

The preposition in

— DIE PRÄPOSITION IN

In German, in is a two-way preposition: it takes the Dativ for a location (wo?) and the Akkusativ for a direction (wohin?).

in expresses both place and time; **wo?** (where?) takes the **Dativ**, **wohin?** (where to?) takes the **Akkusativ**. English speakers make the mistake most often when nothing is moving and they still reach for the Akkusativ.

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01 00:00

in – Dativ or Akkusativ?

in is a two-way preposition (Wechselpräposition); when it shows a place, the case depends on whether there is movement.

“**Wo?**” (where?) asks about a position, “**Wohin?**” (where to?) asks about a direction. English blurs the two: “in the kitchen” fits both “I’m in the kitchen” and “I’m going into the kitchen”. German keeps them apart with the case.

QUESTION	SENTENCE	CASE
Wo?	Ich bin in der Küche .	Dativ (location)
Wohin?	Ich gehe in die Küche .	Akkusativ (direction)

The verb (**sein** vs **gehen**) decides the case.

02 01:10

in + Dativ (location – where?)

When there is no movement and a person or object is **inside** a place, use the Dativ.

GERMAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Das Buch liegt in der Tasche .	The book is lying in the bag .	die Tasche feminine → der
Wir sitzen in dem Garten .	We are sitting in the garden .	der Garten masculine → dem
Die Katze schläft in dem Bett .	The cat is sleeping in the bed .	das Bett neuter → dem
Meine Schlüssel sind in der Schublade .	My keys are in the drawer .	Plural die Schlüssel → in der

Article change: in dem → im, in der stays.

03 02:20

in + Akkusativ (direction – where to?)

When you move **into** a place, the Akkusativ comes.

GERMAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Ich lege das Buch in die Tasche .	I put the book into the bag .	die Tasche feminine → die
Er geht in den Garten .	He goes into the garden .	der Garten masculine → den
Wir stellen die Vase in das Fenster .	We put the vase in the window .	das Fenster neuter → das
Sie fährt in die Stadt .	She drives into town .	die Stadt feminine → die

in das → ins merge.

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04 03:30

Contractions (im · ins) and use in time expressions

in dem → **im** (masculine/neuter Dativ), in das → **ins** (neuter Akkusativ).

in is also used in time expressions: **im Januar** (in January), **in einer Woche** (in a week).

① The contraction is written without a space; **im** and **ins** behave like single words.

05 06:00

Traps



TRAP 01

Using the Akkusativ when nothing moves

English says “in the kitchen” either way, so nothing warns you. If the verb shows no movement, the Akkusativ slips in by accident; check whether anything is actually moving.

✗ **Ich bin in die Küche.**

“bin” shows a position, so it needs the Dativ: **in der Küche.**

✓ **Ich bin in der Küche.**

I am in the kitchen.



TRAP 02

Saying nach with a country that has an article

Most countries have no article and take **nach**. But countries with an article, like **die Türkei** or **die Schweiz**, take **in** + Akkusativ.

✗ **Ich fliege nach der Türkei.**

country with an article → in + Akkusativ

✓ **Ich fliege in die Türkei.**

I am flying to Turkey.



TRAP 03

The wrong case in time expressions

“in einer Woche” is Dativ; the Akkusativ “in eine Woche” gives the wrong meaning.

✗ **Wir sehen uns in eine Woche.**

Akkusativ “in eine Woche” = for the span of a week, not “in a week’s time”.

✓ **Wir sehen uns in einer Woche.**

We will see each other in a week.

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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