

# German Language Resource Packet

## *German has three features of word order than do not exist in English:*

1. The main verb must be the second element in the independent clause. This often requires an inversion of subject and verb. For example: Manchmal komme ich mit dem Bus in die Schule. (Sometimes I come to school by bus.)
2. The past participle must always be the last element in the independent clause. Example: Ich habe ihn nicht gesehen. (I have not seen him.)
3. The main verb must be the last element in the dependent clause. For example: Sie fragte mich, ob ich den Film schon gesehen hätte. (She asked me if I had already seen the film.)

## *Vocabulary: German and English share many cognates:*

Winter/winter, Haus/house, trinken/drink, etc. Many cognates, however, do not have the same meaning (i.e. they are false friends). For example, the German word *also* means so in English, not also; aktuell means current not actual. Nouns in German are capitalized, which often leads to students writing English nouns with capital letters.

## *German Sentence Word Order Tip:*

When linking two German phrases with a conjunction, the word order of the second phrase will be as follows: Ich gehe ins Bett, denn ich bin müde. - I'm going to bed, because I am tired.

However adverbs indicating cause (such as *darum*, *trotzdem*, *sonst*, *so*) can also at times be used to link two German phrases. In such cases they are operating as conjunctions; however the word order will not be the same as in the example above. Instead, the sentence will be constituted as follows: Ich bin kalt, *darum* ziehe ich meinen Mantel an. - I am cold, that's why I'm putting my coat on.

As the example demonstrates, the verb is placed right after the adverb, whereas with a conjunction, the verb will come after the pronoun or noun.

Word order in German is more flexible than in English. In particular, sentences need not begin with the subject (see "inverted word order" below). There are strict rules determining the position of the verb, and there are a few other rules to bear in mind, but in general once you have put the verb(s) in the right place and chosen between "subject first" and "inverted" word order, there will often be a number of acceptable ways for you to arrange the rest of the sentence.

The main rules for verb position are:

- In general, the verb should be in position 2
- The coordinating conjunctions *und*, *aber*, *oder*, *denn* & *sondern* occupy position 0 ==> you will generally want e.g. "und"; then something in position one; then the verb.
- If the verb is in two parts, the conjugated part goes in position two, and the "generic part" (infinitive or past participle) goes at the end of the clause.

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- After a subordinating conjunction (dass, weil, wenn, als, ob...) and in a relative clause, the verb comes at the end.
- After a subordinate clause, the subsequent main clause begins with the verb. Infinitives with or without “zu” always come at the end of the clause.

## *Verb Conjugation:*

Every German verb has an infinitive form. You need to know the stem of the verb to be able to conjugate the verb. The stem is the part of the verb without the infinitive ending.

For most German words this is quite easy because most of the verbs are formed in the same way. The verbs *spiel-en* (to play), *lachen* (to laugh) and *rennen* (to run) all end in “en,” which indicates the basic infinitive form.

### *Example:*

Laufen (to run) | Infinitive: laufen | Stem: lauf  
Geben (to give) | Infinitive: geben | Stem: geb  
Lachen (to laugh) | Infinitive: lachen | Stem: lach

The German language differentiates between two types of verbs: weak and strong. Weak verbs have a dental consonant (the tongue is pressed against the upper teeth) that is inflected and changed. Strong verbs have a vowel gradation (examples are *sing*, *sang* and *sung*).

Although there are some exceptions, both of these verbs have a regular system that can be applied to almost all the verbs. The most well-known exception is the verb *sein* (to be), which is highly irregular. *Sein* is an essential part of German grammar because it is used to form the past tenses.

## *For regular strong verbs, use the following rules:*

- First-person singular is formed by adding “e” to the stem of the verb.
- Second-person singular is formed by adding “st” to the stem of the verb.
- Third-person singular is formed by adding “t” to the stem of the verb.
- First-person plural is formed by adding “en” to the stem of the verb.
- Second-person plural is formed by adding “t” to the stem of the verb.
- Third-person plural is again formed by adding “en” to the stem of the verb.

## *German Articles:*

Definition: In German, the articles are the main indicators of grammatical case. Articles are words mostly used before nouns. In German, articles are the key to understand the gender of nouns because they are divided in three genders.

