

G E R M A N

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GLOSSARY OF GRAMMATICAL TERMS

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# INTRODUCTION

The definitions and explanations of grammatical terms in this glossary do not claim to be exhaustive. For more detailed information, a dictionary should be consulted.

Most definitions or explanations are followed by a German example, containing the feature in question, which is underlined. If the feature is applicable to the English language, it is underlined in the English translation.

All entries are arranged alphabetically. Capital letters are used for cross reference.

This glossary has a variety of uses, but it was essentially prepared for DLIFLC Gateway students and instructors.

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## ACCUSATIVE

One of four German CASES. In German, the DIRECT OBJECT is usually in the ACCUSATIVE CASE.

Der Soldat kauft einen Volkswagen.  
(The soldier buys a Volkswagen)

The accusative is also used for the object of some PREPOSITIONS.

Der Volkswagen ist für den Soldaten.  
(The Volkswagen is for the soldier)

## ACTIVE VOICE

The VOICE which indicates that the SUBJECT of a sentence acts, i.e., is doing something.

Der Soldat kauft einen Volkswagen.  
(The soldier is buying a Volkswagen)

See also PASSIVE VOICE.

## ADJECTIVE

A word which modifies a NOUN or PRONOUN. See ATTRIBUTIVE ADJECTIVE and PREDICATE ADJECTIVE.

## ADVERB

A word which most commonly modifies a VERB (1), an ADJECTIVE (2), or another ADVERB (3).

- (1) Der Soldat fährt schnell.  
(The soldier drives fast)
- (2) Der Soldat fährt einen sehr schnellen VW.  
(The soldier drives a very fast VW)
- (3) Der Soldat fährt sehr schnell.  
(The soldier drives very fast)

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They most commonly express time (1), manner (2), or place (3).

- (1) Der Soldat fährt heute einen VW.  
(The soldier drives a VW today)
- (2) Der Soldat fährt schnell.  
(The soldier drives fast)
- (3) Der Soldat fährt hier einen VW.  
(The soldier drives a VW here)

#### ARTICLE

A NOUN determiner. There are two articles: the DEFINITE ARTICLE (1) and the INDEFINITE ARTICLE (2).

- (1) Der Soldat kauft einen VW.  
(The soldier buys a VW)
- (2) Ein Soldat kauft einen VW.  
(A soldier buys a VW)

The definite article can be used with nouns in both the SINGULAR and PLURAL.

Die Soldaten kaufen die Volkswagen.  
(The soldiers buy the VWs)

#### ATTRIBUTIVE ADJECTIVE

An ADJECTIVE which precedes the NOUN which it modifies.

Mike kauft einen neuen Volkswagen.  
(Mike buys a new Volkswagen)

#### AUXILIARY VERB

A verb used in combination with another verb to form the PREDICATE (1) and some VERB TENSES (2).

- (1) Der Soldat kann einen VW kaufen.  
(The soldier can buy a VW)
- (2) Der Soldat hat einen VW gekauft.  
(The soldier has bought a VW)

## CASE

- NOMINATIVE - Der Soldat ist Amerikaner.  
(The Soldier is an American)
- ACCUSATIVE - Er fragt den Soldaten.  
(He asks the soldier)
- DATIVE - Er hilft dem Soldaten.  
(He helps the soldier)
- GENITIVE - Das ist der VW des Soldaten.  
(This is the soldier's VW)

Observe the changes of the article and noun der Soldat in the above sentences. In each sentence, der Soldat is in a different CASE; the case is reflected by case endings (underlined) and depends on the function of the words in the sentence.

## CLAUSE

A simple sentence, or a subdivision of a larger sentence. Its minimal elements are SUBJECT and PREDICATE.

Der Wagen ist neu.  
(The car is new)

There are two types, PRINCIPAL (or MAIN) CLAUSE (1) and SUBORDINATE CLAUSE (2).

- (1) Der Soldat kauft den Volkswagen, ...  
(The soldier buys the Volkswagen, ...)
- (2) ... obwohl der VW teuer ist.  
(... although the VW is expensive)

COMPARATIVE see DEGREE.

## COMPOUND TENSE

A TENSE formed with an AUXILIARY VERB. See PERFEKT, and FUTURE TENSE.

