

# GENITIVE

The genitive case in German is used to indicate three different grammatical functions: *the object of certain prepositions, indefinite time, and nouns possessing other nouns*. The genitive case is slowly eroding in the spoken language and being replaced by dative. However, genitive is alive and well in the written language and is still considered a sign of good education when used in speaking.

## Forms (a few examples)

masc.	fem.	neut.	plur.	
-S	-R	-S	-R	
des	der	des	der	(definite article)
dieses	dieser	dieses	dieser	( <i>der</i> word)
eines	einer	eines	(keiner)	(indefinite article)
meines	meiner	meines	meiner	(possessive adjective)
seines	seiner	seines	seiner	
ihres	ihrer	ihres	ihrer	
unseres	unserer	unseres	unserer	
eueres	euerer	eueres	euerer	
etc.	etc.	etc.	etc.	

## Grammatical Forms of Nouns

All masculine and neuter nouns take an additional ending when used in the genitive case. The normal ending is *-es* for nouns that contain one syllable. Nouns with more than one syllable take *-s*.

### Examples:

des Kindes	of the child	seines Vaters	of his father
des Mannes	of the man	ihres Wagens	of her car
dieses Hauses	of this house	unseres Professors	of our professor
jenes Krieges	of that war		

Weak Masculine "N" nouns take the ending *-n* or *-en*.

### Examples:

des Jungen	of the boy
ihres Nachbarn	of their neighbor

Feminine and plural nouns take no additional genitive ending.

### Examples:

der Frau	of the woman
meiner Tante	of my aunt
der Leute	of the people
meiner Eltern	of my parents

## Prepositions Governing the Genitive

There are well over 100 prepositions that govern the genitive case. Here are a few of the more common ones. Notice that many of these prepositions contain the key word: *of*.

wegen	because of, on account of	oberhalb	above
trotz	in spite of, regardless of	innerhalb	inside of, within
statt	instead of, in place of	außerhalb	outside of
während	during, through the course of	diesseits	this side of
unterhalb	beneath, below, on the underside of	jenseits	the other (far) side of

In a prepositional construction, the object of the preposition is governed by the case associated with that preposition. If the preposition governs genitive, then its object takes the genitive case.

### Examples:

during the day	während des Tages
within a week	innerhalb einer Woche

**A. Exercises:** Render the following prepositional phrases into German:

1. because of the rain
2. in spite of the heat
3. during the summer
4. inside of the motor
5. this side of the river
6. the far side of the river
7. during the vacation
8. above the Earth
9. outside of Europe
10. below sea level
11. within the borders of the country
12. instead of the book I'll read ....

### Key to Exercises:

1. wegen des Regens
2. trotz der Hitze
3. während des Sommers
4. innerhalb des Motors
5. diesseits des Flusses
6. jenseits des Flusses
7. während der Ferien
8. oberhalb der Erde
9. außerhalb Europas
10. unterhalb des Meeresspiegels
11. innerhalb der Grenzen
12. statt des Buches

## Genitive expressing Indefinite Time

Time expressions that are indefinite, either future or past, are expressed without a preposition in the genitive case.

### Examples:

eines Tages	<i>some day or one day</i> (in the past or future depending on context)
eines Jahres	<i>some year or one year</i> (in the past or future depending on context)

**B. Exercises:** Render the following sentences into correct German:

1. We will have a lot of money some day. (in the future)
2. One day she simply left. (in the past)

### Key to Exercises:

1. Wir werden eines Tages viel Geld haben.
2. Eines Tages ist sie einfach weggegangen.

## Genitive Nouns possessing other Nouns

The primary use of the Genitive case in German is to indicate that one noun is possessing another noun. In these constructions, you will find two nouns back to back. This is seen in English:

*Ralph's store / my sister's husband / the sheep's wool.*

In English, the possessor typically appears before the item being possessed.

In German the word order is as follows:

noun(1) item being possessed	noun(2) possessor of item	
<i>case = governed by sentence</i>	<i>case = always genitive</i>	
both nouns (1&2) together form a single syntactic unit		

Ich habe	den Wagen	meines Vaters	gekauft.
	<i>noun(1)</i>	<i>noun(2)</i>	
	<i>(acc. - d.o.)</i>	<i>(gen. - poss)</i>	

“I bought my father’s car.”

## Word Order of Nouns with Genitive of Possession

In the German genitive, the item being possessed appears first, and the possessor appears second. It is the possessor that will take the genitive case. The genitive markers will be determined by the gender of the possessor. The item being possessed can take any case or be any gender. This will not affect the form of the genitive noun.

### Example:

The mailman’s bag is yellow.

In German, the form appears as:

Die Tasche des Briefträgers ist gelb.

The bag *die Tasche* is the item being possessed.

The mailman *der Briefträger* is the possessor.

Notice the masculine, genitive marker *-s*.

If the genitive noun is a person’s name, then the word order is usually reversed from above.

### Example:

Johann’s radio

Johanns Radio

There is no apostrophe in the German construction.

