

the preposition vor

— DIE PRÄPOSITION VOR

vor is a two-way preposition: it takes the dative for a position and the accusative for a direction.

vor takes two cases: if it answers **wo?** (where?) it is **Dativ**, if it answers **wohin?** (where to?) it is **Akkusativ**. English “in front of” is the same either way, so learners often reach for Akkusativ even when nothing is moving.

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01 00:00

1. vor – Dativ or Akkusativ?

vor is a two-faced preposition. If the sentence answers “where?” (**wo?**), it shows a position and takes the **Dativ**. If it answers “where to?” (**wohin?**), it shows a direction and takes the **Akkusativ**.

The rule is simple: movement means Akkusativ, no movement means Dativ.

CASE	QUESTION	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
Dativ (position)	wo?	Ich stehe vor dem Haus .
Akkusativ (direction)	wohin?	Ich gehe vor das Haus .

Movement: Akkusativ. No movement: Dativ.

02 01:10

2. vor for position (Dativ): examples

Nothing moves in the sentences below; they only say that something or someone is in front of something.

GERMAN	ENGLISH
Das Auto parkt vor der Tür .	The car is parked in front of the door .
Die Katze sitzt vor dem Fenster .	The cat is sitting in front of the window .
Wir warten vor dem Kino .	We're waiting in front of the cinema .
Der Baum steht vor dem Haus .	The tree stands in front of the house .

No movement in any of these, so it is Dativ.

03 02:20

3. vor for direction (Akkusativ): examples

In these sentences a person or object moves towards a place; the goal is “the front of it”, so Akkusativ follows.

GERMAN	ENGLISH
Er stellt die Vase vor den Tisch .	He puts the vase in front of the table .
Sie läuft vor das Gebäude .	She runs to the front of the building .
Wir schieben den Schrank vor die Wand .	We push the cupboard in front of the wall .
Der Hund springt vor das Tor .	The dog jumps in front of the gate .

The movement is towards a goal, so Akkusativ.

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04 03:30

4. “vor” in time – always Dativ

With a time expression, **vor** means “... ago” or “before” and takes the **Dativ, always**; Akkusativ never appears.

TIME EXPRESSION	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
vor zwei Jahren	Vor zwei Jahren war ich in Berlin.
vor einer Woche	Vor einer Woche habe ich ihn gesehen.
vor fünf Minuten	Vor fünf Minuten begann der Film.

In time expressions “vor” never takes Akkusativ.

05 06:00

Traps



TRAP 01

Using Akkusativ when nothing moves

When “wo?” is the question you need Dativ, but learners sense movement and pull out Akkusativ.

✗ **Ich bin vor das Haus.**

Akkusativ “das” is wrong; a position needs Dativ “dem”.

✓ **Ich bin vor dem Haus.**

I’m in front of the house (position).



TRAP 02

Trying Akkusativ in a time expression

When “vor” expresses time it always takes Dativ, never Akkusativ.

✗ **Vor zwei Jahre habe ich das Buch gelesen.**

“zwei Jahre” is Akkusativ; the correct form is “zwei Jahren” (Dativ).

✓ **Vor zwei Jahren habe ich das Buch gelesen.**

I read the book two years ago.



TRAP 03

Mixing up “vor” and “vorher”

“vorher” is an adverb and needs no case; the preposition “vor” does.

✗ **Ich war vorher dem Haus.**

“vorher” is an adverb, not a preposition; it takes no case.

✓ **Ich war vor dem Haus.**

I was in front of the house.

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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