

N-declension

— DIE N-DEKLINATION (SCHWACHE NOMEN)

The N-Deklination is a group of masculine nouns that add -n or -en in every case except the Nominativ.

Some masculine nouns in German are considered “weak”: everywhere except the Nominativ (the subject form) they get an -n (or -en) on the end: der Junge -> den Jungen.

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01 00:15

Right now: nouns that take -n everywhere

SHORTCUT ⚡ Most nouns change only through the article in the Akkusativ or Dativ (den Tisch). But words in the **N-Deklination** group **also take -n or -en on their own ending**, next to the article.

✓ **Ich sehe den Jungen.**

I see the boy. (not den Junge)

✓ **Das ist das Auto des Student**en**.**

This is the student's car. (not des Students)

This rule applies in every case except the Nominativ (the subject form): Akkusativ, Dativ and Genitiv.

02 01:30

English does this too, with pronouns (sort of)

English has almost no cases left, but pronouns still change their own ending: *he* → *him*, *who* → *whom*. German usually shows the case through the article (der -> den). But for N-Deklination words the noun itself changes too, a bit like *he* → *him*.

CASE	NORMAL NOUN (DER HUND)	N-DEKLINATION (DER JUNGE)
Nominativ (subject)	der Hund	der Junge
Akkusativ (direct object)	den Hund	den Jungen
Dativ (indirect object, "to")	dem Hund	dem Jungen
Genitiv ("of", possession)	des Hundes	des Jungen

As you may have noticed, Junge took -n even though it is not a plural. It is only a case ending.

03 02:45

Table: which nouns belong to this group?

The words in the N-Deklination group share two features: apart from das Herz they are all **masculine (der)** and they describe living beings (people/animals).

CATEGORY	EXAMPLE WORDS	AKKUSATIV FORM
Masculines ending in -e	Junge , Kollege , Kunde , Löwe	den Jungen , den Kollegen
Ending in -ent	Student , Präsident , Assistent	den Studenten , den Präsidenten
Ending in -ist / -at	Tourist , Polizist , Soldat	den Touristen , den Soldaten
Exceptions	Herr , Mensch , Nachbar , Bär	den Herrn , den Menschen , den Nachbarn

Das Herz (heart) is the only neuter exception: in the Akkusativ it takes no ending (das Herz), the Dativ is dem Herzen and the Genitiv is des Herzens.

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Trap: expecting -s in the Genitiv



TRAP

Applying the Genitiv rule to N-Deklination words

Normal masculine words take -s or -es in the Genitiv (possession) (des Vaters). N-Deklination words **do not take -s**; they take -n / -en as always (Exception: a few words like *der Name* and *der Gedanke* take both -n and -s in the Genitiv: *des Namens*).

✗ Das Auto des Studentes

Wrong. -es is for normal words.

✓ Das Auto des Studenten

Correct.

✗ Die Tasche des Herrs

Wrong.

✓ Die Tasche des Herrn

Correct (the word Herr is special and takes only -n).

The part nobody mentions: it looks like the plural

The -n/-en ending that N-Deklination adds to the word is **the same** as the word's plural form. So "den Studenten" can mean both "the student" (singular Akkusativ) and "to the students" (plural Dativ). You can only tell which one is meant from the context of the sentence. (For the plural Akkusativ, "the students", you say "die Studenten".)

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

05:00

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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