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ENGLISH



GERMAN GRAMMAR

# Nominative, Accusative, Genitive or Dative?

LEVEL A1 - B1

Easy explanations for mastering the  
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JAN RICHTER

# Table of Contents

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<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Weitere Bücher und Ebooks von EasyDeutsch</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Forward</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>The Authors</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>German Cases - in General</b> .....	<b>12</b>
What is a case? .....	13
How many cases are there in German???	13
What do the cases do? .....	13
Which words have a case? .....	14
How do I know which case to use? .....	14
Cases in English .....	15
General Info about Cases: .....	16
Your To-Do List .....	16
<b>The Nominative Case</b> .....	<b>17</b>
What is the Nominative Case? .....	18
Nominative – Declension .....	18
Uses of the Nominative Case .....	18
Summary .....	21
<b>Nominative Case - Exercises</b> .....	<b>22</b>
Exercise 1 – Theory .....	22
Exercise 2 – Theory .....	23
Exercise 3 – Practice – Verbs with Subject Complements .....	23
Exercise 4 – Practice – Personal Pronouns .....	24
Exercise 5 – Practice – Possessive Articles .....	25
Exercise 6 – Putting it all together .....	26
Additional Exercise – Personal Pronouns in the Nominative Case .....	27
Useful Sentences .....	27
<b>The Accusative Case</b> .....	<b>28</b>
What is the Accusative Case? .....	29
Accusative – Declension .....	29
Uses of the Accusative Case .....	29
Verbs with Two Accusative Objects .....	31
Summary .....	32

Your To-Do List .....	32
<b>Accusative Case - Exercises .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Exercise 1 – Theory .....	33
Exercise 2 – Theory .....	34
Exercise 3 – Practice – Accusative Verbs .....	34
Exercise 4 – Practice – Accusative Prepositions.....	36
Exercise 5 – Practice – Possessive Articles.....	37
Exercise 6 – Practice – Nominative or Accusative? Personal Pronouns .....	38
Exercise 7 – Practice – Verbs: Nominative or Accusative? .....	38
EXTRA: Exercise 8 - Practice - Nominative or Accusative .....	39
Useful Sentences.....	39
<b>The Dative Case .....</b>	<b>40</b>
What is the Dative Case? .....	41
Dative – Declension.....	41
Special Features.....	41
Uses of the Dative Case .....	42
Prepositions that Use Both Dative and Accusative .....	44
Two-case Prepositions as Local Prepositions .....	45
The Dative Case with Specific Adjectives .....	46
Summary .....	47
Your To-Do List .....	47
<b>Dative Case - Exercises .....</b>	<b>48</b>
Exercise 1 – Theory .....	48
Exercise 2 – Theory .....	49
Exercise 3 – Practice – Dative Verbs – Possessive Articles and Personal Pronouns .....	49
Exercise 4 – Practice – Dative Prepositions.....	53
Exercise 5 – Practice – Two-Case Prepositions .....	56
Exercise 6 – Practice – Dative Verbs with Prepositions.....	57
Exercise 7 – Practice – Two-Case Prepositions .....	58
Exercise 8 – Practice .....	65
EXTRA: Exercise 9 – Practice – Dative Plural .....	66
Useful Sentences.....	66
<b>The Genitive Case .....</b>	<b>67</b>
What is the Genitive Case? .....	68

Genitive - Declension .....	68
Special Features.....	68
Uses of the Genitive Case.....	69
Summary .....	71
Your To-Do List .....	71
<b>Genitive Case Exercises .....</b>	<b>73</b>
Exercise 1 – Theory .....	73
Exercise 2 – Practice – Noun-Noun Constructions .....	74
Exercise 3 – Practice: from Dative to Genitive .....	75
Exercise 4 – Practice – Genitive Prepositions.....	76
Exercise 5 – Practice – Sentences with the Genitive Case.....	78
Exercise 6 – Practice – Adjectives with the Genitive Case.....	79
Exercise 7 – Practice – Verbs with the Genitive Case .....	79
EXTRA: Exercise 8 – Articles, Pronouns, and Endings in the Genitive Case .....	80
Useful Sentences .....	80
<b>4-Step-Guide to the Right Case .....</b>	<b>81</b>
Basic Principles .....	81
<b>Step 1:</b> Where is the subject? .....	81
<b>Step 2:</b> Is there a preposition before the noun? .....	81
<b>Step 3:</b> Does the verb determine the case? .....	82
<b>Step 4:</b> Direct or indirect object? .....	82
<b>Practice - Nominative, Accusative, Dative, and Genitive .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Answer Key.....</b>	<b>87</b>
Answer Key - The Nominative Case: .....	87
Answer Key - The Accusative Case:.....	94
Answer Key - The Dative Case: .....	102
Answer Key - The Genitive Case:.....	123
Answer Key - Nominative, Accusative, Dative, or Genitive: .....	130
<b>All EasyDeutsch Ebooks .....</b>	<b>136</b>

