

second edition

essential german grammar

Martin Durrell, Katrin Kohl,
Claudia Kaiser and Gudrun Loftus



Essential Grammars



Essential German Grammar

Essential German Grammar is a student-friendly grammar and workbook designed to give learners a firm foundation on which to build a real understanding of both spoken and written German. The reference grammar section offers clear explanations of key grammar points while a separate exercise section gives students the opportunity to test themselves and put into practice what they have learnt.

This new edition has been revised and updated throughout. Explanations, tables and exercises have been improved and a number of the authentic texts and illustrations have been replaced by new material. Key features of this second edition include:

- ◆ User-friendly layout with updated two-colour design, engaging illustrations and visually appealing tables throughout to aid the learning process
- ◆ Clear and accessible explanations with memorable examples informed by the latest research on the German language and presented in accordance with current teaching methodology
- ◆ Helpful parallels between English and German provided where relevant
- ◆ End-of-chapter extracts taken from contemporary journalistic or authentic literary sources, illustrating grammar in context, with model translations provided at the back of the book
- ◆ Material to enable better strategic learning and understanding, including a *Why Grammar? – FAQ* section, a glossary of grammatical terms in both English and German and a complete answer key to exercises
- ◆ Created especially for the new edition, a companion website at www.routledge.com/cw/kaiser offering a wealth of additional materials, including interactive exercises, quizzes and flashcards to test student understanding, downloadable PDF sheets for classroom use, PowerPoint slides for instructors and audio recordings illustrating the sounds of spoken German.

Written by highly experienced lecturers in the field, *Essential German Grammar* is an invaluable resource for intermediate and advanced students of German (CEFR levels A2 to B2, ACTFL Novice High to Intermediate High). It is designed to function equally as a free-standing grammar or as a foundation grammar for *Hammer's German Grammar and Usage* and is suitable for both classroom use and self-study.

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“*Essential German Grammar* is exceptionally straightforward to use, full of useful exercises and examples, and written with an eye for salient detail. I would recommend it confidently to students at A level and beyond. It is not just a valuable source of information; the book also explains cogently why you can’t just ‘do without’ grammatical knowledge. It will help learners appreciate that, far from an inconvenience, the striving for a mastery of grammar is absolutely central to successful advanced language learning.”

Geoffrey Plow, *University College School, UK*

“Here now is finally a German grammar that stands out from the crowd: modern, pleasing on the eye and bursting with self-correcting exercises, backed up by a complementary website to make it a book of its era. The ideal grammar to work through prior to taking on the ultimate reference work on the topic, Martin Durrell’s *Hammer’s German Grammar and Usage*.”

Bruce Donaldson, *formerly at The University of Melbourne, Australia*

“Clearly set out, this useful reference work is student-friendly. The two colour design makes examples clear and easy to access; contemporary text extracts, amusing illustrations together with exercises (and answers) as well as explanations in English take the frustration out of learning German grammar. *Essential German Grammar* is a highly recommended addition to any post-beginner’s German course.”

Kathleen Thorpe, *University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg*

“Students of German with English language backgrounds will welcome the second edition of the *Essential German Grammar*. It is an excellent, user-friendly stand-alone Grammar which presents the basic structures of German in a clear and systematic manner. Grammatical concepts are explained in a glossary which teachers too will find useful. The emphasis on learning rules with examples of authentic usage will be very helpful for learners who wish to move to an advanced level of competence in German. This well designed volume is highly recommended.”

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“An invaluable tool for every serious student of German. Concise and clearly written – yet covering all the key elements of German grammar – it is without question one of the most user-friendly grammars currently available.”

Seán Allan, *University of Warwick, UK*

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ESSENTIAL GERMAN GRAMMAR

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PREFACE

This book is designed to introduce the basic grammatical structures of German and give a wide range of examples to illustrate how they are used in practice. As the title *Essential German Grammar* indicates, it is not a comprehensive reference work, and the focus is on presenting the most important aspects of German grammar clearly and approachably. Much of the material is given in tables, which use two colours in order to make it easier to focus on key points and memorize rules. Explanations are intended both to clarify individual points and to develop an appreciation of how German grammar operates as a system. Each chapter finishes with an authentic text that illustrates how the grammar points work in context. A separate section with exercises and answers enables learners to test themselves on what they have learnt.

In principle, the individual chapters are self-contained and are not intended to be worked through in the order in which they are presented in the book. The exception to this is chapter 1, which provides a basic introduction to how German sentences are made up. It is longer than the other chapters and learners are advised to study it carefully first, before going on to later chapters which generally provide more detail about the aspects of grammar introduced in chapter 1.

The book is intended to be suitable for use as a stand-alone grammar for post-beginners at school or university, i.e. those who have already acquired a basic knowledge of German (e.g. through completing a GCSE in England or a one-year university beginners course) and want to build on this systematically. This means that it is designed primarily for learners whose command of the language has reached A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) or ‘novice high’ by the guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and who are looking to progress to CEFR level B2 or ACTFL ‘intermediate high’, or beyond.

At the same time, it is designed as a foundation grammar for *Hammer’s German Grammar and Usage*, by Martin Durrell (5th edition Routledge, 2011). *Hammer* gives the advanced learner a deeper understanding of German grammar, and it explains complex areas of the language not covered in this more elementary book. Nevertheless, the learner will still find it useful to keep referring back to the tables and summaries in *Essential German Grammar*.

The companion website offers a wide range of additional exercises on all the main areas of German grammar. The exercises are mainly designed for self-study, but can also be used to accompany instructed grammar courses. As in the book, the exercises are organized by chapter and sub-chapter. Within a sub-chapter, the exercises are normally graded, with the later ones being more challenging. Students are given the opportunity to familiarize themselves with grammatical terminology via flashcards; the audio section gives learners the opportunity to listen to the authentic texts that accompany each chapter in *Essential German Grammar*; and PowerPoint presentations suitable for classroom use are provided for instructors. These presentations cover the main areas of grammar and include examples. They may be adapted by teachers to suit their students' needs or learners may also wish to use them independently. Additionally, instructors will find exercises for download covering the main chapters in PDF format.

The authors would like to thank colleagues and students at the University of Manchester and the University of Oxford, whose questions have helped to shape this book – in particular Wiebke Brockhaus-Grand and Thomas Despositos – as well as a number of anonymous reviewers in the UK and the USA who provided invaluable feedback. Dr Sonia Brough and Erica Parsons provided many constructive criticisms and helpful suggestions. The authors must also acknowledge their immense debt to Gudrun Loftus, who was a co-author of the first edition and who sadly died in tragic circumstances in autumn 2010.

Finally, our thanks go to Lesley Riddle, Elena Seymenliyska, Eva Martinez and Anke Ueberberg at Arnold, who were responsible for seeing the first edition through to completion, and to Andrea Hartill, Isabelle Cheng and Sarah Douglas at Routledge for the enthusiasm and expertise with which they supported the production of this revised edition.

