

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.

Principle or principal?

Knowing the difference between *principle* and *principal* can be a matter of *principle*. Essentially, a *principle* is a rule, a law, a guideline, or a fact. In other words, it's a list of values set by a group of people. People follow their *principles* when trying to do the right thing.

A *principal*, meanwhile, is someone in charge, whether the headmaster of a school – the school *principal* – or, for example, a *principal* director in a company. As an adjective, *principal* means original, first, or most important.

A helpful trick to remember the difference: *principle*, like the word 'rule', ends in 'le'.

1. As a matter of _____, the _____ of the high school took a stand and asked the disobedient boys to stay late for detention. (Aus Prinzip bezog der Direktor der High School Stellung und bat den ungehorsamen Jungen, zum Nachsitzen zu bleiben.)
2. I do not agree with the _____ of that religion. (Ich stimme nicht mit den Prinzipien dieser Religion überein.)
3. One example of a business _____ is putting the customer's interests first. (Ein Beispiel für ein Geschäftsprinzip ist, dass die Interessen des Kunden an erster Stelle stehen.)
4. The _____ problem facing our economy today is jobs. (Das Hauptproblem unserer heutigen Wirtschaft sind Arbeitsplätze.)

Too or either?

What's the difference between *too* and *either*? We use both words to express how something is also true for a second person or thing. As a general rule, *either* or *neither* is used in negative sentences, and *too* is used in positive or affirmative sentences. For example: 'I like pizza, and my wife does *too*.'

There is no difference in meaning between *either* and *neither*. We use *either* when there is another negative word in the sentence, such as *not* or *never*. For example: 'I've never tried scuba diving.' 'I haven't *either*.'

We use *neither* when there is no other negative word in the sentence. For example: 'I've never tried scuba diving.' 'Neither have I.'

1. My husband has never been to South America. I haven't _____, but I'd really like to go there one day. (Mein Mann war noch nie in Südamerika. Ich auch nicht, aber ich würde wirklich gerne einmal dorthin reisen.)
2. I have been to China many times, and my husband has _____. (Ich war schon oft in China und mein Mann auch.)
3. _____ she nor her assistant is prepared to teach you. (Weder sie noch ihre Assistentin sind bereit, Sie zu unterrichten.)
4. He can speak Spanish and Italian _____. (Er kann auch Spanisch und Italienisch sprechen.)

The solutions are on page 34.