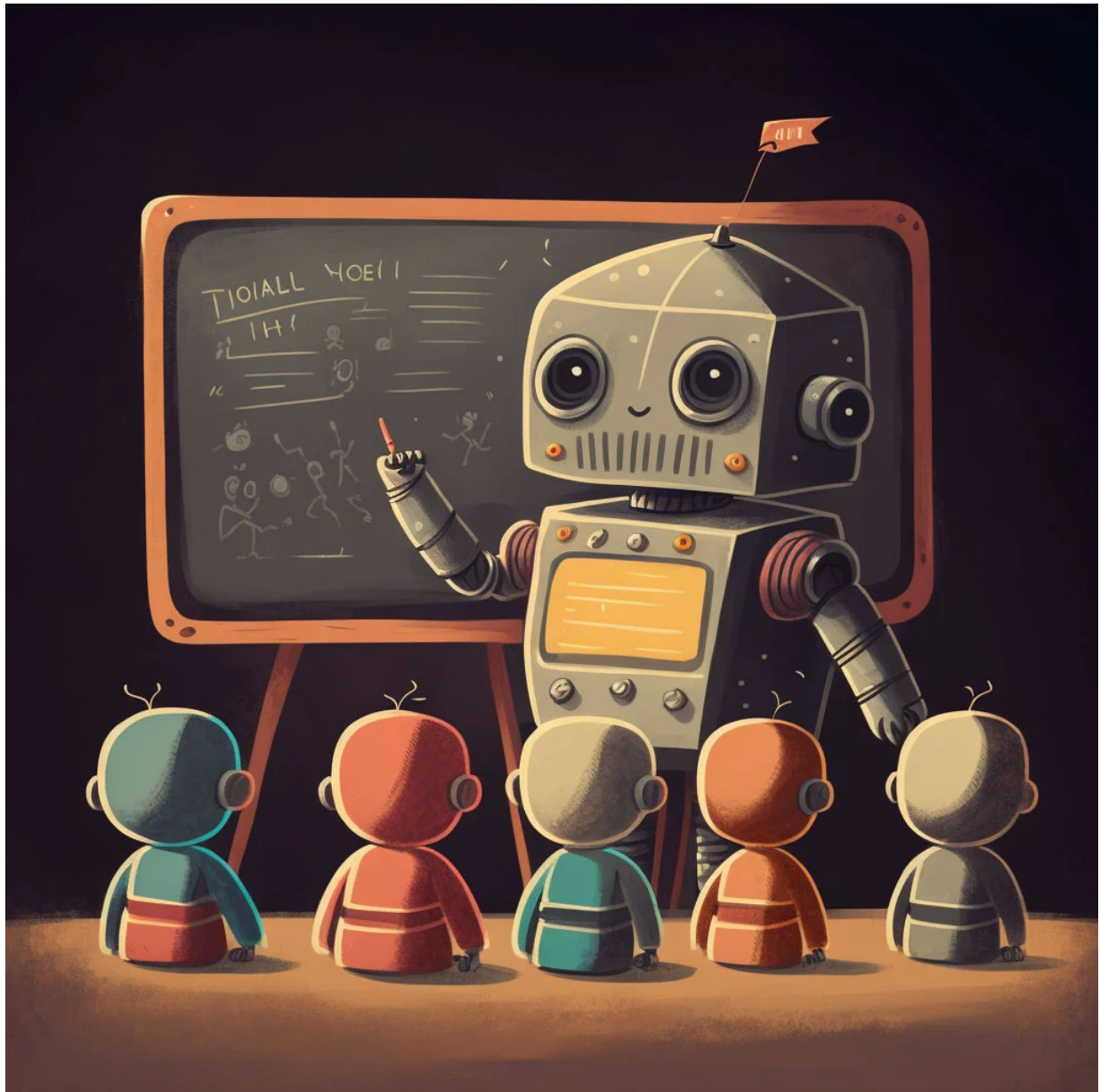


## 7 Ways To Learn German with ChatGPT

André Klein · Wednesday, December 7th, 2022



AI chatbots can be an amazing tool for language learning, especially if you're studying on your own. There are several potential benefits to using AI chatbots for language learning, such as providing personalized and customized instruction, allowing learners to practice their language skills in a interactive and engaging way, and offering instant feedback and correction.

