

Germany: The Survival Guide to an Amazing Experience

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Congress-Bundestag Pre-Departure Orientation

*Cross-Cultural Communication Workshop

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*Adapted from Barbara Donelson



Tonight, We Will Think About

- Culture
 - Differences between Americans & Germans
 - Low-Context & High-Context Cultures
 - Nonverbal Cues
- Your Role as an Ambassador
- BREAK
- Life in Germany
 - Living with a Host Family
 - Independence & Responsibility

A light gray silhouette of the continent of Australia, centered on the page. The text "Do You Speak English?" is overlaid on the map in a large, black, serif font.

Do
You
Speak
English?



What is Culture?

- Neutral Term
- Learned Knowledge
- Collective
 - Historical Patterns (Politics & Economics)
 - Values & Beliefs (Religion, Time)
 - Ways of Living
 - Behaviors & Manners
 - Language & Ideas
- Provides a Framework for Understanding
- Brings Order to Society

A large, light gray silhouette of the United States map serves as a background for the text.

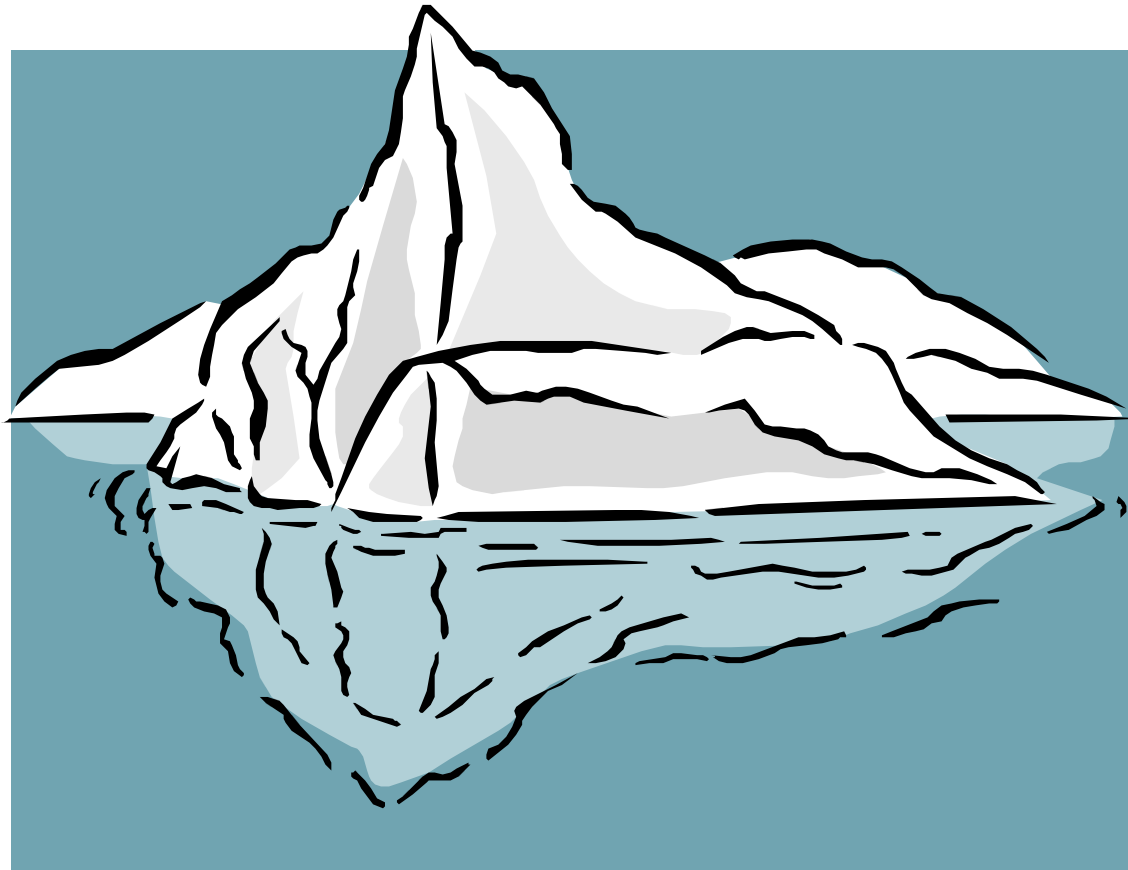
Define American Culture

A light gray silhouette of the map of Germany, serving as a background for the text.

