

Essential German Daily Phrases

Wichtige Deutsche Alltagsphrasen

IdiomAry

What are German daily phrases?

German daily phrases (Alltagsphrasen) are the essential expressions and conversational building blocks you need for everyday communication in Germany, Austria, and German-speaking regions. These phrases go beyond individual words to help you navigate real-life situations with confidence and cultural awareness. Mastering these common expressions will dramatically improve your fluency and help you connect authentically with German speakers, from casual conversations to formal interactions in the German-speaking world.

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1 Greetings and Basic Courtesy

Begrüßungen und Grundlegende Höflichkeit - Essential phrases for polite daily interaction

1.1 Meeting and Greeting

- **Guten Tag** - *Good day/Hello*
The most universal greeting, appropriate for any time of day.
Shows proper German politeness and respect for others.
- **Guten Morgen** - *Good morning*
Used until approximately 11 AM, standard morning greeting.
Professional and polite way to start conversations early in the day.
- **Guten Abend** - *Good evening*
Used from about 6 PM onwards for evening interactions.
Appropriate for formal and informal evening encounters.
- **Hallo** - *Hello (informal)*
Casual greeting used with friends, family, or familiar people.
Universal and friendly, works in most informal situations.
- **Wie geht es Ihnen?** - *How are you? (formal)*
Shows respect and proper manners with strangers or in business.
Essential for professional and formal social situations.
- **Wie geht's?** - *How's it going? (informal)*
Friendly, casual way to ask about someone's well-being.
Used with people you know well, friends, or peers.
- **Freut mich** - *Pleased to meet you*
Polite response when being introduced to someone new.
Shows good manners and proper German social etiquette.

1.2 Polite Expressions

- **Bitte** - *Please*
Essential for polite requests and showing good manners.
Also means "you're welcome" - very versatile German word.
- **Danke** - *Thank you*
Basic expression of gratitude used constantly in German.
Shows appreciation and is fundamental to German politeness.
- **Vielen Dank** - *Thank you very much*
Shows extra appreciation and genuine gratitude for help.
Used when someone does something especially helpful or kind.

- **Bitte schön** - *You're welcome (elaborate)*
More elaborate response to thanks, shows extra politeness.
Demonstrates excellent German manners and social grace.
- **Entschuldigung** - *Excuse me/Sorry*
Used to get attention politely or apologize for interruptions.
Essential for navigating crowds and requesting help politely.
- **Es tut mir leid** - *I'm sorry*
More serious apology for mistakes or causing inconvenience.
Shows genuine regret and takes responsibility for problems.
- **Kein Problem** - *No problem*
Casual response showing that something wasn't bothersome.
Friendly way to reassure others and keep interactions pleasant.
- **Auf Wiedersehen** - *Goodbye (formal)*
Standard formal farewell for most situations and relationships.
Literally means "until we see each other again" - shows hope for future meetings.

2 Essential Daily Interactions

Wichtige Tägliche Interaktionen - Phrases for common daily situations

2.1 Asking for Help and Information

- **Können Sie mir helfen?** - *Can you help me?*
Polite way to request assistance from strangers or acquaintances.
Opens conversations respectfully and shows appreciation for their time.
- **Wo ist...?** - *Where is...?*
Essential for finding locations and getting directions to places.
Complete with: der Bahnhof (train station), die Apotheke (pharmacy).
- **Wie viel kostet das?** - *How much does this cost?*
Crucial for shopping and making informed purchasing decisions.
Used in stores, markets, restaurants, and various service situations.
- **Ich verstehe nicht** - *I don't understand*
Honest admission that encourages clearer communication from others.
Most Germans will appreciate your honesty and speak more clearly.
- **Sprechen Sie Englisch?** - *Do you speak English?*
Backup question when German becomes too challenging to navigate.
Always ask in German first to show respect and effort.

- **Können Sie das wiederholen?** - *Can you repeat that?*
Requests clarification when you miss or don't understand something.
Shows you're trying to learn and engage properly in German.
- **Langsamer, bitte** - *Slower, please*
Asks speakers to slow down for better comprehension and understanding.
Most Germans will happily accommodate language learners and speak slower.

