

Free German Children's Books For Language Learners Young and Old

André Klein · Wednesday, April 9th, 2014



Learning German with [stories](#) can be a great method to practice and expand your vocabulary and grammar. But where to start? Literary German [short stories](#) or classic [German novels](#) may be intimidating for beginners or simply not everyone's cup of tea.

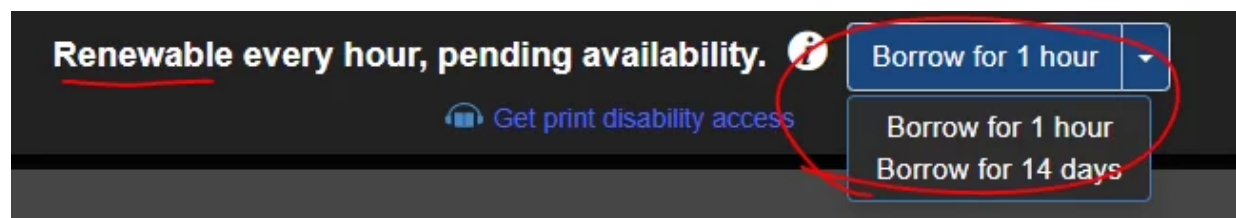
So how about German children's books? The sentences are short, there are often illustrations to support text comprehension, and most German books for children make do with a rather basic vocabulary.

Admittedly, most stories aimed at third-graders will not put adult readers at the edge of their seat, but working with these very simple narrative text can sometimes be an excellent way to practice German in a non-threatening way.

In the following article, I'd like to present a number of German language books for children that come in various formats, but most importantly, are free to download (or borrow) and enjoy.

German Textbooks for Children

But before we dive into the world of German children's books written for young native speakers, let's have a look at freely available textbooks, picture dictionaries, activity books and other German learning books for children. Most of these are free to borrow from the Internet Archive. It's as simple as creating an account and then clicking the blue "Borrow" button above the preview. Keep in mind though that different books have different loan-durations. If there's only one copy available, the loan window is one hour, if there are more the loan duration is either one hour or 14 days.



Note: one hour may not sound like much, but if you're currently the only one borrowing the book, you can just renew and resume reading after 60 minutes. Besides, 60 minutes of intense focus is nothing to scoff at. You can find out more about the [Internet Archive's Borrowing Program](https://archive.org/borrowing-program) on archive.org.



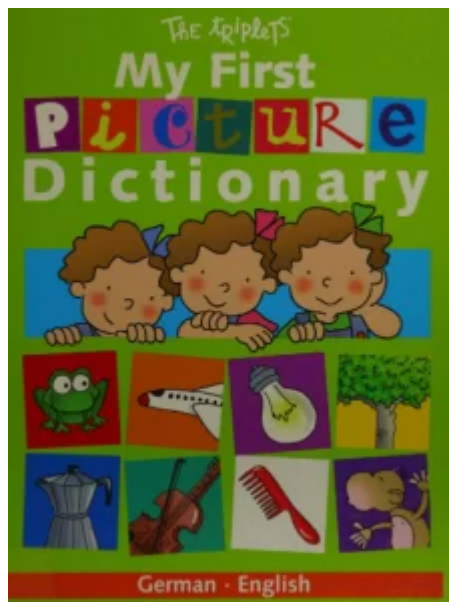
First German: At Home

Publisher: Tulsa, OK : EDC Pub.

This fundamental German language textbook for children covers all the basics from saying hello and goodbye, describing one's house, rooms and neighborhood. It teaches how to count from one to 10, the words for basic objects around the house, telling time, colors and everything else young learners need to get started.

? free (to borrow)

? loan duration: 1h or 14 days



My first picture dictionary: German-English

Publisher: London : Wayland

This picture dictionary is a fun and intuitive way for children to learn the German language. It includes common topics, from animals, family, colors to transportation. Perfect for beginners, it is illustrated with full color pictures on 63 pages.

? free (to borrow)

? loan duration: 1h



German for Children: Fun, Activity-Based Language Learning

Publisher: New York : McGraw-Hill

This book aims to introduce children to the excitement of learning a new language and culture. It includes a variety of activities, games and songs. Through various chapters young learners can the basics like counting from one to 10, colors, describing things, expressing likes and dislikes, and much more.

