

GCSE / A Level German Grammar Transition Booklet





This booklet is designed to help you to consolidate key GCSE grammar so you are ready to tackle A level. It is **not** a complete guide to German grammar: we will cover more advanced aspects such as cases, adjective endings, relative clauses, compound tenses, passive and subjunctive fully in lessons in year 12, so they are not included here. If you would like to follow these exercises up with some independent work, you could continue to work through the exercises in your '789' booklet and/or try the website www.languagesonline.org.uk .

Viel Spaß beim Grammatik lernen!

Frau Arnold

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1. Noun gender and plurals

As you know, nouns in German are **masculine (der/ein)**, **feminine (die /eine)**, or **neuter (das/ein)**. You can check the gender of a noun in a dictionary, but sometimes the ending of a noun can help you to work out its gender:

Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nouns that end in -ant, -ast, -ich, -ismus, -ling, -or, -us Most nouns ending -er and -en (apart from nouns made from verb infinitives) Days, months, seasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nouns ending in -schaft, -heit, -keit, -ung, -a, -ei, -enz, -ie, -ik, -sion, -tät, -tion, -ur The vast majority of nouns ending in -e 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nouns made from verb infinitives Nouns ending in -chen, -lein, -ma, -ment, -sel, -tel, -tum, -um The vast majority of nouns starting Ge- Many of the words that come from other languages (Fremdwörter)

The 'Article Signals Song' on Youtube (SmarterGerman) is helpful for memorising some of these! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heHgukjDq-U>

There are exceptions to these patterns (eg. das Ende; die Gefahr), but in most cases they are very likely to give you the right gender.

Task 1a What gender are the following German nouns?

Arbeitslosigkeit	Freude	Hähnchen
Lehrer	Kapitalismus	Element
Bäckerei	Kuchen	Viertel
Herbst	Schwimmen	Freiheit
Getränk	Mannschaft	Palast
Baby	Januar	Realität

Reminder: the last part of a compound noun gives you the gender, for example:

Plan is masculine (der), therefore → **der** Stunden**plan**, **der** Busfahr**plan**, **der** Lehr**plan**

Noun plurals

There are many different ways of making plural nouns in German (just as there are in English - think about it!). There are a few 'set' patterns:

Nouns ending -schaft, -keit, -heit, -ung add -en in plural

Nouns ending -chen and -er *generally* stay the same in the plural

Nouns ending -e *often* add -n in plural

BUT there is often no clear pattern, so you will usually find you have to look up plurals in a dictionary. Different dictionaries do this in different ways:

If you use online dictionaries such as dict.cc (my first choice online dictionary for A level!), clicking on the German word will give you a box with word in singular and plural, eg if you click on 'Hemd' you are taken to a box with NOUN

das Hemd | **die Hemden** .

If you use paper dictionaries (in which case I recommend Collins), the plural is usually given in brackets alongside the singular, for example 'Hemd, (-en), *nnt*'.

In larger dictionaries you might find that there are TWO things in brackets, eg. for 'shirt' you would find: 'Hemd ((-e)s; -en) *nnt*; : **the plural will be the SECOND thing in brackets** – the first thing is the genitive form.

Reminder: 'the' in the plural is **die**. This **doesn't** mean the word has changed into a feminine noun – it keeps the same gender, for example:

der Hund – die Hunde (masculine sg and pl)

die Katze – die Katzen (feminine sg and pl)

das Buch – die Bücher (neuter sg and pl)

Task 2a– Find the plurals of the following nouns:

das Kaninchen

der Computer

die Schule

das Haus

das Gefühl

die Freundschaft

der Freund

der Teenager

Task 2b – Here are some particularly useful nouns for the A level German course. Look up the German, and say what the gender of each noun is.

problem	decision	disadvantage
problems	environment	consequences
government	advantage	population

2. Subject pronouns

A quick exercise to make sure you are clear about the meanings of the subject pronouns:

Task 3: Fill in the meanings of the pronouns in English, using the checklist in the bubble if needed.

ich =

wir =

du =

ihr =

er =

Sie =

sie =

sie =

es =

man =

they I we he

'one'/you (=people in general)

she you (familiar sg)

you (formal sg & pl) it

you (familiar pl)

Task 4:

Which word for 'you' would you use if you were talking to:

- Your brother
- Someone serving you in a shop
- several friends

3. Direct Object Pronouns

These are the words in bold below – they are pronouns for the person /people/thing the verb acts directly on.

