

# GETTING STARTED: SUSTAINABILITY IN GERMANY

EASY TO UNDERSTAND + TIPS



A guide for international students at the Offenburg University of Applied Sciences  
by the Sustainability Group – Bee part of it!

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



## 1. MOBILITY

1.1 Public transport .....	5
1.2 Cycling: How to get a bike .....	6
1.3 Mobility by car & more .....	7

## 2. FOOD & WASTE REDUCTION

2.1 How to store food correctly in your fridge .....	8
2.2 Best before date .....	9
2.3 Plant-based food .....	10

## 3. APPS & TOOLS

Too good to go, Refill / water finder .....	12
Vinted, Ebay, Kleinanzeigen .....	13

## 4. WASTE SEPARATION

4.1 The different bins: paper, residual waste, plastic .....	14
4.2 Glass & batteries .....	15

## 5. DEPOSIT

5.1 Singel use deposit, reusable deposit, no deposit .....	17
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## 6. VENTILATION & HEATING

6.1 How to: shock ventilation in winter & summer .....	18
6.2 Heating & preventing mold .....	19

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# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Welcome to your guide for a sustainable daily life in Germany!

## FOR WHOM?



This guide is specifically designed for international students at our university.



German students will also find plenty of helpful links and tips here.



## WHAT TO EXPECT?

Based on a survey of international students, this guide addresses common challenges like Germany's complex waste separation and the deposit system.

### PRACTICAL TIPS FOR:

- Mobility
- Food & waste reduction
- Apps & digital tools
- Waste separation & deposit system
- Ventilation & heating

Our goal is to provide easy-to-understand explanations for the typical challenges you might face when trying to live sustainably in a new country. The structure follows the survey results: topics that were rated as particularly problematic or helpful by your peers are prioritized and covered in dedicated chapters.

# 1. MOBILITY

## SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

Do you feel confused by all the mobility offers? Here you can find helpful tips to find more sustainable ways to travel!



### 1.1 PUBLIC TRANSPORT



#### DB NAVIGATOR

Connection search, ticket purchase (trains and public transport within Germany and abroad); Germany ticket [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de) / DB Navigator App

- Baden-Württemberg Ticket: 28€



D-TICKET

#### DEUTSCHLANDTICKET

Use local transport throughout Germany

- Cost: 63 €/month (subscription automatically renews on a monthly basis)
- Book it in the DB Navigator app



#### ORTENAU MOBIL APP

Route search and ticket purchase in the Ortenau

Also includes bike sharing, car sharing and carpooling portal

- Day Ticket (Ortenaukarte): unlimited travel on one day  
Prices for one to three zones: 6,70 € - 10,10€
- Europass (Ortenau + Straßburg): 11€

Find all the tariffs in TGO on [www.ortenaulinie.de](http://www.ortenaulinie.de)

# 1.2 CYCLING: HOW TO GET A BIKE



## BIKE-SHARING

with Nextbike/Einfach Mobil

Pay 24€/year and always take the bike 30 minutes for free.

Check it out on: <https://www.nextbike.de/einfachmobil/de/>



## RADMARKT OFFENBURG

Sell and buy used bikes

Next date: March 7th, 2026 from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m

[www.radmarkt-offenburg.de](http://www.radmarkt-offenburg.de)



## BUY A SECOND-HAND BIKE

Toms Scheune (= Toms barn)

Kreuzwegstraße 18, 77656 Offenburg-Elgersweier

(Thu + Fri: 5 p.m. - 7 p.m., Sat: 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.)

You can find him on [kleinanzeigen.de](http://kleinanzeigen.de) as Tom Fautz.



## KLEINANZEIGEN

Find used bikes as well as accessories and other items in the

app and use the location radius search: [www.kleinanzeigen.de](http://www.kleinanzeigen.de)



# 1.3 MOBILITY BY CAR & MORE



## EINFACH MOBIL

Website that bundles all mobility services in Offenburg



### BIKES

- rent a nextbike for a ride (see page before)
- <https://www.nextbike.de/einfachmobil/de/>

### CARSHARING

- with naturenergie sharing
- cost: 30€ registration fee + time+kilometer charge per rental
- [www.naturenergie-sharing.de/](http://www.naturenergie-sharing.de/)



# 2. FOOD & WASTE REDUCTION

## 2.1 HOW TO STORE FOOD CORRECTLY IN YOUR FRIDGE:

Correct fridge storage helps food last longer and reduces waste.

