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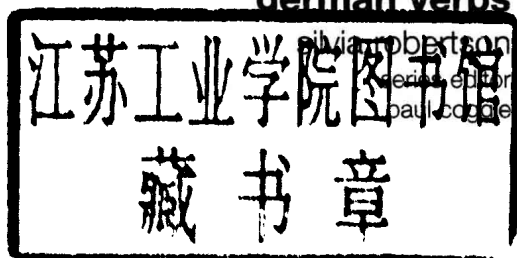
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Aim of this book

The aim of this book is to offer you the opportunity to improve your command of German by focusing on one aspect of language learning that invariably causes difficulties – verbs and the way they behave. Whether you are a complete beginner or a relatively advanced learner, you can consult this book when you need to know the form of a certain verb, or you can increase your command of German by browsing through. Whatever your approach, you should find *Teach Yourself German Verbs* a valuable support to your language learning.

How to use this book

Read the section on verbs and how they work. This starts on page 2.

Look up the verb you want to use in the verb list at the back of the book. You will need what is known as the *infinitive*, the equivalent to the *to ...* form in English (e.g. **kommen** *to come*).

The verbs have been allocated a number between 1 and 201. If the number is in **bold print**, the verb is one of the 201 presented in the verb tables; if it is not among the 201, the reference number (in ordinary print) will direct you to a verb that behaves in the same way as the verb you want to use.

Turn to the verb(s) referred to for details of your verb. If you are not sure which verb form to use in a given context, turn to the relevant section of 'How verbs work'.

The examples listed with the 201 verbs show basic uses of the verb, some well-known phrases and idiomatic expressions and, lastly, words sharing the same origin.

1 What is a verb?

It is difficult to define precisely what a verb *is*. Definitions usually include the concepts of actions, states and sensations. For instance, *to play* expresses an action, *to exist* expresses a state and *to see* expresses a sensation. A verb may also be defined by its role in the sentence or clause. It is in general the key to the meaning of the sentence and the element that can least afford to be omitted. Examine the sentence:

My neighbour works excessively hard every day of the week.

The elements *excessively hard* and/or *every day of the week* can be omitted with no problem whatsoever. In an informal conversation even *My neighbour* could, with a nod in the direction of the neighbour in question, be omitted. It would, however, not be possible to omit the verb *work*. The same is true of the verb in German sentences – you could not take *arbeitet* out of the following sentence.

Mein Nachbar arbeitet jeden Tag furchtbar schwer.	<i>My neighbour works terribly hard every day.</i>
---	--

2 I, you, he, she, it ...: person

You will recall that the form of the verb given in dictionaries, the *to ...* form in English, or the *-en* form in German, is called the infinitive. However, the verb is normally used in connection with a given person or persons, known as personal pronouns (e.g. *I work, she works*). Traditionally, these persons are numbered as follows:

First person singular	ich	<i>I</i>
Second person singular	du, Sie	<i>you</i>
Third person singular	er, sie, es	<i>he, she, it</i>
First person plural	wir	<i>we</i>
Second person plural	ihr, Sie	<i>you</i>
Third person plural	sie	<i>they</i>

German has two pronouns for both *you* singular and *you* plural. **Sie** is the polite form for *you*, whether you are addressing one person or more than one. The familiar **du** is reserved for members of the family, friends, people in your own peer group (such as fellow students), children, animals and God. But you only use **du** to individual persons. As soon as more than one person is being addressed you use **ihr**. Notice that although the plural **Sie** appears

as a second person plural pronoun, the verb it is being used with will be in the third person plural form.

You must also remember that *er*, *sie* and *es* are not used in exactly the same way as *he*, *she* and *it* in English. *Er* is used when you want to refer to a masculine (*der*) noun as well as for male persons. For example: *Der Tisch – er ist neu.* (*The table – it is new*). Similarly, *sie* is used for feminine (*die*) nouns and *es* for all neuter (*das*) nouns: *Die Tür – sie ist offen.* (*The door – it is open.*); *Das Haus – es ist klein.* (*The house – it is small.*)

3 Past, present, future ...: tense

a What is tense?