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WHY GRAMMAR?

Some frequently asked questions

Can language learning be made easy?

The simple answer is no – whatever certain methods promise you. You can quickly learn a few useful phrases, but you can't learn to communicate properly without a lot of effort. As with a musical instrument, you also need to practise regularly what you learn in order not to forget it. But you can enhance your efficiency:

- ◆ Develop an awareness of what types of learning work best for you.
- ◆ Vary the ways you learn.
- ◆ Use your teacher and any (other) native speakers to help you.

Are there any shortcuts to learning a language?

Yes – learning its grammar! For each rule you learn to use, you can produce a huge number of different sentences.

Does German have 'more grammar' than English, French or Spanish?

No. The grammar of a language is its basic framework which allows you to combine a finite number of words in an infinite number of ways – and still be understood immediately. But in different languages, different parts of the framework are developed in more or less complex ways. This means that difficulties can lie in different aspects of the language and confront the learner at different stages. German seems to have 'more grammar' at the beginning because it's an 'inflecting' language: the structure of certain words changes (typically, different endings are used) depending on their function in the sentence. But other areas of German grammar are comparatively simple (there are not that many irregular verbs, for instance), and developing your vocabulary in German is helped by the big 'word families' you can build up with the rules of word formation.

Isn't it best to concentrate on communicating and forget about those silly little endings?

Even without the details, it's possible to reach a stage where you can order the right drink in a restaurant, you can manage to tell people where you went on holiday, and get the gist of simple conversations or films. But you'll never get your command of German to a point where you can take part in more complex (and interesting) conversations – or business negotiations – or understand sophisticated texts or documentaries. Even popular

newspapers can be quite challenging. You're also not taken as seriously if you make mistakes – just think of how people (even you!) react to foreigners who speak ungrammatical or inaccurate English. If you're aiming for a good command of German in the long term, you need to get into the habit of caring about the detail from the start. But it's still a good idea to vary your aims: set aside times for switching into 'basic communication' mode.

Is it best to learn grammar in context, by listening to German and reading it?

It's very important to see how grammar works in the context of real conversations and texts. But it's essential to get hold of the rules systematically if you want to make fast progress. After all, you wouldn't expect to learn to play football or tennis just by watching matches on television.

Is it best to avoid translating when learning grammar?

You can't assume that an English phrase or construction can be transposed directly into German, though in fact the two languages are in many ways similar. But it's very useful to learn grammar by comparing where they do things in similar ways and where they are different. After all, you've spent thousands of hours mastering the grammar of your native language (even if much of it is subconscious), and you really can make use of that knowledge when learning German. Some people think translation is an 'unnatural' way to learn – but even small children will use it if they're learning a second language. Practising translating from German into English and vice versa is a good way of comparing German and English grammar 'in action'.

Do I need to go abroad to learn the language?

For most people, spending some time using the language in a country where it is spoken is the most interesting and motivating way to learn it – and that means potentially the fastest. But your progress will be best if you underpin any time in a German-speaking country with systematic learning. Sadly, it is not unknown for students to spend a whole year in Germany, Austria or Switzerland without significantly improving their command of German!

Can't we do without all that jargon used in grammar books?

This would be like trying to do chemistry without knowing the names of the elements. Without the 'metalinguage' (the terms we use to talk about language) explanations become very long-winded. It's worth spending some time familiarizing yourself with the ideas explained in the Glossary and in the introductory chapter (Words and sentences). You may forget them again, but you can keep coming back to them when you meet them in the later chapters. You should also get a good, comprehensive bilingual dictionary and familiarize yourself with the terms and abbreviations it uses.

How can I make learning German grammar less boring?

It's only boring until you realize how you can make it work for you. Vary the ways you learn and use the media you find most interesting. Make the rules stick in as many ways as possible:

- ◆ See if you can spot examples of a rule by looking at, for instance, e.g. German advertisements, a German website, tweets in German, a magazine article on a topic that interests you, a short Grimm's fairy-tale or even a poem.
- ◆ Have regular learning competitions with a friend, with prizes.
- ◆ Find a pen-pal, e-mail pal or Facebook friend and work on getting your written German right.
- ◆ See if you can get hold of a 'parallel text' or a translation of a German story, and compare the beginning with the original. You could even try translating a passage from the original and compare your translation with the published translation. (Hint: you can load an integrated bilingual dictionary into some e-book readers.)
- ◆ Read examples out loud so that they sink in via your ear as well as via your eye.
- ◆ Write important rules out on cards, using colour to highlight irregularities.
- ◆ Use cards to test yourself by writing examples of a rule on one side of the card and the rule on the other.
- ◆ Use cards to learn vocabulary, with one word per card and the translation on the back. Write the words out with colour-coding, e.g. with noun genders blue for masculine, red for feminine, green for neuter, or with types of verb blue for weak, green for strong and red for irregular. Put aside the cards once you have learnt the words, and then check through them at regular intervals.
- ◆ It is good practice always to learn words in context, in little phrases or sentences. After all, you don't use words on their own.
- ◆ Set aside regular slots for learning grammar and stick to them. It helps to have a routine, and to be systematic. That way you'll be able to see progress.

Keep going back and forth between the rules and actual usage in spoken and written language. Spot the differences without allowing them to frustrate you!

Did you know...?

- ▶ By the time a child is 5 years old, it will on average have spent 9100 hours learning its native language.
- ▶ An adult can learn a foreign language far more efficiently than a child learns its native language.
- ▶ German is spoken as a first language by nearly 100 million people in 15 European countries.
- ▶ Many companies based in English-speaking countries lack staff with a knowledge of German, but they acknowledge they need them in order to do business in Germany.
- ▶ Aside from Dutch, German is the language that is most closely related to English.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND SPELLING

Abbreviations

acc.	accusative case	jdn.	<i>jemanden</i> (accusative)
adj.	adjective	masc./m.	masculine
aux.	auxiliary verb	neut./n.	neuter
dat.	dative case	nom.	nominative case
esp.	especially	pl.	plural
etw.	<i>etwas</i> (something)	prep.	preposition
fem./f.	feminine	sb.	somebody
gen.	genitive case	sg., sing.	singular
jd.	<i>jemand</i> (nominative)	sth.	something
jdm.	<i>jemandem</i> (dative)		

Spelling

The reformed German spelling is used throughout, e.g. *dass*, *musste*, not *daß*, *mußte* (see 12.2 and 12.5).