You don't understand me !	du verstehst mich nicht!
I like you (familiar, singular)	ich mag dich
Anna tricked him	Anna hat ihn ausgetrickst
The letter annoyed her	der Brief hat sie genervt
I fixed it	ich habe es * repariert
They're meeting us in the park	Sie treffen uns im Park
We'll miss you (familiar, plural)	Wir werden euch vermissen
I warned you (formal) yesterday	Ich habe Sie gestern gewarnt
Markus finds them weird	Markus findet sie seltsam

*'es' is the commonest word for 'it' and it is used to refer to general /unspecified things, situations or experiences as well as neuter nouns – but if the thing being referred to is masculine you should use 'ihn' (eg. Wie war **der** Kuchen? Ich fand **ihn** lecker!) and if it's feminine you should use 'sie' (eg. **Die** Schule ist gut – ich besuche **sie** seit 3 Jahren.)

Task 5: translate the following, using the correct direct object pronoun

I find him quite funny

She saw them yesterday

He ate it quickly (*'it' = the food*)

I'll meet you in the café (*talking to two friends*)

That surprises me!

4. Word Order: the 'Verb Second' rule

The most important rule of German word order is that the main clause verb must be the second **element** in the sentence:

Ich	gehe	samstags oft in die Stadt
Meine Mutter	mag	italienisches Essen
Die ganze Familie	ist	zur Party gegangen

You need to be **very careful** about this when translating phrases where English uses subject + adverb + verb (so verb 3rd), for example:

1	2	3	1	2	3
I	never	go	Ich	gehe	nie
He	often	says ...	Er	sagt	oft ...
The minister	unfortunately	thinks ...	Der Minister	denkt	leider ...

You can see here that the verb doesn't have to be the second **word!** **The first 'element'** can be quite long, for example:

Die ganze Klasse, die Lehrerin und der Schulleiter **haben** letzte Woche einen Kurzfilm gedreht.

The whole phrase in blue is the subject of the verb (the people that made the short film) so it counts as the first element.

As in English, you don't have to start the sentence with the subject (the person/thing doing the verb) – you can use a time phrase or other adverbial phrase instead. The difference is that in German, **you still need to have the verb as the second element**, so you end up with the subject in third place. This is called inversion. Here are some examples:

1	2 verb	3 subject
Leider	denkt	der Minister
Letzte Woche	war	das Wetter ...
Manchmal	geht	sie ...

In fact, German being nothing if not logical, you can even have a **whole subordinate clause as the 'first element'**, which is then followed by the main clause **verb** (with a comma first), then **the subject**:

Weil er wegen des Babys so schlecht geschlafen hatte, war er furchtbar müde

Obwohl ich meine Schwester oft so irritierend finde, ist sie wirklich ganz nett.

Task 6 – Translate:

I often play tennis

They never drink tea

It was sometimes difficult

Sometimes it was difficult

Unfortunately the weather was terrible

To my surprise, my team won!

Although I don't normally like hot food (=scharfes Essen), I found it delicious.

When it rains, the children wear wellies (=Gummistiefel).

5. Word Order: Time, Manner, Place

This is a straightforward rule: if you have expressions of time, manner and place in a sentence, that's the order they go in. 'Time' includes expressions of frequency, and 'Manner' is to do with *how* something happens (eg slowly, surprisingly, reluctantly, unfortunately, with hesitation, by train, on foot, with my family ...).

Task 7 – classify the following expressions into time, manner, or place, and combine some of them with the verbs at the bottom (or your own preferred verbs) to make your own sentences with correct word order. You don't have to use all three elements in every sentence, add you can add your own nouns etc to complete the sentences. As an extension, try starting the sentence with a time expression – don't forget you will still need to have the verb second!

gestern	normalerweise	alleine
nach Oxford	mit dem Bus	nächste Woche
widerwillig	zu Hause	nach Italien
im Park	ab und zu	leider
langsam	im Hotel	vor drei Jahren
in Zukunft	mit Freunden	hier

Verb suggestions:

Meine Familie ist gefahren

Ich möchte spielen

Lukas wird gehen

Ich lese

Anke und Ulli sind ... geblieben

Die alte Dame sitzt ...

