



Stolpersteine

German in 10 minutes a day

Andrea G. Klaus

“Waiting for the German verb is surely the ultimate thrill.”

Flann O’Brien (1911-1966)

Irish novelist

Andrea G. Klaus

STOLPERSTEINE

German in 10 minutes a day

Revise and improve your German in a few minutes a day

A self-study guide for students of German

University of Warwick

2019

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Introduction: How to use this book

German in 10 minutes a day is a self-study guide for students of German. It was designed with special attention to students' needs. In my more than 20 years of teaching experience at British universities I have found that students often look for an accessible and easy way to revise their language skills. Conventional grammar books, however, usually confront learners with excessive and therefore rather impervious detail.

This guide is aimed at all levels of German learners, but especially at those with a good basic command of the language seeking to consolidate their knowledge of key grammatical structures (i.e. intermediate levels between B1 – C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)). It will be useful to students on German Studies degrees, university-wide language courses, A-level students and adult learners of German alike. It is assumed that students' mother tongue or main language is English.

It aims to serve as a reference as well as a "reading" guide. It can be used by students as a learning tool to revise various grammar topics without overwhelming them with too much information. The purpose of it is to spend a few minutes a day on one topic. There is no particular sequence of topics, i.e. the user can go through the book chronologically or individual topics can be picked out according to interest.

Although this booklet is mainly designed for independent learning, it may also be useful for tutors as a companion for exercises in

language courses and grammar classes. I know from experience that tutors are constantly in need of new material for their lessons and the example sentences in this booklet could be used in class to explain various grammar points.

The structure and content of the book should be easy to use and is as follows: one particular aspect of German grammar is presented on the basis of a model sentence. Examples are based on current usage rather than prescription. The subject content of the sentence is generally a feature of German and sometimes also Austrian and Swiss culture and life. The grammar topic and the content of the example sentence are explained in English in a concise way. In case the information provided is not sufficient to remind the student, he or she is advised to refer to an established grammar book. Rather than being a replacement for grammar books this guide is to be regarded as a complement for any grammar book.

It is first and foremost a grammar guide, however, the acquisition of language takes place in a cultural context. This guide provides the opportunity to learn about German (as well as Austrian and Swiss where appropriate) culture and life by embedding grammar into a context. However, the paragraph on culture and life can be ignored if the user wants to concentrate on language alone.

The booklet particularly concentrates on common mistakes and does not claim to be comprehensive.

Andrea G. Klaus
University of Warwick, August 2018

II: Articles

a) Definite article

Er zieht die Lederhose an.

(He puts on his leather trousers or lederhosen)

Grammar:

In German, the definite article is used for articles of clothing (as here with **die Lederhose**) where English uses a possessive adjective ('his trousers'). The verb here is **anziehen** which means 'to put on'. Also note that the German word for trousers can be used in the singular (**die Hose**) or in the plural (**die Hosen**) with singular meaning in both cases.

Cultural Aspect:

Contrary to popular belief in Britain and elsewhere, **Lederhosen** are not a traditional costume in the whole of Germany. These distinctive outfits are only worn by men in Bavaria and in Austria and not normally on a daily basis but only on Sundays and for certain special occasions. The traditional costume for women is the **Dirndl**. However, **Lederhosen and Dirndls** have in the recent past become a bit of a fashion statement in other regions in Germany as

well (together with regional versions of the **Münchner Oktoberfest**). Please note: the word **Lederhose** can, of course, also refer to leather trousers used as part of motor biking equipment or any other trousers made out of leather.

a) Definite article

Zum Frühstück gibt es heute Brötchen.

(There are rolls for breakfast today)

Grammar:

The names of meals: **das Frühstück** (breakfast), **das Mittagessen** (lunch), **das Abendessen** (dinner) etc. are used with the definite article in German. The word **zum** is a contracted form of the preposition **zu** (for, to) and the definite article **dem** (dative neuter singular form of **das** since **zu** takes the dative case). It is usual to use the contracted form both in speech and writing; the uncontracted form is used only if the article is stressed.

Cultural Aspect:

A traditional German breakfast consists of coffee, orange juice, rolls, bread, jam, honey, cheese and sliced cold meat or sausage. Like the rest of us, however, the Germans do not usually have lots of time on a weekday morning before leaving the house and prefer cereals or bread with a quick coffee or two and keep the traditional more leisurely breakfast for weekends and holidays. Traditionally, lunch (**das Mittagessen**) was the biggest (and only hot) meal of the day but this has also changed over the last few decades and a lot of families, especially those where both parents work, have their hot meal at night.

a) Definite article

Das Leben war früher besser.

(Life used to be better.)

Grammar:

Abstract nouns like **das Leben** are used with the definite article in German. Other examples you may come across are, for example:

die Gesellschaft (society), **der Kapitalismus** (capitalism), **die Globalisierung** (globalisation), **die Demokratie** (democracy), **die Arbeit** (work), **das Altertum/ die Antike** (antiquity), **das Christentum** (Christianity), **der Islam** (Islam), **die Menschheit** (humanity), **die Ehe** (marriage, married life), **die Forschung** (research) **die Freiheit** (freedom), **die Politik** (politics), **die Natur** (nature), **die Wahrheit** (truth), **die Jugend** (youth), **die Liebe** (love), **die Zeit** (time) etc

Cultural Aspect:

People always seem to complain about the state of things and usually agree that ‘the good old days’ were better (even if this might be quite untrue, at least in certain situations) – this does apply to the Germans just as much as it does to the British and it is quite common to hear this sentence uttered by people of a certain age!

a) Definite article

Das föderalistische Deutschland hat 16 Bundesländer.

(Federal Germany consists of 16 states)

Grammar:

Neuter geographical names (names of countries, towns, areas and islands) do not usually take an article in German. The definite article is used, however, when the name is preceded by an adjective. In the example above, the adjective **föderalistisch** (federal) is used and so an article is required. Most names of continents, countries and towns are neuter, and the exceptions are masculine, feminine or plural names that are always used with a definite article, for example **der Iran** (Iran) or **die Türkei** (Turkey). Some geographical names are in the plural and need the plural article: **die Niederlande** (the Netherlands). Please note: while officially, the USA is a plural word in German, **die Vereinigten Staaten (von Amerika)**, in colloquial German it is often treated as feminine singular. The 16 **Bundesländer** (states) of Germany are all neuter.

Cultural Aspect:

The 16 **Länder** of the Federal Republic of Germany consist of the 11 **Länder** of the old Federal Republic and the 5 new **Länder** (the former East German states **Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt** and **Thüringen**). Under the federal system of government, their areas of responsibility are

the judiciary, the police force, education and cultural affairs, the health service and partly economy and taxes.

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a) Definite article

(Compare above)

Die Schweiz gehört zu den kleinsten Ländern Europas.

(Switzerland is one of the smallest countries in Europe).

Grammar:

Usually, geographical names (names of countries, towns, areas and islands) are neuter in German and do not have an article. If they are feminine, masculine or plural names, however, they do use the definite article. Examples of these are:

Countries:

die Türkei (Turkey), **die Niederlande** (the Netherlands), **die USA** (the US). Please note: while officially, the USA is a plural word in German, **die Vereinigten Staaten (von Amerika)**, in colloquial German it is often treated as feminine singular. Regions: **die Provence** (Provence – south of France), **der Balkan** (the Balkans), **der Bodensee** (Lake Constance), also astronomical names, i.e. **der Mars** (Mars), and mountains, i.e. **der Mont Blanc** (Mont Blanc). Please note: There are a few neuter names of regions and provinces that are normally used with the article, for example: **das Elsass** (Alsace), **das Wallis** (Valais), **das Rheinland** (Rhineland).

Cultural Aspect:

Schweizerdeutsch (Swiss German) is spoken in the largest part of Switzerland. It is quite a distinctive form of German (**Variante des Deutschen**) spoken with a distinctly different accent from standard German and partly also with its own vocabulary as well (**Gruezi** or **Sali** is used for **Guten Tag**, or **AB** for **WC, Toilette** for example). It is usually rather difficult to understand for the average German! The other three languages of Switzerland are French, Italian and Romansh. All but Romansh maintain equal status as official languages in the country.

Stolpersteine

b) No article

Sie ist Lehrerin.

(She is a teacher)

Grammar:

Nouns that indicate a profession or nationality and are used with the verbs **sein**, **werden** or **bleiben** do not need the indefinite article.

This mistake was famously made by JF Kennedy visiting Berlin in 1963 when he said **Ich bin ein Berliner** rather than **Ich bin Berliner**. Although grammatically not incorrect **Ich bin ein Berliner** translates into 'I am a doughnut' – a **Berliner** being a German pastry not unlike the doughnuts you can find in British shops.

Nouns for professions add an **–in** at the end of the noun when it refers to a female person (**Lehrerin**, **Politikerin**, **Fussballspielerin** etc.)

Cultural Aspect:

The teaching profession is well-paid and highly respected in Germany; however, there are periods of time when it seems hard to recruit new teachers, which then usually becomes a major concern for the government. At the moment, there are reports of a dramatic shortfall especially of primary school teachers. This shortage is due to many teachers reaching retirement age as well as an increasing birth rate in recent years.

III: Verbs

a) Weak and strong verbs

Die Kanzlerin eröffnete die Computermesse CeBIT.

(The Chancellor opened the CeBIT computer fair.)

Grammar:

German verbs fall into two groups: so-called weak and strong verbs. The conjugation of a verb depends on whether it is a weak (or regular) or strong (also called irregular) verb. Most verbs belong to the weak class, so does **eröffnen** ('to open'). Weak verbs form the past tense by adding **-te** to the stem (**eröffnete**).

Cultural Aspect:

The computer fair CeBIT (**Centrum für Büroautomation, Informationstechnologie und Telekommunikation**) is the biggest computer trade fair in the world. It takes place in Hanover, Germany and was first established in 1970. In the last few years there has been a decline in visitor numbers (2018: ca. 120.000 visitors), compared to a peak attendance of ca. 500.000 visitors during the dot-com boom. The German Chancellor usually opens the CeBIT which takes place annually in June.

b) Transitive verbs

Die Stasi beobachtete die Bürger der DDR.

(The Stasi observed the citizens of the GDR)

Grammar:

A transitive verb is a verb that is followed by an accusative object (here: **die Bürger**). The accusative object is called direct object. Most German verbs are transitive. Some German transitive verbs have English equivalents with different constructions, for example **etwas bezahlen** (to pay for sth), **etwas freut mich** (I am pleased about), **etwas beantragen** (to apply for sth) etc.

Cultural Aspect:

The **Staatssicherheitsdienst**, commonly known as **die Stasi**, was the secret service in the GDR (the German Democratic Republic of East Germany). The **Stasi** had a network of full-time as well as unofficial collaborators (in German: **IM** or **Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter**) and compiled dossiers (**Stasi-Akten**) on more than 6 million people. After re-unification, these **Stasi-Akten** could be seen openly for the first time.

b) Transitive verbs

Ich bezahlte die Bahncard.

(I paid for the railcard)

Grammar:

Another example of a transitive verb in German is **bezahlen** (to pay). In the sentence above **etwas bezahlen** (literally: ‘pay something’) requires a preposition in English: pay ‘for’ something. There is a similar verb in German, namely **zahlen** (to pay), which also very often uses a preposition, e.g. **einen bestimmten Preis für etwas zahlen** (to pay a certain price for something).

Cultural Aspect:

The **Bahncard** is a railcard issued by **Deutsche Bahn (DB)** the German national railway company. It entitles the passenger to a discount price (depending on which one you buy you can save 25% or 50% of the full price) and is very useful for people who travel by train a lot. You can even buy a BahnCard 100; for this you will have to pay 4270 Euros (2018) and can travel for “free”, i.e. without any further charges for a whole year.

c) Modal verbs

Du musst es nicht machen.

