

EBERHARD KARLS  
UNIVERSITÄT  
TÜBINGEN



# Guidelines

Division V – International Office

**German as a second language  
and intercultural programs**





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Note: 65 percent of our tandem partners are women. When we talk about tandem partners in these guidelines, we mean both men and women.☺





## What are the advantages of a language tandem?

It will help you to

- ✓ learn in a relaxed way in a pleasant atmosphere,
- ✓ learn without stress or pressure to perform,
- ✓ get practice in authentic conversations,
- ✓ plan how fast or slow you want to progress,
- ✓ explain your native language and, in doing so, find out more about it,
- ✓ build bridges between cultures,
- ✓ recognize and understand cultural similarities and differences,
- ✓ discover more about the country and its people,
- ✓ get to know new people.



## How can I find a tandem partner?

This is how:

- ✓ Fill out the application form. You'll find it on our website:  
<https://uni-tuebingen.de/en/1088>.
- ✓ Or you can come to our tandem office hours.  
You'll find the hours on the website as well (see above).
- ✓ As soon as we have found someone for you, we will send you an e-mail.  
The e-mail will contain all the necessary information and your tandem partner's e-mail address.



## How do we match you up?

(For all of you who want more detail)

We match up tandem partners according to the following criteria:

1. your target language and native language,
2. Waiting time: The longer you wait, the higher up you go on the waiting list.
3. gender-specific wishes,
4. age-specific wishes,

What does that mean, exactly?

- ✓ Once we receive your application, we search our database for tandem seekers whose native language matches your target language. We then compare these potential tandem partners with your wishes regarding gender and age. If we find more than one potential tandem partner, we will put you in touch with the person who has been waiting the longest - i.e.

who is at the top of the waiting list. If there are no suitable tandem seekers for your language preference, we will put you on the waiting list.

- ✓ Your place on the waiting list depends primarily on the date you applied. The question of how long you will be available is not relevant to this matter. Limitations on your availability only tell us when we can remove you from the waiting list because you are no longer available for a tandem from that point on.
- ✓ If your tandem partner does not contact you after a few days or no longer has the time, write to us at [info@daf.uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:info@daf.uni-tuebingen.de) and we will put you at the top of the waiting list. Hopefully we will find a new tandem partner for you quickly.



## What happens then?

After we have matched you up, everything else is up to you. Contact your tandem partner and arrange a first meeting. This is your first meet-up and you should plan for it to be completely free of pressure. You can start with a "neutral" language (usually English). This is often easier for your first contact. It's like a blind date: Only now do you realize if you are a good match, if your tandem partnership has a future. Do not put yourself under pressure to succeed. It may be that the first meeting is also the last. (See also "How do I conclude a tandem partnership?" later in this brochure.)



## When do we meet?

You need to plan regular meetings (e.g. every Wednesday from 3 to 5 pm). That gives the tandem partnership a firm place in your week and you will not have the problem of always trying to make a date.



## Where do we meet?

Find places where you can talk undisturbed and in a relaxed atmosphere:

- ✓ A Uni cafeteria (e.g. Clubhaus, University Library, Brechtbau cafeteria),
- ✓ the lawn at the Brechtbau,
- ✓ University Library,
- ✓ other university buildings in the departments and faculties,
- ✓ cafés, restaurants in the old town,
- ✓ the old botanical gardens on Wilhelmstrasse,
- ✓ the new botanical gardens in the Wanne district (you can take a pleasant walk to get there, passing the geographical middle of Baden-Württemberg),

- ✓ the walls along the Neckar, Platanenallee,
- ✓ or you can have a relaxed conversation as you walk and talk.
- ✓ Maybe you would like to hire a row-boat and do your tandem on the water.☺

Sometimes the location itself sets the topic for your tandems

- ✓ your private kitchen or a dormitory kitchen. Cooking and eating together is certainly one of the best tandem options.
- ✓ A joint visit to a museum (Tübingen Museum, University Museums: <https://www.unimuseum.uni-tuebingen.de/>) or a current exhibition.
- ✓ A visit to a cinema or concert followed by a joint tandem session.
- ✓ You can expand your vocabulary by shopping together in the supermarket.
- ✓ Short trips to neighboring cities: Language practice begins as soon as you buy your ticket. On the train you have tandem time and possible topics of conversation pass by the window.
- ✓ Why repair your bike or car by yourself? It's more fun with your tandem partner and you can also expand your vocabulary.