? [free \(to borrow\)](#)

? loan duration: 1h

Free Classic German Children's Books From The Public Domain

One of the most well-known sources for free German children books online is the public domain, .i.e. the place where books (and other works of art) go when their copyright has run out.

Der Struwwelpeter

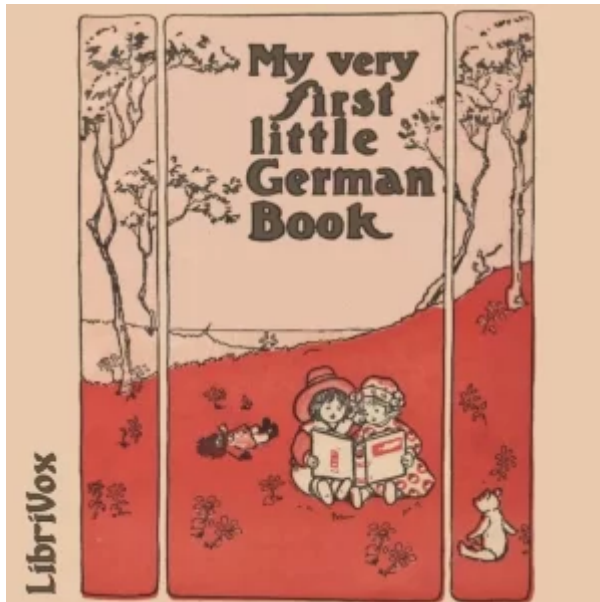


For example, the classic German children's book *Der Struwwelpeter*, first published in 1845 as a kind of cautionary tale, is available for free on [Project Gutenberg](#) in EPUB, MOBI (Kindle) and other formats because the copyrights expired. You can also listen to a free audiobook version on [Librivox](#).

Struwwelpeter consists of ten illustrated and rhymed stories, all of them designed with a clear moral and showing consequences of bad behavior in often absurdly exaggerated ways. A classic in the world of children's books, Struwwelpeter is one of the earliest books for children that combines visual and verbal narratives in this format, long before [comic books](#) became a staple of popular culture.

Max und Moritz

Another popular classic is *Max und Moritz – Eine Bubengeschichte in sieben Streichen* (*Max and Moritz: A Story of Seven Boyish Pranks*). Yet another precursor to comic books, these illustrated stories about the exploits of the “terrible duo” Max and Moritz were written and illustrated by Wilhelm Busch and published in 1865. The original text plus colored illustrations are available on [Project Gutenberg](#). A free audio version is also available via [Librivox](#).



My Very First Little German Book

This book was originally published in 1900 (Hodder & Stoughton) and is now in the Library of Congress Rare Books catalog. This little bilingual gem with illustrations can be enjoyed as a [PDF](#) download or directly [in your browser](#). And yes, there's a free Librivox [audio book](#).

Free Contemporary German Language Books For Children

Now, finding free German children's books or fairy-tales in the public domain is not difficult, but there's a problem with books or stories that are more than 100 years old. Not only are the ideas and strict morals (as in *Struwwelpeter*) bewildering to modern readers, also these texts often use strange vocabulary, idioms and other stylistic devices which are outdated and hard to grasp even for native German speakers.

Luckily, there are many other online sources for free German children's books than just the public domain:

29 Free German Children's Books by Hans Wilhelm

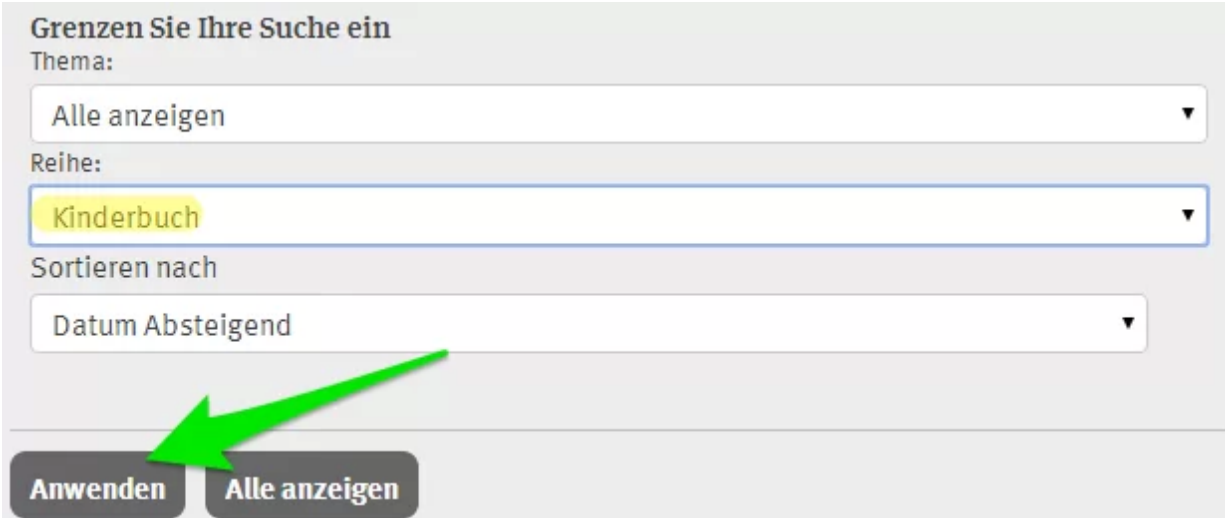
Hans Wilhelm, a renowned children's book author whose works have been translated into thirty languages, generously offers out-of-print editions of his books as free PDF downloads. (EDIT: The original website is defunct unfortunately, but there are captures on [Wayback Machine](#).)

Wilhelm's books are written in clear and contemporary language, and come with lovely full-color illustrations. Also, since he offers his children's books in multiple languages, you can read the [English](#) and the German editions side by side, which can be helpful for reading-comprehension. Keep in mind that the titles of the book aren't always exactly translated, e.g. "Wie man einen Dino besiegt" is called "Tyrone the Horrible" in English, but you can easily find the correct version by looking at the covers.

Additionally, there are many free German books for children published by federal German agencies, leagues and associations, which are designed as educational material for youngsters but will do just fine for German language-learning purposes.

Free German Books For Children About Environmental Issues

First of all, there's the *Bundesumweltamt* (Federal Environment Agency) whose books deal with environmental issues like climate, water and waste-management. To [filter out their children's books from the thousands of publications](#), select *Kinderbuch* from the drop-down menu under *Reihe* and click on *Anwenden*.



Grenzen Sie Ihre Suche ein

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Anwenden Alle anzeigen

Once you get to the search results for their children's books, look for the buttons *Downloaden* und *Bestellen* under each title. Not all of the books are always available, but if you find a *Downloaden* link you'll get an immediate PDF download, and even better: if you click on *Bestellen* you can get a free physical copy delivered to your doorstep, free shipping worldwide. How cool is that?

Next up is the *Fachagentur Nachwachsende Rohstoffe e.V.* (Agency for Renewable Resources) and their *Bauer Hubert* (farmer Hubert) children's book series. You can browse and download their short books in PDF format [from their site](#).

Another free educational resource by the *Bundesamt für Naturschutz* (Federal Agency for Nature Protection) is *Kinatschu*, a children's magazine about nature protection and conversation which can be downloaded as PDF.

Free German Children's Books About Engineering And Politics

There is also *think-ING*: an online platform about engineering studies, initiated by technical-academic and industrial associations in Germany. They offer two children's books, one called *Energie & Strom* (energy and electricity) and *Meine Freundin, die ist Ingenieurin* (my girlfriend, she's an engineer). The books are produced by the high-quality Carlsen publishing house and can be read in-browser.

Last but not least, the *Hamburgische Bürgerschaft* (Hamburg Citizenry) has two German children's books called *Ich mische mich ein – und du?* ("I'm gonna get involved, what about you?") and *Ich habe eine Freundin, die ist Abgeordnete* ("I have a [girl]friend, she's a representative"). They also have a children's detective series called *Alster Detektive* which is available as an audiobook.

The two children's books are only available as physical copies. They are free to order (within Germany). The *Alster Detektive* audiobook can be obtained as free CDs or downloadable mp3s/rar archive. You can find the order (*zum Bestellen*) and download (*zum Downloaden*) links.

German Children's Books For German Learners



If you're looking for German children's books that are specifically aimed at

language learners, you can also check out my own two publications called *Bert das Buch* and *Fred der Fisch*.

These books are designed as entry-level reading material for beginners both young and old. They both come with extensive vocabulary, illustrations and text-comprehension questions and are available as Amazon Kindle ebooks and other formats.

Have you used German children's book in your studies? Which ones do you recommend? Tell us in the comments!

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