**Top Shelf:** Perfect for jam, sauces, and cooked leftovers.

**Middle Shelf:** Best for dairy products like yogurt and cheese.

**Bottom Shelf:** The coldest zone for perishable items like meat or fish.

**Vegetable Drawer:** Keeps fruits and salad fresh

**Warm zone, 8°C:**

Preserves, leftovers



**Middle zone, 5°C:**

Dairy products



**Cold compartment, 2°C:**

Meat, sausage, fish



**Vegetable drawer, 10°C:**

Fruits, vegetables



**Fridge door, 10 to 15°C:**

Drinks, eggs, butter



## 2.2 BEST BEFORE DATE

“MHD” means “Best before date” and shows until when a food product keeps its best quality, but it is often still safe to eat after this date if it looks, smells, and tastes normal.

### PRODUCT

### SHELF LIFE AFTER THE DATE



#### Often years beyond the MHD:

Keep them in airtight containers to protect them from pantry pests



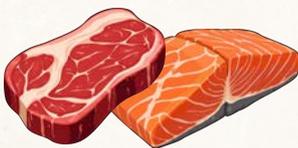
#### Often years beyond the MHD:

Throw them away only if the can is damaged, rusted or “bloated”



#### Often weeks beyond the MHD:

If you see any fuzzy mold on yogurt or soft cheese, discard the whole container immediately



#### Look for Use By:

This is not a quality guarantee! It is a safety deadline.



## TRUST YOUR SENSES

The best before date is not “deadly from this date”!

## 2.3 PLANT-BASED FOOD

Contribute to a healthy planet by reducing the amount of meat and dairy product consumption.



Also you can find a lot of inspiration, recipes and information on <https://veganuary.com/>



**VEGETARIAN** = excludes meat and fish

**VEGAN** = excludes all animals products (meat, fish, eggs, milk)

### GOOD FOR:



#### The planet

Animal farming causes deforestation, CO<sub>2</sub> + methane emissions, species extinction, and needs a lot of resources. Plant-based foods have a significantly smaller ecological footprint than animal products!



#### The animals

By avoiding animal products, you can lower the demand for industrial animal farming, where many animals are kept in crowded and stressful conditions and suffer.

