

Separable and Inseparable Prefixes

As you know, German verbs can have separable prefixes. These prefixes change the meaning of the original verb, and make a new word. In the present tense, separable prefixes are separated from the verb and placed at the end of the sentence bracket. The separation rule also applies in the imperative. When used in the infinitive, however (e.g. with a modal auxiliary), separable prefix verbs are not divided. And as we are learning now, the participle forms in the past tense are also combined, but the *ge-* prefix goes in the middle, between the prefix and the verb stem.

Hans **steht** jeden Tag um 9.00 Uhr **auf**.

Hans, **steh** jetzt **auf**!

Hans muss jeden Tag um 9.00 Uhr **aufstehen**.

Hans ist gestern um 8 Uhr **aufgestanden**.

Hans gets up every day at 9:00.

Hans, get up now!

Hans has to get up every day at 9:00.

Hans got up yesterday at 8:00.

Common separable prefixes. Remember that this list is only a rough guide to the meanings of prefixes, since their use is highly idiomatic. These verbs are merely examples -- you will surely encounter more verbs with separable prefixes in the future.

ab = off, down	abholen abnehmen	= to pick up = to take off	ein = in, into	einkaufen einschlafen	= to shop = to fall asleep
an = at, on	anfangen anrufen anziehen	= to start, begin = to call, telephone = to put on, dress	fern = far	fernsehen	= to watch TV
auf = up	aufhören aufräumen aufstehen	= to stop = to clean up = to get up, stand up	fort = away	fortgehen	= to leave, go away
aus = out	ausgehen aussehen	= to go out = to look, appear	her = to here	herholen herkommen	= to fetch = to come from
			hin = down, to there	hinstellen	= to place, put down
			mit = with, along	mitkommen mitnehmen	= to come along = to take along

nach = <i>after</i>	nachdenken = <i>to think, reflect</i> nachfragen = <i>to inquire, ask after</i>	weg = <i>away</i>	weggehen = <i>to go away, leave</i> wegnehmen = <i>to take away</i>
um = <i>around, at</i>	umsehen = <i>to look around</i>	zu = <i>to, closed</i>	zuhören = <i>to listen</i> zumachen = <i>to close</i>
vor = <i>before</i>	vorhaben = <i>to have planned</i> vorstellen = <i>to introduce</i>	zurück = <i>back</i>	zurückgeben = <i>to give back</i> zurückkommen = <i>to come back</i>
vorbei = <i>by, past</i>	vorbeikommen = <i>to come by</i>	zusammen = <i>together</i>	zusammentun = <i>to mix together</i>

On the other hand, some German verbs have recognizable prefixes that are **INSEPARABLE**, e.g. they remain with the verb at all times.

Das Feuer **zerstört** unser Haus.

The fire is destroying our house.

Zerstör das Haus!

Destroy the house!

Das Feuer kann unser Haus **zerstören**.

The fire can destroy our house.

Ein Feuer hat unser Haus **zerstört**.

A fire destroyed our house.

The meanings of these prefixes are much harder to explain, since they often perform a grammatical function but do not have a direct English cognate. Nonetheless, here's a short list of common **INSEPARABLE** prefixes and example verbs. Please don't try to memorize the meaning of these prefixes -- instead, focus on the meanings of the whole verbs.

be = <i>makes a verb transitive or turns action to object</i>
beantworten = <i>to answer (a question)</i>
bekommen = <i>to receive, get</i>

er = *stress on outcome or accomplishment*

erleben	= <i>to experience</i>
erkennen	= <i>to recognize</i>

ent, emp = <i>beginning of action or separation</i>
entkommen = <i>to escape</i>
empfangen = <i>to receive</i>

ge = <i>result, completeness or successful action</i>
gewinnen = <i>to win or gain</i>
gebrauchen = <i>to use up, consume</i>

miss = *same as English 'mis-'*

missverstehen

= *to misunderstand*

missbrauchen

= *to abuse*

zer = *asunder, apart*

zerbrechen

= *to break into pieces*

zerstören

= *to destroy*

ver = *action of the verb has miscarried*

verschlafen

= *to oversleep*

verlaufen

= *to go astray*

Let's practice just a little. Form complete German sentences in the PERFEKT tense from the elements.

1. ich / vorbeikommen / heute / um 8 Uhr

2. wann / du / heute Morgen / aufstehen ?

3. wir / gewinnen / das Fußballspiel .

4. Hans / aufräumen / sein Zimmer .

5. Ich / besuchen / letztes Wochenende / meine Großeltern .

6. fernsehen / du / gestern Abend / viel ?

7. Ich / erkennen / ihn / sofort .

8. Wann / du / zurückgeben / mir / mein Buch ?
