

## Spotting Datives: A Refresher

### Form

- All nouns, pronouns, and adjectives take the dative plural ending *-um*; the *-u-* is lost if the stem ends in a vowel.  
*enlum, heofonum, wordum, sāwulum, mannum, oðrum, þām/þēm, him, hefigum geswincum*
- Nouns of the most common strong masculine and neuter class take the singular dative ending *-e*.  
*engle, heofone, worde*
- When declined masculine or neuter, pronouns and strong adjectives take the dative ending *-um* even in the singular (cf. German *dem*).  
*þissum, þām/þēm, him, tilum cyninge, heabum heofonum*
- Nouns that are feminine, weak, or like *sunu, mann, brōþor* do not have a specific dative form, but you can often identify them by an accompanying pronoun, adjective, or governing preposition.  
*þēm naman, eadigum suna, fram þam fæder*
- When declined feminine, pronouns and strong adjectives take the dative ending *-re* (cf. German *ihre*). This makes the adjectives easy to confuse with comparatives ('stronger' etc.)!  
*þære mēder, eadigre bletsunge*

### Triggers

- As in German, the dative can be triggered by a variety of prepositions, including *æfter, ær, be, for, fram, in, on, mid, of, tō, ymb*. Prepositions trigger the vast majority of datives in prose, and more than half in poetry. In these cases, we don't classify a type of dative; instead, we say that it is governed by the preposition.  
*be þam cyninge, on heofonum, mid swilcum*
- When not triggered by a preposition, the dative is usually governed by the verb, but sometimes by an adjective. In all these cases, we can classify the type of dative (or subsumed instrumental):
  - **Dative of interest:** for a party that receives or benefits from something.  
*Se ðām werude geaf mōd and mihte.*  
*Þā þæt inwitspell Abraham sægde frēondum sīnum.*  
*Þā wearð yrre God and þām werode wrāð.*

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- **Instrumental dative/dative of means:** tells us by means of what something is done.  
*Her lið **sweorde** gebeawen, beheafdod bealdend ure.*  
*Cleopað þonne swa cearful **cealdan reorde**.*
  - **Dative of respect:** when something is described to be of a certain quality in this or that respect. Here, we expect an adjective (e.g. 'tall') in any grammatical case combined with a noun (e.g. 'legs') in the dative: he or she is tall in terms of his or her legs.  
*his mægen is micel and **mihtum** strang.*

For a fuller index of functions of the dative, see the [Dative and Instrumental tutorial handout](#); more examples are found on the [Genesis A handout](#).