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GLOSSARY

In order to learn a foreign language, you need to gain an understanding of the way in which languages are structured. It helps to analyse your own native language since you have a native-speaker command of it – even if you aren't aware of the 'metalinguage' linguists use to talk about what you are doing in practice. In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, David Crystal gives the following example of a word you probably know how to use correctly in five different grammatical contexts:

- ◆ It's your **round**. I'll have a coke with ice. **Noun**
- ◆ Mary bought a **round** table. **Adjective**
- ◆ We walked **round** to the shop. **Adverb**
- ◆ The car went **round** the corner. **Preposition**
- ◆ The yacht will **round** the buoy soon. **Verb**

This glossary explains these 'word classes' as well as other grammatical concepts you'll come across in the following chapters, with examples. It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with these concepts thoroughly – they're your tools! But you will need to do so gradually, as you move through the chapters.

The explanations include references to sections of chapters where you will find more detailed explanations. Further references are given in the index.

accusative

Akkusativ

typically, the **CASE** which shows the **DIRECT OBJECT** of **TRANSITIVE VERBS**: *Ich sehe **den** Hund*; *Ich sehe **ihn*** (see **1.3, 8.1**). It is also used after some **PREPOSITIONS**: *Ich gehe durch **den** Wald*, *in **die** Stadt* (see **5.1, 5.3**), and in some **ADVERBIAL** constructions: *Sie kommt **jeden** Tag* (see **4.9**).

adjective

Adjektiv

a word which qualifies or describes a **NOUN**: *die **schöne** Stadt*; *die Stadt ist **schön*** (see **4.1–4.2**).

adverb

Adverb

a word which qualifies a **VERB**, an **ADJECTIVE** or a whole **CLAUSE**, often giving extra information on how, when, where or why: *Sie singt **gut***; *Sie war **sehr** freundlich*; *Sie ging **trotzdem** nicht* (see **4.8–4.14**).

adverbial

Adverbialbestimmung

any part of a **SENTENCE** which has the function of an **ADVERB**. It can be a single word (an **ADVERB**), or a **PHRASE**, or a whole **CLAUSE**: *Sie sang gut*; *Sie sang mit einer hellen Stimme*; *Sie sang, als sie ins Zimmer kam* (see 4.8–4.14).

agreement

Kongruenz

copying a grammatical feature from one word to another, so that some words have **ENDINGS** according to the words they are used with or refer to. In German, **DETERMINERS**, **ADJECTIVES** and many **PRONOUNS** ‘agree’ with their **NOUN** for **GENDER**, **NUMBER** and **CASE**: *dieses Buch*; *mit meinem neuen Auto*; *Welchen Rock kaufst du?* *Den da* (see chapter 3 and 4.1–4.2). **VERBS** also ‘agree’ with their **SUBJECT** for **PERSON** and **NUMBER**: *ich singe*, *du singst*, *er/sie/es singt* (see 1.2).

article

Artikel

the most important of the **DETERMINERS**. In German, like English, there is a definite article *der*, *die*, *das*, etc. (= English ‘the’) and an indefinite article *ein*, *eine*, etc. (= English ‘a’) (see 3.1–3.3).

attributive adjective

attributives Adjektiv

an adjective used before a **NOUN**: *der grüne Baum*, *mein großer Zeh* (see 4.1–4.2).

auxiliary verb

Hilfsverb

a verb used in combination with the **INFINITIVE** or **PAST PARTICIPLE** of another verb, especially to form **COMPOUND TENSES** and the **PASSIVE**, e.g. *Karin bat einen Hund gekauft*. The main auxiliary verbs in German are *haben*, *sein*, *werden* and the **MODAL AUXILIARIES**, like *können* and *müssen* (see chapter 6, esp. 6.2, 6.5–6.7).

bracket

Verbalklammer

the ‘bracket’ construction is typical of German **CLAUSES**, with most words and phrases in a clause bracketed between two parts of the **VERB**: *Wir [kommen um 17 Uhr in Innsbruck an]*; *Sie [bat ihn in der Stadt gesehen]* (see 1.8, 9.1).

cardinal number

Kardinalzahl

numerals used in counting: *eins*, *zwei*, ... , *hundert* (see 4.17).

case

Kasus/Fall

indicates the function of a **NOUN PHRASE** in the **CLAUSE** (e.g. whether it is the **SUBJECT** or **DIRECT OBJECT**, or dependent on a particular **PREPOSITION**) by using **ENDINGS**. German has four cases: **NOMINATIVE** *der Igel*; **ACCUSATIVE** *den Igel*; **GENITIVE** *des Igels* and **DATIVE** *dem Igel* (see 2.11).

central section

Mittelfeld

the main part of a **MAIN CLAUSE**, between the **BRACKETS** formed by the **FINITE VERB** in second position and any other parts of the verb at the end of the clause, e.g. *Bald wird Disneys Kult-Klassiker in den Kinos ein tolles Comeback feiern* (see 1.8, 9.4–9.9).

clause

Satz

a part of a **SENTENCE** with a **VERB** and its **COMPLEMENTS**. A **MAIN CLAUSE** can stand on its own. A **SUBORDINATE CLAUSE** is dependent on another clause in the sentence (see 1.7).

commands

Befehle

use the **IMPERATIVE** mood of the **VERB**. The **FINITE VERB** is in first position: *Komm hierher! Seid vorsichtig! Steigen Sie bitte ein!* (see 1.9, 6.3).

comparative

Komparativ

the form of an **ADJECTIVE** or **ADVERB** used to express a comparison: *schneller, höher, weiter* (see 4.6, 4.16).

complement

Ergänzung

an element in a **CLAUSE** which is closely linked to the **VERB** and completes its meaning. The most important complements of the verb are its **SUBJECT** and **OBJECTS**, but German also has **DIRECTION COMPLEMENTS**, **PLACE COMPLEMENTS** and **PREDICATE COMPLEMENTS** (see 1.1).

compound tense

zusammengesetzte Verbform

a **TENSE** formed by using an **AUXILIARY VERB** with the **INFINITIVE** or **PAST PARTICIPLE** of another verb. The main compound tenses in German are the **PERFECT**: *Sie **bat** geschlafen; Sie **ist** gekommen*, the **PLUPERFECT**: *Sie **hatte** geschlafen; Sie **war** gekommen* and the **FUTURE**: *Sie **wird** schlafen; Sie **wird** kommen* (see 6.2).

compound word

Kompositum

a word formed by joining two or more words: *Kindergarten, Computerfachmann, dunkelrot* (see 11.1, 11.3).

conditional

würde-Form

a compound form of **SUBJUNCTIVE II** formed from the subjunctive II form of the **AUXILIARY VERB** *werden*, i.e. *würde*, and the **INFINITIVE** of another verb: *Ich **würde** gehen; Die Kinder **würden** schlafen* (see 6.9, 7.11).

conjugation

Konjugation

the forms of a **VERB**, in particular the pattern of endings and/or vowel changes which indicate **AGREEMENT** with the **SUBJECT**, and show the various **TENSES**, the **MOOD**, etc., e.g. *ich **kaufe**, du **kaufst**; ich **sehe**, du **siehst*** (first and second person singular, present, indicative); *ich **kaufte**; ich **sah*** (first person singular, past, indicative) (see chapter 6).

