Episode 030 – Grammar

1. Verbs with two objects

At the heart of any German sentence is the conjugated verb. Usually there is another component to the sentence - the subject in the nominative. Many verbs require an object as well. The majority of German verbs require an accusative (direct) object, e.g. "nehmen" (to take) and "treffen" (to meet).

Examples:
*Ich nehme **den Füller**.*
*Ich möchte **dich** treffen.*

Some verbs can have another (indirect) object in the dative. Verbs that express the acts of giving, receiving and telling fit into this category.

Who		*Whom*	*What*
Subject	Verb	Dative = person / indirect object	Accusative = thing / direct object
Ich	*schicke*	*Helen*	*den Brief.*

The nominative subject ("ich") indicates who is carrying out the action.
"Helen" is the dative (indirect) object of the action.
"den Brief" is the accusative - or direct - object of the action.

In sentences with two objects, usually the dative object comes first, followed by the accusative object. So a typical main clause with the subject placed first would look like this:

Who		**Whom**	**What**
Subject	Verb	Dative = person / indirect object	Accusative = thing / direct object
Harry	*gibt*	***dem Mann***	***den Brief****.*

More:

Generally, the dative object also precedes the accusative object when sentences are formulated as questions or imperatives. Only the subject and verb switch positions:

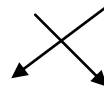|	Verb	Subject	Dative = person / indirect object	Accusative = thing / direct object
	Geben	*Sie*	*mir*	*den Brief!*
Wann	*schickst*	*du*	*Helen*	*den Brief?*

However, if the accusative object is a pronoun, then it moves in front of the dative object, even if the dative object is a pronoun, too.

*Ich schicke **Helen den Brief.***   *Ich schicke **Helen den Brief.***   *Ich schicke **Helen den Brief.***

*Ich schicke **ihr den Brief.***   *Ich schicke **ihn** Helen.*   *Ich schicke **ihn** ihr.*

2. **References to people in the female form**

German nouns that refer to people can be changed to indicate whether they are male or female. Some nouns are entirely different words to make that differentiation:

Male	Female
der Mann	*die Frau*
der Sohn	*die Tochter*

But more often, the female form is created by adding "in" to the end of the male form. This is the case for most occupations, for instance.
For some nouns, there is a vowel change as well.

Male	Female
der Freund	**die Freundin**
der Schauspieler	**die Schauspielerin**
der Arzt	**die Ärztin**

If the male version of the word ends with an "e", then it is dropped before adding the female ending "in":

Male	Female
der Meteologe	**die Meteologin**
der Computerexperte	**die Computerexpertin**

Nouns with the "in" ending get a double consonant in the plural. The following plural ending is always "en":

Singular	Plural
die Freund**in**	die Freund**in**-**n**-**en**
die Schauspieler**in**	die Schauspieler**in**-**n**-**en**
die Ärzt**in**	die Ärzt**in**-**n**-**en**