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Door 1

Zip up your Coat in Winter Wonderland - Zipper - Martin Winterhalter

What would we do without the zipper keeping our winter jackets closed nicely during our long winter months? The zipper was invented by Martin Winterhalter. He was born in Switzerland in 1889. In 1923, he met Gideon Sundbäck who had the first ideas to develop a zipper. After buying the first patent from him, Winterhalter changed the design from small balls and clamps to ridges and grooves. He built a production facility in Mendrisio, Switzerland and generously spent his fortune, to the annoyance of his heirs. Since he had no children of his own, he stated in his testament that his assets were to be used to establish the Dr. Martin Othmar Winterhalter Foundation to support people who had fallen on hard times, as well on cultural, scientific, and humanitarian endeavors.

Learn German:

zipper - der Reißverschluss / winter jacket - die Winterjacke / children (child) - die Kinder (das Kind)

Follow the link to a fun video to learn about zippers.

[Zippers with "Sendung mit der Maus"](#)



Door 2

Wrapping up Christmas - Tesafilm - Oscar Troplowitz

The German pharmacist and entrepreneur Oscar Troplowitz, born in 1863, was indeed a very creative and busy person. He worked as a chemist for the Beiersdorf AG in Hamburg and after buying the company, he started selling brand-name merchandise. He not only developed the pressure-sensitive tape, Tesafilm, but many other products as well. Just to name a few, Leukoplast band aids, Labello lip balm, and Nivea. But his best innovation was the introduction of reforms regarding worker benefits at Beiersdorf: paid vacations, maternity leave and a 48-hour work week. These benefits surely reflect the spirit of Christmas!

Learn German:

product - das Produkt / maternity leave - der Mutterschaftsurlaub / paid vacation - bezahlter Urlaub



Door 3

Dashing through the Snow - Bobsleigh Track - Caspar Badrutt

The Swiss hotelier, Caspar Badrutt, was frustrated that his hotel in St. Moritz in the Swiss Alps was almost empty during the long winter. There were many things to do from May to September, but from October to April things slowed down. He set a challenge for his summer guests, they would get a free winter vacation if he could not make them enjoy the stay. They only had to promise to spread the word if they had a good time. Around the 1870s, some Englishmen used a delivery sled to dash down the narrow streets of St. Moritz. These sleds became soon larger and more sophisticated. Different styles from early skeleton to bobsleigh versions were built. However, the risk of accidents grew with the popularity of the rides. As a consequence Badrutt created the first half-pipe track to make this pastime safer and separate the wild runners from the pedestrians of the streets in St. Moritz.

Learn German:

snow - der Schnee / guest - der Gast / sled - der Schlitten

Song: Schlittenfahren



Door 4

Leise rieselt der Schnee - Hole Punch - Matthias Theel and Friedrich Soennecken

Do you need artificial snow for your Christmas decorations, your hand-made Christmas card, or a Christmas ornament? Try using the little leftovers after punching holes in your documents. Of course, that was not the intended use for a hole puncher when Matthias Theel and Friedrich Soennecken originally came up with the idea. Both filed their patents about the same time when during the late 1800s office administration seemingly grew to new heights. Soennecken added the ring binder to his invention, which made keeping documents organized a lot simpler. The German Louis Leitz later made some changes to the ring binder and added the hole to aid getting the binder out of stuffed shelves easier.

Learn German: Hole Punch - der Locher / decoration - die Dekoration / Christmas card - die Weihnachtskarte



Door 5

Making Life easier - Klettverschluss - George de Mestral

Many remember how difficult it was to tie your shoes when we were little. Now, it is as simple as pressing two pieces of fabric together. The Swiss electrical engineer, George de Mestral, went for a hike in the Swiss Alps around 1941, where he became somewhat annoyed by the burdock seeds clinging to his dog's fur and his cloth. Who wouldn't? But, being an engineer, he was also curious, what made these things stick! So, he took a closer look and saw tiny little hooks. This gave him the idea to try to develop fabric strips to recreate the same effect. It took him about 10 years to perfect his idea and develop the process on how to make Velcro - talk about sticking to a project! The name Velcro comes from the French language, velvet, and crochet. The German name is "Klettverschluss", which literally means, burr lock.