You will need to add your own nouns etc to make complete sentences – and feel free to use your own verbs instead if you prefer!

6. Word Order: Subordination

You know how to use 'weil', 'dass' and several other subordinating conjunctions. As you move towards A level, you will find it useful to have a wider range of subordinating conjunctions at your fingertips. They still count as 'complex structures' at A level, and many of them are really useful for developing arguments, which carries a lot of marks.

All of these conjunctions work just like 'weil' - they send the verb to the end of the clause. In tenses with two parts, it's the first bit of the verb (the finite verb) that gets sent – so the part of haben/sein in perfect tense, or the part of werden in future – look at no.s 1 & 5 below. Use as many different conjunctions as you can in your work.

You will already know:

da – because/since/as

ob – whether / if

wenn – if / whenever

question words such as was, wo, warum, wie, wer - these can also be used as subordinating conjunctions

obwohl – although

als – when + past tense

Try now to learn and start using these more sophisticated conjunctions:

damit – in order that, so that

nachdem – after (also good with pluperfect!)

so dass – with the result that

solange – as long as

während – while

wohingegen – whereas

bis - until

indem – by ...ing

bevor – before (can be used with pluperfect)

egal was /wie (etc) – no matter what /how (etc)

Task 8 - Translate the following sentences:

1. Ich weiss nicht, ob ich am Montag nach London fahren werde.
2. Ich habe stundenlang im Garten gespielt, als ich Kind war.
3. Sie hat keine Idee, warum ihr Bruder so launisch ist.
4. Ich trage Gummistiefel, wenn es regnet, egal wie doof das aussieht!
5. Du musst arbeiten, bis du alles gemacht hast!
6. Meine Eltern arbeiten Überstunden, damit wir einen tollen Sommerurlaub haben können.
7. Man kann fit werden, indem man dreimal pro Woche trainiert.
8. I don't know if I like the German school system. *Careful with 'if' – does it mean 'whether' (=ob), or 'whenever' (=wenn)?*
9. I always lose if I play Monopoly with my sister. *(to lose = verlieren)*
10. Max loves basketball, whereas I prefer playing volleyball. *(to prefer playing = spielen + lieber).*
11. You can use my room as long as you tidy up afterwards. *(to tidy up = aufräumen; afterwards = hinterher).*

7. Verbs: Present tense, regular

The present tense is used to describe **what is happening now**, or **what usually happens**. There are two present tenses in English ('I eat' and 'I am eating'), but only one in German, which expresses both of these. (In fact English has a third type of rarer, emphatic present tense, as in: 'I'm a vegetarian but I do eat cheese because I'm not vegan' – to do this in German you just add 'doch' or 'schon' to the usual present tense).

As you know, the vast majority of verbs in German end in -en in the infinitive, and regular verbs are conjugated as follows:

spielen – to play			
ich	spiele	wir	spielen
du	spielst	ihr	spielt
		Sie	spielen
er/sie/es/man	spielt	sie	spielen

If you need a reminder of what the pronouns mean, have another look at section 2 of this booklet.

You can tell if a verb is regular if it says “**v reg**” in the dictionary after it.

Good news: almost all German verbs are regular in the present tense even if they are irregular in other tenses! Auxiliary verbs (haben, sein and werden), modal verbs, and 'stem-changing' verbs are all somewhat irregular in present tense, and these are discussed in the following sections.

NB also that verbs ending with -ten in the infinitive (eg arbeiten) add an extra 'e' in 3rd person sg form (er/sie/es/man) so you end up with (eg.) 'er/sie arbeit**e**t', rather than 'er/sie arbeit**t**', which just looks wrong!

