

German Pronunciation Summary Guide

Vowels

a = ah as in latte.

e = Closed is a as in hate. Open is eh as in bet. Final e, en, or er is more of a schwa sound.

i = Closed is ee as in beet. Open is i as in hit.

o = Closed is oh as in boat. Open is aw as in ought.

u = Closed is oo as in hoot. Open is u as in put.

Umlauts – The word “um-laut” means change sound. They are marked with two dots over the vowel, and can be used on a, o and u. If an umlaut symbol is not available, the vowel is indicated with an e following it. For example ä = ae; ö = oe; ü = ue.

ä = eh as bet (but a bit closer to short a as in hat)

ö = like trying to say uh and oh at the same time

ü = like trying to say ee and oo at the same time

ie = ee as in beet

ei = i as in light

Rule about these combinations – sing the sound of the second letter.

au = close to ow as in owl, pronounce both vowels: ah and oo

eu = close to oy as in boy, but start the sound with a schwa rather than an o.

äu = close to oy as in boy, similar to eu.

Consonants:

b – Like b in English, but a final b sounds like p.

d – like d in English, but a final d sounds like t.

g – is always hard, as in get.

j – sounds like y in English

r – in singing, the German r is rolled, or dropped completely. (Spoken German the r is guttural.)

s – sounds like z at the beginning or middle of a word, but s at the end of a word.

st together at the beginning of a word (or root word) sounds like sht (like shtick)

sch sounds like sh

th = t

v – sounds like f

w – sounds like v

y – sounds like the umlaut vowel ü

z – sounds like ts as in cats, or zz as in pizza

Gutturals

ch – Cat hiss: When preceded by the forward vowels i, e, ä, ö, ü and combinations such as eu, äu, and even “or”, or a consonant, the ch guttural is like a cat hiss.

Popcorn hull: When preceded by the back vowels a, o, u and au, the ch guttural is like

Clearing a popcorn hull out of the back of your throat.

final ig – pronounced like “ich” (cat hiss guttural)