

nouns plural

grimm **grammar**

Nouns : Der Plural

In German, a noun is either singular or plural. It is usually introduced by a determiner that helps identify whether the noun is singular or plural. Singular nouns [when they are the subjects of a sentence] are preceded by **der** (masc), **die** (fem) or **das** (neuter). Plural nouns are preceded by **die**:

▶ **Die Bäume** geben dem Wolf gute Deckung. **The trees** give the wolf good cover.



There are many ways that German can form plurals, and there is no really easy way to guess which noun has which plural ending, so it's best just to memorize the plural forms along with the gender of each noun.

The two key things that happen to nouns when they are made into plurals is that they may receive an **ending** (e, n, en, er, s) and they may receive an **Umlaut** on their stem vowel (main vowel of the noun).

Since there is little pattern to the distribution of endings (although there are some), it is best to work backwards and group nouns according to the changes they go through in the plural. Don't worry, though, you do this automatically in English as well, although there are many different ways to form English plurals too!

Here are some of the exciting combinations that you will encounter in German:

1. No ending, plural noun looks the same as the singular noun

- a) most masculine and neuter nouns that end in -el, -en, -er
- b) all the neuter nouns that end in diminutives (-chen and -lein)
- c) all neuter words that begin with **Ge-** (e.g., Gebäude: building)

▶ Der **Jäger** ist pensioniert. **Jäger** töten keine Wölfe mehr; sie sind gefährdete Tiere!

Er hat alle seinen **Messer** verschenkt. Er hat selbst sein berühmtes **Messer** nicht mehr!

The hunter is retired. **Hunters** don't kill wolves anymore; they are endangered animals!

He gave away all his **knives**. He doesn't even have his famous **knife** anymore!

2. No ending but Umlaut on stressed vowel

- a) a handful of masculine nouns that end in -el, -en
- b) **Mutter** and **Tochter** (feminine nouns), **Kloster** and **Wasser** (neuter nouns)

▶ Rotkäppchens **Großmutter** ist sehr mutig. **Großmütter** heutzutage haben keine Angst vor dem Wolf!

Little Red Riding Hood's **grandmother** is very brave. **Grandmothers** nowadays are not afraid of wolves at all!

3. ER/Umlaut + ER ending

a handful of masculine and neuter nouns

- ▶ Der Wolf ist sehr traurig. Er wird immer als **Bösewicht** dargestellt. Wölfe sind doch nicht unbedingt **Bösewichter**!

Wenn er sich wirklich schlimm fühlt, geht er in den **Wald**. **Wälder** findet er sehr beruhigend!

The wolf is very sad. He is always portrayed as **a villain**. Wolves are not necessarily **villains**!

When he feels really bad, he goes into **the forest**. He finds **forests** very calming!

4. -E ending

a) quite a few masculine and neuter nouns

b) feminine nouns that end in **-nis**, **-sal**

- ▶ Ein **Tag** im Leben von einem Wolf... Die Memoiren beschreiben die alten **Tage** im Leben des Wolfs.

Es gab viele **Probleme** in seinem Leben. Ehrlich gesagt, das Schreiben ist auch ein **Problem**!

A **day** in the life of a wolf ... The memoir describes the olden **days** in the wolf's life.

There were a lot of **problems** in his life. Honestly, writing is now a **problem**!

5. Umlaut + -E ending

a) many masculine nouns and the neuter Floß (raft) get an Umlaut on the stem vowel (a, o, u only)

b) a handful of feminine mono-syllabic nouns (consisting of one syllable only)

- ▶ Der **Wolf** kann nicht mehr arbeiten. Kinder finden **Wölfe** nicht mehr erschreckend!

Er isst jetzt **Nüsse**! Vorher hätte er keine einzige **Nuss** gegessen!

The **wolf** cannot work anymore. Children don't find **wolves** scary anymore!

He now eats **nuts**! Before, he would not have eaten a **single nut**!



6. -EN/N ending

a) all masculine nouns that end in -e, masculine nouns that describe male persons

b) most feminine nouns

c) a small group of neuter nouns

- ▶ Der Wolf pflückt eine **Blume**. Er hat veilchenblaue **Blumen** am liebsten.

Selbst sein **Bett**, so wie die **Betten** seiner Mitbewohner, sind veilchenblau dekoriert.

The wolf is picking a **flower**. He likes periwinkle colored **flowers** the best.

Even his **bed**, just like the **beds** of his roommates, is decorated in periwinkle.

Die Wohnung von Rotkäppchen ist im ersten Stock.

Es gibt jetzt viele andere **Wohnungen** im Schloß.

Sogar der Wolf hat da einen **Freund**, den Froschkönig.

Aber die Bremer Musikanten sind nicht seine **Freunde**!

Little Red Riding Hood's **apartment** is on the first floor.

There are many other **apartments** in the castle now.

Even the wolf has a **friend** there, the Frog King.

But the Bremer musicians are not his **friends**!

7. -S ending

Many foreign words get an -s ending in German to form the plural.

▶ Rotkäppchens Mutter hat kein **Auto**. Die drei **Autos** vor dem Schloß gehören Schneewittchen, den Zwergen und dem pensionierten König.

Rotkäppchen liebt **Mopeds**! Sie möchte ein **Moped** sogar zum Geburtstag!

Little Red Riding Hood's mother doesn't have a **car**. The three **cars** in front of the castle belong to Snow White, the dwarves and the retired king.

Little Red Riding Hood loves **mopeds**! She even wants a **moped** for her birthday!



False friends with English

Some nouns are plural in English, but singular in German:

	singular	=>		plural
▶	die Hose	pants	=>	zwei Hosen two pairs of pants
	die Schere	scissors	=>	zwei Scheren two pairs of scissors
	die Brille	glasses	=>	zwei Brillen two pairs of glasses
	die Polizei	the police	=>	die Polizisten the policemen