

LEARNING MADE EASY



3rd Edition

# German

<sup>for</sup>  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A **Wiley** Brand

Speak conversational  
German with ease

Learn the most important  
phrases for home, travel,  
business, and more

Follow along with free  
online audio tracks



**Wendy Foster**



# German

**for  
dummies®**  
A Wiley Brand





# German

3rd Edition

**by Wendy Foster**

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand

## German For Dummies®, 3rd Edition

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com)

Copyright © 2025 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved, including rights for text and data mining and training of artificial technologies or similar technologies.

Published simultaneously in Canada.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the Publisher. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

The manufacturer's authorized representative according to the EU General Product Safety Regulation is Wiley-VCH GmbH, Boschstr. 12, 69469 Weinheim, Germany, e-mail: [Product\\_Safety@wiley.com](mailto:Product_Safety@wiley.com).

**Trademarks:** Wiley, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, [Dummies.com](http://Dummies.com), Making Everything Easier, and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: THE PUBLISHER AND THE AUTHOR MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS WORK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ALL WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION WARRANTIES OF FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES OR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS. THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR EVERY SITUATION. THIS WORK IS SOLD WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING LEGAL, ACCOUNTING, OR OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. IF PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED, THE SERVICES OF A COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL PERSON SHOULD BE SOUGHT. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR THE AUTHOR SHALL BE LIABLE FOR DAMAGES ARISING HEREFROM. THE FACT THAT AN ORGANIZATION OR WEBSITE IS REFERRED TO IN THIS WORK AS A CITATION AND/OR A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FURTHER INFORMATION DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE AUTHOR OR THE PUBLISHER ENDORSES THE INFORMATION THE ORGANIZATION OR WEBSITE MAY PROVIDE OR RECOMMENDATIONS IT MAY MAKE. FURTHER, READERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT INTERNET WEBSITES LISTED IN THIS WORK MAY HAVE CHANGED OR DISAPPEARED BETWEEN WHEN THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN AND WHEN IT IS READ.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002. For technical support, please visit <https://hub.wiley.com/community/support/dummies>.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com).

Library of Congress Control Number is available from the publisher.

ISBN 978-1-394-32126-1 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-394-32128-5 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-394-32130-8 (ebk)

# Contents at a Glance

<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Part 1: Getting Started with German</b>	7
CHAPTER 1: You Already Know a Little German	9
CHAPTER 2: Pronunciation Basics	23
CHAPTER 3: Meeting and Greeting	33
CHAPTER 4: Getting Numbers, Time, and Measurements Straight	45
CHAPTER 5: The Nitty-Gritty: Basic German Grammar	57
CHAPTER 6: Talking About Home and Family	79
<b>Part 2: German in Action</b>	89
CHAPTER 7: Getting to Know You: Making Small Talk	91
CHAPTER 8: Asking for Directions	111
CHAPTER 9: Guten Appetit! Dining Out and Going to the Market	131
CHAPTER 10: Shopping Made Easy	155
CHAPTER 11: Taking Care of Business and Telecommunications	171
CHAPTER 12: Recreation and the Great Outdoors	189
<b>Part 3: German on the Go</b>	209
CHAPTER 13: Going Out on the Town	211
CHAPTER 14: Planning a Trip	231
CHAPTER 15: Making Sense of Euros and Cents	241
CHAPTER 16: Getting Around: Planes, Trains, Taxis, and Buses	251
CHAPTER 17: Finding a Place to Stay	271
CHAPTER 18: Handling Emergencies	287
<b>Part 4: The Part of Tens</b>	305
CHAPTER 19: Ten Ways to Pick Up German Quickly	307
CHAPTER 20: Ten Things Never to Say in German	313
CHAPTER 21: Ten Favorite German Expressions	319
CHAPTER 22: Ten Phrases That Make You Sound German	323
<b>Part 5: Appendices</b>	327
APPENDIX A: German-English Mini-Dictionary	329
APPENDIX B: Verb Tables	347
APPENDIX C: Answer Key	359
<b>Index</b>	363





# Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
About This Book	1
Conventions Used in This Book	2
Foolish Assumptions	3
Icons Used in This Book	4
Beyond the Book	5
Where to Go from Here	5
 <b>PART 1: GETTING STARTED WITH GERMAN</b>	 7
 <b>CHAPTER 1: You Already Know a Little German</b>	 9
The German You Know	9
Friendly allies (perfect cognates)	10
Kissing cousins (near cognates)	12
False friends	14
Lenders and borrowers	16
Using Basic Expressions	20
 <b>CHAPTER 2: Pronunciation Basics</b>	 23
Mouthing Off: Basic Pronunciation	23
Dealing with stress in German	24
Building the alphabet blocks	24
Pronouncing vowels	25
Pronouncing ä, ö, and ü	27
Pronouncing diphthongs	27
Pronouncing consonants	28
Pronouncing combinations of consonants	30
 <b>CHAPTER 3: Meeting and Greeting</b>	 33
Getting Formal or Informal	33
Saying “Hello,” “Goodbye,” and “How Are You?”	34
Asking “How are you?”	36
Replying to “How are you?”	37
Introducing Yourself and Your Friends	39
Introducing your friends	39
Introductions for special occasions	39
Introducing yourself	41

<b>CHAPTER 4:</b>	<b>Getting Numbers, Time, and Measurements Straight</b>	45
	Juggling Numbers	45
	Telling Time	47
	Asking for the time	48
	Telling time with the 12-hour clock	48
	Using the 24-hour system	49
	Times of the day	50
	Days of the week	50
	Naming the Months	52
	Measurements, Quantities, and Weights	53
<b>CHAPTER 5:</b>	<b>The Nitty-Gritty: Basic German Grammar</b>	57
	Getting a Handle on Parts of Speech	58
	Nouns	59
	Articles	61
	Pronouns	62
	Adjectives	62
	Verbs	63
	Adverbs	64
	Constructing Simple Sentences	65
	Arranging words in the right order	65
	Putting the verb in second place	65
	Pushing the verb to the end	66
	Forming questions	66
	The Tenses: Past, Present, and Future	67
	Looking at the present	67
	Talking about the past: The perfect tense	68
	Writing about the past: Using the simple past tense of verbs	70
	Talking about the future	71
	Putting the Language in the Proper Case	72
	A quick trip through the different cases	72
	Why all these cases matter	73
<b>CHAPTER 6:</b>	<b>Talking About Home and Family</b>	79
	Living in an Apartment or House	79
	Describing life within four walls	80
	Asking the right questions	80
	Talking About Your Family	82
<b>PART 2: GERMAN IN ACTION</b>		89
<b>CHAPTER 7:</b>	<b>Getting to Know You: Making Small Talk</b>	91
	Talking About Yourself	91
	Describing your work	92

Providing your name and number(s) . . . . .	93
Looking at possessive pronouns . . . . .	96
Talking About Cities, Countries, and Nationalities . . . . .	97
Revealing where you come from . . . . .	98
Using the all-important verb “sein” . . . . .	99
Asking people where they come from . . . . .	99
Discovering nationalities . . . . .	101
Chatting about languages you speak . . . . .	102
Making Small Talk About the Weather . . . . .	105
Noting what it’s like out there . . . . .	105
Discussing the temperature . . . . .	106
Describing the day’s weather . . . . .	106
<b>CHAPTER 8: Asking for Directions . . . . .</b>	<b>111</b>
“Wo?” — Asking Where Something Is . . . . .	111
“Wie weit?” How Far Is It? . . . . .	113
Going Here and There . . . . .	114
Asking “How Do I Get There?” . . . . .	115
Using “in” to get into a location . . . . .	116
Using “nach” to get to a city or country . . . . .	117
Using “zu” to get to institutions . . . . .	117
Describing a Position or Location in Relation to Some Other Place . . . . .	118
Getting Your Bearings Straight with Left, Right, North, and South . . . . .	120
Left, right, straight ahead . . . . .	121
The cardinal points . . . . .	122
Taking This or That Street . . . . .	122
Using Ordinal Numbers: First, Second, Third, and More . . . . .	123
Traveling by Car or Other Vehicle . . . . .	126
<b>CHAPTER 9: Guten Appetit! Dining Out and Going to the Market . . . . .</b>	<b>131</b>
Hast du Hunger? Hast du Durst? . . . . .	132
All about Meals . . . . .	133
Setting the Table for a Meal . . . . .	133
Dining Out: Visiting a Restaurant . . . . .	134
Deciding where to eat . . . . .	134
Making reservations . . . . .	136
Arriving and being seated . . . . .	139
Deciphering the menu . . . . .	140
Placing your order . . . . .	144
Applying the subjunctive to express your wishes . . . . .	144
Using modals to modify what you say . . . . .	146
Ordering something special . . . . .	147

