

The
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Essential
German
Book

All you need to learn German in no time



EDWARD SWICK, MA

THE

EVERYTHING
ESSENTIAL
GERMAN
BOOK

All you need to learn German in no time

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Avon, Massachusetts

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Introduction

It's always a good time to learn a new language! Perhaps you want to know German for business purposes, or you want to travel in the German-speaking countries. Maybe you have a keen interest in German literature and no longer want to read translations. Or maybe you're interested in Germany itself because Grandpa Schmidt came from Bavaria eighty years ago and you just have to know more about his hometown and your family history.

No matter what your goal is in learning German, right now is the perfect time to start, and *The Everything® Essential German Book* gives you all the basics you need to know. With a lot of enthusiasm and a little self-discipline, you can soon be on your way to acquiring the skills you need to speak and understand German.

German and English are brother and sister languages. At an early age they became separated and were brought up in different locations: the brother on the continent, the sister in England. This relationship makes learning German a relatively comfortable experience for English speakers, because there are many words and elements in both languages that are still quite similar.

The word *language* comes from the Latin *lingua*, which means “tongue.” That's an important fact. Articulating utterances by moving the tongue inside the mouth creates the sounds that we call language. Language is, therefore, fundamentally a spoken form. And when you use this book, you should discipline yourself to practice everything you learn out loud. Just “thinking” a new phrase or writing it down isn't enough. You have to practice speaking German to learn German well.

The contents of each chapter will guide you smoothly to understanding new structures and words. They are designed like building blocks. Understanding Concept A will help you learn Concept B. Understanding Concept B will help you learn Concept C, and so on. And you can move from idea to idea as slowly or as rapidly as is comfortable for you. The choice of a timetable for acquiring your German skills is yours.

If this is your first attempt at learning a foreign language, you will probably be surprised at just how simple the process is. If you know other foreign languages, you will discover that *The Everything® Essential German Book* is an efficient vehicle for developing your next language—German.

With new language skills, you open up many new avenues for yourself. The number of books available to you will be vastly increased. You'll have access to a wider range of magazines and newspapers and, thereby, to new points of view. There will be more movies and theater productions to enjoy. And you will no longer be limited to meeting and getting to know only people who speak English. It will truly help to make you what the Germans call *ein Weltbürger*—a citizen of the world.

However you approach this learning experience, enjoy yourself. Experiment with words. Be creative with what you know. As long as you are consistent and enthusiastic, you will succeed. Have fun! *Viel Spaß!*

German Pronunciation

Pronouncing German words is fairly straightforward, and most English speakers find that they have little difficulty learning German pronunciation. The following sections will guide you through what you need to know to start pronouncing German like a native.

Cognates in Context

There are so many shortcuts to learning new German words. The following few sentences use some words that will probably look familiar to you. Don't worry about understanding the sentence structure yet. Just use these sentences to get used to looking at written German. Can you pick out the meanings of any of the words?

<i>Andreas gewinnt einen Preis.</i>	Andreas wins a prize.
<i>Meine Familie ist sehr klein.</i>	My family is very small.
<i>Wir lieben die Natur.</i>	We love nature.
<i>Das ist perfekt!</i>	That's perfect!
<i>Er braucht Salz und Pfeffer.</i>	He needs salt and pepper.
<i>Deine Schwester ist sehr attraktiv.</i>	Your sister is very attractive.
<i>Warum bist du so nervös?</i>	Why are you so nervous?
<i>Ich trinke keinen Kaffee.</i>	I don't drink coffee.
<i>Jazz ist sehr populär.</i>	Jazz is very popular.



ESSENTIAL

If you treat every German word you find here as a spoken form, you will learn how to read and speak the language more easily. Say every word and every phrase you encounter out loud. If you're not saying them accurately or smoothly, practice them out loud until you can.

