treated as neuter singulars:

Wir haben ein stilles Weihnachten verbracht	*We spent a quiet Christmas*
Hast du ein schönes Ostern gehabt?	*Did you have a nice Easter?*

If they are the subject of a verb, the verb is in the singular:

Weihnachten steht vor der Tür	*Christmas is almost here*
Pfingsten fällt dieses Jahr spät	*Whitsun is late this year*

In greetings or used with an adjective, however, they are treated as plural:

Frohe Weihnachten! Sie hat uns letzte Ostern besucht

(c) German nouns with no plural

Some German nouns do not have a plural, although the nearest English equivalents do. With these a plural has to be expressed in other ways in German, using a compound or a synonym:

der Atem *breath*   die Atemzüge *breaths*

das Essen *meal*	die Mahlzeiten *meals* (*rarely*: die Essen)
die Furcht *fear*	die Befürchtungen *fears*
der Käse *cheese*	die Käsesorten *cheeses* (*rarely:* die Käse)
der Kohl *cabbage*	die Kohlköpfe *cabbages*
die Liebe *love*	die Liebschaften *loves* (*rarely*: die Lieben)
der Luxus *luxury*	die Luxusartikel *luxuries*
das Obst *fruit*	die Obstsorten *fruits*
der Rasen *lawn*	die Rasenflächen *lawns*
der Raub *robbery*	die Raubüberfälle *robberies*
der Sport *sport*	die Sportarten *sports*
der Tod *death*	die Todesfälle *deaths* (*rarely:* die Tode)
das Unglück *accident*	die Unglücksfälle *accidents*

The following words are only used in the singular in German, and this corresponds to either singular or plural in English:

der Kummer *care(s)*   die Sehnsucht *longing(s)*   der Verdacht *suspicion(s)*

(d) German equivalents of English nouns with no plural

Some English nouns do not have a plural, although the nearest German equivalents do. With these, English expresses singular or plural in other ways, especially with an additional word for the singular:

die Auskunft *(piece of) information*	die Auskünfte *information*
der Blitz *(flash of) lightning*	die Blitze *flashes of lightning*
das Brot *bread*, *loaf*	die Brote *loaves*
der Fortschritt *advance*	die Fortschritte *progress*
die Hausaufgabe *(piece of) homework*	die Hausaufgaben *homework*
die Information *(piece of) information*	die Informationen *information*
die Kenntnis *(piece of) knowledge*	die Kenntnisse *knowledge*
die Nachricht *(piece of) news*	die Nachrichten *news*
der Rat *(piece of) advice*	die Ratschläge *(pieces of) advice*
der Schaden *damage*	die Schäden *(instances of) damage*

(e) Using a singular noun for items of clothing and parts of the body

With reference to two or more people, a singular noun is commonly used in German for parts of the body or items of clothing if each person involved only

has one of each. In these contexts English normally uses the plural:

Alle hoben **die rechte Hand**   *They all raised their right hands*

Ihnen klopfte **das Herz**   *Their hearts were beating*

To use the plural *die Herzen* in the last example could suggest that each person had more than one heart. Nevertheless, exceptions are not unknown, especially if the possessive is used rather than the definite article (see **4.6.1**), e.g.:

Die Passagiere drehten **ihre Köpfe** (*Frisch*)   *The passengers turned their heads*

1.2.8 Nouns of weight, measurement and value

If masculine and neuter nouns of weight, measurement and value are preceded by a numeral, the **singular** form is used, not the plural:

zwei **Pfund** Kirschen   zwei **Sack** Kartoffeln   drei **Dutzend** Eier   zwei **Fass** Wein

zwei **Paar** Schuhe   zwanzig englische **Pfund**   um ein paar **Dollar** mehr

zwei, drei, mehrere **Glas** Bier   *two, three, several glasses of beer*

ein paar **Schluck** (Kaffee)   *a few mouthfuls (of coffee)*

Wir hatten zehn **Grad** Kälte   *We had ten degrees of frost*

zehn **Schritt**   *ten paces*

3 **Schuss** – ein Euro 50   *3 shots for one euro fifty*

The singular is also used when shopping or ordering in restaurants:

Die hier brauche ich gerade. Geben Sie mir bitte drei **Stück**!
Bringen Sie mir bitte drei **Erdbeereis** und zwei Glas **Bier**!

However, if they are seen as individual objects, these nouns appear in their usual plural form:

Auf dem Hof liegen zehn **Fässer**   *There are ten barrels in the yard*

Feminine nouns of measurement have their usual plural form:

zehn **Flaschen** Wein zwei **Ladungen** Holz vier **Tassen** Kaffee

However, the old currency unit *die Mark* never has a plural ending: *zwanzig Mark*.

For the agreement of the verb with measurement phrases, see **10.1.4f**.

1.3 The declension of nouns to show case

CASE shows the relationship of a NOUN or NOUN PHRASE to the sentence as a whole (see **Chapter 2**), and German indicates the four cases NOMINATIVE, ACCUSATIVE, GENITIVE and DATIVE by means of INFLECTION, i.e. by changing the form of the words in the noun phrase. These changes are known as the DECLENSION of these words. In German it is most often the DETERMINER and ADJECTIVES which decline rather than the noun itself (see **Chapters 4** −.**6**), but there are instances where German nouns have inflections in the form of ENDINGS to show case.

Detailed information on noun declension is given in the following sections:

1.3.1 The declension of **regular nouns**
1.3.2 The declension of **'weak' masculine** nouns
1.3.3 The declension of **irregular masculine** and **neuter** nouns
1.3.4 The **dative singular** ending *-e*
1.3.5 The **genitive singular** ending *-(e)s*
1.3.6 The declension of **names**

1.3.1 The declension of regular nouns

With most German nouns there are two endings to signal case, which are added to the basic singular or plural forms, giving the regular declension patterns illustrated in *Table 1.7*. These endings are:

TABLE 1.7   Declension of regular nouns

	Masculine		Feminine		Neuter	
	Singular	**Plural**	**Singular**	**Plural**	**Singular**	**Plural**
N om.	der Vater	die Väter	der Frau	die Frauen	das Kind	die Kinder
A cc.	den Vater	die Väter	die Frau	die Frauen	das Kind	die Kinder
G en.	des Vater**s**	der Väter	der Frau	der Frauen	des Kind**es**	der Kinder
D at.	dem Vater	den Väter**n**	der Frau	den Frauen	dem Kind	den Kinder**n**
N om.	der Park	die Parks	die Hand	die Hände	das Jahr	die Jahre
A cc.	den Park	die Parks	die Hand	die Hände	das Jahr	die Jahre
G en.	des Park**s**	der Parks	der Hand	der Hände	des Jahr**es**	der Jahre

	Masculine		Feminine		Neuter	
	Singular	**Plural**	**Singular**	**Plural**	**Singular**	**Plural**
Dat.	dem Park	den Parks	der Hand	den Hände**n**	dem Jahr	den Jahr**en**

(a) Masculine and neuter nouns add - *s* **or -** *es* **in the genitive singular**

des Bahnhof**s**, des Busch**es**, des Fenster**s**, des Mann(**e**)**s**, des Tal(**e**)**s**

For the use of -*s* or -*es* and the occasional omission of this ending, see **1.3.5.**

(b) -*n* **is added in the dative plural if possible**

den Kinder**n**, den Fenster**n**, den Hunde**n**, den Stühle**n**, den Töchter**n**

If the plural of the noun ends in -*n* or -*s*, this dative plural ending cannot be added:

den Gärten, den Frauen, den Autos, den Müllers

Further notes on the dative plural of nouns:

(i) Nouns of measurement sometimes drop the ending -*n* after numerals, e.g.: *Er fiel aus tausend Meter Höhe*. This is regularly the case if the thing being measured is indicated (in this case *Höhe*), otherwise it is accepted but less frequent: *eine Entfernung von fünf Kilometer(n)*.
(ii) A plural noun following a noun of measurement can drop the ending -*n*, e.g.: *Wir rechnen mit einem Dutzend Teilnehmer(n)*; *Der Junge hat mit einer Schachtel Streichölzer(n) gespielt*.
(iii) In non-standard colloquial German the ending -*n* is sometimes omitted, and one often sees notices like *Eis mit Früchte*.
(iv) No -*n* is used in the set phrase *aus aller Herren Länder* 'from the four corners of the earth'

1.3.2 'Weak' masculine nouns

A large group of masculine nouns, most of which denote male human beings or animals, have the ending **-** *n* or -*en* throughout the plural and **in all singular cases except the nominative**. These are called (for no good reason) 'weak' masculine

nouns, and their inflections are shown in **Table 1.8**. Nouns ending in **-** *e* or *-er* have the ending *-n*, like *der Junge*, nouns ending in another consonant have the ending **-** *en*, like *der Student*.

TABLE 1.8   'Weak' masculine nouns

	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nom.	der Junge	die Jungen	der Student	die Studenten
Acc.	den Jungen	die Jungen	den Studenten	die Studenten
Gen.	des Jungen	der Jungen	des Studenten	der Studenten
Dat.	dem Jungen	den Jungen	dem Studenten	den Studenten

(a) The 'weak' masculine nouns fall into three main groups

(i) those which end in **-** *e* in the nominative singular. These all denote male human beings or animals:

der Affe, der Bote, der Chinese, der Franzose, der Schwabe

A few masculine nouns in *-e* denote things, but these have different endings, in particular the eight irregular nouns which decline like *der Name* (see **1.3.3**). The two nouns *der Käse* and *der Charme* are regular.

(ii) a large number of foreign nouns, in particular those with the following stressed endings:
-and, -ant, -arch, -at, -ent, -et, -graf, -ist, -krat, -nom, -ot

Most of these (but by no means all) denote male human beings, e.g.:

der Doktorand, der Diamant, der Monarch, der Automat, der Student,
der Komet, der Geograf, der Komponist, der Demokrat, der Astronom, der Idiot

A few other nouns originally taken from other languages are in this group, e.g.:

der Barbar, der Chirurg, der Kamerad, der Katholik, der Prinz, der Tyrann

(iii) a few native nouns denoting male humans or animals which do not end in *-e* in the nominative singular. The most frequent are:

der Ahn	*ancestor*	der Fürst	*prince*	der Narr	*fool*
der Bär	*bear*	der Graf	*count*	der Oberst	*colonel*
der Bauer	*farmer, peasant*	der Held	*hero*	der Ochs	*ox*
der Bayer	*Bavarian*	der Hirt	*shepherd*	der Papagei	*parrot*

der Bub	*lad* (S.G.)	der Mensch	*human being*	der Spatz	*sparrow*
der Fink	*finch*	der Nachbar	*neighbour*	der Tor	*fool* (lit.)

(b) Weak masculine nouns may have no ending in the singular if they are used without a determiner

This avoids the possibility of confusion between singular and plural:

Die Situation war für Arzt und **Patient** kritisch   *The situation was critical for doctor and patient alike*

Ich schrieb an Christian Schulz, **Präsident** des *I wrote to Christian Schulz, the president of the* Gesangvereins   *choral society*

However, exceptions are by no means uncommon, especially after *als*:

Das russische Volk feierte ihn als **Helden** (Hapke/Scheer)   *The Russian people celebrated him as a hero*

(c) The singular endings of weak masculine nouns are often dropped in colloquial German

i.e. they have the 'regular' forms in the accusative and dative singular: *den Bär*, *dem Bär*. In principle, this usage is considered non-standard and incorrect, especially in writing, but it is clearly becoming more widespread and it is considered acceptable with some of these nouns, i.e.:

der Bauer, der Oberst, der Papagei, der Partisan, der Spatz, der Untertan

der Typ 'bloke', 'guy' (see **1.2.1e**) is often used with the 'weak' singular endings in colloquial speech: *den Typen*, *des Typen*, *dem Typen*. The 'weak' endings are also occasionally used with other words, even in writing, e.g. *des Nerven* (for standard *des Nervs*) especially those denoting male humans or animals, e.g. *des Autoren*, *des Zwergen*, but these forms are not generally accepted as correct.

(d) The noun *der Herr*

der Herr is a 'weak' masculine noun, but it has the ending *-n* in the singular and *-en* in the plural, e.g.:

Singular: *den, des, dem Herr n*   Plural: *die, der, den Herr* **en**

Unlike other 'weak' masculine nouns it always keeps the ending *-n* in the singular even if used without a determiner, e.g. (when addressing an envelope): *Herrn*

Alfred Bletzer.

(e) 'Weak' masculine nouns should not be confused with adjectives used as nouns

Nouns like *der Beamte* and *der Vorsitzende* look like 'weak' masculine nouns but they are adjectives used as nouns and they always have the endings of adjectives, see **6.2**.

1.3.3 Irregular masculine and neuter nouns

(a) Nine masculine nouns are irregular

As shown in **Table 1.9** they have the ending *-n* in the plural and in the accusative and dative singular, but *-ns* in the genitive singular. The following nouns belong to this group:

TABLE 1.9   Irregular masculine and neuter nouns

	Singular	**Plural**	**Singular**	**Plural**
Nom.	der Name	die Nam**en**	das Herz	die Herz**en**
Acc.	den Nam**en**	die Nam**en**	das Herz	die Herz**en**
Gen.	des Nam**ens**	der Nam**en**	des Herz**ens**	der Herz**en**
Dat.	dem Nam**en**	den Nam**en**	dem Herz**en**	den Herz**en**

der Buchstabe	*letter*	der Gedanke	*thought*	der Name	*name*
der Friede	*peace*	der Glaube	*belief*	der Same	*seed*
der Funke	*spark*	der Haufe	*heap*, *pile*	der Wille	*will*

The form of some of these words varies, so that *der Friede*, *der Funke*, *der Haufe* and *der Same* have alternative regular forms with *-n* in the nominative singular, i.e. *der Frieden*, *der Funken*, *der Haufen* and *der Samen*. Of these, *der Haufen* and *der Samen* have almost completely replaced *der Haufe* and *der Same*, and *der Frieden* is more frequent than *der Friede*. On the other hand, *der Funke* is more usual than *der Funken*.

In the genitive singular *der Buchstabe* has the less frequent alternative form *des Buchstaben*.

(b) The irregular neuter noun *das Herz*

As shown in **Table 1.9** , **t**he neuter noun *das Herz* has similar forms to the irregular masculine nouns. Regular singular forms, i.e. *des Herzes*, *dem Herz*, are not uncommon in colloquial speech and medical writing.

1.3.4 Dative singular in *-e*

In older German, masculine and neuter nouns, particularly those of one syllable, regularly added **-e** in the dative singular, e.g.:

dem Fluss**e**, dem Mann**e**, dem Tag**e**, dem Tal**e**

Although it is still occasionally found in formal written German, this so-called 'dative **-e**' has largely gone out of use, except in some common set phrases, i.e.:

das Kind mit dem Bade ausschütten	*to throw out the baby with the bathwater*
im Falle, dass	*in the event that*
bis zu einem gewissen Grade	*to a certain extent*
im Grunde genommen	*basically*
jdm. zum Halse heraushängen	*to be sick of sth.*
jdm. im Halse stecken bleiben	*to stick in sb.'s throat*
nach Hause (or *nachhause*, see **21.3.1**)	*home*
zu Hause (or *zuhause*, see **21.3.1**)	*at home*
im Jahre 2017	*in 2017*
auf dem Lande	*in the country*
im Laufe des Tages	*in the course of the day*
bei Lichte betrachtet/besehen	*seen in the (cold) light of day*
in gewissem Maße	*to a certain extent*
jdn. zu Rate ziehen	*to consult sb.*
etw im Schilde führen	*to be up to sth*
in diesem Sinne	*in this sense*
am Tage	*by day*
unter Tage arbeiten	*to work below ground*
(nicht) zum Zuge kommen	(*not*) *to get a look-in*
zum Zwecke	*with the aim*

Some of these phrases are often used without the **-e**, e.g. *im Lauf des Tages*, *am Tag*.

1.3.5 The masculine and neuter genitive singular

(a) The endings - *es* **and -** *s*

Regular masculine and neuter nouns have the ending *-s* or *-es* in the genitive singular, e.g. *des Buchs*, *des Tages*. The choice between these is only fixed where the ending *-s* would be impossible or difficult to pronounce, i.e.:

The ending *-es* must be used with nouns ending in *-s*, *-ß*, *-x* or *-z*, e.g.:

> des Krebs**es**, des Maß**es**, des Reflex**es**, des Sitz**es**, des Kreuz**es**

Nouns in *-nis* have double *-ss-*, e.g. *des Ereignisses*.

It is also more usual with nouns in *-sch*, *-st* or *-zt* (although *-s* is possible with these), e.g.:

> des Tisch**es**, des Dienst**es**, des Arzt**es**

The ending *-s*, on the other hand, is usual:

(i) with words ending in a vowel:
des Büros, des Knies, des Rehs, des Schnees, des Schuhs, des Sofas, des Uhus
(ii) with names and foreign words:
Schillers Dramen, die Einwohner Berlins, des Hotels, des Klubs, des Prinzips, des Rheins
(iii) with words of more than one syllable, especially if the last syllable is not stressed:
des Abends, des Königs, des Lehrers, des Mädchens, des Schicksals, des Wagens, des Zufalls
(iv) With other words the choice is largely a matter of individual preference, and either ending is considered correct. Some speakers feel that the ending *-es* is more formal or elevated, but this is not borne out by usage, and there often seems to be quite arbitrary variation with individual words.

Nevertheless, which ending is used does seem to depend in practice on the frequency of the word, with a clear preference for *-es* with the most commonly used words, especially if they end in more than one consonant. Thus, for example, *des Gastes* and *des Hundes* are rather more frequent than *des Gasts* and *des Hunds*.

(b) Lack of the genitive ending *-(e)s*

There is a tendency to omit the genitive singular ending *-(e)s*, in particular with less frequent loan words and others which are not typically native German nouns.

(i) with the names of the days of the week, months and seasons

> in den Abendstunden des folgenden Mittwoch(s)
> am Morgen des zehnten Januar(s)
> die kräftigste Zyklone des beginnenden Herbst (*NZZ*)

The omission of the ending *-s* with days of the week is widespread, but not universally accepted as correct.

The ending *-s* is normally used with the month names ending in *-er*, e.g. *die letzten Tage des Septembers*.

(ii) with names of artistic styles and epochs
des Barock(s), des Empire(s), des Jugendstil(s), des Rokoko(s)
(iii) with abbreviations and other parts of speech used as nouns

> ein Stück des eignen Ich(s)   meines Gegenüber(s)
> eines gewissen Jemand(s)   des LKW(s)

This also applies to names of languages and colours, which are adjectives used as nouns, see **6.2.4**:

> die Aussprache des modernen Deutsch(s)   dieses hässlichen Gelb(s)

(iv) with technical terms or specific names, e.g.:

des Dativ(s), des Dynamo(s), des Establishment(s), des Gulasch(s), des Holunder(s), des Interesse(s), des Islam(s), des Karfreitag(s), des Ostersonntag(s), des Parlament(s), des Parterre(s), des Radar(s)

The currency unit *der Euro* is also treated in this way, with the ending *-s* optional: *des Euro(s)*.

(v) after prepositions when the noun has no adjective or determiner with it, e.g.:

> laut Bericht   wegen Schnee geschlossen   trotz Geldmangel

The omission of *-s* can depend on whether an article or adjective is present, e.g.:

> eine Agrar-Reform, die aber wegen **Geldmangel** *an agricultural reform which is proceeding only*

und **gebremsten Eifers** nur langsam vorankommt *slowly because of a lack of money and limited* (*Zeit*) *enthusiasm*

However, usage is not consistent, and an ending is often used even if no article or adjective is present, especially with *wegen*:

Mehrere Skilifte mussten wegen **Sturms** ihren Betrieb *Several skilifts had to suspend operations* einstellen (*MM*) *because of a storm*

(vi) with foreign nouns ending in *-s* or *-x* and not stressed on the last syllable it is usual to omit the ending:
des Atlas, des Chaos, des Globus, des Index, des Rhythmus, des Sozialismus

The most frequent of these words may have the ending *-es*, e.g. *des Atlasses*, *des Indexes*, and a few foreign words, such as *der Bus*, have been totally assimilated and only have the ending *-es*, e.g. *des Busses*. If a word has a regular German plural rather than an unusual foreign one (or as an alternative to it, see **1.2.5**), it will most often have the genitive ending *-es*.

(c) The ending - *s* with feminine nouns in the genitive singular

Feminine nouns do not normally have an ending in the genitive singular. However, a few are occasionally used with the masculine ending *-s* in a few fixed expressions by analogy with masculine nouns used in similar contexts, i.e. *an Zahlungs statt* 'in place of payment', *von Obrigkeits wegen* 'on the part of the authorities'.

In addition, the feminine noun *Nacht* is used with masculine genitive endings in the adverbial expressions *des Nachts* and *eines Nachts* by analogy with *des Tags* and *eines Tages* (see **2.3.3c**).

1.3.6 Declension of proper names and titles

(a) Geographical names and proper names without titles or an article add - *s* in the genitive singular

Werner Faymans Politik	Elisabeths Bücher
die Werke Johann Sebastian Bachs	der Tod Friedrichs des Großen
Flüge innerhalb Deutschlands	Deutschlands Straßen

Personal names ending in *-s*, *-ß*, *-x*, *-z* do not add *-s* in the genitive. In writing, an apostrophe may be used:

> Fritz' Schwester, Agnes' Hut, Perikles' Tod, Marx' Einfluss

The use of the apostrophe in other cases (i.e. like English), e.g. *Bach's Werke*, *Anna's Bücher*, is often seen but considered quite incorrect.

In speech, a construction with *von* is usual and can be used in writing as an alternative to the apostrophe, see also **2.4**:

> der Hut von Agnes, der Tod von Perikles, der Einfluss von Marx

With geographical names in *-s*, *-ß*, *-x*, *-z*, only a phrase with *von* is possible:

> die Straßen von Paris   die Geschichte von Florenz

In everyday speech, especially in North Germany, the generic names of members of the family are often treated as names, e.g.:

Tantes Haus, Mutters Kleid, Vaters Geburtstag

(b) Proper names do not have the ending *-s* in the genitive singular if they are used with an article

die Rolle des Egmont   die Gedichte des alten Goethe

die Werke eines Johann Sebastian Bach   die Briefe dieses Thomas Schmidt

(c) With geographical names used with an article the ending -(*e*) *s* is optional

eines vereinigten Europa(s)   die Einwohner des geteilten Berlin(s)

die Kuppe des Feldberg(s)   die Ruinen des alten Rom(s)

an den Ufern des Nil(s)   in den Ländern des frankophonen Afrika(s)

If the article is part of the name (e.g. with rivers), adding the ending **is** more usual, e.g. *an den Ufern des Rheins* (less frequent: *des Rhein*).

Foreign geographical names do not usually have an ending, e.g. *die Berge des High Peak*.

(d) Proper names with titles in the genitive singular

(i) If there is no article, only the name (or the last name) is declined:

König Heinrichs Politik   am Hof Kaiser Ottos des Großen

Onkel Roberts Haus   Bundeskanzler Schröders Amtsantritt

Hans Joachims neue Bücher Tante Käthes Wohnung

(ii) If there is an article, only the title is declined:

die Siege des Kaisers Karl die Hauptstadt des Landes Niedersachsen

(iii) If the title is a weak masculine noun, the ending *-n* is optional:
Wir bedauern Genosse(n) Schmidts Versetzung nach Bautzen

However, *Herr* is always declined (see **1.3.2d**), and a following title may then lack the ending *-s*: *der Vortrag des Herrn Generaldirektor(s) Kramer*.

(iv) *Doktor* and the now rarely used *Fräulein*, used as titles, are never declined:

die Erfolge unseres Doktor Meyer die Mutter dieses Fräulein Sauer

(e) Titles and names of books, plays, newspapers, hotels, companies

(i) These are fully declined in the appropriate case, e.g.:
ein Lied aus Schillers „Räubern“, aus Brechts „kaukasischem Kreidekreis“
Sie las es in der „Süddeutschen Zeitung“, im „Spiegel“
Ich wohne im „Goldenen Apostel“
(ii) After a word which describes what kind of thing it is, a full title in quotation marks remains in the nominative:
in Brechts Drama „Der kaukasische Kreidekreis“
im Hotel „Weißer Löwe“
in der Wochenzeitschrift „Der Spiegel“
(iii) A short title in the genitive with an article may drop the *-(e)s*:
in der letzten Strophe des Erlkönig(s)
(iv) Names of companies should always be declined in full:
der Überschuss bei der Süddeutschen Zucker-AG
die Verwaltung der ehemaligen Deutschen Reichsbahn

This rule is frequently ignored in practice.

2 Case

The grammatical category of CASE relates to the INFLECTION of a NOUN, PRONOUN or NOUN PHRASE , i.e. putting ENDINGS on these to show their function in a sentence.

German has **four** cases: NOMINATIVE, ACCUSATIVE, GENITIVE and DATIVE which all have a range of uses, as summarized in *Table 2.1*. This chapter explains the use of the cases in the following sections:

TABLE 2.1   Main uses of the German cases

Nominative	
marks the subject of the verb	**Der Fußballspieler** schoss ein Tor *The football player shot a goal*
marks the complement of copular verbs like *sein*	Brecht war **ein großer Dichter** *Brecht was a great writer*
used with the noun in isolation	**Dein Freund**, wann siehst du ihn wieder? *Your friend, when will you see him again?*
Accusative	
marks the direct object of the verb	Ich kaufe **einen neuen Fernseher** *I'm buying a new television*
used after some prepositions	Sie hat es für **ihren Bruder** getan *She did it for her brother*
used in adverbial phrases, especially to mark distance or length of time	Anita blieb **den ganzen Tag** zu Hause *Anita stayed at home the whole day*
used in conventional greetings and wishes	**Guten Abend! Herzlichen Glückwunsch!** *Good evening! Congratulations!*
Genitive	
links nouns, e.g. to show possession	Der Ton **dieses Radios** ist furchtbar *The sound of this radio is awful*
used after some prepositions	Trotz **des Regens** gingen wir spazieren

	We went for a walk despite the rain
Dative	
marks the indirect object of the verb	Ich gebe **dem Hamster** sein Futter *I'm giving the hamster its food*
marks the sole (dative) object of some verbs	Sie will **ihrem Freund** helfen *She wants to help her friend*
can show possession, especially with clothing and parts of the body	Sie zogen **dem Verletzten** das Hemd aus *They took the injured man's shirt off*
used after some prepositions	Wir haben überall nach **dem Geld** gesucht *We looked everywhere for the money*
used with many adjectives	Dieses Gespräch war **mir** sehr nützlich *This conversation was very useful for me*

2.1 the NOMINATIVE case
2.2 the ACCUSATIVE case
2.3 the GENITIVE case
2.4 the use of *von* rather than the GENITIVE case
2.5 the DATIVE case
2.6 case use in APPOSITION
2.7 case use in **measurement phrases**

CASE is an area of the grammar where the differences between English and German seem most striking. English only has case forms for the possessive in *-s*, e.g. *my brother' s bike ~ das Fahrrad mein es Bruder s*, and in a few pronouns which change to show the SUBJECT or the OBJECT of the verb, such as *I~me* and *she~her*. The function of parts of a sentence are shown in other ways in English, typically by the word order. Compare:

> *The young man* [SUBJECT] *has given his friend* [INDIRECT OBJECT] *the suitcase* [DIRECT OBJECT]
> *D* **e***r jung* **e** *Mann* [NOMINATIVE] *hat sein em Freund* [DATIVE] *d en Koffer* [ACCUSATIVE] *gegeben*

In German the function of the noun phrases is shown by the **endings**, **not** the **word order** – which means that you can change the order round without changing the basic meaning (see also **Chapter 19**):

> *Sein em Freund hat d er jung e Mann d en Koffer gegeben*

but if you change the order in English the meaning changes totally, e.g.:

> *His friend has given the young man the suitcase*

We know what the sᴜʙᴊᴇᴄᴛ of the verb is in English because it comes immediately before the verb, but in German that information is in the ᴇɴᴅɪɴɢs (here for the ɴᴏᴍɪɴᴀᴛɪᴠᴇ case: *d er jung e Mann*). In this way, ɪɴꜰʟᴇᴄᴛɪᴏɴ for case is vital for showing the structure of a German sentence and understanding it.

2.1 The nominative case

2.1.1 The nominative case marks the subject of the finite verb

This is the most important and characteristic function of the nominative case. The ꜰɪɴɪᴛᴇ ᴠᴇʀʙ has an ending which agrees with the subject, see **10.1.4**:

Der Zug war nicht pünktlich			Heute war ausnahmsweise **der Mittagszug** nicht pünktlich					Heute war **der Zug** nicht pünktlich		

For more details see **16.2**. It is the endings of the nominative case which tell us what the subject of the verb is, and for this reason it does not always have to come before the verb, as it does in English, see **19.2**.

2.1.2 The nominative is used with nouns or pronouns in isolation

In this way it functions as a neutral case, used with nouns without any function in a sentence.

> **Ein schöner Tag** heute, nicht?
> Und **dein Freund**, wann siehst du ihn wieder?
> Und **du**, was meinst du dazu?

It is used in a similar way for persons and things addressed, and in exclamations:

Was beunruhigt dich, **mein Lieber**?	**Herr Müller**, Telefon für Sie!
Ach **du liebe Zeit**!	**Der unverschämte Kerl**!

It is also used in so-called 'absolute' phrases, where the noun phrase is placed outside the main framework of the clause:

als er an den Mann dachte, zu dem er jetzt gehen musste, **dieser Mann aus Röders Abteilung** (*Seghers*)	*when he thought of the man he now had to go to, that man from Röder's company*
Er saß am Feuer, **der Hund zu seinen Füßen**	*He sat by the fire, (with) the dog at his feet*

The type of absolute phrase in the last example is found mainly in formal, especially literary German; other registers generally prefer a construction with *mit*, e.g. *mit dem Hund zu seinen Füßen*.

2.1.3 The nominative is used in the complement of copular verbs

The so-called COPULAR VERBS have a PREDICATE COMPLEMENT which describes the subject of the verb. There are not many of them, but they are very frequent, i.e.: *sein*, *werden*, *bleiben*, *heißen* and *scheinen:*

Robert ist, wird **mein Freund**	Er heißt **der Kaiser** von Galizien
Er bleibt **ein Optimist**	Er wurde **der Weise** genannt

More information about these verbs and the predicate complement is given in section **16.6**.

2.2 The accusative case

The use of the accusative case with prepositions is dealt with in sections **18.2** and **18.3**.

2.2.1 The accusative case marks the direct object of transitive verbs

This is the most important function of the accusative case. TRANSITIVE VERBS are those which have a DIRECT OBJECT, which is typically a person or thing directly affected by the action of the verb in some way. Further details are given in section **16.3**.

Ich habe **einen Salat** gegessen	Die Putzfrau hat **den Fußboden** gebohnert
Sie hat mir **den Inhalt** erklärt	Er hat **die Tauben** im Park vergiftet

A very few verbs, e.g. *kosten* and *lehren*, take two objects in the accusative, see **16.3.3**.

INTRANSITIVE VERBS, by contrast, are those which do not have a direct object in the accusative case. A few appear to be an exception to this definition, because they can be used with a following accusative noun phrase, e.g.:

Er starb **einen** gewaltsame**n Tod**	Sie schlief **den Schlaf** der Gerechten

However, these accusative noun phrases are not **direct** objects affected by the action expressed by the verb, but so-called '**inner**' objects or '**cognate accusatives**'. Their meaning is very closely related to that of the particular verb and repeats or explains more fully the idea expressed by it.

In formal registers, *sterben* can also be used with an 'inner' object in the genitive case, e.g. *Er starb eines gewaltsamen Todes*.

2.2.2 The accusative case is used in some adverbial phrases

(a) A noun phrase in the accusative case can be used adverbially to indicate time

In these phrases the accusative case used without a preposition can indicate

(i) a length of time lying entirely in the past, present or future. The accusative usually corresponds to an English phrase with 'for' (see **18.1.3c**). The noun phrase in the accusative may be followed by *lang*, or, emphasizing the duration, *über* or *hindurch:*

Ich war **einen Monat/drei Monate** (lang) in Kassel	*I was in Kassel for a month/for three months*
Dort blieb sie **viele Jahre** (lang)	*She stayed there for many years*
Jahre hindurch blieb er im Gefängnis	*He stayed in prison for years (on end)*
Ich bin jede Woche **einen Tag** (lang) in Kaiserslautern	*I am in Kaiserslautern one day every week*
Er lag **den ganzen Tag** (lang/über) im Bett	*He lay in bed the whole day/all day (long)*
den ganzen Sommer (lang)	*all summer, for the whole of the summer*
den ganzen Winter hindurch/über	*throughout the winter*
sein ganzes Leben (lang)	*all his life/for his whole life*
Wo warst du **die ganze Zeit**?	*Where were you the whole time?*

(ii) a specific time or period of time. In these contexts the usual English equivalent is a phrase with no preposition, e.g.:

Einen Augenblick zuvor hätte sie ihn noch retten können	*A moment before she could still have saved him*
Er kommt **jeden Tag/jede Woche**	*He comes every day/every week*
Sie fährt **alle vierzehn Tage/alle paar Jahre** in die Schweiz	*She goes to Switzerland every two weeks/every few years*
Jede halbe Stunde kommt er vorbei	*Every half hour he comes past*
Wir besuchen sie **nächsten Dienstag/kommenden Dienstag/nächste Woche/kommende Woche**	*We are visiting her next Tuesday/next week*
Wir werden **dieses Jahr** nicht verreisen	*We're not going away this year*
Sie ist **2018** wieder zur Vorsitzenden des Vereins gewählt worden	*In 2018 she was elected chair of the society again*
Ich habe sie **letzten Freitag/vorigen Freitag/ vergangenen Freitag** gesehen	*I saw her last Friday*

In many contexts a prepositional phrase can be used as an alternative to a phrase in the accusative case, as in these typical alternatives to the examples above:

am nächsten/kommenden Dienstag	*next Tuesday*
am letzten/vorigen/vergangenen Freitag	*last Friday*
in der nächsten/kommenden Woche	*next week*
in diesem Jahr	*this year*
im Jahre 2018	*in 2018*

For information about *an* and *in* in time phrases see **18.3.2b** and **18.3.7b**. Phrases with the accusative case tend to be more frequent in everyday speech, whereas those with a preposition are rather more common in writing.

Time phrases in the accusative can also be alternatives to phrases with other prepositions, e.g.:

Ich bin **Mittag** (*or* um Mittag) wieder zu Hause   *I'll be back home at noon*

Fährst du **Ostern** (*or* zu Ostern) zu deinen Eltern?   *Are you going to your parents at Easter?*

Sind Sie **das erste Mal** (*or* zum ersten Mal) hier?   *Is this the first time you've been here?*

The accusative is also used in dates in letters: *Essen, den 4. August*. Further information on usage in dates is given in section **8.5.3**.

In time phrases the nouns *Anfang*, *Mitte* and *Ende* are used in the accusative case without a preposition:

Er ist **Anfang Januar**/**Mitte Januar**/**Ende Januar** gestorben   *He died at the beginning of January/in the middle of January/at the end of January*

Ich fahre schon **Anfang**/**Ende** nächster Woche   *I'm leaving at the beginning/at the end of next week*

Anfang 2014 fand die Zeitschrift heraus, dass diese Fernseher die TV-Sender informieren, wenn der Benutzer den Kanal wechselt (*BZ*)   *At the beginning of 2014 the journal found out that these televisions inform the broadcasters when the viewer changes channels*

If *Anfang* and *Ende* are used without a following time phrase, they are preceded by *am*, e.g. *am Anfang* 'at the beginning', *am Ende* 'at the end'.

(b) A noun phrase in the accusative case is used with verbs and adverbs denoting motion to indicate distance travelled

Ich bin **den ganzen Weg** zu Fuß gegangen   Sie kommt **den Berg** herauf

Wir sind **die Straße** heruntergekommen   Sie kommt **die Treppe** herunter

This adverbial accusative is particularly common with the direction adverbs formed with *hin-* and *her-* (see **7.2.4a**).

(c) A noun phrase in the accusative case can be used with an appropriate adjective following to express a measurement or a value

Das ist **keinen Pfennig** wert   Der Tisch ist **ein(en) Meter** breit

Das Kind ist **vier Jahre** alt   Der Sack wiegt **einen Zentner**

2.2.3 Other uses of the accusative case

(a) Conventional greetings and wishes are in the accusative case

The accusative case with these is naturally only evident with masculine nouns:

Guten Morgen, Tag, Abend	Gute Nacht	Guten Rutsch (ins neue Jahr)
Schönen Sonntag	Besten Dank	Herzlichen Glückwunsch
Viel Vergnügen	Gute Besserung	Angenehme Reise

The accusative case is used as these phases are in practice the direct objects of a verb like *wünschen*, which is understood.

(b) A few adjectives are used with the accusative case

e.g. *etwas gewohnt sein* 'to be used to something':

Als einstiger Skilehrer ist er sich **den Saisonbetrieb** gewohnt (*SGT*)   As *a former ski instructor he is used to seasonal work*

Further details on these adjectives are given in **6.3.2**.

(c) The accusative case is sometimes used in 'absolute' phrases

Phrases like this typically describe a noun, e.g.:

Wilhelmine, **den Kopf geneigt**, erlaubt ihm, ihr Haar zu lösen (*Wolf*)   *Wilhelmine, her head bowed, allows him to untie her hair*

Den Bauch voller Fracht, fliegt der Jet nach Fernost (*Spiegel*)   *Its belly full of freight, the jet flies to the Far East*

This usage is typical of formal or literary registers and is uncommon even there, since a construction with *mit* is often preferred, e.g. *mit dem Bauch voller Fracht*.

2.3 The genitive case

In modern German the genitive case is characteristic of more formal, especially written registers, and it is often considered a symbolic marker of 'best' usage. It can at times sound affected in informal registers, and other constructions are frequently preferred in everyday speech. This section outlines the current uses of the genitive with this general proviso.

Information about the contexts in which a phrase with *von* may be preferred to the genitive is given in section **2.4**, and the use of the genitive case in measurement phrases is treated in section **2.7**.

For the use of the genitive case after prepositions see section **18.4**.

2.3.1 The main function of the genitive case is to link noun phrases

English typically uses the preposition *of* in constructions like this. We often think of the genitive as the 'possessive' case, but its range is wider, since it can be used:

das Haus meines Bruders

- **to express possession**

  die Hälfte des Kuchens
- **as a partitive**

  die Abfahrt des Zuges
- **for the subject of a verbal noun**

  der Umbau des Hauses
- **for the object of a verbal noun**

  ein Strahl der Hoffnung
- **to qualify a noun**

  die Pflicht der Dankbarkeit
- **to define a noun**

A noun in the genitive case with a verbal noun can sometimes be ambiguous, since it might come from the subject or the object of the verb. For example, *die Beschreibung des Polizisten* could refer to the policeman describing something or somebody describing the policeman. Ambiguities like this can be resolved if necessary by re-phrasing: *die Beschreibung durch den Polizisten*, for instance, makes it clear that it is the policeman who is describing something and not himself being described.

2.3.2 The position of noun phrases in the genitive

A noun phrase in the genitive case usually **follows** the noun phrase on which it depends:

die Gefahr **eines Erdbebens**   das Rauschen **der Bäume**

However, proper names in the genitive usually come first:

Roberts Freund   **Annas** Smartphone   **Frau Benders** Haus
Heinrich Bölls Werke **Figaros** Hochzeit   **Deutschlands** Grenzen

In written German, though, personal names without a title and geographical names can follow the noun phrase which they depend on:

die Werke **Heinrich Bölls**   die Grenzen **Deutschlands**

Otherwise, the genitive comes first only in rather old-fashioned literary usage, or in set phrases:

seiner Vorfahren großes altes Haus (*Th. Mann*) *the large old house of his ancestors*

Undank ist **der Welt** Lohn *Never expect thanks for anything*

In other contexts this order sounds ironic or facetious:

Wer spielt, ist **des Trainers Entscheidung,** und ich *It's the manager's decision who's going to play and I*
  weiß noch nicht, wie er plant (*RhZ*) *don't yet know what he has in mind*

2.3.3 Other uses of the genitive case

(a) Some verbs take an object in the genitive case
There are very few of these in modern German, e.g. *bedürfen*, *gedenken*, see **16.7**, and, uniquely, *sterben* can be used with an 'inner' object (see **2.2.1**) in the genitive case, e.g. *Er starb eines gewaltsamen Todes*. They are all largely restricted to formal registers.

(b) Noun phrases in the genitive case after the verb *sein*
In a few fixed expressions a noun phrase in the genitive occurs as the predicate complement of *sein*. The following are still frequent:

Wir sind gleichen Alters	*We are of the same age*
Ich bin der Ansicht, dass …	*I am of the view that …*
Ich bin der Auffassung, dass …	*I am of the opinion that …*
Er ist guter Dinge	*He is in good spirits*
Wir waren guter/schlechter Laune	*We were in a good/bad mood*
Sie ist der Meinung, dass …	*She is of the opinion that …*
Dann sind wir des Todes	*Then we are doomed*
Sie sind der festen Überzeugung, dass …	*They are firmly convinced that …*
Das Wort ist griechischen Ursprungs	*The word is of Greek origin*

(c) The genitive case of nouns denoting time can refer to indefinite or habitual time
These are now mainly set expressions, and they are extended by adjectives only in formal registers:

eines Tages	*one day*
eines schönen Tages	*one fine day*
eines Sonntags	*one Sunday*
eines Morgens	*one morning*
eines Sonntagmorgens	*one Sunday morning*
eines nebligen Morgens	*one foggy morning*

dieser Tage	*in the next/last few days*
eines Nachts	*one night*

Note the form *eines Nachts*, despite the fact that *die Nacht* is feminine.

Some simple adverbs, e.g. *morgens*, *abends*, originated from noun phrases in the genitive with the definite article, i.e. *des Morgens*, *des Abends*, etc. (see **7.3.2** for further details). The full phrases are still occasionally used in formal writing.

(d) Some other noun phrases in the genitive are used adverbially as fixed expressions

unverrichteter Dinge	*without managing to finish anything*
letzten Endes	*after all*
meines Erachtens (*abbrev.*: m.E.)	*in my view*
allen Ernstes	*in all seriousness*
stehenden Fußes (*lit.*)	*immediately*
gesenkten/erhobenen Hauptes	*with one's head bowed/raised*
leichten/schweren Herzens	*with a light/heavy heart*
Sie fährt erster Klasse	*She is travelling first class*
seines Weges gehen (*lit.*)	*to go on one's way*
meines Wissens (*abbrev.*: m.W.)	*to my knowledge*

(e) A few adjectives are used with the genitive case
For further details see **6.3.3**. A construction with *of* is a frequent English equivalent for these, e.g.:

Er ist **einer solchen Tat** nicht fähig   *He is not capable of such a deed*

2.4 Genitive case or *von*?

Using the genitive case where appropriate is the norm in written German, and it is considered very much as a mark of 'best' style. However, it is much less frequent in everyday speech, except with names (e.g. *Ruths Buch*, *Peters Fahrrad*), and a prepositional phrase with *von* is often preferred, e.g.:

everyday speech: das Dach **vom Haus**, der Ring **von seiner Frau**
written German: das Dach **des Hauses**, der Ring **seiner Frau**

Even in written German, though, there are contexts where the genitive is not possible and where the paraphrase with *von* **must** be used, and in some other contexts the paraphrase is an acceptable alternative. This section gives information about the contexts where the paraphrase with *von* must or can be used

in written German. In other contexts the paraphrase is considered colloquial, and a phrase with the genitive will usually be preferred in formal registers.

The use of the genitive case or a phrase with *von* with certain prepositions (e.g. *oberhalb der Stadt Basel*, *innerhalb von vier Jahren*) is explained in **18.4.3**.

2.4.1 Contexts in which a phrase with *von* is usual in writing

(a) if a noun stands by itself or is used with a word which does not decline
i.e. with a determiner which has no ending or with a numeral

der Bau **von Kraftwerken**	*the building of power stations*
die Wirkung **von wenig Wein**	*the effect of a little wine*
der Preis **von fünf Fahrrädern**	*the price of five bicycles*
ein Strahl **von Hoffnung**	*a ray of hope*

(b) with a descriptive phrase

eine Frau **von bezaubernder Höflichkeit**	*a woman of enchanting politeness*
ein Ereignis **von weltgeschichtlicher Bedeutung**	*an event of global historical significance*

(c) with personal pronouns
The genitive forms of personal pronouns are rarely used, see **3.1.2**:

fünf **von euch**	*five of you*
ein Freund **von ihr**	*a friend of hers*

(d) in partitive constructions with *viel*, *wenig* and indefinite pronouns

viel/wenig **von dem**, was sie sagte	*much/little of what she said*
etwas **von ihrem Charme**	*something of her charm*
welches **von diesen Büchern**?	*which of those books?*
nichts **von diesem Zauber**	*nothing of this magic*

2.4.2 Contexts in which a phrase with *von* is acceptable in writing

In these contexts it is equally acceptable in written German to use a phrase with *von* **or** the genitive case.

(a) to avoid consecutive genitive noun phrases in -(*e*) *s*

der Turm **von dem Palast** des Königs }	*the tower of the king's palace*
der Turm **des Palasts** des Königs	

Consecutive genitive noun phrases are considered inelegant, especially if both nouns have the ending -(*e*)*s*, but they are not unknown, e.g.:

die Existenz **eines Verdachts eines Verstoßes** gegen den Atomsperrvertrag (*SZ*)   *the existence of a suspected violation of the nuclear weapons non-proliferation treaty*

(b) if a noun is qualified by an adjective with no article

der Bau **von modernen Kraftwerken**   }   *the building of modern power stations*
der Bau **moderner Kraftwerke**

There is a clear preference for a phrase with *von* if the first noun is qualified by an indefinite article, e.g.:

ein übler Geruch **von faulen Eiern**   *a nasty smell of bad eggs*

(c) with nouns qualified by indefinite pronouns

die Ansicht **von vielen Politikern**   }   *the view of many politicians*
die Ansicht **vieler Politiker**

(d) in most partitive constructions
i.e. following number words (except those listed at **2.4.1d**):

eines **von den wenigen alten Häusern**   }   eines **der wenigen alten Häuser**
one of the few old houses

viele **von meinen Freunden**   }   *many of my friends*
viele **meiner Freunde**

zwei **von ihren Kindern**   }   *two of her children*
zwei **ihrer Kinder**

(e) with geographical names which have no article

die Zerstörung **von Dresden**   }   *the destruction of Dresden*
die Zerstörung **Dresdens**

die Hauptstadt **von Deutschland**   }   *the capital of Germany*
die Hauptstadt **Deutschlands**

In German, no preposition is used with geographical names, e.g. *die Stadt Ulm*, *die Universität Freiburg*, see **2.6c**.

2.5 The dative case

The dative case has **the widest range of all the German cases**; its uses are explained in the following sections:

2.5.1 the **dative** as the **indirect** or **sole object** of a verb
2.5.2 **'free' datives** with other verbs
2.5.3 the **dative** used to indicate **possession**

2.5.4 the use of the **dative** case with **adjectives**

In all these contexts it typically marks a person or persons (rather than a thing) in some way concerned or affected, if not necessarily very directly, by the action or the event expressed in the verb. In addition, the dative case is the most frequent case used after prepositions, and these uses are dealt with in sections **18.2** and **18.3**.

2.5.1 The dative case as the object of a verb

(a) The dative case marks the indirect object of transitive verbs

The INDIRECT OBJECT typically indicates the person who is in receipt of the direct object of the verb, and it is a characteristic of verbs of giving and receiving or the like that they have an indirect as well as a direct object (see **16.4.1**). In German the indirect object is in the dative case, whereas in English it is marked by the word order or by a phrase introduced by *to*:

Ich habe **dem Polizisten** meinen Führerschein gezeigt	{	*I showed the policeman my driving licence*
		I showed my driving licence to the policeman
Ich habe **meinem Freund** das Buch geliehen	{	*I lent my friend the book*
		I lent the book to my friend

(b) Some verbs take a sole object in the dative case

These are intransitive verbs which do not have a direct object in the accusative case, but only a dative object. The English equivalents are most often simple transitive verbs, e.g.:

Er hat **seiner Tante** für ihre Hilfe gedankt	*He thanked his aunt for her help*
Der Einbrecher hat **dem alten Mann** mit einer Pistole gedroht	*The burglar threatened the old man with a pistol*

Other verbs like this are *dienen*, *folgen*, *gratulieren*, *helfen* and *schmeicheln*. For further details see **16.4.2**.

2.5.2 'Free' datives

The dative case is often used to mark a person (rarely a thing) affected in some way by the action or event expressed by the verb, especially with verbs which denote an activity, in particular moving and making things, or which indicate a change of state. These uses of the dative case are often referred to as **'free' datives**. However, the difference between some of these uses and the typical dative objects dealt with in **2.5.1** is not clear-cut, except that the dative case in these contexts is rarely a grammatical requirement.

Various types of 'free' datives have been identified, but there are similarities between all of them (and between them and the possessive dative, see **2.5.3**). Some are idiomatic and lack a clear equivalent in English.

(a) The dative case can indicate a person on whose behalf the action is done

(i) This is sometimes called the '**dative of advantage**' or the '**benefactive**' **dative**. It often corresponds to an English phrase with 'for':

Sie hat **mir** seine Adresse aufgeschrieben	*She wrote his address down for me*
Ich habe **ihr** die Tür geöffnet	*I opened the door for her*
Er füllte **meinem Vater** das Glas	*He filled the glass for my father/my father's glass*

(ii) It is sometimes used with things, especially things being altered, repaired or improved:

Sie setzt **dem Auto** einen neuen Motor ein   *She's putting a new engine in the car*

(iii) In this 'benefactive' sense, a dative reflexive pronoun can be used if a physical action is involved. This is very frequent in everyday speech:

Ich will **mir** das Buch anschauen   *I want to go and look at that book*

(iv) In many of these contexts a phrase with *für* can be used rather than the dative case:

Er will **mir** Blumen/Blumen **für mich** kaufen	*He's going to buy some flowers for me*
Ich habe **ihr** die Tür/die Tür **für sie** geöffnet	*I opened the door for her*

The construction with *für* may be preferred if the dative is ambiguous. For instance, *Er hat seinem Vater einen Brief geschrieben* could mean 'to his father' or 'for his father', but *Er hat für seinen Vater einen Brief geschrieben* is quite clear.

(b) The dative case can indicate a person who is disadvantaged by the action

This '**dative of disadvantage**' characteristically indicates a person who is affected by something undesirable happening to the person or thing which is the subject or direct object of the verb:

Mir ist Großmutters Vase kaputtgegangen   *Grandmother's vase broke on me*

(c) The dative case can mark a person from whose standpoint an action is being judged

This usage typically involves an adjective qualified by *zu* or *genug*:

Mir vergeht die Zeit zu schnell	*I have a feeling that time is passing too quickly*
Fährt sie **dir** schnell genug?	*Is she driving fast enough for you?*

A similar dative of the person concerned is frequent with the verb *sein* and a noun. In such cases, English uses a phrase with 'to' or 'for':

Das Wiedersehen mit dir war **mir** ein Vergnügen	*It was a pleasure for me to see you again*
Dem alten Mann waren diese Worte ein Trost	*These words were a consolation to the old man*

(d) The so-called 'ethic dative' indicates the speaker's emotional involvement
It is only found with the first person, in commands or exclamations:

Dann soll **mir** mal so einer vorbeikommen!   *Just let me catch one like that coming past!*

Seid **mir** doch nett!   *Be nice, for my sake!*

2.5.3 The dative of possession

(a) The dative case is often used to indicate possession
This is especially frequent with **parts of the body** or **articles of clothing**, but it is also found with close relatives and prized possessions (like vehicles or houses). The definite article is used rather than a possessive determiner (see **4.6**), and the dative typically comes before the item possessed:

Einem Mann ist das Bein gebrochen worden (*FR*)   *One man's leg was broken*

Mir muss der Mund offen geblieben sein (*Borst*)   *My mouth must have hung open*

Dem Alten ist gerade die Frau gestorben   *The old man's wife has just died*

Das Kind ist **mir** vors Auto gelaufen   *The child ran in front of my car*

If the possessor is the subject of the sentence, a reflexive pronoun in the dative case is used. This may be optional if no ambiguity is involved about who the item in question belongs to:

Er wischte **sich** den Schweiß von der Stirn   *He wiped the sweat from his brow*

Willst du (**dir**) den grünen Pullover anziehen?   *Are you going to put your green pullover on?*

There is some variation in the use of the possessive dative, but the following guidelines apply:

(i) It is not used if no-one else could possibly do it to one or for one:

Er hat die Augen aufgemacht   *He opened his eyes*

Sie hob den Arm   *She raised her arm*

Er nickte mit dem Kopf   *He nodded his head*

(ii) It is not used with verbs of perception:

Sie hat sein Gesicht nicht gesehen   *She didn't see his face*

Ich habe ihre Stimme gehört   *I heard her voice*

(iii) It **must** be used if the body part or article of clothing is used with a preposition (other than *mit*):

Ich habe **mir** in den Finger geschnitten   *I've cut my finger*

Die Mütze fiel **ihm** vom Kopf   *The cap fell off his head*

Regen tropfte **mir** auf den Hut   *Rain was falling on my hat*

(iv) It **must** be used if reference is not to the subject of the sentence:

Die Mutter wäscht **ihm** die Hände   *His mother is washing his hands*
Wir zogen **dem Verletzten** die Hose aus   *We took the injured man's trousers off*

(b) Differences between using the dative and a possessive construction

Possession can also be indicated by using a genitive phrase or a possessive determiner like *sein* or *mein*, but if the dative is used rather than a possessive construction, the person is seen as affected by the action as well. Compare:

Regen tropfte **ihm auf den Hut**	*(he was wearing it and getting wet)*
Regen tropfte **auf seinen Hut**	*(he wasn't necessarily wearing it)*
Sie strich **dem Jungen übers Gesicht**	*(the usual equivalent of 'she ran her hand over the boy's face')*
Sie strich **über das Gesicht des Jungen**	*(only likely if the boy is unconscious – or dead)*
Er zog **ihr die** Jacke an	*He helped her on with her jacket*
Er zog **sich ihre** Jacke an	*He put her jacket on*

(c) The use of the accusative or the dative to indicate possession of parts of the body

With some verbs the accusative or the dative case can be used to indicate possession of parts of the body with no significant difference in meaning.

Der Hund hat **ihm/ihn** ins Bein gebissen	Sie hat **mir/mich** in die Seite gestoßen
Die Wespe hat **ihr/sie** in den Arm gestochen	Er zwickte **dem/das** Kind in den Arm

With *schmerzen* and *stoßen*, the accusative and dative are equally common, but there are another ten verbs with which it is possible to use the accusative, although the dative is more common:

beißen	boxen	hauen	klopfen	schießen
schlagen	schneiden	stechen	treten	zwicken

(d) In colloquial speech a phrase in the dative case is often used to indicate possession

This construction is widespread in everyday speech, especially in the South, but it is heavily stigmatized as non-standard. It can only be used if the possessor is a person:

Ist das wirklich **der Astrid ihr Fahrrad**?	*Is that really Astrid's bike?*
Meinem Onkel sein Garten ist ganz groß	*My uncle's garden is quite big*
Dem Huck Finn sein Vater (*Andersch*)	*Huck Finn's father*
Das ist aber **mir**!	*But that's mine/that belongs to me*
Wem ist das alte Fahrrad dort?	*Whose is that old bike over there?*

2.5.4 Other uses of the dative case

(a) The dative case is often used with noun phrases which depend on adjectives

e.g. *Er ist seinem Bruder sehr ähnlich*. The dative is the most common case used with adjectives, and full details are given in section **6.3.1**.

(b) Adjectives with *zu* **or** *genug* **may govern a dative case or a phrase with** *für*

A phrase with *für* can come before **or** after the adjective, but the dative always precedes it:

Diese Uhr ist **mir** zu teuer/**für mich** zu teuer/zu teuer **für mich**	*That watch is too expensive for me*
Der Mantel ist **mir** nicht warm genug/**für mich** nicht warm genug/ nicht warm genug **für mich**	*The coat is not warm enough for me*

(c) The dative case with *sein* **and** *werden* **and adjectives expressing sensations**

With a number of adjectives which express a sensation used with the verbs *sein* and *werden*, the person who is experiencing the sensation is put into the dative case in an impersonal construction. In English the person is typically the subject of the verb:

Es ist **mir** kalt/**Mir** ist kalt	*I am cold*
Ist **dir** warm genug?	*Are you warm enough?*
Ihm wurde plötzlich schwindlig	*He suddenly felt dizzy*

For the omission of *es*, see **16.2.4e**. This construction is used with the following adjectives:

bange	heiß	schlecht	übel	(un)wohl
gut	kalt	schwindlig	warm	

English-speaking learners need to be aware that *Ich bin kalt* or *Ich bin warm*, etc. are **never** used to mean 'I am cold' or 'I am warm', etc. Indeed, they can sometimes have a quite different meaning, so that, for example, in colloquial speech *Er ist warm* commonly means 'He is gay'.

2.6 Apposition

A noun phrase is said to be '**in apposition**' to another noun phrase if it immediately follows and gives some additional information about it, e.g.:

> Wilhelm, **der letzte deutsche Kaiser**
> Berlin, **die Hauptstadt der Bundesrepublik Deutschland**

Comparative phrases introduced by *als* and *wie* are also 'in apposition' to the noun they qualify, and the rules given below apply to them as well:

ein Tag **wie jeder andere**   Er gilt **als großer Staatsmann**   Jürgen ist größer **als du**

Apposition in measurement phrases is dealt with in section **2.7**.

(a) Noun phrases in apposition have the same case as the noun which they describe

Es spricht Herbert Werner, **der Vorsitzende des Vereins**	*The speaker is Herbert Werner, the chairman of the society*
in Michelstadt, **einem kleinen Städtchen im Odenwald**	*in Michelstadt, a little town in the Odenwald*
6,8 Prozent der Frauen empfinden die Arbeitslosigkeit als **einen Makel** (*LV*)	*6.8% of women feel that being unemployed is a stigma*
der „Mythos der Schweiz" als **eines Landes mit vier Landessprachen** (*NZZ*)	*The 'myth of Switzerland' as a country with four national languages*
für Heinrich Böll als **gläubigen Katholiken**	*for Heinrich Böll as a devout Catholic*
nach einem Tag wie **diesem**	*after a day like this*

(b) There are some exceptions to this general rule

The rule that noun phrases in apposition are in the same case is generally followed in both spoken and written German. However, a few exceptions are common:

(i) After a genitive, an noun in apposition with no determiner or adjective is usually in the nominative:

nach dem Tod meines Onkels, **Bürgermeister** der Stadt Krefeld   *after the death of my uncle, the mayor of the town of Krefeld*

(ii) In dates a weekday introduced by *am* can be followed by the date in the dative **or** the accusative, see **8.5.3b**:
am Montag, **dem** 7. September 2015 *or* am Montag, **den** 7. September 2015
(iii) If the phrase in apposition has an adjective, but no determiner, then the nominative can be used:
Wir informieren auch Uwe Rösler, **Technischen Direktor**/**Technischer Direktor** des Betriebs

In practice, the nominative occasionally occurs in other contexts, as a kind of neutral possibility.
(iv) The dative is often used instead of other cases:

> nach dem Tod meines Onkels, **dem früheren Bürgermeister dieser Stadt**
> die Wirtsleute des „Birnbaumes", **einem kleinen Dorfhaus** (*BZ*)
> Der Präsident begrüßte Walter Keller, **dem Minister** für Entwicklungshilfe

However, using the dative in such contexts is not (yet) fully accepted as standard and many authorities recommend avoiding it in writing.
(v) After verbs used reflexively (i.e. not 'true' reflexive verbs, see **16.3.5b**) the nominative **or** the accusative can be used:
Er betrachtet sich als **ein** glüclich**er** Mensch/ein**en** glüclich**en** Menschen
(vi) The genitive case is regularly used after a phrase with *von*:
Sacramento ist die Hauptstadt von Kalifornien, **des reichsten Bundesstaates**
(c) German often uses appositional constructions with geographical names

die Insel Rügen   die Universität Hamburg   die Stadt Bremen

English typically uses 'of' in contexts like this, e.g. 'the University **of** Hamburg', 'the city **of** Bremen', etc.

2.7 Measurement phrases: genitive, *von* or apposition?

There is much variation and uncertainty in respect of case usage in measurement phrases, and this section outlines the most widely used accepted alternatives. For the use of singular nouns in measurement phrases, e.g. *zwei Pfund Kirschen*, see **1.2.8**.

2.7.1 Noun phrases after a noun of measurement

(a) A noun phrase after a noun of measurement is most often treated as being in apposition to it
i.e. it is put in the same case (see **2.6**):

eine Flasche **Wein**	*a bottle of wine*
eine Flasche **deutscher Wein**	*a bottle of German wine*
er kauft zwei Flaschen **deutschen Wein**	*he is buying two bottles of German wine*
mit einer Tasse **heißem Tee**	*with a cup of hot tea*
von vier Kilo **grünen Erbsen**	*of four kilograms of green peas*

In spoken German it is not uncommon to hear datives for accusatives and vice versa, e.g. *Er kauft zwei Flaschen deutschem Wein*, *mit einer Tasse heißen Tee.* This is considered incorrect in writing.

(b) The genitive case is sometimes used in measurement phrases

eine Flasche **sommerabendlichen Dufts** (*Süßkind*)	*a bottle of the perfume of a summer evening*
zehn Jahre **treuer Mitarbeit**	*ten years' faithful service*
Dort in der Ecke liegen zwei Körbe **frischer Äpfel**	*There are two baskets of fresh apples over there in the corner*

This alternative **only** occurs in the sequence: **noun of measurement + adjective + noun**. With masculine and neuter nouns in the singular, as in the first example above, it is typical of formal written registers and largely limited to them, but it is quite frequent in the plural in both written and spoken German.

(c) Usage when the noun of measurement is in the dative case
Here usage is particularly uncertain and variable, and the following alternatives are equally acceptable:

(i) After nouns of measurement in *-er*, e.g. *Zentner* 'hundredweight', *Liter*, *Meter*, etc., the dative plural ending *-n* can be attached to these rather than to the following noun:
mit zwei Zentner**n** Äpfel *or* mit zwei Zentner Äpfel**n**
(ii) If the following noun is plural, it can be in the dative or the nominative, i.e. it may lack the ending *-n* of the dative plural:

mit einem Haufen **Butterbrote(n)**	*with a pile of sandwiches*
mit einem Dutzend **Kühe(n)**	*with a dozen cows*

If the noun has an adjective with it, it can be in the genitive. This means that all three of the following

alternatives are acceptable:

> mit einem Strauß rote Rosen (*nominative*)
> mit einem Strauß roten Rosen (*dative*)
> mit einem Strauß roter Rosen (*genitive*)

(iii) If the following noun is singular and has an adjective with it, the adjective has the 'strong' ending -*em*:

von einem Pfund gekocht**em** Schinken   *of a pound of cooked ham*

The use of the 'weak' ending -*en*, i.e. *von einem Pfund gekochten Schinken*, is not accepted as standard.

(d) Usage in contexts where the noun of measurement is in the genitive case
In these contexts the following noun only has the genitive ending if it has an adjective with it:

> der Preis eines Pfund**es** Schinken**BUT**: der Preis eines Pfund**es** gekocht**en** Schinken**s**.

However, even in formal writing, constructions like this are usually avoided by using a phrase with *von*, e.g. *der Preis von einem Pfund Schinken*, especially if the following noun has an adjective qualifying it: *der Preis von einem Pfund gekochtem/gekochten Schinken.*

2.7.2 Noun phrases after words of rather vague quantity

e.g. *die Anzahl*, *die Gruppe*, *der Haufen*, *die Reihe*, *die Schar*, *die Sorte*. A phrase following these is most often in the genitive case in writing if the following noun has an adjective with it (or is an adjective used as a noun), but a phrase with *von* is also possible (and is the norm in speech):

zwei Gruppen **junger Arbeiter**	*or* zwei Gruppen **von jungen Arbeitern**
große Mengen **neuer Autos**	*or* große Mengen **von neuen Autos**
eine Reihe **ernsthafter Probleme**	*or* eine Reihe **von ernsthaften Problemen**
die wachsende Anzahl **Asylsuchender**	*or* die wachsende Anzahl **von Asylsuchenden**

If these words are followed by a single noun, it can be in apposition or in a phrase with *von*:

eine Art (von) Museum   eine Anzahl (von) Touristen   eine große Menge (von) Material

2.7.3 Noun phrases after nouns of number

i.e. *das Dutzend*, *das Hundert*, *das Tausend*, *die Million*, *die Milliarde*. If these are used in the plural without a preceding numeral, they are followed by a phrase with *von*:

Dutzende **von Anfragen**   Tausende **von Briten**   Millionen **von Menschen**

If the following noun has an adjective with it, three alternative constructions are possible, and in such contexts *Dutzend*, *Hundert* and *Tausend* can be spelled with an initial capital **or** a small letter, see **8.1.5c**, i.e.:

a phrase with *von*:	Tausende/tausende **von jungen Arbeitern**
a phrase in apposition:	Tausende/tausende **junge Arbeiter**
a phrase in the genitive case:	Tausende/tausende **junger Arbeiter**

In practice, the alternative with a phrase in the genitive case is now less frequent.

If they are used in the singular **or** the plural with a numeral, the following noun is usually in apposition, rather less commonly in the genitive:

zwei Millionen **hungernde(r) Menschen**	*two million starving people*
ein Dutzend **Eier**	*a dozen eggs*
Allein im Bahnhof kam es im Februar zu mehr als einem Dutzend **Taschendiebstählen** (*MM*)	*Just in the station there were more than a dozen pickpocket thefts in February*

A plural noun following a noun of measurement in the dative case can drop the ending *-n*, e.g. *Wir rechnen mit einem Dutzend Teilnehmer(n)*.

3 Personal pronouns

PRONOUNS are a limited ('closed') set of small words which stand in place of NOUNS or NOUN PHRASES. In particular they stand for nouns or noun phrases which have already been mentioned or which are so well known to the speaker and the listener that they do not need to be repeated in full.

The following sections of this chapter give information on:

3.1 the forms of the **personal pronouns**
3.2 reflexive and **reciprocal pronouns**
3.3 the use of the **second person pronouns** *du*, *ihr* and *Sie*
3.4 the uses of the **third person pronouns**
3.5 the **prepositional adverb**
3.6 special uses of the **pronoun** *es*

This chapter explains the forms and uses of the PERSONAL PRONOUNS , i.e. those which refer to:

- the speaker(s), i.e. English *I* and *we* – the FIRST PERSON
- the person(s) addressed, i.e. English *you* – the SECOND PERSON
- other person(s) or thing(s) mentioned, i.e. English *he, she, it* and *they* – the THIRD PERSON

There are a number of other types of pronoun which are dealt with in **Chapter 5**.

Pronouns are used in the same grammatical contexts as nouns or noun phrases and thus, in German, they change their form to indicate the same grammatical categories as nouns, i.e. CASE, NUMBER **and** GENDER. These forms are given in *Table 3.1*.

TABLE 3.1   Personal pronouns

Person		Nominative		Accusative	Genitive	Dative
Singular **1st**		**ich**	*I*	**mich**	**meiner**	**mir**
2nd		**du**	*you*	**dich**	**deiner**	**dir**
3rd	**masculine**	**er**	*he/it*	**ihn**	**seiner**	**ihm**
	feminine	**sie**	*she/it*	**sie**	**ihrer**	**ihr**
	neuter	**es**	*it*	**es**	**seiner**	**ihm**
Plural **1st**		**wir**	*we*	**uns**	**unser**	**uns**
2nd	**familiar**	**ihr**	*you*	**euch**	**euer**	**euch**
polite (sg./pl.)	**Sie**		*you*	**Sie**	**Ihrer**	**Ihnen**
3rd		**sie**	*they*	**sie**	**ihrer**	**ihnen**

3.1 The forms of the personal pronouns

3.1.1 The declension of the personal pronouns

The forms of the personal pronouns given in *Table 3.1* are those used in writing. However, there are some frequent variations in everyday speech.

(a) In everyday speech reduced forms are usual
Personal pronouns are weakly stressed, so that in rapid casual speech they tend to be reduced, e.g.:

'ch soll's **'m** geben   *for*   **Ich** soll **es ihm** geben

Jetzt kannst**e'n** sehen   *for*   Jetzt kannst **du ihn** sehen

Particularly frequent are contractions with the common verbs *sein* and *haben*, e.g. *hammer?* or *hamwe?* for *haben wir?*, see also **10.2.2a**. Except in imitation of spoken forms, reductions like this are not normally seen in writing – with the exception of (*'*)s for *es*, which is quite common in written dialogue and poetry, e.g. *geht's?*/*gehts?* (with or without an apostrophe).

(b) In rapid casual speech, the subject pronouns *ich*, *du* and *es* are often omitted entirely
Such omissions are only seen in written German to indicate natural everyday speech.

(Ich) weiß's nicht   Kannst (du) morgen kommen?   (Es) scheint zu klappen

(c) In South Germany *mir* is commonly heard for *wir*
This is a non-standard regionalism, but it is almost universal in everyday speech in the South.

Mir gehen jetzt ins Kino   *for*   **Wir** gehen jetzt ins Kino

3.1.2 The genitive of the personal pronouns

(a) The genitive forms of the personal pronouns are only used in formal registers

mittels einer Passbildaufnahme **seiner** selbst (*Grass*)	*by means of a passport photograph of himself*
Ist die Politik erst einmal auf die Straße verlegt, dann wird sich die Straße **ihrer** annehmen (*OH*)	*Once politics is moved onto the streets, the streets will take it over*

Even in writing, these forms can sound stilted, and alternative constructions are often preferred:

(i) With verbs, an alternative construction or a different verb can be used (see also **16.7**):

> Erinnern Sie sich an mich (*rarely*: meiner)
> Er braucht mich nicht (*rarely*: Er bedarf meiner nicht)

(ii) After prepositions (see **18.4**) the dative case is used in speech:

> wegen **uns**, trotz **ihnen**, statt **ihm** (*or* an seiner Stelle)

Formal standard German still prefers the genitive in writing after these prepositions, but, in practice, the dative is not uncommon, and the genitive may be heard in some regional spoken usage. To refer to things, the adverbs *stattdessen*, *trotzdem*, *währenddessen* and *deswegen* are used rather than the preposition with a pronoun.

(iii) After the prepositions which have alternative constructions with *von* (see **18.4.3b**), the prepositional adverb *davon* (see **3.5**) is used rather than a pronoun in the genitive, e.g. *innerhalb davon*, *unweit davon*. Alternatively, the prepositions may be used on their own, as adverbs: *außerhalb* 'outside (it)', *jenseits* 'on the other side (of it)'.

(iv) With numerals the paraphrase with *von* is usual, (see **2.4.1c**), e.g. *Es waren fünf von ihnen*. However, in formal registers the genitive form of the pronoun may be used before the numeral, e.g. *Es waren ihrer fünf*.

(v) In other contexts, the paraphrase with *von* is used, e.g. *ein Freund von mir*.

(b) The genitive personal pronouns are usually only used to refer to persons or animals

Ich bedarf **seiner** nicht	*I don't need him*

The demonstratives *dessen* or *deren* are used to refer to things:

Ich bedarf **dessen** nicht	*I don't need it*

Nevertheless, this usage is not fixed, and personal pronouns are occasionally used to refer to things:

Er lässt seinen Autoschlüssel im Küchenschrank, so dass andere Familienmitglieder sich **seiner** bedienen können (*MM*)	*He leaves his car key in the kitchen cupboard so that other members of the family can use it*

(c) The forms *unsere* (or *unsrer*) and *euerer* (or *eurer*)
These are sometimes used rather than *unser* and *euer*, e.g.: *Eine angenehme Schwere bemächtigte sich uns(e)rer*; *Da ist niemand, der sich eur(e)rer annimmt.*

For a long time these alternatives were not regarded as standard, but they are now considered acceptable.

(d) The genitive forms *mein* **,** *dein* **and** *sein*

These forms are archaic and they have been replaced in modern German by *meiner, deiner* and *seiner*. However, they are sometimes still used for stylistic effect, e.g.: *Man gedachte sein* (for*: seiner*) *nicht mehr*.

(e) Genitive personal pronouns with *wegen, um ... willen* **and** *-halben*

Special forms of the genitive personal pronoun are used with these prepositions, compounded with an intervening *- (e) t-*, e.g.:

meinetwegen, **deinet**wegen, um **ihret**willen, um **unsert**willen, **seinet**halben

3.2 Reflexive and reciprocal pronouns

3.2.1 Forms of the reflexive pronoun

The REFLEXIVE PRONOUN is a personal pronoun which refers back to the SUBJECT of the sentence or clause, e.g. *Ich wasche mich* 'I wash myself', *Sie wäscht sich* 'She washes herself'. *Table 3.2* gives the forms of the reflexive pronoun with the present tense and the imperative of *sich setzen* 'sit down' and *sich (das) einbilden* 'imagine (that)', which show the ACCUSATIVE and DATIVE cases of the reflexive pronoun.

TABLE 3.2   The reflexive pronoun

Accusative		Dative		
ich setze	**mich**	ich bilde	**mir**	das ein
du setzt	**dich**	du bildest	**dir**	das ein
er/sie/es setzt	**sich**	er/sie/es bildet	**sich**	das ein
wir setzen	**uns**	wir bilden	**uns**	das ein
ihr setzt	**euch**	ihr bildet	**euch**	das ein
Sie setzen	**sich**	Sie bilden	**sich**	das ein
sie setzen	**sich**	sie bilden	**sich**	das ein
setz	**dich!**	bilde	**dir**	das ein!
setzt	**euch!**	bildet	**euch**	das ein!
setzen Sie	**sich!**	bilden Sie	**sich**	das ein!

As *Table 3.2* shows, the reflexive pronoun has a special form, *sich*, which is used in the accusative and dative cases of the third person (singular and plural), and for

the 'polite' second person. For the first and second persons the personal pronouns are used as reflexive pronouns.

The German reflexive pronoun is more frequent than English forms in -*self*, in particular with the so-called REFLEXIVE VERBS (see **16.3.5** and **16.4.3**) which are always used with a reflexive pronoun.

3.2.2 Uses of the reflexive pronoun

(a) The reflexive pronoun used after a preposition refers back to the subject of the verb

Er hatte kein Geld bei **sich**   *He had no money on him*
Sie schlossen die Tür hinter **sich** *They closed the door behind them*

The reflexive pronoun can also refer back to a dative object denoting a person with verbs whose dative object is the equivalent of an English subject (see **16.2.4d**):

Ihm gefallen Geschichten über sich *He likes stories about himself*

(b) The reflexive pronoun in infinitive constructions without *zu*
In these contexts it may not always be clear who the reflexive pronoun refers to. However, it usually refers back to the **direct object** of the finite verb:

Er hörte seinen Freund **sich** tadeln   *He heard his friend blaming himself*
Er ließ den Gefangenen **sich** ausziehen *He made the prisoner get undressed*

On the other hand, a non-reflexive pronoun refers back to the **subject** of the finite verb:

Er hörte seinen Freund **ihn** tadeln   *He heard his friend blaming him*
Er ließ den Gefangenen **ihn** ausziehen *He made the prisoner undress him*

After a preposition a reflexive pronoun also refers back to the **subject** of the finite verb:

Peter sah eine dunkle Gestalt **vor sich** auftauchen *Peter saw a dark shape appear in front of him*
Eva ließ mich **bei sich** wohnen   *Eva let me live at her place*

(c) The use of the reflexive pronoun in infinitive clauses with *zu*
In these, the choice of pronoun depends on who is understood to be the **subject** of the infinitive (see **11.2.3**):

Uwe versprach Peter, **sich** zu entschuldigen	(Uwe is the one to apologize)
Uwe versprach Peter, **ihn** zu entschuldigen	(Uwe is excusing Peter)
Uwe bat Peter, **sich** zu entschuldigen	(Peter should apologize)
Uwe bat Peter, **ihn** zu entschuldigen	(Peter is asked to excuse Uwe)

(d) The reflexive pronoun with compound subjects
As explained in section **3.2.1**, the reflexive pronoun normally agrees with the subject of the sentence. However, with compound subjects in the first and second person plural, *sich* is used rather than the expected *uns* or *euch* **if** the subject follows the verb with the reflexive pronoun preceding it. Compare:

> Anne und ich begegneten **uns** vor einem Monat in Hamburg
> Vor einem Monat begegneten **sich** Anne und ich in Hamburg

(e) The use of *selbst* **and** *selber*
Selbst or *selber* can be used in conjunction with a personal pronoun as the equivalent of emphatic 'myself', 'yourself', etc. The distinction between them is stylistic, in that *selbst* is preferred in formal registers, whilst *selber* is more typical of colloquial usage. They are always stressed:

Ich habe **selbst/selber** mit dem Minister darüber gesprochen	*I spoke to the minister about it myself*
Er hat **selbst/selber** den Brief geschrieben	*He wrote the letter himself*

Unstressed *selbst* has the meaning 'even' and always precedes the pronoun (or noun) which it qualifies, e.g. *Selbst er hat den Brief gelesen*.

(f) The genitive pronoun is sometimes used reflexively in formal written German
It occurs most often with certain adjectives (see **6.3.3**). To avoid ambiguity, it is always used with *selbst*:

Er ist **seiner selbst** sicher	*He is sure of himself*
Sie war **ihrer selbst** nicht mehr mächtig	*She had lost control of herself*

3.2.3 Reciprocal pronouns

RECIPROCAL PRONOUNS are used to refer to two (or more) people, like English 'each other' or 'one another'. For these, German can use either *einander* or the reflexive pronoun *sich*. *Einander* is less common in speech than in writing, but it is the only possible alternative after prepositions, when it is written together with the preposition, (see **21.3.1b**), e.g. *durcheinander*, *miteinander*:

Sie haben **sich** (*or* **einander**) oft gesehen	*They often saw each other*
Wir gehen **uns** (*or* **einander**) aus dem Wege	*We avoid each other*
Wir verlassen **uns aufeinander**	*We rely on each other*
Sie sprachen **voneinander**	*They were talking about each other*
but Sie sprachen von **sich**	*They were talking about themselves*

If the reflexive pronoun is ambiguous, *selbst* can be added to confirm that the sense is reflexive, or *gegenseitig* to show that it is reciprocal:

Sie widersprachen **sich selbst**	*They contradicted themselves*
Sie widersprachen **sich gegenseitig**	*They contradicted each other*
(*or* Sie widersprachen **einander**)	

3.3 Pronouns of address: *du*, *ihr* and *Sie*

English only has a single **second person pronoun 'you'**, but like most other European languages **German makes a distinction** between what are conventionally termed FAMILIAR and POLITE pronouns, i.e. on the one hand singular *du* and plural *ihr*, and on the other *Sie*, which is used for both singular and plural.

Since the loss of the old form *thou*, English has lacked any distinction of this kind, and English-speaking learners of German need to establish which is appropriate in context. The use of these pronouns is anchored in social convention, and it is important for English learners to realize that these conventions can be rather different from those in the English-speaking world. Since the late 1960s, the use of *du* and *Sie* (referred to as *duzen* and *siezen*) has shifted with changing social attitudes, and the use of *du* has become more widespread, particularly among younger people. However, these changes have created considerable uncertainty, and Germans nowadays can often feel insecure about which one to use in unfamiliar surroundings or with new acquaintances. However, **consciousness of the need to use the 'right' pronoun is still very strong.**

Essentially, *du* **signals intimacy, affection** and **solidarity**. People who use *du* to one another are conscious of belonging to the same group or standing together, whereas *Sie* **signals a degree of social distance and**, **perhaps above all**, **respect** (rather than just 'politeness'). Thus, in the 'wrong' situation *du* sounds disrespectful, intrusive of personal privacy and even offensive, and in extreme cases it can be such a gross insult that people have been prosecuted for using it (notably to policemen). On the other hand, *Sie* in the 'wrong' situation can sound stand-offish or pompous.

Outside school or university, when talking to fellow pupils or fellow students (where the use of *du* is universal), non-native speakers are advised to let native speakers take the initiative in proposing the use of *du*. It is very important for English speakers to be aware that the use of *du* (and first names) is much less frequent or acceptable between adults than is the use of first names in the English-speaking countries, especially between colleagues at work and casual acquaintances. It has a quite different social meaning and can be interpreted as indicating a lack of respect rather than friendliness, especially from younger to older people.

(a) *du* **is used:**

(i) when speaking to children (up to about the age of 14), to animals and inanimate objects, to oneself and to God.
In schools it was the norm that teachers would switch from *du* to *Sie* when addressing students after the 10th class. However, this has become less universal, and teachers often reach agreement with a particular class to continue using *du* (although the teacher will still be addressed with *Sie*).
(ii) between relatives and close friends, between schoolchildren and students, predominantly between blue-collar workmates, between non-commissioned soldiers and between members of clubs, interest groups and (especially left-wing) political parties.
Unlike some other languages with similar distinctions in the use of second person pronouns, **the use of** *du* **or** *Sie* **among adults is always reciprocal**, i.e. there are no circumstances in which one adult will use *du* to another and the other would use *Sie* back to them. And using *du* to another adult one has just met would usually be considered unacceptably rude.

(b) *ihr* **is the plural of** *du*
ihr is used to address two or more people whom the speaker would individually address with *du*. However, as *ihr* is unambiguously plural, whereas *Sie* can be singular or plural, it is sometimes used to address a group, even if one would not use *du* with every single one of them, e.g. (at work):

     Ich wollte **euch** doch alle zum Kaffee einladen

Occasionally, *ihr* may be used to address any group to stress plurality, even if the speaker would normally address all of them individually as *Sie*. In this way, *ihr* can sometimes function as a kind of neutral compromise to mask the speaker's uncertainty about whether to use *du* or *Sie*.

(c) *Sie* **is used in all other situations**

In particular, *Sie* is used to adult strangers and generally in middle-class professions (e.g. to colleagues in an office, a shop or a bank). The use of *Sie* is thus usually associated with formal titles, i.e. *Herr Engel*, *Frau Kallmeyer*, etc., that of *du* with first names. However, using *Sie* with first names (so-called 'Hamburger Siezen' or 'Hanseatisches Siezen') is not uncommon, especially from adults to older teenagers and in 'trendy' circles. In the latter case this may possibly be in imitation of the American use of first names, although there is also a tendency to use *du* (and first names) on television chatshows and the like to give an impression of familiarity which is at variance with usage outside such artificial situations.

(d) *du* **and** *ihr* **may be spelled with initial capitals in letter-writing**

This applies to all the various forms of these pronouns, e.g. *Du* and *Ihr* as well as *Dich*, *Dein*, *Euch*, etc., e.g. *Ich danke Dir recht herzlich für Deinen Brief*. This is optional, and the forms may also be spelled with a small initial letter, e.g. *Ich danke dir recht herzlich für deinen Brief*.

(e) The use of titles

Titles are often used rather than *Sie* in shops, restaurants, etc. to address customers:

Was wünscht **der Herr?**   Was darf es für **die Herrschaften** sein?

3.4 Third person pronouns

3.4.1 The gender of third person singular pronouns

The third person singular pronouns have distinct forms for each gender, i.e. **masculine** *er*, **feminine** *sie* and **neuter** *es*. Since they take their gender from the noun they refer to, this means that *er*, *sie* or *es* **can all correspond to English** *it* **when referring to things**:

Der **Rotstift**? Ach, **er** hat vorhin auf dem Tisch gelegen, aber ich muss **ihn** jetzt verloren haben	*The red pencil? Oh, it was lying on the table just now, but I must have lost it*
Er hörte meine **Meinung** und stimmte **ihr** zu	*He heard my opinion and agreed with it*
Darf ich Ihr **Buch** noch eine Woche behalten? Ich habe **es**	*May I keep your book another week? I haven't*

noch nicht gelesen   *read it yet*

Possible conflicts between grammatical and natural gender in the agreement of the pronoun are explained in **1.1.12**.

3.4.2 The use of demonstratives rather than third person pronouns

In informal colloquial speech, the demonstrative pronoun *der* (see **5.1.1**) is often used to refer to people rather than a third person personal pronoun, e.g.:

Der kommt wohl nicht mehr   *for* **Er** kommt wohl nicht mehr

Ich hätt' **die** kaum wieder erkannt *for* Ich hätte **sie** kaum wieder erkannt

This is common in spoken German, although it could be considered rude if the person being referred to is actually present. In writing it is only used if there is a possible ambiguity or a need for emphasis:

Es gibt Konflikte, wenn zum Beispiel ein Mountainbiker von hinten an Wanderer heranfährt und **die** sich erschrecken (*Spiegel*)

There are conflicts, for example if a mountain biker rides up to some hikers from behind and they get a shock

3.4.3 Third person pronouns in comparative clauses

Third person pronouns are used in comparative clauses with *wie*. They agree in gender and number with the relevant noun, and this makes it absolutely clear what is being compared:

Das waren Reichtümer, wie **sie** Fürsten nicht besaßen (*Süßkind*)

These were riches such as princes did not possess

ein Stadtteil, wie **ihn** jede Großstadt kennt (*Spiegel*)

a district such as is to be found in any big city

Ein Kuchen, wie **ihn** deine Mutter backt, ist was Besonderes

A cake like your mother makes is something special

3.5 The prepositional adverb

The PREPOSITIONAL ADVERB (sometimes called the PRONOMINAL ADVERB) is formed by prefixing *da(r)* to a preposition, e.g.:

damit **da**von **dar**an **dar**über

3.5.1 The use of the prepositional adverb instead of a pronoun

The prepositional adverb is often used rather than a preposition followed by a third person pronoun. In general, the PERSONAL PRONOUN is used with a preposition when referring to **people**, whereas the PREPOSITIONAL ADVERB is used when referring to **things**. Compare:

> Ich spiele **mit ihr** (i.e. *mit meiner Schwester*)
> Ich spiele **damit** (i.e. *mit der Puppe*)

There are some variations, however, and modern usage is broadly as follows:

(a) The pronoun *es* is not normally used after prepositions

Da steht mein neues Auto. Ich habe lange **darauf**   *There's my new car. I had to wait a long time for it*
(not *auf es*) warten müssen

Exceptions to this norm are occasionally found, e.g. *Ein sehr altes Schema schlägt durch, obwohl der Autor gegen es ankämpft* (*SZ*), but they are not frequent.

(b) The personal pronoun is always used after a preposition to refer to individual persons
(but **not** groups of people, see **(d)** below):

Du darfst nicht **mit ihr** spielen   *You mustn't play with her*

Ich kann mich nicht **an ihn** erinnern *I can't remember him*

(c) To refer to a specific thing (or things), or to abstracts
In this context, either preposition plus pronoun **or** the prepositional adverb can be used:

Ich habe diese Geschirrspülmaschine seit drei Wochen und bin sehr zufrieden **damit/mit ihr**	*I've had this dishwasher for three weeks and I'm very satisfied with it*
Wie findest du den Vorschlag? Bist du **damit/mit ihm** einverstanden?	*What do you think of the suggestion? Do you agree with it?*

In practice, using the prepositional adverb is more frequent, but if the combination of preposition plus pronoun is used, it may emphasize the thing referred to more strongly.

(d) The prepositional adverb is used to refer to groups of people
dahinter, *darunter* and *davon* are particularly frequent in this type of context.

Ich erwarte zehn Gäste heute Abend, **darunter** einige sehr alte Bekannte	*I am expecting ten guests this evening, among them some very old acquaintances*
Die meisten **davon** wollten keinen Ärger machen	*Most of them didn't want to cause trouble*

(e) The prepositional adverb is always used to refer back to whole sentences

Seine Frau hat eine neue Stelle gekriegt. Er freut sich sehr **darüber**   *His wife's got a new job. He's very pleased about it*

(f) If motion is involved, a separable verb prefix with *hin-* or *her-* is used

The prepositional adverb is not used in such contexts (see also **7.2.4**):

Wir fanden eine Hütte und gingen **hinein**   *We found a hut and went into it*

Sie kam an einen langen Gang und eilte **hindurch**   *She came to a long passage and hurried through it*

3.5.2 Further notes on the prepositional adverb

(a) The second syllable of the prepositional adverb is usually stressed

da'**durch**   da'**mit**   da'**von**   da'**ran**   da'**rüber**

In spoken German the first syllable is often reduced, e.g. *dran*, *drauf*, *drin*, *drunter*, and these forms are sometimes used in writing.

However, if the prepositional adverb replaces a preposition plus a demonstrative (i.e. = 'with **that**', 'in **that**', etc., see **5.1.1i**), then the first syllable is stressed, e.g. '*dadurch*, '*damit*, '*daran*.

'**Da**mit war alles unter Dach und Fach   *With that everything was sorted*

(b) Four common prepositions do not form a prepositional adverb

i.e. *außer*, *gegenüber*, *ohne*, *seit*. These are used with pronouns referring to people *or* things:

Außer ihm ist keiner gekommen   *Nobody came apart from him*

Vor uns ist das Rathaus, und **ihm gegenüber** liegt der Dom   *In front of us is the town hall and opposite it is the cathedral*

Ohne es wäre unser Erfolg nicht möglich gewesen   *Without it our success wouldn't have been possible*

When referring to things, the pronoun is usually omitted after *gegenüber* and *ohne*, e.g. (*ihm*) *gegenüber liegt der Dom*; *ohne* (*es*) *wäre es nicht möglich gewesen*. *außer* and *seit* are never used with a pronoun to refer to things, and the adverbs *außerdem* 'besides (that)' and *seither* 'since (then)' are used instead.

No prepositional adverbs are formed from the prepositions which govern the genitive. For the use of pronouns with them, see **3.1.2**.

(c) In colloquial speech the prepositional adverb is often split

Da weiß ich nichts **von**   **Da** kann ich nichts **mit** anfangen

This usage was originally a North German regionalism, but it has recently become more widespread, even in formal speech, but it is not (yet?) generally considered acceptable in writing.

If the preposition begins with a vowel, the reduced form of the prepositional adverb is used as the second part rather than the preposition, e.g.:

Da habe ich nicht **dran** gedacht

In rapid colloquial speech the initial *da* is sometimes dropped, e.g.: [...] *kann ich nichts mit anfangen*.
(d) The prepositional adverb can anticipate a following dependent clause
Ich verlasse mich **darauf**, dass sie rechtzeitig kommt
Details about this construction are given in sections **6.4.1c**, **16.5.14** and **17.2.3b**.

3.6 The pronoun *es*

The pronoun *es* has a range of uses beyond simply referring back to a neuter noun. In many constructions it functions as a grammatical particle, and this section explains these.

Note that *es* **is never stressed**. If emphasis is needed, *es* is replaced by the demonstrative *das* (see **5.1.1h**):

Sind **das** Ihre Handschuhe? **Das** bist du. Ich mache **das** schon.

3.6.1 *es* can refer to elements other than neuter nouns

es can refer

(a) to a whole phrase, sentence or situation

Willst du die Brötchen holen? Angela macht **es** schon *Will you get the rolls? Angela is already doing it*

Ich weiß, dass sie gestorben ist, aber Michael weiß **es** noch nicht *I know that she is dead, but Michael doesn't know (it) yet*

(b) to the predicate complement of *sein* or *werden*
Inserting *es* is obligatory when referring back to a noun or adjective after *sein* or *werden* in the preceding clause, where in English no equivalent or a different construction is required:

Er soll zuverlässig sein, und ich bin sicher, dass er **es** ist *He is said to be reliable and I am sure he is*

Ist Jürgen ein guter Schwimmer? Ja, er ist **es** *Is Jürgen a good swimmer? Yes, he is (one)*

Sein Vater ist Arzt, und er wird **es** auch *His father is a doctor and he's going to be one, too*

3.6.2 Special uses of *es*

(a) *es* is used as the impersonal subject of the verb in many constructions

(i) *es* is used as the subject of all kinds of impersonal verbs or verbs used in impersonal constructions:

es regnet   **es** klingelt   **es** fehlt mir an Geld   **es** bedarf noch einiger Mühe

More details on the use of *es* as an impersonal subject are given in **16.2.4**.

(ii) *es* can be used as an indefinite subject, to give the idea of a vague, impersonal agent:

Erst wurde **es** dunkel, dann gewitterte **es**	*First it got dark, then there was thunder and lightning*
Ihn trieb **es** in die schottischen Hochlande (*Zeit*)	*He felt a desire to go to the Highlands of Scotland*

(iii) *es* is used in impersonal reflexive constructions, which often have the force of a passive, see **13.4.3b:**

Es schreibt **sich** sehr leicht mit diesem neuen Stift	*It's very easy to write with this new pen*
Abends lernt **es sich** am besten	*It is best to study in the evenings*

(iv) *es* is used in impersonal passive constructions and in passive constructions with intransitive verbs (see **13.1.3a** and **13.1.4**):

Es wurde in dieser Zeit viel gearbeitet	*A lot of work was done at this time*
Es wurde im Nebenzimmer geredet	*There was talking in the next room*
Es kann ihm doch nicht geholfen werden	*He can't be helped, though*

In these constructions *es* is omitted if it is not in first position in a main clause, e.g. *In dieser Zeit wurde viel gearbeitet. Wir wissen doch, dass in dieser Zeit viel gearbeitet wurde.*

(b) *es* **is used as an indeterminate subject with** *sein* **and** *werden*

(i) This corresponds to the English use of *it*:

Es ist der Briefträger, ein Polizist	*It's the postman, a policeman*
Es wurde spät	*It got late*
Es ist Mittag	*It's midday*
Es ist Sonntag heute	*It's Sunday today*

es can be omitted with a time phrase if it is not in initial position, e.g. *Jetzt ist* (*es*) *Mittag. Sie weiß, dass* (*es*) *heute Sonntag ist*.

(ii) *es* can be used with *sein* or *werden* in the plural and it then corresponds to English 'they', see **10.1.4b**:

Es sind Ausländer	*They're foreigners*
Sind **es** Ihre Handschuhe?	*Are they your gloves?*
Was sind **es?**	*What are they?*

(iii) In contexts like this, *es* can refer back to a masculine, feminine or plural noun, as an alternative to the expected masculine, feminine or plural pronoun:

Seine Mutter lebt noch. **Es/Sie** ist eine alte Frau	*His mother is still alive. She's an old woman*
Siehst du die Kinder dort? **Es/Sie** sind meine	*Can you see the children there? They're mine*

(c) *es* **with** *sein* **and a personal pronoun**
i.e. corresponding to English 'It's me', 'It's them', etc.

(i) The German construction differs from English, since the person involved is the **subject** of *sein*, and *es* follows the verb:

Du bist **es**. Ich bin **es**	*It's you. It's me*
Seid ihr **es** gewesen?	*Was it you?*
Sie werden **es** wohl sein	*It will probably be them*

(ii) So-called CLEFT SENTENCE constructions with relative clauses are based on this construction in German. These correspond to English constructions like 'It was you who rang the bell':

Er war **es**, der es mir gesagt hat	*It was him who told me*

Du warst **es** also, der geklingelt hat   *So it was you who rang the bell*

Other cleft sentence constructions, especially those corresponding to the English type 'It was this morning that I saw her', are used less often in German than in English (see **19.2.3a**).

(d) *es* **can be used as a 'dummy subject'**

i.e. it is placed in initial position, before the verb, so that the 'real' subject can come later in the sentence. This construction is particularly frequent if the 'real' subject is a noun phrase with an indefinite article or an indefinite quantifier. It gives more emphasis to the 'real' subject, see **19.2.2d**.

(i) With *sein*, this *es* corresponds to 'there' in 'there is/are':

Es ist ein Brief für Sie da   *There's a letter for you*
Es waren viele Wolken am Himmel   *There were a lot of clouds in the sky*

This *es* is omitted if it is not in first position in a main clause, e.g. *Viele Wolken waren am Himmel. Ich weiß, dass ein Brief für mich da ist*. In such contexts it is not necessary, since the 'real' subject is in its expected place.
For the use of *es ist/sind* and *es gibt* for English 'there is/are', see **16.2.5.**
(ii) In German, unlike English, *es* can be used in this construction with **any** verb. The verb then agrees with the 'real' subject, not with the *es*:

Es saß eine alte Frau am Fenster   *There was an old woman sitting at the window*
Es hatte sich auch ihr Verhältnis zu den Nachbarn verändert   *Their relationship to their neighbours had changed, too*
Es liegen zwei Briefe für Sie auf dem Schreibtisch   *There are two letters for you lying on the desk*

This construction is particularly common with verbs of happening:

Es ist gestern ein schwerer Unfall **passiert**   *A serious accident happened yesterday*

In spoken German *da* is often used rather than *es* in these contexts, e.g. *Da hat eine alte Frau am Fenster gesessen*.

(e) The 'anticipatory' *es* pointing forward to a subject clause

es can be used to anticipate a following subordinate or infinitive clause which is the subject of the verb:

Es freut mich, dass du dein Examen bestanden hast   *I am pleased that you passed your examination*

Es fällt mir ein, dass ich ihn schon gesehen haben muss   *It occurs to me that I must already have seen him*

Es war mir nicht möglich, früher **zu** kommen   *It wasn't possible for me to come earlier*

Es liegt mir fern, Schwierigkeiten **zu** machen   *The last thing I want is to make difficulties*

If the clause precedes the verb there is no need for the *es*, e.g. *Dass du dein Examen bestanden hast, freut mich*.
This 'anticipatory' *es* is sometimes omitted if it is not in first position in a main clause:

Dann fiel (**es**) auf, **dass** er kein weißes Hemd trug   *Then it was noticed that he wasn't wearing a white shirt*

Ihm steht (**es**) nicht zu, ein Urteil **zu** fällen   *It's not up to him to pass judgement*

There is considerable variation in whether *es* is retained or omitted in these contexts. The following general tendencies reflect current usage:

(i) The omission of *es* is especially frequent (but not obligatory) with the following verbs:

auffallen	einfallen	feststehen	sich herausstellen	vorschweben
aufgehen	sich ergeben aus	folgen aus	hervorgehen	sich zeigen
dazukommen	sich erweisen	gelten	hinzukommen	

(ii) With many verbs, especially those expressing feelings and emotions, *es* can be omitted before a following *dass*-clause if the main clause begins with a pronoun:

Ihn interessiert (es) nur, dass ihr Vater viel Geld hat   *The only thing that interests him is that her father's got a lot of money*

Damit hängt (es) natürlich zusammen, dass er im Gefängnis sitzt   *Of course, that's connected with the fact that he's in prison*

(iii) *es* can be omitted with the verb *sein* if the main clause begins with the noun or adjective which is the complement of *sein*:

Wichtig ist (es), dass sie es weiß   *It's important for her to know it*

Wichtig ist (es), diesen Satz richtig zu verstehen   *It is important to understand this sentence correctly*

Ein Glück ist (es), dass du kommst   *It's fortunate you're coming*

With *klar*, *leicht*, *möglich*, *schwer* and *wichtig*, *es* can be omitted if the main clause begins with a pronoun:

Ihm war (es) völlig klar, dass er jetzt springen musste   *It was quite clear to him that he had to jump now*

(iv) *es* is never omitted before *wenn*-clauses: *Mir ist es recht, wenn sie jetzt kommt*.

(f) The 'anticipatory' *es* pointing forward to an object clause
es is often used to anticipate a following infinitive or *dass*-clause which is the object of the verb:

Ich konnte **es** kaum ertragen, ihn so leiden zu sehen   *I could hardly bear to see him suffer like that*

Ich habe **es** erlebt, dass Anne die beste Arbeit geschrieben hat   *I have known Anne to write the best piece of work*

(i) The use of this 'anticipatory' *es* is variable, and there are no hard and fast rules as to when it is used and when not. However, it is especially frequent with the following verbs, so that the advice to the foreign learner is to always use it with them:

ablehnen	bereuen	fertig bringen	lassen	schaffen	vergessen
angewöhnen	betrachten als	genießen	leiden	schätzen	vermeiden
aufgeben	dulden	gönnen	leisten	übel nehmen	versäumen
aushalten	erfahren	halten für	leugnen	überlassen	vertragen
bedauern	erleben	hassen	lieben	unterlassen	verzeihen
begrüßen	ermöglichen	hindern	merken	verantworten	wagen
bemerken	ertragen	hinnehmen	mögen	verdienen	zulassen

The phrases *nicht erwarten können* and *nicht wahrhaben wollen* are also normally used with an anticipatory *es*, as is *finden* followed by an adjective, e.g. *Ich finde es schön, dass du da bist*.

(ii) Verbs of saying, thinking and knowing, e.g. *ahnen*, *denken*, *erzählen*, *fühlen*, *glauben*, *hören*, *sagen*, *wissen* are also often used with an anticipatory *es* in conjunction with certain adverbs and particles, in particular *bereits*, *deutlich*, *doch*, *genug*, *ja*, *oft* and *schon*, or when there is an appeal to the listener's prior knowledge, e.g.:

Ich habe (es) ihm deutlich gesagt, dass er schreiben muss   *I told him clearly enough that he's got to write*

Ich habe (es) schon geahnt, dass sie schwanger ist   *I already suspected she was pregnant*

Ich weiß (es) ja selber, dass die Ampel rot war   *I know myself that the lights were red*

(g) *es* corresponds to English 'so' as the object of a few verbs
In particular *sagen* 'say' and *tun* 'do':

Er hat **es** gesagt   *He said so*

Warum hast du **es** getan?   *Why did you do so?*

es can also be used with *glauben* and *hoffen*, but it is not obligatory:

Kommt sie? – Ich glaube/hoffe (es)   *Is she coming? – I think/hope so*

(h) *es* is used as an object in a number of idiomatic verbal phrases
In these, *es* is an essential part of the idiom. The following are in common use:

es auf etwas absehen	*to be after sth.*
es auf etwas ankommen lassen	*to take a chance on sth.*
es jdm. antun	*to appeal to sb.*
sie hat es ihm angetan	*he fancies her*
es mit jdm./etwas aufnehmen können	*to be a match for sb./sth.*
es bei etwas belassen	*to leave it at sth.*
es weit bringen	*to go far*
es zu etwas bringen	*to attain sth.* (*esp. a position*)
Er hat es zum Minister gebracht	*He got to be a minister*
es an etwas fehlen lassen	*to be lacking in sth.*
es eilig haben	*to be in a hurry*
es gut/schlecht haben	*to be (un)fortunate*
es in sich haben	*to be a tough nut to crack*
es sich leicht/schwer machen	*to make it easy/difficult for oneself*
es gut mit jdm. meinen	*to mean well with sb.*
es mit etwas genau nehmen	*to be punctilious with sth.*
es mit jdm. zu tun haben	*to have to deal with sb.*
es sich mit jdm. verdorben haben	*to have fallen out with sb.*
es mit etwas versuchen	*to try (one's hand at) sth.*

(i) *es* used with adjectives in conjunction with *sein* or *werden*
Some adjectives are preceded by *es* when they are used with *sein* or *werden*, they, e.g. *Ich bin es satt* 'I am sick of it'. This *es* is used especially with the adjectives

which govern the genitive of nouns (see **6.3.3**), e.g. *Ich bin es nun überdrüssig.*
The following adjectives occur in this construction:

los müde satt teilhaftig überdrüssig wert würdig zufrieden

Also:

Ich bin **es** gewohnt   *I am used to it*
Ich wurde **es** gewahr (*lit.*)   *I became aware of it*

When *gewohnt sein* and *wert sein* are used with a following *dass*-clause, the *es* can be used to anticipate the subordinate clause, e.g. *Ich bin (es) nicht mehr gewohnt, am frühen Morgen aufzustehen*. This usage is common, but not obligatory.

4 The articles

German, like English, has a DEFINITE **and an** INDEFINITE ARTICLE.

This chapter explains the **forms** and **uses** of the **articles i**n German in the following sections:

4.1 The **declension** of the definite and indefinite articles
4.2 The use of the articles with **abstract** and other similar **nouns**
4.3 The use of the articles in **generalizations**
4.4 The use of the articles with **names**

4.5 The use of the articles in **time expressions**
4.6 The use of the definite article to indicate **possession**
4.7 Other contexts where **German and English differ** in the use of the articles
4.8 The '**zero article**' – the noun used **with no article**
4.9 The use of the articles with **phrasal verbs**
4.10 The use of the articles with **prepositions**

The ARTICLES belong to a closed set of small words known as DETERMINERS which are used with NOUNS to link them to a particular context or situation. Besides the articles, the determiners include all those words, like the DEMONSTRATIVES (*dieser, jener*, etc.), the POSSESSIVES (*mein, sein*, etc.) and INDEFINITES (*einige, etliche*, etc.), which are used to specify nouns (see Chapter **5**). They are typically in **first position** in a NOUN PHRASE , before any adjectives, as shown in *Table 4.1*.

TABLE 4.1   The noun phrase: determiners (articles)

DETERMINER	**Adjective/adjectival phrase**	**Noun**
der	runde	Tisch
ein	schnelles	Auto
eine	außerordentlich langwellige	Zeitung
das	in der bayrischen Hauptstadt gebraute	Bier

The definite and indefinite articles DECLINE, i.e. they have endings which indicate the grammatical categories of the noun they are used with: CASE, NUMBER and GENDER. In practice, **the forms of the article are the main way these categories of the noun are shown**, and mastering them is essential to be able to use and understand German. **Tables 4.2** and **4.3** show the declension of the **definite article** *der – die – das* and the **indefinite article** *ein – eine*.

TABLE 4.2   Declension of the definite article

	Masculine	**Feminine**	**Neuter**	**Plural**
Nominative	der	die	das	die
Accusative	den	die	das	die
Genitive	des	der	des	der
Dative	dem	der	dem	den

TABLE 4.3   Declension of the indefinite article

	Masculine	**Feminine**	**Neuter**
Nominative	ein	eine	ein
Accusative	einen	eine	ein
Genitive	eines	einer	eines
Dative	einem	einer	einem

German and English agree in most contexts (85%) on whether to use a definite, an indefinite or no ('zero') article with a noun. However, as the articles are very frequent, the contexts where the two languages do not correspond are significant, in particular where German uses a definite article when English has none.

4.1 The declension of the articles

4.1.1 The definite article

(a) In spoken German the definite article is lightly stressed

This means that reduced forms are the norm, e.g.:

der [dɐ]   *die* [dɪ]   *das* [d(ə)s] or [s]
den [d(ə)n] or [n]   *dem* [d(ə)m] or [m]   *des* [d(ə)s]

These reductions rarely occur in writing, except to reflect speech in written dialogue, but they are the norm in speech, since the full forms, e.g. [deːm], have the force of a demonstrative, i.e. 'this' or 'that', see **5.1.1**. Compare:

Ich habe '**n** Tisch gekauft   *I bought the table*

Ich habe **den** [deːn] Tisch gekauft *I bought that table*

(b) The definite article cannot be omitted in pairs of words with a different gender or number

In English we can say 'the house and garden(s)' or 'the son and daughter(s)', with the definite article understood to refer to the second noun as well. This is only possible in German if the two nouns have the same gender or number (and thus the same form of the article). In other contexts the second article with its different form **must** be included:

das Haus und **der** Garten/**die** Gärten   **der** Sohn und **die** Tochter/**die** Töchter

However, it is possible to say *die Söhne und Töchter*, since both nouns are plural and would have the same article. However, the article can only be omitted if the nouns are linked in some way. We can only say *der Bürgermeister und Vorsitzende des Vereins*, for example, if both nouns refer to the same person. If two different people are being referred to, the article is repeated: *der Bürgermeister und der Vorsitzende des Vereins*. In English, too, we have to say *The mayor and the chairman of the club* if they are not the same person.

This rule applies to all the other determiners, and to adjectives used with nouns, e.g. *sein Sohn und seine Töchter* but *seine Söhne und Töchter*; *guter Wein und gutes Bier* but *alte Männer und Frauen*, see **6.1.3f**.

(c) Contracted forms of the definite article are used with some prepositions

(i) Contractions which are usual in both speech and writing:

ans = an + das **am** = an + dem   **beim** = bei + dem **ins** = in + das

im = in + dem **vom** = von + dem **zum** = zu + dem   **zur** = zu + der

The uncontracted forms are only used if the article is relatively stressed, and in contexts like these it may have the force of a demonstrative (= 'this' or 'that', see **5.1.1**):

Einer der Affen war besonders lebhaft. Klaus wollte *One of the monkeys was particularly lively. Klaus* unbedingt eine Aufnahme von **dem** Affen machen *really wanted to take a picture of that monkey*

Similarly, the uncontracted forms are typically used to refer back to something recently mentioned in order to make it clear that that one is the one meant. Note the difference between:

> Er ging **zu der** Hütte (the one/that one we were just talking about)
> Er ging **zur** Hütte (the one we know about)

The uncontracted form is usual where the noun is particularized, especially by a following relative clause:

an dem Nachmittag, an dem sie anrief   *on the afternoon when she called*

Er geht **zu der** Schule, wo sein Vater früher war *He goes to the school where his father used to be*

However, only contracted forms are used in set phrases and expressions, and with names of places, e.g.:

am Dienstag	**am** 10. Mai	**am** einfachsten
im Frühling	**im** Freien	**im** Gang
zum Frühstück	**zur** Zeit	**im** Vertrauen
Ich habe ihn **beim** Wort genommen	Sie war **beim** Kochen	Wir sind **zum** Mond geflogen

Compare:

Am Dienstag kam er spät zur Arbeit   *On Tuesday he came to work late*

An dem Dienstag kam er spät zur Arbeit *That Tuesday he came to work late*

(ii) Contractions which are common in speech and sometimes used in writing:

aufs = auf + das   **durchs** = durch + das **fürs** = für + das
übers = über + das **ums** = um + das   **unters** = unter + das

In general these contractions are only used in writing in certain set phrases, e.g.:

aufs Land fahren **fürs** Leben gern **übers** Herz bringen **ums** Leben kommen

(iii) Contractions which are frequent in spoken German, but only occasionally used in writing, mainly in a very few set phrases or in imitation of everyday speech. These are:

außerm hinterm hintern hinters überm

übern   unterm   untern   vorm   vors

Other contractions are regular in everyday speech but hardly ever found in writing, e.g.:

an'n bei'n durch'n in'n mit'm nach'm seit'm

4.1.2 The forms of the indefinite article

(a) The indefinite article has no plural

Indefinite plural nouns are used without an article, as in English:

Hier gibt es gute Weine   *There are good wines here*

(b) In spoken German the indefinite article is lightly stressed

This means that reduced forms are the norm, i.e.:

ein [n]   *eine* [nə]   *einen* [nən]
einem [nəm] *einer* [nɐ]   *eines* [nəs]

These reductions are rare in writing except in imitation of casual dialogue, but they are usual in unaffected speech, as the full forms, e.g. [aın], [aınən], etc., would be interpreted as the numeral *ein* 'one'. Compare:

Ich habe **'n** Buch gekauft   *I bought a book*
Ich habe **ein** [aın] Buch gekauft *I bought one book*

(c) The indefinite article *ein* has the negative form *kein*

kein is typically used if the corresponding positive sentence would have an indefinite article or no article. It is thus most often the equivalent of English *not ... a, not ... any* or *no*. For further details see **5.5.16**:

Es war ein angenehmer Anblick Es war **kein** angenehmer Anblick
Kennst du einen Arzt?   Kennst du **keinen** Arzt?
Hier gibt es gute Weine   Hier gibt es **keine** guten Weine
Ich habe Geld   Ich habe **kein** Geld

Unlike *ein*, *kein* has a plural form, and its declension is given in *Table 4.4*.

TABLE 4.4   Declension of the negative indefinite article *kein*

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Nominative	kein	keine	kein	keine
Accusative	keinen	keine	kein	keine
Genitive	keines	keiner	keines	keiner
Dative	keinem	keiner	keinem	keinen

4.2 The definite article with abstract and similar nouns

This section deals with abstract nouns and other similar groups of nouns which are typically used with **a definite article in German**, but **no article in English**.

4.2.1 Abstract nouns

(a) German typically uses a definite article with abstract nouns

This is particularly the case where the reference is to a specific and definite whole, known and familiar to the speaker and listener. In general, an article is not used in contexts like this in English:

Er fürchtet **das Alter**	*He is afraid of old age*
Er liebt **die Demokratie**	*He loves democracy*
Wir hängen von **der Industrie** ab	*We depend on industry*
Die Zeit vergeht	*Time passes*
Das Volk lebt **im Elend** (*Spiegel*)	*The people are living in misery*
Die Menschheit braucht nichts nötiger als **den Frieden**	*Humanity needs nothing more urgently than peace*

(b) In some contexts no article is used with abstract nouns

However, in some contexts the definite article is not used with abstract nouns. This is especially the case if the idea is referred to not as a whole, but in an vaguely general, indefinite or partial sense. Typically, in contexts like this, *some* or *any* can often be inserted in the corresponding English sentence without changing the meaning:

Zu dieser Aufgabe gehört **Mut**	*This task demands (some) courage*
Seine Parteifreunde witterten **Verrat**	*His party colleagues suspected (some) treachery*
Unentschlossenheit wäre jetzt verhängnisvoll	*(Any) indecision now would be disastrous*
Bewegung ist gesund	*(Any) exercise is healthy*

Compare the following sentences:

| Unter seinen Anhängern entstand **Misstrauen** | *(Some) distrust arose among his followers* |
| **Das Misstrauen** wächst unter seinen Anhängern | *Distrust is growing among his followers* |

In the first sentence 'distrust' is a new concept of a rather vague, general and indefinite kind. In the second it is a specific and familiar general notion. In practice, though, the distinction is sometimes slight, and there are contexts where either the definite article or no article is possible, e.g.:

Sie kämpfen für (**die**) Gerechtigkeit *They are fighting for justice*

You often have such a partial or indefinite sense when an abstract noun, especially one denoting a human quality or emotion, is used with an adjective, and in these cases no article is used:

Ich verachte **kleinliche Eifersucht**	*I despise (any) petty jealousy*
Im Heer wuchs **neuer Mut**	*In the army new courage was growing*
Er neigt zu **unnötiger Verschwendung**	*He tends to unnecessary extravagance*

Abstract nouns in general statements can be used with the definite article or with no article, e.g.:

(**Der**) **Frieden** ist das höchste Gut der Menschen *Peace is man's greatest good*

(c) No article is used with abstract nouns in proverbs, sayings and set phrases

There is often no article with abstract nouns in these, e.g.:

Alter schützt vor **Torheit** nicht	*There's no fool like an old fool*
Not kennt kein Gebot	*Necessity knows no law*
Stolz ist keine Tugend	*Pride is not a virtue*

(d) No article is used with abstract nouns in a few other contexts

in pairs of words and enumerations, see **4.8.1**.
in some constructions with the verbs *sein* and *werden*, see **4.8.2**.
with some phrasal verbs, see **4.9**.

4.2.2 Other nouns typically used with a definite article

The use of the article with some other nouns is similar to that with abstract nouns, and differs from English.

(a) Names of substances

These have a definite article if they are understood as general concepts, but no article if they are used in an indefinite or partial sense:

Die Butter kostet 3 Euro das Pfund	*Butter costs 3 euros a pound*
Faraday hat **die Elektrizität** erforscht	*Faraday investigated electricity*
Die Bauern bauen hier **Roggen** an	*The farmers grow rye here*
Wir importieren **Kaffee** aus Afrika	*We import coffee from Africa*

In generalizations with nouns of this kind, either the definite article or no article can be used:

(Das) Eisen ist ein Metall	*Iron is a metal*
(Die) Elektrizität ist eine wichtige Energiequelle	*Electricity is an important source of energy*

The definite article occurs in some set phrases, e.g. *beim Bier sitzen*; *Das steht nur auf dem Papier*.

(b) Names of meals

The definite article is used with meals if they are referred to as known quantities, but the article can be omitted if the reference is indefinite or partial:

Das Mittagessen wird um 13 Uhr eingenommen	*Lunch is taken at 1 p.m.*
Wir sollen uns vor **dem Frühstück** treffen	*We are to meet before breakfast*
Ich habe **(das) Mittagessen** bestellt	*I have ordered lunch*
Wann bekommen wir **(das) Frühstück**?	*When are we getting breakfast?*

(c) Names of sicknesses and diseases

These have a definite article when they are referred to in general as known quantities, but there is no article when they are referred to in an indefinite or partial sense, or as a new idea in the context, particularly after *haben*:

Er ist an **der Schwindsucht** gestorben	*He died of consumption*
Sie ist an **den Masern** erkrankt	*She fell ill with measles*
Die Grippe hat Tausende weggerafft	*Influenza carried off thousands*
Ich habe **Kopfschmerzen**, **Gelbsucht**	*I've got a headache, jaundice*

Singular names of specific illnesses are used with the indefinite article to refer to a bout of that disease. This is in particular the case when the noun is modified by an adjective:

Er ist an **einer Lungenentzündung** gestorben   *He died of (a bout of) pneumonia*
Er hat **eine schwere Erkältung**   *He's got a heavy cold*

(d) Names of languages

These nouns from adjectives have two forms, see also **6.2.4c**:

(i) an inflected one, always used with the definite article, which refers to the language in a general sense:

Das Spanische ist **dem Portugiesischen** sehr nahe verwandt   *Spanish is very closely related to Portuguese*
eine Übersetzung aus **dem Russischen ins Deutsche**   *a translation from Russian into German*

(ii) an uninflected form, which refers to the language in a specific context. With this, the use of the article is the same as in English:

das **Deutsch** der Auswanderer   *the German of the emigrants*
Luthers **Deutsch**   *Luther's German*
Sie kann, versteht, lernt **Deutsch**   *She knows, understands, is learning German*
Sie kann **kein Deutsch**   *She doesn't know any German*
eine Zusammenfassung **in Deutsch**   *a summary in German*

(iii) The distinction in usage between these two forms is not always clear-cut, particularly with compound forms or when the noun is qualified by an adjective. In the nominative the uninflected forms tend to be preferred, e.g. *das Schweizerdeutsch, das österreichische Deutsch*, as also in the dative with an adjective, e.g. *im heutigen Deutsch*, and in this case the definite article is also present. But with compounds with no adjective after *im* there is a clear preference for using the inflected form, e.g. *im Hochdeutschen*.

(e) Names of historical periods, literary and philosophical movements, religions

The definite article is normally used with these:

der deutsche Expressionismus   *German Expressionism*
Diese Auffassung ist charakteristisch für **den Islam**   *This view is characteristic of Islam*

Marx begreift **den Feudalismus** als notwendige Stufe der *Marx considers feudalism to be a necessary* historischen Entwicklung (*Knaur*)   *stage in the process of history*

(f) Names of the arts and sciences

The definite article is normally used with these:

Ich erwarte von **der Literatur** mehr Anregung als **vom Leben** (*Grass*)	*I expect more stimulus from literature than from life*
Darüber schweigt **die Geschichte**	*History is silent about that*
ein Lehrbuch **der Astronomie**	*a textbook of astronomy*
Sie liebt **die Musik**	*She loves music*

No article is used to refer to school or university subjects, e.g. *Sie hat eine Zwei in Geschichte aber eine Vier in Mathe. Mechthild studiert Astronomie in Göttingen.*

(g) Names of institutions, company titles and buildings

The definite article is normally used with these:

Sie geht in **die Schule**	*She goes to school*
Er wurde **ins Parlament** gewählt	*He was elected to parliament*
Die Bundesrepublik gehört **der NATO** an	*The Federal Republic belongs to NATO*
Er arbeitet bei **der BASF**	*He works for BASF*
im Kölner **Dom**, **das** Ulmer **Rathaus**	*in Cologne cathedral, Ulm town hall*

No article is used with names of buildings with a proper name in apposition, e.g. *Schloss Sanssouci, Burg Gibichstein, Kloster Beuron.*

(h) Infinitives used as nouns

These have a definite article when they are used in a general sense:

Er hat **das Schwimmen** verlernt	*He has forgotten how to swim*
Das Kaffeetrinken kam im 17. Jahrhundert nach Europa	*Coffee-drinking came to Europe in the 17th century*

4.3 The use of articles in generalizations

Generalizations about people and things can be expressed in different ways.

Compare the following possibilities in German and English:

(a) Die Tanne ist ein Nadelbaum	*The fir is a conifer*
(b) Die Tannen sind Nadelbäume	[no direct English equivalent]
(c) Eine Tanne ist ein Nadelbaum	*A fir is a conifer*
(d) Tannen sind Nadelbäume	*Firs are conifers*

German tends to use constructions like (a) above, especially in writing, whereas English has a clear preference for sentences like (d). The following example illustrates a characteristic equivalence:

Das Auto ist der Fluch der modernen Stadt (*Zeit*) *Cars are the curse of modern cities*

Construction (b), with a definite article and a plural noun, is quite common in German, but it is only possible in English with a few nouns (especially nouns of nationality). Compare:

Die Beschwerden vermehren sich	*Complaints are increasing*
Die Steuern waren drückend (*Brecht*)	*Taxes were oppressive*
Die Italiener lieben die Musik	*The Italians love music*

English 'man' in the sense 'human being' is not normally used with an article, while *der Mensch*, with a definite article, is regular in German in general statements of type (a) above, e.g.:

Der Mensch ist ein seltsames Geschöpf *Man is a strange creature*

4.4 Articles with geographical and other proper names

4.4.1 Geographical and astronomical names

(a) Masculine names of countries

(See also **1.1.6h**). With these, the definite article is usual, but optional:

(der) Libanon   **(der)** Iran   **in/im** Sudan

The definite article is always used with masculine names of regions or provinces, e.g. *der Balkan*, *der Bosporus*.

(b) Feminine and plural names of countries and regions

These are *always* used with a definite article:

die Lausitz   **die** Schweiz   **die** Türkei   **die** Niederlande

die Normandie **die** Steiermark **die** Ukraine **die** USA

(c) Neuter names of countries and cities

No article is used with most of these:

Deutschland Norwegen Spanien Leipzig London Ulm

However, some neuter names of regions and provinces are normally used with the article:

das Elsass   **das** Engadin   **das** Ries   **das** Wallis *Valais*

das Rheinland **das** Vogtland (and all others in *-land*)

Historical German regions are sometimes referred to with an adjectival noun, e.g. *Jetzt kommen wir ins Bayrische*; *Das Dorf liegt im Thüringischen*. The definite article is always used with these.

The definite article is optional with *Tirol*: *in/im Tirol*.

(d) Other geographical names always have a definite article

This is so even where English has no article:

der Mont Blanc **der** Genfer See **der** Bodensee *Lake Constance*

(e) Astronomical names most often have a definite article

der Mars **die** Venus **der** Jupiter

However, they are occasionally used with no article, e.g. *der Asteroidengürtel zwischen Mars und Jupiter*.

(f) The definite article is commonly used to refer to street names

> Ich wohne in **der** Goethestraße
> Wir treffen uns auf **dem** Schlossplatz
> **Der** Alexanderweg ist die zweite Querstraße **zur** Humboldtstraße

However, no article is used in addresses: *Frau Gerlinde Haarmann, Weserstraße 247, 34125 Kassel.*

4.4.2 Use of the article with personal names

In standard German there is usually no article with personal names. However, there are some exceptions.

(a) In colloquial speech a definite article is frequent with names

Ich sehe **die** Monika   Gestern war ich bei **der** Frau Schmidt

This usage is characteristic of South German speech, where the use of the article is universal, but it has spread into North Germany in recent years.

(b) The article is always used with names outside the sentence

i.e. in constructions involving so-called DISLOCATION to the right or left of the sentence:

> **Den** Robert Bauer, den kann sie einfach nicht riechen.
> Hat er irgendwas gewusst davon, **der** Peter?
> Ich habe sie seit langem nicht mehr gesehen, **die** Angelika

See 19.2.1c for the use of the cases in dislocation.

(c) To clarify case or gender

(see also *4.7a*):

der Vortrag **des** Klaus Müller   Das hat Klaus **dem** Wolfgang Pedersen gesagt
Ich habe eben mit **der** Rupp (i.e. **Frau** Rupp, *not* **Herr** Rupp) gesprochen

(d) To individualize the person concerned more strongly

> **Der** Lehmann hat einen ausgezeichneten Vortrag gehalten
> die Briefe Leopold Mozarts an **das** Nannerl (*Hildesheimer*)

(e) to refer to characters in plays

> Er hat in der vorigen Saison **den** Hamlet gespielt

4.4.3 Geographical and proper names qualified by an adjective

A definite article is always used when names have an adjective with them.

das heutige Deutschland   **das** viktorianische England   **das** zerstörte Dresden
das kalte Moskau   **der** junge Heinrich   **der** alte Doktor Schulz

This applies also to saints' names: *der heilige Franziskus* 'Saint Francis'.

4.5 The use of articles in time expressions

(a) The names of months and seasons are used with a definite article

Der April war verregnet   Wir fahren **im August** nach Italien
Der Frühling war dieses Jahr spät   **Im Winter** friert der Bach zu

However, the names of the months have no article after prepositions other than *an*, *bis zu* and *in* (see below), or after *Anfang, Mitte, Ende*:

Es war kalt für April   Der Fahrplan gilt von Mai bis Oktober
Ende Februar hat es geschneit   Er kommt erst Anfang Mai

No article is used with these words after *sein* and *werden*, see **4.8.2c**, e.g. *Es ist, wird Sommer*, or when the name is qualified by *letzten, nächsten, vorigen, vergangenen*, e.g.:

nächsten Oktober   letzten Herbst

(b) The major festivals are not used with an article

Weihnachten   Silvester   Neujahr   Pfingsten   Ostern

Note though: *der Heilige Abend* 'Christmas Eve', *der Karfreitag* 'Good Friday'.

(c) All time nouns are used with the definite article after the prepositions *an*, *bis zu* **and** *in*

am Mittwoch   **am** 27. Januar   **bis zum** Montag
am Tag *by day*   **in der** Nacht *at night*   **in der** vorigen Woche
in der Gegenwart *at present*   **im** Jahre 1945

After other prepositions in time expressions there is normally no article. Consult the entries for the individual prepositions in **Chapter 18**.

4.6 Definite article or possessive?

German sometimes uses a definite article rather than a possessive determiner (e.g. *mein, sein, unser*).

4.6.1 Referring to parts of the body and articles of clothing

(a) German most often uses a definite article with these nouns

This is quite different to English, which always uses a possessive determiner:

Hast du **die** Zähne geputzt?	*Have you cleaned your teeth?*
Sie hat **das** Bein gebrochen	*She has broken her leg*
Sie strich **den** Rock glatt	*She smoothed her skirt*
Das Mädchen zog **den** rötlichen Kamm aus **dem** Haar, nahm ihn in **den** Mund und fing an, mit **den** Fingern **die** Frisur zurechtzuzupfen (*Böll*)	*The girl took the reddish comb out of her hair, put it in her mouth and began to put her hair straight with her fingers*

A possessive dative is often used in such constructions, and it is essential when the relevant person is not the subject of the verb, see **2.5.3**, e.g.:

Sie nahm es (**sich**) in den Mund	*She put it in her mouth*
Die Mütze fiel **mir** vom Kopf	*My cap fell off my head*

(b) A possessive determiner is used rather than the definite article in a few contexts

(i) when the owner has been named in a previous sentence, or when the part of the body or article of clothing is the first element in the sentence:

Ein Fremder erschien. **Seine** Stirn glänzte. S**ein** Anzug war altmodisch	*A stranger appeared. His forehead glistened. His suit was old-fashioned*
Meine Beine sind nicht krumm (*Brecht*)	*My legs aren't crooked*

(ii) when the owner must be specified, but the verb does not permit the use of a possessive dative:

Ich erblickte eine Wespe auf **meinem** Ärmel	*I caught sight of a wasp on my sleeve*
Sie legte **ihre** Hand auf **seine** Hand (*Wendt*)	*She put her hand on his hand*

(iii) to emphasize the owner or avoid ambiguity:

Langsam hob sie **ihre** rechte Hand	*Slowly, she raised her right hand*
Hast du **deine** Zähne geputzt?	*Have you cleaned your teeth?*
Zieh (dir) lieber **deinen** Mantel an!	*Put your coat on (i.e. not mine!)*
Ich zog mir **seine** Hose an	*I put his trousers on*

4.6.2 Other contexts where a possessive is not used in German

(a) The definite article is sometimes used with some abstract nouns

This is frequent with nouns denoting human attributes and emotions, which are thus seen as 'part' of the person concerned. A possessive dative may occur under the same conditions as with body parts:

Du musst versuchen, **die/deine** Angst zu überwinden	*You must try to overcome your fear*
Ich werde ihm **die Faulheit** austreiben	*I shall rid him of his laziness*
Der Appetit ist mir vergangen	*I've lost my appetite*

(b) The definite or indefinite article can be used with the adjective *eigen*

The appropriate one of these can be an alternative to a possessive determiner:

Er hat **den/seinen** eigenen Sohn erschlagen	*He killed his own son*
Jetzt haben wir **eine/unsere** eigene Wohnung	*We've got our own flat/a flat of our own now*

Note, as a set phrase with no article or possessive: *Das haben wir mit eigenen Augen gesehen* 'We saw that with our own eyes'.

4.7 Other uses of the definite article

In a few other contexts the use of the definite article is unexpected or differs from English.

(a) The definite article can be used to make the case of a noun clear

(i) The definite article used to mark the **genitive** case:

der Geruch **des** Seetangs	*the smell of seaweed*
ein Ausdruck **des** Erstaunens	*an expression of surprise*

In practice no noun (other than a proper name) can be used in the genitive without a determiner or an adjective which shows the case. For this reason, the article is essential in the first sentence below to show that the noun is in the genitive case. On the other hand, *brauchen* is a transitive verb with a direct object in the accusative case, and no article is needed:

Sie bedarf **der** Ruhe } *She needs rest*
Sie braucht Ruhe

If ambiguity could arise from the use of a definite article, then a phrase with *von* must be used (see **2.4**). Thus 'the smell of wild boar' has to be given with *der Geruch von Eber* if *der Geruch des Ebers* could be understood in the context to mean 'the smell of **the** wild boar' (i.e. a particular one).

(ii) The definite article can be used to mark the **dative** case in contexts where it would not normally occur (see **4.2.2**) in order to resolve an ambiguity or make the function of the particular noun clear:

Ich ziehe Kaffee **dem** Tee vor	*I prefer coffee to tea*
Dieses Metall gleicht **dem** Gold	*This metal resembles gold*
Er hat sich **der** Physik gewidmet	*He devoted himself to physics*

(b) The definite article can be used in a distributive sense

In contexts like this English commonly uses the indefinite article or 'per':

Die Butter hat 3 Euro **das** Pfund gekostet	*The butter cost 3 euros a/per pound*
Sie kommt zweimal **die** Woche zu uns	*She comes to us twice a week*
Wir sind 80 Kilometer **die** Stunde gefahren	*We were doing 80 kilometres per hour*

pro (see **18.1.7d**) and (with measurements) *je*, both without an article, are common alternatives to the definite article in this sense:

Wir haben 2 Euro **pro/je** Meter gezahlt	*We paid 2 euros a/per metre*
Es kostet 20 Euro **pro** Stunde	*It costs 20 euros an hour*

(c) The definite article is always used with *meist*

Er hat **das meiste** Geld	*He has (the) most money*
die meisten Jungen	*most of the boys*
die meisten meiner Freunde	*most of my friends*

4.8 The 'zero article'

In most contexts English and German agree on whether an article is used or not, but there are some contexts in which no article is used in German where one might be expected or where the usual English equivalent construction has a definite or indefinite article.

4.8.1 Nouns used in pairs or enumerations

These often lack the definite article even if a single noun in the same construction would require an article. Many of these are idiomatic or set phrases:

Form und Inhalt	*form and content*
Tag und Nacht	*day and night*
mit Müh und Not	*with great difficulty*
Rhein, Main und Donau sind schiffbare Flüsse	*The Rhine, the Main and the Danube are navigable rivers*
In Industrie und Handwerk bleiben Tausende von Arbeitsplätzen unbesetzt (*Spiegel*)	*In industry and trade thousands of job vacancies remain unfilled*

4.8.2 No article in the predicate of *sein*, *werden* and *bleiben*

These are COPULAR VERBS which have a PREDICATE COMPLEMENT (see **16.6**) in the NOMINATIVE CASE (see **2.1.3**). In some contexts these nouns are used without an article, unlike in English.

(a) With nouns denoting professions, nationality, origins or classes of people in general

Er ist **Arzt**, **Bäcker**, **Installateur**	*He is a doctor, a baker, a plumber*
Ich bin **Deutsche(r)**, **Engländer/-in**, **Schwede/Schwedin**	*I am a German, an Englishman/-woman, a Swede*
Franz ist **gläubiger Katholik**	*Franz is a devout Catholic*
Helmut ist **Junggeselle** geblieben	*Helmut remained a bachelor*
Danach ist er **Marxist** geworden	*After that he became a Marxist*

But the indefinite article **is** used if the noun refers to a specific individual, not to a class of person:

Sie ist **eine bekannte Anwältin**	*She is a well-known lawyer*
Er ist **ein guter Arzt**	*He's a good doctor*

Compare:

Er ist **Clown**	*He's a clown* (that's his job)
Er ist **ein Clown**	*He's a clown* (he behaves like one)

The indefinite article is also used in descriptive constructions with professions and positions, e.g.:

| Er hatte den Titel **eines Professors**, die Stelle **eines** Untersuchungsrichters | *He had the title of professor*, *the position of examining magistrate* |

(b) With certain nouns, mainly in formal writing

A number of nouns are typically used with no article in formal writing at the beginning of a sentence with *sein* to introduce a general statement. The most frequent are *Bedingung, Fakt, Gegenstand, Grundlage, Sache, Schwerpunkt, Tatsache, Voraussetzung* and *Ziel*.

Tatsache ist, dass …	*It is a fact that …*
Bedingung dafür ist, dass er den Vertrag unterschreibt	*The condition for this is that he signs the contract*
Auch Anfang Januar brauchen Autofahrer wieder Geduld. **Grund** sind einige Baustellen, Straßensperrungen und Verkehrsänderungen (*MM*)	*At the beginning of January, too, drivers will need to be patient again. This is because of some road works, road closures and diversions*

(c) With the names of the months and the seasons, and abstract nouns used in a general sense

Against the usual rule with these (see **4.2** and **4.5**) they are used with no article after the verb *sein:*

Es war schon **April**	*It was already April*
Jetzt ist **Sommer**	*It's summer now*
Heute Abend ist **Tanz**	*There's a dance on tonight*
Das ist **Geschmackssache**	*That is a matter of taste*

4.8.3 'Zero article' for English *some* or *any*

The most frequent equivalent for the English indefinite determiners 'some' or 'any' is simply to use the noun without an article:

Ich möchte **Suppe**	*I should like some soup*
Brauchen Sie **Marken**?	*Do you need any stamps?*
Ich habe **(rote) Äpfel** gekauft	*I bought some (red) apples*
wenn du noch **Schwierigkeiten** hast	*if you have any more difficulties*
Hast du **Geld** bei dir?	*Have you got any money on you?*

For more information on German equivalents for *some* and *any*, see **5.5.9b**.

4.8.4 Other contexts where no article is used

German has no article in a few contexts where English usually has a definite or indefinite article:

(a) No article is used in phrases introduced by *als* ' as'

Ich kannte ihn **als Junge**	*I knew him when I was a boy*
Er hat **als Franzose gesprochen**	*He spoke as a Frenchman*
die Bedeutung des Passes **als wichtige(r) Handelstraße**	*the significance of the pass as an important trade route*
Als überzeugter Demokrat kann ich das nicht gutheißen	*As a convinced democrat, I cannot approve of that*
Er gilt **als bester Tenor** der Neuzeit	*He is reckoned to be the best tenor of modern times*

However, an article can be used with verbs which are usually followed by als, e.g. ansehen, betrachten, fühlen, gelten: Er gilt als *(der)* beste(r) Tenor der Neuzeit.

The article can also be used in the genitive case, e.g. mit der Verhaftung des Generals als *(des)* eigent-lichen Putschführers.

(b) The article can be omitted in appositional phrases

See **2.6** for information about **apposition**. The lack of the article is characteristic of formal written registers.

Zunächst kamen wir nach Florenz, **(der) Hauptstadt der Toskana**	*First we arrived in Florence, the capital of Tuscany*
dieses Zürich, **(der) Treffpunkt der Kaufleute** (*Frisch*)	*this Zurich, the meeting place of businessmen*
Neil Armstrong, **(der) amerikanischer Astronaut**, betrat als erster Mensch den Mond (*Zeit*)	*Neil Armstrong, the American astronaut, was the first man to set foot on the moon*

(c) No article is used in some formulaic expressions referring to people

This usage is typical of formal, especially official registers.

Angeklagter hat gestanden, dass …	*The accused confessed that …*
Unterzeichneter bittet um rasche Entscheidung seiner Angelegenheit	*The undersigned requests a speedy decision in the matter concerning him*
Verfasser behauptet, das Problem gelöst zu haben	*The author claims to have solved the problem*

(d) Articles are often omitted for stylistic effect in headlines and advertisements

Verbrechen gestanden. Münchner Kaufmann vom Geschäftspartner erschlagen (*HA*)	*Crime admitted. Munich businessman killed by partner*
Wohnung mit Bad gesucht möglichst nahe Stadtzentrum	*Flat with bathroom required as close as possible to the city centre*

(e) No article is used with adverbial genitives

e.g. *schweren Herzens* 'with a heavy heart', see **2.3.3d**.

4.9 Article use with phrasal verbs

Constructions with phrasal verbs like *Abschied nehmen*, *in Druck geben*, *in Erfahrung bringen* are typically idiomatic, in particular in respect of the use of a definite article or no article with them, e.g. *zum Abschluss bringen* but *zu Ende bringen*, and in principle it is best to consult a dictionary in cases of uncertainty. However, the following general rules apply:

(i) Infinitives used as nouns have a **definite article** in phrasal verbs with prepositions:

> **ins** Rollen kommen, **zum** Kochen bringen

(ii) Feminine nouns in phrasal verbs with *zu* **have a definite article:**

> **zur** Kenntnis bringen, *zur* Verfügung stehen

(iii) Phrasal verbs with *außer* **and** *unter*, **and most of those with** *in* **have no article**:

> **außer** Gefahr sein, jdn. **unter** Druck setzen, jdn. **in** Verlegenheit bringen

However, those with *in* followed by an infinitive used as a noun do have an article, see **(i)** above.

(iv) Most phrasal verbs with *gehen***,** *halten* **and** *setzen* **have no article:**

> *in* Erfüllung *gehen, in* Gang *halten*, **in** Brand **setzen**

(v) Abstract nouns used with *haben* **have no article:**

> Aufenthalt **haben**, Angst **haben**, Durst **haben**, Geduld **haben**, Mut **haben**

(vi) Phrasal verbs consisting of a **verb** and **an object noun with no preposition** have **no article**:

> Anspruch erheben, Antwort geben, Abschied nehmen, Krieg führen, Not leiden, Zeit sparen

(vii) An article is used with phrasal verbs if the noun is qualified by an adjective

This applies even if the phrasal verb normally lacks an article:

jdn. **in Gefahr** bringen	*lead sb. into danger*
jdn. **in** (eine) **große Gefahr** bringen	*lead sb. into great danger*
jdn. **in die größte Gefahr** bringen	*lead sb. into the greatest danger*

4.10 Article use with prepositions

Article use with prepositions is typically idiomatic. Usage in time phrases and phrasal verbs is dealt with in sections **4.5** and **4.9**. More detail, in particular concerning differences between the English and German use of articles in set phrases with prepositions, can be found in **Chapter 18** under the individual prepositions. In this section we deal with a few cases where general rules apply.

(i) The definite article can be omitted in prepositional phrases if the following noun is qualified by a genitive or another prepositional phrase:

auf Anraten des Arztes	*on the advice of a doctor*
in Gegenwart von zwei Kollegen	*in the presence of two colleagues*
die Studie, die Smith noch **in Diensten** der Bank verfasste (*Spiegel*)	*the study which Smith wrote in the service of the bank*
unter Ausnutzung aller Möglichkeiten	*by exploiting all possibilities*

(ii) The indefinite article is often omitted in adverbial or adjectival phrases consisting of preposition and adjective plus noun. This is characteristic of formal registers and quite common if a set phrase is extended by an adjective:

Bewerber **mit türkischem Namen** erhielten 14 Prozent weniger Zusagen (*taz*)	*Applicants with a Turkish name received 14% fewer acceptances*
ein Mann, der solchem Rat nicht folgte und **zu schrecklichem Ende** kam (*Hildesheimer*)	*a man who failed to follow this kind of advice and met a terrible end*
Wir erhielten den Betrag **in frei konvertierbarer Währung**	*We received the sum in a freely convertible currency*

This usage is also the norm in phrases with *mit* which are alternatives to adverbial genitives (see **2.3.3d**):

Sie ging **mit schnellem Schritt** (= schnellen Schrittes) über die Straße	*She crossed the road at a fast pace*

(iii) A few prepositions are used with no article in some or all of their uses. The most noteworthy (because of the differences to English) are the following:

> *mit* is often used with no article when a part-whole relationship is involved:

ein Zimmer **mit Bad**   ein Audi **mit Schiebedach**

ein Hut **mit breitem Rand**   eine Suppe **mit Wursteinlage**

ohne is used with no article in German in contexts where English has an indefinite article:

Er geht gern **ohne Hut**   Ich übersetzte den Text **ohne Wörterbuch**, **ohne Mühe**

Sie trat **ohne Brille** auf   Wie hast du die Tür **ohne Schlüssel** aufgemacht?

The following prepositions, most of which belong to formal written registers, are typically used without a following article. More information is given under the individual prepositions in **Chapter 18**.

ab	ab ersten/erstem Mai; ab Bahnhof; Preise ab Fabrik *ex works*
gemäß	Die Angelegenheit wurde gemäß Verordnung entschieden
infolge	Die Straße ist infolge schlechten Wetters gesperrt
kraft	Er handelte kraft Gesetzes
laut	Der Fahrer wurde laut Gesetz verurteilt
mangels	Der Angeklagte wurde mangels Beweises freigesprochen
per	per Einschreiben *by registered mail*; per Anhalter fahren *to hitch-hike*
pro	pro Stück; der Preis pro Tag *per day*; pro männlichen Angestellten
von … wegen	Diese Angelegenheit muss von Amts wegen geklärt werden
zwecks	Junge Dame möchte netten, gebildeten Herrn zwecks Heirat kennen lernen (*FAZ*)

5 Other determiners and pronouns

Determiners are a limited set of small words used with nouns to relate them to a particular context or situation. PRONOUNS are a limited set of small words which stand in place of NOUNS **or** NOUN PHRASES, in particular for nouns or noun phrases which have already been mentioned or which do not need to be repeated in full. This chapter deals with the following determiners and pronouns in the sections indicated:

5.1 demonstratives
5.2 possessives
5.3 interrogatives
5.4 the relative pronouns
5.5 indefinites, quantifiers and other determiners and pronouns

The DETERMINERS include the DEFINITE and INDEFINITE ARTICLES , which are dealt with in **Chapter 4**, and all other words used to determine nouns, like the DEMONSTRATIVES (*dieser*, *jener*, etc.), the POSSESSIVES (*mein*, *sein*, etc.), the INTERROGATIVES (e.g. *welcher?*), the INDEFINITES (*einige*, *etliche*, etc.) and the QUANTIFIERS (*viele*, *wenige*, etc.). They typically occupy the first position in a NOUN PHRASE, before any adjectives .

TABLE 5.1 The noun phrase: other determiners

DETERMINER	Adjective/adjectival phrase	Noun
diese	heidnische	Gottheit
einige	fleißige	Studenten
ihr	sehr elegantes	Ensemble
jedes	in der Bundesrepublik geborene	Kind

PRONOUNS include the PERSONAL PRONOUNS, which are dealt with in Chapter 3, DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS, POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS, INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

(asking questions), the **relative pronouns** (the 'who', 'which' and 'that' words) and ɪɴᴅᴇꜰɪɴɪᴛᴇ ᴘʀᴏɴᴏᴜɴs.

ᴅᴇᴛᴇʀᴍɪɴᴇʀs and ᴘʀᴏɴᴏᴜɴs typically ᴅᴇᴄʟɪɴᴇ , i.e. they have endings which indicate the same ɢʀᴀᴍᴍᴀᴛɪᴄᴀʟ ᴄᴀᴛᴇɢᴏʀɪᴇs as nouns – ᴄᴀsᴇ , ɴᴜᴍʙᴇʀ and ɢᴇɴᴅᴇʀ and *Table 5.2* gives the ᴅᴇᴄʟᴇɴsɪᴏɴ of *dieser* 'this'. Many other determiners and pronouns have the same endings as *dieser*, and they can be used as determiners **or** pronouns, e.g.:

TABLE 5.2   Declension of *dieser*

	Masculine	**Feminine**	**Neuter**	**Plural**
Nominative	dieser	diese	dieses	diese
Accusative	diesen	diese	dieses	diese
Genitive	dieses	dieser	dieses	dieser
Dative	diesem	dieser	diesem	diesen

Dieses Auto fährt sehr schnell (**determiner**)   **Dieses** fährt aber schneller (**pronoun**)

The same is true of many of the determiners dealt with in this chapter, but a few have a different declension depending on whether they are used as determiners or pronouns. This is in particular the case with the possessives, such as *mein/meines*, e.g.:

Mein Auto fährt sehr schnell (**determiner**)   **Meines** fährt aber schneller (**pronoun**)

For this reason it is important to know the difference between ᴅᴇᴛᴇʀᴍɪɴᴇʀs and ᴘʀᴏɴᴏᴜɴs, as shown for the ᴘᴏssᴇssɪᴠᴇs in **Tables 5.7** and **5.8**.

5.1 Demonstratives

5.1.1 *der* 'that'

der **is the most frequent demonstrative in spoken German**. It can be used to point in a general way to something distant or something near at hand and in this way it can be the equivalent of both 'this' and 'that'.

(a) When used as a determiner, der **has the same declension as the definite article**

i.e. as given in *Table 4.2*. However, it differs from the definite article in speech because it is always stressed, e.g. *den* [deːn], *der* [deːɐ], etc. It is thus quite distinct from the definite article, whose spoken forms are typically always unstressed and reduced, e.g. *'n*, *d'n* or *d'r*, etc., see **4.1.1**. Compare:

Ich möchte ein Stück von **d'r** Wurst	*I would like a piece of the sausage*
Ich möchte ein Stück von **der** [deːɐ] Wurst	*I would like a piece of this/that sausage*

In written German the demonstrative force of *der* may sometimes be clear from the context, especially when a relative clause follows, e.g.:

Ich kann dir **die** Hefte der Zeitschrift schicken, die dir noch fehlen	*I can send you those issues of the journal which you haven't got yet*
Bei **der** Lehrerin würde ich auch nichts lernen	*I wouldn't learn anything from that teacher either*

In many contexts, though, it would be difficult to tell the demonstrative *der* apart from the definite article in writing, and *dieser* or *derjenige* is preferred. In colloquial speech the demonstrative force of *der* can be strengthened by adding *da* or *hier* after the noun, depending on whether 'this' or 'that' is meant, e.g. *der Mann da* 'that man', *der Mann hier* 'this man'. These forms are not used in writing.

In colloquial spoken German, especially in the South, *denen* is sometimes used rather than *den* in the dative plural, e.g. *Mit denen Sachen kann ich eh nichts anfangen*.

(b) The declension of demonstrative *der* used as a pronoun

This is identical to the declension of the definite article, or *der* used as a determiner, **except in the genitive**, and in the **dative plural**. The forms are given in *Table 5.3*. When used with the demonstrative pronoun the prepositions *halber*, *wegen* and *um ... willen* have special compound forms of the genitive with *-t-* inserted, e.g. *derenthalben*, *dessentwegen*, *um derentwillen*, etc., see **18.4.1d** and **18.4.4b**.

TABLE 5.3   Declension of the demonstrative pronoun *der*

	Masculine	**Feminine**	**Neuter**	**Plural**
Nominative	der	die	das	die
Accusative	den	die	das	die

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Genitive	dessen	deren/derer	dessen	deren/derer
Dative	dem	der	dem	denen

(c) The use of *der* as a pronoun

When it is being used as a pronoun, *der* cannot be confused with the definite article, as there is no noun following, and it is used freely in writing. It usually corresponds to English 'the one'/'this one'/'that one':

mein Wagen und **der** meines Bruders	*my car and my brother's*
Die Sache ist nämlich **die**: Er ist schon verheiratet	*It's like this: he's already married*
Diese Seife ist besser als **die**, die ich gewöhnlich gebrauche	*This soap is better than the one I normally use*
Die sind mir zu teuer	*Those (ones) are too expensive for me*
Das Buch liegt auf dem Tisch. Ja, auf **dem** da drüben	*The book's lying on the table. Yes, on that one over there*

(d) Pronominal *der* is often used instead of a third person pronoun

This usage is frequent in writing to refer to things, but to refer to persons it is typical of everyday colloquial speech and considered non-standard, see **3.4.2**:

Ist der Teller kaputt? Ja, **den** hat Astrid fallen lassen	*Is the plate broken? Yes, Astrid dropped it*
Keine Möwen. **Die** waren weiter draußen (*Grass*)	*No gulls. They were further offshore*
Hast du Peter gesehen? Ja, **der** ist gerade reingekommen	*Have you seen Peter? Yes, he's just come in.*

(e) *der* can be strengthened by the addition of *da* or *hier*

This usage is typical of informal colloquial speech. It makes it more clear whether '**this** one (here)' or '**that** one (there)' is being referred to, e.g. *das da* 'that one', *das hier* 'this one'.

(f) The genitive of the pronoun *der* can be used for a possessive pronoun to avoid ambiguity

i.e. where it might not be completely clear what *sein* or *ihr* could refer to:

Sie war die Tochter des Schriftstellers Thomas Mann und **dessen** viertes Kind (*Spiegel*)	*She was the daughter of the writer Thomas Mann and his fourth child*

Dennoch wurden sie alle geprägt von ihrer Stadt und **deren** geistiger Tradition	*Nevertheless they were all moulded by their city and its intellectual tradition*
Erboste Bauern nahmen britische LKW-Fahrer gefangen und plünderten **deren** Konvois (*Zeit*)	*Angry farmers held some British lorry-drivers captive and plundered their convoys* (i.e. the lorry-drivers' convoys, not the farmers')

In colloquial speech, the genitive of *der* is sometimes used instead of a possessive for emphasis, e.g. *Ich kann deren Mann nicht leiden*.

(g) The feminine singular and genitive plural forms *derer*

These are typically used to refer forwards, especially with a following relative clause (see also **5.4.1c**). The traditional rule that it can **only** be used in this way is no longer valid:

Unverändert niedrig ist die Zahl **derer**, die Asyl in Deutschland erhalten (*NüN*)	*The number of those who have been granted asylum in Germany is unchanged and still low*
Wie soll man **derer** habhaft werden, wenn sie jemanden umgefahren haben? (*FR*)	*How can they be detained when they have knocked somebody down?*

(h) The pronoun *das* is used as an emphatic form of *es*

das is used as *es* cannot be stressed (see **3.6**), and like *es*, it can be used with singular **or** plural forms of the verb *sein*. In the corresponding English constructions we distinguish between 'that' and 'those':

Das sind meine Bücher	*Those are my books*
Das ist mein Arm, meine Hand, mein Knie	*That is my arm, my hand, my knee*

(i) Demonstrative pronouns are not normally used after a preposition

The prepositional adverb (see **3.5**) is used instead, e.g. *damit* 'with that', *darin* 'in that'. The stress is on the first syllable:

'**Damit** kann man die Büchse doch nicht aufmachen, oder?	*You can't open the can with that, can you?*

To refer to something near or something just mentioned, a prepositional adverb with *hier-* can be used, e.g. *hiermit* 'with this', *hierin* 'in this':

'**Hier**über lässt sich nichts mehr sagen	*There is nothing more to be said about this*

These forms in *hier-* are particularly common in scientific texts, especially *hierbei* 'in this connection'.

The variant forms in *hie-*, e.g. *hiemit*, *hienach*, can sound rather old-fashioned, but they are still widely used in Switzerland and Austria.

With a following relative clause introduced by *was* (see **5.4.3**), it depends on the individual preposition whether you use the prepositional adverb or a preposition followed by the demonstrative pronoun.

- with *hinter* and *über* the prepositional adverb is more frequent, e.g.:

  Du darfst **darüber** (*less common*: **über das**), **was** ich dir gerade gesagt habe, nicht sprechen   *You mustn't talk about what I just told you*

- with *an*, *auf, aus* and *für*, the preposition followed by a demonstrative pronoun is more usual:

  Ich richtete meine ganze Aufmerksamkeit **auf das** (*less common*: **darauf**), was er erklärte   *I focused my whole attention on what he was saying*

- with *bei*, *gegen*, *mit* and *unter*, the construction with the preposition followed by a demonstrative pronoun is predominant:

  Es soll **bei dem** (*infrequent*: **dabei**) bleiben, was vereinbart wurde   *It really has to stay as agreed*

5.1.2 *dieser* **'this'**

The declension of *dieser* is given in *Table 5.2*. The form *diesen* is now often used rather than *dieses* in the genitive singular masculine and neuter if the noun has the ending *-(e)s*, e.g. *im Februar dies en Jahres* (MM) (for *dies es Jahres*). This usage is slowly becoming accepted as standard, especially with *Jahr*, although it is still rather less frequent. Genitive forms of the pronoun are not used.

(a) As a determiner and a pronoun *dieser* **typically refers to something near at hand**

It thus generally corresponds to English 'this'. As a determiner, *dieser* occurs in both spoken and written German, but as a pronoun it is mainly used in writing since spoken German tends to use *der* in this function (see **5.1.1**):

Diese Erklärung ist unbefriedigend	*This explanation is unsatisfactory*
Dieser Junge arbeitet aber gut	*That boy really does work well*
Er hat den kleinen Wagen nicht gekauft, weil ihm **dieser** (*spoken:* **der hier**) viel besser gefallen hat	*He didn't buy the small car because he liked this one much better*

dieser is often used simply to point to an object or person in contexts where the difference between near and distant (i.e. between 'this one' and 'that one') is not crucial. In such contexts it often corresponds to English 'that', e.g. *Warum hast du dieses Top gekauft?* 'Why did you buy this/that top?'

(b) The short form *dies* **can be used for** *dieses* **as a pronoun**

It refers in general to something close by or recent and its use is very similar to that of English 'this':

Dies geschieht nicht oft   Gerade **dies** hatte ich vergessen
Es ist **dies** der früheste Reisebericht über Afrika und Indien (*TT*)

dies, like *das*, can be used irrespective of gender or number, with a plural verb where appropriate: *Dies sind meine Schwestern*; *Dies ist meine Frau*.

The use of *dies* for *dieses* as a determiner in the nominative or accusative singular neuter is old-fashioned, but it occurs occasionally in formal writing for stylistic effect, or to give a historical flavour, e.g.: *Dies Werk malte Konrad Witz aus Basel* (*Borst*).

5.1.3 *jener* 'that'

jener declines like *dieser*, see *Table 5.2*, and also has the same declension whether it is used as a determiner or a pronoun. It is largely restricted to formal written German, and it occurs most often in the following contexts:

(a) to contrast with *dieser*

Es war nicht die Absicht, dieses oder **jenes** Verfahren zu *It was not the intention to forbid this procedure*
  verbieten (*SGT*)   *or that one*
Wir sprachen über dieses und **jenes** (*less formal*: über dies *We talked about this and that*
  und das)

(b) to refer to something distant, but well-known

Werfen wir einen kurzen Blick über den Eisernen Vorhang *Let us cast a short glance at the Iron*
  jener Zeit (*Sonnenberg*)   *Curtain of those times*

(c) with a following relative clause

Deshalb hat er auch eine Menge Anhänger unter **jenen**, die *That is why he has a lot of fans among those*

5.1.4 *derjenige* **'that'**

Both parts of *derjenige* decline, as shown in *Table 5.4*, the first part in the same way as the definite article (see Table 4.2), the second as a weak adjective (see Table 6.4).

TABLE 5.4   Declension of *derjenige*

	Masculine	**Feminine**	**Neuter**	**Plural**
Nominative	derjenige	diejenige	dasjenige	diejenigen
Accusative	denjenigen	diejenige	dasjenige	diejenigen
Genitive	desjenigen	derjenigen	desjenigen	derjenigen
Dative	demjenigen	derjenigen	demjenigen	denjenigen

It is used as an emphatic demonstrative determiner or pronoun, typically with a following restrictive relative clause, corresponding to English 'that (one), which/who'. Although it was originally more typical of formal and official registers, it is now quite frequent in speech as well as in writing.

Wir wollen **diejenigen** Schüler herausfinden, die musikalisch begabt sind	*We want to find those pupils who are musically gifted*
Beihilfen sollen nur **demjenigen** zufließen, der unter der Armutsgrenze lebt (*FR*)	*Assistance should only go to those who are living below the poverty line*

5.1.5 *derselbe* **'the same'**

derselbe corresponds to English 'the same'. Both parts decline, as with *derjenige*, see Table 5.5.

TABLE 5.5   Declension of *derselbe*

	Masculine	**Feminine**	**Neuter**	**Plural**
Nominative	derselbe	dieselbe	dasselbe	dieselben
Accusative	denselben	dieselbe	dasselbe	dieselben
Genitive	desselben	derselben	desselben	derselben
Dative	demselben	derselben	demselben	denselben

Er besucht **dieselbe** Schule wie dein Bruder	*He goes to the same school as your brother*

Sind das **dieselben**?	*Are those the same?*
Sie wohnt **im selben** Haus	*She lives in the same house*
Es läuft auf (ein und) **dasselbe** hinaus	*It all comes to the same thing*

Note that, unlike *derjenige*, it can be used with a contracted preposition, which is then separated in the spelling, e.g. *am selben Tag*, *zur selben Zeit*.

Standard German has long insisted on distinguishing between *derselbe*, i.e. 'the very same', and *der gleiche*, i.e. 'one which is similar', e.g. *Er trägt den gleichen Hut* 'He is wearing the same hat', i.e. a similar one, whereas *Er trägt denselben Hut* would be nonsensical. However, this distinction is often ignored in speech and either are used in both senses. It is widely felt, though, that the distinction should be upheld, at least in writing.

5.1.6 *solch* and other equivalents of 'such'

solch- occurs in a number of forms:

- **inflected** *solcher*, which declines like *dieser* (see Table 5.2).
- **endingless** *solch*, used with an indefinite article: *solch ein Unsinn*
- *solch-* used after the indefinite article *ein* or another determiner, with the endings of an adjective: *ein solches Buch*, *jeder solche Gedanke*, *alle solchen Frauen*

(a) German equivalents of 'such'

(i) the most frequent equivalent of English 'such (a)' as a determiner in written registers are *ein solcher* in the **singular** and inflected *solche* in the **plural**:

Eine solche Auflockerung könnte dem politischen Diskurs gut bekommen (*Zeit*)	*Such a relaxation of tension could benefit the political debate*
Einen solchen Wagen würde er nie kaufen	*He would never buy a car like that*
Solchen Leuten kann man alles erzählen	*You can tell people like that anything*
solche großen Häuser	*such big houses*

(ii) Inflected *solcher* as a determiner in the singular still occurs occasionally in formal registers:

bei **solchem** Wetter	*in such weather*
ein Mann, der **solchem** Rat nicht folgte (*Hildesheimer*)	*a man who failed to follow such advice*

(iii) with a following adjective the most usual equivalent with singular count nouns followed by an adjective is *ein so*, or in less formal registers *so ein* (see also **(vi)** below):

> **ein so** großes Haus   } *such a big house*
> **so ein** großes Haus

With plural COUNT NOUNS and singular MASS NOUNS used with an adjective, inflected *solcher* is usual in written German, but *so* is commonly used in everyday speech:

> **so** große Häuser (spoken)   } *such big houses*
> **solche** großen Häuser (written)
>
> bei **so** gutem Wetter (spoken)   } *in such good weather*
> bei **solchem** guten Wetter (written)

(iv) In formal registers uninflected *solch* is not uncommon if an adjective follows. It also occurs in a few idiomatic phrases:

Das ist häufig die Gefahr nach **solch** guten Leistungen *That is often the danger after such good*
(*NUZ*)   *results*

mit **solch** unermüdlichem Eifer   *with such tireless enthusiasm*

Solch dummes Gerede!   *Such stupid gossip!*

(v) In formal registers uninflected *solch* can be used as a determiner with a following indefinite article. This is more emphatic than if the article comes first:

Geprobt haben sie **solch** eine Situation allerdings nicht (*NUZ*).   *However, they haven't tested a situation like that*

The use of uninflected *solch* before a singular noun, e.g. *solch Wetter*, is now old-fashioned.

(vi) In colloquial speech, and increasingly in less formal written registers, the usual equivalent of English 'such a' in the singular is *so ein*, e.g. *in so einer Stadt*, *so ein Geschenk*, and simple *so* is used in the plural, e.g. *Das sind so Sachen* 'things like that'.

In practice, *so* and *ein* are used so often in rapid speech that they have become fused and are interpreted as a single word *son* with its own endings, e.g. *son altes*

Haus, *sone nette Person*, *mit sonem Kerl*, and this is even used in the plural, e.g. *sone frechen Gören*.

(b) German equivalents of 'such' as a pronoun

(i) The most frequent alternatives are *solche* (plural) and *so einer* (singular):

Ich habe **solche** oft gesehen	*I've often seen ones like that*
So eines kann ich mir nicht leisten	*I can't afford one like that*

(ii) Singular *solcher* is used after *als*:

Der Fall als **solcher** interessiert mich	*The case as such interests me*

(iii) Singular (*k*)*ein solcher* is restricted to literary registers. In the singular it sounds rather stilted:

Sie hatte auch **einen solchen**	*She had one like that, too*
Leider haben wir **keine solchen** mehr	*I'm afraid we haven't got any more like that*

(c) The adjective *derartig* is a common, more emphatic alternative to *solch-*

It is used with *ein* in the singular, or with no article in either singular or plural:

Er fuhr mit **einer derartigen** Geschwindigkeit gegen die Mauer, dass ...	*He drove into the wall at such a speed, that ... .*
Erfahrung im Umgang mit **derartiger** Kälte hat niemand (*Bednarz*)	*Nobody has experience in dealing with that degree of cold*
Derartige Gerüchte hören wir oft	*We often hear rumours like those*

If another adjective follows, *derartig* may be uninflected, e.g. *Er fuhr mit einer derartig(en) hohen Geschwindigkeit gegen die Mauer, dass...* In some contexts, though, there can be a difference in meaning. Compare *ein derartig dummes Geschwätz* (i.e. 'gossip which is stupid to such an extent') and *ein derartiges dummes Geschwätz* (i.e. 'such gossip which is stupid').

(d) *dergleichen* and *derlei*

dergleichen and *derlei* do not decline. They are used as determiners or pronouns meaning 'suchlike', 'that kind/sort of':

Dergleichen Behauptungen stören mich	*Assertions like that bother me*
nichts **dergleichen**	*nothing of the kind*
und **dergleichen** mehr (*abbrev.*: u.dgl.m.)	*and so forth*

Er hatte ein langes Messer oder **dergleichen** in der Tasche	*He had a long knife or something of the kind in his pocket*
Die rotblonde Miss Leclerc hatte **derlei** Tricks nicht nötig (*BILD*)	*The strawberry blond Miss Leclerc didn't need tricks like that*
Sie sah **derlei** nicht ungern (*Jacob*)	*She wasn't averse to that kind of thing*

5.2 Possessives

The ᴘᴏssᴇssɪᴠᴇs indicate a relationship between two noun phrases where one in some sense 'belongs' to the other, e.g. *mein Buch* 'my book'; *die Stadt und ihre Geschichte* 'the city and its history'; *Ist das dein Fahrrad oder meines ?* 'Is that your bicycle or mine?'

