

This document intend only to provide guidance & scattered infos, for the useful infos - always rely on the reliable resources. I've partly succeeded trying to make it more comprehensive & informative by means of variety of links & sources. I couldnt, however guarentee reliability of the sources hence I owe no responsibility.

What Do You Have to Arrange Before Coming to Germany?

When still at home you should prepare and obtain

- a passport valid for the entire period to be spent in Germany
- the notification of admission or confirmation of application
- proof of financial resources
- visa (not a tourist visa), if applicable
- originals and certified (!) translations of your birth certificate, secondary school leaving certificate, possibly your academic qualifications and your insured documents. Certifications abroad can e obtained at German diplomatic and consular missions
- possibly confirmation of health insurance cover or, for students from the European Union, Form E 111
- if you intend to go on a work placement: arrange compulsory insurance
- book of vaccination certificates, if you have one. Check at the German missions whether you need any vaccinations
- possibly an international driving license
- start searching for accommodation
- Entry and Residence Regulations

When is a Visa Mandatory?

Foreign students wishing to enter the Federal Republic of Germany require a residence permit visa for educational purposes (= Aufenthaltserlaubnis in der Form des Sichtvermerks) issued by a diplomatic representation of the Federal Republic of Germany (local German embassy or consulate) in the student's country of origin and entered into the passport. This regulation does not apply to study applicants and students from EU countries and from countries with whom Germany has agreed different regulations. Please ask your local German embassy or consulate, if and what kind of visa you need.

Citizens from a number of other countries can also enter Germany without a visa, if they only want to stay in Germany for a maximum of three months. However, once this three-month period is over, they will require a visa for educational purposes which they can only apply for in their home country. These means that such students must first leave the country, which may possibly be expensive in terms of time and money.

You are urgently warned against entering the country as a tourist. A tourist visa cannot be retrospectively converted into a visa or residence permit for educational purposes.

Bureaucratic formalities take time the world over, which in this case means your time. To ensure that you do not unnecessarily lose time, we would advise you to contact the German embassy or consulate as soon as possible about which documents you need for the visa application.

What Papers are Required?

Student Visa

You will need the following documents in order to be able to apply to the local [German embassy or consulate](#) for a visa for educational purposes in the Federal Republic of Germany:

- a valid passport and numerous passport photographs;
- a higher education entrance qualification recognised in Germany (this is the Abitur certificate or an appropriate equivalent qualification);
- proof of your previous study achievements;
- proof of [sufficient financial](#) means; and
- the notification of admission from the university of your choice or an applicant confirmation notification certifying that the full set of required application documents and papers has been received by the university.

Study Applicant Visa

If you have not been able to contact any German universities from your home country, there is a second visa format, in addition to the visa for educational purposes, with which you will initially be able to enter Germany without formal application to or admission from an institution of higher education or preparatory course (Studienkolleg). This visa, the so-called study applicant visa (Studienbewerber-Sichtvermerk), allows you to stay for up to three months in Germany in which time you can inform yourself about study opportunities in the Federal Republic of Germany, fulfil any conditions which are still required for application or for acceptance to a study programme. This visa can then be extended as a residence permit for the Federal Republic of Germany without you first having to leave the country. The necessary papers and documents are:

- a valid passport and numerous passport photographs;
- a higher education entrance qualification recognised in Germany (this is the Abitur certificate or an appropriate equivalent qualification);
- proof of your previous study achievements; and
- proof of [sufficient financial](#) means (see the site "costs" in the "Tips to start of" section).

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German language skills

Even if you don't want to continue your studies in German: A good knowledge of German will make your stay in Germany all the more rewarding. You can already begin to find out about Germany and its culture by attending a German language course before you come here: The Goethe Institute maintains [125 cultural institutes](#) around the world and [16 in Germany](#). Or why not try learning online with the multimedia language course [Redaktion D](#).

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Your first port of call: the International Office

We would advise you to visit the International Office (Akademisches Auslandsamt - AAA) at your chosen higher education institution as soon as arrive there. The International Office is generally open between 9.00 and 12.00. The staff there will be able to provide you will all the information you need in order be able to organise and arrange your first few days in Germany.

Cash and currency

You will have to pay for plenty of items in the first few days: Rent deposit, first rent payment, health insurance, semester contribution, and so on. This is why we recommend that you have the equivalent of around 250 euros with you in cash. You are allowed to bring any amount of any currency into Germany. However, you should check the foreign currency regulations in your home country. In most cases, you will be able to pay by credit card in large shops and stores, restaurants and hotels; however, smaller guesthouses and shops will rarely accept credit cards. The exchange counters (Wechselbüros) at airports and major railway stations are also open in the evening and at weekends. That is where you can change your home currency into euros or cash in traveller's cheques. There are also machines that change your money into euros; generally, they are located in front of the main bank branches.

The Deutsche Mark continued to be legal tender until the end of 2001. As from January 2002, euro banknotes and coins of the European Economic and Monetary Union were brought into circulation (further information from: www.euro.ecb.int).

The first few nights

If the International Office is closed when you arrive and you do not yet have a place to spend the night, then the student services organisation (Studentenwerk) may initially be able to accommodate you on a temporary basis. If you can't find anybody there, then you will have to spend the first few nights in a hotel, guesthouse or youth hostel. The Tourist Information Office (Verkehrsamt) will be able to arrange a room for you. These offices are located at or very close to the airport or railway station.

You will find cheaper accommodation than in a guesthouse or hotel by spending the first few nights in a youth hostel, where you can sleep for around 8.- to 15.- euros per night. Except for Bavaria, people over 27 years of age can also stay overnight there for a few euros. You do need an International Youth Hostel Pass (Internationaler Jugendherbergsausweis), which you can also get direct from the youth hostel itself. For detailed information and the addresses contact:

DJH Service GmbH
Bismarckstraße 8
D-32754 Detmold
Tel. +49.5231.7401-0
Fax +49.5231.7401-74
E-Mail: service@djh.de
Internet: <http://www.djh.de/>

If you're really unlucky and cannot find anywhere to sleep for the first night (which we don't really expect to happen), then there are other social organisations which you can turn to, such as the Railway Mission (Bahnhofsmission located in the station), the Salvation Army (Heilsarmee) or the City Mission (Stadtmission). Their addresses are in the phone book under "Kirche".

Registering

At the start of your stay in Germany you will have to complete a number of bureaucratic formalities. You need to register with two authorities: First, you must go to the Residents Registration Office (Einwohnermeldeamt) followed by the Aliens Registration Office (Ausländeramt). Both offices are generally located in the buildings of the town or city hall (Stadtverwaltung). In some cities, they may also be found in the citizens office (Bürgeramt) or the district office (Bezirksamt).

If you're not clear about this, please ask the International Office, your fellow students or your housemates for advice.

Residents Registration Office

Everybody who lives in Germany - regardless of whether foreigners or Germans - has to go to the Residents Registration Office to register themselves and their address. You risk being fined if you fail to meet this requirement.

Registration

- Finding your Residents Registration Office (Einwohnermeldeamt)
First, find out where the local Residents Registration Office is located. The address is in the phone book under "Stadt", "Stadtverwaltung", "Bezirksamt", "Rathaus" or "Bürgeramt". Generally, you can also find it on the Internet. Just enter the name of your town and click your way through, e.g. www.heidelberg.de or www.koeln.de
- Registration form (Anmeldeformular or Meldeschein)
Many city and local authorities have the registration form ready for downloading from their website. You can either print it out or you can go to the Residents Registration Office and collect the form in person. Some stationery shops also have the official forms.
- Your landlord's/landlady's signature
Ask your landlord or landlady to fill in the relevant section on the form. They are obliged to do this. And they will surely help you complete the rest of the form.
- Residents Registration Office (Einwohnermeldeamt)
Then go to your local Residents Registration Office and register. You need the completed registration form and your passport (EU citizens can take their passport or identity card).
- Deadlines
Please note: The registration deadlines are very short and differ from one federal state (Land) to the next. You only have one or two weeks in which to register.

