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German

WORKBOOK

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Learn to read, write,
and speak German

Grasp basic grammar
concepts

Get a handle on
key vocabulary terms



Wendy Foster



German Workbook

by Wendy Foster

**for
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German Workbook For Dummies®

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Introduction

You may have had *German Workbook For Dummies* delivered to your doorstep, or you were opening birthday presents, and ... surprise! No matter how you came across this book, acquiring more German helps you in a myriad of ways. You cannot help noticing that globalization is taking place at an ever-increasing pace. German is spoken by more members of the European Union than any other language, and Germany plays a leading economic role in the European Union. You may be a businessperson, adventurer, or avid language learner; it doesn't matter. At some point in your life, you're bound to come in contact with German. So get a head start and be ready to communicate, travel, and — most of all — have some fun **auf Deutsch** (*in German*).

Using this book builds your confidence in no time. Well, okay, you do need some free hours here and there, but the time you do spend using this book will pay off down the road. Consider what you can gain from *German Workbook For Dummies* as the equivalent of having invested a huge chunk of money, time, and effort at the local health club to become super-fit for a trek across the Alps. The obvious difference is that you have to plunk out only a small chunk of change, plus some time and effort, to reap personal and professional gain.

About This Book

German Workbook For Dummies is your key to success in becoming confident using German. In this book, you get basic skills, straight talk, the nitty-gritty, and enough detail to see you successfully through any major and minor roadblocks to communicating in German.

You'll find this book very user-friendly because you can go through it in any order you choose, zeroing in on your priorities. You can skim or, better, skip the grammar you don't need. Use the book to find answers to specific questions you may have on a topic that comes up while you're acquiring useful language. All the chapters have ample practice exercises following the grammar explanations so you can check whether you've grasped the material. Flip to the end of the chapter, and you'll find the answer key for the exercises, with explanations pertinent to problematic usage. Without even realizing it, you'll find your German vocabulary expanding as you cruise through the book. The example sentences and exercises use practical, everyday German that let you flex your vocabulary muscles as you complete the tasks. Most important, as you go through this book, **Viel Spaß!** (*Have a lot of fun!*)

Conventions Used in This Book

To make your progress go as smoothly as possible, I use some conventions in this book that can help you spot essential elements in the text and exercises:

- » I boldface the essential elements in verb tables, which may be information such as verb endings or irregular conjugations. Elsewhere, I boldface German words and example sentences.
- » I italicize English translations that accompany German words and sentences. I also italicize English terms that I immediately follow with a definition.
- » The answer key at the end of each chapter has not only the solutions to the practice exercises (in bold),

but also italicized English translations. Answers have explanations when I feel it's important to clarify why the answer given is the correct one.

- » Before each group of practice exercises, I provide an example exercise in Q&A format to show you how to complete the task. The example (Q.) is followed by the answer (A.) and an explanation for that answer, as needed.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing *German Workbook For Dummies*, I made the following assumptions about you, dear reader:

- » Your goal is to build your knowledge of German so that you feel comfortable with communicating in the language. (Alternatively, you want to dream in German.)
- » You're willing to jump into German at the deep end and start swimming, even if you need some water wings at first. Or perhaps you're already acquainted with some basics of German grammar and want to get going full steam ahead.
- » You don't want to be burdened by long-winded explanations of unnecessary grammatical terms; neither do you care to hold a scholarly discussion in German about Goethe's *Faust*. You just want to express yourself in clear and reasonably accurate German.
- » You're enthusiastic about having some fun while honing your German skills because the last thing you want from this book is to be reminded of boring school days, when success meant figuring out how to (a) sleep and learn at the same time, (b) skip class and

not be missed, and/or (c) wrap the teacher around your little finger so that no matter what you did, you still got good grades.

If any of these statements describes you, you're ready to get started using this book. **Willkommen!** (*Welcome!*)

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into six parts. The first four parts are divided into several chapters each, containing explanations, tables, and exercises. In the last two parts, you find practical learning tips and the appendix with charts, tables, and a mini dictionary. Here's the preview.

Part 1: The Basic Building Blocks of German

In this part, you find out how to introduce yourself and start a simple conversation. You acquaint yourself with the world of nouns and verbs, numbers and dates, word order and more fundamentals. See the mysteries of gender and case unveiled. [Part 1](#) also contains a practical guide to increasing your word power exponentially. You become familiar with techniques that help you retrieve newly acquired vocabulary and expressions.

Part 2: Focusing on the Present

Here you get the tools needed to construct sentences in the present tense. I give you ample practice combining nouns and pronouns with verbs. I include info on asking and answering questions, as well as agreeing and disagreeing. This part also shows you the seven modal verbs that help you be polite, ask for help, and talk about what you can do, want to do, would like to do, should do, or must do.