## How do we organize our tandem?

Here are a few useful and important rules:

- ✓ Discuss clearly when and how long you will speak each of the two languages. You can speak one language in the first half of the meeting and the other in the second half. Or you can concentrate on only one language per meeting and switch from one appointment to the next.
- ✓ Do not mix the two languages - stick to one language.
- ✓ Sometimes English helps as a "bridge" to clarify comprehension problems (if it is not already one of the two tandem languages). But quickly return to your tandem language.
- ✓ Mistakes are important for language learning. But it is difficult to find the right measure for correction. As long as you understand your tandem partner, there is no reason for correction at first. Later in this brochure we will give you more tips on how to deal with mistakes.
- ✓ In some tandem situations you may feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed. Talk openly about such situations. Formulate simple, clear questions and sentences: I didn't understand you, please speak more slowly, please repeat... If your language level is low, such sentences are especially important.

- ✓ Don't try to do too much all at once. Nobody expects you to have an answer to every question or that you know and can explain all your native tongue's grammatical rules.
- ✓ Be patient with one another. In a new language you often need more time to formulate an idea. Give each other that time.
- ✓ Keep a folder of material covered. There is a separate chapter on this subject in this brochure



## What can we talk about?

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- ✓ Why are you learning this language?
- ✓ What are your goals? To study in the country of the target language, travel, communicate without fear, read books, understand films...?
- ✓ What particularly interests you about this language: grammar, vocabulary, slang, idioms?
- ✓ What is easy for you, what is difficult about this language?
- ✓ What do you like about the country in which this language is spoken?
- ✓ Have you visited your tandem partner's country?

And generally:

- ✓ Studies
- ✓ Family and friends
- ✓ Free-time activities, hobbies
- ✓ Favorite music, favorite films, favorite books
- ✓ Favorite foods and drinks
- ✓ Travels
- ✓ Similarities and differences between the cultures
- ✓ Future plans, wishes, dreams



## How do I conclude a tandem partnership?

It happens and is part of the process: One or the other of you hasn't got enough time or leaves Tübingen. Or you don't get along. You can simply stop your tandem. Please talk openly to one another and then send us an email. We will be happy to find you a new tandem partner. We can also delete your name from the tandem database. You can of course register for a new tandem partnership at any time.



## A few more tips for a successful tandem partnership

### Dealing with mistakes - the error log

Many people who make a language mistake apologize to the person they are talking to. This is unnecessary and disturbs the flow of speech. Therefore, mistakes should only be corrected if they lead to misunderstandings or make understanding impossible.

Some errors can be pointed out simply by a discreet gesture, finger signal or a sound. Often the person you are talking to can then correct (or ignore) the error and continue speaking.

But mistakes are also important, and positive. You can learn a lot from mistakes. How do you manage it without constant corrections? One way is to keep an error log:

During a conversation, write down which mistakes you notice the other person making - without interrupting or correcting her or him. Pay attention to conjugation and declension, word order and sentence structures, vocabulary, idiom, pronunciation and intonation. At the beginning it is easier if you focus on just one area for the protocol, e.g. pronunciation or word order.

After a while, look at the mistakes together. Correct them, discuss rules, find out where the mistakes come from. Very often they have to do with linguistic and sometimes cultural peculiarities of the speaker's native language.

With an error log you can quickly identify your own common errors. Once you have identified a typical error, you shouldn't just check it off, suppress or hide it. Because then it will keep coming back. So: repeat the mistakes, take a good look at them. Collect the funniest mistakes.

### Grammar

Language tandem and grammar - that sounds boring. But it doesn't have to be:

- ✓ Make your grammar funnier, smarter, more attractive. Invent nonsense examples together for important language structures, crazy sentences, cabaret texts with intelligent content but with a funny effect. This method has a big advantage: the funny content helps you remember the abstract grammar rule more easily.
- ✓ Dig into your grammar books: Simply rephrase some things - according to your own taste and imagination.
- ✓ Write your own personal grammar book. Maybe on index cards. You can use them to test each other or to invent grammar games.

