

When do I use “*der*” and when do I use “*den*”?

Gender	Nominative Case Subjects & Predicate Nominatives			Accusative Case Direct Objects & Objects of Prepositional Phrases		
	masculine	der	ein	er	den	einen
feminine	die	eine	sie	die	eine	sie
neuter	das	ein	es	das	ein	es
plural	die	keine	sie	die	keine	sie

der and *ein* and *er*

the a/an he/it

Use these if the noun (or pronoun) in questions is:

- either** the SUBJECT
- or equals** the SUBJECT and basically re-names it.

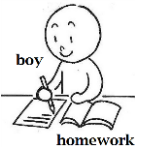
NOMINATIVE CASE

EXAMPLES:

Action Verb Sentence:

The boy is doing homework.
A boy is doing homework.
He is doing homework.

Der Junge macht Hausaufgaben.
Ein Junge macht Hausaufgaben.
Er macht Hausaufgaben.

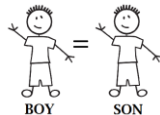


In this sentence, the boy is performing an **action**.

The boy is the SUBJECT and the homework is the DIRECT OBJECT receiving the boy's “*is doing*” action.

Linking Verb Sentence:

The boy is the son.
A boy is a son.
He is a he. (?!—It’s grammar.)



Der Junge ist *der* Sohn.
Ein Junge ist *ein* Sohn.
Er ist *ein er*.

In this sentence, the boy and the son are the same person.

The boy is the SUBJECT and the son is the PREDICATE NOMINATIVE that re-names him.

BTW—If the sentence were written in the reverse order (*The son is the boy.*), then the “son” would be the SUBJECT and the “boy” would be the PREDICATE NOMINATIVE. Whichever is first in a LINKING VERB sentence gets to be called the SUBJECT.

den and *einen* and *ihn*

the

a/an

him/it

Use these if the noun (or pronoun) in questions is:

- the DIRECT OBJECT of the sentence
- or is in a prepositional phrase of an *accusative* preposition

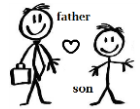
ACCUSATIVE CASE

EXAMPLES:

Action Verb Sentence:

The father loves the son.
A father loves a son.
He loves him.

***Der* Vater *liebt* *den* Sohn.**
***Ein* Vater *liebt* *einen* Sohn.**
***Er* *liebt* *ihn*.**

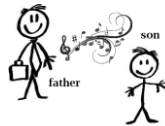


In this sentence, the father is performing an **action**. The father is the SUBJECT and the son is the DIRECT OBJECT receiving the father's love.

Prepositional Phrase Sentence (in the ACCUSATIVE CASE)

The father sings for the son.
A father sings for a son.
He sings for him.

***Der* Vater *singt* *für* *den* Sohn.**
***Ein* Vater *singt* *für* *einen* Sohn.**
***Er* *singt* *für* *ihn*.**



HOW DO I KNOW?!

- Find the verb. Ask “Who is doing this verb?” → That’s the SUBJECT.
- Then say: “What receiving the ACTION of the SUBJECT?” → That’s the DIRECT OBJECT.
- But maybe you should have asked: “What *else* is the SUBJECT?” → That’s the PREDICATE NOMINATIVE (or predicate adjective).
- Recognize accusative case prepositions: *für*, *bis*, & *um*. (There are a few more, too.)