

Jump Start Your German



A Guide to Learning German Successfully without
Trial and Error

Foreword:

Learning a new language is always exciting. You basically allow yourself to dive into a new culture, get to know new people, find new job opportunities and expand your view into different topics related to the language of your choice – in this case German.

Like with everything new there is also a certain anxiety about whether you will actually manage to speak the language fluently in the end...what hurdles you might run into...and how to go about learning the language. Which holds the question: What are the best tools to use so you learn German efficiently and quickly?

A lot of beginners as well as intermediate German learners still struggle with this since there is a clear overload of German learning offers out there.

Having learned 6 languages myself I am speaking out of my own experience: You can spend a boat-load of money and time on all the fancy tools and well-sounding German learning offers these days. Instead of learning German you suddenly find yourself testing and trying different language learning programs, *memorizing* words and phrases and getting nowhere.

Learning the language and *why* and *how* the words flow into sentences and paragraphs to express your thoughts and expressions is far more superior and beneficial to you than merely memorizing phrases.

Unfortunately, *memorization* is what takes place a lot of times in so-called German language programs. Why is that, you ask?

Well, basically it is because the basics, too often, are not taught, prior to the “teaching” of words, phrases and composition.

It is the instant gratification element that is satisfied a lot of times. Tutors, instructors and creators of online language courses, realize that the student is there because he/she has a desire to learn German quickly, or within a number of weeks. So, not wanting to disappoint a customer in that regard, they proceed with teaching the student how to say or pronounce phrases and/or questions that are projected to

come up in the scenario that the student is anticipating to use his soon-to-be-acquired language skill. Examples are “My name is John” and “How are you?”, and “Where is the telephone?” etc.

You, as the prospective student, should remember that it was not an ad that promised to teach you to memorize German that you answered, but rather one that claimed to “Teach German”.

Unfortunately, at some point, a lot of people give up trying and testing because they can't seem to find the right tools to get ahead and get the basics done the right way. The dream of German fluency seems to drift away into far spaces. Those people then tell me that they probably were not made for learning another language...

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How Can You Avoid These Pitfalls and Frustrations?

This is going to be the subject of this e-book.

You and I are going to explore what the best learning tools are, and how you test whether you have found a quality tool.

You will get checklists, the right questions to ask and important resources.

In the end of this e-book you'll be well equipped to learn German fast and successfully by using the right tools.

The Three (4) Key Elements That You Need to Learn to Communicate In German

Let us look at the elements that are necessary to fulfill the advertising claim or promise to "Teach German".

To learn to communicate *effectively* in German, you need a basic foundation consisting of:

1. Learning and practicing the pronunciation of the German alphabet;
2. Learning to conjugate verbs with past, present and future, and all their variations
3. Learning the genders and declension of German nouns - their appropriate articles and their 4 cases
4. Learning the German sentence structure, which most of the time is very different from the one in English.

Practicing items 1, 2 and 3 above, as well as adding a German noun or verb to your vocabulary **on a daily basis**, and conjugating your choice word-of-the-day.

Two dictionaries that provide an extraordinary source of information in the aforementioned areas are titled “*Collins Unabridged German-English Dictionary, 5th Edition*” and the “*Oxford-Duden German-English Dictionary, 3rd Edition*”. They are the most complete dictionaries you can find at this level and price. In them you will find a summary of the German language, with an English guide for the correct pronunciation of the German alphabet, a conjugation guide, and countless English words translated to German.

Realistically speaking, if you were to sit down, open the aforementioned Dictionary, and study the cited sections, you could become a self-taught expert in the German language, but for now, let us concentrate on the three enumerated elements above that are paramount for the learning (and teaching) of German:

- 1) The German Alphabet—You **must** learn the 26 letters plus 3 Umlaute Ä, Ö and Ü of the alphabet, and their pronunciation. Sure, the letters look exactly like the letters in the English alphabet—but they are not pronounced the same, especially not the vowels. While studying, practicing and speaking German, you must **always** use and keep the German pronunciation in mind. You **must not** apply the English pronunciation, as you know it, to any of the letters in the German alphabet. If you can adhere to applying the German alphabet to German, German words, you will find that pronouncing German words is a lot easier to accomplish, and you will not have to be corrected by seasoned German speakers, as you venture out to use your newly-acquired German speaking skills in German-speaking circles.

Differences between English and German?

