

Adjectives as nouns

— ADJEKTIVE ALS NOMEN

Adjectives as nouns are adjectives written with a capital letter and used like nouns, while still taking adjective endings: der Bekannte, etwas Neues.

Even after you turn an adjective into a noun, it keeps following the adjective-ending rules.

CONTENTS

- 01 Right now: the adjective becomes a noun, the endings stay
- 02 You already do this in English (“the elderly”, “the rich”) 03 Table: using etwas, nichts and alles
- 04 Two places where people go wrong 05 The part nobody tells you: the most common ones
- 06 Test yourself

01 00:10

Right now: the adjective becomes a noun, the endings stay

SHORTCUT ⚡ In German you can turn an adjective (e.g. *deutsch*, *bekannt*) straight into a noun by **starting it with a capital letter** (*der Deutsche*, *der Bekannte*). But these words **keep taking adjective endings**.

- ✓ Er ist **ein Bekannter** von mir.
He’s an acquaintance of mine.
- ✓ Ich spreche mit **dem Bekannten**.
I’m talking to the acquaintance.

You already do this in English (“the elderly”, “the rich”)

English drops the noun after an adjective too: instead of “the old people” we say “the elderly”, instead of “the poor people” just “the poor”. German does the same thing, only far more often, and it writes the word with a capital letter.

ENGLISH	GERMAN	ADJECTIVE ENDING
the adult (man)	der Erwachsene	Definite article → -e
an adult	ein Erwachsener	Indefinite article (der) → -er
the adults (plural)	die Erwachsenen	Plural with definite article → -en

One difference from English: **“the elderly” never changes, but Erwachsene does.** The last letters change with the article in front of it, exactly as in the adjective-ending table.

✗ **Das ist ein Erwachsene.**

This is an adult (man).

✓ **Das ist ein Erwachsener.**

This is an adult (man).

Table: using etwas, nichts and alles

After words that express an indefinite amount, adjectives become nouns and are written with a capital letter.

WORD	ENDING	EXAMPLE
etwas / nichts	-es	etwas Neues (something new)
viel / wenig	-es	viel Gutes (a lot of good)
alles (everything)	-e	alles Gute (all the best)

This one is very common: on birthdays people say “*Alles Gute!*” because **alles** takes the ending **-e**. **etwas** and **nichts**, on the other hand, take **-es**.

✗ **Ich wünsche dir alles Gutes.**

I wish you all the best.

✓ **Ich wünsche dir alles Gute.**

I wish you all the best.

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04 04:00

Two places where people go wrong



TRAP 1

Forgetting the ending

✗ Ich fahre mit ~~einem Deutscher~~.

The adjective ending has to stay.

✓ Ich fahre mit **einem Deutschen**.

In the dative, adjectives take -en.



TRAP 2

etwas neues (lowercase)

✗ Gibt es ~~etwas neues~~?

Adjectives used as nouns can't be written in lowercase.

✓ Gibt es **etwas Neues**?

Is there anything new? (Capital letter and -es).

This is one of the places where written exams take off the most points.

05 05:30

The part nobody tells you: the most common ones

You can actually turn any adjective into a noun, but in everyday life these four turn up most: **der Deutsche** (the German), **der Bekannte** (the acquaintance), **der Angestellte** (the employee), **der Erwachsene** (the adult).

In Germany you keep running into these words on forms (especially Angestellter). Knowing that they are really adjectives will save you when you have to pick the ending.

06 BUILD

Build the sentence yourself

Tap the words and put them in order. This is the hardest part of German — and there are no options to pick from, **you** build it.

TAP THE WORDS

TAP THE WORDS

TAP THE WORDS

06 07 : 20

Test yourself

Tap an answer — we will look at why together.

+4

Take the full test

10 questions · timed · rule breakdown at the end



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