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Berlin, 9. November 1989

Das ganze Land ist glücklich. Ach was - die ganze Welt!
Die Menschen rufen, singen, tanzen ...
Ich nicht.

What to do with this text

- Listen to it a few times and read along. You will find the audio files at www.skapago.eu/jensjakob/bonus.
- Try to understand the words. Then look them up in the word lists.
- Try to understand the whole sentences. If you want, translate them to your own language.
- Read the text aloud several times and make sure you are pronouncing everything correctly using the audio files.

Berlin	capital of Germany
November	November
das Land	the country
ganze	whole
ist; sein	is; to be (see grammar explanation)
glücklich	happy
ach	oh
was	what
ach was	I mean, here: expression of correction
die* Welt	the world
die Menschen	the people
rufen, du rufst	to call, to shout
singen, du singst	to sing
tanzen, du tanzt	to dance
ich	I
nicht	not

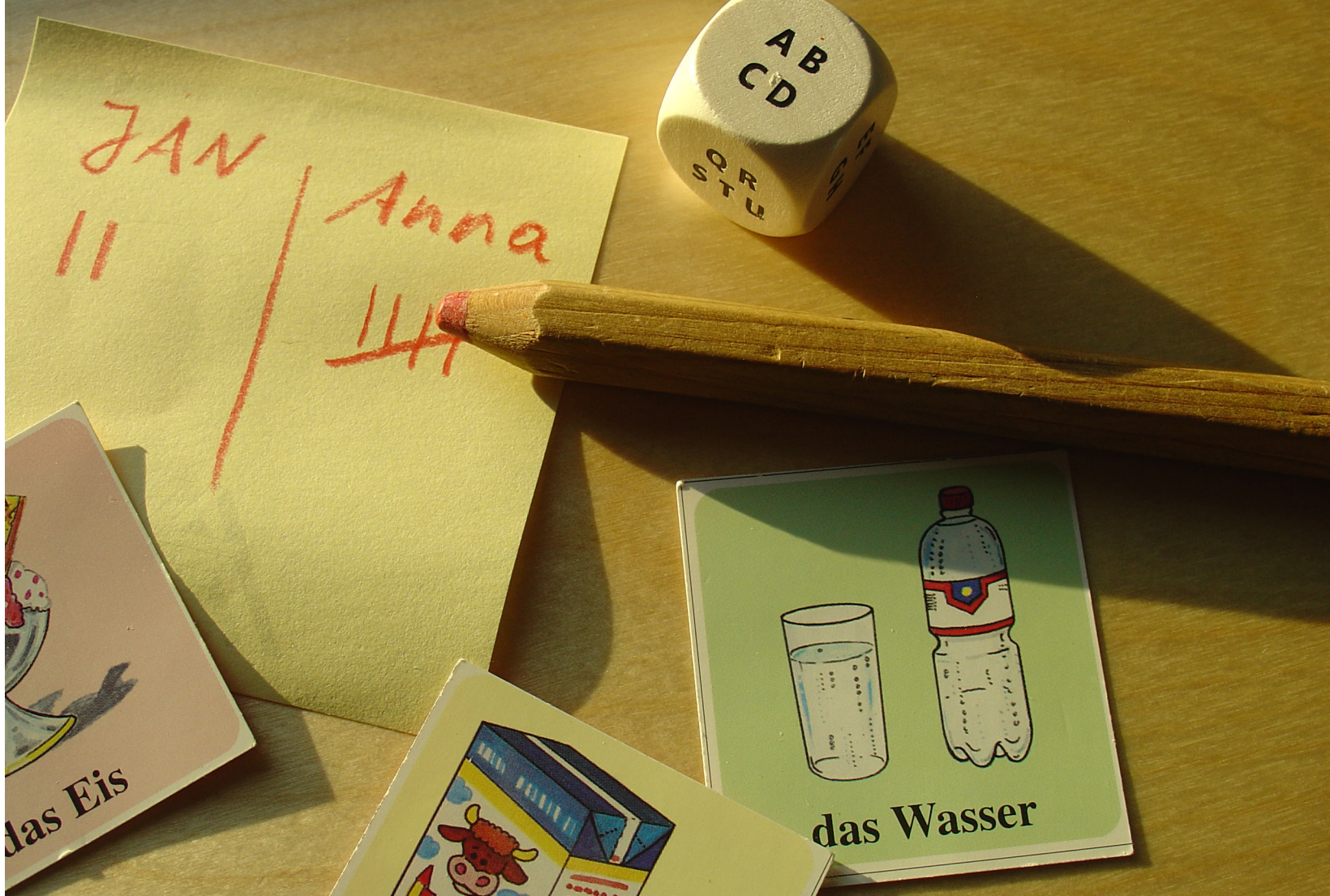
*Why is it **das Land**, but **die Welt**? After all, both **das** and **die** (and even **der**) mean *the*. Well, German has several translations for *the*, but don't worry about that right now. I'll explain it in chapter 3.

