

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> prezidente.	nom: pan prezident
Na shledanou, <u> paní </u> profesorko.	nom: paní profesorka
Jak se máš, <u> Tomáši </u> ?	nom: Tomáš
Kam jdeš, <u> Marcelo </u> ?	nom: Marcela
<u> Pane </u> učiteli, 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> doktorko...	nom: paní doktorka
Vážená <u> paní </u> učitelko...	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> Havel, přeji Vám zdraví. I-wish you health	nom: pan Havel
Děkujeme Vám, <u> pane </u> Havle. we-thank you	
Řeknete pravdu, <u> pane </u> Topolánek.	nom: pan Topolánek
tell truth	
Můžeme Vám ještě věřit, <u> pane </u> Topolánku?	
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 > **božě!**, 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.