As the English alphabet the German one consists of 26 letters plus the Ä, Ö and Ü. The biggest difference you’ll in the pronunciation of the German vowels.

The German “a” is pronounced like the short “u” in ‘cut’ or ‘but’, just longer in some cases

The German “e” is pronounced like the “a” in ‘fade’ or ‘date’

The German “i” is pronounced like the “e” in ‘see’ or ‘bee’

The German “o” is pronounced like the “o” in ‘over’ or ‘bone’

The German “u” is pronounced like the “oo” in ‘booth’ or ‘goose’

The German “ei” and “ai” are the English “i” like in ‘rice’ or ‘nice’

But you are an adult now, and should be capable of remembering and adhering to those and the remaining few other pronunciation differences that exist between the two languages.

2) Learn to conjugate verbs and use their tenses correctly

Just like you had to learn that “He is” is correct and “He are” is incorrect, you will need to learn proper verb conjugation in German. Most reputable German teaching programs use the following basic pronouns for conjugation instruction and exercises:

<i>ich</i>	<i>(I)</i>	<i>wir</i>	<i>(We)</i>
<i>du</i>	<i>(You)</i>	<i>ihr</i>	<i>(You Plural)</i>
<i>er/sie/es</i>	<i>(He/She/It)</i>	<i>sie/Sie(Formal)</i>	<i>(They)</i>

There are rules to learn and to observe with respect to conjugating verbs using the pronouns listed above. If you can master conjugation by simply applying the proper ending to the word stem according the pronouns, you are already halfway through laying the foundation to be able to be good-to-go in German!

3) By now you are probably already aware of the fact that the German nouns have 3 genders and also 4 different cases. This means the articles, pronouns, adjectives adapt to those genders and cases with their endings.

It may seem overwhelming in the beginning but there are rules you can follow. One simple rule is that nouns ending with an 'e' are feminine. The other two – masculine and neuter are more intricate. Practise, practice, practice...And you will become comfortable using the genders and cases over time.

4) The third key element that is essential to learning German. The sentence structure is in 90% different to the one in English. There are some key elements you need to know and learn to get it right over time. Yes, it will take time!

Just one Example for now:

English: Who **did** you **see** in the car?

German: Wen **hast** Du im Auto **gesehen**?

A) German mostly uses a different tense in spoken language. **Past Tense** becomes **Present Tense** in German.

B) In German the second part of the verb “did **see**” moves to the end of the sentence

Learning these elements—the German alphabet, verb conjugation, correct articles to nouns and their cases plus proper sentence structure would certainly open the door for you to learn the language properly, rather than to struggle through memorization of “useful phrases” that may or may not come up in your anticipated German-speaking scenario.

Prepare Yourself!

You have made it here which means you really *want* to learn German. Great!

Now, before you get started you want to make a self-assessment regarding the extent to which you wish to learn German—whether your choice is to learn a limited amount, or to become fluent in the language. This really depends on your goal and purpose for using the language.

Next...

Have you made a weekly time commitment already?

→ If not, then put that down as a note to yourself right now. It's extremely important for your success. Check for at least 3 slots a week of 20 minutes to max 1 hour and commit yourself to learning German.

Now you want to get equipped with the right tools for learning the language. Here is what you need in the beginning:

→ Get yourself a good dictionary German/English-English/German. If you are not sure what to look for, I'm going to cover that in one of my next newsletters

→ Get a quality German learning software. I'll cover later in this ebook what the important features are you need to look for.

→ Get a quality German tutor in the beginning. ...I know already what you're saying right now: "Ah, way too expensive, no time for it, just a waste!" ...What if I showed you some inexpensive, time effective ways to work with a tutor?

...I don't make any money on tutoring programs but learned that it really makes a difference whether you work with a tutor or not. Especially in the beginning...

Two more things before we get into the nitty-gritty....

#1 Do yourself a favor and keep it pretty much to yourself in the beginning that you are learning German. You don't want your friends or colleagues say: "Oh, great...say something in German!" or "Cool, then you can help me out with this German customer..."

I have a friend who that happened too and he felt pretty embarrassed when he couldn't perform the way he wanted to.

#2 You might know this one already...

Learning a language is like learning a new music instrument or learning a new sport. It takes time and effort.

Especially in the beginning you might feel odd because you just sound a little different when you start pronouncing German words. Don't worry - this is normal!