The Alphabet

The German alphabet (*das Alphabet*) consists of the same letters that make up our English alphabet, with one exception. German has one letter that we do not have in English. It is called an “ess-tset” and is often mistaken for a capital *B*. It looks like this (*ß*) and is pronounced like a double *s* (ESS). It takes the place of *ss* after long vowels and diphthongs. Note these examples: *heißen*, *süß*, *weiß*.

▼DAS ALPHABET

Letter	Pronunciation	Letter	Pronunciation
A a	<i>ah</i>	O o	<i>oh</i>
Ä ä	<i>ah umlaut</i>	Ö ö	<i>oh umlaut</i>
B b	<i>bay</i>	P p	<i>pay</i>
C c	<i>tsay</i>	Q q	<i>koo</i>
D d	<i>day</i>	R r	<i>air</i>
E e	<i>ay</i>	S s	<i>ess</i>
F f	<i>eff</i>	T t	<i>tay</i>
G g	<i>gay</i>	U u	<i>oo</i>
H h	<i>ha</i>	Ü ü	<i>oo umlaut</i>
I i	<i>ee</i>	V v	<i>fow</i>
J j	<i>yawt</i>	W w	<i>vay</i>
K k	<i>kah</i>	X x	<i>ix</i>
L l	<i>ell</i>	Y y	<i>uepsilon</i>
M m	<i>em</i>	Z z	<i>tset</i>
N n	<i>en</i>		

Pronouncing the Vowels

The following descriptions can serve as your guide as you practice forming German sounds. The English phonetics are enclosed in parentheses with the stressed syllable in capital letters—for example, *Vater* (FAH-tuh).



Be aware that the English pronunciation is an approximation of the German sound and not always a perfect replica of it. Listening to German radio, television, and films will give you a better sense of the sounds as pronounced by native Germans.

When English phonetics are provided, there is no precise way to indicate the pronunciation of Ö ö and Ü ü. The phonetics will show their sounds as *er* (in bold letters) and *ue* (in bold letters) respectively.

An umlaut is the two dots that sometimes appear over the letters *a*, *o*, and *u*. They occur with no other letters. As you'll see in the following table, the umlaut changes the pronunciation of the vowel sound slightly.

▼ PRONOUNCING THE VOWEL SOUNDS

Letter	Sound	Example	Pronunciation	Translation
A a	ah as in "father"	<i>Vater</i>	(FAH-tuh)	father
Ä ä	ay as in "say"	<i>spät</i>	(SHPATE)	late
E e	ay as in "say"	<i>Weg</i>	(VAYK)	path
I i	ee as in "tree"	<i>ich</i>	(EECH)	I
O o	o as in "go"	<i>Foto</i>	(FOE-toe)	photo
Ö ö	e as in "her"	<i>schön</i>	(SHERN)	beautiful
U u	oo as in "moon"	<i>tut</i>	(TOOT)	does
Ü ü	pucker lips to say oo but say ee	<i>Tür</i>	(TBR)	door
Y y	pucker lips to say oo but say ee	<i>Gymnasium</i>	(GUEM-nah-zee-oom)	high school

Long and Short Vowels

Just as in English, there is a slight difference between long and short vowels in German. The words "long" and "short" are an accurate description of the difference between the sounds in German. Long vowels are drawn out more when pronounced. They tend to precede a single consonant. Short vowels usually precede a double consonant and are pronounced more quickly. For example, the long German *a* is pronounced *ah*; the short German *a* is pronounced *uh*. A rare exception to this rule is the article *das* (DUSS).

