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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>masc.</th>
<th>fem.</th>
<th>neut.</th>
<th>plur.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>–S</td>
<td>–R</td>
<td>–S</td>
<td>–R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>des</td>
<td>der</td>
<td>des</td>
<td>der</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dieser</td>
<td>dieser</td>
<td>dieses</td>
<td>dieser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eines</td>
<td>einen</td>
<td>eines</td>
<td>(keiner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meiner</td>
<td>meiner</td>
<td>meines</td>
<td>meiner</td>
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<tr>
<td>seiner</td>
<td>seiner</td>
<td>seines</td>
<td>seiner</td>
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<tr>
<td>ihres</td>
<td>ihrer</td>
<td>ihres</td>
<td>ihrer</td>
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<tr>
<td>unseres</td>
<td>unserer</td>
<td>unseres</td>
<td>unserer</td>
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<tr>
<td>eueres</td>
<td>euerer</td>
<td>eueres</td>
<td>euerer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Case  Associate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wegen</td>
<td>because of, on account of</td>
<td>oberhalb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trotz</td>
<td>in spite of, regardless of</td>
<td>innerhalb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>statt</td>
<td>instead of, in place of</td>
<td>außerhalb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>während</td>
<td>during, through the course of</td>
<td>diesseits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unterhalb</td>
<td>beneath, below, on the underside of</td>
<td>jenseits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 7. während der Ferien
2. trotz der Hitze 8. oberhalb der Erde
3. während des Sommers 9. außerhalb Europas
4. innerhalb des Motors 10. unterhalb des Meeresspiegels
5. diesseits des Flusses 11. innerhalb der Grenzen
6. jenseits des Flusses 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         some day or one day (in the past or future depending on context)
eines Jahres        some year or one year (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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>noun(1) item being possessed</th>
<th>noun(2) possessor of item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>case = governed by sentence</td>
<td>case = always genitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>both nouns (1&amp;2) together form a single syntactic unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ich habe den Wagen meines Vaters gekauft.

"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 Frankreichs Wirtschaft

the economy of France Wirtschaft Frankreichs
C. Exercises: Render the following possessives into German using the genitive case.

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

Key to Exercises

1. der Vater des Mädchens
2. der Vater des Jungen
3. das Buch des Professors
4. die Tasche der Frau
5. die Regierung der Leute
6. das Auto meiner Mutter
7. das Auto meines Bruders
8. das Auto meiner Eltern
9. das Haus seines Sohnes
10. das Haus seiner Tochter
11. das Haus seiner Kinder
12. der Onkel ihres Vaters
13. die Tante ihres Vaters
14. der Kuli ihrer Mutter
15. die Tasche ihrer Mutter
16. der Motor des Wagens
17. Erichs Fahrrad
18. Helgas Kind
19. die Industrie Deutschlands
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 cannot be split up, no matter where it occurs in the sentence.


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.
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.