



Leben in Deutschland

Der Wortschatz zum Test

The vocabulary, the history, and the ideas behind all 310 questions

Anju Mishra



SURABHI VERLAG

Leben in Deutschland: Der Wortschatz zum Test
Anju Mishra.

Published by Surabhi Verlag.

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The question numbers cited in this volume refer to the official question catalogue for the test *Leben in Deutschland* published by the Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (as of May 2025), Teil I and Teil II for Rheinland-Pfalz. All running text is original.

Free sample edition.

About the author



Anju Mishra came to German the way most of her readers do: as an adult, mid-career, with a life already in motion. After five years in the United States she moved to Germany, where a small daughter with German homework became the best reason imaginable to master the language properly. She did, all the way to C1, and along the way discovered that German is not a mountain of exceptions but a system of patterns. An MBA in finance taught her to look for that structure; teaching learners from around the world taught her how to share it. She lives in Germany with her husband and daughter, who remains her favourite reason to get every *der*, *die* and *das* right.

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How to use this book

The Leben in Deutschland test asks 33 questions from an official catalogue of 310. You need 17 right answers to pass. The questions are published, so the test is not a mystery. The real obstacle is language, because words like Meinungsfreiheit or verfassungswidrig are B1 words with whole ideas folded inside them. This book unfolds the ideas.

The book has two parts:

1. The Topics covers the catalogue field by field, from basic rights to elections to the everyday questions about work, school, and family. Every unit is a vocabulary chapter first, with a scene, a word list, and the context that makes the answers make sense.
2. The Lessons are five briefings in plain English, three telling German history from Bismarck to reunification and two on how the state works. Read them once and dozens of history and politics questions become guessable instead of memorised.

How to read a unit:

1. Read the German scene first, then its English mirror. The highlighted words are the unit's targets.
2. Learn the Vocabulary list actively. Words marked ✓ appear in the official questions or answers, so they are test-critical. Unmarked words are their natural neighbours, the words that make your German complete rather than crammed.

3. Read the Why it is so box. It carries the history that the test quietly assumes. Then open the official catalogue and read the unit's questions in German. If you can read them without the English lines, the unit is done.

Every noun comes with its article and plural. Learn the words whole, and on test day you will not be translating. You will be recognising.

The videos. The lessons of this series also live on YouTube: vocabulary drills, stories read aloud by German voices, and dialogue practice, all free. Find them on the channel AllesKlarMitAnju, and all books and courses at AllesKlarMitAnju.com.

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Contents

1	Das Grundgesetz und die Grundrechte	The Basic Law and the basic rights	1
2	Der Staat und seine Organe	The state and its organs	6

Das Grundgesetz und die Grundrechte

The Basic Law and the basic rights

Nearly every third question in the test touches the constitution, and the test loves one word family above all: das Recht, the right. From it German builds das Grundrecht, der Rechtsstaat, das Wahlrecht, and the test's favourite adjective, verfassungswidrig. Meet the family in a kitchen conversation first.

THE SCENE

Amir is studying for the Life in Germany test. Lena is helping him at the kitchen table.

"First question," Lena reads out. "Why may people in Germany openly say something against the government?"

"Because **Meinungsfreiheit** (*freedom of expression*) applies here," says Amir. "It is a **Grundrecht** (*basic right*). It is written in the **Grundgesetz** (*Basic Law*), and no parliament can abolish it."

"Very good. And what does **Rechtsstaat** (*state under the rule of law*) mean?"

"Everyone must obey the **Gesetze** (*laws*). The state itself too. That is why a party that wants a **Diktatur** (*dictatorship*) is **verfassungswidrig** (*unconstitutional*)."

Lena laughs. "You already know everything. Last question: what is **unantastbar** (*untouchable, inviolable*)?"

"Human dignity, **die Würde des Menschen** (*the dignity of the human being*). Article one."

