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How to Pass the TELC B1 German Exam: Your Complete 2026 Guide

The TELC B1 German exam opens doors. Residence permits. Citizenship applications. Job opportunities. If you're preparing for this test, you already know what's at stake.

Here's the good news: you don't need perfect German to pass. With the right preparation and test-taking strategies, you can guarantee successful completion of your B1 exam!

This guide gives you exactly that—practical tips, proven templates, and a study plan you can actually follow based on my personal experience.

What You Need to Know About the Exam Format

The TELC B1 has two parts: written and oral.

Schriftliche Prüfung	Prüfungsdauer	Höchstpunktzahl	Anteil
1. Leseverstehen	90 Minuten	75 Punkte	25 %
2. Sprachbausteine		30 Punkte	10 %
3. Hörverstehen	ca. 30 Minuten	75 Punkte	25 %
4. Schriftlicher Ausdruck	30 Minuten	45 Punkte	15 %
Mündliche Prüfung	(20 Minuten Vorbereitung)		
5. Mündlicher Ausdruck	15 Minuten	75 Punkte	25 %
Gesamt		300 Punkte	100 %

To pass, you need at least 60% in both parts - this means that you need to score at least 135 points in the written part and 45 points in the speaking section. That's your minimum target floor. Aim for 80% to give yourself a comfortable margin.

The 60% Rule: Work Smarter, Not Harder

Many learners try to be perfect at everything. Bad strategy.

Instead, identify which sections come easiest to you. Reading and listening are usually the fastest to improve. Lock in strong scores there, then let writing and speaking push your total higher.

Think of it like this: if reading feels natural, spend less energy there and focus your practice time on weaker areas. The goal is passing, not perfection.

Reading: Speed Over Perfection

The reading section tests three skills: understanding the main idea, finding specific details, and matching information.

Most questions follow predictable patterns. You'll match headings to paragraphs, answer multiple-choice questions about longer texts, and connect advertisements or notices to people's needs.

What actually helps:

- Read the questions first. Then scan for keywords. Don't read every word slowly.
- Practice with real German materials - ads, notices, websites. They look exactly like TELC tasks.
- Time yourself. If you finish reading early, use that extra time for Sprachbausteine.

Students who passed with high scores often finish reading 15-20 minutes early. That buffer time made a real difference.

Sprachbausteine: The Section That Surprises Test Takers

This is where prepared students still lose points. Sprachbausteine (speaking elements) tests grammar and vocabulary through 20 fill-in-the-blank tasks that can give you 30 points in total.

The good news? It's extremely pattern-based. Once you know what to look for, your scores jump fast.

You'll get two texts with fill-in-the-gap blanks. The first one gives you 3 options and you need to decide if any is correct. The second one gives you a list 15 words and you need to pick the 10 correct ones.

Focus on these grammar topics:

- Verb position in main vs. subordinate clauses
- Conjunctions: weil, dass, obwohl, wenn
- Cases with prepositions: mit + Dativ, für + Akkusativ

- Adjective endings after der-words and ein-words

Listening: You Only Get One Chance

Here's what catches people off guard: in TELC B1, the first part of the listening section (Globalverstehen) tracks play only once. No replays. The parts 2-Detailverstehen and 3-Selektives Verstehen play the tracks twice.

This makes preparation different from other exams.

How to prepare:

- Before each track, quickly read the questions. Predict what information you need - times, prices, reasons, opinions.
- Practice without headphones. Use speakers in a room. This simulates exam conditions where audio plays over loudspeakers. Sometimes audios have a bit of background noise like chatter or street noise.
- If you miss an answer, let it go immediately. Dwelling costs you the next question. Also, remember that there is no penalty for giving a wrong answer.

Daily listening practice helps enormously. Even 10 minutes with B1-level podcasts or YouTube videos and practice with AI like Heylama builds the stamina you need.

Writing: Templates Save Time

The writing task is either an informal or a semi-formal email reply. You'll write about things like appointment changes, complaints, requests, or invitations.

You have 30 minutes and the evaluation criteria include:

- 1 **The four Leitpunkte (key content points)** - Each task includes four mandatory points listed in the instructions. All four must be covered and presented in a logical order. Missing even one leads to point loss.
- 2 **Logical structure and flow** - Your text should have a clear structure with an introduction, main part, and conclusion. Sentences and paragraphs must be connected, not written as isolated statements.
- 3 **Appropriate tone for the reader** - You must adapt your language to the situation and the addressee (formal vs. informal). Using the wrong tone costs points.
- 4 **Correct letter format** - The text must follow basic letter or email conventions, including subject line, greeting, and closing.

Use templates:

Start with a memorized greeting: "Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren," (formal) or "Liebe Frau Schmidt," (semi-formal/informal). End with a standard closing: "Mit freundlichen Grüßen" (formal) or "Viele Grüße" (friendly). These phrases take zero thinking on exam day. That saves you 5-10 minutes for the actual content.

Aim for 100-120 words. Short, clear sentences beat long, complicated ones where grammar mistakes can hide.

TEMPLATE 1:

Betreff: Terminänderung / Anfrage / Beschwerde

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

ich schreibe Ihnen, weil ich eine Frage zu [Thema] habe.

In den letzten Tagen ist folgendes passiert: [kurze Erklärung der Situation].

Außerdem möchte ich Sie darüber informieren, dass [zweiter Leitpunkt].

Deshalb bitte ich Sie um [Bitte / Lösung / Information].

Zum Schluss möchte ich mich für Ihre Zeit bedanken.

Ich freue mich auf Ihre Antwort.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

[dein Name]

TEMPLATE 2

Betreff: Kurze Frage wegen Termin

Liebe Frau Schmidt,

ich hoffe, es geht Ihnen gut. Ich schreibe Ihnen, weil [Grund des Schreibens].

