



Introduction to German

Lessons 1 - 25

1-25

Introduction

This is Innovative Language Learning.

Go to InnovativeLanguage.com/audiobooks to get the lesson notes for this course, and sign up for your FREE lifetime account.

This Audiobook will take you through the basics of German with Basic Bootcamp, All About, and Pronunciation lessons.

The five Basic Bootcamp lessons each center on a practical, real-life conversation. At the beginning of the lesson, we'll introduce the background of the conversation. Then, you'll hear the conversation two times: one time at natural native speed, and one time with English translation. After the conversation, you'll learn carefully selected vocabulary and key grammar concepts. Next, you'll hear the conversation one time at natural native speed. Finally, practice what you have learned with the review track. In the review track, a native speaker will say a word or phrase from the dialogue, wait three seconds, and then give you the English translation. Say the word aloud during the pause. Halfway through the review track, the order will be reversed. The English translation will be provided first, followed by a three-second pause, and then the word or phrase from the dialogue. Repeat the words and phrases you hear in the review track aloud to practice pronunciation and reinforce what you have learned.

In the fifteen All About lessons, you'll learn all about German and Germany. Our native teachers and language experts will explain everything you need to know to get started in German, including how to understand the writing system, grammar, pronunciation, cultural background, tradition, society, and more -- all in a fun and educational format!

The five Pronunciation lessons take you step-by-step through the most basic skill in any language: how to pronounce words and sentences like a native speaker. You'll go from basic concepts to advanced tips and will soon sound like you've been speaking German your entire life.

Before starting the lessons, go to InnovativeLanguage.com/audiobooks to get the lesson notes for this course, and sign up for your FREE lifetime account.



Basic Bootcamp

Self Introduction/Basic Greetings in German

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German

- A Hallo. Ich heiße Paul. Freut mich, Sie kennenzulernen.
 B Hallo. Ich heiße Maria. Freut mich, Sie kennenzulernen.

English

- A Hello. My name is Paul. Nice to meet you.
 B Hello. My name is Maria. Nice to meet you.

Vocabulary

German	English		Notes
Hallo	hello	salutation	
Mein Name ist...	My name is...	phrase	
Freut mich, Sie kennenzulernen.	Nice to meet you.	phrase	

Vocabulary Sample Sentences

- Hallo? Ich brauche ein Taxi an der Königsstraße Ecke Friedrichsstraße.* Hello? I need a taxi at the corner of Königsstraße and Friedrichsstraße.
Mein Name ist Lisa. My name is Lisa.

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is to Teach You Some German Essentials to Get You Speaking Right from Your First Lesson.

Today's phrases are what we use to introduce ourselves:

- A: Hallo. Ich heiße Paul. Freut mich, Sie kennenzulernen.
 A: Hello. My name is Paul. Nice to meet you.

B: Hallo. Ich heie Maria. Freut mich, Sie kennenzulernen.

B: Hello. My name is Maria. Nice to meet you.

Vocabulary and Lesson Notes

hallo

This word is the German equivalent of "hello."

ich

The word *ich* means "I." Both males and females can use this pronoun.

heie

This is the inflected verb of the sentence (first person singular, present tense) and refers to the verb *heien*, which in English means "to be called." We always follow this with the name, either first name or full name, with one exception: in the case of just using the last name, we insert *Herr* ("Mr.") or *Frau* ("Ms.") right between the verb and the name.

For Example:

1. *Ich heie Herr Schmidt. Ich heie Frau Meier.*

"My name is Mr. Schmidt. My name is Ms. Meier."

In the dialogue, we have the following construction:

Personal Pronoun	Inflected Verb	First Name
<i>Ich</i>	<i>heie</i>	<i>Paul</i>
<i>Ich</i>	<i>heie</i>	<i>Maria</i>

Freut mich, Sie kennenzulernen. ("Nice to meet you.")

This phrase means "Nice to meet you." We use it when meeting someone for the first time. The phrase consists of *freut mich*, which in English means "nice to" or "pleased to." *Freut* is the inflected verb form, third singular person, present tense of the verb *heien* ("to be called"), while *mich*, an inflected possessive pronoun, can be translated as "me." Then we have *Sie* (with capital letter "-S"), which in English is "you," in the formal level of speech, and finally *kennenzulernen*, the present participle of the verb *kennenlernen* ("to meet").

Literally translated, *Freut mich, Sie kennenzulernen* is "It pleases me you to meet." We can translate it

as "Nice to meet you" or "Pleased to meet you."

While *Freut mich, Sie kennenzulernen* is rather formal, the informal way of expressing "Nice to meet you" in German is *Freut mich, dich kennenzulernen*. Instead of *Sie* ("you" - formal), we use *dich* ("you" - informal).

Names in German

In German, full names are given with the first name before the last name. In formal situations, it is very common for people to introduce themselves using their full name or only their last name. When addressing other people you are not familiar with or who are higher than you in status, it is important to address them with their last name in connection with *Herr* ("Mr.") or *Frau* ("Ms.").

Cultural Insight

House-Warming

Did you just move to Germany? Then a traditional house-warming party might be the right way to get to meet new people like your neighbours and to have fun with friends! You can also expect some nice presents from whoever you decide to invite and such an event provides a real low-pressure environment for networking and introducing yourself!

The traditional gifts that are given at house warming parties include bread & salt, nice wine or general things that might be useful to have!

I will leave you with a traditional German poem concerning the topic of house warming which you can often find framed in German houses!

Wir wünschen Dir viel Glück und Frieden,
in Deiner neuen Häuslichkeit.
Gesundeheit sei Dir stets beschieden,
mit Dir zieh ' ein Zufriedenheit.

Dem Brauche folgend, dass zu Wänden,
die neu sind, gehört Salz und Brot,
nimm beides hin aus unseren Händen
dann bleibt der Schwelle fern die Not.

Translation:

We wish you good luck and peace,
In your new home,
Be always healthy,
May happiness move in together with you.

Following the tradition, that to walls,
That are new, bread and salt belong,
Take both from our hands
Then bad things will stay away from your door.





Basic Bootcamp

Basic German: Nationality / 'to be' / Basic Sentence Structure

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German

- A Hallo, ich heie Widar. Ich bin Deutscher.
 B Hallo, ich heie Susanne. Ich bin Amerikaner.

English

- A Hello, I'm Widar. I'm German.
 B Hello, I'm Susanne. I'm American.

Vocabulary

German	English		Notes
Hallo, ich heie Widar. Ich bin Deutscher.	Hello, I'm Widar. I'm German.	sentence	
Hallo, ich heie Susanne. Ich bin Amerikaner.	Hello, I'm Susanne. I'm American.	sentence	

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Bootcamp Lesson Is to Teach You How to Talk about Your Ethnicity.

Hallo, ich bin Widar. Ich bin Deutsche.

"Hello, I'm Widar. I'm German."

To talk about your ethnicity, you add suffixes according to gender (male, female) to the name of a country. In many cases, you have to make some more changes (adding *-n* + suffix, or replacing the last letter of the country + suffix). Let's take a look at some examples.

Countries and Ethnicities

I. country + suffix -er (male)/-erin (female)

Examples for a Male and Female:

Gender	"Country" ("English")	Country (German)	"Ethnicity" ("English")	Ethnicity (German)
Male	"Italy"	<i>Italien</i>	"Italian"	<i>Italien-er</i>
Male	"Austria"	<i>Österreich</i>	"Austrian"	<i>Österreich-er</i>
Female	"Italy"	<i>Italien</i>	"Italian"	<i>Italien-erin</i>
Female	"Austria"	<i>Österreich</i>	"Austrian"	<i>Österreich-erin</i>

II. country + -n + suffix -er (male)/-erin (female)

Examples for a Male and Female:

Gender	"Country" ("English")	Country (German)	"Ethnicity" ("English")	Ethnicity (German)
Male	"America"	<i>Amerika</i>	"American"	<i>Amerika-n-er</i>
Male	"Cuba"	<i>Kuba</i>	"Cuban"	<i>Kuba-n-er</i>
Female	"America"	<i>Amerika</i>	"American"	<i>Amerika-n-erin</i>
Female	"Cuba"	<i>Kuba</i>	"Cuban"	<i>Kuba-n-erin</i>

III. country - last letter + suffix -er (male)/-erin (female)

Examples for a Male and Female:

Gender	"Country" ("English")	Country (German)	"Ethnicity" ("English")	Ethnicity (German)
Male	"Canada"	<i>Kanada</i>	"Canadian"	<i>Kanad-ier</i>
Female	"Canada"	<i>Kanada</i>	"Canadian"	<i>Kanad-ierin</i>

IV. country + -land/-reich + suffix

Examples for a Male and Female:

Gender	"Country" ("English")	Country (German)	"Ethnicity" ("English")	Ethnicity (German)
Male	"Germany"	<i>Deutschland</i>	"German"	<i>Deutsch-er</i>
Male	"France"	<i>Frankreich</i>	"Frenchman"	<i>Fran-z-ose</i>
Female	"Germany"	<i>Deutschland</i>	"German"	<i>Deutsche</i>
Female	"France"	<i>Frankreich</i>	"Frenchwoman"	<i>Fran-z-ösin</i>

Expressing Ethnicities (American and German)

To express your ethnicity, you need to use the copula verb *sein* ("to be"). The conjugation of *sein* appears in the table below.

German	"English"
<i>Ich bin Amerikaner.</i>	"I'm American."
<i>Ich bin Deutscher/Deutsche.</i>	"I'm German."
<i>Du bist Amerikaner.</i>	"You're American."
<i>Du bist Deutscher/Deutsche.</i>	"You're German."
<i>Er/Sie ist Amerikaner/-in.</i>	"He/She is American."
<i>Er/Sie ist Deutscher/Deutsche.</i>	"He/She is German."
<i>Wir sind Amerikaner.</i>	"We're American."
<i>Wir sind Deutsche.</i>	"We're German."
<i>Ihr seid Amerikaner.</i>	"You're American."
<i>Ihr seid Deutsche.</i>	"You're German."
<i>Sie sind Amerikaner.</i>	"They're American."
<i>Sie sind Deutsche.</i>	"They're German."

Word Order in Simple German Sentences

The above sentences demonstrate the basic word order of a German sentence: subject + verb + object. English has the same basic word order for independent clauses.

For Example:

1. *Ich heie Widar.*
Literally, "I'm – called – Widar."
"I'm Widar."/"My name is Widar."
2. *Er spricht Deutsch.*
Literally, "He – speaks – German."
"He speaks German."

Cultural Insight

Citizenship

Ever wanted to become *truly* a German? Until the year 2000 you were pretty much out of luck if you were not born of at least one German parent, but fret not! Now there are some options for someone who wants to become a naturalized citizen on Germany which were introduced to make it somewhat easier for foreigners. Chances are that if you have lived in Germany for 8 years, are pretty fluent in German and can support yourself without needing welfare, that the German passport might be yours sooner than expected! Additionally, spouses of German citizens can be naturalized after only 3 years of residence and 2 years of marriage, so go out and there and find yourself a cute german guy or girl!





Basic Bootcamp

Useful Phrases for Learning German

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German

Benny	Entschuldigung. Wie sagt man das auf Deutsch?
Bedienung	Grillsauce.
Benny	Noch einmal bitte. Langsam bitte.
Bedienung	Grillsauce.
Benny	Schreiben Sie das bitte auf.

English

Benny	Excuse me. How do you say this in German?
Waitress	Barbecue sauce.
Benny	Once again, please. Slowly, please.
Waitress	Barbecue sauce.
Benny	Please write it down.

Vocabulary

German	English		Notes
Entschuldigung. Wie sagt man das auf Deutsch?	Excuse me. How do you say this in German?	phrase	
Schreiben Sie das bitte auf.	Please write it down.	phrase	
Noch einmal bitte. Langsam bitte.	Once again, please. / Slowly, please.	phrase	

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Bootcamp Lesson Is Some German Phrases that Come in Handy When Learning German.

Entschuldigung. Wie sagt man das auf Deutsch?

"Excuse me. How do you say this in German?"

Below, we'll cover several phrases that you'll find useful when first learning German.

***Entschuldigung.* ("Excuse me.")**

Entschuldigung translates to "excuse me" in English, and you often use it when trying to get someone's attention when you are about to say something or ask a question. You can also use it to apologize.

***Wie sagt man ____ auf Deutsch?* ("How do you say [word] in German?")**

You can use this phrase when you don't know what something is called in German. In the blank, you can put an English word or point to something and use *das* ("this") like Benny did in the dialogue.

If someone uses a German word that you are not familiar with, and you would like to ask for the English translation, you can use the same structure to ask what that something is called in English as follows: *Wie sagt man ____ auf Englisch?* ("How do you say (word) in English?")

***Bitte.* ("Please.")**

Bitte is a phrase that means "please." You can use this phrase when you are asking for something or asking someone to do something for you.

You can pair the following two phrases with *bitte* to ask someone to repeat something:

1. *noch einmal*
"once more"
2. *langsam*
"slowly"

***Schreiben Sie das bitte auf.* ("Please write it down.")**

You can also ask someone to write down the word that you don't know or understand. In this case, you should use the simple phrase *Schreiben Sie das bitte auf* ("Please write it down.").

Note that in German, you don't write something "down," but rather you write it "up": the verb *aufschreiben* literally means "to write up," but we translate it as "to write down."

Cultural Insight

German Grills

In most residential neighborhoods in Germany, the grill is a place for the people in the local area to meet, eat, and talk . Be it for construction workers or students who want to grab a quick lunch (it is very unusual for food to be served at most German schools!), grills serve as a fast alternative to most normal restaurants. Even though there is of course the fair share of franchises like McDonalds or Subway in German cities, those are mainly restricted to downtown areas or near major highway exits, which leaves grills as one of the major fast food opportunities in Germany. The food ranges from the typical cheeseburger and fries to German fast food specialties like the Currywurst, and the prices are usually very fair for the amount of food that is being served.



Basic Bootcamp

Counting 1 – 100 in German

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German

Paul 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

English

Paul 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

Vocabulary

German	English		Notes
eins	one (1)	numeral	
zwei	two (2)	numeral	
drei	three (3)	numeral	
vier	four (4)	numeral	
fünf	five (5)	numeral	
sechs	six (6)	numeral	
sieben	seven (7)	numeral	
acht	eight (8)	numeral	
neun	nine (9)	numeral	
zehn	ten (10)	numeral	

Vocabulary Sample Sentences

Auf die Eins in Mathe kannst du stolz sein.

Möchtest du ein oder zwei Brötchen?

Drei Briefmarken, bitte.

Die Polizei konnte vier Kilo Rauschgift sicherstellen.

Nur noch fünf Minuten!

Ich habe gestern Abend sechs Biere getrunken.

Die Woche hat sieben Tage.

Er fiel von einer acht Meter hohen Mauer und brach sich das Bein.

Ich habe neun Leute zu meiner Feier eingeladen.

You can be proud of that A in math.

Do you want one or two rolls?

Three stamps, please.

The police were able to seize four kilos of narcotic drugs.

Just five more minutes!

I drank six beers yesterday.

The week has seven days.

He fell from a wall that was eight meters high and broke his leg.

I invited nine people to my party.

Ich bin zehn Jahre alt.

I am ten years old.

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Bootcamp Lesson Is Learning the Numbers from One to One Hundred in German.

eins, zwei, drei, vier, fünf, sechs, sieben, acht, neun, zehn
 "one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten"

Numbers from zero through ten:

Number	German
0	<i>null</i>
1	<i>eins</i>
2	<i>zwei</i>
3	<i>drei</i>
4	<i>vier</i>
5	<i>fünf</i>
6	<i>sechs</i>
7	<i>sieben</i>
8	<i>acht</i>
9	<i>neun</i>
10	<i>zehn</i>

Numbers from eleven through twenty:

Number	German
11	<i>elf</i>
12	<i>zwölf</i>
13	<i>dreizehn</i>
14	<i>vierzehn</i>
15	<i>fünfzehn</i>
16	<i>sechzehn</i>
17	<i>siebzehn</i>
18	<i>achtzehn</i>
19	<i>neunzehn</i>
20	<i>zwanzig</i>

Multiples of ten up to one hundred:

Number	German
10	<i>zehn</i>
20	<i>zwanzig</i>
30	<i>dreiig*</i>
40	<i>vierzig</i>
50	<i>fnfzig</i>
60	<i>sechzig</i>
70	<i>siebzig</i>
80	<i>achtzig</i>
90	<i>neunzig</i>
100	<i>ehundert</i>

The words marked with an asterisk are exceptions. Please note the sound changes that take place in these words.

Language Expansion

Here is the pattern for building some additional numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine, which we discussed in the lesson:

number + “and” + multiple of 10

Number	German
21	<i>ein-und-zwanzig</i>
39	<i>neun-und-dreiig</i>
45	<i>fnf-und-vierzig</i>
99	<i>neun-und-neunzig</i>
100	<i>ein-hundert</i>

Cultural Insight**Marks and Euros: German Currency**

Just a quick note on currencies. While Germany’s official currency has been the euro (€) since 2002, before that it was the Deutsche Mark for almost sixty years.

The euro is now the official currency in sixteen out of twenty-seven member states of the European Union. Some 330 million Europeans use it daily, and it is the second most-traded currency in the world, second only to the U.S. dollar.

The European Union issues banknotes in €500, €200, €100, €50, €20, €10, and €5. Each banknote has its own color and is dedicated to an artistic period of European architecture. The front of the note always features windows or gateways, while the back shows bridges.

The euro is divided into one hundred cents. The coins are issued in €2, €1, €50 cent, €20 cent, €10 cent, €5 cent, €2 cent, and €1 cent denominations. All euro coins have a common side and a national side that the respective national authorities choose, which shows national emblems, portraits of famous compatriots, or other significant symbols. For example, the German €2 coin shows the federal eagle. It's one of Europe's oldest state insignias.





Basic Bootcamp

Counting from One Hundred to Ten Thousand in German

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German

Auktionär	Und hier haben wir ein schönes neues Motorrad! Seht stylish aus wenn ihr in der Stadt herumfahrt! Das Mindestgebot liegt bei 100 Euro.
Michael	Einhundert!
Paul	Zweihundert!
Michael	Fünfhundert!
Paul	Eintausend!
Michael	Dreizehnhundert!
Paul	Sechzehnhundert!
Michael	Zweitausend!
Paul	Dreitausend!
Michael	Achttausend!!!
Paul
Auctioneer	Verkauft! Zu dieser Person hier für achttausend Euro!
Michael	Wahnsinn!

English

Auctioneer	And here we have a beautiful new motorcycle! Look stylish as you ride around town! We'll start the bidding at 100 euro.
Michael	One hundred!
Paul	Two hundred!
Michael	Five hundred!
Paul	One thousand!
Michael	Thirteen hundred!
Paul	Sixteen hundred!
Michael	Two thousand!
Paul	Three thousand!
Michael	Eight thousand!!!
Paul
Auctioneer	Sold! To this person right here for eight thousand euro!
Michael	Insanity!

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Bootcamp Lesson is to teach numbers from 100 to 10,000 in German.

Achttausend!

"Eight thousand!"

In this lesson, we'll learn how to form the numbers from one hundred up to ten thousand.

Number	German
100	<i>ehnhundert</i>
1,000	<i>eintausend</i>
10,000	<i>zehntausend</i>

To create multiples of hundreds and thousands, attach the number before the word *hundert* ("hundred") and *tausend* ("thousand") as follows:

Number	German
100	<i>ehnhundert</i>
200	<i>zweihundert</i>
300	<i>dreihundert</i>
400	<i>vierhundert</i>
500	<i>fünfhundert</i>
600	<i>sechshundert</i>
700	<i>siebenhundert</i>
800	<i>achthundert</i>
900	<i>neunhundert</i>
1000	<i>eintausend</i>
2000	<i>zweitausend</i>
3000	<i>dreitausend</i>
4000	<i>viertausend</i>
5000	<i>fünftausend</i>
6000	<i>sechstausend</i>
7000	<i>siebentausend</i>
8000	<i>achttausend</i>
9000	<i>neuntausend</i>

Here are the numbers from ten thousand to one million in German:

Number	German
10,000	<i>zehntausend</i>
20,000	<i>zwanzigtausend</i>
30,000	<i>dreiigtausend</i>
40,000	<i>vierzigtausend</i>
50,000	<i>fnfzigtausend</i>
60,000	<i>sechzigtausend</i>
70,000	<i>siebzigttausend</i>
80,000	<i>achtzigtausend</i>
90,000	<i>neunzigtausend</i>
100,000	<i>ehunderttausend</i>
1,000,000	<i>eine Million</i>

More Complex Numbers

The pattern for building numbers from 100 to 999 is:

number + hundred number + multiple of ten

For Example:

Number	German
101	<i>ehundert-eins</i>
105	<i>ehundert-fnf</i>
111	<i>ehundert-elf</i>
723	<i>siebenhundert drei-und-zwanzig</i>

The pattern for building numbers from 1,000 to 9,999 is:

number + thousand number + hundred number + multiple of ten

For Example:

Number	German
1300	<i>eintausend-dreihundert</i>
1600	<i>eintausend-sechshundert</i>
4800	<i>viertausend-achthundert</i>
2496	<i>zwei-tausend vier-hundert sechs-und-neunzig (literally, "two thousand,</i>

	four hundred, six and ninety")
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Cultural Insight

Frankfurt, Financial Center of Germany

If you are looking for people that deal with big numbers on a daily basis, Frankfurt might just be the place that you should visit! Situated near the beautiful Main River, Frankfurt is the financial as well as the transportation center of Germany. Important institutions like the German stock exchange, the European central bank, and the German Federal bank are situated here as well as one of the busiest international airports.

Additionally, Frankfurt has some other great points that should make a decision for a visit even easier; for example, it is considered one of the warmest cities in Germany with an annual average temperature of 10.1 °C (50°F). Needless to say, this city has been around since the Roman era and is the place of many roman-style buildings and churches like the Saint Paul's church, which was the seat of the first democratically elected parliament in 1848.