- ✓ Search for mnemonics to help you remember grammar rules. You can find many online. Or invent some yourself. It's much more fun when you're together than when you're alone.
- ✓ Arrange, sort, categorize grammar rules. Write them with different colors on large sheets of paper. You can hang them on the walls of your apartment at home. This is another way to help you remember.

## Vocabulary

You can do some vocabulary work for each tandem meeting. Here are a bunch of suggestions - choose what you like best (they are English and German examples, but many can be transferred to other tandem languages):

- ✓ Generic terms:
  - Transportation: Car, plane, bike, boat*
  - Feelings / emotions: love, hate, compassion*
- ✓ Specific terms:
  - moving quickly: running, rushing, hurrying*
- ✓ Synonyms, opposites, alternatives, degrees of something:
  - seeing: recognizing, perceiving, determining, noticing*
  - good: bad, not great, not so good, not bad, rotten, OK.*
- ✓ What can you do with:
  - a house: build, tear down, buy, plan, inhabit.*
  - the time: spend, waste, steal.*
- ✓ Internationalisms:
  - Many words have suitable international equivalents:
  - Augenblick - Moment, Bauchgefühl - Intuition, Prüfung - Test,*
  - kindlich - infantil, Klavier - Piano,*
  - Be careful: There are "false friends" - international words which have developed different meanings in different languages:
  - English - German: become - bekommen, billion - Billion, brave - brav*
  - French - German: clavier - Klavier, couvert - Kuvert*
- ✓ Word formation: In German there are many productive ways to boost your vocabulary: prefixes, suffixes, compound nouns, nominalization, verbalization. You can organize joint excursions through the dictionary. For example:
  - Which prefixes can be used with a verb?
  - stehen - aufstehen, ausstehen, anstehen, überstehen, verstehen...*
  - fallen - auffallen, ausfallen, einfallen, durchfallen, befallen ...*
  - What new words can be formed from these words/prefixes/postfixes:
  - stehen, ver-, un-, miss-, -lich, -nis (Stand, Verstand, verstehen, ververständlich, missverständlich, unmissverständlich...)*
  - Composite nouns - can they be turned around?
  - Schweineschnitzel - Schnitzelschwein? Bücherregal - Regalbücher?*



Lieblingsfarbe - Farbenliebling? Spachkurs - Kurssprache?

- ✓ Get your partner to guess word relationships:  
'Champignon' verhält sich zu 'Pilz' wie 'Gabel' zu ('Besteck').  
krank/Krankheit - schön/(Schönheit)  
aufwecken/aufwachen - legen/(liegen)  
Haus/bauen - Brief/(schreiben)  
Baum/Rinde - Mensch/Haut - Apfel/(Schale)
- ✓ What other words are in these words:  
Kreisel (Reis, es, Eis, Esel, Krise, Keil, Reise etc.)
- ✓ Words and expressions that sound interesting, funny, comical:  
Tod und Teufel, Kind und Kegel, hoch und heilig, Saus und Braus...  
Kuddelmuddel, Techtelmechtel, Tamtam, plemplem, larifari...

## Written language - spoken language

In all cultures there are sometimes big differences between the written and the spoken language. This topic is usually neglected in regular language lessons. That is why many people speak the same way as they have learned in written language classes. When they are in the country of the target language, they are surprised that the people there speak quite differently.

Tandem is a very good way to understand and learn these differences. It is often only then that one feels at home in a new language. So make this the topic of your meetings again and again.

Here are a few examples for the German language - surely you will find many examples in your other tandem languages:

- ✓ phonetic abrasions: E.g. *hasde* for *hast du*, *'ne* for *eine*, *ich hab'* instead of *ich habe*...
- ✓ Rule breakdowns in grammar: e.g. *weil* with main clause instead of subordinate clause, *trotz* and *wegen* with dative instead of genitive ...
- ✓ Words which are often only used in spoken German or have a different meaning there: e.g. *anmachen*: *Ich mache das Licht an, er macht sie an, ich mache den Salat an, der Salat macht mich an* ☺...  
Reinforcing words like *krass*, *super*, *mega*...  
Joke words like *Kram*, *Krempel*, *Mist*...  
Many tandem partners have a lot of fun with swear words and curses ☺.
- ✓ Metaphorical expressions: e.g. *jemand hat Tomaten auf den Augen*, *jemand hat einen Frosch im Hals*, *jemand benimmt sich wie ein Elefant im Porzellanladen*... Which metaphorical expressions, e.g. with animals or body parts, do you find in your other tandem languages?