Es ist kalt. Ich liege auf der Straße. Ich habe Schmerzen.
 Ich denke: Ich muss sterben. Aber ich bin noch so jung! Ich will leben!
 Plötzlich sehe ich etwas über mir.
 Eine große Hand. Eine sehr, sehr große Hand. Ein Mensch.
 „Hallo! Wer bist du?“, fragt er. „Was ist los?“
 Ich kann nicht antworten. Natürlich nicht.
 Der Mensch nimmt mich in die Hand.
 Sie ist ganz warm. Ich bin plötzlich ganz ruhig. Kurz danach schlafe ich.

es	it
kalt	cold
liegen, du liegst	to lie
die Straße	the street, the road
auf	(up)on, here: in
auf der Straße	in the street
haben, du hast	to have
Schmerzen	ache, pain
denken, du denkst	to think
ich muss	I must (see grammar explanation)
sterben, du stirbst	to die
aber	but
noch	still
so	so
jung	young
ich will	I want (see grammar explanation)
leben, du lebst	to live
plötzlich	suddenly

sehen, du siehst	to see
etwas	something
über	above
mir*	me
eine Hand	a hand
die Hand	the hand
groß	big
eine große Hand	a big hand
sehr	very
hallo	hello
wer	who
du	you
fragen, du fragst	to ask
er	he
Was ist los?	here: What happened?
ich kann	I can (see grammar explanation)
antworten, du antwortest	to answer
natürlich	natural(ly), here: of course
nehmen, du nimmst	to take (see grammar explanation)
mich*	me
in	in
sie	she
ganz	completely, absolutely
warm	warm
ruhig	calm
kurz	briefly, short
danach	afterwards
schlafen, du schläfst	to sleep

*Two words for **me** as well? Yes, unfortunately. You will learn the difference in chapter 6.



How to learn new words

- not too many: **5-7** words per day
- but you should **repeat** every day
- if you want, write the words on **flashcards**: German on one side, English on the other
- look at the English word first and try to remember the German translation - not the other way round
- put difficult words **aside** so that you can repeat them more often
- learn words in a **context**: e.g. how they are used in the story

Your first German sentences

Verbs & pronouns

Some people say German grammar is overwhelming, but the good news is that with most of it, even if you get it wrong, people will still understand you. They might not even notice.

However there is one thing that you should get right from the very beginning, and that is *verbs and pronouns*.

- A *verb* is a word that tells you what someone does: **eat, sleep, work, fly, love** ... these are all verbs.
- A *pronoun* is a word that replaces a person or a thing: **I, you, he, she**

In English we don't change verbs a lot: **I sing, you sing** ... One exception is **to be: I am, you are** ... You cannot say ~~you am~~ or ~~I are~~ – not only does it sound strange, but it will also lead to misunderstandings. For example if I say **you am tired** – what is that supposed to mean? Am I tired? Are you tired? We don't know, so foreigners learning English need to get that right.

The thing with German is that we do this *for all verbs*.

- Fortunately most German words are changed in a completely predictable pattern.
- Some other verbs, so-called *modal verbs*, follow it with two minor tweaks.
- And still some others, called *strong verbs*, follow the same pattern with just one tweak.

Let's start with the pronouns:

ich	I
du	you (<i>one person</i>)
er	he
sie	she
es	it
wir	we
ihr	you, you all (<i>several persons</i>)
sie	they

Now let's look at the verb endings for a regular verb:

ich singe	wir singen
du singst	ihr singt
er singt	sie singen
sie singt	
es singt	

How do you learn that?

Memorize it!

Sorry, there is no alternative. You should learn the combinations above like a poem, always the combination **pronoun + verb**, never just the verb.

Now for the details.

