

# GERMAN FOR SINGERS

A Textbook of Diction and Phonetics

THIRD EDITION

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# Preface to the Third Edition

The two main objectives of *German for Singers* put forth in the preface to the first edition continue to be: “(1) to give the singer a systematic approach to pronouncing any German word; and (2) to provide the singer with a phonetic shorthand for making notations above trouble spots in a score.”

And as we found in the preface to the second edition, “even though *German for Singers* has been an effective tool for thousands of singers, we nevertheless felt that the book needed some changes, clarifications, and improvements in order to produce a more thorough familiarity with the subtleties of German diction.” With this third edition of *German for Singers*, we hope to further improve and clarify our treatment of German diction and help build confidence in singers as they approach the extensive body of vocal literature in the German language.

## INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET

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As the use of the IPA has continued to proliferate, it has become challenging to maintain an overview of the different symbols in use. The long-time standard reference for stage and media professionals, *Deutsche Aussprache*, by Theodor Siebs, is now out of print, but still readily accessible at various sources, including e-book and print-on-demand options by the publisher. *Das Aussprachewörterbuch*, Volume 6 in the Duden German language series, is a reliable resource that, although oriented toward colloquial pronunciation, regularly reflects Siebs in most of its transcriptions and explanations.

In the third edition, we have adopted symbols now widely in use and have added, in footnotes as well as in the body of the text, variations in transcriptions as well as explanations of the use of various symbols, frequently citing Siebs in our comments. To underscore the challenge of making transcriptions, consider that the diphthong *au*, as in *Haus*, is transcribed in several standard sources variously as: [ao, ao, aʊ, au, aɔ, au, a:ɔ, a:u, a:ʊ, œ̃].

For the offglide in diphthongs we, like several sources, have elected to use the subscript arch, as in *Haus* [haʊ̯s], *Wein* [vaɪ̯n].

We support the practice by citing Siebs, who states that it reflects the relationship of the dominant vowel to the non-syllabic vowel, although he elects not to indicate it in the transcriptions in *Deutsche Aussprache*.

Like most sources now, we indicate the syllable *-er* in *Vater* [ˈfa:tɐ] with [ɐ], [ˈfa:tɐ]; and, like Duden, we indicate vocalic *r* with [ɐ], as in *mir* [mi:r̥] because it is in essence a diphthongal offglide, while holding open the artistic option to use a trill, depending on expressive intention.

## RULES OF THUMB

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Early in our discussion of German sounds, we have added a table of succinct rules of thumb regarding vowel length, stress, voicing, and pronunciation of *r*. Since these issues confront learners from the outset, we hope that condensing key concepts to a concise form will aid them in retaining and implementing the concepts as they progress through more challenging material.

## STRESS

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In Chapter 7, we attempt to address the issue of stress more thoroughly, dividing the prefixes into stressed, unstressed, or variable and including a discussion of secondary stress as well as a description of stress in words borrowed from other languages.

## EXCEPTIONS

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Included in every section on German pronunciation is a list of exceptions to the rules, with their translations. Quite a few of these occur regularly in vocal literature, and the serious student is urged to memorize as many as possible.

## ANSWER KEYS

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For the third edition, we have added a student section with answers to many exercises and a teacher section that contains answers to all

exercises, as well as many other useful supplements. These sections can be accessed on the companion website.

## TRANSLATIONS

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With the addition of translations for the excerpts and song texts, we hope to extend our pragmatic treatment of the German language in singing to the meaning of the texts. Poetic translations and singable translations are available in various sources; with our translations, we want to help singers see the relationship of the German words to the English words, so that as they pronounce them they may see, as nearly as possible, what each word means. If at all possible, we have attempted to keep the English words on the same line as the German words and, when possible, to have an English word for each German word. We have used parentheses to add a word necessary for the English or to clarify a German word that cannot be comfortably rendered in the English. This is, of necessity, not a precise process, and may sometimes lead to somewhat stiff or prosaic phrasing, but we hope that having a good understanding of what each word means will enable singers to bring more confident expression to their performance.

