

Troublesome Translations



For native German speakers, finding the right translation, from German to English or vice versa, can sometimes be a challenge. Here are some examples to help you figure out how to say certain words. And to make sure you keep yourself out of trouble.

Person, persons, people or peoples?

How is a *person* meant to distinguish between *person*, *persons*, *people*, and *peoples*? We use *person* in the singular to refer to any human being. For example, 'Joshua is such a nice *person*.'

Persons in the plural is formal and is largely limited to legal contexts. 'Any *persons* found in possession of illegal substances will be prosecuted.'

When referring to groups of humans, we use *people*: 'I saw three *people* standing outside.'

Peoples, meanwhile, refers to the members of a particular nation, community, or ethnic group. For example, 'The documentary is about the native *peoples* of Canada.'

1. Many of the great historic movements of _____ were doubtless due to the gradual change of geographical or climatic conditions. (Viele der großen historischen Völkerbewegungen waren zweifellos auf die allmähliche Veränderung der geographischen oder klimatischen Bedingungen zurückzuführen.)
2. I made friends with lots of _____ from the training course. (Ich habe mich mit vielen Leuten aus dem Trainingskurs angefreundet.)
3. All _____ under the age of eighteen must first complete a consent form. (Alle Personen unter achtzehn Jahren müssen zunächst eine Einverständniserklärung ausfüllen.)
4. You're the _____ who suggested this, so tell me what to do. (Sie sind die Person, die das vorgeschlagen hat, also sagen Sie mir, was ich tun soll.)

Lose or loose?

Many people confuse *lose* with *loose*. To *lose* something is to no longer have it because you don't know where it is: 'I've *lost* my train ticket.'

It also means to have someone or something taken away from you: 'At least 600 staff will *lose* their jobs if the factory closes.'

Lose is also to stop feeling something: 'I've *lost* my faith.' Additionally, it means to have less of something than you had before: 'I'm trying to *lose* weight.'

Loose, on the other hand, means not firmly fixed in place. When it comes to clothes, it means something that doesn't fit tightly: 'She slipped into a *loose* pair of trousers.'

1. He's always _____ his car keys and it drives me mad. (Er verliert ständig seine Autoschlüssel und das macht mich wahnsinnig.)
2. He kept crying and, in the end, I _____ my patience. (Er weinte weiter und am Ende verlor ich die Geduld.)
3. He's _____ his hair and _____ his eyesight. (Er verliert seine Haare und sein Augenlicht.)
4. His tooth was _____ and he _____ it when he bit into a piece of stale bread. (Sein Zahn war locker und er verlor ihn, als er in ein Stück altes Brot biss.)
5. Rocks kicked _____ fell and bounced down the mountainside. (Losgetretene Felsen fielen und hüpfen den Berghang hinunter.)