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# Groschen

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**Groschen** (German: [ˈɡʁɔʃŋ] <sup>ⓘ</sup>; from Latin: *grossus* "thick", via Old Czech *groš*) is the (sometimes colloquial) name for various coins, especially a silver coin used in parts of Europe, including some of the Italian states, and various states of the Holy Roman Empire.

The word is borrowed from the late Latin *grossus denarius Turnosus*, 'thick denarius of Tours', a description of a *turnese*.<sup>[1]</sup> *Groschen* was frequently abbreviated in old documents to *gl*, in which the second character was not an *L* (12th letter of the alphabet), but an abbreviation symbol; later it was written as *Gr* or *g*.

## Names and etymology  [edit]

The name was introduced in 13th-century France as [*denarius*] *grossus*, lit. "thick penny", whence Old French *gros*, Italian *grosso*, Middle High German *gros(se)*, Low German and Dutch *grōte* and English *groat*. In the 14th century, it appeared as Old Czech *groš*,<sup>[2]</sup> whence Modern German *Groschen*.

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*Barile* (large groschen), Florence, 1506

Names in other modern languages include:

- **Albanian:** *gros*
- **Amharic:** *gersh*
- **Arabic:** *qirsh*
- **Bulgarian, Macedonian, Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian:** *грощ*
- **Czech, Slovak, Serbo-Croatian:** *groš*
- **Dutch:** *groot*
- **Estonian:** *kross*
- **French:** *gros*
- **Greek:** *γρόσι*
- **Hebrew:** *grush*
- **Hungarian:** *garas*
- **Lithuanian:** *grašis*
- **Polish:** *grosz*
- **Romanian:** *groș*
- **Yiddish:** ‏גרוש‎ (*grošn*)
- **Turkish:** *kuruş*



The Arabic, Amharic, Hebrew, Greek and Turkish names for currency denominations in and around the territories formerly part of the [Ottoman Empire](#) derived from the same origin "Groschen", since it was the common name for all the silver coins throughout the early modern Europe.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup><sup>[3]</sup>

## History [[edit](#)]

### Middle Ages [[edit](#)]

Names like *groschen*, *grossus/grossi*, *grosso*, *grossone*, *grosz*, *gros*, *groš*, *groat*, *Groten*, *garas* etc. were used in the Middle Ages for all *thick silver coins*, as opposed to *thin* silver coins such as *deniers* or *pennies*. Historically it was equal to between several and a dozen *denarii*.

In the German-speaking world, the groschen was usually worth 12 pfennigs; many regional (small) groschen e.g. *Neugroschen*, *Groten* (plural: Grote) in northern Germany, English: *groat*, *Mariengroschen*, *Grösch(e)* were worth between 2½ and 10 pfennigs. The later *Kreuzer*, a coin worth 4 pfennigs arose from the linguistic abbreviation of the small *Kreuzgroschen*.

The groschen was first introduced into the [Holy Roman Empire](#) in 1271 by Duke [Meinhard II](#) of [Tyrol](#) in [Merano](#) after [Venice](#) struck her first 2,1 gr. silver *grosso* in 1192. It was originally a solid coin of pure *silver*, larger than the *denarius* which was no longer valid. In essence, it took the place of a variety of the older *pfennigs*, whose silver purity had inflated their value over the centuries. According to one source, the city of [Trier](#) is said to have struck groschen-like, thick pfennigs as early as 1104, which were then followed in 1300 by the [Bohemian groschen](#) from [Kuttenberg](#). The new coin soon inspired other 'mint lords' (*Münzherren*) and was given, not least for reasons of economic necessity, a higher face value in the [Early Renaissance](#) period. Upper Italian coins of multiple pfennig value in the High Middle Ages were similarly called *Grossini* (cf. also *Schilling*).



The 1286 Tyrolean example (above right) weighs 1.45 grams (22.4 grains), it is marked with *ME IN AR DVS* (for "Meinhard") and a [Double Cross](#) (*obverse*), and with *DUX TIROL* and the [Eagle](#) of Tyrol (*reverse*).