You will also have situations when you feel you're NOT making enough progress. This is normal too. ...Look, children take about 5-6 years from the time they are born to the time their speech is sophisticated.

We adults can do this process much faster over all but need time to digest things too.

Skunk in the barnyard...

You might still remember this count-out rhyme from your childhood... just going about choosing the right German learning software this might not be the right strategy. ☺

I have bought a bunch of them, tried and looked at even more and came up with a number of quality criteria to insure that the course matches different learning types as well as needs.

Here we go:

- The audio part needs to be done by **natives** so you get the right pronunciation
- Make sure your software course includes **visual aids** (pictures, photos, spelling of words). For visual learners this is crucial as the brain needs pictures to memorize effectively.
- Audio content should be transferable to MP3 or comes as CD so you can learn on-the-go (in your car or on the plane).
- Check whether the course is Austrian, Swiss or **Standard German** (used in the news) as there are differences in pronunciation and wording
- Each lesson should be max. 30 minutes. Our concentration dramatically diminishes after 20-30 minutes.
- Vocabulary and Grammar should be divided into beginner, intermediate, advanced and expert level
- Lessons should build on each other.
- Check for included games and flashcards as they are very helpful for practicing vocabulary and grammar
- Check for **compatibility with your PC or MAC**
- Knowledge tests should be included so you can test your progress
- Make sure you have a play back or scan option so you can jump in between lessons

Once you've found a course that fits the quality standards as well as your needs you are actually good to go...Or are you?

Almost...

What About Speaking with Real People?

Now I assume at this point that your ultimate goal is to become fluent and able to have a meaningful conversation with German speakers. ...And you don't want to sound funny. Right?

Conversations as you know them from your mother tongue include a lot of idioms, phrases and colloquial expressions. A lot of them you won't find in a German software course OR... if you find them, you might not know how to use them adequately.

Let me tell you one example out of my first years in the US: I am native German and was just here 2 or 3 years. My son was around 2 or 3 years old and playing with our neighbor's son around the same age. So, I said to my neighbor: "They are some knuckleheads!" which I thought meant: "Kids who are daredevils" Oh, my neighbor got mad at me for calling her son stupid!

I don't want this happen to you!
You want to make sure that when you use an expression you know *exactly* what it means.

Language is full of those 'little' expressions. This is what actually makes it come alive. I know a lot of expressions in my mother tongue that don't even exist as such in any other language.
Or another expression in the English language: "He's such a ham!"
No dictionary or learning software will teach you what exactly it means and when to use it.

Just learning vocabulary, grammar and sentence structures just doesn't cut it...At least not if your goal is to become fluent...

So, what is the answer?

Talk to real German speaking people! ...I mean native Germans.

I already hear you say: "No way! I am not ready yet. I've just started learning!"

Let's Look at Your Options Then:

Your time and money are precious—and the most that you are able to make from both—with the least investment of both—should suit you best.

So, who could provide you the most value for learning German with the least amount of time and money?

The answer is actually simple – A German Tutor.

Now, sure a tutor is not for free. But these days you have options that will also fit your wallet. We'll get to that in a minute...

Let's look first at how a German tutor actually can benefit you in learning German fast and easily before we continue on.

- Your tutor will give you the confidence to speak German, which is the most important factor. Speaking is all about confidence!
- He/she will help you to understand the *why* and *how* of German language with all its subtleties and nuances
- You will stay motivated during the entire process. People give up because they lose motivation NOT because they can't do it...
- You will be taught grammar, synonyms and colloquial in a way so you can actually use it and become fluent
- Your tutor will help you to overcome your personal sticking points

There are certainly more advantages to having a tutor. But the point I'm making is that you should have somebody on your site (especially in the beginning), who takes you by your hand and guides you through the process.

Learning a new language is a process and not an “overnight flight”. It takes time, effort and motivation.

While searching for a tutor or German instructor, you should keep in mind that anything short of actually being *taught* German can be considered as being shorted of your time and money.

What are your choices out there?

- Online
- Offline
- Classroom setting
- One-on-One Private Setting

Let's do a little homework with the teacher-to-be before you make your selection. Consider your search to be a job ‘interview in reverse’—in the sense that a job seeker usually goes to the prospective employer. In your quest to hire a German tutor, however, you—being the prospective Employer—will be going to the prospective Employee—Your German Teacher/Tutor.

