

# Dative Case

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

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

One of the most frequent uses of the dative is as the **indirect object** of a verb. The indirect object is usually a **person or animate being that is the recipient** in an agent-object-recipient transaction. We can think of a **typical “giving” scenario in which someone** (an agent or doer of an action) **gives an object to someone else** (the recipient). The Czech dative is used to mark the recipient of the object.

We have **indirect objects in all kinds of English** sentences, but the most we do to mark them is put a preposition (*to* or *for*) in front of them: *Jakub gave Honzu a puppy* (*Jakub gave a puppy to Honzu*), *David made tea for his friends*, *Lidka bought her mother flowers* (*She bought flowers for her mother*), *The teacher lent the student a book*, *Did you send a postcard also to your parents?*... **Czech datives overlap with many English indirect objects** and are used in much the same way.

Some examples:

Jakub dal <u>Honzovi</u> pejska. gave puppy	nom: Honza
David uvařil <u>kamarádům</u> čaj. boiled tea	nom pl: kamarádi
Lidka koupila <u>mamince</u> květiny. bought flowers	nom: maminka
Učitelka půjčila <u>žákyni</u> knihu. lent student	nom: žákyně
Poslal jsi pohled i <u>rodičům</u> ? did-you-send postcard also parents	nom pl: rodiče

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

Here are some more examples, taken from newspapers, of the indirect object in Czech. You’ll see that **the prototypical “giving” scenario**—transferring some kind of object from agent to recipient—**can have extended senses that involve other verbs than “to give” and other types of (non-prototypical) objects.**

Milionář dává šanci <u>mladým umělcům</u> . gives chance young artists	nom pl: mladí umělci
iPhone nedovoluje <u>aplikacím</u> běžet na pozadí. does-not-allow to-run in background	nom: aplikace

Co doporučují ekonomové <u>Spojeným státům</u> ? recommend United States	nom pl: Spojené státy
Ronaldo nabídl pomocnou ruku <u>frustrovanému Adrianovi</u> . offered helping hand	nom: frustrovaný Adriano
Tibet'an vysvětluje <u>čtenářům</u> Západu karmu. explains readers of-the-West	nom pl: čtenáři
Psycholog prezentuje <u>studentům</u> novou teorii. presents students	nom pl: studenti
Přinesl jsem jablko <u>všem svým učitelkám</u> . I-brought apple all	nom pl: všechny (své) učitelky
Paní Helmsleyová odkázala miliardy <u>psům</u> . willed billions dogs	nom pl: psi
Režisér dedikoval film <u>Hitchcockovi</u> . director dedicated	nom: Hitchcock

Czech makes particular use of the **dative reflexive pronoun *si*** to indicate that **the agent or subject is the recipient of the verb's effect**. This is “giving something to oneself” or “doing something for oneself”, although *si* can combine with many different verbs. Some examples include the verbs: *dát si* (to give to oneself or to order something for oneself in a restaurant), *koupit si* (to buy for oneself), *dovolovat si* (to permit or allow for oneself), and *přát si* (to wish for oneself).

Dáme si pizzu se salámem a k pití víno.  
with pepperoni for drink

Koupila jsem si novou hračku—notebook!  
toy laptop

Jak si vůbec dovoluješ odsuzovat Jitku?  
at all to condemn

Přejeme si pád vlády?  
fall of-the-government

The “giving” scenario can be extended to **verbs of communication**: when we speak to other people, it is as if we are giving them our words and thoughts. There are **many verbs of communication**—with and without direct objects—**that take the dative case** for the person or entity being addressed. Some examples include the verbs (*za*)*lhát* (to lie to someone), (*za*)*volat* (to make a phone call to someone), *tykat / vykat* (to use *ty / vy* in speaking to someone), *slíbit* (to promise something to someone), (*po*)*děkovat* (to give thanks to someone), (*po*)*gratulovat* (to give congratulations to someone), and *říct* (to say something to someone).

Nikdy bych manželce nelhal.  
never would
 nom: manželka |

Kdo zavolal policii na tísňovou linku?  
called
 nom: policie |

emergency line

Proč <u>Bohu</u> tykáme a <u>šéfům</u> vykáme? God bosses	nom: Bůh, šéf
Slíbil jsem <u>fanouškům</u> , že budu hrát dál. fans will play more	nom pl: fanoušky
Poděkovali jsme <u>dětem</u> i <u>učitelkám</u> .	nom pl: děti, učitelky
<u>Panu prezidentu Klausovi</u> gratuluji.	nom: pan prezident Klaus
Řekneme ,ano‘ nebo ,ne‘ <u>evropské ústavě</u> . we-will-say constitution	nom: evropská ústava

The **dative case is also used in Czech to mark someone who receives some kind of experience**, an experiencer being an abstract kind of recipient. There are **many contexts for dative-as-experiencer**, and here only three types will be mentioned: using the **dative to express someone’s age**, the **dative as experiencer of some environmental conditions**, the dative to **indicate someone who likes something**.

