

## Duolingo • Tips and Notes @ duome.eu

Basics 1 #4 • 2022-03-25 ^

### Welcome to German :)

Welcome to the German course! We will provide you with tips and notes throughout the course. However, be aware that these are optional. Only read them when you feel stuck, or when you are interested in the details. You can use the course without them.

Often, it's best to just **dive into the practice**. See how it goes! You can always revisit the Notes section later on.

### Capitalizing nouns

In German, **all nouns are capitalized**. For example, “my name” is *mein Name*, and “the apple” is *der Apfel*. This helps you identify which words are the nouns in a sentence.

### German genders are strange

Nouns in German are either **feminine, masculine or neuter**. For example, *Frau* (woman) is feminine, *Mann* (man) is masculine, and *Kind* (child) is neuter.

While some nouns (*Frau*, *Mann*, ...) have **natural gender** like in English (a woman is female, a man is male), **most nouns have grammatical gender** (depends on word ending, or seemingly random).

For example, *Mädchen* (girl) is neuter, because all words ending in *-chen* are neuter. *Wasser* (water) is neuter, but *Cola* is feminine, and *Saft* (juice) is masculine.

It is important to **learn every noun along with its gender** because parts of German sentences change depending on the gender of their nouns.

For now, just remember that the **indefinite article** (a/an) *ein* is used for masculine and neuter nouns, and *eine* is used for feminine nouns. Stay with us to find out how “cases” will later modify these.

gender	indefinite article
masculine	ein Mann
neuter	ein Mädchen
feminine	eine Frau

### Verb conjugations

#### Conjugating regular verbs

**Verb conjugation** in German is more complex than in English. To conjugate a regular verb in the present tense, identify the stem of the verb and **add the ending** corresponding to

any of the grammatical persons, which you can simply memorize. For now, here are the singular forms:

Example: *trinken* (to drink)

English person	ending	German example
I	-e	ich trinke
you (singular informal)	-st	du trinkst
he/she/it	-t	er/sie/es trinkt

### Conjugations of the verb *sein* (to be)

Like in English, *sein* (to be) is completely irregular, and its conjugations simply need to be memorized. Again, you will learn the plural forms soon.

English	German
I am	ich bin
you (singular informal) are	du bist
he/she/it is	er/sie/es ist

### Umlauts

**Umlauts** are letters (more specifically vowels) that have two dots above them and appear in some German words like *Mädchen*.

*Literally, "Umlaut" means "around the sound," because its function is to change how the vowel sounds.*

no umlaut	umlaut
a	ä
o	ö
u	ü

An umlaut change may change the meaning. That's why it's important not to ignore those little dots.

If you can't type these, a workaround is to type "oe" instead of "ö", for example.

### No continuous aspect

In German, there's **no continuous aspect**. There are no separate forms for "I drink" and "I am drinking". There's only one form: *Ich trinke*.

There's no such thing as *Ich bin trinke* or *Ich bin trinken*!

*When translating into English, how can I tell whether to use the simple (I drink) or the continuous form (I am drinking)?*

Unless the context suggests otherwise, either form should be accepted.

*Hello #2 · 2019-04-18 ^*

## Welcome to the Wonderful World of German :)

### *How to use this course*

These tips will guide you through the course. The course is designed so you can discover German without resorting to grammar notes. However, if you feel lost, you can check these notes, they will clarify things.

**Always play first!** In language learning, practice counts more than theory.

If you have questions about a specific sentence, refer to **sentence discussions**. You can either already find answers there, or state your own question.

The bubbles in the main view are called **skills**, the whole course is called a **tree**. Each skill is divided into several **lessons**.

The most important thing in learning is that you **relax and enjoy yourself**. With this course, you can explore German in a playful way. **Don't worry too much about remembering things**. Your brain will do that for you, as long as you're having fun and keep your eyes and ears open.

### *What you learn in this skill*

In this skill, you learn the following things:

- German can be very **similar to English**.
- **Plural forms** are kind of **irregular**. Think “foot/feet” or “child/children”. There are patterns; you will discover them while you master this course. For example, **nouns ending in -e always have a plural ending in -en**.
- As in English, **“to be” is highly irregular**.
- Soon you will discover that **gender works differently** than in English. In this skill, we only show you “feminine” nouns. Keep that in mind when later on, you encounter words from the two other genders.
- *But wait, why is “Katze” feminine? My cat is a guy!* — Yes, did we mention that gender works differently than in English? :) *Katze* is *die* (feminine) because the word ends in an -e. Check out the next skill for more on this!

*The #4 · 2018-10-25 ^*

## Definite articles

As mentioned in *Basics 1*, German nouns have one of **three genders: feminine, masculine or neuter**.

While they sometimes correspond to a *natural gender* (“der Mann” is male), most often the gender will depend on the word, not on the object it describes. For example, the word “das Mädchen” (the girl) ends in “-chen”, hence it is neuter. This is called *grammatical gender*.

Each gender has its own definite article. **Der** is used for masculine nouns, **das** for neuter, and **die** for feminine. Later in this course you will learn that these might be modified according to “case”.

gender	definite (the)	indefinite (a/an)
masculine	der Mann	ein Mann
neuter	das Mädchen	ein Mädchen
feminine	die Frau	eine Frau

### Conjugating verbs

Here are the conjugation tables from “Basics 1” (where you can find a more detailed explanation) again.

*trinken* (to drink)

English person	ending	German example
I	-e	ich trinke
you (singular informal)	-st	du trinkst
he/she/it	-t	er/sie/es trinkt

*sein* (to be)

English	German
I am	ich bin
you (singular informal) are	du bist
he/she/it is	er/sie/es ist

### Generic vs. specific (German is not Spanish or French)

Just like in English, using or dropping the definite article makes the *difference between specific and generic*.

I like *bread* = Ich mag *Brot* (bread in general)

I like *the bread* = Ich mag *das Brot* (specific bread)

A good general rule is to use an article when you would use one in English. If there is none in English, don’t use one in German.

There are some slight differences when using a few abstract nouns, but we’ll see about that later.

### Modal verbs: Plural forms

In the previous lesson, you learned the singular forms of some modal verbs:

ich	kann	mag
du	kannst	magst
er/sie	kann	kann

In the plural, these verbs have regular endings. They often use a different vowel than the singular forms:

wir	können	mögen
sie	können	mögen

### Infinitives, some plural forms

In German, every verb has an infinitive form (similar to “to learn” in English). The first and third person plural are always the same:

	learn	drive	have
infinitive	lernen	fahren	haben
wir	lernen	fahren	haben
sie	lernen	fahren	haben

Here is a revision of the singular forms:

	learn	drive	have
ich	lerne	fahre	habe
du	lernst	fährst	hast
er/sie/es	lernt	fährt	hat

### More pronouns

#### Already known

So far, you learned how to say “my, your, his, her”:

Engl.	fem./pl.	masc. Nom./neut.	masc. Akk.
my	meine	mein	meinen
your (sg.)	deine	dein	deinen
his/its	seine	sein	seinen
her/their	ihre	ihr	ihren

Remember that the endings are the same as for “ein” and “kein”:

Engl.	fem./pl.	masc. Nom./neut.	masc. Akk.
a(n)	eine	ein	einen
no	keine	kein	keinen

“Their” is the same as “her” in German, and “its” the same as “his”.

If you find these hard to remember, just keep practicing! Why not revisit some of the earlier skills, too?

### More plural pronouns

In addition, you learn “our” and “your (plural)” here:

Engl.	fem./pl.	masc. Nom./neut.	masc. Akk.
our	unsere	unser	unseren
your (pl.)	eure	euer	euren
their	ihre	ihr	ihren

Notice that “euer” loses an “e” when it gets a suffix.

Again, instead of trying to memorize tables, it is best to just jump into practice, and use them until you get a feeling for them.

### Numbers: 1-12

By now, you encountered the numbers from one to twelve:

1	eins	7	sieben
2	zwei	8	acht
3	drei	9	neun
4	vier	10	zehn
5	fünf	11	elf
6	sechs	12	zwölf

Notice that they are very similar to the numbers in English.

These numbers never change form, apart from number one. *Eins* is only used when nothing comes after it:

- Um *eins* schwimme ich. (I swim at one.)
- Um *ein* Uhr schwimme ich. (I swim at one o'clock).
- Ich habe *eine* Tochter. (I have one daughter.)

## Noun gender

As mentioned in the last skill, gender works differently than in English. English has *natural gender*:

- woman — feminine (she)
- man — masculine (he)
- house — neuter (it)

Some words in German are like this:

- Frau (woman) — feminine (she)
- Mann (man) — masculine (he)

However, **most nouns use grammatical gender**.

Often, it is the noun ending that determines the “gender”:

- Gitarre — feminine (she)
- Computer — masculine (he)
- Mädchen (girl) — neuter (it)

Things (as opposed to living being or ideas) ending in *-e* are almost always feminine (she):

- Rose, Gitarre, Toilette, Lampe, ...

Nouns ending in *-er* are often masculine (he):

- Computer, Videorekorder, ...

Nouns ending in *-chen* are always neuter (it).

There are more patterns like this. You will encounter them later in the course.

However, for many common nouns, the endings got lost over time; so for these, you will need to memorize the gender.

- Tisch, Stuhl — masculine (he)
- Haus, Bett, Sofa, Licht — neuter (it)

## Articles and related words

In English, you have “a(n)” (the indefinite article) and “the” (the definite article), and that’s it.

In German, these can be quite variable, depending on context.

### Feminine and plural forms

Feminine (*she*) nouns use *eine* for “a(n)”:

- Das ist *eine* Lampe! (That is *a* lamp!)

Possessive pronouns (“my, your, ...”) use the same endings:

- Das ist *meine* Lampe! (That is *my* lamp!)
- Das ist *deine* Lampe. (That is *your* lamp.)

There is also the special *kein*, which roughly works like “not a” in English:

- Das ist *keine* Lampe! (That is *not a* lamp!)

For “the”, feminine nouns use “die” in German:

- Wer ist *die* Frau? (Who is *the* woman?)
- *Die* Rose ist hier. (*The* rose is here.)

Plural endings often look like feminine forms:

- *Die* Rosen sind hier. (*The* roses are here.)
- Das sind *meine* Rosen! (Those are *my* roses!)
- Das sind *keine* Sofas! (Those are *not* sofas!)

Of course, as for English “a(n)”, there is no plural for *eine*; it means “one”!

### Non-feminine forms

The other two genders share the same indefinite article (“a(n)”): they use *ein*.

Again, possessive pronouns (“my, your, ...”) and some other words will use the same form.

- Das ist *ein* Computer. (That is *a* computer.)
- Das ist *mein* Computer! (That is *my* computer!)
- Hier ist *dein* Bett. (Here is *your* bed.)
- Das ist *kein* Sofa! (That is *not a* sofa!)

All genders are the same in plural:

- Hier sind *die* Rosen. (Here are *the* roses.)
- Hier sind *die* Sofas. (Here are *the* sofas.)

### Article overview

Here is a quick overview of the forms you will practice in this and the next skills:

English	fem.	plural	not fem.
a(n)	eine	—	ein
my	meine	meine	mein
your	deine	deine	dein
no	keine	keine	kein



## Plurals

As mentioned in the last skill, German plurals are rather irregular. Here are some forms you will encounter in this skill:

singular	plural
eine Lampe	Lampen
eine Tochter	Töchter
ein Bett	Betten
ein Sofa	Sofas
ein Stuhl	Stühle
ein Computer	Computer

As you can see, sometimes it's simple:

- All nouns with an *-e* ending will end in *-en* in the plural.

Sometimes the vowel will slightly change (think “foot/feet”).

A few nouns (mostly ending in *-er*) don't change at all in the plural. For these, you need to look at the context (for example the verb form) to know which one is which.

- Das *ist mein* Computer. (This is my computer.)
- Das **sind meine** Computer. (These are my computers.)

Don't worry about memorizing these now. Just relax, explore, and let German work on you for a while :)

## Pronunciation

German pronunciation is pretty straightforward: unlike in English, a letter will normally always be pronounced in the same way.

However, some letters have different sounds than in English. We will remind you of these throughout the course; just try your best to copy what you actually hear for now.

Words from other languages (such as French or English) sometimes sound like the original:

- Computer (sounds like in English)
- Garage (sounds kind of like in French)

## Special characters

By now, you have encountered some letters that don't exist in English:

- ä ö ü — These are vowels that **do not sound like a o u**. They are called “umlauts”. A workaround for people without English keyboard is to write “ae oe ue” instead.

- ß — this is not a B, but rather a **special kind of S**. One name for it is “es-zett”. Swiss people (and people writing on a non-German keyboard) type “ss” instead.

Basics 2 #7 · 2022-03-25 ^

### German plurals are also strange :)

In English, making plurals out of singular nouns is typically as straightforward as adding - (e)s at the end of the word. In German, the transformation is more complex. You will learn details about this in a later lesson.

In some languages (such as French or Spanish), genders are also differentiated in the plural. In German, the **plural form does not depend on what gender** the singular form is.

Regardless of grammatical gender, **all plural nouns take the definite article *die*** (You will later learn how “cases” can modify this). This *does not make them feminine*. The grammatical gender of a word never changes. Like many other words, *die* is simply used for multiple purposes.

Just like in English, there’s **no plural indefinite article**.

English	German
a man	ein Mann
men	Männer

### You, you and you

Most languages use different words to address one person, or several people.

In German, when **addressing a single person, use *du***:

- *Du* bist mein Kind. (*You* are my child.)

If you are talking to **more than one person, use *ihr***:

- *Ihr* seid meine Kinder. (*You* are my children.)

Some English speakers would use “y’all” or “you guys” for this plural form of “you”.

Note that these only work for people you are familiar with (friends, family, ...). For others, you would use the formal “you”, which we teach later in this course. So stay tuned :)

### *Ihr* vs. *er*

If you’re new to German, *ihr* and *er* may sound confusingly similar, but there is actually a difference. *ihr* sounds similar to the English word “ear”, and *er* sounds similar to the English word “air” (imagine a British/RP accent).

Don’t worry if you can’t pick up on the difference at first. You may need some more listening practice before you can tell them apart. Also, try using headphones instead of speakers.

**Learn the pronouns together with the verb endings.** This will greatly reduce the amount of ambiguity.

### Verb conjugation

Here is the complete table for conjugating regular verbs:

Example: *trinken* (to drink)

English person	ending	German example
I	-e	ich trinke
you (singular informal)	-st	du trinkst
he/she/it	-t	er/sie/es trinkt
we	-en	wir trinken
you (plural informal)	-t	ihr trinkt
they	-en	sie trinken

Notice that the first and the third person plural have the same ending.

And here's the complete table for the irregular verb *sein* (to be):

English	German
I am	ich bin
you (singular informal) are	du bist
he/she/it is	er/sie/es ist
we are	wir sind
you (plural informal) are	ihr seid
they are	sie sind

You will learn about the distinction between “formal” and “informal” later (it's easy).

[Common Phrases #4 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

### Common phrases

Commonly used phrases are often *shortened versions of a longer sentence*. Or they might be *leftovers from some old grammar* that has otherwise fallen out of use. That means that their grammar might appear strange.

For now, just learn them like you would learn a long word.

### Wie geht's?

There are many ways to ask someone how they are doing. Take “How are you?,” “How do you do?” and “How is it going?” as examples. In German, the common phrase or idiom uses the verb *gehen* (go): *Wie geht es dir?* (How are you?).

This can be shortened to *Wie geht's?*.

*Willkommen can be a false friend*

In German, *Willkommen* means welcome as in “Welcome to our home”, but it does not mean welcome as in “Thank you - You’re welcome”. The German for the latter is *Gern geschehen* (or just *Gern!*) or *Keine Ursache*.

*Entschuldigung!*

Sometimes, German words can be a mouthful. Later on, you will find that you can take long words apart, and recognize the meaning from their elements.

Here’s an example:

Part	Meaning
ent-	de-
Schuld	guilt
-ig	-y
-gung	noun suffix

So, *Entschuldigung* literally means something like “deguiltification”: “Take the guilt away from me” :)

**Duo**

*Duo* is the name of Duolingo’s mascot (the green owl). He will guide you through this course. If you make him happy, he will make you happy :)

*You #2 · 2019-04-18 ^*

*Sentence structure*

While German sentence structure is often similar to English, there are some differences.

One essential feature is the **sentence bracket**. Like in English, one part of the verb changes with the person:

- Ich *bin*. Du *bist*. (I am. You are.)

This part generally goes into **position 2 of the sentence**.

1	2	...
Ich	bin	hier.
Meine Mutter	ist	in Irland.

The “rest” of the verb **goes to the very end**. In this skill, you will encounter elements that “kind of belong” to the verb. They complement the verb: The verb feels incomplete without them. They are thus called **complement**. These **go to the very end of the sentence**:

1	2	...	end
Meine Mutter	ist	...	in Irland.
Ich	trinke	...	Tee.

By that logic, everything else has to go **between the verb in position 2 and the complement**:

1	2	...	end
Meine Mutter	ist	oft	in Irland.
Ich	trinke	oft	Tee.

This is one of the most common points of confusion for new learners. **Always pay attention to the sentence structure.** Some combinations that are perfectly fine in English are impossible in German.

### Yes/No questions

Compare these two English sentences:

1	2	...	end
You	are		old.
—	Are	you	old?

The first (verb in position 2) is a statement. The second (verb in position 1) is a yes/no question.

German works the same way, for *all* verbs:

1	2	...	end
Du	bist		alt.
—	Bist	du	alt?
Du	trinkst		Kaffee.
—	Trinkst	du	Kaffee?

Note that here, English is *more complicated*, requiring a “do” construct for most verbs:

- Do you drink coffee?

### Verb endings

In English, the verb endings change for the third person singular:

- I sleep. He sleep\_s\_.

In German, more persons have their own ending. For *du* (singular you), this ending will be **the same for all verbs. Whenever you see *du*, the verb will end in -st:**

- Du **bist**. Du **hast**. Du **kommst**.

*Du heißt* looks like an exception, but isn't. The reason is that the strange *ß* character actually represents an S already: There will never be an -s- after a *ß*.

*Me #2 · 2019-04-18 ^*

### *Verb endings*

In the skill *You*, you learned that **du always goes with -st**:

- Du bi\_st\_. (You are.)
- Du sing\_st\_. (You sing.)

In the same way, **ich (I) normally has an -e ending to go with**:

- Ich sing\_e\_. (I sing.)
- Ich lern\_e\_. (I learn.)

This is not completely regular, but works for most verbs. Work on getting the verb endings right, your German will sound a bit weird to native speakers if you don't :)

### *Not*

By now, you have encountered *keine/kein* and *nicht*. These are often confusing for new learners.

Generally, **kein works like ein** (has the same ending changes), and can be thought of as *not a*:

- Das ist *kein* Haus. (This is *not a* house.)

In contrast, *nicht* works like *not*:

- Das ist *nicht* mein Haus. (This is *not* my house.)

There are some situations when it's tricky to say which one is correct, but most often, the following rule helps you out: If you would say **not a or no in English, use kein**. If you only can say **not, use nicht**.

- Das ist *keine* Milch. (This is *no* milk.)
- Das ist *nicht* gut. (This is *not* good.)

Of course, *no* as in *No, I am not sleeping* is *nein* in German.

### *Natural gender*

Remember that in German, gender works different than in English. Many nouns have a certain gender because of what the noun looks like (often an ending). It has nothing to do with actual gender.

However, for people, the gender generally (not always) corresponds to the person's gender. There is normally a male and a female version. The female version often has an *-in* ending:

- Freund — male friend
- Freund\_in\_ — female friend

### How to type the special characters

As mentioned before, German has four letters that do not exist in English:

- the umlauts: ä, ö, ü
- es-zett: ß

Most mobile keyboards provide these when long-pressing a, o, u, and s, respectively.

If you cannot find them, you can always replace these with the following letter combinations:

- ae, oe, ue for the umlauts
- ss for the es-zett

*Origin #2 · 2019-04-18 ^*

### Verb endings

By now, you know all the regular verb endings for singular verbs:

English	Ending	Example
I	-e	ich singe
You (singular)	-st	du singst
She/He	-t	sie/er singt

As in English, “to be” is highly irregular:

English	Form
I	ich bin
You (singular)	du bist
She/He	sie/er ist

Be sure to practice these enough, this will improve your German a lot later on!

### Articles and related words

As you have noticed, articles are not as simple as in English. Among other things, they correspond to the “gender” of a noun. Remember that this gender does normally not refer to the real “gender” of something, it is just one of three noun classes.

English	feminine	plural	masculine
she/they/he	sie	sie	er
the	die	die	der
this	diese	diese	dieser
which	welche	welche	welcher
mine	meine	meine	meiner
yours	deine	deine	deiner

If you want, compare these with the similar endings for “a(n)” and related words:

English	feminine	plural	not feminine
a(n)	eine	—	ein
my	meine	meine	mein
your	deine	deine	dein
not a	keine	keine	kein

*You made a mistake! It should be “die Name”!!*

We mentioned earlier that “words for things” are feminine (die) when they end in -e:

- die Lampe, die Rose, die Gitarre, die Garage

This does not necessarily extend to nouns that are for abstract concepts, people, or animals. Hence, they may not be feminine.

*Junge* (boy) and *Chinese* (Chinese man) are masculine. The reason is simple: They are actually male!

- **Nouns for people with -e ending are often masculine**

For abstract ideas (not things, not people), the genders for -e nouns are all over the place: *Name* is also masculine, while *Ende* (end) is neuter. However, *your best bet is still feminine (die)*!

### *Reporting errors*

Yes, we do make mistakes! If you find one, please report it. Use the “flag” symbol for this. If you only report in the sentence discussions, we (the course maintainers) might not see it.

Also, please **double-check first**. We get literally thousands of reports every day. More than 99% of them do not report actual errors. Course maintenance is done by volunteers, so here you can do your part :)

### *Where does auch go?*

Remember that German has a peculiar, consistent sentence structure:



- The verb that changes with the person goes in position 2.
- The rest of the verb goes to the end.
- Everything else goes in between.

*Auch* goes between the first and the second part of the verb:

1	2	rest	end
Ich	komme	auch	aus Japan.

It can *not* go to the very end, because that would violate German sentence structure.

*sondern* vs. *aber*

Generally, think of *sondern* as **not A, but B instead**:

- Das ist kein Mann, *sondern* eine Frau. (That's not a man; that's a woman.)
- Ich komme nicht aus Japan, *sondern* aus China. (I'm not from Japan; I'm from China.)

In other contexts, use *aber*:

- Ich komme aus China, *aber* ich lebe in Japan. (I'm from China, but I live in Japan.)
- Ich komme nicht aus China, *aber* ich spreche Chinesisch. (I'm not from China, but I speak Chinese.)

*Accusative Case #4 · 2018-10-25 ^*

## German Cases

In English, the words “he” and “I” can be used as subjects (the ones doing the action in a sentence), and they change to “him” and “me” when they are objects (the ones the action is applied to). Here's an example:

Subject	Verb	Object
I	see	him
He	sees	me

This is called a **grammatical case**: the same word changes its form, depending on its relationship to the verb. In English, only pronouns have cases. In German, **most words** other than verbs (such as nouns, pronouns, determiners, adjectives, etc.) **have cases**.

You'll learn more about cases later; for now you just need to understand the difference between the two simplest cases: **nominative and accusative**.

The **subject** of a sentence (the one doing the action) is in the **nominative** case. So when we say *Die Frau spielt*. (The woman plays.), “die Frau” is in the nominative.

The *accusative object* is the thing or person that is directly receiving the action. For example, in *Der Mann sieht den Ball*. (The man sees the ball.), *der Mann* is the (nominative) subject and *den Ball* is the (accusative) object.

For the articles, nominative and accusative are nearly the same. Only the masculine (“der”) forms change:

“a(n)”	masc.	neut.	fem.
Nominative	ein	ein	eine
Accusative	einen	ein	eine

“the”	m.	n.	f.	pl.
Nom.	der	das	die	die
Acc.	den	das	die	die

### Flexible sentence order

The fact that most words in German are affected by the case explains why the **sentence order is more flexible than in English**. For example, you can say *Das Mädchen hat den Apfel*. (The girl has the apple.) or *Den Apfel hat das Mädchen*.. In both cases, *den Apfel* (the apple) is the accusative object, and *das Mädchen* is the subject (always nominative).

However, take note that in German, the **verb always has to be in position 2**. If something other than the subject takes up position 1, the **subject will then move after the verb**.

- Normally, **I drink** water.
- Normalerweise **trinke ich** Wasser.

### Vowel change in some verbs

A few common verbs change the vowel in the **second and third person singular**.

Here is the table for a verb without vowel change:

En. person	person	trinken
I	ich	trinke
you (sg.)	du	trinkst
he/she/it	er/sie/es	trinkt
we	wir	trinken
you (pl.)	ihr	trinkt
they	sie	trinken

And here are three verbs with that vowel change. Notice that in the first two verbs, the 2nd and 3rd person singular seem the same. This is just because the *du* ending *-st* merged with the *-s-* of the verb stem. This is unrelated to the vowel change.

person	lesen	sprechen
ich	lese	spreche

person	lesen	sprechen
du	liest	sprichst
er/sie/es	liest	spricht
wir	lesen	sprechen
ihr	lest	sprecht
sie	lesen	sprechen

Similarly, *essen* turns to *du isst/er isst*.

*Sprechen* (to speak) will be introduced in one of the next lessons.

### *Isst vs. ist*

*Isst* and *ist* sound exactly the same. So do *Es ist ein Apfel.* and *Es isst ein Apfel.* sound the same?

Yes, but you can tell it's *Es ist ein Apfel*: *Es isst ein Apfel* is ungrammatical. The **accusative** of *ein Apfel* is *einen Apfel*. Hence, *It is eating an apple* translates as *Es isst einen Apfel*.

Of course, this only works for *masculine* nouns. Other forms will look the same in nominative and accusative:

- Er isst eine Banane.
- Er ist eine Banane.

Only context will tell you here :)

### *Ich habe Brot*

In English, you can say "I'm having bread" when you really mean that you're eating or about to eat bread. **This does not work in German.** The verb ***haben*** refers to possession only. Hence, the sentence *Ich habe Brot* only translates to *I have bread*, not *I'm having bread*. Of course, the same applies to drinks. *Ich habe Wasser* only translates to *I have water*, not *I'm having water*.

Conjugation is also slightly irregular: two forms lose the *-b-*.

English person	German example
I	ich habe
you (sg.)	du hast
he/she/it	er/sie/es hat
we	wir haben
you (pl.)	ihr habt
they	sie haben

## Polite “you”

Remember that German has two ways of expressing “you” (singular and plural)?

Surprise! There is a third form, usually used with people you don’t know well. German just uses the third person plural for this (they):

person	trinken
du	trinkst
ihr	trinkt
sie/Sie	trinken

How to know whether the meaning is “they” or “you”? German writes the “you” forms in upper case.

- Wo sind sie? (Where are they?)
- Wo sind Sie? (Where are you?)

Of course, at the beginning of the sentence, this does not work. It can then mean both:

- Sie sind da! (They/You are there!)

When using the polite form, you usually combine it with the last name of a person, and *Herr/Frau*:

- Guten Tag, Herr Müller! (Good day, Mr Müller!)
- Willkommen, Frau Schmidt! (Welcome, Mrs Schmidt!)

## Noun endings

As mentioned earlier, sometimes a noun endings gives away the gender:

- -chen (das)
- -er (often *der*)
- -e (often *die*)

A common way to turn a verb into a noun is to add *-ung* to the word stem. These nouns will always be feminine:

- die Wohnung, die Reservierung, die Rechnung

Later on, you will learn more of these regular noun endings.

## Cup of tea

In German, you just add the quantity before the noun:

- eine Tasse Tee (one cup of tea)

- ein Glas Milch (one glass of milk)

### Willkommen

*Willkommen* only means *welcome* as a greeting. It will not mean *you're welcome*.

### Past tense

As in English, you can use the present tense to talk about the present and the future:

- Ich esse! (I am eating!)
- Ich gehe morgen ins Theater. (I go to the theatre tomorrow.)

Also as in English, the past requires a different tense. Here, you learn how to say "I was":

- Ich war gestern im Theater. (I was at the theater yesterday.)

The endings are like those of the modal verbs (*müssen, können, ...*). But the stem never changes:

Person	sein (to be)	können (can)
ich	war	kann
du	warst	kannst
er/sie/es	war	kann
wir	waren	können
ihr	wart	könnt
sie/Sie	waren	können

### I went to Ireland!

Many learners of German struggle with expressing where they went:

- I *went to* Ireland.

Germany is actually simpler here: it just uses *ich war*:

- Ich *war* in Irland.

*Need #6 · 2019-04-18 ^*

### The third gender

Previously, you learned that articles and similar words change according to gender and number. For all words in the following table, *feminine* and *plural* forms are the same.

English	fem. / pl.	masculine
she/they • he	sie	er
the	die	der
this	diese	dieser

English	fem. / pl.	masculine
which	welche	welcher
mine	meine	meiner
yours	deine	deiner

There is one more gender (*neuter*). Here are the corresponding forms, together with *masculine* for comparison:

English	masc.	neuter
he • it	er	es
the	der	das
this	dieser	dieses
which	welcher	welches
mine	meiner	meines
yours	deiner	deines

As you see, generally, *feminine* (and *plural*) ends in *-e*, *masculine* in *-er*, and *neuter* in *-es*.

You actually encountered *neuter* nouns before:

- das Bett, das Wasser, das Kind, das Sofa, das Telefon, das Zimmer, das Haus

You probably didn't notice, because the indefinite articles (*a(n)* in English) are the same for *masculine* and *neuter*:

English	fem.	pl.	masc. / neut.
a(n)	eine	—	ein
no	keine	keine	kein
my	meine	meine	mein
your	deine	deine	dein

So, there are two groups of article-like words. The first group has endings like the definite article (*the*), the second like the indefinite article (*a(n)*). The best way to master these is to practice them a lot!

*Girls are not things!!*

Yes, we agree :) Here's what you are used to from English ("natural gender"):

- the woman — she (*feminine*)
- the man — he (*masculine*)
- the lamp — it (*neuter*)

Remember that in German, a lot of “gender” is actually determined by the word form, not by what it means (“grammatical gender”). Hence, *die Lampe* is *feminine*, because it’s a word for a thing, and ends in *-e*. *Der Computer* is *masculine*, because most nouns ending in *-er* are.

As a general rule, for people, the grammatical gender normally corresponds to the natural gender. For animals and objects, it normally does not.

There are many more of these endings that give away the gender. As mentioned earlier, **-chen words are always neuter**.

- das Mä\_d\_chen\_ (*neuter*)

The ending *-chen* signifies a smaller version of something, similar to *-let* or so in English (*pig/piglet*). *Magd* (*maid*) used to mean *woman* long ago, so *Mädchen* literally means *little woman*.

### Man

The pronoun *man* works like English *one/you*:

- Man kann hier tanzen. (One can dance here.)

As in English, the grammar follows *er* (*he*):

- Man brauch\_t\_ ein Ticket. (One need\_s\_ a ticket.)

Of course, *man* does not imply males only. Think “mankind”, not “that man”.

[Introduction #3 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

### Grammar break!

There is no new grammar in this lesson. If you’re confused, you can review the grammar points from earlier lessons.

[Harness the power of other learners](#)

Or you can check the discussion that’s available for each sentence. You can reach these when tapping or clicking on the speech bubble. Your question might already have been answered there. Otherwise, you can leave a comment yourself.

[Trip #7 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

### Sentence structure, again.

Remember this important rule of German:

- The **verb that changes with the person goes in position 2**

This you already know from English.

- Ich tanze. (I *dance*.)

- Der Mann *kommt* auch aus China. (The man *is* also from China.)

In the examples above, you see that the subject (“I”, “the man”) appears in position 1.

German often puts **things other than subjects in position 1**. But *still* the verb will appear in position 2! The **subject then has to move behind the verb**.

- Ich *schwimme* am Montag oft. (I swim often on Mondays.)
- Am Montag *schwimme* ich oft. (On Monday, I often swim.)

1	2	...	end
Er	tanz	am Freitag.	
Am Freitag	tanz	er.	
Ich	schwimme	am Montag	oft.
Am Montag	schwimme	ich	oft.

### Some slightly irregular verbs

Most verbs only change the ending. There are a few common verbs that change the main vowel too:

Person	drive	see	sleep
ich	fahre	sehe	schlafe
du	fährst	siehst	schläfst
er/sie	fährt	sieht	schläft

Note that the change happens **only for the second and third person** (singular only).

### Gehen means to walk

In English, you can “go to China by plane”.

The German word “gehen” means “to walk” only.

