

Accusative Prepositions

Hallo, Deutschlerner. Today I'm going to show you the accusative prepositions in German and teach you how to use them in your own sentences. By the time this video ends, you will be able to wow your German friends with your use of the accusative prepositions: für, um, durch, gegen, ohne, bis and entlang.

Don't forget, if you want practice materials to go with this lesson, you can get those by becoming a channel member or supporting me on Patreon. Individual lesson materials are also available on my website, germanwithantrim.com.

Prepositions are little words that you put in front of nouns or pronouns to give more context to the sentence at hand. There are a ton of prepositions in German, but only a few use the accusative case. Technically there are eight, but some are more important than others.

FYI: If you are curious about the two-way prepositions, also known as Wechselpräpositionen, which use either the accusative or dative cases, depending on the way in which they are used in the sentence, you can find a video about those linked in the description. This video today, however, will only explain those prepositions that always require the accusative case.

First on our list is "für". It looks and sounds a lot like the English preposition "for". It is often used in similar contexts, but not always. For example:

Ich kaufe ein Geschenk für meine Mutter. - I am buying a gift for my mother.

Er arbeitet für meinen Vater. - He works for my father.

Sie kauft diese Schuhe für dreißig Euro. - She is buying these shoes for 30 €.

Karel möchte für immer jung sein. - Karel wants to be young forever.

If the word "das" is needed after "für", it is often shortened to "fürs". For example:

Ich kaufe die Karten fürs Konzert. - I am buying the tickets for the concert.

Meine Eltern geben zwanzig Euro fürs Fahrrad aus. - My parents are spending 20 € for the bicycle.

The tricky part about using für isn't knowing what it means and how to use it. The problem is knowing when not to use it. There are a lot of occasions that English native speakers are tempted to use "für", because in English they say "for". This is not always a good assumption.

You can use "für" when referring to time, but you more than likely mean to say something with the preposition "seit". If you want to use "für" followed by a period of time, you need to make sure that that time has concluded and is no longer continuing on. For example:

Ich habe für zwei Jahre bei einer Firma in der Stadt gearbeitet. - I worked at a company in the city for two years.

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Ich arbeite seit zwei Jahren bei dieser Firma. Nach Montag arbeite ich nicht mehr hier. - I have worked at this company for two years. After Monday I am not working here anymore.

If you are stating the purpose or reason for something, you don't use "für". Use "aus", "wegen" or "zu" instead.

Aus diesem Grund werden wir sie nicht einstellen. - For this reason, we will not hire her.

Wegen der Erderwärmung sterben die Eisbären. - Because of global warming, the polar bears are dying.

Dieses Haus ist nicht zum Verkauf. - This house is not for sale.

If you are talking about a destination, use "nach" or "zu".

Unser Flug fliegt um drei Uhr nach Berlin ab. - Our flight departs for Berlin at 3 o'clock.

Wir fahren am Samstag zur Oma. - We are headed for (driving to) grandma's on Saturday.

Next up on our list of prepositions is "um". "Um" can best be translated with the English preposition "around". This will work most of the time. If you are going around something or one thing is around another, you likely need "um" in German. For example:

Der LKW fährt um das Auto. - The semi truck drives around the car.

Die Fee streut einen Kreis aus Feenstaub um die Tiere. - The fairy sprinkles a ring of fairy dust around the animals.

Der Koch wickelt das Kohlblatt um das Fleisch. - The cook wraps the cabbage leaf around the meat.

You can also use "um" with a time of the day to say "at". For example:

Um zehn Uhr möchte ich essen. - I would like to eat at ten o'clock.

Die Schule beginnt um acht Uhr. - School begins at eight o'clock.

You may also see "um" followed by an infinitival clause, which includes the word "zu". This is used to say "in order to". For example:

Ich spare Geld, um ein Auto zu kaufen. - I am saving money in order to buy a car.

When "um" is used in this way, it is not a preposition, but rather fulfilling the function of a conjunction, as it connects one clause to another. If you want to learn about how to make those clauses, I have a video for that linked in the description, as well.

Our next preposition is "durch". This is an easy one, as it is translated as "through" and is used pretty much the same as the English version. Here are a few examples:

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Der Bus fährt durch den Tunnel. - The bus drives through the tunnel.

Die Touristen gehen durch die Stadt. - The tourists are walking through the city.

Hänsel und Gretel laufen durch den Wald. - Hansel and Gretel are walking through the forest.

In addition to the literal meaning, you can use “durch” to mean something like “because of”. For example:

Ich mache durch meine Erfahrungen auf YouTube bessere Videos. - I make better videos because of (through) my experiences on YouTube.

Mein Schreibtisch ist durch das Erdbeben kaputt gegangen. - My desk was broken by the earthquake.

Next on my list for today is the preposition “gegen”. It is translated with the English word “against”. For example:

Ich bin gegen Tierversuche. - I am against animal experimentation.

Der Junge schlägt seinen Kopf gegen die Wand. - The boy hits his head against the wall.