- Masculine
- Feminine
- Neuter

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In German the matter of grammatical gender is quite different. Gender does not depend entirely on sex.

German grammar treats all these as neuter. Use “das” for all three.

- Woman = Weib
- Girl = Mädchen
- Young lady = Fräulein

## *Adjectives with articles: Definite & Indefinite articles*

Adjectives with Definite Articles

	<b><i>Masc.</i></b>	<b><i>Fem.</i></b>	<b><i>Neut.</i></b>
Nom.	der gute Mann	die gute Frau	das gute Buch
Acc.	den guten Mann	die gute Frau	das gute Buch
Dat.	dem guten Mann	der gute Frau	dem guten Buch
Gen.	des guten Mannes	der gute Frau	des guten Buches

### ***Plural.***

- die guten Leute
- die guten Leute
- den guten Leuten
- der guten Leute

Adjectives with Indefinite Articles

	<b><i>Masc.</i></b>	<b><i>Fem.</i></b>	<b><i>Neut.</i></b>
Nom.	ein guter Mann	eine gute Frau	ein gutes Buch
Acc.	einen guten Mann	eine gute Frau	ein gutes Buch
Dat.	einem guten Mann	einer guten Frau	einem guten Buch
Gen.	eines guten Mannes	einer guten Frau	eines guten Buches

### ***Plural.***

- keine guten Leute
- keine guten Leute
- keine guten Leuten
- keiner guten Leute

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## *Adjectives with No Articles*

	<i>Masc.</i>	<i>Fem.</i>	<i>Neut.</i>
Nom.	guter Kuchen	kalte Milch	frisches Brot
Acc.	guten Kuchen	kalte Milch	frisches Brot
Dat.	gutem Kuchen	kalter Milch	frischem Brot
Gen.	guten Kuchens	kalter Milch	frischen Brotes

### ***Plural***

- frische Würste
- frische Würste
- frischen Würsten
- frischer Würste

## ***Idioms/Idiomen:***

But some German expressions are extremely good at “hitting the nail on the head” (den Nagel auf den Kopf treffen). One of my all-time favorites: da bin ich überfragt (lit., “I’ve been over-asked” or in other words, “you’ve got me there”). Another favorite is one of many German expressions for “not being all there”: Sie hat nicht alle Tassen im Schrank. (“She doesn’t have all [her] cups in the cupboard.”)

Proverbs, sayings, and clichés also fall into this category. You can’t teach an old dog new tricks in English, but auf Deutsch what little Johnny can’t learn, old John will never learn. (Was Hänchen nicht lernt, lernt Hans nimmermehr.) With expressions like these, it is often only necessary to say the first few words before someone nods with recognition.

## ***For any test:***

Pay special attention to the following areas. Use the entire time available to you for your exam. If you’re finished before the time, review your answers and again focus especially on the following:

1. Capitalize all nouns!
2. Use the perfect (=past) tense when you describe events that happened in the past. This feels like stating the obvious but you’d be surprised how many times people use the present tense for describing the past.
3. You can, however, use the present tense to describe what you’ll do in the future. Im Sommer fahre ich in den Urlaub.
4. Remember the differences between als, wenn and wann. All translate as the English “when” but als is used for past events (Als ich 10 Jahre alt war, war ich in Spanien.); wenn for future or regularly occurring events (Immer wenn ich Durst habe, trinke ich Wasser. Wenn ich wieder in Cork bin, besuche ich meine Eltern.); wann is only ever used in questions (Wann kommst du?)

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5. Remember the word order. Generally the subject in a main sentence comes first followed by the verb. Ich fahre morgen nach Dublin. If you put anything else in the front the verb still remains at second place: Morgen fahre ich nach Dublin. (Not: Morgen ich fahre nach Dublin.)
6. If you're in loss for a word, don't beat yourself up over it but try and come up with alternatives that may also describe it. Brand names can often come in handy! "Ich brauche Panadol." if you happened to forget that "die Tablette" is German for "tablet". It's better to write something rather than nothing.
7. Re-read the German exam texts properly to make sure you have really understood them correctly

Prepared by Sara Franks for the Learning Center, Spring 2013