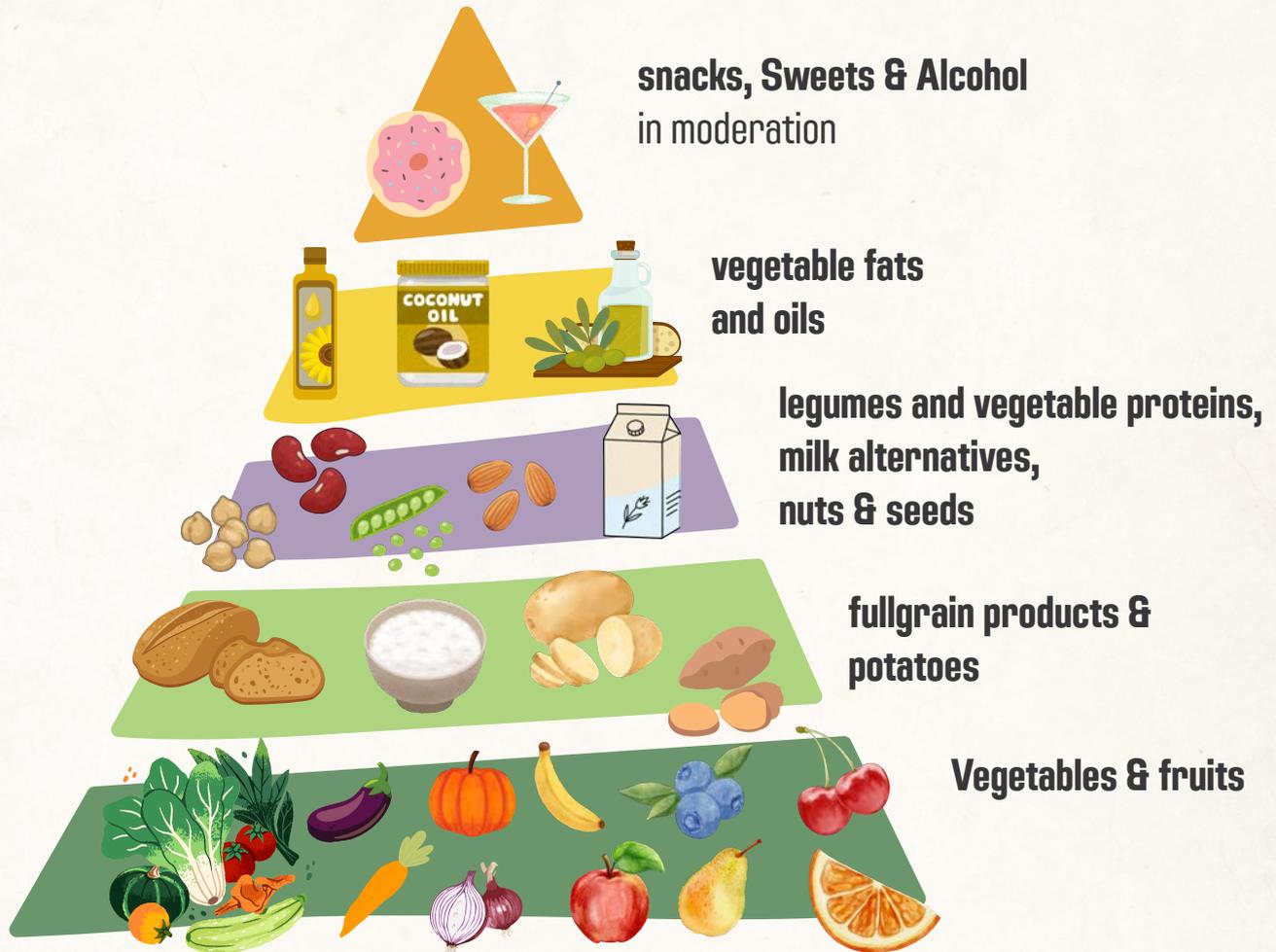


#### Your health

Diets rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes and nuts provide nutrients and fiber. Studies show that a plant-based lifestyle can lower the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancers.

## 2.3 PLANT-BASED FOOD

### THE VEGAN DIET PYRAMID



+ Vitamine B12, Omega-3 (algae) and vitamine D  
supplements, iodine (f.i. as salt)

#### PRO TIP:

### INCLUDE SAISONAL, REGIONAL AND BIO PRODUCTS

Look out for labels like these:



# 3. APPS & TOOLS

There are applications that can help you to save food, get clothes, furniture and save you bare money!

Note: The QR-Codes lead to IOS Apps, but you can find them in the playstore as well.



## TOO GOOD TO GO

**The Goal:** Rescue surplus food from bakeries, restaurants, and supermarkets for little money.

**How it works:** Scan the QR Code → Reserve a "Surprise Bag" at a discount → Pick it up before the store closes.



<https://www.toogoodtogo.com/de>



## REFILL / WATER FINDER

**The Goal:** Refill your drinking water for free while you save money on plastic bottles and reduce waste.

**How it works:** Use the app "Water finder" or use the interactive web map and look for the blue "Refill" sticker.



<https://refill-deutschland.de>



## VINTED

**Goal:** Buy and sell second-hand clothing, accessoires and more. Extend the life cycle of fashion & other products.

**Your Advantage:** You save money, reduce fast fashion and give items a second life!



<https://www.vinted.de>



Vinted



## EBAY

**Goal:** Buy or sell pre-owned clothes, furniture, and electronics. Be aware that there are private and commercial sellers.

