

verbs overview

grimm **grammar**♣ **Verbs : Verben - Überblick**

Verbs describe the action of a sentence. To find out who the subject of a sentence is, you ask "WHO is doing what?" To find out what the verb of the sentence is, you ask "WHAT is this person DOING?"

- ▶ Der Esel **kommt** aus Bremen. Jetzt **lebt** er mit seinen Freunden zusammen. Sie **haben** eine schöne, helle Wohnung. The donkey **comes** from Bremen. Now he **lives** together with his friends. They **have** a nice, bright apartment.

♣ **I. Infinitives vs. conjugated verbs**

Verbs can appear either in the infinitive form or in their finite, conjugated forms. English infinitives are preceded by the word "to": to work, to be.

Conjugated verbs indicate when an action takes place and, often, by whom (although this is less obvious in English than in German):

- ▶ *der Esel* Ich **mache** Kaffee, **möchtest** du eine Tasse? I **am making** coffee, **would** you **like** a cup?
- der Hahn* Ja, gerne, mein Hals **ist** total ausgetrocknet. Ich **krähe** immer zu enthusiastisch! Yes, I'd love some, my throat **is** totally parched. I always **crow** too enthusiastically!

♣ **II. Regular verbs**

Regular verbs follow a regular pattern (amazingly).

▶

machen · make, do	
ich mache e	wir mache n
du mach st	ihr mach t
er/sie/es mach t	sie mache n

♣ **III.-ieren verbs**

Verbs like **dekoriieren**, **reparieren**, **informieren** are regular in the present tense, but will be a separate category in the past tense.

▶

reparieren · repair, fix	
ich repariere e	wir repariere n
du reparier st	ihr reparier t
er/sie/es reparier t	sie repariere n

- ▶ Die Tiere **reparieren** ihre Wohnung. Sie ist eine Märchenwohnung, und hat keine Küche und kein Bad. The animals **repair** their apartment. It's a fairy tale apartment and has no kitchen or bath.

❖ IV. Irregular verbs

Just like in English (am/are/is or have/has), there are many German words that are irregularly conjugated. In both languages, the most irregular are the most frequently used words, and there is nothing else to do but memorize the different forms (they are not known for logical conjugation!).

▶

sein · to be	
ich bin	wir sind
du bist	ihr seid
er/sie/es ist	sie sind

▶

haben · to have	
ich habe	wir haben
du hast	ihr habt
er/sie/es hat	sie haben

▶

wissen · to know	
ich weiß	wir wissen
du weißt	ihr wisst
er/sie/es weiß	sie wissen

❖ V. Tenses

Verb tenses allow us to show when actions take place: present, future, past.

a) present tense verbs express actions that are happening right now or events that happen regularly.

- ▶ *der Hahn* Ich **stehe** jeden Morgen um halb fünf auf. Ich **Wisst** ihr, wie anstrengend das ist? I **get up** every morning at 4:30. Do you **know** how stressful that is?
- die Katze* Ja, natürlich **weiß** ich das, denn du **beklagst** dich ständig darüber! Yeah, of course I **know**, because you **are** always **complaining** about it.

b) the future tense is not used all that often in German; we express future events merely by stating something in the **present tense** and adding a *time expression of the future*.

- ▶ *die Katze* Es tut mir leid, mein Freund. Ich will dich nicht beleidigen. **Morgen kaufen** wir einen elektronischen Wecker! I'm sorry, my friend. I don't want to offend you. **Tomorrow** we (**will**) **buy** an electronic alarm clock.

If the future (with the help of a future time expression) is not clear from the sentence, then you can use the verb **werden** plus an infinitive to describe actions in the future.

- ▶ *der Hahn* Tolle Idee! Ich **werde** jeden Tag bis Mittag **schlafen**! Ich kann kaum warten!!! Great idea! I **will sleep** until noon every day! I can hardly wait!!!

c) the past tense can be expressed in two ways: simple past (used in formal writing and speech) or conversational past (used in informal writing and spoken language).

Also, some verbs (*modals*, **haben**, **sein**, **wissen**) are often used only with the simple past. In German, both the conversational past and the simple past express the same idea: something happened in the past.



