

German course

Level A1 to C1

Some German determiners

Determiners in German

What are determiners? Well, definite and indefinite articles (*der, ein, die, eine...*), demonstratives (*dieser, diese, etc.*), possessives (*mein, seine, ihrer etc.*) and a few others.

You will find everything you need to know about the first three categories mentioned in the chapter "nominative, accusative, dative and genitive" and in the "tables of declensions". This chapter focuses on a few other determiners that have their own patterns. Let's go!

alle (all/all the)

This determiner is used with plural nouns, and its endings will be the same as *dieser*.

alle (nominative), *alle* (accusative), *allen* (dative), *aller* (genitive)
+ plural nouns

Example:

Sie hat alle guten Bonbons aufgegessen. = She's eaten up all the good sweets.

beide (both)

This determiner is used with plural nouns, and its endings will be the same as *dieser*.

beide (nominative), *beide* (accusative), *beiden* (dative), *beider* (genitive) + plural nouns

Example:

Ich möchte beide T-Shirts kaufen. = I would like to buy both t-shirts.

ein paar (a few)

This determiner does not decline. Be careful not to confuse it with the noun *ein Paar* (a couple).

Example:

Wir fahren in ein paar Tagen nach Griechenland. = We are going to Greece in a few days' time.

einige (some)

This determiner is usually used with plural nouns, but can be found with a singular noun in rare cases. Its endings will follow those of the demonstrative *dieser*.

einige (nominative), *einige* (accusative), *einigen* (dative), *einiger* (genitive) + plural nouns

If it is used with a singular noun, the ending will also follow that of *dieser* (masculine), *diese* (feminine) and *dieses* (neuter) depending on the case (nominative, accusative, dative, genitive)

Example:

Nach einigem Überlegen hat sie einige Bücher gekauft. = After some deliberation she bought some books.

irgendein/irgendwelche ("some/any")

irgendein/irgendwelche refer to the existence of something or someone indefinite. *irgendein* is always used with a singular noun. Its endings will follow those of the definite article *ein*:

irgendein (male nominative), *irgendeine* (female nominative), *irgendein* (neuter nominative) + singular noun

See the tables of declensions for the accusative, the dative or the genitive.

irgendwelche is always used with a plural noun, and its ending will follow that of *dieser*.

Irgendwelche (nominative), *irgendwelche* (accusative), *irgendwelchen* (dative), *irgendwelcher* (genitive)

To better understand the use of these two determiners, here are two examples:

Er hat irgendeinen Job bei einer Zeitung. = He has some job with a newspaper.

Sie hat mir Fotos von irgendwelchen Filmstars gezeigt, von denen ich noch nicht gehört habe. = She showed me pictures of some filmstars I've never heard of.

jeder (each, every, any)

jeder is only used with a singular noun and will follow the table of declensions of *dieser, diese, dieses*:

jeder (nominative male), *jede* (nominative female), *jedes* (nominative neuter) etc.

Example:

Wir spielen jeden Tag Monopoly. = We play Monopoly every day.

mancher (some, many, "a fair number of")

mancher is mainly used in the plural (even if it is sometimes found in the singular) and will follow the table of declensions of *dieser*:

mancher (male nominative), *manche* (female nominative), *manches* (neuter nominative), *manche* (plural nominative) etc. See *dieser* in the "tables of declensions" for the other endings.

Example:

An manchen Tagen bleibt Alfred einfach im Bett. = Some days Alfred just stays in bed.

mehrere (several)

mehrere is always used with a plural noun and will follow the table of declensions of *dieser*:

mehrere (nominative), *mehrere* (accusative), *mehreren* (dative),
mehrerer (genitive)

Example:

Er brauchte zur Reparatur des Computers mehrere Monate. = He needed several months to repair the computer.

sämtliche (all, referring to the members of a particular set)

sämtliche represents all members of a defined group. Its endings will follow the table of declensions of *dieser*.

Example:

In der Kreidezeit sind sämtliche Dinosaurier ausgestorben. = All the dinosaurs died out in the Cretaceous period. (all members of the "dinosaur" group)

viel (many, much, a lot)

When used in the singular, *viel* usually has no ending. When it is plural, its endings follow those of *dieser*:

viele (plural nominative), *viele* (plural accusative), *vielen* (plural dative), *vieler* (plural genitive)

Example:

Viel Glück! Ich hoffe, du fängst viele Fische. = Good luck! I hope you catch lots of fish.

was für (ein) (what sort of... »)

In the singular, the word *ein* declines like the indefinite article (a).

was für ein (male nominative), *was für eine* (female nominative and accusative), *was für einen* (male accusative), etc.

Example:

Was für ein Mann ist er denn? = What sort of a man is he? What type of man is he?

In the plural, we simply use *was für* without *ein*, with obviously a plural noun that will follow the usual declensions of plural nouns:

Was für Tiere magst du am liebsten? = What kind of animals do you like best? What are your favorite animals?

welcher (which)

It can be used in the singular as well as in the plural and will be declined as *dieser*:
welche, welchen, welcher etc.

Example:

Welche Partei wählst du dieses Mal? = Which party are you going to vote for this time?

This determiner may have the meaning of "some or any" in spoken German. It will still be declined as *dieser*.

Ich brauche Marken. Hast du welche? = I need stamps. Do you have some?

Wenn du Erdbeeren möchtest, dann nimm dir welche! = If you want strawberries, then take some!

Vor dem Haus stehen welche. = A few people / Some people are standing in front of the house.

wenig / wenige (little, few, not many, not much)

When used in the singular, it usually has no ending (*wenig*) and when used in the plural, it has the same endings as *dieser*:

wenige (plural nominative), *wenige* (plural accusative), *wenigen* (plural dative), *weniger* (plural genitive)

Example:

Das Flugzeug landet in wenigen Minuten. = The plane will be landing in a few minutes.

Er hat wenig Zeit. = He doesn't have much time.