Curriculum – the overall concept

Learning a language requires so much more from the student than the plain memorisation of grammar and vocabulary.

Language tells us much about the present and past culture, social order and philosophies of the society/ community that speaks it. This is not only reflected in the choice of vocabulary - words used to form expressions to eventually make meaning of a concept – but also in the simplest aspects such as syntax or the number of tenses that exist in a particular language – not all languages have a past or future tense for instance, as neither an understanding nor a concept of the future and the past exist.

Social skills are an equally important aspect of the language learning process. Different communities require different social skills. It is generally accepted that if a student wants to get of to a good start in learning a second or foreign language, he/she will have acquired certain social skills for interaction and communication that he/she is able to apply within the new language.

In Lesson 1-8 we will gradually build your vocabulary and your understanding of very basic grammatical rules, so that you will be able to go on to the next stage of language learning with confidence. (A1)

Once you have acquired these, we will move on to improving your understanding and use of more complex grammatical structures as well as language style. This will strengthen your ability to communicate with more ease and you will be ready to move on to an intermediate level. (A2)

Syllabus – the lesson plan

(A1) Grammar theory (Lessons 1-8):

- Language concepts and the alphabet [material dispatch in ppt., doc. and mp3]
- Simple syntax: affirmative sentence, negative sentence, question, word question (subject, verb, object) [material dispatch in ppt. and doc.]
- Conjugation of main verbs and auxiliary verbs in Simple Present and Present Perfect [material dispatch in ppt. and doc.]
- The gender of nouns (masculine, feminine and neutral) [material dispatch in ppt. and doc.]

- Personal Pronouns, Possessive Pronouns, Reflexive Pronouns [material dispatch in ppt. and doc.]

- Cases: the Nominative (declension of the subject) [material dispatch in doc.]

(A2) Grammar theory (Lessons 8-30/35 depending on your progress):

[material dispatch in ppt. and/or doc.]

- Syntax: main and sub clauses (commas, conjunctions and position of objects)

- Conjugation of verbs in Simple Past

- Conjugation of verbs in the Simple Future

- Cases: the Accusative and Dative (declension of the object)

Themes, incorporating grammar practice and language style (use of vocab.)

[all material is dispatched in either ppt. or doc. or http and mp3]

(A1) Very basics (Lessons 1-8):

- Introducing oneself

- In the restaurant

- Numbers

- Time, the week, the year, holidays, birthday, names day

- The weather and navigation

- The city, in the country, mountains, at the seaside, travelling in general

- Traffic and transportation

- At home
- In the garden
- Nature (flora and fauna)
- Colours
- Countries/ continents
- The family
- Food and cutlery
- Clothing
- The body
- Sports
- At the shops
- Society
- Employment, at work
- Education, at school, at university, at college etc.
- At the doctor’s/ dentist’s
- A lot of short words (prepositions etc.)
- Attributes (adjectives and adverbs)
- Other useful vocab.
- Verbs in daily use

(A2) Specialised topics (with each subject building up on the previous) (Lessons 8-30/35 or more depending on your progress and specialised topic):

- Clichés: this topic covers all those *unreal* ideas about the Germans that circulate the world, such as their obsession for punctuality, perfection, economic success, beer and their resistance to humour.

- Society in general: what makes the German tick and how does German society function (past and current issues)

- Linguistics – German: a language under constant change

- Geography – Germany and its central European location

- Historical and international relations (Germany and its European neighbours)

- Political structures and systems (East-West-Germany, the EU, Russia and the USA)

- Economic structures – the present and past

- Social structures in the two Germanies after 1945

- Social structures in the new and old federal states of Germany after 1990

- The financial crises (a comparison to Wall Street)

- Nature and the environment, pollution and renewable energies

- Who invented 20th century recycling?

- Employment, professions, education

- Immigration

- Migration – German/s overseas

- Reading, understanding and analysing the news

- Culture in the past and the present: education, philosophy, spirituality, music, arts, literature, the obsession with nature (Goethe, Schiller), the Praguer league (Kafka, Rilke, Freud) WWI and the rise of Expressionism (Kandinsky, Heckel, Brecht),

- Culture in the past and present: the **grotesque** in and **dark psyche** of German culture (Kafka, Brecht, Gunther von Hagen), medicine, human experiments under the Nazis, and examples from recent news (cannibalism, baby deaths, amok-runners) – the relation to death

- A topic of your choice: please let me know in advance, so I can prepare this for you.

- Essay and report writing

- Giving presentations

- *How to write a job application and how to prepare for the job interview (optional)*

Homework:

You will be given homework following each lesson. These include:

- Grammatical exercises (doc.)

- Reading (http., ppt. or doc.)

- Listening (http or plain audio)

- Writing (coherent texts and short essays/ reports)

Homework should be emailed to me completed and before the lesson (preferably 12-24 hours in advance). This is under normal circumstances. If you do not have time to do homework, let me know and we can cover it during the lessons.

Assessment:

We are not keen on exams or pressurizing students into achieving a required set of standards, as these types of assessment often affect the student in his/ her ability to apply theoretical knowledge into real-life situations. Each student learns at his/her own pace and with his/her own methods. That, however, does not mean that you should not try out new methods.

Instead, we will comment and make suggestions after the completion of each lesson and homework, so you always know how well you progress in your language learning.
You, as the student, will need to do exactly the same. After every 5 lessons, we would like you to give us an update on how well you think you are progressing. Make comments and suggestions on our teaching style – is it clearly structured, does it benefit you and would you prefer changes in methods, topics, materials etc. It is important to adjust the course to your specific needs, not ours. So, do not be hesitant to let us know your concerns.