

Learning German online

Tips, hints and online resources to help you succeed



Learning a new language is sometimes no easy matter – especially if you don't really know where to start. With this in mind, we'd like to tell you about some online resources for helping you get to the next level in German, no matter how advanced you are at the moment. At the end of this guide, you'll find some useful tips for making things easier still.



Free online German courses and practice exercises

If you're interested in doing a German course, the [Deutsche Welle](#) website is a great first port of call. It's got an [overview of courses by level](#) and a [placement test](#) for you to do if you're unsure of what level you're at. If you need specific vocabulary, the website's [Deutschtrainer](#) has lessons organised by topic rather than level. Deutsche Welle is also a good place to go for [grammar practice](#), including fill-in-the-gaps exercises.

The [vhs learning portal](#) provided by the German organisation of adult and continuing education centres is another source of [German courses](#) for a range of levels.

The volunteer centre Freiwilligen Zentrum Hamburg has an online course on [pronunciation, emphasis and sentence construction](#) in German. You can register to take part by emailing info@fz-hamburg.de.

If you need German for your student job, you might be interested in [these exercises](#), provided by the [Goethe-Institut](#), around communicating at work.

The [Mehrsprachigkeit und Multikulturalität im Studium](#) project has issued some helpful resources including the [UniComm Deutsch](#) online dictionary of useful German phrases.

Video and audio

Watching German videos or listening to audio material in German is a great way of familiarising yourself with the language, especially if you struggle with vocabulary or listening skills. There are all sorts of targeted online resources available to help you in this area. The [Deutsche Welle](#) website has [news bulletins read slowly](#) for you to listen

to and, if you want, read along with; if you prefer a good drama, there's also a [German telenovela](#) to watch. Beginners can enjoy a radio series for levels [A1](#) or [A2](#).

There are also two series produced by the [Goethe-Institut](#) available online. [Deutschlandlabor](#) explains German culture and debunks popular stereotypes, while [Einstieg](#) has accompanying practice exercises for you to do. The site has a link to the Youtube channel [24h Deutsch mit Ida](#), which features German-language videos with subtitles.

If you're a radio fan, visit the [Deutschlandradio](#) website – this largely speech-based station is full of interesting content for more advanced learners.

These resources are just a small selection of those available on the websites named above. Take the time to have a good look around and find what works for you.

Apps and games

If you're a gamer at heart, the [Goethe-Institut](#) has the ideal resources for you. Why don't you [prevent a kidnapping](#), [save a wedding](#) or click your way through an [interactive story](#)? You won't even notice that you're improving your German while you're having fun.

There are also enjoyable apps available, such as '[Lern Deutsch - die Stadt der Wörter](#)'.

Again, these are just a few examples – have a browse on the Goethe-Institut site and see what you discover.

Find a community

It's usually much easier to learn something new if you're doing it with others rather than on your own. Some of the organisations mentioned above run online gateways where you can register free of charge to record your progress and share your experiences with other learners. One of them is the Goethe-Institut's "[Deutsch für Dich](#)" community, whose more than 500,000 members can talk online in forums and a private chat function – whatever your question, there's sure to be someone who knows the answer.

You can also register free of charge with the [vhs learning portal](#), where you can set up a profile and work with a tutor who'll check your German writing.



If you want all these resources to have an optimum effect, you need to make sure you are learning proactively and productively. Here are some hints for making the most of your learning opportunities.

Listening

Watching films and series in German is a fun and highly effective way of training your listening comprehension skills. As well as watching the series mentioned above, you can make use of streaming services such as [Netflix](#) and [Amazon Prime Video](#), which usually provide subtitles. You should try and watch series produced in German-speaking countries rather than dubbed series from elsewhere; their more natural usage and sound will help you understand ‘real-life’ German better.

Why not dive down a German [Youtube](#) rabbit hole? If you’re interested in a specific topic, just enter the search term in German and enjoy exploring the thousands of results. After you’ve done this a few times, your homepage will feature mostly German-language videos, which will make finding interesting material even easier. If you struggle with understanding the videos at first, you can use the settings to slow down the speed.

To keep up your language learning on the move, you can download and listen to a wide range of podcasts from free-of-charge services such as [Pocket Casts](#), [Castbox](#) and the [ARD Audiothek](#). Some podcasts, such as [Coffee Break German](#), are specially targeted at German learners; alternatively, you can find podcasts on any topic that interests you.

Just a word of warning to end this section: Because audio and videos are a fun way of improving your German, it can be tempting to spend too much time doing this and end

up neglecting other, more active skills. For example, if your speaking needs a boost, it's best to take a break from screens now and again and try out other ways of learning.

Writing

Of course, if you want to write, you need to be able to read first! It doesn't have to be books, although they are a great way of improving reading comprehension. Instead, you could [set your phone's language to German](#) and use the German [Google](#) or [Wikipedia](#) pages when you want to find something out.

If you're a bookworm, go to a flea market to see what's available or download the [Kindle app](#) for cheap or even free books in German (and other languages).

You can fit writing into your daily routine quite easily; how about writing your shopping lists in German from now on? Keeping a diary in German is also a good idea. As well as extending your vocabulary, it means you learn the exact words you need day to day.

Websites such as [Interpals](#) present opportunities to link up online with German speakers who are keen to learn your language. You can register free of charge and start chatting to others within minutes. Don't forget all the usual internet safety precautions!

Speaking

If you're still finding it hard to talk to others in German, the [HAW Hamburg language tandem scheme](#) can be a great help. You get together with a native German speaker who wants to learn your language – that way both of you benefit. To take part, both tandem partners need to be at level B1 or above in each language.

If you have any German speakers or learners among your friends, why not suggest that you speak German to each other from now on instead of your language or English? You could either speak German all the time or agree on 'German-only times' – such as the first 15 minutes of any meeting/conversation.

Vocabulary

Making yourself vocabulary flashcards is a really good way of learning new terms, as it helps you to remember them actively rather than just reading through lists of words. Apps can make this easier. One example is [Anki](#), which takes a smart approach to your flashcards – whenever you repeat one, it asks you how easy you found it to remember the word, and sets the frequency of the next repeat in accordance with your answer. For

instance, you might get words you struggle with every day, but ones you know well may only turn up every few months.

Many people are enthusiastic users of language learning apps such as [Duolingo](#) and [Babbel](#). These apps can certainly help you with your vocab, but they can't replace a good language course, so try not to limit yourself to using them, but test out other methods too. If you do use them, you'll often find more detailed practice exercises on their websites than in the apps themselves.



Follow [this link](#) for full details of the language courses on offer at HAW Hamburg.

We hope these ideas and resources will be helpful to you on your journey to the next level in German. *Viel Glück (und natürlich noch mehr Spaß) beim Lernen!*