

German and English

If you are an English speaker unfamiliar with German, you may be surprised to learn that English and German are closely related languages and share many words that are very similar. This is particularly true for everyday words in English that are Anglo-Saxon (that is, Germanic) in origin. Consider the following list of English words followed by their German counterparts:

arm ~ *der Arm*
book ~ *das Buch*
cat ~ *die Katze*
father ~ *der Vater*

finger ~ *der Finger*
wagon ~ *der Wagen*
house ~ *das Haus*

hand ~ *die Hand*
June ~ *der Juni*
man ~ *der Mann*

mother ~ *die Mutter*
mouse ~ *die Maus*
name ~ *der Name*

son ~ *der Sohn*
garden ~ *der Garten*

lamp ~ *die Lampe*
bush ~ *der Busch*
baker ~ *der Bäcker*
net ~ *das Netz*
storm ~ *der Sturm*
hat ~ *der Hut*
fire ~ *das Feuer*
grass ~ *das Gras*
fish ~ *der Fisch*
kindergarten ~ *der Kindergarten*

Of course, even words whose spelling is no different in English and German may be pronounced quite differently. But in reading German, you will see the connections between these languages, even in many of the "small" words (the above examples are all nouns). For example:

This week, my father is with my brother in the city

Diese Woche ist mein Vater mit meinem Bruder in der Stadt.

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Lesson 1.00 • Introduction

Welcome to Level I German!

Level I is aimed at junior high and high school students. However, it can be used by others just beginning to learn to speak or read German.

The goal of Level I German is not to overwhelm or confuse the student, but rather to teach the student in an orderly fashion. Learning German is meant to be fun, not subjective. Thus, the vocabulary is formatted for translating from English (which the students know) into German.

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German and English

German and English are very close to each other. Here are some major similarities:

- Both languages use the Latin alphabet.
- Normally, sentences follow Subject-Verb order.
- Questions have Verb-Subject order or Adverb-Verb-Subject order.
- Both languages have prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs, nouns, verbs, interjections, pronouns, and adjectives.
- The indirect object usually comes before the direct object.
- There are contractions in both German and English.
- Many words share the same roots, such as *word* and *Wort*, or *house* and *Haus*.
- Many words, such as *Football* and *Sandwich* are the same in English and German.

As you can see, German is very much like English. There are, however, differences:

- German has **genders**; every noun is either masculine, feminine, or neuter.
- German has three different words for "you", while English has only one. There are even four if you count the impersonal "man".
- German has more verb forms than English.
- German has more letters than and different pronunciations from English (see Lesson 1).
- German is the only known written language where *all* nouns are capitalized, regardless of whether or not it is a proper noun.
- Sometimes in German the verb will be the last word of a sentence.
- There are no helping verbs in German.
- Adjectives will have different endings based on the noun they are modifying in German.
- German is more 'guttural'. In German, you talk in the back of your mouth.
- "I" (*ich*) is only capitalized if it is the first word of the sentence.
- In German, there are four cases; in English, there are three.

However, next to [Dutch](#), German is one of the easiest languages for English speakers to learn. The differences will be tackled over the course of the lessons.

Lesson 1.01 • Wie Heißt du?

Dialog

German Dialogue • Wie Heißt du? • audio: [One](#) • [Two](#) (131 + 142 kb • [help](#)) What's your name? • Wie heißt du?

Franz Hallo, ich bin Franz. Wie heißt du? Hello, I'm Franz. What's your name?
Greta Hallo, Franz. Ich heiße Greta. Wie geht's? Hello, Franz. I'm Grata. How are you?
Franz Es geht mir gut. Kennst du den Lehrer? I'm fine. Do you know the teacher?
Greta Ja, er heißt Herr Weiß. Yes, his name is Mr. Weiß (White).
Franz Oh, danke, Greta. Bis dann! Oh, thanks, Grata. See you later!
Greta Wiedersehen! See you!

