

Some key points of English grammar

Dear students,

English grammar can be very complex, and no one is familiar with 'everything that may be acceptable'. It is, however, very well possible for non-native speakers of English to master basic structures. Below you will find a list of items which are 'essential' and a survey of common irregular verbs which you should familiarize yourself with before you take the test "Grammatische Grundkenntnisse". The selection of the material is largely based on points you may find difficult. The list makes no claim to be exhaustive.

This is not a substitute for grammar books, which should be worked through in addition, eg Eastwood, J. (2000). *Oxford Practice Grammar (with answers)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Murphy, R. (1994). *English Grammar in Use (with answers)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

NB: In formal written English contracted forms are usually avoided. In this survey the shorter forms prevail.

VERB GROUP

Questions (Eastwood: units 34, 36-39, 41, tests 8 & 9, Murphy: units 48-49)

Do you know him?

Did you **ask** her? (past tense in '**did**', **not in 'ask'**)

Who saw you? (subject question) **Wer** hat dich gesehen?

Who did you see? **Wen** hast du gesehen?

What are you looking **at**?

I don't know where **he is**. (**indirect question**)

Question tags (basic patterns) (Eastwood: 42, Murphy: 51)

She **loves** him, **doesn't** she?

She **doesn't** love him, **does** she?

You **haven't** seen her, **have** you?

They **had** breakfast at 8 o' clock **didn't** they? ('h ave' is sometimes a full verb)

Short replies (Eastwood: 43, Murphy: 50)

A: I **went** there yesterday.

B: So **did** I. I **did** too.

A: I've read two books by Tom Sharpe.

B: So **have** I.

A: I **didn't** go there yesterday.

B: **Neither/Nor did** I. I didn't either.

Tenses/Aspect (Eastwood: 8-17, tests 2 &3, Murphy: 7-14)

Past tense if there is a **time gap, irrespective of what may be said in German.**

Ich habe ihn gestern/vor einer Minute/letztes Jahr/1999 gesehen.

I saw him **yesterday/a minute ago/last year/in 1999.**

for and past tense

Ich habe zwei Jahre hier gewohnt.

I **lived** here **for two years.** (I don't live here any more.)

Pre-present tense if there is **no time gap.**

I've **just** seen him.

I haven't seen him **yet.**

Pre-present tense with **since** for something that began in the past and is still going on. **Don't be misled by the tense in the German sentence.** Ich wohne hier seit 1998 ...

I've **lived/ been living** here **since 1998/since March/since Christmas/since my wife died.**
(point of time)

Seit wann kennst du ihn?

Since when/How long/have you **known** him? ('know' is not used in the expanded form)

Ich **habe** das Buch **seit Anfang Februar.**

I've **had** this book **since the beginning of February.**

for and pre-present tense:

Ich **kenne** ihn schon **jahrelang.**

I've **known** him **for years.** (period)

Ich **habe** das Buch **seit zwei Wochen.**

I've **had** this book **for two weeks.**

NB: Das ist das erste Mal, daß ich im Krankenhaus **bin.**

This is/It's the first time I've been in hospital.

(The present tense cannot be used in the above sentence.)

Conditionals (Eastwood: 144-149, test 25, Murphy: 37-39)

I'll ask him if he comes. If he comes, I'll ask him.

I'd ask him if he came.

If I were/was you, I'd ask him.

I would have asked him if he had come. If he hadn't crossed the road, he wouldn't have been run over.

Modality (Eastwood: 44-53, test 10, Murphy: 32, 35, 44)

Shall we sit here? (Wollen wir ...)

You are to deliver these flowers before 11. (Du sollst ...)

OPEC representatives are to meet in London next Wednesday.

You mustn't do it. Du darfst es nicht tun.

You don't have to do it. Du brauchst es nicht zu tun.

John is said to be ill.

He is said to have killed his wife.

Passive Voice (Eastwood: 54-59, test 11, Murphy: 41-43)

A decision **will not be taken** until tomorrow.

The room is being cleaned.

The windows should have been cleaned, but they weren't.

He might have got the job if he had not been late for the interview.

She wasn't offered the job.

Have they been shown the new machine?

Five people are still unaccounted **for**.

Priscilla was stung by a bee.

Causation (Eastwood: 58, Murphy: 45)

I have my hair cut once a month.

How often do you have your hair cut?

Gerund/infinitive (Eastwood: 60-75, tests 12 & 13, Murphy: 52-57, 59-62)

1. Verbs followed by the **gerund**, **not** the infinitive

admit
avoid
consider
delay
deny
enjoy
fancy
finish
give up
imagine
involve
look forward to
mind
miss
postpone
practise
risk
suggest

NB: This book is worth reading.

2. Verbs followed by the **infinitive**, **not** the gerund

attempt
decide
decline
offer
plan
refuse
threaten

NB:

I'd rather (= I would rather) stay at home than go to the theatre. (= I would prefer to stay at home.)

I'd better (= I had better) return the money. (= It would be better if I returned the money.)

