Episode 044 – Grammar

Verbs with prefixes

Prefixes can be added to German verbs to give them completely new meanings.

Examples:
suchen: Ich suche meine Freundin Julia. (= I’m looking for my friend Julia.)
aussuchen: Ich suche mir ein Trikot aus. (= I choose one of several uniforms.)
versuchen: Versuchen Sie es an der Information. (= Try asking at the information desk.)

With some verbs, the conjugated form of the verb can be separated from the verb prefix. These are called separable verbs. The prefix is placed at the end of the sentence and the second part of the verb is conjugated as usual.

Examples:
einsteigen: Harry steigt in die U-Bahn ein. (= Harry gets into the tram.)
umsteigen: Er steigt an der nächsten Haltestelle um. (= Harry switches trams at the next stop.)
aussteigen: Harry steigt am Bahnhof aus. (= Harry gets out at the train station.)

Some verbs have prefixes that cannot stand by themselves. These are called inseparable verbs because the verb and its prefix jointly form an inseparable unit.

Examples:
versuchen: Versuchen Sie es an der Information.
besuchen: Harry besucht Tom in Berlin.