

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.

The rule can be summarized as follows:

- In the plural, these nouns always take *-en* or *-n*.
- In the singular, these nouns also take *-en* or *-n*, except in the nominative case, where they remain unchanged.

Examples:

der Junge (“the young man,” nominative singular) becomes *Jungen* in the singular accusative, dative, and genitive, as well as in the plural.

der Student (“the student,” nominative singular) becomes *Studenten* in the singular accusative, dative, and genitive, as well as in the plural.

Be careful! The noun *Herr* (“Mr.” / “sir”) takes *-n* in the singular (except, of course, in the nominative) and *-en* in the plural (in all cases).

How to recognize a weak masculine noun?

Generally, weak masculine nouns are often masculine nouns referring to people or animals (although not all masculine nouns referring to people or animals are weak masculine nouns). They can be divided into three categories:

- All masculine nouns ending in *-e*

der Affe (the monkey)

der Bote (the messenger)

der Erbe (the heir)

der Hase (the hare)

der Junge (the young man)

der Riese (the giant)

and so on.

- Masculine nouns of foreign origin (ending in a stressed syllable):

der Diamant (the diamond)

der Fotograf (the photographer)

der Monarch (the monarch)

der Soldat (the soldier)

der Präsident (the president)

der Planet (the planet)

der Tourist (the tourist)

der Astronom (the astronomer)

der Idiot (the idiot)

and so on.

-A few masculine nouns ending in a consonant:

der Bauer (the farmer)

der Fürst (the prince)

der Held (the hero)

der Herr (Mr., sir, gentleman)

der Mensch (the human being, person)

der Nachbar (the neighbor)

and so on.

Do not confuse them!

Adjectives used as nouns are NOT weak masculine nouns. For example, *der Deutsche* ("the German") comes from the adjective *deutsch* and is NOT a weak masculine noun.

To learn how to use these particular nouns, see the module "Adjectives Used as Nouns."

Irregular weak masculine nouns

There are six masculine nouns that behave like weak masculine nouns but take *-ns* in the genitive singular instead of simply *-n*.

These six nouns are:

der Buchstabe (the letter of the alphabet)

der Funke (the spark)

der Gedanke (the thought)

der Glaube (the belief, faith)

der Name (the name)

der Wille (the will)

To this list, one may add the neuter noun *das Herz* (the heart), which behaves in the same way as the six nouns listed above.