conjunction

Konjunktion

a word used to link **CLAUSES** within a **SENTENCE**. Coordinating conjunctions link **MAIN CLAUSES** (e.g. *und, aber, denn, sondern*), and subordinating conjunctions introduce **SUBORDINATE CLAUSES** (e.g. *dass, obwohl, weil, wenn*) (see 10.1–10.4).

copula

Kopulaverb

a linking **VERB**, which typically links the **SUBJECT** with a **PREDICATE COMPLEMENT**: an **ADJECTIVE** or a **NOUN** in the **NOMINATIVE** case. The most frequent copulas in German are *sein, werden* and *scheinen*: *Er **ist** ein guter Lehrer; Die alte Frau **wurde** blass; Das **scheint** mir plausibel* (see 8.7).

dative

Dativ

a **CASE** used to mark some **OBJECTS** of the verb, especially the **INDIRECT OBJECT** of a verb which also has a **DIRECT OBJECT**: *Sie hat **meiner Schwester** die CD gegeben.* Some German verbs just have an object in the dative case (you have to learn these): *Ich helfe **meinem Bruder*** (see 1.4, 8.3). The dative case can also indicate possession: *Sie zog **dem Kind** die Jacke aus* (see 8.4). It is used after some **ADJECTIVES**: *Er sieht **meinem Vater** ähnlich* (see 4.4); and after many **PREPOSITIONS**: *Er will mit **diesen Kindern** spielen* (see 5.2–5.3).

declension

Deklination

the pattern of **ENDINGS** on a **NOUN**, an **ADJECTIVE** or a **DETERMINER** which show **GENDER**, **NUMBER** and **CASE**, e.g. *der gute Hund* (masculine singular nominative); *den guten Hunden* (masculine plural dative) (see chapters 2, 3, and 4.1–4.2).

demonstrative

Demonstrativpronomen

a **DETERMINER** or **PRONOUN**, like English ‘this’ and ‘that’, which points to something specific, e.g. *dieser, jener* (see 3.4, 3.9).

determiner

Determinativ

a function word used with **NOUNS**, including the **ARTICLES** *der* and *ein*, the **DEMONSTRATIVES**, like *dieser*, the **POSSESSIVES**, like *mein*, and **INDEFINITES** like *einige* and *viele*. They typically come before **ADJECTIVES** in the **NOUN PHRASE** (see 3.1–3.6).

direct object

direktes Objekt

a verb **COMPLEMENT**, typically a person or thing directly affected by the action. It is in the **ACCUSATIVE** case. *Der Löwe fraß **den Esel**; Die böse Frau schlug **den Hund*** (see 1.3, 8.1). It is **never** introduced by a preposition.

direction complement

Direktivergänzung

a typical **COMPLEMENT** with verbs of motion, indicating where the **SUBJECT** is going or where the **DIRECT OBJECT** is being put: *Sie fährt nach Prag; Er stellte den Besen in die Ecke* (see 8.8).

ending

Endung

a **SUFFIX** on a **NOUN**, **VERB** or **ADJECTIVE** which helps to indicate the grammatical role of the word in the phrase or sentence: *mit kaltem Wasser; Kommst du morgen? seit Jahren.*

feminine

Femininum

one of the three **GENDERS** into which **NOUNS** are divided, shown by the **ENDING** of the **DETERMINER** and/or **ADJECTIVE** in the **NOUN PHRASE**: *die Frau, eine kleine Lampe.* A feminine thing is referred to by a feminine **PRONOUN**, not the neuter pronoun *es*, e.g. *Die Waschmaschine ... Sie ist kaputt* (see 2.3, 3.7).

finite verb

finites Verb

a form of the verb which has an **ENDING** in **AGREEMENT** with the **SUBJECT**: *Ich komme*; *Wir haben geschlafen*; *Sie wurden betrogen*; *Ihr könnt gehen* (see 1.2, 6.2).

future perfect

Futur II

a **TENSE** formed with the **AUXILIARY VERB** *werden* and a compound **INFINITIVE**, indicating what will have happened by a point in the future, or a supposition in the past: *Sie wird das Buch gelesen haben* (see 6.2, 7.2).

future tense

Futur

a **TENSE** which refers to the future or expresses a supposition. It is formed with the **AUXILIARY VERB** *werden* and an **INFINITIVE**: *Ich werde das Buch nicht lesen*; *Franz wird wieder krank sein* (see 6.2, 7.2).

gender

Geschlecht/Genus

a division of **NOUNS** into three classes, called **MASCULINE**, **FEMININE** and **NEUTER**. The gender of a noun is shown by the **ENDING** of the **DETERMINER** and/or **ADJECTIVE** in the **NOUN PHRASE**: *der Mann*, *diese Frau*, *klares Wasser* (see 2.1).

genitive

Genitiv

a **CASE** which is mainly used to show possession or to link **NOUNS** together: *das Buch meines Vaters*; *die Geschichte dieser Stadt* (see 2.11). A few verbs have a genitive **OBJECT** (see 8.5); and it is used after a few **PREPOSITIONS**: *trotz des Wetters* (see 5.4).

imperative

Imperativ

a **MOOD** of the **VERB** used to give commands or instructions, or make a request: *Komm hierher!* *Seid vorsichtig!* *Steigen Sie bitte ein!* (see 6.3, 7.10).

indefinite

Indefinitpronomen

an indefinite **PRONOUN** or **DETERMINER** is one which does not refer to a specific person or thing: *etwas*, *jemand*, *irgendwelcher* (see 3.6, 3.9).

indicative mood

Indikativ

the most usual **MOOD** of the **VERB**, used to make statements and ask questions: *Sie kam gestern*. *Siebst du das Licht?* This 'default' mood (see chapters 6 and 7) is contrasted with the **IMPERATIVE** mood and the **SUBJUNCTIVE** mood (see 7.10).

indirect object

indirektes Objekt

a verb **COMPLEMENT**, typically a person indirectly affected by the action expressed by the **VERB**, especially someone being given something or benefitting from the action. It is in the **DATIVE** case: *Sie gab ihrem Vater das Geld* (see 1.1, 1.4, 8.3). The English equivalent can often be a phrase with *to* (compare: 'She gave the money **to** her father'), but in German it is **never** introduced by a preposition.

infinitive

Infinitiv

the basic form of a **VERB**, ending in *-en* or *-n*: *kommen*, *machen*, *untergeben*, *betteln*, *sein*. This is the form of the verb given in dictionaries (see 6.1).

infinitive clause

Infinitivsatz

a **SUBORDINATE CLAUSE** containing an **INFINITIVE**, which is typically preceded by the particle **zu**: *Sie bat mir geraten, nach Hause zu gehen* (see 1.10, 10.6–10.8).

