What contains a:

Birth / baptismal / christening / circumcision / name giving record

Marriage record

Marriage ban

Divorce record

Death / burial / cemetery record

Confirmation record

Status animarum

Family register

Civil registration record

Citizenship record

Census record

Court record

Military record

Tax Record

Birth / baptismal / christening / circumcision / name giving record

Keywords: Taufe, getauft, geboren, beschnitten

Children were usually baptized a few days after birth (in Schleswig up to several years). Baptism registers usually give the infant's name, parents' names, status of legitimacy, names of witnesses or godparents, and baptism date. You may also find the child's birth date, the father's occupation, and the family's place of residence. Death information was sometimes added as a note or signified by a cross.

Earlier registers typically gave less information, sometimes including only the child's and father's names and the baptism date. A few records did not even give the child's name. This problem can sometimes be resolved if the godparents are mentioned in the entry. Boys were often named for the godfather and girls for the godmother. Until the end of the 1700s, pastors in some communities did not name the mother in the birth records, or they included only her given name. Sometimes only the baptism date was recorded, but in later years the birth date was given as well.

Because of social conditions in Germany, the birth of illegitimate children was not uncommon. Illegitimacy is usually noted in baptism records, sometimes by a note in the margin or an upside-down entry.

Marriage record

Keywords: Heirat, geheiratet, geehelicht, ehelich verbunden, vor Gott versprochen

Marriage registers give the marriage date and the names of the bride and groom. The registers may also indicate whether they were single or widowed and give the names of witnesses. Other information about the bride and groom is often included, such as their ages, residences, occupations, birthplaces, and parents' names.

The many formerly independent kingdoms, duchies, and other small and large entities that made up the German Empire, led to variations and customs relating to marriage. In addition, in the 18th and 19th centuries marriage laws were passed to limit population growth in the lower classes. This led to more out-of-wedlock births and an increase in emigration. The prospective couple had to submit proof of property and employment income sufficient to guarantee that they would not need public assistance in the future. Hessen-Nassau and Bavaria had the most

restrictive laws. The minimum age for a marriage depended on the local ruler and was between 18 and 25 for men and 14 and 22 for women.

Requirement of parental permission for first marriages. If the parents were deceased, the county court gave permission.

Marriage usually took place in the bride's home town.

Dispensations were required for those related by blood up to the fourth degree and for marrying outside of one's religious denomination.

The intent to marry was proclaimed 2-3 times in each person's home town/parish of residence and/or birth. Dispensations for a price could be obtained if the couple already had a child or were planning to emigrate.

If either party was a serf tied to the land, the lord of the land had to give his permission to marry.

Soldiers could not marry until they were discharged, and after posting a large bond that would support survivors if he was killed. This led to many couples living together and bearing children before marriage.

Journeymen had to complete their traveling training before receiving permission to marry. They often married girls in the town where they received their training.

Marriage records may include proof of property ownership and income, copies of parental permission, birth/baptismal certificates, and military discharge papers. In some instances, the marriage permission files may include guardianship records for illegitimate and orphaned children giving the child's name, birth date, birth place, parents, guardian, and details concerning financial arrangements.

A town council could deny permission to marry, and the whole process could be repeated several times.

Wedding contracts regulated everything that was brought into the marriage -- both possessions and children from previous relationships -- as well as what was to become of them in case one of the spouses died. These contracts are a good indication of a family's social standing because they included such things as requirements for children to be raised in the Christian faith and how much money they had for food and clothes.

To find these records, check first with the state archive for the area in which your ancestors lived. Also check local town or community archives and genealogical societies for these and other unique records.

Marriage ban

Keywords: Verlobung, versprechen

For two or three weeks before the marriage, marriage banns (announcements of the intention to marry) were read and/or posted in church. This gave community members a chance to object to the marriage. Most proclamations took place on consecutive Sundays. If the future spouses were from different parishes, the banns were read in each church. Before the marriage ceremony could take place, the non-local party was required to present the officiating pastor with a paper stating that the proclamations had been read and there were no objections. A note stating that this person had been "dismissed" to marry elsewhere may be found in the marriage register.

The marriage banns themselves may exist in a separate record. Some parishes kept the marriage banns and other marriage information instead of marriage registers.

Divorce record

Keywords: Scheidung, Scheidbrief

Special permission to remarry were often required if a person was divorced. Divorces were usually granted by the court, and partners sometimes were denied the privilege to remarry for a number of years.

Death / burial / cemetery record

Keywords: Tote, Begräbniss, gestorben, begraben

Burials were recorded in the parish where the person was buried. The burial usually took place within a few days of death.

Burial registers give the name of the deceased and the date and place of death or burial. Often the deceased's age, place of residence, and cause of death and the names of survivors are also given.

