

Top 20 Most-Used German Verbs Ranked by Frequency (Häufigkeit)

Some estimates of vocabulary use indicate that an educated person has an active vocabulary of 10,000 to 20,000 words. (Our passive vocabulary—words we understand—is much larger.) To be reasonably fluent in a foreign language (be it German or any other tongue), most experts say you need to understand around 8,000 words and be able to use about 2,000. Since larger German dictionaries list over 300,000 terms, no one can be expected to know all of them. Our goal here is much more modest: the most frequently used verbs.

Although this is a non-scientific listing of word frequency (**Worthäufigkeit**), the 21 verbs listed here (there was a tie for 11th place) are among the most commonly used in daily spoken and written (email, letters) form. They are ranked by approximate frequency, from most-used to least. But by any measure, the verbs below are among the *most useful* in German, and it is a good idea to know all of them. Note that the English meaning shown here for each verb may be only one of several possible meanings.

In the following chart you'll find selected conjugations and examples for each verb. For more detailed information on some verbs, click on the verb's hyperlink. (You can see all of the irregular and other German verbs on our [German Verbs](#) page and on the [50 Common German Verbs](#) chart of the most common German verbs in the present tense - with examples.) Note: Our ranked verb list is related more to spoken German.

Top 20 Most-Used German Verbs Ranked by Frequency of Use		
Infinitiv	Common Forms	Examples
1 sein to be	ich bin I am du bist you are er war he was er ist gewesen he was/has been es wäre it would be	COMMANDS Sei still! Be quiet! Seien Sie bitte so freundlich! Would you be so kind! OTHER Ich bin's. It's me. Wie wär's mit einem Bier? How about a beer?
2 haben to have	ich habe I have du hast you have er hat he has Sie haben gehabt You had/have had wir hätten we would have	COMMANDS Hab dich nicht so! Don't make such a fuss! OTHER Er hat keine Zeit. He has no time. Wenn ich nur das Geld hätte. If I only had the money.

<p>3 <u>werden</u> to become</p> <p><i>Also used to form the future tense and the passive voice.</i></p>	<p>ich werde I become du wirst you become er ist geworden he became es wurde it became es würde.. it would...</p>	<p>COMMANDS werde! become! werden Sie! become! OTHER Es wird dunkel. It's getting dark. Sie wird uns schreiben. She will write us. (future) Der Brief wurde geschrieben. The letter was written. (passive)</p>
<p>4 <u>können</u> to be able, can</p>	<p>ich kann I can du kannst you can er konnte he could Sie können you can</p>	<p>COMMANDS <i>No imperative</i> OTHER Er kann Deutsch. He knows German. Ich habe es nicht sagen können. I couldn't say it.</p>
<p>5 <u>müssen</u> to have to, must</p>	<p>ich muss I must/have to du musst you must er muss he must sie musste she had to wir müssen we have to</p>	<p>COMMANDS <i>No imperative</i> OTHER Ich muss nicht. I don't have to. Er muss nach Berlin. He has to go to Berlin.</p>
<p>6 <u>wollen</u> to want (to)</p>	<p>ich will I want (to) du willst you want (to) er will he wants (to) er wollte he wanted to sie hat gewollt she wanted to</p>	<p>COMMANDS <i>Imperative rare</i> OTHER Er will nichts trinken. He doesn't want to drink anything. Das habe ich nicht gewollt. I didn't mean to (do that). Wir wollen morgen abfahren. We want to leave tomorrow.</p>
<p>7 <u>mögen</u> to like (to)</p>	<p>ich mag I like ich möchte I would like du magst you like er mochte he liked Sie mögen you like</p>	<p>COMMANDS <i>No imperative</i> OTHER Er mag die Suppe. He likes the soup. Was möchten Sie? What would you like?</p>
<p>8 <u>wissen</u> to know</p>	<p>ich weiß I know du weißt you know wir wissen we know er wusste he knew ich habe gewusst I knew, have known</p>	<p>COMMANDS wisse! know! wisset! know! OTHER Er weiß es nicht. He doesn't know. Sie wusste weder ein noch aus. She didn't know which way was</p>

		up. Wissen Sie, wann sie ankommen? Do you know when they arrive?
9 machen to make, do	ich mache I do, make du machst you make er macht he does wir machten we did, made er hat gemacht he did, has done ich werde machen I will do, make	COMMANDS Machen Sie sich keine Gedanken! Don't worry about it! OTHER Das macht nichts. It doesn't matter. Was macht das? What does it come to? (How much?) Was machen wir jetzt? Now what do we do?
10 <u>sollen</u> should, ought to, supposed to	ich soll I should du sollst you should er soll he should sie sollte she was supposed to wir sollen we ought to	COMMANDS <i>No imperative</i> OTHER Ich sollte dort bleiben. I ought to stay there. Es soll schön sein. It's said to be/supposed to be nice. Was soll das? What's that supposed to mean?
MORE > Next 10 Verbs		

Continued from [Part 1](#) In this section of our chart you'll find selected conjugations and examples for each verb in the next ten top. You can see all of the irregular and other German verbs on our [German Verbs](#) page and on the [50 Common German Verbs](#) chart of the most common German verbs in the present tense—with examples. For more on word frequency in German, also see the link for *Projekt Wortschatz Deutsch* below.