THE WORD FAMILY OF RECHT

German glues *Recht* to other words exactly the way English glues *law* and *right*, and the test uses every joint. Learn the family as one picture, not as six flashcards.

das *Recht*, -e • the right, the law

Jeder Mensch hat das Recht auf freie Meinung. Every person has the right to a free opinion.

das *Grundrecht*, -e • basic right (Grund = foundation)

Die Grundrechte stehen am Anfang des Grundgesetzes. The basic rights stand at the beginning of the Basic Law.

der *Rechtsstaat* • state under the rule of law

In einem Rechtsstaat halten sich alle an die Gesetze. In a Rechtsstaat everyone obeys the laws, the state included.

das *Wahlrecht* • the right to vote

Mit 18 Jahren hat man in Deutschland das Wahlrecht. At 18 you have the right to vote in Germany.

The same trick builds the freedoms. Die Freiheit plus a front word names each one, and the test asks for them by name: die Meinungsfreiheit (opinion), die Pressefreiheit (press), die Religionsfreiheit (religion), die Versammlungsfreiheit (assembly). One of them wears an older costume in the catalogue, so learn the long form too: die Glaubens- und Gewissensfreiheit, freedom of faith and conscience.

VOCABULARY

The constitution

das *Grundgesetz* • the Basic Law, Germany's constitution ✓

die *Verfassung*, -en • constitution ✓

der *Artikel*, - • article (of a law) ✓

die *Würde* • dignity ✓

unantastbar • inviolable, untouchable ✓

garantieren • to guarantee ✓

der *Staat*, -en • state

staatlich • state-run, of the state

The freedoms

die Meinungsfreiheit • freedom of expression ✓

die Pressefreiheit • freedom of the press ✓

die Religionsfreiheit • freedom of religion ✓

die Glaubens- und Gewissensfreiheit • freedom of faith and conscience ✓

die Versammlungsfreiheit • freedom of assembly ✓

die Freizügigkeit • freedom of movement (choosing where to live) ✓

das Asyl • asylum (the one right only for foreigners) ✓

die Freiheit, -en • freedom

die Meinung, -en • opinion

seine Meinung äußern • to express one's opinion

The Rechtsstaat

das Gesetz, -e • law, statute ✓

sich an die Gesetze halten (hielt, hat gehalten) • to obey the laws ✓

gelten (gilt, galt, hat gegolten) • to apply, to be in force ✓

gleich vor dem Gesetz • equal before the law ✓

die Gleichbehandlung • equal treatment ✓

einschränken • to restrict ✓

verbieten (verbot, hat verboten) • to prohibit ✓

abschaffen • to abolish ✓

erlauben • to allow

die Pflicht, -en • duty

What the constitution rejects

die Diktatur, -en • dictatorship ✓

verfassungswidrig • unconstitutional ✓

die Zwangsarbeit • forced labour (Zwang = coercion) ✓

die Todesstrafe • the death penalty ✓

die Folter • torture ✓

die Geldstrafe, -n • monetary fine (the one punishment that is allowed) ✓

die Strafe, -n • punishment

bestrafen • to punish

Words to recognise

das Faustrecht • law of the fist (a wrong answer in question 4)

die Selbstjustiz • taking the law into one's own hands

der Waffenbesitz • possession of weapons

die Prügelstrafe • corporal punishment

leugnen • to deny (den Holocaust leugnen is a crime)

die Verbreitung falscher Behauptungen • spreading false claims (the limit of free speech)

Why it is so

The Grundgesetz was written in 1948 and 1949 by the Parlamentarischer Rat, sixty-five delegates of the western Länder meeting in a natural history museum in Bonn while the ruins of the war were still being cleared. Nearly every one of them had lived the previous constitution's failure personally. Konrad Adenauer, who chaired the council, had been dismissed as mayor of Cologne by the Nazis; others returned from prisons, camps, and exile. They were not writing abstract political theory. They were writing rules against things that had happened to them personally.

