

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.

Waste or waist?

Don't *waste* away trying to figure out the difference between *waste* and *waist*. The two might sound the same, but they have completely different meanings.

As a verb, *waste* means to use carelessly or become progressively weaker. As a noun, *waste* refers to unwanted or unusable material.

Waist, meanwhile, is the narrower part of the body above the hips.

1. In my opinion, Twitter is a complete _____ of time.

(Meiner Meinung nach ist Twitter eine reine Zeitverschwendung.)

2. Please put your _____ in the bins outside.

(Bitte werfen Sie Ihren Müll draußen in die Mülleimer.)

3. He put an arm around her _____ and kissed her cheek.

(Er legte einen Arm um ihre Taille und küsste sie auf die Wange.)

4. Michael told me he thought I was _____ my money.

(Michael sagte mir, dass er dachte, ich würde mein Geld damit verschwenden.)

Compliment or complement?

Now, it's a real *compliment* to you if you already know the difference between *complement* and *compliment*.

The former refers to something that goes well with something else: 'The scarf *complements* the colour of her eyes'. *Complement* is also a noun: 'The wooden frame was the perfect *complement* to the painting'.

The latter means to praise someone for something: 'He *complimented* her on her appearance'. *Compliment* is also a noun: 'Who doesn't like being paid a *compliment*?'

1. The boy was shocked when his father _____ his football skills, as he very rarely praised him.

(Der Junge war schockiert, als sein Vater seine Fußballfähigkeiten lobte, da er ihn sehr selten lobte.)

2. He told me he liked my name, so I returned the _____ by telling him I liked his name as well.

(Er sagte mir, dass er meinen Namen mochte, und ich erwiderte das Kompliment, indem ich ihm sagte, dass ich auch seinen Namen mochte.)

3. I think the cool blue _____ the warm yellow.

(Ich finde, das kühle Blau ergänzt das warme Gelb.)

4. The rug is a nice _____ to the rest of the furniture in the room.

(Der Teppich ist eine schöne Ergänzung zu den übrigen Möbeln im Raum.)

The solutions are on page 35.