

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Meeting and greeting
- » Starting a conversation
- » Simplifying subject pronouns
- » Doing the numbers and dates

Chapter **1**

Laying the Foundations of German

When you set out to learn another language, you want to find out how to get along in everyday situations, such as greeting people in a socially acceptable manner. In other words, if there's a difference between addressing someone you know and a complete stranger, you'd want to know about it. You also want to be able to feel confident in understanding and using some key components, such as numbers, time, dates, and whatnot.

In this chapter, I get you started on the crucial building blocks of German. You get going on some basic communication skills, such as finding out how to say hello in a formal manner and in a casual way. Along with numbers, I provide you days of the week, months of the year, and seasons, all of which will enable you to strike up a conversation in a German-speaking environment. **Los geht's!** (*Let's get started!*)

Saying Hello and Goodbye

In German-speaking countries, the cultural norm is that adults often greet one another with a handshake. In a formal situation or when you're introduced to someone, you're expected to shake hands. However, in a (post) COVID world, you might need to observe the body language of those around you before extending your hand. Also, know that in Europe, people tend to stand closer together than they do in English-speaking cultures.

Table 1-1 Saying Hello and Goodbye

Expression	Usage	English
Guten Morgen	standard/formal	<i>Good morning</i>
Guten Tag	standard/formal	<i>Good day/Hello</i>
Hallo/Hi	familiar (with friends)	<i>Hello/Hi</i>
Guten Abend	standard/formal	<i>Good evening</i>
Auf Wiedersehen	standard/formal	<i>Goodbye</i>
Tschüss/Ciao	familiar (with friends)	<i>Bye/Bye</i>
Gute Nacht	standard/formal	<i>Good night (at bedtime)</i>
Bis bald/Bis dann	familiar (with friends)	<i>See you soon/Til then</i>
Mach's gut	familiar (with friends)	<i>Take care</i>

Table 1-1 shows German expressions for saying hello and goodbye, notes on usage, and the English equivalents. In this table, I include the term *standard* together with *formal* to express both everyday and formal situations, in contrast to *familiar* situations.

Some regional expressions are

- » **Grüß Gott**, a standard greeting in southern Germany and Austria, meaning *Good day* or *Hello*. **Grüß dich** is the familiar regional counterpart, similar to *Hi* or *Hi there*.
- » **Grüezi**, a standard greeting in Switzerland, as a way of saying *Good day* or *Hello*.
- » **Servus**, a familiar way to say both *Hi* and *Bye* in southern Germany and Austria.



TIP

Addressing people in a familiar tone when it isn't appropriate can turn German speakers off — fast. Language and culture are bonded with superglue, so avoid pasting your culture onto the German-speaking world. You show respect for others by observing their way of life.



PRACTICE

In the following exercise, you find yourself in some German-speaking situations. Write the appropriate German response for the situation. The example shows you how to proceed. You'll find the solutions to the exercises in the answer key at the end of every chapter.

Q. The shopkeeper in a store greets you with **Guten Tag**. Your response is _____

A. **Guten Tag.**

- 1 You greet your Austrian neighbors with the customary expression of that region. You say _____.
- 2 You're staying with a host family in Germany. Before going to your room for the night, you say _____.
- 3 The next morning, you greet your host family with _____.

- 4 You say goodbye to your German friends like this: (more than one option)
_____.
- 5 With the same German friends, you want to add something like *See you then*, so you say
_____.
- 6 When you depart your hotel, you say _____.

Introducing yourself and others

The next step after saying **Guten Tag** (*good day/hello*) is introducing yourself. Depending on the situation, you may want to shake hands as you introduce yourself. Look at the following exchange between **Herr Hahn** (*Mr. Hahn*) and **Frau Maier** (*Ms. Maier*) at an international conference. They introduce themselves with full names, an indication of a formal situation.

Guten Tag. Ich heiÙe Gisela Maier. (*Hello. My name is Gisela Maier.*) **Und Sie, wie heiÙen Sie?** (*And you, what is your name?*)

Guten Tag. Ich heiÙe Josef Hahn. (*Hello. My name is Josef Hahn.*)

Freut mich. (*Nice to meet you.*)

Mich auch. (*Nice to meet you too.*)

To introduce another colleague (or friend or partner), you may start with

Das ist . . . (*This is . . .*)

and add the person's name.

After initial introductions, what's next? It's **Wie geht es Ihnen?** (*How are you?*), of course. The following day of the conference, the same two colleagues, Herr Hahn and Frau Maier, greet each other at the breakfast buffet. They may or may not address each other with first names or Herr/Frau with last names, depending on the company culture and social norms in place. Look at their conversation:

Guten Morgen, Gisela (Frau Maier). Wie geht es Ihnen? (*Good morning, Gisela [Frau Maier]. How are you?*)

Guten Morgen, Josef (Herr Hahn). Gut, danke. Und Ihnen? (*Good morning, Josef [Herr Hahn]. Fine, thanks. And you?*)

Danke, sehr gut/ganz gut. (*Thanks, I'm very/really good.*)



PRACTICE

In this exercise, write the German equivalent to the English prompt in the space provided. Check out the previous sections for help. The practice exercise gets you on track. You may use your own name(s) in place of the names shown in parentheses. As usual, you find the solutions to the exercises in the answer key at the end of the chapter.