German Grammar

## Nominative, Accusative, Dative or Genitive? – No Problem!

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**Autor:** Jan Richter, Claudia Berghold

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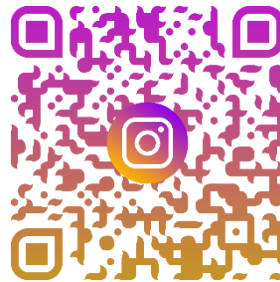
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## Forward

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You probably already know me, but let me quickly introduce myself. My name is Jan, and I run the website [EasyDeutsch](https://www.easy-deutsch.com). My goal is to show you that German grammar isn't as hard as you might think it is; it's just usually explained in a complicated way.

This e-book covers the German cases. I'll show you that they aren't just randomly used and instead follow clear rules that you can understand.

**My goal: when you finish reading this book, I want you to say, "Oh! NOW I get how German cases work!"**

I divided the explanations and exercises into four levels: easy, medium, hard, and expert. Easy corresponds to the A1 level, medium to A2/B1, hard to B1/B2, and expert to C1/C2.

You'll notice that the individual cases are marked in different colors: green for the **nominative** case, purple for the **accusative** case, red for the **dative** case, and orange for the **genitive** case. You should use these colors as well; it will help you subconsciously assign the correct case.

I've included some valuable lists (available as a separate download that you received when you purchased this ebook), as well as hundreds of exercises for all levels and topics.

Happy learning!

Jan

## The Authors

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This e-book was created by Jan from EasyDeutsch and Claudia Berghold.



Jan Richter from  
EasyDeutsch

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## German Cases - in General

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What is a case? .....	13
How many cases are there in German???	13
What do the cases do? .....	13
Which words have a case? .....	14
How do I know which case to use? .....	14
Cases in English.....	15
General Info about Cases:.....	16
Your To-Do List.....	16



### Video Lesson

<https://easy-deutsch.com/yt/casesL1/>

## WHAT IS A CASE?

This e-book is about German cases, so we first need to know what we mean by the word “case”.

### Definition:

The case of a noun or pronoun explains its function and its relation to other words in the sentence.

## HOW MANY CASES ARE THERE IN GERMAN???

German has “only” 4 cases: **Nominative**  
**Accusative**  
**Dative**  
**Genitive**

**Attention:** I will use the same color code for the different cases throughout the whole ebook. It’s important that you use a color code for the cases too because it helps your brain to memorize the correct case in combination with prepositions and certain verbs.

## WHAT DO THE CASES DO?

- The **nominative** case is the base form of the noun and indicates the noun is the subject of the sentence (the person or thing that performs the action).
- The **accusative** case indicates the direct object (the person or thing that is acted upon or used but doesn’t do anything itself).
- The **dative** case indicates the indirect object (the person or thing that receives something).
- The **genitive** case indicates belonging or ownership.

There are some other uses of the cases, which you’ll find out about in the individual chapter for each case.

## WHICH WORDS HAVE A CASE?

Every noun has a case.

Additionally, all words related to a given noun (e.g., articles, adjectives, pronouns) take on the same case.

→Articles, nouns, pronouns, and adjectives are declined based on the case.

‘Declined’ means that the ending must fit the case.

### Examples:

- „**Der Mann** gibt **der Frau** **die Blumen**.“
- „**Die Frau** bekommt **ein Geschenk**.“
- „**Das Kind** hat **einen Ball**.“
- „**Der Vater** geht morgen mit **dem Kind** in **die Schule**.“

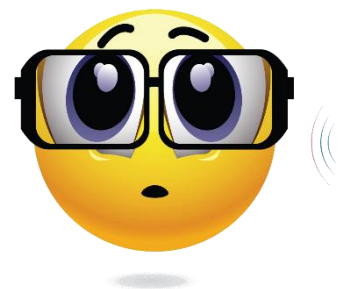
Nominative	Accusative	Dative	Genitive
der Vater	den Vater	dem Vater	des Vaters
das Kind	das Kind	dem Kind	des Kindes
die Frau	die Frau	der Frau	der Frau
die Menschen	die Menschen	den Menschen	der Menschen

## HOW DO I KNOW WHICH CASE TO USE?

### Short Answer:

Based on...

