

The preposition um

— DIE PRÄPOSITION UM

um is a German preposition that always takes the Akkusativ: um acht Uhr (at eight o'clock), um den Tisch (around the table).

um always takes the **Akkusativ**, and one table sums up the time prepositions (clock time, day, month, season) that English speakers mix up most often.

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01 00:00

um always takes the Akkusativ

As a preposition, **um** only ever appears with the Akkusativ; that means the article after it has to be in its Akkusativ form.

For example **um den Tisch** (around the table) – **den** is the masculine Akkusativ article.

02 01:10

Clock times and a table of time prepositions

For clock times you use **um** + Akkusativ: **um acht Uhr, um halb neun**.

Days, months and seasons need different prepositions; all of them take the Dativ.

TYPE OF TIME	PREPOSITION + CASE	EXAMPLE
Clock time	um + Akkusativ	um acht Uhr
Day	an + Dativ (am)	am Montag
Month	in + Dativ (im)	im Januar
Season	in + Dativ (im)	im Sommer

You don't have to memorise the table; just remember **um** for clock time and **an/in** + Dativ for the rest.

Time prepositions – all in one table

In German the preposition changes depending on **what** you are naming: a clock time, a day or a month. English does the same (“at eight, on Monday, in January”), and the German set lines up with it nicely, but the words are different, so you need the table before you can build a time sentence.

The three don’t get mixed up and there are almost no exceptions: **clock time um • day am • month im.**

WHAT YOU ARE NAMING	PREPOSITION	EXAMPLE
Clock time	um	um 8 Uhr • um halb neun • um Mitternacht
Part of the day	am	am Morgen • am Nachmittag • am Abend
Day	am	am Montag • am Wochenende
Date	am	am 3. Mai • am ersten Januar
Month	im	im Januar • im Dezember
Season	im	im Sommer • im Winter
... from now (duration)	in	in einer Woche • in zwei Stunden
Year	NO PREPOSITION	2026 • or im Jahr 2026

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04 03:30

The meaning “around”

um is also used to describe the area around an object or place; it takes the Akkusativ here as well.

Examples: **um den Tisch** (around the table), **um die Ecke** (around the corner / to turn the corner).

05 04:40

Verbs that require um, and the purpose construction

Some verbs require the preposition **um**: **bitten um** (to ask for), **sich kümmern um** (to take care of).

There is also the infinitive construction **um ... zu** that expresses purpose (e.g. **Ich lerne, um zu bestehen**), but that is a separate topic.

06 06:00

Traps



TRAP 01

Wrong preposition for clock time

If you use **an** or **in** for clock times, the sentence is wrong.

✗ **Wir treffen uns an acht Uhr.**

an is not used for clock time; you need **um** + Akkusativ.

✓ **Wir treffen uns um acht Uhr.**

We're meeting at eight.



TRAP 02

Wrong preposition for a day

Using **um** or **in** for a day is a mistake.

✗ **Ich komme um Montag.**

um is not used with days; **an** + Dativ (**am**) is the correct form.

✓ **Ich komme am Montag.**

I'm coming on Monday.



TRAP 03

Wrong preposition for a season

For seasons you use **in** + Dativ (**im**) instead of **um**.

✗ **Wir fahren um Sommer.**

um doesn't work with seasons; **im Sommer** is correct.

✓ **Wir fahren im Sommer.**

We're going in the summer.

07 07:00

The other Akkusativ prepositions

08 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

08 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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