Learn German:

winter boot - der Winterstiefel / velcro - der Klettverschluss, das Klettband / dog - der Hund

Make your own Christmas gift!



Door 6

Don't be late for Christmas - Doodle Scheduling - Michael Näf und Paul E. Sevinc

Based in Zurich, Switzerland, Doodle scheduling created by Michael Näf und Paul E. Sevinc is one of the simplest tools to use to organize your Christmas party with friends, family, or colleagues. Michael Näf developed the tool in 2003 when he wanted to organize a dinner with multiple friends. Since 2007, after starting his company with his former fellow student Paul Sevinc, the number of people using this easy-to-use online tool has grown considerably. It is available in more than 175 countries and in 26 different languages. So, maybe even Santa Claus uses Doodle to make sure to deliver presents around the world on time.

Learn German:

to create - kreieren / the tool - das Werkzeug / to doodle - kritzeln



Door 7

Candy Cane Lane - Zuckerstange - Cologne Choirmaster

There is a legend that the candy cane was created in 1670 by a choirmaster at the Cologne Cathedral to keep the noise of the young singers at bay during mass. He asked a local candy maker to produce some sugar sticks to keep the choir boys quiet. Of course, the church board complained that rewarding children to make them obey was not right. So, he had the sugar sticks shaped in the form of shepherds' crooks to remind the boys of the shepherds visiting the infant Jesus. The sugar sticks were white to teach the boys the belief of the sinless life of Jesus. Soon candy canes became a part of Christmas plays and celebrations. However, all sugar sticks were white until about 200 years ago, before mass-production began. Today, the colorful treat is an essential part of Christmas time.

Learn German:

legend - die Legende / cathedral - die Kathedrale / mass - die Messe

[Make your own Candy Canes!](#)



Door 8

Celebrating Christmas - Rex Vegetable Peeler - Alfred Neweczeral

Christmas is the time to get together with friends and family to enjoy nice meals together. The invention of the REX vegetable peeler by the Swiss Alfred Neweczeral helps not only to prepare delicious meals, but also make the meals look good. This Swiss classic has remained the same since 1947 and is even featured on a Swiss postage stamp from 2004. Findus, Petterson's little cat in the popular children's books and shows "Petterson and Findus", even gives a peeler as Christmas present.

Learn German:

meal - die Speise / peeler - der Schäler / postage stamp - die Briefmarke



Door 9

It's the Time to be Jolly - Portable Watch - Peter Henlein

If you are still looking for a nice Christmas present, a pocket watch would be an idea! Maybe not the one made by Peter Henlein in 1505, it could get a little pricey at about 50 to 80 million US dollars. Peter Henlein was born in 1485, he was a locksmith and clockmaker in Nuremberg, Germany. He was the first to make ornamental timepieces which could be worn as pendants. The miniaturization of the torsion pendulum and coil spring mechanism was a technological wonder at that time and made him the inventor of the first watch in 1505. Surprisingly, the oldest watch in existence is still running strong.

Learn German:

Christmas present - das Weihnachtsgeschenk / portable watch - die Taschenuhr / locksmith - der Schlosser (Schlüsseldienst)



Door 10

Deutsche Gemütlichkeit, Advent, Advent, ein Lichtlein brennt – Coffee Filter – Amalie Bentz

The Advent season is for getting together with family and friends, to enjoy a nice cup of coffee, maybe even with a drop of Baileys, some cinnamon, or other delicious drinks. Thanks to Amalie Auguste Melitta Bentz we are able to enjoy our coffees without coffee grounds in them. Amalie did not like coffee grounds in her coffee so she started experimenting. Cleaning linen bag filters was very cumbersome, and at some point, she tried blotting paper from her son's school exercise book and a brass pot she perforated using a nail. The resulting coffee was less bitter, and the best part, it had no coffee grounds in it. Receiving a patent for her invention in 1908, she started her company, where her husband and her two sons were the first employees. After transferring the business to her sons, but still having a hand in it, she started offering Christmas bonuses and increased vacation days for her workers after 1932.

