

GERMAN

GERMANIC LANGUAGE OF 128 MILLION

74. Colloquial Expressions and Idioms

In informal speech and writing, *es* is commonly contracted with the preceding word by 's. *Geht es = geht's*

Es is also used as an impersonal pronoun (*es regnet*, it's raining), but it can also be used as an introductory word for emphasis or stylistic reasons. *Es* begins the sentence, and the true subject follows the verb.

Es ist niemand zu Hause. No one is at home.

Es kommen heute drei Kinder. Three children are coming today.

Es can also be used to anticipate a dependent clause or infinitive phrase. This is almost like in English when we say *I hate it when that happens* instead of *I hate when that happens*. "It" has no real meaning in the first sentence, but it is not incorrect to say it.

Ich kann es nicht glauben, daß er sich vor nichts fürchtet. I can't believe that he's not afraid of anything.

Er haßt es, nichts davon zu wissen. He hates not knowing anything about it.

Other idioms:

Sie ist mit ihrem Urteil immer sehr schnell bei der Hand. She makes her judgments rather quickly. (Literally: She is quick at hand with her judgments.)

Alles ist in Butter. Everything is fine. (Literally: Everything is in butter.)

Er geht mit dem kopf durch die Wand. He does as he pleases. (Literally: He goes with his head through the wall.)

75. Word Formation

Noun compounds

German uses compounds more often than English and they are formed by simply putting the two words together (sometimes adding an -n or -s in between), and using the gender of the last word. *Die Woche* (week) + *der Tag* (day) = *der Wochentag* (Days of the week)

The prefix un-

As in English, the prefix *un-* gives a word a negative or opposite meaning. **klar** (clear) - **unklar** (unclear)

The suffix -los

This suffix is often the equivalent of the English suffix -less, and is used to form adjectives and adverbs from nouns. **das Ende** (the end) - **endlos** (endless)

The suffix -haft

The suffix -haft is used to form adjectives from nouns so as to designate related qualities. **das Kind** (the child) - **kindhaft** (childlike)

The suffix -ung

This suffix may be added to the stem of a verb to form a noun. All nouns ending in -ung are feminine. **wandern** (to hike) - **die Wanderung** (the hike)

The suffix -er

This suffix designates a person is from a certain place. **Frankfurt** (a city) - **Frankfurter** (a person from Frankfurt)

The suffix -in

This suffix designates a female person and is added to the male counterpart. **Architekt** (male architect) - **Architektin** (female architect)

76. Adjectival Nouns

When referring to people, adjectives can sometimes be used as nouns. The definite article precedes the adjective, which is now capitalized because it is functioning as a noun. The adjectival nouns take the regular adjective endings for adjectives preceded by a der word as well.

der Alte - the old man
die Alte - the old woman
das Alte - everything that is old
die Alten - the old people

77. Ordinal Numbers

To form the ordinal numbers, just add -te to the cardinal numbers for 1-19, and -ste for 20 and up. The exceptions are erste, dritte, siebte, and achte.

first	erste	eleventh	elfte
second	zweite	twelfth	zwölfte
third	dritte	thirteenth	dreizehnte
fourth	vierte	fourteenth	vierzehnte
fifth	fünfte	fifteenth	fünfzehnte
sixth	sechste	sixteenth	sechzehnte
seventh	siebte	seventeenth	siebzehnte
eighth	achte	eighteenth	achtzehnte
ninth	neunte	nineteenth	neunzehnte
tenth	zehnte	twentieth	zwanzigste

In writing dates, German uses the number followed by a period. On February 2nd would be am 2. Februar. However, when saying this out loud, you would say am zweiten Februar. You must use the construction **am + -en** to answer a question beginning with *Wann?* But you use the construction **der + -e** to answer the question *Welches Datum?*

Wann sind Sie geboren? When were you born?
Am achzehnten Mai. On May 18th.

Welches Datum is heute? What is today's date?
Heute ist **der** neunte Oktober. Today is October ninth.

