

# German pronunciation guide

## 1. Consonants

Note: German consonants B, F, G, K, L, M, N, P, T and X sound exactly the same as their English counterparts, hence those are not included here to keep this guide compact.

Consonant	Sounds like	Examples
<b>b</b> , at the <b>end</b> of a word	<b>P</b>	gel <b>b</b> ( <i>yellow</i> ), taub ( <i>deaf</i> ), hal <b>b</b> ( <i>half</i> )
<b>c</b> , before <b>ä, e, i &amp; ö</b>	<b>ts</b> in <b>cats</b>	<b>c</b> irca ( <i>approximately</i> )
<b>c</b> , in other cases	<b>k</b> <u>Note:</u> <b>c</b> words aren't very common in German	<b>C</b> reme ( <i>cream</i> )
<b>d</b> , at the <b>start / middle</b> of a word	<b>d</b> in <b>day</b>	<b>d</b> unkel ( <i>dark</i> ), <b>D</b> ing ( <i>thing</i> ), la <b>d</b> en ( <i>load</i> )
<b>d</b> , at the <b>end</b> of a word	<b>T</b>	Ab <b>e</b> nd ( <i>evening</i> ), Wald ( <i>forest</i> ), Freu <b>n</b> d ( <i>friend</i> )
<b>g</b> , at the <b>end</b> of a word	<b>K</b>	Tag ( <i>day</i> )
<b>h</b>	<b>Pronounced</b> , when it begins a word	<b>H</b> erz ( <i>heart</i> ), <b>H</b> als ( <i>neck</i> ), <b>h</b> eute ( <i>today</i> )
	<b>Pronounced</b> , when it falls in the middle of a word, with a <b>consonant</b> preceding it	Bahn <b>h</b> of ( <i>station</i> ), nam <b>h</b> aft ( <i>well-known</i> ), Vor <b>h</b> of ( <i>front yard</i> )
	<b>Silent</b> , when it is preceded by a vowel (this is used to indicate that the vowel is long)	se <b>h</b> en ( <i>to see</i> ), se <b>h</b> r ( <i>very</i> ), fa <b>h</b> ren ( <i>to drive/ go</i> ), wo <b>h</b> nen ( <i>to live</i> ), Ru <b>h</b> e ( <i>silence</i> )
<b>j</b>	(mostly) <b>y</b> as in <b>yes</b>	<b>J</b> a ( <i>yes</i> ), <b>J</b> osef, <b>J</b> ohann, <b>J</b> acke ( <i>jacket</i> )
	<b>Exception:</b> In English words imported into German, ' <b>J</b> ' sounds exactly the same as in English	<b>J</b> eans, <b>J</b> ob, <b>j</b> oggen ( <i>to jog</i> )
	<b>Exception:</b> In French words imported into German, the <b>j</b> sounds like ' <b>si</b> ' in vision	<b>J</b> ournalist, <b>J</b> ournal ( <i>journal</i> ), <b>J</b> argon
<b>qu*</b>  * <b>q</b> words in German are	<b>kv</b>	<b>Q</b> ual ( <i>distress</i> ), <b>Q</b> uittung ( <i>receipt</i> ), be <b>q</b> uem ( <i>comfortable</i> )

