Cases: The Dative

You already learned that the nominative case is used to designate the subject of a sentence, and the accusative case is used for the direct object of a sentence and with a number of prepositions.

The dative case also has several distinct functions:

• it designates the person for or to whom something is done, for example:

- *Luca schenkt sein**er** Oma einen Blumenstrauß.*
- *Ich schenke mein**em** Freund ein Buch.*

→ As you can see in these sentences, the dative case often appears in a sentence with three nouns:
- the person who is doing something (=the subject, in the nominative case),
- the recipient or the person for or to whom something is being done (=the indirect object, in the dative case),
- and the object that is being given from the subject to the recipient (=direct object, in the accusative case).

subject (Nom.)	verb	indirect object (Dat.)	direct object (Acc.)
Luca	*schenkt*	*sein**er** Oma*	*einen Blumenstrauß.*

• it is used with certain verbs (e.g., *antworten, danken, gehören, gratulieren, helfen,* etc.)

- *Kannst du mein**em** Bruder bitte helfen?*
- *Ich gratuliere **dir** zum Geburtstag!*

• it is used with these specific prepositions: aus, außer, bei, mit, nach, seit, von, zu

- *Ich wohne **bei** mein**en** Eltern.*
- *Wir fahren **mit** de**m** Bus.*
- *Lori fährt **zu** ihr**er** Familie.*

As with the nominative and accusative cases, the dative case is also signaled by special forms of pronouns (see *Einheit* 5.10 in *Willkommen: Deutsch für alle*) and endings for articles and possessive determiners.

	masculine	feminine	neuter	plural
endings	-**m**	-**r**	-**m**	-**n**
definite article	de**m**	de**r**	de**m**	de**n**
indefinite article	ein**em**	ein**er**	ein**em**	---
	kein**em**	kein**er**	kein**em**	kein**en**
possessive determiners	mein**em**	mein**er**	mein**em**	mein**en**
	dein**em**	dein**er**	dein**em**	dein**en**
	sein**em**/ihr**em**/	sein**er**/ihr**er**/	sein**em**/ihr**em**/	sein**en**/ihr**en**/
	sein**em**	sein**er**	sein**em**	sein**en**
	unser**em**	unser**er**	unser**em**	unser**en**
	eur**em**	eur**er**	eur**em**	eur**en**
	ihr**em**/Ihr**em**	ihr**er**/Ihr**er**	ihr**em**/Ihr**em**	ihr**en**/Ihr**en**

The dative object answers the question **wem**?
(whom?, to/for whom?):

Wem kauft Herr Ebert einen Ring?

   Er kauft seiner Frau einen Ring.

There are also idiomatic expressions that use the dative case:

- *Wie geht es Ihnen?/Wie geht es dir?* (formal/informal: How are you?)
- *Wie geht es deinem Vater?* (informal: How is your father?)
- *Es tut mir Leid.* (I'm sorry.)
- *Das ist mir egal.* (I don't care.)
- *Mir fällt nichts ein.* (I can't think of anything.)
- *Wie gefällt dir mein Mantel?* (How do you like my coat?)
- *Diese Jacke steht dir.* (This jacket looks good on you.)

ACHTUNG All nouns (except for some proper names) add -n in the dative plural, unless their plural ends in -s, for example:

die Freunde (Nom. pl.) → den Freunden (Dat. pl.)

die Kinder (Nom. Pl.) → den Kindern (Dat. Pl.)

die Bücher (Nom. pl.) → den Büchern (Dat. pl.)

die Hobbys (Nom. pl.) → den Hobbys (Dat. pl.)