

Cases: The Dative

You already learned that the nominative case is used to designate the subject of a sentence (*Einheit 2.2*), and the accusative case is used for the direct object of a sentence (*Einheit 3.8*) and with a number of prepositions.

The dative case also has several distinct functions:

- it designates the person for or to whom something is done, for example:
 - *Luca schenkt seiner Oma einen Blumenstrauß.*
 - *Ich schenke meinem Freund ein Buch.*

→ As you can see in these sentences, the dative case often appears in a sentence with three nouns:

- the person who is doing something (=the subject, in the nominative case),
- the recipient or the person for or to whom something is being done (=the indirect object, in the dative case),
- and the object that is being given from the subject to the recipient (=direct object, in the accusative case).

subject (Nom.)	verb	indirect object (Dat.)	direct object (Acc.)
<i>Luca</i>	<i>schenkt</i>	<i>seiner</i> Oma	<i>einen Blumenstrauß.</i>

- it is used with certain verbs (e.g., *antworten, danken, gehören, gratulieren, helfen, etc.*)
 - *Kannst du meinem Bruder bitte helfen?*
 - *Ich gratuliere dir zum Geburtstag!*
- it is used with these specific prepositions: aus, außer, bei, mit, nach, seit, von, zu
 - *Ich wohne bei meinen Eltern.*
 - *Wir fahren mit dem Bus.*
 - *Lori fährt zu ihrer Familie.*

As with the nominative and accusative cases, the dative case is also signaled by special forms of pronouns (*Einheit* 5.10) and endings for articles and possessive determiners.

	masculine	feminine	neuter	plural
endings	-m	-r	-m	-n
definite article	de m	de r	de m	de n
indefinite article	ein em kein em	ein er kein er	ein em kein em	--- kein en
possessive determiners	mein em dein em sein em /ihr em / sein em unser em eur em ihr em /Ihr em	mein er dein er sein er /ihr er / sein er unser er eur er ihr er /Ihr er	mein em dein em sein em /ihr em / sein em unser em eur em ihr em /Ihr em	mein en dein en sein en /ihr en / sein en unser en eur en ihr en /Ihr en

The dative object answers the question **wem?**
(whom?, to/for whom?):

Wem kauft Herr Ebert einen Ring?

Er kauft seiner Frau einen Ring.

There are also idiomatic expressions that use the dative case:

- *Wie geht es Ihnen?/Wie geht es dir?* (formal/informal: How are you?)
- *Wie geht es deinem Vater?* (informal: How is your father?)
- *Es tut mir Leid.* (I'm sorry.)
- *Das ist mir egal.* (I don't care.)
- *Mir fällt nichts ein.* (I can't think of anything.)
- *Wie gefällt dir mein Mantel?* (How do you like my coat?)
- *Diese Jacke steht dir.* (This jacket looks good on you.)

ACHTUNG All nouns (except for some proper names) add -n in the dative plural, unless their plural ends in -s, for example:

die Freunde (Nom. pl.) → den Freunden (Dat. pl.)

die Kinder (Nom. Pl.) → den Kindern (Dat. Pl.)

die Bücher (Nom. pl.) → den Büchern (Dat. pl.)

die Hobbys (Nom. pl.) → den Hobbys (Dat. pl.)