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German for Children — Kindergarten, School and Support

Language support in kindergarten and school: welcome classes, DaZ instruction, speech therapy and parental tips.

Deutsche Begriffe: Kita | Sprachförderung | Willkommensklasse | DaZ | Logopädie | Sprachstandserhebung | Vorschule

Language Support Begins in Kindergarten

Children learn languages fastest through everyday interaction — that's why attending **Kita** (kindergarten/childcare) is the most important building block for learning German. In most German states, there is a **right to a kindergarten place** starting from age 1.

Language Support in Kindergarten

- **Everyday integrated language education:** Educators speak German during play, meals, and crafts
- **Language level assessment:** In many states, language proficiency is tested before school enrollment (e.g., HAVAS 5, Delfin 4)
- **Targeted support:** For language deficits, additional support programs are available in kindergarten
- **Preschool language courses:** Up to 18 months before school enrollment, free of charge

Tip for parents: Register your child in kindergarten as early as possible. Waiting lists in major cities are long — ideally 6–12 months in advance.

Welcome Classes in School

Children who arrive in Germany without German language skills initially attend a **Willkommensklasse** (welcome class, preparation class, international class, or DaZ class).

How It Works

Aspect	Details
Duration	6-24 months (depending on state and progress)
Goal	German proficiency at B1 level, integration into regular class
Class size	10-15 students
Instruction	Intensive German language support (15-25 hours/week)
Subjects	German, mathematics, often also social studies and physical education

Transition to Regular Class

The transition happens gradually — first individual subjects (PE, art, music), then increasingly more instruction in the regular class. **DaZ support** (German as a second language) often continues to accompany children for another 1-2 years.

DaZ — German as a Second Language

DaZ instruction is additional German language teaching for children with a different native language. It runs parallel to regular instruction.

- **Primary school:** 2-5 hours per week additionally
- **Secondary school:** Sometimes as a separate subject
- **Goal:** Master academic language (not just everyday speech)
- **Costs:** Free — part of the school system

Speech Therapy for Language Problems

If a child has significant language problems despite kindergarten and school, **speech therapy** can help.

When to See a Speech Therapist?

- Child doesn't speak two-word sentences by age 3
- Speech is barely understandable by ages 4-5
- Child stutters over several months
- Teacher recommends an evaluation

Costs and Access

- **Prescription** from pediatrician (speech therapy referral)
- **Health insurance** covers costs fully for children under 18
- **Duration:** Usually 10-20 sessions (45 minutes each)
- **Important:** Speech therapy distinguishes between speech development disorders and DaZ support needs

Tips for Parents

- 1. Maintain native language:** A strong native language supports second language acquisition
- 2. Read aloud:** Read in German 10-15 minutes daily (picture books from the library)
- 3. German media:** "Sendung mit der Maus", "KiKA", Toniebox with German audiobooks
- 4. Playdates:** Arrange meetings with German-speaking children
- 5. Patience:** Children need 1-2 years for everyday language, 5-7 years for academic language
- 6. Attend parent meetings:** School contact shows children: education matters