



German–English Kita Glossary

60 key terms you will hear when working in a German day-care centre (Kita) – each with an English equivalent and a short explanation in our own words. Legal references point to the federal laws SGB VIII and IfSG; entries without a reference describe general professional practice.

Legal status: 26 October 2026. Many details are regulated by the 16 federal states (Länder) and by your employer's procedures – always follow your Kita's agreed rules and ask your management. This glossary does not replace the official recognition of foreign qualifications.

Types of care and organisations

Kita (Kindertageseinrichtung) <i>day-care centre</i>	Umbrella term for facilities where children spend part of the day or the whole day and are supported in groups (section 22(1) SGB VIII). Krippe, Kindergarten and Hort can belong to a Kita; the exact terms are set by state law.
Krippe <i>nursery group (under 3)</i>	Group or facility for children under the age of three.
Kindergarten <i>kindergarten</i>	Group or facility for children from about three years of age until they start school.
Hort <i>after-school care centre</i>	Care for primary-school children outside lessons. Like Kitas, Horte count as community facilities under the Infection Protection Act (section 33 no. 1 IfSG).
Offene Ganztagschule (OGS) <i>open all-day primary school</i>	All-day offer at a primary school, usually with voluntary participation. Its offers count towards the new all-day entitlement (section 24(4) SGB VIII, see Ganztagsanspruch).
Kindertagespflege <i>childminding</i>	Support of children by a suitable childminder in the childminder's home, in the parents' home or in other suitable rooms (section 22(1) SGB VIII).
Kindertagespflegeperson (Tagesmutter / Tagesvater) <i>childminder</i>	Is suitable if they stand out through personality, expertise and willingness to cooperate with parents, and have child-friendly rooms; they should have in-depth knowledge, usually from qualification courses (section 23(3) SGB VIII).
Pflegeerlaubnis <i>childminding permit</i>	Required when someone cares for one or more children outside the parents' home for part of the day, for more than 15 hours a week, for payment and for longer than three months (section 43(1) SGB VIII).
Träger <i>provider / operator</i>	The organisation that runs a Kita, for example a municipality, a church organisation, a welfare association, a registered association or a parent initiative.
freier / öffentlicher Träger <i>independent / public provider</i>	Youth welfare services are delivered by independent and by public providers; the legal obligations of SGB VIII are addressed to the public youth welfare providers (section 3(2) SGB VIII).
Jugendamt <i>local youth welfare office</i>	Local authority for child and youth welfare. It informs parents about available places (section 24(6) SGB VIII) and must be informed by Kita staff if a risk to a child cannot be averted otherwise (section 8a(4) SGB VIII).

Kita-Gesetz <i>state day-care act</i>	Each of the 16 federal states (Länder) has its own day-care law; SGB VIII leaves details to state law (section 22(1) and (4) SGB VIII). Group sizes, staffing rules and parental fees therefore differ between the Länder.
Bildungsplan / Orientierungsplan <i>early-education framework</i>	State framework for learning and education in Kitas. Every Land has its own framework, with different names and different degrees of binding force.
Konzeption <i>pedagogical concept</i>	Written description of a Kita's educational approach and daily work. The provider submits it with the application for the operating licence (section 45(3) no. 1 SGB VIII).

