

# Stop Sounding Like a Textbook

## German Speaking Fillers That Make You Sound More Natural

You know the grammar.

You know the vocabulary.

But when you speak German, you still sound a little... rehearsed.

That's often because real conversations are full of **small filler words and expressions**.

Native speakers don't always speak in perfectly structured sentences. They use words like:

**also, na ja, genau, eigentlich, ehrlich gesagt...**

These little words can make your German sound much more natural.

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### 1. also

**Meaning:** so / well / therefore

One of the most common words you'll hear in spoken German.

**Example:**

**Also, ich denke, dass das eine gute Idee ist.**

So, I think that's a good idea.

**Also, was machen wir jetzt?**

So, what are we doing now?

💡 Great when you want to start an answer or collect your thoughts.

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### 2. na ja

**Meaning:** well... / hmm...

Use it when you're unsure, hesitant or don't completely agree.

**Example:**

**Na ja, ich weiß nicht.**

Well... I don't know.

**Na ja, das ist nicht so einfach.**

Well, it's not that simple.

This instantly sounds more conversational than a direct **Nein**.

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## 3. genau

**Meaning:** exactly / right

You'll hear this everywhere.

**Example:**

**Genau! Das meine ich auch.**

Exactly! That's what I mean too.

**Ja, genau.**

Yes, exactly.

It is also commonly used just to show that you're listening and following the conversation.

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## 4. eigentlich

**Meaning:** actually / really / by the way

This word is extremely useful — but its exact meaning depends on the sentence.

**Example:**

**Eigentlich wollte ich heute zu Hause bleiben.**

Actually, I wanted to stay home today.

**Was machst du eigentlich am Wochenende?**

What are you doing this weekend, by the way?

**Wie heißt du eigentlich?**

What's your name, actually?

💡 **eigentlich** often makes a question sound softer and more natural.

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## 5. ehrlich gesagt

**Meaning:** honestly speaking / to be honest

Perfect when giving your real opinion.

**Example:**

**Ehrlich gesagt finde ich den Film langweilig.**

Honestly, I find the film boring.

**Ehrlich gesagt bin ich nicht ganz überzeugt.**

To be honest, I'm not completely convinced.

Very useful for B1/B2 speaking tasks too.

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## 6. natürlich

**Meaning:** of course / naturally

**Example:**

**Natürlich kann ich dir helfen.**

Of course I can help you.

**Das ist natürlich wichtig.**

That is of course important.

Be careful: sometimes **natürlich** means “naturally,” not only “of course.”

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## 7. vielleicht

**Meaning:** maybe / perhaps

A simple word, but extremely useful when you want to sound less direct.

**Example:**

**Vielleicht können wir später darüber sprechen.**

Maybe we can talk about it later.

**Vielleicht hast du recht.**  
Maybe you're right.

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## 8. irgendwie

**Meaning:** somehow / kind of

Very common in spoken German.

**Example:**

**Das ist irgendwie komisch.**  
That's kind of strange.

**Ich bin heute irgendwie müde.**  
I'm somehow / kind of tired today.

It can make your statement sound softer or less absolute.

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## 9. wirklich

**Meaning:** really

**Example:**

**Das ist wirklich interessant.**  
That is really interesting.

**Ich weiß wirklich nicht.**  
I really don't know.

Simple — but very useful in natural speech.

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## 10. eigentlich schon

**Meaning:** actually, yes / more or less yes

**Example:**

**Gefällt dir Berlin?**

Do you like Berlin?

**Ja, eigentlich schon.**

Yes, actually I do.

This sounds much more natural than only saying **Ja**.

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## 11. eigentlich nicht

**Meaning:** not really / actually no

**Example:**

**Magst du Kaffee?**

**Eigentlich nicht.**

Not really.

Another useful way to avoid a very blunt **Nein**.

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## 12. im Grunde

**Meaning:** basically / essentially

**Example:**

**Im Grunde bin ich damit einverstanden.**

Basically, I agree with that.

