



## Why learn German?

The importance of German is indisputable. German-speakers occupy a prominent place on any list of the world's greatest artists and thinkers, while almost every academic discipline has a strong German tradition, in many cases one that largely defines the field. In fact, the modern university itself, with its combination of teaching and research, is a German invention. German contributions to the sciences are the easiest to document. 22 greatest scientific breakthroughs of the 20th century includes eight that were made exclusively by Germans. German-speakers are equally prominent in the arts.

Between 2002 and 2009, *Nirgendwo in Afrika* ("Nowhere in Africa"), *Das Leben der anderen* ("The Lives of Others"), and *Die Fälscher* ("The Counterfeiters") won Academy Awards as the best foreign pictures, while *Sophie Scholl, Untergang* ("Downfall"), *Revanche*, and *The Baader Meinhof Complex* were also nominated. In 2005, *Newsweek* called *Gegen die Wand* ("Head On") the best film of the year.

German is spoken in four countries with diverse cultural, political, and economic traditions: The Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.

Among Europeans, in fact, the approximately 101 million native speakers of German greatly outnumber those of English, French, Italian, or Spanish. As a language used in business, diplomacy, and tourism, German stands second only to English in Western Europe.

The German-speaking countries' economic significance is even greater. Germany boasts the world's fourth-largest national economy and is furthermore the most influential member of the European Union, the world's second-largest economic entity.

Germany's automobile, engineering, chemical, pharmaceutical, and high-end appliance firms are well known, as is its leadership in design, but the country's information enterprises are also significant. Bertelsmann is the world's largest publisher, and the German book-publishing industry as a whole ranks third in the world. Germany is also among the leaders in computing. SAP is the world's largest business software company and the world's third-largest independent software provider. A 1999 study by McKinsey found that the Munich area's 1,800 computer firms, with over 100,000 employees, formed the world's fourth largest concentration of hardware and software producers (after Silicon Valley, Boston, and London). Munich is also home to 115 biotech companies. On the internet, German is the second language, both in terms of webpages and of languages used in search engines (see <http://www.daad.de/deutschland/en/2.5.1.html>).

Germany is also the world's leader in the development of alternative energy. Approximately half of all photovoltaic cells and a third of all windmills are produced in Germany.

Of the 50 most-recorded classical composers in the world, 23 are German or Austrian. Among the world's languages, German ranks 12th in the number of native speakers.

Since Europeans who study English frequently learn German, as well, the total of German-speakers in the European Union actually exceeds that of English-speakers. In most countries in the world, French and German are, after English, the most frequently taught foreign languages. In the countries that have recently joined the European Union, 77% of students learn English, 37% German, and 18% French. In Japan, 68% of all students learn German.