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German
FOR
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**by Paulina Christensen, Anne Fox,
and Wendy Foster**



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Contents at a Glance

.....

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Part I: Getting Started</i>	7
Chapter 1: You Already Know a Little German	9
Chapter 2: The Nitty-Gritty: Basic German Grammar	21
Chapter 3: Hallo! Pronunciation and Basic Expressions	41
Chapter 4: Getting Numbers, Time, and Measurements Straight	61
Chapter 5: Talking about Home and Family	73
<i>Part II: German in Action</i>	81
Chapter 6: Getting to Know You: Making Small Talk	83
Chapter 7: Asking for Directions	101
Chapter 8: Guten Appetit! Dining Out and Going to the Market	119
Chapter 9: Shopping Made Easy	143
Chapter 10: Going Out on the Town	159
Chapter 11: Taking Care of Business and Telecommunications	179
Chapter 12: Recreation and the Great Outdoors	197
<i>Part III: German on the Go</i>	215
Chapter 13: Planning a Trip	217
Chapter 14: Making Sense of Euros and Cents	227
Chapter 15: Getting Around: Planes, Trains, Taxis, and Buses	235
Chapter 16: Finding a Place to Stay	253
Chapter 17: Handling Emergencies	269
<i>Part IV: The Part of Tens</i>	285
Chapter 18: Ten Ways to Pick Up German Quickly	287
Chapter 19: Ten Things Never to Say in German	291
Chapter 20: Ten Favorite German Expressions	295
Chapter 21: Ten Phrases That Make You Sound German	299

<i>Part V: Appendixes</i>	301
Appendix A: Mini-Dictionary	303
Appendix B: Verb Tables	321
Appendix C: On the CD.....	333
Appendix D: Answer Key	337
<i>Index</i>	341

Table of Contents

.....

***Introduction*..... 1**

About This Book.....	1
Conventions Used in This Book.....	2
Foolish Assumptions.....	3
How This Book Is Organized.....	4
Part I: Getting Started.....	4
Part II: German in Action.....	4
Part III: German on the Go.....	5
Part IV: The Part of Tens.....	5
Part V: Appendixes.....	5
Icons Used in This Book.....	5
Where to Go from Here.....	6

***Part I: Getting Started*..... 7**

Chapter 1: You Already Know a Little German 9

The German You Know.....	9
Friendly allies (perfect cognates).....	9
Kissing cousins (near cognates).....	11
False friends.....	13
Lenders and borrowers.....	15
Using Popular Expressions.....	17

Chapter 2: The Nitty-Gritty: Basic German Grammar 21

Getting a Handle on Parts of Speech.....	22
Nouns.....	22
Articles.....	23
Pronouns.....	24
Adjectives.....	25
Verbs.....	25
Adverbs.....	27
Constructing Simple Sentences.....	27
Arranging words in the right order.....	27
Putting the verb in second place.....	28
Pushing the verb to the end.....	29
Forming questions.....	29

The Tenses: Past, Present, and Future	30
Looking at the present	30
Talking about the past: The perfect tense.....	31
Writing about the past: Using the simple past tense of verbs	33
Talking about the future	34
Putting the Language in the Proper Case	35
A quick trip through the different cases.....	35
Why all these cases matter.....	36
Chapter 3: Hallo! Pronunciation and Basic Expressions	41
Mouthing Off: Basic Pronunciation	41
Dealing with stress in German	42
Building the alphabet blocks.....	42
Pronouncing vowels	43
Pronouncing ä, ö, and ü	44
Pronouncing diphthongs	45
Pronouncing consonants	46
Pronouncing combinations of consonants.....	48
Getting Formal or Informal.....	49
Saying “Hello,” “Goodbye,” and “How Are You?”	50
Asking “How are you?”	51
Replying to “How are you?”	52
Introducing Yourself and Your Friends	54
Introducing your friends.....	54
Introductions for special occasions	55
Introducing yourself	56
Chapter 4: Getting Numbers, Time, and Measurements Straight ...	61
Juggling Numbers	61
Telling Time.....	63
Asking for the time.....	63
Telling time with the 12-hour clock.....	64
Using the 24-hour system	65
Times of the day.....	65
Days of the week	66
Naming the Months	68
Measurements, Quantities, and Weights.....	69
Chapter 5: Talking about Home and Family	73
Living in an Apartment or House.....	73
Describing life within four walls	73
Asking the right questions.....	74
Talking about Your Family	76

Part II: German in Action..... 81**Chapter 6: Getting to Know You: Making Small Talk 83**

