

WELCOME TO ANSBACH

INTERCULTURAL TRAINING



WELCOME TO ANSBACH!


SERVUS IN ANSBACH!

Dear international Students,

studying in a different country can be overwhelming. There are many different rules and conventions. Some are very obvious, and some are hidden beneath the surface. On the following pages you can find the most important cultural tips to make your stay and studies as smooth as possible.

As always, if you have any questions about living or studying in Germany, feel free to contact the Welcome Center at any time.

WELCOME@HS-ANSBACH.DE



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1. FACT-ORIENTATION

Example: You meet your study group for the first time and are very excited. You are looking forward to getting to know them in detail, know about their family, heritage and hobbies. Your German study partners brush your questions off and are getting increasingly annoyed until they yell at you to finally focus on the work.

GERMANS ARE FOCUSED ON FACTS, NOT EMOTIONS! THEY HAVE THE HIGHEST FACT-ORIENTATION IN THE WHOLE WORLD!

TIPS FOR STUDYING IN GERMANY:

- Seemingly cold, emotionally detached conversations are normal
- Don't ask personal questions in professional settings
- Don't be overemotional, it can be seen as weak
- Don't expect personal praise – only your work will get complimented
- Feedback, also negative one, is uttered directly ➡ it is a critique of your work, not you! Don't take it personal!
- The focus is always on the task: hierarchies will get ignored if it aides the task



- **Christian influence:** ora et labora (focus on praying and working, not feelings)
- **Protestantism:** more intellectual approach to religion, less emotional attachment to ideas
- **Aftermath of WWII:** language was stripped away to ensure denazification, but the fear to use many words remained

Germans do have feelings! But the absence of our feelings appears more dominant!



2. ADHERENCE TO RULES

Example: You are about to write your first exam in Germany; however, you start to feel sick. You do not want to infect other people and therefore stay home. You think that informing your professor will be enough and head to bed. The next morning you get an email that you failed your course since you didn't follow the proper rules: you didn't go to your general physician on the day of the exam. You plead with your professor that you didn't know the procedure, but he stays strict: the rules are the rules.

GERMANS LOVE THEIR RULES AND OFTEN SEE THEM AS FIXED AND UNCHANGEABLE!

TIPS FOR STUDYING IN GERMANY:

- There are strict rules about every aspect of life, and you need to **inform yourself** about them
- Rules about:
 - How to behave in courses
 - How to enrol in courses
 - How to register the exams
 - How to dress in exams
 - How to contact your professors
 - How to call in sick
 - How to call in sick when you have an exam
 - How to behave during office hours
 - How to behave in your apartment
 - When to throw away garbage
 - How to throw away garbage
 - How often you must open the window
 - ...



Check out:

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and

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Don't be stressed by German rules! If we are strict about rules, it is not an insult to you, but a way to feel more secure!



WHY?

- Germany was comprised of **microstates** → rules were important to survive peacefully
- **Enlightenment**: love for thinking about structures was prevalent

3. INTERNALISED CONTROL

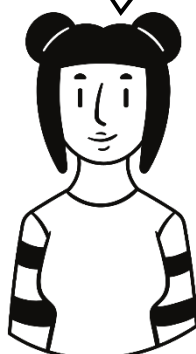
Example: You are working on a group project with a German. You do not get a grade for the project; therefore, you relax and focus on other more important tasks. Your German partner is getting increasingly frustrated and tells you to finally start working properly. You do not understand why they are so eager to work for something that doesn't count.

GERMANS STRIVE FOR PERFECTION AND COMPLIANCE, EVEN WHEN NOT NEEDED!

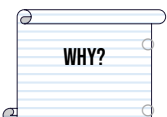
TIPS FOR STUDYING IN GERMANY:

- German idea of perfection: everyone follows the rules, everyone is on time, everyone participates actively, everyone is responsible for their own actions
- Germans not only follow the rules, but they also want to be role models in whatever they do ➡ they expect the same from you
- You are responsible for everything yourself ➡ there are no external resources checking on you! Ask if you have a question or problem!
- The same rules apply to everyone, regardless of gender, age, religion; etc. ➡ no one gets a special treatment (clean your dorm, participate in group projects, etc.)
- Germans trust in contracts, not personal contacts! Read through every contract because it is nearly impossible to change it once you have signed it.
- Reliability over politeness! Never agree to something out of politeness. Germans always expect you to honour your promise!

Germans love to point out mistakes – don't take it personally! We just want everyone to learn from it!



Roman legal system, Judaism and Christianity: all are rule-based systems
Protestantism: everyone is responsible for their own soul's well-being



4. TIME MANAGEMENT

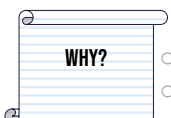
Example: You have a study date with some German students. You agreed to meet at 4 o'clock. On the way there you realise that you haven't brought any snacks for the group and you go to Aldi. You are now 15 minutes late, but surely, they will be happy about the snacks. Once you arrive the German students are visibly mad at you. They ask why you are late. You are confused. You are only 15 minutes late and only because you did something nice for the group – why are they so mad?

A GERMAN IS NEVER LATE. NOR IS HE EARLY. HE ARRIVES PRECISELY 5 MINUTES BEFORE AN APPOINTMENT.

