

GERMAN VOWELS

Single Vowels

Single Vowel	American English Sound	Comment	Example (English Word)	In American English, Sounds Like:
A	ah	as in Father Short a sounds almost the same.	aber - Hand (but - hand)	AH-ber ~ hahnt
E (long)	ai	1) when e is followed by h 2) when e is followed by an r, especially at beginning of a word (er-, ver-, zer- and her-), but not -er at the end of a multi-syllabic word 3) when the vowel is doubled (ee). See EE below.	sehr - mehr (very - more) wer - heraus (who - out)	zair ~ mair vair ~ hair-OVS
E (short)	eh	as in Sell	Bett - wenn (bed - when)	beht ~ ven
E (final letter of a word)	eh, uh	Should sound like eh sound in Get, but often said like A in Ago.	Leute - Hause (people - house)	LOY-teh ~ HOW-zeh
I (long)	ee	as in Machine	Ire - Irak (Irishman - Iraq)	EE-reh ~ ee-RAHK
I (short)	ih	as in Sit	immer - Wille (always - will)	IM-mer ~ VILL-eh
O (long)	oh	as in Hope	Ofen - oder (stove - or)	OH-fen ~ OH-der

O (short)	aw	like aw sound in Offer	offen - Gottes (open - God)	AW-fen ~ GAW-tess
U	oo (long)	as in Tune	Uhr - Stuhl (clock - stool)	oor ~ shtool
U	-- (short)	as in Push	Hund - Suppe (dog - soup)	hûnt ~ ZÛP-eh

Vowel Followed by an H Gives it a German Long Vowel Sound

Combination	American English Sound	Comment	Example (Meaning)	In American English, Sounds Like:
AH	ah		Gefahr - Sahn (danger - cream)	geh-FAHR ~ zahn
EH	ai		geht - mehr (goes - more)	gait ~ mair
IH	ee		ihn - ihr (him - your)	een ~ eer
OH	oh		ohne - Ohr (without - ear)	OH-neh ~ ohr

Combinations of E and I (almost always sounds like the English name of the second letter)


Combination	American English Sound	Comment	Example (Meaning)	In American English, Sounds Like:
EI	Long I (ī)	as in Heidi	Heilige Geist (Holy Ghost)	HĪ-lig-eh gĭst
IE	ee	as in Piece	wieder - lieben (again - to love)	VEE-der ~ LEE-ben
IE	ee-eh	I and E are sometimes sounded separately if IE is at the end of the word (but not Sie or Glorie)	Linie (line)	LEEN-ee-eh

Other Double Vowels

Vowels	American English Sound	Comment	Example (Meaning)	In American English, Sounds Like:
AA	ah		Staat - Saal (state - hall)	shtaht ~ zahl
AU	ow	like ow in Cow	Baum - glauben (tree - to believe)	bowm ~ GLOW-ben
EE	ai		Beet - Meer	bait ~ mair

			(flower bed - sea)	
EU	oy	like oy in Toy	Leute - Deutschland (people - Germany)	LOY-teh ~ DOYTSH-lahnt

Vowels with an Umlaut (double dot above the letter)

Vowel(s)	American English Sound	Comment	Example (Meaning)	In American English, Sounds Like:
Ä	ai	like in Aid	Jäger - sägen (hunter - saw)	YAI-ger ~ ZAI-gen
	eh	like E in Met	Männer - Hände (men - hands)	MEN-er ~ HEN-deh
ÄÜ	oy	---	Fräulein - Häuser (Miss - houses)	FROY-lin ~ HOY-zer
Ö	eř	with almost no R sound	Flöte - schön (flute - beautiful)	FLEŘT-eh ~ sheřn 
Ü (long)	--	shape lips to say the U in Tune, but say EE	über - Tür (above - door)	 listen
Ü (short)	--	like U in put or push	Brücke - Stück (bridge - piece)	 listen

GERMAN CONSONANTS

Consonants have basically the same sound as in English, with the exceptions shown below.

Consonants Which May Sound Different in German


Single Consonant	American English Sound	Comment		In American English, Sounds Like:
C	TS	before i or e at beginning of word	circa (circa)	TSIHR-kah
	K	otherwise	Cape (cape)	CAH-peh
G	hard as in Go (except as part of NG)	never like a 'j' as in Giraffe or Gin	Glas - Ginster (glass - broom)	glahs ~ GIN-ster
H	H	silent following a vowel (see also TH below)	gehen - Lehrer (go - teacher)	GAI-en ~ LAIR-er
J	Y		ja - Jude (yes - Jew)	yah ~ YOO-deh
QU	KV (never Q alone)		Qualität - quieken (quality - squeal)	kvah-lee-TAIT ~ KVEE-ken
S	Z or S	Z before a vowel	Suppe - Geist (soup - ghost)	ZÛP-eh ~ Gïst
V	F		Vater - Vorschule	FAHT-er ~ FOR-shoo-leh

			(father - nursery school)	
W	V		Wagen - vorweg (cart - beforehand)	VAH-gehn ~ for-VAIK
Y	many sounds			
Z	TS		Zimmer - Zucker (room - sugar)	TSIM-er ~ TSÛK-er

Consonants That Change Their Sound at the End of a Syllable or Word

Consonant	American English Sound	Comment	Words	In American English, Sounds Like:
B	P		lieben - lieb (to love - kind)	LEE-ben ~ leep
D	T		lieder - lied (songs - song)	LEED-er ~ leet
G	K		Vogel - Sieg (bird - victory)	FOH-gel ~ zeek
	<u>HH</u>	Like H in Hubert at end of word if it is after an i	windig - fertig (windy - finished)	VIN-dih<u>h</u> ~ FER-tih<u>h</u>

Double Consonants

Double Consonant	American English Sound	Comment	Words	In American English, Sounds Like:
CH	SH or K	at beginning of a word	Chemie (chemistry)	shai-MEE (kai-MEE in South Germany)
	similar to a strong H	after a vowel (like H in Hubert)	ach - Tochter (oh! - daughter)	 (to keep it simple, ignore all boxes except first)
NG	as in SINGER	<u>not</u> as in the English word finger	Finger - Hunger (finger - hunger)	FINGĚ-er ~ HOONĚ-er (don't use hard g)
SCH	SH	---	Schule - schief (school - crooked)	SHOO-leh ~ sheef
PF & PS	pronounce both letters	---	Pfeffer - Psychologie (pepper - psychology)	PFEF-er ~ psee-KOH-loh-gee

SP	SHP	at beginning of a word	Spiel - Speise (game - food)	shpeel - SHPĪ-zeh
ST	SHT or ST	Normally ST, but SHT at beginning of a word and also in middle of word if it is a compound word that includes a word that begins with ST	stehen - verstehen (stand - understand)	SHTAI-en ~ fair-SHTAI-en
SS or ß	S	SS is sometimes used in place of ß and vice versa. Name of ß is Eszett [ESS-tsett]	Strasse - gross (street - large)	SHTRAHS-eh ~ grohs
TH	T	the H is always silent in TH	These - Apotheke (thesis - pharmacy)	TAI-zeh ~ ah-poh-TAI-keh