Cases in German:

Nominative, Accusative and Dative

(review)

Cases in German

- This presentation reviews cases you already know: nominative, accusative, and dative.

- Revisit this presentation from time to time as a good resource and whenever you have questions about the German case system.

What do we already know?

- Each noun (person, place, or thing) in the German language has a grammatical gender: masculine, feminine, or neuter and must use the correct corresponding article.

- There are definite articles (the= *der, die, das*) and indefinite articles (a= *ein, eine, ein*)

- The German language uses cases to indicate the grammatical function of a noun in a sentence.

- In order to use the correct definite and indefinite articles and German cases, you must be able to identify when a noun is a subject, direct object, indirect object, or possessive noun in a sentence.

- Articles, adjectives, and other words accompanying the noun also reflect the noun's case in the sentence by changing their endings.

- Sometimes certain verbs or prepositions determine case

Definitions

- The nominative case describes the subject of a sentence, which is the person or thing performing the action of the verb.

- The accusative case describes the direct object of a sentence (the thing the subject acts upon).

- The dative case describes the indirect object of a sentence, which usually receives an action from the direct object (in the accusative case); it designates the person for or to whom something is done.

Review Chart: Definite and Indefinite Articles

Definite Articles	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Nominative	der	die	das	die
Accusative	den	die	das	die
Dative	dem	der	dem	den

Here's a little help to memorize the endings (last letter of each definite article):

R-E-S-E   (Rese)
N-E-S-E   (Nese)
M-R-M-N   (Mr. Man)

Indefinite Articles	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Nominative	ein	eine	ein	meine
Accusative	einen	eine	ein	meine
Dative	einem	einer	einem	meinen

Achtung
der-words are definite articles and words like dies-, jed-, welch-, solch-
ein-words are indefinite articles and words like kein- and all possessive determiners (mein-, dein-, sein-, ihr-, sein-, unser-, euer-, Ihr-, ihr-)

Examples: Nominative = Subject

- Der/ein Mann ist groß.

- Die/eine Frau spielt Gitarre.

- Das/ein Kind isst eine Pizza.

Adjective endings also reflect the nominative case and differ when they accompany a definite or an indefinite article:

- Der alte Mann/ein alter Mann wohnt hier.

- Die junge Frau/eine junge Frau spielt Gitarre.

- Das kleine Kind/ein kleines Kind isst eine Pizza.

Chart for nominative (including adjective endings)

Nominative	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
der-words	der alte Mann	die junge Frau	das kleine Kind	die neuen Freunde
ein-words	ein alter Mann	eine junge Frau	ein kleines Kind	meine neuen Freunde
unpreceded	alter Mann	junge Frau	kleines Kind	neue Freunde

Notes:

- the subject tells you how to conjugate the verb
- we use the nominative case after these verbs: sein (*to be*) / werden (*to become*) / heißen (*to be called*) / bleiben (*to stay/remain*)
- the question word "*wer*" refers to the subject of the sentence
- there are no prepositions in German followed by the nominative case

Examples: Accusative=Direct Object
[nominative=subject]

- Die Studentin kauft den/einen Kugelschreiber.

- Isabelle isst die/eine Pizza.

- Der Professor liest das/ein Buch.

Adjective endings also reflect the accusative case and differ when they accompany a definite or an indefinite article:

- Die Studentin kauft den neuen/einen neuen Kugelschreiber.

- Isabelle isst die leckere/eine leckere Pizza. [lecker=*delicious*]

- Der Professor liest das spannende/ein spannendes Buch. [spannend=*exciting*]

Chart for accusative (including adjective endings)

Accusative	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
der-words	den alten Mann	die junge Frau	das kleine Kind	die neuen Freunde
ein-words	einen alten Mann	eine junge Frau	ein kleines Kind	meine neuen Freunde
unpreceded	alten Mann	junge Frau	kleines Kind	neue Freunde

Notes:

- only the masculine endings are different in accusative (feminine, neuter, and plural endings are the same as in nominative)
- verbs that are commonly followed by the accusative case: kaufen (to buy) / nehmen (to take) / mögen (to like) / möchten (would like) / wollen (to want) / haben (to have) / tragen (to read) / machen (to do / make) / finden (to find) / brauchen (to need) / trinken (to drink) / essen (to eat) / 'es gibt' (there is / are)
- the question word "*wen*" refers to the direct object of the sentence
- you will use the accusative case following certain prepositions (there is a list later in this presentation)

Examples: Dative=Indirect Object
[nominative=subject; accusative=direct object]

- Ich schenke dem Mann/einem Mann den/einen Pullover.
- Sara gibt der/einer Professorin das/ein Buch.
- Die Mutter kauft dem/einem Kind die/eine Hose.

Adjective endings also reflect the dative case and differ when they accompany a definite or an indefinite article:

- Ich schenke dem/einem alten Mann den/einen schönen Pullover.
- Sara gibt der/einer bösen Professorin das große/ein großes Buch.
- Die Mutter kauft dem/einem kleinen Kind die/eine kurze Hose.

