

nominative pronouns

grimm **grammar**

Pronouns : Personalpronomen im Nominativ

Just like in English, personal pronouns in German are used to substitute nouns once they have already been mentioned, including people, animals, objects, or abstract ideas. There are nine basic personal pronouns in German. Well, sort of ...

er, sie, es

 Die Mutter geht heute auf den Markt. The mother is going to the market today.

Sie geht heute auf den Markt. She is going to the market today.

Das Mädchen kommt mit. The little girl goes along.


Es kommt mit. It goes along. (Mädchen is a neutral noun in German because of the 'chen' diminutive ending)

Der Wolf folgt ihnen. The wolf follows them.

Er folgt ihnen. He follows them.



Another sie

 Die Mutter und Rotkäppchen kaufen eine Flasche Wein und frische Äpfel.

The mother and Little Red Riding Hood buy a bottle of wine and some fresh apples.

Sie kaufen eine Flasche Wein und frische Äpfel. They buy a bottle of wine and some fresh apples.

sie is used for both **she** and **they**, and you will need to figure out from the context who is actually shopping at the market. In this example the **sie** refers to both Little Red Riding Hood and her mom.

ich, du

 Rotkäppchen

Mama, **ich** möchte Wein trinken!

Mama, **I** want to drink some wine.

Rotkäppchens Mutter

Wie bitte??? **Du** darfst erst Wein trinken, wenn **du** 16 Jahre alt bist!

Yeah, right. **You** will be allowed to drink wine only when **you** are 18 years old!

Rotkäppchen

Aber, Mama, das Gesetz betrifft Märchenfiguren doch nicht, oder?

But mama, the law doesn't apply to fairy tale characters, does it?

❖ **wir, ihr**

Rotkäppchen

Mama, darf ich mit Gretel ins Kino? **Wir** wollen den neuen Disneyfilm sehen!

Mama, can I go to the movies with Gretel? **We** want to see the new Disney film!

Rotkäppchens Mutter

Ihr dürft erst dann gehen, wenn **ihr** eure Aufsätze geschrieben habt.

You guys can go only when **you** have finished writing your essays.

Rotkäppchen

Unsere Aufsätze haben **wir** aber schon gestern geschrieben. **Wir** mussten "Rotkäppchen" aus der Perspektive des Wolfes neuschreiben.

But **we** already wrote our essays yesterday. **We** had to re-write "Little Red Riding Hood" from the perspective of the wolf!

❖ **When es is not es**

One big difference between German and English is the use of the pronoun **es**. In English, "it" is used whenever nouns do not have a biological gender. Therefore, any object or abstract noun will be considered "it." (Where is the castle? It is ...)

In German, however, every noun has a grammatical gender (**der, die, das**). When you substitute a noun with a personal pronoun, you need to pay attention to the noun's grammatical gender, which sometimes produces results that may sound strange to you.



Großmutter

Rotkäppchen, hast du **den Wolf** gesehen?

Little Red Riding Hood, did you see **the wolf**?

Rotkäppchen

Ja, **er** war wieder am Rande des Waldes. Solch ein Versager!

Yes, **it** was at the edge of the forest again. What a loser!

Großmutter

Und wo ist **die Flasche Wein**?

And where is **the bottle of wine**?

Rotkäppchen

Sie ist in meinem Korb.

It is in my basket.



Since **wolf** is a masculine noun, the masculine pronoun **er** substitutes it in the little girl's response. Next, the grandmother asks about the bottle of wine, feminine in German (die Flasche). Hence Little Red Riding Hood's response using **sie**. As a native speaker of English, you may want to choose the pronoun **es** (it) for any inanimate object (e.g., a bottle of wine), of course. *Resist that urge*, and don't worry: it takes a while to get used to German pronouns.

❖ **Terms of address: Du, Ihr and Sie**


In German, there are three ways to address people you talk to:

Du is the informal equivalent of single "you." **Du** is reserved for friends, young people, children and pets.

Ihr is also informal, also means "you" but refers to more than one person. It is also used for friends, peers, people your own age, children and pets ... (think **y'all**)

Sie is the formal "you" and can be used when talking to one or more individuals. This is the appropriate expression to use when you meet other adults for the first time if you don't know them. **Sie** is a sign of respect, and is fairly common even among long-term acquaintances and work colleagues if they don't consider each other to be close friends.

Sie is the appropriate expression when you ask for help from sales persons, office clerks, your professors, strangers and people who are older than you.

 <i>Großmutter</i>	Rotkäppchen , kannst du bitte den Tisch decken?	Little Red Riding Hood , can you please set the table?
<i>Rotkäppchen</i>	Natürlich. Herr Jäger , wo möchten Sie sitzen?	Of course. Mr. Hunter , where would you like to sit?
<i>Jäger</i>	Gegenüber der Tür, wenn möglich.	Across from the door, if possible.
<i>Großmutter</i>	Rotkäppchen, du und deine Mutti, ihr sollt mich öfters besuchen!	Little Red Riding Hood, you and your mom, you guys should visit me more often!
<i>Rotkäppchen</i>	Aber Großmutter, unsere Geschichte würde langweilig werden!	But grandmother, our story would become boring!
<i>Großmutter</i>	Aha, da hast du Recht!	Oh, yeah, you're right!

❖ Nominative pronouns

This table reviews the different pronouns in the nominative case and what they mean.

	singular	plural
1st person	ich (I)	wir (we)
2nd person	du (you)	ihr (y'all)
3rd person masculine	er (he)	
3rd person feminine	sie (she)	sie (they)
3rd person neuter	es (it)	
formal	Sie (you)	



👤 Übung: Auszüge aus dem Tagebuch des armen Wolfs (from the poor wolf's diary)

Please fill in the blanks with the correct personal pronoun. Watch out for the verbs, as their endings can help you decide which pronoun is needed. Also, look carefully at the nouns the pronouns refer to – there are often clues in preceding and following phrases!

1. _____ bin völlig missverstanden.

2. Zum Beispiel, heute sehe _____ Rotkäppchen im Wald.
3. Dieses Mädchen! _____ hat wieder seinen schicken Rock und sein rotes Käppchen an.
4. Und der Wein! _____ riecht himmlisch (smells heavenly)! Und das Brot noch besser!
5. Natürlich bin _____ hungrig!
6. Ich sage Rotkäppchen: " _____ musst Blumen sammeln, kleines Mädchen, für deine Großmutter."
7. Und Rotkäppchen, das freche (cheeky) Kind, antwortet: " _____ ist allergisch auf Blumen!"
8. Meine Psychologin hat kein Mitleid (sympathy): _____ meint, ich soll Vegetarier werden, wie mein Bruder (become).
9. Ich sagte ihr (said to her): " _____ verstehen mich gar nicht! Aber sie lachte nur als ich weinte."
10. _____, mein Bruder und ich, böse Wölfe, Vegetarier?! Lächerlich (ridiculous).
11. Die modernen Kinder haben keine Angst vor uns. _____ kennen alle Märchen, und wissen, dass das Böse immer besiegt wird (evil is always is defeated). Pech!
12. Kinder, ich warne euch! _____ sollt nicht alles glauben (believe), was _____ lest!