Registering your change of address

If you move within Germany, some federal states require you to go through the whole process once more. You then fill in a de-registration form in your old town and another registration form in your new town. Please contact the Residents Registration Office to find out whether you have to de-register and re-register when you move or whether you only have to register in your new town.

If you move within the same town, then you only need to use the form for registering your change of address (Ummeldung).

De-registering

You must de-register before you leave Germany. There is a special de-registration form for this (Abmeldeformular), which you can either download from the website or obtain from the Residents Registration Office.

E-Government

Although most authorities have placed information and forms on their websites, legal provisions mean that it is not currently possible to return these forms to the authorities electronically, i.e. you cannot register via the World Wide Web. However, many administrations are working on offering this service in the near future.

Aliens Registration Office

Residence permit

Each and every foreign student living in Germany needs a residence permit (Aufenthaltsbewilligung). Students from the European Union, from EFTA countries, from the United States and from a number of other countries may enter Germany without a visa, however. If you do not know whether your country is among these states, then please contact the German Embassy in your home country for information on whether you need to apply for a visa, that is an entry permit (Einreisegenehmigung).

The addresses of the embassies and consulates are listed on the website of the German Federal Foreign Office: www.auswaertiges-amt.de

Once you have entered Germany and registered at the Residents Registration Office, you must immediately go to the Aliens Registration Office (Ausländeramt) in order to

apply for a residence permit (Aufenthaltsbewilligung). This applies to all foreigners. Please make sure that you take along the following documents and papers when you go to there:

If you have a visa (stamp) entered into your passport:

- The confirmation of registration (Meldebestätigung) issued by the Residents Registration Office
- Proof that you have private or statutory health insurance
- Passport
- Money for administrative fees

If you do not need a visa:

- The confirmation of registration (Meldebestätigung) issued by the Residents Registration Office
- Proof that you have private or statutory health insurance
- Student ID card or letter of admission (Zulassungsbescheid) issued by your higher education institution

Proof of financial resources:

- Passport (citizens of EU countries can take their passport or identity card)
- possibly, a number of passport photographs

If you are a citizen of an EU country and intend to stay in Germany for less than three months, you do not need to obtain a residence permit. You can stay in Germany as a tourist.

Work permit (Arbeitserlaubnis)

Only in exceptional cases are foreign students allowed to take up paid employment to pay for their cost of living. And if they are allowed to, then not always as much as they would like.

Students from non EU countries:

Study applicants, students enrolled in preparatory or foundation courses (Studienkolleg) or in German language courses offered by higher education institutions are not allowed to take up paid employment. Students enrolled in full studies can choose: Either they are allowed to work for up to 90 days per year and additionally ten hours per week or in the semester vacations. But please note: If you are such a student, you do need a work permit. To find out more, please contact the Aliens Registration Office (Ausländeramt) and not the Employment Office or Job Centre (Arbeitsamt).

Students from EU countries

Students from EU countries can work as much as they wish. They can also take up an independent profession or go self-employed. A work permit is not required.

Proof of financial resources

Most international students come to Germany without a scholarship or grant. They must prove to the German diplomatic representations abroad (embassies and consulates) and the Aliens Registration Office in Germany (Ausländeramt) that they have the financial resources to fund their stay. This means, they must present so called proof of financial resources (Finanzierungsnachweis) for one year.

Information on how to earn some extra money as a working student and more details on the costs of studying in Germany can be found in the chapters "Student Jobs", "Costs, Fees, Sources of Funding", and "Registering - Work Permit".

Banks and Your Money

Opening times differ from one bank to the next. Roughly, they open as follows:

Weekdays from 9.00 to 16.00, Thursdays additionally until 18.30, and are possibly closed midday from 13.00 to 14.30.

Opening a current account (Girokonto): Before you choose a bank, make sure that you get them to answer the following questions:

- Once I have opened the account, can I immediately draw money from the cash dispenser/ATM?
- Can I set up standing orders (Daueraufträge) and issue direct debit notices (Lastschriftaufträge) after the account has been open for around three months? (see below)
- Will I be able to get a Eurocheque Card after about three months?
- Will I be able to get a credit card after a certain amount of time, if I so wish?

As a rule, the bank will watch your account over the first few months to check whether money is being regularly credited to it before they offer you the above services. As a student you can apply for exemption from the usual account charges (Kontoführungsgebühren).

In Germany, by contrast to many countries, it is not usual to send cheques to people by post (eg. the rent to your landlord)! There are various ways of conducting monetary transactions:

- Transfer (Überweisung) is used to transfer money from one account to the other. You have to fill in a transfer form and hand it in at your bank or savings bank.
- Standing order (Dauerauftrag): if you have regularly recurring payments of a set sum, such as the rent, it is recommendable to arrange for a standing order so that the set sum can be deducted automatically from your account on an agreed date and transferred to the account of the recipient. The bank will provide you with the necessary form.
- Direct debit (Lastschrift): this is a practical method of payment if you have recurring sums which vary in size, such as the telephone bill or health insurance. You give the recipient a direct debit authorization (Einzugsermächtigung) which authorises them to deduct the respective amounts from your account. Of course, you can always cancel the authorization and stop the direct debit. This method of payment may be new to you and you may be suspicious that it could be open to abuse. However, all direct debits are registered on your bank statement so that you can check them and revoke any incorrect debits.
- Eurocheque card: If you have a Eurocheque card and a Personal Identification Number (PIN), you can withdraw money from a cash dispenser/ATM and use the card to pay in shops. If you lose the card, you can have the card "blocked" by phoning a special number around the clock. The Eurocheque card should not be confused with a Eurocard; the latter is a credit card that is accepted worldwide.
- Overdraft facility/credit cards: An overdraft facility (Dispositionskredit) allows you to overdraw your account up to a certain limit set by the bank, i.e. your account is in debit (minus). However, the overdraft interest rates are anything but low. If you are interested in a credit card, your bank will be pleased to advise you.
- Home banking/online banking: Many banks offer their customers the opportunity to run their accounts (transfers, statements, etc.) from home using the computer and an Internet connection.

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Looking for a place to live - from home

It would be wonderful: You arrive here and a room or flat is waiting for you. To make sure that this doesn't just remain wishful thinking, we recommend that you use some of the following strategies:

The Service Set for international students

is offered by the Association of German Student Services Organisations (Deutsches Studentenwerk - DSW) and includes a room in a student hall of residence for the first six months of the stay in Germany. The Service Set costs between 205.- euros 375.- euros per month, but offers a whole lot more than just a room. Unfortunately, only a limited number of sets are available. For further information please contact:

Deutsches Studentenwerk
Monbijouplatz 11
D-10178 Berlin
Germany
Tel.: +49 (0)30/ 29 77 27-64
Fax: +49 (0)30/ 29 77 27-69
E-Mail: dsw@studentenwerke.de
Internet: <http://www.studentenwerke.de/main/default.asp?id=09202>

A room in a student hall of residence

costs between 75.- and 225.- euros per month, depending on the region in question. A place in a twin room may actually cost less than 75.- euros. Some halls of residence even offer accommodation for families. If you apply to the local student services organisation (Studentenwerk) early and put your name on the waiting list, then you will have quite a good chance of getting a room. This means that you have accommodation for the whole length of your stay. The International Office at your university will be able to give you further information. If your host higher education institution has a university guesthouse, you can also have your name put on the waiting list there. As a rule, however, these rooms are reserved for visiting professors and academics.

