**Where Is German Spoken? - Wo spricht man Deutsch?**

**Who speaks German? With a helpful pronunciation guide**

From [Hyde Flippo](http://german.about.com/bio/Hyde-Flippo-5414.htm), former About.com Guide



Germany - Deutschland

**Can you name the seven countries where German is the dominant or official language?**

German is spoken by an estimated 126 million people1. Most of them are found in Germany (*Deutschland*), which has about 82 million German-speakers. But that still leaves 44 million others. Where are the rest? ([Germany Map](http://german.about.com/library/blbundesl_de2.htm))

[**Austria**](http://german.about.com/cs/culture/a/austria.htm) (*Österreich*) should quickly come to mind. Germany's neighbor to the south has a population of about eight million. Most Austrians are Roman Catholic (85 percent) and German-speaking. (Arnold's "I'll-be-back" accent is Austrian German.) Austria's beautiful, mostly mountainous landscape is contained in a space about the size of the US state of Maine. Vienna (**Wien**), the capital, is one of Europe's loveliest and most-livable cities. ([Austria Map](http://german.about.com/library/blbundesl_at2.htm))

Most of the seven million citizens of **Switzerland** (*die Schweiz*), about 65 percent, speak German. The rest speak French, Italian, or Rhaeto-Romansh (one percent). As in Germany, most Swiss who claim a religion are rather evenly divided between Catholics and Protestants. Switzerland's largest city is Zurich (pop. 341,000), but the capital is Bern, with the federal courts headquartered in French-speaking Lausanne. Switzerland has displayed its penchant for independence and neutrality by remaining the only major German-speaking country outside of the European Union and the euro currency zone.

Then there's the "postage stamp" country of **Liechtenstein**, tucked in between Austria and Switzerland. Its nickname comes from both its diminutive size (62 sq. mi.) and its philatelic activities. Vaduz, the capital and largest city, counts fewer than 5,000 inhabitants and has neither an airport (*Flughafen*) nor a train station (*Bahnhof*)! But it does have the German-language newspaper, the *Liechtensteiner Vaterland*. Remarkable, since Liechtenstein's total population is only about 30,000.

Most people forget **Luxembourg** (*Luxemburg*, without the o, in German), situated on Germany's western border. Although French is used for street and place names, and for official business, most of Luxembourg's citizens speak a dialect of German called *Lëtztebuergesch* in daily life, and Luxembourg is considered a German-speaking country, along with Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. Most of Luxembourg's newspapers are published in German, including the [Luxemburger Wort](http://www.wort.lu/) ("Luxemburg Word").

NEXT > [German as a Minority Language](http://german.about.com/od/culture/a/germanspoken_2.htm)
MORE > [Chart: Countries Where German is Spoken](http://german.about.com/od/culture/a/germanspoken_3.htm)

1The 126-million estimate is for all German-speakers, including those who speak it as a second language. The estimate for just native speakers of German is between 99 and 110 million. In a ranking of world languages (spoken by native speakers), German is in tenth place. Chinese (Mandarin) is number one, Hindi ranks second, Spanish third, English fourth. (English ranks second if non-native speakers are included.) The others in the top ten? In order: Bengali (5th), Arabic (6th), Portuguese (7th), Russian (8th), Japanese (9th). French comes in 11th and Italian ranks 15th.

**Sources:** *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, David Crystal, Cambridge University Press, 1987; *dtv-Atlas zur deutschen Sprache*, Werner König, dtv, 1994; *The World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1998*, World Almanac Books.

The chart below shows where in the world German is spoken and how many people speak it.

**GERMAN-SPEAKING COUNTRIES**
*Deutschsprachige Länder*

**German Is the Dominant Language**

* Germany - 82.7 million
* Austria - 8.1 million
* Switzerland - 4.6 million1
* Liechtenstein - 32,000

1 *The rest of Switzerland's 7.2 million citizens speak French, Italian and Romansch.*

**German Has Official Status**

* Luxembourg - 400,0002
* Italy (Bolzano/*Südtirol*) - 200,000
* Belgium - 70,000

2 *Lëtzebuergisch, a German dialect, is spoken by most Luxembourgers and German is the language of instruction in the lower grades. But French is used for official business. Web:* [*Languages in Luxembourg*](http://www.luxembourg.co.uk/lingua.html)

**German Is Regional/Minority Language**

* Former Soviet Union - 1.9 million3
* France (Alsatian) - 1.5 million3
* Poland (Silesia) - 500,000 (400,000)
* Romania - 150,0004
* Hungary - 62,000
* Czech Republic - 50,0004
* Denmark - 35,000
* Slovakia - 15,0004

**Other Areas:** There are also minority groups of German dialect speakers found in certain areas of North America (Hutterites, Mennonites, Amish, etc.), in Kazakhstan, Namibia (former German Southwest Africa), Argentina, Paraguay, and other non-European regions.

3 *This figure (from various sources) is probably too high because many of the ethnic Germans have now either been assimilated, died off, or left the region.*
4 *1998 data (Romania, 1993) from* [*Ethnologue.com*](http://www.ethnologue.com/country_index.asp)

NOTE: Unless noted otherwise, the figures above are based on population estimates for the year 2000. Sources include *The New York Times Almanac*, *The World Almanac and Book of Facts* (World Almanac Books), and [Deutsche Welle](http://www.dw-world.de/).

**Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Datum \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Klasse \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Arbeitsanweisungen: Now that you have read about the geography of German speaking countries, read and respond in a short paragraph to the following prompt.**

Jonathan Harker on his way to Transylvania in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, 1897 once said ""I found my smattering of German very useful here; indeed, I don't know how I should be able to get on without it."

To what extent do you agree or disagree with his statement? How does this statement compare to what you have learned about the geography and amount of people who speak German in German speaking countries? Be sure to use examples to clarify and illustrate your conclusions.

Step 1: How do you interpret the quote from Jonathan Harker?

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Step 2: Identify the German speaking countries in the world. What kind of influence do you believe Germany has in the world?

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Step 3: Write your paragraph to answer the question in the prompt below.

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