All About
Why You Should Learn German

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Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson Is the Background of the German Language.

Linguistics

- 
1. German is a West Germanic language, like English and Dutch. It derives from the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family, although there are significant minorities of words derived from Latin and Greek. It ranks in the list of the top ten languages based on the number of native speakers, with approximately 105 million people speaking German as their native language. German is also the third most-learned language worldwide.
 2. The German language is rich with regional dialects, with some being so radically different from the standard dialect (*Hochdeutsch*, meaning "High German") that some native speakers even have trouble understanding them. The most well-known dialects are the "Bavarian dialect" (*Bayrischer Dialekt*) and the "Saxonian dialect" (*Sächsischer Dialekt*). While the Bavarian dialect is spoken in Bavaria, the southernmost state of Germany with its famous city Munich (*München*), the Saxonian dialect is spoken in the southeastern part of the country.
 3. The German written language consists of a Latin-based alphabet, which is extended by a few specific German letters.
 4. The German language has borrowed heavily from other European countries and languages when it comes to foreign words or loan words. The Germans have borrowed many words from France, Italy, Scandinavia, and Eastern Europe, but also from the Hebrew, Arabic, and Turkish languages. Although the number of borrowed French words is quite high, many of them have fallen out of use. These days, we can't overlook English influences. This tendency has led to extreme polarization in academic discussions: strong supporters for the integration of foreign words (especially English loan words) on one hand and those who fight to banish them on the other hand. While the matter is still up in the air, the German Ministry of Education stays out of this conflict.

About Germany

Germany is known as *Deutschland*, which literally means "German country." to the Germans. With high-level education, a high-class medical system, great innovation potential, and a strong economy, this technologically advanced country in the heart of Europe is one of the world's leading nations. It's

also gaining power from its position as the strongest financial contributor to the European Union.

Where German Is Spoken

German is mainly spoken in Germany, but there are another four countries that use German as their official language: Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Liechtenstein. Furthermore, there are large communities of German speakers all over the world, including the United States of America, Canada, Russia, the Netherlands, Eastern Europe, and many other regions.

Why German Is Important

So why should you learn German? Here are some of the top reasons!

1. To communicate with German people! German is one of the top ten languages in the world based on the number of native speakers. That's over 105 million people. Just imagine all of the conversations you could have.
2. German pronunciation is easy! German is pronounced just the way it looks, so you can start speaking right away.
3. You will learn more than just a language. Learning German will give you great insight into the world of German and European culture in general that you just can't get any other way. By learning how the language works, you'll learn more about how the culture works.
4. German is fun! German has a lot to offer in the way of pop culture – fun and interesting movies, music, TV shows – you name it! Learning German will give you even greater access to the rich world of German pop culture.
5. You can make money! Germany boasts one of the largest economies in the world and is ranked third in the world after the United States and China. Proficient speakers of German can find jobs in various fields such as business, international relations, finance, electronics, engineering, information technology, tourism, translation, education, and many, many more.



All About
Understanding the German Writing System

2

Grammar Points	2
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Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is the German Writing System.

The German writing system uses one alphabet – the German alphabet. With this alphabet, the German writing system displays a scientific vocabulary of about nine million German words and word groups. The German alphabet is a Latin-based alphabet and consists of twenty-six letters: the same letters you can find in the basic Latin alphabet.

Latin was the official language of the Roman Empire (500 B.C. – 500 A.D.). The Romans developed twenty-six letters to create a broad variety of possible syllables and words. While the common people in the territory that was Germany at that time spoke an antecedent of German, the upper class continued to use Latin as their official language and so adapted the Latin alphabet.

Even today, the Latin-based alphabet is quite popular in Europe and many other countries around the world. Its impact is unparalleled. The most prominent countries that use it are England, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, South American nations in general, and many more countries around the globe.

2 The German alphabet has twenty-six basic letters, like the Latin alphabet. We can find them in two variants: uppercase and lowercase. German uses five basic vowels: *-A, -E, -I, -O, and -U* (uppercase) and *-a, -e, -i, -o, and -u* (lowercase). It also uses twenty-one basic consonants: *-B, -C, -D, -F, -G, -H, -J, -K, -L, -M, -N, -P, -Q, -R, -S, -T, -V, -W, -X, -Y, and -Z* (uppercase), and *-b, -c, -d, -f, -g, -h, -j, -k, -l, -m, -n, -p, -q, -r, -s, -t, -v, -w, -x, -y, and -z* (lowercase).

The German language additionally uses three letters with diacritics and one ligature. We call the diacritic letters *umlaute* ("umlauts"), while we call the ligature *Eszett* (sharp-s).

The German language uses three diacritic letters in uppercase and lowercase: *-Ä, -Ö, and -Ü* (uppercase), and *-ä, -ö, and -ü* (lowercase). Although these letters represent distinct sounds in the German phonology, Germans usually do not consider them part of the alphabet. When asked to say the alphabet, Germans will just count the twenty-six cardinal Latin letters and will name the umlauts only when asked to do so explicitly.

-ä, -ö, and -ü originated as *-a, -o, and -u* with a superscripted *-e*, which in German handwriting was

written as two vertical dashes. Those dashes have degenerated to dots. This led to their current writing as cardinal letters plus superscripted dots: $-a + \ddot{}$ = $-ä$; $-o + \ddot{}$ = $-ö$, and $-u + \ddot{}$ = $-ü$.

In case it is not possible to use the umlauts, when using a restricted character set (because keyboards other than the German keyboard don't display the umlauts), transcribe the umlauts $-Ä$, $-Ö$, $-Ü$, $-ä$, $-ö$, and $-ü$ as $-Ae$, $-Oe$, $-Ue$, $-ae$, $-oe$, and $-ue$ (base vowel plus $-e$).

Yet, avoid any such transcription when possible because vowel combinations of $-a + -e$, $-o + -e$, or $-u + -e$ don't necessarily mean that it always is a transcription of $-ä$, $-ö$, or $-ü$. For example, look at *das neue Haus* ("the new house"). *Neue* is spelled $-n-e-u-e$, which could be back-transcribed as $-n-e-ü$. Technically, the second $-e$ has no connection with the $-u$ at all: *neue* means *neu* ("new"), while the $-e$ at the end indicates the neutral singular form. So *neü* doesn't exist in German.

The other extra letter of the German alphabet is the sharp $-s$, which we call *Eszett* and write as β . The *Eszett* looks similar to the lowercase greek "beta" (β), but the curve is not closed at the bottom (β). *Eszett* only exists in a lowercase version because it can never occur at the beginning of a word or sentence.

When using a restricted character set, we can convert *Eszett* (β) to $-ss$. For example, you can convert *Fuß*, spelled $-F-u-\beta$ (meaning "foot"), to *Fuss* ($-F-u-s-s$). This rule also applies when you must capitalize entire words. For example, *Fußball* ("soccer") is capitalized FUSSBALL, using $-SS$.

The German spelling reform of 1996 led to a reduced usage of *Eszett* in Germany and Austria. Nowadays, β replaces $-ss$ only after long vowels and diphthongs.

There is no general agreement on where these umlauts occur in the sorting sequence. Telephone directories treat them by replacing them with the base vowel followed by an $-e$, whereas dictionaries sort each umlauted vowel as a separate letter after the base vowel. As an example from a telephone book, *Ärzte* ("doctors") occurs after *Adressenverlage* but before *Anlagenbauer* (because $-Ae$ replaces $-Ä$). In a dictionary, *Ärzte* and all other words starting with $-Ä$ occur after *Arzt* and all other words starting with $-A$. We sort the sharp $-s$ *Eszett* (β) as though it were $-ss$ in both phone directories and dictionaries.

The Germans consider some of the letters of the German alphabet to be rare letters. $-q$, for example, is a rare letter. It only appears in the sequence $-qu$, as in *Quark* ("cottage cheese"). Other letters, like $-x$ and $-y$, occur almost exclusively in loan words (especially of Greek heritage) and not in native German words. We use $-c$ in combination with $-h$ or $-s-h$ as $-ch$ or $-sch$.

Another peculiarity of the German writing system is the rule that the first letter of any German noun is always capitalized, even in the middle of the sentence.

For Example:

1. *Peter spielt Ball auf der Straße.*
"Peter plays with a ball on the street."

We capitalize the nouns *Ball* ("ball") and *Straße* ("street") even though they don't appear at the beginning of the sentence and are not considered proper nouns.





All About

We Make It Easy to Learn Basic German Grammar!

3

Grammar Points

2

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is Basic German Grammar.

Welcome to our explanation of Basic German grammar! Now, we know that the mere mention of grammar is enough to make your palms sweat and perhaps bring back some not-so-good memories of your old high school language classes. But don't worry – we're here to give you a basic overview of German grammar using language that's easy to understand – no drawn-out, long-winded explanations to be found here! Learn German grammar quickly while having fun at the same time!

Before we take a look at German grammar, though, let's quickly go over the basics of English grammar first. By understanding more about how English works, you'll be able to see how it differs from German grammar.

English Sentence Order

First, let's take a look at sentence order.

English is what we call an SVO language, which means that the sentences come in the order of subject – verb – object. This rule applies to main clauses and subordinate clauses.

Let's illustrate this with an example.

Main clause:

Subject	Verb	Object
"I"	"eat"	"ice cream"

The subject, or the one doing the action, is "I." The verb, or action, is "eat." The object, or the one receiving the action, is "ice cream." This is an example of a sentence in an SVO language.

Subordinate clause:

Conjunction	Subject	Verb	Object
"because"	"I"	"like"	"it"

Subordinate clauses start with a conjunction, followed by subject-verb-object (SVO); first the subject, "I," followed by the verb, "like," and finally the object, "it."

German Sentence Order

German is a bit different from English in this respect. There are two common word orders: one for **main clauses** (independent clauses) and another for **subordinate clauses** (dependent clauses).

Main clauses use SVO like English. The subject is in first position of the sentence, while the verb or helping verb appears second in the sentence, and the object marks the last position. In subordinate clauses, this is somewhat different. A conjunction holds the first position, followed by the subject and the object. The verb appears at the very end.

For Example:

Let's look at the whole sentence: "I eat ice cream because I like it." The main clause is "I eat ice cream," while the dependent clause is "because I like it."

Main clause:

Subject	Verb	Object
"I"	"eat"	"ice cream"

Main clauses use SVO like English. So our previous example, "I eat ice cream" in English, stays "I eat ice cream" when put in German order.

Subordinate clause:

Conjunction	Subject	Object	Verb
"because"	"I"	"it"	"like"

The conjunction holds the first position, followed by subject, "I," and the object, "it," and the verb "like" appears in the last position.

To sum it up: German main clauses follow the SVO rule, while subordinate clauses follow the SOV rule (subject-object-verb). This is one of the biggest differences between English and German grammar and one of the most important aspects to keep in mind!

Forming Questions

First, we will take a look at how to form questions in English. To do so, you have to change the order of the sentence!

For Example:

1. "He is a student"
becomes
"Is he a student?"

German uses the same method as English – changing the word order of the sentence. Let's take a look at the German equivalent of the sentence above:

1. *Er ist ein Student.* ("He is a student.")
becomes
Ist er ein Student? ("Is he a student?")

Let's look at one more.

For Example:

1. *Du wohnst in Berlin.* ("You live in Berlin.")
becomes
Wohnst du in Berlin? ("Do you live in Berlin?")

The position of a verb in a sentence changes according to the type of sentence. Affirmative sentences require a verb or helping verb to appear second in the sentence. In polar questions (*Ist er ein Student?* meaning "Is he a student?"), exclamations (*Halt bitte an!* meaning "Stop, please!"), and wishes, verbs always appear in the first position, and in subordinate clauses, verbs occur at the very end.

Tense

Tense is a method that we use in English to refer to time – past, present, and future. If you are a native

English speaker, you might not even be aware of how many tenses there are in English. Let's think about the future tense for a moment. The sentence "I jog" in the present tense becomes "I will jog" or even "I'm going to jog." (And they have slightly different meanings! Did you ever notice?)

Compared to the twelve basic English tenses, German has only a few. While the German language knows six tenses, Germans mainly use only four. These six tenses are **present, future, future perfect, preterit, perfect, and past perfect.**

The present tense describes what is happening at this definite moment. The future tense describes what's going to happen, and the future perfect describes what will have happened in the future. The other three tenses describe the past. The preterite tense expresses actions that took place in the past. The German language uses the perfect tense to describe completed (thus "perfect") actions in the past, and the past perfect refers to events that had been completed before another past action.

The two tenses the German language rarely uses are the future perfect and the past perfect.

Non-composed Tenses

The present and preterit tenses are non-composed tenses. In these tenses, we conjugate the verb without any helping verb forms.

For Example:

1. Present

Ich gehe zum Supermarkt.

"I go to the supermarket."

Gehe is the conjugated verb, and it means "go."

2. Preterit

Ich ging zum Supermarkt.

"I went the supermarket."

Ging is the conjugated verb, and it means "went."

Composed Tenses

The perfect, past perfect, future, and future perfect tenses are composed tenses. They are composed of a helping verb (usually an inflected form of *sein/haben*, meaning "to be"/"to have") and the infinite verb or participle at the end of the sentence.



For Example:**Perfect**

1. *Ich bin zum Supermarkt gegangen.*
"I was going to the supermarket."

The perfect tense is a composed tense. Here, the verb is composed of the helping verb *bin* (first singular person of "to be") and the verb participle *gegangen* ("to go") at the end of the sentence.

Future

1. *Ich werde zum Supermarkt gehen.*
"I will go to the supermarket."

The future tense is composed of the helping verb *werde* ("will") and the infinite verb *gehen* ("to go") at the end of the sentence.

One more note on the future tense: Germans tend to avoid using the future tense because it can be unspecific. Instead of saying *Ich werde zum Supermarkt gehen* ("I will go to the supermarket."), they might say *Ich gehe morgen zum Supermarkt* ("Tomorrow, I go to the supermarket."). It's more common to use the present tense and add words that indicate the future, like *morgen* ("tomorrow") or *nächste Woche* ("next week") than to use the future tense.

Conjugation

In a lot of languages, the verb conjugates, or changes its form, according to **who** is doing the action. This is especially true for Romance languages, but we also see it in English: for example, "I go" versus "he goes."

German verbs also conjugate according to the subject. The pronouns *ich*, *du*, *er/sie/es*, *wir*, *ihr*, and *sie* symbolize the three persons (singular and plural). The subject, if specified, can easily be something other than these pronouns, but we use them for our examples.

German distinguishes between regular and irregular verb conjugation. The verb *gehen* is an example



for regular conjugation. There are a lot of different verb classes though. We classify the regular verbs, sometimes called "weak verbs," by their endings. There are three groups of regular verbs: regular *-en* verbs (such as *lieben*, meaning "to love"); regular *-n* verbs (such as *handeln*, meaning "to act") and regular *-ten* verbs (such as *arbeiten*, meaning "to work").

Conjugation Mode for Regular Verbs (present tense, indicative)

Regular *-en* Verbs

Infinitive *lieben* ("to love")

Singular

<i>German</i>	"English"
<i>ich liebe</i>	"I love"
<i>du liebst</i>	"you love"
<i>er/sie/es liebt</i>	"he/she/it loves"

Plural

<i>German</i>	"English"
<i>wir lieben</i>	"we love"
<i>ihr liebt</i>	"you love"
<i>sie lieben</i>	"they love"

Regular *-n* Verbs

Infinitive *handeln* ("to act")

Singular

<i>German</i>	"English"
<i>ich handele</i>	"I act"
<i>du handelst</i>	"you act"
<i>er...handelt</i>	"he...acts"

Plural

<i>German</i>	"English"
<i>wir handeln</i>	"we act"

<i>ihr handelt</i>	"you act"
<i>sie handeln</i>	"they act"

Regular *-ten* Verbs

Infinitive *arbeiten* ("to work")

Singular

German	"English"
<i>ich arbeite</i>	"I work"
<i>du arbeitest</i>	"you work"
<i>er..arbeitet</i>	"he...works"

Plural

German	"English"
<i>wir arbeiten</i>	"we work"
<i>ihr arbeitet</i>	"you work"
<i>sie arbeiten</i>	"they work"

Irregular Verbs

English is full of irregular verbs. In many cases, we can turn verbs into the past tense by adding "-ed" to the end, but think of how many exceptions there are to this rule: "fly" becomes "flew," "run" becomes "ran," "buy" becomes "bought"...the list goes on!

In German, irregular verbs ("strong verbs") also follow different patterns than the regular verbs. They not only change the word endings, but the root word changes too. For example, look at the difference between *ich fahre* ("I drive") to *du fährst* ("you drive"), changing the root *fahr-* to *fähr-*.

Plurals

Remember learning all of the complicated rules for forming plurals in English when you were in grade school? We first learn that you add *-s* to a word to make it plural, but then comes one exception after another, such as words like "knives," "candies," and "mice."

German is even more complicated: the German language knows twelve different ways of forming the

plural. So it's best to learn the plural for each new noun you learn.

Many feminine nouns are very regular in the formation of the plural; however, masculine and neuter nouns are not. Some plurals are formed with -n or -en, some with an umlaut and an -e or -en, others with -er, while loan words borrowed from other languages take a plural in -s, such as *das Restaurant*, which becomes *die Restaurants* in the plural.

Pronouns

The grammatical term pronoun refers to a form that substitutes for a noun. And here's one fine example: instead of saying, "Amy gave the coat to Peter," you can replace all three nouns with pronouns and say, "She gave it to him." If you have mentioned Amy, the coat, and Peter before, the listener can deduce what the pronouns "she," "it," and "him" refer to and therefore understand the meaning of the sentence. German pronouns work the same way.

German pronouns of the first person refer to the speaker. Pronouns of the second person refer to an addressed person. Pronouns of the third person obviously refer to third persons.

The most well-known pronouns are personal pronouns. The following chart shows the personal pronouns in the nominal case:

Singular

Construction	German	"English"
First person	<i>ich</i>	"I"
Second person	<i>du</i>	"you"
Third person	<i>er/sie/es</i>	"he"/"she"/"it"

Plural

Construction	German	"English"
First person	<i>wir</i>	"we"
Second person	<i>ihr</i>	"you"
Third person	<i>sie</i>	"they"

For Example:

German	"English"
<i>Ich gehe einkaufen.</i>	"I go shopping."

<i>Du gehst einkaufen.</i>	"You go shopping."
<i>Er/sie geht einkaufen.</i>	"He/she goes shopping."
<i>Wir gehen einkaufen.</i>	"We go shopping."
<i>Ihr geht einkaufen.</i>	"You go shopping."
<i>Sie gehen einkaufen.</i>	"They go shopping."

Articles

The extensive use of articles (definite and indefinite) is a unique feature of German. Articles can be inflected. The inflected forms depend on the number, the case, and the gender of the corresponding noun. In contrast to English where you use the definite article "the" for all genders, German distinguishes between three genders for articles: *der* (masculine), *die* (feminine), and *das* (neuter). Articles have the same plural forms for all three genders: *die*.

For Example:

German	"English"	Construction
<i>der Computer</i>	"computer"	singular, masculine
<i>die Computer</i>	"computers"	plural, masculine
<i>die Blume</i>	"flower"	singular, feminine
<i>die Blumen</i>	"flowers"	plural, feminine
<i>das Auto</i>	"car"	singular, neuter
<i>die Autos</i>	"cars"	plural, neuter

Gender

The German language, like many of the Romance languages, uses all of the three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Every German noun takes one of these genders, though the grammatical gender of a German noun is not necessarily the actual gender of the corresponding real-life object. It's different with nouns that signify a person: for example, *die Frau* ("woman") or *der Mann* ("man") take the grammatical gender corresponding to their sex.

German also assigns gender to nouns without natural gender. The following example of three cutlery pieces will show this: *das Messer* ("knife") is neuter, *die Gabel* ("fork") is feminine, and *der Löffel* ("spoon") is masculine.

It's best to learn German nouns with their accompanying definite article, as the definite article corresponds to the gender of the noun. However, the ending of a noun can be used to recognize about eighty percent of noun genders. Nouns ending with the suffixes *-heit*, *-keit*, *-tät*, *-ung*, *-ik*, or *-schaft*

are feminine. Most nouns ending in *-e* are likely to be feminine, though there are exceptions: for example, *die Liebe* ("love") is feminine, but *das Ende* ("end") is neuter. Nouns ending in *-er* are likely to be masculine: for example, *der Arbeiter* ("worker"), *der Computer* ("computer"). However, there are exceptions: for example, *das Wasser* ("water") is neutral.



All About

How Do You Pronounce Those German Letters with the Dots?

4

Grammar Points	2
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Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is Basic German Pronunciation.

It's often been said that German pronunciation is one of the easier aspects of the language. And guess what – it's true! But it still takes some practice, and we're here to help you with it. We'll introduce you to the ins and outs of German pronunciation and show you how it matches with and differs from English pronunciation.

Sounds and Syllables

Let's first take a look at how German sounds work. The German writing system uses eight vowels (the basic *-a*, *-e*, *-i*, *-o*, and *-u* and the umlauts *-ä*, *-ö*, and *-ü*) and twenty-two consonants (*-b*, *-c*, *-d*, *-f*, *-g*, *-h*, *-j*, *-k*, *-l*, *-m*, *-n*, *-p*, *-q*, *-r*, *-s*, *-t*, *-v*, *-w*, *-x*, *-y*, *-z*, and *Eszett ß*). This makes a total of thirty letters, but German uses more sounds than letters. Since German is a pluricentric language, there are a number of pronunciation variations of standard German, though they agree in most respects.

