

Vocative Case

What context takes the vocative case?

What are the forms of the vocative case?

The vocative case is **used when directly addressing, or calling, someone or something**. Of all the Czech cases, it is the **simplest in meaning and form**.

Since it is used for direct address, the vocative is quite **frequent in conversational Czech**, especially **in greetings, questions, and requests**. It is often used with **titles** and the words for “Mr” and “Mrs”: **pan (vocative: pane)** and **paní (vocative: paní)**.

Ahoj, <u> Davide</u> !	nom: David
Dobrý den, <u> pane</u> <u> prezidente</u> .	nom: pan prezident
Na shledanou, <u> paní</u> <u> profesorko</u> .	nom: paní profesorka
Jak se máš, <u> Tomáši</u> ?	nom: Tomáš
Kam jdeš, <u> Marcelo</u> ?	nom: Marcela
<u> Pane</u> <u> učiteli</u> , mám otázku.	nom: pan učitel
Promiňte, <u> pane</u> , kolik je hodin?	nom: pan

The vocative also occurs **in the salutation of letters** usually **after the adjectives Milý/Milá... or Vážený/Vážená...**(both translate as “Dear...” but the latter is quite formal and also means “respected”):

Milá <u> Renata</u> , moc Tě zdravíme z Brna. much you we-greet from Brno	nom: Renata
Milý <u> Miloši</u> , gratulujeme. we-congratulate	nom: Miloš
Vážená <u> paní</u> <u> doktorko</u> ...	nom: paní doktorka
Vážená <u> paní</u> <u> učitelko</u> ...	nom: paní učitelka

In formal vocatives with pan + last name, often **only the title is put in the vocative** (ie, *pan* > *pane*) while the last name stays in the nominative. These examples illustrate the possibilities:

<u> Pane</u> <u> Havel</u> , přeji Vám zdraví. I-wish you health	nom: pan Havel
Děkujeme Vám, <u> pane</u> <u> Havle</u> . we-thank you	
Řeknete pravdu, <u> pane</u> <u> Topolánek</u> . tell truth	nom: pan Topolánek
Můžeme Vám ještě věřit, <u> pane</u> <u> Topolánku</u> ? we-can you still believe	

Because we often need to directly address other people, the **path of least resistance for the vocative is names**, but it can also be **used for animals** (for example, calling a dog) and even **for things (or places)** if we are calling or addressing them directly.

<u>Pejsku</u> , pojd' sem! puppy come here	nom: pejsek
<u>Bouřko</u> , co ti dává takovou sílu? storm what you gives such power	nom: bouřka
Zdravíme Tě, <u>Česká republiko</u> ! we-greet you	nom: Česká republika
Dobré ráno, <u>Praho</u> ! good morning	nom: Praha
Velebný jsi, <u>Pražský hrad</u> ! sublime you-are	nom: Pražský hrad

Endings for the vocative case

Below are the nominative endings for the following noun declensions: [Masculine inanimate and] Masculine animate and Feminine. The endings for the vocative are the same as those for the nominative for all neuter nouns and for all plural nouns as well as for any adjectives modifying vocative nouns.

Singular	<i>Hard</i>	<i>Soft</i>
[M inanim	hrad <u>e</u> , kluk <u>u</u>	počít <u>ač</u> i
M anim	Davide <u>u</u> , Ludvík <u>u</u>	Miloš <u>í</u> , Tomáš <u>í</u> , učitel <u>í</u>
F	Lenk <u>o</u> , Iren <u>o</u> , Honz <u>o</u>	Mar <u>i</u> e

Some remarks:

1. When the nominative case ends in **-a**, the vocative ending is **-o**.
2. When the nominative case ends in **-k, -g, -h, or -ch**, the vocative is **-u**.
3. When the nominative case ends in **-e**, the vocative is also **-e (no change)**.
4. When the nominative case ends in a **soft consonant**, the vocative is **-i**.
5. Nominatives ending in a **hard consonant** take **-e** in the vocative.
6. Note that **male names or titles ending in -a** follow the feminine vocative pattern: Honza > **Honzo**, pan starosta > **pane starosto**...
7. Since the **last names of women**—like *paní Mahlerová* and *paní Havlová*—are adjectives, they **do not change form** in the vocative.
8. **Irregular vocative forms** include: Petr > **Petrě!**, bratr > **bratrě!**, otec > **otče!**, Bůh > **bože!**, člověk > **člověče!**.

* Analysis of the vocative 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.