Replying to “How did you like the food?” .....	148
Asking for the check .....	149
Shopping for Food. ....	150
Knowing where to shop .....	151
Finding what you need .....	151
<b>CHAPTER 10: Shopping Made Easy .....</b>	<b>155</b>
Places to Shop around Town .....	156
Finding Out about Opening Hours .....	156
Navigating Your Way around a Store .....	157
Just Browsing: Taking a Look at Merchandise .....	158
Getting Assistance as You Shop .....	159
Shopping for Clothes .....	160
Familiarizing yourself with the colors available .....	162
Knowing your size .....	163
Trying on the items you find .....	164
Paying for Your Shopping Items .....	167
Comparatively Speaking: Making Comparisons among Items .....	168
<b>CHAPTER 11: Taking Care of Business and Telecommunications .....</b>	<b>171</b>
Phoning Made Simple .....	171
Asking for your party .....	172
Making the connection .....	173
Making Appointments .....	175
Sending Written Correspondence .....	177
Sending a letter or postcard .....	178
E-mailing .....	179
Sending a fax .....	180
Getting to Know the Office .....	181
Mastering your desk and supplies .....	182
Grasping Anglicisms .....	183
Doing business in German .....	184
<b>CHAPTER 12: Recreation and the Great Outdoors .....</b>	<b>189</b>
Playing Sports .....	189
Playing around with the verb “spielen” .....	190
Verbalizing sports you enjoy .....	190
Inviting someone to play .....	191
Using Reflexive Verbs to Talk about Plans .....	193
Getting reflexive. ....	193
Accusing and dating your pronouns .....	193
Some common reflexive verbs .....	194
Reflexive verbs that are flexible .....	197

Exploring the Outdoors . . . . .	198
Getting out and going . . . . .	198
Things to see along the way . . . . .	198
Going to the mountains . . . . .	201
Going to the country . . . . .	203
Going to the sea . . . . .	204
<b>PART 3: GERMAN ON THE GO . . . . .</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>CHAPTER 13: Going Out on the Town . . . . .</b>	<b>211</b>
What Would You Like to Do? . . . . .	212
Going to the Movies . . . . .	212
Getting to the show . . . . .	213
Buying tickets . . . . .	214
What Was That? The Simple Past Tense of “Sein” . . . . .	216
Going to the Museum . . . . .	217
Talking About Action in the Past . . . . .	219
Forming the past participle . . . . .	219
Using “haben” in the perfect tense . . . . .	221
Using “sein” in the perfect tense . . . . .	222
Going Out for Entertainment . . . . .	223
How Was It? Talking About Entertainment . . . . .	225
Asking for an opinion . . . . .	225
Telling people what you think . . . . .	225
Going to a Party . . . . .	227
Getting an invitation . . . . .	228
Talking about a party . . . . .	228
<b>CHAPTER 14: Planning a Trip . . . . .</b>	<b>231</b>
Getting Help from a Travel Agent . . . . .	231
Planning Ahead: Using the Future Tense . . . . .	234
Describing events in specific months . . . . .	235
Naming specific times in the months . . . . .	235
Rethinking dates . . . . .	236
Dealing with Passports and Visas . . . . .	237
The all-important passport . . . . .	237
Managing visas . . . . .	238
<b>CHAPTER 15: Making Sense of Euros and Cents . . . . .</b>	<b>241</b>
Heading to the ATM . . . . .	241
Getting Imperative . . . . .	243
Changing Currency . . . . .	244
Understanding the Euro and Other Currencies . . . . .	248

