

# Adjective Endings

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## Definition of Adjective

An adjective is a word that describes a noun. Colors are adjectives (*purple, pink, black, yellow, red, etc.*) Words that describe the weather (*cold, hot, windy, warm, rainy, etc.*) are adjectives. Words that describe people (*tall, ugly, handsome, angry, happy, fat, skinny, etc.*) are adjectives. Words that indicate the attributes of nouns are adjectives. Any kind of word describing a noun is an adjective.

## Types of Adjectives

There are two types of adjectives in German. These types are based on the position of the adjective in relationship to the noun being described.

### *Predicate Adjectives:*

An adjective following its noun is predicative. Predicate adjectives appear somewhere to the right of their noun. Often, predicate adjectives are separated from their noun by a verb.

*The newspaper subscription became expensive.*

*My clothes are old.*

*The weather turned warm.*

*Your friend appears to be interesting.*

*Never was the work so tedious.*

### *Attributive Adjectives:*

An adjective immediately preceding its noun is attributive. Attributive adjectives appear directly to the left of their noun.

*I rarely read my expensive newspaper.*

*These old clothes need to be thrown away.*

*The warm weather excited the tourist.*

*You have nothing but interesting friends.*

*Gleeful children ran down the beach.*

## Declension of Adjectives

### *Declension:*

The term “declension” means attaching grammatical endings to adjectives and nouns. As verbs conjugate, so do adjectives decline. The system is called “declension”. In German, predicate adjectives never take endings. Only the attributive adjectives take endings. In more technical terms, predicate adjectives are not declined whereas attributive adjectives are declined.

### *Undeclinable Adjectives:*

In German, some adjectives never take endings, even if they are used attributively. “rosa, lila, lauter” are examples of these adjectives, “rosa” is an undeclinable adjective, it never takes grammatical endings. Undeclinable adjectives are fairly rare in German.

### *The adjectives “viel” & “wenig”:*

The adjectives “viel” and “wenig” are typically not declined in the singular but decline in the plural. viel: *much, a lot of, many*; wenig: *not much, little, few, not many*

## Determiners

Determiners are words that act like adjectives, and help more specifically define or describe a noun. Words such as *this, that, the, a, my, your, each*, and *which* are all determiners. There are eighteen determiners in German. Memorize the following list of the eighteen determiners. Determiners are broken down into two categories: the “der” words and the “ein” words. These two categories are based on the different sets of grammar endings associated with German determiners.

### “Der” Words

Memorize the seven “der” words in German. The dash following each German “der” word represents the point at which a grammar ending is attached to that word. Grammar endings for determiners are based on the case and gender of the noun that a determiner describes. These words take “primary” endings.

<b>d-</b>	the (definite article)
<b>dies-</b>	this, that, these, those (in close proximity)
<b>jen-</b>	this, that, these, those (far away)
<b>jed-</b>	each, every
<b>solch-</b>	such a, such, this kind of
<b>manch-</b>	many a, there are those that
<b>welch-</b>	which

### “Ein” Words

There are eleven “ein” words in German. As with the “der” words, the dash following each German “ein” word represents a grammar ending based on the case and gender of the noun following the “ein” word. The indefinite article (“a” / “ein”) along with the possessive adjectives (“my, your, his” / “mein, dein, sein” etc.) belong to the group of determiners called “ein” words. These words take “primary” endings but also take a “Ø” ending when followed by a noun in masculine nominative, neuter nominative and neuter accusative.

<b>ein-</b>	a, an (indefinite article)
<b>kein-</b>	not a, not any, no (negation of indefinite article)
<b>mein-</b>	my
<b>dein-</b>	your (familiar, singular)
<b>sein-</b>	his
<b>ihr-</b>	her
<b>sein-</b>	its
<b>unser-</b>	our
<b>euer-</b>	your (familiar, plural)
<b>ihr-</b>	their
<b>Ihr-</b>	your (formal, singular & plural)

## Primary Endings

Memorize the following set of endings. Be sure to insert the appropriate vowel before *r*, *s*, *n* and *m*.

	masc	fem	neut	plur
nom	<b>r</b>	<b>e</b>	<b>s</b>	<b>e</b>
acc	<b>n</b>	<b>e</b>	<b>s</b>	<b>e</b>
dat	<b>m</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>n</b>
gen	<b>s</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>s</b>	<b>r</b>

By saying these sounds in a row, it is much easier to memorize these endings:

reesy, neesy, mister man, sir sir

(reesy = r/e/s/e · neesy = n/e/s/e · mister man = m/r/m/n · sir sir = s/r/s/r)

Keep in mind that we are not taking into account the Ø endings for the “ein” words in masculine nominative, neuter nominative, or neuter accusative. You will have to remember this exception.

