

Substantive – nouns

Nouns are used to give names to people, objects and things, as well as abstract ideas and are always written with a capital letter in German:

der Frieden, der Freund peace, friend

die Katze, die Rose cat, rose

das Haus, das Kind house, dress

1. Genus Gender

In German every noun has a grammatical gender. The gender is shown by the artikel in front of the noun

masculine	feminine	neuter
der Baum <i>tree</i>	die Blume <i>flower</i>	das Handy <i>mobile phone</i>

2. Singular und Plural Singular and Plural

Normally every noun has a singular and a plural form. The accompanying article is always the same – it doesn't matter whether the noun in the singular is masculine, neuter or feminine, the article in the plural is always *die*. The indefinite article is even easier: there isn't any.

3. Kasus Case Endings

Unlike English, German has retained case endings for nouns indicating the grammatical role they play in a sentence. Without them the meaning of the sentence would be unclear. Nouns are used in four different „cases“:

Nominativ – nominative, **Akkusativ** – accusative, **Dativ** – dative und **Genitiv** – genitive. Each case indicates the part a noun plays in a sentence: the subject, object, etc. The case is determined by the verb or by prepositions.

Case	Role in the sentence	What to ask
Nominativ nominative	subject; subject's complement Herr Walther ist mein Vorgesetzter. Herr Walther is my superior.	Wer? Was? Who? What?
Akkusativ accusative	standard object (similar to direct object in some languages) Frau Schmitt liest einen Bericht. Frau Schmitt is reading a report. after some prepositions Das Protokoll ist für den Chef. The minutes are for the boss.	Wen? Was? Who(m)? What?
Dativ dative	special object (similar to indirect object in some languages) Die Pizza schmeckt mir. I like this pizza. after some prepositions Er nimmt sein Handy aus der Tasche. He takes his mobile phone out of his pocket.	Wem? To whom?
Genitiv genitive	shows mostly a possessive relationship, it is sometimes used after certain prepositions. Das Büro meines Vaters. My father's office. Aufgrund des schlechten Wetters wurde das Fußballspiel verschoben. Due to the bad weather the football match was postponed.	Wessen? Whose?

4. Deklination Noun Declension

The different cases cause only a few changes to the endings of the nouns themselves.

singular				plural
	masculine	feminine	neuter	
nominative	der Mann	die Frau	das Kind	die Männer die Frauen die Kinder
genitive	des Mannes	der Frau	des Kindes	der Männer der Frauen der Kinder
dative	dem Mann	der Frau	dem Kind	den Männern* den Frauen* den Kindern*
accusative	den Mann	die Frau	das Kind	die Männer die Frauen die Kinder

For nouns in the singular the following rules apply:

- Feminine nouns remain the same in all cases.
- Masculine and neuter nouns in the genitive take the ending - (e)s.
- Nouns in the plural take an -n in the dative, unless they already end in -n or -s:

die Leute	mit den Leuten	people, with the people
die Frauen	mit den Frauen	women, with the women
die Autos	mit den Autos	cars, with the cars

*Just to make things interesting, there are, of course, exceptions.

German Grammar in a Nutshell. Stief, Christine und Stang, Christian. Langenscheidt

Possessivartikel

Possessive Articles

A possessive article indicates the person something belongs to:

Maria hat ein Handy. *Maria hat got a mobile phone.*
 Sie hat ihr Handy immer dabei. *She always has her mobile phone with her.*
 Herr Romero sieht mit seiner neuen *Herr Romero's new glasses suit him better*
 Brille besser als mit seiner alten. *than his old ones.*
 Meine Kollegin und ich haben einen *My colleague and I have prepared a report*
 Bericht über die Konferenz angefertigt. *on the conference. You can read our report*
 Unser Bericht ist im Intranet aufrufbar. *on the intranet.*

The choice of possessive article is dictated by the person who possesses something:

ich	I	mein	my
du	you	dein	your
er	he	sein	his
sie	she	ihr	her
es	It	sein	it
Sie	you, formal	Ihr	your
wir	we	unser	our
ihr	you, plural	euer	your
sie	they	ihr	their
Sie, plural, formal	you, plural, formal	Ihr	your

Possessive articles follow the same formal rules as the indefinite article:

Das ist Simone und ihr Hund *That's Simone and her Dog. (masculine, nom.)*
 Simone liebt ihren Hund. *Simone loves her dog. (masculine, acc.)*
 Simone geht *ihrem Hund* *Simone goes to work with her dog. (masculine,*
 zur Arbeit. *dative)*

There are two sides to every possessive article: the choice and the ending by the noun and the role it plays in the sentence.