

# Dictionary Skills

Using a dictionary is a skill you can improve with practice and by following some basic guidelines. This section gives you a detailed explanation of how to use the dictionary to ensure you get the most out of it.

The answers to all the questions in this section are on page 13.

## Make sure you look in the right side of the dictionary

The German-English side comes first, followed by the English-German. At the side of the page, you will see a tab with either **German-English** or **English-German**, so you know immediately if you're looking up the side you want.

- 1 Which side of the dictionary would you look up to translate '**das Fahrrad**'?

## Finding the word you want

When you are looking for a word, for example **froh**, look at the first letter - **f** - and find the **F** section in the German-English side. At the top of each page, you'll find the first and last words on that page. When you find the page with the words starting with **fr**, scan down the page until you find the word you want. Remember that even if a word has an umlaut on it, for example **für**, it makes no difference to the alphabetical order.

- 2 On which page will you find the word - '**gestern**'?
- 3 Which comes first - '**Bruder**' or '**Brötchen**'?

To help you expand your vocabulary, we have also suggested possible alternatives in the WORD POWER features of the most common adjectives in English - try looking up **big** on page 340 and learning some of the words you could use.

## Make sure you look at the right entry

An entry is made up of a **word**, its translations and, often, example phrases to show you how to use the translations. If there is more than one entry for the same word, then there is a note to tell you so. Look at the following example entries:

**flat** ADJECTIVE

▷ see also **flat** NOUN

1 flach

□ flat shoes *flache Schuhe*

■ a flat roof *ein Flachdach neut*

2 platt (tyre)

□ I've got a flat tyre. *Ich habe einen platten*

*Reifen.*

**flat** NOUN

▷ see also **flat** ADJECTIVE

die Wohnung

□ She lives in a flat. *Sie wohnt in einer*

*Wohnung.*

- 4 Which of the two entries above will help you translate the phrase 'My car has a flat tyre'? Look for the two clues which are there to help you:

> an example similar to what you want to say

> the word ADJECTIVE



Look out for information notes which have this symbol on the left-hand side. They will give you guidance on grammatical points, and tell you about differences between German and British life.

## Choosing the right translation

The main translation of a word is shown on a new line and is underlined to make it stand out from the rest of the entry. If there is more than one main translation for a word, each one is numbered.

Often you will see phrases in light blue, preceded by a white square □. These help you choose the translation you want because they show how the translation they follow can be used.

## 5 Use the phrases given at the entry 'hard' to help you translate: 'This bread is hard'.

Words often have more than one meaning and more than one translation, for example, a **pool** can be a puddle, a pond or a swimming pool; **pool** can also be a game. When you are translating from English into German, be careful to choose the German word that has the particular meaning you want. The dictionary offers you a lot of help with this. Look at the following entry:

- pool** NOUN
- 1 die Pfütze (*puddle*)
  - 2 der Teich (PL die Teiche) (*pond*)
  - 3 das Schwimmbecken (PL die Schwimmbecken) (*for swimming*)
  - 4 das Poolbillard (*game*)
    - Shall we have a game of pool? **Sollen wir eine Partie Poolbillard spielen?**
    - **the pools** (*football*) **das Toto** □ to do the pools **Toto spielen**

The underlining points out all the main translations, the numbers tell you that there is more than one possible translation and the words in brackets in *italics* help you choose which translation you want.

## 6 How would you translate 'I like playing pool'?

**Never take the first translation you see without looking at the others. Always look to see if there is more than one translation underlined.**

Phrases in **bold type** preceded by a blue or black square ■ / ▣ are phrases which are particularly common or important. Sometimes these phrases have a completely different translation from the main translation; sometimes the translation is the same. For example:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>cancer</b> NOUN                         | <b>abgemacht</b> ADJECTIVE                    |
| <u>der Krebs</u> (GEN <u>des Krebses</u> ) | <u>agreed</u>                                 |
| □ He's got cancer. <b>Er hat Krebs.</b>    | □ <b>Wir trafen uns zur abgemachten Zeit.</b> |
| ■ <b>I'm Cancer.</b> <b>Ich bin Krebs.</b> | We met at the agreed time.                    |
|  | ■ <b>Abgemacht!</b> OK!                       |

When you look up a word, make sure you look beyond the main translations to see if the entry includes any **bold phrases**.

## 7 Look up 'fahren' to help you translate the sentence 'Ich werde morgen mit dem Zug fahren'.

### Making use of the phrases in the dictionary

Sometimes when you look up a word you will find not only the word, but the exact phrase you want. For example, you might want to say 'What's the date today?' Look up **date** and you will find the exact phrase and its translation.