Private student halls of residence

also rent out rooms at favourable rates. The local student services organisation will be able to send you the addresses.

The addresses of private landlords and landladies,

which international students have left before returning to their home country can be obtained from the International Office. We would like to take this opportunity to ask you to pass on the address where you lived during your studies at the end of your stay, if you were satisfied with your accommodation.

International flat-sharing agencies

arrange accommodation across borders and are open to people from all around the world. The following two agencies have specialised in arranging accommodation for students and don't charge excessive or possibly any arrangement commission:

INTAS - The International Accommodation Service

INTAS arranges a reasonably-priced place to live in Berlin for the first few days for international students. The German hosts generally speak English and are pleased to assist you. If you would like to see more of Europe than Germany, then INTAS will also arrange reasonable accommodation in Prague, Nice, London, etc.

INTAS - The International Accommodation Service

Petra Jahn-Draskóczy
Brahestraße 37
D-10589 Berlin
Tel. +49.30.3499331 or 3458329
Tel. in English: +49.30.3499332
Fax +49.30.3499338
E-Mail: intas_berlin@compuserve.com

Other international agencies

can be reached via the European Shared Accommodation Ring (Ring Europäischer Mitwohnzentralen e.V. - REM) using a nationwide number 19430 preceded by the

relevant local dialling code (for example, 030 19430 in Berlin or 0228 19430 in Bonn) or by going to the REM website at: www.mitwohnzentrale.de. Ask for an accommodation request form (Vermittlungsauftrag) to be sent to you in which you can specify your wishes. It is worth following up your request with all the agencies at regular intervals. And please never pay any charges in advance. The agencies are only allowed to charge commission once a legally binding rent agreement has been signed.

Further links on finding a place to live can be found in [our Service Section](#).

Looking for accommodation on the spot

If you have not been successful finding somewhere to live via the channels mentioned above you will have to enter Germany before the semester begins otherwise the housing market will be totally saturated and most of the rooms long since allocated.

Accommodation services at the university

The student services organisations (Studentenwerke) and the student unions (AStA/UStA) at some higher education institutions run student accommodation services which arrange private rooms. Students get the addresses of several landlords/landladies who have rooms available. The chances of getting a room are good, because each address is only given to three students per day.

Notice Boards

AstA and Student Services put up large notice boards where notices searching for or offering accommodation, selling items etc. can be posted. You will also find notice boards in the department and the Mensa but these are usually covered with notices searching for rooms.

Newspapers

On Wednesdays and Saturdays the local newspapers have a special accommodation section. You should call the number for the chosen flat or room as early as possible and arrange to view it.

The ABC of small ads

When looking through the ads, you will stumble across plenty of abbreviations and codes, such as:

2 Zi.-Whg = 2 room flat

2 ZKDB = 2 rooms, kitchen, hall, bathroom

zzgl. NK = plus extra charges (heating, electricity, etc.)

ZH = central heating

K = deposit

NR = non-smokers

KN = kitchenette

NMM = net monthly rent (plus costs for heating, electricity, gas, water, waste disposal)

MVZ = rent in advance

Prov. = commission

WG = shared flat

WBS erford. = subsidised housing only rented to holders of a special permit issued on social grounds

kalt = heating extra

Abstand = you have to buy some of the fixtures and furnishings

Estate agent

Estate agents are entitled to charge an agent's commission (Courtage) when they help somebody find a flat. The Estate Agents Act (Wohnungsvermittlungsgesetz) states that this commission amounts to two months' base rent (Kaltmiete excluding any of the extra charges)) plus value added tax (as per 2000). An estate agent must not demand that you make any payment until the legally-binding rent contract has been signed.

Wohnberechtigungsschein (WBS)

The Wohnberechtigungsschein (WBS) is a permit for renting socially-subsidised housing

in Germany and is issued by local authorities to people whose income is below a specified ceiling. To qualify, your residence permit must have been issued for one year. You can obtain further information on the WBS permit from the local housing authority (Amt für Wohnungswesen) listed in the phone book under "Stadt".

Deposits

Most landlords ask for a deposit of between 1 and 3 months' rent which will be refunded to you when you move out. However, should any damage have been done to your accommodation the landlord is allowed to withhold the sum required to repair the damage from the deposit. The landlord must ensure that you receive the current rate of interest for the whole period.

Tenancy Agreements

Before signing a tenancy agreement you should read it carefully. If you have any questions you can contact the German Tenants' Association (Deutscher Mieterbund, DMB):

Deutscher Mieterbund e.V.
Aachener Straße 313
50931 Cologne
Tel.: (+49) 0221/94 07 70
E-Mail: dsw@studentenwerke.de
Internet: <http://www.studentenwerke.de/>

Your rent contract should contain the following details:

- the length of the rent agreement
- the amount of rent and any extra charges
- the agreed term of notice (3 months are normal)
- the amount of your deposit (and the interest it earns)
- details of whether you redecorate when you move in or move out (you only decorate once)
- the conditions for any rent increases
- in the case of furnished rooms, a list of all objects (please check in the presence of the landlord/landlady whether all the items are in good order and, if damaged, please have this documented in writing - so that you don't have to pay for the damage when you move out)
- the general house rules (which also define the repairs that the landlord/landlady is responsible for and those which you have to pay for).

Electricity

All electrical power points in Germany are designed for 220 volts, 50 Hz. AC and two-point plugs. Any adapters you may need can be bought in electrical shops.

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Shopping to your heart's delight

Strolling, shopping, running errands or just "going into town": In Germany, these all mean going out and buying things. Everyday items such as bread, milk or newspapers are bought locally. If you want to look at various items and compare prices or simply have a look at what's on offer, then you go into town (or into the "city" as Germans say). Most German towns and cities - whether large or small - have a pedestrian precinct in the town centre/downtown. City maps often use a special colour to identify these. In most cases, they begin near the rail station and not only have department stores, boutiques, the post office or a weekly market, but also cosy cafés, ice cream parlours and international fast-food restaurants. So, it's the perfect place to meet friends. An afternoon

spent there passes quickly.

- [Opening times](#)
- [How to pay](#)
- [Chemists/pharmacies/drugstores](#)
- [Food](#)
- [Clothes](#)
- [Second-hand goods](#)

Opening times

Germany has a shop closing act which precisely governs when goods may be offered. Most shops have to remain closed Monday to Friday from 20.00 in the evening until 6.00 the next morning. On Saturdays, shops are generally not allowed to sell anything after 20.00.

Mondays to Fridays

Shop opening hours are different at different places. In large cities, shops open at between 6.00 and 10.00 in the morning during the week and close at 20.00. In the country or in more remote parts of town, shops will already close at 18.30 or 19.00. Shops in small towns can be expected to close at lunch time, from around 12.00 to 15.00.

Weekends

On Saturdays, department stores close at 16.00, while smaller shops will shut even earlier. At the end of the year, shops and stores are allowed to open longer. On the last four Saturdays before Christmas, shops open until 18.00 under a "long Saturday" opening arrangement.

On Sundays and public holidays, towns and cities will look quite empty. Everything is closed, although bakeries and confectioners may sell their bread and cakes for a few hours, while florists can sell their flowers. So what do you do when you urgently need something? The petrol station or railway kiosk are the only places that will be able to help out. You can buy food, drinks, small items and newspapers there outside of normal shop opening hours, albeit at an excessively high price.