5.2.1 The forms and declension of the possessives

(a) The basic forms of the possessives

In German there is a basic form of the ᴘᴏssᴇssɪᴠᴇ ᴘʀᴏɴᴏᴜɴs and ᴅᴇᴛᴇʀᴍɪɴᴇʀs for each grammatical ᴘᴇʀsᴏɴ, and these are given in Table 5.6.

TABLE 5.6   Basic forms of the possessives

Singular	Person		
	1st		mein
	2nd		dein
	3rd	*masculine*	sein
		feminine	ihr
		neuter	sein
Plural	1st		unser
	2nd	*familiar*	euer
		polite (sg./pl.)	Ihr
	3rd		ihr

(i) To refer back to **indefinites**, the **masculine** form *sein* is used, e.g.:

Wer hat **seine** Zahnbürste vergessen?	*Who has forgotten their toothbrush?*
Niemand hatte **sein** Heft mit	*No-one had their exercise book with them*

As the examples show, English can use the third person plural possessive in contexts like this, as a gender-neutral form – although this is not uncontroversial

despite the fact that it has in practice been used for centuries. There is no direct equivalent of this in German, though, and the use of the masculine form has been the subject of substantial criticism, as it can be regarded as discriminatory. However, none of the suggested solutions has yet been generally accepted.

(ii) A demonstrative is sometimes used instead of a third person possessive to avoid ambiguity, see **5.1.1f**.

(b) When used as determiners the possessives have the same endings as the indefinite article Table 5.7 gives the forms of *mein* 'my' and *unser* 'our'.

(i) The - *er* of *unser* and *euer* is part of the root and **not an ending**. As Table 5.7 shows, the endings are attached to this root.
(ii) When *unser* and *euer* have an ending, the -*e*- of the root is often dropped, e.g. *unsrer, unsren, eurer, euren*. Alternatively, the -*e*- of the endings -*en* or -*em* may be dropped, e.g. *unsern, unserm, euern, euerm*.

TABLE 5.7 Declension of the possessive determiners

	Masculine	**Feminine**	**Neuter**	**Plural**
Nominative	mein	meine	mein	meine
Accusative	meinen	meine	mein	meine
Genitive	meines	meiner	meines	meiner
Dative	meinem	meiner	meinem	meinen
Nominative	unser	unsere	unser	unsere
Accusative	unseren	unsere	unser	unsere
Genitive	unseres	unserer	unseres	unserer
Dative	unserem	unserer	unserem	unseren

With *unser*, the full forms, as given in the table, are the more usual ones in writing, although the reduced forms, which are the norm in speech, are also accepted.

With *euer*, the forms with no -*e*- in the root, i.e. *euren, eurer, eures, eurem*, are usual in both spoken and written German.

In the genitive singular masculine and neuter the ending -*en* is now sometimes found if the noun has the ending -*(e)s*, e.g. *die Launen meinen Bruders*. This usage is increasingly common but it is considered incorrect.

(c) When used as pronouns, the possessives have the endings of *dieser*

Table 5.8 gives the forms of *mein* 'my' and *unser* 'our'.

TABLE 5.8   Declension of the possessive pronouns

	Masculine	**Feminine**	**Neuter**	**Plural**
Nominative	meiner	meine	meines	meine
Accusative	meinen	meine	meines	meine
Genitive	meines	meiner	meines	meiner
Dative	meinem	meiner	meinem	meinen
Nominative	unser	unsere	unser	unsere
Accusative	unseren	unsere	unser	unsere
Genitive	unseres	unserer	unseres	unserer
Dative	unserem	unserer	unserem	unseren

(i) Unlike the possessive determiners, the possessive pronouns have endings in the nominative singular masculine and the nominative/accusative singular neuter (i.e. *mein er*, *mein es*). Compare:

> Das ist nicht **mein** Hut, sondern **deiner** Hast du **dein** Fahrrad? Ich sehe **mein(e)s** nicht
> Seine Sammlung ist größer als **meine Ihr** Garten ist größer als **uns(e)rer**
> Ich nehme **uns(e)ren** Wagen. In **seinem** habe ich immer Angst

(ii) The *-e-* of the nominative/accusative neuter ending *-es* is often dropped in writing, and almost always in speech: *meins*, *deins*. With *unseres* and *eueres* the -e- of the ending is dropped: *unsers*, *euers*. Otherwise, *unserer* and *euerer* can drop the *-e-* of the root or the ending as with the possessive determiner, see **(b)** above.
(iii) Endingless forms of the possessive occur in set phrases, archaic expressions or poetic language:

Dein ist mein Herz!   Die Rache ist **mein**   Die Welt ist **unser**

Er hat **Mein** und **Dein** nie unterscheiden können

(d) Alternative forms of the possessive pronoun

There are two alternatives to the possessive pronouns *meiner*, *deiner*, etc. These have the form of adjectives used after a definite article.

(i) In the first alternative adjective endings are simply added to the basic possessive root, e.g.: *der meine/der Meine* 'mine'; *der deine/der Deine* 'yours'; *der uns(e)re/der Uns(e)re* 'ours', etc., e.g.:

> Seine Sammlung ist größer als die meine/Meine

(ii) In the second alternative the adjective has *-ig-* inserted between the basic possessive root and the adjective ending, e.g.: *der meini ge /der Meini ge* 'mine', *der deini ge /Deini ge* 'yours', *der uns(e)ri ge /Uns(e)ri ge* 'ours', etc.

Both these forms can be spelled with a small or a capital initial letter (see **21.2.1g**). They are found almost exclusively in formal written German and are much less frequent than *meiner*, etc. The first *(der meine*, etc.) is rather more emphatic than *meiner*, etc., while the second is rather old-fashioned and now used principally in set phrases, e.g. *die Deinigen* 'your people' (i.e. your family); *Ich habe das Meinige getan* 'I've done my bit'.

5.2.2 The use of the possessives

In a few contexts German and English differ in the use of possessives.

(a) A definite article is often used to refer to parts of the body and articles of clothing

e.g. *Sie hat sich den Arm gebrochen* 'She has broken her arm'. Details are given in section **4.6**.

(b) Some idiomatic equivalents

In some common contexts German expresses possession in a different way to English:

Das gehört mir. Gehört das dir?	*That's mine. Is that yours?*
ein Freund von mir/einer meiner Freunde	*a friend of mine*
Freunde von mir	*friends of mine*
Das ist eins von meinen Büchern	*That's a book of mine*

5.3 Interrogatives

Interrogatives are words used to ask a question. In English they typically begin with *wh-*, like *which* or *who*.

5.3.1 *welcher* 'which'

(a) *welcher* can be used as a determiner or a pronoun

(i) It declines like *dieser*, see Table 5.2, and the forms are the same whether it is used as a determiner or a pronoun.

Welches Bier willst du trinken?	*Which beer do you want to drink?*
Welchen Zug nehmen wir denn?	*Which train shall we take?*

Aus **welchem** Land kommt sie denn?	*Which country does she come from?*
Welcher berühmte Schriftsteller hat diesen Roman geschrieben?	*Which famous author wrote this novel?*
Hier sind zwei gute Weine. **Welchen** möchtest du zuerst probieren?	*Here are two good wines. Which one would you like to try first?*
Er hat mich gefragt, **welchen** (Wein) ich zuerst probieren wollte	*He asked me which (wine) I wanted to try first*

(ii) In formal written German the endingless form *welch* is sometimes used before an adjective, as an alternative to the declined form:

Welch berühmter Schriftsteller hat diesen Roman geschrieben?	*What famous author wrote this novel?*
Die Künstler zeigten, **welch** reiches Kulturgut sie mitbrachten (*MM*)	*The artists showed what cultural riches they had brought with them*
Der Smogalarm machte erneut deutlich, in **welch hohem** Maße die Luft mit Giftstoffen verseucht ist (*MM*)	*The smog alarm made it clear once again to what high degree the air is polluted with poisonous substances*

(iii) In the **genitive singular masculine** and **neuter** the determiner can have the ending *-en* rather than *-es* if the following noun has the ending *-(e)s*:

Welch**en**/Welch**es** Kindes Buch ist das?	*Which child's book is that*
Innerhalb welch**en** Zeitraumes müssen nicht bestandene Prüfungen wiederholt werden? (*Universität Innsbruck*)	*Within what period of time must failed examinations be retaken?*

(iv) *welcher* can have the **neuter singular form** *welches* when it is used as a **pronoun** in an indefinite sense with the verb *sein*, irrespective of the gender and number of the noun it refers to:

Welches ist die jüngere Schwester?	**Welches** sind die besten Zeitungen?
Welches ist der längste Fluss in Amerika?	

Using endings in agreement with the following noun would be equally possible in these examples:

> *Welche ist die jüngere Schwester?* etc.

(b) *welcher* **can be used in exclamations with the force of English 'What (a) …!'**

Welcher Unterschied!	**Welcher** schöne Tag!
Welche Überraschung!	**Welchen** unglaublichen Unsinn hat er geredet!

Endingless *welch* can be used instead of declined *welcher* in exclamations if *ein* or an adjective follows:

Welch ein Unterschied!	**Welch (ein) schöner** Tag!
Welch eine Überraschung!	**Welch unglaublichen** Unsinn hat er geredet!

This use of *welch(er)* is mainly found in formal German. *was für (ein)* (see **5.3.2**) is more current in speech.

The form *welcher* has a number of other uses:

- as a relative pronoun (= 'who', 'which'), see **5.4.2**
- as an indefinite (= 'some', 'any'), see **5.5.26**.

5.3.2 *was für ein* **'what kind of (a)'**

(a) *was für ein* **can be used as a determiner or a pronoun**

(i) When *was für ein* is used as a **determiner** in the singular, *ein* declines like the indefinite article, see Table 4.3:

Was für ein Mensch ist sie denn?	*What sort of person is she?*
Was für einen Wein trinken Sie am liebsten?	*What sort of wine do you like to drink most?*
Aus **was für einer** Familie stammt er?	*What kind of a family does he come from?*
Sie können sich denken, in **was für einer** schwierigen Lage ich mich befand	*You can imagine what (kind of) an awkward situation I found myself in*

The case of *ein* depends on the role of the noun phrase in the sentence, not on the case usually taken by the preposition *für*.

(ii) Simple *was für*, without *ein*, is used in the plural and before mass nouns in the singular

Was für Sondermarken haben Sie?	*What kinds of special issue stamps do you have?*
Was für Käse soll ich kaufen?	*What kind of cheese shall I buy?*

(iii) When used as a pronoun, *was für einer* 'what kind (of a one)' has the endings of the pronoun *einer* (see **Table 5.10**):

Er hat sich ein neues Auto gekauft. **Was für ein(e)s**?	*He has bought a new car. What kind?*

(iv) In the plural *was für welche* is used

Ich habe Blumen gebracht. **Was für welche**?	*I have brought some flowers. What kind?*

was für welcher is used in place of *was für einer* in the singular in colloquial speech, especially in North Germany, e.g. *Er hat einen neuen Wagen gekauft. Was für welchen?*

For the use of *was für (ein)* in concessive clauses, see **17.6.2c**.

(b) *was* **is often separated from** *für ein*

The phrase with *für* follows the verb. This alternative is frequent in speech, but it is also used in writing:

> **Was** hast du denn **für ein** Auto gekauft?
> **Was** sind das **für** Vögel?

(c) *was für ein* **can be used in exclamations (= 'What (a) ...!')**

It is in practice commoner than *welcher* (see **5.3.1b**), especially in speech. In this usage the separated form is more frequent:

Was für eine Chance!	*What a chance!*
Was für herrliche Blumen!	*What lovely flowers!*
Er ist ein Schauspieler – und **was für einer**!	*He's an actor – and what an actor!*
Was sind das **für** wunderschöne Häuser!	*What lovely houses these are!*

If there is a verb in these exclamations, it may, alternatively, go to the end, as in a subordinate clause, e.g. *Was für wunderschöne Häuser das sind!*

(d) In colloquial speech *was für einer* **is often used for** *welcher* **'which'**

This usage is not accepted as standard German.

Was für ein Kleid ziehst du an?	*Which dress are you going to wear?*

5.3.3 *wer*, *was* **'who', 'what'**

(a) *wer* **and** *was* **are only used as pronouns**

(i) *wer*, like English 'who', only refers to **persons**. It does not distinguish gender and it has the forms given in **Table 5.9**:

Wer hat diesen Brief geschrieben?	*Who wrote this letter?*
Wen hast du heute gesprochen?	*Who(m) did you speak to today?*
Wem wollten sie vorhin helfen?	*Who(m) did they want to help just now?*
Mit **wem** hast du gespielt?	*Who(m) did you play with?*
Wessen Bücher sind das?	*Whose books are those?*
Ich kann Ihnen sagen, **wer** gespielt hat	*I can tell you who was playing*

(ii) *was*, like English 'what', only refers to **things**. Its only case form is the genitive *wessen ?*

Was bewegt sich dort im Gebüsch?	*What is moving there in the bushes?*
Was hat sie dir zum Geburtstag geschenkt?	*What did she give you for your birthday?*
Wessen schämst du dich?	*What are you ashamed of?*
Weißt du, **was** er getan hat?	*Do you know what he did?*

TABLE 5.9 Declension of *wer*

Nominative	wer?
Accusative	wen?
Genitive	wessen?
Dative	wem?

The genitive form *wessen*, whether referring to people or things, is felt to be clumsy and tends to be avoided, even in written German. Thus *Wem gehören diese Bücher?* is used rather than *Wessen Bücher sind das?* and *Warum schämst du dich?* rather than *Wessen schämst du dich?*

As *was* has no dative case form, a paraphrase has to be used in contexts where it could be needed, e.g.:

Welcher Ursache kann man seinen Erfolg zuschreiben?	*To what can one ascribe his success?*
	(Literally: 'To what cause . . .?')

(b) Nominative *wer* and *was* are followed in most contexts by a singular verb

(i) Compare the examples in **(a)** above and the following:

Wer **kommt** denn morgen?	*Who's coming tomorrow?*
Was **liegt** dort in der Ecke?	*What's that lying there in the corner?*

(ii) However, with *sein* the appropriate singular or plural form of the verb is used, as in English:

Wer **ist** das an der Tür?	*Who's that at the door?*
Wer **sind** diese Leute?	*Who are those people?*
Was **ist** der Vogel da?	*What's that bird there?*
Was **sind** die längsten Flüsse der Welt?	*What are the longest rivers in the world?*

(iii) To emphasize quantity, *alles* is often added to sentences with *wer* and *was* in colloquial speech:

| **Wen** kennst du hier **alles**? | *What people do you know here?* |
| **Was** hat er denn **alles** gefragt? | *What were the things he asked?* |

(c) *was* **is not used in combination with most prepositions**

The compound forms *wo(r)* + preposition, e.g. *woran*, *womit*, *wozu*, etc., are used instead.

(i) These forms are like those of the prepositional adverb with *da(r)-*, see **3.5**:

Womit schreibst du?	*What are you writing with?*
Worüber sprechen Sie?	*What are you talking about?*
Weißt du, **worauf** wir warten?	*Do you know what we are waiting for?*

Some prepositions are not used in the form with *wo(r)-: außer, gegenüber, hinter, neben, ohne, seit, zwischen*.

(ii) The forms *wodurch*, *wonach*, *wovon* and *wozu* can only be used if there is no idea of movement involved:

Wodurch weiß er das?	*How is it that he knows that?*
Wonach soll man sich denn richten?	*By what is one to be guided?*
Wovon sollen wir leben?	*What are we to live on?*
Wozu gebraucht man das?	*What is that used for?*

Compare: *durch was?* 'through what?', *von wo?* or *woher?* 'where . . . from?', *wohin?* 'where . . . to?'

(iii) In colloquial German *was* is often used with a preposition instead of *wo(r)* + preposition, e.g. *Von was sollen wir leben? Mit was schreibst du?* This usage is frequent in speech, but it is not universally considered standard, and it tends to be avoided in writing.

(d) *wer* **and** *was* **are often used in exclamations**

Wer hätte so was erwartet!	*Who would have expected such a thing!*
Wem hat er nicht alles geholfen!	*Who(m) hasn't he helped!*
Was haben wir gelacht!	*How we laughed!*
Was er nicht alles tut!	*The things he does!*

(e) *was* **can be followed by an adjective used as a noun**

The adjective has the neuter ending *-es* (see **6.2.4**). It is separated from *was*, spelled with a capital letter and placed later in the sentence, after the verb:

Was haben sie **Wichtiges** besprochen?   *What important matters did they discuss?*

Was ist **Komisches** dran?   *What's funny about it?*

(f) *was* **can be used in the sense of 'why?' or 'what for?'**

This usage is typical of informal speech:

Was sitzt ihr da rum?   *What are you doing just sitting around?*

was used like this often carries a tone of reproach.

(g) Idiomatic differences between German and English

In a few contexts German has *wie* where English uses 'what'.

Wie ist Ihr Name, bitte?   *What is your name, please?*

Wie heißt Ihr Bruder?   *What's your brother called?*

Wie ist das Buch?   *What's the book like?*

(h) *wer* **and** *was* **have a number of other uses:**

- as relative pronouns (= 'who', 'which', 'that') in some contexts, see **5.4.3** and **5.4.5**.
- in some concessive clauses (i.e. = 'whoever', 'whatever'), see **17.6.2**.
- colloquially, as an indefinite (i.e. = 'someone'), see **5.5.27**.

5.4 Relative pronouns

RELATIVE PRONOUNS introduce subordinate clauses (called RELATIVE CLAUSES) which describe or qualify nouns, e.g. *die Frau, die heute kommt* 'the woman **who** is coming today'; *das Buch, das ich gerade lese* 'the book **which** I am just reading'. As they qualify nouns these clauses have the same function as adjectives and they are sometimes called **adjectival clauses**.

Especially in spoken English the relative pronoun is often dropped. This is never the case in German. Compare:

the book which I am just reading }   das Buch, das ich gerade lese
the book I am just reading

5.4.1 *der* 'who', 'which', 'that'

TABLE 5.10 Declension of the relative pronoun *der*

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Nominative	der	die	das	die
Accusative	den	die	das	die
Genitive	dessen	deren	dessen	deren
Dative	dem	der	dem	denen

(a) *der* is the most frequent relative pronoun in German

der declines to indicate **gender**, **number** and **case**. Its forms are given in *Table 5.9*; they are almost identical to those of the demonstrative pronoun *der* (see **5.1.1**).

der takes its **gender** and **number** from the noun it refers to (called the ANTECEDENT), e.g.:

der Mann, **der** heute zu uns kommt (**masculine**)
die Frau, **die** heute zu uns kommt (**feminine**)
das Kind, **das** heute zu uns kommt (**neuter**)
die Leute, **die** heute zu uns kommen (**plural**)

Its **case** is determined by the **role** it plays in the **relative clause**:

der Mann, **der** zu uns kommt (**subject** of *kommt*)
den Mann, **den** ich kenne (**accusative object** of *kenne*)
der Mann, **dem** ich helfen musste (**dative object** of *helfen*)
der Mann, mit **dem** sie gekommen ist (after **preposition** *mit*)

(b) Relative clauses are less frequent in spoken German than in writing

In speech, a construction with a main clause (and the verb in second place) and the demonstrative pronoun *der* is often used rather than a subordinate relative clause (with the verb at the end). This is usually considered to be poor style in writing, unless colloquial speech is being imitated, as in the following examples:

Er trug ein Heft bei sich, **in dem** standen die Namen der fünfzig Verräter (*E.W. Heine*) *He had a little book with him in which the names of the fifty traitors were written down*

Es gibt Leute, **die** freuen sich über die Fahrt (*Bichsel*) *There are people who are pleased about the trip*

In formal registers a full relative clause would be expected, e.g. *Er trug ein Heft bei sich, in dem die Namen der fünfzig Verräter standen*.

(c) Clauses inserted into relative clauses

In English we can insert clauses into a relative clause, especially with verbs like *believe*, *hope*, *know*, *say* or *think*, e.g.: *The man (who) you said was coming tomorrow*. Constructions of this kind are not possible in German, and both clauses must be completed separately:

Das ist doch der Mann, **von dem** du gesagt hast, **dass** er morgen kommt	*But that is the man (who) you said was coming tomorrow*
Dies ist ein Vorschlag, **von dem** ich hoffe, **dass** er angenommen wird	*This is a proposal which I hope will be accepted*
Das ist ein Buch, **von dem** du angenommen hast, ich hätte es gelesen	*That is a book (which) you thought I had read*
„Vielleicht", erwiderte der Rotäugige, **von dem** Süden wusste, **dass** er eigentlich grüne Augen hatte (*Ani*)	*'Perhaps', answered the man with red eyes, who Süden knew really had green eyes*
Ich werde die rechtlichen Zusicherungen aufzeigen, **von denen** ich glaube, **dass** wir sie brauchen, um die Bedenken der Mitglieder des Parlaments zu zerstreuen (*Presse*)	*I will show the legal assurances which I believe we need to allay the reservations of the Members of Parliament*

In practice such constructions can be avoided by re-phrasing, for example, especially in speech, with fewer subordinate clauses, e.g. *Dieser Mann, du hast doch gesagt, dass er morgen kommt*. And in writing, paraphrases can be rather less cumbersome, so that the second example above, i.e. *This is a proposal which I hope will be accepted* could have the following alternative equivalents in German:

> Dies ist ein Vorschlag, der hoffentlich angenommen wird
> Dies ist ein Vorschlag, der, wie ich hoffe, angenommen wird

(d) The genitive of *der*

(i) The genitive forms of *der* correspond to English 'whose' or 'of which':

die Frau, **deren** Namen ich immer vergesse	*the woman whose name I always forget*
ein Mann, von **dessen** Erfolg ich hörte	*a man of whose success I heard*
Sie blickten auf das Mietshaus gegenüber, in **dessen** Erdgeschoss sich eine Schreibwarenhandlung befand	*They looked out on the apartment house opposite, on the ground floor of which there was a stationer's*

It is incorrect (though a common mistake by Germans) to decline *dessen* and *deren*, e.g. *ein Mann, von dessen* (not *desse m*) *Erfolg ich hörte*.

(ii) In the genitive plural and the genitive singular feminine *derer* is sometimes used rather than *deren*:

die Frist, innerhalb **derer** die Zahlungen erfolgen sollen (*Presse*)	*the period within which the payments are to be made*
das Vorbild der deutschen Widerstandskämpfer, **derer** zum 20. Juli überall gedacht wurde (*RhZ*)	*the example of the German resistance fighters who were remembered everywhere on the 20th of July*
die ungewöhnliche Autorität, **derer** sich die katholischen Bischöfe in Polen erfreuen (*Spiegel*)	*the extraordinary authority which is enjoyed by the Catholic bishops in Poland*

This usage was once considered incorrect, but *derer* is now at least as frequent as *deren*, especially in the genitive plural. However, *deren* is preferred if a noun follows: *die Frau, deren Tochter du kennst*.

(iii) After prepositions the shorter form *der* can be used as an alternative to *deren:*

eine lange Übergangszeit von sechs Jahren, innerhalb **der** die Länder die Juristenausbildung umstellen können (*Zeit*)	*a long transitional period of six years, within which the federal states can reorganize the training of lawyers*

(iv) Constructions of the type 'one of whom', 'most of which', 'some of which' correspond to constructions with *von denen* in German:

eine Anzahl Jungen, **von denen** ich **die meisten** kenne	*a number of boys, most of whom I know*
viele Bilder, **von denen einige** ganz gut sind	*a lot of pictures, some of which are quite good*

(v) *dessen and deren are compounded with -halben, -wegen and -willen with the insertion of a -t, e.g. derentwegen, um dessentwillen,* (see **18.4.1d** and **18.4.4b**)*:*

ein charismatischer, weltberühmter Darsteller, **dessentwegen** die Frauen in Ohnmacht fallen (*Presse*)	*a charismatic, world-famous actor on whose account women faint*

(e) Relative pronouns with first and second person personal pronouns

Normal usage is for the pronoun to be repeated in the relative clause, e.g.:

du, **der/die du** ja nicht alles wissen kannst	*you, who cannot know everything*
für mich, **die ich** noch gar nicht ordentlich lesen konnte (*Dönhoff*)	*for me, who wasn't yet able to read properly*
ich, **der ich** seit 20 Jahren seinem Volke diene	*I, who have been serving my people for 20 years*

The alternative construction with a third person verb, e.g. *ich, der seit 20 Jahren seinem Volke dient* (*FAZ*), is possible, but less frequent. It is most common when

the relative pronoun is separated from the personal pronoun by other words, e.g. *Was kannst du tun, der nicht alles wissen kann*.

5.4.2 *welcher* 'who', 'which', 'that'

(a) *welcher* **is a stylistic variant of** *der*

It has the same endings as *dieser*, see *Table 5.2*, but it is not normally used in the genitive. It is restricted to formal written German, and even there it is much less frequent than *der*.

Diese Hauptwache war mehrfach von fremden Heeren, **welche** die Stadt überfielen, eingenommen worden (*Schneeweiß*)	*This sentry post had been taken several times by foreign armies which had attacked the city*
Der Herr tat doch immer so, als umgäbe ihn eine vielköpfige Familie, **welcher** er Anweisungen zu geben hätte (*Grass*)	*The gentleman always acted as if he was surrounded by a large family to which he had to give instructions*

It is perhaps most often used to avoid repeating forms of *der*, e.g. *Die, welche zuletzt kamen, waren erschöpft*. However, it is never necessary in such contexts – compare, as perfectly acceptable (see **5.4.5b**): *Die, die gingen, haben in der DDR mehr verändert, als die, die geblieben sind* (*FR*).

(b) *welcher* **is used before a noun which refers back to part or whole of the preceding clause**

This use, which is limited to formal registers, corresponds to that of English 'which'. In this construction *welcher* agrees with the following noun for case, number and gender:

Er wurde zum Stadtdirektor ernannt, **welches Amt** er gewissenhaft verwaltete	*He was appointed town clerk, which office he administered conscientiously*
Er sagte ihr, sie müsse den Betrag sofort zurückzahlen, **welcher Forderung** sie dann auch nachging	*He told her she had to repay the amount immediately, which request she then complied with*

5.4.3 *was* **as a relative pronoun**

was is used as a relative pronoun in a few contexts. Its only case form is the genitive *wessen*, although this tends to be avoided. It is used in the following contexts:

(a) After neuter indefinites

i.e. alles, einiges, etwas, folgendes, manches, nichts, vieles, weniges:

Nichts/Etwas/Alles, **was** er sagte, war mir neu	*Nothing/Something/Everything (that) he said was new to me*
Sie mieden alles, **was** ihre Unabhängigkeit einschränken könnte (*Walser*)	*They avoided anything which might restrict their independence*

After *etwas*, *das* is now at least as frequent as *was*:

Da tat Gregorius etwas, **das** er von sich aus noch nie getan hatte (*P. Mercier*)	*Then Gregorius did something which he had never done before of his own accord*
Ich erinnere mich an etwas Merkwürdiges, **das** er sagte	*I remember something strange that he said*

das is occasionally found after other indefinites, but this is considered incorrect.

(i) After prepositions, forms of *was* are replaced by the prepositional adverb in *wo(*r)-, see **5.4.4b**.
(ii) In colloquial speech *was* is often heard for *das* to refer to a neuter noun, e.g. *das Buch, was er mir geliehen hat*. This is not considered standard.

(b) After a neuter adjective used as a noun referring to something indefinite

Er tat daher das einzig Richtige, **was** in so einem Fall zu tun ist (*Presse*)	*So he did the only correct thing to be done in a case like that*
Sie verstellen die Sicht auf das Schöne, **was** unsere Innenstadt zu bieten hat (*NüN*)	*They block the view of the fine things which our city centre has to offer*

In these contexts *das* is now used almost as frequently as *was*, e.g.: *Das Gute, das er getan hat, wird ihn überdauern*. However, *was* is always used after superlatives, e.g. *Das Beste, was du machen könntest*.

(c) After the indefinite demonstrative *das*

Es war nie **das**, **was** wir wirklich brauchten (*Böll*)   *It was never what we really needed*

If *das* is in the genitive or dative, or after a preposition, it cannot be omitted. This differs from English, where often only 'what' is needed. Compare:

Sie hörte nichts von **dem**, **was** er ihr sagte	*She didn't hear anything of what he said to her*
eine Antwort auf **das**, **was** er gerade dachte (*Walser*)	*an answer to what he was just thinking*
ein eifriger Leser **dessen**, **was** neu auf den Markt kommt (*Zeit*)	*a keen reader of what is new on the market*

For the use of the prepositional adverb or a preposition with the demonstrative pronoun before a relative clause with *was*, e.g. *Ich bin gespannt auf das, was noch kommt* or *Ich bin gespannt darauf, was noch kommt*, see **5.1.1i**.

(d) To introduce a supplementary relative clause, referring back to a whole clause

Er hat sein Examen bestanden, **was** mich sehr erstaunt hat   *He has passed his examination, which surprised me very much*

Er hat gesagt, er hätte mich damals gesehen, **was** ich nicht glauben konnte   *He said he had seen me then, which I couldn't believe*

5.4.4 Relative pronouns with prepositions

(a) The usual construction is to introduce the relative clause with *der* following the preposition

The relative pronoun *der* is in the **case** determined by the **preposition** (in the example below the **dative**, since *mit* is followed by the dative), and its **number** and **gender** are determined by the **antecedent** – in this example *der Ball*, which is **masculine singular**:

der Ball, **mit dem** der Junge spielt   {   *the ball with which the boy is playing*
                                      the ball which the boy is playing with
                                      the ball the boy is playing with

The German construction corresponds closely to that of the first equivalent, which is typical of formal registers in English. The alternatives, with a 'stranded' preposition at the end of the clause or with the relative pronoun omitted entirely, are common in spoken English, but constructions like this are not possible in German. Compare these further examples:

die Frau, **auf die** Sie warten   {   *the woman for whom you are waiting*
                                          the woman (who) you are waiting for

der Stuhl, **auf den** du dich setzen wolltest {   *the chair on which you wanted to sit down*
                                          the chair (which) you wanted to sit down on

der Stuhl, **auf dem** du sitzt   {   *the chair on which you are sitting*
                                          the chair (which) you are sitting on

die Stadt, **in der** ich wohne   {   *the town in which I live*
                                          the town (which) I live in

(b) The form *wo(r)* + preposition as a relative pronoun

The forms of the prepositional adverb in *wo(r)-* (e.g. *worauf, woran, wovon*, etc., see **5.3.3c**) are used as relative pronouns in some constructions.

(i) *wo(r)* + preposition is used in those contexts where *was* is used as a relative pronoun (see **5.4.3**):

etwas, **woran** ich mich nicht mehr recht erinnern konnte	*something which I couldn't remember properly any more*
Es gibt nichts, **womit** man diese Ablehnung begründen könnte	*There is no reason by which this refusal might be justified*
Es kam etwas, **womit** kein Mensch auf der Welt hätte rechnen können (*Süßkind*)	*Something came which nobody on earth could have reckoned with*
Sie hat ihr Examen bestanden, **worüber** sie sich sehr freut	*She has passed her examination, which she is very pleased about*

Preposition + *das* (or *dem*, if the preposition takes the dative) can be used instead of *wo(r)* + preposition, most frequently after *etwas*, e.g.:

> etwas, **an das** ich mich nicht mehr recht erinnern konnte
> nichts, **mit dem** man diese Ablehnung begründen könnte

Preposition + *was* is quite common in these contexts, but it is more typical of spoken German:

> etwas, **an was** ich mich nicht mehr recht erinnern konnte
> nichts, **mit was** man diese Ablehnung hätte begründen können

> **(ii)** *wo(r)* + preposition used to be a common alternative to the preposition followed by *der* to refer to things, e.g. *das Heim, worin ich geboren wurde* (*Th. Mann*). This is now rare even in formal writing.

The use of the prepositional adverb with *da(r)-* (e.g. *darauf, daran*, cf. **3.5**) as a relative pronoun to refer to things, e.g. *der Dolch, damit sie ihn erstach*, is now obsolete.

(iii) *wo(r)* + preposition is sometimes split (in a similar way to *da(r)* + preposition, see **3.5.2c**), e.g.:

etwas, **wo** ich mich nicht **mit** abfinden kann (*standard:* **womit** ich mich nicht abfinden kann)	*That is something I can't get used to*

This usage is widespread in speech, especially in North Germany, but it is considered non-standard.

(iv) In spoken German **w***o* is often combined with a prepositional adverb later in the clause

Da in der Ecke ist das Sofa, **wo** du **d(a)rauf** schlafen kannst (*standard:* **auf dem** du schlafen kannst)	*There in the corner is the sofa you can sleep on*

This is a frequent alternative in colloquial speech, but it is considered unacceptable in formal registers. The variation on this construction with a simple preposition, e.g. *der Ball, wo der Junge mit spielt* is if anything even less acceptable, although it, too, is frequent in speech.

(c) The form *weswegen* **is used as the relative pronoun from the preposition** *wegen*

As a relative pronoun *weswegen* is thus used to mean 'because of which', 'which is why':

Dieses Kraut blüht spät im Jahr, **weswegen** Allergiker jetzt oft bis in den September hinein Beschwerden haben (*RhZ*)	*This plant blooms late in the year, which is why people with allergies now often have problems right through to September*

5.4.5 German equivalents of 'the one who', 'he/she who', 'that which'

There are a number of German equivalents for these English constructions.

(a) *wer* **and** *was* **can be used in generalizations**

Wer viele Freunde hat, ist glücklich	*Whoever has many friends is happy*
Wer wagt, gewinnt	*Who dares wins*
Und **was** noch schlimmer ist, er merkt es selber nicht	*And what is worse, he doesn't realize it himself*
Was du sagst, stimmt nicht	*What you say is not right*

If there is a difference in case or construction between the two clauses, an correlating demonstrative pronoun can be added to begin the main clause:

Wen es zum Lehrerberuf hinzieht, **der** bevorzugt eher die philosophischen Fächer	*Those who are attracted to the teaching profession favour Arts subjects*
Was wir getan haben, **darüber** müssen wir auch Rechenschaft ablegen	*What we have done we shall also have to answer for*

If, as in the first example above, the masculine form of the demonstrative pronoun is used, it tends to be avoided nowadays as it could be considered discriminatory, and a alternative construction without a clarifying pronoun is preferred, i.e.:

Wen es zum Lehrerberuf hinzieht, bevorzugt eher die philosophischen Fächer (*Zeit*)

(b) Relative pronouns following demonstrative pronouns

The following alternatives are found:

(i) demonstrative *der* followed by relative *der*. This is the commonest alternative, despite the repetition:

Die, **die** gingen, haben in der DDR mehr verändert, als **die**, **die** blieben *Those who left changed more in the GDR than those who*
(*FR*) *stayed*

(ii) in formal registers, demonstrative *der* can be followed by relative *welcher*:

Die, **welche** ich kaufen wollte, waren mir zu teuer *The ones I wanted to buy were too expensive for me*

(iii) demonstrative *derjenige* followed by relative *der* (or, in formal registers, *welcher*). This is used in both speech and writing:

Diejenigen, die (welche) in den hinteren Reihen saßen, konnten nichts *The ones who were sitting in the back rows couldn't see*
sehen *anything*

(iv) demonstrative *jener* followed by relative *der* (or *welcher*). This is occasionally used in formal writing:

bei **jenen**, **die** es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht haben, Schüler zu fördern *with those who have made it their business to support*
(*MM*) *schoolchildren*

(v) *der* can be used as a compound relative (e.g. 'he who'). This is common in speech and not unusual in writing:

Die hier sitzen, sind Verfluchte (*Chr Wolf*) *Those who are sitting here are cursed*

Der ihm Brötchen und Bockwurst verkaufte, kam aus Winsen an der Luhe *The man who sold him rolls and sausage came from Winsen*
(*Surminski*) *an der Luhe*

5.4.6 Other forms of the relative pronoun

(a) *wo* can be used to refer to a place, as an alternative to using *der* with a preposition

die Stadt, **wo** (*or*: in der) ich wohne *the town where I live*

If motion to or from a place is involved, *wohin* or *woher* are used:

die Stadt, **wohin** (*or:* in die) ich ging *the town to which I went*

das Dorf, **woher** (*or:* aus dem) er kam *the village from which he came*

The use of *wo* as a general relative pronoun (e.g. *die Frau, wo jetzt kommt*) is a common non-standard regionalism.

(b) Usage with time words

In such contexts English often uses *when* as a relative. A number of alternatives exist in German, depending on region or register:

(i) A preposition followed by the relative pronoun *der* is often used, especially in formal registers, but it is no longer considered the only acceptable alternative in standard German (cf (ii) below):

Den Tag, **an dem** er ankam, werde ich nie vergessen   *I shall never forget the day when he arrived*

in einer Zeit, **in der** die Jugend immer unabhängiger wird   *at a time when young people are becoming more and more independent*

(ii) The use of *wo* as a relative indicating time is frequent in South German speech. It used not to be considered standard, but it is now acceptable in writing:

im Augenblick, **wo** er die Tür aufmachte   *at the moment when he opened the door*

jetzt, **wo** ich das weiß   *now that I know that*

zu einer Zeit, **wo** wenig Verkehr ist   *at a time when there isn't much traffic*

(iii) *als* (for past time) and *wenn* (for present or future time) are in common use, with *als* being particularly frequent in North German speech, as well as in writing generally:

Ich erinnere mich an die Zeit, **als** die Geschäfte noch um 18 Uhr geschlossen   *I remember the time when the shops still used to shut at*
    haben (*BrZ*)   *6 p.m.*

Ich liebe diesen Moment, **wenn** es kein Zurück mehr gibt (*SGT*)   *I like that moment when there's no turning back*

(iv) The use of *da* is largely restricted to formal written registers:

Das ist der Augenblick, **da** er die Opposition angreift (*TA*)   *That's the moment when he attacks the opposition*

eine Zeit, **da** wir noch CDs gebrannt haben (*Stern*)   *a time when we still used to burn CDs*

(v) *wie* is used in speech in Austria:

Gerade in dem Moment, **wie** ich im Bad war, hat mein Handy   *Just at the moment when I was in the bath, my mobile/cellphone*
    geklingelt   *rang*

(c) *wie* **can be used to indicate manner, especially following** *die Art*

die Art, **wie** er zu mir gesprochen hat   *the manner in which he spoke to me*

so, **wie** ich es gewohnt bin   *just as I am used to*

(d) *warum* **is used to indicate cause, chiefly after** *der Grund*

weshalb is an alternative in formal registers:

der Grund, **warum** (weshalb) ich nach Aachen ging   *the reason why I went to Aachen*

5.5 Indefinites, quantifiers and other determiners and pronouns

This section deals with the meaning and use of the remaining determiners and pronouns. These are listed in **Table 5.11** with their most frequent English equivalents. For the declension of adjectives after them see **6.1.4**

TABLE 5.11   Indefinites, quantifiers and other determiners and pronouns

aller, all	*all (the)*	**irgend(-)**	*some-*	**mehrere**	*several*
ander	*(the) other*	**jeder**	*each, every*	**meinesgleichen**	*people like me*
beide(s)	*both*	**jedermann**	*everyone*	**nichts**	*nothing*
einer	*one*	**jedweder**	*each, every*	**sämtlich(e)**	*all (the)*
ein bisschen	*a little*	**jeglicher**	*each, every*	**unsereiner**	*the likes of us*
ein paar	*a few*	**jemand,**	*someone,*	**viel, viele**	*much, many*
ein wenig	*a little*	**niemand**	*no-one*	**wenig, wenige**	*a little, a few*
einige(r)	*some*	**kein(er)**	*no, none*	**welcher**	*some*
etliche	*some*	**lauter**	*nothing but*	**wer**	*someone*
etwas	*something*	**man**	*one*		
folgende(r)	*the following*	**manch(er)**	*some*		

5.5.1 *aller*, *alle* 'all (the)'

(a) *all-* **'all (the)', used as a determiner, has a number of alternative forms**

(i) Inflected *aller*, with the **endings of** *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**), used on its own. A following adjective has 'weak' endings, cf. **6.1.4a**:

Alle Kinder spielen gern	*All children like playing*
Alle deutschen Schüler waren gekommen	*All the German pupils had come*
mit **allen** denkbaren Mitteln	*with all conceivable means*
alles Glück dieser Erde	*all the happiness of this world*

This is the commonest alternative in the plural, especially in the nominative and accusative, but in the singular it is largely restricted to formal registers and set phrases. Plural *alle* may correspond to English 'all the' or 'all (of) the', e.g. *alle Schüler* 'all the pupils'/'all of the pupils'. *alle* is **never** followed by a genitive.

In the genitive singular masculine and neuter, *all-* has the ending *-en* rather than *-es* **if** the noun has the ending *-(e)s*, e.g. *die Grenzen allen* (less frequent: *alles*) *Wissens*; *solch verfehlte Ablehnung allen Verhandelns* (*Zeit*).

(ii) Inflected *aller* followed by the **definite article:**

alle die Bücher   *all the books*
alle die Mühe   *all the trouble*

This is quite common in the plural, especially in colloquial speech, and with feminine nouns in the nominative and accusative singular.

(iii) Uninflected *all* followed by the **definite article:**

all das schlechte Wetter   *all the bad weather*
all die Schüler   *all the pupils*
mit **all dem** Geld   *with all the money*

This is the most frequent alternative in the singular, particularly with masculine and neuter nouns, and it is common in the plural, especially in the genitive and dative cases.

The most idiomatic equivalent of English *all* with a singular noun is often a phrase with *ganz*, see **(g)** below.

(b) *all(-)* **is often used in conjunction with another determiner**

In the singular uninflected *all* is the norm with masculine and neuter nouns, and most common in the genitive and dative singular of feminine nouns and in the genitive and dative plural. In other contexts both inflected and uninflected forms are used:

all mein Geld   gegen **all diesen** Wahnsinn
nach **all (aller) ihrer** Müh mit **all (allen) diesen** Problemen
all/alle seine Arbeit   **all/alle meine** Brüder

Only the inflected form is used before *solch*, which then has the endings of an adjective, e.g. *alle solchen Frauen*.

(c) *all-* **used as a pronoun declines like** *dieser*

(see **Table 5.2**), but it is not used in the genitive singular. The neuter singular *alles* is used for 'everything', the plural *alle* for 'everyone':

Alles ist bereit	*Everything is ready*
Ich bin mit **allem** einverstanden	*I agree to everything*
Alle waren anwesend	*Everybody was present*
Sind das **alle**?	*Is that all (of them)?*

(d) Plural *alle* 'all' is often used with a personal pronoun

Sie hat uns **alle** beleidigt	*She insulted us all*
Ich habe mit ihnen **allen** gesprochen	*I have spoken to all of them*
Das ist unser **aller** Hoffnung	*That is the hope of all of us*

alle usually follows the pronoun, but in the nominative it can be separated from it. In this case it has slightly less emphasis. Compare:

Sie **alle** sind gekommen	} *They have all come*	Sie sind **alle** gekommen
Alle versuchten sie, nicht zu atmen (*Kehlmann*)		*They all tried not to breathe*

(e) Uninflected *all* and inflected *alles* are often used with the demonstratives *das* and *dieses*

This corresponds to English 'all that' or 'all this'. Uninflected *all* always precedes the demonstrative, but inflected *alles* may precede or follow the demonstrative, or, with less emphasis, be separated from it:

Ich habe **all das/alles das/das alles** schon gesehen **Das** habe ich **alles** schon gesehen	} *I've already seen all that*
Ich bin mit **all dem/dem allen/allem dem** einverstanden	*I agree to all that*
Mit **all diesem** werde ich nicht fertig	*I can't cope with all this*

In the dative singular, when *all-* follows the demonstrative, it can have the ending *-en* as an alternative to *-em*, e.g. *dem/diesem all en* or *dem all em*.

(f) A noun can be qualified by a following inflected *all-*

all- follows the verb if the noun comes before the verb. This usage is most common in the plural:

<center>**Die Kinder** spielen **alle** im Garten **Die Semmeln** sind **alle** trocken</center>

In the singular this construction is colloquial and restricted to the nominative and accusative singular feminine and neuter:

<center>**Das Brot** ist **alles** trocken Ich habe **die Milch alle** verschüttet</center>

Singular *alles* is often used with a plural noun after the verb *sein* in the sense 'nothing but': *Das sind alles Lügen*.

(g) The use of *ganz* for English 'all'

In practice, the adjective *ganz* is often the most idiomatic equivalent of English 'all', particularly with singular nouns. Thus, English 'all my money' may correspond in German to *mein ganzes Geld* or *all mein Geld*, with the former being rather more frequent. Compare also:

Der **ganze** Wein war schlecht	*All the wine was bad*
diese **ganze** Unsicherheit	*all this uncertainty*
mit seiner **ganzen** jugendlichen Energie	*with all his youthful energy*

With collective nouns, time expressions and geographical names *ganz* is often the only possible equivalent for English 'all':

Die **ganze** Familie kommt	*all (of) the family is/are coming*
den **ganzen** Tag (lang)	*all day (long)*
der **ganze** Januar war kalt	*all January it was cold*
ganz Europa, **ganz** Schweden, **ganz** München	*all (of) Europe, all (of) Sweden, all (of) Munich*
in der **ganzen** Schweiz	*in all of Switzerland*

The use of *ganz* with a plural noun is colloquial, e.g. *Nach dem Sturm waren die ganzen Fenster kaputt*. In such contexts *sämtliche* (see **5.5.23**) is a common alternative in formal registers, e.g. *Nach dem Sturm waren sämtliche Fenster* ('all the windows') *kaputt*.

(h) Other uses of *all-*

- *alles* can be used to emphasize a large number of people or things with the interrogatives *wer* and *was*, cf. **5.3.3b**, e.g. *Wer kommt denn alles ? Was hast du dort alles gekauft?*
- In colloquial North German *alle* is used in the sense of 'all gone': *Die Butter ist jetzt alle. Meine Geduld ist alle*.
- *alle* is compounded with the demonstrative pronoun in the phrases *bei alledem* 'for all that', *trotz alledem* 'in spite of all that'.

- *alles* is often used with an adjective used as a noun, see **6.2.4b**, e.g. *alles Wichtige* 'all (the) important things'.
- In colloquial speech in the South and West, *all(e)s* (often spelled *als*) is used to express a continuous action (= English 'to keep on doing sth.'), e.g. *Er hat als geflucht* 'He kept on cursing'.

5.5.2 *ander* 'other'

(a) In most contexts *ander* is an adjective

However, it has a few special forms and uses which resemble those of a determiner or pronoun. The following examples illustrate the range of its uses:

der **and(e)re** Student	*the other student*
mein **anderes** Auto	*my other car*
der **and(e)re**	*the other one*
irgendein **and(e)rer**	*some/any other one*
die drei **anderen**	*the three others*
alle **anderen**	*all the others*
andere deutsche Politiker	*other German politicians*
alles **and(e)re**	*everything else*

When *ander* is used without a preceding article or other determiner, a following adjective has the same ('strong') endings as those of *ander*, **except** that the 'weak' ending **- en** is a frequent alternative in the **dative singular masculine** and **neuter**:

anderes dumm**es** Gerede	andere italienisch**e** Maler
mit anderer modern**er** Musik	aus anderem wertvoll**en**/wertvoll**em** Material

(b) Notes on the spelling and forms of *ander*

- The first *-e-* is often dropped in writing, e.g. *andre*, *andrer*, *andres*. With the endings *- en* and *-em*, though, it is more usual to drop the second *-e-*, e.g. *ander(e)m*, *ander(e)n* (less common: *andrem*, *andren*).
- When used with a preceding determiner and no following noun, it differs from other adjectives in not usually being spelled with a capital letter: *der and(e)re*, *alles and(e)re*, etc. However, an initial small or capital letter can be used after *etwas* and *nichts*: *etwas and(e)res/And(e)res*, *nichts and(e)res/And(e)res*, see also **21.2.1c**.
- '**another** cup of tea' = *noch eine Tasse Tee*
- For the adverb *anders* 'else', see **7.4.5**.

5.5.3 *beide* 'both'

(a) *beide* 'both' can be used as a determiner or a pronoun

It has the same endings as the plural of *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**). Following adjectives have **weak** endings:

Ich habe **beide** Bücher gekauft	*I bought both books*
Beide Brüder sind gekommen	*Both brothers came*
beide jungen Mädchen	*both young girls*
Seine Brüder sind **beide** gekommen	*His brothers both came*
Beide sind gekommen	*Both came*

When used as a pronoun, *beide* can be strengthened by *alle*:

Alle beide sind gekommen   *The two of them came*

(b) *beide* can be used as a simple adjective after a definite article or another determiner

It then has the endings of a 'weak' adjective and often corresponds to English 'two':

Seine **beiden** Brüder sind gekommen	*His two brothers came*
Die **beiden** Brüder sind gekommen	*The two brothers came*

(c) Used with a personal pronoun, *beide* usually has the endings of plural *dieser*

wir **beide**, sie **beide**, von euch **beiden**, unser **beider**

There is some variation in usage with *wir* and *ihr*:

(i) In isolation *wir beiden* can be used rather than *wir beide*. However, it is less common unless a noun follows, e.g. *wir beiden Freunde*.
(ii) *ihr beiden* is more usual than *ihr beide* in isolation, e.g. *Los, ihr beiden , kommt schon!* (*BrZ*). Within a clause both are current, e.g. *Wollt ihr beide(n) schon mitkommen?*
(iii) If *beide* is separated from the pronoun, only the ending *-e* is usual:

Wir wollen **beide** schon mitkommen.	Ihr wollt **beide** mitkommen, oder?
Beide halten sie ein Wahlergebnis für möglich, das eine große Koalition erzwänge (*Zeit*)	*They both consider an election result possible which would force a grand coalition*

(d) The neuter singular *beides* **is used collectively to refer to two things**

In this usage it can be the equivalent of English 'either':

Sie hatte einen Hut und einen Regenschirm mit und ließ **beides** im Zug liegen	*She had a hat and an umbrella with her and left both on the train*
Sprechen Sie Deutsch oder Englisch? – **Beides**	*Do you speak German or English? Both*
Beides ist möglich	*Either is possible*

If *beides* is the subject of *sein*, the verb can be singular or plural:

Das Hotel und die Landschaft: **beides ist/sind** schön *The hotel and the scenery: both are lovely*

The use of singular *beides* to refer to people is a non-standard colloquialism, e.g. *Ich habe mit den Brüdern Schmid zu Mittag gegessen. Beides ist/sind* (in writing: *Beide sind*) *Vegetarier.*

(e) Other uses of *beide*, **and other equivalents of English 'both'**

Einer von beiden könnte uns helfen	*One/Either of the two could help us*
An beiden Enden des Ganges hängt ein Bild	*At either end of the corridor there is a picture*
in beiden Fällen	*in either case*
Keiner von beiden ist gekommen	*Neither of them came*
Sowohl seine Frau **als (auch)** seine Tochter sind krank	*Both his wife and his daughter are sick*

5.5.4 *einer* 'one'

(a) The pronoun *einer* declines like the possessive pronoun *meiner*

See **Table 5.12** . Note that the pronoun *einer* has different endings from those of the indefinite article *ein* in the nominative singular masculine (*ein er*) and the nominative/accusative singular neuter (*ein es*). *eines* is often written *eins*, reflecting its usual pronunciation. For the use of *eins* as a numeral 'one', see **8.1.2**.

TABLE 5.12   Declension of the pronoun *einer*

	Masculine	**Feminine**	**Neuter**
Nominative	einer	eine	eines
Accusative	einen	eine	eines
Genitive	eines	einer	eines

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Dative	einem	einer	einem

A paraphrase with *von* (see **2.4.2**) may sometimes be preferred to the genitive forms of *einer* so that, for example, *die Empfehlung von einem ihrer Freunde* is used rather than: *die Empfehlung eines ihrer Freunde* 'the recommendation of one of her friends'.

(b) The use of the pronoun *einer*

einer corresponds to English 'one' in the sense of 'one of a certain number':

einer der Männer, **eine** der Frauen, **ein(e)s** der Kinder	*one of the men, one of the women, one of the children*
Ein Fenster war offen und **ein(e)s** war zu	*One window was open and one was shut*
Ich sprach mit **einer** der Damen	*I spoke to one of the ladies*
Das hintere Ende **eines** der beiden zusammengestoßenen Züge (*SZ*)	*The rear of one of the two trains which had collided*
eines der Themen, die der slowenische Außenminister angesprochen hat (*Presse*)	*one of the topics which the Slovenian foreign minister touched on*

Unstressed *einer* has the negative *keiner*, see **5.5.16**, stressed *einer* has the negative *nicht einer*. Compare: *Ich habe keinen gesehen* 'I haven't seen one' and: *Ich habe nicht einen gesehen* 'I haven't seen a single one'.

(c) *einer* **often has the sense of 'someone', 'anyone'**

Einer muss es gesehen haben	*Someone must have seen it*
einer, der sie gekannt hat	*a person/someone who knew her*
Mit so **einem** will ich nichts zu tun haben	*I don't want anything to do with anyone like that*
Da kam **einer** durch die Glastür	*Someone came through the glass door*

einer is similar in meaning and use to *jemand*, see **5.5.15**, although this more clearly refers to an indefinite 'somebody' whose identity is quite unknown. *jemand* is also generally more polite, whereas *einer* can sound offensive, particularly in the feminine, e.g. *Da war gerade eine mit sechs Kindern.*

In the nominative *einer* tends to be more typical of informal speech, but the accusative and dative forms *einen* and *einem* are used in all registers for those

which *man* lacks (see **5.5.18**).

(d) *einer* **can be used as an adjective**

i.e. with a preceding definite article, demonstrative or possessive. It then has the 'weak' adjective endings (see **Table 6.4**), but it never has an initial capital letter, even when there is no noun following:

Der **eine** deutsche Tourist beschwerte sich	*One German tourist complained*
das **eine**, das ich brauche	*the one thing I need*
Mein **einer** Sohn ist gestorben (*coll.*)	*One of my sons has died*
Dieser **eine** Schnaps wird dich nicht gleich umwerfen	*This one schnapps won't knock you out*

der eine linked to a following *der andere* corresponds to English '(the) one … the other', etc. In German, though, the definite article or another determiner is usually present, whereas it can be lacking in English, and the plural *die einen* can occur in the meaning 'some':

Das eine Buch habe ich gelesen, **das andere** aber noch nicht	*I've read one of the books, but not the other one yet*
Die einen sagen dies, und **die anderen** das	*Some say this, and the others say that*
Unsere eine Katze heißt Mimi, **unsere andere** Fifi	*One of our cats is called Mimi, the other one is called Fifi*

(e) Some idiomatic uses of *einer*

Das ist aber **einer**!	*He's quite a lad*
Du bist mir **einer**! (see **2.5.2d**)	*You're a nice one!*
Eins wollte ich noch sagen	*There's one more thing I wanted to say*
Trinken wir noch **eins**?	*Shall we have another (drink)?*
Es ist mir alles **eins**	*It's all the same to me*
Er redet **in einem** fort	*He talks without stopping*

5.5.5 *ein wenig*, *ein bisschen* 'a little'

(a) *ein wenig* **corresponds to English 'a little'**

The *ein* of *ein wenig* does not decline. A phrase with *von* (see **2.4**) is used rather than a genitive:

Ich hatte noch **ein wenig** australisches Geld *I still had a little Australian money*

| Der Zug hatte sich **ein wenig** verspätet | *The train had got a little late* |
| Der Saal war **ein wenig** ruhiger geworden | *The room had become a little more quiet* |

(b) *ein bisschen* **can replace** *ein wenig* **in most contexts**

It could be used in all the examples in **(a)** without any significant difference in meaning, but it is rather more colloquial. Unlike *ein wenig*, it can, optionally, be declined in the dative singular, e.g. *mit ein(em) bisschen Geld*. This is normal when it is used as a pronoun, e.g. *Mit einem bisschen wäre ich schon zufrieden*. It also differs from *ein wenig* in that it can occur with a preceding adjective:

| ein winziges **bisschen** Käse | *a tiny little bit of cheese* |
| mit einem ganz kleinen **bisschen** gesunden Verstand | *with a very little bit of common sense* |

In South Germany *ein bisse(r)l* is a frequent variant in speech for northern *ein bisschen*.

(c) *bisschen* **can also be used with a demonstrative, a possessive or** *kein*

mit **dem bisschen** Verstand, den er hat	*with the little sense that he has*
mit **ihrem bisschen** Talent	*with her bit of talent*
Er hat **kein bisschen** Humor	*He hasn't got the least sense of humour*

5.5.6 *ein paar* **'a few'**

The *ein* of *ein paar* does not decline. A phrase with *von* (see **2.4**) is used rather than a following genitive. *ein paar* is close in meaning to *einige*, see **5.5.7**, but it is used more widely in everyday speech:

Ein paar Flaschen Wein haben wir noch im Keller	*We've still got a few bottles of wine in the cellar*
Hast du noch **ein paar** von diesen Flaschen?	*Do you still have a few of those bottles?*
mit der Hilfe von **ein paar** alten Freunden	*with the help of a few old friends*

The *ein* can be replaced by another determiner, which is declined. Such combinations can sound disparaging or pejorative:

Was soll ich mit den **paar** Euros anfangen?	*What am I supposed to do with these few lousy euros?*
der Wert meiner **paar** Möbel	*the value of my few bits of furniture*
Die Straßenbahn kommt alle **paar** Minuten	*The tram comes every few minutes*

ein paar should not be confused with *ein Paar* 'a pair'. Compare *ein paar Schuhe* 'a few shoes' but *ein Paar Schuhe* 'a pair of shoes'.

5.5.7 *einiger*, *einige* **'some'**

einig- refers to a limited amount or number. It corresponds to English unstressed 'some' (or 'a few', as it is close in meaning to *ein paar*, see **5.5.6**). It declines like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**) except that the (little used) genitive singular masculine and neuter form is *einig en*, and a following adjective in the plural usually has **strong** endings, see **6.1.4**.

(a) The use of *einiger* in the singular is limited

The usual German equivalents of English unstressed *some* in the singular are *etwas* (see **5.5.9**), or, most often, simply no article or determiner at all (see **4.8.3**), e.g. *Ich habe heute (etwas) Fleisch gekauft* 'I bought some meat today'.

When *einiger* is used in the singular it implies a rather unusual or unexpected quantity and often comes close to English 'no little'. It is most frequent with mass and abstract nouns (especially *Entfernung* and *Zeit*), adjectives used as nouns and collectives:

mit **einigem** Glück	*with some degree of luck*
bei **einigem** guten Willen	*with a certain degree of good will*
vor ihm in **einiger** Entfernung	*some distance in front of him*
vor **einiger** Zeit schon	*some time ago now*
nach **einigem** Überlegen	*after some consideration*
Diese Schlangen, die ihr Gift spucken, zielen bis drei Meter weit noch mit **einiger** Treffsicherheit (*Grzimek*)	*These snakes which spit their venom can aim up to three metres with no little accuracy*

In the singular *einiger* is mainly used as a determiner rather than as a pronoun, but the neuter singular *einiges* does occur as a collective indefinite pronoun:

einiges davon	*some of it*
Ich habe noch **einiges** zu tun	*I've still got a few things to do*

(b) In the plural *einige* is widely used both as a determiner and as a pronoun

Sie wollte **einige** Ansichtskarten von Rothenburg kaufen	*She wanted to buy some postcards of Rothenburg*
unter Verwendung **einiger** technischer Mittel	*by using some technical methods*
Einige mussten stehen	*Some/A few had to stand*
Sie hat schon **einige** mitgebracht	*She's already brought some/a few*

German often uses no determiner in contexts where English uses unstressed 'some', so that a common alternative to the first example above would be: *Sie*

wollte Ansichtskarten von Rothenburg kaufen.

einige is also used with numerals to mean 'a few', e.g. *einige tausend Bücher* 'a few thousand books'.

5.5.8 *etliche* 'some'

etliche typically implies 'more than the expected number' and is close to English 'several' or 'a fair number of'. In this sense it is used in both spoken and written German. It declines like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**) and it is only used in the plural. A following adjective usually has **strong** endings, see **6.1.4**.

Warum ist die Bahn so unpünktlich geworden? Da gibt es **etliche** Ursachen (*Spiegel*)	*Why have the railways become so unpunctual? There are several/a (good) number of reasons for this*
Etliche dieser Stücke sind auch für Anfänger relativ leicht zu bewältigen (*SWF*)	*Some/A number of these pieces are relatively easy to manage, even for a beginner*

In Switzerland *etwelche* is used with the same meaning as *etliche*, e.g. *Den FC Flawil plagen vor dem morgigen Spiel zwar etwelche Personalsorgen* (*SGT*).

5.5.9 *etwas* 'something', 'anything'

etwas is used as an **indefinite pronoun**, to **qualify nouns**, and as an **adverb**. It has no case forms and is not used in genitive constructions, a phrase with *von* (see **2.4**) being used if necessary.

(a) As an indefinite pronoun, *etwas* **corresponds to English 'something' or 'anything'**

Etwas hat mich gestört	*Something bothered me*
Ich habe **etwas** für Sie	*I've got something for you*
Hast du **etwas** gesagt?	*Did you say anything?*

etwas is often reduced to *was* in colloquial speech unless it occupies first position in the sentence, e.g. *Ich habe was für Sie*; *Hast du was gesagt? etwas* is often used with *von* in a partitive sense, i.e. 'some (of)':

Ich möchte **etwas** von diesem Kuchen	*I would like some of this cake*

In contexts like this, *etwas* can be omitted: *Ich möchte von diesem Kuchen*.

(b) Qualifying a noun, *etwas* **has the sense of 'some', 'any' or 'a little'**

It is used chiefly with mass and abstract nouns in the singular. However, as an equivalent to unstressed English 'some' or 'any', German often uses no determiner at all (see **4.2.2a**, **4.8.3** and **5.5.7b**), and *etwas* could be omitted in all the examples below:

Er hat kaum **etwas** Geld	*He has hardly any money*
Bringen Sie mir bitte **etwas** Brot	*Please bring me some bread*
Sie muss **etwas** Geduld haben	*She needs a little patience*
Etwas mehr Aufmerksamkeit wäre nützlich gewesen	*A little more attention would have been useful*

etwas is commonly used with a following adjective used as a noun (see **6.2.4b**). The adjective has the 'strong' adjective endings:

etwas ganz Neues	*something quite new*
Er hat von **etwas** ganz Neu**em** gesprochen	*He spoke of something quite new*

(c) As an adverb, *etwas* means 'somewhat', 'a bit'

Er ist **etwas** nervös	*He is somewhat/rather/a bit nervous*
Es geht ihm **etwas** besser	*He is somewhat/a bit better*
Er zögerte **etwas**	*He hesitated somewhat/a bit*

5.5.10 *folgend* '(the) following'

folgend can be used as a simple adjective, but it has some special forms and uses which resemble those of a determiner or pronoun. Unlike English 'following', it is often used without a preceding article or other determiner. A following adjective usually has 'weak' endings in the singular and 'strong' endings in the plural, see **6.1.4**:

alle **folgenden** Bemerkungen	*all the following remarks*
Sie machte **folgende** Bemerkungen	*She made the following remarks*
Sie machte **folgende** treffende Bemerkungen	*She made the following apposite remarks*
folgender interessante Gedanke	*the following interesting thought*
mit **folgender** nachdrücklichen Warnung	*with the following firm warning*
Sie sagte mir **Folgendes**: …	*She said the following to me: …*
Im **Folgenden** wird diese Frage näher erläutert	*In the following this question will be clarified more precisely*
Aus **Folgendem** lässt sich schließen, dass.	*From the following it may be deduced that …*

folgend has an initial capital letter when used as a pronoun meaning 'the following', as in the last three examples.

5.5.11 *irgend* 'some … or other'

(a) The principal use of *irgend* is to emphasize indefiniteness

It occurs in combination with many indefinite pronouns, adverbs and determiners, giving them the sense of 'some … or other' or 'any … at all'. All these compounds of *irgend* are written as single words, e.g. *irgendetwas*, *irgendjemand*, *irgendwo*.

(b) *irgend* can be compounded with most interrogative adverbs to form indefinite adverbs

i.e.: *irgendwann* 'sometime or other', 'any time'; *irgendwie* 'somehow', 'anyhow'; *irgendwo* 'somewhere', 'anywhere'; *irgendwohin* '(to) somewhere, anywhere'; *irgendwoher* 'from somewhere, anywhere':

Du musst es **irgendwie** machen	*You'll have to do it somehow*
Er fährt heute Nachmittag **irgendwohin**	*He's going somewhere this afternoon*
Gehst du heute Abend **irgendwohin**?	*Are you going anywhere tonight?*

(c) With *einer*, *(et)was*, *jemand* and *wer*, *irgend* stresses indefiniteness

irgendeiner, *irgendjemand* and *irgendwer* correspond to English 'somebody', 'anybody', *irgendetwas* to 'something', 'anything'. In practice, *irgendeiner* and *irgendwer* are commoner than simple *einer* and *wer* (see **5.5.4** and **5.5.27**) to mean 'somebody', 'anybody':

Irgendwann wurden von **irgendwem** diese Briefe aus dem Kasten genommen (*Böll*)	*At some time or other someone (or other) took these letters out of the letter-box*
Versteht er **irgendetwas** von Wein?	*Does he know anything (at all) about wine?*
Irgendeiner soll es gesagt haben	*Someone (or other) is supposed to have said it*
Hat denn **irgendjemand** angerufen?	*Did anybody phone?*

Only *irgendjemand* and *irgendetwas*, not simple *jemand* or *etwas*, are possible in response to a question:

Wer hat eben geklopft? **Irgendjemand**	*Who just knocked? Someone or other*
Was willst du denn kaufen? **Irgendetwas**	*What are you going to buy, then? Something or other*

In colloquial North German, *irgend* can be compounded with the prepositional adverb with *wo(r)*- (see **5.3.3c**), in place of *irgendetwas* with a preposition:

Ich habe mich **irgendworan** gestoßen *I knocked against something or other*
(*standard*: an irgendetwas)

(d) irgendein(er) and irgendwelcher

These correspond to 'some (or other), any (whatsoever)', often with the sense of 'no matter which/who'. They are used as determiners or pronouns.

(i) The determiner *irgendein* has the endings of the indefinite article *ein*, see **Table 4.3**. It is used in the singular with countable nouns:

Er hat mir **irgendeine** Broschüre gezeigt	*He showed me some brochure or other*
Hat er **irgendeine** Bemerkung gemacht?	*Did he make any remark (at all)?*
Die Selbstmordquote soll höher sein als in **irgendeinem** anderen Ort der Welt (*Bednarz*)	*The suicide rate is said to be higher than in any other place in the world*

(ii) The pronoun *irgendeiner*, which declines like *einer* (see **Table 5.11**) only has singular forms and can only refer to countable nouns. The masculine and feminine forms are used in the sense of 'somebody', 'anybody':

Irgendeiner muss dich gesehen haben	*Someone or other must have seen you*
Wenn du wirklich einen neuen Tisch suchst, musst du hier im Geschäft **irgendeinen** gesehen haben, der dir gefällt	*If you're really looking for a new table, you must have seen one here in the shop which you like*
Ich habe ein paar Bücher über Israel. Sie können sich **irgendeins** ausleihen	*I've got a few books about Israel. You can borrow any one you like*

(iii) *irgendwelcher*, which declines like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**), is used as a determiner in the singular with mass and abstract nouns, and in the plural. A following adjective can have 'weak' or 'strong' endings, see **6.1.4**. The genitive is rarely used in the singular:

Wenn **irgendwelche** anderen Idioten auf RTL heiraten wollen, … (*HMP*)	*If any other idiots want to get married on RTL …*
Er hat **irgendwelches** dumme(s) Zeug geredet	*He was talking some stupid rubbish or other*
Wenn Sie **irgendwelche** Probleme haben, wenden Sie sich an uns (*Bednarz*)	*If you have any problems (at all), turn to us*

Colloquially, *irgendwelcher* is often used for *irgendein*, e.g. *Er zeigte mir irgendwelche Broschüre*.

(e) *irgend so ein* corresponds to English 'one/some of those', 'any/some such'

In the plural, *irgend solche* is used. It can often sound pejorative:

Wer war es? Es war **irgend so ein** Vertreter für Doppelfenster	*Who was it? It was one of those men who sell double glazing*
Er hat **irgend solche** komische Bemerkungen gemacht	*He made some such odd remarks*

(f) *irgend* **can be used as an independent adverb with the sense of** *irgendwie*

i.e. 'somehow', 'anyhow', 'in some way':

wenn **irgend** möglich	*if at all possible*
Ich würde mich freuen, wenn es **irgend** geht	*I would be pleased if it's possible somehow*

5.5.12 *jeder* 'each', 'every'

(a) *jeder* **is only used in the singular, as a determiner or a pronoun**

When used as a determiner, *jeder* corresponds to English 'each', 'every', or when used as a pronoun to English 'everyone', 'everybody' – although in this sense *alle* may be considered preferable to the potentially discriminatory masculine form *jeder*.

It declines like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**), except that *jeden* is now at least as frequent as *jedes* in the genitive singular masculine and neuter if the following noun has the ending *-(e)s*, e.g. *am Ende jed en/ jed es Abschnitts*. However, only *jedes* is possible if an adjective is present, e.g. *am Ende jed es* (**not** *jed en*) *kurzen Abschnitts*, or with weak masculine nouns (see **1.3.2**) which have the ending *-(e)n* in the genitive singular, e.g. *die Aufgabe jed es Studenten*.

Sie hat **jedem** Kind einen Apfel gegeben	*She gave each child an apple*
nach **jedem** solchen Versuch	*after each such attempt*
Er ist **jeden** Tag zur selben Zeit gekommen	*He came every day at the same time*
In diesem kleinen Ort kennt **jeder jeden**	*In this little place everyone knows everybody else*

jeder often has an individualizing sense (i.e. 'no matter which/who'), in which case it can be the equivalent of English 'any':

Das weiß doch **jeder** gebildete Bürger	*Any/Every educated citizen knows that, though*
Die industrielle Revolution verwandelte die Lebensbedingungen der Menschen radikaler als **jeder** andere Ereigniszusammenhang der neueren Geschichte	*The Industrial Revolution changed people's living conditions more radically than any other set of events in recent history*

The neuter *jedes* can refer back to both sexes: *Seine Eltern waren sehr tüchtig, jedes auf seine Weise*. See also section **1.1.12b**.

jeder is only used as a pronoun in the genitive case when followed by a noun in the genitive, e.g.

die Meinung **jedes** der Experten   *The opinion of each of the experts*

In other contexts, *ein jeder* can be used, e.g.

Die Wünsche **eines jeden** müssen berücksichtigt werden   *Each one's wishes must be taken into account*

(b) The combination *ein jeder* **is more emphatic than** *jeder*

It is used chiefly as a pronoun and is particularly frequent in the individualizing sense of stressed 'any', i.e. 'no matter which/who'. In this combination, *jeder* has the same endings as a simple adjective:

Ein jeder wollte was sagen	*Everyone wanted to say something*
Das könnte doch **ein jeder** machen	*But everybody/anybody (at all) could do that*
Das kannst du doch nicht **einem jeden** erzählen	*But you can't tell that to just anybody*
Die Wünsche **eines jeden** werden berücksichtigt	*Each one's wishes are taken into account*

5.5.13 *jedermann* 'everybody', 'everyone'

jedermann is only used, as a pronoun, in elevated, formal registers and set phrases. *jeder*, or the less potentially discriminatory *alle*, are more commonly used alternatives. Its only case form is the genitive *jedermanns*.

Jedermann wusste, dass Michael den Wehrdienst verweigert hatte	*Everyone knew that Michael had refused to do military service*
Das ist nicht **jedermanns** Sache	*That's not everyone's cup of tea*

5.5.14 *jedweder*, *jeglicher* 'each', 'every'

jedweder and *jeglicher* decline like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**). They are used as determiners or pronouns as alternatives to *jeder* and both are largely restricted to formal written registers.

(a) *jedweder* **is rather more emphatic than** *jeder*

It has a rather old-fashioned ring and is not frequently used, even in formal registers:

Auch sonst bleiben den Insassen **jedwede** Motorgeräusche verborgen (*HMP*)	*Otherwise, too, the occupants are cut off from any sort of noise from the motor*

(b) *jeglicher* **stresses the individuality of the items in question**

It is most often used in the sense of stressed 'any' (i.e. 'no matter who/what'). It is most frequent with abstract nouns and in negative contexts. Unlike *jeder*, it can be used in the plural. Adjectives following *jeglicher* have the strong declension, see **6.1.4**:

Das entbehrt **jeglicher** Grundlage	*That is completely unfounded*
Sie hatten in der vergangenen Woche **jegliche** Schuld von sich gewiesen (*SZ*)	*The previous week they had denied any possible shadow of guilt*
Es fehlt derzeit **jeglicher** Ansatz für eine Besserung am Arbeitsmarkt (*MM*)	*At the moment we are lacking any sign of an improvement in the labour market*

5.5.15 *jemand* 'somebody', 'someone'; *niemand* 'nobody', 'no-one'

(a) Declension and use of *jemand* and *niemand*

(i) *jemand* 'somebody', 'someone' and *niemand* 'nobody', 'no-one' have case endings as in **Table 5.13**. In the accusative and dative, the forms without endings are at least as common as the forms with endings in both speech and writing:

> Ich habe **niemand/niemanden** gesehen
> Ich habe **jemand/jemandem** das Paket gegeben

(ii) The genitive forms are felt to be awkward and tend to be avoided by paraphrasing, e.g. *Hat jemand diese Aktentasche liegen lassen?* or *Wem gehört diese Aktentasche?* rather than: *Ist das jemands Aktentasche?*

(iii) Pronouns and determiners referring back to *jemand* and *niemand* have the masculine singular form: *Niemand, der es weiß*; *Jemand hat seine Tasche vergessen*

(iv) In colloquial speech, *einer* and *wer* are common alternatives to *jemand*, see **5.5.4** and **5.5.27**, as is *keiner* for *niemand*, see **5.5.16**.

(v) The indefiniteness of *jemand* may be emphasized by combining it with *irgend*, see **5.5.11c**.

TABLE 5.13 Declension of *jemand* and *niemand*

Nominative	jemand	niemand
Accusative	jemand(en)	niemand(en)

Genitive	jemandes	niemandes
Dative	jemand(em)	niemand(em)

(b) *jemand* **and** *niemand* **with a following adjective**

When followed by an adjective, *jemand* and *niemand* are usually endingless in the accusative and dative. The adjective is treated as a noun (see **6.2**), and it can have the ending *-es* in all cases, although it is now more usual for it to have the endings *-en* in the accusative and *-em* in the dative cases.

> Jemand Fremd**es** ist gekommen
> Ich habe jemand Fremd**en** gesehen (less often: *jemand Fremd es*)
> Ich habe mit jemand Fremd**em** gesprochen (less often: *jemand Fremd es*)

The use of the ending *-er* in the nominative case, e.g. *jemand Fremd er*, is a southern regionalism.

jemand and *niemand* can be used in a similar way with *ander*, which always has a small initial letter in all these forms:

> Jemand ander**s** ist gekommen
> Ich habe jemand ander**s**/ander**en** gesehen
> Ich habe mit jemand ander**s**/ander**em** gesprochen

anders most often has the ending *-s* in all cases; the endings *-en* and *-em* are typical of southern usage.

5.5.16 *kein*, *keiner* 'no', 'not … any', 'none'

(a) *kein* **is the negative form of the indefinite article**

See **4.1.2c**. Its basic declension is identical to *ein*, but it does have plural forms, as illustrated in **Table 4.4**. It is used typically where a corresponding positive sentence would have an indefinite article or no article, and it thus usually corresponds to English 'not a', 'not … any ' or 'no':

Sie hat ein Auto	Sie hat **kein** Auto
Wir haben frische Brötchen	Wir haben **keine** frischen Brötchen
Ich habe Zeit	Ich habe **keine** Zeit

(b) *kein* **or** *nicht* **in negation?**

It is sometimes difficult to know whether to use *kein* or *nicht* in negation. *kein* is used to negate an indefinite noun (i.e. one with an indefinite article or no article), as in the examples given under **(a)** above. *nicht* is used in other cases, notably to negate a whole sentence, e.g. *Sie will heute mitkommen – Sie will heute nicht mitkommen*. However, there are contexts where the choice may not be obvious:

(i) Some German phrases with an indefinite noun (and which are thus negated with *kein*) have rather different English equivalents:

Ich bin Deutscher	Ich bin **kein** Deutscher
Ich spreche Deutsch	Ich spreche **kein** Deutsch
ein Problem von großer Bedeutung	ein Problem von **keiner** großen Bedeutung

(ii) Phrasal verbs with nouns, e.g. *Atem holen*, *sich Mühe geben*, *Freude empfinden* and all those with *haben*, e.g. *Angst, Durst, Hunger haben*, etc. are generally negated with *kein*:

> Er hat sich **keine** Mühe gegeben
> Dabei hat er **keine** Freude empfunden
> Ich habe **keinen** Durst, Hunger
> Sie hatten **keine** Angst

Phrasal verbs with *nehmen* have *kein* **or** *nicht*:

> Sie hat **keinen/nicht** Abschied von ihm genommen
> Sie wollen **keine/nicht** Rache nehmen
> Er hat **keine/nicht** Rücksicht auf mich genommen

nicht occurs with phrasal verbs where the noun is so closely linked to the verb that it is felt to be the equivalent of a separable prefix:

> Er spielt **nicht** Klavier
> Sie läuft **nicht** Schi
> Sie haben in Berlin **nicht** Wurzel gefasst
> Er hat **nicht** Wort gehalten
> Er kann **nicht** Auto fahren

Such close links with nouns are often found with the verbs *fahren*, *halten*, *laufen* and *spielen*.

(c) *kein* **and** *nicht ein*

kein is the usual equivalent of English 'not a' (and using *nicht ein* for *kein* is typical of English learners' German). Nevertheless, there are a few contexts where *nicht ein* is used:

(i) if *ein* is stressed, i.e. 'not (a single) one':

Die TAP besitzt **nicht ein** Flugzeug, denn alle 38 Maschinen sind geleast   *TAP doesn't own a single aeroplane, as all 38 planes are*
(*NZZ*)   *leased*

(ii) in direct contrasts:

Das ist eine Ulme, **nicht eine** Eiche   *That's an elm, not an oak*

(iii) *nicht ein* is more usual than *kein* after *wenn* 'if':

Man hätte ihn kaum bemerkt, wenn ihm **nicht ein** Schnurrbart etwas   *No-one would have noticed him, if a moustache hadn't given him*
Distinguiertes verliehen hätte   *a rather distinguished air*

(d) Some idiomatic uses of *kein* as a determiner

Sie ist noch **keine** zehn Jahre alt   *She's not yet ten years old*

keine zwei Stunden vor meiner Abreise   *within two hours of my departure*

Es ist noch **keine** fünf Minuten her   *It is less than five minutes ago*

Sie ist schließlich **kein** Kind mehr   *After all, she's no longer a child*

(e) The form *keiner* is used as a pronoun

(i) It has endings like those of *einer*, see **Table 5.12**. It is rarely used in the genitive:

> **Keiner** von uns hat es gewusst
> Zum Schluss hat sie **kein**(e)**s** der Bücher gekauft
> Haben Sie einen Smart-TV? Nein, wir haben **keinen**
> Ich möchte in **keinem** dieser neuen Häuser wohnen
> **kein**(e)**s** von beiden *neither of them*

(ii) The neuter form *kein(e)s* is used to refer to people of different gender (see **1.1.12b**): *Ich fragte meine Eltern, aber keins (von beiden) wusste es*.

(iii) The use of *keiner* for *niemand* to mean 'no-one', 'nobody' (see **5.5.15a**) is frequent in colloquial speech but generally avoided in more formal registers.

(f) The superlative adjective form *keinste* is sometimes used for emphasis

in keinster Weise   *in no way at all*

Das hat keinste Aussicht auf Erfolg (*MM*)   *That doesn't have the slightest chance of success*

This usage is often considered non-standard, but it is common in informal registers, and it is increasingly found in writing.

5.5.17 *lauter* **'only', 'nothing but'**

lauter is indeclinable. It is used only as a determiner, i.e. before nouns:

Dort lag **lauter** Eis und Schnee	*Nothing but ice and snow lay there*
Es sind **lauter** junge Leute gekommen	*Only young people came*
Er hat **lauter** solchen Unsinn geredet	*He only talked rubbish like that*

5.5.18 *man* **'one'**

(a) The indefinite pronoun *man* corresponds to English 'one'

However, unlike 'one', it is not restricted to elevated registers. Rather, it corresponds to the general use of 'you' in spoken English, or, frequently, to 'we', 'they' or 'people' (and overusing *Leute* in contexts where *man* would be appropriate is typical of English learners' German). It is also often used in contexts where English would most naturally use a passive construction, e.g. *Man sagt* 'It is said', see **13.4.1**. The corresponding pronouns are possessive *sein* and reflexive *sich:*

Als **man** sich zum Abendessen setzte, fehlte der alte Herr	*When they/we sat down to dinner the old gentleman was missing*
Man hat sich nach dir erkundigt	*People were/Somebody was asking after you*
Man sollte seinen Freunden helfen	*One ought to help one's friends*
Hier spricht **man** meistens unter sich noch Dialekt	*Here people mainly still speak dialect amongst themselves*

man is sometimes used, for reasons of politeness, to refer to the speaker, e.g. *Darf man fragen, wohin Sie fahren?* In certain situations this can acquire a note of sarcasm. This is always so when it is used to refer to the listener, e.g. *Hat man schon wieder zu tief ins Glas geguckt?*

English-speaking learners should note that *man* is **never** referred back to with *er*, e.g. *Wenn man müde ist, muss man* (not *er*) *sich setzen*.

(b) *man* only has a nominative case form

In the accusative and dative *einen* and *einem* (see **5.5.4**) are used:

Man weiß nie, ob er **einen** erkannt hat	*You never know whether he has recognized you*
So Leid es **einem** tut, man muss manchmal hart sein	*However much you regret it, you have to be hard sometimes*

The use of the nominative form *einer* for *man* (see **5.5.4**) is frequent in colloquial speech, but generally avoided in writing.

5.5.19 *manch* 'some', 'many a'

manch always has the rather special sense of stressed 'some', i.e. 'a fair number, but by no means all'. This may be equivalent to English 'many a', and in certain contexts it comes close to the sense of English 'several'. *manch* has a number of alternative forms.

(a) As a determiner, *manch* **is most often used in the inflected form** *mancher*

i.e. with the endings of *dieser*, see **Table 5.2**.

In the genitive singular masculine and neuter, the form *manchen* is occasionally found besides the more frequent *manches* if the following noun has the ending -*(e)s* (e.g. *manch es Mannes* or *manch en Mannes*).

mancher can be used in the singular or the plural. The singular form (like English 'many a') may put more emphasis on the individual items, whereas the plural (like English stressed 'some') stresses the collectivity. In practice, however, the difference between, for example, *mancher schöne Tag* and *manche schöne Tage* is slight. A following adjective usually has **strong** endings, see **6.1.4**.

An **manchen** Tagen blieb er lange im Bett	*Some days he stayed in bed a long time*
Von der Abzocke **mancher** Skiregionen ist hier keine Spur (*HMP*)	*Here there is no sign of the rip-offs you get in a good number of skiing areas*
ein überhöhter Preis, wie er in **manchen** Reparaturwerkstätten seit Jahren üblich ist (*BILD*)	*an exorbitant price, such as has been usual in some garages for years*

(b) Uninflected *manch* is commonly used as a determiner in the following constructions

(i) before the indefinite article *ein*. This is a less common alternative to inflected *manch*, and it is mainly used in formal writing. The noun is given rather more emphasis:

Da gibt es mancherlei Grund zum Zweifeln – **manch ein** Zeitgenosse wird sagen: zum Verzweifeln (*Zeit*)	*There are many kinds of reasons for doubt – many contemporaries will say: for despair*

(ii) before an adjective, where the uninflected form is a widespread and frequent alternative to the inflected one, especially in the singular:

Sie konnten dem Kanzler **manch** guten Tipp geben (*MM*)	*They were able to give the Chancellor many a good tip*
…um neben **manch** Komischem auch etliches Entlarvende bieten zu können (*MM*)	*…to be able to present quite a few revealing things besides much that is comical*

(iii) before neuter nouns. This sounds rather old-fashioned, but it has become fashionable recently:

Und so ist **manch** Dachstubentalent ins Scheinwerferlicht geraten (*NUZ*)	*In this way many a hidden talent has emerged into the limelight*

(c) As a pronoun *mancher* **declines like** *dieser*

See **Table 5.2**. It is not used in the genitive:

Mancher hat es nicht geglaubt	*Not many believed it*
Das ist schon **manchem** passiert	*That has happened to quite a few people*
Manche trinken Tee, andere lieber Kaffee	*Some people drink tea, others prefer coffee*
manche meiner Bekannten	*a fair number of my acquaintances*

manch einer is a fairly frequent alternative to inflected *mancher:*

Manch einer musste auf die Mittagspause verzichten (*MM*)	*A fair few had to give up their lunch hour*

5.5.20 *mehrere* 'several'

mehrere is used, as a determiner or a pronoun, in the plural only. It has the same endings as *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**). A following adjective usually has strong endings, see **6.1.4**.

Ich habe **mehrere** Bücher darüber gelesen	*I have read several books about it*
Mehrere standen draußen und warteten	*Several people were standing outside waiting*
Es ist doch viel spannender, mit **mehreren** Jungen auszugehen, als immer an einem zu kleben (*BILD*)	*But it's much more exciting to go out with several boys than always to stick with one*

5.5.21 *meinesgleichen* 'people like me'

meinesgleichen is indeclinable. Parallel forms can be formed for the other persons, i.e. *deinesgleichen, seinesgleichen, ihresgleichen, unsresgleichen, euresgleichen*. If they are used as the subject of a verb, it has the endings of the third person singular. These forms sometimes sound rather old-fashioned, but the first example below is a frequent idiom:

Dieser Wagen hat nicht **seinesgleichen**	*This car has no equal*
Ich und **meinesgleichen** interessieren uns für so etwas nicht	*I and people like me aren't interested in things like that*

Euresgleichen hat es wirklich leicht   *People like you really have it easy*

5.5.22 *nichts* **'nothing', 'not … anything'**

In speech *nichts* is almost invariably pronounced *nix*. It does not decline:

Aus **nichts** wird **nichts** (*Proverb*) *Nothing comes of nothing*

Nichts gefiel ihr dort   *She didn't like anything there*

nichts als Schwierigkeiten   *nothing but difficulties*

nichts is often used with a following adjective used as a noun, which has the strong endings, see **6.2.4b**:

nichts Neues   *nothing new*

Er hat von **nichts Neuem** gesprochen *He didn't speak of anything new*

It is also common with *von* in partitive constructions, i.e. 'nothing (of)':

Ich möchte **nichts von** dem Essen *I don't want any of the food*

nichts von alledem   *nothing of all that*

5.5.23 *sämtlich* **'all (the)'**

sämtliche inflects like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**). It is used, as a determiner or a pronoun, in the plural only, as an emphatic alternative to *alle*. A following adjective has weak endings, see **6.1.4**.

Sämtliche gezeigten Tiere wurden am Freitag von *All the exhibited animals were judged on*
   Experten bewertet (*SGT*)   *Friday by experts*

die Anschriften **sämtlicher** neuen Mitglieder   *the addresses of all the new members*

sämtliche is rather more limited in meaning than *alle*, since it can refer to all the members of a subgroup of persons or things, but not to all those which are in existence. Thus, one can say *Sämtliche* (or *Alle*) *Bäume in dem Wald wurden gefällt*, but only: *Alle* (not *Sämtliche*) *Menschen sind sterblich*.

sämtliche can also be used with a preceding definite article or other determiner, in which case it has the endings of an adjective:

Meine **sämtlichen** Verwandten haben mir geschrieben *All my relatives wrote to me*

As an adverb, *sämtlich* is used in the meaning 'without exception':

Sämtlich sind dies Konsequenzen jahrzehntelanger *These are all the result of bad planning going*
Fehlplanungen (*taz*) *back decades*

5.5.24 *unsereiner* 'someone like me', 'the likes of us'

unsereiner declines like *einer*, see **Table 5.12**. There are parallel forms for the other plural persons, i.e. *eurereiner*, *ihrereiner*, although these are used less often:

Unsereiner kann das nicht wissen *Someone like me can't know that*

Mit **unsereinem** spricht sie nie *She doesn't talk to the likes of us*

In the nominative and accusative, the neuter form *unsereins* is a common alternative to the masculine, especially in colloquial speech.

5.5.25 *viel* 'much', *viele* 'many', *wenig* 'a little', *wenige* 'a few'

The various forms and uses of *viel* 'much', 'many', 'a lot of' and *wenig* '(a) little', '(a) few', 'not many' are broadly similar. Both occur as a determiner, a pronoun or an adverb. Both have alternative uninflected and inflected forms, in the latter case with the endings of *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**). In certain constructions and uses, the uninflected forms are more usual, in others the inflected are, without any identifiable difference in meaning. Adjectives following inflected *viele* and *wenige* in the plural usually have strong endings, see **6.1.4**.

ein wenig 'a little' is invariable, see **5.5.5**.

For the comparatives of *viel* and *wenig*, see **7.7.1b**.

(a) *viel* **and** *wenig* **used as pronouns**

When *viel* and *wenig* are used as **pronouns**, they most often have **no endings in the singular**, but they do have **an ending in the plural**. They are not used in the genitive singular:

Sie hat **viel/wenig** versucht
Er will **viel/wenig** haben
Viel/Wenig von dem Kuchen
Ich bin mit **viel/wenig** von dem einverstanden, was du sagst
Viele/Wenige von diesen Büchern
Ich habe **viele/wenige** gesehen

The inflected neuter singular forms, i.e. **vieles** (nominative or accusative), **vielem** (dative) are occasionally used, chiefly in formal writing:

Sie hat **vieles** versucht	*She has tried a lot of things*
Mit **vielem** bin ich nicht einverstanden	*There's much I don't agree with*

Inflected forms of *wenig* (i.e. *weniges, wenigem*) are rare.

(b) *viel* **and** *wenig* **used as determiners**

When *viel* and *wenig* are used as **determiners**, they usually have **no endings in the singular**, but they do have **endings in the plural**. The genitive singular is scarcely ever used, a phrase with *von* being preferred (see **2.4**):

Dazu ist **viel** Mut nötig	*A lot of courage is needed for that*
Ich trinke **wenig** Milch	*I don't drink much milk*
die Wirkung von **wenig** Wein	*the effect of a little/not much wine*
der Genuss von **viel** Obst	*eating a lot of fruit*
Viele Probleme wurden besprochen	*Many problems were discussed*
Gestern waren **wenige** Zuschauer im Stadion	*There weren't many spectators at the ground yesterday*
Er hat **viele/wenige** Freunde	*He has a lot of/few friends*
die Reden **vieler** Politiker	*the speeches of a lot of politicians*
mit **vielen/wenigen** Ausnahmen	*with a lot of/few exceptions*

There are some common exceptions to this usage:

(i) Inflected singular forms are sometimes used in formal registers with a following adjective used as a noun (see **6.2.4b**), e.g. *Er hat vieles/weniges Interessante gesagt* (less formal: *Er hat viel/wenig Interessantes gesagt*).
(ii) Inflected forms are quite common in the dative singular masculine and neuter, e.g. *Mit viel/vielem Zureden konnten wir einiges erreichen*.
(iii) Endings are optional with plural *viel* when it is used with *wie* in questions in the meaning 'how many': *Wissen Sie, wie viel(e) Stunden Arbeitslose arbeiten dürfen*.
(iv) Uninflected plural forms of both *viel* and *wenig* are occasionally found, mainly in colloquial speech: *Im Grunde interessieren mich furchtbar wenig Dinge außer meiner eigenen Arbeit* (*Langgässer*).
(v) Inflected singular forms are used in a few set phrases, notably *vielen Dank*.

(c) *viel* **and** *wenig* **can be used with a preceding definite article or other determiner**

They then have the usual adjective endings:

Ich habe gestaunt über das **viele** Geld, das er ausgegeben hat	*I was amazed at the large amount of money that he spent*
der Mut dieser **vielen/wenigen** Frauen	*the courage of these many/few women*
Sie hat ihr **weniges** Geld verloren	*She lost her little bit of money*
die **wenigen**, die ihn erkannt haben	*the few who recognized him*

(d) *wenig* **in constructions like** *wenig gutes Fleisch* **can be ambiguous**

It can mean 'not much good meat' or 'not very good meat'. If the context does not resolve the ambiguity, the first meaning can be made clear by replacing *wenig* by *nicht viel*, i.e. *nicht viel gutes Fleisch*, the second by using *nicht sehr*, i.e. *nicht sehr gutes Fleisch*.

Similarly, *weniger gutes Fleisch* could mean 'meat which was less good' or 'a smaller amount of good meat' (English 'less good meat' is similarly ambiguous). This ambiguity can also be resolved if necessary by paraphrasing, i.e. *nicht so gutes Fleisch* or *nicht so viel gutes Fleisch*.

(e) The spelling of *so viel*, *wie viel*, *zu viel*, **etc.**

These combinations are spelled as separate words: *so viel*, *wie viel*, *zu viel*, *zu wenig*, see **21.3.3**.

5.5.26 *welcher* 'some', 'any'

When used as an **indefinite pronoun** *welcher* has the endings of *dieser*, see **Table 5.2**. It is typical of colloquial speech, other alternatives (i.e. *einige*, *etwas*, *manche*) usually being preferred in formal registers.

It is used without restriction in the plural, but in the singular it can only refer to a mass noun. It refers back to a noun which has just been mentioned or to 'some people' identified by a following relative clause:.

Hast du Käse? Ja, ich habe **welchen**	*Have you got any cheese? Yes, I've got some*
Wenn kein Wein mehr da ist, hole ich uns **welchen**	*If there's no wine left, I'll get us some*
Ich brauche Marken. Kannst du mir **welche** geben?	*I need some stamps. Can you give me some/any?*
Hier sind **welche** vom Westfernsehen (*Bednarz*)	*Here are some people from Western television*

For the use of *welcher* as an interrogative, see **5.3.1**, as a relative pronoun, see **5.4.2**.

5.5.27 *wer* **'someone', 'somebody'**

wer is used as a pronoun in colloquial speech, where formal registers prefer *jemand* (see **5.5.15**):

Dich hat wieder **wer** angerufen — *Someone's been on the phone for you again*

Die hat wohl wieder **wen** angelächelt — *It looks as if she's picked some guy up again*

Hast du wenigstens **wem** Bescheid gesagt? — *Have you at least told someone about it?*

For the use of *wer* as an interrogative pronoun, see **5.3.3**.

6 Adjectives

ADJECTIVES are words which describe, modify or qualify **NOUNS**. This chapter deals with the forms and uses of adjectives in German:

6.1 the **declension** of adjectives
6.2 adjectives used as **nouns**
6.3 the use of **cases** with adjectives
6.4 the use of **prepositions** with adjectives
6.5 the **comparison** of adjectives

Adjectives can qualify nouns on their own or as part of a longer adjectival phrase which forms part of a **NOUN PHRASE**, in which they come immediately **before** the **noun**, **after** any **determiners**. This is the **ATTRIBUTIVE** use of the adjective, see **Table 6.1**

TABLE 6.1   The noun phrase: adjectives

Determiner	Adjective/adjectival phrase	Noun
	kaltes	Wasser
das	**schicke**	Auto
eine	**sehr hohe**	Mauer
viele	**jetzt über das Internet erhältliche**	Games

They can also be used as a **COMPLEMENT** to a noun which is the **SUBJECT** or **OBJECT** of a verb, see also **16.6**.:

Helga ist aber **klein**   Das Mädchen lag **krank** im Bett
Er isst die Würstchen **warm**   Sie strich die Wand **gelb**

This is called the **PREDICATIVE** use of the adjective.

6.1 Declension and use of adjectives

6.1.1 Attributive and predicative adjectives

In German, **predicative** adjectives have no endings, but **attributive** adjectives DECLINE in AGREEMENT with the noun, i.e. they have endings which indicate the same grammatical categories – i.e. CASE, NUMBER and GENDER – as the nouns which they are used with:

ein gut**er** Mensch diese schön**en** Tage frisch**es** Brot

When used **predicatively**, or in phrases separated from the noun, they have **no endings**:

Der Mensch war **gut**	Er trat **ungeduldig** in das Zimmer
Er fühlte sich **gesund**	Wir essen die Möhren **roh**
Mein Vater, in Hamburg **tätig**,…	Das Klima machte ihn **krank**
Sie hielt ihn für **dumm**	Das gilt als **sicher**

Optimistisch wie immer, sie ließ sich von ihrem Vorhaben nicht abhalten

ein erstklassiger Kellner, **rasch**, nicht **schwerhörig** (*Wohmann*)

When an adjective is placed after the noun rather than before it, it does not have an ending. This usage is typically poetic: *O Täler weit , o Höhen!* (*Eichendorff*), but it is also frequent as a stylistic device in advertising and technical language:

Henkel **trocken**	Schrankwand in Eiche **rustikal** oder Kiefer **natur**
Whisky **pur**	700 Nadelfeilen **rund** nach DIN 8342

6.1.2 The 'strong' and 'weak' declensions

There are **two basic declensions of the adjective** in German, conventionally labelled the STRONG and WEAK declensions. The **endings** of these declensions are shown in **Table 6.2**, and they are illustrated with full noun phrases in **Tables 6.3**, **6.4** and **6.5**.

TABLE 6.2   The endings of adjectives in the 'strong' and 'weak' declensions

	Strong					Weak			
	Masc.	**Neut.**	**Fem.**	**Plural**		**Masc.**	**Neut.**	**Fem.**	**Plural**
Nom.	-er	-es	-e		**Nom.**		-e		

Strong

	Masc.	Neut.	Fem.	Plural
Acc.	-en			
Gen.			-er	
Dat.	-em			-en

Weak

	Masc.	Neut.	Fem.	Plural
Acc.				
Gen.			-en	
Dat.				

TABLE 6.3   The 'strong' adjective endings with no determiner

	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine	Plural
Nom.	guter Wein	gutes Brot	gute Suppe	gute Weine
Acc.	guten Wein	gutes Brot	gute Suppe	gute Weine
Gen.	guten Weins	guten Brots	guter Suppe	guter Weine
Dat.	gutem Wein	gutem Brot	guter Suppe	guten Weinen

TABLE 6.4   The 'weak' adjective endings with the definite article

	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine	Plural
Nom.	der gute Wein	das gute Brot	die gute Suppe	die guten Weine
Acc.	den guten Wein	das gute Brot	die gute Suppe	die guten Weine
Gen.	des guten Weins	des guten Brots	der guten Suppe	der guten Weine
Dat.	dem guten Wein	dem guten Brot	der guten Suppe	den guten Weinen

TABLE 6.5   The 'mixed' adjective endings with the indefinite article

	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine
Nom.	ein guter Wein	ein gutes Brot	eine gute Suppe
Acc.	einen guten Wein	ein gutes Brot	eine gute Suppe
Gen.	eines guten Weins	eines guten Brots	einer guten Suppe
Dat.	einem guten Wein	einem guten Brot	einer guten Suppe

These tables are arranged with the neuters next to the masculines to show the overlap between the endings more clearly.

(a) The strong declension has relatively more distinctive endings

They are given in **Table 6.2** and are **identical to** those of *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**), except that the **genitive singular masculine** and **neuter** ends in - *en*:

ein Stück international**en** Gewässers (*Presse*) die Perfektion rein**en** Klanges (*hifi ad*)

However, with **weak masculine nouns** which have the ending *-en* in the genitive singular (see **1.3.2**), the strong adjective has the ending *-es*, e.g. *das Gesuch obig es Adressat en* 'the request of the above-named addressee'. However, this combination is infrequent.

(b) The weak declension has only two endings

i.e. *-e* and *-en*, as shown in **Table 6.4**. *-e* is used in the **nominative singular** of all genders and the **accusative singular feminine** and **neuter**. *-en* is used in **all other combinations** of case, number and gender.

6.1.3 The use of the 'strong' and 'weak' declensions

The **underlying principle** governing the use of the strong and weak declensions is that the more distinct '**strong**' endings are used if there is **no determiner** in the noun phrase or if the **determiner** has **no ending** to show the case, gender and number of the noun.

The **weak** endings are used if there is a **determiner with an ending.**

(a) The 'strong' declension is used when there is no determiner in the noun phrase

frisch**e** Milch   frisch**es** Obst   durch gena**ue** Beobachtung
mit neu**em** Mut aus deutsch**en** Landen das Niveau französisch**er** Filme
Er war der Polizei wegen zu schnell**en** Fahrens aufgefallen (*Lux*)

This also applies to adjectives used after **numerals** (including the genitives *zweier* and *dreier*, see **8.1.3a**), after preceding **genitives**, and after the **genitive** of the **relative pronoun**:

zwei schön**e** Pfirsiche	*two fine peaches*
Karls unermüdlich**er** Eifer	*Karl's tireless zeal*
in Astrids klein**em** Arbeitszimmer	*in Astrid's little study*
mein Freund, dessen ältest**er** Sohn krank war	*my friend, whose eldest son was ill*
der Vater zweier erwachsen**er** Söhne (*NZZ*)	*the father of two adult sons*

(b) The 'strong' declension is used when the determiner in the noun phrase has no ending

ein älter**er** Herr	unser klein**es** Kind	kein schön**er** Tag
mein neu**es** Kleid	viel indisch**er** Tee	ein paar grün**e** Äpfel
manch reich**es** Land	welch herrlich**es** Wetter!	mit was für englisch**en** Büchern
lauter faul**e** Äpfel	bei solch herrlich**em** Wetter	

An important effect of this rule is that strong endings are used after the **endingless forms** of the **indefinite articles** *ein* and *kein*, and the **possessives** *mein*, *dein*, *unser*, etc. The declension of adjectives after these determiners, which involves both strong and weak endings, is sometimes referred to as **the 'mixed' declension** and it is illustrated in **Table 6.5**.

(c) The 'weak' declension is used when the determiner has an ending

This rule follows the principle given above and applies, in particular:

(i) After the **definite article** and **demonstrative** *der*

der weiß**e** Wein   den weiß**en** Wein   des weiß**en** Weines   die weiß**en** Weine

(ii) After the **indefinite articles** *ein* and *kein* and **the possessives**, **if** they have **an ending**, i.e. except in the nominative singular masculine and the nominative/accusative singular neuter, where the strong endings are used, as explained in **(b)** above and illustrated in **Table 6.5**:

einen weiß**en** Wein   seinem weiß**en** Wein   ihrer weiß**en** Weine

(iii) After *dieser*, *jener*, *jeder* and *welcher* :

dieser weiß**e** Wein   diesen weiß**en** Wein   diesen weiß**en** Weinen
jenes weiß**en** Weines   jedem weiß**en** Wein   von welchem weiß**en** Wein?

(d) Two or more adjectives qualifying the same noun all have the same ending

dieser schön**e**, groß**e** Garten   mein lieb**er** alt**er** Vater
gut**es** bayrisch**es** Bier   die Lösung wichtig**er** politisch**er** Probleme

As an exception to this rule, in the dative singular masculine or neuter, the second adjective may have the **weak ending** -*en* rather than the **strong ending -** *em*:

> mit dunklem bayrisch**en** Bier
> nach wochenlangem politisch**en** Tauziehen (*Presse*)

Some authorities do not accept the use of the weak ending -*en* on the second adjective as standard and consider only the strong ending -*em* to be correct. However, the weak ending is increasingly frequent in practice, especially if the second adjective is felt to be closely linked to the meaning of the noun. However, if the two adjectives are of equal status and are (or could be) separated by a comma or *und*, then it is possibly more usual for both to have the strong ending, e.g.:

aus weichem(,) europäischem Holz nach langem (und) heftigem Streit

The weak ending is the norm in the dative singular with adjectives used as nouns, e.g. *in Almuts tiefstem Inneren*, see **6.2.2b**.

(e) The adjective is still declined if a noun is understood

'one' often has to be supplied in the equivalent English construction:

Welches Kleid hast du gewählt? Das **rote**	*Which dress did you choose? The red one*
Ich habe mein Taschenmesser verloren. Ich muss mir ein **neues** kaufen	*I've lost my penknife. I'll have to buy myself a new one*
Deutsche Weißweine sind süßer als **französische**	*German white wines are sweeter than French ones*

Adjectives used in this way with a noun understood are spelled with a small initial letter, not a capital, since they are not adjectives being used as nouns, see **6.2.1** and **21.2.1b**.

(f) Adjectives governing more than one noun with a different gender cannot be understood

In English an adjective (with or without a determiner) can be understood in a series of linked noun phrases, e.g. *my old aunt and uncle, dear Ruth and Martin, the new table and chairs*. This is not possible in German if the nouns involved are of a different gender or number. The adjective (and determiner) must be repeated, with different endings as appropriate:

mein alt**er** Onkel und mein**e** alt**e** Tante   lieb**e** Ruth, lieb**er** Martin

der neu**e** Tisch und die neu**en** Stühle

(g) In a few special cases an attributive adjective has no ending

(i) In older German, adjectives sometimes lacked the strong ending -*es* before a neuter singular noun in the nominative or accusative, and this usage is retained in a few idioms and set phrases, e.g.:

etwas auf gut Glück tun	*to take a chance*
sich lieb Kind machen	*to ingratiate oneself*
Gut Ding will Weile haben	*Nothing good is done in a hurry*
Kölnisch Wasser	*eau de Cologne*
ein gehörig/gut Stück	*a substantial/good piece*
ein gut Teil	*a large proportion*

(ii) Some originally foreign adjectives ending in a full vowel do not take endings. Many of these are colour terms, e.g. *lila*, *rosa*:

eine **klasse** Idee   ein **lila** Mantel   ein **beige** Cordjacket

ein **rosa** Kleid   eine **prima** Ware   eine **super** Schau

In writing, the problem of the endingless adjective can be avoided with the colour terms by adding a suffix which can take an ending, such as -*farben* or -*farbig*, e.g. *ein rosafarbenes Kleid*. In colloquial speech, -*n*- is sometimes inserted as a base for the usual endings, e.g. *ein rosanes Kleid*. This usage is widespread but considered incorrect in writing.

The adjective *orange* was treated in this way, with no endings used in standard written German, e.g. *ein orange Sommerkleid*, but with -*n*- frequently inserted in colloquial speech, e.g. *ein orangenes Sommerkleid*. However, it is increasingly found with the usual endings in writing, e.g. *ein oranges Sommerkleid*. Similarly, the adjective *beige* is now often used with regular endings, e.g. *ein beiger Frauenmantel*.

(iii) An adjective used as an adverb to qualify a following adjective has no ending, see **7.4.1c**. Compare the difference between the following:

ein unheilbar**er**, fauler Junge   *an incurable, lazy boy*

ein unheilbar fauler Junge   *an incurably lazy boy*

However, this distinction is not always clear-cut, and the first of a pair of adjectives is sometimes left uninflected even if it is not being used as an adverb. This is a common stylistic device in writing:

ein reingebürtiger Pole von **traurig** edler Gestalt (*Grass*)   *a pure-bred Pole with a sad, noble figure*

seine **hochrot** abstehenden Ohren (*Grass*)   *his deep red, protuberant ears*

einzig regularly has no ending if it can be considered as qualifying a following adjective, e.g. *die einzig(e) mögliche Lösung*. For similar usage with *derartig*, see **5.1.6c**.

(iv) Adjectives in *-er* from town names do not add endings, e.g.:
   die Leipziger Messe, die Lüneburger Heide, der Kölner Dom
(v) Adjectives in *-er* from numerals do not add endings, e.g. *die neunziger Jahre* 'the nineties'.
(vi) Endingless adjectives are used with names of letters and numerals if no determiner is present:
   groß A, klein z, römisch IV, arabisch 4
(vii) *halb* and *ganz* have no endings before geographical names used without an article:
   halb Berlin, ganz Deutschland, ganz Europa

See **8.3.2** for further details on the use of *halb*.

(h) Adjectives used after a personal pronoun usually have strong endings

> ich arm**er** Deutscher
> Wer hat dich dumm**en** Kerl gesehen?
> Wer konnte euch treulos**en** Verrätern helfen?
> Wer kümmert sich um uns früher**e** Kollegen?

However, weak endings are found in a few contexts:

(i) In the (rarely used) dative singular, weak or strong endings can be used in the masculine and neuter, e.g. *mir mittellos em /mittellos en Mann*, but the feminine almost always has weak endings, e.g. *Er hat mir alt en* (rarely: *alt er*) *Frau geschmeichelt*.
(ii) Weak endings are more usual in the nominative plural: *wir jung en Kollegen*; *ihr hilflos en Kerle*. However, for 'we Germans' and 'you Germans' *wir Deutsch*

e and *ihr Deutsch e*, with strong endings, are in common use, although they are about half as frequent in practice as *wir Deutsch en* and *ihr Deutsch en*.

6.1.4 Adjective declension after indefinites and quantifiers

Following the principle outlined in section **6.1.3**, adjectives usually have 'weak' endings following any determiner which itself has an ending showing the case, number and gender of the noun. However, this principle is not always followed consistently after many of the indefinites and quantifiers dealt with in section **5.5**, and usage has long been uncertain, variable and subject to change.

(a) Predominant modern usage with the most frequent indefinites and quantifiers

(i) Adjectives after *all-* have the 'weak' endings:

mit allem möglich**en** Fleiß alle fremd**en** Truppen

(ii) Adjectives after *beide* can have 'weak' or 'strong' endings. The 'weak' endings are more common except in the genitive plural, where 'strong' endings are equally frequent:

beide bekannt**en** (bekannt**e**) Politiker beider jung**en**/jung**er** Mädchen

(iii) After *irgendwelch-*, *sämtlich-* and *solch-* both 'weak' and 'strong' endings are used, with the 'weak' endings being more usual in the dative singular masculine and neuter and in the nominative and accusative plural but 'strong' endings elsewhere:

mit irgendwelchem abgeschriebe**nen** Blödsinn	irgendwelche abgelege**nen** Waldstraßen
irgendwelches technisch**es** Gerät	wegen irgendwelcher kulturell**er** Besonderheiten
mit sämtlichem gesammelt**en** Material	sämtliche schön**en** Bücher
sämtliches gesammelt**es** Material	trotz sämtlicher schön**er** Bücher
mit solchem pur**en** Unsinn	solche regnerisch**en** Tage
solches dumm**es** Gerede	wegen solcher alt**er** Menschen

(iv) After *manch-* both 'weak' and 'strong' endings occur, with the 'weak' endings being more usual in the singular and equally frequent with 'strong' endings in the nominative and accusative plural, but in the genitive plural 'strong' endings are more usual.

mancher brav**e** Mann   manche schön**e**/schön**en** Aussichten

die Ersparnisse mancher älter**er** Leute

(v) Adjectives after *einig-*, *etlich-*, *folgend-*, *mehrer-*, *viel-* and *wenig-* most often have 'strong' endings, except in in the dative singular masculine and neuter, where 'weak' endings are more frequent:

einige neu**e** ICE-Verbindungen   etliche fremd**e** Besucher

folgende bezeichend**e** Beispiele   mehrere groß**e** Städte

vieler nichtbeamtet**er** Österreicher *(Kurier)*   weniger günstig**er** Zeiten

mit einigem bühnentechnisch**en** Aufwand (*Zeit*) aus wenigem schlecht**en** Wein

(vi) For adjective endings after *ander*, see **5.5.2**.

(b) Indefinites and quantifiers preceded by another determiner are declined like adjectives

Some indefinites and quantifiers can be preceded by another determiner, i.e. by a definite or indefinite article, one of the demonstratives *dieser* or *jener*, or by one of the possessives *mein*, *dein*, etc. They are then treated like adjectives and have a 'weak' or 'strong' adjective ending according to the usual rules, as do any further following adjectives:

eine **solche** interessante Nachricht   aller **solchen** guten Wünsche

mit der **folgenden** krassen Behauptung diese **vielen** alten Dörfer

mit seinem **wenigen** deutschen Geld   mein **sämtliches** kleines Vermögen

(c) Adjectives after endingless indefinites and quantifiers

Some indefinites and quantifiers have alternative forms without endings, as explained under the relevant determiner in section **5.5**. These endingless forms are followed by adjectives with strong endings, following the general principle explained in **6.1.3**:

viel deutsch**es** Geld   manch schön**er** Tag   solch dumm**es** Gerede

6.1.5 Irregularities in the spelling of some adjectives

(a) The spelling of inflected adjectives in *-el*, *-en*, *-er*

These often lose the **-** *e* **-** of the root, or occasionally the **-** *e* **-** of the ending.

(i) Adjectives in - *el* drop the **-** *e* **-** when an ending is added:
ein **dunkler** Wald, eine **respektable** Leistung

When used as a noun, *dunkel* drops the **-** *e*- of the ending, e.g. *im Dunkel n* 'in the dark'.

(ii) Adjectives in - *en* can drop the **-** *e*- when an ending is added.

This is usual in speech, but uncommon in writing: *eine metallene* (rarely written: *metallne*) *Stimme*, *ein seltener* (rarely written: *seltner*) *Vogel*.

(iii) Adjectives in - *er*

Foreign adjectives and those with *-au-* or *-eu-* before the *-er* always drop the *-e-*:
eine **makabre** Geschichte, mit **teuren** Weinen, durch **saure** Milch
Other adjectives in *-er* most often keep the **-** *e*- in written German, although it is usually dropped in speech: *eine muntere* (rarely written: *muntre*) *Frau*. For the spelling of declined *ander*, which is a special case, see **5.5.2**.

The **-** *e* **-** of the comparative ending *-er* (see **6.5**) is rarely omitted in writing, although it often is in speech, e.g. *eine bessere* (rarely in writing: *bessre*) *Lösung*.

(iv) Adjectives with - *el*- **or -** *er*- **in the middle of the word** often lose the **-** *e* **-**, e.g.:
neb(e)lige Tage, eine **wäss(e)rige** Suppe, etc.

(b) *hoch* **'high' has the special form** *hoh*- **and the usual endings are added to that**
   der Berg ist **hoch**, ʙᴜᴛ ein **hoher** Berg
(c) A few adjectives have alternative base forms with or without final *-e*

e.g. *Er ist feig* ᴏʀ *feige* 'He is cowardly'. The others are:

blöd(e) bös(e) fad(e) irr(e) leis(e) mild(e)
müd(e) öd(e) träg(e) trüb(e) vag(e) zäh(e)

With all except *blöd(e* **)**, *mild(e)* and *zäh(e)*, the alternative with **-** *e* tends to be preferred in writing, but in speech the form without *-e* is more frequent unless the adjective is stressed.

6.1.6 Extended attribute phrases

In German extended phrases with adjectives can be used attributively, i.e. before the noun, in a way quite unlike any English construction. Such phrases include a noun phrase (in the case governed by the adjective, see **6.3**) or a prepositional phrase (with the preposition governed by the particular adjective, see **6.4**), and they can sometimes be very long. In practice, this EXTENDED ATTRIBUTE construction is only used in formal writing, especially in technical and official registers, but it is very frequent there. In English such phrases most often correspond to a relative clause or to a phrase after the noun:

dieses **seinem Vorgesetzten äußerst nützliche** Gespräch	*this conversation which was very useful to his superior*
zum Einsatz bereite Truppen	*troops (who are) ready to be deployed*
eine **von rhetorischen Effekten freie** Rede	*a speech (which is/was) free of rhetorical devices*
eine **für sie ganz typische** Haltung	*an attitude (which is/was) quite typical of her*

This construction is very frequent with participles, see **11.5.1f**.

6.2 Adjectives used as nouns

6.2.1 Any adjective can be used as a noun in German

It is then written with an initial capital letter:

der **Alte** *the old man*	die **Alte** *the old woman*
das **Alte** *old things*	die **Alten** *the old people*

English cannot turn adjectives into nouns as easily, except in a few restricted cases to refer to groups of people, e.g. 'the young', 'the Dutch', 'the good, the bad and the ugly', etc., and a dummy noun like 'man', 'woman', 'thing(s)', 'people' usually has to be added. Overusing words like *Ding* or *Leute* where an adjective used as a noun would be more appropriate is typical of the German of English learners.

Idiomatic German exploits fully the possibilities of concise expression offered by the fact that adjectives can be used as nouns in this way, and they are often used where full clauses would be needed in English:

Die Farbe dieser Vögel war das für mich **Interessante**	*The colour of these birds was what interested me*

Er hat sich über das **Gesagte** aufgeregt	*He got annoyed about what had been said*
Das **Erschreckende** an diesem Vorfall war seine scheinbare Unabwendbarkeit	*What was terrifying about this occurrence was its apparent inevitability*
Die gerade **Eingestiegenen** waren ein älterer Herr und eine elegante Dame	*The people who had just got in were an elderly man and an elegant lady*
ein Ort, wo das irgendwie zu denkende **Konkrete** unwiederbringlich in **Abstraktes** umschlägt	*a point where concrete reality, however it may be imagined, turns into something irrevocably abstract*

Adjectives used as nouns in this way are different from adjectives being used with a preceding noun understood. These are spelled with a **small** initial letter, see **6.1.3e**. Compare *Kennst du den Alten ?* 'Do you know the old man?' with *Hast du einen neuen Wagen gekauft? Nein, einen alten* (*Wagen* understood). 'Did you buy a new car? No, an old one.'

6.2.2 The declension of adjectives used as nouns

(a) Adjectives used as nouns decline like attributive adjectives
They have **weak** or **strong** endings according to the rules given in **6.1**. With the exceptions given under **(b)** below they have the same endings as any preceding adjective, e.g. *ein zuverlässig er Angestellt er*, *von einer unbekannt en Fremd en*. The declension with the definite and indefinite articles of a typical masculine adjective used as a noun, *der Angestellte* 'employee', is shown in **Table 6.6**.

TABLE 6.6 Declension of adjectives used as nouns

		Definite article	Indefinite article
Singular	**Nominative**	der Angestellte	ein Angestellter
	Accusative	den Angestellten	einen Angestellten
	Genitive	des Angestellten	eines Angestellten
	Dative	dem Angestellten	einem Angestellten
Plural	**Nominative**	die Angestellten	Angestellte
	Accusative	die Angestellten	Angestellte
	Genitive	der Angestellten	Angestellter
	Dative	den Angestellten	Angestellten

der Angestellte is naturally only used of a male employee. A female employee is *die Angestellte*, *eine Angestellte*, with the appropriate endings, see **6.2.3**.

Adjectives used as nouns in this way should not be confused with 'weak' masculine nouns, whose declension looks quite similar, see **Table 1.8**. Note the difference between the endings of adjectives used as nouns and 'weak' masculine (or other regular) nouns:

Adjective used as noun	**'Weak' masculine (or other) noun**
der Deutsche, des Deutschen *German* *NB*: ein Deutsch**er**	der Franzose, des Franzosen *Frenchman* *NB*: ein Franzos**e**
das Junge *young of an animal* *NB*: ein Jung**es**	der Junge, des Jungen *boy* *NB*: ein Jung**e**
die Fremde *female stranger* *NB*: mit der Fremd**en**	die Fremde *foreign parts* *NB*: in der Fremd**e** *abroad*

(b) In a few contexts adjectives used as nouns decline in a different way from other adjectives

(i) In the **dative singular** and the **genitive plural** the adjective used as a noun can have the **weak ending -** *en* if preceded by an adjective with the strong endings -*em* or **-***er*. This is usual with masculine nouns, but less regular with feminines or in the genitive plural:

Ich sprach mit Karls alt**em** Bekannt**en**, mit Helmuts englisch**er** Bekannt**en**/Bekannt**er**

Dänische Bahn muss deutsch**er** Reisend**en** Schadenersatz zahlen (*WK*)

die Freistellung zahlreich**er** Angestellt**er**/Angestellt**en**

(ii) In apposition (see **2.6**), the weak ending is used in the dative singular even if there is no determiner:

Er sprach mit Karl Friedrichsen, Angestellt**en** (*rarely*: Angestellt**em**) der BASF in Ludwigshafen Er sprach mit Heike König, Angestellt**en** (*never*: Angestellt**er**) der BASF in Ludwigshafen

In practice, constructions like this are avoided, and the nominative case is used: *mit Karl Friedrichsen*, *Angestellter der BASF*, or an article is added: *mit Karl Friedrichsen*, *dem/einem Angestellten der BASF*.

(iii) The neuters *das Äußere*, *das Ganze* and *das Innere* now usually have strong endings in the nominative/accusative singular after the indefinite article or the possessives if another adjective comes first, i.e.: *sein schlichtes Äußer es*, *ein einheitliches Ganz es*, *mein eigen es Inneres*. Using the weak ending in these contexts, i.e. *sein schlichtes Äußere*, etc., is no longer current.

6.2.3 Masculine and feminine adjectival nouns

(a) Masculine and feminine adjectival nouns usually refer to people

The gender is indicated by using the appropriate article, e.g. *der Fremde* 'the (male) stranger', *die Fremde* 'the (female) stranger'. Many common ones like the following correspond to simple nouns in English:

der Abgeordnete *representative*	der Freiwillige *volunteer*	der Obdachlose *homeless person*
der Adlige *aristocrat*	der Fremde *stranger*	der Reisende *traveller*
der Angestellte *employee*	der Gefangene *prisoner*	der Staatsangehörige *citizen*
der Asylsuchende *asylum-seeker*	der Geistliche *clergyman*	der Überlebende *survivor*
der Beamte *civil servant*	der Gesandte *emissary*	der Verlobte *fiancé*
der Bekannte *acquaintance*	der Heilige s*aint*	der Verwandte *relative*
der Deutsche *German*	der Industrielle *industrialist*	der Vorgesetzte *superior*
der Erwachsene *adult*	der Jugendliche *young person*	der Vorsitzende *chairman*

(b) A few feminine adjectival nouns are special cases

(i) A few referring to things are always feminine, e.g.:

die Elektrische *tram* (older S. Ger.)	die Rechte, Linke *right*, *left (hand)*; *(political) right*, *left*
die Illustrierte *magazine*	

e.g.: überdrüssig des Terrors einer revolutionären Linken (*SZ*)

(ii) Some feminine nouns which are in origin adjectival nouns are treated as regular feminines, i.e.:

die Brünette *the brunette*	die Horizontale *the horizontal*	die Variable *the variable*
die Gerade *the straight line*	die Parallele *the parallel (line)*	die Vertikale *the vertical*

Although both forms are used, the mathematical terms are still predominantly treated as adjectival nouns, so that, for example, *in der Horizontalen* is more frequent than *in der Horizontale*. On the other hand, *die Brünette* is now almost only ever used as a regular feminine noun.

(iii) Exceptionally, the feminine form corresponding to *der Beamte* is *die Beamtin*. This is a regular feminine noun, with the plural *die Beamtinnen*.

6.2.4 Neuter adjectival nouns

(a) Most neuter adjectival nouns denote abstract or collective ideas

Es ist schon **Schlimmes** passiert	*Bad things have already happened*
Er hat **Hervorragendes** geleistet	*He has achieved outstanding things*
zugleich immer aufbauend auf das **Erreichte** (*Mercedes advert*)	*at the same time always building on what has been achieved*

Note, though, *das Junge* 'the young' (of an animal), see **1.1.11**.

The names of regions within the German-speaking countries are often given in the form of neuter adjectival nouns, e.g.:

Nach der Wende zogen sie ins **Mecklenburgische**   Hier sind wir im **Thüringischen**

Vier maskierte Männer überfallen eine Spielhalle **im Hessischen** (*BrZ*)

(b) Neuter adjectival nouns are frequently used after indefinites

especially after *alles*, *etwas*, *nichts*, *viel(es)*, *wenig*, see **5.5**. These have weak or strong endings depending on the ending of the indefinite, e.g.:

all**es** Gut**e**	viel**es** Interessant**e**	lauter Neu**es**
von all**em** Gut**en**	von viel**em** Interessant**en**	viel/wenig Interessant**es**
weiter**es** Interessant**e**	nichts Neu**es**	von viel Interessant**em**
folgend**es** Neu**e**	von nichts Neu**em**	

(c) Names of languages have the form of neuter adjectival nouns

For the use of the definite article with these, see **4.2.2d**.

(i) The most common form is a neuter adjective.

This form is used to refer to the language in a specific context, or when *kein* or an adjective precedes it. It has no endings, except that, optionally, *-s* can be added in the genitive (see **1.3.5b**):

Wir lernen **Spanisch**, **Französisch**, **Russisch**, **Englisch**
Sie kann aber kein **Italienisch**
die Aussprache des heutigen **Deutsch**
Mit meinem schlechten **Deutsch** komme ich nicht weit
eine Übersetzung aus **dem amerikanischen Englisch**

(ii) To refer to the language in a general sense, a neuter adjectival noun is used. It always has the definite article:

> **Das Englische** ist **dem Deutschen** verwandt
> eine Übersetzung aus **dem Tschechischen**

This form is often used in the dative and genitive in contexts where the endingless form would be expected:

> im heutigen **Standarddeutsch(en)**
> die Aussprache des **Standardenglischen/Standardenglisch(s)**

(d) Names of colours

These usually have the form of a neuter adjectival noun with no ending except for optional -*s* in the genitive singular. Adding -*s* in the plural is more usual in speech than in writing:

das **Grün** der Wiesen   dieses hässlichen **Gelb(s)** die beiden **Blau** (*spoken:* Blaus)

von einem glänzenden **Rot** in **Schwarz** gekleidet

Colour nouns are declined in a few set phrases with the definite article:

ins **Grüne** fahren   Es ist das **Gelbe** vom Ei

ins **Schwarze** treffen das **Blaue** vom Himmel herunter versprechen

6.3 Cases with adjectives

Many adjectives can be used with a noun dependent on them, which then takes a particular case – we say that the adjective 'governs' a noun in that case. The case used depends on the individual adjective:

- **dative**: *Sie ist **i**hrem Bruder sehr ähnlich* (section **6.3.1**)

- **accusative:** *Ich bin den Lärm nicht gewohnt* (section **6.3.2**)

- **genitive:** Sie ist *der deutschen Sprache mächtig (section **6.3.3**)*

6.3.1 Adjectives which govern the dative

(a) The dative is the most common case used with adjectives

German	English
Sie waren **ihrem Freund** beim Umzug behilflich	*They helped their friend when he moved house*
Ihre Meinung ist **uns** wichtig	*Your opinion is important to us*
Er war **seinem Gegner** überlegen	*He surpassed his opponent*
Ein **ihr** unbekannter Mann trat herein	*A man she didn't know walked in*

The following list gives a selection of frequent adjectives which govern the dative.

ähnlich* *like, similar*	nicht geheuer *scary*	nützlich[†] *useful*
angenehm[†] *agreeable*	gehorsam *obedient*	peinlich[†] *embarrassing*
begreiflich *comprehensible*	geläufig *familiar*	schädlich[†] *injurious, harmful*
behilflich *helpful*	gemeinsam *common*	schuldig *owing*
bekannt *known, familiar*	gerecht *just*	schwer *difficult*
bequem *comfortable*	gesinnt *inclined*	teuer *expensive*
bewusst *known*	gewogen (lit.) *well-disposed*	treu* *faithful*
böse *angry*	günstig *favourable*	überlegen *superior*
dankbar *grateful*	heilig *holy, sacred*	verhasst *hateful*
eigen *peculiar*	hinderlich *awkward*	verständlich[†] *comprehensible*
entbehrlich[†] *unnecessary*	klar *obvious*	wichtig[†] *important*
ergeben *devoted, attached*	lästig[†] *troublesome*	widerlich *repugnant*
fern *distant*	leicht[†] *easy*	willkommen *welcome*
fremd *strange*	möglich[†] *possible*	zugänglich[†] *accessible*
gefährlich[†] *dangerous*	nahe* *near, close*	zuträglich *beneficial*
gefällig *obliging*	nötig *necessary*	

The adjective usually **follows** the noun (or pronoun) dependent on it, but those marked with * in the list above may come before a noun. Those marked with [†] may alternatively be used with *für* (before or after the adjective), e.g. *Das war für mich unangenehm/unangenehm für mich*, and *böse* can also be used with *auf* or *mit* (see **6.4.1a**).

(b) Some adjectives which govern the dative are only used predicatively
i.e. they are only used in conjunction with the verb *sein*:

Sie ist **mir** zuwider *She is repugnant to me*

These are:

abhold (arch., lit.) *ill-disposed*	gram (lit.) *angry (with)*	zugetan *well-disposed*

feind (arch., lit.) *hostile*   hold (arch., lit.) *favourably disposed*   zuwider *repugnant*

freund (lit.) *friendly*   untertan *subordinate*

This construction is also used with the adjectives meaning 'all the same', e.g.:

Das ist **mir** gleich   *That's all the same to me*

i.e. *einerlei*, *egal* (coll.), *gleich*, *piepe* (coll.), *schnuppe*, *wurs(ch)t* (coll.)

zugetan can be used attributively, e.g. *Madame de Pompadour*, *die den Künsten zugetane Mätresse Ludwigs XV* (*HAZ*).

(c) Adjectives expressing sensations

Many adjectives which express a sensation are used in the predicate of *sein* with a dative of the person experiencing the sensation, e.g.:

Es ist mir heiß, kalt, schlecht, übel, warm

More detail on these is given in **2.5.4c**.

6.3.2 Adjectives which govern the accusative

These are all used in constructions with *sein* or *werden*, although some can also be used with a following *dass*-clause or an infinitive clause with *zu*.

jdn./etwas ***gewahr** werden (lit.)	*to become aware of sth./sb.*
Wir wurden unseren Irrtum gewahr	*We realized our mistake*
etwas **gewohnt** sein	*to be used to sth.*
Ich bin den Lärm nicht gewohnt	*I'm not used to the noise*
etwas ***leid** sein	*to be tired of /fed up with*
Ich bin das schlechte Essen leid	*I'm fed up with the bad food*
etwas/jdn. **los** sein/werden	*to be/get rid of sth./sb.*
Endlich bin ich den Schnupfen los	*At last I've got rid of the cold*
etwas/jdn.***satt** sein/haben	*to be sick of sb./sth.*
Er ist/hat es gründlich satt	*He's thoroughly sick of it*
jdm. etwas **schuldig** sein	*to owe sb. sth.*
Sie ist ihm eine Erklärung schuldig	*She owes him an explanation*
etwas ***wert** sein	*to be worth sth.*
Es ist das Papier nicht wert, auf dem es steht (*MM*)	*It's not worth the paper it's written on*

(i) The adjectives asterisked can be used with a genitive in formal registers, see **6.3.3**; in the case of *satt* this is only possible in conjunction with *sein*, not with *haben*.

(ii) *schuldig* is used with a genitive in the sense of 'guilty', e.g. *Er ist des Verbrechens schuldig* 'He is guilty of the crime'.

6.3.3 Adjectives which govern the genitive

(a) The genitive with adjectives is mainly restricted to formal German

Some of these adjectives have alternative constructions in less formal registers, as indicated below, while a few which are most often used with a following accusative (see **6.3.2**) can alternatively be used with a genitive in more formal registers. With the exception of *bar*, these adjectives always follow the noun:

bar *devoid of*	Seine Handlungsweise war bar **aller Vernunft**
	His action was devoid of all reason
bewusst *conscious of*	Ich war mir **meines Irrtums** bewusst
	I was conscious of my mistake
fähig *capable of*	Er ist **einer solchen Tat** nicht fähig
(or with *zu* + noun, see **6.4.1a**)	*He is not capable of such a deed*
froh *pleased at*	Sie war **seines Erfolges** froh
(usually + *über*)	*She was pleased about his success*
gewahr *aware of*	Wir wurden **unseres Irrtums** gewahr
(usually with acc.)	*We became aware of our mistake*
gewiss *certain of*	Sie können **meiner Unterstützung** gewiss sein
	You can be certain of my support
mächtig *master of*	Sie ist **des Deutschen** absolut mächtig
	She has a complete command of German
müde *tired of*	Wer **des Schauens und Kaufens** müde war (*SGT*)
	Whoever was tired of looking (at things) and buying (them)
schuldig *guilty of* (see **6.3.2**)	Der Angeklagte ist **des Hochverrats** schuldig
	The accused is guilty of high treason
sicher *sure of*	Er ist sich **seiner Sache** noch nicht sicher (*Zeit*)
	He is not quite sure of his ground
überdrüssig *tired of*	Er sagte, er sei **des Lebens** überdrüssig (*HMP*)
(rarely with acc.)	*He said he was tired of life*
unwürdig *unworthy of*	Die Kampagne war **Großbritanniens** unwürdig. (*ZDF*)
	The campaign was unworthy of Great Britain

wert *worthy of*	der Wille, erhalten zu wollen, was **des Erhaltens** wert ist (*SGT*)
(often with acc.)	*the desire to keep what is worth keeping*
würdig *worthy of*	Er ist **dieser Ehre** nicht würdig
	He is not worthy of this honour

When *bewusst* and *sicher* are used with a genitive a reflexive pronoun is always inserted.

(b) *voll* **and** *voller* **are used in a number of alternative constructions**

(i) In formal written language *voll* and *voller* are used with the **genitive**:

Das Theater war voll **aufmerksamer Zuschauer**, ein Korb voller **grüner Äpfel**

(ii) *voll* and *voller* can be used with the dative singular:

ein Korb voll **grünem Obst**; mit einer Schüssel voller **warmem Wasser** (*Grass*)

(iii) With a noun standing alone, *voll* or *voller* can be used with a **nominative**:

ein Korb voll **Obst**, voll(er) **Äpfel**

(iv) With a noun qualified by an adjective, *voll von* can be used:

ein Korb **voll von** herrlichem Obst, roten Äpfeln

(v) *voll mit* is particularly frequent in spoken registers:

ein Korb **voll mit** herrlichem Obst, roten Äpfeln

(c) Adjectives governing the genitive which are restricted to predicate use

Some adjectives governing the genitive are largely restricted to use in the predicate after *sein*, *bleiben* and/or *werden*. Most of them are used only in formal (particularly legal or official) written German:

ansichtig   bedürftig eingedenk geständig   gewärtig habhaft
(un)kundig ledig   teilhaftig   verdächtig verlustig

Examples from official legal language:

Er ist **der Bürgerrechte** für verlustig erklärt worden	*He has been deprived of his civic rights*
Sie versuchen mittlerweile **der Verbrecher** lateinamerikanischer Militärdiktaturen habhaft zu werden (*KlZ*)	*In the meantime they are attempting to arrest criminals from Latin American military dictatorships*

6.4 Adjectives with prepositions

Many adjectives can be linked to a noun in a prepositional construction, in which case we speak of the adjective 'governing' a particular preposition:

Das ist **von** dem Wetter **abhängig**   Er war **mit** meinem Entschluss **einverstanden**

die **um** ihre Kinder **besorgte** Mutter

Which preposition is used depends on the individual adjective, and the preposition often retains little of its full meaning. A selection of adjectives governing prepositions is given below, especially those which are frequent or which have a construction different from their usual English equivalents.

The prepositional phrase may precede or follow the adjective. If it contains a noun it commonly comes before the adjective, but it may follow; if it contains a pronoun it almost invariably follows, e.g.:

either:	Er ist **über den neuen Lehrling** verärgert
or (less usual):	Er ist verärgert **über den neuen Lehrling**
but always:	Er ist verärgert **über ihn**

(a) Frequently used adjectives governing a preposition

abhängig von	*dependent on*
angewiesen auf etwas/jdn. sein	*to have to rely on sth./sb.*
Wir waren **auf uns selber** angewiesen	*We had to rely on ourselves*
ärgerlich auf/über	*annoyed with*
***arm** an	*poor in*
aufmerksam auf	*aware of*
Sie machte mich **auf meinen Irrtum** aufmerksam	*She pointed out my mistake*
begeistert von/über	*enthusiastic about*
berechtigt zu	*justified in*
Sie sind **zu diesem Vorwurf** berechtigt	*You are justified in making this reproach*
bereit zu	*ready for*
Die Truppen waren **zum Einsatz** bereit	*The troops were ready to be deployed*
besorgt um	*anxious about*
bezeichnend für	*characteristic of*
blass, bleich vor	*pale with*
Er war völlig blass/bleich **vor Entsetzen**	*He was pale with terror*
böse auf/mit	*angry, cross with*
Bist du böse **auf mich/mit mir?**	*Are you annoyed with me?*
(*or* Bist du **mir** böse? see **6.3.1a**)	
charakteristisch für	*characteristic of*
dankbar für	*grateful for*
Ich war ihm **für seine Hilfe** dankbar	*I was grateful to him for his help*

eifersüchtig auf	*jealous of*
einverstanden mit	*in agreement with*
Bist du **mit diesem Vorschlag** einverstanden?	*Do you agree with this proposal?*
empfänglich für	*susceptible, receptive to*
empfindlich gegen	*sensitive to*
Sie ist sehr empfindlich **gegen Kälte**	*She is very sensitive to cold*
ersichtlich aus	*obvious, clear from*
Das ist **aus seiner letzten Bemerkung** ersichtlich	*That is clear from what he just said*
fähig zu (or genitive, see **6.3.3a**)	*capable of*
Sie ist **zu einer solchen Tat** nicht fähig	*She is not capable of doing anything like that*
fertig mit etwas sein	*to have finished sth.*
Bist du **mit dem Essen** schon fertig?	*Have you already finished your meal?*
geeignet für/zu	*suitable for*
Er ist **für diese/zu dieser Arbeit** nicht geeignet	*He is not suitable for that kind of work*
gefasst auf	*ready, prepared for*
Mach dich gefasst **auf seine Reaktion!**	*Get ready for his reaction*
geil auf (*coll.*)	*keen on*
Ich bin so geil auf Tennis, sagte er (*MM*)	*I am so keen on tennis, he said*
gespannt auf	*extremely curious about*
Ich bin **auf diesen Film** sehr gespannt	*I am dying to see that film*
gewöhnt an	*accustomed/used to*
Ich bin jetzt **an das englische Bier** gewöhnt	*I am used to English beer now*
gierig nach	*greedy for*
gleichgültig gegen/gegenüber	*indifferent to(wards)*
höflich zu/gegenüber	*polite to(wards)*
hungrig nach	*hungry for*
interessiert an	*interested in*
müde von (see also **6.3.3a**)	*tired from*
Er war müde **von der schweren Arbeit**	*He was tired from working so hard*
neidisch auf	*envious of*
neugierig auf	*curious about*
***reich** an	*rich in*
scharf auf (*coll.*)	*keen on*
Er ist total scharf **auf diesen Job**	*He is really keen on this job*
schuld an etwas sein/haben	*to be blamed for sth.*
Wer war/hatte **an dem Streit** schuld?	*Who was to blame for the argument?*
sicher vor	*safe from*

stolz auf	*proud of*
stumm vor	*dumb with*
typisch für	*typical of*
überzeugt von	*convinced of*
unabhängig von	*independent of*
verheiratet mit	*married to*
verliebt in	*in love with*
Sie ist **in den Bruder** ihrer Freundin verliebt	*She is in love with her friend's brother*
verschieden von	*different to/from*
versessen auf	(*very, mad*) *keen on*
Er ist versessen **auf alte Sportwagen**	*He is mad keen on old sports cars*
verwandt mit	*related to*
vorbereitet auf	*prepared for*
wütend auf	*mad at, furious with*
Er war wütend **auf seine Chefin**	*He was mad at his boss*
zornig auf	*angry with*
zuständig für	*responsible for*

If they are governed by an adjective, *auf* and *über* are always followed by the accusative case, and *vor* is always followed by the dative.

*arm and *reich* usually precede rather than follow a phrase with *an*, even if it has a noun, e.g. *Das Land ist arm/reich an Bodenschätzen*.

(b) *über* **is used with many adjectives to mean 'about'**

In this usage it is always followed by the accusative, e.g.:

Sie war erfreut, erstaunt, froh, verwundert **über seinen Erfolg**

Frequent adjectives which govern *über* (see also **18.3.12e**):

aufgebracht *outraged*	erbittert *bitter*	glücklich *happy*
beschämt *ashamed*	erbost *infuriated*	traurig *sad*
bestürzt, betroffen *full of consternation*	erfreut *delighted*	verwundert *astonished*
empört, entrüstet *indignant*	erstaunt *amazed*	
entzückt *delighted*	froh *glad* (see **6.3.3a**)	

(c) Many adjectives governing prepositions can be used with a following clause

i.e. by a *dass*-clause or an infinitive clause with *zu*. These clauses are often anticipated by the appropriate prepositional adverb (*da(r)* + preposition), e.g. *daran*, *damit*, see **3.5**:

Er ist **davon** abhängig, dass ihm sein Bruder hilft	*He is dependent on his brother helping him*
Er ist **davon** abhängig, das Geld zu erhalten	*He is dependent on receiving the money*
Wir sind **dazu** bereit, Ihnen darüber Auskünfte zu geben	*We are prepared to give you some information about this*
Sie war **darüber** froh, dass sie ihn noch sehen würde	*She was pleased that she would still see him*

There are no hard and fast rules for when the prepositional adverb is used in these constructions and when it is not. With a number of the adjectives given in section **6.4.1** it is optional and sentences like the following are equally acceptable and grammatical:

> **Ich bin gewöhnt**, jeden Tag eine Stunde zu üben
> **Ich bin daran gewöhnt**, jeden Tag eine Stunde zu üben

Using the prepositional adverb seems to focus emphasis on the content of the dependent clause or infinitive phrase. In practice it is more commonly used than left out, even where it is optional, especially in written German.

6.5 Comparison of adjectives

Qualities can be compared using the COMPARATIVE and SUPERLATIVE forms of adjectives, and this section deals with the formation and use of these in German, and other means of comparison, in the following subsections:

6.5.1 the **formation** of comparatives and superlatives
6.5.2 the **uses** of the **comparative** and other means of comparison
6.5.3 the **uses** of the **superlative**

The **comparative** is normally used to compare two items, the **superlative** more than two:

> der **größere** der beiden Brüder
> Von den zwei Büchern über Berlin hat er das **billigere** gekauft
>
> der **größte** von acht Jungen

> Von diesen vielen Büchern hat er das **billigste** gekauft

As in English, this rule is not universally observed in everyday speech, and phrasings like *der größte der beiden Brüder* are often heard, although they are considered incorrect.

6.5.1 Formation of the comparative and superlative

(a) The comparative and superlative are formed with the endings *-er* and *-st*

These are the regular endings and they are simply added to the positive form, as shown for some common adjectives in **Table 6.7**. As the superlative always occurs in a declined form, with the definite article, *das* is included with all the examples. Exceptions are outlined in sections **(b)** to **(h)** below.

TABLE 6.7   Regular formation of comparative and superlative

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
tief	tief**er**	(das) tief**ste**
schön	schön**er**	(das) schön**ste**
langsam	langsam**er**	(das) langsam**ste**
freundlich	freundlich**er**	(das) freundlich**ste**
unwiderstehlich	unwiderstehlich**er**	(das) unwiderstehlich**ste**

In English there are two ways to form the comparative and superlative of adjectives. With short adjectives, we use the endings *-er* and *-est*, with longer adjectives we use 'more' and 'most'. In German, though, the endings *-er* and *-st* are used **no matter how long the adjective** is. *mehr* and *meist* are only used in a few special cases explained in **6.5.1h**.

Comparative and superlative forms decline in the same way as any adjective when used before a noun, with the same weak or strong endings (see **6.1**), e.g.:

> ein schneller**er** Zug, der schnellst**e** Zug, in der tiefst**en** Schlucht der Erde

> **(b) Some common adjectives have irregular comparative and superlative forms**

groß	gr**öß**er	das gr**öß**te	*big, large*
gut	**besser**	das **beste**	*good*
hoch	h**öher**	das h**öch**ste	*high*
nah	n**äher**	das n**äch**ste	*near*

(c) Comparative and superlative forms with *Umlaut*

A few common adjectives have *Umlaut* on the root vowel in the comparative and superlative, in addition to the ending:

arm – **ä**rmer – der **ä**rmste klug – kl**ü**ger – der kl**ü**gste lang – l**ä**nger – der l**ä**ngste

(i) The following adjectives **always have** *Umlaut* in the comparative and superlative

alt *old*	dumm *stupid*	jung *young*	krank *sick*	rot *red*	schwarz *black*
arg *bad*	grob *coars*	kalt *cold*	kurz *short*	scharf *sharp*	stark *strong*
arm *poor*	hart *hard*	klug *clever*	lang *long*	schwach *weak*	warm *warm*

groß, *hoch* and *nah* also have *Umlaut*, but they are otherwise irregular, see **(b)** above.

(ii) A few adjectives have **alternative forms with** or **without** *Umlaut*

e.g. *nass – nässer/nasser – der nässeste/nasseste*. These are:

bang *scared*	fromm *pious*	glatt *smooth*	krumm *crooked*	schmal *narrow*
blass *pale*	gesund *healthy*	karg *sparse*	nass *wet*	zart *tender*

In general, the forms without *Umlaut* are more frequent in writing, whereas those with *Umlaut* are more typical of spoken German, especially in the South.

(d) Some adjectives add - *est* **rather than** *-st* **in the superlative**

In general, *-e-* is added if it makes pronunciation easier.

(i) Adjectives ending in *-haft, -s, -sk, -ß, -x* and *-z* always have *-est*

boshaft – der boshaft**est**e brüsk – der brüsk**est**e fix – der fix**est**e
lieblos – der lieblos**est**e   süß – der süß**est**e   stolz – der stolz**est**e

(ii) Most adjectives ending in *-d, -t* and *-sch* add *-est*

mild – der mild**est**e   berühmt – der berühmt**est**e
sanft – der sanft**est**e rasch – der rasch**est**e

However, longer words in these consonants have the ending *-st* **if the last syllable is unstressed:**

spannend – der spannend**ste** komisch – der komisch**ste**

(iii) Adjectives ending in a **long vowel** or **diphthong** can have the ending *-est* or *–st*

früh – der früh**ste**/früh**este** treu – der treu**ste**/treu**este**

In practice, *-est* is more frequent.

(iv) Other adjectives ending in a **consonant cluster** can optionally have *-est*, e.g. *der schlankeste*, *der stumpfeste*, although *-st* **is more usual**, e.g. *der schlankste*, *der stumpfste*.

(e) Adjectives in - *el* **, -** *en* **, -** *er*

These can drop the **-** *e-* of the stem in the comparative, e.g.:

dunkel – **dunkler** – das dunkelste   bitter – **bitt(e)rer** – das bitterste
trocken – **trock(e)ner** – das trockenste teuer – **teurer** – das teuerste

(i) Those in *-el* regularly drop the **-** *e* **-** of the stem

dunkel – dunk**ler** edel – ed**ler**

(ii) Those in **-** *en* and **-** *er* usually drop the **-** *e-* of the stem if they have an inflectional ending

trocken – der trock**nere** Wein bitter – ein bitt**rerer** Geruch

If there is no ending, the **-** *e-* is usually kept in writing, although it is often dropped in speech:

Dieser Wein ist trock**ener** Dieser Geruch war bitt**erer**

If the *-er* follows a diphthong, the *-e-* is always dropped:

teuer – Diese Tasche ist teu**rer** – die teu**rere** Tasche

(f) The comparative and superlative of compound adjectives

Some compound adjectives are spelled as a single word whereas others are always spelled as two words and some allow either possibility (see **21.3.4**). The comparative and superlative of these adjectives show similar variation.

(i) If both parts are felt to retain their original meaning and they are written as separate words, only the first has the comparative or superlative form. The superlative has the form *am … -ten*.

die dicht bevölkerte Stadt *the densely populated city*	die leicht verdauliche Speise *the easily digested food*
die **dichter bevölkerte** Stadt	die **leichter verdauliche** Speise
die **am dichtesten bevölkerte** Stadt	die **am leichtesten verdauliche** Speise

(ii) In the case of compound adjectives which can be written as a single word **or** as separate words (see **21.3.3**), the same usually applies to the comparative, but the superlative is written as a single word:

der hoch gelegene/hochgelegener Ort *the place situated high up*
ein **höher gelegener/höhergelegener** Ort
der **höchstgelegene** Ort
nahe liegende/naheliegende Gründe *obvious reasons*
näher liegende/**näherliegende** Gründe
nächstliegende Gründe

(iii) If the first part is an adjective with irregular comparative and superlative forms, in particular *gut* and *viel*, these irregular forms are often used, with the comparative spelled with two words and the superlative with one:

gutbezahlt – **besser** bezahlt – **best**bezahlt
vielgekauft – **mehr** gekauft – **meist**gekauft

(iv) Compound adjectives which are well established and effectively considered to be single words form their comparative and superlative in the usual way, with the endings *-er* and *-st*:

altmodisch *old-fashioned*	altmodisch**er**	das altmodisch**ste**
vielversprechend *promising*	vielversprechend**er**	das vielversprechend**ste**
weitmaschig *coarse-meshed*	weitmaschig**er**	das weitmaschig**ste**
wohlfeil *inexpensive*	wohlfeil**er**	das wohlfeil**ste**

(v) In practice there are many individual exceptions to the norms given in the preceding sections, and there is considerable variation and uncertainty regarding acceptable or correct usage, especially with frequent words which often have alternative forms (but not necessarily in all three degrees of comparison), for example:

schwerwiegend/ schwer wiegend *serious*	**schwerer** wiegend	das **am schwersten** wiegende/ das **schwerwiegendste**
tiefgehend/ tief gehend *deep, extreme*	**tiefer** gehend/ **tiefgehender**	das **am tiefsten** gehende/ das **tiefstgehende**
weitgehend *far-reaching*	**weiter** gehend/ **weitgehender**	das **weitestgehende**/ das **weitgehendste**

(g) Seven adjectives denoting position only have comparative and/or superlative forms

das äußere *outer, external*	das äußerste *outermost, utmost*
das innere *inner, internal*	das innerste *innermost*
das obere *upper*	das oberste *uppermost*
das untere *lower*	das unterste *lowest, bottom*
das vordere *front*	das vorderste *foremost, front*
das hintere *back*	das hinterste *back(most)*
das mittlere *central, middle, medium*	das mittelste *central, middle*

These adjectives are only used attributively:

| seine **äußere** Erscheinung | seine **innersten** Gedanken |
| mit der **äußersten** Höflichkeit | in der **vorderen**, **vordersten** Reihe |

As equivalents for English 'external(ly)' and 'internal(ly)' in other contexts, i.e. after *sein* or as adverbs, German uses *äußerlich* and *innerlich*:

> Seine Verletzungen sind nicht **äußerlich**, sondern **innerlich**
> Sie blieb **äußerlich/innerlich** ganz ruhig

(h) The use of *mehr* and *meist* in comparison

A few adjectives form their comparative and superlative by means of a preceding *mehr* or *am meisten*. This is restricted to

(i) participles which are not normally used as adjectives:

Er verrichtet jetzt eine ihm **mehr zusagende** Tätigkeit   *He is now performing a job which appeals to him more*

Dresden ist die durch den Krieg **am meisten zerstörte** deutsche Stadt   *Dresden is the German city most completely destroyed in the war*

(ii) a few adjectives which are only used in the predicate (like *zuwider*, see **6.3.1b**):

Er ist mir noch **mehr zuwider** als sein Bruder   *He is even more repugnant to me than his brother*

(iii) some unusually long and complex adjectives like *bemitleidenswert*:

Er ist der **am meisten bemitleidenswerte** Kranke   *He is the most to be pitied of all the patients*

mehr is also used if two qualities of the same object are being compared, i.e. in the sense 'rather': *Diese Arbeit ist mehr langweilig als schwierig. eher* is an alternative to *mehr* in this meaning in more formal registers.

6.5.2 The use of the comparative and other types of comparison

(a) The comparative particle in standard usage is *als*

This corresponds to English *than:*

Peter ist älter **als** Thomas   Mein Wagen ist schneller **als** deiner

(i) *wie* (or *als wie*) is frequently used instead of *als* in (especially regional) colloquial speech. e.g. *Peter ist älter (als) wie Thomas*; *Mein Wagen ist schneller (als) wie deiner*. This usage is considered incorrect.

(ii) The use of *denn* rather than *als* is archaic, although it can be used in formal registers to avoid the sequence *als als*:

Die Mauer erscheint eher als Kunstwerk **denn als** Grenze (*Schneider*)   *The wall appears rather as a work of art than as a frontier*

denn also occurs in a few set phrases, especially before *je*, e.g. *mehr denn je* 'more than ever', größer denn je 'bigger than ever'.

(iii) Noun phrases after *als* are in apposition to the noun they refer to, i.e. they are normally in the same case, see **2.6**.

(b) Degree of difference

i.e. a certain amount more. This is expressed by *um … als*, or by a noun phrase in the accusative case:

Eine Fahrt im TGV-Atlantique kann **um** bis zu 50 Prozent teurer kommen **als** in einem herkömmlichen Schnellzug (*FR*)	*A journey on the TGV-Atlantique can work out up to 50% more expensive than in an ordinary express train*
Er ist (**um**) **einen Monat** jünger **als** ich	*He is a month younger than me*

(c) To express a greater degree *noch* is used with the comparative

i.e. the equivalent of English 'even more':

London ist eine **noch schmutzigere** Stadt als Amsterdam	*London is an even dirtier city than Amsterdam*
Oliver ist noch fauler als dein Bruder	*Oliver is even lazier than your brother*

(d) Lower degrees of comparison are expressed by *weniger , am wenigsten*

These correspond to English 'less tall than', 'least tall', etc.:

Er war **weniger optimistisch** als deine Tante	*He was less optimistic than your aunt*
der **am wenigsten talentiert**e Spieler	*the least talented player*

In practice, *am wenigsten* is felt to be awkward, and other constructions are often preferred. Compare:

die **uninteressantest**e Rede	*the least interesting speech*
der **billigst**e/**preiswertest**e Wagen	*the least expensive car*
die **einfachst**e Methode	*the least difficult method*
möglichst geringe Kosten	*the least possible expenditure*

In formal registers, *minder* is an occasional alternative to *weniger*, e.g. *Nicht minder virtuos ist dagegen die Vorstellung auf der gegenüberliegenden Reeperbahnseite* (*HMP*).

(e) The 'absolute' comparative

The comparative of some common adjectives is used not to signal a direct comparison, but to indicate a fair degree of the relevant quality, e.g. *ein älterer Herr* 'an elderly gentleman', *eine größere Stadt* 'a fair-sized city'. This so-called 'absolute' comparative is possible with the following adjectives:

alt   dick   dünn   gut   jung   kurz   neu
bekannt   dunkel   groß   hell   klein   lang

eine **bessere** Wohngegend   *a fairly good neighbourhood*
seit **längerer** Zeit   *for a longish time now*
ein **neueres** Modell   *a fairly new model*

(f) Progression is expressed by using *immer* with the comparative

This corresponds to English 'more and more':

Der Sprit wird **immer teurer**   *Petrol is getting dearer and dearer*
Meine Arbeit wird **immer schwieriger**   *My work is getting more and more difficult*

(g) Proportion (i.e. 'the more … the more')

Proportion is expressed in German by using a subordinate clause introduced by the conjunction *je*, followed by a main clause beginning with *umso* or (especially in formal registers) *desto*:

Je älter er wird, **umso/desto** ärgerlicher wird er   *The older he gets, the more irritating he becomes*

je schneller der Wagen, **umso/desto** größer die *the faster the car, the greater the risks*
   Risiken

Die Schutzwirkung ist **umso** größer, **je** mehr Fluorid *The protective effect is greater the more fluoride*
   die Pasta enthält (*HAZ*)   *the toothpaste contains*

(i) In older German, a second *je* could be used rather than *desto* or *umso*. This survives in a few set phrases such as *je länger*, *je lieber* and *je länger*, *je mehr*.
(ii) As an equivalent to 'all the more because', German uses *umso mehr, als/da/weil* … (see **17.4.3b**).
(iii) In colloquial German the combination *umso … umso* is common, e.g. *umso größer, umso besser* 'the bigger, the better'.

(h) Equality is expressed by *so … wie*

This is the equivalent construction to English 'as … as':

Peter ist **so** alt **wie** Thomas   Er ist nur halb **so** alt **wie** seine Schwester

(i) In colloquial German, *als* is occasionally used for *wie:*

Peter ist **so** alt **als** Thomas   Ich bin doch **so** groß **als** du

This is only regarded as acceptable in written registers in a few contexts:

- 'as well as' can be *sowohl wie* or *sowohl als* (see **17.1.4b**), e.g. *Ich will sowohl Anna als/wie (auch) Helga einladen*
- 'as soon/little as possible' can be *so bald/wenig wie möglich* or *so bald/wenig als möglich*.
- 'twice as … as' can be *doppelt so … wie* or *doppelt so … als: Die Ernte ist doppelt so groß als/wie im vorigen Jahr*

The combination *als wie*, e.g. *Ich bin doch so groß als wie du* is common in speech, but it is a non-standard regionalism.

(ii) *so* can be omitted in some common phrases and idioms

Er ist (so) hart wie Stahl   Er ist (so) schlau wie ein Fuchs

(iii) just as … (as)' is expressed by *ebenso … (wie)* or *genauso … (wie)*:

Peter ist **ebenso/genauso** alt **wie** Thomas
Dort können wir **genauso** gutes Fleisch kaufen **wie** beim Metzger in der Bismarckstraße

(iv) *ebenso* is also used to indicate equivalence between two qualities:

ein **ebenso** lehrreiches **wie** unterhaltsames Buch (*SGT*)   *a book which is as instructive as it is entertaining*

(v) *nicht so sehr … wie* is used for 'not so much … as':

Er ist **nicht so sehr** dumm **wie** faul   *He is not so much stupid as lazy*

(i) *gleich* **can indicate equality with an adjective**

Peter und Thomas sind **gleich** alt   *Peter and Thomas are the same age*
Diese Städte sind etwa **gleich** groß   *These towns are about the same size*

6.5.3 Types and uses of the superlative

(a) The superlative form *am … sten*

The form of the superlative with the preposition *am* and the weak adjective ending **-en**, e.g. *schnell – am schnell sten*, is mainly used for adverbs, see **7.7.1a**. However, in some contexts it can be used adjectivally in the predicate of the verb *sein* as well as the usual form of the superlative with a definite article, e.g.:

Welcher Junge ist am stärksten? ~ Welcher Junge ist der stärkste?

(i) If a noun is understood, either form can be used:

Diese Blume ist **die schönste/am schönsten**	*This flower is the most beautiful*
Unter den deutschen Flüssen ist die Donau **der längste/am längsten**	*Of the German rivers the Danube is the longest*

(ii) If there is no noun to be understood, or if something is being compared with itself (= 'at its most …'), **only the form with** *am* can be used:

Ein Mercedes wäre **am teuersten**	*A Mercedes would be the dearest*
Für meinen Geschmack ist eine Nelke schöner als eine Tulpe, aber eine Rose ist natürlich **am schönsten**	*For my taste a carnation is nicer than a tulip, but a rose is the nicest*
Hier ist die Donau **am tiefsten**	*The Danube is (at its) deepest here*
Euer Garten ist **am schönsten** im Juni	*Your garden is (at its) nicest in June*

(b) Any superlative can be used in an absolute sense

i.e. not as a comparison but in the sense 'extremely':

in **höchster** Erregung	*in great excitement*
mit **größter** Mühe	*with the greatest difficulty*
Es ist **höchste** Zeit, dass …	*It is high time that …*
Modernste Kureinrichtungen stehen zu Ihrer Verfügung *(FAZ)*	*You will have use of the most up-to-date spa treatments*

A superlative form of *kein* is used in a similar emphatic sense, e.g. *in keinster Weise* 'in no way at all'. This is often considered to be a non-standard colloquial usage, but it has become frequent in writing, see **5.5.16f**.

(c) A superlative adjective can be emphasized by prefixing *aller-*

This has the sense of the highest degree possible, e.g.:

der **allerschnellste** Wagen	*the fastest car of all*
die **allerbeste** Lösung	*the absolutely best solution*

Zugleich ist jetzt wieder der Moment gekommen für eine der **allerbritischsten** aller britischen Sportarten: Snooker (*NZZ*)

At the same time the moment has now arrived again for what is surely one of the most British of British sports: snooker

7 Adverbs

The traditional term ADVERB covers a range of words with a variety of uses. Typically, adverbs are words which **do not decline** and which express relations like **time**, **place** and **manner**.

There is some disagreement about which words should be considered as adverbs in German and how they are best classified. In this chapter we use a simplified classification for practical purposes, as summarized in **Table 7.1**, and each type is dealt with in the section indicated:

TABLE 7.1   Main types of adverb

Adverbs	Use	Examples
time	answering the question **when**	damals, lange, oft, gestern
place	answering the question **where**	hier, dort, oben, draußen, überall
direction	answering the question **where to/from**	dahin, daher, hinüber, herein
attitude/ viewpoint	commenting on what is said, or answering a **yes/no** question	hoffentlich, leider, natürlich, psychologisch, wahrscheinlich
reason/cause	answering the question **why**	dadurch, daher, trotzdem
manner	answering the question **how**	irgendwie, anders, telefonisch
degree	answering the question **how much/ how small** (often with adjectives)	außerordentlich, etwas, relativ, sehr, ziemlich
interrogative	used to ask **questions**	wann?, weshalb?, wieso?

7.1 adverbs of **place**
7.2 adverbs of **direction**
7.3 adverbs of **time**
7.4 adverbs of **attitude**, **viewpoint**, **reason**, **cause** and **manner**
7.5 adverbs of **degree**
7.6 interrogative **adverbs**

7.7 comparative and **superlative** forms of adverbs

Adverbs are used:

- to qualify verbs: *Sie hat ihm höflich geantwortet*
- to qualify adjectives: *ein natürlich eleganter Stil*
- in relation to the sentence as a whole: *Er hat ihr sicher geholfen*

Phrases, often with a preposition, can have the same function as an adverb in a sentence. Compare:

> Sie hat **heute** gearbeitet – Sie hat **den ganzen Tag** gearbeitet
> Sie ist **trotzdem** gekommen – Sie ist **trotz des Regens** gekommen
> Sie blieb **dort** – Sie blieb **in der alten Stadt am Rhein**

The term ADVERBIAL is used to refer both to single words and to phrases like these (traditionally called **adverbial phrases**) which have the same function in a sentence. This chapter only deals with **adverbs** proper (i.e. single words) and concentrates on those adverbs of German and their uses which have significant differences to their most usual English equivalents:

7.1 Adverbs of place

7.1.1 *hier, dort, da*

(a) *hier* **refers to a place close to the speaker (= English 'here')**

Ich habe deine Tasche **hier** im Schrank gefunden

(b) *dort* **refers to a place away from the speaker (= English 'there')**

Ich habe deine Schwester **dort** an der Ecke gesehen

(c) *da* **is a less emphatic alternative to** *dort*

It is used more frequently than *dort* and usually refers to a place away from the speaker:

Ich sah ihn **da** an der Ecke stehen

da is sometimes used to point in a general way in contexts where the difference between 'here' and 'there' is not important. In contexts like these it can

sometimes correspond to English 'here':

Herr Meyer ist momentan nicht **da**   *Mr Meyer is not here at the moment*

This usage is particularly common in the South, and universal in Austria.