→Key questions to ask a prospective Employee, of course, their academic background. Ask how they were taught to speak the language. Make sure that the prospective tutor has some linguistics knowledge of German. Why? Without that you won't be taught about where an expression came from or what the roots of words are. Languages have developed over many 1,000's of years and have many cultural and historical influences such as Latin or Arabic in the German language. That explains why German works the way it works.

→Also ask about their pay or hourly rate as well as the hours that will be involved.

→Request to see a sample lesson plan, the text and other materials that the prospect intends to use.

→Check for references from past or current students.

→If the tutor is native German make sure that their English is fluent. If not, stay away since you will run into understanding problems later on.

→If the tutor is native American you want to check where they learned their German and how much time they spent in German speaking countries because the tutor needs native German pronunciation

→Ask how make-up work is handled, and their hours of availability between German language class sessions to ask questions.

→Ask what aspects of learning German will be covered, and in what order.

If neither words *The German alphabet, Noun Declension, Conjugation or Sentence Structure* are mentioned, and the prospect is still claiming to be able to teach you German, set your sights elsewhere. What you will be taught, as mentioned before, will be memorization of German phrases—which is not being *taught German*.

→Some of the questions that your prospective German language *Teacher/Tutor should ask you* include what your learning style is—whether visual, acoustic or a mix; what your reason for learning German is; whether you have studied other languages—and what level you were able to attain; how much knowledge you have in German;

and if not mentioned earlier in the course of your conversation with the prospective instructor: “Do you know the **German alphabet** and are you familiar with **verb conjugation**?” Also—if it is important to you—measure their level of knowledge of English while you are conversing with them.

→Also—do not be shy about asking to be given a “test” or “try-out” lesson. The prospective instructor may be open to accommodating your request. After all—it is your precious time and money that are at stake, and you cannot afford to waste any of each—and you want to learn German—not how to memorize.

Now, that we have looked at how to find a quality tutor and the importance of having one let’s discuss the different tutoring options.

Group Tutoring vs. Private Tutoring

When looking at German tutoring you will find two options:
Either you learn with a group of students=group tutoring.
Or you take lessons by yourself with the tutor=called private tutoring.

Of course everything depends on your preferences, and how you learn best. Here are some considerations to think about before you make a decision on which option you might select:

With group tutoring you can have anything between 2 and 12 students in one group. The duration of one lesson is either 45 minutes, 1hour or 1 ½ hours. This depends on the tutor or language school.

Let’s say you are 6 students in your class and the lesson takes 1 hour. Each student would just get 10 minutes of undivided attention by the tutor. Is this really worth your money?

Most people opt for group lessons because it is cheaper at first sight. But you see in above example that you really get less out of it.

Lessons plans in group lessons are usually based on the entire group’s knowledge level, NOT on the individuals. Let’s say you are a really great German student, you might be bored during parts of the lesson.

If your schedule changes because of changes in your job and personal life the tutor won't change the class schedule because of you. In this case you might need to find a different tutoring option that fits your schedule again.

Private tutoring has an advantage right here. Your tutor is usually willing to work around your schedule.

Your lessons plan is determined by YOUR knowledge level, language goals and learning style. If your tutor encounters a subject where you have difficulty learning he or she can slow down the lesson pace and just focus on that particular area.

You can even request to work on certain subjects such as cultural aspects or colloquial expressions.

Your private tutor can fully focus on YOU the entire time. You can also decide according to your budget and needs whether you'd like to take 1 or more tutoring lessons per week.

Online Tutoring vs. In-Person Tutoring

In the past you only had one option in this case. But advances in the internet technology over the past years have made it possible that you can also take tutoring lessons online.

Some people still prefer the "old-fashioned" in-person private or group tutoring. And it has its place. Especially when teaching children in-person is a much better option since the tutor can guide the child much easier and can provide great visuals.

But it also has a much higher payment rate for lessons than online tutoring since you also pay for all their expenses, such as gasoline or room rent etc. Plus you need to do a background check if the tutor comes to your home. Please do that as it is about your safety!

Before you get into the online option you should always check whether it is technically possible for you to consider this option. You should have a high-speed internet connection, plus you should check with your potential online tutoring provider what platforms they support and how they do audio (Skype, phone or VoIP).

Of course, you should check all previously mentioned points related to their tutoring qualifications.

Usually online lessons are also a bit shorter than in person tutoring- from 1/2 hour to 45 minutes.

I have seen online tutoring rates starting as low as \$12.00.

