

# imperative in german language

**imperative in german language** is a fundamental grammatical mood used to express commands, requests, or instructions. Understanding how to form and use the imperative mood correctly is essential for effective communication in German. This article explores the formation of the imperative in German, including its different forms according to person and number, as well as its usage in various contexts. Additionally, common irregularities, polite forms, and practical examples will be examined to provide a comprehensive overview. Mastery of the imperative in German language will enhance one's ability to give clear directions and engage in everyday conversations with native speakers. The content is organized to guide learners step-by-step through the complexities involved in the imperative mood, ensuring a thorough grasp of this important linguistic feature.

- Formation of the Imperative in German
- Usage of the Imperative Mood
- Polite Forms and Variations
- Common Irregular Imperative Verbs
- Practical Examples and Exercises

## Formation of the Imperative in German

In the German language, the imperative mood is used to issue commands, instructions, or requests. Its formation varies depending on the grammatical person and the level of formality. The imperative exists for the second person singular (du), second person plural (ihr), and the formal second person (Sie). Each form has specific conjugation rules that are essential to learn for proper usage.

### Imperative for "du" (informal singular)

The informal singular imperative is typically formed by taking the stem of the verb and dropping the personal ending from the "du" form in the present tense. Usually, the final "-st" is removed. For example, the verb *machen* (to do/make) in the "du" form is *du machst*, and the imperative becomes *mach!*. Often, the pronoun "du" is omitted in commands.

### Imperative for "ihr" (informal plural)

The imperative for the second person plural is formed by using the present tense form of the verb for "ihr" without the pronoun. For example, *machen* becomes *macht!*. This form is used when addressing multiple people informally.

## Formal imperative for "Sie"

The formal imperative uses the infinitive form of the verb followed by the pronoun "Sie". For example, *machen Sie!* is the formal command equivalent to "do!" or "make!" in English. This form is used in formal situations or when showing respect.

## Imperative for "wir"

Though less common, the first person plural imperative exists and is used to make suggestions that include the speaker, equivalent to "let's" in English. It is formed by using the verb in the present tense for "wir" followed by the pronoun "wir". For example, *machen wir!* means "let's do (it)!"

## Summary of Imperative Formation

- **du:** verb stem (without -st), no pronoun (e.g., *Geh!*)
- **ihr:** present tense "ihr" form, no pronoun (e.g., *Geht!*)
- **Sie:** infinitive + "Sie" (e.g., *Gehen Sie!*)
- **wir:** present tense "wir" form + "wir" (e.g., *Gehen wir!*)

## Usage of the Imperative Mood

The imperative mood in the German language is primarily used to give commands, make requests, offer invitations, or provide instructions. Its tone and level of politeness depend on the context and the form used. Understanding when and how to apply the imperative is key to effective communication.

## Commands and Orders

The imperative is most commonly used to issue direct commands or orders. This can range from simple instructions like "Sit down!" to more complex directions. The formality of the command depends on the relationship between the speaker and the listener.

## Requests and Invitations

The imperative can soften commands into polite requests or invitations, especially when combined with polite modal particles or in the formal "Sie" form. For example, *Kommen Sie bitte her!* ("Please come here!") is a polite request.

## Instructions and Directions

In manuals, recipes, or directions, the imperative is extensively used to guide the reader or listener step-by-step. This usage is typically in the "du" or "Sie" forms depending on the audience.

## Expressing Suggestions

The first person plural imperative form ("wir") is used to make suggestions that include the speaker, similar to "let's" in English. For example, *Gehen wir ins Kino!* ("Let's go to the cinema!").

## Polite Forms and Variations

Politeness in German imperative usage is crucial due to cultural emphasis on respect and social hierarchy. Different forms and particles modify the tone of commands and requests accordingly.

## Formal Imperative with "Sie"

The "Sie" form is the standard for polite commands and requests, especially with strangers, elders, or in professional contexts. It always includes the pronoun "Sie" after the verb in the infinitive form, e.g., *Öffnen Sie das Fenster!*

## Using Modal Particles

Modal particles such as *bitte* (please) are often added to soften the imperative. For example, *Geben Sie mir bitte das Buch!* makes the command more polite and less abrupt.

## Negative Imperative Forms

The negative imperative is formed by adding *nicht* after the verb or by using the expression *kein* depending on the context. For example, *Gehen Sie nicht!* means "Don't go!"

## Imperative with Pronouns

When object or reflexive pronouns are used with the imperative, they usually follow the verb directly in the "du" and "ihr" forms. For example, *Wasch dich!* ("Wash yourself!").