How to pay

Cash / traveller's cheques

You pay for your bread rolls from the baker or the magazine from the kiosk in cash, although "plastic money" is increasingly being accepted. You can change the cash from your home country into euros around the clock at some machines, mostly to be found in the main branches of the banks. You can also go to the bank counters to do this, of course and can also cash in traveller's checks there, but only at the official opening times. In major tourist centres, you will also find exchange counters where you can cash in cheques or change money.

electronic cash (ec/maestro) with Eurocheque cards

If you come from a country which itself issues Eurocheque cards (not to be confused with the "Eurocard" credit card), then you should make sure you obtain such a card. You can use it to pay by card easily and almost everywhere. Just look for the ec/maestro sign on the cash register. Then you can pay by card and signature or with your PIN and the sum is immediately booked from your account. A large number of cash dispensers/ATMs are also available where you can use your Eurocheque card to draw out euros. However, you will often be charged foreign fees for using this service, if you use your card from home.

If you want to open a current account (Girokonto) in Germany which offers these services, we have compiled some additional [information](#) to help you.

Credit cards

Of course, you can pay larger sums worldwide with all well-known credit cards. The door of the shop in question will have a sticker showing which credit cards are accepted. You can also draw cash with your credit card from cash dispensers/ATMs, if you have a PIN. But you will have to pay high charges for this service.

Cash card (GeldKarte)

The cash card is a bank card with a chip on it that can be loaded at terminals. You have to hold a current account at a bank if you want to use this electronic purse. However, the GeldKarte has failed to properly assert itself amongst many retailers.

Chemists/pharmacies/drugstores

Depending on where you come from (dispensing) chemists, pharmacies or drugstores are called "Apotheke" in German and are also subject to the regulations of the shop closing act. However, the law has introduced regulations to ensure that there is always a chemist open around the clock within a radius of seven kilometres. You can find out which chemist is on duty in the newspaper; you will also find the duty chemist for that day posted on the door of every other chemist. If you need medication during the night or at weekends, then just ring the bell at the chemists on emergency duty. You will also be able to buy hygiene articles and baby food. Chemists charge an emergency duty fee of 1.53 euros for this service. Please note: Whether during the day or at night: Strong medicine will only be handed out against a medical prescription issued by a doctor.

Look here to find the chemists near you as well as the emergency duty rotas for chemists throughout Germany www.apotheken.de

Food

Supermarkets

Usually, Germans buy their food in a supermarket, because they have a large range of products and are not as expensive as small grocery shops, the so-called "Tanta-Emma-Läden" (corner shops). Each city district has a supermarket. When shopping, you should make a habit of looking at the various items and comparing prices - including within a supermarket. They often have special offers. You can buy particularly reasonably-priced food in the discount markets. They neither offer a large range of products nor brand names, but the quality is nevertheless good.

Tip: Take enough cash with you, supermarkets do not generally accept credit cards and discounters generally only accept cash.

Weekly markets

Do you really like and value fresh fruit and vegetables? Then you'll find everything to suit your taste at the weekly markets. In most cases, farmers set up their stalls in the town centre on the market square or a car park. They sell farm produce from the region, as well as imported goods, such as exotic fruits. Markets are held on one or several days a week.

International shops

Perhaps you're planning to cook a speciality from your home country for your fellow students and can't find everything you need in the supermarket. No problem. A wealth of international food shops stock imported goods from all parts of the world. A Turkish vegetable grocer who also offers numerous oriental products will be found in every German city. In addition, you can find Asia shops with special fish products and spices or African shops in which you can buy manioc, for example.

Natural food shops

Shops which sell particularly healthy foods and a number of other products go by the name of "Bioladen", "Grüner Laden", "Öko-Geschäft" or "Reformhaus" in Germany. That means that the fruit and vegetable from the bio shop was produced without pesticides and is not genetically modified. All bread and cake products were made with wholemeal

flour. The meat and eggs come from farms where the animals are kept in a way appropriate to the species, which means that the chickens were not kept in coops or cages, for example. But this all comes at a price. Cheaper bio goods can now also be found in some supermarkets. You can recognise these products by a green, octagonal bio seal awarded in accordance with the EEC Council Regulation on Organic Agricultural Produce.

For information on bio shops near-by and on healthy eating go to:

www.naturkost.de

What does the "Bio-Seal" mean? Find out here:

www.bio-siegel.de

Clothes

In the city centres, shop window upon shop window stand next to each other with the very latest fashion. Just look at what catches your fancy and don't worry about going in and trying on a jumper or pair of trousers. Nobody will demand that you buy the items then. You will be able to buy more "exclusive" or "outlandish" clothes in the boutiques and designer shops, which are correspondingly expensive, of course. Those who choose to do without the "very latest fashion" and are content with more reasonably-priced clothes "off the peg" will also be able to shop very well in the major department stores or retail chains.

Sales

Twice a year, the shops clear their stocks of clothing from the current season and offer good discounts. Take a look around town just before the start of the summer sales (Sommerschlußverkauf - SSV) or winter sales (Winterschlußverkauf - WSV), because some shops already start to drop their prices a few days before the official start. Officially, the SSV begins on the last Monday in July, and the WSV on the last Monday in January.

Exchanging goods

If you are no longer satisfied with your purchases when you get home in front of the mirror or if you realise that the dress doesn't quite fit, then you can exchange the goods or even get your money back. Of course, this also applies to damaged fabrics. This is why you should always keep the receipt, because it's only possible to exchange goods when you can present it.

However, you will only be able to exchange dresses and clothes that have been reduced in the sales, if they are damaged or have defects which were not mentioned on the price-tag.

The Federal Retailers' Association (Bundesverband des Einzelhandels) announces the dates of the sales and provides information on statutory guidelines governing complaints as well as other information on its website: www.einzelhandel.de

Second-hand goods

Very many students, as well as other citizens, own something that they bought second-hand. There are various ways to buy clothes, furniture, bicycles, cars, domestic appliances - just about anything that you would like - second-hand. But how do you know who would like to say goodbye to something they own? Here the answers:

Press

Advertisers distributed free-of-charge to households, daily papers or city magazines (such as "Zitty" in Berlin, "Stadtrevue" in Cologne, "Schnüss" in Bonn, "Prinz" in several cities) have a section in which private individuals can offer second-hand items for sale. Just call the phone numbers given in the ad and take a look at what's being sold. Haggling is certainly worth it. You are bound to be able to lower the price.

Second-hand shops

In most cases, we think of second-hand shops as offering clothes. This is where you can

find something for every taste. Items can range from simple socks to high-quality designer fashion. Just as in a normal shop, you can look around and try things on in peace and quite. Special second-hand shops for children also sell toys and other accessories. However, more and more second-hand shops are opening up that specialise in household appliances or computers. You will even get a guarantee that the items are in good working order.

Flee markets

At the flee markets held during the summer you will everything you could ever think of and more. Bargain hunters spend hours in the open air going through the stands of books, antiques, clothes, electrical goods, jewellery or crazy accessories. It's even fun just going there to see everything that people want to get rid of. Once you have found something really useful or a curiosity, haggle over the price. That is simply part of the atmosphere at a flee market. You'll find the dates of flee markets in the press. They are also often announced in posters on the big round advertising columns (Litfaßsäulen).

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The statutory health insurance companies pay for medical and dental treatment, for drugs and medicines, hospital treatment (inpatient and outpatient) as well as for many other cures, treatments and preventive measures. If not exempted from the additional (prescription) charges (see "Social Clause"), insured persons contribute a basic charge towards the cost of medication (prescription charge) and some other treatments. The only costs which your health insurance will not cover in full are those for dentures, orthodontic treatment, and glasses; in such cases, the health insurance will contribute a fixed payment, however.