In theory, AI chatbots can be more affordable and accessible than traditional lan-

guage lessons, making them a useful option for learners who may not have access to a teacher or who cannot afford expensive language courses. But are they any good? Today I'd like to explore some tips and tricks how you can integrate ChatGPT into your language learning routine.

In my examples I will focus mostly on [learning German](#), but most of these should work for other languages as well.

Please note that AI (not unlike humans) is fallible and will sometimes get things wrong or just be generally weird. Caution is advised!

## What is ChatGPT?

ChatGPT is a chatbot that uses natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning algorithms to understand and respond to user input. NLP is a branch of artificial intelligence that deals with the interaction between computers and human language, and it is used to enable chatbots like ChatGPT to understand and interpret human speech.

This can be useful for a variety of purposes, such as providing information, answering questions, or engaging in interactive conversations. It doesn't really "understand" language in any sense of the word, but if you feed it the right input you can get impressive outputs. Remember: GIGO (garbage in, garbage out)

For the time being ChatGPT is free and anyone can use it here: [chat.openai.com/chat](https://chat.openai.com/chat) (needs registration). So, let's find out how we can learn German with ChatGPT!

## 1. Set ChatGPT To Your Target Language

Every conversation with this chatbot is running in a thread. While you can't change its default language you can set its output language per thread by writing something like:

*let's speak German*

Here's the response I got:

*Gerne. Wie möchtest du gerne sprechen?*

*Translation: Sure. How would you like to speak?*

*Note: “Gerne” means “gladly” or “with pleasure” in German. “Wie” means “how” and “möchtest” is the informal second-person singular form of the verb “mögen,” meaning “to like.” “Du” is the informal second-person singular pronoun, similar to “you” in English. “Gerne sprechen” is the infinitive form of the verb “to speak,” and “möchtest” is the conjugated form of the verb “to like” in the present tense.*

As you can see, not only did ChatGPT respond in German, it even provided a translation and further explanation of the word “gerne”. That’s pretty helpful!

Let’s continue the conversation:

*Wie geht es dir?*

*Mir geht es gut, danke der Nachfrage. Wie geht es dir?*

*Translation: I’m doing well, thank you for asking. How are you?*

*Note: “Wie geht es dir?” is a common way to ask “How are you?” in German. “Mir geht es gut” means “I’m doing well” and “danke der Nachfrage” is a common way to say “thank you for asking.” “Wie” means “how” and “geht” is the third-person singular present tense conjugation of the verb “gehen,” which means “to go.” “Es” is a pronoun that means “it” and “dir” is the second-person singular pronoun, similar to “you” in English.*

You see how well this works? Simply by having a chat conversation with this bot you can learn quite a bit.

## 2. Correct Your Grammar And Spelling

As you've seen above this bot seems to "know" quite a lot about grammar and spelling. Will it be able to correct my input and perhaps provide additional information? Let's give it a try:

*Can you correct my German grammar and spelling?*

*Sure, I'd be happy to help with that! To get started, could you provide the German sentence or text that you would like me to correct? I'll do my best to help with any grammar or spelling issues that I can identify. Please keep in mind that I am a large language model trained by OpenAI, so my knowledge is based on the text that has been fed into my training data. If there are any specific topics or areas that you would like me to focus on, let me know and I will do my best to assist.*

That sounds promising! Let's give it some broken grammar and spelling:

*Ich habe ein House gekauft. Es ist zehr schon.*

*Here is a corrected version of your sentence:*

*"Ich habe ein Haus gekauft. Es ist sehr schön."*

*In this sentence, "House" should be spelled "Haus" and "gekauft" should be spelled "gekauft". Additionally, "zehr" should be spelled "sehr" and "schon" should be spelled "schön". In German, nouns are always capitalized, so "Haus" is capitalized in the corrected sentence. I hope this helps! Let me know if you have any other questions or if you would like me to provide more detailed explanations.*

Not bad at all! It caught all of my spelling errors, fixed the participle “gekauft” and even reminded me that nouns are always capitalized, although that wasn’t really an issue here.

### 3. Ask for Explanations About Grammar

From what we’ve seen above, ChatGPT seems to have a knack for explaining linguistic stuff. Let’s try to have it explain one of my favorite German grammar topics: Wechselpräpositionen, also known as “two-way prepositions” (yay!)