7.1.2 *oben, unten*

German lacks noun equivalents for 'top 'and 'bottom 'and typically uses phrases with the adverbs *oben* and *unten* in contexts where these nouns are used in English:

oben auf dem Turm	*at the top of the tower*
Sie stand ganz **oben** auf der Treppe	*She was standing right at the top of the stairs*
unten auf dem Bild	*at the bottom of the picture*
Bis unten sind es noch zwei Stunden zu Fuß	*It's another two hours' walk to the bottom*
Die Säule wird **nach unten hin** breiter	*The column broadens out towards the bottom*
Sein Name steht **unten** auf der Liste	*His name is at the bottom of the list*
ganz **unten** im Kasten	*right at the bottom of the chest*
auf Seite 90 **unten**	*at the bottom of page 90*
von **oben** bis **unten**	*from top to bottom*

7.1.3 *mitten*

The adverb *mitten* is the most usual equivalent for the English nouns 'middle' or 'midst'. It is usually followed by a preposition. In some contexts *mitten* can have other English equivalents:

Mitten im Garten ist ein Teich	*In the middle of the garden there is a pond*
Sie stellte die Vase **mitten** auf den Tisch	*She put the vase in the middle of the table*
mitten in der Nacht	*in the middle of the night*
mitten in der ganzen Aufregung	*in the midst of all the excitement*
Ich war **mitten** unter den Leuten auf der Straße	*I was in the midst of the people in the street*
Er bahnte sich einen Weg **mitten** durch die Menge	*He forced his way through the middle of the crowd*
mitten auf der Leiter	*halfway up/down the ladder*

7.1.4 *außen, draußen; innen, drinnen*

außen and *innen* mean '**on** the outside', '**on** the inside', i.e. they refer to the outer or inner surface of the object, whereas *draußen* and *drinnen* mean 'outside' and 'inside', i.e. away from the object or contained within it:

Die Tasse ist **außen** schmutzig	*The cup is dirty on the outside*
Ich musste **draußen** warten	*I had to wait outside*
Die Äpfel sind **innen** faul	*The apples are rotten inside*
Drinnen ist es aber schön warm	*Indoors it's nice and warm, though*
Dieses Fenster geht **nach innen** auf	*This window opens inwards*
Wir kommen **von draußen**	*We are coming from outside*
Er schloss die Tür **von außen** zu	*He shut the door from the outside*
von außen/innen gesehen	*seen from the outside/inside*

The use of *außen* and *innen* to mean 'outside' and 'inside' is now archaic or regional (especially Austrian).

7.1.5 *Indefinite place adverbs*

i.e. the equivalents of English 'somewhere', 'anywhere', 'everywhere', 'nowhere' and similar words and phrases.

(a) *irgendwo*

irgendwo corresponds to 'somewhere' or, in questions, 'anywhere':

Ich habe es wohl **irgendwo** liegen gelassen	*I've probably left it lying about somewhere*
Hast du Paula **irgendwo** gesehen?	*Have you seen Paula anywhere?*

In spoken German simple *wo* is often used for *irgendwo* if unstressed: *Ich habe es wohl wo liegen gelassen*.

(b) *überall*

überall corresponds to 'everywhere', or to 'anywhere' in the sense of 'no matter where':

Erika hat dich **überall** gesucht	*Erika was looking for you everywhere*
Sie dürfen hier **überall** parken	*You can park anywhere here*

(c) *nirgendwo, nirgends*

nirgendwo and *nirgends* correspond to 'nowhere', 'not … anywhere':

Er war **nirgendwo/nirgends** zu sehen	*He was nowhere to be seen*
Ich habe dich gestern **nirgends** gesehen	*I didn't see you anywhere yesterday*

(d) *anderswo, woanders*

anderswo and *woanders* correspond to 'somewhere else', 'elsewhere', or, in questions, 'anywhere else':

Sie müssen ihn **anderswo/woanders** suchen	*You'll have to look for him somewhere else*
Hast du ihn **anderswo/woanders** gesehen?	*Have you seen him somewhere/anywhere else?*

7.2 Adverbs of direction: *hin* and *her*

The adverbs *hin* and *her* indicate the direction of movement, most typically towards or away from the speaker, and German expresses this more consistently and more systematically than English. These adverbs have a wide range of uses and can occur alone or linked with another word, especially a preposition. In general, *hin* denotes **motion away from** the speaker (or the person concerned), while *her* denotes **motion towards** the speaker (or another point of reference).

7.2.1 *hin* and *her* compounded with adverbs of place

Direction adverbs are formed in German by compounding *hin* or *her* with adverbs indicating place, and these are used to differentiate consistently between **position**, **movement away from the speaker** and **movement towards the speaker.** This can be illustrated by the interrogative adverbs:

Wo wohnen Sie?	*Where do you live?*
Wohin gehen Sie?	*Where are you going* (*to*)?
Woher kommen Sie?	*Where are you coming from?*

In English we don't need to say 'Where are you going **to**?' since 'to' can be left out. In German, though, we have to use *wo hin?* to ask where someone is going or something is being put.

The other adverbs of place listed in section **7.1** can be compounded with *-hin* and *-her* to indicate direction to/from:

Sie wohnt **hier**	*She lives here*
Sie kommt **hierher**	*She's coming here*
Leg das Paket **hierhin!**	*Put the parcel down here*
Sie wohnt doch **da/dort**	*She lives there, doesn't she?*
In den Ferien fahren wir **dorthin/dahin**, wo wir voriges Jahr waren	*In the holidays we're going where we were last year*

Sie kommt **dorther**	*That's where she comes from*
Er stand **dort** an der Ecke	*He was standing there on the corner*
Wie wollen wir **dorthin** kommen?	*How are we going to get there?*
Er geht heute Nachmittag **irgendwohin**	*He's going somewhere this afternoon*
Sie geht **überallhin**	*She goes everywhere*
Morgen fahren wir **anderswohin**	*We're going somewhere else tomorrow*

wohin, *woher*, *dahin* and *daher* are often split, especially in spoken German, with *hin* and *her* being placed at the end of the clause (when they are written together with the verb, like a separable prefix):

Wo kommt deine Mutter **her**?   **Wo** gehört dieses Buch **hin**?

Da gehe ich praktisch nie **hin**   **Da** kommt er doch nicht **her**, oder?

Überall, **wo** wir **hin**kamen, waren andere schon vor uns da (*BZ*)

(i) *von wo* and *von da / dort* are common alternatives in spoken German to *woher*, *daher / dorther*:

Von wo kommt er? Er kommt **von da/dort.**

(ii) *dahin* is used with *sein* in the meaning 'finished', 'lost', e.g.:

Sein Leben ist **dahin**

Mein ganzes Geld war **dahin.**

(iii) If these words are not being used literally they cannot be split, e.g. *woher* in: *Woher weißt du das?* 'How do you know that?' and *daher* in the meaning 'that is why', e.g. *Daher hat sie sich aufgeregt*.

7.2.2 *hin* and *her* as verb prefixes

hin and *her* are used with many verbs as SEPARABLE PREFIXES (see **20.6**).

(a) Used as prefixes, *hin* **and** *her* **typically indicate the direction of movement**

In such contexts no specific word meaning 'here' or 'there' is needed, and the English equivalent can be idiomatic, especially if the verb itself does not primarily express movement:

Heute ist eine Wahlversammlung, und ich gehe **hin**	*There's an election meeting today and I'm going there/to it*

Ich hielt ihm die Zeitung **hin**	*I held out the newspaper to him*
Ich hörte einen Ruf und sah **hin**	*I heard a cry and looked over in that direction*
Komm mal **her!**	*Come here!*
Gib den Schlüssel **her**!	*Give me the key*
Er hat mich mit dem Auto **her**gefahren	*He drove me here*
Halt den Teller **her**!	*Hold out your plate*
Setz dich **her** zu mir!	*Come and sit down over here by me*

(b) Some verbs with the prefixes *hin-* and *her-* have a derived, abstract or figurative meaning

sein Leben für etwas **hingeben**	*to sacrifice one's life for sth.*
Das wird schon **hinhauen** (*coll.*)	*It'll be OK in the end*
Nach dem Interview **war** ich völlig **hin**	*After the interview I was shattered*
Die Burschen **fielen** über ihn **her**	*The youths attacked him*
Das Thema **gibt** doch nicht viel **her**	*There's not a lot to this topic, is there?*
Es **ging** recht lustig **her**	*It was good fun*
Sie hat ein Zimmer für ihn **hergerichtet**	*She got a room ready for him*

7.2.3 *hin* and *her* with a preceding prepositional phrase

(a) When used with a preceding prepositional phrase *hin* and *her* emphasize direction

In contexts like this they are typically optional:

Wir wandern bis zu den Bergen (**hin**)	Er blickt zur Decke (**hin**)
Wir fahren nach Süden (**hin**)	Er geht zum Fenster (**hin**)
Wir wandern durch das Tal (**hin**)	Sie fliegen über den Berg (**hin**)
Eine Stimme kam von oben (**her**)	Rings um ihn (**her**) tobte der Sturm

(b) *her* with *hinter, neben, vor* and *zwischen*

With these prepositions, *her* indicates movement in relation to another person or thing moving in the same direction. The noun is always in the **dative** case, see **18.3**:

Er geht **hinter** ihr **her**	*He's walking behind her*
Der Hund läuft **neben** mir **her**	*The dog is running beside me*
Ein deutscher Wagen fährt **vor** uns **her**	*A German car is driving in front of us*

Sie geht **zwischen** uns **her**   *She's walking between us*

The adverbs *hinterher* and *nebenher* are used in a similar sense, e.g. *Er lief hinterher*, *nebenher* 'He was running behind, alongside'.

(c) Phrases with *auf* giving reasons or causes can be strengthened by *hin*

(See also **18.3.5e**):

Das tat er **auf** meinen Vorschlag **hin**   *He did that at my suggestion*
auf die Gefahr **hin**, erkannt zu werden *at the risk of being recognized*

7.2.4 *hin-* and *her-* with prepositions form adverbs of direction

e.g. *hinab*, *herab*, *hinauf*, *herbei*, etc. These are mainly used as separable verb prefixes, see **20.6.** In general they link the direction indicated by the preposition with the notion **away from** or **towards** the speaker.

In everyday speech in the North, both *hin-* and *her-* are reduced to *r-* in these compounds irrespective of the direction involved, e.g.:

> Wollen wir jetzt **raus**gehen (written: *hinausgehen*)
> Wollen wir die Jalousien **runter**lassen? (written: *herunterlassen*)

These forms often occur in writing to give the impression of informal speech, e.g.: *Ich ging morgens Bahnhofstreppen rauf und runter und nachmittags Bahnhofstreppen runter und rauf* (*Böll*).

(a) Six prepositions indicating direction form pairs of compounds with *hin-* and *her-*

hinab, herab *down* hinaus, heraus *out* hinüber, herüber *over*
hinauf, herauf *up*   hinein, herein *in*   hinunter, herunter *down*

They are characteristically used in conjunction with a preceding prepositional phrase or a noun phrase in the accusative case (see **2.2.2b**):

Wir steigen die Treppe **hinauf**   *We are climbing up the stairs*
Sie kommen die Treppe **herab**/**herunter** *They are coming down the stairs*
Er geht in das Haus **hinein**   *He is going into the house*
Er kommt in das Zimmer **herein**   *He is coming into the room*

hinab/herab and *hinunter/herunter* have identical meanings. Those with *-unter* are more usual in spoken registers.

hinaus and *heraus* are used with a preceding phrase with *zu* to indicate movement or vision out of or through doors, windows etc., e.g.:

Er blickt **zur** Tür **hinaus** *He is looking out (of) the door*

Sie warf es **zum** Fenster **heraus** *She threw it out (of) the window*

(b) Other prepositions or adverbs combine with only one of *hin-* or *her-*

With *hin* -: **hindurch** *through*	**hinweg** *away*	**hinzu** *in addition*	
With *her* -: **heran** *along*; *up* (*to*)	**herbei** *along*	**herum** *round*	**hervor** *forth, out*

Er drang durch die Menge **hindurch** *He pushed through the crowd*

Die Rollbahn sauste unter uns **hinweg** *The runway sped away beneath us*

Sie legte einige Papiere **hinzu** *She put down some papers in addition*

Sie tritt an den Tisch **heran** *She steps up to the table*

Einige Polizisten kamen **herbei** *A few policemen came along*

Er kommt um die Ecke **herum** *He is coming round the corner*

Die Bücher liegen auf dem Tisch **herum** *The books are lying around on the table*

Er zog einen Revolver unter dem Tisch **hervor** *He pulled a revolver out from under the table*

German used to make a distinction between *herum* 'round in a circle' and *umher* 'criss-crossing; higgledy-piggledy', but *herum* is now commonly used in both senses in both speech and writing.

(c) The adverb with *hin-* or *her-* often repeats the direction given by a previous preposition

Der Vogel fliegt **in** das Zimmer **hinein**   Er kommt **um** die Ecke **herum**

Wir kommen **aus** dem Wald **heraus**   Sie gehen **durch** das Tal **hindurch**

These constructions can seem tautologous, but if the adverb is omitted, the effect is usually that the verb is emphasized rather than the direction. The adverb should thus be used **unless** the verb is to be stressed. Compare:

> Der Vogel ist in das Zimmer **geflogen** (i.e. it flew rather than hopped)
> Der Vogel ist in das Zimmer **hinein**geflogen (i.e. it didn't fly **out**)
> Wir wollen die Truhe in dein Zimmer **tragen** (i.e. carry, not push)
> Wir wollen die Truhe in dein Zimmer **hinüber**tragen (i.e. take it **across** – not up or down)

If another word in the sentence bears the main stress, the adverb is optional:

> Der **Vogel** ist in das Zimmer (hinein)geflogen
> Wir wollen die **Truhe** in dein Zimmer (hinüber)tragen

(d) Some verbs with *hin-* and *her-* compounds have figurative meanings

sich zu etwas **herablassen**	*to condescend to (do) sth.*
Er **gibt** eine Zeitschrift **heraus**	*He edits a journal*
Es **kommt** auf dasselbe **heraus**	*It all comes to the same thing*
Er **leierte** die Predigt **herunter**	*He reeled off the sermon*
Die Verhandlungen **zogen sich hinaus**	*The negotiations dragged on*

(e) Verbs with simple direction prefixes

ab-, *an-*, *auf-*, *aus-*, etc. Since direction is indicated by using the compounds with *hin-* or *her-*, verbs with simple prefixes typically have an extended or non-literal meaning (see also **20.6.1**). Compare:

Er ist (in das Zimmer) **hineingegangen**	*He went in(to the room)*
Die Zeitung ist **eingegangen**	*The newspaper went bust*
Er hat den Koffer **hereingebracht**	*He brought the suitcase in*
Das **bringt** nichts **ein**	*That's not worth it*
Sie **kommt** (aus dem Haus) **heraus**	*She is coming out (of the house)*
Mit 100 Euro **kommen** wir nicht **aus**	*We won't manage on 100 euros*
Ich **ging** zu ihm **hinüber**	*I went over to him*
Er ist zur SPD **übergegangen**	*He went over to the SPD*

7.2.5 Other meanings and uses of *hin* and *her*

(i) *hin-* often has the sense 'down':

> Sie legt sich **hin**   Der Junge fiel **hin**   Er setzt den Stuhl **hin**

(ii) *vor sich hin* means 'to oneself' (see **18.3.16b**):

> Das murmelte er so **vor sich hin**   Sie las **vor sich hin**

(iii) *an … hin* (see **18.3.2a**) means 'along(side)'. The noun is in the dative case:

> Der Weg führt **an** der Wiese **hin**   *The path goes along the meadow*

(iv) *von … her* means 'in respect of': *Vom Preis her macht es keinen Unterschied zum Normalbenzin* (*RhZ*) (see **18.2.8a**).

(v) *hin und her* means 'to and fro', 'back and forth': *Er geht auf der Straße hin und her*

(vi) *hin und wieder* means 'now and again': *Hin und wieder sehe ich ihn in der Stadt*

(vii) *her* is used in the sense of 'ago' in time phrases: *Das ist schon lange her*

7.3 Adverbs of time

Adverbs of time can indicate a **point in time** (e.g. *damals*), **duration** (e.g. *lange*) or **frequency** (e.g. *oft*). A selection of commonly used German time adverbs is given in **7.3.1**, listed in terms of these categories. Sections **7.3.2–7.3.5** explain some instances where German and English usage differ in respect to time adverbs.

7.3.1 Commonly used adverbs of time

Further information on some of these adverbs is given in other sections, as indicated. Note that the 'present' with time adverbs can sometimes be a point of reference in the past or future rather than the actual present moment.

(a) indicating a point in time
(i) referring to the present:

augenblicks	*instantly*	heuer (*S. Ger.*)	*this year*	momentan	*at the moment*
derzeit	*at present*	heute	*today*	nun (**9.1.24**)	*now*
gegenwärtig	*at present, currently*	heutzutage	*nowadays*	zugleich	*at the same time*
gerade	*just (now)*	jetzt	*now*	zurzeit	*at present*

(ii) referring to the past (or 'previously'):

ehemals	*formerly, previously*	gestern	*yesterday*	unlängst	*recently*
einst	*once (upon a time)*	neuerdings, neulich	*recently*	vorher	*before(hand)*
früher	*formerly, previously*	kürzlich	*a short time ago*	vorhin	*just now*
gerade	*just (now)*	soeben	*just (now)*	zuvor	*before(hand)*

(iii) referring to the future (or 'subsequently'):

bald	*soon*	einst	*some time*	nächstens (**7.2.2c**)	*shortly*

danach	*afterwards*	gleich (**9.1.16**)	*at once*	sofort, sogleich	*immediately*
darauf	*after that*	künftig	*in future*	später	*later*
daraufhin	*after that*	morgen	*tomorrow*		
demnächst	*very soon*	nachher	*after(wards)*		

(b) indicating duration

bisher, bislang	*up to now, hitherto*	seither, seitdem	*since then*
inzwischen	*meanwhile*	solange	*meanwhile*
künftig	*in future*	unterdessen	*in the meantime*
kurz	*for a short time*	vorerst, vorübergehend	vorläufig, *temporarily, for the time being, for the moment*
lange	*for a long time*		
längst (**7.2.2b**)	*for a long time*	währenddem (*inf.*), währenddessen	*meanwhile*
mittlerweile	*in the meantime*		
nunmehr (*elev.*)	*from now/then on*	zeitweilig	*temporarily*

lang can be suffixed to other time words to indicate duration, e.g. *stundenlang, monatelang, jahrelang* 'for hours, months, years (on end)'.

(c) indicating frequency

gelegentlich	*occasionally*	manchmal	*sometimes*	selten	*seldom, rarely*
häufig	*frequently*	mehrmals	*repeatedly*	ständig	*continually*
immer	*always*	meistens	*mostly*	stets	*always*
irgendwann	*sometime (or other)*	nie, niemals	*never*	unaufhörlich	*incessantly*
je	*ever*	nochmals	*again*	wieder	*again*
jederzeit	*at any time*	oft, öfters	*often*	zwischendurch	*in between times*

7.3.2 Adverbs referring to days and periods of the day

(a) *gestern* , *heute* and *morgen*

These are used in conjunction with words indicating periods of the day to give the equivalent of English 'last night', 'this afternoon', etc.:

gestern	*yesterday*
gestern Morgen	*yesterday morning*
gestern Abend	*last night* (before bedtime)

vorgestern	*the day before yesterday*
heute	*today*
heute Morgen *or* heute früh/Früh	*this morning*
heute Vormittag	*this morning* (after breakfast)
heute Nachmittag	*this afternoon*
heute Abend	*this evening*, *tonight* (before bedtime)
heute Nacht	*tonight*, *last night* (after bedtime)
morgen	*tomorrow*
morgen früh/Früh	*tomorrow morning*
morgen Vormittag	*tomorrow morning* (after breakfast)
übermorgen	*the day after tomorrow*

(b) Adverbs referring to seasons, particular days, weekdays or periods of the day

Several such adverbs are formed from the names of particular days, periods of the day or seasons by adding **-** *s*:

morgens, abends	*in the mornings, evenings*
frühmorgens	*early in the morning*
vormittags, nachmittags	*in the mornings (after breakfast), afternoons*
spätabends	*late in the evening*
tags, nachts	*by day, at night*
von morgens bis abends	*from morning to night*
dienstags, freitags	*on Tuesdays, on Fridays*
montagmorgens, montags morgens	*on Monday morning(s)*
montagnachmittags, montagsnachmittags	*on Monday afternoon(s)*
wochentags, werktags	*on weekdays, on working days*
sommers, winters	*in the summer, in the winter*
sommers wie winters	*all year round*

Some of these adverbs can be used to refer to single occasions (e.g. *nachmittags* for *am Nachmittag*), especially in the South:

Nach einem Flug über die Südalpen Neuseelands *After flying over the Southern Alps of New Zealand*
  landen wir nachmittags in Melbourne (*SGT*)   *we land in Melbourne in the afternoon*

The adverbs *morgens*, *abends*, etc. originated from noun phrases in the genitive with the definite article (see **2.3.3c**), e.g. *des Morgens*, *des Abends*, and these full

phrases are still occasionally used in formal writing.

7.3.3 German equivalents of English 'then'

(a) *damals* **refers to past time**

i.e. meaning 'at that time':

Sie war **damals** sehr arm	*She was very poor, then*
Er war **damals** Anfang sechzig	*At that time, he was in his early sixties*
Damals kam der Kaiser jeden Sommer nach Bad Ischl	*In those days the Emperor went to Bad Ischl every summer*

(b) *dann* **is used for other meanings of 'then' referring to time**

especially in the sense of 'after that' with a series of actions or events:

Dann geh mal zu ihm	*Then just go to him*
Erst bist du an der Reihe, **dann** ich	*First it's your turn, then mine*
Wenn er dir schreibt, **dann** musst du es deiner Mutter sagen	*If he writes to you, then you'll have to tell your mother*
Und wenn sie kommt, was machst du **dann**?	*And if she comes, what will you do then?*

dann is not used after a preposition, cf. *bis dahin* 'till then', 'by then', *seither*, *seitdem* 'since then', *von da an* 'from then on', *vorher*, *zuvor* 'before then' (see also **7.3.4a**).

In colloquial North German speech *denn* is often heard for *dann*, e.g.: *Denn geh mal zu ihm*.

(c) **To intensify a question, the German equivalent is** *denn*

e.g. *Was ist denn daran so komisch?* See **9.1.6** for further details.

7.3.4 German equivalents for English 'before' and 'after'

(a) *vorher* **and** *zuvor* **are the usual equivalents for English 'before' used as adverbs**

Both can be used to refer to the past **or** the future:

Ich war ein Jahr **vorher/zuvor** da gewesen	*I had been there a year before/previously*

Ich muss **vorher/zuvor** noch telefonieren	*I've got to make a phone call before then*
Er hatte uns am Tag **vorher/zuvor** besucht	*He had been to visit us the day before/the previous day*
einige Zeit **vorher/zuvor**	*some time previously*

Referring to time up to the present moment, *früher* or *zuvor* is used, or, in a negative context, *noch*:

Sie hätten es mir **früher/zuvor** sagen sollen	*You ought to have told me before*
Ich habe sie **nie zuvor/noch nie** gesehen	*I've never seen her before*

(b) *danach* **or** *nachher* **are the usual equivalents for English 'after(wards)'**

danach implies some previous event or action, whilst *nachher* is more general:

Wir sind ins Kino gegangen, und **danach/ nachher** haben wir zu Abend gegessen	*We went to the cinema, and afterwards we had dinner*
Der Wagen war **danach/nachher** nicht mehr fahrbereit	*Afterwards the car was no longer in running order*
Ich habe sie einen Monat **danach/nachher** gesehen	*I saw her a month after(wards)/later*
Das werde ich dir **nachher** erzählen	*I'll tell you that afterwards*

darauf is a frequent alternative to *danach* or *nachher* after words expressing a period of time:

Kurz **danach**/Kurz **nachher**/Kurz **darauf** habe ich sie wieder gesehen	*I saw her a short time after/shortly afterwards*
Am Tag **darauf/danach** sind wir ins Theater gegangen	*The day after we went to the theatre*

hinterher is also often used for 'afterwards', as is *im Nachhinein* in the sense of 'in retrospect':

Natürlich ist man **hinterher** immer klüger	*Of course you are always wiser afterwards*
Im Nachhinein war er enttäuscht über die Niederlage, aber mit seiner Mannschaft nicht unzufrieden (*BrZ*)	*Afterwards/In retrospect/Looking back he was disappointed at the defeat, but he was not dissatisfied with his team*

(c) *before* **and** *after* **can also be used as prepositions and conjunctions in English**

When *before* and *after* are used as **adverbs** they have the German equivalents as explained in **(a)** and **(b)** above. However, English *before* and *after* are also used as

prepositions and conjunctions, and they have different equivalents in German. **English learners need to be alert to these differences.**

(i) *before:*

- The German equivalent of *before* when used as a **preposition** is *vor* (followed by a noun in the dative case, see **18.3.14c**):

in den Jahren **vor** dem Ersten Weltkrieg *in the years before the First World War*

- The most frequent German equivalent of *before* when used as a **conjunction** is *bevor*, see **17.3.2**, with *ehe* also often used in more formal registers.

Zwei Wochen, **bevor** er starb, ist er nach Würzburg gefahren *Two weeks before he died he drove to Würzburg*

Vier Jahre lang lebte er in München, drei Jahre in Bremen, **ehe** er 1961 wieder in die USA ging (*MM*) *He lived in Munich for four years, and three in Bremen before returning to the USA in 1961*

(ii) *after*

- The German equivalent of *after* when used as a **preposition** is *nach* (followed by a noun in the dative case, see **18.2.6c**):

in den Jahren **nach** dem Ersten Weltkrieg *in the years after the First World War*

- The German equivalent of *after* when used as a conjunction is *nachdem*, see **17.3.4**:

Nachdem sie abgefahren war, fiel ihr ein, was sie vergessen hatte *After she had driven off she realized what she had forgotten*

7.3.5 German equivalents for English 'recent(ly)'

German has no single word with the range of meaning of English 'recent(ly)'. The following are the most frequent equivalents, and the choice depends on the precise meaning to be expressed:

vor kurzem/kürzlich/unlängst/jüngst (*elev., S. Ger.*) } *at a point in time not long ago*

neulich/letztens (*elev.*) *at a point in time not long ago* (but relevant to the present)

neuerdings	*up to and including the present* (sth. which started recently)
letzthin	*recently* (in the very recent past)
in letzter Zeit	*latterly* (over a period of time up to and including the present)
seit kurzem	*not for very long* (continuing to the present)

All these words and phrases are adverbial, so they have to be used in paraphrases to give German equivalents for the English adjective 'recent', e.g.:

auf der **kürzlich stattgefundenen** Konferenz	*at the recent conference*
bei unserer Begegnung **neulich**	*at our recent meeting*
als er **vor kurzem** krank war	*during his recent illness*
eine **erst kürzlich eingeführte** Neuerung	*a (very) recent innovation*
sein **neustes** Buch	*his most recent book*

Some other equivalents:

bis vor kurzem	*until recently*
Ich habe ihn noch später gesehen als Sie	*I have seen him more recently than you*
Kurt hat sie zuletzt gesehen	*Kurt has seen her most recently/just recently*

Occasionally, *neulich* is used as an adjective in the meaning 'recent', e.g. *Der neuliche Umsturz einer der alten Linden auf dem Kirchplatz* (*Nordkurier*). This is considered incorrect, although it is not uncommon.

The adjective *rezent* is close in meaning to English 'recent', but in practice it is only widely used in Austria and Switzerland, e.g. *im Lichte der rezenten Erfahrungen* (*Presse*) 'in the light of recent experience', and in specialist geological or biological contexts, e.g. *rezente Amphibien* 'recent amphibians' (i.e. not going very far back in time).

7.4 Adverbs of manner, viewpoint, attitude and reason

A large number of adverbs fall into these categories, or into related subgroups which are not dealt with individually. It is convenient to deal with them all together here.

7.4.1 Adverbs of manner and viewpoint

(a) Adverbs of manner typically answer the question *Wie?*

Wie ist sie gefahren?   Sie ist **schnell** gefahren

Wie hat sie gesungen?   Sie hat **gut** gesungen

Wie hat er es gemacht? Er hat es **anders** gemacht

When they are used in a sentence with *nicht*, the *nicht* always refers specifically to the adverb:

Sie hat **nicht deutlich** gesprochen (she did speak, but not clearly)

RB Leipzig hat gestern Abend in Leverkusen **nicht sehr gut** gespielt (they played, but not very well)

(b) Adverbs of viewpoint indicate a context in which the statement is to be understood

They can be paraphrased by 'seen from a … point of view' or ' …-ly speaking', e.g.:

Die Stadt liegt **verkehrsmäßig** ungünstig (i.e. in terms of road and rail communications)

Finanziell war diese Entscheidung eine Katastrophe (i.e. financially speaking)

Deutschland ist **wirtschaftlich** stärker geworden (i.e. from an economic point of view)

(c) Most adjectives (and participles) can be used as adverbs

Most of these are in practice adverbs of manner or viewpoint. In English such adverbs are typically marked by the suffix '-ly', but German has no such ending, and these words have exactly the same form whether they are being used as adjectives or adverbs. Compare:

Er hat die Sache **überraschend schnell** erledigt   *He settled the matter surprisingly quickly*

Ein Dokument zeigt doch, dass er **mäßigend** und *A document shows nevertheless that he tried to* **bremsend** zu wirken versuchte (*Zeit*)   *exercise a moderating and calming influence*

An adverb qualifying an adjective before a noun is marked as such by having no ending. Compare:

ein **schön** geschnitzter Schrank   *a beautifully carved cupboard*

ein **schöner**, geschnitzter Schrank *a beautiful carved cupboard*

This distinction is not always maintained in practice, see **6.1.3g**.

These adjective-adverbs can be used very flexibly in German, often with compounding, in a way which can lack direct equivalents in English, which often expresses ideas like these in a different way:

Er hat mir **brieflich** mitgeteilt, dass er anderer *He informed me by letter that he was of a different* Meinung sei   *opinion*

Widerrechtlich geparkte Fahrzeuge werden *Illegally parked vehicles will be removed at the* **kostenpflichtig** abgeschleppt   *owner's expense*

Das Mitbringen von Hunden ist *Bringing dogs (into the shop) is forbidden by order* **lebensmittelpolizeilich** verboten   *of the food inspectorate*

7.4.2 Adverbs of attitude

Adverbs of attitude express the speaker's comment on the content of the statement, i.e. whether he or she thinks it is probable, likely, welcome, well-known or the like. In many ways their function overlaps with that of the modal particles (see **Chapter 9**). Because they relate to the sentence as a whole they are often called *Satzadverbien* in German.

> **Anscheinend** ist sie erst um sieben gekommen (it appears to the speaker that she only arrived then)
> Er fährt **leider** schon heute ab (the speaker thinks it is unfortunate that he's going)
> **Natürlich/Selbstverständlich** darfst du das machen (the speaker thinks that it goes without saying)
> Sie wird uns **sicher(lich)** helfen (the speaker thinks that it is certain)

These adverbs of attitude have a number of characteristic features. In particular, although they can occur in a negative sentence, they cannot themselves be negated:

Sie kommen **hoffentlich** noch heute (one can't say *nicht hoffentlich*)
Er fährt **leider** nicht weg (*nicht leider* is not possible)
Sie ist **wahrscheinlich** nicht gekommen *(nicht wahrscheinlich … does not make sense)*

Unlike adverbs of manner, they cannot answer the question *Wie?*, but they **can** be used to answer a yes/no question:

Singt sie heute? Ja, **bestimmt/leider/vielleicht/zweifellos**, etc.

(None of these words can answer the question *Wie singt sie?)*

7.4.3 Adverbs of reason

A large group of adverbs indicate cause, circumstance, condition, purpose or reason. The most frequent members of this group are:

allenfalls *at most*	demnach *therefore*	infolgedessen *consequently*
andernfalls *otherwise*	demzufolge (formal) *therefore*	jedenfalls *in any case*
dabei *at the same time*	dennoch *nevertheless*	mithin (formal) *consequently*
dadurch *thereby*	deshalb *therefore*	nichtsdestoweniger *nevertheless*
daher *therefore*	deswegen *therefore*	somit *consequently*
dann *in that case*	folglich *consequently*	sonst *otherwise*
darum *therefore*	gegebenenfalls *if necessary*	trotzdem *nevertheless*
dazu *to that end*	gleichwohl (formal) *nevertheless*	

7.4.4 German adverbs for English verbs or clauses

Many German adverbs in this group have a verb or a subordinate clause construction as their only or most natural idiomatic English equivalent. For example, a frequent equivalent of the English verb **'to like'**, is to use the German adverb *gern* with *haben* or another verb, e.g. *Ich esse gern Käsekuchen* 'I **like** cheesecake'; *Sie hat ihren Lehrer ganz gern* 'She quite **likes** her teacher'.

Using these adverbs appropriately can make a significant difference for English-speaking learners in speaking or writing idiomatic German, and some of the most useful are given below. Sometimes a construction with a verb is also possible in German, so that 'It must be admitted that it isn't easy' could correspond to *Man muss zugeben, dass es nicht einfach ist* **or** to *Es ist freilich nicht einfach*, but in general, the equivalents with adverbs can sound more idiomatic and concise:

Das Problem ist **allerdings** schwierig	*I must admit that the problem is difficult*
Er wurde **allmählich** rot im Gesicht	*He began to get red in the face*
Er hat **andauernd** gespielt	*He kept on playing*
Er ist **angeblich** arbeitslos	*He claims to be unemployed*
Er ist **anscheinend** nicht gekommen	*It seems he didn't come*
Wir können Ihnen **bedauerlicherweise** nicht weiter behilflich sein	*We regret that we can be of no further assistance to you*

Er ist **bekanntlich** ein hervorragender Linguist	*Everyone knows that he is an outstanding linguist*
Hier können Sie **beliebig** lange bleiben	*You can stay here as long as you like*
Am besten behalten Sie das für sich	*You'd better keep that to yourself*
Thomas kommt **bestimmt** mit	*I'm sure Thomas is coming with us/Thomas is sure to be coming with us*
Wir haben **erfreulicherweise** das Spiel gewonnen	*I'm glad to say that we won the game*
Es ist **freilich** nicht einfach	*It **m**ust be admitted that it isn't easy*
Gegebenenfalls kann man auch eine andere Taste wählen	*If the need should arise , another key may be selected*
Im Sommer spielt er **gern** Tennis	*He likes playing tennis in summer*
Hoffentlich erreichen wir die Hütte vor Sonnenuntergang	*I hope we will reach the cabin before sunset*
Sie kann **leider** nicht kommen	*I'm afraid she can't come*
Im Winter spielt er **lieber** Fußball	*He prefers playing football in the winter*
Ich habe Reiten **lieber** als Radfahren	*I prefer riding to cycling*
Er kommt **möglicherweise** noch vor dem Abendessen	*It is possible that he will be coming before dinner*
Sie erschien **nicht**	*She failed to appear*
Die Firma stellt diese Ersatzteile **nicht mehr** her	*The company has ceased/stopped making these spare parts*
Nimm dir **ruhig** noch etwas zu trinken	*Don't be afraid to help yourself to another drink*
Alle Insassen sind **vermutlich** ums Lebe gekommen	*It is presumed that all the passengers lost their lives*
Er las **weiter**	*He continued to read/ went on reading*
Ich habe sie **zufällig** in der Stadt gesehen	*I happened/chanced to see her in town*
Zweifellos wird auch dieses Jahr sehr wenig Schnee im Allgäu fallen	*There is no doubt that very little snow will fall in the Allgäu this year either*

7.4.5 *anders* **and** *sonst*

These two adverbs are very similar in meaning and both can be equivalents of English *else*. However, they are not always interchangeable.

(a) *anders* **means 'else' or 'differently'**

anders was originally the genitive of the adjective *ander*, see **5.5.2**. It usually has the written form *anders*, which differentiates it from the nominative/accusative singular neuter of *ander*, which is normally written *andres* or *anderes*. It is used as follows:

(i) In the meaning 'else' with *jemand* and *niemand*:

Es ist jemand **anders** gekommen	*Somebody else came*
Der Schirm gehört jemand **anders**	*The umbrella belongs to somebody else*
Ich habe mit niemand **anders** gesprochen	*I didn't talk to anybody else*
Sie hat niemand **anders** als dich gesucht	*She wasn't looking for anyone else but you*

In standard German, *anders* is usually invariable in combination with *jemand* and *niemand*, see **5.5.15b**. In southern usage, though, inflected forms of *ander* often occur rather than invariable *anders*, especially in the accusative and dative, e.g. *jemand/niemand anderen*, *jemand/niemand anderem*.

(ii) *anders* is used in the meaning 'else' with *wo*, *wohin*, *woher*, *(n)irgendwo*. Note the various alternative combinations:

woanders/anderswo/irgendwo anders	*somewhere else/elsewhere*
nirgendwo anders	*nowhere else*
Ich gehe **irgendwo anders** hin/**woandershin/ anderswohin**	*I'm going somewhere else*
Er kommt **anderswoher**, nicht aus Hamburg	*He comes from somewhere else, not from Hamburg*
Ich gehe **nirgendwo anders** hin	*I'm not going anywhere else*

(iii) *anders* also means 'different(ly)', 'in a different way':

Er ist ganz **anders** als sein Bruder	*He is quite different to his brother*
Du musst es irgendwie **anders** anpacken	*You'll have to tackle it differently*
Das klingt jetzt **anders**	*That sounds different now*
Compare:	
Es ist etwas **anders**	*It is rather different*
Es ist etwas **and(e)res**	*It is something else*

(b) *sonst* **means 'else' or 'otherwise'**

(i) In some contexts *sonst* can overlap with the meaning of *anders* 'else' or *ander* 'other', 'different'. Compare the following alternatives:

Kannst du **etwas anderes** vorschlagen?	}	*Can you suggest anything else?*
Kannst du **sonst (noch) etwas** vorschlagen?		
War **noch jemand anders** da?	}	*Was anyone else here?*
War **sonst noch jemand** da?		

Niemand anders hat mir geholfen	}	*Nobody else helped me*
Niemand sonst hat mir geholfen		
sonst (irgendwo)/irgendwo sonst/anderswo, etc.	}	*somewhere/anywhere else*
(see **(a)** above)		
Ich muss **noch sonst wohin**	}	*I've got to go somewhere else*
Ich muss **anderswohin**		
Wenn **noch andere** Probleme auftauchen	}	*If any other problems arise, ...*
Wenn **sonst noch** Probleme auftauchen		
Wer kann es **sonst** gesagt haben?		*Who else can have said it?*
(less usual: **Wer anders** kann es gesagt haben?)		

(ii) However, if the sense is clearly 'different' or 'other', only *ander* or, where appropriate, *anders*, can be used. Compare:

Da ist Professor Niebaum und **niemand anders**	*That's Professor Niebaum and nobody else* (i.e. not a different person)
Da ist Professor Niebaum und **sonst niemand**	*Professor Niebaum's there and nobody else* (i.e. he's the only one there)

(iii) If the meaning is clearly 'in addition', 'apart from that', 'otherwise', then only *sonst* is possible:

Wer kommt **sonst** noch?	*Who else is coming?*
Mit wem haben Sie **sonst** noch gesprochen?	*Who else did you talk to?*
Was hat sie **sonst** noch gesagt?	*What else did she say?*
sonst irgendwann	*some/any other time*
Sonst geht alles gut	*Otherwise all is well*
Wir müssen uns beeilen, **sonst** verpassen wir den Zug	*We'll have to hurry, otherwise we'll miss the train*
länger als **sonst**	*longer than usual*

7.4.6 Adverbs in *-weise*

The suffix *-weise* is very productive to form adverbs of manner or attitude.

(a) Adverbs formed from a noun or a verb + - *weise*

These are typically manner adverbs, meaning 'by way of', 'in the form of':

andeutungsweise *by way of a hint*	pfundweise *by the pound*
ausnahmsweise *by way of exception*	probeweise *on approval*
beispielsweise *by way of example*	ruckweise *by jerks*
beziehungsweise *or, as the case may be*	schrittweise *step by step*

(17.1.3b)

bruchstückweise *in the form of fragments*	stückweise *piecemeal*
dutzendweise *by the dozen*	stundenweise *by the hour*
familienweise *in families*	teilweise *partly*
gruppenweise *in groups*	versuchsweise *tentatively*
massenweise *on a massive scale*	zeitweise *temporarily*
paarweise *in pairs*	zwangsweise *compulsorily*
Die Flüchtlinge strömten **massenweise** über die Grenze	*The refugees were streaming in great numbers across the border*
Sein neues Buch ist **stellenweise** ganz gut	*His new book is quite good in places*
Er wird **stundenweise** bezahlt	*He is paid by the hour*

These forms were originally only adverbs, but they are increasingly being used as adjectives as well:

eine **probeweise** Anstellung   der **stückweise** Verkauf   eine **stundenweise** Bezahlung

eine **ruckweise** Bewegung   die **stufenweisen** Fortschritte   die **teilweisen** Verbesserungen

eine **schrittweise** Anhebung des Rentenalters auf 70 Jahre (*HMP*)

However, this usage is only generally considered acceptable with nouns which denote a process, as in the examples above. They are sometimes used with other nouns, e.g. *der stückweise Preis* or *eine auszugsweise Urkunde*, but this is considered incorrect.

(b) Adverbs in *-erweise*

Many adverbs of attitude are formed from adjectives or participles with the suffix *-weise* and the linking element *-er-*, e.g. *möglicherweise* from *möglich*, *bezeichnenderweise* from *bezeichnend*. Similarly:

bedauerlicherweise *regrettably*	liebenswürdigerweise *obligingly*
begreiflicherweise *understandably*	möglicherweise *possibly, perhaps*
dummerweise *foolishly*	natürlicherweise *of course*
erstaunlicherweise *astonishingly*	normalerweise *normally*
glücklicherweise *fortunately*	unglücklicherweise *unfortunately*
interessanterweise *interestingly*	unnötigerweise *unnecessarily*
komischerweise *funnily*	unvermuteterweise *unexpectedly*

As these are adverbs of **attitude**, indicating a comment by the speaker on the statement, their meaning is different from that of the adverb of **manner** from

which they are derived, and also from that of a corresponding phrase with the prepositions *auf* or *in* and the noun *Weise*. Compare:

Er war **merkwürdig** müde	*He was strangely tired*
Er war **merkwürdigerweise** müde	*Strange to say, he was tired*
Er war **in merkwürdiger Weise** müde	*He was tired in an unusual way*
Er hat **vernünftig** geantwortet	*He replied sensibly*
Er hat **vernünftigerweise** geantwortet	*Sensibly enough, he replied*
Er hat **auf vernünftige Weise** geantwortet	*He replied in a sensible way*

Adverbs in -*erweise* are **never** used as adjectives.

7.5 Adverbs of degree

7.5.1 Common adverbs of degree and their use

(a) Adverbs of degree typically emphasize, amplify or tone down another part of speech

They are sometimes called 'intensifiers', and they are most often used to modify adjectives or other adverbs. The following are the most frequent in German:

außerordentlich *extraordinarily*	genug *enough*	sehr (see **7.5.2**) *very*
äußerst *extremely*	geradezu *virtually*	überaus *extremely*
beinahe *almost, nearly*	höchst *extremely, highly*	verhältnismäßig *relatively*
besonders *especially*	kaum *hardly, scarcely*	völlig *completely*
durchaus *absolutely, thoroughly*	mäßig *moderately*	vollkommen *completely*
etwas *a little*	nahezu *virtually*	wenig *little*
fast *almost, nearly*	recht *really*	ziemlich *fairly*
ganz *quite*	relativ *relatively*	zu *too*

eine **durchaus** selbstkritische Einsicht	*a thoroughly self-critical understanding*
Der Kaffee ist **etwas** süß	*The coffee is a little sweet*
Er fährt schnell **genug**	*He's driving fast enough*
Das ist **geradezu** lächerlich	*That is little short of ridiculous*
Die Suppe war nur **mäßig** warm	*The soup was (only) moderately warm*
eine **nahezu** optimale Lösung des Problems	*a virtually optimal solution to the problem*
Er arbeitet **recht** gut	*He works really well*
ein **überaus** ehrliches Geschäft	*a thoroughly honest transaction*
Dieser Schriftsteller ist **wenig** bekannt	*This author is little known*

This list is not exhaustive, and many more occur, especially in colloquial speech, e.g. *echt, enorm, irrsinnig, ungeheuer, unheimlich, verdammt*.

(b) Some adverbs of degree are used mainly with adjectives in the comparative or superlative

The following are the most frequent:

> bedeutend *significantly*: Die Donau ist **bedeutend** länger als der Rhein
> beträchtlich *considerably:* Die Zugspitze ist **beträchtlich** höher als die anderen Gipfel in den
>   bayrischen Alpen
> denkbar *possible*: Sie hat den **denkbar** schlechtesten Eindruck gemacht
> entschieden *decidedly:* Er hat **entschieden** schlechter gespielt als vor einem Jahr
> viel *much:* Diese Schule ist **viel** größer als meine
> weit *far*: Der Wagen ist **weit** schneller, als ich dachte
> bei weitem (by) *far:* Er ist **bei weitem** besser als Jochen/der Beste in der Klasse
> weitaus (*by*) *far*: Isabella ist **weitaus** reifer, als man ihrem Alter nach schließen dürfte
> Deutschland blieb natürlich auch der **weitaus** wichtigste Handelspartner der Schweiz (*NZZ*)
>   wesentlich *substantially*: Er hat heute **wesentlich** besser gespielt

(c) *hoch* **'highly'**

hoch is used as an intensifier with some abstract adjectives, and it is usually compounded with them: *hochempfindlich, hochfrequent, hochinteressant, hochgeschätzt, hochqualifiziert, hochwahrscheinlich*. The superlative form *höchst* is used in the same way in a few cases, e.g. *höchstwahrscheinlich*.

(d) *lange* **and** *längst*

lange and *längst* are used before a negative to indicate a considerable difference in degree. In such contexts *lange* is often preceded by *noch*:

Das ist **noch lange nicht** gut genug	*That is not nearly good enough*
Dieses Buch ist **lange/längst nicht** so gut wie sein letztes	*This book isn't nearly as good as his last one*

7.5.2 *sehr*

sehr is chiefly used as an adverb of degree (= 'very'):

> Sie weiß es **sehr** gut   Das ist **sehr** nett von dir

However, it has a wider range of use than English *very*.

(a) It can modify a verb or phrase, corresponding to English 'very much'

Ich bewundere sie **sehr**   Sie ist **sehr** dafür Das interessiert mich **sehr**

Er hat sich **sehr** verändert Das ist **sehr** nach meinem Geschmack

(b) After *so*, *wie* **or** *zu*, **it can denote degree, like English 'much'**

In these contexts *sehr* is used rather than *viel*:

> Nicht **so sehr** die Handlung wie der Stil hat mich gefesselt
> **Wie sehr** ich es bedaure, dass er durchgefallen ist!
> Er hat es sich **zu sehr** zu Herzen genommen

7.6 Interrogative adverbs

The German interrogative adverbs introduce questions and correspond to the English *wh-* **words**. They fall into similar groups to other adverbs:

(a) Time

wann?	*when?*	**Wann** kommt der Zug in Gelsenkirchen an?
bis wann?	*until when?*, *how long?*	**Bis wann** bleibt ihr hier?
	by when?	**Bis wann** seid ihr damit fertig?
seit wann?	*since when?*, *how long?*	**Seit wann** spielen Sie Tennis?
wie lange?	*how long?*	**Wie lange** wollt ihr heute noch spielen?
wie oft?	*how often?*	**Wie oft** fährt der Zug nach Putbus?

(b) Place and direction (see also 7.2.1)

wo?	*where?*	**Wo** steckt die Angelika jetzt?
wohin?	*where (to)?*	**Wohin** fahrt ihr heute?/**Wo** fahrt ihr heute **hin**?
woher?	*where from?*	**Woher** kommt der Wagen?/**Wo** kommt der Wagen **her**?
von wo? (*coll.*)	*where from?*	**Von wo** kommt der Wagen?

(c) Manner

wie?	*how?*	**Wie** habt ihr das nur gemacht?
inwiefern? inwieweit?	*in how far*	**Inwiefern**/**Inwieweit** ist das für mich überhaupt relevant?

(d) Reason

warum?	*why?*	**Warum** wollt ihr nicht gehen?

was? (*coll.*)	*why?*	**Was** rennst du denn so schnell? (see **5.3.3f**)
wieso? (*coll.*)	*why?*	**Wieso** wollt ihr nicht gehen?
weshalb? (*formal*)	*why?*	**Weshalb** wollen Sie nicht gehen?
weswegen (*formal)*	*why?*	**Weswegen** hast du mich eigentlich geheiratet? (*Wilkenloh*)
wegen was (*coll.*)	*why?*	**Wegen was** hätte ich den Mann anklagen sollen? (*NüN*)
wozu?	*what ... for?*	**Wozu** benutzt man das?

These interrogative adverbs can also introduce indirect questions (see **14.4.4** and **17.2.2c**), e.g.:

> Er hat mich gefragt, **wann** ich morgen komme
> Ich habe dir doch gesagt, **wie** man das macht

For the interrogative pronouns *was* and *wer*, see **5.3.3**. For the interrogative determiner *welcher*, see **5.3.1**.

7.7 Comparison of adverbs

Like adjectives (see section **6.5**), adverbs which denote a quality or a quantity can have comparative and superlative forms, e.g.:

positive degree:	Robert redet **laut**	*Robert talks loudly*
comparative degree:	Erich redet **lauter**	*Erich talks louder*
superlative degree:	Henning redet **am lautesten**	*Henning talks the loudest*

7.7.1 Formation of the comparative and superlative of adverbs

(a) Regular formation of the comparative and superlative

(i) The comparative is formed with the ending *-er* and is identical to the comparative of adjectives (see **6.5.1**):

Vettel fährt aber schnell**er**   Ulrike musste etwas langsam**er** sprechen

(ii) The superlative of adverbs is formed with the ending **-** *st*, as with adjectives, but it is always used with the preposition *am* and the weak adjective ending *-en* (see also **6.5.3a**):

| Vettel fährt **am schnellsten** | *Vettel drives fastest* |
| Von der Burg aus sieht man es **am klarsten** | *You can see it most clearly from the castle* |

Am einfachsten steigst du in Innsbruck um   *The simplest is for you to change trains in Innsbruck*

(b) Irregularities in the formation of the comparative and superlative of adverbs

(i) Adjectives with irregular comparative and superlative forms have the same basic irregular forms if they are used as adverbs, e.g:

> Monika spielt gut – Eva spielt **besser** – Antje spielt **am besten**
>
> Peter ist lange geblieben – Thomas ist **länger** geblieben – Klaus ist am **längsten** geblieben

(ii) A few adverbs have irregular comparative and superlative forms:

bald	**eher**	am **ehest**en	*soon*
gern	**lieber**	am **liebst**en	*willingly, gladly*
oft	**öfter**		*often*
viel	**mehr**	das **meist**e	*much, many*
wenig	wenig**er**/**minder**	das wenig**ste**/das **mindeste**	*little, few*

The adverb *oft* has no commonly used superlative form (*am öftesten* is very unusual), and the nearest equivalent to English 'most often' is *am häufigsten* 'most frequently'. The comparative *öfter* can be used in an 'absolute' sense (see **6.5.2e**), with the meaning 'fairly often', e.g. *Ich war öfter bei ihr in Berlin.*

Regular comparative and superlative forms of *bald*, i.e. *bälder/balder* and *am bäldesten/baldesten* occur occasionally in writing, but they are nowadays considered non-standard regionalisms.

(iii) Notes on the use of the comparative and superlative forms of *viel* and *wenig*:

- *mehr* and *weniger* are adverbs, not adjectives and so they do not have endings when used with a following noun, e.g. *Er hat weniger Geld als ich*; *Sie hat mehr Verstand als du.*
- *minder* is only used in formal written German. It is only used to qualify adjectives, most commonly with a preceding *nicht*, e.g.: *Anderswo zwischen Ostsee und Erzgebirge ist die Lage der Denkmalpflege nicht minder prekär.* (*Spiegel*)
- *mindest* can be used for 'least' in the sense 'slightest' but its use is restricted to formal registers: *Er hatte nicht die mindesten Aussichten zu gewinnen.*
- *nichts weniger als* normally means 'anything but', i.e. the same as *alles andere als*, e.g. *Er ist nichts weniger als klug* 'He is anything but clever'. However, some Germans use *nichts weniger als* to mean 'nothing less than'. To avoid ambiguity a positive statement can be used, e.g. *Das ist wirklich katastrophal* 'That is nothing less than catastrophic'.

7.7.2 Other superlative forms of adverbs

(a) Absolute adverbial superlatives can be formed in *aufs …ste*

e.g. *aufs einfach ste*, *aufs genau este*, etc. This form is common in formal writing. It can be spelled with a small or a capital letter: *aufs einfachste/aufs Einfachste* (see **21.2.1**). If emphasis is needed the preposition and definite article can be written out in full: *auf das einfachste/Einfachste*:

Der große runde Tisch war **aufs festlichste/ Festlichste** geschmückt (*Dürrenmatt*)	*The large round table was decorated in a most festive way*
Herr Naumann war **aufs äußerste/Äußerste** gereizt (*MM*)	*Mr Naumann was exceedingly irritated*
Lange Zeit hat der Ministerpräsident jeden Verdacht **auf das heftigste/Heftigste** dementiert	*For a long time the Prime Minister denied all suspicions most vehemently*

(b) Adverbial superlatives in - *st*

These consist simply of the superlative stem, whether regular or irregular. Some are in common use in speech and writing, often with special meanings:

äußerst *extremely*	längst *for a long time*, *a long time ago*	unlängst *recently*
höchst *highly*, *extremely*	meist *mostly*	
jüngst (*elev.*) *recently*	möglichst *as … as possible*; *if at all possible*	

Die Situation ist **höchst** problematisch	*The situation is highly problematic*
Er ist **längst** gestorben	*He died a long time ago*
Sie ist **unlängst** zurückgekehrt	*She got back recently*
Du musst einen **möglichst** guten Eindruck machen	*You must make the best possible impression*

The following are typically used in formulaic idioms in formal registers:

eiligst *as quickly as possible*	herzlichst *most cordially*	sorgfältigst *most carefully*
freundlichst *friendly*	höflichst *respectfully*	tunlichst *absolutely*
gefälligst, gütigst *kindly*	schleunigst *as promptly as possible*	

Ich danke Ihnen **herzlichst**	*I thank you most cordially*
Sie werden **höflichst** gebeten, diesen Irrtum ohne Verzug zu berichtigen	*You are respectfully requested to rectify this mistake without delay*
Wir machten uns **schleunigst** aus dem Staube (*Dönhoff*)	*We quickly got up off the floor*
Jeder Lärm ist **tunlichst** zu vermeiden	*Any noise is to be avoided as far as possible*

New formations in **-** *st* are frequent, especially in journalism, where their conciseness can be exploited:

Die Böhmendeutschen sind nicht ausgesiedelt, sondern **brutalst** vertrieben worden (*Presse*) *The Germans of Bohemia were not resettled, but driven out in the most brutal fashion*

Some forms in *-st*, i.e. *best-, größt-, höchst-, kleinst-, kürzest-* can be compounded with *möglich* to mean 'the best possible', etc.:

die **bestmöglich**e Lösung   die **kleinstmöglich**e Summe

der **größtmöglich**e Schaden   der **kürzestmöglich**e Weg

(c) Adverbial superlatives in *-stens*

These forms typically have special idiomatic meanings:

bestens *very well*	mindestens *at least*	strengstens *strictly*
frühestens *at the earliest*	nächstens *shortly, soon*	wärmstens *most warmly*
höchstens *at the most*	schnellstens *as quickly as possible*	wenigstens *at least*
meistens *mostly*	spätestens *at the latest*	

Es kommen **höchstens** dreißig Gäste	*At most thirty guests are coming*
Ich stehe **meistens** früh auf	*I mostly get up early*
Ich brauche **mindestens** dreitausend Euro für diese Reise	*I need at least three thousand euros for this trip*
Wir kommen **spätestens** um sechs an	*We'll arrive at six at the latest*
Rauchen ist **strengstens** verboten	*Smoking is strictly prohibited*
Er könnte **wenigstens** anrufen	*He might at least ring up*

wenigstens and *mindestens* are often interchangeable, but *mindestens* emphasizes the idea of the absolute minimum possible rather more strongly. It is used less often when no actual figure is mentioned, in which case *zumindest* (see **(c)** below) is a possible, rather more emphatic alternative to *wenigstens*.

(d) Adverbial superlatives in *zu- … -st*

Only a few of these are in current use, all with idiomatic meanings:

zumindest *at (the very) least*   zuoberst *(right) on top* zuvorderst *(right) at the front*

zunächst *at first, in the first place* zutiefst *(very) deeply*

Er hätte uns **zumindest** grüßen können   *He could at least have said hello to us*

Das Angebot sah **zunächst** verlockend aus

The offer looked attractive at first

Sie nahm das Buch, das **zuoberst** lag

She took the book which was lying on top

Der Angeklagte bereut sein Fehlverhalten **zutiefst** (*NUZ*)

The accused deeply regrets his inappropriate behaviour

8 Numerals

This chapter deals with words for NUMBERS and NUMERALS and their associated forms and uses:

8.1 Cardinal numbers, such as 'one', 'two', 'three', etc.
8.2 Ordinal numbers, such as 'first', 'second', 'third', etc.
8.3 Fractions and decimals
8.4 Other **numerical usages**
8.5 Times and **dates**
8.6 Addresses

8.1 Cardinal numbers

Cardinal numbers are the numerals used in counting. *Table 8.1* illustrates the most important forms

TABLE 8.1   The forms of the cardinal numbers

0 null	**10** zehn	**20** zwanzig	**30** dreißig
1 eins	**11** elf	**21** einundzwanzig	**40** vierzig
2 zwei	**12** zwölf	**22** zweiundzwanzig	**50** fünfzig
3 drei	**13** dreizehn	**23** dreiundzwanzig	**60** sechzig
4 vier	**14** vierzehn	**24** vierundzwanzig	**70** siebzig
5 fünf	**15** fünfzehn	**25** fünfundzwanzig	**80** achtzig
6 sechs	**16** sechzehn	**26** sechsundzwanzig	**90** neunzig
7 sieben	**17** siebzehn	**27** siebenundzwanzig	**91** einundneunzig
8 acht	**18** achtzehn	**28** achtundzwanzig	**92** zweiundneunzig
9 neun	**19** neunzehn	**29** neunundzwanzig	**93** dreiundneunzig
100 (ein)hundert		**1000** (ein)tausend	
101 hundert(und)eins		**1099** tausend(und)neunundneunzig	
102 hundertzwei		**1100** (ein)tausendeinhundert/elfhundert	
151 (ein)hunderteinundfünfzig		**2305** zweitausenddreihundertfünf	

200 zweihundert	**10 000** zehntausend
535 fünfhundertfünfunddreißig	**50 000** fünfzigtausend
999 neunhundertneunundneunzig	**100 000** hunderttausend

564 297 fünfhundertvierundsechzigtausendzweihundertsiebenundneunzig

1 000 000 eine Million	**1 000 000 000** eine Milliarde
2 000 000 zwei Millionen	**1 000 000 000 000** eine Billion

5 276 423 fünf Millionen zweihundertsechsundsiebzigtausendvierhundertdreiundzwanzig

8.1.1 *Spoken and written forms of the cardinal numbers*

(a) Long numbers are rarely written out in full

The traditional rule was to use numerals for numbers above 12. Although this is no longer adhered to strictly, numbers of more than two syllables are rarely written out in full, and, in general, figures are used in written German far more often than is usual in English.

(b) Numbers higher than a thousand

These can be given with **spaces** every three digits, i.e. *564 297*, or with a **point**, e.g. *564 . 297*. This is quite different to practice in English-speaking countries and needs to be carefully noted to avoid confusion, especially as a comma is used in German rather than a point to indicate decimals, see **8.3.1d**.

(c) *hundert* **or** *einhundert*; *tausend* **or** *eintausend*?

English speakers tend to overuse the longer form *einhundert* because of the similarity to English 'a hundred'. However, it is used less frequently than the shorter alternative *hundert*, and the long form *eintausend* is less usual than simple *tausend*. However, *ein* is normally inserted in complex numbers, e.g. 101.100 *hunderteintausendeinhundert*.

(d) *und* **can be used between** *hundert* **and** *eins*

However, English speakers tend to overuse this, because of the similarity to English 'a hundred **and** one'. Nevertheless, *und* is optional (and less frequent in practice), as in *hundert(und)eins, zweihundert(und)eins*, as also between *tausend* and tens or units, e.g. *tausend(und)eins, viertausend(und)elf, zwanzigtausend(und)zweiunddreißig*.

(e) *eine Million* **,** *eine Milliarde* **and** *eine Billion* **are nouns**

They thus have a plural ending where necessary, e.g. *zwei Million en*; *fünf Million en vierhunderttausend*. Numbers higher than *eine Milliarde* are rare in normal use, so that, for instance, *tausend Milliarden* is more usual than *eine Billion*.

English speakers should note that *Milliarde* is the equivalent of what is usually referred to as 'billion' in British and American usage, i.e. a thousand million (i.e. 10^9), whereas the rarely used German *Billion* is a million million (i.e. 10^{12}).

The plural form is used when **one** million is followed by a decimal: *1,4 Millionen Euro*. This is spoken as *einskommavier Millionen Euro*.

Million is commonly abbreviated as *Mill.*, and *Milliarde* as *Mrd*.

(f) *zwo* **is often heard for** *zwei*

This otherwise archaic form is used to avoid confusion with *drei*, especially on the telephone. However, it has become common in other spoken contexts and is sometimes extended to *2* in complex numbers, e.g. *zwounddreißig*, and the ordinal *der zwote*.

(g) The numbers from 2 to 12 have alternative forms with an additional - *e*

e.g. *sechs e*, *neun e*, *elf e*. These are common in colloquial speech (especially in the South) for emphasis, particularly when stating the time: *Ich bin um fünfe aufgestanden*, and in counting scores in card games.

(h) Longer numbers are often stated in pairs

e.g. *4711* (a brand of Eau de Cologne), spoken *siebenundvierzig elf*. This usage was formerly common with telephone numbers, so that a number like *(0621) 54 87 23* would be given as *null sechs zwo eins – vierundfünfzig siebenundachtzig dreiundzwanzig*. However, this is now less frequent in practice.

(i) Usage with years

The years from *1100* to *1999* are usually stated in hundreds in a similar way to English, so that *1996* will usually be given as *neunzehnhundertsechsundneunzig*.

However, years since the millennium are given with *zweitausend*, so that, for example, *2009* is *zweitausendneun* and *2021* is *zweitausendeinundzwanzig*. This differs from English, where using 'twenty' has become established.

(j) Using *beide* **for English 'two'**

beide is often used where English uses the numeral 'two'. This is particularly the case where it is a question of 'two and only two' of the relevant items, see **5.5.3b**, e.g. *Ich möchte diese beiden Hemden kaufen* 'I would like to buy these two shirts'.

(k) *fünfzehn* **and** *fünfzig*

These are often pronounced *fuff zehn* and *fuff zig* in colloquial speech.

(l) Colloquial German *zig*

Colloquial German uses *zig* to indicate an indefinite large number, corresponding to English 'umpteen':

Ich kenne sie schon **zig** Jahre	*I've known her umpteen years*
Die ist mit **zig** Sachen in die Kurve gefahren	*She took the bend at a fair old speed*

The compounds *zigmal* 'umpteen times', *zigtausend* 'umpteen thousand', etc. are also often heard. These forms are sometimes seen written with an initial hyphen: -*zig*, -*zigmal*, etc., but this is not standard.

(m) Cardinal numbers used as nouns

If these refer to the numeral, they are feminine (see **1.1.5d**) and have a plural in -*en* if required:

Die Sieben ist eine Glückszahl	In Mathe habe ich nie **eine Fünf** gehabt
Im Abitur hat er **drei Zweien** und **eine Eins** gekriegt	**Die Hundert** ist eine dreistellige Zahl

The feminine nouns *die Hundert* and *die Tausend*, referring to the numbers as such, are to be distinguished from the neuters *das Hundert* and *das Tausend*, which refer to quantities (see **8.1.5b**).

(n) The numeral 7 is usually written in handwriting with a stroke

i.e. **7** This helps to distinguish it from 1, which Germans always write with an initial sweep, i.e. *1*.

8.1.2 *eins, ein, einer 'one'*

(a) The form *eins* **is used in isolation as a numeral**

i.e. in counting and the like:

Wir müssen mit der (Linie) eins zum Bahnhof fahren	*We've got to take the number one* (i.e. tram, bus) *to the station*

This form is also used with decimals (see **8.3.1d**): *einskommasieben*

(b) The form *ein* **is used with a following noun**

It agrees with the following noun for case and gender and has the same endings as the indefinite article, see **Table 4.3**:

ein Tisch	*one table*
eine Kirche	*one church*
ein Buch	*one book*
durch **einen** Fehler	*by one mistake*
aus **einem** Grund	*for one reason*

The **numerical** sense of *ein* (i.e. 'one') is distinguished from the **indefinite article** *ein* (i.e. 'a, an') in speech by always being pronounced in full, see **4.1.2b**. In writing, if there is a possibility of ambiguity in context, the numerical sense can be made clear typographically, although in practice this is quite rare, e.g.:

éin Buch   *ein Buch*   ein Buch   **ein** Buch

After *hundert* and *tausend*, e.g. *301*, *2001*, there is considerable uncertainty as to how or whether to decline forms of *ein*.

One possibility is to use a **declined form of** *-ein* with a **singular** noun, e.g. *ein Buch mit dreihundertundeiner Seite*. With this option *-und-* is usually included after *hundert* or *tausend*. The combinations *hundertundeine Mark* and *Tausendundeine Nacht* 'The 1001 Nights' are well established idiomatically.

Many Germans feel this sounds odd, and use the alternative of **undeclined** *-ein*, with a **plural** noun (and most often with no *-und-* after *hundert* or *tausend*), e.g. *ein Buch mit dreihundertein Seiten*.

As this can sound rather strange, too, a further alternative, using the **invariant** form *-eins* with a **plural** noun, is increasingly preferred (often with no *-und-*), e.g. *ein Buch mit dreihundert(und)eins Seiten*; *Wir haben hundert(und)eins tolle Ideen*.

(c) The form *einer* **is used as a pronoun**

Its declension is given in **Table 5.11**. For further details see **5.5.4**.

einer der Männer *one of the men*   **ein(e)s** der Häuser *one of the houses*
Wir haben einen Schäferhund, und ihr habt auch **einen**, nicht?

(d) After a determiner, *ein-* **declines like an adjective**

e.g. *der eine …*, 'the one …'

Das Dorf hatte bloß **die eine** Straße   Mit **seinem einen** Auge sieht er schlecht

(e) *ein* **has no ending in a few constructions**

(i) When followed by *oder* or *bis* and **another number**, e.g. *ein oder zwei*, *ein bis zwei:*

Ich pflückte **ein oder zwei** Rosen   Wir mussten **ein bis zwei** Tage warten
Er kam vor **ein oder zwei** Wochen   Ich sprach mit **ein oder zwei** anderen

(ii) When followed by *andere* or *derselbe*, *ein* can be declined or left endingless:

Ein(er) oder der andere machte eine kurze Bemerkung   *One or other made a brief remark*
An **ein(em)** und demselben Tag machten drei Firmen Pleite   *On one and the same day three firms went bankrupt*

If *ein* is followed by *mehrere* it is usually inflected: *vor einem* (rarely: *ein*) *oder mehreren Monaten* 'one or more months ago'.

(iii) *ein* is not inflected in *ein Uhr* 'one o'clock', see **Table 8.3**. (Compare *eine Uhr* 'a/one clock')

8.1.3 Declension of cardinal numbers

Apart from *ein* 'one' (see **8.1.2**), cardinal numbers do not usually decline to show case or gender. Thus:

gegen sechs Kinder   die sechs Kinder

mit sechs Kindern   mit den sechs Kindern

wegen sechs Kindern   wegen der sechs Kinder

However, there are one or two special contexts where numbers can have endings to show case.

(a) *zwei* **and** *drei* **can have the genitive forms** *zweier* **and** *dreier*

These forms are only used in formal writing, and although they are quite frequent there, their use is wholly optional, e.g.:

Der Taufe **zweier** Kinder aus der Ehe stimmte er zu (*MM*)   *He agreed to the baptism of two children of the marriage*

die vielerlei Eindrücke **dreier** anstrengender Tage (*Zeit*)   *the various impressions from three strenuous days*

A following adjective has the strong ending *-er* (see **6.1.3a**), as in the second example above. A following adjective used as a noun can have the strong **or** the weak ending, e.g.: *die Seligkeit zweier Verliebter* or *die Seligkeit zweier Verliebten*. In less formal registers a phrase with *von* is always used, e.g. *die Eindrücke von drei anstrengenden Tagen*, and this is also an acceptable alternative in writing.

(b) The numbers from *2* **to** *12* **can have a dative in** *-en* **when used in isolation**

i.e. when no noun follows:

Nur einer von **zweien** ist als gesund zu bezeichnen (*Zeit*)
als sich die Tür hinter den **dreien** geschlossen hatte (*Welt*)

Using the form with an ending is optional, but it is quite common, even in spoken German, especially with the numbers *2*, *3* and *4*.

It is most frequently used for added emphasis, as well as in set phrases such as *auf allen vieren* 'on all fours', *mit dreien* 'with three (Jacks)' (in the card game *Skat*), and in the formula *zu zweien, dreien, vieren*, etc. 'in twos, threes, fours', e.g. *dieser Spaziergang zu zweien*.

An alternative means of expressing 'in twos, threes, fours', etc. is to use the preposition *zu* with a form of the numeral in *-t* (i.e. using the stem of the ordinal, see **8.2.1**), e.g. *zu zweit*, *zu dritt*, *zu viert*. A distinction can be made between *zu zweien* 'in pairs' and *zu zweit* 'as a pair' (i.e. when there are only two). Compare:

Sie gingen **zu zweien** über die Straße   *They crossed the road in pairs*
Sie gingen **zu zweit** über die Straße   *The two of them crossed the road together*

However, this distinction is not always upheld consistently.

8.1.4 Adjectives from cardinal numbers

Adjectives can be formed from cardinal numbers with the suffix *-er*, e.g. *fünf er*, *zehn er*. This form is used to denote value and measurement, or with reference to years. When they are used as adjectives, they do not decline (see **6.1.3g**). When they are used as nouns, they have the ending *-n* in the dative case:

Ich habe zwei Zehner und einen Hunderter   *I've got two ten euro notes and a hundred euro note*
zwei Fünfziger   *two fifty cent pieces* **or** *two fifty euro notes*
zehn achtziger Marken   *ten 80 cent stamps*
eine Achtziger   *an 80 cent stamp*
die Zehner und die Einer   *tens and units*
eine Sechserpackung   *a six-pack*
in den neunziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts   *in the 1990s*
ein Mann in den Vierzigern   *a man in his forties*
eine Mittfünfzigerin   *a woman in her mid-fifties*
ein Dreitausender   *a mountain (over) 3000 metres high*
ein zweiundzwanziger Heppenheimer Krötenbrunnen   *a '22 Heppenheimer Krötenbrunnen* (i.e. a wine vintage 2022)

8.1.5 hundert, tausend, Dutzend

(a) *hundert* and *tausend* are not declined when they are used as numerals

hundert, **zweihundert** Häuser   *a hundred, two hundred houses*
tausend Bücher, **sechstausend** Bücher   *a thousand books, six thousand books*

(b) *das Hundert*, *das Tausend* and *das Dutzend* are used as nouns of quantity

das zweite **Dutzend**, **Hundert, Tausend**   *the second dozen, hundred, thousand*
ein halbes **Dutzend**, ein halbes **Hundert**   *half a dozen, half a hundred* (i.e. fifty)

zwei **Dutzend** Eier   *two dozen eggs*

(c) These words can be used to refer to an indefinite quantity

i.e. to indicate a rough approximation. When they are used in this way, especially after quantifiers such as *einige*, *mehrere*, *viele*, etc., they can be spelled with an initial capital or – rather more frequently in the case of *hundert* and *tausend* – a small letter. In the nominative and accusative they can have the plural ending *-e*, although this is somewhat less frequent (see **2.7.3**):

In dem Stadion warteten mehrere **Hundert(e)/ hundert(e)** Fans auf den Spielbeginn	*In the stadium many hundreds of fans were waiting for the match to start*
In Sonderzügen kamen viele **Tausend(e)/ tausend(e)** Flüchtlinge am Bahnhof an	*Many thousands of refugees arrived in special trains at the station*
Zunächst konnten wir nur einige **Dutzend(e)/ dutzend(e)** Vermisste identifizieren	*At first we were only able to identify a few of the missing persons*

In the genitive plural, they have the ending *-er* if no determiner precedes. A following adjective has the strong endings:

inmitten **Tausender/tausender** fröhlicher New Yorker (*HMP*)	*in the midst of thousands of happy New Yorkers*

However, they have the ending *-e* if a preceding determiner has the genitive plural ending *-er* : *die Ersparnisse vieler Tausende/tausende*.

- *Dutzend* does not take a plural ending when used as a measurement noun in constructions such as *drei Dutzend (Eier)* 'three dozen (eggs)', see **1.2.8**.
- For the use of the genitive, apposition or a phrase with *von* after the nouns *Dutzend, Hundert, Tausend*, see **2.7.3**.

8.1.6 *Qualification of cardinal numbers*

Numerals may be modified by certain adverbs of degree

bis zu *up to*	knapp *barely*	über *over, more than*
unter *under*	zwischen *between*	

an die, gegen, rund, um, ungefähr, circa/zirka *(abbrev.:* ca.*) about, approximately*

Although some of these adverbs look like prepositions which would usually be followed by a noun in the accusative or dative case, when they are used in these constructions with a following numeral they have no influence on the case of the following noun phrase, and *an die* is followed by strong adjective endings:

Bis zu zehn Kinder können mitfahren	*Up to ten children can come with us*
Sie ist **zwischen 30 und 40 Jahre** alt	*She is between 30 and 40 years old*
An die vierzig ausländische Gäste haben teilgenommen	*Up to forty foreign guests took part*
Mit **über tausend Zuschauern** war die Vorstellung gut besucht	*With more than a thousand spectators the performance was well attended*

However, when they are used as prepositions, the following noun phrase is in the accusative or dative case, as normally required by the particular preposition:

Kinder **unter sieben Jahren** zahlen die Hälfte	*Children under seven years old pay half-price*
Kinder **über sechs Jahre** zahlen voll	*Children over six years old pay the full price*
geeignet für Kinder **zwischen sieben und zwölf Jahren**	*suitable for children between the ages of seven and twelve*

It is quite straightforward to work out whether these words are being used as **adverbs** (when they do not influence the selection of case) or **prepositions** (when they do), since in contexts where they are being used as adverbs the sentence would still be correct if they were left out: *Zehn Kinder können mitfahren*.

But if they are being used as prepositions, they cannot be omitted –*Kinder sieben Jahren zahlen die Hälfte* is, for example, not a grammatical sentence.

A few other adverbs can be used with numbers, e.g.:

Es dauert gut drei Stunden	*It lasts a good three hours*
Er gab mir **ganze** fünf Euro	*He gave me all of five euros*

8.2 Ordinal numbers

ORDINAL NUMBERS are those used as adjectives like English '(the) first, second, third', etc. The forms of ordinal numbers in German are given in **Table 8.2**, with the definite article. Most are formed by adding the **suffix** *-te* to the cardinals **2–19** and *-ste* to the cardinals from **20** upwards, but *das erste* 'first', *das dritte* 'third' and *das siebte* 'seventh' are exceptions to this pattern (the alternative regular form *das siebente* is less frequent, but it is often used in eastern Germany and Austria).

The forms of the ordinal numbers

1 das erste	**20** der zwanzigste
2 das zweite	**21** der einundzwanzigste
3 das dritte	**27** der siebenundzwanzigste
4 das vierte	
5 das fünfte	**30** der dreißigste
6 das sechste	**40** der vierzigste
7 das siebte	**50** der fünfzigste
8 das achte	**60** der sechzigste
9 das neunte	**70** der siebzigste
10 das zehnte	**80** der achtzigste
11 das elfte	**90** der neunzigste
12 das zwölfte	
13 das dreizehnte	**100** der hundertste
14 das vierzehnte	**101** der hundert(und)erste
15 das fünfzehnte	**117** der hundertsiebzehnte
16 das sechzehnte	
17 das siebzehnte	**1000** der tausendste
18 das achtzehnte	
19 das neunzehnte	**1 000 000** der millionste
5437 das fünftausendvierhundertsiebenunddreißigste	

All ordinal numbers are declined like adjectives.

(a) Ordinal numbers are indicated in writing by using a full stop after the numeral

 am **14**. Mai   das **275**. Regiment   die **12**. Klasse

This is the only usual means of indicating ordinal numbers in writing. Abbreviations, e.g. *am 5 ten Mai*, are no longer used.

(b) Ordinal numbers can be used as nouns

They are then written with initial capitals like other adjectives used as nouns:

 jeder **Dritte**   Er kam als **Erster**   Wer ist der **Zweite**?

As with other adjectives, a small initial letter is used if the noun is understood, e.g. *Anke war die erste Frau in unserem Kreis, aber wer war die zweite?* (see **6.2.1**).

(c) Equivalents for English 'to be the first to'

For 'to be the first to', German uses either *als Erster*, or *der Erste* followed by a relative clause:

Die Russen **waren die Ersten**, die einen künstlichen Erdsatelliten um den Globus schickten; sie brachten **als Erste** einen Menschen in den Weltraum (*Zeit*)	*The Russians were the first to send an artificial satellite around the earth; they were the first to put a man into space*
Dann musste Konstantin **als Erster** über den Graben (*Dönhoff*)	*Then Konstantin had to be the first to cross the ditch*

(d) The form *der wievielte* is used to enquire about numbers

Das **wievielte** Kind ist das jetzt?	*How many children is that now?*
Den **Wievielten** haben wir heute?	*What's the date today?*
Zum **wievielten** Mal bist du schon hier?	*How many times have you been here?*

(e) Equivalents for English 'first(ly)', 'secondly', etc.

For these adverbial numerals, German uses the stem of the ordinal with the suffix *-ens*, e.g.:

erstens first(ly), *zweitens* secondly, *drittens* thirdly, etc.

Alternatively, the forms *zum Ersten*, *zum Zweiten*, *zum Dritten*, etc. are used.

(f) Ordinal numbers can be compounded with superlatives

die **zweitbeste** Arbeit   die **drittgrößte** Stadt   der **vierthöchste** Berg

(g) *der x-te* and *der zigste* are used as indefinite ordinals

i.e. as equivalents of English 'the umpteenth', e.g.: *Das war mein x-ter/zigster Versuch*

x-te is pronounced [ɪkstə]. For the form *zig*, see **8.1.21**.

8.3 Fractions and decimals

8.3.1 Usage with fractions (*die Bruchzahlen*) and decimals

(a) The form of fractions

Fractions in German are neuter nouns formed by adding *-el* to the ordinal stem:

 ein Drittel ein Viertel ein Fünftel ein Achtel ein Zehntel

They have no ending in the plural, e.g. *zwei Drittel*. The ending *-n* is optional in the dative plural:

Die Prüfung wurde von **vier Fünftel(n)** der Schüler bestanden

If a fraction in the dative is followed by a phrase in the genitive, it is possible, although less usual, to drop the ending:

in einem Drittel der Fälle (*less common*: in ein Drittel der Fälle)

When used with full integers, fractions are read out as written, with no *und*:

 3⅝ *drei fünfachtel* $1^7/_1$ $_0$ *eins siebenzehntel*

(b) Verb agreement with fractions

If a fraction is the subject of a verb, then it takes a singular or plural ending as appropriate, see **10.1.4**:

 Ein Drittel **ist** schon verkauft Zwei Drittel **sind** schon verkauft

However, in everyday speech the verb is often in the singular, e.g. *Zwei Drittel der Mannschaft wird vermisst*, although correct written usage prefers the plural: *Zwei Drittel der Mannschaft werden vermisst*.

(c) The spelling of fractions

(i) When fractions are followed by a noun of measurement they are spelled with a small letter, and an accompanying indefinite article takes its case and gender from the noun:

 mit einer **drittel** Flasche mit einem **viertel** Liter

(ii) Fractions can be written together with measurement words, e.g. *ein Viertelliter*, *fünf Achtelliter*, *vier Zehntelgramm* and (especially) *eine Viertelstunde*. The following alternatives are thus all acceptable:

Sie verfehlte den Rekord um **drei Zehntel einer Sekunde**
Sie verfehlte den Rekord um **drei zehntel Sekunden**

Sie verfehlte den Rekord um **drei Zehntelsekunden**

It can be compounded with *Stunde*, e.g. *in einer Dreiviertelstunde* 'in three-quarters of an hour', or, alternatively: *in drei viertel Stunden* or (less usually) *in drei Viertelstunden*.

(d) Decimals

Decimals are written with a comma, **not** with a point, e.g.:

0,7 nullkommasieben	4,75 vierkommasiebenfünf
1,25 einskommazweifünf	109,1 hundertneunkommaeins
3,426 dreikommavierzweisechs	

In everyday usage, two places of decimals are frequently read out in terms of tens and units, e.g. 4,75 *vierkommafünfundsiebzig*.

8.3.2 'half'

English 'half' can correspond to the adjective *halb* or the noun *die Hälfte*, which are used as follows:

(a) 'half', used as a noun, is normally *die Hälfte*

Er hat mir nur **die Hälfte** gegeben	*He only gave me half*
die größere **Hälfte**	*the bigger half*

The form *das Halb*, from the adjective, is used to refer to the number as such:

(Ein) **Halb** ist mehr als ein Drittel *Half is more than a third*

(b) The usual equivalent of 'half a' is the indefinite article *ein* with the adjective *halb*

Ich habe einen **halben** Apfel gegessen	*I ate half an apple*
ein **halbes** Dutzend	*half a dozen*
ein **halbes** Brot	*half a loaf*

(c) 'half the/this/my'

The most usual equivalent is the noun *die Hälfte* with a following genitive, but the appropriate determiner can be used with *halb* if the reference is to a whole thing which can be divided cleanly in two:

Die Hälfte der/dieser Äpfel ist schlecht   *Half the apple is/Half these apples are bad*

die Hälfte meines Geldes   *half my money*

Ich habe **die Hälfte des Kuchens** gegessen } *I ate half the cake*

Ich habe **den halben Kuchen** gegessen

In colloquial speech *halb* is sometimes used with a plural noun in this meaning, e.g. *die halben Äpfel* 'half the apples'. This is not accepted as standard.

(d) English adverbial 'half' corresponds to German *halb*

halb angezogen   *half dressed*

Er weiß alles nur **halb** *He only half knows things*

(e) German equivalents for English 'one and a half'

For 'one and a half' German can use either *eineinhalb* or *anderthalb*. 'two and a half', 'three and a half', etc. are *zweieinhalb*, *dreieinhalb*, etc. They never have any endings:

Bis Walldürn sind es noch **eineinhalb/anderthalb** *It's another hour and a half to Walldürn*
    Stunden

Sie wollte noch **sechseinhalb** Monate bleiben   *She wanted to stay another six and a half months*

(f) Other phrases and idioms with 'half':

Er hatte **halb so viel** wie ich   *He had half as much as me*

Kinder fahren **zum halben Preis**   *Children travel half price*

Er ist mir **auf halbem Wege** entgegengekommen *He met me halfway* (literally and figuratively)

Ich nehme noch **ein Halbes**   *I'll have another half*

Das ist **nichts Halbes** und nichts Ganzes   *That's neither flesh nor fowl*

Die Besucher waren **zur Hälfte** Deutsche   *Half the visitors were German*

nach der ersten **Halbzeit**   *after the first half* (sport)

halb Europa, **halb** München (see **6.1.3g**)   *half Europe, half Munich*

8.4 Other numerical usages

8.4.1 Numerically equal distribution

i.e. '**each**' of two or more receiving the same. This is expressed by *je*:

Ich gab den Jungen **je** zehn Euro	*I gave each of the boys/each boy ten euros*
A. und B. wurden zu **je** drei Jahren verurteilt	*A and B were each sentenced to three years*
Sie erhielten **je** fünf Kilo Reis	*They each received five kilograms of rice*

8.4.2 Multiples

(a) To form multiples, *-fach* is suffixed to the cardinal number

e.g. *einfach* 'single', *zweifach* 'twofold', *dreifach* 'threefold', etc.:

eine **einfach**e Karte	*a single ticket*
ein **vierfach**er Olympiasieger	*a four-time gold-medal winner*
Die Grundstückspreise stiegen zunächst aufs **Zehnfach**e (*Böll*)	*The price of land first went up tenfold*

-fach can also be suffixed to some indefinites, e.g. *vielfach* or *mehrfach* 'manifold', 'frequent(ly)', 'repeatedly', *mannigfach* 'varied', 'manifold'.

The variant *zwiefach* for *zweifach* is still occasionally used, but it can sound rather old-fashioned.

(b) The suffix *-fältig*

e.g. *zweifältig*, *dreifältig*, *vielfältig*, etc. These forms are less common to indicate multiples than those in *-fach*.

A couple of forms lack *Umlaut*, i.e. *mannigfaltig* 'diverse' (which is more frequent than *mannigfach* with the same meaning), and *die (Heilige) Dreifaltigkeit* 'the (Holy) Trinity'.

einfältig is most often used with the figurative meaning 'simple(-minded)'.

(c) 'double'

For English 'double', German can use *zweifach* and *doppelt*. They are sometimes interchangeable, but *zweifach* usually refers to **two different** things (corresponding to English 'two-fold'), while *doppelt* refers to **two of the same**, e.g.:

der **zweifache** Etappensieger bei der Tour de France	*the two-fold stage-winner in the Tour de France*
Er ist verheiratet und **zweifacher** Vater erwachsener Töchter	*He is married and the father of two grown-up daughters*
Der Koffer hat einen **doppelten** Boden	*The suitcase has a double bottom*

(d) 'single'

In the sense 'individual', 'separate', the equivalent of English *single* is *einzeln:*

Die Bände werden **einzeln** verkauft   *The volumes are sold singly/separately*

In the sense 'sole', the equivalent is *einzig:*

Er hat keinen **einzigen** Freund   *He hasn't got a single friend*

(e) The suffix *-erlei*

-erlei is added to the cardinal numbers to give forms which mean 'x kinds of', e.g. *zweierlei* 'two kinds of', *dreierlei* 'three kinds of', *vielerlei* 'many kinds of', etc. They can be used as nouns or adjectives and do not decline:

Es gibt aber nur **zweierlei** Straßen (*FR*)	*However, there are only two kinds of road*
Er hat **hunderterlei** Pläne	*He's got hundreds of different plans*
Ich habe ihm **dreierlei** vorgeschlagen	*I suggested three different things to him*

einerlei is most often used in the sense 'all the same' (i.e. = *egal*, *gleich*, etc.), e.g. *Das ist mir alles einerlei*.

8.4.3 *-mal(s)* and *Mal*

(a) *-mal*

(i) Adverbs expressing an occasion or occasions are formed by adding *-mal* to numerals or other words

einmal *once*	**zweimal** *twice*	**zehnmal** *ten times*
hundertmal *a hundred times*	**dutzendmal** *a dozen times*	**diesmal** *this time*
erstmal/erst mal *first of all*	**keinmal** *on no occasion*	**nochmal/noch mal** *once more* (coll.)
manchmal *sometimes*	ein **paarmal** *a few times*	**wievielmal?** *How many times?*
ein **andermal** *another time*	**x-mal**, **zigmal** *umpteen times*	
Ich habe ihn diese Woche **fünfmal** gesehen	*I've seen him five times this week*	
Also, Herr Ober, **zweimal** Gulasch, bitte	*Right, waiter, goulash for two, please*	
anderthalbmal so groß wie der andere	*half as big again as the other balloon*	

(ii) If particular emphasis is required, the noun *Mal* can be used, written separately from the numeral, e.g. *Wir haben drei Mal gewonnen!* 'We won **three times**!'

(iii) In writing, *mal* can linked to a figure with a hyphen, e.g. *3-mal, 20-mal*.

(iv) Adjectives can be formed from a few of these adverbs by suffixing *-ig* (see **20.3.1d**), e.g. *einmalig, zweimalig*:

eine **einmalige** Gelegenheit	*a unique opportunity*
nach **dreimaligem** Durchlesen seines Briefes	*after reading his letter three times*

mehrmalig 'repeated' is formed in a similar way.

(v) *mal* is used to express multiplication, for English 'times' (see **8.4.5**), e.g.:

sieben **mal** vier ist achtundzwanzig *seven times four is twenty-eight*

(b) *das Mal* (plural *die Male)* is a neuter noun

It is written separately from any preceding adjectives or determiners:

das erste **Mal**, als ich ihn sah	Beide **Male** bin ich durchgefallen
kein einziges **Mal**	ein um das andere **Mal** *time after time*
Ich werde es nächstes **Mal** tun	Das vorige **Mal** war es schöner
Zum wievielten **Mal bist du hier**?	Beim vorletzten **Mal** war sie schwer krank
Jedes **Mal** bist du zu spät gekommen	viele (hundert) **Male**
Dieses **Mal** wird sie mich anders behandeln müssen	Die letzten paar **Male** war sie nicht zu Haus

(c) Forms in - *mals*

The suffix *-mals* is used to form adverbs to indicate 'time(s)', i.e. *erstmals* 'for the first time', **mehrmals** 'repeatedly' and *vielmals* 'many times'.

Ich danke Ihnen **vielmals**	}	*Many thanks*	Danke **vielmals**
Ich bitte **vielmals** um Entschuldigung			*I do apologize*
Nachdem der Horst jahrelang unbenutzt war, hatten **erstmals** im Jahr 2011 zwei Störche Quartier bezogen (*BrZ*)		*After the nest had not been used for years, two storks moved in for the first time in 2011*	
Der russische Präsident hatte bereits		*The Russian President had*	

mehrmals in die Ukraine reisen wollen   *already wanted to travel to*
(*SGT*)   *Ukraine on many occasions*

8.4.4 Mathematical expressions

The common arithmetic and mathematical functions are expressed as follows in German. Some symbols used in the German-speaking countries differ from those current in English-speaking countries:

$4 + 5 = 9$ vier und/plus fünf ist/macht/gleich neun

$8 - 6 = 2$ acht weniger/minus sechs ist/gleich zwei

$3 \times 4 = 12$ }   drei mal vier ist/gleich zwölf

$3 \cdot 4 = 12$

$8 : 2 = 4$ acht (geteilt) durch zwei ist/gleich vier

$3^2 = 9$ drei hoch zwei (drei zum Quadrat) ist/gleich neun

$3^3 = 27$ drei hoch drei ist/gleich siebenundzwanzig

$\sqrt{9} = 3$ Quadratwurzel/zweite Wurzel aus neun ist/gleich drei

$5 > 3$ fünf ist größer als drei

8.5 Times and dates

8.5.1 Clock times

(a) In everyday speech the twelve-hour clock is the norm for giving the time

The forms are given in **Table 8.3**. The twelve-hour clock is used in everyday conversation in German, as in English and this is the norm when reference is not being made to public events, official timetables and the like.

TABLE 8.3   Clock times

1.00	**Es ist ein Uhr/Es ist eins**	Its one (o'clock)
3.00	**Es ist drei (Uhr)**	Its three (o'clock)
3.05	**fünf (Minuten) nach drei**	five (minutes) past three
3.07	**sieben Minuten nach drei**	seven minutes past three
3.10	**zehn (Minuten) nach drei**	ten (minutes) past three
3.15	**Viertel nach drei/viertel vier**	quarter past three
3.20	**zwanzig nach drei/zehn vor halb vier**	twenty past three
3.25	**fünf vor halb vier**	twenty-five past three
3.30	**halb vier**	half past three/half three

3.35	**fünf nach halb vier**	twenty-five to four
3.40	**zwanzig vor vier/zehn nach halb vier**	twenty to four
3.45	**Viertel vor vier/dreiviertel vier**	quarter to four
3.47	**dreizehn Minuten vor vier**	thirteen minutes to four
3.50	**zehn (Minuten) vor vier**	ten (minutes) to four
3.55	**fünf (Minuten) vor vier**	five (minutes) to four

The names of some times vary regionally in speech. Although most German speakers are familiar with all variants, north and west of a line stretching roughly from Lübeck to Karlsruhe the following forms are most frequent:

Viertel nach drei zwanzig nach drei zwanzig vor vier Viertel vor vier

In the South and East the following forms are the most commonly heard (with some variation, especially in Austria and Switzerland):

viertel vier zehn vor halb vier zehn nach halb vier dreiviertel vier

(b) In official contexts the twenty-four-hour clock is used

This is the norm in timetables, for television and radio programmes, theatrical performances, official meetings, business hours, and in all other official contexts. There is thus no equivalent in German for English *a.m.* and *p.m.* Examples are given in **Table 8.4**.

TABLE 8.4   The twenty-four-hour clock

0.27	null Uhr siebenundzwanzig	*12.27 a.m.*
5.15	fünf Uhr fünfzehn	*5.15 a.m.*
10.30	zehn Uhr dreißig	*10.30 a.m.*
13.07	dreizehn Uhr sieben	*1.07 p.m.*
21.37	einundzwanzig Uhr siebenunddreißig	*9.37 p.m.*
24.00	vierundzwanzig Uhr	*12.00 midnight*

TABLE 8.5   Days of the week

Sonntag	*Sunday*	**Donnerstag**	*Thursday*
Montag	*Monday*	**Freitag**	*Friday*
Dienstag	*Tuesday*	**Samstag** {	*Saturday*
Mittwoch	*Wednesday*	**Sonnabend**	

TABLE 8.6   The months

Januar	*January*	Mai	*May*	September	*September*
Februar	*February*	Juni	*June*	Oktober	*October*
März	*March*	Juli	*July*	November	*November*
April	*April*	August	*August*	Dezember	*December*

When these forms are spoken, the word *Uhr* is only omitted in giving the full hours between 1 a.m. and noon, e.g. *Ihr Zug kommt um 9.00 an* (spoken: *um neun (Uhr)*).

Otherwise the full forms, with *Uhr*, are used, e.g. *Die Vorstellung beginnt um 20.00* (spoken: *um zwanzig Uhr*), *um 20.15* (*um zwanzig Uhr fünfzehn*), *Der Zug fährt um 9.17* (*um neun Uhr siebzehn*), etc.

Even in everyday conversation it is common for 'official' times to be given using the twenty-four-hour clock. Thus one would say *Mein Zug fährt um 19.35 (um neunzehn Uhr fünfunddreißig)*, but it would be odd to say *Tante Käthe hat uns alle für fünfzehn Uhr dreißig zum Kaffee eingeladen* – you would say *halb vier*.

(c) Further phrases with clock times

Wie viel Uhr ist es?	*What's the time?*	
Wie spät ist es? (*coll.*)	}	
Wieviel Uhr haben Sie?		*What time do you make it?*
Um wieviel Uhr kommt sie?	*What time is she coming?*	
Sie kommt um halb drei	*She's coming at half past two*	
um drei Uhr nachts	*at three in the morning*	
um neun Uhr vormittags	*at nine in the morning*	
um zwölf Uhr mittags	*at twelve noon*	
um drei Uhr nachmittags	*at three in the afternoon*	
um sieben Uhr abends	*at seven in the evening*	
um Mitternacht	*at midnight*	
Es ist Punkt/genau neun (Uhr)	*It is exactly nine (o'clock)*	
Es ist gerade halb	*It is just half past*	
Es ist ungefähr neun (Uhr)	*It's about nine (o'clock)*	
Es ist (schon) neun Uhr vorbei	*It's gone nine o'clock*	
Er kommt ungefähr um neun Uhr	*He's coming at about nine o'clock*	
Er kam gegen neun (Uhr) an	*He arrived at about nine/just before nine*	

As the last example shows, *gegen* can be ambiguous with clock times, see **18.1.4g**.

8.5.2 Days and months

(a) The days of the week

As the equivalent for 'Saturday', *Samstag* was originally restricted to South Germany and *Sonnabend* was preferred in the North (i.e. north of the river Main). However, *Samstag* has recently come to be used more widely at the expense of *Sonnabend,* which is now only used at all frequently in the far North and in eastern Germany.

For English 'on Sunday', etc. German uses *am Sonntag*, etc., see **4.5c** and **18.3.2b**.

For information on adverbs with the names for days of the week, e.g. *dienstags*, see **2.3.3c** and **7.3.2c**

(b) The months

(i) In Austria, *Jänner* is always used for *Januar*, and, less commonly, *Feber* for *Februar*.
(ii) *Juni* and *Juli* are sometimes pronounced *Jun o* and *Jul ei* to avoid confusion, especially on the telephone.
(iii) For English 'in January', etc., German has *im Januar*, etc., see **4.5a** and **18.3.7b**.

(c) The major public holidays and religious festivals

Neujahr(stag)	*New Year's Day*
Heilige Drei Könige	*Epiphany*
Rosenmontag	*Carnival Monday* (the day before Shrove Tuesday)
Aschermittwoch	*Ash Wednesday*
Gründonnerstag	*Maundy Thursday*
Karfreitag	*Good Friday*
Ostersonntag	*Easter Sunday*
Ostern	*Easter*
Ostermontag	*Easter Monday*
Maifeiertag	*May Day/Labor Day* (1st May)
(Christi) Himmelfahrt	*Ascension Day*
Pfingsten	*Whitsun*
Pfingstsonntag	*Whit Sunday*

Pfingstmontag	*Whit Monday*
Fronleichnam	*Corpus Christi*
Mariä Himmelfahrt	*Assumption of the Virgin Mary* (15th August)
Tag der Deutschen Einheit	*Day of German Unity* (3rd October)
Allerheiligen	*All Saints' Day* (1st November)
Buß- und Bettag	*Day of Penitence and Prayer* (Wednesday preceding the last Sunday before Advent)
Mariä Empfängnis	*Immaculate Conception* (8th December)
der Heilige Abend *or* Heiligabend	*Christmas Eve*
Weihnachten	*Christmas*
Erster Weihnachts(feier)tag	*Christmas Day*
Zweiter Weihnachts(feier)tag Stephanitag/Stephanstag	*Boxing Day*
Silvester	*New Year's Eve*

(i) *Ostern*, *Pfingsten* and *Weihnachten* are usually treated as neuter singulars, see **1.2.7b**.

(ii) Not all of these are official public holidays throughout the German-speaking countries. There is much variation between individual *Länder* in Germany and Austria, and the Swiss cantons, and there are many additional local holidays.

8.5.3 Dates

(a) Ordinal numbers are used for the days of the month

e.g. *der fünfte April* 'the fifth of April'. In writing, they are only ever given with figures, never with words:

Der Wievielte ist heute? } *What's the date today?*	Den Wievielten haben wir heute?	
Heute ist der 8. (*spoken*: achte) Mai } Wir haben heute den 8. (achten) Mai		*Today is the eighth of May*
Er kam am 5. (fünften) Juni, 2019/ am 5.6.2019 (am fünften, sechsten, zweitausendneunzehn)	*He came on the fifth of June 2019/on 5.6.2019*	

As the last example shows, the day is given **before** the month in German. This corresponds to usage in British English, but it is the reverse of American practice.

(b) Usage with dates including the day of the week

i.e. equivalents of 'Monday, the fifth of June'. There are three ways of expressing this in German, all of which are equally acceptable:

(i) with the day of the week and the date in the accusative case:
   Wir fliegen **Montag, den 5. Juni**(,) nach Australien
(ii) with the day of the week preceded by *am*, followed by the date in the accusative case:
   Wir fliegen **am Montag, den 5. Juni**(,) nach Australien
(iii) with the day of the week preceded by *am*, followed by the date in the dative case:
   Wir fliegen **am Montag, dem 5. Juni**(,) nach Australien

Of these, option (ii) is in practice most frequent in personal correspondence, whilst option (iii) is more frequent in print (e.g. in newspapers).

(c) Letter headings

In private correspondence (i.e. where the address is not printed on the notepaper), the writer's address is not usually written out in full at the head of the letter, as is the common British or American practice. Instead, just the town is given, followed by the date, which may be written in various ways, i.e.:

Siegen, **(den) 5.6.15**   Siegen, **am 5.6.15**

Siegen, **(den/d.) 5. Juni 2015** Siegen, **im Juni 2015**

When writing a formal letter to an unknown person, especially for the first time, some Germans put their full name and address in the top left-hand corner of the letter and the town and date, as given above, in the top right-hand corner.

8.6 Addresses

The format recommended by the *Deutsche Post* is as in the examples below:

Herrn	Frau
Dr. Ulrich Sievers	Maria Jellinek
Sichelstraße 17	Maximiliansgasse 34
54290 Trier	1084 Wien
Familie	Herrn
Karl (und Ute) Schulz	Beat Wernli

Königsberger Straße 36	Gerechtigkeitsgasse 24
64711 Erbach/Odw.	3011 Bern
Firma	Monsieur Alain Dubois
Eugen Spengel	rue Napoléon 17
Rossgasse 7-9	94320 THIAIS
07973 Greiz	FRANKREICH
(Herrn und Frau)	Mr & Mrs Frank Johnson
Peter und Eva Specht	27 Corsland Ave
Steinweg 2½	GUILDFORD
35037 Marburg/Lahn	GROßBRITANNIEN
	GU3 4AY
An das	
Katasteramt Westfalen	Mr. Albert McEvoy
Bismarckallee 87	30987 – 31st Street SW.
48151 Münster	CALGARY
	CANADA
	T3C 1E5

The postcode is regarded as essential. For post to other countries, the name of the town and the name of the country should be written in capitals below the street name. Prefixed country codes, e.g. A-1084 Wien, CH-3011 Bern, D-48151 Münster, F-94320 Thiais should no longer be used (although, in practice, many people still do).

Even in private correspondence it is now recommended that the sender's name and address should be given, in the same format, in the top left-hand corner of the front of the envelope, not on the back, as was traditional (although, in practice, this recommendation is widely ignored).

9 Modal particles

MODAL PARTICLES **are words which express the speaker's attitude to what is being said**. They are words like *aber, doch, ja, mal, schon,* which alter the tone of what is being said and aim to make the speaker's intentions and attitudes clear. They typically

- appeal for agreement
- express surprise or annoyance
- tone down a blunt question or statement
- sound reassuring

The particles dealt with in this chapter and the section where they are treated are given in **Table 9.1**.

TABLE 9.1   German modal particles

aber	9.1.1	**eigentlich**	9.1.10	**ja**	9.1.19	**schließlich**	9.1.28
allerdings	9.1.2	**einfach**	9.1.11	**jedenfalls**	9.1.20	**schon**	9.1.29
also	9.1.3	**erst**	9.1.12	**lediglich**	9.1.21	**sowieso**	9.1.30
auch	9.1.4	**etwa**	9.1.13	**mal**	9.1.22	**überhaupt**	9.1.31
bloß	9.1.5	**freilich**	9.1.14	**noch**	9.1.23	**übrigens**	9.1.32
denn	9.1.6	**gar**	9.1.15	**nun**	9.1.24	**vielleicht**	9.1.33
doch	9.1.7	**gleich**	9.1.16	**nur**	9.1.25	**wohl**	9.1.34
eben	9.1.8	**halt**	9.1.17	**ohnehin**	9.1.26	**zwar**	9.1.35
eh	9.1.9	**immerhin**	9.1.18	**ruhig**	9.1.27		

There is no full agreement about which words in German should be classified as 'modal particles' (called *Abtönungspartikeln* or *Modalpartikeln* in German). Their function is similar to that of adverbs of attitude (see **7.4.2**), and like them **they can never be negated**. In general, though, they are less independent and

they cannot usually occur in first position in a main clause, before the main verb.

English has very few words like this and tends to express an attitude to what is being said in other ways, especially by means of intonation and tag questions like 'isn't it?' Because of this, learning to use modal particles idiomatically needs attention and practice, as they are a characteristic feature of spoken German (although learners should beware of overusing them in an attempt to sound idiomatic).

The sections in this chapter try to give some idea of the flavour of all the German modal particles, by giving hints and indications of approximate equivalents in the translations of examples. However, these can only be a rough guide to usage and the equivalents should be understood in this sense, not as practical translation equivalents. Special attention needs to be paid to those particles identified as 'downtoners' because there is a clear tendency for German to use these more extensively than English.

Typical modal particles relate to the clause or sentence as a whole, but there is another group of particles, the so-called **scalar** or **focus particles** (called *Gradpartikeln* or *Fokuspartikeln* in German), like *sogar*, which focus attention on a particular word or phrase (usually immediately before or after the particle). These can correspond to words like *even*, but English also uses so-called 'CLEFT SENTENCES' (see **19.2.3a**) to focus attention on a particular word or phrase, e.g. *Dieses Mal war der Mann aber schuld* 'This time **it was the man who** was to blame'. The examples in this chapter show typical instances of this.

A major difficulty in identifying types of particle and explaining how they are used is that distinctions between them are not always clear-cut, and many of the words dealt with in this chapter can be used in more than one way. *auch* and *nur*, for example, are used both as modal and as focus particles, very many, like *eigentlich* and *vielleicht*, are used as adverbs of attitude as well as modal particles, and some, like *aber*, are also used as conjunctions. As differentiating between these categories is not always straightforward, it was considered most practical to deal in this chapter with all uses of all the words which could be considered 'modal particles'.

9.1 German modal particles

9.1.1 *aber*

(a) In STATEMENTS , *aber* expresses a surprised reaction

In effect, *aber* makes these statements into exclamations:

Das war aber eine Reise!	*That was quite a journey, wasn't it?*
Der Film war aber gut!	*The film <u>was</u> good*
Der Kaffee ist aber heiß!	*Oh! The coffee <u>is</u> hot*

aber can be given even greater emphasis by adding *auch*. Compare:

Das war aber auch eine Reise!	*That really was some journey!*

ja is also used to express surprise (see **9.1.19b**), but surprise resulting from a difference in kind, where *aber* indicates a difference in degree. Compare:

Der Kaffee ist **aber** heiß (i.e. hotter than you had expected)
Der Kaffee ist **ja** heiß (you had expected <u>cold</u> coffee?)

In this sense, *aber* is very similar in force to *vielleicht* (see **9.1.33a**): *Der Tee ist vielleicht heiß!*

(b) Within a CLAUSE *aber* expresses a contradiction

In contexts like this, *aber* has much the same meaning as it would have as a conjunction at the beginning of the clause (i.e. = English 'but', see **17.1.1**). This sense is close to that of *doch* (see **9.1.7a**), or *though* in English:

Mein Freund kam aber nicht	*My friend didn't come, though*
Sie muss uns aber gesehen haben	*But she must have seen us*
Jetzt kannst du etwas schneller fahren … Pass aber bei den Ampeln auf!	*You can go a bit quicker now … Watch out at the lights, though!*
Dieses Mal war aber der Mann schuld	*This time it was the man who was to blame, though*

As the last example shows, *aber* can focus attention on a following noun, and this often has the same effect as using a cleft sentence in English.

Used with *oder*, *aber* has the sense of 'on the other hand':

Wir jungen Leute konnten uns sportlich betätigen oder aber	*We young people could play sport or on the*

auch nur gemütlich zusammensitzen (*SGT*)   *other hand just sit round and relax*

(c) Used initially in EXCLAMATIONS , *aber* stresses the speaker's opinion

aber can sound scolding or reassuring, depending on the context:

Hast du was dagegen? Aber nein!	*Have you any objection? Of course not!*
Aber Kinder! Was habt ihr schon wieder angestellt?	*Now, now, childen! What have you been up to?*
Aber, aber! Was soll diese Aufregung?	*Oh now! What's all the excitement about?*

(d) *aber* is also used as a coordinating conjunction

i.e. corresponding to English 'but', see **17.1.1**.

9.1.2 *allerdings*

allerdings most often **expresses a reservation** about what has just been said. It usually corresponds to English 'admittedly', 'of course', 'to be sure', 'all the same', etc. *freilich* has a similar meaning, see **9.1.14**.

(a) Within a CLAUSE , the sense of *allerdings* is close to that of *aber*

(see 9.1.1b) It also expresses a contradiction, but it is a little less blunt:

Es ist ein gutes Buch, allerdings gefallen mir seine anderen etwas besser	*It's a good book. Even so, I like his others rather better*
Wir haben uns im Urlaub gut erholt, das Wetter war allerdings nicht sehr gut	*The holiday was a good rest for us. All the same, the weather wasn't very good*
Ich komme gern, allerdings muss ich zuerst der Rita Bescheid sagen	*I want to come, of course I'll have to tell Rita first*

(b) In ANSWER TO A QUESTION , *allerdings* expresses a strongly affirmative answer

There is typically the hint of a reservation of some kind which the speaker isn't saying out loud:

Kennst du die Angelika? Allerdings!	*Do you know Angelika? Oh yes!* (*I know what she's like, too!*)
Ist der Helmut schon da? Allerdings!	*Is Helmut here yet? Oh, yes!* (*and you should see who he's come with!*)

9.1.3 *also*

(a) WITHIN A CLAUSE *also* **requests confirmation of what the other person has just said**

In contexts like this, *also* typically corresponds to English 'so', 'thus' or 'then':

Du wirst mir also helfen können	*You're going to be able to help me, then*
Wann kommst du also genau?	*So, when are you coming precisely?*
Sie meinen also, dass wir uns heute entscheiden müssen	*So you think we're going to have to make a decision today*

(b) IN ISOLATION , *also* **links up with what has just been said**

also can introduce a statement, a question or an exclamation:

Also, jetzt müssen wir uns überlegen, wie wir dahinkommen	*Well then, now we've got to think about how we're going to get there*
Also, besuchst du uns morgen?	*So, are you going to come to see us tomorrow?*
Also, gut!	*Well all right then!*
Also, so was!	*Well I never!*

9.1.4 *auch*

(a) In STATEMENTS , *auch* **stresses the reasons why something is or is not the case**

auch can correct a false impression and is often used with *ja*:

Gerhard sieht heute schlecht aus
  – Er ist (ja) auch lange krank gewesen
	Gerhard's not looking well today
	  – Well, he's been ill for a long time

Jetzt möchte ich schlafen gehen
  – Es ist (ja) auch spät
	I'd like to go to bed now
	  – Well, after all, it is late

Das hättest du nicht tun sollen
  – Ich habe es (ja) auch nicht getan
	You ought not to have done that
	  – But I didn't do it, you know

(b) In YES/NO QUESTIONS , *auch* **asks for confirmation**

The speaker thinks something should be taken for granted and is making sure this is clear. English often uses a tag question in these contexts:

Kann ich mich auch darauf verlassen?	*I can rely on that, can't I?*
Hast du auch die Rechnung bezahlt?	*You <u>did</u> pay the bill, didn't you?*
Bist du auch glücklich mit ihm?	*You're happy with him, aren't you?*

(c) *auch* turns w-QUESTIONS into rhetorical questions

auch confirms that nothing else could be expected:

Was kann man auch dazu sagen?	*Well, what can you say to that?*
Ich bin heute sehr müde	*I'm very tired today*
– Warum gehst du auch immer so spät ins Bett?	*– Well, why do you always go to bed so late?*

Questions like these can be turned into exclamations which emphasize the speaker's negative attitude:

Was war das auch für ein Erfolg?!	*Well, what sort of success do you call that?!*
Wie konnte er auch so schnell abreisen?!	*How <u>could</u> he have left as quickly as that?!*

(d) *auch* reinforces COMMANDS

This is similar to English 'Be/Make sure …!':

Bring mir die Zeitung und vergiss es auch nicht!	*Bring me the paper and be sure you don't forget!*
Sei auch schön brav!	*Be sure you behave!*

(e) Other uses of *auch*
(i) Before a noun *auch* has the force of English 'even'. It is an alternative to *sogar* or *selbst* as a focus particle:

Auch der beste Arzt hätte ihr nicht helfen können	*Even the best doctor wouldn't have been able to help her*
Auch Manfred kann sich ab und zu mal irren	*Even Manfred can be wrong now and again*
Und wenn auch!	*even so, no matter*

Note that the usual equivalent for English 'not even' is *nicht einmal*.

(ii) As an adverb, *auch* means 'too', 'also', 'as well':

Peter will auch mit	*Peter wants to come too*
Gisela ist auch nett	*Gisela's nice as well*
In Potsdam sind wir auch gewesen	*We also went to Potsdam*

(iii) The combination *auch nur* expresses a restriction. It corresponds to English 'even', 'as/so little/much as', etc.:

wenn ich auch nur zwei Freunde hätte	*if I only had just two friends*

ohne auch nur zu fragen	*without even so much as asking*
Es war unmöglich, auch nur Brot zu kaufen	*You couldn't buy so much as a loaf of bread*

(iv) *oder auch* has the sense 'or else', 'or even':

Du kannst Birnen kaufen oder auch Pfirsiche	*You can buy pears or else peaches*

(v) *auch nicht*, *auch kein* and *auch nichts* are often used for 'nor', 'neither', etc.:

Ich habe nichts davon gewusst – Ich auch nicht	*I didn't know anything about it – Nor me/Neither did I*
Mathe habe ich auch nicht gern	*Neither do I like maths/I don't like maths either*
Das wird ihm auch nichts helfen	*That won't help him either*
Er liest keine Zeitungen und auch keine Bücher	*He doesn't read any newspapers or books*

See **17.1.3d** for more details on the German equivalents of 'neither' and 'nor'.

(vi) *auch* is also used in all kinds of concessive constructions where its meaning is similar to that of English 'ever', e.g. *Wer es auch sein mag* 'Whoever that may be'. For more details see **17.6.2**.

9.1.5 *bloß*

bloß usually has a restrictive sense (= English 'only', 'simply', 'merely'). It is a rather less formal alternative to *nur* – see **9.1.25**, where the uses of *nur* and *bloß* are compared:

Störe mich bloß nicht bei der Arbeit	*You'd better not disturb me while I'm working*
Wie spät ist es bloß?	*I wonder just what the time is?*
Wenn er bloß bald käme!	*If only he would come soon!*
Sie hatte bloß 100 Euro bei sich	*She only had 100 euros on her*
Sollen wir Tante Mia einladen? – Bloß nicht!	*Shall we invite aunt Mia? – No way!*

9.1.6 *denn*

(a) As a modal particle, *denn* **is only used in QUESTIONS**
(i) *denn* tones down the question, referring back to what has just been said, or to the general context, and makes the question sound less blunt and more obliging. In *w*-questions it is almost automatic in speech:

Hast du denn die Renate gesehen?	*Tell me, have you seen Renate?*

Geht der Junge denn heute nicht in die Schule?	*Isn't the boy going to school today, then?*
Ach, der Bus hält. Sind wir denn schon da?	*Oh, the bus is stopping. Are we already there, then?*
Warum muss er denn in die Stadt?	*Tell me, why has he got to go to town?*
Wie bist du denn gekommen?	*Tell me, how did you get here?*
Wie geht es dir denn?	*How are you then?*

In rapid speech, *denn* is often reduced to *'n* and suffixed to the verb, e.g. *Hast'n du die Renate gesehen? Wie bist'n du gekommen?*

(ii) If there is a negative element in the question, *denn* signals reproach. The negative element may not be explicit, and the question itself expects a justification rather than an answer:

Hast du denn keinen Führerschein?	*Come on, haven't you got a driving licence?*
Bist du denn blind?	*Come on now, are you blind?*
Wo bist du denn so lange geblieben?	*Where on earth have you been all this time?*
Was ist denn hier los?	*What on earth's going on here, then?*

(iii) *denn* can convert *w*-questions into rhetorical questions, expecting a negative answer:

Wer spricht denn von nachgeben?	*Who's talking of giving in?* (prompting the answer: nobody!)
Was haben wir denn damit erreicht?	*And what have we achieved by that?* (prompting the answer: nothing!)

Adding *schon* makes it absolutely clear that the question is rhetorical:

Was hat er denn schon damit gewonnen?	*And what did he gain by that?* (prompting the answer: nothing!)

(iv) Yes/no questions with *denn* can be used as exclamations of surprise. They often begin with *so*:

Ist das Wetter denn nicht herrlich?	*How lovely the weather is!*
So hat sie denn die Stelle gekriegt?	*So she did get the job!*

(v) The combination *denn noch* is used to recall a fact:

Wie heißt er denn noch?	*What is his name again?*

The sense of *denn noch* is similar to that of *doch gleich* (see **9.1.7c**).

(b) Other uses of *denn*

(i) *denn* is used as a coordinating conjunction indicating a cause or reason (see **17.1.2**). It corresponds to English 'for', 'because', e.g.:

Er kann uns nicht verstehen, denn er spricht kein Deutsch	*He can't understand us, because he doesn't speak any German*

(ii) The combination *es sei denn*, *(dass)* is a conjunction meaning 'unless'. It is mainly used in formal registers. For details see **14.3.3d**.

Sie kommt gegen ein Uhr, es sei denn, sie wird aufgehalten	*She's arriving at about one o'clock, unless she's held up*

(iii) *geschweige denn* means 'let alone', 'still less'. It is used mainly in formal registers:

Er wollte mir kein Geld leihen, geschweige denn schenken	*He didn't even want to <u>lend</u> me any money, let alone give me any*

(iv) *denn* is sometimes used in literary registers and set phrases after comparatives for *als* 'than', e.g. *mehr denn je* 'more than ever'. For details, see **6.5.2a**.
(v) *denn* is sometimes used in place of *dann* 'then' in everyday speech in North Germany, e.g. *Na, denn geht es eben nicht*. This is a non-standard regionalism.

9.1.7 *doch*

doch is used typically to try to persuade the listener of the speaker's point of view. It usually expresses a contradiction or disagreement and often corresponds to English 'though' or a tag question. The element of persuasion is given more force if *doch* is stressed.

(a) In STATEMENTS , *doch* indicates disagreement with what has been said

(i) If *doch* is stressed, it clearly contradicts, and its meaning is close to that of *dennoch* or *trotzdem*. If it is unstressed, it appeals more politely and tentatively for agreement or confirmation:

Gestern hat es **doch** geschneit	*All the same, it <u>did</u> snow yesterday*
Gestern hat es doch geschneit	*It snowed yesterday, didn't it?*
Ich habe **doch** Recht gehabt	*All the same, I <u>was</u> right*

Ich habe doch Recht gehabt	*I was right, wasn't I?*
Wir müssen **doch** morgen nach Bremen	*All the same, we <u>have</u> got to go to Bremen tomorrow*
Ich habe ihm abgeraten, aber er hat es **doch** getan	*I advised him against it, but he did it all the same*
Du hast doch gesagt, dass du kommst	*You did say you were coming, didn't you?*

(ii) When being used in this way, unstressed *doch* can turn a statement into a question expecting a positive answer. It is then the equivalent of a following *oder?* or *nicht* (*wahr*)*?* and one of these may be used as well:

Den Wagen kann ich mir doch morgen abholen?	*I can collect the car tomorrow, can't I?*
Du kannst mir doch helfen(, oder)?	*You can help me, can't you?*
Du glaubst doch nicht, dass ich es getan habe?	*Surely you don't think I did it?*
Das hat ihr doch Sandra gesagt	*It was Sandra who told her, wasn't it?*

(iii) Unstressed *doch* can also mildly point out a reason for disagreement. In such contexts it has much the same force as *aber*, see **9.1.1**:

Wir wollten doch heute Abend ins Theater gehen	*Surely we were going to go to the theatre tonight (weren't we?)*
Die Ampel zeigt doch rot, wir dürfen noch nicht fahren	*But the lights are red, we can't go yet*

(iv) In literary German *doch* can be used with the verb first in the clause. This explains the preceding statement:

War ich doch so durch den Lehrbetrieb beansprucht, dass ich dafür keine Zeit fand (*Grass*)	*After all, I was so busy with my lessons that I didn't have any time for that*

(v) For the difference in meaning between *doch* and *ja* in statements appealing for the listener's agreement, see **9.1.19a**.

(b) *doch* **in** COMMANDS

(i) The force of *doch* in commands depends on the context. Sometimes it adds a note of impatience or urgency, and in this sense it can be strengthened by *endlich* or, in a negative sentence, by *immer*:

Reg dich doch nicht so auf!	*For heaven's sake, don't get so excited*
Bring den Wagen doch (endlich) in die Werkstatt!	*For goodness' sake, take the car to the garage*
Mach doch nicht (immer) so ein Gesicht!	*Don't keep making faces like that*
Freu dich doch!	*Do cheer up*

(ii) In other sentences, *doch* can moderate the force of the command, making it sound more advisory or encouraging. This can be made even more clear by adding *mal* or *ruhig*:

Lassen Sie mich doch (mal) das Foto sehen!	*Why don't you just let me see the photograph?*
Kommen Sie doch (ruhig) morgen vorbei!	*Why not drop by tomorrow?*

(c) In W-QUESTIONS , *doch* asks for confirmation of an answer or the repetition of information

doch can be strengthened by adding *gleich* (see **9.1.16**), and its force is then similar to that of *denn noch*, see **9.1.6a**:

Wie heißt doch euer Hund?	*What did you say your dog is called?*
Wer war das doch (gleich)?	*Who was that again?*
Wohin fahrt ihr doch auf Urlaub?	*Where did you say you were going on holiday?*

(d) In EXCLAMATIONS , *doch* emphasizes the speaker's surprise

In these the force of *doch* is close to that of *ja*, see **9.1.19b**:

Wie winzig doch alles von hier oben aussieht!	*But how tiny everything looks from up here!*
Du bist doch kein kleines Kind mehr!	*You're not a baby any more, you know!*
Das ist doch die Höhe!	*That really is the limit!*
Wir haben doch Gulasch bestellt!	*But it was goulash we ordered!*

(e) In WISHES expressed with *Konjunktiv II*, *doch* emphasizes the urgency of the wish

See also **14.5.6b**. In sentences like these *doch* is the equivalent of *nur* and can be used with it, see **9.1.25c**:

Wenn er doch jetzt käme!	*If only he would come now!*
Wäre ich doch (nur) zu Hause geblieben!	*If only I'd just stayed at home!*

(f) Other uses of *doch*

(i) In reply to a question, *doch* contradicts a negative or emphasizes an affirmative reply. Note that *ja* is not used to contradict a negative, unlike English *yes* – which can be ambiguous in contexts like this.

Bist du nicht zufrieden? Doch!	*Aren't you satisfied? Yes, I am*
Kommt er bald? Doch!	*Is he coming soon? Oh, yes*

Er hat nie etwas für uns getan.	*He's never done anything for us.*
– Doch, er hat mir einmal 100 Euro geliehen	*– Oh, yes he has, he once lent me a hundred euros*

When used with *nein* or *nicht*, *doch* emphasizes a negative reply:

Mutti, kann ich ein Stück Schokolade haben?	*Mummy, can I have a piece of chocolate?*
– Nein doch, du hast jetzt genug gegessen	*– Certainly not, you've had enough to eat*

(ii) As a conjunction, *doch* is an alternative to *aber* 'but', e.g. *Sie wollten baden gehen, doch es hat geschneit*. For details see **17.1.1**.

9.1.8 *eben*

eben typically expresses a confirmation that something is the case and often corresponds to English 'just'.

(a) In STATEMENTS , *eben* **emphasizes an inescapable conclusion**

Das ist eben so	*But there, that's how it is*
Ich kann ihn nicht überreden. Er ist eben hartnäckig	*I can't convince him. He's just obstinate*
Er zeichnet ganz gut	*He draws quite well*
– Nun, er ist eben ein Künstler	*– Well, he is an artist*
Ich mache es, so gut ich eben kann	*I'll do it as well as I can (given the circumstances)*
Eben das hat er schreiben wollen	*That's exactly what he wanted to write*

(b) In COMMANDS , *eben* **emphasizes that there is no real alternative**

These commands are often introduced by *dann*:

(Dann) bleib eben im Zug sitzen!	*Well, just stay on the train, then*
(Dann) fahr eben durch die Stadtmitte!	*Well, just drive through the town centre, then*

halt (see **9.1.17**) has much the same meaning as *eben*. It was originally more typical of South German and Austrian usage, but it is now used more widely and it is at least as frequent as *eben* in a large part of Germany.

(c) Other uses of *eben*

(i) *eben* can be used in the sense of 'exactly', 'precisely', 'just'. In this meaning it can be used to emphasize the following word, or as a response to a statement or a question. *genau* is a common alternative:

Das wäre mir eben recht	*That would be just what I'd like*
Eben 'daran hatte ich nie gedacht	*That's the one thing I hadn't thought of*

Eben dieses Haus hat mir zugesagt	*It was this house which attracted me*
Das wird sie doch kaum schaffen. – Eben!	*She won't manage it, will she? – Precisely!*

(ii) Used with *nicht* before an adjective, *eben* lessens the force of *nicht*. *gerade* is a common alternative:

Sie ist nicht eben fleißig	*She's not exactly hard-working*
Der Bus war nicht eben pünktlich	*The bus wasn't what you'd call on time*

(iii) As an adverb, *eben* means 'just (now)'. *gerade* is very similar in meaning:

Wir sind eben (erst) angekommen Eben geht mir ein Licht auf

Mit zweitausend Euro im Monat kommen wir eben (noch) aus

(iv) As an adjective, *eben* means 'level', e.g. *Die Straße ist hier nicht eben*

9.1.9 *eh*

eh has a very similar meaning to *ohnehin* (see **9.1.26**) or *sowieso* (see **9.1.30**). Like them, it is an equivalent of English 'anyway' or 'in any case'. Until recently it was used predominantly in colloquial South German, especially in Austria and Bavaria, but it is now widespread throughout Germany:

Wenn ich arbeite, brauche ich eh immer mehr zum Essen (*Kroetz*)	*When I'm working I need more to eat anyway*
Für eine Markenpersönlichkeit wie Sie ist das neue Magazin der Süddeutschen eh ein Muss (*SZ*)	*It goes without saying that the new magazine of the "Süddeutsche Zeitung" is a must for a person of quality like you*

9.1.10 eigentlich

eigentlich emphasizes that something is actually the case, even if it appears otherwise. It is often used to change the topic of conversation.

(a) *eigentlich* **in QUESTIONS**

(i) *eigentlich* is typically lightly stressed and can tone a question down and makes it sound more casual. It is close to the sense of English 'actually' and is often used in conjunction with *denn*:

Sind Sie eigentlich dieses Jahr schon in Urlaub gewesen?	*Tell me, have you been on holiday yet this year?*
Wohnt Eva (denn) eigentlich schon lange in Hameln?	*Has Eva actually been living a long time in Hameln?*

(ii) In *w*-questions, *eigentlich* implies that the question has not yet been answered fully or satisfactorily. In these contexts it is rather more heavily stressed and close in meaning to *im Grunde genommen*, *tatsächlich* or *wirklich*, with the sense of 'at bottom', 'in actual fact', 'in reality':

Wie heißt er eigentlich?	*What's his real name?*
Warum besuchst du mich eigentlich?	*Why, basically, did you come to visit me?*

(b) *eigentlich* **in STATEMENTS**

(i) *eigentlich* indicates that something actually is the case, despite appearances. It moderates a refusal, an objection or a contradiction by indicating how strong the reasons are:

Er scheint manchmal faul, aber er ist eigentlich sehr fleißig	*He appears lazy sometimes, but in actual fact he's very hard-working*
Ich wollte eigentlich zu Fuß gehen	*In actual fact, I did want to walk*
Ich trinke eigentlich keinen Kaffee mehr	*Well, actually, I don't drink coffee now*

(ii) Sometimes *eigentlich* can signal that the matter is still a little open:

Wir haben eigentlich schon zu	*Well, actually, we're already closed* (hinting that an exception might not be wholly out of the question)
Das darf man hier eigentlich nicht	*Strictly speaking, that's not allowed here* (but, possibly, …)

(c) As an ADJECTIVE , *eigentlich* means 'real', 'actual', 'fundamental'

Was ist die **eigentliche** Ursache?   Er nannte nicht den **eigentlichen** Grund

9.1.11 *einfach*

(a) *einfach* **as a PARTICLE**

When it is used as a particle, *einfach* emphasizes that alternative possibilities are excluded. It usually corresponds to English 'simply' or, especially in commands, 'just'. In commands it is often used in conjunction with *doch* and/or *mal*, and in exclamations it is often combined with *ja*:

Ich bin einfach weggegangen	*I simply/just walked away*
Ich werde ihm einfach sagen, dass es nicht möglich ist	*I'll simply/just tell him it's not possible*
Warum gehst du nicht einfach ins Bett?	*Why don't you simply/just go to bed?*
Leg dich (doch) einfach hin!	*Why don't you just go and lie down?*

| Geh doch einfach mal zum Zahnarzt! | *Why not just simply go to the dentist?* |
| Heute ist das Wetter (ja) einfach herrlich! | *The weather is simply lovely today!* |

(b) *einfach* **as an** ADVERB

There is a clear difference in meaning between contexts where *einfach* is being used as an adverb and those where it is used as a particle. As an adverb, *einfach* is **always stressed** and means 'in a simple manner'. Compare the two uses in the following sentences:

Sie macht es **einfach**	*She is doing it simply* (in an uncomplicated way)
Sie **macht** es einfach	*She's simply doing it* ('just', 'without further ado')
Du musst **einfach** anfangen	*You have to begin simply*
Du musst einfach **anfangen**	*You simply/just have to begin*

9.1.12 *erst*

(a) As a modal particle in STATEMENTS and EXCLAMATIONS , *erst* has intensifying force

erst implies that something really is the absolute limit and perhaps more than expected or desirable. It is often strengthened by adding *recht*:

Dann ging es erst (recht) los	*Then things really got going*
Das konnte sie erst recht nicht	*That she really couldn't manage*
Das macht es erst recht schlimm	*That really does make it bad*
Sie hat schon Hunger, aber das Kind erst (recht)!	*She may be hungry, but it's the kid who's really hungry!*

In exclamations which are effectively wishes, *nur* or *bloß* are alternatives to *erst* (and can be used with it):

| Wäre er doch erst zu Hause! | *If only he were at home!* |
| Wenn er (bloß) erst wieder arbeiten könnte! | *If only he could start work again!* |

(b) *erst* **as a focus particle**

erst focuses on the next word or phrase and indicates that there are/were less or fewer than expected.

(i) Before a number or an expression of quantity it corresponds to 'only':

Ich habe erst zehn Seiten geschrieben	*I've only written ten pages*
Er ist erst sieben Jahre alt	*He's only seven years old*
Ich habe erst die Hälfte fertig	*I've only got half of it finished*

(ii) Before other nouns the sense is 'nothing less than':

Erst mit einer Stelle in Berlin wird er sich zufrieden geben	*He'll only be satisfied with a job in Berlin*

(iii) In time expressions, *erst* implies that it is later than expected or desirable. It usually corresponds to English 'only', 'not before', 'not until' or, in some contexts, 'as late as':

Er kommt erst (am) Montag	{ *He's only coming on Monday* *He's not coming till Monday*
Es ist erst acht Uhr	*It's only eight o'clock*
Ich kam erst im Sommer nach Heidelberg	*I didn't get to Heidelberg until the summer*
erst wenn/als (see **19.3.2b**)	*not until, only when*
wenn er erst zu Hause ist, …	*once he's home …*
Wir waren eben aus der Kneipe abgezogen	*We had only just left the pub*
Ich kann den Wagen erst Anfang nächste Woche abholen	*I shan't be able to collect the car till the beginning of next week*
Erst im September ist es mir aufgefallen	*It was only in September that I noticed it*

(iv) The opposite of *erst* 'only' as a focus particle is *schon*, see **9.1.29e**.

(c) *erst* **'only' needs to be carefully distinguished from** *nur* **(see 9.1.25d)**

(i) With numbers or expressions of quantity, *erst* implies that more are to follow. In English this can be made clear by adding 'as yet' to the sentence. *nur*, on the other hand, sets a clear limit, i.e. that number and no more. Compare:

Ich habe **erst** drei Briefe bekommen	*I've only received three letters (as yet)* (more are expected)
Ich habe **nur** drei Briefe bekommen	*I've only received three letters* (i.e. three and no more)

(ii) In time expressions, *erst* has the sense 'not before', etc., but *nur* means 'on that one occasion'. Compare:

Sie ist erst (am) Montag gekommen	*She only came on Monday* (i.e. not before Monday)

Sie ist nur (am) Montag gekommen	*She only came on Monday*
	(i.e. on no other day)

The distinction between *erst* and *nur* is not always consistently maintained in casual speech.

9.1.13 *etwa*

(a) In YES/NO QUESTIONS , *etwa* implies that something is undesirable

It suggests that the answer ought to be *nein*. A common English equivalent is a negative statement followed by a positive tag question or an exclamation beginning 'Don't tell me …':

Hast du die Zeitung etwa schon weggeworfen?	*You haven't thrown the newspaper away already, have you?*
Ist das etwa dein Wagen?	*That's not your car, is it?*
Habt ihr etwa geschlafen?	*Don't tell me you've been asleep!*

Questions like this with *etwa* can be in the form of statements, in which case they also contain *doch nicht*:

Sie wollen doch nicht etwa nach Paderborn umziehen?	*You don't want to move to Paderborn, do you?*

(b) In NEGATIVE SENTENCES , *etwa* intensifies the negation

Sie müssen nicht etwa denken, dass ich ihn verteidigen will	*Now don't go and think I want to defend him*
Komm nicht etwa zu spät zum Flughafen!	*Make sure you don't get to the airport too late!*

(c) In CONDITIONAL SENTENCES *etwa* stresses the idea of a possibility

Wenn der Zug etwa verspätet sein sollte, dann verpassen wir den Anschluss nach Gera	*If the train were to be delayed we'll miss our connection to Gera*
Wenn das Wetter etwa umschlagen sollte, müssen wir die Wanderung verkürzen	*If the weather were to change, we'll have to shorten our walk*

(d) *etwa* as a focus or scalar particle before a noun or noun phrase

(i) Before a number or expression of size or quantity, *etwa* expresses approximation:

Ich komme etwa um zwei	*I'll come at about two*
Es kostet etwa dreißig Euro	*It costs about thirty euros*
Er ist etwa so groß wie dein Vater	*He is about as tall as your father*

Wir haben es uns etwa so vorgestellt   *We imagined it to be something like that*

(ii) Before a noun or list of nouns, *etwa* suggests a possibility. It is often close in meaning to English 'for instance' or 'for example':

Sie begnügte sich mit etwa folgender Antwort	*For example, she was satisfied, with the following answer*
Bist du sicher, dass du Jürgen gesehen hast, und nicht etwa seinen Bruder Thomas?	*Are you sure you saw Jürgen, and not perhaps his brother Thomas?*
Er hat viele Hobbys, (wie) etwa Reisen, Musik und Sport	*He has a lot of hobbies, for example travelling, music and sport*
Willst du etwa (am) Sonntag kommen?	*You're not thinking of coming on Sunday, are you?*
Hast du etwa Martina in Verdacht?	*Is it Martina you suspect, perhaps?*

9.1.14 *freilich*

freilich typically has a concessive sense and its meaning is similar to that of *allerdings*, see **9.1.2**. It **never** means 'freely', which is *frei* in most contexts.

(a) Within a clause *freilich* means 'admittedly', 'all the same'

Es scheint freilich nicht ganz so einfach zu sein	*Admittedly, it doesn't appear to be that simple*
Wir nehmen sie mit, freilich muss sie pünktlich am Treffpunkt sein	*We'll take her with us, even so she'll have to get to the meeting place on time*

(b) In answer to a question, *freilich* stresses that the answer is yes

freilich is often used in conjunction with *ja*. It lacks the hint that there is some kind of reservation or qualification to the answer which is sometimes present with *allerdings*:

Kennst du die Angelika?	*Do you know Angelika?*
– (Ja,) freilich (kenne ich sie)!	*– Of course (I know her)!*
Kannst du auch alles besorgen?	*Can you see to it all?*
– (Ja,) freilich!	*– Certainly I can!*

9.1.15 *gar*

gar is used in a number of ways with an intensifying sense.

(a) *gar* can intensify negatives, especially *nicht* and *kein*

In these contexts *gar* is an alternative to *überhaupt*, see **9.1.31c**:

Sie hatte gar nicht gewusst, ob er abfahren wollte *She hadn't even known whether he wanted to*
  (*Johnson*)   *leave*

Ich habe doch heute gar keine Zeit   *I really haven't got any time at all today*

(b) *gar* can intensify *so* or *zu* with an adjective

allzu is a more frequent alternative in this sense:

Du darfst das nicht gar so ernst nehmen   *You really mustn't take that quite so seriously*
Es waren gar zu viele Leute auf der Straße   *There were far too many people in the street*

(c) *gar* can emphasize the following word and indicate surprise

In contexts like this *gar* is the equivalent of English 'even' or 'possibly' and is a less frequent alternative to *sogar*, used mainly in literary registers:

Eher würde ich einem Habicht oder gar Aasgeier eine   *I would rather entrust a message of peace to a*
  Friedensbotschaft anvertrauen als der Taube (*Grass*)   *hawk or even a vulture than to a dove*

9.1.16 *gleich*

As a modal particle *gleich* is used in w-QUESTIONS to politely request the repetition of information. It is often used with *doch*, see **9.1.7c**:

Wie war Ihr Name (doch) gleich?   *What was your name again?*
Was hast du gleich gesagt?   *What was it you said?*

gleich is also used as a time adverb in the sense of 'immediately', e.g. *Ich werde ihn gleich fragen*, or to mean 'at once' or 'at the same time', e.g. *Er hat gleich zwei Hemden gekauft*.

9.1.17 *halt*

halt has much the same meaning as *eben* (see **9.1.8**) and represents an attempt by the speaker to put an end to any discussion because the situation does not allow any alternatives. It was originally used mainly in the South, but in recent years it has become much more frequent elsewhere.

(a) In STATEMENTS , *halt* stresses that something is the case

Das ist halt so   *But there, that's how it is*

Da kann man halt nichts machen	*There's just nothing you can do about it*
Chinesisch ist halt eine sehr schwere Sprache	*Chinese is just simply a very difficult language*
Junge Buben in dem Alter haben halt ihren eigenen Willen	*Young boys just have a mind of their own at that age*

(b) In COMMANDS , *halt* **stresses that there is no alternative**

Commands with *halt* often begin with *dann*:

Dann nimm halt die U-Bahn!	*Just take the underground/subway, then*
(Dann) fahr halt etwas langsamer!	*Just drive a bit more slowly, then*

9.1.18 *immerhin*

immerhin indicates that something might not have come up to expectations, but is acceptable at a pinch. It corresponds most often to English 'all the same' or 'even so' and can be used within a sentence or (very frequently) as a response:

Du hast immerhin tausend Euro gewonnen	*All the same, you won a thousand euros*
Wir haben uns immerhin einen neuen Blu-ray-Player anschaffen können	*Even so, we were able to buy a new blu-ray player*
Das Wetter im Urlaub war miserabel, aber wir hatten ein schönes Zimmer – (Na,) immerhin!	*The weather was lousy on holiday, but we did have a nice room. – Well, that was something, at least!*

9.1.19 *ja*

(a) In STATEMENTS , *ja* **appeals for agreement**

(i) By using *ja* the speaker insists that what they are saying is correct. A common English equivalent is the 'do' form of the verb, or a cleft sentence:

Wir haben ja gestern davon gesprochen	*We did talk about that yesterday (you know)*
Ihr habt ja früher zwei Autos gehabt	*Of course, you used to have two cars*
Hier im Gebirge ist es ja im Frühjahr am schönsten	*It's in spring when it's nicest here in the mountains*
Ich komme ja schon	*It's all right, I'm on my way*
Der katastrophale Zustand des Landes ist ja gerade das Erbe der Diktatur (*Spiegel*)	*The catastrophic state of the country is precisely the legacy of the dictatorship*

(ii) *ja* has a distinct meaning from *doch* (see **9.1.7a**) when used to appeal for agreement. Whereas *doch* implies that the listener might have a different opinion, *ja* always assumes that speaker and listener agree. Compare:

Du könntest dir **ja** Karls Rad leihen	*You could borrow Karl's bike, of course (we both know you can)*
Du könntest dir **doch** Karls Rad leihen	*Surely, you could borrow Karl's bike (you might have thought you couldn't)*
Das ist es **ja** eben	*Why, of course, that's the point*
Das ist es **doch** eben	*Don't you see, that's just the point*
Er kann unmöglich kommen,	*He can't possibly come,*
er ist **ja** krank	*he's ill, as you know*
er ist **doch** krank	*he's ill, don't you know*

(b) In EXCLAMATIONS, *ja* expresses surprise

Heute ist es ja kalt!	*Oh, it is cold today!*
Sie hat ja ein neues Auto!	*Why, she's got a new car!*
Das ist ja unerhört!	*That really is the limit!*
Da kommt ja der Arzt!	*Oh (good), here comes the doctor!*

By using *ja* (or *doch*, which has a very similar force in exclamations, see **9.1.7d**), the speaker expresses surprise that something is the case at all. Thus:

> *die Milch ist ja/doch sauer!* would be said if the milk had been expected to be fresh

On the other hand, when *aber* or *vielleicht* are used in exclamations, surprise is expressed at the extent of a quality, see **9.1.1a** and **9.1.33a**, thus:

> *die Milch ist aber/vielleicht sauer!* expresses surprise at *how* sour the milk is

(c) *ja* intensifies a COMMAND

There is often an implied warning or threat, especially if *ja* is stressed:

Bleib ja hier!	*Be sure to stay here!*
Geht ja nicht auf die Straße!	*Just don't go out onto the street!*
Er soll **ja** nichts sagen	*He really must not say anything (or else)*

nur is an alternative to *ja* to intensify commands and sound a note of warning, see **9.1.25a**.

(d) *ja* can be used as a focus particle

In a string of nouns, verbs or adjectives, *ja* (sometimes in combination with *sogar*) emphasizes the importance of the one (usually the last) before which it is placed. This often corresponds to English *indeed* or *even*:

Es war ein Erfolg, ja ein Triumph	*It was a success, indeed a triumph*
Es war ein unerwarteter, ja sensationeller Erfolg	*It was an unexpected, indeed a sensational success*
Sie konnte die Aussage bestätigen, ja (sogar) beeiden	*She was able to confirm the testimony, even on oath*

(e) *ja* **is the affirmative particle, corresponding to English 'yes'**

e.g. Kommst du morgen? – **Ja!** It can also be used as a tag, e.g. Es geht um acht los, ja?

9.1.20 *jedenfalls*

The phrases *auf jeden Fall* and *auf alle Fälle* are possible alternatives to the particle *jedenfalls* in most contexts.

(a) In STATEMENTS *jedenfalls* **stresses the reason why something should be the case**

(or why something is not as bad as it seems). In these contexts, *jedenfalls* corresponds to English 'at least' or 'at any rate', and *wenigstens* or *zumindest* are alternatives to it, see **7.7.2**:

Vielleicht ist sie krank, sie sieht jedenfalls schlecht aus	*Perhaps she's ill, at least she doesn't look well*
Er ist nicht gekommen, aber er hat sich jedenfalls entschuldigt	*He didn't come, but at least he did apologize*

(b) In COMMANDS *jedenfalls* **indicates that something should be done in any event**

jedenfalls corresponds to English 'anyhow' or 'in any case':

Bei schönem Wetter gehen wir morgen baden. Bring jedenfalls deinen Badeanzug mit	*If it's fine we'll go swimming tomorrow. Bring your costume along anyhow*

9.1.21 *lediglich*

lediglich is used before another word to indicate a restriction or a limit. It is an emphatic alternative to *nur* in the sense of 'only', 'no more than'. It is typical of formal registers and can sound stilted:

Er hat lediglich zwei Semester in Münster studiert	*He only studied two semesters in Münster*
Ich verlange lediglich mein Recht	*I am only asking for what's due to me*

9.1.22 *mal*

(a) *mal* **moderates the tone of a sentence, making it sound less blunt**

(i) *mal* is very frequent in commands, requests and questions. It can correspond to English 'just' (although in practice this is used far less often than German *mal*):

Lies den Brief mal durch!	*Just read the letter through (will you?)*
Hol mal schnell den großen Koffer!	*Just quickly go and get the big suitcase*
Das sollst du mal probieren	*You just ought to try that*
Ich will ihr schnell mal simsen	*I just want to text her quickly*
Würden Sie mir bitte mal helfen?	*Could you just help me?*
Hältst du mir mal die Tasche?	*Just hold my bag for me, will you?*

(ii) In everyday spoken German *mal* is almost automatically added to commands, especially if there is nothing else in the sentence apart from the verb:

Sieh mal her! Hör mal zu! Komm mal herüber! Sag mal!

(iii) The tone of a request or a command can be moderated further by adding *eben*:

Reich mir eben mal das Brot, bitte!	*Just pass me the bread, would you, please?*
Lies den Brief eben mal durch!	*Won't you please just read the letter through?*

(iv) The combination *doch mal* makes a command sound more casual:

Nimm doch mal ein neues Blatt!	*Why don't you get another piece of paper?*
Melde dich doch mal bei der Chefin!	*Why not just arrange to see the boss?*

(v) *man* is a colloquial North German equivalent to *mal* in commands and requests

Geh du man vor!	*You just go ahead*
Seien Sie man bloß ruhig! (*Fallada*)	*Just keep calm*

(b) The particle *mal* **is quite different to the adverb** *einmal* **'once' (see 8.4.3a)**

The particle *mal* is **not** simply a shortened form of *einmal*, which cannot be used for *mal* in any of the contexts explained in **9.1.22a**. However, there are occasions

when *einmal* is shortened to *mal* in everyday speech, but this should not be confused with the particle *mal*:

(i) *noch einmal* '(once) again', 'once more':

Ich habe ihn noch (ein)mal gewarnt   *I warned him once again*

(ii) *nun einmal* 'just'. This combination emphasizes the lack of alternatives. It is a more forceful alternative to *eben* or *halt*, see **9.1.8a**:

Es wird nun (ein)mal lange dauern   *It's just going to take a long time*

(iii) *nicht einmal* 'not even':

Er hat sie nicht (ein)mal gegrüßt   *He didn't even say hello to her*

9.1.23 *noch*

(a) *noch* **indicates something additional**

(i) It can be used in this sense as a modal particle within the clause:

Das wird sich noch herausstellen   *That will remain to be seen*
Wer war noch da?   *Who else was there?*
Und es hat auch noch geregnet!   *And apart from that, it rained too*

(ii) It can also be used as a focus particle before a number, corresponding to English 'another':

Er hat noch drei Stunden geschlafen   *He slept another three hours*
Ich trinke noch eine Tasse Kaffee   *I'll have another cup of coffee*

(b) *noch* **in time expressions**

(i) *noch* can indicate that something is going on longer than expected. It corresponds to English 'still' or 'yet' and can be strengthened by *immer*:

Angela schläft (immer) noch   *Angela's still asleep*
Klaus ist (immer) noch nicht gekommen   *Klaus hasn't come yet/Klaus still hasn't come*
Sie wohnen (immer) noch in Fritzlar   *They're still living in Fritzlar*
Ich habe sie noch nie gesehen   *I've never seen her (yet)*
Sie ist doch noch jung   *She's still young, isn't she?*

(ii) If a particular point in time is indicated, *noch* indicates that an event took place or will take place by then. The implication may be that this is contrary to expectations:

Ich habe ihn noch vor zwei Tagen gesehen	*I saw him only two days ago*
Sie hat noch im Mai ihre Dissertation abgegeben	*She managed to hand her thesis in by the end of May*
Ich rufe den Arzt noch heute an	*I'll ring the doctor before tomorrow*

In this sense, *noch* can come after short time words and phrases as well as before them, e.g. *Ich rufe den Arzt heute noch an*.

(c) Other uses of *noch*

(i) In *w*-questions, *noch* asks for the listener to jog the speaker's memory, i.e. suggesting that something has just slipped their mind:

Wie heißt er noch?	*Oh now, what <u>is</u> his name?*
Wann war das Spiel noch?	*Oh now, when <u>was</u> the game?*

(ii) *noch* is used with comparatives in the sense of 'even' (see **6.5.2c**), e.g.:
Er ist **noch** größer als du
(iii) *noch* is used with *weder* as the equivalent of English 'neither … nor' (see **17.1.3d**), e.g.:
Er liest weder Bücher **noch** Zeitungen
(iv) *noch* is used with *so* and an adjective in a concessive sense (see **17.6.2b**), e.g.:
Wenn er (auch) **noch so** fleißig ist, er wird die Prüfung doch nicht bestehen.

9.1.24 *nun*

(a) In QUESTIONS , *nun* signals dissatisfaction with a previous answer

By using *nun* the speaker insists that the correct or complete information should be provided:

Wann kommt der Zug nun an?	*When <u>does</u> this train get in, now?*
Stimmt es nun, dass sie verheiratet ist?	*Now, is it really true that she's married?*

nun is commonly used on its own as a question to push the other speaker to give more information, cf. *Nun?* 'Well?', *Nun … und?* 'And then what?'

(b) *nun* signals that the speaker considers the topic exhausted

In this sense *nun* typically occurs on its own at the beginning of a sentence. It often corresponds to English 'well':

Nun, das ist alles schon wichtig, aber ich glaube, wir müssen zunächst das Wahlergebnis besprechen	*Well, of course that's all very important, but I think we'll have to discuss the election results first*
Nun, natürlich hat er die besten Erfahrungen	*Well, of course he's got the widest experience*
Nun, wir werden ja sehen	*Well, we shall see*
Nun, meinetwegen!	*All right then*

(c) *nun* is used as an adverb of time to mean 'now'

nun is rather less specific than *jetzt* and it is not used as much to refer simply to the present moment:

Nun wollen wir umkehren	*Now we'll turn back*
Nun hat er mehr Zeit als früher	*Now he's got more time than he used to have*
Geht es dir nun besser?	*Are you better now?*

9.1.25 *nur*

nur is used as a modal particle with an intensifying sense, and as a focus particle with a restrictive sense (= 'only'). *bloß*, see **9.1.5**, is a frequent alternative to *nur* in all its uses except where indicated below. *bloß* is slightly more emphatic than *nur*, and it is used rather more in speech and less formal registers.

(a) In COMMANDS , *nur* intensifies the basic meaning

Depending on the sense of the command, i.e. whether it is an urgent instruction or a request, *nur* can make it sound more of a threat **or** more reassuring respectively.

(i) 'threatening' or **'warning'** *nur* is more common in negative commands or when *nur* is stressed. This sense is similar to that of *ja* (see **9.1.19c**):

Komm nur nicht zu spät!	*You'd better not be late!*
Nimm dich nur in Acht!	*You'd better be careful!*
Geh nur nicht in dieses Geschäft!	*Whatever you do, don't go into that shop*
Sehen Sie nur, was Sie gemacht haben!	*Just look what you've done!*

In this sense, *nur* can be used initially in a positive or negative command using the infinitive or with no verb at all:

Nur nicht so schnell laufen! *Just don't run so fast!*

Nur aufpassen! *Just be sure to look out!*

Nur immer schön langsam! *Take it nice and slow!*

(ii) The **'reassuring'** sense of *nur* is close to that of *ruhig* (see **9.1.27**):

Lass ihn nur reden! *Just let him speak, do!*

Kommen Sie nur herein! *Do come in!*

Hab nur keine Angst! *Don't be afraid, will you!*

Nur weiter! *Just carry on!* (implying: *It's all right so far*)

bloß is **not** used in this 'reassuring' sense, and commands with *bloß* always have a 'warning' tone. Compare *Lass ihn bloß reden!* 'Just let him speak (and you or he will suffer the consequences)' with the first example in **(ii)** above.

(b) *nur* **intensifies w-QUESTIONS and makes them sound more urgent**

Wie kann er nur so taktlos sein? *How on earth can he be so tactless?*

Was können wir nur tun, um ihr zu helfen? *Whatever can we do to help her?*

Wo bleibt sie nur? *Where on earth is she?*

Questions like this can be used as exclamations of reproach or astonishment, as no real answer is possible or expected:

Wie siehst du nur wieder aus?! *What on earth do you look like?!*

Warum musste er nur wegfahren?! *Why on earth did he have to go away?!*

(c) *nur* **intensifies a wish in the form of a** *wenn* **-clause**

See also **14.5.6b**. The force of *nur* is similar to that of *doch*, see **9.1.7e**, and they are often used together to add an even greater intensity to the wish:

Wenn sie (doch) nur anrufen würde! *If only she would call!*

Hätte ich nur mehr Zeit! *If only I had more time!*

Wenn er mir nur geschrieben hätte! *If only he had written to me!*

(d) *nur* **is used as a focus particle to express a restriction**

i.e. with the force of English 'only'. *nur* is used in all kinds of sentences to qualify nouns, verbs or adjectives:

Ich wollte nur Guten Tag sagen	*I only/just wanted to say hello*
Die Mittelmeerküste ist sehr schön, sie ist leider nur etwas dreckig	*The Mediterranean coast is very nice, only I'm afraid it's rather dirty*
Er geht nur bei schönem Wetter spazieren	*He only goes for a walk when it's fine*
Ich vermute nur, dass sie gestern in Urlaub gefahren ist	*I'm only assuming that she went on holiday yesterday*
Man kann es nur dort kaufen	*It's only there you can buy it*
Dort kann man nicht nur Bücher kaufen, sondern auch allerlei Zeitschriften	*You can not only buy books there, but also magazines of all kinds*

For the difference between *erst* and *nur* as an equivalent of English 'only', see **9.1.12c**. *lediglich*, see **9.1.21**, is a more formal alternative to *nur*.

nur dass is used as the equivalent of the English conjunction 'only' (see also **17.7f**), e.g.:

> Die Zimmer waren in Ordnung, **nur dass** die Duschen gefehlt haben.

9.1.26 *ohnehin*

ohnehin indicates that something is correct irrespective of any other reasons given or implied. A typical English equivalent is 'anyway' or 'in any case'. It is an alternative to *eh* (see **9.1.9**), or to *sowieso* (see **9.1.30**):

Er trinkt ohnehin zu viel	*He drinks too much anyway*
Der Zug hat ohnehin Verspätung	*The train's late anyway*
Du musst sofort zum Arzt	*You'll have to go to the doctor right away*
– Ich hätte ihn ohnehin morgen besucht	*– I would have gone to see him tomorrow in any case*

9.1.27 *ruhig*

ruhig lends a reassuring tone to what the speaker is saying. This meaning is clearly related to that of the adjective *ruhig* 'quiet'. It is used in commands (where it is an alternative to *nur*, see **9.1.25a**), and in statements, especially with a modal auxiliary:

Bleib ruhig sitzen!	*Don't get up for me*
Arbeite ruhig weiter!	*Just carry on* (i.e. don't let me disturb you)
Auf dieser Straße kannst du ruhig etwas schneller fahren	*It's all right, you can go a bit faster on this road*
Sie dürfen ruhig hier im Zimmer bleiben	*You can stay here in this room, I don't mind*

9.1.28 *schließlich*

schließlich indicates that the speaker accepts the validity of a reason. It usually corresponds to English 'after all', or a tag question:

Es liegt schließlich nicht genug Schnee auf der Piste	*After all, there isn't enough snow on the piste, is there?*
Wir wollen ihn schließlich nicht zu sehr reizen	*We don't want to annoy him too much, do we?*
Schließlich kann das einem jeden passieren	*After all, it can happen to anybody*

9.1.29 *schon*

(a) The use of *schon* in STATEMENTS

(i) *schon* generally expresses agreement or confirmation in principle, but with slight reservations. This sense is concessive, and *schon* often has (or implies) a following *aber*, *nur* or the like. *zwar* or, especially in North Germany, *wohl* are possible alternatives, see **9.1.34a** and **9.1.35b**:

Das ist schon möglich (aber …)	*That's quite possible (but …)*
Ich wollte schon kommen	*Well, I did want to come*
Das stimmt schon, aber es könnte auch anders kommen	*That may be true, but things might turn out differently*
Ja, ich glaube schon (aber …)	*Well, I think so (but ...)*
Der Film hatte schon wunderschöne Aufnahmen, nur war er etwas langweilig	*The movie may have had some lovely shots, only it was a bit boring*

(ii) In a **response**, *schon* corrects what has just been said and indicates why it was wrong:

Niemand fährt über Ostern weg
  – Mutter schon!
	Nobody's going away over Easter
	  – But mother is

Heute waren keine deiner Freunde da
  – Der Uli aber schon!
	None of your friends came today
	  – But Uli did

Er hat da ein sehr schönes Haus gekauft
  – (Das) schon, aber …
	He's bought himself a very nice house there
	  – Well yes, but …

(iii) In statements referring to the future, *schon* emphasizes the speaker's confidence that something will happen. *schon* usually sounds reassuring, but in some contexts and situations it may take on a more threatening tone. English 'all right' has similar force:

Er wird uns schon helfen	*He'll help us all right*
Es wird schon gehen	*It'll be all right, don't worry*
Das schaffen wir schon	*We'll get that done all right*
Dem werde ich's schon zeigen!	*I'll show him all right!*

(b) *schon* gives persuasive force to a W-QUESTION

In particular if a negative answer is expected or the speaker has a negative attitude:

Was sagt die Regierung zu Russland?	*What does the government say about Russia?*
– Nichts. Was sollen sie schon sagen?	*– Nothing. But then, what are they to say?*
Wer kann diesem Angebot schon widerstehen?	*Who can refuse this offer?* (i.e. 'nobody')
Warum kommt der schon wieder?	*What's he coming back for?* (implying: 'he's up to no good')
Na, und wenn schon?	*So what?*

(c) In CONDITIONAL SENTENCES *schon* emphasizes the condition

In addition, *schon* may point to the inescapability of the conclusion. It is normally used only in open conditions, with the indicative, see **14.3.2**:

Wenn ich das schon mache, dann muss ich über alle Probleme informiert sein	*If I <u>am</u> going to do it, I'll need to be told about all the problems*
Wenn du schon ein neues Auto kaufst, dann aber kein so teures	*If you are going to buy a new car, then don't get such an expensive one*
Wenn sie schon ans Meer fährt, dann will sie auch baden	*If she's going to the seaside, she will want to go swimming*

(d) In COMMANDS , *schon* adds an insistent note

The sentence often begins with *nun*:

(Nun,) beeile dich schon!	*Do hurry up (then)!*
Fang schon an!	*Do make a start!*
Sag mir schon, was du denkst! Ich werde es dir nicht übel nehmen	*Do tell me what you think. I shan't take it amiss*

(e) *schon* is used as a focus particle to express a restriction

erst is the opposite of *schon* in the contexts dealt with under **(i)** and **(ii)** below, see **9.1.12b**.

(i) Referring to time, *schon* indicates that something is happening or has happened sooner than expected or desirable. In some contexts, *schon* can stress that something actually has happened. In this meaning, it can correspond to English 'already', but it is much more widely used:

Er war schon angekommen	*He had already arrived*
schon am nächsten Tag	*the very next day*
Da bist du ja schon wieder	*There you are back again*
Sind Sie schon einmal in Köln gewesen?	*Have you been to Cologne before?*
Ich habe ihn auch schon in der Bibliothek gesehen	*I've sometimes seen him in the library*
Das habe ich schon 2019 geahnt	*I suspected that as early as 2019*
Schon im Mai ist es mir zum ersten Mal aufgefallen	*It was as early as May that I noticed it for the first time*

(ii) Before a number or an expression of quantity, *schon* indicates that this is more than expected or desirable:

Sie hat schon dreißig Mails bekommen	*She has already had thirty e-mails*
Ich habe schon die Hälfte des Buches gelesen	*I've already read half the book*
Er wartet schon eine Stunde auf dich	*He's already been waiting for you for an hour*

(iii) When *schon* qualifies a noun (or, less often, another part of speech), it expresses a restriction:

Schon der Gedanke ist mir unsympathisch, schon wegen ihrer Kinder	*I don't like even thinking about it, not least because of their children*
Das geht schon daher nicht, weil …	*That's impossible, not least because …*
Schon vor dem Krieg war die Eisenbahn in Schwierigkeiten geraten	*Even before the war the railways had run into difficulties*

9.1.30 *sowieso*

sowieso indicates that something is correct irrespective of any other reasons given or implied. It usually corresponds to English 'anyway' or 'in any case'. It is an alternative to *eh* or *ohnehin*, see **9.1.9** and **9.1.26**:

Ich kann heute sowieso nicht arbeiten	*I can't work today anyway*
Der ist sowieso scharf auf sie	*He fancies her anyway*
Ich wäre sowieso nach Nürnberg gefahren	*I would have gone to Nuremberg in any case*

9.1.31 *überhaupt*

(a) *überhaupt* **makes** STATEMENTS **and** COMMANDS **more general**

The English equivalent is often 'at all' or 'anyhow':

Bochum ist überhaupt eine grässliche Stadt	*Bochum is a dreadful city anyhow*
Das ist überhaupt eine gefährliche Angelegenheit	*That's a risky business in any case*
Er liebte die italienische Sprache, ja die Sprachen überhaupt (*Goes*)	*He loved the Italian language, indeed, languages in general*
Seinen Mut müsste man haben, dachte ich. Oder überhaupt Mut (*Walser*)	*One ought to have his courage, I thought. Or any courage at all*
Ihr sollt überhaupt besser aufpassen!	*You ought anyway to pay more attention*

(b) In QUESTIONS**,** *überhaupt* **casts doubt on the basic assumption**

Er singt nicht besonders gut – Kann er denn überhaupt singen?	*He doesn't sing particularly well – Can he sing at all?*
Wie konntest du überhaupt so was tun?	*How could you do such a thing at all?*
Der Brief ist nicht da. Wo kann er überhaupt sein?	*The letter's not there. Wherever can it be?*
Was will er denn überhaupt?	*What on earth does he want?*

(c) *überhaupt* **intensifies a negative**

It typically corresponds to English 'at all'. *gar* is a common alternative, see **9.1.15a**:

Du hättest es überhaupt nicht tun sollen, und besonders jetzt nicht	*You ought not to have done it at all, and particularly not now*
Er hat überhaupt keine Ahnung	*He's got no idea at all*
Ich weiß überhaupt nichts von seinen Plänen	*I don't know anything at all about his plans*

9.1.32 *übrigens*

übrigens is used in STATEMENTS and QUESTIONS to indicate a casual remark which is incidental to the main topic of conversation. It corresponds to English 'by the way', etc.:

Ich habe übrigens erfahren, dass sie eine neue Stelle bekommen hat	*Incidentally, I've found out she's got a new job*
Sie hat übrigens vollkommen Recht/recht	*She's perfectly right, by the way*
Wo wollt ihr übrigens dieses Jahr hin?	*By the way, where are you going this year?*

9.1.33 *vielleicht*

(a) In EXCLAMATIONS **unstressed** *vielleicht* **expresses surprise**

These exclamations can have the form of statements or questions.

Siehst du vielleicht schlecht aus! }   *Oh, you really do look awful!*   Du siehst vielleicht schlecht aus!