Further information on health insurance in Germany can be found in the chapter on "[The Social Security System](#)".

Doctors, physicians and medical practitioners

Besides general practitioners, you will also find specialists (eye specialists/ophthalmologists, skin specialists/dermatologists, etc.). In most cases, you must make an appointment. However, if you are in acute pain, you must be treated immediately or at least in the course of the same day. The names, addresses and phone numbers of doctors can be found in the classified directory / Yellow Pages, where they are arranged by specialisms. You are free to choose which doctor you wish to go to.

Hospitals and clinics

Germany has state-maintained (public) hospitals, charitable/non-profit hospitals (mainly run by the churches) and private hospitals. A university clinic will be found in practically every university town to which you can go for outpatient treatment. If you are admitted to hospital, your health insurance will cover the costs of that stay. However, you will be expected to pay a small day rate for up to the first 14 days (fortnight) of your stay.

Emergency service and emergency call

If you need urgent medical treatment at night or over the weekend, you can call the hospital outpatient unit (Ambulanz) or an emergency doctor (Notarzt). The addresses of the doctors are listed in daily newspapers under the heading of emergency medical service (Ärztlicher Notdienst). Or just call any doctor - the answering machine will automatically tell you the number of the emergency doctor.

Emergency call 112

112 is the free-of-charge phone number with which you can call an ambulance

(Krankenwagen). Should you experience the emergency while travelling on a major road (motorway, highway, secondary road), please check the white kilometre stones or posts. These have arrows pointing in the direction of the nearest emergency telephone.

Alternative cures and treatments

Many registered doctors (specialists/general practitioners) with their own practice have additionally specialised in natural (naturopathic) cures, remedies and treatments. Health insurance companies have recognised the efficacy of treatments, such as acupuncture, ozone therapy or homoeopathy and cover part of the costs of such treatment when it is carried out by a registered doctor. It is worthwhile comparing the services offered by various health insurance companies, since they differ in the extent to which they support alternative medicine. We would certainly recommend that you contact your health insurance company before you start the treatment to ask whether and, if so, how much of the cost is actually covered.

Dispensing chemists/pharmacies

In Germany you can only get medicines from dispensing chemists/pharmacies (Apotheke). These should not be confused with drugstores (Drogerie) where, at most, you can get some cough syrup or other weak drugs. There are two types of medication: freely-available drugs and prescription only medicines. You can only get the latter if a doctor has prescribed them. The German Medical Preparations Act is very strict. Some medicines, which may be available without prescription in your own country (antibiotics, for example), always have to be prescribed by a doctor. You will have to pay for non-prescription drugs yourself and will have to contribute to the cost of prescription only drugs and medicines, unless you have been exempted from the mandatory prescription charge (Zuzahlungspflicht) (see "Social Clause" above). If you have private health insurance, you will first pay for your medication yourself and then submit the receipts to claim the costs back from your health insurance company.

Opening hours: Weekdays 9 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. (18.30); some chemists are closed Wednesday afternoons, depending on the region; Saturdays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (13.00), very rarely until 4 p.m. (16.00).

You can also buy hygiene articles and baby food, The chemists charge an emergency duty fee of 1.53 euros. Please note: Whether during the day or at night: Strong medicine will only be handed out against a medical prescription issued by a doctor.

Emergency duty: Chemists open all day and all night long when it's their turn to be on emergency duty. You can find out which chemist is on duty in the newspaper; you will also find the duty chemist posted on the door of every other chemist. If you need medication during the night or at weekends, then just ring the bell at the chemists on emergency duty. The law has introduced regulations to ensure that there is always a chemist open around the clock within a radius of seven kilometres.

Look here to find the chemists near you as well as the emergency duty rotas for all chemists throughout Germany www.apotheken.de

The Social Security System

Social security provides the insured person with a legally-founded right to certain payments and services. This right is acquired by paying social security contributions.

Social security covers

- Health insurance (Krankenversicherung)
- Nursing care insurance (Pflegeversicherung)
- Accident insurance (Unfallversicherung)

- Pension insurance (Rentenversicherung)
- Unemployment insurance (Arbeitslosenversicherung)

The following text will describe how you, as a student, are integrated into this social security system and which types of insurance are relevant to you.

Health insurance during your studies

All students in Germany are obliged to have health insurance (statutory health insurance), which means that you will have to provide proof of your health insurance in Germany before you can register at your university or college. If you do not have this proof, you will not be able to study.

In principle, students can use a special Student Health Insurance Scheme which offers particularly favourable rates. In addition to this, everybody who has health insurance in Germany must also have nursing care insurance. This statutory nursing care insurance aims to provide social security against the risk of becoming dependent on nursing care and attention, which may arise as a consequence of serious accidents, illness, disease or in old age. The statutory nursing care insurance is taken out with the same company which provides the health insurance.

Student health insurance

The law stipulates that all students who are registered at a state-recognised higher education are obliged to have health insurance (statutory health insurance), unless, exceptionally, they have been exempted from the insurance obligation. Health insurance cover begins with the start of the semester, at the earliest, though, on the day of registration or re-registration at the university or college. This statutory health insurance requirement continues until completion of the 14th full study semester (Fachsemester) - or until the student turns 30, whichever may occur first. Once this obligation comes to an end, the student can opt to take out voluntary insurance. Your health insurance company will advise you on the conditions and on possible exceptions to this principle.

Important information:

Students from countries with which Germany has concluded a social security agreement which includes an insurance clause can continue to be covered by their home insurance company while they are in Germany. (Please inquire at your institution's International Office for details). In such cases, you will be required to present proof of insurance cover to the health insurance company in Germany.

Family insurance

If members of your family (spouse, child(ren)) come with you to Germany, they may, under certain circumstances, be insured with you at no extra cost. To benefit from this arrangement, the family members must have their first (or customary) place of residence in Germany, must not themselves be subject to the statutory health insurance requirement, and must not exceed certain income ceilings.

Voluntary insurance

Even if you are over 30 years of age or have already completed your 14th full semester, you will still be well serviced by a statutory health insurance company. Students with their place of residence in Germany and who are no longer covered by statutory health insurance can opt to take out voluntary insurance with the health insurance company. To do this, they must present proof of their previous health insurance periods (Vorversicherung) with a German insurance company. The requirement is that insurance cover had been held either for 24 months over the past 5 years or for at least 1 year (12 months) without interruptions immediately prior to registration.

Accident insurance

As a student, you are covered by statutory accident insurance at your higher education institution and on your way between home and the institution. If you have been awarded a scholarship or grant, please read the conditions and arrangements for the award carefully.

Pension and unemployment insurance

Generally, students do not pay such insurance contributions.

Beware!

This situation may change, however, if you take on student jobs or other employment during your studies. You may then become liable to pay other social security contributions.

The health insurance card

To be able to benefit from all the medical care, treatment and preventive measures offered by the health insurance system, simply present your doctor or dentist your health insurance card and you no longer have to worry about how the account will be settled.

Exemption from additional (prescription) charges (Zuzahlung)

Insured people whose gross monthly income is below a certain level which has been set by the legislator will be exempted from the need to pay additional (prescription) charges. This exemption applies, for example, to medicines and drugs, bandages and plasters, remedies and cures, dentures, hospital stays, and rehabilitation measures.

Doctors and hospitals

Regardless of which registered doctor you choose, your health insurance will cover the costs of your treatment. If you are admitted to hospital, your health insurance will cover your accommodation costs (given that you are exempted from additional charges), nursing costs and all medical examinations.