*I’m having a hard time with Wechselpräpositionen. Can you explain them to me in simple terms?*

*Wechselpräpositionen, also known as “dative-accusative prepositions” or “two-way prepositions,” are a type of preposition in German that can take either the dative or the accusative case, depending on the meaning of the sentence. These prepositions are called “Wechselpräpositionen” because they can “switch” between the dative and the accusative case.*

*The most common Wechselpräpositionen in German are:*

- *an (at, to)*
- *auf (on, onto)*
- *hinter (behind)*
- *in (in, into)*
- *neben (next to)*
- *über (over, above)*
- *unter (under, beneath)*
- *vor (in front of)*
- *zwischen (between)*

*The case that these prepositions take depends on the meaning of the sentence. For example, if the preposition is indicating a location or destination, it takes the accusative case. For example:*

- *Er setzt sich an den Tisch. (He sits down at the table.)*

- *Sie hängt das Bild auf die Wand. (She hangs the picture on the wall.)*

*On the other hand, if the preposition is indicating a direction or movement, it takes the ~~dative~~ case. For example:*

- *Er geht auf den Tisch zu. (He walks towards the table.)*
- *Sie sieht dem Mann hinterher. (She watches the man walk away.)*

*It can take some practice to learn when to use the dative or accusative case with these prepositions, but with some practice and exposure to the language, it will become more natural. I hope this explanation helps clarify things for you. If you have any other questions, feel free to ask and I'd be happy to help.*

Alright, so while it generally is an okay-looking answer to my question, there is a glaring issue here. It switched dative and accusative! For location or destination we use dative, and for direction or movement we use accusative. Whoops!

As I've heard someone say recently: "ChatGPT is very confident, but it's also very confident when it's wrong." Keep in mind that it's currently in an early phase and may get better over time. For now, you can definitely use it to explain basic grammar stuff (the list of prepositions it gave above is accurate for example), but I'd always double check with a human (or human written resource).

UPDATE: Since I first published this post on March 5th, 2023, it seems that ChatGPT improved. Upon tryin again the same prompt today (March 31st), it now seems to give the correct answer (emphasis mine):

*I'm having a hard time with Wechselpräpositionen. Can you explain them to me in simple terms?*

*Sure, I'd be happy to explain Wechselpräpositionen!*

*Wechselpräpositionen, also known as two-way prepositions or two--*

*case prepositions, are prepositions in German that can take either the accusative or dative case, depending on the context of the sentence.*

*The following are the Wechselpräpositionen in German:*

*an, auf, hinter, in, neben, über, unter, vor, zwischen*

*When these prepositions are used with a motion or direction, they take the **accusative** case. For example:*

- *Ich gehe in den Park. (I am going into the park.)*
- *Er stellt die Tasse auf den Tisch. (He is placing the cup on the table.)*

*When these prepositions are used to indicate location or position, they take the **dative** case. For example:*

- *Der Hund liegt neben dem Bett. (The dog is lying next to the bed.)*
- *Das Bild hängt über dem Sofa. (The picture is hanging above the sofa.)*

*It's important to note that there are some exceptions and special cases where the preposition might take a different case or have a different meaning. However, understanding the basic usage of Wechselpräpositionen can help you use them correctly in many common situations.*

Well done, ChatGPT!

## **4. Let It Write Simplified Stories For You**

Yes, I know, as an author of [German stories for beginners](#) I probably shouldn't be telling you this, but ChatGPT can actually write some basic stories which may be useful for reading comprehension.

Tip: Use “simple language”, “Leichte Sprache” or similar keywords to make sure it keeps its syntax and vocabulary light and easy.