(You don't have to do it.)

Grammar:

Müssen is one of the six German modal verbs (**dürfen, können, mögen, müssen, sollen, wollen**). They are called modal because they are linked to the category of the mood which means they indicate the attitude of the speaker with regard to what is being said. Generally, they are used with another verb usually in the infinitive (here: **machen**), and they express ideas like ability, possibility, permission, necessity, obligation or volition. **Müssen** means 'to be obliged to' but one needs to be careful when using the negative. The negation **nicht müssen** means 'to not be obliged to' i.e. 'you don't have to' rather than 'to be obliged not to i.e. 'you must not'.

If you wished to use a construction for 'you must not' then you should use the verb **nicht dürfen**.

Cultural Aspect:

Other nations often think of Germans as liking to order others around and this phrase might sound like a command to some people but in fact it is not. Quite the opposite.

c) Modal verbs

Man muss sich beim Einwohnermeldeamt anmelden.

(Everybody must/ has to register with the residents' registration office)

Grammar:

Müssen is one of the six German modal verbs (**dürfen, können, mögen, müssen, sollen, wollen**). They are called modal because they are linked to the category of the mood which means they indicate the attitude of the speaker with regard to what is being said. Generally, they are used with another verb usually in the infinitive (here: **anmelden**), and they express ideas like ability, possibility, permission, necessity, obligation or volition. **Müssen** means 'to be obliged to'. In German, there is no difference between the English 'must' (obligation or necessity coming from the person who is speaking) and 'have to' (the speaker imparts an obligation or necessity coming from somebody else). In both cases the modal verb **müssen** is used.

Cultural Aspect:

Everybody who takes up residence in Germany, changes his or her address within Germany or leaves Germany for good has to notify the authorities at the **Einwohnermeldeamt** (Residents' registration office). This regulation is called **Meldepflicht** (obligation to register). It applies to both German citizens and all other nationalities.

c) Modal verbs

Kannst du Skat?

(Can you play skat?)

Grammar:

Können is one of the six German modal verbs and it is most commonly used to express ability. Although it is usually followed by another verb in the infinitive (as are all modal verbs), this is not necessary when **können** is used to express knowing of things learnt ("to be able to", "to know how to", "to be in the position to"), especially languages (you will very often hear a phrase such as: **Kannst du Spanisch?** meaning 'Can you speak Spanish'). This also applies to the rules of games etc.

Cultural Aspect:

Skat is a popular card game in Germany. There are regular **Skatrunden** or **Skatabende** (skat evenings) and also **Skat** competitions between clubs and there is a German championship every year.

c) Modal verbs

Der Film könnte im ARD gesendet werden.

(The film might be broadcast on the ARD.)

Grammar:

The verb **können** is one of the six German modal verbs and it is most commonly used to express ability. **Könnte** (first and third person singular) is the **Konjunktiv II** (subjunctive II) of **können** and is often used to denote a possibility. This is then translated into English with 'might' or 'could' but not 'can'.

Cultural Aspect:

The **ARD (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich- rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland)** is a merger of the broadcasting stations of the German **Länder** (states) and it has been broadcasting the first German national TV channel since 1954. It concentrates on news, information and educational programmes as well as entertainment programmes, for example **Tatort** (meaning 'crime scene'). **Tatort** is a police series that has been running since 1970 which makes it the longest-running German TV drama. It is broadcast on Sunday evenings after the 8 o'clock news (**Die Tagesschau**) and has almost become iconic.

c) Modal verbs

Der Mindestlohn soll Arbeitsstellen bedrohen.

(The minimum wage is supposed to threaten jobs.)

Grammar:

Sollen is one of the six German modal verbs. Its most common use is to express an obligation ('to be to', 'to be supposed to'). Normally, the meaning of **sollen** is close to that of **müssen** (must/have to), with the difference that **sollen** conveys the idea that the obligation comes from outside, i.e. another person. In the example above, however, **sollen** is used to express an intention or prediction ('to be supposed to').

Cultural Aspect:

The **Mindestlohn** (minimum wage) was introduced in Germany in January 2015. It pays 8.84 Euro an hour at the moment (2018). Almost 4 million gainfully employed people benefited from the introduction of the minimum wage. Opponents of the minimum wage, however, argued that the minimum wage might mean a reduction in jobs. This has not happened to date.

c) Modal verbs

Die Ladenöffnungszeiten sollten frei sein.

(Shop opening times should be unrestricted.)

Grammar:

Sollen is one of the six German modal verbs. Its most common use is to express an obligation (to be to, be supposed to). Here, it is used in the subjunctive (**Konjunktiv**) to express a wish or an opinion.

Cultural Aspect:

Ladenöffnungszeiten (shop opening times) are controlled by law in Germany. Since 2003 shops have to be closed between 8pm and 6am Mondays to Fridays, from 2pm on 24 December and on Sundays and Bank Holidays. Before then, opening times were even stricter and it was usual for shops to close at 6.30pm. The **Deutsche Industrie- und Handelskammer** – DIHK – (Chamber of Commerce) has demanded the abolition of this law to allow shops to stay open 24 hours between Monday and Saturday in order to adapt to changing shopping habits and shoppers have reacted very positively to the idea of such a change.

c) Modal verbs

In Deutschland sollte es mehr Kitas geben.

(There should be more nurseries in Germany.)

Grammar:

Sollen is one of the six German modal verbs and is usually translated into English with 'shall/should'. In the example above the **Konjunktiv II** (subjunctive II) of **sollen** is used to express the idea of a possible obligation meaning 'should' or 'ought to'.

Cultural Aspect:

Since 2007 the German government has tried to address the chronic shortage of nursery places and since 2013 all municipalities are obliged to provide places for at least one third of all children under the age of three in a **Kita**, short for **Kindertagesstätte** (day-care centre for children).

c) Modal verbs

Die Kurtaxe dürfte recht hoch sein.

(The visitor's tax will probably be high.)

Grammar:

Dürfen is one of the six modal verbs in German and has several meanings – the most common one being ‘to be allowed to’ or ‘may’. In the example above, however, the verb is used in the **Konjunktiv II** (subjunctive II) to express a possibility and is translated into English as ‘will’ or ‘will probably be’).

Cultural Aspect:

As a visitor at a **Kurort** (health resort) or a holiday resort one has to pay **Kurtaxe** (visitor's tax) – a special charge to help cover costs of recreational facilities in the town. **Kurorte** specialize in natural health remedies such as salt water, springs or mud. When patients are sent on a Kur by their doctor, the health insurance usually pays most or at least some of the cost. The **Kurtaxe** can differ from place to place (you will probably have to pay between €1.50 and €3.50 per day and person) and there are even some resorts where the family pet has to pay as well!

c) Modal verbs

Bier mag das beliebteste Getränk der Deutschen sein, ich trinke aber lieber Kaffee.

(Beer is perhaps/ might be the favourite beverage of all Germans, however, I prefer coffee.)

Grammar:

Mögen is one of the six German modal verbs and is most commonly used to express liking ('to like'). In the example above, however, it is used to express a probability or possibility and is translated into English by 'to be perhaps, probably'.

Cultural Aspect:

It is a well-known fact that Germany has got a long beer culture. The German Beer Purity law is over 500 years old (written down in Bavaria in 1516) and states that only hops, barley, yeast and water can be used to make this popular drink. There are a lot of different varieties of German beer and it can be enjoyed in pubs, restaurants and beer gardens and, obviously, at home. Although statistically, the consumption of beer has decreased since the early 1990s, the Germans still consume ca. 104 litres of beer annually per person and are only beaten by the Czechs in their beer consumption. In comparison, ca. 150 litres of coffee per person are consumed yearly in Germany, making it the most popular drink – Germany certainly is a nation of coffee drinkers as well!

c) Modal verbs

Sie will dich auf dem Schützenfest gesehen haben.

(She claims she saw you at the fun fair.)

Grammar:

Wollen is one of the six modal verbs in German. It is mostly used to express desire or intention (want, wish). In the example above, however, it is used in the sense of 'to claim' something. It is often used by the speaker with the implication that he or she does not believe this claim.

Cultural Aspect:

The **Schützenfest** is a traditional annual fun fair or festival that features shooting matches. You will find **Schützenfeste** both in Germany and also Switzerland. The winners of the shooting competition become **Schützenkönig** (king of the archers) and **Schützenkönigin** (queen of the archers). They keep their prizes until the following year when there is a new **Schützenkönigspaar**. The traditions connected to this festival can vary greatly from region to region.

d) Reflexive verbs

Ich erinnere mich an meine Zeit an der Fachhochschule.

(I remember my time at the polytechnic/ at college.)

Grammar:

There are a few verbs in German that can be used in a reflexive and a non-reflexive form. Using the reflexive variant changes the meaning of the verb. In the example above, the verb **erinnern** is used reflexively meaning 'to remember something'. If it was used in a non-reflexive way, **an etwas erinnern**, it would mean 'to remind of something', for example: **Es erinnerte ihn an die Fachhochschule** *(It reminded him of the college).*

Cultural Aspect:

A **Fachhochschule** (often shortened to **FH** and similar to a former polytechnic or a University of Applied Sciences) is an institution of higher education which generally specializes in studies of technology, engineering, arts and social sciences. The courses are usually more focused and practical than courses at a university. They seek a close relationship between education and employment. **Fachhochschulen** generally do not award doctoral degrees. They also usually only appoint professors with professional experience outside education. The traditional degree awarded was called **Diplom (FH)** ('diploma'). These **Diplom** degrees have been phased out and replaced by the European bachelor's and master's degrees in recent years.

d) Reflexive verbs

Sie freut sich über den Lebkuchen.

(She is happy about the gingerbread.)

Grammar:

The German reflexive verb **sich freuen** with the preposition **über** means 'to be happy about'. It is not to be mixed up with **sich freuen auf** which means 'to look forward to' (see example below). This example shows how prepositions can completely change the meaning of a verb although the verb itself stays the same.

Cultural Aspect:

Lebkuchen (gingerbread), sometimes also called **Pfefferkuchen**, is a big biscuit that is usually eaten at **Advent** (advent) and Christmas time. It is generally round and made with syrup or honey and spices, especially cinnamon and cloves. It is often coated with chocolate or sugar icing. The most famous **Lebkuchen** is the **Nürnberger Lebkuchen** or **Elisenlebkuchen** (which must contain at least 25% nuts and less than 10% wheat flour).

d) Reflexive verbs

Sie freut sich auf das Volontariat.

(She is looking forward to the practical training.)

Grammar:

The German reflexive verb **sich freuen** with the preposition **auf** means 'to look forward to'. It is not to be mixed up with **sich freuen über** 'to be happy about' (see example above). This example shows how prepositions can completely change the meaning of a verb although the verb itself stays the same.

Cultural Aspect:

A **Volontariat** is a period of voluntary training within a certain profession (for example journalism or office work). It usually lasts for one or two years but can also be shorter. **Volontäre** (trainees) gain practical experience and also receive some tuition. Payment is usually rather low.

d) Reflexive verbs

Er kennt sich gut in Berlin aus.

(He knows his way around Berlin.)

Grammar:

Some German verbs only exist in the reflexive form and are so-called true reflexive verbs which means they cannot be used without the reflexive pronoun **sich**. The reflexive pronoun is an integral part of the verb and not a separate complement. **Sich auskennen** is one of these verbs. (Further common reflexive verbs are, for example: **sich ärgern** (to be annoyed, upset), **sich bedanken** (to thank), **sich beeilen** (to hurry), **sich bemühen** (to try, make an effort), **sich benehmen** (to behave), **sich bewerben** (to apply), **sich entschuldigen** (to apologize), **sich erkälten** (to catch a cold), **sich freuen** (to be pleased), **sich irren** (to be mistaken), **sich konzentrieren** (to concentrate), **sich verabreden** (to make a date), **sich verhalten** (to behave), **sich verlieben** (to fall in love), **sich wundern** (to wonder), **sich wünschen** (to wish)). Note that some German verbs change their meaning when used either with the reflexive pronoun **sich** or without, for example: **sich ausziehen** (to undress) – **ausziehen** (to move out), **sich umziehen** (to change) – **umziehen** (to move house).