**Your Advantage:** It is much cheaper than buying new items and helps save valuable resources.



<https://www.ebay.de>



## KLEINANZEIGEN

**Goal:** Reuse everyday items locally instead of buying new ones and avoid unnecessary waste.

**Your Advantage:** You get affordable items, support local reuse and actively reduce resource consumption and waste.



<https://www.kleinanzeigen.de>



### PRO TIP:

**PERFECT FOR FINDING AFFORDABLE FURNITURE OR KITCHEN APPLIANCES FOR YOUR ROOM**

# 4. WASTE SEPARATION

Confused by the different bins? Here is your quick guide to sorting like a pro.



## PAPER

### ✓ Dos

- cardboard boxes
- wrapping paper
- writing paper
- magazines
- brochures
- books

### ✗ Don'ts

- food packaging with leftovers or grease like pizza boxes
- baking paper
- paper tissues
- "normal" receipts



## RESIDUAL WASTE

### ✓ Dos

- hygiene waste
- general waste
- shards of glass
- food waste
- porcelain / ceramics
- cigarettes

### ✗ Don'ts

- glass bottles
- electronic waste
- batteries



## PLASTIC (YELLOW BAG)

### ✓ Dos

- plastic
- metal
- composite materials (e.g Tetrapaks)
- Spoon-clean is enough

### ✗ Don'ts

- clothes
- lighters
- electronic devices
- ballpoint pens
- toys



# 4. WASTE SEPARATION

## YELLOW BAGS DISTRIBUTION



Yellow Bags are distributed to every household once a year in autumn  
If you need more, you can get them for free all year round at special distribution points like the resident office (BürgerBüro).

## GLASS

- Sort by color: white, green, brown
- Blue glass goes into the green bin
- Never put ceramics or porcelain in the glass containers and don't leave trash.



## BATTERIES

- you can return used batteries at supermarkets or in the A-Building at the HSO
- never throw in the trash!



## SPECIAL WASTE

- Electrical appliances
- Scrap metal, wood
- Bulky waste
- Green waste
- And much more



<https://www.abfallwirtschaft-ortenaukreis.de/>

## RECYCLING CENTER

Offenburg-Rammersweier  
Durbacher Straße  
77654 Offenburg  
Tel.: 0781 9195107

## NOTE:

This recommendation applies for the OrtenauDistrict. Local rules can vary slightly.

# 4. WASTE SEPARATION

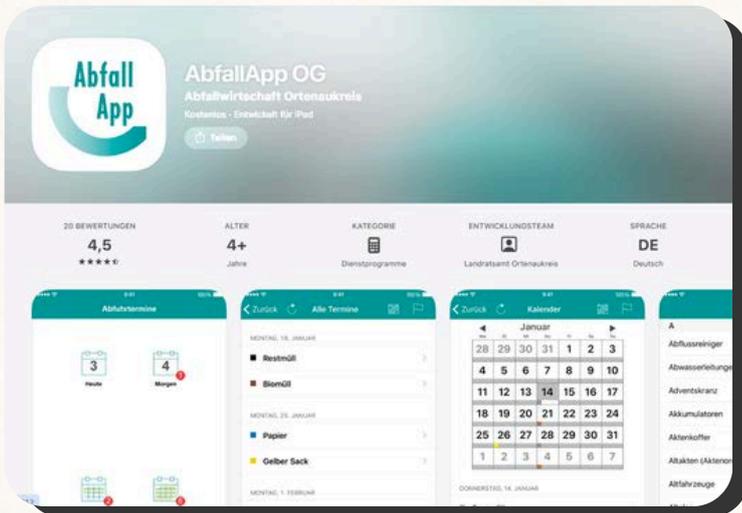
## NEVER MISS A PICKUP!