78. Passive Voice

To change a sentence from the active to the passive, change three things:

1. accusative object of active sentence to nominative subject of passive sentence
2. active verb to a tense of *werden* plus the past participle of verb in active sentence
3. subject to **von** + dative object in the passive sentence, if agent is mentioned

Present Tense

Viele Studenten lesen diesen Roman. = Dieser Roman **wird** von vielen Studenten **gelesen**.
Many students read this novel. = This novel is read by many students.

Imperfect Tense

Viele Studenten lasen diesen Roman. = Dieser Roman **wurde** von vielen Studenten **gelesen**.
Many students read this novel. = This novel was read by many students.

Future Tense

Viele Studenten werden diesen Roman lesen. = Dieser Roman **wird** von vielen Studenten **gelesen werden**.
Many students will read this novel. = This novel will be read by many students.

Present Perfect Tense

Viele Studenten haben diesen Roman gelesen. = Dieser Roman **ist** von vielen Studenten **gelesen worden**.
Many students have read this novel. = This novel has been read by many students.

Past Perfect Tense

Viele Studenten hatten diesen Roman gelesen. = Dieser Roman **war** von vielen Studenten **gelesen worden**.
Many students had read this novel. = This novel had been read by many students.

*Notice that in the passive voice, the past participle of *werden* is **worden** and not *geworden*.

Durch can replace **von** when the agent is an impersonal force (fire, wind, etc.); but it cannot be used if preceded by a limiting word (such as an article or adjective.)

Passive with modals

Shifts in tense will only affect the modal part of the sentence. The infinitive forms of the past participles are used with modals in the passive voice as well. And where you might expect something like *Das Haus hat werden müssen verkauft*, the actual construction is **Das Haus hat verkauft werden müssen** because of the double infinitive construction. Double infinitives always go to the end of the sentence, but you only need to worry about these in the present perfect and past perfect tenses.

79. Problems with the Passive

False Passive

Grammatically, the false passive is the same as sein + an adjective. This construction describes a condition rather than an action. **Das Haus ist verkauft** is the false passive, while **das Haus wird verkauft** is the true passive. The false passive sentence indicates that the house is already sold (condition), while the true passive indicates the house is in the process of being sold (action).

Passive with Absentee Subjects

Passive forms may have a definite or indefinite subject, or no apparent subject at all. The accusative object of an active sentence becomes the nominative subject of the passive sentence. But sometimes there is no accusative object. Since a verb cannot be in the first position of sentence without turning the sentence into a question, **es** is used as the subject.

Man antwortet ihnen nicht is an active sentence, but if it were turned into the passive, there would be no accusative object. The passive would have to be **es wird ihnen nicht geantwortet**. (Here werden agrees with the apparent subject, es.)

But if another element, such as a dative object or time expression, can be put in the first position, then es is omitted. **Ihnen wird nicht geantwortet** can also be used as the passive. There is no apparent subject, only an implied es, so the form of werden remains *wird* to agree with es.

80. Avoiding the Passive

1. The construction man + an active verb can be used instead of the passive voice. Man translates to one, you, we, they, people and constitutes the subject.

Diese Bluse wird gereinigt. This blouse is being dry-cleaned
Man reinigt diese Bluse. They are dry-cleaning this blouse.

Der Dieb wurde gefunden. The thief was caught
Man fand den Dieb. They caught the thief.

2. Man + modal + an infinitive is frequently used with müssen or können.

Der Flecken kann nicht entfernt werden. The stain cannot be removed.
Den Flecken **kann man nicht entfernen**. We can't remove the stain.

3. Sein + zu + an infinitive can be used with können or müssen to express the possibility or necessity of an action.

Das kann schnell gemacht werden. That can be done quickly.
Das **ist schnell zu machen**. That is quickly done.

4. Sich lassen + an infinitive can replace können and a passive infinitive.

Das kann gemacht werden. That can be done.
Das **läßt sich machen**. That can be done.

