

Germanic languages: first steps in German

A language family, not one language

"Germanic languages" names a language family that includes German, English, Dutch and Swedish, among others. "German" names one language. This workbook explores a few similarities between German and English, then gives you exercises for your first conversations in German.

Term	Meaning
Germanic languages	A family of related languages.
German / Deutsch	German: one language in this family.
English and German	Two Germanic languages with different grammar and pronunciation.
French and Spanish	Two Romance languages, rather than Germanic languages.

Your starting point

Which languages do you already use? What would you like to say in German in a first conversation?

Six words to notice similarities

These words share a historical origin. Similar spellings can help you remember them, but they are not pronounced identically. Learn each German word in its own right instead of automatically using English pronunciation.

Deutsch	English	Meaning
Haus	house	a home or building
Wasser	water	water
Hand	hand	a hand
Name	name	a name
Mutter	mother	a mother
Bruder	brother	a brother

German nouns start with a capital letter. Similarity is not a translation rule: check unfamiliar words rather than guessing.

Match without looking at the table

Haus / Bruder / Wasser > water / house / brother

Haus = house; Bruder = brother; Wasser = water.

Say the essentials

For a first conversation, a greeting, your name and your town are enough. Choose two or three phrases and repeat them without reading. These examples practise the basics; they do not define a language level on their own.

Deutsch	Meaning
Guten Tag.	Hello. / Good day.
Hallo.	Hi.
Ich heiße ...	My name is...
Wie heißen Sie?	What is your name? (formal)
Wie heißt du?	What is your name? (informal)
Ich komme aus Marokko.	I come from Morocco.
Ich wohne in Essaouira.	I live in Essaouira.
Freut mich.	Pleased to meet you.

Choose between “du” and “Sie”

“Sie” is the polite form and starts with a capital. “du” is informal. The question and verb change: “Wie heißen Sie?” and “Wie heißt du?”. Keep the same form unless you agree to use informal address.

Deutsch	Meaning
Sprechen Sie bitte langsamer.	Please speak more slowly.
Können Sie das bitte wiederholen?	Could you repeat that, please?
Ich verstehe nicht.	I do not understand.
Danke.	Thank you.
Auf Wiedersehen.	Goodbye. (formal)
Tschüss.	Bye. (informal)

Your turn

Write a formal question asking someone’s name, then its informal version.

Two dialogues to practise

Context	Dialogue
Formal first meeting	A: Guten Tag. Ich heie Sara. Wie heien Sie? B: Ich heie Adam. A: Ich wohne in Essaouira. B: Freut mich.
Between classmates	A: Hallo! Wie heit du? B: Ich heie Lina. Und du? A: Ich heie Sami. B: Freut mich!

Names, prices and situations are practice examples. Always check the actual information at your workplace.

Change one detail

Keep the dialogue, change the names and try again. In the second dialogue, "Und du?" means "And you?".

Write, say and check

1. Complete

Ich ___ Lina. Ich ___ in Essaouira.

2. Ask for repetition

You did not understand the other person. Choose a polite phrase from page 4.

3. Your introduction

Write three true sentences about yourself, then say them without reading.

1. heiÙe; wohne. 2. "Können Sie das bitte wiederholen?" is one possible answer. 3. Check consistent use of "du" or "Sie" and the verb form with "ich".

Further reading

Goethe-Institut: A Glimpse of German(y), lesson 1

Cambridge University Press: The Germanic languages

Explore the course in Essaouira