Episode 050 – Grammar

Attributive genitives

There are four grammatical cases in German: nominative, accusative, dative and genitive. The genitive case shows possession.

A noun can be modified by another noun in the genitive to indicate ownership or to express that something belongs to something or someone else. In German this is referred to as an attributive genitive.

Proper nouns can be used as attributive genitives. They precede the noun they modify.

	Attributive genitive (proper noun)	Noun
Das ist	**Annas**	**Pistole.**

In other cases, the modified noun precedes the attributive genitive together with its article.

	Noun	Attribute genitive (noun)
Das ist	**die Waffe**	**des Mörders.**

How to form it

When an attributive genitive is a proper noun that precedes the noun it modifies, then it is given the ending **-s**.

Example:
*Das ist Julia**s** Fahrrad.*

The forms for all other attributive genitives depend on the gender and number of the modifying element:

1. Masculine and neuter nouns
Most masculine and neuter nouns take the ending**-(e)s**.

Nominative	Genitive
der Wein	*des Wein**s***
das Heim	*des Heim**s***
der Psychiater	*des Psychiater**s***

Nouns that end with an "s" sound (s, ss, ß, tz, z or x), are given the ending "es".

Nominative	Genitive
der Deutschkurs	*des Deutschkurs**es***
der Arbeitsplatz	*des Arbeitsplatz**es***

2. Feminine nouns
Feminine nouns have no ending in the genitive.

Nominative	Genitive
die Pistole	*der Pistole*
die Waffe	*der Waffe*
die Mörderin	*der Mörderin*

3. Plural nouns
The endings for all plural nouns in genitive are the same as for plural nouns in the nominative.

Nominative Singular	Nominative Plural	Genitive Plural
der Wein	*die Weine*	*der Weine*
die Waffe	*die Waffen*	*der Waffen*
das Kind	*die Kinder*	*der Kinder*

The following chart shows you how the nouns and their articles change in the genitive according to gender and number:

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Definite article	*der Name **des Weins***	*der Name **der Mörderin***	*der Name **des Opfers***	*die Namen **der Kinder***
Indefinite article	*der Name **eines Weins***	*der Name **einer Mörderin***	*der Name **eines Opfers***	*(-)*

Exceptions

For proper nouns that end with the letter s, there is no additional "es" ending. Instead, an apostrophe is added!

Example:
Das Auto gehört Thomas. - Das ist Thomas' Auto.

Words that end with "nis" are given a double s!

Example:
das Missverständnis – des Missverständnisses

Some masculine nouns take the ending "en" in the genetive.

Example:
der Mensch - der Menschen.

Dative instead of genitive

In spoken German, the preposition "von" + dative is often used instead of the genitive, especially with names.

*Das ist **Toms** Zimmer.*
or: *Das ist das Zimmer **von Tom**.*

*Das Aroma **des Weins** ist einmalig.*
or: *Das Aroma **von dem Wein** ist einmalig.*