- You can see that there are two translations for **you** in German. When you are talking to one person, you say **du**. When you are talking to several persons, you say **ihr** (like the Southern **you all**).
- Notice also that the ending for **er/sie/es** and **ihr** is the same.
sie singt
ihr singt
- We have two translations for **you**, but the translations for **they** and **she** are the same! Again, the verb ending determines who is doing something:
Sie singt. = **She** sings.
Sie singen. = **They** sing.

A lot to learn?

Perhaps, but if you get that right you have really come a long way. There is some good news! German doesn't have a continuous form. That means that the translation for **she sings** and **she is singing** is the same: **sie singt**. You simply figure out from the context if she is singing right now or if she does it regularly.



Modal verbs

Modal verbs are extremely useful because you can combine them with other verbs, and then you can use these other verbs in the basic form (called *infinitive*) that you would find in the dictionary. Consider an example:

Ich will leben.
I want to* live.

The first verb **will** is a so-called *modal verb*, used in the **ich** form (i.e. first *person singular*, if you prefer grammatical terms). The second verb **leben** is in the *infinitive*.

Now the good thing is that when you are talking about other people you do not have to change the **leben**. You just change the **will**. Look:

ich will leben	wir wollen leben
du willst leben	ihr wollt leben
er will leben	sie wollen leben
sie will leben	
es will leben	

The not-so-good thing is that you have to learn the forms for the modal verbs by heart. But since these are used so frequently it's a really good investment. You'll find some of them on the right side of this page. Again, learn the combinations like a poem. If it helps, make sentences out of them. For example:

Ich kann singen.
Du kannst tanzen ...

Meaning of the modal verbs

- du willst singen you want to sing (wish, desire)
- du musst singen you must/have to sing (obligation)
- du kannst singen you can/are able to sing (ability, also: allowance)

wollen (want)

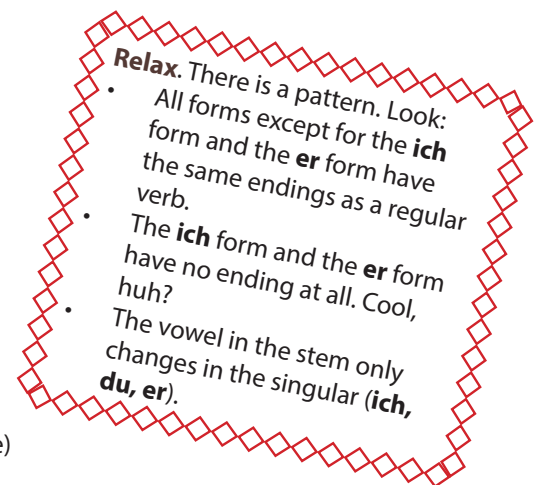
ich will_	wir wollen
du willst	ihr wollt
er will_	sie wollen
es will_	
sie will_	

müssen (must, have to)

ich muss_	wir müssen
du musst	ihr müsst
er muss_	sie müssen
sie muss_	
es muss_	

können (can, be able to)

ich kann_	wir können
du kannst	ihr könnt
er kann_	sie können
sie kann_	
es kann_	



*Notice that in German we don't translate the English **to**. That's actually special about *modal verbs* in German.

Strong verbs

Strong verbs are completely regular except for one tiny detail. Look at an example:

ich sehe	wir sehen
du siehst	ihr seht
er sieht	sie sehen
sie sieht	
es sieht	

Strong verbs have (an)other letter(s) in the second and third person singular (i.e. **du** form and **er/sie/es** form). I recommend to learn the second person (**du** form) by heart. Doing this you will always know whether a verb is regular or strong – and if it is strong you will know all the forms. So you're going to learn new verbs like this:

to see → sehen, du siehst
to sleep → schlafen, du schläfst
to take → nehmen, du nimmst

To be or not to be

To be is a very special verb in most languages. It is irregular in English, and the same applies to German. Learn it by heart (I know, I've said this before ...).

ich bin	wir sind
du bist	ihr seid
er ist	sie sind
sie ist	
es ist	

Haben

So here is the last one – **haben** (*to have*). The only irregular thing is that we drop the **b** in the **du** and **er / sie / es** form.

ich habe	wir haben
du hast	ihr habt
er hat	sie haben
sie hat	
es hat	

Tidying up in your brain

Overview of all the verb forms

I'm really proud of you: The last pages have been hard. I want to sum up everything you have learned. Take your time to memorize this. Come back to this page as often as you want. I know many German textbooks present this information later, but I believe this is the single most important thing to know about the German language, so it's important to learn it early. Once you have the verb forms memorized, you will have an extremely solid foundation that will carry you far.

