

the German alphabet

Learn with television

Deutsch Plus: Programmes 2 and 6

Nico Antonescu is Romanian, and Germans aren't sure how to spell his name. Watch him spell it over the phone and see how Susanne Weiss says hers.

Deutsch Plus is repeated regularly on BBC Learning Zone (BBC Two). Check out the details on www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone, then video the programmes to watch at your leisure.

Learn online

www.bbc.co.uk/languages/german

German Steps Stage 5: Booking a room

Listen at your own pace to how Andrea spells out her surname when booking a room over the phone. Watch the slideshow then do the online activity.

Learning hint

Some English names can be difficult for speakers of other languages, which is why it's useful to be able to spell them out, particularly over the phone or on voicemail. You're most likely to need to know how to spell out your personal details, so make sure you practise spelling your name and address and the names of anyone who might be travelling with you.

Acquiring a good German accent is about more than knowing the alphabet, and it's very important to say words and phrases out loud on a regular basis. Listen as often as you can to the characters in German Steps and make a concentrated effort to imitate them closely.

Key language

Wie schreibt man das? How do you write that?

Ich buchstabiere I'll spell it out

Doppel-F double f

In German, proper names are used to clarify letters when a word is being spelt out – the equivalent of using 'Alpha, Bravo, Charlie ... Yankee, Zulu' in English. Opposite is the phonetic pronunciation of the letters of the German alphabet plus the corresponding name.

a = ah = **Anton**

ä = ah Umlaut

b = beh = **Berta**

c = tseh = **Cäsar**

d = deh = **Dora**

e = eh = **Emil**

f = eff = **Friedrich**

g = geh = **Gustav**

h = ha = **Heinrich**

i = ee = **Ida**

j = yot = **Julius**

k = kah = **Kaufmann**

l = ell = **Ludwig**

m = emm = **Martha**

n = enn = **Nordpol**

o = oh = **Otto**

ö = oh Umlaut

p = peh = **Paula**

q = kuh = **Quelle**

r = err = **Richard**

s = ess = **Siegfried**

ß = ess-tsett

t = teh = **Theodor**

u = uh = **Ulrich**

ü = uh Umlaut

v = fow = **Viktor**

w = veh = **Wilhelm**

x = iks = **Xanthippe**

y = upsilon = **Ypsilon**

z = tsett = **Zeppelin**

Quiz

1. What do we call the car that the Germans call a **fow-veh**?
2. You might want to travel by a German high-speed train, an **ee-tseh-eh**; what German abbreviation will you look out for?
3. Which German town do these letters spell: **tseh-ha-eh-emm-enn-ee-teh-tsett**?
4. Which English name do these letters spell: **yot-uh-ell-ee-ah**?
5. German also uses WC to indicate a toilet, but how is it pronounced?
6. Which English surname do these letters spell: **ha-ah-err-fow-eh-upsilon**