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GERMAN LESSON

Basic Conversation 1 · Chapter 1 · Greetings & Goodbyes

German Basic Conversation 1

Chapter 1 · Greetings & Goodbyes

Greetings & Goodbyes — Begrüßungen und Verabschiedungen

Your very first German conversations: saying hello and goodbye, asking how someone is, being polite, and choosing between the formal and informal way to speak. No German needed — everything is spelled out for you, including how to say it.

How to Say It — Aussprache

German is spelled much more consistently than English. Learn these few sounds and you can read almost any word aloud. Each phrase below also comes with a pronunciation guide — CAPITALS show the stressed part.

ei = "eye" (nein) **ie** = "ee" (bitte, Wiedersehen) **eu / äu** = "oy" (neu) **w** = "v" (Wie = vee)
v = usually "f" (Vater) **z** = "ts" (Zeit) **s** before a vowel = "z" (sehr) **sch** = "sh" (schlecht)
sp / st at the start = "shp / sht" (sprechen) **ch** = a soft breathy sound (ich) or a throaty one (noch)
ä = "eh" (später) **ö** = "ur", lips rounded (schön) **ü** = "ee" with lips rounded (tschüss)
ß = "ss" (Grüß Gott) **j** = "y" (ja)

Six Short Conversations — Gespräche

Read each one aloud, using the pronunciation line. Speaking out loud, even alone, is the fastest way to make these phrases feel natural.

① Good Morning (formal) — Guten Morgen

A:

Guten Morgen, Frau Weber!

GOO-ten MOR-gen, frow VAY-ber

② Meeting a Friend (informal) — Hallo!

A:

Hallo, Anna! Wie geht's?

HAH-lo, AH-nah! vee GAYTS

Hello, Anna! How's it going?

Good morning, Mrs Weber!

B:

Guten Morgen! Wie geht es Ihnen?

GOO-ten MOR-gen! vee gayt es EE-nen

Good morning! How are you?

A:

Sehr gut, danke. Und Ihnen?

zair goot, DAHN-kuh. oont EE-nen

Very well, thank you. And you?

B:

Auch gut, danke.

owkh goot, DAHN-kuh

Also well, thank you.

B:

Hallo, Tom! Super, danke. Und dir?

HAH-lo, tom! ZOO-per, DAHN-kuh. oont

DEER

Hello, Tom! Great, thanks. And you?

A:

Es geht. Nicht so gut.

es GAYT. nikht zo GOOT

So-so. Not so good.

③ Afternoon & Evening — Guten Tag, Guten Abend

A:

Guten Tag, Herr Schmidt.

GOO-ten TAHK, hair SHMIT

Good day, Mr Schmidt.

B:

Guten Tag, Frau Keller.

GOO-ten TAHK, frow KEL-ler

Good day, Mrs Keller.

A:

Guten Abend! Schön, Sie zu sehen.

GOO-ten AH-bent! SHURN, zee tsoo ZAY-en

Good evening! Nice to see you. (later that day)

④ Please, Thanks & Sorry — Bitte, Danke, Entschuldigung

A:

Oh, Entschuldigung!

oh, ent-SHUL-dee-goong

Oh, sorry! / Excuse me!

B:

Kein Problem!

kine pro-BLAYM

No problem!

A:

Bitte schön. — Danke schön!

BIT-tuh SHURN — DAHN-kuh SHURN

Here you go / please. — Thank you very much!

B:

Gern geschehen.

GAIRN geh-SHAY-en

You're welcome. (literally "gladly happened")

⑤ Formal Goodbye — Auf Wiedersehen

A:

Auf Wiedersehen, Herr Braun!

owf VEE-der-zay-en, hair BROWN

Goodbye, Mr Braun!

B:

Auf Wiedersehen! Einen schönen
Tag noch!

owf VEE-der-zay-en! EYE-nen SHUR-nen

TAHK nokh

Goodbye! Have a nice day!

A:

Danke, gleichfalls!

DAHN-kuh, GLYKH-fahls

Thanks, likewise!

⑥ Casual Goodbye & Good Night — Tschüss, Gute Nacht

A:

Tschüss, Max! Bis morgen!

tshüss, MAX! biss MOR-gen

Bye, Max! See you tomorrow!

B:

Tschüss! Mach's gut!

tshüss! MAHKHS GOOT

Bye! Take care!

A:

Gute Nacht, Lisa! Schlaf gut!

GOO-tuh NAHKHT, LEE-zah! SHLAHF GOOT

Good night, Lisa! Sleep well!

B:

Danke, du auch!

DAHN-kuh, doo OWKH

Thanks, you too!

Key Phrases at a Glance — Wichtige Sätze

The formal way (with Sie) is for strangers, shops, hotels, work and anyone older; the informal way (with du) is for friends, family, children and people your own age in relaxed settings.

SITUATION	FORMAL	INFORMAL
Hello (morning)	Guten Morgen	Guten Morgen / Morgen!
Hello (daytime)	Guten Tag	Hallo / Tag!
Hello (evening)	Guten Abend	Guten Abend / Hallo
How are you?	Wie geht es Ihnen?	Wie geht's? / Wie geht es dir?
Fine, thanks. And you?	Gut, danke. Und Ihnen?	Gut, danke. Und dir?

