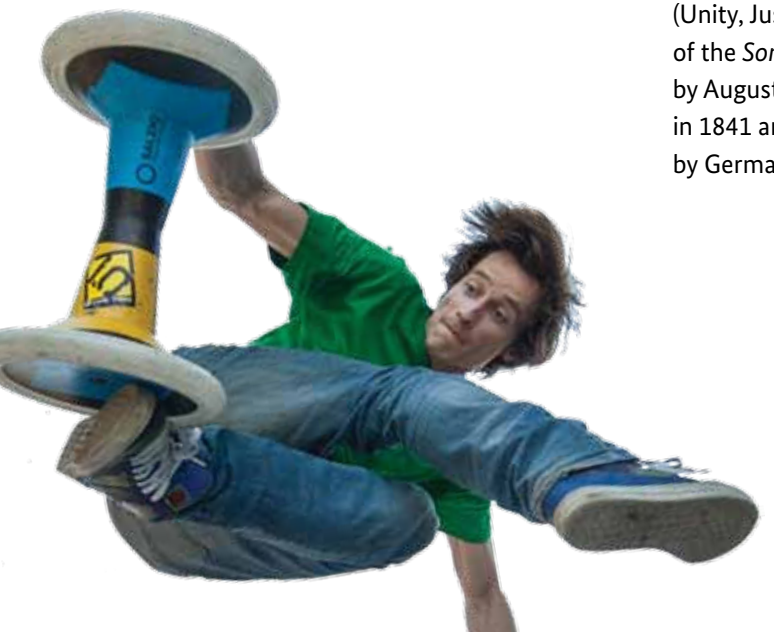
DO YOU KNOW GERMANY?

Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Washington

GERMANY MEETS THE U.S.

FUN FACTS ABOUT GERMANY

Official Name	Federal Republic of Germany
Capital	Berlin
Official Language	German
Official Currency	Euro (€; 1 Euro = 100 cents)
Size	137,810 sq. mi. (357,022 sq. km), approximately the size of Montana
Population	Approximately 82 million inhabitants, roughly one fourth of the U.S. population
Measuring System	Metric
Federal States	16 federal states (13 states + 3 city-states)
Federal Flag	3 same-sized horizontal stripes in black, red, and gold
Federal Seal	Black eagle on gold background
Government System	Parliamentary democracy
National Anthem	*Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit* (Unity, Justice and Freedom) is the third verse of the *Song of Germany*, a poem written by August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben in 1841 and set to *The Emperor Quartet* by German composer, Joseph Haydn



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GEOGRAPHY

CAN YOU FIND GERMANY ON A MAP?

Germany is located in central Europe and is bordered by nine countries, more than any other European nation. The country's geography is diverse and defines its many regions.

Germany has many mountains, forests, rivers and beaches. The northern part of the country is generally flat and borders the North and Baltic seas. In the summer, many people visit the beaches there. The southern part of Germany is known for its tall mountains, called the Alps, which are famous for their hiking trails and ski slopes.

Forests cover almost one third of Germany, offering ample opportunity for hiking and walking. The Rhine and the Danube are two of the many rivers that flow through Germany.

LOWEST

At 11.6 ft (3.5 m) below sea level, Neuendorf-Sachsenbande in Schleswig-Holstein is the lowest accessible point in Germany.

Like many German families, Philipp and Katja take a vacation to the beach every summer with their family.

Germany and its neighbors

The longest river in Germany is the picturesque Rhine which is 538 miles (865 km) long. It flows from Switzerland through Germany and into the Netherlands.

SIZE COMPARISON

Waterfall in the Black Forest ("Schwarzwald")

HIGHEST

At 9,718 ft (2,962 m), the Zugspitze lies on the border to Austria and is the tallest mountain in Germany.

