

Simplified German

Speaking made easy

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Introduction

Are you trying to learn German and find speaking it difficult? Perhaps you are already familiar with some of the rules of the language but still find it challenging. If this applies to you, you may benefit from Simplified German.

Simplified German (SG) is a way of speaking German for beginners. Since the grammar is easier, we can start speaking fluently sooner. SG is *designed to sound as close as possible to real German*. This is its main guiding principle.

SG is designed for speaking only. And please note, there are many benefits from knowing the correct German grammar. SG is meant as a *temporary support* which complements German when needed.

This document presents how SG works. When you already know a little bit of German, you can use these principles to aid your speaking. In example phrases the simplified words are in ***bold italic***.

The German name for Simplified German is vDeutsch (the *v* is pronounced *fo*).

Simply just say "de"

As we can see in the German example below, the word which means "the" has different forms. It is called the definite article and is here taking the forms *der*, *die* and *das*:

der Löffel (the spoon)

die Gabel (the fork)

das Messer (the knife)

In plural:

die zwei Löffel (the two spoons)

In German, the definite article often changes in ways which are challenging for a nonnative speaker. Here *der Löffel* and *die Gabel* have the same ending, but they still have a different article.

The definite article also changes in German phrases like the following ones. Here it takes the forms *der*, *den* and *dem*:

Der Lehrer ist hier (The teacher is here)

Ich sehe den Lehrer (I see the teacher)

Ich gebe dem Lehrer den Schlüssel (I give the key to the teacher)

Transforming it into Simplified German

What do the above forms *der*, *die*, *das*, *den* and *dem* have in common?

Answer: They all begin with a d-sound.

This is very close to the sound of the word *de*. The vowel sound is similar to the one in the English word sister.

Therefore:

The definite article in Simplified German is always *de*.

This goes for both the singular and the plural.

So we get:

de Löffel (the spoon)

de Gabel (the fork)

de Messer (the knife)

In plural:

de zwei Löffel (the two spoons)

We also get:

De Lehrer ist hier (The teacher is here)

Ich sehe **de** Lehrer (I see the teacher)

Ich gebe **de** Lehrer **de** Schlüssel (I give the key to the teacher)

The pronunciation of "de"

How is the article *de* pronounced? The vowel sound is similar to the one in the English word *sister*. It is the sound of just letting air escape through our open mouth.

If we want *de* to sound exactly like the beginning of all definite articles, it is possible to pronounce only the d-consonant (without the vowel). However, because *d* is a voiced consonant, this will still sound very close to *de*.

About learning the gender of nouns

It is worth noting that if we want to learn to speak and write correct German, then it is a good idea to learn the gender together with each noun (masculine - der, feminine - die, neuter - das). This doesn't prevent us from using SG when needed.

"Das" still plays a part

Just like in German, the word *das* is used in SG in its meaning of *that*:

Das ist gut (That is good)

Wir wollen das (We want that)

Simply just say "ein"

As we can see in the German example below, the word which means "a" has different forms. It is called the indefinite article and is here taking the forms *ein* and *eine*:

ein Löffel (a spoon)

eine Gabel (a fork)

The indefinite article also changes in German phrases like the following ones. Here it takes the forms *ein*, *einen* and *einem*:

Ein Lehrer ist hier (A teacher is here)

Ich sehe einen Lehrer (I see a teacher)

Ich gebe einem Lehrer einen Bogen (I give a sheet of paper to a teacher)

Transforming it into Simplified German

What do the above forms *ein*, *eine*, *einen* and *einem* have in common?

Answer: They all have the sound of *ein* within them. Therefore:

The indefinite article in Simplified German is always *ein*.

So we get:

ein Löffel (a spoon)

ein Gabel (a fork)

We also get:

Ein Lehrer ist hier (A teacher is here)

Ich sehe **ein** Lehrer (I see a teacher)

Ich gebe **ein** Lehrer **ein** Bogen (I give a sheet of paper to a teacher)

So we can start speaking fluently sooner by saying *de* and *ein*. And the best part is that it will sound quite close to real German, especially when we are speaking fast.

Dialogue 1

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hier ist dein Essen. • Danke, kann ich ein Gabel und ein Messer haben? • Ja natürlich. De Löffel hast du schon? | <p>Here is your food.
Thank you, can I have a fork and a knife?
Yes of course. You already have the spoon?</p> |
|---|--|

Adjective endings

Now we come to adjective endings. Adjectives are words which describe something, such as large, small, blue, red etc. Being able to choose the correct ending for an adjective can often be tricky in German, especially while speaking. We will here use the adjective *rot* (red) as an example.