Chart for dative (including adjective endings)

Dative	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
der-words	dem alten Mann	der jungen Frau	dem kleinen Kind	den neuen Freunden
ein-words	einem alten Mann	einer jungen Frau	einem kleinen Kind	meinen neuen Freunden
unpreceded	altem Mann	junger Frau	kleinem Kind	neuen Freunden

Note:

- All nouns (except for some proper names) add -n in the dative plural, unless their plural ends in -s, for example:
  die Freunde (Nom. pl.) → den Freunden (Dat. pl.) / die Kinder (Nom. Pl.) → den Kindern (Dat. Pl.)
- verbs that are commonly followed by the dative case: glauben (to believe) / gratulieren (to congratulate)/ helfen (to help) / schmecken (to taste) / antworten (to reply) / danken (to thank) / gehören (to belong) / passen (to fit) / gefallen (to please)
- the question word "*wem*" refers to the indirect object of the sentence
- you will use the dative case following certain prepositions (there is a list later in this presentation)

Why all these cases???

- The German language uses cases to explicitly mark the grammatical function of nouns which allows for flexible word order. By adding specific case endings to nouns, their role in the sentence is clear regardless of their position. This allows German to have a much more flexible word order to convey meaning, very different from the strict (subject-verb-object) word order that English uses.

Look at the following example:

- Der Hund beißt den Mann. [The dog bites the man.]

- Den Mann beißt der Hund. [still means: The dog bites the man.]

- In both sentences, "der Hund" is the subject (indicated by the nominative case), doing the biting, regardless of the word order.

- This is not possible in English. If you place the man at the beginning of the sentence, he becomes the subject, thus biting the dog.

- The dog bites the man. <--> The man bites the dog.

Prepositions + Case

Often, we use prepositions in a sentence. When we use them, the preposition determines the case of the noun's article (and its adjective endings). Use the case the preposition demands. Prepositions are very bossy! This will be a main grammatical focus this semester.

- Accusative prepositions: durch, für, gegen, ohne, um (Einheit 6.12)
  Ich laufe durch den Park.

- Dative prepositions: aus, außer, bei, mit, nach, seit, von, zu (Einheit 5.8/7.6)
  Ich fahre mit dem Auto zur Uni.

- Two-way prepositions: either Accusative (indicating movement) or Dative (indicating location): an, auf, hinter, in, neben, über, unter, vor, zwischen (Einheit 8.6/8.8)
  Ich gehe ins Kino.   [oder]   Ich bin im Kino.

Personal Pronouns

Pronouns also change depending on the case they are being used in. You can review this in Einheit 3.14 and 5.8.

Nominative	Accusative	Dative
ich	mich	mir
du	dich	dir
er	ihn	ihm
sie	sie	ihr
es	es	ihm
wir	uns	uns
ihr	euch	euch
sie	sie	ihnen
Sie	Sie	Ihnen

Examples:

Was schenkst du deinem Bruder?
Ich schenke ihm ein Buch.

Rufst du mich heute Abend an?
Ja, ich rufe dich heute Abend an.

Sehen Sie die Katze?
Nein, ich sehe sie nicht.

Was kauft ihr euren Großeltern?
Wir kaufen ihnen Konzertkarten.

Summary

Learning the German case system (Nominativ, Akkusativ, and Dativ) can be tricky, but here are <u>four</u> tips to make it easier:

1. Learn with Example Sentences, Not Just Rules - instead of just memorizing charts, practice cases in real sentences. For example:

- Nominativ: *Der Hund ist groß.* (The dog is big.)
- Akkusativ: *Ich sehe den Hund.* (I see the dog.)
- Dativ: *Ich gebe dem Hund einen Knochen.* (I give the dog a bone.)

Reading and using sentences like these will help the cases feel more natural.

2. Use Question Words to Identify the Case - each case answers specific questions:

- Wer/Was? (Who/What?) → Nominativ → *Wer ist hier? Der Mann.*
- Wen/Was? (Whom/What?) → Akkusativ → *Wen siehst du? Den Mann.*
- Wem? (To whom?) → Dativ → *Wem gibst du das Buch? Dem Mann.*

Summary Continued

3. Memorize Prepositions that Take Specific Cases - some prepositions always take a certain case:

- Akkusativ: *durch, für, gegen, ohne, um* (*Ich lerne für meine Prüfung.*)
- Dativ: *aus, außer, bei, mit, nach, seit, von, zu* (*Ich spreche mit dem Lehrer.*)

There are also two-way prepositions (like *in, auf, unter, vor, hinter, zwischen, über, neben, an*) that take accusative for movement (*Ich gehe in den Park*.) and dative for location (*Ich bin im Park*.).

4. Practice with Speaking and Writing Exercises

- Try repeating sentences aloud to reinforce patterns.
- Write short stories or diary entries, focusing on different cases.
- Use the exercises provided in this book and the supplemental material provided - remember to use the *Grammatik* section at the end of the book as a quick reference.