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*German*  
FOR  
DUMMIES®  
2ND EDITION





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



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# Contents at a Glance

.....

<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b><i>Part I: Getting Started</i></b> .....	<b>7</b>
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
<b><i>Part II: German in Action</i></b> .....	<b>81</b>
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
<b><i>Part III: German on the Go</i></b> .....	<b>215</b>
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
<b><i>Part IV: The Part of Tens</i></b> .....	<b>285</b>
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

---

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

---

# 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
<b>Chapter 3: Hallo! Pronunciation and Basic Expressions .....</b>	<b>41</b>
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
<b>Chapter 4: Getting Numbers, Time, and Measurements Straight ...</b>	<b>61</b>
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
<b>Chapter 5: Talking about Home and Family .....</b>	<b>73</b>
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
<b>Chapter 9: Shopping Made Easy .....</b>	<b>143</b>
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
<b>Chapter 10: Going Out on the Town. ....</b>	<b>159</b>
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
<b>Chapter 11: Taking Care of Business and Telecommunications. . .</b>	<b>179</b>
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
<b>Chapter 12: Recreation and the Great Outdoors .....</b>	<b>197</b>
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
<b>Part III: German on the Go .....</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>Chapter 13: Planning a Trip .....</b>	<b>217</b>
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
<b>Chapter 14: Making Sense of Euros and Cents .....</b>	<b>227</b>
Changing Currency.....	227
Heading to the ATM .....	230
Getting Imperative.....	232
Understanding the Euro and Other Currencies.....	233

<b>Chapter 15: Getting Around: Planes, Trains, Taxis, and Buses . . . .</b>	<b>235</b>
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
<b>Chapter 16: Finding a Place to Stay . . . . .</b>	<b>253</b>
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
<b>Chapter 17: Handling Emergencies . . . . .</b>	<b>269</b>
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 Quickly . . . . .287**

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 German . . . . .291**

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 Expressions . . . . .295**

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

<b>Chapter 21: Ten Phrases That Make You Sound German</b> . . . . .	<b>299</b>
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
 <b>Part V: Appendixes</b> .....	 <b>301</b>
<b>Appendix A: Mini-Dictionary</b> .....	<b>303</b>
<b>Appendix B: Verb Tables</b> .....	<b>321</b>
Regular Verbs (No Stem Vowel Change) .....	321
Special Conjugations .....	322
Irregular and Modal Verbs .....	324
<b>Appendix C: On the CD</b> .....	<b>333</b>
Track Listing.....	333
Customer Care .....	335
<b>Appendix C: Answer Key</b> .....	<b>337</b>
 <b>Index</b> .....	 <b>341</b>

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# Introduction



**W**e 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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