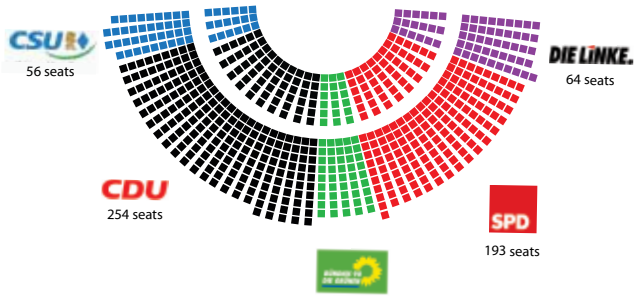
POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Germany is a parliamentary democracy with a federal system of government, which means Germans choose their representatives in local, state, and national elections. It is also a multi-party system, so political parties usually have to form coalitions to create a governing majority in the parliament. The upper house of parliament is called the *Bundesrat* and represents the states, similar to the U.S. Senate. The lower house is called the *Bundestag* and represents the people, similar to the U.S. House of Representatives.

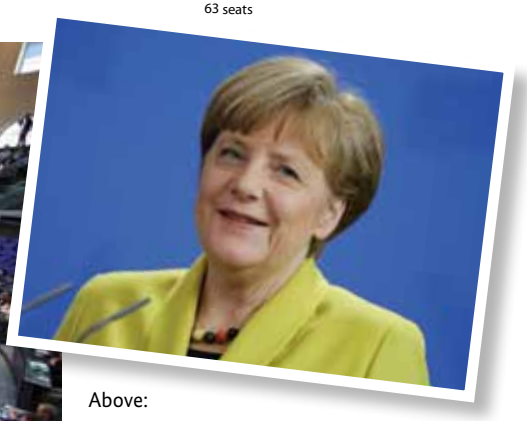
The head of government, called the chancellor, is elected by majority of the members of the *Bundestag*. He or she is the most powerful person in Germany. The head of state is the president, who represents Germany at home and abroad. In the U.S., the heads of state and government are combined into the office of the president.

The German constitution is called the *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law). Much like the U.S. Constitution, it establishes democracy and grants all Germans the same basic inalienable rights. Human rights and dignity are principles enshrined in the Basic Law.

The Federal Constitutional Court is independent from the government and ensures that the Basic Law is followed. Anyone may appeal to the court if they believe their basic rights have been violated by a law or public authority.



The *Bundestag* in session



Above:

Breakdown of the 2013 Bundestag showing the major parties

Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany since 2005

EUROPEAN UNION

After World War II, the leaders of Europe came together in an effort to guarantee and promote peace. They formed a community of nations to cooperate with each other economically and, later, politically. Germany was one of the six original members. This small community has grown into what we know today as the European Union (EU). Currently, 28 countries belong to the EU and are called member states. Thus, 510 million people across Europe are also EU citizens.

What does this mean for Germany? Like its EU partners, Germany is an independent nation with its own culture and traditions. But as a member of this special community, Germans can easily travel to and from, work and live in other EU countries. The EU also makes up the world's largest single market, which allows the member states to trade more easily with each other. Collectively, the EU member states also negotiate with non-EU nations on trade and other political issues to secure the best possible future for their citizens.

European Central Bank in Frankfurt

For current information visit http://europa.eu/index_en.htm.

The European Flag is the symbol of the Council of Europe and the European Union.

THE EURO

Currently, 19 EU member states, including Germany, use a common currency, called the euro. This makes buying and selling much easier across country borders, because everyone is using the same kind of money. Prices for goods in the countries using the euro are easier to compare. Germany started using the euro on January 1, 2002.

1 EURO = 100 CENTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

With 82 million people, Germany has the largest population of any country in the European Union. Roughly one in five people, or 20 percent of the population, has at least one parent who was born outside of Germany. The majority of immigrants come from other European countries, such as Turkey, Poland, Russia, and Italy.

Most families have a father, mother, and children living under the same roof. However, many other types of families such as "patchwork" or blended families have emerged. All are welcomed and have a place in German society. Many young people say that they strongly value a good, stable family life.

