

Learning German for International Students at TUHH

Sept. 2015

Introduction

Learning a foreign language while studying can be difficult, especially in another country and if you have to work (or party a lot ;). At the same time, studying German in Germany has many benefits if you take advantage of them. This guide is meant to help you do just that!

1. Signing up for language courses

Signing up for a course is always a good idea, especially if you are a beginner or an intermediate learner (A1-B2). Of course, going to classes regularly and writing your homework gives you the maximum possible benefit!

1.1. Language courses at TUHH (free)

<http://www.tuhh.de/alt/tuhh/education/students/language-program-in-cooperation-with-vhs.html>

TUHH offers free language courses once a week for 2.5 hours with teachers from the VHS ([Hamburger Volkshochschule](#)). They offer many other languages in addition to German that you can check yourself!

- You can earn university credits (2 to 4), but you need to fulfill certain requirements: 80% attendance and writing an exam/making a presentation. Ask your lecturer about the details!
- You can register using the online form on the website:

<http://www.tuhh.de/.../language-program.../application-and-placement.html>

- Taking an online placement test is required for certain levels. You can also upload your recent certificates to prove your previous knowledge.
- Registration ends usually before the start of each semester, so check the link regularly!

These courses are not enough for a comprehensive study, but you can sign up for more than one level at the same time (ex: B2.1 and B2.2). You can and should supplement the classes with other activities as well.

1.2. Courses at Hamburg Volkshochschule (paid)

<http://www.vhs-hamburg.de/kurse/kurse/deutsch-145>

Another good option are the paid courses at different VHS centers in Hamburg. They have evening, weekend and even intensive classes. Naturally, you have to do some work to take full advantage of them.

- Students get a 50% discount! For example, the bi-weekly evening course (2 x 1.5 hours) costs around 92€ (from 184) with an additional 18€ for the textbooks, which you have to buy yourself.
- You can go for a consultation or sign up directly in person as well. There is a VHS center in Harburg:

DaF-Zentrum in Harburg:	Tel: 4273-12114 / Fax: 4273-12122
Harburg Carrée,	Email: daf@vhs-hamburg.de
Eddelbüttelstraße 47a, 21073 Hamburg	Di 14.00 – 17.00 / Do 10.00 – 13.00

- Goethe courses are very good, but expensive: <http://www.goethe.de/ins/de/ort/ham/deindex.htm>

1.3. GES TestDAF Preparation

You can safely skip this section if you are not a General Engineering Science student.

The TestDAF [requirements](#) for the GES degree change often. The latest regulations (08.2015) require a Minimum Grade of 3 on all components (12/20 points in total) *before you enroll* at the university (1 October in the Winter Semester). However, there are still some students from previous years that have to take the test.

- You should address your questions to Mr. Lars Querhammer, who is responsible for the GES degree: <https://www.tuhh.de/tuhh/studium/ansprechpartner/studis-studierendenservice.html>
 - For students enrolled before WiSe 2015: you can write TestDAF later than the second semester in extraordinary circumstances. But you have inform Studis about this as soon as possible!
 - If you did not pass the exam, you just have to write it again. It's not a big deal, but, again, you must talk to Studis as soon as you know your result!
- How to prepare? There was a free „Deutschkurs - Niveau B 2.1 (TestDAF-Vorbereitungskurs für GES)“ offered by the university. In addition, you can get new TestDAF books in the TU library (ask the librarian if you cannot find them). You can go ask the FSR AIW-GES for additional materials as well ;)
- Does passing the exam (with 12/20 or more) mean you know German well enough? Not necessarily. It only means that you did well on the test. Think of the TestDAF as a necessary but not sufficient condition to study in German. With that in mind, I hope you find the next section useful!

2. Studying on your own (level B1+)

Language courses are great, but you can go to courses in your own country as well. The following sections can give you ideas on how to go to the next level.

2.1. Watching

One of the best ways to procrastinate... erm, learn is by watching movies or series in German.

- Netflix.com – popular online streaming service (requires Microsoft Silverlight; credit card for payment)
 - You can play many popular shows with German audio and German/English subtitles.
 - Current price is 8€ for two people or 12€ for up to four people a month.
- German Television channels. You can hook up your TV/monitor or view them online (requires Adobe Flash). You are paying for these channels anyway (Rundfunkbeitrag), you can at least try them!
 - ARD – first German national channel, with quality news broadcasts (Tagesschau)
Live: <http://www.daserste.de/live/index.html> Recorded: <http://www.ardmediathek.de/tv>
 - ZDF Online – second German national channel: <http://www.zdf.de/>
- Some great German movies (find more information about them on the fluentu.com blog):

○ Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant (1972)	○ Das Leben der Anderen (2006)
○ Lola Rennt (1998)	○ Revanche (2008)
○ Nirgendwo in Afrika (2001)	○ Der Baader Meinhof Komplex (2008)
○ Good Bye Lenin! (2003)	○ Das weiße Band (2009)
○ Der Untergang (2004)	○ Paradies: Liebe (2013)

- Also check IMDB.com: *[click here](#)* for a list of the highest-rated German movies with at least 10000 votes. It contains some old movies for cinema enthusiasts, but also modern and entertaining titles.

