

Hacking the German adjective declension

(the cheatsheet)

- Adjectives will get a special ending when they are in front of a noun

Das *schnelle*e Auto. (*The fast car.*)

- Adjectives can get 2 type of endings: the “**weak**” ending or the “**strong**” ending

Das *schnelle*e Auto. (*The fast car.*) → “**weak**” ending

Ein *schnell*es Auto. (*A fast car.*) → “**strong**” ending

1. Adjective “weak” endings

The adjective will take a “**weak**” ending when its accompanied by an **article with an ending** that gives a **clear case signal**.

What is an article with an ending?

Articles with endings and without endings

definite	indefinite	possessive	negative
<u>der</u>	ein*	mein*	kein*
<u>das</u>	ein*	dein*	kein*
<u>die</u>	eine	seine	keine
<u>den</u>	ein <u>en</u>	<u>unseren</u>	kein <u>en</u>
<u>dem</u>	ein <u>em</u>	<u>eu<u>em</u></u>	kein <u>em</u>

- The **red** marked articles have endings (actually, the endings are marked in red)
- The *-marked articles don't have endings

The **red** endings give a **clear case signal** (nominative, accusative, dative) → the adjective will take a “**weak**” ending

Das **schnelle** Auto. (*The fast car.*) → “**weak**” ending

What are the “**weak**” endings?

	masculine	feminine	neuter	plural
Nominative	e	e	e	en
Accusative	en	e		en
Dative	en	en	en	en

There are just 2 type of endings: **-e** and **-en**. Memorize them easily recognizing the toothbrush in the table.

2. Adjective “strong” endings

The adjective will take a “**strong**” ending when its accompanied by an **article without ending** or there is **no article at all** that gives a **clear case signal**.

What is an article without ending?

Articles with endings and without endings

definite	indefinite	possessive	negative
der	ein*	mein*	kein*
das	ein*	dein*	kein*
die	ein e	sein e	kein e
den	ein en	<u>unseren</u>	kein en
dem	ein em	<u>eurem</u>	kein em

The *-marked articles have no endings. They don't give a **clear case signal** → the adjective will take a “strong” ending

Ein* *schnelles* Auto. (*A fast car.*) → “strong” ending

What are the “strong” endings?

Definite articles and “strong” endings

	masculine	feminine	neuter	plural
Nominative	d- <u>er</u>	di- <u>e</u>	da- <u>s</u>	di- <u>e</u>
Accusative	d- <u>en</u>	di- <u>e</u>	da- <u>s</u>	di- <u>e</u>
Dative	d- <u>em</u>	d- <u>er</u>	d- <u>em</u>	d- <u>en</u>

The endings of the definite articles are also the “strong” endings.

- Since we **don't** have a clear case signal from the **article** (it has no ending or there is no article at all), this time we need an additional case signal. Now the adjective must give a clear case signal.
- Or in other words: **it's as if the adjective has to include the correspondent definite article ending that is missing.**

Ich trinke gerne *heissen* Kaffee. (*I like to drink hot coffee.*)

- There is no article so there is still no case signal. “Kaffee” is here: accusative, masculine, singular: den Kaffee → *heissen* Kaffee

Ein *schnelles* Auto. (*A fast car.*)

- Ein* is an article **without ending** so there is no case signal given by the article. “Auto” is here: nominative, neuter, singular: das Auto → *schnelles* Auto