

lonely planet

≡ *Fast Talk*

German

GUARANTEED TO GET YOU TALKING





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Before You Go

It is possible to travel in Germany without speaking a word of German, but just a few phrases go a long way in making friends, inviting service with a smile, and ensuring a rich and rewarding travel experience – you could discover a hidden Berlin bar, find the best new fashion boutiques, or be able to buy last-minute tickets to the opera.

PRONUNCIATION TIPS

The sounds of German can almost all be found in English, and if you read our coloured pronunciation guides as if they were English you'll have no problems being understood. The stressed syllables are indicated with italics.

★ The few sounds that do differ from English include the **ü** (pronounced as the 'ee' in 'see' with rounded lips), plus **kh** (pronounced at the back of the throat, like in the Scottish *loch*) and **r** (also throaty, a bit like gargling).

★ Vowels are pronounced crisply and cleanly, with your

mouth tenser than in English, eg *Tee* is pronounced **tay**, not *tay-ee*.

★ Note also that **zh** is pronounced as the 's' in 'pleasure'.

MUST-KNOW GRAMMAR

The structure of German holds no major surprises for English speakers since the two languages are quite closely related.

★ German has a formal and informal word for 'you' (*Sie zee* and *du doo* respectively). When talking to someone familiar or younger than you, use the informal *du* form.

Phrases in this book use the form that is appropriate to the situation. Where both forms can be used, they are indicated by **pol** and **inf** respectively.

★ German also distinguishes between masculine and feminine forms of words, eg *Freund*/*Freundin* **froynt/froyn-din** (friend), indicated in this book by **m** and **f**. German also has neuter nouns, indicated with **n** where required.

★ German words can have a number of different endings, depending on their role in the sentence (it's similar to some verbs in English, eg 'I do' vs 'he/she **does**'). Travellers don't need to worry too much about this though – if you use the dictionary form of a word in all contexts, you'll still be understood.

SOUNDS FAMILIAR?

Numerous German words are already part of the English vocabulary – you're sure to recognise *kindergarten*, *kitsch*, *waltz*, *hamburger*, *poodle*...

Fast Talk German

Don't worry if you've never learnt German (*Deutsch* **doytsh**) before – it's all about confidence. You don't need to memorise endless grammatical details or long lists of vocabulary – you just need to start speaking. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain when the locals hear you making an effort. And remember that body language and a sense of humour have a role to play in every culture.

“you just need to start speaking”

Even if you use the very basics, such as greetings and civilities, your travel experience will be the better for it. Once you start, you'll be amazed how many prompts you'll get to help you build on those first words. You'll hear people speaking, pick up sounds and expressions from the locals, catch a word or two that you know from TV already, see something on a billboard – all these things help to build your understanding.

5.

Phrases to Learn Before You Go

1.

Do you accept credit cards?

Nehmen Sie Kreditkarten?

nay·men zee kre·deet·kar·ten

Cash payment is still common in Germany, so don't assume you'll be able to pay by credit card – it's best to enquire first.

2.

Which beer would you recommend?

Welches Bier empfehlen Sie?

vel·khes beer emp·fay·len zee

Who better to ask for advice on beer than the Germans, whether at a beer garden, hall, cellar or on a brewery tour?

3.

Can I get this without meat?

Kann ich das ohne Fleisch bekommen?

kan ikh das aw·ne flaish be·ko·men

In the land of *Wurst* and *Schnitzel* it may be difficult to find a variety of vegetarian meals, especially in smaller towns.

4.

A (non)smoking table, please.

Einen (Nicht)Rauchertisch, bitte.

ai·nen (nikht·)row·kher·tish bi·te

Germany and Austria have only partial smoking bans, so you may want to choose where to sit in cafes, bars and restaurants.

5.

Do you run original versions?

Spielen auch Originalversionen?

shpee·len owkh o·ri·gi·nahl·fer·zi·aw·nen

German cinemas usually run movies dubbed into German – look for a cinema that runs subtitled original versions.

10.

Phrases to Sound Like a Local

Hey! **Hey!** hei

Great! **Toll!** tol

Cool! **Spitze!** shpi·tse

No problem. **Kein Problem.** kain pro·blaym

Sure. **Klar!** klahr

Maybe. **Vielleicht.** fi·laikht

No way! **Auf keinen Fall!** owf kai·nen fal

It's OK. **Alles klar.** a·les klahr

What a pity! **Schade!** shah·de

Doesn't matter. **Macht nichts.** makht nikhts