Their central diagnosis was that Weimar's rights had been beautiful but breakable. The Weimar constitution granted freedoms and then, in its Article 48, let the president suspend them by decree. After the Reichstag fire of February 1933 exactly that happened overnight, and every later crime of the regime was formally legal. So the new constitution inverted the architecture. Article 1 begins with *Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar*, human dignity placed before the state itself, and Article 79 locks the door: the basic rights and the democratic order may not be abolished by any majority whatsoever. Constitutional lawyers call it the eternity clause. That is why question 12 answers no, and why the wrong op-

tions offering half or two-thirds majorities describe exactly the mistake Weimar made.

The founders also armed the constitution against enemies who fight democracy with democracy's own tools, as the Nazi party had done at the ballot box. A party working against the free democratic order can be banned as *verfassungswidrig* by the constitutional court, and only by that court. The young republic used the weapon twice, against a Nazi successor party in 1952 and the communist party in 1956, and has used it with extreme reluctance since. Germans call the doctrine *streitbare Demokratie*, militant democracy, a democracy that fights back.

Two details of this chapter follow from history rather than logic. Asylum became a basic right, the only one reserved for foreigners, because the men and women writing it remembered colleagues who had survived Hitler only because Switzerland, Sweden, or America took them in. The right to asylum was that debt, repaid in constitutional form. And free speech ends exactly where Nazi propaganda began, at the public spreading of false claims about people and at denial of the Holocaust. These limits do not weaken the lesson of 1933. They apply it.

Der Staat und seine Organe

The state and its organs

The test's largest single habit is asking who does what. Who makes laws, who governs, who represents, who judges. German names each player with a compound on Bund (federation), so the vocabulary looks formidable and is actually one prefix plus six short words.

THE SCENE

On television, the Bundestag is voting. Amir and Lena are watching the news with tea.

“So many words with **Bund** (*federation*),” sighs Amir. “**Bundestag, Bundesrat, Bundesregierung, Bundeskanzler, Bundespräsident**. Who actually does what?”

“Think of a firm,” says Lena. “The **Bundestag** (*federal parliament*) is the big meeting of the owners. The people elect its **Abgeordnete** (*members of parliament*), and they **beschließen** (*pass*) the laws.”

“And the **Bundeskanzler** (*federal chancellor*) is the manager?”

“Exactly. The Bundestag elects him, he leads the **Bundesregierung** (*federal government*) and picks his ministers. The **Bundespräsident** (*federal president*) is more like the face of the firm. He **repräsentiert** (*represents*) the country, and he formally **ernennt** (*appoints*) the ministers.”

“And the **Bundesrat** (*federal council*)?”

“The sixteen state governments at one table. Nothing that touches the Länder passes without them.”

THE THREE POWERS

Behind all the organs stands one idea the test asks about repeatedly, the separation of powers, die Gewaltenteilung. German uses three Latin names, and each maps to organs you now know.

die Legislative • legislative power (makes the laws)

Bundestag und Bundesrat gehören zur Legislative. Bundestag and Bundesrat belong to the legislative.

die Exekutive • executive power (governs and administers)

Die Regierung und die Polizei gehören zur Exekutive. The government and the police belong to the executive.

die Judikative • judicial power (the courts)

Eine Richterin gehört zur Judikative. A judge belongs to the judiciary.

Watch for the trap questions. The press is not a Staatsgewalt (question 32), it is free precisely because it stands outside the state. And a Bürgerversammlung, a citizens' assembly, is not a constitutional organ (question 48).