▼ LONG VOWEL SOUNDS BEFORE A SINGLE CONSONANT

German Word	Pronunciation of Vowel	Pronunciation of Word	Translation
<i>Vater</i>	long <i>ah</i>	(FAH-tuh)	father
<i>Käse</i>	long <i>ay</i>	(KAY-zeh)	cheese
<i>Keks</i>	long <i>ay</i>	(KAYKS)	cookie
<i>grob</i>	long <i>oh</i>	(GROP)	rude, rough
<i>schön</i>	long <i>er</i>	(SHERN)	beautiful
<i>gut</i>	long <i>oo</i>	(GOOT)	good
<i>spülen</i>	long <i>oo</i> umlaut	(SHPUE-len)	to flush

▼ SHORT VOWEL SOUNDS BEFORE A DOUBLE CONSONANT

German Word	Pronunciation of Vowel	Pronunciation of Word	Translation
<i>Halle</i>	short <i>uh</i>	(HUH-leh)	hall
<i>fällen</i>	short <i>eh</i>	(FELL-en)	to chop down
<i>Keller</i>	short <i>eh</i>	(KELL-uh)	basement
<i>Zoll</i>	short <i>aw</i>	(TSAWL)	customs
<i>können</i>	short <i>er</i>	(KER-nen)	to be able to
<i>Mummel</i>	short <i>oo</i>	(MOOM-ell)	water lily
<i>müssen</i>	short <i>oo</i> umlaut	(MUESS-en)	to have to

Look at the form of a word to determine whether the phonetic spelling *oo* is long or short: *Mutter* (MOO-tuh) (short *oo* because it precedes a double consonant) or *tun* (TOON) (long *oo* because it precedes a single consonant).

Pronouncing the Consonants

German consonants are pronounced fairly close to how they are pronounced in English. The following table shows you how to pronounce the consonants in German words.

▼ PRONOUNCING THE CONSONANTS

Letter	Pronunciation	Example	Pronunciation	Translation
B b	<i>b</i> as in “baby”	<i>Buch</i>	(BOOCH)	book
C c	<i>ts</i> as in “bits”	<i>CD</i>	(tsay DAY)	CD (occurs primarily in foreign words)
D d	<i>d</i> as in “did”	<i>Doktor</i>	(DAWK-tuh)	doctor
F f	<i>f</i> as in “fit”	<i>fein</i>	(FINE)	fine
G g	<i>g</i> as in “goggles”	<i>gut</i>	(GOOT)	good
H h	<i>h</i> as in “hat”	<i>Haus</i>	(HOUSE)	house
J j	<i>y</i> as in “yard”	<i>ja</i>	(YAH)	yes
K k	<i>k</i> as in “kick”	<i>Kind</i>	(KINT)	child
L l	<i>l</i> as in “little”	<i>bellen</i>	(BELL-en)	to bark
M m	<i>m</i> as in “mama”	<i>Mutter</i>	(MOO-tuh)	mother
N n	<i>n</i> as in “noon”	<i>nicht</i>	(NIHCHT)	not
P p	<i>p</i> as in “papa”	<i>Preis</i>	(PRICE)	prize
Q q	<i>kv</i> as in “back vent”	<i>Quelle</i>	(KVELL-eh)	source
R r	guttural similar to French <i>r</i> or rolled similar to Italian <i>r</i>	<i>rot</i>	(ROT)	red
S s	<i>s</i> as in “sis” (middle of a word)	<i>Meister</i>	(MYE-stuh)	master
S s	<i>z</i> as in “zap” (start of a word)	<i>soll</i>	(ZAWL)	ought to
T t	<i>t</i> as in “toot”	<i>tun</i>	(TOON)	to do
V v	<i>eff</i> as in “fit”	<i>vier</i>	(FEER)	four
V v	<i>v</i> as in “very” (usually foreign words)	<i>Vase</i>	(VAH-zeh)	vase
W w	<i>v</i> as in “Vivian”	<i>Walter</i>	(VAHL-tuh)	the name Walter
X x	<i>x</i> as in “wax”	<i>verflixt</i>	(fare-FLIKST)	tricky
Z z	<i>ts</i> as in “bits”	<i>Zoll</i>	(TSAWL)	customs

There are a few things you have to look out for with certain consonants, besides what’s given in the previous table. Sometimes the consonants change sound depending on their placement in a word, as you can already see from the pronunciation for the letter *s*. When the letter *b* appears at the end of a word or prefix, it is pronounced like a *p*. When the letter *d* appears at the end of a word or prefix, it is pronounced like a *t*.