Cultural Aspect:

Berlin is the capital and the largest city of Germany. At the same time it is also one of Germany's 16 states (**Bundesländer**). Its

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population is approximately 3.7 million. Between 1949 and 1990, East Berlin was the capital of the GDR and Bonn was the capital of West Germany. In June 1991, the **Bundestag** (the lower house of the German parliament) decided to transfer the seat of government from Bonn to Berlin.

e) Tenses

Wir fahren im Sommer an den Bodensee.

(We will go to Lake Constance in the summer – meaning we will holiday there.)

Grammar:

In the example sentence the verb **fahren** (to go, to drive) is in the present tense. This tense can be used in German to refer to actions and events in the future when it is clear from the context that the statement refers to the future. The signal word here is: **im Sommer** (in the summer). Other obvious signal words would be **morgen** (tomorrow), **nächste Woche**, (next week), **in drei Wochen** (in three weeks' time), **nächstes Jahr** (next year) etc. This use of the present tense is especially common in spoken German. In general, the present tense is much more frequently used than the future tense to refer to future time (as long as a future reference is clear from the context).

Cultural Aspect:

Der Bodensee (Lake Constance) is central Europe's third largest lake and is situated between Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Lake Constance and the region around it have a substantial touristic infrastructure and the area is especially well known for sightseeing and water-sports (in particular sailing, wind-surfing and swimming). There are three islands on the **Bodensee**: **Mainau**, **Reichenau** and **Lindau** Island. Although Germans love going abroad for their

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holidays, German holiday destinations are also becoming ever more popular.

e) Tenses

Ich habe letztes Jahr (mein) Abitur gemacht.

(I took my A-levels last year.)

Grammar:

The perfect tense is very often used in German to refer to past actions and events. This especially applies to spoken German. There is no difference in meaning to saying **Ich machte letztes Jahr (mein) Abitur** (= Imperfect, past tense). Using the perfect tense rather than the simple past is merely a matter of style or register (in written, formal German the use of the simple past would mostly be expected).

Cultural Aspect:

In Germany, the **Abitur** (A-levels) is taken by students at a **Gymnasium** (grammar school) at the end of 12 or 13 years of school. It formally enables a student to attend university. All students have to pass examinations in three areas (1. language, literature and the arts, 2. social sciences and 3. mathematics, natural science and technology), and are free to choose other subjects they are interested in.

e) Tenses

Angela Merkel ist seit 2005 Bundeskanzlerin.

(Angela Merkel has been Chancellor since 2005.)

Grammar:

An action or state that began in the past and is still going on at the moment of speaking (or writing) is expressed in German by the present tense. These kinds of sentences usually contain a preposition such as **seit** (since) or an adverb such as **schon** (already). In English the perfect tense is used for this construction.

Cultural Aspect:

The **Bundeskanzler** - female form **Bundeskanzlerin** – (Chancellor) of Germany is the head of government and is responsible for the government's general policy. He or she is elected for a period of four years by a majority of the members of parliament. Angela Merkel became the first female Chancellor of Germany in 2005 and was re-elected for her fourth term in spring 2018.

e) Tenses

Die Deutschen feiern heute den Tag der Deutschen Einheit.

(The Germans are celebrating the Day of German Unity today.)

Grammar:

There is no equivalent of the English present continuous (progressive) tense in German. German only uses the simple present tense (**einfache Gegenwartsform**). It is usually clear from the context or through signal words (here: **heute** – ‘today’) if the action or event described is happening at the moment or if it is a permanent state. Other signal words might be: **jetzt** (now), **im Moment** (at the moment), **gerade** (at the moment).

Cultural Aspect:

The **Tag der Deutschen Einheit** (The Day of German Unity) is the national holiday of Germany. It is celebrated on the 3rd of October, the day on which the **Bundesrepublik Deutschland** (Federal Republic of Germany) and the **Deutsche Demokratische Republik** (German Democratic Republic) were unified in 1990. The **Tag der Deutschen Einheit** is celebrated each year with a ceremonial act attended by politicians and a festival for citizens. The first celebrations took place in 1990 and were held in Berlin. The celebrations are hosted by a different major city every year, usually by a **Landeshauptstadt** (capital of a state).

f) Separable verbs

Ich zahle das Geld für die AOK ein.

(I'm paying in the money for the AOK.)

Grammar:

German has a number of separable verbs; i.e. verbs with prefixes which can be separated from the main verb (here: **ein-zahlen**). By adding a prefix to a verb the meaning of this verb changes. These prefixes can look like prepositions or adverbs (**an-, auf-, ein-, nach-, vor-** etc.) The separable prefix goes to the end in a main clause in the present and past tenses. These verbs have no exact counterpart in English (but could be compared to phrasal verbs such as 'to get up' or 'to go out').

Cultural Aspect:

The **AOK (Allgemeine Ortskrankenkasse)** is the largest state health insurance company in Germany with more than 25 million members. Germans have to pay higher contributions for their health insurance than people in the UK do; however, the general impression is that the health service also seems to be working better. Foreign nationals on holiday and students on the Year Abroad also receive help from the **AOK** if they fall ill while staying in Germany.

g) The passive

In der Adventszeit wird Weihnachtsgebäck gebacken.

(Christmas biscuits are baked in the season of Advent.)

Grammar:

This form of the German passive, the so-called **Vorgangspassiv** or “**werden**”-passive is the usual form of the passive in German. It is constructed with the auxiliary verb **werden** + the past participle of the main verb. It is used to refer to an action or a process. In the phrase above, **Gebäck** is a singular word – that is why **wird** is used whereas the plural is needed in the English translation. Note: The passive has the same range of tenses and moods as the active voice, however, the future tense is not used a lot in the passive and the present tense is preferred as long as any misunderstanding can be ruled out.

Cultural Aspect:

In Germany, it is still a tradition in many families to bake biscuits for Christmas. They include, for example, gingerbread, fruit loafs, all sorts of biscuits flavoured with cinnamon, chocolate, vanilla etc. as well as the Christmas cake named **Stollen**. This is a type of cake with dried fruit, almonds and often also marzipan. A big variety of creations for Christmas can be seen in the displays of bakeries all over Germany and Austria.

g) The passive

Der Tisch ist gedeckt.

(The table is laid.)

Grammar:

This form of the German passive is called **Zustandspassiv** or “**sein**”-passive because it is formed with the auxiliary verb **sein** and the past participle of the main verb. It is used to indicate a state as a result of a previous action (compare to: **Der Tisch wird gedeckt** - ‘The table is being laid’, i.e. someone is laying the table at this moment whereas the example sentence above implies that someone has already laid the table). It is a lot more restricted in use than the “**werden**”-passive. Normally only the present tense and the past tense are used in the **sein-Passiv**.

Cultural Aspect:

It is still common in Germany to have family meals at the table rather than in front of the TV. This applies to lunch (traditionally the main meal of the day) as well as the evening meal (traditionally a lighter meal with bread, cold meats and cheeses). These days, however, a lot of families also only manage to get together for their evening meal, at least during the working week.

h) Impersonal verbs and constructions

Als ich das Heidelberger Schloss besuchte, wimmelte es dort von Touristen.

(When I visited the castle in Heidelberg, the place was swarming with tourists.)

Grammar:

A number of German verbs can be used as so called impersonal verbs. This means they are used in the third person singular with the impersonal pronoun **es** (which corresponds to English 'it' or 'there'). In the example above, the impersonal verb **es wimmelt** has a noun subject in the English translation ('the place was swarming'). Other common examples are: **es regnet** (it is raining), **es brennt** (there's a fire, something is burning), **es klingelt/ es läutet** (somebody is ringing the bell), **es klopft** (there's a knock at the door), **es ist spät** (it's late), etc.

Cultural Aspect:

Heidelberg, a city in **Baden-Württemberg**, (the **Bundesland**, 'state', in South-West Germany), on the river **Neckar** is famous for its castle, which was initially built in the 12th century, and the university, founded in 1386, which makes it the oldest university in Germany. Apart from the university, there are also a number of independent research institutions. Roughly a quarter of the whole population (ca. 156.000) are students. The city is a very popular

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tourist destination and attracts more than 3.5 million visitors each year.

h) Impersonal verbs and constructions

Mich freut, dass wir Karten für Bayreuth bekommen haben.

(I am pleased that we managed to get tickets for Bayreuth.)

Grammar:

There are some verbs in German that do not require a subject. Most of these verbs express an emotion or a sensation. They are used in the third person singular and instead of a subject they have an accusative or a dative complement. **Mich freut** 'I am pleased' is formed with the third person singular of the verb **freuen** + the accusative of the persona pronoun **ich**.

Cultural Aspect:

Bayreuth, a town in **Franken** (Franconia – North East Bavaria) is the home and burial place of the 19th century composer **Richard Wagner** and is famous for its festival of his music, the **Wagnerfestspiele**, taking place annually in the summer. Wagner himself planned and promoted the festival in a detailed manner and he supervised the construction of a specially designed theatre which could accommodate the big orchestras needed to perform his works. It is usually rather difficult to obtain tickets for the festival; there is a waiting list with a waiting time of up to ten years and longer.

h) Impersonal verbs and constructions

Am Nikolaustag gibt es Geschenke.

(There are presents at St Nicholas day.)

Grammar:

Es gibt (followed by an accusative) is an impersonal construction which is usually translated into 'there is/ there are' in English. It is used when the existence of something or someone is referred to. Note the word order: We can also say: **Es gibt Geschenke am Nikolaustag**. The words at the beginning of a sentence are the ones that are stressed, so depending on what is of more importance (either the day or the presents) will be mentioned first.

Cultural Aspect:

Nikolaus (the name Santa Claus is a corruption of this) is celebrated on the 6th of December in Germany. A man dressed as St Nicholas comes to the houses and brings small gifts for the children. If he does not make a personal appearance, children leave their shoes by the door on the night of the 5th of December to discover small presents stuffed in the shoes the following morning.

i) Subjunctive

Es heißt, es werde bis 2020 eine Million E-Autos in Deutschland geben.

(They say there will be one million electric cars in Germany by 2020.)

Grammar:

The **Konjunktiv I** (subjunctive I, sometimes also called the present subjunctive) is used for indirect speech in German. This is especially the case in more formal and written usage of the language. The verb **werden** becomes **werde** in the third person singular in the subjunctive I. The **Konjunktiv** has the same compound tenses and also passive forms as the indicative.

Cultural Aspect:

The German government support electric car purchases (there is, for example a 4000 Euro bonus for buying one) and there is also financial support for charging stations.

j) Subjunctive

Ich wünschte, ich müsste nicht zur Arbeit pendeln.

(I wish I didn't have to commute to work.)

Grammar:

The **Konjunktiv II** (subjunctive II, sometimes also called the past subjunctive) is used to express an unreal condition, some doubt, a possibility or uncertainty. The expression 'I wish' is always translated into German in the **Konjunktiv II** form **ich wünschte** (and not **ich wünsche** – which is the indicative).

Cultural Aspect:

More and more people commute to work in Germany, their share is ca. 60 % of the working population. Munich has the biggest share of commuters, mainly because renting or buying property there is more expensive than anywhere else in Germany.

k) Verbs with prefixes

Sie bestellt eine Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte.

(She orders a black forest gateau.)

Grammar:

German has a large number of verbs formed with prefixes. These prefixes can either be separable or inseparable (which means that the prefix cannot be detached from the verb). One example for a verb with an inseparable prefix is **bestellen** (to order) with the prefix **be-**. Their past participle does not use the prefix **ge-** (e.g. the past participle of **bestellen** is **bestellt**). Seven further prefixes are inseparable: **emp-, ent-, er-, ge-, ver-, zer-** and normally **miss-**.