*Hey, can you write a German story for me in simple language?*

*Gerne! Hier ist eine kurze Geschichte auf Deutsch:*

*Es war einmal ein kleines Mädchen namens Anna. Sie lebte in einem kleinen Dorf in den Bergen. Anna liebte es, im Wald spazieren zu gehen und die Natur zu beobachten. Eines Tages beschloss sie, tiefer in den Wald zu gehen, als sie je zuvor gewesen war.*

*Sie lief den ganzen Tag und kam zu einem kleinen Fluss. Der Fluss war kristallklar und sah sehr einladend aus. Anna beschloss, ihre Füße im Fluss zu kühlen. Als sie im Wasser stand, bemerkte sie plötzlich eine kleine Flasche, die im Schlamm lag. Sie grub sie aus und öffnete sie. Zu ihrer Überraschung fand sie einen Zettel darin, auf dem stand: "Wünsch dir etwas, und es wird wahr!"*

*Anna war sehr aufgeregt. Sie dachte lange nach und wünschte sich schließlich, dass sie immer glücklich sein würde. Plötzlich fühlte sie sich von innen heraus warm und glücklich. Sie wusste, dass ihr Wunsch in Erfüllung gegangen war.*

*Von da an lebte Anna ein glückliches Leben im Wald. Sie genoss jeden Tag und war immer dankbar für alles, was sie hatte.*

Alright! There's no real narrative tension here and the "plot" is ... well, basic, but it's something to read. Also, I do think some of the words and expression may not actually be all that "simple", but you can certainly use such a story for practice. Now let's have it create a glossary of difficult words from the text and translate them to English:

*Can you create a table of difficult words from this story and translate them to English?*



*Gerne! Hier ist eine Tabelle mit einigen schwierigen Wörtern aus der Geschichte und ihren Übersetzungen ins Englische:*

kleines Mädchen	little girl
Dorf	village
Berge	mountains
Wald	forest
spazieren gehen	to go for a walk
Natur	nature
tiefer	deeper
Fluss	river
kristallklar	crystal clear
einladend	inviting
Füße kühlen	to cool one's feet
Schlamm	mud
Zettel	note
darin	in it

Pretty impressive!

In next steps you could now ask ChatGPT to continue writing the story (just write “continue”), translate the whole text to English or other things. I’ve even experimented with having it come up with simple text comprehension questions for these stories and it worked surprisingly well.

## **5. Summarize and Simplify Complex Texts**

One thing that ChatGPT excels at is summarizing and rewriting existing texts. You can feed it paragraphs from newspapers in German for example and ask for quick summaries (either in English or German) to check if you’ve understood everything.

Even better for practice is taking paragraphs which are written at native levels and breaking them down into [simplified German](#) or “Einfache Sprache”. There are a number of guidelines for simplified German, e.g.:

1. Using simple words that are easy to understand.
2. Using short sentences with only one idea per sentence.
3. Avoiding complex sentence structures.
4. Using active voice instead of passive voice.
5. Avoiding abstract or technical terms, and using concrete language.
6. Breaking down complex ideas into smaller, simpler parts.
7. Providing context and explaining any unfamiliar concepts or terms.

For our example, let’s take a paragraph from a [news article from Tagesschau](#) about increased prices for flights to tourist vacations. Here’s the original paragraph:

*“Besonders stark steigen auch die Flugpreise bei den bislang als preiswert geltenden Zielen Bulgarien, Türkei und Ägypten. Sie sind bis zu 28 Prozent teurer. Besonders kostspielig sind in diesem Jahr die klassischen Fernreiseziele wie die Dominikanische Republik oder Thailand. 2022 war hier wegen der Pandemie die Nachfrage noch gering, die Preise moderat. In diesem Jahr sind Flüge dort hin bis zu 50 Prozent teurer.”*

It’s not extremely convoluted, but it could definitely be made simpler. Let’s ask ChatGPT to rewrite it by using some of our “Einfache Sprache” rules:

*Please rewrite the following paragraph in “Einfache Sprache”, using short main clauses, only active voice, and basic vocabulary while avoiding abstract or technical terms and using concrete language:  
[insert paragraph]*

*Flugpreise steigen stark für Bulgarien, Türkei und Ägypten, die bisher billig waren. Sie kosten jetzt bis zu 28 Prozent mehr. Die klassischen Fernreiseziele wie die Dominikanische Republik oder Thailand sind sehr teuer in diesem Jahr. 2022 gab es wegen Corona wenig Nachfrage, deshalb waren die Preise normal. Aber dieses Jahr kosten Flüge dorthin bis zu 50 Prozent mehr.*

That's not bad at all. It did use one subclause (“..., die ... waren.”) but it still kept everything short and concise. Also it avoided phrases like “preiswert geltend” and “kostspielig”, opting for the simpler “billig” and “sehr teuer”. Also it replaced “moderat” with “normal”.