Sometimes you have to adapt what you find in the dictionary. If you want to say 'I play darts' and look up **dart** you will find:

**dart** NOUN  
der **Pfeil** (PL die Pfeile)  
■ to play darts Darts spielen

You have to substitute **ich spiele** for the infinitive form **spielen**. You will often have to adapt the infinitive in this way, adding the correct ending to the verb for **ich, du, er** etc and choosing the present, future or past form. For help with this, look at the German verb tables. On the **German-English** side of the dictionary, you will notice that verbs are followed by a number in square brackets, which correspond to verb tables on pages 22–38 in the middle section of the dictionary. **Spiele**n is a regular verb so it follows the same pattern as verb number [48] **machen**, which is set out in full on page 34.

## 8 How would you say 'We played football'?

Phrases containing nouns and adjectives also need to be adapted. You may need to make the noun genitive, plural or dative plural, or the adjective feminine, neuter or plural. Remember that some nouns have irregular genitive or plural forms and that this information is shown in the entry.

## 9 How would you say 'The red flowers are beautiful'?

## Don't overuse the dictionary

It takes time to look up words so try to avoid using the dictionary unnecessarily, especially in exams. Think carefully about what you want to say and see if you can put it another way, using the words you already know. To rephrase things you can:

- > Use a word with a similar meaning. This is particularly easy with adjectives, as there are a lot of words which mean *good*, *bad*, *big* etc and you're sure to know at least one.
- > Use negatives: if the cake you made was a total disaster, you could just say that it wasn't very good.
- > Use particular examples instead of general terms. If you are asked to describe the sports '*facilities*' in your area, and time is short, you could say something like '*In our town there is a swimming pool and a football ground*'.

### 10 How could you say '*The Black Forest is huge*' without looking up the word '*huge*'?

You can also guess the meaning of a German word by using others to give you a clue. If you see the sentence '*ich lese ein gutes Buch*', you may not know the meaning of the word **lese**, but you know it's a verb because it's preceded by **ich**. Therefore it must be something you can do to a book: **read**. So the translation is: *I'm reading a good book*.

### 11 Try NOT to use your dictionary to work out the meaning of the sentence '*Das Mädchen schreibt ihrer Brieffreundin einen Brief auf Deutsch*'.

# Parts of Speech

If you look up the word **flat**, you will see that there are two entries for this word as it can be a noun or an adjective. It helps to choose correctly between the entries if you know how to recognize these different types of words.

## Nouns

Nouns often appear with words like *a, the, this, that, my, your* and *his*.

They can be singular (abbreviated to SING in the dictionary):

*his dog her cat a street*

or plural (abbreviated to PL in the dictionary):

*the facts those people his shoes our holidays*

They can be the subject of a verb:

**Vegetables** are good for you

or the object of a verb:

I play **tennis**

**I bought my mother a box of chocolates.**

**12 Which three words in this sentence are nouns?**

**13 Which of the nouns is plural?**

German nouns all start with a capital letter and can be either masculine, feminine or neuter (abbreviated to MASC, FEM or NEUT in the dictionary).

Masculine nouns are shown by **der**:

*der Hund der Zug der Arm*

Feminine nouns are shown by **die**:

*die Katze die Milch die Tür*

Neuter nouns are shown by **das**:

*das Auto das Kind das Sofa*

The plural form of **der**, **die** and **das** is **die**. The plural of most feminine German nouns is made by adding **en** or **n**:

*die Katzen    die Türen    die Familien*

Many German nouns, however, do not add **en** or **n** in the plural, so the plural of these nouns is shown in the entry:

*die Hunde    die Häuser    die Autos    die Wagen    die Mütter*

In German **der**, **die** and **das** (and also **ein** and **eine**) may change when the noun they precede is used in another case, for example in the accusative, genitive or dative case (abbreviated to ACC, GEN and DAT in the dictionary). It is important to learn when you should use each case in German.

The **nominative** case is used to show the subject of a sentence – *the dog* is chasing the cat. All German nouns are shown in the nominative case in the dictionary:

*Ich esse ein Eis.    Die Katze schläft.    Der Ball ist im Garten.*

The **accusative** case is used to show the direct object of a sentence – I love *chocolate* – and after certain prepositions e.g. **durch**, **ohne**:

*Ich sehe den Hund.    Sie liebt mich.    Wir gingen durch den Wald.*

The **genitive** case is used to show that something belongs to somebody – my *father's* hat – and after certain prepositions e.g. **wegen**:

*das Auto des Mannes  
der Hund meiner Mutter  
wegen des schlechten Wetters*

The **dative** case is used to show the indirect object of a sentence – she told *me* the news – and after certain prepositions e.g. **mit**, **aus**:

*Ich gebe dem Lehrer das Heft.  
Er schreibt mir einen Brief.  
Sie spielen mit dem Ball.*

The rules for the changes to **der**, **die**, **das**, **ein** and **eine** are shown here:

	MASC SING	FEM SING	NEUT SING	PL
NOM	der	die	das	die
ACC	den	die	das	die
GEN	des	der	des	der
DAT	dem	der	dem	den

	MASC SING	FEM SING	NEUT SING
NOM	ein	eine	ein
ACC	einen	eine	ein
GEN	eines	einer	eines
DAT	einem	einer	einem

Masculine and neuter singular German nouns usually add **-es** or **-s** when they are used in the genitive case:

*des Vaters    des Hundes    des Autos*

Feminine and plural German nouns do not change in the genitive:

*der Mutter    der Tür    der Katzen    der Männer*

Sometimes the genitive form is irregular, and this is shown in the entry:

*des Jazz    des Herrn    des Abiturienten*

An **n** is added to the plural form of German nouns in the dative case, unless the plural form already ends in **-n**:

*den Kindern    den Häusern    den Katzen    den Lehrerinnen*

*Ich gebe meinem Bruder ein Buch.*

- 14** Which two words in the sentence are nouns - are they singular or plural?
- 15** What is the genitive form of 'Bruder'?
- 16** Use your dictionary to find the plural form of 'Buch'. Then work out the dative plural form.

## Pronouns

Words like *I, me, you, he, she, him, her* and *they* are pronouns. They can be used instead of nouns. You can refer to a person as *he* or *she* or to a thing as *it*.



*I showed her the new computer.*

**17 Which words are pronouns in this sentence?**

## Adjectives

**Flat** can be an adjective as well as a noun. Adjectives describe nouns: your tyre can be **flat**, you can have a pair of **flat** shoes.

*I'm afraid of the dark.*

*The girl has dark hair.*

**18 In which sentence is 'dark' an adjective?**

German adjectives can be masculine, feminine or neuter, singular or plural. The ending of the adjective may also change depending on whether the noun is preceded by **ein, eine** etc or by **der, die** or **das**:

*der kleine Hund*

*ein kleines Kind*

*kleine Kinder*

*die kleinen Katzen*

Adjectives are also affected by the case i.e. **nominative, accusative** etc of the noun they describe:

*des kleinen Hundes*

*der kleinen Katze*

*inem kleinen Mädchen*

*den kleinen Kindern*

The endings of German adjectives follow the rules shown here:

	MASC SING(DER)	FEM SING(DIE)	NEUT SING(DAS)	PL(DIE)
NOM	kleine	kleine	kleine	kleinen
ACC	kleinen	kleine	kleine	kleinen
GEN	kleinen	kleinen	kleinen	kleinen
DAT	kleinen	kleinen	kleinen	kleinen

	MASC SING(EIN)	FEM SING(EINE)	NEUT SING(EIN)	PL
NOM	kleiner	kleine	kleines	kleine
ACC	kleinen	kleine	kleines	kleine
GEN	kleinen	kleinen	kleinen	kleiner
DAT	kleinen	kleinen	kleinen	kleinen

Only the basic form of the adjective is shown in the dictionary. So, if

you want to find out what kind of girls **die schönen Mädchen** are, look under **schön**.

Some adjectives, called **invariable adjectives**, don't change whether they are masculine, feminine, neuter or plural or describing a noun in a different case. This is shown in the dictionary:

**pink** ADJECTIVE  
**rosa**  
 **LANGUAGE TIP** **rosa** is invariable.  
□ a pink shirt **ein rosa Hemd**

- 19 What is the feminine accusative singular form of 'schwarz'?
- 20 What is the basic form of the adjective in the sentence 'Peter ist ein braves Kind'?

## Verbs

*She's going to record the programme for me.  
His time in the race was a new world record.*

**Record** is a verb in the first sentence, and a noun in the second.

One way to recognize a verb is that it frequently comes with a pronoun such as **I**, **you** or **she**, or with somebody's name. Verbs can relate to the present, the past or the future. They have a number of different forms to show this: **I'm going** (present), **he will go** (future), and **Nicola went** (past). Often verbs appear with **to**: **they promised to go**. This basic form of the verb is called the infinitive.

In the dictionary verbs are preceded by 'to', so you can identify them at a glance. No matter which of the four previous examples you want to translate, you should look up 'to **go**', not '**going**' or '**went**'. If you want to translate 'I **thought**', look up to '**think**'.

- 21 What would you look up to translate the verbs in these phrases?