▼ SOUNDING THE LETTER *B* AT THE END OF A WORD OR PREFIX

German	Pronunciation	English
<i>grob</i>	(GROP)	rude, rough
<i>starb</i>	(SHTAHRP)	died
<i>ablehnen</i>	(AHP-lay-nen)	to reject
<i>absagen</i>	(AHP-zah-gen)	to cancel

▼ SOUNDING THE LETTER D AT THE END OF A WORD OR PREFIX

German	Pronunciation	English
<i>Deutschland</i>	(DOITCH-lunt)	Germany
<i>Freund</i>	(FROINT)	friend
<i>Kind</i>	(KINT)	child
<i>Gold</i>	(GAWLT)	gold
<i>Geld</i>	(GELT)	money
<i>Bild</i>	(BILLT)	picture

When the letter *g* appears at the end of a word or prefix, it is pronounced like a *k*. However, when it follows the letter *n* it is pronounced like the English *ng*: *jung* (YOONG) young.

▼ SOUNDING THE LETTER G AT THE END OF A WORD OR PREFIX

German	Pronunciation	English
<i>Weg</i>	(VAYK)	path
<i>lag</i>	(LAHK)	lay
<i>trug</i>	(TROOK)	wore
<i>weglaufen</i>	(VEHK-low-fen)	to run away

In 1998, Germany adopted new spelling rules to try to simplify the language as it is taught in schools. The most obvious change involves the use of the *ß* in words—*ß* is to be used only after long vowels and diphthongs, and *ss* is to be used following short vowel sounds. So *daß* becomes *dass* under the new rules. Until 2005 both spellings were accepted, but now the new spellings are the only officially acceptable ones.

Letter Combinations

German pronunciation is also affected by groups of letters. Certain combinations of letters have their own sounds that you must be aware of. When two vowels in the same syllable form one speech sound

it is called a diphthong.

▼ PRONOUNCING COMBINED LETTERS AND DIPHTHONGS

Letter Combination	Sound	Example	Pronunciation	English
AA	<i>ah</i> as in “father”	<i>Saal</i>	(Z AHL)	hall, saloon
AU	<i>ow</i> as in “cow”	<i>Frau</i>	(FROW)	woman
EU	<i>oi</i> as in “toil”	<i>Heu</i>	(HOI)	hay
ÄU	<i>oi</i> as in “toil”	<i>Fräulein</i>	(FROI-line)	young woman
EI	<i>i</i> as in “high”	<i>klein</i>	(KLINE)	small
IE	<i>ee</i> as in “feet”	<i>tief</i>	(TEEF)	deep
EE	<i>ay</i> as in “say”	<i>Tee</i>	(TAY)	tea
ER	<i>air</i> as in “stair”	<i>merken</i>	(MAIR-ken)	to notice
ER	<i>uh</i> as in British “father” (end of word only)	<i>Messer</i>	(MESS-uh)	knife
OO	<i>o</i> as in “home”	<i>Boot</i>	(BOTE)	boat
CH	soft <i>ch</i> similar to <i>h</i> in “human”	<i>ich</i>	(EECH)	I
CH	guttural <i>ch</i> as in Scottish “loch”	<i>Koch</i>	(KOCH)	cook
CHS	<i>x</i> as in “wax”	<i>sechs</i>	(ZEHKS)	six
SCH	<i>sh</i> as in “shush”	<i>Schuh</i>	(SHOO)	shoe
TSCH	<i>ch</i> as in “church”	<i>Deutschland</i>	(DOITCH-lunt)	Germany
SP	<i>shp</i> as in “cash payment”	<i>Sport</i>	(SHPORT)	sport
ST	<i>sht</i> as in “wash tub”	<i>stark</i>	(SHTAHRK)	strong
TH	<i>t</i> as in “Tom”	<i>Bibliothek</i>	(beeb-lee-oh-TAKE)	library
PF	<i>pf</i> as in “top fin”	<i>Pfennig</i>	(PFENN-ik)	penny
TZ	<i>ts</i> as in “its”	<i>Hitze</i>	(HITS-eh)	heat

Many words in German have an *h* directly following a vowel. That *h* is most often silent. For example, *gehen* (to go) is not (GAY-hen). It is pronounced (GAY-en).