You can’t walk by plane, taxi or bus :)

### More pronouns

#### You saw these before

Earlier, you learned that, just as articles, some pronouns change their endings:

	a(n)	my	your
fem./pl.	eine	meine	deine
masc./neut.	ein	mein	dein

- Meine Mutter ist hier.
- Mein Mann ist hier.



	one	mine	yours
fem./pl.	eine	meine	deine
masc.	einer	meiner	deiner
neut.	eines	meines	deines

- Diese Tasche ist *deine*. (This bag is yours.)
- Die Lampen sind *meine*. (These lamps are mine.)
- Hier ist einer! (Here is one!)
- Welcher Computer ist *meiner*? (Which computer is mine?)
- Das Handy ist *deines*. (That cellphone is yours.)

### New pronouns

In this skill, you encounter two more:

	his/its	her/their
masc./neut.	sein	ihr
fem./pl.	seine	ihre

As you see, for these forms, “his” and “its” look the same. So do “her” and “their”.

- masculine: sein/ihr Partner. (his/her male partner)
- neuter: sein/ihr Handy (his/her cellphone)
- feminine: sein\_e\_/ihr\_e\_ Mutter (his/her mother)
- plural: sein\_e\_/ihr\_e\_ Handys (his/her cellphones)

	his/its	hers/theirs
fem./pl.	seine	ihre
masc.	seiner	ihrer
neut.	seines	ihres

- Der Computer ist *ihrer*. (The computer is hers/theirs.)
- Das Handy ist *seines/ihres*. (The cellphone is his/“its”/hers/theirs.)

### Gender overload?

Some learners find this very confusing. “There are two genders within one pronoun!!”

Don’t overthink this! As an English speaker, you know the difference between “his” and “her”.

English “his” translates to *sein*, plus ending. English “her” translates to *ihr*, plus ending.

The ending is determined just like in the other pronouns:

- mein\_e\_ Mutter, mein Vater (my mother, my father)

We highly recommend just to keep practicing all the pronouns and articles, and then “his/hers” in German will just fall into place!

### *Ideology overload?*

This course teaches current standard German.

Currently, mainstream German has not yet found a way to avoid the genderization that is such a central part of European languages. For example, unlike in English (“their”) or Swedish (“hen”), there is no gender-neutral pronoun for third person singular in German.

While language is often very conservative (unwilling to change), culture is often much more progressive. This course reflects that. If you are offended by the fact that gay people do not only exist, but are finally a normal part of German life, don’t be. We can’t change you, but don’t try to change reality.

*Hobbies #2 · 2022-03-25 ^*

### *Im vs. ins*

For now, think of *im* as “inside”, and “ins” as “into”:

- Ich bin im Theater. (I am inside the theater.)
- Ich gehe ins Theater. (I go into the theater.)

Later on, you will see these are part of a larger pattern.

*Im* is also used for months and seasons:

- Im Juli, im Winter

### *Verb forms: you (plural)*

So far, you learned these verb forms:

	learn	drive	have
infinitive	lernen	fahren	haben
ich	lerne	fahre	habe
du (you sg.)	lernst	fährst	hast
er/sie/es	lernt	fährt	hat
wir	lernen	fahren	haben
sie	lernen	fahren	haben

Here you learn the form for the last person, “you (plural)”.

This form always has a “-t” ending, and the stem of the verb will always be the same as the infinitive. Contrast with the third person singular, where there may be stem changes:

	learn	drive	have
infinitive	lernen	fahren	haben
er/sie/es	lernt	fährt	hat
ihr (you pl.)	lernt	fahrt	habt

## Gern

In English, you can say:

- I like chocolate. I like to swim.

Previously, you learned “mögen” means “to like”:

- Ich mag Schokolade.

However, this can only be used with nouns. For verbs, there is a structure that English does not use. It is therefore often confusing for beginners of German.

- Ich schwimme *gern*.

*Gern* is an adverb, not a verb. Literally, Germans say “I swim likingly.” Here’s a tip: If you know where in the sentence to put “oft” (often), you know where to put “gern”:

- Ich gehe *oft* ins Theater. (I often go to the theater.)
- Ich gehe *gern* ins Theater. (I like to go to the theater.)

*Gern* may be written/spoken as *gerne*, these two forms are exactly the same.

## Questions #4 · 2022-03-25 ^

### Yes/No Questions

Questions can be asked by switching the subject and verb. For instance, “Du verstehst das.” (You understand this) becomes “Verstehst du das?” (Do you understand this?). These kinds of questions will generally just elicit yes/no answers. In English, the main verb “to be” follows the same principle. “I am hungry.” becomes “Am I hungry?”. In German, all verbs follow this principle. There’s no do-support.

### Asking a Question in German With a W-Word

Six W-questions - “Wer” (Who), “Was” (What), “Wo” (Where), “Wann” (When), “Warum” (Why) and “Wie” (How) - can be asked in German to elicit more than yes/no answers. Two of the six adverbs are declineable (i.e. change with the case), whereas four are not.

### Wer (Who)

“Wer” is declinable and needs to adjust to the four cases. The adjustment depends on what the question is targeting.

1. If you ask for the subject of a sentence (i.e. the nominative object), “wer” (who) remains as is: “Wer sitzt da?” (Who is sitting there?).
2. If you ask for the direct (accusative) object in a sentence, “wer” changes to “wen” (who/whom). As a mnemonic, notice how “wen” sounds similar to “den” in “den Apfel.” “Wen siehst du?” (Whom do you see?) - “Ich sehe den Sohn” (I see the son).
3. If you ask for the indirect object, “wer” changes to “wem” (who/to whom) and adjusts to the dative case. You could ask “Wem hast du den Apfel gegeben?” (To whom did you give the apple?) and the answer could be “Dem Mann” (the man). Notice again how the declined form of “wer” (“wem”) sounds like the definite article of all masculine and neuter nouns in the dative case (like “dem Mann” or “dem Kind”).
4. Lastly, asking about ownership (genitive case), changes “wer” to “wessen” (whose). “Wessen Schuhe sind das?” (Whose shoes are these?) - “Das sind die Schuhe des Jungen” (These are the boy’s shoes). And notice once again how “wessen” (of the) and “des” (of the) include a lot of s-sounds.

### Was (What)

Similar to the changes made to “wer,” “was” will decline depending on the four cases.

1. For both the nominative and accusative cases, “was” remains the same. It is common to ask “Wer oder was?” (who or what?), if you want to know more about the nominative object and do not know if it is a person (who) or a thing (what). You ask “Wen oder was?” (who/whom or what?), if you want to know more about the accusative object.
2. “Was” changes to “wessen” for questions about the genitive object as in “Wessen ist sie schuldig?” (What is she guilty of?).
3. For the dative, “was” changes to a compound of “wo(r)” + preposition. For instance, if the verb takes the German preposition “an” (on/about) as in “an etwas denken,” you would ask “Woran denkt er?” (About what is he thinking?). Likewise, “hingehen” is a verb composed of “gehen” + “hin” (go + to) and you would ask “Wohin geht sie?” (To where is she going?).

### Wo (Where)

In German, you can inquire about locations in several ways. “Wo” (where) is the general question word, but if you are asking for a direction in which someone or something is moving, you may use “wohin” (where to). Look at: “Wo ist mein Schuh?” (Where is my shoe?) and “Wohin kommt dieser Wein?” (Where does this wine go?). Furthermore, “Wohin” is separable into “Wo” + “hin.” For example, “Wo ist mein Schuh hin?” (Where did my shoe go?).

Note that the sound of “Wer” is similar to “Where” and that of “Wo” to “Who,” but they must not be confused. In other words: the two German questions words “Wer” (Who) and “Wo” (Where) are false cognates to English. They mean the opposite of what an English speaker would think.

## Wann (When)

“Wann” (when) does not change depending on the case. “Wann” can be used with conjunctions such as “seit” (since) or “bis” (till): “Seit wann haben Sie für Herrn Müller gearbeitet?” (Since when have you been working for Mr. Müller?) and “Bis wann geht der Film?” (Till when does the movie last?).

## Warum (Why)

“Warum” (why) is also not declinable. “Wieso” and “Weshalb” can be used instead of “Warum.” For an example, take “Warum ist das Auto so alt?” = “Wieso ist das Auto so alt?” = “Weshalb ist das Auto so alt?” (Why is that car so old?).

Siblings #7 · 2019-04-18 ^

## Modal verbs

### Modal verbs have simpler endings

In English, some verbs can be used in **combination with an infinitive**:

- He can swim. I must sleep.

German is similar:

- Er kann schwimmen. Ich muss schlafen.

Did you ever notice the -s (as in *he eats*) does not appear in *he can*? In German, too, the **first and third person are the same** for modal verbs:

person	modal verb	full verb
ich	kann	singe
du	kannst	singst
er/sie	kann	singt

## Mögen vs. machen

*Mögen* (to like) is not a normal modal verb. It can only be used with nouns (or pronouns):

- Ich mag Pizza. (I like pizza.)
- Er mag es! (He likes it!)

Its singular forms are:

ich	mag
du	magst
er / sie	mag

*Machen* is a normal verb. It means *to make*.

- Ich *make* Pizza. (I *make* Pizza.)

However, it's also used where English used *to do*

- Das *make* ich nicht! ("I don't *do* that!", literally "That make I not!")

They are easily confused by new learners:

- Ich *make* Pizza! (I make pizza!)
- Ich *mag* Pizza! (I like pizza!)

### To infinity and beyond!

Earlier, you learned an important principle of German sentence structure:

- The subject-related part of the verb ("ich *singe*, du *singst*, ...") will always be in position 2.
- The "rest" of the verb goes to the end of the sentence.
- Everything else will go between these two.

This principle is called "sentence bracket".

1	2	...	end
Ich	singe	nicht	.
Ich	kann	nicht	singen.
Ich	kann	am Montag nicht	singen.

What does this mean for modal verbs?

- The **modal verb goes to position 2.**
- The **infinitive goes to the end of the sentence.**

Many learners find sentence structure hard. Be patient, keep experimenting. At some point, your brain will adapt :)

### Case Alert: *nominative vs. accusative*

#### *Me and You*

In English, the pronouns sometimes change:

- *He* likes *her*. *She* likes *him*.

This is a leftover from a much more detailed ancient "case system".

German uses quite a bit more of this system, as you will see later on. For now, just consider these forms:

nominative	accusative
ich	mich

nominative	accusative
du	dich

*Nominative* and *accusative* are two of these “cases”.

*Nominative* is used for the sentence’s subject.

*Accusative* has several functions. Here it is used as the object of a sentence:

- *Ich mag dich. Du magst mich. (I like you. You like me.)*

Some prepositions also will require the *accusative*:

- *Ist der Tee für mich? (Is the tea for me?)*

### Accusative: Other Forms

There are other words that will change when they are in the *accusative* case. The good news is, this only happens for words that are *masculine* (and of course *singular*).

This means, that as long as a noun (and its associated words, such as pronouns or articles) are not *masculine* and *singular*, ***nominative* and *accusative* will be the same.**

- *Eine Frau hat eine Katze. (A woman has a cat.)*
- *Ein Kind hat ein Fahrrad. (A child has a bike.)*
- *Die Pizza ist für die Frau. (The pizza is for the woman.)*

The change for *masculine singular* is very simple. Just use an *-en* ending everywhere:

- *Ein Mann hat ein\_en\_ Computer. (A man has a computer.)*
- *Ich habe kein\_en\_ Computer. (I have no computer.)*
- *Der Euro ist für d\_en\_ Bus. (The euro is for the bus.)*

Consistently, the pronoun for *he* also gets an *-n* ending:

- *Er mag ihn. (He likes him.)*

*Wer* (who) also changes in *accusative*: it will always be *wen* then (regardless of gender):

- *Wer ist das? (Who is that?)*
- *Wen magst du? (Whom do you like?)*

### Adjective endings

At the end of a sentence, adjectives do not change their endings:

- *Die Pizza ist gut. (The pizza is good.)*
- *Das Eis ist gut. (The ice cream is good.)*

In front of nouns, they will have endings that go with the gender, and with the case. For now, just remember these rules:

For feminine and plural, add *-e*:

- Das ist ein\_e\_ gut\_e\_ Pizza.
- Ich habe zwei klein\_e\_ Brüder. (I have two little brothers.)

For masculine/neuter, also add *-e*, when using *der/das*:

- Der klein\_e\_ Bruder (the little brother)
- Das gut\_e\_ Eis (the good ice cream).

As a language hack, you might use *-e* as the default ending, and learn the exceptions later on.

Here's the first exception: if in masculine accusative (*den/einen*), the adjective also ends in *-en*

- Ich habe ein\_en\_ klein\_en\_ Bruder. (I have a little brother.)
- Ich mag d\_en\_ klein\_en\_ Mann. (I like the little man.)

[Animals 1 #2 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

### Recognizing noun gender

While noun genders might seem random for many words, there are quite a few ways to at least land a likely hit.

For example, many German nouns have some kind of ending, which will always or often come with a particular gender.

- **Non-living objects that end in *-e***: these will almost always be **feminine** (*Schokolade, Erdbeere, Orange, Banane, Suppe, ...*). One of the very few exceptions is *der Käse*. This also works for many, but not all animals (*die Katze, Ente, Spinne, Biene, Fliege, ...*).
- Nouns **beginning with *Ge-*** are often **neuter**. This is the only prefix determining gender. (*das Gemüse, ...*)

There are many more endings like these. You will learn more about them throughout this course.

### *Fressen vs. essen*

Unlike English, German has two similar but different verbs for “to eat”: *essen* and *fressen*. The latter is the standard way of expressing that an animal is eating something. Be careful **not** to use *fressen* to refer to humans – this would be a serious insult. Assuming you care about politeness, we will not accept your solutions if you use *fressen* with human subjects.

The most common way to express that a human being is eating something is the verb *essen*. It is not wrong to use it for animals as well, so we will accept both solutions. But we strongly recommend you accustom yourself to the distinction between *essen* and *fressen*.



Fortunately, both verbs have the same conjugation:

essen	fressen (for animals)
ich esse	ich fresse
du isst	du frisst
er/sie/es isst	er/sie/es frisst
wir essen	wir fressen
ihr esst	ihr fresset
sie essen	sie fressen

[Market #6 · 2022-03-25 ^](#)

### *Jeder*

For English *every*, German uses *jeder*. However, its ending changes like “der, die, das”:

gender, case	the	every
masc. Nom.	der	jeder
neut. Nom/Akk.	das	jedes
fem. Nom./Akk.	die	jede
masc. Akk.	den	jeden
m/n Dativ	dem	jedem
fem. Dativ	der	jeder

Times are in accusative in German:

- Ich gehe *jeden Tag* schwimmen.

[Adjectives: Predicative 1 #2 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

### **Predicate adjectives**

Predicate adjectives, i.e. **adjectives that don't precede a noun, are not inflected.**

- Der Mann ist *groß*.
- Die Männer sind *groß*.
- Die Frau ist *groß*.
- Die Frauen sind *groß*.
- Das Haus ist *groß*.
- Die Häuser sind *groß*.

As you can see, the adjective remains in the base form, regardless of number and gender.

“D’uh”, you say? Keep digging into the German skills tree, and you will soon find the deeper reality of German adjectives :)

## German Negatives - *nicht*

There are different ways to negate expressions in German (much like in English you can use “no” in some cases, and “does not” in others). The German adverb *nicht* (not) is used very often, but sometimes you need to use *kein* (not a). *Kein* will be taught in a later lesson.

Use ***nicht*** in the following situations:

### *Nicht + definite article*

*Nicht* negates a **noun that has a definite article**:

- Das ist **nicht** *der Junge*. (That is not the boy.)

### *Nicht + possessive pronoun*

*Nicht* negates a **noun that has a possessive pronoun**:

- Das ist **nicht** *mein Glas*. (That is not my glass.)

### *Nicht negates a verb*

When negating a verb, use *nicht*.

- Ich *trinke* **nicht**. (I do not drink.)

## Why does the ***nicht*** appear at the end here?

Refer to the section “Position of *nicht*” below to find the answer.

### *Nicht negates an adverb*

*Nicht* appears before an **adverb or adverbial phrase**:

- Ich tanze **nicht** *oft*. (I don’t dance often.)

### *Nicht negates an adjective at the end of a sentence*

When an adjective is part of a verb, also use *nicht*.

- Du bist **nicht** *hungrig*. (You are not hungry.)

The infinitive here is *hungrig sein* (to be hungry).

### *Position of Nicht*

Adverbs end up in different places in different languages. You cannot simply place the German adverb *nicht* where you would put “not” in English.

The general rule is:

***Nicht* appears before the item it negates.**

- Du bist **nicht** hungrig. (not hungry)
- Ich tanze **nicht** oft. (not often)
- Das ist **nicht** mein Glas. (not my glass)
- Das ist **nicht** der Junge. (not the boy)

So, what about *Ich trinke nicht*?

### ♪ The German Sentence Bracket ♪

Consider this English sentence:

- I wake up in China.

The verb would be “wake up”, the infinitive “to wake up”. English keeps its verb elements close together. German, on the other hand, has a peculiar sentence structure:

- Ich wache in China auf.

The infinitive here is *auf/wachen*. German will normally put the last element of the infinitive (the part that changes with the person) in position 2 of the sentence. Everything else will end up at the very end. The rest of the sentence (for example, adverbs), will appear between this “sentence bracket”.

Here’s a longer example:

- Infinitive: *mit Freunden ins Restaurant gehen* (to go to the restaurant with friends)
- Ich *gehe* mit Freunden ins Restaurant.

If you’re confused now, don’t worry :) This will become clearer as you get lots of practice throughout this course.

Why are we telling you this here? This bracket is the reason *nicht* might end up at the end of a sentence.

Consider these examples:

- Ich lerne Deutsch. (I learn German.) — *Deutsch lernen* (to learn German)
- Ich trinke Bier. (I drink beer.) — *Bier trinken* (to drink beer)
- Ich trinke nicht. — *nicht trinken* (“to not drink”)

**This skill contains both negative and positive statements.**

[Complain #2 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

### Verb forms: to be

As mentioned earlier, as in English, “sein” (to be) is highly irregular. Here are the complete verb forms for the present tense:

to be

sein

I	ich	bin
you (sg.)	du	bist
he/she/it	er/sie/es	ist
we	wir	sind
you (pl.)	ihr	seid
they	sie	sind

Note that the first and third person plural are still the same.

### Verb forms: modal verbs

As mentioned earlier, modal verbs have their own rule set.

They often have a different vowel in singular than in plural.

Also, the first and third person singular are the same.

person	can
ich	kann
du	kannst
er/sie/es	kann
wir	können
ihr	könnt
sie	können

As in English, they are usually combined with an infinitive form:

- Ich kann nicht *schwimmen*! (I cannot swim!)

### Imperative: you (plural)

The imperative for plural is easy:

- Ihr trinkt kein Bier. (You drink no beer.)
- Trinkt kein Bier! (Drink no beer!)

As in English, just omit the pronoun.

### Too many *ihr*?

The word *ihr* has several functions in German:

her	ihr Bier (her beer)
their	ihr Bier (their beer)
you (pl.)	ihr trinkt (you guys drink)

Don't worry too much about this, context normally shows you which one is which.

## Finden

*Finden* can just mean “to find”:

- Ich kann mein Handy nicht finden! (I cannot find my mobile phone!)

It is also used to express opinions:

- Ich finde den Film gut. (“I like the movie.”, literally “I find the movie good.”)

Note that the object is in the accusative case.

## Tut mir leid!

Learn *tut mir leid* like one word, the grammar is irregular. It roughly corresponds to English “I am sorry”, meaning that you feel regret or empathy.

*Questions and statements #6 · 2018-10-25 ^*

## Yes/No Questions

When **asking a yes/no question** in English, you would say:

- “**Is** it cold?”, but
- “**Do** you **have** a dog?” or
- “**Does** the man **drink** water?”.

German will not use “do” here. We will **switch subject and verb for all verbs**.

- **Ist** es kalt?
- **Hast** du einen Hund?
- **Trinkt** der Mann Wasser?

*This skill contains both questions and statements.*

*Leisure #2 · 2022-03-25 ^*

## Dative plural: “n” all the way!

Remember that the ending for articles, pronouns and adjectives is *-n* in dative plural:

- mit de\_n\_ alte\_n\_ Autos (with the old cars)

In addition, plural nouns that do not end in *-n* already will also get an *-n*:

- der Freund, die Freunde (the friend, the friends)
- mit meine\_n\_ alte\_n\_ Freunde\_n\_ (with my old friends)

As you can see above, *-s* plural endings break this rule.

## No continuous aspect

Remember that in German, there's no continuous aspect, i.e. there are no separate forms for "I drink" and "I am drinking". There's only one form: *Ich trinke*.

There's no such thing as *Ich bin trinke* or *Ich bin trinken*!

## Verb conjugation

### Conjugating regular verbs

Here again is the complete table for conjugating regular verbs:

Example: *gehen* (to go)

English person	German example
I	ich gehe
you (sg. informal)	du gehst
he/she/it	er/sie/es geht
we	wir gehen
you (pl. informal)	ihr geht
they	sie gehen

Notice that the **1st and the 3rd person plural have the same ending**.

The *-h-* in *gehen* tells you that the *-e-* before it will have a "long" pronunciation. It is not pronounced!

### Vowel change in some verbs

A few common verbs change the vowel in the **second and third person singular**.

Normally the vowel will change:

- from *a* to *ä*
- from *e* to *i(e)*

person	schlafen	sehen
ich	schlafe	sehe
du	schläfst	siehst
er/sie/es	schläft	sieht
wir	schlafen	sehen
ihr	schlaft	seht
sie	schlafen	sehen

Other verbs in this skill are

- fahren (to ride) — du **fährst**
- waschen (to wash) — du **wäschst**

In addition, when a **verb stem ends in -s**, *second and third person singular* forms will look the same:

- lesen (to read) — du **liest**, er **liest**

This is because the -s- from *du ...-st* and the -s from the verb stem merge.

### Wollen and mögen

*Wollen* (to want) and *mögen* (to like) follow a different conjugation system:

English	pronoun	wollen	mögen
I want/like	ich	will	mag
you (sg. inf.)	du	willst	magst
he/she/it	er/sie/es	will	mag
we	wir	wollen	mögen
you (pl. inf.)	ihr	wollt	mögt
they	sie	wollen	mögen

Notice that here, the first and third person are the same (plural **and** singular). The vowel in singular is different from the vowel in plural.

### How do you like things in German?

Use the verb *mögen* to express that you **like something or someone**.

### **Mögen cannot be used for verbs!**

In a later lesson, you will learn to **use the adverb gern(e) to express that you like doing\* something**.

(The similar verb *möchten* can be followed by a verb, but *Ich möchte Fußball spielen* translates as “I *would like to* play soccer”, not “I *like* playing soccer”.)

### *Mögen is used for things, animals, and people:*

- Ich *mag* Bier. (I like beer.)
- Sie *mag* Katzen. (She likes cats.)
- Wir *mögen* dich. (We like you.)
- Ihr *mögt* Bücher. (You like books.)

## Lakes and seas - false friends ahoy!

The German for “the lake” is *der See* (masculine) and the most commonly used word for “the sea” is *das Meer* (neuter).

There’s another slightly less commonly used word for “the sea”: *die See* (feminine).

Be careful not to confuse *der See* (the lake) and *die See* (the sea). Remember that when you learn a noun, you should always learn the gender with it.

singular	(masc.: “lake”)	(fem.: “sea”)
nominative	der See	die See
accusative	den See	die See

The plural forms are identical (only the plural of *der See* is commonly used).

plural	(masc.: “lakes”)	(fem.: “seas”)
nominative	die Seen	die Seen
accusative	die Seen	die Seen

There are not many noun pairs like this in German. Here is the most extreme example, with plural forms:

- *das* Band (die Bänder) - the tape (band)
- *der* Band (die Bände) - the volume/tome
- *die* Band (pronounced as in English) (die Bands) - the music band

## Kaufen vs. einkaufen

*Kaufen* is normally used in the meaning of “to buy”:

- Ich **kaufe** einen Hut.

*Einkaufen* is normally used without an object, and often refers to shopping. It can be used in conjunction with *gehen*:

- Ich *kaufe* im Supermarkt *ein*. (I shop in the supermarket)
- Wann gehst du *einkaufen*? (When do you go shopping?)

*Verkaufen* means “to sell”. The prefix *ver-* is often associated with an “away” notion.

## Laden, Geschäft

A variety of words exist for “shop”. These are two common ones, with roughly exchangeable usage.



### Sehenswürdigkeiten?!

The word *Sehenswürdigkeit* (*sight* as in *sightseeing*) is made up of several meaningful parts: *sehen* + *s* + *würdig* + *keit*.

Let's look at each part and its meaning.

Part	Meaning
sehen	to see
-s-	connecting element
würdig	to be worthy
-keit	noun suffix

Literally *Sehenswürdigkeit* means *something which is worthy to see*.

The connecting element *-s-* is used to link words together.

The ending *-keit* turns an adjective into a noun.

Often the ending of a compound noun is a good indicator for the gender of the noun. For example, if a noun ends in *-keit*, it will always be feminine (die).

### Urlaub vs. Ferien

Just like in English there's "holidays" and "vacation", in German there are *Ferien* and *Urlaub*. They can be used interchangeably to some extent.

*Ferien* only exists as a plural noun:

- Die Ferien sind im Sommer. (The holidays are in summer.)

*Urlaub* only exists as a singular noun:

- Wann ist der Urlaub? (When is the vacation?)

### Visum

In English, you need "a visa". In German, the singular is *das Visum*, *Visa* is the plural (as it is in Latin, the source language of this word).

### Weg vs. weg

*Der Weg* (with a long *-e-*) roughly means "the path".

- Der Weg ist lang. (The path is long.)

The word *weg* (with a short, open *-e-*) roughly means "away". Here are some examples:

- Geh weg! (Go away!)

- Ich bin *weg*! (I'm gone!)

[Classroom #2 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

### Verbs ending in *-ieren*

There is a large number of verbs that end in *-ieren*. These are usually actions. Often, you can just look at the word stem (before *-ieren*) and guess the meaning from English:

- notieren (to note down)
- markieren (to mark)
- telefonieren (to talk on the phone)
- studieren (to study at university)

This group is completely regular: all verbs in this group will behave in the same way. They differ from other verbs in one way: regardless of how long the verb is, the *-ie-* part will always carry the stress:

- Mein Bruder telefoni**iert**. (My brother is talking on the phone.)
- Wir studi**ieren** hier. (We study here.)

### Number one

Remember that numbers don't change endings in German. The single exception is *eins* (one).

When used on its own, say *eins*. In combination with nouns, the *-s* gets lost, and there might be additional ending changes.

- Ich komme um ein\_s\_! (I arrive at one!)
- Ich komme um ein Uhr. (I arrive at one o'clock.)
- Ich habe ein\_e\_ Frage. (I have a/one question.)

[Possessive Pronouns #4 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

### Personal Pronouns in the Nominative Case

A pronoun is a word that represents a noun, like *er* does for *der Mann*. In the nominative case, the personal pronouns are simply the grammatical persons you already know: *ich*, *du*, *er/sie/es*, *wir*, *ihr*, and *sie*.

### Possessive pronouns

German uses possessive pronouns similar to the English ones. For example "my" is *mein* in German, "his" is *sein*, and "her" is *ihr*.

personal pronouns	possessive pronouns
ich	mein
du	dein

personal pronouns	possessive pronouns
er/es	sein
sie (feminine)	ihr
wir	unser
ihr	euer
sie (plural)	ihr

Remember that in German, *eu* sounds like “b\_oy\_”, and the ending *-er* normally roughly sounds like “m\_a\_”.

### Nominative forms

Unlike English, these possessive pronouns change their endings in the same way as the indefinite article *ein*.

- mein Bruder (ein Bruder)
- meine Mutter (eine Mutter)

This is mostly straightforward (just append the correct ending according to the noun). There is a slight irregularity: *euer* does not become *euere*, but *eure* (it loses an internal *-e-*).

The following table has the forms in the nominative case. These are used for subjects, as in

- *Meine Katze* ist super. (My cat is great.)

	der Hund	das Insekt	die Katze	die Hunde
indef. article	ein	ein	eine	(keine)
ich	mein	mein	meine	meine
du	dein	dein	deine	deine
er/es	sein	sein	seine	seine
sie (fem.)	ihr	ihr	ihre	ihre
wir	unser	unser	unsere	unsere
ihr	euer	euer	eure	eure
sie (plural)	ihr	ihr	ihre	ihre

As you might notice, *ihr* has several different functions, so make sure you understand the context it is used in.

### Demonstrative Pronouns

The demonstrative pronouns in English are: **this, that, these, and those**. In German, in Nominative and Accusative, the **demonstrative pronouns are the same as the definite articles**.

That means, *der*, *die* and *das* can also mean “that (one)” or “this (one)” depending on the gender of the respective noun, and “die” (plural) can mean “these” or “those.”

- **Der** ist komisch! (*That one* is strange!)
- Meine Kinder? **Die** sind in England. (My kids? *They/Those* are in England.)

When spoken, the definite articles can serve a similar function:

- **Der** Junge liest eine Zeitung, **der** Junge liest ein Buch.
- *This* boy is reading a newspaper, *that* boy is reading a book.

The articles would be stressed in that case.

[Breakfast #4 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

## Perfect tense

As in English, you cannot use the present tense for the past.

Unlike in English, the perfect tense is almost always used. You do not have to think whether the action is relevant to the present or not. Just use the perfect tense.

- Ich habe Suppe gekocht. (I [have] cooked soup.)

Here you will learn how the regular perfect participle forms work: just add *ge-* in front, and *-t* to the stem.

machen	kochen
gemacht	gekocht

Most of the time, German uses “haben” (have) as a helper verb, just like English:

- Ich habe nichts gemacht! (I have done/did nothing!)

Remember that German sentence structure requires you to put the subject-related part of the verb in position 2, and the rest of the verb to the end:

1	2	...	end
Ich	habe	gestern Suppe	gekocht.
Gestern	habe	ich Suppe	gekocht.

## Adverbs at the beginning of the sentence

Remember that you can put many sentence elements at the sentence beginning:

- Morgen gehe ich ins Theater. (Tomorrow, I go to the theater.)
- Pizza mag ich nicht. (I do not like pizza.)
- Normalerweise trinke ich keine Milch. (Normally, I don't drink milk.)

Don't forget that if you do that, the verb will come second! This means that the subject will then be *after* the verb.

## What comes first?

Generally, German puts the sentence element first that gives the context for the sentence. This is often the part that was stressed in a question before:

- Was machst du *morgen*? (What are you doing tomorrow?)
- *Morgen* gehe ich ins Theater.

Never put the answer to a question in first position.

If in doubt, just start with the subject:

- Ich gehe morgen ins Theater.

## Erst vs. nur

Earlier on you learned that *nur* means *only*:

- Ich habe nur einen Sohn. (I have only one son.)

German also has *erst*, which implies that there might be more coming:

- Ich habe erst einen Sohn. (I have only one son so far.)
- Ich esse erst Suppe. (I eat soup first.)
- Er kommt erst am Montag. (He arrives not before Monday.)

## Nominative Pronouns #2 · 2020-07-30 ^

### Some other pronouns

Some other words can function as pronouns.

The following ones change their endings like definite articles:

	der	das
this/these	dieser	dieses
every	jeder	jedes
some	mancher	manches

die (fem.)	die (pl.)
diese	diese
jede	—
manche	manche

- *Dieser* Junge isst, *dieser* (Junge) trinkt.
- *This* boy eats, *that* (boy/one) drinks.
- *Jedes* Kind mag Pizza. (*Every* kid likes pizza.)

- *Manche* Kinder mögen Käse. (*Some* kids like cheese.)

### *Viel vs. viele*

These roughly correspond to English “much/many”. Use *viel* with uncountable nouns, *viele* with countable ones.

- Ich trinke **viel** Wasser.
- Ich habe **viele** Hunde.

### *Alles oder nichts*

Just like *nicht* (not) has a look-alike *nichts* (nothing), *alle* (all) has *alles* (everything) as a counterpart.

- Ich esse **nicht**. (I do not eat.)
- Ich esse **nichts**. (I eat nothing.)
- Ich esse **alles**. (I eat everything.)
- Ich esse **alle** (Orangen). (I eat all (oranges).)

### *Ein paar vs. ein Paar*

*Ein paar* (lowercase *p*) means “a few”, “some” or “a couple (of)” (only in the sense of **at least two, not exactly two!**).

*Ein Paar* (uppercase *P*) means “a pair (of)” and is only used for things that typically come in pairs of two, e.g. *ein Paar Schuhe* (a pair of shoes).

