

GERMAN **FOR** **ENGLISH** **SPEAKERS**

**GRAMMAR,
EXPLANATIONS,
AND EXERCISES**

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PROLOGUE

Welcome to the start of your (hopefully fun) journey through German grammar!

Have you been battling your way through German grammar with little to no success? It really doesn't have to be this way. My name is Reuben Boyd and I have been speaking German as a second language for almost all my adult life in addition to teaching German for years online and in-person. Now, I have decided to put my ideas and useful explanations of German grammar down in a book.

Some people may wonder if a non-native speaker should really be allowed to teach a language that is not his own but I say to you: There are numerous non-native speaking teachers of most (if not all) languages around the world.

The main benefit of learning from a non-native speaker is that they had to learn the language themselves. Native speakers grow up learning their language without taking heed to the grammar that comes along with it. This is not the case for non-native speakers.

I hope my explanations and examples using both German and English will help other native English speakers reach their German language goals painlessly.

Los geht's!

Here we go!

1.

THE ALPHABET

Abc... and so on! We start our journey looking at the German alphabet and some of the more complicated sounds in German. There are some German sounds that can be a little tricky for us native English speakers.

Let's take a look at the letters and how they are pronounced on their own (like when you spell something):

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
AH	BAY	TSAY	DAY	AY	EFF	GAY
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
HAH	EE	YOT	KAH	EL	EM	EN
O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
OH	PAY	KUH	AIR	ES	TAY	OO
V	W	X	Y		Z	
VOW	VEY	EEKS	OOPSILON		TSET	
Ä	Ö	Ü	ß			
AEH	OEH	OOO	ES-TSET			

Let's start with spelling your name. The questions below mean how do you write your name. The first sentence is in formal German and the second is in informal. Use the space below the questions to write out your full name. You may also like to include the pronunciations of the letters to make it easier for you to practice saying them.

Wie schreiben Sie Ihren Namen?

Wie schreibst du deinen Namen?

It is vital to learn how to pronounce the letters in German words and pronounce them well. Once you get all of the sounds down, you will be able to pronounce any German word easily. Even big scary Frankenwords like:

Donaudampfschiffahrtsgesellschaftskapitän

Danube steamship company captain

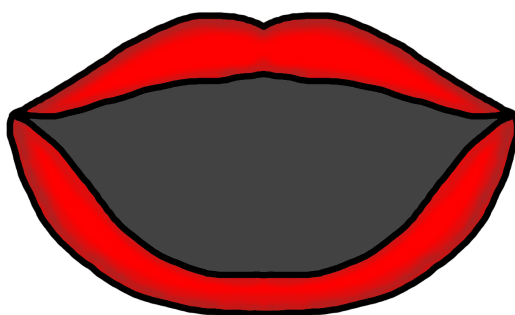
German is a wonderfully phonetic language. You pronounce every letter that's in a German word - even the letter 'E' when it's on the end of a word! New words can be pronounced with ease. Even if you hear a new word, you should be able to spell it and look it up without much trouble. Let's now take a look at some letters that have tricky pronunciations when used in words.

UMLAUTS

Ä - This letter sounds a bit like how we say the letter 'A' in English when spelling (ay). It is very close to how a regular German 'E' sounds. If you are stuck trying to make this sound, you can replace it in your mind with an 'E'.

die Äpfel
the apples

In your head you can try to see it spelt as 'epfel'. This can help a lot but it's not perfect. The more you practice this sound the better and easier it will become.



This is how we want our mouths to look when we say 'Ä':

Your mouth should be open wide longways but not completely open upwards. Your lips should be pulled tight. Your mouth should be in the shape of a lemon ... more or less.

Try these on for size.

die Männer
the men

die Hände
the hands

These two are a little longer so hold the sound for longer:

das Mädchen
the girl

die Währung
the currency

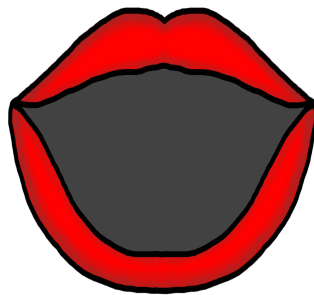
When 'Ä' is combined with 'U', the sound changes to a sound like 'oy':

die Häuser
the houses

die Säule
the column

Now that you have got 'Ä' down, let's move on to 'Ö'.

Ö - Oh, boy. 'Ö' is the one umlaut letter that English speakers seem to have the most problems with. It's tricky but not impossible. It sounds a bit like 'ooee'. Try using the way we say the letter 'A' (ay) in English again. Start saying 'ay' then pull your lips tight together at the sides so that your mouth looks like a big circle. Like this:



Have a crack at these!

der Körper
the body

die Köche
the cooks

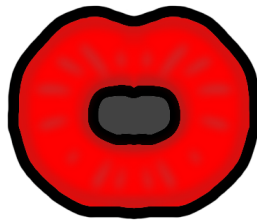
These two are longer:

die Lösung
the solution

das Öl
the oil

This one may require more practice than 'Ä' as it's somewhat foreign for English speakers but keep going until you get it. Then when you're ready, let's move on to our last Umlaut: 'Ü'.