<b>CHAPTER 16: Getting Around: Planes, Trains, Taxis, and Buses</b>	<b>251</b>
Using German at the Airport	251
Getting your ticket and boarding pass	252
Checking in	252
Going through immigration	255
Going through customs	256
Traveling by Car	257
Renting a car	257
Making sense of maps	259
Wrapping your brain around road signs	260
Taking a Train	261
Interpreting train schedules	261
Getting information	261
Buying tickets	262
Knowing When to Separate Your Verbs	263
Navigating Buses, Subways, and Taxis	265
Catching the bus	265
Taking a taxi	268
<b>CHAPTER 17: Finding a Place to Stay</b>	<b>271</b>
Finding a Hotel	271
Reserving Rooms	272
Saying when and how long you want to stay	273
Specifying the kind of room you want	273
Asking about the price	274
Finalizing the reservation	275
Checking In	276
Stating how long you're staying	277
Filling out the registration form	277
Getting keyed in	278
Asking about amenities and facilities	278
Checking Out and Paying the Bill	282
Asking for your bill	282
Asking small favors	282
<b>CHAPTER 18: Handling Emergencies</b>	<b>287</b>
Requesting Help	287
Shouting for help	287
Reporting a problem	288
Asking for English-speaking help	288
Getting Medical Attention	289
Describing what ails you	289
Telling about any special conditions	290
Getting an examination	291

Specifying parts of the body . . . . .	292
Getting the diagnosis . . . . .	293
Getting treatment . . . . .	295
Talking to the Police . . . . .	297
Describing what was stolen . . . . .	298
Answering questions from the police. . . . .	299
Getting legal help. . . . .	300
<b>PART 4: THE PART OF TENS</b> . . . . .	305
<b>CHAPTER 19: Ten Ways to Pick Up German Quickly</b> . . . . .	307
Labeling the World Around You . . . . .	307
Organizing Useful Expressions . . . . .	308
Writing Shopping Lists . . . . .	308
Using What You Know. . . . .	309
Thinking in German. . . . .	309
Language Learning Online. . . . .	310
Watching German TV Online . . . . .	310
Experimenting with What Works Best . . . . .	311
Eating German Cuisine . . . . .	312
Setting Goals and Rewarding Yourself. . . . .	312
<b>CHAPTER 20: Ten Things Never to Say in German</b> . . . . .	313
Using the Right Form of Address . . . . .	313
Addressing Service People Correctly . . . . .	314
Hot or Cold? . . . . .	314
I'm Not Loaded. . . . .	315
Speaking of the Law with Respect. . . . .	315
Using "Gymnasium" Correctly . . . . .	315
Knowing the Appropriate Form of "Know". . . . .	315
Going to the Right Closet . . . . .	316
Using Bekommen Properly . . . . .	316
Using the Right Eating Verb . . . . .	317
<b>CHAPTER 21: Ten Favorite German Expressions</b> . . . . .	319
Alles klar!. . . . .	319
Wirklich . . . . .	320
Kein Problem . . . . .	320
Vielleicht . . . . .	320
Doch . . . . .	320
Unglaublich! . . . . .	320
Hoffentlich . . . . .	321
Wie schön! . . . . .	321
Genau!. . . . .	321
Stimmt's?. . . . .	321

<b>CHAPTER 22: Ten Phrases That Make You Sound German</b>	323
Schönes Wochenende!	323
Gehen wir!	323
Was ist los?	324
Das klingt gut!	324
Keine Ahnung.	324
Es zieht!	324
Nicht zu fassen!	324
Du hast Recht!/Sie haben Recht!	325
Lass es!	325
Nicht schlecht!	325
<b>PART 5: APPENDICES</b>	327
<b>APPENDIX A: German-English Mini-Dictionary</b>	329
<b>APPENDIX B: Verb Tables</b>	347
<b>APPENDIX C: Answer Key</b>	359
<b>INDEX</b>	363



# Introduction

---

**W**e are the players in a fascinating era, one that interconnects us with others all around the world. With globalization and technology as the driving forces, we find ourselves getting in closer and closer contact with more and more people. As a result, knowing how to say at least a few words in a language such as German is becoming an ever-more-vital tool.

