

## Nominativ, Akkusativ und Dativ

### What is the subject of a sentence?

The **subject** of a sentence is the person or thing that is “doing” the verb. To find the subject, look for the verb and ask “Who or what is doing?” (substitute the verb for “doing” -- Who or what is singing? Who or what is sleeping?) Subjects are always in the **NOMINATIVE CASE**.

### What is the direct object of a sentence?

The **direct object** receives the action of the verb. To find the direct object, look for the verb and ask “Who or what is being verbed?” (as in Who or what is being kicked? Who or what is being read?) Direct objects take the **ACCUSATIVE CASE**.

For example:

The woman sees the girl.

*The woman is the subject and is nominative.*

*the girl is the direct object and is accusative.*

The girl sees the woman.

*The girl is the subject and is nominative.*

*the woman is the direct object and is accusative.*

In English the articles “the”, “a” and “an” do not change depending on whether the noun is accusative or nominative. (Only pronouns change case in English: compare “She sees me” and “I see her”.)

In German not only the personal pronouns but also many other words change their form based on case. The articles (*der, ein, kein, etc.*), possessive adjectives (*mein, dein, etc.*), and a few (unusual) nouns all change their form (usually by adding or changing endings) depending on what case they are in. Right now we’ll be dealing mostly with the definite articles (*der/die/das*) and the indefinite articles (*ein/eine*); the table below shows how they change in the accusative case:

### Nominative

	<u>Definite</u>	<u>Indefinite</u>
Masc.	<b>Der</b> Tisch ist braun.	<b>Das</b> ist ein Tisch.
Fem.	<b>Die</b> Lampe ist neu.	<b>Das</b> ist eine Lampe.
Neut.	<b>Das</b> Fenster ist offen.	<b>Das</b> ist ein Fenster.
Plural	<b>Die</b> Bücher sind interessant.	<b>Das</b> sind keine Bücher.

All of the nouns above are in the nominative case because they are the subjects of the sentences or because they follow the verb “sein.”

### Accusative

	<u>Definite</u>	<u>Indefinite</u>
Masc.	Ich sehe <b>den</b> Tisch.	Ich habe <b>einen</b> Tisch.
Fem.	Ich sehe <b>die</b> Lampe.	Ich habe <b>eine</b> Lampe.
Neut.	Ich sehe <b>das</b> Fenster.	Ich habe <b>ein</b> Fenster.
Plural	Ich sehe <b>die</b> Bücher.	Ich habe <b>keine</b> Bücher.

### Nominative

- for the subject of a sentence: who or what is doing this?

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- for predicate nouns: when the main verb is *sein* or *werden*, use the nominative for both subject and predicate nouns.

Das ist ein Tisch.

### Accusative

- for the direct object of a sentence: who or what is being <verbed>?

Ich habe einen Tisch.

*What is being had? A table.*

Note that the very common expression "es gibt" (there is/are) requires that the noun be in the accusative case because it is grammatically a direct object.

Es gibt einen Stuhl da drüben.

*There is a chair over there.*

- after the accusative prepositions and postpositions: *durch, für, gegen, ohne, um* (memory aid: dogfu), as well as the postpositions *bis* and *entlang*. If a noun follows these prepositions, it will ALWAYS be in the accusative!

Er geht um den Tisch.

*Around what? The table.*

Ist das Geschenk für mich?

*For whom? For me.*

- time expressions in a sentence are usually in accusative: *jeden Tag, letzten Sommer, den ganzen Tag, diesen Abend*, etc. We haven't officially learned this yet, but it's good to know.

Jeden Morgen esse ich Brot und Marmelade zum Frühstück.

*Every morning.*

Let's practice a bit. These sentences mix nominative and accusative forms, so watch out.

1. Heute habe ich ein \_\_\_\_ hässlichen Mann gesehen!
2. Mein \_\_\_\_ Schwester und \_\_\_\_ (I) fahren morgen nach Hause.
3. Nächste Woche wollen wir \_\_\_\_ (you) besuchen.
4. Man soll nie ohne sein \_\_\_\_ Deutschbuch zum Unterricht kommen.
5. Mein \_\_\_\_ Lieblingsgruppe (f) Rammstein spielt am Freitag in Köln!
6. \_\_\_\_ (you) musst mir d \_\_\_\_ Geld (n) geben!
7. D \_\_\_\_ Tisch ist wirklich alt. \_\_\_\_ (you) sollst ein \_\_\_\_ neuen Tisch kaufen!
8. D \_\_\_\_ Mantel habe ich für \_\_\_\_ (you) gekauft!
9. Hast du mein \_\_\_\_ Mantel irgendwo sehen? Ich kann \_\_\_\_ (it) nicht finden. Übrigens, ich kann mein \_\_\_\_ Hemd auch nicht finden. Weißt du zufällig, wo \_\_\_\_ (it) ist?
10. Morgen fahren wir durch d \_\_\_\_ Stadt. D \_\_\_\_ Glockenturm (m) ist schön. Wir besichtigen d \_\_\_\_ Turm und kaufen dort ein \_\_\_\_ Postkarte (f).