Next Dialogue

Franz Guten Morgen. Sind Sie Herr Weiß? Good morning, are you Mr. Weiß?
Herr Schwarz Nein, ich bin Herr Schwarz. Wie heißt du? No, I'm Mr. Schwarz (black). What's your name?
Franz Ich heiße Franz. Danke Herr Schwarz. Ich bin spät dran. I'm Franz. Thanks MR. Schwarz. I'm running late
Herr Schwarz Bitte, Franz. Ich bin auch spät dran. Bis später! You're welcome Franz. I'm late too. See you later!
Franz Auf Wiedersehen! See you later.

Hellos and Goodbyes in German

German Vocabulary • Wie Heißt du? • audio (info • 144 kb • [help](#)) Greetings • Grüße

Hello!	Hallo!*
	<i>Moin Moin!</i> (used in northern Germany)
	<i>Grüß Gott!</i> (used in southern Germany, Austria and South Tyrol)
Good morning!	Guten Morgen!*
Good day!	Guten Tag!*
Good evening!	Guten Abend!*
Goodbye!	Auf Wiedersehen!*
Bye!	Tschüss!*
Later!	Bis später!*, Bis dann!*
Good night!	Gute Nacht!*

Many different German-speaking regions have their own ways of saying hello and goodbye. You will not be required to know any of those for any problems or tests. You will need to know all of the expressions with a "*" after them though. The others, of course, would be useful to know if you are traveling to the regions where they are used.

Formal and Informal Greetings in German

Germans respect higher authority with their choice of certain phrases. The more formal phrases above are *Guten Morgen*, *Guten Tag*, and *Auf Wiedersehen* (as well as *Griß Gott*). The less formal ones are *Tschüss*. The other are neutral in the formal - informal chain.

Note: In Germany nowadays, "Tschüss" is also used with people who are not on first name terms.

Here are some examples:

- *Claudia*: Guten Morgen, Herr Wagner!
- *Herr Wagner*: Hallo, Claudia!
- *Brigit*: Tschau, Susi!
- *Susi*: Bis später, Brigit!

German Vocabulary • Wie Heißt du? Mr. & Mrs. • Herr und Frau	
Mr.	Herr
Mrs.	Frau
Ms.	Fräulein (archaic)

The German Alphabet

German Grammar • Wie Heißt du? • audio (info • 690 kb • help)										
The Alphabet • Das Alphabet										
Characters	Aa	Ää	Bb	Cc	Dd	Ee	Ff	Gg	Hh	Ii
Pronunciation	ah	äh	bay	tsay	day	ay	ef	gay	hah	ee
Characters	Jj	Kk	Ll	Mm	Nn	Oo	Öö	Pp	Qq	Rr
Pronunciation	yot	kah	el	em	en	oh	öh	pay	coo	air
Characters	Ss	ß	Tt	Uu	Üü	Vv	Ww	Xx	Yy	Zz
Pronunciation	ess	eszett	tay	oo	diaresis	fow	vay	iks	ypsilon	tset

The 26 letters in both German and English are shown above. One other letter, ß (the eszett 'ess-tset') is used for (voiceless) 's'. It is used in case two s's (ss) or when a single s can't be used: between vowels or in the end of words when the preceding vowel is long. Example: "der Fluss" (short u, English river), but "der Fuß" (long u, English foot). Note that the eszett is not used in Switzerland. You always write double s instead, even after long vowels. Therefore you write "Fluss" and "Fuss".

Another difference between German and English is the **umlaut**. The vowels a, o, and u can take an umlaut (double dots above), becoming ä, ö, and ü. The umlaut changes the sound of the vowel. For pronunciations of all the letters, go to the [Pronunciation Guide](#) in Appendix 1.

