

Gender and plurality: Variation and change

These questions are asking you to apply and build on what you've learned in the book and in class. They are intended as challenging assignments.

You need to have access to a couple of good dictionaries (recall that the Grimms' *Deutsches Wörterbuch* is available online and Duden or Wahrig would be useful as well.)

1. Gender and sound patterns. Assemble sets of 20 or more monosyllabic German nouns that end in:

- nasal+obstruent (-*nd*, -*nk*, -*ns*, etc.) and
- fricative+*t* (/ft/, /çt/, /xt/)

Can you see patterns for either?

Can you account for nouns that don't match the patterns you've found?

2. Variation in plurals. Below are some variants of German plural forms for nouns. For each pair:

- Using dictionaries, try to establish parameters of variation (new vs. old, regional, standard vs. non-standard).
- Using web searches or Ngram Viewer, provide some basic data on frequency of some variants, along with indications of change over time.
- If you feel brave, you might try to suggest why any changes you find appear to be taking place.

die Böden / die Boden

die Kästen / die Kasten

die Magen / die Mägen

die Bürgermeister / die Bürgermeisters

die Mädchen / die Mädchens

die Kumpel / die Kumpels

die Bestecke / die Bestecks

die Wracke / die Wracks

Are there any possible generalizations? Can you find other examples that might support them?