Task 9 – Translate these verbs in the Present Tense

I am listening

He drinks

They begin

We are meeting

She loses

You (formal) know

We believe

You (sg familiar) are playing

The Present Tense is also used in German with “seit” to say how long you **have been doing** something.

e.g. **Ich wohne** seit drei Jahren hier = **I’ve been living** here for three years
(what you are saying in German, literally, is ‘I live here since three years’)

Task 10 – How would you say...?

He’s been waiting in the park for two hours.

They’ve been learning German for six months.

8. Verbs: Present tense, stem-changing

Some verbs in German don’t quite follow the regular pattern for present tense: they have a small change in the stem for **2nd and 3rd person singular only**. The verb endings are regular. There are three groups of stem-changing verbs:

1. a to ä, e.g. fahren	
ich fahre	wir fahren
du fä hrst	ihr fahrt
	Sie fahren
er, sie, es, man fä hrt	sie fahren

2. e to i, e.g. helfen	
ich helfe	wir helfen
du hil fst	ihr helft
	Sie helfen
er, sie, es, man hil ft	sie helfen

3. e to ie, e.g. sehen	
ich sehe	wir sehen
du sieh st	ihr seht
	Sie sehen
er, sie, es, man sieh t	sie sehen

Task 11 – complete the sentences with the stem-changing verb in brackets.

Remember that the stem ONLY changes in 2nd and 3rd person singular!

Martha _____ Deutsch (sprechen)

Ich _____ gerne Tomaten, aber mein Bruder _____ lieber Käse (essen x2)

Wir _____ das Auto am Wochenende (waschen)

_____ du ein neues Kleid zur Party? Wir _____ alle Jeans (tragen x 2)

Der Mann _____ jeden Tag nach London (fahren)

Die Lehrerin _____ den Schülern, das Fach besser zu verstehen (helfen)

Ich _____ gern Science-Fiction (lesen)

9. Reflexive verbs

Reflexive verbs are conjugated in the same way as other verbs in all the tenses, but they have an additional reflexive pronoun. Many of these verbs have the sense of doing something to yourself, or to each other – you can think of it as the verb ‘reflecting back’ onto the person doing it! Here’s an example:

Sich rasieren – to shave (literally ‘to shave oneself’)

ich rasiere **mich**

wir rasieren **uns**

du rasierst **dich**

ihr rasiert **euch**

Sie rasieren **sich**

er/sie/es/man rasiert **sich**

sie rasieren **sich**

Infinitives of reflexive verbs in the dictionary begin with **sich** and have a “**vr**” next to them to help you identify them. Providing you remember to add the reflexive pronoun they are very straightforward to use.

Other examples of reflexive verbs: sich waschen (stem-changing, like waschen), sich duschen (to shower), sich baden (to bathe), sich amüsieren (to have fun), sich langweilen (to be bored), sich ändern (to change (oneself)), sich irren (to be mistaken), sich freuen auf (to look forward to), sich interessieren für (to be interested in), sich verstehen mit (to get on with), sich benehmen (to behave), sich streiten (to argue)

Task 12: Fill in the gaps in the sentences with a suitable reflexive verb from the list. Check that you have the appropriate verb ending and reflexive pronoun!

Morgens nach dem Frühstück _____ er _____.

Ich _____ gut mit meiner Tante.

_____ du _____ auf die Schulferien?

Glaubst du, Menschen können _____ ?

Heute habe ich _____ nicht _____, weil wir kein heisses Wasser hatten!

Ich hoffe, die Kinder werden _____ bei der Party gut _____

Mein Bruder und ich _____ immer, wenn wir zu Hause sind.

Ich denke, meine Schlüssel sind in meiner Tasche – oder _____ ich _____ ?

10. Separable verbs

These verbs have a prefix which sometimes separates from the main verb. Common prefixes are zu-, mit-, nach-, vor-, auf-, ein-, aus-, an-, ab-, zusammen- etc., but there are many others. Separable verbs are usually marked 'v.sep' in dictionaries. Many of the separable prefixes are prepositions, as you can see. The main verb is conjugated as normal, including any irregular parts. Here is how separable verbs behave in different tenses, with **main verb** and **prefix** highlighted:

- **Present tense: prefix to the end of the clause**

Der Zug **fährt** in 5 Minuten **ab** (abfahren = to depart)

Ich **stimme** einfach nicht **zu**! (zustimmen = to agree)

- **In subordinate clauses** where the main verb is sent to the end, the two parts of the verb 'click' back together:

Ich habe keine Zeit dafür, **weil** der Zug in 5 Minuten **abfährt**!

