



# German Church and Civil Records

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This course is designed to give family history researchers who read little or no German and have had no experience with German vital records a basic working knowledge of such records.

## Objectives:

Patrons will be able to identify:

- types of important documents
- key information in documents

Church registration began considerably earlier than civil registration, as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century in some cases. However, this does not mean that church registration was introduced uniformly throughout the German-speaking region. Generally speaking, the western parts of Germany had registration earlier than the eastern parts.

Civil registration starts in Germany in the 1790s when the French occupy the territory left of the Rhine. However, such registration was restricted to those areas, not to the whole of Germany and was generally discontinued after French withdrawal. Civil registration was finally instituted on a nationwide basis in 1876.

## A short glossary of words related to church and civil records:

Basic vocabulary for German records

year: Jahr, Anno, Ao, Annus

day: Tag

on the: am, den

place: Ort

residing: wohnhaft zu, wohnend

name: Name, Vorname, Zuname

Months are the same or very similar to English

baptism: getauft, get. Getaufte, Taufe, Täufling, baptizat-

birth: Geburt, Geborene, geboren (am), geb.

parents: Eltern

father: Vater

mother: Mutter

child: Kind

girl/daughter/female: Mädchen, Tochter, Töchterlein, weiblich

boy/son/male: Junge, Knabe, Sohn, Söhnlein, männlich

godparents: Pat(h)en, Gevattern, Gote, Gött, Sponsa

witnesses: (Tauf)Zeugen, levantes, levantibus, susceptoris, testes

marriage: Ehe, Eheschließung, Trauung, Heiraten, Heuraten, Vermählung, copuliert, Copulati  
maiden name: geb., geborene, née  
unmarried: unverheiratet  
age: Alter, Alt., aetatis

death: gestorben, starb, Verstorbene, Gestorbene  
buried: begraben, beerdigt, bestattet, Begräbnis, Beerdigungen

**For a more extensive vocabulary list, see:**

[https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/German\\_Word\\_List](https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/German_Word_List)

**For an article on German language, including numbers, see:**

[https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/German\\_Language\\_and\\_Languages](https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/German_Language_and_Languages)

**For handouts and videos on German handwriting see:**

[https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany\\_Handwriting](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany_Handwriting) (This is the page to begin with, as it gives many links and other resources)

[https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/File:Old\\_German\\_Handwriting.jpg](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/File:Old_German_Handwriting.jpg)

<https://familysearch.org/learningcenter/results.html?fq=place%3A%22Germany%22&resultListItem=1>

**For further reading:**

“Germany Civil Registration.” FamilySearch Wiki.

[https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany\\_Civil\\_Registration#General\\_Historical\\_Background](https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany_Civil_Registration#General_Historical_Background)

**Want to learn more? See this site:**

FamilySearch Research Wiki: [https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Main\\_Page](https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Main_Page)

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