

WHAT ARE DIRECT AND INDIRECT OBJECT PRONOUNS?

Pronouns used as direct and indirect objects are called **OBJECT PRONOUNS**.

- Michael saw *us*.
- Michael saw *whom*? *Us*.
- Us* is the direct object of *saw*.
- My parents wrote *me*.
- My parents wrote to *whom*? *Me*.
- Me* is the indirect object of *wrote*.

The various functions of object pronouns are established in the same way as the function of object nouns (see *What are Objects?*, p. 52).

IN ENGLISH

Most pronouns that function as objects in a sentence are different in form from the ones used as subjects. When pronouns are used as the direct object, indirect object, or object of a preposition in English they are said to be in the **OBJECTIVE CASE**.

Compare the nominative and objective cases of English pronouns:

	SUBJECT	OBJECT
SINGULAR		
1 st PERSON	I	me
2 nd PERSON	you	you
3 rd PERSON	{ he she it	him
		her
		it
PLURAL		
1 st PERSON	we	us
2 nd PERSON	you	you
3 rd PERSON	they	them

Here are a few examples showing you the use of subject and object pronouns:

- He and I work for the newspaper.
- subjects
- nominative case

The politician invited him and me to lunch.

- direct objects
- objective case

They took their car to the garage.

- subject
- nominative case
- I lent them my car.
- indirect object
- objective case

You and she are going now.

- subjects
- nominative case
- I want to go with you and her.
- objects of a preposition
- objective case

The form of the object pronoun is the same regardless of whether the pronoun is used as a direct object, an indirect object, or an object of a preposition.

IN GERMAN

Unlike English which has only one objective case for pronouns that are direct objects and indirect objects, German uses two cases, the accusative and the dative. Look at the chart below.

ENGLISH OBJECTIVE SINGULAR	GERMAN	
	ACCUSATIVE	DATIVE
1 st PERSON	<i>me</i>	<i>mir</i>
2 nd PERSON	<i>you</i>	<i>dir</i>
	{ <i>him</i> <i>her</i> <i>it</i>	<i>Ihnen</i>
3 rd PERSON		<i>ihn</i>
	<i>sie</i>	<i>ihr</i>
	<i>es</i>	<i>ihm</i>
PLURAL		
1 st PERSON	<i>us</i>	<i>uns</i>
2 nd PERSON	<i>you</i>	<i>euch</i>
	{ <i>Sie</i> <i>Ihnen</i>	<i>Ihnen</i>
3 rd PERSON		<i>them</i>

Two English object pronouns have more than one equivalent in German: *you* and *it*. Let us look more closely at these object pronouns.

FAMILIAR "YOU" AS OBJECT PRONOUN
(see p. 21 in *What is a Personal Pronoun?*)

The familiar forms of "you" can be singular or plural, depending on whether the "you" addressed is one or more persons, each form having an accusative and dative form.

SINGULAR—You are speaking to one person → **dich** (accusative); **dir** (dative)

We see you, Anna.
Wir sehen dich, Anna.

sehen (*to see*) takes an accusative object

We are helping you, Anna.
Wir helfen dir, Anna.

helfen (*to help*) takes a dative object

PLURAL—You are speaking to more than one person → **euch** (accusative and dative)

We see you, Effi and Franz.
Wir sehen euch, Effi und Franz.

sehen (*to see*) takes an accusative object

We are helping you, Effi and Franz.
Wir helfen euch, Effi und Franz.
helfen (*to help*) takes a dative object

FORMAL "YOU" AS OBJECT PRONOUN
(see p. 21 in *What is a Personal Pronoun?*)

The formal form of "you" has two forms, the accusative and the dative; the same form is used for the singular and the plural.

ACCUSATIVE—You are speaking to one or more persons → **Sie** (accusative singular and plural)

We will see you tomorrow, Mrs. Erb.
Wir sehen Sie morgen, Frau Erb.

sehen (*to see*) takes an accusative object

DATIVE—You are speaking to one or more persons → **Ihnen** (dative singular and plural)

We are glad to help you, Dr. Fried.
Wir helfen Ihnen gern, Dr. Fried.
helfen (*to help*) takes a dative object

"IT" AS AN OBJECT PRONOUN

Like English, German uses personal pronouns in the objective case to refer to people, **ihn**, **ihm** (*him*) and **sie**, **ihr** (*her*). But where English uses one pronoun for "it," German has six different object pronouns depending on the gender of the antecedent (masculine, feminine, and neuter) and the case of the pronoun, accusative or dative.

To choose the correct form, follow these steps:

1. **ANTECEDENT:** Find the noun "it" replaces.
2. **GENDER:** Determine the gender of the German antecedent.
3. **FUNCTION:** Determine the function of "it" in the sentence.
4. **CASE:** Choose the case that corresponds to the function.
5. **SELECTION:** Select the form depending on the gender and case.

Let us look at some examples.

- if the antecedent is masculine → **ihn** (accusative) or **ihm** (dative)

Did you see the film? Yes, I saw it.