Ich muss sagen, **dass** ich einfach nicht **zustimme**

- **After modal verbs**, the separable prefix verb is used in the infinitive at the end of the clause, as you would expect:

Ich kann einfach nicht **zustimmen**

Ich muss morgen früh **aufstehen** (aufstehen = to get up)

- **Perfect tense: the 'ge' of the past participle is sandwiched between the prefix and the main verb**

Ich hoffe, du **hast** die Karte **mitgebracht**! (mitbringen = to bring along).

Er **hat** mich gestern dreimal **angerufen** (anrufen = to phone)

- **Future tense: just use the infinitive of the separable prefix verb at the end of the clause**, as you would expect:

Ich **werde** nächstes Jahr Alkohol **aufgeben** (aufgeben = to give up)

- **Conditional: again, use the infinitive of the separable prefix verb at the end of the clause:**

Ich dachte, meine Eltern **würden** länger darüber **nachdenken** (nachdenken = to think about /reflect on)

Task 13 – Fill in the gaps with the separable verb indicated in the correct form

Ich _____ immer um 7 Uhr _____, aber meine Oma sagt, ich sollte früher _____ (aufstehen x 2)

Er _____ letzte Woche unglaublich viel online _____ (einkaufen)

Sie ist so stur! Sie _____ nie _____, dass sie unrecht hat (zugeben = to admit)

Die Kinder _____ meisten Musikvideos _____ (herunterladen)

Ich kann leider nicht _____ (mitkommen)

Ich würde gerne an einem Musikfestival _____ (teilnehmen)

Mein Freund _____ letzten Sommer bei Glastonbury Festival _____ (teilnehmen)

Warum _____ du mich nicht _____ ? (zuhören)

Wenn du mit dem Klarinettenspielen mitten in der Nacht nicht _____, _____ ich die Polizei _____! (aufhören = to stop; anrufen = to call/phone)

Franz ist sauer, weil Oliver ihn gestern _____ _____ (austricksen = to trick)

11. Modal Verbs

Reminder: these verbs are used with infinitive at the end of the clause to say what someone wants/is able/has to/is supposed to/is allowed to/likes to do. **You do NOT use 'zu' before the infinitive**, because the infinitive includes the idea of 'to':

I **want to visit** my aunt = ich **will** meine Tante **besuchen**

Task 14 – Test your recall of the meaning of German modal verbs, and see how far you can get with conjugating them in present tense before checking your answers using the table below:

müssen =

dürfen =

können =

sollen =

mögen =

wollen =

Present tense: *what do you notice about where the umlauts are used?*
 which verbs have a vowel change in present tense, and where?

<i>meaning</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>You (fam. sg)</i>	<i>he/she/it/ 'one' (=you)</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>you (fam. pl)</i>	<i>you (formal)</i>	<i>they</i>
	ich	du	er/sie/es/ man	wir	ihr	Sie	sie
must / have to	muss	musst	muss	müssen	müsst	müssen	müssen
can/ be able to	kann	kannst	kann	können	könnt	können	können
want to	will	willst	will	wollen	wollt	wollen	wollen
be allowed to	darf	darfst	darf	dürfen	dürft	dürfen	dürfen
should/ought to*	soll	sollst	soll	sollen	sollt	sollen	sollen
like to	mag	magst	mag	mögen	mögt	mögen	mögen

*instead of present tense, the **imperfect** tense of **sollen** is often used to mean 'to be supposed to /should /ought to': ich sollte, du solltest, er/sie/es/man sollte, wir sollten, ihr solltet, Sie sollten, sie sollten

 **Vorsicht! 'must not' is not 'muss nicht'!** Here's why:

- 'müssen' in German basically means 'to have to'
- therefore 'muss nicht' means 'don't have to'
- this is not the same as 'mustn't' in English! (compare 'you mustn't swear at the teacher' with 'you don't have to swear at the teacher' – not the same rules at all!)
- In German you say 'you aren't allowed to' where English uses 'you mustn't'
- So **for 'must not' in English, use 'darf nicht' in German**

Man **darf** hier **nicht** rauchen = You're **not allowed to** smoke here / you **mustn't** smoke here

Du **musst nicht** bleiben, wenn du müde bist – you **don't have to** stay if you're tired

Task 15: Translate the following using present tense modal verbs:

I have to do my homework

I want to do my homework!

