



DELKI



GERMAN PRONUNCIATION

5 PRACTICAL WAYS TO SPEAK MORE CLEARLY

A practical German-English self-study
guide for clearer, stronger listening, and
more confident conversations

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00 HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Use one small section at a time. Listen first, copy the mouth position, practise the sound in words and phrases, then record yourself. Ten focused minutes is enough for one session.

THE FIVE-SKILL SYSTEM

1. Hear the difference before you try to reproduce it.
2. Give your mouth a clear physical target.
3. Practice sounds inside useful words and complete phrases.
4. Record, compare, and correct one feature at a time.
5. Repeat short sessions frequently instead of cramming.

Your goal is not to remove your accent. Your goal is clear, intelligible German that other people can understand without unnecessary repetition.

BEFORE YOU START

Choose one target sound for the day. Do not try to fix every pronunciation feature at once.

Use headphones when possible and work with short native-speaker recordings.

Keep a voice-note folder called “German Pronunciation” so you can hear your progress over time.



01 LEARN HOW GERMAN SOUNDS ARE PRODUCED

Use a mirror. Make the mouth position obvious at first, then reduce the movement until it feels natural.

TARGET	GERMAN + ENGLISH	MOUTH / SOUND CUE
ü	über – over / about	Say “ee” while keeping the tongue high and forward; round the lips without moving the tongue back.
ö	schön – beautiful	Start from an “eh/e” tongue position and round the lips.
ich-Laut (ch)	ich – I; nicht – not	Keep the sound light and forward. Let air pass through a narrow space near the front/high part of the tongue.
ach-Laut (ch)	Bach – stream; Buch – book	Make the friction farther back in the mouth. Do not turn it into an English k.
z	Zeit – time	German z normally starts with a clear “ts” sound.
w	Wasser – water	German w is normally pronounced like English v.
j	ja – yes	German j is normally pronounced like English y in “yes”.

INDEPENDENT ACTIVITY: MIRROR CHECK

Pick two target sounds from the table.

Say each sound slowly five times while watching your lips and jaw.

Say the example word five times.

Close your eyes and repeat it again. Can you reproduce the same mouth position without the mirror?

Record one final attempt and save it for comparison tomorrow.



02 TRAIN YOUR EARS BEFORE YOUR MOUTH

If two sounds still sound identical to you, repetition alone will not solve the problem. First train your brain to notice the contrast.

WORD A	ENGLISH	WORD B	ENGLISH
bieten	to offer	bitten	to ask / request
fühlen	to feel	füllen	to fill
Ofen	oven	offen	open
schon	already	schön	beautiful
ich	I	ach!	oh! / ah!

5-MINUTE LISTENING DRILL

1. Find a native-speaker recording of one word pair.
2. Listen without looking at the spelling.
3. Decide whether you heard A or B.
4. Check the written word.
5. Repeat the word only after you can hear the difference.

Variation matters. After you become comfortable with one speaker, listen to another voice. The same sound should still be recognisable when pitch, speed, and voice quality change.

INDEPENDENT ACTIVITY: SOUND HUNT

Choose one target, such as ü or the ich-Laut.

Listen to one minute of German audio and write down every word you hear with that sound.

Replay the audio and check your list.

Choose three words and say each one in a short phrase.



03 NOTICE VOWEL LENGTH AND FINAL CONSONANTS

Clear pronunciation is not only about individual letters. German listeners also use vowel length and consonant patterns to recognise words.

EXAMPLE A	EXAMPLE B	WHAT TO NOTICE
bieten – to offer	bitten – to ask / request	Longer vowel vs shorter vowel
Ofen – oven	offen – open	Longer vowel vs shorter vowel
fühlen – to feel	füllen – to fill	Longer vowel vs shorter vowel
Tag – day	Tage – days	At the end of Tag, g is pronounced voiceless; the plural makes the g sound easier to hear.
Hund – dog	Hunde – dogs	Final d is pronounced voiceless; the plural reveals the underlying d.

INDEPENDENT ACTIVITY: RUBBER-BAND VOWELS

Use your hands like a rubber band: pull them slowly apart for a long vowel and keep them close for a short vowel.

Say bieten, then bitten. Say Ofen, then offen.

Record the pair. When you listen back, the length difference should be audible without looking at the words.

DO NOT OVER-CORRECT

German spelling gives useful clues, but pronunciation is not perfectly predictable from letters alone.

When a word matters to you, listen to a reliable native recording and copy the whole word rather than guessing from spelling.



04 PRACTISE COMPLETE PHRASES AND RHYTHM

A sound can be correct in isolation and still disappear in real conversation. Practice it inside short, useful phrases.