Q. Good evening, (Maria). _____

A. Guten Abend, (Sabina).

7 Nice to meet you. _____

8 Nice to meet you too. _____

9 This is my colleague (*mein Kollege [male]* (Tobias)/*meine Kollegin [female]*)(Renate).

10 How are you, (Helena)? _____

11 Thanks, I'm very good. _____

12 Good morning. My name is (Hartmut Schmidt). _____

13 And you? _____

Keeping the conversational ball rolling

After initial introductions and pleasantries, you want to keep the lines of communication open. Asking questions is a terrific way to give yourself some listening practice. You may not understand all the answers, so try **Wie bitte?** (*Sorry, what?*) to politely nudge the other person to repeat what they just said. Or if that attempt fails, try **Langsamer, bitte.** (*More slowly, please.*) The following phrases help you keep the conversation flowing:

» **Woher kommen Sie?** (*Where are you from?*)

» **Ich komme aus (Hamburg).** (*I'm from [Hamburg].*)

» **Und Sie?** (*And you?*)

» **Wo wohnen Sie?** (*Where do you live?*)

» **Ich wohne in (Sigmaringen).** (*I live in [Sigmaringen].*)

» **Und Sie?** (*And you?*)

» **Wie finden Sie das Hotel/das Essen/Berlin/die Konferenz?**(*What do you think of the hotel/ the food/Berlin/the conference?*)

» **Exzellent/hervorragend/sehr gut/nicht sehr gut/es geht.** (*Excellent/outstanding/very good/not very good/so, so.*)

A practically universal topic is, of course, **das Wetter** (*the weather*). You can ask: **Wie ist das Wetter?** (*What's the weather like?*) Some replies you may hear are

» **Es ist schön/sonnig/windig/wolkig/neblig.** (*It's beautiful/sunny/windy/cloudy/foggy.*)

» **Es ist kalt/kühl/warm/heiß.** (*It's cold/cool/warm/hot.*)

» **Es regnet/es schneit.** (*It's raining/it's snowing.*) (Literally: *it rains/it snows.*)

To get a forecast, you can add a future time period such as **morgen/heute Abend/am Wochenende** (tomorrow/this evening/on the weekend) to your question, as in this example: **Wie ist das Wetter morgen?** (What's the weather going to be like tomorrow?) You may hear the following responses:

- » **Schön, aber kühl.** (Beautiful, but cool.)
- » **Morgen ist es sonnig und sehr warm.** (Tomorrow, it's going to be sunny and very warm.)
- » **Morgen regnet es.** (Tomorrow, it's going to rain.) (Literally: Tomorrow, it rains.)



PRACTICE

Let's see whether you can respond in German to someone who is speaking to you. This exercise has elements from all the previous sections in this chapter. For some exercises, in which several responses are appropriate, you may use your own imagination. Check out the previous sections for help.

Q. Wie heißen Sie? _____

A. Ich heiße (Jonathan Summer).

14 Gute Nacht. _____

15 Wo wohnen Sie? _____

16 Wie geht es Ihnen? _____

17 Wie ist das Wetter in Kanada im Winter (in the winter)? _____

18 Woher kommen Sie? _____

19 Auf Wiedersehen. _____

20 Wie ist das Wetter? _____

21 Grüß Gott (in southern Germany and Austria) _____

22 Freut mich. _____

23 Wie finden Sie Ihr Deutsch (your German)? _____

Figuring Out How Subject Pronouns Fit with Verbs

Before you understand how to form complete sentences, you need a firm grasp of the subject pronouns. These pronouns stand in for long-winded nouns and pop up everywhere in any language, and they play a key role in helping you get your verbs in shape. In this book, you always see them in tables that conjugate verbs, so get them down pat before you start work on the verbs that accompany them.

You use subject pronouns — **ich** (*I*), **du** (*you*), **er** (*he*), **sie** (*she*), **es** (*it*), and so on — to express who or what is carrying out the action or idea of the verb. Pronouns refer to the noun without naming it, which means that they can serve as placeholders so you don't have to sound redundant by repeating the noun. (For more discussion on pronouns, check out chapters 2 and 3.) To use subject pronouns, you need to know which *person* (first, second, or third) and *number* (singular or plural) the pronoun represents, as with **ich** (*I*) = first person, singular. To connect the correct subject pronoun to a verb, you need to know which conjugated verb form to use.

Table 1-2 shows you the breakdown of subject pronouns in German and English. Notice that singular is on the left, plural is on the right, and the pronoun **Sie** (*you*) is at the bottom. I use the same setup throughout the verb tables in this book.

