

mögen and möchten

— MÖGEN · MÖCHTEN

mögen means “to like” and möchten means “would like”; they are two forms of the same verb.

Two faces of the same verb, doing **opposite jobs**: **Ich mag Kaffee** means “I like coffee”, while **Ich möchte einen Kaffee** means “I’d like a coffee”. Pick the wrong one in a café and you haven’t ordered anything.

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01 00:10

Two forms, one verb



SHORTCUT

möchten is the **polite form** of **mögen** — not a separate verb. But in everyday speech the two carry different meanings.

In the dictionary you see one entry; in conversation you hear two separate things. So the most practical route is to **memorise them separately**: one talks about liking, the other about wanting. English does the same with “I like” and “I’d like” — German just spells the difference differently.

PERSON	MÖGEN · I LIKE	MÖCHTEN · I'D LIKE
ich	mag	möchte
du	magst	möchtest
er / sie / es	mag	möchte
wir	mögen	möchten
ihr	mögt	möchtet
sie / Sie	mögen	möchten

In both columns the **ich** and **er** rows are **the same** — the fixed rule for modal verbs. **möchte** ends in **-e**, but that is not a person ending; it is the polite form’s own ending.

02 01:30

mögen — to like, to be fond of

mögen usually **takes no second verb**: what you like comes straight after it. That is what sets it apart from the other modals.

- ① Careful with negatives: if the noun **has no article**, use **kein**, not **nicht** — **Ich mag keinen Fisch**. Details on the [negation page](#).

03 02:50

möchten — to want, to ask for

möchten is **the modal verb you will hear most** in Germany: in cafés, shops, at reception, at the doctor's. It is used in two ways — directly with an object, or with a second verb.

STRUCTURE	EXAMPLE	ENGLISH
möchten + object	Ich möchte einen Tee .	I'd like a tea .
möchten + infinitive	Ich möchte zahlen .	I'd like to pay .
Question — offer	Möchten Sie etwas trinken?	Would you like something to drink?
Politeness add-on	Ich möchte bitte einen Kaffee .	Could I have a coffee , please?

bitte can sit in the middle of the sentence or at the end. Both are natural, and both clearly soften the tone.



SHORTCUT

When you are **asking for something**, always **möchten**. wollen is blunt and mögen means "I like" — neither is an order.

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04 04:00

Put all three side by side: mag · möchte · will

English blurs them too: “I like”, “I’d like” and “I want” all sit in the same neighbourhood. German builds three different sentences out of them, and picking the wrong one in a café is one of the most common mistakes.

- ✓ Ich mag Kaffee.
I like coffee. (in general)
- ✓ Ich möchte einen Kaffee.
I’d like a coffee. (right now, an order)
- ✗ Ich will einen Kaffee.
I want a coffee. — sounds blunt, a bit childish

VERB	WHAT IT SAYS	WHERE IT IS USED
mögen	I like , I’m fond of	Talking about taste
möchten	I’d like now (polite)	Orders , requests , offers
wollen	I’ve decided , I want	Talking about goals and intentions

wollen has its own page, with the full politeness contrast, [here](#).

Traps



TRAP 01

Using mögen to place an order

mögen describes taste; it doesn't order anything. The waiter thinks "nice, so do we" and brings nothing.

- ✗ Ich **mag** einen Kaffee.
a statement of taste, not an order
- ✓ Ich **möchte** einen Kaffee, bitte.
Could I have a coffee?



TRAP 02

Adding a person ending to möchte

möchte is already a finished form; it is the same for **ich** and **er**.

- ✗ Er **möchtet** einen Tee.
no -t ending on a modal
- ✓ Er **möchte** einen Tee.
He'd like a tea.



TRAP 03

Using möchten to say what you like

If you are describing a general taste, möchten is wrong — it reports a wish of the moment.

- ✗ Ich **möchte** Katzen.
sounds like "I'd like some cats right now"
- ✓ Ich **mag** Katzen.
I like cats.

06 05:30

The other modal verbs

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 05 : 40

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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GENAU — NOT RULES, THE MOMENT IT CLICKS.

