

weil · dass · wenn

— NEBENSÄTZE MIT WEIL, DASS, WENN

weil, dass and wenn are German subordinating conjunctions: they start a subordinate clause and send the conjugated verb to the end (weil ich müde bin, dass du kommst).

The moment you say **weil**, the verb runs to the end of the clause. English never does this — “because I’m tired” keeps its order — so this is where almost everyone trips. Here: every conjunction that sends the verb to the end, the **wenn · wann · als** split, and **denn**, the escape hatch when you are speaking.

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01 00:12

English never moves the verb — German does



SHORTCUT

In a subordinate clause the **conjugated verb goes to the very end**. One rescue exception: **denn** never disturbs the order.

In English you say “I’m not coming **because I’m tired**” — the verb sits right after the subject, same as in any other sentence. German treats a *because*-clause as a different kind of sentence, and in it the verb does not stay put. That is the whole shock.

✓ Ich bin müde.

I’m tired. → main clause: verb in second position

✓ Ich komme nicht, **weil** ich müde **bin**.

I’m not coming because I’m tired. → subordinate clause: verb at the very end

- ① That is the entire rule: **conjunction arrives → the conjugated verb goes last**. Nothing else in the clause changes; only the verb moves.

Three conjunctions, one behaviour

CONJUNCTION	MEANING	EXAMPLE
weil	because	Ich bleibe zu Hause , weil es regnet .
dass	that	Ich glaube , dass er kommt .
wenn	if - when (every time)	Wenn ich Zeit habe , rufe ich dich an .
ob	whether - if	Ich weiß nicht , ob er kommt .
obwohl	although	Ich gehe , obwohl ich müde bin .
damit	so that	Ich lerne , damit ich die Prüfung bestehe .
als	when (one time in the past)	Als ich klein war , ...
bis - seit - während	until - since - while	Warte , bis ich fertig bin .

They all do the same thing — these are not separate rules to memorise, just **one reflex**: if one of these words has left your mouth, park the verb at the end.

The escape hatch: denn

If you freeze after **weil** when speaking, there is a way out: **denn** also means “because”, but it **does not move the verb**.

- ✓ Ich komme nicht, **denn** ich **bin** müde.

I’m not coming, because I’m tired. → normal order

- ✓ Ich komme nicht, **weil** ich müde **bin**.

Same meaning, verb at the end.

SENDS THE VERB TO THE END	LEAVES THE VERB ALONE
weil - dass - wenn - ob - obwohl - damit - als - bis - seit - während	und - aber - denn - oder - sondern

The group on the right is fixed: **und • aber • denn • oder • sondern**. They line two clauses up side by side and never change either word order. Keep it in your pocket; when a sentence jams, switch to this side.

- ① **denn** sounds a bit heavy in writing and perfectly natural in speech. In an exam, though, you are expected to show you can build it with **weil** — treat **denn** as a temporary fix.

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04 02:30

Which verb goes last?

If the clause has more than one verb, the one that goes last is the **conjugated** one — the one that changes with the person. The others line up in front of it.

CASE	MAIN CLAUSE	SUBORDINATE CLAUSE
One verb	Ich bin müde .	... , weil ich müde bin .
Modal verb	Ich muss arbeiten .	... , weil ich arbeiten muss .
Perfekt	Ich habe gearbeitet .	... , weil ich gearbeitet habe .
Separable verb	Ich stehe früh auf .	... , weil ich früh aufstehe .
Perfekt + separable	Ich bin früh aufgestanden .	... , weil ich früh aufgestanden bin .

See the pattern? **The verb that changes with the person always goes last.** muss, habe, bin — the infinitive and the Partizip line up to its left.

05 03:30

Four traps



TRAP 01

If the subordinate clause comes first, the main clause flips

✓ **Weil** ich müde bin, **gehe** ich nach Hause.

Because I'm tired, I'm going home.

✗ **Weil** ich müde bin, ~~ich~~ **gehe** nach Hause.

Wrong — subject and verb must swap places.

Here is why: in German the verb of a main clause is **always in second position**. When the subordinate clause comes first, *the whole clause* fills position one — so the verb lands right behind it and the subject falls in behind the verb.

① Shortcut: after the comma, **start with the verb**. ..., **gehe** ich ... · ..., **rufe** ich dich an.



TRAP 02

The comma is not optional

- ✓ Ich glaube, dass er heute kommt.

I think (that) he's coming today.

In German a subordinate clause is **always** separated by a comma. English lets you drop it (and even drop the word "that"); German gives you no such flexibility. In an exam, this is where careless points disappear.



TRAP 03

dass ≠ das

- ✓ Ich weiß, dass du kommst.

I know (that) you're coming. → conjunction

- ✓ Das Buch ist neu.

The book is new. → article

With one s, **das** is an article or a demonstrative pronoun; with double s, **dass** is the conjunction and it sends the verb to the end. The two most confused words in German writing.



TRAP 04

wenn · wann · als — English has one "when" for all three

WORD	WHEN	EXAMPLE
wenn	every time / in the future - condition	Wenn ich Zeit habe , komme ich .
als	in the past , one time	Als ich 10 war , ...
wann	questions only	Wann kommst du?

If you are describing something that kept happening in the past, it is **wenn** again: **Immer wenn ich in Berlin war, ...** (every time I was in Berlin...). For a single event, **als**.

wann also shows up in indirect questions, and there it sends the verb to the end: **Ich weiß nicht, wann er kommt.**

06 05:00

How not to freeze when speaking: build the sentence backwards

Here is why subordinate clauses jam in conversation: you build the sentence from left to right, and saving the verb for the end means **knowing in advance** what you are about to say. The fix: pick the verb first, then start talking.

- 1 · What do I want to say? → *I'm tired* → verb: **bin**
- 2 · Hold the verb in your hand, say the rest: **weil ich müde ...**
- 3 · Let the verb go: **... bin.**

① For one week, build every **weil** sentence **out loud**. The habit of dropping the verb at the end comes through the ear; if you only practise on paper, you will slide back into main-clause order the moment you speak.

Three patterns that will earn their keep in daily life: **Ich glaube, dass ... · Ich weiß nicht, ob ... · ..., weil ich ... muss.** Memorise the three, swap the content every day.

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 : 15

Test yourself

Tap an answer — we will look at why together.

+16

Take the full test

22 questions · timed · rule breakdown at the end



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