Define German Culture



The Cultural Iceberg





Choose to be the Titanic

- Ethnocentrism: Your culture is superior
- Naïve Realism: Everyone sees the world as you do
- Stereotyping: Oversimplifying the character of an individual or culture
- Snap Judgments: Hurried or impulsive decision about an individual or culture



Choose to Melt the Iceberg

- Look for Similarities & Differences in Culture
- Are they Universal, Cultural or Personal
- Ask About Cultural Generalizations You Observe
 - Where does a Behavior, Idea, Value or Custom come from?
 - What does it mean?
- Thank Those who Answer
- Provide Thoughtful Answers about Your Own Behavior, Ideas, Values and Customs

You are NOT expected to know everything!

You are expected to put in the effort to learn & to share!



High Context Culture vs. Low Context Culture

- Some cultures require more context to gain the full meaning of a message
- Some cultures require less context
- Context may include how people relate, communicate, treat space, treat time & learn

Cultural Generalizations: Relating to Each Other

- High Context

- Relationships Depend on Trust; Build-up Slowly; are Stable
- How Things Get Done Depends on Relationships
- One's Identity Rooted in Groups (Family, Culture, Work)

- Low Context

- Relationships Begin & End Quickly
- Things Get Done by Following Procedures & Paying Attention to the Goal
- One's Identity Rooted in Oneself & One's Accomplishments

Cultural Generalizations: Communication with Each Other

- High Context

- High Use of Nonverbal Elements
- Context of Message More Important than Content
- Message is Indirect
- Communication Seen as an Art Form

- Low Context

- Low Use of Nonverbal Elements
- Content of Message More Important than Context
- Message is Direct
- Communication Seen as Way of Exchanging Information, Ideas, Opinions

Cultural Generalizations: Disagreements with Each Other

- High Context
 - Disagreement Personalized
 - Sensitivity to Conflict Expressed in Nonverbal Communication
 - Must Resolve Conflict Before Work Can Progress or Avoid Conflict Because It's Personally Threatening
- Low Context
 - Disagreement Depersonalized
 - Withdraw from Conflict & Get on with Task
 - Focus on Rational Solutions, Not Personal Solutions
 - One Can Be Explicit About Another's Bothersome Behavior

Cultural Generalizations: Personal Space

- High Context
 - Space is Communal
 - People Stand Close to Each Other
- Low Context
 - Space is Compartmentalized & Privately Owned
 - Privacy is Important
 - People Stand Further Apart; Spread Out in Space

Cultural Generalizations: Time



- High Context

- Everything Has its Own Time
- Time Not Easily Scheduled
- Needs of People May Interfere with Keeping to a Set Time
- Importance on Activity Getting Done
- Change is Slow
- Things are Rooted in the Past

- Low Context

- Things Scheduled to be Done at Particular Times; One Thing at a Time
- Importance in the Activity Getting Done Efficiently
- Change is Fast
- One Can Make Changes & See Immediate Results
- Time is a Commodity to be Spent or Saved
- One's Time is One's Own

Cultural Generalizations: Learning

- High Context
 - Knowledge Embedded in the Situation; Things are Connected, Synthesized & Global
 - Thinking is Deductive, Proceeds from General to Specific
 - Learning Occurs First by Observing, then Practicing
 - Group Learning Preferred
 - Accuracy is Valued
- Low Context
 - Reality is Fragmented & Compartmentalized; One Source of Information is Used to Develop Knowledge
 - Thinking is Inductive, Proceeds from Specific to General
 - Focus on Detail
 - Learning Occurs by Following Explicit Directions
 - Individual Learning Preferred
 - Speed/Efficiency is Valued