Die Kiste ist vielleicht schwer!   *How heavy the crate is!*

Du bist vielleicht ein Idiot!   *You really are stupid!*

Das hat vielleicht gegossen!   *It really did pour!*

Ich habe vielleicht gestaunt!   *I wasn't half surprised!*

Like *aber* (see **9.1.1a**), *vielleicht* expresses surprise at a difference in **degree** from the speaker's expectation, whereas *ja* (see **9.1.19b**) relates to a difference in **kind**.

(b) In YES/NO QUESTIONS , *vielleicht* **signals that the speaker expects a negative answer**

The sense of *vielleicht* is close to that of *etwa*, see **9.1.13a**. The English equivalent is often an exclamation beginning with 'Don't tell me …' or a negative statement followed by a positive tag question:

Willst du mir vielleicht erzählen, dass …?   *You don't mean to tell me that …, do you?*

Soll ich vielleicht bis 7 Uhr abends hier sitzen?   *I'm not supposed to sit here till seven at night, am I?*

Arbeitet er vielleicht?   *Don't tell me he's working?*

(c) *vielleicht* **is used as an adverb of attitude corresponding to English 'perhaps'**

Sie ist vielleicht 30 Jahre alt   *She is perhaps thirty years old*

Sie wird vielleicht morgen kommen   *She may come tomorrow*

Wird sie uns vielleicht morgen besuchen?   *Will she perhaps come to see us tomorrow?*

When it is used as an adverb *vielleicht* **has a quite different meaning from when it is used as a particle**. The difference is may often only be clear from the intonation, with heavy emphasis when it is being used as a particle:

Die Kiste ist vielleicht schwer   *Perhaps the case is heavy*

Die Kiste ist vielleicht schwer!   *How heavy this case is!*

In requests in the form of a question, *vielleicht*, like English 'perhaps', expresses polite reserve on the part of the speaker:

Könnten Sie mir vielleicht sagen, wo es zum Bahnhof geht?	*Could you perhaps tell me the way to the station?*
Würden Sie mir vielleicht helfen?	*Would you perhaps help me?*

9.1.34 *wohl*

(a) In STATEMENTS , *wohl* signals a fair degree of probability

The force of *wohl* is very similar to that of the future tenses, see **12.3.2**, and it is often used together with them, and in practice the present tense with *wohl* can have the same force. It can also correspond to a positive statement followed by a negative tag question, or to formulae like 'I suppose', 'probably':

Das wird wohl der Briefträger sein } Das ist wohl der Briefträger	*That'll be the postman*
Sie sind wohl neu hier	*You're new here, aren't you?*
Sie hat wohl ihr Auto schon verkauft	*I suppose she's already sold her car*
Diese Probleme versteht er wohl nicht	*He probably doesn't understand these problems*
Ich habe ihn nie gesprochen, wohl aber oft gesehen	*I've never spoken to him, but I have often seen him*

The combination *ja wohl* sounds rather more certain, corresponding to English '(pretty) certainly' or 'no doubt':

Sie wird ja wohl noch in Potsdam sein	*She's pretty certainly still in Potsdam*
Das weißt du ja wohl	*No doubt you know that*

The combination *wohl doch* (or, for some speakers, *doch wohl*) sounds rather less certain, though the speaker hopes that it is the case:

Er hat wohl doch noch einen Schlüssel	*Surely he's got another key, hasn't he?*
Die Antje wird doch wohl noch das Abitur schaffen	*Antje's surely going to get through her Abitur, isn't she?*

(b) Stressed *wohl* in STATEMENTS has a concessive sense

wohl expresses agreement or confirmation in principle, but tinged with a slight reservation. It often has (or implies) a following *aber*, *nur* or the like. *zwar* (see **9.1.35a**) or, especially in South Germany, *schon* (see **9.1.29a**) are possible alternatives in this sense:

Er ist wohl mein Freund, aber ich kann ihm nicht helfen	*He may be my friend, but I can't help him*
Das ist wohl möglich(, aber …)	*That may be possible(, but …)*
Kevin ist wohl nach Basel gefahren, aber nur für eine Woche	*Kevin did go to Basle, but only for a week*

(c) In QUESTIONS *wohl* signals uncertainty on the part of the speaker

wohl can make the question sound tentative, as if the speaker doubts whether the other can give a clear answer. The question can be in statement form.

Wer hat diesen Brief wohl geschrieben?	*Who can possibly have written that letter?*
Wie spät ist es wohl?	*I wonder what time it is*
Ist Peter wohl schon zu Hause?	*Peter is at home, isn't he?*
Darf ich wohl bei Ihnen telefonieren?	*Might I use your telephone?*
Henning ist wohl gestern Abend angekommen?	*Henning arrived last night, didn't he?*

(d) *wohl* intensifies a COMMAND , making it sound urgent, insistent and rather abrupt

wohl is often used with *werden* or *wollen*:

Hebst du wohl das Buch wieder auf!	*Pick that book up again right away!*
Wirst du wohl sofort wieder ins Bett gehen!	*Will you go straight back to bed!*
Wollt ihr wohl endlich still sein!	*Once and for all, will you be quiet!*

(e) As an adverb, usually stressed, *wohl* has the sense 'well', 'fully'

wohl often strengthens an affirmative response (i.e. *jawohl!* 'yes, indeed'):

Ich fühle mich wohl	*I feel well*
Er hatte es sich wohl überlegt	*He had considered it fully*
Er weiß sehr wohl, dass er Unrecht hat	*He knows full well that he's wrong*
Schlaf wohl!	*Sleep well!*

9.1.35 *zwar*

(a) *zwar* can be used in a concessive sense

In this sense, *zwar* is typically followed by a clause with *aber* (or one is implied), and the combination *zwar … aber* can have the force of English '(al)though', see **17.6.2b**:

Er ist zwar etwas erkältet, aber er kommt heute Abend noch mit	*Although he's got a bit of a cold, he's still coming with us tonight*
Er stand nach Kinkels Aussage „zwar in der Mitte, aber doch mehr nach rechts als nach links" (*Böll*)	*According to Kinkel he was 'politically in the centre, but tending all the same to the right rather than the left'*

wohl is a possible alternative to *zwar* in this concessive sense, especially in North Germany, see **9.1.34b**, whilst in South and Central Germany *schon* is often used, see **9.1.29a**.

(b) *und zwar* **is used in the sense of English 'namely'**

It specifies something which has just been mentioned:

Mein Entschluss fiel auf dem neuen Flugplatz in Mexico-City, und zwar im letzten Augenblick (*Frisch*)	*My decision was taken at the new airport in Mexico City, (in actual fact) at the very last minute*
Ich habe die wichtigsten Museen in Wien besucht, und zwar das kunsthistorische, das naturhistorische und die Albertina	*I visited the most important museums in Vienna, (namely) the Museum of Art History, the Museum of Natural History and the Albertina*

10 Verbs: conjugation

Verbs typically express actions or activities (like *fallen, gehen, schreiben, stehlen*), **processes** (like *gelingen, sterben, wachsen*) or **states** (like *bleiben, leben, wohnen*). They constitute the core of the sentence and are usually accompanied by one or more NOUN PHRASES, i.e. the SUBJECT and the other COMPLEMENTS, as illustrated in **Table 10.1**.

TABLE 10.1   Subject, verb and complements

Subject	Verb	Complement(s)
Der Lehrer	redet	Unsinn
Ihre Freundin	unterrichtet	die deutsche Sprache
Die Mutter	gibt	ihrer Tochter die Tasche
Der alte Mann	wartet	auf seine Frau

In German, verbs change their form (typically adding endings or changing the vowel) to express a number of GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES, i.e. TENSE, MOOD and PERSON and NUMBER, e.g. *du* (second person singular), *wir* (first person plural), as shown on **Table 10.2**. The different forms of each verb make up its CONJUGATION.

TABLE 10.2   The conjugation of the German verb

Person and number		First person	Second person		Third person
	Singular	**ich** kaufe	**du** kauf**st**		**er/sie/es** kauf**t**
		ich singe	**du** sing**st**		**er/sie/es** sing**t**
		ich wandere	**du** wander**st**		**er/sie/es** wandert
	Plural	**wir** kauf**en**	**ihr** kauf**t**		**sie** kauf**en**
		wir sing**en**	**ihr** sing**t**		**sie** sing**en**
		wir wander**n**	**ihr** wander**t**		**sie** wander**n**
Simple tenses		Present tense	Past tense		
		ich kaufe	ich kauf**te**		

	ich singe	ich s**a**ng	
	ich wandere	ich wander**te**	
Compound tenses	Perfect tense	Pluperfect tense	Future tense
	ich **habe** gekauft	er **hatte** gekauft	sie **werden** kaufen
	ich **habe** gesungen	er **hatte** gesungen	sie **werden** singen
	ich **bin** gewandert	er **war** gewandert	sie **werden** wandern
Mood	Indicative	Subjunctive	Imperative
	sie kauf**t**	sie kauf**e**	kauf**e**!
	sie s**a**ng	sie s**ä**ng**e**	sing**t**!
	sie **wird** wandern	sie **würde** wandern	wander**n Sie**!
Voice	Active	werden-passive	sein-passive
	Sie **schickt** die Mail ab	Die Mail **wird abgeschickt**	Die Mail **ist abgeschickt**
	Er **verkaufte** das Buch	Das Buch **wurde verkauft**	Das Buch **war verkauft**
Non-finite forms	Infinitive	Present participle	Past participle
	kauf**en**	kauf**end**	**ge**kauf**t**
	sing**en**	sing**end**	**ge**sung**en**
	wander**n**	wander**nd**	**ge**wander**t**

This chapter gives details on the conjugation of regular and irregular verbs:

10.1 Basic principles of the conjugation of German verbs
10.2 The conjugation of the simple present and past tenses and the imperative
10.3 The conjugation of the compound tenses: perfect and future
10.4 The conjugation of the passive
10.5 The conjugation of the subjunctive

The forms of all strong and irregular verbs are given in **Table 10.17**, at the end of the chapter.

10.1 Verb conjugation

10.1.1 Forms, endings and grammatical categories

German verbs are usually given in dictionaries in the form of the INFINITIVE, which ends in *-en* or *-n*, e.g. *kaufen, singen, wandern*.

If we take off the ending *-(e)n*, we obtain the basic core of the verb, which is called the ʀᴏᴏᴛ, e.g. *kauf-*, *sing-*, *wander-*. The root carries the basic meaning of the verb (i.e. 'buy', 'sing', 'wander', etc.). By adding endings to the root, or by changing its vowel, we can express different ɢʀᴀᴍᴍᴀᴛɪᴄᴀʟ ᴄᴀᴛᴇɢᴏʀɪᴇs, as illustrated on **Table 10.2**.

(a) Indicating the person and number of the subject of the verb

There is a close link between a ᴠᴇʀʙ and its sᴜʙᴊᴇᴄᴛ. This is indicated in German by adding endings to the verb for each ᴘᴇʀsᴏɴ (i.e. first, second or third person, see Chapter 3) according to ɴᴜᴍʙᴇʀ (i.e. singular or plural), as shown in **Table 10.2**. The 'polite' form of the second person (see 3.3) has the same ending as the third person plural, e.g. *Sie kaufen*, *Sie singen*, *Sie wandern*.

In this way verbs are said to agree with the subject. Those forms of verbs which have an ending in ᴀɢʀᴇᴇᴍᴇɴᴛ with the subject like this are known as ғɪɴɪᴛᴇ ᴠᴇʀʙs (see **10.1.4** for more details).

(b) Indicating tense

The forms of the verb which express **time relationships** are known as its ᴛᴇɴsᴇs. We can add endings to the ʀᴏᴏᴛ verb (or change the vowel of some verbs) to show these time relationships. German, like English, has two sɪᴍᴘʟᴇ ᴛᴇɴsᴇs (i.e. with a single word), the ᴘʀᴇsᴇɴᴛ tense and the ᴘᴀsᴛ tense, as illustrated in **Table 10.2**. The formation of simple tenses is explained in section **10.2**.

The other tenses are called ᴄᴏᴍᴘᴏᴜɴᴅ ᴛᴇɴsᴇs. They are made up of two (or more) words, i.e. the ᴀᴜxɪʟɪᴀʀʏ ᴠᴇʀʙs *haben*, *sein* or *werden* together with the ᴘᴀsᴛ ᴘᴀʀᴛɪᴄɪᴘʟᴇ or the ɪɴғɪɴɪᴛɪᴠᴇ of the verb, as illustrated in **Table 10.2**. Detail on the formation of these tenses is given in section **10.3**.

The use of the tenses in German is explained in Chapter 12.

(c) Indicating mood

The forms of the verb can show whether we are dealing with a fact, a possibility or a command, by changing the category known as the ᴍᴏᴏᴅ of the verb. German has three moods, and typical forms of each are illustrated in **Table 10.2**.

- The ɪɴᴅɪᴄᴀᴛɪᴠᴇ mood states a **fact**

- The SUBJUNCTIVE mood indicates a **possibility** or a **report**
- The IMPERATIVE mood expresses a **command**

The **indicative** is the usual mood for **statements** or **questions**, and the information about verb conjugation in sections **10.2–10.4** relates to the indicative mood. The formation of the subjunctive is given in section **10.5**, and its uses are explained in **Chapter 14** (sections **14.2–14.5**). The **imperative** mood is treated in section **14.1**, together with other ways of expressing commands in German.

(d) Changing the perspective of the sentence

Using a different VOICE of the verb, i.e. the ACTIVE VOICE or the PASSIVE VOICE , allows different elements to appear as the subject of the verb and thus relates the action from a different perspective.

German has **two forms** of the **passive voice**, as illustrated in **Table 10.2**. These are formed by combining the auxiliary verb *werden* (the *werden*-passive), or the auxiliary verb *sein* (the *sein*-passive) with a past participle. The conjugation of the passive is given in section **10.4**, and the uses of the two passive forms are explained in **Chapter 13**.

(e) The non-finite forms of the verb

The NON-FINITE forms of the verb are the INFINITIVE , the PRESENT PARTICIPLE and the PAST PARTICIPLE , as illustrated in **Table 10.2**. Unlike the **finite** forms of the verb (see **(a)** above) the non-finite forms are fixed and **do not agree with the subject of the verb**. They can be combined with **auxiliary verbs** to form the **compound tenses** and the **passive voice** (see **10.3–10.4**), and they have other uses which are explained in **Chapter 11**.

10.1.2 'Weak' and 'strong' verbs

There are two main types of verb CONJUGATION in German, conventionally known as the WEAK and STRONG conjugations. The main difference between them is how the **past tense** is formed:

- **WEAK verbs form their past tense by adding** *-te* **to the root:**

kauf-en   →   kauf-**te**
mach-en   →   mach-**te**

wander-n → wander-**te**

- STRONG verbs form their past tense by changing the vowel of the root:

bleib-en → bl**ie**b
flieg-en → fl**o**g
sing-en → s**a**ng

Most German verbs follow the 'weak' conjugation and can be thought of as the **regular** verbs.

There are far fewer strong verbs, but many of them are very common, so that about half the verbs in a typical text are strong. There is no way of telling from the infinitive of a verb whether it is weak or strong and **foreign learners need to learn which verbs are strong**, together with their three most important forms, the PRINCIPAL PARTS , as shown in **Table 10.3**. These are the **infinitive**, the **past tense** and the **past participle**. All the other forms can be built up from these three basic forms.

TABLE 10.3 Principal parts of strong verbs

Infinitive	Past tense	Past participle
bleiben	blieb	geblieben
fliegen	flog	geflogen
singen	sang	gesungen

The principal parts of **all strong and irregular verbs** are given in **Table 10.17**.

In practice, the **vowel changes** in nearly all strong verbs (called *ABLAUT* in German) follow a small number of **recurrent patterns**. For example, fourteen verbs have the same pattern as *bleiben*. It is useful to be aware of these patterns, which are shown in **Table 10.4**.

TABLE 10.4 Vowel changes in strong verbs

Vowel change	Example
ei – ie – ie	bleiben – blieb – geblieben
ei – i – i	greifen – griff – gegriffen

Vowel change	Example
i – a – u	singen – sang – gesungen
i – a – o	schwimmen – schwamm – geschwommen
ie – o – o	fliegen – flog – geflogen
e – a – o	helfen – half – geholfen
e – a – e	geben – gab – gegeben
e – o – o	fechten – focht – gefochten
a – u – a	fahren – fuhr – gefahren
a – ie – a	fallen – fiel – gefallen

10.1.3 Irregular verbs

A few verbs do not follow the usual weak or strong conjugation but have irregular forms. There are **four groups** of these **irregular verbs**.

(a) Irregular weak verbs

A few verbs have the endings of weak verbs in the past tense and the past participle, but with additional **vowel changes** (and sometimes also **consonant changes**), e.g.:

kennen – k**a**nnte – gek**a**nnt   rennen – r**a**nnte – ger**a**nnt
bringen – br**ach**te – gebr**ach**t denken – d**ach**te – gedacht

The principal parts of all irregular weak verbs are given in **Table 10.17**.

(b) Irregular strong verbs

A few strong verbs have **consonant changes** as well as vowel changes in the past tense and the past participle, e.g.:

gehen – g**ing** – geg**ang**en   leiden – l**itt** – gel**itt**en
stehen – st**and** – gest**and**en ziehen – z**og** – ge**zog**en

The principal parts of all irregular strong verbs are given in **Table 10.17**.

(c) The modal auxiliary verbs and *wissen*

The six MODAL AUXILIARY verbs *dürfen, können, mögen, müssen, sollen, wollen,* and the verb *wissen* 'know' have an **irregular present tense** with no ending in

the third person singular and some have a different vowel in the singular and plural. In the past tense and the past participle they have the endings of weak verbs, but some of them have vowel changes:

können er k**a**nn, wir k**ö**nnen k**o**nnte gek**o**nnt

müssen er m**u**ss, wir m**ü**ssen m**u**sste gem**u**sst

wissen er w**ei**ß, wir w**i**ssen w**u**sste gew**u**sst

All the forms of these verbs in the indicative tenses are given in **Table 10.12**, and the uses of the modal auxiliaries are explained in **Chapter 15**.

(d) The verbs *haben***,** *sein* **and** *werden*

These three verbs are wholly irregular and their indicative forms are given in **Table 10.11**. Aside from their basic meanings, i.e. *haben* 'have', *sein* 'be', *werden* 'become', they are used as AUXILIARY VERBS to form the **compound tenses** and the **passives**.

10.1.4 Agreement of subject and finite verb

As explained in **10.1.1a** and illustrated in **Table 10.2**, finite verbs have endings in AGREEMENT with the PERSON and NUMBER of the SUBJECT. However, there are contexts where there can be uncertainty, especially if the subject is not a noun phrase or there is doubt whether the subject is singular or plural.

(a) If the subject of the verb is a clause, the verb has the third person singular endings

The clause can be a subordinate clause (see **17.2**) or an infinitive clause (see **11.2.2**):

Dass sie nichts tut, **ärgert** mich sehr *I'm very annoyed that she isn't doing anything*

Sie wiederzusehen **hat** mich gefreut *I was pleased to see her again*

(b) If the verb *sein* **is followed by a noun in the plural**

In these contexts the verb has a plural ending even if the subject is singular:

Mein Lieblingsobst **sind** Kirschen *My favourite fruit is cherries*

This is in particular the case with *es*, *das* and other neuter pronouns (see **3.6.2b**, **5.1.1h** and **5.3.1a**):

Was **sind** das für große Vögel? *What kind of large birds are those?*

  – Es sind Störche   – *They are storks*

Sind es deine Handschuhe?   *Are they your gloves?*

Welches **sind** deine Handschuhe? *Which are your gloves?*

(c) If the subject consists of a series of linked nouns, the verb is usually plural

Helmut und sein Bruder sind gekommen *Helmut and his brother have come*

Vater, Mutter, Tochter saßen beim Essen *Father, mother and daughter were sitting down to a meal*

However, in some contexts it is possible to use a singular ending (although this is still less common than the plural ending).

(i) if the subject follows the verb:

Im Osten **winkte** das Völkerschlachtdenkmal, die *In the East, the memorial to the Battle of 1813, the*
    Türme und die Essen von Leipzig   *towers and chimneys of Leipzig beckoned*

(ii) if the parts of the subject are seen as separate or distinct (this is especially the case if the nouns are qualified by *jeder* or *kein*):

Wenig später **wurde** heiße Suppe und Weißbrot *A little later hot soup and white bread were handed*
    ausgeteilt   *out*

Ihm **konnte** kein Arzt und kein Apotheker mehr *No doctor or chemist could help him now*
    helfen

(iii) if the linked nouns are felt to form a single whole:

Die Beratung und Vermittlung soll im Mai beginnen *The consultations and negociations are to start in*
    (*RhZ*)   *May*

(iv) with the conjunctions *sowie* and *sowohl ... als/wie (auch)*, see **17.1.4**:

Sowohl Jörg als auch seine Frau **war** einverstanden *Both Jörg and his wife agreed*

(d) If the subject consists of nouns linked by a disjunctive conjunction

i.e. a conjunction with the meaning 'or'. The verb is then most often in the singular.

(i) This applies in particular to *(entweder ...) oder* and *nicht (nur) ..., sondern (auch)*

Entweder Hans oder Kurt **wird** mir helfen	*Either Hans or Kurt will help me*
Mit dieser Lösung **wäre** nicht nur die Mehrheit der Partei, sondern auch Seelmann selbst zufrieden gewesen	*Not only the majority of the party but Seelmann too would have been satisfied with this solution*

A plural verb is sometimes used with these, especially if the nearest noun is plural, e.g. *Entweder Karl oder seine Brüder werden mir helfen*.

(ii) With *weder ... noch*, either a singular or a plural verb is possible, but the plural is more frequent:

In Berlin waren sich weder Kabinett noch Regierungsfraktionen einig	*In Berlin neither the cabinet nor the governing parties were agreed*

(e) If a coordinated subject includes a pronoun

The verb has the ending corresponding to the combination, i.e. first, second or third person plural.

(i) This applies in particular with the conjunction *und* and its synonyms:

Mein Mann und ich (= wir) **trennten** uns im Frühjahr *(Spiegel)*	*My husband and I separated in the spring*
Du und sie (= ihr) **könnt** damit zufrieden sein	*You and she can be satisfied with that*
Sowohl sie als auch er (= sie) **haben** sich darüber gefreut	*Both she and he were pleased about it*

These combinations can sound artificial, especially if the second person plural *ihr* is involved, and they are often avoided by rephrasing the sentence and adding the appropriate plural pronoun, e.g. *Ihr könnt damit zufrieden sein, du und sie*.

(ii) With disjunctive conjunctions (i.e. those meaning 'or'), the verb usually agrees with the nearest pronoun, whether this precedes or follows:

Entweder du oder ich **werde** es ihnen sagen
Nicht ich, sondern ihr **sollt** es ihnen sagen
Dann **werden** nicht nur sie, sondern auch ihr es ihnen sagen
Ich, nicht du, **sollst** es ihnen sagen

These, too, can sound unnatural, and can be avoided by repeating the verb or splitting one pronoun off, e.g.:

Entweder du sagst es ihnen, oder ich sage es ihnen
Entweder du sollst es ihr sagen oder ich

(f) Usage with expressions of measure or quantity

(i) With singular nouns of indefinite quantity followed by a plural noun, the verb is often plural:

Ein Dutzend Eier **kosten** 2 Euro	*A dozen eggs cost 2 euros*
In Canary Wharf **arbeiten** eine Menge Leute, die sich solche Wagen leisten können (*BZ*)	*A lot of people who can afford cars like that work in Canary Wharf*
Eine Gruppe von **Studenten** standen vor dem Bahnhof	*A group of students were standing in front of the station*
Die Hälfte meiner Gedanken **waren** bei ihr (*Grass*)	*Half my thoughts were with her*

This is the predominant usage in speech and common in writing, although the singular is is often preferred in writing, e.g. *ein Dutzend Eier kostet 2 Euro* or *Die Hälfte meiner Gedanken war bei ihr*, and some authorities insist that only this is correct.

(ii) With singular measurement words followed by a plural noun, the verb can be either singular or plural, although in practice the singular is rather more frequent:

> Ein Kilogramm Kartoffeln **reicht (reichen)** nicht aus
> Ein Kubikmeter Ziegelsteine **wiegt (wiegen)** fast zwei Tonnen

(iii) With nouns of measurement used with a numeral or with a plural determiner, the verb is normally in the plural, although in such cases, masculine and neuter nouns of measurement have no plural ending (see **1.2.8**):

Mehrere Liter Benzin **waren** verschüttet	*Several litres of petrol were spilled*
Fünf Kilo **kosten** fünfzehn Euro	*Five kilograms cost fifteen euros*
Dafür **wurden** mir tausend Euro angeboten	*I was offered a thousand euros for it*
80 Prozent der Bevölkerung **waren** dagegen	*80% of the population was opposed to it*

However, a singular ending is often used in such contexts, especially in speech, as the quantity is thought of as a single whole: *Zwanzig Euro ist/sind zu viel*; *80 Prozent der Bevölkerung war/waren dagegen*.

(g) Singular collective nouns are used with a singular verb

This contrasts strongly with English (especially British English), where the plural is frequent (or with some nouns, like *police*, the only possibility), and English-speaking learners need to pay careful attention to German usage in such contexts:

Die ganze Familie **ist** verreist	*The whole family have/has gone away*
Unsere Mannschaft **hat** wieder verloren	*Our team have/has lost again*
Die Polizei **kommt** gleich	*The police are coming straight away*
Die Regierung **hat** es beschlossen	*The government have/has decided it*

(h) Agreement of neuter indefinites and pronouns with the verb *sein*

The neuter indefinites and pronouns *es*, *das*, *welches*, *wer*, *was* and *beides* can be used with singular or plural forms of *sein*, which in effect agrees with the PREDICATE COMPLEMENT, e.g.:

Das **ist** mein Buch	*That is my book*
Das **sind** meine Bücher	*Those are my books*

See **3.6.2b**, **5.1.1h**, **5.3.1a**, **5.3.3b** and **5.5.3d** for examples with various pronouns.

10.2 The simple tenses, the non-finite forms and the imperative

The forms of the simple present and past tenses, the imperative and non-finite forms (i.e. the participles and the infinitive) make up the basic conjugation of the German verb.

These are all single words, formed by adding prefixes or suffixes to the root of the verb, or (especially in the case of strong and irreglar verbs) by changing the form of the root, e.g. by altering the vowel.

10.2.1 Weak and strong verbs

As explained in **10.1.2**, weak and strong verbs differ mainly in the way in which they form the past tense and the past participle (their 'principal parts'). Weak verbs have the ending *-te* in the past tense and *-t* in the past participle, while strong verbs change the vowel of the root in the past tense and have the ending *-en* (sometimes with a further change of vowel) in the past participle.

Otherwise, both weak and strong verbs have the same endings in the two simple tenses and in the imperative in agreement with the subject of the verb (see

10.1.1a), and the same prefixes and suffixes in the non-finite forms. **Table 10.5** gives these forms for typical weak and strong verbs. The principal parts of all strong and irregular verbs are given in **Table 10.17**.

TABLE 10.5   Basic verb conjugation – the simple forms

	Weak			**Strong**
Infinitive	kaufen	warten	wandern	singen
Present participle	kaufend	wartend	wandernd	singend
Past participle	**ge**kauf**t**	gewartet	gewandert	gesungen
Present tense	ich kaufe	ich warte	ich wand(e)re	ich singe
	du kaufst	du wartest	du wanderst	du singst
	es kauft	es wartet	es wandert	es singt
	wir kaufen	wir warten	wir wandern	wir singen
	ihr kauft	ihr wartet	ihr wandert	ihr singt
	Sie kaufen	Sie warten	Sie wandern	Sie singen
	sie kaufen	sie warten	sie wandern	sie singen
Past tense	ich kaufte	ich wartete	ich wanderte	ich sang
	du kauftest	du wartetest	du wandertest	du sangst
	es kaufte	es wartete	es wanderte	es sang
	wir kauften	wir warteten	wir wanderten	wir sangen
	ihr kauftet	ihr wartetet	ihr wandertet	ihr sangt
	Sie kauften	Sie warteten	Sie wanderten	Sie sangen
	sie kauften	sie warteten	sie wanderten	sie sangen
Imperative singular	kauf(e)!	warte!	wand(e)r**e**!	sing(e)!
plural (familiar}	kauf**t**!	wartet!	wandert!	singt!
plural (polite)	kaufen Sie!	warten Sie!	wandern Sie!	singen Sie!

There are a few regular variations to the pattern of endings given in Table 10.5 .

(a) Verbs with a root ending in *-d* **or** *-t* **, or in** *-m* **or** *-n* **after a consonant**

These verbs add **-e-** before the endings *-t* and *-st*, and before the *-te* of the past tense of weak verbs: *du arbeitest, er arbeitet, er arbeitete, gearbeitet*, etc. The forms of *warten* 'wait' are given in **Table 10.5** as illustration. Other examples:

finden *find*   du find**e**st, er find**e**t, ihr find**e**t; ihr fand**e**t

regnen *rain*   es regn**e**t, es regn**e**te, geregn**e**t

atmen *breathe*   du atm**e**st, sie atm**e**t, ihr atm**e**t, ich atm**e**te, geatm**e**t

(i) These verbs always have the ending *-e* in the **imperative singular** (see also **(g)** below): *arbeite!, finde!, warte!*

(ii) *-e-* is not usually added in the second person singular of the past tense of strong verbs: *du fandst,* e.g. (very occasionally – and rather old-fashioned: *du fandest*).

(iii) Verbs with *l* or *r* before *m* or *n* have no linking *-e-: sie filmt* 'she is filming', *er lernt* 'he is learning'.

(iv) Some strong verbs with a vowel change in the present tense do not add *-et* in the third person singular, see **(e)** and **(f)** below.

(b) Verbs with a root ending in *-s* **,** *-ß* **,** *-x* **or** *-z*

(i) These add the ending *-t* in the second person singular of the present tense:

rasen *race* – du **rast**   grüßen *greet* – du **grüßt**   faxen *fax* – du **faxt**   sitzen *sit* – du **sitzt**

The ending - *est* **, e.g.** *du sitzest* **, is nowadays considered old-fashioned.**

Verbs **with a root ending in** *-sch* add *-st* in standard usage, e.g. *du beherrschst*. The use of *-t* rather than *-st*, e.g. *du beherrscht*, is not uncommon, but this is considered incorrect.

(ii) Strong verbs with a root ending in *-s*, *-ß* or *-z* add *-e-* before the ending *-st* in the second person singular of the past tense:

lesen *read* – du **lasest**   heißen *be called* – du **hießest**   sitzen *sit* – du **saßest**

(iii) With these strong verbs, *-e-* was added before the ending *-t* of the second person plural of the past tense in older usage, e.g. *ihr laset*. However, the shorter ending *-t* is now usual, i.e. *ihr last*.

(c) Verbs with a root ending in *-el* **and** *-er*

These verbs have some endings with slight differences from the general pattern, as illustrated by the forms of *wandern* given in **Table 10.5**.

(i) They have the ending *-n* in the infinitive, and the first and third person plural of the present tense, e.g. *klingel n* 'ring', *wander n* 'wander'.

(ii) In the first person singular of the present tense and the imperative singular, the -*e*- of the root is usually dropped with verbs in -*el*, e.g. *ich kling le* (or, much less often: *ich kling ele*). With verbs in -*er* the -*e*- is occasionally dropped (more commonly in speech than in writing), e.g. *ich wand(e) re*. However, it is always dropped if the root of the verb ends in a vowel, e.g. *ich bedau re*.

(iii) In speech, forms are heard in the first person singular of the present tense where the -*e*- of the root is kept, but the -*e* of the ending is dropped, e.g. *ich klingel*, *ich wander*, etc.

(d) Verbs with a root ending in a long vowel or diphthong

These sometimes drop -*e*- in their endings, in particular:

(i) In the present tense and infinitive of *tun* 'do', i.e.:
ich tue, du tust, es tut, wir tun, ihr tut, sie tun
(ii) The present tense of *knien* [kni:ən] 'kneel' is as follows (see also **21.4.2a**):

> ich knie [kni:ə], du kniest [kni:st], er kniet [kni:t],
> wir knien [kni:ən], ihr kniet [kni:t], sie knien [kni:ən]

(iii) The past tense of the strong verb *schreien* 'shout, scream' is similar, i.e.:

> ich/er schrie, wir/sie schrien [ʃri:ən]

The past participle is *geschrien* [gəʃri:ən]. The spelling *geschrieen* is no longer current.

(iv) Other verbs with a root ending in a long vowel or diphthong typically drop the -*e*- of the ending -*en* in spoken German, e.g. *schaun, gehn, gesehn* (for *schauen, gehen, gesehen*). These forms are occasionally used in writing, especially in dialogue.

(e) Strong verbs with the vowel - *e*- **in their root**

Most of these verbs **change -** *e* **-** to **-** *i*- or **-** *ie* **-** in the second and third person singular present, and in the imperative singular. Full details of all these changes are given with the individual verb in **Table 10.17**. In general, verbs with **short** -*e*-[ɛ] change this to short **-** *i* **-**, while those in **long** -*e*- [e:] usually change this to **-** *ie* **-**, e.g.:

essen *eat*	du **i**sst, es **i**sst, **i**ss!	helfen *help*	du h**i**lfst, es h**i**lft, h**i**lf!
lesen *read*	du l**ie**st, es l**ie**st, l**ie**s!	stehlen *steal*	du st**ie**hlst, es st**ie**hlt, st**ie**hl!

There are a few exceptions to these changes, and a few minor differences with some verbs.

(i) The following strong verbs in *-e-* do not change the vowel to *-i-* or *-ie-*:

bewegen *induce* gehen *go* genesen *recover* heben *lift*
melken *milk* scheren *shear* stehen *stand* weben *weave*

(ii) *erlöschen* 'go out' (of lights, fires) changes *-ö-* to *-i-*: *es erlischt*
(iii) Three strong verbs with a long *-e-* in their root change this to **short** *-i-*:

geben *give* du g**i**bst, es g**i**bt, g**i**b!
nehmen *take* du n**i**mmst, es n**i**mmt, n**i**mm!
treten *step* du tr**i**ttst, es tr**i**tt, tr**i**tt!

(iv) Verbs with this vowel change whose root ends in *-d* or *-t* do not add an ending in the third person singular of the present tense:

gelten *be worth* es g**i**l**t** treten *step* es tr**itt**

(v) In colloquial speech, you often hear imperative forms without this vowel change, e.g. *ess!, geb!, nehm!* These are considered incorrect.

(f) Strong verbs with *-a-* or *-au-* in their root

Most of these verbs have *Umlaut* in the second and third person singular of the present:

fahren *go* du f**ä**hrst, es f**ä**hrt lassen *let* du l**ä**sst, es l**ä**sst laufen *run* du l**äu**fst, es l**äu**ft

Full details of all these changes are given with the individual verb in **Table 10.17**. There are some exceptions and further irregularities:

(i) *stoßen* 'push' has *Umlaut* of *-o-*: *du stößt, es stößt*
(ii) *schaffen* 'create' and *saugen* 'suck' do not have *Umlaut*: *du schaffst, du saugst*; *es schafft, es saugt*
(iii) Verbs whose root ends in *-t* do not add an ending in the third person singular of the present tense, e.g. *es hält* from *halten* 'hold', while those whose root ends in *-d* add *-t* without an intervening vowel, e.g. *es lädt* from *laden* 'load'.

In spoken South German, *Umlaut* is often lacking with these verbs, and one hears, for example, *sie schlaft* instead of *sie schläft*. This is a non-standard regionalism.

(g) The imperative singular ending - *e*

(i) The ending is optional with most verbs, e.g.:

 Komm(e) in den Garten! Setz(e) dich! Stör(e) mich nicht!

It is usually dropped in speech, but quite commonly used in written German. An apostrophe is occasionally seen in writing, e.g. *Setz' dich!* but this is not considered correct.

(ii) Strong verbs with a vowel change never have an ending: *Lies! Gib! Nimm!*
(iii) Verbs with a root ending in *-ig*, and *-m* or *-n* after another consonant always keep the ending *-e*:

 Entschuldige bitte! Segne mich! Atme langsam!

(iv) Verbs in *-el* (see **(c)** above) drop the *-e-* of the root, but keep the ending: *Kling le laut!*

(h) The past participle prefix *ge-*

As shown on **Table 10.5**, most verbs have the **prefix** *ge-* in the **past participle**, e.g. *gekauft, gewandert, gewartet, gesungen*. However, verbs which are **not stressed on the first syllable** have **no prefix.** These fall into three groups.

(i) Verbs with inseparable prefixes (see **20.5**):

bedeuten *mean*	bedeutet	misslingen *fail*	misslungen
erfinden *invent*	erfunden	überlegen *consider*	überlegt
gelingen *succeed*	gelungen	unterdrücken *suppress*	unterdrückt
anvertrauen *entrust*	anvertraut	zerbrechen *smash*	zerbrochen

(ii) Verbs in *-ieren* **:**

 gratulieren *congratulate* gratuliert studieren *study* studiert

(iii) A few other verbs which are not stressed on the first syllable. Some are recent loans from English:

frohlocken *rejoice*	frohlockt	prophezeien *prophesy*	prophezeit
interviewen *interview*	interviewt	recyceln *recycle*	recycelt
liebkosen *caress*	liebkost	schmarotzen *sponge*	schmarotzt
offenbaren *reveal*	offenbart	stibitzen *nick, pinch*	stibitzt
posaunen *bellow*	posaunt		

Some of these verbs can, alternatively, be pronounced with the first syllable stressed, and in this case the past participle has the prefix *ge-*:

ʹfrohlocken – geʹfrohlockt   ʹliebkosen – geʹliebkost   ʹoffenbaren – geʹoffenbart

(i) Separable verbs

SEPARABLE VERBS are made by adding a PREFIX to a simple verb to form a new verb with a distinctive meaning (as explained in **20.6**). These verbs are called **separable verbs** because this prefix is separated from the main verb in certain contexts. Separable verbs have exactly the same endings and forms, whether weak or strong, as the simple verbs from which they are derived. Thus, *ankommen* 'arrive' conjugates like *kommen*, *zumachen* 'shut' like *machen*.

(i) In main clauses, the prefix is separated from the verb and is placed at the end of the clause (see also **19.1.1a**):

ankommen *arrive*:	Ich komme morgen um zwei Uhr **an**
ausgehen *go out*:	Sie geht heute Abend **aus**
nachahmen *imitate*:	Sie ahmten seine Bewegungen **nach**
totschlagen *kill*:	Er schlug das Tier mit einer Keule **tot**

(ii) The prefix remains joined to the verb in all the non-finite forms. The *ge-* of the past participle is inserted **between the prefix** and **the verb**:

ankommen – ankommend – an**ge**kommen
ausgehen – ausgehend – aus**ge**gangen
ausmachen – ausmachend – aus**ge**macht
vorstellen – vorstellend – vor**ge**stellt

If the simple verb has no *ge-* in the past participle (see **(h)** above), it is also lacking in all corresponding separable verbs:

einstudieren *rehearse* – einstudiert   anerkennen *recognize* – anerkannt

The *zu* of the expanded infinitive (see **11.1.2b**) is also inserted between the prefix and the verb:

ankommen – an**zu**kommen   ausgehen – aus**zu**gehen   anerkennen – an**zu**erkennen

(iii) In subordinate clauses (see **19.1.1c**), the prefix rejoins the finite verb in final position:

> Ich weiß, dass sie heute Abend **ausgeht**
> Er sah, wie sie seine Bewegungen **nachahmten**

(iv) Some verbs have prefixes derived from nouns, such as *notlanden* 'make an emergency landing' and *schutzimpfen* 'innoculate' (see **21.3.1e**). These prefixes are not separable in the simple tenses, e.g. *wir notlanden*, although these are rarely used in practice. However, the prefix *ge-* of the past participle and the *zu* of the expanded infinitive is inserted between the prefix and the verb root, e.g.:

notlanden   → notgelandet, notzulanden
schutzimpfen → schutzgeimpft, schutzzuimpfen

(v) In general usage, the verb *anerkennen* 'recognize' is a separable verb, e.g. *Frankreich erkannte das neue Regime an*. However, it is not unusual in legal language, and in Austrian and Swiss usage, for the prefix *an* to be kept with the verb, e.g. *Als erstes Land anerkannte Südafrika den Machtwechsel* (*SGT*).

(j) Forms in everyday speech

Some verb forms which are in practice quite usual in spoken German are considered non-standard colloquialisms and avoided in writing and formal speech.

(i) Final *-e* is dropped in all endings, e.g.:

> ich kauf, ich hätt, ich fall, er/sie sucht *for* ich kaufe, ich hätte, ich falle, er/sie suchte

This form is occasionally found in written German to give the impression of informal speech, and the missing ending is sometimes indicated by an apostrophe, e.g.: *ich kauf', ich hätt'*.

(ii) The ending *-en* can be reduced to *-n*, *-m* or *-ng*, e.g. *wir kaufn, sie falln, wir bleibm, gebackng*.
(iii) In colloquial speech in North and Central Germany, the verb *brauchen* lacks an ending in the third person singular of the present tense, e.g. *er/sie brauch*. This

is a non-standard regionalism.

(k) Recent loan words from English

Many English verbs are simply taken over as German roots and the regular prefixes and endings of weak verbs are simply added to them, e.g.:

> surfen *surf (the web)* – Oliver sitzt am Computer und surft durchs Internet
> mailen *e-mail* – Hast du ihr gestern gemailt?
> simsen *send a text message (SMS)* – sie simst ihren Freunden dauernd

> Kinder und Jugendliche bewegen sich heute fast unbeschränkt auf der ganzen Welt – der virtuellen Welt. Sie „googlen", „surfen", „chatten", „twittern", „skypen", „mailen", „bloggen", „gamen" und so fort (*SGT*)

Some English verbs are less easy to convert into a German root, in which case partly English spellings may be used, e.g. *Dieses Bild wurde schon hundertmal geliked*. However, some authorities recommend the use of the German forms, i.e. *gelikt*.

With verbs loaned from English or modelled on English which have prepositions or adverbs as their first elements these are often treated as separable prefixes in the past participle or the extended infinitive with *zu* (see also **20.6.3e**), e.g.:

doppelklicken	→	gedoppelklickt *or* doppelgeklickt; zu doppelklicken *or* doppelzuklicken
downloaden	→	gedownloadet *or* downgeloadet; zu downloaden *or* downzuloaden
outsourcen	→	outgesourct *or* geoutsourct; zu outsourcen *or* outzusourcen
upgraden	→	geupgradet *or* upgegradet; zu upgraden *or* upzugraden

In practice, usage is still variable and uncertain with all these. In practice they tend to be avoided in the present or past tenses, but if they are used in these the first element is not usually separated, e.g.: *ich doppelklicke* – except in the case of *outsourcen*, where *wir sourcen out* is quite frequent.

10.2.2 Irregular verbs

The verbs *sein* 'be', *haben* 'have', *werden* 'become', the six **modal auxiliary verbs** *dürfen, können, mögen, müssen, sollen, wollen* and the verb *wissen* 'know' are wholly irregular.

(a) The conjugation of *sein ,* *haben* **and** *werden* **is given in Table 10.6**

TABLE 10.6 Conjugation of *sein*, *haben*, *werden*

Infinitive	*sein*	*haben*	*werden*
Present participle	**seiend**	**habend**	**werdend**
Past participle	**gewesen**	**gehabt**	**geworden**
Present tense	ich **bin**	ich **habe**	ich **werde**
	du **bist**	du **hast**	du **wirst**
	es **ist**	es **hat**	es **wird**
	wir **sind**	wir **haben**	wir **werden**
	ihr **seid**	ihr **habt**	ihr **werdet**
	Sie **sind**	Sie **haben**	Sie **werden**
	sie **sind**	sie **haben**	sie **werden**
Past tense	ich **war**	ich **hatte**	ich **wurde**
	du **warst**	du **hattest**	du **wurdest**
	es **war**	es **hatte**	es **wurde**
	wir **waren**	wir **hatten**	wir **wurden**
	ihr **wart**	ihr **hattet**	ihr **wurdet**
	Sie **waren**	Sie **hatten**	Sie **wurden**
	sie **waren**	sie **hatten**	sie **wurden**
Imperative singular	**sei!**	**hab!**	**werde!**
plural (familiar)	**seid!**	**habt!**	**werdet!**
plural (polite)	**seien Sie!**	**haben Sie!**	**werden Sie!**

(i) Reduced forms of *sein* and *haben* are frequent in everyday speech, e.g.:

> **es/sie/er is** (for *es/sie/er ist*)
> **wir/sie sin, ham** (for *wir/sie sind, haben*)
> **simmer, hammer/hamwe** (for *sind wir, haben wir*)

(ii) Special forms of *werden*

The old form of the past tense, *ich/es ward,* is still sometimes used for *ich/es wurde* in deliberately archaicizing (especially biblical) contexts.

The past participle of *werden* has no *ge-* when used as an auxiliary to form the passive, see **10.4**, e.g. *Er ist gelobt worden*. Compare its use as a full verb meaning 'become': *Er ist Schauspieler geworden*.

(b) The conjugation of the modal auxiliaries and *wissen* **is given in Table 10.7**

TABLE 10.7 Conjugation of the modal auxiliary verbs and *wissen*

Infinitive		dürfen	können	mögen	müssen	sollen	wollen	wissen
Present tense	**ich**	darf	kann	mag	muss	soll	will	weiß
	du	darfst	kannst	magst	musst	sollst	willst	weißt
	es	darf	kann	mag	muss	soll	will	weiß
	wir	dürfen	können	mögen	müssen	sollen	wollen	wissen
	ihr	dürft	könnt	mögt	müsst	sollt	wollt	wisst
	Sie	dürfen	können	mögen	müssen	sollen	wollen	wissen
	sie	dürfen	können	mögen	müssen	sollen	wollen	wissen
Past tense	**ich**	durfte	konnte	mochte	musste	sollte	wollte	wusste
	du	durftest	konntest	mochtest	musstest	solltest	wolltest	wusstest
	es	durfte	konnte	mochte	musste	sollte	wollte	wusste
	wir	durften	konnten	mochten	mussten	sollten	wollten	wussten
	ihr	durftet	konntet	mochtet	musstet	solltet	wolltet	wusstet
	Sie	durften	konnten	mochten	mussten	sollten	wollten	wussten
	sie	durften	konnten	mochten	mussten	sollten	wollten	wussten
Past participle		gedurft	gekonnt	gemocht	gemusst	gesollt	gewollt	gewusst

(i) The past participle of the modal auxiliaries is rarely used. When these verbs are used in the perfect tenses in conjunction with a main verb, the infinitive is used rather than the past participle (see. **11.3.2**):

Ich habe es machen **müssen**   Sie hatte es sehen **können**

Wir haben ihn lehren sollen   Sie hatten es uns sagen **wollen**

(ii) The present participle and imperative of the modal auxiliaries are not used. Those of *wissen* are regular, i.e. present participle: *wissend*; imperative: *wisse! wisst! wissen Sie!*

10.3 The compound tenses

10.3.1 The conjugation of the verb in the compound tenses

(a) The perfect and future are formed with the auxiliary verbs *sein*, *haben* **and** *werden*

The perfect tenses are formed with the past participle and *haben* or *sein*, and the future tenses with *werden* and the infinitive, e.g.:

perfect	sie hat gekauft *she has bought*	sie ist gekommen *she has come*
pluperfect	sie hatte gekauft *she had bought*	sie war gekommen *she had come*
future	sie wird kaufen *she will buy*	sie wird kommen *she will come*
future perfect	sie wird gekauft haben *she will have bought*	sie wird gekommen sein *she will have come*

Full forms of these tenses are given in **Table 10.8** for the weak verb *machen* 'make' and the strong verb *singen* 'sing', which form their perfect tenses with the auxiliary *haben*, and for the strong verb *bleiben* 'remain' which forms its perfect tenses with the auxiliary *sein* (see **10.3.2**).

TABLE 10.8 Compound tenses of strong and weak verbs

		with *haben*					**with** *sein*	
Perfect	ich	habe	gemacht	habe	gesungen		bin	geblieben
	du	hast	gemacht	hast	gesungen		bist	geblieben
	es	hat	gemacht	hat	gesungen		ist	geblieben
	wir	haben	gemacht	haben	gesungen		sind	geblieben
	ihr	habt	gemacht	habt	gesungen		seid	geblieben
	Sie	haben	gemacht	haben	gesungen		sind	geblieben
	sie	haben	gemacht	haben	gesungen		sind	geblieben
Pluperfect	ich	hatte	gemacht	hatte	gesungen		war	geblieben
	du	hattest	gemacht	hattest	gesungen		warst	geblieben
	es	hatte	gemacht	hatte	gesungen		war	geblieben
	wir	hatten	gemacht	hatten	gesungen		waren	geblieben
	ihr	hattet	gemacht	hattet	gesungen		wart	geblieben
	Sie	hatten	gemacht	hatten	gesungen		waren	geblieben
	sie	hatten	gemacht	hatten	gesungen		waren	geblieben
Future	ich	werde	machen	werde	singen		werde	bleiben
	du	wirst	machen	wirst	singen		wirst	bleiben
	es	wird	machen	wird	singen		wird	bleiben
	wir	werden	machen	werden	singen		werden	bleiben
	ihr	werdet	machen	werdet	singen		werdet	bleiben
	Sie	werden	machen	werden	singen		werden	bleiben
	sie	werden	machen	werden	singen		werden	bleiben
Future perfect	ich	werde	gemacht haben	werde	gesungen haben		werde	geblieben sein
	du	wirst	gemacht haben	wirst	gesungen haben		wirst	geblieben sein
	es	wird	gemacht haben	wird	gesungen haben		wird	geblieben sein
	wir	werden	gemacht haben	werden	gesungen haben		werden	geblieben sein

	with *haben*						with *sein*		
ihr	werdet	gemacht	haben	werdet	gesungen	haben	werdet	geblieben	sein
Sie	werden	gemacht	haben	werden	gesungen	haben	werden	geblieben	sein
sie	werden	gemacht	haben	werden	gesungen	haben	werden	geblieben	sein

(b) The non-finite parts of compound tenses

i.e. the past participle in the perfect tenses and the infinitive in the future. These are placed at the **end of the clause** in main clauses and make up part of the VERBAL BRACKET (see **19.1.2**), e.g. *Ich habe sie gestern in der Stadt gesehen*. In subordinate clauses the auxiliary usually follows the non-finite part at the end of the clause, see **19.1.3**, e.g. *Sie wissen, dass ich sie gestern in der Stadt gesehen habe*.

10.3.2 *haben* and *sein* in the perfect

The perfect tenses are constructed using one of the auxiliary verbs *haben* or *sein*. Which one is used depends on the meaning of the verb.

(a) The following groups of verbs form their perfect with *sein*

All these verbs are **intransitive**, i.e. they do not have a direct object in the accusative case (see **16.3**):

(i) Intransitive verbs of motion:

Ich **bin** in die Stadt gegangen	Sie **war** zu Boden gefallen
Wir **sind** aus dem Haus entkommen	Ihr **wart** auf die Mauer geklettert
Um die Zeit werden wir schon angekommen **sein**	Wir **waren** aber schon nach Zwickau gefahren

Some verbs of motion take *sein* or *haben* in different contexts, see (c) below.

(ii) Intransitive verbs expressing a **change of state.** This group includes a large number of verbs which point to the beginning or end of a process, including many with the prefixes *er-* and *ver-* (see **20.5**):

Sie **ist** schon eingeschlafen	Die Blumen **sind** verwelkt
Die Bombe **ist** um zwei Uhr explodiert	Der Reifen **war** geplatzt
Das Licht **ist** ausgegangen	Der Schnee **war** schon geschmolzen

Mein Buch **ist** verschwunden   Sie werden gleich danach ertrunken **sein**

(iii) Most verbs meaning 'happen', 'succeed', 'fail', i.e.:

begegnen *meet* (by chance) fehlschlagen *fail*   gelingen *succeed*   geschehen *happen*
glücken *succeed*   missglücken *fail*   misslingen *fail*   passieren *happen*
vorgehen *happen*   vorkommen *occur*   zustoßen *happen*

Ich **bin** ihr gestern begegnet   Das **war** schon einmal vorgekommen
Der Plan **ist** fehlgeschlagen   Was wird mit ihr passiert **sein**?

The colloquial verb *klappen* 'succeed' takes *haben*, e.g. *Hat's mit den Karten geklappt?* 'Did you manage to get the tickets?'

(iv) The verbs *sein* and *bleiben* :

Sie **ist** früher Lehrerin gewesen   Wir **sind** in Dessau geblieben
War er mal Diplomat gewesen? Sie wird dort geblieben **sein**

(b) All other verbs form their perfect tenses with *haben*

This includes the majority of German verbs. The most important fall into the following groups:

(i) TRANSITIVE VERBS , i.e. those which have a direct object in the **accusative** case (see **16.3**):

> Ich **habe** sie gesehen
> Er **hat** die Wohnung geputzt
> Der Hund **hatte** die Mülltonne umgeworfen
> Sie **hatte** mich geschlagen
> Ich werde den Brief bis morgen früh geschrieben **haben**

A few compounds of *gehen* and *werden* are exceptions to this rule:

Er **ist** die Strecke abgegangen   *He paced out the distance*

Sie **ist** die Arbeit mit dem Schüler durchgegangen *She went through the work with the pupil*

Er **ist** die Wette eingegangen   *He made the bet*

Ich **bin** ihn endlich losgeworden   *I have finally got rid of him*

(ii) REFLEXIVE VERBS**:**

Sie **hat** sich sehr gefreut   Ich **hatte** mir alles eingebildet

Ich **habe** mich schon erholt   Sie wird sich müde gelaufen **haben**

If verbs which form their perfect with *sein* are used with a reflexive pronoun in the dative (= 'each other', see **3.2.3**), the perfect is still constructed with *sein*:

Sie **sind** sich ausgewichen   *They avoided each other*

Wir **sind** uns in der Stadt begegnet *We met* (*each other*) *in town*

(iii) Intransitive verbs which **do not express motion or a change of state**. Most of these verbs denote a continuous action or state:

Ich **habe** gestern lange gearbeitet	Sie **hatte** dabei gepfiffen
Hast du in der Nacht gut geschlafen?	Sie **hatten** in Münster studiert
Dort **hat** jemand auf der Bank gesessen	Sie wird dort lange gewartet **haben**
Oben **hat** vorhin das Licht gebrannt	Gerhard wird ihr gesimst **haben**

The verbs *liegen*, *sitzen* and *stehen* form their perfect tenses with *haben* in speech in northern and central Germany, e.g. *ich habe gelegen*, *gesessen*, *gestanden*. However, *sein* is in common use in speech in the South, e.g. *ich bin gelegen*, *gesessen*, *gestanden*. In writing *haben* is most commonly found throughout Germany, but *sein* is not unusual in the South, and it is the norm in Austria and Switzerland.

The verb *enden* 'finish', 'end' usually forms its perfect tense with *haben*, e.g. *Die Geiselnahme in Moskau hat mit einem Blutbad geendet* (*TT*), but *sein* is often found, especially in the North and West, e.g. *Der Ausflug ist in einem Unfall auf der Autobahn geendet* (*HAZ*).

(iv) Most **impersonal verbs**:

Es **hat** geregnet, geschneit, gehagelt	Es **hatte** nach Benzin gerochen
An der Tür **hat** es geklopft	Da **hatte** es einen Krach gegeben

Impersonal expressions with verbs which form their perfect tenses with *sein* form an exception to this rule, e.g. *Es ist mir kalt geworden; Wie war es Ihnen in Berlin gegangen?*

(v) The **modal auxiliaries**:

Ich **habe** es hinnehmen müssen   Wir **haben** es nicht gekonnt

Sie **hat** ihn besuchen wollen   Sie **hat** ihn nie gemocht

The choice of auxiliary depends on the modal auxiliary, not on the verb it is used with, and so *haben* is used even if the main verb takes *sein*, e.g. *Ich hatte leider schon fahren müssen*; *Sie hat ihm sicher nicht begegnen wollen*.

(c) The use of *haben* **and** *sein* **with the same verb**

(i) The choice of *haben* or *sein* depends on **meaning**, i.e. it is **not** an automatic feature of a particular verb. Verbs which have more than one meaning can be used with *haben* or *sein* in the perfect if they have one meaning of the kind which requires *haben* for the perfect tense, and another which requires *sein*. This variation between *haben* and *sein* is most common with verbs which can be used transitively or intransitively. Thus, *fahren*, used as an intransitive verb of motion (= 'go'), forms its perfect with *sein*:

Sie **ist** nach Berlin gefahren   Wir **sind** sehr schnell gefahren

But when it is used transitively (= 'drive'), it takes *haben*:

Sie **hat** einen neuen Porsche gefahren   Ich **habe** ihn nach Hause gefahren

A few contexts may be ambiguous, so that, for example, although you would normally expect to hear *Mechthild ist gefahren*, you might hear *Mechthild hat gefahren*, with the direct obect 'understood'.

More examples with other verbs:

Ich **habe** eine Mail bekommen	*I have received an e-mail*
Das Essen **ist** mir gut bekommen	*The meal agreed with me*
Er **hat** das Rohr gebrochen	*He has broken the pipe*
Das Rohr **ist** gebrochen	*The pipe has broken*
Sie **hat** auf Zahlung gedrungen	*She has pressed for payment*
Wasser **ist** in das Haus gedrungen	*Water has penetrated into the house*
Er **hat** ihr gefolgt	*He has obeyed her*
Er **ist** ihr gefolgt	*He has followed her*
Es **hat** in der Nacht gefroren	*There was a frost in the night*
Der See **ist** gefroren	*The lake has frozen*
Sie **hat** ihn zur Seite gestoßen	*She pushed him to one side*
Ich **bin** an den Schrank gestoßen	*I bumped into the cupboard*

Du **hast** mir den Spaß verdorben	*You have spoilt my fun*
Das Fleisch **ist** verdorben	*The meat has gone bad*
Sie **hat** viel Benzin verfahren	*She has used a lot of petrol/gas*
Wir **sind** nach diesem Grundsatz verfahren	*We acted according to this principle*
Sie **hat** in Künstlerkreisen verkehrt	*She moved in artistic circles*
Die Züge **sind** heute nicht verkehrt	*The trains didn't run today*
Ich **habe** die Vase zerbrochen	*I have broken the vase*
Die Vase **ist** zerbrochen	*The vase has broken*

This variation between *haben* and *sein* is not maintained consistently in actual usage. The most common verbs, like *fahren*, are not infrequently found with *sein* even when used transitively, e.g. *Im Gericht hatte der Schwager behauptet, er sei den Wagen gefahren* (*HAZ*).

(ii) A few **verbs of motion** form their perfect with *sein* if they express movement from one place to another, but *haben* may be used with them if they just refer to the activity as such, without any idea of getting somewhere:

Ich **habe** als junger Mann viel getanzt	*I danced a lot when I was a young man*
Er **ist** aus dem Zimmer getanzt	*He danced out of the room*
Sie **hat** den ganzen Morgen gesegelt	*She's been sailing the whole morning*
Sie **ist** über den See gesegelt	*She sailed across the lake*

This usage is limited to a few verbs, i.e. *flattern* 'flutter', *paddeln* 'paddle', *reiten* 'ride', *rudern* 'row', *schwimmen* 'swim', *segeln* 'sail', *tanzen* 'dance', *treten* 'step'. However, with the exception of *tanzen*, these verbs are increasingly used with *sein* in all contexts.

10.4 The *werden*-passive and the *sein*-passive

German has two passives. These are easiest to think of as the werden-PASSIVE and the sein-PASSIVE , according to whether they are formed by combining the auxiliary verb *werden* or *sein* with the **past participle** of another verb:

werden-passive	Die Stadt **wird zerstört**	Ich **wurde verletzt**
sein-passive	Die Stadt **ist zerstört**	Ich **war verletzt**

The**ir** uses of the passives are dealt with in **Chapter 13.** The forms of the *werden*-passive are given in **Table 10.9**, and those of the *sein*-passive which are in

common use in **Table 10.10**.

TABLE 10.9   The forms of the *werden*-passive

Present			**Perfect**				**Future**			
ich	werde	gelobt	ich	bin	gelobt	worden	ich	werde	gelobt	werden
du	wirst	gelobt	du	bist	gelobt	worden	du	wirst	gelobt	werden
es	wird	gelobt	es	ist	gelobt	worden	es	wird	gelobt	werden
wir	werden	gelobt	wir	sind	gelobt	worden	wir	werden	gelobt	werden
ihr	werdet	gelobt	ihr	seid	gelobt	worden	ihr	werdet	gelobt	werden
Sie	werden	gelobt	Sie	sind	gelobt	worden	Sie	werden	gelobt	werden
sie	werden	gelobt	sie	sind	gelobt	worden	sie	werden	gelobt	werden

Past			**Pluperfect**				**Future perfect**				
ich	wurde	gelobt	ich	war	gelobt	worden	ich	werde	gelobt	worden	sein
du	wurdest	gelobt	du	warst	gelobt	worden	du	wirst	gelobt	worden	sein
es	wurde	gelobt	es	war	gelobt	worden	er	wird	gelobt	worden	sein
wir	wurden	gelobt	wir	waren	gelobt	worden	wir	werden	gelobt	worden	sein
ihr	wurdet	gelobt	ihr	wart	gelobt	worden	ihr	werdet	gelobt	worden	sein
Sie	wurden	gelobt	Sie	waren	gelobt	worden	Sie	werden	gelobt	worden	sein
sie	wurden	gelobt	sie	waren	gelobt	worden	sie	werden	gelobt	worden	sein

TABLE 10.10   Current forms of the *sein*-passive

Present			**Past**			**Imperative**
ich	bin	verletzt	ich	war	verletzt	
du	bist	verletzt	du	warst	verletzt	Sei gegrüßt!
es	ist	verletzt	es	war	verletzt	
wir	sind	verletzt	wir	waren	verletzt	
ihr	seid	verletzt	ihr	wart	verletzt	Seid gegrüßt!
Sie	sind	verletzt	Sie	waren	verletzt	Seien Sie gegrüßt!
sie	sind	verletzt	sie	waren	verletzt	

Further details on the passives:

- In the perfect tenses of the passive the form *worden,* without the prefix *ge-,* is used as the past participle of *werden*, i.e. *Das Haus ist im Jahre 1845 gebaut worden*.

- Imperative forms of the *werden*-passive, e.g. *werde gelobt!* are scarcely ever used. If a passive imperative is needed, the form with *sein* is used.
- Other tenses of the *sein*-passive than those given in **Table 10.10** are occasionally found, but in practice only the present and past tenses, and the imperative, are at all frequent.
- As in other compound verb forms, the participle in passive constructions is placed at the end of the clause in main clauses (see **19.1.2**):

<div align="center">Das Haus wurde 1845 gebautDas Kind war schwer verletzt</div>

- In subordinate clauses the participle comes at the end, followed by the auxiliary *werden* or *sein* (see **19.1.3**): *Ich weiß, dass das Haus vor zwanzig Jahren gebaut wurde*.

10.5 The subjunctive

The SUBJUNCTIVE mood presents what the speaker is saying as **not necessarily true**, whereas the INDICATIVE presents what is said as a **fact**. In this section we give information about the various **forms** of the subjunctive. All the **uses** of the subjunctive are explained in **Chapter 14**.

Most modern German grammars and textbooks divide the forms of the German subjunctive into two major groups, which they refer to as *K*onjunktiv *I* and *K*onjunktiv *II*. These terms make it simpler to explain their use because the traditional names (i.e. 'present' and 'past' subjunctive) suggest that their use is connected with time or tense differences, which is not the case. There are no English equivalents for these terms, and the German ones are used in this book. **Table 10.11** shows how these groupings are related to the traditional 'tenses' of the subjunctive:

TABLE 10.11   *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II*

Konjunktiv I	**'present' subjunctive**	es gebe
	'perfect' subjunctive	es habe gegeben
	'future' subjunctive	es werde geben
Konjunktiv II	**'past' subjunctive**	es gäbe
	'pluperfect' subjunctive	es hätte gegeben
	'conditional'	es würde geben

10.5.1 *Konjunktiv I*

(a) The simple form of *Konjunktiv I* is regular for all verbs except *sein*

For all verbs except *sein* the endings are added to the root of the verb without any other changes or irregularities, as illustrated for a range of typical regular and irregular verbs in **Table 10.12**.

TABLE 10.12   The simple forms of *Konjunktiv I* (the 'present subjunctive')

Konjunktiv I ('present subjunctive')	*sein*	*haben*	*können*	*werden*	*geben*	*machen*
ich	sei	habe	könne	werde	gebe	mache
du	sei(e)st	habest	könnest	werdest	gebest	machest
es	sei	habe	könne	werde	gebe	mache
wir	seien	haben	können	werden	geben	machen
Ihr	seiet	habet	könnet	werdet	gebet	machet
Sie	seien	haben	können	werden	geben	machen
sie	seien	haben	können	werden	geben	machen

(i) The second person singular and plural forms in *-est* and *-et* (e.g. *du sag est*, *ihr sag et*), are rather artificial and they are rarely used.
(ii) For most verbs except *sein*, the only difference in practice between the simple form of *Konjunktiv I* and the present indicative is in the third person singular, which has the ending *-e* as opposed to the ending *-t* of the indicative.
(iii) There are no vowel changes in the second or third person singular of any strong or irregular verbs. Compare subjunctive: *es gebe*, *es fahre* with indicative: *es gibt*, *es fährt*.
(iv) Verbs with a root in *-el* (see **10.2.1c**) usually drop the *-e-* of the root, e.g. *es segle*, *es lächle*, etc.

(b) Compound forms of *Konjunktiv I*

Compound perfect and future tenses of *Konjunktiv I*, and the *werden-* and *sein-* passive, are constructed in exactly the same way as for the indicative, using the subjunctive forms of the appropriate auxiliary verb, i.e. *haben*, *sein* or *werden*, together with the past participle or the infinitive. **Table 10.13** gives examples of all these forms in the third person singular, which is in practice the only form in frequent use.

TABLE 10.13   Compound forms of *Konjunktiv I*

perfect (with *haben* **)**	es habe gekauft
perfect (with *sein* **)**	es sei gekommen
future	es werde kaufen
werden **-passive (present)**	es werde gekauft
werden **-passive (perfect)**	es sei gekauft worden
werden **-passive (future)**	es werde gekauft werden
sein- **passive**	es sei gekauft

10.5.2 *Konjunktiv II*

There are three frequent forms of *Konjunktiv II*:

- The **simple form**, in one word, traditionally called the '**past subjunctive'**, see **Tables 10.14–10.15**, e.g. *ich wäre, wir müssten*. Details about its forms are given in **(a)** below.
- The '**pluperfect subjunctive**', see **Table 10.16**, formed from the past subjunctive of the auxiliary verb *haben* or *sein* and the past participle, e.g. *ich hätte gewartet*, *Sie wären gekommen*. More details are given in **(b)** below.
- The '**conditional**', see **Table 10.16**, formed from the past subjunctive of the auxiliary verb *werden* and the infinitive, e.g. *ich würde meinen*, *wir würden arbeiten*. More details are given in **(c)** below.

(a) The formation of the simple form of *Konjunktiv II*

(i) As **Table 10.14** illustrates with the form of the first or third person singular, the **simple form of** *Konjunktiv II* **is formed from the past tense** of the indicative in the following ways:

- For regular **weak verbs** it is **identical to the past indicative**.
- For most **strong verbs**, it is formed by taking the form of the **past tense**, **umlauting the vowel** if possible, and **adding -** *e* to the endings if possible (although this **-** *e* is often dropped in speech).
- A few **strong verbs** have an **irregular** *Konjunktiv II* form with a **different vowel** from that of the past tense. Only a few of these are commonly used nowadays.
- Some other common **irregular verbs** also have *Umlaut* in the simple *Konjunktiv II*, including *sein*, *haben*, and most of the modal auxiliaries. All these are given in **Table 10.14**.
- In recent times, a *Konjunktiv II* form with *Umlaut* of the verb *brauchen* 'need', has come to be widely used, i.e. *ich br ä uchte*. This form is now accepted as standard, although the original form without *Umlaut* is still used in writing.

TABLE 10.14 The simple form of *Konjunktiv II* (the 'past subjunctive')

	Verb	Past tense	*Konjunktiv II*
Regular weak verbs	kaufen	kaufte	kaufte
	machen	machte	machte
Regular strong verbs	bleiben	blieb	blieb**e**
	brechen	brach	br**äch**e
	fahren	fuhr	f**üh**re
	gehen	ging	ging**e**
	kommen	kam	k**äm**e
	lassen	ließ	ließ**e**
	sprechen	sprach	spr**äch**e
	tragen	trug	tr**üg**e
	tun	tat	t**ät**e
	ziehen	zog	z**ög**e
Strong verbs with an irregular past subjunctive	helfen	half	h**ül**fe
	stehen	stand	st**ün**de
	sterben	starb	st**ür**be
Irregular verbs	sein	war	w**är**e
	haben	hatte	h**ä**tte
	werden	wurde	w**ü**rde
	dürfen	durfte	d**ü**rfte
	können	konnte	k**ö**nnte
	mögen	mochte	m**ö**chte
	müssen	musste	m**ü**sste
	wissen	wusste	w**ü**sste
	bringen	brachte	br**äch**te
	denken	dachte	d**äch**te

TABLE 10.15 The conjugation of the simple form of *Konjunktiv II*

Konjunktiv II ('past subjunctive')	*sein*	*haben*	*können*	*werden*	*geben*	*machen*
ich	wäre	hätte	könnte	würde	gäbe	machte
du	wärest	hättest	könntest	würdest	gäbest	machtest
es	wäre	hätte	könnte	würde	gäbe	machte
wir	wären	hätten	könnten	würden	gäben	machten
ihr	wäret	hättet	könntet	würdet	gäbet	machtet

Konjunktiv II
('past subjunctive')

	sein	*haben*	*können*	*werden*	*geben*	*machen*
Sie	wären	hätten	könnten	würden	gäben	machten
sie	wären	hätten	könnten	würden	gäben	machten

TABLE 10.16 The 'pluperfect subjunctive' and the 'conditional'

	Pluperfect subjunctive (with *haben*)		Pluperfect subjunctive (with *sein*)		Conditional	
ich	hätte	gekauft	wäre	geblieben	würde	kaufen
du	hättest	gekauft	wärest	geblieben	würdest	kaufen
es	hätte	gekauft	wäre	geblieben	würde	kaufen
wir	hätten	gekauft	wären	geblieben	würden	kaufen
ihr	hättet	gekauft	wäret	geblieben	würdet	kaufen
Sie	hätten	gekauft	wären	geblieben	würden	kaufen
sie	hätten	gekauft	wären	geblieben	würden	kaufen

The simple *Konjunktiv II* forms for each individual **strong** or **irregular verb** are given in **Table 10.17**.

TABLE 10.17   Principal parts of strong and irregular verbs

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
backen *bake*	**backte/buk**	hat **gebacken**
es backt/bäckt	*büke*	
befehlen *command*	**befahl**	hat **befohlen**
es befiehlt	*befähle/beföhle*	
[*fehlen* **'lack'** is weak, i.e. *fehlte*, *gefehlt*]		
beginnen *begin*	**begann**	hat **begonnen**
	begänne (*begönne*)	
beißen *bite*	**biss**	hat **gebissen**
	bisse	
bergen *rescue*; *hide*	**barg**	hat **geborgen**
es birgt	*bärge*	
bersten *crack, burst*	**barst**	hat **geborsten**
es birst (berstet)	*bärste*	

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
bewegen *induce*	**bewog** *bewöge*	hat **bewogen**

[*bewegen* **'**move' is weak, i.e. *bewegte, bewegt*]

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
biegen *bend*; *turn*	**bog** *böge*	hat **gebogen**
bieten *offer*	**bot** *böte*	hat **geboten**
binden *bind*	**band** *bände*	hat **gebunden**
bitten *ask, request*	**bat** *bäte*	hat **gebeten**
blasen *blow* es bläst	**blies** *bliese*	hat **geblasen**
bleiben *stay, remain*	**blieb** bliebe	ist **geblieben**
braten *fry, roast* es brät (bratet)	**briet** *briete*	hat **gebraten**
brechen *break* es bricht	**brach** bräche	hat/ist **gebrochen**
brennen *burn*	**brannte** *brennte*	hat **gebrannt**
bringen *bring*	**brachte** brächte	hat **gebracht**
denken *think*	**dachte** dächte	hat **gedacht**
dingen *hire, engage* (*e.g. servant*)	**dingte**	hat **gedungen**

[*dingen* and its compounds (especially *ausbedingen*) occur mainly in formal legal registers]

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
dreschen *thresh* es drischt (drescht)	**drosch** (dreschte) *drösche*	hat **gedroschen** (gedrescht)
dringen *penetrate*	**drang** *dränge*	hat/ist **gedrungen**
empfehlen *recommend* es empfiehlt	**empfahl** *empfähle/empföhle*	hat **empfohlen**
erkiesen *choose*	**erkor**	hat **erkoren**

Infinitive	Past tense	
3rd person singular present	*Konjunktiv II*	**Past participle**

[Only the past tense and the past participle are now used, in elevated registers]

erlöschen *go out (lights)*   **erlosch**   ist **erloschen**

    es erlischt   *erlösche*

    [*löschen* '*extinguish*', 'put out' is weak, i.e. *löschte*, *gelöscht*]

erschallen *ring out*   **erscholl/erschallte**   ist **erschollen/erschallt**

                    erschallte

erschrecken *be startled*   **erschrak**   ist **erschrocken**

    es erschrickt   *erschräke*

    [Transitive *erschrecken* '*frighten*' is weak, i.e. *erschreckte*, *erschreckt*]

essen *eat*   **aß**   hat **gegessen**

    es isst   *äße*

fahren *go*, *drive*   **fuhr**   ist/hat **gefahren**

    es fährt   *führe*

fallen *fall*   **fiel**   ist **gefallen**

    es fällt   *fiele*

fangen *catch*   **fing**   hat **gefangen**

    es fängt   *finge*

fechten *fight*, *fence*   **focht** (fechtete)   hat **gefochten**

    es ficht   *föchte*

finden *find*   **fand**   hat **gefunden**

                  fände

flechten *plait*, *braid*   **flocht** (flechtete)   hat **geflochten**

    es flicht   *flöchte*

fliegen *fly*   **flog**   ist/hat **geflogen**

                  flöge

fliehen *flee*   **floh**   ist **geflohen**

                  flöhe

fließen *flow*   **floss**   ist **geflossen**

                  flösse

fragen *ask*   **fragte** (*arch*.: frug)   hat **gefragt**

    er fragt (*reg*. frägt)

fressen *eat* (of animals)   **fraß**   hat **gefressen**

    es frisst   *fräße*

frieren *freeze*   **fror**   hat/ist **gefroren**

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
	fröre	
gären *ferment*	**gärte/gor**	hat/ist **gegärt/gegoren**
	göre	
[The weak forms are usual if *gären* is used figuratively]		
gebären *give birth*	**gebar**	hat **geboren**
es gebiert (gebärt)	*gebäre*	
geben *give*	**gab**	hat **gegeben**
es gibt	gäbe	
gedeihen *thrive*	**gedieh**	ist **gediehen**
	gediehe	
gehen *go*	**ging**	ist **gegangen**
	ginge	
gelingen *succeed*	**gelang**	ist **gelungen**
	gelänge	
gelten *be valid*	**galt**	hat **gegolten**
es gilt	*gälte (gölte)*	
genesen *recover* (elev.)	**genas**	ist **genesen**
	genäse	
genießen *enjoy*	**genoss**	hat **genossen**
	genösse	
geschehen *happen*	**geschah**	ist **geschehen**
es geschieht	geschähe	
gewinnen *win*	**gewann**	hat **gewonnen**
	gewänne/gewönne	
gießen *pour*	**goss**	hat **gegossen**
	gösse	
gleichen *resemble*	**glich**	hat **geglichen**
	gliche	
gleiten *glide, slide*	**glitt**	ist **geglitten**
	glitte	
[*begleiten* 'accompany' is weak, i.e. *begleitete*, *begleitet*]		
glimmen *glimmer* (elev.)	**glimmte/glomm**	hat **geglimmt/geglommen**
	glömme	
graben *dig*	**grub**	hat **gegraben**

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
es gräbt	*grübe*	
greifen *grasp*	**griff**	hat **gegriffen**
	griffe	
halten *hold*; *stop*	**hielt**	hat **gehalten**
es hält	hielte	

[The compound verbs *beinhalten* 'comprise' and *haushalten* 'be economical 'are weak]

hängen *hang* (intrans.)	**hing**	hat **gehangen**
	hinge	

[The transitive verb *hängen* 'hang' is weak, i.e. *hängte*, *gehängt*]

hauen *hew*, *cut*	**haute** (hieb)	hat **gehauen** (*coll*., *AU*: gehaut)
	(hiebe)	

[*hieb* is literary and used especially in the meaning 'hew, cut (with a sword)']

heben *lift*	**hob** (hub)	hat **gehoben**
	höbe	

[*hub* is occasional in formal registers, especially with *anheben* 'commence']

heißen *be called*	**hieß**	hat **geheißen**
	hieße	
helfen *help*	**half**	hat **geholfen**
es hilft	hülfe (*hälfe*)	
kennen *know*	**kannte**	hat **gekannt**
	kennte	
klimmen *climb*	**klomm** (klimmte)	hat **geklommen** (geklimmt)
	klömme	
klingen *sound*	**klang**	hat **geklungen**
	klänge	
kneifen *pinch*	**kniff**	hat **gekniffen**
	kniffe	
kommen *come*	**kam**	ist **gekommen**
	käme	
kriechen *creep*, *crawl*	**kroch**	ist **gekrochen**
	kröche	
küren *choose*	**kürte** *(elev*. kor)	hat **gekürt** (*elev*. gekoren)
	köre	
laden *load; invite*	**lud**	hat **geladen**

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
es lädt (ladet)	*lüde*	
[*ladet* is regional, and only used in the sense 'invite', or with the compound *einladen*]		
lassen *leave; let*	**ließ**	hat **gelassen**
es lässt	ließe	
[*veranlassen* 'cause' is weak, i.e. *veranlasste*, *veranlasst*]		
laufen *run*	**lief**	ist/hat **gelaufen**
es läuft	liefe	
leiden *suffer*	**litt**	hat **gelitten**
	litte	
[*verleiden* **'**spoil' is weak, i.e. *verleidete*, *verleidet*]		
leihen *lend; borrow*	**lieh**	hat **geliehen**
	liehe	
lesen *read*	**las**	hat **gelesen**
es liest	läse	
liegen *lie*	**lag**	hat **gelegen**
	läge	
lügen *tell lies*	**log**	hat **gelogen**
	löge	
mahlen *grind*	**mahlte**	hat **gemahlen**
meiden *avoid*	**mied**	hat **gemieden**
	miede	
melken *milk*	**molk/melkte**	hat **gemolken** (gemelkt)
es melkt		
messen *measure*	**maß**	hat **gemessen**
es misst	*mäße*	
misslingen *fail*	**misslang**	ist **misslungen**
	misslänge	
nehmen *take*	**nahm**	hat **genommen**
es nimmt	nähme	
nennen *name*, *call*	**nannte**	hat **genannt**
	nennte	
pfeifen *whistle*	**pfiff**	hat **gepfiffen**
	pfiffe	
pflegen *be in the habit of*, *maintain*	**pflegte** (pflog)	**gepflegt** (gepflogen)

Infinitive **3rd person singular present**	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	**Past participle**

[The strong forms are only used in the meaning 'maintain', in very formal registers]

preisen *praise*	**pries**	hat **gepriesen**
	priese	

[The compound *lobpreisen* can be weak (e.g. *lobpreiste)* or strong (e.g. *lobpries*)]

quellen *gush*, *well up*	**quoll**	ist **gequollen**
es quillt	*quölle*	
raten *advise*	**riet**	hat **geraten**
es rät	*riete*	
reiben *rub*	**rieb**	hat **gerieben**
	riebe	
reißen *tear*	**riss**	hat/ist **gerissen**
	risse	
reiten *ride (a horse)*	**ritt**	hat/ist **geritten**
	ritte	
rennen *run*	**rannte**	hat/ist **gerannt**
	rennte	
riechen *smell*	**roch**	hat **gerochen**
	röche	
ringen *wrestle*	**rang**	hat **gerungen**
	ränge	
rinnen *flow*, *trickle*	**rann**	ist **geronnen**
	ränne/rönne	
rufen *call*, *cry*	**rief**	hat **gerufen**
	riefe	
salzen *salt*	**salzte**	hat **gesalzen** (gesalzt)
saufen *drink* (of animals); *booze*	**soff**	hat **gesoffen**
es säuft	*söffe*	
saugen *suck*	**sog/saugte**	hat **gesaugt/gesogen**
	söge	

[In technical language only weak forms are used, as also with *staubsaugen* 'vacuum-clean']

schaffen *create*	**schuf**	hat **geschaffen**
	schüfe	

[*schaffen* is weak (i.e. *schaffte*, *geschafft*) in the meaning 'manage', 'work']

schalten *switch*	**schaltete**	hat **geschaltet**

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle

[The participles *angeschalten* and *eingeschalten* are usual in Austria and occasional elsewhere]

Infinitive / 3rd person singular present	Past tense / *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
scheiden *separate*; *depart*	**schied** *schiede*	hat/ist **geschieden**
scheinen *seem*; *shine*	**schien** schiene	hat **geschienen**
scheißen *shit* (vulg.)	**schiss** *schisse*	hat **geschissen**
schelten *scold* es schilt	**schalt** *schölte*	hat **gescholten**
scheren *shear, clip*	**schor** *schöre*	hat **geschoren**

[*scheren* is weak in the meaning 'concern', and in *sich scheren* 'bother about', 'clear off']

Infinitive / 3rd person singular present	Past tense / *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
schieben *push, shove*	**schob** *schöbe*	hat **geschoben**
schießen *shoot*	**schoss** *schösse*	hat/ist **geschossen**
schinden *flay, ill-treat*	[schindete/schund]	hat **geschunden**

[Neither past tense form is in common use]

Infinitive / 3rd person singular present	Past tense / *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
schlafen *sleep* es schläft	**schlief** schliefe	hat **geschlafen**
schlagen *hit, beat* es schlägt	**schlug** schlüge	hat **geschlagen**
schleichen *creep*	**schlich** *schliche*	ist **geschlichen**
schleifen *grind, sharpen*	**schliff** *schliffe*	hat **geschliffen**

[*schleifen* is weak (i.e. *schleifte*, *geschleift*) in the meaning 'drag']

Infinitive / 3rd person singular present	Past tense / *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
schließen *shut*	**schloss** schlösse	hat **geschlossen**
schlingen *wind, wrap*	**schlang** *schlänge*	hat **geschlungen**
schmeißen *throw, chuck* (coll.)	**schmiss** *schmisse*	hat **geschmissen**
schmelzen *melt*	**schmolz** (schmelzte)	hat/ist **geschmolzen** (geschmelzt)

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
es schmilzt (schmelzt)	*schmölze*	

[The weak forms are colloquial and only used if *schmelzen* is used transitively]

schneiden *cut*	**schnitt** schnitte	hat **geschnitten**
schreiben *write*	**schrieb** schriebe	hat **geschrieben**
schreien *shout*, *scream*	**schrie** *schriee*	hat **geschrien**
schreiten *stride*	**schritt** *schritte*	ist **geschritten**
schweigen *not speak*	**schwieg** *schwiege*	hat **geschwiegen**
schwellen *swell* es schwillt	**schwoll** *schwölle*	ist **geschwollen**

[*schwellen* is weak (i.e. *schwellte*, *geschwellt*) when used transitively]

schwimmen *swim*	**schwamm** *schwämme/schwömme*	ist/hat **geschwommen**
schwinden *disappear*	**schwand** schwände	ist **geschwunden**
schwingen *swing*	**schwang** *schwänge*	hat **geschwungen**
schwören *swear*	**schwor** (elev.: schwur) *schwöre/schwüre*	hat **geschworen**
sehen *see* es sieht	**sah** sähe	hat **gesehen**
senden *send*	**sendete/sandte** *sendete*	hat **gesendet/gesandt**

[The regular forms *sendete*, *gesendet* are mainly used in technical senses (i.e. 'broadcast')]

sieden *boil* (elev.; S.G.)	**siedete** (sott) *sötte*	hat **gesotten** (gesiedet)
singen *sing*	**sang** sänge	hat **gesungen**
sinken *sink*	**sank** sänke	ist **gesunken**

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
sinnen *meditate* (elev.)	**sann** *sänne*	hat **gesonnen**
sitzen *sit*	**saß** säße	hat **gesessen**
spalten *split, cleave*	**spaltete**	hat/ist **gespalten** (gespaltet)
speien *spit, spew* (elev.)	**spie** *spiee*	hat **gespien**
spinnen *spin*; *be stupid*	**spann** *spönne (spänne)*	hat **gesponnen**
speisen *eat, feed*	**speiste** (Sw. spies)	hat **gespeist** (Sw. gespiesen)

[The strong forms are used in Switzerland, chiefly in transitive uses, i.e. meaning 'feed']

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
sprechen *speak* es spricht	**sprach** spräche	hat **gesprochen**
sprießen *sprout* (elev.)	**spross** *sprösse*	ist **gesprossen**
springen *jump*	**sprang** spränge	ist **gesprungen**
stechen *prick, sting* es sticht	**stach** *stäche*	hat **gestochen**
stehen *stand*	**stand** stünde (stände)	hat **gestanden**
stehlen *steal* es stiehlt	**stahl** *stähle*	hat **gestohlen**
steigen *climb*; *rise*	**stieg** stiege	ist **gestiegen**
sterben *die* es stirbt	**starb** stürbe	ist **gestorben**
stieben *fly up (like dust)* (elev.)	**stob** (stiebte) *stöbe*	ist/hat **gestoben** (gestiebt)
stinken *stink*	**stank** *stänke*	hat **gestunken**
stoßen *bump*; *push* es stößt	**stieß** *stieße*	ist/hat **gestoßen**
streichen *stroke*	**strich**	ist/hat **gestrichen**

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
	striche	
streiten *quarrel*	**stritt**	hat **gestritten**
	stritte	
tragen *carry*, *wear*	**trug**	hat **getragen**
es trägt	trüge	
[*beantragen* 'apply' and *beauftragen* 'commission' are weak]		
treffen *meet*; *hit*	**traf**	hat **getroffen**
es trifft	träfe	
treiben *drive*, *drift*	**trieb**	ist/hat **getrieben**
	triebe	
treten *step*	**trat**	ist/hat **getreten**
es tritt	träte	
triefen *drip* (elev.)	**triefte/troff**	ist/hat **getrieft** (getroffen)
	tröffe	
trinken *drink*	**trank**	hat **getrunken**
	tränke	
trügen *deceive*	**trog**	hat **getrogen**
	tröge	
tun *do*	**tat**	hat **getan**
	täte	
verbleichen *fade*	**verblich**	ist **verblichen**
	verbliche	
[Simple *bleichen* 'bleach' is weak (i.e. *bleichte*, *gebleicht*), as is *erbleichen* 'turn pale']		
verderben *spoil*	**verdarb**	hat/ist **verdorben**
es verdirbt	*verdürbe*	
verdrießen *vex* (elev.)	**verdross**	hat **verdrossen**
	verdrösse	
vergessen *forget*	**vergaß**	hat **vergessen**
es vergisst	vergäße	
verlieren *lose*	**verlor**	hat **verloren**
	verlöre	
verschleißen *wear out*	**verschliss**	ist/hat **verschlissen**
	verschlisse	
wachsen *grow*	**wuchs**	ist **gewachsen**

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
es wächst	wüchse	
wägen *weigh (one's words)*	**wog** (wägte) *wöge*	hat **gewogen** (gewägt)

[With simple *wägen* the strong forms are more frequent, with *abwägen* 'weigh up' both weak and strong forms are common, but *erwägen* **'**consider' only has strong forms: *erwog*, *erwogen*]

waschen *wash* es wäscht	**wusch** *wüsche*	hat **gewaschen**
weben *weave*	**webte** (wob)	hat **gewebt** (gewoben)

[The strong forms are only used in figurative senses and mainly in elevated registers]

weichen *yield*, *give way*	**wich** *wiche*	ist **gewichen**

[In the meaning 'soften' *weichen* is weak, as are *einweichen* 'soak' and *aufweichen* 'make soft']

weisen *point*	**wies** wiese	hat **gewiesen**
wenden *turn*	**wandte/wendete** *wendete*	hat **gewandt/** **gewendet**

[*wandte*, *gewandt* are more frequent, except in the sense 'turn over', 'turn round' (e.g. *das Auto*, *das Heu wenden*). The compounds *entwenden* and *verwenden* are most often regular]

werben *recruit*; *advertise* es wirbt	**warb** *würbe*	hat **geworben**
werfen *throw* es wirft	**warf** würfe	hat **geworfen**
wiegen *weigh*	**wog** *wöge*	hat **gewogen**

[*wiegen* is weak (i.e. *wiegte*, *gewiegt*) in the meaning 'rock' (cradle, etc.)]

winden *wind*, *twist* (elev.)	**wand** *wände*	hat **gewunden**
winken *wave*	**winkte**	hat **gewunken/gewinkt**
wringen *wring (clothes)* (N.G.)	**wrang** *wränge*	hat **gewrungen**
zeihen *accuse*	**zieh** ziehe	hat **geziehen**
ziehen *pull*; *move*	**zog** zöge	hat/ist **gezogen**
zwingen *force*	**zwang**	hat **gezwungen**

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv II*	Past participle
	zwänge	

(ii) The **conjugation** of the simple form of *Konjunktiv II* with endings to indicate person and number in agreement with the subject of the clause is given in **Table 10.15**, illustrated by examples from a selection of common verbs.

(b) The 'pluperfect subjunctive'

Like all perfect tenses in German, the compound perfect of *Konjunktiv II* (the 'pluperfect subjunctive') is formed with one of the auxiliaries *haben* or *sein* (depending on the verb, see **10.3.2**) and the past participle, as illustrated in **Table 10.16**.

(c) The 'conditional'

The 'conditional' form of *Konjunktiv II* consists of a combination of the **past subjunctive** of the auxiliary verb *werden* with the **infinitive**. Its forms are given in **Table 10.16**.

The conditional with *würde* has the same meaning in most contexts as the simple 'past subjunctive' and is often used in its place, so that, for example, *ich würde kommen* is often seen or heard instead of *ich käme*. Which form is used depends on **register**, **meaning** and **the individual verb**. Current usage is explained fully in **14.2.3**, but it can be summarized briefly here as follows:

(i) The simple *Konjunktiv II* forms of the **weak verbs** are identical to those of the past indicative and they are hardly ever used even in formal writing.
(ii) Although the simple forms of some more frequent strong and irregular verbs, such as *ich käme* and *ich bliebe*, are often used in writing and occur occasionally in speech, those of many less frequent strong verbs, e.g. *ich flöge* or *ich röche*, are felt to be stilted (and even rather ridiculous) and are avoided entirely. The current usage of the simple forms of strong and irregular verbs is indicated with the individual verbs in **Table 10.17**.
(iii) With a few of the most common irregular verbs, in particular *haben*, *sein*, *werden* and the modal auxiliaries, the simple form is in practice much more

frequent than the compound form with *würde* in both writing and everyday speech.

(d) Passive forms of *Konjunktiv II*

The *werden*- and *sein* **-**passives of *Konjunktiv II* are constructed in exactly the same way as the indicative, using subjunctive forms of the auxiliary verb *werden* or *sein* and the past participle:

werden -passive (past)	es **würde gekauft (werden)**
werden -passive (pluperfect)	es **wäre gekauft worden**
sein -passive	es **wäre gekauft**

10.6 Forms of strong and irregular verbs

Table 10.17 gives the PRINCIPAL PARTS, i.e. the INFINITIVE, the PAST TENSE and the PAST PARTICIPLE, of all **strong** and **irregular verbs**, with the exception of the wholly irregular verbs and the modal auxiliaries whose forms are given in **Tables 10.6** and **10.7**.

The following should be noted when consulting **Table 10.17**:

- The **third person singular** of the **present tense** is given for those verbs which have **vowel changes** in the second and third person singular (see **10.2.1e/f**).
- The **simple past subjunctive** form of *Konjunktiv II* (see **10.5.2a**) of strong and irregular verbs is given **in italics** if it is **obsolete**, **archaic** or **rarely used**.
- No *Konjunktiv II* form is given if it would be identical to the past indicative of a weak verb and thus not in current use, as, for example, in the case of *salzen – salzte*.
- The **auxiliary** used to form the **perfect tenses** (i.e. *haben* or *sein*, see **10.3.2**) is indicated by *hat* or *ist* alongside the past participle.
- **Alternative forms** separated by a slash are both in current use, with the more frequent one given first.
- **Less common alternative forms** are given in brackets after the commoner ones.
- In principle, **simple verbs** (i.e. without prefixes) **are given** if they exist, even if they are much less frequent than compound verbs – as is the

case, for instance, with *schwinden* and *zeihen*, which are less commonly used than the compounds *verschwinden* and *verzeihen*. Compound verbs normally conjugate in the same way as the simple verb from which they are derived, but exceptions are given in the table.

11 The infinitive and the participles

This chapter deals with the uses of the NON-FINITE forms of the verb, i.e. the INFINITIVE , the PRESENT PARTICIPLE and the PAST PARTICIPLE, as shown in **Table 11.1**. The non-finite forms and their uses are treated in the following sections:

TABLE 11.1   Non-finite forms of the verb

Infinitive	Present participle	Past participle
kauf**en**	kauf**end**	**ge**kauft
sing**en**	sing**end**	**ge**sung**en**
wander**n**	wander**nd**	**ge**wander**t**
aufmach**en**	aufmach**end**	auf**ge**mach**t**
bestell**en**	bestell**end**	bestell**t**

11.1 The **forms** of the **infinitive**
11.2 The uses of the **infinitive with** *zu*
11.3 The uses of the **infinitive without** *zu* – the 'bare infinitive'
11.4 Infinitives used as **nouns**
11.5 The uses of the **present** and **past participles**
11.6 German equivalents for English constructions with the **'-ing' form**

As explained in **10.1.1e**, these forms of the verb do not have endings to show agreement with the subject, or to express tense and mood. They are used to form the compound tenses and the passive (see **10.3** and **10.4**), and they occur in a number of constructions which depend on an element in a full clause with a finite verb.

11.1 Forms of the infinitive

11.1.1 The simple and compound infinitive

(a) The simple infinitive is the basic form under which verbs are listed in dictionaries

(see **10.1.1**). For most verbs it ends in *-en* (e.g. *komm en*, *mach en*, *seh en*), but a few verbs have an infinitive ending in **-** *n*, i.e. *sein, tun* and verbs with a stem ending in *-el* and *-er* (see **10.2.1c**).

(b) Compound infinitives

The infinitive of the auxiliaries *haben*, *sein* and *werden* can be combined with the **past participle** of a verb to form compound infinitives:

perfect infinitive (with *haben*)	gesehen haben
perfect infinitive (with *sein*)	angekommen sein
werden **-passive infinitive**	verletzt werden
sein **-passive infinitive**	verletzt sein
perfect passive infinitive	verletzt worden sein

The perfect infinitive is formed with *haben* or *sein* in accordance with the rules given in **10.3.2**. For the use of *sein* or *werden* in the passive, see **13.2.2**. The German perfect infinitive is used to show that an action took place before the time of speaking, as in English:

Sie muss das Buch **lesen**	*She must read the book*
Sie muss das Buch **gelesen haben**	*She must have read the book*

11.1.2 The infinitive with and without *zu*

In some constructions in German, the **infinitive** is accompanied by the **particle** *zu*, whilst in others a so-called **bare infinitive** is used, without *zu*:

Ich riet ihr zum Arzt **zu gehen**	*I advised her to go to the doctor*
Ich konnte nicht zum Arzt **gehen**	*I couldn't go to the doctor*

Constructions with *zu* (which are more frequent) are explained in section **11.2**. Constructions with the bare infinitive are treated in section **11.3**.

(a) *zu* with simple verbs and verbs with inseparable prefixes

zu comes immediately before the verb and is separated from it in writing:

Sie fing an **zu schreiben**	Wir kamen auf dieses Thema **zu sprechen**

Ich war bereit **zu verhandeln**   Es gefiel mir mich mit ihr **zu unterhalten**

(b) *zu* with verbs with a separable prefix

zu is placed **between the prefix** and **the verb.** The whole is written as a single word (see **10.2.1i**):

Sie hat vor ihn **anzurufen**   Es war schön euch **wiederzusehen**
Es wäre wohl besser ihr davon **abzuraten** Sie wusste mit diesem Mann **umzugehen**

If a verb has a separable prefix followed by an inseparable one, as in *anvertrauen*, *zu* comes between the prefixes:

Es fällt mir nicht ein mich ihm **anzuvertrauen**   *I wouldn't dream of confiding in him*

Although the verb *missverstehen* is inseparable, the *zu* is placed **after** the prefix, i.e. *misszuverstehen*. A few other verbs with the prefix *miss-* also allow this as an alternative, e.g. *zu missachten* or (less commonly) *misszuachten*, see **20.7.3**.

(c) *zu* with compound infinitives

zu is placed between the participle and the auxiliary *haben*, *sein* or *werden:*

Er verleugnet es sie betrogen **zu** haben   *He denies having deceived her*
Ihr gefällt es nicht betrogen **zu** werden   *She doesn't like being deceived*
Sie behauptet betrogen worden **zu** sein   *She claims to have been deceived*

zu is also placed between the main verb and a modal auxiliary:

Es freut mich Sie hier begrüßen zu dürfen   *It is a pleasure to be able to welcome you here*

11.2 The infinitive with *zu*

Infinitives with *zu* are typically used in reduced clauses, called the *Infinitivgruppe* or *Infinitivsatz* in German. These clauses can depend on a noun, a verb or an adjective in a full clause within the same sentence. The infinitive with *zu* comes at the end of its clause, i.e. in the same position as the finite verb in a subordinate clause (see **19.1.1c**):

Das Kind fing an **heftig zu weinen**   *The child began to cry bitterly*
Sie gab mir die Erlaubnis **in Berlin zu bleiben**   *She gave me permission to stay in Berlin*
Es ist nicht schwer **eine fremde Sprache zu lernen**   *It is not difficult to learn a foreign language*

If there is more than one infinitive, *zu* is repeated with each, e.g. *Es begann zu blitzen und zu donnern und zu stürmen*.

For the use of the comma with infinitive clauses, see **21.5.3**.

11.2.1 The position of infinitive clauses with *zu*

(a) The infinitive clause is usually quite separate from the main clause

i.e. it is not enclosed inside the clause it depends on (see **19.8.1**), and it follows the verb at the end of that clause:

Sie hatten beschlossen **vor dem Rathaus zu warten**
  (*not* *Sie hatten vor dem Rathaus zu warten beschlossen)
Wir hatten vor **im Urlaub nach Rom zu fliegen**
  (*not* *Wir hatten im Urlaub nach Rom zu fliegen vor)
… weil er sich bemüht hat **rechtzeitig fertig zu sein**
  (*not* *… weil er sich rechtzeitig fertig zu sein bemüht hat)

There are a few **exceptions** to this general rule, when the infinitive clause can (or must) be enclosed within the clause which it depends on. These are:

(i) with the **semi-auxiliary verbs** (see **11.2.4**):

  … bevor sein Duft ihn **zu ersticken drohte** (*Süßkind*)
  Seine Brutalität ist nicht mehr **zu ertragen gewesen** (*Wickert*)

(ii) Enclosure is possible with **some other common verbs**, although it is never obligatory. It is more typical of written registers:

Dass sie ihn **entdeckt zu haben** glaubte, war ein Beweis dafür, dass … (*Süßkind*)
  (*or*: Dass sie glaubte ihn entdeckt zu haben, …)
Du hast mir **das zu tun** versprochen
  (*or*: Du hast mir versprochen das zu tun)

Verbs often used with this construction are *anfangen, beabsichtigen, beginnen, erwarten, fürchten, glauben, hoffen, meinen, trachten, vergessen, vermögen, versuchen, wagen, wünschen*. Other verbs are sometimes used in this way in formal registers, but constructions like this can sound stilted.

With these verbs, too, especially in formal registers, the infinitive clause can be incorporated in the main clause by splicing the object of the infinitive into it, if there is only the finite verb and its subject in the main clause:

Er wagte **die Reise** aus diesem Grunde nicht **abzubrechen**	*He didn't dare to break his journey for that reason*
Das wird der Minister am Montag vor der Presse zu **erklären** versuchen (*SZ*)	*The minister will try to explain that in front of the press on Monday*

(b) Infinitive clauses depending on relative clauses

The German equivalent of English constructions such as 'a man whom I tried to kill' typically has the infinitive clause enclosed within the relative clause, e.g. *ein Mann, den ich zu töten versuchte*. Other examples:

… die Person, **deren Gesicht** ich **zu erraten** versucht hatte (*Frisch*)	… *the person whose face I had tried to recognize*
… kein Mann, **den zu beseitigen** eine Revolution gelohnt hätte (*Spiegel*)	… *not a man whom it would have been worth a revolution to get rid of*

Alternatively, if there is only a simple infinitive clause (i.e. one consisting only of *zu* plus the infinitive), it can follow the finite verb, e.g. *ein Mann, den er versuchte zu töten*.

11.2.2 Infinitive clauses as the subject or object of a verb

(a) Infinitive clauses are often used in German as the subject of a verb

These usually correspond in English to an infinitive clause or to a clause with an '-ing' form. In many contexts there is a choice in English between using the '-ing' form or the infinitive with 'to', but in German only an infinitive clause is possible, as German does not use present participles in the way the '-ing' form is used in English (see **11.6**). The finite verb has the ending of the third person singular:

Ihn zu überzeugen wird nicht leicht sein	*To convince him/Convincing him won't be easy*
So etwas zu erlauben ist unerhört	*To allow/allowing that kind of thing is outrageous*
Ihr Ziel ist **einen Roman zu schreiben**	*Her aim is to write a novel*

(b) A subject infinitive clause can be used without *zu*

This is most frequent if the infinitive clause is short, and in set phrases:

Lange Auto (zu) fahren ist sehr anstrengend   *Driving a car for long periods is very strenuous*

Lesen heißt auch sich Zeit nehmen (*Lux*)   *Reading also means devoting time to yourself*

Irren ist menschlich   *To err is human*

(c) A subject infinitive clause is sometimes anticipated by *es* in the preceding main clause

(see **3.6.2e** for further details of when this *es* is used):

Es war mir nicht möglich **ihm früher zu mailen**   *It wasn't possible for me to e-mail him earlier*

Ihm steht **(es)** nicht zu **ein Urteil zu fällen**   *It's not up to him to pass judgement*

(d) The infinitive clause with *zu* is often used as the object of a verb

Like subject infinitive clauses, these can correspond to an English infinitive clause or a clause with an '-ing' form:

Ich hoffe **dich bald wiedersehen zu können**   *I hope to be able to see you again soon*

Ich gebe zu **das gesagt zu haben**   *I admit having said that*

Ich habe vor **sie morgen zu besuchen**   *I intend to visit them/visiting them tomorrow*

(e) A following object infinitive clause is sometimes anticipated by *es*

(see **3.6.2f** for details of when this *es* is used)

Ich konnte **es** kaum ertragen **ihn so leiden zu sehen**   *I could hardly bear to see him suffer like that*

Sie hat **(es)** versäumt **die Miete zu zahlen**   *She missed paying the rent*

(f) Infinitive clauses depending on verbs which govern a prepositional object

Infinitive clauses can be linked to a prepositional object in the preceding clause, and these are often anticipated by a prepositional adverb (i.e. *da(r)*+preposition). See **16.5.14** for further details about this construction:

Bitte achten Sie beim Verlassen des Zuges **darauf**, Ihre persönlichen Gegenstände mitzunehmen (*train announcement*)   *When leaving the train please be sure to take your personal possessions with you*

Ich erinnere mich (**daran**), sie voriges Jahr in Bremen gesehen zu haben   *I remember having seen her in Bremen last year*

11.2.3 The subject of the verb in infinitive clauses

(a) Infinitives in infinitive clauses all have a subject

As infinitives are non-finite forms of the verb, they do not have endings in agreement with a subject, but when they are used in a clause they do have a subject, which is the person or thing mentioned in the preceding clause that is carrying out the action expressed by the infinitive.

When an infinitive clause is used as the **object of a verb**, there are some contexts where the **subject of the main verb** is the **subject of the infinitive**. Thus, in the following sentence, it is Christian, the **subject** of *versprechen*, who has to be understood as the **subject** of *mitzunehmen* :

Christian versprach Ellen sie mitzunehmen   *Christian promised Ellen to take her with him*

In other contexts, though, the **object of the main verb** is the **subject of the infinitive**. In the following example, it is Ellen, the **object** of *bitten*, who is understood as the **subject** of *mitzunehmen* :

Christian bat **Ellen** ihn mitzunehmen   *Christian asked Ellen to take him with her*

What is understood to be the subject of the infinitive typically depends on the sense of the verbs involved and the context. In practice English and German generally agree on whether the subject or object of the main verb is to be understood as the subject of the infinitive. More examples:

Anna gab zu **sich** geirrt zu haben	*Anna admitted having made a mistake* (Anna – the **subject** of *zugeben* – was mistaken)
Sabine hat **Manfred** geraten die Ausstellung zu besuchen	*Sabine advised Manfred to see the exhibition* (Manfred – the **object** of *raten* – should see the exhibition)

However, as explained in the following sections, some German verbs behave in a different way to their closest English equivalents.

(b) German verbs whose object cannot act as the subject of a following infinitive clause

In practice, fewer verbs in German allow an object to be taken as the subject of a following infinitive. In particular, it is not possible with most verbs of wishing, desiring, saying, knowing, thinking and the like. With these **a** *dass*- **or** *wenn* **- clause has to be used**:

Sie will, **dass ich mit ihr gehe**	*She wants me to go with her*
Ich möchte nicht, **dass es irgendein Missverständnis gibt**	*I don't want there to be any misunderstanding*
Ich erwarte, **dass sie bald nach Flensburg umzieht**	*I expect her to move to Flensburg soon*
Sage ihm doch, **dass er warten soll**	*Tell him to wait, though*
Ich habe gewusst, **dass es ein Irrtum war**	*I knew it to be a mistake*
Mir wäre es lieber, **wenn Sie sich neben Frau Keller setzen würden**	*I would prefer you to sit next to Mrs Keller*

These verbs cannot be used in the passive with a following infinitive clause, either, and a subordinate clause has to be used in German where English has this type of construction:

Man erwartet, **dass sie bald nach Flensburg umzieht**	*She is expected to move to Flensburg soon*
Man hat uns gesagt/Uns wurde gesagt, **dass wir warten sollten**	*We were told to wait*

(c) With some verbs the subject of the infinitive may sometimes not be specified

In constructions like this the subject is understood as *man*, i.e. 'person or persons unknown', who are to carry out the action expressed by the infinitive. This construction is chiefly used with verbs of ordering or requesting and the like. In equivalent contexts English typically uses a clause with a passive, a passive infinitive or a noun construction:

Der Präsident hat angewiesen **alle Universitäten zu schließen**	*The president instructed that all the universities be closed*
Er ordnete an **die Gefangenen zu entlassen**	*He ordered the prisoners to be released*
Helmut befahl früh **aufzubrechen**	*Helmut ordered an early start*

Other typical verbs used in constructions of this kind are: anregen, auffordern, beantragen, befehlen, befürworten, bitten, drängen, eintreten, empfehlen, ersuchen, fordern, raten, veranlassen, verlangen, warnen.

(d) Cases of uncertainty

With some verbs **the subject or the object of the main verb** can act as the subject of the infinitive, and the listener or reader has to resolve the ambiguity from the context. In English a subordinate clause is normally used with verbs of this kind, and there is no ambiguity:

Er schlug mir vor **das Zimmer aufzuräumen** *He suggested to me that I/he/we should tidy the room up*

Other verbs which are used like this are *anbieten*, *einreden*, *zusichern*.

(e) An infinitive clause is used in German after some verbs denoting mental processes

The English equivalents typically have a subordinate clause:

Sie behauptete (glaubte, meinte, war überzeugt) **mich** *She maintained* (*believed*, *thought*, *was convinced*)
    gesehen zu haben   *that he had seen me*

This construction is more usual in writing than in speech, where a subordinate clause (often with *dass* omitted, see **17.2.1b**) may be preferred, e.g. *Er hat gemeint, er hätte mich gesehen/dass er mich gesehen hätte*.

11.2.4 Infinitive clauses with 'semi-auxiliary' verbs

Some verbs have a closer link with a following infinitive clause than others. Their main role is to modify the meaning of the verb used in the infinitive in some way, rather like a modal auxiliary verb (see **Chapter 15**), and it is useful to think of them as '**semi-auxiliary**' verbs.

English has more 'semi-auxiliary' verbs of this kind than German. The natural German equivalent to many of them is a construction with an adverb, e.g. *Ich spiele gern Tennis* 'I **like** to play tennis', *Ich habe sie zufällig in der Stadt gesehen* 'I **happened** to see her in town'. A survey of these equivalences is given in **7.4.4**.

These German semi-auxiliary verbs **always enclose the infinitive** in dependent clauses or compound tenses, and they are also often incorporated with a dependent infinitive clause (see **11.2.1a**):

…, da er den eben Angekommenen **zu erkennen schien**

…, als das Boot **zu kentern drohte**

Sie hat uns **zu verstehen gegeben**, dass sie morgen kommt

The most important verbs which can be used as semi-auxiliaries in German are given below. Many of them have other uses and meanings.

bekommen 'get':

Und wenn ich dich **zu fassen bekomme** …   *And if I lay hands on you, …*

belieben 'like', 'wish'. Nowadays archaic except ironically:

Sie **belieben zu scherzen**   *You must be joking*

bleiben 'remain'. The following infinitive has the force of a passive:

Die Gesetzesvorlage **bleibt** noch **zu diskutieren**   *The draft bill still remains to be discussed*

For the use of *bleiben* with a **bare infinitive**, see **11.3.1f**.

brauchen 'need'. In this sense it only occurs with a negative (or with *nur* or *bloß*). This is the most common negative to *müssen* (see **15.5.1c**):

Du **brauchst** nur **anzurufen,** und ich komme sofort   *You only need to call and I'll come straight away*

eine Sprache, die sie nie **zu erlernen brauchten**   *a language which they never needed to learn* (*Spiegel*)

In colloquial speech, *brauchen* is frequently used without *zu* (see **11.3.1a**): *Ich brauche nicht hingehen.* This usage is widely considered to be non-standard, but in practice it is often seen in writing.

The infinitive is used rather than the past participle in the perfect tenses (see **11.3.2a**): *Du hättest nicht hin(zu)gehen brauchen* and in this context *zu* can be omitted.

drohen 'threaten'. The subject is typically inanimate in this use:

Oskars Herz **drohte** zu Stein **zu werden** (*Grass*)   *Oskar's heart threatened to turn to stone*

geben 'give'. Used mainly with *denken, erkennen, verstehen*:

… weil sie uns **zu verstehen gab**, dass sie bald kommen würde   *… because she gave us to understand that she would be coming soon*

es gibt 'there is' (see **16.2.5**) is also used as a semi-auxiliary, e.g. … *weil es hier wenig zu trinken gibt*.

gedenken 'propose'. It is restricted to formal registers:

eine Frau, die er nicht **zu heiraten gedenkt** (*Zeit*)   *a woman whom he does not propose to marry*

gehen 'go'. The use of *gehen* as a semi-auxiliary is colloquial. It expresses a possibility, and the infinitive has passive force (see **13.4.5c**):

Die Uhr **geht** nicht **zu reparieren**   *The clock can't be repaired*

For the use of *gehen* with a bare infinitive, see **11.3.1e**.

haben 'have' expresses necessity or obligation. It is an alternative to *müssen* or *sollen*:

Was **habe** ich **zu bezahlen**?   *What have I got to pay?*
Ich **habe** mehrere Mails **zu schreiben** *I have several e-mails to write*
Sie **haben** hier nichts **zu suchen**   *You have no business here*

With some verbs (especially *tun*), this use of *haben* is idiomatic and there is little sense of obligation or necessity:

Das **hat** mit dieser Sache nichts **zu tun** *That's got nothing to do with this matter*
Das **hat** wenig **zu bedeuten**   *That doesn't mean very much*

For the use of *haben* with a bare infinitive, see **11.3.1f**.

kommen 'come' expresses a (chance) result:

Es war nicht meine Absicht, dass wir auf dieses Thema **zu** *It was not my intention for us to get onto*
  sprechen kamen   *this subject*
Lorena **kam** neben ihm **zu sitzen** (*Suter*)   *Lorena ended up sitting next to him*

For the use of *kommen* with a bare infinitive, see **11.3.1e**.

pflegen 'to be accustomed to' only used in formal registers:

Am Abend dann studierte Stefan die Sonntagsergebnisse *So in the evening Stefan studied the Sunday*
  der Bundesliga, wie er es immer zu tun pflegte (*HMP*)   *Bundesliga results, as he always used to do*

scheinen 'seem'

Ihm **schien** es **zu gefallen**   *He seemed to like it*
Das Dorf Lidice, wohin die Spuren der beiden *The village of Lidice, where the tracks of the two*
  Attentäter **zu führen schienen**, wurde zerstört   *assassins seemed to lead, was destroyed*
  (*Presse*)

sein 'be', as a semi-auxiliary, is the equivalent of *können* (or sometimes *müssen* or *sollen)*. The following infinitive has the force of a passive, see **13.4.5a**:

Ist der Direktor heute **zu sprechen**?	*Can I see the manager today?*
Die Fahrausweise **sind** auf Verlangen **vorzuzeigen**	*The tickets are to be shown on demand*
Das Haus **ist zu verkaufen**	*The house is for sale*

For the use of *sein* with a bare infinitive, see **11.3.1e**.

stehen has a similar sense to *sein*, and the following infinitive also has the force of a passive. It is used mainly with *befürchten*, *erwarten* and *hoffen*:

Es **steht zu erwarten**, dass niemand es wagen wird, ihm ernsthaft zu widersprechen (*SZ*)	*It is to be expected that nobody will dare to contradict him in any serious way*

suchen 'try', 'seek' is restricted to formal registers:

eine Ordnung, die die selbständige militärische Betätigung des Adels **einzuschränken suchte** (*Bumke*)	*a decree which sought to limit the independent military activities of the nobility*

versprechen 'promise'. In this sense, *versprechen* refers to an involuntary action with something desirable in the offing. The subject is usually inanimate:

Das Wetter **verspricht schön zu werden**	*The weather promises to be nice*
Wir sind froh, weil das Unternehmen **zu gedeihen verspricht**	*We are happy because the enterprise promises to prosper*

As a full verb, in the sense of 'make a promise', *versprechen* is used with a separated infinitive clause and the subject is always **animate**, e.g. *Der Arzt versprach mir sofort zu kommen*.

verstehen 'be able to', 'know how to':

Sie war in Verhältnisse geschleudert worden, mit denen sie nicht **umzugehen verstand** (*Fleißer*)	*She had been catapulted into circumstances which she didn't know how to cope with*

wissen 'know how to'. In this sense *wissen* is similar to *verstehen*:

Er **weiß mit den Leuten umzugehen**	*He knows how to deal with people*
Wie soll zurechtkommen, wer sich in das Gegebene nicht **zu schicken weiß**? (*Wolf*)	*How is anyone going to manage who doesn't know how to come to terms with reality?*

11.2.5 The infinitive with *zu* after adjectives

In some infinitive constructions after *sein* used with an adjective, the **subject** of *sein* has to be understood as the **object** of the infinitive:

Diese Aufgabe ist **einfach zu lösen**	*This problem is simple to solve*
Er ist **leicht zu überzeugen**	*He is easy to convince*
Diese Frage ist **schwer zu beantworten**	*This question is difficult to answer*

This construction is common in English, but it is only possible with very few adjectives in German, i.e. *einfach*, *interessant*, *leicht*, *schwer*, *schwierig*. In German, too, the construction is only possible if the verb takes an accusative object, i.e. it cannot occur with verbs like *helfen* which govern a dative object. These other English constructions have quite different German equivalents:

Es war schön, sie zu kennen	*She was nice to know*
(not **Sie war schön zu kennen*)	
Meiner Schwester zu helfen war schwierig	} *My sister was difficult to help*
Es war schwierig, meiner Schwester zu helfen	
(not **Meine Schwester war schwierig zu helfen*)	
Zum Trinken war der Kaffee zu heiß	*The coffee was too hot to drink*
(not **Der Kaffee war zu heiß zu trinken*)	

In English adjectives like this can be used attributively (i.e. in front of a noun), with an infinitive depending on them, e.g. 'That is a **difficult** question **to answer'**. There is no comparable construction in German, and other constructions are used:

Diese Frage zu beantworten ist schwer }	*That is a difficult question to answer*
Das ist eine schwer zu beantwortende Frage	
Es ist ein leicht erreichbarer Ort	*It's an easy place to reach*
Es war dumm diese Frage gestellt zu haben	*That was a silly question to have asked*

11.2.6 Infinitive clauses with *zu* after prepositions

An infinitive clause with *zu* can be introduced by four prepositions: *um*, *ohne*, *(an)statt* and *außer*. These clauses have special meanings and are the equivalent

of adverbial clauses. They are always preceded by a comma in writing, see **21.5.3b**.

(a) *um … zu* **has a number of uses**
(i) It expresses purpose, like English 'in order to'. It is the equivalent of a clause introduced by *damit* (see **17.5.1**):

Ich konnte nichts tun, **um** ihn **zu** beruhigen	*I couldn't do anything to reassure him*
Er zündete das Haus an, **um** die Versicherung **zu** kassieren	*He set fire to the house (in order) to collect on the insurance*
Da war kein Wasser, **um** das Feuer **zu** löschen	*There was no water to put the fire out*

The *um* is sometimes omitted, both in elevated **and** colloquial registers, if the notion of purpose is clear from the context, e.g. *Ich konnte nichts tun ihn zu beruhigen*.

(ii) It is always used after an adjective qualified by *zu* or *genug*:

Er ist **zu jung**, **um** alles **zu** verstehen	*He is too young to understand everything*
Er ist alt **genug**, **um** alles **zu** verstehen	*He is old enough to understand everything*

um is sometimes omitted, especially in colloquial speech, e.g. *Er ist zu jung alles zu verstehen*.

um…zu can only be used after adjectives qualified by *zu* or *genug* if the subject of the two clauses is the same. If it is different, the conjunction *als dass* is used (see **17.5.3**), e.g. *Er ist zu jung/nicht alt genug, als dass wir es ihm erklären können*.

(iii) It can be used simply to link clauses, as an equivalent to *und*:

Er betrat die Gaststätte, **um** sie nach kurzer Zeit wieder **zu** verlassen	*He went into the restaurant, only to leave it again after a short time*

This construction is limited to formal writing and it has been criticized by stylists, as it could be misunderstood to imply purpose or intention. At worst, it can then sound nonsensical, as in a sentence like: *Otto ging nach Australien, um dort von einem Auto überfahren zu werden*.

(b) *ohne … zu* **corresponds to English 'without' followed by an '-ing' form**

Er sollte den Gegner ablaufen, **ohne** ihn per Foul	*He ought to run down his opponent without getting the*

vom Ball **zu** trennen (*HMP*)   *ball off him by fouling him*

Sie verließ das Haus, **ohne** gesehen **zu** werden   *She left the house without being seen*

With a change of subject, the conjunction *ohne dass* is used (see **17.7g**), e.g. *Er verließ das Haus, ohne dass Gertrud ihn sah*.

(c) *(an)statt… zu* **corresponds to English 'instead of' followed by an '-ing' form**

Er hat gespielt, **(an)statt zu** arbeiten   *He played instead of working*

Die Mädchen sollten sich schämen, dass sie einfach *The girls should be ashamed that they just*
abgehauen sind, **statt** Hilfe **zu** holen (*BrZ*)   *cleared off instead of fetching help*

A clause with *(an)statt dass*, e.g. *Er hat gespielt, (an)statt dass er gearbeitet hat*, is an alternative to this construction. No change of subject is possible with either *(an)statt zu* or *(an)statt dass*.

(d) *außer … zu* **corresponds to English 'except', 'apart from' or 'besides' with an infinitive**

Was konnten sie tun, **außer zu** protestieren? (*Zeit*)   *What could they do except protest?*

Using *außer* followed by an infinitive with *zu* is a quite recent possibility. A common alternative is to use the preposition *außer* with an infinitive noun, e.g. *Sie tat nichts außer Schlafen*. With a different subject, a clause with the conjunction *außer dass* is used (see **17.7b**).

11.2.7 Differences between English and German in the use of infinitives

An infinitive clause with *zu* is used in fewer constructions than English infinitive clauses, and it is useful to know the most frequent German equivalents for these. Typically, German often uses constructions with subordinate clauses where English can use an infinitive clause.

(a) English 'for' followed by an infinitive

English 'for' is often used with a noun or a pronoun together with an infinitive. The most usual German equivalent is a construction with a relative clause, or an adverbial clause, with the conjunction to be used depending on the sense:

Hier sind ein paar Formulare, die Sie ausfüllen sollen	*Here are a few forms for you to fill in*
Dort war niemand, mit dem wir hätten reden können	*There was nobody there for us to talk to*
Ihr lag es sehr daran, dass er die Stelle annahm	*She was very keen for him to take the job*
Er wartete darauf, dass sie ankam	*He was waiting for her to arrive*
Sie bringt die Fotos, damit wir sie uns ansehen können	*She's bringing the photographs for us to look at*
Sie muss schon sehr krank sein, wenn ihre Mutter den Arzt angerufen hat	*She must be very ill for her mother to have called the doctor*

In a few contexts German can use a noun with *für*, or a noun in the dative in the main clause:

Es ist Zeit für uns loszugehen	*It is time for us to leave*
Es war ihm unmöglich, das auch nur zu verstehen	*It was impossible for him even to understand that*

(b) English 'with' followed by an infinitive

If English 'with' is followed by a noun or a pronoun and an infinitive, the German equivalent, depending on the sense, can be a subordinate clause with *da* or *weil*, a main clause with *und*, or a relative clause:

Da ich diesen Aufsatz noch schreiben muss, werde ich heute Abend nicht mitkommen können	*With this essay to write, I shan't be able to come with you this evening*
Sie waren nur auf der Durchreise in München und konnten dort nur ein paar Stunden verbringen	*They were just passing through Munich, with no more than an hour or two to spend*
Auch der Sonntag, an dem sie nicht ins Büro ging, verging irgendwie	*With no office to go to, even that Sunday passed by for her somehow*

(c) English infinitives in indirect statements and questions

e.g. 'He told me **how to do it**'. In German a subordinate clause is used, often with a modal auxiliary verb such as *sollen*, *müssen* or *können*:

Er hat mir gesagt, wie man es macht	*He told me how to do it*
Ich weiß nicht, was ich tun soll/muss	*I don't know what to do*
Woher weiß man, welchen Knopf man drücken soll?	*How do you know which button to press?*

(d) English infinitives used after a noun

e.g. 'the person **to apply to**'. A relative clause is used in German:

Ich möchte ein Paar Handschuhe, die zu meinem Wintermantel passen	*I want a pair of gloves to go with my winter coat*

das Einzige, was man machen kann   *the only thing to do*

Constructions like this are especially common after superlatives:

Er war der Erste (der Letzte, der beste Spieler), der *He was the first (the last, the best player) to*
gekommen ist   *come*

11.2.8 Other uses of the infinitive with *zu*

(a) In comparative phrases with *als*

zu can be omitted, although it is more usual for it to be included:

Du kannst nichts Besseres tun **als zu Hause (zu) bleiben**
Man sollte lieber erst alles gründlich besprechen **als sofort (zu) streiten**

(b) In exclamations

These are similar to the corresponding English construction:

Und zu denken, dass es ihr nichts bedeutet hat! *And to think it didn't mean anything to her!*
Ach, immer hier zu bleiben!   *Oh, to stay here for ever!*

(c) In small ads

Zwei-Zimmer-Wohnung ab 1. Mai zu vermieten *Two-room apartment to let from May 1st*

11.3 The infinitive without *zu*

11.3.1 Verbs used with a 'bare' infinitive without *zu*

A few common verbs are followed by a so-called **'bare' infinitive**, without *zu*, e.g.:

Ich muss morgen nach Bochum **fahren**
Sie will diese Briefe morgen **schreiben**
Ich weiß, dass sie diese Briefe morgen **schreiben** will
Sie hat diese Briefe heute **schreiben** wollen

The 'bare' infinitive is placed in final position at the end of the clause, and enclosed in subordinate clauses and compound tenses (see **19.1**). The following

verbs are used with a 'bare' infinitive.

(a) *The modal auxiliaries – dürfen, können, mögen, müssen, sollen, wollen*

(see **Chapter 15**):

Sie **darf** heute nicht **ausgehen**	Ich **musste** heute früh **aufstehen**
Wir **können** es nicht **verhindern**	Er wird mir nicht **helfen wollen**

In colloquial speech, the verb *brauchen* is often used with a bare infinitive, especially when it is used with *nicht* as an equivalent to *nicht müssen*, in the meaning 'not need' (see **15.5.1c**), e.g. *Sie brauchen heute nicht hingehen*. However, this is not generally accepted as standard, and *brauchen* is still most often used with *zu* in writing: *Sie brauchen heute nicht hinzugehen*. However, in the perfect tense the bare infinitive is considered acceptable, with the infinitive of *brauchen* being used rather than a past participle (see **11.3.2a**), e.g. *Das hättest du wirklich nicht (zu) lesen brauchen*.

(b) The verbs of perception – *fühlen**, hören**, sehen , spüren*

Ich **sah** ihn ins Zimmer **kommen**	*I saw him come into the room*
Sie **hörte** das Kind **weinen**	*She heard the child crying*
Er **fühlte** sein Herz **klopfen**	*He felt his heart beat(ing)*
Ich **spürte** seinen Einfluss **wachsen**	*I sensed how his influence was growing*

With these verbs, a clause with *wie* is an alternative to the infinitive construction:

Sie **hat gehört**, **wie** das Kind geweint hat	Ich **habe ge**spürt, **wie** sein Einfluss gewachsen ist
Ich **sah**, **wie** der Polizist sich nach dem alten Mann umsah	

This alternative is more frequent in less formal registers, although it is not restricted to them, if the sentence is long or complex, and with the verbs *fühlen* and *spüren*, which are in practice now rarely used with the infinitive construction. A clause with *wie* is also the only possibility with a following passive:

Wir haben gesehen, **wie** die Frau in diesem Geschäft **betrogen wurde**	*We saw the woman being swindled in that shop*

(c) *lassen*

lassen with a bare infinitive has two principal meanings:

(i) 'let', 'allow':

Er **ließ** mich das Buch **behalten**   *He let me keep the book*

Lass sie doch **hereinkommen!**   *Do let her come in!*

In this sense *lassen* is often used reflexively with a similar force to a passive construction (see **13.4.6**):

Das **lässt sich** leicht **ändern**   *That can easily be changed*

Das Buch **lässt sich** leicht **lesen**   *The book is easy to read*

(ii) 'cause', 'make':

Sie **ließ** den Schlosser die Tür **reparieren**   *She had the locksmith fix the door*

Die Nachricht **ließ** ihn **erblassen**   *The news made him turn pale*

Er **ließ** sich die Haare **schneiden**   *He had his hair cut*

lassen is never followed by a passive infinitive, but in both meanings the infinitive after *lassen* can have the sense of a passive:

Er **lässt** die Bäume **fällen**   *He has the trees felled*

Er **ließ** sich **sehen**   *He allowed himself to be seen*

Sie **ließen** die Autobahnen von den Gefangenen **bauen**   *They had the motorways built by the prisoners*

(d) tun

The use of *tun* with a bare infinitive is typical of colloquial speech:

Sie **tut** gerade schreiben   *She just busy writing*

Tust du mich auch **verstehen**?   *Do you understand me?*

Ich **täte** gern mit ihr **gehen**   *I would like to go with her*

This usage is widespread in spoken German, but it is not accepted as standard, and it is only acceptable in writing to allow an emphasized verb to be placed first in the sentence:

Bewundern tue ich ihn nicht, aber er imponiert mir doch   *I don't admire him, but he does impress me*

Rauchen zum Beispiel **tat** er auch nicht (Dürrenmatt)   *He didn't smoke either, for instance*

(e) Some verbs of motion – *gehen*, *kommen*, *fahren*, *schicken*

The verb in the infinitive expresses the purpose of going:

Während ich **öffnen ging**, … (*Andersch*)	*While I went to open the door, …*
Kommst du heute **schwimmen**?	*Are you coming swimming today?*
Er **fährt** immer vormittags **einkaufen**	*He always goes shopping in the mornings*
Sie hat den Opa **einkaufen geschickt**	*She sent grandad shopping*

This usage is typical of colloquial speech, but it is not restricted to informal registers. In everyday speech, the past and perfect tenses of *sein* can also be used with a bare infinitive to mean 'go':

| Ich **war** heute Morgen **schwimmen** | *I went swimming this morning* |
| Er **ist einkaufen gewesen** | *He went/has been shopping* |

schicken can also be used with *zu* and an infinitive: *Sie hat den Großvater geschickt, Kartoffeln und Gemüse zu kaufen*. This is most usual if the infinitive clause is fairly long.

(f) *bleiben*, *finden* **and** *haben* **followed by a verb of position**

Er **blieb** im Zimmer **sitzen**	*He stayed sitting in the room*
Sie **ist** an der Ampel **stehen geblieben**	*She stopped at the lights*
Er **hat** sein Auto vor der Tür **stehen**	*He's got his car at the door*
Sie **hat** einen Bruder in Köln **wohnen**	*She's got a brother living in Cologne*
Sie **fand** das Buch auf dem Boden **liegen**	*She found the book lying on the floor*

(i) *stehen bleiben* 'stop' and *sitzen bleiben* 'repeat a year' (at school) have an idiomatic meaning and can be written as single words, i.e. *stehenbleiben*, *sitzenbleiben* (see **21.3.1c**).
(ii) For *finden* with the present participle, see **11.6.5c**.
(iii) *haben* is also used with a bare infinitive in a few fixed expressions with adjectives, e.g. *Du hast gut/leicht reden* 'It's all very well for you to talk'.
(g) *heißen* **'order',** *helfen*, *lehren* **,** *lernen*

These verbs can be followed by a bare infinitive **or** by an infinitive with *zu*:

Sie **hieß** ihn **schweigen**	*She bade him be silent*
Er **hieß** seine Truppen die Burg bis zum letzten Mann **zu verteidigen**	*He ordered his troops to defend the castle to the last man*
Die Wände **helfen** die Akustik **verbessern** (*FAZ*)	*The walls help to improve the acoustics*
Der Badmeister **half** ihnen, den Rollstuhlfahrer ins	*The pool attendant helped them to carry the man in a*

Wasser **zu tragen** (*SGT*)	*wheelchair into the water*
Sie **lehrte** mich **kochen**	*She taught me to cook*
Sie **lehrte** mich Suppe **zu kochen**	*She taught me how to make soup*
Er **lernte** beim Militär Russisch **(zu) sprechen**	*He learnt to speak Russian in the army*

(i) This sense of *heißen*, i.e. 'command', is typical of formal literary registers and can sound old- fashioned. In the sense 'mean', *heißen* is always followed by an infinitive without *zu*, see **(h)** below.

(ii) *kennen lernen* 'meet', 'get to know' can be written as a single word, i.e. *kennenlernen* (see **21.3.1c**).

(iii) When *lehren* or *lernen* follow a modal verb, the infinitive with them always has *zu*:

Sie wollte mich **lehren**, Knödel **zu** kochen	*She wanted to teach me how to cook dumplings*
Wir müssen **lernen**, uns gegenseitig **zu** respektieren (*BZ*)	*We have to learn mutual respect for one another*

(iv) The construction with *zu* tends to be used with longer and more complex infinitive clauses, but the bare infinitive is preferred if the infinitive precedes or the alternative is an awkward construction, e.g.:

Sie hat mir die Koffer **tragen helfen**	*She helped me to carry the suitcases*
Er hat beim Militär Russisch **sprechen gelernt**	*He learnt to speak Russian in the army*
Es geht darum, die seit vierzig Jahren geforderte Freiheit der osteuropäischen Völker **verwirklichen zu helfen** (*FR*)	*It is a matter of helping the peoples of Eastern Europe to realize the freedom which has been demanded for forty years*

(h) A few other verbs in certain constructions

(i) With *machen* in some idioms, i.e. *von sich reden machen* 'become a talking point' and *jdn. etwas glauben machen* 'convince sb. of sth.', and used with a few other verbs, i.e. *jdn. gruseln, lachen, schwindeln, weinen, zittern machen* 'make sb. have the creeps, laugh, feel dizzy, cry, tremble'.

(ii) A bare infinitive is used after *heißen* 'be (the equivalent of)', 'mean' and *nennen* 'call':

Das **heißt lügen**	*That amounts to lying*
Das **hieße** wieder von vorne **anfangen**	*That would mean starting again from scratch*
Das **nennst** du höflich **sein**!	*You call that being polite!*

heißen in the meaning 'command' is followed by a bare infinitive **or** an infinitive with *zu*, see **(g)** above.

(iii) *legen* is followed by a bare infinitive in the idiom *sich schlafen legen* 'go to bed', e.g. *Ich legte mich schlafen*.

11.3.2 The use of the infinitive for a past participle

The infinitive is used rather than a past participle in the perfect tenses of some verbs which are followed by a bare infinitive, e.g. *Sie hat kommen wollen* (not *gewollt)*, see **15.3.2a**. This so-called *Ersatzinfinitiv* is used with the following verbs:

(a) the modal auxiliaries

Er hat heute ausgehen **dürfen**	Er hat ihn sehen **müssen**
Wir hätten Ihnen helfen **können**	Sie hätte es machen **sollen**
Das hätte ich aber sehen **mögen**	Karl hatte Sie sehen **wollen**

brauchen also forms its perfect tenses with the infinitive, whether it is used with an infinitive with *zu* or with a bare infinitive (see **11.3.1a**), e.g. *Wir haben nicht (zu) warten brauchen*.

The past participle is sometimes used with these verbs in spoken German, e.g. *Sie hat arbeiten gemusst, gekonnt, gewollt,* etc., but these forms are not considered correct.

(b) *lassen*

Sie hat den Schlosser die Tür **reparieren lassen** Er hat sich die Haare **schneiden lassen**

The infinitive of *lassen* is generally used rather than the past participle, but the participle is occasionally heard in the sense of 'leaving something somewhere', e.g. *Ich habe Kaffee und Kuchen stehen gelassen* (more usual: *stehen lassen*), and with the combinations *fallen lassen, liegen lassen,* etc. (see **21.3.1c**).

(c) *sehen***,** *hören* **and other verbs of perception**

With *sehen* and *hören*, the norm is to use the infinitive:

Ich habe sie hereinkommen **sehen** *I saw her come in*

Sie hatte ihn nicht kommen **hören** *She hadn't heard him come*

Less commonly, the past participle of these verbs is used, e.g. *Sie hatte ihn nicht kommen gehört*.

With *fühlen* and *spüren*, the past participle is now used rather than the infinitive, e.g. *Sie hat die Katastrophe kommen gefühlt*.

(d) *helfen***,** *heißen* **and other verbs used with a bare infinitive**

Both the infinitive and the past participle are accepted with all these verbs, but there are differences in frequency of usage.

(i) With *helfen*, the infinitive is rather more usual than the past participle:
Sie hat ihm den Koffer **tragen helfen** (*also common*: **tragen geholfen**)
(ii) With *heißen* the infinitive and the past participle are almost equally common:
Wer hat dich **kommen heißen/geheißen**?
(iii) With other verbs, especially *lehren* and *lernen*, the past participle is the norm:
Er hat Chinesisch **sprechen gelernt** (*unusual*: **sprechen lernen**)

In subordinate clauses the auxiliary precedes these double infinitives: *Er sagte, dass sie es hätte machen sollen/…*, *dass sie den Koffer hat tragen helfen*, etc. (see **15.1.4d** and **19.1.3b**).

11.3.3 Other uses of the bare infinitive

(a) in commands, in place of an imperative

Using the infinitive with the force of a command is frequent in official language and instructions, see also **14.1.3a**:

Nicht rauchen! Bitte anschnallen! *No smoking! Please fasten your seat-belts!*

(b) in isolation, especially in elliptical questions, wishes and the like

Wie? Alles vergessen und vergeben?	*What? (Am I supposed to) forgive and forget?*
Wozu sich weiter bemühen?	*Why (should we) bother further?*
Was möchtest du jetzt? – Schlafen bis Mittag!	*What would you like to do now? – Sleep till lunchtime!*

11.4 Infinitives used as nouns

11.4.1 Making and using nouns from the infinitive of verbs

The infinitive of almost any verb can be used as a noun in German. They are always **neuter**, see **1.1.6e**, and they are spelled with a capital letter, e.g. *das Schlafen*, *das Sehen*, *das Sprechen*.

(a) Infinitival nouns often correspond to English '-ing' forms used as nouns

Ich hörte das laute **Bellen** eines Hundes	*I heard the loud barking of a dog*
Nach monatelangem **Warten** erhielt sie die Nachricht von seinem Erfolg	*After waiting for months she received news of his success*
Das **Mitnehmen** von Hunden ist polizeilich verboten	*Bringing dogs in is forbidden by law*
die Kunst des **Schreibens**	*the art of writing*

(b) The pronoun *sich* is usually omitted in infinitival nouns from reflexive verbs

(i) This is especially the case if the use of the infinitive as a noun is well-established and frequent, e.g. *das Benehmen* 'behaviour' (from *sich benehmen* 'behave').

(ii) However, *sich* may be included to avoid ambiguity, e.g. *die Kunst des Sichäußerns* 'the art of expressing oneself' (*das Äußern* could mean something different).

(iii) *sich* tends to be included with forms which have not become established usage, e.g. *dieses ständige Sichumschauen* 'this continual looking round', *das meditative Sichannähern an Gott* 'coming closer to God through meditation', *das Sichnichtbegnügenkönnen* (*Süßkind*) 'not being able to be satisfied'.

There is often uncertainty in how to spell nouns from reflexive verbs, and spellings like *das sich Äußern* are sometimes seen, although they are incorrect.

(c) In general, infinitival nouns are not used in the plural

This is because, like the English '-ing' form, they simply express the action denoted by the verb. However, a few established forms, with extended meanings, can be used in the plural, see **11.4.3**.

(d) Compound infinitival nouns

Infinitival nouns can be compounded with the object or another part of the clause, e.g.:

das Zeitunglesen *reading the newspaper* das Rückwärtsfahren *reversing*

das Schlafengehen *going to bed*

If there are several words in these additional elements, they are normally written with hyphens, e.g.:

dieses ständige Mit-sich-selbst-Beschäftigen (*SWF*) das Auf-die-lange-Bank-Schieben

The first word, the infinitive and any nouns in the combination are all spelled with capital letters.

(e) Widespread use of infinitival nouns is typical of written German

They are especially frequent in technical registers, e.g.:

In der Bundesrepublik beginnt sich diese Basis humanen **Miteinanderlebens**, **Unterein- anderaussprechens** und **Miteinander- wirkens** aufzulösen (*FAZ*) *In the Federal Republic this basic principle of living together humanely, freely exchanging ideas and co-operating is beginning to dissolve*

11.4.2 Infinitival nouns with prepositions

The preposition is fused with the appropriate form of the definite article (see **4.1.1c**).

(a) *am* + **infinitival noun**

am is used with an infinitival noun to express continuous action (see also **12.5c**):

Paula ist **am Tanzen**	*Paula is dancing*
Der Ölpreis ist wieder **am Sinken**	*The price of oil is dropping again*
Er ist gerade meinen Laptop am **Reparieren**	*He's just reparing my laptop*
Während die Piraten noch auf der Insel **am Feiern** sind, läuft die „Neptun" wieder aus mit Kurs auf Spanien (*Zeit*)	*While the pirates are still celebrating on the island, the 'Neptune' sets sail for Spain again*

This construction was originally a regionalism restricted to western areas, but it has recently come to be used almost everywhere in speech. However, it is not universally accepted as standard, it is still infrequent in writing and using it with an object, as in the third example above, is less usual.

(b) *beim* + **infinitival noun**

This most often corresponds to an English progressive tense (see **12.5c**), English 'on' with an '-ing' form, or an adverbial time clause with 'when' or 'as':

Beim Erwachen am Morgen erschrak ich eine Sekunde lang (*Frisch*)	*On waking up/When I woke up in the morning I was frightened for an instant*
Die Brücke war so dicht mit vierstöckigen Häusern bebaut, dass man **beim Überschreiten** den Fluss nicht zu Gesicht bekam (*Süßkind*)	*The bridge was so densely built up with four-storey houses that you couldn't see the river as you crossed it*

(c) *ins* + **infinitival noun**

This combination is used with *geraten* or *kommen* to form phrasal verbs denoting the beginning of an action:

Der Ball geriet/kam **ins Rollen**	*The ball started rolling*
Der Turm kam/geriet **ins Schwanken**	*The tower started to sway*
Der Wagen kam **ins Schleudern**	*The car went into a skid*

(d) *zum* + **infinitival noun**
(i) *zum* with an infinitival noun expresses purpose, often corresponding to English 'for' with an *'-ing'* form or to an infinitive with 'to':

Zum Fußballspielen ist der Garten viel zu klein	*The garden is much too small for playing football in*
Ich gebrauche den Computer vor allem **zum Spielen** von Games	*More than anything I use a computer for playing games*
Der Kaffee ist zu heiß **zum Trinken**	*The coffee is too hot to drink*

(ii) Some combinations of infinitival nouns with *zum* are idiomatic:

Das ist doch **zum Lachen**, **zum Kotzen**, **zum Verrücktwerden**	*But that's laughable, enough to make you sick, enough to drive you mad*

(iii) *bis zum* with an infinitival noun is used for 'until':

Bitte bewahren Sie den Fahrschein **bis zum Verlassen** des Bahnhofs	*Please retain your ticket until you leave the station*

(iv) Combinations of infinitival nouns with *zum* with *bringen* or *kommen* form phrasal verbs expressing the completion of an action:

zum Halten bringen/kommen	*bring/come to a stop*

zum Kochen bringen/kommen *bring/come to the boil*

11.4.3 Infinitival nouns with extended meanings

Some infinitival nouns have lost their link to the verb they came from in such a way that they no longer simply express the action denoted by it and have developed additional meanings. For many of these this means that they can be used in the plural, which is not generally the case with infinitival nouns. Some common examples:

das Andenken	*souvenir*	das Gutachten	*reference*	das Verbrechen	*crime*
das Benehmen	*behaviour*	das Guthaben	*credit balance*	das Vergnügen	*pleasure*
das Dasein	*existence*	das Leben	*life*	das Vermögen	*wealth*
das Einkommen	*income*	das Schreiben	*letter*	das Versprechen	*promise*
das Essen	*meal*	das Unternehmen	*enterprise*	das Vorhaben	*intention*

11.5 The present and past participles

Aside from the use of the past participle to form the perfect tenses and the passive (see **10.3–10.4**), the German participles are chiefly used as adjectives (see **11.5.1**) or in participial clauses (see **11.5.2**).

In English, the participles are usually called the PRESENT PARTICIPLE (e.g. *lesend, überwältigend*, etc.), and the PAST PARTICIPLE (e.g. *gestellt, geworfen*, etc.). These terms are misleading, as they do not necessarily refer to present or past time, and in German they are now usually called *das erste Partizip* and *das zweite Partizip* (or simply *Partizip I* and *Partizip II*).

11.5.1 The participles used as adjectives

(a) Most German present and past participles can be used as adjectives

This is their most frequent use outside the compound tenses:

die **schreienden** Vögel   das **kochende** Wasser
mein **verlorener** Schirm   der **gehasste** Feind

(b) Participles can be used as nouns

In this respect they are like other adjectives (see **6.2**).

die **Streikenden** *the people on strike* der **Gehasste**   *the detested man*

die **Sterbende**	*the dying woman*	das **Hervorragende**	*the outstanding thing*

ein bitterer Kampf zwischen **Habenden** und Habenichtsen, zwischen **Überfütterten** und **Zukurzgekommenen** (*Zeit*)	*a bitter struggle between the haves and the have-nots, between the overfed and those who have come off badly*

Many participles used as nouns have developed special meanings, e.g. *der/die Abgeordnete* 'member of parliament', *der/die Vorsitzende* 'chairperson', etc. More of these are given in **6.2.3**.

(c) Like other adjectives, participles can be used as adverbs

They are mainly used as adverbs of manner or viewpoint, see **7.4.1c**:

Er hat die Sache **überraschend** schnell erledigt	*He settled the matter surprisingly quickly*
Sie rannten **schreiend** davon, als sie ihn sahen (*Süßkind*)	*They ran off screaming when they saw him*
Die alte Frau ging **gebückt** zum Rathaus hin	*The old woman was walking with a stoop towards the town-hall*

(d) Participles are often compounded

They are typically compounded with the object of the verb, or with a qualifying adverb. These compounds can be used as nouns or adverbs in the same way as simple participles. They are especially frequent in written German:

Vancouver ist eine Stadt von **atemberaubender** Schönheit	*Vancouver is a breathtakingly beautiful city*
die **Arbeitsuchenden**	*the people looking for work*
ein **weichgekochtes** Ei	*a soft-boiled egg*
Tiefgefrorenes	*frozen food*

(e) Present participles can be used adjectivally with an accompanying *zu*

e.g. *das abzufertigende Gepäck* 'the baggage for checking'. This is an adjectival form of the construction with *sein* and an infinitive with *zu* expressing possibility or necessity, i.e. *Das Gepäck ist abzufertigen* (see **11.2.4**). As in that construction the participle has passive force:

ein nicht **zu übersehender** Fehler	*a mistake which cannot be overlooked*
ihre **anzuerkennende** Leistung	*her achievement which must be acknowledged*
ein **Auszubildender**	*a trainee*

As the last example shows, these forms, too, can be used as nouns. This construction is very frequent in formal registers, especially in officialese.

(f) The extended participial phrase

A participle used as an adjective can be expanded leftwards by adding objects and/or adverbials. In this way, what in English would be a phrase or a relative clause placed **after** the noun can appear in German as an extended adjectival phrase placed **before** the noun:

Die **um ihre eigenen Arbeitsplätze fürchtenden** Stahlarbeiter wollten nicht streiken (*FR*)	*The steelworkers, who were afraid for their own jobs, did not want to strike*
Ich habe dieses **von meinem Cousin warm empfohlene** Buch mit Genuss gelesen	*I enjoyed reading this book which was strongly recommended to me by my cousin*
Wegen Überproduktion entlassene Arbeiter demonstrierten im Fabrikhof	*Workers who had been laid off on account of overproduction were demonstrating in the factory yard*
eine **von allen echten Demokraten zu begrüßende** Entwicklung	*a development which must be welcomed by all true democrats*

These extended adjectival phrases can be made into nouns, e.g. *das wirklich Entscheidende* 'what is really decisive', *die soeben Angekommenen* 'the people who have just arrived', etc.

This construction is common in formal writing, especially in non-literary registers (official and technical writing as well as all kinds of non-fiction), but it is hardly used in speech. As the following example shows, there can be a long way between the article and the noun in these phrases:

> Zwar gilt **der** in den vergangenen vier Jahren auf der Basis einer deutschamerikanischen Regierungsvereinbarung für bislang 552 Millionen entwickelte **Panzer** als Spitzenmodell seiner Klasse (*Spiegel*)

The order of the elements in these phrases is the same as in subordinate clauses, with the participle in final position, where the verb would be in a subordinate clause, see **19.3**.

Similar constructions can be used with other adjectives (see **6.1.6**), e.g.: *eine für sie ganz typische Haltung*.

(g) Lexicalization of participles used as adjectives

Many participles used as adjectives have become **lexicalized**, i.e. they have developed a meaning distinct from that of the original verb, so that they are now felt to be independent adjectives rather than simply the participles of a particular verb.

A clear indication of this is that lexicalized participles can be used with comparative and superlative endings, e.g. *spannender*, *am spannendsten* 'more, most exciting'. With true participles, *mehr* and *meist* are used, see **6.5.1h**.

Another indication of lexicalization is the possibility of using the prefix *un-* with some of them, e.g. *(un)bedeutend* '(in)significant', *(un)angebracht* '(in)appropriate', etc. A selection of frequently used lexicalized participles is given below:

- **Lexicalized present participles**

abstoßend	*repulsive*	beruhigend	*reassuring*	rührend	*touching*
abwesend	*absent*	dringend	*urgent*	spannend	*exciting*
ansteckend	*infectious*	drückend	*oppressive*	überraschend	*surprising*
anstrengend	*strenuous*	einleuchtend	*reasonable*	überzeugend	*convincing*
anwesend	*present*	empörend	*outrageous*	umfassend	*extensive*
auffallend	*conspicuous*	entscheidend	*decisive*	verblüffend	*amazing*
aufregend	*exciting*	glühend	*glowing*	verlockend	*tempting*
bedeutend	*significant*	reizend	*charming*	wütend	*furious*

These lexicalized present participles can also be used as the complement of the verb *sein*:

ein **spannender** Film	*an exciting film*
der Film war **spannend**	*the film was exciting*

True present participles cannot be used like this in German, and these lexicalized participles are not to be confused with the '-ing' forms of the English progressive tenses. Compare:

die **brennenden** Lichter	*the burning lights*
die Lichter **brannten**	*the lights were burning*

i.e. *not *die Lichter waren brennend*. German present participles cannot be used with *sein* to form progressive tenses like the English '-ing' form with the verb 'be' (see also **12.5**).

- **Lexicalized past participles**

angebracht	*appropriate*	ausgezeichnet	*excellent*	gelehrt	*scholarly*
angesehen	*respected*	bekannt	*famous*	geschickt	*clever*
aufgebracht	*outraged*	belegt	*occupied*	verliebt	*in love*
aufgeregt	*excited*	erfahren	*experienced*	verrückt	*insane*

Some lexicalized past participles are archaic and are no longer the current past participle of the verb they are derived from, e.g.:

erhaben *illustrious*   (*erheben* 'raise'– modern past participle *erhoben*)

gediegen *solid, upright* (*gedeihen* 'prosper'– modern past participle *gediehen*)

verhohlen *secret*   (*verhehlen* 'conceal'– modern past participle *verhehlt*)

verworren *confused*   (*verwirren* 'confuse'– modern past participle *verwirrt*)

A few adjectives look like past participles but they are not from verbs at all, e.g. *beleibt* 'portly' and *benachbart* 'neighbouring'. These come directly from the nouns *der Leib* 'body' and *der Nachbar* 'neighbour' – there are no verbs *beleiben or *benachbaren.

11.5.2 Clauses with participles

Both present and past participles can be used to construct non-finite clauses. These can have the force of an adjective, qualifying a noun or pronoun, or of an adverb, giving the circumstances of the action. The participle is usually in final position in the clause, as in subordinate clauses, see **19.3**.

Participial clauses are typically only used in formal writing. In particular, those with present participles can sound stilted and they are used much less frequently than clauses with '-ing' forms in English. In practice, English learners are best advised to avoid them entirely in German and use instead one of the alternatives explained in **11.6**.

(a) Clauses with the present participle

The present participle used in a non-finite clause indicates an action taking place **at the same time** as that of the finite verb in the main clause:

Den Schildern **folgend**, fanden sie das Krankenhaus (*Walser*)

Following the signs, they found the hospital

Ich putzte **auf dem Brett stehend** das Fenster von außen (*Spiegel*)

I was cleaning the window from the outside, standing on the plank

eine ständige Verbesserung des Automobils nach den Möglichkeiten der Zeit, **doch zugleich immer aufbauend auf das Erreichte** (*Mercedes advert*)

a continuous improvement of the car according to the possibilities of the time, but at the same time always building on what has been achieved

(b) Clauses with the past participle

The meaning of the **past participle** in a non-finite clause **differs according to the type of verb.**

(i) With **intransitive verbs**, the past participle has an **active** (i.e. not passive) sense, and refers to an action which has taken place before that indicated by the finite verb in the main clause:

Der neue Lehrer, in Freiburg **angekommen,** suchte das Humboldt-Gymnasium auf

Having arrived in Freiburg, the new teacher went to the Humboldt Secondary School

(ii) With **transitive verbs**, the past participle has the force of a **passive**. If the verb denotes a **continuous action**, the participle refers to an **action simultaneous** with that of the finite verb in the main clause:

Der Zug, von zwei Lokomotiven **gezogen**, fuhr in den Bahnhof ein

The train, which was being pulled by two locomotives, came into the station

Da saß eine zarte Dame mit einem zarten Gesicht, **umrahmt** von einem blonden Pagenkopf

There sat a delicate lady with a delicate face, which was framed by blond hair cut in the page-boy style

(iii) With **transitive verbs** which denote a **momentary action**, the past participle refers to an action which has taken place **before** that of the finite verb in the main clause:

Der Flüchtling, von seinen Freunden **gewarnt**, verließ sein Versteck

The fugitive, (who had been) warned by his friends, left his hiding-place

Zwar hatte dieses Mal der Dolch, durch ein seidenes Unterkleid **abgelenkt**, das Opfer nicht sogleich tödlich getroffen (*Heyse*)

Nevertheless, this time the dagger, deflected by a silk petticoat, had not immediately wounded the victim fatally

(c) Comparative clauses can be formed with *wie* and a past participle:

eine Betonburg, **wie** von einem anderen Stern in diesen   *a concrete castle, as if it had fallen into this*
   Wald **gefallen** (*Walser*)   *forest from another star*

In general, this construction is also typical of formal registers, but some have become established idioms and are more widely used:

Also, **wie ausgemacht**: Wir treffen uns um acht   *Well, then, as arranged, we'll meet at eight o clock*

wie gesagt, **wie erwartet**, **wie gehabt**   *as I said, as expected, as before*

(d) A clause with a past participle can be introduced by *obwohl*

This is similar to the English construction with '(al)though':

Obwohl von seinen Kollegen **geachtet**, war er nicht   *Although respected by his colleagues, he was not*
   sehr beliebt   *very popular*

No other conjunction can introduce a participial clause in German.

11.5.3 Other uses of the past participle

(a) Elliptical use of the past participle

The past participle is sometimes used in isolation as an exclamation or an impersonal command. Many such forms have become idiomatic:

Verdammt! Verflucht (noch mal)!   *Blast!*

Frisch gewagt!   *Let's get on with it!*

Aufgepasst!   *Watch out!*

For further details, see **14.1.3b**.

(b) The past participle after *finden*

This corresponds closely to the English construction:

Ich **fand** sie vor dem Ofen **zusammengesunken**   *I found her slumped in front of the stove*

Du wirst ihn dort **aufgebahrt finden**   *You will find him laid out there*

For the use of *finden* with a present participle, see **11.6.5c**.

(c) The past participle after *kommen*

This corresponds to an English '-ing*' form with 'come':

Er **kam** ins Zimmer **gelaufen**   *He came running into the room*
Sie **kam herbeigeeilt**   *She came hurrying along*

(d) The past participle after bleiben and scheinen

bleiben and *scheinen* can be used with a following past participle in a construction similar to English:

Ihr Brief blieb unbeantwortet   *Her letter remained unanswered*
Die Tür schien geschlossen   *The door seemed/appeared closed*

The participle with these verbs has a similar force to that of the *sein*-passive, see **13.2.2c**.

11.6 English constructions with the '-ing' form

The English '-ing' form has some uses which are more noun-like (when it is often called the 'gerund') and others which are more verb-like (when it is often called the 'present participle'). However, it is difficult to distinguish systematically between these uses and it is simplest to refer to it as the '-ing' form.

It is used **much more widely than the German present participle**, which is used mainly as an adjective (see **11.5.1**). In other contexts, different constructions are usually preferred in German. In particular, the German present participle is not often used in participial clauses (see **11.5.2**), and it is generally advisable for English-speaking learners to avoid attempting to use clauses with the present participle in German. The equivalents given below for constructions with the English '-ing' form represent more idiomatic German usage.

11.6.1 The English '-ing' form used as a noun

The usual German equivalent is one of the following, but more than one of these alternatives is often possible.

(a) An infinitive used as a noun, or another noun derived from a verb (see also **11.4** and **20.2**):

Aufmerksames **Zuhören** ist wichtig   *Attentive listening is important*

die Freuden des **Skilaufens**	*the pleasures of skiing*
Warum hat man die **Eröffnung** der neuen Schule aufgeschoben?	*Why has the opening of the new school been delayed?*
Er ist einer solchen **Tat** nicht fähig	*He is not capable of doing such a thing*

(b) An infinitive clause with *zu*

Es ist wichtig aufmerksam **zuzuhören**	*Attentive listening is important*
Er gab zu das Fenster **zerbrochen zu haben**	*He admitted having broken the window*
Ich verlasse mich darauf, ihn zu Hause **zu finden**	*I rely on finding him at home*

(c) A *dass* -clause

Es ist wichtig, **dass** man aufmerksam **zuhört**	*Attentive listening is important*
Er gab zu, **dass** er das Fenster **zerbrochen hatte**	*He admitted having broken the window*
Ich verlasse mich darauf, **dass** ich ihn zu Hause **finde**	*I rely on finding him at home*

This alternative must be used if the English '-ing' form has a different subject to that of the main verb:

Ich kann es mir nicht vorstellen, **dass sie ihren Ring verkauft**	*I can't imagine her selling her ring*
Ich verlasse mich darauf, **dass er alles arrangiert**	*I rely on his/him arranging everything*

(d) A finite verb

Wer **kocht** bei Ihnen zu Hause?	*Who does the cooking at your house?*

The subjectless passive (see **13.1.4**) can be used for an English '-ing' form after 'there is/are':

Überall **wurde** laut **gesungen**	*There was loud singing everywhere*

For 'there is/are' followed by 'no' and an '-ing' form, a construction with *sich lassen* (see **13.4.6**) may be possible:

Das **lässt sich** nicht leugnen	*There's no denying that*

11.6.2 The English '-ing' form after prepositions

(a) 'by' (or 'through') + '-ing' form

This construction usually corresponds to a clause with *dadurch*, *dass* or *indem* (see **17.3.1f**), or to *durch* followed by an infinitival noun. Thus the following are possible equivalents for the English sentence 'He escaped by jumping out of the window':

Er rettete sich **dadurch, dass er aus dem Fenster sprang**

Er rettete sich, **indem er aus dem Fenster sprang**

Er rettete sich **durch einen Sprung aus dem Fenster**

(b) 'for' + '-ing' form

The commonest equivalents are (*um*) … *zu* (see **11.2.6a**), or *zum* with an infinitival noun (see **11.4.2d**):

Sie hat keine Zeit mehr, } *She no longer has any time* Sie hat keine Zeit mehr
  (um) zu üben   *for practising*   **zum Üben**

Es ist zu kalt **zum**   *It's too cold for*
  Schwimmen   *swimming*

(c) 'instead of' + '-ing' form

(an)statt … zu or *(an)statt dass* can be used (see **11.2.6c**):

Er spielt, **anstatt zu arbeiten/anstatt dass er arbeitet** *He is playing instead of working*

(d) 'on' + '-ing' form

This usually corresponds to a clause with *als* or *wenn*, or *beim* followed by an infinitival noun (see **11.4.2b**):

Als sie den Brief las, wurde sie rot   }   *On reading the letter, she blushed*
  Beim Lesen des Briefes wurde sie rot

(e) 'with' + '-ing' form

This construction has a variety of possible equivalents in German, chiefly subordinate clauses introduced by a conjunction with an appropriate meaning. The range of equivalents is similar to that for participial clauses with '-ing' forms (see **11.6.3**):

Wenn der Berg nur als ein unbestimmtes Gebilde *If the hill only appears as an indefinite shape*

German	English
erscheint, **wobei** sich die Baumgruppen bloß als blasse Schatten zeigen, …	*with the groups of trees showing only as faint shadows, ...*
Es ist schön hier, **wenn** die Sonne durch die Bäume scheint	*It's lovely here with the sun shining through the trees*
Wir sahen die alte Stadt, **über die** die zerfallene Burg emporragte	*We could see the old town with the ruined castle towering above it*
Da der Fluss rasch stieg, mussten Notmaßnahmen getroffen werden	*With the river rising rapidly, emergency measures had to be taken*
Der Bürgermeister eröffnete die Sitzung **unter** Ausschluss der Öffentlichkeit	*The mayor opened the meeting, with the public being excluded*
Sie eilte durch die Stadt, **und dabei** wehten ihre Haare nach hinten	*She raced through the town with her hair streaming behind her*

(f) 'without' + '-ing' form

This corresponds to *ohne … zu* or *ohne dass* (see **11.2.6b**):

German	English
Der Zug fuhr durch, **ohne zu halten**	*The train went through without stopping*
Er bot uns seine Hilfe an, **ohne dass wir ihn darum bitten mussten**	*He offered us his help without our/us having to ask him for it*

(g) Other prepositions followed by '-ing' forms

The German equivalent is typically a subordinate clause or an appropriate preposition with an infinitival noun, or another noun derived from a verb:

German	English
Nach seiner Ankunft/ **Nachdem** er angekommen war, ging er sofort zum Rathaus	*After arriving he went straight to the to hall*
Vor dem Einschlafen/ **Bevor** er einschlief, hat er schnell die Zeitung gelesen	*Before going to sleep he quickly read the newspaper*
Trotz seiner Hilfe/**Obwohl** er mir geholfen hatte, kam ich zu spät an	*In spite of his/him having helped me, I arrived late*

11.6.3 Participial clauses with '-ing' forms

The German equivalent depends on the sense of the clause.

(a) The participial clause and the main verb refer to consecutive or simultaneous actions

(i) The simplest German equivalent is to use **main clauses** joined by *und*. *dabei* can be used in the second clause to stress that the actions are taking place (or took place) at the same time:

Sie öffnete die Schublade **und** nahm das Testament heraus	*Opening the drawer, she took out the will*
Ich saß an seinem Tisch **und** schrieb einen Brief	*I was sitting at his table writing a letter*
Er erzählte seine Geschichte **und** machte (**dabei**) nach jedem Satz eine Pause	*He told his story, pausing after each sentence*

In modern German, a clause with *indem* is no longer used in clauses corresponding to English participial clauses like those above, see **17.3.1f**.

(ii) A clause introduced by *wobei* can be used if the actions in the two clauses are simultaneous (see also **17.3.8**):

Er erzählte seine Geschichte, **wobei** er nach jedem Satz eine Pause machte.