This is especially useful at B1/B2 level.

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## 13. jedenfalls

**Meaning:** anyway / in any case

**Example:**

**Jedenfalls müssen wir jetzt eine Entscheidung treffen.**

Anyway, we have to make a decision now.

Useful when you want to bring the conversation back to the main point.

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## 14. sagen wir mal ...

**Meaning:** let's say...

**Example:**

**Sagen wir mal, du hast drei Tage Zeit.**

Let's say you have three days.

Great for giving examples or hypothetical situations.

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## 15. ich meine ...

**Meaning:** I mean...

Extremely common in everyday conversation.

**Example:**

**Ich meine, das ist doch normal.**

I mean, that's normal.

**Ich meine... vielleicht sollten wir warten.**

I mean... maybe we should wait.

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## 16. weißt du ...

**Meaning:** you know...

**Example:**

**Weißt du, manchmal braucht man einfach eine Pause.**

You know, sometimes you just need a break.

Use this in informal conversations.

For formal conversations, avoid using **weißt du** with strangers.

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## 17. keine Ahnung

**Meaning:** no idea

Much more natural in casual conversation than always saying:

**Ich weiß es nicht.**

**Example:**

**Wann kommt er?**

**Keine Ahnung.**

No idea.

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## 18. mal sehen

**Meaning:** we'll see / let's see

**Example:**

**Kommst du morgen mit?**

**Mal sehen.**

We'll see.

Very useful when you don't want to give a definite answer.

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## 19. Moment mal

**Meaning:** wait a moment / hold on

**Example:**

**Moment mal, das verstehe ich nicht.**

Wait a second, I don't understand that.

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## 20. ach so!

**Meaning:** Oh, I see!

One of those expressions you'll hear constantly in German conversations.

**Example:**

**Der Kurs beginnt erst um zehn.**

**Ach so!**

Oh, I see!



## Compare These Two Speakers

**Textbook German:**

**Ich denke, dass es eine gute Idee ist. Ich stimme zu. Vielleicht können wir das machen.**

Correct?

Yes.

Natural?

A little stiff.

**More conversational German:**

**Also, ich finde die Idee eigentlich ganz gut. Ja, genau. Vielleicht können wir das einfach mal ausprobieren.**

Same message.

But much more natural.



## Your Natural German Starter Pack

If you only learn 10, start with:

**also** — so / well

**na ja** — well...

**genau** — exactly  
**eigentlich** — actually  
**ehrlich gesagt** — honestly  
**natürlich** — of course  
**vielleicht** — maybe  
**irgendwie** — somehow / kind of  
**ich meine** — I mean  
**ach so** — oh, I see

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## But Don't Overdo It

Speaking fillers help your German sound natural.

But adding **also** after every three words will not magically make you sound fluent. 😊

Use fillers to:

- give yourself time to think
- react naturally
- soften your opinion
- connect ideas
- make conversation flow better

The goal is not to memorise fillers.

The goal is to start **hearing them, understanding them and using them naturally.**

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## Mini Challenge

Make these sentences sound more natural.

1.

**Ich weiß nicht.**

Try:

**Na ja, ich weiß nicht.**

2.

**Ich finde das gut.**

Try:

**Also, eigentlich finde ich das ganz gut.**

**3.**

**Ich bin nicht einverstanden.**

Try:

**Ehrlich gesagt sehe ich das etwas anders.**

**4.**

**Ja.**

Try:

**Ja, genau!**

**5.**

**Ich verstehe.**

Try:

**Ach so! Jetzt verstehe ich.**

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## **Free German Learning Resource by Zenith School of Foreign Languages**

Knowing German is not only about building grammatically correct sentences.

It's also about knowing how people **actually speak**.

Little expressions like **also, na ja, eigentlich, genau** may look insignificant — but they can completely change the rhythm of your German.

**Less textbook. More real German.**

**Learn German. Build real language skills.**