Cultural Aspect:

Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte (Black forest gateau) is named after the liquor originating from the Black forest region, **Schwarzwälder Kirsch(wasser)** (liquor distilled from tart cherries). **Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte** is one of the best known German cakes and is famous all over the world. It was first mentioned in writing in 1934.

I) Verbs with 'lassen'

Das kleine Mädchen ließ die Schultüte fallen.

(The little girl dropped the cone of sweets.)

Grammar:

Some German verbs in the infinitive are used in combination with the verb **lassen** (with the two meanings 'to let', 'to allow' or 'to cause', 'to make') as the equivalent of an English transitive verb. In the example above, *fallen* means 'to fall' and with **lassen** it means 'to let fall' or 'to drop'.

Cultural Aspect:

On their first day at school, little children are given a **Schultüte** (a large cornet of cardboard filled with sweets and little presents such as books and toys). It is intended to take the child's mind off any fears he or she might experience about going to school. The school entrance age in Germany is normally six with some children being five or seven, depending on the date of their birthday and their maturity.

m) verbs with adjective 'fertig'

Der Schwarzarbeiter hat den Hausanbau fertig gebaut.

(The illicit worker has finished building the extension of the house.)

Grammar:

A number of German verbs can be preceded by the adjective **fertig** (finished) to indicate that the activity expressed by the verb (here: **bauen**, 'to build') has been brought to an end. The most common verbs used with **fertig** are **bauen**, **essen** (to eat), **lesen** (to read), **machen** (to do), and **schreiben** (to write).

Cultural Aspect:

At the moment, work done illicitly is on the decrease in Germany – perhaps due to the introduction of the minimum wage. In general, moonlighting is especially found in construction and building work, home help, babysitting, and private tuition.

IV: Adjectives

a) Comparative form of the adjective

Der Polterabend war schöner als die Hochzeit.

(The party before the wedding was nicer than the wedding itself.)

Grammar:

As in English, the comparative of an adjective is formed by adding the ending **–er**: **schön** (nice) – **schöner** (nicer). This is also the only way to form a comparison in German. English learners of German often make the mistake to say **mehr schön** (sic) (more beautiful), however, this possibility to form a comparative does not exist in German. The ending **–er** for the comparative (and the ending **–st** for the superlative) is used in German with all adjectives, irrespective of length.

Cultural Aspect:

The **Polterabend** (**poltern** means ‘to bluster’, ‘to crash about’ or ‘to rant’) is traditionally the evening before the wedding when people smash old crockery in front of the bride and groom which is supposed to bring luck to the couple. The saying is **“Scherben bringen Glück”** (broken crockery brings you luck). Conventionally,

the **Polterabend** is celebrated with more enthusiasm than the wedding itself. Nowadays, the **Polterabend** is an informal party for friends and family and is often held about a week before the wedding. It is also a way to include people in the celebrations who are not necessarily invited to the wedding itself. Furthermore, a lot of couples decide to have separate bachelor (girl) parties, similarly to the stag do and hen party common in the UK.

a) Comparative form of the adjective

In Deutschland haben immer mehr Menschen eine Teilzeitbeschäftigung.

(More and more people work part-time in Germany.)

Grammar:

Comparison of adjectives: The English comparison of adjectives using -er and -er is expressed in German by using **immer** + comparative. In the example above it is the irregular adjective **viele** (many) – **mehr** (more).

Cultural Aspect:

Although more and more people have a job in Germany, the number of full-time jobs is declining. In the last twenty years, the number of people in part-time work has almost doubled (in numbers: 15 million in 2017). That means that four in ten employees do not have a full-time position.

a) Comparative form of the adjective

Im Sommer werden wir eine längere Reise machen.

(We are going on a long(ish) journey in the summer.)

Grammar:

The comparative form of some adjectives (here: **länger**) is used to indicate in German what is expressed in English by using “-ish”, although no comparison is made here.

Cultural Aspect:

Germans love going on holiday, either abroad or in Germany itself which is actually their favourite destination. Most Germans travel by car to their holiday destination and 40% of all German tourists travel by plane. The beach holiday is still the favourite type of holiday.

b) Adjectives used as noun

Heute kommt 'Der Alte' im Fernsehen.

('The old man' is on television today.)

Grammar:

German adjectives (here: **alt**) can be used as nouns. They are then written with a capital letter and are declined like ordinary adjectives. Further examples would be **der Fremde** (stranger, from **fremd** - strange), or **der Erwachsene** (adult, from **erwachsen** – grown up).

Cultural Aspect:

Der Alte can either be an old man in general or a not very nice expression for father or husband. **Der Alte** is also the name of a very long-running popular crime series on German television which premiered in 1977 on the **ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen)**. Germans love to watch crime films on TV.

c) The adjective “ganz”

Ganz Deutschland leidet unter der Hitze.

(The whole of Germany is suffering from the heat.)

Grammar:

The two adjectives **ganz** (whole, entire) and **halb** (half) are not declined, which means they do not have differing endings, before geographical nouns that are used without an article.

Cultural Aspect:

Like most or all regions on earth, Germany is also affected by climate change. As a result, temperatures in the summer rise steadily and it is not a very unusual anymore to see the thermometer climb to almost 40 degrees, something most Germans do not like too much because as a rule, offices and private homes are not normally equipped with air conditioning and there is no tradition of a long lunch break as there is in southern parts of Europe.

c) The adjective “ganz”

Beim Frühschoppen wurde das ganze Bier getrunken.

(All the beer was drunk at the lunchtime drink.)

Grammar:

Most idiomatic equivalents of English ‘all’ are given by the adjective **ganz** in German. This especially applies to singular nouns as in the example sentence above: **das ganze Bier** – all the beer. The literal translation of **ganz** is ‘whole’, but **ganz** has a much wider range of usage.

Cultural Aspect:

The **Frühschoppen** (morning pint/ lunchtime drink) is a social gathering in a **Kneipe** (pub) usually in the late morning just before lunch. People might drink a glass of wine or a beer, specific customs vary from region to region. A **Frühschoppen** normally takes place on a Sunday. Especially in Bavaria and Austria people used to meet up in a **Gasthaus** (inn) between churchgoing and lunch at home.

d) Adjectives without endings

Ich habe Kölnisch Wasser für meine Mutter gekauft.

(I have bought some Eau de Cologne for my mother.)

Grammar:

Usually, adjectives in German change their endings according to the noun they precede. In a few cases, however, an attributive adjective has no ending. This usage is especially retained in idioms or set phrases like **Kölnisch Wasser**. Other examples are: **etwas auf gut Glück tun** (to take a chance) or **ruhig Blut (bewahren)** (keep calm), **eine klasse Idee** (a great idea), **eine super Schau** (a great show).

Cultural Aspect:

Kölnisch Wasser is a toilet water originating from 1709. It was initially only produced in Cologne (hence the name). The most famous Original Eau de Cologne is **4711**, named after its location at **Glockengasse number 4711**. **Köln** (Cologne) is one of the largest cities in Germany and has one of the biggest universities in the country. It is the largest city of the **Bundesland Nordrhein-Westfalen** (land of North Rhine-Westphalia).

e) The 'absolute comparative' of adjectives

Der ICE, mit dem wir fahren, war ein neueres Modell.

(The intercity express we took was fairly new.)

Grammar:

Here, the comparison **neuer** (newer) is not used to form a comparison but to indicate a certain degree of the relevant quality. Other examples would be: **ältere Personen** (elderly people), **eine größere Stadt** (a fairly big town). This 'absolute comparative' can only be formed with a limited number of adjectives, namely: **alt** (old), **bekannt** (familiar, known, famous), **dick** (thick, fat, bulky), **dünn** (thin), **dunkel** (dark), **groß** (big, large, tall, great), **gut** (good), **hell** (light, bright, clear), **jung** (young), **klein** (short, little, small), **kurz** (short), **lang** (long), **neu** (new) and **oft** (often).

Cultural Aspect:

The ICE – short for **Intercityexpresszug** (intercity express train) is a high-speed train predominantly running on various main routes in Germany and its surrounding countries. It offers a considerably reduced journey time and increased comfort in comparison to conventional trains. However, fares are higher than for other, slower, trains.

f) Adverbs of direction

Wir fahren nach Spanien. Wir fahren gern dahin.

(We're going to Spain. We like going there.)

Grammar:

German usually makes a clear distinction between a position (for example **da** – ‘there’), movement away from the speaker and movement towards the speaker by adding **hin** (away from speaker – see example sentence – **dahin**) and **her** (towards speaker) to adverbs or prepositions (for example **daher**). Other examples would be **wohin/woher** (where to/ where from), **hierher** (here), **irgendwohin/ irgendwoher** (somewhere/ from somewhere).

Cultural Aspect:

Germans love going on holiday and one of the most popular holiday destinations is Spain.

g) Colour adjectives

Am Rosenmontag trug sie ein lila Kostüm mit rosa Streifen.

(She wore a purple fancy dress costume with pink stripes on Shrove Monday.)

Grammar:

Usually, German adjectives that precede a noun are inflected, that means they have different endings depending on the gender and the case of the noun. There are, however, some colour adjectives (originating from other languages) that do not take any endings. The main ones are: **lila** (purple, lavender), **rosa** (pink), **orange** (orange), **beige** (fawn, beige), and **crème** (off-white).

Cultural Aspect:

Rosenmontag (Shrove Monday, Carnival Monday) is the day before **Fastnachtsdienstag** (Shrove Tuesday). In many towns and cities, especially in Catholic areas, street parades take place on this day. One can see dressed up carnival club members going through the streets, throwing sweets into the crowds and playing music. Some make satirical comments on the past year's social and political events and carry big paper-mache figures portraying local and national politicians or other well-known people. **Rosenmontag** is a public holiday in many regions in Germany, especially in the Rhineland and in the south.

V: Adverbs

a) Comparison of adverbs

Als sie auf der Autobahn waren, fuhren sie immer schneller.

(When they were on the motorway they drove faster and faster.)

Grammar:

The comparative of an adverb or adjective is formed by adding –er in German, e.g. **schnell** (fast) becomes **schneller** (faster). Adverbs in the combination ‘-er and –er’ in English e.g. ‘faster and faster’ are expressed by **immer** plus the comparative in German: **immer schneller**.

Cultural Aspect:

The German **Autobahnen** (motorways) are well known for the fact they normally do not have a general speed limit. There are exceptions, however: there are a lot of sections of the **Autobahnen** that might be either close to urban areas, substandard or dangerous that are subject to speed restrictions for reasons of safety and/ or reduced exhaust emissions. In general, there is an advisory speed limit (**Richtgeschwindigkeit**) of 130 km per hour (ca. 80 mph). The **Autobahnen** formed the first high-speed road

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network in the world. The idea for constructing an **Autobahn** in Germany was first conceived in the 1920s (during the **Weimarer Republik**, 'Weimar Republic'), however, it was the job creation programme under the Nazis that turned the idea into reality. Today, Germany's **Autobahn** network has a total length of almost 13,000 km.

b) Word order with adverbs

Gestern waren wir am Baggersee.

(Yesterday, we were at the quarry pond.)

Grammar:

When a sentence begins with an adverb (here: **gestern**, 'yesterday'), the finite verb (i.e. the verb which shows person, number and tense) follows this adverb (here: **waren**, 'were'). The general rule in German is that the finite verb is always the second item in the main clause.

Cultural Aspect:

Many German towns, especially in the south, have a nearby **Baggersee** (a quarry pond or dredging lake) which is used for swimming in the summer. It is often a disused gravel pit which is filled up with water (**baggern** means 'to dredge'). **Baggerseen** have traditionally been mostly free of charge. These days, they are increasingly being equipped with changing cubicles, showers and cafes and will then usually have an entrance fee for these facilities. They are popular with both young and old and a lot of people even prefer them to the swimming pools in town.