Law and entitlements

SGB VIII (Achstes Buch Sozialgesetzbuch) <i>Social Code, Book VIII – Child and Youth Welfare</i>	Federal law that covers, among other things, day care and childminding (sections 22–26), the child protection mandate (section 8a) and the operating licence of facilities (section 45).
Förderungsauftrag <i>mandate to support children</i>	The Kita mandate covers Erziehung (upbringing), Bildung (learning in a broad sense) and Betreuung (care). It relates to the child's social, emotional, physical and mental development and includes passing on values and rules (section 22(3) SGB VIII).
Rechtsanspruch (auf einen Kita-Platz) <i>legal entitlement to a place</i>	From the first birthday until age three: early support in a Kita or in childminding; from age three until school entry: support in a Kita (section 24(2) and (3) SGB VIII). The claim is directed at the public youth welfare provider (section 3(2) SGB VIII).
Ganztagsanspruch <i>entitlement to all-day support</i>	Children who start first grade in school year 2026/27 or later are entitled to support on weekdays for up to eight hours a day until the start of fifth grade; lessons and all-day school offers count towards it (section 24(4) SGB VIII).
Schließzeit <i>closure period</i>	Days on which a Kita or Hort is closed, for example in summer. For the all-day entitlement, the Länder may set a closure period of up to four weeks a year during school holidays (section 24(4) SGB VIII).
Betriebserlaubnis <i>operating licence</i>	A Kita needs a licence. It is granted if the children's well-being in the facility is ensured; as a rule this includes a concept for protection against violence and procedures for participation and complaints (section 45(1) and (2) SGB VIII).
Meldepflicht (§ 47 SGB VIII) <i>duty to report</i>	The provider must report certain facts to the competent authority without delay – for example events or developments that could harm the children's well-being (section 47 SGB VIII).
erweitertes Führungszeugnis <i>extended criminal record certificate</i>	Staff present it to the provider, which checks it and requests it again at regular intervals (section 45(3) no. 2 SGB VIII; see also section 72a SGB VIII and sections 30(5) and 30a(1) of the Federal Central Criminal Register Act, BZRG).
Aufsichtspflicht <i>duty of supervision</i>	Staff must supervise children appropriately. What is appropriate depends on the child's age and development, the group and the situation – ask your Kita management about the agreed rules.
Datenschutz <i>data protection</i>	Personal data of children and families are protected by the GDPR (DSGVO) and the social data protection rules. Photos and passing on information usually require a legal basis, such as consent.
Einwilligung <i>consent</i>	Permission given by the persons with parental responsibility, for example for photos. It should be documented and can be withdrawn.

**Sorgeberechtigte /
Erziehungsberechtigte**
persons with parental responsibility

Usually the parents. Important for consent, information and the question of who may pick up a child.

Child protection

Kindeswohl
the child's well-being

Central guiding principle of child and youth welfare and of all decisions in the Kita.

Kindeswohlgefährdung
risk to the child's well-being

A situation in which a child's well-being is at significant risk. In a Kita, significant indications of such a risk start the procedure under section 8a SGB VIII.

Schutzauftrag (§ 8a SGB VIII)
child protection mandate

Agreements between the Jugendamt and Kita providers ensure that staff assess the risk when they become aware of significant indications, consult an experienced child protection specialist and involve parents and child – unless this would compromise the child's protection (section 8a(4) SGB VIII).

gewichtige Anhaltspunkte
significant indications

Concrete signs that a child's well-being may be at risk. They trigger the risk assessment (section 8a SGB VIII).

Gefährdungseinschätzung
risk assessment

Structured assessment of a possible risk to a child, carried out by the team with the advice of an insoweit erfahrene Fachkraft (section 8a(4) SGB VIII).

**insoweit erfahrene Fachkraft
(InsoFa)**
*experienced child protection
specialist*

Specialist who advises staff during the risk assessment (section 8a(4) no. 2 SGB VIII). Your Kita's protection procedure names who to contact.

Hinwirken auf Hilfen
encouraging parents to accept help

If staff consider help necessary, they work towards the parents accepting it. If the risk cannot be averted otherwise, they inform the Jugendamt (section 8a(4) SGB VIII).

**Gewaltschutzkonzept /
Schutzkonzept**
*concept for protection against
violence*

Written plan of a facility to protect children from violence. Developing, applying and reviewing it is, as a rule, a condition for the operating licence (section 45(2) no. 4 SGB VIII). It typically includes a risk analysis, a code of conduct and intervention steps.

Beschwerdeverfahren
complaints procedure

Ways for children to raise complaints in personal matters. Ensuring this possibility belongs to the conditions for the operating licence (section 45(2) no. 4 SGB VIII).

Partizipation
participation

Involving children in decisions that affect them, appropriate to their age. Suitable procedures for self-representation and participation belong to the licence conditions (section 45(2) no. 4 SGB VIII).

Health and hygiene

Infektionsschutzgesetz (IfSG)
Infection Protection Act

Federal law on preventing infectious diseases. Kitas, Horte and childminding that requires a permit count as community facilities (section 33 nos. 1 and 2 IfSG).

