B1 EINHEIT 2 GRAMMAR

There are several points of grammar introduced in this unit. First is the genitive case - *der Genitiv*. The primary function of the genitive is to show possession. There are also a handful of prepositions followed by the genitive case as well as some other rare uses.

Normally, German shows possession in exactly the opposite way as English. Whereas in English we might say, "my brother's car," in German you are more likely to say something more akin to, "the car of my brother." "car" would be in whatever case it needs to be in and the possession (genitive) is indicated by the ending on *mein* and (in the case of masculine and neuter nouns) by an *(e)s* ending on the noun. *Ein* words and *dies* words preceding feminine nouns in the genitive case get an *er* and, as you might expect, the definite article is *der*. *Ein* words and *dies* words preceding masculine and neuter nouns get *es* and the definite article is *des*. Additionally, in the case of *der* and *das* words the noun also gets an ending – *es* for monosyllabic nouns and *s* for polysyllabic nouns. Plural nouns get the same endings as the feminine. Weak nouns don't get an *s*. They retain their weak noun ending. Study the examples below:

Das ist der Wagen meines Bruders.   *Siehst du den Wagen meines Bruders?*
Fährt er mit dem Wagen meines Bruders?   *Ich suche den Wagen meiner Schwester.*
Ich bleibe bei dem Vater meiner Kinder.   *Wo ist das Lenkrad des Autos?*
Ich kenne die Kinder des Herrn (weak noun)*, der allein in der Ecke sitzt.*

The next point introduced is *um … zu* – which means "in order to" indicates *Zweck* – purpose. The *zu* is followed by an infinitive. In the case of verbs with separable prefixes the *zu* comes between the prefix and the stem of the infinitive. Consider the following examples:

   Ich bin gekommen um dir zu helfen.   *Sie kam um mich abzuholen.*

This unit also introduced *weil* – "because." *Weil* is a subordinating conjunction which means the conjugated verb in the clause introduced by *weil* is no longer second element but appears at the end of the clause. Remember, *weil* is preceded by a comma. Consider:
         Ich kann nicht einkaufen gehen, weil ich kein Geld habe.

Notice how *um … zu* and *weil* can be two different ways of saying the same thing.

Ich bin gekommen um dir zu helfen.   *Ich bin gekommen, weil ich dir helfen will.*

The final point of grammar introduced in this unit is the passive voice. In a normal declarative sentence, the subject is verbing and the direct object is being verbed. In a passive sentence, this relationship is turned on its head. The direct object of the declarative sentence is the subject and it is being verbed by the subject of the declarative sentence – introduced by "by" in English and by *von* in German. (If the agent is expressed at all) – "Harry is hitting the ball" – "The ball is being hit by Harry."

English and German build the passive in similar fashion. They both use what I call a "variable constant" and a "constant constant." In both languages the "constant constant" is the past participle. Every passive sentence in English and German – regardless of *te.nse* – will have the past participle of the verb describing what is being done. Both languages also employ a "variable constant." In English it's the verb "to be." In German it's *werden.* I call these verbs "variable constants" because they are an essential part of every passive sentence but, unlike the past participle, they are conjugated and they change their tense according to the tense of the sentence. In fact, the tense of the "variable constant" determines the tense of the sentence.

ACTIVE	PASSIVE
Meine Tochter liest das Buch in der Schule.	*Das Buch wird von meiner Tochter in der Schule gelesen.*
Meine Tochter las das Buch.	*Das Buch wurde von meiner Tochter gelesen.*
Meine Tochter hat das Buch gelesen.	*Das Buch ist von meiner Tochter gelesen worden.*
Meine Tochter wird das Buch lesen.	*Das Buch wird von meiner Tochter gelesen werden.*
Meine Tochter hatte das Buch gelesen.	*Das Buch war von meiner Tochter gelesen worden.*

I want to point out a couple of things that can be seen in the sentences above. First of all, the present and past perfect tenses call for a helping verb (*haben* or *sein)* and the past participle. The helping verb used with *werden* is *sein*. (That's why *ist* and *war* are the helping verbs used above.) However, the past participle of *werden* is *geworden.* As seen above, the *ge* is dropped in the passive. This prevents two past participles starting with *ge* from being used in succession.

Although *von meiner Tochter* appears in all the examples above, I included it just for demonstration purposes so you know how it's done. The passive is generally very impersonal and usually used without mention of the agent – *Das Buch wird in der Schule gelesen.* While we're on the topic of the agent I should mention that if the agent is inanimate, *durch (+*accusative) is used. - *Das Haus wurde durch Feuer zerstört.*

Finally, although I show you how to form the passive in five different tenses, this unit focuses on the present and past tenses.