

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 it. And to make sure you keep yourself out of trouble.

wirken

The German *wirken* can mean several different things in English, such as to look/appear/seem (He appears to be confused), come across as or to act as/operate/work or to be effective/to affect (It acts as a painkiller/How did it affect you?).

Use the exercises below to test your own knowledge.

1. Sir wirkt jünger, als sie ist.

She _____ younger than she really is.

2. Wie lange dauert es, bevor das Medikament wirkt?

How long before the medication is _____?

3. Sie müssen ein bisschen seriöser wirken.

You need to _____ as a little more serious.

4. Die Strategie soll als Wachstumsanreiz wirken.

The strategy is designed to _____ a growth stimulus.

5. Wie hat der Film auf Dich gewirkt?

How did the movie _____ you?

6. Eine passende Therapie kann Wunder wirken.

The right therapy can _____ wonders.

Careful with idioms

How would you express these phrases in English?

1. Sand ins Getriebe streuen

- a) to throw a spanner in the works
- b) to spoil the party

2. im Eimer sein

- a) down the drain
- b) in the bucket

3. über den Berg sein

- a) to be over the hill
- b) to be out of the woods

4. sich in die Haaren liegen

- a) to be at each other's throats
- b) to be in each other's hair

5. jemandem einen Denkkettel verpassen

- a) to give someone a piece of your mind
- b) to teach someone a lesson

The solutions are on page 38.