In Germany, different types of waste are collected on different days

- Check the schedule. Download your local waste calendar
- Use an app. Search for your city waste app and set reminders
- Be early. Place bins at the curb by 6:00 AM or the night before



### THE TRASH APP

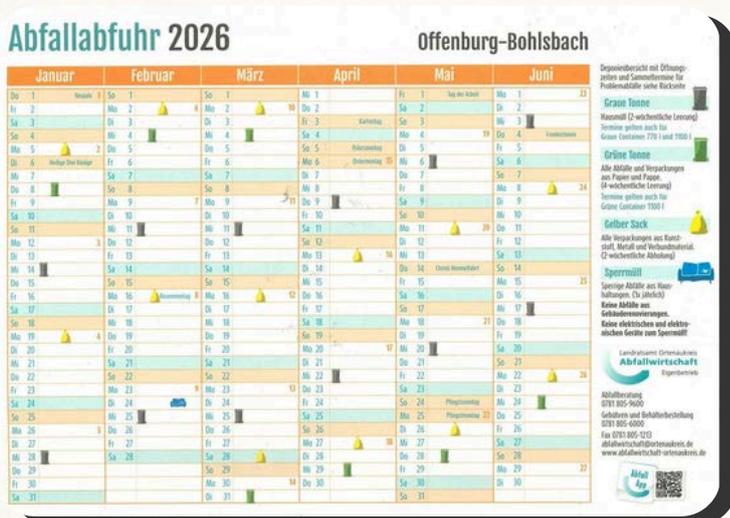


Playstore



IOS App

### THE TRASH CALENDAR ON PAPER



# 5. DEPOSIT



## "PFAND" (DEPOSIT) LABEL

**Before throwing away a bottle check the label.**

**Bring them to the supermarket, recycle and get money back!**

There are three common cases in Germany:

### SINGLE USE DEPOSIT

- 25 cents deposit
- Look for the DPG logo
- Bottles and cans are recycled



### REUSABLE DEPOSIT

- 8 or 15 cents deposit
- Mostly glass bottles or hard plastic bottles
- Returned bottles are washed and refilled



### NO DEPOSIT

- No deposit logo on the bottle
- For example wine or spirit bottles
- Dispose of them in public glass containers



# 6. VENTILATION

## SAVE ENERGY & PREVENT MOLD

### Why should I ventilate by opening windows wide?

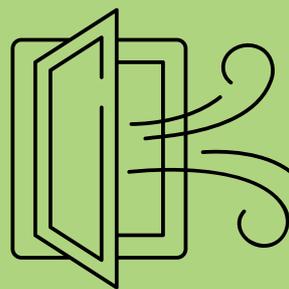
This quickly replaces humid indoor air with fresh, dry air without cooling down the walls. Tilted windows waste energy and increase the risk of mold.



## 6.1 HOW TO: SHOCK VENTILATION (STOßLÜFTEN)

### IN WINTER

- Open windows completely (don't tilt)
- Turn off the heater while airing
- Ventilate for 5-10 minutes
- 2-3 times a day



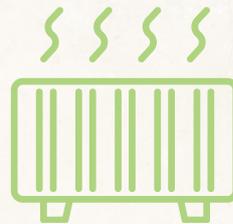
### VENTILATION IN SUMMER

- morning & evening for 20-30 min
- In case of strong heat, close the windows during the day and provide shading



## 6.2 HEATING

Understand the intensity of the heater and use it appropriately.



**LEVEL 3 IS USUALLY ENOUGH**

LEVEL	TEMPERATURE	MEANING
Star *	about 5-8 degree	Frost protection
1-2	about 12-16 degree	Bedrooms, hallways
3	about 20 degree	Ideal for living rooms
4-5	over 24 degree	Very warm, high energy use

## PREVENTING MOLD

- ✓ Ventilate more often when drying laundry indoors
- ✓ Ventilate after showering or cooking
- ✓ Use shock ventilation regularly
- ✓ Avoid permanently tilted windows
- ✓ Do not turn heating completely off in winter
- ✓ Leave 5-10 cm space from the furniture to outside walls for air circulation



# BEE PART OF IT!



## EVERY SMALL STEP COUNTS

You're welcome to join the Sustainability Group! (AG Nachhaltigkeit)