Notes:

- The umlauts are even used when spelling. Common words used to clarify a given letter are Ärger (anger), Ökonom (economist) and Übermut (high spirits). To say "umlaut" after the letter is an English custom used when spelling German words in English.
- In writing, the umlauts are sometimes substituted with the vowel plus e, i.e ae, oe and ue. You find this in names as Goethe or in crosswords, but you don't use it in normal texts (Goethe is an exception to the rules governing umlauts, always written with "oe"). However, if you have no way to type umlauts you *must* use vowel-plus-e.
- In most search engines and online dictionaries, a vowel with umlaut can be entered as either the simple vowel or in vowel-plus-e form. For example, if you wish to find "Ärger" you may enter any of the following three search strings: "ärger", "aerger", "arger" (the last is incorrect writing, and actually means something different! ("arg"=very bad/grim, "arger"= "grimmer").

To create the special umlaut and esszet characters on an english keyboard, you can use your numeric keypad with the Alt key.

German Ect. • Wie Heißt du? Alt keys for • German characters	
ß	alt + 0223
ü	alt + 0252
Ü	alt + 0220
ö	alt + 0246
Ö	alt + 0214
ä	alt + 0228
Ä	alt + 0196

If you use Mac OS X these will work only if you choose "Unicode" keyboard layout, but you can add umlauts with option-u and the ß with option-S.

Bitte buchstabieren Sie

Look at this short phone conversation. Try to read it aloud. The translation of words and phrases is given below the text.

German Dialogue • Wie Heißt du? • [audio](#) (info • 405 kb • [help](#)) Directory Assistance • Fernsprechauskunft

Man A Auskunft, Guten Tag.

Man B Guten Tag. Ich hätte gern die Telefonnummer von Frau Claudia Bolliger aus Bern.

Man A Wie schreibt man das? Bitte buchstabieren Sie.

Man B Natürlich. Claudia: C wie Cäsar, L wie Ludwig, A wie Anton, U wie Ursula, D wie Dora, I wie Ida, A

wie Anton. Bolliger: B wie Berta, O wie Otto, zweimal L wie Ludwig, I wie Ida, G wie Gustav, E wie

Emil und R wie Richard.

Man A Danke. Die Nummer lautet ...

Vocabulary and Phrases (from above)

German Vocabulary • Wie Heißt du? Vocabulary • Wortschatz	
English	German
Information Desk	die Auskunft (no plural)
I would like to have	Ich hätte gern(e)
Phone Number	die Telefonnummer
from Berne	aus Bern
How do you spell this?	Wie schreibt man das?
Please	Bitte
Spell	Buchstabieren
Of course	Natürlich
"A" as in Anton	A wie Anton
Twice	Zweimal
The number is	die Nummer lautet

Nominative Case

Cases describe what a noun or pronoun does in a sentence. When a noun or pronoun is the subject of a sentence, it is considered to be in the **nominative case**. For example, in the sentence "I ate an apple", **I** is the subject and the **apple** is the direct object. You will learn more about cases as the course continues.

German Grammar • Wie Heißt du? • audio (info • 87 kb • help) Subject Pronouns • Vorbehaltliche Pronomina			
1st person	singular	ich	I
	plural	wir	we
2nd person	singular	du, *Sie	you
	plural	ihr, *Sie	you
3rd person	singular	er, sie, es	he, she, it
	plural	sie	they

Sie is the formal (polite) version of du and ihr. In all conjugations, it acts exactly like sie (plural)

Names

German Grammar • Wie Heißt du? Names • Namen	
English	German
My name is...	Ich heiße...
His/Her/Its name is...	Er/Sie/Es heißt...
Their names are...	Sie heißen...
Our names are...	Wir heißen...
Your name is...	Du heißt...
Your names are...	Ihr heißt...
What is your name?	Wie heißt du?
What are your names?	Wie heißt ihr?

- To ask someone else's name, ask "Wie heißt..."
- For more than one person, "Wie heißen..."

Note: There *are* possessive pronouns in German, they just don't apply here.

Verbs

You have already learned one verb: heißen, to be called.