Note also that the German soft *ch* is used commonly after the vowels *e*, *i*, *ei*, *ie*, *eu*, *äu*, and *ö*. The guttural *ch* is used generally after the vowels *a*, *ä*, *o*, *u*, *ü*, and *au*.

▼ PRONOUNCING WORDS WITH AN H FOLLOWING A VOWEL

German	Pronunciation	English
<i>fliehen</i>	(FLEE-en)	to flee
<i>glühen</i>	(GLUE-en)	to make red hot
<i>sehen</i>	(ZAY-en)	to see
<i>stehen</i>	(SHTAY-en)	to stand

There is no English equivalent for German *ch* (guttural like Scottish *ch* in “loch”). Both the soft and the guttural *ch* will be shown phonetically as **ch** (in bold letters) and should not be confused with the English version of that letter combination. An umlaut is the two dots placed over the letters *a*, *o*, and *u*. *Ä ä* is pronounced much like *ay*. But *Ö ö* and *Ü ü* have pronunciations that do not occur in English. *Ö ö* sounds much like *er* and *Ü ü* sounds like *ue* said with pursed lips. Both will appear in the phonetics in bold as **er** and **ue** respectively.

Practicing Your Pronunciation

Use the following list of words to practice your German pronunciation. Try to sound out the words without looking at the phonetic spelling at first, then check to see if you are right.

▼ VOCABULARY WORDS TO HELP YOU PRACTICE PRONOUNCING GERMAN

German	Pronunciation	English
<i>absagen</i>	(AHP-zah-gen)	to cancel
<i>Alpen</i>	(ULL-pen)	Alps
<i>alt</i>	(ULT)	old
<i>Amerika</i>	(uh-MAY-ree-kuh)	America
<i>bekam</i>	(bay-KAHM)	received
<i>Berlin</i>	(bare-LEEN)	Berlin
<i>Bild</i>	(BILLT)	picture
<i>Bilder</i>	(BILL-duh)	pictures
<i>brechen</i>	(BRECH-en)	to break
<i>Brüder</i>	(BRUE-duh)	brothers
<i>Buch</i>	(BOOCH)	book
<i>Bücher</i>	(BUECH-uh)	books
<i>Deutschland</i>	(DOITCH-lunt)	Germany
<i>Erhardt</i>	(AIR-hart)	the name Erhardt
<i>essen</i>	(ESS-en)	to eat

<i>Frankreich</i>	(FRAHNK-ryech)	France
<i>Fräulein</i>	(FROI-line)	young woman
<i>führen</i>	(FUE-ren)	to lead
<i>geht</i>	(GATE)	goes
<i>halten</i>	(HULL-ten)	to hold
<i>Hamburg</i>	(HAHM-boork)	Hamburg
<i>Händel</i>	(HENN-del)	Händel
<i>Insel</i>	(IN-zel)	island
<i>jung</i>	(YOONG)	young
<i>Junker</i>	(YOONK-uh)	titled landowner
<i>Kanada</i>	(KAHN-nah-dah)	Canada
<i>kaufen</i>	(KOW-fen)	to buy
<i>König</i>	(KER-nik)	king
<i>konnte</i>	(KAWN-teh)	could
<i>kurz</i>	(KOORTZ)	short
<i>lachen</i>	(LUH-chen)	to laugh
<i>lang</i>	(LUNG)	long
<i>langsam</i>	(LUNG-zum)	slow
<i>Leiter</i>	(LYE-tuh)	leader
<i>Löffel</i>	(LER-fel)	spoon
<i>Mann</i>	(MUNN)	man
<i>München</i>	(MUEN-chen)	Munich
<i>Mutter</i>	(MOO-tuh)	mother
<i>Nacht</i>	(NAHCHT)	night
<i>nicht</i>	(NIHCHT)	not
<i>Niedersachsen</i>	(NEE-duh-sux-en)	Lower Saxony
<i>oder</i>	(OH-duh)	or
<i>Panzer</i>	(PUNTS-uh)	tank
<i>Pfeffer</i>	(PFEFF-uh)	pepper
<i>Präsident</i>	(pray-zee-DENT)	president
<i>Pulver</i>	(POOL-fuh)	powder
<i>quälen</i>	(KVAY-len)	to torment
<i>Qualität</i>	(kvah-lee-TATE)	quality
<i>reich</i>	(RYECH)	rich
<i>Russland</i>	(ROOS-lunt)	Russia

