

Genitiv

— DER GENITIV

The Genitiv is the German case of possession, and certain prepositions also require it: des Mannes, der Frau, trotz des Regens.

“Das Auto des Mannes” — the man’s car. The Genitiv shows possession: most masculine and neuter nouns add -s or -es, feminine and plural nouns don’t. English puts ’s on every owner; German changes the article by gender, and in speech “von” often takes its place.

CONTENTS

- 01 The big picture: two articles, two endings
- 02 English does this too — but the other way round
- 03 Proper names: no apostrophe in German
- 04 Prepositions that take the Genitiv
- 05 What nobody tells you: where the von escape is allowed and where it isn’t
- 06 What to do this week
- 07 Test yourself

01 00:10

The big picture: two articles, two endings

⚡ SHORTCUT The article is **masculine/neuter** → **des**, **feminine/plural** → **der**. And **only masculine/neuter nouns** get -s or -es. A feminine noun never changes.

GENDER	ARTICLE	ENDING ON THE NOUN	EXAMPLE
masculine	des	-s / -es	das Auto des Mannes
neuter	des	-s / -es	die Tür des Hauses
feminine	der	—	das Auto der Frau
plural	der	—	die Autos der Kinder

The same holds for indefinite articles: **eines Mannes** · **einer Frau** · **eines Kindes**. And for possessives: **meines Bruders** · **meiner Schwester**.

✓ **Das ist das Auto meines Bruders.**

That is my brother’s car.

02 01:10

English does this too — but the other way round

English has two ways to show ownership: the owner up front with *'s* (*the man's car*), or the owner at the back with *of* (*the door of the house*). German uses the second order: it names **the thing owned first** and **throws the owner to the back**, marked by the article.

ENGLISH	ORDER	GERMAN
the man's car	owner first →	das Auto des Mannes ← owner last
the woman's bag	owner first →	die Tasche der Frau
the door of the house	owner last — like German	die Tür des Hauses

This flip is where people who build the sentence in English and then translate trip most often. The right reflex: **say the OWNED thing first, then the owner.**

Second difference: in English the owner **always** takes 's. In German a **feminine noun never changes** — only its article does. **der Frau**, not **der Frauens**.



TRAP 1

-s or -es

Masculine and neuter nouns have two options, and the choice depends on **the length of the word and its last letter**.

CASE	ENDING	EXAMPLE
one syllable	-es	des Kindes · des Mannes · des Hauses
several syllables	-s	des Lehrers · des Computers · des Vaters
ending in -s · -ss · -ß · -z · -tz	-es is required	des Platzes · des Gesetzes

With one-syllable words you can also hear **-s** (des Manns), but **in writing -es is preferred**. If you hesitate in an exam, put **-es** on the one-syllable word.

03 02:40

Proper names: no apostrophe in German

With people's names the Genitiv **goes in front** and simply takes **-s**. The English reflex is a **mistake** here: no apostrophe.

× ~~Anna's~~ Auto

Your English habit — wrong in German.

✓ **Annas** Auto

Anna's car.

✓ **Peters** Bruder wohnt in Berlin.

Peter's brother lives in Berlin.

- ① Exception: if the name already ends in **-s** • **-z** • **-x**, the apostrophe **does** come — **Hans' Auto** • **Max' Buch**.
The alternative is more common: **das Auto von Hans**.

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04 03:30

Prepositions that take the Genitiv

The Genitiv does not only answer “whose?”. It also turns up **after a group of prepositions**. These are classic B1 written-exam questions.

PREPOSITION	MEANING	EXAMPLE
wegen	because of	wegen des Wetters — because of the weather
trotz	despite	trotz des Regens — despite the rain
während	during	während der Woche — during the week
statt / anstatt	instead of	statt des Autos — instead of the car
außerhalb / innerhalb	outside / inside, within	innerhalb einer Woche — within a week

während is both a preposition and a conjunction. As a preposition it goes **with a noun** and takes the Genitiv (**während der Woche**); as a conjunction it goes **with a clause** and sends the verb to the end (**während ich koche**). The second is on the [time conjunctions page](#).



TRAP 2

wegen dem Wetter — fine on the street, wrong in the exam

Most Germans use **wegen** and **trotz** with the **Dativ** in everyday speech. You will hear it, a lot. But in a **written exam it counts as a mistake** — the Duden still says Genitiv.