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3. Verbs that can be followed by **either the infinitive or the gerund, with a difference in meaning**

remember doing sth - sich erinnern, etwas getan zu haben

She remembered posting the letter.

Sie erinnerte sich, den Brief aufzugeben zu haben.

remember to do sth - daran denken/nicht vergessen, etwas zu tun

She remembered to post the letter.

Sie vergaß nicht, den Brief aufzugeben.

stop doing sth - mit etwas aufhören

She stopped writing.

Sie hörte auf zu schreiben.

He stopped looking at the girl.

Er hörte auf, das Mädchen zu betrachten.

stop to do sth - innehalten/etwas abbrechen, um etwas anderes zu tun

He stopped to look at the girl. = He stopped in order to look at the girl.

Er hielt an, um das Mädchen zu betrachten.

try doing sth - etwas versuchsweise tun, es mit etwas versuchen (experiment)

Try adding some pepper next time.

try to do sth - versuchen, etwas zu tun (attempt)

She tried to open the door but didn't succeed.

regret

He regrets saying that. (reference to past)

Es tut ihm leid, das gesagt zu haben.

We regret to inform you that this book is out of print. (reference to present or future)

Es tut uns leid, Ihnen mitteilen zu müssen, daß das Buch nicht mehr erhältlich ist.

NB: used to

I'm used to getting up early. (**adjective**)

Ich **bin es gewohnt**, früh aufzustehen.

I used to get up up early. (**modal verb**)

Früher stand ich zeitig **auf**./Ich **pflegte** zeitig aufzustehen.

'**In former times**' cannot be used in the above sentence. It may be used to refer to the distant past, but there are very often better phrases, eg 'in the past', 'in the old days'.

NB: difficulty: We had no **difficulty (in) finding** the garden.

NOUN GROUP

Nouns/noun phrases which are problematic for Germans

(**countable/uncountable; singular/plural**) (Eastwood: 77-82, test 14, Murphy: 68-70)

The **furniture was** very expensive.

'Information', 'advice', 'furniture' and a few others cannot be used with the indefinite article and in the plural.

information = Information(en) Who gave you the information?

If you want to refer to a single item you can say 'a piece of information', 'a piece of furniture'

Plural verb:

Where **are the scissors/trousers?**

The **police have** arrested Theodore.

Singular verb:

Seven miles is too far for me to walk.

Five years is a long time.

Three thousand pounds was stolen in the robbery.

Hier sind die Nachrichten, gesprochen von Peter Barker.

Here's **the news, read by** Peter Barker

NB:

a **13-year-old** girl

1 Dollar = 1 dollar, 12 Dollars = 12 dollars

I have a car /**my own car/a car of my own.** (**ein eigenes Auto**)

Noun modifiers

Determiners/Quantifiers (Eastwood: 87, 91-97, test 16, Murphy: 81-90)

Articles

a book

a university [j] (before semivowel)

an old man

an hour ago

Society has a right to see thieves punished.

the death penalty (**but** capital punishment)

the environment

Quantifiers (C/U)

She doesn't write **many** letters.

I don't drink **much** wine.

Susan eats **a lot of** rice/apples.

Non-count nouns:

little - less - least (milk, money, sugar, etc)

I have little money. (negative)

I have a little money. (positive)

Count nouns:

few - fewer - fewest (friends)

I have few friends/only **a** few friends. (negative)

I have a few friends. (positive)

Some, any

Sheila has some questions.
 Are there any questions?
 I don't have any questions.
 Any pen will do.

Neither, either

Neither hotel is expensive. (not one or the other)
 I don't like **either** hotel. (not one or the other)
 We could go to **either** bar. (one or the other)

Relative clauses (Eastwood: 137-143, test 24, Murphy: 91-96)

defining relative clauses (They are essential to make the meaning of the sentence clear.)

The woman who lives next door is very friendly.
 I know a lot of people who live in Manchester.
 The windows that were broken have now been repaired.
 Is he the man you gave the money to?
 I saw some people whose car had broken down.
 This is the house whose roof needs repairing.

All (that) we know is that he never took the money.

Wer es sich nicht wirklich leisten kann, sollte nicht an der Expedition teilnehmen.

Anyone who can't really afford it, should not take part in the expedition.

non-defining relative clauses (They could be left out without changing the basic message of the sentence.)

Goethe, who died in 1832, was a famous writer.
 Our car, which is quite old, is still reliable.
 I'd like you to meet our secretaries, some of whom are bilingual.

NB: She helped him, **which** was a good thing.

ADJECTIVAL GROUP (Eastwood: 106, 108-112, 114, tests 18 & 19, Murphy: 99, 100, 194-107)

Adjectives as complements

This is/seems/appears/looks/sounds/tastes/smells/good.

