Episode 040 – Grammar

1.   Final clauses with "damit"

Subordinate clauses are dependent upon main clauses or other dependent clauses. They cannot stand on their own. Often they begin with words (subordinating conjunctions, relative pronouns or question words) that connect them to the main or independent clause.

"damit" (so that) is a conjunction that introduces a final clause. In other words, the clause reveals a purpose, intention or goal behind the action of the independent clause it links to. Clauses with "damit" answer the question ("Wozu?") (for what reason/purpose).

Examples:
Wir demonstrieren gegen das Experiment. – Zu welchem Zweck?
Wir demonstrieren gegen das Experiment, **damit** die Welt eine Zukunft hat.
(= We are protesting. Our goal is to ensure that the world has a future.)

Clauses with "damit" usually follow the independent clause and are separated from it by a comma.

The conjugated verb goes to the end of a final clause.

Example:
Ich bin hier, **damit** ich mehr über das Experiment **erfahre**.

2. Infinitive constructions with "um ... zu"

When an independent clause and a subordinate clause share the same subject, the final clause can be expressed in short form with the infinitive construction "um ... zu". The subject is left out and the infinitive verb goes to the end of the sentence. The infinitive construction is separated from the independent clause by a comma.

Examples:
Harry muss zuhören, damit er Deutsch lernt.
Harry muss zuhören, um Deutsch zu lernen.

Wir demonstrieren gegen das Experiment, damit wir eine Katastrophe verhindern.
Wir demonstrieren gegen das Experiment, um eine Katastrophe zu verhindern.

3. **Verbs with fixed prepositions**

Prepositions connect words and groups of words together. They express the relation between living beings, things or contexts. German has many different prepositions. You've already learned about location prepositions that give information about a place, position or direction, and temporal prepositions that refer to time. Knowing how to categorize and when to use them isn't always easy because they can mean different things depending on how they're used. In many instances you can only know the meaning of a preposition from its context.

Some prepositions serve the function of connecting a verb to an object. In other words, they don't describe a relationship (location or temporal). Such prepositions are simply fixed to certain verbs. For example,

demonstrieren gegen *+ accusative***:**
*Wir **demonstrieren gegen** das Experiment.*

sich engagieren für *+ accusative***:**
*Wir **engagieren uns für** die Natur.*

warten auf *+ accusative***:**
*Ich **warte auf** dich.*

Since there is no strict rule that says which prepositions must be used with which verbs, it's better to memorize such verbs along with their prepositions and case.