

## punctuation

grimm **grammar**

### Miscellaneous : Die Zeichensetzung

An essential part of learning to write in German is learning how to properly use German **punctuation** - a system of marks or signs that are placed in a text to clarify meaning and separate structural units. Luckily, German punctuation is similar to English punctuation in many respects.

#### Punctuation marks (Satzzeichen)

With the exception of quotation marks, the German punctuation marks are the same as the English ones.

 German term	English term	Punctuation mark
die Anführungszeichen	quotation marks	" " or « »
die Auslassungspunkte	ellipsis dots	...
das Ausrufezeichen	exclamation mark	!
der Apostroph	apostrophe	'
der Bindestrich	hyphen	-
der Doppelpunkt/das Kolon	colon	:
der Ergänzungsstrich	dash	–
das Fragezeichen	question mark	?
der Gedankenstrich	long dash	—
runde Klammern	parentheses	( )
eckige Klammern	brackets	[ ]
das Komma	comma	,
der Punkt	period	.
das Semikolon	semicolon	;

However, four of these German punctuation marks - quotation marks, the apostrophe, the comma and the dash - differ from their English counterparts in terms of how they are used.

#### Die Anführungszeichen

Difference	German usage	English usage
Marks	<p>* Generally, chevron-style marks are used in books</p> <p><i>Beispiel:</i> Die Prinzessin sagte: «Du garstiger Frosch!»</p> <p>(or)</p> <p>Die Prinzessin sagte: »Du garstiger Frosch!«</p> <p>* In newspapers and other printed material, German quotation marks are used (i.e., the opening quotation mark is below the line rather than above)</p> <p><i>Beispiel:</i> Die Prinzessin sagte: „Du garstiger Frosch!“</p>	<p>* International quotation marks are used in all types of texts</p> <p><i>Example:</i> The princess said, "You nasty frog!"</p>
Introducing a quotation	A colon is used to introduce a direct quote.	A comma is used to introduce a direct quote.

	<i>Beispiel:</i> Sie sagten: «Das Mädchen ist sehr schön.»	<i>Example:</i> They said, "The little girl is very beautiful."
Ending a quotation	At the end of a quotation, the comma is placed outside the quotation mark.  <i>Beispiel:</i> "Die sieben Zwerge sind sehr fleißig", sagte Schneewittchen.	At the end of a quotation, the comma is placed inside the quotation mark.  <i>Example:</i> "The seven dwarves are really hard-working," said Snow White.
Quotations vs. italics	* Quotation marks are used for the titles of poems, articles, short stories, songs and TV shows.  <i>Beispiel:</i> „Hänsel und Gretel“ ist ein Grimm-Märchen.  * Quotation marks are also used for the titles of books, novels, films, dramatic works and the names of newspapers or magazines.  <i>Beispiel:</i> Die Brüder Grimm haben „Kinder- und Hausmärchen“ geschrieben.	* Single quotation marks are used for the titles of poems, articles, short stories, songs and TV shows.  <i>Example:</i> 'Hänsel and Gretel' is a Grimm fairy tale.  * The titles of books, novels, films, dramatic works and the names of newspapers or magazines are either italicized or underlined.  <i>Example:</i> The brothers Grimm wrote <i>Children's and Household Tales</i> .
Quotations within quotations	* Single quotation marks ( <b>halbe Anführungszeichen</b> ) are used for a quotation within a quotation.  <i>Beispiel:</i> „Hänsel und Gretel“ ist ein Grimm-Märchen", sagte Dornröschen.	* Single quotation marks are used for a quotation within a quotation  <i>Example:</i> "'Hänsel and Gretel' is a Grimm fairy tale," said Sleeping Beauty.



