

The preposition über

— DIE PRÄPOSITION ÜBER

über is a two-faced preposition: it takes the Dativ for position and the Akkusativ for direction.

Learners get stuck most often on whether **über** takes the **Dativ** or the **Akkusativ**. No movement means Dativ; movement means Akkusativ.

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01 00:00

über – two cases (Dativ / Akkusativ)

über takes two cases: if it answers **wo?** (where?) it wants the **Dativ**; if it answers **wohin?** (where to?) it wants the **Akkusativ**. So if the thing stays where it is, use the Dativ; if it moves somewhere, use the Akkusativ.

The same preposition with different cases: **Die Lampe hängt über dem Tisch.** (position – Dativ) ↔ **Die Katze springt über den Tisch.** (direction – Akkusativ).

- ① No movement means Dativ, movement means Akkusativ – this rule holds for all the Wechselpräpositionen (two-way prepositions).

02 01:10

über for position (Dativ) – everyday sentences

In the sentences below, **über** says that something is **above a place, without touching it**; that is why the noun is in the Dativ.

GERMAN	ENGLISH	CASE
Das Bild hängt über dem Sofa .	The picture is hanging above the sofa .	Dativ
Die Lampe schwebt über dem Tisch .	The lamp is floating above the table .	Dativ
Ein Vogel kreist über dem Dach .	A bird is circling above the roof .	Dativ
Die Wolken ziehen über den Bergen .	The clouds are moving above the mountains .	Dativ

All the examples use **über** + Dativ (dem, den).

03 02:20

über for direction (Akkusativ) – everyday sentences

Here **über** expresses a movement **across something** or **over something**, like crossing or throwing; that is why the noun is in the Akkusativ.

GERMAN	ENGLISH	CASE
Er wirft den Ball über den Zaun .	He throws the ball over the fence .	Akkusativ
Sie springt über den Bach .	She jumps over the stream .	Akkusativ
Das Kind klettert über den Stuhl .	The child climbs over the chair .	Akkusativ
Wir fahren über die Brücke .	We drive over the bridge .	Akkusativ

When there is a subject that moves, **über** + Akkusativ (den, die) is a must.

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04 03:30

One contraction, and the meaning “about”

When **über** means “about”, it **always takes the Akkusativ**. There is one contraction, mostly spoken: **über das → übers** (**übers Wochenende**). English does the same job with a different word – “talk *about*” – but German keeps **über** for both “over” and “about”.

Example: **Wir sprechen über den Film.** – “We are talking about the film.”

① Memorise the pattern “über + Akkusativ = about”; the Dativ never comes up.

05 06:00

Traps



TRAP 01

Using the Dativ when there is movement

A learner says “the cat is jumping” and leaves the Dativ in place.

✗ **Die Katze springt über dem Tisch.**

“springt” expresses movement, so the Akkusativ (den) is needed.

✓ **Die Katze springt über den Tisch.**

The cat is jumping over the table.



TRAP 02

Using the Dativ for “about”

When you want to say “we talk about something” with **über**, the verb for “talk” takes the Akkusativ.

✗ **Wir sprechen über dem Film.**

“über” + Dativ is wrong; “about” always takes the Akkusativ (den).

✓ **Wir sprechen über den Film.**

We are talking about the film.



TRAP 03

Using the Akkusativ in a sentence about position

In a sentence that describes a state, people write “über” + Akkusativ.

✗ **Das Bild hängt über den Tisch.**

“hängt” expresses position, so the Dativ (dem) is needed.

✓ **Das Bild hängt über dem Tisch.**

The picture hangs above the table.

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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