

18 The present tense

18.1 Uses

The German present tense can refer to past, present or future actions. It may be translated by various tenses in English.

■ 18.1.1 Past action continuing up to now:

Er **wartet** hier schon seit zwei Stunden. *He has been waiting here for two hours.*
Wir **sind** nun schon zehn Tage hier. *We have been here for ten days now.*

■ 18.1.2 Habitual action:

Ich **arbeite** jeden Sonntag. *I work every Sunday.*

■ 18.1.3 Action in progress:

Ich **lese** gerade ein Buch. *I am reading a book.*

■ 18.1.4 Future action, where the context makes it clear that the future is referred to:

Im Oktober **geht** er zur Universität. *He is going/will go to university in October.*

■ 18.1.5 Vivid narrative style:

Ich **komme** aus dem Urlaub und **sehe**, dass die Einbrecher alles gestohlen haben. *I came back from my holidays to see that the burglars had stolen everything.*

18.2 Formation: weak verbs

The present tense of weak verbs is formed by adding the following endings to the verb stem:

Sing.	1. ich	mache	<i>I</i>	<i>do</i>
	2. du	machst	<i>you</i>	<i>do</i>
	3. er/sie/es	macht	<i>he/she/it</i>	<i>does</i>
Pl.	1. wir	machen	<i>we</i>	} <i>do</i>
	2. ihr	macht	<i>you</i>	
	3. sie/Sie	machen	<i>they/you (formal)</i>	

■ 18.2.1 If the verb stem ends in **-d** or **-t**, or in **-m** or **-n** preceded by a consonant other than **l** or **r**, an **-e-** is inserted before the ending of the second and third persons singular and the second person plural:

arbeiten ich arbeite, du arbeitest, er/sie/es arbeitet,
(to work) wir arbeiten, ihr arbeitet, sie arbeiten

■ 18.2.2 If the verb stem ends in **-s**, **-ß**, **-x** or **-z**, the ending of the second person singular loses its **-s-**, so that it is identical to the third person singular:

reisen (to travel) ich reise, du reist, er/sie/es reist

18.3 Formation: strong verbs

The present tense endings are the same as for weak verbs, but many strong verbs have a vowel change in the second and third persons singular; see 34.3.

raten ich rate, du rätst, er/sie/es rät,
(to guess) wir raten, ihr ratet, sie raten
geben ich gebe, du gibst, er/sie/es gibt,
(to give) wir geben, ihr gebt, sie geben

18.4 Formation: irregularities

These types of verb have peculiarities in the present tense:

- Auxiliary verbs (**haben**, **sein**, **werden**) see 25
- Modal verbs (**können**, **wollen**, etc.) see 26
- Separable verbs (**abfahren**, **anrufen**, etc.) see 28.3
- Impersonal verbs (**es tut mir Leid**, **es regnet**) see 29