Our natural curiosity to find out about other cultures motivates us to hop on a plane and find out firsthand what everyday life is like in the German-speaking regions: Germany, Austria, Switzerland, South Tyrol in northern Italy, Luxembourg, and Liechtenstein. Conducting international business in an increasingly globalized market necessitates personal contact; hence, more businesspeople find the need to establish connections with partners in countries like Germany, which has the largest economy in the European Union. On a more personal level, you may have friends, relatives, and neighbors who speak German, or you may want to get in touch with your heritage by learning a little bit of the language that your ancestors spoke.

Whatever your reasons for wanting to learn some German, *German For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, is a terrific choice because it gives you the skills you need for basic communication in German. I'm not promising super fluency here, but if you want to know how to greet someone, purchase a train ticket, or order food from a menu in German, you need look no further than this book.

## About This Book

---

*German For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, is set up so that you can use it any way you want to — as a reference to dip into for specific questions you have about German, as a means of gaining knowledge of German in a systematic way, or just for the fun of getting the feel for another language. Perhaps your goal is to learn some words and phrases to help you get around when you travel to a German-speaking country. Maybe you simply want to be able to say “Hello, how are you?” to your German-speaking neighbor. At any rate, you can go through this book at your own pace, reading as much or as little at a time as you like. You don't need to plod through the chapters in order, either; you're welcome to read the sections that interest you most.

# Conventions Used in This Book

To make this book easy for you to navigate, we've set up a few conventions:

- » German terms are set in **boldface** to make them stand out.
- » Pronunciation is set in parentheses following the German terms, and the stressed syllables are italicized.
- » English translations are italicized. You'll find them set in parentheses following the pronunciation of German terms or sentences.
- » In some cases, German speakers use the same pronunciation as English speakers for words, many of which are borrowed from English or other languages. When such words are pronounced the same way in German as in English, you'll see the English word in the pronunciation followed by the notation "as in English" rather than the usual phonetic pronunciation. Of course, if the pronunciation differs between the English and German, I include the German pronunciation as usual.
- » Verb conjugations (lists that show you the forms of a verb) are given in tables in the following order, starting with **ich**, which is the German equivalent of "I," followed by **du**, the German equivalent "you," and so on.
  - **ich** — This is the "I" form.
  - **du** — This is the "you" (singular, informal [or sing. inf.]) form.
  - **er/sie/es** — This is the "he, she, it" form.
  - **wir** — This is the "we" form.
  - **ihr** — This is the "you" (plural, informal [or pl. inf.]) form.
  - **sie/Sie** — This is the "they" form/the "you" (formal [or form.]) form.

The first column (see below) shows the German equivalent of "I am, you are," and so on. Pronunciations follow in the second column.

Conjugation	Pronunciation
<b>ich bin</b>	iH bin
<b>du bist</b>	dooh bist
<b>er, sie, es ist</b>	êr, zee, ês ist
<b>wir sind</b>	veer zint
<b>ihr seid</b>	eer zayt
<b>sie/Sie sind</b>	zee zint

To help you make fast progress in German, this book includes a few elements to help you along:

- » **Talkin' the Talk dialogues:** The best way to learn a language is to see and hear how it's used in conversation, so I include dialogues throughout the book. The dialogues come under the heading "Talkin' the Talk" and show you the German words, their pronunciations, and the English translations.
- » **Words to Know blackboards:** Acquiring key words and phrases is also important in language learning, so I collect these important words in sections that resemble chalkboards, with the heading "Words to Know." **Note:** In the pronunciations given in these sections, the stressed syllables are italicized.
- » **Fun & Games activities:** If you want to flex your new language muscles, you can use the Fun & Games activities to reinforce what you learn. These activities are fun ways to check your progress.

Also note that, because each language has its own ways of expressing ideas, the English translations that I provide for the German terms may not be exactly literal. I want you to know the essence of what's being said, not just the meanings of single words. For example, the phrase **Es geht** (êś geyt) can be translated literally as It goes, but the phrase is actually the equivalent of so-so or Okay, which is what you see as the translation.

## Foolish Assumptions

To write this book, I made some assumptions about who you are and what you hope to gain from this book:

- » You know no German — or if you took German somewhere in your deep, dark past, you don't remember much more than **Ja, nein, Kindergarten, Guten Tag,** and **auf Wiedersehen.**
- » You're primarily interested in communicating verbally in German, not in reading or writing German.
- » You're definitely not looking for a ho-hum textbook that puts you to sleep, nor do you want to plod through monotonous language exercises that drill German into your brain. You just want to know some practical words, phrases, and sentence constructions so that you can communicate basic information in German — with confidence.

