



The Perfect Tense(1)

There are two common past tenses in German:

Simple Past Tense (*Präteritum*):

- is used most commonly in written language (newspapers, literature, etc)

Perfect Tense (*Perfekt*):

- is used most commonly in spoken language and informal writings (emails, text messages, etc)

We will use the Perfect Tense for all forms of communication, except for the verbs "*haben*" and "*sein*" and modal verbs.

The perfect tense consists of two parts:

a conjugated form of either ***haben*** or ***sein*** in the present tense

+

a past participle

Every verb has a past participle form and you must memorize them. Once you have, it will never change. You will always conjugate your auxiliary verb according to the subject of the sentence, but not the past participle.

subject	auxiliary		past participle
Luca	ist	zu seiner Oma	gefahren.
Nico	hat	einen Schokoladenkuchen	gebacken.

Weak (or regular) verbs in German form their past participle by adding **ge-** in front of the verb stem and **-t** at the end of the verb stem, for example:

*Luca und Sebi haben Tennis **gespielt**.*

*Luca hat für die Uni **gelernt**.*

*Sebi hat Rühreier mit Speck **gekocht**.*

*Alle Freunde haben zusammen Inas Geburtstag **gefeiert**.*

*Was hat Luca am Samstag **gemacht**?*

Strong (or irregular) verbs form their past participle in a variety of ways. It is best to learn the past participle right away together with the verb when you learn a new verb. Here are some ways that strong verbs form the past participle (but there are many more ways and you will see another presentation in 5.4):

add **ge-** in front:

- *kommen* – **ge**kommen (*Luca ist spät nach Hause gekommen.*)
- *fahren* – **ge**fahren (*Wir sind zu Oma gefahren.*)
- *backen* – **ge**backen (*Ich habe einen Kuchen gebacken.*)

add **ge-** in front plus a vowel change:

- *schwimmen – geschwommen (Maren ist schnell geschwommen.)*
- *trinken – getrunken (Ina hat einen Cocktail getrunken.)*
- *treffen - getroffen (Luca hat seine Freunde getroffen.)*
- *schreiben - geschrieben (Ich habe ein Buch geschrieben.)*

add **ge-** in front plus a vowel change plus a consonant change:

- *gehen – gegangen (Ich bin gestern in die Uni gegangen.)*

Separable prefix verbs insert **ge-** between the prefix and the verb stem (which can take on various forms), for example:

*ausschlafen – aus**ge**schlafen (Luca hat am Samstag ausgeschlafen.)*

*fernsehen – fern**ge**sehen (Am Sonntag hat Ina ferngesehen.)*

*aufstehen – auf**ge**standen (Bist du am Sonntag spät aufgestanden?)*

*mitbringen – mit**ge**bracht (Habt ihr einen Kuchen mitgebracht?)*

Sein or haben?

If this is not confusing enough, now you need to figure out which verbs take *haben* or *sein* as their auxiliary verb. Most verbs form the perfect tense with *haben*, but there are some very common verbs that use *sein* instead of *haben*.

The verbs using *sein*

- denote a **change of location** (e.g., *fahren, gehen, kommen, wandern, reiten, ...*)
- a **change of condition** (*aufwachen, aufstehen, sterben, ankommen, ...*)
- and the verbs *sein* and *bleiben*

There is a PDF with many common irregular verbs listed in the *Grammatik* section of the e-textbook.

What to do if you encounter a new verb and do not know it's past participle?

If you are unsure of what the past participle is you can use a dictionary. Look up the verb in the infinitive. If you look up “drove” for example, rather than “fahren” or “to drive” you will get the simple past tense form that we are not using.

See examples on the next slide:

fahren äöüß...
 DE <> EN

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Wörterbuch Englisch ← Deutsch: **fahren** Übersetzung 1 - 50 von 333 >>

ENGLISCH	DEUTSCH	
-	NOUN das <u>Fahren</u> - VERB <u>fahren</u> fuhr <u>gefahren</u> ... <input type="button" value="+"/> SYNO am Steuer sein chauffieren <u>fahren</u> ... <input type="button" value="+"/>	<input type="button" value="edit"/> <input type="button" value="edit"/>
<input type="button" value="i"/> <input type="button" value="a"/> to drive	fahren	2774 <input type="button" value="a"/> <input type="button" value="i"/>

the past participle form you want!

drove äöüß...
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Wörterbuch Englisch → Deutsch: **drove** Übersetzung 1 - 17 von 17

ENGLISCH	DEUTSCH	
<input type="button" value="edit"/> NOUN a <u>drove</u> droves <input type="button" value="edit"/> VERB ¹ to drive <u>drove</u> driven ... <input type="button" value="+"/> <input type="button" value="edit"/> VERB ² to <u>drove</u> droved droved ... <input type="button" value="+"/> SYNO <u>drove</u> drove chisel horde swarm	-	
<input type="button" value="i"/> <input type="button" value="a"/> <i>sb.</i> drove	<i>jd.</i> fuhr	268 <input type="button" value="a"/> <input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="button" value="i"/> <input type="button" value="a"/> <i>sb./sth.</i> drove	<i>jd./etw.</i> trieb	112 <input type="button" value="a"/> <input type="button" value="i"/>
<input type="button" value="i"/> <input type="button" value="a"/> <i>[they]</i> drove	<i>[sie]</i> fuhren	54 <input type="button" value="a"/> <input type="button" value="i"/>

Not helpful - no past participle form given - this is the simple past tense