

Idiomatic Verb & Preposition Combinations

In German, certain verbs take certain prepositions plus an object as part of their construction. This is true in English as well.

For example, the verb 'think' typically takes the preposition 'about'.
"She's thinking about her vacation."
verb=think / preposition=about / object=vacation

Another example is the verb 'wait', which can take the preposition 'for' or 'on'.
"I'm waiting for the bus."
verb=wait / preposition=for / object=bus

The choice of preposition associated with any given verb is already set in the language, however the choice of preposition is arbitrary and needs to be memorized.

Examples: 'warten' + 'auf' (wait for) / 'sprechen' + 'über' (talk about) / 'denken' + 'an' (think about)

Many of the prepositions used in these idiomatic combinations can take either the accusative or the dative case. The choice of case must also be memorized with these combinations. The choice of case has already been set, however, that choice is also arbitrary.

Memorize the following verb + preposition + case combinations:

denken + an + acc object	to think about (something/someone)	In each instance, 'something/someone' is the object of the preposition.
Angst haben + vor + dat object	to be afraid of (something/someone)	
warten + auf + acc object	to wait for (something/someone)	Please refer to the examples below to see how these appear in German.
sterben + an + dat object	to die of (something)	
sprechen + über + acc object	to talk about (something/someone)	
lachen + über + acc object	to laugh at/about (something/someone)	
arbeiten + an + dat object	to work on (something)	

Example Sentences in German:

Die Frau denkt an ihre Kinder.	The woman is thinking about her children.
Die Frau den an ihren Mann.	The woman is thinking about her husband.
Ich habe Angst vor dem Hund.	I'm afraid of the dog. (<i>lit</i> : I have fear before the dog.)
Ich habe Angst vor dir.	I'm afraid of you.
Wir warten auf den Professor.	We are waiting for the professor.
Wir warten auf den Bus.	We are waiting for the bus.
Wir sprechen über den Film.	We are talking about the movie.
Wir sprechen über dich.	We are talking about you.
Er lacht über deinen Witz.	He is laughing at your joke.
Sie arbeitet an ihrem Auto.	She is working on her car.