## RECORDINGS

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We include audio recordings of most of the exercises and many of the excerpts in each chapter, which are spoken and sung by Benno Schollum. The items on the recordings are indicated in the text with the symbol shown here. These recordings can be accessed on the companion website.

We hope that, as a textbook and a reference, *German for Singers* will continue to provide beginning singers and more experienced singers alike with the tools they need to acquire a solid command of German diction and phonetics.

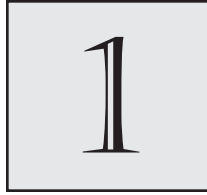


# Recordings

	Track	Pages	Exercise		Track	Pages	Exercise
<b>PART I</b>						62	Excerpt 2
<b>Chapter 5:</b>				Section 3	7	65	Exercise 6.20
Section 1	1	36	Exercise 5.1			65	Exceptions
		37	Exercise 5.2			66	Exceptions
		40	Exercise 5.3			67	Exercise 6.22
		40	Exercise 5.4			67	Exercise 6.23
		40	Exercise 5.5			68	Exercise 6.25
		40	Excerpt			68	Exercise 6.26
Section 2	2	41	Exercise 5.6			69	Exercise 6.27
		41	Exercise 5.7			69	Excerpt 2
		42	Exercise 5.8	Section 4	8	72	Exercise 6.29
		42	Excerpt			72	Exceptions,
	3	43	“Am Brunnen vor dem Tore”			72	Words with ß
						73	Exercise 6.31
<b>Chapter 6:</b>						74	Exercise 6.33
	4	48	Exercise 6.1			74	Exercise 6.34
		49	Exercise 6.2			74	Exercise 6.36
		50	Exercise 6.3			75	Excerpt 1
		50	Exercise 6.4	Section 5	9	78	Exercise 6.37
		50	Exercise 6.5			78–79	Exceptions,
Section 1		54	Exceptions				Words with ß
		54	Exercise 6.8			80	Exercise 6.38
		55	Exercise 6.9			80	Exceptions
		56	Excerpt 2			80	Exercise 6.39
	5	56	“Du, du, liegst mir im Herzen”	Section 6	10	81	Excerpt 2
Section 2	6	59	Exercise 6.12			85	Exercise 6.42
		59	Exceptions, Words with ß			86	Exceptions, Words with ß
		60	Exercise 6.14			87	Exercise 6.43
		61	Exercise 6.16			87	Exceptions
						87	Exercise 6.44

	<b>Track</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>Exercise</b>		<b>Track</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>Exercise</b>
		89	Excerpt 2			135	Excerpt 2
<b>Chapter 7:</b>				Section 2		138	Exceptions, Words with ß
	11	99	Exercise 7.1			139	Exercise 9.5
		99	Exercise 7.2			139	Exercise 9.6
		99	Inflection			139	Excerpt 1
		100	Exercise 7.3	Section 3		142	Final -ie
		100	Exercise 7.4			143	Final -ien
		101	Exercise 7.5			144	Excerpt 1
		101	Exercise 7.6			145	Recording
		103	Exercise 7.7				
		104	Exercise 7.8				
		105	Exercise 7.9				
		105	Exercise 7.10				
		106	Exercise 7.11				
		107	Exercise 7.12				
		108	Exercise 7.14				
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		115	Exercise 8.2		2	148	Exercise 10.1
		115	Exercise 8.3		3	148	Exercise 10.2
		115	Recording		4	149	Exercise 10.3
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		119	Exercise 8.5		6	151	Excerpt 2
		120	Excerpt 3	Section 2	7	155	Exercise 10.6
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		124	Exercise 8.6		9	156	Exercise 10.8
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		126	Excerpt 1	Section 3	11	158	Exercise 10.10
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		134	Exercise 9.2	Section 1	12	164	Exercise 11.1
		134	Exercise 9.3			164	Excerpt
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	<b>Track</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>Exercise</b>		<b>Track</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>Exercise</b>
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		200	Excerpt 1				
Section 4	29	202	Exercise 14.5				
	30	202	Excerpt 1				
Section 5		203	Exercise 14.6				
		204	Excerpt				
<b>Chapter 15:</b>							
Section 2	31	209	Exercise 15.1				



# Introduction to Phonetics

## THE IPA

---

Consider the words *ski*, *key*, *quay*, *me*, *meat*, *meet*, *siege*, *seize*, *people*, and *amoeba*. They all contain the vowel sound traditionally represented in dictionaries by the symbol  $\bar{e}$ .