Table 1-2 Subject Pronouns

Person	Singular	Plural
First	ich (<i>I</i>)	wir (<i>we</i>)
Second (familiar)	du (<i>you</i>)	ihr (<i>you</i>)
Third	er (<i>he, it</i>)	sie (<i>they</i>)
	sie (<i>she, it</i>)	
	es (<i>it</i>)	
Second (formal)	Sie (<i>you, both singular and plural</i>)	

Think of the subject pronouns as *persona* because they *impersonate* the subject that they represent. You characterize them by their grammatical *person* (based on who's speaking and listening), *number* (singular or plural), and sometimes *formality* (which I discuss in the next section). Here's a closer look at the three persons:

- » **First person:** The one(s) speaking: **ich** (*I*) or **wir** (*we*).
- » **Second person:** The one(s) spoken *to*: **du**, **ihr**, **Sie**. All three mean *you* in English; **du** is the singular, familiar form, which you'd use with a friend; **ihr** is the plural, familiar form, which you'd use with a group of friends; and **Sie** is the formal form, whether singular or plural, which you'd use with the chancellor of Germany and everyone else you're not on a first-name basis with.

Note: "Y'all" as used in the American South is the equivalent of **ihr**.
- » **Third person:** Who or what is spoken *about*: **er** (*he, it*), **sie** (*she, it*), or **es** (*it*); **sie** (*they*). If you're talking about an inanimate object (*it*), the choice of **er**, **sie**, or **es** depends on the gender of the noun; see Chapter 2 for details.

Making sure "you" dress properly for the occasion: The formality of du/ihr and Sie

Ideally, if you're hobnobbing with some business moguls, the mayor, and a throng of socialites at the charity benefit of the year, you're on your best behavior. On the other hand, most people do and say whatever they feel like while hanging out with their buddies at a backyard barbecue

on a Saturday afternoon. That formality/informality factor is what you need to keep in mind when you address people in German, because there are three ways to say *you*: **du**, **ihr**, and **Sie**.

Use **Sie**, which is always capitalized, to speak to one or more people with whom you have a more distant, formal relationship. It's appropriate

- » When you aren't sure whether **du/ihr** or **Sie** is correct
- » When you're not yet on a first-name basis with someone (using Herr Kuhnagel or Frau Zitzelsberger instead of Sigmund or Hildegard, for example)
- » When you're talking to adults you don't know well
- » In business or at your place of work
- » In public situations to a person in uniform (police officer, airport official, and other such people)

Use **du** when you talk to one person (or animal) in an informal way, and use **ihr**, the plural version of **du**, to address more than one person (or animal) informally. An informal pronoun is appropriate

- » For addressing children and teens younger than 16 or so
- » For talking to a close friend or relative
- » When a German speaker invites you to use **du**
- » When you talk to pets

You may hear **du** among close working colleagues, students, members of a sports team, or people hiking in the mountains, but unless someone asks you, "**Wollen wir uns dutzen?**" (*Shall we say du to each other?*), try to stick with **Sie**.



TIP

Be careful with recent crossover scenarios at the workplace: people addressing one another with **Sie** although they use first names: **Heinz, haben Sie meine E-mail gelesen?** (*Heinz, have you read my e-mail?*). If you use last names (Frau Dinkelhuber and Herr Sternhagel), using **Sie** is best.

Distinguishing among sie, sie, and Sie

I have a threesome tangle to help you unravel, and then you'll be on your way to success with subject pronouns. Look back at Table 1-2, and you'll find the Three Musketeers — **sie** (*she*), **sie** (*they*), and **Sie** (*you*) — lurking in their separate boxes. Seeing them in what looks like random places may seem to be daunting, but a few clues can help you sort them out.

First, you know the meanings by their context. The conjugated verb and capitalization also help reveal the meaning. Here's what to watch out for:

- » **Conjugation:** When **sie** means *she*, its verb form is distinct; in the present tense, the conjugated verb usually ends in **-t**. When **sie/Sie** means *they* or *you*, the present-tense verb ends in **-en**.
- » **Capitalization:** The *they* and *you* forms of **sie/Sie** have identical conjugations, but only the *you* version, which is formal, is capitalized.

The following examples show how you figure out which one to use when:

- » **Wo wohnt sie?** (*Where does she live?*) The verb is in third-person singular form.
- » **Wo wohnen sie?** (*Where do they live?*) The verb is in third-person plural form, and **sie** isn't capitalized.
- » **Wo wohnen Sie?** (*Where do you live?*) The verb is in second-person plural form (which is identical to the third-person plural form), and **Sie** is capitalized.



PRACTICE

In the following situations, decide which subject pronoun you would use (**ich, du, er, sie, es, wir, ihr, sie, or Sie**), and write it in the space provided. Refer to Table 1-2 on subject pronouns.

Q. Someone talking about his father uses _____

A. er

- 24 Friends talking to each other use (plural form) _____.
- 25 You're talking about your friends, so you use _____.
- 26 An adult meeting another adult for the first time uses _____.
- 27 When you talk about yourself, you use _____.
- 28 An adult talking to three children ages 8, 11, and 14 uses _____.
- 29 You're talking to an animal, so you use _____.
- 30 A man talking about his wife uses _____.
- 31 When you talk about your cousin and yourself, you use _____.
- 32 You're talking about your colleagues, so you use _____.
- 33 A teenage customer talking to a sales assistant uses _____.
- 34 When you talk to someone on a ski lift in Switzerland, you use _____.
- 35 A military comrade talking to another comrade uses _____.