In the following table everything that is blue is somehow irregular. Find the patterns – for example:

- Apart from **sein** all plural forms are always regular.
- The **wir** form is always the same as the **sie** (plural) form.
- All **du** forms end with **-st**.
- The **er / sie (singular) / es** form are the same.

regular verbs	strong verbs	modal verbs	sein	haben
ich singe	ich spreche	ich will_	ich bin	ich habe
du singst	du sprichst	du willst	du bist	du hast
er singt	er spricht	er will_	er ist	er hat
sie singt	sie spricht	sie will_	sie ist	sie hat
es singt	es spricht	es will_	es ist	es hat
wir singen	wir sprechen	wir wollen	wir sind	wir haben
ihr singt	ihr sprecht	ihr wollt	ihr seid	ihr habt
sie singen	sie sprechen	sie wollen	sie sind	sie haben
vowel changes for ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • du • er/sie/es 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ich • du • er/sie/es 		
endings	<i>regular</i>	<i>no ending for:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ich • er/sie/es 	<i>irregular</i>	<i>drop the b for:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • du • er/sie/es

Your first conversation

A common mistake students make is to delay speaking German until they have studied it to a certain level. The truth, you will never feel completely confident speaking German unless you practice it a lot. Therefore, I highly recommend you start practicing now! If you don't have German, Austrian, or Swiss people around you to practice with, see www.skapago.eu/jensjakob/speakgerman for help. If you feel too shy to talk to anyone, talk to yourself! Just like you would get better practicing the violin in your kitchen although no one is listening, you will make progress with your German.

Hallo, ich heiÙe ...	Hello, my name is ...
Ich komme aus ...	I come from ...
Woher kommst du?	Where do you come from?
Ich wohne in ...	I live in ...
Wo wohnst du?	Where do you live?
Ich spreche nur ganz wenig Deutsch.	I speak only very little German.
Ich verstehe dich nicht.	I don't understand you.
Kannst du das noch einmal sagen?	Can you say that again?
Was bedeutet ... auf Englisch?	What does ... mean in English?
Können wir Englisch sprechen?*	Can we speak English?
Tschüss!	Bye!

heiÙen, du heiÙt	to be called
kommen, du kommst	to come
aus	from, out, of
woher	where ... from
wo	where
wohnen, du wohnst	to live, to stay
sprechen, du sprichst	to speak
nur	only
wenig	a little
deutsch	German
verstehen, du verstehst	to understand
dich	(to) you
noch einmal	again, once more
das	here: this
bedeuten, du bedeutest	here: to mean
Englisch	English

* This phrase should, of course, only be used as your last resort. I would like to encourage you to speak as much German as possible, and as you become better, you should insist on speaking German even with Germans who are very good English speakers.



„Woher kommst du?“

1. Make sentences. Combine the right phrases from each column and write them down. A lot of combinations can make sense.

Die Menschen	ist	leben.
Jens	liegt	ruhig.
Die Hand	will	eine große Hand.
Du	sind	nicht antworten.
Er	ist	nicht.
Jens	hast	auf der Straße.
Jens	tanz	Schmerzen.
Es	kann	glücklich.

2. Fill in the gap.

Die ganze Welt ____ glücklich.

Jens liegt auf der ____.

Er ____ Schmerzen.

Er will ____.

Der ____ nimmt mich in die Hand.

Die Hand ____ warm und groß.

3. Conjugate the verbs and write down sentences that make sense.

Ein Beispiel (an example, short form: Bsp.): wollen → Ich will tanzen. Du willst tanzen.

Er will tanzen. Sie will tanzen. Wir wollen tanzen. Ihr wollt tanzen. Sie wollen tanzen.

sein haben singen wollen müssen können

4. Change the personal pronouns of each sentence and conjugate the verbs accordingly.

Beispiel: Sie singt auf der Straße. → Ich singe auf der Straße. Du singst ...

Ich muss schlafen. Ich bin glücklich.

Du kannst antworten. Du hast eine sehr große Hand.

Er tanzt auf der Straße. Sie kann nicht antworten.

Wir sind jung. Ihr wollt leben.

Sie haben Schmerzen.

There is not much space here.
That's because I encourage
you to write the exercises on a
separate piece of paper and not
into the book. That way you can
do them again if you get them
wrong or when you want to
repeat them (yes, you should do
that). You can find the solutions
on page 231.

More exercises online at www.skapago.eu/jensjakob/bonus