

# Introduction to the Pronunciation of German Consonants

(a simplified guide for Americans learning German)

## ! single letters representing consonantal sounds

### German characters

↓ approximate equivalent English pronunciation

↓ German words with “fake” English pronunciation

↓

<b>ß</b>	“ss”	<b>heißen</b> [HICE un] <b>groß</b> [grow-ss] <b>fleißig</b> [FLY sixh]
<b>w</b>	“v”	<b>Wagen</b> [VAH gun] <b>Wind</b> [vint] <b>Wort</b> [vo-ut]
<b>s</b>	“z”	<b>sieben</b> [ZEE bun] <b>Sommer</b> [ZO muh] <b>Sonntag</b> [ZONE talk]
<b>v</b>	“f”	<b>viel</b> [feel] <b>vier</b> [fee-uh] <b>vierzehn</b> [FEE-uh tsane]
<b>v</b>	“v”	(only in borrowed words - not of German origin) <b>Vase</b> [VAH zuh]
<b>z</b>	“ts”	<b>zu</b> [tsoo] <b>schwarz</b> [shvah-uts] <b>zwei</b> [tsv-eye]
<b>b</b>	“p”	(only at end of word) <b>ab</b> [opp] <b>ob</b> [ope] <b>halb</b> [halp]
<b>d</b>	“t”	(only at end of word) <b>Abend</b> [AH bent] <b>Bild</b> [bilt]
<b>g</b>	“k”	(only at end of word) <b>Tag</b> [talk] <b>Zug</b> [took] (see below for “-ig”)
<b>c</b>	“ts”	<b>Celsius</b> [TSELL zee ooss] <b>CD-Spieler</b> [tsay DAY schpee luh]
<b>j</b>	“y”	<b>ja</b> [ya] <b>jeder</b> [YAY duh] <b>Januar</b> [YAWN wah-uh] <b>jawohl</b> [yah VOLE]

## ! letter combinations representing consonantal sounds

### German character combinations

↓ approximate equivalent English pronunciation

↓ German words with “fake” English pronunciation

↓

<b>sch</b>	“sh”	<b>Schule</b> [SHOE luh] <b>schwimmen</b> [SHVIMM un]
<b>tsch</b>	“ch”	<b>tschüß</b> [chee-ss (“ee” with rounded lips)] <b>Deutsch</b> [doich]
<b>st-</b>	“scht-“	(only at beginning of word) <b>Straße</b> [SCHTRAW suh] <b>Stuhl</b> [schtool] <b>Student</b> [schtoo DENT]
<b>sp-</b>	“schp-“	(only at beginning of word) <b>spielen</b> [SCHPEE lun] <b>spät</b> [schpate] <b>Spaß</b> [shpawss]
<b>-er</b>	“uh”	(at end of word “er” is a vowel) <b>bitter</b> [BIT uh] <b>Bruder</b> [BROO duh]
<b>r</b>	-	(a gargling sound in the throat) <b>grau</b> [graou] <b>rot</b> [rote]
<b>qu</b>	“kv”	<b>Qualität</b> [kvah lee TATE] <b>Quantität</b> [kvan tee TATE] <b>quitt</b> [kvit]
<b>ch</b>	-	(like the “ch” in Scottish “loch”) <b>ich</b> [ixh] <b>Buch</b> [boo-xh]
<b>-ig</b>	-	(like the “ch” in Scottish “loch” <b>dreißig</b> [DRY sixh] <b>windig</b> [VINN dixh] - dialects along the Rhine river pronounce “ig?” and “ich” as [ish] windig = [VIN dish] - some dialects (primarily in the south) pronounce “ig?” as [ick] windig = [VIN dick]