Comparison of adjectives

new - newer - newest

easy - easier - easiest

difficult - more difficult - most difficult

bad - worse - worst

late - later - latest (with reference to 'time')
latter - last (with reference to 'order')

farther – farthest (referring to 'distance')
further – furthest (distance; figurative use)

near:

nearer – nearest (place)
next (sequence)

NB: She is **the same** age as Peter.

as ... as

not so ... as

not as ... as

older **than**

ADVERBIAL GROUP (cf adjectival group)

She works methodically/fast/hard/well.

He works extremely hard.

Peggy is highly intelligent.

She is extraordinarily good.

Comparison of adverbs

easily - more easily - most easily

badly - worse - worst

well – better – best

Phrases in which comparatives are used

The sooner the better.

The earlier we leave, the sooner we (will) arrive.

PREPOSITIONAL GROUP (Eastwood: 118-125, test 21, Murphy: 120-135)

Prepositions before nouns

In spite of/Despite the rain, we enjoyed ourselves.

at night - at Christmas - at the moment - **at** the age of

I'll be back **by Monday**. Tell me **by Thursday** whether or not you can come to the meeting.

By the time you get to the shops, they will be shut. (by = not later than)

('Till' or 'until' would be wrong in those sentences.)

I saw it **on** TV - similar **to**

in the town **of** Dessau – in der Stadt Dessau; similiarly: in the state **of** Iowa

Prepositions after verbs

depend on
 rely on
 succeed in

She was **discriminated against**.

He was **operated on**.

NB: No preposition in 'Let's discuss it.'

Prepositions after adjectives

characteristic of
 independent of
 typical of

We hope that the examples will help you find your way around in grammar books so that you can successfully organise your work.

Yours grammatically,

Peter Connell, Dietmar Schneider, Dieter Schöne, Marjorie Willey

Common irregular verbs

arise	arose	arisen
awake	awoke	awoken
be	was/were	been
bear	bore	borne
beat	beat	beaten
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
bend	bent	bent
bind	bound	bound
bite	bit	bitten
bleed	bled	bled
blow	blew	blown
break	broke	broken
bring	brought	brought
build	built	built
buy	bought	bought

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cast	cast	cast
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
cling	clung	clung
come	came	come
cost	cost	cost
creep	crept	crept
cut	cut	cut
deal	dealt	dealt
dig	dug	dug
do	did	done
draw	drew	drawn
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
feed	fed	fed
feel	felt	felt
fight	fought	fought
find	found	found
fly	flew	flown
forbid	forbade	forbidden
foresee	foresaw	foreseen
forget	forgot	forgotten
forgive	forgave	forgiven
freeze	froze	frozen
get	got	got; (US) gotten
give	gave	given
go	went	gone
grow	grew	grown
hang	hung; hanged (They hanged him.)	hung; hanged (He was hanged.)
have	had	had
hear	heard	heard
hide	hid	hidden
hit	hit	hit
hold	held	held
hurt	hurt	hurt
keep	kept	kept
know	knew	known
lay	laid	laid
lead	led	led
leave	left	left
lend	lent	lent
let	let	let
lie	lay	lain
lose	lost	lost

make	made	made
mean	meant	meant
meet	met	met
mishear	misheard	misheard
mislay	mislaid	mislaid
mislead	misled	misled
misread	misread	misread
mistake	mistook	mistaken
misunderstand	misunderstood	misunderstood
overcome	overcame	overcome
overdo	overdid	overdone
overhear	overheard	overheard
oversleep	overslept	overslept
overtake	overtook	overtaken
overthrow	overthrew	overthrown
pay	paid	paid
put	put	put
read	read	read
rebuild	rebuilt	rebuilt
redo	redid	redone
rewrite	rewrote	rewritten
ride	rode	ridden
ring	rang	rung
rise	rose	risen
run	ran	run
say	said	said
see	saw	seen
seek	sought	sought
sell	sold	sold
send	sent	sent
set	set	set
shake	shook	shaken
shed	shed	shed
shine	shone; shined (He shined the furniture.)	shone; shined (Her boots had been shined.)
shoot	shot	shot
show	showed	shown
shrink	shrank, shrunk	shrunk
shut	shut	shut
sing	sang	sung
sink	sank	sunk
sit	sat	sat
sleep	slept	slept
slide	slid	slid
slit	slit	slit
sow	sowed	sown, sowed
speak	spoke	spoken

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speed	sped; speeded (in speeded up)	sped; speeded (in speeded up)
spend	spent	spent
spin	spun	spun
spit	spat; (esp US) spit	spat; (esp US) spit
split	split	split
spread	spread	spread
spring	sprang	sprung
stand	stood	stood
steal	stole	stolen
stick	stuck	stuck
sting	stung	stung
strike	struck	struck
strive	strove	striven
swear	swore	sworn
sweep	swept	swept
swing	swung	swung
take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught
tear	tore	torn
tell	told	told
think	thought	thought
throw	threw	thrown
undergo	underwent	undergone
understand	understood	understood
upset	upset	upset
wake	woke	woken
wear	wore	worn
weave	wove	woven
weep	wept	wept
win	won	won
wind	wound	wound
withdraw	withdrew	withdrawn
write	wrote	written