

Accusative Case: The Beginning

Up to now, we've discussed grammatical gender, and we've discussed how verbs conjugate in the present tense. Today we're going to discuss our new big thing, grammatical case. Cases exist in all languages, even English (though they're not as noticeable as they are in BCS). Grammatical case is a way to categorize nouns, adjectives, pronouns, etc. according to their function in a sentence. We've already been using a case this whole time—the nominative case. The basic form of a noun, adjective, etc. is the nominative case. This is what a word looks like in the dictionary, for example. All sentence subjects are in the nominative case. So in the sentence *On voli majku* ("He loves mother") the subject, "on," is in the nominative case.

Today, we're going to start talking about a new case—the accusative case. Nouns, pronouns, adjectives, etc. that are in the accusative case are often (but not always) direct objects in a sentence. This means that they receive the action of the verb. In the above sentence, *On voli majku*, the word "majku" is the object, and it's in the accusative case. (In the nominative case, the word would be "majka.") Keep in mind that the verb *biti* does not have a direct object, so in a sentence like *Ja sam student* (or any sentence with the verb *biti*) both "ja" and "student" are in the nominative case.

So how do we put words and stuff into the accusative case? (Or, if you want to get technical and fancy, how do we *decline* nouns in the accusative case?) Well, first we use the nominative case as our base and go from there.

Neuter Nouns and Adjectives in the Accusative Case

Neuter words like "pismo" and "polje" and even "dete/dijete" don't change in the accusative case. Neither do the adjectives that modify them. So if we want to say "I love this letter," we would say *Volim ovo pismo*. Notice that "ovo pismo" is unchanged! Likewise, in *Volim ovo dugo pismo*, the adjective we added, "dugo," also remains unchanged. So luckily, putting neuter nouns and adjectives (as well as demonstrative pronominal adjectives and possessive pronominal adjectives) into the accusative case is easy.

Masculine Nouns and Adjectives in the Accusative Case

Masculine nouns and adjectives are a little more complicated than neuter nouns. For inanimate masculine nouns (and the adjectives, etc., that modify them), you're going to leave them unchanged, just like neuter nouns. By inanimate, I mean nouns that aren't people or animals. For example, in the sentence *Čitam ovaj udžbenik* the phrase "ovaj udžbenik" is in accusative case. Animate masculine nouns (and the adjectives, etc., that modify them) are more complicated, and we're going to be discussing them in a whole separate lesson. So for now, steer clear of saying things like "I love my dog/brother/father" in BCS because the words "pas," "brat," and "otac" are all animate masculine nouns. (So are male names, professions, etc.)

Feminine Nouns and Adjectives in the Accusative Case

Feminine nouns (and the adjectives, etc., that modify them) all change in the accusative case in the same way: a → u. So, back to our original sentence, up at the top: *On voli majku*. The “a” in “majka” becomes an “u.” Some more examples, this time with adjectives: *Ona čita dobru knjigu* (“She reads a good book”). You’ll notice that “dobra knjiga” becomes “dobru knjigu.” Another example: *Da li vidiš tu ženu?/Vidiš li tu ženu?* (“Do you see that woman?”) In this sentence “ta žena” becomes “tu ženu” in the accusative case. Basically, whenever you see an “a” and need to put the word in accusative case, that “a” will become an “u.”

Important: masculine nouns like *tata* and masculine names like *Luka* and *Nikola* will change just like feminine nouns in the accusative case. Thus, if you want to say “I love dad,” you’d change “tata” to “tatu”: *Ja volim tatu*. That said, any adjectives (etc.) that modify these nouns and names would look like any other masculine and would change like any other masculine animate adjective (which we won’t go into today). Equally important: F2 nouns like *stvar*, *ljubav*, and *književnost* won’t change in the accusative case. However, the adjectives (and etc.) that modify them will change in the accusative case since they look just like all other feminines. So, for example, in the sentence *Ti voliš tu stvar* (“You love that thing”) you’ll notice that in the phrase “tu stvar” “ta” has become “tu” but “stvar” stays the same.

So now that I’ve explained this, can you come up with some examples of your own using the accusative case? Work together to come up with four sentences using the accusative case. Make sure to come up with one sentence with a neuter noun in the accusative, one with a masculine noun in the accusative, and one with a feminine noun in the accusative. (And then one extra.)