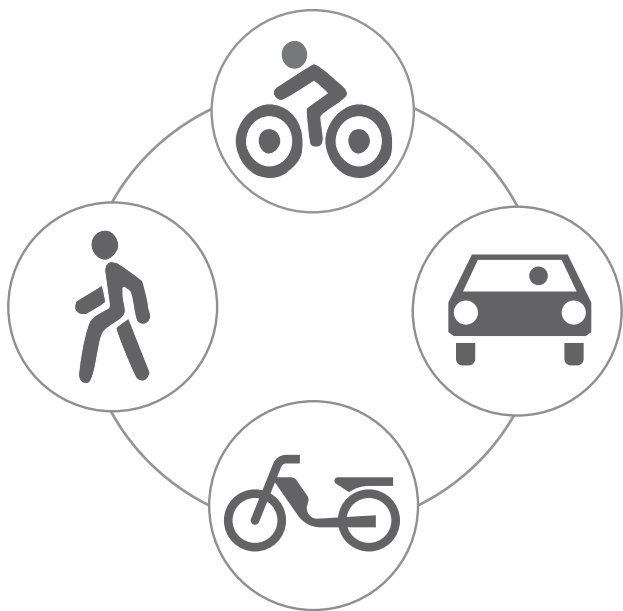


Englisch

On the roads in Germany – what do I need to know? Essential rules of the road







Welcome to Germany

You will be using our roads on a daily basis – as a pedestrian, a cyclist, a passenger on buses or trams and perhaps also as a motorcyclist or a driver of a car. For your own protection and for everyone's safety, there are many rules of the road that you need to follow in Germany. You will be familiar with many of them, but some may be completely new to you.

The most important rule of all is: Show consideration to others, and do not put yourself or others in danger.



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When you are on foot



In towns and cities there are pavements for pedestrians. Please **always** use these **pavements**. The roads are for motor vehicles and bicycles. If there are no pavements, walk at the side of the road.

Outside of built-up areas, you must walk at the **side of the road** on the left so that you can see the oncoming traffic better and are able to react and step out of the way if necessary. If you are in a group, walk in single file (one after the other, not side by side).

In poor light and at night, it is good to wear bright or **reflective clothing**.





Sometimes there are whole streets or areas of a town or city that are for pedestrians only. These are known as **pedestrian zones**.

In **traffic-calming zones**, pedestrians can use the whole of the road, and drivers and cyclists must show particular consideration to them. Certain types of children's play (e.g. riding a tricycle) are allowed on these roads. However, road users must not hinder each other. Pedestrians do not have priority on these roads.





Cyclists are allowed to use some **pavements**, and sometimes they can use pedestrian zones as well. However, there must be a road sign there that indicates they are allowed to do so. It is particularly important for both cyclists and pedestrians to show each other consideration here.



Shared pavement and cycle path

If you want to **cross the road**, you must go directly and briskly from one side to the other. Pay particular attention to motor vehicles and cyclists. Wherever possible, do not cross the road from between parked cars.



Use points where it is possible to cross safely even if you have to walk a little to find such a point.

- ▶ **Signal-controlled pedestrian crossings:** Pedestrians have their own signal-controlled crossings. These are generally at junctions, but they are also sometimes found in other locations.





Do not cross when the light is red. You can cross when the light is green. Nevertheless, you should still make sure that drivers and cyclists have stopped.



At signal-controlled pedestrian crossings, there are often **yellow buttons** that you have to press in order to get a green light. Wait until you see the green light.

▷ **Zebra crossings:**

Here, too, you can cross the road safely. Vehicles have to stop for you. Nevertheless, please take care. Make it clear you want to cross, **wait until the vehicles have stopped**, and then cross briskly.



▷ **Islands in the middle of the road:**

Vehicles are not obliged to stop here. You should therefore look carefully to make sure no vehicles are coming, and then





briskly cross to the island. **You can wait there** if there is traffic coming from the other direction.

- ▶ **Be careful** when crossing roads with trams: These always have **priority** because they cannot brake very quickly.



If you have small children with you, **make sure you hold them by the hand** so that they don't go onto the road.





If you see a vehicle with a flashing blue light or hear the siren of a police car or emergency vehicle, you must be very careful. It is essential to stay off the road. A vehicle with a blue light and/or a siren is generally a police car, a fire engine or **an ambulance in an emergency situation.**



You cannot stop buses in Germany by using a hand signal. They stop only at **bus stops**. There is normally a timetable at the bus stop. This indicates the departure times of the buses.



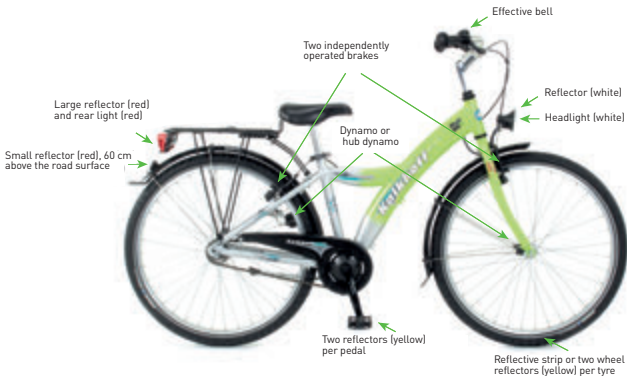
Always keep your eye on the traffic, and don't get distracted!



When you are cycling

The same rules of the road that apply to drivers apply to cyclists as well (rules governing who has priority, one-way streets, traffic lights, etc.).