2.2 Expressing Needs and Preferences

- **Ich brauche...** - *I need...*
Direct way to express requirements and necessities clearly.
Complete with: Hilfe (help), Informationen (information), Zeit (time).
- **Ich möchte...** - *I would like...*
Polite way to express desires, more courteous than "ich will."
Shows good manners and proper German courtesy in requests.
- **Das gefällt mir** - *I like that*
Positive response when trying food, activities, or experiences.
Can be strengthened with "sehr" (very much) for emphasis.
- **Das gefällt mir nicht** - *I don't like that*
Polite way to express dislike without being rude or offensive.
Better than simply refusing or saying no repeatedly to suggestions.
- **Ich bevorzuge...** - *I prefer...*
Diplomatic way to show choice between different available options.
More tactful than directly rejecting alternatives or other possibilities.
- **Das ist in Ordnung** - *That's fine/okay*
Acceptance when something is adequate but not necessarily perfect.
Shows flexibility and avoids seeming too demanding or difficult.
- **Das ist perfekt** - *That's perfect*
Shows strong satisfaction and appreciation for excellent results.
Used when something exceeds expectations or is exactly what you wanted.

3 Restaurant and Food Phrases

Restaurant und Essen Phrasen - Essential expressions for dining situations

3.1 Ordering Food and Drinks

- **Einen Tisch für zwei, bitte** - *A table for two, please*
How to request seating when entering a restaurant establishment.
Change the number as needed for your specific group size.

- **Die Speisekarte, bitte** - *The menu, please*
Request to see the menu when seated at your table.
"Speisekarte" is the food menu, "Getränkekarte" is the drinks menu.
- **Was empfehlen Sie?** - *What do you recommend?*
Excellent way to discover specialties and popular local dishes.
Shows interest in the restaurant's best offerings and regional cuisine.
- **Ich nehme...** - *I'll have...*
Standard phrase for placing your order clearly and politely.
Complete with the specific dish or drink name from the menu.
- **Die Rechnung, bitte** - *The bill, please*
How to request the check when you're ready to pay and leave.
In Germany, you usually need to ask for it specifically.
- **Ist die Bedienung inbegriffen?** - *Is service included?*
Important question about tipping expectations and final costs.
Helps you understand the total amount you need to pay.

3.2 During the Meal

- **Das ist lecker** - *This is delicious*
Compliment to show appreciation for excellent food and cooking.
Makes chefs and servers proud of their culinary work and efforts.
- **Noch etwas Wasser?** - *Some more water?*
Polite way to request additional beverages during your meal.
Shows consideration while expressing your needs clearly to staff.
- **Ich habe Durst** - *I'm thirsty*
Expresses the need for something to drink clearly and directly.
Often leads to ordering beverages or requesting water from servers.
- **Ich habe Hunger** - *I'm hungry*
Indicates readiness to order food or explains your current state.
Useful when deciding timing for meals or ordering additional food.
- **Ich bin satt** - *I'm full/satisfied*
Polite way to decline more food or explain why you're finished.
Shows appreciation while indicating you've had enough to eat.
- **Getrennt zahlen?** - *Pay separately?*
Asks if the group can pay individually for their meals.
Common question when dining with friends, colleagues, or acquaintances.

4 Shopping and Money Expressions

Einkaufen und Geld Ausdrücke - Essential phrases for commercial transactions

4.1 In Stores and Markets

- **Was kostet das?** - *What does this cost?*
Direct question about price while pointing to specific items.
Used when prices aren't clearly marked, displayed, or visible.
- **Gibt es einen Rabatt?** - *Is there a discount?*
Useful for finding deals, especially during sales periods or promotions.
Important in markets and when buying multiple items at once.
- **Das ist zu teuer** - *That's too expensive*
Honest reaction that might open price negotiation opportunities.
Sometimes leads to alternatives or better deals being offered instead.
- **Haben Sie Größe M?** - *Do you have size M?*
Essential for clothing shopping and finding the right fit.
Replace with S (small) or L (large) as needed for your specific size.
- **Ich nehme es** - *I'll take it*
Decisive phrase showing you want to purchase the specific item.
Clear signal that you're ready to complete the purchase transaction.
- **Nehmen Sie Karten?** - *Do you accept cards?*
Important question about available payment methods and options.
Many small German businesses prefer cash or have minimum purchase amounts.

4.2 Payment and Transactions

- **Ich zahle mit Karte** - *I'm paying by card*
Indicates your intention to use credit or debit card payment.
Helps the cashier prepare the appropriate payment terminal for you.
- **Bar, bitte** - *Cash, please*
Indicates your preference to pay with physical money instead.
Sometimes necessary when card machines aren't functioning properly or available.
- **Haben Sie Wechselgeld?** - *Do you have change?*
Important when paying with large bills for small purchases.
Shows consideration for the vendor's cash flow needs and limitations.
- **Stimmt so** - *Keep the change*
Polite way to tip or show appreciation for good service.
Generous gesture that's always well-received by service staff and workers.
- **Eine Quittung, bitte** - *A receipt, please*
Request for proof of purchase for your personal records.
Important for returns, warranties, or expense documentation and tracking.