<i>scheu</i>	(SHOY)	shy
<i>Schnee</i>	(SHNAY)	snow
<i>schnell</i>	(SHNELL)	fast
<i>schön</i>	(SHERN)	beautiful
<i>schwarz</i>	(SHVARTZ)	black
<i>Schwester</i>	(SHVESS-tuh)	sister
<i>Spitze</i>	(SHPITZ-eh)	point
<i>sterben</i>	(SHTAIR-ben)	to die
<i>süß</i>	(ZUESS)	sweet
<i>Türen</i>	(TUE-ren)	doors
<i>typisch</i>	(TUEP-ish)	typical
<i>über</i>	(UE-buh)	over
<i>unter</i>	(OON-tuh)	under
<i>vierzehn</i>	(FEAR-tsayn)	fourteen
<i>voll</i>	(FAWL)	full
<i>weiß</i>	(VICE)	white
<i>Welt</i>	(VELT)	world
<i>Wetter</i>	(VEH-tuh)	weather
<i>wichtig</i>	(VICH-tik)	important
<i>wissen</i>	(VISS-en)	to know
<i>wunderbar</i>	(VOON-duh-bah)	wonderful
<i>zu</i>	(TSOO)	to, too
<i>Zucker</i>	(TSOO-kuh)	sugar

Getting Started with the Basics

What do you need to know to start a conversation? This chapter covers the basics of how to greet someone, introduce yourself, ask someone's name, and ask how he or she is doing. You're on your way to having your first conversation in German!

Names and Titles

Just like English speakers, Germans address one another with first names on an informal basis and with a title and last name on a formal basis. German has shortened first names or nicknames just as English does. *Johann* is known to his friends as *Hans*. *Margarethe* is *Gretchen* or *Gretel*. *Eduard* becomes *Edu*. *Geli* comes from *Angelika*. And sometimes a double first name borrows a syllable from each name to form a nickname: *Lieselotte* becomes *Lilo*.



ESSENTIAL

German first names—just like English first names—come into fashion and in time fall out of fashion. A popular name with one generation is considered old-fashioned in another. The names you'll encounter in this book will run the gamut: Some will be contemporary and others will be traditional.

You should be aware of such shortened names or nicknames, but don't try using them until you have more experience with the language. Although the English name Richard is also the German name *Richard*, you cannot refer to *Richard* as *Dick*. The German word *dick* means "fat"!

When addressing someone by their last name, you should use the appropriate title of the person to whom you are speaking.

▼ TITLES IN GERMAN NAMES

German	Pronunciation	English Equivalent
<i>Herr</i>	(HAIR)	Mr.
<i>Frau</i>	(FROW)	Ms.
<i>Doktor</i>	(DAWK-tuh)	Doctor (academic)
<i>Professor</i>	(proh-FESS-uh)	Professor

Nowadays, you should address all women as *Frau*—married, single, young, and old. As a foreigner, you'll be forgiven if you forget and say *Fräulein*, but it's only polite to strive to use the correct form.

Hello!

