

Nominative Case

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

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

The nominative case is the **naming case**. It is not a complicated case in terms of its meaning and usage. The nominative is the **dictionary form** or base form of any noun.

The **nominative names people, places, and things**. A typical sentence for nominative-as-naming would be *This is (a) X* or *These are Xs* (in Czech, *To je X* or *To jsou X-y*).

Some examples:

To je Davidovo vysvětlení.
David's explanation

To je naše učitelka češtiny.
our teacher of-Czech

To jsou turisté z Ameriky.
tourists from America

To jsou učebnice.
textbooks

Another typical context for the nominative in its naming function **is the sentence *X is (not) Y***, in which both X and Y are in the nominative case. (Sometimes Y is in the instrumental case, but this is more typical of Literary Czech than Spoken Czech.)

Squash není tenis o stěnu.
squash isn't tennis against wall

Česká gramatika je moje hobby.
Czech grammar is my hobby

The nominative is also **the subject case** or the person or thing that **acts as agent for the verb**.

Vláda chce zlevnit elektřinu.
government wants to-cut-price-of electricity

První čínský Airbus vzlétl do nebes.
first Chinese Airbus flew-up into sky

Because Czech has case, **nominative subjects can move around**, and it takes native speakers of English – who are used to relying on word order for clues to “case” – a while to get used to the subject of a sentence coming at the end of it. Here are a few examples of a nominative subject that does not occur at the start of a sentence before the verb. The nominative subject is underlined.

Z televize Prima odešel Pavel Zuna.
from TV Prima left Pavel Zuna
English equivalent: Pavel Zuna has left TV Prima.

S výrobou vakcíny nastal problém.
 with production of-vaccine arose problem
 English equivalent: A problem has arisen with the production of the vaccine.

Před dvěma lety byl zvolen do funkce prezidenta Nicolas Sarkozy.
 ago two years was elected to function of-president Nicolas Sarkozy.
 English equivalent: Two years ago, Nicolas Sarkozy was elected to the presidency.

Endings for the nominative case

Below are the nominative endings for the following noun declensions: **M**asculine **in**animate and **M**asculine **an**imate, **N**euter, **F**eminine, 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 | student, pes, Srb | učitel, češtinář | studenti, psi, Srbové; učitelé, češtináři |
| N | pero, město, okno | moře, letiště | pera, města, okna; moře, letiště |
| F | třída, žena, tužka | tabule, sklenice, země | třídy, ženy, tužky; tabule, sklenice, země |
| -í | | nádraží, náměstí | nádraží, náměstí |

Some remarks:

1. **M inanim hard-stem** nouns take **-y** in the pl while **soft-stem** nouns take **-e**.
2. **M anim** nouns can take a variety of different endings in the pl: **-i**, **-ové**, **-é**.
3. **N hard-stem** nouns take **-o** in the sg and **-a** in the pl while **soft-stem** variants take **-e** and **-a** respectively.
4. **F hard-stem** nouns take **-a** in the sg and **-y** in the pl while the **soft-stem** nouns have **-e** in both sg and pl (context will differentiate).
5. **N nouns in -í** have the same ending in both sg and pl (context will differentiate).

Question words for nominative: *Kdo? Co?*

* Analysis of the nominative 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.