# Common Irregular Imperative Verbs

Many German verbs have irregular imperative forms, especially common auxiliary verbs and modal verbs. These irregularities must be memorized as they do not follow standard conjugation rules.

## Examples of Irregular Verbs

- **sein** (to be): *Sei!* (du), *Seid!* (ihr), *Seien Sie!* (Sie)
- **haben** (to have): *Hab!* (du), *Habt!* (ihr), *Haben Sie!* (Sie)
- **werden** (to become): *Werde!* (du), *Werdet!* (ihr), *Werden Sie!* (Sie)

## Modal Verbs in the Imperative

Modal verbs like *können*, *wollen*, or *sollen* are rarely used in the imperative mood directly. Instead, their imperative meaning is often conveyed through other expressions or constructions.

## Verbs with Stem Changes

Some verbs undergo vowel changes in the stem when forming the imperative for "du". For example, *fahren* (to drive) changes to *fahr!* in the imperative, dropping the stem vowel change present in the "du" form (*du fährst*).

## Practical Examples and Exercises

Using the imperative in practical contexts helps reinforce understanding and fluency. Below are examples of commands, requests, and suggestions in different imperative forms, followed by practice exercises.

### Examples

- *Komm hier!* – Come here! (du)
- *Setzt euch!* – Sit down! (ihr)
- *Lesen Sie diese Seite!* – Read this page! (Sie)
- *Gehen wir ins Restaurant!* – Let's go to the restaurant! (wir)

- *Iss dein Gemüse!* – Eat your vegetables! (du)

## Practice Exercises

Convert the following infinitive verbs into the correct imperative forms for "du," "ihr," and "Sie":

1. sprechen (to speak)
2. kommen (to come)
3. arbeiten (to work)
4. lesen (to read)
5. essen (to eat)

Examples of answers:

- **du:** Sprich!, Komm!, Arbeit!, Lies!, Iss!
- **ihr:** Sprecht!, Kommt!, Arbeitet!, Lest!, Esst!
- **Sie:** Sprechen Sie!, Kommen Sie!, Arbeiten Sie!, Lesen Sie!, Essen Sie!

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the imperative mood in the German language?

The imperative mood in German is used to give commands, instructions, or requests. It directly addresses someone to perform an action.

### How do you form the imperative for regular verbs in German?

For regular verbs, the imperative is formed by using the stem of the verb. For 'du' (informal singular), typically the ending '-st' is dropped (e.g., 'spielen' becomes 'spiel!'). For 'ihr' (informal plural), add '-t' (e.g., 'spielt!'). For 'Sie' (formal), use the full infinitive with 'Sie' after the verb (e.g., 'spielen Sie!').

## **Are there irregular verbs in the German imperative?**

### **Can you give examples?**

Yes, some German verbs have irregular imperative forms. For example, 'sein' (to be) has the imperative forms: 'sei' (du), 'seid' (ihr), and 'seien Sie' (Sie). Another example is 'haben' (to have) with 'hab' (du), 'habt' (ihr), and 'haben Sie' (Sie).

## **How do pronouns affect the formation of the imperative in German?**

In the imperative mood, personal pronouns like 'du' and 'ihr' are usually omitted, but the polite 'Sie' is always included after the verb. For example, 'Komm!' means 'Come!' (informal singular), but 'Kommen Sie!' means 'Come!' (formal).

## **Can the imperative in German be softened to sound more polite?**

Yes, to make an imperative more polite, Germans often add words like 'bitte' (please) or use modal particles such as 'doch' or 'mal'. For example, 'Komm bitte!' or 'Komm doch mal!' makes the command sound softer and more polite.

## **Additional Resources**

### *1. Die Kunst des Imperativs: Deutsche Befehlsformen verstehen und anwenden*

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**imperative in german language: Tense across Languages** Renate Musan, Monika Rathert,

2011-10-27 This book addresses recent developments in the study of tense from a cross-paradigm and cross-linguistic point of view. Leading international scholars explore challenging ideas about tense at the interfaces between semantics and syntax as well as syntax and morphology. The book is divided into three main subsections: 1) Tense in tenseless languages; 2) Tense, mood, and modality, and 3) Descriptive approaches to some tense phenomena. Although time is a universal dimension of the human experience, some languages encode reference to time without any grammatical tense morphology of the verb. Some of these exceptional “tenseless” languages are investigated in this volume: Kalaallisut, Paraguayan Guaraní and Movima. Modal verbs are polyfunctional in the sense that they express both tense and modality. In this volume, an untypical modal is analyzed, a modal analysis of imperatives is argued for, and sentential mood, which is closely related to modality, is analyzed. It is always interesting to look at the expression of tense in understudied languages, which is done here for Scottish Gaelic, Austronesian Rukai and German dialects. The volume can be used for graduate and undergraduate level teaching

