

The imperative • Imperativ

— DER IMPERATIV

The imperative (Imperativ) is the German command form; it expresses an order, a suggestion or an invitation: Komm! Kommt! Kommen Sie!

Komm! • Kommt! • Kommen Sie! — the same command in three different shapes. In English, politeness lives in your tone; in German it lives in **the shape of the verb**. Here: the forms for three kinds of listener, how irregular verbs behave in commands, and where a request stops being an order.

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01 00:10

Three forms, one logic

⚡ **SHORTCUT** A du command has **no ending and no pronoun**: Komm! • Geh! • Nimm!

In English the command is one form: “Come.” Politeness comes from tone and words like “please”. German has **three separate forms** depending on who you are talking to, and the choice depends entirely on the listener — on shape, not tone.

TO WHOM	HOW IT IS BUILT	KOMMEN	MACHEN
du • one person, informal	bare stem (no pronoun)	Komm!	Mach!
ihr • several people, informal	ihr form, pronoun dropped	Kommt!	Macht!
Sie • formal	verb + Sie (pronoun stays)	Kommen Sie!	Machen Sie!

The only real news is the **du** form: the pronoun drops and the verb stands bare. The **ihr** and **Sie** forms are conjugations you already know.

✓ **Komm bitte her!**

Come here, please. — du

✓ **Kommen Sie bitte herein!**

Please, come in. — Sie

02 01:30

Two details in the du form

First: some verbs take an **-e** at the end. It is there to make the word sayable — if the stem ends in **-t** • **-d** or in **consonant + m/n** (**öffn-**, **atm-**), the **-e** is required. After a vowel + m/n, as in **komm-**, it is not; with other verbs it drops in everyday speech.

VERB	DU COMMAND	WHY
warten	Warte!	stem ends in -t
öffnen	Öffne!	stem ends in consonant + n
kommen	Komm!	vowel + m, not needed
gehen	Geh!	not needed, drops

Second, and more important: **verbs whose stem vowel changes e → i change in the command too, and -e is never added.** But the **a → ä** change does not happen in commands.

VERB	DU FORM	DU COMMAND	RULE
geben	du gibst	Gib!	e → i carries over
lesen	du liest	Lies!	e → ie carries over
helfen	du hilfst	Hilf!	e → i carries over
fahren	du fährst	Fahr!	a → ä does NOT carry over
schlafen	du schläfst	Schlaf!	the umlaut goes away

Short rule: **the e-change carries into the command, the umlaut does not.**

03 03:00

sein • separable verbs • softeners

CASE	DU	IHR	SIE
sein — completely irregular	Sei!	Seid!	Seien Sie!
haben	Hab!	Habt!	Haben Sie!
separable verb aufmachen	Mach ... auf!	Macht ... auf!	Machen Sie ... auf!

Sei ruhig! • Seien Sie bitte leise! — the imperative of **sein** is simply memorised; there is no rule.

A German command doesn't sound rude on its own, but two small words turn it completely into a **request**. In everyday speech almost every command has one of them.

- **bitte** — “please”. It can go almost anywhere: **Bitte komm!** • **Komm bitte!**
- **mal** — like English “just” or “for a sec”: **Warte mal!** = “Hang on a sec.” It makes a sentence friendly at once.

- The two also appear together: **Mach mal bitte das Fenster auf.**

✓ **Mach** das Licht **aus!**

Turn off the light! — the prefix went to the end

✗ **Ausmach** das Licht!

the prefix stayed at the front

04 04:20

Three traps



TRAP 01

Dropping the pronoun in the Sie form

Kommen! is wrong — it isn't a command, it looks like an infinitive. In the formal command **Sie has to be written: Kommen Sie!** The only form that drops the pronoun is **du**.



TRAP 02

Not carrying the stem change into the command

Gebe mir das Buch! is wrong, and so is **Lese den Text!**. The correct forms are **Gib mir das Buch!** and **Lies den Text!**. The rule: if the **du** form has **e → i/ie**, the command has it too, and no **-e** is added at the end.



TRAP 03

Taking the ihr command for a plural "you" and using it in formal settings

Kommt! is an **informal** address to several people — a group of friends, children. To an official, a teacher, a customer you say **Kommen Sie!**. The wrong form comes across as rude.

05 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

05 05 : 20

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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