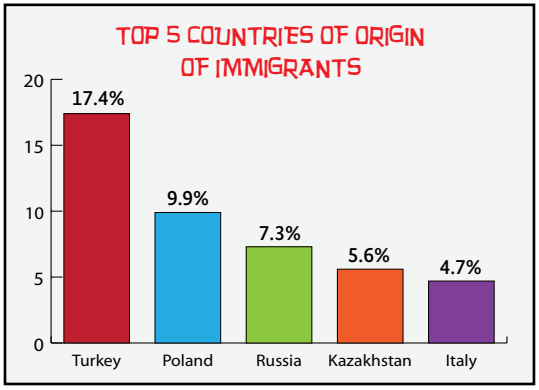
The birth rate in Germany is significantly lower than in the United States. Without immigration, the German population would shrink, because not enough children are being born to support the economy and the aging population.

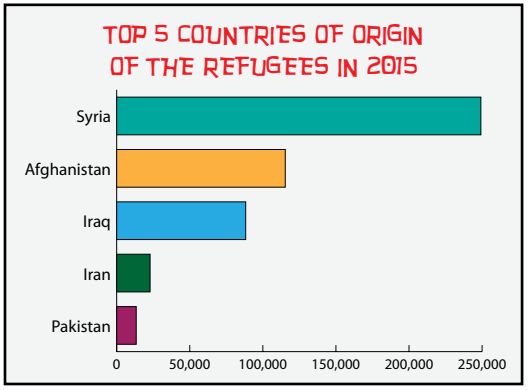
From top clockwise:

Families spending time in nearby parks or forests on weekends

A Turkish family in a park

A fun summer outing to the North Sea





ECONOMY

The German economy is currently the strongest in the European Union and among the largest worldwide. German companies sell most of their products, such as cars, appliances and chocolate, abroad. Germany exports almost as many products as the United States, even though it is a much smaller country. Many brands are well-known household names, but most German companies are actually small- and medium-sized businesses. Look around your home, and you might find several products made in Germany.

Most of the economy is devoted to providing services, which includes everything from banks to restaurants to hotels and beyond. However, high-tech manufacturing also is a major part of the German economy. Research, development, and innovation help businesses, such as those in the car and construction industries, to remain leaders in the global marketplace.

From top clockwise:

Marzipan animal figures made with almond paste

Technicians in a laboratory

Scientist demonstrating voice commands with a robot at the Hannover Messe

The financial district in Frankfurt

Manufacture of gas turbines

Windfarm in the North Sea

RELIGION

The Basic Law protects freedom of religion. There is no official state church, and religion is a private matter for the individual. Public schools must offer courses in religion, but only for educational purposes, and students may opt out. The most common religious faith is Christianity.

In 1517, Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation when he challenged some practices of the Catholic Church, triggering wars and causing Europe to split into devoted Catholic believers and reformers of the Church, who would later become known as Protestants. Individual regions throughout Germany can still be identified as distinctly Catholic or Protestant.

The long history of Jewish life and culture in Germany was cut short by the Nazis and the Holocaust. But in the 1990s, many people of Jewish descent from the former Soviet Union settled in Germany. Jewish communities in Germany have more than 95,000 members. Roughly the same number have a Jewish background without being affiliated with a Jewish community.

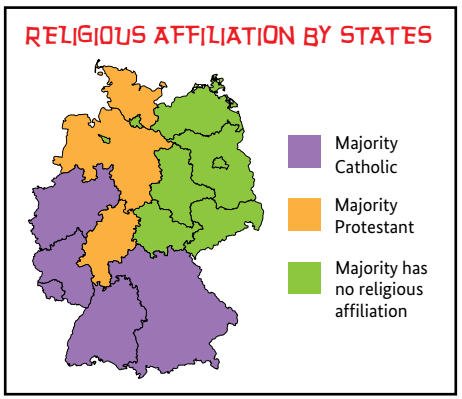
About one third of Germans do not belong to any major religion. Most of those living in the former communist eastern part of Germany identify as atheists.