So this is quite similar to English “a couple” (a pair) vs. “a couple of” (some).

### *etwas vs. manche*

Both *etwas* and *manche* can be translated as “some” in certain contexts, but they don’t have the same meaning.

*etwas* means “some” before an uncountable noun, when the meaning is “a little bit of, a small quantity of”: The following noun is always in the **singular** in this meaning.

- *etwas Wasser* (some water, a bit of water)
- *Hast du etwas Brot?* (do you have some bread / a bit of bread?)

*manche* means “some” in the sense of “certain; some but not others” and almost always stands before a **plural** noun

- *Manche Kinder haben Hunger.* (Some children are hungry [but others are not].)
- *Manche Häuser sind teurer als andere.* (Some houses are more expensive than others.)

## German Negatives

There are different ways to negate expressions in German (much like in English you can use “no” in some cases, and “does not” in others). The German adverb *nicht* (not) is used very often, but sometimes you need to use *kein* (not a).

### Nicht

As mentioned in the lesson “Not”, you should use *nicht* in the following situations:

- Negating a **noun that has a definite article** like *der Junge* (the boy) in *Das ist nicht der Junge*. (That is not the boy).
- Negating a **noun that has a possessive pronoun** like *mein Glas* (my glass) in *Das ist nicht mein Glas*. (That is not my glass).
- Negating **the verb**: *Ich trinke nicht*. (I do not drink.).
- Negating **an adverb or adverbial phrase**. For instance, *Ich tanze nicht oft*. (I do not dance often)
- Negating **an adjective that is used with sein** (to be): *Ich bin nicht hungrig*. (I am not hungry).

For details, and to learn where to put *nicht* in a sentence, refer to the “Not” lesson.

### Kein

Simply put, **kein is composed of k + ein** and placed where the indefinite article would be in a sentence. **If you want to negate ein, use kein.**

Just like *mein* and the other possessive pronouns, **kein changes its ending like ein**.

For instance, look at the positive and negative statement about these two nouns:

- Er ist ein Mann. (He is a man) — Sie ist kein Mann. (She is not a/no man.)
- Ich habe ein\_e\_ Katze. (I have a cat.) — Ich habe kein\_e\_ Katze. (I have no cat.)

Here are the endings of the indefinite article so far:

	masc	neut	fem	plural
nominative	ein	ein	eine	—
accusative	einen	ein	eine	—

Here is the list of the respective *kein* forms:

	masc	neut	fem	plural
nominative	kein	kein	keine	keine
accusative	keinen	kein	keine	keine

*Kein* is also used for **negating nouns that have no article**: *Er hat Brot.* (He has bread.) versus *Er hat kein Brot.* (He has no bread.).

As a general rule:

- If you **can use “not a/no” in English, use *kein*.**
- If you **need to use “not”, use *nicht*.**

### *Nicht vs. Nichts*

*Nicht* is an adverb and is useful for negations. On the other hand, *nichts* (nothing/anything) is a pronoun and its meaning is different from that of *nicht*.

- Ich esse *nicht*. (I do not eat.)
- Ich esse *nichts*. (I eat nothing.)

Using *nicht* simply negates a fact, and is less overarching than *nichts*. For example, *Der Schüler lernt nicht.* (The student does not learn.) is less extreme than *Der Schüler lernt nichts.* (The student does not learn anything.).

### *Keiner, keine, keines*

In German, “nobody” can be expressed in several ways.

As long as it refers to people, *niemand* works just fine:

- Niemand schläft. (Nobody sleeps.)

There is also *keiner*. It changes endings like the definite articles:

	masc.	neut.	fem.	plural
nominative	der	das	die	die
accusative	den	das	die	die

  

	masc.	neut.	fem.	plural
nominative	keiner	keines	keine	keine
accusative	keinen	keines	keine	keine

For now, we teach only the default version (which is *masculine* in German):

- Keiner schläft. (None of them sleeps.)

[Shop #5 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

### **More dative**

In some ways, dative is the “easiest” case.

Articles (and related words) follow a simple ending system:



gender	ending
feminine	-r
not feminine	-m
plural	-n

### Dative pronouns

Let's test this with the whole range of pronouns:

Nom.	Akk.	Dat.
ich	mich	mir
du	dich	dir
er/es	ihn/es	ihm
sie (fem.)	sie	ihr
wir	uns	uns
ihr	euch	euch
sie/Sie	sie/Sie	ihnen

As you see, the same rule applies: feminine (sie) becomes *ihr*, *er/es* become *ihm*, and *sie* (they) becomes *ihnen*.

Note that for (wir/ihr) (we/plural you), the forms for accusative and dative are the same.

### Dative adjectives

Generally, dative adjectives always end in -en, regardless of gender or number.

gender	adjective		English	
f	mit meiner	alten	Katze	with my old cat
m/n	mit meinem	alten	Hund	with my old dog
pl	mit meinen	alten	Freunden	with my old friends

### Dative plural nouns

There is one more thing: in dative plural, not only do the article and the adjective end in -n; even the noun itself will get an extra -n, if it does not have one already:

- der Freund, die Freunde (the friend, the friends)
- mit mein\_en\_ gut\_en\_ Freunde\_n\_ (with my good friends)

Of course, plurals ending in -s do not conform to this rule.

## Contracted prepositions

Now you can understand why some nouns use *zur*, but others *zum*. These are contractions of “zu der” + “zu dem”. Feminine nouns use the former, others the latter.

- Ich fahre *zum* Zoo. (I drive to the zoo) > “der Zoo” (m)
- Ich fahre *zur* Oper. (I drive to the opera) > “die Oper” (f)

German has some other contractions like this. So far you learned these:

- im (in dem)
- ins (in das)

*Places 1 #6 · 2018-10-25 ^*

## Recognizing noun gender

As mentioned before, you can often know the **gender of a noun** by **looking at the word ending**.

- non-living objects that end in *-e*: these will almost always be feminine (*die Lampe, Schokolade, Erdbeere, Orange, Banane, Suppe, Hose, Jacke, Sonne, Straße, Brücke, Schule, ...*)
- nouns beginning with *Ge-* are often neuter. This is the only prefix determining gender. (*das Gebäude, Gemüse, Gesicht, Gesetz, ...*)

In addition, rhyming can often help. If you already know a noun that rhymes with the new one, there's a good chance they will have the same gender. Go for it :)

- der Fisch, der Tisch
- der Raum, der Traum, der Baum
- der Kopf, der Knopf

## Pronunciation of French loanwords

When English uses a word from French, it usually pronounces it according to English sound rules. German will often sound more close to the original.

An example for this is *Restaurant*. Like in French, the last syllable will sound roughly like “raw”. The *-t* will be silent. Some people will pronounce the ending similar to English “rung” instead. Of course, the *R-* will sound like the German *r*, not the English one.

*Languages #3 · 2019-04-18 ^*

## Perfect tense: no *ge-*

Remember that the standard way to create the perfect participle is to add *ge-* to the beginning of the verb stem, and *-t* to the end:

- machen > *ge\_mach\_t*

- kaufen > ge\_kauf\_t

Verbs that do not have the stress on the first syllable do not get a *ge-* in the beginning.

There are two classes of these. First, it includes all verbs ending in *-ieren*, as these are stressed on the *-ie-*:

- markieren > er hat markiert
- telefonieren > er hat telefoniert

The other one you will encounter in the next skill.

Notice that these look like the third person singular, but they are not:

- Er markiert (present tense, third person)
- Ich habe markiert (perfect tense, first person)

*Stuff #2 · 2021-02-15 ^*

### Combining stuff

German is well known for its long words that can be made up on the go by concatenating existing words. In this skill you will learn one very simple and commonly used way of forming compounds: adding *-zeug* (=“stuff”) to existing words.

Remember that the last element determines gender and plural. So all new words in this lesson will be neuter.

OK, because you asked: the longest “real” German word (so far) is:

- Rindfleisch-etikettierungs-überwachungs-aufgaben-übertragungs-gesetz

(Without the hyphens. We had to add those in order to be able to show the whole word...)

It’s a law on how to transfer tasks about the monitoring of the labeling of beef. At least that’s what the word says.

If you enjoyed this, check out “Rhabarberbarbara” on Youtube.

No, words like this don’t normally happen in German :)

### How much stuff?

In English, you can’t count “stuff” – you can’t use the plural “stuffs” or say that “there are three stuffs on the floor”. Instead, “stuff” is a collective noun, referring to a group of things but used in the singular: “there is stuff on the floor”.

Some German *-zeug* words can work like this as well – for example, *Spielzeug* and *Werkzeug* in the singular, without an article, mean “toys” and “tools”, which are plural in English.

Those words can also be used in a countable way: *ein Spielzeug*, *zwei Werkzeuge* “one toy, two tools”. So “the tools” could be either *das Werkzeug* or *die Werkzeuge* – the former would view the tools as a group, the latter would consider them individually.

Look out for whether there is an indefinite article or number before the singular word to see whether it’s used countably or uncountably.

If there’s a possessive word or a definite article before such a noun in the singular, it could be either: *mein Werkzeug ist neu* could mean either “My tool is new” or “My tools are new”, for example; similarly with *das Werkzeug ist neu* which could be either “The tool is new” or “The tools are new”.

(An English word that works similarly is “fruit” – “my fruit” could refer to just one apple, or it could refer to two apples and a banana all together, depending on whether “fruit” is used countably or uncountably.)

Other *-zeug* words are always regular countable words, such as *Flugzeug* “airplane” or *Feuerzeug* “lighter”.

*Holiday #7 · 2019-04-18 ^*

### Perfect tense: no *ge-*

In the Languages skill, you learned that verbs ending in *-ieren* do not get a *ge-* prefix in the perfect tense:

- markieren > er hat markiert
- telefonieren > er hat telefoniert

The reason is that the first syllable of the verb is not stressed.

There is another group of verbs like this. These end in any one of the following unstressed prefixes:

- be-, er-, ver-, zer-, ent-

Note the difference between *kaufen* (“to buy”, first syllable stressed) and *verkaufen* (“to sell”, first syllable not stressed):

- Ich kaufe. Ich habe *ge\_kauf\_t*. (I buy. I bought.)
- Ich verkaufe. Ich habe *ver\_kauf\_t*. (I sell. I sold.)

As in English, perfect participles do not change, regardless of person:

- Ich habe verkauft. Er hat verkauft. Wir haben verkauft.

### Who?

“Who?” has three forms in German, according to case. These have the same endings as the masculine “the”. But of course, they work for all genders, and plural:

Case	who?	the (masc.)	
Nominative	wer	der	I
Accusative	wen	den	II
Dative	wem	dem	III

Note how the number of legs of the last letter neatly align with I, II, III :)

### North, South, ...

Use *Norden, Süden, Osten, Westen* when talking about a place within another place:

- Hamburg ist im Norden von Deutschland. (Hamburg is in the northern part of Germany.)

Use *nördlich, südlich, östlich, westlich* when talking about a place relative to another:

- Dänemark ist nördlich von Deutschland. (Denmark is to the north of Germany.)

### in der Schweiz

Most place names don't have an article (they happen to be neuter, but that's mostly irrelevant):

- Ich bin in Köln. Italien ist schön.

When talking about a direction, these use *nach*:

- Ich fahre nach Köln. (I go to Cologne.)

A few place names do have an article:

- die Türkei, die Schweiz (fem.)
- der Iran, der Irak (masc.)
- die USA, die Philippinen (plural)

You cannot use *nach* with those. Instead, use "in + accusative":

- Ich fahre *in die* USA. Ich fliege *in den* Iran.

When talking about being in a location, you will use the dative versions:

- Ich bin *in der* Schweiz. Ich bin *in den* USA.

You will learn more about this dative/accusative switch in the later skill "Furniture".

[People #5 · 2022-03-25 ^](#)

### N-declension

In general, nouns have two forms, singular and plural:

- der Hund, die Hunde

- die Katze, die Katzen

In dative plural, all nouns that do not already have an *-n* ending get one:

- die Hunde, mit den Hunde\_n\_
- but: die Katzen, mit den Katzen
- the exception are plurals ending in “-s”: die Autos, mit den Autos

In this skill, you encounter a special all-masculine noun group. These will have an *-en* ending in *all forms*, except for the nominative singular (the dictionary form):

- Der Junge ist nett. Ich kenne einen Jung\_en\_.

This group includes:

- almost all masculine nouns that end in *-e* (Junge, Name, Kollege, Türke, ...)
- nouns ending in *-ist*, *-ent* and some other endings
- a small group of other masculine nouns.

Here is an example table for *der Junge* (the boy):

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	der Junge	die Jungen
Accusative	den Jungen	die Jungen
Dative	dem Jungen	den Jungen

### Adjectival nouns

There is one last group of irregular nouns. These are actually adjectives that became nouns, but keep their rich set of adjective endings. As long as you know the adjective endings, these are straightforward to use:

Adjective	Noun
ein deutscher Mann	ein Deutscher
der deutsche Mann	der Deutsche
eine deutsche Frau	eine Deutsche
mit einer deutschen Frau	mit einer Deutschen

Refer to the *Clothes* skill for an overview of the adjective endings.

In this skill, you encounter:

Adjective	Adj. noun (masc. sg.)
deutsch (German)	Deutscher (German)
erwachsen (adult)	Erwachsener (adult)
verwandt (related)	Verwandter (relative)

Adjective	Adj. noun (masc. sg.)
bekannt (known)	Bekannter (acquaintance)

[Accusative Pronouns #2 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

## Pronouns

### [Personal Pronouns in the Accusative Case](#)

Aside from the nominative case, most of the German **pronouns are declined** according to case. Like in English, when the **subject becomes the object, the pronoun changes**. For instance, *ich* changes to *mich* (accusative object) as in *Sie sieht mich*. (She sees me.).

Nominative (subject)	Accusative (object)
ich (I)	mich (me)
du (you singular informal)	dich (you singular informal)
er (he) sie (she) es (it)	ihn (him) sie (her) es (it)
wir (we)	uns (us)
ihr (you plural informal)	euch (you plural informal)
sie (they)	sie (them)

Notice that apart from masculine singular, the **third person forms are the same** in nominative and accusative. The masculine form, which does change, has the same endings as the definite article (*der* becomes *den*).

### [Possessive Pronouns in the Accusative Case](#)

You might remember from the lesson “Personal Pronouns” that German possessive pronouns change their endings like the indefinite article:

- *ein* Hund, *mein* Hund
- *eine* Katze, *meine* Katze

This extends to all cases. You already know that **in the accusative case, only masculine singular changes**:

- **Ein** Hund schläft. Er sieht **einen** Hund.

but:

- **Eine** Katze schläft. Sie sieht **eine** Katze. (no change)

So, if you see *einen*, *meinen*, *unseren* and so forth with a singular noun, you will know two things:

- the noun is masculine
- the noun is in the accusative case (probably the object of the sentence)

Consider this example:

- Meinen Hund mag die Frau nicht.

It is clear here that the dog must be the object (accusative). So actually the woman does not like the dog.

Here is the table of possessive pronouns for the accusative case:

Accusative	der Hund	das Insekt	die Katze	die Hunde
indef. article	einen	ein	eine	(keine)
ich	meinen	mein	meine	meine
du	deinen	dein	deine	deine
er/es	seinen	sein	seine	seine
sie (fem.)	ihren	ihr	ihre	ihre
wir	unseren	unser	unsere	unsere
ihr	euren	euer	eure	eure
sie (plural)	ihren	ihr	ihre	ihre

### Other declining words

#### *Viel vs. viele*

These roughly correspond to English “much/many”. Use *viel* with uncountable nouns, *viele* with countable ones.

- Ich trinke **viel** Wasser.
- Ich habe **viele** Hunde.

*Viele* changes endings like the articles. But because the plural forms are the same for nominative and accusative, for now it will look always the same.

#### *Jeder*

*Jeder* changes endings like definite articles:

- die Frau, jede Frau
- das Mädchen, jedes Mädchen
- der Mann, jeder Mann — den Mann, jeden Mann (accusative)

#### *Household 1 #2 · 2018-10-25 ^*

#### *Möbel*

*Möbel* corresponds to English “furniture”. While “furniture” is singular, *Möbel* is normally only used in the plural.

- Die Möbel sind super! (The furniture is great!)



## German Conjunctions

A conjunction like *wenn* (when) or *und* (and) connects two parts of a sentence together.

### Coordinating conjunctions

**Coordinating conjunctions** form a group of coordinators (like *und* (and), *aber* (but)), which combine two items of equal importance; here, each clause can stand on its own and the word order does not change.

- Ich mag Schokolade. Sie mag Pizza.
- Ich mag Schokolade **und** sie mag Pizza.

Examples: *und, oder, aber, denn*

### Subordinating conjunctions

**Subordinating conjunctions** combine an independent clause with a dependent clause; the dependent clause cannot stand on its own and its word order will be different than if it did. In these **subordinate clauses**, the verb switches from the second position to the last.

- Ich bin gesund. Ich **laufe** oft.
- Ich bin gesund, **weil** ich oft **laufe**.
- Ich spreche gut Deutsch. Ich **lerne** oft Deutsch.
- Ich spreche gut Deutsch, **weil** ich oft Deutsch **lerne**.

Examples: *weil, wenn, dass, obwohl*

### Correlative conjunctions

**Correlative conjunctions** work in pairs to join sentence parts of equal importance. For instance, *entweder...oder* (either...or) is such a pair and can be used like this: *Der Schuh ist entweder blau oder rot.* (This shoe is either blue or red.).

In German, conjunctions do not change with the case (i.e. they are not declinable).

- Du trägst einen Rock. Du trägst eine Hose.
- Du trägst **entweder** einen Rock **oder** eine Hose.
- Du wäschst den Rock. Du trägst eine Hose.
- **Entweder** du wäschst den Rock, **oder** du trägst eine Hose.
- Du wäschst **entweder** den Rock **oder** (du) trägst eine Hose.

Examples: *entweder ... oder, nicht nur ... sondern auch, weder ... noch*

## Sondern

*Sondern* works like “but ... instead” in English. It only takes the element that is different:

- Ich trage *kein Kleid*. Ich trage *eine Hose*.
- Ich trage *kein Kleid*, **sondern** *eine Hose*.
- Sie kommt nicht *aus Deutschland*. Sie kommt *aus China*.
- Sie kommt nicht *aus Deutschland*, **sondern** *aus China*.

School 1 #7 · 2019-04-18 ^

## Adjectives: Plural + article

Here are the nominative adjective endings you’ve learned so far:

gender	article	adjective	noun
fem.	die	alte	Frau
fem.	eine	alte	Frau
masc.	der	alte	Mann
neut.	das	kleine	Kind
pl.	—	alte	Männer

- Die alte Frau und der alte Mann tanzen.

Remember that in accusative, only masculine changes:

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	den	alten	Mann
masc.	einen	alten	Mann

- Ich sehe einen alten Mann.

Also, dative adjectives will always (so far) end in *-en*:

gender	article	adjective	noun
fem.	der	alten	Frau
fem.	einer	alten	Frau
masc./neut.	dem	kleinen	Mann/Kind
masc./neut.	einem	kleinen	Mann/Kind
pl.	den	alten	Männern
pl.	—	alten	Männern

In later skills, you will complete this system.

Here you learn that when you add an article in plural (nominative or accusative), you also have to add an *-n* to the adjective:

article	adjective	noun
—	alte	Hunde
die	alten	Hunde
meine	alten	Hunde
keine	alten	Hunde
welche	alten	Hunde?
diese	alten	Hunde

Note that besides articles, some other article-like words will have the same effect (pronouns, *keine*, *welche*, *diese*).

### A second group of perfect participles

So far, you learned that perfect participles

- end in *-t*
- normally have a *ge-* prefix
- but not when the first syllable is not stressed
- **kaufen**, gekauft
- ver**kaufen**, verkauft
- telefon**ieren**, telefoniert

Most verbs act like this. However, there is an old group of very common verbs, which shows two differences.

Their perfect participles

- end in *-en*
- might have a vowel (or other) change in the verb stem
- fahren > gefahren, schlafen > geschlafen
- schwimmen > geschwommen, fliegen > geflogen

Otherwise, they behave like the other group: if their first syllable is unstressed, they lose the *ge-*:

- vergessen > vergessen (forget)

Thus, these might be confused with infinitives.

- Ich möchte ihn *vergessen*. (I would like to *forget* him.)
- Ich *habe* es *vergessen*. (I *have forgotten* it.)

The latter group is called “strong verbs”, the former (more abundant, regular one) “weak verbs”.

## Wollen

The modal verb *wollen* means “to want”:

- Ich will tanzen! (I want to dance!)

Do not confuse it with the English verb “will”.

As a modal verb, it follows their rules:

- the stem vowel is different in singular and plural
- the first and third person are the same in singular.

person	wollen
ich	will
du	willst
er/sie/es	will
wir	wollen
ihr	wollt
sie/Sie	wollen

[People 1 #7 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

## Leute

In English, you refer to one “person”, but multiple “people”. In German, *Leute* is also only used in the plural. The singular is *eine Person*.

## Ich bin Türke. Ich komme aus Berlin.

Germany has many Turkish people. These are not necessarily from Turkey. Most have had their parents or even their grandparents born in Germany.

[Furniture #5 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

## Location

Earlier, you might have wondered about the following:

- Ich gehe ins Kino. (I go to the cinema.)
- Ich bin im Kino. (I am in the cinema.)

Here’s what’s happening: for a range of prepositions, the accusative case indicates location change, while the dative case indicates the location stays the same:

- in, auf, unter, über, an, neben, vor, hinter, zwischen

In this skill, you'll only encounter sentences without location change. In the next skill, you can practice both.

### Liegen, stehen, ...

English usually uses "to be" to describe position:

- The book is on the table. The bottle is under the chair.

German distinguishes between the following:

German	English
stehen	stand
sitzen	sit
liegen	lie
hängen	hang

Sometimes, these are straightforward:

- Der Mann sitzt auf dem Stuhl. (The man is sitting on the chair.)

Sometimes, you have to consider whether an object is more vertical (standing) or horizontal (lying):

- Das Buch liegt auf dem Tisch. (flat on the table)
- Das Buch steht auf dem Tisch. (upright)

*Do it! #3 · 2019-04-18 ^*

### Location and location change

In the last skill, you saw that when describing a position, the preposition generally takes the dative:

- Ich bin im Kino. Die Katze ist unter dem Tisch.

German has a range of "two-way prepositions":

- in, auf, unter, über, an, neben, vor, hinter, zwischen

These will take the dative when describing a position. But when indicating a location change, they will instead take the accusative!

- Ich gehe ins Kino. (I go to the cinema.)
- Die Katze läuft unter den Tisch. (The cat runs under the table.)

This takes a lot of practice to master!

Some prepositions always go with dative:

- von, zu, aus

And some always go with accusative:

- durch, gegen, um

We recommend you learn the “pure” dative/accusative prepositions first. Then you only have to decide “location change or not?” for those that are not in that list.

### Liegen, legen

There are some verb pairs, where one verb describes a position, while the other indicates a placement:

position	placement
liegen	legen
sitzen	setzen
stehen	stellen
hängen	hängen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Das Buch liegt auf dem Tisch. (The book is on the table.)</li> <li>• Ich lege das Buch auf den Tisch. (I put the book on the table.)</li> </ul>	

The verbs in the first column will use the dative when used with prepositions such as “in, auf, ...”. Those in the second column will instead use the accusative. This was explained above.

The last two verbs in the table look the same, but they have different perfect participles:

position	placement
gelegen	gelegt
gesessen	gesetzt
gestanden	gestellt
gehangen	gehängt

Note that the variants for position have “strong” participles, while the ones for placement have “weak” (regular) ones.

### One more adjective ending

Remember that the adjective ending for “das, der, die, eine” ist -e:

gender	article	adjective	noun
fem.	die	alte	Frau
fem.	eine	alte	Frau
masc.	der	alte	Mann
neut.	das	kleine	Kind

gender	article	adjective	noun
pl.	—	alte	Männer

In this skill, you will encounter the following new ending:

gender	article	adjective	noun
neut.	das	kleine	Kind
neut.	ein	kleines	Kind

The logic here is that either the article or the adjective (but not both!) need to have an -s ending.

Nominative and accusative are the same for neuter, feminine and plural.

You will be able to practice all adjective endings in the later Clothes skill.

### Imperative

Compare the difference between a statement and an order in English:

- You speak English.
- Speak English!

Remember that German has three forms for “you”:

- “du” for a single person
- “ihr” for multiple people
- “Sie” for people (one or more), in polite mode

The imperative form for the latter two are straightforward:

Statement	Order
Ihr kommt in den Garten.	Kommt in den Garten!
Sie kommen in den Garten.	Kommen Sie in den Garten!

For *ihr*, you just remove the pronoun. For *Sie*, you place it after the verb, instead of before it.

For *du*, the main rule goes like this:

Statement	Order
Du kommst in den Garten.	Komm in den Garten!

You omit the pronoun, and the -st ending of the verb.

However, there are some quirks:

- for irregular verbs, take the stem of the *du*-form
- but lose the umlaut, if present

- for verb stems ending in -t/d, the additional -e- remains

Statement	Order	Explanation
Du trinkst.	Trink!	Regular
Du isst.	Iss!	Infinitive is essen
Du fährst.	Fahr!	Remove umlaut
Du arbeitest	Arbeite!	extra e remains

[Questions 2 #2 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

### Yes/No Questions

Questions can be asked by **switching the subject and verb**. For instance,

- *Du verstehst das.* (You understand this.)

becomes

- *Verstehst du das?* (Do you understand this?).

These kinds of questions will generally just elicit yes/no answers. In English, the main verb “to be” follows the same principle. “You are hungry.” becomes “Are you hungry?”.

In German, all verbs follow this principle. **There’s no do-support.**

### Asking a Question in German With a W-Word

There are seven W-questions in German:

English	German
what	was
who	wer
where	wo
when	wann
how	wie
why	warum
which	welcher

Don’t mix up *wer* and *wo*, which are “switched” in English :)

Some of these will change according to case.

### *Was (what)*

If you ask *was* with a preposition, the two normally turn into a new word, according to the following pattern:



English	preposition	wo-
for what	für	wofür
about what	über	worüber
with what	mit	womit

If the preposition starts with a vowel, there will be an extra *-r-* to make it easier to pronounce.

This *wo-* prefix does **not** mean “where”.

### Wer (who)

*Wer* is declinable and needs to **adjust to the cases**. The adjustment depends on what the question is targeting.

If you ask for the subject of a sentence (i.e. the nominative object), *wer* (who) remains as is:

- *Wer* ist da? (Who is there?).

If you ask for the direct (accusative) object in a sentence, *wer* changes to *wen* (who/whom). As a mnemonic, notice how *wen* rhymes with *den* in *den Apfel*.

- *Wen* siehst du? — Ich sehe *den* Hund.
- (Whom do you see? — I see the dog.)

You will soon learn about the Dative case. You have to use *wem* then. And there is a fourth case in German (Genitive). You would use *wessen* here. This corresponds to English “whose”.

The endings look like the endings of *der* (but don’t change with gender/number):

case	masc.	Form of <i>wer</i>
nominative	der	<i>wer</i>
accusative	den	<i>wen</i>
dative	dem	<i>wem</i>

### Welche(r/s) (which)

*Welche-* words are used to ask about for a specific item out of a group of items, such as “which car is yours?”.

This declines not only for case, but also for gender. The endings are the same as for definite articles:

article	welch*
der	welcher
das	welches
die	welche

article	welch*
die (pl.)	welche
den	welchen

### Wo (where)

In German, you can inquire about locations in several ways.

*Wo* (where) is the general question word, but if you are **asking for a direction** in which someone or something is moving, you may **use \*wohin\*** (where to).

Consider these examples:

- *Wo* ist mein Schuh? (Where is my shoe?)
- *Wohin* gehst du? (Where are you going (to)?)

Furthermore, *wohin* is separable into *wo* + *hin*:

- *Wo* ist mein Schuh *hin*? (Where did my shoe go?)

The same goes for *woher* (where from):

- *Woher* kommst du? (Where are you from)

might become

- *Wo* kommst du *her*?

English	German
where	wo
where to	wohin
where from	woher

### Wann (when)

*Wann* (when) does not change depending on the case. *Wann* can be used with conjunctions such as *seit* (since) or *bis* (till):

- *Seit wann* wartest du? (Since when have you been waiting?)
- *Bis wann* geht der Film? (Till when does the movie last?).

Don't confuse *wann* with *wenn* which you learned in Conjunctions. Both translate to "when" in English, but they have different functions in German.

- *Wann* kommst du? (When are you coming?)
- Ich schlafe nicht, *wenn* ich Musik höre. (I don't sleep when I listen to music)

### Warum (why)

*Warum* (why) is also not declinable. It will never change endings. *Wieso*, *Weshalb*, and *Weswegen* can be used instead of *Warum*. There's no difference in meaning.

Here is an example. All four following sentences mean "Why is the car so old?".

- *Warum* ist das Auto so alt?
- *Wieso* ist das Auto so alt?
- *Weshalb* ist das Auto so alt?
- *Weswegen* ist das Auto so alt?

### Wie viel vs. wie viele

*Wie viel* is used with uncountable or countable nouns (how much/how many), and ***wie viele* is only used with countable nouns** (how many). Some people think that "wie viel" can only be used with uncountable nouns, but that is not true.

- *Wie viel* Milch trinkst du? (How much milk do you drink?)
- *Wie viel(e)* Tiere siehst du? (How many animals do you see?)

### Family 1 #7 · 2018-10-25 ^

#### Informal and formal words for family members

Just like in English, there are informal and formal words for "mother", "father", "grandmother", and "grandfather". Note that in German, the difference between formal and informal is a lot more pronounced than in English. The informal terms are pretty much only used within your own family.

formal	informal
die Mutter (the mother)	die Mama (the mom)
der Vater (the father)	der Papa (the dad)
die Großmutter (the grandmother)	die Oma (the grandma)
der Großvater (the grandfather)	der Opa (the grandpa)

#### Family plurals

You might notice that most members of the close family have their own "system" of plurals:

singular	plural
die Mutter	die Mütter
der Vater	die Väter
der Bruder	die Brüder

singular	plural
die Tochter	die Töchter
die Schwester	die Schwestern

*Schwester* has an extra -n, because it can't change its vowel (e has no umlaut).

### Eltern

*Eltern* (parents) has no singular, unlike in English. We normally refer to *Mutter* or *Vater* then.

If necessary, there is a word *das Elternteil* (literally, "the parents part"). But this is only used in formal settings, for example on forms.

### Alternative words for family members

There are countless alternative words for certain family members. A lot of them are regionalisms or influenced by your own family's heritage. Some of them are ambiguous as well. For instance, some people call their father "papa", and some people call their grandfather "papa".

We can't accept all these terms, and since translations used in the German course for English speakers may also pop up in the English course for German speakers, we don't want to confuse German speakers with these words. Please understand that we're not going to add more alternatives. In your own interest, stick to the ones suggested by Duolingo (see above).

### Food #3 · 2022-03-25 ^

#### The German Preposition am

Most likely, food is being consumed at the table. The German preposition *am* is the contraction of *an* (at/on) and *dem* (the). For example, *The man eats at the table* is *Der Mann isst am (an + dem) Tisch*. Since *an* can translate to both *at* and *on*, *am* can translate to both *at the* and *on the*, depending on the context. For example *an dem Tisch* only translates to *at the table* (context: spatial relationship between things) and *an dem Tag* only translates to *on that day* (context: temporal).

#### The verb haben (to have)

In English, you can say "I'm having bread" when you really mean that you're eating or about to eat bread. **This does not work in German.** The verb ***haben*** refers to possession only. Hence, the sentence *Ich habe Brot* only translates to *I have bread*, not *I'm having bread*. Of course, the same applies to drinks. *Ich habe Wasser* only translates to *I have water*, not *I'm having water*.

### Mittagessen - lunch or dinner?

We're aware that *dinner* is sometimes used synonymously with *lunch*, but for the purpose of this course, we're defining *Frühstück* as *breakfast*, *Mittagessen* as *lunch*, and *dinner* / *supper* as *Abendessen* / *Abendbrot*.

### Compound words

A compound word is a word that consists of two or more words. These are written as one word (no spaces).

The gender of a compound noun is always determined by its last element. This shouldn't be too difficult to remember because the last element is always the most important one. All the previous elements merely describe the last element.

- **die Autobahn** (das Auto + die Bahn)
- **der Orangensaft** (die Orange + der Saft)
- **das Hundefutter** (der Hund + das Futter)

Sometimes, there's a connecting sound (*Fugelaut*) between two elements. For instance, *die Orange* + *der Saft* becomes *der Orangensaft*, *der Hund* + *das Futter* becomes *das Hundefutter*, *die Liebe* + *das Lied* becomes *das Liebeslied*, and *der Tag* + *das Gericht* becomes *das Tagesgericht*.