(iii) If the action of the English participial clause precedes that of the main clause, the German equivalent can be a clause with *als*, *wenn* or *nachdem*:

Als wir zum Fenster hinausschauten, sahen wir einen Polizeiwagen heranfahren	*Looking out of the window, we saw a police car approaching*
Wenn man oben auf dem Kirchturm steht, sieht man das ganze Dorf	*Standing on top of the church tower, you can see the whole village*
Nachdem ich ihre Mails beantwortet hatte, ging ich in die Stadt	*Having answered her e-mails, I went into town*

(b) Participial clauses which give a reason or cause

In German, a subordinate clause with *da* or *weil* can be used:

Da es schon spät war, gingen wir nach Hause	*It being late, we went home*
Weil ich wusste, dass sie verreist war, habe ich sie nicht angerufen	*Knowing that she was away, I didn't call her*

(c) Participial clauses introduced by a conjunction

Subordinate clauses with the appropriate conjunction are used in German:

Während ich auf dich wartete, habe ich einen schweren Unfall gesehen	*While waiting for you, I saw a bad accident*

11.6.4 Clauses with '-ing' forms used to qualify nouns

These correspond in German to a **relative clause** or, especially in formal written German, to an extended participial phrase (see **11.5.1f**):

Er sah ein **in entgegengesetzter Richtung kommendes** Auto Er sah ein Auto, **das in entgegengesetzter Richtung kam**	*He saw a car coming in the opposite direction*
Einige Minuten später eilte der Arzt, **der einen kleinen Koffer trug**, zum Krankenhaus hin	*A few minutes later the doctor, carrying a small suitcase, was hurrying towards the hospital*

11.6.5 English '-ing' forms after some verbs

The usual German equivalent of English '-ing' forms after verbs is an infinitive with *zu* or a clause, see **11.6.1**. However, a few verbs are special cases.

(a) verbs of perception

i.e. 'see', 'hear', 'feel'. The English '-ing' form corresponds to a **bare infinitive** or a **clause with** *wie* (see **11.3.1b**):

Ich höre die Vögel laut **singen** Ich höre, **wie die Vögel** laut **singen**	*I can hear the birds singing loudly*

(b) verbs of motion

e.g. 'go', 'come', 'send', etc. If the '-ing' form expresses purpose, a **bare infinitive** is used in German (see **11.3.1e**):

Wir gehen heute **schwimmen**	*We're going swimming today*
Kommst du heute mit **schwimmen**?	*Are you coming swimming with us today?*
Sie schickt ihn samstags **einkaufen**	*She sends him shopping on Saturdays*

The past participle is used after *kommen*, e.g. *Sie kam herangelaufen* 'She came running up', see **11.5.3c.**

(c) '-ing' form expressing position

i.e. *standing, sitting*, etc. after *find, have, remain, stay*

(i) German uses a **bare infinitive** after *bleiben, finden, haben* and *lassen* (see **11.3.1**):

Sie **blieb** neben dem Ofen **sitzen**	*She remained sitting by the stove*

Ich **fand** ihn am Fenster **stehen**	*I found him standing by the window*
Hast du ein Sakko in der Garderobe **hängen**?	*Have you got a jacket hanging in the wardrobe?*
Sie **lässt** ihre Sachen **herumliegen**	*She leaves her things lying about*

(ii) *finden* can also be used with the present participle of many verbs, e.g.:

Sie fand ihn **schlafend.**   Sie fanden ihn Pilze **suchend** im Wald.

This construction is also possible with verbs of place, as an alternative to the infinitive (see **11.3.1f**):

Sie fand das Buch auf dem Boden **liegend/liegen.**

(d) 'keep' + '-ing' form

A frequent equivalent is *lassen* with a *bare infinitive* **,** see **11.3.1c**:

Sie **ließ** uns **warten**   *She kept us waiting*

(e) 'keep'/ 'go on' + '-ing' form

The simplest idiomatic equivalent is the adverb *weiter* with the verb (see **7.4.4**):

Sie sang **weiter**   *She kept/went on singing*

(f) 'need', 'want' + '-ing' form

These most often correspond to *müssen*, see **15.5.1b**:

Das **muss** noch erklärt werden	*That still needs/wants explaining*
Man **muss** sich um sie kümmern	*She needs/wants looking after*

(g) 'can't help' + '-ing' form

einfach müssen is the commonest German equivalent, see **15.3.6**:

Sie musste einfach lachen   *She couldn't help laughing*

12 The tenses

The grammatical category of TENSE involves the indication of time through special forms of the verb (see **10.1.1b**). This chapter deals with the uses of the **tenses of the INDICATIVE MOOD**:

12.1 The **present tense**
12.2 The **past** and the **perfect tenses**
12.3 The **future tenses**
12.4 The **pluperfect tense**
12.5 The **English progressive tenses**

German has six tenses, as illustrated for the verb *kaufen* 'buy' in **Table 12.1**.

TABLE 12.1   German and English tenses

Present	ich kaufe	*I buy*
Past	ich kaufte	*I bought*
Perfect	ich habe gekauft	*I have bought*
Pluperfect	ich hatte gekauft	*I had bought*
Future	ich werde kaufen	*I shall/will buy*
Future Perfect	Ich werde gekauft haben	*I shall/will have bought*

The CONJUGATION of the tenses is explained in **Chapter 10** and shown in the following tables:

Table 10.5: the **simple tenses** of **regular verbs**
Table 10.6: the **simple tenses** of the irregular verbs *haben*, *sein* and *werden*
Table 10.7: the **simple tenses** of the **modal auxiliary** verbs and *wissen*
Table 10.8: the **compound tenses**

The forms and uses of the tenses in German and English are quite similar (except that German has no PROGRESSIVE tenses, see section **12.5**), and this

chapter concentrates on the uses of German tenses which differ from those of the corresponding English tenses.

Table 12.1 illustrates the tenses of the ᴀᴄᴛɪᴠᴇ voice of *kaufen* in the ɪɴᴅɪᴄᴀᴛɪᴠᴇ mood. The same tenses are also found in the ᴘᴀssɪᴠᴇ voice, with the same meanings, as shown in **Chapter 13**. The tenses of the sᴜʙᴊᴜɴᴄᴛɪᴠᴇ mood are dealt with in **Chapter 14.**

12.1 The present tense

12.1.1 The main use of the present tense

The present tense is most often used to relate **present**, **habitual** or '**timeless**' actions or events. This corresponds to the main use of the present tense (simple or progressive) in English:

Sie **singt** gut	*She sings/is singing well*
Ich **lese** die Zeitung von gestern	*I'm reading yesterday's newspaper*
Dankend **bestätigen** wir den Empfang Ihres Schreibens vom 30. Juni	*We gratefully acknowledge receipt of your letter of 30th June*
Ursula **spricht** ein wenig Spanisch	*Ursula speaks a little Spanish*
In Irland **regnet** es viel	*It rains a lot in Ireland*

12.1.2 The present tense in 'up-to-now' contexts

The German present tense can indicate an action or state which **began in the past and is still going on at the moment of speaking**. Sentences like this typically contain an adverb (*schon* or *bisher*), an adverbial phrase with *seit*, or a clause with *seit(dem)* or *solange*. These all express the idea of '**up to now**'.

(a) German most often uses the present tense in 'up-to-now' contexts

This is different to English, which uses the **perfect** tense (typically the **perfect progressive**) in such contexts:

Sie **wartet** schon lange hier vor dem Bahnhof	*She's been waiting here in front of the station for a long time*
Er **wohnt** seit zehn Jahren in Hamburg	*He's been living in Hamburg for ten years*
Er **wohnt** in Hamburg, solange ich ihn kenne	*He's been living in Hamburg as long as I've known him*
Seit wann **kennst** du Frau Wiegand?	*How long have you known Mrs Wiegand?*

Seitdem die Spanier die deutschen Finanzämter darüber **informieren**, wurden viele Villen rasch verkauft (*HMP*)	*Since the Spanish have informed the German tax authorities about this, a lot of villas have been sold off quickly*

English learners need to be alert to the fact that, since the perfect tense is often used in German in contexts where English uses the simple past tense (see **12.2.2**), a sentence like *Sie hat lange hier vor dem Bahnhof gewartet* means 'She waited here in front of the station for a long time' – i.e. **not** 'She has been waiting here in front of the station for a long time', cf. the first example above.

(b) In a few 'up-to-now' contexts German uses the perfect tense

These are exceptions to the general rule given in **(a)** above. There are two main types of such contexts:

(i) in negative statements:

Ich **habe** ihn seit Jahren nicht **gesehen**	*I haven't seen him for years*
Seitdem ich ihn kenne, **haben** wir uns nie **gestritten**	*Since I've known him, we have never quarrelled*

However, the present tense is used in negative statements if there has been a **continuous action** or **state** lasting up to the present time:

Seit Weihnachten **arbeitet** er nicht mehr	*He hasn't worked since Christmas*
Seitdem ich hier in diesem kleinen Dorf wohne, **bin** ich nie einsam	*Since I've been living here in this little village, I've never been lonely*

(ii) when referring to a **series of repeated actions** or **states**:

Er **ist** seit Weihnachten mehrmals krank **gewesen**	*He's been ill several times since Christmas*
Seit ihrer Erkrankung/Seitdem sie krank ist, **hat** sie viele Bücher **gelesen**	*Since she's been ill, she has read a lot of books*

However, the present tense is used to refer to a **habit** or **state** which has **continued up to the present** moment. English uses a progressive tense in contexts like this, as can be seen by comparing this example with the one above:

Seit ihrer Erkrankung/Seitdem sie krank ist, **liest** sie viele Bücher	*Since she's been ill, she's been reading a lot of books*

(c) The present tense of *kommen* is often used to refer to the immediate past

The idea is of an action continuing up to the present moment. English normally uses the perfect tense:

Ich **komme**, die Miete zu bezahlen *I've come to pay the rent*

12.1.3 The present tense referring to the future

German often uses the present tense to refer to the future. This is often possible in English, too:

Der Match **beginnt** um 17 Uhr   *The match starts at 5 o'clock*
Heute Nachmittag **fahren** wir nach Zürich *We're going to Zurich this afternoon*

However, this use of the present is much more restricted in English than German, which often uses the present in contexts where a future tense is needed in English. This applies whether English uses the future form with 'will/shall/'ll' or 'be going to':

In zwei Stunden **bin** ich wieder da I'll be back in two hours
Wir **finden** es nie   We're never going to find it

In practice, the present tense is much more frequent than the future in German to refer to future time as long as it is clear from the context that the future is meant. This is especially the case if there is an adverbial in the sentence pointing to the future:

Ich **schreibe** den Brief heute Abend   *I'll write the letter tonight*
Morgen um diese Zeit **bin** ich in Wien *This time tomorrow I'll be in Vienna*

The present tense can always be used in German to refer to future time even when no adverbial is present, as long as the context points unambiguously to the future:

Astrid **holt** uns von der Bahn ab   *Astrid is going to meet us from the station*
Ich erwarte, dass sie **kommt**   *I expect she'll come*
Weitere Einzelheiten **erteilt** Ihnen unser Fachpersonal *Our specialist staff will give you further information*
Vielleicht **sage** ich es ihm   *Perhaps I'll tell him*

In practice, the only contexts where a future tense needs to be used in German are those where the present tense could be interpreted as referring to the present, i.e. if the rest of the context does not make the reference to the future clear.

Compare the following pairs of sentences, where we must use the future tense to make it clear that the future is meant, because the present tense could only be understood to refer to the present:

Er **wird** wieder in der Bank **arbeiten**   *He's going to work at the bank again*

Er **arbeitet** wieder in der Bank   *He's working at the bank again*

Ich **werde** auf euch **warten**   *I'll be waiting for you*

Ich **warte** auf euch   *I'm waiting for you*

Sie weiß, was **geschehen wird**   *She knows what will happen*

Sie weiß, was **geschieht**   *She knows what is happening*

If the **future tense** is used where it would be possible to use the present tense, it often emphasizes the idea of a **prediction**, an **intention** or a **supposition** (as is typically the case with the German future tense, see **12.3.2**). In English we often use *be going to* (rather than *will/shall*) in contexts like this, as this emphasizes intentions and predictions more strongly:

Es **wird** morgen wieder **regnen**   *It is going to rain again tomorrow*

Ich **werde** den Brief heute Abend **schreiben**   *I am going to write the letter tonight*

Wir aber fliegen dorthin, wo die Sonne scheint, und keine Wolken **werden** uns jetzt noch **stoppen** (*Grzimek*)   *But we're flying to where the sun shines, and no clouds are going to stop us now*

12.1.4 The present tense referring to the past

This so-called '**historic present**' is often used in writing in German, possibly more so than in English. It makes the past seem more immediate and it is a common stylistic device in narrative fiction and historical writing:

Die Zuschauer **machen** Platz, eine Gasse **entsteht**, die beiden Angeklagten **werden** zum Podium geführt, vorneweg die alte Hanna Krell, dahinter der Müller. Beide **gehen** sie vorgebeugt, sie **wirken** geistesabwesend, es **wird** nicht klar, ob sie **wissen**, wo sie **sind** und was **geschieht**. (*Kehlmann*)

Similarly in newspaper headlines:

40-Tonner **zermalmt** Trabi – 2 starben (*BILD*)   Forty-ton lorry squashes Trabi – two dead

It is also a typical feature of narration in colloquial speech, as in English:

Gestern Abend **geh** ich ins Café und **seh** den Horst Brunner dort an der Theke sitzen   Last night I go down the pub and see Horst Brunner sitting there at the bar

12.2 The past and perfect tenses

What in this book is referred to as the PAST TENSE is sometimes called the IMPERFECT TENSE. However, unlike the imperfect tense of some languages, like French, Spanish or Latin, the **German past tense does not convey the idea of an incomplete or continuous action**. It simply indicates that the action or event took place at some time in the past, just like the English past tense. For this reason, the less misleading term PAST TENSE is to be preferred. In German it is now usually referred to as the *Präteritum*, and the term PRETERITE is occasionally found in English.

12.2.1 The past and perfect tenses in English and German

In **English** there is typically a **clear difference between the past and the perfect tenses**, and the

sentences 'I broke my leg' and 'I have broken my leg' are quite distinct in meaning.

The **English past tense** simply tells us that **something happened in the past,** so that 'I broke my leg' tells us that it happened at some time in the past – and it's probably mended now.

The **English perfect tense,** on the other hand, typically indicates that what has happened in the past still has **some relevance at the present.** When we say 'I have broken my leg', for instance, it usually means that it is still broken (possibly in plaster) at the moment of speaking.

The **German** sentences *Ich brach mir das Bein* and *Ich habe mir das Bein gebrochen* look deceptively similar to English. However, the difference in meaning is less clear-cut than in English, and in many contexts either can be used without any real difference in meaning. Which one is used is often rather a **matter of style** or **register.**

The main differences between the two German tenses can be summarized as follows:

- The PERFECT tense is used principally:
    - to refer to past actions or events which have some relevance to the present

○ in spoken German, to refer to past actions and events
   • The PAST tense is used principally:

        ○ in written German, to refer to past actions and events

More details are given in the remainder of this section.

12.2.2 Narrating past actions or events

Narrations of past actions and events are typically predominantly in the PAST tense in **written German** and in the PERFECT tense in **spoken German.**

In English, the past tense is usual in speech or writing to relate an action or event lying entirely in the past. In German, though, while the past tense is usual in such contexts in the written language, the perfect tends to predominate in everyday speech, especially in the South.

The characteristic use of the past tense in a written narrative can be seen in this passage from Bernhard Schlink's novel *Der Vorleser*:

> Den Sommer nach dem Prozess **verbrachte** ich im Lesesaal der Universitätsbibliothek. Ich **kam,** wenn der Lesesaal **öffnete,** und **ging,** wenn er **schloss.** An den Wochenenden **lernte** ich zu Hause. Ich **lernte** so ausschließlich, so besessen, dass die Gefühle und Gedanken, die der Prozess betäubt hatte, betäubt **blieben.** Ich **vermied** Kontakte. Ich **zog** zu Hause aus und **mietete** ein Zimmer. Die wenigen Bekannten, die mich im Lesesaal oder bei gelegentlichen Kinobesuchen **ansprachen**, stieß ich zurück.

In Franz Xaver Kroetz's *Chiemgauer Gschichten*, by contrast, where ordinary people (from Bavaria) are telling their stories to the author, the narrative is in the perfect tense:

> Ja, und dann **hats** wieder ein bisschen **gedauert**, bis sie wieder eine Arbeit **gekriegt hat**, also Lohn von ihr **ist** praktisch nichts **eingegangen**. **Hab** ich alles selbst verdienen **müssen**. Da wo wir dann **geheiratet haben**, da **hab** ich zwei Monate so noch **gearbeitet** auf Montage, und dann **bin** ich gekündigt **worden**.

Nevertheless, there are important exceptions to this general tendency for the past tense to be used in written narrative and the perfect tense in spoken narrative.

(a) The past tense in spoken German

In South Germany, Austria and Switzerland the past tense is rarely used in everyday speech. However, this is less true in North Germany (i.e. north of the river Main), where the past tense is quite frequent in speech, especially in the following contexts:

(i) with commonly used verbs, i.e.:

- sein, haben, bleiben, gehen, kommen, stehen and es gibt
- the modal auxiliaries
- verbs of saying, thinking and feeling

In this way, the following would be equally frequent in North German speech:

Vorige Woche **war i**ch in Bremen	Vorige Woche **bin** ich in Bremen **gewesen**
Sie **konnte** gestern nicht kommen	Sie **hat** gestern nicht kommen **können**
Was **sagten** Sie?	Was **haben** Sie **gesagt**?

The past tense of other verbs can be heard in spoken North German, but, as a general rule, less often than the perfect tense.

(ii) *with the passive , e.g. Das alte Haus wurde abgerissen*

(iii) in clauses introduced by *als* or *wie*, and in sentences with the adverb *damals* **:**

Ich kochte gerade, als sie **ankam**	I was just doing some cooking when she arrived
Ich habe gehört, wie sie die Treppe **herunterkam**	I heard her coming down the stairs
Damals **wohnte** ich in Kiel	At that time I was living in Kiel

(iv) to record a state, or a habitual or repeated action in the past:

Die Rechnung **lag** auf dem Tisch	The bill was lying on the table
Bei uns in der alten Heimat **dauerten** die Sommerferien länger als hier	In our old homeland the summer holidays used to last longer than they do here
Hast du gewusst, dass sein Vater **trank**	Did you know that his father used to drink

(b) Longer narratives often start with the perfect tense and then continue in the past

The perfect is used to set the scene, as it were. This usage is very frequent in newspaper reports:

> Ein Vater und dessen Sohn **haben** beim Magnetangeln eine 13 Kilogramm schwere Brandbombe aus dem Zweiten Weltkrieg **entdeckt**. Den Fund aus dem Stichkanal Linden **nahmen** die beiden erst ahnungslos mit nach Hause in Ricklingen, doch beim Reinigen am Montagabend **begann** das Objekt plötzlich zu rauchen. Die Frau des 55-Jährigen **reagierte** geistesgegenwärtig und **wählte** sofort den Notruf. Wegen der giftigen Gase und Verbrennungen **kamen** das Ehepaar und ein Bekannter ins Krankenhaus. (*HAZ*)

(c) The perfect is sometimes used as a narrative tense in written German

The perfect tense is sometimes deliberately used to give a more colloquial tone. However, particularly outside fiction, it is often treated simply as an alternative to the past and seems to be used for reasons which relate to style, emphasis and sentence rhythm, as in the following text from Grzimek's *Serengeti darf nicht sterben*:

> Ein tüchtiger Mann namens Rothe, der Verwalter bei den Siedentopfs **war**, **hat** 1913 die Reste einer uralten Siedlung und eines Friedhofs aus der Jungsteinzeit am Nordende des Kraters **entdeckt**. Schon diese Leute, die einige Jahrhunderte vor Christus **gelebt haben**, **weideten** als Hirten ihr Vieh wie heute die Massai. Rothe **hieß** eigentlich anders, er **war** 1905 bei der ersten finnischen Revolution kurze Zeit Minister **gewesen**, … In Ägypten **stellte** ihm die russische Geheimpolizei nach, und so **kam** er als Tierpfleger mit Maultieren nach Deutsch-Ostafrika.

In practice, the past tense could be substituted for any of the perfect tenses in this passage, or vice versa, without any real difference in meaning.

12.2.3 Past actions or events with continuing relevance in the present

(a) The perfect tense typically indicates a past action with present relevance

The **perfect tense** is usual in both spoken and written German to indicate a **past action or event whose effect is relevant or apparent at the moment of**

speaking. Linking the past with the present is also the typical function of the English perfect tense, and in practice the perfect tense is also characteristically used in German in such contexts, i.e.:

(i) where the result of a past action or event is still evident at the moment of speaking:

Sie **hat** sich das Bein **gebrochen** (her leg is still in plaster)	*She's broken her leg*
Es **hat** in der Nacht **geschneit** (there's snow on the ground)	*It snowed in the night*
Meine Tante **ist** gestern **angekommen** (and she's still here)	*My aunt arrived yesterday*

As the last two examples above show, the perfect tense is used in German to express the present relevance of a past action even if there is a past time adverbial in the sentence. This differs from English, where the past tense, not the perfect, is normally used in sentences which contain adverbials expressing past time.

The use of the perfect tense to express 'present relevance' means that it is particularly frequent with the adverbs *schon* 'already', 'yet' or *noch nicht* 'not yet'. This corresponds to British English, but some American usage prefers the past tense in such contexts:

Ich **habe** sie **schon gesehen**	{	(BrE): *I've already seen her*
		(AmE): *I saw her already*
Hast du den Arzt **schon angerufen**?	{	(BrE): *Have you called the doctor yet?*
		(AmE): *Did you call the doctor yet?*
Ich **habe** das Buch **noch nicht gelesen**	{	(BrE): *I haven't read the book yet*
		(AmE): *I didn't read the book yet*

(ii) to refer to something which happened in the **immediate past**:

Jetzt **hat** Fuchs den Ball **eingeworfen**	Fuchs has just thrown the ball in
Damit **haben** wir diese kleine Führung **beendet**	With this we have come to the end of this short guided tour

(iii) to refer to states or repeated actions which have continued up to the moment of speaking:

Ich **habe** immer **gefunden**, dass es nützlich ist, viel zu	I've always found it useful to know a lot

wissen

Ich **habe** ihm wiederholt **gesagt**, dass er ihr schreiben sollte	I've told him repeatedly that he ought to write to her
Das Paket **ist** noch nicht **angekommen**	The parcel hasn't arrived yet

The **present** tense is used in German to refer to activities or states which began in the past and continue into the present, where English typically uses a perfect progressive, see **12.1.2**.

(b) The past tense used to indicate a past action or event with present relevance

The past tense is occasionally used to indicate a past action or event which has relevance for the present, i.e. in the kind of contexts given under **(a)** above where the perfect is typically used. This use of the past tense is mainly restricted to the following contexts, almost exclusively in written or formal spoken German:

(i) in **newspaper headlines** and **short announcements**. In these contexts the past tense, with its single word, can sound neater and snappier:

Lastwagenfahrer **gaben** Blockade am Brenner nach einer Woche auf (FR)	Lorry drivers have given up their blockade on the Brenner pass after a week
Sie **sahen** soeben einen Bericht von unserem Korrespondenten in Washington	You have just been watching a report from our Washington correspondent

(ii) with **common verbs**, especially the auxiliary verbs, and in the **passive**:

In der letzten Zeit **war** sie sehr krank	She has been very ill recently
Er **musste** heute kommen	He has had to come today
Noch nie **wurde** ein Auto so oft gebaut (VW advert)	No car has ever been produced in such numbers

(iii) in relative clauses:

Wir veröffentlichen in dieser Ausgabe einige der Briefe, die uns **erreichten** (*NüN*)	*In this edition we are publishing a few of the letters which have reached us*

In all the above examples the perfect tense would be equally possible.

12.2.4 Other uses of the past tense

The perfect tense cannot be used in any of these contexts.

(a) to relate a continuing state or activity in the past

i.e. a continuing state or activity which began in the past and was still in progress at a more recent point in the past. This is the equivalent in past time of the use of the present with *seit* phrases, etc. (see **12.1.2**). In English the pluperfect tense (especially the pluperfect progressive) is used in contexts like this:

Ich **wartete** schon zwei Stunden/seit zwei Stunden auf sie	I had been waiting for her for two hours
Das Schloss **gehörte** seit Jahrhunderten den Grafen von Solms	The castle had belonged to the Counts of Solms for centuries

As with the use of the perfect tense rather than the present, the pluperfect tense is used rather than the past tense in **negative statements** or when referring to a **series** of actions or states:

Ich **hatte** ihm seit Jahren **zugeredet**, sein Haus zu verkaufen	I had been urging him for years to sell his house

(b) with the sense of a future-in-the-past

The past tense is an infrequent alternative in such contexts to the *würde*-form of *Konjunktiv II* (see **14.2.4c**):

Nachdem er sicher war, dass der Vorhang nicht mehr **hochging** (more usual: *hochgehen würde*), verließ er das Theater	When he was sure that the curtain would not go up again, he left the theatre

(c) to refer to the present moment

This is a special usage to recall information which has already been given:

Wie **war** ihr Name doch gleich?	What was your name again?
Wer **erhielt** das Eisbein?	Who is getting the knuckle of pork?
Herr Ober, ich **bekam** noch ein Bier	Waiter, I did order another beer

12.2.5 Other uses of the perfect tense

The past tense cannot be used in any of these contexts.

(a) The perfect tense used rather than the future perfect

(i) The perfect tense is often used in the sense of a future perfect:

Bis morgen um diese Zeit **habe** ich alles **geregelt**	By this time tomorrow I shall have settled everything

Bald **habe** ich den Brief **geschrieben**   I'll have written the letter soon

As with the use of the present tense to refer to future time (see **12.1.3**), the perfect tense can only substitute for the future perfect if it is clear from the context (e.g. from a time adverbial) that the reference is to the future. This is different to English, where the future perfect tense is always used in such contexts. When the future perfect tense is used in sentences like this in German, e.g. *Bis morgen um diese Zeit werde ich alles geregelt haben*, there is often an additional sense of a prediction or a supposition, see **12.3.2**.

(ii) The perfect is usual in subordinate time clauses with future reference, typically introduced by the conjunction *wenn*. In these contexts English and German correspond in the tense used:

Wenn ich von ihm **gehört habe**, werde ich dir schreiben   When I've heard from him, I shall write to you

Occasionally a future perfect is used in sentences like this in written German:

Wenn Manuela morgen ihren Arbeitstag in der Gemeindebibliothek **beendet haben wird**, dann werden alle Beteiligten zusammensitzen (*SGT*)	When Manuela has finished her day's work in the council library tomorrow, everyone concerned will get together for a meeting

(b) The perfect tense used to indicate a characteristic state

The perfect tense can be used in German to indicate an action whose completion can be taken to define a particular person or thing. This usage is common in technical and legal language and has no equivalent in English.

Ein Unglück **ist** schnell **geschehen**	*Accidents happen quickly* (i.e. if you don't watch out)
Ein Akademiker **hat studiert**	*A graduate is a person who has completed a course of study*
Die Mannschaft, die zuerst 50 Punkte **erreicht hat**, ist Sieger	*The first team to reach 50 points is the winner*

12.3 The future and future perfect tenses

The conjugation of the **future** and **future perfect** tenses is explained in **10.3.1** and shown in **Table 10.8**.

The English future has two forms, one with the auxiliaries *will* or *shall* (usually reduced to *'ll* in speech, e.g. *I'll probably see her on Monday*), and one with the

phrase *be going to* (e.g. *I'm going to see her on Monday*). The difference in meaning between these is slight, although *be going to* is rather less frequent, more typical of informal registers, and tends to emphasize a decision taken, a supposition, a prediction or an intention more strongly.

12.3.1 The future and future perfect tenses refer to future time

The **future tense** (sometimes called *Futur I* in German) relates an action or event which will happen after the time of speaking:

Ich **werde** sie nicht mehr **sehen**   *I won't/shan't see her again*

Wirst du ihr helfen **können**?   *Will you/Are you going to be able to help her?*

The **future perfect** tense (sometimes called *Futur II* in German) is a 'relative' tense, indicating an action or event which will take place **before** another action or event in the future:

Seine Frau **wird** den Brief sicher bis morgen Abend   His wife will certainly have read the letter by
   gelesen haben   tomorrow evening

If the reference to future time is otherwise clear from the context, German often prefers the present tense to the future (see **12.1.3**), and the perfect tense to the future perfect (see **12.2.5a**). However, there are contexts where these tenses must be used to make the future reference clear:

Ich mag ihn nicht und **werde** ihn nie **mögen**   *I don't like him and I'll never like him*

Hat er Ihnen nicht gesagt, dass er Sie **besuchen wird**?   *Didn't he tell you that he's going to visit you?*

Am Montag **wird** sie den Gipfel **erreicht haben**   *On Monday she'll have reached the summit*

12.3.2 The future and future perfect tenses expressing a possibility

Like in English, the German future and future perfect tenses are often used to express an intention, a supposition or a possibility, rather than simply a time relationship.

Such meanings are typically found in contexts where the future time reference is clear from the context and the present or perfect tense could be used (see **12.1.3** and **12.2.5a**):

Morgen **wird** es bestimmt **schneien**   *It will definitely snow tomorrow*

Ich **werde** es heute Abend noch **erledigen**   *I am going to finish it tonight*

Morgen **wird** er die Arbeit **beendet haben**   *He'll have finished the work tomorrow*

In practice these tenses may not express a notion of futurity at all, and the future tense can simply express a possibility in the present and the future perfect a possibility that something happened in the past.

Sie **wird** bereits zu Hause **sein**	*She'll be home already*
Er ist nicht gekommen. Er **wird** wieder zu viel zu tun **haben**	*He didn't come. He'll have too much to do again*
Sie **wird** den Zug **verpasst haben**	*She'll have missed the train*
Sie **wird** sich gestern ein neues Handy **gekauft haben**	*She'll have bought a new mobile/cellphone yesterday*

When used like this to express a possibility, these tenses are often accompanied by the particle *wohl* (see **9.1.34a**), and, in practice, the present or future tenses with *wohl* can have the same force:

Sie wird **wohl** bereits zu Hause sein	Sie wird **wohl** den Zug verpasst haben
(cf.: Sie ist wohl bereits zu Hause)	(cf. Sie hat wohl den Zug verpasst)
Das **wird** ja wohl niemand gelesen haben (*NüN*)	*Nobody will have read that, will they?*

This sense of the future and future perfect is very similar to the meaning of *dürfte* (see **15.2.2**), so that *Sie wird bereits zu Hause sein* means much the same as *Sie dürfte bereits zu Hause sein*.

12.4 The pluperfect tense

For the forms of the pluperfect tense in German, see **10.3.1** and **Table 10.8**.

12.4.1 Uses of the pluperfect tense

(a) The pluperfect tense indicates a past within the past

The pluperfect is thus a **relative tense** and places an action or event further back in the past than the time of the context. It is characteristically used in clauses introduced by *nachdem* (see **17.3.4**), where the action or event in that clause precedes the action in the main clause:

Nachdem sie **gegangen war**, fiel ihr ein, was sie **vergessen hatte**	*After she had gone she remembered what she had forgotten*
Das bemerkte man erst, nachdem man Platz **genommen hatte** (*Morgner*)	*You only noticed that after you had sat down*

But it is used in many other types of context to indicate a more **remote past**:

Wir haben gewartet, bis der Zug **abgefahren war**	*We waited until the train had left*
Sie kamen zu spät, denn das Hochwasser **hatte** den Damm schon **überflutet**	*They came too late, as the high water had already flooded over the embankment*

(b) The perfect tense is occasionally used where one would expect a pluperfect

This may emphasize the immediacy of a state or an action. The effect is rather similar to that of the 'historic present', see **12.1.4**:

Dann seufzte sie auf eine Weise, die mir deutlich machte, wie alt sie **geworden ist** (*Böll*)	*Then she sighed in a way which made it clear to me how old she had become*

This usage is quite frequent in writing as well as in everyday speech.

(c) The past tense is sometimes used for an expected pluperfect

This usage is typically literary and is often motivated by stylistic reasons, with the one-word past tense being preferred in context:

… doch ergab der Befund jene hoffnungslose Krankheit, die man **vermutete** (*Dürrenmatt*)	*…but the investigation revealed the terminal disease which had been suspected*

(d) The pluperfect tense is sometimes used simply to refer to the past

In colloquial speech the pluperfect tense is sometimes used simply to refer to the past, where a past or perfect tense would be expected:

Eva **hatte** dich **gesucht**	*Eva's been looking for you*
Wer **war** das **gewesen**?	*Who was that?*

This 'pseudopluperfect', is quite common in everyday speech, but it is not considered standard.

12.4.2 Complex pluperfect tense forms

In colloquial speech in South Germany a **pluperfect** tense can be formed with the **perfect** tense of the auxiliaries *haben* or *sein*, so that, for example, *Ich habe ihn gesehen gehabt* is heard for standard German *Ich hatte ihn gesehen*.

Forms like this are now widespread in spoken German and they are no longer restricted to the South. Indeed, if an extra dimension of remoteness in time is

needed, the **pluperfect** tense of the auxiliary is sometimes used, e.g. *Sie hatte ihn gesehen gehabt, bevor er sie bemerkt hatte*. This is especially common in speech if the action has been reversed again, e.g.:

Sie hatte ihren Schlüssel vergessen gehabt	*She had forgotten her key* (but she's remembered it again now)
Tatsächlich **hatte** er vorübergehend **vergessen gehabt,** sich zu melden (*Ani*)	*In fact he had for the moment forgotten to report in*

These complex pluperfects are typical of informal colloquial registers and they are often thought of as non-standard. However, they are not uncommon in writing:

Er dachte: Du kannst jetzt nichts gesehen haben, du kannst wegdrücken … und **hast** bloß den Anschluss **verloren gehabt** und bist kein Jäger (*Gaiser*)	*He thought 'You can't have seen anything now, you can sneak off… You had just got left behind and you're not a rifleman'*
Mein Bruder hat mir immer Bücher mitgebracht und sie dann sonntags wieder abgegeben. Da **habe** ich sie meist noch gar nicht fertig **gelesen gehabt** (*MM*)	*My brother always brought books back for me and returned them on Sundays. But most of the time I hadn't even finished them.*

12.5 German equivalents for the English progressive tenses

There are no PROGRESSIVE TENSES in German, and the difference between the English **progressive present** tense 'He **is singing** well' (i.e. at the moment) and the **simple present** tense 'He **sings** well' (i.e. he is a good singer) cannot be expressed by using different forms of the verb. In most contexts the difference is simply ignored in German and 'Er singt gut' would be used for both these English sentences.

Nevertheless, there are contexts where we need to make it clear that we are dealing with a continuous or unfinished action, as can be seen in the difference between the English sentences *The old man drowned* **and** *The old man was drowning* **, and there are several ways this can be done in German,** i.e.:

(a) by using an adverb

(i) *eben* or *gerade* can be used to indicate an action in progress:

Ich schreibe **eben** einen Brief an Anja	*I'm writing a letter to Anja*
Er liest **gerade** die Zeitung von Sonntag	*He's reading Sunday's newspaper*

(ii) *schon* or *gleich* can be used with verbs of motion:

Ich fahre **schon**   *I'm leaving*
Sie kommt **gleich** *She's coming*

(iii) Other adverbials or **particles** can be used in other contexts:

Ich habe ihn **letzthin** zweimal in der Woche gesehen *I've been meeting him twice a week (recently)*
Regina wohnt **zur Zeit** in Fulda   *Regina is living in Fulda (now)*
Ich kümmere mich **eben mal** darum   *I'm seeing to it now*

(iv) The sense of **habitual** or **repeated action** which is typically expressed by a **simple** (i.e. non-progressive) tense in English can be indicated by an adverb in German:

Ich stehe **immer** um sechs auf *I (always) get up at six*
Sie spielt **meistens** gut   *She (usually) plays well*

(b) by using (*gerade/eben*) *dabei sein* followed by an infinitive with *zu*

Ich bin **(gerade) dabei**, das Zimmer ein bisschen *I'm just tidying the room up a bit*
    aufzuräumen
Gestern war er **gerade dabei**,,,Krieg und Frieden" zu lesen   *He was reading "War and Peace"*
                                                                                                      yesterday

(c) by using a construction with an infinitival noun

(i) In standard German *beim* is used with an infinitival noun (see **11.4.2b**):

Als seine Frau zurückkam, war er **beim Kochen** *When his wife returned, he was cooking*
Wir waren **beim Kartenspielen**, als er klingelte *We were playing cards when he rang the bell*

(ii) In informal registers *am* is used with an infinitival noun:

Der alte Mann war **am Ertrinken**   *The old man was drowning*
In Köln ist es immer **am Regnen**   *It's always raining in Cologne*
Diese Lobby ist ständig **am Wachsen** (*FAZ*) *This lobby is growing all the time*

This construction is in origin a regionalism characteristic of western areas (see **11.4.2a**), but it has recently come to be more widely used elsewhere. However, it is not universally accepted as standard, and it is still infrequent in writing.

Expanding the construction, for example with a direct object, e.g. *Er ist gerade meinen Laptop am Reparieren*, is still largely restricted to regional spoken language.

(d) by using a noun with a prepositional phrase

Wir sind **an der Arbeit**	*We're working*
Er liest **in der Zeitung**	*He's reading the newspaper*
Sie strickte **an einem Strumpf**	*She was knitting a stocking*

(e) by using a different verb

Some German verbs, especially those with prefixes, imply the completion of an action. The corresponding unprefixed verbs do not necessarily imply that the action has finished and can in certain contexts correspond more closely to the sense of an English progressive tense:

Sie **erkämpften** die Freiheit ihres Landes	*They fought for their country's freedom* (they were successful)
Sie **kämpften** für die Freiheit ihres Landes	*They were fighting for their country's freedom*
Sie **erstiegen** den Berg	*They climbed the mountain* (right to the top)
Sie **stiegen** auf den Berg	*They were climbing the mountain* (in the process of climbing, or only part of the way)
Wir **haben** die Würste **aufgegessen**	*We ate the sausages (up)*
Wir **haben** die Würste **gegessen**	*We were eating the sausages*

(f) The perfect progressive

The perfect progressive is typically used to indicate that an action beginning in the past is still going on at the moment of speaking, e.g. *I have been waiting here for an hour*. German uses the simple present tense in these contexts, see **12.1.2**.

13 The passive

The uses of the passive in German, and other constructions which are the equivalent of passives, are explained in the following sections of this chapter, i.e.:

13.1 The *werden* **-passive**
13.2 The *sein* **-passive**, and the differences between it and the *werden*-passive
13.3 The use of *von* and *durch* for English 'by' with the passive
13.4 Other German constructions with **passive meaning**

We typically express actions using the ACTIVE VOICE, both in English and in German. An active sentence tells us what is happening and who or what is doing it. But we can present a different perspective on an action by using the PASSIVE VOICE, which places the emphasis on what is going on, without necessarily saying who or what is doing it.

Most active sentences with a TRANSITIVE VERB (i.e. a verb which has an accusative object, see 16.3) can be turned into passive sentences. The ACCUSATIVE OBJECT **of the sentence in the active voice becomes the SUBJECT of the sentence in the passive voice**, as the example in **Table 13.1** shows.

TABLE 13.1   Active and passive voice

active voice	Die Schlange **frisst** den Frosch
passive voice	Der Frosch **wird** (von der Schlange) **gefressen**

The subject of the active sentence (the person or thing carrying out the action, called the AGENT) can appear in a phrase using *von* or *durch* (= English 'by'), but it is often left out. The possibility of talking about an action without saying who or what did it is a major reason why we use the passive rather than the active.

There are **two forms of the passive** in German:

1. The WERDEN-PASSIVE is formed by combining the auxiliary verb *werden* with a **past participle**. It expresses a **process** or **action**, e.g.: *die Stadt wurde zerstört*. In German it is called the *Vorgangspassiv*.

2. The SEIN-PASSIVE is formed by combining the auxiliary verb *sein* with a past participle. It expresses a **state**, e.g.: *die Stadt war zerstört*. In German it is called the *Zustandspassiv*.

Some textbooks of German for English learners suggest that the passive is used less often in German and it should be avoided if possible. This is misleading. The passive is used frequently in German, particularly in formal writing (especially in technical registers and journalism), but it is not unusual in speech.

However, it does tend to be used rather less than in English. One reason for this is that a passive is often used in English to make something other than the subject the TOPIC of the sentence by mentioning it first. In German, with its more flexible word order, this can be achieved by shifting the elements in the sentence round. This means that the following sentences are natural equivalents:

Diesen Roman hat **Thomas Mann** während eines Aufenthaltes in Italien **geschrieben** — *This novel was written by Thomas Mann during a stay in Italy*

In German if we wish to focus on the novel in the first instance, making it the topic of the sentence, we can simply place the accusative object before the verb and the subject after it. This is not possible in English, because the subject must always come before the verb. To get the same focus, mentioning the novel first, we often use a passive construction. More details on this are given in **19.2.3b**.

13.1 The *werden*-passive

13.1.1 The *werden*-passive: tenses and moods

The *werden*- **passive** has the same range of tenses and moods as the active voice, and **Table 13.1** shows the relationship between the **tenses** of the **active and passive voice** in the **indicative mood**. The conjugation of these tenses is given in **Table 10.9**. For passives in the subjunctive mood, see section **10.5**.

(a) The use of the passive tenses is in general the same as in the active

(see **Chapter 12**). There is some slight variation in use in a few instances:

(i) The future tense is little used in the passive, and the present tense is preferred unless there is a risk of being misunderstood (see **12.3**). Compare

(a) Das Haus wird nächste Woche abgerissen	*The house will be pulled down next week*
(b) Das Haus wird abgerissen	*The house is being pulled down*
(c) Das Haus wird abgerissen werden	*The house will be pulled down*

In sentence (a) the phrase *nächste Woche* makes the reference to the future clear, and there are no problems in using the present tense. In practice, it is quite rare for the passive of the future tesne, i.e. *Das Haus wird nächste Woche abgerissen werden*, to be used in contexts like this. However, if there is no time phrase, as in sentence (b), the present tense would be understood to refer to the present, and in such a context we have to use the future tense, as in sentence (c), if we want to make the time reference clear.

(ii) The **past tense** of the passive is quite common in both written and spoken German, even in contexts where the perfect tense might be expected in the active voice (see **12.2.3b**).

(b) The imperative of the *werden-* **passive is rarely used**

In practice, only the *sein-* **passive** is used for **commands** in the passive, e.g. *Sei gegrüßt! Sei beruhigt!*

(see **14.1.1**).

13.1.2 The *werden*-passive can be formed from most transitive verbs

i.e. those verbs which are used with a **direct object** in the **accusative case**, see **16.3**.

(a) The direct object becomes the subject of the corresponding passive construction

The accusative object of the active verb becomes the subject of the corresponding passive construction:

Mein Vater liest **diesen Roman** → **Dieser Roman** wird von meinem Vater gelesen
My father is reading this novel   *This novel is being read by my father*

Further examples are given in **Table 13.2**.

TABLE 13.2   Active and passive sentences

Tense	Active	Passive
Present	Der Arzt **heilt** den Patienten *The doctor heals the patient*	Der Patient **wird** (vom Arzt) **geheilt** *The patient is healed (by the doctor)*
Past	Die Bauleute **rissen** das Haus **ab** *The builders pulled down the house*	Das Haus **wurde** (von den Bauleuten) **abgerissen** *The house was pulled down (by the builders)*
Perfect	Die Firma **hat** den Angestellten **entlassen** *The company has sacked the employee*	Der Angestellte i**st** (von der Firma) **entlassen worden** *The employee has been sacked (by the company)*
Future	Der Computer **wird** das Buch **verdrängen** *The computer will replace the book*	Das Buch **wird** (vom Computer) **verdrängt werden** *The book will be replaced (by the computer)*

(b) A few transitive verbs cannot be used in the *werden* -passive

This group consists of a number of verbs of knowing, containing, possessing and receiving, in particular *bedeuten*, *bekommen*, *besitzen*, *enthalten*, *erhalten*, *haben*, *kennen*, *kriegen*, *umfassen* and *wissen*.

These verbs cannot be used in the passive in German, although some of their usual English equivalents can. In German other constructions are used for verbs like this, in particular active forms of another verb or a construction with *man*:

Dieses Schloss **gehört** dem Grafen von Libowitz (i.e. *not *wird …besessen*)	*This palace is owned by Count von Libowitz*
Ihr Brief **traf** gestern **ein** (i.e. *not *wurde … erhalten*)	*Your letter was received yesterday*
Man **wusste** nicht, wie viele Kinder kommen würden (i.e. *not **es *wurde … gewusst*)	*It was not known how many children would come*

enthalten can be used with *sein*, e.g. *Wieviel Essig ist in diesem Gefäß enthalten?* but this is not really a passive. A passive of *erhalten* can be formed with *bleiben*, see **13.2.2b**.

(c) No passive can be formed with the verbs of perception followed by a bare infinitive

(see **11.3.1b**). These verbs can be used in the passive with an '-ing' form in English, but equivalent sentences in German have other constructions, usually with the active voice:

Man **hörte** ihn singen	*He was heard singing*

Ein Vorbeigehender sah ihn in das Haus einbrechen *He was seen breaking into the house by a passer-by*

13.1.3 Dative, genitive and prepositional objects and the passive

In German only **the accusative (direct) object of a transitive verb** can become **the subject of a passive construction**.

This is different to English and means that **a dative object**, **a genitive object** or **a prepositional object** can **never** become the subject of a passive construction in German.

(a) Verbs with dative objects

If a verb which takes a dative object is used in the passive, **the dative object remains in the dative case**. This applies to verbs which govern the dative case, and have no accusative object (see **16.4**).

Astrid dankte **ihm** für seine Hilfe → **Ihm** wurde für seine Hilfe gedankt
Astrid thanked him for his help   *He was thanked for his help*

As the dative object remains in the dative, the verbs in these passive constructions are **subject-less** (or **impersonal**) and the verb always has **the endings of the third person singular**. Further examples:

Die Polizei kann Ihnen helfen   → **Ihnen** kann geholfen werden
   The police can help you   *You can be helped*

Er empfahl uns, nicht über Kiel zu fahren → **Uns** wurde empfohlen, nicht über Kiel zu fahren
   He recommended them not to go via Kiel   *We were recommended not to go via Kiel*

The dative object does not need to be in first position, before the verb, but if it is placed later in the sentence (with a slight change in emphasis) the pronoun *es* (see **3.6.2a**) has to be used in first position. Compare the following (equally acceptable) alternatives to the examples above:

Es kann Ihnen geholfen werden **Es** wurde uns empfohlen, nicht über Kiel zu fahren

(b) Verbs with an accusative and a dative object

With verbs which have both an accusative object and a dative object (so-called *einem etwas* verbs, see **16.4.1**), the **dative object remains in the dative in the passive**. This is because, in German, **only an accusative object can become the subject of a passive verb**.

This differs from English, where, with many verbs which have two objects, either can become the subject of the passive. An English sentence like *He gave the old man the money* can be converted into the passive in two ways, with the direct object *the money* or the indirect object *the old man* as the subject. Compare the following sentences and their German equivalents:

The money (direct object) *was given to the old man*	**Das Geld** wurde dem alten Mann gegeben
The old man (indirect object) *was given the money*	**Dem alten Mann** wurde das Geld gegeben

The direct object *das Geld* of the German sentence *Er gab dem alten Mann das Geld* can be the subject of the passive sentence in German, as in English, but **not** the indirect (dative) object *dem alten Mann*, which must remain in the dative case in German.

The original direct object *das Geld* becomes the subject of both the German passive sentences, and this makes for an even more striking difference between the languages if the indirect object is in the plural, since the verb must still agree with the singular subject *das Geld*. Compare:

The money (direct object) *was given to the old men*	**Das Geld** wurde den alten Männern gegeben
The old men (indirect object) *were given the money*	**Den alten Männern wurde** das Geld gegeben

A dative object can become the subject of a passive construction with *bekommen* or *kriegen*, see **13.4.2**.

(c) German equivalents for English sentences with a passive infinitive

Sentences like 'He could not hope to be helped' are quite usual in English, but in German the passive infinitive of a verb which governs the dative cannot be used in an infinitive clause with *zu*. We cannot say ***** *Er konnte nicht hoffen geholfen zu werden* **,** since *helfen* governs a dative and its object cannot be used as the subject of a passive construction. A *dass*-clause has to be used in the equivalent sentences in German:

Er konnte nicht hoffen, dass ihm geholfen wurde	*He could not hope to be helped*
Er besteht darauf, dass ihm geantwortet wird	*He insists on being answered*

(d) Verbs with genitive or prepositional objects

Like dative objects, **genitive objects** and **prepositional objects** (see **16.5** and **16.7**) **cannot become the subject of corresponding passive constructions**. They remain in the same form in an impersonal construction, with the verb in the third person singular form:

Sie gedachten **der Toten** → **Der Toten** wurde gedacht
  They remembered the dead   *The dead were remembered*

Meine Mutter sorgt **für die Kinder** → **Für die Kinder** wird gesorgt
  My mother is taking care of the children   *The children are being taken care of*

With these verbs, too, the genitive or the prepositional phrase can be placed later in the sentence rather than at the beginning, but, similarly, *es* then has to be inserted before the verb:

Es wurde der Toten gedacht **Es** wird für die Kinder gesorgt

(e) Verbs which have two accusative objects

In practice *lehren* **(see 16.3.3a) is the only such verb which is used in the passive. The persons being taught are put in the dative case and the subject in the accusative:**

Wir lehren **die Kinder** gutes Deutsch → **Den Kindern** wird gutes Deutsch gelehrt
We are teaching the childen good German   *The children are being taught good German*

Alternatively, the persons can be put in the nominative, e.g. *Die Kinder werden gutes Deutsch gelehrt*.

13.1.4 The 'subjectless' or impersonal *werden*-passive

(a) The *werden-* **passive can be used without a subject to denote an activity in general**

A sentence like *Es wird getanzt* simply means 'There is dancing going on' without any indication of who is doing it. No comparable construction exists in English. The verb has the third person singular endings:

Sie hörten, wie im Nebenzimmer **geredet wurde**   *They heard people talking in the next room*

Hier darf nicht **geraucht werden**   *Smoking is not allowed here*

Vor Hunden **wird gewarnt**   *Beware of dogs*

Heute **ist** mit den Bauarbeiten **begonnen worden** (*ARD*) *They started construction today*

(b) A subjectless passive can be formed from any verb which expresses a continuous activity

This construction is not only used with transitive verbs, but also with other verbs which cannot otherwise be used in the passive, i.e. **intransitive** verbs and, in colloquial German, **reflexive** verbs:

Im Flugzeug darf ab Herbst **gesurft** und **gesimst werden**	*From the autumn it will be permitted to use the internet and send text messages in aeroplanes*
An dem Abend **wurde** viel **gesungen**	*There was a lot of singing that evening*
Jetzt **wird sich gewaschen**	*It's time to get washed*

(c) The use of *es* in impersonal passive constructions

In these impersonal passive constructions, the pronoun *es* is inserted in a main clause if there is no other word or phrase before the verb (see **3.6.2a** for further details):

Es wurde auf den Straßen getanzt	*There was dancing in the streets*
Es wird besonders rücksichtslos geparkt (*ARD*)	*People are parking in a particularly inconsiderate way*

(d) The subjectless passive can be used to give commands

(see **14.1.3c** for further details):

Jetzt wird gearbeitet!	*Let's get down to work now*
Jetzt wird nicht gelacht!	*No laughing now!*

13.2 The *sein*-passive

13.2.1 Forms of the *sein*-passive

The conjugation of verbs in the indicative mood of the *sein*-passive *i*s given in **Table 10.10**. Subjunctive forms are explained in section **10.5**. In practice, only a limited range of tenses and moods of the *sein*-passive is in use (**Table 13.3**). The **past tense** tends to be used rather than the **perfect tense**, although the perfect sometimes occurs in spoken German and is occasionally found in writing:

TABLE 13.3   Forms of the *sein*-passive

Present tense	Ich **bin** beruhigt
Imperative	**Sei** beruhigt!

Past tense	Ich **war** beruhigt
Konjunktiv I	Ich **sei** beruhigt
Konjunktiv II	Ich **wäre** beruhigt

Vierzig Lehrer **sind** gestern als krank **gemeldet gewesen** *Forty teachers were reported sick yesterday* (*Zeit*)

The future tense, e.g. *Die Bilder werden morgen entwickelt sein* is very seldom used.

The existence of two distinct passive forms in German, and the fact that the one which is used less often looks deceptively like the English passive with *be*, means that English learners need to pay particular attention to the distinction between the two.

As with the *werden*-passive, see **13.1.3**, only the accusative object of a transitive verb can become the subject of a *sein*-passive. With verbs governing a dative, genitive or prepositional object, a 'subjectless' construction must also be used in the *sein*-passive:

Auch **dem Klima** ist mit einem starren Limit nicht gedient (*FAZ*) — *Neither is the climate well served by an inflexible limit*

Damit ist **den Kranken** nicht geholfen — *The patients have not been helped by that*

Für die Verletzten ist gesorgt — *The wounded have been taken care of*

In practice, few intransitive verbs are used in the *sein*-passive, notably *dienen, helfen, nützen, schaden, sorgen für*.

13.2.2 The *sein*-passive and the *werden*-passive

(a) The *sein* -passive refers to a state, whilst the *werden* -passive refers to an action

This is reflected in its German name: *Zustandspassiv*. It is used to describe a **state** which the subject of the verb is in as the result of a previous action. The *werden*-passive, on the other hand, relates an **action** or **process**, hence its German name: *Vorgangspassiv*.

The following sentence illustrates the difference between the two passives:

Als ich um fünf kam, **war** die Tür **geschlossen**, aber ich *When I came at five the door was shut, but I* weiß nicht, wann sie **geschlossen wurde** *don't know when it was shut*

In the first clause, someone had already shut the door by the time I arrived, i.e. it was in a **state** of being shut, and the *sein*-passive is used. In the second clause I am referring to the specific time when the **action** of shutting the door occurred, and the *werden*-passive is used.

The *werden*-passive is more frequent than the *sein*-passive and it can be used with more verbs. Nevertheless, the *sein*-passive can be quite common in some registers, for instance in newspaper reports, which often have reason to refer to states or to the results of actions, and also in narrative fiction:

Deutschland **ist** fest in die NATO **eingebunden** (*Welt*)

Dass die Wahlergebnisse in der DDR gefälscht waren, bestreitet auch Modrow nicht (*Spiegel* **)**

The following examples show the distinct meanings of the two passives:

Der Tisch **wird gedeckt**

The table is being laid
(someone is performing the action of laying the table)

Der Tisch **ist gedeckt**

The table is laid
(someone has already laid it)

Die Stadt **wurde** 2016 **zerstört**

The town was destroyed in 2016
(the action took place in 2016)

Die Stadt **war zerstört**

The town was destroyed
(someone had already destroyed it)

Das Rathaus **wurde** allmählich von Demonstranten **umringt**

The town hall was (being) gradually surrounded by demonstrators
(the demonstrators were in the process of surrounding it)

Das Rathaus **war** von Demonstranten **umringt**

The town hall was surrounded by demonstrators
(the demonstrators were already all round the town hall)

(b) Indicators pointing to the use of the *werden* -passive or the *sein* -passive

In practice, there are a number of indicators which can prove helpful for English-speaking learners in determining whether to use the *sein*-passive or the *werden*-passive:

(i) The *werden*-passive often corresponds to an English progressive tense, while this is never the case with the *sein*-passive. This is especially the case in the present tense.

Die Straße wird repariert	*The road is being repaired*
Der Tisch wird gedeckt	*The table is being laid*
Die Stadt wurde in diesem Augenblick zerstört	*The city was being destroyed at that precise moment*

(ii) English can form a passive with *get* as an auxiliary verb, e.g. *This road got repaired last week*. This is less common than the passive with *be* (which can always replace it), it is restricted to use with verbs which express an action carried out by an agent (usually a person or persons) and it is typically used in less formal registers. However, if a passive with *get* can be used in a particular context in English, then *werden* (which often translates *get* in other contexts) is used in German, e.g.:

Dieses Haus **wird** nächste Woche abgerissen	*This house is getting/will be pulled down next week*
Diese Straße **wurde** letzte Woche repariert	*This road got/was repaired last week*

(iii) As the *sein*-passive relates to the state resulting from a previous action, its meaning is close to that of the perfect tense, since the perfect often expresses a result (see **12.2.3**). This means, for example, that the following pairs of sentences are quite close in meaning:

Das Haus **ist gebaut**	Das Haus **ist gebaut worden**
Die Stadt **war zerstört**	Die Stadt **war zerstört worden**

As a consequence, the natural English equivalent of a German *sein*-passive is often a perfect or pluperfect tense rather than a present or a past tense:

Der Wagen **ist repariert**	*The car has been repaired*
Rund 2500 Polizeibeamte riegelten die Stadt ab, über die ein umfassendes Demonstrationsverbot **verhängt war** (*Welt*)	*About 2500 police officers cordoned off the city, which had been made subject to a comprehensive ban on demonstrations*

Nevertheless, there **is** a difference between the *sein*-passive, which points to a continuing state, and the perfect of the *werden*-passive, which points to an action at a particular time:

Die Tür **ist** seit Langem **geöffnet**	*The door has been open a long time*

Die Tür **ist** vor langer Zeit **geöffnet worden**	*The door was opened a long time ago*
Die Stadt **war** jahrelang **zerstört**	*The city was in ruins for years*
Die Stadt **war** vor Jahren **zerstört worden**	*The city had been destroyed years ago*

(iv) In the *sein*-passive, the past participle is essentially descriptive and is being used with the force of an adjective describing the state of the subject of the verb. For example, *geöffnet* in the sentence *Die Tür ist geöffnet* has much the same function as *offen* in *Die Tür ist offen*. Compare also:

| Der Brief **ist geschrieben** | Der Brief ist fertig |
| Die Stadt **war zerstört** | Die Stadt war kaputt |

The past participles of many reflexive verbs (which cannot form a passive) can similarly be used with *sein* with the force of an adjective:

Das Mädchen **ist verliebt**	(compare: *Das Mädchen hat sich verliebt*)
Bist du **erkältet**?	(compare: *Hast du dich erkältet?*)
Ich **bin erholt**	(compare: *Ich habe mich erholt*)

The past participle can be used in a similar way with the verbs *bleiben* and *scheinen:*

Das Museum **bleibt geschlossen**	*The museum remains closed*
Der Wagen **schien** leicht **beschädigt**	*The car seemed slightly damaged*
Nur Bruchstücke dieser Skulptur **sind erhalten geblieben**	*Only fragments of this sculpture have been preserved*

(v) As the *sein*-passive expresses a state resulting from a previous action, it can only be used with **verbs whose action produces a clear result**, e.g. *bauen, begraben, beunruhigen, brechen, öffnen, reparieren, schreiben, verletzen, waschen, zerstören*, etc.:

| Meine Hand **ist verletzt** | *My hand is injured* (and you can see the resulting injury) |
| Mein Wagen **ist beschädigt** | *My car is damaged* (and you can see the resulting damage) |

By contrast, verbs whose action produces no tangible or visible result, like *bewundern* or *zeigen*, cannot be used in the *sein*-passive at all, as admiring or showing do not involve any kind of result. Other verbs which typically **cannot be used** in the *sein*-passive include:

anbieten   *offer*   betrachten   *look at*   brauchen   *need*   loben   *praise*

begegnen *meet* bemerken *notice* erinnern *remind* sehen *see*

(c) The *sein*-passive can indicate a continuous state

Diese Insel **ist** von Kannibalen **bewohnt**	*This island is inhabited by cannibals*
Die Oberrheinebene **ist** durch ihre Randgebirge vor rauhen Winden **geschützt** (*Brinkmann*)	*The Upper Rhine plain is protected from harsh winds by the hills which border it*
Die Häuser **sind** nur durch einen Drahtzaun von der Müllverbrennungsanlage **getrennt**	*The houses are only separated from the incinerating plant by a wire fence*
Das Esszimmer **ist** von einem großen Kronleuchter **beleuchtet**	*The dining-room is lit by a large chandelier*
Die Bücher in der alten Bibliothek **sind** mit Staub **bedeckt**	*The books in the old library are covered with dust*

Here we are not dealing with the result of a process, but with a lasting state, often a permanent one. In such sentences, the *werden*-passive and the *sein*-passive are interchangeable as long as the *werden*-passive cannot be interpreted as referring to an action. Thus, the following are equally acceptable alternatives to the first four examples above:

> Diese Insel **wird** von Kannibalen bewohnt
> Die Oberrheinebene **wird** durch ihre Randgebirge vor rauhen Winde geschützt
> Die Häuser **werden** nur durch einen Drahtzaun von der Müllverbrennungsanlage getrennt
> Das Esszimmer **wird** von einem großen Kronleuchter beleuchtet

But **not**: *Die Bücher in der alten Bibliothek werden mit Staub bedeckt*, as this would mean someone is actively engaged in covering them with dust.

(d) The *sein* -passive and the *werden* -passive with *geboren*

Current usage with this verb is as follows:

(i) *Ich bin geboren* is used when no other circumstances or only the place of birth are mentioned:

Wann **sind** Sie **geboren**? Ich **bin** in Hamburg **geboren**

(ii) *Ich wurde geboren* is used if further circumstances, or the date, are mentioned:

Ich **wurde** im Jahre 1995 in Hamburg **geboren** Als ich **geboren wurde**, hat es geschneit

13.3 *von* **and** *durch* **with the passive**

An important reason to use the passive rather than the active is to avoid mentioning who is performing the action, and this is the case with 90% of passive sentences in German. However, if required, the person or thing carrying out the action can be included by adding a prepositional phrase with *von* or *durch*. Both of these correspond to English *by*, so it is important to be aware which one to use in which contexts.

The traditional rule of thumb is that *von* is used with **persons**, *durch* with **things**, but although this is a useful guideline, it is not fully reliable.

Phrases with *von* or *durch* occur most often with the *werden*-passive. With the *sein*-passive they are used almost only when it is a matter of a continuing state, as in **13.2.2c**.

(a) *von* indicates the agent who actually carries out the action

This is usually a person, but can be a force of nature:

Ich war **von meinem Onkel** gewarnt worden	*I had been warned by my uncle*
Sie wurde **von zwei Polizeibeamten** verhaftet	*She was arrested by two police officers*
Die Stadt wurde **von einem großen Waldbrand** bedroht	*The city was threatened by a huge forest fire*

(b) *durch* indicates the means by which the action is carried out

This is most often a thing which is the involuntary cause of the occurrence, but it can be a person acting as an intermediary. Thus, we would say *Ich wurde durch einen Boten benachrichtigt* 'I was informed by a messenger', not *von einem Boten*, because the messenger was bringing a message from someone else.

Die Ernte wurde **durch den Hagel** vernichtet	*The crop was destroyed by hail*
Ich wurde **durch den starken Verkehr** aufgehalten	*I was held up by the heavy traffic*
Die Hühnerpest wird **durch ein mikroskopisch nicht nachweisbares Virus** verursacht (*ND*)	*Fowl pest is caused by a virus which is not detectable under the microscope*

(c) The choice between *von* and *durch* is not always wholly clear-cut

In practice there can be considerable hesitation between *von* and *durch*, as it is often not fully clear whether we are dealing with the 'agent' or the 'means'. *von* is usual for a person or persons who obviously carried out the action. However, when this could be a matter of interpretation, or with 'things' (especially natural

forces like storms and earthquakes) which people might think of as actually carrying out an action, it is not unusual for both *von* or *durch* to be possible, as in the following sentences:

Sie ist **von den Demonstranten/durch die Demonstranten** aufgehalten worden *She was held up by the demonstrators*

Der Baum ist **von dem Blitz/durch den Blitz** getroffen worden *The tree was struck by lightning*

In the first sentence *von den Demonstranten* could imply that the demonstrators held her up deliberately, whereas *durch die Demonstranten* could mean that it just happened to be the case that she was held up by them. However, such fine distinctions are often ignored in practice.

(d) *von* **and** *durch* **in the same sentence**

The difference between *von* and *durch* is most clear when both are used in the same sentence:

Ich war **von meinem Onkel durch seinen Sohn** gewarnt worden

I had been warned by my uncle through his son (The warning came from my uncle, his son was the intermediary)

Das Gebäude wurde **von Terroristen durch einen Sprengstoffanschlag** zerstört

The building was destroyed by terrorists in a bomb attack (Terrorists destroyed it, the bombs were the means)

(e) Phrases with *mit* **are often used in passive constructions**

Such phrases indicate the instrument used to perform an action:

Das Schloss musste **mit einem Hammer** geöffnet werden *The lock had to be opened with a hammer*

Der Brief wurde wohl **mit einer alten Schreibmaschine** geschrieben *The letter was probably written with an old typewriter*

The noun in these phrases with *mit* does not come from the subject of the corresponding active sentence.

13.4 Other passive constructions

German has a wide range of other ways of expressing passive ideas, or constructions which are used where English typically uses a passive.

13.4.1 *man*

man is often used in German where English naturally uses a passive (see also **5.5.18**):

Man sagt, dass …	*It is said that …*
Man hatte sie davor **gewarnt**	*She had been warned about it*
Das **macht man** nicht	*That's not done*

13.4.2 The passive construction with *bekommen*

(a) The use of *bekommen* in passive constructions

As explained in **13.1.3a**, the dative object of an active sentence cannot be turned into the subject of a passive senetnce with *werden*. However, it is possible to turn a dative object into the subject of a sentence by using a construction with *bekommen* and a past participle, e.g.:

Ich schenke **meinem Bruder** das Buch →	**Mein Bruder bekommt** das Buch (von mir) **geschenkt**
Ich widerspreche **meinem Bruder**	**Mein Bruder bekommt** (von mir) **widersprochen**

This construction is relatively recent, but it has become frequent in writing as well as in speech and it is now generally accepted as standard German. In colloquial registers *kriegen* is often used for *bekommen*, and *erhalten* occurs in formal writing. The construction is used in particular with verbs which express an action and where the original dative object can be interpreted in some way as receiving something.

(b) The *bekommen*- passive can be formed from various types of dative object

(i) from the **dative object of** *einem etwas* **verbs**, i.e. a verb which governs both a dative and an accusative object (see **16.4.1**). The English equivalent may be a passive (with 'be' or 'get'), or a construction with 'have' with a past participle. Active sentences like

Man zahlt **mir** das Geld regelmäßig aus	Man hat **uns** viel gezeigt
Somebody pays me the money regularly	*Somebody showed us a lot*

can be rephrased with the *bekommen*-passive as:

Ich **bekomme** das Geld regelmäßig **ausgezahlt** *I am paid the money regularly/*
I have/get the money paid to me regularly

| Wir haben viel **gezeigt bekommen** | *We were shown a lot/We had/got a lot shown to us* |

This construction is possible with most verbs (except *geben*) which have an accusative and a dative object. Further typical examples:

Sie **hat** im Verlag angerufen und **gesagt gekriegt**, dass du heute abend nach Hause kommst. (*Schlink*)	*She called the publishers and was told that you were coming home tonight*
Wer ein Produkt ersteigert, **bekommt** den Zuschlag umgehend mit einer E-Mail **bestätigt** (*SGT*)	*Anyone buying a product at auction will get the extra charges confirmed by e-mail straight away*
Traditionell **erhielt** nach der Prinzessin zuerst der Bürgermeister den neuen Orden **umgehängt** (*MM*).	*In accordance with tradition, after the princess the mayor was the first to be presented with the new medal*

(ii) from the **dative object** of verbs which only govern a dative object (see **16.4.2**). This form of the construction is often considered a colloquial regionalism, but it is not unknown in writing:

Sie **bekam** gratuliert	*She was congratulated*
Er **bekam** von niemandem widersprochen	*He was contradicted by nobody*
An dieser Schule **bekommt** er bei den Hausaufgaben geholfen (*MM*)	*At this school he gets helped with his homework*

This construction is not possible with verbs which do not denote an activity or whose dative object is not a person being given something in some way, e.g. *ähneln*, *begegnen*, *gefallen*, *gehören* or *schaden*, and it is not used with *erhalten*.

(iii) from the **dative of advantage** or the **dative of possession** (see **2.5.2** and **2.5.3**). This often corresponds to an English construction with 'get'. This form of the construction is primarily colloquial:

Sie hat den Wagen **repariert gekriegt**	*She got her car repaired*
Man **bekommt** den Schlips **abgeschnitten** (*Grzimek*)	*You get your tie cut off*
Er **bekam** von mir die Wohnung **renoviert**	*He got his flat renovated by me*

(c) Some subjects of the *bekommen* **-construction are not derived from an original dative object**

(i) The construction is sometimes used with verbs which take two accusatives, e.g. *lehren* 'teach' and *schimpfen* 'tell off', 'bawl out' (see **16.3.3**). The conditions are the same as for other uses of the construction, i.e. that the verb denotes an

action and the subject is a person being given something. This usage is primarily colloquial:

Da **bekommt** man **geschimpft**, wenn andere Fehler machen (*RhZ*) — *You get told off if other people make mistakes*

Der Junge **bekommt** die Vokabeln **gelehrt** — *The boy is getting the words taught him*

(ii) It is used in some other contexts as the equivalent to an English construction with 'get':

Ich **kriege** den Brief bis heute Abend **geschrieben** — *I'll get the letter written by tonight*

13.4.3 Reflexive verbs

Reflexive verbs (see **16.3.5**) **are a frequent alternative to a passive construction**, and verbs which denote accomplishments or activities can be used with *sich* to give the sense of a passive, e.g. *Das erklärt sich leicht* 'That is easily explained'. A sense of ability (= *können*) is sometimes implied.

(a) Reflexive constructions from transitive verbs

In most instances an adverbial of manner is needed to complete the sense:

Das **lernt sich** rasch — *That is/can be quickly learned*

Das Buch **verkaufte sich** in Rekordauflagen — *The book was sold in record numbers*

Mein Verdacht **hat sich bestätigt** — *My suspicions have been confirmed*

(b) Reflexive constructions from intransitive verbs

Reflexive constructions from intransitive verbs are impersonal. An adverbial of manner **and** an adverbial of place or time are usually needed to complete the sense:

Es fährt sich gut auf der Autobahn — *You can drive well on the motorway*

In der Hauptstadt **lebt es sich** besser als anderswo (*Zeit*) — *You can live better in the capital than anywhere else*

(c) Other reflexive verbs

A reflexive verb is often the closest German equivalent to several English passives or constructions which look like passives:

sich ärgern *be annoyed* sich freuen *be pleased* sich schämen *be ashamed*

13.4.4 Phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs are made up from a **verbal noun** (especially in *-ung*) and a verb which no longer has its full meaning. **Many phrasal verbs have the sense of a passive**, especially those which include *erfahren*, *erhalten*, *finden*, *gehen*, *gelangen*, *kommen* or *stehen*:

eine große Vereinfachung **erfahren** (= sehr vereinfacht werden)	*be greatly simplified*
seine Vollendung **finden** (= vollendet werden)	*be completed*
in Vergessenheit **geraten** (= vergessen werden)	*be forgotten*
zur Anwendung **kommen** (= angewendet werden)	*be used*

Unsere Arbeit hat **Anerkennung gefunden**	*Our work was appreciated*
Der Wunsch **ging in Erfüllung**	*The wish was fulfilled*
Das Stück **gelangte/kam zur Aufführung**	*The play was performed*
Diese Frage **steht zur Diskussion**	*This question is being discussed*

Phrasal verbs like these are characteristic of written non-literary registers. They have been criticized by stylists as verbose, but they make it possible to express nuances which are not possible with the simple verb. For example, *Das Stück gelangte zur Aufführung* emphasizes the start of the action, whilst *Das Stück wurde aufgeführt* simply records that the action took place.

13.4.5 *zu* + infinitive

The **infinitive with** *zu* with some **auxiliary** and **semi-auxiliary verbs** has the force of a passive. This has been called the '**modal infinitive**' construction, and further details are given in **11.2.4**.

Depending on the verb, these constructions can express possibility, obligation or necessity, i.e. they have the sense of *können*, *müssen* or *sollen* followed by a passive infinitive. The following verbs occur in this construction:

(a) *sein* **: the construction has the sense of** *können***,** *müssen* **or** *sollen*

The English construction with 'be to' has a similar meaning:

Die Anträge **sind** im Rathaus **abzuholen** (= Die Anträge können/müssen im Rathaus abgeholt werden)	*The applications may/can/must be collected from the town hall/are to be collected from the town hall*

Diese Frage **ist** noch **zu erörtern**	*This question must still be discussed/is still to be discussed*
(= Diese Frage muss/soll noch erörtert werden	
Dieser Text **ist** bis morgen **zu übersetzen**	*This text must be translated by tomorrow/This text is to be translated by tomorrow*
(= Dieser Text muss/soll bis morgen übersetzt werden)	

This construction can be turned into an extended adjective using a present participle, e.g. *diese noch zu erörternde Frage* (see **11.5.1e**).

(b) *bleiben* **: the construction has the sense of** *müssen*

| Vieles **bleibt** noch **zu erledigen** (= Vieles muss noch erledigt werden) | *Much still remains to be done* |

(c) *gehen* **: the construction has the sense of** *können*

| Das Bild **geht** nicht **zu befestigen** | *The picture cannot be secured* |
| (= Das Bild kann nicht befestigt werden) | |

This construction is colloquial and not accepted as standard.

(d) *stehen* **: the construction has the sense of** *müssen*

It is only used impersonally, with a limited number of verbs, principally *befürchten* and *erwarten:*

| Es **steht zu befürchten**, dass sich diese Vorfälle häufen | *It is to be feared that these incidents will occur increasingly* |
| (= Es muss befürchtet werden, dass sich diese Vorfälle häufen) | |

(e) *es gibt*: the construction has the sense of *müssen*

| Es **gibt** noch vieles **zu tun** (= Vieles muss noch getan werden) | *There's still a lot to be done* |

13.4.6 sich lassen

sich lassen **with a following infinitive can have the force of a passive**. It expresses possibility and thus means much the same as using *können* with a passive infinitive. This construction is very frequent with transitive verbs in all registers:

| Das **lässt sich** aber erklären | *But that can be explained* |

(= Das kann aber erklärt werden)

Das Problem **lässt sich** leicht lösen	*The problem can be solved easily*
(= Das Problem kann leicht gelöst werden)	
Das **ließe sich** aber ändern	*That might be altered, though*
(= Das könnte geändert werden)	
Ein Ende **lässt sich** nicht absehen	*There is no end in sight*

This construction can be used impersonally with transitive or intransitive verbs. The impersonal subject *es* can be omitted if it is not in initial position in a main clause, see **3.6.2**:

Es **lässt sich** dort gut **leben**	*It's a good life there*
Darüber **lässt** (es) **sich streiten**	*We can argue about that*

In general, this construction is only possible if the subject is a thing rather than a person. Reflexive *lassen* with a person as subject usually has the sense of 'cause' or 'permit', see **11.3.1c**.

13.4.7 gehören

gehören **with a past participle has passive force** and the sense of obligation or necessity. This construction is not considered standard by all authorities, but it is not solely colloquial, and it is commonly used in writing in Austria.

Dieser Kerl **gehört eingesperrt**	*That guy needs locking up*
(= Dieser Kerl sollte eingesperrt werden)	
Diese Regeln **gehören reformiert**	*These rules need to be reformed*
(= Diese Regeln sollten reformiert werden)	

13.4.8 Adjectives in *-bar*

Adjectives in *-bar* from verbs can be used with *sein* to express a possibility with a passive sense. They correspond to English adjectives in '-able'/'-ible', see **20.3.1a**:

Diese Muscheln sind nicht **essbar**	*These shellfish are not edible/cannot be eaten*
(= Diese Muscheln können nicht gegessen werden)	
Das Argument ist nicht **widerlegbar**	*The argument is irrefutable/cannot be refuted*
(= Das Argument kann nicht widerlegt werden)	
Man ist einfach **unerreichbar** (*Frisch*)	*One simply cannot be reached*

Adjectives with the suffixes *-lich* (from some verbs, see **20.3.1f**) or *-fähig* (from some verbal nouns) have similar force:

Seine Antwort war **unverständlich** (= Seine Antwort konnte nicht verstanden werden)

His answer was incomprehensible/could not be understood

Dieser Apparat ist nicht weiter **entwicklungsfähig** (= Dieser Apparat kann nicht weiter entwickelt werden)

This apparatus cannot be developed further

14 Mood: the imperative and the subjunctive

The grammatical category of MOOD makes it possible for speakers to signal their attitude to what they are saying, in particular to indicate whether what they are saying is to be understood as a fact, a possibility or a command. German has three moods, the INDICATIVE **,** the IMPERATIVE and the SUBJUNCTIVE , and these are shown by special verb endings or forms. **Table 14.1** gives examples of verb forms in the three moods.

TABLE 14.1   The moods of German

Indicative	Subjunctive	Imperative
sie **ist**	sie **sei**	**sei!**
sie **kauft**	sie **kaufe**	**kaufe!**
sie **kam**	sie **käme**	**kommt!**
sie **wird wandern**	sie **würde wandern**	**wandern Sie!**

The INDICATIVE can be thought of as the 'normal' or default mood, and its use is not treated specifically here. Information on the IMPERATIVE and SUBJUNCTIVE is given in the following sections:

14.1 The **imperative** and other ways of expressing **commands** and **requests**
14.2 The **forms and tenses** of the subjunctive
14.3 The subjunctive in **conditional sentences**
14.4 The use of the subjunctive in **indirect speech**
14.5 Other uses of the subjunctive

The **forms** of the **indicative** and the **imperative** in the **active** voice are given in **Tables 10.5–10.8**, and in the **passive** in **Tables 10.9** and **10.10**. The formation of

the **subjunctive** mood is explained in section **10.5** and all the forms are shown in **Tables 10.11–10.16**.

The ɪɴᴅɪᴄᴀᴛɪᴠᴇ mood presents what the speaker is saying as a fact. It is the most frequent mood, used in all kinds of **statements** and in **questions** – in effect in all contexts where speakers do not want to give a command or to signal that what they are saying may not be the fact.

The ɪᴍᴘᴇʀᴀᴛɪᴠᴇ mood is used in commands and requests. As we normally address these to the person we are talking to, it only has special forms in the **second person** (i.e. the 'you'-form).

The ꜱᴜʙᴊᴜɴᴄᴛɪᴠᴇ mood presents what the speaker is saying as not necessarily true. If we use the **subjunctive**, we are characterizing an activity, an event or a state as **unreal**, **possible** or, at best, **not necessarily true** (hence its old German name of *Möglichkeitsform*). Modern English has few distinct subjunctive forms, and these often sound archaic or artificial even in formal registers, but the subjunctive is still widely used in German, in particular to **signal a possibility** and in **indirect speech.**

14.1 Commands and the imperative

14.1.1 The imperative mood

The most frequent means of expressing commands or requests in German is by using the imperative mood. This only has special forms for **the second person**, i.e. the person to whom the request or command is being directed. These forms are given in Tables 10.5 and **10.6**:

> Jürgen, **sei** doch nicht so dumm!
> Angelika, **stell**(e) dich nicht so an!
> Kinder, **bringt** mal die Stühle zu uns in den Garten!
> **Kommen Sie** doch bitte herein und **nehmen Sie** Platz, Frau Meier!

The imperative is typically used with the modal particles *mal* (see **9.1.22**) and/or *doch* (**see 9.1.7**). Without one of these, a spoken command can sound insistent or harsh. Other modal particles often used with the imperative to alter the tone of a command are *ja* (**9.1.19**), *nur* (**9.1.25**), *ruhig* (**9.1.27**) and *schon* (**9.1.29**).

A pronoun is normally only used in the *Sie* form of the imperative, but *du* or *ihr* are occasionally added to the simple imperative forms for emphasis:

Bestell **du** inzwischen das Frühstück! (*Wendt*)   *Meanwhile, you order breakfast*

Kinder, wir kommen gleich. Geht **ihr** schon vor!   *Children, we're just coming. You go first.*

14.1.2 Commands and requests in the first and third person

As the imperative only has special forms in the second person, other forms have to be used for commands and requests involving the first or third person.

(a) Commands and requests in the first person plural

In English, these are typically in the form *Let's do something*. German has a number of equivalents for this:

(i) using the **first person plural** form of *Konjunktiv I*, with the verb first:

Seien wir dankbar, dass nichts passiert ist!   *Let's be grateful that nothing happened!*

G**ehen wir** es langsam an! (*SZ*)   *Let's start at it slowly*

Also, **trinken wir** doch noch ein Glas Wein! *All right, let's have another glass of wine then!*

Only the verb *sein* shows that it is the subjunctive which is being used in this construction, as this is the only verb with a distinctive first person plural *Konjunktiv I* form.

(ii) using the **imperative** of *lassen*. This is rather formal:

Lass uns jetzt ganz langsam gehen!   **Lasst uns** dankbar sein!

Lassen Sie uns doch noch ein Glas Wein trinken!

(iii) using the modal auxiliary *wollen:*

Wir wollen doch noch ein Glas Wein trinken, oder?

Questions with *wollen*, e.g. *Wollen wir jetzt nach Hause gehen?* have the force of a suggestion, rather like English 'Shall we …?' (see **15.7.1b**).

(b) Commands and requests in the third person

These can be used to **ask someone else** to tell a third person to do something, as in English 'Let/Have her come in', or when issuing general instructions to anyone

concerned.

(i) Third person commands are most often expressed with *sollen*, see **15.6.1b**:

Er **soll** hereinkommen   *Let him come in/Tell him to come in*

Sie **sollen** draußen bleiben   *Tell them to stay outside*

Man **soll** hier nicht parken   *There's no parking here*

(ii) *Konjunktiv I* can be used in third person commands (see **14.5.6d**):

Es **sage** uns niemand, heute gebe es keine *Let nobody tell us that there are no longer any* Alternativen mehr (*Spiegel*)   *alternatives at present*

Er **komme** sofort!   *Let him come at once*

A generalized command or instruction (i.e. 'to whom it may concern') can be expressed by using *Konjunktiv I* with the pronoun *man*:

Man **schlage** 4 Eiweiß zu steifem Schnee *Beat 4 egg whites until stiff*

These constructions with *Konjunktiv I* now sound a little old-fashioned. *sollen* is preferred for third person commands, and the infinitive for generalized commands and instructions (**see 14.1.3a**).

(iii) In formal registers *Konjunktiv I* of the modal auxiliary *mögen* can be used to express a command or instruction to a third person (see **15.4.4**), e.g.:

Er **möge** sofort kommen   *He should come in at once*

Wer weiß, wo sich Hans Mayer aufhält, **möge** sich *Anybody who has knowledge of Hans Mayer's* umgehend mit dem Gendarmerieposten Liezen *whereabouts is requested to get in touch* in Verbindung setzen (*KlZ*)   *immediately with the police station in Liezen*

14.1.3 Other ways of expressing commands and requests

Apart from the imperative mood, some other constructions can be used to express commands, requests, instructions and the like.

(a) The infinitive is often used in official commands and instructions

(See also **11.3.3a**.) Using the infinitive makes the command sound more general and less directed at a particular person or group:

Nicht **rauchen**! Bitte **anschnallen**!   *No smoking. Fasten seat belts*

Erst **gurten**, dann **starten**	*Fasten your safety belt before setting off* (official advice to motorists)
Bitte **einsteigen!**	*Please get in* (railway announcement)
4 Eiweiß zu sehr steifem Schnee **schlagen**	*Beat 4 egg whites until stiff* (cooking instruction)

With reflexive verbs, the reflexive pronoun is omitted: *Nicht hinauslehnen!* (from *sich hinauslehnen* 'lean out').

(b) Past participles are sometimes used for depersonalized commands

In practice, this construction is limited to idiomatic usage with a small number of verbs (see also **11.5.3a**):

Abgemacht!	*Agreed!*
Aufgepasst!	*Look out!*
Stillgestanden!	*Attention!* (military command)

(c) The subjectless passive can have the force of a command

See also **13.1.4d**. The speaker can include him/herself in the instruction:

Jetzt wird gearbeitet!	*Let's get down to work now*
Hier wird nicht geraucht!	*No smoking here!*

(d) Statements or questions in the present or future can serve as commands

i.e. by being given the characteristic intonation of a command, as in English. These always sound more blunt than the simple imperative. In this way, any of the following could be used for English 'Are you going to listen now?!' or 'You're going to listen now!':

Hörst du jetzt zu?!	Du hörst jetzt zu!
Wirst du jetzt zuhören?!	Du wirst jetzt zuhören!

(e) The modal auxiliary *sollen* can be used with the force of a command

This usage is linked to the basic meaning of *sollen*, which expresses obligation, see **15.6.1b**:

Du **sollst** das Fenster zumachen	(*I want you to*) *shut the window*
Sie **sollen** ihr sofort schreiben	(*You should*) *write to her at once*

sollen is often used to repeat a command to someone who appears not to have heard the first time: *Du sollst <u>sofort</u> nach Hause kommen!* Commands in indirect speech are also most often given with *sollen*, e.g. *Sie sagte ihm, dass er sie am Dienstag anrufen sollte* 'She told him to call her on Tuesday'. For the use of *sollen* in third person commands see **14.1.2b**.

(f) A *dass* -clause in isolation can be used as a command

These are emotive in tone and are usually accompanied by the particle *ja* (see **9.1.19**) and/or an 'ethic' dative (see **2.5.2d**):

Dass du **mir (ja)** gut aufpasst!	*Be careful for my sake*
Dass ihr **ja** der Mutter nichts davon erzählt!	*Just don't tell your mother anything about it*

(g) Some commands involving directions can be given in sentences without a verb

Her mit dem Geld!	*Let's have the money!*
Nieder mit Ulbricht!	*Down with Ulbricht!*
In den Müll mit deinen Klamotten!	*In the garbage with your old clothes!*

14.2 The subjunctive: forms and uses

Although the SUBJUNCTIVE is widely used in modern German, some forms and uses are nowadays restricted to formal registers, while others have become obsolete. Even educated native speakers are often uncertain and insecure about what constitutes 'good' or 'correct' usage, and there is often a gulf between what people think they **ought** to say or write and what they actually **do** say or write.

Few other aspects of German grammar have attracted so much attention from self-appointed guardians of the language and sundry pedants, and information in German grammar books and even teaching manuals for foreign learners is often at variance with actual usage. This does not make it easy to describe modern usage for the English-speaking learner, but the following sections attempt to set out as clearly and accurately as possible how the subjunctive is actually used in modern German, concentrating on those usages which are most likely to be encountered in practice or needed when speaking and writing German.

14.2.1 The forms of the subjunctive: *Konjunktiv I* **and** *Konjunktiv II*

The forms of the subjunctive are traditionally referred to by the names of the tenses as shown in **Table 14.2**, e.g. **present subjunctive**, **past subjunctive**, **perfect subjunctive**, etc. These terms are misleading, since these six forms do not correspond to time differences in the same way as the tenses of the indicative. Many modern German grammars group the subjunctive forms into two sets which they call *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II* as set out in Table 14.2, and these terms will be adopted here since they make it easier to explain how the subjunctive is used in German. All the forms are given in **Tables 10.11–10.16**.

TABLE 14.2   The forms of *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II*

Konjunktiv I	**present subjunctive**	es gebe
	perfect subjunctive	es habe gegeben
	future subjunctive	es werde geben
Konjunktiv II	**past subjunctive**	es gäbe
	pluperfect subjunctive	es hätte gegeben
	conditional	es würde geben

14.2.2 The uses of *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II*

(a) *Konjunktiv I* **and** *Konjunktiv II* **have distinct uses**

These have **nothing to do with time or tense**, and the so-called 'present subjunctive' and 'past subjunctive' can both refer to the present, as the following examples show:

Gisela sagt ihrer Mutter, sie **komme** um sechs in Berlin an	*Gisela is telling her mother that she is arriving in Berlin at six*
Wenn ich es jetzt **wüsste**, **könnte** ich es dir sagen	*If I knew it now, I would be able to tell you*

The most important use of the 'present subjunctive' and all *Konjunktiv I* forms is to mark **indirect speech**, see **14.4**.

The most important use of the 'past subjunctive' and all *Konjunktiv II* forms is to indicate an **unreal condition** or a **possibility**, see **14.3**.

(b) Indicating time differences in the subjunctive

The difference between **present** and **past** time is expressed in *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II* by using the '**perfect**' or '**pluperfect**' subjunctives:

(i) The **perfect subjunctive** functions as the past tense of *Konjunktiv I* :

Gisela sagt ihrer Mutter, sie **sei** um sechs in Berlin **angekommen**	*Gisela is telling her mother that she arrived in Berlin at six*

(ii) The **pluperfect subjunctive** functions as the past tense of *Konjunktiv II* :

Wenn ich es damals **gewusst hätte, hätte** ich es dir sagen **können**	*If I had known it then, I would have been able to tell you*

14.2.3 *Konjunktiv II* and *würde*

Konjunktiv II has **three forms** as illustrated in Table 14.3. As explained in **14.2.2**, the **'past subjunctive'** typically refers to **present time**, and the **'pluperfect subjunctive'** to the **past**. The **conditional with** *würde* can be used as a **'future-in-the-past'** (see **(c)** below), but it most often occurs as a **substitute for the past subjunctive**, as explained below.

TABLE 14.3   The forms of *Konjunktiv II*

Past subjunctive	Pluperfect subjunctive	Conditional
ich hätte	ich hätte gehabt	ich würde haben
ich wäre	ich wäre gewesen	ich würde sein
ich käme	ich wäre gekommen	ich würde kommen
ich schliefe	ich hätte geschlafen	ich würde schlafen
ich machte	ich hätte gemacht	ich würde machen

(a) The conditional form with *würde* **is often used rather than the simple past subjunctive**

i.e. saying or writing *ich würde schlafen* rather than *ich schliefe*. Which is used depends on **the individual verb** involved and on **register.** The use of the simple past subjunctive forms is sometimes still encouraged by school teachers and traditionalists as a mark of good style, but in practice they can sound stilted or archaic, and they are avoided. Modern usage is as follows:

(i) With **weak verbs** the simple form is only used if the subjunctive meaning is otherwise clear from the context. This is because their past subjunctive form is exactly the same as the past indicative:

Wenn sie das Fenster **aufmachte**, **hätten** wir frische   *If she opened the window, we would have some fresh*
    Luft im Zimmer   *air in the room*

Although *aufmachte* could be ambiguous (in isolation we would have no way of knowing whether it is indicative or subjunctive), the **clear** *Konjunktiv II* **form** *hätte* in the other half of the sentence makes it clear that the whole sentence is to be understood as expressing possibility.

However, the past subjunctive forms of weak verbs are in practice never used in spoken German, which always prefers the conditional:

Wenn sie das Fenster **aufmachen würde**, hätten wir frische Luft im Zimmer

In fact, the simple past subjunctive of weak verbs is nowadays unusual even in writing, and if the subjunctive meaning is not clear from the context, the conditional must be used:

Bei der Hitze **würde** ich das Fenster **aufmachen**   *With this heat I would open the window*

(ii) With **common irregular verbs** only the past subjunctive form is usual, in particular with *sein*, *haben*, *werden* and the **modal auxiliaries**. With these, the simple forms *wäre*, *hätte*, *würde*, *könnte*, *müsste*, etc. are preferred in both spoken and written German. The conditional forms *würde sein*, *würde haben*, etc. are rarely used in any register, unless there is a sense of 'future-in-the-past' (see **(c)** below).

(iii) The past subjunctive forms of a few other **common strong** or **irregular verbs** occur quite often. In particular, the past subjunctive forms and conditional of the following verbs are roughly equally frequent in written German:

finden **fände**	halten **hielte**	lassen **ließe**	tun **täte**
geben **gäbe**	heißen **hieße**	sprechen **spräche**	wissen **wüsste**
gehen **ginge**	kommen **käme**	stehen **stünde**	

käme, *täte* and *wüsste* are also not unusual in spoken German, as well as in writing, and the simple forms of the other verbs in this group are sometimes heard in speech, too.

(iv) The past subjunctive forms of the **other strong or irregular** verbs are used less often. They only occur frequently nowadays in formal registers, and even there they can be less common than the conditional forms, so that, for example, *sie würde schlafen* or *sie würde hier sitzen* are more frequent than *sie schliefe* or

sie säße hier. In practice, despite the efforts of generations of schoolteachers, the past subjunctive forms of many less common strong verbs, in particular most of the irregular ones and those in *-ö-* and *-ü-* (e.g. *begönne*, *flösse*, *verdürbe*), are felt to be impossibly stilted and even comical. Many Germans do not even know the forms, and they are generally avoided even in writing. **The forms which are no longer used in practice are given in italics in Table 10.17.**

(b) The pluperfect of *Konjunktiv II* **forms with** *würde … haben/sein* **are infrequent**

The pluperfect subjunctive is composed of *hätte* or *wäre* (depending on whether the verb forms its perfect tenses with *haben* or *sein*) together with the past participle:

Ich **hätte geschlafen**   *I would have slept*

Ich **wäre gekommen**   *I would have come*

Longer forms, e.g. *ich würde geschlafen haben* or *ich würde gekommen sein* are occasionally seen or heard, but they are much less common than the shorter forms with *hätte* or *wäre*, especially in writing.

(c) The conditional is often used in the sense of a future-in-the-past

i.e. where the speaker or writer is looking forward within a narrative in the past tense, e.g.:

Er wusste viel besser als Chénier, dass er keine Eingebung **haben würde**; er hatte nämlich noch nie eine gehabt (*Süßkind*) — *He knew much better than Chénier that he would not have an inspiration, because he had never had one*

Er hätte seine Seele dafür gegeben, in hundert Jahren zu leben, wenn es Mittel gegen den Schmerz **geben würde** (*Kehlmann*) — *He would have given his soul to live in a hundred years' time when there would be something to cure the pain*

Ich war sicher, dass ich den Job nicht **kriegen würde** — *I was sure I wouldn't get the job*

The simple past subjunctive is hardly ever used in contexts of this type.

14.3 Conditional sentences

Typical CONDITIONAL SENTENCES consist of a subordinate clause, introduced by the conjunction *wenn* (= English 'if'), expressing a condition, and a main clause, expressing the consequence (see **Table 14.4**)

TABLE 14.4   Conditional sentences

Condition	Consequence

Wenn du den Wein kaufst,
   If you buy the wine
	mache ich das Abendessen
	   I will cook dinner

Wenn ich genug Zeit hätte,
   If I had enough time
	käme ich gern mit
	   I would gladly come with you

Wenn sie mich fragen würde,
   If she asked me
	würde ich ihr alles sagen
	   I would tell her everything

Wenn ich gewonnen hätte,
   If I had won
	wäre ich nach Amerika gefahren
	   I would have gone to America

We can distinguish **'open' conditional sentences,** where there is a real possibility of the condition being met, and **'remote' conditional sentences,** where this possibility is at best a remote one. Compare:

Open: Wenn Anna da **ist, kann** sie gern mitkommen

Remote: Wenn Anna da **wäre, könnte** sie gern mitkommen

German typically uses the **indicative** in **'open' conditional sentences** (see **14.3.2**), but *Konjunktiv II* in **'remote' conditional sentences** (see **14.3.1**).

14.3.1 *Konjunktiv II* in remote conditional sentences

(a) Remote conditional sentences in the present

The past subjunctive or conditional form of *Konjunktiv II* is used to express an **unreal condition** in the present:

Wenn wir Zeit **hätten**, **könnten** wir einen Ausflug machen	*If we had time, we would be able to go on an excursion*
Die Europäer **wären** erleichtert, wenn England wieder **austreten würde** (*Zeit*)	*The Europeans would be relieved if England pulled out again*
Wenn ich 200 000 Euro im Lotto **gewinnen würde**, **würde** ich eine Villa auf Teneriffa **kaufen**	*If I won 200,000 euros in the lottery I would buy a villa on Tenerife*

Konjunktiv II is used in **both the** *wenn* **-clause and the main clause**. This contrasts with English, which typically uses the past tense in the 'if'-clause, and the conditional (with 'would') in the main clause. Either the past subjunctive or the conditional can be used in German in either clause, with the choice depending on register and the individual verb involved, as explained in **14.2.3a**.

Grammarians and schoolteachers have long argued that the conditional with *würde* should only be used in the main clause, or that sentences with two conditionals are clumsy and should be avoided. However, this prescription is widely ignored in both spoken and written German, especially if the simple *Konjunktiv II* forms of the verbs involved are obsolete or not used, as in the last example above and the following:

Die Telefonleitungen sind ohnehin sehr schlecht, also **würde** es kaum etwas ausmachen, wenn auch sie zerstört werden **würden** (SZ)	*The telephone cables are very bad anyway, so it would hardly make any difference if they were destroyed as well*

Nevertheless, it is still a very frequent pattern in conditional sentences to have a simple *Konjunktiv II* form in the *wenn*-clause and a conditional with *würde* in the main clause:

Ich **würde** den schönen Top **kaufen**, wenn ich genug Geld **hätte**	*I would buy that nice top if I had enough money*

(b) Remote conditional sentences in the past

Conditional sentences with the **pluperfect subjunctive** express a **hypothetical possibility in the past** – typically something which did not come about. The **pluperfect subjunctive** is used in **both** the *wenn*-clause and the main clause:

Wenn ich es nicht mit eigenen Augen **gesehen hätte**, **hätte** ich es nicht **geglaubt**	*If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed it*
Wenn mich jener Anruf nicht mehr **erreicht hätte, wären** wir einander nie **begegnet** (*Frisch*)	*If that call hadn't managed to reach me, we would never have met*
Es **wäre** besser für mich **gewesen,** wenn ich **hätte** absagen **können** (*Böll*)	*It would have been better for me if I had been able to refuse*

(c) Time differences between the clauses in conditional sentences

If there is a difference in time between the main clause and the *wenn*-clause, this can be indicated by using the **past subjunctive**/**conditional** forms or the **pluperfect** forms as appropriate:

Wäre Sarkozy schon im ersten Wahlgang **gewählt worden**, **würde** die französische Bevölkerung schon jetzt das Datum **kennen**	*If Sarkozy had already been elected in the first ballot the French people would already know the date*
Ich **säße** hier nicht auf demselben Stuhl, wenn wir bisher diesen Punkt nicht **erreicht hätten** (*Zeit*)	*I wouldn't be sitting here in the same chair if we hadn't already reached this point*

Double pluperfect forms are sometimes used to indicate a time further back in the past:

> **Hätte** ich seinen Artikel schon damals **gelesen gehabt,** *If I had already read his article at that time,*
> dann hätte ich es natürlich auch vorausgesehen (*Falter*)   *then of course I would have predicted it.*

These forms are quite frequent in written German, but they are not universally accepted as standard.

(d) Other auxiliary verbs used in remote conditional sentences

(i) The *Konjunktiv II* of *sollen* is often used in the *wenn*-clause. This normally points to the future, and the meaning is similar to using 'should' or 'were to' in English:

> Wenn sie mich **fragen sollte,** würde ich ihr alles sagen   *Should she ask me, I would tell her everything*
>
> Er hält sich bereit, aus der Bodenluke zu springen, wenn sich   *He is ready to jump out of the skylight if a*
> nachts ein Auto der Sägemühle **nähern sollte** (*Strittmatter*)   *car were to approach the sawmill at night*

(ii) The *Konjunktiv II* of *wollen* is frequently used in the *wenn*-clause, often with only a faint suggestion of its basic meaning of 'want', 'intend':

> Wenn du schneller **arbeiten wolltest**, könntest du mehr   *If you worked faster you could earn*
> verdienen   *more*
>
> Wie wäre es, wenn wir ihr **helfen wollten?**   *What about us helping her?*

wollen is particularly common in formal registers if *wenn* is omitted (see **14.3.3a**):

> Es würde uns zu lange aufhalten, **wollten wir** alle diese   *It would detain us too long if we were to treat*
> Probleme ausführlich behandeln   *all these problems in detail*

(iii) The *Konjunktiv II* of *tun* (i.e. *täte*) is common in colloquial speech instead of *würde*, especially in the South, see **11.3.1d**. This is generally considered to be a non-standard regionalism.

> Wenn dieser Österreicher nicht so schnell **fahren täte**, hätte   *If that Austrian didn't drive so fast I would*
> ich schon mehr Punkte (*NKZ*)   *already have more points*

14.3.2 Open conditional sentences

The **indicative** is used in conditional sentences which express 'open' conditions, i.e. where there is a real possibility of the conditions being met. These correspond to conditional sentences without 'would' in English. In English, the future tense is the norm in the main clause of such sentences, but in German the present is at least as frequent, see **12.1.3**:

Wenn sie immer noch krank **ist**, **muss** ich morgen allein kommen	*If she's still ill, I'll have to come on my own tomorrow*
Wenn ich ihr jetzt **schreibe**, **bekommt** sie den Brief morgen	*If I write to her now, she'll get the letter tomorrow*
Wenn wir jetzt **losfahren**, **werden** wir schon vor zwölf in Augsburg **sein**	*If we set off now, we'll be in Augsburg by twelve*

If one half of a conditional sentence is seen as hypothetical, but the other as factual, the first can be in the subjunctive and the second in the indicative:

Was **würdet** ihr **tun**, wenn ihr **mitbekommt**, dass euer Freund mit anderen Frauen simst?	*What would you do if you find out that your boyfriend has been texting other women?*

In open conditional sentences with a past tense, the conditions have been met, and as reference is to something which has actually happened, the meaning of *wenn* is close to English 'when(ever)', see **17.3.1e**:

Wenn meine Eltern mir Geld **schickten**, **kaufte** ich mir sofort etwas zum Anziehen	*If/When/Whenever my parents sent me money I immediately bought something to wear*

14.3.3 Other forms of conditional sentences

A typical conditional sentence has a *wenn*-clause and a main clause, as shown in **Table 14.4**, but there are several possible variations on this pattern.

(a) The conjunction *wenn* **can be omitted**

In this case the subordinate clause begins with the verb:

Hätte ich Zeit, käme ich gern mit	*If I had time, I should like to come with you*
Ist sie krank, muss er morgen allein kommen	*If she's ill, he'll have to come on his own tomorrow*
Sollte ich nach Berlin kommen, würde ich sie sicher besuchen	*If I should get to Berlin I'd be sure to visit her*

This construction can be compared to the similar, rather old-fashioned English construction, e.g. '**Had** I time, …'. As a general rule, it is more typical of formal

writing, although sentences with *sollte*, in particular, are not unusual in the spoken language, and it is often used in legal or quasi-legal contexts. Occasionally, the main clause comes first:

Das Bild wäre unvollständig, **würden** nicht die vielen Gruppen erwähnt, die den Einwanderern das Leben leichter machen (*FR*)	*The picture would be incomplete if the many groups were not mentioned who make life easier for the immigrants*

(b) Using *so* or *dann* in a following main clause

If the *wenn*-clause comes first in the sentence, it can be picked up by *so* or *dann* at the start of the main clause. This so-called 'correlating' *so* or *dann* is optional, but quite common in formal registers:

> Wenn ich Zeit hätte, (**so/dann**) käme ich gern mit
> Wenn ich ihr heute schreibe, (**so/dann**) bekommt sie den Brief morgen

However, it is very frequent if *wenn* is omitted (see **(a)** above):

> Hätte ich Zeit, (**so**) käme ich gern mit
> Ist sie krank, (**so**) muss ich morgen allein kommen
> Sollte ich nach Berlin kommen, (**so**) würde ich sie sicher besuchen

(c) The condition may appear in another form

i.e. not in a *wenn*-clause but in an adverbial or another kind of clause. *Konjunktiv II* indicates a remote possibility, or, with a pluperfect subjunctive, something which might have happened, but didn't:

Dieser Unbekannte würde mich **wahrscheinlich** besser verstehen (*Böll*)	*This stranger would probably understand me better*
Ohne die Notlandung in Tamaulipas wäre alles anders gekommen (*Frisch*)	*But for the emergency landing in Tamaulipas everything would have turned out differently*
Wer diese Entwicklung vorausgesehen hätte, hätte viel Geld verdienen können	*Anyone foreseeing this development would have been able to make a lot of money*

In some sentences the condition is implicit:

Lieber **bliebe** ich zu Hause (i.e. an deiner Stelle)	*I would rather stay at home*
Ich **hätte** dasselbe **getan** (i.e. wenn ich die Wahl gehabt hätte)	*I would have done the same*

(d) Other conjunctions used in conditional sentences

wenn is the most frequent conjunction in conditional sentences, but there are other possibilities:

(i) *falls* 'if' unambiguously introduces a condition.

As *wenn* can have the sense of 'when(ever)' (see **17.3.1e**), *falls* can be useful to make the sense clear in contexts where a misunderstanding could be possible. A sentence like:

> **Wenn** ich nach Berlin komme, besuche ich sie

could mean 'When(ever) I get to Berlin I visit her' **or** 'If I get to Berlin I shall visit her'. But *Falls ich nach Berlin komme, besuche ich sie* can only mean 'If I get to Berlin I shall visit her'.

falls most often introduces 'open' conditions, with the indicative (see **14.3.2**), but it can be used in remote conditional sentences with *Konjunktiv II*, and it is particularly frequent with *sollte*:

Sie kann niemanden ins Oberhaus befördern lassen, **falls** er einen unsicheren Wahlkreis vertritt (*FAZ*)	*She can't elevate anybody into the Upper House if he doesn't have a safe seat*
Falls diese Hinweise zuträfen, wäre das eine eindeutige Verletzung der Abmachungen (*MM*)	*If these indications were correct, that would be a clear infringement of the agreements*
Man hielt eine Ratskonferenz für denkbar, jedoch nur, **falls** Frankreich dem Haushalt die Zustimmung verweigern sollte (*FAZ*)	*A meeting of the Council was considered conceivable, but only if France should refuse to give its consent to the budget*

(ii) *angenommen*, *dass* **…** and *vorausgesetzt*, *dass* **...** 'assuming that', 'provided that' mainly introduce open conditions.

Angenommen, dass er den Brief erhalten hat, wird er bald hier sein	*Assuming he got the letter, he'll be here soon*
Vorausgesetzt, dass nichts dazwischen kommt, ziehen wir im Frühjahr nach Graz um	*Provided that all goes well, we'll be moving to Graz in the spring*

The conjunction *dass* can be omitted, and the following clause then has the word order of a main clause, e.g. *Angenommen , er hat den Brief erhalten, wird er bald hier sein*.

(iii) *sofern* can be used in the sense of 'if', 'provided that' or 'as long as' in open conditions:

Sofern es die Witterungsbedingungen erlauben, findet die Aufführung im Freien vor der alten Abtei statt	*If weather conditions permit, the performance will take place in the open air in front of the old abbey*

(iv) *selbst wenn*, *auch wenn*, *sogar wenn*, *wenn … auch* all correspond to English 'even if'. For example, the German equivalent of 'Even if she were to call today, she wouldn't get any tickets', could be any of the following:

Selbst wenn sie heute anrufen sollte,　} 　würde sie keine Karten bekommen
　　Auch wenn sie heute anrufen sollte,

Sogar wenn sie heute anrufen sollte,

Wenn sie **auch** heute anrufen sollte,

(v) *es sei denn*, *(dass)…* . 'unless' is mainly used in 'open' conditions. The conjunction *dass* can be omitted, and the following clause then has the word order of a main clause:

Ich komme um zwei, **es sei denn**, dass ich aufgehalten werde / ich werde *I'll come at two, unless I'm* aufgehalten *held up*

In older literary styles *denn* on its own can have this meaning:

„Ich lasse dich nicht fort", rief sie, „du sagst mir **denn**, *'I shan't let you go', she cried, 'unless you tell* was du im Sinn hast" (*Wiechert*) *me what you have in mind'*

(vi) *wenn … nicht* is the usual equivalent of English 'unless' as well as 'if … not'. It is used with open or remote conditions, in the latter case with *Konjunktiv II:*

Wenn er **nicht** bald kommt, wird es zu spät sein *If he doesn't come soon, it will be too late*

Er hätte es nicht gesagt, **wenn** er **nicht** schuldig wäre *He wouldn't have said it unless he was guilty/if he wasn't guilty*

Du brauchst die Suppe nicht zu essen, **wenn** du sie *You needn't eat the soup if you really don't like it* wirklich **nicht** magst

14.4 Indirect speech

14.4.1 Indirect and direct speech

(a) Indirect speech

In DIRECT SPEECH we quote exactly what someone said in the original spoken form (using inverted commas in writing).

In INDIRECT SPEECH (sometimes called 'reported speech'), on the other hand, we report what someone said by putting it into a sentence of our own.

Compare the following English examples:

Direct speech: She said, **'I am writing a letter to Mr. Miller'**
Indirect speech: She said **that she was writing a letter** to Mr. Miller

There are marked differences in English between direct and indirect speech. In particular, we put what was said in a **subordinate clause** of its own (typically introduced by 'that'), the **pronoun** may be altered (especially from the first person to the third person) and the **tense is shifted** to the past.

(b) In German indirect speech can be indicated by using *Konjunktiv I*

Konjunktiv I is used, rather than shifting the tense as in English:

Direct speech: Sie sagte: „**Ich schreibe einen Brief an Herrn Müller**"
Indirect speech: Sie sagte, **dass sie einen Brief** an Herrn Müller **schreibe**

This is the most important use of *Konjunktiv I* in modern German – so much so that *Konjunktiv I* **on its own is often enough to indicate indirect speech.**

However, **the use** of *Konjunktiv I* **to mark indirect speech varies considerably**. It is less often used in informal registers, and there is considerable uncertainty among native speakers in respect of correct usage.

The conjunction *dass*, like English 'that', can be left out after the verb of saying, see **17.2.1b**. The following clause then has the order of a main clause, with the verb in second place (see **19.1.1a**), e.g. *Sie sagte, sie schreibe einen Brief an Herrn Müller*.

14.4.2 The use of the subjunctive to mark indirect speech

The **accepted standard use of the subjunctive in indirect speech**, as prescribed in all modern grammars of German for written registers, is illustrated with examples in **Table 14.5** and summarized in the rules given in the rest of this section.

TABLE 14.5   Standard rules for the use of the subjunctive in indirect speech

Rule	Original tense	Direct speech	Indirect speech
Rule 1	**present**	„Sie weiß es"	Er sagte, sie wisse es
Use Konjunktiv I in indirect speech, keeping the same tense as in the original direct speech		'She knows it'	He said she knew it
	past	„Sie wusste es"	Er sagte, sie habe es gewusst
		'She knew it'	He said she had known it
	perfect	„Sie hat es gewusst"	Er sagte, sie habe es gewusst
		'She knew/has known it'	He said she had known it
	future	„Sie wird es wissen"	Er sagte, sie werde es wissen
		'She will know it'	He said she would know it
Rule 2	**present**	„Sie wissen es"	Er sagte, sie wüssten es
If the Konjunktiv I form is the same as the indicative, use Konjunktiv II		'They know it'	He said they knew it
	past	„Sie wussten es"	Er sagte, sie hätten es gewusst
		'They knew it'	He said they had known it
	perfect	„Sie haben es gewusst"	Er sagte, sie hätten es gewusst
		'They knew/have known it'	He said they had known it
	future	„Sie werden es wissen"	Er sagte, sie würden es wissen
		'They will know it'	He said they would know it

(a) Rule 1: *Konjunktiv I* **is used to mark indirect speech wherever possible**

i.e. as long as the forms of *Konjunktiv I* are clearly distinct from those of the present indicative

(i) In practice, for almost all verbs except *sein*, this is the case only in the **third person singular**, where the ending *-e* of *Konjunktiv I* (e.g. *sie schreibe*) differs from the present indicative ending *-t* (e.g. *sie schreibt*)

(ii) The basic principle is that the same tense of *Konjunktiv I* is used for the indirect speech as was used in the indicative in the original direct speech, as shown in the examples in **Table 14.5**. The only exception to this principle is that **if the original direct speech** was in the **past** or **the pluperfect** tense, the **perfect subjunctive** is used in indirect speech. In this way the following sentences of direct speech all become *Sie sagte, sie habe es nicht gewusst* in indirect speech:

„Ich **wusste** es nicht"   „Ich **habe** es nicht **gewusst**"   „Ich **hatte** es nicht **gewusst**"

(iii) Complex pluperfect forms are sometimes used if the original direct speech was in the pluperfect or to give an extra dimension further back in time, e.g.

Die 23jährige Geschädigte erklärte, sie kenne die Angeklagte bereits seit ihrer Schulzeit. Man **habe** sich aber über ein Jahr lang nicht **gesehen gehabt** (*MM*)	*The 23-year old victim declared that she had known the accused since their schooldays. However, they had not seen each other for more than a year*
In Bemburg erklärte mir ein Schulsozialarbeiter, er habe dort 40 Schulschwänzer gehabt, von denen einige die Schule noch nie von innen **gesehen gehabt hätten** (*Sachsen-Anhalt*)	*A school social worker in Bemburg told me that he had had 40 truants there, some of whom had never seen the school from the inside*

Such constructions are quite frequent in writing, although they are not universally considered standard.

(iv) If the present tense of the original direct speech refers to the future (see **12.2.3**), the future subjunctive is often used in indirect speech, as an alternative to the present subjunctive. In this way, there are two possibilities for converting the following sentence into indirect speech:

„Sie heiratet bald" → Sie sagte, sie **heirate** bald **or** Sie sagte, sie **werde** bald **heiraten**

(b) Rule 2: If the form of *Konjunktiv I* **is the same as the indicative,** *Konjunktiv II* **is used**

The principle underlying this so-called **'replacement rule'** is that indirect speech should be marked by a distinct subjunctive form if possible. This is typically needed in the third person plural, where only *sein* has a *Konjunktiv I* form (*sie seien*) which differs from the form of the present indicative (see **Table 10.12**).

For example, to turn the sentence *„Wir wissen es nicht"* into indirect speech, we cannot use the *Konjunktiv I* form *sie wissen*, because it is the same as the present indicative, and it has to be replaced by *Konjunktiv II*: *Sie sagten, sie wüssten es nicht*. **Table 14.5** gives examples of the application of this rule for the other tenses.

These standard rules for the use of the subjunctive in indirect speech are adhered to with particular consistency in newspapers. By using *Konjunktiv I* we can indicate that we are simply reporting what someone else said, without committing ourselves to saying whether we think it is true or not. This makes it a handy device for journalists (especially when reporting politicians?!) and newspapers make wide use of it:

Der Bundespressechef verwies darauf, dass in den kommenden Gesprächen noch manches verfeinert werden **könne** (*FAZ*)	*The Federal government press officer pointed out that some things could be refined in future discussions*
M. erklärte, die Bahn **könne** das Betriebsrisiko nicht übernehmen, auch wenn es zusätzliche öffentliche Mittel für den Bau der Strecke **gebe** (*Presse*)	*M. explained that the Federal Railways could not take on the operational risks even if there were additional public funds to build the line*

(c) The subjunctive as the only indicator of indirect speech

Konjunktiv I in particular is such a clear marker of indirect speech that it can be used on its own to show that a statement is reported. This means that German can dispense with repeated cues like 'He said that …', 'He went on to say that …' which are often needed in English. Almost any newspaper report will provide examples of how this possibility is exploited:

> Der Regierungssprecher bedauerte die Veröffentlichung. Die Dokumente **seien** „auf illegale Art und Weise an die Öffentlichkeit gelangt". Die robusten und festen Beziehungen zu den USA **würden** aber in „keiner Weise" betrübt. Es **gebe** eine in Jahrzehnten gewachsene tiefe Freundschaft, die auf gemeinsamen Werten **beruhe** und durch die Publikation „nicht ernsthaft beschädigt wird". Passagen über deutsche Politiker **hätten** eher das „Niveau des Lästerns". (*SZ*)

Note the **alternation of** *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II* **forms** according to the **'replacement rule'** and that, even in such a sequence of main clauses without any verb of saying **the subjunctive on its own is enough to signal indirect speech**.

Interspersing a few stretches of direct speech in quotation marks, in the indicative, is also very typical in this style of presentation in newspapers.

14.4.3 Other current usage in indirect speech

The 'standard rules' given in 14.4.2 for the use of the subjunctive in indirect speech are in practice only observed closely in formal written registers, especially in newspapers and non-fiction. In everyday speech and less formal writing (and not infrequently in literary German) alternative constructions occur regularly, and these are summarized for quick reference in **Table 14.6**.

TABLE 14.6   Indirect speech in everyday spoken German

Formal writing: *Konjunktiv I*		**Everyday speech: Indicative or** *Konjunktiv II*
Sie sagte, sie **komme** erst um vier	{	Sie hat gesagt, sie **kommt** erst um vier Sie hat gesagt, sie **käme** erst um vier
Sie sagte, er **habe** es sicher **gewusst**	{	Sie hat gesagt, er **hat** es sicher **gewusst** Sie hat gesagt, er **hätte** es sicher **gewusst**

(a) *Konjunktiv II is* **used rather than** *Konjunktiv I*

i.e. *Konjunktiv II* is used even where a distinct *Konjunktiv I* form is available. This occurs:

(i) in **everyday speech** *:*

Sie hat gesagt sie **käme** heute nicht	*She said she wasn't coming today*
Sie hat gesagt sie **hätte** es verstanden	*She said she had understood it*
Sie hat gesagt sie **würde** den Brief noch heute **schreiben**	*She said she'd get the letter written today*

In spoken German *Konjunktiv II* is an alternative to the indicative (see **(c)** below), and it is often preferred when the main verb is in the past or perfect tense. *Konjunktiv II* also tends to be used if there is a longer stretch of indirect speech covering more than one sentence:

Oliver sagt, er hat eben einen neuen Wagen gekauft. Der **hätte** über 40 000 Euro gekostet und **hätte** eine Klimaanlage	*Oliver says he's just bought a new car. It cost more than 40,000 euros and it's got air conditioning*

Konjunktiv I can sound affected in informal registers and it is rarely used in everyday speech. The only exception is that forms of *sein* are occasionally heard, but these often imply that the speaker has doubts. If someone says *Silke hat mir gesagt, sie sei heute krank* it often indicates that s/he thinks that Silke might perhaps not have been telling the whole truth.

(ii) in **writing**: *Konjunktiv II* is less frequent than *Konjunktiv I*, but it is by no means unknown, especially in fiction or in biographical writing:

Sie sagte, ihr Vater **schliefe** erst gegen Morgen richtig ein und **würde** bis neun im Bett **bleiben** und sie müsse den Laden aufmachen (*Böll*)	*She said that her father didn't get to sleep properly till the morning and he would stay in bed till nine and that she had to open the shop*
Tante Sissi schrieb uns, es gehe Onkel Heinrich nicht gut und sie **säße** oft an seinem Bett (*Dönhoff*)	*Aunt Sissi wrote telling us that Uncle Heinrich wasn't well and she often sat at his bedside*

Prescribed 'standard' usage in the above examples would be *schlafe*, *bleibe* and *sitze* respectively. Notice also the inconsistency in the first example, with the *Konjunktiv I* form *müsse* used in the same sentence.

(b) The conditional with *würde* is used rather than the past subjunctive

Using the conditional with *würde* in indirect speech as a substitute for the past subjunctive is potentially confusing for English speakers, as they could interpret it as having the same meaning as an English conditional with 'would'.

(i) The use of *würde* is frequent in colloquial spoken German, especially since the simple past subjunctive is restricted to a few common verbs (see **14.2.3**):

Sie hat gemeint, er **würde** zu schnell **reden**	*She thought he talked too fast*
Sie wirft ihm vor, er **würde** ihnen nicht **vertrauen**	*She tells him off, saying he doesn't trust them*

(ii) Using the conditional in indirect speech in writing is frowned on by purists, but it is actually quite frequent, especially with weak verbs or those strong verbs whose simple *Konjunktiv II* forms are obsolete (see **14.2.3**).

- It can be used for a *Konjunktiv II* required by the 'replacement rule':

Immer häufiger, berichtet Professor N. von der Uni Hamburg, **würden** Studenten abends oder nachts **jobben**. Tagsüber **seien** sie dann furchtbar erschöpft (*Spiegel*)	*Professor N. from the University of Hamburg reports that more and more often students take on casual work in the evenings or at night. During the day they are then terribly exhausted, he said*
Sieben Leser gaben an, sie **würden** regelmäßig Fachzeitschriften **lesen** (*MM*)	*Seven readers declared that they regularly read specialist journals*

The conditionals with *würde* are used in the first example in the case of the weak verb *jobben*, and in the second rather than the rather old-fashioned sounding past subjunctive *läsen*.

- It is even used in cases where a distinct *Konjunktiv I* form is available:

Gleichzeitig informierte man die Presse, die Polizei **würde** auch die Namen zweier Komplizen **kennen** (*Horizont*)   *At the same time the press was informed that the police also knew the names of two accomplices*

The past subjunctive form *kennte* is obsolete, but in this example the unambiguous *Konjunktiv I* form *kenne* would be expected according to the standard rule.

- It can be used for the *Konjunktiv I* form *werde* if there is a sense of 'future-in-the-past' (see **14.2.4c**):

Er glaubte, sie **würde** schon eine Lösung **finden**   *He thought that she would surely find a solution*

This last usage is very frequent in practice, and it is accepted in formal registers.

(c) The indicative is used rather than the subjunctive

If the main verb is in the past or perfect tense, the verb in indirect speech is usually in the tense of the original direct speech, although it is sometimes shifted to the past tense, as in English. The indicative is used:

(i) in everyday spoken German, where this is probably the most frequent alternative:

Sie hat gesagt, sie **weiß** es schon   *She said she knew it already*
Sie hat gesagt, sie **hat** es verstanden   *She said she had understood it*
Sie hat gesagt, sie **wird** Alex noch heute anrufen   *She said she'd call Alex today*

(ii) in writing. The indicative is fairly regular in indirect speech in written German and it is regarded as an acceptable alternative to the subjunctive in certain contexts:

- if the indirect speech is in **a clause introduced by** *dass*:

Der Kanzler erklärte, dass er zu weiteren Verhandlungen bereit **ist** / **war**   *The Chancellor declared that he was prepared to enter into further negotiations*

Es wurde erzählt, dass der Verwalter ihnen persönlich das Mittagessen **auftrug** (Wiechert)   *It was recounted that the administrator served them lunch in person*

If *dass* is included, the indicative is almost as frequent as the subjunctive in written German. However, if *dass* is omitted (see **17.2.1b**), then the subjunctive is almost always used, e.g. *Der Kanzler erklärte, er sei zu weiteren Verhandlungen bereit*.

- if a **first** or **second person** is involved:

Er hat dir doch gesagt, von wo sie gekommen **ist**   *He did tell you where she had come from*

Er hat mir erzählt, dass der Fluss hier tief **ist**   *He told me that the river was deep here*

In deinem letzten Brief hast du mir geschrieben, seine Tochter **studiert** schon vier Semester in Hamburg   *In your last letter you wrote that his daughter had already been studying in Hamburg for four semesters*

The function of *Konjunktiv I* is to distance the speaker from what is being reported, i.e. to make it clear that s/he isn't willing to vouch for whether it is true or not. For this reason it may not make sense to use it when the speaker or the listener is directly involved.

- if the 'replacement rule' (see **14.4.2b**) is ignored:

Die Verfügung des letzten deutschen Kaisers besagte, dass im Ruhrgebiet weder Universitäten noch Kasernen gebaut werden **dürfen** (*v. d. Grün*)   *The decree by the last German emperor declared that neither universities nor barracks were allowed to be built in the Ruhr*

The standard rule would require *dürften*, as the form *dürfen* is identical with the indicative and not a clear subjunctive. However, it is not unusual to see ambiguous forms like this in the third person plural. They are sometimes used, too, if the 'replacement rule' produces an obsolete past subjunctive form, as in the following example:

Der Unterhändler sagte, er hoffe, dass die Vernunft siege und Verhandlungen **beginnen**   *The negotiator said he hoped that reason would prevail and talks would begin*

Applying the replacement rule would result in the obsolete form *begönnen*.

- for stylistic reasons, to render the flavour of colloquial speech:

Seit der Wende denken die Nazis, sie **bestraft** ohnehin keiner	*Since unification the Nazis have thought that nobody would punish them anyway*

(d) Alleged differences in meaning between forms in reported speech

It is sometimes claimed that there is a difference in meaning between the three possible forms:

- *Konjunktiv I*:   Manfred sagte, dass er krank **gewesen sei**

- *Konjunktiv II*:   Manfred sagte, dass er krank **gewesen wäre**

- **Indicative**:   Manfred sagte, dass er krank **gewesen ist**

In this view, *Konjunktiv I* is used just to report Manfred's statement neutrally, without offering any personal opinion as to whether it is true or false. Using *Konjunktiv II* **,** on the other hand, would make it clear that the speaker thinks Manfred's statement is untrue, while the speaker's use of the indicative would acknowledge that it is a fact that he had been ill.

However, although some writers appear to have attempted to apply such a distinction, it is never consistently maintained. In practice the use of the three forms is determined not by meaning, but by register, stylistic considerations and norms of usage, as outlined in this section.

14.4.4 Indirect questions and commands

(a) Usage in indirect questions is exactly the same as in indirect statements

In formal written registers *Konjunktiv I* (or *Konjunktiv II*, by the 'replacement rule') is used:

Sie fragte ihn, wie alt sein Vater **sei**	*She asked him how old his father was*
Der Lehrer fragte uns, ob wir **wüssten**, was das **bedeute** (*Böll*)	*The teacher asked us if we knew what that meant*
Die Dame fragte, ob denn die Typen einer bestimmten Sorte von Schreibmaschinen alle ununterscheidbar gleich **wären** (*Johnson*)	*The lady asked whether the characters of a particular make of typewriter were all the same and indistinguishable from one another*

As in statements, *Konjunktiv II* is sometimes used even if a distinct *Konjunktiv I* form is available: *Sie fragte ihn, wie alt sein Vater wäre*.

The indicative occasionally occurs in indirect questions in formal writing, although it is less frequent than the subjunctive:

Warum ich nicht fragte, ob Hanna noch **lebt**, weiß ich nicht (*Frisch*)	*I don't know why I didn't ask whether Hanna was still alive*

(ii) In everyday spoken German, the indicative, *Konjunktiv II* or the conditional are used:

> Sie hat ihn gefragt, wie alt sein Vater **ist/wäre**
> Tante Emma hat sie gefragt, ob sie Hunger **hat/hätte**
> Der Lehrer hat gefragt, ob sie es **wissen/wüßten/wissen würden**

(b) Commands are reported in indirect speech by using a modal verb

Konjunktiv I is used in writing, but both *Konjunktiv II* and the indicative are frequent, and these are the most usual variants in spoken German.

(i) *sollen* is the most frequent verb used in indirect commands, see **15.6.1b**. Thus the direct command *Rufe mich morgen im Büro an!* would correspond to the indirect command:

Frau Hempel sagte ihm, er **solle/sollte/soll** sie morgen im Büro anrufen	*Ms Hempel told him to call her at the office tomorrow*

(ii) *müssen* indicates a more forceful command, e.g. *Frau Hempel sagte ihm, er müsse/müsste / muss sie* (*unbedingt*) *morgen im Büro anrufen*
(iii) *mögen* sounds less peremptory. It is most often used in the *Konjunktiv II* form *möchte*: *Frau Hempel sagte ihm, er* **möchte** *sie morgen im Büro anrufen* **.** The *Konjunktiv I* form *möge* is also found in formal registers. Elsewhere it can sound stilted (or possibly facetious):

der junge Kleiderverkäufer, der mich bat, ich **möge** doch auch bei ihm etwas kaufen (*Biehl*)	*the young clothing salesman who asked me please to buy something from him, too*

14.5 Other uses of the subjunctive

14.5.1 Hypothetical comparisons

(a) Hypothetical comparative clauses: *als ob* **and the subjunctive**

als ob introduces clauses expressing a hypothetical comparison and is the most frequently used equivalent of English 'as if'. It is regularly followed by a verb in the subjunctive.

(i) If the action in the 'as if'-clause is simultaneous with the action in the main clause, the simple **past subjunctive** is used:

Er tat, **als ob** er krank wäre   *He acted as if he was/were ill*
Das Kind weint, **als ob** es Schmerzen hätte   *The child is crying as if it is in pain*

The **conditional** can be used if the simple past subjunctive is obsolete or unusual (see **14.2.3**), as *bewürbe* would be in the following example:

Sie hatten den Eindruck, als **würde** sich Diana um die Rolle   *They had the impression that Diana was*
    in einem Kostümfilm **bewerben** (*Spiegel*)   *trying for a part in a period film*

(ii) If the action in the 'as if'-clause took place before the action in the main clause, the **pluperfect subjunctive** is used:

Sie sah aus, als ob sie seit Tagen nicht **gegessen hätte**   *She looked as if she hadn't eaten for days*
Er tat, als ob nichts **passiert wäre**   *He acted as if nothing had happened*

(iii) If the action in the 'as if'-clause will take place after the action in the main clause, the **conditional** is used:

Es sieht aus, als ob es bald **regnen würde** (*taz*)   *It looks as if it is going to rain soon*
Es sah aus, als ob er gleich **hinfallen würde**   *It looked as if he was about to fall down*

(b) Alternative constructions in hypothetical comparisons

(i) The *ob* of *als ob* can be left out, and the finite verb, which is **always** in the subjunctive, then moves into first position, immediately after *als*:

Er tat, **als wäre** er krank   Das Kind weint, **als hätte** es Schmerzen
Das Kleid ist rosa, weiß und lila und sieht aus, als   *The dress is pink, white and lilac and looks as if*
    gehörte es einer sevillanischen Tänzerin (*SZ*)   *it belongs to a dancer from Seville*

In practice this is at least as frequent than *als ob* in writing, but hardly ever used in speech.

(ii) *als wenn* and *wie wenn* are less frequent alternatives to *als ob*:

Er tat, **als wenn/wie wenn** er krank wäre
Das Kind weint, **als wenn/wie wenn** es Schmerzen hätte

(iii) In written German, *Konjunktiv I* can be used rather than *Konjunktiv II* without any difference in meaning, but it is less frequent, and some Germans consider it incorrect:

Er tat, als ob er krank **sei**   Es sah aus, als **werde** er hinfallen

Sie sieht aus, als ob sie seit Tagen nicht gegessen **habe**

Konjunktiv I is sometimes used, rather than a conditional (see **(a)** above), to avoid an obsolete or unusual past subjunctive form (see **14.2.3**):

Der Eindruck, als **befände** sich die Partei auf dem Weg   *The impression that the party was on the way*
 zurück in ihre beschwerliche Vergangenheit – als   *back to its problematic past, that it wasn't*
 kämpfe sie nicht für die Überwindung akuter Probleme   *fighting to overcome immediate problems*
 (*Zeit*)

The *Konjunktiv II* form *kämpfte* is not distinguishable from the past indicative, and so the writer has preferred to use *Konjunktiv I* – although the past subjunctive *befände* **is** used earlier in the same sentence.

(iv) The **indicative** is frequently used in spoken German, especially in the North (Austrians consider it a 'Prussianism'), and it does occur in writing, although the subjunctive is generally considered preferable.

Er tat, als ob er krank **war**   Es ist mir, als ob ich hinfallen **werde**

Sie sieht aus, als ob sie seit Tagen nicht gegessen **hat**

14.5.2 Clauses of purpose

(a) Clauses with *damit* 'so that' sometimes have a verb in the subjunctive

Konjunktiv I or *Konjunktiv II* is used without any difference in meaning:

Konstantin musste als Erster über den Graben, um die Flinte   *Konstantin had to cross the ditch first to take*
 in Empfang zu nehmen, damit sie nicht womöglich mir ins   *hold of the shotgun so that I shouldn't*
 Wasser **fiele** (*Dönhoff*)   *drop it into the water*
Einmal schickte Dionysos dem Aristippos drei Mädchen,   *Dionysus once sent three girls to Aristippos*
 damit er sich eine davon als Geliebte aussuchen **könne**   *so that he could choose one of them as a*
 (*SZ*)   *lover*

This usage is typical of elevated registers and can sound rather old-fashioned. The indicative is nowadays more frequent in all registers, e.g.:

| Aber passen Sie auf, wenn Sie da vorbeigehen, damit Sie nicht überfahren **werden** (*Lehmkuhl*) | *But watch out there that you're not run over when you go past* |

The modal verbs *können* and *sollen* are often used in *damit*-clauses, especially (but not only) in spoken German, e.g.:

| Dieses Jahr vermietete ein Hausbesitzer einen Teil des Dachs an einen Mobilfunkbetreiber, damit dieser dort eine Antenne aufstellen **konnte** (MM) | *This year a house-owner rented out part of his roof to a mobile telephone company, so that it could set up an aerial there.* |

(b) The conjunction *auf dass* 'so that'

auf dass is an alternative to *damit* . It sounds archaic and solemn and is most often followed by a subjunctive (usually *Konjunktiv I* if the form is unambiguous):

| Der Häuptling eines Eingeborenenstammes verfluchte sie, **auf dass** ihnen nichts von allem, was sie dem Boden und den Gewässern abgewinnen würde, je zum Nutzen **gereiche** (*Spiegel*) | *The chief of a native tribe cursed them, that they might never derive benefit from anything they gained from the soil or the waters* |

14.5.3 *Konjunktiv II* can moderate the tone of an utterance

Konjunktiv II can sound less blunt than the indicative and is often used to tone down an assertion, a statement, a request or a question. This usage is very frequent, especially in spoken German, and the conditional is often used in similar contexts with a similar effect in English. The simple past subjunctive of the common verbs is used, or the conditional form of others:

Ich **wüsste** wohl, was zu tun **wäre**	*I think I know what's to be done*
Eine Frage **hätte** ich doch noch	*There's one more thing I'd like to ask*
Da **wäre** er nun aufgewacht	*He seems to have woken up*
Ich **würde** auch **meinen**, dass es jetzt zu spät ist	*It seems a little late to me, too*
Diese Sache **hätten** wir also geregelt	*We would appear to have sorted that out*
Das **wär**'s für heute	*I think that's enough for today*
Hätten Sie sonst noch einen Wunsch?	*Is there anything else you would like?*
Würden Sie bitte das Fenster **zumachen**?	*Would you be so kind as to shut the window?*
Könnten Sie mir bitte sagen, wie ich zum Bahnhof komme?	*Could you please tell me how to get to the station?*

14.5.4 *Konjunktiv II* in time clauses

Konjunktiv II is sometimes used in time clauses introduced by *bis*, *bevor* or *ehe*. This usage is only found in formal writing and is an optional (and much less

frequent) alternative to the indicative. It can stress that it was still in doubt whether the action or event in question would or did actually take place:

Sie beschlossen zu warten, bis er **käme**	*They decided to wait till he came*
Er weigerte sich, den Vertrag zu unterzeichnen, bevor wir ihm weitere Zugeständnisse **gemacht hätten**	*He refused to sign the contract before we had made further concessions*

14.5.5 *Konjunktiv II* **in negative contexts**

Konjunktiv II can be used in contexts where an event, action or state was possible, but in fact did not take place or was not the case. The indicative is almost always a possible alternative, especially in speech, but it can sound less tentative. Such contexts are:

(a) After the conjunctions *nicht dass*, *ohne dass* and *als dass*

Nicht, dass er faul **wäre** (*or* **ist**), aber er kommt in seinem Beruf nicht voran	*Not that he's lazy, but he's not getting on in his career*
Es wurden auch häppchenweise private Daten gesammelt, angeblich ohne dass das Unternehmen davon **wüsste**	*Private data was also collected little by little – allegedly without the company knowing anything about it*
(*wusste* would sound more definite)	
Die Auswahl war zu klein, als dass ich mich **hätte** schnell entscheiden mögen (*Grass*)	*The choice was too small for me to have wanted to decide quickly*

The commonly used set phrase *nicht dass ich (es) wüsste* 'not that I know of' always appears in that form, with a subjunctive, even in spoken German.

(b) In other subordinate clauses where the main clause and/or the subordinate clause have a negative element

So gab es keine menschliche Tätigkeit, die nicht von Gestank begleitet gewesen **wäre** (*Süßkind*)	*So there was no human activity which was not accompanied by stench*
Es gibt nichts, was schwieriger **wäre** (*or* ist), als der Gebrauch des Konjunktivs	*There's nothing more difficult than the use of the subjunctive*
nicht eine einzige Großstadt, die nicht ihr Gesicht in zwei Jahrzehnten gründlich gewandelt **hätte** (*Zeit*)	*not a single city that has not changed its appearance totally in twenty years*
(**hat** would sound much more positive)	

(c) In sentences with *fast* or *beinahe*

In these, the pluperfect subjunctive can be used to emphasize that something almost happened, but didn't:

Er **wäre** (*or* ist) **beinahe hingefallen**	*He almost fell down*
Ich **wäre** (*or* bin) **fast nicht gekommen**	*I nearly didn't come*
Wir **hätten** (*or* haben) das Spiel **beinahe gewonnen**	*We almost won the match*
Süden war so überrascht, dass er **beinah** auf den falschen Knopf gedrückt **hätte** (*Ani*)	*Süden was so surprised that he almost pressed the wrong button*

14.5.6 The subjunctive in wishes, instructions and commands

(a) *Konjunktiv I* can be used in the third person to express a wish

In modern German this is largely restricted to set phrases, e.g.:

Gott **segne** dich/dieses Haus!	*God bless you/this house!*
Es **lebe** die Freiheit!	*Long live freedom!*
Gott **sei** Dank!	*Thank God!*
Behüte dich Gott!	*God protect you!*

The use of the *Konjunktiv I* of *mögen* in wishes, e.g. *Möge er glücklich sein!* 'May he be happy!' is archaic.

(b) A conditional clause with *Konjunktiv II* can express a wish

The clause can have the form with or without *wenn*, see **14.3.3a**. The wish can be strengthened by adding *doch* and/or *nur* or *bloß* (see **9.1.7e** and **9.1.25c**):

Wenn er doch nur **käme**!	*If only he would come*
Wenn er bloß fleißiger **arbeiten würde**!	*If only he would work harder!*
Wenn ich bloß/nur/doch zu Hause **geblieben wäre**!	*If only I'd stayed at home!*
Hätte mein Vater doch dieses Haus nie **gekauft**!	*If only my father hadn't bought this house!*

(c) The *Konjunktiv I* of *sein* or the *sein* -passive can express a proposition

This usage is typical of academic, technical or mathematical language:

Gegeben **sei** ein Dreieck ABC	*Given a triangle ABC*
In diesem Zusammenhang **sei** nur darauf verwiesen, dass diese Hypothese auf Einstein zurückgeht	*In this context we merely wish to point out that this hypothesis goes back to Einstein*

In mathematics the indicative is now at least as common as the subjunctive: *Gegeben ist ein Dreieck ABC*.

(d) *Konjunktiv I* in commands or instructions

As the imperative only has forms for the second person, the subjunctive is used in commands or instructions in the third person and the first person plural (see **14.1.2**):

Also, **spielen** wir jetzt Karten!	*Well, let's play cards*
Im Notfall **wende** man sich an den Hausmeister!	*In case of emergency please apply to the caretaker*

15 The modal auxiliaries

dürfen mögen sollen
können müssen wollen

These six verbs in German are known as the MODAL AUXILIARY verbs, and their **features** and **uses** are explained in the following sections:

15.1 The **forms** and **syntactic features** of the modal auxiliary verbs
15.2 dürfen
15.3 können
15.4 mögen
15.5 müssen
15.6 sollen
15.7 wollen

They are **'modal'** verbs because their typical function is to indicate the attitude of the speaker with regard to what is being said, expressing ideas like ability, possibility, permission, necessity, obligation and volition. This range of meaning is related to that of the MODAL PARTICLES (see **Chapter 9**) and the category of MOOD (see **Chapter 14**). They are **'auxiliary'** verbs because they are used with other verbs.

15.1 The modal auxiliaries: form and syntax

The modal auxiliary verbs have several features which set them apart from other German verbs, and from their English equivalents. The most important of these are as follows:

- Their forms are wholly **irregular** in similar ways (see **10.1.3c** and **Table 10.7**)
- They have a full range of **tense** and **mood** forms (see **15.1.1**)

- They are used with a **'bare' infinitive**, without *zu* (see **11.3.1a** and **15.1.2a**)
- Their **perfect tenses** are constructed with the **infinitive** (see **11.3.2a** and **15.1.2b**)

15.1.1 Tense and mood forms

The German modal auxiliaries have a full range of tense and mood forms. In this they differ from the corresponding English verbs (*can*, *may*, *must*, etc.), which have at most only a present tense and a past tense (often with conditional meaning). German *können*, for example, can be used in the future tense:

Er **wird** es morgen nicht machen **können**   *He won't be able to do it tomorrow*

English 'can' has no future tense, so the paraphrase 'be able to' has to be used to refer to the future. Similarly, there is a clear difference in German between the past tense *konnte*, which means **'was able to'**, and the past subjunctive *könnte*, which means **'would be able to'**. English 'could', on the other hand, can be used in either sense, depending on the context:

Ich **konnte** sie gestern nicht besuchen, weil ich keine Zeit hatte   *I couldn't (= wasn't able to) visit her yesterday, because I didn't have time*

Ich **könnte** sie morgen besuchen, wenn ich das Auto nehmen dürfte   *I could (= would be able to) visit her tomorrow if you let me take the car*

Because of this, the German modal auxiliaries can seem complex, but they are easier to sort out if the various combinations of tense and mood with a following simple or compound infinitive are treated independently and learned with their usual English equivalents. The examples in sections **15.2** to **15.7** are set out to facilitate this, and **Table 15.1** illustrates the various possible combinations with *können*.

TABLE 15.1   The tenses and moods of *können* with an infinitive

Tense	Infinitive type	Example	
present	**+ infinitive**	Sie **kann** es **machen**	*She can do it*
present	**+ perfect infinitive**	Sie **kann** es **gemacht haben**	*She can have done it*
future	**+ infinitive**	Sie **wird** es **machen können**	*She will be able to do it*
past	**+ infinitive**	Sie **konnte** es **machen**	*She was able to do it*
perfect	**+ infinitive**	Sie **hat** es **machen können**	*She has been able to do it*

Tense	Infinitive type	Example	
pluperfect	+ infinitive	Sie **hatte** es **machen können**	*She had been able to do it*
past subj.	+ infinitive	Sie **könnte** es **machen**	*She could do it*
past subj.	+ perfect infinitive	Sie **könnte** es **gemacht haben**	*She could have done it*
pluperf. subj.	+ infinitive	Sie **hätte** es **machen können**	*She would have been able to do it*

15.1.2 Constructions with the modal auxiliaries

More detailed information on word order with modal verbs is given in **19.1**.

(a) The modal auxiliaries are followed by a 'bare' infinitive

(see **11.3.1a**). This is similar to the typical English equivalents of these verbs, which are not used with 'to'. As **Table 15.1** shows, they can be followed by a simple or a compound infinitive:

Ich kann **schwimmen**	*I can swim*
Darf ich **gehen**?	*May I go?*
Sie muss es **gesehen haben**	*She must have seen it*

(b) The perfect tenses of modal auxiliaries

In the perfect tenses, the **infinitive** of the modal verbs is used instead of the past participle:

Wir haben meinen Onkel nicht besuchen **können**	*We weren't able to visit my uncle*
Das habe ich ihr versprechen **müssen**	*I had to promise her that*
Sie hätte das Buch lesen **sollen**	*She ought to have read the book*

However, the past participle is used if the modal auxiliary is used on its own, without a following infinitive (see **11.3.2** and **15.1.2e**), e.g. *Ich habe es nicht gewollt*.

Using the past participle rather than the infinitive, e.g. *Herbert hat arbeiten gemusst*, is not unknown in spoken German, but it is considered incorrect.

(c) In main clauses the infinitive of the main verb is in final position

Darf ich heute Tennis **spielen**?	*May I play tennis today?*
Ich möchte das Buch gern **lesen**	*I would like to read that book*

In compound tenses, the infinitive of the modal verb comes **after** the infinitive of the main verb at the end of the clause:

Sie wird morgen nicht **kommen können** *She won't be able to come tomorrow*

Sie hätte ihrem Mann doch **helfen sollen** *She really ought to have helped her husband*

(d) In infinitive clauses, the modal verb follows the infinitive of the main verb

i.e. at the **end** of the infinitive clause, with the particle *zu* between the main verb and the modal verb:

Es scheint **regnen zu wollen** *It looks as if it's going to rain*

Sie gab vor, meine Handschrift **nicht lesen zu können** *She claimed not to be able to read my handwriting*

(e) In subordinate clauses, the modal verb follows the infinitive of the main verb

i.e. it comes at the end of the clause:

Wenn Sie diesen Ring heute nicht **kaufen wollen**, **...** *If you don't want to buy this ring today, ...*

Obwohl ich gestern Abend **ausgehen durfte**, **...** *Although I was allowed to go out last night, ...*

die Frau, die ich **besuchen sollte** *the woman I ought to visit*

If a modal verb is used in a compound tense in a subordinate clause, the tense auxiliary *werden* or *haben* comes **before** the two infinitives:

Obwohl ich sie morgen **werde** besuchen können, ... *Although I'll be able to visit her tomorrow, ...*

Es war klar, dass er sich **würde** anstrengen müssen *It was clear that he would have to exert himself*

Das Buch, das ich **hätte** kaufen sollen, kostete dreißig Euro *The book I ought to have bought cost thirty euros*

Sie hat mir gesagt, dass sie es **hat** machen müssen *She told me she had had to do it*

The same order is usual with a **passive infinitive**:

... weil der Vertrag **hätte** überprüft werden sollen *... because the contract should have been checked*

If there are **two modals** in the clause, the finite one may come before **or** after the two infinitives:

... weil sie ihrem Bruder **müsste** helfen können/ } *... because she ought to be able to help her brother*
... weil sie ihrem Bruder helfen können **müsste**

In Austrian usage, the tense auxiliary is often placed between the main verb and the modal verb, e.g.:

am Flughafen Wien-Schwechat, wo die Luftraumsperre von 0.00 Uhr bis 5.00 Uhr **dauern hätte sollen** (*Standard*)	*at Vienna Schwechat airport, where the airspace closure should have lasted from midnight to 5 a.m.*

This order is frequent in Austria, but it is not accepted as standard elsewhere.

(f) The omission of the main verb after the modal auxiliaries

The infinitive of the main verb can be left understood and omitted in some contexts:

(i) A verb of motion can be omitted after the modal verb if there is an adverbial or, very often, a separable prefix in the sentence which conveys the idea of movement. This usage is common in everyday speech, but it is found in writing, too:

Wo wollen Sie morgen hin?	*Where do you want to go tomorrow?*
Ich will nach Frankfurt	*I want to go to Frankfurt*
Ich sollte zu meinem Onkel	*I ought to go to my uncle's*
Ich kann heute Abend nicht ins Kino	*I can't go to the cinema tonight*
Sie will ihm nach	*She wants to go after him*
Ich möchte jetzt fort	*I'd like to leave now*

If the modal is at the end of the clause, a separable prefix is written together with it, e.g. *Sie wissen ja, dass Sie jetzt zu Fuß nach Elberfeld zurückmüssen.*

The verb understood is usually *gehen*, *kommen* or *fahren*, as would be the case in the above examples, but other verbs can be omitted if the idea of movement is sufficiently clear from the adverbial or the prefix:

Er wollte über die Mauer [klettern]	*He wanted to climb over the wall*
Die Strömung war so stark, dass er nicht bis ans Ufer [schwimmen] konnte	*The current was so strong that he couldn't swim to the bank*

The omission of a verb of motion is most common with simple tenses of the modals, but it is frequently found with the future and perfect tenses of *können* and *müssen* (and in the perfect the past participle of the modal is used):

Er hat ins Geschäft gemusst	*He's had to go to work*

Ich glaube schon, ich werde vorbeikönnen *I think I'll be able to get past*

(ii) if the main verb is *tun*:

Das kann ich nicht	*I can't do that*
Das darfst/sollst du nicht	*You mustn't/ought not to do that*
Was soll ich damit?	*What am I supposed to do with it?*
Ich kann nichts dafür	*I can't help it*
Er kann was	*He is very able*

(iii) if the main verb has just been mentioned

This often corresponds to English usage. Optionally, *es* can be added to make it clear that a previous phrase is being referred to, see **3.6.1a**:

Ich wollte Tennis spielen, aber ich konnte/durfte (es) nicht	*I wanted to play tennis, but I couldn't/wasn't allowed to*
Er kann dem amerikanischen Diktat nicht nachgeben, auch wenn er es wollte (*SbgN*)	*He can't give in to the American dictate even if he wanted to*

(iv) in some idiomatic or colloquial phrases:

Ich kann nicht mehr [weitermachen]	*I can't go on*
Was soll das eigentlich [bedeuten]?	*What's the point of that?*
Sie hat nicht mehr gewollt	*She didn't want to go on*
Er kann mich [am Arsch lecken] (*vulg.*)	*He can kiss my ass*
Mir kann keiner [was antun]	*No-one can touch me*
Dürfen wir Pommes [haben]?	*Can we have chips/fries?*

(g) In German two modals can be used in the same sentence

This is different to standard English, which does not permit two modal verbs to occur in the same sentence:

Rechnen **muss** doch jeder **können**	*But everyone has to be able to add up*
Wir **müssten** hier spielen **dürfen**	*We should be allowed to play here*
Wie **kannst** du das nur machen **wollen**?	*How can you want to do that?*

15.2 *dürfen*

15.2.1 *dürfen most often expresses permission*

(a) In this sense *dürfen* corresponds to English 'be allowed to' or 'may'

Sie **dürfen** hereinkommen	{	*They may/can come in*
		They are allowed to come in
Sie **durfte** ausgehen, wenn sie wollte		*She was allowed to go out when she wanted to*
Endlich **durfte** er die Augen wieder aufmachen		*At last he could open his eyes again*
Sie **wird** erst heute Nachmittag mit uns spielen **dürfen**		*She won't be allowed to play with us till this afternoon*

In English, 'can' also expresses permission and is often preferred to 'may', especially in informal speech. In German *können* is sometimes heard for *dürfen* in everyday speech in this sense (see **15.3.4**), but it is much less common than English 'can'.

(b) Negative *dürfen* has the sense of English 'must not'

i.e. it expresses a prohibition (= 'not be allowed to'):

Sie **dürfen nicht** hereinkommen	{	*They mustn't come in*
		They're not allowed to come in
Wenn es ernst wird, **darf** man den Humor **nicht** verlieren (*V. Wyss*)		*If it gets serious, you musn't lose your sense of humour*
Das **darf** d**och nicht** wahr sein!		*But that really can't be true!*
		(i.e. it really can't be allowed)

nicht müssen usually means 'doesn't have to', 'needn't', not 'mustn't', see **15.5.1c**.

(c) *Konjunktiv II forms of nicht dürfen*

These often correspond to English 'shouldn't', 'ought not to', but *dürfen* keeps its basic sense of permission in such contexts and thus sounds more incisive than *sollen*, see **15.6.4a**:

Das **dürfte** sie doch gar **nicht** wissen	*She ought not to know that*
	(i.e. it shouldn't be allowed)
Er **hätte** so etwas **nicht** machen **dürfen**	*He ought not to have done anything like that*
	(i.e. someone should have forbidden it)

(d) *dürfen* is commonly used in polite formulas

In these, it usually corresponds to English 'can', with the tone of a polite request or a tentative suggestion:

Das **darf** als Vorteil betrachtet werden	*That can/may be seen as an advantage*
Was **darf** sein? (in a shop or restaurant)	*How can/may I help you?*
Der Wein **dürfte** etwas trockener sein	*The wine could just be a bit drier*
Dürfte ich Sie um das Salz bitten?	*Could I ask you to pass the salt?*
Wir freuen uns, Sie hier begrüßen zu **dürfen**	*We are pleased to be able to welcome you here*

15.2.2 *dürfen* can express probability

The *Konjunktiv II* of *dürfen* expresses an assumption that something is likely:

Das **dürfte** reichen	*That will probably be enough*
Manchester United **dürfte** unser bisher schwerster Gegner in der Champions League werden	*Manchester United will probably be our most difficult opponent so far in the Champions League*
Das **dürfte** ein Vermögen gekostet haben	*That'll have cost a fortune*

This sense of *dürfen* is close to that of the future tense with *werden* (see **12.3.2**), or that of the modal particle *wohl* (see **9.1.34**).

15.3 *können*

15.3.1 *können* most often expresses ability

Its usual English equivalents are 'can' or 'be able to':

Sie **kann** ihn heute besuchen	*She can/is able to visit him today*
Ich **konnte** sie gestern nicht besuchen Ich **habe** sie gestern nicht besuchen **können**	} *I couldn't visit her yesterday/I wasn't able to visit her yesterday*
Ich **werde** sie morgen besuchen **können**	*I'll be able to visit her tomorrow*
Ich **könnte** sie morgen besuchen, wenn ich Zeit hätte	*I could visit her tomorrow if I had time*
Ich **hätte** sie gestern besuchen **können**, wenn ich Zeit gehabt hätte	*I would have been able to/could have visited her yesterday, if I'd had time*

15.3.2 *können* can express possibility

(a) In this sense *können* usually corresponds to English 'may'

Das **kann** sein	*That may be*
Ich **kann** mich irren	*I may be wrong*

Er **kann** krank sein   *He may be ill*

However, **the use of** *können* **to express possibility is limited**. In general *können* can only be used in this sense in contexts where it cannot possibly be understood to mean 'be able to'. Thus, *Sie kann ihn heute besuchen* can only mean 'She is able to visit him today'. In such contexts one of the other ways of expressing 'may' in German given in **(b)** below has to be used.

Using *können* to express possibility is most often an option:

(i) with a perfect or passive infinitive:

Sie **kann** den Schlüssel verloren haben   *She may have lost the key*

Die Straße **kann** gesperrt sein   *The road may be blocked*

Er **kann** krank gewesen sein   *He may have been ill*

(ii) in the *Konjunktiv II* **form** *könnte* (= English 'might' or 'could'), to indicate a remote possibility:

Sie **könnte** jetzt in Wien sein   *She might/could be in Vienna now*

Wir **hätten** umkommen **können**   *We might/could have been killed*

Er **könnte** krank sein   *He might/could be ill*

Er **könnte** krank gewesen sein   *He might/could have been ill*

(iii) *könnte* can also be used to express a **tentative request** (see **14.5.3**):

Könnten Sie mir bitte helfen?   Could you please help me?

(b) Other German equivalents for English 'may', 'might'

Since *können* can only be used in the sense of possibility in contexts where it cannot be understood to mean 'be able to', we often need to express the idea of possibility in German in other ways, i.e.:

(i) with the adverbs *vielleicht* or *möglicherweise*, or a paraphrase (e.g. *Es ist möglich, dass ...*). Compare the following possibilities for English 'He may be working in the garden':

Vielleicht arbeitet er im Garten

Es ist möglich, dass er im Garten arbeitet

Möglicherweise arbeitet er im Garten

Er kann im Garten arbeiten can only mean 'He is able to work in the garden'.

(ii) In sentences with a negative, the same alternatives can be used, or the sense of possibility can be made clear by adding *auch* to *nicht können* (see **9.1.4**), especially if you are contradicting something just said. *nicht* is stressed in these contexts:

Sie **kann auch** <u>nicht</u> kommen	}	*She may not come*
Möglicherweise kommt sie nicht		
Er **kann auch** <u>nicht</u> krank gewesen sein	}	*He may not have been ill*
Vielleicht ist er gar nicht krank gewesen		
Sie **kann** das Auto **auch** <u>nicht</u> gesehen haben	}	*She may not have seen the car*
Vielleicht hat sie das Auto gar nicht gesehen		

15.3.3 *können* meaning 'know'

i.e. to 'know' something you have learned. This is used especially with reference to languages, school subjects, the rules of games, etc. *können* is a full verb, not an auxiliary, in these contexts and it is used without a following infinitive:

Er **kann** Spanisch	*He can speak Spanish*
Ich **kann** die Melodie der österreichischen Nationalhymne	*I know the tune of the Austrian national anthem* (i.e. 'I've learnt it')
Kann der Jochen Skat?	*Does Jochen know how to play Skat?*
Ich **kann** den Trick	*I know that trick* (i.e. 'I can do it'. Compare: *Ich kenne den Trick* 'I've seen it before')

15.3.4 *können* used to express permission

i.e. in the sense of *dürfen* (see **15.2.1**). This usage is colloquial:

Kann ich herein?	*Can I come in?*
Du **kannst** den Bleistift behalten	*You can keep the pencil*

However, even in colloquial German, *können* is less frequent to express permission than 'can' is in English.

15.3.5 English 'can' with verbs of sensation

können is used less often than English 'can' with verbs of sensation, such as 'see', 'hear', 'feel' and 'smell'. These are often used with 'can' in English without any real idea of being able, but in practice to make up for the fact that these verbs are

not used in progressive tenses to express a continuous action. In this way, 'I can see it/hear it' is used because we cannot say 'I am seeing it/hearing it'. *können* is not needed in German unless the idea of ability is being emphasized:

Ich sehe die Kirche	*I can see the church*
Ich höre Musik	*I can hear music*
Sie sahen die Stadt im Tal liegen	*They could see the town lying in the valley*

15.3.6 English 'I couldn't help ...'

There are a number of alternatives in German for this construction, e.g. for English 'I couldn't help laughing':

(i) Ich musste einfach lachen
(ii) Ich konnte nicht anders, ich musste lachen
(iii) Ich konnte nichts dafür, ich musste lachen
(iv) Ich konnte nicht umhin zu lachen

Alternative (i) is the simplest and most usual in speech, although (ii) and (iii) are quite current. Alternative (iv) is mainly used in formal registers.

15.3.7 könnte ... gemacht haben and hätte ... machen können

These constructions have different meanings in German. The English equivalents for both are 'could have done' or 'might have done', but German makes distinctions which we ignore in English, e.g.:

Sie **könnte** den Brief nicht **geschrieben haben**	*She couldn't have written the letter* (i.e. it couldn't have been her who wrote it)
Sie **hätte** den Brief nicht **schreiben können**	*She couldn't have written the letter* (i.e. she wouldn't have been able to)
Er **könnte umgekommen sein**	*He might have been killed* (i.e. it is possible that he was killed)
Er **hätte umkommen können**	*He might have been killed* (i.e. it was possible, but he wasn't)

15.4 *mögen*

15.4.1 *mögen* most often expresses liking

This is by far the most common use of *mögen* in present-day German

(a) It is most frequent in the *Konjunktiv II* **form** *möchte*

This expresses a polite request and usually corresponds to English 'would like' or 'want'. It is often linked with the adverb *gern:*

Sie **möchte** (gern) nach Rom fahren   *She would like to go to Rome*

Ich **möchte** nichts mehr davon hören   *I don't want to hear any more about it*

Ich **möchte** ihr Gesicht gesehen haben   *I would have liked to see her face*

Ich **möchte** nicht, dass er heute kommt *I don't want him to come today*

The pluperfect subjunctive is also used occasionally in this sense, e.g.:

Baldini **hätte** ihn erwürgen **mögen** (*Süßkind*)   *Baldini would have liked to strangle him*

In general, though, German more often simply uses *gern* with the pluperfect subjunctive of the verb, e.g., for 'I would have liked to read the book', *Ich hätte gern dieses Buch gelesen.*

(b) Other tenses of *mögen* **are used in the sense of English 'like'**

(i) As a full verb, on its own, it occurs most often (although not exclusively) in the negative, chiefly with reference to people, places and food:

Sie **mag** keinen Tee	*She doesn't like tea*
Ich **mag** ihn nicht	*I don't like him*
Sie **hat** ihn nie **gemocht**	*She never liked him*
Meine Frau hat extra Apfelkuchen gebacken, den mit dem dicken Rahm, den Sie so gern **mögen** (*Balden*)	*My wife has baked apple cake especially, the one with the thick cream which you like so much*

(ii) With a following infinitive it is only used in the negative:

Wie es im Winter werden soll, daran **mag** er noch gar nicht denken (*Zeit*)	*He doesn't want to think about what it's going to be like in winter*
Ich **mag** das Wort gar nicht aussprechen	*I don't even like saying that word out loud*
Ich **mag** diese Fragen nicht beantworten (*BILD*)	*I don't want to answer these questions*
Er **mochte** nicht allein an der Straße stehen (*Johnson*)	*He didn't want to stand on the street alone*

15.4.2 *mögen* **sometimes expresses possibility or probability**

The use of *mögen* to express possibility is largely limited to formal written registers and set phrases (although it is more widely used in speech in the South).

When it is used it tends to express a rather higher degree of probability than *können*, see **15.3.2**.

(a) *mögen* **typically indicates a reasonable degree of probability**

i.e. somewhere between 'possible' and 'probable':

Sie **mag/mochte** etwa sechzig sein	*She is/was probably about sixty*
Die parteipolitischen Attacken der Opposition **mögen** auch eine Rolle gespielt haben (*MM*)	*The party political attacks of the opposition probably also played a part*
An einem Sonntag im März – es **mochte** etwa ein Jahr seit seiner Ankunft in Grasse vergangen sein (*Süßkind*)	*On a Sunday in March – a year or so had probably gone by since his arrival in Grasse*

(b) When indicating possibility *mögen* **often has a concessive sense**

i.e. there is an expected qualification by a following *aber* (which may or may not be present). This usage is similar to English 'That may well be (but ...)':

Das **mag** vielen nicht einleuchten, (aber ...)	*That may not be clear to many, (but ...)*
Das Tief **mag** über Italien weiterwandern und den Balkan einnässen. Wir aber fliegen dorthin, wo die Sonne scheint (*Grzimek*)	*The low may drift over Italy and make the Balkans wet. But we're flying to where the sun shines*
Eine Zeitlang **mochte** es scheinen, dass es gelänge, das Absinken der deutschen Währung abzubremsen, doch schien es nur so (*Heuss*)	*For a time it might have appeared that the attempt to stop the German currency falling would be successful, but that appearance was deceptive*

(c) Idiomatic phrases with *mögen* **expressing possibility**

These are common phrases which are used in spoken German as well as in formal writing:

Das mag (wohl) sein	*That may well be*
Wer mag das (schon) sein?	*Who can that be?*
Wie mag das (nur) gekommen sein?	*How can that have happened?*

A few phrases with *möchte* convey a doubt or a supposition:

Ich möchte meinen, dass ...	*I should think that ...*
Dabei möchte man verrückt werden	*It's enough to drive you mad*

könnte can be used for *möchte* in contexts like these, but it sounds rather less tentative.

15.4.3 *mögen* **in concessive clauses**

i.e. the German equivalent of English clauses like 'whatever/whoever that may be', etc. (see also **17.6.2a**). *mögen* is often used in these clauses, especially in writing:

Wann er auch ankommen mag, ...	*Whenever he may arrive ...*
Was auch immer geschehen mag,...	*Whatever happens ...*
Wer er auch sein mag, ...	*Whoever he may be ...*

Alternatively, the main verb can simply be used on its own, and in practice this is more frequent in less formal registers, especially in spoken German:

Wann er auch **ankommt**, ...   Was auch immer **geschieht**, ...   Wer er auch **ist**, ...

However, *mögen* is always used in the set phrase *Wie dem auch sein mag* 'However that may be'.

15.4.4 *mögen* **in wishes and commands**

(a) *Konjunktiv I* **of** *mögen* **can express a wish or a command in the third person**

Möge er glücklich sein!	*May he be happy!*
Die Herren **mögen** bitte unten warten	*Would the gentlemen be so kind as to wait downstairs?*

This usage is limited to formal German and sounds old-fashioned, see **14.1.2b**.

(b) The subjunctive of *mögen* **is used in indirect commands**

Sagen Sie ihr, sie **möchte** zu mir kommen	*Ask her to be kind enough to come and see me*
Er sagte mir, ich **möchte** einen Augenblick auf ihn warten	*He asked me to wait for him a moment*

The *Konjunktiv I* of *mögen* (e.g. *..., sie möge zu mir kommen)* is also used in indirect commands in formal registers. For further details, see **14.4.4b**.

