

Nothing for Ungood

Exemplarische Einträge aus dem Blog „Nothing for Ungood“ des Amerikaners John, der einige Jahre Arbeit bei Bosch und wohnen in Deutschland (üb)erlebt hat. Einige Dinge scheinen dabei seltsam vertraut...

[Germans must eat exactly one warm meal per day](#)

April 17th, 2008



I am not sure what would happen to a German if they mistakenly eat two heated meals in one day, but I am sure it would be devastation, because all Germans make sure that they eat exactly one warm meal each day.

In fact, if you eat with your colleagues at work in the cafeteria, you can tell which ones are married, because they will grab a salad and a roll, then remind you that they have a wife at home who will cook *warmes* for them later. Even if the cafeteria is serving their favorite heated dish, the German must consider that his wife will cook later, and he cannot break the cardinal rule of never, ever, under any circumstances, eating two meals above room temperature in one calendar day.

[Brutal Honesty](#)

April 17th, 2008

The first thing you need to know about surviving amongst Germans is that they are brutally honest. If you are overweight at all, be prepared for 75% of your German friends to remind you of the fact that you are fat at least one time. In fact if you move to Germany, don't bother buying a bathroom scale, some acquaintance will always let you know if you have gained a pound.

All around the world children say exactly what they are thinking. Eventually children of every other nationality on Earth learn that some things are best kept to yourself. The concept of a "little white lie" just doesn't exist in German culture. Germans just don't possess the talent to let you know how they feel in some sugar-coated way. Simply put, Germans are brutally honest, you have to learn to deal with it.

Germans think they speak better English than they do

April 17th, 2008

First of all, this is certainly a case of throwing stones in glass houses here, but all Germans make the same mistakes when they speak English. Learning these common mistakes will help you communicate.

First, the most annoying, Germans think *Handy* means cell phone. Telling them that the word *Handy* is not English for cell phone will make you endure a horrendous joke about how a Schwäbian guy actually came up the term. Do not tell them its not called a *Handy* in English under any circumstance, just know that they are talking about a mobile phone and move on.

Beamer is not a BMW, it is a projector.

Eggzill is a spreadsheet program from Microsoft. A warning from first hand experience here is in order. After hearing your German colleagues talk about using *Microzoft Vord*, *Eggzill*, and *Axis*, do not call the other program Microsoft *Proyekt*, like you think your German colleagues would pronounce it. They will make fun of you for being stupid, if you do.

Actual does not mean actual to a German. To a German actual means current, or up-to-date. For some reason they think *aktuell* = actual, which gets super annoying, since every German will always make this mistake till they die, no matter how many times you tell them.

Fitness Studio is a gym. Sounds like you're going to get filmed while you work out, but no worries, it's just a gym.

Der Smoking is a tuxedo.

Mobbing gives you the image of an angry mob of 50 people ready to kill you, but in German it is any form of harassment or mistreatment, especially in the work place by coworkers or management.

Informations, *trainings*, *etc.* Germans make up plural forms of words you can't really do that with, which sounds pretty ridiculous.

Lucky means happy to Germans. Kind of weird since most Germans use the word happy now and then, as in "This film is a happy end." By the way Germans, if you are listening, you mean "This movie has a happy **ending**."

An *Oldtimer* to a German means a vintage car, not your grandpa.

A *shooting* is not what happens on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard once a day; Germans use it to mean a photo shoot.

Shrimps is the German word for shrimp, even though they could use their own language, the Germans prefer to misuse ours.

A *Body bag* in Germany is not what the authorities take dead people to the morgue in, but rather a back pack or a fanny pack.

Perpetual handshaking and timely greetings.

April 18th, 2008

If you are going to work in Germany, get ready to shake the hand of every colleague you have every day. In America, we generally shake hands when first meeting someone, or if we haven't seen each other in a very long time. Germans on the other hand want to shake hands one time per day.

Sometimes you will forget with which colleagues you have already shaken hands, and you may try to reshake and your colleague will begin to extend his or her hand until the moment of realization that that would be two shakes in one day, and one or both of you must jerk your hand away and exclaim "*wir hatten schon!*," because shaking hands twice in one day is just as unacceptable as eating two warm meals in one day.