- » You have no interest in memorizing long lists of bookish-sounding vocabulary words or a bunch of boring grammar rules.
- » You're excited about German and are looking forward to having some fun as you pick up a bit of the language.

If any or all of these statements apply to you, you've found the right book!

## Icons Used in This Book

You may be looking for particular information while reading this book. To make certain types of information easier for you to find, the following icons have been placed in the left-hand margins throughout the book:



TIP

This icon highlights tips that can make learning German easier.



REMEMBER

This icon points out interesting information that you won't want to forget.



GRAMMATICALLY  
SPEAKING

Languages are full of quirks that may trip you up if you're not prepared for them. This icon points to discussions of important grammar points.



CULTURAL  
WISDOM

If you're looking for information and advice about culture and travel, look for these icons. They draw your attention to interesting tidbits about the countries in which German is spoken.



AUDIO  
ONLINE

The online audio tracks that accompany this book give you the opportunity to listen to real German speakers so that you can get a better understanding of what German sounds like. This icon marks the Talkin' the Talk dialogues that you can listen to online. To listen to the online audio tracks, go to [www.dummies.com/go/germanfd3e](http://www.dummies.com/go/germanfd3e).

# Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this book comes with a free, access-anywhere Cheat Sheet containing tips and techniques for learning German faster. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and type **German For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the search box.

## Where to Go from Here

Learning a language is all about jumping in and giving it a try (no matter how bad your pronunciation is at first). So, take the plunge! Start at the beginning, pick a chapter that interests you, or listen to a few dialogues online. Before long, you'll be able to respond, "**Ja!**" (yah) (yes) when someone asks you **Sprechen Sie Deutsch?** (*shprêH-en zee doych?*) (*Do you speak German?*)

**Note:** If you've never been exposed to German before, you may want to read the chapters in Part I before you tackle the later chapters. Part I gives you some of the basics that you need to know about the language, such as how to pronounce the various sounds, some basic expressions and words, and the fundamentals of German sentence structure.



# 1

## **Getting Started with German**

**IN THIS PART . . .**

Identify what you already know.

Use basic expressions.

Understand German pronunciation.

Meet and greet people.

Deal with numbers.

Get introduced to basic grammar.

Talk about home and family.



#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Recognizing the German you already know
- » Spotting words that aren't what they seem
- » Using basic German expressions

## Chapter 1

# You Already Know a Little German

**T**he best way to learn a new language is to jump right in — no pussyfooting around. In this chapter, you get a head start in German by seeing some of the language you're already familiar with. You also find out some popular German expressions, and you get the hang of why you need to be careful with what are called “false friends” — words that seem to be the same in both languages but actually have different meanings.

## The German You Know

Because both German and English belong to the group of Germanic languages, quite a few words are either identical or similar in both languages. Words that share a common source are called *cognates*. Another group of words common to German and English stem from Latin-based words with which English speakers are familiar. Many of these have direct equivalents in German, for example, nouns that end in “-tion.”

## Friendly allies (perfect cognates)

The following words are spelled the same way and have the same meaning in German and in English. The only differences are the pronunciation, as shown in parentheses, as well as the fact that in German, nouns are always capitalized. In addition, German nouns have one of three genders, as seen on this list by the words **der** (masculine), **die** (feminine), and **das** (neuter) in front of each noun. See Chapter 5 for details on what gender is all about and go to Chapter 2 for information on the pronunciation key for each word presented in this book. In a few instances, the German and English pronunciation for the word is the same, so you'll see the English word in the pronunciation (followed by the notation "as in English").

