

Online German course

Level A1 to C1

German declensions

In German, nouns and pronouns change their form depending on their function in the sentence. There are four grammatical cases: nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive.

Nominative: the subject or subject complement

The nominative case is used for:

- The subject of the sentence: the person or thing performing the action.

Der Hund sitzt im Garten. → The dog is sitting in the garden.

- The subject complement (predicate nominative) with certain verbs: *sein* (to be), *bleiben* (to remain), *werden* (to become), and *scheinen* (to seem).

Er ist der beste Schüler. → He is the best student.

Accusative: the direct object, expressing a movement from position/place to another, time expressions

L'accusatif sert pour :

- The direct object (direct object complement).

Siehst du das Auto? → Do you see the car?

- After the prepositions *bis*, *durch*, *für*, *gegen*, *ohne*, *um*, and *entlang*.

Das Auto fährt durch den Wald. → The car drives through the forest.

- A complement of place when there is movement toward a location.

Der Bus fährt in die Schweiz. → The bus goes to Switzerland.

- A time expression without a preposition.

Das Kind hat den ganzen Tag geschlafen. → The child slept all day.

- Greetings and expressions of good wishes.

Guten Tag! → Good day! / Hello!

Herzlichen Glückwunsch! → Congratulations!

Dative: the indirect object, static location, personal state and time expressions

The dative case is used for:

- The indirect object

Der Mann gibt dem Mädchen ein Geschenk. → The man gives a gift to the girl.

- After the prepositions *aus, bei, mit, nach, seit, von, and zu*

Die Eltern sind mit den Kindern gekommen. → The parents came with the children.

- A static location (no movement from one place to another)

Die Blumen stehen auf dem Tisch. → The flowers are on the table.

- A time expression with two-way (mixed) prepositions (*in, an, auf*)

In zwei Stunden sind wir in Wien. → In two hours, we will be in Vienna.

- Feelings or a personal state

Es geht mir gut. → I am doing well.

Ihr ist schlecht. → She feels sick.

Genitive: possession or after certain prepositions

The genitive case is used for:

- Expressing possession (between two nouns)

Der Ton des Radios ist furchtbar. → The sound of the radio is terrible.

- It can often be replaced by *von + dative*:

Der Ton vom Radio ist furchtbar.

- After certain prepositions: *außerhalb, innerhalb, statt, trotz, während, and wegen*

Trotz des Regens fand das Festival statt. → The festival took place despite the rain.

- After a word indicating a quantity or proportion

Die Hälfte des Apfels → Half of the apple.

Einige der Verletzten → Some of the injured.

Short summary

Case	Question to ask	Exemple
Nominative	Who? / What is the subject?	<i>Der Hund sitzt</i>
Accusative	What ? / Where am I going ?	<i>Ich sehe den Hund</i>
Dative	To whom? Where? / For whom?	<i>Ich gebe dem Kind ein Buch</i>
Genitive	Whose? / Of whom? / Of what?	<i>Das Ende des Films</i>