



COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

when a learner's first language is German

Common language errors can vary a lot according to the first language of the learner. When teaching English as a second language to German students, it is common to spot the following mistakes in a learner's grammar and vocabulary.

Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **accommodation** (for example, spelled **accomodation**)
- **advertisement** (for example, spelled **advertisment**)
- **which** (for example, spelled **wich**)
- **department** (for example, spelled **departement**)
- **interested** (for example, spelled **intrested**)
- **colleagues** (for example, spelled **collegues**)
- **interesting** (for example, spelled **interresting**)
- **programme** (for example, spelled **programm**)
- **decision** (for example, spelled **decission**)
- **sincerely** (for example, spelled **sencereley**)

There is confusion between the verbs **loose** and **lose** and between nouns **costumers** and **customers**.

Learners tend to make mistakes with prepositions

The most common errors are **in** for **on**, **of** for **for** and **in** for **at**.

- We would like a seminar **in on** the subject of achieving customer service.
- It could be a centre **of for** recreation and tourism.
- The figures are not available **in at** the moment.

Word order

A prominent error that learners make is putting words in the wrong order.

- Yes, I **have also also have** a favourite restaurant.
- We have **a quite quite a** big training room.

Key: errors in **red**, corrections in **blue**.



Conditional and past simple tenses can be easily confused

These tend to involve either conditional patterns (e.g. the second conditional shown below), or tense errors mainly when learners use present simple instead of past simple.

Conditionals:

- It would be perfect if there **are** **were** sockets for our phone chargers.

Non-conditionals:

- There **is** **was** a slight increase during the first week, but it decreased immediately in the next few days.

Learners tend to confuse verbs and collocations

Make is most often used when other verbs are more suitable, while *have*, *had* and *do* are most often missed out. Contextual words which form phrases are shown in bold.

- What you **make** **do with** your talent is up to you.
- We would like to **make** **have** a training **course** in our building.
- You don't know where to go or you've already **made** **had** bad **experiences**.

Use of the wrong noun in a particular context

The most common nouns learners don't use when they should are *opportunity*, *number* and *advertising*.

- Volunteering gives students a great **possibility** **opportunity** to socialise.
- It depends on the length of the **way** **journey** from home to work or school.
- It was agreed that **advertisement** **advertising** had a direct impact on profits.

Key: errors in **red**, corrections in **blue**.