

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.

Big or great?

It can be a big problem, mixing up *big* and *great*. But don't worry – help is at hand.

As adjectives, *big* refers to something large, for example, 'Elephants are *big* animals.'

Meanwhile, *great* describes something very large in either size, extent, importance, or number, such as: 'A *great* decision made by a *great* man.' You can also use great as a positive interjection, expressing happiness. And that's *great*!

1. We all considered the party to be a _____ success. (Wir haben die Party alle als großen Erfolg betrachtet.)

2. She was only two years old, but she was _____ for her age. (Sie war erst zwei Jahre alt, aber sie war groß für ihr Alter.)

3. Anna reassured me that it was no _____ deal. (Anna beruhigte mich, dass es keine große Sache war.)

4. Thanks for helping out today. You're doing a _____ job! (Danke, dass Du heute mithilfst. Du machst einen tollen Job!)

High or tall?

Don't confuse *high* with *tall*.

We use the adjective *high* for objects that are a long way above the ground. For example, 'There are some *high* mountains in the north of the country.'

We don't use *high* when we talk about people. We use *tall* instead. For example, '*Tall* people often get backache.'

1. The light switch is too _____ for a child to use. (Der Lichtschalter ist zu hoch für ein Kind.)

2. Sally is very ____ and slim – she could get a job as a model! (Sally ist sehr groß und schlank – sie könnte einen Job als Model bekommen!)

3. You know that very _____, white building just where the motorway begins – that's where I work. (Sie kennen das sehr hohe, weiße Gebäude genau dort, wo die Autobahn beginnt – dort arbeite ich.)

4. We climbed the _____ mountain in the country in just under six hours. That's quite a feat! (Wir haben in knapp sechs Stunden den höchsten Berg des Landes bestiegen. Das ist eine ziemliche Leistung!)

The solutions are on page 35.