

Living in Germany - Tips & Tricks

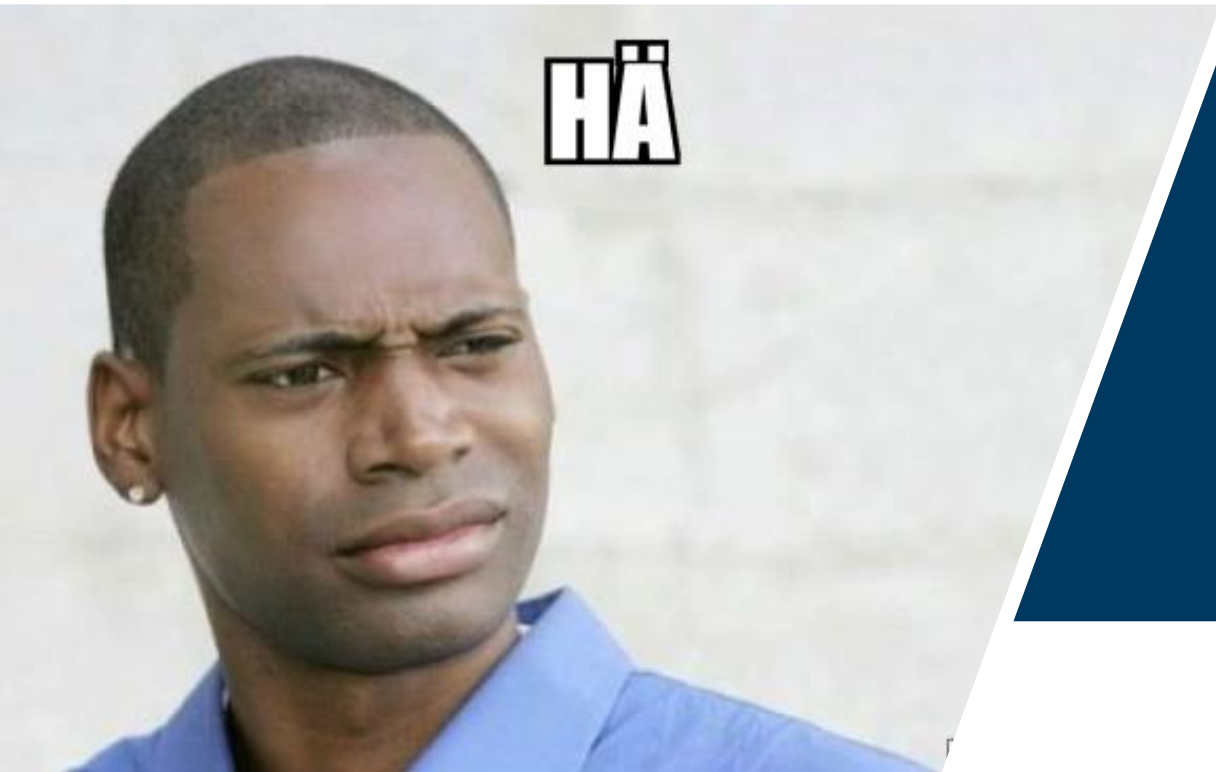
uni-siegen.de

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German Weird Behavior?

Here are some fun facts that you might did not know:



- Tap water in Germany is of very good quality, but you have to pay for it in restaurants.
- To use the railway, there is no turnstile that restricts access. Inspectors are on the train and check tickets at random. The train doors also do not open automatically.
- Germany is considered modern, but there are many shops (especially bakeries, small restaurants or markets) that only accept cash. If you only rely on credit cards, you can quickly find yourself in an embarrassing situation.

Ach so!

Living in Germany





Quiz

1. Form teams! 😊
 2. Choose a name for your team!
 3. You will be asked questions about Germany – they can be tricky!
 4. Discuss the answer in your team.
 5. If you know the answer, write it on your board.
- You will get a point if you gave the correct answer.

LET'S GO!



Question 1

A German person invites you to dinner at their house for 7pm.

