

# Nominative case

The **nominative case** (abbreviated nom), **subjective case**, **straight case** or **upright case** is one of the grammatical cases of a noun or other part of speech, which generally marks the subject of a verb or the predicate noun or predicate adjective, as opposed to its object or other verb arguments. Generally, the noun "that is doing something" is in the nominative, and the nominative is often the form listed in dictionaries.

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## Etymology

Nominative comes from Latin *cāsus nominātīvus* "case for naming",<sup>[1]</sup> which was translated from Ancient Greek ὀνομαστική πτῶσις, *onomastikḗ ptōsis* "inflection for naming",<sup>[2]</sup> from *onomázō* "call by name",<sup>[3]</sup> from *ónoma* "name".<sup>[4]</sup> Dionysius Thrax in his *Art of Grammar* refers to it as *orthḗ* or *eutheîa* "straight",<sup>[5]</sup> in contrast to the oblique or "bent" cases.

## Characteristics

The reference form (more technically the *least marked*) of certain parts of speech is normally in the nominative case, but that is often not a complete specification of the reference form, as the number and the gender may need to be specified. Thus, the reference or least marked form of an adjective might be the nominative masculine singular

The parts of speech that are often declined and therefore may have a nominative case are nouns, adjectives, pronouns and (less frequently) numerals and participles. The nominative case often indicates the subject of a verb but sometimes does not indicate any particular relationship with the other parts of a sentence. In some languages, the nominative case is unmarked, and it may then be said to be marked by a zero morpheme. Moreover, in most languages with a nominative case, the nominative form is the lemma; that is, it is the reference form used to cite a word, to list it as a dictionary entry etc.

Nominative cases are found in Arabic, Estonian, Slovak, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Georgian, German, Latin, Greek, Icelandic, Old English, Old French, Polish, Serbian, Czech, Romanian, Russian and Pashto, among other languages. English still retains some nominative pronouns, which are contrasted with the accusative (comparable to the oblique or disjunctive in some other languages): *I* (accusative *me*), *we* (accusative *us*), *he* (accusative *him*), *she* (accusative *her*), *they* (accusative *them*) and *who* (accusative *whom*). A usage that is archaic in most current English dialects is the singular second-person pronoun *thou* (accusative *thee*). A special case is the word *you*: originally, *ye* was its nominative form and *you* the accusative, but over time, *you* has come to be used for the nominative as well.

The term "nominative case" is most properly used in the discussion of nominative–accusative languages, such as Latin, Greek and most modern Western European languages.

In active–stative languages there is a case, sometimes called nominative, that is the *most* marked case and is used for the subject of a transitive verb or a voluntary subject of an intransitive verb but not for an involuntary subject of an intransitive verb. Since such languages are a relatively new field of study there is no standard name for this case.

## Subjective case

English is now often described as having a **subjective case**, instead of a nominative, to draw attention to the differences between the "standard" generic nominative and the way that it is used in English.<sup>[6][7][8][9][10]</sup> The term **objective case** is then used for the oblique case, which covers the roles of accusative, dative and objects of a preposition. The genitive case is then usually called the *possessive* form, rather than a noun case *per se*. English is then said to have two cases: the subjective and the objective.

## Examples

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### Subject

The nominative case marks the subject of a verb. When the verb is active, the nominative is the person or thing doing the action (agent); when the verb is passive, the nominative is the person or thing receiving the action.

- **The boy** saw her.
- **She** was seen.

### Predicate noun or adjective

In copular sentences, the nominative is used for both subject and predicate.

- **Socrates** was a wise man
- **Socrates** was wise.

## References

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## External links

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- German nominative caseA lesson covering the nominative case in the German language
  - The Nominative Case - Russian GrammarA lesson covering the nominative case in the Russian language
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