CHRISTINE
BURGMER

let's talk business

German loanwords in English

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GERMAN WORDS USED IN ENGLISH

English has borrowed quite a few words from German. And today you'll find that some of these German words have even come into everyday use as there is often no direct English equivalent. The German word explains it all in a compact term whereas English often needs a whole paraphrase.

Let's take the word 'schadenfreude' as an example. There is no English equivalent. To explain the word you'd have to say that it's a "feeling of pleasure at the bad things that happen to other people" or a "gloating over others' misfortune". Now that's quite a mouthful, isn't it?

It's also fairly popular to use German *prefixes* with English words, as for example 'ubercool', 'ubercharming' or 'uberblond', especially if you want to inject a note of criticism, sarcasm or scorn. For example, instead of saying 'the very charming Mr Major', you might hear something like 'the ubercharming Mr Major … and his ubercool blog'.

You might be surprised when you read the list:

abseil (abseiling)	to go down a steep cliff or rock while attached to a rope, pushing against the slope or rock with your feet; to rappel
abseiler	the person who goes doen a steep cliff or rock while attached to a rope
abseiling (rappelling)^	the controlled descent down a steep cliff or rock using a rope
achtung	attention
affenpinscher	a breed of small dogs of European origin
ahnentafel	a method for displaying information about one's ancestors
alpenglow	a reddish glow seen on mountain tops before sunrise or after sunset
alpenstock	a strong iron-pointed staff used by mountain climbers
Alzheimer's	a disease mainly affecting older people that prevents the brain from functioning normally and causes loss of memory, loss of ability to speak clearly, etc.
angst	a feeling of anxiety and worry about a situation or about your life, not 'fear' –
angst-ridden	full of angst
anschluss	a political union of two countries (especially the one unifying Nazi Germany and Austria in 1938)
apfelstrudel	Austrian apple cake
aspirin	a pain-killer
auslander	a foreigner
autobahn	motorway (only in reference to Germany and German-speaking countries)
automat	vending machine, e.g. *cigarette automat*
Baedeker	a guidebook to countries or a country
Bauhaus	a German style of architecture in the 1920s and 30s
beer garden	an outdoor area (like a garden) where beer and other alcoholic drinks are served
berg	a mountain (South African)
bildungsroman	a novel which focuses on the moral, psychological and intellectual development of the main character

blitz	something down with a lot of energy, such as an advertising blitz; a sudden attack
the Blitz	the German air attacks on Britain in 1940
blitz, to	to attack or damage a city by dropping a large number of bombs on it in a short time, to attack suddenly and intensively
blitzkrieg	a sudden military attack intended to win a quick victory
bratwurst	a fried sausage
bremsstrahlung	the electromagnetic radiation produced by a change in the velocity of an electrically charged subatomic particle, such as an electron, as when it collides with another object.
coffee klatch/ coffee klatsch/ kaffeeklatsch	informal gathering where coffee is served; coffee party
dachshund	small dog of a breed of German origin
delicatessen/deli	a shop that sells special and unusual foods from other countries
deutschmark	the former monetary unit of Germany
diesel	a type of heavy oil used as fuel instead of petrol; pertaining to a type of internal-combustion engine
diktat	a decree, an order given by a government that people must obey
dirndl	a woman's dress with a full gathered skirt and fitted bodice
Doberman/ Doberman pinscher	medium large breed of dog of German origin
doppelgänger/ doppelganger	a double, look-alike
Doppler	of, relating to, or using the Doppler effect or Doppler radar
dreck	trash
drecky	of inferior or shoddy quality
dummkopf	a stupid person, a fool
echt	real, genuine
edelweiss	a flower found in the Alps
eigen	(prefix) of one's own, e.g. *eigenvalue, eigenfunction, eigenstate, eigenangular frequency*
ersatz	substitute, imitation, e.g. *ersatz religion, ersatz coffee*
fahrenheit	a scale of temperature
fahrvergnügen	driving for pleasure
fest	a festival, such as *a jazzfest, spend fest*
festschrift	commemorative collection of writings
fingerspitzengefühl	sure instinct, flair
flak	guns on the ground that are shooting at enemy aircraft
flugelhorn	a brass instrument resembling a cornet
foehn/föhn	a warm, dry wind that blows down the side of a mountain as on the north side of the Alps
frankfurter	a long thin sausage often eaten in a bread roll

