

The TestDaF – a New Measure of German Language Proficiency

The TestDaF – Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache / Test of German as a Foreign Language – is a language test suitable for learners of German at an intermediate to high level of language proficiency.

The TestDaF provides the universally recognised proof of the language skills required for admission to any German university. The TestDaF is administered by a worldwide net of licensed test centres and thus can be taken in the candidates' home country.

The TestDaF is suitable for:

- students who wish to start or continue their university studies in Germany,
- students who need a proof of their proficiency in German for other purposes,
- academic staff who want to establish their level of knowledge of the German language prior to a study visit in Germany,
- professionals who have to document their proficiency in German.

General Features

The TestDaF is a standardised language test assessing linguistic performance within the context of university life at an intermediate to advanced level. Within the scale of the European Framework of Reference the TestDaF comprises the levels B 2.1 (ALTE level 3) to C 1.2 (ALTE level 5). The TestDaF has been developed for candidates with a considerable knowledge of German (e.g. after approx. 700 hours / teaching units). The TestDaF examination may also be taken as a placement test and can be taken any number of times.

The TestDaF measures several levels of language performance. Each candidate's scores are aggregated to determine the candidate's performance as to one of the following levels:

- TDN 5 – TestDaF-Niveaustufe 5 (TestDaF level 5)
- TDN 4 – TestDaF-Niveaustufe 4 (TestDaF level 4)
- TDN 3 – TestDaF-Niveaustufe 3 (TestDaF level 3)

TDN 5 is the highest level. A score below TDN 3 shows that within this subtest the candidate has not yet reached the lowest level measured by the TestDaF.

Administering the TestDaF

TestDaF examines the following four language skills in separate subtests:

- reading comprehension
- listening comprehension
- writing
- speaking

Based on the scores achieved in each of the subtests, the TestDaF provides a differentiated linguistic profile of the applicant.

The test papers are compiled at the TestDaF Institute and are subject to a centralised evaluation procedure. Examinations are carried out in the Test Centres licensed by the TestDaF Institute.

The TestDaF examination is carried out worldwide; all instructions and questions are in German.

Admission according to proficiency levels

The following official recommendations of the Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK: Association of Universities and other Institutions of Higher Education in Germany) apply:

Candidates fulfil the linguistic requirements for admission to any German university if they score TDN 5 in all four subtests.

Individual university regulations apply if candidates obtain results below this level (TDN 3 and 4). These university regulations may require that the student should enrol in a parallel language course.

In fields of study where neither teaching nor learning is done in German but, for example, in English, exceptions to these rules are possible and candidates may be admitted with lower scores, including scores under TDN 3 in one or more subtests.

Information on the university specific admission rules is available at the Academic Registry or the "Office for International Affairs" (Akademisches Auslandsamt) of the university.

TestDaF Certificate

An official certificate documents the student's performance in each of the four subtests.

Examination Fee

Examination fees range from 100,00 € to 130,00 €. The exact amount will be determined by your Test Centre.

Examination Schedule

The time schedule for the next examination dates will be published on our web site in due time. Currently the TestDaF is administered two to three times a year. A higher frequency of the TestDaF will be established in the near future.

Information

- The following information can be downloaded from our web site or be ordered from the TestDaF-Institute:
- Model Test
- Information on the TestDaF
- Instructions for Test Centres
- TestDaF Examination Regulations
- Criteria for Licensing of Test Centres
- Posters

For more information as well as for literature on the test please visit our web site:
<http://www.testdaf.de>.

You may also contact us via email: info@testdaf.de

The Four Subtests of the TestDaF

The TestDaF assesses the four language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking – in four separate subtests:

1. Reading Comprehension

This part of the test is designed to assess the candidate's ability to adequately handle written texts relevant to academic life. The candidates have to prove their capability to understand the overall structure, to extract detailed as well as implicit information. This subtest contains three assignments varying in their level of difficulty, type of text and question type.

The first task presents several short topical texts, the candidates are asked to relate these texts to statements. The second task contains a journalistic report on an academic event, the question type conforms to the format of a triple multiple choice. The third task presents an article from an academic journal or book. Following the format of the triple multiple choice, candidates have to decide if the answer is "yes", "no" or "not relevant to text".

The subtest "reading comprehension" takes 60 minutes.

2. Listening Comprehension

This subtest is designed to assess the candidate's ability to adequately handle oral texts relevant to academic life. The candidates have to prove that they understand the overall structure as well as detailed and implicit information. Again, this is tested in three tasks at different levels with different types of texts and different question types.

The first task presents a dialogue typical of everyday life at university. Candidates are requested to follow the dialogue and to answer some questions on the text by keywords. The second task contains an interview or a group discussion on a wide-ranging academic topic. Here, the 'right or wrong' format is used. In the third task candidates have to listen to a comparatively complex monologue or to an interview with longer and more complex monological parts. Candidates are asked to note keywords or short answers to questions on the text.

The subtest "listening comprehension" takes 40 minutes.

3. Writing

This subtest is designed to assess the candidate's ability to write a coherent and well structured text on a given topic taken from the academic context. On the basis of a graph, a table or a diagram, the candidates are asked to write a text which has to cover two types of prose: description and argument. The goal is to verbalise the most important information given and possibly draw comparisons. The examination paper indicates specific points to be addressed. Then, the candidates are asked to discuss various points of view on a given aspect of the topic and to give reasons for their own opinions. Short text passages, statements or quotations are provided.

The subtest "writing" takes 60 minutes.

4. Speaking

This subtest is designed to assess the candidate's ability to communicate appropriately in typical situations of university life. This subtest comprises four parts which contain items on different levels of difficulty:

In the first part, the candidates are asked to make a simple request, the second part features situations which require specific communicative skills, such as giving or asking for information, making an urgent but polite request, convincing someone etc. The third part focuses on skills of description, while the fourth part requires skills of argument.

This subtest follows the "SOPI"- format (Semi-direct/Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview): it is done either in a language laboratory or with a set of two cassette recorders. All instructions, questions and stimuli come from a master tape, candidates can read the questions simultaneously in their examination booklets. A second tape records the answers given by the candidate.

The subtest "speaking" takes 30 minutes.

For a complete sample set of questions of the TestDaF please visit our website:
<http://www.testdaf.de>

The TestDaF Institute works under the auspices of the Gesellschaft für Akademische Testentwicklung (Society for Academic Test Development). Founding Members are: Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK: Association of Universities and other Institutions of Higher Education in Germany), Bonn ; Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service), Bonn; Goethe-Institut, Munich; FernUniversität – University of Hagen; University of Bochum; University of Leipzig; Fachverband Deutsch als Fremdsprache (FaDaF: Association of Teachers of German as a Foreign Language).

The TestDaF Institute is affiliated with the FernUniversität – University of Hagen and with the University of Bochum.