SITUATION	FORMAL	INFORMAL
Goodbye	Auf Wiedersehen	Tschüss / Bis später / Bis morgen

ANSWERING "HOW ARE YOU?"	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
Super!	ZOO-per	Great!
Sehr gut.	zair GOOT	Very good.
Gut, danke.	GOOT, DAHN-kuh	Good, thanks.
Es geht.	es GAYT	So-so. / It's OK.
Nicht so gut.	nikht zo GOOT	Not so good.
Schlecht.	shlekht	Bad.

Sie or du? — The Formal / Informal Split

German has two words for "you". *Sie* (always with a capital S, and paired with *Ihnen* in "Wie geht es Ihnen?") is polite and formal; *du* (with *dir* in "Und dir?") is friendly and informal. English has just "you", so this is new — but the rule of thumb is simple: **when in doubt, use Sie**. Nobody is offended by being addressed too politely, and if a German wants you to switch to *du*, they'll offer it ("Wir können uns duzen").

Survival Phrases — Wenn Sie etwas nicht verstehen

Four phrases every beginner needs. You'll use them in every chapter of this course.

GERMAN	PRONUNCIATION	ENGLISH
Ich verstehe nicht.	ikh fer-SHTAY-uh nikht	I don't understand.
Noch einmal, bitte.	nokh INE-mahl, BIT-tuh	Once more, please.
Langsamer, bitte.	LAHNG-zah-mer, BIT-tuh	Slower, please.
Sprechen Sie Englisch?	SHPREKH-en zee ENG-lish	Do you speak English?



Vocabulary — Wortschatz

20 key words and phrases from this chapter. German nouns are always written with a capital letter, and each has a gender shown by its article: *der* (masculine) or *die* (feminine). Learn the article together with the noun.

#	GERMAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE	NOTE
1	hallo	HAH-lo	hello	phrase	works any time, any place, mostly informal
2	guten Morgen	GOO-ten MOR-gen	good morning	phrase	until late morning
3	guten Tag	GOO-ten TAHK	good day / hello	phrase	from late morning until early evening
4	guten Abend	GOO-ten AH- bent	good evening	phrase	a greeting, not a goodbye
5	gute Nacht	GOO-tuh NAHKHT	good night	phrase	only when going to bed or parting late
6	auf Wiedersehen	owf VEE-der- zay-en	goodbye	phrase	formal; literally "until we see again"
7	tschüss	tshüss	bye	phrase	informal
8	bis später	biss SHPAY-ter	see you later	phrase	bis = until
9	bis morgen	biss MOR-gen	see you tomorrow	phrase	
10	danke	DAHN-kuh	thank you	phrase	danke schön = thank you very much
11	bitte	BIT-tuh	please / you're welcome	phrase	one word, two jobs
12	Entschuldigung	ent-SHUL-dee- goong	sorry / excuse me	phrase	also used to get someone's attention

#	GERMAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	TYPE	NOTE
13	ja	<i>yah</i>	yes	phrase	
14	nein	<i>nine</i>	no	phrase	
15	gut	<i>goot</i>	good / well	adj	"Wie geht's?" — "Gut."
16	schlecht	<i>shlekht</i>	bad	adj	
17	sehr	<i>zair</i>	very	adv	<i>sehr gut</i> = very good
18	und	<i>oont</i>	and	word	"Und dir?" = And you?
19	der Herr	<i>hair</i>	Mr / gentleman	noun	used before a surname: <i>Herr Braun</i>
20	die Frau	<i>frow</i>	Mrs / Ms / woman	noun	<i>Frau Weber</i> (no separate <i>Miss</i> in modern use)

Real German Tip — Regional Greetings

Once you travel, you'll hear other greetings. In the north, *Moin* (say it any time of day) is very common. In Bavaria and Austria you'll hear *Servus* (hello and goodbye) and *Grüß Gott* (hello, literally "greet God" — used by everyone, not only the religious). In German-speaking Switzerland it's *Grüezi*. *Hallo* and *Guten Tag* work everywhere, so stick with those until you're comfortable. Germans also commonly shake hands when meeting or leaving in formal and work situations.

Quick Grammar Note — Gute Nacht vs. Guten Abend

Notice the endings: *guten* Morgen / Tag / Abend but *gute* Nacht. The ending changes because the nouns have different genders (Morgen, Tag, Abend are masculine; Nacht is feminine). You don't need to understand this yet — just memorise the four phrases as they are. The system behind it arrives in later chapters.

Try It Yourself — Übungen

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. It's 8 a.m. and you meet your neighbour, Frau Weber. What do you say?

▼ Show answer

Guten Morgen, Frau Weber! (You'd use Sie with a neighbour you don't know well.)

2. You bump into a friend. Say hello and ask how they are.

▼ Show answer

Hallo! Wie geht's? (or: Wie geht es dir?)

3. Your boss asks "Wie geht es Ihnen?" Reply that you're very well and ask the same back.

▼ Show answer

Sehr gut, danke. Und Ihnen?

4. A friend is leaving and you'll see them tomorrow. What do you say?

▼ Show answer

Tschüss! Bis morgen!

5. A shop assistant speaks quickly and you don't follow. Ask them to slow down and repeat.

▼ Show answer

Noch einmal, bitte. Langsamer, bitte. (You can add: Ich verstehe nicht.)

Coming Up in Chapter 2

You can now greet people and say goodbye. Next you'll **introduce yourself** — your name, how to say "nice to meet you", and how to ask someone else's name.