15.5 *müssen*

15.5.1 *müssen* **most often expresses necessity or compulsion**

(a) The usual English equivalents are 'must' or 'have (got) to'

Wir **müssen** jetzt abfahren	*We must leave now/We have (got) to leave now*
Wir **werden** bald abfahren **müssen**	*We'll have to leave soon*
Ich **musste** um acht abfahren Ich **habe** um acht abfahren **müssen** }	*I had to leave at eight*
Ich **muss** den Brief bis heute Abend **geschrieben haben**	*I've got to have the letter written by tonight*
Wir **mussten** die Anträge bis zum 15. Januar **abgegeben haben**	*We had to have the applications handed in by the 15th of January*
Sie **muss** sich beeilen, wenn sie den Zug erreichen will	*She'll have to hurry if she wants to catch the train*

(b) 'need' is sometimes a more natural English equivalent for *müssen*

This is especially the case with a passive infinitive or a passive equivalent:

Das **muss** gut überlegt werden	*That needs thinking about properly*
Man **muss** sich um sie kümmern	*She needs looking after*

(c) Negative *müssen* keeps the sense of necessity

It usually has the sense of English 'needn't' or 'don't have to':

Wir **müssen** noch **nicht** gehen	*We needn't go yet/We don't have to go yet*
Er **hat** es **nicht** tun **müssen**	*He didn't need to/didn't have to do it*
Du **musst nicht** hier bleiben, du kannst auch gehen	*You don't need to stay here, you can leave*

In practice *nicht brauchen* (see **11.2.4** and **11.3.1a**) is at least as frequent as *nicht müssen* in this meaning, e.g. *Du brauchst nicht hier zu bleiben*.

English **'mustn't'** expresses a **prohibition**, and its usual German equivalent is *nicht dürfen*, see **15.2.1b**. *nicht müssen* is sometimes used in this sense in speech, e.g. *Sie müssen hier nicht parken* 'You mustn't park here', but this is a non-standard (northern) regionalism.

15.5.2 *müssen* can express a logical deduction

(a) This corresponds to English 'must' or 'have to'

Sie spielt heute Tennis, also **muss** es ihr besser gehen	*She's playing tennis today, so she must be better*
Das **muss** ein Fehler sein	*That must/has (got) to be a mistake*
Sie **muss** den Unfall gesehen haben	*She must have seen the accident*

If *müssen* could be taken in context to express necessity where logical deduction is intended, the meaning can be made clear by using the adverb *sicher* rather than *müssen*, e.g.:

Er ist heute **sicher** in Frankfurt   *He must be in Frankfurt today*

Er muss heute in Frankfurt sein would naturally be understood to mean 'He has to be in Frankfurt today'.

(b) The past tense of *müssen* with a simple infinitive expresses a logical deduction in the past

In such contexts English uses 'must' with a compound infinitive:

Er schuftete, dass ihm heiß sein **musste** (*Grass*)   *He was working hard, so he must have been hot*

(c) A logical deduction can be queried by *nicht brauchen*

This is commoner than *nicht müssen*, e.g.:

Er war heute nicht im Büro, aber er **braucht nicht** *He wasn't in the office today, but that doesn't mean*
   deshalb krank zu sein   *to say that he's ill*

aber er muss nicht deshalb krank sein would be a less frequent alternative.

(d) A negative logical deduction is expressed by *nicht können*

This corresponds to English 'can't':

Sie spielt heute Tennis, also **kann** sie **nicht** krank sein   *She's playing tennis today, so she can't be ill*

15.5.3 The *Konjunktiv II* of *müssen*

(a) *müsste* can express a possible compulsion or necessity

In this sense it corresponds to English 'would have to' or 'would need to':

Er weiß ja nicht, was er tut – ich **müsste** ja sonst meine   *He doesn't know what he's doing – otherwise I*
   Hand von ihm zurückziehen (*Böll*)   *would have to disown him*
Es sind Felsen, Gestein, wahrscheinlich vulkanisch, das   *They are rocks and stones, probably volcanic, that*
   müsste man nachsehen und feststellen (*Frisch*)   *would need to be checked and established*

In negative sentences the *Konjunktiv II* of *nicht brauchen* is more usual than that of *nicht müssen*, see **15.5.2c**:

Du hättest **nicht** hinzugehen **brauchen**, wenn ... *You wouldn't have had to go there if ...*

(b) *müsste* **can express a logical probability or necessity**

In this sense, 'should' or 'ought to' are the usual English equivalents:

Dieses Geschäftsmodell macht Wohneigentum in Hamburg deutlich teurer, als es sein **müsste** (*Zeit*)	*This business model makes property in Hamburg more expensive than it ought to be/should be*
Das **müsste** eigentlich reichen	*That really ought to be enough*
Ich **hätte** mich vielleicht anders ausdrücken **müssen**	*Perhaps I ought to/should have expressed myself differently*

This sense of *müsste* is close to that of *sollte*, which also corresponds to English 'should' or' ought to', see **15.6.4**. There is a difference, though, as *sollte* always expresses **an obligation** (often laid on a person by someone else), whereas *müsste* expresses **a logical probability or necessity.** Compare:

Sie **sollte** heute im Büro sein	*She ought to be at the office today*
(i.e. she is obliged to be there if she doesn't want to get into trouble)	
Sie **müsste** heute im Büro sein	*She ought to be at the office today*
(i.e. I assume that is the most likely place for her to be)	
Das **hätte** er eigentlich wissen **sollen**	*He ought to have known that*
(i.e. he was obliged to – it could have stopped him making a mistake)	
Das **hätte** er eigentlich wissen **müssen**	*He ought to have known that*
(i.e. I would have thought it was a pretty fair assumption that he did)	
Wo ist der Brief? Er **müsste** in dieser Schublade sein	*Where's the letter? It ought to be/should be in this drawer*
(A logical deduction: *sollte* is not possible, since there can be no obligation on a letter to be in a particular drawer)	

müsste nicht is not normally used as an equivalent for English 'shouldn't' or 'ought not to'; we usually find *sollte nicht* or *dürfte nicht*, see **15.2.1c** and **15.6.4.**

(c) *müsste ... gemacht haben* **and** *hätte … machen müssen*

The English equivalent for both these constructions is usually 'should/ought to have done', but there can be a distinction between them in German. Compare, for English *He ought to have written the letter yesterday*:

> Er **müsste** den Brief schon gestern **geschrieben haben**
> (i.e. it is a fair deduction that he did)

Er **hätte** den Brief schon gestern **schreiben müssen**
(i.e. one might assume that he did, but he didn't)

15.6 *sollen*

15.6.1 *sollen* most often expresses an obligation

(a) This corresponds to 'be to', 'be supposed to' or (in a few contexts) 'shall'

Um wie viel Uhr **soll** ich kommen?	*What time am I to/shall I come?*
Ich **soll** nicht so viel trinken	*I'm not supposed to drink so much*
Was **soll** ich in Greifswald tun?	*What am I (supposed) to do in Greifswald?*
Sie wusste nicht, was sie tun **sollte**	*She didn't know what to do*
Wir **sollten** uns gestern treffen	*We were (supposed) to meet yesterday*

The meaning of *sollen* is close to that of *müssen*, and 'must', 'have to' is often a possible English equivalent. However, *sollen* always conveys the idea that another person is the source of the obligation. Compare:

Ich **soll** hier bleiben	*I am to/have (got) to stay here* (i.e. someone's told me to)
Ich **muss** hier bleiben	*I've got to stay here* (i.e. I need to)

In questions, the past tense of *sollen* can be used to prompt a strong reaction (negative or positive, depending on the context). It can sound ironic:

Wie **sollte** ich das wissen?	*How was I (supposed) to know that?*
Sollte das nun fertig sein?	*Is that supposed to be finished?* (ironic)
Sollte er wirklich nichts davon wissen?	*Is he really supposed not to know anything about it?*

(b) *sollen* often has the force of a command

See also **14.1.3e.** This use is related to the basic sense of obligation:

Du **sollst** nicht stehlen	*Thou shalt not steal*
Du **sollst** das Fenster zumachen	(*I want you to*) *shut the window*
Man **soll** sofort den Saal verlassen	*Everyone has to leave the room immediately*
Das **soll** dir eine Warnung sein	*Let that be a warning to you*
Er **soll** sofort kommen	*He is to/has got to come at once/Tell him to come at once*

sollen is the most frequent modal auxiliary in indirect commands (see **14.4.4b**):

Sie sagte ihm, er **solle/sollte** unten warten   *She told him to wait downstairs*

Ich habe ihm gesagt, er **soll** seinem Vater helfen   *I told him to help his father*

15.6.2 *sollen* **can express an intention or prediction**

(a) In this sense *sollen* corresponds to 'be to', 'be supposed/meant to'

Der neue Flughafen **soll** bald geöffnet werden	*The new airport is (supposed) to be opened soon*
Soll das ein Kompliment sein?	*Is that meant as a compliment?*
Es **sollte** eine Überraschung sein	*It was intended to be a surprise*
Was **soll** das heißen?	*What's that supposed to mean?*
Es **soll** nicht wieder vorkommen	*It won't happen again*
Das **sollst** du noch bereuen	*You're going to regret that*

(b) The sense of intention is common in first person plural questions

In such contexts *sollen* is an alternative to *wollen*, although there is a slight difference of meaning, see **15.7.1b**. *sollen* leaves the decision entirely to the other person(s), but *wollen* in the same context would indicate that the speaker is in favour:

Was **sollen wir** uns heute in Berlin ansehen?	*What are we going to look at in Berlin today?*
Sollen wir heute Abend ins Theater gehen?	*Shall we go to the theatre tonight?*

(c) The past tense of *sollen* can indicate what was destined to happen

This sense is essentially that of a 'future-in-the-past':

Diese Meinung **sollte** sie noch oft zu hören bekommen	*She would often hear this opinion again*
Er **sollte** früh sterben	*He would/was (destined) to die young*
Er **sollte** niemals nach Deutschland zurückkehren	*He would never return to Germany*

In these contexts *sollte* differs slightly from *würde* (see **14.2.3c**), since it indicates that this is a prediction by the speaker.

15.6.3 *sollen* **can express a rumour or report**

i.e. 'It is said that ...'. Only the present tense of *sollen* is used in this sense, with a compound infinitive to refer to past time if necessary:

Er **soll** steinreich (gewesen) sein	*He is said to be (have been) enormously rich*

Bei den Unruhen **soll** es bisher vier Tote *So far four people are reported to have been killed in the* gegeben haben (*FAZ*) *course of the riots*

Das Auto **soll** eine rote Ampel überfahren *The car is reported to have gone through a red light* haben (*MM*)

15.6.4 The *Konjunktiv II* of *sollen*

(a) The *Konjunktiv II* of *sollen* conveys the idea of a possible obligation

sollte or *hätte* **...** *sollen* are thus the commonest equivalents of English 'should (have)', 'ought to (have)':

Warum **sollte** ich denn nicht ins Theater gehen?	*Why shouldn't I go to the theatre?*
Das **solltest** du mal probieren	*You ought just to try that*
Das **sollte** ihm inzwischen klar geworden sein	*He ought to have realized that by now*
Das **hätten** Sie mir aber gestern sagen **sollen**	*You ought to have told me that yesterday*

For negative 'shouldn't', 'ought not to', *dürfte nicht* can be used as a more incisive alternative to *sollte nicht*, see **15.2.1c**.

For the distinction between *sollte* and *müsste* as equivalents of English 'should'/'ought to', see **15.5.3b**.

(b) *sollte* **...** *gemacht haben* and *hätte* **...** *machen sollen*

The English equivalent for both these constructions is usually 'should'/'ought to have done', but German can make a distinction between them. Thus, for English 'She ought to have written the letter yesterday':

Sie **sollte** den Brief gestern **geschrieben haben** (I would expect her to have done so)
Sie **hätte** den Brief gestern **schreiben sollen** (She ought to have done, but she didn't)

(c) In questions, the *Konjunktiv II* of *sollen* is often used as an alternative to *können*

There is no significant difference in meaning:

Wie **sollte/könnte** ich das wissen?	*How could I know that?*
Wie **hätte** ich das wissen **sollen/können?**	*How could I have known that?*
Warum **sollte/könnte** er nicht einmal in Rom gewesen sein?	*Why shouldn't he have been to Rome some time?*

(d) *sollte* is often used in conditional sentences and clauses of purpose

(i) In conditional sentences it corresponds to 'should' or 'were to', see **14.3.1d**:

Wenn/Falls es regnen **sollte,** so komme ich nicht	*If it should rain, I shan't/won't come*
Sollten Sie ihn sehen, dann grüßen Sie ihn bitte von mir	*If you were to see him, please give him my regards*

(ii) *sollen* is often used in clauses of purpose with *damit* (see **17.5.1a**):

Ich trat zurück, damit sie mich nicht sehen **sollten**	*I stepped back, so that they shouldn't see me*

For alternative usage in clauses of purpose see **14.5.2**.

15.7 *wollen*

15.7.1 *wollen* **most often expresses desire or intention**

(a) In many contexts it expresses a wish

(i) It usually corresponds to English 'want/wish (to)':

Sie **will** ihn um Geld bitten		*She wants to ask him for money*
Sie **wollte** ihn um Geld bitten	}	*She wanted to ask him for money*
Sie **hat** ihm um Geld bitten **wollen**		
Hättest du kommen **wollen?**		*Would you have wanted to come?*
Willst du nicht deinem Vater helfen?		*Don't you want to help your father?*

(ii) In this sense, *wollen* is often used without a dependent infinitive, as a full verb:

Was **wollen** Sie von mir?	*What do you want from me?*
Der Arzt **will,** dass ich mehr Bewegung mache	*The doctor wants me to take more exercise*
Mach, was du **willst**	*Do what you like*

(iii) The sense of 'wish' is often given by *Konjunktiv II* to stress that the wish isn't or wasn't fulfilled:

Ich **wollte,** ich hätte sie nicht so beleidigt	*I wish I hadn't offended her so much*
Ich **wollte,** ich wäre zu Hause	*I wish I was at home*

(iv) *wollen* can correspond to English 'will', 'would':

Er **will** es nicht zugeben	*He won't admit it*
Ich bat sie, es zu tun, aber sie **wollte** nicht	*I asked her to do it, but she wouldn't*
Willst du mir helfen? Ja, ich **will** dir helfen	*Will you help me? Yes, I will help you*

wollen in this sense is distinct in meaning from the future tense. *Wirst du mir helfen? Ja, ich werde dir helfen* sound more impersonal and lack the sense of active intention which is conveyed by *wollen* and which can often be closer to English 'want', i.e. 'Do you want to help me? Yes, I want to help you'.

(v) *wollen* is common in second person questions with the sense of an insistent request:

Willst du bitte noch mal nachsehen?	*Will you have another look, please?*
Wollen Sie bitte die Frage wiederholen?	*Will you repeat the question, please?*

In requests like these, the conditional (i.e. *Würden Sie bitte noch mal nachsehen?*, see **14.5.3**) sounds rather less blunt and direct than *wollen*.

(b) *wollen* **can express intention**

(i) In such contexts it often corresponds to English 'be going to', and *wollen* stresses the notion of intention more forcefully than the future with *werden*:

Wir **wollen** uns bald einen neuen Smart TV anschaffen	*We're going to buy ourselves a new Smart TV soon*
(The future *Wir werden uns bald einen neuen Smart TV anschaffen* sounds less definite)	
Wie **wollen** Sie ihm das klarmachen?	*How are you going to explain that to him?*
Ich **wollte** Sie darüber fragen	*I was going to ask you about it*
Was **wollen** Sie damit sagen?	*What do you intend by that?*
Das **will** nicht viel sagen	*That doesn't mean much*
Ich **will** sie erst morgen anrufen	*I don't intend calling her/I'm not going to call her until tomorrow*
Es scheint regnen zu **wollen**	*It looks as if it's going to rain*

(ii) In first person plural questions *wollen* has the sense of English 'Shall we ...?':

Wollen wir eine Tasse Kaffee trinken?	*Shall we/Let's have a cup of coffee*
Was **wollen wir** heute machen?	*What shall we do today?*
Na, dann **wollen wir** mal (anfangen)?	*Well then, let's get on with it!*

sollen is an alternative to *wollen* in such constructions, see **15.6.2b**. However, there is a slight difference in meaning. *wollen* clearly indicates that the speaker is in favour of the proposal, but *sollen* leaves the decision to the other person(s).

(c) With an inanimate subject, *wollen* **corresponds to English 'need'**

The sense of *wollen* in these contexts is similar to that in **(a)** and **(b)** above, but English 'want' and 'wish' are not normally used with an inanimate subject:

Tomaten **wollen** viel Sonne   *Tomatoes need a lot of sun*

Eine solche Arbeit **will** Zeit haben   *A piece of work like that needs time*

Das **will** gut überlegt werden   *That needs proper consideration*

Negative *wollen* with an inanimate subject has the sense of 'refuse':

Der Koffer **wollte** nicht zugehen   *The suitcase refused to/wouldn't close*

Meine Beine **wollen** nicht mehr   *My legs won't carry me any further*

Das **will** mir nicht in den Kopf   *I can't grasp that*

15.7.2 *wollen* **can be used in the sense of 'claim'**

In this sense, *wollen* is usually linked with a perfect infinitive, typically with the implication that the claim is false:

Er **will** eine Villa auf Mallorca **gekauft haben**   *He claims to have bought a villa on Majorca*

Sie **wollen** dich in Berlin **gesehen haben**   *They say they saw you in Berlin*

eine ehemalige Geliebte, die nichts **gesehen haben** *a former lover who claims not to have seen* **will,** weil sie „schockiert" war (*MM*)   *anything because she was 'shocked'*

A few set phrases are an extension of this sense of *wollen*:

Keiner will es getan haben   *No-one admits doing it*

Ich will nichts gesagt haben   *Go on as if I hadn't said anything*

Ich will nichts gehört/gesehen/gemerkt haben *I'll go on as if I hadn't heard/seen/noticed anything*

16 Verbs: valency

Different verbs need different elements to make a grammatical sentence.

The elements needed by a particular verb are called the COMPLEMENTS of the verb, and the type and number of complements required by a particular verb to construct a grammatical sentence make up the VALENCY of the verb.

The following sections of this chapter explain **valency** and the **verb complements**, with particular emphasis on verbs and constructions in German which are different from their nearest English equivalents.

16.1 verb **valency**, **complements** and **sentence patterns**
16.2 the **subject** of the verb
16.3 the **accusative** or **direct object** of the verb
16.4 verb objects in the **dative** case
16.5 prepositional objects
16.6 predicate complements
16.7 verb objects in the **genitive** case
16.8 locative complements

16.1 Valency, complements and sentence patterns

16.1.1 The complements of the verb

German typically shows the **relationship** between the **complements** and the **verb** by using CASES (see **Chapter 2**). English NOUN PHRASES do not have endings to show case, and the relationship of the complements to the verb is typically indicated by their **position** (see **Chapter 21**).

The action of giving involves a person handing a thing over to another person. The verb *geben*, therefore, needs **three complements** to form a sentence: **a**

SUBJECT (in the **nominative** case), **a DIRECT OBJECT** (in the **accusative** case) and an INDIRECT OBJECT (in the **dative** case):

Mein Vater (nom.) hat **seinem Bruder** (dat.) **das Geld** (acc.) gegeben

These complements make up the **valency** of the verb *geben*. If we omitted any of them, the sentence would be ungrammatical.

Other verbs, like *telefonieren*, only need **one** element, in this case a SUBJECT:

Meine Schwester hat eben telefoniert *My sister has just called*

Many verbs, like *schlagen*, need two, i.e. a SUBJECT and a DIRECT OBJECT:

Sie hat **den Ball** geschlagen *She hit the ball*

Some verbs have other types of construction, for example with a SUBJECT and a PREPOSITIONAL OBJECT, i.e. a phrase with a particular preposition, like *warten:*

Ich habe lange **auf dich** gewartet *I waited a long time for you*

There are **seven types of complement in German**, as shown in *Table 16.1*.

TABLE 16.1   Verb complements in German

SUBJECT	a noun phrase in the **nominative** case	**Der Bäcker** trinkt zu viel Hier wächst **ein guter Wein** Das hast **du** mir doch versprochen!
ACCUSATIVE OBJECT	a noun phrase in the **accusative** case	Er trinkt **schwarzen Tee** Sie hat mir **diesen Roman** empfohlen **Diesen Mann** sah er in der Stadt
DATIVE OBJECT	a noun phrase in the **dative** case	Sie verkauft **der Dame** einen Laptop Ich habe soben **Markus** gemailt **Ihrem Mann** wollte ich helfen
PREPOSITIONAL OBJECT	a **phrase** introduced by a **preposition** determined by the verb	Sie warnt mich **vor dem Polizisten** Er starb **an einer Lungenentzündung** **Darauf** hatte sie lange gewartet

PREDICATE COMPLEMENT	a noun phrase in the **nominative** case or an **adjective** with a copular verb	Er ist **ihr Betreuer**
		Wir sind **älter** geworden
		Das Heft war **teuer**
GENITIVE OBJECT	a noun phrase in the **genitive** case	Er bedarf **meiner Hilfe**
		Er erinnerte sich **des Vorfalls**
		Sie wurde **des Mordes** angeklagt
LOCATIVE COMPLEMENT	a **phrase** indicating **place** with a **verb of position** or **direction** with a **verb of motion**	Sie wohnt **in Heiligenhafen**
		Gestern ist sie **in die Stadt** gefahren
		Er legt das Buch **auf den Tisch**

16.1.2 Verb valency

As in the example in **16.1.1** shows, *geben* has **three complements**: a **subject**, an **accusative** or **direct object** and a **dative** or **indirect object**. *telefonieren*, on the other hand has only **one**: a **subject**. The property of each verb to govern a certain number of complements of a particular type is called the VALENCY of the verb.

We have to know the valency of a German verb to be able to use it correctly. This is sometimes different from the valency of what may seem to be the equivalent English verb:

Das hat er **mir** gestern mitgeteilt	*He informed me of that yesterday*
Ich fürchte **mich vor dem Zahnarzt**	*I'm afraid of the dentist*
Er riet **ihr von dieser Reise** ab	*He advised her against (making) that journey*

English-speaking learners need to learn the valency of each verb in order to be able to use it in context. **It is good practice to learn German verbs in typical sentences containing them**.

A number of frequent verbs are used with different valencies associated with differences in meaning:

jdn. achten	*respect somebody*
auf jdn. achten	*pay attention to somebody*

Further examples are given in the remainder of this chapter.

16.1.3 German sentence patterns

All German verbs are used with one, two or three of the complements listed in *Table 16.1* to form a grammatical clause or sentence. There are a limited number of combinations of complements which occur with German verbs, since many verbs have the same valency, and so we can say that German possesses a limited number of possible sentence structure types or SENTENCE PATTERNS (the German term is *Satzbaupläne*). For example, many verbs are *einem etwas* verbs, like *geben*, and need an **accusative object** and a **dative object** besides the **subject**.

The **most frequent sentence patterns** of German are given in *Table 16.2*. They are explained in the remainder of this chapter under the heading of the individual complements, where some less frequent sentence patterns are also introduced.

TABLE 16.2   German sentence patterns

subject + verb	**Der Mann** schwimmt
subject + verb + accusative object	**Der Mann** kauft **den Fernseher**
subject + verb + dative object + accusative object	**Der Mann** gibt **seinem Bruder den Fernseher**
subject + verb + dative object	**Der Mann** hilft **seinem Bruder**
subject + verb + prepositional object	**Der Mann** wartet **auf seinen Bruder**
subject + verb + predicate complement	**Der Mann** ist **nett/ein netter Mensch**
subject + verb + locative complement	**Der Mann** fährt **in die Stadt**

16.1.4 Complements and adverbials

The COMPLEMENTS are the elements in a sentence which are most closely linked to the verb. However, a sentence can contain other elements:

> Mein Vater hat seinem Bruder **jetzt** das Geld gegeben
> **Heute** habe ich diesen Mann **in der Stadt** gesehen
> Sie hat **lange** in Husum gewohnt
> **Gestern** ist sie **mit ihrer Freundin Petra** in die Stadt gefahren

Words and phrases like those in bold type provide additional information, often about the time, manner or place of the action or event. They may be important in context, but they are not closely bound up with the basic meaning of the verb like the complements. If we leave them out, the sentence is still grammatical. These elements are ADVERBIALS (in German *freie Angaben*). They can be single words, i.e. ADVERBS (see **Chapter 7**) or phrases, and they can be classified into types as shown in *Table 7.1*.

Frequently, **complements are necessary** to make a grammatical sentence, whilst **adverbials can be left out** without the sentence becoming ungrammatical. But the distinction is not always clear-cut, since certain complements of some verbs can be omitted without the result being an ungrammatical sentence. Compare:

 Er trinkt **viel Kaffee**   Er trinkt   Sie fährt **in die Stadt**   Sie fährt

The sentences are still grammatical even when the complements in bold are left out. However, the action of *trinken* must involve consuming some liquid (the **direct object**), and the action of *fahren* always implies going somewhere (the **locative complement**). These elements are so closely bound up in meaning with the action of the verb that, even if we can leave them out in some contexts, they are implicit in the sentence, and so **they are complements rather than adverbials, which are typically pieces of extra information**.

The same word or phrase can be a complement in some contexts, but an adverbial in others. Compare:

 Sie wohnte **in Köln**:   *in Köln* is a **complement** to *wohnen*; it cannot be omitted
 Sie starb **in Köln**:   *in Köln* can be omitted; it is an **adverbial** adding extra information

16.2 The subject

16.2.1 Most German verbs require a subject

Characteristically, the **subject** of verbs in the active voice is the AGENT , i.e. an animate being carrying out the action, e.g. *der Räuber hat das Geld gestohlen*, *die Studenten trinken*, *der Bär frisst den Honig*.

(a) The subject is in the nominative case

The finite verb agrees with the subject, see **10.1.4**:

> **Ich** reise nach Italien
> Das hat uns **die Geschichte** gelehrt
> **Wer** ruft mich?
> Kommen **deine Geschwister** morgen?

Note that *es* can be used as a 'dummy' subject so that the real subject can be placed later in the clause (see **3.6.2d**), e.g.: *Es stand eine alte Frau am Fenster*.

(b) The subject can be a subordinate clause or an infinitive clause

In this case, the verb has the third person singular ending, see **10.1.4a**.

> **Dass du hier bist**, freut mich
> **Dich wiederzusehen** hat mich gefreut

Subordinate subject clauses are introduced by *dass* or an interrogative, see **17.2**. For information on subject infinitive clauses see **11.2.2**. If a clause is not in first position in the sentence, it can be anticipated by *es,* (see **3.6.2e**), e.g. *Es freut mich, dass du hier bist*.

(c) The subject can be 'understood' in certain contexts

In German as in English, we can leave out the subject of the verb in some contexts. In particular, if the verbs in two (or more) main clauses linked by the conjunctions *und* and *oder* (see **17.1**) have the same subject, the second (or subsequent subject) is often omitted. We say that the subject is 'understood' in the second clause:

Er kam herein und sah seine Frau in der Ecke sitzen	*He came in and saw his wife sitting in the corner*
Meine Schwester geht oft ins Kino oder besucht ein Konzert	*My sister often goes to the cinema or attends a concert*

16.2.2 A few verbs do not need a subject

These verbs just have an **accusative** or a **dative object** (depending on the verb), but **no subject**. The verb has the ending of the **third person singular**, e.g. *mich hungert*, *mir bangt*. Most of these verbs express an emotion or a sensation, and many are now limited to formal or literary registers, or to regional (especially southern) usage. The following are still used (more frequently used equivalents are given where appropriate):

Mir **bangt** vor etwas (*dat.*)	*I am afraid of sth.*
(More usual: *Ich habe Angst vor etwas*)	
Mich **dürstet**, **hungert**	*I am thirsty, hungry*
(More usual: *Ich habe Durst, Hunger*)	
Mir (Mich) **ekelt** vor etwas (*dat.*)	*I am disgusted at sth.*
(More usual: *Es ekelt mich/Ich ekele mich vor etwas* or *Etwas ekelt mich*)	
Mich **friert**	*I am cold*
(More usual: *Es friert mich* or, more colloquially: *Ich friere*)	
Mir **graut** vor jdm./etwas (*dat.*)	*I have a horror of sb./sth.*
(More usual: *Es graut mir vor etwas*)	
Mich/Mir **schaudert** vor etwas (*dat.*)	*I shudder at sth.*

(More usual: *Es schaudert mich vor etwas*)

Mir (Mich) **schwindelt**   *I feel dizzy*

 (More usual: *Mir ist schwindlig*)

Mir **träumte** von etwas (*dat*.)   *I dreamed of sth*.

 (More usual: *Ich träumte von etwas*)

Mich **wundert**, dass …   *I am surprised that …*

 (Common alternatives: *Es wundert mich/Ich wundere mich*, *dass*)

The impersonal constructions with *sein* and *werden* and an adjective linked with the dative of a person experiencing a sensation, e.g. *Mir ist kalt*, *übel*, etc., are similar to the constructions with these verbs, in particular because they are most often used with the dative in first position and the impersonal subject omitted. For details see **2.5.4c** and **16.2.4e**.

16.2.3 The subject in German and English

German is more restrictive than English in respect of the noun which can occur as the subject of the verb. In English, nouns which do not denote an agent are often used as the subject of the verb. This is less frequent in German, where the subject of the verb is typically the agent actually performing the action. In such cases, the noun which is the subject in English often appears in a prepositional phrase in German:

In diesem Hotel sind Hunde verboten	*This hotel forbids dogs*
In diesem Zelt können vier schlafen	*This tent sleeps four*
Mit dieser Anzeige verkaufen wir viel	*This advertisement will sell us a lot*
Wir können **mit diesem Prozess** nicht fortfahren	*This trial cannot proceed*
Damit haben wir unseren besten Mittelstürmer verloren	*This has lost us our best striker*
In Berlin wird es wieder ziemlich heiß sein	*Berlin will be rather hot again*

A thing like a hotel cannot really 'forbid'. Neither do 'tents' actually 'sleep' or 'advertisements' do any 'selling', etc., and, in the last example, Berlin is **where** 'it' is hot rather than a person feeling the heat. The German constructions reflect this more clearly than the corresponding English sentences.

16.2.4 The impersonal subject *es*

Many verbs are exclusively or commonly used impersonally, with the indefinite subject *es* (see also **3.6.2a**), which corresponds to English 'it' or 'there'. The *es*

can only be omitted in the constructions dealt with in sub-sections **(e)** and **(f)** below.

(a) Verbs referring to weather

These verbs are only used impersonally:

Es regnet, hagelt, schneit *It is raining, hailing, snowing*

Es blitzte *There were flashes of lightning*

Es dämmert *It is growing light/dusk*

(b) Verbs used with impersonal *es* to refer to an indefinite agent

These verbs **can** be used with a specific subject, but they are used impersonally if the agent is vague or unknown:

(i) verbs referring to natural phenomena:

Es zieht *There's a draught*

Es brennt *Something's burning*

Dort riecht **es** nach Teer *There's a smell of tar there*

(ii) verbs denoting noises:

Es läutet, klingelt *Someone's ringing the bell*

Es hat an der Tür geklopft *There was a knock at the door*

Es kracht, zischt, knallt *There is a crashing, hissing, banging noise*

Many other verbs can be used with an impersonal *es* to express the idea of a vague impersonal agent, see **3.6.2a**.

(c) Verbs denoting sensations and emotions

Many verbs denoting sensations can be used with an impersonal *es* as subject to give the idea of an unspecified force causing the sensation. The person involved appears as an accusative object:

Es juckt mich *I itch*

Es überlief mich kalt *A cold shiver ran up my back*

Es zog mich zu ihr *I was drawn to her*

Es hält mich hier nicht länger *Nothing's keeping me here any more*

Most verbs which can be used without a subject in formal or older German are now more usually constructed like this, e.g. *Es friert mich*, *Es wundert mich*, etc. (see **16.2.2**).

(d) Impersonal *es* **with** *sein* **or** *werden* **followed by a noun or an adjective**

This usually corrresponds to English 'it':

  Es ist, wurde spät   *It is*, *got late*
  Es ist dein Vater   *It's your father*

Further details on this use of *es* are given in **3.6.2b**. The use of *es ist* in the sense of English 'there is/are' is treated in detail in **16.2.5**.

(e) The impersonal use of *sein* **and** *werden* **with a dative**

sein and *werden* can be used impersonally with a personal dative and some adjectives expressing a sensation:

         Es ist mir heiß, kalt, schwindlig, übel, warm, etc.

For details see **2.5.4c**. *es* is often left out if it is not in first position in a main clause:

         Ist (es) dir kalt? Ja, mir ist (es) kalt
         Ich merkte, dass (es) mir schwindlig wurde

         (f) Impersonal passive and reflexive constructions

  Es lebt sich gut in dieser Stadt   *You can live well in this city*
  Es wurde im Nebenzimmer geredet   *People were talking in the next room*

es is usually left out unless it is in initial position in a main clause. For details see **3.6.2a** and **13.1.3–4**.

(g) Other impersonal verbs and constructions

Many other verbs can be used in impersonal constructions as well as with a definite subject, and several of these have become frequent idioms:

  Es braucht etwas (*acc.* or (elev.) *gen.*, see **16.7.1**)   *Something is needed*
  e.g. Es braucht einen Beweis/eines Beweises   *Evidence is needed*

  Es fehlt mir an etwas (*dat.*) (see also **16.4.2d**)   *I lack sth.*

  Es gefällt mir in Heidelberg (see also **16.4.2d**)   *I like it in Heidelberg*

  Wie geht es (dir/Ihnen)?   *How are you?*

Es geht	*It can be done; OK (answering Wie geht es dir/Ihnen?)*
Es geht um Leben und Tod	*It's a matter of life and death*
Es gilt, etwas zu tun	*Something must be done*
Es geschah ihm recht	*It served him right*
Es handelt sich um etwas (*acc.*)	*It is a question of sth.*
Es heißt, dass …	*It is said that …*
Es kommt auf etwas (*acc.*) an	*It depends on sth.*
Es kommt zu etwas (*dat.*)	*Something occurs*
e.g. Am Abend kam es zu neuen Zusammenstößen	*There were fresh clashes in the evening*
Es liegt an etwas (*dat.*)	*It is due to sth.*
e.g. Woran liegt es, dass …?	*Why is it that ...?*
Es macht/tut nichts	*It doesn't matter*
Es steht schlecht/besser um ihn	*Things look bad/better for him*
Wie steht es mit ihr?	*How's she doing?*
Es verhält sich so	*Things are like that*
e.g. Ähnlich verhält es sich an dieser Universität	*Things are similar at this university*

16.2.5 *es ist/sind* and *es gibt*

es ist/sind and *es gibt* are both equivalents of English 'there is/are', but they have different meanings.

(a) *es gibt* **indicates existence in general**

It is a real impersonal construction, and *es* is never omitted. However, it has become so frequently used that, in the form *gibs*, it has almost become an independent word in non-standard colloquial speech, e.g. *da gibs schon mehr als genug*, and it is even heard with another *es*, e.g. *Ich weiß nicht, wo's die gibs*.

In everyday speech in the South-West, *es hat* is often used for *es gibt*. This is a non-standard regionalism.

(i) *es gibt* is typically used in broad, general statements, denoting existence in general, without necessarily referring to a particular place:

Es gibt Tage, wo alles schief geht	*There are days when everything goes wrong*
So etwas **gibt es** nicht	*There's no such thing*
Es gibt verschiedene Gründe dafür	*There are various reasons for that*
Dort **hat** es schon häufig Ärger **gegeben** (*HMP*)	*There has often been trouble there*

(ii) *es gibt* is used to point in a general way to permanent existence in a large area (i.e. a city or a country):

Es gibt drei alte Kirchen in dieser Stadt	*There are three old churches in this town*
In Trier **gibt es** ja so viel zu sehen	*There's really so much to see in Trier*
Es dürfte in der Bundesrepublik wenige **geben**, die so gut wie er informiert sind (*Zeit*)	*There are probably not many people in the Federal Republic who are as well informed as he is*

(iii) *es gibt* records the consequences of some event:

Wenn du das tust, **gibt's** ein Unglück	*If you do that, there'll be an accident*
Bei den Unruhen **soll es** bisher vier Tote **gegeben haben** (*FAZ*)	*It is reported that there have been four killed in the disturbances so far*

(b) *es ist/sind* **indicates the presence of something at a particular time and place**

The *es* of *es ist/sind* is a 'dummy' subject (see **3.6.2d**), which allows the real subject of the verb to occur later in the sentence. It drops out when it is not in initial position in a main clause. Compare:

Es war eine Maus in der Küche	*There was a mouse in the kitchen*
In der Küche **war** eine Maus	*In the kitchen there was a mouse*
Er hat gemerkt, dass eine Maus in der Küche **war**	*He noticed that there was a mouse in the kitchen*

es ist/sind is used:

(i) to refer to permanent or temporary presence in a definite and limited place, or temporary presence in a large area:

Es war noch ein kleines Café in der Berliner Straße	*There was still a little café in the Berliner Strasse*
Es ist irgendjemand an der Tür	*There's someone at the door*
Es waren noch viele Menschen auf den Straßen	*There were still a lot of people in the streets*
Es sind keine Wolken am Himmel **gewesen**	*There were no clouds in the sky*

Sentences with *es ist/sind* **must** contain an indication of place. This is often quite simply *da*:

Es ist ein Brief für Sie **da**	*There's a letter for you there*

In everyday spoken German *da ist/sind* is very commonly used to indicate presence in a particular place, e.g.: *Da war gerade ein Hund im Garten*; *Da sind noch viele Menschen auf der Straße heute Abend*.

es gibt is sometimes used in contexts like this, but it emphasizes the thing rather than the place and underlines its distinctive character:

In dieser Diele **gab es** gegenüber der Tür einen offenen *In this lounge there was an open fireplace*
    Kamin (*Wendt*)   *opposite the door*

(ii) to record events and when speaking of weather conditions:

Letzte Woche **war** in Hamburg ein Streik   *There was a strike in Hamburg last week*
In Mainz **war** ein Aufenthalt von fünf Minuten   *There was a five-minute stop in Mainz*
Am nächsten Morgen **war** dichter Nebel   *Next morning there was thick fog*
Gestern Abend **war** ein Gewitter in Füssen   *There was a thunderstorm in Füssen last night*

Usage varies in contexts like this, and *es gibt* is often used without any real difference of meaning:

> Letzte Woche **gab es** einen Streik in Hamburg
> In Mainz **gab es** einen Aufenthalt von fünf Minuten
> Gestern **gab es** ein Gewitter in Füssen

es gibt is particularly frequent when a need is felt to emphasize the exceptional nature of the event or to refer to the future:

Es gab eine Explosion in der Fabrik   *There was an explosion in the factory*
Morgen **wird es** wieder schönes Wetter **geben** *It will be fine again tomorrow*

16.3 The accusative object

16.3.1 Transitive verbs govern a direct object in the accusative case

Verbs which **govern an accusative object** are called TRANSITIVE VERBS. This accusative object is known as the DIRECT OBJECT of these verbs, and with many, the direct object is the only complement apart from the subject:

> Er hat **sie** besucht
> Christian hat **seine Freundin** besucht
> Seine Worte haben **mich** verletzt
> **Den jungen Mann** hat sie nicht gesehen

Many transitive verbs can have other complements in addition to the direct object, in particular:

- a **dative object**:
  Maria hat **ihrem Freund** den Reiseführer geliehen

- a **prepositional object**:
  Der Jäger hat die Kinder **vor dem Wolf** gewarnt

- a **locative complement**:
  Albrecht hat den Besen **in die Ecke** gestellt

- a **genitive object**:
  Adelheid würdigte ihren Kolleginnen **keines Blickes**

Details about these other sentence patterns with direct objects are given in the sections dealing with the other relevant complement.

The accusative case is used in some **time** and **place phrases**, e.g. *Es hat den ganzen Tag geschneit*. These are not complements of the verb, but **adverbials**, see **2.2.2**.

A few intransitive verbs can be used with a so-called 'inner' object in the accusative case, e.g. *Er starb einen sanften Tod*, see **2.2.1**.

16.3.2 The direct object can have the form of a clause

(a) Many verbs can have a clause as their direct object

Because these clauses function as complements of the verb, they are called COMPLEMENT CLAUSES . These clauses can be:

(i) a **subordinate clause** with *dass*, *ob* or an interrogative (see **17.2**):

Ich bedauerte es sehr, **dass ich nicht kommen konnte**
Sie hat mich gefragt, **ob ich dort übernachten wollte**
Sie hatte vergessen, **wie man es macht**

(ii) an infinitive clause with *zu* **(see 11.2.2):**

Ich bedauerte **nicht kommen zu können**
Ich hoffe **dich bald wiedersehen zu können**
Ich habe vor **sie morgen zu besuchen**

Many verbs which have a clause as object can have either a subordinate clause or an infinitive clause, like *bedauern* in the examples above. However, a few verbs only allow an infinitive clause (especially verbs denoting an intended action, like *versuchen*, *vorhaben*, *wagen*, *sich weigern*, *zögern*), whereas others only allow a subordinate clause (especially verbs of saying and hearing, e.g. *erleben*, *fragen*, *mitteilen*, *verfügen*). In practice, usage in German is similar to that with the nearest English equivalents. For the main exceptions see **11.2.3**.

(b) A direct object clause is sometimes anticipated by *es*

This can be the case whether the complement is a subordinate clause or an infinitive clause, e.g.:

> Sie sah **es** als gutes Zeichen an, dass keine Leute mehr vorbeikamen
> Ich konnte **es** kaum ertragen, ihn so leiden zu sehen

Details on the use of this 'anticipatory' *es* are given in **3.6.2f**.

16.3.3 A few verbs are used with two accusative objects

Although the general rule is that only one accusative object is possible in a sentence, a few verbs govern two accusative objects.

A second accusative with verbs of calling, e.g. *Er nannte mich einen gemeinen Schurken* is not an object but a predicate complement in the accusative, see **16.6.2**.

(a) *kosten* **and** *lehren* **are normally used with two accusatives**

Der Flug hat **meinen Vater 5000 Euro** gekostet	*The flight cost my father 5000 euros*
Sie hat **mich Deutsch** gelehrt	*She taught me German*

In colloquial German both these verbs are often used with a dative of the person, e.g. *Sie hat mir Deutsch gelehrt*; *Das hat mir viel Geld gekostet*. This is not generally considered standard, but it is acceptable with *kosten*, as an alternative to the accusative, in figurative contexts:

Das kann **ihn/ihm** den Hals kosten	*That may cost him his life*

(b) *abfragen* **and** *abhören* **'test sb. orally'**

These verbs can be used **either** with two accusative objects **or** a dative of the person and an accusative:

Der Lehrer hat **ihn/ihm** die englischen Vokabeln *The teacher tested him on his English* abgefragt/abgehört *vocabulary*

If only the person is mentioned, they are in the accusative: *Der Lehrer hat ihn abgefragt/abgehört*

(c) *bitten* **and** *fragen* **can be used with two accusatives**

One denotes the person asked, the other is an indefinite pronoun or a subordinate clause:

Hast du **ihn etwas** gefragt?	*Did you ask him something?*
Das möchte ich **dich** bitten	*I would like to request that of you*
Sie hat **ihn** gefragt, **ob er mitkommen wollte**	*She asked him if he wanted to come with her*

bitten is also used with a prepositional object introduced by *um*, see **16.6.10**: *Ich möchte dich darum bitten*.

(d) *angehen* **is used with an accusative of the person and an indefinite expression of quantity**

Das geht **dich nichts** an   *That doesn't concern you at all*

Similarly: *Das geht mich viel/wenig/einen Dreck an*. Using *angehen* with a dative of the person (e.g. *Das geht dir nichts an*) is a North German regionalism.

16.3.4 Transitive verbs in German and English: important differences

(a) Fewer verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively in German than in English

Many German verbs are less flexible than their nearest English counterparts and more restricted to use in certain constructions only.

Some German verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively, e.g.:

Ich brach den Zweig	*I broke the branch*
Der Zweig brach	*The branch broke*

| Sie rollte den Ball ins Netz | *She rolled the ball into the net* |
| Der Ball rollte ins Netz | *The ball rolled into the net* |

However, fewer German than English verbs can be used in this way, which means that many English verbs have two (or more) German equivalents depending on whether the English verb is being used transitively or intransitively. These can take a number of forms:

(i) Different verbs are used in German for the transitive and intransitive use of an English verb:

grow

Er **züchtet** Tulpen	*He grows tulips*
Hier **bauen** die Bauern Weizen **an**	*The farmers here grow wheat*
Diese Blumen **wachsen** in meinem Garten	*These flowers grow in my garden*

leave

Sie **verließ** den Saal	*She left the room*
Ich **ließ** den Brief im Fach (**liegen**)	*I left the letter in the pigeonhole*
Der Zug **fährt** schon **ab**	*The train is already leaving*
Er **ging** früher als ich (**weg**)	*He left before me*

open/close (see also **(iii)** below)

| Ich **machte** die Tür **auf/zu** | *I opened/closed the door* |
| Die Tür **ging auf/zu** | *The door opened/closed* |

(ii) Related verbs are used in German, especially with a prefixed verb used in the transitive construction. In particular, the prefix *be-* (see **20.5.1**) is often used to make transitive verbs from intransitive verbs, but other prefixes (notably *er-* and *ver-*) sometimes have this function, and there are some pairs of verbs with vowel or consonant changes:

answer

| Sie hat die Frage **beantwortet** | *She answered the question* |
| Sie hat ge**antwortet** | *She answered* |

climb

Ich **bestieg** den Berg	*I climbed the mountain*
Ich **erstieg** den Berg	*I climbed the mountain (to the top)*
Die Maschine **stieg**	*The plane climbed*

drown

Man **ertränkte** die Hexe	*They drowned the witch*
Die Matrosen **ertranken**	*The sailors drowned*

sink

Wir **versenkten** das Schiff	*We sank the ship*
Das Schiff **sank**	*The ship sank*

sit

Sie **setzt** sich auf den Stuhl	*She sits down on the chair*
Sie **sitzt** auf dem Stuhl	*She is sitting on the chair*

wake up

Die Kinder **wachten auf**	*The children woke up*
Sie **weckte** die Kinder **auf**	*She woke the children up*

(iii) Some transitive German verbs can be used reflexively as the equivalent of an English verb used intransitively:

change

Das hat nichts **geändert**	*That has changed nothing*
Das hat **sich geändert**	*That has changed*

feel

Sie **fühlte** etwas unter ihren Füßen	*She felt something under her feet*
Sie **fühlte sich** unwohl	*She felt unwell*

move

Sie konnte den linken Arm nicht **bewegen**	*She couldn't move her left arm*
Die Erde **bewegt sich** um die Sonne	*The earth moves round the sun*

open/*close* (see also **(i)** above)

Ich **öffnete**/**schloss** die Tür	*I opened/closed the door*
Die Tür **öffnete**/**schloss sich**	*The door opened/closed*

turn

Er **dreht** das Rad	*He is turning the wheel*
Das Rad **dreht sich**	*The wheel is turning*

(iv) A construction with *lassen* and an intransitive verb (see also **11.3.1c**) sometimes corresponds to an English transitive verb:

drop

Ich **ließ** den Stein **fallen**	*I dropped the stone*
Der Stein **fiel**	*The stone dropped*

fail

Sie **haben** den Kandidaten **durchfallen lassen**	*They failed the candidate*
Der Kandidat **ist durchgefallen**	*The candidate failed*

run

Ich **habe** das Wasser in die Badewanne **laufen lassen**	*I've run the bathwater*
Der Wasserhahn **läuft**	*The tap's running*

(v) A construction with *sich lassen* an**d a German transitive verb** (see **13.4.6**) sometimes corresponds to the intransitive use of an English verb:

cut

Sie **hat** das Papier **geschnitten**	*She cut the paper*
Das Papier **lässt sich** leicht **schneiden**	*The paper cuts easily*

(b) Some German transitive verbs have English equivalents with different constructions

i.e. the closest English equivalents are not transitive verbs but verbs with other constructions, e.g.:

etwas beantragen	*to apply for sth.*
jdn. beerben	*to inherit from sb.*
etwas bezahlen	*to pay for sth.*
etwas dauert mich	*I regret sth.*
etwas ekelt mich (see also **16.2.2**)	*I am disgusted at sth.*
etwas freut mich	*I am pleased/glad about sth.*
jdn./etwas fürchten	*to be afraid of sb./sth.*

16.3.5 Reflexive verbs

Many German verbs are always used with a reflexive pronoun in the accusative case (see **3.2**), e.g. *sich beeilen* 'hurry', *sich erkälten* 'catch a cold'. These REFLEXIVE VERBS have no direct equivalent in English – reflexive pronouns like 'myself' in English are used in a quite different way – and they can correspond to a variety of English verb constructions and verb types.

Some German reflexive verbs have English equivalents quite different from the simple verb (and the English equivalent is often an intransitive verb), e.g. *sich setzen* 'sit down' (cf. *setzen* 'put'), etc., see **16.3.4a**. In some instances the nearest English equivalent is a passive (or passive-like) construction (see **13.4.3**).

Many verbs used with a reflexive accusative also have other complements, e.g. a dative, genitive or prepositional object. They are treated in the sections dealing with these other complements. Some verbs have a reflexive object in the dative case rather than the accusative and these are explained in section **16.4.3**.

It is helpful to distinguish two types of reflexive verb in German:

(a) 'True' reflexive verbs, which are only used with a reflexive pronoun

With these, the reflexive pronoun is an integral part of the verb:

sich bedanken	*say 'thank you'*	sich erholen	*recover*
sich beeilen	*hurry*	sich erkälten	*catch a cold*
sich befinden	*be (situated)*	sich irren	*be mistaken*
sich benehmen	*behave*	sich verabschieden	*say 'goodbye'*
sich eignen	*be suited*	sich verneigen	*bow*
sich entschließen	*decide*	sich weigern	*refuse*

(b) Other transitive verbs used reflexively

With these the usual direct object appears as a reflexive pronoun.

(i) Many transitive verbs can be used with a reflexive pronoun. The agent is then performing the action on him-/herself. Compare:

non-reflexive	reflexive
Das habe ich **meinen Bruder** gefragt	Das habe ich **mich** gefragt
Ich setzte **den Koffer** auf den Stuhl	Ich setzte **mich** auf den Stuhl
Ich habe **die Hemden** gewaschen	Ich habe **mich** gewaschen
Ich habe **ihn** nicht überzeugen können	Ich habe **mich** nicht überzeugen können

(ii) Many transitive verbs denoting activities and accomplishments can be used reflexively with a subject which is not the person carrying out the action. These typically correspond to English passive constructions (see **13.4.3**):

Das **erklärt sich** leicht	*That is easily explained*
Mein Verdacht **hat sich bestätigt**	*My suspicions were confirmed*

Intransitive verbs denoting activities and accomplishments can also be used in a similar way with a reflexive pronoun. These constructions are always impersonal

and have a sense similar to a construction with *man*.

| Dort **wohnt** es **sich** gut | *One can live well there* |
| Hier **arbeitet** es **sich** bequem | *One can work comfortably here* |

(iii) A few verbs have reflexive and non-reflexive forms where the reflexive variant is a 'true' reflexive, with a slightly different meaning, see also **16.3.4a**:

Das erinnert mich an etwas	*That reminds me of something*
Ich erinnere mich an etwas	*I remember something*
Das habe ich ihr versprochen	*I promised her that*
Ich habe mich versprochen	*I made a slip of the tongue*

16.4 The dative object

A DATIVE OBJECT occurs in three main sentence patterns:

- together with an **accusative object**:

  Maria hat **ihrem Freund** den Reiseführer geliehen

- as the **sole object** of a verb:

  Maria hat **ihrer Schwester** geholfen

- together with a **prepositional object**:

  Maria hat **Ihrer Mutter** für das Geschenk gedankt

The **prepositional objects** used with a dative object are treated in **16.5**. There are also verbs with a **reflexive object** in the dative case, and these are explained in **16.4.3**. As explained in **13.1.3**, a dative object can never be converted into the subject of a corresponding passive sentence.

Besides dative objects, there are also 'free' datives and possessive datives, which are not grammatical requirements of particular verbs in the way that dative objects are. These are explained in section **2.5.2**.

16.4.1 Verbs governing a dative and an accusative object

These are transitive verbs with two complements, i.e. a **direct object** in the accusative case, which is usually a thing, and a dative object, called the **indirect object**, which is usually a person. It is helpful to remember them as *einem etwas* **verbs**.

The German dative commonly corresponds to an English indirect object, e.g. *He gave his uncle the money*, or an English prepositional phrase with 'to', e.g. *He gave the money to his uncle*. In German, the indirect object **is always indicated by the dative case**, never by a preposition: *Er gab seinem Onkel das Geld*.

With many verbs (e.g. *geben*) the dative object is necessary for a grammatical sentence, with others (e.g. *beweisen*) it can be dropped in appropriate contexts.

(a) Verbs of giving and taking (in the widest sense) govern a dative and an accusative object

There are a large number of such verbs:

Sie haben **mir eine Stelle** angeboten	*They offered me a job*
Das wollte er (**mir**) beweisen	*He wanted to prove that (to me)*
Er brachte (**ihr**) **einen Blumenstrauß**	*He brought (her) a bunch of flowers*
Ich kann (**dir**) **diesen Roman** empfehlen	*I can recommend this novel (to you)*
Er hat **dem Lehrer seine Hausarbeit** gegeben	*He gave his homework to the teacher*
Sie will **mir** jetzt **etwas Ruhe** gönnen	*She is now willing to let me have some peace and quiet*
Kannst du **mir hundert Franken** leihen?	*Can you lend me a hundred francs?*
Wir haben (**ihr**) **die Tasche** genommen	*We took the bag (from her)*
Ich habe (**ihr**) **das Paket** geschickt	*I've sent (her) the parcel*
Du schuldest **mir** noch **hundert Euro**	*You still owe me a hundred euros*
Er hat (**mir**) **seinen alten Golf** verkauft	*He sold (me) his old Golf*
Er zeigte **ihr seine Kupferstiche**	*He showed her his etchings*

(b) Most verbs involving an act of speaking are used with a dative and an accusative object

(i) With most of these verbs the accusative object can only be either a neuter or indefinite pronoun (e.g. *es*, *das*, *etwas*, *nichts*) or a clause (a subordinate clause introduced by *dass*, *ob* etc., or an infinitive clause). The equivalent English verbs often have rather different constructions:

Sie hat (**mir**) geantwortet, dass sie morgen kommen wollte	*She answered me, and said she was going to come tomorrow*
Wer hat (**dir**) befohlen, die Geiseln zu erschießen?	*Who gave (you) the order to shoot the hostages?*
Das habe ich **ihr** schon gestern erzählt	*I already told her that yesterday*
Er hat **mir** geraten, mein Haus zu verkaufen	*He advised me to sell my house*
Sie versicherte **mir**, dass sie alles erledigt hätte	*She assured me she had taken care of everything*

Das wird er (**dir**) nie verzeihen können	*He'll never be able to forgive you that*

With **antworten**, the dative is only used for persons, cf. Sie hat **auf** meinen Brief, **auf** meine Frage geantwortet.

sagen is normally used in this way, with a dative of the person if required:

Was wollen Sie (ihm) sagen?	*What do you want to say (to him)?*
Sie sagte mir, dass sie es auf keinen Fall machen würde	*She told me that on no account would she do that*

However, it is used with *zu* when introducing direct speech, or for persons addressing themselves:

„Nun komm doch!" sagte sie zu Christian	*'Come along now', she said to Christian*
„Wie kannst du das nur machen?", sagte er zu sich selbst	*'How on earth can you do that?', he said to himself*

(ii) With a few verbs the accusative object or the dative object can be omitted, as the context requires. This is not possible with all the nearest equivalent verbs in English:

Die iranische Regierung erlaubte (der Delegation) die Einreise	*The Iranian government allowed the delegation into the country*
Sie hat mir (einen langen Brief) geschrieben	*She wrote me (a long letter)*

(iii) *glauben* has a dative of the person and/or an accusative of the thing:

> Er glaubt **dem Lehrer**
> Er glaubt **jedes Wort**
> Er glaubt **dem Lehrer jedes Wort**

glauben an (acc.) (see **16.6.2b**), is used for 'believe **in**': *Ich glaube an seinen Erfolg*.

(c) Differences between German *einem etwas* constructions and English

The nearest equivalent English verbs to some German *einem etwas* verbs have rather different constructions:

Man merkt ihm die Anstrengung an	*One notices the effort he's making*
Sie fügte es dem Brief bei	*She enclosed it with the letter*
Das hat ihm das Studium ermöglicht/erschwert	*That made it possible/difficult for him to study*
Das hat sie mir gestern mitgeteilt	*She informed me of that yesterday*

Die Polizei konnte ihm nichts nachweisen	*The police couldn't prove anything against him*
Das hat sie mir aber verschwiegen	*She didn't tell me about that, though*
Das hätte ich ihr nicht zugetraut	*I wouldn't have believed her capable of that*

(d) Verbs of sending or transferring

With verbs of sending or transferring, a phrase with *an* is often used instead of a noun phrase in the dative. This emphasizes the recipient more strongly:

> Ich habe ein Paket **an meinen Vater** geschickt
> Ich habe einen Brief **an deinen Vater** geschrieben
> Sie hat den alten Audi **an ihren Vater** verkauft
>
> **(e) A few reflexive verbs have a dative object**

With these the reflexive pronoun is the accusative object:

Sie mussten sich **dem Feind** ergeben	*They had to surrender to the enemy*
Sie näherten sich **der Stadt**	*They approached the city*

16.4.2 Verbs governing the dative

Several German verbs have **a dative object**, **but no accusative object**. These have no direct equivalent in English. No general rules can be given as to which verbs govern a dative object, but these dative objects often relate to persons who are advantaged or disadvantaged in some way through the action expressed by the verb.

(a) Common verbs which govern a dative object

abraten *advise against*

Sie hat **ihm** davon abgeraten	*She advised him against it*

ähneln *resemble, look like*

Er ähnelt **seinem Bruder**	*He looks like his brother*

applaudieren *applaud*

Sie applaudierten **dem Solisten**	*They applauded the soloist*

ausweichen *get out of the way of, evade, avoid*

Er ist **der Gefahr** ausgewichen	*He avoided the danger*

begegnen *meet* (by chance)

Ich bin **ihr** in der Stadt begegnet	*I met her in town*

*bekommen *agree with one* (of food)

Fleisch bekommt **mir** nicht	*Meat doesn't agree with me*

danken *thank*

    Ich habe **ihnen** sehr dafür gedankt   *I thanked them very much for it*

dienen *serve*

    Er hat **dem König von Italien** gedient   *He served the king of Italy*

drohen *threaten*

    Sie hat **ihm** mit einem Stock gedroht   *She threatened him with a stick*

einfallen *occur*

    Das ist **mir** nicht eingefallen   *That didn't occur to me*

erliegen *succumb to*

    Er **erlag** seinen Wunden   *He succumbed to his injuries*

folgen *follow*

    Er ist **ihr** ins Exil gefolgt   *He followed her into exile*

gehorchen *obey*

    Sie gehorcht **ihrem Vater**   *She obeys her father*

*gehören *belong*

    Der Mercedes gehört **mir** nicht   *The Mercedes doesn't belong to me*

gelten *be meant for, be aimed at, be for*

    Gilt diese Bemerkung **mir**?   *Is that comment meant for me?*

    Der Beifall galt **den Schauspielern**   *The applause was for the actors*

gleichen *be equal to, resemble*

    Jeder Tag glich **dem anderen**   *One day was like the next*

gratulieren *congratulate*

    Sie haben **ihr** zum Geburtstag gratuliert   *They congratulated her on her birthday*

helfen *help*

    Er hat **seinem Vater** in der Küche geholfen   *He helped his father in the kitchen*

imponieren *impress*

    Sie hat **ihm** sehr imponiert   *She impressed him a lot*

*kündigen *fire, give notice*

    Der Chef hat **ihm** gestern gekündigt   *The boss gave him notice yesterday*

lauschen *listen to*

    Sie lauschten **dem Gesang** der Vögel (*FR*)   *They listened to the song of the birds*

misstrauen *distrust, not trust*

    Sie misstraut **den Politikern**   *She doesn't trust politicians*

nutzen/nützen *be of use*

    Das nutzt **mir** doch gar nichts   *But that's no use to me*

*passen *fit*

    Diese neuen Schuhe passen **dem Jungen** gut   *These new shoes fit the boy fine*

schaden *harm*

    Rauchen schadet **der Gesundheit**   *Smoking is harmful to your health*

schmeicheln *flatter*

    Der Student wollte **dem Professor** schmeicheln *The student wanted to flatter the professor*

trauen *trust*

    Ich habe **meinen Augen** nicht getraut   *I couldn't believe my eyes*

trotzen *defy*

    Er trotzte **der Gefahr**   *He defied/braved the danger*

unterliegen *be defeated by, be subject to*

    Er unterlag **seinem Gegner**   *He lost to his opponent*

vertrauen *have trust in*

    Er hat **seinem Navi** blind vertraut   *He trusted his satnav blindly*

wehtun *hurt*

    Der Wespenstich hat **ihm** wehgetan   *The wasp sting hurt him*

The asterisked verbs are also used in other constructions, often with a different meaning. For example, *bekommen* with an accusative object means 'receive': *Er bekam einen langen Brief von seinem Vater*.

(b) Most verbs with the meaning 'happen', 'occur' govern a dative

Es wird **dir** doch nichts geschehen   *But nothing will happen to you*

Was ist **ihm** gestern passiert?   *What happened to him yesterday?*

So etwas ist **mir** noch nie vorgekommen *Nothing like that has ever happened to me*

Similarly: *bevorstehen, widerfahren, zustoßen*, etc.

(c) Many verbs with certain prefixes govern a dative object

in particular those with *bei-, ent-, entgegen-, nach-, wider-, zu-*:

Er ist **der SPD** beigetreten   *He joined the SPD*

Das hat **meinen Erwartungen** entsprochen *That came up to my expectations*

Sie kam **mir** entgegen   *She came towards me*

Er eilte **ihr** nach   *He hurried after her*

Das Kind widersprach **seiner Mutter**   *The child contradicted its mother*

Er hat **dem Gespräch** zugehört   *He listened to the conversation*

Similarly (among many others):

beistehen	*give support to*	entstammen	*originate from*	sich widersetzen	*oppose*
beiwohnen	*be present at*	nachgeben	*give way to*	widerstehen	*resist*
entgegengehen	*go to meet*	nachkommen	*follow*	zulaufen	*run up to*
entgegenwirken	*counteract*	nachlaufen	*run after*	zustimmen	*agree with*
entsagen	*renounce*	nachstellen	*follow, pester*	zuvorkommen	*anticipate*

All the verbs prefixed with *ent-* meaning 'escape' (*entgehen*, *entkommen*, *entrinnen*, *entwischen*, etc.) also all govern a dative.

A few verbs with these prefixes have a dative **and** an accusative object, e.g. *jdm. etwas beibringen* 'teach somebody something', *jdm. etwas zutrauen* 'credit somebody with something'.

(d) The dative object of some verbs corresponds to the subject of the usual English equivalent

Etwas fällt mir auf	*I notice something*
Etwas entfällt mir	*I forget something*
Es fällt mir leicht/schwer	*I find something easy/difficult*
Es fehlt, mangelt mir an etwas }	*I lack something*
Etwas fehlt, mangelt mir	
Etwas gefällt mir	*I like something*
Etwas geht mir auf	*I realize something*
Etwas gelingt mir	*I succeed in something*
Etwas tut mir Leid	*I am sorry about something*
Das leuchtet mir nicht ein	*I don't understand that*
Es liegt mir viel an etwas (*dat.*)	*I am keen on something*
Etwas liegt mir	*I fancy something*
Das genügt, reicht mir	*I have had enough of that*
Etwas schmeckt mir	*I like something (i.e. food)*

With these verbs, the dative object tends to come first in main clauses, e.g. *Mir hat das nicht gefallen*.

16.4.3 Verbs with a dative reflexive pronoun

(a) Many verbs governing a dative can be used with a dative reflexive pronoun

The action refers back to the subject. Both types of verbs governing the dative can be used in this way:

(i) *einem etwas* verbs (see **16.4.1**):

Ich erlaubte **mir**, ihm zu widersprechen	*I allowed myself to contradict him*
Ich muss **mir** Arbeit verschaffen	*I must find work*
Ich habe **mir** zu viel zugemutet	*I've taken on too much*

(ii) Verbs which only govern **a dative object** (see **16.4.2**):

Ich habe **mir** mehrmals widersprochen	*I contradicted myself several times*
Du schadest **dir** mit dem Rauchen	*You're harming yourself by smoking*

(b) A few other verbs are used with a dative reflexive pronoun

These are 'true' reflexive verbs (see **16.3.5a**), where the reflexive pronoun is an integral part of the verb. All also have an accusative object:

Das habe ich **mir** angeeignet	*I acquired that*
Das habe ich **mir** eingebildet	*I imagined that*
Das verbitte ich **mir**	*I refuse to tolerate that*
Ich habe **mir** vorgenommen, das zu tun	*I have resolved to do that*
Das kann ich **mir** gut vorstellen	*I can imagine that well*
Ich habe **mir** eine Grippe zugezogen	*I contracted flu*

The verb *sich behelfen* 'manage, make do' can be used with either an accusative or a dative reflexive pronoun without any difference in meaning, e.g. *Ich musste mich/mir mit diesem alten Mantel behelfen*.

16.5 Prepositional objects

16.5.1 Many verbs have a prepositional object as complement

PREPOSITIONS used in PREPOSITIONAL OBJECTS are wholly **idiomatic** and determined by the individual verb. The fact that German has *Ich warte auf Sie* for English 'I am waiting **for** you', for example, is not related in any way to the usual meaning of the German preposition *auf*. For this reason, each combination of verb and preposition has to be learned separately and remembered as a whole.

Prepositional objects occur in three main sentence patterns:

- as the **only complement** of a verb:

  Maria wartet draußen **auf ihre Freundinnen**

- together with a **direct object**:

  Maria erinnerte **ihren Bruder an sein Versprechen**

- together with a **dative object**:

  Maria hat **Ihrer Mutter für das Geschenk** gedankt

- together with **another prepositional object**

  Maria klagt **auf Schadenersatz gegen diese Firma**

All prepositional objects are treated in this section under the individual prepositions, with other complements governed by the verb indicated as appropriate.

16.5.2 *an*

an is most often followed by the **dative case** in prepositional objects, but a few verbs govern *an* with the accusative.

(a) *an* **with the dative case**

Prepositional objects with *an* followed by a dative often convey the idea of 'in respect of, in connection with':

Ich habe sie **an ihrem knallroten Haar** erkannt	*I recognized her by her bright red hair*
Er ist **an einer Lungenentzündung** gestorben	*He died of pneumonia*
Ich zweifle **an seiner Ehrlichkeit**	*I doubt his honesty*

A selection of other verbs:

arbeiten an	*work at*	Es liegt mir viel an etwas	*I am very keen on sth.*
erkranken an	*fall ill with*	mitwirken an	*play a part in*
Es fehlt mir an etwas	*I lack sth.*	sich an etwas orientieren	*orientate oneself by sth.*
sich an jdm./etwas freuen	*take pleasure in sb./sth.*	etwas an jdm. rachen	*avenge sth. on sb.*
jdn. an etwas hindern	*prevent sb. from (doing) sth.*	teilnehmen an	*take part in*
leiden an	*suffer from*	verlieren an (e.g. *Boden*)	*lose some (ground)*

sich freuen is used with other prepositions with different meanings, i.e. *auf* (acc.), 'look forward to', see **16.5.3a** and *über*, see **16.5.9**.

(b) *an* **with the accusative case**

Most verbs which govern a prepositional object with *an* and the accusative case denote mental processes:

Maria denkt immer **an ihren kleinen Bruder**	*Maria is always thinking of her little brother*
Du erinnerst mich **an ihn**	*You remind me of him*
Ich erinnere mich **an ihn**	*I remember him* (see **16.7.2**)
Ich glaube **an den Fortschritt**	*I believe in progress* (see **16.4.1b**)

Other verbs with *an* followed by the accusative:

sich an etwas halten *stick to sth.* sich an etwas gewöhnen *get used to sth.*

16.5.3 *auf*

auf most often occurs with the **accusative case** in prepositional objects.

(a) *auf* **with the accusative case is the commonest preposition in prepositional objects**

Ich werde **auf deine Kinder** aufpassen	*I'll mind your children*
Seine Bemerkung bezog sich **auf dich**	*His comment related to you*
Das läuft **auf das Gleiche** hinaus	*It amounts to the same thing*
Er wies (mich) **auf die Schwierigkeiten** hin	*He pointed the difficulties out (to me)*

A selection of other verbs:

achten auf	} *pay attention to*	rechnen auf	*count on*
achtgeben auf		schwören auf	*swear on/by*
sich berufen auf	*refer to*	sich spezialisieren auf	*specialize in*
drängen auf	*press for*	sich stützen auf	*lean, count on*
sich erstrecken auf	*extend to*	sich verlassen auf	*rely on*
folgen auf	*follow* (see **16.4.2a**)	sich verstehen auf	*be expert in*
sich freuen auf	*look forward to*	(jdn.) verweisen auf	*refer (sb.) to*
hoffen auf	*hope for*	verzichten auf	*do without*
sich konzentrieren auf	*concentrate on*	warten auf	*wait for*
pfeifen auf (*coll.*)	*not care less about*	zählen auf	*count on*
reagieren auf	*react to*	zurückkommen auf	*come back to*, *refer to*
Es kommt (mir) auf etwas an	*sth. matters (to me)*		
etwas auf etwas beschränken	*limit/restrict/confine sth. to sth.*		

| sich auf etwas beschränken | *limit oneself/be limited to sth.* |
| etwas auf etwas zurückführen | *put sth. down to sth.* |

(b) *auf* with the dative case

A few verbs which convey the idea of not moving govern *auf* with the **dative** case:

| Er beharrte **auf seiner Meinung** | *He didn't shift from his opinion* |
| Ich bestehe **auf meinem Recht** | *I insist on my right* |

Similarly: *beruhen auf* (dat.), *fußen auf* (dat.), which both mean 'be based on', 'rest on'. In current usage *gründen auf* 'be based on' is now predominantly used with a following dative, e.g. *Ihr Ruf gründet auf scheinbaren Widersprüchen* (*SGT*) but the reflexive verb *sich gründen auf* 'be based on' is followed by the accusative, e.g. *Der Vorschlag gründet sich auf diese Annahme*.

basieren auf, when used intransitively, in the meaning 'be based on' is followed by the dative, e.g. *Das basiert auf genauer Kenntnis dieser Methode*. When used transitively, in the meaning 'base (sth.) on' it can be followed by the dative or the accusative, although the accusative is more frequent, e.g. *Sie basierte ihre Aussage auf zahlreiche Beispiele* (less common: *zahlreichen Beispielen*).

bestehen auf is sometimes used with a following accusative, especially if a specific action is involved, e.g. *Der Verkehrsbetrieb bestand auf diese Regelung* (*BMP*).

Note *bestehen aus* 'consist of' (**16.5.4**) and *bestehen in* 'consist in' (**16.5.6b**).

16.5.4 *aus*

aus usually has the meaning 'of', 'from' in prepositional objects.

| Ihr Essen bestand **aus trockenem Brot** | *Their food consisted of dry bread* |

Other verbs:

etwas aus etwas entnehmen, ersehen	*infer, gather sth. from sth.*
sich aus etwas ergeben	*result from sth.*
etwas aus etwas folgern, schließen	*conclude sth. from sth.*

Some of these verbs are used with other prepositions or constructions, often with different meanings:

(i) *bestehen auf* 'insist on' (see **16.5.3b**), *bestehen in* 'consist in' (**16.5.6b**).
(ii) *entnehmen* can alternatively govern the dative, e.g. *Ich entnehme (aus) Ihrem Brief, dass Sie das Geschäft aufgeben wollen*.
(iii) *sich in etwas ergeben* 'submit to sth.' (see **16.5.6a**), *sich jdm./etwas ergeben* 'surrender to sb./sth.' (see **16.4.1e**).

16.5.5 *für*

für usually has the meaning 'for' in prepositional objects.

Ich habe ihm **für seine Mühe** gedankt	*I thanked him for his trouble*
Ich habe mich **für den Audi** entschieden	*I decided on the Audi*
Ich halte deine Freundin **für hochbegabt**	*I consider your friend to be very gifted*

A selection of other verbs:

sich (bei jdm.) für etwas bedanken	*give thanks for sth. (to sb.)*
sich für etwas begeistern	*be enthusiastic about sth.*
sich für jdn./etwas eignen	*be suitable for sb./sth.*
sich für jdn./etwas interessieren	*be interested in sb./sth.*
sich für jdn./etwas schämen	*be ashamed of sth./for sb.*
für jdn./etwas sorgen	*take care of/look after sb./sth.*

Notes on some of these verbs:

(i) Non-reflexive *interessieren* is used with *für* or *an* (dat.), e.g. *Er interessierte sie für das/an dem Unternehmen*.
(ii) *sich eignen zu/als* means 'be suitable as' (see **16.5.13**).
(iii) *sich (wegen) jds./etwas schämen* (see **16.7.2**) 'be ashamed of sb./sth.', *sich vor jdm. schämen* 'feel ashamed in front of sb.' (see **16.5.12a**).
(iv) *sich um jdn./etwas sorgen* 'be worried about sb./sth.'

16.5.6 *in*

(a) *in* is most often used with the accusative case in prepositional objects

Sie willigte **in die Scheidung** ein	*She agreed to the divorce*
Er verliebte sich **in sie**	*He fell in love with her*

A selection of other verbs:

jdn. in etwas einführen	*introduce sb. to sth.*	sich mischen in	*meddle in*
sich ergeben in	*submit to* (see **16.5.4**)	sich vertiefen in	*become engrossed in*

(b) Very few verbs govern *in* with the dative case

Ihre Aufgabe besteht **in der Vermittlung** der deutschen Sprache und Kultur	*Her job consists in teaching German language and culture*
Ich habe mich nicht **in ihr** getäuscht	*I was not mistaken in (my judgement of) her*

Both these verbs are used with other prepositions with different meanings, i.e. *bestehen auf* 'insist on' (**16.5.3b**), *bestehen aus* 'consist of' (**16.5.4**), *sich täuschen über* 'to be mistaken about' (**16.5.9a**).

16.5.7 *mit*

mit usually has the sense of 'with' in prepositional objects.

Sie hat **mit ihrer Arbeit** angefangen	*She made a start on her work*
Willst du bitte **damit** aufhören?	*Please stop doing that*
Sie hat ihm **mit der Faust** gedroht	*She threatened him with her fist*
Mein Freund simst **mit anderen Frauen**	*My boyfriend texts other women*
Ich habe gestern **mit ihm** telefoniert	*I spoke to him on the telephone yesterday*

A selection of other verbs:

sich abfinden mit	*be satisfied with*	übereinstimmen mit	*agree with*
sich befassen mit	*deal with*	sich unterhalten mit	*converse with*
sich begnügen mit	*be satisfied with*	vergleichen mit	*compare with*
sich beschäftigen mit	*occupy oneself with*	sich verheiraten mit	*marry*
rechnen mit	*count on*	versehen mit	*provide with*
sprechen mit (*or* jdn. sprechen)	*speak to/with*	zusammenstoßen mit	*collide with*

16.5.8 *nach*

(a) *nach* with verbs of calling, enquiring, longing, reaching, etc.

With these, *nach* typically has the sense of 'after' or 'for':

Haben Sie sich nach seinem Befinden erkundigt? *Have you enquired how he is?*

Plötzlich griff das Kind nach der Katze	*Suddenly the child made a grab for the cat*
Sie hat nach ihrem Cousin geschrieen	*She yelled for her cousin*
Ich habe nach einem Arzt telefoniert	*I called for a doctor*

A selection of other verbs:

fragen nach	*ask after, for*	streben nach	*strive for*
rufen nach	*call after, for*	suchen nach	*search for*
sich sehnen nach	*long for*	verlangen nach	*ask, long for; crave*

Two verbs are used with other prepositions with slightly different meanings, i.e. *sich erkundigen über* 'enquire about' and *fragen über* 'ask about' (see **16.5.9**).

(b) *nach* **has the sense of English 'of' with verbs of smelling, etc.**

Es riecht **nach Teer**	*It smells of tar*
Es hat **nach Knoblauch** geschmeckt	*It tasted of garlic*

Similarly: *duften nach, stinken nach*, etc., and *Es sieht nach Regen aus* 'It looks like rain'.

16.5.9 *über*

über always governs the **accusative** case in prepositional objects.

(a) *über* **corresponds to English 'about' with verbs of saying, etc.**

Ich habe mich sehr **über sein Benehmen** geärgert	*I was very annoyed at his behaviour*
Sie musste lange **darüber** nachdenken	*She had to think it over for a long time*
Ich habe gestern mit meiner Chefin **über diese Bewerbung** gesprochen	*I talked to my boss about this application yesterday*

Many verbs can be used with *über* in this sense, e.g.:

sich bei jdm. über etwas beklagen/beschweren	*complain to sb. about sth.*
sich über jdn./etwas freuen	*be pleased about sth.* (see **16.5.2a, 16.5.3a**)
jdn. über etwas informieren	*inform sb. about sth.*
über jdn./etwas spotten	*mock sb./sth.*
sich täuschen über etwas	*be mistaken about sth.* (see **16.5.6b**)
über etwas urteilen	*judge sth.*
sich über jdn./etwas wundern	*be surprised at sb./sth.*

Some verbs, i.e. *denken*, *erzählen*, *hören*, *lesen*, *sagen*, *schreiben*, *sprechen* and *wissen* can be used with *über* or *von* in the sense of 'about'. *über* tends to refer to something more extensive than *von*. Compare:

Was denken Sie **darüber**?	*What is your view of that?*
Was denken Sie **von ihm**?	*What do you think of him?*
Er wusste viel **über Flugzeuge**	*He knew a lot about aeroplanes*
Er wusste nichts **von ihrem Tod**	*He knew nothing of her death*

(b) Other verbs governing a prepositional object with *über*

es nicht über sich bringen, etwas zu tun	*not bring oneself to do sth.*
sich über etwas hinwegsetzen	*disregard sth.*
über etwas verfügen	*have sth. at one's disposal*

16.5.10 *um*

um usually has the meaning 'concerning', 'in respect of' in prepositional objects.

Sie hat sich **um ihre Schwester** in Dresden geängstigt	*She was worried about her sister in Dresden*
Es handelt sich **um eine Wette**	*It is a question of a bet*
Ich habe mich **um meine Enkelkinder** gekümmert	*I looked after my grandchildren*

A selection of other verbs:

sich um etwas bemühen	*take trouble over sth.*
jdn. um etwas beneiden	*envy sb. sth.*
sich um etw. bewerben	*apply for sth* (e.g. job)
jdn. um etwas betrügen	*cheat sb. out of sth.*
jdn. um etwas bitten, ersuchen (*elev.*)	*ask sb. for sth., request sth. from sb.*
jdn. um etwas bringen	*make sb. lose sth.*
Es geht um etwas (see **16.2.4g**)	*Something is at stake*
um etwas kommen	*lose sth., be deprived of sth.*
sich um jdn./etwas sorgen	*be worried about sth.*
sich um/über etwas streiten	*argue about/over sth.*

Note, with a different preposition and a different meaning *sich ängstigen vor* 'be afraid of' (**16.5.12**).

16.5.11 *von*

von usually has the sense of 'from' or 'of' in prepositional objects.

Ich will dich nicht **von der Arbeit** abhalten	*I don't want to keep you from your work*
Wir müssen **davon** ausgehen, dass …	*We must start by assuming that …*
Ich muss mich **von meinem Kollegen** distanzieren	*I have to dissociate myself from my colleague*
Das Kind träumte **von einer schönen Prinzessin**	*The child was dreaming of a beautiful princess*

A selection of other verbs:

etwas hängt von jdm./etw. ab	*sth. depends on sb./sth.*
jdm. von etwas abraten	*advise sb. against sth.*
jdn. von etwas befreien	*liberate sb. from sth.*
sich von etwas erholen	*recover from sth.*
von etwas herrühren	*stem from sth.*
jdn. von etwas überzeugen	*convince sb. of sth.*
jdn. von etwas verständigen	*inform sb. of sth.*

16.5.12 *vor*

vor is always used with the **dative** case in prepositional objects.

(a) *vor* **corresponds to English 'of' with verbs of fearing**, **etc.**

Ich ekele mich **vor diesen großen Spinnen**	*I have a horror of these big spiders* (see **16.2.2**)
Er fürchtete sich **vor dem Rottweiler**	*He was afraid of the Rottweiler*
Er hat mich **vor dem Treibsand** gewarnt	*He warned me about the quicksand*

A selection of other verbs:

sich vor jdm./etwas ängstigen	*be afraid of sb./sth.* (see **16.5.10**)
Angst vor jdm./etwas haben	*be afraid, scared of sb./sth.*
sich vor etwas drücken (*coll.*)	*dodge sth.*
vor jdm./etwas erschrecken	*be scared by sb./sth.*
sich vor jdm./etwas hüten	*beware of sb./sth., be on one's guard against sb./sth.*
sich vor jdm. schämen	*feel ashamed in front of sb.* (see **16.5.5**)
sich vor etwas scheuen	*be afraid of, shrink from sth.*

(b) *vor* **corresponds to English 'from' with verbs of protecting, etc.**

Sie bewahrte ihn **vor der Gefahr**	*She protected him from danger*
Sie sind **vor der Polizei** geflohen	*They fled from the police*

Some similar verbs:

jdn. vor jdm./etwas beschützen	*protect sb. from sb./sth.*
jdn. vor etwas retten	*save sb. from sth.*
sich vor jdm./etwas verbergen	*hide from sb./sth.*

16.5.13 *zu*

(a) *zu* often corresponds to English '(in)to'

This is especially frequent with verbs of empowering, leading, persuading, etc. All these verbs are transitive, i.e. they have an accusative object besides the prepositional object with *zu*:

Er ermutigte sie **zum Widerstand**	*He encouraged them to resist*
Er trieb sie **zur Verzweiflung**	*He drove her to despair*
Er überredete mich **zu einem Glas Wein**	*He talked me into having a glass of wine*
Er zwang mich **zu einer Entscheidung**	*He forced me into a decision*

A selection of other verbs used similarly:

berechtigen	*entitle*	nötigen	*invite*	veranlassen	*cause*
einladen	*invite*	provozieren	*provoke*	verführen	*seduce*
herausfordern	*challenge*	raten	*advise*	verhelfen	*help*

(b) Some other verbs have a prepositional object with *zu*

Das hat **zu seinem Erfolg** sehr beigetragen	*That contributed a lot to his success*
Sie entschloss sich **zur Teilnahme**	*She decided to take part*
Ich rechne/zähle ihn **zu meinen Freunden**	*I count him among my friends*

A selection of other verbs:

es zu etwas bringen	*attain sth.* (see **3.6.2h**)
zu etwas dienen	*serve as sth.*
sich zu etwas eignen	*be suitable as sth.* (see **16.5.5**)
zu etwas führen	*lead to sth.*
zu etwas gehören	*be part of sth.*, *be one of sth.* (see **16.4.2a**)
jdm. zu etwas gratulieren	*congratulate sb. on sth.*
zu etwas neigen	*tend to sth.*
zu jdm./etwas passen	*go with sb./sth.* (see **16.4.2a**)

sich zu etwas verhalten   *stand in a relationship to sth.*

zu etwas werden (see **16.6.1**) *turn. change into sth.*

16.5.14 Prepositional objects in the form of a clause

If a prepositional object is in the form of a clause it is frequently anticipated by a prepositional adverb, i.e. the form *da(r)* + **preposition**, see **3.5**. The prepositional object can be a subordinate clause (usually introduced by *dass*), or an infinitive clause with *zu*, for example:

> Sie hat ihm **dafür** gedankt, **dass er ihr geholfen hatte**
> Ich verlasse mich **darauf**, **dass er alles arrangiert**
> Er hinderte mich **daran**, **den Brief zu schreiben**
> Ich verlasse mich **darauf**, **ihn zu Hause zu finden**

The prepositional adverb is optional with some verbs, e.g.:

> Ich ärgerte mich (**darüber**), dass er so wenig getan hatte
> Sie haben (**damit**) angefangen, die Ernte hereinzubringen

There are no precise rules whether a prepositional adverb is used or not, and it is often left out with some common verbs. If it is used, it tends to emphasize the following clause more strongly. In general, it is more commonly included than omitted in written German (and it is never incorrect to include it), whilst omission is more typical of everyday speech.

The following list gives some common verbs with which the prepositional adverb is often left out:

abhalten von	sich bemühen um	sich fürchten vor	sich sehnen nach
abraten von	sich beschweren über	glauben an	sorgen für
achtgeben auf	bitten um	hindern an	sich sorgen um
anfangen mit	sich ekeln vor	hoffen auf	sich streiten über
(sich) ärgern über	sich entscheiden für	sich hüten vor	träumen von
aufhören mit	sich entschließen zu	klagen über	überzeugen von
aufpassen auf	sich erinnern an	raten zu	urteilen über
beginnen mit	fragen nach	sich scheuen vor	sich wundern über
sich beklagen über	sich freuen auf/über	sich schämen über	zweifeln an

The prepositional adverb can also be omitted with all the transitive verbs used with *zu* (see **16.5.13a**).

16.6 Predicate complements

16.6.1 Predicate complements with copular verbs

PREDICATE COMPLEMENTS are used with very few verbs, but they are very common, like *sein* and *werden*. They typically have a **noun phrase** or an **adjective** with them which describes the subject in some way:

Er ist **mein Freund**	Das scheint mir **ratsam**
Das Buch ist **langweilig**	Er wurde **Katholik**
Sie ist **blass** geworden	Du bist ganz **der Alte** geblieben

These verbs are known as COPULAR (i.e. 'linking') VERBS, because the verb simply links the **subject** of the verb with the **noun phrase** or **adjective** which makes up the **predicate complement**. We can see this by comparing the following sentences:

Henning fährt einen Bus	*Henning drives a bus*
Henning ist Busfahrer	*Henning is a bus driver*

In the first sentence, *Henning* and *Bus* refer to different things, but in the second *Henning* and *Busfahrer* refer to the same person. Because the complement simply describes the subject, it is in the **nominative case** if it is a noun.

The following verbs are used with a predicate complement:

bleiben	*remain*	sein	*be*	scheinen	*seem*
heißen	*be called*	werden	*become*		

werden is used in two sentence patterns. When used with a predicate complement, it has the meaning 'become' and is typically used with nouns denoting professions and beliefs, etc. (e.g. *Er wurde Katholik, Kommunist*; *Sie werden Soldaten*). However, when it is used with a prepositional object introduced by *zu* (see **16.5.13**), it means 'change, develop, turn into':

Die Felder waren **zu Seen** geworden	*The fields had turned into lakes*
Das ist mir **zur Gewohnheit** geworden	*That has become a habit of mine*
Es wurde **zur Mode**	*It became a fashion*
Er wurde **zum Verbrecher**	*He became a criminal*

The verbs *bleiben* and *sein* can also be used with locative complements (see **16.8**), e.g. *Wir bleiben/sind heute in der Schule*.

16.6.2 Predicate complements in the accusative case

A few **transitive verbs** have a PREDICATE COMPLEMENT in the accusative. This is not a second accusative object, as with the verbs dealt with in **16.3.3**, but an additional element which relates back to the accusative object, describing or identifying it:

Er nannte **mich einen Lügner**   *He called me a liar*

This construction is only used in German with verbs of calling, i.e. *heißen*, *nennen* and *schimpfen*.

A similar construction is possible with more verbs in English than in German. The German equivalents of these most often have a phrase with *als* in apposition (see **2.6**), or a prepositional complement, usually with *zu*, although some verbs select other prepositions:

Ich sehe es **als eine Schande** an   *I consider it a shame*
Er erwies sich **als Feigling**   *He proved himself a coward*
Er machte sie **zu seiner Frau**   *He made her his wife*
Man erklärte ihn **zum Verräter**   *He was declared a traitor*
Wir hielten ihn **für einen Idioten**   *We considered/thought him an idiot*

16.7 Genitive objects

A small number of verbs have an **object in the genitive case**. With a very few this is the only object, i.e. they are intransitive verbs with no accusative object. Others are reflexive verbs or transitive verbs with an accusative object and a genitive object.

All these verbs are typical of formal, elevated or specialized registers and a few are only used in set phrases. Although there is recent evidence that some more frequently used verbs are starting to be used in other constructions (e.g. *bedürfen* with an object in the accusative rather than the genitive case), only the genitive is accepted as standard. In the following lists equivalents used in less elevated registers are given wherever possible.

16.7.1 Verbs with a genitive as the only object

bedürfen *need*, *require* (more neutral equivalents: *brauchen*, *benötigen*)

Die Ursache des Unfalls bedarf **weiterer Ermittlungen** (*SZ*) — *The cause of the accident requires further investigation*

brauchen *be needed*, *be required* (used impersonally, see **16.2.4g** – less elevated with the accusative case)

Heute allerdings braucht es **dieses Beweises** nicht (*TAZ*) — *Nowadays, though, this evidence is not needed*

Es braucht noch **einen Beweis,** bis die Gäste dem Spielverderber Christian glauben (*BZ*) — *More evidence is required for the guests to believe the spoilsport Christian*

entbehren *lack* (used with an accusative object in less elevated registers)

Der Staat konnte **eines kraftvollen Monarchen** nicht entbehren (*v. Rimscha*) — *The state could not do without a powerful monarch*

ermangeln *lack* (less elevated equivalent: *fehlen*, see **16.4.2d**)

Sein Vortrag ermangelte **jeglicher Sachkenntnis** — *His lecture was lacking in any kind of knowledge of the subject*

gedenken *remember* (elevated for *denken an* (acc.), typically with reference to the dead)

Der Bundespräsident gedachte **der Opfer** des Nationalsozialismus — *The Federal President remembered the victims of National Socialism*

harren *await* (elevated for *warten auf* (acc.); has a rather biblical ring)

Wir harren **einer Antwort** (*Zeit*) — *We are awaiting an answer*

16.7.2 Reflexive verbs with a genitive object

Most of these are 'true' reflexive verbs, with an accusative reflexive pronoun (see **16.3.5**):

sich annehmen *look after*, *take care of* (less elevated equivalent: *sich kümmern um*)

Er hätte sich **dieses Kindes** angenommen (*Walser*) — *He would have looked after that child*

sich bedienen *use* (less elevated equivalents: *benutzen*, *gebrauchen*, *verwenden*)

Die Firma bediente sich nur **schmutziger Schiffe** (*Böll*) *The firm only used dirty ships*

sich befleißigen *cultivate* (less elevated registers: *sich bemühen um*, *sich Mühe geben*)

Er **befleißigte** sich einer geschraubten Redeweise (*Zeit*) *He cultivated a pretentious manner of speaking*

sich bemächtigen *take possession of* (several less elevated equivalents depending on context)

Sie hatte sich **des Autos** bemächtigt, während die Besitzerin den Kofferraum lud (*Presse*) *She had snatched the car while the owner was loading the boot/trunk*

sich enthalten *abstain*

Die Grünen enthielten sich **der Stimme** (*MM*) *The Greens abstained from voting*

sich entledigen *eliminate* (less elevated equivalent: *sich befreien von*)

Die ungarische Regierung hat sich **eines Problems** entledigt (*Standard*) *The Hungarian government has eliminated a problem*

sich entsinnen *remember* (less elevated equivalent: *sich erinnern an* (acc.), see **16.5.2b**)

Ich entsann mich **des Anblicks** der langgestreckten Baracken (*Andersch*) *I remembered the sight of the long huts*

sich erfreuen *enjoy* (less elevated equivalent: *genießen*)

Sie erfreuten sich **des schönen Sommerwetters** (*OH*) *They were enjoying the fine summer weather*

sich erinnern *remember* (less elevated: *sich erinnern an* (acc.), see **16.5.2b**)

Ich erinnere mich **bestimmter Details** noch (*Böll*) *I still remember certain details*

sich erwehren *refrain from* (less elevated equivalent: *sich wehren gegen*)

Ich konnte mich **eines Lächelns** kaum erwehren *I could scarcely refrain from a smile*

sich rühmen *boast about/of* (less elevated equivalent: *stolz sein über*)

Die meisten Länder Europas rühmen sich **einer** *Most European countries can boast of a*

sich schämen *be ashamed of* (less elevated equivalent: *sich schämen für/wegen*, see **16.5.5**)

Er schämte sich **seines Betragens**   *He was ashamed of his behaviour*

sich vergewissern *make sure* (less elevated equivalents: *nachprüfen*, *überprüfen)*

Sie vergewisserte sich **der Zuverlässigkeit** dieses Mannes   *She made sure of this man's reliability*

16.7.3 Verbs used with a genitive and an accusative object

The verbs in this group are all characteristic of specialized legal language.

anklagen *accuse* (in non-specialized registers: *anklagen wegen*)

Man klagte ihn der fahrlässigen Tötung an   *He was accused of manslaughter through culpable negligence*

berauben *rob* (in non-specialized registers: *einem etwas rauben)*

Er beraubte ihn der Freiheit   *He robbed him of his freedom*

versichern *assure* (in non-specialized registers: *einem etwas zusichern*)

Ich versichere Sie meines uneingeschränkten Vertrauens   *I assure you of my absolute trust*

The following verbs are used with a genitive in legal language, but otherwise with a following clause:

jdn. einer Sache beschuldigen/bezichtigen	*accuse sb. of sth.*
jdn. einer Sache überführen	*convict sb. of sth.*
jdn. einer Sache verdächtigen	*suspect sb. of sth.*

16.7.4 Set phrases with a genitive object

More verbs were used with a genitive object in older German, and some still occur in idiomatic phrases, although many of these, too, are more typical of formal registers:

der Gefahr nicht **achten**	*pay no heed to danger*
jdn. eines Besseren **belehren**	*teach someone better*
sich eines Besseren **besinnen**	*think better of something*
sich des Lebens **freuen**	*enjoy life*

der Ruhe **pflegen**	*keep calm*
jeder Beschreibung **spotten**	*beggar description*
jdn. des Landes **verweisen**	*expel someone from the country*
seines Amtes **walten**	*discharge one's duties*
jdn. keines Blickes **würdigen**	*not to deign to look at someone*

Uniquely, the verb *sterben* can be used in formal writing with a so-called 'inner' object in the genitive, e.g.: *Er starb eines gewaltsamen Todes*, see **2.2.1**.

16.8 Locative complements

Verbs involving **movement** typically have a phrase with them indicating the **direction of movement** or the **destination**, and verbs referring to **position** have a phrase to say **where** the relevant person or thing **is located**.

Such phrases are complements of the verb because even if they can often be omitted, they are implicit in the meaning of the verb, as explained in **16.1.4**. It is convenient to deal with DIRECTION COMPLEMENTS and PLACE COMPLEMENTS together under the general heading of LOCATIVE COMPLEMENTS.

It is important to understand that **locative complements differ from adverbials**, which are much more loosely connected with the verb. This difference is particularly important in respect of word order, see **19.7.1**.

16.8.1 Direction complements

Most verbs expressing motion can occur with a **direction complement**, typically a phrase which indicates where someone or something is moving or being put. Direction complements usually take the form of a prepositional phrase or an equivalent word. It can be omitted with many verbs.

Some verbs of motion – typically verbs of coming and going – are **intransitive** and only have a direction complement with them:

> Gestern ist sie **nach Italien** gefahren
> Der Junge ist **ins Wasser** gefallen

Other verbs of motion – typically verbs which express the action of putting something somewhere – are **transitive** and have an accusative object as well as the direction complement:

Ich warf den Ball **dorthin**

Sie hat das Buch **auf den Tisch** gelegt

16.8.2 Place complements

Some verbs indicating position require a **place complement**, a word or phrase to denote where someone or something is located, e.g.:

Sie hat lange **in der Pfeilgasse** gewohnt	*She lived in the Pfeilgasse for a long time*
Der Brief befand sich **dort**	*The letter was there*
Nach der Party hat er **bei ihr** übernachtet	*He spent the night with her after the party*
Sie hielt sich **in Hamm** auf	*She stayed in Hamm*

These phrases are similar to direction complements with verbs of motion because they are closely linked to the meaning of the verb, and in practice the sentences would not be grammatical if they were omitted. Common verbs with place complements are:

sich aufhalten	*stay*	liegen	*lie, be lying*	stehen	*stand*
bleiben	*stay, remain*	parken	*park*	sich verlieren	*get lost*
hängen	*hang*	sitzen	*sit*	wohnen	*live, dwell*
leben	*live*	stattfinden	*take place*	zelten	*camp*

17 Conjunctions and subordination

Conjunctions are words used to **link clauses within a sentence**. *Table 17.1* shows the **types of clauses and conjunctions** in German.

TABLE 17.1 Conjunctions and clauses

There are two main types of clause in German

MAIN CLAUSES are **independent**. The **finite verb** is in **second position**
Mein Bruder **fährt** morgen mit dem ICE nach Bochum
An dem Abend **ist** der Meteor auf die Erde gefallen

SUBORDINATE CLAUSES are embedded within another clause and **dependent** on it. The **finite verb** is in **final position**
Ich weiß, **dass** mein Bruder morgen nach Bochum **fährt**
Wir haben im Fernsehen gesehen, **wie** der Meteor auf die Erde gefallen **ist**

If a sentence contains more than one clause, the clauses can be linked in two ways

COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS like *und* or *aber* link **parallel clauses** of equal status. If both are **main clauses**, the verb is in **second position** in both
Sie ist gestern Abend gekommen, **aber** ich **habe** sie noch nicht gesehen

If **coordinating conjunctions** join subordinate clauses the verb is in **final position** in both:
Ich weiß, **dass** sie morgen **kommt und** dass sie mich sehen **möchte**

SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS like *dass* or *wenn* introduce **subordinate clauses**
Ich bringe dir das Buch, **wenn** ich morgen **vorbeikomme**

Subordinate clauses depend on another clause. There are three main types

NOUN CLAUSES function like NOUN PHRASES, i.e. as the SUBJECT or OBJECT of a verb. They are typically COMPLEMENTS of the verb and sometimes called COMPLEMENT CLAUSES
Ich weiß, **dass sie morgen kommt**

ADJECTIVAL CLAUSES have the function of ADJECTIVES. They are introduced by a RELATIVE PRONOUN, and are often called RELATIVE CLAUSES
die Frau, **die morgen kommt** .

ADVERBIAL CLAUSES have the same function as ADVERBS , and they can be classified in the same way for place, time, manner, etc. (see **Table 7.1**), e.g. (for time)
Die Frau kam, **als die Sonne unterging**

This chapter gives details about the conjunctions of German in the following sections:

17.1 Coordinating conjunctions – *und*, *aber*, *oder*, etc.
17.2 Conjunctions introducing **noun clauses** – *dass*, *ob*, etc.
17.3 Conjunctions of **time** – *als*, *wenn*, etc.
17.4 Causal conjunctions – *weil*, *da*, etc.
17.5 Conjunctions of **purpose** and **result** – *damit*, *so dass*, etc.
17.6 Concessive conjunctions – *obwohl*, etc.
17.7 Conjunctions of **manner** and **degree** – *indem*, *ohne dass*, etc.

Relative pronouns and **relative clauses** (= 'who', 'which, 'that') are dealt with in section **5.4**, and conjunctions used to introduce **conditional clauses** (= 'if') are explained in section **14.3**. For the use of **commas** to mark off clauses see section **21.5**.

17.1 Coordinating conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions link clauses of the same kind. As shown in *Table 17.1* they can link main or subordinate clauses, but most of them can also link single words or phrases:

Ich finde diesen Smart-TV schön, **aber** etwas teuer
Sie hat ein Buch **und** zwei Zeitschriften gekauft

A few, like *sowie*, are only used like this, i.e. they cannot link clauses. *Table 17.2* lists the German coordinating conjunctions, with the section indicated where their use is explained.

TABLE 17.2 Coordinating conjunctions

aber	*but*	17.1.1	**nämlich**	*as, for*	17.1.2
allein	*but*	17.1.1	**oder**	*or*	17.1.3
bald … bald	*now … now*	17.1.5	**sondern**	*but*	17.1.1
beziehungsweise	*or*	17.1.3	**sowie**	*as well as*	17.1.4
denn	*as, for*	17.1.2	**sowohl … als**	*as well as*	17.1.4
doch	*but*	17.1.1	**teils … teils**	*partly … partly*	17.1.5
entweder … oder	*either … or*	17.1.3	**und**	*and*	17.1.4
jedoch	*but*	17.1.1	**weder … noch**	*neither … nor*	17.1.3

17.1.1 *aber, allein, doch, jedoch, sondern*

These conjunctions all indicate restrictions of some kind and correspond to English *but*.

(a) *aber* **is the usual equivalent of English 'but'**

Markus hat sie gerufen, aber Anja war schon weg *Markus called her, but Anja had already left*

For *aber* with *zwar* in the preceding clause, see **17.6.1b**.

(b) *allein, doch* **and** *jedoch*

These alternatives to *aber* are used mainly in formal written literary registers.

(i) *allein* usually introduces a restriction which is unwelcome or unexpected:

Ich hatte gehofft, ihn nach der Sitzung zu sprechen, **allein** er war nicht zugegen   *I had hoped to speak to him after the meeting, but he wasn't present*

(ii) *jedoch* is rather more emphatic than *doch* **:**

Der Lohn ist karg, **doch** man genießt die abendlichen Stunden (*Jens*)   *The wages are meagre, but one enjoys the evening hours*

Im Allgemeinen war er kein guter Schüler, **jedoch** in Mathe war er allen überlegen   *In general he was not a good pupil, but he was better than any in maths*

(c) *aber* **,** *doch* **and** *jedoch* **are also used as modal particles or adverbs**

For *aber*, see **9.1.1**, for *doch*, see **9.1.7**. They have much the same meaning when used like this as when they are used as conjunctions, but they form part of the clause rather than introduce it, and the word order is different. Compare these alternatives to the sentences in **(a)** and **(b)**:

Markus hat sie gerufen, Anja **aber** war schon weg
Markus hat sie gerufen, Anja war **aber** schon weg

Der Lohn ist karg, **doch** genießt man die abendlichen Stunden
Der Lohn ist karg, man genießt **doch** die abendlichen Stunden

…, in Mathe **jedoch** war er allen überlegen
…, in Mathe war er **jedoch** allen überlegen

Constructions like this highlight the contrast more than when these words are used as conjunctions. *aber* is often used like this if the verbs in the two clauses have the same subject, and the subject is then omitted in the second clause: *Er war schon um acht Uhr hier, hat sich aber beim Direktor nicht gemeldet*.

(d) *sondern* **'but'**

(i) *sondern* contradicts a preceding negative:

Er ist nicht reich, **sondern** arm	*He is not rich, but poor*
Das Wasser darf nicht mehr getrunken werden, **sondern** ist mindestens zehn Minuten lang abzukochen (*KlZ*)	*The water mustn't be drunk now but has to be boiled for at least ten minutes*

sondern is distinct from *aber*, which is only used after a negative if it doesn't contradict, i.e. if the linked elements are equally true:

Er ist nicht reich, **aber** ehrlich *He is not rich, but (he is) honest*

(i.e. he is *both* 'not rich' *and* 'honest')

(ii) *nicht nur … sondern auch* corresponds to 'not only … but also':

Sie hatte zugegeben, daß sie den Lord in Würzburg **nicht nur** gesehen, s**ondern auch** gesprochen hatte (*Balden*)	*She had admitted that they hadn't only seen the lord in Würzburg, but also spoken to him*
Hierzu sind **nicht nur** Mitglieder, **sondern auch** Gäste eingeladen (*BrZ*)	*Not just members are invited to this, but guests, too.*
Nicht nur hat Helmut kräftig mitgeholfen, **sondern** Franziska hat **auch** ihren Teil dazu beigetragen	*It wasn't only Helmut who had helped immensely, but Franziska had done her bit too*

As the last example shows, if *nicht nur* is in initial position, it is followed immediately by the finite verb.

See **10.1.4** for the agreement of the finite verb if the subject consists of more than one noun or pronoun linked by *nicht nur … sondern auch*.

17.1.2 *denn, nämlich*

denn and *nämlich* mean 'because', but they are **coordinating**, not subordinating conjunctions, i.e. they are used in main clauses with the verb in second position.

Clauses with them are never in first position in the sentence; they give the reason for the event or action in the preceding clause (often almost as an afterthought).

(a) *denn*

Wahrscheinlich hatte ich den Fremden angestarrt, **denn** *I had probably been staring at the stranger* er sah auf und lächelte (*R. Schoof*) *because he looked up and smiled*

Wir wollten nicht länger draußen bleiben, **denn** es wurde *We didn't want to stay outside any longer, as it* langsam kalt *was starting to get cold*

denn is becoming less common in everyday spoken German, and *weil* is often heard in its place as a coordinating conjunction, followed by a main clause with the verb second. However, this is not accepted as standard German, and it is avoided in writing, see **17.4.1**.

(b) *nämlich* **is placed within the clause, after the verb**

Er konnte sie nicht verstehen, er war **nämlich** taub *He couldn't understand her, as he was deaf*

17.1.3 *oder, beziehungsweise, entweder … oder, weder… noch*

These are **disjunctive** conjunctions, giving alternatives. See **10.1.4** for the agreement of the finite verb if the subject consists of two or more nouns or pronouns linked by them.

(a) *oder* **is the most frequent equivalent for English 'or'**

Ich weiß, was passiert, wenn eine Warmfront **oder** eine *I know what happens when a warm front or* Kaltfront vorbeiziehen *(Grzimek)* *a cold front go past*

Morgen können wir zu Hause bleiben, **oder** wir können einen *Tomorrow we can stay at home, or we can* Spaziergang machen, wenn du willst *go for a walk if you want to*

Wir können in Heidelberg **oder** in Mannheim umsteigen *We can change trains in Heidelberg or Mannheim*

Sie wollten das Haus aus- **oder** umbauen *They wanted to extend or alter the house*

oder can be ambiguous, like English 'or', since the alternatives linked by it can be **exclusive** (one or the other, but not both) or **inclusive** (i.e. 'and/or', as in the last example above). In order to confirm that exclusion is meant, *aber (auch)* can be added to *oder* (see **9.1.1b**), e.g.:

Wir können in Heidelberg, **oder aber (auch)** in Mannheim umsteigen

Alternatively, *beziehungsweise* or *entweder ... oder* can be used to signal exclusion (see **(b)** and **(c)** below).

oder is frequently used in speech as the equivalent of an English tag question:

Hannes kommt morgen auch, oder? *Hannes is coming tomorrow, too, isn't he?*

(b) *beziehungsweise* **indicates mutually exclusive alternatives**

In writing it is usually abbreviated to *bzw.*:

Sie haben lange in Deutschland gewohnt, **bzw.** sie haben dort oft Urlaub gemacht
They lived a long time in Germany, or (else) they often took their holidays there

Das Gerät kostet 300 Euro, **bzw.** 250 Euro mit Rabatt
The appliance costs 300 euros, or 250 euros with the discount

beziehungsweise was originally restricted to formal registers, but it is now often heard in speech.

(c) *entweder ... oder* **'either … or' signals mutually exclusive alternatives**

Entweder er wird entlassen, **oder** er findet gar keine Stellung (*BILD*)
He will either be dismissed or not find a job at all

Less usually, *entweder* can be immediately followed by the verb, e.g. *Entweder wird er entlassen, oder …*

(d) *weder ... noch* **'neither … nor'**

Er liest **weder** Bücher **noch** Zeitungen
He reads neither books nor newspapers/He doesn't read books or newspapers

Ich habe **weder** seinen Brief bekommen, **noch** habe ich sonst von ihm gehört
I have neither received his letter, nor heard from him in any other way

A common alternative to *weder ... noch* is to use *und auch nicht/kein*. This is often felt to be less clumsy, especially in spoken German:

Er liest keine Bücher **und auch keine** Zeitungen
Ich habe seinen Brief nicht bekommen, **und** ich habe **auch nicht** sonst von ihm gehört

noch cannot be used on its own in the sense of 'nor' without a preceding *weder*. As an equivalent for English 'nor' or 'neither' used to begin a clause (or 'or' preceded by a negative) German uses *und auch nicht/kein:*

Sie hat mir noch nicht geschrieben, **und** ich erwarte **auch nicht**, dass ich bald von ihr höre	*She hasn't written to me yet, nor/neither do I expect to hear from her soon*
Ich höre die Nachrichten im Radio nicht **und** kaufe **auch keine** Zeitungen	*I don't listen to the news on the radio or buy newspapers*

17.1.4 *und, sowie, sowohl… als*

(a) *und* is the usual equivalent for English 'and'

Angela **und** Gudrun wollen auch kommen	*Angela and Gudrun want to come too*
Einer der Verdächtigten durchbrach eine Straßensperre **und** konnte erst nach einer Verfolgungsjagd gestoppt werden (*NZZ*)	*One of the suspects broke through a road block and could only be stopped after a chase*

(b) *sowie*, *sowohl … als* 'both … and', 'as well as'

These are stylistic alternatives to *und*, especially in writing. They emphasize the connection between the elements more than *und*, and they are often used with a following *auch*:

Dürrenmatt hat **sowohl** Dramen **als (auch)** Kriminalromane geschrieben	*Dürrenmatt wrote both plays and detective novels*

Less commonly, *wie* is used for *als* with *sowohl*.

sowie puts rather more stress on the second element than *sowohl … als*, e.g.:

Dürrenmatt hat Dramen **sowie (auch)** Kriminalromane geschrieben

Simple *wie* can also be used in the same contexts:

Das Haus wurde außen **wie** innen total renoviert
Dürrenmatt hat Dramen **wie (auch)** Kriminalromane geschrieben

See **10.1.4** for the agreement of the finite verb if the subject consists of more than one noun or pronoun linked by *sowohl … als* or *sowie*.

17.1.5 Less frequent coordinating conjunctions

(a) *bald ... bald* **'one moment … the next', 'now … now'**

This combination is typical of formal writing. *bald* is followed immediately by the verb in both clauses:

Bald weinte das Kind, **bald** lachte es *One moment the child was crying, the next it was laughing*

(b) *teils ... teils* **'partly … partly'**

Wir haben unseren Urlaub **teils** in Italien verbracht, **teils** in der Schweiz *We spent our holiday partly in Italy, partly in Switzerland*

teils heiter, **teils** wolkig *cloudy with sunny intervals*

When clauses are linked with *teils*, the verb follows immediately after *teils* in both clauses:

Teils war man sehr zuvorkommend, **teils** hat man mich völlig ignoriert *Sometimes people were very helpful, at other times I was completely ignored*

17.2 Noun clauses

Noun clauses have the same function in the sentence as nouns or noun phrases. They are most often found as complements of a verb, and for this reason they are also called COMPLEMENT CLAUSES.

They can be the subject (*Dass sie kommt, freut mich*), object (*Sie sah, wie er sich anstrengte*) or one of the other **complements** of a verb (see **Table 16.1**). If a noun clause is used as the **subject**, the verb has the third person singular endings, see **10.1.4a**.

Noun clauses in German can be introduced by *dass*, *ob*, *wenn* or the interrogative *w*-words (see **7.6**).

17.2.1 dass 'that'

(a) *dass* **is the commonest conjunction used in noun clauses**

It corresponds closely to English 'that', and is used to introduce all kinds of complement clauses:

- **subject**:   **Dass sie morgen kommt**, erstaunt mich

- **accusative object**:   Sie hat mir versichert, **dass alles in Ordnung sei**

- **genitive object**:   Man klagt ihn an, **dass er das Geld gestohlen hat**

- **prepositional object**:   Er hat darauf gewartet, **dass Peter ihn grüßen würde**

- **predicate complement**:   Tatsache ist, **dass er gelogen hat**

Noun clauses with *dass* can also **depend on adjectives**, e.g. *Ich bin froh, dass du kommen konntest,* or on **nouns related to verbs**, e.g. *Ihn quälte die Angst, dass etwas passieren könnte.*

(b) The omission of *dass*

The conjunction *dass* can sometimes be omitted, and the subordinate clause then has the order of a main clause, with the verb second. Compare the following alternatives:

Sie sagte, **dass** sie einen Brief **schreibe**

Sie sagte, sie **schreibe** einen Brief

In general, German *dass* is dropped less often than English *that*. It can be left out:

(i) after verbs (and other expressions) of saying, when introducing indirect speech (see **14.4**):

Ich sagte, sie sei das einzige Mädchen, mit dem ich „diese Sache" tun wollte (*Böll*)	*I said she was the only girl I wanted to do "that" with*
Bei denen herrscht die Meinung vor, die Universitäten litten an der Überlast ungeeigneter Studenten (*Spiegel*)	*With these people the idea is dominant that universities are suffering from being overloaded with unsuitable students*

dass is often dropped in both spoken and written German, but it is more often kept if the main verb is negative. Thus *Er sagte nicht, dass er sie nach Hause fahren werde* is more usual than *Er sagte nicht, er werde sie nach Hause fahren.*

(ii) after verbs (and other expressions) of perceiving, feeling, hoping, thinking and believing (in the widest sense). The omission of *dass* in these contexts is rather more frequent in spoken than in written German.

Ich hatte gehofft, er würde es vergessen (*RhZ*)	*I had hoped he would forget it*
diejenigen, die jetzt noch glaubten, man könne in Europa so fortfahren wie bisher (*Presse*)	*those who still believed even now that things could continue in Europe just as before*
die Ahnung, sie könnte noch unterwegs sein	*the idea that she could still be on her way*

(c) Initial *dass* -clauses are more frequent in German than in English

Especially in written German, sentences begin with a subject or object *dass*-clause much more often than in English, where we tend to provide a noun (especially 'the fact') for the 'that'-clause to link to. Compare:

Dass die Wahlergebnisse der DDR gefälscht waren, bestreitet auch Modrow nicht (*Spiegel*)	*The fact that the election results in the GDR were falsified is not disputed even by Modrow*
Dass er einmal nicht mehr wollen würde, wagte er nicht zu hoffen (*Walser*)	*The possibility that at some time he wouldn't want to any more, was something he didn't dare to hope*

(d) *dass* should not be followed immediately by another conjunction

Compare the following possibilities:

(i) Sie sagte, dass er, wenn er am Wochenende kommen sollte, bei ihrer Mutter übernachten könnte
(ii) Sie sagte, dass er bei ihrer Mutter übernachten könnte, wenn er am Wochenende kommen sollte
(iii) Sie sagte, dass, wenn er am Wochenende kommen sollte, er bei ihrer Mutter übernachten könnte

Ordering similar to (iii) is very frequent in English, with an adverbial clause following straight after 'that', e.g. 'She said that if he were to come at the weekend he would be able to stay with her mother'.

However this ordering is awkward in German, and it is considered preferable to insert at least the subject of the *dass*-clause, as in example (i), before starting a second clause, or to complete the *dass*-clause first, as in example (ii). English-speaking learners are strongly advised to avoid the ordering exemplified in (iii).

(e) dass-clauses can be used in isolation

(i) in commands or wishes (often with an 'ethic' dative, see **2.5.2d)**:

 Dass du (mir) rechtzeitig nach Haus kommst! *Make sure you're not too late home!*

(ii) in exclamations:

 Dass die es heute so eilig haben! *They are in a hurry today!*

17.2.2 Other conjunctions with noun clauses

(a) *ob* 'whether', 'if' typically indicates a question or a doubt

ob-clauses are all **indirect questions** and can have the following functions:

- **subject:**   **Ob sie morgen kommt**, ist mir gleich

- **accusative object:**   Sie vergaß, **ob sie eine Karte gekauft hatte**

- **prepositional object:**   Ich erinnere mich nicht daran, **ob ich eine gekauft habe**

- **predicate complement:**   Die Frage ist, **ob wir eine Tankstelle erreichen**

ob-clauses are often used in isolation, especially in spoken German, to ask a question:

 Ob es in Schwerin noch Glocken gibt? (*Surminski*) *Are there still bells in Schwerin?*

They are also used to pick up or repeat a question, or to express a general query or supposition:

 Ja, **ob** das wirklich stimmt? *I wonder whether that's really right*

(b) *wenn* 'when', 'if'

Noun clauses introduced by *wenn* can function as:

- **subject:**   Mir ist es recht, **wenn sie heute nicht kommt**

- **accusative object:**   Sie mag es nicht, **wenn ich sie bei der Arbeit störe**

The verb in noun clauses introduced by *wenn* can be in the *Konjunktiv II* form if an unreal condition is involved, see **14.3.1**, e.g. *Mir wäre es recht, wenn sie heute nicht käme*. Noun clauses with *wenn* **always** have an anticipatory *es* in the main clause, see **17.2.3.**

(c) Interrogatives

All the *w* **-words** which can be used to ask questions (see **7.6**) can be used as conjunctions to introduce noun clauses. Noun clauses with *w*-words are all indirect questions and can function as:

- **subject:** **Was sie dort macht**, ist mir gleich

- **accusative object:** Sie hat vergessen, **wie man es macht**

- **prepositional object:** Ich erinnere mich nicht daran, **wann ich es gehört habe**

- **predicate complement:** Die Frage ist, **wo sie es gekauft hat**

17.2.3 Correlates to complement clauses

In German, a noun clause is often **linked to a pronoun in the main clause which anticipates it**.

Such pronouns are called CORRELATES, and their form differs depending on the function of the clause.

(a) The pronoun *es* **functions as a correlate to subject and object clauses**

Dann fiel **es** mir auf, dass sie plötzlich fehlte   *Then I noticed that all at once she wasn't there*
Ich bedaure **es**, dass sie nicht kommen konnte   *I regret that she couldn't come*

More details on this 'correlating' *es* are given in **3.6.2**.

(b) The prepositional adverb as a correlate

The prepositional adverb, i.e. the form *da(r)* + preposition (see **3.5**), can act as a correlate in the main clause to noun clauses functioning as prepositional objects:

die Angst **davor,** dass er vielleicht nicht entkommen könnte *the fear of perhaps not being able to escape*

Er verlässt sich **darauf**, dass wir rechtzeitig kommen *He's relying on us arriving on time*

After many nouns, adjectives and verbs the prepositional adverb is optional, see **6.4.1c** and **16.5.14**.

(c) *dessen*

The pronoun *dessen* can function as a correlate to noun clauses with the function of a genitive object. It is optional and only occurs infrequently in formal registers:

Ich bin mir **(dessen)** bewusst, dass ich ihn strafen sollte *I am aware that I should punish him*

17.3 Conjunctions of time

The main conjunctions which introduce adverbial clauses of time in German are given in **Table 17.3**, together with an indication of the sub-sections where their use is explained.

TABLE 17.3 Conjunctions of time

als	*when*	**17.3.1**	**seit(dem)**	*since*	**17.3.5**
bevor	*before*	**17.3.2**	**sobald**	*as soon as*	**17.3.6**
bis	*until, till, by the time*	**17.3.2**	**solange**	*as long as*	**17.3.6**
da	*when*	**17.3.1**	**sooft**	*as often as whenever*	**17.3.6**
dieweil	*while, whilst*	**17.3.7**	**sowie**	*as soon as*	**17.3.6**
ehe	*before*	**17.3.2**	**während**	*while,whist*	**17.3.7**
indem	*as*	**17.3.1**	**wenn**	*when (ever)*	**17.3.1**
indes, indessen	*while, whilst*	**17.3.7**	**wie**	*as*	**17.3.1**
kaum (dass)	*hardly, scarcely*	**17.3.3**	**wobei**	*when*	**17.3.8**
nachdem	*after*	**17.3.4**			

17.3.1 *als, da, indem, wenn, wie*

All these conjunctions are the equivalent of English 'when' (or 'as') in various contexts.

(a) Clauses with *als* refer to a single event in the past

als corresponds to English 'when' or 'as':

Als ich in Passau ankam, habe ich sie auf dem Bahnsteig gesehen	*When I arrived in Passau, I saw her on the platform*
Als ich weiterging, wurde ich immer müder	*As I went on, I grew more and more tired*
Als die Frau später ihre Arbeitspapiere vorlegen musste, kam die Wahrheit an den Tag (*BILD*)	*When, later on, the woman had to show her work documents, the truth came to light*

A main clause following an als-clause is sometimes (optionally) introduced by a correlating *da*, e.g. *Als ich in Passau ankam*, *da habe ich sie auf dem Bahnsteig gesehen*.

(b) *da* is a literary (and rather old-fashioned) alternative to *als*

Die Sonne schien an einem wolkenlosen Himmel, **da** er seinen Heimatort verließ (*Dürrenmatt*)	*The sun was shining in a cloudless sky as/when he left his home village*

(c) *wie* can be used for 'when' with a verb in the present tense referring to a past action

i.e. with a 'historic' present (see **12.1.4**). *wie* is an alternative to *als* in such contexts:

Als/Wie ich das Fenster öffne, schlägt mir heftiger Lärm entgegen	*As/When I opened the window, I was confronted by an intense noise*

The use of *wie* in place of *als* with a past or perfect tense is common in colloquial speech, especially in Austria and Bavaria, e.g. *Wie ich in Passau ankam/angekommen bin, …* This usage is occasionally found in writing, but it is not generally accepted as standard.

(d) *wo* is used for *als* in colloquial speech

Wo ich krank war, hatte ich hohes Fieber	*When I was ill I had a high fever*

This usage is restricted to informal registers, especially in the South, and it is not accepted as standard.

(e) Clauses with *wenn* refer to the present, the future or to repeated actions

Wir können rasten, **wenn** wir den Gipfel erreichen	*We can have a rest when we get to the top*
Ich bringe es, **wenn** ich morgen vorbeikomme	*I'll bring it when I drop by tomorrow*

Sie besucht uns immer, **wenn** sie nach Fulda kommt *She always comes to see us when(ever) she's in Fulda*

A main clause following a *wenn*-clause can (optionally) be introduced by *dann:*

Wenn das Wasser ausgelaufen ist, (**dann**) schließt sich die *When the water has run out, the valve shuts*
Klappe automatisch *off automatically*

wenn often conveys the sense of English 'whenever', especially in the past, where *als* must be used if a single action is involved (see **(a)** above):

An den Bahnhöfen standen Grenzsoldaten und *Border guards stood on the stations and watched*
bewachten die Gleise, **wenn** die U-Bahn langsam *the tracks when(ever) an underground train went*
mit geschlossenen Türen durchfuhr (*MM*) *through slowly with its doors closed*

wenn, not *als*, is used if there is a sense of a future-in-the-past:

Ich wollte zu Hause sein, **wenn** Karl ankam *I wanted to be at home when Karl arrived*

wenn is also used in conditional clauses, i.e. = 'if' (see **14.4**). If there is a possibility of ambiguity, *immer wenn* can be used to emphasize that the sense is that of 'whenever'. Alternatively, *falls* can be used to make it clear that 'if' is meant (see **14.3.3d**).

(f) *indem* **'as' links simultaneous actions**

Anna küsste ihre Mutter, **indem** sie die Palette und den *Anna kissed her mother, holding the palette*
nassen Pinsel in ihren Händen weit von ihr abhielt (*Th.* *and the wet brush well away from her in her*
Mann) *hands*

This use of *indem*, where the *indem* clause corresponds to an English '-ing' phrase or a clause with 'while', is no longer usual, even in literary registers, and *indem* is now mainly used in the sense of English 'by' + '…ing', see **17.7c**. German equivalents of English phrases with an '-ing' form are explained in **11.6**.

(g) Equivalents of English 'when' introducing relative clauses

e.g. *zu einer Zeit*, *wo* … 'at a time **when** …'. For these, see **5.4.6b**.

17.3.2 *bevor***,** *ehe***,** *bis*

For the occasional use of the subjunctive in clauses introduced by these conjunctions, see **14.5.4**.

(a) *bevor* **and** *ehe* **'before'**

There is no difference in meaning between *bevor* and *ehe*. *bevor* is more frequent whilst *ehe* is typical of more formal registers, although it does occasionally occur in speech.

Der Kanzler muss das Volk befragen, **bevor** er einen Friedensvertrag unterzeichnet (*Presse*) — *The Chancellor has to ask the people before signing a Peace Treaty*

Es bestand, **ehe** die Erde geschieden war von den Himmeln (*Heym*) — *It existed before the earth was separated from the heavens*

bevor or *ehe* can be strengthened by *noch* to give the sense of '**even** before', e.g. *Noch bevor/ehe sie zurückkam* 'Even before she got back'.

(b) German equivalents for English 'not… before', 'not … until'

(i) The simplest equivalent is *erst …, wenn/als*:

Ich will **erst** nach Hause gehen, **wenn** Mutter wieder da ist — *I don't want to go home before/until mother gets back*

Das Kind hörte **erst** zu weinen auf, **als** es vor Müdigkeit einschlief — *The child didn't stop crying until it was so tired that it fell asleep*

(ii) *Nicht … bevor* (or *ehe*) and *nicht … bis* are only used if the subordinate clause implies a condition. An extra (redundant) *nicht* is often added:

Bevor er sich (**nicht**) entschuldigt hatte, wollte sie das Zimmer **nicht** verlassen — *She didn't want to leave the room before/until he had apologized*

Bevor ihre Kollegin **nicht** hier ist, fangen wir **nicht** an (*Ani*) — *We won't start before/until your colleague gets here*

Du darfst nicht gehen, **bis** du (**nicht**) deine Hausaufgaben fertig hast — *You can't go out until you've finished your homework*

If the subordinate clause precedes, then this second *nicht* is almost always added, but the rule given by some authorities that *nicht* is only added then is not followed consistently.

(c) *bis* **has two main English equivalents**

(i) 'until, till':

Ich warte hier, **bis** du zurückkommst *I'll wait here till you get back*

(ii) 'by the time (when)':

Bis du zurückkommst, habe ich das Fenster repariert *I'll have fixed the window by the time you get back*

17.3.3 kaum (dass)

The most usual German equivalent for English 'hardly/scarcely … when', 'no sooner …. than' is to use two main clauses, the first introduced by *kaum*, the second by *so* or *da:*

Kaum hatten wir das Wirtshaus erreicht, **so/da** begann { *We had hardly reached the inn when it began*
es zu regnen *to rain/*
  No sooner had we reached the inn, than it
  began to rain

Alternatively, a main clause introduced by *kaum* followed by a subordinate clause with *als* can be used:

Kaum hatten wir das Wirtshaus erreicht, **als** es zu regnen begann

The phrasal conjunction *kaum dass* is sometimes still used in literary German:

Kaum dass er Platz genommen hatte, tauchte auch schon der Wirt auf und fragte nach seinen Wünschen (*Kohnen*)

17.3.4 *nachdem*

Er wollte wissen, was mit Valette geschehen war, **nachdem** er *He wanted to know what had happened to*
sie das letzte Mal gesehen hatte (*Schneeweiß*) *Valette after he had seen her last*

Nachdem sie das Schiff verlassen hatten, suchte der junge *After they had left the ship the young man*
Mann sofort nach einer Telefonzelle (*Balden*) *immediately looked round for a telephone*
  box

nachdem is sometimes used in a causal sense, as an alternative to *da* (= 'as, since', see **17.4.1**):

Damit soll die Produktion von 30.000 Neuwagen eingespart *With this the production of 30,000 new cars is*
werden, **nachdem** die Nachfrage in Europa äußerst *to be stopped since demand in Europe is*
schleppend läuft (*Presse*) *extremely sluggish*

This usage is typical of South Germany and Austria, even in written registers, but it is not considered standard elsewhere.

For *je nachdem* 'according as', see **17.7e**.

17.3.5 *seit, seitdem*

The shorter form *seit* was formerly restricted to colloquial registers, but it is now at least as frequent as *seitdem*, even in writing:

Seit(dem) er sein Haus verkauft hat, wohnt er bei seiner Freundin	*Since he sold his house, he's been living with his girlfriend*
Vertraut er ihr an, dass er unter Schreibstörungen leidet, **seit** er diesen Drehbuchauftrag bekommen hat? (*Schoof*)	*Will he confess to her that he has been suffering from writer's block since he got that commission for a screen-play?*

For the use of tenses in sentences with *seit(dem)*, see **14.2.2** and **14.3.4a**.

17.3.6 *sobald, sowie, solange, sooft*

These conjunctions are always spelled as single words and are not normally followed by *als* or *wie*.

(a) *sobald* **'as soon as'**

Sobald ich merkte, dass er gar nicht zuhörte, griff ich ihn am Ärmel (*Frisch*)	*As soon as I noticed he wasn't listening at all I grabbed him by the sleeve*

sowie is a frequent alternative to *sobald*, especially in less formal registers: *Sowie ich etwas weiß, rufe ich dich an*.

(b) *solange* **'as long as'**

(i) *solange* can refer purely to time:

Wir haben gewartet, **solange** wir konnten	*We waited as long as we could*
Solange Leute da sind, werden wir Musik machen und ausschenken (*MM*)	*As long as there are people here we'll make music and pour drinks*

The sense of *solange* can approach that of *seit(dem)*, as in the second example, and tense use is similar, see **12.1.2** and **12.2.4a**.

(ii) It can have a conditional sense (= 'provided that'), e.g.:

Solange er sein Bestes tut, bin ich zufrieden	*As long as he does his best, I'll be satisfied*

The conjunction *solange* is to be distinguished from the phrase *so lange* 'so long', which is written as two words:

Du hast uns **so lange** warten lassen, dass wir den Zug verpasst haben — *You kept us waiting so long that we missed the train*

So lange er auch wartete, es kam kein Zug mehr — *However long he waited, no more trains came*

(c) *sooft* corresponds to English 'as often as' or 'whenever'

Du kannst kommen, **sooft** du willst — *You can come as often as you want to*

Sooft er kam, brachte er uns immer Geschenke mit — *Whenever he came, he always brought us presents*

17.3.7 *während and alternatives*

(a) *während* is the usual equivalent of English 'while', 'whilst'

Like 'while', it can express time **or** a contrast (i.e. = 'whereas'):

Die Zollprobleme löste Boris, **während** wir in Urlaub waren (*Bednarz*) — *Boris solved the problems with the customs while we were on holiday*

Klaus Buch müsste auch sechsundvierzig sein, **während** der vor ihm Stehende doch eher sechsundzwanzig war (*Walser*) — *Klaus Buch ought to be forty-six as well, whereas the man standing in front of him was more like twenty-six*

(i) *noch während* is used for 'even as/whilst', e.g. *Noch während sie schlief…* 'Even as she slept …'
(ii) In colloquial speech, *während* is sometimes used with main clause word order (i.e. with the verb second). This usage is not accepted as standard.

(b) *indes* **and** *indessen*

These mean the same as *während*. They are used chiefly in formal, especially literary registers.

Seine Glieder zitterten, **indes** er diese grauenvolle Lust in sich erwürgte (*Süßkind*) — *His limbs were trembling as he throttled this terrible desire in himself*

(c) *dieweil*

dieweil means the same as *während*. It can sound rather old-fashioned, but it is used in writing for stylistic effect.

In Norddeutschland versank der Verkehr in Schneechaos, **dieweil** wir hier den Vorfrühling bei sieben Grad genießen konnten (*SZ*)	*In North Germany traffic descended into chaos because of the snow, whilst here we were able to enjoy a foretaste of spring at seven degrees*

(d) *wohingegen* **signals a contrast**

It is used mainly in formal registers as an alternative to *während*. It stresses the contrast more strongly and often corresponds to English 'whereas' :

Auf fünf Stipendien hatten sich nur 18 Autoren beworben, **wohingegen** es im Vorjahr noch 40 Kandidaten gewesen waren (*MM*)	*Only 18 authors had applied for five grants, whereas the previous year there had been 40 candidates*

17.3.8 *wobei*

wobei introduces a clause with an action taking place at the same time as that of the main clause. It has no precise English equivalent, but a clause with *wobei* often corresponds to an English participial clause with an '-ing' form (see **11.6.3b**), or a main clause joined with 'and':

Nach Angaben der Polizei schlug der Mann sie ins Gesicht, **wobei** er sie verletzte (*MM*)	*According to the police the man struck her in the face, injuring her*
Es kam zur Kollision mit dem Wagen einer 24-Jährigen, **wobei** sich beide Fahrzeuge überschlugen (*SGT*)	*A collision occurred with a car driven by a 24-year-old woman, and both vehicles overturned*

wobei has recently come to be used frequently with a following main clause construction (i.e. with the verb in second position rather than at the end), especially when it is used in a meaning close to that of 'but' or 'although': e.g. *Sie ist immer sehr freundlich, wobei ich muss sagen, dass das nicht jedem gefällt*. This is a feature of colloquial speech which is not accepted as standard.

17.4 Causal conjunctions

The German conjunctions expressing a cause or a reason are listed in **Table 17.4** with an indication of the section in which they are explained.

TABLE 17.4   Causal conjunctions

da	*as*, *since*	**17.4.1**
nun (da/wo)	*now that*, *seeing that*	**17.4.2**
umso mehr, als	*all the more because*	**17.4.3**
weil	*because*	**17.4.1**
zumal	*especially as*	**17.4.3**

17.4.1 *weil* and *da* – 'because', 'as', 'since'

The difference between *weil* and *da* is relatively slight, like that between English 'because' and 'as' (or 'since'). In general, *da* is used rather more frequently in the North or in more formal registers, and *da*-clauses typically indicate a reason which is already known. They often come first, before the main clause:

Ich musste bremsen, **weil/da** ein gefallener Baum auf der Straße lag	*I had to brake because/as/since there was a fallen tree lying across the road*
Weil dichter Nebel herrschte, konnten keine Maschinen landen	*Because there was thick fog, no planes could land*
Da heute Samstag ist, machen wir schon um 18 Uhr zu	*As it's Saturday today, we'll already be closing at 6 p.m.*

A *weil*-clause can be anticipated by *darum*, *deshalb* or *deswegen* in the preceding main clause This gives greater emphasis to the reason stated in the *weil*-clause:

Er konnte **darum/deshalb/deswegen** nicht kommen, **weil** er plötzlich krank geworden war	*He couldn't come because he had suddenly got sick*

In spoken German *weil* is frequently used with main clause word order, i.e. with the finite verb second rather than at the end of the clause:

Du musst langsamer sprechen, **weil** der **versteht** nicht viel	*You'll have to speak more slowly because he doesn't understand much*

This usage has recently become widespread, even in relatively formal speech, but it is considered non-standard and it is not used in writing. However, even in spoken German, it is only found in contexts where *weil* is used as a co-ordinating conjunction, in place of *denn* (see **17.1.2**), which is coming to be used less frequently. Clauses with *weil* used in this way always follow the main clause and give a reason for the statement in it – often with a slight hesitation after *weil*, as if the reason being given is almost an afterthought, e.g.: *Du musst langsamer sprechen, weil […] der versteht nicht viel*.

17.4.2 *nun da* 'now that','seeing that'

Nun da wir alle wieder versammelt sind, können wir das Problem weiter besprechen	*Seeing/Now that we're all gathered together again, we can carry on talking about the problem*

There are several alternatives to *nun da*. Simple *nun* is occasionally used in formal written registers:

Nun alles geschehen ist, bleibt nur zu wünschen, dass ... (*FAZ*)   *Now that everything has been done, one can only wish that...*

Other alternatives, i.e. *nun wo*, *wo.. . (doch)*, *da… nun (mal)*, are typical of colloquial registers:

Nun wo du sowieso in die Stadt fährst, kannst du uns wohl mitnehmen, oder?   *Seeing as you're going into town anyway, you'll be able to take us with you, won't you?*

Ich muss es wohl tun, **wo** ich es dir (**doch**) versprochen habe   *I'll have to do it, seeing that I promised you*

Da er das **nun (mal)** schon weiß, (so) muss ich ihm wohl das Weitere erzählen   *Seeing that he already knows that, I'll have to tell him the rest*

17.4.3 Other causal conjunctions

(a) *zumal* is a stronger alternative to *da* and corresponds to English 'especially as/since':

Sie wird uns sicher helfen, **zumal** sie dich so gern hat   *She's sure to help us, especially as/since she's so fond of you*

Mehr verriet sie nicht, **zumal** es Stiller gar nicht wunderte, warum sie dieses Bedürfnis hatte (*Frisch*)   *She didn't reveal any more, especially as Stiller was not at all surprised why she felt this need*

(b) *umso mehr...*, *als/da/weil* correspond to 'all the more ... because'

Ich habe mich **umso mehr** über seinen Erfolg gefreut, **als/da/weil** er völlig unerwartet war   *I was all the more pleased about his success because it was totally unexpected*

Du musst früh ins Bett gehen, **umso mehr als** du morgen einen schweren Tag hast   *You've got to go to bed early, all the more because you've got a busy day tomorrow*

umso..., *als* can be used more generally, with other comparative adjectives:

Die Sache ist **umso** dringlicher, **als/da** die Iraner den Ölhahn zudrehen könnten   *The matter is all the more urgent because the Iranians might turn off the oil tap*

17.5 Conjunctions of purpose and result

German conjunctions indicating purpose or result (also called **final conjunctions** and **consecutive conjunctions** respectively) are given in **Table 17.5** with an indication of the sub-sections in which their use is explained.

TABLE 17.5   Conjunctions of purpose and result

als dass	*for...to*	**17.5.3**

auf dass	*so that* (purpose)	**17.5.1**
damit	*so that* (purpose)	**17.5.1**
derart dass	*so that* (consecutive)	**17.5.2**
sodass	*so that* (consecutive)	**17.5.2**

English-speaking learners need to note that 'so that' has two distinct senses, with different German equivalents:

- **Final** 'so that' expresses **purpose** and is an alternative to 'in order that'. The most frequent German equivalent is *damit*, see **17.5.1**.
- **Consecutive** 'so that' expresses a **result** and has the sense of '(in) such (a way) that'. The most frequent German equivalent is *sodass*, see **17.5.2**.

17.5.1 Clauses of purpose

(a) *damit* is the most frequently used conjunction in final clauses

Diese Tüte ist aus Papier, **damit** sie nicht aus Kunststoff ist	*This bag is made of paper so that it is not made of plastic*
König Ludwig ließ Wagner 40 000 Gulden auszahlen, **damit** sich der total verschuldete Meister bei seinen Gläubigern freikaufen konnte (*SZ*)	*King Ludwig had 40,000 guilders paid to Wagner so that the totally debt-ridden maestro could pay off his creditors*

The verb in *damit*-clauses is usually in the indicative in modern German. For the occasional use of the subjunctive, see **14.5.2a**.

Infinitive clauses with *um ... zu* also have a final meaning (= 'in order to'), see **11.2.6a**.

(b) *auf dass* is an older alternative to *damit*

It is occasionally still used for stylistic effect and has a very formal ring. It is always followed by a subjunctive, see **14.5.2b**:

die elektronischen Medien, die moderne Eltern glauben dulden zu müssen, **auf dass** ihr Kind nicht zum Außenseiter in der Peer-Group gerate (*FOCUS*)	*the electronic media which modern parents believe they have to tolerate so that their child does not become an outsider in their peer group*

(c) Simple *dass* is sometimes used for *damit*

This usage is most often found in colloquial speech, but it is not unknown in formal writing, where it is sometimes used with a subjunctive:

Ich mache dir noch ein paar Brote, **dass** du unterwegs auch was zu essen hast	*I'll make you a couple of sandwiches so that you've got something to eat on the journey*
Er entfernte sich leise, **dass** niemand ihn sehe, niemand ihn höre (*Süßkind*)	*He withdrew quietly, so that no-one should see him, no-one should hear him*

In colloquial German, *sodass* is occasionally used to introduce clauses of purpose, rather than *damit*. This usage is not considered standard.

17.5.2 Clauses of result

(a) *sodass* **is the most frequently used conjunction to introduce clauses of result**

sodass can be written as two words (i.e. *so dass*).

Sein Bein war steif, **sodass** er kaum gehen konnte	*His leg was stiff, so (that) he could hardly walk*
Das Wetter war schlecht, **sodass** wir wenig wandern konnten	*The weather was bad, so (that) we couldn't do much hiking*
Er schob den Ärmel zurück, **sodass** wir die Narbe sehen konnten	*He pushed his sleeve back, so (that) we were able to see the scar*

The difference between consecutive clauses and final clauses is clear if we replace *sodass* by *damit* in the last example. *Er schob die Ärmel zurück, damit wir die Narbe sehen konnten* implies that he did it with the express intention that we should see the scar. With *sodass*, the fact that we could see the scar is only the (possibly unintentional) result of his action.

(b) **In clauses of result with adjectives or adverbs, the** *so* **can precede these**

This is similar to the corresponding constructions in English. Compare the examples below to the first two examples in **(a)** above:

Sein Bein war **so** steif, **dass** er kaum gehen konnte	*His leg was so stiff that he could hardly walk*
Das Wetter war **so** schlecht, **dass** wir wenig wandern konnten	*The weather was so bad that we couldn't do much hiking*

derart and *dermaßen* are more emphatic alternatives to *so*. They are used most often in written German:

Er fuhr **so/derart/dermaßen** langsam, **dass** Frieda uns leicht	*He drove so slowly that Frieda caught us*

einholte	*up easily*
Es hat **so/derart/dermaßen** geregnet, **dass** wir schon Montag nach Hause gefahren sind	*It rained so much that we already came home on Monday*

dermaßen is only possible if some idea of quantity is involved. Thus, only *derart* could replace *so* in: *Er hat den Ärmel so/derart zurückgeschoben, dass wir die Narbe sehen konnten*.

17.5.3 *als dass*

als dass is only used to introduce a clause after an adjective modified by *zu*, *nicht genug* or *nicht so*. The equivalent English sentences usually have an infinitive with 'for'. *Konjunktiv II*, particularly of a modal verb, is often used in these clauses, see **14.5.5a**.

Er ist **zu** vernünftig, **als dass** ich das von ihm erwartet hätte	*He's too sensible for me to have expected that of him*
Es ist noch **nicht so** kalt, **als dass** wir jetzt schon die Heizung einschalten müssten	*It's not so cold for us to have to turn the heating on yet*
Das Kind ist **nicht** alt **genug**, **als dass** wir es auf einer so langen Reise mitnehmen könnten	*The child is not old enough for us to be able to take it with us on such a long journey*

In everyday speech, a simpler construction is typically preferred to a sentence with *als dass*, e.g. *Es ist noch nicht so kalt, also brauchen wir die Heizung noch nicht einschalten*.

If the subject of the two clauses is the same, an infinitive clause with *um ... zu* is used rather than an *als dass*-clause (see **11.2.6a**).

17.6 Concessive conjunctions

Concessive conjunctions typically include the equivalents for English '(al)though' or 'even though' (see section **17.6.1**), and the forms which correspond to English 'however', 'where(so)ever', etc. (see section **17.6.2**). The conditional concessive conjunctions corresponding to English 'even if', i.e. *selbst wenn*, *auch wenn*, *sogar wenn* and *wenn ... auch* are dealt with **14.3.3d**.

17.6.1 German equivalents for English '(al)though'

(a) *obwohl* **is the most frequent concessive conjunction in spoken and written German**

Obwohl sie Schwierigkeiten mit dem Reißverschluss hatte, stand ich nicht auf, ihr zu helfen (*Böll*) — *Although she was having difficulties with her zip, I didn't stand up to help her*

If the *obwohl*-clause comes first, the contrast can be emphasized by using *(so) ... doch* in the main clause:

Obwohl ich unterschrieben hatte, (**so**) blieb sie **doch** sehr skeptisch — *Although I had signed, she still remained very sceptical*

Less commonly, the contrast may be stressed by putting the verb second in the following main clause:

Obwohl er mein Cousin ist, ich **kann** nichts für ihn tun — *Although he's my cousin, I can't do anything for him*

In colloquial speech German *obwohl* is increasingly used with the word order of a main clause, i.e. with the verb second, often with an almost imperceptible pause after *obwohl*: *Sie kann ihn sehen, obwohl [...] es ist sehr dunkel.* In such contexts it has a meaning close to that of the particle *allerdings*, see **9.1.2**. This usage is not accepted as standard.

(b) Other concessive conjunctions

(i) Some other conjunctions mean *although*, but all are less frequent than *obwohl* and largely restricted to writing. These are, in approximate descending order of frequency: *wenngleich*, *obschon*, *obgleich*, *wiewohl*, *obzwar* and *gleichwohl*:

Er hat auf dieser Reise an diesem Bild gearbeitet, **wenngleich** er zugleich sehr konservativ ist (*NüN*) — *He has worked on this image during this journey, even though at the same time he is very conservative*

Über ihre Zukunft machen sie sich wenig Sorgen, **obschon** sie sich der hohen Arbeitslosigkeit im Land bewusst sind (*NZZ*) — *They don't have many worries about their future although they are aware of the high unemployment in the country*

Ein Wunsch eint sie, **obgleich** sie alle wissen, dass kein Geld mehr da ist (*MM*) — *One wish unites them although they all know that there's no more money left*

Wiewohl alle das Problem sehen, scheint sich doch keiner darüber zu wundern (*Zeit*) — *Although everybody can see the problem, even so nobody seems surprised about it*

Die Gärtner beginnen mit dem Blumenschmuck der Stadt, **obzwar** die Temperatur noch wenig vom Sommer ahnen lässt (*TT*) — *The gardeners are starting to decorate the city with flowers although the temperatures are not yet giving much of a hint of summer*

Dennoch hat er das Match gewonnen, **gleichwohl** er sich nicht viele Freunde gemacht haben dürfte (*SZ*) — *All the same he did win the match, although he won't have made many friends*

(ii) *obwohl* and the other conjunctions meaning *although* can be used simply with a following word or phrase rather than a full clause with a verb (see also **11.5.2d**), e.g.:

Obwohl schüchtern, gelingt es Mario, das Vertrauen des Dichters zu gewinnen (*SGT*)

Although he is shy Mario succeeds in gaining the poet's trust

(iii) *trotzdem* occurs occasionally in writing as a concessive conjunction:

Ich hab die jungen Herrschaften auch gleich erkannt, **trotzdem** es ein bisschen dunkel ist (*Th. Mann*)

I recognized the young master and mistress straight away, although it is a little dark

This use of *trotzdem* is obsolete in written German, and it is now restricted to informal registers or regional usage.

(iv) A common alternative way to express concession is a construction with *zwar ... aber*, i.e. with two main clauses. The first one has the particle *zwar* (see **9.1.35a**), and the second is introduced by *aber*:

Bei den Hotlines gab es **zwar** laufend Anrufe, **aber** keine größeren Störfälle (*Presse*)

Although there was a stream of calls to the hotlines, there weren't any major breakdowns

17.6.2 Clauses of the type 'however', 'whoever', 'whenever', etc.

(a) The usual German equivalent for these is *wie ... auch*, *wer ... auch*, **etc.**

The clause is introduced by an interrogative pronoun (see **5.3**) or adverb (see **7.6**), and the particle *auch* is placed later in the clause:

Wer er **auch** ist, ich kann nichts für ihn tun	*Whoever he is, I can't do anything for him*
Wann sie **auch** ankommt, ich will sie sofort sprechen	*Whenever she arrives, I want to speak to her immediately*
Wohin sie **auch** hingeht, ich werde ihr folgen	*Wherever she may go, I shall follow her*
Wo er sich **auch** zeigte, er wurde mit Beifall begrüßt	*Wherever he showed himself, he was greeted with applause*

A main clause following these clauses has normal word order, with the verb second, see **19.2.1c**.

Other features of this type of concessive clause:

(i) They often contain the modal verb *mögen* (see **15.4.3**), especially in formal registers, e.g. *Wer er auch sein mag, ...*; *Wann sie auch ankommen mag, ...* etc.

(ii) The verb in these clauses is in the indicative. The subjunctive only occurs nowadays in the set phrase *Wie dem auch sei* 'However that may be'.

(iii) *auch* can be strengthened by adding *immer*, e.g. *Wo er sich auch immer zeigte, ...*, and *immer* can be used on its own, e.g. *Wo immer er sich zeigte, ...* The place and order of *auch* and *immer* is variable, and as an equivalent of 'Whatever the old man says nobody listens to him' all the following are possible alternatives to: *Was der alte Mann auch sagt, keiner hört ihm zu*

Was der alte Mann **immer** sagt, keiner ...	Was **immer** der alte Mann sagt, keiner...
Was **auch** der alte Mann sagt, keiner ...	Was **auch immer** der alte Mann sagt, keiner...
Was der alte Mann **auch immer** sagt, keiner...	Was **immer auch** der alte Mann sagt, keiner...
Was der alte Mann **immer auch** sagt, keiner...	Was **immer** der alte Mann **auch** sagt, keiner...

(b) *so/wie ... auch* corresponds to English 'however' followed by an adjective or an adverb

So/Wie gescheit er **auch** sein mag, für diese Stelle passt er nicht	*However clever he may be, he's not right for this job*
So/Wie teuer das Bild **auch** ist/sein mag, ich will es doch kaufen	*However expensive the picture may be, I'm still going to buy it*
So höhnisch die Antwort Vittlars **auch** sein mochte, gab sie mir dennoch mehr Gewissheit (*Grass*)	*However scornful Vittlar's answer may have been, it still gave me more certainty*

Similarly *sosehr ... auch* is usual for 'however much':

Sosehr das Publikum die feurigen Latinorhythmen **auch** beklatschte, getanzt wurde nicht (*MM*)	*However much the public clapped in time to the fiery Latin rhythms, nobody danced*

noch so can be used in a concessive sense with a following adjective. Compare the following alternative for the first example above: *Er mag noch so gescheit sein, für diese Stelle passt er nicht*.

(c) *was für (ein)* or *welcher ... auch* corresponds to 'whatever' with a noun

Was für Schwierigkeiten du **auch** hast, es ist der Mühe wert	*Whatever difficulties you may have, it's worth the trouble*
diese Vorgänge, von **welcher** Seite man sie **auch** betrachtet (*SZ*)	*these events, from whatever side one considers them*
aus **welchem** Land **auch immer**	*from whatever country*

aus **welchem** Grund **auch immer**   *for whatever reason*

17.7 Conjunctions of manner and degree

(a) *als* **and** *wie* **introduce comparative clauses**

For the use of *als* or *wie* in comparatives, see **6.5.2**:

Wir fahren schneller, **als** du denkst	*We're going faster than you think*
Der Vortrag war nicht so interessant, **wie** ich erwartet hatte	*The lecture was not as interesting as I had expected*

Clauses expressing unreal comparisons with *als ob/wenn (=* 'as if') are explained in **14.5.1**. For *je ... umso/desto* 'the more ... the more', see **6.5.2g**.

(b) *außer dass* **and** *außer wenn*

(i) *außer dass* corresponds to English 'except that'

Ich habe nichts herausfinden können, **außer dass** er erst im April zurückkommt	*I couldn't find anything out, except that he's not coming back till April*

An infinitive clause with *außer ... zu* can be used if the two clauses have the same subject, see **11.2.6d**.

(ii) *außer wenn* corresponds to English 'except when' or 'unless'

Wir haben oft im Gebirge gewandert, **außer wenn** es geregnet hat	*We often used to go hiking in the mountains, except when/unless it was raining*
Du brauchst die Suppe nicht zu essen, **außer wenn** du sie wirklich magst	*You don't need to eat the soup, unless you really like it*

Simple *außer* is often used for *außer wenn*, especially (but not only) in speech. It is followed by the word order of a main clause, with the verb second, e.g. *Wir gehen morgen im Gebirge wandern, außer es regnet*.

For other equivalents for English 'unless', see **14.3.3d**. For *anstatt dass* 'instead of', see **11.2.6c**.

(c) *dadurch dass* **and** *indem* **have instrumental meaning**

Their usual English equivalent is 'by' followed by the '-ing' form of the verb, see also **11.6.2a**:

Er hat sich **dadurch** gerettet, **dass** er aus dem Fenster } gesprungen ist	*He saved himself by jumping out of the window*
Er hat sich gerettet, **indem** er aus dem Fenster gesprungen ist	
Man kann **dadurch** Unfälle vermeiden helfen, **dass** man die } Verkehrsvorschriften beachtet	*One can help to avoid accidents by observing the highway code*
Man kann Unfälle vermeiden helfen, **indem** man die Verkehrsvorschriften beachtet	

This is the only current use of *indem* in modern German. Its use in time clauses, see **17.3.1f**, is now obsolete.

(d) *insofern (als)*, *insoweit (als)*, *sofern*, *soviel*, *soweit* **are all very close in meaning**

(i) *insofern (als)* and *insoweit (als)* correspond to English '(in) so/as far as' or 'inasmuch as'

Ich werde dir helfen, **insofern (als)** ich kann/**insoweit (als)** ich kann	*I'll help you in so far as I'm able to*

insofern and *insoweit* can be placed within a preceding main clause, especially qualifying an adjective or adverb. The following clause is introduced by *als*:

Diese Verhandlungen werden **insofern/insoweit** schwierig sein, **als** es sich um ein ausgesprochen heikles Problem handelt	*These negotiations will be difficult, inasmuch as we're dealing with an extremely delicate problem*

The use of *insofern* with a following *weil* or *dass* rather than *als* is frequent in informal registers, but not accepted as standard.

(ii) *soweit* usually has the sense of '(in) so/as far as'/'as much as'. In this sense *soweit* is an alternative to *insofern/insoweit (als) :*

Ich werde dir helfen, **soweit** ich kann	*I'll help you as much as I can*
Soweit ich die Lage beurteilen kann, muss ich ihm Recht geben	*In so far as I can judge the situation, I have to admit he's right*

soweit can be used in a conditional sense, as an alternative to *sofern* (see below and **14.3.3d**):

Soweit/Sofern noch Interesse besteht, wollen wir schon *Provided there's still interest, we're going to* morgen damit anfangen *make a start tomorrow*

Note that 'as far as I know' is**:** *soviel ich weiß*.

(iii) *sofern* usually has a conditional sense, corresponding to English 'provided that' or 'if'. See also **14.3.3d**.

Sofern wir es im Stadtrat durchsetzen können, *Provided (that)/If we can get it through the town* wird die neue Straße bald gebaut *council, the new road will soon be built*

(e) *inwiefern* **,** *inwieweit* **'to what extent', 'in how far'**

Der Bundesregierung liegen keine *The Federal Government has currently no information* Informationen darüber vor, **inwiefern** *about the extent to which any surviving victims of* überlebende NS-Opfer in Europa heute in *National Socialism in Europe are living in poverty* Armut leben (*taz*)

Derzeit wird geprüft, **inwieweit** sich das Projekt *At the moment people are examining to what extent the* im Detail realisieren lässt (*SZ*) *project can be carried out in every detail*

(f) *je nachdem* '**according to', 'depending on'**

je nachdem is normally used with a following *ob* or an interrogative:

Je nachdem, **ob** es ihm besser geht oder nicht, wird er *Depending on whether he's better or not, he'll* morgen verreisen *leave tomorrow*

Je nachdem, **wann** wir fertig sind, werden wir hier oder *Depending on when we get finished, we'll eat* in der Stadt essen *here or in town*

Je nachdem, **wie** das Wetter wird, werden wir am *According to what the weather is like, we'll go* Montag oder am Dienstag segeln gehen *sailing on Monday or Tuesday*

je nachdem often occurs in isolation, e.g.:

Kommst du morgen mit? Na, **je nachdem** *Are you coming tomorrow? Well, it depends*

(g) *nur dass* **'only (that)'**

In der neuen Schule hat er sich gut eingelebt, **nur dass** *He's settled down well at his new school, only* seine Noten etwas besser sein könnten *his marks could be a bit better*

A main clause introduced by *nur* is often used rather than *nur dass* in spoken German, e.g. *In der neuen Schule hat er sich gut eingelebt, nur könnten seine Noten etwas besser sein*.

(h) *ohne dass* '**without'**

ohne dass must be used for English 'without' followed by an '-ing' form if the subordinate clause has a different subject from the main clause. The subjunctive is often used in these clauses, see **14.5.5a**:

Er verließ das Zimmer, **ohne dass** wir es merkten   *He left the room without us noticing*

Sie haben mir sofort geholfen, **ohne dass** ich sie darum *They helped me immediately without my*
   bitten musste/müsste   *having to ask them*

If the two clauses have the same subject, an infinitive clause with *ohne ... zu* can be used for English 'without + ...-ing', see **11.6.2f**.

18 Prepositions

PREPOSITIONS are a small class of words which combine with a following **NOUN PHRASE** to form a **PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE**. Prepositional phrases often express notions of time, place and direction and are typically (but not only) used as **ADVERBIALS**.

In German, the **noun phrase following each preposition is i**n **a particular** **CASE** – we say that the preposition **'GOVERNS '** that case.

Table 18.1 gives the most important German prepositions, with the case they govern, and this chapter explains the use of all the German prepositions in the following sections**:**

TABLE 18.1   The main German prepositions and the cases they govern

accusative	**bis durch für** **gegen ohne um**
dative	**aus außer bei gegenüber** **mit nach seit von zu**
accusative or **dative**	**an auf hinter in neben** **über unter vor zwischen**
genitive	**(an)statt entlang trotz** **während wegen**

18.1 prepositions governing the **accusative**
18.2 prepositions governing the **dative**
18.3 prepositions governing the **dative** or the **accusative**
18.4 prepositions governing the **genitive**
18.5 German equivalents for **English 'to'**

Some uses of prepositions are dealt with in detail elsewhere in the book:

3.5 the **prepositional adverb,** e.g. *darauf*, *damit*

4.1.1c the **contraction** of some prepositions with the **definite article**, e.g. *am*, *ins*
6.3.2 the use of prepositions after **adjectives**
16.5 prepositional object – prepositions with verbs

18.1 Prepositions governing the accusative case

Six common prepositions are used with the accusative:

 bis durch für gegen ohne um

The following are less frequent and are dealt with in **18.1.7**:

 à   betreffend eingerechnet pro wider

entlang is also often used with the accusative, but case usage with it is variable (see **18.4.2**).

18.1.1 *bis*

bis **is rarely used as a preposition in its own right**. It is never followed by an article (or any determiner), and it is used on its own only with names, adverbs and some time phrases. Otherwise it is followed by another preposition which determines the case of the following noun.

(a) Referring to place, *bis* **means 'as far as', '(up) to'**

(i) Followed by names of places and adverbs *bis* is used **without an article**. In practice the case of the following noun is never obvious:

Ich fahre nur **bis** Frankfurt	*I'm only going as far as Frankfurt*
Bis dahin gehe ich mit	*I'll go that far with you*
bis hierher und nicht weiter	*so far and no further*

With names of towns, cities and countries, *bis* or *bis nach* can be used. The latter is more emphatic: *Wir fahren bis (nach) Freiburg*, *von Köln bis (nach) Aachen*.

(ii) If the following noun has an article, **an appropriate preposition must follow** (most often the appropriate equivalent of English 'to', see **18.5**):

Wir gehen **bis zum** Waldrand	*We are going as far as the edge of the forest*
Sie ging **bis zur** Tür	*She went up to the door*
Sie ging **bis an** die Tür	*She went right up to the door*

Sie stehen im Wasser **bis an** die Knie	*They are standing in water up to their knees*
Sie stehen im Wasser **bis über** die Knie	*They are standing in water coming up over their knees*
bis hin zu den Wanzen im Gesicht (*Borst*)	*right down to the warts on his face*
Er stieg **bis aufs** Dach	*He climbed right onto the roof*
bis über die Ohren verschuldet	*up to one's ears in debt*

bis zu can be used as an adverb in the sense of 'up to' with quantities, e.g. *Bis zu dreißig Kinder nahmen an dem Ausflug teil*. See **8.1.6** for further details of this usage and the distinction between the adverbial and prepositional usage of *bis zu* with quantities.

(b) Referring to time, *bis* **means 'until' or 'by'**

(i) *bis* indicates an **end-point in time** and corresponds to English 'until' or 'by':

Bis 2020 hat er in Wien gelebt	*Until 2020 he lived in Vienna*
Das Geschäft ist von 9 Uhr **bis** 18.30 Uhr durchgehend geöffnet	*The shop is open continuously from 9 a.m. until 6.30 p.m.*
Ich werde es **bis** heute Abend/**bis** Montag fertig haben	*I'll have it finished by tonight/by Monday*
bis nächste Woche, nächstes Jahr	*until/by next week, next year*
bis dahin/**bis** dann	*by then, until then*
bis jetzt, **bis** anhin (Sw.)	*up to now*
Bis dahin bin ich längst zurück	*I'll be back long before then*

(ii) With **days of the week**, **months** and **dates**, *bis* can be used with **or** without a following *zu* (and the definite article):

bis (zum) Freitag	*by/until Friday*
bis (zum) 11. Juni	*by/until the 11th of June*
Bis (zum) kommenden Montag kannst du mich hier erreichen	*You can reach me here till next Monday*

(iii) In other contexts *bis* **must be followed by** *zu* (or another appropriate preposition) with the definite article:

bis zum 18. Jahrhundert	*until/by the 18th century*
bis zu seinem Tode	*until his death*
bis vor kurzem	*until recently*
Bis vor zwei Wochen war er hier	*He was here until two weeks ago*
Ich arbeite **bis gegen** Mittag im Büro	*I'm working at the office until about noon*

Wir wollen es **bis auf** weiteres verschieben	*We'll postpone it for the present*
bis tief/spät **in** die Nacht hinein	*till late at night*

A date following a phrase with *bis* and a weekday is in the accusative, e.g. *bis Montag, den 5. September*. In other contexts, the date is in the dative, e.g. *bis morgen, dem 11. November*.

erst is used for 'not until', e.g. *Er kommt erst am Montag*, see **9.1.12**.

bis is used in several leave-taking phrases: *Bis gleich! Bis bald! Bis morgen! Bis nächste Woche!*

(c) *bis auf* **(+ acc.) means 'down to (and including)' or 'all but', 'except'**

Die Kabinen waren mit 447 Passagieren **bis auf** das letzte Klappbett belegt (*Zeit*)	*With 447 passengers, the cabins were full down to the last camp bed*
Bis auf drei kamen alle Insassen ums Leben	*All but three of the passengers were killed*

bis auf can be ambiguous: *Der Bus war bis auf den letzten Platz besetzt* can mean 'The bus was full down to the last seat' or 'The bus was full except for the last seat'.

18.1.2 *durch*

(a) *durch* **means 'through', referring to place**

Sie ging **durch** die Stadt	*She went through the city*
Er atmete **durch** den Mund	*He was breathing through his mouth*
mitten **durch** den Park (see **7.1.3**)	*through the middle of the park*

durch is often strengthened by adding *hindurch*, see **7.2.4**, e.g. *Wir gingen durch den Wald hindurch* 'We went (right) through the forest'.

durch can also be used for English 'across', especially with a preceding *quer*. This can give the sense of 'crosswise', 'diagonally', but it is often used simply to strengthen *durch* (i.e. = 'right through'):

Wir wateten (**quer**) **durch** den Fluss	*We waded across the river*
im Rahmen ihrer Frühlingstournee **quer durch** Deutschland (MM)	*in the course of their spring tour right across Germany*

(b) *durch* **can be used in the sense of English 'throughout'**

(i) This is its usual sense when it refers to time, and it can be strengthened by adding *hindurch*, e.g. *durch viele Generationen (hindurch)* 'throughout many generations'.
(ii) *hindurch* can be used without a preceding *durch* for 'throughout' after an accusative phrase of time with *ganz*, see **2.2.2a**:

den ganzen Winter **hindurch**   *throughout the winter*

die ganze Nacht **hindurch**   *throughout the night*

durch can also be used on its own after the noun in this meaning: *die ganze Nacht durch*.