## Working with texts

You want to read and understand texts together? Here are a few tips on how you can organize this:

- ✓ First ask yourself: What do you know about the subject of the text?
- ✓ Clarify new, difficult words before reading. This creates an expectation horizon, arouses curiosity.
- ✓ Skim over a text first. Structure it with a pen or highlighter. Don't get stuck on every difficult word. Accept that you may not understand every word immediately.
- ✓ On the second reading you can work on the text together, section by section. Situation: What is it about? When? Where? Participants, action, examples, argumentation etc.
- ✓ Formulate a short headline for each section.
- ✓ Briefly summarize the text.
- ✓ Reading a text aloud is a good exercise for pronunciation, but also helps beat shyness and the fear of hearing your own voice. But please do not read aloud until you have understood the content of the text well.

Here are a few playful tips for a tandem with texts:

- ✓ You can read a text for fun as a sports report, funeral speech, parliamentary speech, eulogy etc.
- ✓ You can cut up a text before reading and mix the parts. The tandem partner tries to reconstruct the text.
- ✓ How about a dictation?
- ✓ You can change the text by shifting the perspective (different time, different people, different place).
- ✓ With the help of a monolingual dictionary, search out all adjectives or nouns together. Replace them with the fourth or fifth following adjective or noun in the dictionary or in the text itself. This usually results in a funny, completely absurd text. But your vocabulary will increase.
- ✓ Change a text together to a newspaper item. This is especially funny with literary texts or fairy tales.
- ✓ Read a (literary) text to your tandem partner step by step. After each section, the tandem partner will advise you how to proceed.

## Useful phrases

Build a useful repertoire for your tandem languages with phrases and sentences for standard situations such as:

- ✓ greeting and saying goodbye to someone
- ✓ asking for something

- ✓ thanking someone for something
- ✓ praising and criticizing
- ✓ arguing, giving reasons
- ✓ agreeing, disagreeing
- ✓ being happy, being angry
- ✓ asking about the well-being of others, talking about your own well-being
- ✓ inviting someone to something (restaurant, café, party...)
- ✓ flirting 😊

In these areas there are important cultural differences in addition to linguistic ones. It is worthwhile to talk about them as well.

## Use your ears

Language learning is all the better the more senses we use for it. The ears are just as important as the eyes:

- ✓ Watch films or series without subtitles in your tandem languages, stop the films at regular intervals and discuss comprehension problems.
- ✓ Podcasts are also good.
- ✓ Listen to songs in your tandem languages and talk about the lyrics.
- ✓ Ask your tandem partner to record lyrics that are important for you to learn. In this way you organize your own language laboratory.

## Pronunciation and intonation

Many people who learn a language take some pronunciation problems with them up to a high level. Nobody corrects them at that stage and yet they suffer from this pronunciation problem. Here, tandem is a great opportunity:

- ✓ Help your tandem partner to pronounce difficult sounds as well as possible. Here you need a lot of patience. Important: It's all about improvement, not perfection. A desire for perfection usually only leads to frustration.
- ✓ Whenever you hear that pronunciation error in your tandem conversations, give your tandem partner a short sign (finger snapping or similar) so that she can correct herself as often as necessary.
- ✓ Please don't forget: learning pronunciation is like learning to play a musical instrument or a new sport - it takes a lot of time and practice, much more than learning grammar or vocabulary.

## Intercultural matters

Remember: Language learning is also culture learning. Many of our tandem pairs report that this is often more important for them than the language: getting to know the country and culture of their tandem partner, personally, up

close, authentically, with first-hand information that is hard to find in the media.

- ✓ Maybe you will find lectures, seminars, film evenings that are about your countries and cultures and that you can visit together.
- ✓ It is also very exciting to read travel guides (books or online) about your own country in the foreign language and talk about it together.
- ✓ What should not be talked about in your cultures. Politics, religion, money, sexuality...? Which taboo topics are there? What about family, friends, acquaintances?
- ✓ All the small cultural rules in everyday life, which we rarely find in a textbook. What is allowed, what is taboo? Blowing one's nose at the dining table, slurping while eating soup, eating and drinking in public places, paying separately/together in a café or restaurant, visiting someone at home, criticizing someone, punctuality...?
- ✓ Often very difficult are rules of politeness, "Duzen und Siezen" etc.