Masernschutz
measles protection

People born after 1970 who are cared for or work in a Kita must have adequate measles vaccination or, from age one, immunity – unless they cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons – and must show proof to the management before starting (section 20(8) and (9) IfSG).

Impfberatung (Nachweis)
proof of vaccination counselling

When a child is first admitted to a Kita, the persons with parental responsibility must show written proof of a medical consultation on age-appropriate vaccination, given shortly before admission (section 34(10a) IfSG).

Besuchs- und Tätigkeitsverbot <i>exclusion from attending or working</i>	People with certain infectious diseases (for example measles or chickenpox) or head lice may not attend, or work in contact with the children, until a doctor judges that they can no longer spread it (section 34(1) IfSG).
Mitteilungspflicht der Eltern <i>parents' duty to inform</i>	Parents must inform the Kita without delay if their child has one of these diseases; the Kita informs every new family about this duty (section 34(5) IfSG).
Hygieneplan <i>hygiene plan</i>	Written in-house rules on cleaning, hand hygiene, nappy changing, food and what to do when children fall ill.

Everyday pedagogy and teamwork

Eingewöhnung <i>settling-in period</i>	Gradual start in the Kita, usually accompanied by a parent, so that the child can build a relationship with a key person before longer separations.
Berliner Eingewöhnungsmodell <i>Berlin settling-in model</i>	Widely used settling-in model based on attachment theory: a parent accompanies the child at first, and separations start short and become longer step by step.
Münchener Eingewöhnungsmodell <i>Munich settling-in model</i>	Settling-in model in which the child and a parent get to know the whole group and the daily routine together over a longer period.
Bezugserzieherin / Bezugsperson <i>key person</i>	The member of staff who mainly accompanies a particular child, especially during settling-in.
Morgenkreis <i>morning circle</i>	Short daily gathering of the group, for example to greet each other, plan the day or sing.
Freispiel <i>free play</i>	Time in which children decide what, where and with whom they play; staff observe, accompany and support.
offene Arbeit <i>open approach</i>	Children are not tied to one group room but use themed rooms (for example a building room or a studio) across groups.
Situationsansatz <i>situational approach</i>	Pedagogical approach that starts from children's real-life situations, questions and interests.
Beobachtung und Dokumentation <i>observation and documentation</i>	Systematic observation and recording of each child's development and learning, as a basis for planning and for talks with parents.
Portfolio <i>portfolio</i>	Folder that documents a child's learning and development, often created together with the child (photos, drawings, stories).
alltagsintegrierte Sprachbildung <i>everyday-integrated language education</i>	Supporting children's language in daily situations such as meals, play and nappy changing – not only in separate sessions.
Übergang Kita–Grundschule <i>transition to primary school</i>	The move from Kita to school, often prepared together with the school and the parents in the last Kita year.
Inklusion <i>inclusion</i>	Children with and without disabilities play and learn together. Where they are supported together, Kitas also cooperate with the rehabilitation providers (section 22(2) SGB VIII).
Entwicklungsgespräch <i>developmental conversation</i>	Regular conversation with parents about their child's development, usually based on observations.

Elternabend / Elternvertretung <i>parents' evening / parents' council</i>	Meeting for all parents of a group or Kita / elected parent representatives; their rights are set out in state law.
Betreuungsschlüssel / Fachkraft-Kind-Relation <i>staff-to-child ratio</i>	Number of children per member of staff. The rules and the way it is calculated differ between the Länder.
Erzieherin / Erzieher <i>educator (Erzieher/in)</i>	A common professional qualification of Kita staff in Germany; the training is regulated by the Länder.
Anerkennung (Berufsanerkennung) <i>recognition of foreign qualifications</i>	If you trained abroad, the responsible authority in the federal state decides whether your qualification is recognised. Official information: anerkennung-in-deutschland.de . Self-study courses do not replace recognition.

Sources

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Learn more in English: germansociallab.com/en/kita/ – a step-by-step learning pathway with self-study courses on child protection, supervision, settling-in and more.