He is supposed to do his (=seine) homework

We like to eat fast food at the weekend

I am not allowed to smoke

You mustn't interrupt me! (interrupt = unterbrechen)

You don't have to order (bestellen) dessert if you're not hungry!

I think that we are supposed to meet at 8pm.

Lola is stressed because she has to find 100, 000 DM

Past (imperfect) tense: *where are the umlauts here? And the vowel changes?*

<i>meaning</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>You (fam. sg)</i>	<i>he/she/it/'one' (=you)</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>you (fam. pl)</i>	<i>you (formal)</i>	<i>they</i>
	ich	du	er/sie/es/ man	wir	ihr	Sie	sie
<i>had to</i>	musste	musstest	musste	mussten	musstet	mussten	mussten
<i>could (=was able to)</i>	konnte	konntest	konnte	konnten	konntet	konnten	konnten
<i>wanted to</i>	wollte	wolltest	wollte	wollten	wolltet	wollten	wollten
<i>was allowed to</i>	durfte	durftest	durfte	durften	durftet	durften	durften
<i>was supposed to*</i>	sollte	solltest	sollte	sollten	solltet	sollten	sollten
<i>liked to</i>	mochte	mochtest	mochte	mochten	mochtet	mochten	mochten

*See note about this after present tense table – this form of *sollen* can also be used to mean *ought to/should* etc. The context where it is used will make it clear whether you are talking about the past or the present.

Conditional modals: *where are the umlauts here? And the vowel changes?*

<i>meaning</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>You (fam. sg)</i>	<i>he/she/it/'one' (=you)</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>you (fam. pl)</i>	<i>you (formal)</i>	<i>they</i>
	ich	du	er/sie/es/ man	wir	ihr	Sie	sie
<i>would have to</i>	müsste	müsstest	müsste	müssten	müsstet	müssten	müssten
<i>could (=would be able to)</i>	könnte	könntest	könnte	könnten	könntet	könnten	könnten
<i>would like to</i>	möchte	möchtest	möchte	möchten	möchtet	möchten	möchten

Task 16 - How would you say:

They wanted to go to Berlin

Ella couldn't understand why he was sad

As a child I was not allowed to watch TV in my bedroom

I had to go to bed at 9pm

You were supposed to buy bananas

Herr Bauerl would like to buy a villa in Spain

She would have to train hard for the marathon

I would not be able to run faster than Usain Bolt

Future tense of modal verbs:

This is used for example if you want to say you **are going to be able to do** something, or you **are going to be allowed to do** something: you can see how this combines **future tense**, **infinitive of modal verb**, and **another infinitive**. In German you use the same elements but in a different order, because the 'werden' (future tense) sends the modal verb to the end:

Er **wird** eine neue Tapete **kaufen müssen**! He's **going to have to buy** a new carpet!

Task 17 Use the example above to translate the following – you might find it helpful to colour-code the sentences in English beforehand:

At 18 (=Mit achtzehn) I'm going to be allowed to have a car.

She is going to want to live in London.

I'm going to have to work at the weekend.

12. Auxiliary verbs: haben, sein, werden

As you know, these are **extremely** important verbs, so it's crucial to be able to use them accurately! They also happen to be fairly irregular.

Task 18 - Fill in the table with the present tense conjugation of haben, sein and werden:

haben		sein		werden	
ich	wir	ich	wir	ich	wir
du	ihr Sie	du	ihr Sie	du	ihr Sie
er, sie, es, man	sie	er, sie, es, man	sie	er, sie, es, man	sie

By the time you start A level, you should know these really well. Consider making them into a quizlet or poster, finding a tune to sing them to (look on Youtube), or just simply reciting them until they become second nature.