✗ ~~wegen dem~~ Wetter

Common on the street, wrong in the exam.

✓ **wegen des** Wetters

Because of the weather. — this is the correct one.

Exception: if the word after it has **no article**, the Genitiv is invisible and the Dativ is correct — **wegen Umbau geschlossen** (closed due to renovation). You will see this sign a lot in Germany.

05 05:00

What nobody tells you: where the von escape is allowed and where it isn't

Plenty of sources say “the Genitiv is dying, just use **von**” and close the topic. That is **half true**. The escape is not free everywhere — it is **required in three places and optional in two**.

WHERE	GENITIV	VON + DATIV
Everyday speech	das Auto des Mannes	das Auto von dem Mann — allowed
Proper name	Annas Auto	das Auto von Anna — allowed
wegen · trotz · während	required	~~not accepted in writing~~
Written exam · formal letter	required	~~looks low-level~~
Plural without article	~~die Rechte Kinder~~ — the Genitiv is invisible	required — die Rechte von Kindern ✓

So the escape is free **when you speak**, not **when you write**. In the written part of the B1 exam, using the Genitiv is a direct level marker — the reader notices.

The second thing nobody says: the Genitiv lives mostly **in fixed phrases**, and you can use them without knowing the declension. **eines Tages** (one day) · **meiner Meinung nach** (in my opinion) · **in der Nähe des Bahnhofs** (near the station) · **am Ende des Monats** (at the end of the month). These four alone lift your speaking.

06 05:45

What to do this week

This topic sticks by **assigning owners to objects**. Five minutes a day:

- Write five objects in your room with their owners: **das Buch meines Bruders** · **die Tasche meiner Schwester**.
- Build each one again with **von** and read the two side by side — which one suits writing?
- Three sentences with **wegen**: **Wegen des Regens bleibe ich zu Hause**.

- Three sentences with **trotz** — and **make sure you did not write the Dativ**.
- Memorise four phrases: **eines Tages** • **meiner Meinung nach** • **in der Nähe des ...** • **am Ende des ...**

① Next up: two-part conjunctions — **entweder...oder** • **weder...noch** • **je...desto**.

07 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

TIPS

Know this before the test

The core of the topic in three lines, then the mistakes people make most often.

01

**des / der and the noun's
-(e)s ending**

Masculine and neuter nouns take the article **des** and an **-(e)s** at the end of the noun: **des Mannes** • **des Hauses**. Feminine and plural take **der** and the noun does not change.

das Auto **des Mannes** • die Tasche **der Frau**

02

**Prepositions that take
the Genitiv**

wegen • **trotz** • **während** • **statt** take the Genitiv in written German. In speech you also hear them with the Dativ, but exams and formal writing expect the Genitiv.

wegen des Wetters • **trotz des Regens** • **während der Woche**

03

**Proper names: add -s,
no apostrophe**

With people's names the Genitiv attaches to the name itself and is used **without an article**: **Annas Auto**. The English apostrophe (**Anna's**) does not exist in German.

Annas Auto • **Peters Hund**

04

**In speech, von + Dativ
takes its place**

In everyday language the Genitiv is dropped and **von** + Dativ steps in. The meaning is the same; the difference is style — Genitiv in writing, **von** in speech.

das Auto meines Vaters →
das Auto von meinem Vater

✗ ~~das Auto des Mann~~

✓ das Auto des Mannes

Changing only the article is not enough: masculine and neuter nouns also take **-(e)s** in the Genitiv.

✗ ~~die Tasche des Frau~~

✓ die Tasche der Frau

The Genitiv article of feminine nouns is **der**, and the noun never changes. **des** is only for masculine and neuter.

✗ ~~Anna's Auto~~

✓ Annas Auto

The apostrophe comes from English. In German a proper name forms the Genitiv directly with **-s**.

✗ ~~wegen dem Wetter (in a written exam)~~

✓ wegen des Wetters

The Dativ version is common in speech, but **wegen** officially takes the Genitiv, and written exams look for it.

07 06 : 10

Test yourself

Tap an answer — we will look at why together.

+7

Finish the topic: take the full test

13 questions · timed · exam style · 60% finishes the topic



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