

# 18 Weird German Words You Won't Believe Exist

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The road to German fluency is [full of twists and turns](#).

Thanks to its lifelong [love affair with compound nouns](#), the German language has smashed all manner of words together to form new, unique vocabulary.

**It's no small wonder that German boasts many unique, highly-specific words that have no literal English translation.**

German learners have to slog through learning [masculine and feminine words](#), [challenging pronunciations](#), [complex word order](#) and [curious vocabulary words](#).

It's a lot of work.

You guys deserve some [reward for all your hard work](#).

Luckily, you do have the special prize of learning [fantastically creative new ways](#) to express yourselves.

Many German words have no close translation in English. One of the greatest things about learning languages is to discover words which exist in one language but don't have any equivalent in your own – or any other for that matter.

It's always fun when you can express something in one perfect word, while others require a whole darn sentence.

Other languages sometimes get word-envy when comparing themselves to German.

Many German words have found their way into the English language, think *Schadenfreude* and *Wanderlust*.

However, there are many more beyond those two.

Below you can find some of the most entertaining examples including their literal translation and what they really mean.

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## 1. *Ohrwurm* (Ear worm)

Have you ever listened to a song on the radio while driving to work only to find yourself still humming the same tune by lunch time? Congratulations, you've had an ear worm. The beautiful German word *Ohrwurm* describes the fact of having a song stuck in your head as if it wriggled itself into your brain through your ear.

## 2. *Fernweh* (Distance pain)

This gem describes the feeling of wanting to be somewhere else. It's kind of like a reverse homesickness (*Heimweh* in German), a longing for a place that isn't where you are right now. *Fernweh* is also a frequent reason for people in Germany to go on holiday.



### 3. *Kummerspeck* (Grief bacon)

When a relationship ends or during other times of sadness, anger, or worry, it's common to put on a few pounds of *Kummerspeck*. What it means is the excess weight put on by emotional overeating. So when you find yourself on the couch watching "Bridget Jones' Diary" with a tub of ice cream, you are in fact feeding your grief bacon.



### 4. *Innerer Schweinehund* (Inner pig dog)

Can't get up in the morning to be on time for work? Too lazy to go to the gym? Homework remains undone until the last minute? Don't worry, it's not your fault. The blame lies with your inner pig dog. That's the tiny voice in the back of your head which is trying to convince you to live a life of inertia and which you will have to overcome to rid yourself of *Kummerspeck*.

### 5. *Fremdschämen* (Exterior shame)

For those of you who cringe in phantom pain when others make a fool of themselves, this is your word. It describes the feeling of shame when seeing someone else in an uncomfortable or embarrassing situation. It's a real thing for the more empathetic folk and has kept more than one person from watching "the Office."

### 6. *Torschlusspanik* (Closing-gate panic)

As people get older, some find themselves worrying about roads not taken or milestones they meant to achieve by a certain age but haven't. *Torschlusspanik* is the feeling of urgency to accomplish them before some imaginary gate closes and "it's all too late." It's mostly used for those who sense their biological clock is running out and feel the need to settle with a partner or have children immediately.

### 7. *Treppenwitz* (Staircase joke)

Have you ever noticed how when you have a chance encounter with an attractive person of the opposite sex or get into an argument with someone, the best jokes, lines, and comebacks always occur to you afterwards? That's the so-called *Treppenwitz*. It's the joke that comes to your mind on the way down the stairs after talking to your neighbor in the hallway two floors up.