Immigration has created more religious diversity, with Muslim communities growing at a high rate.

Left: The Frauenkirche in Dresden (Protestant)

Below: Martin Luther (1483–1546), Leader of the Protestant Reformation

Right, top to bottom: A country chapel in Bavaria (Catholic). Rabbi ordination in the Leipzig synagogue (Jewish). The Imam Ali Mosque in Hamburg (Islam). Religious leaders at the site of the future "House of One" in Berlin.



EDUCATION

German children start school when they are six years old. After elementary school (usually grades 1 to 4), students have a choice of different types of schools. The most common is called *Gymnasium*, which runs from 5th to 12th grade. Each state has slightly different educational requirements, and some have an additional 13th grade.

At the end of 12th grade, students earn an *Abitur*, which is similar to a high-school diploma, and enables the recipient to study at a university. Many high-school students spend a year as an exchange student studying in another country. The United States is one of the most popular places for such study abroad.

Another option for young people is an apprenticeship. Under Germany's very successful dual vocational training and education system, young apprentices attend a vocational school while at the same time working at a company learning the chosen career on the job .

From the top:

A typical Gymnasium classroom

A school building in the city

Two students show off their award-winning science project.

SCHULTÜTE

German students get a Schultüte - or school bag - from their parents on their first day of school. It is a large cone filled with candy and school supplies.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT?

Students generally stay in the same class, so a friend you have made in 1st grade, may also be in your 4th grade.

GERMANY IN THE

"The world must be made safe for democracy."
Woodrow Wilson, 1917

United States enters WWI in 1917.

Chancellor Otto von Bismarck unifies Germany.

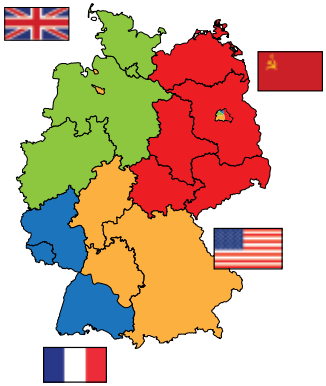
1870

Revolution at the end of WWI leads to the creation of a democratic Germany and the **Weimar Republic** in 1919.

1918

During ***"Kristallnacht"*** ("Night of Broken Glass") Jewish businesses, synagogues, and schools are destroyed in **pogroms** on November 9. Persecutions intensify, leading to the Holocaust.

1938



World War II ends. Allies (United States, Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union) **occupy and split** war-ravaged Germany.

1945

1914

World War I (1914-1918) devastates Europe. 15 million lives are lost.

1933

Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor. He will become a dictator and lead Germany into World War II.

1939

World War II (1939-1945) begins with the German invasion of Poland on September 1.

The **Marshall Plan** introduced by the United States in 1948 allows West Germany to rebuild.

20TH CENTURY

Federal Republic of Germany

German Democratic Republic

The **Federal Republic of Germany** (West Germany) and the **German Democratic Republic** (East Germany) are founded.

1949

Berlin Airlift
In 1948, U.S. and British planes drop supplies to the people of Berlin after the Soviet Union blocks the western part of Berlin.

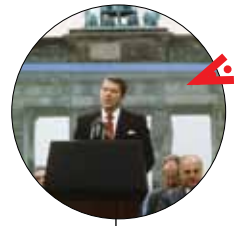
"Rosinenbomber"
"Raisin Bomber"

West Germany becomes member of NATO in 1955.

The **Berlin Wall is built** by East Germany to prevent residents from leaving the country. East and West Germany are sealed off from each other.

1961

"Ich bin ein Berliner!"
"I am a Berliner!"
U.S. President John F. Kennedy in Berlin, 1963



"Tear down this wall!"
U.S. President Ronald Reagan in Berlin, 1987

The **Berlin Wall falls** on November 9 after weeks of protests and mass demonstrations by East Germans against their socialist government.