Some services work with tutors from non-German speaking countries. So, please make sure that their English is decent.

Now, what is the benefit of online tutoring besides the money?

First, and you might have guessed it already...It is absolutely convenient since you can take your German lessons right at home on your computer. No traffic jams, no waiting for your tutor to come to your house. You don't even need to do a background check... Since the lessons as such are shorter too it will also save your time overall which you can use for additional practice.

Online tutoring works for many people much better as the visual part is eliminated in most of the times. Concentrating on just hearing a person speak helps you develop your pronunciation and intonation much faster. The usual distraction by mimic and gestures is eliminated in this case.

You can take tutoring sessions even later in the evening like 9:00 or even 10:00 PM or early in the morning if you're an early riser ☺ Most online tutoring services offer the option to record tutoring sessions so you can repeat them at your convenience and practice.

In summary: You have 4 different tutoring options out there that you can mix and match according to your preferences and needs. A tutor will certainly give you nuances and insights that you wouldn't get with just a plain software German course. You will learn to speak fluently with a tutor since he or she can give you that confidence.

Just look at the countless examples in history of highly successful individuals e.g. Tina Turner mentor to Mick Jagger, Richard Burton mentor to Sir Anthony Hopkins, Phil Jackson (NBA coach) mentor to Michael Jordan and Andrew Carnegie mentor to Charles Schwab prove the importance of having a quality tutor/mentor/coach or trainer (whatever you'd like to call the person) to become successful.

One Word about: Bilingual Instruction vs. Immersion

You might have noticed that there is a lot of discussion going on about whether language immersion programs for adults work or not.

First, let me tell you what immersion actually is.

Here is what Wikipedia says: "Language immersion is a method of teaching a second language (also called L2 or the target language). Unlike a more traditional language course, where the target language is simply the subject material, language immersion uses the target language as a teaching tool, surrounding or "immersing" students in the second language."

Here is what the theory about it is:

As a child you learned English or native tongue just by being exposed to an English speaking environment. From the day you were born until the age of about 2 years you just absorbed the language and took in. Then slowly you developed speech. First you spoke single words, then short sentences and by the age of 6-7 you were pretty much fluent in complex sentences.

Now, why should this not work for learning German as an adult?

For two main reasons it can't work:

1. It took you about 2 years until you spoke your first words and another 4 years until you finally were fluent. I don't think that you have the patience to wait that long...
2. Children until the age of about 6-7 have a totally different way of learning. They learn inductively; meaning by example and interaction. We adults though learn deductively, which means in an analytical way and by reasoning.

Going the immersion route in the beginning is a hard, long route until fluency. As a beginner you are much better off to learn German through bilingual teaching.

Now, I admit that everything has its place and so does language immersion have.

When you are at the point that you're becoming an intermediate to advanced student an immersion program can give your German skills the finishing touch.

So in Summary...

As always when you start learning something new you should get a good idea at first about how you want to approach it. You want to set time aside, look at the tools that can help you to achieve your goal.

So, in this case you want to look at getting a quality German software course to get started right away. You can take the check list above to evaluate online German courses.

OR

Check under “Additional Resources” below under “German Language Course Reviews” where we have already evaluated a number of courses.

There are a lot of resources online to find a German tutor. One well-known website is listed below.

Being a subscriber of our newsletter you will also receive additional information on current tools and resources that will help you to learn German fast and easily.

If you have questions, suggestions or feedback feel free to contact us directly under Support@LearnGermanCoach.com.

Additional Resources

- **German Verb Conjugation Made Easy**
http://german.about.com/library/verbs/blverb_Conjug1.htm
- **Learn-German Coach Blog**
<http://learnGermancoach.com/blog/>
- **Find German Tutors**

<http://www.wyzant.com> for in-person tutoring

http://www.verbalplanet.com/publicviewprofile.asp?tr_id=10009045466&lang=GER&lang2=GER¤cy=USD
for phone tutoring

Just ask Annett from Learn German Coach for private German tutoring ☺
- **German Online Courses**

[Transparent Languages](#) several courses and products in several budgets

[Tell Me More](#) several products in different budgets

[Rocket German](#) with grammar, games, forum

[Surefire German](#) with games and memorization techniques

[Lingo Basics](#) e-book

[Easy German Lessons](#) membership

[Sprachen Lernen 24](#) this German course is in German

[Pimsleur German](#)

GOOD LUCK AND MUCH SUCCESS!
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