German Online

with Nancy Thuleen



Question Words

Was ist das?

Wie heißt du?

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Question Words

(Fragewörter)

Woher kommst du?

Wo ist mein Stift?

Question Words

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The following are the **main question words** in German, which you will **need to be familiar with**.

was?	*what?*
warum?	*why?*
wann?	*when?*
wer?	*who?*
wo?	*where?*
woher?	*where from?*
wohin?	*where to?*
wie?	*how?*
wie viel?	*how much?*
wie viele?	*how many?*
welche?	*which?*

Word Order with Question Words

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For the most part, using question words in German is straightforward. When starting a question with any question word, remember that the **verb must be the second element**. Notice that **some interrogatives are two words** (such as ***'wie viel'***) but the verb is the second **element**, not the second word.

Wann beginnt der Film?	*When does the movie start?*
Wie viel kostet die Pizza?	*How much does the pizza cost?*
Wo wohnst du?	*Where do you live?*
Welche Freunde kommen zur Party?	*Which friends are coming to the party?*

Just remember to keep the **verb as the second element** in the sentence and you should have the correct word order!

Wie versus *Was*

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There are a few German phrases that use ***"wie"*** *('how')* where their **English equivalents use *'what'***. It's best to just **memorize** or **accept these idiomatic differences**.

Usually, ***'wie'*** is used with **numbers** and **statistics**, as well as **names** and **designations**.

Wie ist Ihre Telefonnummer?	*What is your telephone number?*
Wie ist deine Adresse?	*What is your address?*
Wie ist Ihr Name?	*What is your name?*
Wie heißt du?	*What are you called?*

The word ***'was'*** is used for most other uses of **English "what"**:

Was ist das?	*What is that?*
Was machst du?	*What are you doing?*

When asking someone to **repeat what they said**, it's considered **rude** to ask simply ***"Was?"*** — instead, you should use the phrase ***"Wie, bitte?"*** as the equivalent of English ***"Pardon? What was that?"*** If you use ***"Was?"*** you sound **shocked**, as if you can't believe what they just said!

Wer - Wen - Wem

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The word ***'wer'*** means *'who'* in the **nominative case only** — the **subject** of the sentence. It is always **conjugated like the pronoun *'er'***.

Wer ist der Professor?	***Who** is the professor?*
Wer kommt zur Party?	***Who** is coming to the party?*

When the *'who'* is the **direct object** of the sentence, the **accusative case** is used: the word ***'wer'*** becomes ***'wen'*** in the **accusative** case, just like the word ***'der'*** becomes ***'den'***. This is similar to the **proper usage of *'whom'* in English**.

Wen fragst du?	***Whom** are you asking?*
Wen bringst du zur Party?	***Whom** are you bringing to the party?*
Für wen ist dieser Brief?	*For **whom** is this letter?*

We'll learn later about the **dative** case in German, used for **indirect objects** and after certain **prepositions**. The **dative** case version of *'who'* is ***'wem'***.

Mit wem spielst du?	*With **whom** are you playing?*
Wem kaufst du das Buch?	*For **whom** are you buying the book?*

Welcher, welche, welches

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The word 'which' in German gets **endings** depending on the noun following it: **masculine, feminine, neuter, plural** as well as **case endings** (nominative, accusative, dative, genitive). The basic word ***"welch—"*** will have **different endings** depending on what **noun** it modifies; it functions just like the words ***der***, ***die***, ***das*** or ***den***.

Welches Auto ist das?	*Which car is that?*
Welche Lampe ist das?	*Which lamp is that?*
Welcher Computer kostet unter €900?	*Which computer costs under €900?*
Welchen Computer kaufst du?	*Which computer are you buying?*

We'll work more with the endings of the so-called **'der-words' later**, such as ***dieser*** (this), ***welcher*** (which), ***jeder*** (each) and others. For now, simply realize that you should be ***putting the same endings*** on ***"welch—"*** as you would put on the ***definite articles der, die, das*** and so on.

Wo, woher, wohin

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The basic word for *'where'* is ***'wo'***. But if **motion towards somewhere** is indicated, you must use the **'to where'** version: ***'wohin?'***. If motion **coming to the speaker** is indicated, you need the **'from where'** version: ***'woher?'***. The **static location** ***'wo?'*** simply means **in** which location or **at** which place, without any motion, destination or origin indicated.

Wo bist du jetzt?	*Where are you now?*
Wohin gehst du?	*Where are you going (to)?*
Woher kommst du?	*Where do you come from?*

We'll learn more about the ***'hin'*** and ***'her'*** compounds later, but you should get used to using ***wohin*** and ***woher*** correctly right away.

Review: Question Words

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Make sure you know the question word meanings!

who?	**wer?**
what?	**was?**
why?	**warum?**
where?	**wo?**
when?	**wann?**
how?	**wie?**
which?	**welch—?**
how much?	**wie viel?**
how many?	**wie viele?**
to where?	**wohin?**
from where?	**woher?**

Which Question Word Fits?

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Fill in the most logical question word for each sentence. Sometimes more than one question word can work!

1. **Wie** heißt du?
2. **Woher** kommst du?
3. **Wohin** gehst du?
4. **Wo** ist das Klassenzimmer? ***also possible: Wie?***
5. **Wie** ist deine Telefonnummer?
6. **Wie viel** ist sieben plus fünf?
7. **Wie viele** Bücher hast du? ***also possible: Welche?***
8. **Warum** lernst du Deutsch? ***also possible: Wo? Wie? Wann?***
9. **Welche** Farbe hat das Haus?
10. **Wann** kommt der Bus? ***also possible: Woher?***
11. **Wer** ist der Professor? ***also possible: Wie? Wo?***

Translate into German

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Translate the English sentences into German.

1.	*What are you doing?*	**Was machst du?**
2.	*Where is the classroom?*	**Wo ist das Klassenzimmer?**
3.	*Why is he studying math?*	**Warum studiert er Mathe?**
4.	*When does the course begin?*	**Wann beginnt der Kurs?**
5.	*How do you find the professor?*	**Wie findest du den Professor?**
6.	*Who is the professor?*	**Wer ist der Professor?**
7.	*Which book do we need?*	**Welches Buch brauchen wir?**
8.	*How many pencils do you have?*	**Wie viele Bleistifte hast du?**
9.	*How much does the book cost?*	**Wie viel kostet das Buch?**
10.	*Where is the cat going?*	**Wohin geht die Katze?**
11.	*Where does Eric come from?*	**Woher kommt Eric?**
12.	*How does one say "funny" in German?*	**Wie sagt man "funny" auf Deutsch?**

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Das Ende

Viel Glück beim Weiterlernen!

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