

The declensions in German

In German, **nouns and pronouns change their endings according to their role in the sentence**. There exist four cases: **nominative, accusative, dative and genitive**.

1. Nominative: the subject or attribute of the subject

The **nominative** is used to:

- The **subject** of the sentence: who does the action
 - *Der Hund sitzt im Garten.* → The dog is sitting in the garden
 - The **attribute of the subject** with certain verbs: *sein* (to be), *bleiben* (to stay), *werden* (to become), *scheinen* (to seem)
 - *Er ist der beste Schüler.* → He is the best student
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2. Accusative: the direct object or to express a movement

The **accusative** is used to:

- The direct object complement
 - *Siehst du das Auto?* → Can you see the car?
 - The prepositions **bis, durch, für, gegen, ohne, um, entlang**
 - *Das Auto fährt durch den Wald.* → The car goes across the forest
 - The **location** if **there is movement**
 - *Der Bus fährt in die Schweiz.* → The bus is going to Switzerland
 - **Expression of time** without preposition
 - *Das Kind hat den ganzen Tag geschlafen.* → The child slept the whole day
 - **Greetings and wishes**
 - *Guten Tag!* → Hello !
 - *Herzlichen Glückwunsch!* → Congratulations !
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3. Dative: the indirect object, location without movement, feelings

The **dative** is used to:

- The indirect object
 - *Der Mann gibt dem Mädchen ein Geschenk.* → The man gives the girl a gift
- The prepositions **aus, bei, mit, nach, seit, von, zu**

- *Die Eltern sind mit den Kindern gekommen.* → The parents came with the children
 - A **location** (without movement)
 - *Die Blumen stehen auf dem Tisch.* → The flowers are on the table
 - **Expression of time** with mixed prepositions (*in, an, auf...*)
 - *In zwei Stunden sind wir in Wien.* → In two hours we will be in Vienna
 - **Feelings /personal state**
 - *Es geht mir gut.* → I'm doing well
 - *Ihr ist schlecht.* → She feels terrible
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4. Genitive: possession or after certain prepositions

The **genitive** is used to:

- Show **possession**
 - *Der Ton des Radios ist furchtbar.* → The sound of the radio is horrible
 - The genitive can often be replaced by *von* + *dative*: *Der Ton vom Radio ist furchtbar*
 - After some **prepositions** : *außerhalb, innerhalb, statt, trotz, während, wegen*
 - *Trotz des Regens fand das Festival statt.* → The festival took place despite the rain
 - After a **word of quantity / proportion**
 - *Die Hälfte des Apfels* → Half the apple
 - *Einige der Verletzten* → Some of the injured
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Tip:

Case	Questions to ask yourself	Example
Nominative	Who? Who or what is performing the action?	<i>Der Hund sitzt</i>
Accusative	What? Where am I going?	<i>Ich sehe den Hund</i>
Dative	To whom? / Where are you? / For who?	<i>Ich gebe dem Kind ein Buch</i>
Genitive	Who is the possessor? To what is it part of / What does it belong to?	<i>Das Ende des Films</i>