



GERMAN GRAMMAR TIPS

One of the main impulses behind the earworms approach is to really get your brain used to the linguistic patterns, even the melody, of the target language.

We do this by offering the target language, spoken by native speakers, with a direct literal translation as well as a correct English interpretation, and by breaking a sentence down so that you understand all its constituent elements. In this way you intuitively learn about the structure, i.e. the grammar, of the language.

As an inquisitive language student, however, you will no doubt be searching for 'the rules' that these patterns are based on, which will give you the tools to construct strings of vocabulary yourself. So here we have provided comments on the grammatical elements to help you to 'decode' the rules, gain a more complete picture, and to construct your own word groups.

The tips given here relate directly to the grammatical themes embedded in earworms German Volumes 1 and 2.

1. 'a' = ein / eine / einen – masculine tea, feminine cups and neuter beer!

For traditional rather than any logical reasons, things are grouped into masculine, feminine and neuter in German.

In Vol. 1, track 1, you will notice that one says:

'Ich möchte einen Tee', but 'Ich möchte ein Bier'.

'einen' is the masculine, 'ein' is the neuter and 'eine' is the feminine version of the English 'a' for the object of a sentence (I'll explain the significance of the object and subject of a sentence later).

An example of a feminine object is 'eine Tasse' (a cup), e.g. 'Ich möchte eine Tasse Tee.'

Note that all **Nouns (Things)** in **German** are written in **Capitals**. This actually helps reading faster I find, because you can easily pick out the most important **Words** at a **Glimp**s.

Remembering the gender

The best advice on learning whether a noun is preceded by der, die or das, einen, ein or eine is to learn them as a child would – by ear! By listening repeatedly, the nouns together with their respective article burn themselves into your long term memory.

Another interesting technique for remembering the gender of a noun, pioneered by Kevin Crocombe at www.200-words-a-day.com is to visualize the object with a man or a woman. So you visualise a man drinking 'ein Kaffee' to know that Kaffee is masculine > der Kaffee. Visualize a woman drinking Cola to remember that it is 'eine Cola' (feminine).

2. Word order.

Rule: In a sentence with: Want, would like, can, will, must, would, should, could etc., (i.e. the so-called 'auxiliary' or 'supporting' verbs (because they 'support' other verbs in a sentence), *the main verb is always kicked right to the end of the sentence!*

E.g.

In the sentence: "I would like to have the menu." 'I would like to' kicks the main verb 'have' right to the end, i.e. the word order in German is "I **would like to** – the menu – **have**." ...

"Ich **möchte** – die Speisekarte – **haben**."



No matter how long the sentence is, the main verb always gets kicked to the end:

"**Can I have** the lunch time menu, please?"

'Can' (being a supporting verb) kicks the main verb (here 'have') to the very end. So it becomes ...

"**Can I** the lunchtime menu please **have**?"



"**Kann** Ich die Mittagsspeisekarte*, bitte **haben**?"

*Note that multi-word nouns are usually joined up in German:

Mittagsspeisekarte, Mineralwasser, Rotwein, etc.

Another example:

Vol 1 track 3.

Can I please get a coffee?

'get' goes to the end ...

Can I please a coffee get?

Kann ich bitte einen Kaffee **bekommen**?

Note that the German word for 'get' is 'bekommen'. It's typical when asking for something in a shop to simply say:

'Ich bekomme ein Liter Milch'. (I get a liter of milk = I'll have a liter of milk.)

Now you know why so many German visitors make the mistake of saying things like: 'I become six eggs?' (This was a real clanger dropped by one of my students. He knew there was something wrong by the confused look on the face of the check out girl!).

Similarly an impatient German guest was heard in a fast food restaurant asking: "When do I become a hamburger!" To which the waiter replied: "Never, I hope sir!"

3. A bottle of ..., a glass of ..., a cup of ..., a pound of ..., a litre of ..., etc

German drops the word 'of' in these structures:

You want to say:

I'll take ...	Ich bekomme ...
... a bottle of water. =	... eine Flasche Wasser.
... a glass of dry white wine. =	... ein Glas trockenen Weißwein.
... a cup of tea. =	... eine Tasse Tee.
... a pound of apples. =	... ein Pfund Äpfel.
... a litre of milk. =	... einen Litre Milch.

