

the preposition an

— DIE PRÄPOSITION AN

an is a two-way preposition: it takes the dative for a position and the accusative for a direction.

The preposition “an” expresses both place and time. For place, the question “where?” takes the dative and “where to?” takes the accusative. **Learners usually forget the movement and use the dative every time.**

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01 00:00

an – two cases (dative / accusative)

“an” takes two cases: dative if it answers “wo?” (where), accusative if it answers “wohin?” (where to). The simple rule: if something moves to a new place in the sentence, use the accusative; if not, the dative.

Same verb, different case: **Ich stehe an der Wand.** (position, dative) — **Ich stelle das Bild an die Wand.** (movement, accusative). English does the same job with “I’m standing at the wall” vs. “I put the picture on the wall”.

02 01:10

an with position (dative): examples

In the sentences below “an” shows a position, so the dative is used.

GERMAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Ich sitze an dem Tisch .	I'm sitting at the table .	Dative – position
Das Auto steht an der Ampel .	The car is stopped at the traffic light .	Dative – position
Wir warten an der Bushaltestelle .	We're waiting at the bus stop .	Dative – position
Das Bild hängt an der Wand .	The picture is hanging on the wall .	Dative – position

Every sentence in the table answers the question “wo?”.

03 02:20

an with direction (accusative): examples

In the sentences below “an” shows movement towards a target, so the accusative is used.

GERMAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Ich hänge das Poster an die Wand .	I'm hanging the poster on the wall .	Akkusativ – direction
Er stellt die Flasche an den Rand .	He puts the bottle at the edge .	Akkusativ – direction
Wir legen das Handtuch an den Pool .	We put the towel down by the pool .	Akkusativ – direction
Sie klebt den Zettel an den Kühlschrank .	She sticks the note on the fridge .	Akkusativ – direction

Every sentence answers the question “wohin?”.

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04 03:30

Contractions (am · ans) and use in time expressions

“an” merges with certain articles: “an dem” → **am**, “an das” → **ans**. In speech these contractions are a must.

For days and dates the contracted form is always used: **am Montag**, **am 3. Mai**. “an dem Montag” or “an das Mai” is wrong. It is the German version of English “on Monday”, “on 3 May”.

① In time expressions “an” never stands on its own.

Traps



TRAP 01

Using the dative when there is movement

The learner reaches for the dative, thinking of a position; in fact the object is being put somewhere.

✗ **Ich stelle den Stuhl an der Tisch.**

“Tisch” is masculine, so the dative would be “dem”; besides, there is movement, so the accusative “den” is needed.

✓ **Ich stelle den Stuhl an den Tisch.**

I put the chair at the table.



TRAP 02

Using “in” instead of “an” in time expressions

Days of the week use “an” in its contracted form; “in” is wrong.

✗ **In Montag gehe ich ins Kino.**

“in” is not used with days; the correct contraction is “am” (= an dem).

✓ **Am Montag gehe ich ins Kino.**

On Monday I’m going to the cinema.



TRAP 03

Using the contraction “am” with the wrong gender

“am” = an + dem (masculine/neuter). With feminine nouns “an der” has to stay; “am” is not possible.

✗ **Ich hänge das Bild am die Wand.**

“Wand” is feminine: dative “der”, accusative “die”; “am” only works with masculine/neuter.

✓ **Ich hänge das Bild an die Wand.**

I’m hanging the picture on the wall.

06 07:00

The other two-way prepositions

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

TAP THE WORDS

07 07 : 30

Test yourself

Tap an answer — we will look at why together.

+7

Take the full test

13 questions · timed · rule breakdown at the end



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GENAU — NOT RULES, THE MOMENT IT CLICKS.

