



# Evidence of basic knowledge of the German language in the event of the subsequent immigration of spouses from abroad

## Germany has amended its law relating to foreigners

Information for spouses who  
immigrate subsequently and  
their marital partners in Germany



[www.integration-in-deutschland.de](http://www.integration-in-deutschland.de)

## What has changed for you?

**Would you like to move to Germany to your spouse?**

**Or would you like to move to Germany together with your spouse?**

**Or would you like to come to Germany to get married there and live with your spouse?**

In these cases, you must demonstrate before you enter the country that you possess a simple knowledge of German<sup>1</sup>. This is to ensure that in Germany you can conduct basic communication in German from the start.

### Are there exceptions?

Yes. You do not have to prove any knowledge of German if one of the following statements applies:

- You or your spouse are citizens of a member state of the European Union (excluding Germany).
- You are incapable of demonstrating basic knowledge of the German language due to a physical or mental illness or handicap.
- You have a university degree or corresponding qualification, or exceptionally in your case, there is a recognisably lesser integration requirement for other reasons.
- You do not wish to reside permanently in Germany.
- Your spouse has a residence permit as
  - highly-skilled worker (§ 19 AufenthG).
  - researcher (§ 20 AufenthG).
  - company founder (§ 21 AufenthG).
  - person entitled to asylum (§ 25 (1) or § 26 (3) AufenthG).
  - recognised refugee (§ 25 (2) or § 26 (3) AufenthG).
  - holder of a permanent right of residence from other EU countries (§ 38 a AufenthG).
- Your spouse is a citizen of Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand or the United States of America.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. § 28 (1) sentence 5 and § 30 (1) sentence 1 no. 2 and the exceptions in § 30 (1) sentence 2 and 3 of the German Residence Act and § 41 of the Residence Ordinance.



## What constitutes basic knowledge of the German language?

Basic knowledge of the German language is knowledge of the German language at “Competence level A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages”<sup>2</sup>. This includes you being able to understand and use common, everyday expressions and very simple sentences (e.g. asking for directions, shopping, etc). You should be able to introduce yourself and others and ask and answer questions about personal details such as where you live or what people you know. Of course, the person you are talking to must speak clearly and be prepared to help.

You should also have basic German writing skills, e.g. you should be able to enter your name, address, nationality, etc. on forms.

## How can you demonstrate basic knowledge of the German language?

Normally, you must demonstrate the language skills before entering the country when applying for the visa for subsequent immigration of a spouse at the German embassy or consulate general. For this, you must submit a certificate of the Goethe Institute for the A1 language examination “Start Deutsch 1” together with the application documents. The Goethe Institutes are the German cultural institutes abroad. They offer German lessons and examinations. The language test “Start Deutsch 1” can be taken at the Goethe Institute. The language test can, however, also be taken at a licensed examiner’s<sup>3</sup> or in

<sup>2</sup> Reference framework on which the member states have agreed.

<sup>3</sup> Licensees are institutes entitled to conduct tests of the Goethe Institute.

the premises of a partner institute of the Goethe Institute. You can find information on the Internet on the Goethe Institute homepage or at the Goethe Institute itself.

In countries in which the “Start Deutsch 1” examination is not yet available, the embassies or consulates general determine whether the spouse has basic knowledge of the German language during the visa application procedure.

In exceptional cases, other language certificates shall suffice as proof, if they are of equal value to the language test “Start Deutsch 1” of the Goethe Institute.

If during the personal interview in the embassy or consulate general it becomes evident beyond any doubt that you have the required knowledge of the German language, no separate proof is required.

Information on how you have to demonstrate a basic knowledge of German is also available on the websites of the visa departments of German embassies and consulates general. The latter will advise you individually when applying for the visa.

## How can you acquire basic knowledge of the German language?

If you do not yet have a basic knowledge of German, there are a variety of options for learning German:

### Language courses – all providers

Information about organisations offering language courses is available from the German diplomatic mission and the Goethe Institute.

### Learning German by correspondence course offered by the Goethe Institute or via the Internet

A complete set of examination papers with which you can prepare for the language examination “Start Deutsch 1” on your own, as well as information on correspondence courses, is available on the Goethe Institute website. There, you will also find further level A1 exercises. Further information is available on the website and via the telephone hotline **+49 911 943-6390** of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

### Radio programmes and Internet offers of the ‘Deutsche Welle’

The Deutsche Welle offers a wide range of opportunities to learn German. Free beginner and advanced German courses are available in almost 30 languages on the website. The frequency lists for receiving radio broadcasts abroad are listed there as well.

For instance, you can also use the audio language course “Radio D” jointly developed by the ‘Deutsche Welle’ and the Goethe Institute. Beginners with no, or little, previous knowledge can either download the audio episodes of Radio D or subscribe to them as a podcast. Furthermore, the course is broadcast in 16 languages on DW radio. In addition, a new interactive online language course gives a picture of life in Germany in 30 lessons with over 1000 interactive exercises. When taking the first steps towards learning German, the language-learning crime thriller “Mission Berlin” can offer further help as well.

If you prefer to learn while on the move, the Deutsche Welle has brought out a portable phrasebook, e.g. for mobile phones. It contains short lessons with interactive exercises for download. A dictionary with vocabulary and idioms assists you when starting out in Germany.

### Learning material in paper form

and multi-media materials can also be purchased in Germany. Reading lists and addresses where you can buy learning materials are available on the website or via the telephone hotline of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

## Contacts that can provide further assistance

You can find further information about legal status and opportunities to learn German at the website of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and via its **telephone number +49 911/943-6390**.

At the website [www.integration-in-deutschland.de](http://www.integration-in-deutschland.de) Internet links to the following Internet addresses and further information are provided:

- Further information about level A1 language skills is offered by the Common European Reference Framework for Languages:
  - <http://www.goethe.de/ger>
- Goethe Institutes and partner organisations worldwide that offer German courses and/or examinations of the Goethe Institute:
  - <http://www.goethe.de/pruefungenveltweit>
- Information and language learning offers of the Goethe Institute:
  - <http://www.goethe.de/fernunterricht>
  - <http://www.goethe.de/lernen>
  - <http://www.goethe.de/sd1>  
(sample examination paper for the Goethe certificate A1 “Start Deutsch 1”)
- Information and language learning offers of the Deutsche Welle
  - <http://www.dw-world.de/deutschkurse>
  - <http://www.dw-world.de/radioD> (Audio language course “Radio D”)
  - <http://www.dw-world.de/deutschinteraktiv>  
(Interactive online language course)
  - <http://www.dw-world.de/misioneuropa> (language crime thriller)
  - <http://mobile.dw-world.de> (Mobile phrasebook)
- Integration portal of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees:
  - <http://www.integration-in-deutschland.de>
- Information of the German diplomatic missions:
  - <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/de/Laenderinformationen/03-WebseitenAV/Uebersicht.html>

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