81. Showing Purpose

Weil (*because*) + a dependent clause shows the reason for an action; however, **damit** and **um...zu** (*so that, in order to*) show the goal of an action. **Damit** is also followed by a dependent clause, whereas **um...zu** introduces an infinitive.

Sie macht das Fenster zu, damit sie nicht friert. = Sie macht das Fenster zu, um nicht zu frieren.
She closes the window, so that she won't freeze . = She closes the window, in order to not freeze.

Commonly, you use **damit** when the subject of the main clause is different from the subject of the dependent clause, and **um...zu** when the understood subject of the infinitive is the same as the subject of the main clause.

82. Shopping

box	die Schachtel
VCR	der Videorecorder
camera	die Kamera
video camera	die Videokamera
film	der Film
watch	die Uhr
handkerchief	das Taschentuch
perfume	das Parfüm
wallet	der Geldbeutel
radio	das Radio
razor	das Rasiermesser
size	die Größe
department (in store)	die Abteilung
greeting card	die Glückwunschkarte

83. Post Office and Bank

letter	der Brief	teller	der Kassierer (in)
postcard	die Postkarte	bill	der Schein
stamp	die Briefmarke	check	der Scheck
phone booth	die Telefonzelle	checkbook	das Scheckbuch
mailbox	der Briefkasten	ATM	der Geldautomat
mail slot	der Briefeinwurf	key	die Schlüssel
address	die Adresse	lock	das Schloß
return address	der Absender	filing cabinet	der Aktenschrank
label	das Etikett	safety deposit box	das Bankschließfach
packing tape	das Paketklebeband	notepad	der Notizblock
package	das Paket	credit card	die Kreditkarte

postmark	der Poststempel	security camera	die Überwachungsanlage
rubber band	das Gummiband	security guard	die Wache
ink pad	das Stempelkissen	drive-thru window	der Autoschalter
string	die Schnur	safe	der Tresor

84. Zu with Infinitives

Infinitives are usually preceded by **zu** except when modals are used. If a separable prefix is used in the infinitive, the **zu** is inserted between the prefix and the stem.

Hast du Lust, den Dom **zu** besichtigen? Do you feel like visiting the cathedral?
 Es dauert lange, durch die Stadt **zu** fahren. It takes a long time to drive through the city.
 Es ist zu früh, sich **aufzu**stehen. It is too early to get up.

Um, ohne and **anstatt** can be used with **zu** as well. They introduce infinitival clauses. **Um.. zu** is used to indicate purpose, while **ohne...zu** and **anstatt...zu** are used with infinitives, and translated as present participles in English. (**Um...zu** must be used instead of just **zu** when the English equivalent "in order to" can be used sensibly.)

Er kam, **um** das Buch **abzu**holen. He came **in order to** *pick up* the book.
 Sie sagte es, **ohne** mich **anzu**sehen. She said it, **without** *looking* at me.
Statt hier **zu** *sitzen*, sollten wir ihn suchen. **Instead of** *sitting* here, we should look for him.

Sein + **zu** + an infinitive are used the same way in English and German, but the construction is far more common in German.

Das *ist* nicht **zu** *machen*. That can't be done.
 Das *ist* in jedem Laden **zu** *finden*. That can be found in any store.

85. Office / School Supplies

compact disc	die Compact Disc	calculator	der Rechner
disc	die Diskette	eraser	der Radiergummi
document	das Dokument	notebook	das Heft
computer	der Computer	folder	der Prospekt
monitor	der Monitor	colored pencil	der Buntstift
keyboard	die Tastatur	ruler	das Lineal
mouse	die Maus	pencil sharpener	der Spitzer
printer	der Drucker	pencil	der Bleistift
memo	die Mitteilung	pen	der Kuli
paper	das Papier	scissors	die Schere
photocopier	das Fotokopiergerät	glue	der Klebstoff
typewriter	die Schreibmaschine	binder	der Ordner
software	die Software	chalk	die Kreide
file	die Akten	chalkboard	die Tafel
cabinet	der Schrank	backpack	der Rucksack

briefcase

die Aktentasche

stapler

die Heftmaschine

86. Expressions of Time

The accusative case is used to indicate definite time when no preposition is used.

