

How to learn German verbs

The one form that you need to learn for every "weak" verb (i.e. regular verb)

For every "weak" verb (i.e. regular verb), you only need to learn the present infinitive (INF). From the this form, you can derive ...

derived form	formula	abbreviated name for the preceding formula
... the present stem	INF - en, or (!) INF - n, if the INF doesn't end in -en	PRS
... the preterite stem	PRS + t or (!) PRS + et, if PRS ends in d, t, or in more than one consonant (= INF - (e)n + (e)t)	PTT
... the past participle ++ its auxiliary verb in infinitive form	ge + PTT ++ haben (= ge + INF - (e)n + (e)t ++ haben)	PPC ++ AUX

Some examples of "weak" verbs (i.e. regular verbs)

INF		PRS	PTT	PPC ++ AUX	
fragen	"to ask"	frag	fragt	gefragt haben	"to have asked"
lieben	"to love"	lieb	liebt	geliebt haben	"to have loved"
ordnen	"to bring in order"	ordn	ordnet (!), instead of ‡ordnt	geordnet haben	"to have brought in order"
arbeiten	"to work"	arbeit	arbeitet (!), instead of ‡arbeits	gearbeitet haben	"to have worked"
handeln	"to trade, to act"	handel (!)	handelt	gehandelt haben	"to have traded, to have acted"

Using these derived forms, you can form all other forms of a "weak" verb (i.e. regular verb).

The non-synthetic tenses and moods of the "weak" verb, i.e. the tenses and moods being formed by merely altering the form of the verb itself

tense and mood	number ⇒	singular				plural		
	person ⇒	1st	2nd	2nd polite	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd
	pronoun ⇒ meaning ↓	ich "I"	du "you"	Sie "you"	er, sie, es "he, she, it"	wir "we"	ihr "you"	sie "they"
present imperative ¹	"Walk!"		PRS + (e) ²	INF			PRS + (e) ¹ t	
present indicative	"I walk." "I am walking."	PRS + e	PRS + (e) ¹ st	INF	PRS + (e) ¹ t	INF	PRS + (e) ¹ t	INF
present subjunctive ³	TO BE DONE	PRS + e	PRS + est	INF	PRS + e	INF	PRS + et	INF
preterite ⁴ indicative	"I walked."	PTT + e	PTT + est	PTT + en	PTT + e	PTT + en	PTT + et	PTT + en
preterite subjunctive ⁵	"I would walk."	PTT + e	PTT + est	PTT + en	PTT + e	PTT + en	PTT + et	PTT + en

1 There is only a present imperative in German. Imperatives of other tenses don't exist.

2 **Add this e, if PRS ends in d, t, or in more than one consonant.**

3 The present subjunctive is usually called "the conditional I".

4 The preterite is sometimes called "the imperfect".

5 The preterite subjunctive is usually called "the conditional II".

General remarks on the use of these forms

1. Almost all forms must be preceded by the corresponding pronoun or noun. E. g. *ich frage*, etc.
2. **Exceptions** to this are:
 - 2.1. The **present imperative 2nd person singular and plural** is used without a corresponding pronoun or noun: *Frag! Fragt!* Etc.
 - 2.2. The **polite present imperative 2nd person singular** is followed by the corresponding pronoun: *Fragen Sie!*

Tricks for every day speech

1. The **present subjunctive** can be freely replaced with the **present indicative**.
2. The **preterite indicative** can be freely replaced with the **present perfect indicative**. (See the *synthetic* tenses and moods further below.)
3. The **preterite subjunctive** can be freely replaced with the **"conditional III"**. (See the *synthetic* tenses and moods further below.)

The five forms that you need to learn for every "strong" verb (i.e. irregular verb)

form or derived form (※)	formula	abbreviation	Does the form need to be learned?
the present infinitive		INF	yes
※ the present stem 1	INF - en	PRS1	
the present indicative 3rd person singular			yes
※ the present stem 2	present indicative 3rd person singular - t	PRS2	
the present imperative 2nd person singular		IMP	yes
the preterite indicative stem = the preterite indicative 3rd person singular		PTT	yes
※ the preterite subjunctive stem	PTT + " on the vowel, <i>if the vowel is a, o, or u</i> <i>otherwise just PTT</i>	PTS	
the past participle ++ its auxiliary verb in infinitive form		PPC ++ AUX	yes

Some examples of "strong verbs" (i.e. irregular verbs)

