Hacking the German adjective declension

(the cheatsheet)

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

Das schnelle Auto. (The fast car.)

 Adjectives can get 2 type of endings: the "weak" ending or the "strong" ending

Das schnelle Auto. (*The fast car.*) \rightarrow "weak" ending Ein schnelles Auto. (*A fast car.*) \rightarrow "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?

definite	indefinite	possessive	negative	
d <u>er</u>	ein <u>*</u>	mein <u>*</u>	kein <u>*</u>	
da <u>s</u>	ein <u>*</u>	dein <u>*</u>	kein <u>*</u>	
di <u>e</u>	ein <u>e</u>	sein <u>e</u>	kein <mark>e</mark>	
d <u>en</u>	ein <mark>en</mark>	unseren	kein <mark>en</mark>	
d <u>em</u>	ein <mark>em</mark>	eur <mark>em</mark>	kein <mark>em</mark>	

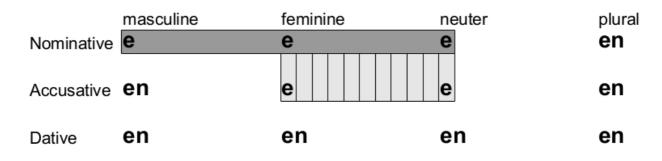
Articles with endings and without endings

- 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) \rightarrow the adjective will take a "weak" ending

Das schnelle Auto. (The fast car.) \rightarrow "weak" ending

What are the "weak" endings?



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?

definite	indefinite	possessive	negative	
d <u>er</u>	ein <u>*</u>	mein <u>*</u>	kein <u>*</u>	
da <u>s</u>	ein <u>*</u>	dein <u>*</u>	kein <u>*</u>	
di <u>e</u>	ein <u>e</u>	sein <u>e</u>	kein <mark>e</mark>	
d <u>en</u>	ein <u>en</u>	unseren	kein <mark>en</mark>	
d <u>em</u>	ein <u>em</u>	eur <mark>em</mark>	kein <mark>em</mark>	

Articles with endings and without endings

The *-marked articles have no endings. They <u>don't</u> give a **clear case signal** \rightarrow the adjective will take a "strong" ending

 Ein_{-}^* schnell<u>es</u> Auto. (A fast car.) \rightarrow "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- <mark>s</mark>	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- <mark>er</mark>	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 heiss<u>en</u> 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: da<u>s</u> Auto
→ schnelles Auto