

GO (Verbs in German meaning “to go”)

German has no single generic verb meaning *to go*. Rather, German has a series of verbs indicating the mode of transport or locomotion. The basic distinction is between using a vehicle and going on foot. The following list is a condensed introduction to these verbs.

FAHREN

To go, to drive, to travel using a means of transport. This verb indicates the use of some mode of transportation that is more efficient or faster than walking. The use of wheels, blades, sleds, skids, or any device touching the ground other than the feet or soles of the shoes indicates *fahren*. The verb *fahren* is typically accompanied by the preposition *mit* (+ dative case) to indicate the means by which the transportation is accomplished.

We're taking the car. Wir fahren mit dem Auto.

I'm taking light rail. Ich fahre mit der Straßenbahn.

... mit der Laufbahn fahren ... to use the motorized walkway

She's taking the train. Sie fährt mit dem Zug.

They're taking the subway. Sie fahren mit der U-Bahn.

... mit der Rolltreppe fahren. ... to use the escalator

This verb is often prefixed with a specific mode of transportation.

radfahren – to travel by bike, to ride a bike

schlittschufahren – to skate (ice skate)

schifahren – to ski

rollerbladfahren – to rollerblade, in-line skaing

GEHEN

To walk, to go (without use of a vehicle). To get to a place on foot. (Also: to go to a place for an extended period of time.) *Gehen* typically indicates locomotion using the legs and feet. When a person goes to a location within a walking distance, then the verb *gehen* is generally used. Extended periods of stay are also expressed using *gehen*.

Ich gehe jetzt in die Bibliothek. I'm going to the library now. (on foot)

Wir gehen zu dir. We are going to your place. (no indication of specific mode of transportation)

Kristin geht ein Jahr nach Österreich. Kristin is going to Austria for a year. (extended period of time)

Im Oktober geht mein Bruder nach Göttingen. My brother is going to Göttingen. (to study at the university)

Gehen also indicates to work properly, the state of health (someone's well-being), and how fast or slow clocks go.

Geht das? Is that working? — Das geht nicht. That won't work. (That won't do. That's not a solution to the problem.)

Wie geht es dir? How is your health? How are things going for you?

Meine Uhr geht vor. My watch is running fast. — Ich denke, diese Uhr geht nach. I think this clock is slow.

REISEN

To travel, to go. *Reisen* typically indicates a planned trip. This can be pleasure or business.

Wir reisen im Sommer in die Schweiz. We're taking a trip to Switzerland in the summer.

Meine Schwester reist gern ins Ausland. My sister likes to travel abroad.

In seinem Beruf reist er oft. He travels a lot for his job.

LAUFEN

To go, to run. In some dialects, *laufen* is a synonym for *gehen*. The concept of *laufen* indicates a motion faster or more intense than *gehen*.

Wie läuft es? How is the process coming along? — Es läuft gut. Things are coming along fine.

Der Motor läuft nicht ganz richtig. The motor is not running quite right.

Alles läuft mir zu langsam. Everything is going by too slowly for me.

Lauf nicht so schnell! Don't go (walk) so fast.

FLIEGEN To fly, to travel by air.

*Fliegst du im Sommer nach Afrika? Are you flying to Afrika this summer?
Ich möchte bald nach Deutschland fliegen. I would like to go to Germany soon.*

RENNEN To race, to go very fast on foot.

*Renn nicht so! Don't go so fast. Don't run along so fast.
Du rennst immer. You always race along.*

SAUSEN To speed along, to zoom, to travel at lightning speed.

*Das Kind saust jeden Tag mit dem Fahrrad an meinem Haus vorbei.
— The kid speeds by my house on his bike every day.
Der Verkehr saust durch das Tal und macht einen unerträglichen Lärm.
— The traffic speeds through the valley and makes an unbearable noise.*

REITEN To be conveyed on the back of a large animal such as a horse or camel, to ride an animal.

*Man reitet durch die Wüste auf einem Kamel. They ride through the desert on a camel.
Ein Ritter reitet auf einem Pferd. A knight rides on a horse.
In Indien kann man auf einem Elefanten reiten. You can ride on an elephant in India.*

TREIBEN To force into motion, to drive, to make go.

*Der Wind treibt die Turbinen. The wind drives the turbines.
Der Motor treibt die Räder. The motor drives the wheels.*

Selected Nouns related to Verbs meaning "to go"

die Fahrt *trip, the time it takes to travel a certain distance*
die Fähre *ferry, the boat that carries one across a body of water*
der Gang *walkway, the corridor, the gait (manner in which someone walks)*
die Reise *trip, the journey (the planned trip)*
der Lauf *run, the course, the distance*
der Läufer *long narrow rug covering a hallway, the runner, the bishop (in a chess game)*
der Flug *flight, the trip in an airplane*
das Rennen *race (usually on foot); das Autorennen: a car race*
der Ritter *knight (on a horse), rider of an animal*
der Antrieb *drive train, propulsion system, push, stimulus*