The **dative is used to express someone’s age**:

<u>Nejstaršímu</u> člověku na světě je 136 let. oldest in-the-world	nom: nejstarší člověk
Kolik je <u>vaší kočce</u> let?	nom: vaše kočka
<u>Našemu pejskovi</u> je rok a půl. half	nom: náš pejsek
<u>Mé babičce</u> je 80 let.	nom: má babička

The **dative marks the experiencer of some environmental or physical condition**:

Pršelo a bylo <u>nám</u> zima. was-raining cold	nom: my
Představ si, že se koupeš a že je <u>tí</u> teplo. imagine are-swimming warm	nom: ty
Bylo <u>dědečkovi</u> špatně po léku. after medicine	nom: dědeček

The dative is used—**with the verbs *líbit se komu*** (for impressions of liking or disliking) **and *chutnat komu*** (for liking food and drink)—**to express liking**. Literally, then, in Czech, “liking” is indicated by the construction “Something is pleasing to someone” or “Something tastes good to someone”: the entity being liked is the subject and the “liker” is in the dative case as an experiencer. Examples include:

Film se <u>vám</u> líbil?	nom: vy
Piercing v jazyce se nebude líbit <u>rodičům</u> . tongue parents	nom: rodiče
Proč <u>dětem</u> často nechutná ryba? fish	nom: děti
<u>Italům</u> chutná české pivo.	nom sg: Ital

Finally, some **common prepositions that take the dative** case include: *naproti* (opposite), *k* (towards, to), *díky* (thanks to), *kvůli* (because of).

Jirka koupil čokoladu v obchodě naproti <u>škole</u> . store	nom: škola
Galerie je naproti <u>restauraci</u> .	nom: restaurace
Konečně jsem se dostala k <u>moři</u> . finally I-got-to sea	nom: moře
Zkorumpovaní rozhodčí se vracejí k <u>fotbalu</u> . corrupt referees return	nom: fotbal
Měli jsme trochu štěstí díky <u>počasí</u> . luck weather	nom: počasí
Zájem Afroameričanů o volby díky <u>Obamovi</u> stoupl. interest in elections increased	nom: Obama
Investice kvůli <u>krizi</u> stagnují. crisis	nom: krize
K hořícímu domu nemohli hasiči kvůli <u>autům</u> . burning could-not firemen	nom pl: auta

## Endings for the dative case

Below are the dative 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
<b>M inanim</b>	stol <u>u</u> , mobil <u>u</u>	pokoji, počítač <u>í</u>	stol <u>ům</u> , mobil <u>ům</u> ; pokoj <u>ům</u> , počítač <u>ům</u>
<b>M anim</b>	student <u>ovi</u> , ps <u>ovi</u>	učitel <u>í</u> , češtinář <u>í</u> (- <u>ovi</u> )	student <u>ům</u> , ps <u>ům</u> ; učitel <u>ům</u> , češtinář <u>ům</u>
<b>N</b>	měst <u>u</u> , okn <u>u</u>	moř <u>í</u> , letiš <u>í</u>	měst <u>ům</u> , okn <u>ům</u> ; moř <u>ím</u> , letiš <u>ím</u>
<b>F</b>	tříd <u>ě</u> , tužk <u>ce</u>	tabul <u>í</u> , zem <u>í</u>	tříd <u>ám</u> , tužk <u>ám</u> ; tabul <u>ím</u> , zem <u>ím</u>
<b>-í</b>		nádraž <u>í</u> , náměst <u>í</u>	nádraž <u>ím</u> , náměst <u>ím</u>

Some remarks:

1. **Dative sg endings for F nouns are the same at those for locative.**
2. The **M pl dative ending is -ům** for both hard and soft stems.
3. **M anim nouns**, especially names, **can take the hard ending -ovi** in the dative sg (just as in the locative sg): *Tomáš > Tomášovi*.
4. **M anim nouns that consist of a series of words follow a special pattern in the dative sg:** the last word in the series (hard or soft) takes the ending *-ovi* while the preceding words take either *-u* or *-i* (as appropriate): *pan profesor Havránek > k panu profesoru Havránkovi, pan Miloš Forman > k panu Miloši Formanovi*.

**Question words for dative: *Komu? Čemu?***

\* Analysis of the dative 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.