On occasion the German you greet may be unable to offer you his hand because he has them both full, has dirty hands, or is sick (you can tell because they will wear a scarf around their neck, without exception), at which point you will be offered a wrist or an elbow, which you are obliged to awkwardly shake.

If one arrives a little late and it would cause an interruption to make way through the room shaking with each individual, it will suffice to knock on a table. It is understood that you have in this way greeted everyone in the room. You will get bonus points as a German insider if you yell out, "Es gilt", so that everyone knows they have been greeted.

On the subject of greetings, you must always check your watch before offering a greeting, because the standard greeting changes throughout out the day. Of course in the morning you say *guten Morgen*, but at about 11 a.m. Germans switch it over to *mahlzeit* or literally translated "meal time". This can extend well into the afternoon until it becomes a more natural *guten Tag*.

Telling people it is meal time for like 3 hours at midday weird. It should be stopped.

Germans eat 1.7 times faster than Americans

April 30th, 2008

Germans are the kings of efficiency and this extends into the realm of eating lunch. If you work at a big company in Germany, you will almost certainly have a cafeteria to eat in which serves up great subsidized meals. Because Germans want to spend as little time as possible at work, they limit their lunch breaks to exactly 45 minutes. That means you have 45 minutes to walk from the office to the cafeteria, get served up a nice meal and a tiny drink with no ice (and no free refills), talk about the latest episode of the emigration reality show, a soccer match, or what would have happened if some battle in a war 95 years ago would have turned out differently. After that you need to return your dishes and take a 10 minute walk the long way back to the office.

When you subtract the walking times and time needed to buy your lunch, you actually only have about 10 minutes to eat your meal while discussing 1 reality show, 1 soccer match, and 1 alternative outcome to a historic event. You as an American cannot pull it off. Do not attempt to participate in the conversation, focus solely on eating as fast as you can. The cards are stacked against you in this for the following 2 reasons:

1. You likely haven't mastered the super-efficient German style of eating, whereby you scoop everything onto your fork in your left hand with your knife that's in your right hand. Maybe you are becoming adept at using the fork with your left hand and are gaining speed, but it won't be enough.
2. You must constantly try to remember the gender of every noun you want to say, then figure out whether the prepositions you want to use require the accusative, dative, or genitive case. Then you have to match the gender with the case to figure out the needed definite article in a table in your head you learned in German class, and you are almost there. Now you just have to figure out the adjective ending based on the definite article and you have part of the sentence you want to say completed. Now figure out where the verbs go in the sentence, conjugate and you are ready to add your mustard to the conversation. Unfortunately by the time you have your witty sentence about the reality show constructed in your head, the topic has already moved on to the *Bundesliga*.

Not only did you not get to say a single word about the first topic, you wasted your first 3 minutes of valuable eating time. You are still working on your soup, while your German colleagues have already finished their *Maultaschen* and are getting ready to dig into dessert.

Once again its going to be one of those days where the only thing you said all lunch long was *genau* one time, and your colleagues are still going to have to wait for the slow American to finish lunch.

Mixed messages on the motorway

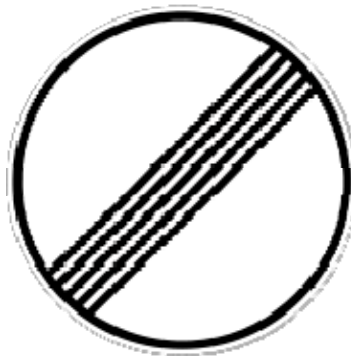
May 7th, 2008

Ah, the world-renown Autobahn. Driving at speeds over 150 mph right next to semis driving 50 mph is quite a rush, and should be on anyone's to do list when visiting Germany. It's just a shame the Dutch don't learn to speed up or get out of the way.

But the lack of a speed limit doesn't really fit to the German mentality for two reasons.

1. It is quite dangerous. Germans love insurance against unfortunate things from happening to them. Physics says going at an unlimited speed may turn out bad.
2. It is a waste of gas. As you go faster your wind-resistance gets much higher and you waste fuel. Germans are generally very ecologically minded, so you would think that a country that makes you pay a deposit for just about any container that could possibly be recycled *and* makes you sort your trash three ways would set speed limits on the Autobahn.

