

Understanding Nominative / Accusative / Dative personal pronouns in German

		English	German		
			<u>Nominative</u>	<u>Accusative</u>	<u>Dative</u>
Singular:					
1 st person	I	ich	mich	mir	
2 nd	you (informal)	du	dich	dir	
	You (formal)	Sie	Sie	Ihnen	
3 rd	he	er	ihn	ihm	
	She	sie	sie	ihr	
	It	es	es	ihm	
Plural:					
1 st person	we	wir	uns	uns	
2 nd	You all (informal)	ihr	euch	euch	
	You all (formal)	Sie	Sie	Ihnen	
3 rd	they	sie	sie	ihnen	

The 2nd person English “you” has four different forms in German in the case of Nominative only, two each in singular and plural to reflect the formal and informal addressing, and to make things more difficult, this form of “you” changes in the other cases as well.

In English, we don’t distinguish between Accusative and dative object, and they mostly overlap. But, in German, this distinction is very important. In short, what role the case of the noun plays in a sentence can be summarised briefly as follows:

Case	Role	Description
Nominative	Subject	takes, drives, or initiates action
Accusative	Direct object	receives action performed by the subject
Dative	Indirect object	to / for whom action is performed, or the beneficiary of the action
Genitive	Possession	indicates ownership or possession