GERMAN	ENGLISH	FOCUS
Ich würde gern einen Termin vereinbaren.	I would like to make an appointment.	Sentence stress + rhythm
Könnten Sie das bitte wiederholen?	Could you please repeat that?	Polite rhythm + clear consonants
Wie spät ist es?	What time is it?	Linking words smoothly
Ich hätte gern einen Kaffee.	I would like a coffee.	ä + natural phrase rhythm
Das ist wirklich schön.	That is really beautiful.	w + ö

SHADOWING: 5 STEPS

1. Choose a recording that is only 5–10 seconds long.
2. Listen several times without speaking.
3. Speak along with the recording.
4. Copy the speaker's rhythm, pauses, and emphasis- not only the individual sounds.
5. Record yourself saying the same phrase without the model.

Start slowly. Accuracy comes before speed. Once the phrase feels easy, increase your speed until it matches the model naturally.



05 RECORD YOURSELF AND GIVE SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

Your recording is a diagnostic tool. Compare one feature at a time instead of judging your entire accent.

CHECK	QUESTION
☐	Are the vowels approximately the same length as the model?
☐	Is the word stress in the same place?
☐	Are final consonants clear?
☐	Did I add an extra vowel after a final consonant?
☐	Do the sentence stress and pauses sound similar?
☐	Can I hear my target sound clearly?

THE A-B-A RECORDING METHOD

A: Record your first attempt.

B: Listen to the model again and practise only one feature.

A2: Record the same phrase again.

Compare A and A2. Keep the better version and write down exactly what improved.

Today's target sound or feature:

Model word or phrase:

One thing I hear in the model:

One thing I will change in my next recording:



06 USE A 10-MINUTE DAILY ROUTINE

Short, repeated practice makes pronunciation easier to maintain and easier to fit into normal life.

TIME	TASK	WHAT TO DO
2 minutes	LISTEN	Identify one target sound in several words.
2 minutes	MOUTH	Practise the mouth position slowly in a mirror.
2 minutes	WORDS	Repeat 4–6 words containing the target sound.
2 minutes	PHRASES	Use the words in complete phrases or short sentences.
2 minutes	RECORD	Record one phrase and compare it with a native model.

7-DAY PRONUNCIATION CHALLENGE

Day 1 — ü and ö: mirror + word practice

Day 2 — ich-Laut and ach-Laut: listen + compare

Day 3 — z, w, and j: word hunt in real audio

Day 4 — vowel length: minimal-pair practice

Day 5 — phrase rhythm: shadow three short phrases

Day 6 — recording day: repeat one phrase until you hear a clear improvement

Day 7 — review: replay Day 1 and Day 6 recordings and choose the next target



07 BUILD YOUR OWN INDEPENDENT PRACTICE SET

Personal words are easier to remember. Use names, work vocabulary, places, and phrases you actually need in Germany.

MY TARGET	GERMAN WORD / PHRASE	ENGLISH	WHAT I WILL LISTEN FOR
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

HOW TO BUILD THE SET

Choose five words you regularly use but do not pronounce confidently.

Find a native recording for each word.

Write one short German phrase for each word and add the English translation.

Practise the set for three days before replacing it.

My most difficult sound this week:

The word I improved most:

The phrase I can now say confidently:

My target for next week:



08 FINAL QUICK REFERENCE

Use this page before a speaking lesson, phone call, appointment, meeting, or German conversation.

WHEN YOU NOTICE...	DO THIS
I cannot hear the difference.	Return to listening. Use two contrasting words and identify them before speaking.
I know the sound but cannot make it.	Slow down and practise the mouth position in a mirror.
The word sounds good alone but unclear in conversation.	Put it into a short phrase and shadow a native recording.
Everything sounds wrong in my recording.	Choose only one feature to correct.
I forget the sound after a few days.	Return to it in short review sessions instead of starting from zero.
I feel pressured to sound “native”.	Refocus on intelligibility, clarity, and confident communication.

YOUR SIMPLE PRONUNCIATION FORMULA

LISTEN → NOTICE → COPY → USE IN A PHRASE → RECORD → CORRECT ONE THING → REPEAT

09 LEARN PRACTICAL GERMAN WITH DELKI

At DELKI, pronunciation is integrated into practical speaking lessons. Learners receive targeted feedback on individual sounds, word stress, rhythm, intonation, and phrases they can use in real conversations.

Our goal is not perfect German. Our goal is German you can use with clarity and confidence.

START YOUR GERMAN LEARNING PLAN

Explore DELKI German courses and practical speaking support.

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