

besuchen

wiederholen

gewinnen

Inseparable-Prefix Verbs

Verben mit untrennbaren Präfixen

verkaufen

verbringen

zerstören

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Inseparable-Prefix Verbs

In addition to separable-prefix verbs that you've learned, German also has inseparable-prefix verbs. Luckily, you already know a few of these, and they're very easy to use, because they look and act just like normal verbs in the present tense.

An example of an inseparable-prefix verb is "besuchen". You already know that "suchen" means to search/look for, and that "besuchen" means to visit. The meaning is changed by adding the be- prefix, but the grammatical usage of the verb doesn't change. The prefix simply makes a new verb that is conjugated normally, and the prefix is never removed.

Ich besuche heute meinen Großvater.

Ich soll heute meinen Großvater besuchen.

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Common Inseparable Prefixes

You can learn to recognize inseparable-prefix verbs fairly quickly, because they will have only a small number of possible prefixes in German. The most common prefixes are:

<u>be-</u>	e.g. <i>besuchen</i>	<u>er-</u>	e.g. <i>erklären</i>
<u>ge-</u>	e.g. <i>gewinnen</i>	<u>ver-</u>	e.g. <i>verkaufen</i>
<u>miss-</u>	e.g. <i>missbrauchen</i>	<u>zer-</u>	e.g. <i>zerstören</i>
<u>ent-</u>	e.g. <i>entkommen</i>	<u>emp-</u>	e.g. <i>empfehlen</i>

There are a few prefixes that can be either separable OR inseparable, but for our purposes now, you should always treat them as inseparable.

<u>wieder-</u>	e.g. <i>wiederholen</i>	<u>hinter-</u>	e.g. <i>hinterlassen</i>
<u>unter-</u>	e.g. <i>untersuchen</i>	<u>über-</u>	e.g. <i>überlegen</i>

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How to Recognize Prefixes

The easiest way to know if a prefix is separable or inseparable is to recognize whether it is a standalone word or not. By now, you probably recognize that words like “auf” or “an” are complete words – in fact they are prepositions. They will always separate from the verb they are combined with, when the verb is conjugated.

Ich rufe meinen Vater an.

Er räumt sein Zimmer auf.

Ich komme heute an.

Er hört mit der Arbeit auf.

But prefixes like ‘ver-’ and ‘ge-’ are not standalone words; they have no meaning in and of themselves, and therefore they will never separate from the verbs they are attached to.

Ich verkaufe mein Haus.

Er versteht die Frage.

Ich verbringe viel Zeit zu Hause.

Er gewinnt das Kartenspiel.

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Word Stress Can Give Clues

Although you usually won't have problems deciding if a prefix separates or not, there is one other way to tell, and that is to listen to the word stress or emphasis of the syllables on prefix verbs.

An inseparable prefix is never stressed or emphasized: the word stress falls on the main portion of the verb, and the prefix is unstressed.

Ich soll meine Mutter besúchen.

Ich besúche meine Mutter.

Wir können unser Haus verkáufen.

Wir verkáufen unser Haus.

But a separable prefix IS stressed, and is the primary syllable in the verb when pronounced. If the prefix receives the emphasis in pronunciation, then it should be separated from the verb when conjugated.

Er soll seinen Vater ánrufen.

Er ruft seinen Vater án.

Ich möchte heute férnsehen.

Ich sehe heute Abend férn.

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Important Reminders

There is nothing grammatically important to learn about inseparable-prefix verbs in the present tense; instead, you should focus on learning the meanings of the sixteen new verbs we'll be discussing. The meaning of the verb can change quite dramatically simply by adding a prefix. It's best to learn each verb individually, because like in English, the prefixes themselves don't really tell you much; it's the overall meaning of the verb that is important.

Remember that inseparable-prefix verbs do NOT separate ever, while separable-prefix verbs will 'come apart' in the present tense!

Ich verkaufe mein Haus.

Er versteht die Frage.

Ich kaufe heute ein.

Er steht um 8 Uhr auf.

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inseparable prefix BE-

<u>beantworten</u>	=	to answer
<u>bekommen</u>	=	to receive, get – not 'become'!
<u>besprechen</u>	=	to discuss
<u>bestellen</u>	=	to order, place an order
<u>besuchen</u>	=	to visit
<u>bezahlen</u>	=	to pay for

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bekommen • bestellen • besuchen • bezahlen

Er bestellt die Tomatensuppe.
He's ordering the tomato soup.