Part 3: Adding Flair to Your Conversations

You want to sound like a native, right? This part helps you find out how to express yourself using two-part verbs and reflexive verbs. It also delves into the finer points of expressing yourself using adjectives of description. The chapters here show you how to put adjectives and adverbs to work for you by making comparisons, show how to connect shorter ideas with conjunctions, and touch on using prepositions.

Part 4: Talking about the Past and the Future

In this part, you practice expressing yourself using past and future verbs. You become familiar with the difference between the conversational past and the simple (narrative) past, and you see how to choose the correct verb form to express yourself in the future.

Part 5: The Part of Tens

Here you find my top ten easy and useful tips for optimizing your German (in other words, how to make your German the best it can be). I close things out with a list of pitfalls to avoid.

Part 6: Appendixes

The three appendixes provide an assortment of references to help you communicate successfully in German. The first appendix includes verb tables for conjugating verbs. The second and third appendixes are the mini-dictionaries, which allow you to find the meaning of a German word you don't understand or the German equivalent of an English word.

Icons Used in This Book

Consider these icons to be key points as you take the journey through this book. You find them in the margins throughout. The icons include the following:



TIP

Helpful hints like these would've made it a whole lot easier for me to feel more comfortable using German when I was first living in Bavaria, stumbling along in my shaky German.



WARNING

The Warning icon points out hidden dangers you may encounter as you journey through the deep forest of tangled words, slippery sentence structure, and the like.



REMEMBER

This icon alerts you to key information that's worth revisiting. You want to stash this info in your mind because you'll end up using it again and again.



DIFFERENCES

Pay attention to these key points. By noticing similarities and differences between German and English, you see patterns that show you how to assemble German into meaningful statements.



PRACTICE

This icon marks the core learning tool in this book: a set of exercises designed for you to check your progress. Grab a pencil and get started.

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this book comes with a free, access-anywhere Cheat Sheet containing some must-have basic vocabulary and an overview of German grammar. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to www.dummies.com and type **German Workbook For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the search box.

Where to Go from Here

Part 1 helps you assess what you already know or don't know. The other parts build up the confidence you need to expand your German horizons. Work at your own pace, proceeding in any order you choose. Skip sections you're not ready to do yet. If you don't get the hang of a section, reread the explanation, check out the example sentences, or look at the first couple of solutions in the answer key.

Any time you feel like you're losing steam, ***mach eine Pause*** (*take a break*), close your eyes, and dream about ***die Romantische Straße*** (*the Romantic Road*, an enchanting route through some of the most picturesque parts of southern Germany). Before you realize it, you'll be dreaming of storybook castles and court jesters ***auf Deutsch*** (*in German*)!

Part 1

The Basic Building Blocks of German

IN THIS PART ...

Meet and greet people

Start a conversation

Get introduced to basic grammar principles

Deal with numbers

Build vocabulary efficiently

Use bilingual dictionaries effectively

Chapter 1

Laying the Foundations of German

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Meeting and greeting
 - » Starting a conversation
 - » Simplifying subject pronouns
 - » Doing the numbers and dates
-

When you set out to learn another language, you want to find out how to get along in everyday situations, such as greeting people in a socially acceptable manner. In other words, if there's a difference between addressing someone you know and a complete stranger, you'd want to know about it. You also want to be able to feel confident in understanding and using some key components, such as numbers, time, dates, and whatnot.

In this chapter, I get you started on the crucial building blocks of German. You get going on some basic communication skills, such as finding out how to say hello in a formal manner and in a casual way. Along with numbers, I provide you days of the week, months of the year, and seasons, all of which will enable you to strike up a conversation in a German-speaking environment.

Los geht's! (*Let's get started!*)

Saying Hello and Goodbye

In German-speaking countries, the cultural norm is that adults often greet one another with a handshake. In a formal situation or when you're introduced to someone, you're expected to shake hands. However, in a (post) COVID world, you might need to observe the body language of those around you before extending your hand. Also, know that in Europe, people tend to stand closer together than they do in English-speaking cultures.

Table 1-1 Saying Hello and Goodbye

<i>Expression</i>	<i>Usage</i>	<i>English</i>
Guten Morgen	standard/formal	<i>Good morning</i>
Guten Tag	standard/formal	<i>Good day/Hello</i>
Hallo/Hi	familiar (with friends)	<i>Hello/Hi</i>
Guten Abend	standard/formal	<i>Good evening</i>
Auf Wiedersehen	standard/formal	<i>Goodbye</i>
Tschüss/Ciao	familiar (with friends)	<i>Bye/Bye</i>
Gute Nacht	standard/formal	<i>Good night (at bedtime)</i>
Bis bald/Bis dann	familiar (with friends)	<i>See you soon/"Til then</i>
Mach's gut	familiar (with friends)	<i>Take care</i>

[Table 1-1](#) shows German expressions for saying hello and goodbye, notes on usage, and the English equivalents. In this table, I include the term *standard* together with *formal* to express both everyday and formal situations, in contrast to *familiar* situations.