fress, to	eat a lot and without restraint
fritz, on the	malfunctioning, inoperable, out of order, broken
fuehrer/führer	a leader, especially one exercising the powers of a tyrant
gasthaus	guest house, inn
gemuetlich/ gemutlich/ gemütlich	cosy, comfortable, comfy, homely, snug
gemütlichkeit	warm friendliness; amicability
gesellschaft	company, society, association
gestalt	form, figure, shape
gesundheit	used to wish good health to a person who has just sneezed
glitz	tasteless showiness; flashiness; gaudiness
glitzy	flashy, gaudy
glockenspiel	a musical instrument (xylophone)
götterdämmerung	a turbulent ending of an institution or regime
graben	a depression between geologic faults
hamburger	minced meat made into a flat round shape and fried (beefburger)
hausfrau	a housewife
hinterland	inland or remote region, outback
infobahn	the information superhighway
jaeger	1. a seabird that pursues weaker birds to make them drop their prey 2. a hunter or hunting attendant
Jugendstil	a style of architecture and decorative art similar to Art Nouveau
kaffeeklatsch	informal gathering at which coffee is served; coffee party
kaiser	the title of the Holy Roman Emperors or the emperors of Austria or of Germany until 1918
kaiser roll	a large roll with a hard crust, often used for sandwiches
kapellmeister	the leader of a choir or orchestra
kaput	broken, in pieces, out of order
karst	an area of irregular limestone with sinkholes, underground streams and caverns
katzenjammer	a loud noise from many sources; a hangover; a state of depression
kibitz	to look on and offer unwanted advice to others; to chat, converse
kindergarten	a nursery school; a school/class to prepare children for school
kirsch	strong alcoholic drink made from cherries
kirschwasser	cherry brandy
kitsch	objects or works of art that are popular but that are considered to have no real artistic value and that are lacking in good taste; knickknacks; gaudy trash
kitschy (adjective)	cheap, sentimental
kletterschuh	climbing shoe
kobold	a gnome or elf in German folklore

kohlrabi	a type of vegetable of the cabbage family
kraut	cabbage; a derogatory term for a German
kultur	culture, civilization
kulturkampf	conflict of cultures
kursaal	a room for the use of visitors at a health resort or spa
lager	a type of beer
landau	a four-wheeled carriage
langlauf	cross-country skiing
langlaufer	a person who skis cross-country
lebensraum	habitat, living space
lebkuchen	similar to gingerbread
leberwurst	"liver sausage" – a spread made of meat
lederhose	leather trousers
leitmotif	1. a short tune in a piece of music that is often repeated and is connected with a particular person, thing or idea 2. an idea or phrase that is repeated often in a book or work of art, or is typical of a particular person or group
lied	a German art song
liederkranz	a 'wreath of songs'; a male singing club
maerchen	a fairy tale or folktale
meerschaum	a white, heat-resistant, claylike mineral; a tobacco pipe with a bowl made of this mineral
Meister	master
.meister	often slang or humorous – an expert, e.g. *culture meister, puzzle meister, gag meister, konzert meister, rock mesiter, spin meister*
mensch	person, human being
milch	giving milk; kept for milk (especially of cattle)
mittelstand	middle class(es)
muesli	a breakfast cereal of Swiss origin
nix	to say "no"
Oktoberfest	Bavarian Folk Festival that involves merrymaking and drinking beer
Ostpolitik	politics towards Eastern Europe
patzer	a poor chess player
poltergeist	a spirit reputed to make much noise
pretzel	a crisp salty biscuit in the shape of a knot
pumpernickel	a coarse, dark bread
putsch	a sudden attempt by a group to overthrow a government
quartz	a hard mineral, often in crystal form, that is used to make clocks and watches
realpolitik	a system of politics that is based on the actual situation and needs of a country or political party rather than on moral principles; practical politics