INF ※ PRS1	※ PRS2	IMP	PTT ※ PTS	PPC ++ AUX
sehen "to see" ※ <u>seh</u>	er sieht "he sees" ※ <u>sieh</u>	<u>Sieh</u> ! "See!"	er <u>sah</u> "he saw" ※ <u>säh</u>	gesehen <i>haben</i> "to have seen"
fahren "to drive" ※ <u>fahr</u>	er fährt "he drives" ※ <u>fähr</u>	<u>Fahr</u> ! "Drive!"	er <u>fuhr</u> "he drove" ※ <u>führ</u>	gefahren <i>sein</i> "to have driven"
geben "to give" ※ <u>geb</u>	er gibt "he gives" ※ <u>gib</u>	<u>Gib</u> ! "Give!"	er <u>gab</u> "he gave" ※ <u>gäb</u>	gegeben <i>haben</i> "to have given"
gehen "to go" ※ <u>geh</u>	er geht "he goes" ※ <u>geh</u>	<u>Geh</u> ! "Go!"	er <u>ging</u> "he went" ※ <u>ging</u> (!)	gegangen <i>sein</i> "to have gone"
stoßen "to push" ※ <u>stoß</u>	er stößt "he pushes" ※ <u>stöß</u>	<u>Stoß</u> ! "Push!"	er <u>stieß</u> "he pushed" ※ <u>stieß</u> (!)	gestoßen <i>haben</i> "to have pushed"
frieren "to feel cold" ※ <u>frier</u>	er friert "he feels cold" ※ <u>frier</u>	<u>Frier</u> ! "Feel cold!"	er <u>fror</u> "he felt cold" ※ <u>frör</u>	gefroren <i>haben</i> "to have felt cold"

Using these forms, you can form all other forms of a "strong" verb (i.e. irregular verb).

The non-synthetic tenses and moods of the "strong" verb, i.e. the tenses and moods being formed by merely altering the form of the verb itself

	number ⇒	singular				plural		
	person ⇒	1st	2nd	2nd polite	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd
tense and mood	pronoun ⇒	ich	du	Sie	er, sie, es	wir	ihr	sie
	meaning ⇓	"I"	"you"	"you"	"he, she, it"	"we"	"you"	"they"
present imperative	"Walk!"		IMP	INF			PRS1 + t	
present indicative	"I walk." "I am walking."	PRS1 + e	PRS2 + st	INF	PRS2 + t	INF	PRS1 + t	INF
present subjunctive	TO BE DONE	PRS1 + e	PRS1 + est	INF	PRS1 + e	INF	PRS1 + et	INF
preterite indicative	"I walked."	PTT	PTT + st	PTT + en	PTT	PTT + en	PTT + t	PTT + en
preterite subjunctive	"I would walk."	PTS + e	PTS + est	PTS + en	PTS + e	PTS + en	PTS + et	PTS + en

General remarks on the use of these forms

1. Almost all forms must be preceded by the corresponding pronoun or noun. E. g. *ich sehe*, etc.
2. **Exceptions** to this are:
 - 2.1. The **present imperative 2nd person singular and plural** is used without a corresponding pronoun or noun: *Sieh! Seht!* Etc.
 - 2.2. The **polite present imperative 2nd person singular** is followed by the corresponding pronoun: *Sehen Sie!*

Tricks for every day speech

1. The **present subjunctive** can be freely replaced with the **present indicative**.
2. The **preterite indicative** can be freely replaced with the **present perfect indicative**. (See the *synthetic* tenses and moods further below.)
3. The **preterite subjunctive** can be freely replaced with the **"conditional III"**. (See the *synthetic* tenses and moods further below.)

The *synthetic* tenses and moods of *all* verbs (excluding the passive forms!), i.e. the tenses and moods being formed by adding an auxiliary verb to the verb in question

tense and <i>mood</i>	meaning	formula <i>auxiliary verb</i> ⁶ + verb form
"conditional III"	"I would walk."	<i>würde</i> + INF
future <i>indicative</i>	"I will walk." or "I'm going to walk."	<i>werde</i> (1) + INF
future <i>subjunctive</i>	"I would walk." (in the future)	<i>werde</i> (2) + INF
present perfect ⁷ <i>indicative</i>	"I have walked."	<i>habe</i> (1) / <i>bin</i> + PPC
present perfect <i>subjunctive</i>	"I would have walked."	<i>habe</i> (2) / <i>sei</i> + PPC
preterite perfect ⁸ <i>indicative</i>	"I had walked."	<i>hatte</i> / <i>war</i> + PPC
preterite perfect <i>subjunctive</i>	"I would have walked." (in the past long ago)	<i>hätte</i> / <i>wäre</i> + PPC
†future perfect ⁹ <i>indicative</i>	"I will have walked."	<i>werde</i> (1) + PPC ++ AUX
†future perfect <i>subjunctive</i>	"I would have walked." (in the future)	<i>werde</i> (2) + PPC ++ AUX

6 The table containing all forms of these auxiliary verbs can be found further below.

7 The present perfect is usually just called "perfect".

8 Other names are "pluperfect" or "past perfect".

9 The future perfect is usually just called "future II".

General remarks on the use of these forms

1. The **future perfect indicative and subjunctive** are basically **not** used anymore in any way.

Tricks for every day speech

1. The **future indicative** can be freely replaced with the **present indicative**, if you also add an **adverb denoting a moment in time in the future**.
2. The **future subjunctive** can be freely replaced with the **future indicative**.
3. The **present perfect subjunctive** can be freely replaced with the **present perfect indicative**.