Most languages use changes in the verb form to indicate an aspect of time. These changes in the verb are traditionally referred to as *tense*, and the tenses may be *present*, *past* or *future*. It is, of course, perfectly possible to convey a sense of time without applying the concept of tense to the verb. Nobody would, for instance, have any trouble understanding:

Yesterday I work all day.

Here the sense of time is indicated by the words *yesterday* rather than by a change to the verb *work*. But on the whole, you should make changes to the verb (and thereby make use of *tense*) to convey a sense of time:

<i>He works hard as a rule.</i>	= Present tense
<i>I worked for eight hours</i> <i>non-stop.</i>	= Past tense

With most verbs, in most languages, including English, this involves adding different endings to what is called the *stem* of the verb. In the examples above, the stem is *work*. You add *-s* to make the third person singular present form of the verb; *-ed* is added to make the past tense, whatever the person. In German, the same principle applies. To form the stem, you take the *-en* off the infinitive, and add the appropriate endings. For example, the stem of *fahren* is *fahr-*, the stem of *kommen* is *komm-*.

b Auxiliary verbs

A verb used to support the main verb, for example, *I am working*, *you are working* is called an *auxiliary* verb. *Working* tells us what activity is going on; *am/are* tell us that it is continuous.

The most important auxiliary verbs in English are *to be*, *to have* and *to do*. You use *do*, for example, to ask questions and to negate statements:

*Do you work on Saturdays?
Yes, but I do not work on Sundays.*

German does not use **tun** (*to do*) as an auxiliary for asking questions or for negating statements, except in certain dialects, but **sein** (*to be*) and **haben** (*to have*) are used to form compound tenses, as you will see below.

c Simple and compound tenses

Tenses formed by adding endings to the verb stem are called *simple* tenses, for example, in the sentence:

I worked in a factory last summer.

The ending *-ed* has been added to the stem *work* to form the simple past tense.

English and German also have *compound* tenses where an auxiliary verb is used as well as the main verb, for example:

I have worked in a factory every summer for five years.

The auxiliary verb *to have* has been introduced to form what is usually known as the *perfect tense*.

d Participles

In compound tenses, the auxiliary verbs *to have* or *to be* are used with a form of the main verb known as a *participle*. The *past participle* is used to form the perfect tense in both German and English:

ich habe **gearbeitet**

I have worked

ich habe **gegessen**

I have eaten

In English, the *present participle* is used to form the continuous tenses:

I am working, eating and sleeping

The present participle in German is not used to form continuous tenses but is often used as an adjective.

4 Regular and irregular verbs

Unfortunately, all European languages have verbs which do not behave according to a set pattern and which are referred to as *irregular* verbs.

In English, the verb *to work* is regular because it does conform to a certain pattern. The verb *to be*, however, does not.

a Weak verbs

Fortunately, most German verbs are regular. They are often referred to as *weak* (wk.) verbs. The weak verbs always behave in the same way with no changes to their stems and with their past participles formed **ge-** + stem + **-t** (see p. 8).

There are some weak verbs, those with their stems ending in **-d** or **-t**, which require an additional **-e-** between the stem and endings of **-st** or **-t**, simply to make them pronounceable. For example, in the present tense, you have **du arbeitest**, **er arbeitet**, **ihr arbeitet**, and the past participle **gearbeitet**.

Some weak verbs do not have the typical **-en** ending of the infinitive but **-rn** instead, which again requires a slight variation for the first and third person plural, where the **-e-** is omitted. (e.g. **wir klettern**, **Sie/sie klettern**).

Rather a large number of verbs ending in **-ieren**, which are in fact derived from foreign verbs, and are almost identical to their English equivalent, differ in their past participle form, which does not have the **ge-** (e.g. **ich habe reserviert**).

b Strong verbs

In both English and German, there are some verbs which do behave according to a set pattern but are not entirely straightforward, since they tend to incorporate vowel changes for the past tense and past participle. Examples of such verbs are:

Infinitive	Present	Past	Perfect
to sing	I sing	I sang	I have sung
to swim	I swim	I swam	I have swum

These verbs are often referred to as *strong* verbs. The majority of strong (str.) verbs in English are also strong verbs in German. For example in German there is:

Infinitive	Present	Past	Perfect
singen	ich singe	ich sang	ich habe gesungen
schwimmen	ich schwimme	ich schwamm	ich bin geschwommen

Since the infinitive gives no indication whether a verb is weak or strong it is a good idea to learn strong verbs not just in their infinitive form but with their third person singular form of the present and the past, as well as their past participle, e.g. **fahren**: **fährt**, **fuhr**, **gefahren**; **singen**: **singt**, **sang**, **gesungen**. In the verb

list these vowel changes are indicated in brackets, e.g. **fahren** (str. ä, u, a); **singen** (str. i, a, u)

c Mixed verbs

There is a small group of nine verbs in German which also have vowel changes in the past tense and for the past participle, though their past participle has the -t ending of weak verbs. They are called *irregular weak* or *mixed* verbs. The nine mixed verbs are:

brennen, brennt, brannte, gebrannt	to burn
bringen, bringt, brachte, gebracht	to bring
denken, denkt, dachte, gedacht	to think
kennen, kennt, kannte, gekannt	to know
nennen, nennt, nannte, genannt	to name
rennen, rennt, rannte, gerannt	to run
senden, sendet, sandte, gesandt	to send
wenden, wendet, wandte, gewandt	to turn
wissen, weiß, wusste, gewusst	to know

5 Formation and use of tenses

a The present

This is formed the same way whether the verb is weak or strong. Simply take off the -en part of the infinitive to get the stem and add the endings:

ich hole	wir holen
du holst	ihr holt
er/sie/es/holt	Sie/sie holen

The present tense is used:

- to express an action that is regularly carried out.

Ich arbeite.

I work.

Just as in English, this action, though in the present tense, refers to past, present and future time.

- to express a continuous action which would require the continuous form in English.

Ich arbeite im Moment. *I am working at the moment.*

There are other little expressions, such as **gerade** (*just*), **im Augenblick** (*at the moment*), **zur Zeit** (*at present*), which combine with this simple form of the present tense to give a continuous meaning.

- to express the future. The appropriate future expression is added to the verb.

Ich arbeite morgen. *I'm going to work tomorrow.*
 In einer Woche arbeite ich. *In one week I'll be working.*

Note that, in the second example, the verb and pronoun have swapped places. This is because the verb always has to be the second concept in the sentence.

- to express an action that started in the past but is still going on. This issue is often indicated by expressions of time such as *seit* (*since*) and *schon* (*already*).

Ich arbeite seit gestern. *I have been working since yesterday.*

b The imperfect or simple past

The formation of the imperfect tense is different for weak and strong verbs. For weak verbs, you add a set of endings to the stem; for strong verbs, you add a different set of endings to the past tense stem. Note the vowel change from the *-i-* of the infinitive to the *-a-* of the past tense (*singen* inf.)

Weak verb

ich holte
 du holtest
 er/sie/es holte
 wir holten
 ihr holtet
 Sie/sie holten

Strong verb

ich sang
 du sangst
 er/sie/es sang
 wir sangen
 ihr sangt
 Sie/sie sangen

The imperfect or simple past is not commonly used in colloquial, spoken German. Here are three ways in which it is most commonly used.

- in formal written and scientific language, and in written narrative.
- in sentences where two actions in the past are united, particularly in clauses beginning with *als* (*when*) and *wie* (*as, when*).

Als ich die Tür öffnete, *When I opened the door I*
 habe ich ihn gesehen. *saw him.*

- with verbs of saying, hearing, feeling and many common verbs, such as *sein*, *haben*, *bleiben*, *gehen*, *kommen*, *stehen*.

Ich war in Berlin. *I was in Berlin.*
 Er ging zur Schule. *He went to school.*
 Der Bus kam nicht. *The bus did not come.*

The past tense is also frequently used in the passive voice (see pp. 14–15) and with modal verbs (see pp. 17–18).

c The perfect

The perfect is a compound tense formed by the relevant form of the present tense of the auxiliary verb with the past participle. The auxiliary verb is usually **haben** (*to have*) but some verbs, especially those expressing a movement or condition, are formed using **sein** (*to be*). All the verbs in the verb list and verb tables that take **sein** rather than **haben** are marked with an *. Those that take both **sein** and **haben** are marked with a †.

