

# 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.

## Roll or role?

*Roll* and *role* are homophones – they sound the same but have different meanings. *Roll* has multiple meanings: as a noun it can refer to a food item, for example a bread *roll*. As a verb it means to turn or bend something over itself, for example: ‘He *rolled* up the newspaper to swat the fly’.

*Role*, meanwhile, refers to a part or function that someone plays: ‘He is happy with his new *role* as CEO’.

See if you’re on a *roll* when completing the following sentences.

1. The children \_\_\_\_\_ down the hill, laughing on their way down.  
(Die Kinder rollten den Hügel hinunter und lachten auf dem Weg nach unten.)
2. The woman asked her husband to go to the bakery to pick up some bread \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Die Frau bat ihrem Mann zur Bäckerei zu fahren, um ein paar Brötchen zu holen.)
3. She played the leading \_\_\_\_\_ in the play.  
(Sie spielte die Hauptrolle in dem Theaterstück.)
4. She fell asleep listening to the waves \_\_\_\_\_ against the boat.  
(Sie schlief ein und lauschte den Wellen, die gegen das Boot rollten.)

## Life or live?

It’s easy to confuse *life* and *live*. *Life* is the existence of a living being. The plural of *life* is *lives* – pronounced ‘laɪvz’.

The verb *live*, meanwhile, means to remain alive or to exist or to have your home somewhere. This is pronounced ‘lɪv’. As an adjective, *live* means alive not dead – and is then pronounced ‘laɪv’.

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ in France, while my brother \_\_\_\_\_ in Poland.  
(Ich lebe in Frankreich, während mein Bruder in Polen lebt.)
2. I read a book about the \_\_\_\_\_ of Mark Twain.  
(Ich las ein Buch über das Leben von Mark Twain.)
3. Many people lost their \_\_\_\_\_ in the war.  
(Viele Menschen kamen im Krieg ums Leben.)
4. We really saw a \_\_\_\_\_ rattlesnake.  
(Wir haben wirklich eine lebende Klapperschlange gesehen.)
5. My father’s words have \_\_\_\_\_ with me all my \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Die Worte meines Vaters haben mein ganzes Leben lang bei mir gelebt.)

The solutions are on page 35.