*I came she's crying they've done it he's out*

Verbs have different endings in German, depending on whether you

are talking about **ich, du, wir** etc: **ich mache, du machst, wir machen** etc. They also have different forms for the present, past (imperfect and perfect tenses), future etc: **wir machen** (*we do* = present), **wir machten** (*we did* = imperfect), **wir haben gemacht** (*we have done* = perfect), **wir werden machen** (*we will do* = future). **machen** is the infinitive and is the form that appears in the dictionary.

Sometimes the verb changes completely between the infinitive form and the **ich, du, er** etc form. For example, *to give* is **geben**, but *he gives* is **er gibt**, and **ich bin gegangen** comes from the verb **gehen** (*to go*).

On pages 28–38 of the dictionary, you will find tables of the most important forms of German verbs. And on pages 22–27 you will find a list of the most important forms of other German irregular verbs. Any irregular forms of verbs are also shown in the entry.

to **bowl** VERB

▷ see also **bowl** NOUN

**werfen** (PRESENT **wirft**, IMPERFECT **warf**, PERFECT **hat geworfen**) (*in cricket*)

**heben** (IMPERFECT **hob**, PERFECT **hat gehoben**)

VERB  
to lift

## 22 Look up the dictionary to find the imperfect and perfect tenses of 'laufen'.

### Adverbs

An adverb is a word which describes a verb or an adjective:

Write **soon**. Check your work **carefully**. The film was **very** good.

In the sentence '*The swimming pool is open daily*', **daily** is an adverb describing the adjective **open**. In the phrase '*my daily routine*', **daily** is an adjective describing the noun **routine**. We use the same word in English for both adjective and adverb forms, and the same word is used in German too. In many cases the same German word is used to translate an adjective and an adverb in English. Sometimes, however, the translations are different and you will need to know the difference between an adjective and an adverb to be able to choose the correct German translation.

Take the sentence *'The menu changes daily'*.  
23 Is *'daily'* an adverb or an adjective here?

## Prepositions

Prepositions are words like **for**, **with** and **across**, which are followed by nouns or pronouns:

*I've got a present **for** David. Come **with** me. He ran **across** the road.*

In German, all prepositions are followed by nouns or pronouns in a certain case, for example, **mit** is followed by nouns or pronouns in the dative case. The case which follows a preposition is shown in the entry:

### ab PREPOSITION, ADVERB

**LANGUAGE TIP** The preposition **ab** takes the dative.

#### 1 from

□ **Kinder ab zwölf Jahren** children from the age of twelve □ **ab morgen** from tomorrow

#### 2 off

□ **Die Straße geht nach links ab.** The road goes off to the left. □ **Der Knopf ist ab.** The button has come off. □ **Ab nach Hause!** Off you go home!

■ **ab sofort** as of now

■ **ab und zu** now and then

### above PREPOSITION, ADVERB

#### über

□ above forty degrees **über vierzig Grad**

**LANGUAGE TIP** Use the accusative to express movement or a change of place. Use the dative when there is no change of place.

□ He put his hands above his head. **Er hielt die Hände über den Kopf.** □ It's in the cupboard above the sink. **Es ist im Schrank über der Spüle.**

■ **the flat above** **die Wohnung darüber**

■ **mentioned above** **oben erwähnt**

■ **above all** **vor allem**

*The party's over.*

*The shop's just over the road.*

24 Which sentence shows a preposition followed by a noun?

25 What case does the preposition **'durch'** take?

26 Use your dictionary to help you translate *'He is going into the garden'*.

## Answers

- 1 the German side
- 2 on page 109
- 3 **Brötchen** comes first
- 4 the first (ADJECTIVE) entry
- 5 **Dieses Brot ist hart.**
- 6 **Ich spiele gern Poolbillard.**
- 7 **I'm going by train tomorrow.**
- 8 **Wir spielten Fußball.**
- 9 **Die roten Blumen sind schön.**
- 10 **Der Schwarzwald ist sehr groß.**
- 11 **The girl is writing a letter to her pen friend in German.**
- 12 **mother**, **box** and **chocolates** are nouns
- 13 **chocolates** is plural
- 14 **Bruder** and **Buch** are nouns – they are both singular
- 15 **Bruders**
- 16 **Bücher** – **Büchern** is the dative plural form
- 17 **I** and **her** are pronouns
- 18 in the second sentence
- 19 **schwarze**
- 20 **brav**
- 21 to **come**, to **cry**, to **do**, to **be**
- 22 the imperfect tense is **lief**, the perfect tense is **ist gelaufen**
- 23 **daily** is an adverb
- 24 the second sentence
- 25 **durch** takes the accusative case
- 26 **Er geht in den Garten.**