Wir sollen morgen unsere Eltern besuchen .
We should visit our parents tomorrow.

Ich möchte zum Geburtstag ein Auto bekommen .
I'd like to get a car for my birthday.

Bezahlst du das Essen?
Are you paying for the meal?

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inseparable prefix ER-

<u>erkennen</u>	=	to recognize
<u>erklären</u>	=	to explain, clarify
<u>erzählen</u>	=	to tell, narrate
<u>erleben</u>	=	to experience
<u>ertrinken</u>	=	to drown

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erkennen • erklären • erzählen • erleben

Können Sie diese Grammatik erklären ?

Can you explain this grammar?

Ich erkenne deinen Freund nicht.

I don't recognize your friend.

Wir möchten ein Abenteuer erleben.

We would like to experience an adventure.

Der Vater erzählt seiner Tochter eine Geschichte.

The father is telling his daughter a story.

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inseparable prefixes GE- and MISS-

<u>gewinnen</u>	=	to win
<u>gehören</u>	=	to belong to
<u>gefallen</u>	=	to be pleasing to (like 'me gusta')
<u>missbrauchen</u>	=	to misuse, to abuse
<u>missverstehen</u>	=	to misunderstand

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gehören • gewinnen • gefallen • missverstehen

Kann unsere Mannschaft das Spiel noch gewinnen ?

Can our team still win the game?

Dieses Buch gehört mir nicht.

That book doesn't belong to me.

Wie gefällt dir dieses Kleid?

How do you like this dress? ('how does this dress please you?')

Der Lehrer missversteht die Frage.

The teacher misunderstands the question.

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inseparable prefix VER-

<u>verkaufen</u>	= to sell
<u>verbringen</u>	= to spend time
<u>verstehen</u>	= to understand
<u>verändern</u>	= to change
<u>verlieben</u>	= to fall in love
<u>verkleiden</u>	= to disguise, dress up

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verkaufen • verstehen • verbringen • verlieben

**Verstehst du, was er sagt?
*Do you understand what he's saying?***

**Meine Eltern wollen ihr Haus verkaufen .
*My parents want to sell their house.***

**Er verliebt sich in seine Freundin.
*He's falling in love with his girlfriend.***

**Ich verbringe viel Zeit zu Hause.
*I spend a lot of time at home.***

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inseparable prefix ZER-

<u>zerstören</u>	=	to destroy
<u>zerbrechen</u>	=	to break into pieces
<u>zerschlagen</u>	=	to hit into pieces
<u>zertrampeln</u>	=	to trample to bits
<u>zerbomben</u>	=	to bomb to bits

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zerstören • zerbrechen • zertrampeln • zerbomben

Die Raketen zerbomben die Stadt im Krieg.

The rockets bomb the city in the war.

Das Feuer zerstört das Haus.

The fire is destroying the house.

Die Kinder zertrampeln die Spielzeuge.

The children are trampling the toys to pieces.

Der Keks zerbricht.

The cookie is breaking into bits.

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inseparable prefixes ÜBER- and WIEDER- and EMP-

<u>überlegen</u>	=	to think over, consider
<u>übersehen</u>	=	to overlook, miss seeing
<u>übernehmen</u>	=	to take over, assume (power)
<u>wiederholen</u>	=	to repeat, do over
<u>empfehlen</u>	=	to recommend
<u>empfangen</u>	=	to receive

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überlegen • übernehmen • wiederholen • empfehlen

Der Kellner empfiehlt uns die Suppe.

The waiter recommends the soup to us.

Ich muss es mir überlegen.

I have to think about it.

Kannst du das bitte wiederholen ?

Can you please repeat that?

Ich übernehme die Verantwortung dafür.

I'll assume responsibility for that.

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besuchen	=	<u>to visit</u>	bestellen	=	<u>to order</u>
gewinnen	=	<u>to win</u>	verbringen	=	<u>to spend time</u>
verkaufen	=	<u>to sell</u>	beantworten	=	<u>to answer</u>
zerstören	=	<u>to destroy</u>	erkennen	=	<u>to recognize</u>
erklären	=	<u>to explain</u>	bekommen	=	<u>to receive, get</u>
verstehen	=	<u>to understand</u>	wiederholen	=	<u>to repeat</u>
missverstehen	=	<u>to misunderstand</u>	besprechen	=	<u>to discuss</u>
überlegen	=	<u>to consider, think about</u>	bezahlen	=	<u>to pay for</u>

Das Ende