## 6. Create Mock Tests For Your Language Level.

Another cool idea is to let ChatGPT create custom tests for you, providing you with the kinds of questions you would usually encounter in a standard test, such as the [Goethe A1 Zertifikat](#). Just keep in mind that most of these tests will use “listening comprehension” questions so it's best to focus on text-based comprehension questions here.

*Create a mock Goethe A1 test in German, focusing on reading comprehension:*

### *Teil 1: Leseverstehen*

*Lesen Sie den folgenden Text und beantworten Sie die Fragen auf Deutsch:*

*Guten Tag, ich heie Maria und ich komme aus Barcelona. Ich bin 23 Jahre alt und ich studiere Germanistik an der Universitt in Barcelona. Ich lerne Deutsch, weil ich gerne in Deutschland arbeiten mchte. In meiner Freizeit gehe ich oft spazieren und ich treffe mich gerne mit Freunden in Cafs. Ich wohne in einer kleinen Wohnung in der Nhe der Universitt.*

*Fragen:*

- a) Woher kommt Maria?*
- b) Wie alt ist sie?*
- c) Was studiert sie?*
- d) Warum lernt sie Deutsch?*
- e) Was macht sie in ihrer Freizeit?*

*Lesen Sie den folgenden Text und whlen Sie die richtige Antwort*

*aus:*

*Meine Familie ist sehr groß. Ich habe zwei Brüder und drei Schwestern. Mein Vater arbeitet als Arzt und meine Mutter ist Hausfrau. Wir wohnen in einem großen Haus am Stadtrand von Berlin. In unserer Freizeit spielen wir gerne Fußball und gehen oft schwimmen.*

*Welche Aussage ist richtig?*

- a) Die Familie hat zwei Söhne und drei Töchter.*
- b) Der Vater arbeitet als Lehrer.*
- c) Die Familie wohnt in einer Wohnung in der Innenstadt.*
- d) Sie spielen gerne Basketball in ihrer Freizeit.*

*Lesen Sie den folgenden Text und vervollständigen Sie die Lücken:*

*Ich heiße Tim und ich bin 27 Jahre alt. Ich komme aus England und ich spreche (1) \_\_\_\_\_ und ein bisschen Deutsch. Ich arbeite als Englischlehrer an einer Sprachschule in Frankfurt. In meiner Freizeit spiele ich gerne Gitarre und ich gehe oft in (2) \_\_\_\_\_ in der Stadt. Ich wohne in einer kleinen Wohnung (3) \_\_\_\_\_ der Sprachschule.*

*Lücken:*

*Englisch / Deutsch*

*Cafés / Kinos*

*in der Nähe von / weit weg von*

*Teil 2: Lückentext*

*Füllen Sie die Lücken im folgenden Text aus:*

*Hallo, ich heiße Anna und ich komme aus Wien. Ich bin (1) \_\_\_\_\_ Jahre alt und ich studiere Jura an der Universität in Wien. Ich lerne (2) \_\_\_\_\_ und ich möchte später als Anwältin arbeiten. In meiner Freizeit lese ich gerne Bücher und ich gehe oft ins Theater. Ich wohne (3) \_\_\_\_\_ einer kleinen Wohnung in der Innenstadt.*

*Lücken:*

*24 / 25 / 26*

*Deutsch / Englisch / Französisch*

*in / auf / an*

*Viel Erfolg!*

Pretty nice! That's definitely around the A1 level and tracks with the kind of questions you would encounter in a Goethe A1 test. Let's see if it can provide an answer key as well.

*Please provide the correct answers for these exercises*

*Teil 1: Leseverstehen*

*Fragen:*

- a) Maria kommt aus Barcelona.*
- b) Sie ist 23 Jahre alt.*
- c) Maria studiert Germanistik.*
- d) Sie lernt Deutsch, weil sie gerne in Deutschland arbeiten möchte.*
- e) In ihrer Freizeit geht sie oft spazieren und trifft sich gerne mit Freunden in Cafés.*

*Die richtige Antwort ist a) Die Familie hat zwei Söhne und drei Töchter.*

*Lücken:*

*Englisch und ein bisschen Deutsch.*

*Cafés und Kinos.*

*in der Nähe der Sprachschule.*

*Teil 2: Lückentext*

*Lücken:*

*24 / 25 / 26 (Eine der drei Angaben ist richtig.)*

*Deutsch*

*in*

Not bad at all. The only issue I can see with this is that it accepted only "Deutsch" as a correct answer for the "Lückentext", while "Englisch" or "Französisch" should be acceptable as well, but apart from that the solutions are spot-on.