1989

1990

German Reunification. East and West Germany reunite on October 3 after the official transfer of power from the Allies.

"Sincere thanks to the American people...for your magnificent support on our path to German unity."
Chancellor Helmut Kohl to U.S. President George H.W. Bush, 1990

LITERATURE & MUSIC

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 - 1750)

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770- 1827)

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

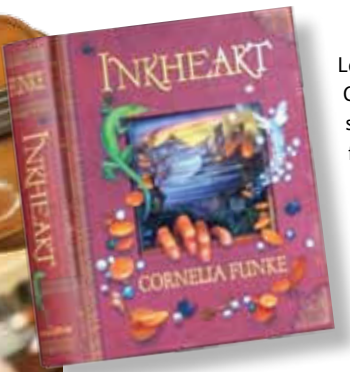
German music is world renowned. For example, classical music by composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven and Johannes Brahms is often heard in movies and played in concert halls, and some songs are even well-known lullabies. The Christmas carol "O Christmas Tree" is translated from a German folk song.

THE 3 B's

Right: A 19th century illustration of Aschenputtel (Cinderella)

The Brothers Grimm traveled around Germany collecting spoken folktales and later publishing them as books. In this way, German fairytales have become known all over the world. Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, and Rumpelstiltskin are just some of the many fairytales widely told, read and watched as movies today.

The books of many modern German authors have been translated into English. Cornelia Funke is famous for her fantasy and adventure books, such as the *Inkheart* series. Walter Moers has a series of books about the adventures of *Captain Bluebear.*



Left: About 14 million Germans play music or sing in a choir in their free time.

Inkheart is a beloved book by German author, Cornelia Funke.

FOOD

Germans eat many of the same foods as Americans. Apple strudel, for example, is as much a German favorite as apple pie is an American one. Another popular food is the Bratwurst, a kind of sausage or hotdog. Germany is also famous for its bakeries, which offer over 600 different types of breads, as well as a wide array of rolls, pastries and cakes.

If you travel throughout Germany, you will discover that different regions have their own specialties. The Black Forest Cake - *Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte* in German - comes from the Black Forest region in the southwest.

Germany also has its share of ethnic foods. In large cities, for example, small restaurants and food cars serve *Döner*, a sandwich brought to Germany by Turkish immigrants, and *Gyros*, a Greek sandwich that is also popular in the U.S.

Top to bottom:

Bratwurst

Döner sandwich

Black Forest Cake

Bread = Brot
Pretzel = Brezel

YUMMY GUMMI

HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

EASTER

Easter is an important holiday in Germany. Some German Easter traditions are similar to American customs. People decorate eggs and the Easter Bunny hides eggs, chocolates and candy for children. People often get together with their families, because Good Friday and Easter Monday are holidays. This gives everyone a nice long weekend to relax and celebrate.

A typical wooden Easter decoration, often displayed in a window or on Easter branches

Easter bread in the shape of a bunny

Branches from pussy willows or forsythia are often decorated with Easter eggs painted by kids

KARNEVAL

Many towns and cities have their own holiday celebrations and traditions. Some regions celebrate *Karneval* or *Fasching* (Carnival), which marks the beginning of Lent, a period of fasting in the Christian religion. Carnival begins with many parades and parties, much like the Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans. People dress in funny costumes and collect candy and treats from the parade floats. In some areas, the parades are so big and festive that schools close for a few days.

The most famous *Karneval* celebrations and parades take place in the Rhineland region, in the cities of Cologne, Mainz and Düsseldorf.

