DA & WO Compounds — An Introduction

DA as the Object of a Preposition (da-compound)

The particle da attaches to the front of a preposition.

Da takes the meanings: it, this, that, these, those, there

When the object of a preposition is a pronoun and that pronoun refers to something other than a person, then the pronoun object of the preposition is expressed as da in German. The da particle attaches to the FRONT of the preposition. If the preposition begins with a vowel, then da becomes dar.

Example da-compounds:
- dafür = for that
- darunter = under it
- darin = in there
- dagegen = against that
- daneben = next to it
- darauf = on top of this

Example sentences with da-compounds:
- Wir haben gestern einen guten Film gesehen. (We saw a good movie yesterday.)
- Wir sprechen gerade darüber. (We are talking about it at the moment.)
- Mein Onkel leidet an Krebs. Das ist schade. (My uncle is suffering from cancer. That's too bad.)
- Mein Vater leidet auch daran. (My father is also suffering from this.)
- Die vorgeschlagene Regelung finde ich schlecht. Ich werde ganz bestimmt dagegen wählen. (I find the proposed ruling bad. I will most certainly vote against that.)

Personal Pronouns as the Object of a Preposition

Personal Pronouns follow their prepositions.

Example pronouns: ihn, ihm, ihr, sie, uns, euch meaning: him, her, us, you, etc.

If the object of a preposition is a pronoun referring to a person, German pronouns such as sie, ihn, ihm, ihr etc. must be employed. The particle da is NEVER used in reference to people.

Example sentences with pronouns referring to people as objects of prepositions:
- Wir haben gestern meinen Bruder gesehen. (We saw a good movie yesterday.)
- Wir sprechen gerade über ihn. (We are talking about him at the moment.)
- Meine Tante hat Krebs. Ich denke oft an sie. (My aunt has cancer. I often think about her.)
- Du bist ein guter Kandidat. Ich werde ganz bestimmt für dich wählen. (You are a good candidate. I will most certainly vote for you.)
WO as an Interrogative Pronoun (wo-compound)

The particle wo attaches to the front of a preposition. Wo takes the meaning: what?

When the object of a preposition asks what? and refers to something other than a person, the word what? becomes wo in German and attaches to the FRONT of the preposition. If the preposition begins in a vowel, wo becomes wor.

wofür = what ... for? worüber = what ... about? etc.
womit = what ... with? woran = what ... of?

Example sentences with wo-compounds:

Worüber spreicht ihr gerade? What are you guys talking about right now?
Wir sprechen gerade über den Film. We are talking about the movie.

Woran leidet dein Onkel? What is your uncle suffering from?
Er leidet an Krebs. He is suffering from cancer.

Wogegen wirst du wählen? What are you going to vote against?
Ich werde wahrscheinlich gegen die neue Reglung wählen. I’ll probably vote against the new ruling.

WEN & WEM as the object of a preposition

The pronouns wen and wem follow their preposition. Wen is accusative and wem is dative. Both words mean who? or whom?

If the object of a preposition is a pronoun referring to a person or persons, the pronouns wen (accusative) or wer (dative) must be employed. The particle wo is NEVER used in reference to people.

Example sentences with pronouns wen & wem referring to people:

Über wen sprechst ihr? Who are you guys talking about?
Wir sprechen gerade über meinen Bruder. We are talking about my brother at the moment.

Mit wem bist du verwandt? Who are you related to?
Ich bin mit Erik verwandt. I’m related to Erik.

Für wen wirst du wahrscheinlich wählen? Who are you probably going to vote for?
Ich werde sicher für den neuen Kandidaten wählen. I’m surely going to vote for the new candidate.