

Hitler Facts



Adolf Hitler opens Reichsparteitag (Reich Party Day) ceremonies with an address.

(Picture from the USHMM, courtesy of Richard Freimark)

Early Life

- Despite becoming the dictator of Germany, Hitler was not born there. Hitler was born in Braunau am Inn, Austria on April 20, 1889.
- Hitler was known as "Adi" in his youth.
- Hitler's father, Alois, was in his third marriage and 51 years old when Hitler was born. Alois died when Hitler was 13.

Artist and Anti-Semite

- Throughout his youth, Hitler dreamed of becoming an artist. He applied twice to the Vienna Academy of Art (once in 1907 and again in 1908) but was denied entrance both times.
- At the end of 1908, Hitler's mother died of breast cancer.
- After his mother's death, Hitler spent four years living on the streets of Vienna, selling postcards of his artwork to make a little money.
- No one is quite sure where or how Hitler picked up his virulent anti-Semitism. Some say it was because of the questionable identity of his grandfather (was Hitler's grandfather Jewish?). Others say Hitler was furious at the Jewish doctor that let his mother die. However, it is just as likely that Hitler picked up a hatred for Jews while living on the streets of Vienna, a city known at the time for its anti-Semitism.

Hitler as a Soldier in World War I

- Although Hitler attempted to avoid Austrian military service by moving to Munich, Germany. In May 1913, Hitler volunteered to serve in the German army once World War I began.
- Hitler endured and survived four years of World War I. During this time, he was awarded two Iron Crosses for bravery.
- Hitler sustained two major injuries during the war. The first occurred in October 1916 when he was wounded by a grenade splinter. The other was on October 13, 1918, when a gas attack caused Hitler to go temporarily blind.
- It was while Hitler was recovering from the gas attack that the armistice (i.e. the end of the fighting) was announced. Hitler was furious that Germany had surrendered and felt strongly that Germany had been "stabbed in the back" by its leaders.

Hitler Enters Politics

- Furious at Germany's surrender, Hitler returned to Munich after the end of World War I, determined to enter politics.
- In 1919, Hitler became the 55th member of a small anti-Semitic party called the German Worker's Party.
- Hitler soon became the party's leader, created a 25-point platform for the party, and established a bold red background with a white circle and swastika in the middle as the party's symbol. In 1920, the party's name was changed to National Socialist German Worker's Party (i.e. the Nazi Party).
- In November 1923, Hitler spearheaded an attempt to take over the German government through a putsch (a coup), called the [Beer Hall Putsch](#).
- When the coup failed, Hitler was caught and sentenced to five years in prison.
- It was while in Landsbergis prison that Hitler wrote his book, [Mein Kampf](#) (*My Struggle*).
- After only nine months, Hitler was released from prison.
- After getting out of prison, Hitler was determined to build up the Nazi Party in order to take over the German government using legal means.

Hitler Becomes Chancellor

- In 1932, Hitler was granted German citizenship.
- In the July 1932 elections, the Nazi Party obtained 37.3 percent of the vote for the Reichstag (Germany's parliament), making it the controlling political party in Germany.
- On January 30, 1933, [Hitler was appointed chancellor](#). Hitler then used this high-ranking position to gain absolute power over Germany. This finally happened when Germany's president, Paul von Hindenburg, died in office on August 2, 1934.
- Hitler took the title of Führer and Reichskanzler (Leader and Reich Chancellor).

Hitler as Führer

- As dictator of Germany, Hitler wanted to **increase and strengthen the German army** as well as expand Germany's territory. **Although these things broke the terms of the Versailles Treaty**, the treaty that officially ended World War I, other countries allowed him to do so. Since the terms of the Versailles Treaty had been harsh, other countries found it easier to be lenient than risk another bloody European war.
- In March 1938, Hitler was able to annex Austria into Germany (called the Anschluss) without firing a single shot.
- When Nazi Germany attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, the other European nations could no longer stand idly by. [World War II began](#).
- On July 20, 1944, Hitler barely survived an assassination attempt. One of his top military officers had placed a suitcase bomb under the table during a conference meeting at Hitler's Wolf's Lair. Because the table leg blocked much of the blast, Hitler survived with only injuries to his arm and some hearing loss. Not everyone in the room was so lucky.
- On April 29, 1945, Hitler married his long-time mistress, Eva Braun.
- The following day, April 30, 1945, [Hitler and Eva committed suicide together](#).