## 7. Come Up With Personalized Study Plans

Many times students ask me how many words they should learn per day and how to space study session over time intervals to maximize their efforts. Recently, I read about someone having ChatGPT coming up with a nutrition and exercise plan, so let's see if it can do something similar for a language study plan:

*I want to learn 1000 new words in German over a period of one month. Can you come up with a study schedule for me?*

*Of course, I can come up with a study schedule for you to learn 1000 new words in German over a period of one month. Here's a possible schedule you can follow:*

*Week 1:*

*Day 1-7: Learn 50 words per day. Use flashcards or apps such as Duolingo or Memrise to help you memorize the words.*

*Week 2:*

*Day 8-14: Review the 350 words you've learned so far. Test yourself using flashcards or quizzes.*

*Day 15-21: Learn another 50 words per day, focusing on words related to your interests or topics you need for your daily life.*

*Week 3:*

*Day 22-28: Review the 700 words you've learned so far. Test yourself using flashcards or quizzes.*

*Day 29-30: Learn 100 words per day, focusing on the words you find most challenging.*

*Week 4:*

*Day 31-35: Review all the 1000 words you've learned. Test yourself using flashcards or quizzes.*

*Day 36-30: Practice using the words in sentences or dialogues. Watch German movies or TV shows, and read German articles or books to reinforce your learning.*

*Remember, it's important to practice consistently every day and to review regularly to help the words stick in your memory. Good luck with your German language learning!*

Alright! I like the suggestion of flashcard apps, focusing on daily life vocabulary and immersion with [German books](#) and movies). Also the idea of using some days purely for review is actually not bad. Regardless of the objective value of this goal of learning 1000 words in a month (may not be for everyone), the strategy ChatGPT offered isn't far off from what I'd recommend in such a case. It's a shame it didn't recommend ANKI for more advanced [spaced-repetition](#) patterns though. Also, note how the AI struggles with getting its "head" around the concept of 30/31 days per month.

As a further suggestion for improving this plan you could even let ChatGPT write custom articles and stories for you which contain the particular words you're studying and use those to reinforce, together with flashcards.

## Conclusion

While ChatGPT in its current form (December 2022) is pretty impressive, I think it's obvious from the above examples that it has its strengths and weaknesses. As it stands I think it can be a great tool to have basic conversations in your target language, let it correct your spelling and grammar, and produce little stories or text for practice sessions. When it comes to explaining more complex topics, there's definitely some potential here, and if you can't afford [textbooks](#) or tutors it may be an okayish alternative, but please keep in mind to always (!) look at results with a critical eye.

**UPDATE:** Another cool idea I just stumbled over: learn German with ChatGPT by creating interactive German text adventures:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OixkUZZeOTM>

What do you think? Have you experimented yet with ChatGPT in language learning? Let me know in the comments!

**UPDATE:** Things are moving fast and since the release of [ChatGPT-4](#) answers are supposedly much more accurate. I haven't yet had time to play with it, but it would be interesting to feed it the same questions again and see if it still makes the same mistakes as before.

**UPDATE:** Redditor [u/Impossible\\_Fox7622](#) came up with some other cool ideas, including:

- Ask ChatGPT to write sentences for certain topics/scenarios, e.g. “Write 50 sentences in German that I might hear at the supermarket/bank/office”
- Ask for sentences in particular genres, e.g. “Write 50 sentences that might appear in a crime novel”
- Ask for various difficulty rewrites, e.g. “Write a text in German at the level A1 for [topic]”. Then ask it to rewrite at A2/B1, etc.
- Create custom texts based on words you are currently learning, e.g. “Generate a text about immigration using the following vocabulary: [word list]”

OP recommends using ChatGPT-4, but the regular free version should provide workable results as well. See [original post](#) for further suggestions.

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