

## GERMAN GENEALOGY FROM A TO Z

## TOP 50 GERMAN SURNAMES

From Mueller (miller) to Keller (cellar)

This Top 50 list ranks the most common family names in Germany. The list was produced by surveying German surnames found in German telephone books.

We have supplemented that list with the English meaning for each German family name. Please note that the English meaning is a translation of the German name and may or may not be a surname actually used in English-speaking countries. For example, the most common German surname is **Müller**, which means "miller." Miller is a fairly common name in the English-speaking world, and is also a family name derived from an occupation. However, the German last name **Keller** means "cellar" or "basement." Neither of those words is used as a family name in English, but Keller belongs to a class of names derived from where someone worked, in this case, perhaps a *Rathskeller* (a cellar pub or restaurant) or a *Weinkeller* (wine cellar). The German surname is also a fairly common family name in the U.S., including the famous Helen Keller (1880-1968, born in Alabama). The German word *Kellner* (waiter) is also related to Keller. However, the name Keller may have other possible origins.

Names and their sources are tricky things. This list is not meant as a guide to name origins. It is only intended to be an enjoyable way to discover the possible meanings of various German names.

## Most-Common German Last Names

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|--|---|
| 1. <b>Müller</b> (Mueller, Möller) = miller          | 26. <b>Hartmann</b> = tough/strong man        |
| 2. <b>Schmidt</b> (Schmitz, Schmitt, Schmid) = smith | 27. <b>Hofmann</b> (Hoffmann) = landed farmer |
| 3. <b>Schneider</b> = tailor                         | 28. <b>Krause</b> = curly-haired              |
| 4. <b>Fischer</b> = fisher                           | 29. <b>Werner</b> = <i>meaning uncertain</i>  |
| 5. <b>Meyer</b> (Meier, Maier, Mayer) = dairyman     | 30. <b>Meier</b> = dairyman                   |
| 6. <b>Weber</b> = weaver                             | 31. <b>Schmid</b> (Schmidt) = smith           |
| 7. <b>Schulz</b> (Schulze, Scholz) = mayor           | 32. <b>Schulze</b> (Schulz) = mayor           |
| 8. <b>Wagner</b> = wagoner, wainwright               | 33. <b>Lehmann</b> = serf                     |
| 9. <b>Becker</b> = baker                             | 34. <b>Köhler</b> (Koehler) = charcoal-maker  |
| 10. <b>Hoffmann</b> (Hofmann) = landed farmer        | 35. <b>Maier</b> (Meyer) = dairyman           |
| 11. <b>Schäfer</b> (Schaefer) = shepherd             | 36. <b>Herrmann</b> = warrior                 |
| 12. <b>Koch</b> = cook                               | 37. <b>König</b> (Koenig) = king              |
| 13. <b>Bauer</b> = farmer, peasant                   | 38. <b>Mayer</b> (Meyer) = dairyman           |
| 14. <b>Schröder</b> (Schroeder) = carter             | 39. <b>Walter</b> = army leader; ruler        |
| 15. <b>Klein</b> = small, little                     | 40. <b>Peters</b> = rock (from Latin/Greek)   |
| 16. <b>Richter</b> = judge                           | 41. <b>Möller</b> (Moeller, Müller) = miller  |
| 17. <b>Wolf</b> = wolf                               | 42. <b>Huber</b> = land owner (hoover)        |
| 18. <b>Neumann</b> = new man                         | 43. <b>Kaiser</b> = emperor                   |
| 19. <b>Schwarz</b> = black                           | 44. <b>Fuchs</b> = fox                        |
| 20. <b>Schmitz</b> (Schmidt) = smith                 | 45. <b>Scholz</b> (Schulz) = mayor            |
| 21. <b>Krüger</b> (Krueger) = potter                 | 46. <b>Weiß</b> = white/wheat                 |
| 22. <b>Braun</b> = brown                             | 47. <b>Lang</b> = long                        |
| 23. <b>Zimmermann</b> = carpenter                    | 48. <b>Jung</b> = young                       |
| 24. <b>Schmitt</b> (Schmidt) = smith                 | 49. <b>Hahn</b> = rooster                     |
| 25. <b>Lange</b> = long                              | 50. <b>Keller</b> = cellar, <u>basement</u>   |

(i.e., someone who worked in a wine cellar or *Rathskeller*)