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## CONJUGATION

		PERSON	NUMBER
ich kaufe	(I buy)	1st	sing.
du kaufst	(you buy)	2nd	sing.
Sie kaufen	(you buy)		
er (sie, es) kauft	(he, she, it buys)	3rd	sing.
wir kaufen	(we buy)	1st	plur.
ihr kauft	(you buy)	2nd	plur.
Sie kaufen	(you buy)		
sie kaufen	(they buy)	3rd	plur.

Observe that the verb endings change according to PERSON and NUMBER. The set of changes is called CONJUGATION.

## CONJUNCTION

See COORDINATING CONJUNCTION and SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTION.

## COORDINATING CONJUNCTION

A word used to link words, phrases, or CLAUSES.

Der VW ist neu, und der Soldat kauft ihn.  
(The VW is new, and the soldier buys it)

## DATIVE

In German, the INDIRECT OBJECT is always in the DATIVE CASE.

Ein Onkel kauft dem Soldaten einen VW.  
(An uncle buys a VW for the soldier)

Some German verbs are followed by only one object in the DATIVE CASE.

Der VW gefällt dem Soldaten.  
(The VW appeals to the soldier)

Some German PREPOSITIONS take an object in the DATIVE CASE.

Der Onkel fährt mit dem Soldaten.  
(The uncle rides with the soldier)

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## DECLENSION

The changes in a NOUN, PRONOUN, ADJECTIVE, or ARTICLE which indicate NUMBER and CASE. See CASE.

## DEFINITE ARTICLE

See ARTICLE.

## DEGREE

The three degrees of ADJECTIVES are:

positive	-	schnell (fast)
comparative	-	<u>schneller</u> (faster)
superlative	-	(am) <u>schnellsten</u> (fastest)

## DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN

See PRONOUN.

## DER-WORDS

Words which take the same endings as the DEFINITE ARTICLE.

Dieser Soldat kauft einen VW.  
(This soldier buys a VW)

Welcher Soldat kauft einen VW?  
(Which soldier buys a VW?)

## DIRECT OBJECT

In German, the DIRECT OBJECT most commonly is in the ACCUSATIVE.

Der Soldat kauft einen VW.  
(The soldier buys a VW)

Certain verbs take a direct object in the DATIVE CASE.

Der Onkel hilft dem Soldaten.  
(The uncle helps the soldier)



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## EIN-WORDS .

Words which take the same endings as the INDEFINITE ARTICLE, (e.g., kein, mein).

Der Soldat kauft keinen Volkswagen.  
(The soldier doesn't buy a VW)

## FEMININE

In German, the gender of nouns whose DEFINITE ARTICLE (nominative singular) is die.

Die Kaserne ist in München.  
(The barracks is in Munich)

## FORM OF ADDRESS

The choice of PRONOUNS for the second PERSON. German distinguishes between the formal (Sie) and familiar (du, ihr) forms of address.

The salesman would ask the soldier:  
Kaufen Sie den VW?  
(Are you going to buy the VW)

The uncle would ask the soldier:  
Kaufst du den VW?  
(Are you going to buy the VW)

## FUTURE TENSE

A TENSE which indicates that the action will take place in the future.

Er wird morgen den VW kaufen.  
(He will buy the VW tomorrow)

## GENDER

In German, nouns are divided into three categories. These have been designated as (1) "Masculine," (2) "Feminine," and (3) "Neuter." Genders are indicated by the article in the singular.

- (1) Masculine - der Volkswagen
- (2) Feminine - die Kaserne
- (3) Neuter - das Haus

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## GENITIVE

A German CASE expressing possession, origin, or similar relationships.

Der Volkswagen des Soldaten ist teuer.  
(The soldier's VW is expensive)

## IMPERATIVE

A form of a VERB used to express a command, request, order, suggestion, or the like.

Kauf den Volkswagen!  
(Buy the VW)

Kaufen Sie den VW!  
(Buy the VW)

## IMPERFEKT

A German verb form used to indicate that an action took place in the past.\*

Der Soldat wollte den VW kaufen.  
(The soldier wanted to buy the VW)

Der Soldat hatte einen VW.  
(The soldier had a VW)

## INDEFINITE ARTICLE

See ARTICLE.

## INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

See PRINCIPAL CLAUSE.

## INDIRECT QUESTION

An indirect question is a SUBORDINATE CLAUSE that begins with a question word (INTERROGATIVE).

Der Soldat weiß nicht, warum der VW so teuer ist.  
(The soldier doesn't know why the VW is so expensive)

\*. Please note: The Gateway course only presents Imperfekt forms of AUXILIARY and MODAL VERBS.

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## INFINITIVE.

That form of the VERB which does not indicate PERSON or NUMBER. Dictionaries always give this verb form as the first entry. With MODAL VERBS, and with an AUXILIARY VERB in the FUTURE TENSE, it forms the PREDICATE VERB.

Der Soldat will einen VW kaufen.  
(The soldier wants to buy a VW)

Der Soldat wird einen VW kaufen.  
(The soldier will buy a VW)

## INFLECTION

Another word for CONJUGATION or DECLENSION.

## INSEPARABLE PREFIX

A PREFIX which is never separated from the VERB of which it is a part. German inseparable prefixes include be-, ver-, zer-, ge-, emp-, er-, ent-, miß-.

Der Soldat verkauft den VW.  
(The soldier sells the VW)

Verbs containing inseparable prefixes form the PAST PARTICIPLE without the prefix ge: verkauft.

Der Soldat hat den VW verkauft.  
(The soldier sold the VW)

In spoken German, inseparable prefixes are always unstressed.

## INTERJECTION

An exclamatory word, which is used to express emotion.

Dein Onkel hat dir einen VW gekauft? Ach, wie nett!  
(Your uncle bought you a Volkswagen? Oh, how nice)

## INTERROGATIVE

A word introducing a question.

Wer kauft den VW?  
(Who is buying the VW?)

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## INTRANSITIVE VERB

In German, an intransitive verb does not require, and usually cannot take, an object in the ACCUSATIVE CASE.

Der Soldat bleibt hier.  
(The soldier remains here)

## IRREGULAR VERB

A verb which does not follow a regular pattern in forming its IMPERFEKT, PAST PARTICIPLE, and often, the third person singular of the present tense.

Der Soldat hatte einen Volkswagen.  
(The soldier had a VW)

Der Soldat ist nach München gefahren.  
(The soldier drove to Munich)

Der Soldat fährt nach München.  
(The soldier drives to Munich)

## MAIN CLAUSE

See PRINCIPAL CLAUSE.

## MASCULINE

In German, the gender of nouns whose DEFINITE ARTICLE (nominative singular) is der.

Der Soldat kauft einen Volkswagen.  
(The soldier buys a Volkswagen)

## MODAL VERB

An AUXILIARY VERB expressing manner, mood, or aspect of an action (e.g., permission, possibility, obligation, and the like). It is generally followed by an INFINITIVE.

Der Soldat will einen VW kaufen.  
(The soldier wants to buy a VW)

Sometimes, the infinitive of a verb is only implied.

Der Soldat will nach Deutschland.  
(The soldier wants [to go] to Germany)

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## NOMINATIVE

A German CASE which is most commonly used for the SUBJECT of a sentence.

Der Soldat hat ein Auto.  
(The soldier has a car)

It is also used for PREDICATE NOUNS.

Das Auto ist ein Volkswagen.  
(The car is a Volkswagen)

## NOUN

That part of speech which is the name of a person, place, thing, or idea.

Der Soldat kauft den Volkswagen.  
(The soldier buys the Volkswagen)

## NUMBER

NOUNS, PRONOUNS, ARTICLES, and VERBS change according to their use in the SINGULAR or PLURAL.

Singular: Der Soldat kauft den VW.  
(The soldier buys the VW)

Plural: Die Soldaten kaufen den VW.  
(The soldiers buy the VW)

## OBJECT

See DIRECT OBJECT and INDIRECT OBJECT.

## PARTICIPLE

See PAST PARTICIPLE.

## PARTS OF SPEECH

They are: NOUNS, PRONOUNS, VERBS, ADJECTIVES, ADVERBS, PREPOSITIONS, CONJUNCTIONS, INTERJECTIONS, and ARTICLES.