**imperative in german language: Wh-exclamatives, Imperatives and Wh-questions**

Simone Guesser, Ani Marchesan, Paulo Medeiros Junior, 2023-12-18 Research on left periphery phenomena has increased in the last 20 years, resulting in consistent studies from a wide range of languages and a fruitful debate on the functional projections within the CP system. Throughout these years, important contributions have been made on Brazilian Portuguese, especially on wh-interrogative sentences, focalization, topicalization and relative clauses. As for exclamative and imperative sentences, however, there is a considerable research gap in all grammatical levels. Regarding interrogatives, semantic and prosodic studies are still lacking (as well as research on the acquisition and processing of these constructions). This collected volume fills some of those gaps, gathering studies on wh-exclamatives, imperatives and wh-questions in Brazilian Portuguese which approach syntactical, semantical and prosodic aspects of these constructions through a rich and yet unregistered set of data. They also deliver novel acquisition and diachronic data that will further both the comprehension of Brazilian Portuguese grammar and the ongoing discussions on left periphery phenomena.

**imperative in german language: The Acquisition of Syntax in Romance Languages**

Vincent Torrens, Linda Escobar, 2006-07-26 This volume includes a selection of papers that address a wide range of acquisition phenomena from different Romance languages and all share a common theoretical approach based on the Principles and Parameters theory. They favour, discuss and sometimes challenge traditional explanations of first and second language acquisition in terms of maturation of general principles universal to all languages. They all depart from the view that language acquisition can be explained in terms of learning language specific rules, constraints or structures. The different parts into which this volume is organized reflect different approaches that current research has offered, which deal with issues of development of reflexive pronouns, determiners, clitics, verbs, auxiliaries, inflection, wh-movement, resumptive pronouns, topic and focus, mood, the syntax/discourse interface, and null arguments.

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Raevaara, Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen, 2017-08-15 In middle-class Anglo-speaking circles imperatives are considered impolite forms that command another to do something; etiquette manuals recommend avoiding them. The papers in this collection de-construct such lay beliefs. Through the empirical examination of everyday and institutional interaction across a range of languages, they show that imperatives are routinely used for constructing turns that further sociality in interactional situations. Moreover, they show that for understanding the use of an imperatively formatted turn, its specific design (whether it contains, e.g., an overt subject, object, modal particles, or diminutives), and its sequential and temporal positioning in verbal and embodied activities are crucial. The fact that the same type of imperative turn is appropriate under the same circumstances across linguistically diverse cultures suggests that there are common aspects of imperative turn design and common pragmatic dimensions of situations warranting their use. The volume provides new insights into the resources and processes involved when social actors try to get another to do something.

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Forshaw, 2021-10-15 Many theories of language acquisition struggle to account for the morphological complexity and diversity of the world’s languages. This book examines the acquisition of complex morphology of Murrinhpatha, a polysynthetic language of Northern Australia. It considers semi-naturalistic data from five children (1;9-6;1) collected over a two-year period. Analysis of the Murrinhpatha data is focused on the acquisition of polysynthetic verb constructions, large irregular inflectional paradigms, and bipartite stem verbs, which all pose interesting challenges to the learner, as well as to theories of language acquisition. The book argues that morphological complexity, which broadly includes factors such as transparency, predictability/regularity, richness, type/token frequency and productivity, must become central to our understanding of morphological acquisition. It seeks to understand how acquisition is impacted by differences in morphological systems and by the ways in which children and their interlocutors use these systems.

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Thieroff, 2010-12-15 This book is the first comprehensive survey of mood in the languages of Europe. It gives readers access to a collection of data on mood. Each article presents the mood system of a specific European language in a way that readers not familiar with this language are able to understand and to interpret the data. The articles contain information on the morphology and semantics of the mood system, the possible combinations of tense and mood morphology, and the possible uses of the non-indicative mood(s). The papers address the explanation of mood from an

empirical and descriptive perspective. This book is of interest to scholars of mood and modality, language contact, and areal linguistics and typology.

