

"CH 1" and "CH 2" in German

or

The Ugly Sound and The Cat Hiss

The German language has two distinct sounds, /x/ and /ç/ (IPA notation), both of which are written in normal German as **"ch."**

The sound /x/ is the easier of the two to pronounce, and it is also the most likely culprit for why some foreigners think that German "sounds ugly". So, think of it as **"The Ugly Sound."** (Fancy linguistics term for this sound: voiceless velar fricative). Der "Ach"-Laut.

The sound /ç/ is much trickier for foreigners to produce, being incorrectly pronounced as either /k/ or /f/ (the sounds found in the English words **king** and **shin**). The sound resembles the hiss of a cat, so think of this sound as **"The Cat Hiss."** (Fancy linguistics term for this sound: voiceless palatal fricative). The Cat Hiss is also used for the pronunciation of "-ig" at the end of a word, such as "zwanz**ig**" and "lust**ig**". "Ich"-Laut.

If we lived in a perfect world, these two unique sounds would be written in two unique ways, but we don't, so they aren't.

How do you know when to use which pronunciation, then? It's easy! It all depends on the vowel that comes before the "ch" in the word you're examining:

1. If the vowel before the "ch" is 'A', 'O', 'U', or 'AU' then it is **The Ugly Sound**.

2. If the vowel before the "ch" is **NOT any of the above vowels**, then it is **The Cat Hiss**. (Ä, Ö, Ü, ÄU, E, EI, IE, EU, I)

Ugly Sound or Cat Hiss? Determine how "CH" is pronounced in the following German words. Write 'x' for The Ugly Sound and 'ç' for The Cat Hiss:

Bach _____	auch _____	sprechen _____	machen _____	ich _____
nicht _____	noch _____	Sprache _____	mächtig _____	Buch _____
Nacht _____	wichtig _____	Bauch _____	Bäuche _____	Bücher _____
München _____	Woche _____	euch _____	wirklich _____	Loch _____
Löcher _____	Tschechien _____	Becher _____	Achtung _____	dich _____
Rechnung _____	acht _____	ächten _____	echt _____	mich _____