- **Wie viel macht das insgesamt?** - *What's the total?*
Clarifies the final cost including all taxes, fees, and charges.
Helpful when multiple items or services are being purchased together.

5 Transportation and Directions

Transport und Richtungen - Getting around and finding places

5.1 Public Transportation

- **Wo ist die Bushaltestelle?** - *Where's the bus stop?*
Essential for using public transportation systems effectively and efficiently.
Replace with "U-Bahn" (subway) or "Straßenbahn" (tram) as needed.
- **Was kostet eine Fahrkarte?** - *How much does a ticket cost?*
Important for budgeting your transportation expenses accurately.
Prices often vary by zones, distance traveled, or time periods.
- **Fährt dieser Bus nach...?** - *Does this bus go to...?*
Confirms you're boarding the correct transportation route.
Prevents getting lost or traveling in the wrong direction accidentally.
- **An welcher Haltestelle muss ich aussteigen?** - *Which stop should I get off at?*
Seeks guidance about your destination stop from driver or passengers.
Helpful when route maps are complex, unclear, or difficult to navigate.
- **Können Sie mir Bescheid sagen?** - *Can you let me know?*
Requests help from others for your stop announcement or arrival.
Most people are happy to help tourists and visitors navigate successfully.
- **Entschuldigung, steigen Sie aus?** - *Excuse me, are you getting off?*
Polite way to ask if you can pass by someone.
Shows courtesy in crowded public transportation situations and spaces.

5.2 Getting Directions

- **Wie komme ich zu...?** - *How do I get to...?*
Direct request for directions to a specific location or destination.
Usually followed by clear, step-by-step navigation instructions from locals.
- **Ist es weit?** - *Is it far?*
Determines if you can walk or need transportation assistance.
Helps you plan your time and choose appropriate travel methods efficiently.
- **Kann man zu Fuß gehen?** - *Can you walk there?*
Asks if the destination is within reasonable walking distance.

Important for planning and choosing appropriate clothing, footwear, and timing.

- **In welche Richtung?** - *In which direction?*
Seeks general orientation when you know the general destination.
Often answered with compass directions or notable landmarks as references.
- **Gibt es einen Stadtplan?** - *Is there a city map?*
Looks for visual aid to understand area layout and navigation better.
Tourist information centers and hotels usually provide free maps and guides.
- **Können Sie es mir auf der Karte zeigen?** - *Can you show me on the map?*
Requests visual demonstration of the route or exact location.
Much clearer than verbal directions for complex or unfamiliar routes and paths.

6 Emergency and Health Situations

Notfälle und Gesundheitssituationen - Important phrases for urgent situations

6.1 Medical Emergencies

- **Hilfe!** - *Help!*
Universal cry for assistance in any emergency situation or crisis.
Short, clear, and immediately understood by all German speakers everywhere.
- **Rufen Sie einen Krankenwagen!** - *Call an ambulance!*
Critical phrase for serious medical emergencies requiring immediate care.
Know this phrase - it could save someone's life in critical situations.
- **Wo ist das Krankenhaus?** - *Where is the hospital?*
Essential for finding medical care when needed urgently or immediately.
Hospital staff in tourist areas usually speak some English as well.
- **Mir geht es nicht gut** - *I don't feel well*
General way to express illness, discomfort, or health concerns.
Often the first step in seeking appropriate medical attention and care.
- **Ich habe Schmerzen in...** - *I have pain in my...*
Specific way to indicate pain in particular body parts or areas.
Complete with: dem Kopf (head), dem Magen (stomach), dem Hals (throat).
- **Ich bin allergisch gegen...** - *I'm allergic to...*
Crucial medical information for treatment and food safety considerations.
Could prevent serious allergic reactions or dangerous medical complications.

6.2 Safety and Security

- **Zu Hilfe!** - *Help! (urgent)*
More urgent than "Hilfe," used in life-threatening emergency situations.
Immediately signals that something serious and dangerous is currently happening.
- **Rufen Sie die Polizei!** - *Call the police!*
Request for law enforcement in dangerous or criminal situations.
Important for theft, violence, or other illegal activities requiring immediate intervention.
- **Wo ist das Polizeirevier?** - *Where is the police station?*
Locates law enforcement for reporting crimes or seeking official help.
Useful for both emergencies and routine police services, reports, and assistance.
- **Ich habe meinen Pass verloren** - *I've lost my passport*
Critical phrase for travelers facing serious document problems.
First step toward getting replacement travel documents from appropriate authorities.
- **Ich wurde bestohlen** - *I've been robbed*
Reports theft to authorities or explains your current difficult situation.
Often requires filing an official police report for insurance claims and procedures.
- **Gibt es hier ein öffentliches Telefon?** - *Is there a public phone here?*
Locates communication when your mobile phone isn't working properly.
Essential backup for contacting help, family, or emergency services when needed.