Using gender-neutral pronouns

In some German-speaking academic and progressive circles, gender-neutral pronouns are being used among intersex, trans and nonbinary individuals. For the English *they*, some German speakers use **they** as well as **dey**. The pronoun **xier** has also grown in popularity. A replacement for **er/sie** (*he/she*) is **z/zet**.

Doing the Numbers

In German-speaking countries, I love seeing **die Bedienung** (*the server*) in street cafés walking around with a bulging black leather change purse either tucked in the back of the pants (the male version) or attached at the waist in front, neatly camouflaged under a starched white apron (the female version). When you say **die Rechnung, bitte** or its more informal version, **Zahlen, bitte** (*the check, please*), they have a crafty way of whipping it out of hiding and opening it wide, ready for action. The next part is my favorite: watching the seasoned **Kellner/Kellnerin** (*waiter/waitress*) take a quick look, add up the tab without pen and paper, and blurt out, “**Das macht siebendvierzig Euro**” (*That’ll be forty-seven euros*). That’s the moment of reckoning: How good are you at understanding numbers in German?

Forming and using German **Zahlen** (*numbers*) isn’t difficult. In fact, barring a few exceptions — notably the one I call the cart before the horse — most numbers follow a logical pattern. Feeling confident around numbers without any hesitation means you’re ready to feed the waiter’s portable cash wallet. You can likewise understand which **Bahnsteig** (*track*) the train is leaving from (and at what time) and jump on the correct train when there’s been a last-minute track change. This section covers cardinal and ordinal numbers as well as a few other number situations so you can use numbers in German without any problems.

Counting off with cardinal numbers

Cardinal numbers have nothing to do with religious numbers colored red or a songbird that can sing numbers. These numbers are just plain, unadulterated numbers like 25, 654, or 300,000. In this section, you get a list of cardinal numbers, details on differences, and practice using these numbers.

Table 1-3 shows numbers 1–29. Notice a couple of points about numbers 21 and up:

- » They’re written as one word: **einundzwanzig** (21), **zweiundzwanzig** (22).
- » They follow the cart-before-the-horse rule — that is, you say the ones digit before the tens digit, linking the words with **und**: for example, **vierundzwanzig** (24; literally: *four and twenty*). Does that remind you of the “four and twenty blackbirds” from the nursery rhyme “Sing a Song of Sixpence”?

Table 1-4 shows representative numbers spanning 30–999. Double-digit numbers follow the same pattern as 20–29 do in Table 1-3: **einunddreißig** (31; literally: *one and thirty*), **zweiunddreißig** (32; literally: *two and thirty*), and the like. Numbers with more digits likewise flip the ones and tens digits: You’d read 384, for example, as **dreihundertvierundachtzig**, which literally means *three hundred four and eighty*.

Table 1-3 Cardinal Numbers 1–29

Numbers 0–9	Numbers 10–19	Numbers 20–29
0 null	10 zehn	20 zwanzig
1 eins	11 elf	21 einundzwanzig
2 zwei	12 zwölf	22 zweiundzwanzig
3 drei	13 dreizehn	23 dreiundzwanzig
4 vier	14 vierzehn	24 vierundzwanzig
5 fünf	15 fünfzehn	25 fünfundzwanzig
6 sechs	16 sechzehn	26 sechszwanzig
7 sieben	17 siebzehn	27 siebenundzwanzig
8 acht	18 achtzehn	28 achtundzwanzig
9 neun	19 neunzehn	29 neunundzwanzig

Table 1-4 Cardinal Numbers 30–999

Numbers 30–100	Numbers 101–114	Numbers 220–999
30 dreißig	101 hunderzeins	220 zweihundertzwanzig
40 vierzig	102 hundertzwei	348 dreihundertachtundvierzig
50 fünfzig	103 hundertdrei	452 vierhundertzweiundfünfzig
60 sechzig	104 hundertvier	573 fünfhundertdreiundsiebzig
70 siebzig	111 hundertelf	641 sechshunderteinundvierzig
80 achtzig	112 hundertzwölf	767 siebenhundertsiebundsechzig
90 neunzig	113 hundertdreizehn	850 achthundertfünfzig
100 hundert	114 hundertvierzehn	999 neunhundertneunundneunzig



TIP

Especially in spoken German, you can use **ein**hundert (*one hundred*) instead of **h**undert (*hun-dred*) to make the number clearer to the listener. Also, when people quote numbers over the phone, you might hear “**zwo**” instead of “**zwei**.” This practice serves to clearly distinguish “**zwei**” from “**drei**” and thus avoids mishearing certain numbers.



TIP

In the German-speaking world, as well as in many other parts of the world, you write the number 7 with a small horizontal line through the downward stroke. Why? It’s simply a way to distinguish between 7 and 1.

