

the preposition ohne

— DIE PRÄPOSITION OHNE

ohne (“without”) is a preposition that always takes the Akkusativ: ohne dich, ohne Zucker.

Learners forget that **ohne** always takes the **Akkusativ** and reach for the Dativ instead. The **no-article rule (Nullartikel)** for “none at all” trips people up too.

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01 00:00

ohne always takes the Akkusativ — ohne mich/dich/ihn

ohne always takes the **Akkusativ**. No exceptions. Pronouns appear in their Akkusativ form: **mich, dich, ihn, sie, es, uns, euch, sie/Sie**. You never use the Dativ forms (**mir, dir, ihm** and so on).

When you mean “nobody there” or “no ... at all”, you put the Akkusativ object right after **ohne**. Example: **Ich gehe ohne dich.** (I’m going without you.)

PERSON	NOMINATIV	AKKUSATIV (OHNE +)
ich	ich	ohne mich
du	du	ohne dich
er	er	ohne ihn
sie	sie	ohne sie
es	es	ohne es
wir	wir	ohne uns
ihr	ihr	ohne euch
sie/Sie	sie/Sie	ohne sie / ohne Sie

Every pronoun takes its Akkusativ form after ohne — no pronoun is an exception.

After ohne the article usually DROPS: ohne Auto, ohne Geld, ohne Zucker

When **ohne** expresses a **general, unspecific** “none at all”, “not containing”, “lacking”, you **leave out** the article (**der, die, das, ein, eine**). German calls this the **Nullartikel** (zero article). It happens most with substances (Zucker), abstract things (Geld, Zeit, Angst) and plurals (Autos).

If you mean one **specific** thing (“without that car”, “without your money”), the article or a possessive (**mein, dein, der, den**) **does appear**.

NO ARTICLE (GENERAL / “NONE AT ALL”)	WITH ARTICLE (SPECIFIC / “THAT, THIS, YOUR...”)
ohne Auto (without a car)	ohne das Auto (without that car)
ohne Geld (without money)	ohne mein Geld (without my money)
ohne Zucker (without sugar)	ohne den Zucker (without that sugar)
ohne Probleme (without problems)	ohne diese Probleme (without these problems)

The rule is simple: if you mean “any / none at all”, write no article; if you mean “that / this particular one”, write the article.

mit and ohne are opposites in meaning, but their CASES differ

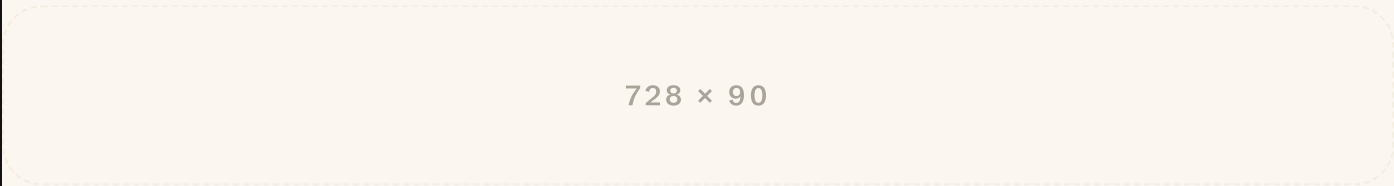
In meaning, **mit** (with) and **ohne** (without) are exact opposites. Their case is **not** the same, though: **mit** always takes the **Dativ**, **ohne** always takes the **Akkusativ**. This mismatch is the most common source of mistakes with the pair.

In English, “with you” and “without you” look perfectly symmetrical — “you” never changes. German feels the difference: **mit dir** (Dativ) but **ohne dich** (Akkusativ). Saying ***ohne dir** is **flatly wrong**.

PREPOSITION	CASE	EXAMPLE (DU)	EXAMPLE (ICH)
mit	Dativ	mit dir	mit mir
ohne	Akkusativ	ohne dich	ohne mich

The mismatch is just how the language is built, so don’t hunt for logic; memorise “mit = Dativ, ohne = Akkusativ”.

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04 03:30

The “ohne ... zu” structure: Er ging, ohne etwas zu sagen

ohne ... zu builds an **infinitive group (Infinitivgruppe)** that means “without doing ...”. You use it when the subject of the main clause and the subject of the **zu** group are **the same**. The **zu** goes at the end, right before the verb (with separable verbs it sits between the prefix and the stem).

Example: **Er ging, ohne ein Wort zu sagen.** (He left without saying a word.) If the second clause has a different subject (**er ging, ohne dass SIE kam**), you build **ohne dass** + a full clause instead.

GERMAN	ENGLISH
Er ging , ohne ein Wort zu sagen .	He left without saying a word .
Sie verließ das Haus , ohne sich umzudrehen .	She left the house without turning around .
Wir aßen , ohne zu sprechen .	We ate without talking .
Er öffnete die Tür , ohne anzuklopfen .	He opened the door without knocking .

Same subject in both parts: “ohne ... zu”. Different subject: “ohne dass”.

Traps



TRAP 01

Trap 1: *ohne dir (using the Dativ)

Because **mit** takes the Dativ, your brain applies the same pattern to **ohne** automatically. But **ohne** takes the Akkusativ, full stop.

✗ ***Ich fahre ohne dir.**

Wrong: “dir” is a Dativ pronoun. “ohne” takes the Akkusativ.

✓ **Ich fahre ohne dich.**

Correct: “dich” is the Akkusativ pronoun.



TRAP 02

Trap 2: an unnecessary article with general things (*ohne das Wasser)

For “without water”, “without money”, “without sugar” — **general lack** — you **drop** the article. English does the same: you say “without water”, not “without the water”. German is no different: you say **Wasser**, not **das Wasser**.

✗ **Ich trinke Kaffee *ohne den Zucker.**

Wrong: “Zucker” here is a general lack, so the article is unnecessary.

✓ **Ich trinke Kaffee ohne Zucker.**

Correct: Nullartikel (no article).



TRAP 03

Changing the subject inside ohne ... zu

ohne ... zu works only when **both parts have the same subject**. If the subject changes, you need **ohne dass**.

✗ Ich ging, ohne er es merkte.

the subject changed → ohne dass

✓ Ich ging, ohne dass er es merkte.

I left without him noticing.

06 07:00

The other Akkusativ 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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