followed by <b>U</b> ( <b>always</b> )		
<b>r, Vocalic</b> (pronounced as a 'vowel', not as a consonant)	Mostly used when there is an '-er' at the end of German words.	Bruder ( <i>brother</i> ), Schwester ( <i>sister</i> ), Mutter ( <i>mother</i> ), Vater ( <i>father</i> )  <a href="#">Click here to listen</a>
	It is also used when the 'r' is the last letter in a word, and follows after a long vowel.	Tür ( <i>door</i> ), Uhr ( <i>clock</i> ), mehr ( <i>more</i> ), vier ( <i>four</i> ), Bier ( <i>beer</i> ), Chor ( <i>chorus</i> )  <a href="#">Click here to listen</a>
	Also used when the 'r' follows a long vowel but precedes another consonant.	Pferd ( <i>horse</i> ), Herd ( <i>cooker</i> ), spürte ( <i>felt</i> ), führte ( <i>led</i> )  <a href="#">Click here to listen</a>
	Used with prefixes <b>er-</b> , <b>ver-</b> , <b>zer-</b> and <b>her-</b>	erlauben ( <i>to allow</i> ), vergessen ( <i>to</i> <i>forget</i> ), zerstören ( <i>to destroy</i> ), hereinkommen ( <i>to come in</i> )  <a href="#">Click here to listen</a>  <a href="#">YouTube lesson</a>
<b>r, Consonantal</b>	Has no English equivalent, is produced in the throat.	<a href="#">YouTube lesson</a>
<b>s</b>	at the start of a word, like z as in <b>zoo</b>	Sie ( <i>you</i> ), sagen ( <i>to say</i> )
	at the <b>end</b> of a word, like the English <b>s</b>	Reis ( <i>rice</i> ), Preis ( <i>price</i> ), Glas ( <i>glass</i> )
<b>v</b>	(mostly) f as in <b>fox</b>	Vorname ( <i>first name</i> ), vier ( <i>4</i> ), Volkswagen
	<b>Exception:</b> In words borrowed from English, the 'v' sounds same as in English	November, aktiv
<b>w</b>	v	wie ( <i>how</i> ), wo ( <i>where</i> ), Wagen ( <i>car</i> )
<b>y</b>	the German <b>ü</b>	typisch, Physik, Gymnasium
	<b>Exception:</b> y at the <b>start</b> or <b>end</b> of words imported from English is pronounced exactly as you'd pronounce them in English	Yoga, Party, Hobby, Handy ( <i>mobile</i> <i>phone</i> )
<b>z</b>	ts as in <b>its</b>	Zeit ( <i>time</i> ), Zahn ( <i>tooth</i> ), Salz ( <i>salt</i> ), Zug

		(train), Herz (heart)
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## 2. Multiple consonants together

Letter combination	Sounds like	Examples
tsch	CH as in chair	Deuts <b>ch</b> (German), tschüss (bye), ruts <b>ch</b> en (to slip)
sch	SH as in shoe	S <b>ch</b> umacher, s <b>ch</b> reiben (to write), s <b>ch</b> wimmen (to swim)
st / sp	SHT / SHP	S <b>pr</b> echen (to speak), s <b>pi</b> elen (to play), s <b>t</b> udieren (to study at a University), s <b>t</b> ehen (to stand)
ß / ss	s in sea	
	written as 'ß' after a diphthong	hei <b>ß</b> en (to be called), drei <b>ß</b> ig (30)
	Written as 'ß' after long vowels	Spa <b>ß</b> (fun), Fu <b>ß</b> (foot)
	Written as 'SS' after a short vowel <u>Note:</u> both <b>ß</b> and <b>SS</b> sound exactly the same	Wiss <b>en</b> (knowledge), Schlo <b>ss</b> (castle)
pf	'p' and 'f' are sounded together	P <b>ferd</b> (horse), Kop <b>f</b> (head)
ck	k as in thick	we <b>ck</b> en (to wake), schme <b>ck</b> en (to taste), zur <b>ü</b> ck (back)
ch	(i)  'ch' after a-, o-, u, and au-, a hard 'ch' sound  -no English equivalent exists-	a <b>ch</b> (oh!), Ba <b>ch</b> (stream), Kr <b>ach</b> (noise), Lo <b>ch</b> (hole), To <b>ch</b> ter (daughter), mo <b>ch</b> te (liked), Bu <b>ch</b> (book), Tu <b>ch</b> (cloth), Ba <b>uch</b> (stomach), Ra <b>uch</b> (smoke)  <a href="#">Listen</a>
	(ii)  In the rest of the cases, namely, 'ch' after 'e', 'ä', 'i', 'ei', 'eu', 'äu', 'ö', and ü or after a consonant, a soft ch sound	Ble <b>ch</b> (tin), St <b>ich</b> (sting), Bä <b>ch</b> e (streams), mö <b>ch</b> te (would like), Bü <b>ch</b> er (books), eu <b>ch</b> (you (informal)), Bräu <b>ch</b> e (customs), Dol <b>ch</b> (dagger), Mön <b>ch</b> (monk), Storb <b>ch</b> (stork)

