

Online German course

Level A1 to C1

Weak masculine Nouns

What are weak masculine nouns in German?

In German, there is a group of masculine nouns known as “weak masculine nouns”. Their endings change depending on the grammatical case (nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive—see the corresponding module) and whether they are singular or plural.

How it works

Plural: these nouns always end in *-en* or *-n*.

Singular:

- Nominative: base form (e.g., *der Student*)
- Accusative / Dative / Genitive: they take *-en* or *-n* (*Studenten, Jungen, etc.*)

Examples:

der Junge (the young man) → *den/dem/des Jungen* → *Jungen* (plural)

der Student (the student) → *den/dem/des Studenten* → *Studenten* (plural)

Exception: *der Herr*: (sir, mister)

singular (except nominative): *Herrn*

plural: *Herren*

How to recognize a weak masculine noun?

- Masculine nouns ending in *-e* (referring to a human or animal):

der Affe (the monkey), *der Hase* (the hare), *der Junge* (the boy/young man), *der Riese* (the giant), *etc.*

- Masculine nouns of foreign origin (stressed ending):

der Fotograf (the photographer), *der Soldat* (the soldier), *der Präsident* (the president), *der Tourist* (the tourist), *der Idiot* (the idiot), *der Planet* (the planet), *etc.*

- A few masculine nouns ending in a consonant:

der Bauer (the farmer), *der Held* (the hero), *der Mensch* (the human being), *der Nachbar* (the neighbor), *der Herr* (Mr./sir, the gentleman), *etc.*

Do not confuse them!

Substantivized adjectives (adjectives used as nouns) are *not* weak masculine nouns. *der Deutsche* ("the German") comes from *deutsch*, and is therefore not a weak masculine noun.

The 6 irregular weak masculine nouns

These nouns take *-ns* in the genitive singular instead of just *-n* or *-en*.

der Buchstabe (letter of the alphabet) → *des Buchstabens*

der Funke (spark) → *des Funkens*

der Gedanke (thought) → *des Gedankens*

der Glaube (belief) → *des Glaubens*

der Name (name) → *des Namens*

der Wille (will) → *des Willens*

Also: *das Herz* (neuter) follows the same pattern.