Medicines and drugs

You will receive all medically required medicines and drugs. Medicines are obtained from dispensing chemists/pharmacies against prescription only.

Dentist

You choose the dentist, your health insurance covers the treatment costs. Special arrangements apply for dentures.

Eye specialists/ophthalmologists

Your health insurance covers the costs of examination by an eye specialist/ophthalmologist.

The information of this page is presented to you with kind support of the [AOK](#).

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All About Cars

In order to drive a car in Germany you have to have a full driving licence. Apart from a German driving licence, "full" driving licences include EU-driving licences, national licences issued in your own country (in many cases a German translation is required) and international driving licences issued in your own country. The translation of national driving licences has to be done by a German diplomatic mission, a national automobile association or the German Automobile Association (ADAC). Rather than having your national licence translated you are recommended to get an international driving licence

as this is generally known and recognised.

Important: foreign and international driving licences are only valid for six months (if you only want to stay twelve months in Germany, you can extend this time for six more months). Even just one day longer and you have to have a German licence if you want to continue driving. You are liable to very high fines if you are caught driving without one. Thus you are strongly advised to apply to the driving licence issuing section of your local Road Traffic Licensing Department (Ordnungs- und Straßenverkehrsamt) 3 months before your own licence runs out as processing sometimes takes considerable time. Enquire in advance which documents you should take with you.

Further details [can be found here \(german site\)](#).

Special Traffic Regulations

Before coming to Germany you should ask your national automobile association for any information on particular aspects of driving in Germany. By contrast with many other countries, for example, all passengers have to wear seat-belts in Germany and children under the age of 12 are required to sit on the back seat of the car. Furthermore, many foreign drivers have to get used to the cycle paths which are a feature of many German towns, so that when turning a corner you do not only have to look out for pedestrians but for cyclists, too!

Fast is best

Germans are passionate and unfortunately somewhat aggressive drivers and often ignore the recommended top speed of 130 km/h on German motorways. When it comes to traffic regulations, however, they are taken very seriously and observed. Traffic offenses are punished with high fines, penalty points and even loss of licence. If there are no signs to the contrary, top speed in towns is 50 km/h, on main roads outside towns, 100 km/h.

Drinking and Driving

If you have only drunk very little alcohol you are still considered capable of driving. The blood alcohol limit in Germany is 0.08 percent and if you are over the limit your licence is in jeopardy. The limit for cyclists is 0.15 percent and if you are over this limit you might lose your licence, too.

Documents

When driving a motor vehicle you are legally required to carry your driving licence and car papers with you.

Importing Your Own Car

You are allowed to import your car into Germany without paying duty if you have owned it for at least six months and you will be registered as resident in Germany. It is then part of your removal goods. Importing a car by sea is very expensive and involves a lot of bureaucracy. If you are staying in Germany for less than a year an international or foreign motor vehicle registration certificate with a German translation will suffice. After this period you have to register the car with a German registration plate at the motor vehicle licensing office (Kraftfahrzeugzulassungsstelle), take it for an M.O.T. test (TÜV - the organisation responsible for regularly checking on the technical reliability of motor vehicles) and insure it in Germany. This will mean just as much running around as you have to do to get your German licence and you should consider carefully whether it is really worth the effort.

If you only need a car occasionally you can rent one from a care-hire agency, and some towns operate successful car-sharing systems. Look out for advertisements in the local town magazine.

Breakdowns and Accidents

The breakdown vans belonging to the German automobile associations help all breakdown victims. On the motorway you can ring from one of the emergency call boxes which are located every 1.5 to 3 km along the hard shoulder. Watch out for the arrows on white posts beside the motorway showing you the direction of the nearest call box. All you have to do then is lift the receiver and you are connected to a breakdown service.

If you are involved in an accident you must not leave the scene until the police arrive. So-called hit-and-run offenses are considered very serious in Germany. Even the slightest damage is defined as an accident. If you are in any doubt at all you should insist that the police are called.

Bicycles

The first time you visit your German institution of higher education you will probably be surprised by the number of bicycles. Germans, and students in particular, are very fond of using bicycles as a means of transport. In smaller towns you can get everywhere by bicycle. So do consider getting hold of a second-hand bicycle while you are here. You can always sell it again when you leave. There are second-hand bicycle shops in many towns or you can look at advertisements in the newspaper.

www.adfc.de

Public Transport

insert header here

Germany has a very good system of public transport. However, it is quite complicated and expensive and German towns cannot boast anything as clearly structured and user-friendly as the Paris Metro or the London Tube. On public transport you can travel by train ("Deutsche Bahn AG"), by city-rail ("S-Bahn"), by tram, by underground, by bus, or by taxi. The easiest thing is to get hold of a town plan as soon as you arrive. This will include a map showing the city-rail, tram and underground connections. An overview of bus routes and a bus and rail time-table can be obtained from the ticket kiosks located at major stops in the town centres.

Semester Ticket

Some institutions of higher education have come to special agreements with the municipal transport companies and introduced the so-called "semester ticket". Students get their ticket at registration. The charge varies from one town to another, from €30 at the lower end to €107 in Hamburg! The semester ticket allows you to use any local public transport for the entire semester free of charge. It is not transferable and thus only valid in combination with an identity card including a photograph.

insert translation here (remaining part of semester ticket)

insert translation here (new topic)

German Rail

There is an extra charge to use Intercity (IC), Intercity Express (ICE) and Eurocity (EC) trains which you pay when you purchase your ticket at the station. You can buy a first- or second-class ticket in a smoking or non-smoking compartment.

Large items of luggage or bicycles can be handed-in before departure (usually a day or two in advance) and collected at your destination at the luggage delivery section on presentation of the luggage ticket.

More information here: www.bahn.de.

Public transport

Travel in comfort with bus, rail and bike

When they enrol (matriculate) at university, students get a Semesterticket with which they can use the local transport in and around town the whole semester long and as much as they like. In larger cities, the ticket can easily cost more than 50 euros, however. This is why many higher education institutions have a "Hardship Committee" (Härtefallausschuss) which looks after students who are absolutely unable to pay for the

ticket. Further information is available from the student union [AStA](#).

Monthly tickets and other favourable tickets - Rail

If there is no Semesterticket in your university town, then the public transport companies or city works will offer favourable student rates. The easiest way to find out is to ask the student union [AStA](#). There will also be many cut-rate tariffs for family members who may not be students. Children under 4 years of age travel free of charge, children up to the age of eleven pay the child tariff.

Catching a lift

Cheap, comfortable and communicative - that is what catching a lift in the car of a fellow student or another kind person is all about. The student union [AStA](#) organises a "lift board" (Mitfahrer Brett) at many higher education institutions. Look here to find out whether somebody can give you a lift to your destination. In addition, many cities have central lift arrangement agencies (Mitfahrzentrale) which offer a wide range of services.

The central lift arrangement agencies also have their own websites:

www.mitfahrzentrale.de

www.mitfahrzentralen.de

www.hitchhikers.de

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Student Concessions for Cultural Activities

State-maintained opera houses, theatres and museums as well as many private theatres and cinemas allow students concessionary tickets on production of a student identity card. Adult education centres and other educational establishments also offer students special rates for courses and lectures.

If your family has accompanied you to Germany and they are not eligible for student reductions there are programmes run by local government offering concessions to people on small incomes. Ask about these agreements at the local government offices (Stadtverwaltung).