When should you ring the doorbell?



Punctuality & Reliability



Germans take punctuality very seriously!

Especially at:

- work (job interviews, meetings, etc.)
- university (exams, lectures, etc.)
- Invitations (except parties)
- Appointments

→ Up to 5 minutes earlier or later is (just!) ok, apart from that better inform the person about your delay.

→ If something has been agreed upon, it should be kept. Not cancelling is very rude (also applies to bookings).

Question 2

When does the officially regulated night resting time period in Germany start and end?



Rest periods



Attention: The understanding of "loud" and "quiet" can be very different -> If in doubt, ask the neighbor.



In Germany, there are legally regulated resting time periods:

- Night rest: 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- All day on Sundays and public holidays
- Noon rest: regulated by landlord

That means, at this time:

- "indoor volume"
- no loud work
- no loud conversations
- no loud music (-> headphones!)
- no meetings / parties

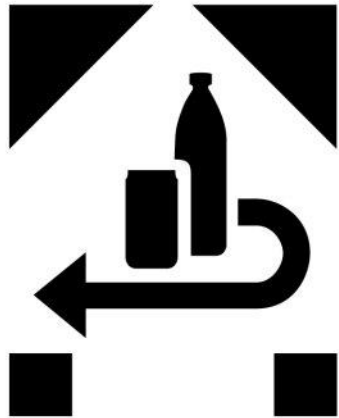
Germans usually take this very seriously!

In case of disregard, the police can be called!

If a party or something similar is planned, please friendly inform your neighbors beforehand (and invite them ;-)).

Question 3

How much Pfand (deposit) do you get for an aluminium can?



Bottle deposit



If you buy drinks in glass, plastic bottles or in cans, mostly you have to pay a deposit of between 8 and 25 cent.

As soon as you bring the empty bottles/cans back to the supermarket, you'll get the money back. So do not just throw them into the waste!

Question 4

You want to write an email to Laura Müller.
How do you address her?

- a) Dear Ms. Müller, ...
- b) Dear Ms. Laura, ...
- c) Dear Müller, ...
- d) Dear Müller Laura, ...
- e) Dear Laura, ...
- f) Dear Laura Müller, ...
- g) Dear Ms. Müller Laura, ...



Communication



Name structure

- In German the given name comes first, the surname after.
- In formal situations, you address a person with Ms. / Mr. (Frau / Herr) and their surname.

„Siezen“ and „Duzen“

- There are two pronouns to address someone: “Du” is rather personal, “Sie” is more respectful.
- As a rule, you use “Sie” with people you do not know and/or who are persons of respect (i.e. lecturers, people at work, etc.).
- Students say “du” to each other and use the given name.
- If in doubt, wait until someone offers you the “Du”.

