

German IPA

Orthographic Vowels

	IPA Closed / Open	Examples	Remarks
a	[a:] [a]	<u>V</u> ater / <u>W</u> asser [fa: tər] [va sər]	Final “e” or within a prefix is unstressed and muted (called the shwa) The underlined syllables in the examples are stressed.
e	[e] [ɛ] [ə]	Ewig <u>B</u> ett <u>L</u> iebe <u>g</u> esund [e: viç] [bət] [l: bət] [gə zʊnt]	
i	[i] [ɪ]	<u>B</u> ibel / <u>K</u> inder [bi: bəl] [kɪn dər]	
o	[o] [ɔ]	Rose / <u>k</u> ommen [rɔ zə] [kɔ mən]	
u	[u] [ʊ]	Musik / <u>M</u> utter [mu zik] [mʊ tər]	
y	[y] [ʏ] [i] [j]	<u>L</u> yrik / <u>R</u> hythmus / Tyrol / York [ly rik] [ryt mʊs] [ti: rəl] [jɔrk]	

Mixed Vowels

ä	[ɛ:] [ɛ]	Spät / <u>M</u> änner [ʃpɛ:t] [mɛ nər]
ö	[ø] [œ]	<u>h</u> ören / <u>G</u> öttlich [hø rən] [gœt lɪç]
ü	[y] [ʏ]	für / <u>M</u> üller [fʏr] [mʊ lər]

Diphthongs

ai (ai,ay,ei,ey)	[aɪ]	Mai / dein [maɪ] [dɛɪn]	Sustain the first vowel as long as possible
au	[aʊ]	Baum [baʊm]	
äu	[ɔʏ]	<u>T</u> räume [trɔʏ mə]	
eu	[ɔʏ]	Treu [trɔʏ]	

Consonants

b	[b] [p]	Buch / <u>g</u> eben / Dieb / lebst [bu:x] [ge bən] [di:p] [le:pst]	The final “b” is pronounced as a “p” in English but it is not aspirated.
d	[d] [t]	<u>a</u> nders / Tod [an dɜrs] [tɔt]	
f	[f]	fein / Tafel [faɪn] [ta fəl]	
g	[g] [k] [ç] [ʒ]	Gott / Tag/ <u>K</u> önig / <u>G</u> enie (Fr) [gɔt] [tak] [kø niç] [ʒə ni:]	
h	[h] silent	Held / Wahn / <u>g</u> ehen [hɛlt] [van] [ge: ən]	
j	[j] [ʒ]	Jahr / <u>J</u> ournalist [jɑr] [ʒʊr na list]	
k	[k]	<u>K</u> lausur / <u>z</u> urück [klaʊ zə] [tsʊ ryk]	

b	[b] [p]	Buch / <u>g</u> eben / Dieb / le bs t [bu:x] [ge bən] [di:p] [le:pst]	The final “b” is pronounced as a “p” in
d	[d] [t]	<u>a</u> nders / Tod [an dərs] [tɔt]	
f	[f]	fein / Tafel [fain] [ta fəl]	
g	[g] [k] [ç] [ʒ]	Gott / Tag/ <u>K</u> önig / <u>G</u> enie (Fr) [gɔt] [tak] [kø niç] [ʒə ni:]	
h	[h] silent	Held / Wahn / <u>g</u> ehen [helt] [van] [ge: ən]	
j	[j] [ʒ]	Jahr / <u>J</u> ournalist [jɑr] [ʒɔr na list]	
k	[k]	<u>K</u> lausur / z <u>ur</u> ück [klaʊ zə] [tsu ryk]	
l	[l]	Hell / <u>l</u> oben [hɛl] [lo bən]	
m	[m]	Mond [mont]	
n	[n]	<u>N</u> onne / Wein [nɔ nə] [vaɪn]	
r	[r]	<u>R</u> egen [re: gən]	

Consonant Combinations

ch	[ç] [x]	ich / <u>w</u> elche / Bach/ doch [ɪç] [vəl çə] [bax] [dɔx]
chs	[ks]	Sechs [zɛks]
ck	[k]	<u>B</u> acken [ba kən]
dt	[t]	Stadt [ʃtat]
ng	[ŋ] [ŋg]	lang / <u>s</u> ingen / <u>h</u> ingehen [laŋ] [zɪŋ ən] [hɪŋ ge ən]
nk	[ŋk] [nk]	danken / Anklang [daŋk ən] [an klaŋ]
pf	[pf]	Pferd / stumpf [pfɛrt] [ʃtʊmpf]
ph	[f]	Phrase [fra zə]
qu	[kv]	<u>Q</u> uelle / <u>e</u> rquicken [kvɛlə] [ɛr kvɪ kən]
sch	[ʃ] [sç]	schnell / Tisch / <u>H</u> äuschen [ʃnɛl] [tɪʃ] [hɔʏs çən]
th	[t]	<u>T</u> heme / Theater / roth [te mə] [te a tər] [rot]
ti	[tsj]	<u>N</u> ation / <u>p</u> atient [na tsj on] [pa tsj ɛnt]
tsch	[tʃ]	Deutsch [dɔʏtʃ]

tz	[ts]	Platz / sitzen [plats] [zɪ tsən]	
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The pronunciation rules and guides used in this outline are based on *Hoch Deutsch* (High German) practice rules. These rules originated in the court of the House of Hannover. They are the accepted sounds of the German Language which one hears in the theater and on television. They do not represent the many different dialects, which are spoken throughout Germany. There is only one noticeable difference between spoken and sung German today and that is, spoken *Hoch Deutsch* does not roll or flip the “r” as strongly. Sung German must include the flipped “r”. It may also be rolled or “trilled” for dramatic effect.

When the letter “e” is unstressed, it is pronounced with an indefinite vowel color. The IPA symbol for this sound is the shwa [ə]. Noted authorities (Langenscheidt, Duden) consistently use this symbol in all unstressed and secondary stress placements. Practice however, does at times open the “e” to an [ɛ]. Registration function for the particular singer may also open the vowel somewhat. If it is necessary to modify the “shwa” color, one should avoid singing an [a], or [ɑ], as this is not at all typical of the native German sound.