How to tell them apart.
werde, würde, wurde

Usually, you learn the three verb forms "werde", "würde", "wurde" separately, which can lead to confusion about the correct use and how to distinguish them as they sound and look very similar.

Some German learners pronounce the vowels e, ü, and u all together, a little bit like the [u] in "to hurt". One verb form you learn, when being taught about the passive, one you learn, when it comes to understanding the future, and the other one, you are likely to see for the first time when learning about conditional sentences.

No wonder, there is such confusion about it. Let's have a look at the three together and make them stick in your mind forever.

The Problem
werde, würde, wurde?

The Solution:

werde

future I:
Ich werde nach Hause gehen.
(I will go home.)

würde

passive, past tense
Ich wurde nach Hause gebracht.
(I was brought home.)

wurde
passive, present
Ich werde nach Hause gebracht. (I am being/will be brought home.)

past tense of to become
Sie wurde Arztin. (She became a doctor.)

subjunctive II, conditional:
Ich würde nach Hause gehen, wenn ich könnte. (I would go home, if I could.)

How to remember them
werde
Have a look at the words ‘future’ and ‘present’. There are quite a few times the letter ‘e’. So does ‘werde’, it contains the letter ‘e’ twice. That could be your clue to use ‘werde’ when you talk about the present or the future.

werde and würde
Or use the alphabet, the letter ‘e’ comes at the beginning of the alphabet (‘werde’ is used in present or future tense), while the ‘u’ is found further down the bottom of the alphabet. Like the past that is deep down buried somewhere in your mind (‘würde’ is used in the past tense).

würde
The ‘ü’ in ‘würde’ is a little bit fancy, and you need to be a little bit fancy when talking about something you would do if you could.

Recap
werde
present and future

würde
would

wurde
past

Pronunciation

Since there is no standard pronunciation in the German language, how German words are pronounced really depends on the region. In some regions the "r" is silent, in some regions it is voiced or even trilled. So don’t worry too much about the "r". But try to pronounce the vowels right.
The middle bit "e" is pronounced like the "ai" in "the air", the air that you breathe. The German "w" is pronounced like an English "v" in "the vase" and the ending "e" is just an add on, like the "e" in "table".

The "ü" in würde is pronounced like the "oo" in "food". Your lips become very pointy when you make the "ü" sound. The "r" is almost silent. How much you pronounce the "r" depends on the region. The ending "e" as an add on sounds like the "e" in "table".

The "ü" in "wurde" is pronounced like the "oo" in "foot". Again, the "r" sound is sometimes silent, sometimes voiced, depending on the region. I would say it is more common to pronounce it silent. The ending "e" is an add on and sounds like the "e" in "table".

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