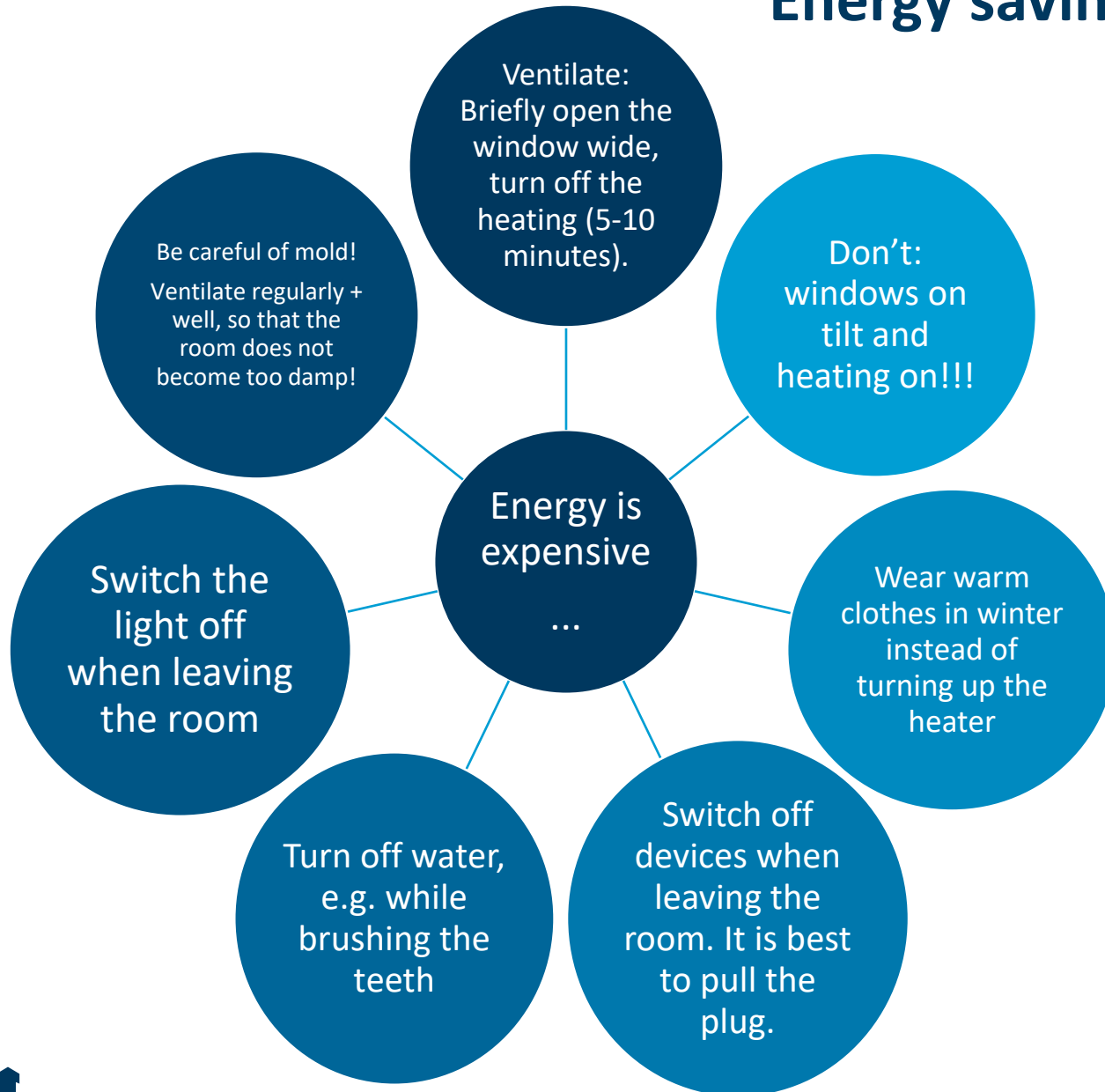


Question 5

Name five things you can do to save energy at home.



Energy saving tips



Question 6

What happens when you cross the street when the traffic light is red and the police sees it?



Rules



Germans tend to love rules. They have rules for a lot of situations and like to follow them very strictly.

For example:

- Jaywalking (crossing at a red light)
- Using the wrong trash bin
- Ignoring noise restrictions
- Littering in public spaces

Rule breaks can have consequences!

Question 7

What is the cancellation period for a rented room/flat in Germany?



Accommodation

Please take note of your rental contract – German landlords are quite strict with it, e.g.:

Cancelation period

- Normally there is a cancellation period of 3 months, running until the end of a month. If e.g. you cancel your contract on June 14th, you have to rent the apartment until end of september.
- If you live in a shared flat (WG), please talk to your flatmates and ask for details.

Deposit

- Normally you have to pay a deposit when renting a room/flat (around 3 monthly rents, after signing the contract)
- Confirmation of the deposit: e.g receipt or note in the rental agreement
- When you move out, you only get the (whole) amount back if you leave the apartment clean and tidy. It may take some months until you get the deposit back.

„Kalt- und Warmmiete“ (basic rent + additional costs)

- The basic rent (Kaltmiete) is paid for the use of the rooms.
- The additional costs and operating costs (Warmmiete) are e.g. for water, heating, garbage disposal, janitor etc..
- Cold rent + service charges = warm rent (paid to the landlord).
- Attention: In addition, there are usually costs for electricity, Internet / telephone, etc..