If the genitive noun is a geographical name, then the word order can go either way.

### Example:

France’s economy

the economy of France

Frankreichs Wirtschaft

Wirtschaft Frankreichs

C. *Exercises:* Render the following possessives into German using the genitive case.

- |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. the girl's father       | 11. his children's house    |
| 2. the boy's father        | 12. her father's uncle      |
| 3. the professor's book    | 13. her father's aunt       |
| 4. the woman's purse       | 14. her mother's pen        |
| 5. the people's government | 15. her mother's handbag    |
| 6. my mother's car         | 16. the motor of the car    |
| 7. my brother's car        | 17. Erich's bicycle         |
| 8. my parent's car         | 18. Helga's child           |
| 9. his son's house         | 19. the industry of Germany |
| 10. his daughter's house   | 20. the history of Berlin   |

*Key to Exercises*

- |                             |                                |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. der Vater des Mädchens   | 11. das Haus seiner Kinder     |
| 2. der Vater des Jungen     | 12. der Onkel ihres Vaters     |
| 3. das Buch des Professors  | 13. die Tante ihres Vaters     |
| 4. die Tasche der Frau      | 14. der Kuli ihrer Mutter      |
| 5. die Regierung der Leute  | 15. die Tasche ihrer Mutter    |
| 6. das Auto meiner Mutter   | 16. der Motor des Wagens       |
| 7. das Auto meines Bruders  | 17. Erichs Fahrrad             |
| 8. das Auto meiner Eltern   | 18. Helgas Kind                |
| 9. das Haus seines Sohnes   | 19. die Industrie Deutschlands |
| 10. das Haus seiner Tochter | 20. die Geschichte Berlins     |

## Examples of Genitive Possessors within sentences:

Remember that in Genitive Possessive constructions, the item being possessed can take any case. This will depend on how it is functioning in the sentence (subject, direct object, object of a preposition, etc.) The possessor will always be in the Genitive Case and will FOLLOW the noun it is possessing.

*Examples:*

I bought my father's car last year.

The noun *car* is the direct object, hence it will take the Accusative Case.  
*Father* is the possessor of *car* and must take the Genitive. *Father* will follow *car*.

Ich habe letztes Jahr den Wagen meines Vaters gekauft.                      I bought my father's car last year.

All the elements of the Genitive Possessor cling together and function as a single unit. This unit can not be split up, no matter where it occurs in the sentence.

Letztes Jahr habe ich den Wagen meines Vaters gekauft.  
Den Wagen meines Vaters habe ich letztes Jahr gekauft.

Die Abstimmung der Regierung bleibt jetzt unverändert.	The government's decision remains unchanged now.
Jetzt bleibt die Abstimmung der Regierung unverändert.	Now the government's decision remains unchanged.

*D. Exercises:* Render the following sentences into correct German.

1. Her mother's handbag is on the table.
2. We're celebrating in my friends' garden. (friends is plural)
3. The government gave the money to her husband's sister.
4. In his uncle's car, the police found a kilo of hashish.
5. I read the student's book.
6. Did you lose the professor's pen?
7. Where is your parent's vacation house? (talking to two friends)
8. Herr Schneider is working on his daughter's house.
9. Uwe sent a gift to his wife's brother.
10. My cat sleeps in the neighbor's car.

*Key to exercises:*

1. Die Handtasche ihrer Mutter liegt auf dem Tisch. (Auf dem Tisch liegt die Tasche ihrer Mutter.)
2. Wir feiern in dem Garten meiner Freunde. (In dem Garten meiner Freunde feiern wir.)
3. Die Regierung hat der Schwester ihres Mannes das Geld gegeben.
4. In dem Auto seines Onkels hat die Polizei ein Kilo Haschisch gefunden.
5. Ich habe das Buch des Studenten gelesen. (Das Buch des Studenten habe ich gelesen.)
6. Hast du den Kugelschreiber des Professors verloren?
7. Wo ist die Ferienwohnung eurer Eltern?
8. Herr Schneider arbeitet an dem Haus seiner Tochter.
9. Uwe hat dem Bruder seiner Frau ein Geschenk geschickt.
10. Meine Katze schläft in dem Auto des Nachbarn. (Im Auto des Nachbarn schläft meine Katze.)

## Adjective endings

It is common to find Genitive constructions in German where unpreceded adjectives are concerned. These constructions appear as adjectives without definite or indefinite articles. The Genitive endings will simply be attached to the adjectives and no other clue will be available in the construction except of course the *-s* or *-es* on masculine and neuter nouns in singular. Unpreceded adjectives in Genitive take *-r* in the feminine and plural and *-n* before masculine and neuter nouns. Constructions with unpreceded adjectives usually render into English as *of*.

*Examples:*

Tomaso Albinoni war ein Komponist italienischer Herkunft.

Tomaso Albinoni was a composer of Italian descent.

Das Wetter letzten Sommers wurde außergewöhnlich mild.

The weather of last summer became unusually mild.