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*German*  
FOR  
DUMMIES®  
2ND EDITION





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



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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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