(iii) A phrase with *ganz* and an appropriate preposition is needed to give the sense of English 'throughout' referring to place, e.g.:

im **ganzen** Land   *throughout the country*

durch die **ganze** Stadt *throughout the town*

(c) *durch* **is used to express means**

This use of *durch* is related to its use for 'by' in passive sentences, see **13.3**.

(i) *durch* indicates the means through whom or which an action is carried out:

Durch harte Arbeit hat er sein Ziel erreicht	*He attained his aim by (means of) hard work*
Er ist **durch** einen Unfall ums Leben gekommen	*He was killed in an accident*
durch seine eigene Schuld	*through his own fault*
Ich habe es **durch** Zufall erfahren	*I learnt of it by chance*

(ii) *durch* in this sense corresponds to 'by' with a verbal noun:

die Annahme des Kaisertitels **durch** den König	*the assumption of the title of emperor by the king*
die Erfindung des Verbrennungsmotors **durch** Benz und Daimler	*the invention of the internal combustion engine by Benz and Daimler*

durch with a verbal noun often corresponds to English 'by' with an '-ing' form, see **11.6.2a**, e.g. *durch Betätigung des Mechanismus* 'by activating the mechanism'.

(iii) The prepositional adverb *dadurch* often has the sense of 'thereby':

Was willst du **dadurch** erreichen?	*What do you hope to gain by that?*
Meinst du, **dadurch** wird alles wieder gut?	*Do you think that will make everything all right again?*

For the compound conjunction *dadurch, dass* 'by …ing' see **17.7c**.

18.1.3 *für*

(a) *für* corresponds to English 'for' in a wide range of senses

i.e. where 'for' has the meaning of 'on behalf of' and the like, e.g.:

Er hat viel **für** mich getan	*He's done a lot for me*
Das wäre genug **für** heute	*That'll be enough for today*
Das war sehr unangenehm **für** mich	*That was very unpleasant for me*
Für einen Ausländer spricht er recht gut Deutsch	*He speaks pretty good German for a foreigner*
Das ist kein Buch **für** Kinder	*That's not a book for children*
Ich habe es **für** zehn Euro gekriegt	*I got it for ten euros*

für is used idiomatically in *ein Sinn, ein Beispiel für etwas* 'a sense, an example **of** sth.'

Where English 'for' expresses **purpose**, its usual German equivalent is *zu*, see **18.2.9d**.

(b) *für* **indicates a period of time extending from 'now'**

In this sense, it corresponds to English 'for':

Ich habe das Haus **für** sechs Monate gemietet	*I've rented the house for six months*
Am nächsten Tag sind wir **für** einen Monat in den Schwarzwald gefahren	*The next day we went to the Black Forest for a month*

auf (+ accusative) is a less common alternative in this meaning, used chiefly in formal registers and set expressions, see **18.3.5c**.

Less frequently, a phrase with *für* is used to refer to a period of time lying entirely in the past or future, e.g. *Nur während der Wintermonate blieb er für längere Zeit an einem Ort* (*Bumke*). An accusative phrase is more usual in this meaning, see **(c)** below.

The use of *für* is idiomatic in *Tag für Tag* 'day by day'.

(c) German equivalents of English 'for' referring to time

(i) a phrase in the accusative case (see **2.2.2a**) can be used to denote a period of time lying entirely in the past or future, e.g. *Er ist einen Monat (lang) in Berlin geblieben* 'He remained in Berlin for a month'. The phrase is often followed by *lang*.

In speech an accusative phrase is often used to refer to a period of time extending from the present, e.g. *Ich gehe eine halbe Stunde (lang) ins Cafe*.

(ii) *seit* refers to a period of time which began in the past and extends up to the present, e.g. *Ich warte seit einer Stunde auf dich* 'I've been waiting for you for an hour'. See **18.2.7** for further details.
(iii) *für* (or more formal *auf*) to refer to a period of time, as illustrated in **(b)** above.

18.1.4 *gegen*

(a) Referring to place or opposition, *gegen* means 'against'

Er hat den Ball **gegen** die Mauer geworfen	*He threw the ball against the wall*
gegen den Strom schwimmen	*swim against the current*
Sie hat sich **gegen** diese Leute verteidigt	*She defended herself against those people*

The prepositional adverb *dagegen* indicates opposition, e.g.:

Hast du was **dagegen**, wenn wir früher anfangen?	*Do you have any objection to us starting earlier?*

Note the different idiomatic usage: *Ich brauche Tabletten gegen Kopfschmerzen*, but: 'I need tablets **for** a headache'.

(b) *gegen* **can indicate direction**

(i) *gegen* often corresponds to 'into':

Er fuhr **gegen** einen Baum	*He drove into a tree*
Wir müssen aufpassen, dass wir nicht **gegen** die Kraterwände fliegen (*Grzimek*)	*We've got to watch out that we don't fly into the sides of the crater*

(ii) In some contexts *gegen* has the sense of 'towards':

Michael will die Maschine mit dem Propeller **gegen** die flache *Michael intends to turn the aeroplane with the propellor towards* Böschung am Seeufer drehen (*Grzimek*) *the slight incline on the lake shore*

The use of *gegen* in the sense of 'towards' with the points of the compass is obsolete. For older *gegen Norden fahren* one now finds *nach Norden fahren*, see **18.2.6**. The archaic form *gen* (e.g. *gen Norden fahren*) is occasionally still used in writing for stylistic effect.

Note the difference from English usage in *etwas gegen das Licht halten* 'hold sth. **up to** the light'.

(c) *gegen* **can express a contrast (= 'contrary to', 'compared with')**

Ich handelte **gegen** seinen Befehl	*I acted against/contrary to his orders*
gegen alle Erwartungen	*against/contrary to all expectations*
Gegen meine Schwester bin ich groß	*I'm tall compared to my sister*
gegen früher	*compared to formerly*

(d) *gegen* **can have the sense of '(in exchange/return) for'**

Er gab mir das Geld **gegen** eine Quittung	*He gave me the money in exchange for a receipt*
Ich will meine Digitalkamera trotzdem **gegen** einen HD-Camcorder eintauschen	*I want to exchange my digital camera for an HD camcorder all the same*

(e) *gegen* **is used after a number of nouns and adjectives**

See also **6.4.1**. These nouns or adjectives mostly involve a mental attitude 'towards' something or someone:

die Abneigung gegen	*aversion towards*	argwöhnisch gegen	*suspicious of*
die Grausamkeit gegen	*cruelty towards*	gesichert gegen	*secure against*
der Hass gegen	*hatred of*	gleichgültig gegen	*indifferent to*
das Misstrauen gegen	*distrust of*		
seine Pflicht gegen seine Eltern		*his duty towards his parents*	
sein Verhalten gegen seinen Chef		*his attitude to(wards) his boss*	
rücksichtslos/rücksichtsvoll gegen		*(in)considerate towards*	

With some of these nouns and adjectives *gegenüber* or *zu* may be an alternative to *gegen*, see **18.2.4d** and **18.2.9g**.

(f) Referring to time, *gegen* **means 'about' or 'towards'**

It can be ambiguous, especially with clock times (see **8.5.1**), as some Germans understand *gegen zwei Uhr* to mean 'at about two o'clock', while others interpret it as 'just before two o'clock'. In other phrases it usually has the meaning 'towards'. It is normally used without an article in time expressions:

gegen Mittag, **gegen** Abend   *towards noon, towards evening*

gegen Monatsende   *towards the end of the month*

gegen Ende des Jahrhunderts   *towards the end of the century*

(g) *gegen* **can also be used as an adverb with quantities, in the sense of 'about'**

e.g.: *Es waren gegen* (or *etwa*, or *an die*) *500 Zuschauer im Saal*. See **8.1.6** for further details of this usage and the distinction between the adverbial and prepositional usage of *gegen* with quantities.

18.1.5 *ohne*

In most contexts *ohne* corresponds to English **'without':**

Das hat er **ohne** mein Wissen getan   *He did it without my knowledge*

Er geht selten **ohne** Schirm   *He rarely goes walking without an umbrella*

Das haben wir **ohne** große Schwierigkeiten erledigt   *We managed it without too much difficulty*

ohne can be used idiomatically on its own in colloquial speech:

Der Wein ist nicht **ohne**   *The wine's got quite a kick*

Er ist gar nicht so **ohne**   *He's got what it takes*

After the combination *mit oder ohne* it is now accepted usage to ignore the usual rule that a noun phrase or pronoun must be repeated after prepositions which govern different cases. Thus, *mit oder ohne Kinder* or *mit oder ohne ihn* (with the following noun phrase or pronoun in the accusative) are considered acceptable.

ohne is used with **no determiner** in many contexts where English has an indefinite article or a possessive, see **4.10**.

For the use of *ohne* in **infinitive clauses** (i.e. *ohne …. zu*), see **11.2.6b;** for the conjunction *ohne dass*, see **17.7g**.

18.1.6 *um*

(a) Referring to place, *um* means '(a)round', 'about'

Wir standen **um** den Teich	*We were standing (a)round the pond*
Er kam **um** die Ecke	*He came (a)round the corner*
Sie sah **um** sich	*She looked round (in all directions)*

um can be strengthened by adding *rund*, *rings* or *herum* (see **7.2.4b**):

Wir standen **rings/rund um** den Tisch *or* **um** den Tisch **herum**

Er kam **um** die Ecke **herum**

Sie sah **um** sich **herum**

(b) *um* referring to time

(i) *um* corresponds to English 'at' with clock times, e.g. *um vier Uhr* 'at four o'clock', etc. (see **8.5.1**).
(ii) With other time words *um* expresses approximation. It corresponds to English 'around' or 'about' and is often used with *herum* following the noun:

um Mitternacht (herum)	*around midnight*
um Ostern (herum)	*round about Easter time*
um 1890 (herum)	*around 1890*
die Tage **um** die Sommersonnenwende (herum)	*the days either side of the summer solstice*

um diese Zeit is ambiguous. It can mean 'at this time' or 'around this time'. Adding *herum*, i.e. *um diese Zeit herum*, makes it clear that the second meaning is intended.

(iii) Idiomatic time phrases with *um*:

Stunde **um** Stunde	*hour after hour*
einen Tag **um** den anderen	*one day after the other*

(c) *um* can be used adverbially with numerals in the sense of 'about', 'approximately'

(see **8.1.6**). It is then often followed by a definite article, but a following adjective has **strong** endings, e.g. *um die vierzig ausländische Gäste*.

(d) *um* is used to denote the degree of difference

This usually corresponds to English 'by':

Ich werde meinen Aufenthalt **um** zwei Tage verlängern	*I shall extend my stay by two days*
Sie hat sich **um** 18 Euro verrechnet	*She was 18 euros out in her calculations*
um die Hälfte mehr	*half as much again*
eine Erweiterung der EU **um** Kroatien	*an expansion of the EU by the inclusion of Croatia*

When *um* is used in this sense with a comparative adjective and a measurement phrase (see **6.5.2b**), an alternative to *um* is simply to put the measurement phrase in the **accusative** case, e.g. *Sie ist (um) einen Kopf größer als ich*.

(e) *um* can convey the idea of 'in respect of', 'concerning'

This sense is common when *um* is used in a prepositional object, see **16.5.10,** but it occurs in other constructions, especially after some nouns and adjectives, e.g.:

der Kampf **ums** Dasein	*the struggle for existence*
Er hat es nur **um** das Geld getan	*He only did it for the money*
Er wandte sich an mich **um** Rat	*He turned to me for advice*
Es ist schade **um** den Verlust	*It's a pity about the loss*
Es steht schlecht **um** ihren Bruder	*Her brother's in a bad way*
ein Streit **um** etwas	*an argument about sth.*
Es ist recht still **um** ihn geworden	*You don't hear anything about him now*

Idiomatically also *Auge um Auge, Zahn um Zahn* 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'.

(f) The prepositional adverb *darum* is used in the meaning 'therefore', 'that's why'

It is an alternative to *deshalb*:

Darum habe ich nicht schreiben können	*That's why I couldn't write*
Sie hat eine Panne gehabt, **darum** ist sie so spät gekommen	*She had a breakdown, that's why she was so late coming*

18.1.7 Less frequent prepositions governing the accusative

(a) *à* is used in the sense of 'at' (i.e. @), with prices

zehn Paar Schuhe **à** 50 Euro	Ten pairs of shoes for 50 euros

à was originally typically used in commercial language, but it has spread to everyday spoken language. In general, though, *zu* (see **18.2.9h**) is used more frequently in these contexts than *à*.

(b) *betreffend* **'with regard to'**

betreffend is used mainly in commercial German. It is an alternative to *betreffs* (+ gen.) and may precede or follow the noun it governs:

 betreffend Ihr Schreiben vom 23. Mai **or** Ihr Schreiben vom 23. Mai **betreffend**

(c) *eingerechnet* **'including'**

eingerechnet is used mainly in commercial German. It follows the noun it governs:

 meine Unkosten eingerechnet *including my expenses*

(d) *pro* **'per'**

pro was originally restricted to commercial language, but it is increasingly used in speech. A common alternative is *je*, see **8.4.1**:

Die Pfirsiche kosten 80 Cent **pro** Stück	*The peaches cost 80 cents each*
Was ist der Preis **pro** Tag?	*What is the cost per day?*
zwanzig Euro **pro** Person	*twenty euros per person*
Unsere Reisekosten betragen 3000 Euro **pro/je** Vertreter **pro/je** Monat	*Our travel expenses amount to 3000 euros per representative per month*

As *pro* is most often used without a following adjective or determiner, the case it governs may not be obvious, and this has given rise to uncertainty. In practice, when the case used is clear, *pro* is seen to be used at least as frequently with the dative rather than the accusative, e.g. *pro neuem Mitarbeiter*. Occasionally it is used with a nominative, especially with an adjective used as a noun, e.g. *pro Angestellter*. All these alternatives are accepted as correct.

However, *je* is usually followed by a noun in the accusative, or occasionally the nominative, but never the dative, e.g. *je neuen Mitarbeiter/neuer Mitarbeiter*.

(e) *wider* **'against'**

wider is an obsolete alternative to *gegen*. It is occasionally still used in elevated registers, but it occurs most often in a few set phrases:

Diese Unterlassung relativiert alle markigen Worte **wider** den Terrorismus (*Zeit*)	*This omission qualifies all the vigorous speeches against terrorism*
wider (alles) Erwarten	*against (all) expectations*
wider Willen	*against my (his, her, etc.) will*
wider besseres Wissen	*against my (his, her, etc.) better judgement*

18.2 Prepositions governing the dative case

Nine common prepositions are used with the dative:

aus außer bei gegenüber mit nach seit von zu

The following are less frequent and are treated together in **18.2.10**:

ab	**binnen**	**dank**	**entgegen**	**entsprechend**	**fern**
gemäß	**laut**	**minus**	**(mit)samt**	**nahe**	**nebst**
per	**plus**	**via**	**zufolge**	**zuliebe**	**zuwider**

18.2.1 *aus*

(a) *aus* **most often denotes direction 'out of' or 'from' a place**

Er kommt **aus** dem Haus	*He is coming out of the house*
Ich sah **aus** dem Fenster (*or* zum Fenster hinaus)	*I looked out of the window*
Er trinkt Wodka **aus** einer Tasse	*He is drinking vodka from a cup*
Sie ging mir **aus** dem Weg	*She avoided me*
aus der Mode kommen/sein	*go/be out of fashion*
aus der Übung kommen	*get out of practice*

aus often corresponds to English 'from', and English learners need to be careful to distinguish it from *von*, which can also mean 'from' (see **18.2.8a**). *aus* is used with reference to places one has been **in,** with the idea of origin. Its opposite is *in* (+ acc.). *von*, by contrast, is used for 'from' with reference to places one has been **at,** i.e. it expresses the idea of direction. Its opposite is *zu* or *nach*. Compare:

Er kommt **aus** Hamburg	*He comes from Hamburg* (i.e. he lives there)
Er kommt **von** Hamburg	*He is travelling from Hamburg* (i.e. on this occasion)
aus dieser Richtung	*from that direction* (compare: *in diese(r) Richtung* 'in that direction')

| ein Mädchen **aus** unserer Klasse | *a girl from our class* (i.e. she is **in** our class) |
| Dieser Schrank ist **aus** dem 18. Jahrhundert | *This cupboard is from the 18th century (i.e. it was made **in** the 18th century)* |

(b) *aus* denotes 'made of' referring to materials

Die Kaffeekanne war **aus** Silber	*The coffee pot was made of silver*
aus Holz, Stahl, Eisen	*made of wood, steel, iron*
ein Kleid **aus** Wolle	*a woollen dress*

(c) *aus* is used to denote a cause, a reason or a motive

Sie tat es **aus** Mitleid, **aus** Überzeugung	*She did it out of sympathy, from conviction*
Ich weiß es **aus** (der) Erfahrung	*I know it from experience*
Ich frage nur **aus** Interesse	*I'm only asking out of interest*
aus Furcht vor, Liebe zu etwas	*for fear, love of sth.*
aus diesem Grund(e)	*for that reason*

For the difference between *aus* and *vor* (+ dat.) to indicate cause, see **18.3.14d**.

(d) Some idiomatic phrases with *aus*

aus erster Hand	*at first hand*
Daraus werde ich nicht klug	*I can't make it out*
Aus dir wird nichts werden	*You'll never come to anything*

18.2.2 *außer*

(a) *außer* usually expresses a restriction (= 'except (for)', 'besides')

Niemand hat ihn gesehen **außer** dem Nachtwächter	*No-one saw him except (for) the nightwatchman*
Niemand wird es machen können **außer** mir	*No-one will be able to do it except for me*
Ich konnte nichts sehen **außer** Straßenlichtern	*I couldn't see anything besides street lights*

außer can also be used with the same case as the word to which it refers back, rather than with the dative. The following are acceptable alternatives to the examples above:

> **Niemand** wird es machen können außer **ich**
> Ich konnte **nichts** sehen außer **Lichter**

In effect *außer* is being used in such contexts to introduce a phrase in apposition (see **2.6**) rather than as a preposition. It can be used in a similar way before another preposition, e.g. *Außer bei Regen kann man hier spielen*.

(b) *außer* **is used in the meaning 'out of', 'outside'**

This sense occurs chiefly in set phrases. In most of them *außer* is used without a following article:

Die Maschine ist **außer** Betrieb	*The machine is out of service*
außer Kontrolle sein/geraten	*be/get out of control*
etwas **außer** Acht lassen	*disregard sth.*
Ich war **außer** mir	*I was beside myself*

Similarly:

außer Atem	*out of breath*	außer Gefahr	*out of danger*
außer Reichweite	*out of range*	außer Sicht	*out of sight*
außer Übung	*out of practice*	außer Zweifel	*beyond doubt*

außer is used with an otherwise obsolete genitive in the idiom *außer Landes gehen* 'leave the country'.

With verbs of motion, *außer* can be used with the accusative, e.g. *etwas außer jede n Zweifel stellen*, and the accusative is an accepted alternative to the dative with *geraten*, i.e. *Ich geriet außer mich/mir* 'I lost my temper'.

18.2.3 *bei*

(a) Referring to place, *bei* **usually corresponds to English 'by' or 'at'**

(i) *bei* is less precise than *an* (+ dat.), see **18.3.2a**, and means 'in the vicinity of' rather than 'next to':

Sie stand **bei** mir (= Sie stand in meiner Nähe)	*She was standing by/near me*
(dicht) **bei** der Kirche	*(right) by the church*
Bad Homburg liegt **bei** Frankfurt	*Bad Homburg is by/near Frankfurt*
Ich habe ihn neulich **beim** Fußballspiel gesehen	*I saw him recently at the football match*

Note that *bei* is used with battles for English *of*, e.g.: *die Schlacht bei Hastings*.

(ii) Used with reference to people, *bei* means 'at (the house of)' or to indicate place of employment:

Sie wohnt **bei** ihrer Tante	*She lives at her aunt's*
Ich habe dieses Fleisch **beim** neuen Metzger gekauft	*I bought this meat at the new butcher's*
Sie arbeitet **bei** der Post, **bei** Bayer	*She works at the post office, at Bayer's*
bei uns	*at our house*
bei uns in der Fabrik	*at our works*

zu is used, not *bei*, to indicate motion **to** somebody's house (see **18.2.9a**), e.g. *Sie geht zu ihrer Tante* 'She's going to her aunt's house'.

(iii) *bei* can be used in an extended sense to refer to people. This often corresponds to English 'with':

Ich habe mich **bei** ihm entschuldigt/beschwert	*I apologized/complained to him*
Er hat großen Einfluss **beim** Minister	*He has a lot of influence with the minister*
Mathe haben wir **bei** Frau Gerstner	*We have Frau Gerstner for maths*
Hast du deinen Ausweis **bei** dir/dabei?	*Have you got your identity card on you?*
Bei Goethe liest man …	*In Goethe's works one reads …*

(b) *bei* **can mean 'on the occasion of', 'at'**

In this meaning, it is often used with nouns which do not of themselves express time to indicate the time when something took/was taking/will take place:

bei dieser Gelegenheit	*on this occasion*
bei dem bloßen Gedanken	*at the very thought*
Sie erblasste **bei** der Nachricht	*She turned pale at the news*
Acht Menschen kamen **bei** diesem Verkehrsunfall ums Leben (*FAZ*)	*Eight people were killed in this traffic accident*
bei einem Glas Wein	*over a glass of wine*

Similarly:

bei der Arbeit	*at work*	beim Fußball	*when playing football*
bei seiner Geburt	*at his birth*	bei diesem Anblick	*at the sight of this*
bei Tisch	*at table*	bei seinem Tod	*at his death*
bei schönem Wetter	*if it's fine*	bei diesen Worten	*at these words*

Both *bei* and *auf* (see **18.3.4b**) can be used for English 'at', referring to formal occasions, functions and the like, e.g.:

Ich habe sie **bei/auf** ihrer Hochzeit kennen gelernt *I met her at their wedding*

The difference of meaning is often slight, but in general *bei* points more clearly to the time, rather than the place, of the event.

It is also used in a similar meaning in a few set phrases with nouns expressing time:

Paris **bei** Tag, London **bei** Nacht *Paris by day, London by night*
bei Tagesanbruch *at daybreak*
bei Einbruch der Nacht *at nightfall*
bei Sonnenuntergang *at sunset*

(c) *bei* often indicates attendant circumstances, meaning 'in view of', 'with'

bei den immer steigenden Preisen *in view of the constantly rising prices*
Bei diesem Gehalt kann ich mir keinen neuen Wagen leisten *With this salary I can't afford a new car*
Bei all seinen Verlusten bleibt er ein Optimist *Despite all his losses he remains an optimist*

(d) *bei* used with the infinitive or other verbal nouns

These combinations have the sense of English 'on …-ing' or a subordinate time clause, see **11.4.2b** and **11.6.2d**. This usage is frequent in non-literary written German, but it is not restricted to that register:

bei seiner Ankunft *on arrival/when he arrived*
beim Schlafen, **beim** Essen *while sleeping, eating*
beim Schließen der Türen *on shutting the doors*
bei näherer Überlegung *on closer consideration*

(e) Idiomatic uses of *bei*

Sie war bei guter/schlechter Laune *She was in a good/bad mood*
Sie hat mich beim Wort genommen *She took me at my word*
Sie hat mich bei der Hand genommen *She took me by the hand*

18.2.4 gegenüber

In writing, *gegenüber* is increasingly used with a following genitive, e.g. *gegenüber des Theaters*. However, this usage is not considered standard and only the dative is regarded as correct.

(a) The position of *gegenüber*

(i) *gegenüber* always **follows a pronoun:**

Sie saß **mir gegenüber** **Ihr gegenüber** stand ein alter Herr

(ii) *gegenüber* can come **before** or **after a noun,** e.g. *gegenüber alten Menschen* or *alten Menschen gegenüber*. The position before the noun is now more frequent except in elevated registers:

seine Verantwortung **gegenüber** den chinesischen Web-Nutzern (*MM*)	*its responsibility towards Chinese web users*
Gegenüber dem Rathaus liegt ein Krankenhaus	*Opposite the town hall there is a hospital*

(b) Referring to place, *gegenüber* **means 'opposite'**

Ich setzte mich ihr **gegenüber**	*I sat down opposite her*
Ich wohne **gegenüber** dem Krankenhaus	*I live opposite the hospital*

In this sense, *gegenüber* is often used with a following *von*, especially in speech: *Sie sitzt gegenüber von mir/Ich wohne gegenüber vom Krankenhaus*. Using *von* with a pronoun is considered poor style in writing.

gegenüber is often used on its own, as an adverb: e.g. *Sie wohnt gegenüber/das Haus gegenüber/die Leute von gegenüber*.

(c) *gegenüber* **can express a comparison (= 'compared to')**

Depending on the context, *gegen*, see **18.1.4c**, or *neben*, see **18.3.9d**, may be alternatives to *gegenüber* in this sense:

Gegenüber meiner Schwester bin ich groß	*I'm tall compared to my sister*
gegenüber dem Vorjahr	*compared to last year*

(d) *gegenüber* **can mean 'in relation to', 'in respect of', 'towards'**

mein Verhalten Astrid **gegenüber**	*my attitude towards Astrid*

Es geht um den Abbau von Vorurteilen und Ängsten *It is a matter of reducing prejuduces and fears in*
    gegenüber Behinderten (*MM*)   *respect of disabled people*

In this sense, *gegenüber* is particularly frequent after nouns and adjectives, where it is an (often more common) alternative to *gegen* , see **18.1.4f**, or, in some contexts, *zu*, see **18.2.9g**:

Er handelte durchaus gerecht mir **gegenüber** (*or* gegen mich)	*He acted absolutely fairly towards me*
Seine Güte mir **gegenüber** (*or* zu mir) war rührend	*His kindness towards me was touching*

Similarly:

das Misstrauen gegenüber/gegen	*distrust of*
eine Pflicht gegenüber/gegen	*a duty towards*
gleichgültig gegenüber/gegen	*indifferent towards*
rücksichtsvoll/-los gegenüber/gegen	*(in)considerate to*
freundlich gegenüber/zu	*kind to(wards)*

18.2.5 *mit*

(a) *mit* **corresponds most often to English 'with'**

ein Paar Würstchen **mit** Kartoffelsalat	*a pair of sausages with potato salad*
Mit ihr spiele ich oft Tennis	*I often play tennis with her*
Was ist **mit** dir los?	*What's up with you?*
mit großer Freude	*with great pleasure*
mit meinem Bruder zusammen	*together with my brother*

(b) *mit* **indicates the instrument with which an action is performed**

This usually corresponds to English 'with'. Note that *mit* indicates the **instrument**, whilst *durch* indicates the **means** by which an action is carried out, see **18.1.2c**:

Er hat **mit** einem Bleistift geschrieben	*He wrote with a pencil*
Er hat die Schlange **mit** einem Messer getötet	*He killed the snake with a knife*

German usage sometimes differs from English:

mit Tinte schreiben *write in ink* **mit** leiser Stimme *in a low voice*

To refer to a means of transport German uses *mit* for English 'by':

mit der Bahn/dem Zug *by rail/train*   **mit** dem Auto *by car*   **mit** der Post *by post*

Ich bin **mit** dem Fahrrad gekommen *I came by bike/on a bike*

(c) *mit* **is commonly used in phrases involving parts of the body**

English does not have a preposition in contexts like this, or uses a simple verb:

Sie hat mich **mit** dem Fuß gestoßen   *She kicked me*

mit den Achseln zucken   *shrug one's shoulders*

(d) The combination *mit oder ohne*

It is now accepted usage for this frequent combination to be followed by a noun phrase or pronoun in the accusative case, e.g. *mit oder ohne deine Kinder*; *mit oder ohne sie* (see also **18.1.5**).

(e) Idiomatic uses of *mit*

mit vierzig Jahren	*at the age of forty*	mit anderen Worten (m.a.W.)	*in other words*
mit der Zeit	*in (the course of) time*	Her damit! (*coll.*)	*Give it here!*
etwas mit Absicht tun	*do sth. on purpose*	Schluss damit!	*That's enough!*

18.2.6 *nach*

(a) *nach* **denotes direction, in the sense of English 'to'**

See **18.5** for a summary of the German equivalents for English 'to'. In this sense *nach* is only used with:

(i) **neuter names of countries** and **towns** used without an article:

> Er geht **nach** Amerika, **nach** Irland, **nach** Bacharach

in is used with names of countries used with an article, see **4.4.1**: *Sie geht in die Schweiz*.

(ii) points of the compass used without an article:

> Wir fahren **nach** Norden, Süden, Westen, Osten

in is used when there is an article, which is usually the case if there is an adjective with the noun: *Wir fahren in den sonnigen Süden*.

(iii) adverbs of place:

> Sie geht **nach** oben, **nach** unten, **nach** vorne, **nach** hinten, **nach** rechts, **nach** links

Also in the phrase *nach Hause/nachhause gehen* 'go home'.

In North Germany *nach* is often used in other contexts in the meaning of English 'to', e.g.: *Ich gehe nach* (standard German: *zu*) *meiner Schwester*; *Wir gingen nach dem* (standard German: *auf den*, *zum*) *Bahnhof*. This is a nonstandard regionalism.

(b) *nach* **can be used in the sense of 'towards', 'in the direction of'**

It can be strengthened by adding *hin*, see **7.2.3,** e.g.:

Er bewegte sich langsam **nach** der Tür	*He moved slowly towards the door*
Ich sah **nach** der Tür (hin)	*I looked towards the door*
nach allen Seiten (hin)	*in all directions*

auf … zu is a frequent alternative in the meaning 'towards', see **18.3.5b**.

(c) Referring to time, *nach* **means 'after' or 'later'**

Nach vielen Jahren ließen sie sich scheiden	*After many years/Many years later they got divorced*
Einen Monat nach seiner Verhaftung wurde er freigelassen	*A month after his arrest he was released*
Nach Ostern studiert sie in Erlangen Chemie	*After Easter she's going to study chemistry in Erlangen*
bald nach Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts	*soon after the beginning of the 17th century*
nach einer Weile	*after a while*
nach Wochen, Jahren	*weeks, years later*

The prepositional adverb *danach* can be used to mean 'after(wards)' or 'later'.

(d) *nach* **is used in the sense of 'according to', 'judging by'**

Nach meiner Uhr ist es schon halb elf	*By my watch it's already half past ten*
nach italienischer Art	*in the Italian manner*
nach Ansicht meines Bruders	*in my brother's view*
etwas **nach** dem Gewicht verkaufen	*sell sth. by weight*
nach besten Kräften	*to the best of one's ability*

nach Wunsch	*just as I (you, she, etc.) wanted*

In this sense, *nach* can **follow** the noun. In general, this is usual only with certain nouns (some of which it may precede **or** follow) in set phrases:

allem Anschein **nach**	*to all appearances*
diesem Bericht **nach**	*according to this report*
(in less formal registers usually: *nach diesem Bericht*)	
der Größe **nach** (also: *nach der Größe*)	*according to size*
meiner Meinung **nach** (also: *nach meiner Meinung*)	*in my opinion*
Ich kenne sie nur dem Namen **nach**	*I only know her by name*
der Reihe **nach**	*in turns*
Seiner Aussprache **nach** kommt Herr Oettinger aus Schwaben	*Judging by his accent Herr Oettinger comes from Swabia*

In formal registers some other prepositions are also used in the meaning 'according to', i.e. *entsprechend*, *gemäß*, *laut* and *zufolge*, see **18.2.10e**.

18.2.7 *seit*

seit **marks a period of time beginning in the past and continuing to the present** or a more recent point in the past. It corresponds to English 'since' or 'for':

Er ist **seit** drei Wochen hier	*He's been here for three weeks*
Ich wartete **seit** einer halben Stunde auf dem Marktplatz	*I had been waiting in the market-place for half an hour*
Seit wann bist du wieder zu Hause?	*Since when have you been back home?*
Seit seiner Krankheit habe ich ihn nicht mehr gesehen	*I haven't seen him again since his illness*
Erst **seit** kurzem gibt es Sondertarife nach Japan	*There have only been special fares to Japan for a short while*

For the use of tenses with *seit* 'for', see **12.1.2** and **12.2.4a**.

An accusative phrase with *schon* is a possible alternative to *seit* 'for', e.g. *Er ist schon drei Wochen hier*, see **9.1.29**.

18.2.8 *von*

(a) *von* **indicates direction 'from' a place**

(i) In this sense, *von* is the opposite of *zu*, which indicates direction towards, see **18.2.9**:

Ich bin **von** Frankfurt nach München gefahren	*I went from Frankfurt to Munich*
Sie hat einen Brief **von** mir bekommen	*She received a letter from me*
Sie kommt **von** ihrer Schwester	*She's coming from her sister's*
Ich wohne zehn Minuten **vom** Bahnhof (entfernt)	*I live ten minutes from the station*
Die Blätter fallen **von** den Bäumen	*The leaves are falling from the trees*

For the difference between *von* and *aus* as equivalents of English 'from', see **18.2.1a**.

(ii) *von* can be strengthened by adding *aus* after the noun to emphasize the point of origin:

Von meinem Fenster (**aus**) kann ich die Paulskirche sehen	*I can see St. Paul's church from my window*
Er ist **von** Bern (**aus**) mit dem Nachtzug nach Lissabon gefahren	*He travelled by the night train from Bern to Lisbon*

von ... aus also occurs in a few idiomatic phrases:

Er war **von** Haus **aus** Lehrer	*He was originally a teacher*
von mir **aus**	*as far as I'm concerned*
von Natur **aus**	*by nature*

(iii) Direction from a point can be emphasized by adding *her* (see **7.2.5**):

Eine Stimme kam **von** oben **her**	*A voice came from above*
Ich komme **von** meiner Schwester **her**	*I am coming from my sister's*

von ... her is now commonly (and fashionably) used in the sense 'in respect of', 'from the point of view of', 'regarding'. This is in effect a contraction of the phrase *von ... her betrachtet*:

Von Beruf **her** ist er Schlosser	*As for his job, he's a mechanic*
Besonders raffiniert **von** der Farbe **her**	*Particularly subtle in respect of the colouring*
Von der Zielsetzung **her** sind wir der gleichen Meinung	*We're of the same opinion in respect of our objectives*

Occasionally, *her* is omitted in these contexts: *Von der Zielsetzung sind wir der gleichen Meinung.*

(b) *von* **means 'from' referring to time**

von indicates a starting-point in time. It corresponds to English 'from' and is often strengthened by a following *an*:

Von 1991 (an) hat sie in Rostock gelebt	*From 1991 she lived in Rostock*
Von kommendem Montag an werden aber wieder steigende Temperaturen vorhergesagt (*MM*)	*However from next Monday rising temperatures are being forecast once more*
von Anfang an	*(right) from the start*
von neun Uhr an	*from nine o'clock (on)*
von nun an	*from now on*
von <u>der</u> Zeit an	*from then on*
von Anfang bis Ende	*from beginning to end*
von heute auf morgen	*from one day to the next, overnight*
von vornherein	*from the outset, from the first*
von jeher/**von** alters her	*from time immemorial, always*
von Jugend auf	*from his (my, etc.) youth*
von Zeit zu Zeit	*from time to time*

(c) *von* **marks the agent in passive constructions**

Details about the use of *von* with the passive, and the difference between *von* and *durch* as equivalents of English 'by' are given in section **13.3a**.

von is also used in this sense, corresponding to English 'by', to mark authorship and the like, e.g. *ein Roman von Daniel Kehlmann, eine Oper von Wagner, ein Gemälde von Caspar David Friedrich*.

(d) A phrase with *von* **is often used in place of a genitive**

i.e. for English 'of', e.g. *ein Ereignis von weltgeschichtlicher Bedeutung*. This usage is explained in **2.4**.

(e) *von* **has a wide range of figurative uses**

(i) It often corresponds to English 'of' in the sense of 'on the part of':

Das war sehr nett, liebenswürdig, vernünftig **von** ihr	*That was very nice, kind, sensible of her*
Das war doch dumm **von** mir	*That was silly of me, wasn't it?*
Er tat es **von** selbst	*He did it of his own accord*

(ii) Some common idiomatic phrases with *von*:

Das ist nicht von ungefähr passiert	*It didn't happen by accident*
Das kommt davon	*That's what comes of it*
Ich kenne sie nur vom Sehen	*I only know her by sight*
von ganzem Herzen	*with all my heart*
Das versteht sich von selbst	*That is self-explanatory*

18.2.9 *zu*

(a) *zu* **expresses direction**

It is a common equivalent for English 'to', particularly:

(i) going to a person('s house): Sie geht **zu** ihrem Onkel, **zu** Müllers, **zum** Frisör

For 'at' (a person's house), *bei* is used, see **18.2.3**.

(ii) going to a place or an occasion:

Fährt dieser Bus **zum** Bahnhof?	*Does this bus go to the station?*
Ich ging **zur** Kirche und wartete dort auf sie	*I went to the church and waited for her there*
Wir haben einen Ausflug **zum** Dorf gemacht	*We went on an outing to the village*
Sie kehrte **zu** ihrer Arbeit zurück	*She returned to her work*
Sie geht morgen **zu** einem Kongress	*She's going to a conference tomorrow*

zu **is the opposite of** *von*, see **18.2.8a**, and puts the emphasis on the **general direction** rather than reaching the destination. For the distinction between *zu* and the more specific prepositions *an*, *auf* or *in* (with the accusative) as equivalents of English 'to', see **18.5.**

zu can be strengthened by adding *hin* after the noun, see **7.2.3**, e.g. *Sie ging zur Post (hin). Er blickte zur Decke (hin).* This emphasizes the direction, so that *zu… hin* is a common equivalent for English 'towards'.

(iii) in some idiomatic phrases:

Sie sah **zum** Fenster/**zur** Tür **hinaus**	*She looked out of the window/the door*
Setzen Sie sich doch **zu** uns!	*Do come and join us*

(b) *zu* **sometimes refers to a place**

i.e. with the meaning of English 'at' or 'in'. This sense of *zu* used to be common, especially with names of towns, but it is now obsolete except in elevated registers, as modern German prefers *in*:

J.S. Bach wurde **zu** (*more usually*: in) Eisenach geboren *J.S. Bach was born in Eisenach*

der Dom **zu** Köln (*more usually*: der Kölner Dom)   *Cologne cathedral*

However, *zu* is still used in this sense in some common set phrases, e.g.:

zu Hause/zuhause *at home* zu beiden Seiten *on either side*

(c) *zu* is used in certain time expressions

(i) with the major festivals (in northern and eastern Germany, and in Austria, whilst *an* is used in other regions, see **18.3.2b**):

zu Weihnachten zu Pfingsten zu Ostern zu Neujahr

(ii) with *Zeit* and *Stunde*

With *Zeit* and *Stunde*, both *zu* and *in* are used, in different contexts.

zu is used in contexts denoting **one or more specific points or limited periods of time:**

zur Zeit der letzten Wahlen	*at the time of the last election*
zu <u>der</u> Zeit, **zu** dieser Zeit	*at that time*
zu der Zeit, als du hier warst	*at the time when you were here*
zu einer anderen Zeit	*at some other time*
zu jeder Zeit	*at all times*, *at any time*
zu jeder Tageszeit	*at any time of the day*
zu gewissen Zeiten	*at certain times*
zur gewohnten Zeit	*at the usual time*
gerade noch **zur** rechten Zeit	*in the nick of time*
zu gleicher Zeit	*at the same time*, *simultaneously*
Zu meiner Zeit war das alles anders	*In my time that was all different*
zu dieser Stunde	*at this hour*
zu jeder Stunde	*at any time*
zur selben Stunde	*at the same hour*

also: *zu diesem Zeitpunkt* 'at this point in time'.

zurzeit 'at present' and *zuzeiten* 'at times' are written as single words, see **21.3.1**.

in is used to denote a **period within or after which something occurs**, or in phrases which are felt to denote **duration** rather than a point or limited period in time:

In all **der** Zeit *(or* In der ganzen Zeit*)* haben wir sie nicht gesehen	*In all that time we didn't see her*
In kurzer Zeit war er wieder da	*In a short time he was back again*
In unserer Zeit tut man das nicht mehr	*In our times that is no longer done*
in einer Zeit, in der die Städte wachsen	*at a time when towns are growing*
in einer solchen Zeit wie heute	*at a time like the present*
in früheren Zeiten	*in earlier times*
in künftigen Zeiten	*in times to come*
in der ersten Zeit	*at first*
in ruhigen Stunden	*in peaceful hours*
in elfter Stunde	*at the eleventh hour*

(iii) *with Mal , e.g. zum ersten Mal, zum zehnten Mal, etc. (see 8.4.3)*

(d) *zu* **can express purpose**

(i) In these contexts *zu* is the equivalent of English 'for':

zu diesem Zweck	*for this purpose*
Das ist kein Anlass **zur** Klage	*That is no cause for complaint*
Was gibt es heute **zum** Nachtisch?	*What's for dessert today?*
Stoff **zu** einem neuen Anzug	*material for a new suit*
Zum Geburtstag hat er mir eine Uhr geschenkt	*He bought me a watch for my birthday*
Wir hatten keine Gelegenheit **zu** einem Gespräch	*We didn't have a chance for a talk*

The prepositional adverb *dazu* can be used to mean 'for that purpose', e.g. *Dazu soll man ein scharfes Messer gebrauchen*. Compare also *Wozu?* 'To what purpose?', 'What for?'

(ii) In this sense, *zu* is very common with infinitives used as nouns or with other verbal nouns, where English uses 'for …-ing' or an infinitive with 'to', see **11.4.2d** and **11.6.2b**. It is typical of written non-literary German, but it is by no means confined to that register.

Wozu gebraucht man dieses Messer? **Zum** Kartoffelschälen. *What do you use this knife for? For peeling potatoes/To peel potatoes*

Hier gibt es viele Möglichkeiten **zum** Schilaufen *There are lots of possibilities for skiing here*

Ich sage dir das **zu** deiner Beruhigung *I'm telling you this to reassure you*

(iii) In certain contexts, this sense of *zu* approaches that of *als*, i.e. 'by way of', as:

Er murmelte etwas **zur** Antwort *He muttered something by way of reply*

Er tat es mir **zu** Gefallen *He did it as a favour to me*

Similarly:

zur Abwechslung	*for a change*	zum Scherz	*as a joke*
zum Andenken an	*in memory of*	zum Spaß	*as a joke*
zum Beispiel	*for example*	zur Strafe	*as a punishment*
zur Not	*if necessary, at a pinch*	zum Vergnügen	*for pleasure*

(e) In some contexts *zu* indicates a result or an effect

The English equivalent is most often 'to':

Zu meinem Erstaunen hat sie die Prüfung bestanden *To my surprise she passed the exam*

Similarly:

zu meiner Befriedigung	*to my satisfaction*
zu meiner großen Freude	*to my great pleasure*
Es ist zum Lachen, zum Heulen, zum Verrücktwerden	*It is laughable, enough to make one weep, enough to drive one mad*

zu is very frequent in this sense in the prepositional object of verbs, see **16.5.13**.

(f) *zu* can express a change of state

It is used in this sense with a few verbs or nouns:

Sie wählten ihn **zum** Präsidenten	*They elected him President*
Er wurde **zum** Major befördert	*He was promoted to major*
Ich habe es mir **zur** Regel gemacht, dies zu tun	*I've made it a rule to do this*

Similarly with: *bestimmen* 'destine to be', *degradieren* 'demote', *ernennen* 'appoint', *krönen* 'crown', *weihen* 'ordain', *werden* 'become' (see **16.6.1**), etc. and the nouns *die Beförderung* 'promotion', *die Ernennung* 'appointment', *die Wahl* 'election', etc.

(g) *zu* **can express a mental attitude towards someone or something**

(i) This is frequent with adjectives, see **6.4.1**, e.g.:

Sie war sehr freundlich **zu** mir *She was very kind to me*

Similarly:

frech zu	*impudent towards*	nett zu	*nice to*				
gut zu	*good, kind to*	respektvoll zu	*respectful to*	(un)höflich zu	*(im)polite to*	unfreundlich zu	*unkind to*

(ii) also with some nouns, e.g.:

Er hatte keine freundschaftlichen Beziehungen **zu** diesen Menschen	*He was not on friendly terms with these people*
ihre Einstellung **zur** Wiedervereinigung	*her attitude to reunification*
seine Liebe **zu** ihr	*his love for her*
das Verhältnis des Einzelnen **zum** Staat	*the relationship of the individual to the state*

gegen (see **18.1.4f**) and *gegenüber* (see **18.2.4d**) can also denote attitude towards or relations with someone or something. Whether *gegen* or *zu* is used depends on the particular noun or adjective, though *gegen* tends to occur with those which denote hostile attitudes, *zu* with those which denote friendly attitudes. A few adjectives can be used with either, e.g.:

gerecht zu/gegen	*fair, just to*	hart zu/gegen	*hard towards*
grausam zu/gegen	*cruel to*		

gegen is used with some nouns although the related adjective has *zu*, e.g. *die Frechheit, die Gerechtigkeit, die Grausamkeit, die Härte, die (Un)höflichkeit gegen jdn. gegenüber* is a common alternative to *gegen* or *zu* with most adjectives or nouns which occur with these prepositions.

(h) Uses of *zu* **with numbers**

(i) to indicate price or measure:

10 Stück Seife **zu** je 4 Euro	*10 bars of soap at 4 euros each*
5 Päckchen Kaffee **zu** hundert Gramm	*5 hundred gram packs of coffee*
zum halben Preis	*at half price*

Also with fractions, etc. *zur Hälfte, zum Teil, zu einem Drittel fertig*

(ii) With the dative of the cardinal or the stem of the ordinal to indicate groups, e.g. *zu zweien*, *zu zweit*, see **8.1.3b**.

(iii) With the declined ordinal number for 'first(ly)', 'second(ly)', etc., e.g. *zum Ersten*, *zum Zweiten*, etc., see **8.2e**.

(i) Idiomatic uses of *zu*

jdn. zum Besten haben	*make a fool of sb.*
zu Boden fallen	*fall to the ground*
sich (*dat.*) etwas zu eigen machen	*adopt sth.*
zu Ende gehen	*draw to a close*
zu Fuß	*on foot*
jdn. zu Rate ziehen	*ask sb.'s advice*
jdn. zur Rechenschaft ziehen	*call sb. to account*
zur Sache kommen	*come to the point*
jdm. zur Seite stehen	*give sb. one's support*
zur Welt kommen	*be born*

18.2.10 Less frequent prepositions governing the dative

Several less frequently used prepositions are followed by the dative case. Most of them are characteristic of formal written registers, and several are nowadays often (and increasingly) used with a following genitive rather than a dative, since that case is regarded as particularly appropriate in elevated registers. The extent of this usage is indicated as necessary with the individual preposition.

(a) *ab* **'from'**

ab used to be typical of commercial and official German, but it is now used more widely. Case use with *ab* varies. When referring to place, it is always used with

the dative, but when referring to time, the accusative is as frequent as the dative if no article follows.

(i) Referring to **place**, it is an alternative to *von*, but it emphasizes the starting point more strongly:

Ab Jericho folgten wir einer langen Kolonne israelischer Touristenbusse (*Zeit*)	*From Jericho we followed a long convoy of Israeli tourist buses*
Dieser Sondertarif gilt **ab** allen deutschen Flughäfen	*This special fare applies from all airports in Germany*
ab Fabrik	*ex works*

(ii) Referring to **time**, *ab* is used in the meaning 'from' and is an alternative to *von ... an*. If it is used without a following determiner (as is usually the case, see **4.10**), both the dative and the accusative are found and considered equally correct:

ab neun Uhr, **ab** heute	*from nine o'clock, from today*
ab sofort	*with immediate effect*
ab ersten/erstem Mai	*from the first of May*
ab kommende(r) Woche	*from next week*
ab nächsten/nächstem Monat	*from next month*

If there is a definite article, then the dative must be used:

ab dem ersten Mai	*from the first of May*
ab dem 21. Lebensjahr	*from the age of 21*

(b) *binnen* **indicates a period of time (= 'within')**

Especially in writing it is used to avoid the potential ambiguity of *in*, see **18.3.7b**:

binnen einem Jahr, drei Jahren	*within a year, three years*
binnen kurzem	*shortly*

In practice, *binnen* is now used more frequently with a following genitive in formal registers, e.g. *binnen eines Jahres*. However, the dative is still the norm in the plural if no declined article or other determiner follows, e.g. *binnen acht Tagen*.

In Switzerland *innert*, with a following dative or (occasionally) a genitive, is typically used rather than *binnen*, e.g. *innert einem/eines Jahres*.

(c) *dank* **'thanks to'**

In formal writing *dank* now occurs at least as frequently with a following genitive, especially in the plural and with verbal nouns:

dank seinem Einfluss/seines Einflusses	*thanks to his influence*
Er hält sich nur **dank** käuflicher Abgeordneter an der Macht (*SZ*)	*He only holds on to power thanks to deputies who can be bought*
dank des schnellen Einsatzes der Feuerwehr (*BrZ*)	*thanks to rapid action by the fire brigade*

(d) *entgegen* **'contrary to'**

It can occur before or (rather less frequently) after the noun:

entgegen allen Erwartungen/allen Erwartungen **entgegen**	*contrary to all expectations*

In formal writing, *entgegen* is sometimes used with a following genitive, e.g. *entgegen des allgemeinen Trends* (*BrZ*), but this is less frequent than the dative and considered incorrect.

(e) *entsprechend , gemäß , laut , zufolge* **'according to'**

These prepositions all mean 'according to', as does the more frequent *nach*, see **18.2.6d**, but they are not interchangeable in all contexts. *entsprechend* and *gemäß* are sometimes used with a genitive, although this is less usual than the dative and considered incorrect.

(i) *entsprechend* means 'in accordance with'. It can precede or (more commonly) follow the noun:

dem neuen Trend **entsprechend**/**entsprechend** dem neuen Trend	*in accordance with the recent trend*

(ii) *gemäß* means 'in accordance with'. It usually follows the noun:

Die Maschine wurde den Anweisungen **gemäß** in Betrieb gesetzt	*The machine was put into operation in accordance with the instructions*

(iii) *laut* introduces a verbatim report of something said or written. It is most often used without a following article, see **4.10**:

Laut Berichten soll der Präsident neue Verhandlungen vorgeschlagen haben	*According to reports the president is said to have proposed fresh negotiations*

| **laut** Gesetz | *according to the law* |
| **laut** Wladimir Putin | *according to Vladimir Putin* |

If the following noun is used with an article or an adjective, it is sometimes in the genitive rather than the dative:

laut des Berichtes/dem Bericht aus Berlin	*according to the report from Berlin*
laut neuer Berichte/neuen Berichten	*according to recent reports*
laut ämtlichem Nachweis/ämtlichen Nachweises	*according to an official attestation*

(iv) *zufolge* follows the noun. In accepted usage it indicates a consequence:

| Dem Vertrag **zufolge** werden nun große Mengen von Rohöl geliefert | *In accordance with/following the contract large quantities of crude oil are now being delivered* |

However, *zufolge* is now widely used where there is no sense of a consequence or a result, although not all authorities consider this acceptable:

| unbestätigen Berichten **zufolge** | *according to unconfirmed reports* |
| einem Regierungssprecher **zufolge** | *according to a government spokesman* |

The use of *zufolge* with a following genitive, e.g. *zufolge des Vertrages*, is obsolete.

(f) *fern* **'far from'**

fern can occur before or (less frequently) after the noun:

| Sie blieben **fern** der Heimat/der Heimat **fern** | *They remained far from home* |
| Europa liegt immer noch **fern** dem britischen Horizont (*Zeit*) | *Europe is still far removed from British horizons* |

In practice, *fern* is now used more often with a following genitive:

| über den Dächern von Nürnberg, **fern** des Verkehrslärms und der Hektik der Großstadt (*NüN*) | *above the roofs of Nuremberg, far from the traffic noise and the bustle of the big city* |

Note that in all registers a frequent equivalent of English 'far from' is *fern von* or *weit von*.

(g) *minus* **'minus', 'less'**

minus is chiefly used in commercial writing, e.g.

Der Nettogewinn entspricht dem Bruttogewinn **minus** den Kosten (*TA*)	*The net profit is equal to the gross profit less the costs*

It is also often used with the accusative or the genitive, so that, for example, *der Betrag minus dem normalen Zins/den normalen Zins/des normalen Zinses* 'the amount less the usual interest' would all be accepted.

(h) *mitsamt* **and** *samt* **'together with'**

Der Beamte verschwand **mitsamt** den Dokumenten (*FR*)	*The policeman disappeared together with the documents*
Neben Marihuana entdeckten die Beamten im Wagen eine Pumpgun **samt** scharfer Munition (*Lux*)	*Apart from marihuana the policemen discovered a pump-action shotgun in the car together with live ammunition*

Both *mitsamt* and *samt* are sometimes, but less frequently, used with a following genitive:

Er kaufte das Gutshaus **samt** des kleinen Nebenhauses (*Nordkurier*)	*He bought the manor house together with the small neighbouring house*
der Plan, das Endlager **mitsamt** der radioaktiven Abfälle aufwändig zu verfüllen (*BrZ*)	*the plan to completely fill in the disposal site together with all the radioactive waste in it*

Note that the most frequent equivalent for 'together with' is *zusammen mit*, or often simply *mit*.

(i) *nahe* **'near (to)'**

ein altes Haus **nahe** dem freien Feld (*FR*)	*an old house near the open field*

When used in an abstract sense *nahe* often follows the noun:

Sie war der Verzweiflung **nahe**	*She was close to despair*

nahe is now used very frequently with a following genitive:

die Waldbrände **nahe des** berühmten Yosemite Nationalparks in Kalifornien (*HAZ*)	*the forest fires near the famous Yosemite National Park in California*

(j) *nebst* **'together with', 'in addition to'**

nebst occasionally appears with the genitive, but this is not considered standard:

eine sehr gute Bibliographie **nebst** einem hilfreichen	*a very good bibliography in addition to a useful*

(k) *per* **'per', 'by'**

per was originally typical of commercial language, but it is increasingly used more widely. When used with a means of transport it is an alternative to more usual *mit*, see **18.2.5b**:

per Post (= mit der Post)	*by post*
per Bahn (= mit der Bahn)	*by rail*
per Einschreiben	*by recorded mail*
per Adresse (p.A.)	*c/o*
per Anhalter fahren	*to hitchhike*
mit jdm. per du sein	*be on first name terms with sb.* (i.e. *use* 'du' *to them*)
Sie bezahlen erst per 31. Dezember	*You do not pay until 31 December*
Die Waren sind per 1. Mai bestellt	*The goods are ordered for 1 May*

As *per* is most often used without a following adjective or determiner, the case it governs is not always clear. This has given rise to uncertainty, and in practice it is used with the accusative as often as with the dative, e.g. *per zweiten/zweitem Bildungsweg*, and both are considered acceptable.

(l) *plus* **'plus'**

plus is chiefly used in commercial writing:

5 Prozent **plus** einer Topdividende von 0,75 Prozent (*HAZ*)	*5% plus a top dividend of 0.75%*

It is often used with the accusative or (least frequently) the genitive, so that, for example, *plus einem Zuschlag/einen Zuschlag/eines Zuschlags von 5 Euro pro Kilometer* 'plus a supplementary charge of 5 Euros per kilometre' would all be accepted.

(m) via **'via'**

via was originally only used with reference to travel, as an alternative to *über* (see **18.3.11a**), e.g.: *Wir sind nach Madrid via Brüssel geflogen*. However it has recently come to be used regularly in the sense of 'by (means of)', especially with reference to communication, e.g. *Bestätigung via E-Mail*, *Lernen via Internet*, *benachrichtigt via Handy*. *via* is most often followed by a simple noun, but if a

declined determiner or adjective is present the noun phrase may (rather less frequently) be in the accusative case rather than the dative:

Energiesparlampen sollten nicht **via** dem normalen Hausmüll entsorgt werden (*SGT*)	*Energy-saving bulbs should not be disposed of in the normal household garbage*
Es wurde später **via** einen Twitter-Account mit dem Namen der Hackergruppe verbreitet (*TA*)	*It was circulated through a twitter account with the name of the group of hackers*

(n) *zuliebe* 'for the sake of' follows the noun it governs

Ich habe es meiner Mutter **zuliebe** getan	*I did it for my mother's sake*
Dir **zuliebe** gibt es Spargel	*Just for you, we're having asparagus*
wahrscheinlich dem Wald **zuliebe** (*Walser*)	*probably for the sake of the forest*

(o) *zuwider* 'contrary to' is an emphatic alternative to *gegen* and follows the noun it governs

Karl handelte seinem Befehl **zuwider**	*Karl acted contrary to his order*

18.3 Prepositions governing the accusative or the dative case

Nine prepositions govern the accusative OR the dative depending on the meaning in context:

an   hinter   neben   unter   zwischen
auf   in   über   vor

General rules governing the use of the accusative and the dative with these prepositions are given in **18.3.1**, and the individual prepositions are dealt with in the following sections. The use with the accusative and the dative is treated separately for the more common ones (i.e. *an*, *auf*, *in*, *über*, *unter* and *vor*).

18.3.1 The use of the accusative and the dative

These nine prepositions govern the **accusative case** if they indicate **direction**, but the **dative** if they indicate **position**.

It is often claimed that the accusative case is used with these prepositions when motion is involved, but it is more precise to say that the accusative case is used with a phrase expressing the direction in which someone or something is moving

or being put, whilst the dative normally indicates that someone or something is stationary.

Ich hänge das Bild an **die** Wand	*I'm hanging the picture on the wall*
Das Bild hängt an **der** Wand	*The picture is hanging on the wall*
Wir gingen in **dieses** Zimmer hinein	*We went into that room*
Wir essen in **diesem** Zimmer	*We eat in that room*

In some contexts the reason for the choice of case is less obvious, or usage is variable.

(a) The dative case is sometimes used when a direction is involved

In contexts like this there is **no movement** in relation to the person or thing in the prepositional phrase:

Er ging neben **seinem** Freund   *He was walking next to his friend*
(He and his friend are moving with equal speed in the same direction)
Er ging zwischen **seinen** Eltern   *He was walking between his parents*
(His position is constant in relation to his parents)
Ein Flugzeug kreiste über **der** Stadt   *A plane was circling over the town*
(Though it was moving, it stayed over the town)

Usage where two prepositional phrases occur in the same sentence with a verb of motion follows the basic principle, e.g. *Elke legte sich auf eine Bank im Schatten hin*. Elke is moving in the direction of the bench, but the bench is stationary in relation to the shadow.

(b) The dative is used with verbs of arriving, appearing and disappearing

Sie kamen **am** Bahnhof an	*They arrived at the station*
Sie landeten auf **dem** Mond	*They landed on the moon*
Er kroch unter **dem** Tisch hervor	*He crept out from under the table*
Sie erschien hinter **der** Theke	*She appeared behind the counter*
Sie verbarg sich unter **der** Decke	*She hid under the sheet*
Der Reiter verschwand hinter **dem** Berg	*The horseman disappeared behind the hill*

German does not consider that such verbs indicate a direction, so that, in the last example, the hill is perceived as the place **where** the horseman disappeared. However, there can be times when the speaker perceives there to be movement in

a particular direction with these verbs and uses the accusative, e.g. *Er verschwand plötzlich über das Dach*. Nevertheless, such contexts are rare.

(c) Different usage with some simple and prefixed verbs

In a few cases, these prepositions are used with the **accusative** after a **simple verb**, but with the **dative** after a related **prefixed verb**. With the prefixed verbs, the action is seen as already completed, whereas with the simple verbs it is visualized as ongoing:

(an/fest)binden *tie*, *fasten*

    Das Pferd wird an **einen** Baum gebunden
    Das Pferd war an **einem** Baum an-/festgebunden

(vor)fahren *drive (up)*

    Der Wagen fährt vor **den** Bahnhof

    Der Wagen fährt vor **dem** Schloss vor

(auf)hängen *hang (up)*

    Sie hängt das Bild an **die** Wand

    Sie hängt das Bild an **der** Wand auf

sich (fest)klammern *cling to*

    Er klammert sich an **sie**

    Er klammert sich an **ihr** fest

sich (nieder)legen, **-setzen** *lie*, *sit down*

    Sie legt/setzt sich auf **die** Bank

    Sie legt/setzt sich auf **der** Bank nieder

(auf)schreiben *write (down)*

    Ich schrieb ihre Adresse in **mein** Notizbuch
    Ich schrieb ihre Adresse in **meinem** Notizbuch auf

(d) Verbs with the prefix *ein-*

(i) Many verbs with the prefix *ein-* are often followed by a phrase with *in*, in the accusative case:

Sie stieg in **den** Zug ein	Wir weihten ihn in **das** Geheimnis ein
Ich trug den Namen in **die** Liste ein	Er wickelte sich in **eine** Decke ein

(ii) A noun phrase in the accusative is used in the *sein*-passive, although usage is variable:

Er war in **eine** Reisedecke eingehüllt	Sie ist in **das** Geheimnis eingeweiht

(iii) *sich einschließen* is used with either case depending on whether the movement in a particular direction is emphasized: *Sie schloss sich in ihr/ihrem Zimmer ein*.

(iv) *sich einfinden*, *einkehren* and *eintreffen* are followed by a preposition with a noun phrase in the dative, as they denote arrival (see **(a)** above):

Wir trafen in **der** Hauptstadt ein   *We arrived in the capital*

Sie kehrten in **einer** Gaststätte ein   *They turned in at an inn*

(e) With a few verbs usage is idiomatic

In the main these are verbs which do not denote movement as such. The choice of case depends on how speakers envisage the action, and it can vary. If no preposition is indicated with the verb in these lists it is commonly used with more than one (e.g. *sehen*, which occurs with *an*, *auf*, *in*, etc.).

(i) A noun phrase in the **dative** case is usual with the following verbs:

anbringen *fix* befestigen an *fasten* drucken *print* notieren *note*

(ii) A noun phrase in the **accusative** case is usual with the following verbs:

anbauen an	*build on to*	kleiden in	*clothe in*	verteilen	*distribute*
anschließen	*add on*	münden in	*flow into*	vertieft in	*engrossed in*
gebeugt über	*bent over*	sehen, schauen	*look*	verwickelt in	*involved in*
grenzen an	*border on*	stützen auf	*support*		

(f) A few verbs have different meanings when used with the dative and the accusative

aufnehmen   A noun phrase in the accusative case implies complete acceptance; in the dative case it implies that the acceptance is temporary:

Er ist in **den** Chor aufgenommen worden   *He was admitted into the choir*

Ich wurde **in seiner** Familie sehr freundlich aufgenommen *I was very amicably received into his family*

einführen If there is an idea of direction, a noun phrase in the accusative case is used, whereas a noun phrase in the dative puts the stress on the place:

Waren **in ein** Land einführen (e.g. **nach** Italien)   *to import goods into a country*

Er will die Sitte in diesem Land einführen (i.e. in *He wants to introduce the custom into that*
Italien) *country*

halten If the gesture is emphasized, a noun phrase in the accusative is used, whilst a noun phrase in the dative emphasizes the position:

Er hielt das Buch in **die** Höhe   *He held the book up in the air*

Er hielt das Buch in **der** Hand   *He held the book in his hand*

klopfen A noun phrase in the accusative is the norm, but in the context of knocking on doors, etc., the dative can be used if the emphasis is on the place rather than the action:

Er klopft **an die** Tür/**auf den** Tisch   *He is knocking on the door/the table*

Da klopft es **an der** Haustür   *There is a knock at the front door*
(i.e. the front door rather than somewhere else)

schreiben A noun phrase in the accusative case refers to the action of writing down, but the dative case is used if the place where something is written is uppermost:

Er hat es **in sein** Heft geschrieben   *He wrote it (down) in his notebook*

In seinem Brief schreibt er, dass … *He writes in his letter that …*

(g) Idiomatic use

If these prepositions **do not have their literal meaning** they are used only or predominantly with a **single case**.

In idiomatic uses, *auf* and *über* are used only with the **accusative**, all **the other prepositions** mainly with the **dative**.

This is particularly evident when these prepositions are being used to refer to **time**, when they are used in **prepositional objects** (see **16.5**), with **adjectives** (see **6.4**), and in other contexts in which they are not being used in their literal senses.

18.3.2 *an* (+ dative)

(a) The basic meaning of *an* (+ dat.) is 'on (the side of)'

(i) This contrasts with *auf* (+ dat.), which means 'on (top of)'. *an* (+ dat.) can correspond to English 'on', or, if the person or thing is not actually touching, 'at', 'by' or 'along'. See **18.2.3a** for the distinction between *an* (+ dat.) and *bei* in the sense of 'at':

Das Bild hängt **an** der Wand	*The picture is hanging on the wall*
An der Grenze wird kontrolliert	*There's a check at the border*
Wir warten **an** der Bushaltestelle	*We are waiting at/by the bus stop*
Ich stand **am** Fenster	*I was standing by/at the window*
Sie wohnt **am** See	*She lives by the lake*
am Berg (compare: *auf dem Berg* 'on the mountain-top')	*on the mountain(side)*
am Fluss (compare: *auf dem Fluss* 'on the river' (i.e. in a boat))	*on the river(side)*

(ii) *an* (+ dat.) is also used for 'on (the underside of)':

Die Lampe hängt **an** der Decke	*The lamp was hanging from the ceiling*
am Himmel (compare: *im Himmel* 'in heaven')	*in the sky*

(iii) *an* (+ dat.) is used with institutions at which a person is employed:

Sie lehrt **an** der Universität Augsburg	*She teaches at the University of Augsburg*
Er ist Intendant **am** Staatstheater	*He is director at the State Theatre*
Er ist Pfarrer **an** der Peterskirche	*He is the pastor at St. Peter's*

(iv) In older German, *an* was often used in the sense of 'down on', and this is still apparent in some set phrases like *am Boden* 'on the ground', where *auf* is a possible alternative. Compare also *am Strand* 'on the beach', *am Ufer* 'on the bank'.

(v) *an* (+ dat.) is used in three phrases together with an adverb following the noun. In all these the dative is used since, although movement is involved, there is no indication of direction:

> *an* (+ dat.) … *hin* expresses movement alongside (see also **7.2.5**):
> Sie gehen **an** der Mauer **hin** *They are walking along the wall*

> *an* (+ dat.) … *vorbei* means 'past':
> Wir gehen **an** seinem Haus **vorbei** *We are walking past his house*

> *an* (+ dat.) … *entlang* means 'along', see **18.4.2b**.

(b) *an* **(+ dat.) is used in some time expressions**

(i) *an* is used with nouns denoting days and parts of the day. The definite article is always used with singular nouns, see **4.5c**. In most contexts it corresponds to English 'in' or 'on':

am Tag	*in the daytime*
am Montag, **am** Dienstag, …	*on Monday*, *on Tuesday*, …
an Wochentagen	*on weekdays*
am Morgen, **am** Nachmittag, **am** Abend	*in the morning*, *in the afternoon*, *in the evening*
am 31. Oktober (see **8.5.3b**)	*on the 31st of October*

(ii) *an* is used with *Tag*, etc. even in contexts where English has no preposition:

am Tag nach seinem Tod	*the day after his death*
An diesem Morgen war er schlecht gelaunt	*That morning he was in a bad mood*
am anderen Tag, **am** anderen Morgen	*the next day*, *the next morning*

(iii) in western and southern Germany and in Switzerland with the major festivals (*zu* is used in other regions, see **18.2.9c**):

an Weihnachten an Pfingsten an Ostern an Neujahr

(iv) *an* occurs in a few other contexts with reference to time:

Es ist **an** der Zeit, dass …	*It is about time that …*
am Anfang, **am** Ende	*at the beginning, at the end*
gleich **am** Anfang	*at the very beginning*

(v) Other notes on usage:

- *in* is used with *Nacht*, see **18.3.7b**.
- An accusative time phrase can be an alternative to a phrase with *an*, especially in speech, see **2.2.2**.
- Combinations of the days of the week and nouns denoting parts of the day are written together, e.g. *am Donnerstagabend*.

  (c) *an* **(+ dat.) can be used to mean 'in respect of', 'in connection with'**

This is common in prepositional objects (see **16.5.2a**), and with nouns and adjectives (see **6.4.1**):

Der Bedarf **an** Arbeitskräften verringert sich	*The demand for labour is decreasing*
Wir haben mehrere Millionen Euros **an** Aufträgen vorliegen	*We have several million euros worth of orders on the books*
Sie hat etwas Eigenartiges **an** sich	*There's something strange about her*
Das Schönste **an** der Sache ist, dass …	*The best thing about it is that …*

an (+ dat.) also often indicates the feature **by** which one recognizes or notices something:

Ich bemerkte **an** seinem Benehmen, dass …	*I noticed from his behaviour that …*
Sie erkannte ihn **an** seinem Bart	*She recognized him by his beard*

(d) *an* (+ dat.) can indicate a partially completed action

This often provides a way of indicating progressive action, see **12.5d**:

Er strickt **an** einem Pullover	*He's knitting a pullover*
Sie arbeitet **an** ihrer Dissertation	*She's working on her thesis*

(e) Other uses of *an* (+ dat.)

(i) The superlative of adverbs and predicate adjectives is formed with *am*, e.g. *am schönsten*, see **6.5.3a**.
(ii) can be used with the infinitive to express continuous action, e.g. *Sie ist am Schreiben*, see **12.5c**.

18.3.3 *an* (+ accusative)

(a) *an* (+ acc.) indicates direction if the destination is *an* (+ dat.)

i.e. in contexts where the ultimate destination is a position 'on', 'at' or 'by' something.

(i) It most often corresponds to English 'to' (see **18.5.1c**) or 'on':

Sie hängt das Bild **an** die Wand	*She is hanging the picture on the wall*
Sie fährt **an** die Küste	*She is driving to the coast*
Ich gehe **ans** Fenster, **an** die Tür, **an** meinen Platz	
Er kommt **an** die Bushaltestelle, **an** den Waldrand	

(ii) The idea of **right up to** somebody or something can be indicated by adding *heran*, see **7.2.4b**:

Sie tritt **an** mich, **an** den Tisch **heran**   *She walks up to me, to the table*

(iii) *an* is also used with a person being addressed, i.e. someone being asked a question or requested to do something:

Er richtet die Frage **an** mich   *He is addressing the question to me*
eine Bitte **an** den Bundeskanzler   *a request to the Federal Chancellor*
Ich werde mich **an** sie um Rat wenden *I shall turn to her for advice*

(b) Most nouns from verbs which govern a dative are followed by a phrase with *an* (+ acc.)

See **16.4**. The dative object of the verb appears in a prepositional phrase with *an:*

die Anpassung **an** die neuen Verhältnisse   *adaptation to new circumstances*
Compare: *Er passt sich den neuen Verhältnissen an*
sein Befehl **an** die Truppen   *his order to the troops*
Compare: *Er befahl **d**en Truppen ...*
eine Antwort **an** mich   ein Bericht **an** die Akademie
viele Grüße **an** Onkel Robert   die Kriegserklärung **an** Japan
der Verkauf des Hauses **an** meinen Sohn   sein Vermächtnis **an** seine Tochter

For the use of *an* (+ acc.) in this sense with verbs of sending, etc., in place of a dative, see **16.4.1d**.

(c) Idiomatic uses of *an* (+ acc.)

etwas ans Licht, an den Tag bringen   *bring sth. to light*
an (und für) sich   *actually*

(d) *an die* can be used to indicate an indefinite quantity

e.g.: *Er verdient an die 5000 im Monat*. In this usage, which is typical of colloquial speech, it is in practice a set adverbial phrase A following adjective has **strong** endings, e.g. *An die vierzig ausländische Gäste waren im Saal*, and the case of the noun is determined by the verb, e.g. *Sie hat an die hundert armen Kindern geholfen*. For further details see **8.1.6**.

18.3.4 *auf* (+ dative)

(a) The basic meaning of *auf* (+ dat.) is 'on (top of)'

For the distinction between *auf* and *an* (+ dat.), see **18.3.2a**.

Das Buch liegt **auf** dem Tisch	*The book is lying on the table*
Sie sind **auf** dem Mond gelandet	*They landed on the moon*
Die Katze spielt **auf** dem Rasen	*The cat is playing on the lawn*
auf dem Weg nach Stuttgart	*on the way to Stuttgart*

(b) *auf* (+ dat.) is used for English 'at' or 'in' in some contexts

(i) 'at' formal occasions, e.g. weddings, conferences, parties, etc.:

Ich habe sie **auf** einem Empfang gesehen	*I saw her at a reception*
Wir haben uns **auf** ihrer Hochzeit kennengelernt	*We met at their wedding*
Sie ist **auf** einer Tagung	*She's at a conference*

bei is a common alternative to *auf* in this sense, but there may be a difference in meaning, see **18.2.3b**.

(ii) with a few other nouns, where idiomatic usage can differ from English:

Die Schafe sind **auf** der Wiese	*The sheep are in the meadow*		
Er ist **auf** seinem Zimmer	*He is (up) in his room*		
auf dem Land(e)	*in the country*		
auf dem (Bauern)hof	*on the farm*	auf dem Gang	*in the corridor*
auf ihrer Bude	*in her bedsit*	auf seinem Gut	*on his estate*
auf dem Feld	*in the field*	auf dem Hof	*in the yard*
auf dem Flur	*in the (entrance) hall*	auf der Toilette	*on the toilet*

Note: *Die Kinder spielen auf der Straße* 'The children are playing in the street' but *in* (+ dat.) is used to refer to a particular street, e.g. *Wir wohnen in der Schillerstraße*.

(ii) with a few nouns denoting public buildings and places. The use of *auf* varies considerably with some of these. It is the norm in more formal registers, but in speech it tends to be more used in the South. Common alternatives are given in brackets:

auf dem Bahnhof (an) auf der Bibliothek (in) auf der Post (in) auf der Universität (an)

auf der Bank (in) auf dem Markt(platz) auf dem Rathaus (in)

(c) Idiomatic uses of *auf* (+ dat.)

blind auf einem Auge	*blind in one eye*
Das hat nichts/viel auf sich	*There's nothing/a lot to that*
etwas auf dem Herzen haben	*have sth. on one's mind*
auf der anderen Seite	*on the other hand*
auf der Stelle	*immediately*

18.3.5 *auf* (+ accusative)

(a) *auf* (+ acc.) indicates direction if the destination is *auf* (+ dat.)

i.e. it corresponds to English 'to' (or 'onto') in contexts where the ultimate goal of the person or thing will be a position 'on (top of)' or 'at' something:

Sie hat das Buch **auf** den Tisch gelegt	*She put the book on the table*
Die Katze ist **auf** das Dach gesprungen	*The cat leapt onto the roof*

This means that with nouns with which German uses *auf* (+ dat.) for English 'at' or 'in', *auf* (+ acc.) corresponds to English 'into' or 'to' (see also **18.5.1b**):

Wir gingen **auf** das Feld	*We went into the field*
Er ging **auf** sein Zimmer	*He went (up) to his room*
Er geht **auf** die Toilette	*He's going to the toilet*

(b) *auf* (+ acc.) … *zu* indicates direction (i.e. = 'towards'):

Sie kam **auf** mich **zu**	*She came towards me/approached me*
Sie ging **auf** die Tore des Friedhofs **zu**	*She went towards the cemetery gates*

(c) *auf* (+ acc.) indicates a period of time extending from 'now'

In this usage it corresponds to English 'for'. It is a less frequent alternative to *für*, see **18.1.3c**, found mainly in formal registers, regionally and in some set phrases:

Sie fährt **auf** vier Monate in die Schweiz	*She is going to Switzerland for three months*
auf unbestimmte Zeit	*indefinitely*
auf ewig, **auf** immer	*for ever, for good*

(i) *auf* is used idiomatically in *auf die Minute (genau)* '(precisely) to the minute'.
(ii) The prepositional adverb *darauf* is used in the sense of 'after(wards)', see **7.3.1a**, e.g. *am Tag darauf* 'the day after', 'the following day'.
(iii) *auf* (+ acc.) is similarly used to indicate a distance from here, e.g. *Kurven auf fünf Kilometer* 'bends for 5 kilometres'.

(d) *auf* **(+ acc.) is used after many adjectives and verbs**

(see **6.4.1** and **16.5.3a**), e.g. *Sie ist neidisch auf ihn. Ich habe vor dem Bahnhof auf sie gewartet*.

(e) *auf* **(+ acc.) can denote 'in response to', 'as a result of'**

In this sense it is often strengthened by a following *hin*, see **7.2.3c**:

Auf meine Bitte (**hin**) hat er die Sache für sich behalten	*At my request he kept the matter to himself*
Er hat sofort **auf** meinen Brief **hin** gehandelt	*He acted immediately following my letter*
auf Anfrage	*on application*
auf meine Empfehlung (hin)	*on my recommendation*
auf einen Verdacht hin	*on the strength of a suspicion*
auf Wunsch, auf meinen Wunsch (hin)	*by request, at my request*
daraufhin	*as a result, thereupon*

(f) Other uses of *auf* **(+ acc.)**

(i) with languages:

Sie hat mir **auf Deutsch** geantwortet	*She answered me in German*

in (+ dat.) is also used, especially with extended phrases:

Er hält seine Vorlesungen **in Deutsch/auf Deutsch**	*He gives his lectures in German*
Er sagte es **in gebrochenem Deutsch**	*He said it in broken German*
Wie heißt das **in Ihrer Sprache**?	*What's that called in your language?*

(ii) to form absolute superlatives, e.g. *aufs angenehmste/Angenehmste* (see **7.7.2a**).
(iii) Idiomatic expressions with *auf* (+ acc.):

auf den ersten Blick	*at first sight*
auf jeden Fall, auf alle Fälle	*in any case*
auf eigene Gefahr	*at one's own risk*

auf eigene Kosten	*at one's own expense*
Das geht auf meine Rechnung	*This one's on me*
auf diese Weise	*in this way*
jdn. auf den Arm nehmen (S. Ger.)/auf die Schippe nehmen (N. Ger.)	*pull somebody's leg*
jdm. auf die Nerven gehen, auf den Wecker gehen/fallen	*get on somebody's nerves*

18.3.6 *hinter*

(a) *hinter* is used to refer to place and usually corresponds to English 'behind' or 'beyond'

hinter indicates position with a following noun phrase in the dative case and direction with a noun phrase in the accusative:

Der Wagen steht **hinter** der Garage	*The car is behind the garage*
Ich habe das Schlimmste **hinter** mir	*I've got the worst behind me*
100 Kilometer **hinter** der Grenze	*100 kilometres beyond the border*
Er fuhr den Wagen **hinter** die Garage	*He drove the car round the back of the garage*
Die eine Spur führte **hinter** das Haus	*One track led round the back of the house*

(b) To indicate movement in relation to another person or thing, *hinter* is used with *her*

See also **7.2.3b.** The noun phrase is always in the dative case:

Er rennt **hinter** ihr **her**	*He is running after her*
Ich gehe **hinter** meinen Eltern **her**	*I am walking behind my parents*

18.3.7 *in* (+ dative)

(a) The basic meaning of *in* (+ dat.) is 'in(side)'

Sie ist **im** Haus/**im** Freien/**in** der Kirche/**im** Kino/**in** der Stadt/**im** Wald/**im** Tal/**in** ihrem Zimmer	*She is in the house/in the open air/in the church/in the cinema/in town/in the forest/in the valley/in her room*
Sie sind **in** Bremen/**in** Deutschland/**in** der Schweiz/ **im** Ausland	*They are in Bremen/in Germany/in Switzerland/abroad*
Die Milch ist **im** Kühlschrank	*The milk is in the fridge*
Die Sonne geht **im** Westen unter	*The sun sets in the west*

In spoken German, *in* can be strengthened by adding *drin*, e.g. *Die sind in der Hütte drin*.

In some contexts, German idiom is different from English:

Ihr Büro ist **im** vierten Stock	*Her office is on the fourth floor*
Das habe ich **im** Fernsehen gesehen/**im** Radio gehört	*I saw it on television/heard it on the radio*

German uses *in* with reference to attendance at public buildings and the like, where English uses 'at':

Die Kinder sind heute **in** der Schule	*The children are at school today*
Meine Eltern sind **in** der Kirche	*My parents are at church*
Emilie ist **im** Theater/**in** einem Konzert/ **im** Kino/**im** Rathaus/**in** der Bibliothek	*Emilie is at the theatre/at a concert/at the cinema/at the town hall/at the library*

(b) *in* (+ dat.) is used in a number of time expressions

(i) *in* can refer to a specific period of time or a length of time. It is used with all words denoting periods of time **except** those with which *an* is used (see **20.2.3b**), in particular with the names of the months and seasons (always with a definite article, see **4.5a**), and with the following nouns:

Augenblick die Epoche das Jahr das Jahrhundert die Minute
der Monat die Nacht die Woche das Zeitalter

Examples of use:

im Augenblick, **im** letzten Augenblick	*at the moment, at the last moment*
im Jahre 1812	*in 1812*
in den letzten paar Jahren	*in the last few years*
in letzter Minute	*at the last moment*
im Mittelalter	*in the Middle Ages*
in der Nacht	*at night*
zweimal **in** der Woche	*twice a week*
in der Woche vor Weihnachten	*in the week before Christmas*
in der Vergangenheit	*in the past*
in Zukunft	*in future*

For the use of *in* or *zu* with *Zeit* and *Stunde*, see **18.2.9c**.

The accepted equivalent for English 'in 1815' in German is either *im Jahre 1815* or simply *1815*, with no preposition. The form *in 1815* is widely used, although it is often considered incorrect.

(ii) *in* indicates a period of time **within which** something happens:

Ich habe die Arbeit **in** zwei Stunden gemacht	*I did the work in two hours*
In zwei Jahren ist der Umsatz um 40 Prozent gestiegen	*In two years the turnover rose by 40%*
im Lauf(e) der Zeit	*in the course of time*
Das kann man **in** zwei Tagen schaffen	*You can do that in two days*

(iii) *in* can indicate the time **after which** something happens or is done:

Er kommt **in** einer halben Stunde zurück	*He's coming back in half an hour*
heute **in** acht Tagen	*a week today, in a week's time*
Sie fliegt **in** ein paar Tagen nach Sydney	*She's flying to Sydney in a few days (time)*

In some contexts, *in* can be ambiguous, like English 'in', so that *in drei Tagen* can mean 'in the course of three days' or 'in three days' time'. This ambiguity can be avoided by using *binnen* or *innerhalb*, which mean 'within', e.g. *Die Koalition muss sich nun binnen 30 Tagen vom Parlament bestätigen lassen* (*BrZ*).

(c) Idiomatic phrases with *in* **(+ dat.)**

in der Absicht, etwas zu tun	*with the intention of doing something*
im Allgemeinen	*in general*
im Durchschnitt	*on average*
nicht im Geringsten/Entferntesten	*not in the slightest*
in dieser Hinsicht	*in this respect*
in gewissem Maße	*to a certain extent*
in dieser Weise (*also* **auf diese** Weise)	*in this way*
in diesem Zusammenhang	*in this context*

18.3.8 *in* (+ accusative)

(a) *in* **(+ acc.) indicates direction if the destination is** *in* **(+ dat.)**

i.e. in contexts where the ultimate goal of the person or thing will be a position 'in(side)' something. It often corresponds to English 'into':

Sie geht **ins** Haus/**in** die Kirche/**in** den Wald/**in** das Tal/**in** ihr Zimmer	*She goes into the house/the church/the forest/the valley/her room*
Ich habe die Milch **in** den Kühlschrank gestellt	*I (have) put the milk in the fridge*

With *Richtung* the accusative **or** the dative case can be used: *in diese/dieser Richtung*.

in is the equivalent of English 'to', if, on arrival, one will be **in** the place concerned, see **18.5.1a**:

Sie geht **in** ein Konzert/**ins** Kino/**in** den vierten Stock	*She goes to a concert/to the cinema/to the fourth floor*
Wir sind **in** die Schweiz/**ins** Ausland gefahren	*We went to Switzerland/abroad*
Die Kinder gehen heute **in** die Schule	*The children are going to school today*

(b) Idiomatic phrases with *in* (+ acc.):

sich in Bewegung setzen	*begin to move*
mit jdm. ins Gespräch kommen	*get into conversation with sb.*
aus dem Französischen ins Deutsche übersetzen	*translate from French into German*

18.3.9 *neben*

(a) *neben* typically corresponds to English 'next to' or 'beside'

(i) Used with a following dative case, *neben* indicates position:

Die Blumen standen **neben** dem Schrank	*The flowers were next to the cupboard*
Er sitzt **neben** seiner Frau	*He is sitting next to his wife*

(ii) With an accusative, *neben* indicates direction. It can be strengthened by adding *hin*, see **7.2.3a**:

Er stellt die Blumen **neben** den Schrank (hin)	*He puts the flowers (down) next to the cupboard*
Er setzt sich **neben** seine Frau (hin)	*He sits down next to his wife*

(b) *neben* with a following *her*

This combination is used when two people or things are moving in the same direction beside one another (see also **7.2.3b**). The noun phrase is always in the **dative** case:

Er geht **neben** seiner Frau **her**   *He is walking next to his wife*

(c) *neben* (+ dat.) can be used in the sense of 'besides', 'apart from'

Its sense is close to that of *außer*, see **18.2.2a**:

Neben zwei Franzosen waren alle Anwesenden aus   *Apart from two Frenchmen all those present were*
Deutschland   *from Germany*

(d) *neben* (+ dat.) can express a comparison

It is a common alternative to *gegen* or *gegenüber*, see **18.2.4c**:

Neben ihrer Mutter ist sie groß   *She's tall compared to her mother*

(e) The prepositional adverb *daneben*

daneben is used with verbs to express the idea of failing to hit a target. It usually has the function of a separable prefix, see **20.6.2**, and it is written together with the verb:

Er hat danebengeschossen   *He shot wide of the mark*
Sie hat sich danebenbenommen   *She behaved quite abominably*

18.3.10 *über* (+ dative)

über followed by a noun phrase in the dative corresponds to English 'over', 'above' or, in certain contexts, 'across' or 'beyond':

Das Bild hängt **über** meinem Tisch   *The picture hangs over my desk*
Briançon liegt 1400 Meter **über** dem Meeresspiegel   *Briançon lies 1400 metres above sea level*
Der Baum lag mir (quer) **über** dem Weg   *The tree lay across my path*
Er wohnt **über** der Grenze   *He lives over/across the border*
Sie wohnt **über** dem See   *She lives across/beyond the lake*

18.3.11 *über* (+ accusative)

(a) *über* (+ acc.) indicates movement over a person or object

über corresponds to English 'above', 'over', 'across' or (with reference to a journey) 'via':

Sie hat das Bild **über** meinen Tisch gehängt   *She hung the picture over/above my desk*

Wir gingen **über** die Straße	*We crossed the road*
Der Baum fiel uns (quer) **über** den Weg	*The tree fell across our path*
Er ist **über** die Grenze geflüchtet	*He fled over the border*
Wir sind **über** die Schweiz nach Italien gefahren	*We drove to Italy through Switzerland*
Dieser Zug fährt nach Stralsund **über** Rostock	*This train goes to Stralsund via Rostock*

If the movement involved is parallel to a surface, *über* (+ acc.) can be strengthened by adding *hin*, see **7.2.3a**:

Die Enten fliegen **über** den See (**hin**)   *The ducks are flying over the lake*

(b) *über* **(+ acc.) is used in more abstract senses of 'above' or 'beyond'**

In the sense of going 'beyond', *über* expressing a limitation can be strengthened by adding *hinaus*:

Er liebt die Ruhe **über** alles	*He likes quiet above all things*
Diese Aufgabe geht **über** meine Fähigkeiten (**hinaus**)	*This task goes beyond my capabilities*

(c) *über* **(+ acc.) can express a relationship of dependency, in the abstract sense of 'over'**

Der Kaiser herrschte **über** viele Länder	*The emperor ruled over many countries*
ihre Macht **über** ihre Brüder	*her power over her brothers*

(d) *über* **(+ acc.) occurs in a few time expressions in the sense of 'over'**

Sie ist **über** Nacht/**übers** Wochenende geblieben	*She stayed overnight/over the weekend*
über kurz oder lang	*sooner or later*

It can be used **after** a noun in the accusative (see **2.2.2**) to emphasize duration:

Sie blieb die ganze Nacht **über**	*She stayed the whole night*
die Schwäne, die den Winter **über** geblieben waren (*Surminski*)	*The swans which had stayed the whole winter*

(e) *über* **(+ acc.) has the sense of 'over', 'more than' with quantities**

e.g. *Es hat über tausend Euro gekostet*; *Kinder über zehn Jahre*, etc. See **8.1.6** for further details of this usage and the distinction between the adverbial and prepositional usage of *über* with quantities.

(f) *über* **(+ acc.) is used in the sense of 'about', 'concerning'**

ein Buch **über** die europäischen Vögelarten	*a book about European bird species*
meine Freude **über** ihren Erfolg	*my delight at her success*
Er beschwerte sich **über** den kaputten Fernsehapparat	*He complained about the broken television set*
Sie war ärgerlich **über** ihn	*She was annoyed at him*

This usage is particularly frequent with nouns, adjectives (see **6.4.1b**) and in the prepositional object of verbs of saying, etc. (see **16.5.9a**).

18.3.12 *unter* (+ dative)

(a) *unter* **(+ dat.) corresponds to English 'under(neath)', 'beneath', 'below'**

Hans-Peter lag **unter** dem Tisch	*Hans-Peter was lying under(neath) the table*
180 Meter **unter** dem Gipfel	*180 metres below the summit*
Das Land steht **unter** Wasser	*The land is under water*
Sie trug die Tasche **unter** dem Arm	*She was carrying her bag under her arm*

(b) *unter* **(+ dat.) is a common equivalent for English 'among(st)'**

Hier bist du **unter** Freunden	*You're among(st) friends here*
Ich habe das Rezept **unter** meinen Papieren gefunden	*I found the prescription among my papers*
Unter den Zuschauern waren viele Ausländer	*There were a lot of foreigners among the spectators*
unter uns gesagt	*between ourselves*
unter vier Augen	*in private*
unter anderem (u.a.)	*amongst other things*

zwischen can also correspond to English 'among(st)', see **16.3.17a**. It is preferred if *unter* could be understood to mean 'under'. Compare:

Das Haus steht **unter Bäumen**	*The house stands under some trees*
Das Haus steht **zwischen Bäumen**	*The house stands amongst some trees*

(c) *unter* **(+ dat.) indicates circumstances**

unter diesen Umständen	*under these circumstances*
unter allen Umständen	*in any case*
unter den größten Schwierigkeiten	*with the greatest difficulty*
unter diesen Bedingungen	*on these conditions*

unter Vorspiegelung falscher Tatsachen   *on false pretences*

(d) *unter* (+ dat.) has the sense of 'under', 'below' with reference to quantity

e.g. *Es hat unter tausend Euro gekostet*. See **8.1.6** for further details of this usage and the distinction between the adverbial and prepositional usage of *unter* with quantities.

18.3.13 *unter* (+ accusative)

(a) *unter* (+ acc.) indicates direction if the destination is *unter* (+ dat.)

i.e. where English has 'under(neath)', 'below', 'among':

Manfred kroch **unter** den Tisch	*Manfred crawled under the table*
Sie hat die Tasche **unter** den Arm gesteckt	*She put her bag under her arm*
Wir gingen **unter** die Brücke hindurch	*We walked under the bridge*
Sie ging **unter** die Menge	*She went among the crowd*

(b) Idiomatic expressions with *unter* (+ acc.)

jdn. unter die Arme greifen	*come to sb.'s assistance*
etwas unter den Tisch fallen lassen	*let sth. go by the board*

18.3.14 *vor* (+ dative)

(a) With reference to place, *vor* (+ dat.) means 'in front of', 'ahead of'

Das Auto steht **vor** der Garage	*The car is in front of the garage*
Der Himalaja lag **vor** uns	*The Himalayas lay before us*
vor ihm in einiger Entfernung	*some distance ahead of him*
Die Insel Rügen liegt **vor** der deutschen Ostseeküste	*The island of Rügen lies off the Baltic coast of Germany*

(b) *vor* (+ dat.) with a following *her*

This combination is used when a person or thing is moving ahead of another in the same direction (see also **7.2.3b**):

Vor uns **her** fuhr ein roter BMW	*A red BMW was driving along ahead of us*

(c) *vor* **(+ dat.) is used in time expressions with the sense of 'ago' or 'before'**

vor einem Jahr, **vor** mehreren Jahren	*a year ago, several years ago*
vor langer Zeit, **vor** einiger Zeit	*a long time ago, some time ago*
vor kurzem	*not long ago, recently* (see **7.3.5**)
gestern **vor** acht Tagen	*a week ago yesterday*
die Verhältnisse **vor** der Krise	*the conditions before the crisis*

In many contexts *her* can be used in the sense of English 'ago', e.g. *Es ist schon lange, einen Monat her* 'It's a long time, a month ago'. *Wie lange ist es (schon) her ?* 'How long ago is it?', see **7.2.5**.

(d) *vor* **(+ dat.) can indicate cause or reason**

In this sense, the noun following *vor* usually has no definite article:

Man konnte **vor** Lärm nichts hören	*You couldn't hear anything for the noise*
Ich konnte **vor** Aufregung nicht einschlafen	*I couldn't get to sleep with the excitement*
Vor Nebel war nichts zu sehen	*You couldn't see anything for the fog*
blass **vor** Furcht, gelb **vor** Neid	*pale with fear, green with envy*

In contrast to *aus*, see **18.2.1c**, which points to a voluntary cause or reason, *vor* (+ dat.) always expresses a cause which is involuntary. This use of *vor* (+ dat.) is very common with adjectives, see **6.4.1**, and in the prepositional object of verbs, see **16.5.12**.

18.3.15 *vor* (+ accusative)

(a) *vor* **(+ acc.) indicates movement to the front of something or someone**

Ich fuhr den Wagen **vor** die Garage	*I drove up in front of the garage*
Sie stellte sich **vor** mich	*She stepped in front of me*
Alle traten **vor** den Vorhang	*Everyone stepped out in front of the curtain*

(b) *vor sich hin* **means 'to oneself'**

See also **7.2.5**, e.g.:

Sie las **vor** sich **hin**	*She was reading to herself*
Ich murmelte etwas **vor** mich **hin**	*I muttered something to myself*

18.3.16 *zwischen*

(a) *zwischen* **is used with reference to place or time in the sense of English 'between'**

(i) *zwischen* **(+ dat.)** indicates **position:**

Ich saß **zwischen** dem Minister und seiner Frau	*I was sitting between the minister and his wife*
Die Tagung findet **zwischen** dem 4. und dem 11. Oktober statt	*The conference is taking place between the 4th and the 11th of October*
zwischen den Zeilen lesen	*read between the lines*

zwischen can also correspond to English 'among(st)' if more than two objects are involved:

Pilze wachsen **zwischen** den Bäumen	*Toadstools are growing among(st) the trees*

See **16.3.13b** for the distinction between *unter* and *zwischen* to mean 'among'.

(ii) *zwischen* **(+ acc.)** indicates **direction:**

Ich setzte mich **zwischen** den Minister und seine Frau	*I sat down between the minister and his wife*
Wir legen die Tagung **zwischen** den 4. und den 11. Oktober	*We are putting the conference between the 4th and the 11th of October*

(b) *zwischen* **(+ dat.) with a following** *her*

This combination is used when a person or thing is moving between others in the same direction (see also **7.2.3b**). The noun phrase is **always in the dative** case:

Er geht **zwischen** seinen Eltern **her**	*He is walking between his parents*

(c) *zwischen* **(+ dat.) has the sense of 'between' with reference to quantity**

e.g. *Kinder zwischen dem 10. und dem 15. Lebensjahr*. See **8.1.6** for further details of this usage and the distinction between the adverbial and prepositional usage of *zwischen* with expressions of quantity.

18.4 Prepositions governing the genitive case

The **prepositions governing the genitive fall into four groups:**

- **four common prepositions**, dealt with in **18.4.1**

(an)statt trotz während wegen

These are used with the genitive in formal registers, but the dative is common in everyday speech.

- the preposition **entlang,** dealt with in **18.4.2**

Usage with *entlang* is extremely variable, with the accusative and dative also being used.

- **eight prepositions** expressing **place relationships**, dealt with in **18.4.3**

außerhalb oberhalb   diesseits beiderseits
innerhalb   unterhalb jenseits   unweit

These are often used with a following *von* rather than a genitive.

- a **large number of prepositions with specialized meanings** which are used mainly in formal (especially official) registers. They are listed and explained in **18.4.4**.

18.4.1 The four common prepositions which govern the genitive

(a) (*an)statt* **'instead of'**

The longer form *anstatt* is less frequent and it occurs chiefly in writing.

Statt eines Laptop hat sie sich ein teures Tablet gekauft	*Instead of a laptop she bought herself an expensive tablet*
Statt eines Briefes hat er ihr eine Mail geschickt	*Instead of a letter he sent her an e-mail*

(an)statt can be used **as a conjunction rather than a preposition**, i.e. as an alternative to *und nicht*. In this construction the noun or pronoun has the same case as the noun or pronoun immediately preceding *(an)statt* with which it is linked:

In Aachen habe ich meinen Onkel Otto **statt** (= und nicht) meine Tante Käthe besucht	*In Aachen I visited my uncle Otto instead of my aunt Käthe*

Ihr Haus hat sie mir **statt** (= und nicht) ihm vermacht	*She left her house to me instead of to him*

(an)statt is always used like this if it links prepositional phrases or personal pronouns:

Sie wollte mit ihrem neuen Freund kommen **statt** mit deinem Bruder	*She wanted to come with her new boy-friend instead of your brother*

anstelle von is a common alternative to *(an)statt*. It can sound less stilted:

Wir essen jetzt Margarine **anstelle von** Butter	*We eat margarine instead of butter now*

For infinitive phrases with *(an)statt… zu* and the conjunction *(an)statt dass* see **11.2.6c.**

(b) *trotz* **'despite', 'in spite of'**

Wir sind am Sonntag **trotz** des starken Regens nach Eulbach gewandert	*We walked to Eulbach on Sunday despite the heavy rain*

(c) *während* **'during'**

während usually corresponds to English 'during':

Sie hat **während** der Aufführung geschlafen	*She slept during the performance*
während der Wintermonate	*during the winter months*
während des letzten Urlaubs, den sie in Italien verbracht hatten (*Walser*)	*during the last holiday which they had spent in Italy*

Unlike English 'during', *während* is not often used with simple time words like *Tag*, *Abend*, *Nacht* or *Jahr* if these just have a definite article with them. Compare:

am Tag, **am** Abend, **in** der Nacht	*during the day, during the evening, during the night*

However, *während* can be used with these nouns if there is an adjective with them, or if they are used with a determiner other than the definite article:

Während der letzten Nacht ist der Junge zweimal aufgewacht	*During the previous night the boy woke up twice*
während eines einzigen Tages	*during/in the course of a single day*

während indicates a period rather than simply duration, and it can be used in this sense in contexts where 'during' would be unusual in English:

während der ganzen Nacht	*throughout the night*
Andere Vogelarten wie der Star können **während** mindestens zweier Jahre Neues dazulernen (*NZZ*)	*Other species of birds like starlings can learn new things over the course of at least two years*
Während dreier Jahre haben sie den Urlaub auf Usedom verbracht	*Three years running they spent their holidays on Usedom*

(d) *wegen* **'because of', 'for the sake of'**

(i) *wegen* normally precedes the noun it governs, but in elevated registers it sometimes follow**s**:

Wir konnten **wegen** des Regens nicht kommen	*We couldn't come because of the rain*
Er musste **wegen** zu schnellen Fahrens eine Geldstrafe bezahlen	*He had to pay a fine because he had been driving too fast*
ein paar Verse, die wir des Dialekts **wegen** nicht verstanden (*Kehlmann*)	*a few lines which we didn't understand because of the dialect*

(ii) *wegen* is sometimes used to mean 'about', 'concerning':

Wegen deiner Reise muss ich noch mit Gesine sprechen	*I've still got to talk to Gesine about your trip*

(iii) The combination *von* (+ gen.)… *wegen* occurs in a few set phrases:

von Amts wegen	*ex officio*
von Berufs wegen	*by virtue of one's profession*
von Rechts wegen	*legally*, *by rights*

(iv) The combination *von wegen* is common in informal registers to mean 'because of' or 'concerning'. This usage is not generally considered standard:

Zunächst haben die Medien ordentlich kritisiert, **von wegen** schlechtes Management (*H. Pundt*)	*First of all there was some heavy criticism in the media, because of the bad management*

von wegen is very frequent in isolation in spoken German to challenge a previous statement:

Also, heute Abend bezahlst du alles. – **Von wegen!**	*So, you're paying for everything tonight. – No way!*

For the forms of pronouns and demonstratives with *wegen* (*meinetwegen*, *ihretwegen*, etc.), see **3.1.2c**, **5.1.1b** and **5.4.1c**.

(e) The use of *(an)statt*, *trotz*, *während* **and** *wegen* **with a dative**

These prepositions are regularly followed by a noun phrase in the genitive in standard German, and the use of the dative with them is generally considered unacceptable in writing. However, reflecting the tendency to avoid the genitive in informal registers (see **2.3**), they are frequently used with a following dative in **everyday speech**, e.g.:

Ich konnte **wegen dem Regen** nicht kommen

Während dem Mittagessen hat sie uns etwas über ihren Urlaub erzählt

The use of the dative is tolerated in writing **in Switzerland**, e.g.:

> Die Koalition wird deshalb vorerst wahrscheinlich trotz **dem neuerlichen Scheitern** überleben (*NZZ*)

An example like this would be unusual in a serious newspaper in Germany.

Nevertheless, the use of the dative case is considered acceptable with these prepositions:

- if they are followed by a plural noun not accompanied by a declined determiner or adjective:
  während fünf **Jahren**, wegen ein paar **Hindernissen**
- if the noun they govern is preceded by a genitive:
  während Vaters **kurzem Urlaub**, wegen des ehemaligen Bundeskanzlers **langem Schweigen**
- to avoid the use of the genitive of the personal pronouns, see **3.1.2**:
  Langsam fahren – **wegen uns!** (on a road sign outside a kindergarten)
- to avoid consecutive genitives in *-(e)s*, see **2.4.2a**:
  trotz dem Rollen des Zuges (*Th. Mann*)
- optionally, if the following noun has no determiner with it:
  trotz Geldmangel(s), **wegen** Amtsmissbrauch(s)
- to achieve a particular stylistic effect:
  Freies Denken **statt starrem Lenken** (election slogan)
- a relative pronoun after one of these prepositions can be in the dative:
  seit dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs, während **dem** die Stadt Salzburg zahlreiche Bombenangriffe erleiden musste (Baedeker)

18.4.2 *entlang*

entlang **corresponds to English 'along'.** There is considerable variation in usage with it, both in respect of the **case** it governs and its position before or after the

noun, and this has changed considerably in recent years. In colloquial speech *entlang* is often shortened to *lang*.

(a) Case use with *entlang*

(i) In writing, *entlang* is now most frequently used with a following noun phrase in the genitive case, especially to indicate position alongside an extended object:

die Uferpromenade **entlang des** Rheins (*MM*)	*the promenade along the bank of the Rhine*
die Minenfelder **entlang der** Grenzen zur Türkei und zum Iran (*SZ*)	*the minefields along the frontiers to Turkey and Iran*
Entlang der Bahnlinie sind Radwege geplant	*There are plans for cycle paths along the railway line*

(ii) A following noun phrase in the dative is rather less frequent, but not uncommon:

im Sommer, wenn **entlang den** Boulevards und in den Vorgärten Rosen blühen (*Zeit*)	*in summer when roses are blooming along the boulevards and in the front gardens*

(iii) *entlang* occasionally follows a noun phrase in the **dative:**

die Straße, die Mussolini **der Küste entlang** gebaut hat (*Grzimek*)	*the road which Mussolini built along the coast*
Wir flogen gar nicht **der Küste entlang** (*Frisch*)	*We were not flying along the coast at all*

This usage was frequent until quite recently, but it is no longer common except in Switzerland.

(iv) *entlang* often follows a noun phrase in the accusative:

Sie gingen **den Bach entlang**	*They were walking along the stream*
Sie hastete **den Flur entlang** bis zum Ende des Ganges (*Johnson*)	*She hurried along the entrance hall to the end of the corridor*
Flaschen und Gläser standen **die lange Tafel entlang** (*Welt*)	*Bottles and glasses were standing along the long table*

This is common in both spoken and written German, especially (but not only) to indicate movement along an extended object.

(b) *an* (+ dat.) … *entlang* **is a common alternative to simple** *entlang*

It can be used with reference to position or movement:

Da gab es **an** der nördlichen Friedhofsmauer **entlang** den Bittweg (*Grass*)	*Along the north wall of the cemetery was the Bittweg*
Er steuerte **am** Ufer **entlang,** bis die Stelle gefunden war (*Frisch*)	*He steered along the bank until he had found the spot*

(c) Alternatives to *entlang* in the meaning 'along'

entlang is used less frequently than English *along*, and the following are common equivalents:

(i) *an* (+ dat.), (see **18.3.2a**) often appears in contexts where English naturally uses 'along', e.g.:

An der Küste war das Wetter schön	*The weather was fine along the coast*

(ii) *an* (+ dat.) … *hin* (see **7.2.5**) can refer to movement alongside something, especially when one is very close to it or in contact with it:

Sie ging **an der Mauer hin**	*She went along the wall*
Er rutschte **am Boden hin**	*He slid along the floor*

(iii) *längs*, see **18.4.4**, only expresses position. It governs a following genitive or (less commonly) a dative, e.g. *längs der Küste*, *längs des Flusses/dem Fluss*.

18.4.3 Prepositions denoting position

(a) Meaning and use

(i) *außerhalb* 'outside' and *innerhalb* 'inside', 'within' can refer to place **or** time:

Sie wohnt **außerhalb** der Stadt	*She lives outside the city*
Das liegt **außerhalb/innerhalb** meines Fachgebietes	*That lies outside/within my specialist field*
Das kann sie **außerhalb** der Arbeitszeit erledigen	*She can finish that outside working hours*
Das wird **innerhalb** eines Jahres geändert werden	*That will be changed within a year*

außerhalb and *innerhalb* only denote position, not direction. Compare:

Wir gingen aus der Hütte hinaus/in die Hütte hinein	*We went outside/inside the hut*

Like *binnen* (see **18.2.10b**), *innerhalb* can be used to avoid potential ambiguity with *in*, see **18.3.7b**.

(ii) *oberhalb* 'above' and *unterhalb* 'below', 'underneath' refer to position and are more specific than *über* and *unter*:

Oberhalb der Straße war ein Felsenvorsprung   *Above the road there was a rocky ledge*
Ich habe mich **unterhalb** des Knies verletzt   *I injured myself below the knee*
der Rhein **oberhalb/unterhalb** der Stadt Basel *the Rhine above/below the city of Basle*

(iii) *beiderseits* 'on either side of', *diesseits* 'on this side of', *jenseits* 'beyond', 'on the other side of':

Bis zum ersten Weltkrieg gehörte das Gebiet   *Up to the First World War the area on both sides*
  beiderseits des Flusses zu Deutschland (*MM*)   *of the river belonged to Germany*
diesseits, **jenseits** der niederländischen Grenze   *on this side, the other side of the Dutch border*

hinter is more commonly used for 'beyond' than *jenseits*, especially in informal registers, e.g. *Das Dorf liegt hinter der Grenze, hinter Hannover*.

(iv) *unweit* 'not far from'

Wir standen auf einer Höhe **unweit** des Dorfes   *We were standing on a hill not far from the village*

unfern, used with the genitive or the dative in the same meaning as *unweit*, is obsolete.

(b) All these prepositions are often used with *von* rather than the genitive

This is usual in spoken German, but it is also quite common in writing:

Sie wohnt **außerhalb von** der Stadt
Innerhalb von einem Jahr wird alles anders werden
Jenseits von der Grenze standen vier Vopos
ein Dorf **unweit von** Moskau (*Bednarz*)

The use of *von* is the norm even in writing in those contexts where the common prepositions taking the genitive are used with the dative (see **18.4.1e**), e.g. *innerhalb von fünf Jahren*.

A relative pronoun following these prepositions is often in the dative rather than the genitive, e.g. *die Zone, innerhalb der* (less commonly: *derer*) *Autos verboten sind*.

18.4.4 Other prepositions governing the genitive

(a) Prepositions with the genitive in formal registers

The other prepositions which govern the genitive are largely limited to formal registers, especially in official and commercial language, and they can sound stilted elsewhere. However, the genitive case is associated with formal registers and seen as appropriate there, to such an extent that a few prepositions, such as those dealt with in **18.2.10**, have come to be used more often with the genitive, even where this is considered incorrect (as is particularly the case with *gegenüber*).

Many of these prepositions were originally adverbs, participles or phrases which have only recently come to be used as prepositions, and similar new ones are constantly entering the language. With this proviso, the following list is as complete as possible. As indicated, several have an alternative construction with *von*, which is usual in speech, but also frequent in writing.

> **abseits** *away from*: eine Speisekarte abseits jeglicher Tradition (*Presse*) (also: *abseits von*)
> † **abzüglich** *deducting*, *less*: abzüglich der Unkosten (also: *abzüglich von*)
> **anfangs** *at the beginning of* (coll. and Sw.): anfangs dieses Jahres
> **angesichts** *in view of*: angesichts der wachsenden Konkurrenz aus Fernost (*MM*) (also *angesichts von*)
> **anhand**: *with the aid of/from*: anhand einiger Beispiele (also *anhand von*)
> **anlässlich** *on the occasion of*: anlässlich seines siebzigsten Geburtstages
> **anstelle** (*also* **an Stelle**): *in place of*, *instead of*: anstelle einer Antwort (also *anstelle von*)
> **aufgrund** (*also* **auf Grund**): *on the strength of*: aufgrund seiner Ausbildung (also *aufgrund von*)
> † **ausschließlich** *exclusive of*: die Miete ausschließlich der Heizungskosten
> **ausweislich** *according to*: Im Lesen sind die Deutschen ausweislich dieser Studie keineswegs Spitze (*SZ*)
> **behufs** *for the purpose of*: behufs einer Verhandlung
> **betreffs, bezüglich** *with regard to*: betreffs, bezüglich Ihres Angebotes
> **eingangs** *at the beginning of*: eingangs dieses Jahres
> **eingedenk** *(may precede or follow the noun) bearing in mind*: eingedenk seiner beruflichen Fehlschläge
> † **einschließlich** *including*: einschließlich der Angehörigen (*SZ*) (also *einschließlich von*)
> † **exklusive** *excluding*: Die Ausstellung kostete eine halbe Million exklusive der Versicherungsprämie (*TT*)
> **fernab** *far from*: fernab des Lärms der Städte
> **hinsichtlich** *with regard to*: hinsichtlich Ihrer Anfrage (also *hinsichtlich von*)
> **infolge** *as a result of*: infolge der neuen Steuergesetze (also *infolge von*: infolge von den Steuergesetzen)

† **inklusive** *including*: fünf Gänge inklusive der Weine (*HMP*)

inmitten *in the middle of*: ein neues Möbelhaus inmitten der Fußgängerzone (*HAZ*) (also *inmitten von*)

kraft *in virtue of*: kraft seines Amtes

längs *along(side)*: längs des Flusses (occasionally with the dative: *längs dem Fluss*)

links *on/to the left of*: links des Rheins (also *links von*)

† **mangels** *for want of*: Freispruch mangels Beweises

† **mittels** *by means of*: mittels eines gefälschten Passes

namens *in the name of*: Ich möchte Sie namens unseres Betriebes einladen

ob *on account of*: die Bundesrepublik seufzt ob des Verschwindens ganzer Kulturtraditionen (*SZ*)

rechts *to/on the right of*: rechts der Isar

seitens *on the part of*: seitens der Bezirksverwaltung

seitlich *to/at the side of*: seitlich der Hauptstraße (also *seitlich von*)

unbeschadet (*after or before the noun*) *regardless of*: unbeschadet des enttäuschenden Ergebnisses (*Presse*)

ungeachtet (*after or before the noun*) *notwithstanding*: ungeachtet unserer üblichen Skepsis (*Dönhoff*) (also *ungeachtet von*)

vermöge *by dint of*: vermöge seines unermüdlichen Fleißes

vorbehaltlich *subject to*: vorbehaltlich seiner Zustimmung

zeit (*only in set phrases with* das Leben) *during*: zeit seines Lebens

zugunsten (*also* **zu Gunsten**) *for the benefit of*: eine Sammlung zugunsten der Opfer des Faschismus

zuungunsten (*also* **zu Ungunsten**) *to the disadvantage of*: Die Richter urteilen meist zuungunsten der Skisportler (*MM*)

† **zuzüglich** *plus*: Es kostet 1800 Euro zuzüglich der Versandkosten

† **zwecks** *for the purpose of*: Er besuchte sie zwecks einer gründlichen Erörterung der Situation

†These prepositions can be used with a following dative case in the same contexts as the common prepositions, especially with a following plural noun with no article or adjective, see **18.4.1e**.

(b) Special cases: *halber* **and** *um … willen*

These two prepositions, which are typically used in elevated registers, have special forms.

(i) halber 'for the sake of' follows the noun, e.g. *der Wahrheit halber*.

It can be **compounded with nouns** to form adverbs, e.g. *sicherheitshalber* 'for safety's sake', *urlaubshalber* 'for a holiday', *vorsichtshalber* 'as a precaution'. When used **with pronouns** *halber* appears as *-halben* and is compounded with pronouns with *-t* inserted, e.g. *meinethalben* 'for my sake', 'for all me', see **3.1.2c** and **5.1.1b**.

(ii) um … willen *for the sake of* has a noun between its two parts, e.g. *um meiner Mutter willen*. It is compounded with forms of the personal pronouns in -*t*, e.g. *um meinetwillen*, see **3.1.2c** and **5.1.1b**.

18.5 German equivalents for English 'to'

English 'to' has a number of possible German equivalents depending on context, and the use of each of these is summarized here for convenience. Fuller details and further examples can be found in earlier sections under the relevant German prepositions.

18.5.1 *an*, *auf* or *in* (+ accusative)

The choice between *an*, *auf* or *in* with a noun phrase in the accusative case to mean 'to' depends on which of these prepositions would be **used with the dative to express position** 'in' or 'at' the place concerned after you get there. Thus:

(a) *in* **(+ accusative) is used for going 'to' places where you will then be inside**

(i.e. *in* + dative):

 Sie geht **ins** Büro/**ins** Dorf/**ins** Kino/**in** die Kirche/**in** ein Museum/**ins** Restaurant/**in** die Schule/**in** die Stadt/**in** den Zoo, etc.

In this way, *Ich gehe in die Kirche* means 'I am going to church' in the sense of going in to a service. If you are just going up to the church, you would say: *Ich gehe an die Kirche* or *Ich gehe zur Kirche*.

(b) *auf* **(+ accusative) is used for going 'to' certain places and events**

in particular those where *auf* (+ dative) is used to say you are 'at' them.

(i) The use of *auf* is idiomatic with many nouns:

Die Schafe gingen **auf** die Wiese	*The sheep went into the meadow*
Wir fahren **aufs** Land	*We're going to the country*
Die Kinder gingen **auf** die Straße	*The children went into the street*

Similarly:

auf den Berg	*up the mountain*	auf den Gang	*into the corridor*
auf den (Bauern)hof	*to the farm*	auf den Hof	*into the yard*

auf ihre Bude	*to her bedsit*	auf die Jagd gehen	*go hunting*
auf den Flur	*into the hall*	auf die Toilette	*to the toilet*

With all these, *auf* (+ dative) is used to indicate presence 'in' or 'on' them, see **18.3.4b**.

(ii) *auf* (+ accusative) can also be used for going 'to' some formal occasions (e.g. weddings, conferences, parties, etc.):

Sie geht **auf** einen Empfang, **auf** eine Hochzeit, **auf** eine Party, **auf** eine Tagung

Although *auf* (+ dative) can be used to denote presence 'at' such functions, see **18.3.4b**, *zu* is now as frequent as *auf* (+ accusative) to express going 'to' them, especially in less formal registers.

(iii) *auf* (+ accusative) is used for going 'to' certain public buildings:

Sie geht **auf** den Bahnhof, **auf** die Bank, **auf** die Bibliothek,
auf die Post, **auf** das Rathaus, **auf** die Universität

With many of these words, *auf* occurs chiefly in more formal registers or in the South (see **18.3.4b** and **18.3.5a**). *zu* is regularly used in its place, especially in the North, although *an* (+ accusative) is frequent with *Universität*.

(c) *an* **expresses direction 'to' a precise spot or objects which extend lengthways**

(i.e. rivers, shores, etc.). *an* expresses movement to a point adjacent to the object concerned. You are then *an* (+ dative) that point, i.e. 'at' it, see **18.3.2a**. Examples:

Er ging **an den** Tisch	→	Er steht **an dem** Tisch
Sie kam **an die** Bushaltestelle	→	Sie traf ihn **an der** Bushaltestelle
Sie ging **an die** Grenze	→	**An der** Grenze wurde kontrolliert
Wir fahren **ans** Meer	→	Wir verbringen unseren Urlaub **am** Meer

Similarly:

Sie geht **ans** Fenster/**an** die Kasse/**ans** Mikrophon/**an** ihren Platz/**an** die Tür/**an** die Tafel
Sie gehen **an** den Fluss/**an** die Mosel/**an** den Strand/**an** den See/**an** die Theke/**ans** Ufer/**an** den Zaun/**an** die Stelle wo der Tote aufgefunden wurde

18.5.2 *zu*

(a) *zu* is often used in place of the more precise prepositions *an*, *auf* and *in*

(see **18.5.1**). It is vaguer than these and tends to emphasize general direction rather than reaching the objective. It is particularly frequent in colloquial registers and in the North.

(i) *zu* is used rather than *in* if one is just going up to the place involved (but not necessarily going inside), or to emphasize the general direction rather than reaching the place:

Ich ging **zum** neuen Theater und wartete auf ihn   Die Straßenbahn fährt **zum** Zoo

(ii) *zu* is used frequently rather than *auf* in connection with functions and public buildings, especially in speech and in the North:

Er geht **zu** einem Empfang/**zu** einer Tagung/**zu** einer Party

Wir gehen **zum** Bahnhof/**zur** Bank/**zur** Post/**zum** Rathaus/**zur** Universität

(iii) *zu* is used rather than *an* if the emphasis is on general direction rather than arriving adjacent to the place concerned:

Ich kann Sie **zur** Fabrik begleiten   Sie geht **zum** Fenster, **zur** Tür, **zu** ihrem Platz

(b) *zu* is always used with reference to people

i.e. going up to someone, or to their house or shop

Sie geht **zu** ihrem Onkel/**zu** ihrer Freundin

Er geht **zum** Bäcker/**zu** Fleischers/**zu** seinem Chef

18.5.3 Equivalents for English 'to' with geographical names

(a) *nach* is used with neuter names of continents, countries and towns

i.e. those which are used without an article (see **18.2.6a**):

Wir fahren **nach** Amerika, **nach** Frankreich, **nach** Duisburg

(b) *in* (+ accusative) is used with names of countries, etc. which are used with an article

Most of these are feminine, but a few are masculine, neuter or plural, see **4.4.1**:

Sie reist morgen **in** die Schweiz, **in** den Jemen (or nach Jemen), **in** das Elsass, **in** die USA

(c) Various prepositions are used with other geographical names

In particular *in*, *an* or *auf* (+ acc.) are used in the same way as with other nouns, see **18.5.1**, depending on whether one will be *in*, *an* or *auf* (+ dat.) on arrival:

Wir fahren **in** die Alpen, **in** den Harz

Wir gehen **auf** den Feldberg, **auf** die Jungfrau

Wir wollen im Sommer **an** den Bodensee, **an** die Riviera fahren

19 Word order

This chapter outlines the **principles of word order in German** in the following sections:

19.1 the **three basic clause structures**, with the finite verb in different positions
19.2 the use of **first position** in main clauses to highlight an important element
19.3–19.8 the position of the **other elements** in the clause:
    19.4 the position of **noun** and **pronoun subject** and **objects**
    19.5 the position of **adverbials**
    19.6 the position of *nicht* and other negative elements
    19.7 the position of other verb **complements**
    19.8 placing elements **after the verb** at the end of the clause

German word order has a different role to English in determining the construction of sentences. English uses word order to identify the SUBJECT **and the** OBJECT(s) **of the verb**. The subject must come first, before the verb, and the objects after it, in the order indirect object + direct object. In a sentence like

    My father has lent our neighbour the old lawnmower

we cannot move the elements round without saying something different, so that, for example, *Our neighbour lent my father the old lawnmower* has another meaning. In German, various permutations are possible without changing the basic meaning:

- **Mein Vater** hat *unserem Nachbarn den alten Rasenmäher* geliehen
- *Unserem Nachbarn* hat **mein Vater** *den alten Rasenmäher* geliehen
- *Den alten Rasenmäher* hat **mein Vater** *unserem Nachbarn* geliehen
- **Mein Vater** hat *den alten Rasenmäher unserem Nachbarn* geliehen

In German it is the **case endings**, not the word order, which tell us **who is doing what to whom**, i.e. what is the subject and what are the objects. **The order of the words and phrases can be changed round to give a different emphasis to the elements without altering the basic meaning**. The last variant above, for example, stresses **who** is being lent the lawnmower. The **position of the verb is fixed**, and the other elements can be moved in order to show different emphases.

Although we usually speak of '**word**' order, what is involved is often a **phrase** of some kind rather than a single word. For example, time adverbials tend to come in a particular place whether they are single words, like *heute*, or phrases like *am kommenden Dienstag*. In order to cover these possibilities, we refer to these segments of the clause as **elements**. In German they are called *Satzglieder*.

19.1 Clause structure and the position of the verb

19.1.1 The three basic clause structures of German

There are **three clause types** in German and these differ in the **place of the** FINITE VERB:

- **main clause statements**: *Petra kommt nach Erfurt*
  The finite verb is the **second** element
- **questions and commands**: *Kommt Petra nach Erfurt? Kommen Sie nach Erfurt!*
  The finite verb is the **first** element
- **subordinate clauses**: *Ich weiß, dass Petra nach Erfurt kommt*
  The finite verb is the **last** element

(a) Main clause statements

In main clauses the finite verb is the **second** element. This means that **only one** element, whether it is a single word, a phrase or a whole clause, comes before the finite verb. All other parts of the verb, i.e. infinitives, past participles or separable prefixes, are placed at the end of the clause, as shown in **Table 19.1**.

TABLE 19.1   The position of the verb in main clauses

Initial position	Verb[1]	Other elements	Verb[2]
Monika	**kommt**	eben aus der Bäckerei	
Morgen	**muss**	ich mit dem Zug nach Brüssel	fahren
Nach einiger Zeit	**blickte**	sie zum Fenster	hinaus
Gestern	**habe**	ich fünf neue Apps	gekauft
Als sie klein war,	**hat**	sie oft mit Claudia	gespielt

Noun clauses with *dass* omitted (see **17.2.1b**) have the same order as main clause statements:

> Sie glaubt, **sie hat ihn gestern in der Stadt gesehen**

The few exceptions to the rule that the finite verb must be the second element are explained in **19.2.1c**.

The order of infinitives and participles at the end of the clause when there is more than one of these is explained in **19.1.3**.

(b) Questions and commands

In questions and commands the finite verb is the first element. As in main clause statements, any other parts of the verb are in final position, as shown in **Table 19.2**. In some questions, the verb is preceded by an ɪɴᴛᴇʀʀᴏɢᴀᴛɪᴠᴇ (i.e. a *w*-word like *was*, *was für ein …*, etc.).

TABLE 19.2   The position of the verb in questions and commands

Interrogative	Verb[1]	Other elements	Verb[2]
	Kommt	sie bald?	
	Musst	du schon	gehen?
	Hat	dich Peter schon	gesprochen?
	Fangen	Sie sofort	an!
	Pass	doch an der Kreuzung	auf!
Was	**hast**	du da schon wieder	angestellt?
Welches Buch	**sollen**	wir zuerst	lesen?
Was für eine Stadt	**ist**	Bochum?	

Conditional clauses with no *wenn* (see **14.3.3a**), and **comparative clauses** introduced simply by *als*, see **14.5.1b**, have the same order, with the finite verb in first position, e.g.:

> **Hätte** ich Zeit**,** so würde ich gern mit euch nach Italien fahren
> Es war mir, als **wäre** ich hoch über der Erde

(c) Subordinate clauses

In subordinate clauses the finite verb is the final element. The clause is introduced by a conjunction in first position and other parts of the verb come immediately before the finite verb at the end of the clause, as shown in **Table 19.3**. Clauses with an **infinitive with** *zu* (see **11.2**) have the same order as subordinate clauses, with the verb last. There is no conjunction at the beginning of the clause, but there may be a preposition like *ohne* or *um*.

TABLE 19.3   The position of the verb in subordinate clauses

Conjunction	Other elements	Verb[2]	Verb[1]
weil	ich gestern krank		**war**
(der Mann), der	in der Ecke allein		**steht**
ob	sie diesen neuen Top	gekauft	**hat?**
dass	er deinen Brief sofort	lesen	**soll**
dass	er morgen		**kommt**
	den Stuhl in die Ecke		**zu stellen**

Conjunction	Other elements	Verb²	Verb¹
ohne	ihrem Freund	helfen	**zu können**

Clauses with participles follow the same pattern, with the verb last:

> **Den Schildern folgend**, fanden sie das Krankenhaus (*Walser*)
> eine Betonburg, **wie von einem anderen Stern in diesen Wald gefallen** (*Walser*)

Some exclamations introduced by an interrogative word can have the form of subordinate clauses **or** questions, e.g. *Wie der Chef darüber geschimpft hat!* or *Wie hat der Chef darüber geschimpft!*

19.1.2 The 'verbal bracket'

As **Table 19.4** shows, a typical feature of German is that most elements in the clause are sandwiched between the various parts of the verb in main clauses, or between the conjunction and the parts of the verb in subordinate clauses. This construction is known as the VERBAL BRACKET.

TABLE 19.4 The 'verbal bracket'

Initial position	[Bracket¹	Other elements	Bracket²]
Heute	**darf**	sie mit uns ins Kino	**kommen**
Ich	**habe**	sie zufällig in der Stadt	**gesehen**
Ich	**komme**	morgen gegen zwei Uhr noch	**vorbei**
	Darf	sie heute mit uns ins Schwimmbad	**kommen?**
	Hast	du sie zufällig in der Stadt	**gesehen?**
	Komm	doch morgen gegen zwei Uhr	**vorbei**
…,	**ob**	sie heute mit uns ins Kino	**kommen darf**
…,	**weil**	ich sie heute zufällig in der Stadt	**gesehen habe**
…,	**dass**	du morgen gegen zwei Uhr noch	**vorbeikommst**

This bracket forms the basic framework for all German clauses, and the order of all the other elements in the clause can be described in relation to it. **Tables 19.1–19.3** have more examples of verbal brackets. The construction has some typical features:

- In main clauses there is **only** one element in initial position before the first 'bracket' formed by the verb. This position is called the *Vorfeld* in German; its function is explained in **19.2**.
- **All other elements** – and this means **all elements** in questions, commands and subordinate clauses – are placed **inside the bracket**. In German, this is called the *Mittelfeld*.

As the examples in **Table 19.4** show, the order of elements in the *Mittelfeld* is **exactly the same for all clause types** and it is explained in **19.3–19.7**.

- Under certain conditions elements can be placed **after the closing bracket**, i.e. after the part of the verb which is at the end, e.g. *Ich rufe an aus London*; *Hat sie dich angerufen aus London?*; *Ich weiß, dass sie dich angerufen hat aus London*. This position is called the *Nachfeld* in German. Its use is explained in section **19.8**.

19.1.3 The order of verbs in final position

If there is more than one verb at the end of the clause, the order of these is fixed.

(a) Main clause statements and questions

In main clauses, the **auxiliary verb** comes **after the main verb**, as shown in **Table 19.5**:

TABLE 19.5 Final position in main clauses

Initial	Finite verb	Other elements	Main verb	Auxiliary verb
Ich	**werde**	es ihr doch	sagen	müssen
Sie	**hat**	ihn voriges Jahr	schwimmen	gelernt

Initial	Finite verb	Other elements	Main verb	Auxiliary verb
	Ist	dir das schon	erklärt	worden?
	Soll	dieser Brief heute noch	geschrieben	werden?

(b) Subordinate clauses

In subordinate clauses the **finite verb** is placed **at the end**, after any **infinitives** or **participles**. The main verb comes before the infinitive or past participle of an auxiliary verb, as shown in **Table 19.6**.

TABLE 19.6   Final position in subordinate clauses

Conjunction	Other elements	Main verb	Auxiliary	Finite verb
Da	ich sie zufällig	gesehen		**habe**
…, weil	er mir das Geld	leihen		**wird**
…, dass	sie mit uns ins Kino	gehen		**darf**
…, wie	sie den Brief	fallen		**ließ**
(das Haus), das	sie	verkaufen		**wird**
…, dass	mir das schon	erklärt	werden	**sollte**
(das Haus), das	heute noch	verkauft	werden	**muss**

If there are **two infinitives** at the end of the clause (see **11.3.2** and **15.1.2**), the **finite verb comes before both**, as shown in Table **19.7**. There are a few common variations or exceptions to this rule:

TABLE 19.7   Final position in subordinate clauses (two infinitives)

Conjunction	Other elements	Finite verb	Main verb	Auxiliary
(Ich weiß), dass	er es bald	**wird**	erledigen	müssen
(der Brief), den	sie	**hat**	fallen	lassen
…, weil	er die Probleme	**soll**	lösen	können
(das Haus), das	sie	**hätte**	verkaufen	sollen
…, dass	Paul ihn	**hat**	kommen	hören

(i) The future tense auxiliary *werden* can be placed **after** the other verbs, e.g.:
dass er es bald erledigen müssen **wird**
(ii) *lassen*, *hören* and *sehen* can also be placed **after** the other verbs **if** their infinitive is substituting for a past participle (see **11.3.1**):
der Brief, den sie **hat** fallen lassen

With these verbs, though, the finite verb can also be placed at the end:

> der Brief, den sie fallen lassen **hat**

> **(iii)** In Austria, the finite verb is often placed **between** the main verb and the auxiliary:
> der Flughafen, wo die Luftraumsperre von Mitternacht bis 5 Uhr dauern **hätte** sollen (*Standard*)
> **(iv)** If there are more than two infinitives or participles the finite verb usually precedes them:
> Tragisch ist, dass der Mann möglicherweise **hätte** gerettet werden können (*SZ*)

However, other orders do occur regularly in writing as well as in speech, although they are not considered standard, e.g.:

> Sie schildert in diesem Schreiben, was für den Mann alles getan **hätte** werden können (*NüN*)
> Er ist davon überzeugt, dass das Kunstmuseum auch mit öffentlichen Geldern realisiert werden **hätte** können (*SGT*)

> **(v)** Words or phrases which are closely connected to the main verb, especially the noun portion of phrasal verbs, see **19.7.2**, can be placed between the finite verb and the auxiliaries and participles:

Er war sich noch nicht so recht klar darüber, ob er **würde Namen nennen dürfen**	*He wasn't yet entirely sure whether he would be able to name names*
Es gab einen Unterschied, den Gregorius immer deutlicher spürte, je weiter die Nacht fortschritt, ohne dass er ihn **hätte in Worte fassen können** (*P. Mercier*)	*There was a difference which Gregorius felt more and more strongly as the night wore on but he would not have been able to put it into words*

19.1.4 Clauses linked by a coordinating conjunction

i.e. clauses linked by a conjunction such as *aber*, *oder* or *und* (see **17.1**).

(a) In coordinated main clauses, the verb is in second position in both

> Zu Hause **schreibt** Mutter Briefe und Vater **arbeitet** im Garten
> Am Abend **blieb** ich in meinem Zimmer, aber ich **konnte** nicht arbeiten

Du **kannst** mit uns ins Kino kommen, oder du **kannst** zu deiner Freundin gehen

If the subject of clauses linked by *sondern* or *und* is identical, it can be omitted ('understood'):

> Wir **gingen** nicht ins Kino, sondern **arbeiteten** im Garten
> Jürgen **kam** um vier Uhr in Soest an und **ging** sofort zu seiner Freundin

However, if the second clause has another element in initial position, the subject **must** be inserted again after the verb and cannot be omitted. This is different from English, where the subject can still be understood even if another element comes before the verb. Compare:

Ich schrieb ein paar Briefe und dann ging **ich** zu meiner Tante *I wrote a few letters and then went to my aunt's*

If an element other than the subject comes in initial position, before the verb, it can be left out (and taken as understood) in following coordinated clauses. The following clauses begin with the verb, and the subject is repeated after it. This stresses that the initial element applies equally to all the clauses:

Schon im April demonstrierten die Bauern, blockierten **sie** Straßen in Ost-Berlin *As early as April the farmers demonstrated, blocked streets in East Berlin*
und protestierten **sie** vor der Volkskammer (*Zeit*) *and protested in front of the Volkskammer*

In this example, *Schon im April* is taken to apply to **all three** coordinated clauses.

However, if no need is felt to emphasize that the initial phrase also applies to the second or subsequent clauses, the subject is placed before the second verb. In practice this is much more usual, especially outside formal written German:

An dem Abend blieb ich zu Hause und **meine Schwester ging** ins Kino *That night I stayed at home and my sister went to the cinema*

(b) Parallel subordinate clauses linked by coordinating conjunctions

The verb is in final position in both clauses:

Ich weiß, dass sie gestern krank **war** und dass ihr Mann deswegen zu Hause geblieben **ist** *I know that she was ill yesterday and that's why her husband stayed at home*
Wenn deine Familie dagegen **ist** oder wenn du keine Zeit **hast**, dann wollen wir den Plan *If your family is against it or if you don't have time, then we'll drop* fallen lassen *the plan*

If the two clauses have compound tenses with the same auxiliary, the auxiliary can be omitted in the first clause:

Nachdem ich Tee **getrunken** und eine Weile **gelesen hatte**, machte ich einen kurzen Spaziergang *After I had had tea and read for a while, I went for a short walk*

19.2 Initial position in main clause statements

19.2.1 The finite verb is the second element in main clauses

The 'verb second' rule is a basic feature of German word order, and the finite verb in main clauses thus constitutes the first part of the 'verbal bracket' (see **19.1.2**).

(a) Only one element can come before the finite verb

This sentence structure is very different from English, where the subject has to come before the verb, because that is the only way we can tell it is the subject. In English, though, other elements can come before the subject, so that there can be several elements in front of the verb:

- **Then** she began to read the letter
- **Then**, **unwillingly**, she began to read the letter
- **Then, unwillingly, when she had shut the door**, she began to read the letter

In the equivalent German sentences, all but one of these elements has to be moved to another position, so that the **verb stays in second place**, e.g. (among several other possible permutations):

- **Dann** begann sie den Brief zu lesen
  Sie begann dann den Brief zu lesen
- **Widerwillig** begann sie dann den Brief zu lesen
  Dann begann sie widerwillig den Brief zu lesen
- **Nachdem sie die Tür geschlossen hatte**, begann sie dann widerwillig den Brief zu lesen
  Dann begann sie widerwillig den Brief zu lesen, nachdem sie die Tür geschlossen hatte

Because of this fundamental difference in sentence construction, corresponding sentences in English and German often have a very different form.

(b) Many types of element can occur in initial position

The subject is often the most natural element to occur in initial position. It has been estimated that two thirds of main clause statements in German in all registers begin with the subject, and it is not unusual for a whole sequence of sentences to begin with the subject:

> **Tobias** zog heftig an seiner Pfeife. **Die Spucke im Mundstück** prasselte; **man** hörte es, obwohl jetzt, immer deutlicher, auch noch das Schießen der anderen hinzukam… **Sie** waren am Kahn. **Tobias** bückte sich und ließ das Kettenschloss aufschnappen. **Die Luft überm See** flimmerte. **Der Milan hoch oben** tat keinen Flügelschlag. (*Schnurre*)

However, **it is quite wrong to think of the order subject + finite verb as the 'normal' order** (as it is in English), and thus imply that it is 'abnormal' for something else to come before the verb. Almost all types of element except the negative *nicht* and the modal particles can come first in a main clause.

This can be seen from examples of the elements which are common in first position in main clauses.

(i) an **accusative** or **dative object**. This can be a (stressed) pronoun, but it is more usually a noun phrase:

> **Ihn** nahm er zuletzt nach Prag mit (*Hildesheimer*)
> **Ihr** war das Bett viel zu klein
> **Das Verfahren gegen ihn** deutet er als weiteren Beleg für die politische Verfolgung (*Spiegel*)
> **Mariken** hat es sehr Leid getan (*Surminski*)

(ii) an **adverbial** (a single adverb or a phrase):

> **Natürlich** kannte er sämtliche Parfum-und Drogenhandlungen der Stadt (*Süßkind*)
> **Trotz den feierlichen Londoner Erklärungen** wird weiter gekämpft (*NZZ*)

Time and **place adverbials** are especially frequent in initial position:

> **An dem Abend** kam ich mit Mahler in den „Kronenkeller" (*Bachmann*)
> **In vielen Städten** sind kostenlose Parkplätze Mangelware

> **(iii)** another **complement of the verb**, i.e. a genitive object, a prepositional object, a place or direction complement or a predicate complement (see **Table 16.1**):
> **Zu einem bedauerlichen Zwischenfall** kam es, als … (*Zwerenz*)
> **Ins Theater/Dahin** komme ich jetzt nur sehr selten
> **Ein guter Kerl** ist er trotz alledem

(iv) a **prepositional phrase** dependent on a noun later in the clause:
> **Über den Ernst der Lage** hat aber auch er keinen Zweifel (*FR*)

(v) an **infinitive** or **participle**. This gives particularly strong emphasis to the verb:
> **Anzeigen** wird sie ihn (*Fallada*)
> **Abgefunden mit ihrer Lage** haben sich 16,6 Prozent der Frauen (*LV*)
> **Aus dem Amt fegen** dürfte es ihn trotzdem nicht (*ZDF*)

(vi) a **noun belonging to a determiner** later in the clause. This emphasizes the noun strongly:
> **Personen** wurden nach Polizeiangaben keine verletzt (*NZZ*)
> **Filme** über taubstumme Menschen gibt es im Kino wenige (*SGT*)

Occasionally this construction is found with adjectives, e.g.:

> **Beweise** hat er äußerst triftige gebracht

> **(vii)** part of a **phrasal verb**:
> **Sehr leid** hat es mir getan
> **Zur Abstimmung** ist dieser Vorschlag nicht gekommen

(viii) a **subordinate clause**. This can be a finite or non-finite clause
> **Wohin sie dich gebracht haben**, weiß ich nicht (*Surminski*)
> **Den Schildern folgend**, fanden sie das Krankenhaus (*Walser*)
> **Ihr Geld zu leihen**, habe ich doch nie versprochen

(c) Exceptions to the 'verb second' rule

There are a few contexts where more than one element is possible in initial position. In practice, these are only apparent exceptions in special kinds of construction, i.e.:

(i) Interjections, the particles *ja* and *nein*, and names of persons addressed. As these can be thought of as standing outside the clause proper they are placed before the initial element and followed by a comma:

> **Ach**, es regnet schon wieder
> **Du liebe Zeit**, da ist sie ja auch
> **Ja**, du hast Recht
> **Nein**, das darfst du nicht
> **Karl**, ich habe dein Buch gefunden
> **Lieber Freund**, ich kann nichts dafür

(ii) Some other words or phrases link up a clause with what has just been said or the general context. They are seen as standing outside the clause and placed before the initial element with a comma:

> **Kurzum**, die Lage ist nun kritisch
> **Wissen Sie**, ich habe sie nie richtig kennen gelernt

The most frequent words and phrases which can be used like this are:

das heißt (d.h.)	*that is* (*i.e.*)	so	*well now*, *well then*
im Gegenteil	*on the contrary*	unter uns gesagt	*between ourselves*
kurz, kurzum, kurz gesagt, kurz und gut	*in short*	weiß Gott	*heaven knows*
		wie gesagt	*as I said*
mit anderen Worten	*in other words*	wissen Sie, weißt du	*you know*
nun, na	*well*	zugegeben	*admittedly*
sehen Sie, siehst du	*d'you see*		

Some words or phrases can be used like these words, or alternatively on their own in initial position as part of the clause, e.g.:

> Er ist unzuverlässig. **Zum Beispiel**, er kommt immer spät *or* **Zum Beispiel** kommt er immer spät.

Words and phrases often used in this way are:

zum Beispiel	*for instance*	natürlich	*of course*
erstens, zweitens, etc.	*first*, *secondly*, etc.	offen gesagt	*to be frank*

(iii) A few adverbs and particles can be used together with another element in initial position, i.e.:

Am Ende **freilich** ist etwas Unerwartetes und etwas Neues da (*Borst*)	*To be sure at the end something new and unexpected is there*
Der Buchfink **jedoch** ist nur in den ersten Lebensmonaten lernfähig (*NZZ*)	*Chaffinches, on the other hand, are only able to learn in the first months of their life*
Selbst in den Chroniken der Städter **schließlich** hat sich die Stadt als revolutionäre Neuheit in die Feudalwelt gestellt (*Borst*)	*After all, even in the chronicles of the burghers the city appears as a revolutionary innovation in feudal society*

The following adverbs and particles can be used in this way:

allerdings	*to be sure*, *admittedly*	jedenfalls	*at any rate*
also	*thus*	jedoch	*however*
freilich	*to be sure*, *admittedly*	wenigstens	*at least*
höchstens	*at most*	sozusagen	*so to speak*
immerhin	*all the same*	übrigens	*incidentally*

Alternatively, these can occur on their own in initial position in the usual way, e.g. *Freilich ist am Ende etwas Unerwartetes und etwas Neues da*. In practice, this is probably more frequent.

The function of these adverbs is like that of a coordinating conjunction in such constructions, and the conjunctions *aber* and *doch* have a similar flexibility in their positioning, see **17.1.1c**.

(iv) Some types of subordinate clause are seen as separate from the main clause and are followed by another element before the finite verb, in particular:

- a *was*-clause which relates to the following clause as a whole:

> **Was so wichtig ist**, das Buch verkauft sich gut *What is so important, the book is selling well*

- concessive clauses of the 'whatever' type (see **17.6.2**):

> **Es mag noch so kalt sein,** die Post muss ausgetragen werden
> **Wer er auch ist,** ich kann nichts für ihn tun
> **Wie schnell er auch lief,** der Polizist holte ihn ein

(v) Two (or more) elements of the same kind can occur together in initial position if they complement or extend one another, being considered, in effect, as a single element. This is very common with adverbials of time and place, e.g.:

> **Heute um zwei Uhr** wurde mein Mann operiert
> **Auf dem Marktplatz in der Marburger Stadtmitte** findet diese Woche ein Fest statt
> **Gestern Abend in Leipzig** fand eine große Demonstration statt

(vi) Especially in spontaneous speech, a highlighted element can occur in isolation from the clause in so-called DISLOCATION. It is usually picked up by a pronoun or the like in initial position in the clause proper, e.g.:

> **Nach Kanada auswandern**, das haben sie ja immer gewollt
> **Der Peter**, den habe ich seit Monaten nicht gesehen
> **Die Gudrun**, der traue ich doch alles zu
> **Der Nachbar**, der hat uns ja immer davon abhalten wollen
> **Als ich davon hörte**, da war es schon zu spät
> **Mit Andreas**, da wird es bald Ärger geben

Nouns used like this in so-called **'left dislocation'**, i.e. before the clause, can be in the nominative case. However, if the speaker has composed the sentence more clearly in their mind in advance, it can be in the case corresponding to its function in the sentence, e.g.: *Den Peter, den habe ich seit Monaten nicht gesehen*.

A highlighted element can be placed after the clause in so-called **'right dislocation'**, with a pronoun within the clause referring forward to it, e.g. *Ich habe ihn seit Monaten nicht gesehen, den Peter* or *Der traue ich doch alles zu, der Gudrun* and then it is always in the appropriate case. These constructions are typical of spontaneous speech and are rarely encountered in writing.

19.2.2 The initial element functions as the topic of the clause

The TOPIC is the element in a sentence which we mention first to say something more about it:

> **Der Kranke** hat die ganze Nacht nicht geschlafen
>   (Information is being given about the patient)
>
> **In Frankfurt** findet jedes Jahr die internationale Buchmesse statt
>   (We are being told what happens in Frankfurt)
>
> **In diesem Zimmer** kannst du dich nicht richtig konzentrieren
>   (We are given information about this room)
>
> **In zwei Tagen** wird die Reparatur fertig sein
>   (We are informed about what will be happening in two days)

The topic, in initial position, functions as a starting point for the clause. It comes first because the speaker (or writer) wants to give the listener (or reader) some new information about it.

The following general observations apply to the topic in a German main clause statement:

(a) The element in initial position is often known or familiar to both speaker and listener

A sentence often starts off with something which is known, and new information is given about it later in the sentence. This is shown by the examples above and the following:

> **Trotz des Poststreiks** ist der Brief rechtzeitig angekommen
>   (You knew about the postal strike, but it's news to you that the letter still got there on time)
>
> **An den meisten deutschen Gymnasien** ist Englisch die erste Fremdsprache
>   (You know about German schools but this is something you may not have known about the curriculum)

It is because a clause often begins with an element which is familiar to both speaker and listener that time adverbials are common in initial position.

(b) The initial element often refers back to something just mentioned

Very often we want to pick up something which has just been referred to and give further information about it. The initial element often takes up a preceding word or phrase in continuous texts or dialogue:

> Wir haben ihn im Garten gesucht, aber **im Garten** war niemand zu sehen
> Ich sehe ihn oft. **Seinen Bruder** aber sehe ich jetzt recht selten
> Ich war drei Wochen auf Sylt. – **Darum** siehst du auch so gut aus.

The answer to a question often repeats an element in the question in initial position and gives the answer later in the clause. Compare:

Was ist gegen Kriegsende geschehen?

- **Gegen Kriegsende** wurden viele Städte zerstört

Wann wurden diese Städte zerstört?

- **Diese Städte** wurden gegen Kriegsende zerstört

(c) The initial element is usually not the main piece of new information

Most main clauses begin with something familiar and the new information appears later. The following sentences sound odd because they start off with an important piece of new information:

> ?? **In einem kleinen Dorf** in Böhmen ist Stifter im Jahre 1805 geboren
> ?? **Ein neues Schloss** hat der Mann gestern gekauft
> ?? **Scharlachrot** ist ihr neues Kleid

These examples show that it is not true that 'any' element can be placed first 'for emphasis'. The first element must be a suitable topic or starting point for the sentence. The strongest emphasis is normally on the most important piece of new information which appears later in the clause, see **19.3**.

(d) The subject may sometimes not be suitable for initial position

As shown in **19.2.1b**, the subject is often a natural choice to be the topic of a sentence. However, if the subject involves new information, it is usually more natural to begin with another element which is known and delay the subject until later in the clause:

Vor deiner Tür steht doch **ein neues Auto**   *But there's a new car by your front door*

(With strong emphasis on the surprise at seeing the new car)

Zwei Tage darauf wurde gegen die Streikenden **Militär** eingesetzt (*Brecht*)   *Two days later the military was deployed against the strikers*

(*Militär* is the crucial piece of new information; it would sound odd to begin the sentence with it)

Verletzt wurde Angaben der Feuerwehr zufolge **niemand** (*SZ*)   *According to reports from the fire brigade nobody was injured*

(The essential information is that nobody was reported to have been injured, and placing *niemand* last stresses this emphatically)

It is unusual for a sentence to begin with an indefinite noun, as they normally involve new pieces of information. For this reason, the subject rarely occurs in initial position with verbs of happening, since the event is usually the main new information (see also **19.4.2c**), e.g.:

> Gestern ereignete sich **ein schwerer Unfall** in der Mariahilfer Straße

A 'dummy subject' *es* (see **3.6.2d**) is often used to move the subject later in the sentence and give it heavier emphasis as important new information, e.g.:

Es kamen **viele Gäste**   *There were many guests*

Es möchte Sie **jemand** am Telefon sprechen   *There's somebody who wants to speak to you on the telephone*

As these examples show, the same effect can be achieved in English by using a construction with *there* (see also **19.2.3d**).

(e) Changing the topic of the sentence

The emphasis in a sentence can be altered by changing the element in initial position. What we choose to place in first position depends on how we want to present the information and what we assume the listener already knows. If we say:

> **Das Konzert** findet heute Abend im Rathaus statt

we assume the listener knows that there is a concert on, and we are telling them where it is. On the other hand, if we say:

> **Heute Abend** findet ein Konzert im Rathaus statt

we are telling the listener what's happening tonight. We are assuming that they don't know that there's a concert on in the town hall, and we are giving them this information. We can begin with *Heute Abend*, because that is information which the speaker and the listener share. Finally, if we say:

> **Im Rathaus** findet heute Abend ein Konzert statt

we are telling the listener something about the town hall, i.e. that there's a concert on there tonight.

19.2.3 Topics in German and English

The flexibility of German in being able to choose which element to make the topic of a sentence is not shared by English, because **the order SUBJECT + VERB** at the start of a sentence is fixed.

If we want to make something other than the subject of the verb the topic of a sentence in English, we often have to use more complex constructions than are necessary or usual in German. This section outlines some of these and explains typical equivalents for them in German.

(a) Cleft sentences

If we want to bring an element other than the subject into first position in English, we often put it in a clause of its own with 'it' and the verb 'be', e.g. *It was Angela* (*who*) *I gave the book to*. These are called **CLEFT SENTENCE** constructions. They are not needed in German, where the topic can simply be shifted into initial position before the verb:

Erst gestern habe ich es ihr gesagt	*It was only yesterday that I told her*
Dort habe ich sie getroffen	*It was there that I met her*
Weil sie oft schwimmt, ist sie fit	*It's because she swims a lot that she's fit*
Was man sagt, zählt	*It's what you say that counts*

There are many variants of this construction, all with simpler equivalents in German:

Dieses Auto da musst du ich kaufen	*That's the car you've got to buy*
Dort/Hier wohnt sie	*That/This is where she lives*
Das meine ich (auch)	*That's what I mean*
So macht man das	*That's the way to do it*
Dann ist es passiert	*That's when it happened*
Dem gehört es	*That's whose it is*
Im Frühjahr ist es hier am schönsten	*Spring is when it's loveliest here*
Zu diesem Schluss gelangt Haas in ihrer neusten Arbeit	*This is the conclusion reached by Haas in her most recent work*

Cleft sentences tend only to be used in German to **emphasize the subject** of the sentence, e.g.:

Er war es, der mich davon abgehalten hat	*It was him who stopped me doing it*

(see also **3.6.2c**). In other cases they are felt to sound clumsy in German and are best avoided. In particular they are hardly ever used in speech, and overusing cleft sentences is a characteristic feature of the German of English-speaking learners.

(b) English passives for German actives

Passive constructions are often used in English to shift the object of the verb to initial position (as the subject of the verb) and function as its topic. Although passives are not unusual in German, a construction using the active voice, with the object in initial position, is often preferred.

Diesen Bestseller hat die schwedische Autorin während eines langen Aufenthaltes in den USA geschrieben	*This bestseller was written by the Swedish writer during a long stay in the USA*
Meinem Vater hat der Chef sehr freundlich gratuliert	*My father was congratulated by the boss in a very kindly way*
Auf diese Worte müssen nun Taten folgen (*Zeit*)	*These words must now be followed by deeds*

(c) English constructions with 'have' and a participle

This construction brings the relevant element to the beginning of the sentence by making it the subject of 'have'. There is nothing like this in German, and the element in question is simply placed first:

In diesem Buch fehlen zwanzig Seiten	*This book has* (*got*) *twenty pages missing*
In diesem Wald haben voriges Jahr viele Nachtigallen genistet	*This wood had a lot of nightingales nesting in it last year*

Ihm wurde eine Golduhr gestohlen   *He had a gold watch stolen*
Ihnen wurden die Fenster eingeworfen   *They had/got their windows smashed*

(d) English constructions with 'there'

If the subject is the main piece of new information, English often shifts it from the position before the verb by using a construction with *there*. In German the subject can be emphasized by bringing another element into initial position, typically a time phrase, or a phrase mentioning a place known to both speaker and listener. The subject can then come later in the sentence where it is more heavily stressed:

Vor zwanzig Jahren waren hier viele Zechen   *There were a lot of coal-mines here twenty years ago*
Da ist doch niemand   *But there's nobody there*
Im Cineplex laufen diese Woche zwei gute Filme *There are two good films on in the Cineplex this week*
Draußen im Regen stand ein alter Herr   *There was an old man standing outside in the rain*

For more similar examples see **19.2.2d**.

19.3 The order of other elements in the sentence

Most elements in a clause come within the VERBAL BRACKET explained in **19.1.2** and shown in **Table 19.4**. The **relative order of the elements** inside this bracket is **the same for all clause types**, i.e. main clause statements, questions, commands and subordinate clauses, as illustrated in **Table 19.8**. This relative order is determined by two basic principles**:**

TABLE 19.8   Word order within the verbal bracket

	Initial position	Bracket[1][	Other elements	Bracket[2]]
Main clause	Sie	hat	**ihn heute zufällig in der Stadt**	gesehen
Question		Hat	**sie ihn heute zufällig in der Stadt**	gesehen?
Subordinate clause	…,	weil	**sie ihn heute zufällig in der Stadt**	gesehen hat

- **Elements which are more heavily stressed and convey important new information tend to follow elements which are less stressed.**

The elements inside the verbal bracket are usually put in order of increasing importance, passing from unstressed elements like pronouns to those elements which represent the main new information and are given most emphasis. The element nearest the end of the bracket is typically the most important piece of new information and typically carries the heaviest stress.

- **Elements which are more closely linked to the verb tend to come after elements with a less strong link.**

Many verb complements are placed at the end of the verbal bracket. Similarly, direct objects, if they are nouns, usually come after the indirect objects, whose link with the verb is less 'direct'.

Following these general principles, the elements within the verbal bracket tend to occur in the order given in Table 19.9. This order reflects general guidelines for the learner, and **it should not be taken to represent rigid rules of German word order**. However, following these guidelines will almost always produce an acceptable German sentence, although they can be varied in certain ways for emphasis. Details on the position of each of the groups of elements are outlined in sections **19.4** to **19.8**.

TABLE 19.9   Basic order of the elements in a German sentence

	Topic	BRACKET[1][	Pronouns NAD	Noun subject	Dative noun object	Most adverbials	Accusative noun object	Manner adverbials	Complements
Main clause	Heute	**hat**	ihr	mein Freund		heimlich	eine Mail		
	Jan	**soll**			dem Chef	jetzt	den Bericht		
	Wir	**wurden**				nachher		höflich	daran
Question/		**Hat**	sie es ihm			denn		richtig	

command	Topic	Bracket[1][	Pronouns NAD	Noun subject	Dative noun object	Most adverbials	Accusative noun object	Manner adverbials	Complements
		Will	er Ihnen			trotzdem	den Weg		
		Geben	Sie mir			sofort	das Geld		
Subordinate clause		**…, weil**		der alte Herr	dem Mann				für seine Hilfe
		…, da		meine Tante		meistens		vorsichtig	
		…, dass	sie				den Brief	schnell	in die Tasche

However, English-speaking learners need to be aware of the effect, in terms of emphasis and presentation, of changing the position of elements in a sentence. It is quite possible to end up saying something rather different to what you intend.

19.4 The order of noun and pronoun subject and objects

19.4.1 The position of pronouns

(a) Pronouns are usually the first elements in the verbal bracket

Pronouns refer to persons and things already mentioned, or well known to the speaker and listener. They are typically unstressed and for this reason occupy the least prominent position within the verbal bracket, following immediately after the finite verb in a main clause, question or command, or after the conjunction in a subordinate clause:

> Gestern hat **ihn** mein Mann in der Stadt gesehen
> Hat **ihn** dein Mann gestern in der Stadt gesehen?
> Da **ihn** mein Mann gestern in der Stadt gesehen hat, …
> Dann hat **es** mein Bruder meinem Vater gegeben
> Dann hat **mir** mein Bruder sein Handy gegeben

(b) Pronouns can be placed before or after a noun subject

This is the only exception to the rule given in **(a)** above. It means that the following would be commonly used alternatives to the first three examples there:

> Gestern hat mein Mann **ihn** in der Stadt gesehen
> Hat dein Mann **ihn** gestern in der Stadt gesehen?
> Da dein Mann **ihn** gestern in der Stadt gesehen hat, …

However, a pronoun usually follows a noun subject if the endings of the noun do not show nominative and accusative case clearly, in order to avoid ambiguity:

Gestern hat meine Mutter **sie** in der Stadt gesehen   *My mother saw her in town yesterday*

Da das Mädchen **sie** in der Stadt gesehen hat, …   As *the girl saw her in town* …

(*Da sie das Mädchen in der Stadt gesehen hat* would be taken to mean 'As **she** has seen the girl in town')

If there are two pronoun objects, it is more usual for them to follow a noun subject, e.g.:

Weil der Lehrer **es ihnen** gezeigt hat, …   *Because the teacher showed it to them, …*

Nevertheless, other orders are possible, e.g.:

> Weil **es** der Lehrer **ihnen** gezeigt hat, …
> Weil **es ihnen** der Lehrer gezeigt hat, …

(c) Pronouns come in the order nominative + accusative + dative

Da **sie dich ihm** nicht vorstellen wollte,…   As *she didn't want to introduce you to him* …

Hast **du es uns** nicht schon gesagt?   *Haven't you already told us that?*

Gestern hat **er sie ihr** gegeben   *He gave them to her yesterday*

Heute will **sie ihm** helfen   *She's going to help him today*

Hanna hat **es mir** gezeigt   *Hanna showed it to me*

This order is relatively fixed. The only common variation on it is that the pronoun *es*, in the reduced form *'s*, often follows a dative pronoun in colloquial speech, e.g. *Heinz hat mir's gezeigt*.

(d) The reflexive pronoun *sich*

sich has the same position as other accusative or dative pronouns and normally comes immediately after the finite verb or the conjunction (and after a pronoun in the nominative, if there is one):

> Gestern hat **sich** der Deutsche über das Essen beschwert
> Gestern hat **sich** jemand darüber beschwert
> Gestern hat er **sich** darüber beschwert
> Er hatte es **sich** (*dat.*!) so vorgestellt
> Er hat **sich** (*acc.*!) mir vorgestellt

However, it is occasionally placed after a noun subject, e.g. *Gestern hat der Deutsche sich über das Essen beschwert*, and it can even be placed later in the clause, e.g. *Gestern hat der Deutsche über das Essen sich beschwert*. In general, this is only possible with 'true' reflexive verbs used with an accusative reflexive, see **16.3.5**.

(e) Personal pronouns precede other pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns such as *der*, *das*, *dieser*, etc. (see **5.1**) come after personal pronouns like *er*, *dir*, *Ihnen*, *ihm*, etc. (and *man*), irrespective of case:

Wollen **Sie die** gleich mitnehmen? *Do you want to take those away with you now?*

Hat **ihn dieser** denn nicht erkannt? *Didn't that person recognize him, then?*

Eben hat sie **mir das** gezeigt   *She's just shown me that*

19.4.2 The position of noun subject and objects

(a) The noun subject and objects usually have the order nominative + dative + accusative

This group of elements includes not only noun phrases in the nominative, accusative or dative case, but also indefinite pronouns such as *etwas*, *jemand*, *niemand*, *nichts*. As **Table 19.9** shows, they usually follow personal and demonstrative pronouns (but see **19.4.1(b)** for exceptions), and precede other verb complements. Examples:

> Gestern hat **jemand meinem Vater eine Kettensäge** geliehen
> Warum hat **Arnim seiner Freundin nichts** gebracht?
> Ich weiß, dass **mein Freund seiner Tochter diese Bitte** nicht verweigern konnte
> Heute hat **der Chef den Mitarbeitern** für ihre Mühe gedankt

Variations on this order usually involve special circumstances of some kind, as explained in the remainder of this section. The position of adverbials in relation to these elements is explained in **19.5**.

(b) The dative object sometimes follows the accusative object

(i) If the dative object refers to a person, this order indicates it is much more important in context. This possibility is not often used and gives very strong emphasis to the dative object:

Er hat sein ganzes Vermögen **seinem Neffen in Kanada** vermacht   *He left his whole fortune to his nephew in Canada*   (We already know about the fortune, what is surprising is who he left it to and *Neffen* is heavily stressed to indicate this)

Er stellte seinen Neffen (auch) **dem Professor** vor   *He introduced his nephew to the professor (, too)*

(**Who** the nephew was introduced to is the important fact. Compare the sentence *Er stellte dem Professor seinen Neffen vor*. Adding *auch* highlights even more strongly the importance of who he was introduced to)

als mein Vater diese merkwürdige Geschichte **einem ihm völlig unbekannten Herrn** erzählte   *when my father told this remarkable story to a gentleman whom he didn't know at all*

(The dative object is indefinite and thus previously unknown to the listener. It is more newsworthy and significant in context than 'this story', which must have been mentioned before)

(ii) If both accusative and dative objects refer to things, the more important of them in context is placed second:

dass er uns nicht alle zwingt, unsere höheren Zwecke **seinem Interesse** zu unterwerfen (*Wolf*)   *that he's not forcing us all to subject our higher aims to his personal interest*

Er hat sein Glück **seiner Karriere** geopfert	*He sacrificed his happiness to his career*

(Compare the very different emphasis in: *Er hat seiner Karriere sein ganzes Glück geopfert*)

(iii) A dative object referring to a thing regularly follows an accusative object referring to a person:

Sie überantworteten den Verbrecher **der Justiz**	*They delivered up the criminal to justice*
Sie haben den armen Jungen **der Lächerlichkeit** preisgegeben	*They exposed the poor boy to ridicule*

(c) The noun subject can follow an accusative and/or a dative object

If it is the major piece of new information it is possible for the noun subject to follow the object (or other complements). It is then emphasized very strongly, and in practice the subject in such contexts is most often a noun with an indefinite article or no article, or an indefinite pronoun (see also **19.2.2d**):

Gendarmen attackierte in der Nacht auf Donnerstag in Amstetten **ein alkoholisierter Arbeitsloser** (*Presse*)	*Some policemen were attacked in Amstetten on Wednesday night by an unemployed drunk*
Nun begrüßte den Dirigenten und den Virtuosen **lautes Händeklatschen** (*Kapp*)	*Now the conductor and the virtuoso were met with loud applause*
Gestern hat meinen Bruder Gott sei dank **niemand** gestört	*Thank goodness nobody disturbed my brother yesterday*
Er wusste, dass dieser Gruppe **etwas Unangenehmes** bevorstand	*He knew that something unpleasant was in store for this group*

Occasionally a subject with a definite article is placed late in the clause to emphasize it strongly:

Die Tatsache, dass der EU unausweichlich **das Geld** ausgeht	*The fact that the EU's money will inevitably run out*

The late position of an indefinite subject is almost regular with verbs of happening and the like, and it is also frequent in passive sentences:

Er wusste, dass seinem Chef **eine große Ehre** zuteil geworden war	*He knew that a great honour had been bestowed on his boss*
Zum Glück ist meinem Bruder da **nichts** passiert	*Luckily nothing happened to my brother*
Deshalb können den Asylbewerbern **keine Personalausweise** ausgestellt werden	*For this reason no identity cards can be issued to the asylum-seekers*

19.5 The place and order of adverbials

An adverbial can be a single word (e.g. *trotzdem*, *heute*), or a phrase with or without a preposition (e.g. *den ganzen Tag*, *mit großer Mühe*). This difference in form has no effect on word order. The classification of adverbs in **Chapter 7** applies equally to all adverbials.