Adjectives which come after the noun (in this case after the word Ball) stay in their basic form:

Der Ball ist rot (The ball is red)

Adjectives which come before the noun have different endings:

der rote Ball (the red ball)

ein roter Ball (a red ball)

ein rotes Rad (a red bike)

die drei roten Räder (the three red bikes)

Transforming it into Simplified German

In SG too, adjectives which come after the noun stay in their basic form:

De Ball ist rot (The ball is red)

For adjectives which come before the noun we do it differently. What do the German forms above, rote, roter, rotes and roten have in common?

To be precise, soundwise the common form is *rot*. However, the form *rote* serves us better. The ending -e makes it sound closer to all the above forms.

Therefore:

Adjectives placed before the noun always have the ending -e.

So we get:

de rote Ball (the red ball)

ein **rote** Ball (a red ball)

ein **rote** Rad (a red bike)

de drei **rote** Räder (the tree red bikes)

And naturally, we also get:

mit **ein rote** Rad (with a red bike)

The versatile ending -e

The usefulness of the ending -e is not limited to adjectives alone. Here are some examples with the words *diese* and *jede*:

Ich reise mit **diese** Schiff (I travel with this ship)

Sie schätzt **jede** Tag (She appreciates each day)

An additional benefit of the ending -e is that it gives the words a beautiful musical quality. This we also find in German in phrases like *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*.

Dialogue 2

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| • Ich werde de kleine Raum streichen. | I will paint the small room. |
| • Mit ein gelbe Farbe? | With a yellow paint? |
| • Ja, aber ich brauche ein bessere Pinsel. | Yes, but I need a better brush. |

Personal Pronouns

Now we will learn an easier way to use personal pronouns. In Simplified German the subject forms are the same as in German:

ich (I)	wir (we)
du (you)	ihr (you, plural)
er, sie, es (he, she, it)	sie/Sie (they/you, formal)

Using the forms above is fairly straightforward and doesn't pose much of a problem.

Object forms of personal pronouns

There are what we call object forms of the personal pronouns above. They are used when speaking about people and things as objects, for example "I see *him*", "I see *her*" etc. Let's look at some examples:

The two different forms for the word *him* in German are *ihn* and *ihm*:

Ich sehe ihn (I see him)

Ich gebe ihm das Buch (I give him the book)

And the two forms for *her* in German are *sie* and *ihr*:

Ich frage sie (I ask her)

Ich antworte ihr (I answer her)

As we see, it can sometimes be challenging to know which one of the two object forms to use.

Transforming it into Simplified German

What do the above forms *sie*, *ihr*, *ihn* and *ihm* have in common?

Answer: They all have the sound of *ih* within them (as in the English see).

Therefore: They are all just *ih* in Simplified German.

So we get:

De Mann ist da. Ich sehe **ih**. (The man is there. I see him.)

De Mann ist da. Ich gebe **ih** de Buch. (The man is there. I give him the book.)

De Frau ist da. Ich frage **ih**. (The woman is there. I ask her.)

De Frau ist da. Ich antworte **ih**. (The woman is there. I answer her.)

In the examples above we have simply used just one form for *him* and one form for *her*. In SG, this is something we do for all object forms of personal pronouns.

Interestingly, the sound of *ih* can also be found in the German object forms meaning *them*, *sie* and *ihnen*, as well as in the formal object forms meaning *you*, *Sie* and *Ihnen*. In SG, all of these are just *ih* and *Ih* respectively:

De Leute sind da. Ich denke an **ih**. (The people are there. I'm thinking about them.)

De Leute sind da. Ich danke **ih**. (The people are there. I thank them.)

Frau Lehnert, ich verlasse **mi** auf **Ih**. (Mrs. Lehnert, I count on you.)

Herr Meier, ich bleibe bei **Ih**. (Mr. Meier, I stay with you.)

The above examples all contain the form *ih* (including *Ih*). Therefore, it is the context of the conversation which tells us which meaning *ih* is having in each case.

