SOME SPECIAL TRAITS OF GERMAN NOUNS

nouns are classified into grammatical genders

Every German noun falls into one of three categories. The three categories were originally based on the sound of the noun. The original sounds have been lost, but the three categories still remain. The names of the categories were borrowed from Latin and are based on gender, however, the categories have nothing to do with biological gender. There is no clue with any German noun as to which category that noun belongs. Each noun must be memorized along with its category. There is nothing about the physical trait of any noun that helps identify its category. Note that the German word for "the" changes according to gender.

(masculine)
der Tisch   the table
der Löffel   the spoon
der Zug   the train

(feminine)
die Lampe   the lamp
die Gabel   the fork
die U-bahn   the subway

(neuter)
das Buch   the book
das Messer   the knife
das Auto   the car

pronouns match the gender of the nouns they replace

Pronouns stand in place of a noun along with the other words that accompany that noun. In German, the gender of the pronoun must match that of the original noun. Note that the German word for "it" changes according to the gender of the original noun.

(noun)	*("it")*
der Tisch (masculine)	er
das Papier (neuter)	es
die Lampe (feminine)	sie
die U-bahn (feminine)	sie
der Löffel (masculine)	er
das Messer (neuter)	es
das Auto (neuter)	es
der Zug (masculine)	er
die Gabel (feminine)	sie

German makes no distinction between "common" nouns and "proper" nouns. All nouns in German are always capitalized no matter what.

der Tag   the day
die Sonne   the sun
das Jahr   the year
der Amerikaner   the American

nouns have many different plural forms

In English, the typical plural formation of a noun is simply an "s" or "es" on the end of that noun. In German, there are many common forms used to create the plural. The plural form for each noun must be memorized.

typical plurals for masculine nouns:
add "e" to the end of the noun

der Tag	die Tage	day/days
der Bleistift	die Bleistifte	pencil/pencils
der Monat	die Monate	month/months
der Stein	die Steine	stone/stones

typical plurals for feminine nouns:
add "n" or "en" to the end of the noun

die Frau	die Frauen	women/women
die Lampe	die Lampen	lamp/lamps
die Gabel	die Gabeln	fork/forks
die Autobahn	die Autobahnen	freeway/freeways

typical plurals for neuter nouns:
add "er" to end of noun and umlaut to stem vowel

das Buch	die Bücher	book/books
das Dach	die Dächer	roof/rooftops
das Blatt	die Blätter	leaf/leaves
das Glas	die Gläser	glass/glasses

Other plural forms:

add ending "er"

das Kind	die Kinder	child/children

add umlaut to stem vowel

der Garten	die Gärten	yard/yards

add "nen" to end of noun

die Ärztin	die Ärztinnen	doctor/doctors

add ending "s" (mostly foreign words)

das Auto	die Autos	car/cars

make no changes

das Mädchen	die Mädchen	girl/girls

nouns take case forms

(1) <u>Der Garten</u> ist schön.
(2) Der Nachbar mag <u>den Garten</u>.
(3) Der Nachbar arbeitet in <u>dem Garten</u>.

(1) <u>The yard</u> is nice.
(2) The neighbor likes <u>the yard</u>.
(3) The neighbor is working in <u>the yard</u>.

(1) nominative (subject)
(2) accusative (direct object)
(3) dative (location)