Primary endings typically attach to determiners, but in some instances they attach to adjectives.

### Examples of “Primary Endings” on determiners:

Remember that the grammar ending attached to a determiner identifies the case and gender of the noun that follows that determiner. The gender of a noun must be memorized. The case of a noun is based on its function in the sentence. Note the insertion of a vowel before endings *r*, *s*, *n* and *m*.

*Kennst du den Professor?*

Professor = masculine accusative

*Welches Buch ist das?*

Buch = neuter nominative

*Ich fahre bald mit meinem Bruder nach Dresden.*

Bruder = masculine dative

*Wir haben ohne eine Pause durchgearbeitet.*

Pause = feminine accusative

*Diese Zeitungen sind interessant.*

Zeitungen = plural nominative

## Secondary Endings

Memorize the following table. It is the set of “secondary endings“.

	masc	fem	neut	plur
nom	e	e	e	n
acc	n	e	e	n
dat	n	n	n	n
gen	n	n	n	n

This chart can easily be memorized by simply reading the sounds from left to right. een, neen, nnnn (een = e/e/e/n · neen = n/e/e/n · all the rest are “n”)

The secondary endings generally attach only to adjectives.

### Examples of “Secondary Endings” on adjectives:

*Kennst du die **neuen** Studenten?*

Studenten = plural accusative

*Welches **interessante** Buch liest du jetzt?*

Buch = neuter accusative

*Ich fahre bald mit **meinem besten** Freund nach Dresden.*

Freund = masculine dative

*Wir haben mit **einer kleinen** Pause durchgearbeitet.*

Pause = feminine dative

***Dieser alte** Text ist interessant.*

Text = masculine nominative

## The Ø ending

“Ein” words preceding nouns in masculine nominative, neuter nominative and neuter accusative take a zero ending. The Ø ending is neither a primary nor a secondary ending. It is a zero ending.

	masc	fem	neut	plur
nom	Ø		Ø	
acc			Ø	
dat				
gen				

### Examples of “Zero Endings” on “ein words”:

*Kennst du meinØ Kind?*

Kind = neuter accusative

*UnserØ Buch ist interessant.*

Buch = neuter nominative

*Wir haben keinØ Haus gekauft*

Haus = neuter accusative

*EinØ Student muß viel lesen.*

Student = masculine nominative

*IhrØ Großvater wohnt in Zwickau.*

Großvater = masculine nominative

Please note that Ø is not used in German.  
The Ø is used here only for demonstration purposes.  
In actual German, the zero ending is simply left blank.

## The Three Principles

### Prinzip I - The Basic Principle

[determiner | adjective | noun]

The determiner takes the **primary ending**.  
The adjectives take the **secondary ending**.

*Wir möchten einen neuen Wagen kaufen.  
Sie wohnt bei ihrer alten Mutter.  
Das nette junge Kind heißt Elke.  
Kennst du diese interessanten intelligenten Leute?  
Er muß dem armen behinderten Mann helfen.  
Wegen des schlechten Wetters gehen wir nicht in den Park.  
Mußt du an deinem neuen Auto arbeiten?*

### Prinzip II - Adjectives without Determiners

[adjective | noun]

There is no determiner in front of the adjective.  
The adjectives take the **primary ending**.

*Ich trinke jeden Morgen heißen starken Kaffee.  
Warmes amerikanisches Bier schmeckt mir nicht.  
Notice that adjectives are never capitalized,  
even when they are derived from a proper noun.  
Große rote Tomaten wachsen im Garten.  
Zum Abendessen machen wir oft belegtes Brot.  
Wegen schlechter Regenstrürme müssen wir später landen.  
Guter deutscher Wein kommt mit dem Mittagessen.  
Bei gutem Wetter gehe ich oft in den Park.*

### Prinzip III - “ein” words with Ø ending

[determiner | adjective | noun]

The determiner takes a **zero ending**.  
*This occurs only with “ein” words in:  
nominative masculine · nominative neuter · accusative neuter  
See the declension of “ein” words above.*  
The adjectives take the **primary ending**.

*UnserØ kleines junges Kind spielt jetzt im Park .  
KeinØ normaler Mensch wohnt im Friedhof.  
Ich habe einØ großes kaltes Eis bestellt.  
SeinØ altes Auto ist schon wieder kaputt.  
Kommt ihrØ lieber Mann zu uns?*

## Other Concerns with Adjective Endings

### Exception in Genitive

[adjective | noun]

Adjectives always take the secondary ending preceding nouns in genitive masculine or genitive neuter. Even when there is no determiner in front of an adjective, those adjectives will still take the secondary ending. Only masculine and neuter nouns take this exception, feminine and plural nouns follow all expected patterns.