For numbers higher than 999, look at Table 1-5. Notice that the decimal point in German numbers represents the comma in English.



REMEMBER

In English, you use a comma to indicate thousands and a period to show decimals. German (and many other languages) does the reverse: It uses a *period* (**Punkt**) for indicating thousands, and the *comma* (**Komma**) works as a decimal point.

Table 1-5 Numbers over 999

English Numerals	German Numerals	Numbers Written in German
1,000	1.000	tausend or ein tausend
1,000,000	1.000.000	Million or eine Million
1,650,000	1.650.000	eine Million sechshundertfünzigtausend
2,000,000	2.000.000	zwei Millionen
1,000,000,000	1.000.000.000	eine Milliarde
2,000,000,000	2.000.000.000	zwei Milliarden



PRACTICE

You're hearing numbers on the phone, and you have to write them down. Write each number in numerical form the German way, remembering that the comma and decimal point are switched in German.

Q. zweiundneunzig _____

A. 92

36 siebenundvierzig _____

37 achthundertdreiundsiebzig _____

38 eintausenddreihunderteinundsiebzig _____

39 vierzehn Komma fünf _____

40 zwanzigtausendzweihundertneunundsechzig _____

41 siebzehntausendneunhundertachtunddreißig _____

42 vierundachtzigtausendzweihundertsieben _____

Getting in line with ordinal numbers

Ordinal numbers are the kinds of numbers that show what order things come in. (Was that a *duh* moment for you?) You need ordinal numbers when you're talking about **das Datum** (*the date*), **die Feiertage** (*the holidays*), **die Stockwerke in einem Hotel** (*the floors in a hotel*), and stuff like that.

The general rule for forming ordinal numbers is to add **-te** to the numbers 1 through 19 and then **-ste** to the numbers 20 and above, as in this example: **Der dritte Oktober ist der Tag der Deutschen Einheit** (*The third of October is German Unity Day*).

This rule has three exceptions: **erste** (*first*); **dritte** (*third*); and **siebte** (*seventh*). Here's an example: **Reinhold Messner war der erste Mensch, der Mount Everest ohne Sauerstoffmaske bestieg.** (*Reinhold Messner was the first person to climb Mount Everest without an oxygen mask.*)

Table 1-6 Ordinal Numbers

Ordinals as Numerals	Ordinals as Words	On the (First . . .)
1st	der erste (<i>the first</i>)	am ersten (<i>on the first</i>)
2nd	der zweite (<i>the second</i>)	am zweiten (<i>on the second</i>)
3rd	der dritte (<i>the third</i>)	am dritten (<i>on the third</i>)
4th	der vierte (<i>the fourth</i>)	am vierten (<i>on the fourth</i>)
5th	der fünfte (<i>the fifth</i>)	am fünften (<i>on the fifth</i>)
6th	der sechste (<i>the sixth</i>)	am sechsten (<i>on the sixth</i>)
7th	der siebte (<i>the seventh</i>)	am siebten (<i>on the seventh</i>)
18th	der achtzehnte (<i>the eighteenth</i>)	am achtzehnten (<i>on the eighteenth</i>)
22nd	der zweiundzwanzigste (<i>the twenty-second</i>)	am zweiundzwanzigsten (<i>on the twenty-second</i>)

Here are two other adjectives you need to know when putting things in order: **letzte** (*last*) and **nächste** (*next*). You can use them to refer to a sequence of numbers, people, things, or the like:

» **Könnten Sie bitte die letzte Nummer wiederholen?** (*Could you repeat the last number, please?*)

» **Wann fährt der nächste Zug nach Bremen?** (*When does the next train leave for Bremen?*)

To write dates as numerals, write the digit followed by a period: **Der 1. Mai ist ein Feiertag in Deutschland** (*May 1 is a holiday in Germany*). If you say the same sentence, it's **Der erste Mai ist ein Feiertag in Deutschland**.

Look at the examples of ordinal numbers in Table 1-6. The first column shows the ordinal numbers as digits, the second column shows the same ordinal numbers as words, and the third column shows how to say *on the* (*fifth floor, sixth of December, and so on*).

When you combine an ordinal number with a noun, it conforms to the gender of the noun (**der**=masculine/**die**=feminine/**das**=neuter), as in the examples: **der siebte Stock** (*the seventh floor*), **die zweite Woche** (*the second week*), or **das erste Mal** (*the first time*). (For more info on gender, check out Chapter 3.)

Was Ist das Datum?: Expressing Dates

To make sure you know how to express dates correctly, you need to know how to correctly use **die Tage der Woche** (*the days of the week*), **die Jahreszeiten** (*the seasons*), and **die Monate** (*the months*). That way, you can clearly and correctly ask and answer **Was ist das Datum?** (*What is the date?*).



TIP

All weekdays in German are masculine. This becomes important when they are combined with an adjective (For more info on forming sentences with adjectives, go to Chapter 10). Normally, however, they are used without an article just as in English.

