

the preposition zu

— DIE PRÄPOSITION ZU

zu is a preposition that always takes the dative and expresses movement toward a person or an institution: zum Arzt, zur Schule.

zum or zur — the spot where German learners trip ten times a day. The answer fits on one line:

zum = zu dem · zur = zu der. So the question is not the preposition, it is the gender of the noun.

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zum or zur — the one-line answer



SHORTCUT

zum = zu + dem (masculine/neuter) · zur = zu + der (feminine). There is no other option.

zu is one of the prepositions that **must** contract with the article. **bei** fuses only with **dem**, but zu fuses with both **dem** and **der** — so you have to learn two forms.

NOUN	DATIVE	WITH ZU
der Arzt (m)	dem Arzt	zum Arzt
das Kino (n)	dem Kino	zum Kino
die Schule (f)	der Schule	zur Schule
die Post (f)	der Post	zur Post
die Eltern (plural)	den Eltern	zu den Eltern

There is **no** contraction in the plural: **zu den Eltern** is written out in full. Contraction happens only with a singular definite article.

- zu mir · zu dir · zu ihm · zu ihr · zu uns · zu euch · zu ihnen
- Komm zu mir! — Come to me!

02 01:40

The three jobs of zu

JOB	WHEN	EXAMPLE
1 - Going to a person or an institution	Most common use	Ich gehe zum Zahnarzt . I'M GOING TO THE DENTIST .
2 - Purpose	what for	Ich habe keine Zeit zum Lernen . I HAVE NO TIME FOR STUDYING .
3 - Fixed phrases	Learn by heart	zu Hause · zu Fuß · zu Mittag essen

03 03:10

zu, nach or in?



SHORTCUT

If there is a person or an institution behind the word, use **zu**. For a city or country it's **nach**; for a building you walk into, it's **in** + accusative.

WHERE TO	PREPOSITION	EXAMPLE
Person	zu	zu meiner Oma · zu dir
Institution , shop	zu	zum Arzt · zur Post · zum Bäcker
City , country without an article	nach	nach Berlin · nach Italien
A place you go inside	in + Akk	ins Kino · in die Stadt

One borderline case: **zur Schule gehen** means “to go to school” (as a pupil), **in die Schule gehen** means “to walk into the school building”. Both are correct; they say different things.

The opposite of **zu** is **von**, and the “being at” version is **bei**: **zum Arzt** → **beim Arzt** → **vom Arzt** (to the doctor → at the doctor’s → from the doctor). The whole three-part system is in [the table on the aus page](#).

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04 04:30

Don’t mix it up: **zu** meaning “too”

The word **zu** also shows up in front of an adjective, and there it is **not a preposition**: it means “too, more than enough”. An adjective follows, not a noun, and there is no case question.

- ✓ **Das Hemd ist zu teuer.**

The shirt is too expensive. (excessively)

- ✓ **Du kommst zu spät.**

You’re too late.

- ① There is a third **zu**: the one before an infinitive — **Ich habe vergessen, dich anzurufen**. That is a completely separate topic, covered on the [zu + infinitive page](#). English spells these three differently (“to”, “too”, “to call”), while German uses one word for all of them; what **follows it** tells you which one you have: noun → preposition, adjective → “too”, verb → infinitive construction.

05 05:30

Traps



TRAP 01

zu die Schule

zu takes the dative; the feminine dative is **der**, and it fuses with **zu** into **zur**.

- ✗ **Ich gehe zu die Schule.**

Dative + contraction → zur

- ✓ **Ich gehe zur Schule.**

I’m going to school.



TRAP 02

zu Berlin

You don't go to cities with zu, even though English says "to" for everything. zu is for people and institutions.

✗ Ich fahre **zu Berlin**.

city → nach

✓ Ich fahre **nach Berlin**.

I'm going to Berlin.



TRAP 03

zu Hause / nach Hause

Both are fixed phrases: one gives a location, the other a direction.

✗ Ich gehe **zu Hause**.

there is movement → nach Hause

✓ Ich gehe **nach Hause**.

I'm going home.

✓ Ich bin **zu Hause**.

I'm at home.

06 06:20

The other dative 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 06:30

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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