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Noun Cases

(Level: Intermediate)

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What is a “noun case?”



A way of modifying a noun or noun-like thing (e.g., an adjective, number, or pronoun) to indicate its role or function in a sentence

- What is a noun, adjective, etc.? Please see the “[Nouns, Pronouns, & Adjectives](#)” presentation

For example, in German:

- der Hund – “the dog (subject),” nominative case
- des Hund[e]s - “of the dog,” genitive case
- dem Hund[e] - “to/for the dog,” dative case
- den Hund - “the dog (object),” accusative case

Cases in Indo-European Languages



Languages from between Europe and South Asia usually have some or all of these cases:

- 1) Nominative – subject of the sentence
- 2) Accusative – object
- 3) Genitive – possession or material
- 4) Dative – indirect object
- 5) Ablative – moving away
- 6) Instrumental – tool use
- 7) Locative – location
- 8) Vocative – addressing someone

Personal Pronoun Cases



Technically, English has cases only for personal pronouns:

1) Nominative (subjects): I, you, he, she, they, we

- I love chocolate. She went home. We told them.

2) Accusative/“oblique” (objects): me, you, her, him, them, us

- Give the keys to me. Go see them. He helped us.

3) Genitive (possession):

1) Determiner form (usually subjects): my, your, her, his, our

- His house is big. Our sports team is the best. That is my coat.

2) Independent form (usually objects): mine, yours, hers, his, ours

- The big house is his. The best sports team is ours. That coat is mine.

Case-like Phrases and Positions (1 of 4)



Otherwise, phrases or the position in the sentence are used, instead of changing the word.

1) Nominative (subject): A/That/The/These/This/Those [noun]...

- This fruit is the best.
- That car is red.
- A woman climbed Mount Everest today.

2) Accusative (object): ...[a/that/the/these/this/those] [noun].

- Please buy some of those carrots.
- Can we ride in the car?
- Who was the woman who climbed Mount Everest today?

Case-like Phrases and Positions (2 of 4)



3) Genitive (possession or material): [noun]'s, of/from [noun]

- **Informal:** Whose house is this? This is Paul's house. What is this wall made of/from? That wall is made [out] of / from stone.
- **Formal:** This is the house of Paul. Of/from what is this wall made?

4) Dative (indirect object): [to/for] [noun]

- Please bring that blanket to me. = Please bring me that blanket.
- Would you do a favor for me? = Would you do me a favor?
- Please give that apple to me. = Please give me that apple.

Case-like Phrases and Positions (3 of 4)



- 5) **Ablative (moving away):** from [noun], [noun] ... [from]
- **Informal:** The storm is moving away from us. Where did you get this book [from]?
 - **Formal:** From where/whom did you get this book? Go back whence (meaning “from where”) you came.
- 6) **Instrumental (tool use):** by/with [noun]
- This chair was made by hand.
 - She polished the metal with a piece of cloth.

Case-like Phrases and Positions (4 of 4)



7) Locative (location):

at/by/in/on [place/time], Where/when/wherein...?

- Where does this bus stop? This bus stops in New York.
- When does the train arrive? The train arrives at 3 o'clock.
- **Formal:** Wherein lies the problem? Herein lies the problem.

8) Vocative (addressing someone): [O] [name/title]

- Mark, please bring me the hammer. Please bring me the hammer, Mark.
- **Formal/old:** O Romeo... wherefor art thou Romeo? (from Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*)

Thanks for watching!

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