Courses outside the university

If your thirst for education has not been quenched at the uni and you'd like to learn some international dance styles besides studying or would like to learn how the knights used to eat in the castles, then the local evening schools (Volkshochschulen - VHS), educational institutes (Bildungswerke), church institutions and private schools offer courses in practically every conceivable discipline. Students also generally pay discounted course fees. Nevertheless, it is worth comparing what it costs, since private schools can be quite expensive. The current programme of the Volkshochschule can be found in book shops,

while the educational institutes will send you their brochure on request, and private schools advertise their courses in the city magazines.

Pizza, pasta, pommes frites and pirozhki: Gastronomy in Germany

"Germans love beer and sausages... and plenty of both." Ahmad Omran from Iran. It's true, many Germans like eating hearty foods, but not only. In the cities you'll be able to find restaurants from nearly all the countries in the world. Whether Persian, Thai, Russian, Mexican, or Korean – the choice of restaurants in Germany is vast. Students are also particularly fond of Italian, Greek, and Turkish places as they often offer plenty of food for little money. Others swear by take-aways with a delivery service which many pizza parlours, Chinese and Mexican restaurants offer.

Tipping

The prices cited include 16% value added tax and 10-15% service charge. Nevertheless, it is usual to leave a tip in restaurants, cafés and other places where your bill is brought to your table. The rule of thumb is as follows: if a bill is under €5 you round the sum up to the next full euro or next but one; if it is over €5 you allow 5% for a tip. If you were especially satisfied with the service you can give a little more and if you were dissatisfied, complain and do not give any tip. Incidentally, students tend to enjoy a special status: nobody expects large tips from them because they know they do not have much money anyway.

Credit Cards

Expensive restaurants nearly always accept credit cards but in more humble establishments cash is the norm. If you want to pay by credit card you should check whether there is a sign outside and, if in doubt, ask before you order.

You can recognise a post-office and mail-box by the yellow sign with a black post-horn. Within Europe you pay €0.55 for a standard letter up to 20 grams and €0.45 for a postcard. Overseas post is sent airmail. You can find out what other letters and parcels cost by asking at the counter or reading the brochures available at the post-office providing an overview of charges (Gebührenübersicht). Or visit www.deutschepost.de. Parcels are handed in at the parcel counter. Within Germany postal-codes can be found in the Postleitzahlenbuch (Directory of Postal-Codes) produced by the German Federal Post-Office.

You can ring any number you like in Germany or abroad from any telephone box. However, to some countries there is no direct dialling, you have to ring the exchange first under 0010 and ask to be connected. In most public telephone boxes it is also possible to be rung back; there should be a sign with the number.

Coin-operated payphones have become fairly rare, and most public call boxes are now card-phones. You can buy the cards at kiosks or the post office. Deutsche Telekom's "World Card" called (T-Card - new with a PayCard-Service) or the postal bank cards with integrated telephone chips enable you to call within Germany and to many other countries without having to use coins or notes.

Directory inquiries: in larger post offices you will still find copies of the good old phone book for all the regions of Germany. Alternatively, you can get CD-ROMS with full or regional lists of phone numbers. Or you can ring the directory inquiry services offered by various providers. But, before you have even been asked "What can I do for you?" you might well have clocked up a few euros in charges.

The Deutsche Telekom directory inquiry service: Phone number: 11833, website: www.telefonbuch.de

Emergency call (Notruf): 110 (Police), 112 (Fire Brigade, Emergency Medical Services and Ambulance)

In the Yellow Pages you can find the numbers of doctors and other occupational groups, while on the first few sides there are numerous important telephone numbers of institutions (listed under Rat und Hilfe - Advice and Help).

Private Telephones

You should make inquiries on the spot to find out which is the most economic way of making private phone calls. The advice of the student union (AStA) or other fellow students who may, like yourself, phone abroad a lot, will help to make your decision easier.

Here are the hotline numbers of some of the providers:

Deutsche Telekom: 0800 33 01 000

Arcor Mannesmann: 0130 12 72 12

O.TEL.O: 01803 19 98:

VIAG Intercom: 0800 10 90 000

Telegate: 0800 88 11 880.

You can use these numbers to find out about current tariffs. For more information on the many providers, go to the following website: www.billiger-telefonieren.de

As in all countries there are certain norms of behaviour and politeness in Germany which you should observe if you do not want to put your foot in it. Students are more informal so it is advisable to take note of both behavioural codes.

Greeting People

Students usually greet each other without shaking hands saying "Hallo", "Grüß Dich" or "Servus" (in Bavaria) and leave saying "Tschüs", "Bis bald" (see you soon) "Adé" (in Swabia) etc.

To shake hands or not to shake hands? That is the question

The rule of thumb is: Do not shake hands with fellow students or in public offices. If you attend an interview or go to a professor's office hour, always shake hands. Just wait until the senior person (i.e. the professor or prospective boss) offers you his/her hand to shake.

"Sie" (formal) or "Du" (informal)?

Adults generally address each other in the formal "Sie"-form and with "Herr" or "Frau" plus surname and possibly even a title: "Guten Tag, Frau Dr. Meier". Colleagues often still use the formal Sie, even after working together for years.

Formal and Informal Address

insert translation

Germans only abandon their formal attitude and use the informal Du-form with their friends, and even this is only possible after it has been formally offered. However, students usually use the Du-form all the time amongst themselves, so when you address a fellow-student feel free to say Du.

Titles

Titles are very important in Germany. If someone has a doctorate it is usual to address

them as Herr Doktor Meier or Frau Doktor Müller. Professors are usually addressed as Professor plus surname. There are doctors and professors who prefer their titles not to be used; they will soon let you know if this is the case.

Punctuality

It cannot be denied that Germans place a lot of emphasis on punctuality. If you have an appointment with your professor there is one thing you should certainly not do - keep him or her waiting! However, amongst students punctuality is taken less seriously.

Invitations

Germans are often rather reticent with invitations to begin with. Only good friends can just drop in on each other unannounced. When you are invited somewhere with a more official character, like to your professor's or boss's for example, you should take a bunch of flowers with you for the hostess. When you are invited to share a pan of spaghetti with other students in their "WG" you do not need to take flowers with you, but a bottle of wine or a home-made dessert will certainly be welcome.

Please! Thank You! Excuse Me!

"Bitte", "Bitte sehr" is what you say when you give something to somebody, when you hold the door open for somebody, when you ask for something or make a request. If you have done someone a favour and he or she thanks you, you then say, "Bitte, gern geschehen" (roughly: "You're welcome" or "Don't mention it"). If you accept something offered to you at table you answer with "Bitte": "Möchten Sie noch etwas trinken?" ("Would you like anything else to drink?") - "Ja, bitte" ("Yes, please").

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Child Allowance and Day-Care

Only foreign students and academics with valid residence permits of the types called Aufenthaltserlaubnis or Aufenthaltsberechtigung (not Aufenthaltsbewilligung) are entitled to apply for child allowance. As a rule this means academics from the EU and those married to Germans. In order to be eligible the children have to live in Germany during your period of research. Child allowance is €154 for the first three children respectively and increases to €179 for the fourth and following. You have to apply for child allowance in writing to the child allowance section (Kindergeldstelle) of the Employment Office (Arbeitsamt) in the town or district where you are staying. In order to enable students with children to concentrate on their studies many institutions of higher education have set-up day-care centres. Ask at Student Services. A fee is charged for nursery school and day-care facilities which varies according to Federal State and income.

Germany in General

Portal for Germany

<http://www.deutschland.de>

Provider: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung

Description: “deutschland.de” is the official and independent web-based portal of the Federal Republic of Germany. It offers a representative collection of important links to German information sites and sources in five languages as well as in a barrier-free version. These links cover the following categories: Education, Health, Culture, Media, Sports, State, Tourism, Economy and Science.