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## PASSIVE VOICE

The VOICE which indicates that the SUBJECT of a sentence is tolerating or enduring an action.

Der Volkswagen wird gekauft.  
(The VW is being bought)

## PAST PARTICIPLE

The form of a verb used to form, together with an AUXILIARY VERB, the PERFEKT tense and the PASSIVE VOICE.

Der Soldat hat den VW gekauft.  
(The soldier bought the VW)

Der VW wird gekauft.  
(The VW is being bought)

## PAST TENSE

An English TENSE corresponding to the German IMPERFEKT.

## PERFEKT

A German TENSE primarily used in everyday speech and ordinary conversations with reference to past actions.

Der Soldat hat den Volkswagen gekauft.  
(The soldier bought the Volkswagen)

## PERSON

The grammatical distinction between speaker, person addressed, and person or thing discussed. There are three PERSONS, each of which may be SINGULAR or PLURAL.

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
first person	<u>ich</u> ( <u>I</u> )	<u>wir</u> ( <u>we</u> )
second person	<u>du</u> ( <u>you</u> )	<u>ihr</u> ( <u>you</u> )
	<u>Sie</u> ( <u>you</u> )	<u>Sie</u> ( <u>you</u> )
third person	<u>er</u> , <u>sie</u> , <u>es</u> ( <u>he</u> , <u>she</u> , <u>it</u> )	<u>sie</u> ( <u>they</u> )

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## PERSONAL PRONOUN

A word that replaces a NOUN or PROPER NOUN.

Der Soldat kauft den VW.      Er kauft ihn.  
(The soldier buys the VW)      (He buys it)

## PLURAL

The grammatical NUMBER indicating more than one.

Die Soldaten kaufen den Volkswagen.  
(The soldiers buy the VW)

## POSITIVE

See DEGREE.

## POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE

An ADJECTIVE which expresses possession, ownership, membership, origin, or similar relationships.

Sein Volkswagen ist teuer.  
(His Volkswagen is expensive)

German possessive adjectives follow the declensional pattern of EIN-WORDS.

## PREDICATE

The VERB or verb phrase in a sentence which says what the SUBJECT is or does.

Der Volkswagen ist teuer.  
(The VW is expensive)

Der Soldat kauft den VW.  
(The soldier buys the VW)

## PREDICATE ADJECTIVE

An ADJECTIVE which is part of the PREDICATE of a sentence, and not followed by a noun.

Der Volkswagen ist teuer.  
(The VW is expensive)

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## PREDICATE NOUN

A noun which is part of the PREDICATE.

Das ist ein Soldat.  
(That's a soldier)

German uses the NOMINATIVE CASE for predicate nouns.

## PREFIX

Syllable(s) joined to the beginning of a word to make a new word.

Der Soldat verkauft den VW.  
(The soldier sells the VW)

## PREPOSITION

A word used to express a relationship between NOUN or PRO-NOUN and another element of the sentence.

Der Soldat kauft den Volkswagen mit seinem Onkel.  
(The soldier buys the VW with his uncle)

## PRESENT TENSE

The verb form used to indicate that action is taking place at the present time.

Der Soldat kauft den VW.  
(The soldier buys the VW)

In German, also used (in combination with certain PREPOSITIONS, ADVERBS or adverbial phrases) to indicate that an action has taken place in the past.

Der Soldat ist seit 1977 in Deutschland.  
(The soldier has been in Germany since 1977)

## PRONOUN

Pronouns can have the same function in a sentence as NOUNS.

Der Soldat kauft den VW.                      Er kauft den VW.  
(The soldier buys the VW)                      (He buys the VW)



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There are several kinds of pronouns:

PERSONAL:	Er kauft den VW. ( <u>He</u> buys the VW)
DEMONSTRATIVE:	Das ist ein VW. ( <u>That</u> is a VW)
INTERROGATIVE:	Wer kauft den VW? ( <u>Who</u> buys the VW?)
REFLEXIVE:	Der Soldat kauft <u>sich</u> den VW. (The soldier buys <u>himself</u> the VW)
RECIPROCAL:	Der Soldat und sein Onkel verstehen <u>sich</u> gut. (The soldier and his uncle understand each other well)

#### PROPER NOUN

A name.