4. To the ...

The expression 'to the' ... is either 'zum' for masculine and neuter objects, or 'zur' in front of feminine objects. These are the expressions: "**zu dem**" and "**zu der**" melded together.

You will often see these on signposts.

to the main station = zum Hauptbahnhof

to the center = zum Zentrum

to the airport = zum Flughafen

to the hotel Windsor = zum Hotel Windsor

to the doctor's = zum Arzt

to the dentist's = zum Zahnarzt

to the motorway = zur Autobahn

to the passport control = zur Passkontrolle

to the toilet /bathroom = zur Toilette

to the bank = zur Bank

also the expression 'for example' = 'zum Beispiel' (z.B.)

Also useful to know. If you want to say:

"I have to go to the ..." you simply say: "Ich muss zum / zur ..." (Literally: "I must to the ...", you don't say 'go'!) See Track 4. Vol. 1

I have to go to the bank. = Ich muss zur Bank.

I have to go to the doctor's. = Ich muss zum Arzt.

I have to go to the toilet. = Ich muss zur Toilette.

4. Verbs: to speak or not to speak?

The verb 'speak' (with: I, you, we)

I speak	ich spreche ...	
you speak (formal)	Sie sprechen ...	(question: Sprechen Sie ...? = Do you speak ...?)
you speak (informal)	du sprichst ...	(question: Sprichst du ...? = Do you speak ...?)
you speak (plural /formal) .	Sie sprechen ...	(question: Sprechen Sie ...? = Do you speak ...?)
we speak	wir sprechen ...	(question: Sprechen wir ...? = Do we speak ...?)

The question is the reversed statement. **Sprechen Sie ...?**

The negative: The negative of 'I speak ...' in German is 'I speak no ...'

I speak German. = Ich spreche Deutsch.

I don't speak German. = Ich spreche **kein** Deutsch. (I speak no German.)

Summary:

Statement	Negative	Question
You speak ...	You don't speak ...	Do you speak ...?
Sie sprechen ...	Sie sprechen kein ...	Sprechen Sie ...?

The verb 'have' (with: I, you, we)

I have	Ich habe ...	
you have (formal)	Sie haben ...	(question: Haben Sie ...? = Do you have ...?)
you have (informal)	Du hast ...	(question: Hast du ...? = Do you have ...?)
you have (plural /formal)	Sie haben ...	(question: Haben Sie...? = Do you have ...?)
we have	Wir haben ...	(question: Haben wir ...? = Do we have ...?)

The question is the reversed statement. **Haben Sie ...?**

The negative: The negative of 'I have' in German is 'I have no' rather than 'I have not' as you might expect.

Examples:

I have a ticket. = Ich habe eine Karte.

I don't have a ticket. = Ich habe **keine** Karte. (I have no ticket)

We have a nice room. = Wir haben ein schönes Zimmer.

We don't have a nice room. = Wir haben **kein** schönes Zimmer. (We have no nice room.)

	Statement	Negative	Question	
	You have ...	You don't have ...	Do you have ...?	
'Do' 'does' they):	Sie haben ...	Sie haben kein / keine ...	Haben Sie ...?	and (it,

Questions are not made with **do** or **does** as in English, as you see above a question is the reversed statement.

Two examples:

I) Statement: It costs ... = Es kostet ...

It costs 10 Euros. = **Es kostet** zehn Euro.

Question: **Does it cost** 10 Euros? = **Kostet es** zehn Euro? (literally: Costs it 10 Euros?)

II) Statement: They cost 20 Euros = **Sie kosten** zwanzig Euro. (lit:

Question: **Do they cost** 20 Euros? = **Kosten sie** zwanzig Euro?

Do they have?

They have ... = Sie haben ...

As always, the question is the reversed statement.

'Do they have fish?' = 'Haben sie Fish?'

What type of fish **do they have?** = 'Was für Fish **haben sie?**' (Vol 2. track 9)

Note:

Haben **Sie** ...? (capital 'S') = Do you have ...?

Haben **sie** ...? (small 's') = Do they have ...?