

Verbs with two objects

— VERBEN MIT ZWEI OBJEKTEN

Some German verbs take two objects, one answering “to whom?” (dative) and one answering “what?” (accusative):
geben, zeigen, schenken.

Giving or showing something to someone: one dative and one accusative in the same sentence.

CONTENTS

- 01 The picture: to whom and what 02 You already do this in English (with a little “to”)
03 Table: the order rules 04 Two places people go wrong 05 What nobody tells you: empfehlen
06 Test yourself

01 00:10

The picture: to whom and what

SHORTCUT ⚡ Verbs like **geben** (to give), **schenken** (to give as a gift) and **zeigen** (to show) always need two things: to whom are you giving, and what are you giving? The “to whom” is always the **dative**, the “what” is the **accusative**.

- ✓ Ich gebe **dem Kind einen Apfel**.

I give the child an apple.

- ✓ Er zeigt **mir das Foto**.

He shows me the photo.

02 01:20

You already do this in English (with a little “to”)

English has the same two slots. *I give **the child an apple*** is the German order exactly. When you say *I give an apple to the child*, the little word “to” marks the dative. German has no “to” here: the endings do the work, and the order

is fixed.

ENGLISH	GERMAN	ORDER
I sell the man the car .	Ich verkaufe dem Mann das Auto .	dative + accusative
I'm explaining this to you .	Ich erkläre dir das .	dative + accusative

Because German words change with their case, the verb is followed straight away by **to whom** (dative) and then **what** (accusative).

- Ich verkaufe das Auto dem Mann.**
Not wrong, just stressed: I sell the car to the man (not to someone else).
- ✓ **Ich verkaufe dem Mann das Auto.**
I sell the man the car.

03 02:30

Table: the order rules

The order of the objects depends on whether they are nouns or pronouns.

CASE	ORDER	EXAMPLE
Two nouns	Dative first	Ich gebe dem Mann den Apfel .
One pronoun	Pronoun first	Ich gebe ihm den Apfel . / Ich gebe ihn dem Mann .
Two pronouns	Accusative first	Ich gebe ihn ihm . / Ich gebe es dir .

A pronoun always jumps ahead of a noun. If both are pronouns, the accusative goes first.

- ✗ **Ich gebe dir es.**
I give it to you.
- ✓ **Ich gebe es dir.**
I give it to you.

ADVERTISEMENT

728 × 90

Two places people go wrong



TRAP 1

Mixing up the order

✗ Ich gebe ~~dem Mann~~ ihn.

A pronoun does not come after a noun.

✓ Ich gebe ihn dem Mann.

The pronoun (ihn) always comes before the noun, whatever its case.



TRAP 2

Putting the dative first with two pronouns

✗ Ich gebe ~~dir~~ es.

With two pronouns, the dative does not come first.

✓ Ich gebe es dir.

With two pronouns, the accusative (es) always comes first.

Memorise **Ich gebe es dir**. If you forget every rule, this one sentence reminds you of the right order.

What nobody tells you: empfehlen

empfehlen (to recommend) also takes two objects. English gets away with a single “to” (*recommend this film to you*), so learners often forget that German wants both the “to whom” and the “what” as bare cases.

✓ Ich empfehle dir diesen Film.

I recommend this film to you.

✓ Können Sie mir ein gutes Restaurant empfehlen?

Could you recommend a good restaurant to me?

Always say both: who you are recommending it to, and what you are recommending.

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

06 07 : 20

Test yourself

Tap an answer — we will look at why together.

+4

Take the full test
10 questions · timed · rule breakdown at the end

↗

ADVERTISEMENT



728 × 250

GENAU — NOT RULES, THE MOMENT IT CLICKS.
GENAU · FREE GERMAN LIBRARY