Waste separation / recycling



Gelber Sack (Yellow bag)

- > Plastic
- > Metal (e.g. tins)
- > Packaging
(e.g. milk cartons,
yoghurt cups...)
- > Aluminum foil

- > Leftover from food
(not cooked)

Papier (paper)

- > Newspaper
- > Magazines
- > Carton
- > Cardboard

Glas (glass)

- > Bottles and jars
(sorted by colour:
Green, brown,
white)

Restmüll (residual waste)

- > Everything else
(but no electronic
devices/ pieces)
→ Werkstoffhof
(recycling centre)
- You give batteries
to drug stores (DM,
Müller, etc.)



Further information: https://www.siegen.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Abfallbeseitigung/AbfallTrennenMehrsprachig.pdf

And now:

**Our game for
Waste separation! 😊**



Typical German behavior...

(of course not all Germans are like this... ;-)



Group work 😊
Prepare role plays



Group 1: Time management / planning

In Germany, planning and time management is very important.

Read the following scenario and discuss it in your group.

Can you understand why Sofia is irritated?

Prepare a role play with people from your group to play the scenario in front of the other students.

Sofia from Spain works in a German research laboratory. She has often asked her German colleagues if they would like to go for a drink together after work and has received a rejection every time. She is surprised to receive responses like, "I can't, unfortunately, because I have to be in the lab very early tomorrow and want to go to bed early." Furthermore, her colleagues often mention having household or garden chores to do. One colleague even said that he wouldn't have time for the next two weeks because he's working on publishing his research results. Sofia can't understand this behavior.



Time management

- Germans not only plan their work schedule but also their free time
- Appointments are taken seriously
- Advantage: Germans are reliable
- Time is used effectively
- Long term planning
- Disadvantage: no flexibility and spontaneity



Privacy



- Privacy is important to Germans
- Separation of work and career
- Possibilities of retreat, being alone
- Clear separation between "yours" and "mine"

Group 2: Living together

Living in a shared apartment can be very nice, but can also lead to conflicts.

Discuss the scenario and prepare a role play for the group.

Two flatmates from a shared flat meet in the kitchen. Student 1 is washing the dishes and looks a bit annoyed. Student 2 gets something from the fridge and wants to leave the kitchen straight away. Student 1 speaks to Student 2. He draws his attention to the fact that he has repeatedly left the dishes he has used and that there was the only large pan in that pile, so nobody else could use. Student 2 is surprised and does not understand the problem. They discuss it.



These questions could help you:

-What could be the problem for Student 1? Why is he upset? What could be his arguments for a good/functioning coexistence in a shared flat?

-How could Student 2 react to Student 1? What could be reasons for Student 2 to be surprised?

Living together



- Each individual is responsible for the dirt they make
- Everyone should leave the common areas as they would like to find them!
- Everyone contributes to a good, harmonious coexistence

Tips:

- Communicate openly and respectfully, show understanding for each other
- Share your feelings about cleanliness (ask questions)
- A fair cleaning plan (reminders on your cell phone, app e.g., Sweepy)

Group 3: Reliability

“You can count on it!”

