Reading Civil Registration Marriage Records
Germany “How to” Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction
September 2018

GOAL
This guide will teach you how to extract genealogical information from a German civil registration marriage record by identifying key words and phrases.

INTRODUCTION
Civil registration is governmental registration of all births, marriages, and deaths that occurred in a specific district. Civil registration districts (Zivilstandsamt until 1874, Standesamt from 1874 to the present) were strictly organized geographically. All individuals were registered regardless of religious faith.

There were usually two copies produced, particularly after 1874. The Hauptregister or primary copy was generally kept in the local civil registrar’s office, while the duplicate copy or Nebenregister was to be collected centrally at the court level for safekeeping. Many of these duplicate records are now located in state archives.

Depending on the area and time, civil registration may be recorded in German, French, Danish, or Polish.

Due to privacy laws, access to recent records is restricted to immediate family members. These restrictions are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Poland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Births: 110 years</td>
<td>Births: 100 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriages: 80 years</td>
<td>Marriages: 80 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaths: 30 years</td>
<td>Deaths: 80 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although some areas of what would later become the German Empire began keeping civil copies of births, marriages, and deaths as early as the 1790s, the practice was not mandatory for all areas of the empire until 1 January 1876. These modern civil registration records were pre-printed standardized forms with blanks for the registrar to write in the required information by hand.

Marriage records typically span two pages and generally contain information about the bride and groom, including name, birthdate and place, residence, occupation, parent’s names, residences, and occupations. Additionally, marriage records contain the names, occupations, ages, and residences of the witnesses.

Not every town had its own Standesamt (civil registration office). Use Meyer’s Gazetteer to determine the location of the nearest Standesamt.
You may want to consult the following “How to” Guides before continuing:

- Fraktur
- German Script
- Meyer’s Gazetteer Online: Meyersgaz.org

**HOW TO**

Sample marriage record

![Sample marriage record image](https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-89GL-K6N2)

Source: [https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-89GL-K6N2](https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-89GL-K6N2); accessed 14 August 2018.
Marriage record outline in English

Nr. (#)
(location) on day (full date written out) year.

Appeared before the undersigned civil registrar with the intention of being married:
1. (occupation/status) (name of the groom), personally known, (religion), born on (full date), at (location), residing at (location)
   Son of (name of parents), residing at (location)
2. (name of the bride), personally known, (religion), born on (full date), at (location), residing at (location)
   Daughter of (name of parents), residing at (location)

The witnesses were:
3. (name of witness 1), personally known, (age), residing at (location)
4. (name of witness 2), personally known, (age), residing at (location)

Key Words

The following key words will indicate the essential genealogical information. Depending on the context, the information may come before or after the key word. Note that the German words and phrases are written in standardized German. In some cases, the examples provided may differ in spelling or conjugation of the word. Keep in mind that phrases and even words may be split between two lines. Also remember that in marriage records, the phrases may appear more than once.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Information given</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the [groom]</td>
<td>1. der</td>
<td>followed by the occupation/status and name of the groom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious affiliation</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>preceded by the type of religious affiliation (example: Evangelical, Catholic, Jewish, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>born the</td>
<td>geboren den</td>
<td>followed by the day and month of birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the year</td>
<td>des Jahres</td>
<td>followed by the year of birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at/in</td>
<td>zu</td>
<td>followed by the place of birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>residing at/in</td>
<td>wohnhaft zu</td>
<td>followed by the place of residence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>son of</td>
<td>Sohn des</td>
<td>followed by the occupation/status and names of the groom's parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the [bride]</td>
<td>2. die</td>
<td>followed by the occupation/status and name of the bride</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daughter of</td>
<td>Tochter des</td>
<td>followed by the occupation/status and names of the bride’s parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PRACTICE**


| Where and when did the marriage take place? | Place: Gambach  
Date: 7 June 1903  
This information is always located at the very top of the first page. |
|---|---|
| What is the name of the groom? | Konrad Otto Böck  
Note: the handwritten word before his name is his occupation! |
| Where was the groom born? | Gambach  
Look for the word “zu”. In this instance the groom was born, lived, and married all in the same city. |
| What are the groom’s parents’ names? | Johann Heinrich Böck and Anna Marie Melcher  
Look for “Sohn des” which will be followed by information about the groom’s parents. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the bride’s name?</th>
<th>Elise Petry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When was the bride born?</td>
<td>5 August 1877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look for “geboren am” which will be followed by the date and place of birth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ACTIVITY**

Now, test your skills you have learned in this “How to” Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you’ve mastered the Guide! [Click here](#) to try out the Activity.
Nr. 51

Jannaburg am 12. Februar

tausend neunhundert sechzig

Vor dem unterzeichneten Standesämter erschienen heute zum Zwecke der Geschleißung:

1. der

2. die

der Persönlichkeit nach

1. die

zunächst die Religion, geboren am 15. Mai des Jahres taufend vierhundert einundzwanzig, zu Pramling, wohnhaft in Pramling.

2. die

zunächst die Religion, geboren am 15. Mai des Jahres taufend vierhundert einundzwanzig, zu Pramling, wohnhaft in Pramling.

Töchter der

zunächst die Religion, geboren am 15. Mai des Jahres taufend vierhundert einundzwanzig, zu Pramling, wohnhaft in Pramling.

Als Zeugen waren zugegen und erhoben:

3. [Name]

4. [Name]

Der Ständesbeamte richtete an die Verlobten eingesen und nach

einander die Frage:

ob sie die Ehe mit einander eingehen wollen.

Die Verlobten bejahten diese Frage und der Ständesbeamte

sprach hierauf aus, dass sie tätig des Bürgerlichen Gesetzbuches

nunmehr rechtswidrig verbundene Geflechte feiern.

[Vorzeichen]

Vegetate, geschehen und verzeichnet von:

[Name]

[Name]

[Name]

Der Ständesbeamte

Die Vereinigung mit dem Hauptregister beauftragt

[Ort] am [Datum]

Der Ständesbeamte