To say “hello” to someone, you use the phrase *Guten Tag* (GOO-ten TAHCK). For example, when saying hello to Andreas, you would say, *Guten Tag, Andreas*. *Guten Tag* literally means “good day.” You have probably heard this common German greeting before. But it's typically used to greet someone only during the afternoon. At other times of the day you have to say something else.



Even when encountering a group of people, a German will shake the hand of every person in that group—usually even the children. He or she will say, *Guten Tag, Ilse*, and shake her hand. And so on with *Hans, Andreas, Maria, Professor Klein*, and little *Sabine*.

In the morning you should say *Guten Morgen* (MAWR-gen), which means “good morning.” In the afternoon you say *Guten Tag*. In the evening use *Guten Abend* (AH-bent), which means “good evening.” And late at night you say *Gute Nacht* (NAHCHT), or “good night,” which, just as in English, is a way of saying “good-bye” but also means “good night” when you are going to bed.

Good-bye!

Most English speakers already know that Germans say good-bye with the phrase *auf Wiedersehen* (OWF VEE-duh-zane). But it really doesn't mean “good-bye.” A closer translation is “till I see you again.”

There is another form of good-bye that is very commonly used, although mostly among good friends. It is very casual. It originated a long time ago when it was fashionable to use a French word

when bidding farewell to friends: *Adieu*. In the course of time, and with people from all over the German-speaking world pronouncing and mispronouncing the word, it somehow got an s attached to it. Then it lost its first syllable. In time it became simply *Tschüs* (CHUESS).

You can't go wrong by saying *auf Wiedersehen*, but it's fun using *Tschüs* when the occasion allows for it: in casual circumstances or when saying good-bye to friends.

When you say that someone is going home, use the following phrase:

Andreas geht jetzt nach Hause.

(ahn-DRAY-us GATE YETZT NAHCH HOW-zeh)

(Andreas is going home now.)

When someone is going home, it's an appropriate time to wish him or her *auf Wiedersehen* or *Tschüs*.

If you're speaking on the phone, you don't use *auf Wiedersehen* to say good-bye. That's only for when you see someone face-to-face. When saying good-bye on the phone, use *auf Wiederhören* (OW VEE-duh-her-ren). It means something like "till I hear your voice again."

How Are You?

When asking how someone is doing, you first have to decide whether you're on a casual or formal basis with the person. Usually, if you're using someone's first name, you have a casual or informal relationship. If you're using a title and last name, you have a formal relationship.

Casual: "How are you?" "*Wie geht's, Andreas?*" (VEE GATES)

Formal: "How are you?" "*Wie geht es Ihnen, Herr Braun?*" (VEE GATE ESS EE-nen)



The word *geht's* is actually a contraction of two words: *geht es*. *Geht es* can be used in place of the contraction. One response to this question is *Es geht mir gut* (ESS GATE MEER GOOT): "It's going well."

Exercise 2-1 (Answers in Appendix A)

Fill in the blank with the appropriate form of asking how someone is in the formal or casual form: *Wie geht es Ihnen?* or *Wie geht's?*

1. _____ , *Professor Braun?*

2. _____ , *Angelika?*
3. _____ , *Hans?*
4. _____ , *Frau Keller?*
5. _____ , *Herr Doktor?*

Some Important New Words

With a few new words, you will be able to form more intricate German sentences. These will help you in basic conversations and simple dialogues. Up until now you have encountered words that are very similar to English words. But as some of the following examples show, the meaning of many German words is not always obvious.

▼ IMPORTANT NEW WORDS

German	Pronunciation	English
<i>wie</i>	(VEE)	how
<i>es</i>	(ESS)	it
<i>wo</i>	(VOH)	where
<i>gut</i>	(GOOT)	good, well
<i>nicht so gut</i>	(NIHCHT ZOH GOOT)	not so well
<i>schlecht</i>	(SHLECHT)	bad
<i>hier</i>	(HEAR)	here
<i>da</i>	(DAH)	there
<i>in der Stadt</i>	(IN DAIR SHTUTT)	in the city
<i>nein</i>	(NINE)	no
<i>ja</i>	(YAH)	yes

What Is Your Name?

