

How to continue practicing

When it comes to getting ready for the “Writing” section of the ÖSD Zertifikat A1 exam, there are different ways you can prepare outside of your German class. The DW Learn German team has put together a few tips for you. And don’t forget to check out the websites of the exam providers, too! There you’ll also find more tips and practice exams.

General tips

1. Give yourself enough time to prepare for the exam. It makes more sense to study regularly than to cram for hours at the last minute.
2. Look for a conversation partner - ideally a native German speaker learning your native language. That way you practice both languages together. This is also something you can do online.
3. You won’t have much time for this part of the test, so be sure to time yourself while you practice and assess how long you needed to complete this section.
4. It’s fine if at first you concentrate on one section while preparing for the exam, but make sure to also plan in time to go back and review both “Writing” sections back-to-back. You shouldn’t need more than 20 minutes for the “Writing” section. Be sure to set aside more time for Part 2 of this section, because that’s where most of your points will come from.
5. Don’t spend too much time on any one question. Don’t take too much time to think about the answer.
6. It’s important that the examiner can read your handwriting. Ask a friend to evaluate your handwriting. Are there letters that are illegible or that could be mistaken for a different letter?
7. Don’t know anyone who speaks German well? Try having AI correct your writing. You can find free AI programs by searching online. For example, you can search for “KI Textkorrektur kostenlos.” Please be aware that for an A1-level test, you will not be expected to write perfectly.
8. Review the structure of the “Writing” section of the exam.

Filling out a form

1. Think about situations in which you must fill out a form. Look for examples of forms online. For example, for signing up for a class or joining a club. Print the form out and fill it out. You might not understand every word. You can leave these parts blank.
2. Look at a form. Which terms or words are difficult for you? Think about phrases that go with these terms, like “Familienstand - Sie ist verheiratet. / Sie ist ledig. / ...” If you’re practicing with forms you found online, for example, focus on the words that appear often in different forms.
3. Do you have a study partner? Think of situations in which you must fill out a form. Choose someone who needs to fill out the form. It could be a friend or someone you’ve made up. Write a short text, for example, “Sara Miller would like a spot for her son Anton in a swimming course. He is six years old. He has time on Monday evenings at 6.” Then each person creates a form for the situation. Fill out your study partner’s form. Review the texts and see how you each did.

Writing a simple text

1. During the exam you will need to write a simple message, for example, an e-mail or a postcard, and answer three questions. Don’t make your writing too complicated. Write simple sentences with words and grammatical structures you already know.
2. Review how to write personal and formal e-mails. Also review different ways to start a message and to sign off.
3. Review different W-questions again. If you find this difficult, you can also use AI to help. Here’s an example of a prompt: “Schreib mir bitte eine Liste mit W-Fragewörtern im Deutschen.” (Write me a list of W-questions in German.) Then, think of a topic for an e-mail and make questions using the question words. For example, if you’ve chosen the topic “Kinobesuch,” the questions could be “Welchen Film wollen wir sehen?” or “Wann treffen wir uns?” Answer the questions.
4. Have AI write short e-mails that you can respond to. Here’s an example of a prompt: „Schreib eine kurze, persönliche E-Mail auf A1-Niveau. Jemand sagt ein Treffen mit einer Freundin ab. Die E-Mail soll ca. 30–40 Wörter lang sein und drei Fragen an die Freundin enthalten.“ (Write a short, personal e-mail in A1-level German. A person is canceling plans with a friend. The e-mail should be 30-40 words long and contain three questions for the friend.)

5. Do you have a study partner? Write down different topics on index cards for a short text. These could be, for example, an invitation to a party, a cancellation for an appointment, or a request. Each person draws a card and writes a text with three questions for their partner. Swap texts and respond. Don't lose track of time – it shouldn't take longer than 15 minutes.
6. If you have a study partner, you can regularly write each other e-mails. You can then ask your study partner to check your text and give you tips. Please note: Your text doesn't have to be error-free, but it needs to be understandable.