

Indefinite pronouns

— INDEFINITPRONOMEN

Indefinite pronouns point to people or things without saying exactly who or what: *man*, *jemand*, *etwas*, *alle*.

The German versions of English words like “someone, everyone, no one, some”.

CONTENTS

- 01 Right now: there's a word for everything 02 You already do this in English (with a different word)
03 Table: *jemand*, *alle* and the *irgend-* family 04 Two places people go wrong
05 The part nobody tells you: skipping the *jemand* endings 06 Test yourself

01 00:10

Right now: there's a word for everything

SHORTCUT ⚡ Indefinite pronouns save you when you don't want to say (or don't know) exactly who or what you mean. *man* means people in general, *jemand/niemand* means someone/no one, *etwas/nichts* means something/nothing.

✓ Hier darf **man** nicht rauchen.

You can't smoke here.

✓ Ist **jemand** da?

Is anyone there?

✓ Ich habe **nichts** gesehen.

I didn't see anything.

You already do this in English (with a different word)

In English we often skip the real subject and say “you can’t smoke here”, “one doesn’t say that”, “they say it’s going to rain” — or we switch to the passive: “Smoking isn’t allowed.” German sentences must have a subject, and the word that plays this role is “man”. It is the German “you/one/they”.

ENGLISH (HIDDEN SUBJECT)	GERMAN (MAN)	USE
This is how it's done .	Das macht man so .	general rule
You can't smoke here .	Hier darf man nicht rauchen .	ban / rule
How do you get there?	Wie kommt man dahin?	directions

man (lower case) is conjugated like the 3rd person singular (er/sie/es). Don’t confuse it with “der Mann” (the man).

- ✗

Wie sagt es auf Deutsch?

How do you say it in German?
- ✓

Wie sagt man auf Deutsch?

How do you say it in German?

Table: jemand, alle and the irgend- family

Most of these pronouns change with the case, just like nouns do.

PRONOUN	MEANING	AKKUSATIV	DATIV
jemand	someone	jemanden	jemandem
niemand	no one	niemanden	niemandem
jeder (like der)	everyone / each	jeden	jedem
alle (plural)	everyone / all	alle	allen

etwas and nichts do not change. manche, einige, viele, wenige take plural endings.

irgend- is a prefix that makes things even vaguer: irgendjemand (anyone at all), irgendwo (somewhere or other), irgendwann (at some point).

- ✗

Ich brauche alle Stift.

I need all the pens.
- ✓

Ich brauche alle Stifte.

I need all the pens.

04 04:00

Two places people go wrong



TRAP 1

man vs Mann

- ✗ Hier darf ~~Mann~~ nicht rauchen.

The man may not smoke here (wrong use).

- ✓ Hier darf **man** nicht rauchen.

You can't smoke here (people in general).



TRAP 2

jeder vs alle

- ✗ ~~Alle~~ Person ist wichtig.

Person is singular, alle needs a plural.

- ✓ **Jede** Person ist wichtig.

Every person is important.

- ✓ **Alle** Personen sind wichtig.

All people are important.

jeder goes with singular nouns, **alle** with plural nouns.

05 05:30

The part nobody tells you: skipping the jemand endings

In everyday German you will hear plain **jemand** and **niemand** instead of **jemanden** (Akk) and **jemandem** (Dat).

- ✓ Hast du **jemand** gesehen?

Common in everyday speech (grammatically it should be jemanden).

In a written exam that is a mistake, but in daily conversation everybody does it.

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

Test yourself

Tap an answer — we will look at why together.

+4

Take the full test

10 questions · timed · rule breakdown at the end

↗

ADVERTISEMENT



728 × 250