

The present tense in German

In German, there is only one present tense (unlike English which has the simple present and the continuous present for example). To express that an action is in progress, the adverb *gerade* is usually added after the verb conjugated in the present tense.

Reminder: the conjugated verb is always the second element of the sentence in German, or last in a relative subordinate clause.

Weak verbs

For the conjugation of regular verbs (also called "weak verbs") in the present, the *-en* or *-n* at the end of the verb is removed, and the following endings are added depending on the subject:

***machen* (do)**

*ich mach***e**

*du mach***st**

*er / sie / es mach***t**

*wir mach***en**

*ihr mach***t**

*sie mach***en**

For verbs whose stem ends with -d (*find***e**n = find), -t (*wart***e**n = wait), -n after a consonant other than -l or -r (*reg***n**e)n = rain), -m after a consonant other than -l or -r (*at***m**e)n = breathe), a -e is added for the second person of the singular (*du*) before the -st, and before the -t for the third person of the singular (*er, sie, es*) and the second person of the plural (*ihr*):

***warten* (wait)**

*ich wart***e**

*du wart***est**

*er / sie / es wart***et**

*wir wart***en**

*ihr wart***et**

*sie wart***en**

For verbs whose stem ends in -s, -ß, -x or -z, (*le***s**e)n = read, *grü***ß**e)n = greet, *fax***e**n = fax, *sitz***e**n = be seated), a -t is added for the second person singular (*du*) and not -st.

*sitz***t**, *fax***t**, *grü***ß**t, *liest*

For verbs whose stem ends with -eln and sometimes also with -ern (*klingeln* = ring, *wandern* = hike, *sammeln* = collect), the verb radical loses the final -e before the -l or the -r for the first person singular (*ich*). So we will have:

*Ich kling***le**, *ich wand***(e)re**, *ich samm***le**

Strong verbs

Many strong verbs experience a second-person vowel change for the second singular (*du*) and the third-person singular (*er, sie, es*).

For strong verbs with a stem in -a (*fahren* = drive, go with a motorized means), the -a becomes -ä:

ich fahre, *du fä***hrst**, *er fä***hrt**, *wir fahren*, *ihr fahrt*, *sie fahren*.

Exceptions: *mahlen* (grind), *schaffen* (manage, create), *salzen* (salt) and *schallen* (resound, echo)

For strong verbs with a stem in -e (*gelten* = be valid, apply to), the -e becomes -i or sometimes -ie (*lesen* = read):

ich gelte, *du gi***ltst**, *er gi***lt**, *wir gelten*, *ihr geltet*, *sie gelten*

ich lese, *du lie***st**, *er lie***st**, *wir lesen*, *ihr lest*, *sie lesen*

Exceptions: *bewegen* (move), *gehen* (go, walk), *genesen* (heal), *heben* (lift), *scheren* (shear), *stehen* (stand)

For strong verbs with a stem in -o (*stoßen* = hit, bang), the -o becomes -ö:

ich stoße, *du stö***ßt**, *er stö***ßt**, *wir stoßen*, *ihr stoßt*, *sie stoßen*.

Exception: *kommen* (come)

For strong verbs with a stem in -ö (*erlöschen* = die out, expire), the -ö becomes -i:

ich erlösche, *du erli***schst**, *erli***scht**, *wir erlöschen*...

Exception : *schwören* (vow)