- » **der Arm** (dêr ârm)
- » **der Bandit** (dêr bân-*deet*)
- » **die Bank** (dee bânk)
- » **die Basis** (dee *bah*-zis)
- » **bitter** (*bit*-er)
- » **blind** (blint)
- » **die Butter** (dee *boot*-er)
- » **digital** (di-gi-*tâl*)
- » **elegant** (êl-ê-*gânt*)
- » **die Emotion** (dee ê-moh-tsee-*ohn*)
- » **emotional** (ê-moh-tsee-oh-*nahl*)
- » **fair** (fair [as in English])
- » **der Finger** (dêr *fin*-er)
- » **die Hand** (dee hânt)
- » **das Hotel** (dâs hotel [as in English])
- » **die Information** (dee in-for-mâ-tsee-*ohn*)
- » **die Inspiration** (dee in-spi-râ-tsee-*ohn*)
- » **die Integration** (dee in-tê-grâ-tsee-*ohn*)
- » **international** (in-ter-nâ-tsee-oh-*nahl*)
- » **irrational** (ir-râ-tsee-oh-*nahl*)
- » **legal** (ley-*gahl*)

- » **liberal** (lee-bêr-ahl)
- » **der Mast** (dêr mast)
- » **die Mine** (dee meen-e)
- » **modern** (moh-dêrn)
- » **der Moment** (dêr moh-mênt)
- » **die Motivation** (dee moh-ti-vâ-tsee-ohn)
- » **das Museum** (dâs mooh-zey-oohm)
- » **der Name** (dêr nah-me)
- » **die Nation** (dee nâ-tsee-ohn)
- » **normal** (nor-mahl)
- » **die Olive** (dee oh-lee-ve)
- » **parallel** (pâr-â-leyl)
- » **das Problem** (dâs proh-bleym)
- » **der Professor** (dêr professor [as in English])
- » **das Radio** (dâs rah-dee-oh)
- » **die Religion** (dee rey-li-gee-ohn)
- » **das Restaurant** (dâs rês-tuh-ron)
- » **die Rose** (dee roh-ze)
- » **der Service** (dêr ser-vis)
- » **das Signal** (dâs zig-nahl)
- » **der Sport** (dêr shport)
- » **die Statue** (dee shtah-tooh-e)
- » **der Stress** (dêr shtrêš)
- » **das System** (dâs zers-teym)
- » **das Taxi** (dâs tâx-ee)
- » **der Tiger** (dêr tee-ger)
- » **tolerant** (to-lêr-ânt)
- » **total** (toh-tahl)
- » **die Tradition** (dee trâ-di-tsee-ohn)
- » **der Tunnel** (dêr toohn-el)

- » **warm** (vahrm)
- » **wild** (vilt)
- » **der Wind** (dêr vint)

## Kissing cousins (near cognates)

Many words, like the ones shown in Table 1-1, are spelled almost the same in German as in English and have the same meaning. Table 1-1 also shows you something about German spelling conventions, which include the following:

- » The English *c* is a **k** in most German words.
- » The *ou* in English words like *house* or *mouse* is often equivalent to **au** in German words.
- » Many English adjectives ending in *-ic* or *-ical* have an **-isch** ending in German.
- » Some English adjectives ending in **-y** are spelled with **-ig** in German.
- » Some English nouns ending in **-y** have an **-ie** ending in German.

TABLE 1-1

### Words Similar in Meaning, Slightly Different in Spelling

German	English
<b>die Adresse</b> (dee ah-drê-s-e)	<i>address</i>
<b>der Aspekt</b> (dêr âs-pêkt)	<i>aspect</i>
<b>der Bär</b> (dêr bear [as in English])	<i>bear</i>
<b>blond</b> (blont)	<i>blond(e)</i>
<b>die Bluse</b> (dee blooh-ze)	<i>blouse</i>
<b>braun</b> (brown [as in English])	<i>brown</i>
<b>die Demokratie</b> (dee dê-moh-krâ-tee)	<i>democracy</i>
<b>direkt</b> (di-rêkt)	<i>direct</i>
<b>der Doktor</b> (dêr dok-tohr)	<i>doctor</i>
<b>exzellent</b> (êx-tsel-ênt)	<i>excellent</i>
<b>fantastisch</b> (fân-tâs-tish)	<i>fantastic</i>
<b>das Glas</b> (dâs glahs)	<i>glass</i>