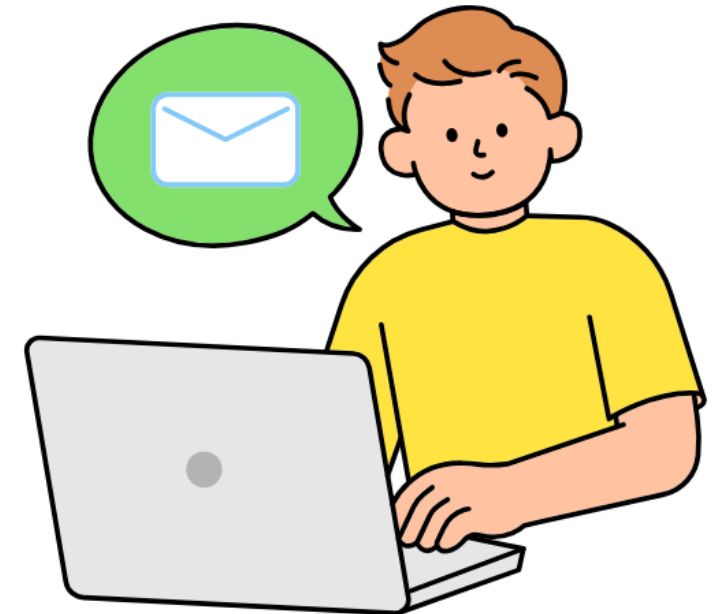
Germans are often said to be very reliable.

Discuss the scenario and prepare a role play for the group.

A small group of students meets a well-known fellow student. A few days ago, everyone was registered for a workshop. However, the fellow student did not show up without canceling his registration. The leader had to cancel the workshop because the number of participants was too small. The group is very disappointed about this. However, the fellow student does not understand the problem.

These questions could help you:

- What could be the group's arguments as to why the fellow student's behavior was problematic? What could an appeal to the fellow student be? What should/could the fellow student have done differently?
- How could the fellow student try to talk his way out of it?



Reliability

- Reliability is very important to Germans
- Especially in university life and at work

- Expectation
 - always and in any case sign off / inform the respective party
 - (illness, overlapping appointments, etc.) -> it is usually not necessary to give reasons)

- Why?
 - Out of solidarity / fairness towards others
 - Out of respect for organizers and their time, effort and possibly financial expenditure



Group 4: Bureaucracy

There is a lot of bureaucracy in Germany. It can be overwhelming sometimes.

Imagine you get a letter from the city hall/foreigners registration office and you don't understand it.

What do you do?

Prepare a role play for the other students.



Bureaucracy



- There is a lot of bureaucracy in Germany.
- Lots of rules, lots of paperwork, lots of forms....

Tips:

- Keep calm.
- Stay friendly.
- Ask and / or get help.
- And: Even Germans often do not understand the forms ! ;-)

Group 5: Communication

Germans have a very direct style of communication.

Discuss the scenario and act it out for the others.

An English student living in Germany has bought a new winter jacket and asks his German flatmates (male and/or female) how the others like it. One German flatmate says bluntly: “I don't like it. It's not your color, it makes you pale”.

These questions could help you:

- How might the English student react to this very direct answer? How might they feel? What could they answer?
- How might the German(s) react in turn? Is it normal for Germans to speak to each other like this?



Communication

- Direct communication (on a factual level) is valued in Germany
 - between friends
 - especially in a professional environment (university, workplace, etc.)
- Opinions are usually expressed openly
 - With a factual argument (“The color makes you pale.”) it is perceived as honest
- “Talking nice” or “talking around it” tends to be seen as dishonest and exhausting
- Objectivity should not offend



Group 6: Bribery



Bribery and corruption are forbidden in Germany and do not go down well at all.

Discuss the scenario and act it out for the others.

A student discusses his last exam with his professor, which he has failed again. The professor tells him that his degree is in jeopardy. The student reacts calmly. He says that surely a solution can be found. After all, his father is a well-known entrepreneur and is definitely interested in supporting the new lab with equipment if the professor reconsiders his grade.

Bribery

- Bribery/corruption is prohibited in Germany
 - It is also considered dishonest and a deterrent
- “Equal rights for all”
 - Principle of equal treatment
 - Equal opportunities, rights and sanctions/punishments for all
- This guarantees fair and functioning coexistence



Bargaining



- Bargaining is very uncommon in Germany (except at flea markets and in the business world).
- **Not** a good idea: Attempting to negotiate grades / exam results.
- Attempts to negotiate / bargain usually have negative consequences!

Group 7: Constructive feedback

Germans express their opinions and give clear, constructive feedback. This also applies to people in authority or people above them (professors, bosses, etc.).

