



learning target

Aim of this section is to learn the correct use of noun endings.

German	English
Die Farbe des Hauses gefällt mir sehr gut.	I like the color of the house.
Das Auto des Nachbarn ist nagelneu.	The neighbor's car is brand-new.
Sie geben den Kindern neue Hoffnung.	They give the children new hope.

rules

The 4 noun classes

Like adjectives nouns take different endings according to their gender, case and class.
 Fortunately, there are just a few endings to learn.

We distinguish between 4 different noun classes:

- **strong nouns**
- **weak nouns**
- **mixed nouns**
- **irregular nouns**

strong nouns

Strong nouns are all nouns:

- in which singular and plural is the same
- which form the plural by adding "e"
- which form the plural by adding "er"

ending scheme

case	singular			plural
	male	female	neuter	-
nominative	-	-	-	-
genitive	+(e)s	-	+(e)s	-
dative	-	-	-	+n
accusative	-	-	-	-



examples:

- Der **Mann** kauft ein Buch. (The man buys a book.) [nominative, male, singular]
- Die Frau des **Mannes** ist Ärztin. (The husband's wife is a doctor.) [genitive, male, singular]
- Das **Kind** isst ein Eis. (The child eats ice cream.) [nominative, neuter, singular]
- Das Spielzeug des **Kindes** ist kaputt. (The child's toy is damaged.) [genitive, neuter, singular]
- Die **Männer** bauen ein Haus. (The men are building a house.) [nominative, plural]
- Ich bringe den **Männern** etwas zu essen. (I bring something to eat to the men.) [dative, plural]

ending "s" or "es"?

Strong male/neuter nouns have either a "s" or "es" as ending in the genitive case:

- Nouns with 1 syllable and all nouns which end with s, ß, z, x, t or d: add "**es**"
- All other nouns with more than one syllable: add "**s**"

examples:

- **der Mann** (one syllable) => des Mannes
- **das Bad** (one syllable, ends with d) => des Bades
- **das Gesetz** (two syllables, ends with z) => des Gesetzes
- **der Vater** (two syllables) => des Vaters
- **der Fernseher** (three syllables) => des Fernsehers

behaviour of loan words

Some loan words from other languages are a kind of subclass of the strong nouns.

To this group belong all nouns which form the plural by adding "s".

They behave in the singular like "normal" strong nouns but don't get an additional "n" in the dative plural.

example ending scheme:

case	singular	plural
nominative	das Auto	die Autos
genitive	des Autos	der Autos
dative	dem Auto	den Autos
accusative	das Auto	die Autos



other loan words:

der Park (the park)	das Kino (the cinema)	das Taxi (the taxi)
der Krimi (the crime story)	der Onkel (the uncle)	das Radio (the radio)
der Job (the job)	das Auto (the car)	das Café (the café)

weak nouns

Weak nouns are:

- almost all female nouns
- all male nouns which form the plural by adding **(e)n** (see below for more details)
- neuter weak nouns don't exist

ending scheme

case	singular			plural
	male	female	neuter	-
nominative	-	-	-	-
genitive	+(e)n	-	-	-
dative	+(e)n	-	-	-
accusative	+(e)n	-	-	-

The declination of weak nouns is also called **n-declination**

since you have to add **(e)n** to the male nouns in all cases except from nominative.

examples:

- Der **Junge** geht in die Schule. (The boy goes to school.) [nominative, male, singular]
- Ich kenne die Mutter des **Jungen**. (I know the boy's mother.) [genitive, male, singular]
- Ich gebe dem **Jungen** ein Buch. (I give a book to the boy.) [dative, male, singular]
- Sie begrüßt den **Jungen**. (She welcomes the boy.) [accusative, male, singular]



Which male nouns are weak?

Male nouns which end with "e".

These are mostly male living beings.

examples:

der Junge (the boy)	der Neffe (the nephew)	der Verwandte (the relative)
der Löwe (the lion)	der Affe (the monkey)	der Hase (the rabbit)
der Kunde (the customer)	der Kollege (the colleague)	der Fremde (the stranger)
der Beamte (the clerk)	der Erwachsene (the adult)	der Verlobte (the fiancé)
der Riese (the giant)	der Drache (the dragon)	der Gatte (the spouse)
der Heilige (the saint)	der Zeuge (the witness)	der Süchtige (the addict)
der Erbe (the inheritor)	der Bube (the jack)	der Rivale (the contender)

exception:

der Käse

(the cheese)

Male nouns which used to end with "e".

examples:

der Held (the hero)	der Mensch (the human)	der Nachbar (the neighbor)
der Graf (the count)	der Fürst (the ruler)	der Prinz (the prince)
der Geck (the fop)	der Bauer (the farmer)	der Bär (the bear)
der Fink (the finch)	der Spatz (the sparrow)	der Ochs (the ox)
der Narr (the fool)	der Tor (the sap)	der Hirt (the herdsman)



Male nouns from Greek or other foreign languages

The following endings are indicator for these words:

- -ant
- -ent
- -ist
- -oge

examples:

der Student (the student)	der Tourist (the tourist)	der Polizist (the police officer)
der Soldat (the soldier)	der Präsident (the president)	der Agent (the agent)
der Architekt (the architect)	der Elefant (the elephant)	der Patient (the patient)
der Assistent (the assistant)	der Lieferant (the deliveryman)	der Terrorist (the terrorist)
der Diplomat (the diplomat)	der Dozent (the lecturer)	der Paragraph (the paragraph)
der Philosoph (the philosopher)	der Christ (the Christ)	der Kamerad (the companion)

some nationalities / races and culture names

examples:

der Deutsche (the German)	der Russe (the Russian)	der Brite (the Briton)
der Franzose (the Frenchman)	der Däne (the Dane)	der Chinese (the Chinese)
der Schwede (the Swede)	der Türke (the Turk)	der Pole (the Pole)
der Bayer (the Bavarian)	der Sachse (the Saxon)	der Preuße (the Prussian)



some (technic) terms

examples:

der Automat (the automat)	der Telegraph (the telegraph)	der Satellit (the satellite)
der Planet (the planet)	der Diamant (the diamond)	der Komet (the comet)

der Herr

Der Herr (=Mr) is a little exception since you just have to add "n" in the genitive, dative and accusative (singular) and not "en" as usually.

case	singular	plural
nominative	der Herr	die Herren
genitive	des Herr n	der Herren
dative	dem Herr n	den Herren
accusative	den Herr n	die Herren

mixed nouns

Mixed nouns behave like strong and weak nouns.

They add **(e)s** in the genitive case of male and neuter nouns (=strong noun behaviour) but form the plural by adding **(e)n** (=weak noun behaviour).

ending scheme

case	singular			plural
	male	female	neuter	
nominative	-	-	-	-
genitive	+(e)s	-	+(e)s	-
dative	-	-	-	-
accusative	-	-	-	-

examples:

- Der **Professor** kann sehr gut erklären. (The professor can explain very well.) [nominative, male, singular]
- Der Name des **Professors** ist sehr lustig. (The professor's name is very funny.) [genitive, male, singular]
- Die **Professoren** kommen aus den USA. (The professors come from the USA.) [nominative, plural]



examples:

der Staat (the country)	der Direktor (the headmaster)	der Schmerz (the pain)	der Motor (the engine)	das Ohr (the ear)	das Ende (the end)
der See (the lake)	der Mast (the pylon)	der Vetter (the cousin)	das Drama (the drama)	das Bett (the bed)	das Auge (the eye)

irregular nouns

There are just a few irregular nouns. They form the plural by adding **(e)n** (=weak noun behaviour) and add **(e)n** in genitive, dative and accusative case of male nouns (=weak noun behaviour). What distinguishes them from weak nouns is that they add an additional "s" in the genitive case and the neuter noun (only one: das Herz) behaves similar.

ending scheme

case	singular			plural
	male	female	neuter	
nominative	-	-	-	-
genitive	+(e)ns	-	+(e)ns	-
dative	+(e)n	-	+(e)n	-
accusative	+(e)n	-	-	-

examples:

- Der **Name** ist lang. (The name is long.) [nominative, male, singular]
- Die Aussprache des **Namens** ist schwierig. (The pronunciation of the name is difficult.) [genitive, male, singular]
- Sie sagt mir den **Namen** ihres Exfreundes. (She tells me her ex boyfriend's name.) [dative, male, singular]
- Ich kann mir all diese **Namen** nicht merken. (I can't remember all these names.) [accusative, plural]
- Das **Herz** ist groß. (The heart is big.) [nominative, neuter, singular]
- Die Farbe des **Herzens** ist rot. (The color of the heart is red.) [genitive, neuter, singular]
- Sie geben dem **Herzen** noch ein Jahr. (They give the heart one more year.) [dative, neuter, singular]
- Die **Herzen** sehen gleich aus. (The hearts look the same.) [nominative, plural]

all irregular nouns:

der Name (the name)	der Gedanke (the thought)	der Buchstabe (the letter)	der Funke (the spark)
der Wille (the will)	der Glaube (the faith)	der Friede (the peace)	das Herz (the heart)



summary

The declination of nouns is not as complicate as it might look.

The things, you have to consider, can be summarized with a few keypoints.

- **Female nouns don't get an additional ending in the singular. They only have to be considered in the dative plural.**
- **The dative plural always ends with "n" regardless if it's a strong, weak, mixed or irregular noun.**
 Either the noun has already the "n" in the plural form or it gets it from the declination.

- **You have to keep in mind that most of the nouns (=strong nouns) take these endings:**

case	singular			plural
	male	female	neuter	-
nominative	-	-	-	-
genitive	+(e)s	-	+(e)s	-
dative	-	-	-	+n
accusative	-	-	-	-

- **... and just a few nouns (=weak nouns) take these endings:**

case	singular			plural
	male	female	neuter	-
nominative	-	-	-	-
genitive	+(e)n	-	-	-
dative	+(e)n	-	-	-
accusative	+(e)n	-	-	-

Keep in mind: Weak nouns form the plural always by adding **(e)n**.

There are three anomalies which have to be considered:

- **strong nouns which form their plural by adding "s"** (no "n" in the dative plural)
- **Der Herr** (add only "n" - not "en" - in genitive, dative and accusative)
- **the 8 irregular nouns** (add an additional "s" in the genitive case)

case	singular			plural
	male	female	neuter	-
nominative	-	-	-	-
genitive	+(e)ns	-	+(e)ns	-
dative	+(e)n	-	+(e)n	-
accusative	+(e)n	-	-	-

Name, Gedanke, Buchstabe, Funke, Wille, Glaube, Friede, Herz