TIPS FOR STUDYING IN GERMANY:

- Always be on time ➡ if you are late, you are seen as unreliable
- Plan ahead (not just today, but this week, this month, this year, etc.)
- Always make an appointment, never expect a German to have time without an appointment!
- If you have a problem ➡ make an appointment, don't just talk about it!
- One thing happens after the other ➡ don't expect Germans to do two things at the same time
- Time management is a fixed idea that can't be changed and needs to be obeyed ➡ follow quiet hours, working hours and schedules – no ifs ands or buts!
- Be aware that some things take more time because of the strict German time management ➡ don't expect instant answers!

Don't be too flexible with your time, otherwise you seem disrespectful!



- **Judaism:** non-cyclical thinking
- **Protestantism:** everyone is responsible for their own time



5. SEPARATION OF WORK AND LIFE

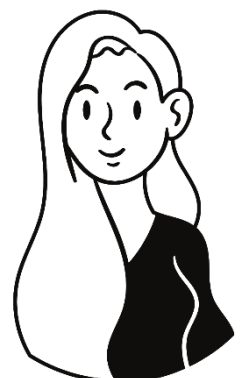
Example: A German student in your study group fell ill. You feel bad and want to do something nice for them. So, you text them and ask them how exactly they are feeling, if they need medication or a warm soup. The sick student doesn't answer and when he arrives back at university, he is ignoring you and telling everyone that you are impolite and invasive.

GERMANS LOVE TO SEPARATE WASTE ... AND THEIR LIVES

TIPS FOR STUDYING IN GERMANY:

- Your behaviour needs to be adapted: communications with friends and acquaintances need to vary; communication with professors needs to be different than your talks with other students
➡ different rules for different groups of people ➡ be aware of hierarchy!
- Don't integrate personal content in professional settings ➡ talk about your private life only with friends
- Separation of spheres: being loud and emotional in public spheres shows a lack of discipline ➡ be quiet in public, especially in public transport and shops, etc.

Don't be discouraged if Germans seem a bit distanced at the university! We see it as our workplace and act accordingly!



- **Absolutist emperors:** German only felt security in their own homes
- **Protestantism:** separation of public and private worship

6. LOW CONTEXT SOCIETY

Example: You are in the last seminar before the exam. The professor is going through all relevant topics; however, you have trouble with some parts. You are waiting for your professor to ask if there are any other questions, but he is dismissing the seminar. You feel lost and angry that the professor is not thinking about his students properly.

GERMANS ARE AS BLUNT AS CAN BE

TIPS FOR STUDYING IN GERMANY:

- Germans communicate clearly, with no hidden meaning ➡ “I don’t have time” ➡ don’t ask again
- Only expect answers for the things you asked for ➡ no additional help is provided
- Don’t be shocked if you’re being criticized in a direct way; direct feedback is not negative
- Don’t be shocked if critique is uttered publicly ➡ it is not seen as something embarrassing, but as the only way forward
- Don’t expect praise ➡ “No critique is praise enough”
- Say if you have problems or questions
- Never be polite and say yes if you don’t mean it
- Don’t expect Germans to understand body language. A light headshake does not convey uncertainty for Germans, only words do!

Germans are very blunt, but it can also make your life easier because you always know what we mean!



WHY?

- Germany was comprised of **microstates**: clear communication was needed
- **Enlightenment**: speaking bluntly was seen as polite (it creates security when you always know what everyone is thinking)

7. INDIVIDUALISM

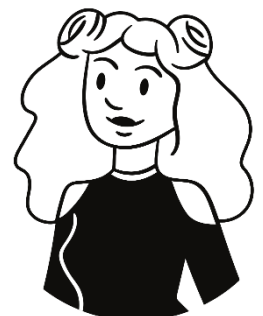
Example: You really like your new roommate. You have been living together for a few months. One day you realise you haven't bought any highlighter pens yet. You go into your roommate's room and borrow some. When they arrive, they are incredible mad that you went into their room. You do not understand – aren't you friends?

GERMANY – A NATION OF LONELY WOLFS?

TIPS FOR STUDYING IN GERMANY:

- Germans do not have strong overt feeling of community, instead individualism is the norm in all aspects of life
- Everyone is responsible for everything themselves: regardless of age, gender, hierarchy
- Don't expect Germans to share their things freely ➡ Germans see their possessions as part of their private sphere
- Community feeling is not created by communication ➡ it is found in abstract situations like shared greetings, joint memberships in clubs, collective experiences like donations and volunteering, etc.
- If you need help, ask for it. Don't expect Germans to approach you to ask if you are ok
- Say what you mean ➡ being passive is not seen as politeness, but as inability to express yourself and fend for yourself

Don't expect communal support in Germany!
Independence and self-reliance are the norm!



WHY?

- **Judeo-Christian heritage:** G*d's rules apply to every single person
- **Protestantism:** only you are responsible for your soul; not your family, not your community, not your country
- **Humanism and Enlightenment:** realisation that oneself can govern one's own life

ALL INFORMATION IS CURRENT AS OF MAY 2026.

ALL INFORMATION IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.