

10 things you didn't know about German

As part of the build-up to the 2006 World Cup, which kicks off in Munich on 9th June, EITI brings you 10 things you didn't know about German...

- 1 German is the tenth most widely spoken language in the world: 95 million people use it as their mother tongue.
- 2 The language has official status in six countries: Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein.
- 3 There are German-speaking communities all over the world, in places as diverse as Namibia and Tajikistan.
- 4 The word for German takes different forms in different languages: in German it is *deutsch*; in Spanish *alemán*; in Italian *tedesco*; and in Russian *nemetsky*.
- 5 German has a 60% lexical similarity with English.
- 6 Some words that are exactly the same in German and English are *Hand*, *Butter* and *Name*.
- 7 The German alphabet includes one additional letter: the *ß* or double s.
- 8 German uses the umlaut, which appears over the letters *ä*, *ö* and *ü*.
- 9 All German nouns begin with a capital letter. German is only language in the world in which this happens.
- 10 There are two major dialects of German: High German, which is spoken in the southern highlands; and Low German, which is spoken in the northern lowlands.



Above: The Brandenburg Gate in Berlin was built between 1788 and 1791. The gate consists of 12 Doric columns - six on each side - topped by the goddess of victory driving a four-horse chariot.

Sources: The Languages of the World (Routledge, 1995); Ethnologue 15th Edition (2005)