

The German Cases

What is a case actually?

- Grammatical cases are a form of inflection that is applied to nouns (Mann), pronouns (er), articles (der), adjectives (gut) and numerals (fünf)

Er dankt dem guten Mann. (*He thanks the good man*). (Nom.) (Dat.)

- The case shows the function of the noun/noun group in the sentence, i.e. whether it functions as the subject, the object or as an addition.
- Why is that important? Because German sentence structure is often so flexible that the sentence might become incomprehensible without the cases!
- The 4 German cases are: Nominative, Genitive, Dative and Accusativ

Examples:

Die junge Frau liest ein interessantes Buch.

(*A young woman reads an interesting book.*)

Das Auto meiner Mutter steht auf dem Parkplatz.

(*My mother's car is standing in the parking lot.*)

Dem strengen Lehrer antworte ich nicht.

(*I don't answer the strict teacher.*)

Er geht in die Stadt und kauft dort einen neuen Rucksack.

(*He goes into town and buys a new backpack there.*)

In der Schule lernen die Kinder das Alfabet.

(At school the learning are learning the alphabet.)

Remember: The case of the subject is always Nominative. The case of the object is determined by the verb!

And: The case of the addition is determined by the preposition!

- The **subject** answers the question: WHO does the action?
- The **object** answers the question: TO WHOM / WHAT is the action done?
- The **addition** answers the question: WHEN / WHERE / HOW / WHY is the action done?

Das Kind (who) trifft am Nachmittag (when) im Park (where) seine Freunde (whom).

The child meets his/her friends at the park in the afternoon.

- Das Kind (the child) is the subject.
- Seine Freunde (his friends) is the object.
- Am Nachmittag (in the afternoon) is a temporal addition.
- Im Park (at the park) is a local addition.

All of these sentence elements stand in the grammatical case that corresponds to their function in the sentence.