13. Perfect tense

This is the past tense you used a lot at GCSE. It is still very important at A level.

Reminder:

Here are some examples of verbs in perfect tense showing that you need **three** things in order to form it correctly in German:

1	2	3	
<u>Subject</u>	<u>Auxiliary Verb</u>	<u>Past Participle</u>	
		(at the end of the clause)	
ich	habe	gegessen	I have eaten / I ate
sie	hat	gesehen	she has seen/she saw
sie	haben	gespielt	they have played / they played
wir	sind	gegangen	we have gone / we went

ich bin geblieben I have stayed / I stayed

The auxiliary verb is the present tense of either haben or sein.

How do I know whether to use ‘haben’ or ‘sein’ in perfect tense?

- **you should be memorising common verbs in different tenses for A level so you will often already know the right auxiliary!**
- **most verbs take haben, but**
- **verbs to do with movement or change** (go, arrive, travel, move house, fall, run, rise, etc) tend to take **sein**

A good rule of thumb is to remember that **transitive verbs** generally take **haben**, and **intransitive verbs** take **sein**:

Transitive verbs can have a direct object, for example you can: eat a cake, see a film, read a book, buy a scarf, drink a coffee, criticise the government, understand the rules, analyse a situation and hit a ball - these are transitive verbs and **they take ‘haben’ in German in the perfect tense.**

Intransitive verbs can’t have a direct object, for example you can’t: go a theatre, fall a stairs, arrive a station or stay a hotel – these need the inclusion of prepositions such as to, down, at, in to make sense. They are intransitive verbs and **they take ‘sein’ in German in the perfect tense.**

Task 19 - Do you think these verbs would take haben or sein in the perfect tense? (Are they transitive or intransitive verbs?)

to travel

to fold

to win

to die

to creep

to happen

to write

to cook

The regular past participle is formed by taking the -en from the infinitive of the verb, and adding ge- to the beginning and -t to the end:

kaufen → gekauft	e.g. ich habe	gekauft
spielen → gespielt	e.g. wir haben	gespielt
lernen → gelernt	e.g. sie haben	gelernt

However:

- **LOTS** of the commonest verbs in German **have irregular past participles** (see table below) which you just have to learn
- Separable verbs have the -ge- between the prefix and the main verb (e.g. ich bin ausgegangen, ich habe angefangen, wir haben zusammengestellt)
- Verbs ending -ieren or starting ent-, be-, ver-, zer-, er- or ge- don't have a 'ge-' in the past participle (and they may be irregular in other ways too)
 - (e.g. interessieren → das hat mich **interessiert**
 - entdecken** → NASA hat einen neuen Planeten **entdeckt**
 - besuchen** → ich habe meine Oma **besucht**
 - versuchen** → wir haben **versucht**, Italienisch zu lernen
 - zerstören** → das Erdbeben hat die Stadt **zerstört**
 - erfahren** → ich habe vom Dokumentar so viel **erfahren**
 - geschehen** → was ist **geschehen**?)

(and these verbs would just look and sound wrong with a 'ge-': geinteressiert, geerfahren, gegeschehen etc ...)

Task 20 – use the information above to work out the past participles of these regular verbs:

protestieren (to protest)

aufmachen (to open)

verkürzen (to shorten)

belehren (to teach)

zusammenfassen (to summarise)

entsorgen (to dispose of)

Task 21 – Irregular perfect tense verbs. Fill in the table with perfect tense (ich) form of these common verbs, including habe/bin. Use a dictionary if needed.

infinitive	meaning	Perfect tense (ich)
beginnen	to begin	ich habe begonnen
bleiben		
bringen		
denken		
essen		
fahren		
fallen		
finden		
fliegen		
geben		
gehen		
genießen		
gewinnen		
haben		
helfen		
kennen		
kommen		
lesen		
nehmen		
rennen		
schlafen		
schreiben		
schwimmen		
sehen		
sprechen		
steigen		
tragen		
treffen		
trinken		
vergessen		
verlieren		

Task 22 – Now translate these sentences:

I slept well

He spoke to the (=mit dem) headteacher

We went to France

They wrote a list

My cousin lost his phone

I swam slowly

She took two biscuits and an apple

They stayed in Cornwall

Have you read the book? (du)

The boy drank thirstily

Karina and I flew to Greece

They brought three suitcases

14. The Imperfect tense

This is another past tense. It is sometimes called the 'simple past tense'. You know some forms of it from GCSE: ich war, er hatte, es gab, ich fand es, sie dachte ... You will start to encounter it more frequently at A level

The imperfect tense is used in German mostly in written reports, essays, newspaper articles and literature. It is the past tense most commonly used in formal writing. It also tends to be used to talk about things that are not particularly connected with the present, that happened a while ago, and/or repeatedly ('I used to...'). The difference between perfect and imperfect tense in German depends largely on style and context.

Regular imperfect tense

To form the imperfect tense of regular verbs, take the stem, and add the following endings:

e.g. lachen – to laugh → stem = lach

ich lach**te**

wir lach**ten**

du lach**test**

ihr lach**tet**

Sie lach**ten**

er/sie/es/man lach**te**

sie lach**ten**

Irregular imperfect tense

Verbs that are irregular in the imperfect tense often have a vowel change in the stem, which has to be learnt, eg laufen → lief, beginnen → begann, or schreiben → schrieb

The endings for *these* verbs (using schreiben as an example) are:

ich schrieb

wir schrieb**en**

du schrieb**st**

ihr schrieb**t**

Sie schrieb**en**

er/sie/es/man schrieb

sie schrieb**en**

Task 23 – Here are some regular and irregular verbs in the imperfect tense. Use the information above about forming the imperfect tense to translate the short paragraph below.

Remember you can use ‚gern‘ to say you like(d) doing something, and that imperfect tense can also mean ‘used to do’

Regular imperfect tense: bestellen, studieren, lernen, spielen, tanzen, hören, wohnen

Irregular imperfect tense: gehen (ich ging), geben (ich gab), trinken (ich trank), sehen (ich sah), lesen (ich las), sein (ich war), haben (ich hatte)

In 2005 I lived in Berlin. I was happy there: I was a student at the university and I read a lot of books, played tennis, watched films and listened to music in my free time. My friend Stephanie used to study with me (=mit mir). She liked dancing, and we used to order pizza, drink beer and go to the clubs at the weekend. It was wonderful.

15. The future tense

German only has one future tense, which covers 'shall', 'will' and 'am/is/are going to' in English. Increasingly, German uses the present tense where English uses the future – watch out for this when you watch films with subtitles.

This is the easiest tense in German, but people sometimes do slip up with using the correct form of 'werden' for er/sie/es/man, so it is highlighted below:

Here's a reminder - for future tense you need:

1. Present tense werden	2. Infinitive at the end of the clause, e.g.
ich werde du wirst er/sie/es/man wird wir werden ihr werdet Sie werden sie werden	gehen glauben diskutieren analysieren beschreiben lesen fragen (or any other infinitive!)

Task 24 – please translate:

I am going to analyse the text

The government is going to introduce strict controls

The environment will be on the agenda (-an der Tagesordnung)

We will have to act quickly

It is certainly going to be challenging.

They will travel by coach.

Although the weather will be warm, I'm bringing a pullover

I am sure that the president will be happy.

16. The Conditional

This is not (very strictly speaking) a tense, but it is used to say what someone *would* do. Like the future tense, it is very straightforward to use. Here's a reminder:

1. würd- + correct ending:	2. Infinitive at the end of the clause, e.g.
ich würde	sagen
du würdest	glauben
er/sie/es/man würde	behaupten
wir würden	erwarten
ihr würdet	finden
Sie würden	verstehen
sie würden	fragen (or any other infinitive!)

Don't forget the 'shortcut' verbs here:

wäre(n) = would be hätte(n) = would have es gäbe = there would be

(This is part of a grammar point you will learn more about in year 12...)

Task 25 – please translate:

I would expect more

It would be surprising

The future would be uncertain

The government would hesitate

The environment would suffer

There would be less inequality