inflection

Flexion

changing the form of words, most often by **ENDINGS**, to indicate their grammatical role in a phrase or sentence. In German, for example, **DETERMINERS** and **ADJECTIVES** inflect to show **GENDER**, **NUMBER** and **CASE**, and **VERBS** inflect to show **PERSON**, **NUMBER**, **TENSE** and **MOOD**. The inflection of **NOUNS**, **ADJECTIVES** and **DETERMINERS** is called **DECLENSION**, while the inflection of verbs is called **CONJUGATION**.

inseparable verb

untrennbares Verb

a prefixed verb whose **PREFIX** is not stressed and always remains attached to the verb: *besuchen, erwarten, verstehen* (see 6.4, 11.5).

interrogative

Interrogativ-

interrogative **ADJECTIVES**, **ADVERBS** or **PRONOUNS** are used to ask a **QUESTION**: *Welches Hemd kaufst du? Warum geht er nicht? Wem sagst du das?* (see 1.9).

intransitive verb

intransitives Verb

a verb is intransitive if it does not have a **DIRECT OBJECT** in the **ACCUSATIVE** case: *Wir schwimmen; Dort stand er und wartete auf Luise; Meine Schwester hilft mir* (see 8.1).

irregular verb

unregelmäßiges Verb

a verb with forms that do not consistently follow the pattern of **WEAK VERBS** or **STRONG VERBS**, e.g. *kennen – kannte – gekannt* has a vowel change like a strong verb, but a past participle ending in *-t* like a weak verb. A few other verbs are quite irregular, e.g. *sein, wissen, geben, tun* (see 6.1, 6.11).

main clause

Hauptsatz

can form a **SENTENCE** on its own, or join up with other main clauses or **SUBORDINATE CLAUSES**. The **FINITE VERB** is the second element in a German main clause: *Heute kommt sie nicht zur Arbeit, weil sie krank ist* (see 1.8).

main verb

Hauptverb

the verb with the main meaning, which constitutes the main verb of a **CLAUSE**, as opposed to **AUXILIARY VERBS**. In simple (i.e. one-word) **TENSES**, the main verb is the **FINITE VERB** of the clause, e.g. *Er schreibt mir eine E-Mail*. In **COMPOUND TENSES** the main verb is generally at or near the end of the clause in the **PARTICIPLE** or **INFINITIVE** form, e.g. *Er bat mir eine E-Mail geschrieben; Er will mir eine E-Mail schreiben* (see 1.8, 6.2).

masculine

Maskulinum

one of the three **GENDERS** into which **NOUNS** are divided, shown by the **ENDING** of the **DETERMINER** and/or **ADJECTIVE** in the **NOUN PHRASE**: *der Mann, ein alter Baum*. A masculine thing is referred to by a masculine **PRONOUN**, not the neuter pronoun *es*, e.g. *Der Computer ... Er ist teuer* (see 2.2, 3.7).

modal auxiliaries

Modalverben

dürfen, können, mögen, müssen, sollen and *wollen* are the modal auxiliary verbs. As **AUXILIARY VERBS** they are normally only used with the **INFINITIVE** of another verb: *Sie **darf** spielen*; *Ich **musste** gehen*; *Du **sollst** das Fenster **aufmachen***. They typically express ideas like possibility, obligation, desire or permission (see 7.13).

modal particle

Modalpartikel

a small word which indicates the speaker's attitude to what is being said: *Es gibt **ja** hier nur zwei gute Restaurants* (assumes agreement on something uncontroversial); *Das Bier ist **aber** kalt!* (surprise) (see 4.21).

mood

Modus

forms of the **VERB** which indicate the speaker's attitude. German has three moods: **INDICATIVE** (neutral, factual): *Er **geht** nach Hause*, **IMPERATIVE** (commands, requests): ***Geh** nach Hause!* and **SUBJUNCTIVE** (possibly not factual): *Wenn er nach Hause **ginge**,...* (see 7.10).

neuter

Neutrum

one of the three **GENDERS** into which **NOUNS** are divided, shown by the **ENDING** of the **DETERMINER** and/or **ADJECTIVE** in the **NOUN PHRASE**: *das Buch, ein gutes Drama*. A neuter noun is referred to by a neuter **PRONOUN**, even if its natural gender is masculine or feminine, e.g. *Das Mädchen ... Es ist sehr klein* (see 2.4, 3.7).

nominative

Nominativ

the nominative **CASE** most often indicates the **SUBJECT** of a **VERB**: *Du lügst*; *Der Hund bellt*; *Der Regen fällt* (see 1.2, 8.1). It is also used in the **PREDICATE COMPLEMENT** of **COPULAS**: *Ich bin **der** neue Lehrer* (see 8.7).

non-finite

infinite Verbform

a form of the **VERB** which does not have an **ENDING** in **AGREEMENT** with the **SUBJECT**, i.e. the **INFINITIVE** and the **PARTICIPLES** (see 6.1–6.2).

noun

Substantiv

a type of word which typically refers to a person, a living being, a thing, a place or an idea and can normally be used with a definite **ARTICLE**: *der Tisch, die Idee, das Pferd* (see chapter 2).

noun phrase

Nominalgruppe

a group of connected words containing a **NOUN** (or a **PRONOUN**) and any other words accompanying it (i.e. a **DETERMINER** and/or an **ADJECTIVE**): *Brot, weißes Brot, das weiße Brot* (see chapter 3).

number

Numerus

the grammatical distinction between **SINGULAR** and **PLURAL**: *der runde Tisch – die runden Tische* (see 2.6–2.10).

object

Objekt

objects are among the most important **COMPLEMENTS** of the **VERB**, especially the **DIRECT OBJECT**, **INDIRECT OBJECT** and **PREPOSITIONAL OBJECT** (see 8.1).

ordinal number

Ordinalzahl

a form of a numeral used as an **ADJECTIVE**: *das zweite Mal*, *sein zwanzigster Geburtstag* (see 4.18).

participle

Partizip

NON-FINITE forms of the **VERB**. German has two participles: the **PRESENT PARTICIPLE**, e.g. *spielend*, and the **PAST PARTICIPLE**, e.g. *gespielt* (see 6.1–6.3).

passive (voice)

Passiv

a form of a **VERB** where the doer of the action is not necessarily mentioned and the **SUBJECT** is typically a person or thing to which something happens. The most common German passive construction uses the **AUXILIARY VERB** *werden* and the **PAST PARTICIPLE**: *Die Schlange wurde getötet* (see 6.8, 7.4–7.8).

past participle

Partizip II

a **NON-FINITE** form of the **VERB**, typically with the **PREFIX** *ge-* and the ending *-t* (**WEAK VERBS**) or *-en* (**STRONG VERBS**). It is most often used with an **AUXILIARY VERB** to form **COMPOUND TENSES** or the **PASSIVE**: *Sie hat es gekauft*; *Wir sind gekommen*; *Er wurde angezeigt* (see 6.1–6.2). It can also be used as an **ATTRIBUTIVE ADJECTIVE**, with the appropriate ending: *der gekühlte Saft* (see 4.1) or as a **NOUN** (see 11.2).

