

The preposition seit

— DIE PRÄPOSITION SEIT

seit is a preposition that always takes the Dativ and describes something that is still going on: seit zwei Jahren, seit Montag.

In English you say “I’ve lived here for two years” — it started in the past and it is still going. German says this with **seit** and the **present tense**. Build a past tense and the sentence goes wrong.

CONTENTS

01 One rule: seit always takes the Dativ 02 The real rule: seit with the PRESENT tense

03 seit · für · vor — all three are “time”, all three are different 04 Traps

05 The other Dativ prepositions 06 Test yourself

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One rule: seit always takes the Dativ

⚡ **SHORTCUT** seit = **it started, and it’s still going**. You don’t use it for something that is over.

seit works in two ways: it points to a **moment** (seit Montag — since Monday) or to a **length of time** (seit zwei Jahren — for two years). Either way, a Dativ follows.

ENGLISH	GERMAN	WHY
for a year	seit einem Jahr	das Jahr → Dativ einem
for two years	seit zwei Jahren	Plural Dativ → the noun takes -n
for three months	seit drei Monaten	Plural Dativ → Monaten
for a week	seit einer Woche	die Woche → Dativ einer
since Monday	seit Montag	Days of the week take no article
since 2020	seit 2020	Years take no article

The plural **-n** is the ending English speakers drop most often, because English nouns never change after a preposition: **zwei Jahre** but **seit zwei Jahren**. In the Dativ plural the noun itself changes too.

The real rule: seit with the PRESENT tense



SHORTCUT

English reaches for “have lived”; German uses the **present tense**: **Ich wohne seit zwei Jahren hier.**

This matters more than the grammar of **seit** itself. Because the situation is still going on, German counts it as **now**. Build a Perfekt and you’ve said “it’s over” — and the sentence stops making sense.

- ✗ **Ich habe seit zwei Jahren hier gewohnt.**
a situation that’s still going on → present tense
- ✓ **Ich wohne seit zwei Jahren hier.**
I’ve been living here for two years.
- ✓ **Ich lerne seit einem Monat Deutsch.**
I’ve been learning German for a month.
- ✓ **Er arbeitet seit 2019 bei uns.**
He’s worked with us since 2019.

- ① The question is in the present tense too: **Seit wann wohnst du hier?** — How long have you been living here? (literally: since when do you live here)

seit · für · vor — all three are “time”, all three are different

In English, “for” covers two of them (“I’ve been here for two weeks”, “I’m here for two weeks”) and “ago” covers the third, so it’s easy to mix them up. But the three sit in **three different places** on the timeline.

PREPOSITION	WHAT IT SAYS	EXAMPLE
seit	Started in the past and is still going	Ich bin seit zwei Wochen hier . I’VE BEEN HERE FOR TWO WEEKS . (STILL)
für	A planned length of time	Ich bin für zwei Wochen hier . I’M HERE FOR TWO WEEKS .
vor	...ago — a single point in the past	Ich war vor zwei Wochen hier . I WAS HERE TWO WEEKS AGO .

All three take the Dativ — same case, completely different meaning. The easiest way to memorise the difference is to read the three sentences side by side: **still going · planned · over**.

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Traps



TRAP 01

seit zwei Jahre

In the Dativ plural the noun gets a **-n** at the end. English has nothing like it, so it keeps getting forgotten.

✗ Ich wohne **seit zwei Jahre** hier.

plural Dativ → Jahren

✓ Ich wohne **seit zwei Jahren** hier.

I've lived here for two years.



TRAP 02

Building a Perfekt with seit

If the situation is still going on, German wants the present tense. A Perfekt says “that’s finished now” — even though English “have learned” looks like a perfect fit.

✗ Ich **habe** seit drei Monaten Deutsch **gelernt**.

if you're still learning → lerne

✓ Ich **lerne** seit drei Monaten Deutsch.

I've been learning German for three months.



TRAP 03

Mixing up seit and für

When these two get mixed up the sentence doesn't break — **you just say something else**, so nobody corrects you.

✓ Ich bin **für zwei Wochen** in Berlin.

I'm in Berlin for two weeks. (a plan)

✓ Ich bin **seit zwei Wochen** in Berlin.

I've been in Berlin for two weeks. (ongoing)

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The other Dativ prepositions

06 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

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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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