

lassen

— DAS VERB LASSEN

lassen is a versatile German verb meaning “to leave”, “to let” and “to have something done”, and with sich it means “can be done”.

In German, lassen does three main jobs: leaving something where it is, having someone else do a job for you, and saying that something “can be done” (a passive-like meaning).

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01 00:15

Right now: the three jobs of lassen

- ⚡ SHORTCUT** 1. **Leave:** as a main verb (I left the car at home) or “let” (Sie lässt das Kind spielen). 2. **Have done:** like a modal verb (I had the car repaired). 3. **Can be done:** with sich lassen (this car can be repaired).

- ✓ **Ich lasse** mein Auto zu Hause.
I’m leaving my car at home.
- ✓ **Ich lasse** mein Auto reparieren.
I’m having my car repaired.
- ✓ **Das Auto lässt sich** reparieren.
The car can be repaired.

02 01:30

You already do this in English

In English you say “I *had* my hair cut”, “I *got* the car repaired”, “I *had* the flat cleaned”. German uses **lassen** + infinitive for exactly this. When the action is done on your own body or for your own benefit, a dative pronoun (**mir, dir, sich**) slips in.

I DO IT MYSELF	SOMEONE ELSE DOES IT (LASSEN)
Ich schneide mir die Haare .	Ich lasse mir die Haare schneiden .
Ich repariere das Auto .	Ich lasse das Auto reparieren .
Ich putze die Wohnung .	Ich lasse die Wohnung putzen .

In the sentence, lassen behaves like a modal verb: it sits in second place and the real action (the infinitive) goes to the very end.

03 02:45

Table: sich lassen as a way around the passive

In everyday German, the pattern **sich lassen** is used far more often than **können** + passive. It means “can be ...-ed / it is possible to ...”.

MODAL VERB + PASSIVE	SICH LASSEN	MEANING
Das kann gemacht werden .	Das lässt sich machen .	That can be done / sorted out .
Der Text kann gelesen werden .	Der Text lässt sich leicht lesen .	The text is easy to read .
Das Problem kann gelöst werden .	Das Problem lässt sich lösen .	The problem can be solved .

In this pattern you always use sich (accusative).

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04 03:45

Trap: saying gelassen in the past



TRAP

Using the wrong past participle in the Perfekt

If lassen stands alone (meaning “leave”), the past is **hat ... gelassen**. But if it is used together with another verb, you never say “gelassen” in the past; you always use the infinitive “lassen”.

✗ Ich habe mein Auto reparieren ~~gelassen~~.

Wrong. With a second verb, gelassen is not allowed.

✓ Ich habe mein Auto reparieren lassen.

Correct.

✓ Ich habe meine Tasche zu Hause gelassen.

Correct (only one verb here, meaning “leave”).

05 05:00

The part nobody tells you: Ich lasse dich in Ruhe

Some lassen phrases are so firmly rooted in everyday German that you should memorise them as whole chunks, not word by word. For example **Lass mich in Ruhe!** (Leave me alone!), **Lass uns gehen!** (Let's go!) or **Das kann sich sehen lassen** (That's not bad / that's pretty good).

06 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

Test yourself

Tap an answer — we will look at why together.

+4

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