Languages: German, English, French, Spanish and Russian

German Tourist Board (Deutsche Zentrale für Tourismus - DZT)

<http://www.deutschland-tourismus.de/>

Provider: Deutsche Zentrale für Tourismus - DZT

Description: “Germany is historical, modern, busy, lazy, laid-back, quiet, musical, tasteful, dynamic, exhausting, hilly, flat, green, picturesque, sporty, poetic, beer-loving, wunderbar...”. Anyway, that is what the German Tourist Board (DZT) says when it invites you to visit its website and take a virtual trip around Germany.

Languages: German and English

A Manual for Germany

<http://www.handbuch-deutschland.de>

Provider: Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration

Description: What does Germany actually look like? What is important to know about the German law concerning foreigner rights? How will I manage my everyday life in Germany?

This site answers these and many other questions, especially the main topics relating to foreigners in Germany. The virtual manual is suitable for all those who want to get a first impression of Germany.

Language: German, English, Spanish, French, Turkish and Russian.

Federal Government (Bundesregierung)

<http://www.bundesregierung.de/>

Provider: The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany (Regierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland)

Description: This site provides information on areas such as the German Federal Chancellor (CV, speeches, etc.), on the current main activity fields of the Federal Government, government declarations, statements and press releases, plus links to the websites of all German ministries.

Languages: German, English, French and Spanish

German Parliament (Deutscher Bundestag)

<http://www.bundestag.de/>

Provider: Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany (Parlament der

Bundesrepublik Deutschland)

Description: This is where you can find a list of all the Members of the German Parliament, their biographies and special functions. All debates are broadcast live on the Internet (requires Realplayer8): a video archive additionally enables users to search through contributions dating from 1998 and onwards as well as read the relevant parliamentary minutes online or alternatively download them as PDF or ASCII files.

Languages: German, English and French

German Foreign Ministry (Auswärtiges Amt)

<http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/>

Provider: The Auswärtiges Amt (AA) is the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany

Description: The AA website is the first place to look for answers to all questions about entering Germany: “Willkommen in Deutschland” (Welcome to Germany).

Furthermore, the site offers information and contact details on Germany’s diplomatic representations around the world. The “Information Service” section not only allows you to download or order publications, but also the most important forms, such as the Visa Application Form etc. The site also offers comprehensive information on German foreign and European policy.

Languages: German, English and French

Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung)

<http://www.bmbf.de/>

Provider: Ministry of Education and Research of the Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF – der Bundesrepublik Deutschland).

Description: The website provides information on the BMBF, its staff, structure and goals, as well as its policy fields, initiatives, lead projects, support programmes, project sponsors, specialist information centres and publications.

Languages: German only

Central Federal Office of Political Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung – BpB)

<http://www.bpb.de/>

Provider: The Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (BpB) is a subsidiary agency of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and promotes an understanding for political facts and contents by providing and communicating information on politics and society.

Description: The BpB’s free-of-charge publications are presented on the website and can be ordered online. The BpB only charges postage and packing (4.60 euros) and a handling charge (1.50 euros per title) for this service. Some materials, such as issues of “Information zur politischen Bildung”, “Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte” or “PZ – die Politische Zeitung” are also available online.

Languages: German

German Culture International (Deutsche Kultur International)

<http://www.deutsche-kultur-international.de/>

Provider: Deutsche Kultur International is a community project of the Association for International Cooperation (Vereinigung für internationale Zusammenarbeit – VIZ) and is funded by the Cultural Section of the Federal Foreign Office.

Description: This site presents those organisations which play an active part in German foreign cultural policy, listing them by areas of responsibility. The site offers brief

outlines, for example, of projects and programmes which promote international academic exchange or of opportunities for learning the German language at home or abroad. These sections also refer users to the German intermediary agencies, such as the DAAD or the Goethe-Institut (see below), while many other links are provided to sites where specific information can be found.

Languages: German and English

Goethe-Institut Inter Nationes

<http://www.inter-nationes.de/>

Provider: The Goethe-Institut Inter Nationes e.V. (GI) has been active since January 2001 in its capacity as the largest intermediary organisation in the field of German foreign cultural policy. This new organisation is the result of the merger between the Goethe-Institut and Inter Nationes and is responsible for spreading Germany's language and culture around the world.

Description: The site provides details on all print, audio-visual and electronic materials made available by the GI, including the option of ordering materials online. A further service provides information on the Federal Republic of Germany for interested persons from around the world, covering topics such as art, society, media, education and science.

Languages: German, English, French and Spanish

Deutsche Welle

<http://dw-world.de/english/Welcome.html>

Provider: Deutsche Welle (DW) is a public broadcasting station funded by federal government. DW is responsible for broadcasting radio and TV programmes in German and other languages around the world. These programmes provide a comprehensive picture of political, business and cultural life in Germany. DW also presents and explains German views on important issues.

Description: The Deutsche Welle service offers news from around the world (upon request also by e-mail), along with analyses and commentaries, a guide to DW radio and TV programmes in all available languages plus complementary service information, such as reception information. Users can also listen to the radio programme online.

Languages: German, plus more or less extensive sections in some 29 other languages (from Albanian to Urdu).

DeutschlandRadio

<http://www.dradio.de>

Provider: DeutschlandRadio with its two radio channels – DeutschlandFunk and DeutschlandRadio Berlin – is the national radio broadcasting corporation of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Description: The DeutschlandRadio website not only lets you tune in to the radio online, but also offers a wealth of additional news and information, plus book tips and film reviews, radio plays and much more.

Languages: German

Search engine Paperball.de

<http://www.paperball.de/>

Description: Paperball is a search engine for finding articles in daily newspapers published in German. It administrates references to same-day articles from more than 213 online newspapers published in German (as per: April 2002).

A database contains news items which users can search for by any major section of a daily paper, for example, the sports or arts section. Newspapers can be searched through on an individual, group-wise or all-papers basis. In addition, users can page through

individual sections in order to gain a quick overview of the daily reporting on a specific topic. Paperball can also be individually configured, allowing users to create their own personal newspaper search engine.

Languages: German only

EXTRA TIP

Looking for a room

If you want to start looking for a place to live while still in your home country, we've compiled some interesting links to help you succeed with your flat hunting.

The European Shared-Accommodation Ring (Ring Europäischer Mitwohnzentralen – REM) will help you find the right accommodation and, where appropriate, will help you rent out your own flat while you are away. The comprehensive range of services offered by the REM include: advice for landlords and tenants, on rent agreements, etc. The REM can be contacted via <http://www.mitwohnzentrale.de> (the website is in German, but some of the sites of the individual agencies are in English as well). Besides this option, you can also try the Association of Flat-Sharing Agencies (Verband der Mitwohnzentralen) of which 35 German agencies are currently members: <http://www.homecompany.de> (German and English).

Advice and support on renting accommodation, rent agreements, etc. can also be found on the homepage of the German Tenants Association (Deutscher Mieterbund – DMB) at <http://www.mieterbund.de> (German) And the web offers a whole range of accommodation exchange services, of course. The following have concentrated on helping students, for example:

- <http://www.studenten-wg.de>
Besides offering an accommodation market review for university towns, this site also has a study place exchange board and a car-sharing board.
- <http://www.studenten-wohnung.de>
An accommodation exchange service for landlords and students – registration is free of charge. Those who register for the City-Newsletter receive e-mail news on the latest flats which become available on the market in their selected city. You will need to understand some German to be able to use these two services.

The following English website will provide you with information on the student halls of residences maintained at German higher education institutions: <http://www.student-affairs.de> (see also “[Student Services](#)”)