*Wir werden am Anfang nächsten Monats eine Reise nach Quedlinburg machen.  
Wegen schlechten Wetters müssen wir zu Hause bleiben.*

### Undeclinable Adjectives

Certain adjective (often of foreign origin) are “undeclinable.” These adjectives never take any endings. Other adjectives in the chain take the expected ending. Some undeclinable adjectives are:

*lila* - purple/lilac colored  
*rosa* - pink/rose colored

*Sie hat ein neues lila Kleid gekauft.  
Du trägst immer schöne rosa Hemden.*

### Adjectives “viel” & “wenig”

The adjectives “viel” & “wenig” are not typically declined in the singular. In the plural, these two adjectives follow the normal pattern. Other adjectives in the chain take the expected ending.

*Ich trinke viel starken heißen Kaffee.  
Du trinkst wenig kalten Tee.  
Wenige Leute haben die Ausstellung besucht.  
Er hat seine Wohnung mit vielen kleinen Bildern ausgestattet.*

### Predicate Adjectives

Predicate adjectives are “undeclined.” That means, predicate adjectives take no endings. Predicate adjectives follow the noun they describe.

*Dieser Wein ist nicht rot, sondern er ist weiß.  
Weißt du, ob das Wetter heiß sein soll?  
Im Winter kann das Wetter kalt werden.  
Obwohl die Frau alt wird, ist sie noch schön geblieben.*

## Adjective Endings · Overview of the 3 Principles

	primary endings				secondary endings				Ø endings on "ein" words			
	masc	fem	neut	plur	masc	fem	neut	plur	masc	fem	neut	plur
nom	r	e	s	e	e	e	e	n	Ø		Ø	
acc	n	e	s	e	n	e	e	n			Ø	
dat	m	r	m	n	n	n	n	n				
gen	s	r	s	r	n	n	n	n				

### Prinzip I - determiner takes primary ending & all adjectives take secondary ending

DETERMINER	+ PRIM	ADJECTIVE	+ SEC	ADJECTIVE	+ SEC	NOUN
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*Das schöne, alte Haus steht an der Ecke.* The beautiful old house is on the corner.

*Die neuen, jungen Studenten haben viel zu lernen.* The young new students have a lot to learn.

### Prinzip II - no determiner & all adjectives take primary ending

(Exception: Adjectives in genitive-masculine & genitive-neuter *always* take secondary endings.)

ADJ	+ PRIM	ADJ	+ PRIM	NOUN
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*Schönes, warmes Wetter gefällt mir.* I like beautiful warm weather.

*Im Winter schmeckt starker heißer Kaffee gut.* In winter, strong, hot coffee tastes good.

### Prinzip III - determiner takes Ø ending & all adjectives take primary ending

This occurs only for "ein" words in: 1) nom. masc. 2) nom. neut. 3) acc. neut.

EIN	+ Ø	ADJ	+ PRIM	ADJ	+ PRIM	NOUN
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*EinØ schönes, altes Haus steht an der Ecke.* A beautiful old house is on the corner.

*Ich habe ihrØ neues, rotes Auto noch nicht gesehen.* I haven't seen her new red car yet.



## Helpful Charts

### Definite Articles

This chart contains all the grammar forms for the definite articles. These forms are based on the case and gender of the noun that follows the definite article.

	masc	fem	neut	plur
nom	<b>der</b>	<b>die</b>	<b>das</b>	<b>die</b>
acc	<b>den</b>	<b>die</b>	<b>das</b>	<b>die</b>
dat	<b>dem</b>	<b>der</b>	<b>dem</b>	<b>den</b>
gen	<b>des</b>	<b>der</b>	<b>des</b>	<b>der</b>

### Ein Words

This chart contains all the grammar endings for the “ein” words. These endings are based on the case and gender of the noun that follows the “ein” word. The symbol “Ø” represents a zero ending. The zero ending is not written in German. The “Ø” helps remind you when zero endings occur.

	masc	fem	neut	plur
nom	-Ø	-e	-Ø	-e
acc	<b>-en</b>	-e	-Ø	-e
dat	<b>-em</b>	<b>-er</b>	<b>-em</b>	<b>-en</b>
gen	<b>-es</b>	<b>-er</b>	<b>-es</b>	<b>-er</b>