7 Time and Scheduling

Essential Time Expressions:

Asking about time:

- Wie spät ist es? - What time is it?
- Um wie viel Uhr...? - At what time...?
- Wann öffnet/schließt...? - When does... open/close?

Expressing time:

- Es ist ein Uhr - It's one o'clock
- Es ist zwei Uhr - It's two o'clock
- Um drei Uhr - At three o'clock
- Eine halbe Stunde - Half an hour
- Eine Viertelstunde - A quarter hour
- Es ist Mittag - It's noon
- Es ist Mitternacht - It's midnight

Days and scheduling:

- Heute - Today
- Morgen - Tomorrow
- Gestern - Yesterday
- Nächste Woche - Next week
- Das Wochenende - The weekend
- Heute Morgen - This morning
- Heute Abend - Tonight/This evening

8 Common Mistakes and Cultural Tips

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

1. **Forgetting formal address:** Use "Sie" until invited to use "du"
2. **Skipping greetings:** Always say "Guten Tag" when entering shops

3. **Informal tone too quickly:** Germans value proper etiquette initially
4. **Ignoring quiet hours:** "Ruhezeit" (quiet hours) are strictly observed
5. **Not saying goodbye:** Always say "Auf Wiedersehen" when leaving
6. **Assuming English:** Start conversations in German to show respect

Cultural Communication Tips:

1. **Respect German punctuality:** Being on time is extremely important
2. **Use proper titles:** "Herr" and "Frau" show appropriate respect
3. **Appreciate directness:** Germans value honest, straightforward communication
4. **Observe quiet public behavior:** Germans prefer discretion in public spaces
5. **Learn about German efficiency:** Processes and systems are highly organized
6. **Show environmental awareness:** Germans value recycling and sustainability
7. **Practice pronunciation:** German pronunciation rules are quite consistent

9 Quick Reference Table

German Phrase	English Translation	When to Use
Guten Tag	Good day/Hello	Universal daytime greeting
Guten Morgen	Good morning	Morning until 11 AM
Wie geht es Ihnen?	How are you?	Formal situations
Bitte	Please	Making polite requests
Danke	Thank you	Showing gratitude
Entschuldigung	Excuse me/Sorry	Getting attention politely
Wo ist...?	Where is...?	Finding locations
Wie viel kostet das?	How much does this cost?	Shopping, purchasing
Ich verstehe nicht	I don't understand	Communication difficulties
Können Sie mir helfen?	Can you help me?	Requesting assistance
Die Rechnung, bitte	The bill, please	Ending restaurant meals
Nehmen Sie Karten?	Do you accept cards?	Payment methods
Ist es weit?	Is it far?	Getting directions
Hilfe!	Help!	Emergency situations

German Phrase	English Translation	When to Use
Ich habe Schmerzen in...	I have pain in my...	Medical problems
Wie spät ist es?	What time is it?	Asking about time

10 Practice Scenarios

Scenario 1: At a Café

Practice this conversation:

- Server: "Guten Tag! Einen Tisch?"
- You: "Guten Tag. _____ für eine Person, bitte."
- Server: "Hier ist die Speisekarte. Was möchten Sie?"
- You: "_____ einen Kaffee, bitte."
- Server: "Sehr gern. Noch etwas?"
- You: "Nein, _____. _____ kostet das?"

Scenario 2: At a Bakery

Complete this dialogue:

- Baker: "Guten Tag!"
- You: "_____! _____ zwei Brötchen, bitte."
- Baker: "Bitte schön. Noch etwas?"
- You: "_____ ein Brot auch."
- Baker: "Das macht 3 Euro 20."
- You: "Ich _____ mit Karte. _____ Dank!"

Scenario 3: Asking for Directions

Fill in your responses:

- You: "_____, wo ist der Bahnhof, bitte?"
- Local: "Geradeaus, dann links."
- You: "_____ weit?"
- Local: "Nein, fünf Minuten zu Fuß."
- You: "_____! Auf Wiedersehen!"

Üben Sie diese Phrasen jeden Tag!
Practice these phrases every day!