

FAVOR Latvian Resource

Counting and numbers

In Latvian, all nouns and adjectives are marked for gender – masculine and feminine. This is also true of numbers – or nearly all of them. Let's learn how to count things in Latvian. The numbers can take case endings like adjectives and nouns, but in this lesson we will concentrate on expressing the idea of 'having' numbers of things, and those things will be in the nominative case.

The numbers 1-10 are, masculine and feminine:

1 viens / viena

2 divi / divas

3 trīs / trīs

4 četri / četras

5 pieci / piecas

6 seši / sešas

7 septiņi / septiņas

8 astoņi / astoņas

9 deviņi / deviņas

10 desmit

Desmit is a word that has no gender, and it takes the **genitive plural** form of the thing being counted – and so do combinations derived from it.

So the numbers from 11 to 20, being derived from **desmit**, have only one form:

11 vienpadsmit

12 divpadsmit

13 trīspadsmit

14 četrpadsmit... and you can probably guess the rest up to **divdesmit**, 20. Compound words that end in the other numbers 1-9 (25, 37, 48 and so on) take the normal gender endings.

So: **seši zirgi** is 'six horses' because **zirgs** 'horse' is masculine. **Piecas upes** is 'five rivers' because **upe** 'river' is feminine. But 'ten horses' would be **desmit zirgu** and '20 rivers' would

be **divdesmit upju**. The same goes for a number in the teens: **sešpadsmit mašīnu** 'sixteen cars'. If a compound number ends in a 'one', though, the number is singular: **divdesmit viena upe** '21 rivers'.

Remembering these counting rules, let's go on to learn how to express what someone 'has'. There is no verb 'to have' in Latvian; instead it uses the **dative case** of the possessor, and the possessed thing is in the nominative.

The dative case expresses the idea 'to' or 'for' a person or thing. The usual endings for the dative singular (adjectives and nouns) are **-am** for masculine words that end in **-s**, **-im** if they end in **-is**, **-ai** for feminine words ending in **-a** and **-ei** if they end in **-e**.

Gunāram 'to/for Gunārs'

Baibai 'to/for Baiba'

tēvam 'to/for father'

mātei 'to/for mother'

The dative cases of the personal pronouns are:

man to/for me

tev to/for you (sing.)

viņam to/for him

viņai to/for her

tam/tai to/for it (m./f.)

mums to/for us

jums to/for you (pl.)

viņiem to/for them (masc.)

viņām to/for them (fem.)

tiem/tām to/for them (inanimate)

The connecting particle in the 'have' construction is the form of the verb 'to be' **būt**, on the third person: in the present tense that is **ir** 'is/are'.

So how would you say:

He has six passports (**pases**).

We have three mothers.

They have eight sons. (**dēls** 'son').

The town has seven trolleybuses (**pilsēta** 'town', **trolejbuss** 'trolleybus').

I have two families (**ģimene**).

Gunta has four daughters (**meita**).

The country (**zeme**) has nine rivers.

I still (**vēl**) have five minutes (**minūte**).

I am 20 years old (=I have 20 years, **gads**).

Answers: Viņam ir sešas pases. Mīms ir trīs māyes. Viņiem ir astoņi dēli. Pilsētai ir septiņi trolejbusi.

Man ir divas ģimenes. Guntai ir četras meitas. Zemei ir deviņas upes. Man vēl ir piecas minūtes.

Man ir divdesmit gadu.