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[Table of Contents](#)

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.

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

CHANGES ARE BEING MADE TO THIS SECTION ...

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 \(German book\).](#)