Emergency issue currency  
for the [Siege of Kolberg](#)  
(1807), 4 *groschen*

In [Germany](#), the name *Groschen* (both singular and plural) replaced *Schilling* as the common name for a 12 *pfennig* coin. In the 18th century it was used predominantly in the northern states as a coin worth  $\frac{1}{24}$  of a *Reichsthaler* (equal to  $\frac{1}{32}$  of a *Conventionsthaler*). In the 19th century, a new currency system was introduced in which the *Groschen*, often under a new name to distinguish it from the old, was worth  $\frac{1}{30}$  of a *Thaler* or *Taler*. This began in 1821 in [Prussia](#), where the coin was called the *Silbergroschen* (Sgr) and was worth 12 pfennigs. [Saxony](#) followed in 1840 with the *Neugroschen* (ngr), also  $\frac{1}{30}$  of a thaler, but subdivided in 10 (new) pfennigs.<sup>[7][8]</sup> Silesia and Bohemia introduced the white groschen (*Weissgroschen*) in 1821 at the same time as Prussia. Frederick William III of Prussia could not yet decide on the consistent introduction of the decimal system. In order to be able to distinguish his new pfennig' from the old ones, they were called *Pfennige*.

The last German *Kurantgroschen* with a face value equalling the silver content value were issued in the Kingdom of Saxony in 1827 and 1828, and in the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha in 1837. These were based on a [monetary standard](#), the *Konventionsfuß*, of the state, according to which the [silver](#) contained in 320 groschen was equal to the weight of a [Cologne Mark](#) (233.856 grammes).

An exception in relation to the value of [thaler](#) coins is the series of 'butterfly coins' (*Schmetterlingsmünzen*) in the [Electorate of Saxony](#). All these coins only show their value in groschen; the usual abbreviation for groschen used in the everyday correspondence being used for the denomination on the coins. Likewise, the abbreviation for groschen used in the written word was stamped on the Electoral Saxon golden *Reichsgulden zu 21 Groschen* of 1584. In this case, it was probably intended to express the fact that it is a [coin of account](#) (*Rechnungsmünze*). Another special case is the *Kipperthaler*, on which the value in groschen (or *Kreuzer*) is also stamped to circumvent the [Imperial Minting Ordinance](#) (*Reichsmünzordnung*). Also interesting are thalers, which were minted in denominations of 28 and 24 groschen without differences in design and size. For example, the 24 groschen *Hosenbandtaler* were also coins of account, which is sometimes not recognized.

Following [German unification](#) and [decimalisation](#), with 100 pfennigs to the [mark](#), the groschen was replaced by the 10 *pfennig* coin and *groschen* remained a nickname for the 10 *pfennig* coin until the introduction of the [euro](#). For the same reason, the name *Sechser* (sixer) remained in use regionally for the half-groschen coin, 5 *Pfennigs*.

There is a [Beethoven rondo](#) for piano, opus 129 (1795) entitled "*Die Wut über den verlorenen Groschen*" (literally "The Rage Over the Lost Groschen", but known as "[Rage Over a Lost Penny](#)"). Also [Die Dreigroschenoper](#), [Kurt Weil](#), [Bertold Brecht](#)

## Modern currencies [[edit](#)]

In recent times, the name was used by three currencies in circulation:

- In [Poland](#), a *grosz* (plural: *grosze* or *groszy*, depending on the number) is a  $\frac{1}{100}$  part of a [złoty](#)
- In [Austria](#), a *Groschen* (plural: *Groschen*) was a  $\frac{1}{100}$  part of a [Schilling](#) (1924–1938 and 1945–2001)
- In Turkey, a *kuruş* is a  $\frac{1}{100}$  part of *lira*.



Austrian 2 Groschen coin, 1925

Likewise, in [Germany](#) groschen remained a slang term for the 10 pfennig coin, thus a  $\frac{1}{10}$  part both of the (West German) [Deutsche Mark](#) and the [East German mark](#). The word has lost popularity with the introduction of the [euro](#), although it can still be heard on occasion, especially from older people.



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