Die Tage der Woche (*the days of the week*), their short forms used in calendars, and some pertinent notes are as follows:

- » **Montag (Mo)** (*Monday*)
- » **Dienstag (Di)** (*Tuesday*)
- » **Mittwoch (Mi)** (*Wednesday*)
- » **Donnerstag (Do)** (*Thursday*)
- » **Freitag (Fr)** (*Friday*)
- » **Samstag (Sa)** (*Saturday*; used in most of Germany, as well as Austria and German-speaking Switzerland) or **Sonnabend (Sa)** (*Saturday*; used in eastern and northern Germany)
- » **Sonntag (So)** (*Sunday*)



REMEMBER

In German-speaking countries, calendars begin with **Montag**.

Sometimes, you want to be more casual in your references to days and use words like *tomorrow* and *this morning* rather than the specific name of the day. The following list helps you refer to specific days without saying them by name:

- » **heute** (*today*)
- » **gestern** (*yesterday*)
- » **vorgestern** (*the day before yesterday*)
- » **morgen** (*tomorrow*)
- » **übermorgen** (*the day after tomorrow*)

When you want to talk about a slice of the day, such as *morning* or *afternoon*, you have several options, as you see in the following list:

- » **der Morgen** (*morning* [includes all the morning hours])
- » **der Vormittag** (*morning* [starting from around 9 a.m. to noon])
- » **der Mittag** (*midday* [around noon])
- » **der Nachmittag** (*afternoon*)
- » **der Abend** (*evening*)
- » **die Nacht** (*night*)

To be more specific in talking about a part of a specific day, you can combine words from the previous two lists like this:

- » **heute Morgen** (*this morning*) (Literally: today in the morning)
- » **morgen Nachmittag** (*tomorrow afternoon*)
- » **gestern Abend** (*yesterday evening/last night*)

You also need to have a firm grasp of the German terms for seasons and months because they're major parts of dates. (The last thing you want to do is invite someone to your July barbecue and tell them that it's in the winter.) The following outlines **die Jahreszeiten** (*the seasons*):

- » **der Frühling** or **das Frühjahr** (*the spring*); you can use either term interchangeably in German-speaking regions
- » **der Sommer** (*the summer*)
- » **der Herbst** (*the autumn*)
- » **der Winter** (*the winter*)

The following list lays out **die Monate** (*the months*) of the year:

- » **Januar** (*January*) or **Jenner** (*January*; often used in Austria)
- » **Februar** (*February*)
- » **März** (*March*)
- » **April** (*April*)
- » **Mai** (*May*)
- » **Juni** (*June*; some German speakers say **Juno** to distinguish it, acoustically speaking, from **Juli**)
- » **Juli** (*July*; some German speakers pronounce it as "you *lie*" instead of "you *lee*" to avoid confusion with *Juni*)
- » **August** (*August*)
- » **September** (*September*)
- » **Oktober** (*October*)
- » **November** (*November*)
- » **Dezember** (*December*)

Dates are written in day-month-year order in German (and in the other European languages as well). You need the periods in dates in German, just as you need to write the date in English with a slash between the month, day, and year.



PRACTICE

Fill in the missing information in the following exercise. For help, refer to the previous lists of German numbers and expressions for days and dates. You find some hints in parentheses. The first example gets you started.

Q. Der Winter beginnt im _____.

A. Der Winter beginnt im Dezember. (*Winter begins in December.*)

43 Heute ist Freitag. Morgen ist _____.

44 Die Blätter (*leaves*) fallen im _____.

45 April, _____, Juni, _____. (Complete the sequence.)

46 Der erste Januar ist ein _____ in vielen Ländern. (*holiday* is the missing word.)

47 Morgen ist der erste Oktober. Was ist heute? _____. (Write the date in words.)

48 Vorgestern war (*was*) Sonntag. Was ist heute? _____.

49 Der Tag der Deutschen Einheit (*German Unity Day*) is am _____.
(*October 3rd*) Write the date in words.)

50 Februar hat _____ Tage. (Write the number as a word.) (except in leap years, of course)

51 Im deutschen Kalender, der erste Tag der Woche ist _____.

52 Dienstag, _____ Donnerstag _____. (Complete the sequence.)

53 Der letzte Tag im Jahr ist der _____. (Write the date in words.)

54 Heute ist der siebte August. Morgen ist _____.

55 Wie viele (*How many*) Monate haben einunddreißig Tage? _____.

56 In den USA, "Labor Day" ist am _____ im
_____. (*first Monday [in] September*)

On the Clock: Expressing Time

You're in **Interlaken (in der Schweiz)** (*Interlaken, Switzerland*), and you want to know what time it is. You have four choices: Look at your **Handy** (*cellphone*); look at the nearest clock tower (most are absolutely stunning; many have four clocks, one for each side) to find out how accurate the Swiss are in keeping time (very!); buy a Rolex for 1,399 Swiss francs (no euros in

Switzerland); or practice understanding German clock time by asking someone on the street, **Wie viel Uhr ist es?** (*What time is it?*). You're just about guaranteed to hear the precise time.

In conversational German, you use the system comparable to English, in which **nach** (*past*) refers to times past the hour up until half past. **Vor** (*to*) refers to the times from half past to the next hour.



