

GELEGENHEITSAUSDRÜCKE UND FRAGEN /
SITUATIONAL PHRASES AND QUESTIONS

situation: die Gelegenheit, die Gelegenheiten
phrase: der Ausdruck, die Ausdrücke
question: die Frage, die Fragen

bathroom information and etiquette: *****

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • toilet, bathroom (public) | die Toilette, die Toiletten |
| • bathroom in a house | das Badezimmer, die Badezimmer |
| • Where is the bathroom? | Wo ist die Toilette, bitte? |
| • May I go to the bathroom? | Darf ich auf die Toilette gehen? |
| • I'm going to the bathroom. | Ich gehe auf die Toilette. |
| • water closet | das WC |
| • mens' room | Herrenzimmer / Herren |
| • ladies' room | Damenzimmer / Damen |
| • free / occupied | frei / besetzt |

In German, it is not necessary to use circumlocutions when asking where to find a restroom. One simply asks, **Wo ist die Toilette, bitte?** or **Wo sind die Toiletten?**

One would NOT ask for the **Badezimmer**, since that is probably not what we are thinking of when we are asking for a public restroom. In German, a **Badezimmer** is a room with facilities to bathe, shower, or wash. A German **Badezimmer** generally contains a sink, toilet, shower, and/or bathtub.

In some public buildings, at trade fairs, and at rest stops on the **Autobahn**, there are often restroom attendants (**Toilettenmänner** and **Toilettenfrauen**) who oversee the facilities. It is customary to leave them a small tip.

Das Bad or das WC? Germans Don't "Go to the Bathroom"!

There are three essential facts to know about this delicate subject: (1) the German terms for *men/gentlemen* and *ladies*, (2) the difference between a bathroom and a toilet, and (3) how to ask where the "rest room" is.

First of all, the German language is more direct and uses far fewer euphemisms than English when it comes to basic bodily functions in general and to the place for "relieving oneself" in particular. In German, you call a toilet a toilet (*eine Toilette, das WC*). It's not a "rest" room, a "powder" room, the "loo," or the "john"—it's the room with a toilet, *die Toilette*. The closest German comes to toilet euphemisms are words borrowed from English: *das WC*, short for "water closet" and pronounced VAY-SAY, or the somewhat less refined *das Klo*. On the autobahn and in some public places, you'll also see the symbol "00" (*null, null*). Generally, but not always, "00" means an outhouse-style, hole-in-the-ground, waterless type of toilet, whereas "WC" always denotes a flush toilet.

The toilet is certainly never the bathroom! If you go to the "bathroom" in Germany, it is to take a bath. Although *das amerikanische Badezimmer* has gained favor over the years in German homes, hotels, and other places, the traditional German approach has long been to separate the two activities by locating them in different rooms. The "bath" or "bathing" room is called, logically, *das Badezimmer* or *das Bad*. It contains a bathtub (*die Badewanne*) and/or a shower (*die Dusche*) but usually no toilet. The toilet or water closet may be located in its own room next door

or even farther down the hall. So, if you inquire of your German host, "*Wo ist das Badezimmer?*" you are likely to get a somewhat startled look that asks, "You want to take a bath now?" If you want to use the facilities, just ask: "*Wo ist die Toilette, bitte?*" In public places, the ladies' room is marked "*Damen*" or "*D*," the men's room "*Herren*" or "*H*." Most German public toilets have an attendant, who expects a tip to be left in the dish strategically placed near the exit. Also, it is wise, particularly for women, to carry some change for pay toilet stalls, which are common in Germany.

"*Wo der Kaiser auch zu Fuss geht*" is one of the few euphemistic toilet expressions in German. It refers to "where even the emperor has to walk" and is used in a humorous way rather than to avoid the actual word *toilet*. A shorter version is simply "*Ich muss wohin*" ("I must go there [where the emperor . . .]"). Other ways to say you've gotta go: *Ich muss . . . aufs Klo/auf die Toilette/aufs WC*.