Learn German:

coffee - der Kaffee / cosiness - die Gemütlichkeit / family - die Familie



Door 11

Getting a Grip on the Soccer Field - Modern Soccer Cleats - Adolf Dassler

Even people living during the Roman Empire knew that having studded sandals gave them better grip while walking on slippery surfaces. Athletes have used cleats probably as early as in the 15th hundreds. Soccer is one of the favourite hobbies in Germany. It is probably not surprising that modern soccer cleats were made by Adolf Dassler in 1954. The soccer cleats had exchangeable rubber or plastic studs with variable length depending on the surface and condition of the soccer field. These new shoes became a game changer for the German soccer teams and helped them win the 1954 Soccer World Cup. There are many uses for cleats, especially when walking in Canada's winter wonderland.

Learn German:

Roman Empire - das Römische Reich / athlete - der Athlet / cleat - der Stollen



Door 12

In High Spirits - Oechsle Scale - Christian Ferdinand Oechsle

Born in Buhlbach, Germany in 1774 Christian Oechsle was a German mechanical workshop owner, goldsmith and inventor and the son of a master glass blower. He realized that reliably measuring the sugar content in must, which is used to make wine, would make it easier to tell the quality of the resulting wine. The measurement was called the Oechsle Scale and is used in Germany, Switzerland, and Luxembourg for the official classification of wine. The sugar content in must has to be higher than 67° for Kabinett, 76° for Spätlese, 83° for Auslese, 110° for Eiswein and 150° for Trockenbeerenauslese. The scale only refers to the must, and never to the finished wine. Even if he did not invent the must balance as such, developing a reliable device and easy to compare scale helped comparing the quality in winemaking.

Learn German:

must - der Most, die Maische / wine - der Wein / glass blower - Glasbläser

Make your own Mulled Wine!



Door 13

Coming Home for Christmas - Automobile - Bertha Benz

Bertha Benz, a very determined woman, born in 1849, was essential in inventing the car at a time when men still believed a woman's brain would be unable to think logically or process much information. At an early age, she was interested in science and after meeting Carl Benz used her entire dowry to continue inventing the car. After getting a patent for the car in 1886, nobody was interested in buying the vehicles. So, Bertha took to the road and made the first long distance trip with her two sons, from Mannheim to Pforzheim. An impressive 88 km trip! During this trip she had to solve many different issues plaguing the car. One was the brakes and she solved that issue by asking a shoemaker to nail leather onto the brake blocks. With her trip, she found the attention the invention needed, and the company made its first sales.

Learn German:

coming home - nach Hause kommen / science - die Wissenschaft / car - das Auto



Door 14

Oh Tannenbaum, Oh Tannenbaum - Artificial Christmas Tree - Germany

It is hard to believe, since many German families prefer a real Christmas Tree, but the artificial Christmas Tree was developed during the 1800s in Germany. Maybe, because of the shrinking numbers of evergreens in Germany at that time. The artificial trees were made from dyed goose feathers attached to twisted wire branches and the size varied from just 5 cm to about 2.5 meters. Later, a brush company made more durable trees with the same method they were using for their brushes. These trees were a lot sturdier and could hold more ornaments.