REMEMBER

In English, you use *half* (German **halb**) to refer to half past the hour. In German, however, you name the next hour. **Halb acht** (Literally: *Half eight*) means *half past seven*, or 7:30. (Think of it as *half of the way to eight*.)

For official time, such as train or plane schedules (and frequently in everyday German), you use the 24-hour system, reading the numbers as you'd read a digital clock. In other words, for 1 p.m. and later, you add 12; 2 p.m. + 12, therefore, is **14 Uhr: Unser Zug fährt um 14.45** (pronounced **vierzehn Uhr fünfundvierzig**) (*Our train leaves at 2:45 p.m.*). Table 1-7 shows the German time expressions and their English equivalents.

The numerical method of telling time may be the easiest. German traditionally uses a period where English uses a colon. Note that when you read the time, you say **Uhr** (*o'clock*) where the period appears. Alternatively, you can leave it out, just as you can leave out the o'clock in English. Here's an example: **Um wie viel Uhr kommst du? Um sechs oder um sieben?** (*What time are you coming? At six or at seven?*)



PRACTICE

Follow the instructions for stating the times shown in parentheses. You may need to change from words to numerals or vice versa or write the time a different way. For help check out the example.

Table 1-7 Expressing Time

German (conversational language)	English equivalent	German (official time)	English Equivalent
drei (Uhr)	three (o'clock)	drei (Uhr)	three (o'clock)
zehn (Minuten) nach drei	ten (minutes) past three	drei Uhr zehn	three ten
Viertel nach drei	quarter past three	drei Uhr fünfzehn	three fifteen
halb vier	half past three	drei Uhr dreißig	three thirty
Viertel vor vier	quarter to four	drei Uhr fünfundvierzig	three forty-five
zehn vor vier	ten to four	drei Uhr fünfzig	three fifty
vier (Uhr)	four (o'clock)	vier (Uhr)	four (o'clock)

Q. What time does the flight land? Write the time as digits.

Der Flug 629 landet um _____. (einundzwanzig Uhr fünfundzwanzig)

A. Der Flug 629 landet um 21.25 Uhr. (Flight 629 lands at 9:25 p.m.)

57 What time do the shops close? Write the time as digits.

Die Geschäfte schließen schon um _____. (achtzehn Uhr)

- 58 Someone tells you the time. Write the time shown in parentheses a different way (in words).

Es ist _____ . (**sieben Uhr fünfundvierzig**)

- 59 At the train station, you hear when your train is leaving. Write the time as words the way you would hear it announced:

Der Zug fährt um _____ . (**20.05**)

- 60 What is another way to state the time (in words) in German? **Es ist drei Uhr fünfzehn.**

Es ist _____ .

- 61 You call your German friend to say when you are arriving tomorrow. Write the time as words the way you would say the time on the phone (two alternatives here).

Morgen kommen wir um _____ . (**10.30 Uhr**)

- 62 *We're playing tennis at 2:45 p.m.* Write the time in words.

Wir spielen um _____ **Tennis.**

- 63 *We went to bed late last night.* Write the time shown in parentheses as digits.

Gestern Abend sind wir um _____ **ins Bett gegangen.** (**halb zwei**)

Answers to “Laying the Foundations of German” Practice Questions

- 1 You greet your Austrian neighbors with **Grüß Gott**.
- 2 Before going to your room at your host family for the night, you say **Gute Nacht**.
- 3 The next morning, you greet your host family with **Guten Morgen**.
- 4 You say goodbye to your German friends with **Tschüss./Ciao**.
- 5 With the same German friends, you add something like *See you then*: **Bis bald./Bis dann**.
- 6 When you depart your hotel, you say **Auf Wiedersehen**.
- 7 *Nice to meet you*. **Freut mich**.
- 8 *Nice to meet you too*. **Mich auch**.
- 9 *This is my colleague*. **Das ist mein Kollege (John)/meine Kollegin (Kathy)**.
- 10 *How are you*,? **Wie geht es Ihnen, (Sarah)?**
- 11 *Thanks, I'm very good*. **Danke, sehr gut/ganz gut**.
- 12 *Good morning. My name is* **Guten Morgen. Ich heiße (Jack Sprat)**.
- 13 *And you?* **Und Ihnen?**
- 14 **Gute Nacht. Gute Nacht.** (*Good night.*)
- 15 **Wo wohnen Sie? Ich wohne in LA.** (*Where do you live? I live in LA.*)
- 16 **Wie geht es Ihnen? Gut, danke.** (*How are you? Fine, thanks.*)
- 17 **Wie ist das Wetter in Kanada im Winter? Es ist sehr kalt.** (*What's the weather like in Canada in the winter? It's very cold.*)
- 18 **Woher kommen Sie? Ich komme aus Boston.** (*Where are you from? I'm from Boston.*)
- 19 **Auf Wiedersehen. Auf Wiedersehen.** (*Good bye.*)
- 20 **Wie ist das Wetter? Es ist sonnig und heiß.** (*How's the weather? It's sunny and hot.*)
- 21 **Grüß Gott. Grüß Gott.** (*Hello.*) (greeting in southern Germany and Austria)
- 22 **Freut mich. Mich auch.** (*Nice to meet you. Nice to meet you too.*)
- 23 **Wie finden Sie Ihr Deutsch? Es ist sehr gut.** (*What do you think of your German? It's very good.*)
- 24 Friends talking to each other use (plural form) **ihr**. *Talking to* is your key for second person, and *friends* is your key for the informal, plural form.