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c) 'sehr'

Alles hat sich nach der Wende sehr verändert.

(Everything changed a lot after re-unification.)

Grammar:

The German adverb **sehr** (very) is used to emphasize or modify the verb it precedes. It corresponds to English 'very (much)', 'a lot': **sich sehr verändern** – to change a lot/ very much.

Cultural Aspect:

The term **die Wende** (literally: turn, turning point) is generally used to describe an important political or social change in Germany. Nowadays, however, **Wende** usually refers to the collapse of the political system in the GDR in 1989 which consequently led to the dissolution of the state and unification with West Germany.

VI: Nouns

a) Singular nouns

Die Familie kommt an Weihnachten.

(The family are coming at Christmas.)

Grammar:

There are some nouns in German such as **die Familie** (family), **die Polizei** (police) or **die Regierung** (government) which are used in the singular and therefore require a singular verb (here: **kommt** – ‘comes’ or ‘is coming’). These nouns are seen as an institution, one body, rather than the individual people behind them. Other common examples for singular nouns in German with plural equivalent in English are: **die Brille** (spectacles), **die Hose** (trousers), **der Inhalt** (contents), **der Lohn** (wages), **die Politik** (politics), **die Schere** (scissors), **die Treppe** (stairs), etc.

Cultural Aspect:

Christmas celebrations in Germany start on Christmas Eve called **Heiligabend**. This is for many Germans the most important day of Christmas because this is when presents are exchanged. Christmas Day (**Erster Weihnachtsfeiertag**) and Boxing Day (**Zweiter**

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Weihnachtsfeiertag) are, as in Britain, a time to relax, to see family and friends and to eat traditional meals commonly goose or carp. A lot of families also attend church services during Christmas.

a) Plural of nouns

Der Besuch von Museen ist in Deutschland sehr beliebt.

(Visiting museums is very popular in Germany.)

Grammar:

There are different ways to form a plural in German, depending on the gender of the noun and the noun endings. A number of words, especially those originating from Latin or Greek, have retained unusual plural forms. Most words ending in “-um” or “-us” form their plural with the ending “-en”. In the example above the word **Museen** is the plural for **das Museum**. Other examples are: **der Organismus – die Organismen** (organism), **das Album – die Alben** (album), **das Visum –** two possible plural forms: **die Visen** or **Visa** (visa), **das Zentrum – die Zentren** (centre).

Cultural Aspect:

There are over 6000 museums in Germany with ca. 112 million visitors yearly. Very popular and famous are, for example, the **Museumsinsel** in Berlin, the **Alte Pinakothek** in Munich, the **Mercedes-Benz Museum** in Stuttgart, the **Auto und Technik Museum** in Sinsheim and many more.

b) Negation of nouns

Wir haben keinen Kaffee mehr.

(We don't have any coffee left.)

Grammar:

To negate a noun the word **kein** (negative indefinite article) is used in German. A common mistake for English speakers learning German is to say **nicht ein** for 'not a/any' which is incorrect.

Cultural Aspect:

Although tea has become much more popular over the last 30 years or so in Germany, coffee is still the most popular beverage. People in Germany invite their friends or family round for **Kaffee und Kuchen** (coffee and cake) and not for afternoon tea and biscuits. Coffee is made from fresh grounds rather than instant and it is usually also relatively strong.

c) Suffix

Auf dem Oktoberfest habe ich zwei Bierchen getrunken.

(I had two small beers at the beer festival.)

Grammar:

The noun suffix **-chen** is a diminutive suffix. It makes all nouns neuter; the plural of the word is the same: **ein Bierchen, zwei Bierchen**. In the English translation little or small is used in front of the noun in question. One can, of course, also say: **ein kleines Bier** ('a small beer').

Cultural Aspect:

The world's largest beer festival in Munich, the **Oktoberfest**, takes place annually from mid-September to early October. Beer tents are set up on a festival site (called **Wiesn**) in the city and people sit at long wooden tables and drink beer served normally only in one-litre mugs. There are also other attractions such as amusement rides and games and obviously food. The festival has become so famous in recent years that one can find imitations all over the world, also in London.

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d) Profession

Sie ist Nachrichtensprecherin beim ZDF.

(She is a newsreader at the ZDF.)

Grammar:

For many nouns denoting professions or occupations the basic word is masculine and the feminine is formed by adding the suffix **-in**. In the example above **Nachrichtensprecher** (newsreader) would be the basic designation, the ending **-in** refers to a female person.

Cultural Aspect:

ZDF is short for **Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen** (Second German Television). It was founded in 1961, second to the **ARD**, the first German national TV channel which has been broadcasting since 1954. It is run as an independent, non-profit institution and is financed through TV licence fees and advertising. These days, the **ZDF** also operates various channels in cooperation with other networks, for example **3sat** and **ARTE**.

e) Nationality

Der Österreicher sagte mir, dass man für die österreichische Autobahn eine Vignette brauche.

(The Austrian told me that you need a permit for driving on the Austrian motorway).

Grammar:

German differentiates between the noun designating a nationality and the corresponding adjective unlike English, where the same word is normally used. There is only one exception in German which is **der/ die Deutsche** (German man, German woman) and the adjective **deutsch** (German). Masculine nouns end in **-er** (**Österreicher** – Austrian man), female nouns are formed with the suffix **-in** (**Österreicherin** – Austrian woman) and the adjectives add the suffix **-isch** to the stem of the noun (**österreichisch** – Austrian).

Cultural Aspect:

A **Vignette** (the word is borrowed from French) is a permit for motorway driving that you need in Austria and also in Switzerland. It is sometimes also called Highway Toll Sticker. It is a sticker for the car windscreen and is valid for one year in Switzerland whereas in Austria you can buy a **Vignette** for the period of time you need it, for example for 10 days, two months or a year. The aim of the **Vignette** is to cover the cost of maintaining the motorways. The German government has also decided to introduce a **PKW-Maut**

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(toll for cars) which is supposed to be implemented at the turn of the year 2018/19.

f) The infinitive of a verb as a noun

Das Fliegen ist bei den Deutschen populär.

(Flying is popular among Germans.)

Grammar:

The infinitive of most German verbs can be used as a noun. These nouns are all neuter and, as usual for a noun, they are written with a capital letter. They normally correspond to the use of the –ing form in English.

Cultural Aspect:

Foreign trips are very popular among Germans. About 80 million people a year use a German airport to go away on their holidays. Favourite destinations are places in the Mediterranean.

g) Neuter nouns

Das Hotel Sacher in Wien ist sehr berühmt.

(The hotel Sacher in Vienna is very famous.)

Grammar:

Hotels, cafes and restaurants are neuter nouns in German, used with the neuter definite article **das**. This also applies when only the proper name is mentioned such as **das Sacher**.

Cultural Aspect:

The **Hotel Sacher** is one of the world's most famous luxury hotels located in Vienna, Austria. It is named after the hotelier **Eduard Sacher** (1843 – 1892) who founded it in 1876. The hotel is frequented by celebrities from all over the world and is especially known for its **Sachertorte** (Sacher cake). This rich chocolate cake was created by Eduard's father **Franz Sacher** (1816 – 1907), a confectioner.

h) Compound nouns

Ihre Englischkenntnisse sind gut.

(Her knowledge of English is good.)

Grammar:

German often uses a compound noun where English has two nouns linked by a preposition (usually the preposition 'of' is used). Also note that **Kenntnisse** is usually used in the plural (and knowledge in the singular) which is why the verb is in the plural as well (**sind**).

Cultural Aspect:

It is a well-known fact that most Germans have some knowledge of English and a high percentage of these are rather good at English. However, this should not discourage you from learning German. The people you meet will always appreciate your efforts!

VII: Prepositions

a) Preposition “an”

Am Mittwoch begann die **Berlinale**.

(The Berlinale started on Wednesday.)

Grammar:

The preposition **an** plus the dative case is used with nouns denoting days (or part of the day). **Am Mittwoch** (on Wednesday) is the contracted (and usual) form for **an dem Mittwoch**.

Cultural Aspect:

The **Berlinale** (or **Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin** – ‘Berlin International Film Festival’) is an international film festival in Berlin. It is, alongside Cannes and Venice, the most important film festival in the world. It began in West Berlin in 1951 and has been taking place annually in February since 1978.

b) Preposition “auf”

Heute Abend gehen wir auf den Weihnachtsmarkt.

(We're going to the Christmas market tonight.)

Grammar:

There are several German equivalents for the English preposition ‘to’. In the example sentence **auf** is used going to a place and/ or event.

Cultural Aspect:

A **Weihnachtsmarkt** (Christmas market) is a street market taking place during the four weeks of Advent in preparation for Christmas. German Christmas markets are world renowned, so much so that they are now being held in many other countries as well and in the case of Britain, for example, grow year on year in size and popularity. German **Weihnachtsmärkte** have a very long tradition, in most cases they go back to the late Middle Ages. One of the most famous Christmas markets is the **Christkindlesmarkt** in Nuremberg (**Christkind** meaning Christ child or boy Jesus). Myriad Christmas items are on sale on these fairs, for example tree decorations, baking utensils and wooden nativity scenes but also other Christmas presents and a lot of culinary delicacies, for example **Glühwein** (mulled wine) – for more information on this please see next example.

c) Preposition “aus”

Glühwein besteht aus Wein und Gewürzen.

(Mulled wine is made of wine and spices.)

Grammar:

The German preposition **aus** has the meaning ‘of’ or ‘from’ in the English translation. **Bestehen aus** means therefore ‘to consist of’ or ‘to be made of’.

Cultural Aspect:

Glühwein (mulled wine) is a hot drink usually made with red wine and various spices such as cinnamon sticks, cloves, nutmeg, and star aniseed. Sometimes oranges, cut in little pieces, are also added. **Glühwein** is very popular in German-speaking countries, especially around Christmas. You will always find a **Glühweinstand** (mulled wine stall) at a Christmas market (see also example above).

d) Preposition “binnen”

Es wird erwartet, dass der DAX binnen kurzem steigen wird.

(It is expected that the DAX index will rise shortly.)

Grammar:

The German preposition **binnen** ‘within’ indicates a period of time. It is followed by a dative (see above) or a genitive and is used in formal registers, usually in writing.

Cultural Aspect:

The **DAX** (short for **Deutscher Aktienindex**) is the German share index. It was introduced in 1988 and comprises the strongest German shares. It consists of the 30 major German companies trading on the **Frankfurter Börse** (Frankfurt stock exchange). Many of the German newspapers offer an online share price watch.

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d) Preposition “durch”

Wir sind auf einer Reise durch den Schwarzwald.

(We're travelling through the Black Forest.)

Grammar:

The German preposition **durch** means ‘through’ when it refers to a place.

Cultural Aspect:

Der Schwarzwald (Black Forest) is a mountainous and densely wooded region in southwest Germany on the border to France. It is a famous holiday destination, known for its picturesque villages, spas and the cuckoo clock that has been produced in the area for over 300 years. The region's largest town is **Freiburg**, near the French and Swiss borders.

e) Preposition “gegen”

Gegen 50 Leute waren auf der Silvesterparty.

(There were about 50 people at the New Year’s Eve Party.)

Grammar:

The German preposition **gegen** usually means ‘against’ in English. It has, however, a number of other usages, one of them is to express approximation as in the example above.

Cultural Aspect:

New Year’s Eve is known in Germany as **Silvester** after the name of the saint who is commemorated on that day. **Silvester** is usually celebrated with a group of friends and at midnight fireworks are lit and champagne is drunk to welcome the New Year. Another old custom is the so-called **Bleigießen** (melting of lead) in which small amounts of molten lead are dropped into cold water and the resulting shapes are used to tell fortunes for the coming year.

f) Preposition “hinter”

Hinter dem Reichstagsgebäude ist das Kanzleramt.