	-no English sound exists-	<a href="#">Listen</a>
	<b>Exception:</b> In words imported from English, the 'ch' sounds exactly the same as how <b>an English speaker</b> would pronounce it	<b>Ch</b> aos, <b>Ch</b> ecken ( <i>to check</i> )
	<b>Exception:</b> In words imported from French, the 'ch' sounds like 'sch'	<b>Ch</b> ef ( <i>boss</i> ), <b>Ch</b> ance, <b>Ch</b> auvinist
-ig suffix	sounds exactly like <b>ch</b> in case (ii) above	richt <b>ig</b> (correct), Hon <b>ig</b> (honey), lust <b>ig</b> (funny), traur <b>ig</b> (sad), eilig (hurried), fert <b>ig</b> (finished)  <a href="#">Listen</a>
th	the <b>t</b> is sounded, while the <b>h</b> is silent	<b>Th</b> eater ( <i>theatre</i> ), <b>Th</b> ema ( <i>theme</i> ), <b>Th</b> eorie ( <i>theory</i> ), sympath <b>th</b> isch ( <i>pleasant</i> ), Apo <b>th</b> eke ( <i>chemist's</i> ), Math <b>th</b> ematik ( <i>mathematics</i> ), Meth <b>th</b> ode ( <i>method</i> ), <b>Ath</b> let ( <i>athlete</i> ), Psychopath (psychopath)  <a href="#">Listen</a>
the suffix -tion	TSEE-ohn	<b>Nation</b> , <b>Information</b>

### 3. Vowels

Vowel	Sounds like	Examples
a	<b>long:</b> a in <i>father</i>	fr <b>a</b> gen ( <i>to ask</i> ), s <b>a</b> gen ( <i>to say</i> ), <b>a</b> rbeiten ( <i>to work</i> ), Sa <b>a</b> l ( <i>hall</i> ), h <b>a</b> ben ( <i>to have</i> )
	<b>short:</b> u in <i>cut</i>	K <b>a</b> tze ( <i>cat</i> ), k <b>a</b> lt ( <i>cold</i> ), <b>a</b> lt ( <i>old</i> ), Sa <b>l</b> z ( <i>salt</i> )
e	<b>long:</b> a in <i>say</i>	L <b>e</b> sen ( <i>to read</i> ), g <b>e</b> hen ( <i>to go</i> ), l <b>e</b> ben ( <i>to live</i> ), R <b>e</b> gen ( <i>rain</i> )
	<b>short:</b> e in <i>Bed</i>	G <b>e</b> ld ( <i>money</i> ), B <b>e</b> tt ( <i>bed</i> )
i	<b>long:</b> ee	Ter <b>mi</b> n ( <i>appointment</i> )
	<b>short:</b> i as in <i>bit</i>	mit ( <i>with</i> ), bitte ( <i>please</i> )
o	<b>long:</b> aw sound as in <i>call</i>	<b>o</b> der ( <i>or</i> ), r <b>o</b> t ( <i>red</i> ), t <b>o</b> t ( <i>dead</i> )

	<b>short:</b> o as in <i>hot</i>	Gott ( <i>God</i> ), blond ( <i>blonde</i> )
<b>u</b>	<b>long:</b> oo in <i>moon</i>	anrufen ( <i>to call</i> ), Blut ( <i>blood</i> )
	<b>short:</b> oo in <i>foot</i>	rund ( <i>around</i> ), Hund ( <i>dog</i> ), Lust ( <i>desire</i> )
<b>ä</b>	Like a in <i>day</i>	spät ( <i>late</i> ), Universität ( <i>university</i> ), Mädchen ( <i>young girl</i> )
	like e in <i>bed</i>	Länder ( <i>countries</i> ), Männer ( <i>men</i> )
<b>ö</b>	OE (sounds like <i>ayo</i> )	schön ( <i>beautiful</i> ), Löwe ( <i>lion</i> )
	OE (sounds like <i>ayo but shorter</i> )	Öffnung ( <i>opening</i> ), Möbel ( <i>furniture</i> )
<b>ü</b>	UE long sound	für ( <i>for</i> ), müde ( <i>tired</i> )
	UE short sound	Über ( <i>over</i> ), Tür ( <i>door</i> )

#### 4. **Diphthongs (combination of two vowel sounds)**

Diphthong	Sounds like	Examples
ai / ei	EYE	Mai ( <i>May</i> ), Hai ( <i>shark</i> ), Nein ( <i>no</i> ), mein ( <i>my</i> ), klein ( <i>small</i> ), Wein ( <i>wine</i> )
ie	EE	Wie ( <i>how</i> ), Wien ( <i>Vienna</i> ), liegen ( <i>to lie, in bed for example</i> )
au	OU as in <i>foul</i>	Auch ( <i>also</i> ), auf ( <i>on, at</i> ), aus ( <i>from</i> ), genau ( <i>exactly</i> )
eu/ äü	OY as in <i>toy</i>	neun ( <i>nine</i> ), Fräulein ( <i>Miss</i> )