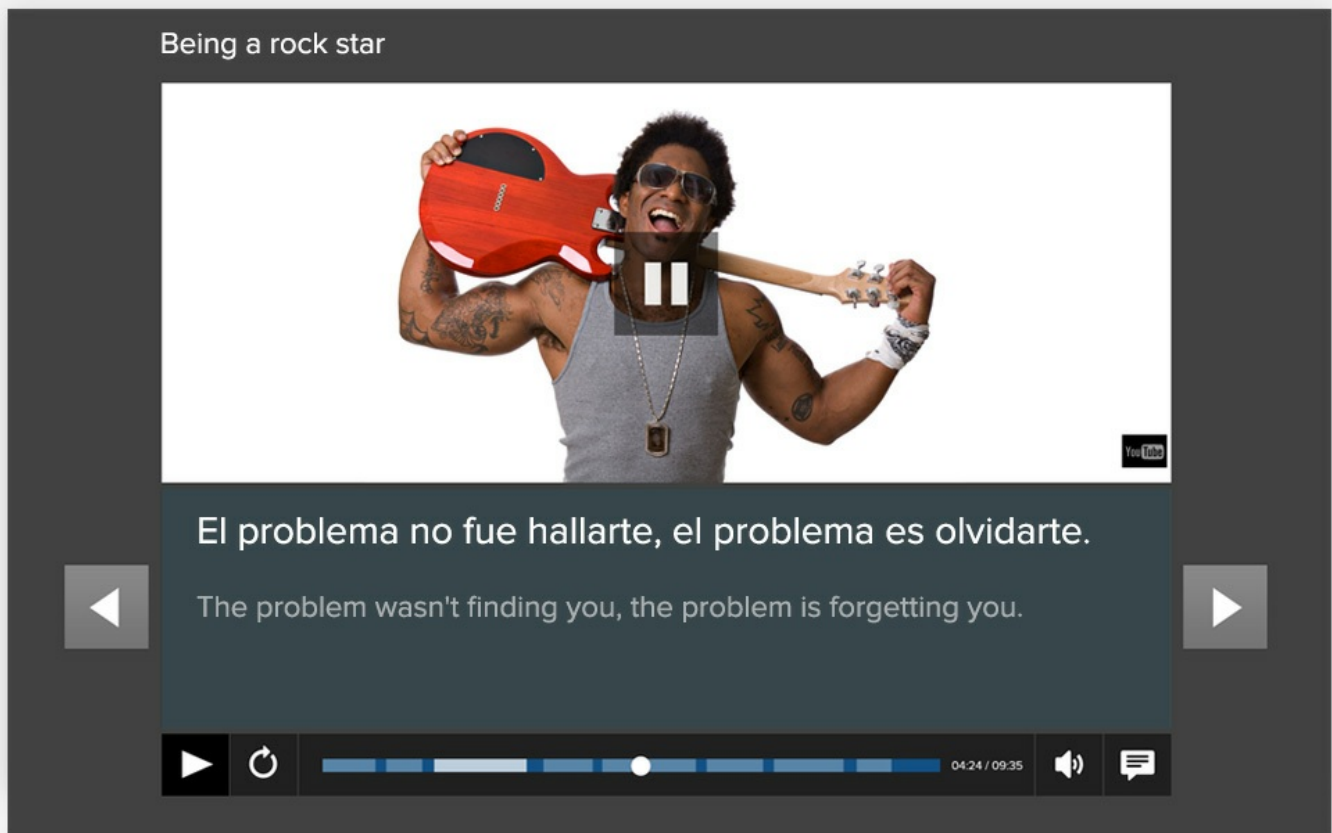


### 8. *Lebensmüde* (Life tired)

This word literally means being tired of life and was used to describe the dramatic and soul-crushing emotional agony of young Romantic poets (see also *Weltschmerz* and *Weichei*). Nowadays *lebensmüde* is what you call your friends when they are attempting something especially stupid and possibly life threatening. Most people in fail videos on YouTube suffer from latent *Lebensmüdigkeit*.

### 9. *Weltschmerz* (World pain)

The world isn't perfect. More often than not it fails to live up to what we wish it was. *Weltschmerz* describes the pain we feel at this discrepancy. It can be one of the main drivers for *Kummerspeck*.



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### 10. *Weichei* (Soft egg)

No, *Weichei* isn't what you order in the hotel when you want a three-minute egg for breakfast. In fact the waiter might look at you slightly disconcerted for accusing him of being a wuss. A soft egg, in German, means someone who is weak and cowardly. The same is also conveyed by calling someone *Würstchen*, the diminutive of sausage. Apparently Germans like to name wimps after foodstuffs.

### 11. *Backpfeifengesicht* (Slap face)

Have you ever heard the joke "Some people just need a high five – in the face – with a chair?" *Backpfeifengesicht* kind of goes in the same direction. It describes someone who you feel needs a slap in the face. Disclaimer: we're telling you this for informational purposes only and do not in any way condone violence.





### 12. *Erklärungsnot* (Explanation poverty)

*Erklärungsnot* is a state shared by cheating spouses, lying politicians, and school children without their homework alike. It's what you find yourself in when put on the spot without a sufficient explanation or excuse for something you have done or failed to do. Most often used in the form of *in Erklärungsnot geraten* or *in Erklärungsnot sein*.

### 13. *Sitzfleisch* (Sit or seat meat)

As much as it sounds like it, *Sitzfleisch* isn't a recipe of German *Hausfrauen* that involves tenderizing meat by placing it under your buttocks. Instead, it describes a character trait. Those who possess a lot of seat meat are able to sit through and weather something incredibly hard or boring. It's like carrying your own personal cushion around with you.



### 14. *Purzelbaum* (Tumble tree)

This tree is so common in Germany that every child knows it. However, if you are about to take out your big German botanical dictionary, let me stop you right there. Despite the name, a *Purzelbaum* isn't part of the kingdom of plants. Instead, it describes a somersault on the ground, a favorite way of children to get their clothes dirty.

### 15. *Dreikäsehoch* (Three cheeses high)

This sounds like it would make a great name for a pizza. However, what it describes is a person who is vertically challenged, implying they're only as tall as three wheels of cheese placed on top of each other. Usually this label is reserved for small children, together with *Zwerg* or *Pimpf*.



### 16. *Zungenbrecher* (Tongue breaker)

While it sounds like a medieval torture instrument, the nature of the *Zungenbrecher* is much less gruesome. It is the German equivalent of tongue twister, a phrase that's very hard to pronounce even for native speakers due to its sequence of letters. A very common one in German is *Blaukraut bleibt Blaukraut und Brautkleid bleibt Brautkleid*. Yeah, practice that for a while and say it 10 times fast.