The passive (always formed synthetically)

The passive can in general be completely avoided by formulating your sentence differently.

passive form (tense and mood)	meaning	formula <i>auxiliary verb</i> + verb form (+ <i>auxiliary verb(s)</i>)
present <i>imperative</i> (this form doesn't exist for the 2nd singular polite)	"Be kissed!"	<i>Werde</i> + PPC ! (2nd singular) <i>Werdet</i> + PPC ! (2nd plural) ¹⁰
present <i>indicative</i>	"I am (being) kissed."	<i>werde</i> (1) + PPC
present <i>subjunctive</i>	TO BE DONE	<i>werde</i> (2) + PPC
preterite <i>indicative</i>	"I was kissed."	<i>wurde</i> + PPC
preterite <i>subjunctive</i>	"I would be kissed."	<i>würde</i> + PPC
"conditional III" doesn't exist in the passive		
future <i>indicative</i>	"I will be kissed." or "I'm going to be kissed."	<i>werde</i> (1) + PPC + <i>werden</i> ¹¹
future <i>subjunctive</i>	"I would be kissed." (in the future)	<i>werde</i> (2) + PPC + <i>werden</i>
present perfect <i>indicative</i>	"I have been kissed."	<i>bin</i> + PPC + <i>worden</i> ¹²
present perfect <i>subjunctive</i>	"I would have been kissed."	<i>sei</i> + PPC + <i>worden</i>
preterite perfect <i>indicative</i>	"I had been kissed."	<i>war</i> + PPC + <i>worden</i>
preterite perfect <i>subjunctive</i>	"I would have been kissed." (in the past long ago)	<i>wäre</i> + PPC + <i>worden</i>
†future perfect <i>indicative</i>	"I will have been kissed."	<i>werde</i> (1) + PPC + <i>worden</i> + <i>sein</i> ¹³
†future perfect <i>subjunctive</i>	"I would have been kissed." (in the future)	<i>werde</i> (2) + PPC + <i>worden</i> + <i>sein</i>

¹⁰ *Werde!* = 2nd person singular present imperative, and *Werdet!* = 2nd person plural present imperative of *werden* "to become".

¹¹ *Werden* "to become" is an infinitive.

¹² *Worden* is an irregular PPC of *werden* "to become".

¹³ *Sein* "to be" is an infinitive.

General remarks on the use of these forms

1. Almost all forms must be preceded by the corresponding pronoun or noun. E. g. *ich werde geküsst*, etc.
2. **Exception** to this is only:
 - 2.1. The **present imperative 2nd person singular and plural** is used without a corresponding pronoun or noun: *Werde geküsst! Werdet geküsst!* Etc.
3. The **future perfect indicative and subjunctive** are basically **not** used anymore in any way.

Tricks for every day speech

1. The **present subjunctive** can be freely replaced with the **present indicative**.
2. The **preterite indicative** can be freely replaced with the **present perfect indicative**.
3. The **future indicative** can be freely replaced with the **present indicative**, if you also add an **adverb denoting a moment in time in the future**.
4. The **future subjunctive** can be freely replaced with the **future indicative**.
5. The **present perfect subjunctive** can be freely replaced with the **present perfect indicative**.

The highly irregular forms of the mentioned auxiliary verbs

	the infinitives of the mentioned auxiliary verbs											
	werden				haben				sein			
	present indicative	present subjunctive	preterite indicative	preterite subjunctive	present indicative	present subjunctive	preterite indicative	preterite subjunctive	present indicative	present subjunctive	preterite indicative	preterite subjunctive
	werde (1)	werde (2)	wurde	würde	habe (1)	habe (2)	hatte	hätte	bin	sei	war	wäre
ich "I"	werde	werde	wurde	würde	habe	habe	hatte	hätte	bin	sei	war	wäre
du "you"	wirst	werdest	wurdest	würdest	hast	habest	hattest	hättest	bist	seist	warst	wärest
Sie "you (polite)"	werden	werden	wurden	würden	haben	haben	hatten	hätten	sind	seien	waren	wären
er, sie, es "he, she, it"	wird	werde	wurde	würde	hat	habe	hatte	hätte	ist	sei	war	wäre
wir "we"	werden	werden	wurden	würden	haben	haben	hatten	hätten	sind	seien	waren	wären
ihr "you (plural)"	werdet	werdet	wurdet	würdet	habt	habet	hattet	hättet	seid	seiet	wart	wäret
sie "they"	werden	werden	wurden	würden	haben	haben	hatten	hätten	sind	seien	waren	wären

The six infinitives

form	meaning	formula
present infinitive active	"to walk"	INF
present infinitive passive	"to be kissed"	PPC + <i>werden</i>
future infinitive active	"to walk" (in the future)	INF + <i>werden</i>
future infinitive passive	"to be kissed" (in the future)	PPC + <i>werden</i> + <i>werden</i> (!)
past infinitive active	"to have walked"	PPC ++ AUX
past infinitive passive	"to have been kissed"	PPC + <i>worden</i> + <i>sein</i>

The other participle

form	meaning	formula
†present participle	"walking"	INF + d

General remarks

The **present participle** is basically not used anymore in any way.