



My Ancestors Were From Germany, and I Don't Speak German

Tamra Stansfield, AG®

FamilySearch
stansfieldt@familysearch.org

Genealogical records from Germany are usually wonderful! The depth of information and available time spans are often astounding! Unfortunately, too many of us are scared away by the thought of participating in German research when we do not have a mastery of the German language. This does not need to be the case. We can find our German homelands by developing a competency in the basic nuances of German research.

This class will familiarize you with the basic elements of German research including easily available resources which if studied and applied, will help lead across the ocean and into the hearths and hearts of our German ancestors.

CLASS OBJECTIVES

- Recognize key historical events, their impact on geography, and identify available resources
- Identify language resources
- Recognize similarities between alphabets and identify handwriting resources
- Know resources for getting started in German research

HISTORICAL RESOURCES

[Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org) contains vast and varied articles relating to every aspect of German history.
<https://en.wikipedia.org>

- [German History docs](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/about.cfm) is a collection of documents, images and maps divided into specific time frames within the History of Germany. <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/about.cfm>
- FamilySearch Wiki: [Germany Beginning Research Series Lesson 2: Learn about Historical Background](https://www.familysearch.org/ask/learningViewer/236). <https://www.familysearch.org/ask/learningViewer/236>
- [History of the World.net](http://www.historyworld.net) contains a historical overview beginning in 7th century AD. <http://www.historyworld.net>
- [Info Please.com](https://www.infoplease.com/country/germany) includes modern history. <https://www.infoplease.com/country/germany>

- [San Jose State University](http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/german1.htm), Department of Economics documents German economic history <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/german1.htm>
- [World Atlas.com](https://www.worldatlas.com/)- provides a historic timeline. <https://www.worldatlas.com/>

GEOGRAPHICAL RESOURCES:

- [Meyers Gazetteer](https://www.meyersgaz.org/) online, easy to search version of Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs-lexikon des deutschen Reichs <https://www.meyersgaz.org/>
- [Google Earth](https://www.google.com/earth/) modern day maps from all over the world. <https://www.google.com/earth/>
- [Ravenstein Atlas des Deutschen Reich](http://www.hoeckmann.de/deutschland/) - historical map at the end of the 18th century. <http://www.hoeckmann.de/deutschland/>
- [MapQuest](https://www.mapquest.com/) includes modern day maps and a directions tool, enabling a quick calculation between villages, towns, etc. <https://www.mapquest.com/>
- [1923 F. W. Putzgers Historischer Schul-Atlas](http://www.maproom.org/00/19/index.php). links to scans of the maps from the 1905 (29th), 1914 (37th), and 1923 (44th) editions of F. W. Putzgers Historischer Schul-Atlas. <http://www.maproom.org/00/19/index.php>
- Jensen Publications. *Maps of the German Empire of 1871*, Pleasant Grove, Utah. FHL Intl Ref 943 E7m ©1987. This edition contains a history of each of the areas of Germany back to the early tribal periods of Germany.
- [Karte des Deutschen Reichs](http://www.ancestry.com) Detailed maps covering the entire German Empire prior to World War I. FHL Intl film 068,814. Ancestry.com has imaged the maps and catalogued them at www.ancestry.com > Card Catalog > Germany, Topographic Maps, 1860-1965.
- [Kartenmeister](http://www.kartenmeister.de) is a comprehensive database of locations east of the Oder/Neisse Rivers and is based on the eastern borders of the German Empire as of the Spring of 1918. Includes the former German place names along with today's Russian, Polish and Lithuanian place names.
- FamilySearch Wiki: [Germany Beginning Research Series Lesson 3: Using Maps and Gazetteers](https://www.familysearch.org/ask/learningViewer/256). <https://www.familysearch.org/ask/learningViewer/256>

LANGUAGE RESOURCES

You will need a good modern German dictionary and at least one dictionary containing archaic terms.

- A [German Genealogical word list](http://www.familysearch.org/wiki) is available at FamilySearch and along with word lists for Latin, French, Danish, Dutch and Polish – languages that often appear in German records. www.familysearch.org/wiki > German genealogical word list
- Thode, Ernest, German-English Genealogical Dictionary, Baltimore, Maryland; Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc. c 1992. A wonderful hands on archaic dictionary and is available to purchase through many different book outlets online.

- [Google Translation](https://translate.google.com/#) is a good source for both small translations and entire websites – be aware that any word for word translation prepared by a computer program is going to have some errors! <https://translate.google.com/#>
- [Latin Dictionary and Grammar Aid](http://archives.nd.edu/latgramm.htm), Notre Dame University. <http://archives.nd.edu/latgramm.htm>
- [Leo.org](https://www.leo.org) is an online German/English dictionary good for individual word definitions. <https://www.leo.org>
- [Wörterbuchnetz > DWB Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm](http://woerterbuchnetz.de/cgi-bin/WBNetz/wbgui_py?sigle=DWB). Before writing fairy tales, the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm created dictionaries. Free online access to the dictionary is available at http://woerterbuchnetz.de/cgi-bin/WBNetz/wbgui_py?sigle=DWB

HANDWRITING RESOURCES

One of the greatest challenges a beginner in German research faces is deciphering the handwriting. The most frequently used style was *Kurrentschrift*, meaning running or connected script. Kurrentschrift was in use between the 15th and 20th century in Germany and Scandinavia.

- [alte deutsche Handchriften](https://www.deutsche-handschrift.de/adsschreiben.php) is a link to a site that allows choose specific names or phrases, and it converts it into eight different font styles associated with German handwriting. <https://www.deutsche-handschrift.de/adsschreiben.php>
- [Reading German Handwritten Records](https://www.familysearch.org/ask/learningViewer/38) Lessons 1-3 located in the FamilySearch Wiki. <https://www.familysearch.org/ask/learningViewer/38>
- [Old German Script](https://www.familysearch.org/ask/learningViewer/375) Part 1-3 located in the FamilySearch Wiki. <https://www.familysearch.org/ask/learningViewer/375>
- [German Script Tutorials](https://script.byu.edu/Pages/German/en/intro.aspx) offered free from Brigham Young University, Provo. <https://script.byu.edu/Pages/German/en/intro.aspx>
- [Sütterlin](http://www.suetterlinschrift.de/Englisch/Sutterlin.htm) – German Handwriting online tutorial. <http://www.suetterlinschrift.de/Englisch/Sutterlin.htm>
- Minert, Roger. *Deciphering Handwriting in German Documents, analyzing German, Latin, and French in Vital Records Written in Germany*, Woodscross, U.S.A., GRT Publications, c 2001. FHL Intl Ref Area 417.7 M662d.
- Edna M. Bentz, *If I Can, You Can: Decipher Germanic Records* (San Diego, Calif.: E.M. Bentz, 1982).

RESEARCH RESOURCES

Below are knowledge articles from major genealogical sites relating to German research methodology and available tools:

- [FamilySearch Wiki](http://www.familysearch.org/wiki) > German Genealogy > Getting Started with Germany Research. www.familysearch.org/wiki

- [Family History Guide](#) > Countries > Central Europe > Germany > [Goal 1: Getting Started with German Research](#). <https://www.thefhguide.com/project-9-germany.html>
- [Ancestry.com](#) > Help > Support Center > type [Researching German Records](#) in search box
- FamilySearch > Help > Community > Groups > [German Genealogy Research](#). <https://community.familysearch.org/s/>

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