### 17. *Schattenparker* (Shadow parker)

This word is part of a series of insults for men which accuse them of unmanly behavior. In this case, of parking their car in the shadow to avoid heating up the interior. These kinds of derogatory terms were something of a meme some years back and whole lists of them exist on the internet. Alternatives include *Warmduscher* (someone who showers with warm water), *Sitzpinkler* (a man who urinates while sitting down), or *Turnbeutelvergesser* (someone who used to forget their gym bag in cardio class).



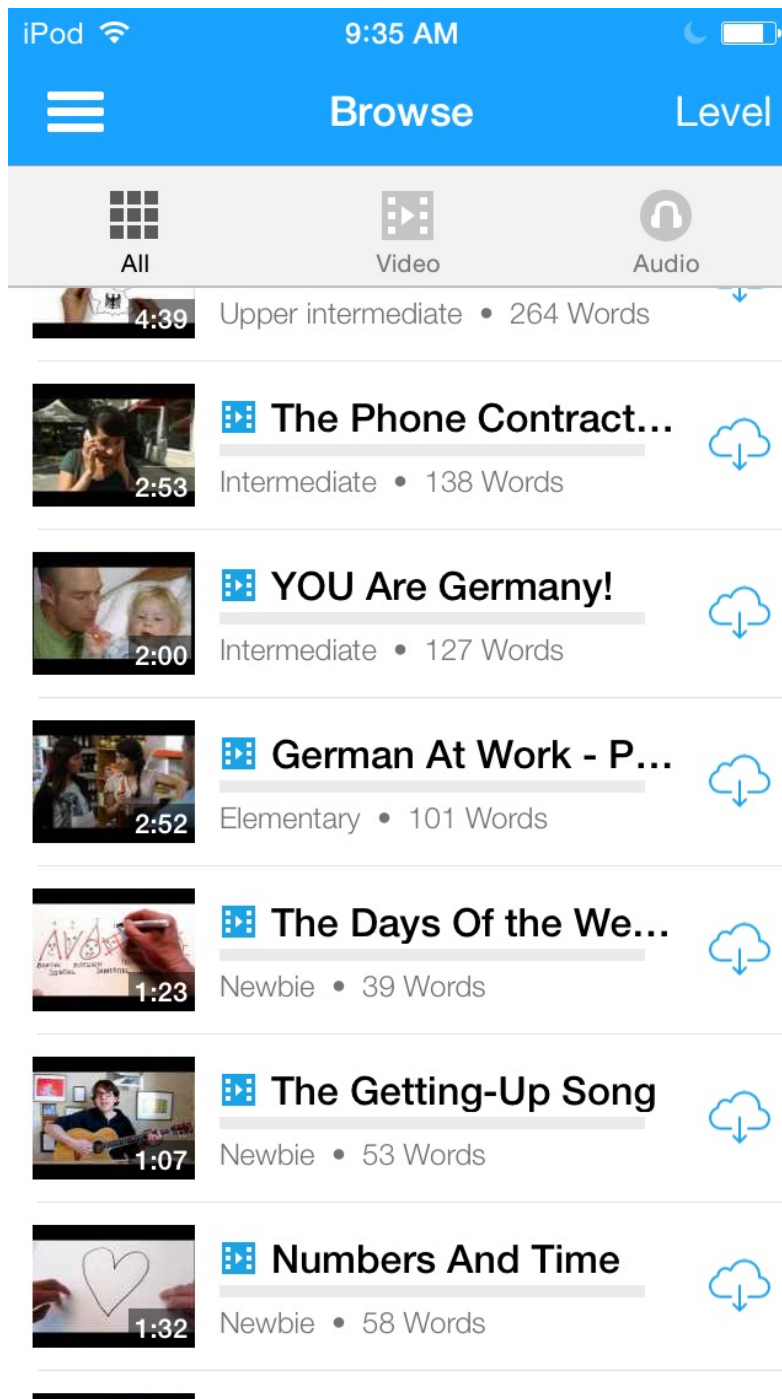
### 18. *Kuddelmuddel* (???)

I know, great final word right? Don't even start guessing its English meaning. *Kuddelmuddel* describes an unstructured mess, chaos, or hodgepodge. Alternatives which are equally awesome include *Tohuwabohu*, *Wirrarr*, *Mischmasch*, and *Kladderadatsch*. I know, some of these just sound too far-fetched to be true. Well, they are far-fetched – gathered in the distant land of Germany. If you're still convinced I'm making up words, go ahead and look them up in the dictionary!

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### And One More Thing

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# Können

*modal verb* to be able to



Sie **können** schwimmen

They can swim.

**Können** die Schweizer Deutsch  
sprechen

Can the Swiss speak german?

And there is a personalized review mode that lets you swipe left or right to see more examples for the word you're learning. The best part? FluentU keeps track of the vocabulary you're learning, and it recommends videos and examples based on the words you've already learned. You'll have a truly personalized experience.

Sie hier , die  
Anleitungen sind sehr wichtig .



Hint: to pay attention

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