

Common Pitfalls

1. *sich* [active infinitive] *lassen* should be translated as a passive, e.g. *sich tragen lassen* ‘have oneself carried.’ Try imagining an implied agent: ‘let [someone] carry you.’ See also my passives handout.
2. *im gegebenen Falle* ‘in certain [lit. ‘given’] cases.’ *Fall* can only mean ‘fall[=drop], case, circumstance’; it is never a season.
3. *ja* as interjection is typically ‘surely’
4. *lehren* ‘teach’; *lernen* ‘learn’
5. *das Glauben* ‘faith’; *der Glaubende* ‘the believer’ (also *der Gläubige*). Remember that for a verb to become an agent noun (*believer*), you need the present participle marker *-end-* ! (Or, as in *Gläubige*, the adjectival marker *-ig*, after which transformation the adjective can be used as an agent noun.)
6. *das Leben* ‘life’; *der Leib* ‘the body.’ If you’re not sure you know the word, looking it up pays off! Also, make sure to reread your translation when you’re done, keeping an eye out for logical pairs: *Leib und Seele* ‘body and soul’ ; *Leben und Tod* ‘life and death.’ The couple ‘life and soul’ should send alarm bells ringing!
7. Similar considerations apply to *jeder Angehörige einer gens*: although *Angehörige* is polysemous, there is no such thing as a tribe’s relative, though a member of a tribe makes good sense.
8. *gelten* often means ‘be considered’: *bei den Germanen galten lange Haare bei Männern als Zeichen der Königswürde*.
9. *wie sehr* ‘to what extent’; *wie viel* ‘how much’; etc.
10. *wo auch (immer)* ‘wherever’; *was auch (immer)* ‘whatever’; *wer auch (immer)* ‘whoever’; etc.
11. *von* is a preposition meaning ‘of,’ but it can also mean ‘by,’ indicating the agent of a passive construction: *der Brief wurde von Augustinus geöffnet*.
12. *Bayern* (n) ‘Bavaria’: *das Gesetz Bayerns* ‘the law of Bavaria’;
Bayer (m) ‘Bavarian’: *das Gesetz der Bayern* ‘the law of the Bavarians.’
13. *bekommen* is a false friend with the meaning ‘receive.’