

The preposition nach

— DIE PRÄPOSITION NACH

nach is a German preposition that always takes the Dativ: nach Berlin, nach dem Essen, nach links.

English has one word for “going to” a place: *to*. German has three: **nach**, **zu**, **in**. Pick the wrong one and you are understood, but instantly sound foreign. This page pins down exactly when nach is the right one.

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01 00:10

One rule: nach always takes the Dativ



SHORTCUT

nach has two main jobs: **direction** (where to) and **time** (after what). Both are followed by the Dativ.

As a direction it is mostly followed by a noun **without an article** (nach Berlin), so you cannot see the case. As a time word an article appears and the Dativ becomes visible: nach dem Essen.

① nach **does not contract**: nach dem stays two words. There are zum and beim, but no “nachm”.

02 00:50

The four jobs of nach

JOB	WHEN	EXAMPLE
1 - Going to a city or country	When there is no article	Ich fliege nach Berlin . I'M FLYING TO BERLIN .
2 - After ...	Order in time	Nach dem Essen trinke ich Kaffee . AFTER LUNCH I HAVE COFFEE .
3 - Direction words	right , left , up , home	Gehen Sie nach links . GO LEFT .
4 - According to ...	Comes after the noun	Meiner Meinung nach ist das falsch . IN MY OPINION , THAT'S WRONG .

The fourth job needs attention: there nach stands **after the noun**. nach meiner Meinung is also heard, but the standard form is **meiner Meinung nach**.

03 02:40

nach, zu or in — the three ways of “going to”

 **SHORTCUT** City/country → nach · person/institution → zu · a place you go inside → in
+ Akkusativ.

English covers all three with a single word: *to* Berlin, *to* the doctor, *to* the cinema. German splits it into three. This is the table on this page that will do you the most good — and the one to memorise.

WHERE TO	PREPOSITION	EXAMPLE
City	nach	nach Berlin · nach Istanbul
Country without an article	nach	nach Deutschland · nach Italien
Country with an article	in + Akk	in die Türkei · in die Schweiz · in den Iran
Person	zu	zu meiner Oma · zu dir
Institution , shop	zu	zum Arzt · zur Post · zum Bäcker
A building you go inside	in + Akk	ins Kino · in die Stadt · in die Schule

In short: **if there is an article, do not use nach.** nach only works with bare nouns. The moment you see an article, the choice is either **zu** or **in**.

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04 04:30

nach Hause / zu Hause — both are “home”, one is direction

One of the two German patterns people mix up most. The difference is not grammar but **logic**: one is movement, the other a state — like “going home” versus “being at home”.

PATTERN	MEANING	EXAMPLE
nach Hause	(going) home — there is movement	Ich gehe nach Hause .
zu Hause	(being) at home — no movement	Ich bin zu Hause .
von zu Hause	from home	Ich arbeite von zu Hause .

These three patterns are **frozen**: **Hause** takes no article here and is not declined. Memorise them, do not try to analyse them.

Traps



TRAP 01

nach der Türkei

The most common mistake. **die Türkei** has an article, so nach cannot be used — with an article you need **in** + Akkusativ.

- ✗ **Ich fliege nach der Türkei.**
country with an article → in + Akk
- ✓ **Ich fliege in die Türkei.**
I'm flying to Turkey.
- ✓ **Ich fliege nach Deutschland.**
I'm flying to Germany. (no article)



TRAP 02

nach Arzt

You do not go to people and institutions with nach. Because English says “to” in both “to Berlin” and “to the doctor”, the difference gets lost.

- ✗ **Ich gehe nach Arzt.**
institution → zu
- ✓ **Ich gehe zum Arzt.**
I'm going to the doctor.



TRAP 03

nach dem Schule

In the time sense nach takes the Dativ, and the article changes **with the gender of the noun**. die Schule is feminine, and in the Dativ it becomes **der**.

✗ **Nach dem Schule** gehe ich nach Hause.

feminine → der

✓ **Nach der Schule** gehe ich nach Hause.

After school I go home.



TRAP 04

Adding an article to nach Hause

It is a frozen phrase; it takes no article and is not declined.

✗ **Ich gehe nach dem Haus.**

sounds like “after the house”

✓ **Ich gehe nach Hause.**

I’m going home.

06 06:40

The other Dativ 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 07:00

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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