2.1. Listening

You can listen to a lot of shows online or with your favorite smartphone podcast application.

- Slowly spoken news broadcasts: <http://www.dw.de/deutsch-lernen/nachrichten/s-8030>
- Everyday German podcast: <http://www.dw.de/deutsch-lernen/alltagsdeutsch/s-9214>

2.2. Reading

An e-reader can be useful since you look up common words (just don't expect too much from the dictionary).

- Kindle and Kobo are good options (59-119€). A German-English dictionary can cost extra (10€).
- Or you can buy physical books. Young adult or teen novels like Harry Potter are a good start.

2.3. Speaking

Try to speak as much as possible – the sooner you do this, the better. You should hang out with German people (don't worry, they don't bite). If you are a bit shy, there are also groups that help you meet friendly natives:

- Dialog in Deutsch: <https://www.buecherhallen.de/ehrenamt-dialog-in-deutsch>
- Deutsch/Englisch Stammtisch: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/985791924786775/>
Note: you should join the Stammtisch group only if you plan on actively participating.
- Language Tandem Hamburg: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/985791924786775/>

Tandem helps you find partners for 1:1 conversations. You teach them your language, they teach you Deutsch. Spanish speakers are in demand, but there are Germans wanting to learn niche languages.

2.4. Other study resources (audio, video, exercises):

Deutsche Welle offers a lot more than free audio podcasts, you should check their site out:

<http://www.dw.de/deutsch-lernen/s-2055>

3. General tips on language learning

You can skip this section unless you feel stuck and want to read about learning mentality / psychology.

3.1. How long will it take?

Learning a new language will generally take a long time. You should be patient, especially if you haven't started at an early age. According to the "Language Development Theory" the stages of learning are: preproduction (0 – 6 months), early production (6 months – 1 year), speech emergence (1 – 3 years), intermediate fluency (3 – 5 years), and advanced fluency (5 – 7, even 10 years) [more on that: [here](#) and [here](#)]. Note that this is not a passive process, many people live and work in Germany for years before starting to learn the language!

3.2. Overcome speaking anxiety

Hamburg is an international city and many locals speak English: you may never have to converse in German at all. However, you learn the most when you have no choice, but to interact with others in their language. You should feel no shame in your "broken" German, nobody will judge you! Making mistakes is an integral part of the process. In fact, it helps you learn much faster! Speaking can be difficult, but the more you practice, the less worried you will feel. Try going to courses or some of the groups mentioned in section 2.3. They offer a friendly and encouraging environment for language practice.

3.3. Forming helpful studying habits

These ideas are based on the book “Make it Stick” by Harvard University Press: <http://makeitstick.net/>

- Spaced repetition: you should allow at least some forgetting to occur when learning new information. Let a couple of hours (to a few days) pass between review sessions.
- Interweave your practice: mix different subjects and vocabulary up.
- Quiz yourself regularly, but always check the correct answers at the end.

Remember: hard and frustrating does not necessarily equal ineffective. It may feel like you're making no progress, but by increasing desirable difficulties, you are remembering the material for a longer period of time!

3.4. Approach with positive mentality (recap)

- It will take time. Be patient.
- [Small tiny habits](#) build over time. Don't stress yourself by trying to do too much.
- [Forgive yourself](#) when things don't go as planned or when you feel frustrated with your progress.

4. Miscellaneous

- [Dict.cc](#) – one of the best mobile German-English dictionaries:
 - Google Playstore: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=cc.dict.dictcc>
 - Apple Appstore: <https://itunes.apple.com/de/app/dict.cc-worterbuch/id327732352?mt=8>
- Anki flashcard vocabulary trainer: <http://ankisrs.net/>
- The “Common European Framework for Languages” used throughout this text ranks knowledge from A1 (beginner) to C2 (mastery). You can read more about it here: <https://www.daad.de/...-languages/>

Ich wünsche euch viel Spaß und Erfolg beim Deutschlernen!
Ich hoffe, dass dieses Handbuch hilfreich für euch sein wird!

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