Although German is made up of letters from the Latin alphabet, German, like many other languages including English, uses the concept of syllables. The German language arranges letters in blocks of syllables to form words. A syllable is usually made up of one or some consonants and one vowel, but some of them contain only one vowel. For example, *Lehrer* (syllabic: *Leh-rer*), meaning "teacher," consists of two syllables, with each one being made up of three letters (two consonants and the vowel *-e*). Another example is the word *trinken* (syllabic: *trin-ken*), meaning "to drink," which consists of two syllables: the first one, *trin*, is made up of three consonants and the vowel *-i*, while the second syllable, *ken*, is made up of two consonants and the vowel *-e*.

Vowels

German vowels exist in two versions: long vowels and short vowels.

Here's a list of German vowels, spoken long and short:

Vowel	Long	Short	Example - Long Vowel	Example - Short Vowel
<i>-a</i>	+	+	<i>Pate</i> ("godfather")	<i>Paste</i> ("paste")

-e	+	+	<i>Erde</i> ("earth")	<i>Erbse</i> ("pea")
-i	+	+	<i>Igel</i> ("hedgehog")	<i>Insel</i> ("island")
-o	+	+	<i>Ton</i> ("sound")	<i>Tonne</i> ("barrel")
-u	+	+	<i>unten</i> ("below")	<i>Bus</i> ("bus")
-ä*	+	-	<i>Ärmel</i> ("sleeve")	-
-ö	+	+	<i>Flöte</i> ("flute")	<i>öffnen</i> ("to open")
-ü	+	+	<i>Tüte</i> ("bag")	<i>Küste</i> ("coast")

* There is no short version of vowel -ä because the short -ä vowel sounds similar to the short -e.

One quick remark about weakened vowels: in certain cases, we do not emphasize the vowel. The best example of this is the -e in the last syllable of a word at the end of sentences.

For Example:

1. *Wir wollen geh'n.*
"We want to leave."

Correctly spoken, it should sound like *Wir wollen gehen*, but it's common to say *Wir wollen geh'n*.

Diphthongs

German uses diphthongs, which are combinations of two different vowels. We also use diphthongs in English: for example, "neutral" has the diphthong "-eu." The most common German diphthongs are -ei as in *Eis* ("ice cream"), -au as in *Raub* ("robbery"), and -eu as in *neu* ("new").

A combination of two vowels of the same kind is not considered a diphthong sound. For example, look at the English "school," where we find two -o vowels, indicating a long "-o."

Consonants

With approximately twenty-five phonemes, the German consonant system exhibits an average number of consonants in comparison with other languages. Like English, clusters of three or more consonants are quite common: for example, *Pflaster* ("plaster") starts with three consonants (-*p-f-l*).

Here we're not going to go over the pronunciation of all the consonants, but if you're interested, you can listen to our pronunciation series designed to help you master German pronunciation.

Stress

Let's think about stress in English for a moment. Try saying the words "important" and "interesting" aloud. When you say these words aloud, you're putting emphasis, or stress, on a certain syllable. In "important," the stress is on the *PORT* syllable. In "interesting," the stress is on the *INT* syllable. If you haven't studied phonetics before, it's probably something that just comes naturally that you've never noticed before! Because correct English pronunciation puts emphasis on certain syllables, English is known as a stress language.

German also uses the concept of stressing syllables, but there is one major difference: stress usually falls on the first syllable. In German, we call stress on the first syllable initial accent. We hold the first syllable for a longer length of time than the others and give that syllable more stress. Stress applies for all kinds of words, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and all other parts of speech. For example, in *Arbeiter* ("worker"), we stress the first syllable, *AR-*. In *trinken* ("to drink"), we stress the first syllable, *TRIN-*.

There are some exceptions to the initial accent rule, though. Many loan words, especially proper names, keep their original stress. A French guy named *Gustáv* will still be called *Gus-TÁV*, not *GUS-tav*.

Other exceptions include verbs that end on the suffix *-ieren*. They receive stress on their penultimate syllable: for example, *stud-IE-ren* ("to study"), *ba-lan-CIE-ren* ("to balance"), and many more. And compound adverbs, starting with *her-*, *hin-*, *da-*, and *wo-* as their first syllable part, receive stress on their second syllable: for example, *her-AUF* ("up here"), *da-HIN* ("there"/"to that place"), and *wo-HIN* ("where...to").

German also distinguishes stress between separable prefixes (with stress on the prefix) and inseparable prefixes (with stress on the root) in verbs and words derived from such verbs. Words beginning with the prefixes *be-*, *ge-*, *er-*, *ver-*, *zer-*, *ent-*, and *emp-* receive stress on the second syllable. Words beginning with *ab-*, *auf-*, *em-*, and *vor-* receive stress on their first syllable.

Rarely in German, you'll encounter two homographs (words that are spelled the same but have a different meaning) with such prefixes. Consider the word *umfahren*. As *UM-fahren* (separable prefix), it means "to drive over"/"to collide with (an object on the street)," and receives stress on the first syllable. On the other hand, we stress *umfahren* (inseparable prefix) on the second syllable, *um-FAH-ren*. This word means "to drive around (an obstacle on the street)."

This might sound like a lot to consider, but remember that learning good pronunciation is one of the easier aspects of German!





All About

Top Five Must-Know German Phrases

5

Grammar Points

2

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson Is the Top Five Must-Know German Phrases

Here we'll introduce five phrases in German that will take you a long way and help you out in a variety of situations!

1. *Guten Tag* ("Good day," "Hello")

Guten Tag is the most common way to greet someone in German. Germans mostly use this phrase on its own, but you can combine it with other words. So maybe, for example, if you're being introduced to a new co-worker, you can use it as a formal greeting.

Guten Tag is kind of formal, but this way you don't sound impolite when you're meeting someone for the first time or when you're greeting the desk clerk in your bank branch or insurance company. In situations where you're not required to be so formal, *hallo* is a convenient word to use. *Hallo* is less formal, and you can compare it to a lighthearted "Hi!" or "Hey!" in English. You can use *Hallo* when meeting friends or getting attention from people working in stores, for example.

2. *Entschuldigung*. ("Excuse me." "I'm sorry.")

Entschuldigung is one of the most versatile phrases you will come across in Germany. *Entschuldigung* is a good phrase to use if you're trying to make your way through a crowd or in a similar situation. You can use *Entschuldigung* to get someone's attention, like to call the waiter over at a restaurant, to get the attention of a shop clerk, or to get the attention of a passerby when you want to ask a question.

No matter how diligent you are, at some point, you're likely going to need to apologize. The neat thing is that *Entschuldigung* can double as "I'm sorry!" in some situations. If you need to apologize for something that has happened, you may use it. You can use this phrase to apologize for some kind of light trouble or mishap: for example, being too late on a date or spilling your coffee all over one's shirt, but you probably shouldn't use it when you're truly sorry.

The correct pronunciation is *Entschuldigung*, but you might hear some people pronounce it as '*schuldigung*. They leave out the prefix *Ent-*. It's quite common in spoken German nowadays. But the correct way to say it is *Entschuldigung*, so we recommend that.

3. *Bitte. Danke.* ("Please." "Thanks.")

You will hear both phrases all the time. The nuance of *Bitte* varies a little bit depending on the situation, but the underlying message is always the same: "Please!" and the response "Thanks!"

You can ask for a tangible object by first saying what you need and then adding *Bitte* ("Please"). It's a pretty easy way to ask for something. For example, "A coffee, please" in German is *Einen Kaffee bitte*.

We use *Bitte* more often to ask favors of or to make requests of other people. It's kind of like "Can you take care of this for me, please?" or even "thanks in advance."

If you're offering something to someone or would like someone to go ahead of you or do something before you, *bitte* also is the phrase you are looking for. Offering your seat to someone on the train? *Bitte*. Holding the door for someone and would like him or her to go right ahead? *Bitte*. At a restaurant and someone else's food came before yours and you would like that person to start eating? *Bitte*.

The appropriate response to *bitte* is *danke* ("thanks"). It's a less formal way of thanking, but it's very common because it's short and quickly spoken. In this situation on the train, the person you're offering your seat to will say *danke* before actually sitting down.

If you want to show off your manners, you can say *Herzlichen Dank*, which literally means "heartful thanks." If you say *Herzlichen Dank*, your host will be very pleased to hear you say this.

You can combine *Danke* with other words: the most prominent is *nein* ("no"). If you feel the need to refuse something, you can just put *nein* ("no") in front of *danke*. *Nein danke* ("No, thanks."). This is a very polite way to express your refusal.

4. *Das verstehe ich nicht.* "I don't understand this."

This phrase is going to be your best friend, go-to phrase, and solace. When a barrage of German follows your perfectly accented *Guten Tag*, you can stop the person opposite you and tell him or her, *Das verstehe ich nicht* ("I don't understand.").

Literally, *Das verstehe ich nicht* means ("This understand I do not"), but it's translated as "I don't understand this." This may be a high-frequency phrase for you at first, but nobody will blame you for not being able to follow their fast talking in native German. Your counterpart(s) will likely become very compassionate with your dilemma. He or she will translate the words you don't know or explain

the situation comprehensibly, because he or she wants to communicate with you and involve you in the discussion.

5. Ich weiß nicht. ("I don't know.")

This is a very common phrase because you can use it when you don't know something but in other circumstances as well. Learn from the Germans how to *Ich weiß nicht* every situation you wish to evade, play dumb about, or avoid. This phrase fits perfectly if you want to be evasive.

Here are some examples of when you can use this phrase:

Imagine it's Friday night. You just finished dinner with some German friends, and now they give you choices of what to do: going clubbing, watching a film in the movie theater, or doing something else. After each choice they give you, you can tell them *Ich weiß nicht* (in case you don't want to watch a film or go clubbing, etc.). The point is that using this phrase is more polite than directly turning down their suggestions.

It's a phrase that you can use in multiple situations, such as if a pedestrian asks you how late it is, but you forgot your watch at home. You can tell him *Ich weiß nicht* ("I don't know.").

Ich weiß nicht works in almost all situations, whether you don't know something or don't want to do something.



All About

Quiz: 5 Things You Have to Know about Germany. Test Your Knowledge of German.

6

Grammar Points

2

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is Testing Your Knowledge of German and Germany

This lesson will build your basic knowledge of Germany by quizzing you on five areas of knowledge: Geography, Pop Culture, Travel, Economics, and Myth Busting.

I. Geography

How many federal states does Germany have?

1. thirty-two
2. eight
3. sixteen

Answer: 3. Germany has sixteen federal states, the largest of which in terms of size is Bavaria, by far. "Bavaria," in German, *Bayern*, has almost twice the size of Niedersachsen and is eighty times as big as Berlin. Furthermore, Bavaria is the southern-most federal state of Germany, and its most popular city is Munich. Three federal states are considered cities likewise: Germany's capital Berlin, Hamburg, and Bremen. With a population of eighty-two million people, Germany is the most populated country in Europe. Federal state Nordrhein-Westfalen places first with a population of about eighteen million people.

Bonus Question:

What percentage of Germany's eighty-two million people, live in urban areas?

1. twenty-two percent
2. fifty-four percent
3. eighty-eight percent

Answer: 3. Eighty-eight percent of Germany's population lives in urban areas. Though Germany doesn't have a lot of big cities with a population above one million, there are a lot of cities everywhere

with a population of three hundred thousand to eight hundred thousand people. Furthermore, the biggest urban areas are in the western and southern parts of the country, except for Hamburg and Berlin. The three northernmost provinces together, amount to just thirteen percent of the overall population.

II. Pop Culture

I'm going to name three people. One is a famous singer, the next one is a politician, and the final one is a sports star. Match the person with their profession.

1. Michael Schumacher
2. Herbert Grönemeyer
3. Angela Merkel

Answer: Herbert Grönemeyer is a famous singer. He has been part of the German music business for over two decades, and is still as popular as back then, reaching Gold and Platinum status on the German pop music charts. His pop-rock songs seem to appeal to a broad variety of people.

Angela Merkel, (who holds a doctoral degree in Physics), has been the German chancellor since 2005 and is believed to be the most powerful woman in the world. Raised in the communist East Germany, she worked her way up to the political top league after the reunification of Germany.

Germany's most prominent athlete is Formula One pilot Michael Schumacher. The motorsports champion won the Formula One World Cup six times between 1994 and 2003, an outstanding and unparalleled record in motorsports.

Correct Matches:

Singer - Herbert Grönemeyer
 Politician - Angela Merkel
 Athlete - Michael Schumacher

III. Travel Question

We will give the names of three popular sightseeing places. Please choose the one that is **NOT** in

Berlin!

1. Brandenburg Gate
2. Deutscher Reichstag
3. Zugspitze

Answer: The answer is 3, Zugspitze. The Zugspitze is not in Berlin. It's the highest mountain in Germany, located in Bavaria close to the Austrian border in the Alps Mountains (700 kilometers, or 430 miles south of Berlin).

Both the Brandenburg Gate and the Deutscher Reichstag are located in Berlin. The Brandenburg Gate is a famous monument and one of Germany's main symbols. The Reichstag building was constructed to house the parliament of the German Empire. This is where the German legislature met from 1894 to 1933 and again since 1999.

IV. Economic Question

Germany's economy ranks what number in the world?

Answer: Fourth. Germany has developed a social market economy that ranks the fourth largest in the world, only after the United States, Japan, and China. As of Europe, Germany has the largest economy. Germany also is the world's leading exporter of merchandise.

V. Debunking a Myth About Germany

True/False: The world-famous Turkish fast food, *Döner Kebab*, was actually created in a backyard in Berlin.

Answer: False! *Döner Kebab* is a Turkish meal and was invented in the eighteenth century. We can translate *Döner Kebab* as "rotating roast." This refers to a Turkish dish made of lamb or chicken meat cooked on a vertical spit and sliced off to order.

Turkish immigrants created a German variation of *Döner Kebab* in Berlin to suit German tastes. The German kebab (where the meat and salad filling is served in thick flatbread that is usually toasted or warmed) became one of Germany's most popular fast food dishes and started a victory parade around the world. It is said that Turkish emigrants exported German kebabs back into their home country.



All About
German Cuisine

7

Grammar Points	2
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Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is German Cuisine

What comes to your mind when you think of German food? Sauerkraut and pork knuckles, perhaps? Various sausages made of pork or beef and potato? And tons of cabbage side dishes? Well, while there might be lots of potato and sausage to be found in Germany, they are merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to German cuisine - there is a whole lot more to be discovered!

Table Etiquette

Before we go on to the food, let's first talk about German table etiquette. Before eating, it is customary to say *Guten Appetit!* (literally, "Good appetite") as a way to show gratitude for the meal. Some people even pray before they start to eat or shake hands while saying *Guten Appetit*, but you had better not do that in a restaurant. People also used to finish a meal with a saying, but this habit has vanished.

Here's a short list of things you had better not do when at a restaurant, café, or pub because Germans consider them very rude:

1. Don't wear shorts and extremely casual wear unless you are young or dining at a beach club.
2. Don't eat with your fingers.
3. Don't eat with your elbows resting on the table.
4. Don't put spoons used to stir beverages in your mouth.
5. Don't put your arms on your lap during dinner. Put them above the table.

Regional Dishes

One of the most interesting aspects of German cuisine is its vast array of regional delicacies. Each area of Germany boasts its own selection of specialty dishes that have become closely associated with the area. It is not uncommon for German people from all over Germany to travel hundreds of miles to try the different specialties in the place that they originally come from.

One of the most famous examples of regional cuisine is *Maultaschen*, a traditional Southwestern noodle dish. Its name, which we can translate as "mouth bags," derives from its shape. These square or

bag-shaped noodles are reminiscent of ravioli, and stuffed with beef and herbs. This dish can be served with a salty, well-seasoned soup in a bowl or can be fried with onion. In some parts of its home region (federal state Baden-Württemberg), you can find vegetarian *Maultaschen*.

Other popular regional dishes include *Königsberger Klopse* ("cooked meatballs in a white sauce with capers"), *Rollmops* ("rolled pickled herring"), and *Germknödel* ("yeast dumpling filled with plum sauce"), and much, much more. If you have a chance to visit Germany, definitely give some of the local specialties a try!

Popular Dishes

A significant part of German cuisine is "bread," in German, *Brot*. There's basically no breakfast or supper without it. Germans consider bread necessary for a healthy diet. About six hundred different types of breads and more than one thousand types of pastries and bread rolls are produced every year. For that reason, Germany is considered to be THE "Bread Country." The importance of bread is illustrated by words such as *Abendbrot* (literally, "evening bread" and meaning "supper"), or *Brotzeit* (literally, "bread time," meaning "snack").

Bread types range from "white wheat bread" (*Weißbrot*) to "gray wheat bread" (*Graubrot*) and "black bread" (*Schwarzbrot*). The most popular bread types include: white bread, wheat-rye, toast bread, whole-grain, multi-grain, sunflower seed, pumpkin seed, and onion bread.

Very popular are "bread rolls," known as *Brötchen*, *Semmel*, *Schrippe*, or *Weckle*, depending on the region. The typical serving is a roll cut in half, then spread with butter or margarine. Meat, cheese, fish, honey, or jam are then placed between the two halves, or on each half separately.

Bread is rarely used as a side dish for the main meal. Traditionally, the main meal of the day has been lunch. Dinner has always been a smaller meal, typically consisting of bread, meat or sausages, and cheese and vegetables, but over the past fifty years, dining habits have changed. People eat only a small meal during the day and have hot dinners at home with their families.

If you were to look at the average German lunch dishes, besides popular fast food restaurants and their standardized dishes, pizza, Turkish *Döner kebab*, and sausage snacks, you would find three very common dish combinations:

1. Potatoes or french fries with meat, usually *Schnitzel*, steak or beef roll, and mixed vegetables.
2. Noodles with ground meat and tomato sauce.
3. French fries or rice with breaded or fried fish.

Common side dishes include hot vegetables (sauerkraut, peas and carrots, or cabbage) and cold vegetables (a broad variety of salads and dressings), while popular desserts are ice cream, puddings, and *Quarkspeisen*.

Seasonal Dishes

Germans love their seasons, and they especially love eating the different dishes that are associated with the different seasons. When the cold weather sets in during winter, people line up at the Christmas markets in December to eat hot potato fritters, *Grünkohl* ("colewort") with bacon, *Maronen* ("sweet chestnuts"), *Schmalzgebäck* ("olycook"), and drink *Glühwein* ("mulled wine") with winter spices such as ginger and cinnamon.

In spring, when the asparagus season sets in, you will find many dishes with *Spargel* ("asparagus") with the most popular being *Spargel mit Schinken*, where the asparagus is wrapped in ham rolls and topped with hollandaise sauce.

Top Five Foods to Try in Germany

Sausages

In Germany, you will find hundreds of different kinds of *Wurst* ("sausages"). "Boiled sausages," like *Wiener* or *Frankfurter Würstchen* and the common *Bockwurst* ("hot sausage," "grilled sausages," "fried sausages," "sausages with peel and without," and so on). But one of the most common sausage dishes is *Currywurst* ("curry sausage"). The special thing about it is that it's a large fried or grilled sausage that is served with curry powder and ketchup. This spicy sausage traditionally comes with bread, potato salad, or french fries. It's one of the most popular German lunch dishes. Walk down Main Street in Hamburg and you'll find a ton of snack bars where they serve *Currywurst*.

Bauernfrühstück

We can translate this classic German dish as "farmer's breakfast," even though it actually is a lunch dish and one of the easiest dishes you can imagine. Its name dates back to a time when farmers had to work hard all day long, and as such, needed a rich breakfast. *Bauernfrühstück* is made of fried potatoes with scrambled egg and bacon, and usually arranged with pickled cucumbers.

Schnitzel

Schnitzel is a "pork outlet without bones." It's probably the most popular meat dish in Germany. People all over the world love *Schnitzel*. When made of prime quality meat, a *Schnitzel* is mostly served pure, perhaps with some salt and a slice of lemon.

There are different versions of *Schnitzel*. Only the version coated in breadcrumbs and made from veal is called *Wiener Schnitzel*. This is best liked among Germans, even though it's an Austrian dish which was first prepared in Austria's capital Wien – Vienna.

Schnitzel in Germany is commonly made of pork coated in breadcrumbs and fried. It's served with either potato salad or potatoes with parsley and butter.

Eintopf

Eintopf in English is "hotpot." It's a traditional type of German stew, which can consist of a great number of different ingredients. The term refers to a way of cooking all ingredients in one pot, not to any specific recipe. For that reason, many different regional specialty recipes for *Eintopf* are known in Germany.

Eintopf contains four basic ingredients: broth, green vegetables, potatoes or pulses, and often meat or sausage. The beef stock, chicken broth, or vegetable stock is often used as a foundation to which the other ingredients are gradually added. To bring out the flavor of the ingredients, numerous different kinds of kitchen herbs like lovage, chive, or parsley may be added as well as salt, pepper, and other spices.

Great examples for *Eintopf* are *Erbsensuppe* ("pea soup"), *Linseneintopf* ("lentil stew"), and *Lübecker National*, which is "made of turnip."

Kohlroulade

"Stuffed cabbage leaf," *Kohlroulade* is a dish consisting of cooked white or savory cabbage leaves, wrapped around a variety of fillings. The filling is traditionally based around meat, usually beef or pork, and is seasoned with onion, garlic, and spices. In some parts of Germany, they use lamb instead of beef or pork. First, the cabbage leaves are stuffed with the filling, then baked, simmered, or steamed in a covered pot, and eaten warm. *Kohlroulade* is served with gravy and boiled potatoes.

Top Five Foods for the Brave

Karpfen in Biersoße

This traditional German dish derives from Germany's Northeast and is well-known in and around Berlin. It's basically made of carp fish. Raw carp slices are cooked in a pot with beer sauce, made of dark beer, grease, and spices.

Pfälzer Saumagen

The name means "sow's stomach," and the stomach is integral to the dish and is not like a typical sausage casing. When the dish is finished by being pan fried or roasted in the oven, it becomes crispy. *Saumagen* is similar to the Scottish *haggis*. *Pfälzer Saumagen* originates from the German federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate and "consists of potatoes, carrots, and pork, usually spiced with onions, marjoram, nutmeg, and white pepper."