- the function of the noun in the sentence,
- the verb requiring a specific case,
- or a preposition determining the case.



**We'll go over this more later!**

## CASES IN ENGLISH

Your English teacher probably didn't use the term cases, but ENGLISH HAS CASES!!!  
There aren't as many as in German, but there are a few still around:

The gardener's tools = **Des** Gärtners **s** Werkzeuge

**Genitive**: apostrophe + "s"

I give **him** milk. = Ich gebe **ihm** Milch.

"He" changes to "him" because he's receiving something → **Dative**

I like **him**. = Ich mag **ihn**.

"He" changes to "him" because he's the direct object → **Accusative**

This is just a quick example of letting you know that other languages use cases as well. If your native language is a Slavic language, like Russian, you should be familiar with this concept already.

## GENERAL INFO ABOUT CASES:

You might have noticed that I wrote that “German has ‘only’ four cases.”

A few hundred years ago, there were nine cases in German! In addition to nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive, there were ablative, locative, vocative, directive, and instrumental.

Linguists believe that the genitive case will soon go extinct. But here ‘soon’ means in the next 100 or 200 years, so you still have to learn it!

**To show you that learning cases in German isn’t so hard, here are the number of cases in a few other European languages:**

- **Russian:** 6 cases
- **Polish:** 7 cases
- **Czech:** 7 cases
- **Croatian:** 7 cases
- **Finnish:** 15 cases
- **Hungarian:** 23 cases

German, with only four cases, doesn't seem so bad now, huh? ;)

## YOUR TO-DO LIST



**Learn about cases in your own language:**

- Does your native language use cases?
- **If yes:** How do they work? What needs to be adjusted? It might be similar to German!
- **If no:** Unlucky! But I promise you that you'll understand cases by the end of this book. It looks more complicated than it actually is!



## The Nominative Case

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What is the Nominative Case? .....	18
Nominative – Declension .....	18
Uses of the Nominative Case .....	18
Use: as Subject .....	18
Use: as Subject Complement .....	19
Verbs with Subject Complements .....	19
Use: after “als” or “wie” .....	20
Summary .....	21



### Video Lesson

<https://easy-deutsch.com/yt/casesL2/>

## WHAT IS THE NOMINATIVE CASE?

The **nominative** case is the base form of the noun and indicates that we are talking about the subject of the sentence.

If you don't know what the subject is, look for the word that tells you how to conjugate the verb. → That's the subject! It's also the person or thing we are talking about / that is performing the action.

- „**Er** kauft 10 Luftballons.“  
“Er” = the subject, which means you have to conjugate “kaufen” in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form: “kauft”.

The question words for the nominative case are: “Wer?” and “Was?”

### Examples:

- „**Das Pferd** ist weiß.“
- „**Die Frau** schenkt dem Mann die Fußballtickets.“
- „Den Ball hat **der Junge** zum Geburtstag bekommen.“

In the third example, you can see that the subject doesn't always have to be at the beginning of the sentence. It can even come AFTER the verb, which only happens rarely in English.

## LEICHT

### NOMINATIVE – DECLENSION

The article always has to match the case.

	Definite Article	Indefinite Article
Masculine:	<b>der</b> Mann	<b>ein</b> Mann
Feminine:	<b>die</b> Frau	<b>eine</b> Frau
Neuter:	<b>das</b> Kind	<b>ein</b> Kind
Plural:	<b>die</b> Eltern	- Eltern

## LEICHT

### USES OF THE NOMINATIVE CASE

#### USE: AS SUBJECT

- „**Das Pferd** ist weiß.“
- „**Der Mann** schenkt der Frau die Blumen.“
- „Den Ball hat **der Junge** zum Geburtstag bekommen.“

## The subject is ALWAYS nominative! No exceptions!!!



### Tip:

The subject is the person or thing that we are talking about, or that performs the action.

## LEICHT

### USE: AS SUBJECT COMPLEMENT

The verbs **“sein”**, **“werden”**, **“scheinen”**, **“heißen”**, and **“bleiben”** use so-called subject complements. If you use these verbs without a preposition, the noun after the verb is also nominative! Even though it's not the subject of the sentence!

