

## Guidelines for Essay Writing in German:

Repeat with me: **Write what you know, not what you don't know.** Essay topics (including those on exams, by the way) are always created with your level in mind. Here are some guidelines for writing an effective essay in a foreign language:

- 1) Train yourself NOT to write an essay in English and translate it word-for-word into German. Trust me—in the long run it will actually become EASIER this way.
- 2) When studying at home, look back material you have covered in class and think back to the dialogues and activities you have worked on. What kinds of topics are covered? How can you manipulate those situations to work in your essay?
- 3) Review any vocabulary lists you have been given in class. Spend a few minutes looking at the words. Close your eyes. What sorts of associations do those words bring to mind? Is there a way you can use that vocabulary in your essay?
- 4) Think about yourself and your interests. Chances are, you will know more vocabulary about things that are relevant to you. Your essay will be more meaningful to you and to the reader if it comes from personal experience. Just be careful not to translate from English!
- 5) If you're writing something as homework, use the dictionary sparingly. When you do need a word, first look in the vocabulary lists in your textbook. If you absolutely need something that's not there, try a dictionary (online dictionaries like [www.leo.org](http://www.leo.org) can be helpful). Never look up whole sentences or phrases--that's cheating! Just look up single words.
- 6) Use the dictionary wisely. Make sure that you are getting the right form of the word you need. For example, the word "record" can be an adjective, a verb or several different nouns depending on the context. Looking up a word "in reverse" (i.e. retranslating it back into English) can be a good way to confirm you have the word you want.
- 7) Keep it simple! Simple doesn't mean boring, but it does mean that if you are unsure of how to say something in German, there may be a simpler way to say it in another way. For example, instead of saying "I depend on my parents for money" you could say, "My parents give me money" or "I don't have much money but my parents help", both which are easier phrases to use than the first.

## **Guidelines for Essay editing (German 2/3/4):**

Congratulations! You've written an essay! Time for step two! The biggest key to effective proofreading and editing in a foreign language is to **read the essay MANY times**. It's sometimes difficult to discern errors even in your own language. Give yourself a chance to adjust to the new language and realize that you have to focus on one thing at a time. Here is a checklist to keep in mind when proofreading and revising your essay or that of a partner—I strongly recommend you read your essay through once for each item. YEP, that's eleven times. Trust me. It works.

### **Grammar:**

- 1) Does the verb come in **second position** in every sentence? If not, can you explain why? (Examples include questions and subordinating conjunctions like dass/weil)
- 2) Does the verb **agree** with the subject of the sentence? (e.g. Ich bin / du bist / er ist...)
- 3) Are all nouns **capitalized**? Remember, pronouns such as "ich" and "du" are only capitalized when at the beginning of a sentence.
- 4) Are the articles before each noun in the correct **gender**? Look up each noun if necessary to be sure of the correct gender (masc. neut. fem.)
- 5) Are the articles before each noun in the correct **case**? Determine if the noun is the subject of the sentence, a direct object, or the object of the preposition and use the chart in the back of your book to verify the proper article for the nominative or accusative case.

### **Content:**

- 1) Does the essay address the assigned points?
- 2) Does the essay use adjectives and adverbs where appropriate and replace nouns with pronouns to avoid repetition?
- 3) Are sentence beginnings varied including the use of time expressions?

### **Communication:**

- 1) Is the essay easy to read?
- 2) Does the essay flow together with transitions when appropriate? Does it have a beginning, middle and end?
- 3) Is the essay interesting? If this were written in English, is it something you would want to read? If not, why write it in German?