

German A2

— What to Study

Level: **A2 (Waystage)** · Language: **German** · Audience: **Learners**

A2 is where German opens up in time. At A1 everything happened now; at A2 you can tell someone what you did at the weekend, where you went on holiday and why you were late. It is also the level where the dative case arrives, and with it the grammar that makes German feel like German.

The Common European Framework describes A2 as being able to understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of immediate relevance — basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment; to communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar matters; and to describe in simple terms aspects of your background, immediate environment and matters of immediate need.

Grammar to master

The perfect tense. In spoken German the *Perfekt* is the everyday past tense. Build it with *haben* or *sein* plus a past participle at the end of the clause — *Ich habe Pizza gegessen, Wir sind nach Hamburg gefahren.*

- Regular participles: *ge-...-t* — *gemacht, gekauft, gewohnt*
- Irregular participles: *ge-...-en*, often with a vowel change — *gegessen, getrunken, geschrieben*
- Separable verbs put *ge* in the middle: *aufstehen* → *aufgestanden*, *einkaufen* → *eingekauft*
- No *ge* for inseparable prefixes and *-ieren* verbs: *bekommen, verstanden, studiert*
- *sein* for movement from place to place and changes of state — *gehen, fahren, kommen, aufstehen, einschlafen* — plus *sein* and *bleiben* themselves

The simple past of a few key verbs. Even in speech, Germans use the *Präteritum* for a small group of verbs rather than the perfect: *ich war, ich hatte*, and the modals *konnte, musste, wollte, durfte*. Learn these as the normal way to say them.

The dative. The third case marks the person something is given to, and follows a fixed set of prepositions.

- Articles: *dem / der / dem*, plural *den* plus *-n* on the noun — *mit den Kindern*
- Pronouns: *mir, dir, ihm, ihr, uns, euch, ihnen, Ihnen*
- Prepositions that always take the dative: *aus, bei, mit, nach, seit, von, zu*
- Common dative verbs: *helfen, gefallen, gehören, schmecken, danken, passen*
- Verbs with two objects: *Ich gebe dem Kind das Buch*

Two-way prepositions. *In, an, auf, über, unter, vor, hinter, neben* and *zwischen* take the dative for location (*Wo?*) and the accusative for movement towards a place (*Wohin?*): *Das Buch liegt auf dem Tisch* but *Ich lege das Buch auf den Tisch*. Learn the verb pairs that go with them: *liegen / legen, stehen / stellen, hängen / hängen*.

Connecting sentences.

- *und, aber, oder, denn* join two main clauses without changing word order
- *weil, dass, wenn* and *ob* send the verb to the end of their clause: ..., *weil ich keine Zeit habe*
- When the subordinate clause comes first, the main clause starts with the verb: *Wenn es regnet, bleibe ich zu Hause*

More tools.

- Comparative and superlative: *schnell, schneller, am schnellsten*; the irregular *gut, besser, am besten* and *gern, lieber, am liebsten*
- Reflexive verbs: *sich freuen, sich interessieren für, sich treffen*
- The imperative for *du, ihr* and *Sie*: *Komm!, Kommt!, Kommen Sie!*
- Ordinal numbers and dates: *am dritten Mai*
- A first contact with adjective endings after the definite article; the full system is a B1 task

Vocabulary areas

Aim for roughly 1,000 to 1,500 active words, still with article and plural for every noun.

- Past events: the weekend, holidays, life stages
- Travel: booking, the station and airport, hotels, delays
- Health: the body, symptoms, the doctor's and the pharmacy
- Shopping: clothes and sizes, returns, comparing prices
- Housing: looking for a flat, rooms and furniture, neighbours
- Work and study: the working day, appointments, simple emails
- Celebrations, invitations and gifts
- Weather and the seasons in more detail
- Directions and describing where things are

What you should be able to do

- Describe what you did last weekend or on your last holiday
- Make, change and cancel an appointment by phone or email

- Explain a simple health problem to a doctor or pharmacist
- Give a reason for something with *weil* and an opinion with *Ich finde, dass...*
- Compare two things: flats, products, cities, plans
- Buy a train ticket and deal with a simple problem such as a delay
- Say where something is and where to put it
- Write a short informal email or message about everyday matters
- Understand the main point of short, clear announcements and messages

Common difficulties

Haben or sein? Most verbs take *haben*. The ones that take *sein* describe moving from A to B or a change of state. When in doubt, ask yourself whether the subject ended up somewhere or became something different.

The verb at the end. In *weil* and *dass* clauses the verb is last, and with the perfect tense two verbs pile up there: ..., *dass ich das Buch gelesen habe*. You will hear *weil* followed by normal word order in casual speech, but learn the standard version first; it is what exams and writing require.

Dative or accusative after in, an, auf? This is not a rule you apply once. It is a question — *Wo?* or *Wohin?* — you ask every time until it becomes automatic.

The dative plural -n. *Mit den Freunden, von den Kindern*: the noun itself gets an extra *-n* in the dative plural unless it already ends in *-n* or *-s*.

How to know you are ready for B1

You are ready when you can talk about the past in the perfect tense without stopping to build each participle, when *mit dem*, *mit der* and *mit den* come out right most of the time, and when you can hold a short conversation on everyday topics that you have not prepared. Persistent confusion between the dative and the accusative is a sign to consolidate A2 before moving on.

Next step

Move on to the German B1 guide, where the conditional, the passive and relative clauses let you talk about what would, could or should happen — not only what did.

Written by GongbuLeng. Aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) A2 descriptors. For the official German examinations at this level, such as the Goethe-Zertifikat A2, see the Goethe-

Institut's examination overview.