

Adverbs of place and direction

— ORTSADVERBIEN

German adverbs of place and direction show where something is or which way it moves: hier, dort, hin, her.

“Ich gehe nach da.” — the direction stays vague. English mostly gets by with “here” and “there” for both standing and moving, but German marks direction with **hin/her**.

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01 00:10

Right now: three questions, one map



SHORTCUT

hin = away from me · her = toward me. German measures direction from where the speaker stands. English hardly has a word for this (only fossils like “hither” and “thither”), so learners keep skipping it.

First the skeleton. German splits questions about place into three, and **each one has its own words**:

QUESTION	IN ENGLISH	ADVERB	EXAMPLE
wo?	where?	hier · dort · da · oben · unten · drinnen · draußen	Ich bin hier .
wohin?	where to?	hierher · dorthin · nach oben · hinein · hinaus	Komm hierher .
woher?	where from?	von hier · von dort · von oben · heraus	Ich komme von dort .

English splits it only in the question, and often drops it: “Where are you going?” instead of “Where **to**?”. German **changes the adverb itself** every time: **hier · hierher · von hier**.

02 01:10

You already do this in English

You build the difference between “come here” and “stay there” without thinking. German has the same split, just in **separate words**:

The pattern is simple: **the position word gets -her or -hin and now means “to”**, and **von** in front means “from”. It matches the English “to there / from there” almost one to one.

- ① **da** and **dort** both mean “there”. The difference: **dort** really points far away, while **da** is looser in everyday speech, like “right there / here you go” — **Ich bin da!** = “I’m here!”

03 02:10

hin and her — the real topic

These two syllables are the most un-English part of German. They have no meaning of their own; **they mark direction relative to the speaker**. One-sentence rule:

When two people describe the same event, the word changes — it depends on **where the speaker is standing**:

✓ **Komm her!**

Come here! — the speaker stands at the destination.

✓ **Geh hin!**

Go over there! — the speaker stands at the starting point.

Both stick to the front of prepositions and build **a pair of directions**. You will hear these patterns all the time in German:

WORD	DIRECTION	ENGLISH	EXAMPLE
hinein	away · inward	in (going in)	Geh hinein! — Go in .
herein	toward me · inward	in (coming in)	Herein! — Come in! (at the door)
hinaus	away · outward	out	Er ging hinaus .
heraus	toward me · outward	out	Komm heraus!
hinauf	away · upward	up	Wir gehen hinauf .
herunter	toward me · downward	down	Komm herunter!
hinüber	away · across	across	Geh hinüber .

The **Herein!** at a door is exactly this logic: the person inside is speaking, the visitor will come **toward them** — so **her-**.

In spoken German both get **shortened**, and you will hear **rein · raus · rauf · runter · rüber** almost every time. They are not rude, just everyday:

- ✓ **Komm rein!**
Come on in! — the everyday form of **herein**.
- ✓ **Geh mal runter.**
Go on down for a moment.

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04 03:40

City, country, home: which preposition

This trio is where place prepositions go wrong most often. **English says “to” for all of them**, German splits it three ways:

DESTINATION	PREPOSITION	EXAMPLE	WHY
city · country (no article)	nach	Ich fahre nach Berlin .	geographic name
country with an article	in + A	Ich fahre in die Türkei .	die Türkei · die Schweiz
person · institution	zu + D	Ich gehe zum Arzt .	the goal is someone , not a place
enclosed space (you go inside)	in + A	Ich gehe ins Kino .	you go inside
home (your own)	nach Hause	Ich gehe nach Hause .	fixed phrase — memorise
being at home	zu Hause	Ich bin zu Hause .	no movement

The pair **nach Hause** / **zu Hause** is a trap on its own: **nach = I'm going**, **zu = I'm there**. Both are written with a capital H and take no article.



TRAP 01

"Ich gehe zu Berlin" — mixing up people and cities

zu is for when the destination is **a person or an institution**: zum Arzt · zur Post · zu meiner Mutter. Cities and countries want **nach**.

✗ Ich fahre ~~zu~~ Berlin.

Wrong.

✓ Ich fahre nach Berlin.

I'm going to Berlin.

✓ Ich fahre zu meinem Bruder nach Berlin.

Both together: to whom + to where.



TRAP 02

If the country has an article, nach does not work

Most countries have no article (**Deutschland** • **Italien** • **Frankreich**) and take **nach**. But some do have one, and those want **in** + **Akkusativ**.

✗ **Ich fliege ~~nach die~~ Türkei.**

Wrong.

✓ **Ich fliege **in die** Türkei.**

I'm flying to Turkey.

A short list of countries with an article: **die Türkei** • **die Schweiz** • **die Ukraine** • **der Iran** • **der Irak** • **die USA** • **die Niederlande**. All of them take **in**.

05 05:10

The part nobody tells you: hin/her turn into separable verbs

hin and **her** do not only stand alone — they attach to the front of a verb and make a **separable verb**. And then they jump to the end of the sentence.

✓ **Ich gehe morgen **hin**.**

I'll go there tomorrow. — “hingehen” split apart.

✓ **Setz dich bitte **hin**.**

Please sit down. — “sich hinsetzen”.

✓ **Bring das Buch bitte **her**.**

Bring the book over here. — “herbringen”.

So do not be thrown when you see a **hin** or **her** at the end of a German sentence: it is not a preposition, it is **the broken-off part of the verb**. We explain how separable verbs work in detail on the [separable verbs page](#).

- **hingehen** — to go there • **Ich gehe hin.**
- **herkommen** — to come here • **Komm her!**
- **sich hinsetzen** — to sit down • **Setz dich hin.**
- **hinlegen** — to lay down / put down • **Leg es hin.**
- **herbringen** — to bring here • **Bring es her.**

- ① Question words split by the same logic: **Wohin gehst du?** (where to) and **Woher kommst du?** (where from). In spoken German the two **can even be pulled apart**: **Wo gehst du hin?** — that is also correct and very common.

06 06:05

What to do this week

Place language sticks when you **walk around your home**. A five-day exercise, two minutes a day:

- When you move from one spot at home to another, build the sentence: **Ich gehe in die Küche. Jetzt bin ich in der Küche.** — hear the Akkusativ → Dativ switch with your own ears.
- Call someone to you: **Komm her!** Then send them away: **Geh hin!** Say both back to back and the difference settles in.
- Write your weekly plan with three prepositions: **Am Montag gehe ich zum Arzt, am Dienstag nach Köln, am Mittwoch bleibe ich zu Hause.**
- When you hear **rein · raus · rauf · runter** in a German series, make a note — they are all shortened forms of the long ones on this page.

① Next up is joining sentences: und · aber · denn leave the word order alone, deshalb flips it.

07 BUILD

Build the sentence yourself

Tap the words and put them in order. This is the hardest part of German — and there are no options to pick from, **you** build it.

TAP THE WORDS

TAP THE WORDS

TAP THE WORDS

07 06 : 30

Test yourself

Tap an answer — we will look at why together.

+7

Take the full test

13 questions · timed · rule breakdown at the end



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