Ü - The last one! You will be happy to know this is much easier than 'Ö'. We have a similar sound in English. This time we will start by making a sound like 'ee' in English. Then when making this sound we will once again pull our lips in tight to make a small hole with our mouth - a little bigger than the hole you might find in some mints (you know the ones I mean).



You know the drill.

das Stück
the piece

die Küche
the kitchen

These two are longer:

die Tür
the door

der Schüler
the (school) pupil

SINGLE LETTERS

Some letters in German are pronounced differently to their English counterparts.

G - Our main difference here is that the letter 'G' in German is always hard. In English, 'G' can make an English 'J' sound but in German that is not the case. At the start of a word it makes a hard 'G' sound, whereas at the end of a word, it can almost sound like a 'K':

der Garten
the garden

genug
enough

J - 'J' is a nice and easy one. Don't be fooled by our English pronunciation of the letter. Our 'juh' sound doesn't exist in German. 'J' is pronounced as we would say the letter 'Y' in a word.

die Jacke
the jacket

R - 'R' is a tricky one. The German 'R' is nothing like ours. 'R' can sound a bit different in the various German dialects but we are going to focus on the 'Hochdeutsch' (Standard German) pronunciation.

We need to start by making an 'H'. A kind of 'huh' sound. Hold it. Then try to morph it into an 'R' sound. This 'R' comes

from our throats. It is more or less from the same position that make our 'H' sound.

das Rohr

the pipe

S - 'S' has some different pronunciations depending on where it appears in a word.

When at the start of a word, 'S' is pronounced similarly to an English 'Z'.

die Sonne

the sun

When 'S' appears at the end of a word, it makes the same sound as it does in English.

die Reise

the journey

The double 'S' in German (written 'SS' or 'ß') is also pronounced like an 'S' at the end of a word.

der Fuß

the foot

V - Most of the time you come across the letter 'V' in German, it will sound like an English 'F'.

der Vogel

the bird

W - This one is well known. 'W' in German does not make the 'wuh' sound it does in English but rather an English 'V' sound.

der Wal
the whale

Z - This letter makes a sound like a 'ts'. If you say the word 'cats' in English, you are already making this sound at the end of the word. 'Z' is pronounced the same at the start, middle, or end of a word.

LETTER COMBOS

Now, let's take a gander at some letter combos. Again, do not let yourself be fooled by English. While having English is a big advantage when it comes to learning German, there are some areas where we can't rely on it. For example, the following letters make different sounds when compared to English:

AI - These two together make a sound that sounds like the English word 'eye'.

im Mai
in May

AU - This is a nice one. It makes the sound of someone who just stubbed their toe. It's the first sound in the word 'ouch!' - 'ah-oh'.

das Auge
the eye

CH - There are two sounds that 'CH' makes in German. Depending on what letters come before it, it will either make a sound like a hissing cat or the guttural sound that most of us associate with German.

'CH' makes a hissing sound when it's preceded by 'Ä, ÄU, Ö, Ü, I, or E'.

ich
/

The guttural sound shows up when 'CH' is preceded by 'A, AU, O, or U'.

auch

too

EI - 'I' before 'E' makes the sound of the word 'eye' in English.

das Eis

ice-cream

EU - 'EU' makes an 'oy' sound, as in 'Oy, you guys!'

der Deutsche

the German (male person from Germany)

IE - 'E' before 'I' makes an English 'ee' sound like in the word 'see'.

Wie?

How?

PF - My favourite! Start with a 'P' sound and blow it out into an 'F' - a bit like 'pfffh'.

der Pfad

the path

QU - So in English, we would pronounce this like 'kwuh' but German doesn't have the 'W' sound. Instead, we pronounce it like 'kvuh'.

die Qualle
the jellyfish

SCH - This is very similar to the 'sh' sound in English but there is a little bit more air expelled in German. It sounds a little sharper.

die Schule
the school

SP - 'SP' in German is pronounced 'shp'.

das Spiel
the game

ST - Just like 'SP', 'ST' has a little 'H' sound in it - 'sht'.

der Stern
the star

And just like that, you are well on your way to being able to pronounce any word you come across!

Gut gemacht!
Well done!

EXERCISE 1

Spell these words:

1. Hund

2. Katze

3. Eis

4. Apfel

5. Quatsch

Translation:

1. dog

2. cat

3. ice-cream

4. apple

5. nonsense