Learn German:

artificial - künstlich / dyed - gefärbt / goose feather - Gänsefeder

[How to make a Goose Feather Christmas Tree](#)



Door 15

Wrapping Presents a little differently - Cellophane - Jacques E. Brandenberger

Did you at some point in time intend to do something and the result turned out to be totally different than expected? Jacques Brandenberger, a Swiss chemist, tried to create stain resistant tablecloths, after being annoyed at a wine spill on a nice tablecloth, but ended up inventing cellophane. In the beginning, he used viscose and sprayed it onto some cloth. The resulting coated fabric was not practical as a tablecloth anymore, but the coating could be separated in one piece, so he had the idea to use it on its own. It took him about 10 years to perfect this film and in 1912 he built a machine to manufacture the film which he named Cellophane from the words cellulose and diaphane. Today, it is used to wrap many things, including Christmas candy, and even presents.

Learn German:

tablecloth - die Tischdecke / fabric - der Stoff / to wrap - einpacken



Door 16

Morgen kommt der Weihnachtsmann - Playmobil - Hans Beck

Hans Beck was born in 1929 in Greiz, Germany. He had one sister and eight half-brothers and half-sisters and started making toys for them at the young age of only ten. He made little cars, trucks, figures, and dolls but at that time never imagined becoming a toymaker later in life. He trained as a cabinet maker and started making model airplanes. After presenting his planes to a local toy manufacturer, he started in product design. In 1971 he was asked to develop toy figures and it took him about three years to come up with the design. He wanted a simple but flexible figure, to allow children to use their imagination. He gave children the little figures and observed their behavior. Playmobil was launched in 1974 with a set of knights and has been a global success since 1975.

Learn German:

Santa Claus - Weihnachtsmann / sister - die Schwester / brother - der Bruder
Sing Along: Morgen kommt der Weihnachtsmann



Door 17

Santa's Workshop - Hand Held Electric Drill - Wilhelm Emil Fein

The electric drill was invented by the Austrian Arthur Arnot in 1889. But who hasn't run into the problem where the spot you want to drill is too far away or too difficult to reach with your tool? Luckily, this is not a big problem anymore, since Wilhelm Emil Fein developed the handheld portable drill in 1895. The brothers Emil and Carl founded a mechanical workshop in Stuttgart where they built the forerunners of the modern power tools. You can be sure that Santa Claus uses one of these tools to make Christmas presents!

Learn German:

Electric drill - die elektrische Bohrmaschine / problem - das Problem / workshop - die Werkstatt



Door 18

Süßer die Glocken nie klingen - PEZ - Eduard Haas

Did you know that one of our favorite candies was created by the Austrian Eduard Haas in Vienna as an alternative to smoking? In 1927, he created a small, flat, mint candy as an option to cigarettes. The German word Pfefferminz, gave the candy its name using the first, middle and last letter, PEZ, from Pfefferminz. Since 1947, the candy dispenser has been shaped like a cigarette lighter in order to give adults a more comfortable and familiar feeling to that of a cigarette. After moving the company to the US in 1952, the marketing shifted towards children. The first character dispenser appeared around 1957. The Halloween Witch and Popeye were first in line. If you still have one of these first dispensers, hang on to them, the political donkey dispensers are valued each at over \$13,000.

Learn German:

candy - die Süßigkeit / peppermint - die Pfefferminze / head - der Kopf



Door 19

Merry and Bright - Bunsen Burner - Robert Bunsen

Do you have a gas stove to cook your Christmas dinner or to make Glühwein? Robert Bunsen, a German chemist, was born in 1811 in Göttingen. He didn't design the gas stove for you, but as a chemist he worked with the mechanics at the University of Heidelberg to improve the burner design in 1845. Producing a reliable flame, controlling the gas and air intake were his major goals, which not only helps in a chemistry lab, but also in your kitchen while cooking and baking. With controlled air flow you can bake the perfect Christmas cookies and make the perfect Creme Brulé for your Christmas dessert!

Learn German:

stove - der Herd / university - die Universität / flame - die Flamme



Door 20

Take a closer look - Electron Microscope - Ernst Ruska

Taking a closer look at things can be very rewarding. The electron microscope developed by the German physicist Ernst Ruska and the electrical engineer Max Knoll, in 1931, certainly helps to see things clearly. The first prototype, built at the Berlin Technical University, was able to magnify by a factor of about 400. Just looking at pictures taken with a microscope is like traveling into a whole different world. An electron microscope might be a little advanced and expensive for a Christmas gift, but if you still need an idea, an optical microscope might do the trick.