Stillbirths were not recorded the same way in all churches. The pastor or priest often determined how to record stillbirths in his parish. In some areas, stillbirths were recorded in

birth records. In other areas, stillbirths were recorded in death records. Some parishes listed stillbirths in both birth and death records.

Confirmation record

Keywords: Konfirmationen

A confirmation is the spending of the Holy Ghost to a member of the congregation, usually to a child. Protestants were usually confirmed around age 14, Catholics about age 12. Some confirmation registers merely list the names of those being confirmed and the confirmation date. Other confirmation registers give additional information about those being confirmed, including their ages or birth dates, birthplaces, and fathers' names. These records are helpful if the baptismal records are missing in a specific parish.

Status animarum

(Yearly abstract of parish records sent to somewhere)

The Catholic parishes used to establish at Easter time each year a list of their parishioners, the so called *Status animarum*. The list issued often contains the full name of the head of household, the full name of his wife, also if she happens to be a widow. Then follow the children with their ages and the number of servants. Most Status animarum are known to be done in the Duchy Baden.

Family register

Keywords: Familienbuch, Familienbücher

Often found in Württemberg area as part of the parish records. Some parishes kept family registers that give information about each family group in the parish. Family registers are more common in southern Germany, especially in Württemberg and Baden after 1808. These registers list the names of the husband and wife and their birth dates and places, marriage date and place, parents' names, occupations, and residence. If a second marriage is listed, details about the parents of the new marriage partner are often included.

Children are usually listed in chronological order. Names, birth dates, confirmation dates, marriage dates, and death dates may be listed. In some registers, when a child married and remained in the same parish, the register gives a "see" reference and a page number where that particular child appears as the head of a household.

Some family registers indicate whether the family moved to another village or emigrated to another country.

The information in family registers was compiled from other church books or obtained from the head of the household, and it is subject to error.

Civil registration record

Keyword: Standesamtunterlagen

In general complete available since 1 Jan. 1876. In Prussian provinces since 1874. In French occupied areas often available for the time of the Napoleonic rule (1792-1814, French calendar from 1793 to 1805, some church records interrupted during this time)

Citizenship record

In Germany one was a citizen of a town rather than a Country. One did not earn this right by simply being born there, citizenship required a good character, obligations and a fee. Citizenship records may provide name, age or birth date, place of origin and relationship information and would include the ancestor's signature. The following list includes names in which citizenship records may have been kept:
Bürgerbuch/ Bürgerroll/ Einbürgerungen – citizens, citizenship records
Heimatscheine – certificate of residence
Personenstandslisten – families and individuals
Wählerliste – voter registration lists

Census record

Keyword: Volkszählungsliste

A national census in Germany was not taken until the late 1800's. Local censuses began as early as 1500's, though most do not appear until the late 1700's and early 1800's. Some were taken on a kingdom, province or duchy level; however most were taken on a city or district level. They often provide name, age or birth date and relationship information.

Court Record

Court records are usually a challenge to research. The records are rarely indexed and may contain several pages of jurisdictional information, though the inheritance, will and guardianship records can be a wealth of information. Many provide name, age or birth date, occupation and relationship information.
Erbbücher – inheritance records

Flurbücher – platt maps, parcel records
Gericht/Gerichtsbucher – court records
Grundbücher, Lehnbücher, Gartenbücher – land records
Konsensbücher – contractual agreements
Lehn- u. Kaufbücher – land lease and sale records

Mieterverzeichnis – land rental/lease list
Nachlässe – inheritance records
Strafsachen – criminal records
Testamente – wills
Vormundschaftsbuch – guardianship records

Military Record

Records of those who served and who were eligible to serve. The different records were kept at different times during a male's lifetime. The Stammrolle (military rolls) was often kept at the time of birth and tracked the male person through his life until he reached the age of required military service. Military records may provide name, age or birth date, parent names, dates of service and areas of service.
Entlassungsurkunde – discharge
Landsturmrolle – home guard
Mannschaftsverzeichnis – list of troops
Musterrolle – muster rolls
Quartierliste – quarter records

Stammrolle – military rolls
Wehrfähige Männer – draft eligible records

Tax Record

Some of the earliest records in existence are those of tax records. The records may provide name, age or birth date, standing/class information and relationship information similar to a census record.

Abgaben – tax payments

Fräuleinsteuer – serf tax

Frohndienst – compulsory labor by serfs and subjects

Frohngeld – compulsory payment in lieu of labor

Geschossbuch – tax record

Grundsteuer – property tax

Heberegister – tax on buildings

Klassensteuer – class tax

Kopfsteuer – head tax

Schossregister – city tax record paid upfront

Tranksteuer – alcohol tax

Türkensteuer – Turkish tax (= military tax of the 16th century)

Zinssteuer – tax on interest