In the same way as above, the two forms for *me* in German, *mich* and *mir*, become *mi*. And the two object forms for *you*, *dich* and *dir*, become *di*:

Du siehst **mi** (you see me)

Ich danke **di** (I thank you)

In the examples above we were not distinguishing between two different forms of personal pronouns but used a single object form instead. Here we have the Simplified German object forms:

Object forms of personal pronouns		
Singular	mi	me
	di	you
	ih	him / her
	es	it
Plural	uns	us
	euch	you
	ih / Ih	them / you, formal

The new forms are *mi*, *di* and *ih* (including *Ih*). They have the vowel sound of the English see. For *ih* (and *Ih*) the letter *h* is silent.

For *uns* and *euch* there is only one object form in German, so we haven't needed to simplify them. The form *es* exists in German but is used more widely in SG which we will see in the next section.

Using the Simplified German object forms it is easier to start speaking, and it will usually sound quite close to German. And the faster we speak, the closer it will sound.

Dialogue 3

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Wie geht es di ? | How are you doing? |
| • Mi geht es gut. | I'm doing fine. |
| • Weißt du wo Angela ist? | Do you know where Angela is? |
| • Ich habe ih gesehen. Sie spielt mit de Hund draußen. | I have seen her. She is playing with the dog outside. |

Talking about things

In the previous section we learned to talk about people. How then do we talk about things (meaning inanimate objects and animals)?

Talking about one thing

Personal pronouns can stand for things too. In German, the pronoun *er* (he) can stand for the masculine word *Käse* (cheese). And *sie* (she) can stand for the feminine *Wurst* (sausage) and *es* (it) for the neutral *Gemüse* (vegetables).

In Simplified German we do it differently:

We always say *es* while talking about one thing.

So we get:

Wo ist **de** Turm? **Es** ist dort drüben. (Where is the tower? It is over there.)

Siehst du **de** Blume? Ja, ich sehe **es**. (Do you see the flower?. Yes, I see it.)

Extra Phonetics

When referring to things, *es* will sometimes sound different from the German forms. Above these would have been *er* and *sie*. There simply isn't any one word which would sound similar in each case.

However, since *es* means "it" in German, we will be understood.

Talking about multiple things

When we are talking about multiple things, we do the same as when we are talking about multiple people:

De Gärten sind groß. Sie sind sehr schön.
(The gardens are large. They are very beautiful.)

Siehst du die Häuser? Ja, ich sehe **ih**.
(Do you see the houses? Yes, I see them.)

Extra Grammar

We use *sie* for multiple things which are subjects. We use *ih* for multiple things which are objects.

Talking about things with a preposition

How would we say the following in Simplified German?

The sharp knife is over there. You can cut with it.

As explained above we could use *es* and say:

De scharfe Messer ist dort drüben. Du kannst mit **es** schneiden.

There is, however, a second way to say "with it" which is German and keeps the same form regardless of which thing we are talking about. Here we add *da-* to the preposition (or *dar-* if the preposition begins with a vowel):

De scharfe Messer ist dort drüben. Damit kannst du schneiden. [preposition: mit]
(The sharp knife is over there. You can cut with it.)

De Sache ist klar. Jetzt werde ich nicht mehr daran denken. [preposition: an]
(That settles it. Now I won't think about it anymore.)

This second way with *da-* and *dar-* is recommended in SG. However, don't use it for people. It would make them feel like things.

Dialogue 4

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wo ist Michael?
Hast du ih gesehen? • Er wäscht de Wagen.
Es ist ganz neu. • Damit kann er seine Instrumente transportieren. • Genau! | <p>Where is Michael?
Have you seen him?
He is washing the car.
It is brand new.
With that one he can transport his instruments.
Exactly!</p> |
|---|--|

Relative pronouns

In SG, relative pronouns are usually replaced by *de*. The relative pronouns are underlined here for clarity:

de Film, de ich gesehen habe (the film which I have seen)

de Leute, mit de ich spreche (the people with whom I speak)

The new relative pronoun "dehen"

In German, in situations as below, one needs to be able to choose between the relative pronouns *dessen* and *deren*, both meaning *whose*:

der Wagen, dessen Reifen sie wechselt
(the car, whose tires she changes)

die Toilette, deren Tapete geblümt ist
(the toilet, whose wallpaper is flowery)

die Studierenden, deren Professorin in die Rente geht
(the students, whose professor will retire)

Transforming it into Simplified German

In order to have just one form for the relative pronoun *whose*, SG introduces the new relative pronoun *dehen*. The letter *h* is silent:

de Wagen, **dehen** Reifen sie wechselt
(the car, whose tires she changes)

de Toilette, **dehen** Tapete geblümt ist
(the toilet, whose wallpaper is flowery)

de Studierende, **dehen** Professorin in **de** Rente geht
(the students, whose professor will retire)

The word *dehen* sounds quite close to both *dessen* and *deren* which is why it was chosen.

