

Word of the Day - "folgen"

by German-is-easy - Thursday, July 06, 2017

<https://yourdailygerman.com/2017/07/06/folgen-folge-meaning/>

Hello everyone,

and welcome to our German Word of the Day. This time with a look at the meaning of

folgen

Now you're like "*Folgen?! Isn't that kinda boring?*"

But no, quite the opposite: not kinda boring.

Actually, it's super exciting. We'll see the full scope of what you can do with the idea of *following*. And we'll gain incredible, mind boggling insights into English and Latin, and super useful prefix versions that'll twist our minds. and see heaps of useful words. And plenty of boring, dry phrasings that can help you give your B1 writing assignment just the bloat it needs.

Pretty cool right?

So follow me into the wonderful world of *folgen*.

And let's just get the obvious out of the way and look at a few examples where *folgen* and *follow* really line up.

- Ich *folge* **dir** in die Küche.
- I *follow* you to the kitchen.

- Ich hoffe, ihr könnt **mir** *folgen*.
- I hope you can *follow* me.
(works in both senses, real following and following a train of thought)

- Wir **gehen wie folgt** vor.
- We'll **proceed/do it as follows**.

Note that folgen uses a **dative** (**mir, dir**) and not accusative (mich, dich), so it's NOT a direct object as in English. You're following "to someone" in German. But other than that it's pretty straight forward.

Now, what's the core idea of the verbs? You might be like "What a weird question, Emanuel? The core idea of following is following."

Of course, you're right. The idea of *following*, or in other words, *the idea that one thing comes after another thing* is a pretty basic concept and as is often the case with basic concepts, it can be molded in many a way. And while English is content having one word for the full range, German is like "I'm gonna need at least half a dozen words to cover..." oh... wait... haha... it's actually the other way around for once. English uses a variety of words and phrasings to cover all you can do with the idea while German does a lot with *folgen*.

Let's look at some common examples.

- **Auf** Regen *folgt* Sonne.
- **After** rain, *comes* the sun.

- Die Ming Dynastie *folgte* der Yuan Dynastie in China.
- The Ming dynasty *succeeded* the yuan dynasty in China.

- Fortsetzung *folgt*...
- To be continued...
- Lit.: **Continuation will follow**

- A ist kleiner als B, B ist kleiner als A. **Daraus folgt**, dass Einhörner existieren.
- A is smaller than B and B is smaller than A. **That implies/"from this it follows"** that unicorns exist.
(*think of that as a fixed phrasing more than a general translation for "to imply"*)

The last example might seem a bit odd. There, the idea of *A comes after B* is used in a sense of deduction and logic. So that's a little bit of mind yoga, I guess. But the others are pretty clear, I think.

However, that's still not all there is to the idea of *following*. And to find out what else is there, we'll now turn toward the noun **die Folge**.

- Der Sportler ist **dreimal in Folge** Olympiasieger geworden.
- The athlete won Olympic gold **three times in a row**.

- Ich habe gestern 4 **Folgen** hintereinander geguckt.
- I watched four **episodes** in a row yesterday.

- "Ich habe Whisky, Bier und Apfelschorle getrunken."
"In umgekehrter **Reihenfolge**, nehm ich mal an." (lit.: row-sequence)
- "I drank Whiskey, beer and [apple juice mixed with soda]"
"In reverse **order**, I take it."

All these examples were still about the idea of *one after another* in some way. But **Folge** has another BIG meaning. You know what a very basic, well-nigh universal example for *one after the other* is? Cause and effect.

First cause, then the effect. It's a sequence. *Effect* is a follow-up for *cause*. And because *effect* only happened because of *cause* ("be cause"... get it, get it?) of *cause*, we call it consequence. **Sequence**, **consequence**... they sound differently but they're the same word, just with a prefix.

The origin is the Latin verb *sequi* and now guess what that meant... **to follow**. What a coincidence. And there are more words from that origin. **Sequel** for instance or the verb **pursue** (originally: "per-sequi"), which is one of English's options for the idea of following. Or how about **second** - the one that follows in a sequence. Pretty cool, right?

And it gets actually even cooler if we look even further into the past toward the mega ancient Indo-European root **skew*. Let me tell ya', if you're interested in how and where words got their meaning, this root is proper fapping material. Erm... I mean amazing material. But we'll get back to that later. Let's focus back on our topic for now.

So, we've seen that the idea of a *consequence* is kind of a sub-category of the basic idea of *following* (*one thing coming after another thing*). And so it's no wonder that the second meaning of **die Folge**, which is probably actually the more important one, is **consequence**. Or **result**, or **ramification** or **outcome**... the translations vary, but the idea is the same.

- Rückenprobleme sind oft eine **Folge** von zu langem Sitzen.
- Back problems are often the **result** of sitting too long.