(The Chancellery is located behind the Parliament.)

Grammar:

Hinter (behind) is a German preposition that takes the accusative and the dative. It is almost exclusively used to refer to a place. Used with the dative (see example above: **dem Reichstagsgebäude**), it indicates a position.

Cultural Aspect:

Das **Reichstagsgebäude** or short der **Reichstag** (home of the German parliament) was opened in 1894. It was severely damaged in a fire in 1933 and largely fell into disuse after the Second World War. It was reopened in 1999 after having undergone a reconstruction under the British architect Norman Foster and became the meeting place of the **Bundestag** (the German parliament). The **Bundestagskanzleramt** (German chancellery) houses the personal offices of the chancellor and his or her staff.

g) Preposition 'in'

Er wohnt in einer Sozialwohnung.

(He lives in a council flat.)

Grammar:

In is a German preposition. Its basic sense, when it takes the dative, is 'in(side)'. In a few cases, German **in** is used when English uses another preposition. For example, German uses **in** when referring to buildings etc., whereas English often uses 'at'.

Cultural Aspect:

Sozialer Wohnungsbau (social housing) is a government sponsored programme aimed at alleviating housing costs. **Sozialwohnungen** (council flats) are given to people on low income or with a large family (or both). In the past, Germany was one of the pioneers of social housing, however, in recent decades privatisation has considerably decreased the number of available council flats.

h) Preposition “mit”

Mit der Zeit gewöhnten sich die Leute an den Solidaritätszuschlag.

(In the course of time people got used to the solidarity surcharge.)

Grammar:

The German preposition **mit** usually corresponds to English ‘with’. There are some idiomatic uses of **mit**, however, where the translation into English requires another construction, such as in the example above (**mit der Zeit** – ‘in (the course of) time’).

Cultural Aspect:

The **Solidaritätszuschlag** is a surcharge on income tax first introduced for the reconstruction of eastern Germany after reunification. Everyone in employment and every company is liable to the **Solidaritätszuschlag** which is 5.5% of income. It was initially used to help cover costs of reunification and the economic development of the former East Germany but has also been used to fund other projects. For years, it has been discussed by politicians if this surcharge should be abolished and the idea is to dispose of it by the year 2030.

i) Preposition “nach”

Nach der Arbeit gingen wir in den Biergarten.

(After work we went to the beer garden.)

Grammar:

The German preposition **nach** is used as an equivalent of the English word 'after' when a preposition is required, i.e. before nouns and pronouns.

Cultural Aspect:

Biergärten (beer gardens, plural) are open-air places that serve mainly cold drinks and simple food. They are open in the summertime and are very popular on hot summer evenings. Usually, they belong to a pub and are located in the pub's backyard. Some bars, however, operate exclusively as **Biergärten**. The institution of the **Biergarten** originated in Bavaria, however, **Biergärten** can be found all over Germany nowadays.

i) Preposition “nach”

Es riecht nach frischem Brot.

(It smells of fresh bread.)

Grammar:

With verbs of sensation, the German preposition **nach** often has the sense of the English word ‘of’; see example sentence above: **riechen nach** – to smell of. Other examples would be **duften nach** – to scent/ smell of, **stinken nach** – ‘to reek/ stink of’ or **schmecken nach** – ‘to taste of’.

Cultural Aspect:

Bread is very important in Germany and there are many different – sometimes regional – varieties of bread. The two basic sorts are the lighter variety made usually from wheat flour and the darker bread made principally from rye flour. A particular kind of bread that can be brought in Britain as well is the **Vollkornbrot**, a hearty bread made with wholemeal flour and with a coarse texture.

j) Preposition “seit”

Seit langem habe ich keine Laugenbrezel mehr gegessen.

(I haven't had a pretzel for a long time.)

Grammar:

The German preposition **seit** is used for the English ‘for’ to refer to a period of time which began at some point in the past and extends to the present (in the example above the exact point in the past is not given).

Cultural Aspect:

Laugenbrezeln and **Laugenbrötchen** are pretzels and rolls that are dipped into boiling caustic soda and sprinkled with grains of salt before baking, thus acquiring a brown crust and their special flavour. They are very popular in various regions of Germany, especially in the south, and can even be bought in Britain nowadays.

k) Preposition “über”

Wir wohnen über der Weinstube.

(We live above the wine bar.)

Grammar:

The German preposition **über** is followed by the dative case if it refers to a position (cf preposition “**hinter**” above). It then corresponds to the English word ‘over’ or ‘above’ and sometimes also ‘across’.

Cultural Aspect:

A **Weinstube** (wine tavern or bar) is a restaurant or a bar where mainly wine is served with or without meals. It offers an extensive wine list and may, especially in wine-growing areas, offer wine-tasting of the various wines of that region. **Weinstuben** are mainly found in the south of Germany.

I) Preposition “von”

Er distanzierte sich von der Burschenschaft.

(He dissociated himself from the student fraternity.)

Grammar:

The German preposition **von** usually has the sense of English ‘of’ or ‘from’ as in the example above: **sich distanzieren von** – ‘to dissociate from’.

Cultural Aspect:

Burschenschaften (student fraternities or leagues) are traditional student organizations that go back to the early 19th century – the time after the wars of liberation (**Befreiungskriege**) against Napoleon I – when they were inspired by liberal and nationalistic ideas and were politically very active. Around 160 **Burschenschaften** still exist today and they are regarded as conservative (they won’t admit female students, for example) and nationalistic. The members – **die Burschenschaftler** – wear multi-coloured sashes and peaked caps when they go out together.

m) Preposition “vor”

Sie fürchtet sich vor dem Examen.

(She is afraid of her final examinations.)

Grammar:

The German preposition **vor** is usually used after a verb of ‘fearing’ and is always followed by a dative construction. It often corresponds to the English preposition ‘of’ (**sich fürchten vor** – ‘to be afraid of’).

Cultural Aspect:

At German universities, most degree courses nowadays end with a **Bachelor** (after a 3 to 4 year course), a **Master** or a **Doktor** (PhD) (after postgraduate studies). Before the European reforms, most first degrees were called either **Staatsexamen** (state examination) or **Diplom** (diploma), some were **Magister** (M.A.) In contrast to English, the word **Examen** is only used for finals (not for all tests after the end of each term/ semester or academic year).

n) Preposition “während”

Während der vergangenen Jahre ist die Zahl der Hausbesitzer in Deutschland gestiegen.

(The number of home owners in Germany has been rising in the last few years.)

Grammar:

There are some prepositions in German that are followed by the genitive. One of the most common of these prepositions is **während** ‘during’. In the example sentence **während** is followed by the genitive construction **der vergangenen Jahre** ‘of the last years’.

Cultural Aspect:

Whereas more and more people in Germany strive to buy their own property rather than renting, home-ownership in Germany is still well below the European average: the percentage of home owners in Germany is around 52% whereas it is around 70% in the EU overall.

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o) Preposition “zu”

Die Dokumenta ging zu Ende.

(The Documenta exhibition came to a close.)

Grammar:

The German preposition **zu** usually expresses a direction (to). But there are a lot of idiomatic uses of **zu**, one of which can be found in the example above: **zu Ende gehen** – ‘to end’, ‘to draw/ come to a close’.

Cultural Aspect:

The **Documenta** is an exhibition of contemporary art in Kassel. It takes place every five years and usually runs for 100 days, which is why it is also referred to **das Museum der 100 Tage** ‘the 100 days museum’. It was founded in 1955 as an attempt to support modern art after the Nazi era and is today regarded as one of the best modern art exhibitions in the world. (The name of the exhibition, **Dokumenta**, is an invented word).

VIII: Pronouns

a) Personal pronouns

Das ist Stefans neuer Wagen, er ist sein ganzer Stolz.

(This is Stefan's new car. It is his pride and joy.)

Grammar:

In German, the personal pronoun in the third person singular (**er**, **sie**, **es**) agrees in gender with the noun it refers to. This applies to objects/ things as well as people. This means that the English pronoun 'it' may be expressed by **er** in German (referring to a masculine noun – see example above: **der Wagen – er**), **sie** (referring to a female noun: **die Tankstelle – sie**, petrol station) or **es** (referring to a neuter noun: **das Auto - es**).

Cultural Aspect:

German cars are world famous and the car industry is one of the most important pillars of the German economy. A lot of Germans strive to buy a German car because of its quality and also because it is a status symbol – they act just like people all over the world. However, the recent **Abgasskandal** (Volkswagen emissions

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scandal) has damaged the reputation of the German car industry slightly (also see next example).

b) Reflexive pronoun

Es wird sich zeigen, welche Auswirkungen der Abgasskandal hat.

(Time will tell what implications the emissions scandal will have.)

Grammar:

A lot of German verbs are reflexive. This means they need a reflexive pronoun **sich** whereas their equivalents in English are usually intransitive verbs: **sich zeigen** – tell, show.

Cultural Aspect:

The **VW Abgasskandal** (Volkswagen emissions scandal) started in 2015 when it was found out that VW had intentionally tempered with emissions testing. As a consequence, its stock price fell and the CEO resigned. The scandal also raised awareness to the fact that the vehicles built by a lot of other car makers emitted higher levels of pollution than previously thought.

c) Relative pronoun

Meine Schwester, die eine Katze hat, würde auch gern einen Hund haben.

(My sister, who owns a cat, would also like to have a dog.)

Grammar:

Relative pronouns introduce a relative clause (which is a kind of subordinate clause). The most common relative pronoun in German is **der/die/das** (corresponding to English 'who', 'which' and 'that'). The relative pronoun takes the gender and number from the noun it refers to (here: **meine Schwester**: feminine, singular) and its case from its role in the relative clause (here: nominative). We also have to remember that a relative clause sends the finite verb to the end.

Cultural Aspect:

About 40% of the people in Germany own a pet and the most popular pets are cats, followed by dogs.

d) “man”

Man sagt, dass das Referendiat sehr schwierig ist.

(It is said that teacher training is very difficult.)

Grammar:

The indefinite pronoun **man** ‘one’ is often used in German as an alternative to a passive construction if the subject is either not known or not important. **Man** is the preferred usage for general statements, generalisations and also maxims. English tends to use the passive to replace this construction: **man sagt** – ‘it is said’. In everyday spoken English it might be replaced by ‘they’ or ‘you’: ‘They say that teacher training is tough’. Be aware: if you start a sentence with **man**, you cannot switch to **er** or **sie** etc in the second half of the sentence.

Cultural Aspect:

Prospective teachers at a **Gymnasium** (grammar school) are called **Referendare** (trainee teachers). Depending on the **Bundesland** (state) they do 18 to 24 months of teaching after graduating from university. At the end of the traineeship, student teachers take another examination before they can apply for a job as a teacher.

The term **Referendar** and **Referendariat** can also refer to trainee lawyers/ barristers doing a pupillage.

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e) “es”

Es sind Flüchtlinge.

(They are refugees.)

Grammar:

Unlike the English pronoun ‘it’, German **es** can be used with a plural verb (**sind** is the third person plural of the verb **sein**). It has the function of an indeterminate subject and is only used in this way with the verbs **sein** and **werden** followed by a noun, as **Flüchtlinge** (refugees) in the example above, or an adjective.

Cultural Aspect:

More than a million refugees, mainly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, have entered Germany in the refugee crisis Europe has seen since 2015. Initially, they were greeted kindly but there was also chaos and poor planning to deal with. The situation has improved in the meantime but the topic of integration is an ongoing subject of much debate.

IX: Conjunctions

a) “aber”

Er isst gern Käse, **aber** auch Wurst.

(He likes eating cheese but also sausage/ cold meat.)

Grammar:

The conjunction **aber** is usually translated simply as ‘but’; however, it is also used for the English ‘but also’ when the statement does not contain a negation.

