



Bundesamt
für Migration
und Flüchtlinge

Proof of knowledge of basic German for spousal reunification from abroad

Information for spouses who
immigrate subsequently
and their spouses in Germany

ENGLISCH



Integration



What you need to be aware of

*Do you want to rejoin your spouse in Germany?
Or do you want to move to Germany together with your spouse?
Or perhaps you want to come to Germany to marry and live together with your spouse?*

Whatever the case, you must prove that you have at least a basic knowledge of the German language before your arrival.¹ This should help ensure that you can make your self understood in simple German from the very start.

Possible exceptions from proof of language skills

You do not normally have to prove your proficiency in German if one of the following exceptions applies:

- You or your spouse are a citizen of member state of the European Union or you have exercised your right of free movement as a German citizen.
- Your spouse is a citizen of Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Andorra, Brazil, El Salvador, Honduras, Monaco or San Marino.

¹ See § 28 (1) sentence 5 and § 30 (1) sentence 1 no. 2 as well as the exceptions in § 30 (1) sentence 2 and 3 of the German Residence Act as well as § 41 of the Residence Ordinance.

- You have a university degree and can probably find work in Germany thanks to your language skills.
- Your spouse holds an EU Blue Card.
- Your spouse holds a residence permit as
 - a skilled worker (§ 18c (3) German Residence Act (AufenthG)).
 - a researcher² (§ 18f AufenthG).
 - a self-employed person² (§ 21 AufenthG).
 - a person entitled to asylum (§ 25 (1) and § 26 (3) AufenthG) to whom you were already married in your home country before your partner moved to Germany.
 - a person who has been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection (§ 25 (2) and § 26 (3) AufenthG) to whom you were already married in your home country before your partner moved to Germany.
 - a long-term resident from another EU member state (§ 38a AufenthG).
- You do not wish to remain permanently in Germany.
- It is impossible or unreasonable to learn the language abroad, or this has proven unsuccessful despite your attempts.
- You are unable to prove a basic knowledge of German on account of a physical, mental or psychological illness or disability.
- You are able to cite other circumstances that make it impossible for you to learn the language, circumstances that could constitute a case of hardship.

Not all possible types of exceptions can be shown here. Therefore please contact the responsible visa office or aliens' registration office for further details.

² The parties must already have been married before one of the spouses moves the location of their usual place of residence to the federal territory.

Basic knowledge of German

A basic knowledge of German means a knowledge of German at proficiency level A1 of the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages”. This includes being able to understand and use familiar, everyday expressions and very simple sentences (e.g. asking the way, when shopping etc.). You should be able to introduce yourself and others and answer questions about yourself and others (e.g. where you live or which people you know). Of course, the person you are talking to must speak clearly and be prepared to help out if necessary.

You should also be able to write a little German, e.g. enter your name, address, nationality etc. on official forms.

How to prove basic knowledge of German

You have to prove your command of the language before entering Germany, usually when you apply for a visa for family reunification in the responsible German embassy or consulate general.

To this end, the application documents must include a language certificate based on a standardised language test according to the standards of the “Association of Language Testers in Europe” (ALTE). This is currently true of the following language certificates: “Start Deutsch 1” of the Goethe Institute or of telc GmbH, “Grundstufe Deutsch 1” of the Austrian language diploma (ÖSD), “TestDaF” of the TestDaF Institute.

Please note that German diplomatic mission where you apply for your visa alone decides on the recognition of the proof of your language skills.

If it becomes clear during your personal interview in the embassy or consulate general that you undoubtedly have the necessary basic command of German, no separate certificate will be needed.



Information on how you have to prove a basic command of German can also be found on the websites of the visa offices of the German embassies and consulate generals. They will advise you personally when you apply for your visa and may check whether one of the named exceptions applies in your case.

How to acquire basic knowledge of German

There are a number of different ways to learn German if you do not already have a basic command of the language:

Language courses

Information about providers of language courses is available from the German diplomatic missions and the Goethe Institute.

Learning the language in correspondence courses offered by the Goethe Institute or online

A complete practice kit to help you prepare for the “Start Deutsch 1” language test on your own as well as information on correspondence courses can be found on the website of the Goethe Institute. You will also find additional exercises for the level A1 test.

More information is available from the website as well as the telephone number +49 911 943-0, the Citizen’s Service Office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

Radio programs and Internet offers from the Deutsche Welle

The Deutsche Welle offers a number of ways to learn German. There is a free German course for beginners or advanced students in almost 30 languages on its website. This is also where you can find the frequency lists for receiving radio broadcasts abroad.

You can also use the “Radio D” audio language course that has been developed jointly by the Deutsche Welle and the Goethe Institute. Beginners with no or only little prior knowledge can download the audio episodes of Radio D or subscribe to the podcast. What’s more, the course is also broadcast over DW radio in 16 languages. A new, interactive online language course also provides a picture of life in Germany in 30 lessons with more than 1,000 interactive exercises. The “Mission Berlin” language learning whodunnit can also help take your first steps in the German language.

If you prefer to learn when “on the move”, the Deutsche Welle also offers a mobile phrase book, e.g. for mobile phones. This contains short lessons with interactive exercises that can be downloaded. A dictionary with a vocabulary and phrases will help you find your way around Germany at the beginning.

Study material on paper

Study material on paper and multimedia material can also be bought in Germany. Reading lists and addresses where you can buy this learning material can be found on the website or from the Citizen’s Service Office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees:

- www.bamf.de
- www.bamf.de/buergerservice

Contact points that can help

Information about the legal situation and on the possibilities for learning German can be found on the website of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and by calling the phone number +49 911 943-0 of the Citizens' Service Office.

The www.bamf.de website also provides Internet links to the following Internet addresses and additional information:

- ✎ Further information about Level A1 language skills is provided by the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages”:
 - ✎ www.goethe.de/ger
- ✎ A globally recognised test organiser and cooperation partner for proof of language skills during the reunification of spouses:
 - ✎ www.goethe.de/pruefungsweltweit
 - ✎ www.telc.net
 - ✎ www.testdaf.de
- ✎ Information and fee-based language learning offers from the Goethe Institute:
 - ✎ www.goethe.de/sd1
(model test for the Goethe certificate A1 “Start Deutsch 1”)
- ✎ Information and free language learning offer from the Deutsche Welle:
 - ✎ www.dw-world.de/deutschkurse
 - ✎ www.dw-world.de/radioD
(audio language course “Radio D”)
 - ✎ www.dw-world.de/deutschinteraktiv
(interactive online language course)
 - ✎ www.dw-world.de/missionseurope
(language learning whodunnit)
- ✎ Information about the German diplomatic missions abroad:
 - ✎ www.auswaertiges-amt.de/auslandsvertretungen

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