Karneval revelers

CHRISTMAS

Christmas Market in Ludwigsburg

Christmas is one of the most important holidays in Germany. Decorating Christmas trees, singing Christmas carols, and opening Christmas presents are all German traditions. Young children also celebrate *St. Nikolaus* on December 6, when St. Nicholas, fills their shoes with small treats if they have been good during the year or lumps of coal if they have been bad. During the four weeks leading up to Christmas, many children keep Advent calendars, which count the days until Christmas, and light candles on Advent wreaths to mark the four Advent Sundays before Christmas. Families exchange gifts on December 24 and celebrate December 25 and 26 as the first and second day of Christmas, so there is plenty of time for enjoying the holiday season.

German families decorate their Christmas tree on December 24.

Germany is famous for its Christmas markets. Some of these *Christkindlmärkte* are very large and thousands of people visit them each year. Christmas markets are held outside, with 20 or 30 little wooden booths often located in the town square. Families bundle up and take a stroll, shopping for Christmas presents and special holiday cookies, gingerbread, and *Stollen*.

Photos, clockwise from top:

Oversized Nutcracker at a Christmas Market in Köln

Typical Christmas baked items include Stollen, Lebkuchen, Spekulatius and cinnamon stars (Zimtstern).

Miniature carving from the Erz Mountains

Christmas pyramid in Erfurt

ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE

Germans place a high value on protecting nature and the environment, which is an official goal of the German government. Land, water, plants, and animals are important resources which must be shared and preserved for future generations. Everyone contributes to this aim by recycling and avoiding waste. Visitors to Germany often notice that trash cans are smaller than recycling bins, an indication that more material is recycled than thrown away.

Germany signed the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2016, just as the United States has. The agreement aims to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius. To implement the treaty and decarbonize the atmosphere, everybody will have to contribute, from energy producers and manufacturers to farms and households.

Germany is committed to finding more ways to use solar power, wind power, and other renewable energy sources. Over 25 percent of Germany's electricity is already generated through renewable resources. The more renewable energy Germany uses, the more it is protecting the climate for the future.

German automakers are developing electric cars.

ENERGIEWENDE... ENERGY TRANSITION

is Germany's ambitious effort to shift from the use of fossil fuels and nuclear power to renewable energies and lower energy consumption. One of the goals of the energy reform is for 40-45 percent of electricity to come from renewable sources by 2025.

The Grüne Punkt (Green Dot) is the symbol of the European-wide recycling program. Less paper and thinner glass are used, and more products are recycled. Trash is sorted to make recycling and energy recovery efforts easier.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY MADE IN GERMANY

Germany is #1 in the world for energy efficiency. New houses have to be insulated, and old houses are retrofitted to be energy efficient. German industry offers particularly efficient technologies for heating and cooling air and water.

Altpapier = Old Paper

(= WASTE PAPER = RECYCLING)

Wind Farm

There are 72 million bicycles in Germany. It is a popular way to get around town. In large cities, it is not uncommon to own a bicycle as your only form of transportation.

SOLAR POWER!

Since the 1990s, the German government provides incentives to homeowners and companies to install solar panels on roofs.

DID YOU KNOW?

...that there are over **21,000 wind farms in Germany** and that the first German offshore wind turbine was completed off the coast of the North Sea in 2009?

... that on the morning of March 20, 2015, a **partial solar eclipse darkened up to 80% of the German sky** for two hours? Solar power generation decreased, but rebounded by the end of the eclipse, without power outages.

...that **per capita energy consumption is much lower in Germany** than in the U.S.? This is partly due to climate and population density.

...that 9**5% of all German students take part in bicycle training at their elementary school?** They familiarize themselves with traffic and safety rules during the first two years of school and take an exam during the third or fourth grade. Many students bike to school.

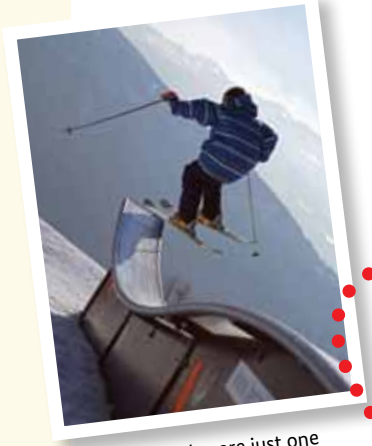
SPORTS

Soccer is the most popular sport in Germany. Professional soccer clubs can be found in many cities with a loyal fan base. The names and faces of the players on the national teams are well known all over Germany.