### Cute like sugar!

The word *süß* means *sweet* when referring to food, and *cute* when referring to living beings.

- Der Zucker ist süß. (The sugar is sweet.)
- Die Katze ist süß. (The cat is cute.)

### Accusative Prepositions #2 · 2018-10-25 ^

#### Prepositions

Prepositions take a noun (or a noun phrase):

- I talk *with a friend from school*.

In German, prepositions will change this noun into one of the cases (but never into nominative).

Here, you learn those that always trigger the accusative case.

Remember that as long as the noun is not masculine singular, the nominative and the accusative will look the same.

- *Der* Hund trinkt *den* Saft. (both are masculine)
- *Die* Katze trinkt *die* Milch. (both are feminine)

### Accusative prepositions

Accusative prepositions *always* trigger the accusative case.

- Nicht **ohne meinen Hund!** (Not without my dog!)
- Die Suppe ist **für den Mann ohne Zähne.** (The soup is for the man without teeth.)

German has these common accusative prepositions: **durch, für, gegen, ohne, um**

### Entlang

*Entlang* is a strange word :) It is commonly used with the accusative case. But then it has to appear **after the noun**.

- Ich gehe *den Fluss entlang*. (I walk along the river.)

It can be used before the noun, but then triggers a different case. This sounds a bit old-fashioned or stilted today. So better use it after the noun.

*Weather 1 #2 · 2019-04-18 ^*

### Werden

The German auxiliary verb *werden* has several functions, depending on grammatical context.

When used with an adjective or noun, it corresponds to English “to get/become”:

- Ich werde müde! (I am getting tired!)
- Er wird Vater. (He is becoming a father.)

The forms of *werden* roughly follow the pattern of strong verbs (essen, fahren, ...):

- the second and third person singular change the vowel
- but the third person singular has an irregular ending

ich	werde
du	wirst
er	wird
wir	werden
ihr	werdet
sie/Sie	werden

*Numbers 1 #2 · 2018-10-25 ^*

### German numbers

You might notice that German numbers look very similar to those in English. The two languages are closely related. So any time you encounter a new word, it's worth checking whether you can find a similar-looking word in English.

At some point, you might realize that there are several more or less consistent changes between English and German. Here are some:

Change	English	German
t > s/z	ten, two	zehn, zwei
gh > ch	eight	acht
v > b	seven	sieben
th > d/t	three	drei
o > ei	one, two	eins, zwei

Generally, the vowels change faster than the consonants. So go for the consonants when looking for related words.

### Zahlen, zahlen, zählen

You learned *bezahlen* (to pay) earlier. There's also the word *zahlen*, which also means to pay. In this lesson, you learn *zählen*, which means "to count". Don't confuse the two.

In addition, you will see *Zahlen*. The upper-case initial tells you this is a noun. It is the plural of *die Zahl* (the number).

[Office #3 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

### Some irregular perfect participles

In this skill, you will encounter the following irregular perfect participles:

Infinitive	Perfect participle
werden	geworden
sein	gewesen

[Clothes #2 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

### Review adjective endings

In this skill, you will encounter all adjective endings for the three main cases: nominative, accusative and dative.

As described in earlier skills, the adjective ending for "das, der, die, eine" ist -e:

gender	article	adjective	noun
fem.	die	alte	Frau
fem.	eine	alte	Frau
masc.	der	alte	Mann
neut.	das	kleine	Kind
pl.	—	alte	Männer

You also learned that for neuter, either the article or the adjective (but not both!) need to have an -s ending:

gender	article	adjective	noun
neut.	das	kleine	Kind
neut.	ein	kleines	Kind

The same logic applies to masculine forms. Either the article or the adjective end in -r:

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	der	alte	Mann
masc.	ein	alter	Mann

Nominative and accusative are the same for neuter, feminine and plural.

For masculine accusative, the articles and the adjective both get -en endings:

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	den	alten	Mann
masc.	einen	alten	Mann

Finally, dative adjectives end in -en, regardless of person.

[Dative Case #5 · 2019-01-11 ^](#)

## The Dative Case

Welcome to the third important case in German :) Later on, there will be a last, less important one.

[Remember the Accusative ?](#)

You already saw that the **accusative case** can be used in different ways.

It can signify the *object of a sentence*:

- Der Hund frisst *den Vogel*. (The dog is eating the bird.)

This is called the **direct object** (or **accusative object**).

It can also be used *in combination with some prepositions*:

- Sie geht *ohne den Hund*. (She walks without the dog.)
- Er hat einen Mantel *ohne Knöpfe*. (He has a coat without buttons.)

[Dative object](#)

The **dative case** also **has a range of different functions**.



In this lesson, you learn to use it with the **indirect object**. This is also called the **dative object**.

The indirect object in a sentence is the **receiver of the direct (accusative) object**.

For example, *Frau* is the indirect (dative) object in

- Das Mädchen gibt *einer Frau* den Apfel. (A girl gives the apple *to a woman*.)

You can think about it as “the other person involved” in a transaction.

- Ich gebe *dem Mann* einen Apfel. (I give *the man* an apple.)
- Sie zeigt *dem Kind* den Hund. (She shows *the child* the dog.)

As a rule the **dative object comes before the accusative object**, if none of these objects is a pronoun (things are a little more complicated if pronouns come into play):

### Dative verbs

The dative is also used for certain dative verbs such as *danken* (to thank) and *antworten* (to answer), or *helfen* (to help):

- Ich danke *dem Kind*. (I thank the child.)
- Ich helfe *der Frau*. (I help the woman.)
- Ich antworte *meinem Bruder*. (I answer my brother.)

These verbs don't have an accusative object.

### Dative articles

Note that the **dative changes all articles for the words**.

For example, *die Katze* is a feminine noun. However, the article in dative will be *der*. This might look like the masculine article. But in the context of a sentence, there will never be any confusion between the two, as long as you know your genders. This is one reason why it's so important to know the gender of a word.

definite articles	Nominative	Accusative	Dative
masculine	der	den	dem
neuter	das	das	dem
feminine	die	die	der
plural	die	die	den
indefinite articles	Nominative	Accusative	Dative
masculine	ein	einen	einem
neuter	ein	ein	einem

indefinite articles	Nominative	Accusative	Dative
feminine	eine	eine	einer
plural	(keine)	(keine)	(keinen)

Notice how **masculine and neuter look the same in Dative** (just like they look the same for Nominative indefinite articles).

This also means that if you see a noun in the Dative, and the article ends in *-r*, it will be a feminine word. Alternatively, if it ends in *-m*, it won't.

It is very much **worth remembering these Dative endings**, because they will pop up in different context, and help you a lot to sort out the grammar. In a way, Dative is the "simplest" case :)

	Dative endings
Masculine/Neuter	-m
Feminine	-r
Plural	-n

### Plural Nouns in Dative

Here's a great rule:

#### Plural Dative: Everything gets an *-n*

(Insert Oprah Winfrey GIF here)

You just saw that articles (also pronouns etc.) get an *-n* ending in dative plural.

Later, you will learn that the German ending system for adjectives is a bit complicated. However, in dative plural, you just **add an *-n***.

It goes so far that even **plural forms of nouns get an extra *-n* in the Dative**.

- Er hat *drei Hunde*. Er spielt *mit drei Hunden*. (He plays with three dogs.)
- Die Computer sind alt. Ich antworte *den Computern*. (I answer the computers.)

There are two "exceptions":

- If the plural already end in *-n*, you're set.
- If the plural ends in *-s*, there's also no change.

### Even more *-n*

**Some masculine nouns add an *-en* or *-n* ending** in the dative and in **all other cases besides the nominative**. For example in the dative, it is *dem Jungen* (the boy).

If you want to look these up, the term for them is "n-Declension".

### Personal Pronouns in the Dative Case

Many words change in the dative case. For the third person pronouns, the following are different from the nominative case: the masculine pronoun is *ihm* (to him), the feminine is *ihr* (to her), the neuter is *ihm* (to it), and the plural is *ihnen* (to them).

Nominative	Accusative	Dative
ich (I)	mich (me)	mir (to me)
du	dich	dir
er / es / sie	ihn / es / sie	ihm / ihm / ihr
wir	uns	uns
ihr	euch	euch
sie	sie	ihnen

Some observations:

- In dative, *mir*, *dir*, *ihr* (to me / you / her) rhyme.
- In the **third person**, the **endings are the same as for the articles**: *-m*, *-r*, *-n*. However, plural dative is "**ihnen**" (not *ihn*, as you might expect).
- In the second person plural, accusative and dative pronouns are the same.

Now you can understand why, when thanking a female person, it is only correct to say *Ich danke ihr* ("I thank her", literally "I give-thank to her") and not *Ich danke sie* (that sounds like "I thank she" would sound to an English speaker).

### Dative verbs

Remember that some verbs have a dative object. This is just a quirk of German. There was a reason for it when these words were created, but it's not easy to understand anymore, after a lot of language change.

In short, you just have to learn these :) There aren't very many.

*Gehören* literally means to "belong to". But don't translate too literally, often a different translation will be more natural.

- Wem gehört das Kleid? ("Whose dress is it?" - Literally, "Whom does the dress belong to?")

### Tall and short people

Tall people are *groß*, not *hoch*, and short people are *klein*, not *kurz*.

This is why German people will often refer to tall people as “big” :)

### Cousin, Cousine

These are French words. While it is possible to write *Cousine* as *Kusine* now, German never found a way to actually spell *Cousin* differently. This is because German originally does not have the French sound at the end. Some people pronounce it like “Kusäng” instead.

### Die Frau kennt seinen Onkel - Why not ihren Onkel?

Both *Die Frau kennt ihren Onkel* and *Die Frau kennt seinen Onkel* are grammatically correct, but they don't have the same meaning.

When you say *Die Frau kennt ihren Onkel*, you're either talking about the woman's own uncle, another female person's uncle, or the uncle of multiple people.

When you say *Die Frau kennt seinen Onkel*, you're talking about another person's uncle, and that person is male. People can know other people's relatives.

### Dative Prepositions #3 · 2018-10-25 ^

#### Dative prepositions

Earlier, you learned that some prepositions always trigger the accusative case.

The most common ones are **durch, für, gegen, ohne, um**.

In the same way, dative prepositions **always** trigger the dative case.

Again, here are the common ones: **aus, bei, gegenüber, mit, nach, seit, von, zu**.

#### Contractions

Some prepositions and articles can be contracted.

preposition + article	contraction
bei + dem	beim
von + dem	vom
vor + das	vors
zu + dem	zum
zu + der	zur

There are some more, which you will learn later.

#### Seit

*Seit* roughly means “since”. However, it works a bit differently.

First, it always denotes something that is **still going on**.

Second, it has **three different ways** of usage.

Consider these examples:

- Ich lerne *seit sechs Jahren* Englisch. (I'm learning English for six years now.)
- Ich lerne *seit 2012* Englisch (I've been learning English since 2012.)
- Ich lerne Englisch, *seit ich denken kann*. (I've been learning English since I can think.)

In the first example, *seit* defines a stretch of time, which reaches into the present.

In the second example, it also defines a stretch of time, reaching into the present. But it defines this stretch of time by its starting point.

*Seit* can also be a subordinating conjunction (check the lesson "Conjunctions"). In these, the verb leaves the second position of the sentence, and ends up at the end. This is why in the last example, *ich kann denken* (I can think) turns into *seit ich denken **kann***.

### *Zu Hause vs. nach Hause*

*Zu Hause* means *at home*, and *nach Hause* means *home (homewards, not at home)*.

The *-e* at the end of *zu Hause* and *nach Hause* is an archaic dative ending, which is no longer used in modern German, but survived in certain fixed expressions.

- Ich bin zu Hause. (I am at home.)
- Ich gehe nach Hause. (I am walking home.)

*Zoo #2 · 2019-04-18 ^*

### *More animal gender*

Again, the gender of a word for an animal does not depend on the animal's actual gender, but on the word.

- der: Bär, Papagei, Tiger, Elefant, Pinguin, Löwe, Affe
- die: Giraffe
- das: Kamel, Zebra

Note that "Löwe, Affe" are masculine. The "die -e" rule is very robust, but only if applied to words describing objects:

- die Lampe, die Tasche, die Jacke, die Schule, ...

### *X-mal*

The German word *mal* translates to *times* quite often:

- drei *mal* drei (three *times* three)
- manch\_*mal*\_ (some\_*times*\_)
- fünf\_*mal*\_ (five *times*)

## Einer ist keiner

Earlier, you learned the various forms of “a(n)” in German:

gender	Nominative	Accusative
der (masc.)	ein	einen
das (neut.)	ein	ein
die (fem.)	eine	eine

These can mean “a(n)” as well as “one”:

- Ich habe einen Hund. (I have a/one dog.)

In the earlier skill “Need” you saw that “my, your, ...” have the same endings:

- Das ist ein\_e\_ Katze. Das ist mein\_e\_ Katze.
- Er hat ein\_en\_ Hund. Er hat mein\_en\_ Hund!

You also learned in “Need” that “mine, yours, ...”, “which” and “this/that” have the same endings as “the” in German:

- Dies\_er\_ Hund ist mein\_er\_. (This dog is mine.)
- Welch\_es\_ Haus ist dein\_es\_? (Which house is yours?)

In English, you can also say:

- I have two dogs. Here is *one*.

Here, it acts more like a pronoun, similar to “mine, yours, ...”.

And just like for “mine, yours, ...”, the endings will then be the same as for “the”:

gender	Nominative	Accusative
der (masc.)	einer	einen
das (neut.)	eines	eines
die (fem.)	eine	eine

Note that all non-bold forms look identical to the forms of “a(n)” that you learned earlier.

Look at these three sentences, all meaning “Here is one!” in English:

gender	sentence	topic
masc.	Hier ist einer!	der Hund
neut.	Hier ist eines!	das Kind
fem.	Hier ist eine!	die Frau

*Keiner* (none, no-one) works the same way:

- Hier ist kein\_er\_! (There is no-one here!)

- Ich brauche Wasser, aber hier ist kein\_es\_! (I need water, but there is none here!)

### Meist-

*Meist-* works similar to English “most”, but there are differences.

- der meiste Wein (most wine)
- die meisten Leute (most people)
- mit den meisten Leuten (with most people)
- German uses the definite article
- The endings change like those of adjectives

### Täglich etc.

Instead of “every month”, German uses “monthly” for all time intervals:

Noun	Adjective
die Sekunde	sekündlich
die Minute	minütlich
die Stunde	stündlich
der Tag	täglich
die Woche	wöchentlich
der Monat	monatlich
das Jahr	jährlich

Mind that all of these have an umlaut change, except for *monatlich*.

### Another dative verb

*Folgen* (to follow) has a dative object only:

- Ich folge dem Hund. (I follow the dog.)

Earlier, you learned some other verbs that only take a dative object:

- helfen: Ich helfe einem Kind. (I help a child.)
- danken: Ich danke meiner Mutter. (I thank my mother.)
- antworten: Antworte mir! (Answer me!)
- glauben: Sie glaubt ihm nicht. (She does not believe him.)

There are not very many of these “dative only” verbs in German.

Park #2 · 2019-04-18 ^

### Animal gender

- die Taube, die Ente, die Fliege, die Wespe, die Biene, die Mücke
- das Eichhörnchen
- der Schwan, der Spatz, der Schmetterling

### Beißen, stechen

*Beißen* (to bite) and *stechen* (to sting) are strong (slightly irregular) verbs:

Person	beißen	stechen
ich	beiße	steche
du	beißt	stichst
er/sie/es	beißt	sticht
wir	beißen	stechen
ihr	beißt	stecht
sie/Sie	beißen	stechen
perf. part.	gebissen	gestochen

Forest #7 · 2019-04-18 ^

### Animal gender

- der Wolf, Fuchs, Käfer, Grashüpfer
- die Eule, Motte, Zecke, Ameise

### Sollen

*Sollen* is a modal verb. Unlike most others, it does not change its vowel.

Here are its present tense forms:

Person	sollen
ich	soll
du	sollst
er/sie/es	soll
wir	sollen
ihr	sollt
sie/Sie	sollen

Sick #2 · 2019-04-18 ^

### Links, rechts

When used as an adjective, the German forms for “left/right” are normal:



- Mein linker Arm (my left arm)

When used as an adverb, they get an extra -s:

- Ich gehe nach link\_s\_. (I go to the left.)
- Der Tisch ist recht\_s\_. (The table is to the right.)

### Body parts

- der Kopf, Arm, Hals, Finger, Rücken, Muskel, Bauch, Fuß, Daumen, Zeh
- das Ohr, Blut, Auge, Herz, Bein, Knie
- die Hand, Schulter, Nase

### Pain

There are two main ways to express pain in German.

First, you can just combine the body part with “Schmerzen” (a plural word meaning “pain”):

- Ich habe starke Kopfschmerzen! (I have a strong headache!)

This works for only some kinds of body parts, though.

Another way is to say “Mein X tut weh.” (Literally, “my X does pain.)

- Mein Kopf *tut* weh. (My head hurts)
- Meine Füße *tun* weh. (My feet hurt.)

### Wegen, gegen

*Gegen* (against) always takes accusative:

- Er läuft *gegen die Wand*. (He runs against the wall.)

*Wegen* usually takes the dative:

- *Wegen meiner Mutter* sind wir hier. (Because of my mother, we are here.)

It can also take the genitive (the fourth, less important case). You will learn about this soon.

[Party #2 · 2022-03-25 ^](#)

### And another adjective ending!

As described in earlier skills, the adjective ending for “das, der, die, eine” ist -e:

gender	article	adjective	noun
fem.	die	alte	Frau
fem.	eine	alte	Frau
masc.	der	alte	Mann

gender	article	adjective	noun
neut.	das	kleine	Kind
pl.	—	alte	Männer

In the last skill, you learned that for neuter, either the article or the adjective (but not both!) need to have an -s ending:

gender	article	adjective	noun
neut.	das	kleine	Kind
neut.	ein	kleines	Kind

The same logic applies to masculine forms. Either the article or the adjective end in -r:

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	der	alte	Mann
masc.	ein	alter	Mann

Nominative and accusative are the same for neuter, feminine and plural.

Keep in mind that for masculine accusative, the articles and the adjective both get -en endings:

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	den	alten	Mann
masc.	einen	alten	Mann

Now you can use all nominative and accusative forms, and also (in general) all dative forms (which so far all end in -en)!

## Ordinal numbers

Ordinals are adjectives, and carry the same endings:

- Ich wohne im fünften Stock. (I live on the fifth floor.)
- Der fünfte Juni ist ein Montag. (June 5th is a Monday.)

The general rule is that from one to nineteen, you add a -t- between number and adjective ending:

2.	zweite
4.	vierte
8.	achte
10.	zehnte
12.	zwölfte
19.	neunzehnte

Starting with twenty, you add *-st-* instead:

20.	zwanzigste
42.	zweiundvierzigste
100.	hundertste
1000.	tausendste

Only three forms are irregular:

1.	erste
3.	dritte
7.	siebte

Note that in German, you just place a dot after a number to indicate it is an ordinal.

### Overview pronouns

By now, you have encountered all the pronouns for all the three main cases:

Nom.	Acc.	Dat.
ich	mich	mir
du	dich	dir
er	ihn	ihm
es	es	ihm
sie	sie	ihr
wir	uns	uns
ihr	euch	euch
sie/Sie	sie/Sie	ihr/Ihr

The next table shows the possessive pronouns. Only two endings are given here:

- no ending (neuter nominative/accusative + masculine nominative)
- *-e* ending (feminine + plural, for both nominative and accusative)

Person	Nom. masc./neut.	Nom./Akk. fem./pl.
ich	mein	meine
du	dein	deine
er/es	sein	seine
sie	ihr	ihre
wir	unser	unsere
ihr	euer	eure
sie/Sie	ihr/Ihr	ihre/Ihre

Note that for *euer*, the last *-e-* of the word stem gets lost when adding an ending.

The complete endings set is the same as for *ein*:

Case + gender	example poss. pronoun
Nom. m/n, Acc n	mein
Acc m	meinen
Nom/Acc f/pl	meine
Dat m/n	meinem
Dat f	meiner
Dat pl	meinen

### Some irregular perfect participles

In this skill, you will encounter the following irregular perfect participles:

Infinitive	Perfect participle
schlafen	geschlafen
essen	gegessen
singen	gesungen
trinken	getrunken
finden	gefunden
helfen	geholfen
gehen	gegangen
verstehen	verstanden

In addition, there is a small group of “mixed” verbs, that change the verb stem, but keep the *-t* ending:

Infinitive	Perfect participle
rennen	gerannt
brennen	gebrannt
müssen	gemusst

[Verbs Imperative #3 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

### Imperative

The imperative mood is used to express commands, just like in English.

There are three different forms, according to the three types of “you” in German.

#### *Du imperative*

The imperative for *du* is very similar to English:

- *Du gehst* nach Hause. (You go home.)

- *Geh* nach Hause! (Go home!)

For most verbs, to come up with the correct verb form, just lose the *-st* ending:

- Du arbeitest nachts. (You work at night)
- Arbeite nachts! (Work at night!)
- Du nimmst das Taxi. (You take the taxi.)
- Nimm das Taxi! (Take the taxi!)

You might have noticed that some common verbs have an extra umlaut in the 2nd/3rd person singular:

- fahren, du fährst
- schlafen, du schläfst

In the imperative, **these do not have an umlaut**:

- Du fährst mit dem Taxi.
- Fahr mit dem Taxi!

#### *Ihr imperative*

The second one is used to address more than one person informally. It uses the same conjugation as the regular *ihr* form of the present tense. This form of the imperative does not include a personal pronoun.

- *Ihr fahrt* nach Paris. (You go to Paris.)
- *Fahrt* nach Paris! (Go to Paris!)

#### *Sie imperative*

The third one is used to address one or more people formally. It uses the same conjugation as the regular *Sie* form of the present tense. The formal imperative is the only form to include the personal pronoun (*Sie*). Note that the word order is reversed. The verb always precedes the pronoun. It essentially looks like a question.

- *Sie lernen* Deutsch. (You learn German.)
- *Lernen Sie* Deutsch! (Learn German!)
- *Lernen Sie* Deutsch? (Do you learn German?)

#### *Imperative for sein*

The verb *sein* (to be) is highly irregular. It even has its own imperative version:

normal	imperative
du bist	sei
ihr seid	seid

normal	imperative
Sie sind	seien Sie

The following sentences all mean “Please be quiet!”:

- *Sei* bitte ruhig! (one friend)
- *Seid* bitte ruhig! (several friends)
- *Seien Sie* bitte ruhig! (some person in the cinema)

### Nehmen, du nimmst??

As mentioned before, a small number of common verbs changes the vowel in the second + third person singular.

The change will normally be from *a* to *ä* or from *e* to *i(e)*.

	nehmen	geben	essen	lesen	lassen
ich	nehme	gebe	esse	lese	lasse
du	nimmst	gibst	isst	liest	lässt
er/sie/es	nimmt	gibt	isst	liest	lässt
wir	nehmen	geben	essen	lesen	lassen
ihr	nehmt	gebt	esst	lest	lasst
sie/Sie	nehmen	geben	essen	lesen	lassen

Form #2 · 2019-04-18 ^

### Form

In this skill, you learn the basics necessary to fill in a form.

*Ledig* means you have never been married.

### Heiraten vs. verheiratet

In earlier times, parents would decide who to marry. They would literally “marry off” their children. This is what “verheiraten” refers to. We don’t do that anymore, but we still use its perfect participle as an adjective/adverb:

- Ich bin verheiratet. (I am married.)
- der verheiratete Mann (the married man)

On the other hand, “heiraten” means “to marry”:

- Ich möchte ihn heiraten. (I want to marry him.)
- Ich habe geheiratet. (I have married.)

These often get confused, because English uses the same word for both.

## Student or Schüler?

**Ein Student is a university student** and a *Schüler* is a pupil/student at a primary, secondary or high school. Students attending other types of schools such as language or dancing schools may also be called *Schüler*.

## Dropping articles

When talking about your or someone else's profession in sentences such as *I'm a teacher* or *She's a judge*, German speakers **usually drop the indefinite article** (*ein/eine*).

- Ich bin Lehrer. (I am **a** teacher.)

It sounds more natural to say *Ich bin Lehrer* and *Sie ist Richterin* than *Ich bin ein Lehrer* and *Sie ist eine Richterin*. This rule also applies to students.

If you **add an adjective**, you **can't drop the article**. *Er ist ein schlechter Arzt* (He's a bad doctor) is correct, but *Er ist schlechter Arzt* is not.

Also note that **you can't drop the definite article** (*der/die/das*).

## Male and female variants

The grammatical gender usually matches the biological sex of the person you're referring to.

So the word that refers to a male baker is grammatically masculine, and the word that refers to a female baker is grammatically feminine.

In the vast majority of cases, **the female variant is formed by simply adding the suffix -in to the male variant**, e.g. *der Bäcker* becomes *die Bäckerin* and *der Schüler* (the pupil) becomes *die Schülerin*.

**The plural of the female variant is formed by adding the ending -innen** to the singular of the male variant, e.g. *die Bäckerinnen* and *die Schülerinnen*.

Keep in mind that, in some cases, the plural comes with an umlauted stem vowel. This applies to the female variant as well.

	singular	plural
male	der Koch	die Köche
female	die Köchin	die Köchinnen

You learn one more word like this in this lesson:

- der Arzt, die Ärztin (the doctor)

### *Sie ist der Boss!*

There are a few words for people where the grammatical and the natural gender differ. One of them is *der Boss*. There is no feminine version for it, although there are certainly female bosses.

- **Mein** Boss heißt Linda Ackermann.
- **Meine** Chefin heißt Linda Ackermann.

*Living #7 · 2019-04-18 ^*

### *Mieter, Vermieter*

The prefix *ver-* often means “away”:

- kaufen, verkaufen (buy, sell)
- verlieren (to lose), vergessen (to forget)

*Mieten* means “to rent” (you pay), while *vermieten* indicates you rent out (you get the rent).

### *High, higher*

*Hoch* is one of the few irregular adjectives in German:

- Das Haus ist *hoch*.
- Mein Haus ist *höher*.
- Sein Haus ist *am höchsten*.

Also, *hoch* will change when it gets an ending:

- Diese Stadt hat *hohe* Häuser.

*Prepositions #2 · 2018-10-25 ^*

### *Prepositions*

#### *Accusative prepositions*

Accusative prepositions **always** trigger the accusative case.

Here are the most common ones: **durch, für, gegen, ohne, um**

#### *Dative prepositions*

Dative prepositions **always** trigger the dative case.

Here are the most common ones: **aus, außer, bei, gegenüber, mit, nach, seit, von, zu**

#### *Two-way prepositions*

**Two-way prepositions** take the **dative case or the accusative case**, depending on the context.



This is an unusual, but central part of German grammar.

If there's **movement from one place to another**, use the **accusative** case.

- Die Katze geht *in die Küche*. (The cat walks into the kitchen.)

If there's **no movement**, or if there's **movement within a certain place**, use the **dative** case.

- Die Katze schläft *in der Küche*. (The cat sleeps in the kitchen.)
- Die Katze geht *in der Küche*. (The cat walks within the kitchen.)

These prepositions can switch case: **an, auf, hinter, in, neben, über, unter, vor, zwischen**

*When not to think about location change*

Two-way prepositions are very common in everyday speech, so it's a good idea to practice them to fluency.

However, don't forget that **for some prepositions, you don't have to decide**:

*Durch* and *um* will always be accusative, although they might signify an activity without location change:

- Das Kind rennt *durch den* Wald. (The child is running through the forest.)
- Die Stühle stehen *um den* Tisch. (The chairs are standing around the table.)

*Aus, von, zu* will always be dative, although they might signify a location change.

- Er kommt *aus der* Küche. (He comes out of the kitchen.)
- Ich fahre *zur* Arbeit. (I go to work.)
- Ich komme *von der* Arbeit. (I come from work.)

*Other uses for two-way prepositions*

Some verbs use one of these prepositions in a way that is *not about location*. This is part of language change, where things get repurposed all the time.

*Über* will always trigger the accusative case:

- Sie diskutieren *über den* Krieg. (They discuss the war.)

When used with these verbs, *vor* will always trigger the Dative:

- Er warnt *vor dem* Hund. (He warns about the dog.)

*An, in* and *auf* are more complicated: in some verbs, they trigger the accusative, in others the dative. You'll just have to memorize these.

- Er denkt *an seinen* Bruder. (He thinks of his brother.)
- Er arbeitet *an einem* Film. (He's working on a film.)

- Ich *warte auf den* Bus. (I'm waiting for the bus.)
- Der Film *basiert auf meinem* Leben. (The film is based on my life.)

### Contractions

Some prepositions and articles can be contracted.

an + das	ans
an + dem	am
auf + das	aufs
bei + dem	beim
in + das	ins
in + dem	im
hinter + das	hinters
über + das	übers
um + das	ums
unter + das	unters
von + dem	vom
vor + das	vors
zu + dem	zum
zu + der	zur

- Wir gehen *ins* Kino (We go to the cinema.)

If you would use “that” in English, you would not use a contraction:

- In *das* Kino gehe ich nicht! (I won't go into *that* cinema!)

### Preposition at the end of a sentence??

An important part of German grammar is that some verbs can split off their prefix. This often ends up at the end of a sentence. Some of these prefixes look exactly like a preposition.

So when you see a “preposition” at the end of a sentence, try to combine it with the verb. You might just have learned a new word :)

- Sie *macht* die Lampe *an*. (*anmachen* means “turn on” here)
- Ich *denke nach*. (*nachdenken* means “to think”)
- *Pass* auf dich *auf*! (*aufpassen* means “to take care”)
- Wann *fährt* der Zug *ab*? (*abfahren* means “to depart”)
- *Nimm* deinen Hut *ab*! (*abnehmen* means “to take off” in this context)

Unfortunately, the way Duolingo is built does not allow to selectively teach German sentence structure. We hope this will change soon :)

### **Zu Hause vs. nach Hause**

*Zu Hause* means *at home*, and *nach Hause* means *home* (*homewards*, not *at home*). The *-e* at the end of *zu Hause* and *nach Hause* is an archaic dative ending, which is no longer used in modern German, but survives in certain fixed expressions.

- Ich bin *zu Hause*. (I am *at home*.)
- Ich gehe *nach Hause*. (I am walking *home*.)

*Job #2 · 2019-04-18 ^*

### **Auf Wiederhören**

*Auf Wiedersehen* is a rather formal way of saying “goodbye”:

- Auf Wiedersehen, Frau Müller!

However, it literally means “see you again”, so it cannot be used over the phone. Instead, German uses *auf Wiederhören* (hear you again):

- Auf Wiederhören, Herr Müller!

### **Information**

Unlike in English, *Information* can be singular or plural:

- Die *Information* war richtig.
- Die *Informationen* sind interessant.

*Journey #5 · 2019-04-18 ^*

### **Gleis, Bahnsteig**

Both *das Gleis* and *der Bahnsteig* are used for English “station platform”. *Gleis* can also be the rail tracks themselves.

### **Visa**

English uses “visa” (from a Latin adjective) for the singular. German uses the singular *Visum* for one visa, and the plural *Visa* (or alternatively *Visen*) for several visas. Due to globalization, this is currently in flux, with many Germans using the English “ein Visa, zwei Visas”.

*Comparisons #3 · 2018-10-25 ^*

### **German is simpler than English! (sometimes)**

In English, there are two systems for making comparisons:

- She is *older* than him.
- Icelandic is *more complicated* than German.

German only uses the first system:

- Sie ist *älter* als er.
- Isländisch ist *komplizierter* als Deutsch.

This is pretty straightforward. However, quite often, the vowel of short adjectives will **get an umlaut change**:

normal	comparative	superlative
alt (old)	älter	am ältesten
groß (big)	größer	am größten
oft (often)	öfter	am öftesten

You might notice that there will be an extra *e* in the superlative, if the word stem ends in *t* (or *d*). This is a general sound rule, just like in *ich arbeite, er arbeitet*.

In addition, in some adjectives an *e* gets lost:

- teuer, **teurer** (not *teuerer*), am teuersten

Again, this is a general sound rule. You might have noticed it for *euer* (plural *your*), which becomes *eure*, not *euere* when it gets an ending.

There is a small number of irregular forms:

normal	comparative	superlative
gut (good)	besser	am besten
viel (much)	mehr	am meisten
gern (to like)	lieber	am liebsten
hoch (high)	höher	am höchsten

*Comparative adjectives are just adjectives*

Consider these examples:

- Sie hat eine schöne Uhr.
- Sie hat eine schönere Uhr (als ich).