- ▶ A bicycle must have lights, brakes and a **bell**.



- ▶ Only one person may be on a bicycle at any one time.



Small children must be secured in **special seats** or trailers.



When cycling, you should keep as far as possible to the right on the road. However, make sure you **keep well clear of parked cars** so that you don't have a collision if somebody suddenly opens a car door.



Wherever possible, do not cycle side by side with other cyclists.



If you want to turn to the left or right, you must always **hold out your hand** to indicate this.





- ▶ If there are no signs indicating who has priority, the road user coming from the right can enter a junction first (**right before left**). At a junction where there is right-before-left priority, a driver must give priority to a cyclist coming from the right.
- ▶ There are also special arrangements for cyclists, such as **traffic lights for cyclists** or the option of cycling the other way down a one-way street.



Additional sign for a route open to cyclists

- ▶ If a cycle path has a **blue sign with a white bicycle**, cyclists must use this path. If there is no such sign, you can either use the road or stay on the cycle path.



Cycle path



- ▷ There are roads on which cyclists are not permitted under any circumstances (e.g. motorways and dual carriageways with a blue sign). Pavements or **pedestrian zones** are open to cyclists if the appropriate signs are in place. However, cyclists must not cycle faster than the pedestrians and must show consideration to them.
- ▷ Do not cycle if you have drunk alcohol.
- ▷ Do not use your phone when you are cycling.
- ▷ Warning: When the driver of a lorry turns right, he may not see you. You should therefore **always stay behind the lorry.**





▶ Wear a **cycling helmet** whenever possible.

▶ Children can cycle on the road once they are eight years old. Before they reach this age, they must use the pavement. Children in Germany normally take a **cycling proficiency test in their fourth year of school.**



▶ If the situation on the road becomes too confusing or unclear, you can get off your bicycle and push it instead. You then have to behave as if you were a pedestrian.



When you are riding a moped or motorcycle

In Germany there are very different types of **two-wheel motor vehicles**, and very different rules apply to them. However, the following applies to all of them: You **must always wear a helmet**, you **must have insurance**, and you must have reached the minimum age required.



You also generally need a special licence or a test certificate. If you have an international or foreign licence, you must find out whether and for how long it is valid in Germany and what kinds of vehicles it permits you to use.



In principle, all two-wheel motor vehicles must use the roads exclusively. Only mopeds with a maximum speed of 25 km/h can use cycle paths – but only outside of built-up areas and when there are signs specifically indicating that this is possible.

You must not weave your way through the traffic on a moped or motorcycle.

No more than two people may ride on a motorcycle. Do not take children with you on a motorcycle.



Do not ride a motorcycle if you have drunk alcohol.



When you are driving a car

If you want to drive in Germany, you must have a valid driving licence. If you have an international or foreign driving licence, you must find out whether, and for how long, it is valid in Germany. A car must always be insured. If you borrow a car from a friend or acquaintance, make sure you are insured to drive it.

- ▶ All car occupants **must wear seat belts**, including those on the rear seats.





- ▶ All children under 12 years old who are less than 150 cm in height must be secured in special **child seats**.
- ▶ When driving, do not make calls with your mobile phone in your hand, do not write any SMS text messages, and do not use a smartphone for any other purpose.
- ▶ Do not drive if you have drunk alcohol.
- ▶ There are different **speed limits** for different road types. However, depending **on the road or weather situation**, it may be necessary to drive more cautiously and slowly.



If you are involved in an accident, call the **emergency services on 112**. Always remain at the scene of the accident until the **police** come.



Red means stop! Never drive through a red traffic light or a red stop sign.





...in built-up areas

You have to be particularly careful in built-up areas. Here there are pedestrians and cyclists, buses, lorries and sometimes trams too, as well as many junctions and traffic lights.



Signs mark the beginning and end of all **towns, cities and villages** in Germany.

In a built-up area, there is generally a **speed limit of 50 km/h**. In residential areas the speed limit is often reduced to **30 km/h**. This speed limit often applies to entire zones. However, almost any speed limit is possible in a built-up area: 10 km/h, 20 km/h, 30 km/h, 40 km/h and so on. So it is important to always pay close attention to the road signs.



Speed limit



Start of a
30 km/h zone



When turning to the right or left, be very careful, particularly when you are turning at a point where you don't have a clear view of everything: Allow **pedestrians and cyclists cycling straight ahead** to cross first. They have priority.

You must also wear your seat belt in built-up areas, and children must be secured as required by the law.



...on roads outside built-up areas



On roads outside built-up areas, you must not drive over 100 km/h, and often you have to drive much more slowly. The speed limit is displayed on signs by the road.

Take care when overtaking on roads outside build-up areas: often you will not have a good view of the road ahead. It is better to drive more cautiously. If you see a **no-overtaking sign**, do not overtake under any circumstances! Never cross an unbroken line on the road!



No overtaking

When turning left, watch out for **oncoming traffic!**



...on the motorway

Here there are at least two lanes in each direction. The recommended **maximum speed** is **130 km/h**.

However, often there are other speed limits, and these are indicated by signs.

On motorways you also have to keep to the right. To overtake, you pass to the left of slower vehicles. Overtaking on the right is not permitted. Nor is reversing or turning around.

Only in the event of an emergency or a breakdown can you stop on the hard shoulder of a motorway.





In such cases, always use safety vests. These must be kept in the vehicle. This is not permitted in other cases. If you need a break, look for a rest or service area. Only enter and exit the motorway using the available entry and exit slip roads.

Never walk on the motorway!



More information:

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English-language edition

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