past tense

Präteritum

the simple (i.e. one-word) **TENSE** used to relate an action, state or event in the past, e.g. *Ich kam an*; *Sie sah mich*; *Wir warteten lang* (see 6.2–6.3, 7.3).

perfect tense

Perfekt

a **COMPOUND TENSE** formed with the **PRESENT TENSE** of the **AUXILIARY VERB** *haben* or *sein* and the **PAST PARTICIPLE**, e.g. *Ich habe sie gesehen*; *Sie sind gekommen*. It can be used to link a past action, state or event to the present, or (especially in spoken German) relate an action, state or event in the past (see 6.2, 6.7, 7.3).

person

Person

a category of the **VERB** indicating the person speaking (first person, i.e. *ich* or *wir*), the person addressed (second person, i.e. *du*, *ibr*, *Sie*) or other persons or things spoken about (third person, i.e. *er*, *sie*, *es*).

personal pronoun

Personalpronomen

simple words standing for the various **PERSONS** or referring to a **NOUN PHRASE**, e.g. *ich*, *mich*, *mir*, *du*, *sie* (see 3.7).

place complement

Lokativergänzung

a typical **COMPLEMENT** with verbs that indicate position, specifying where something is situated: *Die Flasche steht auf dem Tisch*; *Ich wohne in Berlin* (see 8.8).

pluperfect tense

Plusquamperfekt

a **COMPOUND TENSE** formed with the **PAST TENSE** forms of the **AUXILIARY VERB** *haben* or *sein* and the **PAST PARTICIPLE**, e.g. *Ich hatte sie gesehen*; *Sie waren gekommen*. It is generally used in the context of a past-tense statement to report an action, state or event in the more distant past, e.g. *Ich rief ihn an, nachdem wir gegessen hatten* (see 6.2, 7.3).

plural

Plural

a grammatical term referring to more than one person or thing, whereas **SINGULAR** refers to just one. The **PRONOUNS** *wir*, *uns*, *ibr* are plural, as are the **NOUN PHRASES** *die kleinen Hunde* and *die Kinder* (see 2.6–2.10 and chapter 3).

possessive

Possessivpronomen

a word used to indicate possession, either as a **DETERMINER**, e.g. *sein Fahrrad*, or as a **PRONOUN**, e.g. *das ist meines* (see 3.5, 3.9).

predicate complement

Prädikatsergänzung

the typical verb **COMPLEMENT** with a **COPULA** (usually *sein*, *werden*, *scheinen*), normally consisting of an **ADJECTIVE**, or a **NOUN PHRASE** in the **NOMINATIVE CASE**, which is descriptive of the **SUBJECT**: *Mein neuer BMW ist schön*; *Er wird bestimmt ein guter Tennisspieler* (see 8.7).

prefix

Präfix

an element added to the beginning of a word to form another word: *Urwald*, *unglücklich*, *verbessern*, *weggeben* (see 11.1).

preposition

Präposition

a (usually small) word used to introduce a **NOUN PHRASE** and typically indicating position, direction, time, etc.: *an*, *auf*, *aus*, *neben*, *ohne*, etc. In German each preposition is followed by a noun phrase in a particular **CASE**: *Er kam ohne seinen Hund* (acc.); *Er kam mit seinem Hund* (dat.); *Er kam trotz seines Hundes* (gen.) (see chapter 5).

prepositional adverb

Pronominaladverb

a compound of *da(r)*- with a **PREPOSITION**, typically used in the function of a **PRONOUN** referring to things: e.g. *damit* ‘with it’, ‘with them’ (see 5.5).

prepositional object

Präpositionalobjekt

a **COMPLEMENT** of the **VERB** introduced by a **PREPOSITION**. Prepositional objects occur with many German verbs. Typically, the preposition does not have its usual meaning, and the choice of preposition depends on the individual verb: *Wir warten auf meine Mutter*; *Sie warnte mich vor dem großen Hund* (see 1.5, 8.6).

prepositional phrase

Präpositionalgruppe

a **NOUN PHRASE** introduced by a **PREPOSITION**: *an diesem Tag*, *aus dem Haus*, *zwischen den Häusern* (see chapter 5).

present participle

Partizip I

a **NON-FINITE** form of the **VERB**, with the suffix *-d* added to the **INFINITIVE**, corresponding to English forms in ‘-ing’: *leidend*, *schlafend*. It is used most often as an **ATTRIBUTIVE ADJECTIVE**, with the appropriate ending: *das rasende Auto* (see 4.1, 6.3, 11.2).

present tense

Präsens

the **TENSE** used to relate something going on at the moment of speaking, or which takes place regularly or repeatedly, e.g. *Jetzt **kommt** sie; In Irland **regnet** es viel* (see 6.3, 7.2).

principal parts

Stammformen

the three main forms in the **CONJUGATION** of a **VERB**, i.e.

INFINITIVE – PAST TENSE – PAST PARTICIPLE: ***machen** – **machte** – **gemacht** (WEAK VERB); **kommen** – **kam** – **gekommen** (STRONG VERB)*. The other verb forms can usually be constructed on the basis of these three forms (see 6.1).

progressive tense

progressive Zeitform

a **TENSE** referring to an action in progress, like the English tenses with the verb *to be* and the **PRESENT PARTICIPLE**, e.g. *She is reading; Have you been waiting?* There are no progressive tenses in German.

pronoun

Pronomen

typically a little word which stands for a whole **NOUN PHRASE** already known from the context, e.g. **PERSONAL PRONOUNS:** ***ich**, **mich**, **sie***; **DEMONSTRATIVE** pronouns: ***dieser***; **POSSESSIVE** pronouns: ***meiner**, **seines***; **INDEFINITE** pronouns: ***man**, **niemand*** (see 3.7–3.9).

questions

Fragen

have the **FINITE VERB** in first position, e.g. ***Kommt** er heute mit in die Disko?* However, if the question starts with an **INTERROGATIVE** word or phrase, the finite verb comes second, e.g. ***Wieviel kostet** das Aquarium?* (see 1.9).

reflexive pronoun

Reflexivpronomen

a **PRONOUN** in the **ACCUSATIVE** or **DATIVE** case referring back to the **SUBJECT** of the verb: *Sie **wäscht sich**; Ich habe es **mir** so **vorgestellt***. In the third person there is a special form for the reflexive pronoun, *sich*. For the other persons the **PERSONAL PRONOUNS** are used as reflexive pronouns (see 3.8, 8.2).

reflexive verb

reflexives Verb

a verb used in combination with a **REFLEXIVE PRONOUN:** ***sich** **erinnern** (remember), **sich** **weigern** (refuse)* (see 8.2).