Past participles: To form the past participle of weak verbs you add the prefix **ge-** and the ending **-t** to the stem. For example:

Infinitive	Past Participle
holen	geholt
sagen	gesagt

Weak verbs whose stem ends in **-t** or **-d**, for example **antwort-en** and **kost-en**, have an extra **-e-** added before the **-t** ending.

antworten	geantwortet
kosten	gekostet

Verbs ending in **-ieren** do not take the prefix **ge-** in the past participle.

organisieren	organisiert
reservieren	reserviert

Remember that the past participles of strong verbs end in **-en** and often incorporate a vowel change, e.g. **ich habe gesungen**.

ich **habe** geholt
du **hast** geholt
er/sie/es **hat** geholt
wir **haben** geholt
ihr **habt** geholt
Sie/sie **haben** geholt

ich **bin** geflogen
du **bist** geflogen
er/sie/es **ist** geflogen
wir **sind** geflogen
ihr **seid** geflogen
Sie/sie **sind** geflogen

The perfect tense has three main uses:

- to express an action in the past (especially in spoken German) that would have to be translated by the English past.

Mein Sohn ist gestern nach Berlin gefahren, wo er seinen Freund besucht hat.

My son went to Berlin yesterday where he visited his friend.

- to express an action that has been completed and for which no time frame is specified.

Ich habe den Film gesehen. *I have seen the film.*

- to express a continuous action.

Ich habe gearbeitet. *I have been working.*

d The pluperfect

The tense is formed by the relevant form of the imperfect tense of the auxiliary verb, with the past participle.

ich **hatte** geholt
du **hattest** geholt
er/sie/es **hatte** geholt
wir **hatten** geholt
ihr **hattet** geholt
Sie/sie **hatten** geholt

ich **war** geflogen
du **warst** geflogen
er/sie/es **war** geflogen
wir **waren** geflogen
ihr **wart** geflogen
Sie/sie **waren** geflogen

It is used as in English to express an action in the past that was completed before another one started.

Ich hatte schon zwölf Stunden *I had already worked for twelve*
gearbeitet, als ... *hours when ...*

e The future

This tense is formed in the same way whether the verb is weak or strong. Use the relevant form of the present tense of **werden** (*to become*) with the infinitive of the verb.

ich **werde** holen
du **wirst** holen
er/sie/es **wird** holen

wir **werden** holen
ihr **werdet** holen
Sie/sie **werden** holen

The future tense is used as in English to express an action that is to be or that is planned or intended.

Ich werde morgen arbeiten. *I'll work/I'll be working/I am*
going to work tomorrow.

f The future perfect

This tense is formed with the relevant form of the present tense of **werden**, followed by the past participle and the infinitive of the auxiliary verb.

ich **werde geholt haben**
 du **wirst geholt haben**
 er/sie/es **wird geholt haben**
 wir **werden geholt haben**
 ihr **werdet geholt haben**
 Sie/sie **werden geholt haben**

ich **werde geflogen sein**
 du **wirst geflogen sein**
 er/sie/es **wird geflogen sein**
 wir **werden geflogen sein**
 ihr **werdet geflogen sein**
 Sie/sie **werden geflogen sein**

This tense is used as in English to express an action that will have been completed by a certain time in the future.

Ich werde gearbeitet haben. *I shall have worked/I shall have been working.*

6 Indicative, subjunctive, imperative ...: mood

The term *mood* is used to group verb phrases into four broad categories according to the general kind of meaning they convey.

a The indicative mood

This is used for making statements or asking questions of a factual kind.

We are not going today.

Does he work here?

Crime does not pay.

All the tenses we have seen so far are in the indicative mood.

b The conditional

This is sometimes regarded as a tense and sometimes as a mood in its own right. It is often closely linked with the subjunctive and is used to express conditions or possibilities.

I would accept her offer, if ...

