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How to learn German vocabulary effectively?

Use a vocabulary learning app.

I recommend using [Anki](#).

Use a good vocabulary card deck for Anki.

I recommend downloading and importing [one](#) of the following decks:

- [A Frequency Dictionary of German - German to English.apkg](#).
- [A Frequency Dictionary of German - English to German.apkg](#).

These files are located in [this repository here](#).

Unfortunately, as these decks are identical with the only difference that their vocabulary cards are mirrored, due to how Anki manages decks, these decks cannot coexist with each other within the Anki app. Therefore, you need to choose [one](#) of these decks.

These decks are slightly changed variants of [this deck](#). The following changes have been made:

- 7 words have been suspended and cannot be learned, unless they get unsuspended, as they are too confusing in the beginning to learn as vocabulary. These words are
 - [der](#) "the; that, those; who, that"
 - [sein](#) "to be; (past tense)"
 - [ein](#) "a, an; one (of)"
 - [haben](#) "to have; (past tense)"
 - [sie](#) "she, her; they, them; you"
 - [werden](#) "to become, get; (future tense); (passive voice)"
 - [ihr](#) "you, her; her, their, hers, theirs; your".
- On the answer side of every card there is now additionally the corresponding [Wiktionary](#) entry to every German word. There you can find additional information that the cards otherwise lack.

For every noun, learn the grammatical gender, the genitive singular and the nominative plural.

This is important, because this information will tell you how to use the nouns properly:

- **Nouns of class s1:** If the **genitive singular** of a noun **ends in -s or -es**, then **all other singular cases** have **no ending and are therefore identical to the nominative singular**. However, sometimes the dative singular **can optionally** end in -e.
- **Nouns of class s2a:** If the **genitive singular** of a noun **ends in -en**, then **the dative and accusative singular end in -en**, as well.
- **Nouns of class s2b:** If the **genitive singular** of a **neuter** noun **ends in -en**, then **only dative singular ends in -en**, as well. The **accusative singular**, however, **is identical to the nominative singular**.

- **Nouns of class s3:** If the **genitive singular** of a noun **is identical to the nominative singular**, then **all other singular cases are identical to the nominative singular**, as well.

Some examples for the **singular cases**:

noun class	s1	s1	s2a	s2b	s3
word	der Vater	das Kind	der Mensch	das Junge	die Mutter
grammatical gender	masculine	neuter	masculine	neuter	feminine
"the ..."	"father"	"child"	"human being"	"young (thing)"	"mother"
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
nominative	Vater	Kind	Mensch	Junge	Mutter
genitive	Vaters	Kindes	Menschen	Jungen	Mutter
dative	Vater	Kind(e)	Menschen	Jungen	Mutter
accusative	Vater	Kind	Menschen	Junge	Mutter

- **Nouns of class p1:** If the **nominative plural** of a noun **ends in -e, -el, or -er**, then **the dative plural adds a -n** and **all other plural cases are identical to the nominative plural**.
- **Nouns of class p2:** If the **nominative plural** of a noun **ends in any other way**, then **all other plural cases are identical to the nominative plural**.

Some examples for the **plural cases**:

noun class	p1	p1	p1	p2	p2
word	Tische	Schlüssel	Männer	Bären	Autos
	"tables"	"keys"	"men"	"bears"	"cars"
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
nominative	Tische	Schlüssel	Männer	Bären	Autos
genitive	Tische	Schlüssel	Männer	Bären	Autos
dative	Tischen	Schlüsseln	Männern	Bären	Autos
accusative	Tische	Schlüssel	Männer	Bären	Autos

Therefore, you need to learn, for example:

der Vater	Vaters	Väter
das Kind	Kindes	Kinder
der Mensch	Menschen	Menschen
das Junge	Jungen	Jungen

die Mutter	Mutter	Mütter
der Tisch	Tisches	Tische
der Schlüssel	Schlüssels	Schlüssel
der Mann	Mannes	Männer
der Bär	Bären	Bären
das Auto	Autos	Autos

Explanation: The article (**der**, **die**, **das**) shows the grammatical gender (masculine, feminine, neuter). The first form is the nominative singular, the second form is the genitive singular, the third form is the nominative plural.

