

A1 EINHEIT 6 GRAMMAR

In this unit you will learn how to work with direct objects. In German the direct object of 99% of the transitive verbs (verbs that can take a direct object) is in the accusative (*der Akkusativ*) case. The first thing you have to be able to do is identify the direct object. Remember, the subject answers the question, Who or what is verbing?. Consider the sentence "My brother bought me ice skates for Christmas." The verb is *bought*. Who or what bought? *My brother* is that your subject. Who or what was bought? *Ice skates* is that your direct object.

The second sentence in the above paragraph makes it clear that some verbs are intransitive - they cannot take a direct object. A good example is *to go*. You cannot go anything. Nothing can be wanted. The intransitive verb that results in the most mistakes is *to be*. Students often follow the verb *sein* (*ich bin, du bist, er, sie, es ist, wir sind, ihr seid, sie, Sie sind*) with an accusative case object. This is impossible. The verb *to be* cannot have a direct object.

In English, nothing happens to a direct object noun or its modifiers. There is no difference between the subject and the direct object. "My brother eats cheese." Or "I cannot find my brother." In the first sentence *my brother* is the subject; in the second, *he* is the direct object. Nothing happened. "My brother remained my brother." However, we do make changes to pronouns. If we replace "My brother" with a pronoun, the subject and direct object are different *he* changes to *him*. He eats cheese and I cannot find him.

In German, pronouns and noun modifiers change from nominative case (subject) to accusative case (direct object and object of certain prepositions) if the accusative noun is a *der* word (masculine noun). *Der* changes to *den* and *ein, kein*, and the possessive adjectives get an *en*, e.g., *Der Hund kostet hundert Euro. Ich suche den Hund. Der* changed to *den* because *Hund* (a *der* word) went from being the subject to the direct object. It switched from the nominative to the accusative case. That explains the addition of *en* in the following examples: *Ein Hund kann nicht lesen. Er ruft einen Hund. or Ich habe keinen Hund.*

The possessive adjectives get the same endings as *ein* and *kein*. In this unit you are responsible for learning the singular possessive adjectives *mein* – my, *dein* – your (*du* form), *sein* – his, *ihr* – her, *sein* – its. Remember, all of these words get an *e* ending when modifying a *die* word in the nominative or accusative case.

| | Nominative case (subject) | Accusative case (direct object) |
|------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| <i>Der</i> words | <i>Mein Hund läuft schnell.</i> | <i>Ich rufe meinen Hund.</i> |
| <i>Die</i> words | <i>Meine Katze schwimmt nicht gern.</i> | <i>Suchst du deine Katze?</i> |
| <i>Das</i> words | <i>Sein Pferd ist schwarz.</i> | <i>Magst du ihr Pferd?</i> |

Remember, when you answer a question in German without using a full sentence, your answer must be in the case it would have been in if you had answered in a full sentence. If somebody asked, *Was suchst du?* and you were looking for your dog, you would answer *meinen Hund* because the entire sentence would be *Ich suche meinen Hund*.

You must remember the above point for the unit test. Also, be sure to know the genders of the nouns you've learned – especially animals and school supplies.