In German, the conditional is formed with the relevant form of the imperfect subjunctive (see below) of **werden**, with the infinitive of the verb. It is formed in the same way whether the verb is weak or strong.

ich **würde holen**
 du **würdest holen**
 er/sie/es **würde holen**

wir **würden holen**
 ihr **würdet holen**
 Sie/sie **würden holen**

The conditional is used, as in English, to express an action that might be realized under certain conditions:

Ich würde arbeiten, wenn ich müsste. *I would work if I had to.*

There is also a past conditional tense. This does not appear in the verb tables as it is most commonly formed in exactly the same way as the pluperfect subjunctive, i.e. with the relevant form of the imperfect subjunctive of **haben** or **sein** and the past participle. However, it is also occasionally formed with the relevant form of the imperfect subjunctive of **werden** with the past participle and the infinitive of the auxiliary verb.

Formed with **haben/sein**

ich **hätte geholt**

du **hättest geholt**

er/sie/es **hätte geholt**

wir **hätten geholt**

ihr **hättet geholt**

Sie/sie **hätten geholt**

ich **wäre geflogen**

du **wärest geflogen**

er/sie/es **wäre geflogen**

wir **wären geflogen**

ihr **wäret geflogen**

Sie/sie **wären geflogen**

Formed with **werden**

ich **würde geholt haben**

du **würdest geholt haben**

er/sie/es **würde geholt haben**

wir **würden geholt haben**

ihr **würdet geholt haben**

Sie/sie **würden geholt haben**

ich **würde geflogen sein**

du **würdest geflogen sein**

er/sie/es **würde geflogen sein**

wir **würden geflogen sein**

ihr **würdet geflogen sein**

Sie/sie **würden geflogen sein**

This tense is used as in English to express an action that might have been realized in the past but was not.

Ich würde gearbeitet haben, wenn ich gekonnt hätte. *I would have worked if I had been able to.*

or

Ich hätte gearbeitet, wenn ich gekonnt hätte.

c The subjunctive mood

This is generally used for expressing wishes, conditions and non-factual matters.

It is my wish that John be allowed to come.

If I were you ...

The use of the subjunctive in English is nowadays rather rare, but it is still frequent in German.

The subjunctive has two main uses:

- to report a conversation by turning direct speech into indirect speech.

Er sagte: „Sie arbeitet nicht“. *He said: 'She doesn't work'.*

would be reported as:

Er sagte, sie arbeite nicht. *He said that she did not work.*

The indirect speech is in the same tense as the direct speech, but in the subjunctive form. If the German direct speech is in the perfect, the indirect version is also in the perfect, but in the subjunctive form:

Er sagte: „Sie hat nicht gearbeitet“.

He said: 'She has not worked'.

Er sagte, sie habe nicht gearbeitet.

He said she had not worked.

- as in English, to express actions which are unreal, imagined or desired.

Wenn ich du wäre ...

If I were you ...

Ich wünschte, er käme.

I wish he would come.

The various tenses of the subjunctive mood are illustrated below.

The subjunctive is often avoided by using the conditional forms with **würde**, **wäre** or **hätte**.

An deiner Stelle täte ich das nicht./An deiner Stelle würde ich das nicht tun.

In your place, I would not do that.

Present

ich hole
du **holst**
er/sie/es hole
wir **holen**
ihr **holet**
Sie/sie **holen**

Imperfect

Weak verb
ich holte
du **holtest**
er/sie/es holte
wir **holten**
ihr **holtet**
Sie/sie **holten**

Strong verb
ich **sänge**
du **sängest**
er/sie/es **sänge**
wir **sängen**
ihr **sänget**
Sie/sie **sängen**

Perfect

ich **habe** geholt
du **habest** geholt
er/sie/es **habe** geholt
wir **haben** geholt
ihr **habet** geholt
Sie/sie **haben** geholt

ich **sei** geflogen
du **seiest** geflogen
er/sie/es **sei** geflogen
wir **seien** geflogen
ihr **seiet** geflogen
Sie/sie **seien** geflogen

Pluperfect

ich **hätte** geholt
du **hättest** geholt
er/sie/es **hätte** geholt
wir **hätten** geholt
ihr **hättet** geholt
Sie/sie **hätten** geholt

ich **wäre** geflogen
du **wärest** geflogen
er/sie/es **wäre** geflogen
wir **wären** geflogen
ihr **wäret** geflogen
Sie/sie **wären** geflogen

Future

ich **werde** holen
du **werdest** holen
er/sie/es **werde** holen