- Die Experten sind sich über die **Folgen** von Brexit nicht einig.
- Experts have split opinions about the **ramifications/consequences** of Brexit.

- Die Kuchenattacke auf den Kandidaten bleibt **folgenlos**, weil er, wie er sagt, Käsekuchen liebt.
- The cake attack on the candidate remains **without consequences** because he loves cheesecake as he claims.

- Der Coach macht einen *folgeschweren* Fehler.
- The coach makes a *grave* mistake. (lit.: "**heavy in consequences**")

- Da sie ihren Kredit nicht bedienen konnten, mussten viele Menschen ihr Haus verkaufen, was einen Verfall der Immobilienpreise *zur Folge hatte*.
- Because they couldn't pay their mortgage many people had to sell their house which *led to* a price slump./which *caused a* price slump.

Cool.

There are a few really common, useful related words so let's look at some examples for those, too. And there, we see all the related ideas we had: so *to follow* in a narrow sense, the broader sense of *one after another*, that logic-deduction stuff and the idea of a consequences. They're a little tiny bit stiff, but you can still find them in daily speech. And they definitely look really good in writing assignments.

- Dem Einstufungstest *zufolge* bin ich B1.
- *According to* the placement test I'm at B1-level.

- Ich bin *folgendermaßen* vorgegangen.
- I did this/proceeded *as follows*.

- Ich muss heute leider bis 10 arbeiten und könnte *demzufolge* frühestens halb 11 bei dir sein.
- Unfortunately, I'll have to work till 10, and *so/thus* I can't be at your place any earlier than half past 10.

- Mein Bier ist nicht mehr da. *Folglich* muss es jemand getrunken haben.
- My beer is gone. *So* someone must have drunk it.

- Aber du hast es nie probiert. Du kannst *folglich* nicht wissen, ob du wirklich nicht auf Fleisch *verzichten* könntest.
- But you never tried. *So* you can't say whether you'd be able to *say no* to meat.

In case you're now wondering if *folglich* is an alternative for German *also*, then you're right. You could

also use German *also* in the last two examples. And if you're wondering WHY *folglich* means that... well, that's a specific angle of the basic *one after another* idea of the *folgen*. You have facts and from them you deduce a new step. A follow up step if you will. We had that earlier already, remember? There was this one example with A and B and the unicorn and nothing made sense. If you don't remember it, that's okay. We've actually done quite a lot already and concentration is slipping.

We were gonna do the prefix versions next, but they're really interesting and we'll spend some time with them, so maybe it's better to make a break here and continue next time.

Now some of you're like "*Boooooooh, there were times when you would have put this into one article you lazy ass.*"

Well, yes, but that doesn't mean it's good. Like... what good is it if at the end, everyone is utterly exhausted and has forgotten all of the beginning. With the prefix versions and all, I really think it would be too much for one read, so hence the split. And come on... what could be more fitting for an article on *folgen* than a *Folge 2* :)?

So, if you have any questions about.... what?... I forgot something? The cool history? Oh yeah, right. Let's do that real quick.

The cool history

So, we talked about the origin of *sequence* and *second* for a second - the Latin verb *sequi* which meant *to follow* - and I mentioned that the Indo-European root for that would be worth a look, too... yeah, I think that's how I phrased it. Well, it is actually so cool, polar bears live there.

Badumm tish.

The root that started it all was the Indo-European **sekw-*. And the meaning of that root was something all too familiar: *following*. Yes, that's right, it had that notion from the very beginning.

What makes it so freaking cool, are the words that can be traced to that root. The list is actually pretty large, but the coolest ones in my opinion are *social*, *sign*, *suit*.

Yup, all these are most likely related and they grew out of the idea of *following*. Can you make the connection :)?

Come on, give it a try. If you want, you can share it in the comments and we can talk about it.

Or of course you can just look it up in the etymological dictionary. Here's a link to it with the entry of all the words related to the root:

[The children of the Indo-European root for "to follow"](#)

So, that's it for today. If you have questions about anything, just leave me a comment. Hope you liked it and I'll see you next week in Folge 2, with the amazing prefix versions.

Schöne Tage euch, bis dann :)

**** Vocab ****

folgen - to follow, come after

folgen aus - to result (in sense of thoughts and deductions, NOT actual results)

daraus folgt - from that it follows, this implies that

auf etwas folgen - to succeed something/someone

die Folge - the consequence, the repercussion, episode

folgeschwer - of serious consequences

folgenreich - rich in consequences

etwas zur Folge haben - have as repercussion

folgenlos - without consequences

[blah] mal in Folge - [blah] times in a row

folglich - so, thus

demzufolge - as a consequence of that, thus, also: according to that

infolgedessen - as a consequence, consequently

[blah] zufolge - according to [blah]

die Reihenfolge - the order (in sense of sequence)