

Overview

Population

Germany's estimated population is 82,210,000 and German is spoken by about 100 million people all over the world. It is the national language of both Germany and Austria and is one of the four official languages of Switzerland. Written German is quite uniform but spoken dialects vary considerably.

Climate

Summer temperatures usually vary between 20°C and 30°C. Winter temperatures range from freezing temperatures mainly occurring in the west to temperatures below freezing in the east.

Education System (for children from Germany)

Age 3-6 Kindergarten (Optional)

Age 6-10 yrs Primary School

From 10 yrs Secondary Education:

- Gymnasium (until 17/18 yrs) For the most gifted and talented students, preparing them for University Studies.
- Realschule (until 16 yrs) Broader range of emphasis, for intermediary students.
- Hauptschule (until 15 yrs) Prepares pupils for vocational education.
- Gesamtschule (variable) Equivalent to a comprehensive school and combines the three approaches.

SEN: Children with special needs of any kind are not usually educated in a main stream school but attend a special school ('Förderschule').

EAL: Learning English is compulsory at secondary school and in some parts of Germany children start to learn conversational English from Year 3

Education System – main differences and implications for schools

School starting age

Usually 6 years old (admission criteria is not the date of birth but the maturity of the child).

Implications

- New arrivals in Year R, Year 1 and sometimes Year 2 may not have experienced formal schooling yet and may require a gentle introduction to school life.
- Emphasis in Kindergarten is on play rather than learning. German children in Year R and Year 1 will often not recognize any letters or numbers yet.
- Older new arrivals will have had fewer years in school than their English peers and will therefore not have covered as many concepts
- Students appear to have 'jumped' a year (a child who was in Year 1 in Germany will suddenly be in Year 2 in England) – parents often find this disturbing and think their child should be placed in a lower year group. Parents need reassurance that their child has been placed in the correct year group and that special attention will be given to his/her individual needs.

School day

- The school day is usually much shorter, especially at primary school (2-4 hours in the first two years) and 5 hours at secondary school. A longer settling in period may be required where younger pupils gradually build up the time spent at school.
- Children in Germany are brought up to be independent from a very early age and most children walk to and from school on their own or with friends shortly after having started school.
- Most subjects are taught in the students' own classroom, even at secondary school; the students stay in their room while the teachers move from class to class.
- Older students are permitted to leave the school compound during breaks.

Curriculum

- At primary school children are mainly taught literacy, numeracy, RE and PE with subjects like geography, history, music and science not starting until secondary school. German new arrivals are therefore quite often not familiar with these subjects.
- Exams are usually essay based rather than multiple choice.
- Most schools use blackboards or whiteboards in class; interactive whiteboards are extremely rare. Most schools do not have a computer for every child and computer skills tend to be lower.
- Grade scales range from 1 to 6 (1 = excellent, 6 = insufficient).

Literacy

- Independent writing starts much later (usually not until age 9). Children in the lower years of primary school might need extra support with independent writing (e.g. writing frames, partially completed sentences etc.)
- German joined up writing is very ornate and quite different from English handwriting. Students should be allowed to continue with the handwriting style they are used to.
- Primary school children are used to line guides for their writing, starting with 3 lines for children first learning to write.

Maths

- Numbers are read 'back to front', e.g. '26' is read as 'six and twenty' so children may do the same in English initially; they may require longer thinking time when working with numbers orally.
- Decimals are written using a comma rather than a full stop e.g. 2,5 instead of 2.5.
- Many concepts in numeracy are taught at a much later stage e.g. a child in Year 5 will not normally have covered fractions and decimals.
- Methods taught for multiplication and division are different from those taught in English schools.
- German children are often unfamiliar with the multiplication sign as this is different in Germany: 2 x 5 is written 2•5
- Time: German children often get confused with reading the clock; 'half past six' in English is read as 'half (to) seven' in German.
- In Germany the number 7 is written with a dash through it 7̄. Also, the German number 1 can be confused with the English 7.

Cultural sensitivities

- Children are encouraged to deal with playground squabbles themselves and although they are not allowed to start a fight, it is usually tolerated that they hit back if someone attacks them. It is important to familiarize new arrivals with the school rules, especially playground rules.
- German school children do not wear school uniform. Because of the cold winters it is normal for boys to wear tights under their trousers on very cold days.

Parental involvement and attendance in Germany

- German children have to repeat a school year if they do not achieve the expected minimum grade. The responsibility to achieve lies mostly with the parents; often parents have to pay for private tuition to ensure their child achieves the expected grades.
- German children are not allowed to take time out of school for holidays or family celebrations. Parents usually support this as it is entirely up to the parents to make sure their child catches up with school work if they do.
- Children sit individual subject tests almost on a weekly basis, with regular feedback to the parents.
- Parents are used to regular feedback through frequent whole class and individual parents' evenings.
- Children bring all their school text and exercise books home every day for homework so parents can see what they have been learning. Here, German parents often feel 'left out' or poorly informed about their child's progress and what they are learning at school - a home-school diary is very effective to put parents' minds at rest. With younger children, parents could be invited to help in school e.g. with reading.