As you can see, comparative adjectives get adjective endings, just like any “normal” adjective.

This can sometimes look a bit confusing:

- Er ist mein junger Bruder. (He’s my little brother.)
- Er ist mein jüngerer Bruder. (He’s my younger brother.)

In the second example, the first *-er* is for the comparative, the second *-er* is the ending from *der Bruder*.

If you find that really confusing, why not practice adjective endings a bit? :) You can do so in the earlier lesson “Colors”.

[Learning #2 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

### *Lang vs. lange*

Just as *gern(e)* and *allein(e)*, when used as an adverb, *lange* can omit the *-e*, without any change in meaning:

- Ich schlafe morgen *lang(e)*. (I sleep long tomorrow.)

### *Wissen vs. kennen*

*Wissen* is not a modal verb, but its forms resemble one:

Person	wissen
ich	weiß
du	weißt
er/sie/es	weiß
wir	wissen
ihr	wisst
sie/Sie	wissen

English speakers often confuse *wissen* with *kennen*, because both translate to “to know”:

- Ich weiß nichts! (I know nothing!)
- Ich kenne ihn. (I know him.)

*Kennen* is generally used to express familiarity: you know it exists, or how it is.

*Wissen* is generally used for facts. It often is used together with verbs (you will learn that later on in this course).

[Tourist #7 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

### *Polizei, Türkei*

Nouns ending *-ei* are

- stressed on the last syllable
- generally feminine: die Polizei, die Türkei

Place names ending in *-ei* will thus have an article:

- die Türkei, die Slowakei

## Er gefällt mir

The use of *gefallen* is unusual:

- Der Song gefällt mir. (I like the song)

Here, what is liked is the subject (the song), while the person liking it is the dative object. Think “The song is pleasurable to me.”

This is mostly used for outward appearance, or style.

Household 2 #2 · 2018-10-25 ^

## Das Handtuch (the towel) vs. das Tuch (the cloth)

A *Handtuch* is a towel, not a hand towel. Of course, a towel can be a hand towel, but this does not mean that the two words are interchangeable. A pet can be a dog, but this does not mean that the words “pet” and “dog” are interchangeable.

Food 2 #9 · 2022-03-25 ^

## Küche vs. Kuchen

*Die Küche* (the kitchen) and *der Kuchen* (the cake) are often confused by learners. To German ears, they sound quite different. One reason is that in *Küche*, the vowel is short, while the vowel in *Kuchen* is long.

singular	plural
die Küche	die Küchen
der Kuchen	die Kuchen

*Kochen* (to cook) also has a short vowel.

## Schmecken

*Schmecken* is very similar to the English word “to taste”:

- Ich schmecke Knoblauch! (I taste garlic!)
- Knoblauch schmeckt super! (Garlic tastes great!)

In addition, *schmecken* can be used by itself:

- Die Pizza schmeckt nicht! (The pizza does not taste *good*!)

## Some popular food

### Müsli

*Müsli* originally refers to “Bircher Muesli”, a Swiss breakfast dish, based on rolled oats and fresh or dried fruits.

Nowadays, people will use it for all kinds of cereals or granola, often with high sugar content.

### Hähnchen

*Hähnchen* usually refers to a chicken that has been turned into a dish. While derived from the word for “male chicken” (*der Hahn*), the only distinction today is that it is a food item.

Remember that words ending in *-chen* are always neuter: *das Hähnchen*.

### Salat

*Salat* can refer to the dish, as well as to the green leaves (usually lettuce) that often go into it.

Health #3 · 2019-04-18 ^

### Lebensmittel

*Das Lebensmittel* (though normally used in plural) refers to anything that can be eaten or drunk.

### Pommes frites

The French word for French fries (which are actually from Belgium) is “pommes frites” (literally “fried apple” - don’t ask :). German took this, and pronounces it the French way (without the *-es*). However, in common language, it got shortened to either “Pommes” or “Fritten”, which are pronounced like regular German words.

A short word on the audio that goes with the sentences: these are recordings of a computer voice, and sometimes off. Please report any errors! But experience shows that it can take a long time for these to get corrected (there’s nothing we, the course creators, can do about it).

### Scheibe

*Die Scheibe* (slice) is mostly used for bread, cheese and sausage, but also for window panes. Otherwise, use *das Stück* (piece):

- eine Scheibe Käse (a slice of cheese)
- ein Stück Fleisch (a piece of meat)

### Reflexive verbs

Many European languages use so-called “reflexive verbs”. Think of “I see myself in the mirror”. In the same way, German would say:

- Ich interessiere mich für Musik. (I interest myself in music.)

We teach these in more depth later on, but here is a list of pronouns that are used for them here:

Nom.	Acc.	Acc. reflexive
ich	mich	mich
du	dich	dich
er	ihn	sich
es	es	sich
sie	sie	sich
wir	uns	uns
ihr	euch	euch
sie/Sie	sie/Sie	sich

Notice how they are the same as the normal accusative pronouns, with one difference: All third persons will just use *sich*.

- Er wäscht sich. (He washes himself.)
- Er wäscht ihn. (He washes him.)

The reflexive verbs taught here are:

- sich kümmern um (to take care of)
- sich freuen auf (to look forward to)

Reflexive verbs should generally be learned together with the preposition they use.

### *Denn*

One way to say “because” in German is *denn*:

- Ich möchte schlafen, denn ich bin müde. (I want to sleep, because I am tired.)

This is straightforward. However, German more commonly uses *weil* instead, which you will learn soon. *Weil* is harder to use, because it changes the position of the verb. But if you always use *denn*, your German will sound slightly stiff.

### *Krankheit, Gesundheit*

A common way to create nouns from adjectives is to add *-heit* or *-keit* to them. These will always be feminine.

- krank, die Krank\_heit\_ (ill, the illness)
- gesund, die Gesund\_heit\_ (healthy, the health)

*Sports 1 #5 · 2019-04-18 ^*

### *Schon wieder*

*Wieder* means *again*:

- Ich bin wieder da! (I am there again!)



German often uses *schon wieder* instead, to stress that something happened “again and again”, or that it already happened again.

- Was, du bist schon wieder da? (What, you are there AGAIN?, or “What, you are already back?”)

## **Erlauben**

*Erlauben* means “to allow”. It takes the dative:

- Ich erlaube es *ihm*. (Literally, I allow it to him.)

*Celebrate #3 · 2019-04-18 ^*

## **A1!**

It’s time for a little celebration: you have now covered all the material for the A1 level of German! That means you have encountered all the words and grammatical structures for the Beginner level.

According to the CEFR standard, there are six levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2). Duolingo aims to teach up to B1, where you can deal with most simple situations in daily life.

Of course, just by arriving at this point does not mean you have now mastered all the material! Go back to the previous skills, try to level up, check the Tips & Notes again.

Also, try to find other ways to practice German. You could find a language exchange; or you could find material online or in your library.

## **The rest of the course**

The remaining course does not conform to CEFR so far. We are working on it though!

## **We want your feedback!**

Please be sure to leave feedback in the forum, and in the sentence discussions, so we can continue to improve this course.

*Adjectives: Predicative 3 #2 · 2019-01-21 ^*

## **Common adjective endings**

*-ig, -lich, -isch*

Here are three common endings, which sound very similar:

- *-ig* (roughly like *-y* in English): eindeutig, abhängig, ...
- *-lich* (roughly *-ly* in English): nützlich, möglich, persönlich, ...
- *-isch* (roughly *-ic(al)* in English): praktisch, logisch, ...

The first two sound the same in regular speech (in some dialects, all three sound the same). You already encountered this with the numbers (*zwanz\_ig\_*).

When you add an ending to the *-ig* adjectives, it will no longer sound like *ch*:

- eindeuti\_g\_: die eindeuti\_ge\_ ... (now sounds like *g*)
- mögli\_ch\_: der mögli\_che\_ ... (still sounds like *ch*)

### *-bar*

*-bar* often corresponds to “-(a)ble” in English:

- sicht\_bar\_ (visi\_ble\_)
- verfüg\_bar\_ (avail\_able\_)

Yes, there are lots of bars with joke adjective names in Germany :)

### *-los, -voll*

These correspond to English “-less” and “-ful”.

- hoffnungs\_voll\_ (hope\_ful\_)
- hoffnungs\_lo\_ (hope\_less\_)

### *-tion*

In English, the “-tion” ending is pronounced “-shen”. In German, it always becomes “-tsion”. It will always be the emphasized syllable, and the word will always be feminine.

- Kommunika\_tion\_, Lek\_tion\_, Na\_tion\_

Similarly, *der Patient* will sound like “der Patsient”.

When nouns ending in *-tion* are used in an adjective, the ending *-al* (or *-ell*) will be used. The resulting adjective will be pronounced on the last syllable:

- internation\_al\_, ration\_al\_, kommun\_al\_, sensation\_ell\_, ...

[Verbs: Present 2 #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### *Wissen vs. kennen*

*Wissen* and *kennen* both translate to “to know” in English. *Können* (to be able to) can also mean “to know” in certain contexts.

- Ich *weiß* (es) nicht. (I don’t know.)
- Ich *kenne* ihn nicht. (I don’t know him.)
- Ich *kann* ein bisschen Polnisch. (I know a bit of Polish.)

So how to know which one to use?

### *Kennen*

*Kennen* is used when talking about people, places and the like. It means that you are aware of its existence. *Kennen* needs an object.

- Ich *kenne* diesen Mann nicht! (I don't know this man!)

### Wissen

*Wissen* is used for knowledge about something. It usually does not have an object. Commonly, it is used with a subordinate clause ("Nebensatz"):

- Ich *weiß*, wer du bist! (I know who you are.)
- Ich *weiß* nicht, wann sie kommt. (I don't know when she arrives.)
- Er *weiß*, dass ich ihn liebe. (He knows that I love him.)

In rare cases, *wissen* can be used with an object, which might lead to very subtle situations like this:

- Ich *kenne* dieses Wort nicht (I don't know this word.)
- Ich *weiß* dieses Wort nicht. (I don't know this word.)

In the first example, you have never seen this word before. In the second example, you have seen it, but you don't know what it means.

### Können

*Können* generally means "be able to", and is generally used like "can/be able to" in English. The only confusing thing is that it can take a language instead of an infinitive, which English cannot:

- Ich *kann* tanzen (I can dance.)
- Ich *kann* Deutsch (I can *speak* German.)

### Conjugation of *wissen*

We already used a range of **verbs that change the vowel in the second and third person singular**:

person	fahren	lesen	essen
ich	fahre	lese	esse
du	fährst	liest	isst
er/sie/es	fährt	liest	isst
wir	fahren	lesen	essen
ihr	fahrt	lest	esst
sie/Sie	fahren	lesen	essen

You also encountered modal verbs which generally have a different vowel in singular and plural, respectively. They also have a simpler (and the same) ending in the first and third person singular.

*Wissen* (to know) is a full verb. However, it is one of the very few full verbs that conjugates like a modal verb:

pronoun	wollen	mögen	wissen
ich	will	mag	weiß
du	willst	magst	weiß
er/sie/es	will	mag	weiß
wir	wollen	mögen	wissen
ihr	wollt	mögt	wisst
sie	wollen	mögen	wissen

### Non-stressed prefixes

You already noticed that in German, some verb prefixes can split off:

- *\_an\_kommen* — Ich komme an.
- *\_ein\_kaufen* — Er kauft ein.

The general rule is: **if the prefix is stressed, it splits off.**

How to know which ones are stressed?

It might be easiest to remember those that are never stressed. The most important ones are:

- *be-, ent-, er-, ver-, zer-*

If you encounter a different prefix, guessing that it splits off will most likely be correct.

### Gefallen

So far, you have learned two ways to say “I like”.

*Mögen* is used with nouns:

- Ich *mag* Schokolade! (I like chocolate!)

*Gern(e)* is an adverb that modifies a verb:

- Ich esse *gerne* Schokolade. (I like to eat chocolate.)
- Ich lerne *gerne* Deutsch. (I like to learn German.)
- Ich kaufe *gerne* ein. (I like to go shopping.)

In this lesson, you learn a third way: *gefallen*.

- Er *gefällt* mir. (I like him.)

What’s going on?! Literally, it means “He is-pleasing to me.” That’s why “him” become the subject, and “I” becomes the Dative object in the example above.

*Gefallen* is normally used if you like the look, sound or feel of something:

- Die Songs *gefallen* mir. (I like the songs.)

- Das Haus *gefällt* uns. (We like the house.)

Like *mögen*, you would only use it with nouns (not with verbs).

### Legen vs. liegen

Earlier, you learned the verb *legen*:

- Ich *lege* den Ball auf den Tisch. (I put the ball on(to) the table.)

*Liegen* is related, but defines a position:

- Der Ball *liegt* auf dem Tisch (The ball is on the table.)

*Legen* roughly corresponds to “lay”, *liegen* to “lie”.

[Home 2 #2 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

### Das Handtuch (the towel) vs. das Tuch (the cloth)

A *Handtuch* is a towel, not a hand towel. Of course, a towel can be a hand towel, but this does not mean that the two words are interchangeable. A pet can be a dog, but this does not mean that the words “pet” and “dog” are interchangeable.

[Verbs Future 1 #4 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### Werden + Infinitiv = Futur

German **normally uses the present tense to indicate the future.**

- Ich *gehe* morgen ins Kino. (I *will go* to the movies tomorrow.)

On some occasions (for example when **making promises or predictions**), German *does* use a **future tense**. It is very similar to the one in English.

The future tense consists of a **conjugated form of werden in the present tense and an infinitive** (the base form of the verb).

German	English
ich werde spielen	I will play
du wirst spielen	you will play
er/sie/es wird spielen	he/she/it will play
wir werden spielen	we will play
ihr werdet spielen	you will play
sie/Sie werden spielen	they/you will play

Depending on the context, *ich werde spielen* translates to “I will play” or “I am going to play”. In German, there is no distinction between “will” and “going to”.

Be aware that the German verb **wollen** (to want) is a **false friend of the English will**:

- Ich *will* spielen! (I *want to* play!)

### Werden has three different functions

Using *werden* can be confusing for learners. However, there are **clear distinctions between its three main uses**:

*Werden + adjective/noun = "to become"*

If *werden* is used **in combination with an adjective or noun**, the meaning will be **"to become" or "to get"**:

- Sie *wird* Mutter. (She's becoming a mother.)
- Ich *werde* müde. (I'm getting tired.)

The German word *bekommen* is a confusing false friend to "become":

- Sie *bekommt* eine Tochter. (She's getting a daughter.)

*Werden + Infinitiv = Futur*

This case is explained above.

*Werden + past participle = passive*

If used **in combination with a participle**, *werden* creates one type of **passive**:

- Der Taxifahrer *fährt* den Fahrgast. (The taxi driver drives the passenger.)
- Der Fahrgast *wird gefahren*. (The passenger is being driven.)

[Pets #5 · 2022-03-25 ^](#)

### Fressen vs. essen

The German word for "to eat" is *essen*. However, many people use a different word for animals:

- Die Frau *isst*. Die Katze *frisst*.

The forms of both verbs are the same:

person	essen	fressen
ich	esse	fresse
du	isst	frisst
er/sie/es	isst	frisst
wir	essen	fressen
ihr	esst	frisst
sie/Sie	essen	fressen
perf. part.	gegessen	gefressen

## Natural vs. grammatical gender

Remember that for most nouns in German, the word determines the gender, not the meaning:

- *der* Becher, *die* Tasse, *das* Glas (the mug, the cup, the glass)

For animals, there is usually a general word with a certain grammatical gender. “Katze” is feminine. That does not mean that the specific cat is necessarily female!

- *die*: Katze, Spinne, Schildkröte, Schlange, Kuh, Maus
- *der*: Hamster, Hund, Vogel
- *das*: Insekt, Huhn, Tier, Schaf, Schwein, Pferd, Kaninchen

German has specific male/female versions for some of these, but we do not teach them at this point.

## Favorite

*Liebling* means “darling”:

- Mein *Liebling*! (My darling!)

When combined with other nouns, it means “favorite”:

- meine *Liebling\_s\_katze* (my favorite cat)

Note that German often glues an “s” or an “n” between two noun word parts.

## Danken

Similar to *helfen* (to help), *danken* is part of a small number of verbs that only have a dative object:

- Ich helfe dem Mann.
- Ich danke dem Mann.

Think of “giving help/thanks to” somebody, and you will get it right.

## Angst haben

Instead of “to be afraid of”, German says “I have fear of”:

- Ich *habe Angst vor* Hunden. (I am afraid of dogs.)

It is sometimes necessary to learn the preposition together with the verb. *Vor* takes the dative when used together with *Angst haben*.

Passport #3 · 2022-03-25 ^

## Yes/No Questions

Questions can be asked by **switching the subject and verb**. For instance,

- *Du verstehst das.* (You understand this.)

becomes

- *Verstehst du das?* (Do you understand this?).

These kinds of questions will generally just elicit yes/no answers. In English, the main verb “to be” follows the same principle. “You are hungry.” becomes “Are you hungry?”.

In German, all verbs follow this principle. **There’s no do-support.**

### Asking a Question in German With a W-Word

There are seven W-questions in German:

English	German
what	was
who	wer
where	wo
when	wann
how	wie
why	warum
which	welcher

Don’t mix up *wer* and *wo*, which are “switched” in English :)

Some of these will change according to case.

#### *Was (what)*

If you ask *was* with a preposition, the two normally turn into a new word, according to the following pattern:

English	preposition	wo-
for what	für	wofür
about what	über	worüber
with what	mit	womit

If the preposition starts with a vowel, there will be an extra *-r-* to make it easier to pronounce.

This *wo-* prefix does **not** mean “where”.

#### *Wer (who)*

*Wer* is declinable and needs to **adjust to the cases**. The adjustment depends on what the question is targeting.



If you ask for the subject of a sentence (i.e. the nominative object), *wer* (who) remains as is:

- *Wer* ist da? (Who is there?).

If you ask for the direct (accusative) object in a sentence, *wer* changes to *wen* (who/whom). As a mnemonic, notice how *wen* rhymes with *den* in *den Apfel*.

- *Wen* siehst du? — Ich sehe *den* Hund.
- (Whom do you see? — I see the dog.)

You will soon learn about the Dative case. You have to use *wem* then. And there is a fourth case in German (Genitive). You would use *wessen* here. This corresponds to English “whose”.

The endings look like the endings of *der* (but don’t change with gender/number):

case	masc.	Form of <i>wer</i>
nominative	der	wer
accusative	den	wen
dative	dem	wem

### *Welche(r/s)* (which)

*Welche*- words are used to ask about for a specific item out of a group of items, such as “which car is yours?”.

This declines not only for case, but also for gender. The endings are the same as for definite articles:

article	welch*
der	welcher
das	welches
die	welche
die (pl.)	welche
den	welchen

### *Wo* (where)

In German, you can inquire about locations in several ways.

*Wo* (where) is the general question word, but if you are **asking for a direction** in which someone or something is moving, you may use **\*wohin\*** (where to).

Consider these examples:

- *Wo* ist mein Schuh? (Where is my shoe?)
- *Wohin* gehst du? (Where are you going (to)?)

Furthermore, *wohin* is separable into *wo* + *hin*:

- *Wo* ist mein Schuh *hin*? (Where did my shoe go?)

The same goes for *woher* (where from):

- *Woher* kommst du? (Where are you from)

might become

- *Wo* kommst du *her*?

English	German
where	wo
where to	wohin
where from	woher

### *Wann* (when)

*Wann* (when) does not change depending on the case. *Wann* can be used with conjunctions such as *seit* (since) or *bis* (till):

- *Seit wann* wartest du? (Since when have you been waiting?)
- *Bis wann* geht der Film? (Till when does the movie last?).

Don't confuse *wann* with *wenn* which you learned in Conjunctions. Both translate to "when" in English, but they have different functions in German.

- *Wann* kommst du? (When are you coming?)
- Ich schlafe nicht, *wenn* ich Musik höre. (I don't sleep when I listen to music)

### *Warum* (why)

*Warum* (why) is also not declinable. It will never change endings. *Wieso*, *Weshalb*, and *Weswegen* can be used instead of *Warum*. There's no difference in meaning.

Here is an example. All four following sentences mean "Why is the car so old?".

- *Warum* ist das Auto so alt?
- *Wieso* ist das Auto so alt?
- *Weshalb* ist das Auto so alt?
- *Weswegen* ist das Auto so alt?

### Wie viel vs. wie viele

Wie viel is used with uncountable or countable nouns (how much/how many), and **wie viele is only used with countable nouns** (how many). Some people think that “wie viel” can only be used with uncountable nouns, but that is not true.

- Wie viel Milch trinkst du? (How much milk do you drink?)
- Wie viel(e) Tiere siehst du? (How many animals do you see?)

Verbs: Modal #3 · 2021-02-15 ^

### Modal verbs

#### Verb forms

You have already encountered some modal verbs earlier in the course:

pronoun	wollen	mögen	können
ich	will	mag	kann
du	willst	magst	kannst
er/sie/es	will	mag	kann
wir	wollen	mögen	können
ihr	wollt	mögt	könnt
sie	wollen	mögen	können

To help remember the conjugated forms, note that modal verbs are the **same in the first and third person singular**.

They also often change their vowel. The **vowel in the singular will be different** from the vowel of the infinitive.

#### Forms of müssen, sollen, wollen, dürfen, möchten

In this lesson, you will learn the **remaining modal verbs**.

Consider these three - two new modal verbs as compared to the familiar *wollen*:

pronoun	müssen	dürfen	wollen
ich	muss	darf	will
du	musst	darfst	willst
er/sie/es	muss	darf	will
wir	müssen	dürfen	wollen
ihr	müsst	dürft	wollt
sie	müssen	dürfen	wollen

As in *können* und *wollen*, the vowel in the singular is different. The first and third person are the same in the plural **and** in the singular (unlike normal verbs).

Here are the last two new modal verbs:

pronoun	sollen	möchten
ich	soll	möchte
du	sollst	möchtest
er/sie/es	soll	möchte
wir	sollen	möchten
ihr	sollt	möchtet
sie	sollen	möchten

**sollen** does not change its vowel. Its meaning is roughly like “shall”.

**möchten** is unusual. It is actually the subjunctive form of “mögen”, which is why it has the same ending system as subjunctive and past tense verbs. You will learn about those later in the course.

If you remember that *mögen* translates to “like” in English, it makes perfect sense that its subjunctive **möchten** means “would like to”.

- Ich *mag* Pizza. (I *like* Pizza.)
- Ich *möchte* Pizza. (I *would like* (to eat) Pizza.)

### How to use modal verbs

As in English, **modal verbs are combined with the infinitive of a verb**:

- Ich schwimme. Ich *kann schwimmen*. (I swim. I can swim.)

Because of the peculiarity of German sentence structure, the **infinitive verb will appear at the end** in a normal sentence:

- Ich **muss** jeden Tag **arbeiten**. (I have to work every day.)

### Müssen vs. dürfen

A common problem for English speakers learning German is to **use müssen right**. Here’s the problem:

- Ich *muss* schlafen. (I *must* sleep.)
- Ich *muss nicht* schlafen. (I *don’t need to* sleep.)

Actually, the problem is in English. Let’s look at the same example again, but use “have to” instead:

- Ich *muss* schlafen. (I *have to* sleep.)
- Ich *muss nicht* schlafen. (I *don’t have to* sleep.)

As you can see, if you **think “have to” instead of “must”**, you’ll be fine.

But how to say “must not”?

- Ich *darf nicht* schlafen. (I must not sleep.)
- Ich *darf* schlafen. (I’m allowed to sleep.)

As you can see, **dürfen works pretty much like “may”** in English.

- *Darf ich?* (*May I?*)
- Nein, du *darfst nicht*. (No, you *may not*.)
- Oh, schade.

[Genitive Case #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

## The genitive case

The genitive case is used to **indicate possession**.

- Das Fahrrad *des Mannes* ist schwarz. (The man’s bike is black.)
- Das Fahrrad *des Kindes* ist blau. (The kid’s bike is blue.)
- Das Fahrrad *der Frau* ist grün. (The woman’s bike is green.)
- Das Fahrrad *der Männer/der Kinder/der Frauen* ist rot. (The people’s bike is red.)

	masc.	neut.	fem.	plural
nom.	der	das	die	die
acc.	den	das	die	die
dat.	dem	dem	der	den
gen.	des	des	der	der

Das Fahrrad *eines Mannes* ist schwarz.

Das Fahrrad *eines Kindes* ist blau.

Das Fahrrad *einer Frau* ist grün.

	masculine	neuter	feminine
nominative	ein	ein	eine
accusative	einen	ein	eine
dative	einem	einem	einer
genitive	eines	eines	einer

## Nouns

**Nouns consisting of one syllable tend to add -es in the masculine and neuter.** The ending is often reduced to just -s, especially in colloquial speech.

- der Hund, des Hundes

Nouns consisting of **more than one syllable, tend to add just -s.**

- der Computer, des Computers

**Weak nouns add -n or -en** in the genitive as well (all cases but the nominative), e.g. *des Jungen* and *des Studenten*. Check the lesson “Dative Case” for a discussion of these nouns.

## Genitive phrases have a fixed word order

You can say *das Fahrrad des Kindes*, but **you cannot say *des Kindes Fahrrad***. The latter word order used to be acceptable hundreds of years ago, and you may still occasionally find it in poetry, but it’s no longer used in contemporary Standard German.

## Proper names

In contrast to common nouns, **proper names precede the noun.**

- Peter\_s\_ Fahrrad ist neu.

Do not add an apostrophe unless the name already ends in -s or -z. In the latter case, the apostrophe comes at the very end of the name.

- Hans’ Fahrrad ist alt.

## Adjectives

**Adjectives in the genitive case end in -en.** The only **exception are feminine and plural, without article** (feminine without article is quite rare).

	preceded by an article	not preceded by an article
masculine	das Fahrrad des/eines großen Mannes	wegen großen Bedarfs
feminine	das Fahrrad der/einer kleinen Frau	trotz großer Freude
neuter	das Fahrrad des/eines kleinen Kindes	trotz ruhigen Wesens
plural (any gender)	das Fahrrad der kleinen Kinder	wegen neuer Informationen

## Prepositions that take the genitive case

The most common **prepositions that take the genitive** case are:

German	English
anstatt	instead of
statt	instead of

German	English
aufgrund	because of
trotz	despite
während	during
wegen	because of

In colloquial speech, some prepositions that traditionally take the genitive tend to take the dative nowadays.

- Trotz *des* Regen\_s\_ spielt er Fußball. (Genitive)
- Trotz *dem* Regen spielt er Fußball. (Dative)

### Verbs that take the genitive case

There's a small set of verbs that take the genitive. Most of them are not used a lot in everyday speech and they may sound a bit stilted.

### The dative as an alternative

As an **alternative for the genitive**, you can often use **von followed by the dative case**. Here are some examples:

genitive	dative
der Ball der Frau	der Ball von der Frau
der Ball des Mädchens	der Ball von dem Mädchen
der Ball des Mannes	der Ball von dem Mann
der Ball der Kinder	der Ball von den Kindern
Peters Ball	der Ball von Peter

Often, the genitive case will be preferred in written language, with colloquial language going more for the dative case.

*Formal You #2 · 2021-02-15 ^*

Surprise! There's another way of addressing people. The good news is: it's super easy. Just use the "they" forms when talking to people you're not close with.

Need more details? Then read on :)

### German You: Who are you talking to?

In English, "you" can be either singular or plural, and no distinction is made between formal and informal. In German, there are **three ways of saying "you"**.

## Du

If you are **familiar with someone, you use *du*** (which is called “duzen”). For example, if you talk to your mother, you would say:

- “Hast *du* jetzt Zeit, Mama?” (Do you have time now, Mommy?).

Use this form for family members, co-students, children and young adults.

## Ihr

If you **refer to more than one person, you use *ihr***. This is also a “familiar” form, so use it in the same settings as *du*.

The German *ihr* you learned earlier is the **informal plural** of “you,” like in

- Hans und Karl, habt *ihr* Zeit? (Hans and Karl, do you have time?)

## Sie (formal you)

If you are **not familiar** with someone or still wish to stay **formal and express respect**, you use *Sie* (so-called “siesen”). For example, you would always address your professor like this:

- Haben *Sie* jetzt Zeit, Herr Schmidt? (Do you have time now, Mr. Schmidt?)

*Sie* is also used for multiple people. But you can’t translate it well with “you all” or “you guys”, because that would sound too informal.

Here are the three forms of “you”, and “they” for comparison:

English person	ending	German example
you (singular informal)	-st	du trinkst
you (plural informal)	-t	ihr trinkt
you (formal)	-en	Sie trinken
they	-en	sie trinken

When spoken, **“they” and formal “you” are identical**. So, in a way, Germans formally address people like “How are they today?”

## How do you know if *sie* means “she”, “they”, or “you”?

You can distinguish the formal *Sie* from the plural *sie* (they) because the **formal *Sie* will always be capitalized**. However, it will remain ambiguous at the beginning of written sentences.

For instance, *Sie sind schön*. can either refer to a beautiful individual or a group of beautiful people. The verbs for *sie* (they) and *Sie* (you) are conjugated the same. On Duolingo, either should be accepted unless the context suggests otherwise. In real life, there’s always context. Don’t worry about misunderstandings.



Fortunately, the **verb for sie (she) is different**. *Sie ist schön*. only translates to “She is beautiful.” There’s no ambiguity.

### Other formal “you”s

There are more ways to address people formally in German, but they are not in common use and/or outdated, so we don’t support them in this course. You might encounter them in Middle Ages reenactments or so :)

The *third person singular* was used:

- Hat *er* heute gut geschlafen? (literally, “Has *he* slept well today?”)

The *second person plural* was also used, and is still used locally:

- *Ihr* habt einen schönen Hut. (literally, “*You all* have a nice hat.”)

### You will encounter the informal you in this skill as well

As some of the sentences in this skill are shared among multiple skills, you will encounter the informal you in this skill as well. For technical reasons, this cannot be changed at this point. Please do not send a report regarding this issue.

Occupation 2 #2 · 2018-10-28 ^

### Student or Schüler?

A *Student* is a university student and a *Schüler* is a pupil/student at a primary, secondary or high school. Students attending other types of schools such as language or dancing schools may also be called *Schüler*.

### Dropping articles

When talking about your or someone else’s profession in sentences such as *I’m a teacher* or *She’s a judge*, German speakers **usually drop the indefinite article** (*ein/eine*). It sounds more natural to say *Ich bin Lehrer* and *Sie ist Richter* than *Ich bin ein Lehrer* and *Sie ist eine Richter*. This rule also applies to students.

If you add an adjective, you can’t drop the article. *Er ist ein schlechter Arzt* (He’s a bad doctor) is correct, but *Er ist schlechter Arzt* is not.

Also note that **you can’t drop the definite article** (*der/die/das*).

### Male and female variants

The grammatical gender usually matches the biological sex of the person you’re referring to, i.e. the word that refers to a male baker is grammatically masculine, and the word that refers to a female baker is grammatically feminine. In the vast majority of cases, **the female variant is formed by simply adding the suffix -in to the male variant**, e.g. *der Bäcker* becomes *die Bäckerin* and *der Schüler* (the pupil) becomes *die Schülerin*.

**The plural of the female variant is formed by adding the suffix *-innen* to the singular of the male variant, e.g. *die Bäckerinnen* and *die Schülerinnen*.**

Keep in mind that, in some cases, the plural comes with an umlauted stem vowel. This applies to the female variant as well, e.g. *der Koch* becomes *die Köche* and *die Köchin* becomes *die Köchinnen*.

*Verbs: Perfect 1 #3 · 2018-10-25 ^*

### When is the *Perfekt* used?

The *Perfekt* is used to describe past events. In spoken German, the *Perfekt* is preferred over the *Präteritum*. Using the *Präteritum* in normal conversation may sound unnatural or pretentious.

- Gestern *habe* ich Pizza *gegessen*. (Yesterday, I *ate* pizza.)

In contrast to the English *present perfect*, the German *Perfekt* is not used to describe events that started in the past and are still ongoing. In such cases, German speakers use the *present tense*:

- Ich lebe seit drei Jahren hier. (I have been living here for three years.)

### *Verbs mostly used in Präteritum*

The following verbs are normally not used in the *Perfekt*. Use *Präteritum* instead.

English	Verb	Präteritum
to be	sein	ich war
to have	haben	ich hatte
to know	wissen	ich wusste
may	dürfen	ich durfte
can	können	ich konnte
must	müssen	ich musste
shall	sollen	ich sollte
want to	wollen	ich wollte

### How is *Perfekt* formed?

The *Perfekt* is formed by combining a conjugated form of *haben* (to have) or *sein* (to be) in the present tense with the past participle of the main verb.

- Gestern *hat* er nur zwei Stunden *geschlafen*. (Yesterday, he only *slept* for two hours.)

### *When to use sein*

The vast majority of verbs take *haben* (just like in English).

Verbs that indicate a motion normally take *sein* as a helper verb. Here are some common examples:

Infinitiv	Perfekt
gehen	ich bin gegangen
laufen	ich bin gelaufen
rennen	ich bin gerannt
schwimmen	ich bin geschwommen
fliegen	ich bin geflogen

However, verbs that indicate some other change also take *sein*:

Infinitiv	Perfekt
aufwachen (wake up)	ich bin aufgewacht
einschlafen (fall asleep)	ich bin eingeschlafen
sterben (die)	er ist gestorben

There are a few other verbs, for example

- bleiben (to stay) - ich *bin* geblieben
- passieren (to happen) - es *ist* passiert

None of these verbs have an object (they are “intransitive”). If they have a variant with an object (“transitive”), they take *haben*:

- Ich *bin* im Auto gefahren. (fahren: movement)
- Ich *habe* das Auto gefahren. (you operate the car. The movement is secondary)
- Ich *bin* Auto gefahren. (Auto is NOT an object here. It’s a complement, like *Deutsch lernen*, similar to *ein/kaufen*)

### How to form the participle

#### Regular verbs

**Most verbs are regular** (these are called “weak”). For these, creating the perfect participle is easy. Just add *ge-* to the front, and replace the infinitive ending with *-(e)t*:

- machen - **gemacht**
- arbeiten - **gearbeitet**

#### Irregular verbs

German has a number of irregular verbs. Most of these are “strong” verbs. For these, you add *ge-*, but you add *-en*. There might be a vowel change involved. Rarely, the change in the word stem is more drastic.

Infinitiv	Partizip II
schlafen	geschlafen
trinken	getrunken
schwimmen	geschwommen
essen	gegessen
gehen	gegangen

While most verbs are weak, **many of the most common verbs are strong**.

There is a small group of irregular verbs that follow a different system (called “**mixed verbs**”). Here are most of them:

Infinitiv	Partizip II
wissen	gewusst
rennen	gerannt
brennen	gebrannt
kennen	gekannt
denken	gedacht
bringen	gebracht

Why is there no *ge-*? Why is it inside the participle?

Once you have the correct form of the basic verb, here are two more rules you need to know:

German verbs have two kinds of prefixes. Some can split off. These are always emphasized:

- (**ein**-kaufen-) Ich *kaufe* im Supermarkt **ein**.

Verbs like this will have the *-ge-* between the prefix and the verb stem:

- Ich habe im Supermarkt **eingekauft**.
- Ich bin im Bus **ingeschlafen**.

Here are some common prefixes that are always emphasized:

- ab-, an-, auf-, aus-, bei-, ein-, mit-, nach-, vor-, zu-

Other prefixes are not emphasized. They never split off. For these (and any other **verbs that are not emphasized on the first syllable**), **do not add a *ge-* prefix**. This includes all verbs that end in *-ieren* (as these are emphasized at the *-ie-*).

- (**ver**kaufen) Ich verkaufe mein Auto
- Ich habe mein Auto **verkauft**.
- Ich habe gestern **verschlafen**.
- Er hat Musik **studiert**.

These prefixes are never emphasized:

- be-, ent-, er-, ge-, ver-, zer-

A few prefixes might be emphasized or not.

*Adjectives: Nominative 1 #2 · 2018-10-25 ^*

### Adjective endings

When an adjective comes before a noun, its ending will change according to this noun.

- Die Katze ist *alt*.
- Das ist eine *alte* Katze.

### Article + Adjective

You can think of the adjective endings as “markers”, that kind of mark what part of speech the adjective belongs to.

### Nominative

Remember that the nominative case is used for the subject of a sentence. These are the **nominative adjectives**:

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	der	rote	Hut
	ein	roter	Hut
neut.	das	rote	Hemd
	ein	rotes	Hemd
fem.	die	rote	Rose
	eine	rote	Rose
Plural	die	roten	Schuhe
	keine	roten	Schuhe
	-	rote	Schuhe

While that might look a bit chaotic, there is not so much going on:

- 1) **Masculine: Either the article, or the adjective** must have the *-r* ending. The same goes for **neuter and -s**
  - Der **kleine** Hund spielt.
  - Ein **kleiner** Hund spielt.
- 2) **Feminine and Plural end in -e**. If you **add an article**, you also have to **add an -n**.
  - Die **alte** Katze schläft.
  - **Alte** Katzen schlafen.
  - Die **alten** Katzen schlafen.

- Das sind **keine** alten Katzen.

[Adjectives: Accusative #2 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

### Accusative adjective endings

Do you remember that quite often, the *accusative* looks like the *nominative*? Specifically, *only the articles for masculine nouns change*.

The same goes for the adjectives. They are the same as for nominative; the only exception is for masculine nouns. The changes are marked in bold in the table below.

#### 3) **masculine accusative:** adjective ends in *-en*

- Die alte Katze schläft. **Der** alte Mann sieht die alte Katze (no change)
- Die alte Katze sieht **den** alten Mann.

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	den	roten	Hut
	einen	roten	Hut
neut.	das	rote	Hemd
	ein	rotes	Hemd
fem.	die	rote	Rose
	eine	rote	Rose
Plural	die	roten	Schuhe
	keine	roten	Schuhe
	-	rote	Schuhe

[Adjectives: Dative #2 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

Please refer to the previous lessons on adjectives about the endings for nominative and accusative.

### Dative

Dative, as always, is even simpler.

#### 4) **Dative: all adjectives get an *-en* ending**

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	dem	roten	Hut
	einem	roten	Hut
neut.	dem	roten	Hemd
	einem	roten	Hemd
fem.	der	roten	Rose
	einer	roten	Rose
Plural	den	roten	Schuhen

gender	article	adjective	noun
	keinen	roten	Schuhen
	-	roten	Schuhen

Remember that in dative,

- masculine/neuter articles end in *-m*
- feminine articles end in *-r*
- plural articles end in *-n*
- and plural nouns (almost) always end in *-n*.

Here are some examples:

- Der Mann **mit de\_m\_rote\_n\_Hem\_d\_** (the man in the red shirt)
- Sie mag Männer **mit rote\_n\_Haare\_n\_** (She likes men with red hair)

*When do dative adjectives not end in -n?*

There is a rather rare case when dative adjectives **do not end in -en**.

Rarely, single nouns will be used without any article. This mostly happens in idiomatic expressions.

- mit heißer Feder (with hot feather)
- mit großem Eifer (with great verve)

What happens here is that the ending that would normally be used in the article now ends up on the adjective.

*Plurals #4 · 2021-02-15 ^*

## German plurals

In English, making plurals out of singular nouns is typically as straightforward as adding an *-(e)s* at the end of the word:

- the dog, the dogs

In German, different nouns have different ways of forming the plural.

Generally, you will probably have to memorize the plurals in the beginning. Later on, your brain will notice regular patterns that are not easily explained.

However, there are some major regularities that are very helpful to know. If you apply these, the task of mastering German plurals will become much easier :)

*Ending in -(e)n*

**All nouns ending in -e**, and **most feminine nouns** will add an *-(e)n* ending in the plural.

- die Frau, die Frauen

- die Ente, die Enten
- der Junge, die Jungen

### Ending in -s

Most nouns **ending in a full vowel** will add an -s in the plural.

- das Sofa, die Sofas
- das Auto, die Autos
- das Baby, die Babys
- das Café, die Cafés

This does not apply to nouns ending in -e (which is not a full vowel).

Many of these words are of foreign origin. Some other foreign words will also get the -s plural:

- der Chef (the boss), die Chefs
- die Email, die Emails
- der Job, die Jobs

### No ending change

There is **no change** for **neuter or masculine** nouns that have **any of these singular endings**:

- **-chen, -lein, -el, or -er.**
- das Mädchen, **die** Mädchen
- der Computer, **die** Computer
- der Löffel (the spoon), **die** Löffel

Some words for close family members will have an umlaut change:

- der Bruder (the brother), die Brüder

If words with these endings are **feminine, the plural will end in -n**:

- die Schwester (the sister), die Schwestern
- die Gabel (the fork), die Gabeln

### Ending in -e/-er

Most German **one-syllable nouns** will add an -e in their plural form. There might be an umlaut change.

- das Brot (the bread), die Brote
- der Tisch (the table), die Tische
- der Ball (the ball), die Bälle



Many other **masculine or neuter** nouns will need the *-er* ending, and there may be umlaut changes.

- das Kind (the child), die Kinder
- der Mann (the man), die Männer

### German feminine plurals - nouns ending in *-in*

Job descriptions are usually masculine:

- der Koch (the male cook)
- der Fahrer (the male driver)
- der Lehrer (the male teacher)
- der Arzt (the male physician)

To refer to a female, German adds *-in*:

- die Köch**in** (the female cook)
- die Fahrer**in** (the female driver)
- die Lehrer**in** (the female teacher)
- die Ärzt**in** (the female physician)

As you can see, some of these get an umlaut change. The same umlaut change will happen in the plural.

The plural of the masculine forms usually refers to mixed, as well as all-male groups:

- die Köche (the cooks)
- die Fahrer (the drivers)
- die Lehrer (the teachers)
- die Ärzte (the physicians)

If you want to specify that you are talking about a group consisting of women, use the feminine plural forms. These will add *-innen* in the plural.

- die Köch**innen**
- die Fahrer**innen**
- die Lehrer**innen**
- die Ärzt**innen**

*Direction #2 · 2021-02-15 ^*

### *Weg vs. weg*

*Der Weg* (with a long e\*) roughly means “the path”.

- *Der Weg* ist lang. (The path is long.)

*Weg* (with a short, open e) roughly means “away”.

Here are some examples:

- Geh *weg*! (Go away!)
- Ich bin *weg*! (I'm gone!)

[Adjectives: Nominative 2 #2 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

## Nominative

Remember that nominative is used for the subject of a sentence. These are the **nominative adjectives**:

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	der	rote	Hut
	ein	roter	Hut
neut.	das	rote	Hemd
	ein	rotes	Hemd
fem.	die	rote	Rose
	eine	rote	Rose
Plural	die	roten	Schuhe
	keine	roten	Schuhe
	-	rote	Schuhe

While that might look a bit chaotic, there is not so much going on:

- 1) **masculine: Either the article, or the adjective** must have the *-r* ending. The same goes for **neuter and -s**.
  - Der **kleine** Hund spielt.
  - Ein **kleiner** Hund spielt.
- 2) **Feminine and Plural end in -e**. If you **add an article**, you also have to **add an -n**.
  - **Die** alte Katze schläft.
  - **Alte** Katzen schlafen.
  - **Die alten** Katzen schlafen.
  - Das sind **keine alten** Katzen.

[Jobs 2 #2 · 2022-03-25 ^](#)

## Student or Schüler?

**Ein Student** is a **university student** and a *Schüler* is a pupil/student at a primary, secondary or high school. Students attending other types of schools such as language or dancing schools may also be called *Schüler*.

## Dropping articles

When talking about your or someone else's profession in sentences such as *I'm a teacher* or *She's a judge*, German speakers **usually drop the indefinite article** (*ein/eine*).

- Ich bin Lehrer. (I am **a** teacher.)

It sounds more natural to say *Ich bin Lehrer* and *Sie ist Richterin* than *Ich bin ein Lehrer* and *Sie ist eine Richterin*. This rule also applies to students.

If you **add an adjective**, you **can't drop the article**. *Er ist ein schlechter Arzt* (He's a bad doctor) is correct, but *Er ist schlechter Arzt* is not.

Also note that **you can't drop the definite article** (*der/die/das*).

## Male and female variants

The grammatical gender usually matches the biological sex of the person you're referring to.

So the word that refers to a male baker is grammatically masculine, and the word that refers to a female baker is grammatically feminine.

In the vast majority of cases, **the female variant is formed by simply adding the suffix -in to the male variant**, e.g. *der Bäcker* becomes *die Bäckerin* and *der Schüler* (the pupil) becomes *die Schülerin*.

**The plural of the female variant is formed by adding the ending -innen** to the singular of the male variant, e.g. *die Bäckerinnen* and *die Schülerinnen*.

Keep in mind that, in some cases, the plural comes with an umlauted stem vowel. This applies to the female variant as well.

	singular	plural
male	der Koch	die Köche
female	die Köchin	die Köchinnen

You learn one more word like this in this lesson:

- der Arzt, die Ärztin (the doctor)

## *Sie ist der Boss!*

There are a few words for people where the grammatical and the natural gender differ. One of them is *der Boss*. There is no feminine version for it, although there are certainly female bosses.

- **Mein** Boss heißt Linda Ackermann.
- **Meine** Chefin heißt Linda Ackermann.

### **Damit vs. damit**

There are two words spelled *damit* in German.

One is a **combination of a pronoun and a preposition** (*da+mit*). It means “**with that**”.

- Das ist ein Stift. *Damit* schreibe ich. (That's a pen. *With that*, I write.)
- Ich habe ein Deutschzertifikat. *Damit* kann ich in Deutschland studieren. (I have a German certificate. *With that*, I can study in Germany.)

This word is generally emphasized on the first syllable. As any standard sentence element, if it is used in the first position, the subject will have to go after the verb (which has to be in position 2).

The other is a **subordinating conjunction**. It translates to “**so that**”:

- Ich kaufe einen Stift, *damit* ich schreiben **kann**. (I buy a pen *so that* I can write.)
- Ich lerne Deutsch, *damit* ich in Deutschland studieren **kann**. (I learn German *so that* I can study in Germany.)

Because it creates a subordinate clause, **the verb of that clause has to go to the end**. This version of *damit* is pronounced at the second syllable.

To remember which is which, remember that the one that's emphasized at the end also sends the verb to the end.

### **Damit, um ... zu ..., zum ...**

There are at least three ways to express a goal.

#### **Zum**

The easiest just takes a simple verb:

- Ich fahre *zum Skifahren* nach Japan. (I go to Japan *for* skiing.)
- *Zum Lachen* geht er in den Keller. (He goes to the basement *to* laugh.)

The verb becomes a noun here, hence the upper-case initial, and the *zum* (zu+dem) preposition. If a verb turns into a noun, it always gets neuter gender (das Essen, das Lachen).

#### **Um ... zu ...**

If you have a more complicated verb complex (for example, with adverbs or objects), you cannot use *zum*. Use *um ... zu ...* instead:

- Ich gehe ins Restaurant, *um mit Freunden Pizza zu essen*. (I go to the restaurant *in order to* eat pizza with friends.)

To do this, you start with an infinitive construction:

- *mit Freunden im Supermarkt ein**kaufen*** (to go shopping in the supermarket with friends)

If you were to use this in a sentence, it would look like this:

- Ich **kaufe** *mit Freunden im Supermarkt ein*.

The *um* goes to the beginning of the infinitive construction. The *zu* goes where the verb part (in the above example, *kaufen*) splits off.

- Ich fahre in die Stadt, *um* mit Freunden im Supermarkt ein\_ *zu* kaufen.

### *Damit*

If your main sentence has a different subject than your goal, you can't use an infinitive. Use *damit*, which comes with a subordinate clause.

- Ich gebe ihm mein Handy, *damit er* seine Mutter anrufen kann. (I give him my phone *so that* he can call his mom)

Read the section "*damit* vs. *damit*" for more information on how to use it.

### *Womit? Damit!*

Many prepositions can be combined with *wo-* and *da-*. *Da* roughly translates to "that" here, *wo* normally to "what" (not "where" which is its normal meaning).

wo-	da-
woran	daran
worauf	darauf
woraus	daraus
wobei	dabei
wodurch	dadurch
wofür	dafür
wogegen	dagegen
wohinter	dahinter
worin	darin
womit	damit
wonach	danach
worum	darum
worüber	darüber
worunter	darunter
wovon	davon
wovor	davor
wozu	dazu

wo-

da-

wozwischen

dazwischen

If the **preposition starts with a vowel**, there will be a **binding r**. So *worum* is pronounced *wo-rum* (not *wor-um*).

[Clothing #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

[Kleider - dresses or clothes?](#)

*Das Kleid* means “the dress”, and *die Kleider* means “the dresses”, but the plural *die Kleider* can also mean “clothes” or “clothing”. In most cases, “clothing” (or “clothes”) translates to *Kleidung* (usually uncountable), but it’s important to be aware that *Kleider* can be used in that sense as well.

[Hose or Hosen?](#)

Both *Hose* and *Hosen* translate to “pants” (“trousers” in British English), but they’re not interchangeable. The singular *Hose* refers to one pair of pants, and the plural *Hosen* refers to multiple pairs of pants.

[Adverbs 3 #5 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

[Trotzdem vs. obwohl](#)

*Obwohl* translates to “although”, while *trotzdem* translates to “however/nevertheless”.

- Ich bin müde, **obwohl** ich Kaffee getrunken *habe*. (I’m tired, although I drank coffee.)
- Ich habe Kaffee getrunken. **Trotzdem** bin ich müde. (I drank coffee. Nevertheless, I’m tired.)

**Trotzdem is an adverb.** It is part of a sentence and will replace the subject if it appears in the first position.

**Obwohl is a subordinating conjunction.** It will send the verb to the last position. See the lesson “Conjunctions” for more details.

[Darum, deshalb, deswegen](#)

These three adverbs are synonymous. They can be used interchangeably.

The conjunctions *weil* and *denn* are used in the form “*Statement, weil/denn Reason*”.

- Ich bin müde, **weil** ich nicht geschlafen *habe*. (subordinating conjunction)
- Ich bin müde, **denn** ich *habe* nicht geschlafen. (coordinating conjunction)

*Darum* and its sisters are used in the form “*Reason, darum Statement*” (or “*Statement, darum Result*”).

- Ich habe nicht geschlafen. **Darum** bin ich müde.

## Womit? Damit!

Many prepositions can be combined with *wo-* and *da-*. *Da* roughly translates to “that” here, *wo* normally to “what” (not “where” which is its normal meaning).

wo-	da-
woran	daran
worauf	darauf
woraus	daraus
wobei	dabei
wodurch	dadurch
wofür	dafür
wogegen	dagegen
wohinter	dahinter
worin	darin
womit	damit
wonach	danach
worum	darum
worüber	darüber
worunter	darunter
wovon	davon
wovor	davor
wozu	dazu
wozwischen	dazwischen

If the **preposition starts with a vowel**, there will be a **binding r**. So *worum* is pronounced “wo-rum”, not “wor-um”.

*Verbs: Preterite #3 · 2021-02-15 ^*

## When is the *Präteritum* used?

The *Präteritum* (also called *Imperfekt*) is used to describe past events. Its use is mostly **limited to formal writing and formal speech**. In **informal writing and speech**, the ***Perfekt* (e.g. *Ich habe geschlafen*) tends to be preferred**. Using the *Präteritum* in normal conversation may sound unnatural or pretentious.

## *Verbs mostly used in Präteritum*

The following verbs are normally not used in the *Perfekt*. Use *Präteritum* instead.

English	Verb	Präteritum
to be	sein	ich war

English	Verb	Präteritum
to have	haben	ich hatte
to know	wissen	ich wusste
may	dürfen	ich durfte
can	können	ich konnte
must	müssen	ich musste
shall	sollen	ich sollte
want to	wollen	ich wollte

### Möchten

The verb *möchten* (would like to/to want to), which is technically the subjunctive of *mögen*, does not have a preterite form. Instead, the preterite of *wollen* (to want [to]) is used.

### How is the *Präteritum* formed?

#### Regular weak verbs

The *Präteritum* of **regular weak verbs** is formed by adding *-(e)te*, *-(e)test*, *-(e)ten*, or *-(e)tet* to the stem.

*sagen* (to say)

Present	Präteritum
ich sage (I say)	ich sagte (I said)
du sagst (you say)	du sagtest (you said)
er/sie/es sagt (he/she/it says)	er/sie/es sagte (he/she/it said)
wir sagen (we say)	wir sagten (we said)
ihr sagt (you say)	ihr sagtet (you said)
sie/Sie sagen (they/you say)	sie/Sie sagten (they/you said)

#### Irregular weak verbs

Some weak verbs, although generally regular, have a slightly irregular verb stem in the *Präteritum*. These are mostly modal verbs. Be sure **not to use the umlaut in the *Präteritum*** for these, as that will change it to the *Konjunktiv II* (subjunctive) mood.

The endings will be the same as for other weak verbs.

- **haben** - ich **hatte**, du hattest, ...
- **können** - ich **konnte**, du konntest, ...
- **müssen** - ich **musste**, du musstest, ...
- **dürfen** - ich **durfte**, du durftest, ...



### Strong verbs

To form the *Präteritum* of **strong verbs**, you need to **find the modified verb stem** first. Google “German irregular verbs” to get a list.

To this modified stem, you add the following endings:

Person	Ending
ich	-
du	-st
er/sie/es	-
wir	-en
ihr	-t
sie/Sie	-en

Notice that these are the **same endings** as for the **modal verbs in the present tense**. **First and third person are the same** in singular and plural.

*finden* (to find)

Present	Präteritum
ich finde (I find)	ich fand (I found)
du findest (you find)	du fandest (you found)
er/sie/es findet (he/she/it finds)	er/sie/es fand (he/she/it found)
wir finden (we find)	wir fanden (we found)
ihr findet (you find)	ihr fandet (you found)
sie/Sie finden (they/you find)	sie/Sie fanden (they/you found)

*sein* (to be)

Present	Präteritum
ich bin (I am)	ich war (I was)
du bist (you are)	du warst (you were)
er/sie/es ist (he/she/it is)	er/sie/es war (he/she/it was)
wir sind (we are)	wir waren (we were)
ihr seid (you are)	ihr wart (you were)
sie/Sie sind (they/you are)	sie/Sie waren (they/you were)

*Adverbs B #2 · 2019-04-18 ^*

### Trotzdem vs. obwohl

*Obwohl* translates to “although”, while *trotzdem* translates to “however/nevertheless”.

- Ich bin müde, **obwohl** ich Kaffee getrunken *habe*. (I'm tired, although I drank coffee.)
- Ich habe Kaffee getrunken. **Trotzdem** bin *ich* müde. (I drank coffee. Nevertheless, I'm tired.)

**Trotzdem is an adverb.** It is part of a sentence and will replace the subject if it appears in the first position.

**Obwohl is a subordinating conjunction.** It will send the verb to the last position. See the lesson "Conjunctions" for more details.

### *Darum, deshalb, deswegen*

These three adverbs are synonymous. They can be used interchangeably.

The conjunctions *weil* and *denn* are used in the form "*Statement, weil/denn Reason*".

- Ich bin müde, **weil** ich nicht geschlafen *habe*. (subordinating conjunction)
- Ich bin müde, **denn** ich *habe* nicht geschlafen. (coordinating conjunction)

*Darum* and its sisters are used in the form "*Reason, darum Statement*" (or "*Statement, darum Result*").

- Ich habe nicht geschlafen. **Darum** bin *ich* müde.

### *Womit? Damit!*

Many prepositions can be combined with *wo-* and *da-*. *Da* roughly translates to "that" here, *wo* normally to "what" (not "where" which is its normal meaning).

wo-	da-
woran	daran
worauf	darauf
woraus	daraus
wobei	dabei
wodurch	dadurch
wofür	dafür
wogegen	dagegen
wohinter	dahinter
worin	darin
womit	damit
wonach	danach
worum	darum
worüber	darüber
worunter	darunter

wo-	da-
wovon	davon
wovor	davor
wozu	dazu
wozwischen	dazwischen

If the **preposition starts with a vowel**, there will be a **binding r**. So *worum* is pronounced “wo-rum”, not “wor-um”.

[Weather #3 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

### **Gewitter**

*Das Gewitter* refers to bad weather with lightning and thunder, not necessarily to strong winds. Hence, we do not accept the translation “storm” in this course.

[Feelings #4 · 2022-03-25 ^](#)

### **Long and short vowels**

*Which sounds are there?*

In German, every vowel can be long or short. The short one often sounds more open than the long one.

The IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) is given for the geeks among you :) But you can also copy/paste one of these symbols into Wikipedia to get an in-depth explanation of it (with sound!).

vowel	short	IPA	long	IPA
a	Mann	/a/	Bahn	/a:/
ä	Bälle	/ɛ/	Käse	/ɛ:/
e	rennen	/ɛ/	Beere	/e:/
i	Mitte	/ɪ/	ziehen	/i:/
o	oft	/ɔ/	ohne	/o:/
ö	Hölle	/œ/	schön	/ø:/
u	Mutter	/ʊ/	Buch	/u:/
ü	Müll	/ʏ/	Bücher	/y:/

You can also google “german sounds” for a longer introduction to German sounds.

*When is a vowel short or long?*

German has a range of spelling convention which will clearly show whether a vowel is short or long:

A vowel before a double consonant will be short:

- Mann, denn, Mutter, Bälle, backen, Pizza, Katze

Note that instead of “zz” (which only occurs in the Italian “Pizza”), German uses *tz*. Instead of “kk”, we use *ck*.

There are also some signals that clearly show the vowel is long.

Sometimes, the vowel will be doubled:

- p\_aa\_r, B\_ee\_re, B\_oo\_t, ... (this only happens with *a/e/o*)

There might be a silent *h* behind the vowel:

- f\_ah\_ren, z\_äh\_len, s\_eh\_en, \_ih\_r, \_oh\_ne, h\_öh\_er, \_Uh\_r, St\_üh\_le, ...

Note that if you read the list above, you should not hear a single *h* sound. It is *geh/en*, not *ge/hen*.

For *i*, it is more common to have an *-e* after it (sometimes even *-eh*):

- d\_ie\_, B\_ie\_ne, sp\_ie\_len, s\_ie\_ben, Bez\_ieh\_ung, ...

Again, the *h* will be silent: *Be/zieh/ung*, not *Be/zie/hung*.

But sometimes, there will not be a signal.

The following examples have an unmarked long vowel:

- B\_u\_ch, d\_a\_, A\_bend, w\_o, Not, Zitr\_o\_ne, ...

And here are some short ones:

- \_a\_n, \_O\_nkel, u\_n-, M\_a\_m\_a, H\_ä\_lfte, Z\_i\_trone, ...

For these, you just have to trust your language feeling, it will normally not be a big problem :)

[Adjectives 2 #2 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

## Adjective endings

When an adjective comes before a noun, its ending will change according to this noun.

- Die Katze ist *alt*.
- Das ist eine *alte* Katze.

## Article + Adjective

You can think of the adjective endings as “markers”, that kind of mark what part of speech the adjective belongs to.

## Nominative

Remember that the nominative case is used for the subject of a sentence. These are the **nominative adjectives**:

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	der	rote	Hut
	ein	roter	Hut
neut.	das	rote	Hemd
	ein	rotes	Hemd
fem.	die	rote	Rose
	eine	rote	Rose
Plural	die	roten	Schuhe
	keine	roten	Schuhe
	-	rote	Schuhe

While that might look a bit chaotic, there is not so much going on:

- 1) **Masculine: Either the article, or the adjective** must have the *-r* ending. The same goes for **neuter and -s**
  - Der kleine Hund spielt.
  - Ein kleiner Hund spielt.
- 2) **Feminine and Plural end in -e**. If you **add an article**, you also have to **add an -n**.
  - Die alte Katze schläft.
  - Alte Katzen schlafen.
  - Die alten Katzen schlafen.
  - Das sind **keine** alten Katzen.

Communication 1 #2 · 2021-02-15 ^

## Phones and cellphones

Believe it or not, people still use landline phones, especially in business contexts. A (tele)phone can be a cellphone or a landline phone. The word *(tele)phone* is to the word *cellphone* what the word *pet* is to the word *dog*, i.e. generic vs. specific.

- the tele(phone) = das Telefon
- the cellphone (the mobile phone) = das Handy / das Mobiltelefon

Regardless of whether you always refer to your cellphone as a *phone*, in this course, you will not be able to use *(tele)phone/Telefon* and *cellphone/Handy* interchangeably.

## Rufen, anrufen

*Rufen* translates to “call”:

- Ich rufe meinen Hund. (I call my dog.)

The word used for calling via phone is **anrufen**:

- Ich *rufe* meinen Bruder *an*. (I call my brother.)

Because people used to call the police long before phones existed, German uses *rufen* for this:

- Ich *ruf(e)* die Polizei!!

### Informationen

Unlike English, the German word *die Information* has a singular and a plural form.

### Fernseher, Fernsehen

*Der Fernseher* refers to a TV set. *Das Fernsehen* refers to TV in general.

- Ich habe gestern einen Fernseher gekauft. (I bought a TV yesterday.)
- Ich bin im Fernsehen! (I'm on TV!)

“Ich bin im Fernseher!” would mean “I’m inside the TV set!”.

### Fernsehen, frühstücken

- Ich sehe fern. Ich habe ferngesehen.
- Ich frühstücke. Ich habe **ge**frühstückt.

Why does one split, but not the other?

*Sehen* is interpreted as a verb by itself. Thus, *fern* is interpreted as the prefix. Because it is emphasized, it will split off. Because it splits off, the *-ge-* of the participle will end up inside the word.

*Stücken* is not a verb. *Frühstücken* is a verb that was created from the noun *das Frühstück*. Hence, the first syllable, although emphasized, will not split off.

[Verbs Future 2 #3 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### Werden + Infinitiv = Futur

German **normally uses the present tense to indicate the future**.

- Ich *gehe* morgen ins Kino. (I *will go* to the movies tomorrow.)

On some occasions (for example when **making promises or predictions**), German *does* use a **future tense**. It is very similar to the one in English.

The future tense consists of a **conjugated form of werden in the present tense and an infinitive** (the base form of the verb).

German	English
ich werde spielen	I will play
du wirst spielen	you will play
er/sie/es wird spielen	he/she/it will play
wir werden spielen	we will play
ihr werdet spielen	you will play
sie/Sie werden spielen	they/you will play

Depending on the context, *ich werde spielen* translates to “I will play” or “I am going to play”. In German, there is no distinction between “will” and “going to”.

Be aware that the German verb **wollen** (to want) is a false friend of the English “will”:

- Ich *will* spielen! (I *want to* play!)

### Werden has three different functions

Using *werden* can be confusing for learners. However, there are **clear distinctions between its three main uses**:

*Werden + adjective/noun = “to become”*

If *werden* is used **in combination with an adjective or noun**, the meaning will be “**to become**” or “**to get**”:

- Sie *wird* Mutter. (She’s becoming a mother.)
- Ich *werde* müde. (I’m getting tired.)

The German word *bekommen* is a confusing false friend to “become”:

- Sie *bekommt* eine Tochter. (She’s getting a daughter.)

*Werden + Infinitiv = Futur*

This case is explained above.

*Werden + past participle = passive*

If used **in combination with a participle**, *werden* creates one type of **passive**:

- Der Taxifahrer fährt den Fahrgast. (The taxi driver drives the passenger.)
- Der Fahrgast *wird gefahren*. (The passenger is being driven.)

[Internet & Social Media #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### Die Seite

*Die Seite* can mean “the side” or “the page”, depending on context.

- Ich stehe auf der anderen Seite. (I am standing on the other side.)

- Ich lese die Seite. (I read the page.)

In the context of the internet, it refers to a web page, as well as to a web site.

## WLAN

WLAN is pronounced ['ve:la:n] in German. Unfortunately, the computer voice of the German course refuses to acknowledge this, and insists on pronouncing it wrong.

## Drucken vs. drücken

*Drucken* means “to print”. The machine commonly used for that is *der Drucker*.

- Ich muss noch zehn Seiten *drucken*! (I have to *print* ten more pages!)

*Drücken* means “to press”. *Der Drücker* may refer to an electric button, or to a hug.

- *Der Drücker* am Aufzug ist kaputt. (*The button* of the lift is broken.)
- *Drücker*! (Hugs!)

Verbs: Past Perfect #4 · 2021-02-15 ^

## Past perfect

### When is the past perfect used?

The past perfect is used to describe past events, more specifically events that happened way back in the past or any time before another event in the past.

past perfect	preterite
Ich hatte ihn schon gesehen,	als er mich sah
I had already seen him	when he saw me

### How is the past perfect formed?

The past perfect is formed almost the same way as the Perfekt. The only difference is that the helper verb will be in the past tense:

- Ich *habe* gegessen. (I have eaten.)
- Ich *hatte* gegessen. (I had eaten.)
- Ich *bin* geschwommen. (I have swum.)
- Ich *war* geschwommen. (I had swum.)

### How to end up with the right participle?

Refer to the “Perfect” lesson in order to review how to form the perfect participle that goes with it.



## Future Perfect

The future perfect talks about actions that will have been completed in the future. It's used pretty much like the English future perfect, but it's formed slightly differently.

The future perfect consists of the future tense of the auxiliary verb *haben* or *sein*, and the past participle of the main verb.

### Haben vs. sein

The vast majority of verbs take *haben*. Verbs that take *sein* have to be intransitive, i.e. they can't take an object, and they have to indicate a change of position or condition. *sein* (to be), *bleiben* (to stay), and *passieren* (to happen) take *sein* even though they don't indicate a change of position or condition.

Please refer to the "Perfect" lesson to review how to form the participle, and for more details on when to use *haben* or *sein*.

### Future Perfect with haben

*essen* (to eat):

The auxiliary verb that goes with *essen* is *haben*. All you need to do is form the future tense of *haben* (*ich werde haben*) and add the past participle of the main verb *essen* (*gegessen*) to the left of *haben*.

German	English
ich werde gegessen haben	I will have eaten
du wirst gegessen haben	you will have eaten
er/sie/es wird gegessen haben	he/she/it will have eaten
wir werden gegessen haben	we will have eaten
ihr werdet gegessen haben	you will have eaten
sie werden gegessen haben	they will have eaten
Sie werden gegessen haben	you will have eaten

### Future Perfect with sein

*gehen* (to leave/to go):

The auxiliary verb that goes with *gehen* is *sein*. All you need to do is form the future tense of *sein* (*ich werde sein*) and add the past participle of the main verb *gehen* (*gegangen*) to the left of *sein*.

German	English
ich werde gegangen sein	I will have left

German	English
du wirst gegangen sein	you will have left
er/sie/es wird gegangen sein	he/she/it will have left
wir werden gegangen sein	we will have left
ihr werdet gegangen sein	you will have left
sie werden gegangen sein	they will have left
Sie werden gegangen sein	you will have left

[People 2 #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

## Verein

*Der Verein* (the *r* is silent) is something between a club and a society. It is very common in Germany: There are almost 600,000 *eingetragene Vereine* (publicly registered associations) in Germany. They bear the abbreviation *e.V.*.

A *Verein* might help the homeless, offer tennis lessons, dance together, among many other activities.

## Man

In English, you can say “you can say” or “one can say”. In German, *man* is commonly used for this purpose. It does not imply that only male people are included, think of it like the English “man” as in “mankind”.

Grammatically, it works exactly like *er*:

- *Er* schläft nicht auf der Küche. (He does not sleep in the kitchen)
- *Man* schläft nicht in der Küche! (One does not sleep in the kitchen!)

## Ein paar vs. ein Paar

*Ein paar* (lowercase p) means *a few, some* or *a couple (of)* (only in the sense of **at least two, not exactly two!**).

*Ein Paar* (uppercase P) means *a pair (of)* and is only used for things that typically come in pairs of two, e.g. *ein Paar Schuhe* (a pair of shoes).

So this is quite similar to English “a couple” (a pair) vs. “a couple of” (some).

[Common Phrases 2 #2 · 2019-02-20 ^](#)

## Naja, na und, na sowas

*Na* appears in some short interjections or phrases:

	Example	English
naja	“Was ist das Problem?”	Well...

	Example	English
	— “Naja, dein Hund stinkt.”	
na und	“Dein Hund stinkt.” — “Na und?”	so what?
na klar	“Stinkt dein Hund?” — “Na klar!”	of course!
na sowas	“Dein Hund tanzt” — “Na sowas!”	Oh wow!

[Verbs Reflexive #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### Reflexive verbs

Reflexive verbs are pretty common in many European languages, but in comparison are rather rare in English:

- He hurt *himself*.
- She found *herself*.

In German, they are more frequent. Sometimes, they make perfect sense:

- Ich wasche *mich*. (“I wash myself”, as opposed to my dog)

But often, the reason for using this form is lost in history, and the verb just has to be learned as is:

- Ich befinde *mich* im Garten. (“I’m in the garden”, literally “I find myself in the garden”)
- Sie setzt *sich* hin. (“She sits down”, lit. “She seats herself”)
- Ich erinnere *mich* nicht. (“I don’t remember” (myself))

### Verb objects

Remember that verbs often have a “direct object”. This will be in the accusative case:

- Der Mann isst *einen Apfel*.

Some verbs have an additional “indirect object”, which will be in the dative case:

- Der Mann gibt *dem Kind einen Apfel*. (The man gives an apple to the child.)

The reflexive pronoun will take the place of one of these objects.

### Replacing the “lost” object

Because the **reflexive part takes up the object, some reflexive verbs need a preposition** to go with them. This preposition has to be learned together with the verb.

- sich interessieren *für* (to have an interest in)

- sich freuen *auf* (to look forward to)
- sich freuen *über* (to be happy about)
- sich kümmern *um* (to care for)
- sich treffen *mit* (to meet with)

### Accusative reflexive verbs

In most reflexive verbs, the direct object gets replaced by the reflexive pronoun. Thus, use the accusative versions.

- Ich rasiere *mich*. (“I shave”, literally “I shave myself”)

### Dative reflexive verbs

If the **verb already has a direct (accusative) object**, the **reflexive pronoun will be in the dative case**:

First, consider this example (*mich* is in the accusative):

- Ich wasche *mich*. (I wash, literally “I wash myself”)

In the next example, “die Haare” is the Accusative object. Hence, the reflexive pronoun is in the dative (“mir”):

- Ich wasche *mir* die Haare. (“I wash my hair”, literally “I wash the hairs to myself”)

Here are some verbs with dative reflexive pronouns:

- Ich wünsche *mir* einen Hund. (I wish for a dog.)
- Ich sehe *mir* den Film an. (I watch the movie.)
- Ich habe *mir* das Bein gebrochen. (I broke my leg.)

### Reflexive pronouns

Here is a review of the **normal pronouns**:

nom.	acc.	dat.
ich	mich	mir
du	dich	dir
er/sie/es	ihn/sie/es	ihm/ihr/ihm
wir	uns	uns
ihr	euch	euch
sie/Sie	sie/Sie	ihnen/Ihnen

Notice that for **wir** and **ihr**, accusative and dative do not differ.

Here are the **accusative and dative reflexive pronouns**:

nom.	acc. refl.	dat. refl.
ich	mich	mir
du	dich	dir
er/sie/es	sich	sich
wir	uns	uns
ihr	euch	euch
sie/Sie	sich	sich

The **reflexive pronoun for the third person (singular and plural) is *sich***. Otherwise, they don't differ from their non-reflexive counterparts.

This means that if you see a sentence such as:

- Er wäscht *ihm* die Füße.

It must be a different person: He washes the feet of somebody else. If it were his own feet, the sentence would be:

- Er wäscht *sich* die Füße.

[Communication 2 #3 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

## Post

*Die Post* has several meanings in German.

It can refer to the mail in your mailbox:

- Ist *die Post* schon da? (Has the mail arrived yet?)

It can also refer to the post office:

- Gehst du heute *zur Post*? (Are you going to the post office today?)

Or, it can refer to the mail company (which used to be state run in Germany):

- *Die Post* hat die Gebühren erhöht. (The mail company raised their fees.)

[Business 1 #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

## Fabrik

Don't confuse *die Fabrik* (the manufacturing plant) with the English word "fabric". The former is the place where something is fabricated, the latter is the fabricated product of the world's first manufacturing plants (hence the name).

In addition, *die Fabrik* is stressed on the last syllable.

## Geschichte

In German, the words for “story” and “history” are the same (just as in Spanish).

However, they are used differently. When used with an article, it generally refers to a story:

- Hast du *die Geschichte* gelesen? (Did you read the story?)

Most of the time, when referring to history, there won't be an article:

- Ich habe *Geschichte* studiert. (I studied history at university.)

In addition, only “story” will have a plural version:

- Er erzählt lustige *Geschichten*. (He tells funny stories.)

## Euro or Euros?

In German, the singular is *Euro* and the **plural is usually *Euro*** as well. As a rule of thumb, use *Euro* when talking about a specific amount, e.g. *200 Euro*.

In some contexts, the form *Euros* is used as well. For instance, you can say *Euros* to refer to individual euro coins, an unquantified amount of euros, or euros as opposed to a different currency, e.g.:

- Ich habe hundert Schweizer Franken, aber keine *Euros* (I have a hundred Swiss francs but no euros).

Many native speakers use either plural form regardless of context.

In English, either plural form is perfectly fine. The plural form *euro* tends to be preferred in the Republic of Ireland, and the plural form *euros* tends to be preferred pretty much anywhere else. Originally, the plural form *euro* was supposed to be used in official EU documents, but that's no longer the case.

## Drucken vs. drücken

*Drucken* means “to print”. The machine commonly used for that is *der Drucker*.

- Ich muss noch zehn Seiten *drucken*! (I have to print ten more pages!)
- *Der Drucker* ist kaputt! (The printer is broken!)

*Drücken* means “to press”. *Der Drücker* may refer to an electric button, or to a hug.

- *Der Drücker* am Aufzug ist kaputt. (The button of the lift is broken.)
- *Drücker*! (Hugs!)

Slightly confusingly, *der Druck* can refer to “pressure”, but also to a “print”.

- Mach keinen *Druck*! (Don’t create stress!)
- *Der Druck* ist schön. (The print is nice.)

[Friends #5 · 2022-03-25 ^](#)

### The third case.

German has four cases. You already learned two so far, nominative and accusative.

Nominative is used for sentence subjects.

Accusative is mostly used for sentence objects. Some prepositions will use accusative, too.

The third important case is “dative”.

### Dative pronouns

Here are the first three dative pronouns for you, together with the nominative and accusative counterparts:

Nom.	Akk.	Dat.
ich	mich	mir
du	dich	dir
sie (fem.)	sie	ihr

### What is dative for?

As the accusative, the dative case has several functions.

Some **prepositions** go with dative:

- mit, zu, aus, von, bei
- Komm *mit mir*! (Come *with me*!)
- Ich gehe *zu ihr*. (I go *to her*.)

For most verbs, the object is in the accusative case:

- Ich sehe *dich*. (I see *you*.)

A few **verbs use the dative** instead:

- Ich helfe *dir*. (I help *you*.)
- Ich danke *dir*. (I thank *you*.)

Some **verbs have two objects**. The one identifying the “other person involved in a transaction” will also be in dative:

- Ich habe einen Hund. (I have a dog.)

- Ich gebe *dir* einen Hund. (I give *you* a dog.)

These three cases will appear in most sentences, so take your time to get a feeling for them.

There is a fourth case (genitive), but it is not used a lot.

### Telling the time

Germans mostly use a system similar to English. There is one important and confusing difference: While English uses “half past seven”, German will say “half eight”.

Time	
10:00	zehn (Uhr)
10:05	fünf nach zehn
10:15	viertel nach zehn
10:30	halb elf
10:45	viertel vor elf
10:55	fünf vor elf

In addition, the 25 and 35 minutes will refer to the half hour:

Time	
10:25	fünf vor halb elf
10:35	fünf nach halb elf

This colloquial system only uses hours from one to twelve.

German official time uses hours from zero to 24:

Time	
10:12	zehn Uhr zwölf
22:50	zweiundzwanzig Uhr fünfzig

### Komm!

Similar to English, the imperative omits the pronoun. You will learn more about this later. For now, just remember that to say “Come (on)!” , German uses *Komm!* (not *kommst*, as you might have suspected).

[Animals 2 #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### Affen

In German, *der Affe* may refer to all primates, or to all primates excluding lemurs.



In everyday English, “apes” tend to be distinguished from other primates, most of which are referred to as “monkeys”. German does not make this distinction. If you want to refer to apes only, you can use the word *Menschenaffen*.

### Kamele

*Das Kamel* is stressed on the last syllable: [ka'me:l]. Unfortunately, Duolingo's computer voice has other ideas about this. When you're in Cologne, don't confuse these adorable, but weighty animals with *Kamelle* ([ka'mɛlə], caramels traditionally thrown around during *Karneval*).

Verbs: Present 3 #4 · 2021-02-15 ^

### Telefonieren, anrufen

*Telefonieren* does not have an object (it is “intransitive”). Hence, you need a preposition for the other person:

- Ich *telefoniere mit* meiner Mutter. (I'm on the phone with my mother.)

On the other hand, *anrufen* has an accusative object:

- Ich *rufe* meine Mutter *an*. (I *call* my mother.)

Remember that for the police, you would use *rufen* (without the *an*):

- *Ruf* die Polizei! (*Call* the police!)

### Wechseln, tauschen

*Tauschen* generally means to swap, or to change something:

- Komm, wir *tauschen* unsere Hüte! (Come, we swap our hats!)

*Austauschen* or *(aus)wechseln* mean to exchange/substitute:

- Er *tauscht* die Batterien *aus*. (He *exchanges* the batteries.)
- Er *wechselt* die Batterien (*aus*).

*Wechseln* by itself can also mean “to switch/change”:

- Er *wechselt* den Fußballverein. (He *switches* the soccer club.)
- Er *wechselt* die Socken. (He *changes* his socks.)

This is also the word used for changing money:

- Ich muss noch Geld *wechseln*. (I have to *change* money first.)

Verbs Future 3 #3 · 2021-02-15 ^

### Drucken vs. drücken

*Drucken* means “to print”. The machine commonly used for that is *der Drucker*.

- Ich muss noch zehn Seiten *drucken*! (I have to print ten more pages!)
- *Der Drucker* ist kaputt! (The printer is broken!)

*Drücken* means “to press”. *Der Drücker* may refer to an electric button, or to a hug.

- *Der Drücker* am Aufzug ist kaputt. (The button of the lift is broken.)
- *Drücker*! (Hugs!)

Slightly confusingly, *der Druck* can refer to “pressure”, but also to a “print”.

- Mach keinen *Druck*! (Don’t create stress!)
- *Der Druck* ist schön. (The print is nice.)

*Verbs: Conditional #3 · 2021-02-15 ^*

### Conditional mood

The conditional mood is mostly used for wishes or unreal situations.

- I wish I *had* a parrot!
- If I *were* you, I *would* sleep more.

*Use würde for most verbs*

Where English uses *would*, German uses forms of *würde*:

German	English
ich würde spielen	I would play
du würdest spielen	you would play
er/sie/es würde spielen	he/she/it would play
wir würden spielen	we would play
ihr würdet spielen	you would play
sie/Sie würden spielen	they/you would play

*Some verbs have their own forms*

Sometimes, English uses special forms for the Conditional. These generally look like Simple Past forms:

- Yesterday, I *had* a dream.
- I wish I *had* a dream.

In German, these two forms are also similar. However, German normally **adds an umlaut change (and occasional -e)**:

person	Präteritum	Conditional
ich	war	wäre

person	Präteritum	Conditional
du	warst	wär(e)st
er/sie/es	war	wäre
wir	waren	wären
ihr	wart	wär(e)t
sie/Sie	waren	wären

Apart from the *sein*, *haben* and the modal verbs, only a few verbs are still conjugated directly. For most verbs, this is now unusual, and considered old-fashioned. Use *würde* + infinitive instead.

To show you the pattern, here are the forms for *haben* (to have), *dürfen* (may) and *geben* (to give):

person	haben	dürfen	geben
(Präteritum: ich)	(hatte)	(durfte)	(gab)
ich	hätte	dürfte	gäbe
du	hättest	dürftest	gäbst
er/sie/es	hätte	dürfte	gäbe
wir	hätten	dürften	gäben
ihr	hättet	dürftet	gäbt
sie/Sie	hätten	dürften	gäben

For the other modal verbs, the forms for *ich* are:

- müssen - müsste
- wollen - wollte (no umlaut change!)
- sollen - sollte (also no umlaut change)

Here are some other verbs that use their own form for the Conditional:

- gehen (to go) - ginge
- wissen (to know) - wüsste
- wünschen (to wish) - wünschte
- tun (to do) - täte
- brauchen (to need) - bräuchte

Again, for most other verbs, use *würde* + infinitive.

[Math #5 · 2018-10-25 ^](#)

## Equals

There are several ways to talk about equations:

- Vier plus drei *macht* sieben.
- Zwei plus zwei *ist* vier.
- Eins plus fünf (*ist*) *gleich* sechs.
- Sieben plus acht *ergibt* fünfzehn.

These are all equivalent (ha!).

[Abstract Objects 2 #3 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### Party, Partei

*Die Party*, an English loanword, refers to a celebration.

A political party will be *die Partei*.

[Colors #4 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### Adjective endings

When an adjective comes before a noun, its ending will change according to this noun.

- Die Katze ist *alt*.
- Das ist *eine alte Katze*.

### Article + Adjective

You can think of the adjective endings as “markers”, that kind of mark what part of speech the adjective belongs to.

### Nominative

Remember that Nominative is used for the subject of a sentence. These are the **nominative adjectives**:

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	der	rote	Hut
	ein	roter	Hut
neut.	das	rote	Hemd
	ein	rotes	Hemd
fem.	die	rote	Rose
	eine	rote	Rose
Plural	die	roten	Schuhe
	keine	roten	Schuhe
	-	rote	Schuhe

While that might look a bit chaotic, there is not so much going on:

- 1) **Masculine: Either the article, or the adjective** must have the *-r* ending. The same goes for **neuter and -s**.
  - *Der kleine* Hund spielt.
  - *Ein kleiner* Hund spielt.
- 2) **Feminine and Plural end in -e**. If you **add an article**, you also have to **add an -n**.
  - *Die alte* Katze schläft.
  - *Alte Katzen* schlafen.
  - *Die alten* Katzen schlafen.
  - Das sind *keine alten* Katzen.

### Accusative

Do you remember that quite often, the accusative looks like the nominative? Specifically, only the articles for masculine nouns change.

The same goes for the adjectives. The accusative endings are the same as for Nominative; the only exception is for masculine nouns. The changes are marked in bold in the table below.

#### 3) Masculine accusative: adjective ends in **-en**

- *Die alte Katze* schläft. *Der alte* Mann sieht *die alte Katze* (no change)
- Die alte Katze sieht *den alten* Mann.

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	den	roten	Hut
	einen	roten	Hut
neut.	das	rote	Hemd
	ein	rotes	Hemd
fem.	die	rote	Rose
	eine	rote	Rose
Plural	die	roten	Schuhe
	keine	roten	Schuhe
	-	rote	Schuhe

### Dative

Dative, as always, is even simpler.

#### 4) Dative: all adjectives get an **-en** ending

- Der Hund *mit der roten Nase* schläft. (The dog *with the red nose* is sleeping.)

gender	article	adjective	noun
masc.	dem	roten	Hut
	einem	roten	Hut
neut.	dem	roten	Hemd

gender	article	adjective	noun
	einem	roten	Hemd
fem.	der	roten	Rose
	einer	roten	Rose
Plural	den	roten	Schuhen
	keinen	roten	Schuhen
	-	roten	Schuhen

Remember that in dative,

- masculine/neuter articles end in *-m*
- feminine articles end in *-r*
- plural articles end in *-n*
- and plural nouns (almost) always end in *-n*.

[Verbs: Conditional Perfect #3 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### Conditional Perfect

Conditional Perfect works just as normal Perfect, but **uses the conditional form of *haben*** instead. So,

- Ich *habe* ihn gesehen.

becomes

- Ich *hätte* ihn gesehen.

For verbs that use *sein* instead, use the **conditional form of *sein***:

- Ich *bin* Auto gefahren.

becomes

- Ich *wäre* Auto gefahren.

Be aware that in some verbs, such as *behalten*, *verlassen*, *erfahren*, the Participle looks like the Infinitive. Don't let that confuse you, always use the Participle!

[Occupation #5 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### Student or Schüler?

A *Student* is a university student and a *Schüler* is a pupil/student at a primary, secondary or high school. Students attending other types of schools such as language or dancing schools may also be called *Schüler*.

## Dropping articles

When talking about your or someone else's profession in sentences such as *I'm a teacher* or *She's a judge*, German speakers **usually drop the indefinite article** (*ein/eine*). It sounds more natural to say *Ich bin Lehrer* and *Sie ist Richterin* than *Ich bin ein Lehrer* and *Sie ist eine Richterin*. This rule also applies to students.

If you add an adjective, you can't drop the article. *Er ist ein schlechter Arzt* (He's a bad doctor) is correct, but *Er ist schlechter Arzt* is not.

Also note that **you can't drop the definite article** (*der/die/das*).

## Male and female variants

The grammatical gender usually matches the biological sex of the person you're referring to, i.e. the word that refers to a male baker is grammatically masculine, and the word that refers to a female baker is grammatically feminine. In the vast majority of cases, **the female variant is formed by simply adding the suffix -in to the male variant**, e.g. *der Bäcker* becomes *die Bäckerin* and *der Schüler* (the pupil) becomes *die Schülerin*.

**The plural of the female variant is formed by adding the suffix -innen** to the singular of the male variant, e.g. *die Bäckerinnen* and *die Schülerinnen*.

Keep in mind that, in some cases, the plural comes with an umlauted stem vowel. This applies to the female variant as well, e.g. *der Koch* becomes *die Köche* and *die Köchin* becomes *die Köchinnen*.

*Verbs Future 4 #3 · 2021-02-15 ^*

## The power of *machen*

*Machen* (to do) is a very versatile word. Often, when you don't know the word for an action, you can somehow use *machen* to describe it. Often, there is even an existing word combination:

Here are some examples. The "higher-level" word is in brackets.

- *\_auf\_machen* (öffnen) — to open
- *\_zu\_machen* (schließen) — to close
- *besser machen* (verbessern) — to improve
- *\_weg\_machen* (entfernen) — to remove

As a fallback, it can help you to just continue speaking, even when you run the risk making up your own words:

- Ich muss den Brief noch *machen*. (very bad German, but people will get what you mean)

As a **general rule**: It's better to speak bad German, than to stop speaking, just because you don't know how to say it well. Keep going, and learn from your mistakes.

Fake it, till you make it :)

[Materials #7 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### [Plastik](#)

*Plastik* is one of the few words that changes meaning, depending on which gender it is.

- das Plastik (artificial material, normally from petroleum)
- die Plastik (a word for “sculpture”)

### [Holz, Wald, Forst](#)

In English, “wood” can refer to a material, and to a forest.

In German, *Holz* only refers to the material. *Der Wald* is “the forest”. We also have a word *der Forst*, but it only refers to a maintained forest (something like a garden for trees), where the trees are grown for commercial purposes.

[Adjectives 3 #2 · 2019-04-18 ^](#)

### **Common adjective endings**

#### [-ig, -lich, -isch](#)

Here are three common endings, which sound very similar:

- *-ig* (roughly like *-y* in English): eindeutig, abhängig, ...
- *-lich* (roughly *-ly* in English): nützlich, möglich, persönlich, ...
- *-isch* (roughly *-ic(al)* in English): praktisch, logisch, ...

The first two sound the same in regular speech (in some dialects, all three sound the same). You already encountered this with the numbers (*zwanz\_ig\_*).

When you add an ending to the *-ig* adjectives, it will no longer sound like *ch*:

- *eindeuti\_g\_*: die *eindeuti\_ge\_* ... (now sounds like *g*)
- *mögli\_ch\_*: der *mögli\_che\_* ... (still sounds like *ch*)

#### [-bar](#)

*-bar* often corresponds to “-(a)ble” in English:

- *sicht\_bar\_* (*visi\_ble\_*)
- *verfüg\_bar\_* (*avail\_able\_*)

Yes, there are lots of bars with joke adjective names in Germany :)

#### [-los, -voll](#)

These correspond to English “-less” and “-ful”.



- hoffnungs\_voll\_ (hope\_ful\_)
- hoffnungs\_lo\_ (hope\_less\_)

### -tion

In English, the “-tion” ending is pronounced “-shen”. In German, it always becomes “-tsion”. It will always be the emphasized syllable, and the word will always be feminine.

- Kommunika\_tion\_, Lek\_tion\_, Na\_tion\_

Similarly, *der Patient* will sound like “der Patsient”.

When nouns ending in *-tion* are used in an adjective, the ending *-al* (or *-ell*) will be used. The resulting adjective will be pronounced on the last syllable:

- internation\_al\_, ration\_al\_, kommun\_al\_, sensation\_ell\_, ...

University #2 · 2022-03-25 ^

### Comparative

The comparative for short words in English is commonly formed by adding *-er* to the adjective:

- fast, faster
- smart, smarter

German works in the same way. Of course, you then have to add the correct adjective ending to the whole thing:

- schnell, schneller
- ein schneller Mann, ein schneller\_er\_ Hund, eine schneller\_e\_ Katze (a fast man, a faster dog, a faster cat)

For longer adjectives, English uses “more” instead. German does not do that.

- interesting, more interesting
- interessant, interessant\_er\_

Short adjectives usually get an umlaut change, though:

- alt, \_ä\_lter
- groß, gr\_ö\_ßer

Remember that *gern* is an adverb. German uses it to describe things it likes. It has the comparative *lieber*:

- Ich esse *gern* Pizza. Ich esse *lieber* Lasagne.
- I like to eat pizza. I prefer to eat lasagna.

## Seit

In English, you can say:

- I have been learning German for two months.

In German, you would instead say:

- Ich lerne seit zwei Monaten Deutsch.

First, as it is still ongoing, the present tense is used.

Second, German uses *seit* for stretches of time that reach into the present. That means you can only use it for things that are still ongoing.

If *seit* is combined with a noun, it takes the dative. Remember that in dative plural, the noun gets an extra *-n*:

- der Monat, die Monate > seit zwei Monate\_n\_

## Anfang, Mitte, Ende

In English, “early, mid, late” refers to positions in a day, month, or year:

- in *late* May

In German, *Anfang*, *Mitte*, *Ende* can be used like this:

- *Ende* Mai

These can also be used for age:

- Sie ist *Anfang* zwanzig. (She is in her early twenties.)

[Qualifiers #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

## Superlative

Please refer to the lesson “Comparisons” for a table of comparative and superlative forms, especially how to form the irregular forms.

### Superlative as an adverb

In the last lesson, you learned the comparative:

- Der Hund ist *alt*. Die Katze ist *älter*.

As in English, there is also a superlative:

- Der Papagei ist **am ältesten**. (The parrot is the oldest.)
- Sie rennt **am schnellsten**. (She runs the fastest.)

*Am ältesten* works like an adverb (How is he? - the oldest; How does she run? the fastest). That means its endings will never change.

### *Superlative as an adjective*

Like in English, you can also use superlatives as adjectives.

Remember that adjectives change their endings according to the noun, if they come before the noun:

- Er ist *der älteste* Hund. (He is the oldest dog.)
- Wir haben *den ältesten* Hund.

Now, consider these two sentences:

- Mein Hund ist *der älteste*. (imagine a second “Hund” at the end)
- Mein Hund ist *am ältesten*.

Both translate to “My dog is *the oldest*”, and both are possible in German. The last one is more common though, and we recommend you only use this one for now.

On the other hand, **you cannot say**:

- Er der *am ältesten* Hund. (**This is wrong!!**)

This is because you can’t put an adverb in front of a noun. That’s what adjectives are for.

Don’t forget that with adjectives, you have to use the right ending to match with the noun:

- Das ist *die kleinste* Katze der Welt! (This is the world’s *smallest* cat!)
- Wir geben *der schönsten* Katze einen Preis. (We give a prize to the *most beautiful* cat.)

As a rough guideline, use a form like *die älteste*, *den ältesten*, ... before a noun, and *am ältesten* at the end of a sentence.

### *Ganz*

#### *As an adjective: easy*

The word “ganz” has several functions in German. As an adjective, it means “whole”:

- Ich esse den ganzen Apfel. (I eat the whole apple.)

#### *As an adverb: tricky!*

As an adverb, it can **intensify or de-intensify** other words (depending on which other word you use).

Consider “very fast” vs. “quite fast” in English. “Very” is an intensifier, “quite” is a de-intensifier.

Here's a table to get an idea of the problem:

Intensifies	De-Intensifies
schlecht	gut
oben	nett
vorne	sympathisch
früh	schön
sicher	interessant
toll	gern
furchtbar	lustig
...	ok

Consider these examples:

- Der Film war *ganz gut*. (The film was quite nice.)
- Der Film war *ganz toll*! (The film was really great!)

You see the problem :) *Ganz* is tricky to use for beginners. For now, better **use these two words instead**:

- *ziemlich* (always means “quite”)
- *total* (always means “really”)
- Der Film war *total gut*. (The film was really nice.)
- Der Film war *ziemlich toll*. (The film was quite great.)

[Arts #3 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### **Plastik**

*Plastik* is one of the few words that changes meaning, depending on which gender it is.

- das Plastik (artificial material, normally from petroleum)
- die Plastik (a word for “sculpture”)

[Places 2 #2 · 2021-10-07 ^](#)

### **Bundesland**

Germany is a Federal Republic (Bundesrepublik). It consists of 16 federal states, which have some degree of autonomy. These are called *Bundesländer*.

### **Pension**

*Die Pension* has different meanings, depending on context. Here it means “guest house”. It can also mean “retirement pay”.

## Passive with werden

In German, *werden* + *perfect participle* forms a passive:

- Ich schreibe einen Brief. (I write a letter.)
- Ein Brief *wird* geschrieben. (A letter is being written.)

Note that the accusative object of an active sentence (*einen Brief*) becomes the (nominative) subject of the passive version (*ein Brief*).

The passive is often used when the original subject is unknown or irrelevant:

- Mein Handy *wurde* gestohlen! (“My phone was stolen!” — You don’t know who did it.)
- Mein Handy *wurde* repariert. (“My phone was fixed.” — You don’t care by whom.)

## Werden has three different functions

Using *werden* can be confusing for learners. However, there are **clear distinctions between its three main uses**:

*Werden* + *adjective/noun* = “to become”

If *werden* is used **in combination with an adjective or noun**, the meaning will be “to become” or “to get”:

- Sie *wird* Mutter. (She’s becoming a mother.)
- Ich *werde* müde. (I’m getting tired.)

The German word *bekommen* is a confusing false friend to “become”:

- Sie *bekommt* eine Tochter. (She’s getting a daughter.)

*Werden* + *Infinitiv* = *Futur*

Refer to the lesson “Future 2” for details.

*Werden* + *past participle* = *passive*

If used **in combination with a participle**, *werden* creates one type of **passive**:

- Der Taxifahrer *fährt* den Fahrgast. (The taxi driver drives the passenger.)
- Der Fahrgast *wird gefahren*. (The passenger is being driven.)

English	German
Sunday	Sonntag (sun)
Monday	Montag (moon)
Tuesday	Dienstag (god "Tyr"?)
Wednesday	Mittwoch (middle of week)
Thursday (Thor!)	Donnerstag (thunder)
Friday	Freitag (goddess Freya)
Saturday (Saturn)	Samstag (sabbath)

However, we changed to Monday as the start of the week, which makes *Mittwoch* sound a bit silly now :)

### *Am, im, um*

If you want to say "on Monday" and so on, that would be *am Montag*.

Here's a mnemonic to remember when to use which:

- **am** Montag
- **um** drei Uhr
- **im** Juni

*Grammar 3 #3 · 2021-02-15 ^*

## Prepositions

### *Accusative prepositions*

Accusative prepositions **always** trigger the accusative case.

Here are the most common ones: **durch, für, gegen, ohne, um**

### *Dative prepositions*

Dative prepositions **always** trigger the dative case.

Here are the most common ones: **aus, außer, bei, gegenüber, mit, nach, seit, von, zu**

### *Two-way prepositions*

**Two-way prepositions** take the **dative case or the accusative case**, depending on the context.

This is an unusual, but central part of German grammar.

If there's **movement from one place to another**, use the **accusative** case.

- Die Katze geht *in die Küche*. (The cat walks into the kitchen.)

If there's **no movement**, or if there's **movement within a certain place**, use the **dative** case.

- Die Katze schläft *in der Küche*. (The cat sleeps in the kitchen.)
- Die Katze geht *in der Küche*. (The cat walks within the kitchen.)

These prepositions can switch case: **an, auf, hinter, in, neben, über, unter, vor, zwischen**

### *When not to think about location change*

Two-way prepositions are very common in everyday speech, so it's a good idea to practice them to fluency.

However, don't forget that **for some prepositions, you don't have to decide**:

*Durch* and *um* will always be accusative, although they might signify an activity without location change:

- Das Kind rennt *durch den* Wald. (The child is running through the forest.)
- Die Stühle stehen *um den* Tisch. (The chairs are standing around the table.)

*Aus, von, zu* will always be dative, although they might signify a location change.

- Er kommt *aus der* Küche (He comes out of the kitchen.)
- Ich fahre *zur* Arbeit. (I go to work.)
- Ich komme *von der* Arbeit. (I come from work.)

### *Other uses for two-way prepositions*

Some verbs use one of these prepositions in a way that is *not about location*. This is part of language change, where things get repurposed all the time.