Cultural Aspect:

Germany is famous for its variety of **Wurst** (which can be sausage and cold meat). **Wurst** can be eaten cold and in slices, for example **Salami**, or warm as for example **Frankfurter Würstchen** or **Bratwurst** which are both very popular at stands on markets but are also eaten at home.

b) “erst”

Die Oberammergauer Passionsfestspiele werden erst wieder 2020 stattfinden.

(The Oberammergau Passion Play won't take place before 2020.)

Grammar:

The German conjunction **erst** is an equivalent to the English expression ‘not...before’ or ‘not...until’. The literal translation of the English ‘not ...before’ is **nicht...bevor** and the translation for ‘not...until’ is **nicht...bis** and are only used if the clause with **bevor** expresses a condition.

Cultural Aspect:

Die Oberammergauer Passionsfestspiele (The Oberammergau Passion Play) was first performed in 1634 in **Oberammergau**, Bavaria. The play depicts the life and death of Jesus Christ and is staged every ten years. The historical background says that the residents vowed in 1633 that they would produce and stage a play if they were spared from the bubonic plague.

c) “nachdem”

Nachdem sie gegessen hatten, gingen sie ins Berghain.

(After they had eaten they went to the Berghain club.)

Grammar:

The German conjunction **nachdem** introduces a subordinate clause in German. It is the equivalent of English ‘after’ when it introduces a dependent clause with a verb in the simple past, present perfect or the plusperfect as in the example above.

Cultural Aspect:

Berghain is a night club in Berlin popular among lovers of electronic music or techno. It is named after its location near the border between the two districts **Kreuzberg** and **Friedrichshain**.

d) ‘When’ – wann

Wann beginnt die Frankfurter Buchmesse?

(When does the Frankfurt book fair start?)

Grammar:

The English conjunction ‘when’ has three possible translations in German: **wenn**, **wann** and **als**. **Wann** is used in German as the equivalent of the English conjunction ‘when’ only in questions – both direct and indirect questions.

Cultural Aspect:

Die Frankfurter Buchmesse (The Frankfurt Book Fair) is the largest trade fair for books and publishers. It takes place every October in Frankfurt and lasts for five days. There is usually one theme, i.e. one country is represented which is called “Guest of Honour” which was Indonesia in 2015, Flanders and the Netherlands in 2016, France in 2017, and will be Georgia in 2018, and Norway in 2019.

d) 'When' – wenn

Wenn das Wetter gut ist, spielt er Fussball oder geht schwimmen.

(When the weather is fine, he plays football or goes for a swim.)

Grammar:

The English conjunction 'when' has three possible translations in German: **wenn**, **wann** and **als**. **Wenn** is used for 'when' in the present and future tense or for a repeated occurrence in the past (like the English 'whenever').

Cultural Aspect:

Germans love all kinds of sports – actively and passively. Football is obviously one of the favourite sports in the country but it is certainly not the only one. One can find more than 90,000 sports clubs in Germany with ca. 23 million members.

d) 'When' – als

Sebastian Vettel wurde Weltmeister, als er erst 23 Jahre alt war.

(Sebastian Vettel became world champion when he was just 23 years old.)

Grammar:

The English conjunction 'when' has three possible translations in German: **wenn**, **wann** and **als**. **Als** is used when the verb is in the past tense and the statement refers to one single event or one uninterrupted stretch of time in the past.

Cultural Aspect:

Germany is one of the leading motorsports countries in the world with its famous **Nürburgring**. In 2010, Sebastian Vettel became the youngest driver ever to win the world championship in motor racing and he managed to defend the title in the following three years.

e) “sowohl ... als auch”

Ich war mit dem Auto sowohl beim TÜV als auch in der Waschanlage.

(I have taken the car both for its MOT and to the car wash.)

Grammar:

The construction **sowohl ... als auch** (both ... and) is a frequent alternative to **und** (and) in both written and spoken German. It emphasizes the connection between the elements more than **und** does. Be careful not to use **beide** (both) for ‘both ... and’!

Cultural Aspect:

All motor vehicles registered in Germany have to be checked by the **TÜV** (short for **Technischer Überwachungsdienst** – ‘Technical Inspection Association – inspection service’) every two years for their safety and to prove they are roadworthy. A newly built car doesn’t need a **TÜV** test for its first three years. If a vehicle is defective and fails a test, it has to be repaired and has to undergo a second **TÜV** test or it has to be taken off the road.

f) “nicht nur ... sondern auch”

1988 besuchte er nicht nur Polen, sondern auch die DDR.

(Not only did he visit Poland in 1988 but also the GDR.)

Grammar:

The conjunction **sondern** means ‘but’ and is used after a statement containing a negation (here: **nicht nur** – ‘not only’). In English ‘not only ... ‘ must always be matched with ‘but also’; **sondern** can be matched with **auch** (also).

Cultural Aspect:

Both Poland and the **DDR** (short for **Deutsche Demokratische Republik** – GDR) used to be socialist states. The GDR was created in 1949 out of the Soviet occupied zone in eastern Germany and was re-united with West Germany in October 1990. People living in West Germany who had relatives in the GDR and especially those who lived in the so-called **Zonenrandgebiet** (the border area to East Germany) could get a visa for visits to the GDR once a year.

X: Translation / Meaning of words / equivalents of German words in English

a) 'Experience' – das Erlebnis

Der Besuch des Doms in Speyer war ein beeindruckendes Erlebnis.

(It was an impressive experience to visit the cathedral in Speyer.)

Grammar:

The English noun 'experience' has two equivalents in German: **die Erfahrung** and **das Erlebnis**. The translation **das Erlebnis** means an experience with a definite effect, so in this case an emotional reaction.

Cultural Aspect:

Speyer, a city in **Rheinland-Pfalz** (Rhineland-Palatine) in southwest Germany, is the place where the German emperors were crowned in the middle ages. Its cathedral was consecrated in 1061 and houses the tombs of several German emperors. It is the biggest Romanesque cathedral in Germany and is a UNESCO world heritage site. In 2017, the requiem for the German politician **Helmut Kohl**,

Stolpersteine

who was Chancellor of Germany from 1982 – 1998, was celebrated there. He was then interred in a cemetery in the town.

a) 'Experience' – die Erfahrung

Wir haben gute Erfahrungen mit dem grünen Punkt gemacht.

(We have had a good experience with the "Green Dot".)

Grammar:

The English noun 'experience' has two equivalents in German: **die Erfahrung** and **das Erlebnis**. The translation **die Erfahrung** means experience which implies acquired knowledge or skills.

Cultural Aspect:

Der Grüne Punkt ("Green Dot") is a symbol on packaging materials that can be recycled and are discarded in a special waste bin, separate from other 'landfill' waste. The system, which was introduced in Germany in the 1990s, is financed by a licence fee paid by manufacturers before they can use this symbol on their products. The sign is now used worldwide.

b) 'to feel'

Wir glauben, dass das Studium gebührenfrei sein soll.

(We feel that going to university should be free of charge/ there shouldn't be any tuition fees.)

Grammar:

The English verb 'to feel', when meant in a sensory way, is usually translated into **(sich) fühlen**. However, **(sich) fühlen** is not used to express an opinion or a belief. Here, we use the verb **glauben** (or alternatively **meinen, finden**).

Cultural Aspect:

Studiengebühren (tuition fees) for university have been a controversial political topic for a long time, and some **Bundesländer** (states) raised fees for a short period of time between 2005 - 2015, however, they have now been abolished in all states in Germany. Some **Bundesländer** have introduced tuition fees for long-time students (i.e. students who spend considerably more time than is intended to finish their degree) and a second degree. All universities impose a so-called **Semesterbeitrag**, i.e. these are fees for administration, the **Studentenwerk** (non-profit organisation for student affairs) the student union, and in many cases a semester ticket for public transport in the region etc. The amount varies from university to university but is normally not more than ca. € 250 per semester.

c) 'To live'

Auf Helgoland leben heute 1400 Menschen.

(1,400 people live in Heligoland today.)

Grammar:

The verb 'to live' has two equivalents in German **wohnen** and **leben**, depending on the meaning. In the example above 'to live' is translated by **leben** which means 'to have one's home somewhere', 'to have an existence'.

Cultural Aspect:

The island of **Helgoland** (Heligoland) is in the North Sea and used to belong to Denmark and later Britain as well as Germany. It was given back to Germany in 1952 after it had been used as a training ground for the Royal Air Force in World War II (British soldiers called the island Hell-go-land during that time). In addition to German, the Heligolandic dialect called **Hallunder (Helgoländer Friesisch)** is also spoken by the local population.

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c) 'To live'

Sie wohnt im Freistaat Sachsen.

(She lives in the free state of Saxony.)

Grammar:

The verb 'to live' has two equivalents in German **wohnen** and **leben**, depending on the meaning. In the example above, 'to live' is translated by **wohnen** which means 'to reside'.

Cultural Aspect:

The word **Freistaat** (free state) means republic. Most German **Länder** (states) called themselves a free state after the German Revolution in November 1918 when Imperial Germany became the **Weimarer Republik** (Weimar Republic). After the Second World War only Bavaria kept its name **Freistaat** to show its independence. That made the word **Freistaat** a synonym for Bavaria. Since reunification, two of the new **Länder**, **Sachsen** (Saxony) and **Thüringen** (Thuringia) also bear this title.

d) 'To miss' - verpassen

Ich will Wacken nicht verpassen.

(I don't want to miss Wacken open air.)

Grammar:

The English verb 'to miss' has two equivalents in German, **vermissen** and **verpassen**, depending on the meaning. Here, 'to miss' is translated with **verpassen** in the sense of 'to fail to experience something'. It can also mean 'to fail to catch or to reach', for example: **Ich darf den Zug nicht verpassen** (I mustn't miss the train).

Cultural Aspect:

The **Wacken** Open Air is a summer open air heavy metal music festival in the village of **Wacken** in northern Germany. It usually takes place in early August and lasts for four days. The festival was first held in 1990 as a small local event but now it attracts about 80,000 visitors.

d) 'To miss' – vermissen

Studenten scheinen das BAfög nicht zu vermissen.

(Students don't seem to miss BAfög.)

Grammar:

The English verb 'to miss' has two equivalents in German, **vermissen** and **verpassen**, depending on the meaning. Here, 'to miss' is translated by **vermissen** in the sense of 'to notice or regret the absence of something'.

Cultural Aspect:

Das **BAfög** (abbreviation for: **Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz**) is a grant and loan for students at secondary schools and universities in Germany. It was first introduced in 1971. The number of students receiving **BAfög** is declining and there are two possible reasons for this: some students seem to shy away from the bureaucratic effort of applying and others seem to be wary of the repayment after their studies.

e) 'Number'

Die Zahl der Linke Wähler ist im Osten größer.

(The number of The Left voters is bigger in the East.)

Grammar:

The English noun 'number' has got a few equivalents in German, **die Nummer, die Zahl, die Anzahl, die Menge** depending on the meaning. Here, 'number' is translated with **Zahl** in the sense of 'a definite quantity, total number, figure'.

Cultural Aspect:

The political party **Die Linke** (The Left) is a left-wing political party in Germany which was founded in 2007 as a merger of the **PDS (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus** – 'Party of Democratic Socialism') and the **WASG (Die Wahlalternative Arbeit und Soziale Gerechtigkeit** - Electoral Alternative for Labour and Social Justice). It is one of the biggest political parties in Germany and is most successful in eastern Germany.

f) 'Power'

In Baden-Württemberg sind die Grünen an der Macht.

(The Green Party is in power in Baden-Württemberg.)

Grammar:

The English noun 'power' has got two equivalents in German, **die Macht** and **die Kraft**, depending on the meaning. Here, 'power' means **Macht** in the sense of 'authority, strength of influence'.