High Context

Context of Cultures: High & Low

Japanese

Chinese

Arab

Greek

Mexican

Spanish

Italian

French

French Canadian

English

Canadian

American

Scandinavian

German

German Swiss

Low Context



Nonverbal Cues

- Use of Voice (Volume, Laughter & Inflection)
- Use of Eyes
- Facial Expressions
- Attentiveness
- Body Posture
- Hand Gestures
- Attire & Possessions
- Formality of Language



Culture Shifts

- Specific Type of Stressful Reaction
- Occurs When Traveling Abroad or Confronting Ways of Life Substantially Different from Your Own



Signals of Cultural Shifts

- Homesickness
- Boredom
- Withdrawal
- Excessive Sleep
- Compulsive Eating
- Compulsive Drinking
- Physical Ailments
- Unexplained Weeping
- Loss of Ability to Work Effectively
- Irritability
- Exaggerated Cleanliness
- Stereotyping Hosts
- Hostility Toward Hosts




Steps to Cultural Adaptation

- Initial Euphoria
- Irritability & Hostility
- Gradual Adjustment
- Adaptation or Biculturalism
- Tip: Keep a Journal



What Can You Learn?

- Learn how to react – not be so ‘short-fused’
- Learn how to reflect on own actions
- Learn how to trust others and yourself
- Learn how to turn your anxiety into curiosity
- Learning how to begin thinking like an adult



Remember: It's not better – It's
not worse – It's just
DIFFERENT!



You are a US Ambassador

- How Do You Want to be Remembered?
- How Do You Want Your Country to be Remembered?
- Think About What You Want to Leave Behind
- Don't Blow It!



BREAK TIME



Keeping Your Hosts Happy

Independence & Responsibility



Money Matters

- Prices are High, but Good Value for the Money
- Surviving the Euro: Multiply by Two
- Credit versus Cash in Hand
 - Be mindful of international fees that are now in place if you use a credit/debit card
- Money Exchange vs. ATM
- Budget!
- Giving to Your Host Family



Family Time: Always Remember You're a Guest!

- Keep Tabs with Your Family
- Accept the Rules
- Accept Invitations
- Get Home Before the Clock Strikes 24
- Help with the Household
- Clean-up After Yourself
- Don't Use Someone Else's Toothbrush!



Noise, Space & Respect for Privacy

- Pick-up After Yourself
- Talking to Strangers
- Talking on Trains
- World War II & the N-bomb



Conservation & The Environment

- Water & Other Resources are High Commodities
- Recycle
- Shut Doors
- Turn-off Lights
- Stretch Your Wardrobe
- Beware of **HOT** Power



Communication with Home

- Pay-by-the-Minute Cell Phones
- Phone Cards
- Local Calls are NOT Free
- Time Your Calls, Even when Using a Calling Card
- Cyber Cafes



Shopping

- Get Up Early: Open at 7 am
- Close for Long Lunch
- Close Again Around 7 pm, 8 pm on Saturdays
- “Nothing” Open on Sunday
- Small Stores vs. Super Wal-Mart

Bier!