- „*Du bist ein guter Schüler.*“
- „*Er ist der Beste!*“
- „*Du willst ein Lehrer werden.*“

In all three sentences, the subject is at the beginning, but “Schüler”, “Beste”, and “Lehrer” are also nominative because these verbs require a subject complement.

**Here's the simple logic behind this:** The subject and second noun aren't two different things. In the first sentence, “du” and “Schüler” are referring to the same person. It's the same for the other two examples. So it makes sense that they are in the same case.

### VERBS WITH SUBJECT COMPLEMENTS

	Verb	Example
A1	sein	<i>Er <u>ist</u> ein Lehrer.</i>
A1	werden	<i>Ich <u>werde</u> später mal ein Feuerwehrmann.</i>
A1	bleiben	<i>Er <u>bleibt</u> ein Teil der Mannschaft.</i>
A1	heißen	<i>Ich <u>heiße</u> Jan.</i>



### Watch out!

If you use these verbs with prepositions, the preposition determines the case.

**Example:** „*Ich bin in der Kirche.*“

It's pretty obvious that "Kirche" and "ich" are not the same thing.

### SCHWER

USE: AFTER "ALS" OR "WIE"

When combined with the prepositions "als" or "wie", there are also verbs that use the nominative case.

**In Most Cases:** If there is a preposition before a noun, it won't be nominative.

Usually, we use "als" and "wie" as conjunction, often to make comparisons.

However, some verbs use "als" and "wie" in connection with prepositional complements.

These prepositional complements take the nominative case when the noun after the preposition and the subject refer to the same thing.

### Examples:

- „*Er arbeitet als Hausmeister.*“
- „*Sie findet als Kellnerin einfach keine Arbeit.*“
- „*Er singt wie ein großer Opernsänger.*“

In the first sentence, "er" and "Hausmeister" are the same person. It's the same in the second and third example. They aren't two different people! That's why even though there is a preposition before "Hausmeister", "Kellnerin", and "Opernsänger", we have to use the nominative case.



### Careful!

„*Ich finde ihn als Lehrer sehr gut, aber als Menschen mag ich ihn nicht.*“

In this example, the noun after "als" is related to the accusative object "ihn" and therefore also accusative.

## SUMMARY

- The nominative case indicates the subject of the sentence.
- The nominative case is the base form.
- It's also used with specific verbs and the preposition "als".
- We can ask for the nominative case using the questions "Wer?" or "Was?"

## Nominative Case - Exercises

---

**Remember:** The nominative case indicates the subject and is also used after specific verbs. Only nouns and pronouns take a case.

**LEICHT****EXERCISE 1 – THEORY**

**Mark all of the nouns/pronouns that are nominative.**

1. „Heute gehe ich im Supermarkt einkaufen.“
2. „Der Lehrer schreibt etwas an die Tafel.“
3. „Die Flasche ist leer.“
4. „Otto ist der Hausmeister.“
5. „Die Bank ist am Sonntag geschlossen.“
6. „Ein Vogel kann fliegen.“
7. „Kevin will später Feuerwehrmann werden.“
8. „Der Kühlschrank ist leer.“
9. „Ich finde die Schlüssel nicht.“
10. „Das Auto ist kaputt.“
11. „Anja kauft sich neue Schuhe.“
12. „Im Park stehen viele Bäume.“
13. „In der Wüste gibt es viel Sand.“
14. „Das Licht ist an.“
15. „Bevor ich schlafen gehe, dusche ich mich immer.“

## EXERCISE 2 – THEORY

**True or False?**

T F

*The nominative indicates the object of the sentence.*


*The nominative tells you how the verb has to be conjugated.*

*The questions words for the nominative case are "Wen?" and "Was?"*

*The subject always takes the nominative case.*

**Which of these verbs does NOT use a subject complement:**

sein, machen, bleiben, haben, heißen, werden.

## EXERCISE 3 – PRACTICE – VERBS WITH SUBJECT COMPLEMENTS

Here is a story about two young people who meet at a playground during their school holidays and might fall in love.

**Declension: fill in each blank with either "ein" or "eine"?**

Peter und Sofia sind beide neun Jahre alt. Peter will einmal \_\_\_\_ Popstar werden. Er scheint \_\_\_\_ talentierter Sänger zu sein. Sofia ist \_\_\_\_ liebes Mädchen. Sie scheint \_\_\_\_ extrovertierte, junge Dame zu sein. Sie will einmal \_\_\_\_ Schauspielerin werden. Sofia und Peter treffen sich das erste Mal auf dem Spielplatz. Sofia ist \_\_\_\_ neue Nachbarin in der Wohnsiedlung, weil ihre Familie gerade von Wien nach Düsseldorf gezogen ist. Sie treffen sich zum ersten Mal - \_\_\_\_ lebenslange Freundschaft beginnt!

