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Girokonto — Bank Account in Germany

A Girokonto is an essential bank account in Germany needed for receiving salary, paying rent, and signing contracts. You can open one at traditional banks or free online banks.

Deutsche Begriffe: Girokonto | Bankkonto | IBAN | EC-Karte | Sparkasse | Girocard | Volksbank | Überweisung | Dauerauftrag | Lastschrift | Geldautomat | Kontoführungsgebühr | Dispositionskredit | Tagesgeldkonto | Basiskonto | Kontowechselservice | Geschäftskonto | Gemeinschaftskonto

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Girokonto — how to choose a bank account

Girokonto is a standard current account — your salary is paid into it (visible on your payslip), from it you pay rent, Rundfunkbeitrag and bills. Here you choose the **right account**; how to **open** it step by step as a new resident — see opening an account.

Types of accounts

• **Girokonto** — everyday transactions, card, transfers

• **Basiskonto** — basic variant without overdraft (everyone's right, details in separate article)

• **Tagesgeldkonto** — savings account, interest-bearing, no card

• **Gemeinschaftskonto** — joint account (e.g., couples), **Geschäftskonto** — business account

Banks — traditional vs online

	Examples	Cost/month
Traditional	Sparkasse, Volksbank, Commerzbank	3–12€
Online	N26, DKB, ING, Comdirect	often 0€

Online banks are cheaper and faster (VideoIdent), traditional banks offer advisors and support for language barriers.

What to look for when choosing

• **Kontoführungsgebühr** — monthly fee (some banks waive it if you have e.g. 700€ incoming)

• **ATM withdrawals** — free only at your own bank's network; at another bank (Fremdbank) there's a fee

• **Card:** Girocard (debit card, formerly EC-Karte) usually free; Kreditkarte (Visa/Mastercard) sometimes paid

• **Apple Pay / Google Pay** — check if your bank supports it

Vocabulary

IBAN (DE + 20 digits), BIC, Überweisung (transfer), Dauerauftrag (standing order), Lastschrift/SEPA (direct debit), Geldautomat (ATM).

Note — Dispo and Schufa

• **Dispositionskredit (Dispo)** — overdraft with very high interest rates (10–14%). Avoid prolonged overdrafts

• Dispo and Kreditkarte limits depend on Schufa; as a new resident you often won't get them immediately

Changing banks

Your bank has a legal obligation to help you transfer standing orders and direct debits from your old account (**Kontowechselservice**, §22 ZKG) — you don't have to do it manually.

Before opening an account you need registration (Anmeldung) — most banks require it.