Hühnerfrikassee

Hühnerfrikassee is "blanquette of chicken," roasted gently in a pan, put in a pot, mixed with cream, egg yolk, and spices, and steamed until it's very soft. The soft, slimy texture of this dish is not well-received everywhere.

Grüne Heringe

Although *Grüne Heringe* means "green herrings," the herrings actually are not green. The color reference is a symbol to their freshness and indicates that they are not preserved pickled herrings. In North Germany, *Grüne Heringe* will be brushed with wheat flour, fried with butter, and then served hot.

You can find this dish at some fish restaurants in the northern part of Germany. While the taste is not the main problem, the smell of the herring fish is very, very strong. So, this is really something for the brave!

Pellkartoffeln mit Quark und Leinöl

This is a regional dish, most popular in the Spree Territory, east and southeast of Berlin. It is made of boiled potatoes with curd and linseed oil. The potatoes are boiled in their skin and then served peeled or non-peeled with a healthy portion of seasoned curd, a slice of ham, and a small jug of linseed oil.

Linseed oil can taste very bitter, so before you pour the oil over the potatoes on your plate, ask the waiter if the oil is from the *Spreewald* ("Spree forest"). There they have the freshest, least bitter linseed oil.



All About

Top Five Things You Need to Know About German Society!

8

Grammar Points

2

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is the Top Five Things You Should Know about Germany Society Major Cities and How they Work

Berlin

Berlin is the capital city of Germany, and with a population of about 3.5 million people, is the largest city in the country. It is the second most populous city in the European Union. Berlin is not only a city, but also one of sixteen federal states, called *Bundesländer*. Located in Northeastern Germany, it is the center of the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area, comprising five million people from over 190 nations.

Since the Kingdom of Prussia (1701-1918), through the German Empire (1871-1918), the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), and the Third Reich (1933-1945), Berlin was a capital city. After World War II, the city was divided into East Berlin and West Berlin. While East Berlin became the capital of communist East Germany, West Berlin became a Western exclave, surrounded by the Berlin Wall (1961-1989). With the German reunification in 1990, the city regained its status as the capital of all Germany. Today, Berlin hosts 147 foreign embassies.

Berlin is a major center of culture, politics, media, and science in Europe. The city is home to world-renowned universities (Humboldt Universität, Freie Universität, Technische Universität), research institutes, sporting and music events, museums, and personalities. Because of its urban landscape and historical settings, it became a popular setting for international film productions.

There is no shortage of things to do and see in Berlin.

Most famous districts include:

1. *Alexanderplatz* - a popular shopping district, the location of the famous television tower, and the world time clock
2. *Potsdamer Platz* - Berlin's biggest entertainment and nightlife district
3. *Hackesche Märkte* - a really high-end area
4. *Prenzlauer Berg* - with its alternative lifestyle folks and artists
5. *Berlin Mitte* - the administration quarter with Europe's most innovative railroad station, parks, and the *Reichstag* (the place where the German legislature holds their meetings)

Berlin's young attitude, liberal lifestyle, and modern zeitgeist attract young people from all over the world. Whether you're visiting Berlin as a tourist or making a life there, you're sure never to get bored.

München

München ("Munich" in English) is the capital city of Bavaria, Germany's largest federal state in terms of size. It is located on the river Isar, north of the Bavarian Alps. München is Germany's third largest city after Berlin and Hamburg with about 1.35 million people living within city limits.

Its name, *München*, is derived from the Old German word for *Mönche*, which in English means "monks." It was named that way to honor the city's founders, the catholic Benedictine order.

München is famous for its traditional atmosphere. You can discover historical churches from the Middle Ages, old colorful houses, or enjoy the English garden—a beautiful park with ever-changing vistas, winding streams, and an artificial lake. The city's motto is "Munich loves you," and this city and its people are open-minded and friendly. The Oktoberfest in September is one of Germany's most famous annual events and the world's largest fair with about six million people attending every year. München is also home to one of Germany's biggest car companies, BMW.

Frankfurt am Main

Frankfurt am Main (commonly known as Frankfurt) is the fifth-largest city in Germany and the largest city in its federal state of Hessen. The city, with its six hundred fifty thousand inhabitants, is located in central Germany at the Rhine-Main Metropolitan region. It's considered to be an outstanding industrial, finance, and commerce center in Germany and Europe.

The people in Frankfurt have a reputation for being progressive and successful. This image is due to Frankfurt being the largest financial and transportation center in continental Europe. It is the seat of the European Central Bank, the German Federal Bank, the Frankfurt Stock Exchange, and the Frankfurt Trade Fair. Furthermore, Frankfurt Airport is one of the world's busiest international airports.

Frankfurt has an amazing Manhattan-like skyline and offers a fantastic view over one of Germany's major rivers, the Rhine. Frankfurt is also birthplace of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Germany's most famous author.

Family Life

The traditional German family is considered to have a working dad who financially supports the family, and a stay-at-home mom who cares for the kids. This family picture, drawn by conservatives over the past century, was rapidly falling apart with the sexual revolution of the late 1960s. Swapping over from the United States, the flower power movement was met with approval in Western Europe and especially in Germany. This led to a revolution of social habits and people changed their general attitude towards founding a family and marrying. Along with this development, gender roles were changing, too.

Since the 1970s immediate families tend to be a bit smaller compared to those of other countries. It is not uncommon for German parents to have only one or two children. This affects German society today. People are less willing to settle and are choosier about their partner. A lot of young women these days value their career, and in some cases, getting married will hinder advancements in their career plans.

Instead of needing approval from their parents, nowadays, young people are free to meet and marry whom they choose, but marriage is not the only option. Forty percent of couples between the ages of eighteen to thirty-five live together without marriage. People are waiting until they are older to get married. It's a fast growing trend. And in urban areas, single parents are accepted. Children born outside marriage have the same rights as children born to parents who are married, and the single parent has no disadvantages to fear.

4 In urban areas, both moms and dads work, mainly because this is the only way they can afford the lifestyle that they want. In rural areas of southern Germany, you may still find families with multiple generations living together, but this is not common in urban areas or farther north. There are different reasons for that. Houses are too small to include grandparents and other relatives outside the immediate family. And for many young families it just doesn't feel right to live together with the older generations under the same roof. Even in smaller cities and rural areas, you can see this trend to nuclear families with only the parents and children living together.

A few problems have recently been plaguing German family life and society. The one with most impact is the falling birthrate. Less and less children are being born each year. It's gotten so bad that if this trend continues, Germany's population will start to shrink in a few years. And the government can't do much about it. They try to reverse this trend for the sake of Germany's future with family development plans and welfare programs for mothers-to-be and young mothers. But the lack of immediate support and benefits for parents with children makes the decision to have children an undesirable one in the eyes of many young people.

Work Culture and Economy

Germany's economy is ranked fourth in the world after those of the United States, Japan, and China. Germany has a lot of strong industries, such as motor vehicles, foods, electronics, chemicals, and so on. Germany also is the world's top exporter. Some major well-known companies from Germany include Mercedes, Volkswagen, Deutsche Telekom, Adidas, and Nestle.

In Germany, the dominant work culture is quite different from what foreigners would expect. Many foreigners need some time to adapt to the German attitude towards work. People don't tend to work long hours; in many offices, especially in the public sector, the day ends at around four pm. But it's not that Germans are lazy. There is a strong emphasis on efficiency and people use their working time to be very productive. This means there is little or no time spent socializing or chatting. Exceptions are during break periods, like forty-five to sixty minutes for lunch.

The German management culture is hierarchical to a certain degree, but just for logical, decision-making reasons. Outside the office, subordinates don't need to be extremely servile towards their superiors. Germans love to work on well-thought-out plans and make factually based decisions. Meetings are well scheduled and thus punctuality is expected while lateness is not tolerated.

While Germany might be *Spitzenreiter* in the export sector, the domestic economy has some serious problems. Even though the social security system is one of the world's best, Germany suffers from a high unemployment rate. In times like these, temporary work is very common. This way, companies don't have to pay if those temporary employees are sick or go on vacation. They can hire and fire people at pleasure and expect momentary profits. There is also an increasing number of people that just get part-time positions. Some even work multiple part-time jobs. This contradicts the old concept of lifelong employment, meaning people stay with the same company until they retire. Twenty years ago, if you got a full-time job, you might have gotten that job for life. But this has changed drastically as more and more people are changing jobs mid-career.

Politics

Germany is a federal parliamentary republic, called *Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Germany's democratic and social foundation is a constitution that the Allies approved after the end of World War II in 1949.

While the president still has political power as the head of state—proposing an individual as Chancellor, appointing him or her to the office, and appointing and dismissing the remaining members of the Federal Government—in practice, his role is a more ceremonial, non-political one. So he's there mostly as a symbol. The political power lies in the hands of the chancellor. The political party system is different from that of the US. Instead of a bipolar political party system, Germans established five major parties. Christian democrats (CDU) and Social democrats (SPD) are the biggest ones, the

so-called big-tent parties, followed by the Liberals (FDP), Environmentalists (*Grüne*), and the Party of the Left (*Die Linke*). Because no political party attains more than fifty percent of the seats in the German parliament, they form coalitions in order to be able to govern. This past term, both big-tent parties governed together with Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian democrats), being the first woman to hold this position. German citizens are allowed to vote when they turn eighteen years old.

Generational Trends

German society is changing in a lot of ways. Generally speaking, the older and younger generations tend to do things differently and hold different ideas about things. The older generation tends to have a strong sense of loyalty to their company and place of work, and family is high on their priority lists. The younger generation, however, is not adverse to changing jobs if there is something that they are not satisfied with, or to have to change careers midway due to a fast changing globalized market. It surely is a lack of loyalty if the younger generation changes their companies, friendships, and relationships every so often, but on the other hand, the older generation never had to deal with a globalized world economy and its opportunities, as well as the negative effects on the domestic labor market.

Times are changing and keeping up with the newest trends seems to be the ultimate goal of the younger generation. They have more of their own interests in mind. Going back to the marriage trends that we talked about earlier, they're waiting longer and longer to get married and a lot of them don't have children partly because they have their own interests in mind and partly because of a lack of immediate support and benefits for parents with children. Members of the older generation might see these developments as being selfish, though, but it will be interesting to see how German culture and society will change along with the generations.



All About

Important Dates: Top Five Important German Holidays During the Calendar Year

9

Grammar Points

2

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is the Top Five Most Important Holidays in Germany

Germany has many different holidays that carry a lot of meaning and years of tradition behind them. Here we'll introduce the top five most important holidays in Germany, going in reverse order starting with number five.

#5 - *Tag der Arbeit* ("Labor Day")

The fifth most important holiday in Germany is *Tag der Arbeit* ("Labor Day"). Labor Day is an annual holiday celebrated all over the world that resulted from the labor union movement. On Labor Day, people celebrate the economic and social achievements of workers. In Germany, like in many other countries, the festivities happen on May 1. The origins of Labor Day lie in the Eight-Hour Day Movement, which promoted eight hours for work, eight hours for recreation, and eight hours for rest.

In Germany, *Tag der Arbeit* was established as an official holiday in 1933 after the Nazi Party came into power. The goal of the festivities with extensive parades and shows was to symbolize the newfound unity between the state and the German people. However, just one day later, on May 2, 1933, all free unions were outlawed and destroyed in the period that followed.

Still today, we celebrate *Tag der Arbeit* in Germany, but it doesn't have the best reputation, especially in metropolitan areas. In Berlin, riots of masked autonomous groups accompany *Tag der Arbeit*, breaking shop windows, inflaming cars, and fighting the police. While this is not happening in most districts of Berlin, there are a few streets around Kreuzberg where these folks riot. This leads storeowners to nail up their stores for protection. In smaller cities and rural areas, *Tag der Arbeit* is a great day to honor the achievements of the workers, or just relax with family and friends, barbecue, and beer.

#4 - *Tag der deutschen Einheit* ("German Unity Day")

The fourth most important holiday in Germany is the *Tag der deutschen Einheit* ("German Unity Day"). It's been a national holiday since 1990 that we celebrate on October 3. On this day, Germans commemorate the anniversary of the German reunification in 1990. The reunited Germany picked this day as their new national holiday.

Alternative plans have also been discussed. An alternative would have been the day the Berlin wall came down on November 9, 1989, which also coincided with the anniversary of the founding of the first German Republic, the Weimar Republic (which lasted from 1918 until Hitler's seizure of power in 1933). But November 9 is a troubled date, because on this day the "first large-scale Nazi-led pogrom against Jews" (known as *Reichskristallnacht*) happened, and was considered to be inappropriate. October 3 was chosen instead, the day of Germany's formal reunion.

While Germany was split for forty years, East and West Germany celebrated their own National holiday between 1949 and 1989. On June 17, West Germans commemorated the Workers' Uprising of 1953 in East Germany. Soviet aid crushed the revolt and thus failed. More than one hundred workers died that day. East Germany celebrated on October 7, and they called this day the Day of the Republic, celebrating the foundation of East Germany in 1949.

Each year, a huge Citizens' Festival is happening on the *Tag der deutschen Einheit*. It's an addition to the traditional celebrations in Berlin. Each year, a different federal state organizes the Citizens' Festival. This follows a strict circulation and while Germany has sixteen federal states, each state will hold the festival every sixteen years.

#3 - *Ostern* ("Easter")

The third most important holiday in Germany is *Ostern* ("Easter"). This holiday is actually a collection of two different holidays, and Germans consider it one of the most important holidays of the year. There is no fixed date when Easter happens, but there is one major rule: Easter falls on the first Sunday following the *Paschal Full Moon* ("the full moon on or after March 21").

Ostern starts with *Karfreitag* ("Good Friday") and is followed by *Ostersonntag* ("Easter Sunday") and *Ostermontag* ("Easter Monday").

Karfreitag commemorates "the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ" and as thus is an important Christian remembrance day in all known denominations, such as Catholic or Protestant. We observe the holiday on the Friday that precedes Easter Sunday. It is believed that Jesus Christ died on the crucifix around three PM in the year 33 AD.

While there are no major celebrations on this day, it goes along with many observances. Many Christian communities hold special services on this day. This starts with prayers and vigil services and leads to special concerts in huge churches. In Germany, which follows a strong Christian tradition, *Karfreitag* is also a government holiday at the federal level. Businesses, the stock exchange, and most

malls, stores, and shops are closed on this day. The German Catholic Church even treats *Karfreitag* as a fasting day. There is only one full meal, which is smaller than a regular one and usually contains fish, with the fish being the symbol for Jesus. In addition to that, comedy theater performances and events that include public dancing are illegal on that day. Cinemas and television are not affected, though many TV channels might show religious material.

Easter celebrations take place two days after *Karfreitag*.

The Christian tradition says that Jesus rose from the dead two days after he died on the crucifix. Everywhere in Germany, Christian communities celebrate together, worshipping his rise from the dead. Later, families get together in private on Easter Sunday and eat an Easter meal together. After the meal, many families like to go out together in the afternoon for a relaxing Easter walk. And the children search for colored Easter eggs that the *Osterhase* (the "Easter Bunny") has left for them.

The question remains, how worshipping Jesus and searching for colored eggs fit together. The answer to that question is simple, they don't. Like many other Christian holidays, Easter has become commercialized and mixed with non-Christian traditions like the ones mentioned above. A look into European history might explain this; European tribes had their own traditions and pagan rituals. Christianity was brought to most of them later. So, the church decided to celebrate the resurrection of Christ together with an old pagan holiday on the same date, hoping the resurrection story would expel the old pagan rites and celebrations.

Another Easter tradition is the Easter Fire. It is very common in Bavaria where many towns begin their celebration of Easter early in the morning. They light a fire in an open area in town before sunrise. This symbolizes the triumph of life over death. People at the fire then light candles and proceed to church.

#2 - *Silvester* ("New Year's Eve")

The second most important holiday in Germany is *Silvester*, which is "New Year's Eve." We celebrate it on the last day and night of the old year, December 31. That's why it has a symbolic meaning. *Silvester* is even more important to the public than New Year's Day. Berlin hosts one of the largest *Silvester* celebrations in Europe. Over one million people attend it. The celebration takes place around the Brandenburg Gate where everybody waits for the fireworks at midnight.

Germans also have a reputation of spending large amounts of money on firecrackers and fireworks. It's a huge market. The timeframe for selling firecrackers is very limited though and stores are just allowed to sell them during the few business days between Christmas and New Years Eve. In every

city, town, or village, you will find people getting together to ignite fireworks and firecrackers. This usually starts in the afternoon of New Year's Eve and lasts way beyond midnight.

In many cultures, there are special New Year's dishes that people traditionally prepare for the new year. While there is no such tradition in Germany, and people usually prepare their personal favorite dish, like lasagna, stuffed cabbage leaf, or roast ribs, there is a pastry traditionally prepared for New Year's Eve, *Berliner Pfannkuchen!* It's a "round-shaped cruller," made of dough, often topped with plain sugar or icing and filled with jam or plum jelly. Some people like to play a party game where they fill one cruller with mustard instead of jam. The person that catches the one with mustard loses the game.

Silvester in Germany is also a huge thing on domestic TV. Each New Year's Eve is broadcast on several German television stations, and a short English theatrical comedy is broadcast every year since 1972, titled *Dinner for One*.

#1 - *Weihnachten* ("Christmas")

The most important holiday in Germany is *Weihnachten*, which is "Christmas." The observance of Christmas in Germany begins with *Adventszeit* ("Advent time"), the period from Advent to Christmas. Advent starts with the first day of December. Many young children are given Advent calendars to count down the days until Christmas, which in Germany is celebrated for three days from December 24 to December 26. These calendars have little windows for each day of Advent. The kids open a new window every day and find little pieces of chocolate or other treats. These "sweet" calendars help them pass the days until Christmas.

Germans start to celebrate Christmas on a day called *Heiligabend* ("Christmas Eve"), the evening of December 24. During this time, families get together for Christmas dinner and exchange gifts by the *Weihnachtsbaum* (the "Christmas tree"). This ritual "gift exchange" is called *Bescherung*. Along with it, "Santa Claus," who in Germany is called *Weihnachtsmann*, appears to bring Christmas presents to the children. But before *Bescherung* and dinner, many families go to church services in the afternoon or evening. Families with little children go to the shorter children's services, where a *Krippenspiel* ("a nativity play") takes place.

In the evening, the family comes together at home. In some families, the whole family comes together and in others, Christmas Eve is celebrated only by the "small" family, whereas the whole family (with grandparents, uncles, aunts, and others) and friends come together on the first or second Christmas Day, December 25th and 26th.



Some notes on the "Christmas tree": The *Weihnachtsbaum* is usually put up by December 24. It can be bought at special traders' sites, but many Germans used to go into the forest to get one themselves. In the morning or during the church service in the afternoon, one of the adults prepares the tree at home with Christmas bulbs and tinsel, usually in the living room. It's also common to turn on electric lights or decorative candles. Then they place the gifts under the tree, or in case somebody plays Santa Claus, they only place the presents for the adults there. When the family comes home, it's time for singing Christmas carols and other winter songs or playing on guitars and pianos, before the *Bescherung* ("the exchange of presents"). The gifts are wrapped in colorful paper and the children unwrap them immediately, and then often play with their new toys before dinnertime. Many families also prepare colorful, decorated paper bags or carton plates for each member of the family, full of chocolates and sweets, which often have the shape of angels or Santa Claus.

Traditionally, on Christmas Eve, we serve a simple meal in contrast to the big meals on the following Christmas days. Very popular Christmas meals are roast goose or chicken, and fondue with many types of meat and roast lamb.

Another, very famous Christmas food is *Stollen*. It's a loaf shaped "fruitcake," powdered with sugar icing on the outside. We usually make the cake with chopped candied fruit, nuts, and spices. It's a traditional German cake, and we usually just eat it during the Christmas season.



All About
German Pop Culture

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Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is the Top Five Things You Need to Know about German Pop Culture

As popular culture changes quickly and drastically, in this lesson, we focus on the most recent pop culture. Please keep in mind that we wrote this lesson in 2009.

Popular Music

Together with the UK, Germany boasts the largest music industry in Europe and one of the largest in the world. Metal and hard rock bands like *Rammstein* are largely popular worldwide.

In the 1990s, pop and rock groups singing in German language had only limited popularity. Only a few artists managed to be played on the radio, like *Rammstein*, *Die Prinzen*, or *Rosenstolz*. Almost all other German bands sang in English, probably because their management wanted to sell their music internationally. Looking back at the 1990s, people now make fun of that time, calling it the "Decade of Techno." Techno, trance, and dance music was widely accepted in the German mainstream market, and events like the Berlin Love Parade had about a million visitors. Only German punk-rock bands like *Die Ärzte* or *Die Toten Hosen* had unbroken success, even with German-language lyrics.

This changed drastically in 2002 with the success of *Wir sind Helden*, a German pop-rock band that showed an impressive musical self-confidence. Lead singer Judith Holofernes and her band mates had a message: Be yourself and don't follow trends just because others are doing it! Several other bands followed this success, for example, *Silbermond*, *Sportfreunde Stiller*, and *Tokio Hotel*.

Since 2002, German-language rock and pop music gained ground and met a broader acceptance, especially the band *Tokio Hotel* who has had an enormous success, nationwide and recently on an international level. *Tokio Hotel* is a phenomenon. They polarize the masses. Many love them for their unique Japanese-like Emo style and pop-punk music. Others hate them for exactly the same reasons. Despite all criticism, they are a perfect example for a band that tops all charts with German-language songs that are meaningful to thousands of German teenagers.

