

German language cheat sheet: On changing quantities

 devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20250703-01/?p=111337

July 3, 2025



Somehow, I must have missed out on learning phrases of changes in quantity in German, so I need a cheat sheet.

Trend	Quantity	
	Low	High
Decreasing	nur noch “only...left”	immer noch “still”
Increasing	erst “so far”	schon “already”
Stable/Unknown	nur “only”	

(Native German speakers: Please feel free to offer corrections.)

Here's a sentence pattern for demonstration.

I	have	only	100	left	=	Ich	nur	noch	100	:	I used to have more, but I'm running low.
I	still	have		100	=	Ich	immer	noch	100	:	I used to have more, but I'm not running low yet.
I	have		100	so far	=	Ich	erst		100	:	It's not much, but it's more than I had before.
I	have		100	already	=	Ich	schon		100	:	It's quite a bit, and it's more than I had before.
I	have	only	100		=	Ich	nur		100	:	It's not much, but that's typical.

I	have	100	=	Ich	100	:	It is what it is.
				habe			

It's interesting to me that the last box is empty. Neither English nor German seems to have a clear phrase pattern to indicate "I have a lot, and that's typical."

Learning another language gives you a chance to reflect upon your own. When laid out this way, it does seem weird that the English patterns scatter the modifier words into three different positions in the sentence.

Note: These adverbs also have meanings unrelated to quantity. I'm focusing on the quantity-related meanings.