## Gestures, facial expressions, body language

Actually, these belong in the previous section on Intercultural Matters. But because we find this topic particularly interesting for your tandem meetings, we would like to point out:

- ✓ Are there typical gestures in your cultures?
- ✓ Do the same or similar gestures perhaps have different meanings and could lead to misunderstandings? How great is the distance when people in your cultures talk to each other?
- ✓ Are strangers allowed to touch each other?
- ✓ Which clothes do you wear in which situation?
- ✓ Formal and informal.
- ✓ Which feelings may or may not be shown publicly?

## Tandem on a high language level - training for experts

Perhaps you already have a very high language level. Maybe there are no more suitable language courses for your level. Here a tandem offers many possibilities: Working with your tandem partner, you can find out what language problems you still have. Then decide on a temporary, but targeted and intensive way of learning together.

Language areas that are particularly suitable for such training: Pronunciation and intonation, rhetoric and free speech, technical language, style of written expression, etc.

## Support in your studies

Tandem is a wonderful help if you have to give a presentation in the target language or write a semester paper. You can give the presentation in front of your tandem partner and with her help you will gain confidence. Together you can correct homework, read and understand technical literature. It is important that such help does not remain one-sided. Tip: "Language for Dinner" further below in this brochure.

## Language portfolio

Maybe you would like to keep a kind of logbook of your tandem meetings - together or individually. Here you write down when you met and what you talked about. You can formulate language goals and record your progress. Together with the materials you have used, this will form a kind of language portfolio.

Cf. [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europäisches\\_Sprachenportfolio](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europäisches_Sprachenportfolio)

## Even more suggestions and materials online

The Seagull Tandem Project offers many more suggestions, tips and materials for your tandem meetings: <http://seagull-tandem.eu/>



## A different kind of tandem?!

Tandem does not always have to mean language for language. Maybe you only have one common language or very different language levels and still want to do something together regularly. Here are three suggestions for a slightly different (and yet symbiotic ☺) tandem form:

✓ Language for culture:

Maybe you are mainly interested in the country and culture of your tandem partner, but not so much in the language. Then you can agree that you will only ever speak your native language. Instead, the country and culture of your tandem partner will be the topic of your tandem meetings.

✓ Language for dinner:

You can cook well and would like to practice the language of your tandem partner as intensively as possible. Then you are responsible for the food and you only speak the language of your tandem partner.

✓ Language for tourguiding:

Maybe you have a car and know your way around your home region. Then you can organize informative short trips or an interesting journey there for your tandem partner and you only speak the native language of your travel companion.

- ✓ Language for a computer language:  
You have learned a computer language or can program web pages. Your tandem partner wants to learn this from you, but you speak her native language.
- ✓ Language for music lessons:  
You play the piano, flute, violin, guitar ... Many people would like to learn that. You give music lessons to your tandem partner, but you speak her language.
- ✓ Language for... The list goes on. You likely have other creative ideas. Go ahead, ask us for a tandem partner with these interests.



## Contact, tandem office hours

Do you still have questions about language tandems? Would you like advice, support or assistance? Would you like to have more suggestions on what you can talk about with your tandem partner or what you can do together? Then come to the tandem consultation hour. You can come together with your tandem partner or alone. You can find information about the consultation hours on our website:

<https://uni-tuebingen.de/en/1088>


You can always send us an e-mail if you have questions or problems:

[info@daf.uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:info@daf.uni-tuebingen.de)



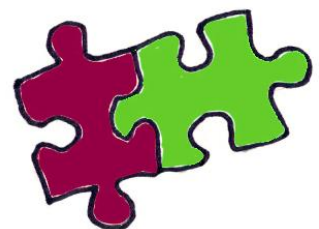
We wish you lots of motivation, fun and success in tandem!

**Coronavirus update**  
We are continuing to match up tandem partners and we are currently available via e-mail. If you do not want to meet in person, think about online options: Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, etc.  
Please take care!



## The tandem team

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