Now consider the words *wage*, *wag*, *wad*, *wall*, *ago*, and *many*. Although the vowel *a* appears in each word, it represents a different sound in each; these sounds have been traditionally indicated as  $\bar{a}$ ,  $\check{a}$ ,  $\hat{a}$ ,  $\acute{a}$ , and  $\check{e}$ , respectively.

If we now include foreign languages in our discussion, it becomes clear that the sound  $\bar{e}$  has a number of yet different spellings and that the letter *a* has a number of yet different pronunciations. Although the number of sounds that human beings use in speaking is limited, it is apparent that the variety of spellings for these sounds can be bewildering. To facilitate the business of learning pronunciation, it would seem logical to have a system in which one symbol represents one sound. The International Phonetic Association, which was founded in 1886, had as one of its chief objectives to create just such a system. The result was the International Phonetic Alphabet, or IPA. Although not the only such alphabet, the IPA has become the most widely accepted one and is used in many of the standard references consulted by singers.

*German for Singers* offers the singer active practice in transcribing sounds into the IPA. Every singer needs a shorthand for jotting down pronunciations. As often as not, the singer will not copy a transcription directly from a reference book but will note down on

a score a pronunciation that is troublesome, or a correction given by a teacher or coach. In either event, it is convenient to have a ready command of the IPA in order to note down a pronunciation. Furthermore, if skill is achieved in writing the IPA, then it will be even easier for the singer to read transcriptions.

## VARIATIONS IN SOUNDS

---

The exercises in the following chapters will generate lively discussions over which symbols to use in certain instances. Two factors must be taken into consideration in trying to resolve such questions.

First, one should consider the range of speech sounds as a continuum, much like the light spectrum. When we think of green, a variety of colors comes to mind. What we consider to be green is actually a somewhat arbitrarily chosen section of wavelengths that fades into yellow on one end and into blue on the other. Likewise, each IPA symbol represents not one sound, but a family of closely related sounds. Thus, the *t* sound is quite different in *top*, *stop*, *pot*, *rotten*, and *bottle* but will still be represented by [t] in the IPA.<sup>1</sup> Vowels also change their color depending on the nature of the consonants surrounding them. The *e* in *bed* does not have exactly the same sound as the *e* in *bet* or *bell*, but all may be represented by the IPA symbol [ɛ]. So, just as the word *green* can indicate a variety of shades, the symbols [t] or [ɛ] can indicate a range of sounds.

Second, the choice of a symbol for a certain sound is affected by individual pronunciation. Differences in accent will give rise to differences in pronunciation. But even within the same dialect group there can be differences in pronunciation.

In *German for Singers*, we will focus on standard pronunciation for both English and German.

---

<sup>1</sup>The IPA has developed diacritic marks to reflect such subtleties of difference.



# Transcribing Sounds

## THE SYMBOLS

---

Before we begin a discussion of transcription, a few notes on the conventions followed in transcribing are in order.

### Sound Versus Letter

---

A *sound* is always represented by an IPA symbol in square brackets: [t]; a *letter* is printed in italics: *t*.

### Stress

---

The main, or primary, stress in a word is indicated by a short vertical line above and to the left of the syllable, as in *intend* [ɪn'tend]. The secondary stress heard in some words is indicated with a short vertical line below and to the left of the syllable, as in *episode* [ˈɛpɪ,soʊd].

### Length

---

In the IPA, *length* refers to the amount of *time* it takes to pronounce a sound, not to the quality of the sound. Thus the vowel in *mad* is actually longer than the vowel in *mate*, although traditionally the sound of *a* in *mate* would be called “long *a*” and indicated as ā. In IPA transcription, length is indicated with a colon. The word *beat* might appear as [bi:t], and the word *bead*, which has a longer vowel sound, might appear in transcription as [bi:d].

