## 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?

Articles with endings and without endings

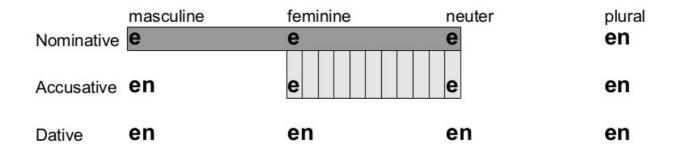
definite	indefinite	possessive	negative
d <u>er</u>	ein <u>*</u>	mein <u>*</u>	kein <u>*</u>
da <u>s</u>	ein <u>*</u>	dein <u>*</u>	kein <u>*</u>
di <u>e</u>	ein <u>e</u>	sein <u>e</u>	kein <u>e</u>
d <u>en</u>	ein <u>en</u>	<u>unseren</u>	kein <u>en</u>
d <u>em</u>	ein <u>em</u>	<u>eurem</u>	kein <u>em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



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
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 <u>e</u>
d <u>en</u>	ein <u>en</u>	unseren	kein <u>en</u>
d <u>em</u>	ein <u>em</u>	<u>eur<b>em</b></u>	kein <u>em</u>

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

Ein<sup>\*</sup> 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<sup>\*</sup> 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