Those alternative bands have to share their success with pop star idols, like Xavier Naidoo. His musical crossovers, including R&B, hip-hop, folk, and pop are absolutely outstanding. But nowadays, most of these idols start their career in a casting show on TV. Very popular solo performers who were

cast on TV are *Mark Medlock* and *Thomas Godoj*, and casted pop bands with number one albums and singles are *No Angels* and *Monrose*. The members of these bands are all over TV and in ads. They're national idols that everyone knows, but critics consider them great performers, not so much great musicians. They've got talent, of course, but most of all, they know how to sell themselves. These young idols are trendsetters, displaying the newest fashions in TV commercials or on covers of popular magazines.

The management also does a lot in the background to push their success. One of the most popular idol producers is *Dieter Bohlen*. He is a notorious former pop idol himself, but he transforms everything he touches to gold.

Popular Movies

Lots of people watch and enjoy Hollywood movies, but recently, German movies have seen a boom in popularity again. Apparently, the annual box-office revenue for domestic movies hit a high in 2004, 2006, and 2008. Before that, German movies have been popular in Europe back in the 1980s, when Wolfgang Peterson's submarine thriller *Das Boot* and Otto Walkes' comedies reached millions of people in Germany.

The success story of Germany's domestic film productions continued from the 2000s, and started with famous TV comedian and film director Michael Herbig's first feature-length comedy hit *Der Schuh des Manitu* ("The Shoe of Manitu"), drawing 11.5 million people into German cinemas. That was the starting point for a lot of successful German films. Comedies like *Sieben Zwerge* ("Seven Dwarfs"), but also serious dramas like the Adolf Hitler-themed *Der Untergang* ("The Downfall") and Academy Award winner *Das Leben der Anderen* ("The Lives of Others," focusing on the espionage system in communist East Germany), had massive success.

Another trend is the revival of the provocative and innovative New German cinema that was scandalous and popular in the 1970s. Experimental films include *Lola rennt* ("Run Lola Run") from Tom Tykwer, Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Das Experiment* ("The Experiment"), and socio-critical films, for example, *Gegen die Wand* ("Head-On") by Fatih Akin, and *Baader-Meinhof-Komplex* by Ulli Edel. These new, innovative films are starting to gain more recognition internationally. Through these and other films, German actors got attention and went on to start careers in Hollywood. For example, *Till Schweiger* in "Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life," *Franka Potente* in "The Bourne Identity," and *Daniel Brühl* in Quentin Tarantino's latest blockbuster, "Inglorious Bastards."

One more note on German film studios, the financiers of major German film releases. The biggest production studios are Bavaria Film, Constantin Film, Studio Hamburg, and UFA (Babelsberg/Berlin). Moreover, Berlin and the huge film studio Babelsberg are recognized shooting locations for

international productions like, "The Bourne Supremacy" and "Aeon Flux."

Popular Television

The German television system differs from those of other Western countries. This is due to Germany having two broadcasting concepts: public broadcasting networks and private broadcasting networks. Analyses indicate that young people usually prefer watching shows on private channels, while older people prefer the public networks.

Public or private, Germans love reality formats, especially quiz shows like "Who wants to be a Millionaire," casting shows, and talk shows. Concepts of these shows are often bought from models in the United States or the UK, like *Deutschland sucht den Superstar*, which is the German version of the famous "American Idol." Comedy shows are popular, too, regardless of the format: scripted, unscripted, experimental, late night, there is an audience for each format.

The show with the best ratings is *Wetten dass* ("You Bet!"). This game and entertainment TV show is the most successful TV show in Europe. Its attraction lies in a unique combination of ordinary people offering to perform some unusual—often bizarre and difficult—task, and the top-ranking celebrity guests, chatting with the host and betting on the outcome of these performances. The guest list is huge: Bill Gates, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, Michael Jackson, Bon Jovi, and Leona Lewis. International artists use this show to promote their new movies or CDs in front of a massive audience.

Also very popular are "Telenovelas," hour-long soap operas shown in the afternoon. *Sturm der Liebe* ("Storm of Love") is the most successful show of its genre, and has been sold to fifteen foreign countries, including Austria, Canada, and Finland. Crime dramas are popular, too. Some of them are extremely long-running shows, coming back every season since the late 1970s. *Tatort* ("Crime scene") is the most popular one for over thirty years now. The situation is different with experimental formats and non-mainstream shows. Some are renewed for a follow-up season and beyond, but that depends on the ratings, audience's response, and the studio's goodwill.

At the same time, foreign-made dramas enjoy their fair share of popularity. Titles such as "CSI," "24," "Lost," "Fringe," "Heroes," and "Desperate Housewives" have been broadcast on television and are widely available for rental at video stores around the country.

Popular German Men/Women Abroad

Quite a few German people have made a name for themselves abroad through the world of entertainment, literature, and fashion. If we look at entertainment, actors like Till Schweiger and Franka Potente are successful internationally, but another famous German actor in Hollywood is Armin Mueller-Stahl. He played in films like "X-Files," and together with Tom Hanks in the 2009 summer blockbuster, "Angels & Demons." He also got a lot of film award nominations for his roles.

Roland Emmerich, the German filmmaker, left his mark as Hollywood's disaster movie specialist with films like "Independence Day," "Godzilla," "The Day after Tomorrow," and the upcoming "2012." Emmerich is also famous for the sci-fi adventure "Stargate" and "The Patriot," a war epic set in the American Revolutionary War.

Other famous Germans abroad include Hans Zimmer, who is one of Hollywood's finest composers. His works include soundtracks for "Gladiator," "Black Hawk Down," "The Last Samurai," and the "Pirates of the Caribbean" sequels. Also famous, is contemporary author Cornelia Funke, known for her children's book trilogy *Tintenherz* ("Inkheart") and in the world of fashion, Paris-based designer Karl Lagerfeld. The controversial Hamburg-born designer is known as head designer for the fashion house Chanel.

Popular Sports Figures

Soccer is without a doubt the most popular sport in Germany. Germany has many popular *Fußballvereine* ("soccer clubs"). Most popular are *Bayern München*, Germany's number one club, and *Werder Bremen*. Both play in Germany's Major League and won the competition several times. Germany also has a strong national soccer team. The German *Nationalelf* won the World Championship three times, (in 1954, 1974, 1990), and placed third in the 2006 World Championship that was held in Germany. Germans love to describe those summer weeks as "The Magic Summer," where a new spirit set in and they showed their hospitable side to the world.

The most popular German soccer player is Michael Ballack, captain of Germany's national team. He led his team to third place in 2006's World Championship and to second place in 2008's European Championship. He has represented Germany ninety-two times and scored the winning goal against Portugal in the 2008 European Championship.

Other famous sports figures include blonde giant Dirk Nowitzki, (standing at seven feet), who is a famous basketball player for the Dallas Mavericks of the NBA since 1998.

Germany's most famous sports figure is Michael Schumacher. The motorsports champion won the Formula One World Cup six times between 1994 and 2003, an outstanding and unparalleled record in



motorsports.





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Top 5 Tools for Learning German

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The Focus of This Lesson is the Top Five Useful Tools for Learning German

The following great tools will aid you in your German studies:

I. Babylon

Babylon is an advanced translation and information source utility program. The most prominent feature is its single-click translation option. When you click on text with the right mouse button, a popup window appears instantly with a translation and definition of the clicked word (in German, English, French, Italian, Hebrew, etc.). Its patented technology and single-click activation work with any Windows program like Word, Excel, and Outlook, browsers like Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Chrome, and other programs like Adobe's Acrobat Reader for PDF documents.

Babylon is very easy to use and is a must when navigating German web pages and documents. You can buy an advanced version of the software, or use two online services which are free of charge and do not require any software installation: the "Free Online Translation," a dictionary for bilingual translation, and the "Free Online Dictionary," for monolingual lookup.

Link: Babylon website: <http://www.babylon.com>

II. Voca: Free Online Vocabulary Trainer

The software Voca is a free vocabulary trainer for foreign languages. With the help of Voca, you will be able to manage your own German word lists and share them online. Voca offers different types of exercises and tests, especially grammar and pronunciation exercises. You can choose between tests with open answers, multiple-choice, or a self-check. Voca also supports multiple translations of a single word.

Link: <http://www.snapfiles.com/get/voca.html>

III. LEO/dict.cc – Free Online Dictionaries

LEO ("Link Everything Online") is a free online dictionary and translation dictionary, available in

English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, and Chinese. The translations are provided as hyperlinks to further dictionary queries. This also includes back translations. LEO's open collaborative nature (where individuals or companies can add or correct dictionaries) led to extensive references to the translations in the form of example phrases of language in use and discussions on the LEO language forum. The English-German dictionary was the first one to go online back in 1995. It contains more than five hundred thousand entries and receives an average of ten million queries per day.

Another high-quality online dictionary is dict.cc. It is an English-German/German-English dictionary with an extensive database of translations and sample sentences. A group of professional translators put it together and continue to be update it regularly. As a result, dict.cc contains a huge number of difficult and obscure terms, colloquial expressions, and technical terms. dict.cc is free of charge. Just follow the link and have fun learning German!

Links: LEO website: <http://www.leo.org>

dict.cc website: <http://www.dict.cc>

IV. Social Networking Services (MySpace, Facebook, MeinVZ)

Using dictionaries and vocabulary trainers might help you to improve reading and writing in German, but you can't learn a language without actually using it. While there might be no native Germans around your neighborhood, you will find conversation partners online. Sign up free of charge for one of the big social networking services like *MySpace* and *Facebook*, and look for German friends. Search for "German conversation" on the forums. You will find a list of groups and people sharing an interest for German culture and language, and it is very likely you will meet someone who would practice German with you via voice and video chat (Skype or Google Talk). If you already speak some German, you can sign up for a German social networking service, like *MeinVZ.de* (which also runs an English language version).

Your German conversation partner is just a click away!

Links: MySpace: <http://www.myspace.com>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com>

MeinVZ: <http://www.meinvz.net>

V. Meetup.com

Meetup.com is a Social Networking Service (SNS) that was created for the purpose of offline group meetings in various localities around the world. Meetup is one of the fastest-growing social

networking sites, with about 5.7 million members, over sixty-six thousand groups and twenty-four thousand interests. Once you complete registration, which is free, you can find and join groups unified by a common interest, such as politics, movies, careers, hobbies, or language exchange and international communication.

This service is perfect for you if you're learning German but you don't know any native speakers to practice with. If you become a member, you can either search for German-language meetup groups in your area, or start a group by yourself. Even if you are just getting started with German, this is an innovative way to practice speaking German and get some nice cultural insights from other group members in a friendly pub atmosphere.

Link: Meetup.com: <http://www.meetup.com>



All About

Top 5 Classroom Phrases in German

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Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is the Top 5 Classroom Phrases in German

In this lesson, we will teach you the top five most useful phrases your German teachers are sure to use!

I. "Please repeat after me."/"Please say it."

Sprechen Sie mir bitte nach means "Please repeat after me." As a variation, you might also hear *Bitte nachsprechen*, which is the impersonal form. The teacher will use both phrases when they want you to repeat exactly what they have said. If the teacher points to a word on a blackboard and wants you to say it, he might say *Sagen Sie das bitte*. ("Please say it.")

II. "Please look."

Schauen Sie bitte means "Please look," and when an object (usually a noun or pronoun) comes after the phrase, it means "Please look at (object)."

For Example:

1. *Schauen Sie bitte zur Tafel*
"Please look at the blackboard."
2. *Schauen Sie bitte zu mir*
"Please look at me."

III. "Please read it (aloud)."

Lesen Sie das bitte vor means "Please read it." You can expect to hear this if the teacher wants you to practice reading some word, phrase, or passage. There is also an impersonal way of expressing "please read it" in German. It's *Bitte vorlesen*.

IV. "Please write it down."

Schreiben Sie das bitte auf means "Please write it down." The teacher may use this when they want

you to practice writing the letters, words, or sentences. The impersonal form for this phrase is *Bitte aufschreiben*. In a class setting, a speaker would use this when the speaker doesn't want to address you directly, yet still wants to make sure you get his request.

V. "Do you understand?"

The most direct translation is *Verstehen Sie das?* However, it is much more common to ask *Haben Sie das verstanden?* This is perfect tense and we can translate it as "Did you understand?" The teacher will often use this question to confirm understanding. Another variation that is used is *Alles in Ordnung?* This literally translates to "Is it/everything okay?" If the teacher wants to ask if there are any questions, they might also ask *Gibt es noch Fragen?* This means "Are there any questions?" You can answer the question with *Ja* ("yes") or *Nein* ("no").





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Top 5 Phrases Your Teacher Will Never Teach You

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The Focus of This Lesson is to Teach You Some Very Common German Expressions That You Might Not Learn From a German Teacher.

I. Cool

Cool is an adjective meaning "wow," "amazing," or "great." It's a foreign word, obviously borrowed from the English adjective "cool."

II. Idiot

Idiot is a noun meaning "idiot" or "fool." When used with the suffix *-isch* as in *idiotisch*, it becomes an adjective meaning "stupid." Another noun meaning "fool" is *Blödmann*, which literally means "silly man."

III. Nee, ne!

Nee is slang for *nein* ("no"), and *ne* is an abbreviation for *nicht* (*wirklich*), meaning "not (really)." When used as an exclamation, it corresponds to "No way!" or "Really!?" in English. Other phrases with the same meaning that are often used are:

1. *Echt?*
"Really?"
2. *Echt jetzt?*
Literally, "Really now?"
3. *Nicht im Ernst!*
"Are you serious?"

Words Used by Young People

IV. voll

Voll is a slangy adverb that usually comes before adjectives to emphasize them, making this word the equivalent of "very," "so," or "really." For example, *schwer* means "difficult," so *voll schwer* would mean "really difficult" or "so difficult."

II. *krass*

Krass is a very slangy word that has a few different meanings. When used to describe something, it can have either a good meaning or a bad meaning depending on the context. For example, *Dieser Film ist krass!* ("This movie is *krass!*") could either mean that the movie was great, or that it was bad. And if the person says *Voll krass!*, they emphasize it even more. When used as an exclamation (*Krass!*), it usually indicates that something is wrong and roughly means "oh no!" or "shoot!"

For example, "*Krass!* I overslept!" meaning "Oh no! I overslept!"

III. *Auf keinsten*

Auf keinsten is a slang phrase and an abbreviation of *auf keinen Fall*, meaning "under no circumstances," or "no way."

IV. *Geil*

Geil is very colloquial and is a synonym of the above-mentioned *cool*. In young people's speech, if something is *geil*, it's "amazing" or "great." Some people, especially older people, are annoyed if someone says *geil* because when they were young, *geil* meant "to be sexually aroused."

Common Interjections

Germans frequently use interjections during conversations. While there are some that show that the listener is paying attention to and understanding the speaker, there are others of a more significant nature. Some common ones include:

Expressing Agreement:

1. *Ja*
"yes," "yeah"
2. *Aha/uh-huh*
"I understand" (sometimes together with nodding the head)



Expressing Surprise:

1. *Wow!*
"Wow!" "Whoa!" (usually, positive surprise)
2. *Oh!*
"Whoa!" "Oh!" (positive or negative surprise)

Other Expressions:

1. *Mhh./Hmm.*
"Mm-hmm."
2. *He!*
"Watch out!"
3. *Hä?*
"I don't understand."





All About

Top 5 Tips for Avoiding Common Mistakes in German

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Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson Is to Offer Tips to Help Students Overcome Common Errors That Learners of German Make.

Tip #1: Think German!

The number one mistake made by beginners is thinking too literally and translating word-for-word. Our advice is: "Think German!" As you progress, you will see that even as a beginner you can learn to 'think' in German, even if it's just in phrases at the beginning. If you just keep translating from English to German, you're doing something wrong. You might always make the same grammatical or vocabulary mistakes. That is not what we recommend you to do.

German doesn't always put things together like English. So, try to hear German in your head! Read German books, listen to German podcasts, radio, or TV shows, and speak German, because that's an effective way to learn it.

Tip #2: The Thing with Sie and Du – Watch your Politeness Level!

Besides English, many languages in the world know at least two kinds of "you" - the "you" used in formal situations, and another "you" for informal, familiar use. German distinguishes between the formal *Sie*, always written with a capital -S, and the familiar *du*. *Sie* is used to address one person (singular) and multiple persons (plural). In familiar situations, the singular form is *du*, while the plural is *ihr*. It is important to remember to speak formally to one's teachers, elders, and anyone else who follows under the category of civil servant, clerk, or officer.

The English language has known this distinction in the past; "you" was used for *Sie* and "thou" or "thee" was related to *du* or *ihr*. For some reason, English now uses only one form of "you" for all situations. Because of this lack of distinction, English speakers often have problems learning when to use *Sie* (formal) and *du* or *ihr* (familiar). The problem extends to verb conjugation and command forms, which are also different in *Sie* and *du* situations.

Formal Situation:1. **Singular:***Wie heißen Sie?*

"What's your name?"

2. **Plural:***Wie heißen Sie?* (to a group of people)

"What are all your names?"

Informal situation:1. **Singular:***Wie heißt du?*

"What's your name?"

2. **Plural:***Wie heißt ihr?*

"What are all your names?"

Tip #3: Watch Your Case!

Unlike English, which usually doesn't inflect nouns and adjectives, German still inflects nouns, adjectives, and pronouns into four grammatical cases. Case in German is indicated by the endings on articles and adjectives. The four German cases are nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative case. The case of a noun depends on its grammatical function in the sentence.

1. *Nominativ* ("nominative"): the subject of the sentence; the thing doing the action
2. *Genitiv* ("genitive"): the possessor of something
3. *Dativ* ("dative"): the indirect object
4. *Akkusativ* ("accusative"): the direct object, which is receiving the action

Example: *der Sitz* ("the seat" masculine)

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominativ	<i>der Sitz</i>	<i>die Sitze</i>
Genitiv	<i>des Sitzes</i>	<i>der Sitze</i>
Dativ	<i>dem Sitz</i>	<i>den Sitzen</i>
Akkusativ	<i>den Sitz</i>	<i>die Sitze</i>

Tips #4 and 5: Watch Out for Semantic Differences!

"Semantic" is a linguistic term and refers to the meaning of a word. In many cases, the meaning of a German word cannot be transferred perfectly from German to English and vice versa; words and their translations don't match one hundred percent or are not one hundred percent equal. Here, we will show you two considerable semantic differences, and we're going to explain them. We will explain how to distinguish between a friend and a romantic partner and take a look at the different meanings of "to study."

Tip #4: "Friend"

There are two different words for "friend" in German: *Freund* is masculine and *Freundin* is feminine. When talking about more than one female friend, use the plural *Freundinnen*. When talking about more than one male friend or male and female friends together, use the plural form, *Freunde*.

We reserve the German term *Freund* for close friends. Germans put emphasis on a distinction between public and private spheres and are choosy about who they allow into their personal inner circle. For that reason, they probably just have a few really good *Freunde*, while most people outside their inner circle are *Bekannte* ("acquaintances").

We also use the words *Freund* and *Freundin* when talking about romantic partners: *Freund* meaning "boyfriend" and *Freundin* meaning "girlfriend." The sentence *Peter ist mein Freund* ("Peter is my (boy-)friend.") might be ambiguous; Peter could either be her boyfriend or just one of her close friends. To avoid this ambiguity, we often use the phrase *ein Freund von mir* or *eine Freundin von mir* ("a friend of mine") to indicate that someone is just a friend.

Examples:

1. *Peter ist mein Freund.*
"Peter is my boyfriend." or "Peter is my friend." (ambiguous)
2. *Peter ist mein fester Freund.*
"Peter is my steady boyfriend." (partner, lover)
3. *Peter ist ein Freund von mir.*
"Peter is a friend of mine." (friend, pal, buddy, mate)

Tip #5: The Difference Between "to study" and "student" "to study"

In English, "to study" means "to learn," "to read," "to practice," or "to memorize." In German, we distinguish between two verbs: *lernen* and *studieren*. While we use *lernen* to encompass these learning activities, the meaning of *studieren* is very limited. It means "to be a university student" or "to major" in a particular subject.

Examples:

1. *Ich lerne Deutsch.*
"I'm learning/studying German." (for a test)
2. *Ich studiere Deutsch.*
"I'm majoring in German." (at College or University)

"student"

The English word "student" can refer to anyone who attends school, (from elementary school to college or a university). In German, a *Student* (masculine), or *Studentin* (feminine), is a person attending a university or another institution of higher education. We use the terms *Schüler* (masculine) and *Schülerin* (feminine) to describe students in primary or secondary education (elementary, middle schools, junior high, or high schools).

Bonus Tip: Watch Out for Similar Sounding Words!

Even though there is a relatively huge number of possible sounds in German, there are many words that sound exactly the same or almost the same but with different meanings. As a beginner in German, it can be easy to mix up similar sounding words.

Some infamous examples include:

1. *Lehre* (noun, meaning "science" or "theory") vs. *Leere* (noun, meaning "emptiness")
2. *Trend* (noun, meaning "trend") vs. *trennt* (verb, third singular person, "to split")
3. *Wände* (noun, meaning "walls") vs. *Wende* (noun, meaning "turn," "change")
4. *Pisste* (verb, third singular person, "to pee") vs. *Piste* (noun, meaning "course," "runway")
5. *Arm* (adjective, meaning "poor") vs. *Arm* (noun, meaning "arm")





All About

Top Five Favorite Phrases from the GermanPod Hosts

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The Focus of This Lesson is the Top Five Phrases from the GermanPod Hosts

We are presenting some additional phrases here because of their practical use (phrases 2, 4, and 5), their frequently requested meaning or translation (phrase 1), and their frequent use in Germany (phrases 3 and 4).

Phrase One: *Gesundheit!* ("Bless you")

This phrase is a classical request from learners of German. They want to know how to say, "Bless you" when a person sneezes.

Literally, *Gesundheit* means "health," but in this context, we use it as "Bless you."

Use *Gesundheit* to address an unknown person or someone in a formal situation as well as to address a friend or someone in an informal context.

In a very formal context (for example a college examination, or at the immigration authorities), you might want to apologize for sneezing.