Cultural Aspect:

The political party **Die Grünen** (The Green Party) was founded in 1980 and has been part of **Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen** since 1993. Its objectives are better environmental policy, increase of social justice and an active peace policy. The party has been in power in **Baden-Württemberg** (state located in the southwest of Germany) since 2016, ousting the **CDU** (**Christlich Demokratische Union** – The Christian Democratic Union).

g) 'To stay'

Wir wohnten im Kanton Wallis.

(We stayed in the canton Valais.)

Grammar:

The English verb 'to stay' has at least four equivalents in German, **wohnen, (zu Hause) bleiben, übernachten, or sich aufhalten.** **Wohnen** is used as a translation for 'to stay' if it refers to a temporary period of time (but longer than one night).

Cultural Aspect:

Die Schweiz (Switzerland) has 26 member states called **Kantone** (cantons). They have autonomy within the Federal Constitution which means that they have their own cantonal government. There are German, French, Italian and Romansh cantons. **Das Wallis** (The Valais) is a canton in southern Switzerland. French and German are spoken there.

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g) 'To stay'

Wir haben im Saarland übernachtet.

(We stayed (the night) in the Saarland.)

Grammar:

The English verb 'to stay' has at least four equivalents in German, **wohnen**, **(zu Hause) bleiben**, **übernachten**, or **sich aufhalten**. **Übernachten** means 'to stay, spend the night'.

Cultural Aspect:

With the exception of the city states Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen, **Saarland** is the smallest of Germany's 16 **Länder** (states). It is in south western Germany bordering France and Luxembourg. Its capital is **Saarbrücken**. Each German **Land** has its own state authorities which are, for example, responsible for education, policing, and legislation.

h) 'To study'

Die Schüler müssen heute nicht lernen, sie haben hitzefrei.

(The pupils do not have to study today, they have time off from school due to the heat.)

Grammar:

The English verb 'to study' has two equivalents in German, **studieren** and **lernen**, depending on the context. **Lernen** is used when it means 'to learn, study, acquire a skill' and is always used when talking about school children and school activities.

Cultural Aspect:

Hitzefrei is a term used when cancelling school lessons or sometimes working hours due to hot weather. There are various, slightly differing regulations, but principally the rule is that at 10am (sometimes 11am) the temperature must be above 25 degrees centigrade in the shade for pupils and teachers to get the rest of the school day off, **sie haben hitzefrei**.

h) 'To study'

Mehr internationale Studenten studieren an deutschen Universitäten.

(More international students study at German universities.)

Grammar:

The English verb 'to study' has two equivalents in German, **studieren** and **lernen**, depending on the context. **Studieren** is used when it means 'to be at college, attend a university' or 'to study something in depth'. It is never used when talking about school children.

Cultural Aspect:

German universities are getting more and more popular with international students. There are now more than 355,000 international students studying in Germany (2017) which is an increase of 37% in the last ten years or so. Consequently, the government's target of 350,000 international students by the year 2020 has already been exceeded.

i) 'To think'

Wir denken darüber nach, ein Elektroauto zu kaufen.

(We're thinking about buying an electric car.)

Grammar:

The German verb **nachdenken (über)** means in English to think carefully or seriously about something, to ponder or reflect upon. It is much stronger than **denken (an)** 'to think about or of'. Notice, too, how the verb breaks into its component parts with **nach** always going to the end of the clause.

Cultural Aspect:

The recent emissions scandal around diesel cars makes more and more people to think about buying an electric car. However, it is not yet quite clear what the ecological damage of electric cars might be.

j) 'To wake up'

Am Martinstag wachte er um 6 Uhr auf.

(He woke up at 6am at St Martin's Day.)

Grammar:

The English verb 'to wake up' has two equivalents in German, **aufwachen** and **aufwecken**, depending on the context. **Aufwachen**, the verb we need here, is an intransitive verb and therefore cannot be followed by a direct object.

Cultural Aspect:

Martinstag (St Martin's Day or Michelmas) is celebrated on the 11th of November each year. In the evening, processions of young children with their parents go singing through the streets, holding paper lanterns. A man on horseback dressed as St Martin might accompany the children and the story of St Martin might be acted out. Another widespread custom in Germany is bonfires on St Martin's eve, the so-called **Martinsfeuer**. A special meal – **Martinsgans** (roast goose) is often served in restaurants together with red cabbage and dumplings.

j) 'To wake up'

Ich wurde von der Deutschen Welle aufgeweckt.

(I was woken up by the "German Wave".)

Grammar:

The English verb 'to wake up' has two equivalents in German, **aufwachen** and **aufwecken**, depending on the context. **Aufwecken**, the verb used here, is a transitive verb (meaning that it can be followed by a direct object).

Cultural Aspect:

The **Deutsche Welle** or **DW** ("German Wave") is Germany's public international broadcaster. The service is available in 30 languages and there is also a satellite television service in four languages, namely German, English, Spanish and Arabic. It is controlled by the German government and financed from Federal funds. Its purpose is to portray cultural, political and economic issues in Germany, to produce reliable news coverage and to provide access to the German language – it is therefore used by learners and teachers of German.

k) Früher

Südtirol gehörte früher zu Österreich.

(South Tyrol used to be part of Austria.)

Grammar:

The English expression 'used to' or also 'would' (when referring to the past) is usually translated into German by the adverb **früher** (in the past).

Cultural Aspect:

Südtirol (South Tyrol, a region in northern Italy) is a former part of the Austrian state of Tyrol and was ceded to Italy in 1919. It is now an autonomous region in northern Italy. However, it is still a region populated by people who insist on speaking their German/ Austro-Bavarian dialect rather than Italian (Italian is spoken by only about 24% of the population mainly around the two largest cities, Merano and Bolzano). Over the years, the South Tyrolese have consistently expressed their desire to be part of Austria but have - to some extent at least - been appeased through partial autonomy from the Italian government.

XI: Miscellaneous

a) Expressions of time

Mittwochs ist hier Wochenmarkt.

(A farmers' market is here every Wednesday.)

Grammar:

The genitive of nouns denoting time or days of the week like **Mittwoch** (Wednesday) are used to refer to habitual time (every Wednesday). A number of these genitives have become adverbs, for example **mittwochs** (on Wednesday), **freitags** (on Fridays), **morgens** (in the mornings) etc.

Cultural Aspect:

On the **Wochenmarkt** (a weekly market, farmers' market) in Germany farmers from the area sell their own produce. You can buy fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, eggs, meat, sausage and flowers. You will not, however, find any stands selling clothes or household items. The **Wochenmarkt** is usually held on one, sometimes two, days of the week.

Stolpersteine

a) Expressions of time

Der Stammtisch trifft sich um 20 Uhr.

(The regulars meet at 8pm.)

Grammar:

In official contexts, for example time-tables, programmes for TV, radio, cinema and the theatre and for official meetings and business hours the twenty-four hour clock is used in German. The use of the am/pm distinction does not exist in German.

Cultural Aspect:

Stammtisch (regulars' table or group of regulars) means two – connected - things in German: firstly, it is a table in a pub that is reserved for regulars who meet at a certain day and time. Secondly, the word is also used for the people themselves who regularly get together at this table. The term **Stammtischpolitik** (bar-room politics, arm-chair politics) meaning unqualified and un-objective political discussions originates from this tradition of ordinary people meeting at a **Stammtisch** to talk about current issues and politics.

a) Expressions of time

Wir treffen uns um halb sieben in der Volkshochschule.

(We're meeting at half past six at the adult education centre.)

Grammar:

Times of the clock are tricky. In everyday speech the twelve-hour clock is usually used in German when it is clear from the context if a time in the morning or a time at night is referred to. Where learners with English as main language have to be careful is that **halb** 'half' does not mean 'half past' but 'half to'! Thus **halb sieben** is 'half past six' and not 'half past seven'.

Cultural Aspect:

Volkshochschulen (adult education centres), called **VHS** for short, are an important institution in Germany. They offer courses and lectures for all age groups on a wide range of topics from foreign languages to crafts or various kinds of sports. **Deutsch als Fremdsprache** (German as a Foreign Language) is also taught there for foreign nationals.

b) Use of 'du' and 'Sie'

An Fastnacht duzen wir uns.

(We are on first-name terms at carnival.)

Grammar:

There are two forms of addressing people in German: the familiar way **du** and the polite way **Sie**. The form **du** and using first names is for family, friends and children, also in a lot of work places for work colleagues. Young people always address each other with **du**. **Sie** is usually used with **Herr/ Frau** XY normally among older people, strangers and people of authority.

Cultural Aspect:

Fastnacht, Fasching or **Karneval** (carnival) is the pre-Lenten carnival predominantly celebrated in catholic areas in Germany. The period officially starts on the 11th of November at 11 minutes past 11 o'clock and ends with Ash Wednesday. The real celebrations, however, start on the Thursday before Ash Wednesday, and end almost a week later. These days are also known as the **tolle Tage** (crazy days) because normal life in many regions is turned upside down. People dressed in fancy clothes go to masked balls and parties, they watch street parades or listen to humorous speeches, normally about politics and public life. It is also a tradition to address strangers with **du** – something one would normally not do.

c) Sentence structure

Es geht mir gut.

(I'm fine.)

Grammar:

The structure of this phrase is quite different to the English equivalent. It would be grammatically incorrect in German to say **Ich bin gut** (which would be the literal translation of the English). In the German phrase the person is the object of the verb and must therefore be in the dative case (whereas the person is the subject and therefore in the nominative case in English).

Cultural Aspect:

This phrase is used – as it is in English – as a polite answer to a question about one's well-being such as **Wie geht es dir?** or **Wie geht's?** (informal) or **Wie geht es Ihnen?** (formal).

d) Modal particle “doch”

Bremen ist doch eine Hansestadt.

(Bremen is a Hanseatic city (after all).)

Grammar:

Doch is a German modal particle. Modal particles are words that express the speaker’s attitude to what he or she says. In statements **doch** indicates disagreement with what has been said before, especially if it is stressed.

Cultural Aspect:

The three cities **Bremen**, **Lübeck** and **Hamburg** in the north of Germany are **Hansestädte** (Hanseatic cities). The **Hanse** (Hanseatic League) started in the 11th century as a powerful alliance of independent trading centres along the coast of Northern Europe. Its aim was to represent and protect the commercial interests of its members. The Hanseatic cities had their own legal system. Today, we have the **Städtebund Die Hanse** (City League The Hanse) with the headquarters being in **Lübeck**. After re-unification, several cities in East Germany – **Greifswald**, **Stralsund** and **Wismar** – all re-adopted this title.

e) Modal particle “aber”

Der Zug ist aber pünktlich.

(The train (really) is on time!)

Grammar:

Aber is a German modal particle. Modal particles are words that express the speaker’s attitude to what he or she says. In English this often relies on emphasis or tone of voice (stress on the verb ‘is’, for example).

Cultural Aspect:

Although the German **Bundesbahn** (the German Rail) was known to be reliable, it has become prone to unpunctuality in recent years. It was formed as the state railway in 1949 and became a private joint-stock company in 1994 (**Deutsche Bahn AG**), with the Federal Republic of Germany being its single shareholder.

f) Location

Der Frankfurter Flughafen ist der größte deutsche Flughafen.

(Frankfurt airport is the biggest German airport).

Grammar:

In German a location name (country, region or place) cannot be placed in front of a noun. The following rules apply: an adjective (with **–isch**) is used, i.e. **italienischer Wein**, for cities/towns we add an **–er**, i.e. **Frankfurter Flughafen**, **Berliner Weiße**, or we use the prepositions **von/aus/ in**.

Cultural Aspect:

The **Frankfurter Flughafen** (Frankfurt Airport) is the biggest airport in Germany as well as a major international airport. It is the fourth busiest airport in Europe after London Heathrow, Paris Charles de Gaulle and Amsterdam Schiphol with more than 60 million passengers per year.



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