You might know the names of several famous German athletes. Mario Götze scored the winning goal in the 2014 FIFA World Cup against Brazil. Speedskater Claudia Pechstein won five gold medals in consecutive Olympic games (1992–2006). Tennis player Steffi Graf won many singles titles at Wimbledon, the French Open, the U.S. Open, and the Australian Open during the 1980s and 1990s.

Besides soccer, other popular sports include iceskating, skiing, gymnastics, tennis, handball, riding, basketball, Formula One, and more.

Philipp and his friends love to play soccer, known as Fußball (pronounced fooss-ball).

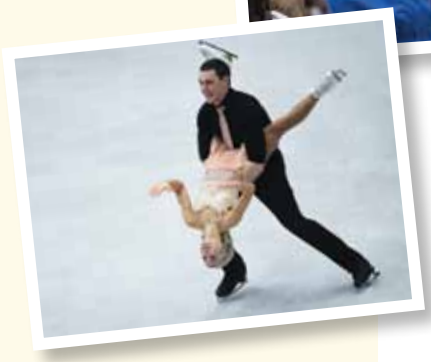


The Bavarian Alps are just one of many places in Germany where families go skiing.

DID YOU KNOW?

...that the German men's national soccer team has won four World Cups (1954, 1974, 1990, 2014)...

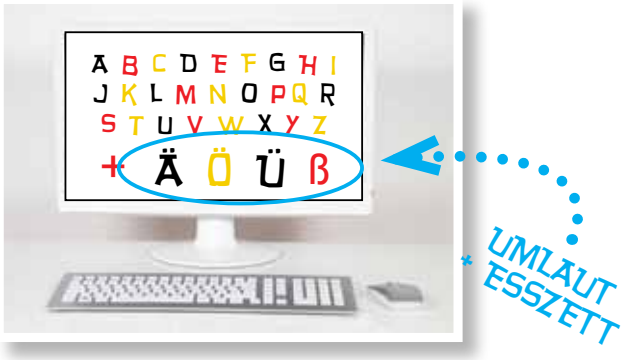
...and that the women's national soccer team has won two (2003, 2007)?



Clockwise from top: Skijumping. Melanie Leupolz in National Championship against Spain. Horseback riding is a popular sport. German ice dancers Aljona Savchenko and Bruno Massot perform at the 2017 European Figure Skating Championship. Dirk Nowitzki of the Dallas Mavericks was born in Germany.

LANGUAGE

The German alphabet is just like the one you use every day, but there are four additional letters. Three letters use an "Umlaut," marked by two small dots above the letter. One letter looks like a "b," but is an "Ess-tsett," a very sharp "s" sound.



COMPOUND WORDS

Donaudampfschifffahrtskapitän

Germans have a word for everything, and often combine words into "compound words." In the example above, the word breaks down into five separate ones: "Donau" (Danube) is a large German river. "Dampf-schiff-fahrt" is itself a compound word meaning "steam-ship-excursion" and "Kapitän" is the German word for "captain."

So the noun *Donaudampfschifffahrtskapitän* means "the captain of a steamship that is making an excursion on the Danube."

W-O-W!
(WORD OF THE WEEK)

The German language has many words that are unusual for English speakers. These words are also a lot of fun to explain, so we have a collection of them on our website at **www.Germany.info**, in the section called "Word of the Week." Here you can learn a new word each week and ask your friends if they are *schreibfaul* or a *Suppenkasper*!

Schreibfaul combines the words for writing and lazy. It means someone who is not interested or very good at writing to people, be it via old-fashioned letters, emails or even just responding to messages.