One more note for our English speakers out there: Don't make any reference to religion in Germany when someone sneezes, save that for when you're swearing (but that's another subject that would require a whole lesson)!

Phrase Two: *Wo wir gerade davon sprechen* ("Now that you mention it...")

This phrase means "Speaking of which" or "Now that you mention it" and you can use it when you are reminded of something and want to talk about it. For example, let's say your friend is talking about party "A" that took place last week, which reminds you of party "B" coming up next week. You can change the subject to party "B" by saying *Wo wir gerade von Parties sprechen...* ("Speaking of parties...") and starting to talk about it. Using *Wo wir gerade davon sprechen* is a natural way to segue into something related to the conversation at hand.

A more casual way to express "Speaking of which," or "Now that you mention it," is the German phrase *Wo du es sagst*. This phrase literally means, "As you say it," but we also use it as "Now that you mention it."

Phrase Three: *Ist gut./Ist in Ordnung.* ("It's okay/good.")

The Germans use these two short sentences all the time and in every possible context. Grammatically speaking, *gut* ("good") is an adjective describing someone or something, while *in Ordnung* is a combination of the preposition *in* ("in") and the noun *Ordnung* ("order"), meaning "It's all right."

Both phrases, *Ist gut* ("it's okay/good.") and *Ist in Ordnung* ("It's all right."), can refer to tasting or smelling a delicious meal or drink. We can also use *Ist gut* and *Ist in Ordnung* to tell someone that his/her work was good. In this case, we will most likely add the demonstrative pronoun *das* to clarify our intention. We will say *Das ist gut* ("This is okay/good.") or *Das ist in Ordnung* ("This is all right.").

Ist gut and *In Ordnung* are phrases that also show that you have understood information or instructions given to you or that you will comply with what someone has told you. As an exclamation, *Ist gut!* and *In Ordnung!* are very close in meaning to "Roger!" or "Copy that!" in English, but in German, you can use these phrases lightly among friends.

There are contexts where we'll just make use of *Ist gut* ("It's okay/good.").

We use *Ist gut* ("It's all right.") when referring to how well things are done. For example, you will say *Ist gut* when implying *Ist gut gemacht* ("It is well done."). Anytime you can say *Ist gut gemalt/geschrieben/gedacht!* etc. ("It's well painted/written/thought," etc.), then use *Ist gut*.

Finally, you can use *Ist gut* (!) when you are tired of someone picking at you or making fun of you, and you want him/her to stop. Your intonation will then sound more annoyed.

Phrase Four: *In der Tat* ("Indeed")

We can translate the phrase *In der Tat* as "Indeed" or "That's for sure." We say this phrase in response to someone who is speaking. When you use *In der Tat* after something that someone has said, it means that you agree with the speaker on that point, even if you don't agree with him or her on other things. In this way, it's very similar to the phrases "That's true," "Indeed," or "That's for sure!" in English.

Phrase Five: *Für's erste...* ("For now"/"In the meantime")

Für's erste is a handy phrase that means "In the meantime" or "For now." Literally translated, this phrase means, "For the first," but we commonly use it as, "For now."

We can use *Für's erste* to talk about some kind of action you take or decision you make "in the meantime," when you feel like it's better than doing nothing. For example, if you don't know what to order at a restaurant but at least know what you want to drink, you can order your drinks using *Für's erste nehm ich ein Bier*, which means "I'll have a beer for now (while we're trying to decide)."



Pronunciation S2

German Vowels

1

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Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is German Vowel Sounds.

Introduction

More than 100 million German speakers speak German fluently (as a native or adopted language). Use it regularly so you start on the right foot, can understand others, and they can understand you. Learning the German sounds will help you to become sensitized to the language's different sounds and better master its pronunciation.

Be aware though, this pronunciation guide is for standard German—the one you'll hear on the radio or television. When traveling in Germany, you'll hear many different accents and vocabulary words used specifically in the region you are in.

For example, in the Southern regions of Germany, you may hear *Weckle* instead of *Brötchen* to refer to a "bread roll" in bakeries and supermarkets. The usage of different words for the same things is due to different dialects and thus influences from other languages neighboring the German territories. Like in Saarland, a small province at the French border, foreign words adopted from France mark the dialect.



Sounds

Let's first take a look at how German sounds work. The German writing system knows eight vowel letters (the basic -a, -e, -i, -o, -u, and the umlauts -ä, -ö, -ü), and twenty-two consonants [-b, -c, -d, -f, -g, -h, -j, -k, -l, -m, -n, -p, -q, -r, -s, -t, -v, -w, -x, -y, -z, and *Eszett* (a sharp -s) -ß]. This makes a total of thirty letters, twenty-six letters form the alphabet and four extra letters, but German uses more sounds than letters. Those thirty letters give rise to forty speech sounds. Among these sounds, there are two main categories.

1. Fifteen vowel sounds
2. Twenty-five consonant sounds.

Since German is a pluricentric language, there are a number of pronunciation variations of standard German, which means even more vowel and consonant sounds, though they agree in most respects.

Today, we will look at the fifteen vowel sounds in detail with many simple examples.

One quick remark about the terms "sound" and "vowel"; in this lesson, we are going to refer to sounds as vowels. So whenever we refer to "vowel," think "sound," don't think "letter."

The Fifteen Vowel Sounds

A vowel is a sound in spoken language, like the German "ah!" or "oh!" and we pronounce it with an open vocal tract. When saying "ah!" the mouth stays open at the end. Consonants, on the other hand, show constriction or closure at some point along the vocal tract. So, when saying "hm," the mouth is closed. In German, the sounds that the vowels make do not change. They sound very similar to the vowels found in Spanish or Italian. Let's take a look at them.

The Five Basic German Vowels

1. **-A:** pronounced [ah], like the -a in "father"
2. **-E:** pronounced [eh], like the -e in "net"
3. **-I:** pronounced [ee], like the -ee in "meet"
4. **-O:** pronounced [oh], like the first part of the -o sound in "so"
5. **-U:** pronounced [oo], like the -oo in "mood"

Like English, German vowels exist in two versions, long vowels and short vowels. In this guide long vowels are indicated with a colon (:) (-a:, -e:, -i:, -o:, -u:) to distinguish them from their short counterparts. In German, the long and short version of a vowel is called a vowel pair.

1. First is the -a pair. You can find the long -a: vowel in *Pate* ("godfather"), and the short one in *Paste* ("paste").
2. Next is the -e vowel pair. You can find the long -e: as in *Erde* ("Earth"), and the short -e as in *Erbe* ("pea").
3. Next is the -i pair. You can find the long -i: in *Igel* ("hedgehog"), and the short -i is in *Insel* ("island").
4. This is followed by the -o vowel pair. You can find the long -o: in *Ton* ("sound"), and the short -o is in *Tonne* ("barrel").
5. The last pair is the -u vowel pair. You will find the long -u: in *unten* ("below"), and the short -u is in *Bus* ("bus").

To sum up here, -a, -e, -i, -o, and -u are the basic vowel pairs we know from the alphabet, representing ten distinct vowel sounds. The German language additionally uses five extra sounds—the so-called umlauts. "Umlaut" refers to a type of "sound shift" in spoken language. While there are five umlaut vowel sounds in German, there are only three vowel letters to represent them orthographically.

The Three Umlaut Vowel Letters

1. -Ä
2. -Ö
3. -Ü

The Five Umlaut Vowel Sounds

1. [Ä:]
2. [Ö:]
3. [Ö]
4. [Ü:]
5. [Ü]

As with the basic vowel pairs, the -ö and -ü umlauts also have a long and a short version.

1. The -ä vowel: In many German regions, we only use the -ä vowel in a long version, -ä:, as in *Ärmel* ("sleeve"), while the short -ä vowel is similar to the short -e.
2. The -ö vowel pair: You can find long -ö: in *Flöte* ("flute"), and short -ö in *öffnen* ("to open").
3. The -ü vowel pair: You can find long -ü: in *Tüte* ("bag"), and short -ü in *Küste* ("coast").

Vowel Chart

Here's a list of German vowel pairs, pronounced long and short:

<i>Vowel</i>	<i>Long</i>	<i>Short</i>	<i>Example (Long Vowel)</i>	<i>Example (Short Vowel)</i>

-a	+	+	<i>Pate</i> ("godfather")	<i>Paste</i> ("paste")
-e	+	+	<i>Erde</i> ("Earth")	<i>Erbse</i> ("pea")
-i	+	+	<i>Igel</i> ("hedgehog")	<i>Insel</i> ("island")
-o	+	+	<i>Ton</i> ("sound")	<i>Tonne</i> ("barrel")
-u	+	+	<i>unten</i> ("below")	<i>Bus</i> ("bus")
-ü*	+	-	<i>Ärmel</i> ("sleeve")	-
-ö	+	+	<i>Flöte</i> ("flute")	<i>öffnen</i> ("to open")
-ü	+	+	<i>Tüte</i> ("bag")	<i>Küste</i> ("coast")

*There is no short version of the -ä vowel, because the short -ä vowel sounds similar to the short -e.

Vowel Articulation

While the mentioned classification of vowels is very basic (the only criterion of distinction is the long or short vowel sound), we want to introduce a more advanced classification of vowels. We can divide the German vowel sounds into different articulation features, which define the vowel's quality.

They are divided into the three groups as follows: height, backness, and roundedness.

I. Height

If we speak of the height of a vowel, we refer to the vertical position of the tongue relative to either the roof of the mouth or the aperture of the jaw. There is a distinction between high vowels (where the tongue is positioned high in the mouth) and low vowels (where the tongue is positioned low in the mouth).

Nowadays, it is not common to refer to high and low vowels anymore; the terms closed and open vowels are preferred.

A. Closed Vowels

The long -i:, -u:, and -ü: vowels are closed vowels.

Examples:

1. -i: as in *Miete* ("rent") with a silent -e following -i as an indicator for long -i:
2. -u: as in *Mut* ("courage")
3. -ü: as in *prüfen* ("to check")

B. Near-Closed Vowels

The short -i, -u, and -ü vowels are near-closed vowels.

Examples:

1. -i as in *Bitte* ("request")
2. -u as in *Mutter* ("mother")
3. -ü as in *Müll* ("garbage")

Then there are vowels that are in the middle.

C. Closed-Mid Vowels

Those vowels are the long -e:, long -o:, and long -ö: vowels.

Examples:

1. -e: as in *sehen* ("to see")
2. -o: as in *Ostern* ("Easter")
3. -ö: as in *Höhle* ("cave")

4. Open-Mid Vowels

Those vowels are the long -ä:, short -e, short -o, and short -ö vowels.

Examples:

1. -ä: as in *Ärmel* ("sleeve")
2. -e as in *Bett* ("bed")
3. -o as in *Tonne* ("barrel")
4. -ö as in *Hölle* ("hell")

5. Open Vowels

Those vowels are the long -a: and short -a.

Examples:

1. -a: as in *Graf* ("earl")
2. -a: as in *Staat* ("state"), (with double -a vowel indicating the long -a:)
3. -a as in *Stadt* ("city")

II. Backness

Vowel backness describes the position of the tongue during the articulation of a vowel relative to the back of the mouth. We distinguish between three major degrees of vowel backness: front, central, and back.

A. Front Vowels

Front vowels (where the tongue is positioned forward in the mouth) are the -i, -ü, -e, and -ö pairs, as well as long -ä:

B. Central Vowels

Vowels in central position are the long and short -a vowels.

C. Back Vowels

Those vowels where the tongue is positioned towards the back of the mouth are the -u and -o vowel pairs.

III. Roundedness

With the parameter of roundedness, we distinguish whether the lips are rounded or not when forming a vowel.

A. Rounded vowels

The vowel pairs -o, -ö, -u, and -ü are rounded.

B. Unrounded vowels

Unrounded vowel pairs are the -a, -e, and -i vowel pairs, as well as the long -ä.

Height, backness, and roundedness are the three major articulation features of German vowels, but there are more than these three vowel qualities in other languages, like nasality, which you can find in foreign words from French. Nasality refers to vowels where the velum is lowered and some of the air travels through the nose while speaking the vowel.

Some examples for nasality are *Teint*, *Genre*, *Parfum*, and *Jongleur*, where the [ʔ] sound represents nasalization.

Vowel Articulation Chart

	<i>Front</i>				<i>Central</i>		<i>Back</i>	
	<i>unrounded</i>		<i>rounded</i>		<i>unrounded</i>		<i>rounded</i>	
	short	long	short	long	short	long	short	long
<i>Closed</i>		[i:]		[ü:]				[u:]
<i>Near-Closed</i>	[ɪ]		[ʊ]				[ʊ]	
<i>Closed-Mid</i>		[e:]		[ö:]				[o:]
<i>Open-Mid</i>	[e]	[ä:]	[ö]				[o]	
<i>Open</i>					[a]	[a:]		

Indicators for Long and Short Vowels

There are fifteen vowel sounds, but just eight vowel letters. When we read a German book, we're not able to find out whether we pronounce a particular vowel short or long. The question is, how do we know when to pronounce a vowel short and when long?

That is one of the more complex questions. To answer it to everyone's pleasure, we need to explain the concept of syllables.

The Concept of Syllables

Although German is made up of letters from the Latin alphabet, German (like many other languages including English) uses the concept of syllables. A syllable is a unit of organization for a sequence of speech sounds. Those sounds (vowels and consonants) are arranged in blocks of syllables to form words. A syllable is usually made up of one or some consonants and one vowel, with the vowel usually building the core (nucleus) of the syllable.

For Example:

1. *Lehrer* [syllabic: Leh-rer], meaning "teacher," consists of two syllables, with each one being made up of three letters (two consonants and the vowel -e).

Other Examples:

1. *trinken* [syllabic: trin-ken], meaning "to drink," consists of two syllables. The first one, *trin-*, is made up of three consonants and the vowel -i, while the second syllable, *-ken*, is made up of two consonants and the vowel -e.
2. *arbeiten* [syllabic: ar-bei-ten], meaning "to work," consists of three syllables.

Whether any particular vowel letter represents the long or short vowel sound is not completely predictable, but there are some regularities.

1. If a vowel (other than -i) is at the end of a syllable or followed by a single consonant, we usually pronounce it long; for example, *Hof* ("yard") and *Tor* ("gate").
2. If the vowel is followed by a double consonant (-ff, -ss, or -tt), -ck, -tz, or a consonant cluster, like -st or -nd, it is nearly always short. We only use double consonants to mark preceding vowels as short; we never pronounce the consonant itself lengthened or doubled.

Examples:

1. The -o vowel in *hoffen* ("to hope") is short, because it is followed by -ff.
2. The first -e vowel in *schmecken* ("to taste") is short, because it is followed by -ck.
3. The -a vowel in *Stand* ("booth") is short, because it is preceded by st- and followed by -nd.

Though these rules are indicators for long or short vowel pronunciation, there are lots of exceptions; and because German is a pluricentric language, there are lots of regional differences.



Pronunciation S2

Basic German Consonants

2

Grammar Points

2

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is German Consonant Sounds.

Introduction

Some of the German consonants are particularly challenging to produce for foreigners. A common example is the pronunciation of the letter -r, as there are different ways to pronounce this consonant in German. One of the -r consonants sounds like the Russian [r] sound—the vibrated rolling [r] (also called a trill sound), which you will hear in southern regions of Germany a lot. People have often imitated this sound and made fun of the sound in movies.

In order to re-establish all the respect that the letter -r deserves, as well as to teach you all the other German consonant sounds, we've put together a very helpful consonant sound pronunciation guide. As you may already know, the German alphabet is composed of twenty-six letters and four extra letters that depict forty speech sounds, of which twenty-five are consonant sounds. Today, we will look at the nineteen basic consonant sounds, which are divided as follows:

1. Plosives: [p], [b], [t], [d], [k], [g]
2. Fricatives: [f], [v], [s], [z], [h], [ʃ]
3. Affricates: [tʃ]
4. Approximants: [j], [ɹ]
5. Trill/Vibrants: [r]
6. Nasals: [m], [n], [ŋ]

But because this classification is quite complex, for the audio lesson, we distinguished between:

1. -r sounds (fricative and vibrant): [r], [ʀ]
2. Basic *fortis-lenis* pairs (voiceless/voiced pairs): [p-b], [t-d], [k-g], [f-v], [s-z], and [tʃ]
3. Other consonant sounds: [h], [j], [ɹ], [m], [n], [ŋ]

This guide will follow the original scientific classification of the basic consonant sounds, but we will also summarize the meaning and impact of the *fortis-lenis* pairs.

Basic Consonants

I. Plosives

"Plosives" are also called "blocked sounds" or "stop sounds," because we produce these consonant sounds by stopping the airflow in the vocal tract. The air is blocked through the mouth and pharynx with a sudden release. These sounds are much easier to reproduce than the different -r sounds, for example, as they are very similar to the English consonants. You'll certainly find it easier to pronounce words that start with the letter -b as in "ball," or its German translation *Ball*.

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keyword	Similar to English	Other German Grapheme/ Note
[p]	/ p /	<i>Partner</i> ("partner")	"p <u>o</u> wer"	-
[b]	/ b /	<i>Bucht</i> ("bay")	"b <u>a</u> y"	-
[t]	/ t /	<i>Tee</i> ("tea")	"t <u>a</u> ke"	-
[d]	/ d /	<i>Donner</i> ("thunder")	"d <u>a</u> d"	-
[k]	/ k /	<i>Katze</i> ("cat")	"c <u>a</u> b"	when [k] follows a short vowel sound, it's written -ck as in <i>dick</i> ("thick")
[g]	/ g /	<i>Gras</i> ("grass")	"g <u>r</u> ound"	-

The German language knows six basic plosive sounds.

1. [p] as in *Partner* ("partner") or *Oper* ("opera") is a voiceless consonant sound.
2. [b] as in *Bucht* ("bay") is its voiced counterpart. When producing [p] or [b] sounds, make sure that a puff of breath goes along with them. Try saying words like "bat" or "bit" while holding your hand in front of your mouth to make sure you can feel the puff of air. Your lips also have to bump into each other while producing these consonant sounds. (For more information on the difference between voiceless and voiced consonant sounds, please check the last chapter of this guide, "Basic Fortis-Lenis Pairs.")
3. [t] as in *Tee* ("tea") is a voiceless consonant sound.
4. [d] as in *Donner* ("thunder") or *danke* ("thanks") is its voiced counterpart.
5. [k] as in *Katze* ("cat") or *König* ("king") is a voiceless consonant sound. In certain cases, when [k]

follows a short vowel sound, it's written as -ck. An example is *dick* ("thick"), where the short -i vowel is followed by -ck.

6. [g] as in *Gras* ("grass") or *groß* ("big") is its voiced counterpart.

II. Fricatives

"Fricatives," also called "sibilant consonant sounds," are produced by forcing air through a narrow opening by placing two parts of the mouth together, such as by closing the teeth tightly when pronouncing the -s consonant sound.

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keyword	Similar to English	Other German Grapheme/Note
[f]	/ f /	<i>frei</i> ("free")	"f <u>ather</u> "	/v/ as in <i>Vater</i> ("father") in words with /v/ of German origin
[v]	/w/	<i>Winter</i> ("winter")	"v <u>acation</u> "	/v/ as in <i>Vase</i> ("vase") in words with /v/ of foreign origin
[s]	/s/ /ss/ /ß/*	<i>Hast</i> ("rush"), <i>Fass</i> ("barrel"), <i>Fuß</i> ("foot"),	"b <u>u</u> s"	/ss/ after short vowels, /ß/ after long vowels and diphthongs
[z]	/ s /	<i>Saft</i> ("juice")	"z <u>oo</u> "	sometimes /ts/ in foreign words, as in Tsunami
[h] [h] (silent -h)	/ h / / h /	<i>Haus</i> ("home") <i>sehen</i> ("to see")	"h <u>ome</u> " -	/h/ is pronounced in syllable onset and when preceding a vowel, and the silent /h/ occurs after a vowel
[?]	/ r /	<i>Raum</i> ("room")	-	another /r/ sound is the tongue-trilled [r], mainly spoken in

				South Germany
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*Ligature -ß never occurs in the initial position of a word. For that reason, there is no capital letter displaying -ß. If words are entirely set in capital letters, we replace -ß with a capital double -s, (-SS). Example: *Straße* à *STRASSE* ("street"/"road")

The German language knows six basic fricative consonant sounds.

1. First is [f], a voiceless sound, pronounced like the -f in the English word "father." To pronounce it correctly, your lower lip and your upper teeth need to rub each other. German examples for the -f sound are *Hafen* ("harbour"), *Fahrt* ("trip"), and *Fischer* ("fisherman").
2. The [v] sound is the voiced counterpart to [f]. While its phonetic symbol is /v/, it's mostly written with the letter -w. We pronounce this consonant sound as [v] in the English word "vacation." German examples are *Winter* ("winter") or *Wunsch* ("wish"). When you say [v], you use your lower lip and upper teeth to express it.*

The next fricative sound is the voiceless [s]. To pronounce it correctly, keep both your upper and lower incisors almost closed, as if you're trying to produce a hissing sound like a snake. We pronounce it as [s], as in the English word "bus." Note that the [s] sound can't occur in the initial position of a word.

Three graphemes represent the [s] sound: /s/, /ss/, and the ligature grapheme /ß/ (Eszett). The /s/ grapheme can appear in various positions of a word, but we don't pronounce it as [s] in the initial position. A common example is *Hast* ("rush"). It is a German spelling convention to use the ligature /ß/ after long vowels such as *Straße* ("street") with the long -a vowel, and after diphthongs such as *äußerst* ("extreme"), while we use the /ss/ grapheme after short vowels such as *Wasser* ("water"). You will never find it at the end of a word or syllable or before a consonant.

