I. Vowels

All German vowels, other than “A,” have two pronunciations: one closed and one open.

A is pronounced as a relaxed “ah” as in the word “father.” [never as “ae” in “cat” or “aw” in “law”]

E [closed] is pronounced as a closed “e” (the first part of the diphthong “day,” with the jaw high).
E [open] is pronounced “eh” as in “red.”
E [unstressed] can also be a “schwa” [neutral] sound, as in “oven.”

I [closed] is pronounced as an “ee” sound, as in “feet.”
I [open] is pronounced as an “i” in “fit.”

O [closed] is pronounced as the european closed “o” (no American analog).
O [open] is pronounced “aw” as in the word “law.”

U [closed] is pronounced “oo” as in “school.”
U [open] is pronounced as an open “U” as in “foot.”

Ä and AE are pronounced as “eh” as in word “dead” (technically there is a difference between the closed and open sounds, but it is largely unnoticeable).

Ö and OE are pronounced as French “eu” (shape lips in open “O” but place tongue as for “ee”).

Ü and Y are pronounced as French “u” (shape lips in “oo” but place tongue as for “ee”).

EI is the diphthong “ahee” but IE is just “ee” as in “feet.”

II. Consonants

German is often described as a “language of consonants.” Make them all strong and crisp.

H is pronounced at the beginning of words and root-stems. Otherwise it is silent.

CH is hard after a, o, u, and au: no English analog—similar to “yimloch” in Hebrew.
CH is soft in all other cases, a sound similar to the word “hue.” Final IG is the same sound.
CHS is pronounced “ks” when the “s” is part of the root.

QU is pronounced as “kv.”

R is flipped—never use an American “arrrr.”

S is voiced [pronounced “z”] in four cases: At the beginning of words; between vowels (“intervocalic”); following a voiced consonant and preceding a vowel; before the suffixes –sal and –sam.
S is unvoiced [pronounced “s”] in all other cases (ends of words, before interior consonants, etc.)
SP and ST are pronounced “shp” and “sht” at the beginning of words and root-stems.

V is pronounced “f.” (F is also pronounced “f,” as is PH.) (Redundant? You create an international incident by complaining. . .)

W is pronounced “v.”

Z is pronounced “ts.”

Several consonants change from voiced to unvoiced when they occur at the ends of words, or before a consonant at the end of a root stem:

B is pronounced “p.” D is pronounced “t.” G is pronounced “k.” S is pronounced “s.”