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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.

In German, every noun has one of **three grammatical genders (masculine, feminine, or neuter)**. Also, every German noun can be used in one of **four cases (nominative, genitive, dative, or accusative)**, as well as in one of **two numbers (singular or plural)**.

Information on the grammatical gender of a German noun, as well as it's different forms in case and number can be found on [Wiktionary](#).

Learning the grammatical gender, the genitive singular, as well as the nominative plural of a German noun is important, because this information will tell you how to use the nouns properly (grammatically) in a sentence.

The grammatical gender of a German noun can be guessed correctly with varying accuracy (more information on this can be found [here](#)), nevertheless it often just needs to be learned.

Besides, every German noun is a member of a singular class (s1, s2a, s2b, or s3) as well as a member of a plural class (p1, p2). These classes are explained below.

The four singular classes:

The form of the **genitive singular** determines the singular class of a German noun. Therefore, the genitive singular needs to be learned.

- Nouns of class s1 : the genitive singular ends in **-s or -es**
 - all other singular cases are identical to the nominative singular
 - the dative singular can sometimes **optionally** end in -e
- Nouns of class s2a : the genitive singular ends in **-en**
 - the dative and accusative singular end in -en, as well
- Nouns of class s2b : the genitive singular of a **neuter** noun ends in **-en**
 - only dative singular ends in -en, as well
 - the accusative singular, however, is identical to the nominative singular
- Nouns of class s3 : the genitive singular is **identical to the nominative singular**
 - 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
definite					
article	der	das	der	das	die
word	Vater	Kind	Mensch	Junge	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

Compare the articles on Wiktionary on these nouns: [der Vater](#) "the father", [das Kind](#) "the child", [Mensch](#) "the human being", [das Junge](#) ("[weak](#)" declension) "the young (thing)", [die Mutter](#) "the mother".

The two plural classes:

The form of the **nominative plural** determines the plural class of a German noun. Therefore, the nominative plural needs to be learned.

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

Compare the articles on Wiktionary on these nouns: [der Tisch](#) "the table", [der Schlüssel](#) "the key", [der Mann](#) "the man", [der Bär](#) "the bear", [das Auto](#) "the car".

Therefore, you need to learn, for example:

article	nominative	genitive	nominative
	singular	singular	plural
-----	-----	-----	-----
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 definite article shows the grammatical gender (`der` (masculine), `die` (feminine), `das` (neuter)).

Having learned the aforementioned nouns including their forms, we can deduce the noun classes of these nouns:

word		singular		plural
		class		class
-----		-----		-----
Vater		s1		p1
Kind		s1		p1
Mensch		s2a		p2
Junge		s2b		p2
Mutter		s3		p1
Tisch		s1		p1
Schlüssel		s1		p1
Mann		s1		p1
Bär		s2a		p2
Auto		s1		p2

Irregular nouns: 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:

positive	comparative	superlative
-----	-----	-----
grün "green"	grüner "greener"	am grünsten "the greenest"
frisch "fresh"	frischer "fresher"	am frischesten "the freshest"

Compare the articles on Wiktionary on these adjectives: [grün](#) "green", [frisch](#) "fresh".

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

Therefore it suffices to learn the POSITIVE of *regular (!)* German Adjectives.

Irregularly, however, these 3 forms might look like this:

positive	comparative	superlative
-----	-----	-----
hart "hard"	härter	am härtesten

groß "big"	größer	am größten
klug "prudent, smart"	klüger	am klügsten
-----	-----	-----
gut "good"	besser	am besten
viel "many, much"	mehr	am meisten
gern "willingly, gladly"	lieber	am liebsten
bald "soon"	eher	am ehesten
oft "often"	öfter	am häufigsten

Compare the articles on Wiktionary on these adjectives: [hart](#) "hard", [groß](#) "big", [klug](#) "prudent, smart", [gut](#) "good", [viel](#) "many, much", [gern](#) "willingly, gladly", [bald](#) "soon", [oft](#) "oft".

Explanation: 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.

How to learn German verbs

In German, every verb can be used in one of **three persons (first, second, or third)**, one of **two numbers (singular or plural)**, one of **six tenses (present, preterite, future, present perfect, past perfect, or future perfect)**, one of **three moods (indicative, subjunctive, or imperative)**, and one of **two voices (active or passive)**.

However, the imperative only exists in one single tense, i.e. the present.

This "grammar" here introduces another person, i.e. the **second polite**. Ordinary German grammars don't do this. Instead, they say that the forms of the third person plural are also used to refer to the second person singular in a polite manner. This "grammar" refers to this phenomenon as a distinct form called the **polite second person singular**, in order to avoid confusion.

Furthermore, there are **three infinitives for each verb (present, past, future) in one of two voices (active or passive)**, as well as **two participles (present, past) that grammatically behave like nouns**.

Information on the different forms of a German verb can be found on [Wiktionary](#). In order to find a German verb in a dictionary, you need to look for the present infinitive form of the verb.

For example, look at the Wiktionary entries of the regular verbs [lieben](#) "to love", [fragen](#) "to ask", [ordnen](#) "to bring in order", [arbeiten](#) "to work", [handeln](#) "to trade, to act", and at the Wiktionary entries of the irregular verbs [sehen](#) "to see", [fahren](#) "to drive", [geben](#) "to give", [gehen](#) "to go", [stoßen](#) "to push", [frieren](#) "to feel cold". (All of these verbs also appear in the PDF document mentioned below.)

However, it must be noted that **all passive forms are missing from the Wiktionary entries!**

Please consult [this PDF document](#) for detailed information on the topic.

Finally, after having consulted the mentioned PDF document, **please investigate the following highly irregular verbs on Wiktionary:**

[sein](#) "to be"

[haben](#) "to have"

[werden](#) "to become; will"

[dürfen](#) "to be allowed to, may"

[können](#) "to be able to, can"

[mögen](#) "to like"

[müssen](#) "to have to, must"

[sollen](#) "shall"

[wollen](#) "to want"

[wissen](#) "to know"

[bringen](#) "to bring"

[denken](#) "to think"

[gehen](#) "to go"

[stehen](#) "to stand"

[tun](#) "to do"

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

TO BE CONTINUED ...

Sources

[!\[\]\(666e09182d4cd268646ea700ea60dcdf_img.jpg\) Source \(German book\).](#)

[!\[\]\(c3d993ca47bfe2a953c700506ce31fa0_img.jpg\) Table of Contents](#)