

Chapter 1

Warming Up to German Basics

In This Chapter

- ▶ Recognizing the German you already know
 - ▶ Spotting words that aren't what they seem
 - ▶ Understanding German pronunciation
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The best way to learn a new language is to jump right in — no tiptoeing around. In this chapter, you get a head start in German by seeing bits of the language you're already familiar with. You find out some popular German expressions, and you get the hang of why you need to be careful with words known as “false friends,” that is, words that seem to be the same in both languages but actually have different meanings. In the section on pronunciation, you familiarize yourself with the German alphabet and find out how to pronounce words so you can start to sound just like a native.

Starting with What You Already Know

Because German and English are both Germanic languages, quite a few words are either identical or similar in the two languages. Words that share a common source are called *cognates*. Another group of words common to German and English stem from Latin-based words that English speakers are familiar with. Many of these words have direct equivalents in German (for example, nouns that end in -tion).

Friendly allies: Kindergarten and more (perfect cognates)

The following words are spelled the same way and have the same meaning in German and in English. The only difference is the pronunciation, as shown in parentheses; in a few instances, the German and English pronunciation for the word is the same, so you see the English word in the pronunciation (followed by the notation “as in English”). The other quirk you may notice is that