## EXERCISE 4 – PRACTICE – PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Fill in the blanks with “ich” or “du”, “wir” or “ihr”, “sie” or “er”:

Peter sieht Sofia und \_\_\_\_ ist sofort sehr neugierig:

**Peter:** Hallo, wie heißt \_\_\_\_ und wie alt bist \_\_\_\_?

**Sofia:** \_\_\_\_ heiße Sofia und \_\_\_\_ bin neun Jahre alt. Und \_\_\_\_?

**Peter:** Peter. \_\_\_\_ bin gleich alt wie \_\_\_\_ aber ich bin viel stärker und größer als \_\_\_\_ . Ätsch. (Was sich liebt das neckt sich. )

**Sofia:** Ok, wie auch immer.

**Die Mutter von Peter schaut aus dem Fenster und sieht die beiden im Hof reden:**

**Peters Mutter:** Was macht \_\_\_\_ denn gerade?

**Peter:** \_\_\_\_ sprechen nur miteinander, warum?

**Peters Mutter:** Es ist heute ein bisschen frisch draußen. Wollt \_\_\_\_ eine heiße Schokolade trinken? Ich kann warme Milch machen.

**Peter:** Nein danke Mama. \_\_\_\_ haben keine Lust auf heiße Schokolade.

**Peters Mutter:** Was, \_\_\_\_ habt keinen Durst? Das gibt's doch nicht.

Wer bist \_\_\_\_ denn eigentlich, kleines Mädchen?

**Sofia:** Sofia. \_\_\_\_ bin neu. \_\_\_\_ habe auch keinen Durst oder Hunger. Danke!

**Peters Mutter:** Nun gut. Freut mich dich kennenzulernen Sofia! Viel Spaß \_\_\_\_ beiden.

**Sofia schaut verträumt in den Himmel. Irgendwie fühlt \_\_\_\_ sich sofort wohl mit Peter.**

**Sofia:** Peter..... was willst \_\_\_\_ denn später einmal werden?

**Peter:** \_\_\_\_ will ein Popstar werden. Das ist cool, oder?

**Sofia:** Meinst \_\_\_\_ ? \_\_\_\_ bin nicht sicher. Willst du also ein Sänger werden?

**Peter:** Ja genau.

**Nach einer Weile bekommt Sofia Lust darauf, eine kleine Fahrradtour zu machen:**



## EXERCISE 5 – PRACTICE – POSSESSIVE ARTICLES

Fill in the blanks with “mein/e” or “dein/e”:

**Sofia:** Hmmmm, wo ist eigentlich \_\_\_\_\_ Fahrrad? Du könntest mir alles zeigen.

**Peter:** Keine Ahnung. \_\_\_\_\_ Fahrrad ist aber ohnehin kaputt. Ich hoffe, dass \_\_\_\_\_ Vater oder \_\_\_\_\_ Mutter es reparieren kann.

**Sofia:** Oh schade. Viel Glück damit. Ist es das da drüben? \_\_\_\_\_ Fahrrad ist zwar kaputt aber es ist viel schöner als \_\_\_\_\_ Fahrrad, denke ich!

**Peter:** Danke Sofia. (Peter wird ein bisschen rot) Das sind übrigens \_\_\_\_\_ Spielsachen. Wollen wir ein bisschen damit spielen? Wo ist \_\_\_\_\_ Spielzeug?

**Sofia:** Warte, ich hole es.

**Sofia und Peter spielen mit all ihren mitgebrachten Spielsachen im Hof. Was denkst du - Was ist sein und was ist ihr Spielzeug?**



Fill in the blanks with “ihr/e” or “sein/e”:

Das Feuerwehrauto aus Lego ist bestimmt \_\_\_\_\_ Spielzeug.

Es scheint \_\_\_\_\_ Clown zu sein, aber bin nicht sicher, es könnte auch \_\_\_\_\_ Clown sein.

Die Barbie ist bestimmt \_\_\_\_\_ Puppe. Ja ja, Klischee olé 😊

Es ist \_\_\_\_\_ “Mensch ärgere dich nicht” Spiel. Sie liebt

Brettspiele.

