

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.

The difference between *since* and *for*

Since we're covering typical German mistakes in English, let's talk about *since* or *seit*. Germans often translate *seit* as *since* instead of *for*, also mistakenly using the simple present tense instead of the present perfect tense.

When referring to a point in time, use *since*. When it concerns a duration of time, use *for*.

1. I've lived here _____ five years and feel at home.

(Ich wohne seit fünf Jahren hier und fühle mich zu Hause.)

2. Actually, I've lived here _____ 2012.

(Eigentlich wohne ich hier seit 2012.)

3. I've been studying English _____ 10 years.

(Ich lerne seit 10 Jahren Englisch.)

4. _____ she got married, she hasn't been to the US.

(Seit ihrer Heirat war sie nicht mehr in den USA.)

5. They've been stressed out _____ last month.

(Sie sind seit letztem Monat gestresst.)

Saying hello and goodbye

So you've conducted an entire conversation without making any mistakes until it's time to say goodbye, when you say 'We see us'.

Wrong! It should be 'See you later'.

Here are some other common English greetings and expressions to practise.

- 'How's it going?' or 'How are you doing?' are casual versions of the more polite 'How are you?' A suitable answer to all three would be 'Well, thank you – how are you?', 'Good, thanks – and you?' or 'Not bad, thanks'.

- 'Good to see you' is a casual greeting used with friends, colleagues or family members whom you haven't seen in a while. 'Long time no see' or 'It's been a while' are alternatives, particularly if you meet that person unexpectedly. In a more formal or business setting, use 'It's nice to meet you' or 'Pleased to meet you' when meeting someone for the first time.

- Remember that 'Good night' is only used to say 'Goodbye', so if you meet someone later in the day, greet him or her with 'Good evening' instead.

The solutions are on page 35.