

German Pronunciation

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Introduction

Goal is to teach you to improve your pronunciation by comparing German sounds to English sounds.

I am a non-native German speaker, but I have been speaking German for many years.

This will be standard German pronunciation unless otherwise mentioned.

Different regions will pronounce words slightly differently

Also, German like English has borrowed many foreign words; such words will be pronounced similar to the foreign language.

Note: single quotes ' ' surrounds English examples and double quotes " " surrounds German examples.

German words you may know

Wunderbar

Gesundheit

Auf Wiedersehen

Guten Tag

Guten Appetit

Oma

Achtung

Consonants – same as English

F K M N P S T X (rarely used)

S has two sounds in English and German <s> like 'some' or <z> like 'rose' or "singen"

B D G H (with exceptions)

B sounds like P at the end of a syllable or word

D sounds like T at the end of a syllable or word

G sounds like K at the end of a syllable or word

H is pronounced like English at the start of a word or syllable, but is silent when following a vowel, e.g. "Ehe"

L (almost the same) – always soft L like after the English word 'lee', e.g. "Hallo" cf. 'Hello'

Consonants – different

J Q R V W Z

J sounds like <y> e.g. "ja"

Q sounds like <kv> e.g. "Quelle"

R may be rolled, trilled or swallowed (sounds like <uh>) at the end of a word like "der" or "er" or "Vater"

V sounds like <f> unless originally in a foreign word, e.g. "Universität" then like <v>

W sounds like <v> e.g. "wo" or "wenn"

Z sounds like <ts like pizza>

Multiple consonants

ß = SS, PF CH CK DT NG SCH SP ST TZ

ß sounds like <s>

PF sounds like <pf> e.g. "pfui" (German word for 'foe')

CH sounds like <ch>, but aspirated, e.g. 'ich' or 'ach'

CH at start of a word sounds like <sh> in northern Germany and <k> in southern Germany, e.g. "China"

CK sounds like <k>

DT sounds like <t> e.g. "Schmidt"

NG sounds like <ng> in 'sing' or "singen"

SCH sounds like <sh> e.g. "schön"

SP sounds like <shp> e.g. "spät"

ST sounds like <sht> e.g. "Stop" cf. 'stop'

TZ sounds like <ts> e.g. 'pizza'

Vowels – long and short (how to recognize)

A E I O U Y(rare)

Long if:

Double like AA, EE or OO, e.g. "Boot" or "Beethoven" or "Staat"

Followed by only 1 consonant, e.g. "Baden",

Followed by a silent 'h'; e.g. "ehelich" or "unehelich"

A sounds like <ah> e.g. 'father' or "Vater" or "Pate"

E sounds like <aye> e.g. 'day' or "Ehe"

I sounds like <ee> e.g. 'see' or "Ihm"

O sounds like <oh> e.g. 'float' or "Boot"

U sounds like <ooh> e.g. 'hoot' or "Hut"

Y sounds like "ü" see below

Short if:

Followed by 2 or more consonants in the same syllable, e.g. "Mann", "Bett", "bald"

E if at the end of the word, "Ende"

A sounds like <ah> e.g. same sound but shorter "bald"

E sounds like <uh> e.g. 'the' or "Ende"

I sounds like <ih> e.g. 'in' or "immer"

O sounds like <oh> e.g. similar sound but shorter "voll"

U sounds like <ooh> e.g. similar sound but shorter "bunt"

Y sounds like "ü" see below

Diphthongs – 2 vowels together

AI EI AU EU IE

AI sounds like <eye> e.g.

EI sounds like <eye> e.g. "frei"

AU sounds like <ow> e.g. "au" or "Auge"

EU sounds like <oi> e.g. "euch"

IE sounds like <ee> e.g. "Spiel"

Umlaut usage

Ä Ö Ü

Ä sounds like vowel E above, e.g. "hätte"

Ö requires special practice – round lips like saying and 'O', but say 'eh', e.g. "schön"

Ü requires special practice – round lips like saying and 'U', but say 'ee', e.g. "über"

Sample words to pronounce

Bett

Gut

Boot

Other fun words:

Die Katze macht miau

Der Hund sagt wau wau

People's names

Meyer

Müller

Möller

Schneider

Bauer

Kötter

Bergmann

Weiss

Schwarz

Places:

Kreis

Dorf

Stadt

Ortschaft

Gemeinde

Links:

www.pronounce.com

Use this site to enter a word and have a native speaker pronounce it.

Example: "Meyer" and select language German

<https://forvo.com/languages/de/>

Enter German word to pronounce; contains 600,000 words

<https://translate.google.com/>

Google translate. Will read the text entered in full sentences.

<https://preply.com/en/blog/improve-your-german-pronunciation-to-sound-like-a-native/>

A thorough description on how to pronounce German sounds

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/German_Genealogical_Word_List

FamilySearch wiki listing German genealogy words and their meaning

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Germany_Languages

FamilySearch wiki for Germany languages

German genealogy terms

Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs-lexikon

Verein (society)

Matricula

Archion

Taufregister

Taufen

geboren

Geborene

Geburten

getauft

Paten oder Pathen (old spelling) – (godparent)

Sohn

Tochter

Vater

Mutter

ehelich

unehelich

und

Trauregister

Heiraten

Ehe

Trauungen

Geheiratet

Junggeselle

Jungfrau

Getraut

katholisch

evangelisch

Braut

Weiland

Totenregister

Tote

Alter

Todesursache

Krankheit

gestorben

Verstorbene

Beerdigung

beerdigt

German Pronunciation Worksheet

Write your family names and village names
Next to them write your pronunciation notes

Also to these common genealogy terms
Verein (society)

Taufregister
Taufen
geboren

Paten oder Pathen
Sohn
Tochter
Vater
Mutter
ehelich
unehelich
und

Trauregister
Heiraten
Ehe
Junggeselle
Jungfrau
katholisch
evangelisch
Braut
Weiland (deceased)

Totenregister
Tote
Alter
Todesursache
Krankheit
gestorben