Vowel length will not be reflected in transcriptions of English words in this book. The use of the symbol for vowel length in German is discussed in Chapter 6.

## Symbols

---

One of the great advantages of the IPA is that it is based on our alphabet. Many of the symbols for sounds are identical with the letters that typically represent the sounds. Thus, the sound of the letter *t* is represented by the symbol [t]. The student should note that the following consonant symbols are used to denote the sounds most commonly associated with these letters: [b, d, f, g, h, k, l, m, n, p, s, t, v, w, z].

*Note on r: Although many sources transcribe the English r as [r], we will transcribe it as [ɹ].*

## Symbol Names

---

Although the International Phonetic Association has not officially approved a set of names, many symbols have commonly used names, and we will include those in parentheses when introducing the symbol.

## One Sound: One Symbol

---

When transcribing, do not be misled by spelling; always assign a symbol for each sound. Often, several letters are used to represent one sound, such as *ough* in *bought*, which is transcribed [bɔt]. Conversely, one letter may be used to represent two or more sounds, such as *x* in *fix*, which is transcribed [fiks].

No punctuation, such as a capital or an apostrophe within a word, is reflected in IPA transcription. Thus *Pete's* is rendered as [pits].

## VOWELS

---

### Monophthongs

---

#### [i] (lower-case I) [ɪ] (small capital I)

The symbol [i] represents the sound of *i* in *ski*. It represents this sound regardless of how it is spelled. Thus we see that the words listed at the beginning of this section—*ski, key, quay, me, meat, meet, siege, seize, people, amoeba*—would be transcribed [ski, ki, ki, mi, mit, mit, siʒ, siz, 'pi:pəl, ə'mi:bə].

The symbol [ɪ] represents the sound of *i* in *skit*, which is transcribed as [skɪt].

**Exercise 2.1** Transcribe the following words:

1. pit, peat, Pete
2. bit, bits, bead, beads
3. nick, Nick, nix, nicks, Nick's
4. deep, dip, dips, dipped
5. be, been, bean, beans
6. fill, fills, filled, field
7. kick, quick, squeak, squeaked
8. sieve, seize, peace, piece, please

#### [ɛ] (epsilon) [æ] (ash or lower-case A-E ligature)

The symbol [ɛ] represents the vowel sound in *bed* [bed]. The symbol [æ] represents the vowel sound in *cat* [kæt].

**Exercise 2.2** Transcribe the following words (Remember to transcribe *r* as [ɹ]):

1. bet, bat, fad, fads
2. bread, bred, breed, brad
3. guest, guessed, geese, passed
4. band, banned, fest, feast, fast
5. impact, infect, deeds, beds
6. Nat's, gnats, nest, knack



**Exercise 2.3** Read the following transcriptions aloud, then write down the words they represent. Some may have more than one spelling.

1. [spɪn, splɪn, tæks, ɛk'spænd]
2. [sɪnd, sɛnt, bægz, tækt]
3. [dɪ'kænt, kɪz, frɪz, pæɪ]
4. [ɪ'lɪst, dɪ'sɪv, 'jɛspɪt, ɪ'sɪnd]
5. [tɛkst, pɪk, 'æ,spɛkt, 'klæsɪk, ɪm'prɛst]
6. [ɪl, lɪvz, fɪnz, ækwɪ'es]
7. [prɛst, kwɪn'tɛt, prɪs'tɪn, 'pæɪɪs]

**[ɑ] (script A)**

**[ɔ] (open O)**

The symbol [ɑ] represents the sound of *a* in *far* [fɑɪ]. The symbol [ɔ] represents the vowel sound in *hall* [hɔl].

