

Learn How to Improve Your German Language Vocabulary Fast!

We did not acquire language as babies by reading. Vocabulary came first. You learn a foreign language the same way. If you do not understand German, you cannot communicate.

(c) Copyright Kathy Steinemann

We all spent our earliest weeks lying flat on our backs, unable to fend for ourselves. The bright spots in our days were the strange sounds coming out of the mouths of our parents.

Soon we began to understand those strange sounds and realized what they meant. After many months of listening, we experimented with our young tongues and began to produce our first rudimentary words. Nobody minded if we got the grammar wrong. Reading and writing was still many years away.

Why should we expect to learn differently just because we are older and supposedly wiser?

The fastest progress in foreign language education occurs when we have an opportunity to listen to it. Our brains process the strange sounds and words, collating and organizing the foreign data and associating everything with concepts and objects.

In days gone by, it was difficult to gain audio exposure to the German language unless we were lucky enough to have someone nearby who spoke it. Very few people in North America had access to German television or radio broadcasts.

Our modern era has embraced technology and the Internet. With a few mouse clicks, you can order a good audio book on CD along with accompanying text. Numerous software programs offer interactive audio learning with meters that measure your oral pronunciation skills. German language films are available on DVD.

This article specifically discusses audio books. Audio books will boost your German language learning faster than many methods. However, there are a few important guidelines to keep in mind.

1. Be sure to purchase **unabridged** audio books, along with the corresponding texts. A good unabridged production will allow you to follow the printed book word-for-word.
2. Concentrate on productions released during the last year or so. They are likely to incorporate recent German spelling reforms. For example, German now uses 'dass' instead of 'daß'. If you find a book with the older spelling of this common word, it is likely to contain other outdated spelling and grammar as well.
3. When buying from a German-language website, watch for terms like those in the following list. (If you do not have a foreign-language keyboard layout, substitute ö or ü with 'oe' or 'ue'.)
 - audio book - Hörbuch (Hoerbuch)
 - audio books - Hörbücher (Hoerbuecher)
 - audio books - Sprechende Bücher (Sprechende Buecher)
 - audio book unabridged - Hörbuch ungekürzt (Hoerbuch ungekuerzt)
 - audio CD - Audio CD
 - audio book - Audio Book
 - unabridged - ungekürzt (ungekuerzt)
 - unabridged reading - ungekürzte Lesung (ungekuerzte Lesung)
 - unabridged readings - ungekürzte Lesungen (ungekuerzte Lesungen)
 - unabridged audio books - ungekürzte Hörbücher (ungekuerzte Hoerbuecher)
4. Children's books tend to be shorter and use simpler language. Concentrate on them if you are new to learning

German.

5. If you do not see 'ungekürzte Lesung' in the description for a desired audio book, you may find the phrase on the cover photo. Try also to search for the ISBN number on the publisher's website.

6. You will need to understand the following terms:

- gebundene Ausgabe - hardcover book
- broschiert - soft cover
- Taschenbuch - pocket book

7. If at all possible, look for books written by native German authors. A book originally written in another language and translated into German may differ considerably from the audio production. If the same publishing company produces both the audio and written book, there is a higher likelihood of a perfect match. However, try to listen to an audio sample and peek inside the book just to be sure. Here are some terms to be aware of:

- Hörprobe or Hörproben (audio sample/s, sound clip/s)
- Leseprobe or Leseproben (reading sample/s, reading rehearsal/s)

If you are relatively new to German, it is also helpful to purchase an English copy of the book to double check your translation skills.

8. Once you have your book and audio CD:

- Listen to the first chapter several times without reading along.
- Listen several times while reading the text.
- Search for new words in a dictionary. Underline them with a red pen and note the translation above each word/phrase or in the book's margin. Use the English book as a backup only if you are really stuck.
- Read the first chapter several times, with and without the audio, until you are fairly comfortable with the vocabulary. You do not have to memorize every single word.
- Use small index cards for particularly difficult words or phrases, and review them whenever you can.
- After completing the first chapter, proceed to the next and complete the process until you work through the entire book.

You will soon find a page here and there where you know almost all of the words!

(c) Copyright Kathy Steinemann: This article is free to publish only if copyright notices, byline, and the author's note below (with active links) are included.

Author's Note:

Kathy loves the German language and has written a [dual-language German-English e-book of short stories and poetry](#) called 'Matthias und die verflixten Ameisen - Matthew and the Pesky Ants'. You can read the book on your PC, PDA, or mobile phone. Be sure to check out her [foreign language](#) website as well.

Author: Kathy Steinemann

Article downloaded from page [eioba.com](#)