Some regional expressions are

- » **Grüß Gott**, a standard greeting in southern Germany and Austria, meaning *Good day* or *Hello*. **Grüß dich** is the familiar regional counterpart, similar to *Hi* or *Hi there*.

- » **Grüezi**, a standard greeting in Switzerland, as a way of saying *Good day* or *Hello*.
- » **Servus**, a familiar way to say both *Hi* and *Bye* in southern Germany and Austria.



TIP

Addressing people in a familiar tone when it isn't appropriate can turn German speakers off — fast. Language and culture are bonded with superglue, so avoid pasting your culture onto the German-speaking world. You show respect for others by observing their way of life.



PRACTICE

In the following exercise, you find yourself in some German-speaking situations. Write the appropriate German response for the situation. The example shows you how to proceed. You'll find the solutions to the exercises in the answer key at the end of every chapter.

Q. The shopkeeper in a store greets you with **Guten Tag**.
Your response is _____

A. Guten Tag.

- 1** You greet your Austrian neighbors with the customary expression of that region. You say _____.
- 2** You're staying with a host family in Germany. Before going to your room for the night, you say _____.
- 3** The next morning, you greet your host family with _____.

- 4 You say goodbye to your German friends like this:
(more than one option) _____.
- 5 With the same German friends, you want to add
something like *See you then*, so you say
_____.
- 6 When you depart your hotel, you say
_____.

Introducing yourself and others

The next step after saying **Guten Tag** (*good day/hello*) is introducing yourself. Depending on the situation, you may want to shake hands as you introduce yourself. Look at the following exchange between **Herr Hahn** (*Mr. Hahn*) and **Frau Maier** (*Ms. Maier*) at an international conference. They introduce themselves with full names, an indication of a formal situation.

Guten Tag. Ich heie Gisela Maier. (*Hello. My name is Gisela Maier.*) **Und Sie, wie heien Sie?** (*And you, what is your name?*)

Guten Tag. Ich heie Josef Hahn. (*Hello. My name is Josef Hahn.*)

Freut mich. (*Nice to meet you.*)

Mich auch. (*Nice to meet you too.*)

To introduce another colleague (or friend or partner), you may start with

» **Das ist ...** (*This is ...*)

and add the person's name.

After initial introductions, what's next? It's **Wie geht es Ihnen?** (*How are you?*), of course. The following day of the conference, the same two colleagues, Herr Hahn and

Frau Maier, greet each other at the breakfast buffet. They may or may not address each other with first names or Herr/Frau with last names, depending on the company culture and social norms in place. Look at their conversation:

Guten Morgen, Gisela (Frau Maier). Wie geht es Ihnen? (*Good morning, Gisela [Frau Maier]. How are you?*)

Guten Morgen, Josef (Herr Hahn). Gut, danke. Und Ihnen? (*Good morning, Josef [Herr Hahn]. Fine, thanks. And you?*)

Danke, sehr gut/ganz gut. (*Thanks, I'm very/really good.*)



PRACTICE In this exercise, write the German equivalent to the English prompt in the space provided. Check out the previous sections for help. The practice exercise gets you on track. You may use your own name(s) in place of the names shown in parentheses. As usual, you find the solutions to the exercises in the answer key at the end of the chapter.

Q. Good evening, (Maria). _____

A. Guten Abend, (Sabina).

7 Nice to meet you. _____

8 Nice to meet you too. _____

9 This is my colleague (*mein Kollege [male]* (Tobias)/*meine Kollegin [female]*)(Renate).

10 How are you, (Helena)? _____

11 Thanks, I'm very good. _____

12 Good morning. My name is (Hartmut Schmidt).

13 And you? _____

Keeping the conversational ball rolling

After initial introductions and pleasantries, you want to keep the lines of communication open. Asking questions is a terrific way to give yourself some listening practice. You may not understand all the answers, so try **Wie bitte?** (*Sorry, what?*) to politely nudge the other person to repeat what they just said. Or if that attempt fails, try **Langsamer, bitte.** (*More slowly, please.*) The following phrases help you keep the conversation flowing:

- » **Woher kommen Sie?** (*Where are you from?*)
- » **Ich komme aus (Hamburg).** (*I'm from [Hamburg].*)
- » **Und Sie?** (*And you?*)
- » **Wo wohnen Sie?** (*Where do you live?*)
- » **Ich wohne in (Sigmaringen).** (*I live in [Sigmaringen].*)
- » **Und Sie?** (*And you?*)
- » **Wie finden Sie das Hotel/das Essen/Berlin/die Konferenz?** (*What do you think of the hotel/the food/Berlin/the conference?*)
- » **Exzellent/hervorragend/sehr gut/nicht sehr gut/es geht.** (*Excellent/outstanding/very good/not very good/so, so.*)

A practically universal topic is, of course, **das Wetter** (*the weather*). You can ask: **Wie ist das Wetter?** (*What's*