#### RECIPROCAL PRONOUN

In German, the REFLEXIVE PRONOUN doubles as reciprocal pronoun. See also PRONOUN.

#### REFLEXIVE PRONOUN

Reflexive pronouns usually serve to indicate that the SUBJECT of a verb is also its OBJECT. See also PRONOUN.

#### REFLEXIVE VERB

In German, a verb which requires a reflexive pronoun.

Der Soldat interessiert sich für Autos.  
(The soldier is interested in cars)

#### REGULAR VERB

A verb which follows a regular pattern in forming its PAST PARTICIPLE.

Der Soldat hat Deutsch gelernt.  
(The soldier has learned German)

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## SENTENCE ELEMENTS

SUBJECT, PREDICATE, OBJECT, PREDICATE NOUN, PREDICATE ADJECTIVE, and SUBORDINATE CLAUSE are some sentence elements.

## SEPARABLE PREFIX

The PREFIX of a German VERB which is separated from the verb in all forms of the PRESENT TENSE.

abholen - to pick up

Der Soldat holt seinen Onkel ab.  
(The soldier picks up his uncle)

Verbs containing separable prefixes form the PAST PARTICIPLE by putting the separable prefix before the prefix ge:

Der Soldat hat seinen Onkel abgeholt.  
(The soldier picked up his uncle)

## SINGULAR

The grammatical NUMBER indicating one.

## STEM

The stem of VERBS is the base to which inflectional endings are added.

Der Soldat kauft einen Volkswagen.  
(The soldier buys a Volkswagen)

## SUBJECT

The subject of a sentence (usually a NOUN or PRONOUN) determines the PERSON and NUMBER of the predicate verb. In German, the NOMINATIVE case is used for the subject.

Der Soldat kauft den VW.  
(The soldier buys the VW)

In an ACTIVE sentence, the subject of the sentence names the doer of the action.

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## SUBJUNCTIVE

A verb form used to make polite requests and ask polite questions,

Onkel Fritz, würdest du mir einen VW kaufen?  
(Uncle Fritz, would you buy me a VW)

to express an unfulfillable wish,

Wenn ich nur einen VW hätte!  
(If only I had a VW)

and to express contrary-to-fact ideas.

Wenn der VW nicht so teuer wäre, würde ich ihn kaufen.  
(If the VW were not so expensive, I would buy it)

## SUBORDINATE CLAUSE

A clause which cannot stand by itself; it must be joined to a PRINCIPAL CLAUSE to form a sentence.

Der Soldat kauft den Wagen, obwohl er teuer ist.  
(The soldier buys the car although it is expensive)

## SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTION

A conjunction which introduces a SUBORDINATE CLAUSE.

Der Soldat kauft den Volkswagen, obwohl er teuer ist.  
(The soldier buys the VW, although it is expensive)

## SUFFIX

Syllable(s) joined to the end of a word to make a new word.

Der Volkswagen ist am schnellsten.  
(The Volkswagen is fastest)

## SUPERLATIVE

See DEGREE.

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## SYNTAX

The system governing the relationship of words to each other in a sentence; the rules determining the sequence of SENTENCE ELEMENTS. For instance: "In German the verb is at the end of a subordinate clause."

Der Soldat kauft den VW, obwohl er teuer ist.  
(The soldier buys the VW, although it is expensive)

## TENSE

Tense is a word used in grammar to mean time. See PRESENT TENSE, IMPERFEKT, PERFEKT, FUTURE TENSE.

## TRANSITIVE VERB

In German, a verb that takes an object in the ACCUSATIVE CASE.

Der Soldat kauft den Volkswagen.  
(The soldier buys the VW)

See also INTRANSITIVE VERB.

## UMLAUT

Umlaut refers to the two dots which appear over a letter to indicate a particular vowel sound:

(ä, äu, ö, ü)

## UTTERANCE

A meaningful unit of speech.

Was kauft der Soldat? (What is the soldier buying?)  
Den Volkswagen. (The Volkswagen)

## VERB

That part of speech which expresses action or being, can be conjugated, and form a past participle.

## VERB ENDING

See CONJUGATION.

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VOICE

See ACTIVE VOICE, PASSIVE VOICE.

WORD ORDER

See SYNTAX.