The placing of adverbials is more flexible than that of any other element in the sentence. This reflects their general freedom of occurrence as elements optionally added to give additional information, see **16.1.4**. This section deals first with the placing of adverbials in relation to other elements (chiefly the noun subject and objects), and then explains the ordering of adverbials where more than one is present.

19.5.1 The position of adverbials and the noun subject and objects

As shown in **Table 19.9**, adverbials typically come **after the noun subject and the dative object**, but **before the accusative object**. However, the relative position of adverbials and noun subjects and objects depends on their relative importance in the clause. Specifically, that element appears later in the clause which the speaker wants to stress most strongly or which conveys the most important new information.

(a) Unstressed adverbials can sometimes precede the noun subject and/or the dative object

This applies in particular to single words, in particular adverbs of attitude and modal particles, e.g. *bestimmt*, *sicher*, *vielleicht*, etc. Unstressed short adverbs of time and place like *da*, *dort*, *hier*, *gestern*, *heute*, *morgen*, *dann*, *damals*, *daher* also often occur early in the clause, immediately after the personal pronouns:

Sie wird **wohl gleich** ihrer Freundin simsen	*She'll probably text her friend straightaway*
Ich weiß, dass sie es **sicher** meinem Vater empfehlen wird	*I know she'll be sure to recommend it to my father*
Sie ist **heute** ihrem Freund aus Bonn begegnet	*She met her friend from Bonn today*
Hat sie **schon damals** ihrem Opa die ganze Geschichte erzählt?	*Did she tell her grandad the whole story at that time?*

In most of the contexts above the adverb could equally well follow the noun subject or one of the objects, and it would then be more strongly emphasized. Compare *Hat sie ihrem Opa schon damals die ganze Geschichte erzählt?* However, such

permutation is not possible in contexts where the noun subject or object is a vital piece of new information (especially if it is quite long or indefinite) and needs to be placed where it carries most stress:

Das hat **bisher** keiner gemerkt	*Nobody's noticed it up to now*
Da war **doch** niemand	*Nobody was there, though*
Ich bin **dort** einem Freund von deinem Bruder begegnet	*I ran into a friend of your brother's there*

A sentence like *Da war niemand doch* sounds very odd.

(b) The order of adverbials and noun objects depends on emphasis

i.e. how important they are in the context of the whole clause or sentence. The element which is being presented as more important comes later. Compare the following:

> Er hat diesen neuen Wagen **im Sommer** gekauft
> (The stress is on **when** he bought the new car)
>
> Er hat im Sommer **diesen neuen Wagen** gekauft
> (The emphasis is on **what** he bought)
>
> Sie haben Fußball **im Park** gespielt
> (This tells us **where** they were playing football)
>
> Sie haben im Park **Fußball** gespielt
> (This tells us **what** they were playing in the park)
>
> Das hat **gestern** ihr Kollege meinem Verlobten erzählt
> (**Who** was told is the point at issue)
>
> Das hat ihr Kollege **gestern** meinem Verlobten erzahlt
> (Who did the telling is seen as relatively unimportant)
>
> Das hat ihr Kollege meinem Verlobten **gestern** erzählt
> (Prominence is given to the time when the fiancé was told)

Although, from a grammatical point of view, there is flexibility in the order of these elements, in a particular context only one may be appropriate. Thus, in answer to the question *Wann hat er diesen neuen Wagen gekauft?* one would naturally use the first alternative above, as the second would sound strange.

(c) Adverbials of manner follow the noun objects

(and **all** other adverbials, see **19.6.2**). This is because **how** something was done is typically the most important new information:

Meiner Meinung nach hat das Quartett das Stück **viel zu schnell** gespielt	*In my opinion the quartet played the piece much too fast*
Er warf den Ball **sehr vorsichtig** über den Gartenzaun	*He threw the ball very carefully over the garden fence*

19.5.2 The relative order of adverbials

If a clause contains more than one adverbial, they most often occur in the order:

> **attitude – time – reason – viewpoint – place – manner**

(a) Adverbials of attitude

This group includes the modal particles (see **Chapter 9**) and other adverbials which express some attitude on the part of the speaker towards what is being said (see **7.4.2**), e.g. *angeblich*, *leider*, *vermutlich*, *zum Glück*, *zweifellos*, etc.:

> Sie wollten **doch** vor zwei Uhr in Magdeburg sein
> Er ist **vielleicht** schon am Montag abgereist

(b) Time adverbials

As explained in **7.3** these can indicate a **point in time** (e.g. *bald, voriges Jahr, am kommenden Sonntag*), **frequency** (e.g. *stündlich, jeden Tag*) or **duration** (e.g. *lange, seit Montag, ein ganzes Jahr*).

> Sie ist **vor zwei Tagen** trotz des Sturms nach Reutte gewandert
> Die Streikenden blieben **vier Stunden lang** vor dem Rathaus versammelt

If there is more than one time adverbial in a clause, they are usually placed in the order

> **point of time – duration – frequency**

Within these categories **the general precedes the particular**, e.g. *jeden Tag um vier Uhr*.

(c) Adverbials of reason

i.e. adverbials expressing **circumstance** (e.g. *zu unserem Erstaunen*), **condition** (e.g. *gegebenenfalls)*, **purpose** (e.g. *zur Durchsicht)* or **reason** (e.g. *wegen des Unfalls)*, see **7.4.3**. Passive agents introduced by *von* or *durch* (see **13.3**) also occur in this position:

> Sie hat den Brief **trotzdem** mit der Hand geschrieben
> Der Brand wurde **von der freiwilligen Feuerwehr** schnell gelöscht

(d) Viewpoint adverbials

e.g. *finanziell* 'from a financial point of view', see **7.4.1b**. Phrases with *mit* and *ohne* also occur in this position:

> Polen ist in den letzten Jahren **wirtschaftlich** viel stärker geworden
> Sie geht **mit Begeisterung** in die Tanzschule

(e) Place adverbials

See **7.1**. Place adverbials must be distinguished from direction complements, see **(h)** below.

> Die Band spielt aber morgen Abend **im Festsaal Kreuzberg**
> Ich habe bis 18 Uhr **im Büro** gearbeitet

(f) Manner adverbials

i.e. those which indicate how an action is carried out, see **7.4.1**. Adverbs of manner are almost always the final element in the clause before any complements:

> Sie ist heute mit ihrem Porsche **viel zu schnell** in die Kurve gefahren
> Der Vorschlag wurde von den Anwesenden **einstimmig** angenommen

(g) The order of adverbials can be varied for emphasis

The relative order given above is only a guide to a 'neutral' order of the adverbs, assuming they all have roughly similar emphasis, and it is not a rigid rule.

As with the relative order of adverbials and the noun subject and objects, variation in the order of adverbials follows the general principle given in **19.3**, i.e. an adverbial can be given more or less emphasis by being placed earlier or later in the clause. This often depends on what the speaker considers to be the main new information in context, which needs to be emphasized, e.g.:

> Paula ist zum Glück **gestern** nicht zu schnell gefahren
> Paula ist gestern **zum Glück** nicht zu schnell gefahren
> (The adverbial in bold is made more prominent in each case by being placed later.)

> Viele deutsche Städte wurden gegen Kriegsende **von den Allierten** zerstört
> Viele deutsche Städte wurden von den Allierten **gegen Kriegsende** zerstört
> (Placing the time adverbial after the *von*-phrase in the second example gives it particular prominence, possibly in reply to a question about when it happened.)

> Sie hat sehr lange **dort** auf ihre Mutter gewartet
> Sie hat dort **sehr lange** auf ihre Mutter gewartet
> (Time adverbials usually precede place adverbials, but they can follow for emphasis.)

(h) The 'time – manner – place' rule

Many manuals of German for foreign learners have traditionally given a rule that adverbials occur in the order **time – manner – place**. However, this can be misleading, since, as shown above, adverbials normally occur in the order **time – place – manner**:

> Der junge Tenor hat gestern in Wien **hervorragend** gesungen
> Die Kinder wollten heute auf der Wiese **ungestört** spielen

Nevertheless, many **elements indicating direction or place** occur **after manner adverbials**, at the end of the verbal bracket and immediately before the final part of the verb. However, **these are COMPLEMENTS of the verb** – so-called **locative complements – not adverbials**, see **16.8** and **19.8**. These **complements follow all adverbials**, including those of manner:

Paula ist gestern viel zu schnell **in die Kurve** gefahren
Andreas wollte gestern mit seiner Freundin gemütlich **nach Todtmoos** wandern
Sie hat die schöne Vase sehr vorsichtig **auf den Tisch** gestellt
Müllers wohnen einsam **in einem großen Haus im Wald**
Astrid lag erschöpft **auf der Couch**
Sie sind wegen des schlechten Wetters widerwillig **zu Hause** geblieben

The elements in bold in these examples are **direction complements** depending on **verbs of motion**, or **place complements** depending on **verbs of position**. As explained in **18.1.4**, complements are more closely linked to the verb than adverbials, which simply give additional circumstantial information, and following the principles given in **19.3**, they come at the end of the verbal bracket. The traditional **'time – manner – place'** rule relies on the fact that, in practice, place and direction phrases tend to be more often complements than adverbials.

19.6 The position of *nicht*

Other negative elements like *nie* 'never' and *kaum* 'hardly', 'scarcely' occupy the same position in the clause as *nicht*, and the following guidelines apply equally to them.

The position of *nicht* depends on what it refers to. For example, in a sentence like *Anita hat den Roman nicht gelesen* it relates to the whole content of the sentence – Anita didn't carry out the action of reading the novel. However, we could say *Anita hat nicht den Roman gelesen*, meaning that she didn't read that particular novel (but possibly another one).

(a) If *nicht* relates to the whole content of the clause, it is placed near the end

i.e. just before any adverbs of manner and verb complements. Thus:

(i) *nicht* follows any noun objects

Er hat aber seine neue Stelle **nicht** erwähnt	*But he didn't mention his new job*
Er hat mir das Buch **nicht** gegeben	*He didn't give me the book*
Verkaufe die Bücher **nicht**!	*Don't sell the books*
Ich weiß, dass sie ihren Bruder gestern **nicht** gesehen hat	*I know she didn't see her brother yesterday*

However, *nicht* precedes any objects with no article which are part of a fixed verb phrase (see **19.7.2**):

Sie hatte damals **nicht** Klavier gespielt   *She didn't play the piano then*

(ii) *nicht* follows all adverbials except those of manner

Sie haben sich seit langem **nicht** gesehen	*They haven't seen each other for a long time*
Den Turm sieht man von hier aus **nicht**	*You can't see the tower from here*
Ich wollte es ihr trotzdem **nicht** geben	*I didn't want to give it to her all the same*
Das ist mir in diesem Zusammenhang **nicht** aufgefallen	*That didn't occur to me in that context*
Wir sind wegen des Regens **nicht** nach Bad Dürkheim gewandert	*We didn't walk to Bad Dürkheim because it was raining*
Sie haben gestern **nicht** gut gespielt	*They didn't play well yesterday*
Ich weiß es **nicht** ausführlich	*I don't know it in detail*

(iii) *nicht* precedes prepositional and genitive objects, as well as locative and predicate complements:

Sie legte das Buch **nicht** auf den Tisch	*She didn't put the book on the table*
Wir konnten uns **nicht** an diesen Vorfall erinnern	*We couldn't remember that incident*
Sie sind gestern **nicht** nach Mailand geflogen	*They didn't fly to Milan yesterday*
Diese Maßnahmen bedürfen **nicht** der Zustimmung des Präsidenten	*These measures do not need the agreement of the President*
Er ist **nicht** in Rostock geblieben	*He didn't stay in Rostock*
Sie war heute **nicht** im Büro	*She wasn't at the office today*
Sie ist sicher **nicht** dumm	*She's certainly not stupid*

However, *nicht* can follow prepositional objects or direction complements **if** *nicht* is relatively unstressed and the complement has to be emphasized. Compare:

Das kann ich doch **nicht von ihm** verlangen   *I <u>can't</u> ask that of him*
Das kann ich doch **von ihm nicht** verlangen   *I can't ask that of <u>him</u>*

(b) If *nicht* applies only to one particular element in the clause it precedes it

Sie hat mir **nicht** das Buch gegeben   *She didn't give me the book*
(not the book, but something else)

Sie sind **nicht** am Freitag nach Kreta geflogen   *They didn't fly to Crete on Friday*
(not Friday, but some other day)

Nicht mir hat er das Buch gegeben, sondern meiner Schwester *It wasn't me he gave the book to, it was my sister*

Compare the 'partial' negation in the first example above with 'global' negation of the whole clause, with *nicht* in its usual position: *Sie hat mir das Buch nicht gegeben* simply means 'She didn't give me the book'.

As an alternative, the stressed element can appear on its own in the initial position, with the *nicht* later in the clause, e.g. *Mir hat er das Buch nicht gegeben*. This is very common if the contrast is implicit, i.e. if there is no following clause or phrase with *sondern*.

Unstressed *nicht* is often used in this way in tentative or rhetorical questions or exclamations, e.g.:

Hast du **nicht** die Königin gesehen!?   *Didn't you see the Queen!?*
War **nicht** dein Vater eigentlich etwas enttäuscht!? *Wasn't your father really a bit disappointed!?*
Was du **nicht** alles weißt!   *Don't you know a lot!*

19.7 The position of verb complements

The subject and the direct and indirect objects have their own position in the clause, as shown in section **19.4**. The other complements of the verb, i.e. **prepositional and genitive objects**, **locative complements** and **predicate complements** come **as far to the right as possible** within the verbal bracket (see **Table 19.9**). This position is relatively fixed, irrespective of emphasis, and only very exceptionally do these complements occur earlier in the clause.

19.7.1 Verb complements

The following complements occur in final position within the verbal bracket:

(a) prepositional objects

Nun wird er sich sicher **um seine beiden Kinder** kümmern können *Now he will certainly be able to look after his two children*
Sie hat in der Ankunftshalle lange **auf ihren Mann** gewartet *She waited for her husband in the arrivals hall for a long time*
Wir haben uns vorgestern lange und ausführlich **darüber** unterhalten *We talked about it in detail for a long time the day before yesterday*

(b) the predicate complement of copular verbs

i.e. *sein*, *werden*, *bleiben*, *scheinen*, *heißen*, see **16.6**. This complement may be a noun or an adjective:

Herbert war immerhin längere Zeit **der beste Schüler** in unserer Klasse *All the same, Herbert was top of our class for a long time*
Sie wurde plötzlich **blass**   *She suddenly turned pale*
Dann scheinen mir diese Bedingungen jedoch **etwas hart** *In that case these conditions seem rather hard to me, though*

(c) genitive objects

weil der Verletzte dringend **eines Arztes** bedurfte *because the injured man urgently needed a doctor*

(d) locative (i.e. direction) complements with verbs of motion

Warum hat Peter den Stein plötzlich **in den Bach** geworfen? *Why did Peter suddenly throw the stone into the stream?*
Sie ist mit ihrem Porsche zu schnell **in die Kurve** gefahren *She took the bend too fast in her Porsche*
Wir möchten nächste Woche **nach Emden zu meinen Eltern** fahren *We want to go to my parents' in Emden next week*

(e) locative (i.e. place) complements with verbs of position

Er befand sich plötzlich **in einem dunklen Saal** *He suddenly found himself in a dark room*
Er wollte unter keinen Umständen **in Duisburg** bleiben *He didn't want to remain in Duisburg under any circumstances*
Sie haben lange **in dieser Hütte** gewohnt *They lived in that hut for a long time*

19.7.2 The noun portion of phrasal verbs

Extended verb phrases can consist of a noun (often an infinitive or other verbal noun) used in a set phrase with a verb, e.g.:

Abstand halten Abschied nehmen Angst haben ins Rollen geraten

These are a rather special type of complement, as they are very closely linked to the verb in a way that makes them similar to separable prefixes. They are always placed at the end of the verbal bracket, and they could even be considered as forming part of the bracket rather than as separate elements within the clause.

Er hat sie durch seine Unvorsichtigkeit **in die größte Gefahr** gebracht	*He brought her into very great danger through his carelessness*
Ich habe ihr alle meine Bücher **zur Verfügung** gestellt	*I put all my books at her disposal*
Gestern hat uns der Minister von seinem Entschluss **in Kenntnis** gesetzt	*The Minister informed us of his decision yesterday*
Sein Chef hat ihn vorige Woche sehr **unter Druck** gesetzt	*His boss put him under a lot of pressure last week*
Ich habe gemerkt, wie der Wagen langsam **ins Rollen** kam	*I noticed the car slowly starting to roll forwards*

In subordinate clauses, these phrases can come after the auxiliary verb and thus be part of the final verbal bracket, e.g. *Ich habe keine Ahnung, wie der Wagen hätte ins Rollen kommen können*, or *Die Zeit scheint vorbei, da man die eigenen Vorurteile hätte über Bord werfen können* (*Presse*) (see also **19.1.3b**).

19.8 Elements following the final verbal bracket: the *Nachfeld*

The last element in a German clause is normally the final part of the verb. However, there are some contexts where it is usual or possible to place an element after this.

This construction is known as *Ausklammerung* in German, and it is becoming increasingly frequent, even in formal writing. This section explains where it is preferable or acceptable in modern German.

19.8.1 Subordinate and infinitive clauses

(a) Subordinate clauses are not normally enclosed within the verbal bracket

Sentences with clauses enclosed within one another and a cluster of verbs at the end (called *Schachtelsätze*, because they are like sets of boxes inside each other) can be cumbersome and are best avoided. Taken to extremes they can be quite impenetrable, like the following example:

> Das "Vorsicht-Glatteis"-Verkehrszeichen, das letzte Nacht, die Frostbildung, was für den Autofahrer, der etwas getrunken und ein Auto gefahren, das abgefahrene Reifen hat, hat, erhöhte Gefahren mit sich bringt, brachte, total beschädigt wurde, wird nicht mehr aufgestellt.

As a general rule it is preferable to complete one clause, with the final part of its verbal bracket, before starting another. In the following pair of sentences, the second alternative, though not ungrammatical, would be considered clumsy:

> Ich konnte den Gedanken nicht loswerden, **dass wir ihn betrogen hatten**
> Ich konnte den Gedanken, **dass wir ihn betrogen hatten**, nicht loswerden

A relative clause, especially a restrictive one, can be separated from the noun it refers to in order to avoid enclosing it:

> Und wie dürfte man eine Zeitung verbieten, **die sich wiederholt und nachhaltig für die Wahl der staatstragenden Partei eingesetzt hat**? (*Spiegel*)

Enclosing the relative clause would result in a clumsy sentence:

> Und wie dürfte man eine Zeitung, **die sich wiederholt und nachhaltig fur die Wahl der staatstragenden Partei eingesetzt hat**, verbieten?

(b) Infinitive clauses are most often not enclosed within the verbal bracket

In this way, the following are usual:

> Sie hatten beschlossen **vor dem Rathaus zu warten**
> Er hat versucht **sein Geschäft zu verkaufen**

rather than:

> Sie hatten **vor dem Rathaus zu warten** beschlossen
> Er hat **sein Geschäft zu verkaufen** versucht

However, enclosing infinitive clauses is common or even obligatory in some contexts, notably with 'semi-auxiliary' verbs. Details are given in **11.2.4**.

19.8.2 Comparative phrases introduced by *als* or *wie*

These are frequently placed outside the verbal bracket, especially those with *wie:*

Gestern haben wir einen besseren Wein getrunken **als diesen**	*Yesterday we drank a better wine than this one*
Ich wusste, dass sie ebenso ärgerlich war **wie ich**	*I knew she was just as annoyed as me*

However, enclosing phrases like these within the verbal bracket is not unusual:

Die Volkstracht hat sich in Oberbayern stärker **als anderswo in Deutschland** erhalten (*Baedeker*)	*Local costumes have been retained in Upper Bavaria longer than anywhere else in Germany*
ein Mann, der **wie ein Italiener** aussah	*a man who looked like an Italian*

Enclosure is especially frequent within longer clauses, especially in writing:

> da die Orangen und Zitronen von den Kindern **wie Schneebälle** über die Gartenmauern geworfen wurden (*Andres*)

19.8.3 Other elements

Other elements of the clause are sometimes placed after the verbal bracket. There are three main reasons for this:

- to give strong emphasis to the element placed last:

  > Du hebst das auf **bis nach dem Abendessen** (*Baum*)
  > Das heißt, wir werden in eine Situation kommen **recht bald**, wo es wieder darun geht, alte und verwundbare Menschen zu schützen (*ZDF*)

- as an afterthought:

  > Ich habe sie doch heute gesehen **in der Stadt**

- In order not to overstretch the verbal bracket, e.g.:

  > Seitdem Rodrigue seine Chronik begonnen hatte, freute er sich darauf, sie zu beschließen **mit der Darstellung der Regierung dieses seines lieben Schülers und Beichtkindes**

The following elements are often placed outside the verbal bracket:

(a) Adverbials with the form of prepositional phrases

These are commonly excluded for the reasons given above:

> Hallo, ich rufe an **aus London** (*Telecom advert*)
> Vieles hatte Glum schon gesehen **auf seinem Weg von seiner Heimat bis über den Rhein hinweg** (*Böll*)

In general, constructions like these are more typical of unprepared or colloquial speech than formal writing. However, *Ausklammerung* is not uncommon in writing, especially if the prepositional phrase is relatively long, as in the second example above, or if a further clause (typically a relative clause) depends on the element excluded, e.g.:

> Von hier aus konnte man noch wenig sehen **von der kleinen Stadt**, die am anderen Ufer im Nebel lag

(b) Prepositional objects

Prepositional objects are the only verb complement to be regularly and frequently excluded in standard German:

> Er hätte das merken können **an den gelegentlichen Rückblicken und dem Arm, der entspannt auf der freien Vorderlehne lag** (*Johnson*)
> Er darf sich entschädigt fühlen **für ganze Jahre Underdog-Dasein im Straßenverkehr** (*Zeit*)
> Du solltest dich nicht zu sehr freuen **auf diese Entwicklung**

However, not all prepositional objects can be excluded in this way and sentences like *Ich habe vor dem Bahnhof gewartet auf meine Freundin* are unacceptable to many native speakers. No clear rules have yet been identified about the circumstances in which prepositional objects can or cannot be excluded.

(c) Other verb complements

i.e. the subject or the accusative and dative objects, or place and direction complements. These are not usually excluded in standard German, although very lengthy elements may occasionally be, e.g.:

> Wir haben aus Steuergeldern gebaut **Wohnungen für nahezu zwanzigtausend Menschen**

Otherwise, such exclusions are restricted to informal registers, e.g. *Gestern habe ich gesehen Toms Onkel aus Dortmund*.

(d) Adverbs

Exclusion of simple adverbs is common in colloquial speech, but avoided in formal writing:

> Bei uns hat es Spätzle gegeben **heute**
> Sie sollen leise reden **hier**
> Ich bin nach Trier gefahren **deshalb**
> Hat es euch gefallen **dort**?

20 Word formation

We can distinguish in German between **simple words** ('ʀᴏᴏᴛs ') like *Kind*, *dort* and *schön,* which cannot be broken down, and **complex words** like *kindisch*, *dortig* and *Schönheit,* which are made up of more than one component and are derived from simple roots in some way. This chapter outlines the most important aspects of word formation – called 'ᴅᴇʀɪᴠᴀᴛɪᴏɴ' – in German.

20.1 Methods of **word formation**
20.2 Noun derivation
20.3 Adjective derivation
20.4 Verb derivation **–** general principles
20.5 Verb derivation – **inseparable prefixes**
20.6 Verb derivation – **separable prefixes**
20.7 Verb derivation – **variable prefixes**
20.8 Verb derivation – other means

Knowing about German word formation, i.e. how complex words are made up, is invaluable for extending the learner's vocabulary. The importance of being able to recognize the meaning of a whole word from its parts, and identify patterns like *Dank – danken – dankbar – Dankbarkeit – Undankbarkeit* cannot be overestimated. Series of words like this are often more transparent in German than in English, as we can see when we compare this set to English *thanks – to thank – grateful – gratitude – ingratitude*.

20.1 Methods of word formation

20.1.1 Complex words are formed in three main ways

(a) by means of a prefix or suffix

In general, PREFIXES and SUFFIXES do not occur as words in their own right, but are only used with ROOTS to form other words, e.g.:

- **prefixes:**

die Sprache → die **Ur**sprache schön → **un**schön
stehen   → **be**stehen   besser → **ver**bessern

- **suffixes:**

gemein   → die Gemein**heit** bedeuten   → die Bedeut**ung**
der Freund → freund**lich**   denken   → denk**bar**
der Motor   → motor**isieren**   die Kontrolle → kontroll**ieren**

Prefixes are most often used to create nouns from nouns, adjectives from adjectives, or verbs from other verbs or from nouns and adjectives. Suffixes are most common to make nouns from adjectives or verbs or adjectives from nouns or verbs; they are seldom used to form verbs.

(b) by means of vowel changes

These vowel changes are often linked with particular suffixes, but they can occur on their own. The following vowel changes are used in word formation:

- UMLAUT:

der Arzt   → die **Ä**rztin der Bart → b**ä**rtig
der Druck → dr**ü**cken   scharf   → sch**ä**rfen

- ABLAUT, i.e. vowel changes like those of the strong verbs, see **12.1.2**. *Ablaut* in word formation is mainly limited to use with roots from strong verbs:

aufsteigen → der Aufst**ie**g werfen   → der W**ur**f
beißen   → b**i**ssig   schließen → schl**ü**ssig

These vowel changes, especially *Ablaut*, are usually no longer productive (see **20.1.2**) in modern German.

(c) by forming compound words

In compounding, a new word is made up from two (or more) existing words:

das Spiel + der Automat → der **Spielautomat**   der Rat + das Haus → das **Rathaus**

hell + blau → **hellblau**   die Brust + schwimmen → **brustschwimmen**

Sometimes there is a linking sound between the two words, e.g.:

der Bauer + der Hof   → der Bauer**n**hof

das Land + der Mann   → der Land**s**mann

das Kind + der Wagen   → der Kind**er**wagen

The ease with which compounds can be formed is a distinctive feature of German (and the source of the notorious long words), and extensive use of compounds is typical of modern German, especially in technical registers.

20.1.2 Productive and unproductive word formation patterns

If new words are still being created by means of a particular pattern (e.g. by adding a particular prefix or suffix), that pattern is called **productive**. For example, the suffix *-bar* is commonly used to make adjectives from nouns (like English '-able/-ible', see **20.3.1a**), and new words in *-bar*, like *machbar* 'do-able', are regularly created, even from recent English loans like *downloadbar*.

On the other hand, many abstract nouns from adjectives are found with the suffix *-e*, and *Umlaut* of the root vowel, see **20.2.1b**, e.g.:

groß → die Gr**öß**e gut → die G**üt**e hoch → die H**öh**e lang → die L**äng**e

However, no new nouns are created from adjectives in this way; the pattern is **unproductive**. Nevertheless, it is still important to know about it, because there are still so many words in the language which have been formed with this pattern.

This chapter deals with all the common patterns of word formation in German, whether they are productive or unproductive.

20.2 The formation of nouns

20.2.1 Noun derivation by means of suffixes

The following suffixes are common. Most are associated with a particular gender, see **1.1**.

(a) *-chen*, *-lein* **(neuter)**

These suffixes are very productive and used to form **diminutives from nouns**:

das Auge → das Äug**lein** *little eye*   die Karte → das Kärt**chen** *little card*
das Buch → das Büch**lein** *little book* die Stadt → das Städt**chen** *little town*

The vowel of the stressed syllable usually has *Umlaut* if possible, although exceptions are common, especially with names, e.g. *Kurtchen*. *-chen* is commoner than *-lein*, which is mainly restricted to words ending in *-ch*, *-g* or *-ng*, and to archaic or poetic language. It was originally South German, but, in practice, colloquial South German speech now uses other forms from the local dialects to form diminutives, e.g. *-li* (Switzerland), *-(e)le* (Swabia), *-la* (Franconia), *-(er)l* (Austria and Bavaria).

In a few cases, derivations from the same noun with both *-chen* and *-lein* exist, but with a difference in meaning, e.g. *Fräulein* 'girl', *Frauchen* 'mistress' (e.g. the owner of a dog).

In non-standard colloquial speech, **-chen** is sometimes added to plurals in **-er**, e.g. *Kinderchen*.

(b) *-e* **(feminine)**

(i) Nouns in **-e from verbs** denote an action or an instrument. The latter is still productive, especially in technical language:

absagen → die Absag**e** *refusal* bremsen → die Brems**e** *brake*
pflegen → die Pfleg**e** *care*   leuchten → die Leucht**e** *light*

(ii) Nouns in -e from adjectives denote a quality. The vowel has *Umlaut* if possible. This pattern is no longer productive, having been replaced by *-heit* or *-(ig)keit* (see **(e)** below):

groß → die Größ**e** *size* stark → die Stärk**e** *strength*

(c) *-ei, -erei, -elei* **(feminine)**

These suffixes are productive and form **nouns from verbs** or **from other nouns**. The suffix *-ei* is always stressed, see **21.1.6b**.

(i) Nouns in *-erei* from verbs are mainly pejorative, indicating a repeated, irritating action:

fragen → die Frag**erei** *lots of annoying questions*

The basis can be a whole phrase, e.g.:

Rekorde haschen → die Rekordhasch**erei** *record hunting*

-ei is used in the same sense from verbs in *-eln* and *-ern*, e.g.:

lieben → die Liebel**ei** *flirtation*

-elei and *-erei* from nouns also have pejorative meaning:

die Fremdwörter → die Fremdwört**elei** *using (too) many foreign words*
die Sklave → die Sklav**erei** *slavery*

(ii) Nouns in *-ei* from nouns (often a noun in *-er*) denote the place where something is done:

der Bäcker → die Bäcker**ei** *bakery*
das Datum → die Dat**ei** (*computer*) *file* (i.e. where data are kept)

(d) *-er, -ler, -ner* **(masculine)**

These productive suffixes form **nouns from verbs or nouns**. The root vowel occasionally has *Umlaut:*

(i) Most nouns in *-er* from verbs denote the person who does something, often a profession:

backen → der Bäcker *baker*   lehren → der Lehr**er** *teacher*
einbrechen → der Einbrech**er** *burglar* schreiben → der Schreib**er** *writer*

The base can be a whole phrase, e.g. *einen Auftrag geben → der Auftraggeber* 'client', 'customer'.

Foreign roots can also serve as the basis for derivations in *-er*, e.g. *der Blueser* (from *die Blues*) 'blues singer/fan'.

(ii) *-ler* (less commonly *-ner*) is used to derive nouns from other nouns to indicate the person who does something. A few are pejorative. *-ler* is particularly frequent with words ending in *-d* or *-t*:

das Bühnenbild → der Bühnenbild**ner**		die Rente	→ der Rent**ner** *pensioner*
stage designer		der Sport	→ der Sport**ler** *sportsman*
die Kunst → der Künst**ler** *artist*		die Wissenschaft → der Wissenschaft**ler**	
der Profit → der Profit**ler** *profiteer*		*scientist*	

In some cases *-er* is used rather than *-ler* to form nouns from other nouns:

die Eisenbahn → der Eisenbahn**er** *railway worker*   die Taktik → der Taktik**er** *tactician*

-ler is also used with acronyms, e.g. *der CDUler* 'member of the CDU party'.

(iii) Some nouns in *-er* from verbs denote an instrument:

bohren → der Bohr**er** *drill* empfangen → der Empfäng**er** *receiver*

The base can be a whole phrase, especially in technical language:

ein Gerät, um Feuer zu löschen → der Feuerlöscher *fire extinguisher*

(iv) Nouns in *-er* from place names designate the inhabitants:

Frankfurt → der Frankfurt**er** Österreich → der Österreich**er**
Hamburg → der Hamburg**er** Wien → der Wien**er**

Some of these have slight irregularities:

Hannover → der Hannover**aner** Zürich → der Zür**cher**

(e) *-heit, -(ig)keit* (feminine)

These suffixes are used productively to form **abstract nouns from adjectives** denoting a quality:

frech → die Frech**heit** *impudence* heftig → die Heft**igkeit** *violence*
gleich → die Gleich**heit** *similarity* geschwind → die Geschwind**igkeit** *speed*

eitel → die Eitel**keit** *vanity*   genau   → die Genau**igkeit** *precision*

Whether *-heit*, *-keit* or *-igkeit* is used is not wholly regular. *-heit* is the most common form. *-keit* is used with adjectives ending in *-bar*, *-ig*, *-lich* and *-sam* and with most in *-el* and *-er* (but not all, e.g. *die Dunkelheit*, *die Sicherheit*). *-igkeit* is used with adjectives ending in *-haft* and *-los* (e.g. *die Glaubhaftigkeit*) and a few others such as those above and several ending in *-e* (e.g. *müde → die Müdigkeit*).

(f) *-in* **(feminine)**

The productive suffix *-in* forms nouns denoting the **feminine** of persons and animals. The root vowel usually has *Umlaut*: For the use of these feminine forms see **1.1.7b**.

der Arzt → die Ärzt**in** *woman doctor*   der Präsident → die Präsident**in** *female president*

der Fuchs → die Füchs**in** *vixen*   der Rocker → die Rocker**in** *female rock singer*

If the base word ends in *-erer*, e.g. *der Herausforderer* 'challenger', the final *-er* is dropped before adding the suffix *-in*, e.g. *die Herausforderin*.

(g) *-ling* **(masculine)**

This productive suffix is used to form **nouns from verbs or adjectives**.

(i) Nouns in *-ling* **from verbs denote persons who are the object of the action. The root may have** *Umlaut* **:**

prüfen → der Prüf**ling** *examinee* strafen → der Sträf**ling** *prisoner*

(ii) Nouns in *-ling* from adjectives designate persons possessing that quality:

feige → der Feig**ling** *coward* fremd → der Fremd**ling** *stranger*

Similar formations denoting plants and animals are common, e.g. *der Grünling* 'greenfinch', *der Kohlweißling* 'cabbage white (butterfly)', but they are no longer productive.

(h) *-nis* **(neuter or feminine, see 1.1.2f)**

Nouns in *-nis* are abstract nouns from verbs or adjective**s**. Those from verbs (which often have irregular forms or use the past participle as a base) often denote

the result of the verbal action. The suffix is no longer productive:

erleben	→ das Erleb**nis** *experience*	finster	→	die Finster**nis** *darkness*
ersparen	→ das Erspar**nis** *savings*	geheim	→	das Geheim**nis** *secret*
gestehen	→ das Geständ**nis** *confession*	wild	→	die Wild**nis** *wilderness*

(i) *-schaft* **(feminine)**

The productive use of this suffix is to form **nouns from other nouns** designating a **collective** or a **state**:

der Student → die Studenten**schaft** *student body* der Freund → die Freund**schaft** *friendship*

Other derivational patterns with **-schaft**, i.e. from adjectives (e.g. *die Schwangerschaft* 'pregnancy') or from participles (e.g. *die Errungenschaft* 'achievement'), are no longer productive.

(j) *-tum* **(neuter)**

-tum is used productively with **nouns referring to persons** to form nouns denoting **institutions**, **collectives** or **characteristic features**:

der Beamte	→ das Beamten**tum** *civil servants*	der Papst	→ das Papst**tum** *papacy*
der Deutsche	→ das Deutsch**tum** *Germanness*	das Volk	→ das Volks**tum** *national*
der König	→ das König**tum** *monarchy*		*traditions*

(k) *-ung* (feminine)

This very productive suffix is used to form **nouns from verbs** referring to the **action of the verb**:

bedeuten *mean*	→ die Bedeut**ung** *meaning*	bilden *form*	→ die Bild**ung** *formation*
landen *land*	→ die Land**ung** *landing*	töten *kill*	→ die Töt**ung** *killing*

The base for the derivation can be a whole phrase, e.g. *den Grundstein legen →
die Grundsteinlegung*

20.2.2 Noun derivation by means of prefixes

All these prefixes except *Ge-* are stressed, see **21.1.6c**. The gender of nouns with prefixes is the same as that of the root noun, with the exception of those in *Ge-*,

which are mostly neuter, see **1.1.2e**.

(a) *Erz-* = **'arch-', 'out and out'**

der Bischof → der **Erz**bischof *archbishop*
der Gauner → der **Erz**gauner *out and out scoundrel*

(b) *Ge-*

Nouns in *Ge-* can be formed from verbs or from other nouns:

(i) Nouns in *Ge-* from verbs denote a **repeated or protracted activity**. They often have a pejorative sense, like nouns in *-erei*, see **20.2.1c**, to which those in *Ge-* are often an alternative. Many also have the suffix *-e*, although this is frequently optional:

schwätzen → das **Ge**schwätz *idle talk*, *gossip*
laufen → das **Ge**laufe *running about*, *bustle* (esp. to no real purpose)
dröhnen → das **Ge**dröhn(**e**) *droning*

(ii) Nouns in *Ge-* from other nouns are **collectives**. This pattern of derivation is no longer productive. The root vowel has *Umlaut* if possible (and *-e-* changes to *-i-*):

der Ast → das **Ge**äst *branches* der Berg → das **Ge**birge *mountain range*

(c) *Grund-* = **'basic', 'essential'**

die Tendenz → die **Grund**tendenz *basic tendency*

(d) *Haupt-* = **'main'**

der Bahnhof → der **Haupt**bahnhof *main station*

(e) *Miss-* **denotes an opposite or a negative**

It sometimes has a pejorative sense:

der Brauch → der **Miss**brauch *misuse* der Erfolg → der **Miss**erfolg *failure*

Fehl- is now probably more productive than *Miss-* to express an opposite or a negative, e.g.:

die Einschätzung → die **Fehl**einschätzung *false estimation*

(f) *Mit-* = co-, etc.

der Arbeiter → der **Mit**arbeiter *colleague, collaborator*
der Reisende → der **Mit**reisende *fellow traveller*

(g) *Nicht-* = non-

der Raucher → der **Nicht**raucher *non-smoker*

(h) *Riesen-* has an augmentative sense

der Erfolg → der **Riesen**erfolg *enormous success*

Riesen- is particularly common in speech, and informal registers of German are rich in other augmentative prefixes, e.g. *Bomben geschäft, Heiden lärm, Höllen durst, Mords apparat, Spitzen belastung, Super hit, Teufels kerl, Top manager,* etc.

(i) *Rück-* occurs with many nouns related to verbs in *zurück-*

die Fahrt → die **Rück**fahrt *return journey* (cf. *zurückfahren*)

The full form *Zurück-* is usually kept with nouns in *-ung* from verbs, e.g. *zurückhalten → die Zurückhaltung*.

(j) *Un-* = opposite, abnormal

Un- is no longer productive as a noun prefix.

der Mensch   der **Un**mensch *inhuman person*   die Summe   die **Un**summe *vast sum*
die Ruhe   die **Un**ruhe *unrest*   das Wetter   das **Un**wetter *bad weather*

(k) *Ur-* = 'original'

die Sprache → die **Ur**sprache *original language*

20.2.3 Other methods of noun formation

(a) Many nouns are formed from verb roots without a suffix

These are almost all masculine, see **1.1.2a**. It is most common with strong verbs (which may themselves be prefixed), and the root vowel is often changed:

ausgehen	→	der Ausgang *exit*	schließen	→ der Schluss *close*
brechen	→	der Bruch *break*	stechen	→ der Stich *stab, sting*
ersetzen	→	der Ersatz *replacement*	zurückfallen	→ der Rückfall *relapse*

This means of derivation is nowadays only marginally productive, with occasional new words like *der Dreh* 'knack' (← *drehen*), *der Stau* 'traffic jam' (← *stauen*) and *der Treff* 'meet' (← *treffen*). All these new words have a plural in -*s*.

(b) Verb infinitives can be used as nouns

e.g. *das Aufstehen* 'getting up', *das Reiten* 'riding'. These often correspond to English '-ing' forms used as nouns and refer to the action as such. They are all neuter and further information is given in **11.4**.

(c) Adjectives and participles can be used as nouns

e.g. *der/die Fremde* 'stranger', *der/die Vorsitzende* 'chair(person)' (see **6.2** for further examples). Such nouns from adjectives often co-exist with derived nouns:

fremd	→	der Fremde *and* der Fremdling
einbrechen	→	der Einbrechende *and* der Einbrecher

Nouns derived by means of a suffix typically have a more extended sense than the adjective used as a noun. Both *der Fremde* and *der Fremdling* mean 'stranger', but the latter is rather pejorative. *der Einbrecher* means, specifically, 'burglar', but *der Einbrechende* simply means 'the person breaking in at present' (who may not necessarily be a criminal).

(d) Reductions

Reduced forms of longer words are typical of informal registers, but many are used more widely. Most have a plural in -*s* (see **1.2.4c**). There are a number of characteristic types.

(i) Clippings are shortened forms of the original words. They keep the gender of the base noun:

das Abitur → das Abi   die Lokomotive → die Lok
der Kriminalroman → der Krimi der Professor → der Prof

(ii) Mixed reductions take parts of longer words:

der/die Auszubildende(r) → der/die Azubi die Schutzpolizei → die Schupo
die Kindertagesstätte → die Kita

(iii) Many reduced words are constructed with a suffixed *-i* or *-o*, as in the designations for the two original wings of the Green Party (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*), *die Realos* (*<Real politiker*) and *die Fundis* (*<Fund amentalisten*). Further examples:

der/die Anarchist/in → der/die Anarcho der/die Student/in → der/die Studi
der Kugelschreiber → der Kuli   der Trabant → der Trabbi

20.2.4 Compound nouns

The ease with which compound nouns can be formed is a feature of German, and the use of compounds has increased significantly in recent years. In particular, while two-part compounds like *Krankenhaus* and *Schreibtisch* have always been common, there has been an extension in the use of compounds with three or more elements over the last hundred years, especially in technical and official language, e.g. *Fahrpreisermäßigung*, *Autobahnraststätte*, *Roggenvollkornbrot*, *Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz*. Even so, compounds with more than four elements, such as the notorious (but now obsolete) *Rindfleischetikettierungsüberwachungsaufgabenübertragungsgesetz* are (thankfully) still unusual.

With a few rare exceptions, compound nouns take the gender of the last part, see **1.1.8a**.

(a) Types of noun compound

Almost any part of speech can combine with a noun to form a compound, e.g.:

(i)   **noun** + **noun**   das Haar + die Bürste → die Haarbürste *hairbrush*
(ii)   **adjective** + **noun**   edel + der Stein → der Edelstein *gem*

(iii)	**numeral** + **noun**	drei + das Rad	→	das Dreirad *tricycle*
(iv)	**verb** + **noun**	hören + der Saal	→	der Hörsaal *lecture theatre*
(v)	**preposition** + **noun**	unter + die Tasse	→	die Untertasse *saucer*
(vi)	**adverb** + **noun**	jetzt + die Zeit	→	die Jetztzeit *the present day*

Compounds can also be formed from a whole phrase, e.g. *ein Boot, das Minen räumt → ein Minenräumboot; die Malerei hinter Glas → die Hinterglasmalerei.*

(b) A linking element is inserted in many noun + noun compounds

e.g. *die Liebling s farbe, die Straße n ecke*. These linking elements (called *Fugenelemente* in German) occur in about a third of all compounds, and they are notoriously unpredictable. A few words form some compounds with a link and some without one, e.g. *der Lobgesang* **but** *die Lob es hymne*, or with a different one, e.g. *das Tag e buch* **but** *die Tag es zeitung*, and in several cases forms with and without a link are in current use, e.g. *die Abfahrtzeit* and *die Abfahrtszeit*. Furthermore, Austrian and Swiss usage can differ from that in Germany, e.g. Austrian or Swiss *der Schwein s braten* for German *der Schwein**e**braten*.

These linking elements depend on the **first** part of the compound, and the following are found:

(i) *-e-* occurs with a few nouns, especially those with a plural in *-e*. The root vowel often has *Umlaut* if the plural has *Umlaut*, e.g. *der Pferdestall, der Gänsebraten.*
(ii) *-(e)s-* (i.e. the ending of the genitive) occurs with many masculine and neuter nouns (and a few feminines), e.g. *die Windeseile, das Kalb s leder, der Lieb es brief*. It is particularly frequent if the first element is itself a compound, e.g. *die Ansicht s karte, die Friedhof s mauer, die Hochzeit s reise.*
(iii) *-(e) n-* is used with many feminine nouns, with 'weak' masculine nouns (see **1.3.2**) and with adjectives used as nouns, e.g. *der Scheib en wischer, die Held en tat, der Bauer n hof, das Beamte n deutsch.*
(iv) *-er-* is found with some nouns which have a plural in *-er*. *Umlaut* is usually present if possible, e.g. *die Männ er stimme, die Rind er zucht.*

(c) Limitations on the formation of compound nouns

It seems easy to make up compound words in German, but there are restrictions on their formation which are not fully understood, and it is not possible to give

clear rules. A few hints are given here for guidance, but it is good practice for foreign learners to be cautious in forming compounds which they have not actually seen or heard used.

In German compound nouns, the first element carries the main stress and defines the second. Thus, *Rathaus* is a type of *Haus* and *Tiefkühltruhe* is a kind of *Truhe*. A compound like *Blauhimmel* for 'blue sky', on the other hand, is not possible, because it is not a type of sky. We must say *der blaue Himmel*.

In particular, compounds like *Vatermitarbeiter* or *Ulmbesuch*, whose first element is an individual person or place, are odd because they are not 'types' of colleague or visit; a full phrase: *der Mitarbeiter meines Vaters* or *sein Besuch in Ulm* is preferred. However, under the influence of English, some compounds like this have come to be more widely used, although some purists consider them incorrect.

Adjective + noun compounds, in particular, tend to be very restricted. In practice they always mean something rather different from when the relevant adjective is used as to qualify the noun. Thus, *eine Großstadt* is more than *eine große Stadt*, and *ein Junggeselle* is not simply *ein junger Geselle*.

(d) Semi-compound suffixes

A few nouns are so widely used in modern German as the basis for compound nouns that they can be considered as suffixes rather than as distinct words in their own right. Words with these semi-suffixes are particularly typical of official German. The most frequent are:

(i) *-gut*

Nouns in *-gut* express the set of material used in a process, or the totality of things expressed in the first element:

streuen *scatter*, *grit* (roads) → das Streugut *material for gritting roads*
der Gedanke *thought*   → das Gedankengut *whole body of thought*

(ii) *-werk*

Nouns in *-werk* from nouns (often plural, and often denoting plants or materials) are typically collective, indicating the whole of something:

der Zucker *sugar* → das Zuckerwerk *sweets, candies*

die Blätter *leaves* → das Blätterwerk *foliage*

(iii) *-wesen*

Nouns in *-wesen* express the whole systematic collectivity of people and institutions involved in the first element:

die Gesundheit *health* → das Gesundheitswesen *health system*

die Schule *school* → das Schulwesen *school system*

(iv) *-zeug*

Nouns in *-zeug* express a set of things used in a particular activity:

nähen *sew* → das Nähzeug *sewing kit*

schlagen *hit* → das Schlagzeug *drum kit*

20.3 The formation of adjectives

20.3.1 Adjective derivation by means of suffixes

(a) *-bar*

This very productive suffix forms **adjectives from verbs** with the sense of English '-able', '-ible':

brauchen → brauch**bar** *usable*   essen → ess**bar** *edible*

liefern → liefer**bar** *available, deliverable* zuordnen → zuord**enbar** *classifiable*

Adjectives in *-bar* are a frequent alternative to passive constructions, see **13.4.8**.

(b) *-(e)n, -ern*

These suffixes are formed from **nouns denoting a material**, and the adjective indicates that the qualified noun is made from that material. The form *-ern* is normally associated with *Umlaut:*

das Gold → gold**en** *golden*   das Silber → silber**n** *silver*

das Holz → hölz**ern** *wooden* der Stahl → stähl**ern** *steel*

Note the difference between adjectives in -(*e*)*n* or -*ern* and those in -*ig* (see **(d)** below) from the same noun, e.g. *silbern* '(made of) silver', *silbrig* 'silvery' (i.e. like silver).

(c) -*haft*

Adjectives formed **from nouns** with the suffix -*haft* indicate a **quality like the person or thing** denoted by the noun, e.g.:

der Greis → greisen**haft** *senile* der Held → helden**haft** *heroic*

(d) -*ig*

-*ig* is a productive suffix, often with *Umlaut*. It is mainly used to form **adjectives from nouns**:

(i) with the idea of possessing what is denoted by the noun, e.g.:

das Haar → haar**ig** *hairy* der Staub → staub**ig** *dusty*

(ii) indicating a quality like the person or thing denoted by the noun:

die Milch → milch**ig** *milky* der Riese → ries**ig** *gigantic*

Adjectives in -*ig* can be formed from whole phrases: *blauäugig* 'blue-eyed', *schwerhörig* 'hard of hearing'.

(iii) indicating duration (from time expressions):

zwei Stunden → zweistünd**ig** *lasting two hours*

Note the difference between adjectives from time expressions in -*ig* (which express duration) and those in -*lich* (which express frequency), e.g. *zweistündlich* 'every two hours', see **(f)** below.

(iv) -*ig* is also used to form adjectives **from adverbs**, e.g.:

dort → dort**ig** hier → hies**ig** morgen → morg**ig**
ehemals → ehemal**ig** heute → heut**ig** sonst → sonst**ig**

(e) -isch

This is a productive suffix, often associated with *Umlaut*, used mainly to form **adjectives from nouns**:

(i) adjectives from **proper names** and **geographical names**:

England	→ engl**isch** *English*	Homer	→ homer**isch** *Homeric*
Europa	→ europä**isch** *European*	Sachsen	→ sächs**isch** *Saxon*

(ii) adjectives which indicate a **quality like that of the person or thing** denoted by the noun. They are often pejorative:

der Herr	→ herr**isch** *imperious*	das Tier	→ tierisch *bestial*
das Kind	→ kind**isch** *puerile*	der Wähler	→ wähler**isch** *choosy*

Compare the pejorative *kindisch* with the neutral *kindlich* 'childlike'.

(iii) adjectives from **nouns of foreign origin**. They are always stressed on the penultimate syllable, see **21.1.6d**:

die Biologie	→ biolog**isch** *biological*	die Musik	→ musikal**isch** *musical*
die Mode	→ mod**isch** *fashionable*	der Nomade	→ nomad**isch** *nomadic*

(f) *-lich*

This is a common suffix with a wide range of functions. Adjectives formed with *-lich* often have *Umlaut:*

(i) Adjectives in *-lich* from nouns indicate a relationship to that person or thing, or the possession of the quality denoted by the noun:

der Arzt	→ ärzt**lich** *medical*	der Fürst	→ fürst**lich** *princely*
der Buchstabe	→ buchstäb**lich** *literal*	der Preis	→ preis**lich** *in respect of price*
der Feind	→ feind**lich** *hostile*	der Tod	→ töd**lich** *fatal, deadly*

This is the only use of *-lich* which is still productive in modern German. Adjectives in *-lich* can also be derived from whole phrases, e.g. *neutestamentlich* from *das Neue Testament*.

(ii) Adjectives in *-lich* from time expressions denote **frequency**:

der Tag → täglich *daily*	zwei Stunden → zweistünd**lich** *every two hours*

For the difference between adjectives in *-ig* and *-lich* from time expressions, see **(d)** above.

(iii) Adjectives in *-lich* from verbs indicate **ability**:

bestechen → bestech**lich** *corruptible* verkaufen → verkäuf**lich** *saleable*

This use of *-lich* is no longer productive, having been replaced by *-bar*, see **(a)** above.

(iv) Adjectives in *-lich* from other adjectives usually indicate a **lesser degree of the relevant quality**:

arm   → ärm**lich** *shabby*; *humble* krank → kränk**lich** *sickly*
klein → klein**lich** *petty*   rot   → röt**lich** *reddish*

(g) *-los*

-los is used to form adjectives from nouns and corresponds to English '-less':

die Hoffnung → hoffnungs**los** *hopeless* die Wahl → wahl**los** *indiscriminate*

(h) *-mäßig*

This suffix is very productive, especially in formal registers, to derive **adjectives from nouns**:

(i) with the sense of 'in accordance with':

die Gewohnheit → gewohnheits**mäßig** *habitual*
der Plan   → plan**mäßig** *according to plan*

-gemäß is an alternative to *-mäßig* in this sense, but it is less common, e.g. *plangemäß, ordnungsgemäß*.

(ii) with the sense of **'in respect of something'**, **'pertaining to'**:

der Instinkt → instinkt**mäßig** *instinctive* der Verkehr → verkehrs**mäßig** *relating to traffic*

(iii) with the sense of 'like someone or something':

der Fürst → fürsten**mäßig** *princely* das Lehrbuch → lehrbuch**mäßig** *like a textbook*

(i) -sam

This suffix is no longer productive. Adjectives in *-sam* have two main sources:

(i) from **verbs** (especially reflexive verbs), expressing **a possibility or a tendency**:

  sich biegen → bieg**sam** *flexible*   sparen → spar**sam** *thrifty*

(ii) from nouns, indicating a quality:

  die Furcht → furcht**sam** *timid*   die Gewalt → gewalt**sam** *violent*

20.3.2 Adjective derivation by means of prefixes

These prefixes are **usually stressed** and form **adjectives from other adjectives**.

(a) *erz-,* *grund-,* *hoch-* **have intensifying meaning**

erz- is mainly used with a rather negative sense, whereas *grund-* and *hoch-* are usually positive. Both *erz-* and *grund-* are rather limited in use:

  reaktionär   → **erz**reaktionär *very reactionary*
  ehrlich   → **grund**ehrlich *thoroughly honest*
  verschieden → **grund**verschieden *totally different*
  begabt   → **hoch**begabt *highly talented*
  intelligent   → **hoch**intelligent *very intelligent*

(b) *un-* **negates and/or produces an opposite meaning**

It closely resembles English 'un-'. It is not always stressed, see **21.1.6c**.

  artig   → **un**artig *naughty*
  vorsichtig   → **un**vorsichtig *incautious*
  wahrscheinlich → **un**wahrscheinlich *improbable*

If an adjective already has a simple word as its opposite (e.g. *klug – dumm*), the form in *un-* gives a negative rather than an opposite. Thus, whilst *dumm* means 'stupid', *unklug* means 'unwise'. In general, only adjectives with a positive meaning can form an opposite with *un-*. Thus, whilst *unschön* from *schön* is in common use, one does not find **unhässlich* from *hässlich*.

(c) *ur-* **with adjectives intensifies the sense**

alt → **ur**alt *very old* komisch → **ur**komisch *very comical*

Sometimes, it gives the idea of 'original' or 'typical', e.g. *urdeutsch* 'typically German'.

20.3.3 Adjective compounding

In general, adjective compounding is similar to noun compounding, see **20.2.4**.

(a) Types of adjective compounds

In practice only the following are common:

(i)   **noun** + **adjective:**   die Pflicht + treu → pflichttreu *dutiful*
(ii) **verb** + **adjective:**   trinken + fest → trinkfest *able to hold one's drink*
(iii) **adjective** + **adjective:** klein + laut → kleinlaut *meek*

Adjective + adjective compounds are often 'additive', i.e. the qualities of both adjectives apply, e.g. *nasskalt* 'cold and wet'.

(b) Many noun + adjective compounds have a linking element

These are similar to those in noun + noun compounds, see **20.2.4b**. *-s-* and *-n-* are the most common, e.g. *geist es krank, gesundheit s schädlich, seite n verkehrt*.

(c) Some compound elements forming adjectives have now become suffixes

A number of adjectives are so widely used in modern German as the basis for compound adjectives that they can be considered as suffixes rather than as distinct words.

(i) with the sense of having or possessing something:

-haltig   → koffein**haltig** **-stark**   → charakter**stark**
-reich   → erlebnis**reich** **-(s)voll** → rücksicht**svoll**

(ii) with the sense of lacking something:

-arm   → nikotin**arm** **-leer**   → gedanken**leer**
-frei   → alkohol**frei**

(iii) with the sense of being protected from something:

-dicht	→ schall**dicht**	**-fest**	→ hitze**fest**	
-echt	→ kuss**echt**	**-sicher**	→ kugel**sicher**	

(iv) with the sense of being similar to something:

-artig	→ kugel**artig**	**-gleich**	→ masken**gleich**	
-förmig	→ platten**förmig**			

(v) with the sense of being capable of something:

-fähig	→ strapazier**fähig**

(vi) with the sense of being worth(y of) something:

-wert	→ lesen**wert**	**-würdig**	→ nachahmens**würdig**

with the sense of needing something:

-bedürftig	→ korrektur**bedürftig**

20.4 Verb formation: general

New verbs are formed in German primarily by means of prefixes. There are three main types

of verb prefix in German:

- **inseparable prefixes** like *be-*, *emp-*, *ent-*, *er-*, *ge-*, *ver-* and *zer-*, e.g. *bestellen, erstehen, verbringen*. They are called inseparable prefixes because they remain fixed to the root, and they are **always unstressed**, see **21.1.6c**. Their past participle does not have the prefix *ge-*, (e.g. *bestellt, erstanden, verbracht*, see **10.2.1h**). The formation of verbs with inseparable prefixes is treated in section **20.5.**
- **separable prefixes**, of which there are a large number. The most typical are from prepositions, e.g. *ab-*, *an-*, *auf-*, etc., e.g. *abfahren, ankommen, aufmachen*, but they can also come from nouns, adverbs and other parts of speech, e.g. *teilnehmen, totschlagen, weglaufen*. They are called separable prefixes because they are separated from the root under

certain conditions, e.g. *Wir kommen in München sehr früh an* (see **10.2.1i**), and they are **always stressed**, see **21.1.6c**. The formation of verbs with separable prefixes is dealt with in section **20.6**.

- **variable prefixes**, which are separable in some cases and inseparable in others, often with a difference in meaning, e.g. *Sie übersetzte den Brief* 'She translated the letter' – *Sie setzten zum anderen Ufer über* 'They crossed over to the other bank'. The prefixes *durch-*, *über-*, *um-* and *unter-* and one or two less common ones are variable. They are explained in section **20.7**.

Other means of verb derivation are explained in **20.8**.

20.5 Inseparable verb prefixes

The prefixes *emp-* and *ge-* are no longer used to form new verbs, but the other inseparable prefixes have a number of very productive derivational patterns.

20.5.1 *be-*

(a) *be-* **makes intransitive verbs transitive**

See **16.3.4a**. If the simple intransitive verb is used with a dative object or a prepositional object, that becomes the accusative object of the prefixed verb with *be-*, e.g.:

> jdn. **be**dienen *serve sb.* (← jdm. dienen)
> eine Frage **be**antworten *answer a question* (← auf eine Frage antworten)

This pattern is often used with new roots, e.g. *die Journalistin, die von New York aus die Präsidentschaftswahlen bebloggt* (*TA*) 'the journalist who is blogging about the presidential elections from New York'.

(b) With transitive verbs *be-* **can change the action to a different object**

jdn. mit etwas **be**liefern *supply sb. with sth.* (← jdm. etwas liefern *deliver sth. to sb.*)

(c) *be-* **forms verbs from nouns with the idea of providing something**

With some verbs the suffix *-ig-* is added, and a few have *Umlaut:*

die Nachricht → **be**nachricht**ig**en *notify* die Sohle → **be**sohlen *sole* (*a shoe*)

der Reifen → **be**reifen *put tyres on* das Wasser → **be**wässern *irrigate*

(d) *be-* **makes verbs from adjectives**

These have the sense of giving someone or something that quality. The suffix *-ig-* is added with some verbs:

feucht → **be**feuchten *moisten* gerade → **be**grad**ig**en *straighten*

frei → **be**freien *liberate* ruhig → **be**ruhigen *calm*

20.5.2 *ent-*

(a) Verbs in *ent-* from verbs of motion have the idea of escaping or going away

What or who is being escaped from usually appears as a dative object with these verbs, see **16.4.2c**, e.g.:

gleiten → jdm. **ent**gleiten *slip away from sb.* (e.g. glass from hand)

laufen → jdm./etwas **ent**laufen *run away/escape from sb./sth.*

reißen → jdm. etwas **ent**reißen *snatch sth. from sb.*

(b) Verbs in *ent-* can have the sense of removing something

These can be based on nouns, adjectives or other verbs, with *ent-* often corresponding to the English prefixes 'de-' or 'dis-'. This pattern is very productive and verbs are often formed from new roots, e.g. *entsexualisieren* 'desexualize'. A few older formations from adjectives have *Umlaut*:

das Gift → **ent**giften *decontaminate* scharf → **ent**schärfen *tone down*

der Mut → **ent**mutigen *discourage* spannen → **ent**spannen *relax*

20.5.3 *er-*

(a) Verbs in *er-* from other verbs often express the achievement or conclusion of an action

bitten → **er**bitten *get* (*sth.*) *by asking for it* schießen → **er**schießen *shoot (sb.) dead*

A productive use of *er-* is to form verbs from verbs or nouns with the idea of acquiring something by the action expressed by the simple verb or the noun.

Compare *erbitten* above and the following:

arbeiten → Er hat etwas **er**arbeitet *He got sth. by working for it*

die List → Er hat etwas **er**listet *He got sth. through cunning*

This pattern is often found with new roots, e.g. *etwas erbloggen* 'get sth. by blogging', *etwas ergoogeln* 'to get sth. by googling'.

A few verbs in *er-* from other verbs point to the start of an action, e.g. *erklingen* 'ring out', *erbeben* 'tremble'.

(b) Verbs in *er-* formed from adjectives express a change of state

i.e. either intransitive verbs with the idea of becoming something, or transitive verbs with the idea of making somebody or something have the quality expressed by the adjective. These verbs often have *Umlaut* of the root vowel, e.g.:

blind → **er**blinden *become blind*   möglich → **er**möglichen *make possible*

frisch → **er**frischen *refresh*   rot → erröten *turn red, blush*

Verbs in *er-* can be formed from comparative adjectives, e.g. *erleichtern* (← *leichter*) 'make easier'.

20.5.4 *ver-*

This prefix has a wide range of meanings. The following are the most frequent or productive:

(a) Many verbs in *ver-* from other verbs express the idea of finishing or 'away'

blühen → **ver**blühen *fade* (flowers)   hungern → **ver**hungern *starve to death*

brauchen → **ver**brauchen *consume*   klingen → **ver**klingen *fade away* (sounds)

New verbs are regularly formed with this pattern, e.g. *Mit dieser Tarif-Option können für 15 Euro monatlich 200 MB versurft werden* (*HMP*) 'With this payment option you can surf 200 MB of data a month for 15 euros'.

(b) Some verbs in *ver-* from other verbs convey the notion of 'wrongly' or 'to excess'

biegen → **ver**biegen *bend out of shape*   lernen → **ver**lernen *unlearn, forget*

bummeln → **ver**bummeln *fritter away*   salzen → **ver**salzen *put too much salt in sth.*

This productive pattern is also found with new roots, e.g. *Vergooglen Sie keine Zeit!* 'Don't waste your time searching on Google'.

Some reflexive verbs in *ver-* have the idea of making a mistake, e.g.:

fahren → sich **ver**fahren *get lost, take a wrong turning* wählen → sich **ver**wählen *misdial*

A few verbs in *ver-* are opposites, e.g.:

achten → **ver**achten *despise* kaufen → **ver**kaufen *sell*

(c) Verbs in *ver-* formed from adjectives often express a change of state

As with *er-*, these can be intransitive verbs with the idea of becoming something, or transitive verbs with the idea of making somebody or something have the quality expressed by the adjective (which may be a comparative):

arm   → **ver**armen *become poor* länger → **ver**längern *make longer*
einfach → **ver**einfachen *simplify*   stumm → **ver**stummen *become silent*

Some verbs in *ver-* from nouns have a similar meaning, e.g.:

das Unglück → **ver**unglücken *have an accident* der Sklave → **ver**sklaven *enslave*

(d) Many verbs formed from nouns with *ver-* convey the idea of providing with something

das Glas → **ver**glasen *glaze* der Körper → **ver**körpern *embody*
das Gold → **ver**golden *gild*   der Zauber → **ver**zaubern *enchant*

This use of *ver-* is very productive and widely used with borrowed roots, e.g. *Verlink deine Seite gegen Geld* 'Link up your website for cash'; *Die Gesichter der Angeklagten wurden aus Sicherheitsgründen verpixelt* 'The faces of the accused were pixelated for reasons of security'.

20.5.5 *zer-*

Verbs in *zer-*, which are mainly formed from other verbs, always convey the notion of 'in pieces':

| beißen | → | **zer**beißen *bite into pieces* | fallen | → | **zer**fallen *disintegrate* |
| brechen | → | **zer**brechen *smash* | streuen | → | **zer**streuen *disperse* |

20.6 Separable verb prefixes

Sᴇᴘᴀʀᴀʙʟᴇ ᴘʀᴇꜰɪxᴇꜱ are so called because they are separated from the root under certain conditions, e.g. *ankommen* 'arrive': *Wir kommen sehr früh in München an*. Unlike inseparable prefixes (see **20.5**), they are always stressed**.** Most separable prefixes exist as independent words, chiefly as adjectives, adverbs, prepositions or nouns.

The forms of separable verbs, in particular the position of the prefix, are explained in **10.2.1i**.

20.6.1 Simple separable prefixes

Most of these derive from prepositions or adverbs and their meanings are often transparent. The examples below illustrate some common and productive patterns of derivation.

Prefixes from prepositions expressing direction (e.g. *ab-*, *an-*, *auf-*) often have a less transparent or figurative sense because direction can be indicated by using a prefix with *her-* or *hin-*, see **7.2.4e**.

(a) *ab-*

(i)	= 'away':	**ab**fahren *depart, leave*	**ab**fliegen *take off*
(ii)	= 'down':	**ab**steigen *get down*	**ab**setzen *put, set down*
(iii)	completing an action:	**ab**drehen *switch off*	**ab**laufen *wear out* (e.g. shoes)

(b) *an-*

| (i) | with the idea of approaching: | **an**kommen *arrive* | **an**sprechen *address (sb.)* |
| (ii) | indicating the start of an action: | **an**brennen *catch fire* | **an**klicken *click on* |

(c) *auf-*

| (i) | = 'up' or 'on': | **auf**bleiben *stay up* | **auf**setzen *put on* (hat, water) |

| (ii) | with the idea of a sudden start: | **auf**lachen *burst out laughing* | **auf**leuchten *light up* |

(d) *aus-* = **'out' often pointing to the completion of an action:**

ausbloggen *finish a blog*   **aus**brennen *burn out*   **aus**füllen *fill up*

(e) *ein-* **is related to the preposition** *in* **, often with the idea of becoming used to something:**

einfahren *run in* (i.e. new car)   sich **ein**leben *settle down*   **ein**schlafen *fall asleep*

(f) *los-* **most often has the meaning of beginning something:**

losbrechen *break out*   **los**gehen *set off, start*   **los**reißen *tear off, away*

(g) *mit-* **indicates accompanying or cooperating:**

mitarbeiten *cooperate*   **mit**gehen *go with sb.*   **mit**reden *join in* (e.g. debate)

(h) *vor-*

(i)   going on or preceding: **vor**gehen *go ahead*; *be fast* (clock)   **vor**stoßen *push forward*
(ii)   demonstrating: **vor**lesen *read aloud*   **vor**machen *show sb. how to do sth.*

(i) *weg-* = **'away':**

wegbleiben *stay away*   **weg**laufen *run away*   **weg**sehen *look away*

fort- is a less common (and more formal) alternative to *weg-* with some verbs: *fortbleiben, fortlaufen*.

weiter- = **'on', 'continue':**

weiterdenken *think ahead*   **weiter**fahren *drive on*   **weiter**machen *continue*

zu-

(i)   indicating the direction of the action: **zu**hören *listen to*   **zu**lächeln *smile at*
(ii)   adding: **zu**geben *add*   **zu**zahlen *pay more*
(iii)   closing: **zu**drehen *turn off* (tap)   **zu**gehen *close, shut*

Other simple prefixes are less frequent or no longer productive

bei-	**bei**treten	*join* (e.g. club)	**bei**tragen	*contribute*
da-	**da**bleiben	*stay on/behind*	**da**stehen	*stand there*
dar-	**dar**stellen	*depict, represent*	**dar**legen	*explain, expound*
fehl-	**fehl**gehen	*miss one's way*	**fehl**greifen	*miss one's hold*
inne-	**inne**haben	*occupy* (position)	**inne**halten	*pause*
nach-	**nach**ahmen	*imitate*	**nach**gehen	*follow*
nieder-	**nieder**brennen	*burn down*	**nieder**lassen	*lower, let down*

20.6.2 Compound separable prefixes

(a) Some compound elements, mainly from adverbs, are widely used as separable prefixes

dabei-	(indicating proximity)	**dabei**stehen	*stand close by*
daneben-	(indicating missing sth.)	**daneben**schießen	*miss* (a shot)
davon-	('away')	**davon**eilen	*hurry away*
dazu-	(indicating an addition)	**dazu**kommen	*be added*
empor-	('upwards')	**empor**blicken	*look up*
entgegen-	('towards')	**entgegen**nehmen	*receive, accept*
überein-	(indicating agreement)	**überein**kommen	*agree*
voraus-	('in advance')	**voraus**sagen	*foretell, predict*
vorbei-, *vorüber-*	('past')	**vorbei**gehen	*pass*
zurück-	('back')	**zurück**fahren	*drive back, return*
zusammen-	('together' or 'up')	**zusammen**rücken	*move together*

zusammenfalten *fold up*

The compound directional adverbs in *hin-* and *her-*, see **7.2.4**, are also commonly used as separable prefixes, e.g. *hinausgehen, herunterkommen*. Several other compound elements, e.g. *drauf-, hintan-, vorweg-, zuvor-* are used with one or two verbs only, e.g. *vorwegnehmen* 'anticipate'.

(b) Many nouns, adjectives and other verbs can be used in combination with verb roots.

If these retain their distinct meaning they are written separately, e.g. *Rad fahren* 'cycle', *Ski laufen* 'ski', but many have effectively become separable prefixes, forming new words with a new meaning, e.g. *nahelegen* 'suggest', *teilnehmen*

'take part'. These compound verbs are treated in detail in section **21.3.1**, which also gives full details on whether they are spelled as one word or two.

20.7 Variable verb prefixes

A few prefixes can form both separable and inseparable verbs. If the verb is **separable**, the prefix is **stressed**, if it is **inseparable**, the prefix is **unstressed**.

20.7.1 *durch-*

durch- always expresses the idea of 'through', whether separable or inseparable.

(a) A few compounds with *durch-* are only inseparable

durch'denken *think through*   durch'leben *experience*   durch'löchern *make holes in*

Separable *'durchdenken* is also found with the identical meaning to *durchdenken*, but it is less common.

(b) Many compounds with *durch-* are only separable

'durcharbeiten *work through*	'durchfallen *fall through/fail*	'durchhalten *hold out*, *survive*
'durchblicken *look through*	'durchführen *carry out*	'durchrosten *rust through*
'durchkommen *get through*, *succeed*	'durchkriechen *crawl through*	'durchsehen *look through*

(c) Some verbs form separable and inseparable compounds with *durch-*

The separable compounds always mean 'right the way through'. The inseparable verbs emphasize penetration without necessarily reaching the other side. However, the distinction may be fine, especially with verbs of motion. Compare:

Er **eilte** durch das Foyer **durch**	*He hurried through the foyer*
Er **durcheilte** das Foyer	*He hurried across the foyer*
Er **ritt** durch den Wald **durch**	*He crossed the forest on horseback*
Er **durchritt** den Wald	*He rode through the forest*

Similarly:

durchbrechen *break through*	durchlaufen *run through*	durchschwimmen *swim across*
durchdringen *penetrate*	durchreisen *travel through*	durchstoßen *break through*
durchfahren *travel through*	durchschauen *see through*	durchwachen *stay awake*

However, the separable and inseparable meanings are quite distinct in the case of *durchsetzen*, as separable *'durchsetzen* means 'carry through', whilst inseparable *durch'setzen* means 'infiltrate'. The distinction is also clear with *durchkämmen* 'comb through' in that separable *'durchkämmen* is only used in a literal sense, of hair, whereas inseparable *durch'kämmen* has the figurative meaning of 'search thoroughly in'.

20.7.2 *hinter-*

hinter- mostly forms inseparable compounds

hinter'fragen *analyze*   hinter'lassen *leave, bequeath*   hinter'treiben *foil, thwart*
hinter'gehen *deceive*   hinter'legen *deposit*

Separable compounds with *hinter-* are non-standard regionalisms, e.g. *'hinterbringen* 'take to the back', *'hintergehen* 'go to the back'.

20.7.3 *miss-*

miss- is generally inseparable. It has two main senses, i.e.:

(i) 'opposite':   missachten *despise, disdain*   misstrauen *distrust*
(ii) 'badly', 'wrongly':   missdeuten *misinterpret*   misshandeln *ill-treat*

With a few verbs *miss-* can be treated as separable in the past participle and the infinitive with *zu*, e.g. *missgeachtet*, *misszuachten*, see **11.1.2b**. These forms are alternatives to the regular inseparable forms *missachtet*, *zu missachten* and are generally less frequent, with the exception of *missverstehen*, where the extended infinitive most commonly has the form *misszuverstehen*.

20.7.4 *ob-*

ob- is mainly inseparable. There are very few verbs with the prefix *ob-* in current use, e.g. *obliegen* 'to be incumbent', *obsiegen* 'to prevail', and they are used typically in formal registers:

Die Beweislast obliegt dem Ankläger   *The burden of proof is on the prosecutor*

All can also be used separably, e.g. *Die Beweislast liegt dem Ankläger ob*, although this is less frequent.

20.7.5 *über-*

(a) Separable compounds with *über-* are all intransitive and have the literal meaning 'over'

'überhängen *overhang* 'überkochen *boil over* 'überkippen *keel over*

(b) Inseparable compounds with *über-* are all transitive and have a variety of meanings

(i) repetition: über'arbeiten *rework*   über'prüfen *check*
(ii) more than enough: über'fordern *overtax*   über'treiben *exaggerate*
(iii) failing to notice: über'hören *fail to hear* über'sehen *overlook*
(iv) 'over':   über'denken *think over* über'fallen *attack*

(c) Many verbs form both separable and inseparable compounds with *über-*

The separable compounds are mostly intransitive. They all have the literal meaning 'over'. The inseparable verbs are mostly transitive, with a more figurative meaning often similar to those given under **(b)** above:

	separable	inseparable
überfahren	*cross over*	*run over*
überführen	*transfer*	*convict*
übergehen	*turn into sth.*	*leave out*
überlaufen	*overflow; desert*	*overrun*
überlegen	*put sth. over sb./sth.*	*consider*
übersetzen	*ferry over*	*translate*
überspringen	*jump over*	*skip*
übertreten	*change over*	*infringe*
überziehen	*put on*	*cover*

übersiedeln 'move (house)' can be used as a separable **or** inseparable verb with no distinction in meaning.

20.7.6 *um-*

(a) Separable compounds in *um-* express the idea of turning or changing a state

'umblicken *look round*   'umdrehen *turn round*   'umkommen *die, perish*

'umbringen *kill*   'umfallen *fall over*   'umsteigen *change* (trains, etc.)

(b) Inseparable compounds in *um-* express encirclement or surrounding

um'armen *embrace*   um'geben *surround*   um'segeln *sail round, circumnavigate*

um'fassen *embrace, encircle*   um'ringen *surround*   um'zingeln *surround, encircle*

(c) Many verbs form separable and inseparable compounds in *um-*

The difference in meaning corresponds to that given in **(a)** and **(b)** above:

	separable	inseparable
umbauen	*rebuild*	*enclose*
umbrechen	*break up*	*set (i.e. type)*
umfahren	*run over, knock down*	*travel round*
umgehen	*circulate*	*avoid*
umreißen	*tear down*	*outline*
umschreiben	*rewrite*	*paraphrase*
umstellen	*rearrange*	*surround*

20.7.7 *unter-*

(a) Separable compounds in *unter-* generally have a literal meaning, i.e. 'under'

'unterbringen *accommodate*   'unterkommen *find accommodation*   'untertauchen *dive, submerge*

'untergehen *sink, decline*   'untersetzen *put underneath*

(b) Inseparable compounds in *unter-* have a variety of meanings

(i) less than enough or 'under':

unter'bieten *undercut*   unter'schätzen *underestimate*   unter'stützen *support*

unter'drücken *suppress, oppress*   unter'schreiben *sign*   unter'treiben *understate*

unter'liegen *be defeated*   unter'schreiten *fall short*   unter'werfen *subjugate*

(ii) other, miscellaneous meanings:

unter'bleiben *cease*   unter'laufen *occur*   unter'scheiden *differentiate*

unter'brechen *interrupt*   unter'richten *teach*   unter'suchen *investigate*

unter'lassen *refrain from*   unter'sagen *forbid, prohibit*

(c) Many verbs form separable and inseparable compounds with *unter-*

The separable verbs are mostly intransitive and have the meaning 'under'. The inseparable compounds are all transitive, and most have a more figurative meaning:

	separable	inseparable
unterbinden	*tie underneath*	*prevent*
untergraben	*dig in*	*undermine*
unterhalten	*hold underneath*	*entertain*
unterlegen	*put underneath*	*underlay*
unterschieben	*foist*	*insinuate*
unterschlagen	*cross* (e.g. legs)	*embezzle*
unterstellen	*keep*, *store*	*assume*
unterziehen	*put on underneath*	*undergo*

20.7.8 *voll-*

(a) Most compounds with *voll-* **have the meaning 'full' and are separable**

'vollbekommen *manage to fill*   'vollstopfen *cram full*   'volltanken *fill up* (car with fuel)

(b) A few compounds with *voll-* **are only inseparable**

Most mean 'complete', 'finish' or 'accomplish' and are only used in formal registers:

voll'bringen *achieve*, *accomplish*   voll'führen *execute*, *perform*   voll'ziehen *execute*, *carry out*

voll'enden *complete*   voll'strecken *execute*, *carry out*

20.7.9 *wider-*

wider- usually forms inseparable verbs

wider'legen *refute*   wider'stehen *resist*

Only two verbs in *wider-* are separable:

'widerhallen *echo*, *reverberate*   'widerspiegeln *reflect*

These verbs are also sometimes used inseparably, *widerhallen* in the present and past tenses, *widerspiegeln* in the present tense.

20.7.10 *wieder-*

wieder- **usually forms separable verbs**

'wiederkehren *return*   'wiedersehen *see again*

Only **one** verb prefixed with *wieder-* is inseparable: *wieder'holen* 'repeat'.

20.8 Verb formation by means other than prefixes

20.8.1 Many verbs are formed simply from nouns or adjectives

The simplest way to convert a noun or an adjective to a verb is to **add verbal endings** (i.e. those indicating person, number, tense, etc.) **to the root of the noun or the adjective.**

These have a variety of meanings, and some add *Umlaut*, especially verbs from adjectives which have the sense of giving something a particular quality:

der Dampf	→ dampfen *steam*	kurz	→ kürzen *shorten*
der Donner	→ donnern *thunder*	leer	→ leeren *empty*
der Fisch	→ fischen *fish*	reif	→ reifen *ripen*
der Fluch	→ fluchen *curse*	scharf	→ schärfen *sharpen*
der Hammer	→ hämmern *hammer*	schwarz	→ schwärzen *blacken*
der Kellner	→ kellnern *work as a waiter*	trocken	→ trocknen *dry*
der Löffel	→ löffeln *spoon*	wach	→ wachen *be awake*

This means of verb formation is widely employed with new roots from English, e.g. *bloggen* (from *das Blog*), *jetten* (from *der Jet*), *simsen* (from *die* SMS = '*short message service*'), *tweeten* (from *die Tweet*).

20.8.2 Other ways of forming verbs

(a) Weak verbs formed from strong verbs with vowel change

These verbs typically mean 'cause to do sth.' This pattern is no longer productive, but its results are still common. In general, a transitive weak verb has been formed from an intransitive strong verb:

ertrinken *drown* (intr.)	→ ertränken *drown* (trans.)	sitzen *sit*	→ setzen *set, put*
fallen *fall*	→ fällen *fell*	springen *jump*	→ sprengen *blow up*

(b) Verbs in *-eln* **express a weaker form of the action**

They usually have *Umlaut*:

husten *cough* → hüsteln *cough slightly* lachen *laugh*   → lächeln *smile*

krank *ill, sick* → kränkeln *be sickly*   streichen *stroke* → streicheln *caress*

Some such verbs have a pejorative sense, e.g. tanzen *dance* → tänzeln *prance*.

This formation is productive and can be based on nouns or adjectives as well as on other verbs:

fromm *pious*   → frömmeln *affect piety*

der Schwabe *Swabian* → schwäbeln *speak with a Swabian accent*

(c) The suffix *-ieren* **is mainly used to form verbs from foreign words**

The source of most verbs in *-ieren* (and its derivatives *-isieren* and *-ifizieren)* is French or Latin. Some have entered German directly from French verbs in *-er*, e.g. *arranger → arrangieren*.

Others have been formed in German from the roots of words taken into German from these or other languages, e.g. *das Tabu → tabuisieren*.

Exceptionally, a few verbs in *-ieren* have been derived from German roots, e.g.:

der Buchstabe *letter* → buchstabieren *spell* halb *half* →halbieren *halve*

21 Spelling, pronunciation and punctuation

German spelling and punctuation are relatively consistent, but some usages and rules are quite different to those for English. This chapter gives information on these in the following sections:

21.1 spelling and **pronunciation**
21.2 capital letters
21.3 one word or two?
21.4 other **miscellaneous points** of spelling
21.5 the **comma**
21.6 other **punctuation marks**

The rulings given are those accepted as authoritative in all the countries where German is an official language.

Uniform official spelling rules for the German-speaking countries were first established in 1901/02. By the end of the twentieth century it was felt that the rulings made then and subsequently had left many unnecessary inconsistencies and anomalies which needed to be eliminated. The countries involved agreed in 1994/95 on a set of reforms which began to be introduced in elementary schools in 1996. For a transitional period the old and the new spellings were permitted, but from 2006 only the new spellings have been regarded as correct for official purposes, in particular in schools and other state institutions.

Although the changes were not far-reaching, this spelling reform gave rise to considerable controversy, and numerous attempts were made to reverse the decision to introduce it. Although these were ultimately unsuccessful, they resulted in the establishment of the *Rat für deutsche Rechtschreibung* which agreed a number of changes to the reforms, and a final version of the new rules

was issued in March 2006. This is now updated regularly, typically with some minor changes each time in the recommendations for spelling a few foreign words. The most recent version, together with a comprehensive wordlist, can be downloaded from the website of the *Rat für deutsche Rechtschreibung* (https://www.rechtschreibrat.com/).

The most recent version of the reformed spelling has been applied consistently in this book, and the information given in this chapter relates exclusively to it.

21.1 Spelling and pronunciation

The relationship between letters and the sounds they represent is more straightforward in German than in English and, in general, each sound of German corresponds to a single letter or group of letters. However, there are a few exceptions to this, and information on these cases is given in this section.

Where necessary, the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) are used to make clear precisely what sounds are involved and, following established conventions in phonetics, they are given in square brackets. A table of the IPA symbols can be found on **page xxi**.

The accepted 'standard' pronunciation of German is based on a set of norms originally established by a commission which met in 1898 to establish the best pronunciation for the stage, and it was thus called *Bühnenaussprache*. This is now usually referred to as *Hochlautung*, or often simply as *Hochdeutsch* (although this term strictly speaking covers standard grammar and vocabulary as well as pronunciation). It was originally a set of rather formal norms, but a modified form of them is now widely accepted as an ideal to aim for, especially for foreign learners, and the information in this section is based on this.

Although these norms are predominantly North German, they are generally regarded as reflecting the 'best' usage, and they are acceptable everywhere. There is, of course, much variation in actual usage within Germany and (especially) the other German-speaking countries, but a book such as this can only give information on the most important instances of such variation.

21.1.1 *b*, *d* and *g*

(a) *b*, *d* and *g* are pronounced as [p], [t] and [k] at the end of a word or syllable, or before a consonant

Sie**b** [ziːp]   a**b**fahren   [apfaːʁən]   ha**b**t [haːpt]

Ra**d** [ʁaːt]   kun**d**geben [kʊntgeːbən] sa**g**t [zaːkt]

Zu**g** [tsuːk]   we**g**fahren [vɛkfaːʁən]

Otherwise, i.e. at the beginning of a word or between vowels, *b*, *d* and *g* are pronounced [b], [d] and [g], as in English.

(b) There are two exceptions to this rule in respect of *g*

(i) In **the ending -** *ig, g* is pronounced as *ch*, i.e. [ç]:

flei**ß**i**g** [flaɪsɪç] Kön**ig** [køːnɪç] sand**ig** [zandɪç]

Although this is the accepted standard norm, in practice most speakers in the South pronounce *-ig* as [ɪk].

(ii) In **North** and **Central Germany**, most speakers pronounce *g* like *ch* (i.e. as [ç] or [x]) rather than as [k] when it occurs at the end of a word or syllable, or before a consonant

sa**g**t [zaːxt] Zu**g** [tsuːx] we**g**fahren [vɛçfaːʁən]

This pronunciation is not accepted as standard, but it is in practice almost universal usage by a majority of speakers across the northern two-thirds of Germany, i.e. north of the river Main.

21.1.2 *ch*

(a) The pronunciation of *ch* **differs depending on the preceding sound**

(i) After low and back vowels, i.e. *a*, *o* and *u*, *ch* is **pronounced [x]**:

Ba**ch** [bax] Lo**ch** [lɔx] Bu**ch** [buːx] Bau**ch** [baʊx]

(ii) After front vowels, i.e. *i*, *e*, **ü** and *ö*, after *l* and *r*, and in the suffix *-chen*, *ch* **is pronounced [ç]**:

Mi**ch** [mɪç] e**ch**t [ɛçt]   Bü**ch**er [byːçɐ] Lö**ch**er [lœçɐ]

Mil**ch** [mɪlç] Kir**ch**e [kɪʁçə] Veil**ch**en [faɪlçən]

(b) The pronunciation of *ch* at the beginning of a word

(i) In most words it is pronounced [k], e.g.:
   Chamäleon, Chaos, Charakter, Chlor, Cholera, Chor, Christ, Chrom, Chronik
(ii) In many words originally from French it is pronounced [ʃ], e.g.:
   Champagner, Chance, Charme, Chauffeur, Chef
(iii) In a very few words, notably *Chemie* and *China*, it is pronounced [ç] in the North (i.e. north of the Main), but in the South it is most often pronounced [k], although this is widely considered non-standard.

(c) The combination *chs* is pronounced [ks]

A**chs**e [aksə] Fu**chs** [fʊks] wa**chs**en [vaksən]

21.1.3 Other consonants

(a) *s* is pronounced [s] except in the following contexts

(i) At the beginning of a word before a vowel, and between vowels, *s* is pronounced [z]:

sandig [zandɪç] suchen [zuːxən] lesen [leːzən]

(ii) At the beginning of a word before *p* and *t*, *s* is pronounced [ʃ]:

spielen [ʃpiːlən] Straße [ʃtraːsə]

(b) *ng* is always pronounced [ŋ]

It is never pronounced [ŋg] as in some English words. Compare, for example, the difference between English *finger* [fɪŋgə] and German *Finger* [fɪŋɐ].

A majority of speakers from North Germany typically pronounce *-ng* at the end of word as [ŋk], e.g. *Hoffnung* [hɔfnʊŋk]. This is not accepted as standard.

21.1.4 Long and short vowels

English-speaking learners need to pay attention to the distinction between long and short vowels in German, as there are significant differences from English. In

particular, **German long vowels are consistently long**.

The problem is not helped by the fact that this distinction is the area where German spelling is least systematic, and the difference between long and short vowels is not always clearly indicated. The main rules (and exceptions) are as follows:

(a) Vowels before double consonants are always short

This rule applies whether the double consonant is in the middle or at the end of the word.

Acker [akɐ] bitte [bɪtə] bücken [bʏkən] kommen [kɔmən]
Butt [bʊt] flott [flɔt] knapp [knap] Schiff   [ʃɪf]

k is never doubled in spelling, and *ck* is used instead.

(b) Vowels before single consonants are usually long

This rule applies whether the consonant is in the middle or at the end of the word.

geben [geːbən] Hefe [heːfə] lösen [løːzən] üben [yːbən]
gab   [gaːp]   Hut [huːt] los   [loːs]   Tag [taːk]

Note that *ß* **counts as a single consonant**, and this is the main reason why it is used in contrast to *ss* (see **21.4.1**). Compare:

Fuß [fuːs] Fluss [flʊs] Maße [maːsə] Masse [masə]

Some loan-words from English are an exception to this rule, as they end in a single consonant but have a short vowel, e.g. *Bus* [bʊs], *Jet* [dʒɛt]. When such words or roots have an ending, the consonant is doubled: *Busse, jetten*.

(c) Vowels before clusters of more than one consonant are usually short

Gang [gaŋ]   Pflicht [pflɪçt] Mast   [mast] Werk [vɛʁk]
sitzen [zɪtsən] Sünde [zʏndə] schuften [ʃʊftən] Wespe [vɛspə]

However, this rule is not consistent, and there are several common exceptions, e.g.:

Art   [aːʁt]   atmen [aːtmən] Geburt [gəbuːʁt] Jagd   [jaːkt]

Krebs [kʁeːps] Mond [moːnt] regnen [ʁeːgnən] Trösten [tʁøːstən]

Inflected forms of words and derivations keep a long vowel, even if the ending results in a consonant cluster:

lösen [løːzən] → löste [løːstə] Tag [taːk] → Tags [taːks]
Hof [hoːf] → höflich [høːflɪç] sagen [zaːgən] → sagbar [zaːkbaːʁ]

(d) Vowels before *ch* may be long or short

In practice, each word needs to be remembered separately:

Hochzeit [hɔxtsaɪt] Loch [lɔx] brechen [bʁɛçən]
hoch [hoːx] fluchen [fluːxən] brach [braːx]

(e) Other ways of marking long vowels

(i) Especially before *m*, *n*, *l* and *r*, a long vowel is often shown by the silent letter *h*:

lahm [laːm] Bühne [byːnə] Höhle [høːlə] fahren [faːʁən]

(ii) In a few words, a long vowel is shown by doubling the vowel letter:

Schnee [ʃneː] Saal [zaːl] Heer [heːʁ] Moos [moːs]

(iii) Long [iː] is usually spelled *ie*, e.g. *Lied* [liːt], *Sieg* [ziːk], *Miene* [miːnə]
(iv) A single vowel at the end of a word is long, e.g. *du* [duː], *wo* [voː]

21.1.5 The vowel *ä*

Short *ä* is always pronounced [ɛ], i.e. identically to *e*, e.g. *Kräfte* [kʁɛftə], *Gäste* [gɛstə]. Standard pronunciation prescribes that long *ä* should be pronounced [ɛː], e.g.:

wäre [vɛːʁə] gäbe [gɛːbə] Bär [bɛːʁ] Väter [vɛːtɐ]

However, this ruling is widely ignored, especially in North Germany, and many people usually pronounce long *ä* and long *e* identically, as [eː], e.g. *wäre* [veːʁə], *gäbe* [geːbə], etc. Indeed, the pronunciation [ɛː] can sound affected. In practice it is most often used, if at all, in subjunctive forms like *gäbe*, in order to make the distinction from the indicative *gebe* clear.

21.1.6 Word stress

Like in English, one syllable in all German words of more than one syllable is pronounced with rather more force than the others. **This syllable is said to be stressed**. However, there is no absolute rule about **which** syllable in a German word is stressed, although there are certain regularities.

(a) In native German words the stress falls on the first syllable

′**Mo**nat ′**Bru**der ′**ge**stern ′**Glau**be ′**Ar**beit ′**E**lend ′**Se**gel

There are very few exceptions to this rule, the most common are:

Fo′**rel**le Ho′**lun**der Hor′**ni**sse Kar′**to**ffel le′**ben**dig Wach′**ol**der

In addition, the suffix *-ei* is *always stressed*: *Bäcker' ei*, *Bücher' ei*

(b) *The position of the stress remains constant in native German words*

i.e. it falls on the same syllable irrespective of any endings which might be added:

′**Mo**nate ′**glau**ben ′**glaub**haft ′**Glaub**haftigkeit ′**glaub**würdig

(c) Stress in words with prefixes

(i) Some prefixes are always unstressed, whether on nouns, adjectives or verbs, i.e. *be-*, *emp-*, *ent-*, *er-*, *ge-*, *ver-*, *zer-*. With verbs these prefixes are inseparable, see **20.5**.

emp′**fang**en Emp′**fang** emp′**fäng**lich Ge′**schich**te ver′**steh**en Ver′**stand**

(ii) Most other prefixes are stressed**.** With verbs, these prefixes are separable, see **20.6**.

′**ab**fahren ′**Ab**fahrt ′**ab**hängig ′**ein**fallen ′**Ein**fall ′**ein**fältig

It has recently been reported that some adverbs of this type are starting to be pronounced with stress on the second syllable, in particular *an'geblich*, *an'scheinend* and *aus'führlich*, possibly because their meaning is no longer seen as linked to the verbs *angeben*, etc. It is not clear how widespread this change of stress is, whether any other words are affected, or whether it is considered non-standard.

(iii) A few verb prefixes can be stressed or unstressed, usually with a difference in meaning, see **20.7**. Nouns derived from these verbs normally keep the same stress as the original verb:

über′**fah**ren *run over* ′**üb**erfahren *cross over* ′**Üb**erfahrt *crossing*

über′**le**gen *consider* ′**üb**erlegen *put/lay over* Über′**le**gung *consideration*

(iv) The prefix *miss-* is variable with verbs, see **20.7.3**, but with nouns in *miss-* the prefix is always stressed:

miss′**brau**chen *misuse* ′**Miss**brauch *misuse*

(v) The prefix *un-* is usually stressed in nouns and adjectives if the form with *un-* is a straightforward negative of the form without *un-*, see **20.2.2j** and **20.3.2b**:

schuldig *guilty* ′**un**schuldig *innocent* Wetter *weather* ′**Un**wetter *bad weather*

However, **with some adjectives** *un-* **is not stressed**. This is especially (but not always) the case if there is no corresponding adjective without *un-*, or if there is some change of meaning other than simple negation, e.g.:

unauf′**hör**lich *incessant* uner′**hört** *outrageous* un′**mög**lich *impossible*

In addition, *un-* is typically not stressed in adjectives with the prefix *un-* and the suffix *-bar*, or with the suffix *-lich* where it corresponds to English *-able* or *-ible*, cf. **20.3.1**.

unbe′**wohn**bar *uninhabitable* unent′**behr**lich *indispensable*

(d) Stress in words of foreign origin

(i) Many German words of French, Greek or Latin origin have a different stress pattern to native words.

They are characteristically stressed on the **final syllable**, e.g.:

ak′**tiv**	feu′**dal**	Phy′**sik**	Reper′**toire**
Al′**tar**	Konso′**nant**	Poli′**zist**	Ro′**man**
Biolo′**gie**	Kon′**trast**	Reforma′**tion**	Stu′**dent**
Ele′**ganz**	Na′**tur**	Re′**gime**	Universi′**tät**

Exceptionally, a **few words in -** *ik* are stressed on the penultimate syllable, e.g. *'Go thik, Gram 'ma tik, ' Lo gik*. When *-er* is suffixed to words in stressed *-ik*, the stress shifts back a syllable, e.g. *' Phy siker, Po ' lit iker*.

(ii) Foreign words with some endings are **stressed on the penultimate syllable**, in particular words in *-as*, *-is*, *-os*, *-us* or *-um* and those with the vowel [ə] in the final syllable:

ʹ**Al**bum	Chiʹ**ne**se	Laʹ**ven**del	renʹ**ta**bel	Sozioʹ**lo**ge
ʹ**At**las	Faʹ**mi**lie	Pasʹ**sa**ge	Schokoʹ**la**de	Taʹ**be**lle
Briʹ**ga**de	ʹ**Kos**mos	Progʹ**no**se	Soziaʹ**lis**mus	ʹ**Zen**trum

Note the different treatment of words spelled with final *-ie*. If it is pronounced [iː] it is stressed, e.g. *Biolo ' gie*, but if it is pronounced [jə] the preceding syllable is stressed, e.g. *Fa 'mi lie*.

(iii) Words with the suffixes *-on* and *-or* are usually stressed on the preceding syllable, e.g.:

ʹ**A**utor	ʹ**Dä**mon	Diʹ**rek**tor	ʹ**D**oktor	Proʹ**fes**sor	ʹ**Trak**tor

In these words the stress shifts when the plural ending *-en* is added:

Auʹ**tor**en Däʹ**mon**en Direkʹ**tor**en Dokʹ**tor**en Profesʹ**sor**en Trakʹ**tor**en

Motor can be stressed on either syllable, i.e. *' Mo tor* or *Mo' tor*, but the plural is always *Mo' tor en*.

(iv) Adjectives in *-isch* from foreign roots (see **20.3.1e**) are stressed on the preceding syllable:

bioʹ**lo**gisch ʹ**mo**disch musiʹ**ka**lisch noʹ**ma**disch

(v) Although stress on the final or penultimate syllable is generally characteristic of foreign words, there are many which are stressed on the first syllable, e.g.:

ʹ**Al**batros ʹ**Al**gebra ʹ**Kä**nguru ʹ**Ko**rridor ʹ**Pub**likum

21.2 Capital letters

The basic rules are that **initial capital letters are used**:

- for the **first word in a sentence** (or a line of poetry)
- for **all nouns**, e.g. der Sack, die Schwierigkeit, das Bürgertum, die Pfirsiche
- for the **'polite' second person pronoun** *Sie* and all its forms, e.g. *Ihnen, Ihr*, etc., see **3.3**
- for **proper names**, e.g. Frankfurt, Deutschland, das Schwarze Meer

The application of these rules gives rise to a few difficult issues as explained in this section.

21.2.1 Capital letters with nouns and proper names

(a) Other parts of speech used as nouns are written with an initial capital letter

beim Lesen	das Für und Wider	das Ich	das Entweder-Oder
eine Drei	ein Drittel	der Vorsitzende	Bekanntes
alles Gute	nichts Schlechtes		

Inconsistencies in the previous spelling rules have been eliminated, and, in principle, all adjectives used as nouns are spelled with an initial capital letter, e.g.:

im Allgemeinen *in general*   im Großen und Ganzen *in general*

alles Mögliche *everything possible*   aufs Neue *afresh*

However, adjectives without an ending are spelled with a small letter in some idiomatic expressions:

durch dick und dünn	*through thick and thin*	von nah und fern	*from near and far*
gegen bar	*for cash*	über kurz oder lang	*sooner or later*
schwarz auf weiß	*in black and white*	von klein auf	*from childhood*

Declined adjectives in a few idiomatic expressions can be spelled with a small **or** a capital letter:

binnen kurzem/Kurzem	*in a short time*	von weitem/Weitem	*from afar*
seit langem/Langem	*for a long time*	bei weitem/Weitem	*by far*
ohne weiteres/Weiteres	*without thinking*		

(b) Adjectives are not spelled with a capital letter if a noun before or after is understood

> Das rote Kleid hat mir nicht gepasst, ich musste das **blaue** nehmen
> Es ist wohl das **schnellste** von diesen drei Autos

(c) The determiners *ander* **,** *beide* **and** *ein* **have small letters in most contexts**

This applies even in contexts where it would appear that they are being used as nouns, e.g.:

etwas **anderes**   diese **beiden**   das **eine** und das **andere**

However, *ander* can be used with an initial capital letter if it refers to something or somebody specific:

das Leben der **Anderen**   *the life of others*

(d) Usage with geographical and other proper names

(i) Adjectives forming part of geographical or other names referring to something or somebody unique have an initial capital letter:

das Schwarze Meer	*the Black Sea*	Karl der Erste	*Charles the First*
das Neue Testament	*the New Testament*	die Olympischen Spiele	*the Olympic Games*
das Auswärtige Amt	*the Foreign Office*	der Eiserne Vorhang	*the Iron Curtain*
die Französische Revolution	*the French Revolution*		

However, the following, and others like them, are not names of unique things, and they are spelled with a small letter:

die goldene Hochzeit *golden wedding* der schwarze Markt *the black market*

(ii) Indeclinable adjectives in *-er* from the names of towns and countries have an initial capital:

der Kölner Dom   die Berliner Straßen   das Wiener Rathaus

(iii) Adjectives formed from proper names with the suffix *-isch* (or *-sch*) normally have a small letter:

die goetheschen Gedichte   das elisabethanische Drama   das ohmsche Gesetz

These adjectives can be used with an apostrophe after the name to emphasize the person involved, in which case they are written with an initial capital, e.g. *die Grimm'schen Märchen*.

(e) Usage with *deutsch* and other adjectives of nationality

(i) Adjectives of nationality are written with a capital letter when used as a noun to refer to the language or the school subject (see **6.4.6a**):

Er kann kein Wort Deutsch   Das ist (kein) gutes Deutsch   auf Deutsch *in German*
Wir haben Deutsch in der Schule   Er hat eine Drei in Deutsch

Sie spricht, kann, lernt, liest (kein, gut) Deutsch, Russisch, Englisch
Das Buch ist in Deutsch und Englisch erschienen

As an adjective used as a noun *der/die Deutsche* 'German' is always spelled with a capital letter.

(ii) When used as adjectives they have a small letter:

das deutsche Volk   ein deutsches Lied   die deutsche Bundesrepublik
italienische Weine   ein amerikanisches Schiff   dieser französische Käse

This runs counter to English usage, which requires a capital letter ('the German people', 'Italian wines', etc.). Only in names is a capital used in German, e.g. *die Österreichischen Bundesbahnen*.

(iii) They have a small letter when used as the equivalent of an adverb:

Der Minister hat mit ihr deutsch gesprochen
Redet sie jetzt deutsch oder niederländisch?

(f) Capital and small letters with superlatives

(i) Superlatives with *am* (see **6.5.3a**) are spelled with a small letter:
am besten, am schönsten
(ii) Superlative forms used with the definite article are written with a capital letter, e.g.:
Es ist das Beste, wenn wir ihr alles sagen.
(iii) Superlatives with the preposition *aufs* (see **7.7.2a**) can be written with a capital **or** a small letter:
aufs Heftigste/heftigste

(g) Possessive pronouns with the form of an adjective after a definite article

(see **5.2.1d**). These can be spelled with a small or a capital initial letter, e.g.:

der meine/Meine *mine*, der deine/Deine *yours*, der uns(e)re/Uns(e)re *ours*
der meinige/Meinige *mine*, der deinige/Deinige *yours*, der uns(e)rige/Uns(e)rige *ours*

21.2.2 Nouns used as other parts of speech

These are written with a small letter, in particular:

(i) nouns used as prepositions, see **18.4**, e.g.:
angesichts, kraft, mittels, statt, trotz

(ii) nouns used as adverbs, e.g.:
abends, anfangs, kreuz und quer, mitten, morgens, rechtens, rings, sonntags, teils, willens

Capital letters are used for words denoting a part of the day used in conjunction with *heute*, *gestern* and *morgen*: *gestern Abend*, *heute Mittag*, etc. (see **7.3.2**).

(iii) nouns used in indefinite expressions of number, e.g.:

ein bisschen *a little* ein paar *a few* (see **5.5.6**)

(iv) some nouns used as adjectives with the verbs *sein, bleiben* and *werden*, i.e.: *Angst, Bange, Gram, Leid, Pleite, Schade* and *Schuld:*

Mir ist/wird **angst**	*I am/am becoming afraid*	Die Firma ist **pleite**	*The firm is bankrupt*
Ihr wurde **bang** ums Herz	*Her heart sank*	Es ist **schade**	*It's a pity*
Er blieb ihr **gram**	*He bore her ill-will*	Sie war **schuld** daran	*It was her fault*

With other verbs, these words have an initial capital letter, e.g. *Ich habe Angst*.

(v) Nouns which have become idiomatic separable prefixes are spelled with a small letter, see **21.3.1a**, e.g. *stattfinden, teilnehmen*.

21.2.3 Pronouns and related forms

All forms of the 'polite' second person pronoun *Sie* are spelled with a capital letter, see **Table 3.1**, e.g. *Sie, Ihnen, Ihre Frau*, etc.

The other second person pronouns *du*, *ihr* and their forms may be spelled with small initial letters or capitals in letter-writing, e.g. *Ich danke dir/Dir recht herzlich für deinen/Deinen Brief*.

No other pronouns have initial capital letters (except when they begin a sentence).

21.3 One word or two?

The general rule is that **compounds are written as a single word if they are felt to be a single concept**, but they are written separately if the individual words are still felt to retain their full meaning. The word stress often gives a clue to this, as a true compound only has one main stress, whereas separate words are stressed independently. Compare:

ʹgut ʹschreiben *write well* ʹgutschreiben *credit* ʹso ʹweit *so far* soʹweit *on the whole*

The spelling reform of 1996 and subsequent revisions aimed to simplify what had always been a problematic aspect of German spelling rules, but in practice there are still many difficulties, much permitted variation and areas of uncertainty, and after subsequent revisions the 'old' and 'new' spellings are permitted in several cases.

21.3.1 Prefixed verbs

When nouns, verbs or adjectives are combined with verb roots the problem arises of whether they have become separable prefixes and written together with the verb, or remain separate words:

(a) Combinations of noun + verb

(i) In most cases the nouns are considered to be separate words rather than as prefixes and written separately, with a capital letter, e.g.:

Rad fahren: sie fährt Rad, ich fuhr Rad, wir sind Rad gefahren
Ski laufen: ich laufe Ski, sie lief Ski, sie sind Ski gelaufen

(ii) An exception is made of the following nouns, which are taken to have lost their full meaning in combination with a verb and are treated as separable prefixes:

heim- irre- preis- stand- statt- teil- wett- wunder-

Examples:

heimgehen	*go home*	standhalten	*stand firm*	wettmachen	*make up for*
irreführen	*mislead*	stattfinden	*take place*	wundernehmen	*surprise*
preisgeben	*expose*	teilnehmen	*participate*		

This also applies to *leidtun*, with *leid-* treated as a separable prefix, as are a few other forms, including some which do not exist as separate words, e.g. *feilbieten*, *kundgeben*.

(iii) Four verbs can be spelled as one word or two, i.e.:

achtgeben/Acht geben	*take care*	achthaben/Acht haben	*take care*
haltmachen/Halt machen	*stop*	maßhalten/Maß halten	*be moderate*

With these, if the prefix is written separately, it can be spelled with a small **or** a capital letter, e.g.: *Ich gebe Acht/acht, sie hat Acht/acht gegeben.*

(iv) With the verbs *eislaufen* 'skate' and *kopfstehen* 'be upside down', 'be in turmoil' the noun is treated as a separable prefix and spelled with a small letter, e.g. *Sie läuft oft eis*; *Ich bin 20 Jahre nicht eisgelaufen* (*Presse*); *Wegen der studentischen Unruhen stand Europa kopf* (*SGT*).

(v) A few combinations have alternative forms with the noun written separately (with a capital letter) **or** as an inseparable prefix, e.g.:

> *Dank sagen/danksagen*: Er sagte allen Anwesenden Dank/Er danksagte allen Anwesenden
> *Staub saugen/staubsaugen*: Heute hat er im Flur Staub gesaugt/Heute hat er im Flur gestaubsaugt

Similarly *gewährleisten/Gewähr leisten* 'guarantee', *haushalten/Haus halten* 'be economical', *hohnlachen/Hohn lachen* 'laugh scornfully'.

(b) Combinations of adjective or adverb + verb

(i) These combinations are spelled as single words if they have a distinct idiomatic meaning, e.g.:

abwärtsgehen	*go downhill*	krankschreiben	*certify sick*	richtigstellen	*correct*
bloßstellen	*expose*	kurztreten	*go easy*	schwarzarbeiten	*moonlight*
fernsehen	*watch TV*	leichtmachen	*make sth. easy*	schwerfallen	*be difficult*
gutschreiben	*credit*	nahelegen	*suggest*	übrigbleiben	*be left over*
kaltstellen	*exclude*	offenlassen	*leave open*	weismachen	*make sb. believe sth.*

With verbs like these, the adjective typically cannot be used in the comparative in conjunction with the verb, or be modified by *sehr* or *ganz*: Thus, *krank* is written separately in *Die Pilze haben meinen Bruder krank gemacht* 'The toadstools made my brother ill', because *krank* has its usual meaning and you can also say *Die Pilze haben meinen Bruder sehr krank gemacht*. On the other hand, *krank* is written together with the verb in *Der Arzt hat Frank krankgeschrieben*, because

krankschreiben is an idiomatic combination and *krank* cannot be modified with *sehr*.

(ii) The adjectives *fest*, *tot* and *voll* form many idiomatic compound verbs which are always written together, e.g.:

festhalten	*keep hold of*	totschießen	*shoot dead*	vollgießen	*fill up*
feststellen	*find out*	totschweigen	*hush up*	volltanken	*fill up (car)*

(iii) If the adjective expresses a property which is the result of the action of the verb, the two parts can be written together **or** separately, e.g.:

bekannt machen/bekanntmachen	*make known*	klar werden/klarwerden	*become clear*
gar kochen/garkochen	*cook through*	klein schneiden/kleinschneiden	*cut up small*
kaputt machen/kaputtmachen	*break, smash*	leer essen/leeressen	*eat up*

In general, the spelling with two words is preferred, and if the first element is a phrase (or derives from a phrase), e.g. *instand setzen* 'get into working order', it is always written separately from the verb (see also **21.3.1**).

(iv) Prefixes consisting of a preposition with *-einander* are always written together with the verb, e.g.:

aneinanderfügen	*join together*	auseinandergehen	*part*	Durcheinanderbringen	*mix up*

(v) Some verbs look as if they have prefixes from adjectives or adverbs, but they are actually formed from compound nouns and the first element does not separate, e.g.:

> frühstücken *breakfast* (from *das Frühstück*) → ich frühstücke, ich habe gefrühstückt, etc.

Similarly: *handhaben* 'manipulate', *langweilen* 'bore', *liebkosen* 'caress', *wetteifern* 'compete'.

(c) Combinations of verb or participle + verb are written as separate words

gefangen nehmen	*take captive*	spazieren gehen	*go for a walk*
laufen lernen	*learn to walk*		

However, the combinations *kennen lernen/kennenlernen* 'get to know' and *verloren gehen/verlorengehen* 'be lost' can be written as two words or one, as can

combinations with *bleiben* or *lassen*, most of which have developed a single idiomatic meaning, e.g.: *stehen bleiben/stehenbleiben* 'stop', *fallen lassen/fallenlassen* 'drop'.

The past participle of *gefangen nehmen* can be written as a single word when it is used as an adjective, e.g. *die gefangengenommenen Terroristen*.

(d) Combinations with the verb *sein* are always written as separate words

This applies even with forms which are usually separable prefixes:

da sein	*be there*	los sein	*be going on*	zufrieden sein	*be satisfied*
inne sein	*be conscious of*	vorbei sein	*be past*	zurück sein	*be back*

(e) Defective compound verbs are always written as a single word

These are verbs which have a special meaning and are only used in the form of the infinitive and/or the past participle. They are especially frequent in technical language.

(i) Some compounds only exist in the infinitive form:

brustschwimmen	*swim breast-stroke*	segelfliegen	*glide*
kettenrauchen	*chain-smoke*	wettlaufen	*race*

For instance, you can say *ich gehe morgen segelfliegen*, but not **ich segelfliege*

(ii) Some compounds are only used in the infinitive and the past participle:

notlanden	*make an emergency landing*	seiltanzen	*walk the tightrope*
schutzimpfen	*inoculate*	uraufführen	*perform for the first time*

With these, you can say, for example, *Das neue Stück wird morgen uraufgeführt*, but not **Morgen uraufführt man das neue Stück*.

21.3.2 Combinations of preposition + noun

These have the function of adverbs or prepositions and they are written separately if the individual words are still felt to retain independent meanings:

mit Bezug auf, unter Bezug auf   zu Ende gehen   in/außer Kraft treten, sein

On the other hand, such adverbs or prepositions are written as single words if they are considered to be single entities, in particular:

anhand infolge   vonnöten   vorderhand zurzeit

beiseite inmitten vonstatten zuhanden   zuzeiten

Alternative forms are permitted in some set phrases where it is open to question whether the words involved retain their separate meanings or not:

außerstand/außer Stand setzen, sein   zumute/zu Mute sein
imstande/im Stande sein   zurande/zu Rande kommen
infrage/in Frage stellen   zuschanden/zu Schanden machen, werden
instand/in Stand setzen   sich etwas zuschulden/zu Schulden kommen lassen
nachhause/nach Hause gehen   zustande/zu Stande bringen
zugrunde/zu Grunde gehen   zutage/zu Tage bringen, fördern
zuhause/zu Hause sein   zuwege/zu Wege bringen
zuleide/zu Leide tun

Some prepositions from complex phrases with a noun also have alternative spellings:

aufgrund/auf Grund zugunsten/zu Gunsten mithilfe/mit Hilfe anstelle/an Stelle

21.3.3 Nouns or adverbs with a participle or an adjective

Compounds which involve an underlying phrase are written together.

das bahnbrechende Werk (from *sich eine Bahn brechend)*   *the pioneering work*

der angsterfüllte alte Mann (from *von Angst erfüllt)*   *the terrified old man*

ein himmelschreiendes Unrecht (from *zum Himmel schreiend*) *an outrageous injustice*

die staubbedeckten Bücher (from *mit Staub bedeckt*)   *the books covered with dust*

Other combinations of an adjective with a participle can always be written as separate words:

ein Aufsehen erregendes Ereignis   die Eisen verarbeitende Industrie

However, it is permissible to write the words together if they are felt to express a single idea, e.g.:

eine allein erziehende/alleinerziehende Mutter
klein geschnittene/kleingeschnittene Radieschen
selbst gebackene/selbstgebackene Kekse

If the combination is qualified by an adverb of degree (see **7.5**), and the qualification relates to the whole combination, then it is written together, e.g.:

eine äußerst kraftraubende Trainingsmethode

21.3.4 Compound adjectives

(a) Combinations of adjectives are written together

(i) if they apply equally, e.g.:

blaurot nasskalt süßsauer

(ii) if the first qualifies the second, indicating a greater or lesser degree of the quality, e.g.:

dunkelgrau halbtot lauwarm

(b) If the first adjective defines the second more closely, they may be written together or separately

eng verwandte/engverwandte Sprachen,	eine halb leere/halbleere Flasche
hoch begabte/hochbegabte Schülerinnen	der rechts abbiegende/ rechtsabbiegende LKW
schwer verständliche/schwerverständliche Details	weit gehende/weitgehende Forderungen.

In general, the spelling with a single word is considered preferable.

(c) Combinations of a participle with an adjective are written separately

e.g.: *kochend heiß*.

21.3.5 Compound adverbs with *so-*, *wie-* and *wo-*

Note the difference between the following pairs (see **17.3.6** for details on the conjunctions in *so-*):

sobald *as soon as*	so bald *so soon*
solange *as long as*	so lange *so long*
sooft *as often as*	so oft *so often*
wieweit? *to what extent?*	wie weit? *how far*, *what distance?*
woanders *elsewhere* (see **7.1.5d**)	wo anders? *where else?*
womöglich *possibly*	wo möglich *if possible*

The conjunction *sodass* 'so that' (see **17.5.2**) can also be spelled with two words, i.e. *so dass*, although this is less frequent in practice.

Most combinations with *viel* and *wenig* are spelled as separate words, e.g. *so viel*, *wie viel*, *zu wenig*, see **5.5.25e**, but when used as a conjunction in the meaning 'as far as' *soviel* is written as a single word, see **17.7d**.

21.4 Other points of spelling

21.4.1 -*ss* or -*ß*?

The distinction between *ss* and *ß* (called *eszett* in North Germany and *scharfes s* in South Germany and Austria) is universally observed in Germany and Austria. In Switzerland, though, no distinction is made and *ss* is used in all cases. Foreign learners are usually recommended to follow the majority practice.

(a) -*ss* is used if the preceding vowel is short

> dass, der Fluss, die Flüsse, gewiss, lassen, er lässt
> müssen, es muss, wissen, ich wusste, das Wasser

(b) -*ß* is used if the preceding vowel is long or a diphthong

> beißen, die Buße, der Fuß, die Füße, groß, der Gruß, der Maß, die Maße, die Straße

The letter *ß* now fits with the rule in German which stipulates that long vowels are followed by a single consonant in the spelling.

Some family names are always spelled with a final -*ss* as a matter of family tradition e.g.:

> Günther Grass, Theodor Heuss, Richard Strauss (but: Johann Strauß), Carl Zeiss

ß was originally only a small letter, but its use as a capital is now permitted, e.g. *BONNER STRAßE*. However, many people still write -*SS*- in capitals: *STRASSE*.

21.4.2 The omission of letters: special cases

(a) The plural of nouns in -*ee* and -*ie*

These nouns do not add an extra -*e* in the spelling of the plural, even if the plural ending is pronounced as a distinct syllable, e.g.:

der See, die Seen [zeːən] die Industrie, die Industrien [ɪndʊstriːən] das Knie, die Knie [kniːə]

Similarly in some verb forms, see **10.2.1d**:

 knien [kniːən] *kneel* wir schrien [ʃriːən] *we cried*

(b) Double vowels are simplified under *Umlaut*

(i) in plurals (see **1.2.1a**): der Saal *room* – die **Säle**
(ii) in diminutives (see **20.2.1a**): das Paar *pair* – das **Pär**chen

(c) Letters are not omitted in compounds

i.e. sequences of three letters are not simplified:

 Brennnessel *stinging nettle* Schifffahrt *travel by ship* Schlussszene *closing scene* Schneeeule *snowy owl*

21.5 Commas

Unlike English, the comma in German is used to mark off grammatical units, **not** to signal a pause when speaking. The rules for using commas are fixed, they are adhered to quite strictly (they are taught systematically in schools), and deviations from them are considered to be as serious as spelling mistakes.

This principle that commas are used to mark off larger syntactic units means that, unlike English, adverbs and adverbial phrases within a clause are **never** separated by commas. Compare:

Gestern konnte sie ihm helfen	*Yesterday, she was able to help him*
Sie konnte ihm jedoch helfen	*She was, however, able to help him*
Bringen Sie mir bitte eine Zeitung	*Bring me a newspaper, please*

21.5.1 The use of commas with coordinated clauses and phrases

i.e. those linked by one of the coordinating conjunctions, like *aber*, *oder* and *und* (see **17.1**)

(a) Clauses and phrases joined by *und* or *oder* do not need a comma

 Die alte Dame öffnete ihm die Tür und er ging in den Garten
 Christa rief an und er erzählte ihr, was passiert war
 Ich gehe morgen ins Theater oder besuche ein Konzert

However, a comma can be used if the writer feels the need to make the sentence clearer or avoid ambiguity:

 Sie begegnete ihrem Trainer, und dessen Mannschaft musste lange auf ihn warten

Parallel subordinate clauses linked by *und* or *oder* do not have a comma between them:

> Er sagte, dass ich sofort kommen müsste und dass er mir etwas sehr Wichtiges zu berichten hätte
> Sie wird nicht kommen, weil sie nicht kann oder weil sie einfach keine Lust hat

No comma is necessary before conjunctions with a similar meaning to *oder* and *und*, e.g. *beziehungsweise, sowie, weder ... noch*, etc. (see **17.1.3** and **17.1.4**).

(b) A comma is used before the conjunctions *aber***,** *denn***,** *doch***,** *jedoch* **and** *sondern*

> Er hat ihr zwei Fragen gestellt, aber sie hat dazu nichts gesagt
> Ich machte Licht, denn es war inzwischen dunkel geworden
> Der Lohn ist karg, doch man genießt die abendlichen Stunden
> Das Kleid war nicht grün, sondern hellblau

(c) A comma is used between parallel clauses and phrases which have no linking conjunction

> Das Licht geht aus, der Vorhang hebt auf, das Spiel beginnt
> Berlin, Paris, London, Madrid sind europäische Hauptstädte

21.5.2 The use of commas with subordinate clauses

All subordinate clauses are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas, whether they are introduced by a conjunction or not:

> Sie hat mich gefragt, ob ich morgen nach Halberstadt fahren wollte
> Weil ich morgen arbeiten muss, werde ich keine Zeit haben
> Sie sagte, sie habe diesen Mann nie vorher gesehen
> Unsere Lage wäre unmöglich gewesen, hätte er diesen Plan nicht ausgedacht

21.5.3 The use of commas with infinitive and participial clauses

(a) As a general rule the use of a comma with these clauses is optional

> Sie beschloss(,) den Betrag möglichst bald zu überweisen
> Ich hoffe sehr(,) Ihnen mit dieser Auskunft geholfen zu haben
> Er kam(,) aus vollem Halse lachend(,) auf mich zu
> Er sank(,) zu Tode getroffen(,) zu Boden

In practice it is more usual not to insert a comma, especially with short infinitive or participial clauses. However, a comma will usually be put in if there is a danger of ambiguity or misunderstanding. For example, a comma is needed in the following sentences to show which part of the sentence *heute* belongs to:

Das Kind versprach heute, nichts mehr von dem Kuchen zu essen
Das Kind versprach, heute nichts mehr von dem Kuchen zu essen

(b) There are a few exceptions to this general rule

(i) A comma is **never** inserted in the case of 'enclosed' infinitives with the 'semi-auxiliary' verbs (see **11.2.4**):

Diesen Vorgang wollen wir zu erklären versuchen
..., da sie den eben Angekommenen zu kennen schien

(ii) A comma **must** be inserted

- if the infinitive clause is introduced by **(an)***statt*, *außer*, *ohne* or *um* (see **11.2.6**):

  Ich konnte nichts tun, um ihn zu beruhigen
  Er hat das Haus verlassen, ohne gesehen zu werden

- if the infinitive clause depends on a noun:

  Umsonst machte er einen letzten Versuch, seine Frau zu retten
  Ich habe nicht die geringste Absicht, ihr 1000 Euro zu leihen

- if the infinitive clause depends on an anticipatory *es* (see **3.6.2e** and **3.6.2f**), or a prepositional adverb (see **11.2.2f**):

  Ich konnte es kaum ertragen, ihn so leiden zu sehen
  Sie hat ihn daran erinnert, Blumen für seine Mutter zu kaufen

However, a comma is not obligatory in the last two contexts if the infinitive clause simply consists of *zu* and an infinitive, e.g.: *Der Franzose fasste den Plan(,) abzureisen*; *Sie liebt es(,) zu tanzen*; *Uwe dachte nicht daran(,) zu gehen*.

21.5.4 The use of commas with other parts of speech and phrases

i.e. with interjections, exclamations, dislocations, explanatory phrases, phrases in apposition and parenthetical words and phrases. If these are seen as separate elements they are normally separated from the rest of the sentence by commas, e.g.:

Ach, kannst du morgen wirklich nicht zu uns kommen?
Kurz und gut, die Lage ist kritisch
Hast du sie tatsächlich gestern im Theater gesehen, **die Monika**?
Wissen Sie, ich kann Ihnen da leider nicht mehr helfen
Das macht, **grob gerechnet**, vierzig Prozent von unserem Absatz aus
Ich habe jetzt**, wie gesagt**, keine Zeit dazu
Wir wurden durch Herrn Meiring, **den Direktor des Instituts**, aufs Herzlichste empfangen

Comparative phrases introduced by *als* or *wie* are **not** normally separated off by commas, e.g.:

Sie ist jetzt wohl größer als ihre ältere Schwester
Dieser Mann sah aus wie ein Schornsteinfeger

21.5.5 Commas with a number of adjectives qualifying a noun

Two or more adjectives qualifying a noun are separated by commas if they are of equal importance, i.e. if they could be linked by *und*, e.g.:

> gute, billige Äpfel (the apples are good **and** cheap)

No comma is used if the second adjective forms a single idea with the noun:

> gute englische Äpfel (i.e. English apples which are good)

In practice, this rule is not always followed consistently (any more than the similar rule in English is), and many German writers use no commas in any series of adjectives.

21.6 Other punctuation marks

German usage differs from English in respect of the use of some other punctuation marks.

21.6.1 The semi-colon is little used in German

In principle, the semi-colon is used as in English. However, a comma or a full stop, as appropriate, tends to be preferred in German. In particular, it is much more common in German than in English to have main clauses not linked by a conjunction, and these are commonly separated by commas:

> Meine Schwester kommt morgen früh mit dem ICE aus Halle, sie will ein paar Tage Ruhe haben

21.6.2 A colon is used to introduce direct speech

This means that a colon is used rather than a comma after a verb of saying:

> Dann sagte sie: „Ich kann es nicht".

Similarly with reported phrases and the like:

> Das Sprichwort heißt: Der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamm

When a colon introduces a full sentence, it is usually followed by a capital letter, but a small letter is now permitted: *Das Sprichwort heißt: der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamm*.

21.6.3 Quotation marks

The first of a set of inverted commas is placed on the line, i.e. **not** above it as in English. This applies equally to single and double quotation marks:

> Dann sagte sie: „Ich kann ihn überhaupt nicht verstehen."

Er fragte mich: „Kennen Sie Brechts Stück‚Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder'?"

In practice, double rather than single quotation marks are always preferred in German.

As placing inverted commas on the line was sometimes difficult with conventional typewriters, it became common for a while to place them above, as in English. However, recent word-processing programs usually standardize on the traditional German placing if German spelling is selected in the program.

21.6.4 The exclamation mark

(a) The exclamation mark is used after interjections and exclamations

Ach!   Donnerwetter!   Pfui Teufel!   Guten Tag!

(b) Commands are followed by an exclamation mark

Komm sofort zurück!   Hören Sie sofort auf!
Seid doch vorsichtig, Kinder! Einsteigen und die Türen schließen!

Standard usage traditionally required the use of the exclamation mark with commands in German, but this rule is not always followed nowadays, and many Germans prefer to use a full stop, especially if the command is not felt to be particularly forceful.

(c) An exclamation mark can be used after the words of address at the beginning of a letter

Sehr geehrter Herr Dr. Fleischmann!   Liebe Petra!

This traditional usage has now largely been replaced by the use of the comma, as in English. However, if a comma is used, the first word of the letter proper should not have a capital letter, since it is not the beginning of a sentence, e.g.:

> Lieber Martin,
> es hat uns sehr gefreut, wieder mal von Dir zu hören ...

List of sources

The examples illustrating points of grammar and usage have been drawn from a wide range of sources and registers, spoken as well as written. Many of the unattributed examples have been simplified or amended from modern texts, from phrases and sentences heard in conversation or on radio and television, etc. and in large number from the *DeReKo* corpus of modern spoken and written German compiled at the *Institut für Deutsche Sprache* in Mannheim. Longer examples quoted verbatim or with minor simplifications have been attributed wherever possible. The following sources have provided such material:

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Chr. Wolf
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Newspapers

The following newspapers or periodicals have provided material. Some titles are abbreviated as indicated.

BILD	*BILD-Zeitung*
BMP	*Berliner Morgenpost*
BZ	*Berliner Zeitung*
BrZ	*Braunschweiger Zeitung*
	Falter
	forum
	FOCUS
FAZ	*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*
FR	*Frankfurter Rundschau*
HA	*Hamburger Abendblatt*
HMP	*Hamburger Morgenpost*
HAZ	*Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*
	Horizont
KlZ	*Kleine Zeitung*
	Kurier
LV	*Leipziger Volkszeitung*
Lux	*Luxemburger Tageblatt*
MM	*Mannheimer Morgen*
ND	*Neues Deutschland*
NKZ	*Neue Kronen-Zeitung*
NZZ	*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*
	Nordkurier
NüN	*Nürnberger Nachrichten*
NUZ	*Nürnberger Zeitung*
OH	*Odenwälder Heimatzeitung*
	(*Die*) *Presse*
	Quick
RhZ	*Rhein-Zeitung*
SbgN	*Salzburger Nachrichten*
SGT	*Sankt Galler Tagblatt*
	(*Der*) *Spiegel*
	(*Der*) *Standard*
	Stern
SZ	*Süddeutsche Zeitung*
taz	*Die Tageszeitung*
TA	*Tages-Anzeiger*
TT	*Tiroler Tageszeitung*

(Die) Welt

WK   *Wiesbadener Kurier*

(*Die*) *Zeit*

In addition, the Baedeker series of travel guides, Knaur's encyclopedia, the *Protokolle* of the Landtag of Sachsen-Anhalt and the *Vorlesungsverzeichnis* of Innsbruck university have provided examples, as well as the radio and television stations ARD, ZDF and SWF.

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This list gives a selection of the most important works which were consulted for this and previous editions of *Hammer's German Grammar and Usage.* Major dictionaries and general accounts of German and English grammar are given first, followed by a selection of works consulted which contain more extensive accounts of specific points of grammar and usage, arranged according to the individual chapters of this book.

In principle, the entries are limited to major reference works. More detailed information, especially in journals and collected volumes, is available in: H. Frosch et al., *Bibliographie zur deutschen Grammatik 1994-2002* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2003), *Bibliographie zur deutschen Grammatik 2003-2007* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2008) and *Bibliographie zur deutschen Grammatik 2008-2012* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2013). Details of these and more recent work on German grammar are available online through the *grammis* website of the *Institut für Deutsche Sprache* in Mannheim.

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   (*Atlas zur deutschen Alltagssprache* – regional variation in spoken German)
https://dgd.ids-mannheim.de/dgd/pragdb.dgd_extern.welcome
   (*Datenbank für gesprochenes Deutsch* – corpus of spoken German)
https://www.dwds.de
   (*Der deutsche Wortschatz von 1600 bis heute* – collection of major dictionaries, with corpora and statistics)
https://www1.ids-mannheim.de/kl/projekte/korpora/
   (*DeReKo – Deutsches Referenzkorpus* – corpus of written German with over 50 billion words)
https://daad-gda.sprache-interaktion.de/
   (*Gesprochenes Deutsch für die Auslandsgermanistik* – collection of authentic spoken material for teaching)
http://lagb-education.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/terminology-9-clean.pdf
   (*Grammatical terminology* – recommended by the Linguistics Association for use in UK

schools)

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https://www.owid.de/

    (*Online-Wortschatz-Informationssystem Deutsch* – information on aspects of German vocabulary)

https://www.rechtschreibrat.com/

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Glossary

One of the perennial difficulties about grammar and language is the confusion caused by the fact that the same feature is often known by a number of names – and this problem can be compounded by the fact that what appears to be the same name can refer to quite different features in other languages and national traditions. Thus what are called in this book the 'progressive tenses' of English (e.g. *I am doing*, *she will be working*) are sometimes called 'continuous tenses', and the German 'past tense' is often referred to as the 'imperfect tense' or the 'preterite'.

In order to address this difficulty, the English terminology in this book has been standardized as far as possible by adopting the recommendations of the Linguistic Association of Great Britain (available to download from its website), with further reference to R.L. Trask, *A Dictionary of Grammatical Terms in Linguistics*, Routledge: London and New York 1993. The most usual German equivalents for all terms are given in italics under the English entry. These have been taken in the main from the *Verzeichnis grundlegender grammatischer Fachausdrücke* available for download on the website of the *Institut für Deutsche Sprache* and compared with the most recent edition of the DUDEN *Grammatik der deutschen Gegenwartssprache*, 9th ed., Dudenverlag: Berlin 2016.

The explanations include references to sections or chapters where more detail is given. Words in small capitals are themselves explained in the glossary.

accusative *Akkusativ*	a CASE (2.2) which indicates the DIRECT OBJECT of TRANSITIVE verbs (16.3): *Ich sehe den Hund*. It is also used after some PREPOSITIONS (18.1, 18.3): *Ich gehe durch den Wald*, as well as in some ADVERBIAL constructions (2.2.2): *Sie kommt jeden Tag*.
accusative object *Akkusativobjekt*	the DIRECT OBJECT of the verb, in the ACCUSATIVE CASE (16.3): *Der Wolf frisst den Esel*.
adjective	a word which modifies, or describes a NOUN (Chapter 6). **Attributive** adjectives are used before a noun: *die schöne Stadt*; **predicative** adjectives

Adjektiv	are typically used after a COPULAR VERB (16.6): *Die Stadt ist schön*.
adverb *Adverb*	a word which modifies a VERB, an ADJECTIVE or a whole CLAUSE, often giving extra information on **how, when, where** or **why** (Chapter 7): *Sie singt gut*; *Sie war sehr freundlich*.
adverbial *Adverbiale*	any part of a SENTENCE which has the **function** of an ADVERB (16.1.4). It can be a single word (an adverb), or a phrase, or a whole CLAUSE: *Sie sang gut*; *Sie sang mit einer hellen Stimme*; *Sie sang, als sie in das Zimmer kam*.
agreement *Kongruenz*	copying a grammatical feature from one word to another, so that certain words have ENDINGS according to the words they are used with or refer to. In German, DETERMINERS and ADJECTIVES 'agree' with the NOUN (4.1, 6.1): *dieses Buch*; *mit meinem neuen Auto*, and VERBS 'agree' with their SUBJECT (10.1.4): *ich singe*, *du singst*.
antecedent *Bezugswort*	the noun to which a RELATIVE CLAUSE refers back, e.g. *dieser Mann , den Sie gut kennen*
apposition *Apposition*	a phrase used to modify a NOUN PHRASE without a connecting PREPOSITION is '**in apposition**' to it (2.6): *Wilhelm, der letzte deutsche Kaiser , starb im Exil.*
article *Artikel*	the most important of the DETERMINERS (Chapter 4). German has a **definite article** *der , die , das ,* etc. (= English *the*) and an **indefinite article** *ein , eine ,* etc. (= English *a*).
auxiliary verb *Hilfsverb*	a VERB used in combination with the INFINITIVE or PAST PARTICIPLE of another verb to form a COMPOUND TENSE or the PASSIVE (10.3–10.4): *Karin hat einen Hund gekauft*, or, in the case of the MODAL AUXILIARIES (Chapter 15), to indicate the attitude of the speaker with regard to what is being said: *Sie soll sofort kommen*.
bracket *Verbalklammer/Satzklammer*	the **'bracket' construction** is typical of German CLAUSES, with most words and phrases in a clause bracketed between two parts of the verb (19.1): *Wir [kommen um 17 Uhr in Innsbruck an] .*
cardinal number *Kardinalzahl*	the numerals used in counting (8.1): *eins*, *zwei*, … *hundert*.
case *Fall/Kasus*	indicates the function of a NOUN PHRASE in the CLAUSE (Chapter 2). German has four **cases:** NOMINATIVE *der Vogel*; ACCUSATIVE *den Vogel*; GENITIVE *des Vogels*; and DATIVE *dem Vogel*.
clause *Satz*	a part of a SENTENCE with a VERB and its COMPLEMENTS (16.1). A **main clause** can stand on its own: *Dein Vater kommt* . A **subordinate clause** (Chapter 17) is dependent on another clause in the sentence and is usually introduced by a CONJUNCTION: *Ich weiß, dass dein Vater kommt*.
cleft sentence *Spaltsatz*	a SENTENCE formed by splitting a sentence into two CLAUSES, the first typically introduced in English by *It* and a form of the verb 'to be', e.g. *It was yesterday (that) she saw him in town*. Cleft sentences are rarely used in German (19.2.3a).
comparative *Komparativ/Steigerung*	the form of an ADJECTIVE (6.5) or ADVERB (7.7) used to express a comparison: *schneller*, *höher*, *weiter*.
complement	an element in a CLAUSE which is closely linked to the VERB and completes its meaning (16.1). The most important complements of the verb are its

Ergänzung/Komplement	SUBJECT and OBJECTS.
complement clause *Ergänzungs(neben)satz*	a **subordinate** CLAUSE which has the same role as a verb COMPLEMENT (17.2): *Dass sie gekommen war , hat mich erstaunt* (the clause is the SUBJECT of the verb); *Ich wusste, dass sie gekommen war* (the clause is the DIRECT OBJECT of the verb).
compound tense *zusammengesetzte/mehrteilige Verbform*	a TENSE formed by using an AUXILIARY VERB with the INFINITIVE or PAST PARTICIPLE of another **verb** (10.3), e.g. the PERFECT tense: *Sie hat geschlafen*, or the FUTURE tense: *Sie wird kommen* .
compound word *Kompositum*	a word formed by joining two or more words (20.1): *Kindergarten*, *dunkelrot*.
conditional würde-*Form*	a compound form of KONJUNKTIV II formed from the **past subjunctive** of the AUXILIARY VERB *werden*, i.e. *würde ,* and the INFINITIVE of another verb (10.5.2c, 14.2.3): *Ich würde gehen*.
conditional sentence *Konditionalsatz*	a SENTENCE which expresses a condition, i.e. 'If X, then Y' (14.3). The SUBJUNCTIVE mood is often used in conditional sentences in German.
conjugation *Konjugation/Verbflexion*	the forms or INFLECTION of a VERB, in particular the pattern of ENDINGS and/or **vowel changes** which show AGREEMENT with the SUBJECT and indicate the various TENSES or the MOOD, etc. (Chapter 10): *ich komme*, *du kommst*, *wir kamen*, *wir kämen*, etc.
conjunction *Konjunktion*	a word used to link CLAUSES within a SENTENCE (Chapter 17). **Coordinating conjunctions** link main clauses (e.g. *und*, *aber*), and **subordinating conjunctions** introduce subordinate clauses (e.g. *dass*, *obwohl*, *weil*, *wenn*).
copular verb *Kopulaverb*	a **linking** VERB, which typically links the SUBJECT with a PREDICATE COMPLEMENT, i.e. an ADJECTIVE or a NOUN PHRASE in the NOMINATIVE case (16.6). The most frequent **copular verbs** in German are *sein*, *werden* and *scheinen*: *Er ist ein guter Lehrer*; *Die alte Frau wurde blass*.
correlate *Korrelat*	an element, typically the PRONOUN *es* or a PREPOSITIONAL ADVERB (i.e. *da(r)*+preposition), which points forward to a following clause, e.g. *Ich bedaure es , dass sie nicht kommen konnte*; *Er verlässt sich darauf , dass wir kommen können*.
count noun *zählbares Substantiv*	a NOUN referring to a thing or object which can be counted. Count nouns, unlike MASS NOUNS, can be used in the PLURAL and with the INDEFINITE ARTICLE.
dative *Dativ*	a CASE (2.5) used to mark some OBJECTS of the VERB: *Sie hat meiner Schwester die CD gegeben*, *Ich helfe meinem Bruder*. It can also indicate **possession:** *Sie zog dem Kind die Jacke aus*, it is used after some ADJECTIVES (6.3.1): *Er sieht meinem Vater ähnlich*, and after many PREPOSITIONS (18.2–18.3): *Er hat mit den Kindern gespielt*.
dative object *Dativobjekt*	a COMPLEMENT of the VERB in the DATIVE case (16.4). With some verbs it is the only object: *Sie wollte dem kleinen Mädchen helfen*; with verbs which also have an ACCUSATIVE (DIRECT) OBJECT, it is the INDIRECT OBJECT: *Sie hat dem kleinen Mädchen das Heft gegeben*.
declension	the pattern of ENDINGS (the 'INFLECTION') of a NOUN (1.3), an ADJECTIVE (6.1) or a DETERMINER (4.1, Chapter 5) which show CASE, NUMBER and GENDER:

Deklination/Flexion	*der gute Hund*, *des guten Hundes*, *den guten Hunden*.
demonstrative *Demonstrativ*	a DETERMINER or PRONOUN (5.1) which points to something specific, e.g. *dieser*, *jener*.
derivation *Derivation/Wortbildung*	forming words from other words, typically by using SUFFIXES and/or PREFIXES (Chapter 20): *be glaub igen* (< *Glaube*), *Gesund heit* (< *gesund*).
determiner *Artikelwort*	a function word used with NOUNS (Chapters 4 and 5). Determiners include the ARTICLES (*der*, *ein*), the DEMONSTRATIVES (*dieser*, etc.), the POSSESSIVES, (*mein*, etc.) and INDEFINITES (*einige*, *viele*, etc.). They typically come **before** ADJECTIVES in the NOUN PHRASE.
direct object *direktes Objekt*	a verb COMPLEMENT, typically a person or thing directly affected by the action (16.3). It is in the ACCUSATIVE case. *Der Löwe frisst den Esel*; *Die böse Frau schlägt den Hund*.
direction complement *Direktivergänzung*	a LOCATIVE COMPLEMENT used with verbs of **motion**, indicating **where** the SUBJECT is going or **where** the DIRECT OBJECT is being put (16.8): *Sie fuhr nach Ulm*; *Er stellt den Besen in die Ecke*.
dislocation *Versetzung*	placing an element (typically a NOUN PHRASE) before (LEFT DISLOCATION), e.g *Den Peter , den habe ich seit Monaten nicht gesehen*, or after the clause (RIGHT DISLOCATION), e.g *Ich habe ihn seit Monaten nicht gesehen, den Peter*. The element in question is referred to by a PRONOUN within the clause (see 4.4.2b and 19.2.1c). These constructions are typical of spoken language.
ending *Endung/Flexiv*	a SUFFIX which gives grammatical information, e.g. about CASE, NUMBER or TENSE. All the endings of a NOUN, ADJECTIVE or DETERMINER make up its DECLENSION; all the endings of a VERB make up its CONJUGATION.
feminine *Femininum*	one of the three GENDERS into which nouns are classified (1.1), shown by the INFLECTION of the DETERMINER or ADJECTIVE in the NOUN PHRASE.
finite verb *finites Verb*	a form of the VERB which has an ENDING in agreement with the SUBJECT (10.1): *Ich komme*; *Wir haben geschlafen*; *Sie wurden betrogen*; *Ihr könnt gehen*.
future tense *Futur/Futur I*	a TENSE formed with the AUXILIARY VERB *werden* and an INFINITIVE (10.3), and used to refer to future time or express a supposition (12.3): *Ich werde das Buch nicht lesen*; *Kevin wird wohl wieder krank sein*.
future perfect *Futurperfekt/Futur II*	a tense formed with the AUXILIARY VERB *werden* and a **compound** INFINITIVE (10.3), used to refer to an action or event which will occur before another in the future, or to a supposition about a past event: *Sie wird das Buch gelesen haben* (12.3).
gender *Genus*	the division of nouns into three classes in German, called MASCULINE, FEMININE and NEUTER (1.1). The **gender** of a noun is shown by the ENDINGS of the DETERMINER or ADJECTIVE in the NOUN PHRASE: *der Mann*, *diese Frau*, *klares Wasser*.
genitive *Genitiv*	a CASE which is mainly used to show possession or to link NOUNS together (**2.3**): *das Buch meines Vaters*; *die Geschichte dieser Stadt*. A few verbs have a **genitive** OBJECT (**16.7**), and it is used after a few PREPOSITIONS (see 18.4): *trotz des Wetters*.

government *Rektion*	in grammar, government refers to the selection, especially by verbs and prepositions, of the grammatical features of other words which depend on them. For example, prepositions are said to 'govern' a particular case.
grammatical category *grammatische Kategorie*	an idea which is expressed in the grammar of a particular language, e.g. (NOMINATIVE) CASE, PASSIVE (VOICE), SUBJUNCTIVE (MOOD).
imperative *Imperativ*	a MOOD of the VERB used to give commands or instructions, or to make a request (14.1): *Komm hierher! Seid vorsichtig! Steigen Sie bitte ein!*
indefinite *Indefinitpronomen, indefinites Artikelwort*	an **indefinite** PRONOUN or DETERMINER is one which does not refer to a specific person or thing (5.5): *etwas*, *jemand*, *irgendwelcher*.
indicative *Indikativ*	the most commonly used MOOD of the VERB, used to make statements or ask questions (Chapter 14): *Sie kam gestern. Siehst du das Licht?*
indirect object *indirektes Objekt*	a verb COMPLEMENT, typically a person indirectly affected by the action expressed by the VERB, especially someone who is being given something or benefiting from the action (16.4.1). It is in the DATIVE case: *Sie gab ihrem Vater das Geld*.
indirect speech *indirekte Rede*	a construction by which what was said is incorporated into a sentence rather than given in the speaker's original words (14.4). Compare **'direct speech'** *Er sagte: „Ich bin heute krank"* with the corresponding **'indirect speech'**: *Er sagte, dass er heute krank sei.* Sometimes called 'reported speech'.
infinitive *Infinitiv*	the basic form of a VERB, ending in - *en* or - *n* (10.1–10.2, 11.1–11.4): *kommen*, *betteln*, *tun*. It is the form of the **verb** given in dictionaries.
infinitive clause *Infinitivsatz*	a **subordinate** CLAUSE containing an INFINITIVE, typically with the particle *zu* (11.2): *Sie hat mir geraten nach Hause zu gehen*.
inflection *Flexion/Beugung*	changing the form of words, most often by ENDINGS, to indicate some GRAMMATICAL CATEGORY, like CASE or TENSE. The **inflection** of NOUNS, ADJECTIVES and DETERMINERS is called DECLENSION, while the **inflection** of VERBS is called CONJUGATION.
inseparable verb *untrennbares Verb*	a **prefixed** VERB whose PREFIX is not stressed and always remains attached to the **verb** (10.2.1, 20.5): *besuchen*, *erwarten*, *verstehen*.
interrogative *interrogativ*	**interrogative** DETERMINERS, ADVERBS or PRONOUNS (5.3, 7.6) are used to ask a question: *Welches Hemd kaufst du? Warum geht er nicht? Wem sagst du das?*
intransitive verb *intransitives Verb*	a VERB is **intransitive** if it does not have an ACCUSATIVE (DIRECT) OBJECT (16.3): *Wir schwimmen*; *Dort stand er und wartete auf Luise*; *Meine Schwester hilft mir*.
irregular verb *unregelmäßiges Verb*	a VERB with a CONJUGATION which does not follow the pattern of the WEAK VERBS **or** the STRONG VERBS (10.1–10.2, 10.6): *wissen – ich weiß – ich wusste – gewusst*.
locative complement *Lokativergänzung*	a verb COMPLEMENT (16.8) involving location, in particular one indicating direction or destination with verbs of movement (the DIRECTION COMPLEMENT) or place with verbs referring to position (the PLACE COMPLEMENT).

masculine *Maskulinum*	one of the three GENDERS into which NOUNS are divided (1.1), shown by the INFLECTION of the DETERMINER or ADJECTIVE in the NOUN PHRASE.
mass noun *Stoffname*	a NOUN referring to an indivisible entity, typically a substance or an abstract idea: *das Gold*, *der Frieden*. Mass nouns, unlike COUNT NOUNS, are not used with the indefinite article or in the plural.
modal auxiliaries *Modalverb*	the VERBS *dürfen*, *können*, *mögen*, *müssen*, *sollen* and *wollen*, which indicate the attitude of the speaker with regard to what is being said (Chapter 15). They are highly IRREGULAR (10.2.2), and as AUXILIARY VERBS they are normally only used with the INFINITIVE of another verb (11.3): *Sie darf spielen*; *Ich musste gehen*; *Du sollst das Fenster aufmachen*.
modal particle *Modalpartikel*	a small word which indicates the speaker's attitude to what is being said (Chapter 9): *Es gibt ja hier nur zwei gute Restaurants* (assuming agreement), *Das Bier ist aber kalt!* (surprise).
mood *Modus*	forms of the VERB which indicate the speaker's attitude (Chapter 14). German has three **moods:** INDICATIVE (neutral, factual): *Er geht nach Hause*; IMPERATIVE (commands, requests): *Geh nach Hause!*; and SUBJUNCTIVE (possibly not factual): *Wenn er nach Hause ginge ,…*
neuter *Neutrum*	one of the three GENDERS into which NOUNS are divided (1.1), shown by the INFLECTION of the DETERMINER or ADJECTIVE in the NOUN PHRASE.
nominative *Nominativ*	a CASE (2.1) which most often indicates the SUBJECT of a VERB (16.2): *Du lügst*; *Der Hund bellt*. It is also used in the PREDICATE COMPLEMENT of COPULAR VERBS (16.6): *Ich bin der neue Lehrer*, or when a word occurs in isolation (i.e. not as part of a full SENTENCE).
non-finite *infinite Verbform*	a form of the VERB which does not have an ENDING in AGREEMENT with the SUBJECT (10.1–10.2), i.e. the INFINITIVE and the PARTICIPLES.
noun *Substantiv/Nomen*	a type of word which typically refers to a person, a living being, a thing, a place or an idea and can normally be used with a **definite** ARTICLE: *der Tisch*, *die Idee*, *das Pferd* . German nouns are classified into one of three GENDERS.
noun phrase *Nominalgruppe/ Nominalphrase*	A set of words which consists of at least one NOUN or PRONOUN and any other words accompanying it, i.e. a DETERMINER and/or an ADJECTIVE: *Brot*, *weißes Brot*, *das weiße Brot*.
number *Numerus*	the grammatical distinction between SINGULAR and PLURAL.
object *Objekt*	certain COMPLEMENTS governed by a verb are referred to as its **objects** (Chapter 16), i.e. the DIRECT OBJECT, the INDIRECT OBJECT and the PREPOSITIONAL OBJECT.
ordinal number *Ordinalzahl*	the form of a numeral used as an ADJECTIVE: *sein zwanzigster Geburtstag* (8.2).
participle *Partizip*	NON-FINITE forms of the VERB (10.1–10.2, 11.5) which are used as ADJECTIVES or to form the COMPOUND TENSES. German has two **participles**: the PRESENT PARTICIPLE, e.g. *spielend*, and the PAST PARTICIPLE, e.g. *gespielt*.
passive (voice)	a form of a VERB where the doer of the action is not necessarily mentioned

Passiv	and the SUBJECT is typically a person or thing to which something happens (10.4, Chapter 13): German has two **passive** constructions, using the AUXILIARY VERBS *werden* or *sein* and the PAST PARTICIPLE: *Die Schlange wurde* (*von dem Jäger*) *getötet*; *Die Stadt war zerstört*. The **passive voice** contrasts with the (more frequent) **active voice:** *Der Jäger tötet die Schlange*.
past tense *Präteritum*	the **simple** (i.e. one-word) TENSE (10.2) used to relate an action, state or event in the **past** (12.2): *Ich kam an*; *Sie sah mich*.
past participle *Partizip II*	a NON-FINITE form of the VERB, typically with the prefix *ge-* and the ENDING *-t* with WEAK VERBS or *-en* with STRONG VERBS (10.1–10.2): *gekauft*; *gekommen*. It is most often used to form COMPOUND TENSES (10.3), or as an ADJECTIVE (11.5).
perfect tense *Perfekt*	a COMPOUND TENSE formed with the PRESENT TENSE of the AUXILIARY VERB *haben* or *sein* and the PAST PARTICIPLE (10.3). It is used to link a past action, state or event to the present, or (especially in spoken German) to relate an action, state or event in the past (12.2): *Ich habe sie gesehen*; *Sie sind gekommen*.
person *Person*	a grammatical category indicating the person speaking, i.e. the **'first' person:** *ich*, *wir*; the person addressed, i.e. the **'second' person:** *du*, *ihr*, *Sie*; or other persons or things, i.e. the **'third' person:** *er*, *sie*, *es* (Chapter 3). The FINITE VERB has ENDINGS in AGREEMENT with the **person** and NUMBER of its SUBJECT (10.1).
personal pronoun *Personalpronomen*	simple words standing for the various PERSONS or referring to a NOUN PHRASE (Chapter 3): *ich*, *mich*, *mir*, *du*, *sie*, etc.
place complement *Lokativergänzung*	a LOCATIVE COMPLEMENT with verbs referring to **position**, indicating **where** something is situated (16.8): *Die Flasche steht auf dem Tisch*; *Ich wohne in Berlin*.
pluperfect tense *Plusquamperfekt*	a COMPOUND TENSE formed with the PAST TENSE forms of the AUXILIARY VERB *haben* or *sein* and the PAST PARTICIPLE (10.3), and used in the context of a statement in the past tense to relate an action, state or event in the more distant past (12.4): *Ich hatte sie gesehen*; *Sie waren gekommen*.
plural *Plural/Mehrzahl*	a grammatical term referring to **more than one** person or thing, whereas SINGULAR refers to just one. German nouns have special ENDINGS to show the **plural** (1.2).
possessive *Possessivpronomen, Possessivartikel*	a word used to indicate **possession** (5.2), either as a DETERMINER: *sein Fahrrad*, or as a PRONOUN: *das ist meines*.
predicate complement *Prädikativergänzung*	the typical VERB COMPLEMENT with a COPULAR VERB, normally an ADJECTIVE or a NOUN PHRASE in the NOMINATIVE CASE which describes the SUBJECT (16.6): *Mein neuer BMW ist rot*; *Er wird bestimmt ein guter Tennisspieler*.
prefix *Präfix*	an element added to the beginning of a word to form another word (Chapter 20): *Ur wald*, *un glücklich*, *ver bessern*, *weg gehen*.
preposition	a word used to introduce a NOUN PHRASE and typically indicating position, direction, time, etc. (Chapter 18): *an*, *auf*, *aus*, *neben*, *ohne*, etc. All

Präposition	German **prepositions** are followed by a noun phrase in a particular case: *Er kam ohne seinen Hund* (acc.); *Er kam mit seinem Hund* (dat.); *Er kam wegen seines Hundes* (gen.).
prepositional adverb *Präpositionaladverb/ Pronominaladverb*	a compound of *da (r)-* with a PREPOSITION, typically used as a pronoun referring to things (3.5, 16.5.14): *darauf* 'on it', 'on them', *damit* 'with it', 'with them'.
prepositional object *Präpositionalobjekt*	a COMPLEMENT of the VERB introduced by a PREPOSITION (16.5). Typically, the **preposition** does not have its usual full meaning, and the choice of **preposition** depends on the individual **verb**: *Wir warten auf meine Mutter*; *Sie warnte mich vor dem großen Hund*.
prepositional phrase *Präpositionalphrase*	the combination of a NOUN PHRASE with a PREPOSITION: *an diesem Tag*, *aus dem Haus*, *zwischen den Häusern*.
present participle *Partizip I*	a NON-FINITE form of the VERB, formed by adding the suffix *-d* to the infinitive (10.1–10.2): *leidend*, *schlafend*. It is used most often as an adjective (11.5): *das schlafende Kind*.
present tense *Präsens*	the simple TENSE (10.2) used to relate something going on at the moment of speaking, or which takes place regularly or repeatedly (12.1): *Jetzt kommt sie*; *In Irland regnet es viel*.
principal parts *Stammformen*	the **three main forms** in the CONJUGATION of a VERB, i.e. the INFINITIVE, the PAST TENSE and the PAST PARTICIPLE (10.1–10.2): *machen – machte – gemacht* (WEAK VERB); *kommen – kam – gekommen* (STRONG VERB). The other forms of most verbs are constructed on the basis of these three forms.
progressive tense *Verlaufsform*	a **tense** referring to an action in progress, like the English tenses with the verb *to be* and the **'-ing' form,** e.g. *She is reading*; *Have you been waiting?* (12.5). There are no comparable tenses in German.
pronoun *Pronomen*	typically a little word which stands for a whole NOUN PHRASE already known from the context, e.g. PERSONAL PRONOUNS (Chapter 3), e.g. *ich*, *mich*, *sie*; DEMONSTRATIVE **pronouns** (5.1), e.g. *dieser*; POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS (5.2), e.g. *meiner*, *seines*; INDEFINITE **pronouns** (5.5), e.g. *man*, *niemand*.
quantifier *quantifizierendes Artikelwort, quantifizierendes Pronomen*	a DETERMINER or PRONOUN indicating quantity, e.g. *viele*, *wenige*, *alle*.
reciprocal pronoun *reziprokes Pronomen*	a PRONOUN indicating that more than one participant is involved, e.g. English *each other* or *one another*, German *einander*.
reflexive pronoun *Reflexivpronomen*	a PRONOUN in the ACCUSATIVE or DATIVE CASE referring back to the SUBJECT OF THE VERB (3.2). In the third person there is a special form for the reflexive pronoun, *sich*. For the other persons the PERSONAL PRONOUNS are used as reflexive pronouns: *Sie wäscht sich*; *Ich habe es mir so vorgestellt*.
reflexive verb *reflexives Verb*	a VERB used in combination with a REFLEXIVE PRONOUN (16.3.5): *sich erinnern* (remember), *sich weigern* (refuse).
register *Register*	differences of usage linked to different **situations** and **addressees**, typically associated with degrees of formality/informality, as found, for example, in differences between **spoken** and **written** language.

relative clause *Relativsatz*	a **subordinate** CLAUSE used in the function of an ADJECTIVE to describe a NOUN: *der Mann, der dort spielt*. **Relative clauses** are introduced by a RELATIVE PRONOUN (5.4).
relative pronoun *Relativpronomen*	a PRONOUN which, like English 'who', 'which' or 'that', is used to introduce a RELATIVE CLAUSE: (5.4): *der Mann, den ich gegrüßt hatte*; *die Männer, denen ich helfen konnte*.
root *Wurzel*	the basic core of a word, without **any** ENDINGS, PREFIXES or SUFFIXES of any kind: *be glaub igen*, *mein e Herr en*, *un interessant e Wander ungen*, *ge wander t*.
sentence *Satz*	the longest unit of grammar, ending with a full stop in writing. It must have at least one **main** CLAUSE: *Else hat mir geantwortet*, and the main clause(s) can have one or more dependent **subordinate clauses:** *Else hat mir geantwortet, dass Sie nicht nach New York gehen wollte.*
sentence pattern *Satzbauplan*	a limited number of combinations of COMPLEMENTS occur commonly with German verbs, since many verbs have the same VALENCY. Such combinations are known as **sentence patterns** (16.1.3).
separable verb *trennbares Verb*	a verb with a **stressed** PREFIX which detaches from the FINITE VERB in MAIN CLAUSES and is placed at the **end** of the CLAUSE (10.2.1, 20.6), e.g. *an kommen*: *Wir kommen morgen um vierzehn Uhr in Dresden an*.
singular *Singular/Einzahl*	a grammatical term referring to **one** person or thing, whereas PLURAL refers to more than one. The PRONOUNS *ich*, *du*, *es*, and the NOUNS *der kleine Hund* or *das Kind* are **singular**.
stem *Stamm*	the form of a word to which inflectional ENDINGS are added: *beglaubig en*, *mein e Herr en*, *uninteressant e Wanderung en*.
stress *Betonung*	as in English, one syllable in all German words of more than one syllable is pronounced with rather more force than the others, and this syllable is said to be stressed or bear the **stress** (21.1.6).
strong adjective declension *starke Adjektivflexion*	a set of ENDINGS used with ADJECTIVES which are like the **endings** of the **definite** ARTICLE or *dieser* (6.1). They are used when there is no DETERMINER in the noun phrase, or when the **determiner** has no **ending** of its own: *starkes Bier*, *mein alter Freund*.
strong verb *starkes Verb*	a VERB which changes its vowel in the PAST TENSE (and often in the PAST PARTICIPLE, too), and has the ENDING *-en* in the **past participle** (10.1.2, 10.2.1): *bitten – bat – gebeten*.
subject *Subjekt*	the NOUN PHRASE in the NOMINATIVE CASE with which the FINITE VERB **agrees** for PERSON and NUMBER (10.1.4, 16.2): *Du kommst morgen*; *Die Leute beschwerten sich über die Preise*. Typically it is the person or thing carrying out the action expressed by the verb.
subjunctive *Konjunktiv*	a MOOD of the VERB typically used to indicate that an action, event or state may not be factual (14.2–14.5). There are two forms of the **subjunctive** in German (10.5): *Konjunktiv I* is chiefly used to mark INDIRECT SPEECH (14.4): *Sie sagte, er sei nicht gekommen* and *Konjunktiv II* indicates **unreal conditions** (14.3): *Ich würde lachen , wenn sie käme .*
suffix	an element added to the end of a word or root to form a new word by DERIVATION (Chapter 20): *freund lich*, *Freundlich keit* or, as an INFLECTION in

Suffix	the form of an ENDING, to give grammatical information: *Kind er*, *mach te*.
superlative *Superlativ*	the form of an ADJECTIVE (6.5) or ADVERB (7.7) which expresses the highest degree of comparison: *der höchste Baum*, *das Auto fährt am schnellsten*.
tense *Tempus/Zeitform*	a form of the VERB which indicates the **time** of an action, event or state in relation to the moment of speaking (Chapter 12). German has **simple tenses**, of one word (10.2): PRESENT *ich warte*; PAST *ich wartete*; and COMPOUND TENSES (10.3): FUTURE *ich werde warten*; PERFECT *ich habe gewartet*; PLUPERFECT *ich hatte gewartet*; FUTURE PERFECT *ich werde gewartet haben*.
topic *Topik/Thema*	the **first element** in a **main** CLAUSE, before the FINITE VERB (19.2): *Max ist gestern nach Rom gefahren*; *Gestern ist Max nach Rom gefahren*; *Nach Rom ist Max gestern gefahren*. It is typically something we begin the sentence with because we want to say something about it.
transitive verb *transitives Verb*	**transitive** VERBS are those which have a DIRECT OBJECT in the ACCUSATIVE CASE (16.3): *Sie sah mich*; *Ich grüsste meinen Freund*; *Meine Schwester kauft die Bücher*.
valency *Valenz*	the construction used with a particular VERB, i.e. the number and type of COMPLEMENTS which it may have to form a **grammatical** CLAUSE or SENTENCE (Chapter 16).
verb *Verb*	a type of word which refers to an action, event, process or state: *schlagen*, *passieren*, *recyceln*, *schlafen*.
weak adjective declension *schwache Adjektivflexion*	a set of ENDINGS used with adjectives when there is a DETERMINER with its own ending preceding it in the NOUN PHRASE (6.1): *das starke Bier*, *die jungen Frauen*.
weak masculine noun *schwaches Maskulinum*	one of a small number of MASCULINE NOUNS which have the ENDING **-(e) n** in the ACCUSATIVE, GENITIVE and DATIVE CASES in the SINGULAR as well as in the PLURAL (1.3.2): *der Affe*, *den Affen*, *des Affen*, *dem Affen*, *die Affen*, etc.
weak verb *schwaches Verb*	the regular VERBS of German, which form their PAST TENSE with the ENDING **-te** and their PAST PARTICIPLE with the ending **-t** (10.1.2, 10.2.1): *machen – machte – gemacht*.

Index

The index lists all the German and English words and the grammatical topics about which specific information is given in this book. Individual words in lists illustrating points of grammar are not included. To facilitate finding particular entries, German words are given in regular type, English words in *italics* and grammatical topics in **small capitals** (with any German terms *italicised*)**.** Main entries are indicated in bold type.

à 18.1.7a
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ablaut **:** in word formation 20.1.1b, 20.2.3a; with strong verbs 10.1.2, **Table 10.4**
ablehnen 3.6.2f
about 6.4b, 8.1.6, 16.5.9a, 18.1.4e, 18.1.6, 18.3.11e, 18.4.1d
above 18.3.10, 18.3.11
abraten 16.4.2a, 16.5.14
Abscheu, die (der) 1.1.10a
abseits 18.4.4
absolute phrases: in accusative 2.2.3c; in nominative 2.1.2
abstoßend 11.5.1g
abstract nouns: derived from adjectives 20.2.1e; derived from verbs 20.2.1k; use of articles with 4.2.1, 4.6.2a, 4.8.2c
Abteil, das 1.1.10c
Abwasser, das 1.2.3d
abwesend 11.5.1g
abzüglich 18.4.4
accomplish 20.7.8