Language differences that may cause problems with Literacy

Spellings

- German sounds are written as they are heard so beginners may replace English sounds with the German letters, ("raund about", "schopping"),
- All German nouns start with a capital letter, so students may write: 'I took a Pen from a Friend.'

Punctuation

- Commas are used more widely in German (they are used before all subordinate clauses and dependent infinitives) and semi-colons less frequently. Quotation marks are written differently: „Are you OK?” she asked

Auxiliaries/negatives/questions/tenses

- The auxiliary *do* has no equivalent; interrogatives are made by inversion; one-word verbs are made negative by putting *nicht* (=not) after the verb (“When started you to sing?"/ "I smoke not")
- Some verbs (esp. those of movement) form the perfect tense with *sein* (=be) (“She is gone out”)
- German does not have a progressive form (“I noticed that someone came towards me”)
- German has no equivalent of the ‘going to’ – form and often the present tense is used to refer to the future (“I think it rains tomorrow”)
- The conditional *würde* (=would) can be used in both the main and the subordinate clause (“If he would ask me I would not tell him anything”)

Modal verbs

- The English modal verbs *must, may, can* etc. have rough equivalents in German which often leads to mistakes: “I can Russian” = “I can speak Russian”; “I must go home yesterday = I had to go home”
- *Muss nicht* (=needn't) gets confused with *must not* in English (e.g. “I mustn't do my homework”)
- *Will* in German means *want* in English (“The dog will the bone”)

Word order

- Because German is an inflected language, the word order is less rigid. German speakers often tend to follow the same syntactical pattern as in German (“She has me bought an ice cream yesterday”). Similarly, a sentence can begin with the object in German (“This book have I me bought”)
- Adverbs may separate a verb from its object (“You speak very well German”)

Gender

- nouns are masculine, feminine or neuter; often these are transferred into English (das Mädchen – the girl = it) (“It (=the girl) did not know where it was”)

Vocabulary

Many German and English words are quite similar because they have the same roots (“Schuh” – “shoe”; “Haus=house”) but there are also quite a few German words that sound like the English word but have completely different meanings, e.g. ‘who’ and ‘where’ get confused easily:
 - German: ‘wer’ = English: ‘who’.
 - German: ‘wo’ = English: ‘where’.

Useful classroom words

Greetings

Welcome	Willkommen
Hello	Hallo
Thank you	Danke
Please	Bitte
Goodbye (formal)	Auf Wiedersehen
Bye (casual)	Tschüss
Morning	Morgen
Afternoon	Nachmittag
Are you OK?	Ist alles OK?

School Routine

School playground	Schulhof
School office	Sekretariat
Hall	Halle
School	Schule
Assembly	Versammlung
Toilets	Toiletten
School field	Schulfeld
Classroom	Klassenzimmer
Registration	Anwesenheit
Computer suite	Computerraum
Tutor group (class)	Klasse
Break time	Pause
Outside	Draußen
Inside	Drinnen
Fire drill	Feuerwehübung
Packed lunch	Pausenbrot
School dinner	Mittagessen
School nurse	Schularzt
First aid room	Erste-Hilfe-Raum
Staff room	Lehrerzimmer
Lunchtime	Mittagspause
School uniform	Schuluniform
Library	Bibliothek
Reading book	Lesebuch
Library book	Büchereibuch
Copy	Kopiere
Label	Beschriftete
Colour	Male aus
Pen	Stift
Pencil	Bleistift
Yes	Ja
No	Nein

Days of the week

Monday	Montag
Tuesday	Dienstag
Wednesday	Mittwoch
Thursday	Donnerstag
Friday	Freitag
Weekend	Wochenende

Numbers

Zero	- Null	
One	- Eins	
Two	- Zwei	20 - Zwanzig
Three	- Drei	30 - Dreissig
Four	- Vier	40 - Vierzig
Five	- Fünf	50 - Fünfzig
Six	- Sechs	60 - Sechzig
Seven	- Sieben	70 - Siebzig
Eight	- Acht	80 - Achtzig
Nine	- Neun	90 - Neunzig
Ten	- Zehn	100- Hundert
How many?	Wie viele?	

Instructions/Questions

Work with a partner	Arbeite mit einem Partner
Use your dictionary	Benutze dein Wörterbuch
Do you understand?	Verstehst du?
Talk about this at home	Besprich das zu Hause
Translate these words at home	Übersetze diese Wörter zu Hause
You can write in German	Du kannst auf Deutsch schreiben
Write in sentences	Schreibe in Sätzen
Fill in the blanks	Fülle die Lücken aus
Annotate	Annotiere
Highlight	Markiere
Draft	Entwerfe
Please be quiet	Sei bitte leise
Come here please	Komm bitte her
Sit on the carpet	Setz dich auf den Teppich
Where does it hurt?	Wo tut es weh?
Well done!	Gut gemacht!