Dialogue 5

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Ich träume von ein Job, de Spaß macht. | I'm dreaming of a job that is fun. |
| • Ich kenne jemand, dehen Bruder Hundetrainer ist. | I know someone, whose brother is a dog trainer. |
| • Wo kann man so was lernen? | Where can one learn such a thing? |

Possessive pronouns

Possessive pronouns are words which communicate that somebody has something in their possession. In SG, the possessive pronouns in singular work similar to the word *ein*. We always use the shortest form of the existing German ones (the form without an ending):

mein (my)	unser (our)
dein (your)	euer (your, plural)
sein (his/its)	ihr/Ihr (their /your, formal).
ihr (her)	

Some examples with *mein* in singular:

Mein Wohnung ist groß (My apartment is big)

In **mein** Wohnung gibt es viel Raum (In my apartment there is a lot of space)

In plural, we always have the ending -e:

Meine Stühle sind aus Holz (My chairs are wooden)

Auf **meine Stühle** kann man gut sitzen (On my chairs one can sit well)

"Kein" works the same way

Kein works the same way as the possessive pronouns:

Sie hat **kein** Zeit (She has no time)

Ich sehe keine Leute hier (I see no people here)

When one thing possesses something

In the previous section we learned how to talk about people possessing something. How is it then, when one thing possesses something?

In German, one needs to be able to choose between the possessive pronouns *sein* and *ihr* in singular, both meaning *its*:

Das Hemd ist bequem und sein Preis ist auch gut
(The shirt is comfortable and its price is good too)

Die Bluse passt mir und ihre Farbe ist toll
(The blouse fits me and its color is great)

Transforming it into Simplified German

In SG, when one thing possesses something, we always say *sein* (its, singular) or *seine* (its, plural):

De Hemd ist bequem und sein Preis ist auch gut
(The shirt is comfortable and its price is good too)

De Bluse passt **mi** und **seine** Farben sind toll
(The blouse fits me and its colors are great)

Extra Grammar

Sein has been chosen as the one possessive pronoun meaning *its*, because any thing is *es* in SG and *sein* is the possessive form of *es* in German.

When multiple things possess something

In SG, when multiple things possess something, we use *ihr* (their, singular) or *ihre* (their, plural) just as we do, when people are possessing something:

De Geigen warten auf **ihr** Besitzer
(The violins are waiting for their owner)

De Gitarren klingen gut mit **ihre neue** Saiten
(The guitars sound good with their new strings)

The question words "wer" and "we"

We will now look at the question word *wer* (who). The subject form in SG is the same as in German:

Wer hat es gemacht? (Who has done it?)

The new object form "we"

In German, when the word *wer* should be an object, one needs to be able to choose between the two forms *wen* and *wem*:

Wen rufst du an? (Who are you calling?)

Wem kaufst du ein Eis? (To whom do you buy an ice cream?)

Transforming it into Simplified German

Now SG introduces the new object form *we*. It is pronounced like the beginning of the English word *vendor*, but with a long vowel sound.

We rufst du an? (Who are you calling?)

We kaufst du ein Eis? (To whom do you buy an ice cream?)

Dialogue 6

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| • We schreibst du? | Who are you writing to? |
| • Ich schreibe mein Chefin diese Rapport. | I am writing this report to my boss. |
| • I sollte mit mein jetzt sprechen. | I should talk to mine now. |

Reflexive pronouns

Reflexive pronouns combine with certain verbs to form reflexive verbs. The table below shows the reflexive pronouns in SG. The new forms are *mi* and *di*:

Reflexive pronouns		
Singular	mi	me
	di	you
	sich	him / her / it
Plural	uns	us
	euch	you
	sich	them / you, formal

Ich erinnere **mi** daran (I remember that)

Könntest du **di de** Hände waschen, bitte. (Could you wash your hands, please.)