Talking about Yourself.....	83
Describing your work.....	83
Providing your name and number(s).....	85
Looking at possessive pronouns	88
Conversing about Cities, Countries, and Nationalities	89
Revealing where you come from.....	89
Using the all-important verb “sein”	90
Asking people where they come from.....	91
Discovering nationalities	93
Chatting about languages you speak.....	94
Making Small Talk about the Weather	96
Noting what it’s like out there.....	96
Discussing the temperature	97
Describing the day’s weather	98

Chapter 7: Asking for Directions 101

“Wo?” — Asking Where Something Is	101
“Wie weit?” How Far Is It?	103
Going Here and There	104
Asking “How Do I Get There?”.....	105
Using “in” to get into a location	105
Using “nach” to get to a city or country	106
Using “zu” to get to institutions	106
Describing a Position or Location in Relation to Some Other Place.....	108
Getting Your Bearings Straight with Left, Right, North, and South.....	110
Left, right, straight ahead	110
The cardinal points.....	111
Taking This or That Street.....	112
Using Ordinal Numbers: First, Second, Third, and More	112
Traveling by Car or Other Vehicle	116

Chapter 8: Guten Appetit! Dining Out and Going to the Market . . . 119

Hast du Hunger? Hast du Durst?.....	119
All about Meals	121
Setting the Table for a Meal	121
Dining Out: Visiting a Restaurant	122
Deciding where to eat.....	122
Making reservations	124
Arriving and being seated.....	127

Deciphering the menu	128
Placing your order	132
Applying the subjunctive to express your wishes.....	132
Using modals to modify what you say	134
Ordering something special	135
Replying to “How did you like the food?”	135
Asking for the check.....	136
Shopping for Food	138
Knowing where to shop	138
Finding what you need	139
Chapter 9: Shopping Made Easy	143
Places to Shop around Town	143
Finding Out about Opening Hours.....	144
Navigating Your Way around a Store.....	144
Just Browsing: Taking a Look at Merchandise	146
Getting Assistance as You Shop	146
Shopping for Clothes.....	147
Familiarizing yourself with the colors available	149
Knowing your size.....	150
Trying on the items you find	152
Paying for Your Shopping Items	154
Comparatively Speaking: Making Comparisons Among Objects.....	156
Chapter 10: Going Out on the Town.	159
What Would You Like to Do?	159
Going to the Movies	160
Getting to the show	160
Buying tickets.....	161
What Was That? The Simple Past Tense of “Sein”	163
Going to the Museum	164
Talking about Action in the Past	166
Forming the past participle	167
Using “haben” in the perfect tense.....	168
Using “sein” in the perfect tense.....	170
Going Out for Entertainment.....	171
How Was It? Talking about Entertainment	173
Asking for an opinion	173
Telling people what you think.....	173
Going to a Party	175
Getting an invitation	175
Talking about a party	176
Chapter 11: Taking Care of Business and Telecommunications. . .	179
Phoning Made Simple.....	179
Asking for your party	180
Making the connection.....	181

Making Appointments	184
Leaving Messages	185
A Few Words about Dative Pronouns	186
Sending Written Correspondence	187
Sending a letter or postcard.....	188
E-mailing.....	189
Sending a fax.....	190
Getting to Know the Office	191
Mastering your desk and supplies.....	192
Doing business in German	193
Chapter 12: Recreation and the Great Outdoors	197
Playing Sports	197
Playing around with the verb “spielen”	197
Verbalizing sports you enjoy	198
Inviting someone to play.....	199
Using Reflexive Verbs to Talk about Plans	200
Getting reflexive	201
Accusing and dating your pronouns	201
Some common reflexive verbs	202
Reflexive verbs that are flexible.....	204
Exploring the Outdoors	205
Getting out and going	205
Things to see along the way	206
Going to the mountains.....	208
Going to the country	210
Going to the sea	211
Part III: German on the Go	215
Chapter 13: Planning a Trip	217
Getting Help from a Travel Agent.....	217
Planning Ahead: Using the Future Tense.....	220
Describing events in specific months	221
Naming specific times in the months	221
Rethinking Dates	222
Dealing with Passports and Visas	223
The all-important passport.....	223
Inquiring about visas.....	224
Chapter 14: Making Sense of Euros and Cents	227
Changing Currency.....	227
Heading to the ATM	230
Getting Imperative.....	232
Understanding the Euro and Other Currencies.....	233

