

the preposition gegen

— DIE PRÄPOSITION GEGEN

gegen is a German preposition that always takes the accusative: gegen den Plan, gegen acht Uhr.

gegen always takes the accusative. Depending on context it means “against”, “around (a time)” or “for/against (an illness)”.

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01 00:00

gegen always takes the accusative

gegen is an **accusative preposition**. The noun, article or pronoun after it must be in the accusative. Only the masculine article changes: **der** → **den**. The others (**die, das**) stay as they are.

Pronouns change too — just like English “he → him”: **ich** → **mich**, **du** → **dich**, **er** → **ihn**, **sie** → **sie**, **es** → **es**, **wir** → **uns**, **ihr** → **euch**, **sie/Sie** → **sie**.

NOMINATIV	AKKUSATIV (GEGEN + ?)	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
der Mann	den Mann	Er spielt gegen den Mann .
die Frau	die Frau	Sie kämpft gegen die Frau .
das Kind	das Kind	Er rennt gegen das Kind .
er	ihn	Ich habe nichts gegen ihn .
ich	mich	Er stellt sich gegen mich .

Table: apart from the **der** → **den** change in the masculine, the other articles and the plural stay as written.

02 01:10

The four main jobs of gegen

a) Against (sport, competition): When two sides meet in a match, a game or a conflict, you use **gegen**. It matches English “against”.

b) Bumping into something (physical contact): It describes an object or a body hitting something else. It is often used with verbs of hitting or moving (**stoßen, prallen, fahren, laufen**) — English “into” or “against”.

c) Approximate time: In clock times it means “around”, not “exactly”. **gegen acht Uhr** = “around eight”, “towards eight”.

d) Medicine / protection / treatment (medical context): It says which illness or complaint a medicine, vaccine or treatment is *against*. English often says “for” here (“something for a cold”), German says **gegen**.

FUNCTION	GERMAN EXAMPLE	ENGLISH
Sport / match	Unser Team spielt gegen den Meister .	Our team is playing the champions .
Bumping into	Der Vogel flog gegen das Fenster .	The bird flew into the window .
Approximate time	Wir treffen uns gegen 17 Uhr .	We're meeting around five .
Medicine / treatment	Er nimmt Tabletten gegen die Schmerzen .	He takes tablets for the pain .

There is no article in clock times: **gegen acht Uhr** (wrong: *gegen die acht Uhr).

03 02:20

gegen and für are opposites

für (for) and **gegen** (against) are **opposites (antonyms)**. Both take the accusative. They are the most common way to say whether you are for or against a plan, an idea or a proposal.

POSITIVE (SUPPORT)	NEGATIVE (AGAINST)	MEANING
Ich bin für den Plan .	Ich bin gegen den Plan .	I support the plan / I'm against the plan .
Stimmt ihr für den Antrag zu?	Stimmt ihr gegen den Antrag zu?	Are you approving the application / rejecting it?
Er ist für die Änderung .	Er ist gegen die Änderung .	He is in favour of the change / opposed to the change .

SPOKEN TIP: You will also hear **Ich bin dafür** / **Ich bin dagegen** (pronominal adverbs) all the time; the meaning is the same.

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04 03:30

gegen acht vs. um acht – the appointment trap

um acht Uhr = **exactly 08:00**. Use it for fixed times such as appointments, trains and flights.

gegen acht Uhr = **around 08:00** (somewhere between 07:50 and 08:10). Use it for flexible times such as meeting a friend or being home.

For a job interview, a doctor’s appointment or a cinema showing, use **um**. For “I’ll be home around dinner time”, you say **gegen**.

PREPOSITION	MEANING	TYPICAL USE	EXAMPLE
um	Exactly / fixed	Formal appointments , transport	Der Zug fährt um 8 Uhr ab .
gegen	Around / approximately	Private meetings , estimated arrival	Ich komme gegen 8 Uhr nach Hause .

If you say “I’ll come **gegen 8 Uhr**”, arriving at 08:15 is fine; if you say “I’ll come **um 8 Uhr**”, arriving at 08:01 is already late.

Traps



TRAP 01

The dative trap

gegen never takes the dative. Using **dem** with a masculine noun is a big mistake.

- ✗ **Ich kämpfe gegen dem Gegner.**
dem is a dative article; **gegen** takes the accusative.
- ✓ **Ich kämpfe gegen den Gegner.**
den = accusative masculine article. Correct.



TRAP 02

The clock-time article trap

German uses no article with clock times (approximate or exact). English “around *the* eight o’clock” sounds odd, but “around the time of ...” makes learners want to slip a **die** in anyway.

- ✗ **Wir kommen gegen die acht Uhr.**
An article like **die** does not belong in a clock time.
- ✓ **Wir kommen gegen acht Uhr.**
No article. This is the correct way to say “around eight”.



TRAP 03

The “für” trap with medicine

A medicine is used *against* an illness (to treat it), so German wants **gegen**. **für** means “for the benefit of” (e.g. vitamins **für** die Gesundheit). English “tablets for headaches” is exactly the reflex that misleads you here.

✗ **Ich nehme Tabletten für Kopfschmerzen.**

für is the wrong context; a medicine targets the illness.

✓ **Ich nehme Tabletten gegen Kopfschmerzen.**

gegen = fighting / treating the illness.

06 07:00

The other accusative 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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