

TOP TEN GERMAN PRONUNCIATION RULES FOR THE TPSC
(created by Noel Daniels for the Phoenix Symphony Chorus)

1. The letter “v” in German is always pronounced like the English [f]. The first syllable of *Volkswagen* is pronounced “folks”, just like the English word “folk” meaning “people”. Examples: *Vater, vor*
2. Conversely, “w” in German is pronounced like the English [v]. The second syllable in *Volkswagen* begins with a “v” sound. Examples: *Wurm, wir*
3. The German “z” is pronounced like the English [ts], two consonants pronounced almost simultaneously. Examples: *Zauber, zum*
4. A single letter “s” preceding a vowel in German is pronounced like the English [z]. Examples: *Seele, diesem*

However, a single “s” followed by a consonant is pronounced “sh”. Examples: *streng, steht*

A letter “s” at the end of a word, or “ss” at the beginning of a syllable sounds like our normal “s”.
Example: *was, uns*

5. The letter “g” at the beginning or a word or syllable is always a hard [g] as in the English words “gate” or “grave”. There is no soft “g” as in the English “gypsy”. Germans don’t pronounce the word “Germany” like we do. Examples: *gegeben, Gott*

However, a “g” at the end of a word is a suitably Teutonic guttural sound, like the “ch” in Loch Ness.
Example: *freudig, Heilig* (IPA symbol [ç] or [x])

“ng” is voiced the same as in the English word “thing”. Examples: *streng, umschlungen*

6. “ch” at the beginning of a word is either pronounced like [k] in the English word “chaos”, or “sh” in the word champagne. It is never pronounced like our word “cherry”. Example: *Cherub* ([k] sound)
7. The letters “d” and “b” are the same as in English, except when they are the *last* letter of the word. As the final consonant, a “d” is pronounced as a [t], and “b” becomes a [p]. Examples: *und, gab*
8. There is no “th” sound in German like the English voiced “this” or unvoiced “thin”. They literally don’t know how to pronounce it (and neither do the French). Instead, “th” is pronounced like a simple [t].
Examples: *geteilt, Heiligthum*
9. Umlauts are fun! You make a face to say one vowel, but then say a different one instead.
 - “ö” is pronounced by shaping your lips to say “o” as in the word “go”, but saying “ay” like the word “may”. Examples: *schöner, Götter*
 - “ü” is pronounced by shaping your lips to say “oo” as in “food”, but saying “ee” as in the word “me” or “feet”. Examples: *Brüder, Flügel*
10. Änderungen Vorbehalten! (Tom reserves the right to make changes for better vocal sounds).