So what does Germany do instead? They spend money to put up signs to tell you there is no speed limit like this:



So you can now drive as fast as you want, but you may soon start noticing signs like this:



That's the suggested speed. If you are feeling like a nice person, you will follow that suggestion for the safety of the rest of people on the road and to do your small part for the environment. But then the weirdest thing Germany does is put up advertising on giant billboards to tell you just how uncool you are if you drive fast.



The worst part of this whole thing aside from being a complete waste of money is having to constantly explain to American colleagues traveling in Germany that the sign is not about what they think it is about.

I guess Daimler, Porsche, VW, BMW, Bosch, and Conti are happy just the way things are.

Don't learn German

May 12th, 2008



Living in Germany is great, and I would recommend it to anyone. Speaking German, on the other hand, is terrible and it should be avoided at all costs. In fact, Mark Twain warned us way back in 1880 in his essay *The Awful German Language* not to bother with this language. There are countless reasons not to learn German, so let's discuss a few:

1. **The German language is, in fact, impossible to learn** unless you begin learning it as a baby. Starting to learn this language is impossible if you start later, because your brain will lack the capacity to learn so many senseless details, such as the different forms of the word "the".
 - o You probably know in German there are three different genders *der*, *das*, and *die*. So for every single noun out there, you need to memorize a gender as well (there are some rules for determining gender, but for every rule there are just as many exceptions as examples that fit, so you still have to memorize every single one individually). But you also need to change the article, based on the case that you are using the noun in. Let's see what this looks like in German:

	German			
Nominative	der	das	die	die (pl.)
Accusative	den	das	die	die
Dative	dem	dem	der	den
Genitive	des	des	der	der

2. Now let's translate that table into English:

	English			
Nominative	the	the	the	the (pl.)
Accusative	the	the	the	the
Dative	the	the	the	the
Genitive	the	the	the	the

3. Do you really want to learn a language that has 16 ways to say the word “the”? And it doesn't stop there, you need to learn 16 ways to say “a” (in English 2), and 32 ways to change adjective endings (in English we have 0). And you want to try to do this in real-time in your head while trying to carry on a conversation... forget about it.
 - o In English, when something is plural we just add “s” to the end. In German you add an “s”, an “e”, a couple of dots somewhere in the middle, an “er”, an “en”, or just do nothing at all and the word becomes plural. Also be careful what case you are talking in, because that changes the plural form again, should you use the dative case.
 - o For every verb you learn, you must learn to conjugate it for I, you, You, they, he, she, it, and ya'll. You'll also need to learn them in present tense, past tense, perfect past tense, and subjunctive. Oh, and having *one* subjunctive case isn't good enough for Germans. Germans need *two* subjunctive cases, because they deem it necessary to designate hearsay grammatically. You will never learn all this, so don't bother trying.
4. **No matter how good your German gets, most Germans will speak English much better than you can speak German.** Let them do the work in learning *your* language, since they have to do it anyway to talk with the rest of the world. The British have figured out you can live in Germany with no problems without speaking a word of German, so just follow their lead.
5. **Use your lack of German speaking abilities to your advantage** in the workforce. For every professional job in Germany, English is a required skill. So by default, any professional working in Germany who doesn't speak English fluently either lied to get the job and/or is incompetent. Forcing these people to speak in English gives you an unfair edge in order to dominate negotiations. Try negotiating in German and you have the exact opposite situation... don't set yourself up for a weaker position by learning enough German to get you into trouble.
6. **It makes business meetings more entertaining**, because when you show up to the meeting and say you can't speak German, the meeting has to be conducted in English to accommodate you. This will slow down the pace of the meeting considerably, because you are forcing the majority of the people to speak a foreign language, but Germans love to discuss things so much, that they will take up all the allotted time for the meeting either way. You might as well do this to make it more fun, because it's really entertaining to watch people who agree with each other fight each other. Since the Germans in the meeting will be so busy trying to figure out how to say what they want to say next in English, they won't have any chance to pay attention to what the other person is saying, so a heated argument will always ensue, even when the participants completely agree with each other. Sit back, drink some excellent European coffee, eat some *Keks* and enjoy, cause you wouldn't be going home soon anyway.

