

Deutsch 101: Time Expressions and Word Order

Expressing the day and time in German is not particularly difficult, but there are some common problems that English speakers often experience. Pay attention to the use of the following:

The days of the week (die Wochentage) are:

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| der Sonntag | <i>Sunday</i> | der Freitag | <i>Friday</i> |
| der Montag | <i>Monday</i> | der Samstag | <i>Saturday</i> |
| der Dienstag | <i>Tuesday</i> | der Sonnabend | <i>Saturday (N. Germany)</i> |
| der Mittwoch | <i>Wednesday</i> | der Werktag | <i>weekday</i> |
| der Donnerstag | <i>Thursday</i> | das Wochenende | <i>weekend</i> |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| heute | <i>today</i> | morgen | <i>tomorrow</i> | gestern | <i>yesterday</i> |
| übermorgen | <i>the day after tomorrow</i> | vorgestern | <i>the day before yesterday</i> | | |
| in drei Tagen | <i>in three days</i> | vor drei Tagen | <i>three days ago</i> | | |

To express what day it is you have two options; you can stick with the easier one if you like:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Was <u>ist</u> heute? | Was <u>haben</u> wir heute? / Welchen Tag <u>haben</u> wir heute? |
| Heute <u>ist</u> Donnerstag. | Heute <u>haben</u> wir Donnerstag. |

To express on which particular day you are doing (or will do) something, use 'am':

| | |
|--|--|
| Ich gehe <u>am Samstag</u> in die Disko. | <u>Am Montag</u> haben wir einen Quiz. |
|--|--|

To express that you habitually do things on a certain day (e.g. 'every Friday' or 'on Fridays'), use the weekday uncapitalized and with an -s.

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Wir haben <u>freitags</u> keine Klasse. | Sie spielen <u>samstags</u> Fußball. |
|---|--------------------------------------|

The months of the year are:

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| der Januar | <i>January</i> | der Juli | <i>July</i> |
| der Februar | <i>February</i> | der August | <i>August</i> |
| der März | <i>March</i> | der September | <i>September</i> |
| der April | <i>April</i> | der Oktober | <i>October</i> |
| der Mai | <i>May</i> | der November | <i>November</i> |
| der Juni | <i>June</i> | der Dezember | <i>December</i> |

To say that something happens in a particular month, use 'im':

Ich habe Geburtstag (=birthday) im Oktober. Im Dezember ist es sehr kalt.

Other time expressions which you will undoubtedly find useful:

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| heute | <i>today</i> | abends | <i>in the evenings</i> |
| heute Abend | <i>this evening, tonight</i> | morgens | <i>in the mornings</i> |
| heute Morgen | <i>this morning</i> | nachmittags | <i>in the afternoons</i> |
| heute Nachmittag | <i>this afternoon</i> | nachts | <i>during the night</i> |
| morgen früh | <i>tomorrow morning</i> | tagsüber | <i>during the day</i> |

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| dieses Jahr | <i>this year</i> |
| im Jahre 1982 (neunzehnhundertzweiundachtzig) | <i>in 1982</i> |
| von...bis | <i>from ... until</i> |
| wann? | <i>when?</i> |
| dann | <i>then</i> |

Word Order with Time Elements

Generally speaking, German sentences follow the rule of **TIME-MANNER-PLACE**. This is different from English, so you'll need to get used to saying the time before the place. Also, general time (days) comes before specific time (2:00), which is the same as English ('today at 5:00').

The conjugated **VERB** in a German sentence is **NOT** moveable, and needs to be the **SECOND element** in the sentence. (An element can be comprised of more than one word, e.g. 'heute Morgen' is one element.) As long as you keep the verb in second position, and follow the secondary rule of time-manner-place, you can move many elements in a sentence around. When you start a sentence with something other than the subject, then the subject must immediately follow the verb (e.g. *Morgen gehe ich ...*).

VERB 2nd

| | | | | | |
|------------|--------------|-------|----------|-------------|--|
| Sie | kommt | heute | um 8 Uhr | zur Schule. | <i>(normal word order)</i> |
| Heute | kommt | sie | um 8 Uhr | zur Schule. | <i>(normal word order, stressing 'today' slightly)</i> |
| Um 8 Uhr | kommt | sie | heute | zur Schule. | <i>(unusual: this emphasizes '8:00' as important)</i> |
| Zur Schule | kommt | sie | heute | um 8 Uhr. | <i>(unusual: this stresses "to school" as important)</i> |

VERB 2nd

| | | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---|
| Wir | reisen | am Donnerstag | mit dem Bus | nach Chicago. | <i>(normal word order)</i> |
| Am Donnerstag | reisen | wir | mit dem Bus | nach Chicago. | <i>(normal, stressing "Thursday" slightly)</i> |
| Nach Chicago | reisen | wir | am Donnerstag | mit dem Bus. | <i>(unusual: stresses "Chicago" as important)</i> |

Please note that conjunctions like 'und', 'aber', 'oder', as well as 'ja' or 'nein' do not count as elements and do not affect word order.

Ja, ich **gehe** morgen ins Kino.

Nein, heute **gehe** ich nicht ins Kino.

Sie **geht** um 9 Uhr in die Bibliothek und er **geht** um 10 Uhr ins Museum.