register

Register/Textsorte

a concept that distinguishes ‘levels’ of language, e.g. differences of usage appropriate to different topics, situations or addressees. An important distinction is that between spoken and written language (see 12.8), or between more or less formal ways of saying things.

relative clause

Relativsatz

a **SUBORDINATE CLAUSE** used rather like an **ADJECTIVE** to describe a **NOUN:** *der Mann, **der dort spielt***. Relative clauses are introduced by a **RELATIVE PRONOUN** (= English ‘who’, ‘which’, ‘that’). The usual relative pronoun in German is *der*, which agrees in **GENDER** and **NUMBER** with the noun it refers to: *die Männer, **die dort spielen***. Its **CASE** is determined by its function within the clause: *der Mann, **den ich sah**; die Männer, **denen wir helfen*** (see 1.10, 10.5).

relative pronoun

Relativpronomen

type of **PRONOUN** that introduces a **RELATIVE CLAUSE** (equivalent to English ‘who’, ‘which’, ‘that’. The most common relative pronoun has the same forms as the **DEMONSTRATIVE** pronoun *der, die, das*; *was* is also used as a relative pronoun (see **10.5**).

reported speech

indirekte Rede

reporting what someone else said within a sentence rather than giving the speaker’s original words (‘direct speech’). Compare direct speech: *Er sagte: „Ich bin heute krank.“* with the corresponding reported speech (sometimes called ‘indirect speech’): *Er sagte, dass er krank sei* (see **7.12**).

root

Stamm

the base form of a word, without **PREFIXES** or **SUFFIXES**, e.g. *wiederkommen, arbeiten, unglaublich* (see **11.1**).

sentence

Satz

the longest unit of grammar, ending with a full stop in writing. It may consist of one **MAIN CLAUSE**, which can stand on its own, or of a number of clauses. A **SUBORDINATE CLAUSE** is dependent on another clause in the sentence (see **1.7**).

separable verb

trennbares Verb

a verb with a stressed **PREFIX** which detaches from the **FINITE VERB** in **MAIN CLAUSES** and is placed at the end of the **CLAUSE**, e.g. *ankommen*: *Wir kommen morgen um zwei Uhr in Dresden an* (see **6.4, 11.6**).

singular

Singular

a grammatical term referring to one person or thing, whereas **PLURAL** refers to more than one. The pronouns *ich, du, er, sie, es* and the noun phrases *der kleine Hund* and *das Kind* are singular (see chapters **2** and **3**).

strong adjective declension

starke Adjektivdeklinaton

a set of **ENDINGS** used with **ATTRIBUTIVE ADJECTIVES** which are like the endings of the definite **ARTICLE** and used when there is no **DETERMINER** in the **NOUN PHRASE**, or when the determiner has no ending of its own: *starkes Bier, guter Wein, mein alter Freund* (see **4.1**).

strong verb

starkes Verb

a verb which has vowel changes in the **PAST TENSE** and often the **PAST PARTICIPLE**, and the ending *-en* on the past participle: *bitten – bat – gebeten* (see **6.1, 6.10–6.11**).

subject

Subjekt

the **NOUN PHRASE** or **PRONOUN** in the **NOMINATIVE CASE** with which the **FINITE VERB** agrees for **PERSON** and **NUMBER**: *Du kommst morgen; Die Leute beschwerten sich über diese Preise*. Typically it is the person or thing carrying out the action expressed by the verb (see **1.2, 8.1**).

subjunctive mood

Konjunktiv

a **MOOD** of the verb typically used to indicate that an action, event or state may not be factual. There are two forms of the subjunctive in German: **SUBJUNCTIVE I** is used most often to mark **REPORTED SPEECH**: *Sie sagte, er **sei** nicht gekommen*; **SUBJUNCTIVE II** typically indicates unreal conditions: *Ich **würde lachen**, wenn sie **käme*** (see 6.9, 7.10–7.12).

subordinate clause

Nebensatz

unlike a **MAIN CLAUSE**, a subordinate clause cannot form a **SENTENCE** in its own right. It is dependent on another clause in the sentence, and usually introduced by a **CONJUNCTION**. In German, the verb is typically at the end: *Wir kommen nicht, **weil wir keine Zeit **haben*****. *Ich weiß, **dass sie heute nicht **kommt*****. Other types of subordinate clause are the **RELATIVE CLAUSE** and the **INFINITIVE CLAUSE** (see 1.10, 10.3–10.8).

suffix

Suffix

an element added to the end of a word or **ROOT** to form a new word or word-form: *freund**lich**, Freundlich**keit**, schneller* (see 11.1).

superlative

Superlativ

the form of an **ADJECTIVE** or **ADVERB** which expresses the highest degree. In German it is formed by adding the ending *-st* to the adjective or adverb: *der **höchste** Baum, das Auto fährt am **schnellsten*** (see 4.6, 4.16).

tense

Tempus

a form of the **VERB** which indicates the time of an action, event or state in relation to the moment of speaking. German has six tenses: **PRESENT** *ich **warte***; **PAST** *ich **wartete***; **FUTURE** *ich **werde warten***; **PERFECT** *ich **habe gewartet***; **PLUPERFECT** *ich **hatte gewartet***; **FUTURE PERFECT** *ich **werde gewartet haben*** (see 6.2–6.7, 7.1–7.3).

topic

Thema

the first element in a **MAIN CLAUSE**, before the **FINITE VERB** – something we are emphasizing because we want to say something about it. This position can be occupied by many types of word or phrase, e.g. ***Max** fuhr gestern nach Rom*; ***Gestern** fuhr Max nach Rom*; ***Nach Rom** fuhr Max gestern* (see 9.3).

transitive verb

transitives Verb

a verb is transitive if it has a **DIRECT OBJECT** in the **ACCUSATIVE** case: *Sie **sah mich***; *Ich **grüßte meinen Freund***; *Meine Schwester **kauft mir die Bücher*** (see 8.1).

valency or **valence**

Valenz

the construction used with a particular **VERB**, i.e. the number and type of **COMPLEMENTS** which it requires to form a fully grammatical **CLAUSE** or **SENTENCE** (see chapter 8).

verb

Verb

a type of word which refers to an action, event, process or state: ***schlagen**, **passieren**, **recyceln**, **schlafen*** (see chapters 6 and 7).

verbal bracket

Verbalklammer

refers to the ‘bracket’ construction that encloses most words and phrases in a clause between two parts of the **VERB**: *Sie [haben Tom die Diskette nicht gegeben]* (see **1.8**, **9.1**).

weak adjective declension

schwache Adjektivdeklinaton

a set of **ENDINGS** used with the **ATTRIBUTIVE ADJECTIVE** when there is a **DETERMINER** with its own ending preceding it in the **NOUN PHRASE**. There are only two endings for the weak adjective: *-e*, used principally in the **NOMINATIVE SINGULAR**, *das starke Bier*; and *-en*, used elsewhere: *mit meinem alten Freund*; *die jungen Frauen* (see **4.1**).

weak masculine noun

schwaches Maskulinum

one of a small set of **MASCULINE** nouns which have the **ENDING -(e)n** in the **ACCUSATIVE**, **GENITIVE** and **DATIVE** cases in the **SINGULAR**, as well as in the **PLURAL**: *der Affe*, *den Affen*, *des Affen*, *dem Affen*, *die Affen*, etc. (see **2.12**).

weak verb

schwaches Verb

the regular verbs of German, which form their **PAST TENSE** with the **ENDING -te** and their **PAST PARTICIPLE** with the **ENDING -t**: *machen – machte – gemacht* (see **6.1**).