German	English
<b>das Haus</b> (dâs hous)	<i>house</i>
<b>hungrig</b> ( <i>hoong-riH</i> )	<i>hungry</i>
<b>die Industrie</b> (dee in-dooH-stree)	<i>industry</i>
<b>der Kaffee</b> (dêr kâf-ey)	<i>coffee</i>
<b>die Komödie</b> (dee koh-mer-dee-e)	<i>comedy</i>
<b>die Kondition</b> (dee kon-di-tsee-ohn)	<i>condition</i>
<b>das Konzert</b> (dâs kon-tsêrt)	<i>concert</i>
<b>die Kultur</b> (dee kool-tooHr)	<i>culture</i>
<b>logisch</b> ( <i>loh-gish</i> )	<i>logical</i>
<b>das Mandat</b> (dâs mân-daht)	<i>mandate</i>
<b>der Mann</b> (dêr mân)	<i>man</i>
<b>die Maschine</b> (dee mâ-sheen-e)	<i>machine</i>
<b>die Maus</b> (dee mouse [as in English])	<i>mouse</i>
<b>die Methode</b> (dee mê-toH-de)	<i>method</i>
<b>die Mobilität</b> (dee moh-bi-li-tait)	<i>mobility</i>
<b>die Musik</b> (dee mooh-zeek)	<i>music</i>
<b>die Nationalität</b> (dee nât-see-oh-nahl-i-tait)	<i>nationality</i>
<b>die Natur</b> (dee nâ-tooHr)	<i>nature</i>
<b>offiziell</b> (oh-fits-ee-êl)	<i>official</i> (adjective)
<b>der Ozean</b> (dêr oh-tsê-ân)	<i>ocean</i>
<b>das Papier</b> (dâs pâ-peer)	<i>paper</i>
<b>das Parlament</b> (dâs pâ-r-lâ-mênt)	<i>parliament</i>
<b>perfekt</b> (pêr-fêkt)	<i>perfect</i>
<b>politisch</b> (poh-li-tish)	<i>political</i>
<b>potenziell</b> (po-tên-tsee-êl)	<i>potential</i> (adjective)
<b>praktisch</b> (prâk-tish)	<i>practical</i>
<b>das Programm</b> (dâs proh-grâm)	<i>program</i>
<b>das Salz</b> (dâs zâlts)	<i>salt</i>

(continued)

**TABLE 1-1** (continued)

German	English
<b>der Scheck</b> (dêr shêk)	<i>check</i>
<b>sonnig</b> (zon-iH)	<i>sunny</i>
<b>der Supermarkt</b> (dêr zooh-pêr-mârkt)	<i>supermarket</i>
<b>das Telefon</b> (dâs tê-le-fohn)	<i>telephone</i>
<b>die Theorie</b> (dee tey-ohr-ee)	<i>theory</i>
<b>die Tragödie</b> (dee trâ-ger-dee-e)	<i>tragedy</i>
<b>die Walnuss</b> (dee vahl-noohs)	<i>walnut</i>

## False friends

As does every language, German contains some false friends — those words that look very similar to English but have a completely different meaning. As you read the following list, you can see why you should treat any new German word with kid gloves, especially if it looks like an English word, until, that is, you find out for sure what it means in English.

- » **After** (ahf-ter): If you want to avoid embarrassment, remember the meaning of this word. Its German meaning is *anus* and not *after*. The German word for *after* is **nach** (nahH) or **nachdem** (nahH-deym).
- » **aktuell** (âk-tooh-êl): This word means *up-to-date* and *current*, not *actual*. The German translation for *actual* is **tatsächlich** (tât-sêH-liH).
- » **also** (âl-zoh): This one means *so*, *therefore*, or *thus*; not *also*. The German word for *also* is **auch** (ouH).
- » **bald** (bâlt): This word means *soon* and is not a description for someone with little or no hair. The German word for *bald* is **kahl** (kahl) or **glatzköpfig** (glâts-kerpf-iH).
- » **bekommen** (be-kom-en): This verb is an important one to remember. It means *to get* and not *to become*. The German word for *to become* is **werden** (vêr-den).
- » **Boot** (boht): This is a *boat* and not a *boot*, which is **Stiefel** (shteef-el) in German. A *sailboat* is called a **Segelboot** (zey-gêl-boht).
- » **brav** (brahf): This word means *well-behaved* and not *brave*. The German word for *brave* is **tapfer** (tâp-fer).