To ask someone's name, you need to use a special little phrase: *Wie heißen Sie?* (VEE HYE-sen ZEE). Actually, the word "name" isn't even in the phrase. The meaning of the phrase is closer to "What are you called?"

When you meet someone new and wish to learn his or her name, this is the phrase you should use. The response is quite simple: *Ich heiße...* (EECH HYE-seh), or "My name is..." You fill in the blank with the appropriate name. When responding with a last name, it's common to offer the first name,

too, just as we often do in English. Look at these examples.

Wie heißen Sie?	Ich heie Karl.
Wie heißen Sie?	Ich heie Maria.
Wie heißen Sie?	Ich heie Braun, Herbert Braun.
Wie heißen Sie?	Ich heie Schmidt, Peter Schmidt.

If you believe you already know someone's name but aren't sure, you can ask about his or her name by placing the verb (*heien*) in front of the subject (*Sie*): "Heien Sie Sabine?"

The response could be either positive (*ja*) or negative (*nein*). Look at the following possibilities.

Heien Sie Martin? Ja, ich heie Martin.

Is your name Martin? Yes, my name is Martin.

Heien Sie Schrder? Nein, ich heie Schfer, Angelika Schfer.

Is your name Schrder? No, my name is Schfer, Angelika Schfer.

Now you are ready to look around and ask the name of someone you see but do not know: "What is the man's name?" "What is the student's name?" In this question the word *heien* will end in a *t*: *heißt*. "Wie heit der Mann?" "Wie heit die Studentin?"

Exercise 2-2 (Answers in [Appendix A](#))

Ask what someone's name is using the first word in each pair. Respond with the name that is second in the pair. For example, if the first words in the pair are *der Mann*, ask yourself, *Wie heit der Mann*? (What's the man's name?) Then use the second name in the pair to respond: *Der Mann heit Andreas*. (The man's name is Andreas.)

1. *die Frau/Maria Schmidt*

2. *der Student (the male student)/Karl*

3. *die Studentin (the female student)/Anna*

4. *der Auslnder (foreigner)/Tom Smith*

First Things First

By now you may have noticed that nouns often have a *der*, *die*, or *das* before them. What does this mean? In the following sections you'll learn that all nouns have gender, and that all nouns are capitalized. You will also learn about definite and indefinite articles. These are the building blocks for your German vocabulary.

Understanding Gender

In the English language, “gender” refers to the sex of living things: Males are of the masculine gender and females are of the feminine gender. Inanimate objects are called neuter. German is a bit different.

In general, German looks at words that represent males as masculine and words that represent females as feminine. But gender is not entirely based on sex. It is related to custom or how a word is formed, rather than the sexual gender involved.

Der is used frequently with males: *der Vater*, *der Professor*, *der Student*. *Die* is used frequently with females: *die Mutter*, *die Frau*, *die Tante* (aunt). But that's where it ends, because the three genders, denoted by the articles *der*, *die*, and *das*, depend more on word formation than anything else to determine what is masculine, feminine, or neuter.

Masculine nouns, which use *der* as their definite article, do not necessarily refer to males. Likewise feminine nouns, which use *die* as their definite article, do not always refer to females. And neuter nouns, which use *das* as their definite article, do not refer exclusively to inanimate objects.

The Masculine Nouns

Although there will be exceptions, there are some broad rules for determining the gender of a noun. These rules are helpful guideposts for making intelligent choices when using *der*, *die*, or *das*.

Here are four basic categories of masculine nouns. (There are more than just four, but these are a good starting point.) Many—but not all!—words that end in *-er*, *-el*, or *-en* tend to be masculine. In addition, cognates that refer to men also tend to be masculine. Look at the examples in the following table.

▼ DETERMINING THE GENDER OF COGNATES THAT REFER TO MEN

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