

Deutsch The German Alphabet

Roman	Fraktur	Cursive	Roman	Fraktur	Cursive
A a	A a	<i>A a</i>	Ä ä	Ä ä	<i>Ä ä</i>
B b	B b	<i>B b</i>	Ö ö	Ö ö	<i>Ö ö</i>
C c	C c	<i>C c</i>	Ü ü	Ü ü	<i>Ü ü</i>
D d	D d	<i>D d</i>	ß	ß	<i>ß</i>
E e	E e	<i>E e</i>	ch	ch	<i>ch</i>
F f	F f	<i>F f</i>	sch	sch	<i>sch</i>
G g	G g	<i>G g</i>	ck	ck	<i>ck</i>
H h	H h	<i>H h</i>	tz	tz	<i>tz</i>
I i	I i	<i>I i</i>			
J j	J j	<i>J j</i>			
K k	K k	<i>K k</i>			
L, l	L l	<i>L l</i>			
M m	M m	<i>M m</i>			
N n	N n	<i>N n</i>			
O o	O o	<i>O o</i>			
P p	P p	<i>P p</i>			
Q q	Q q	<i>Q q</i>			
R r	R r	<i>R r</i>			
S s	S s	<i>S s</i>			
T t	T t	<i>T t</i>			
U u	U u	<i>U u</i>			
V v	V v	<i>V v</i>			
W w	W w	<i>W w</i>			
X x	X x	<i>X x</i>			
Y y	Y y	<i>Y y</i>			
Z z	Z z	<i>Z z</i>			

The rather intimidating typeface known in German as *Fraktur* was generally used in Germany until before World War II, but has since been replaced in common usage by the alphabet familiar to us. Even in the modern Roman-based alphabet there are a few modified letters used for special sounds in German, and these are listed on the right-hand side of the chart: ä (a-umlaut), ö (o-umlaut), ü (u-umlaut) and ß (eszet). The other letter combinations (*ch*, *sch*, *ck*, and *tz*) are shown because their printed or cursive forms can be hard to recognize; but they are not regarded as separate characters and do not affect alphabetical order. Note also the alternate forms of lower-case *s* in *Fraktur* and cursive: **ſ** and *ſ* are the usual forms, **ß** and *ß* are used at the end of words or at dividing spots in compound words. We've all seen similar usage in older English-language documents such as the Declaration of Independence, where the letters that look like uncrossed *f*'s are actually *s*'s.

German cursive script can be as intimidating as the printed *Fraktur*. Consider *Gesundheit*, a familiar expression to most Americans—it looks like a series of angular scrawls, but it's "Gesundheit," what you say when someone sneezes! Any combination of *n* (*e*), *r* (*c*), *m* (*m*), *n* (*n*), *ü* (*u*), *v* (*v*), and *w* (*w*) can be frustrating to decipher, especially if the penmanship is sloppy. The best approach is to identify the easier letters, such as *b*, *p*, *u*, and *v*; distinguish *ſ* (*s*) and *h* (*h*) by their extending above and below the other letters; then start counting up-and-down strokes and trying to match them with problem letters. Hints: *ü* (*u*) should always have that little curve over it, and *v* (*v*) and *w* (*w*) end with tailing curves that are usually discernable. Your odds improve if you have a limited list of candidate words to choose from; if you've inferred that the word in question might refer to a parent, *Mutter* can suddenly go from "M—r" to *Mutter*, "mother." So a good dictionary can help a lot with deciphering written words.

Source: Shea, Jonathan D., and William F. Hoffman. *Following the Paper Trail: A Multilingual Translation Guide*. Teaneck, NJ: Avotaynu, Inc., 1994.