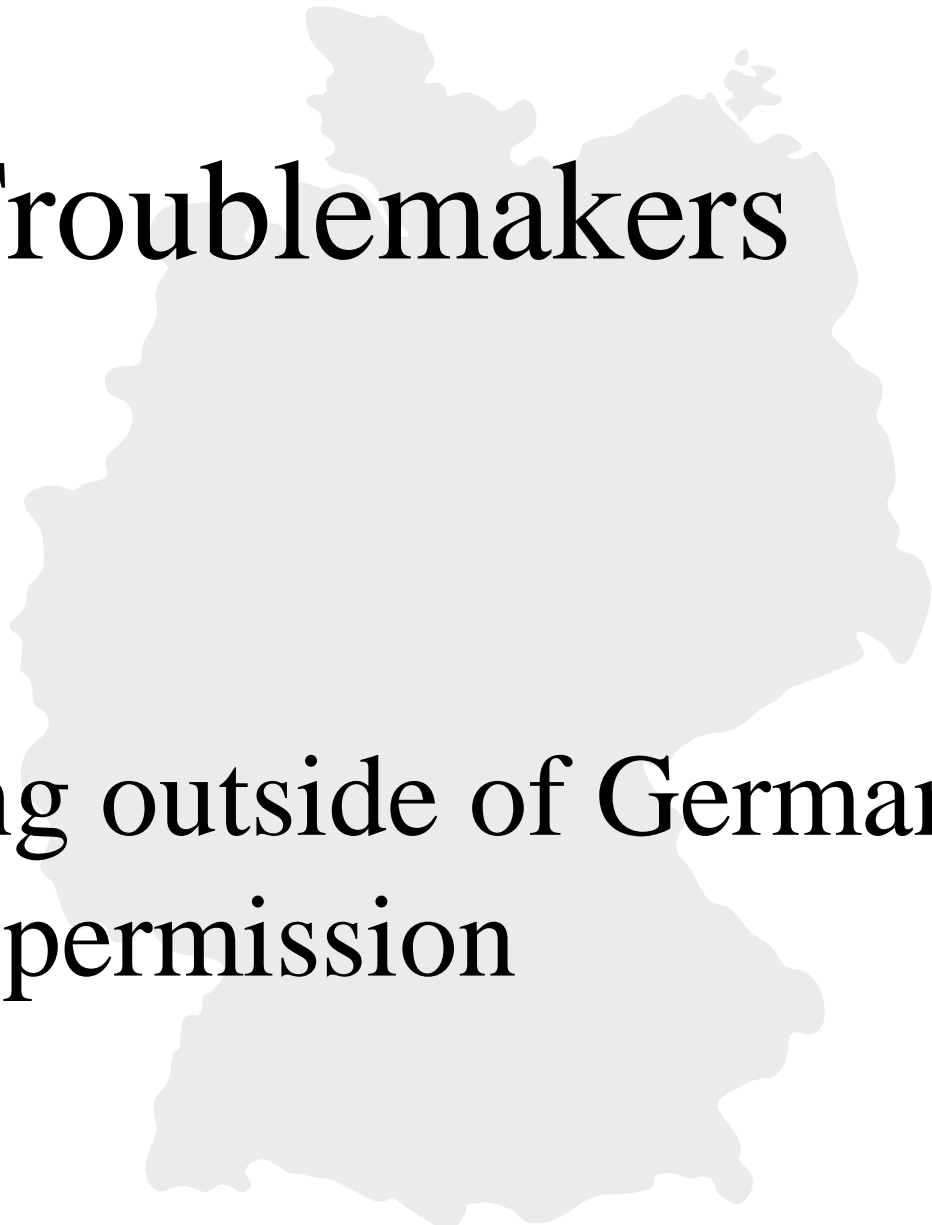
- New Setting, New Customs
- Family Time at Meals
- Work Functions
- 18... 21





Troublemakers

- Drugs
- Driving
- Traveling outside of Germany without permission





Dating

- Dating = Boyfriend/Girlfriend
- Walk, don't run into intimate relationships



Social Networking

- Use common sense
- Liability of Social Networking
- Sharing of social media files
- Nothing is private!



Working in Germany

- Vocational Education Held in High Esteem: Enjoy Your New Status!
- Punctuality is a Great Virtue
- Ask for Clarification When You Don't Understand
- Watch Your Informal Language
- Introduce Yourself!



Learn Public Transportation

- People Your Age Just Learning to Drive
- Gas is **EXPENSIVE**: Offer to chip-in
- Investigate Bikes
- Don't **EVER** Hitchhike



Know Your Surroundings

- Your Country is Engaged in a War
- Keep Your Personal Politics to Yourself
- Dress Down
- Know When to Walk Away



HAVE FUN!

- TV
- Libraries
- Museums
- Tours
- Other Cultural Activities
- Cinemas
- Festivals
- Cafes
- Pubs & Bier Halls
- Outdoor Activities
- Futbol!!!!!!



Going Out

- Share the Table
- Share the Food
- Smoking is Common
- Which Reminds Me: Carbonated Water, Ice, Pepperoni & Ham Sandwiches



Re-entry Issues

- Too American
- Dreaming in German
- Missing Family & Friends
- Who Cares?



Questions?

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