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In all languages a limited number of basic elements, **words**, can be combined in a limited number of patterns. These patterns make up the **grammar** of the language. They show how each word in the sentence is related to the others, and this makes sure that people can understand what we are saying.

In the English sentence *The dog has bitten this man* we know what has happened because of the order of the phrases and the endings on the words.

The same is true of the German sentence *Der Hund hat diesen Mann gebissen*. But in German more work is done by the **endings** of the words and less by their order than in English. If you change the order of the phrases in the English sentence to *This man has bitten the dog* the meaning changes completely. But if you change the German sentence round to *Diesen Mann hat der Hund gebissen*, it still means ‘The dog has bitten this man’ (though the emphasis is a bit different). If we want to say ‘This man has bitten the dog’ in German, we need to change the endings: *Dieser Mann hat den Hund gebissen* or *Den Hund hat dieser Mann gebissen*.

To understand a foreign language properly, or speak or write it, we need to learn the grammar of the language so that we can make up comprehensible sentences and understand what the speakers of the other language are saying to us.

- ◆ **This chapter is intended to give you an overview** so you can see how all the areas of grammar fit together. It explains the basic patterns of German, shows how sentences are built up, and introduces some of the terminology we use to talk about grammar. Don’t worry if you find some of the ideas and terms confusing to start with – they will be explained in more detail later.
- ◆ The first part of the chapter explains how German shows the links between the elements of a sentence so that we can tell who is doing what to whom – see **1.1–1.6**.
- ◆ The second part of the chapter explains how different types of German sentence are constructed – see **1.7–1.10**.

1.1 Words and how they are linked in a sentence

Like English, German has different types of word, called **PARTS OF SPEECH**. The following sentences give examples of the most important parts of speech: **VERBS**, **NOUNS**, **PRONOUNS**, **ADJECTIVES** and **DETERMINERS**:

determiner	adjective	noun	verb
Der	böse	Wolf	schläft.
<i>The</i>	<i>bad</i>	<i>wolf</i>	<i>sleeps/is sleeping.</i>

determiner	adjective	noun	verb	determiner	noun
Der	böse	Wolf	frisst	die	Großmutter.
<i>The</i>	<i>bad</i>	<i>wolf</i>	<i>eats/is eating</i>	<i>the</i>	<i>grandmother.</i>

pronoun	verb	pronoun
Er	frisst	sie.
<i>He</i>	<i>eats/is eating</i>	<i>her.</i>

VERBS, **NOUNS**, **PRONOUNS** and **ADJECTIVES** are familiar grammatical terms, but you may not have come across the word **DETERMINER**, which is a handy cover term for the whole set of function words which typically come with a noun. The most important determiners are the **ARTICLES** *der* and *ein*, the **DEMONSTRATIVES**, like *dieser*, the **POSSESSIVES**, like *mein*, and **INDEFINITES** like *einige* and *viele*.

Verb

The **VERB** is the main word in a sentence telling you what is happening or being done, e.g. *schlafen* (sleep), *spielen* (play) or *fressen* (eat). It may have more than one part, as in the sentence: *Der Hund **hat** den Mann **gebissen**.*

Complements

To make a complete sentence the verb needs one or more **COMPLEMENTS**. These tell us **who** is doing **what** to **whom**, and, typically, they consist of a **NOUN PHRASE**. This can be a single **NOUN**, like *Großmutter*, a longer phrase with a **NOUN** and a **DETERMINER** (*die* *Großmutter*/*meine* *Großmutter*), or with a **DETERMINER** and an **ADJECTIVE** (*die* *alte* *Großmutter*). A **COMPLEMENT** can also just be a **PRONOUN**, which is a word like *er* or *sie*, that 'stands for' a noun.

The most important **COMPLEMENTS** are:

- ▶ The **SUBJECT** of the verb, which is the person or thing doing the action.
- ▶ The **DIRECT OBJECT**, which is typically the person or thing to which the action is done.

subject	verb	direct object
Der Wolf	frisst	die Großmutter.
Rotkäppchen	hat	eine Großmutter.
Ich	kaufe	einen Computer.

- The **INDIRECT OBJECT** is typically the person something is given to or taken from.

subject	verb	indirect object	direct object
Rotkäppchen	bringt	der Großmutter	einen Kuchen.

Other frequent complements are:

- The **PREPOSITIONAL OBJECT**, with a preposition like *in*, *an* or *auf* and a noun phrase, e.g. *Der Wolf wartet **auf Rotkäppchen***, ‘The wolf waits **for Little Red Riding Hood**’.
- The **PREDICATE COMPLEMENT**, which is used after a few verbs like *sein* ‘be’ or *werden* ‘become’. It typically describes the subject in some way, e.g. *Rotkäppchen ist **ein Mädchen*** or *Der Wolf ist **böse***.
- **DIRECTION** and **PLACE COMPLEMENTS**, i.e. **direction complements** with verbs of motion, e.g. *Er stellte den Besen **in die Ecke*** and **place complements** with verbs indicating position, e.g. *Astrid wohnt seit sechs Monaten wieder **in Stuttgart***.

More information about complements in German is given below in **1.2–1.6**, and in chapter **8**.

Case

In English, the function of a noun phrase in the sentence and its relationship to other words in the sentence is shown by its **position**. For example, in ‘Craig kisses Sheila’, ‘The guy kisses the girl’ or ‘The snake eats the frog’ the subject comes first, then the verb, then the direct object, so we are sure who is kissing or eating and who or what is being kissed or eaten. If we change the position of the noun phrases we get a different sentence: ‘The girl kisses the guy’ or ‘The frog eats the snake’.

In German, the function of a noun phrase is not shown by its position, but by changing the **endings** of the determiner, adjective, noun or pronoun which make up the noun phrase: ***Der** Junge küsst **das** Mädchen* or ***Die** Schlange frisst **den** Frosch*. We can change the order of the words in the last sentence: ***Den** Frosch frisst **die** Schlange*, but it is still the frog which is being eaten and the snake doing the eating.

The different functions of the noun phrase which are indicated by different endings are called the **CASES** of the noun. German has **four** cases: