

Determiners in German

Determiners are small words placed before a noun:

articles (der/ein), possessives (mein/dein), demonstratives (dieser), etc.

Here, we focus on a few useful determiners that have particular patterns.

1. alle = all/all the

How to use it: **always with a plural noun.**

Endings = like *dieser*.

Example:

Sie hat **alle Bonbons** gegessen.

She's eaten up **all the sweets**.

2. beide = both

Always **plural**.

Endings like *dieser*.

Example:

Ich möchte **beide T-Shirts** kaufen.

I'd like to buy **both** T-shirts.

3. ein paar = a few

It doesn't decline. Not to be confused with *ein Paar* (a couple).

Example:

In **ein paar Tagen** fahren wir nach Griechenland.

In **a few days** we are going to Greece.

4. einige = some

Used mainly **with a plural noun**.

It declines as *dieser*.

Example:

Sie hat **einige Bücher** gekauft

. She bought **some books**.

Special case: sometimes used with an abstract singular noun.

Nach **einigem** überlegen...

After **some** deliberation...

5. irgendein/ irgendwelche = any, some (indefiniteness)

irgendein → always with a **singular noun**

irgendwelche → always with a **plural noun**

Idea: **it emphasizes indefiniteness**, it is a bit random.

Examples:

Er hat **irgendeinen Job**.

He has **some job**.

Sie zeigte mir **irgendwelche Fotos**.

She showed me **some pictures**.

6. jeder = each, every, any

Always **singular**.

Declines as *dieser*.

Example:

Wir spielen **jeden Tag** Monopoly.

We play Monopoly **every day**.

7. mancher = some/many, in the sense of 'a fair number'

Often used **in the plural**, sometimes in the singular.

It declines as *dieser*.

Example:

An **manchen Tagen** bleibt Alfred im Bett.

Some days Alfred stays in bed.

8. mehrere = several

Always **plural**.

It declines as *dieser*.

Example:

Er brauchte **mehrere Monate**.

It took him **several months**.

9. sämtliche = all, referring to the members of a particular set

Idea: **all without exception**, the complete set.

It declines as *dieser*.

Example:

Sämtliche Dinosaurier sind ausgestorben.

All the dinosaurs have died out.

10. viel/viele = much, many, a lot

Singular: *viel* (without ending) → countless quantity

Plural: *viele* → it declines as *dieser*

Example:

Viel Glück! / Ich fange **viele Fische**.

Good luck! / I catch **a lot of fishes**.

11. was für (ein) = what type of...

Singular: was für **ein/eine** + nom

Plural: was für + plural noun

Examples:

Was für **ein Mann** ist er?

What sort of a man is he?

Was für **Tiere** magst du?

What types of animals do you like?

12. welcher = which

Used in the singular and plural.

It declines as *dieser*.

It may mean 'some/any' in spoken German.

Examples:

Welche Partei wählst du?

Which party do you vote for?

Ich brauche Marken. Hast du **welche**?

I need stamps. Do you have **some**?

13. wenig/wenige = little/few/not much/not many

Singular: wenig (no ending)

Plural: wenige (declines as *dieser*)

Examples:

Er hat **wenig Zeit**.

He doesn't have much time.

Das Flugzeug landet in **wenigen Minuten**.

The plane will be landing in **a few minutes**.