**Exercise 2.4** Pronounce the following word pairs containing [ɑ] and [ɔ]:

1. fond - fawned
2. stock - stalk
3. bobble - bauble
4. body - bawdy
5. rot - wrought
6. knot - naught
7. popper - pauper

**Exercise 2.5** Transcribe the following words:

1. all, awl, fall, pause, paws
2. cot, caught, Don, dawn
3. clawed, clod, naught, not
4. far, for, park, pork
5. wrought, rot, rat, gnawed, nod

**[u] (lower-case U)**  
**[ʊ] (horseshoe U)<sup>1</sup>**

The symbol [u] represents the vowel sound in *boot* [but]. The symbol [ʊ] represents the vowel sound in *book* [bʊk].

**Exercise 2.6** Transcribe the following words:

1. nook, put, full, fool, foot
2. moons, prove, lute, loot
3. look, Luke, cooed, could, cod
4. lose, loss, lost, loose
5. crew, crude, crook, crock
6. baboon, monsoon, festoon
7. spool, pull, would, wood

**[ʌ] (turned V)**  
**[ə] (schwa)**

The symbol [ʌ] represents the vowel sound in *but* [bʌt]. The symbol [ə], called the *schwa*, is the sound of *a* in *approve* [ə'pru:v]. Although the articulation of the two sounds is somewhat similar, [ə] appears *only* in unstressed syllables.

**Exercise 2.7** Transcribe the following words:

1. bun, blood, fussed, flux
2. abet, collect, condemn, vista
3. above, conundrum, alumnus, compulsive
4. tough, son, woman, summons
5. buck, book, boot, putt, put, pool
6. symphony, sonata, accustomed

**Exercise 2.8** Read the following transcriptions aloud, then write down the words they represent. Some may have more than one spelling.

1. [kə'kʌfəni, 'ɑ:ɪə, 'lʌv, 'sʌnz]
2. [kə'denzə, bə'sʌn, 'ɑ:pərə, kwɑ:'tɛt]
3. [ˌɪɛsɪtə'tɪv, kələrə'tu:ərə, kən'klusɪv]

<sup>1</sup>Also called “upside-down omega,” this character is generally known as “upsilon,” from the Latin small capital U.

4. [ˈɔɪɡən, ɪlf, kɔf, ˈɔfəl]
5. [ˈɪɔkəs, ˈɪlkəs, flu, luz]
6. [bɪʊk, wʊlvz, lus, bɪu, ˈkiʊkɪd]
7. [lɔɪd, lɑɪd, hʊk, hək, hɔk]
8. [sɔt, sʊt, sət, sæt, set, sɪt, sɪt, ˈsɑtlɪ]
9. [ɛgˈzɔst, brˈkɔz, faks, ˌfʊlˈfɪl]

### Sounds in Unstressed Syllables: [ə], [ɪ]

Many sources use the symbol [ə], called a “right-hook schwa” to represent the final syllable *-er*, as in *sister* [ˈsɪstə]. The IPA describes this symbol as an “R-colored mid central vowel,” indicating that the syllable consists of *r* and schwa blended together.

Some sources use the symbol [ɪ] to represent the final sound in *people* [ˈpiɪ]. The IPA name for the diacritic under the *l* is “syllabicity mark,” indicating that the syllable consists of *l* and the vowel blended together.

Depending on the source and on the context, these words can also be transcribed [ˈsɪstəɪ, ˈpiɪəl].

**Exercise 2.9** Transcribe the following words:

1. rustle, fiddle, castle, lovable
2. cover, older, wander, banter

### Diphthongs

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The word *diphthong* comes from the Greek *di-*, “two,” and *phthongos*, “sound.” A diphthong begins with one vowel sound and ends with another. Although only two of the English diphthongs are regularly spelled with two vowels, there are at least five diphthongs in standard English: [ɔɪ, aʊ, aɪ, eɪ, oʊ]. In each of these diphthongs, the first vowel is the dominant sound, extending to over half the length of the diphthong and proceeding smoothly to the second vowel, also called the off-glide. It is important to note that a diphthong is a continuous sound occurring within one syllable.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>A diacritic is sometimes used to indicate that the off-glide is to be treated as part of the diphthong, not as a separate syllable, e.g. [ɔɪ̯, aʊ̯]. (See Chapter 11 for German diphthongs.)