1. The [z] sound is the voiced/soft counterpart to the sharp [s]. You can compare the [z] sound to the English [z] in "zoo." It's written with the same -s letter from the alphabet we use for the voiceless [s] sound, and appears only if it forms the syllable onset. German examples are numbers *sechs* ("six") and *sieben* ("seven"), or *Ansage* ("announcement").
2. Another fricative consonant sound is the [h] sound, written with the /h/ grapheme in German. It can be compared to [h] in the English word "home." When [h] occurs at the syllable onset or precedes a vowel, then we pronounce it. German examples are *Haus* ("home"), *haben* ("to have"), or *Abhang* ("slope"). When -h follows a vowel, it is silent and only indicates that a vowel is lengthened. An example for silent -h is the verb *sehen* ("to see").
3. Unlike English, German uses two different -r sounds, the uvular [ʀ] and the tongue-trilled [r]. Both -r sounds can't be compared to the English -r sound. The most common German -r sound is

the uvular [ʁ], a fricative sound, produced when air 'rubs' against the back of the throat. The result is a sound similar to a light clearing of the throat. German examples are *Raum* ("room") and *rauchen* ("to smoke").

***Note on the Grapheme Symbols for [f] and [v] Sounds:**

In many cases, we express the [f] sound with the grapheme /f/. But in *certain* cases, we use *the* grapheme /v/ to express the [f] sound. For example, the German word for "father" (*Vater*) starts with a /v/ instead of an /f/, but we pronounce it [f]. On the other hand, there are words written with grapheme /v/, but spoken as [v], like *Vase* ("vase"). The only rule you need to remember is that we pronounce German words with grapheme /v/ as [f] in words of Germanic origin and [v] in words of foreign origin.

III. Affricates

"Affricates" are "consonant sounds that begin as stops" (often alveolar stops like [t] or [d]), but are released as fricatives (like [s] or [z]), rather than being released directly into the following vowel.

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keyword	Similar to English	Other German Grapheme/ Note
[ts]	/ z /	Zoo ("zoo")	"cats"	/t/ in words of Latin origin such as <i>Aktion</i> ("action")

The German language knows four affricate sounds. Most prominent is the [ts] affricate. We always pronounce -z, the last letter of the alphabet, as [ts], as in the English word "cats." We usually express the consonant sound [ts] with the grapheme /z/. German examples are *Zoo* ("zoo") and *Ziel* ("goal").

A [ts] also indicates that the preceding vowel is short. For example, in the word *Akzent* ("accent"), the vowel -a is short, followed by -k and -z.

Sometimes, we express [ts] with the /t/ grapheme. This applies for foreign words of Latin origin. A prominent example is the German word *Aktion*, which in English means "campaign" or "action." We pronounce the letter -t as [ts].

IV. Approximants

"Approximants" are "sounds that are considered to be intermediate sounds" between vowels and



typical consonants. If you want to articulate them, it is important to narrow the vocal tract, but also leave enough space for air to flow without much audible turbulence. They are more open than fricatives.

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keyword	Similar to English	Other German Grapheme/ Note
[j]	/j/	<i>Januar</i> ("January")	"yes"	-
[ɪ]	/ɪ/	<i>Land</i> ("country")	"lamp"	double consonant: <i>bell en</i> ("to bark")

The German language knows two approximants, [j] and [ɪ]. In words of German origin, we pronounce [j] similar to the English [y] in "yes," but in modern loanwords, it follows the pronunciation of the language it's taken from. For example, the pronunciation of the word *Jazz* in German is adapted from English, and therefore not spoken like a German [j].

We pronounce the English [ɪ], which is a rather dark sound, far back in the mouth. In contrast, we pronounce the German [ɪ] at the front of the mouth with the tongue flatter, so that you can touch the back of the front teeth. Therefore, it is called a "clear -ɪ" or "front -ɪ" and is much lighter than the dark "-ɪ" sound.

V. Trill/Vibrants

A "trill" or "vibrant" is a "consonant sound produced by one or various vibrations" that are caused by building up pressured air in one of the mouth organs (in German, usually the tip of the tongue or the uvula) that are then suddenly released.

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keyword	Similar to English	Other German Grapheme/ Note
[r]	/r/	<i>Richter</i> ("judge")	-	-

The German language knows just one trill sound, the tongue-trilled [r]. This -r sound is mainly used in southern varieties of standard German. For native English speakers, especially of US-American descent, the tongue-trilled [r] is easier to pronounce than the more common uvular [ʀ]. (For the uvular [ʀ] sound, check chapter three: Fricatives.)

[r] and [ʀ] Sound in Syllable Coda

In the syllable coda of German words, we commonly substitute the [r] sound with the allophone [ʀ] ("schwa"), which sounds almost like the German umlaut vowel [ä]. For example, the German noun *Richter* ("judge") is made of two -r letters. While we can pronounce the first -r as the tongue-trilled [r] or the uvular [ʀ], we substitute the last two letters, -er, with "-ʀ," and for that reason, we pronounce the noun [*Richtä*], instead of [*Richter*].

* Refers to the pronunciation of a German word, not its actual spelling.

VI. Nasals

We produce a nasal consonant sound with a lowered velum in the mouth that allows air to escape freely through the nose. The oral cavity acts as the resonance chamber for nasal sounds, but the air doesn't escape through the mouth, as it is blocked by the lips or tongue.

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keyword	Similar to English	Other German Grapheme/ Note
[m]	/ m /	<i>Mann</i> ("man")	" <u>m</u> other"	double consonant: <i>ko mmen</i> ("to come")
[n]	/ n /	<i>Norden</i> ("north")	" <u>n</u> orth"	double consonant: <i>re nnen</i> ("to run")
[ʀ]	/ ng /	<i>singen</i> ("to sing")	"to <u>s</u> ing," "to <u>s</u> wing"	- words of German and foreign origin: /ng/ - in some words of French origin: /nd/ as in <i>Gra nde Dame</i>

Like English, the German consonant system uses three nasal sounds. Those are [m], [n], and [ʀ].

The bilabial [m] sound is built with the lips closed. Like with the [b] and [p] sounds, your lips have to bump into each other while producing the sound. We pronounce it like [m] in the English word "M

anhattan." German examples are *Mann* ("man") and *Milch* ("milk").

The alveolar [n] sound is built with the tongue placed against the superior alveolar ridge, close to the sockets of the superior teeth. We pronounce it like [n] in the English word "North." German examples are *Norden* ("north") and *Pfanne* ("pan").

The velar [ʁ] sound is built with the back part of the tongue pressed against the back part of the roof of the mouth. We pronounce it like [ʁ] in the English word "angry." In written German, we express it with the letters -ng. German examples are *singen* ("to sing") and *bringen* ("to bring").

Basic Consonant Articulation Chart

	Places of Articulation						
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Plosive	[-p], [b]		[t], [d]		[k], [g]		
Fricative		[f], [v]	[s], [z]			[ʁ] ("-r")	[h]
Affricate			[tʃ], [dʒ]				
Approximant			[l]	[j]			
Trill/Vibrant			[r]				
Nasal	[m]		[n]		[ŋ]		

Appendix (Places of Articulation)

1. **Bilabial:** consonants articulated with both lips.
2. **Labiodental:** consonants articulated with the lower lip and the upper teeth.
3. **Alveolar:** consonants articulated with the tongue against or close to the superior alveolar ridge (which contains the sockets of the superior teeth).
4. **Palatal:** consonants articulated with the body of the tongue raised against the middle part of the roof of the mouth.
5. **Velar:** consonants articulated with the back part of the tongue against the back part of the roof of the mouth (known as the velum).
6. **Uvular:** consonants articulated with the back of the tongue against or near the uvula, which is further back in the mouth than velar consonants.
7. **Glottal:** consonants articulated with the glottis (a combination of the vocal folds and the space between the folds).

Basic Fortis-Lenis Pairs

The terms *fortis* and *lenis* refer to German consonant sounds that we pronounce either "voiceless" or "voiced." Those consonants occur in pairs at the same place of articulation. And while the German language is a pluricentric language (where there is no standard German, but a bunch of standard German dialects), in some parts of the country we pronounce those fortis-lenis pairs differently; sometimes always voiced or voiceless. But in general, we always produce fortis consonant sounds with more muscular tension than lenis consonant sounds.

This guide follows the pronunciation rules of the northern standard dialect, where all ten consonant sounds occur.

Ten basic consonant sounds build five fortis-lenis pairs. Those five pairs are: [p-b], [t-d], [k-g], [f-v], and [s-z].

If you are unsure about how to pronounce these consonants, please check chapter one: "Plosives," and chapter two: "Fricatives," of this guide. The plosive fortis-lenis pairs include: [p-b], [t-d], and [k-g], while the fricative pairs are [f-v] and [s-z].

Fortis consonants are pronounced voiceless, while lenis consonants are pronounced voiced. The fortis/voiceless consonants are: [p], [t], [k], [f], and [s].

The lenis/voiced consonants are: [b], [d], [g], [v], and [z].

Terminal Devoicing

In most varieties of German, the opposition between fortis and lenis (voiced and voiceless), is neutralized in the syllable coda. This is due to "terminal devoicing," or *Auslautverhärtung*, as this is called in Germany. This rule applies for the voiced consonants -b, -d, and -g, which we pronounce [p], [t], and [g] in the syllable coda.

Examples for terminal devoicing are:

1. *Lob* ("praise")
2. *Freund* ("friend")
3. *Hoffnung* ("hope")

These three German nouns end with consonant letters for voiced consonant sounds:

-b in *Lob*, -d in *Freund*, and -g in *Hoffnung*. But instead of pronouncing them as voiced consonant sounds [b], [d], and [g], we will pronounce them as their short, voiceless counterparts [k], [p], and [t].

For Example:

1. **Lop* ("praise")
2. **Freunt* ("friend")
3. **Hoffnunk* ("hope")

* Refers to the pronunciation of a German word, not its actual spelling.



Pronunciation S2

German Diphthongs and Grouped Consonants

3

Grammar Points

2

Grammar Points

This Lesson Focuses on German Diphthongs and Consonant Pairs.

Introduction

In the past two lessons, you learned how to use and pronounce basic vowel and consonant sounds that make up the German language. In this guide, we will introduce you to German diphthong vowel sounds and we'll work with you on some more complex consonants—grouped consonants.

Diphthongs

A "diphthong" (Greek: *di* meaning "two," and *phthongos* meaning "sound"), also called a "gliding vowel," is a unitary vowel that changes quality during its pronunciation. The vowel sound glides with a movement of the tongue from one articulation to another. Diphthongs occur in many languages, also in English and German. English examples for diphthongs are "eye," "cow," and "boy." This contrasts with "monophthongs," or "pure" vowels, where the tongue holds still and the quality doesn't change. Examples for monophthongs are [a] in "father," [e] in "net," [i] in "inter," and [o] in "home."

Diphthongs can form when separate vowels run together in fast speech. However, here we will take a look at unitary diphthongs, as we introduced in the aforementioned English examples, which are heard by listeners as distinct vowel sounds. The German language consists of three major diphthongs, shown in the list below.

Diphthong Chart

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keywords	Similar to English
[a??]	/ ai / / ay / / ei / / ey /	<i>Mai</i> ("May"), <i>Bayern</i> ("Bavaria"), <i>Ei</i> ("egg"), <i>Herr Meyer</i> ("Mr Meyer")	"eye," "kite"

[a??]	/ au /	A uge ("eye"), H aus ("house"), F rau ("woman")	" <u>ow</u> ," " <u>house</u> "
[???]	/ äu / / eu / / oi /	H äuser ("houses"), E uro ("Euro"), h eute ("today"), P arano i a ("paranoia")	" <u>oy</u> ," " <u>noise</u> "

The three common German diphthongs are [a??] (ei), [a??] (au), and [???] (eu). Note that we can spell two of these diphthongs in several different ways, namely [a??] (ei) and [???] (eu). For that reason, non-native speakers might have a hard time identifying a diphthong in a text or article. The most common varieties of [a??] are /ai/ and /ei/, and of [???] are /äu/ and /eu/.

Example:

1. *Herr Meier baut heute ein Haus.*
"Mr. Meier builds today a house." (literal translation)
"Today, Mr. Meier builds a house."

As silly as this example sentence might sound, it includes the three major German diphthongs. The diphthongs in this sentence are [a??] (ei) in *Meier*, [a??] (au) in *baut* and *Haus*, and [???] (eu) in *heute*. Please note that we pronounce German diphthongs short and clipped, not drawn out as they are in English.

Diphthong Example List

Diphthong	German Examples
[a??] (ei)	<i>Mai, Hai, Maier, Bayern, Heide, reisen, leise, Meier, Meyer</i>
[a??] (au)	<i>Haus, Maus, Frau, Auge, auch, auf, aus, brauchen</i>
[???]	<i>Häuser, Fräulein, Feuer, Freude, Leute, heute,</i>

(eu)	<i>Parano<u>ia</u></i>
------	------------------------

Other Diphthongs in German

For ages, and even today, there is a debate whether the digraph /ie/ represents the fourth German diphthong, but many linguists argue that instead of being a diphthong, /ie/ is just a spelling variant of the long [i:] vowel sound, as in *Liege* ("couch"). This argumentation is widely accepted, because there is no glide in the sound quality when pronouncing /ie/.

Another diphthong that we rarely use is [ui], which appears in interjections; for example, *pfui* ("ugh!").

Grouped Consonants

We don't consider grouped consonants to be diphthongs—a term we only use for combinations of two vowel sounds. A "grouped consonant" or "consonant cluster" describes "distinct consonant sounds of the German language, displayed by a group of consonant letters."

I. Postalveolar Consonant Sounds

A consonant is supposed to be postalveolar if the tongue is near the back of the alveolar ridge (which contains the sockets of the superior teeth), though not as close to the superior teeth as alveolar consonants (like [s] or [z]), but instead further back in the mouth.

In German, there are two fricative and two affricate consonant sounds that are built postalveolar.

The Fricative Postalveolar Sounds [ʃ] and [ʒ]

Remember that we produce fricatives by forcing air through a narrow opening by placing two parts of the mouth together, such as by closing the teeth tightly when pronouncing the [s] consonant sound.

[ʃ] is a voiceless consonant sound, made of three letters: "-s" plus "-c" plus "-h," and in written German, displayed with the grapheme /sch/. We pronounce the German [ʃ] consonant sound like [ʃ] in the English word "ship."

Example for the [ʃ] sound:

1. *In der Schule habe ich ein schönes Mädchen getroffen.*



"In school, I met a pretty girl."

The [ʃ] sound can be found in *Schule* ("school") and *schön* ("pretty").

In foreign words of English descent, we write [ʃ] as "-s" plus "-h," /sh/, leaving out the letter -c. Examples are *Show* ("show") or *Shareware* ("shareware").

Another written variety of [ʃ] is the grapheme /ch/. We pronounce German words of foreign origin like *Chef* ("chief") or *charmant* ("charming") with [ʃ] as well.

One more note on the [ʃ] sound in written German. You might find German words, where we do not pronounce /sch/ or /sh/ as [ʃ], but we speak each separately. This can happen if the first syllable of a word ends with the letter -s, and the following syllable begins with the letters -h or -ch. Examples are *Häschen* ("bunny," syllabic: *Häs-chen*) or *Grashalm* ("Blade of grass," syllabic: *Gras-halm*).

The voiced counterpart to [ʃ] is [ʒ]. The [ʒ] sound just occurs in the initial position of words of foreign origin, and in written German we express it with the letter -g. We pronounce this consonant like [ʒ] in the English word "vision." German examples for the [ʒ] sound are *Genre* ("genre") or *Genie* ("genius").

Example:

1. /ʒ/ and /ʃ/ together in a sentence:

Ich bin ein Genie in der Schule.

"I am a genius in school."

The Affricate Postalveolar Sounds [tʃ] and [dʃ]

Remember that affricates are consonant sounds that begin as stops (often alveolar stops like [t] or [d]), but we release them as fricatives (like [s] or [z]), rather than releasing them directly into the following vowel.

The affricate [tʃ] is a voiceless consonant sound. We pronounce [tʃ] with a light -t sound before -ʃ. We pronounce the affricate [tʃ] as the -ch in the English word "chance." In German, we write this consonant sound with the letter combination /ch/. German examples are *Check* ("check") or *Chip* ("chip").

The voiced counterpart to [tʰ] is the [dʒ] consonant sound. Pronounce [dʒ] with a light -d sound before -ʃ. We pronounce it as the -j in the English word "jungle." In German, we write this affricate with the letter combination /dsch/, and it appears in few loanwords only.

Postalveolar Consonant Chart

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keywords	Similar to English
[ʃ]	/sch/ /sh/ /ch/	<i>Schule</i> ("school"), <i>Show</i> ("show"), <i>Chef</i> ("chief")	" <u>sh</u> ip"
[ʒ]	/g/	<i>Genre</i> ("genre"), <i>Genie</i> ("genius")	"vi <u>si</u> on"
[tʰ]	/ch/	<i>Check</i> ("check")	" <u>ch</u> ance"
[dʒ]	/dsch/	<i>Dschungel</i> ("jungle")	"ju <u>ng</u> le"

Additional [ʃ] Sounds

Other consonant clusters with [ʃ] we use often include [ʃp] and [ʃt] sounds. In written German, both sounds appear as /sp/ and /st/.

In standard German dialect, at the beginning of a word, the -s letter in /sp/ and /st/ sounds like [ʃ]. For that reason, we pronounce words with /sp/ or /st/ in the initial position of a word as [schp] or [scht].

Examples are *Spiel* ("game") or *sprechen* ("to speak"), and *Stadt* ("city") or *studieren* ("to study"). Both grouped consonants might look like the English /sp/ or /st/, found in "speak" or "stone," but we pronounce them [schp] or [scht].

If you have trouble pronouncing [ʃp] and [ʃt], think of the English word "shine" and say it a few times. Then just say /ʃ/ with round lips and an open mouth, and add a -p or -t at the end.

[ʔp] and [ʔt] Consonant Chart

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keywords	Similar to English	Note
[ʔp]	/sp/	<i>Spiel</i> ("game")	-	- pronounced [ʔp] in initial position
[ʔt]	/st/	<i>Stadt</i> ("city")	-	- pronounced [ʔt] in initial position

II. The Affricate [pʔf]

One of the more noteworthy sound combinations is the affricate [pf]. [pf] consists of the consonant letters -p and -f. We pronounce a light [p] sound shortly before the [f]. Examples are *Pferd* ("horse"), *Pfeffer* ("pepper"), and *Pfennig* ("penny").

Remember how to build a [p] sound, where a puff goes along with it, and add a [f]. Then you have [pf] as in *Pferd*.

Another affricate combination sound is made of three consecutive consonants. The most graphic example is the word *Pflanze*, which in English means "plant." It starts with [pf], followed by the consonant -l.

If you are not able to pronounce the affricate [pfl] correctly, a simple [f] sound before [l] will do it: [**Flanze*], but try to build it with [pf].

* Refers to the pronunciation of a German word, not its actual spelling.

Advanced Consonant Articulation Chart

	Places of Articulation							
	Bilabial	Labio - Dental	Alveolar	Postal - Veolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Plosive	[p], [b]		[t], [d]			[k], [g]		
Fricative		[f], [v]	[s], [z]	[ʃ], [ʒ]			[χ], ("r")	[h]
Affricate		[pʔf]	[ts]	[tʃʃ], [dʒʒ]				
Approximant			[l]		[j]			
Trill/Vibrant			[r]					

Nasal	[m]		[n]			[ʔ]		
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III. Other Grouped Consonants

German has more grouped consonants at its disposal. Two of them, we want to discuss in this guide, but there are more shown in the chart below. Those two are /qu/ and /th/.

1. **[qu]**: Similar to English, the letter -q is always followed by the vowel -u. The difference is that we pronounce the German /qu/ grapheme as if it were written /kw/: [kw] as in *Quark* ("curd") or *Quittung* ("receipt"). You can practice building [kw] by forming your lips as if you want to say the English word "cave." Say it a few times. Then leave out the -a vowel and say only -cv.
2. **[th]**: The German language doesn't use [th] as a sound, but a lot of foreign words have a /th/ grapheme in the syllable onset. While in English you pronounce /th/, in German /h/ is silent, and so we pronounce /th/ like the English name "Thomas." German examples are *Theater* ("theatre"), *Thema* ("topic"), and *Theologie* ("theology").

Other Grouped Consonants Chart

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keywords	Similar to English	Note
[kw]	/qu/	<i>Quark</i> ("curd"), <i>Quittung</i> ("receipt")	-	- say "cave" a few times, then leave out the -a and say [cv]
[t]	/th/	<i>Theater</i> ("theater"), <i>Thema</i> ("topic"), <i>Theologie</i> ("theologie")	"Thomas"	- the -h is silent
[gn]	/gn/	<i>Gnade</i> ("mercy"), <i>Gnom</i> ("gnome")	-	- pronounce a light [g] sound before the -n
[kn]	/kn/	<i>Knall</i> ("bang," "crack"), <i>knapp</i>	-	- pronounce a light [k] sound before the -n

		("scarce")		
[tsw]	/zw/	Z wiebel ("onion"), z w anzig ("twenty")	cats + <u>v</u>	





Pronunciation S2

German Ich and Ach Sounds

4

Grammar Points

2

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson Will Introduce the *-Ich* and *-Ach* Sounds and the Letter *-C* With Its Different Pronunciations

Introduction

Up until now, you have learned the basic German vowels and consonants, and also learned what diphthongs and grouped consonants are and how we pronounce them in German. This time, we will guide you through the immensely important *ich* and *ach* sounds, that are fundamental for understanding and pronouncing German correctly.

If you have ever spoken German or listened to a conversation between native German speakers, you may have noticed that Germans quite often use a sound that sounds like they are clearing their throats.

Imagine it's movie night on a Friday evening, and you and your German friends want to watch that nice action flick at nine PM, but you have chatted too long in the kitchen with them. Finally, someone checks the time. It's already eight PM. So, he/she might be very surprised and say something like *Ach je, es ist schon acht Uhr*, which in English means "Oh dear, it's already eight."