Chapter 15: Getting Around: Planes, Trains, Taxis, and Buses	235
Using German at the Airport	235
Getting your ticket	236
Checking in	236
Going through immigration	239
Going through customs	240
Traveling by Car	241
Renting a car	241
Making sense of maps	243
Wrapping your brain around road signs	244
Taking a Train	244
Interpreting train schedules	245
Getting information	245
Buying tickets	246
Knowing When to Separate Your Verbs	248
Navigating Buses, Subways, and Taxis	249
Catching the bus	249
Getting a taxi	251
Chapter 16: Finding a Place to Stay	253
Finding a Hotel	253
Reserving Rooms	254
Saying when and how long you want to stay	254
Specifying the kind of room you want	255
Asking about the price	256
Finalizing the reservation	256
Checking In	258
Stating how long you're staying	258
Filling out the registration form	259
Getting keyed in	260
Asking about amenities and facilities	260
Checking Out and Paying the Bill	263
Asking for your bill	263
Asking small favors	264
Chapter 17: Handling Emergencies	269
Requesting Help	269
Shouting for help	269
Reporting a problem	270
Asking for English-speaking help	270
Getting Medical Attention	271
Describing what ails you	271
Telling about any special conditions	272
Getting an examination	273
Specifying parts of the body	274
Getting the diagnosis	275
Getting treatment	278

Talking to the Police.....	280
Describing what was stolen.....	280
Answering questions from the police	281
Getting legal help	282

Part IV: The Part of Tens..... 285

Chapter 18: Ten Ways to Pick Up German Quickly287

Labeling the World Around You	287
Organizing Useful Expressions	287
Writing Shopping Lists.....	288
Thinking in German	288
Using Language CDs and Downloads	289
Watching German TV and Listening to German Radio Online.....	289
Trying an Interactive German Program	289
Watching German Movies.....	289
Reading German Publications.....	290
Eating German Cuisine.....	290

Chapter 19: Ten Things Never to Say in German291

Using the Right Form of Address.....	291
Addressing Service People Correctly	291
Hot or Cold?	292
I'm Not Loaded.....	292
Speaking of the Law with Respect.....	292
Using "Gymnasium" Correctly	293
Knowing the Appropriate Form of "Know"	293
Going to the Right Closet.....	293
Using Bekommen Properly.....	294
Using the Right Eating Verb	294

Chapter 20: Ten Favorite German Expressions295

Alles klar!	295
Wirklich.....	295
Kein Problem.....	295
Vielleicht	296
Doch	296
Unglaublich!.....	296
Hoffentlich	296
Wie schön!	297
Genau!	297
Stimmt's?	297

Chapter 21: Ten Phrases That Make You Sound German	299
Schönes Wochenende!	299
Gehen wir!.....	299
Was ist los?.....	299
Das klingt gut!.....	299
Keine Ahnung.....	300
Es zieht!.....	300
Nicht zu fassen!.....	300
Du hast Recht!/Sie haben Recht!.....	300
Lass es!.....	300
Nicht schlecht!	300
 Part V: Appendixes	 301
Appendix A: Mini-Dictionary	303
Appendix B: Verb Tables	321
Regular Verbs (No Stem Vowel Change)	321
Special Conjugations	322
Irregular and Modal Verbs	324
Appendix C: On the CD	333
Track Listing.....	333
Customer Care	335
Appendix C: Answer Key	337
 Index.....	 341

Introduction



We are the players in a fascinating era, one that interconnects us with others all around the world. With globalization and technology as the driving forces, we find ourselves getting in closer and closer contact with more and more people. As a result, knowing how to say at least a few words in a language such as German is becoming an ever-more-vital tool.

Our natural curiosity to find out about other cultures motivates us to hop on a plane and find out firsthand what everyday life is like in the German-speaking regions: Germany, Austria, Switzerland, South Tyrol in northern Italy, Luxembourg, and Liechtenstein. Conducting international business in an increasingly competitive market necessitates personal contact; hence, more businesspeople are traveling overseas to countries like Germany, which has the largest economy in the European Union. On a more personal level, you may have friends, relatives, and neighbors who speak German, or you may want to get in touch with your heritage by learning a little bit of the language that your ancestors spoke.

Whatever your reasons for wanting to learn some German, *German For Dummies*, 2nd Edition, is a terrific choice because it gives you the skills you need for basic communication in German. We're not promising super fluency here, but if you want to know how to greet someone, purchase a train ticket, or order food from a menu in German, you need look no further than this book.