ANTECEDENT: the film

GENDER: der Film (*the film*) is masculine

FUNCTION: direct object of *see* (*sehen*)

CASE: accusative

SELECTION: masculine accusative → **ihn**

Hast du den Film gesehen? Ja, ich habe ihn gesehen.

- if the antecedent is feminine → **sie** (accusative) or **ihr** (dative)

Are you reading the newspaper? Yes, I am reading it.

ANTECEDENT: the newspaper

GENDER: die Zeitung (*the newspaper*) is feminine

FUNCTION: direct object of *read* (*lesen*)

CASE: accusative

SELECTION: feminine accusative → **sie**

Lesen Sie die Zeitung? Ja, ich lese sie.

- if the antecedent is neuter → **es** (accusative) or **ihm** (dative)

Do you understand the book? Yes, I understand it.

ANTECEDENT: the book

GENDER: das Buch (*the book*) is neuter

FUNCTION: direct object of *understand* (*verstehen*)

CASE: accusative

SELECTION: neuter accusative → **es**

Verstehen Sie das Buch? Ja, ich verstehe es.

CAREFUL—In English you can only use the objective pronouns *him* or *her* to refer to people. In German, however, when you replace neuter nouns that refer to people you will have to use the neuter pronouns *es* and *ihm*.

Who helps the child? We are helping her (or him).

ANTECEDENT: the child

GENDER: **das Kind** (*the child*) is neuter

FUNCTION: object of *help* (*helfen* takes a dative object)

CASE: dative

SELECTION: neuter dative → **ihm**

Wer hilft dem Kind? Wir helfen **ihm**.

dative object

— **REVIEW** —

Using the chart on p. 59, indicate the information requested about the pronouns in bold.

1. I believe **you**.

PERSON:	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
NUMBER:	singular	plural	

2. We saw **him** often.

PERSON:	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	neuter
GENDER:	masculine	feminine		
NUMBER:	singular	plural		

3. They called **her**.

PERSON:	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	neuter
GENDER:	masculine	feminine		
NUMBER:	singular	plural		

The **POSSESSIVE** is used to show that one noun *possesses* or *owns* another noun.

Katie's German book is on the table.

noun	noun
possessor	possessed

IN ENGLISH

There are two constructions to show possession:

1. An apostrophe can be used. In this construction, the possessor comes before the possessed.

- a singular possessor adds an apostrophe + "s"

Inge's mother	the professor's book
	singular possessor

- a plural possessor ending with "s" adds an apostrophe after the "s"

the girls' father	the boys' school
	plural possessor

- a plural possessor not ending with "s" adds an apostrophe + "s"

the children's playground	the women's role
	plural possessor

2. The word *of* can be used. In this structure, the possessed comes before the possessor.

- a singular or plural possessor is preceded by *of the* or *of a*

the book <i>of the</i> professor	the branches <i>of a</i> tree
	singular possessor
the teacher <i>of the</i> students	
	plural possessor

WHAT ARE OBJECTS?

Objects are nouns or pronouns that are connected to the action of the verb or to a preposition.

Paul writes a letter.
 verb direct object

Paul writes his mother.
 verb indirect object

The boy left with his father.
 preposition object of a preposition

We will study the three types of objects separately: the direct object, indirect object, and object of a preposition. Although we have limited the examples in this section to noun objects, the same procedure can be used to establish the function of pronoun objects (see *What are Direct and Indirect Object Pronouns?*, p. 58 and *What are Object of Preposition Pronouns?*, p. 131).

IN ENGLISH

A direct object is a noun or pronoun that receives the action of the verb directly, without a preposition between the verb and the noun or pronoun. It answers the question *whom?* or *what?* asked after the verb.

John sees *Mary*.
 John sees *whom?* *Mary*.
Mary is the direct object.

John writes a letter.
 John writes *what?* A letter.
 A letter is the direct object.

There are two types of verbs: transitive and intransitive.

A **TRANSITIVE VERB** is a verb that takes a direct object. It is indicated by the abbreviation *v.t.* (verb transitive) in dictionaries.

The boy threw the ball.
 transitive direct object

She lost her job.
 transitive direct object

An **INTRANSITIVE VERB** is a verb that cannot take a direct object. It is indicated by the abbreviation *v.i.* (verb intransitive) in dictionaries.

Laura arrives today.
 intransitive adverb

Brian is sleeping.
 intransitive

Many verbs can be used both transitively, that is, with a direct object, and intransitively, without a direct object. The students speak German.

transitive direct object
 Actions speak louder than words.
 intransitive adverbial phrase

CAREFUL—Some verbs that are transitive in English are intransitive in German, while other verbs that are intransitive in English are transitive in German.

IN GERMAN

As in English, a direct object is a noun or pronoun that receives the action of the verb directly. It answers the question *wen?* (*whom?*) or *was?* (*what?*) asked after the verb. Direct objects are expressed by the accusative case in German.

Paula liest das Buch.
 Paula reads *what?* The book.
 Das Buch is the direct object → accusative case
 Paula reads *the book*.

