

German course

Level A1 to C1

Weak masculine nouns

What are weak masculine nouns?

In German, there is a group of masculine nouns called "weak masculine nouns" which ending will vary according to the case (nominative, accusative, dative and genitive, see the corresponding chapter) and whether they are in the singular or plural

The rule can be summarized as follows:

- In the plural, these nouns always take *-en* or *-n* at the end.
- In the singular, these nouns always take *-en* or *-n* at the end unless they are in the nominative, in which case they remain unchanged.

Examples: *der Junge* (the young, singular nominative) will become *Jungen* in the accusative, dative and genitive singular and in the plural. *Der Student* (the student, singular nominative) will become *Studenten* in the accusative, dative and genitive singular and in the plural.

Be careful! The noun *Herr* (sir) will take *-n* in the singular (except in the nominative) and *-en* in the plural (all cases)

How to recognize them

Generally, weak masculine nouns represent male humans or animals (but not all masculine nouns that represent humans or animals are necessarily weak masculine nouns!). These can be divided into three main categories:

- All masculine nouns that end in *-e*:

der Affe (the monkey), *der Bote* (the messenger), *der Erbe* (the heir), *der Hase* (the hare), *der Junge* (the youth), *der Riese* (the giant) etc.

How to recognize them

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

der Diamant (the diamond), *der Fotograf* (the photographer), *der Monarch* (the monarch), *der Soldier* (the soldier), *der Präsident* (the president), *der Planet* (the planet), *der Tourist* (the tourist), *der Astronom* (the astronomer), *der Idiot* (the idiot) etc.

- Some masculine nouns that end with a consonant:

Der Bauer (the farmer), *der Fürst* (the prince), *der Held* (the hero), *der Herr* (the gentleman), *der Mensch* (the man), *der Nachbar* (the neighbor) etc.

Be careful!

Adjectives used as nouns are NOT weak masculine nouns: *der Deutsche* (the German) comes from the adjective *deutsch* and is NOT a weak masculine noun!

For information on how to use these nouns, see the chapter "Adjectives used as nouns"

Irregular masculine nouns

There are six masculine nouns that follow the pattern of weak masculine nouns but have the particularity of taking *-ns* as the ending for the singular genitive instead of simply taking *-en* or *-n*.

These six nouns are:

der Buchstabe (the letter of the alphabet), *der Funke* (the spark), *der Gedanke* (the thought), *der Glaube* (the belief), *der Name* (the name), *der Wille* (the will)

To this list may be added a neuter noun, *das Herz* (the heart), which follow the same pattern as the six names mentioned above.