

Accusative Case

What are the main contexts in which the accusative case is used?

What are the forms of the accusative case for nouns in the singular and plural?

One of the most frequent uses of the accusative is as the **direct object** of a verb. Verbs that have direct objects are called transitive verbs, and we can think of a **typical scenario in which someone** (an agent or doer of an action) **transfers the energy of the verb directly onto something else** (the object or patient).

We have **direct objects in all kinds of English** sentences, but we don't do anything to mark them as such because we don't have cases. In English, word order is king, and direct objects usually follow right after a verb: *I am reading David's explanation, He is singing a song, We know that teacher, David is writing this text, They never clean their apartment, Jana has a puppy. **Czech accusatives overlap with many English direct objects** and are used in the same way, although there are exceptions to this general rule.*

Some examples:

Čtu <u>Davidovo vysvětlení</u> . am-reading David's explanation	nom: Davidovo vysvětlení
Zpívá <u>písníčku</u> . is-singing song	nom: písníčka
Známe <u>toho učitele</u> . we-know that teacher	nom: ten učitel
David píše <u>tento text</u> . is-writing this	nom: tento text
Nikdy neuklízejí <u>svůj byt</u> . never not-clean their apartment	nom: (svůj) byt
Jana má <u>pejska</u> . has puppy	nom: pejsek

When you learn a new verb in Czech, ask yourself (or your teacher, if you're not sure) if it's a transitive verb that requires the accusative case and add that information to your flashcard for that verb.

Here are a few more **complicated contexts with accusative objects** that are taken from news stories:

"Musím si dávat <u>reálné cíle</u> ." i-must to-myself give real goals English equivalent: "I must set <u>real goals</u> for myself."	nom pl: reálné cíle
Tesco zavře <u>hypermarket</u> v pražských Stodůlkách. will-close superstore in Prague's Stodůlky English equivalent: Teco will close <u>its superstore</u> in Prague's Stodůlky.	nom: hypermarket

Drogový případ fotbalisty už vyšetřuje policie. nom: drogový případ
drug case of-soccer-player already investigates police
English equivalent: The police are already investigating the soccer-player's drug case.

Španělské letovisko zakázalo sex na pláži. nom: sex
Spanish resort forbade on beach
English equivalent: The Spanish resort has forbidden sex on its beach.

Časopis pořádá den skateboardingu. nom: den
magazine promotes day of-skateboarding
English equivalent: The magazine is promoting a day of skateboarding.

The **verbs illustrated here take direct objects in both Czech and English**: *dávat si nějaké cíle* (to set some goals), *zavřít něco* (to close something), *vyšetřovat něco* (to investigate something), *zakázat něco* (to forbid something), and *pořádat něco* (to promote or organize something).

The accusative is also used in Czech **for certain time expressions**. For example, in English we say that an activity happened *at a certain time* or has been going on *for a certain amount of time*, and Czech can express this by leaving off the preposition and marking the time in the accusative case:

Nehoda se stala asi hodinu a půl po půlnoci. nom: hodina a půl
accident occurred about hour and half after midnight
English equivalent: The accident occurred about an hour and a half after midnight.

Celou sobotu bude polojasno. nom: celá sobota
all Saturday will-be half-clear
English equivalent: All day Saturday it will be partly clear.

Vždyť to je to, o čem celou dobu hovoříme. nom: celá doba
but this is that about what whole time we-talk
English equivalent: But this is what we're been talking about the whole time.

The accusative is also used with **a number of prepositions in time expressions and other contexts**. Some of the more common prepositions and meanings include: *v(e)* (on a day of the week), *pro* (for someone), *za* (in a certain amount of time), *na* (used after a motion verb for motion "to a certain destination" or "for something"). Examples include:

Ve středu začne znovu sněžit. nom: středa
on Wednesday will-begin again to-snow
English equivalent: On Wednesday it will begin to snow again.

Seminář je povinný pro všechny studenty. nom pl: všichni studenti
seminar is obligatory for all
English equivalent: The seminar is obligatory for all students.

Cesta kolem světa za 80 dní! nom: 80 dní
Trip around world in days
English equivalent: A trip around the world in 80 days!

Letos jedeme na hory. nom pl: hory
this-year we-go to mountains
English equivalent: This year we're going to the mountains.

Když máme žízeň, jdeme na pivo. nom: pivo

when we-have thirst we-go for beer
English equivalent: When we're thirsty, we go for a beer.

Endings for the accusative case

Below are the accusative endings for the following noun declensions: **Masculine inanimate** and **Masculine animate**, **Neuter**, **Feminine**, and **Neuters in -í**. (There are more declensional types in Czech, but the others — for example, feminine nouns with nominative endings in a consonant — are more complicated and will be treated elsewhere as will adjective and pronoun declensions.)

Singular	<i>Hard</i>	<i>Soft</i>	Plural
M inanim	stůl, hrad, mobil	pokoj, gauč, počítač	stoly, hrady, mobily; pokoje, gauče, počítače
M anim	studenta, psa, Srba	učitele, češtináře	studenty, psy, Srby; učitele, češtináře
N	pero, město, okno	moře, letiště	pera, města, okna; moře, letiště
F	tříd <u>u</u> , ženu, tužk <u>u</u>	tabul <u>í</u> , sklenic <u>í</u> , zem <u>í</u>	třídy, ženy, tužky; tabule, sklenice, země
-í		nádraží, náměstí	nádraží, náměstí

Some remarks:

1. **M inanim** and **N nouns** are the same in the nominative and accusative in both sg and pl.
2. **M anim** nouns take a genitive-like ending in the accusative sg and a regular (non-animate) ending in the accusative pl — that is, in the accusative pl, they look like inanimate nouns.
3. **F hard-stem nouns** take **-u** in the sg and **soft-stem nouns** have **-í**. In the accusative pl, F nouns look like nominative pl.
4. **N nouns in -í** have the same ending in both sg and pl (context will differentiate).

Question words for accusative: *Koho? Co?*

* Analysis of the accusative case presented here is drawn from the highly recommended book by Laura Janda and Steven Clancy, *The Case Book for Czech* (Slavica Publishers, 2006). More analytic details and examples are available in Janda and Clancy's book.