rinderpest	an acute infectious viral disease of cattle
rollmops	marinated herring
rottweiler	a German breed of dog
rucksack	a large bag, carried on the back; backpack
sauerbraten	beef marinated in vinegar, water, wine and spices before being cooked
sauerkraut	shredded cabbage that is preserved in salt water
schadenfreude	a feeling of pleasure at the bad things that happen to other people; malicious job, gloating over others' misfortune
schlep, schlepp	to carry with difficulty; to lug
schmaltz/schmalz	the quality of being too sentimental
schmuck	a clumsy or stupid person
schnapps/schnaps	a strong alcoholic drink made from grain, spirits
schnauzer	a German breed of dog
schnitzel	escalope, a veal cutlet
schrecklich	frightful
schuss	to make a fast straight downhill run in skiing
schwärmerei	sentimental enthusiasm, fanaticism
schwarzlot	a type of black enamel decoration on glass, pottery or porcelain
schuss	in skiing, a straight slope on which it is possible to make a fast run
singspiel	a German musical drama with spoken dialogue
sitz bath	a bathtub shaped like a chair; a bath taken in such a tub
sitzmark	the mark made in the snow by a skier who has fallen backward
spiel	mechanical, often extravagant talk intending to persuade
sprechgesang	a style of dramatic vocalisation between singing and speaking
spritz	to spray (liquid)
spritzer	in America a drink made with white wine and soda water
spritzig	sparkling (especially of wine)
stein	a large earthenware mug used for drinking beer
streusel	a crumb-like topping for cakes (made of flour, sugar, butter)
strudel	a kind of pastry; a thin sheet of filled dough rolled up and baked
sturm und drang	a state of disturbance and disorder; a German romantic literary movement in the 18th century
torte	a rich sweet cake or pastry, often garnished or filled with fruit
tusche	a black liquid used for drawing in lithography, etching and silk-screening
über/uber (prefix)	over, super, very, e.g. *uberblonde, ubercharming, ubercool, ubermensch, ubernerd, uberpowerful, Uber-guru, ubersexy, ubertrendy*
u-boat	a submarine
umlaut	a change in a vowel sound; the diacritic mark (¨) placed over a vowel (especially in German)
ur- (prefix)	the original condition or first representation of a thing, original, primitive (e.g. an urtext is the original text of a composer or author)
verboten	forbidden
volksmarch	a non-competitive 6 mile walk which is open to the public

volkssport	non-competitive 'people's' sports
volkswalk	'people's' walk; an organised walk which is open to the public
waldsterben	the dying of forest ecosystems through pollution
waltz	a graceful dance, music for this dance, to do this dance
Wanderjahr	a year of travel, especially after one's schooling
wanderlust	a strong desire to travel, to wander or go hiking
wedeln	a skiing technique
welt	world
weltanschauung	a particular attitude towards life; philosophy; world view
weltschmerz	sorrow which one feels and accepts are one's necessary portion in life; world-weariness; despair with the world
wiener/wienerwurst	a smooth-textured sausage; a frankfurter
wiener schnitzel	a breaded veal or pork cutlet
wunderbar	wonderful
wunderkind(er)	a very successful child; a child or infant prodigy
wurst	sausage
yammer	to whine in a complaining manner; to complain, to lament
yodel	to sing in a way that the voice fluctuates rapidly between the normal voice and a falsetto (as in songs from the Swiss Alps)
zaftig	having a full, shapely figure
zeitgeist	the general mood or quality of a particular period of history, as shown by the ideas, beliefs, etc. common at the time; the spirit of the age; spirit of the times
zeitgeisty (adj.)	e.g. *zeitgeisty trends*
zeppelin	a type of airship
zigzag	a line or course having sharp turns in alternating directions
Zimmer frame	a metal frame that old or ill people use to help them to walk
zugzwang	compulsion to move (in chess); a situation in which one is forced to make a disadvantageous move
zwieback	rusk; twice-baked bread

Compiled with the help of Robbin D. Knapp. Please visit http://germanenglishwords.com for a fuller listing and more detailed discussion or look at Robbin's book called "German English Words – A Popular Dictionary of German Words Used in English".

You might also like to look at Sven Siedenberg's book called "Besservisser beim Kaffeeklatsching – Deutsche Wörter im Ausland – ein Lexikon".