### ❖ Der Apostroph

Difference	German usage	English usage
Genitive possession	* Generally, genitive possession is indicated with just an <b>-s</b> at the end of a name or noun.  <i>Beispiel:</i> Aschenputtel <b>s</b> Stiefmutter	* Genitive possession is indicated with both an apostrophe and an <b>-s</b>  <i>Example:</i> Cinderella <b>'s</b> stepmother

	<p>* When a name or noun ends with an <b>s</b> sound (i.e., spelled <b>-s</b>, <b>-ss</b>, <b>-ß</b>, <b>-tz</b>, <b>-z</b>, <b>-x</b>, <b>-ce</b>), genitive possession is indicated with just an apostrophe</p> <p><i>Beispiel:</i> des Prinz' Ross</p>	<p>* <i>Example:</i> The prince's steed</p>
Missing letters	<p>* Missing letters in contractions, slang, dialect, idiomatic expressions or poetic phrases are indicated with an apostrophe</p> <p><i>Beispiele:</i> wie geht's? (wie geht es?) ich hab' (ich habe)</p> <p>* In some common contractions with definite articles, no apostrophe is used</p> <p><i>Beispiele:</i> ins (in das) zum (zu dem)</p>	<p>* Missing letters in contractions, slang, dialect, idiomatic expressions or poetic phrases are indicated with an apostrophe</p> <p><i>Examples:</i> how's it going? (how is it ...?) I've (I have)</p>



#### ❖ Das Komma

Difference	German usage	English usage
Linking clauses	<p>* A comma may link two independent clauses without a conjunction; the other options are a semicolon or a period.</p> <p><i>Beispiel:</i> Der Frosch stand vor der Tür, die Prinzessin erschrak.</p>	<p>Generally, a comma is not an option when linking two independent clauses without a conjunction; a semicolon or a period is more appropriate.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> The frog stood before the door: the princess was frightened.</p>
Series ending with and/or	<p>* A comma is never used at the end of a series ending with and/or.</p> <p><i>Beispiel:</i></p>	<p>* A comma is optional at the end of a series ending with and/or.</p> <p><i>Example:</i></p>

	Die sieben Zwerge sind Brummbär, Chef, Happy, Hatschi, Pimpel, Schlafmütz und Seppel.	The seven dwarves are Grumpy, Doc, Happy, Sneezy, Bashful, Sleepy(,) and Dopey.
<i>Infinitive phrases</i>	<p>* The reformed spelling rules (<b>Rechtschreibreform</b>) make commas optional in infinitive phrases</p> <p><i>Beispiel:</i> Die Prinzessin verliess den Brunnen(,) ohne den Frosch mitzunehmen.</p>	n/a
<i>Numerical expressions</i>	<p>* In prices, a comma separates the tens position from the ones position.</p> <p><i>Beispiel:</i> €9,95</p> <p>* In large numbers, either a space or a decimal point divides thousands</p> <p><i>Beispiel:</i> 1 000 000 or 1.000.000</p>	<p>* In prices, a decimal point separates the tens position from the ones position.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> 19.95 euros</p> <p>* In large numbers, a comma divides thousands</p> <p><i>Example:</i> 1,000,000</p>

#### ✦ Der Ergänzungsstrich/Der Gedankenstrich

Difference	German usage	English usage
<i>Pauses, delayed continuation, contrast</i>	<p>* A dash or long dash indicates a pause, a delayed continuation or a contrast.</p> <p><i>Beispiel:</i> Auf einmal - ein lautes Weinen!</p>	<p>* A dash or long dash indicates a pause, a delayed continuation or a contrast.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> All of a sudden - a loud sobbing!</p>
<i>Change in speaker</i>	<p>* When there are no quotation marks, a dash or long dash indicates a change in speaker.</p> <p><i>Beispiel:</i> - Aschenputtel, komm mal her! - Ja, ich komme sofort!</p>	<p>* Generally, quotation marks indicate a change in speaker.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> "Cinderella, come here!" "Yes, I'm coming right away."</p>
<i>Prices</i>	<p>* A dash or long dash indicates an even price.</p> <p><i>Beispiel:</i> €10,-</p>	<p>* A double zero or naught indicates an even price.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> 10.00 euros</p>