Was hast du gegen meinen Freund? - What do you have against my friend?

Die Cardinals spielen morgen gegen die Cubs. - The Cardinals are playing against the Cubs tomorrow.

Meine Mannschaft gewinnt gegen die Bösen. - My team wins against the evil ones.

“Gegen” can also be used to mean “against” an ailment or problem.

Ich nehme Aspirin gegen Kopfschmerzen. - I take Aspirin for headaches.

You also use the preposition “gegen” with time. In this way it means “around”.

Wir fahren gegen acht Uhr nach Hause. - We are driving home around 8 o'clock.

The preposition “ohne” is translated with the English word “without”. It is used almost exactly the same as that English preposition. That makes using “ohne” probably one of the easiest prepositions on today's list.

Ich kann ohne dich nicht leben. - I can't live without you.

Pommes ohne Ketchup sind keine Pommes. - Fries without ketchup are not fries.

Ich gehe nicht ohne einen Mantel aus dem Haus. - I don't leave the house without a coat.

Ichabod sieht einen Mann ohne Kopf. - Ichabod sees a man without a head.

Man lernt keine Grammatik ohne Beispiele. - One doesn't learn grammar without examples.

The prepositions I have mentioned so far are usually the only ones listed in textbooks. That's because they are the most popular ones and the other ones sometimes require a bit more

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knowledge of the German language in order to use them properly. I'm going to talk about them anyway, starting with "bis".

The preposition "bis" generally means "until". You may recognize it from farewells, such as "bis später", "bis Morgen" or "bis Dienstag". Those all use the preposition "bis", but don't require us to remember that it's using the accusative case. When we use it with an article, however, we do have to remember that "bis" requires the accusative case. For example:

Bis nächste Woche! - Until next week.

Bis nächsten Donnerstag. - Until next Thursday.

"Bis" can also be translated with the English preposition "by", when it is expressing a deadline. For example:

Du musst bis nächsten Dienstag deine Hausaufgaben machen. - You have to do your homework by next Tuesday.

Bis nächstes Jahr werden wir ein Haus bauen. - By next year we will build a house.

"Bis" can't be used with an article, which is why it is often left off of lists like this, but it can be used with adjectives, which is what you saw in my examples. These will have the same endings as the definite articles in the accusative case. N for masculine, E for feminine and plural and S for neuter.

Another reason that "bis" is often left off of the accusative prepositions list is that it is often paired with another preposition, such as "zu" or "in". In those instances, "bis" is not in control of the case you use. You look to the other preposition to tell you the case. I could make an entire video about "bis" and the combinations of prepositions you can use, but I'll leave that for another day.

Next on the list of neglected accusative prepositions in German, we have "wider". Not to be confused with "wieder", which sounds the same, but is definitely not the same. "Wider" means "against" or "contra", while "wieder" means "again". "Wider" is similar to "gegen", but sounds a bit out of date or elevated. For example:

Kain rebelliert wider den Vater-Gott. - Cain is rebelling against God the Father.

Dieser Film ist wider meine Erwartungen. - This film is contra to my expectations.

Man kann nicht wider die Natur agieren. - One cannot act against nature.

The last one on my list for today is "entlang" and it comes with a bit of controversy. It is usually listed as an accusative preposition, but only uses the accusative case when it is in the postposition. When "entlang" is used in front of a noun, it requires the genitive case. When it is used behind a noun, it uses the accusative case. Duden lists it as a preposition with the accusative case "bei Nachstellung" and even gives a few examples of how one might use it.

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Unfortunately those examples are fragments of sentences and only show the noun and “entlang” after it. This doesn’t tell me that it is a postposition. It shows me that the last word in the sentence is “entlang”, which could just mean it is a separable prefix. In fact, Duden also lists “entlang” as a separable prefix and as an adverb, so I know it can be done. You can see this when the infinitive of the verb is used at the end of the sentence and it is connected to the word “entlang”. Such as: entlangfahren, entlangkommen, entlangführen, and many others.

Well, however you define this word, it can be translated with the English word “along”, as in the following examples.

Wir fahren diese Straße entlang. - We are driving along this street.

Wir fahren entlang dieser Straße. - We are driving along this street.

In the second example I used the genitive case, because I put “entlang” in front of the noun.

Die Kinder laufen den Fluss entlang. - The children are running along the river.

Now I have a challenge for the native speakers that I know are watching this video. Write in the comments an example sentence using “entlang” with the accusative case, but not at the end of the sentence or clause. I couldn’t come up with any for this video and I’m slowly becoming convinced that it just can’t be done. If it can’t be done, I’m losing faith that “entlang” is actually ever an accusative preposition and in reality it is only ever a separable prefix, an adverb or a genitive preposition. Your challenge is to prove me wrong and show that “entlang” even deserves to be in this video.

Das ist alles für heute. Danke fürs Zuschauen. Bis zum nächsten Mal. Tschüss.