That 'throat-cleaning sound' appears twice in this sentence; in the particle *ach* ("oh") and the numeral *acht* ("eight").

This example leads us right into today's topic: *ich* and *ach* sounds. First, we will go over the basics of these two consonant sounds with more examples, and in the second part of this guide, we will give you some other miscellaneous pronunciation advices regarding the letter *-c* and its different pronunciation rules.

Ich [ç] and Ach [x] Sounds

Both sounds, the *ich* and the *ach* sound, are consonant sounds we express with the phonemes [ç] ("ich") and [x] ("ach"). In written German, they are represented by the consonant cluster /ch/. [ç] and [x] are closely related, but still are distinct sounds in German. They do not appear in Standard English. For that very reason, native English speakers usually have a hard time pronouncing them correctly.

Pronunciation

Hold your tongue and mouth in a position as if you want to build a [k] sound: [k] as in the English word "kite." But, try not to cut off the stream of breath as you do when building [k]. Instead, force it through the narrow opening between the tongue and the roof of the mouth. First, say [k] a few times, and then force your air over your tongue.

To build a palatal *ich* [ç] sound, force the stream of air through a flat, but wide opening between the tongue and the roof of the mouth.

Reference Example

1. *Ich* [ç] consonant sound:
Ich beichte in der Kirche.
"I confess in church."

To build the guttural *ach* [x] sound, pronounce it toward the back of the throat. We've introduced you to the [x] sound earlier in this lesson. It's the so-called 'throat cleaning sound.'

Pronunciation tip: Try to pronounce it like the [x] in the Scottish word "Loch Ness."*

Reference Example

1. [x] consonant sound:
Ach je, es ist schon acht Uhr.
"Oh dear, it is already eight o'clock."

* Loch Ness is a lake in Scotland, where according to legend, a lake monster (Nessie) lives and terrorizes people.

When to Use [ç] and [x]

We determine whether the /ch/ grapheme in a German word becomes a [ç] or [x] sound by the immediately preceding vowel. If /ch/ follows the back vowels -o and -u, as well as the vowel -a and diphthong -au, we pronounce it as [x].

Examples for the [x] sound are:

1. *Koch*
"cook" where [x] is preceded by vowel -o
2. *Buch*
"book" where [x] is preceded by vowel -u
3. *acht*
"eight" where [x] is preceded by vowel -a
4. *Rauch*
"smoke" where [x] is preceded by diphthong -au

The [ç] sound occurs after front vowels, -e, -i, -ä, -ö, and -ü, after diphthongs -ei and -eu, and the consonants -l, -n, and -r.

Examples for the [ç] sound are:

1. *schlecht*
"bad" where [ç] is preceded by the vowel -e
2. *ich*
"I" where [ç] is preceded by the vowel -i
3. *riechen*
"to smell" where [ç] is preceded by the long -i:; expressed by the letters -ie
4. *lächeln*
"to smile" where [ç] is preceded by the umlaut -ä
5. *möchte*
"to want" where [ç] is preceded by the umlaut -ö
6. *Bücher*
"books" where [ç] is preceded by the umlaut -ü
7. *Bechte*
"confession" where [ç] is preceded by the diphthong -ei
8. *leuchten*
"to glow" where [ç] is preceded by the diphthong -eu
9. *welche*
"what"/"which" where [ç] is preceded by the consonant -l
10. *München*
"Munich" where [ç] is preceded by the consonant -n
11. *Kirche*
"church" where [ç] follows the consonant -r

The German Suffix *-ig*

A lot of German adjectives end on the suffix *-ig*, made of the vowel *-i* and the consonant *-g*. However, in standard German, we always pronounce this suffix as *ich* [ç].

Example:

wichtig ("important")

We pronounce this adjective as *[wichtich], instead of [wichtig].

Other examples are:

1. *hastig* ("hurried")
2. *lustig* ("funny")
3. *richtig* ("right"/"proper")
4. *schmutzig* ("dirty")

* Refers to the pronunciation of a German word, not its actual spelling.

The German Suffix *-chen*

We always pronounce the German diminutive suffix *-chen* as [ç]. This rule also applies for words that follow back vowels – usually the indicator to pronounce /ch/ as [x]. An example for that is the German word *Frauchen* ("female dog master"). Even though /ch/ follows the diphthong /au/ (indicator for [x] sound), we pronounce it as [ç].

The diminutive suffix *-chen* also triggers umlauts:

1. *Katze* ("cat") – *Kätzchen* ("kitten")
-a vowel changes to -ä umlaut vowel
2. *Hund* ("dog") - *Hündchen* ("little dog")
-u vowel changes to -ü umlaut vowel



The Different Functions of *-chen*

You need to be careful if you read a word that ends with *-chen*. Not always is it a diminutive suffix.

The German verb *rauchen* ("to smoke") for example, ends with *-chen*, but here, we pronounce *-chen* as [x]. This is not an exception to the *-chen* suffix pronunciation rule because the *-chen* in *rauchen* is not a diminutive suffix, even though it looks like one. The same goes for *Kuchen* ("cake"), a noun that also ends with *-chen*, but where *-chen* is not a suffix. We pronounce the *-chen* at the end of this German word as [x].

A diminutive suffix adds to the whole word, like in our previous example:

Frau plus the suffix *-chen* results in *Frauchen*. Whereas the *-chen* in *rauchen* and *Kuchen* is part of the root word.

The basic rule is, if it's a diminutive suffix, we always pronounce it as [ç]. If it's part of the root word, the pronunciation of /ch/ depends on the preceding vowel.

[ç] and [x] Consonant Sound Chart

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keywords	Similar to English	Note
[ç]	/ch/	<i>ich</i> ("I"), <i>Bücher</i> ("books"), <i>Kirche</i> ("church")	-	- pronounced as [ç] after vowels -e, -i, -ä, -ö, and -ü, diphthongs -ei and -eu, and consonants -l, -n, and -r
[x]	/ch/	<i>Krach</i> ("noise"), <i>Koch</i> ("cook"), <i>Buch</i> ("book")	-	- pronounced as [x] after -a, -o, and -u, and the diphthong -au

The Letter -c and Its Different Pronunciations

In this part of the lesson, we will look at the letter -c and the consonant cluster -ch with its different pronunciation rules. Even though -c is a letter of the German alphabet, it doesn't display a specific consonant sound on its own. We can pronounce the letter -c, expressed with the grapheme /c/, in a variety of ways.

-C in Initial Word Position

The letter -c can appear in the initial position in foreign words.

We pronounce -c in the initial position as the [ts] as in "cats" or "hats" if it comes before the vowels -ä, -e, or -i. It's a sharp affricate consonant sound. (For further information on affricates, please check your PDF guide for Pronunciation Lesson number two).

Examples are:

1. *Cäsar* ("Caesar")
2. *Celsius* ("Celsius")
3. *circa* ("approximately")

In other environments, if -c comes before the vowels -a and -o, or the diphthong -ou, we will pronounce it as the [k] as in "camping."

Examples are:

1. *Camping* ("camping")
2. *Computer* ("computer")
3. *Couch* ("couch")

Ch- in the Initial Word Position

In words of German origin, the letter -c always appears in combination either with the letter -h to build -ch, or with the letters -s and -h to build -sch. As you have seen above, the -ch combination is crucial for building the [ç] and [x] sounds in German. In contrast, we can pronounce German words of foreign

origin that start with -ch in a variety of possible ways:

1. [k] as in **Christ** ("Christ") or **Chaos** ("chaos")
2. [ʃ] as in **Chef** ("chief") or **charmant** ("charming")
3. [tʃ] as in **Check** ("check") or **Chip** ("chip")
4. [ç] as in **Chemie** ("chemistry") or **chinesisch** ("Chinese")
5. An [x] sound is never spoken in the initial word position

Pronunciation of the c/-ch- Sounds in Initial Word Position

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keywords	Similar to English	Note
[ts]	/c/	Cäsar ("caesar"), Celsius ("celsius"), circa ("approximately")	"cats," "hats"	- pronounced as [ts] before -ä, -e, and -i - other grapheme symbol is /z/ as in Zoo ("zoo")
[k]	/c/	Camping ("camping"), Computer ("computer"), Couch ("couch")	"c <u>amp</u> ing," "c <u>ab</u> "	- pronounced as [k] before -a, -o, and -ou

German Phonetic Symbol	German Grapheme Symbol	German Keywords	Similar to English
[k]	/ch/	Christ ("Christ"), Chaos ("chaos")	"c <u>amp</u> ing" "c <u>ab</u> "
[ʃ]	/ch/	Chef ("chief"), Chance	"s <u>h</u> ow" "s <u>h</u> adow"

		("chance")	
[tʰ] (<i>tsch</i>)	/ch/	Check ("check"), Chip ("chip")	" <u>ch</u> ance"
[ç]	/ch/	Chemie ("chemistry"), chinesisch ("Chinese")	





Pronunciation S2

German Stress, Rhythm, and Intonation

5

Grammar Points

2

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson Will Introduce You to German Stress, Intonation, and Rhythm

Introduction

Speaking German involves adding intonation, stress, and rhythm to speech to give it some life. Listening to someone speaking in the same rhythm and without any intonation rising or falling feels boring and lifeless. Without rhythm and intonation, language does not express emotions or intentions. Both, the English and German languages possess a rhythm and stress, but each language applies them differently.

Stress

"Stress" is a linguistic term and refers to the "emphasis" that may be given to certain syllables in a word. In any syllable, vowels can be stressed, consonants not. Stress is fundamental to the pronunciation of many languages, including English and German.

Stress in English

The English language has a lot of stress in it. Try saying the words "important" and "interesting" aloud. When you say these words aloud, you're putting emphasis (or stress) on a certain syllable. In "**important**," the stress is on the "-port" syllable. In "**i**nteresting," the stress is on the "int-" syllable. If you haven't studied phonetics before, it's probably something that you've never noticed before! It just comes naturally. Because in English, we put emphasis on certain syllables, English is known as a stress language.

Another kind of stress is "word accent." Word accent is widely used in English, and is realized on focused or accented words in a sentence.

Example:

Phone conversation:

A: "Will you take the early train tomorrow?"

B: "No, I'll take the *evening* train tomorrow."

In this conversation, the acoustic differences between the syllables of "tomorrow" are small compared to the differences between the syllables of "evening." That is because "evening" is the emphasized word. In those words, stressed syllables are louder and stronger than in regular words. In our example, we heavily emphasize the first -e vowel sound (B says: "evening").

To sum it up, there are two kinds of stress in English: Putting emphasis on certain syllables in words, and word accent.

Stress in German

Like English, the German language also uses the concept of stressing syllables and knows both kinds of stress. But there is one major difference to stress in English. While in English you have to learn which syllable or syllables of a word are stressed (as stress is mostly unpredictable), stress in German usually falls on the first syllable of the root word. "Stress on the first syllable of a root word" is called "root word accent" or "root word stress." We hold the first syllable of a root for a longer length of time than the others and we give it more stress. Root word stress occurs in most words of German origin. Stress applies to all kinds of words: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and all other parts of speech.

Examples for Root Word Stress:

<i>German Example</i>	Syllabic and Stressed	Word Class	"English"
<i>Arbeiter</i>	Ar -bei-ter	noun	"worker"
<i>Hausaufgabe</i>	Haus -auf-ga-be	noun	"homework"
<i>kaufen</i>	kau -fen	verb	"to buy"
<i>trinken</i>	trin -ken	verb	"to drink"
<i>ordentlich</i>	or -dent-lich	adjective	"tidy"/"orderly"
<i>fünfzehn</i>	fünf -zehn	numeral	"fifteen"

The use of root word stress in German becomes even more obvious if we take a look at the root word *lehr*- ("teach").

For Example:

1. *lehren*
"to teach"
2. *Lehrer*
"male teacher"
3. *Lehrerin*
"female teacher"
4. *belehren*
"to inform"

We place stress (emphasis) on the first syllable of the root word, as seen in the first three examples. But this does not necessarily mean that we stress the first syllable of any German word. In our last example, *belehren* ("to inform"), we stress the second syllable. That is because we add the prefix *be-* to the root word. So, we stress the second syllable of the word *belehren*, and the first of the root word, which is *lehren*.

To sum it up: If we add prefixes and/or suffixes to the root word, they have an impact on stress, too.

Exceptions

There are some common exceptions to the German root word stress.

I. Foreign Words and Loanwords in German

The pronunciation of loanwords often follows the rules of the language we borrow them from.

Examples:

1. Especially proper names keep their original stress. We will still call a French guy named *Gustáv* [*Gus-táv*], not [*Gus-tav*].
2. We stress the word "Computer" in German similar to English on the **second** syllable: *Com-pu-ter*, not on the **first** syllable, *Com-pu-ter*.

II. Compound Adverbs

We stress compound adverbs with one of the following prefixes: *her-*, *hin-*, *da-*, and *wo-*, on their second syllable.

Examples:

1. *-her-auf*
"up here"
2. *-da-hin*
"there"/"to that place"
3. *-wo-hin*
"where... to"

III. Separable and Inseparable Prefixes

German also distinguishes stress between separable prefixes (with stress on the prefix) and inseparable prefixes (with stress on the root word) in verbs and words derived from such verbs.

A. Separable Prefixes:

Words beginning with *ab-*, *auf-*, *em-*, and *vor-* have separable prefixes and we stress them on their first syllable.

Example Chart

<i>German Example</i>	<i>Syllabic and Stressed</i>	<i>"English"</i>
<i>abbauen</i>	<i>ab-bau-en</i>	"to mine"/"to dismantle"
<i>Abdruck</i>	<i>Ab-druck</i>	"print"/"mark"
<i>aufnehmen</i>	<i>auf-neh-men</i>	"to take up"/"to record"
<i>Aufgabe</i>	<i>Auf-ga-be</i>	"task"
<i>Embargo</i>	<i>Em-bar-go</i>	"embargo"
<i>vorausgehen</i>	<i>vor-aus-ge-hen</i>	"to precede"
<i>Vorabend</i>	<i>Vor-a-bend</i>	"eve"

B. Inseparable Prefixes

Words beginning with *be-*, *ge-*, *er-*, *ver-*, *zer-*, *ent-*, and *emp-* have inseparable prefixes and receive stress on the second syllable.

Example Chart

<i>German Example</i>	<i>Syllabic and Stressed</i>	<i>"English"</i>
<i>beginnen</i>	<i>be-gin-nen</i>	"to start"
<i>gewinnen</i>	<i>ge-win-nen</i>	"to win"
<i>erbitten</i>	<i>er-bit-ten</i>	"to request"
<i>vertrauen</i>	<i>ver-trau-en</i>	"to trust"
<i>zerbrechen</i>	<i>zer-bre-chen</i>	"to break"
<i>entbinden</i>	<i>ent-bin-den</i>	"to give birth"
<i>empfangen</i>	<i>emp-fan-gen</i>	"to receive"

Note

Rarely, two homographs (words that are written the same, but with a different meaning) with such prefixes are formed. Consider the word *umfahren*. As *um-fahren* (separable prefix), it means "to drive over/to collide with (an object on the street)," and receives stress on the first syllable. On the other hand, *umfahren* (inseparable prefix) is stressed on the second syllable, *um-fah-ren*. This word means "to drive around (an obstacle on the street)."

IV. Suffixes with Predictable Stress Patterns

One major example are verbs that end on the suffix *-ieren*. They receive stress on their penultimate syllable.

Examples:

1. *-studieren* ("to study"); a verb made of three syllables: *stu-die-ren*. Stressed on the middle syllable *-die*, which is the penultimate syllable.
2. *-balancieren* ("to balance"); a verb made of four syllables: *ba-lan-cie-ren*. Stressed on the third syllable, which is the penultimate syllable.

Other suffixes are listed in the chart below.

Suffixes with Predictable Stress Patterns

Suffix	German Example	Syllabic and Stressed	"English"	Stress
-erei	<i>Bücherei</i>	<i>Bü-che-rei</i>	"library"	last syllable
-ie	<i>Chemie</i>	<i>Che-mie</i>	"chemistry"	last syllable
-ik	<i>Politik</i>	<i>Po-li-tik</i>	"politics"	last syllable
-tät	<i>Aktivität</i>	<i>Ak-ti-vi-tät</i>	"activity"	last syllable
-eum	<i>Museum</i>	<i>Mu-se-um</i>	"museum"	next to last syllable
-ieren	<i>studieren</i>	<i>stu-die-ren</i>	"to study"	next to last syllable

Learning Tip

These exceptions are quite something to memorize. To get good at this, practice copying native speakers! Stressing syllables the way we do in English when speaking German will sound unnatural, so be careful! Keep in mind that listening and repeating is really the key to improving your pronunciation. Listen to and copy native speakers as much as you can.

Rhythm**I. Rhythm & Timing**

When we speak, we don't say everything in the same rhythm and timing, because that would sound unnatural. The general idea of rhythm and timing is that a language "divides time rhythmically into equal portions." This is called "isochrony." There are three types of isochrony: stress-timed, syllable-timed, and mora-timed.

The German language, like many other languages including English, Dutch, and Russian, is a stress-timed language. This means that syllables may last different amounts of time, but the temporal duration between consecutive stressed syllables is equal or close to equal. Stressed syllables appear at a constant rate, but we shorten non-stressed syllables to accommodate this.

A stress-timed rhythm like in German is sometimes called "Morse-code rhythm." This comparison works because a Morse-code is made of long and short signals. In a metaphorical sense, this refers to stressed (long) and non-stressed (short) syllables. Stressed syllables are not only spoken louder and more powerful than non-stressed syllables, but also longer. So, if a non-stressed syllable follows a

stressed syllable, we will pronounce the non-stressed one shorter and with a lower voice. And for that reason, stress-timing usually correlates with vowel reduction processes.

The main difference between stress-timed and syllable- or mora-timed languages is that in languages like Spanish (syllable-timed) or Japanese (mora timed), syllables or *morae* are spoken at a constant rate regardless of stress.

II. Stress and Vowel Reduction

In many languages, such as English, German, and Russian, vowel reduction may occur when a vowel changes from a stressed to an unstressed position. Especially in German, many unstressed vowels reduce to "schwa-like" vowel sounds. But this highly depends on the specific German dialect spoken. Vowel reduction occurs in the unstressed position, for example, in the last syllable of a word. There, the vowel is not emphasized and changes its sound.

Example:

[e] vowel sound in the last syllable of words

1. correct pronunciation: *Butter* ("butter"); syllabic: *But-ter*
2. reduction of the last syllable (very common): **Buttä*; syllabic: *But-tä*.

This [ä] vowel sound at the end of the word instead of /er/, we call it the "schwa" vowel sound.

Other examples for vowel reduction:

1. *Bäcker* ("baker")
becomes
**[Bäckä]*
2. *Hausmeister* ("caretaker")
becomes
**[Hausmeistä]*
3. *Maler* ("painter")
becomes
**[Malä]*

* Refers to the pronunciation of a German word, not its actual spelling.

III. Vowel Omission

Another phenomenon that commonly occurs in German is vowel omission. In certain positions, we can omit vowels in unstressed syllables. Most common is the omission of the [e] vowel sound in a verb's last unstressed syllable. Let's say two people need to go to an appointment together, one of them would say *Wir woll'n geh'n* instead of *Wir wollen gehen*. ("We want to leave.") We omit the [e] in the last unstressed syllable of both verbs, and so we have *woll'n* instead of *wollen*, and *geh'n* instead of *gehen*.

Intonation

All right. Let's switch over to our last topic – "intonation." The German language knows three different tones of voice. Those are: falling, rising, and floating intonation.

I. Falling Intonation

Falling intonation marks the conclusion of declarative and imperative sentences.

Examples:

1. *Ich gehe arbeiten.*
"I go to work." (declarative sentence)

Over the last two syllables of *arbeiten*, the tone of voice is falling.

1. *Mach das Fenster zu!*
"Shut the window!" (imperative sentence)

Over the last two syllables of the sentence (*-ster + -zu*), the tone of voice is falling.

We also use falling intonation at the end of interrogative sentences with "open questions."



Examples:

1. *Wie spät ist es?*
"What time is it?"
2. *Wie geht es dir?*
"How are you?"

II. Rising Intonation

Rising intonation is typical for "yes/no questions." You can hear a raised pitch near the end of the sentence.

Examples:

1. *Hast du Hunger?*
"Are you hungry?"
2. *Magst du Fußball?*
"Do you like soccer?"

III. Floating Intonation

We use floating intonation to mark breaks between main clauses and dependent clauses.

Example:

1. *Marie macht das Fenster zu, denn ihr ist kalt.*
"Marie closes the window because she feels cold."

The main clause, *Marie macht das **Fenster zu***, ends on floating intonation to indicate that it's continuing with a dependent clause.

To sum it up: The tone of the voice falls or rises at the end of a sentence depending on the kind of sentence (declarative, imperative, or interrogative). Falling or rising intonation takes place beginning

with the last stressed syllable of the sentence.

If the intonation is falling, we pronounce the last stressed syllable a little bit higher so that we can pronounce the following unstressed syllable(s) of the sentence with a falling tone of voice.

Example:

1. *Ich gehe **arbeiten**.*
"I go to work."

The last stressed syllable in this sentence is the *ar-* in ***arbeiten*** ("to work"), and we pronounce it higher so that we can pronounce the following two syllables with a falling tone of voice. ***ar**-bei-ten.*

If the intonation is rising, we pronounce the last stressed syllable a little bit lower so that we can pronounce the following unstressed syllable(s) of the sentence with a rising tone of voice.

Example (yes/no question):

1. *Hast du **Hunger**?*
"Are you hungry?"

The last stressed syllable is the *Hun-* in ***Hunger*** ("hungry"). We pronounce it lower so that we can pronounce the following syllable with a rising tone of voice to build the question. ***Hun**-ger.*

Thank You

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