- 25) You're talking about your friends, so you use **sie**. *Talking about* tells you that you need third person, and *friends* is your key for plural form.
- 26) An adult meeting another adult for the first time uses **Sie**. You show respect and formality with **Sie**.
- 27) When you talk about yourself, you use **ich**.
- 28) An adult talking to three children ages 8, 11, and 14 uses **ihr**.
- 29) You're talking to an animal, so you use **du**.
- 30) A man talking about his wife uses **sie**. He says *she*, so you need **sie**, the third-person singular form.
- 31) When you talk about your cousin and yourself, you use **wir**.
- 32) You're talking about your colleagues, so you use **sie**. Here, **sie** stands for *they*.
- 33) A teenage customer talking to a sales assistant uses **Sie**. The teen's age doesn't matter; saying **Sie** is polite and respectful. An adult would also use **Sie**.
- 34) When you talk to someone on a ski lift in Switzerland, you use **Sie**. Start out with **Sie**; you're always safe. Maybe you'll hear the person using **du**, however. Or you may hear something like "**Sollen wir uns dutzen?**" (*Shall we say du to one another?*) That's your opportunity to answer "**Gern!**" (*"Yes, I'd like to!"* or *"Gladly!"*).
- 35) A military comrade talking to another comrade uses **du**. Especially in times of stress, people working side by side need each other's support, and familiarity and closeness are indicated by **du**.
- 36) **siebenundvierzig: 47**
- 37) **achthundertdreiundsiebzig: 873**
- 38) **eintausenddreihunderteinundsiebzig: 1.371**
- 39) **vierzehn Komma fünf: 14,5**
- 40) **zwanzigtausendzweihundertneunundsechzig: 20.269**
- 41) **siebzehntausendneunhundertachtunddreißig: 17.938**
- 42) **vierundachtzigtausendzweihundertsieben: 84.207**
- 43) **Heute ist Freitag. Morgen ist Sonnabend/Samstag.** (*Today is Friday. Tomorrow is Saturday.*)
- 44) **Die Blätter fallen im Herbst.** (*The leaves fall in the fall.*)
- 45) **April, Mai, Juni, Juli.** (*April, May, June, July*)
- 46) **Der erste Januar ist ein Feiertag in vielen Ländern.** (*The first of January is a holiday in many countries.*)

- 47 **Morgen ist der erste Oktober. Was ist heute? Heute ist der dreißigste September.** (Tomorrow is the first of October. What is today? Today is the thirtieth of September.)
- 48 **Vorgestern war Sonntag. Was ist heute? Heute ist Dienstag.** (The day before yesterday was Sunday. What is today? Today is Tuesday.)
- 49 **Der Tag der Deutschen Einheit ist am dritten Oktober.** (German Unity Day is on October 3.)
- 50 **Februar hat achtundzwanzig Tage.** (February has twenty-eight days.)
- 51 **Im deutschen Kalender ist der erste Tag der Woche Montag.** (In the German calendar, the first day of the week is Monday.)
- 52 **Dienstag, Mittwoch, Donnerstag Freitag.** (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.)
- 53 **Der letzte Tag im Jahr ist der einunddreißigste Dezember.** (The last day of the year is the thirty-first of December.)
- 54 **Heute ist der siebte August. Morgen ist der achte August.** (Today is the seventh of August. Tomorrow is the eighth of August.)
- 55 **Wie viele Monate haben einunddreißig Tage? Sieben Monate.** (How many months have thirty-one days? Seven months.)
- 56 **In den USA ist "Labor Day" am ersten Montag im September.** (In the USA, Labor Day is on the first Monday in September.)
- 57 **Die Geschäfte schließen schon um 18.00 Uhr.** (The shops already close at 6 p.m.)
- 58 **Es ist Viertel vor acht. (sieben Uhr fünfundvierzig)** (It's quarter to eight.) (seven forty-five)
- 59 **Der Zug fährt um zwanzig Uhr fünf.** (The train leaves at eight-oh-five p.m.)
- 60 **Es ist drei Uhr fünfzehn. Es ist Viertel nach drei.** (It's three-fifteen. It's quarter past three.)
- 61 **Morgen kommen wir um halb elf/zehn Uhr dreißig.** (Tomorrow, we're coming at half-past ten/ten-thirty.)
- 62 **Wir spielen um Viertel vor drei Tennis.** (We're playing tennis at 2:45 p.m.)
- 63 **Gestern Abend sind wir um 1.30 Uhr ins Bett gegangen.** (We went to bed at 1:30 a.m. last night.)