Now it's time to learn the **DATIVE** case -- the third of German's four cases. (You'll learn the fourth, the genitive case, next semester.) First, let's learn what the forms of the dative look like for the articles:

	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>pl</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>pl</i>
NOM	der	die	das	die	ein	eine	ein	keine
AKK	den	die	das	die	einen	eine	ein	keine
DAT	<b>dem</b>	<b>der</b>	<b>dem</b>	<b>den</b>	<b>einem</b>	<b>einer</b>	<b>einem</b>	<b>keinen</b>

### When to use the dative case?

A primary use of the dative case is for the **indirect object** of a sentence. An indirect object is the beneficiary of whatever happens in a sentence. It's usually a person, although it doesn't have to be. If you ask yourself: "TO whom or FOR whom is this being done?", the answer will be the indirect object, and in German it will need the dative case.

Not every sentence will have an indirect object -- all semester, we've mostly been using sentences that do not have indirect objects. Like in English, only some verbs allow an indirect object: *to give (to)*, *to bring (to)*, *to tell (to)*, *to buy (for)*, *to send (to)* are some good examples of verbs that will almost always have an indirect object. In English, we don't distinguish the direct and indirect object in the forms of words; instead, we often use "to" or "for" to mark these. If you can potentially insert "to" or "for" in front of a noun in an English sentence, it's probably an indirect object.

Ich gebe <u>der Frau</u> ein Buch.	I'm giving <u>her</u> a book = a book <u>to her</u> .
Er schenkt <u>mir</u> ein Buch.	He's giving <u>me</u> a book.
Ich habe das <u>dem Mann</u> schon gesagt.	I already told <u>the man</u> that.
Wir kaufen <u>unserer Mutter</u> ein Geschenk.	We're buying <u>our mother</u> a present.

Let's practice identifying objects in some sentences first. Tell whether the underlined nouns/pronouns in these sentences are SUBJECTS (S), DIRECT OBJECTS (DO), or INDIRECT OBJECTS (IO).

1. The salesman offered the customer the car.
2. We're bringing her the mail.
3. I lent my stereo to you.
4. He promised his wife everything.
5. The realtor sold the house to us.
6. For my dog, I'm buying a chew-toy.

Now do the same thing, but with these German sentences.

1. Ich gebe ihm ein Auto.
2. Die Schwester hat ihrem Lehrer die Antwort gesagt.
3. Der Sohn gibt seiner Mutter eine Blume.
4. Kannst du uns dein Auto leihen (=to lend)?
5. Euch gebe ich jetzt das Quiz.
6. Die Fotos habe ich meinen Freunden gezeigt (=showed).

You'll notice in the last sentence that the normal plural form "die Freunde" has changed to "meinen Freunden". This is the only irregularity in the dative case: **dative PLURAL forms add an -n to the noun** if at all possible. Consider:

	den Freunden		(adds -n to plural form <i>Freunde</i> )
Ich gebe	den Amerikanern	viele Geschenke.	(adds -n to plural form <i>Amerikaner</i> )
	den Leuten		(adds -n to plural form <i>Leute</i> )
	den Eltern		(already had an -n for plural, no second -n)

den Frauen  
den Cousins

added)  
(already had an -n for plural, no second -n added)  
(had an -s for plural, but *Cousinsn* not possible!)

Now, remember that your dative articles are *dem - der - dem - den*. Let's try filling in some blanks.

1. Ich kaufe mein\_\_\_\_\_ Vater ein\_\_\_\_\_ Krawatte zum Geburtstag.
2. Die Studenten sagen d\_\_\_\_\_ Lehrerin d\_\_\_\_\_ Antworten (*pl*).
3. Kannst du d\_\_\_\_\_ Mann sein\_\_\_\_\_ Suppe bringen, bitte?
4. Wir kaufen d\_\_\_\_\_ Kind ein\_\_\_\_\_ Eis (*n*).
5. Morgen gebe ich mein\_\_\_\_\_ Freunde\_\_\_\_ (*pl*) d\_\_\_\_\_ Weihnachtsgeschenke (*pl*).

In addition to the articles (*dem, einem, etc*), we need to learn the pronouns in the dative case (to me, to you, etc). Here's a summary table:

	NOM	AKK	DAT		NOM	AKK	DAT
<i>I</i>	ich	mich	<b>mir</b>	<i>we</i>	wir	uns	<b>uns</b>
<i>you</i>	du	dich	<b>dir</b>	<i>you all</i>	ihr	euch	<b>euch</b>
<i>he</i>	er	ihn	<b>ihm</b>	<i>they</i>	sie	sie	<b>ihnen</b>
<i>she</i>	sie	sie	<b>ihr</b>	<i>You</i>	Sie	Sie	<b>Ihnen</b>
<i>it</i>	es	es	<b>ihm</b>				