

Appendix to lesson 3

3.1 Grammatical gender. The nominative singular

In the following table of the nominative singular (which is the form that you will find in the dictionary) the so-called declension patterns are presented. These patterns represent various types of declension. (You will encounter them in the overall overview of cases on pages 66 and 67.)

| Nominative singular ¹ | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Gender | pronoun ten | -ý a -í adjective | noun |
| Masculine animate | ten | dobry ² kvalitní | student, muž, kolega |
| Masculine inanimate | ten | dobry ² kvalitní | banán, čaj |
| Feminine | ta | dobrá kvalitní | káva, restaurace, kancelář, místnost |
| Neuter | to | dobré ² kvalitní | auto, moře, kuře, nádraží |

¹ The typical endings for the nominative plural (in the majority of cases) are *i* or *y* (e.g. knedlíky, brambory, palačinky...). You can find an overview of nominative plurals in the table on page 67.

² In colloquial Czech you can also hear these nominative sg. adjective forms: *dobřej student/ banán, dobrý auto*.

In this table you can see that we have used three colours to mark grammatical genders visually in this coursebook: *blue, red and green*. Each noun has a grammatical gender which determines the forms of several other types of word, e.g. adjectives, several pronouns and verbs in the past tense (see page 36, paragraph 6. 1).

Nouns

Nouns have three grammatical genders: *masculine* (we make a distinction between *masculine animate* – people and animals, e.g. *student, pes* and *masculine inanimate*, e.g. *banán*), *feminine* (e.g. *káva*) and *neuter* (e.g. *auto*).

It's important to know the gender of each noun. There is a practical aid to determine the gender of a noun. Remember:

66% of nouns have these majority ending in the nominative singular:

Masculine ends in a **consonant** (e.g. *student, banán, profesor, muž man, učitel, supermarket, čaj tea*..)

Feminine ends in **-a** (e.g. *káva, studentka, profesorka, učitelka, banka, škola*...)

Neuter ends in **-o** (e.g. *auto, kino, divadlo, město, pivo, metro*...)

You can easily recognise the gender of most nouns by these endings.

34% of nouns have different, minority endings in the nominative singular:

The ending **-el-ě** very often occurs in the feminine (*restaurace, stanice, rýže, sportovkyně, kolegyně* ...), but also in the neuter (*kuře, moře* sea).

The ending **-í** very often occurs in the neuter (e.g. *nádraží, náměstí*).

The ending **-a** can also occur in the masculine (*kolega* colleague, *chleba* bread), while a **consonant** can occur also in the feminine (*kancelář* office, *místnost* room).

You need to remember the gender of nouns with minority endings. However, in time you will get practice in determining gender by the ending in the nominative singular and be able to distinguish almost all nouns.

Adjectives

We can divide adjectives into two types according to the ending of the nominative singular:

a) Adjectives, which end in -ý (-ý adjectives).

In Czech grammar these are called *hard adjectives* because *y* is called a 'hard *y/ý*' in Czech. These adjectives are affected by the gender of the noun that they go with in the nominative singular. For example: *dobry banán, dobrá káva, dobré auto*.

b) Adjectives, which end in -í (-í adjectives).

In Czech grammar these are called *soft adjectives* because *i* is called a 'soft *i/í*' in Czech. These adjectives are not affected by the gender of the noun that they go with in the nominative singular. For example: *kvalitní banán, kvalitní káva, kvalitní auto*.

Pronouns

The demonstrative pronoun **ten** this/that has masculine, feminine and neuter forms. E.g. *ten banán, ta káva, to auto*.

3.2 Co × jaký, jaká, jaké

Co means what. **Jaký** means what ... it is like. Compare:

Co je to? What is it? – **To je banán.** It's a banana. × **Jaký je?** What is it like? – **Je dobrý.** It's delicious.

Be careful: *Jaký* is a *-ý* adjective, and so it takes masculine, feminine and neuter forms: *Jaký je ten banán? Jaká je ta káva? Jaké je to auto?*