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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 its 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 [!\[\]\(e2376d476d06eb31946dc01a69a4403a_img.jpg\) Herz](#) "heart", [!\[\]\(bbb3388d591ef640dd8a8c4262f2866a_img.jpg\) Name](#) "name", [!\[\]\(ef6e697e79b33cfafe8ba6744dc11bd6_img.jpg\) Buchstabe](#) "letter", [!\[\]\(36a26e5b369c5d231b75de2efc184e39_img.jpg\) Funke](#) "spark", [!\[\]\(c5cee65d8128a7c1c31c4ac9cbd38372_img.jpg\) Gedanke](#) "thought", and [!\[\]\(3d68e4eb958ce14892acdd7ab347bcfa_img.jpg\) 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.

Finally, a PDF document containing detailed information on the (fortunately completely regular!) adjective inflection, as well as the inflection of both articles (definite and indefinite) can be found [here](#).

Numbers

Cardinal numbers

German cardinal numbers **can freely be used as nouns or as adjectives**. If there is a distinct adjective form (i.e. if the noun form can't be used as an adjective), then it will be explicitly listed in the table below beside the noun.

If German cardinal numbers are **used as a noun, they start with a capital letter**. However, all cardinal numbers are listed as adjectives in the table below.

Grammatical facts about *German cardinal numbers being used as nouns*:

- Their grammatical gender is **always feminine**.
- **Their genitive singular form is always identical to their nominative singular form**. Therefore, they belong to class `s3` which means that all of their singular forms are identical.
- **Their nominative plural form always ends in -en**. Therefore, they belong to class `p2` which means that all of their plural forms are identical, as well.

Grammatical facts about *German cardinal numbers being used as adjectives*:

- All of their forms are identical, i. e. **they are not inflected**.
- They have **no comparative or superlative forms**.

Ordinal numbers

A German ordinal number is **formed by adding the suffix `-t` to a German cardinal number**. Furthermore, the German ordinal numbers are **normal adjectives**. They are given in the table below in the nominative singular feminine form which ends in `-te` (this is the form that is also used in dictionaries) below each German *cardinal* number.

Fractions

A German fraction is **formed by adding the suffix `-tel` to a German cardinal number**. German fractions **can freely be used as nouns or adjectives**. They are given in the table below under each German *ordinal* number.

If German fractions are **used as a noun, they start with a capital letter**. Note that all fractions are listed as nouns in the table below.

Grammatical facts about *German fractions being used as nouns*:

- Their grammatical gender is **always neuter**.
- **Their genitive singular form always ends in `-s`**. Therefore, they belong to class `s1` which means that excluding the genitive singular, all of their singular forms are identical.
- **Their nominative plural form is always identical to the nominative singular form and thus, it always ends in `-el`**. Therefore, they belong to class `p1` which means that all of their plural forms are identical except the dative plural which adds a `-n`.

Grammatical facts about *German fractions being used as adjectives*:

- All of their forms are identical, i. e. **they are not inflected**.

- They have **no comparative or superlative forms**.

[👉 Finally, here you can find the aforementioned table containing the German cardinal numbers, ordinal numbers, and fractions, as well as some extreme examples.](#)

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, preterite 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.

An Anki deck with German irregular verbs can be downloaded [👉 here](#).

This file is located in [📖 this repository here](#).

This deck was created based on a list of German irregular verbs that can be found [📖 here](#).

Additionally, a PDF document containing all information from this Anki deck can be consulted [📖 here](#).

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

TO BE CONTINUED ...

Sources

[📖 Source \(German book\)](#).

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