A few verbs take dative case objects in German instead of accusative case objects. Here are two examples:

- danken (*to thank*)
 Sie danken dem Polizisten.
 They thank *whom?* The policeman (dem Polizisten).
 Dem Polizisten is the direct object in the dative case.
 They thank *the policeman*.

■ **helfen** (to help)

Wir helfen dir.

We are helping whom? You (dir).

Dir is the direct object in the dative case.

We are helping you.

Your German textbook will indicate the verbs that take objects in the dative case, and you will need to memorize them.

IN ENGLISH

When a sentence has both a direct and an indirect object, two word orders are possible, one without "to" preceding the indirect object and one with the preposition "to":

1. If the indirect object is not preceded by "to," the word order is as follows: subject (S) + verb (V) + indirect object (IO) + direct object (DO).

John gave his sister a gift.
S V IO DO

Who gave a gift? John.

John is the subject.

John gave what? A gift.

A gift is the direct object.

John gave a gift to whom? His sister.

His sister is the indirect object.

— **INDIRECT OBJECT** —

IN ENGLISH

An indirect object is a noun or pronoun that receives the action of the verb indirectly. It answers the question *to* or *for whom?* or *to* or *for what?* asked after the verb.

John wrote his brother.

He wrote to whom? His brother.

His brother is the indirect object.

John did his brother a favor.

He did a favor for whom? His brother.

His brother is the indirect object.

Sometimes the word *to* is included in the English sentence.

John spoke to Paul and Mary.

John spoke to whom? To Paul and Mary.

Paul and Mary are two indirect objects.

IN GERMAN

As in English, an indirect object is a noun or pronoun that receives the action of the verb indirectly. It answers the question *wem?* (*to* or *for whom?*) or *was?* (*to* or *for what?*) asked after the verb. Indirect objects are expressed by the dative case in German.

Jeff schreibt seinem Bruder.

Jeff writes to whom? His brother.

Seinem Bruder is the indirect object → dative case

Jeff writes (to) his brother.

Susan tat mir einen Gefallen.

Susan did a favor for whom? Me.

Mir is the indirect object → dative case

Susan did me a favor.

— **SENTENCES WITH A DIRECT AND AN INDIRECT OBJECT** —

A sentence may contain both a direct object and an indirect object, either as nouns or pronouns.

Josh is leaving without Maria.

Josh is leaving without whom? Without Maria.

Maria is the object of the preposition without.

— **OBJECT OF A PREPOSITION** —

IN ENGLISH

An object of a preposition is a noun or pronoun that follows a preposition and is related to it. It answers the question *whom?* or *what?* asked after the preposition.

Josh is leaving without Maria.

Josh is leaving without whom? Without Maria.

Maria is the object of the preposition without.

The baby eats *with a spoon*.
 The baby eats *with what?* With a spoon.
 A *spoon* is the object of the preposition *with*.

IN GERMAN

As in English, the object of a preposition is a noun or pronoun that follows a preposition and is related to it. It answers the question "whom?" (*wen/wem/wessen*) or "what?" (*was*) asked after the preposition. Unlike English, however, German prepositions have objects in particular cases, usually accusative or dative, and sometimes genitive. As you memorize prepositions, you will need to learn which case each preposition requires. Look at the examples of three different prepositions, each requiring a different case.

um diese Stadt
 accusative with um
 around *this city*
 von solchen Büchern
 dative with von
 about *such books*
 wegen des Sturmes
 genitive with wegen
 on account of *the storm*

CAREFUL—As a student of German you must watch out for the following pitfalls:

- an English verb that requires a preposition before its object may have an equivalent German verb that simply requires a direct object in the accusative.

She is looking for her coat.
 She is looking *for what?*
 Her coat is the object of the preposition *for*.
 Sie sucht *ihren* Mantel.

accusative
 suchen (*to look for*) takes a direct object

- the preposition that follows an English verb may be different from the preposition that follows the equivalent German verb.

He is waiting for his friend.
 Er wartet auf seinen Freund.
 on

I am asking you for advice.
 Ich bitte dich um Rat.
 about

Your German textbook will introduce phrases like **warten auf** + accusative object (*to wait for*) and **bitten um** + accusative object (*to ask for*). Make sure you learn the verb together with the preposition and its case so that you can use the entire pattern correctly. Remember that German has structures different from English and avoid the error of translating word-for-word from English into German.

— REVIEW —

- Find the objects in the sentences below.
- Next to Q, write the question you need to ask to find the object.
 - Next to A, write the answer to the question you just asked.
 - Circle the kind of object(s) you found: direct object (DO), indirect object (IO), or object of a preposition (OP).

1. The computer lost my homework.

Q: _____ DO IO OP
 A: _____

2. She sent her friend a postcard.

Q: _____ DO IO OP
 A: _____

Q: _____ DO IO OP
 A: _____

3. My parents paid for the books with a credit card.

Q: _____ DO IO OP
 A: _____

Q: _____ DO IO OP
 A: _____