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|--------------------|---|--|
| ▶ <i>die Katze</i> | Gestern habe ich 12 Mäuse gefangen . Ich musste wieder eine Menge Überstunden machen! | Yesterday I caught 12 mice. I had to work a lot of overtime again! |
| <i>der Hund</i> | Und was hast du mit ihnen gemacht ? | And what did you do with them? |
| <i>die Katze</i> | Das sag ich nicht. Dies ist doch ein Märchen. Ich will keine Kinder erschrecken! | I'm not telling. This is, after all, a fairy tale. I don't want to scare any children. |
| <i>der Hund</i> | Tja, in der Grimm-Version durften wir alle grausamen Details lesen! Das waren die guten alten Zeiten! | Well, in the Grimm-version we could read all the gory details! Those were the good old days! |

habe gefangen => *conversational past* **musste** => *simple past*
hast gemacht => *conversational past*
durften => *simple past* **waren** => *simple past*

d) the past perfect tense is the remaining past tense. It is used when you want to state that something had happened even before another past event took place (this is really helpful in narration, as you can imagine, with words like **bevor** or **nachdem** – before/after).

- | | | |
|-------------------|--|---|
| ▶ <i>der Esel</i> | Wisst ihr noch, wie es im Märchen war? Bevor wir hier eingezogen sind , hatten wir im heruntergekommenen Räuberhaus gelebt . | Do you remember how it was in the fairy tale? Before we moved in here, we used to live (i.e., had lived) in the decrepit home of the robbers. |
| <i>der Hund</i> | Ja, ich kriege noch heute Gänsehaut! Nachdem wir die Räuber hinausgejagt hatten , versuchten wir das Räuberhaus sauber zu machen, aber es war wirklich kaputt! | Yeah, I still get goose bumps! After we had chased out the robbers, we tried to clean the robbers' home, but it was really run-down! |

eingezogen sind => *past tense* **hatten gelebt** => *past perfect*
hatte hinausgejagt => *past perfect* **versuchten/war** => *past tense*

❖ VI. Participle forms

As you could see in both the present perfect and past perfect tenses, the verb takes on a special form (just like "been" or "taken" in English). This is the participle form of the verb.

a) regular verbs are formed by adding a **ge-** before and a **-t** at the end of the stem (the infinitive minus the **-en**):

- | | | | |
|-----------------|----|-------------------|----------|
| ▶ machen | => | gemacht | (made) |
| kochen | => | gekocht | (cooked) |
| arbeiten | => | gearbeitet | (worked) |

b) -ieren verbs are also formed by adding a **-t** to the stem, but they do not get the **ge-** prefix:

- ▶ **reparieren** => **repariert** (repaired, fixed)
 ▶ **dekoriieren** => **dekoriert** (decorated)

c) irregular verbs can be formed with or without the **ge-** prefix, but end in **-en** (instead of the **-t**). And many of them have changes in the verb stem vowel.

- ▶ **finden** => **gefunden** (found)
 ▶ **gehen** => **gegangen** (went)
 ▶ **laufen** => **gelaufen** (ran)

d) mixed verbs put a bit of spin on things because they act like both regular and irregular verbs in some ways. They are like regular verbs because they all get a **ge-** prefix and a **-t** suffix, but they are like irregular verbs because the stem vowel changes.

- ▶ **denken** => **gedacht** (thought)
 ▶ **wissen** => **gewusst** (knew)
 ▶ **bringen** => **gebracht** (brought)

❖ VII. Prefixes

One more facet of verbs is that they can be preceded by prefixes, small units of language that somehow modify or enhance the meaning of verbs. Some of these prefixes are separable from the stem of the verb while others are not. Whether the prefixes are separable or not matters in declarative sentences (basic statements) and in forming the participle.

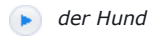


a) separable prefixes (such as **aus**, **an**, **mit**, **nach**, etc.) move to the end of a sentence or phrase in basic statements (declarative sentences):

- ▶ *die Katze* Ja, wir **jagten** die Räuber hinaus! Sie **rannten** schnell in den Wald **hinaus**! Yes, we **chased out** the robbers! They **fled** into the forest like crazy!

hinausjagen, hinausfliehen

b) inseparable prefixes (be-, emp-, ent-, er-, ge-, ver- and zer-) stay with the verb at all times:



Wie sehr der Räuber **erschrak!** Und wie die Katze ihm das Gesicht **zerkratzt** hat! Tihhi ... Danke Wilhelm und Jacob Grimm, diese Endung hat mir sehr gut **gefallen**.

The robber was so **scared!** And the cat really **scratched** his face! hehehe ... thank you, Wilhelm and Jacob, I really **liked** this ending.

erschrecken, zerkratzen, gefallen