**imperative in german language: Technical and Military Imperatives** L Brown, 1999-01-01  
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Speech-act theory is the interdisciplinary study of the wide range of things we do with words. Originally stemming from the influential work of twentieth-century philosophers, including J. L. Austin and Paul Grice, recent years have seen a resurgence of work on the topic. On one hand, a new generation of linguists, philosophers, and cognitive scientists have made impressive progress toward reverse-engineering the psychological underpinnings that allow us to do so much with language. Meanwhile, speech-act theory has been used to enrich our understanding of pressing social issues that include freedom of speech, racial slurs, and the duplicity of political discourse. This volume presents fourteen new essays by many of the philosophers and linguists who have led this resurgence. The topics span a methodological range that includes formal semantics and pragmatics, foundational issues about the nature of linguistic representation, and work on a variety of forms of indirect and/or uncooperative speech that occupies the intersection of the philosophy of language, ethics, and political philosophy. Several of the contributions demonstrate the benefits of integrating the methodologies and perspectives of these literatures. The essays are framed by a comprehensive introductory survey of the contemporary literature written by the editors.

**imperative in german language: The Oxford Handbook of Developmental Linguistics** Jeffrey Lidz, William Snyder, Joe Pater, 2016-06-30  
In this handbook, renowned scholars from a range of backgrounds provide a state of the art review of key developmental findings in language acquisition. The book places language acquisition phenomena in a richly linguistic and comparative context, highlighting the link between linguistic theory, language development, and theories of learning. The book is divided into six parts. Parts I and II examine the acquisition of phonology and morphology respectively, with chapters covering topics such as phonotactics and syllable structure, prosodic phenomena, compound word formation, and processing continuous speech. Part III moves on to the acquisition of syntax, including argument structure, questions, mood alternations, and possessives. In Part IV, chapters consider semantic aspects of language acquisition, including the expression of genericity, quantification, and scalar implicature. Finally, Parts V and VI look at theories of learning and aspects of atypical language development respectively.

**imperative in german language: Interpreting Imperatives** Magdalena Kaufmann, 2011-10-26  
Imperative clauses are recognized as one of the major clause types alongside those known as declarative and interrogative. Nevertheless, they are still an enigma in the study of meaning, which relies largely on either the concept of truth conditions or the concept of information growth—neither of which are easily applied to imperatives. This book puts forward a fresh perspective. It analyzes imperatives in terms of modalized propositions, and identifies an additional, presuppositional, meaning component that makes an assertive interpretation inappropriate. The author shows how these two elements can help explain the varied effects imperatives have, depending on their usage context. Imperatives have been viewed as elusive components of language because they have a range of functions that makes them difficult to unify theoretically. This fresh view of the semantics-pragmatics interface allows for a uniform semantic analysis while accounting for the pragmatic versatility of imperatives.

**imperative in german language: Language Acquisition and Development** Anna Gavarró,

Maria João Freitas, 2009-10-02 This volume gathers fifty papers from the conference Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition, GALA 2007, celebrated in Barcelona between the 6th and 8th of September, 2007. It covers the areas of syntax and phonology of child language from the theoretical perspective of generative grammar – the theoretical outlook which first placed language acquisition at the centre of linguistic inquiry.

**imperative in german language: Finiteness** Irina Nikolaeva, 2007 This book explores the nature of finiteness, one of most commonly used notions in descriptive and theoretical linguistics but possibly one of the least understood. Scholars representing a variety of theoretical positions seek to clarify what it is and to establish its usefulness and limitations. In doing so they reveal cross-linguistically valid correlations between subject licensing, subject agreement, tense, syntactic opacity, and independent clausehood; show how these properties are associated with finiteness; and discuss what this means for the content of the category. The issues explored include how different grammatical theories represent finiteness; whether the finite/nonfinite distinction is universal; whether there are degrees of finiteness; whether the syntactic notion of finiteness has a semantic corollary; whether and how finiteness is subject to change; and how finiteness features in language acquisition. Irina Nikolaeva opens the book by describing the history of finiteness and its place in current thinking and research. She then introduces the chapters of the book, comparing the authors' perspectives and showing what they have in common. The book is then divided into four parts. Part I considers the role finiteness plays in formal syntactic theories and Part II its deployment in functional theories and as the subject of research in typology. Parts III and IV look respectively at the finite/nonfinite opposition in individual languages and at the role finiteness plays in linguistic change and linguistic development. The book is written and structured to appeal to scholars and students of syntax and general linguistics at graduate level and above.

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