Letzten Sonntag blieb ich zu Hause. Last Sunday I stayed home.
Sie fährt **nächste Woche** nach Deutschland. She's going to Germany next week.
Er hats uns **voriges Jahr** besucht. He visited us last year.

Time expressions with the prepositions an, in and vor are in the dative case.

Wir müssen **am Sonntag** zurück. We must return on Sunday.
In der Nacht wird es kalt. It gets cold at night.
Vor drei Jahren war es hier genau so kalt. Three years ago it was just as cold here.

The genitive case is used to express indefinite time, and may refer to the future or past.

Eines Tages war er krank. One day he was sick.
Eines Morgens kommt er zu spät. One morning he'll be late.

87. Travelling / Airport

Customs Office	das Zollamt
Airline Office	das Büro der Fluglinie
Travel Agency	das Reisebüro
Information Office	das Auskunftsbüro
Train Station	der Bahnhof (ö, e)
departure	die Abfahrt (en)
arrival	die Ankunft (ü, e)
flight tickets	die Flugkarten
baggage	das Gepäck
bag	der Koffer (-)
suitcase	der Handkoffer (-)
passport	der Pass (ä, e)
left	links
right	rechts
next (to)	neben
near	bei
straight ahead	geradeaus
(acc. noun +) entlang	along the (noun)
über (+ acc. noun)	over the (noun)
an (noun) vorbei	past the (noun)
bis zu (noun)	up to, as far as the (noun)

gegenüber von (noun) across from the (noun)

88. Another

Ein(e) ander- and **noch ein-** both mean another, but they cannot be used interchangeably. *Ein(e) ander-* means a different one, and *ander-* takes the adjective endings for adjectives preceded by ein words. *Noch ein* means one more.

Sollen wir **ein anderes** Mal wiederkommen? Should we come again at another (a different) time?

Möchtest du **noch einen** Raum anschauen? Would you like to look at another (one more) room?

89. Cosmetics / Toiletries

toothbrush	die Zahnbürste	hair spray	der Haarfestiger
toothpaste	die Zahnpasta	hair dryer	der Fön
dental floss	der Zahnfaden	nail polish	der Nagellack
hair brush	die Bürste	mascara	das Maskara
comb	der Kamm	lipstick	der Lippenstift
shampoo	das Shampoo	powder	der Puder
curling iron	der Lockenstab	soap	die Seife
shaving cream	die Rasiercreme	makeup	die Schminke
razor	das Rasiermesser	perfume	das Parfüm
mousse	der Schaum	cologne	das Kölnisch Wasser

90. Subjunctive II or General Subjunctive

This subjunctive mood is used to make statements that are contrary to fact, instead of factual statements that are made in the indicative mood. There are two forms of the German subjunctive: Subjunctive II and Subjunctive I. Subjunctive II or the general subjunctive is used with if...then (*wenn...dann*) statements and conditional sentences. Subjunctive I or special subjunctive is a less common mood that is used with indirect discourse.

The **present tense of Subjunctive II** is derived from the imperfect tense of the indicative. For weak (regular) verbs, the subjunctive II is identical to the imperfect tense. For strong (irregular) verbs, the present tense of the subjunctive II takes the past tense stem of the imperfect, adds an umlaut where possible, and adds the following endings:

		-e	-en		
		-est	-et		
		-e	-en		
	sein		haben		werden
wäre	wären	hätte	hätten	würde	würden
wärest	wäret	hättest	hättet	würdest	würdet

wäre wären hätte hätten würde würden

Some exceptions include:

Imperfect Subjunctive II

brachte	brächte
dachte	dächte
durfte	dürfte
konnte	könnte
mochte	möchte
sollte	sollte
wollte	wollte
mußte	müßte
hatte	hätte
wußte	wüßte

The **past tense of Subjunctive II** is derived from the past perfect tense of the indicative. It is composed of a form of the subjunctive of sein or haben and a past participle.