Note: Our ranked verb list is related more to spoken German. Many ranked word lists are based on the frequency of words found in newspapers and magazines, which is an easier statistic to generate. We make no claims of scientific accuracy for our *Rangliste*.

The Top 20 Most-Used German Verbs (2) Ranked by Usage Frequency		
Infinitiv	Common Forms	Examples
11 <i>Tie</i> <u>heißen</u> to be called, named (my/his) name is	ich heiße my name is sie heißt her name is du heißt your name is er hieß his name was er hat geheißen he was named wir heißen our name is Heißen Sie...? Is your name...?	COMMANDS N/A OTHER Wie heißen Sie? What's your name? (<i>last name</i>) Ich heiße Jones. My name is Jones. Er heißt Braun. His name is

		<p>Braun. Wie heißt du? What's your name? <i>(child)</i> Ich heiße Karl. My name is Karl. <i>(child)</i> Was soll das heißen? What's that supposed to mean?/What do you mean by that?</p>
<p>11 <i>Tie</i> sagen to say, tell</p>	<p>ich sage I say du sagst you say er sagte he said er hat gesagt he said/has said wir sagen we say sagen Sie? do you say?/are you saying?</p>	<p>COMMANDS Sag das nicht! Don't say it! Sagen Sie mir! Tell me! OTHER Er sagt, was er denkt. He says what he means/thinks. Das sagt mir nichts. That doesn't mean anything to me. Du hast nichts zu sagen. You have no say (in the matter).</p>
<p>12 <u>gehen</u> to go</p>	<p>ich gehe I go, am going du gehst you go er geht he goes sie ist gegangen she went/has gone er ging he went</p>	<p>COMMANDS gehe! go! geht! go! gehen Sie! go! OTHER Das geht nicht. That won't do/work. Wie geht es Ihnen? How are you? Meine Uhr geht nach. My watch is slow. Sie geht zu Fuß She goes on foot./She walks.</p>
<p>13 <u>sehen</u> to see</p>	<p>ich sehe I see du siehst you see er sieht he sees er hat gesehen he saw/has seen sie sah she saw wir sahen we saw</p>	<p>COMMANDS sehe! see! sehen Sie! see! OTHER Sie sieht nicht gut. She doesn't see well. Wo hast du ihn gesehen? Where did you see him?</p>
<p>14 <u>geben</u> to give</p>	<p>ich gebe I give du gibst you give er gab he gave Sie geben you give es gibt there is/are</p>	<p>COMMANDS gebt! give! gib! give! geben Sie! give! OTHER Geben Sie mir den Bleistift! Give me the pencil. Es gibt kein Geld. There is no money. Ich gab ihr das Buch. I gave her the book.</p>

		Er hat mir das Geld gegeben. He gave me the money.
15 <u>kommen</u> to come	ich komme I come, am coming du kommst you come er kam he came sie ist gekommen she came	COMMANDS komm! come! kommt! come! kommen Sie! come! OTHER Ich komme nicht nach Hause. I'm not coming home. Er ist nach Berlin gekommen. He came to Berlin. Woher kommt sie? Where does she come from? Es kam ganz anders, als erwartet. It turned out very differently than we expected.
16 <u>lassen</u> to let, allow, leave	ich lasse I let du lässt you let er lässt he lets Sie haben gelassen You have let er ließ he let	COMMANDS Lassen Sie das! Stop that! Leave that alone! OTHER Er ließ sich keine Zeit. He didn't allow himself any time. Das lasse ich mir nicht gefallen. I won't put up with that. Er lässt sich die Haare schneiden. He's getting a haircut.
17 <u>finden</u> to find	ich finde I find ich fand I found du findest you find er fand he found Sie haben gefunden you found/have found	COMMANDS finde! find! findet! find! finden Sie! find! OTHER Er fand die Suppe gut. He liked the soup. Wir finden keinen Platz. We can't find a seat.
18 <u>bleiben</u> to stay, remain	ich bleibe I stay du bleibst you stay wir bleiben we stay er blieb he stayed ich bin geblieben I stayed, have stayed	COMMANDS bleib! stay! bleibt! stay! Bitte, bleiben Sie sitzen! Please remain seated! OTHER Er bleibt in Köln. He's staying in Cologne. Alles blieb beim Alten. Everything stayed the same./Nothing changed. Es bleibt dabei. Agreed. It's a deal.

<p>19 <u>nehmen</u> to take</p>	<p>ich nehme I take du nimmst you take er nimmt he takes wir nehmen we take er hat genommen he took, has taken ich werde nehmen I will take</p>	<p>COMMANDS nimm! take! nehmt! take! nehmen Sie! take! Nehmen Sie Platz! Have a seat! OTHER Er nahm das Geld. He took the money. Sie nahm es auf sich, das zu machen. She took it upon herself to do that. Wir haben den Tag freigenommen. We took the day off.</p>
<p>20 bringen to bring</p>	<p>ich bringe I bring du bringst you bring er brachte he brought sie hat gebracht she brought, has brought</p>	<p>COMMANDS bring! bring bringt! bring bringen Sie! bring OTHER Ich bringe Sie dorthin. I'll take you there. Er hat es weit gebracht. He has been very successful./He has come far. Was bringt das? What will that accomplish? Das hat mich zum Lachen gebracht. That made me laugh.</p>