VOCABULARY

The organs

der Bundestag • federal parliament, elected by the people ✓

der Bundesrat • federal council of the state governments ✓

die Bundesregierung • federal government ✓

das Bundeskabinett • the cabinet (chancellor plus ministers) ✓

die Bundeskanzlerin, -nen / der Bundeskanzler, - • federal chancellor ✓

die Bundespräsidentin, -nen / der Bundespräsident, -en • federal president ✓

die Bundesversammlung • federal convention (elects the president) ✓

das Bundesverfassungsgericht • federal constitutional court ✓

die Bundeswehr • the German army ✓

das Verfassungsorgan, -e • constitutional organ ✓

Inside parliament

die/der Abgeordnete, -n • member of parliament ✓

die Fraktion, -en • parliamentary group of one party ✓

die Opposition • all members not in the governing parties ✓

das Staatsoberhaupt • head of state ✓

die Regierungschefin, -nen / der Regierungschef, -s • head of government

die Ministerin, -nen / der Minister, - • minister

die Mehrheit, -en • majority

die Sitzung, -en • session, sitting

The three powers

die Gewaltenteilung • separation of powers ✓

die Staatsgewalt, -en • state power ✓

die Legislative • legislative (Bundestag and Bundesrat) ✓

die Exekutive • executive (government, administration, police) ✓

die Judikative • judiciary (the courts) ✓

die Volkssouveränität • popular sovereignty (all state power comes from the people) ✓

Who does what: the verbs

beschließen (beschloss, hat beschlossen) • to pass, to resolve (parliament passes laws) ✓

wählen • to elect (the Bundestag elects the chancellor) ✓

ernennen (ernannte, hat ernannt) • to appoint (the president appoints the ministers) ✓

vorschlagen (schlug vor, hat vorgeschlagen) • to propose (the president proposes the chancellor) ✓

repräsentieren • to represent (the president's main task) ✓

kontrollieren • to check, to scrutinise (the opposition checks the government) ✓

leiten • to lead, to chair (the chancellor leads the cabinet) ✓

regieren • to govern

zuständig für • responsible for

Words to recognise

die Ernennungsurkunde, -n • certificate of appointment (question 70)

das Bundeskanzleramt • the chancellery in Berlin

die Auslegung • interpretation (of the Basic Law, by the constitutional court)

die Pressezensur • press censorship (the thing a democracy does not have, question 30)

die Monarchie / die Republik • monarchy / republic (Germany is a republic, questions 22 and 34)

Why it is so

The Weimar Republic had two heads, and the wrong one was stronger. Its Reich President was elected directly by the people for seven years, commanded the army, could dissolve parliament, and under Article 48 could govern by emergency decree when he judged order threatened. The office was designed as a substitute Kaiser, and in the crisis years after 1930 it became exactly that: the last Weimar governments ruled by presidential decree with no parliamentary majority at all, so that democracy was already hollowed out before Hitler arrived. It was the aged President Hindenburg who appointed Hitler Reichskanzler on 30 January 1933, legally, with a signature. Parliament was not asked.

The Grundgesetz answered by taking the presidency apart. The Bundespräsident is elected indirectly by the Bundesversammlung (question 86), commands nothing, decrees nothing, and dissolves nothing on his own initiative. What remains is dignity: he represents the country (question 84), proposes the chancellor after an election, and signs and appoints (questions 70 and 58). This is why question 44 is so firm that citizens never elect the president directly. The direct election was not forgotten. It was deliberately removed, because the country had seen where a popularly anointed head of state above the parties can lead.

The real power went to the chancellor instead, but with one more safeguard learned from Weimar. Weimar parliaments could topple a government simply by voting no, and communists and Nazis, who agreed on nothing else, happily voted no together, so cabinets fell every few months and left a vacuum behind.

The Bundestag can bring down a chancellor only through the konstruktives Misstrauensvotum, which means it must elect a successor in the same vote. A government cannot be destroyed without building the next one at the same moment. In seventy-five years this has succeeded exactly once, in 1982, when Helmut Kohl replaced Helmut Schmidt. Stable government, the thing Weimar never had, has been the republic's quietest and proudest achievement since.

For the questions asking current names, check the year against your own catalogue. The edition of May 2025 answers Friedrich Merz for chancellor (question 72) and Frank-Walter Steinmeier for head of state (question 75), with CDU/CSU and AfD as the two largest parliamentary groups (question 73). These answers change with elections, so verify them before your test day.

Read the rest.

The full book is available at AllesKlarMitAnju.com

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