Prepare a role play for the group.

It is the last session of a seminar in the semester. The professor wants to debrief the seminar with her students: What went well, what went badly? A student (male/female) comes forward and directly criticizes the order in which the students gave their presentations. For them, a different order would have made more sense.

These questions could help you:

- With regard to the introduction: How could the professor react to the student's criticism? Does she remain calm? What does she answer?
- How might the German students react to the criticism?
- How might other international students react to the criticizing student's statement?



Constructive feedback

- Feedback and criticism is communicated quite openly and directly in Germany
- Differentiation between the person and the person's behavior or the grievance (factual level ≠ emotional level)
- Critical thinking and expressing criticism/opinion = sign of intelligence, authenticity, self-confidence
- “Everyone can, may and should speak their mind!”
 - This is the only way to point out and remedy grievances and problems
- Have you noticed any social grievances?
 - Involvement in voluntary positions (party, association, initiatives, etc.) is important to bring about change



Respect & Boundaries

- **Personal Zone:**

also called private sphere,
allowed for acquaintances and friends, for greetings and smalltalk

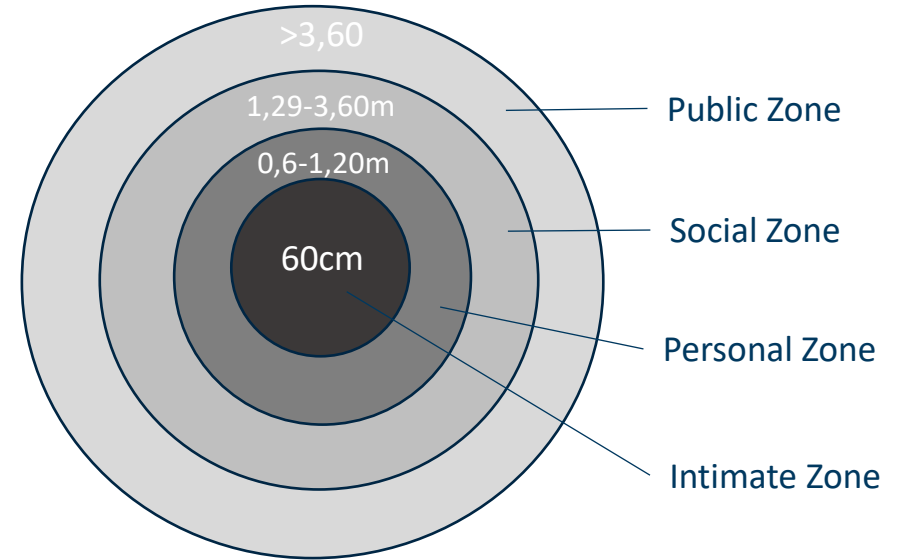
- **Intimate Zone**

also called intimate sphere,
just for close friends, family or partner, should not be crossed by other people
→ western european average value, can be different in other cultures

If your personal zones are crossed, do not hesitate to make this clear!!



Distance Zones by Hall



If you experience any violation of your personal zones, please contact us!
(Department ISA – International Student Affairs)



Other contact points for harassment, sexualised violence or discrimination

- **Security on Campus**
Tel.: 0271 / 740 - 2600
bmteam@uni-siegen.de
- **Equal Opportunities Officer University of Siegen: Dr. Elisabeth Heinrich**
Phone: 0271/740-2227
gleichstellungsbeauftragte@uni-siegen.de
- **Women's Counseling Center Siegen: Freudenberger Straße 28, 57072 Siegen (close to the ZOB & train station),**
Phone: 0271 21887, E-Mail: frauenberatung@frauenhelfenfrauen-siegen.de
- **Equality Body of the City of Siegen: Haus Seel, Kornmarkt 20, 57072 Siegen**
Miss Kratzel, Room: 233
Phone:(0271) 404-3457, E-Mail: m.kratzel@siegen.de

Be attentive and observe. It takes a little time to get to know a country and its rules of behavior.

Ask if you don't understand something.