German course

Level A1 to C1

Genders in German

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In German, there are three genders: masculine, feminine or neuter. But be careful! In German, even objects have a gender…

"the letter" becomes " *der Brief*" (masculine) in German.

"the sun" becomes " *die Sonne* " (feminine).

"the quarter" is neuter "*das Viertel*"…

So how do you know if a German name is masculine, feminine or neuter? A few patterns can help.

Masculine nouns

- Nouns that refer to "male" humans or animals are masculine. A few examples:

der Vater (the father), *der Arzt* (the doctor), *der Lehrer* (the teacher), *der Hund* (the dog), *der Hahn* (the rooster)

Be careful! "the cat" is an exception: *die Katze* (female)

- The seasons, months and days of the week are all masculine:

der Sommer (summer), *der Mai* (May), *der Mittwoch* (Wednesday)

- Weather events are also masculine:

der Wind (the wind), *der Regen* (the rain), *der Hagel* (the hail), *der Sturm* (the storm)

- The car brands are all masculine:

der Ford , *der BMW* , *der Mercedes*

Masculine nouns

Some nouns endings make it possible to know the gender:

-ant : *der Konsonant* (the consonant)
-ast : *der Kontrast* (the contrast)
-ich : *der Teppich* (the mat)
-ig : *der Honig* (the honey)
-ismus : *der Sozialismus* (the socialism)
-ling : *der Liebling* (the favorite)
-or : *der Motor* (the motor)
-us : *der Rhythmus* (the rhythm)

Feminine nouns

Nouns that are always feminine include:

- "Female" humans or animals:

die Mutter (the mother), *die Ärztin* (the female doctor), *die Lehrerin* (the female teacher), *die Henne* (the hen)

- Brands of aircraft, motorcycles and boat names:

Die Boeing (the Boeing), *die Suzuki* (the Suzuki), *die "Bismarck"* (the boat "Bismarck")

Be careful! One exception: *der Airbus* (the Airbus)

- Rivers in Germany:

die Donau (the Danube), *die Elbe* (the Elbe), *die Mosel* (the Moselle), *die Ruhr* (the Ruhr)

Be careful! Two exceptions: *der Rhein* (the Rhine), *der Main* (the Main)

- Numbers:

die Null (the zero), *die Eins* (the one), *die Hundert* (the hundred), *die Million* (the million)

Feminine nouns

Names terminated with the following endings are always feminine:

-a : *die Pizza* (the pizza)

-anz/enz : *die Eleganz* (the elegance)

-ei : *die Bücherei* (the library)

-heit/keit : *die Krankheit* (the disease)

-ie : *die Biologie* (the biology)

-in: *die Freundin* (the female friend)

-schaft : *die Herrschaft* (power, reign)

-sion/tion : *die Explosion* (the explosion)

-tät: *die Universität* (the university)

-ung: *die Bedeutung* (the meaning)

-ur: *die Natur* (the nature)

Neuter names

Neuter names include:

- Young humans or animals (regardless of whether they are "male" or "female":
das Baby , *das Kind* (the child), *das Lamm* (the lamb)

- Continents, most countries and cities:
das alte Europa (the old Europe), *das neue Polen* (the new Poland), *das geteilte Berlin* (the divided Berlin)

Be careful! "Neutral" cities and countries do not normally take an article. We will say *Frankreich* (France), *Spanien* (Spain) etc. The article is only necessary when the noun is accompanied by an adjective, as in the examples above.

Be careful! Some countries are not "neuter" and always take the article: *die Schweiz* (Switzerland), *der Iran* (Iran), *die Ukraine* (Ukraine), *die Niederlande* (the Netherlands), *das Kongo* (Congo), *die Vereignigten Staaten* (the United States)

- Letters of the alphabet, musical notes:
das A (the "A"), *das Ypsilon* (the "Y"), *das hohe C* (the tenor)

Neuter names

Names with the following endings are always neuter:

-chen : *das Mädchen* (the little girl). Names in -chen often refer to something "small ". *der Hund* = the dog, *das Hündchen* = the little dog, *die Katze* = the cat, *das Kätzchen* = the little cat, etc.

-lein : *das Büchlein* (the booklet)

-ma : *das Drama* (the drama)

 -ment*: das Appartement* (the apartment)

-tel : *das Viertel* (quarter)

-um : *das Album* (the album)