

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.

Experience or experiment?

Let's be clear about the differences between *experience* and *experiment*. We use *experience* as a verb when something happens to us or we feel something. For example, 'I *experienced* a feeling of deep sadness as I entered the refugee camp.' As a noun, it means something that a person lives through or refers to knowledge gained. As in, 'I'm afraid I don't have much sales *experience*.'

Experiment as a verb means to try something in order to discover what it is like or to find out more about it. For instance, 'I wish that the government would stop *experimenting* with new teaching methods for our kids.' As a noun it means something that you do to then see the result. 'The scientists carried out a lot of *experiments* last week.'

1. How children behave when they grow up often depends on what they _____ during early childhood. (Wie sich Kinder verhalten, wenn sie erwachsen sind, hängt oft davon ab, was sie in der frühen Kindheit erleben.)

2. His _____ in Germany were rather depressing, and he _____ terrible homesickness. (Seine Erfahrungen in Deutschland waren eher deprimierend und er hatte schreckliches Heimweh.)

3. Scientists have _____ with liquids and gels in which plants can grow artificially. (Wissenschaftler haben mit Flüssigkeiten und Gelen experimentiert, in denen Pflanzen künstlich wachsen können.)

4. Don't worry, it's just an _____. I'm not going to keep my beard. (Keine Sorge, es ist nur ein Experiment. Ich werde meinen Bart nicht behalten.)

Die, dead, or death?

English learners often make mistakes with the words *die*, *dead*, and *death*.

To *die* is a regular verb. For example, 'He *died* last year.'

Dead, meanwhile, is an adjective. 'That is a *dead* mouse.'

Finally, *death* is the noun referring to the end of life. 'After his *death*, my grandma was devastated.'

1. His grandfather ____ two years ago. He was one of four people to suffer a tragic _____ because of the fire in the factory. (Sein Großvater starb vor zwei Jahren. Er war einer von vier Menschen, die durch den Brand in der Fabrik einen tragischen Tod erlitten.)

2. I hope that my plants don't _____ when I'm away on holiday. (Ich hoffe, dass meine Pflanzen nicht sterben, wenn ich im Urlaub bin.)

3. Don't touch that bird. It's _____. (Fassen Sie den Vogel nicht an. Er ist tot.)

4. I was scared to _____. I couldn't escape! (Ich war zu Tode erschrocken. Ich konnte nicht entkommen!)

The solutions are on page 34.