

Possessive pronouns

— DIE POSSESSIVPRONOMEN

German possessives show who something belongs to and agree with the thing owned: mein Bruder, seine Frau.

“Sein Haus” — but the owner might be a woman. English already tells “his” from “her” by the owner, and German does too. What English never does is change the word for the thing owned: German adds gender and number endings.

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01 00:10

Who owns it — the word tells you



SHORTCUT

The possessive word follows **the owner for its stem, and the thing owned for its ending**: mein Bruder but meine Schwester.

You already do half of this in English: “his car” or “her car” depends on the owner. German **has to make the same choice**: **sein** if the owner is male, **ihr** if the owner is female or if there are several owners. The extra step, which English does not have, is the ending.

WHO	WORD	EXAMPLE
ich · I	mein	mein Bruder — my brother
du · you	dein	dein Buch — your book
er · he	sein	sein Auto — his car
sie · she	ihr	ihr Auto — her car
es · It	sein	sein Name — its name

WHO	WORD	EXAMPLE
wir · we	unser	unser Haus — our house
ihr · you (plural)	euer	euer Lehrer — your teacher
sie · they	ihr	ihre Kinder — their children
Sie · you (formal)	Ihr	Ihr Ticket — your ticket

The formal **Ihr** is written with a **capital letter** even in the middle of a sentence — that is the only thing that tells it apart from “their”.

- ① What decides the stem is **the owner’s gender**, not the gender of the thing owned. **Er** liebt **seine** Frau. — the owner is male (**er**), so **sein**; the **-e** comes from **Frau** being feminine.

02 01:40

Declension — exactly what ein does

Good news: you are not learning a new pattern. **mein** • **dein** • **sein** • **ihr** all decline like **ein**. They take the ending **ein** takes, and where **ein** has no ending, they have none.

	MASCULINE • DER	FEMININE • DIE	NEUTER • DAS	PLURAL • DIE
Nominativ (subject)	mein Vater	meine Mutter	mein Kind	meine Eltern
Akkusativ (object)	meinen Vater	meine Mutter	mein Kind	meine Eltern
Dativ	meinem Vater	meiner Mutter	meinem Kind	meinen Eltern

Do not memorise the table, memorise **one line**: *in the Akkusativ only the masculine changes* → **meinen**. Feminine, neuter and plural stay the same as in the Nominativ. This is exactly where most A1 mistakes happen.

- **unser** and **euer** lose the inner **e** when an ending is added: **euer** → **eure** Mutter • **euren** Vater.
- In the plural Dativ, the possessive takes **-en** and the noun takes **-n**: **mit meinen Kindern**.
- With a possessive there is no article: **mein Vater** is right, **der mein Vater** is wrong.

03 03:40

sein • ihr — three questions that end the confusion

When you build a sentence, ask in this order: **1) Who is the owner? 2) Male or female? 3) What gender and case is the thing owned?** The first two questions choose the word, the third chooses the ending.

SENTENCE	OWNER	WORD	WHERE THE ENDING COMES FROM
Er sucht seine Tasche .	er (male)	sein	die Tasche → Akk . feminine → -e
Sie sucht ihren Mantel .	sie (female)	ihr	der Mantel → Akk . masculine → -en
Sie besuchen ihre Eltern .	sie (they)	ihr	plural → -e
Wir helfen unserem Nachbarn .	wir	unser	helfen takes Dativ → masculine Dat . -em

- ✓

Das ist Ali. **Seine** Schwester wohnt in Izmir.

The owner is Ali (male) → sein; Schwester is feminine → -e
- ✗

Das ist Ayşe. **Seine** Schwester wohnt in Izmir.

the owner is a woman, so it should have been ihre

Three traps



TRAP 01

Looking at the gender of the thing, not the owner

The most common mistake. If you mean his own wife and say **Er liebt ihre Frau.**, the sentence means “he loves somebody else’s wife”. The owner is **er**, so the right form is **seine Frau**. The **owner** picks the word, the **thing owned** picks the ending.



TRAP 02

Adding -en to every gender in the Akkusativ

Wrong: **Ich sehe meinen Mutter.** In the Akkusativ **only the masculine** changes. The right form is **meine Mutter** — the feminine Akkusativ is the same as the Nominativ.



TRAP 03

The e that drops out of euer

euere Mutter · eueren Vater are in the dictionary but rare and old-fashioned. When an ending arrives, the inner e almost always drops: **eure Mutter · euren Vater**. With **unser** the drop is optional: **unsere** is the common form.

TIPS

Know this before the test

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

01

The owner picks the word, the noun picks the ending

Two separate questions:
WHO is the owner
(mein/dein/sein/ihr...) and
what gender/case is the
thing owned (the ending).

02

They decline like ein

Possessives belong to the
ein-family: bare in the
masculine/neuter
Nominativ (**mein** Buch), **-e**
for feminine/plural (**meine**
Mutter), **-en** for the

03

The e of euer drops out

With an ending, **euer** → **eure**
· **euren**: **eure Mutter**
("euere" is rare and old-
fashioned).

Mix them up and you get
the **sein/ihr** mistake.

seine Frau · ihr Mann

masculine Akkusativ
(**meinen Schlüssel**).

Ich suche meinen
Schlüssel.

eure Mutter

04

Formal possessive: Ihr,
always capitalised

Ihr Ticket, bitte. — the
possessive of the polite Sie.
A lowercase **ihr** means
“her” or “their”.

Ihr Ticket, bitte.

~~✗ Das ist Ali. Ihre Frau heißt Ayşe.~~

✓ Seine Frau heißt Ayşe.

The owner is male: **sein**. The ending comes
from the feminine noun: **seine**.

~~✗ Sie sucht ihr Mantel.~~

✓ Sie sucht ihren Mantel.

der Mantel is masculine and the object: **-en**.

~~✗ euer Mutter~~

✓ eure Mutter

With a feminine noun **euer** takes an ending
and loses its inner e: **eure**.

~~✗ ihr Ticket, bitte (formal address,
lowercase i)~~

✓ Ihr Ticket, bitte.

The polite possessive is
capitalised everywhere.

05 05 : 50

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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