Learn German:

to look - anschauen / microscope - das Mikroskop / magnify - vergrößern



Door 21

A bright and colorful Christmas - Prussian blue - Johann Jacob Diesbach

What would Christmas be without bright colours? It was probably Johann Jacob Diesbach, a paint maker, living in Berlin in 1706, who created the intense blue paint by accident. He was making red cochineal dye and tainted the batch by accident with some blood. Due to the contamination iron ferrocyanide was created, which has a very distinct blue colour. The colour was named Preußischblau and Berlinisch Blau. The colour cannot be perfectly displayed on the computer screen because it has a high-chroma pigment. However, it is easy to produce, cheap, not toxic, and has a very intense colour to it. Therefore, it has many uses and was soon widely utilized in all kinds of paints right after its invention. One of the best-known uses was and still is in blueprints. Guess where that expression comes from?

Learn German:

color - die Farbe / accident - der Unfall / contamination - die Verunreinigung



Door 22

Joy to the World - Globe - Martin von Beheim

Who would have thought that an Erdapfel would be one of the first globes still in existence? The Erdapfel is the oldest surviving terrestrial globe and literally translates to earth apple, which is now a German word for a potato. However, potatoes were not known in Germany at the time the globe was made. Martin von Beheim, born in 1459 in Nuremberg, Germany, was a textile merchant and cartographer and because of his interest in trade, he directed the production of a globe. A team of artisans and craftsmen made the globe from laminated linen, enforced with wood, and had the map drawn on paper, then glued around the globe. Don't try to use this globe to reach any destination on earth though! The Americas are still missing and the positions and sizes of the continents and countries are inaccurate, and the best part: gaps are filled with phantasy islands.

Learn German:

travel - reisen / the globe - der Globus / the craftsman - der Kunsthandwerker



Door 23

Schneeflöckchen Weiß Röckchen – Snow Globe – Erwin Prezy

Around 1900, the Austrian Erwin Prezy discovered, by chance, the secret of making snow globes. Working on improving the newly invented electric light bulb to create better surgical lamps, he used a "Schusterkugel", a water-filled glass container with light reflecting particles to focus light. It did not work well for the intended purpose, but he was fascinated by the little particles floating slowly like snow during a pleasant snow fall. His first snow globe had the basilica of Mariazell as a figurine in it, and for the first 40 years the diorama always was a church. After Erwin Prezi II continued the business different designs were introduced. To this day the company is a family business and has just about 30 employees. They still use glass and handcrafted dioramas in their products, and what they use for the snow particles is still a secret.

Learn German: snow - der Schnee / globe - die Kugel, der Globus / church - die Kirche



Door 24

Holiday Train - Diesel Engine - Rudolf Diesel

Even though Rudolf Diesel was born in Paris, France, he was German, since his parents were immigrants from Bavaria, who were living in Paris at the time of his birth. At the young age of 12, he had already received the Société pour l'Instruction Élémentaire bronze medal and left for Augsburg, Germany to live with his aunt and uncle. After graduating with highest academic honors, he returned to Paris to assist Carl von Linde, his former professor from Munich. After just one year, he became the director of the modern refrigeration and ice plant. His best-known invention is the diesel engine, which became the number-one power source for many industries. He started his work on the engine in 1885 and it took 13 years for him to finish the process. Later, he moved back to Augsburg and improved the engine to reach about 26% efficiency, compared to the 10% efficiency of the steam engines which had been used widely at that time.

The perfect example of a good use for the diesel engine is the CP Holiday train. Watch out for the holiday train when it visits again in 2021.

Learn German:

parents - die Eltern / invention - die Erfindung / year - das Jahr