About This Book

German For Dummies, 2nd Edition, is set up so that you can use it any way you want to — as a reference to dip into for specific questions you have about German, as a means of gaining knowledge of German in a systematic way, or just for the fun of getting the feel for another language. Perhaps your goal is to learn some words and phrases to help you get around when you travel to a German-speaking country. Maybe you simply want to be able to say “Hello, how are you?” to your German-speaking neighbor. At any rate, you can go through this book at your own pace, reading as much or as little at a time as you like. You don't need to plod through the chapters in order, either; you're welcome to read the sections that interest you most.

Conventions Used in This Book

To make this book easy for you to navigate, we've set up a few conventions:

- ✔ German terms are set in **boldface** to make them stand out.
- ✔ Pronunciation is set in parentheses following the German terms, and the stressed syllables are italicized.
- ✔ English translations are italicized. You'll find them set in parentheses following the pronunciation of German terms or sentences.
- ✔ In some cases, German speakers use the same pronunciation as English speakers for words, many of which are borrowed from English or other languages. When such words are pronounced the same way in German as in English, you'll see the English word in the pronunciation followed by the notation "as in English" rather than the usual phonetic pronunciation. Of course, if the pronunciation differs between the English and German, we include the German pronunciation as usual.
- ✔ Verb conjugations (lists that show you the forms of a verb) are given in tables in this order:
 - The "I" form
 - The "you" (singular, informal [or sing. inf.]) form
 - The "you" (singular, formal [or sing. form.]) form
 - The "he, she, it" form
 - The "we" form
 - The "you" (plural, informal [or pl. inf.]) form
 - The "you" (plural, formal [or pl. form.]) form
 - The "they" form

Pronunciations follow in the second column. The example shown uses the verb "to be." The conjugation starts with the German equivalent of "I am, you are," and so on.

Conjugation

ich bin

du bist

Sie sind

er, sie, es ist

Pronunciation

iH bin

dooh bist

zee zint

êr, zee, ês ist

Conjugation

wir sind
ihr seid
Sie sind
sie sind

Pronunciation

veer zint
eer zayt
zee zint
zee zint

To help you make fast progress in German, this book includes a few elements to help you along:

- ✔ **Talkin' the Talk dialogues:** The best way to learn a language is to see and hear how it's used in conversation, so we include dialogues throughout the book. The dialogues come under the heading "Talkin' the Talk" and show you the German words, their pronunciations, and the English translations.
- ✔ **Words to Know blackboards:** Acquiring key words and phrases is also important in language learning, so we collect these important words in sections that resemble chalkboards, with the heading "Words to Know." **Note:** In the pronunciations given in these sections, the stressed syllables are underlined rather than italicized.
- ✔ **Fun & Games activities:** If you want to flex your new language muscles, you can use the Fun & Games activities to reinforce what you learn. These activities are fun ways to check your progress.

Also note that, because each language has its own ways of expressing ideas, the English translations that we provide for the German terms may not be exactly literal. We want you to know the essence of what's being said, not just the meanings of single words. For example, the phrase **Es geht** (ê's geyt) can be translated literally as *It goes*, but the phrase is actually the equivalent of *So, so, or Okay*, which is what you see as the translation.

Foolish Assumptions

To write this book, we made some assumptions about who you are and what you hope to gain from this book:

- ✔ You know no German — or if you took German somewhere in your deep, dark past, you don't remember much more than **Ja, Nein, Kindergarten, Guten Tag, and auf Wiedersehen.**

- ✔ You're primarily interested in communicating verbally in German, not in reading or writing German.
- ✔ You're definitely not looking for a ho-hum textbook that puts you to sleep, nor do you want to plod through monotonous language exercises that drill German into your brain. You just want to know some practical words, phrases, and sentence constructions so that you can communicate basic information in German — with confidence.
- ✔ You have no interest in memorizing long lists of bookish-sounding vocabulary words or a bunch of boring grammar rules.
- ✔ You're excited about German and are looking forward to having some fun as you pick up a bit of the language.

If any or all of these statements apply to you, you've found the right book!

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided by topic: first into parts and then into chapters. The following sections tell you what types of information you can find in each part.

Part I: Getting Started

This part gets you acclimated by providing you with some German basics: how to pronounce words, how to form sentences, and so on. You find a wealth of basic survival-type expressions such as greetings and numbers. We even challenge you to boost your confidence by activating some German words that you probably already know. Finally, we outline the basics of German grammar that you may need to know when you work through later chapters in the book.

Part II: German in Action

In this part, you begin learning and using German. Instead of focusing on grammar points as many dull, dusty language textbooks do, this part focuses on communicating effectively in everyday situations, such as shopping, asking for directions, going to a museum, dining, phoning, and lots more.

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