Leider kann ich den Termin am [Datum] nicht wahrnehmen, da [Begründung].

Außerdem wollte ich Sie fragen, ob [Bitte / Vorschlag].

Vielen Dank im Voraus für Ihre Unterstützung.

Viele Grüße

[dein Name]

Speaking: Structure Beats Grammar

The oral exam has three parts:

1. Introduction and small talk (family, hobbies, work)

2. Discussing a topic and giving your opinion
3. Planning something with your partner

You're not expected to sound native. You're expected to communicate.

Focus on connectors. Words like *deshalb* (therefore), *obwohl* (although), and *trotzdem* (nevertheless) show the examiner you've reached B1 level. These matter more than fancy vocabulary. Bonus hack: learn a few sentence openers from B2/C1 level such as "Ich bin der Meinung, dass ..." (My opinion is that...) or "Studien zufolge" (according to studies) that can casually drop in the conversation. That will instantly win you extra points!

Useful phrases to memorize:

- **Opinion**
 - Meiner Meinung nach ...
 - Ich finde, dass ...
 - Ich denke, dass ...
 - Für mich ist ... wichtig.
- **Reason / Explanation**
 - Der Grund dafür ist, dass ...
 - Das liegt daran, dass ...
 - Deshalb ...
 - Aus diesem Grund ...
- **Adding information**
 - Außerdem ...
 - Auch ...
 - Dazu kommt, dass ...
- **Example**
 - Zum Beispiel ...
 - Ein gutes Beispiel dafür ist ...
- **Conclusion**
 - Zum Schluss möchte ich sagen, dass ...
 - Abschließend ...
 - Insgesamt denke ich, dass ...

Check out this list of free German vocabulary lists as well.

Keep the conversation going. Ask your partner questions. If they get stuck, help them - "Was denkst du dazu?" (What do you think about that?) actually earns you points.

One more thing: The examiners don't care if your stories are true. If the topic is "your favorite childhood hobby" and you didn't have one, make something up. It's easier to talk about "playing football" than to explain something complicated.

Use Your 20-Minute Speaking Prep Time Wisely

Before the oral exam, you get 20 minutes to prepare. Don't write a full script. You can't read it anyway. Instead, write down power phrases and keywords for each of the three parts. Think of it as your cheat sheet of sentence starters, not complete answers. Plug in the advanced B1 and B2 sentence starters you memorized. Again - no detailed script, more like an outline and list of phrases.

Exam Day Checklist

Nerves can cost you points even when you're prepared.

Keep it simple:

- Confirm your exam date, time, and location
- Arrive 20-30 minutes early
- Bring your ID, confirmation letter, water, and pens
- Sleep 7-8 hours the night before
- Eat your normal breakfast—don't change your routine
- If it's winter, bring some warm clothes along as some classrooms might be cold
- Don't cram anything on the last day - maybe just do a few exercises or have a short conversation with your AI tutor, but definitely no late night cramming!

3 Mistakes That Fail Students (Even if Their German is Good)

You can know all the grammar rules in the world and still fail if you fall into these specific exam traps. Here is how to avoid the mistakes that catch most students off guard.

1. The "Perfectionist" Trap - The biggest enemy in the Reading and writing sections isn't vocabulary, it's the clock. Many students get stuck on one difficult question or thinking about what to write, obsess over it for 10 minutes, and then run out of time.

The Fix: If you don't know an answer within 30 seconds, guess and move on. You only need 60% to pass, not 100%. Don't sacrifice easy points at the end for one hard point at the start.

2. The "Silent Partner" Mistake (Speaking Section) - In the oral exam, examiners aren't just checking your grammar; they are checking your **interaction**. If you give perfect one-sentence answers but never ask your partner questions or react to what they say ("Ach, wirklich? Das ist interessant!"), you will lose crucial points for communication.

The Fix: Treat it like a ping-pong match, not an interview. Your job is to keep the ball moving. If your partner gets stuck, help them out—the examiners love to see teamwork.

3. Missing the "4th Bullet Point" (Writing Section) - In the writing task (email/letter), the prompt will always give you **four specific points** you must address. If you write a beautiful, error-free email but forget to mention *one* of those four points, your score for "Task Completion" drops drastically.

The Fix: Before you start writing, number the four points on your question sheet. As you write your email, physically cross them off. Do not submit your paper until all four are crossed out.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Is the TELC B1 exam hard?

It is designed to be fair. It tests "everyday language," so you won't need to analyze poetry or discuss complex politics. Since you only need 60% of the total possible points to pass, you have a solid buffer for making mistakes. Most students who prepare specifically for the *format* (not just the language) find it manageable.

What happens if I fail one part of the exam?

Good news: You don't always have to retake the whole thing. The TELC B1 is divided into the **Written Exam** (Reading, Listening, Writing) and the **Oral Exam** (Speaking). If you pass the Oral part but fail the Written part (or vice versa), you can keep your passing grade for the part you succeeded in and only retake the failed section. Check with your exam center, as this credit is usually valid for a specific period (often until the end of the next calendar year).

How long is the TELC B1 certificate valid?

The TELC B1 certificate is valid indefinitely. Unlike some tests (like IELTS or TOEFL) that expire after two years, your TELC certificate does not have an expiration date. However, some employers or authorities might ask for a "recent" certificate (e.g., within the last 2 years) to ensure your skills are still fresh.

Final Thought

The TELC B1 tests endurance and strategy as much as language. Walk in with your templates memorized, a clear head for listening, and confidence that you've practiced the format.

You don't have to be perfect. You just have to be B1.

Mach's gut,
Sher from Heylama