A *Suppenkasper* is someone who is a picky eater. The term comes from *Kasper*, a character in the classic German children's book *Der Struwwelpeter* who sits at the dinner table and refuses to eat his soup (*Suppe*).

GERMANY IN THE U.S.

DO DEUTSCH

About 46 million people in the U.S. claim some German heritage, or 1 in 6 Americans. From town names and festivals with German roots to last names and family traditions, traces of Germany can be found all over the U.S.

More than 3,400 German companies have investments in the U.S. and have created about 640,000 jobs. The German and American governments have signed agreements to increase cooperation on both sides.

Nearly 400,000 students in public schools across the U.S. are learning German, along with another 100,000 at universities and colleges.

- Speaking German helps your chances in the job market by opening up more doors in today's global economy.
- Want to go abroad? There are more than 2,000 scholarships and grants offered to Americans to study in Germany.
- Germans will help you when you are traveling. German is spoken by around 100 million people in Europe, and about 15.4 million people around the world are learning it!
- German is the second-most-commonly used scientific language.
- Eighteen percent of the world's books are published in German, and knowing German gives you access to even more knowledge.

GERMANY MEETS THE U.S.

INFORMATION

Goethe-Institut
www.goethe.de/en

The Goethe-Institut is Germany's cultural and language center around the world. It provides information and programs on a wide range of topics, is well-known for its language courses and teacher materials and promotes discussion on current world affairs.

German Academic Exchange Service DAAD
www.daad.org

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is a publicly-funded independent organization of higher education institutions in Germany dedicated to supporting students and faculty for international research and study.

German-American Heritage Foundation and Museum
www.gahmusa.org

The German-American Heritage Foundation and Museum aims to highlight German history in the U.S., as well as the impact it has had on shaping the country.

Facts about Germany

www.facts-about-germany.de

Here you can find the latest information, facts and statistics about Germany presented in an easy-to-use format.

Young Germany
www.young-germany.de

This website is dedicated to the latest information about career, education, innovation, and lifestyle in Germany.

WWW.GERMANY.INFO

DID YOU KNOW...?

...that the website of the German Embassy has its own kids and teen pages? Visit the websites shown below and learn more about kids who live in Germany. You can also subscribe to online newsletters - one of them is in German. Just ask your parents for help.

WWW.GERMANY.INFO/KIDS

WWW.GERMANY.INFO/TEENS

PHOTO SOURCES:

PICTURE-ALLIANCE.COM. ***Front Cover:*** photo. ***Inside Front Cover:*** timber frame house, girl on beach, skateboarder. ***Page 3:*** Rhein, Black Forest waterfall, Zugspitze. ***Page 4:*** Bundestag. ***Page 5:*** European Central Bank. ***Pages 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18. Page 13:*** Döner, cake, bread, gummibears. ***Page 15:*** Nutcracker, baked goods, miniature carving, pyramid. ***Page 19:*** Computer. ***Back Cover:*** photo.

PHOTOTEK.NET. ***Page 4:*** Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel, CDU. Berlin, 16.03.2015. © Thomas Trutschel/photothek.net.

GERMAN NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE. ***Inside Front Cover:*** Chapel (Hans Peter Merten/DZT), lakeside fun (argus fotoagentur Peter Frischmuth/DZT). ***Page 2:*** Wattensee (Panorama-Fotografie Olaf Vernunft/DZT). ***Page 15:*** Christmas market (Ludwigsburg/ Neckar Stadtmarketing u. Touristik GmbH/DZT).

ISTOCKPHOTO. ***Inside Front Cover:*** German flag button. ***Page 5:*** EU flag, ***Page 13:*** Bratwurst

JENS TIEDEMANN, NEUENDORF-SACHSEBANDE. ***Page 2:*** Lowest point marker

GERMAN INFORMATION CENTER. ***Page 2, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21:*** Philipp and Katja illustrations were produced for the GIC.

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