

bei

— DIE PRÄPOSITION BEI

bei is a German preposition that always takes the dative: bei mir, beim Arzt, bei der Arbeit.

“I’m at the doctor’s” and “I’m going to the doctor’s” need two different prepositions in German: **beim Arzt** / **zum Arzt**. bei is position, zu is direction — and bei takes the dative without exception.

CONTENTS

- 01 One rule: bei is always dative 02 The five jobs of bei 03 bei or zu — where it really gets mixed up
04 bei or mit — both correct, different meaning 05 The English “at” trap: bei · in · an 06 Traps
07 The other dative prepositions 08 Test yourself

01 00:10

One rule: bei is always dative

⚡ **SHORTCUT** After bei you **never** get the accusative. There is no **bei mich** — it is **bei mir**.

Many German prepositions split into “sometimes this case, sometimes that one”. bei is not in that group: **it has one case, and it is the dative**. The moment you see bei, you already know what follows. No thinking needed.

	DATIVE FORM	WITH BEI
masculine DER MANN	dem Mann	bei dem Mann → beim Mann
feminine DIE FRAU	der Frau	bei der Frau
neuter DAS KIND	dem Kind	bei dem Kind → beim Kind
plural DIE ELTERN	den Eltern	bei den Eltern

The full case table is on the [cases page](#). Here you only need the dative column.

- **bei mir · bei dir · bei ihm · bei ihr**
- **bei uns · bei euch · bei ihnen · bei Ihnen**
- The same list works for **mit · von · zu · aus · nach · seit** too — learn it once, use it with seven prepositions.

① **Contraction happens in only one place: bei dem → **beim**. bei der does not contract, bei den does not contract.** So in everyday German you say **beim Arzt**, but **bei der Arbeit** stays in full.

The five jobs of bei

The dictionary says “at, with, near”, then learners put bei wherever they would say “at” or “with” in English, and the sentence breaks. bei really does five separate jobs; once you know which one you are in, you no longer need a translation.

JOB	WHEN	EXAMPLE
1 - At someone's place	A person follows	Ich wohne bei meiner Oma . I LIVE AT MY GRANDMA'S .
2 - Workplace	Who you work for	Ich arbeite bei Siemens . I WORK AT SIEMENS .
3 - During an activity	An action follows	Beim Essen spricht man nicht . YOU DON'T TALK WHILE EATING .
4 - Weather , situation , condition	Means “in case of...”, “when there is...”	Bei Regen bleibe ich zu Hause . WHEN IT RAINS , I STAY AT HOME .
5 - Near	For cities and places , “near”	Potsdam liegt bei Berlin . POTSDAM IS NEAR BERLIN .

What all five share: there is **no movement**. bei describes where you are, not where you are going. If you are going somewhere, the preposition is **zu** — the next section separates exactly that.

bei or zu — where it really gets mixed up



SHORTCUT

zu means being on the way, bei means having arrived. Look at the verb:
gehen/kommen/fahren → zu · sein/bleiben/wohnen/arbeiten → bei.

Both take the dative and both are used with people — which is why this is the pair learners mix up most often. But the difference is not grammar, it is **logic**: one is direction, the other is position.

✓ **Ich gehe **zum** Arzt.**

I'm going to the doctor's. (on my way)

✓ **Ich bin **beim** Arzt.**

I'm at the doctor's. (arrived)

✓ **Ich komme **zu** dir.**

I'm coming to your place.

✓ **Ich bin **bei** dir.**

I'm at your place.

PERSON	DIRECTION → ZU	POSITION → BEI
doctor	zum Arzt gehen	beim Arzt sein
grandma	zu meiner Oma fahren	bei meiner Oma sein
hairstylist	zum Friseur gehen	beim Friseur sein
us	zu uns kommen	bei uns bleiben

English already makes this split with its verbs: “go *to* the doctor's” versus “be *at* the doctor's”. German just marks it on the preposition — **zu** for going, **bei** for being.

ADVERTISEMENT

728 × 90

bei or mit — both correct, different meaning

Here neither is wrong. Both work and they **say two different things** — so a wrong pick is not “corrected”, you have just said something you did not mean.

✓ Ich wohne **bei** meinen Eltern.

I live at my parents' place. (it is their home)

✓ Ich wohne **mit** meinen Eltern.

I live together with my parents. (shared home)

① **bei** = **in their space**. **mit** = **together with them**. If someone owns the place, use **bei**; if it is only about being together, use **mit**.

✓ Gestern war ich **bei ihm**.

Yesterday I was at his place.

✓ Gestern war ich **mit ihm** im Kino.

Yesterday I went to the cinema with him.

05 05:20

The English "at" trap: **bei** · **in** · **an**

English gets by with one little word for almost everything: **at** school, **at** the doctor's, **at** the bus stop, **at** the table. German splits this into three, and if you choose wrong the sentence is understood but sounds foreign.

GERMAN	WHEN	EXAMPLE
bei	A person follows, or an institution thought of as people	beim Arzt · bei Herrn Yilmaz · beim Bäcker
in	You are inside a space	in der Schule · in der Küche · im Bus
an	You are touching a point or an edge	an der Haltestelle · am Fenster · am Tisch

in and **an** are two-way prepositions: dative when you ask where, accusative when you ask where to. All nine are on the [wo? / wohin? page](#).

✗ Ich bin **bei der Schule**.

This means "I'm near the school" — not inside it

✓ Ich bin **in der Schule**.

I'm at school. (inside the building)

Traps



TRAP 01

bei mich

The most common mistake. bei has **no** accusative form; whatever you say, the dative follows.

✗ **Bleib heute bei mich.**

bei → must be dative

✓ **Bleib heute bei mir.**

Stay at my place today.



TRAP 02

Trying to go with "bei"

In English the noun stays "the doctor" whether you are at the doctor's or going to the doctor's, so it is tempting to keep the same preposition in German. But when there is movement, the preposition has to change.

✗ **Ich gehe beim Arzt.**

gehen → direction → needs zu

✓ **Ich gehe zum Arzt.**

I'm going to the doctor's.



TRAP 03

Contracting bei der into "beir"

Because **beim** exists, people assume every article contracts. In German, bei contracts only with **dem**; feminine and plural are written out in full.

✗ **Ich bin beir Arbeit.**

there is no such word

✓ **Ich bin bei der Arbeit.**

I'm at work.



TRAP 04

bei Herr Müller

Herr is a weak noun: outside the nominative it takes **-n**. Since bei needs the dative, it becomes **Herrn**.

✗ Ich war **bei Herr Müller**.

dative → Herrn

✓ Ich war **bei Herrn Müller**.

I was at Mr. Müller's.

07 06:30

The other dative prepositions

08 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

08 06:40

Test yourself

Tap an answer — we will look at why together.

+7

Take the full test

13 questions · timed · rule breakdown at the end



ADVERTISEMENT

728 × 250

GENAU — NOT RULES, THE MOMENT IT CLICKS.
GENAU · FREE GERMAN LIBRARY