German Verb • Wie Heißt du? heißen • to be called			
	Singular		Plural
first person	ich	heiße	wir heißen
second person	du	heißt	ihr heißt
	er	heißt	
third person	sie	heißt	sie heißen
	es	heißt	

Two more extremely common verbs are the German translations for 'to be' and 'to have': *sein* and *haben*. They are conjugated like this:

German Verb • Wie Heißt du?

sein • to be

	Singular		Plural	
first person	ich	bin I am	wir	sind we are
second person	du	bist you are	ihr	seid you are
	er	ist he is		
third person	sie	ist she is	sie	sind they are
	es	ist it is		

German Verb • Wie Heißt du?

haben • to have

	Singular		Plural	
first person	ich	habe	wir	haben
second person	du	hast	ihr	habt
	er	hat		
third person	sie	hat	sie	haben
	es	hat		

Wie geht's?

German Vocabulary • Wie Heißt du?

How are you? • Wie geht's?

English

German

How are you?

Wie geht's?

Responses for

Good

Great

Prima

Good

Gut

Very good

Sehr gut

Responses for

Bad

Miserable

Miserabel

Bad

Schlecht

Not good

Nicht gut

Responses for

Okay

Okay

Ganz gut

Alright

Es geht so

Articles

German, like many other languages, gives each noun a gender: **Masculine**, **Feminine**, and **Neuter**. **Plural** is easy; the definite nominative Article is always *die*. And as in English there is no indefinite article in plural. Nouns in plural form require different verbforms than nouns in singular.

In English, there are two different types of articles: definite (the) and indefinite (a and an). German is the same, except that there are five different articles of each type. The nominative case articles are as follows:

Definite Articles

German Grammar • Wie Heißt du?				
The Definite Article of the Nominative Case • Der definitive Artikel des Nominativ				
singular	<i>masculine</i>	der	der Junge	the boy
	<i>feminine</i>	die	die Frau	the woman
	<i>neuter</i>	das	das Mädchen	the girl
plural		die	die Jungen	the boys
			die Frauen	the women
			die Mädchen	the girls

Indefinite Articles

German Grammar • Wie Heißt du?				
The Indefinite Article of the Nominative Case • Der unbestimmte Artikel des Nominativ				
singular	<i>masculine</i>	ein	ein Mann	a man
	<i>feminine</i>	eine	eine Frau	a woman
	<i>neuter</i>	ein	ein Mädchen	a girl

Forming Questions

The common word order in a German sentence is the same as in English: Subject verb Objects. (SvO)

- *Der Junge spielt Fußball.*

The boy plays soccer.

This sentence is in the *indicative mood*, the mood that states a fact. The *interrogative mood* asks a question. To change the English sentence "The boy throws the ball" to the interrogative mood, we insert the helper verb "does" before "boy," ending with, "?". "Does the boy throw the ball?"

The process is very similar in German. However, since German verbs express both the simple and progressive aspects, we **switch the whole verb with the subject**, ending up with,

- *"Spielt der Junge Fußball?"*

Does the boy play soccer

You have learned two questions so far: "Wie heißt...?" and "Wie geht's?". In German, there are two basic ways to form a question. The first is the method described above. In addition to this, you can put an *interrogative adverb*...

German Vocabulary • Wie Heißt du? Questions • Fragen

English

German

Who?	Wer?
What?	Was?
Where?	Wo?
When?	Wann?
Why?	Warum?
How?	Wie?

The question "Wie heißt...?", directly translated, means "How is ... called?". That is why it does not contain *Was*. These words come first in the sentence; the word order is: Interr. Adverb Verb Subject Object. For example:

- *Warum spielt der Junge Fußball?*

Why does the boy play soccer?

You should note at this point that in German, **the verb always comes second in the sentence**, except in the case of a question as described above. **The subject is always next to the verb, if not in front of it then following it.** For example:

- *Der Junge spielte am Montag Fußball.*

The boy played soccer on Monday.

- *Am Montag spielte der Junge Fußball.*

On Monday, the boy played soccer.

At this point, you should know the words for "yes", *ja* and "no", *nein* respectively.