Es sind \_\_\_\_\_ Autos. Aber er spielt nicht mehr so oft damit.

\_\_\_\_\_ Spielsachen sind sehr kostbar für Peter und Sofia.



**Answer without using nouns - only possessive pronouns:**

Mein Auto ist hier, aber wo ist **deines**? - **Meines** ist doch auch hier.

Gehört diese Puppe dir? - Ja, das ist \_\_\_\_\_!

Ist das dein Clown? Ja, das ist \_\_\_\_\_?

Ist das Sofias Puppe? - Ja das ist \_\_\_\_\_.

Ist das Peters Auto? - Ja, das ist \_\_\_\_\_.

Sind das eure Spielsachen? Ja, das sind \_\_\_\_\_.

Ist das euer Spielzeug? Ja, das ist \_\_\_\_\_.

Ist das ihr Lego? Nein, das ist \_\_\_\_\_.

Ist das dein Kind? Ja, das ist \_\_\_\_\_.

Ist das ihre Barbie? Nein, das ist \_\_\_\_\_.

**EXERCISE 6 – PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER****Fill in the blanks with the correct personal pronoun, possessive pronoun, or article (in nominative):**

Peter ist \_\_\_\_\_ guter Junge und spielt gerne mit Sofia. \_\_\_\_\_ scheint Sofia sehr zu mögen aber Sofia weiß das nicht. \_\_\_\_\_ Spielsachen sind auf jeden Fall \_\_\_\_\_ guter Grund mehr Zeit miteinander zu verbringen. \_\_\_\_\_ Feuerwehrlego macht einen großen Eindruck auf Sofia und \_\_\_\_\_ Clown gefällt Peter. Peter hat eines Tages schlechte Laune. Es scheint als hätte \_\_\_\_\_ eine kleine "Kinderlebenskrise."

**Sofia tröstet ihn:**

**Sofia:** Peter, \_\_\_\_\_ werde immer meine Spielsachen mit dir teilen. Was \_\_\_\_\_ ist, ist auch \_\_\_\_\_.

**Peter:** Danke Sofia. In einer Woche geht die Schule ja wieder los! \_\_\_\_\_ Junge aus meiner Klasse ist sehr gemein zu mir.

**Sofia:** \_\_\_\_\_ werden immer zusammenhalten. \_\_\_\_\_ Freundschaft ist sehr wichtig.

**Peter:** Willst \_\_\_\_\_ meine beste Freundin für immer sein?

**Sofia:** Ja. Ehrenwort, für immer!

DID YOU KNOW?

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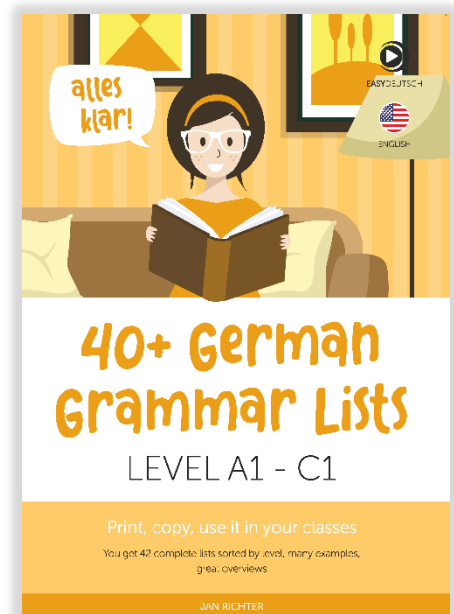
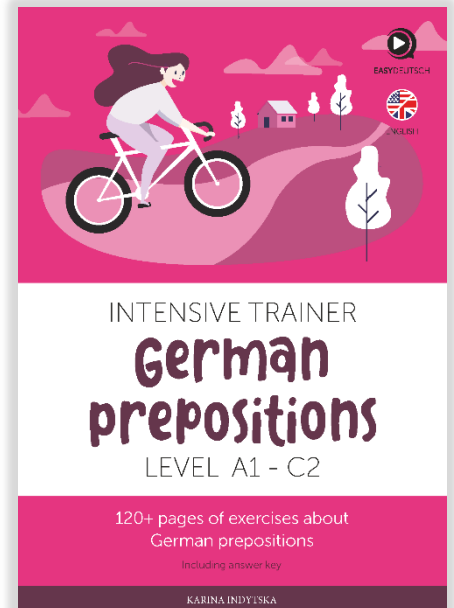
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