Expressing ownership

We have already discussed expressing ownership through possessive pronouns. Just like in German, ownership can also be communicated in SG by adding an *s* to a noun:

Marias Pläne (Maria's plans)

Like in German, we can also use *von*:

de Glocke von **de** Kirche (the bell of the church)

Unlike German, when needed SG likes to use *von* twice:

de Farbe von **de** Dach von **de** Gebäude (the color of the roof of the building)

Extra Grammar

In SG we generally avoid German genitive structures like *die Küche des Hauses* (the kitchen of the house). We might not be understood, if we said *de Küche de Haus*. Instead we use *von*:

de Küche von de Haus

For some genitive structures such as *Ich bin der Auffassung* (to my mind) it works well to use *de*:

Ich bin *de* Auffassung

"in de" and "zu de"

In German it is possible for prepositions and definite articles to combine into one word. For example *in* and *dem* become *im*. Or, *zu* and *der* combine into *zur*.

In SG we keep these separate and say:

in *de* Haus (in the house)

zu *de* Treffen (to the meeting)

Some other examples:

am	->	an de
beim	->	bei de
zum	->	zu de
vom	->	von de

Fixed expressions

Fixed expressions are phrases which always appear in the same form. Typical German ones are for example:

Guten Morgen (good morning)

auf jeden Fall (in any case)

zur Schule (to school)

Simplified German has been created to make speaking easier during the early part of our language journey. Saying these fixed expressions, however, is not difficult at all. One can learn them by heart without yet needing to understand the grammar.

Therefore, it is preferable to say frequently used fixed expressions in German rather than in SG. Native speakers are so used to hearing *zur Schule* rather than *zu de Schule* that it is a good idea to use the former one if you know it.

Dialogue 7

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Erinnerst du di , wo de Laden ist? | Do you remember where the shop is? |
| • Es ist in de Gebäude von de Kaufhaus. | It is in the building of the department store. |
| • Gut. Danach könnten wir zu de Park gehen. | Good. Afterwards we could go to the park. |

Word order

Simplified German uses the same word order as German. The goal of sounding close to German would otherwise be really difficult to achieve. We revisit the following German sentence:

Ich gebe dem Lehrer den Schlüssel (I give the key to the teacher)

Here *dem Lehrer* means *to the teacher*. It is the word *dem* which gives it the meaning "to the". There is, however, an additional clue: *dem Lehrer* comes before *den Schlüssel* (the key) in the sentence. This too helps create the meaning "to the teacher".

Transforming it into Simplified German

In Simplified German we only use *de* (not *dem*, *der* etc.). Therefore we have to rely on a correct word order alone to communicate that we mean "to the teacher":

Ich gebe **de** Lehrer **de** Schlüssel (I give the key to the teacher)

How can I learn Simplified German?

Simplified German is meant to be combined with your existing knowledge of German. So if you haven't started learning German yet, you can start with a good, regular beginner's course.

Then, once you already know a bit of German, you can start applying the principles of SG when needed. Later you can leave SG behind and speak completely in real German. Consider SG a *temporary support* to have you speaking fluently sooner.

A historical connection with "de"

De has been chosen as the only definite article in SG, because it sounds like the beginning of *der*, *die*, *das* and others. It is pronounced with a vowel sound similar to the one in the English word sister.

Interestingly, *de* also exists in Low German (Niederdeutsch), where it can stand for both the masculine and the feminine. So there is a historical connection with *de*. In Low German the pronunciation of this article varies.

New words in Simplified German

The following new words exist in SG (and not in standard German):

New word		Corresponds to	Note
de	De Haus ist schön (The house is beautiful)	der, die, das, den, dem, denen	Pronounced <i>dö</i> . This article also exists in Low German (Niederdeutsch) for masculine and feminine nouns
dehen	de Wagen, dehen Reifen neu sind (the car, whose tires are new)	dessen, deren	
deselbe	Sie will wieder deselbe Job (She wants the same job again)	derselbe, dieselbe, dasselbe, dieselben, denselben, demselben, derselben	
di	Ich gebe di ein Buch (I give you a book)	dich, dir	This pronoun also exists in Low German and other dialects
ih	Ich sehe ih (I see him, her, them, you-formal)	ihn, sie*, Sie*, ihm, ihr*, ihnen *as an object form of a personal pronoun	
Ih	Ich danke Ih (I thank you, formal)	Ihnen	
mi	Ich wasche mi de Hände (I wash my hands)	mich, mir	This pronoun also exists in Low German and other dialects
we	We fragst du? (Whom do you ask?)	wen, wem	

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Wishing you fluency and joy with your German!