7. **You will never learn how to say ö or ü.**
8. **Germans will change their spelling system** as soon as you learn it. By the time you learn the difference between *das* and *daß*, *daß* doesn't exist anymore, and in its place you have words like *Schiffffahrt*.
9. **Tokio Hotel records English versions of their songs**, so you have that angle covered as well.

[Germans have MacGyver-like abilities in opening beer bottles.](#)

May 9th, 2008

Germans hate convenience. Although Germany is generally a cash based society as opposed to America, where we use credit and debit cards for every transaction upwards of 49 cents, Germany has no ATMs that you can drive through. In fact the only drive-throughs in all of Germany are called McDrive.

You will also encounter the German hatred of convenience while grocery shopping as you watch the cashier throwing all of your groceries into a big pile, which you have to then bag yourself, while simultaneously trying to pay for them, while a big line of impatient customers are tapping their feet behind you.

The most obvious indication that Germans hate convenience is the fact that they do not have twist-off caps on bottles of beer, like we have had for the last 47 years. Instead Germans must develop new talents in opening their beer, as a bottle opener is not always available.



Here is a partial list of ways Germans can open their bottles:

The Klassiker: Since 87% of Germans smoke, you have well over a 98% chance in a group of three or more that a cigarette lighter will be available. Using the available cigarette lighter, Germans put a firm grip around the bottleneck with one hand, and use the butt-end of the lighter to pry open the lid with the other hand, using a lever-action, which is intuitive to all Germans, because they are all gear-heads.

Before returning to the States, you should learn this technique, because it will amaze your friends, and it works with twist-offs as well. You can learn to either make the cap fly off into the air for amusement, or just gently pop off to avoid injury.

The Tischler: Never let a German do this on your table or counter-top, but most Germans have the ability to set the lip of cap against a hard 90 degree angled surface with one hand, and bang the bottle with the other to remove the cap. This works only 30% of the time, so you have a 70% chance of a hand injury and/or scratched surface.

The Doppeldeckler: This is a limited use technique, because it requires two bottles. Once they are down to the last beer, Germans have to resort to another strategy. This

technique is to flip one bottle into the opposing direction of the other and use one cap to pry the other one off. Despite its limitations this is a stylish, impressive feat.

The Zahnarzt: Young Germans males find a way to open bottles with their teeth. We don't know how or why, but we recommend you avoid this.

Some smaller German breweries, such as Flensburger, make a very stylish cap that requires you to only push against the cap, and the mechanical mechanism allows the cap to pop out of the bottle, requiring you to neither use the techniques explained above, nor hurt your delicate hands on a twist-off cap; however, since Germans hate convenience, these bottles are very unpopular.

Germans wonder why Americans think of Bavaria when they think of Germany

May 15th, 2008



One baffling thing about Germans is that 90% of them honestly wonder why Americans immediately think of Bavaria as soon as Germany is mentioned. The remaining 10% are all Bavarian.

Germans, try this experiment with me: Picture a stereotypical Bavarian. OK, done? Let me guess, you thought of either a girl wearing a *dirndl* or some dude with a huge mustache wearing *lederhosen*. Now think of a stereotypical German from Hessen. You can't and neither can we.

Americans are not the least bit ashamed to ignore the rest of Germany, because Bavaria is exactly what we are looking for. We come to Europe to see old stuff. In Munich we can see buildings that are nearly 60 years old. We read the same fairy tales as you growing up (ok, well our fairy tales edit out all the really creepy stuff you've got) and we want see a real castle that makes us think those fairy tales could have really happened. Neuschwanstein gives us that hope.

But most importantly, we don't have the time to learn the culture and pick up on subtleties, because we only get two weeks of vacation per year. We want stuff that is big and obvious, and Bavaria is pretty much the only place that delivers for us. Americans love big stuff and that's what Bavaria gives us, beer in one liter mugs, huge pretzels, *haxn*, and the Alps.

We love Bavaria, because it's Germany's version of Texas: They're big. They're mostly rural. Despite being rural, they're hotbeds for industry and high tech companies. They're way down south. People talk with a funny accent there. They remember when they were their own countries and wish they would become their own country again. The rest of the country doesn't really like them, and the people there don't really like the rest of the country.

And the best part is that in both Texas and Bavaria, the locals still play dress up in outdated clothing now and then.