

German

Being able to speak, read, write, and understand the German language is one of the most important factors that will help you prepare for life in Germany as a foreign national. For some purposes, such as work or study, it may even be necessary for you to demonstrate a certain level of German language knowledge. When applying for a German visa, foreign nationals are often required to show proof that they can speak German to a particular set standard.

This is usually demonstrated by taking a test and obtaining a certification to prove that you meet the language requirements of the category you are applying under. These certifications are internationally recognised tests that can bring you a step closer to your goal to live, work, or study in a German-speaking country.

How is German language proficiency assessed?

Generally, you will need to take an exam at an authorised test centre where your German language skills will be assessed using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels.

The CEFR was developed by the Council of Europe to set a consistent standard for assessing language fluency. Under the framework, learners are evaluated in the four areas of language use: listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

The CEFR distinguishes between the following six levels of language competence, which describe what learners of a foreign language can express and understand at each level.

1. **A1** (Lower Beginner)

- At the A1 level, you can understand and use simple German sentences and recognise basic words that describe yourself and your surroundings. You can use greetings and introduce yourself and others, and understand basic everyday German vocabulary provided the other person speaks slowly and clearly. You also have the ability to write simply, for example, entering details when filling out official forms.
- The A1 level of German language proficiency is required for some non-EU spouses coming to Germany under family reunion visa applications, although some exceptions apply.

2. **A2** (Upper Beginner)

- The A2 level is a slightly more advanced beginner level. At this level, you can relate information about your job, your family, and your basic needs. You also understand practical materials like train schedules and you can comprehend short written and spoken messages.
- You will need to evidence this level of German language ability if you are applying for a visa for the recognition of foreign qualifications, or a visa for employment within the framework of a recognition Partnership.

3. **B1** (Lower Intermediate)

- Once your language abilities have progressed to B1 level, you will start to enjoy more German media, with the ability to follow most TV or radio programs that have slow and clear narration. Your written and spoken expressions have also become more sophisticated.
- B1 level of language proficiency is required if you wish to apply for permanent residency in Germany after five years, and when you apply for naturalisation.

4. **B2** (Upper Intermediate)

- At B2 level, you can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity, making regular interaction with native speakers much easier. Even if you may still struggle with fast dialogue or idiomatic expressions, at this level of language proficiency the right words, expressions and grammar will come more naturally for you. You can also produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and clearly explain different viewpoints.
- As a general rule, German language skills at least at level B2 are required for student visas, depending on the university and study programme.

5. **C1** (Lower Advanced)

- At level C1, your use and understanding of German becomes more intuitive. You can read deeper into the German you see and hear, engaging in more complex conversations and enjoying more native-level media.
- The Goethe Certificate C1 is recognised as proof of language skills for studying at numerous (technical) universities in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

6. **C2** (Upper Advanced/Fluent)

- C2 level enables you to produce and understand highly complex German. This is close to native-level German fluency. Even accents from different parts of the German-speaking world do not cause issues for you.
- The Goethe Certificate C2 is recognised by all (technical) universities as proof of language skills for studying or research in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.
- In Germany, the federal states recognize the C2 exam as linguistic proof within the teaching qualification. Information on this can be provided by the accrediting bodies in the respective states, such as the Ministry of Culture, Schools or Education, the Office for Teacher Training, the district government or the Senate Administration.

Obtaining a German language certification

The Goethe-Institute is an organisation, part-funded by the German government, that offers German courses and language certification exams in more than 90 countries worldwide. The Goethe-Institute certificate (Zertifikat) is recognised worldwide as a German language certification, and can be used in Germany for visa, residence permit and citizenship applications, as well as for university entrance requirements.

The level of German language skills you will need to demonstrate depends on the type of visa you are applying for. You can use this chart to check which German language skills you need to have to obtain a certain residence title.