Having learned the previous examples, we can deduce the noun classes of these nouns:

der Vater	s1	p1
das Kind	s1	p1
der Mensch	s2a	p2
das Junge	s2b	p2
die Mutter	s3	p1
der Tisch	s1	p1
der Schlüssel	s1	p1
der Mann	s1	p1
der Bär	s2a	p2
das Auto	s1	p2

Special cases: The nouns **Herz** "heart", **Name** "name", **Buchstabe** "letter", **Funke** "spark", **Gedanke** "thought", and **Wille** "will".

Also, there are some more subtleties mostly connected with the use of names of persons which cannot be treated here.

For adjectives, learn the irregular comparative and superlative forms

Regularly, the positive, comparative, and superlative look like this:

grün	grüner	am grünsten
"green"	"greener"	"the greenest"
frisch	frischer	am frischesten
"fresh"	"fresher"	"the freshest"

From this, we can deduct the following **rules for regular adjectives**:

* the POSITIVE needs to be learned	
* the comparative	= POSITIVE + er
* the superlative	= am + POSITIVE + (e)sten

Irregularly, these 3 forms might look like this (the examples are **hart** "hard", **groß** "big", **klug** "prudent, smart", **gut** "good", **viel** "many, much", **gern** "willingly, gladly", **bald** "soon", **oft** "often"):

hart	härter	am härtesten
groß	größer	am größten
klug	klüger	am klügsten
gut	besser	am besten
viel	mehr	am meisten
gern	lieber	am liebsten
bald	eher	am ehesten
oft	öfter	am häufigsten

Fortunately, most irregular adjectives in German behave like **hart**, **groß**, and **klug** which show themselves a regularity: In the comparative, as well as in the superlative, they add two dots above the vowel which results in a different pronunciation, but other than that they are completely regular.

For every verb, there are 6 forms that need to be learned

These forms are:

- the infinitive ("to do")
- the 3rd person singular present indicative ("he does")
- the 3rd person singular preterite indicative ("he did")
- the 3rd person singular preterite subjunctive ("he would do")
- the 2nd person singular imperative ("Do!")
- the past participle together with its auxiliary ("to have done")

If you know these 6 forms of a verb, then you can derive **all** other forms from them. Unfortunately, it can't be shown here how this works, as this would go too far for now.

Regularly, these 6 forms look like this (the examples are **fragen** "to ask" and **ordnen** "to organize"):

fragen	fragt	fragte	fragte	frag	gefragt haben
ordnen	ordnet	ordnete	ordnete	ordne	geordnet haben

From this, we can deduct the following **rules for regular verbs**:

- * the INFINITIVE needs to be learned
- * the 3rd person singular present indicative = INFINITIVE - en + (e)t
- * the 3rd person singular preterite indicative = INFINITIVE - en + (e)te
- * the 3rd person singular preterite subjunctive = INFINITIVE - en + (e)te
- * the 2nd person singular imperative = INFINITIVE - en + (e)
- * the past participle together with its auxiliary = ge + INFINITIVE - en + (e)t + haben

These regular forms don't need to be learned, as we know the rules to create them.

Irregularly, these 6 forms might look like this:

sehen	sieht	sah	sähe	sieh	gesehen haben
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As a consequence, in the case of the verb **sehen** "to see", all forms need to be learned, as they are all irregular.

Two Anki decks with German irregular verbs are available here:

- [German to English](#)
- [English to German](#)

These files are located in in [this repository here](#).

This time, **both** decks can be used in Anki simultaneously!

These decks were created based on a list of German irregular verbs that can be found [here](#).

For every preposition, learn the cases that can be combined with it, as well as the meanings of those combinations.

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Sources

[Source \(German book\)](#).

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