Conditional sentences

These sentences are based on an if... then (wenn... dann) pattern in both English and German. Dann can be omitted in these sentences also. Remember that wenn is a subordinating conjunction, and forces the conjugated verb to the end of the clause.

Present Subj. II: Wenn ich Zeit **hätte**, (dann) **ginge** ich ins Kino. If I had time, (then) I would go to the movies.

Past Subj. II: Wenn ich Zeit **gehabt hätte**, dann **wäre** ich ins Kino **gegangen**. If I had had time, (then) I would have gone to the movies.

Wenn clauses may be introduced by a verb, and in this case, **wenn** disappears and dann may be replaced by so.

Kommt er heute nicht, (**so**) kommt er morgen. If he's not coming today, then he'll come tomorrow.

A conditional sentence may begin with the *dann clause* as well; but **dann** is never used and the clause uses normal word order.

Wir trinken den Kaffee nicht, wenn er zu heiß ist. We don't drink coffee if it is too hot.

Forms of würden + an infinitive

Würde and an infinitive translate to would + infinitive and is more common than the one word form in the *dann clause*. *Wenn clauses* tend to avoid the würde construction, except with these eight verbs: helfen, stehen, sterben, werfen, brennen, kennen, nennen, and rennen. These eight verbs use the würde construction in the *wenn clause* because the one word forms are archaic. Moreover, conversational German tends to replace many subjunctive II forms of strong verbs with the würde construction. However, this construction cannot be used with modal auxiliaries, haben or sein.

Wenn ich Zeit hätte, dann **ginge** ich ins Kino.
dann **würde** ich ins Kino **gehen**.

If I had time, I would go to the movies.

Wenn ich Geld hätte,
dann **flöge** ich nach Deutschland.
dann **würde** ich nach Deutschland **fliegen**.

If I had money, I would fly to Germany.

91. Other uses of Subjunctive II

To be more polite, use the subjunctive II form of the modals.

Subjunctive II forms of modals

	können	müssen	dürfen	sollen	wollen	mögen
ich	könnte	müsste	dürfte	sollte	wollte	möchte
du	könntest	müsstest	dürftest	solltest	wolltest	möchtest
er, sie, es	könnte	müsste	dürfte	sollte	wollte	möchte
wir	könnten	müssten	dürften	sollten	wollten	möchten
ihr	könntet	müsstet	dürftet	solltet	wolltet	möchtet
sie	könnten	müssten	dürften	sollten	wollten	möchten

Könnten sie mir bitte helfen? Could you please help me?

Dürfte ich Ihr Telefon benutzen? Could I use your phone?

In modern German, the subjunctive forms of mögen has become almost a synonym of wollen. **Was willst du?** = What do you want? **Was möchtest du?** = What would you like?

Hätte gern is also becoming common as a synonym for "would like" especially when ordering food.

Wir hätten gern zwei Colas, bitte. = We would like two colas, please.

Note that these polite forms are only limited to the modal verbs, sein, haben and werden. For this reason, you may hear *Würden Sie mir helfen?* but never *Hülften Sie mir?*

92. Subjunctive I or Special Subjunctive

The Subjunctive I form is used with indirect discourse when reporting what someone says in a formal, impartial way. The indicative can also be used to imply a statement of fact, while the subjunctive II can be used to imply the statement is open to question (since subjunctive II is used with contrary to fact statements.) These three distinctions are quite subtle, although they are important. In everyday conversation, the tendency is to avoid the subjunctive I and to choose instead between the indicative and subjunctive II.

The **present tense of Subjunctive I** is derived from the present tense of the indicative and formed by adding the following endings to the stem of the verb. Note that the subjunctive I forms never have the stem vowel change found in their present indicative counterparts.

-e -en
-est -et
-e -en

The only exception is sein, which has no endings in the ich and er forms:

sei seien
seiest seiet
sei seien

The **past tense of Subjunctive I** is derived from the present perfect tense of the indicative. It is composed of the subjunctive I form of haben or sein and a past participle.