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Ausbildung in Germany — Dual System, Application, and Remuneration

How dual Ausbildung works in Germany: professions, application process, remuneration, and apprentice rights.

Deutsche Begriffe: Ausbildung | Berufsschule | Ausbildungsvertrag | Azubi | Ausbildungsvergütung | IHK | Handwerkskammer

What is an Ausbildung?

Dual Ausbildung (also called vocational training or apprenticeship) is the German model of vocational education. It combines **practical work in a company** with **theoretical instruction at a vocational school**. This system is unique worldwide and is regarded as a model in many countries.

An Ausbildung typically lasts **2 to 3.5 years** and concludes with a **final examination** at the IHK (Chamber of Commerce and Industry) or the Chamber of Crafts.

Ausbildung vs. University Study

	Ausbildung	University
Duration	2–3.5 years	3–5+ years
Remuneration	Yes (from 724 €/month)	Usually not
Practical work	Extensive (70% in company)	Limited
Qualification	Apprenticeship certificate / IHK diploma	Bachelor / Master
Costs	None	Semester fees

Which professions can you learn?

Germany offers over **320 recognized vocational training professions**. The most popular:

Commercial Professions

- Kaufmann/-frau für Büromanagement
- Industriekaufmann/-frau
- Kaufmann/-frau im Einzelhandel
- Bankkaufmann/-frau
- Kaufmann/-frau für Spedition und Logistik

Craft Professions

- Elektroniker/in
- Anlagenmechaniker/in (sanitation, heating, air conditioning)
- Kfz-Mechatroniker/in
- Friseur/in
- Tischler/in

IT and Technology

- Fachinformatiker/in
- IT-Systemelektroniker/in
- Mechatroniker/in
- Zerspanungsmechaniker/in

Health and Social Services

- Pflegefachmann/-frau
- Medizinische/r Fachangestellte/r
- Zahnmedizinische/r Fachangestellte/r
- Erzieher/in (school-based training)

Prerequisites

School Diploma

Formally, there is **no fixed minimum diploma requirement** for Ausbildung. In practice:

• **No diploma** — possible in some craft professions, but difficult

• **Secondary school diploma** (Hauptschulabschluss) — sufficient for many craft and simple commercial professions

• **Middle school certificate** (Realschulabschluss/Mittlere Reife) — for most professions

• **A-levels/Abitur** — for demanding professions (banking, IT)

Language Skills

• German at least **B1**, preferably **B2** (vocational school is in German!)

• Some companies offer **training-accompanying German courses**

• **Vocational language courses** (DeuFöV) are free at adult education centers (VHS)

Residency Status

For Ausbildung, you need **a residency permit allowing vocational training**:

• **Residence permit for training** (§ 16a AufenthG)

• **Permanent residence permit** or **EU Blue Card** — training allowed without restrictions

• **Duldung** (tolerated status) — training duldung possible (§ 60c AufenthG, "3+2 rule")

• **EU citizens** — no residence permit required

How to find an apprenticeship position?

Online Portals

• **Agentur für Arbeit** (arbeitsagentur.de) — largest apprenticeship database

• **IHK-Lehrstellenbörse** (ihk-lehrstellenboerse.de) — IHK professions

• **Handwerkskammer** (handwerkskammer.de) — craft professions

• **Azubi.de, Ausbildung.de** — private portals with many listings

• **Indeed, Stepstone** — also offer apprenticeship positions

Application

A typical application includes:

1. Cover letter — why this profession and this company?

2. Curriculum vitae (tabular format, with photo)

3. Certificates — school diploma, possibly internship certificates

4. Language certificate (German B1/B2) if applicable

Application deadline: Most Ausbildung begins on **August 1st or September 1st**. Apply **one year in advance** (from September of the previous year).

Apprentice Remuneration

Since 2020, there is a **minimum apprentice remuneration** (§ 17 BBiG):

Training Year	Minimum (2026)
Year 1	**724 €** gross/month
Year 2	**854 €** gross/month
Year 3	**977 €** gross/month
Year 4	**1.014 €** gross/month

Many industries pay **significantly more** — e.g., industrial mechanics (approx. 1,000–1,200 €), banking professionals (approx. 1,100 €), masons (approx. 900–1,300 €).

Financial Support

• **Vocational training allowance (BAB)** — subsidy from Agentur für Arbeit if remuneration is insufficient

• **Housing allowance** — if you don't live with your parents

• **Child allowance** — parents receive allowance until age 25 if the child is in training

Rights and Duties as an Apprentice

Your Rights

• **Ausbildungsvertrag** — written contract with company and vocational school

• **Remuneration** — at least the legal minimum amount

• **Leave** — at least 24 working days (under 18: 25–30 working days)

• **Release for vocational school** — vocational school time counts as working time

• **Probation period** — 1–4 months; thereafter, termination only for important cause

• **Retention** — no guarantee, but many companies retain good apprentices

• **Retake examinations** — if unsuccessful, maximum 2 retakes

Your Duties

• **Learning obligation** — strive to master the profession

• **Compulsory school attendance** — attend vocational school regularly

• **Training logbook** — written documentation of training content (weekly)

• **Follow instructions** — within the scope of training

• **Maintain confidentiality** — regarding business secrets

3+2 Rule (Training Duldung)

For refugees with **duldung** (tolerated status), there is a special provision:

• **3 years of training** — you receive duldung for the entire training period

• **2 years of residence** — after successful completion, you receive a residence permit for 2 years

• **Requirements:** training contract, no deportation interest, identity must be clarified

Tips for Foreigners

1. Internship first — a 2–4 week internship demonstrates your interest in the profession and convinces employers

2. Use career counseling — free at Agentur für Arbeit

3. Improve your German — B2 is ideal for vocational school

4. Find volunteer mentors — many organizations offer training mentors

5. Don't give up — rejections are normal; apply to many companies