*Über* will always trigger the accusative case:

- Sie diskutieren *über den* Krieg. (They discuss the war.)

When used with these verbs, *vor* will always trigger the Dative:

- Er warnt *vor dem* Hund. (He warns about the dog.)

*An, in* and *auf* are more complicated: in some verbs, they trigger the accusative, in others the dative. You'll just have to memorize these.

- Er *denkt an seinen* Bruder. (He thinks of his brother.)
- Er *arbeitet an einem* Film (He's working on a film.)
- Ich *warte auf den* Bus. (I'm waiting for the bus.)
- Der Film *basiert auf meinem* Leben. (The film is based on my life.)

## Contractions

Some prepositions and articles can be contracted.

an + das	ans
an + dem	am
auf + das	aufs
bei + dem	beim
in + das	ins
in + dem	im
hinter + das	hinters
über + das	übers
um + das	ums
unter + das	unters
von + dem	vom
vor + das	vors
zu + dem	zum
zu + der	zur

- Wir gehen *ins* Kino (We go to the cinema.)

If you would use “that” in English, you would not use a contraction:

- In *das* Kino gehe ich nicht! (I won’t go into *that* cinema!)

## Preposition at the end of a sentence??

An important part of German grammar is that some verbs can split off their prefix. This often ends up at the end of a sentence. Some of these prefixes look exactly like a preposition.

So when you see a “preposition” at the end of a sentence, try to combine it with the verb. You might just have learned a new word :)

- Sie *macht* die Lampe *an*. (*anmachen* means “turn on” here)
- Ich *denke nach*. (*nachdenken* means “to think”)
- *Pass* auf dich *auf*! (*aufpassen* means “to take care”)
- Wann *fährt* der Zug *ab*? (*abfahren* means “to depart”)
- *Nimm* deinen Hut *ab*! (*abnehmen* means “to take off” in this context)

Unfortunately, the way Duolingo is built does not allow to selectively teach German sentence structure. We hope this will change soon :)



### Zu Hause vs. nach Hause

*Zu Hause* means *at home*, and *nach Hause* means *home* (*homewards*, not *at home*). The *-e* at the end of *zu Hause* and *nach Hause* is an archaic dative ending, which is no longer used in modern German, but survives in certain fixed expressions.

- Ich bin *zu Hause*. (I am *at home*.)
- Ich gehe *nach Hause*. (I am walking *home*.)

Cooking #3 · 2022-03-25 ^

### Zu Mittag, zu Abend

In some combinations, prepositions are not grammatical. Just learn the whole phrase like a word:

German	English
zu Fuß	on foot
zu Mittag	for lunch
zu Abend	for dinner
zu Hause	at home
nach Hause	towards home

Especially *zu Hause* is often confusing, as in regular use, *zu* often means *towards*.

### Geben

*Geben* (to give) is one of several verbs that describe a transaction. These generally have two objects:

- the *direct object* is what changes hands. This is the object you already know: it is in the accusative case.
- the *indirect object* identifies the “other person involved” in a transaction. This object is in the dative case.
- Ich gebe *einem Kind einen Apfel*. (I give a child an apple.)

As in English, the dative “indirect” object comes before the accusative “direct” object.

English can also use “to”: “I gave an apple to a child.” — this is not possible in German.

*Geben* is a strong (slightly irregular) verb, here are its forms:

Person	geben
ich	gebe
du	gibst
er/sie/es	gibt

Person	geben
wir	geben
ihr	gebt
sie/Sie	geben
perf. part.	gegeben

[Verbs: Conditional 2 #3 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### Conditional mood

Please refer to lesson “Verbs: Conditional 1” to review to German’s “Konjunktiv II” mood. This is normally formed by a form of *würden* + infinitive:

- Wenn ich reich wäre, *würde* ich den ganzen Tag Deutsch *lernen*. (If I were rich, I *would learn* German all day.)

### Konjunktiv I

German has another, lesser used form, the “Konjunktiv I”. It is mostly used for marking indirect speech in newspapers:

- Sänger: “Der Song ist gut!” (direct speech)
- Der Sänger sagte, *der Song sei gut*. (indirect speech)

Therefore, only the third person (singular and plural) is commonly used.

Here are the forms of *present tense* and *past tense* (Präteritum), together with the two forms of Konjunktiv, to demonstrate the pattern. Forms in brackets are rarely used:

person	present	Konj I
ich	habe	(habe)
du	hast	(habest)
er/sie/es	hat	habe
wir	haben	(haben)
ihr	habt	(habet)
sie/Sie	haben	(haben)

person	Präteritum	Konj II
ich	hatte	hätte
du	hattest	hättest
er/sie/es	hatte	hätte
wir	hatten	hätten

person	Präteritum	Konj II
ihr	hattet	hättet
sie/Sie	hatten	hätten

As you can see, *Konjunktiv I* is sometimes the same as the present tense form. In these cases, German uses the *Konjunktiv II* form:

- Männer: “Wir haben Hunde!” (direct speech)
- Die Männer sagten, **sie hätten Hunde**. (indirect speech; uses *hätten* instead of *haben*)

Here are some commonly used forms:

- *sein* (to be) — er *sei*
- *haben* (have) — er *habe*
- *müssen* (must) — er *müsse*
- *können* (can) — er *könne*
- *wollen* (want) — er *wolle*

[Fantasy & Science Fiction #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### **Der/Die Außerirdische: adjectival nouns**

Some **adjectives can turn into nouns** in German. If they do so, **they still change endings** like any normal adjective:

- *deutsch* (German) — der *Deutsche*
- *gefangen* (captive) — der *Gefangene*
- *alt* (old) — der *Alte*
- *außerirdisch* (extraterrestrial) — der *Außerirdische*
- *verwandt* (related) — der *Verwandte*
- der deutsche Mann — der Deutsche
- ein deutscher Mann — ein Deutscher
- Ich kenne einen deutschen Mann — Ich kenne einen Deutschen.
- eine deutsche Frau — eine Deutsche
- der Hund der deutschen Frau — der Hund der Deutschen

... and so on.

Google “german adjectival nouns” for more information.

If you want, now would be a good time to review the adjective endings in earlier lessons :)

## N-declension

Don't confuse adjectival nouns with nouns that follow the "n-declension". (See lesson "Dat. Case" for details)

For example, all other nouns for nationalities that end in -e follow the n-declension:

- der Brite, der Chinese, der Ire, ...

[Relative Pronouns #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

## Relative clauses

In English, relative clauses look like this:

- The girl *who came to visit him* was his aunt.
- The man, *whose daughter worked as a manager*, came home.

In German, relative clauses are subordinate clauses. The verb moves from position 2 to the end.

- Der Mann kauft Hundefutter. Ihm gehört der Hund. (The man buys dog food. The dog belongs to him.)
- Der Mann, *dem der Hund gehört*, kauft Hundefutter. (The man *to whom the dog belongs* buys dog food.)

Relative clauses are *always* set off by commas from the rest of the sentence.

(There's no distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive clauses.)

## Relative pronouns

The **relative pronouns look like the definite articles**, with the **exception of the dative plural and the genitive** forms.

The relative pronouns closely correspond to the personal pronouns they replace:

- Das ist der Mann. *Er* hat einen Hund.
- Das ist der Mann, *der* einen Hund hat.
- Das sind die Bälle. Mit *ihnen* spielt er. (These are the balls. He plays with them.)
- Das sind die Bälle, mit *denen* er spielt.

pers. pronoun	rel. pronoun	grammar
er	der	masc. (nom.)
es	das	neut. (nom.+acc.)
sie	die	fem./pl. (nom.+acc.)

pers. pronoun	rel. pronoun	grammar
ihn	den	masc. (acc.)
ihm	dem	masc.+neut. (dat.)
ihr	der	fem. (dat.)
ihnen	denen	pl. (dat.)

Relative pronouns can never be dropped.

### Genitive relative clauses

The **genitive version** derives from the **possessive pronoun**:

- Die Frau ist krank. **Ihr** Sohn hat einen Hund.
- Die Frau, **deren Sohn** einen Hund hat, ist krank.
- Der Mann mag Pizza. **Seine** Tochter kann singen. (The man likes pizza. His daughter can sing.)
- Der Mann, **dessen** Tochter singen kann, mag Pizza.

Here, too, the possessive pronouns correspond somewhat to the relative pronouns:

poss. pronoun	rel. pronoun	grammar
sein(*)	dessen	masc./neut.
ihr(*)	deren	fem./pl.

### The relative clause determines which pronoun to use

Be aware that the **relevant case is in the relative clause**, not the main clause:

- *Der Hund* schläft. (Hund = nominative)
- Ich mag *den Hund*. (Hund = accusative)
- Der Hund, **den** ich mag, schläft. (use accusative relative pronoun)

The form you need to use is governed by the grammatical gender and number of the word that is being referred to (outside the relative clause), and the case is governed by the context of the relative clause.

Keep in mind that certain prepositions and verbs always trigger a certain case, e.g. the preposition *mit* always takes the dative case and so does the verb *helfen*.

- Das Kind schläft. Die Frau hat *ihm* geholfen. (The kid sleeps. The woman helped him.)
- Das Kind, *dem* die Frau geholfen hat, schläft.

### What is a Wurst?

A *Wurst* is a sausage. It does not specifically refer to any kind of sausage. It could be a salami, chorizo, mortadella, frankfurter, etc.

*Bratwurst* specifically refers to a fried or grilled sausage.

### Ob

Indirect questions are subordinate clauses in German:

- Was *machst* du? (direct question, verb in position 2)
- Ich weiß, was du *machst*! ("I know what you do!", verb at the end)

For questions with a question word, the question word starts the sentence, and the verb ends it.

For yes/no-questions, German uses *ob* as a placeholder (just like "whether" is used in English):

- Gehst du ins Kino?
- Er fragt, *ob* du ins Kino *gehst*.

### Je ... desto ...

*Je ... desto ...* works roughly like "the ... the ..." in English:

- *The longer* I learn German, *the happier* I become.
- *Je länger* ich Deutsch lerne, *desto glücklicher* werde ich.

However, the sentence structure is unusual, when compared to English. For the above sentence, it is:

- je + (comparison) (subject) (rest) (verb), desto (comparison) (verb) (subject) (rest)

The *je* part is a subordinate clause, so the verb will be at the end. Because the *je*+comparison is in the first position, the subject has to come immediately after, followed by the rest of the sentence.

The *desto* part is a main clause. The verb is in position 2, and *desto*+comparison are in the first position. This is not unusual in German, as you can put all kinds of elements in the first position:

Position 1	2	3	4	5
Ich	esse	morgen	mit einem Freund	zu Mittag.
Morgen	esse	ich	mit einem	zu Mittag.

Position 1	2	3	4	5
			Freund	
Mit einem Freund	esse	ich	morgen	zu Mittag.
Zu Mittag	esse	ich	morgen	mit einem Freund.

Notice how the verb is always in the second position. The subject is either at the beginning (the default), or directly behind the verb.

### Mal

(-)mal can often be translated with “time(s)” in English:

German	English
zehn mal	ten times
manchmal	sometimes
das erste Mal	the first time

In addition, it has a function as a “modal particle”. These are words that give a sentence an additional flavor, and can’t be easily translated. Modal particles are almost never emphasized.

- Komm *mal* nach Hause! (*I’m impatient, come home!*)
- Kann ich *mal* vorbei? (*Can I get through? I won’t bother you for long.*)

We don’t teach modal particles in this course (because you can’t translate them). But you will encounter *mal schauen* in this lesson, which roughly means “let’s see”.

Body 1 #5 · 2021-10-07 ^

### Hals

*Der Hals* refers to the whole connection between head and shoulders. German does have more specialized words for “neck” and “throat”, but we normally use *Hals* for both.

### Haare

*Das Haar* normally refers to a single hair. It *can* be used to refer to all the hair on someone’s head, but is considered slightly outdated or poetic.

- Seine Haare sind lang. (ok)
- Sein Haar ist lang. (sounds a bit old)

### Bein

*Das Bein* refers to the leg. It used to mean “bone” a long time ago. This meaning survives in some word combinations:

- Elfenbein (ivory, literally “elephant bone”)
- Eisbein (pork knuckle, literally “ischias bone”, because it referred to hip meat before)
- Beinhaus (bone house)
- Gebein(e) (a collection of bones)

### Magen

*Der Magen* is the stomach, the part of your body that starts digestion. It is not commonly used to refer to the belly (*der Bauch*).

### Brust

*Die Brust* can have several meanings, depending on context.

- Komm an meine Brust! - This means the chest area. It will always be used in the singular.
- Vögel haben keine Brüste. (Birds don't have breasts) - This refers to female breasts. It can be used in the singular.

### Adverbs #3 · 2021-02-15 ^

#### How do you like things in German?

Use the verb *mögen* to express that you like something or someone, and use the adverb *gern(e)* to express that you like doing something.

*Mögen is used for things, animals, and people:*

- Ich mag Bier. (I like beer.)
- Sie mag Katzen. (She likes cats.)
- Wir mögen dich. (We like you.)
- Ihr mögt Bücher. (You like books.)

Please refer to lesson “Present 1” for more details on *mögen*.

*Gern(e) is used for verbs/activities:*

- Ich trinke gern(e) Bier. (I like to drink beer/I like drinking beer.)
- Er spielt gern(e) Fußball. (He likes to play soccer/He likes playing soccer.)
- Wir lesen gern(e) Bücher. (We like to read books/We like reading books.)
- Sie schreibt gern(e) Briefe. (She likes to write letters/She likes writing letters.)

### Position of *gerne*

If you're not sure **where to put *gern(e)***: It goes to the same position as *oft* (often).



- Ich trinke **oft** Bier. (I drink beer often.)
- Ich trinke **gern** Bier. (I like to drink beer.)

### *Gern/gerne, allein/alleine*

What's the difference between **gern and gerne**? They're just variations of the same word. There's no difference in terms of meaning or style. You can use whichever you like best.

The same goes for *allein(e)*.

### *Position of auch*

*Auch* corresponds to English "also, too".

The positioning follows different rules in both languages. Soon you will learn more about the peculiarities of German sentence structure. For now, remember that *auch* takes roughly the same position as *nicht*. When both occur together, *auch* will come before *nicht*.

Consider these two examples to get a first idea about this:

- Ich laufe. Du läufst **auch**. Er läuft **nicht**. Sie läuft **auch nicht**.
- Ich komme aus China. Du kommst **auch** aus China. Er kommt **nicht** aus China. Sie kommt **auch nicht** aus China.

Here's one more adverb, to see how they work together:

- Ich trinke **oft** Bier. Du trinkst **auch oft** Bier. Er trinkt **nicht oft** Bier. Sie trinkt **auch nicht oft** Bier.

For reasons that will become clearer soon, *Sie kommt aus China **auch*** is **not a valid sentence** in German.

### *Numbers 2 #2 · 2021-10-07 ^*

#### *German numbers*

You learned earlier that the numbers from 1-19 are very similar to those in English.

This mostly continues in German, with one important quirk. Did you ever notice that the digits in numbers 13-19 are kind of "switched" in English? German continues that through to 99.

So **84 would be vier/und/acht/zig** (literally, four and eighty).

This might take some getting used to, but at least it's consistent ;)

#### *Hundert*

For "100", people would usually just say *hundert*, not *einhundert* (as in English).

## Huge numbers

There used to be two different systems for huge numbers, called “short scale” and “long scale”. Unfortunately, German and American English ended up with different ones. British English used to use the long scale, but switched to short scale.

Number	US English (short scale)	German (long scale)
$10^6$	million	Million
$10^9$	billion	Milliarde
$10^{12}$	trillion	Billion
$10^{15}$	quadrillion	Billiarde
$10^{18}$	quintillion	Trillion

( $10^6$  means a one with six zeros)

Location #2 · 2022-01-20 ^

## Location

### Hier, da, dort

When talking about locations in English, you can use *here*, *there*, *this*, and *that* to express that something is close or far away. In German the word *da* is commonly used when talking about locations. The good thing about *da* is, you don't have to worry about the distance! It can mean anything close or far away.

Let's look at a few examples:

- Wir sind *da*. (We are here/there.)
- *Da* ist ein Apfel. (Here/There is an apple.)

With *hier* (here) and *dort* (there) you can be more specific about the distance.

- hier (here)
- da (here/there)
- dort (there)

You can also say *da oben* for “up there” and so on:

- Die Katze ist *da oben*. (The cat is up there.)
- *Da hinten* wohnt er. (He lives there in the back.)

### Das hier

You can combine all of them with articles, and use them similar to *this* and *that* !

- das hier (this)
- das da (this/that)

- das dort (that)

Many people use this with the other articles as well. Note that while all of the following constructs are commonly used in spoken language, they are not appropriate for written, formal language.

- der/die/das hier (this)
- der/die/das da (this/that)
- der/die/das dort (that)

To refer to one specific thing, you can put a noun between the article and *hier/da/dort*.

For example:

- Der Apfel *da* ist groß. (That apple is big.)
- Die Katzen *da* sind süß. (Those cats are cute.)

Some people might add *drüben*. This translates to *over there*.

- Der Apfel *da drüben* ist groß. (That apple *over there* is big.)
- Die Katzen *dort drüben* sind süß. (Those cats *over there* are cute.)

### Innen, drinnen

*Innen* and *außen* mostly refer to the inside and outside of objects.

*Drinnen* and *draußen* are normally only used for rooms (more generally, enclosed spaces that people can be in).

- Die Wassermelone ist *innen* rot und *außen* grün. (The watermelon is red on the inside, and green on the outside.)
- *Drinnen* ist es trocken, aber *draußen* regnet es. (Inside, it is dry, but outside it is raining.)

[Café #5 · 2022-03-25 ^](#)

### Eineinhalb

Here is an overview of time spans:

#### Minuten

10	zehn Minuten
15	eine Viertelstunde
30	eine halbe Stunde
45	eine Dreiviertelstunde
60	eine Stunde
90	eineinhalb Stunden
120	zwei Stunden

## Minuten

---

150

zweieinhalb Stunden

When speaking, pay attention to the endings (marked in bold) of *eine halbe Stunde* and *eineinhalb Stunden*. If you mix these up, people will think you mean the other one.

*Eineinhalb* literally means “one, one half” (60+30). Some people use *anderthalb* instead.

## Alleine

Just as with *gern(e)*, *alleine* can omit the *-e*, without a change in meaning.

[Numbers 3 #4 · 2021-10-07 ^](#)

## Ordinal numbers

German ordinal numbers are pretty regular. The general rule is:

number range	ending
1-19	-te
> 19	-ste

  

Irregular forms	
1.	erste
3.	dritte
7.	siebte

Ordinal numbers behave like adjectives, so their endings will change accordingly:

Er kennt den **n** ersten Sänger.

Er ist **am** sechsten **n** August geboren.

Ich bin seine tausendste Lehrerin.

[Medical #2 · 2022-01-20 ^](#)

## What is a Pflaster?

*Das Pflaster* is a small adhesive bandage.

Depending on where you live, you may call it “Band-Aid”, “plaster” or “Elastoplast” in English.

The German word *Pflaster* does **not** refer to a plaster cast. The German for plaster cast is *der Gips(verband)*.

## Long and short vowels

### Which sounds are there?

In German, every vowel can be long or short. The short one often sounds more open than the long one.

The IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) is given for the geeks among you :) But you can also copy/paste one of these symbols into Wikipedia to get an in-depth explanation of it (with sound!).

vowel	short	IPA	long	IPA
a	Mann	/a/	Bahn	/a:/
ä	Bälle	/ɛ/	Käse	/ɛ:/
e	rennen	/ɛ/	Beere	/e:/
i	Mitte	/ɪ/	ziehen	/i:/
o	oft	/ɔ/	ohne	/o:/
ö	Hölle	/œ/	schön	/ø:/
u	Mutter	/ʊ/	Buch	/u:/
ü	Müll	/ʏ/	Bücher	/y:/

You can also google “german sounds” for a longer introduction to German sounds.

### When is a vowel short or long?

German has a range of spelling convention which will clearly show whether a vowel is short or long:

A vowel before a double consonant will be short:

- Mann, denn, Mutter, Bälle, backen, Pizza, Katze

Note that instead of “zz” (which only occurs in the Italian “Pizza”), German uses *tz*. Instead of “kk”, we use *ck*.

There are also some signals that clearly show the vowel is long.

Sometimes, the vowel will be doubled:

- p\_aa\_r, B\_ee\_re, B\_oo\_t, ... (this only happens with *a/e/o*)

There might be a silent *h* behind the vowel:

- f\_ah\_ren, z\_äh\_len, s\_eh\_en, \_ih\_r, \_oh\_ne, h\_öh\_er, \_Uh\_r, St\_üh\_le, ...

Note that if you read the list above, you should not hear a single *h* sound. It is *geh/en*, not *ge/hen*.

For *i*, it is more common to have an *-e* after it (sometimes even *-eh*):

- d\_ie\_, B\_ie\_ne, sp\_ie\_len, s\_ie\_ben, Bez\_ieh\_ung, ...

Again, the *h* will be silent: *Be/zieh/ung*, not *Be/zie/hung*.

But sometimes, there will not be a signal.

The following examples have an unmarked long vowel:

- B\_u\_ch, d\_a\_, A\_bend, w\_o, Not, Zitr\_o\_ne, ...

And here are some short ones:

- \_a\_n, \_O\_nkel, u\_n-, M\_a\_m\_a, H\_ä\_lfte, Z\_i\_trone, ...

For these, you just have to trust your language feeling, it will normally not be a big problem :)

[Education #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### **Student or Schüler?**

A *Student* is a university student and a *Schüler* is a pupil/student at a primary, secondary or high school. Students attending other types of schools such as language or dancing schools may also be called *Schüler*.

### **A Hochschule is not a high school**

Careful: a *Hochschule* is not a high school. Depending on the context, *Hochschule* is either an umbrella term that comprises *Universitäten* and *Fachhochschulen*, or it's a synonym for *Fachhochschule*.

A *Universität* is a full research university and a *Fachhochschule* (often just called *Hochschule*) is a university with a practical focus that offers Bachelor and Master degrees. PhD programmes may be offered in cooperation with other universities.

### **A Gymnasium is not a gym**

In German, the word *das Gymnasium* refers to a university prep-school.

The German for a sports gym is *die Turnhalle* (used by schools and sports clubs) or *das Fitnessstudio* (commercial).

[Science #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### **Motor, Motoren**

Normally, nouns don't change the stress pattern when they change into the plural:

- Ele\_fan\_t, Ele\_fan\_ten
- Ge\_le\_genheit, Ge\_le\_genheiten

Nouns ending in *-or* are an exception. In the plural, the emphasis lands on the *-or-* syllable.

- D\_ok\_tor, Dok\_to\_ren
- \_Mo\_tor, Mo\_to\_ren

[Dates 2 #4 · 2021-10-07 ^](#)

### Monatlich

Just as in English you have “year/yearly”, German has the same word pairs. In German, some of these have an umlaut change:

noun	adjective
das Jahr	jährlich
der Monat	monatlich
der Tag	täglich
die Stunde	stündlich
die Minute	minütlich
die Sekunde	sekündlich

Why does *monatlich* not change? All others are emphasized on the syllable that changes. *Monatlich* is emphasized on the first syllable.

### Seasons

The seasons in German are as follows:

English	German
spring	der Frühling
summer	der Sommer
autumn	der Herbst
winter	der Winter

*Herbst* sounds similar to “harvest”, and *Frühling* has *früh* (early) in it.

When you refer to seasons or months, you use *im*. Here’s the mnemonic again that helps you remind which is which:

- **a**m Montag
- **u**m drei **U**hr
- **i**m Juni

[Time #5 · 2021-10-07 ^](#)

### Times of day

German uses a system similar to English:

English	German	
morning	der Morgen	am Morgen
-	der Vormittag	am Vormittag
noon	der Mittag	am Mittag
afternoon	der Nachmittag	am Nachmittag
evening	der Abend	am Abend
night	die Nacht	in der Nacht
midnight	die Mitternacht	um Mitternacht

It's generally pretty straightforward. Remember this mnemonic:

- **am Montag**
- **um drei Uhr**
- **im Juni**

*Am Montag, am Mittag.* Just “at night there are different rules”: *in der Nacht* and *um Mitternacht* are irregular.

All of these have an adverbial form:

- morgen\_s\_, vormittag\_s\_, abend\_s\_, nacht\_s\_, ...

### *Morgen am Morgen?*

Similar to Spanish, the **words for “tomorrow” and “morning” are the same** in German. Unlike Spanish, German escapes this problem by choosing a different word when they clash.

Instead of *morgen am Morgen* or *morgen morgens* we say **morgen früh**.

### **Telling the time**

#### *Official time*

In German, there are “official” and informal ways to say the time. Here’s the official one (often used on radio and television):

- dreizehn Uhr neun (literally, “thirteen o’clock nine”)

Official time uses a 24 hour system, from zero to 24.

Don’t confuse “hour” and *Uhr* (they are false friends):

English	German
the hour	die Stunde
o’clock	Uhr



*Die Uhr* can also mean “clock” or “watch”. *Die Stunde* can also mean “lesson” (which confusingly might not last one hour).

### Informal time

In everyday life, people will often use informal time.

There are several systems, with two forms dominant. In many parts of Germany, this system is used:

Time	English	German
14:05	five past two	fünf nach zwei
14:10	ten past two	zehn nach zwei
14:15	a quarter past two	Viertel nach zwei
14:20	twenty past two	zwanzig nach zwei
14:25	twenty-five past two	fünf vor halb drei
14:30	half past two	halb drei
14:35	thirty-five past two	fünf nach halb drei
14:40	twenty to three	zwanzig vor drei
14:45	a quarter to three	Viertel vor drei
14:50	ten to three	zehn vor drei
14:55	five to three	fünf vor drei

Yes, the part in the middle is very confusing :) German considers the next hour to be half full. In addition, German relates “X:25” and “X:35” to the half hour.

[Body 2 #7 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

### Hirn, Gehirn

The words *das Gehirn* und *das Hirn* are used more or less interchangeably in German.

[Nature 2 #2 · 2021-10-07 ^](#)

### Der See vs. die See

*Der See* means “the lake”. ***Die See*** means “the sea, the ocean”. It is less commonly used. German uses more often *das Meer* or *der Ozean* for the latter.

Check out *Bodensee* and *Nordsee* on Google Maps and see if you can figure out which one is feminine and which one is masculine :)

### Der Strand

*Der Strand* means “the beach”. This meaning still survives in the English adjective “stranded” (literally, ended up on a lonely beach).

## Holz, Wald, Forst

In English, “wood” can refer to a material, and to a forest.

In German, *Holz* only refers to the material. *Der Wald* is “the forest”. We also have a word *Der Forst*, but it only refers to a maintained forest (something like a garden for trees), where the trees are grown for commercial purposes.

*Spiritual #2 · 2021-02-15 ^*

## Wunderbar

Due to its use as a loanword in English, *wunderbar* is often overused by English-speaking learners of German. Contrary to popular opinion, most Germans don’t run around in leather trousers, smiling broadly and shouting *Wunderbar!* at each other :)

Think of it as the equivalent to “splendid!”. If you want to sound less antiquated, better use *Super!* or *Toll!* or something like that.

*Banking #3 · 2021-02-15 ^*

## Das Konto, die Konten

Most nouns in German form the plural by appending an ending. There might be an umlaut change.

- der Hund, die Hund\_e\_
- das H\_a\_u\_s, die H\_ä\_u\_s\_er\_

A few loanwords will instead replace the singular ending with a different one:

- das Kont\_o\_, die Kont\_en\_

You will learn more of these in the skill “Business 2”.

*Business 2 #3 · 2021-02-15 ^*

## Firma

Most nouns in German get their plural by attaching an ending. There might be an umlaut change:

- der Hund, die Hund\_e\_
- das Haus, die H\_ä\_u\_s\_er\_

A few nouns (from Ancient Greek and Latin) will instead replace a singular ending with a different plural ending:

- das Muse\_um\_, die Muse\_en\_ (same for *Zentrum*, etc.)
- die Firm\_a\_, die Firm\_en\_
- das Kont\_o\_, die Kont\_en\_

- das Vir\_us\_, die Vir\_en\_
- das Vis\_um\_, die Vis\_a\_

*Objects #4 · 2021-10-07 ^*

### *Hose, Schere, Brille*

Pants used to be two hoses, until somebody had the idea of stitching them together. Glasses are now joined into one object. If you deconstruct scissors into multiple objects, you have two awkward knives and a screw.

**German uses the singular for all of these.** *Die Hose* is “a pair of pants”. *Die Hosen* (plural) is at least two pairs of pants.

### *Stelle*

*Die Stelle* has the meaning of “position” in at least two ways. It can be a location, or it can be a job position.

### *Geschenk, Gift*

The common German word German for “gift” is *das Geschenk*. **Das Gift means “poison”.** The reason is that a long time ago, “gift” in the meaning of “something that is given” was used as an euphemism for poison.

- “Why did he die?”
- “Kunigunde gave him something.”

The original meaning survives in the word *die Mitgift* (dowry).

*Adverbs 2 #4 · 2021-02-15 ^*

### *Damit vs. damit*

There are two words spelled *damit* in German.

One is a **combination of a pronoun and a preposition** (*da+mit*). It means “**with that**”.

- Das ist ein Stift. *Damit* schreibe ich. (That’s a pen. *With that*, I write.)
- Ich habe ein Deutschzertifikat. *Damit* kann ich in Deutschland studieren. (I have a German certificate. *With that*, I can study in Germany.)

This word is generally emphasized on the first syllable. As any standard sentence element, if it is used in the first position, the subject will have to go after the verb (which has to be in position 2).

The other is a **subordinating conjunction**. It translates to “**so that**”:

- Ich kaufe einen Stift, *damit* ich schreiben **kann**. (I buy a pen *so that* I can write.)
- Ich lerne Deutsch, *damit* ich in Deutschland studieren **kann**. (I learn German *so that* I can study in Germany.)

Because it creates a subordinate clause, **the verb of that clause has to go to the end**. This version of *damit* is pronounced at the second syllable.

To remember which is which, remember that the one that's emphasized at the end also sends the verb to the end.

### *Damit, um ... zu ..., zum ...*

There are at least three ways to express a goal.

#### *Zum*

The easiest just takes a simple verb:

- Ich fahre *zum Skifahren* nach Japan. (I go to Japan *for* skiing.)
- *Zum Lachen* geht er in den Keller. (He goes to the basement *to* laugh.)

The verb becomes a noun here, hence the upper-case initial, and the *zum* (zu+dem) preposition. If a verb turns into a noun, it always gets neuter gender (das Essen, das Lachen).

#### *Um ... zu ...*

If you have a more complicated verb complex (for example, with adverbs or objects), you cannot use *zum*. Use *um ... zu ...* instead:

- Ich gehe ins Restaurant, *um* mit Freunden Pizza *zu* essen. (I go to the restaurant *in order to* eat pizza with friends.)

To do this, you start with an infinitive construction:

- *mit Freunden im Supermarkt einkaufen* (to go shopping in the supermarket with friends)

If you were to use this in a sentence, it would look like this:

- Ich **kaufe** *mit Freunden im Supermarkt ein*.

The *um* goes to the beginning of the infinitive construction. The *zu* goes where the verb part (in the above example, *kaufen*) splits off.

- Ich fahre in die Stadt, *um* mit Freunden im Supermarkt ein\_*zu*\_kaufen.

#### *Damit*

If your main sentence has a different subject than your goal, you can't use an infinitive. Use *damit*, which comes with a subordinate clause.

- Ich gebe ihm mein Handy, *damit* er seine Mutter anrufen kann. (I give him my phone *so that* he can call his mom)

Read the section "*damit* vs. *damit*" for more information on how to use it.

## Womit? Damit!

Many prepositions can be combined with *wo-* and *da-*. *Da* roughly translates to “that” here, *wo* normally to “what” (not “where” which is its normal meaning).

wo-	da-
woran	daran
worauf	darauf
woraus	daraus
wobei	dabei
wodurch	dadurch
wofür	dafür
wogegen	dagegen
wohinter	dahinter
worin	darin
womit	damit
wonach	danach
worum	darum
worüber	darüber
worunter	darunter
wovon	davon
wovor	davor
wozu	dazu
wozwischen	dazwischen

If the **preposition starts with a vowel**, there will be a **binding r**. So *worum* is pronounced *wo-rum* (not *wor-um*).

[The World #2 · 2021-02-15 ^](#)

## Congratulations! :)

Welcome to the last lesson of this course!

We hope you got a good first impression on how German works and thinks. But your journey should not end here :) Find other speakers, get some learning material, and/or keep using this course.

Wir wünschen dir alles Gute!

---