

Grammar Checklist

- All German **nouns are capitalized**.
- **Subject-Verb Agreement:** Always double check that the verb is conjugated to reflect the subject in terms of number (singular or plural) and person (first, second, or third).
- The **conjugated verb** should generally be in the **second position** in a main (independent) clause. If there is a second verb (infinitive or past participle), it should occupy the final position.

Examples:

- Du **machst** deine Hausaufgaben.
- Ich **habe** am Sonntag lange **geschlafen**.

- If the main clause starts with a sentence element other than the subject, subject and conjugated verb swap their positions (so that the verb remains in the second position). Please note that the words “ja” and “nein” do not trigger this **inverted word order**.

Examples:

- Am Sonntag **habe** ich lange geschlafen.
- Morgens **bin** ich immer müde. Du auch?
- Ja, **ich** bin auch ein Morgenmuffel.

- In a **subordinate clause** that starts with a subordinating conjunction (e.g. *weil, obwohl, wenn, dass*) the conjugated verb occupies the final position of the phrase.
- After a **coordinating conjunction** (e.g. *und, oder, aber*) the verb follows the subject (regular word order).
- Avoid using **auch** at the beginning of a sentence. Integrate it in the middle of the sentence (usually after the verb).
- *overall = insgesamt (überall means everywhere)*
- **gehen** usually means *to walk*. If you mean *to go by car, by bike or by train* use **fahren** (*mit dem Auto fahren, mit dem Fahrrad fahren, mit dem Zug fahren*). For *to go by plane* use **fliegen** (*mit dem Flugzeug fliegen*).
- *5 years ago = vor 5 Jahren*

- **there is/there are** translates to **es gibt** in German!

Examples:

- **Es gibt** einige bekannte deutsche Automarken.
- **Gibt es** in den Alpen viel Schnee.

- Differentiate between **studieren** and **lernen**:

lernen = to study (i.e. for an exam)

studieren = to attend university, to be enrolled in a university

- in my opinion = **meiner Meinung nach**

Example:

- **Meiner Meinung nach** sind deutsche Züge schnell und sicher. (In my opinion, German trains are fast and safe.)

- for this reason = **aus diesem Grund**

for these reasons = **aus diesen Gründen**

- **seit** means *since* or *for* in a temporal sense. Do not use *seit* if you mean *since* in the sense of *because*! In that case use: *weil*!

Examples for the use of **seit**:

- *Seit* 1999 wohne ich in Austin. (I've been living in Austin *since* 1999.)
- Ich studiere *seit* 3 Jahren an der Universität von North Carolina. (I've been studying at UNC *for* three years.)

- **Negation**: Differentiate between *nicht* and *kein-!*

If you are negating a noun use *kein-*, plus the appropriate ending:

Ich habe **kein** Geld.

Ich habe **keine** Kinder.

If you are negating a verb, use *nicht*:

Ich arbeite heute **nicht**.

Ich fliege **nicht** nach Deutschland.

- **Relative pronouns**: Use **der, die, das** as relative pronouns! Do not use *dass* as a relative pronoun, but rather as a subordinating conjunction.

Example:

- Das Wirtschaftssystem, **das** es in Deutschland gibt, wird soziale Marktwirtschaft genannt.

- Don't use **wer** as a relative pronoun. *Wer* is a question word and can only be used in direct or indirect questions:

Examples:

- **Wer** ist der amerikanische Präsident?
- Er hat mich gefragt, **wer** der beste Basketballspieler ist.

- Pay very close attention to **wann**, **wenn**, and **als**, which all translate as “when” in English!

wann is a question word meaning “when” in the sense of “at what time” and is only used in direct or indirect questions.

Examples:

- **Wann** musst du morgen arbeiten?
- Ich frage mich, **wann** du zuletzt in Chicago warst.

wenn means *if* or *when(ever)* and indicates conditional or temporal phrases.

Examples:

- Ich bleibe zu Hause, **wenn** es regnet, (I'll stay at home if it rains.) or (I stay at home whenever it rains.)
- **Wenn** du keine Zeit hast, gehe ich allein ins Kino. (If you don't have time, I'll go to the movies by myself.)

als means *when* and indicates temporal phrases referring to a single incident or a one-time continuous state in the past.

Examples:

- **Als** ich ein Kind war, musste ich mein Zimmer aufräumen. (When I was a child, I had to clean up my room.)
- **Als** ich in Berlin gewohnt habe, bin ich oft ins Theater gegangen. (When I lived in Berlin, I often went to the theater.)

- The **passive voice** is formed with the conjugated form of the verb **werden** and the **past participle** of another verb.

Examples:

- Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland **wurde** 1949 **gegründet**.
- Die Bezahlung der Arbeiter **wird** Lohn **genannt**.

Do not use *to be (sein)* as the conjugated verb as you do when using the passive in English!

Reminder:

Be careful when spelling German words with **ie** or **ei**. The German *ie* is pronounced like the letter *e* in English. The German *ei* is pronounced like the letter *i* in English.