

An Tuiseal Ginideach | Explained

The Tuiseal Ginideach (or the Genitive Case) is one of the trickiest grammar points in the Irish language and many students fail to use it properly due to not fully understanding it. Here's a helpful reference and dissection of this grammar point, which will hopefully make it clearer and easier for you to use it when you're writing in Irish.

When/Where?

There are several instances in the Irish language where you must use the Tuiseal Ginideach.

You can (and must) employ the Tuiseal Ginideach (TG) in the following instances:

1. When talking about possession. ("of the", the boy's hat), e.g. something belonging to someone or something.

For example > The cat's tail = Eireaball an chait.

^Normally, the cat is "an cat", but because possession is in question, "an cat" is put into the genitive case and therefore change to "an chait".

2. When using quantities/amounts. e.g. measurements like "a lán/neart/go leor/an-chuid" (a lot), "an iomarca"(too much), "beagán" (a little) etc.

For example > I have too much money = Ta an iomarca airgid agam.

^Normally, money is "airgead", but because it follows a quantity, it changes to "airgid" in the genitive case.

3. After a verbal noun (an t-Ainm Briathartha). (after "ag")

For example > eating the dinner = ag ithe an dinnéir

^Normally, the dinner is "an dinnéar", but because it follows the ainm briathartha i.e. "eating", it changes to the TG form of "an dinnéir".

4. After a complex preposition e.g. "in aghaidh" (against), "faoi bhun" (underneath), "taobh thiar" (behind), "ar thaobh" (on the side), etc.

For example > She is standing on the side of the road = Ta sí ag seasamh ar thaobh an bhóthair.

^Normally, the road is "an bóthar", but because it follows a complex preposition, it changes to the genitive form of "an bhóthair".

5. After "Trasna/Chun/Timpeall"

For example > Around the world = Timpeall an domhain

^Normally, the world is "an domhan", but because it follows "timpeall", it is in the TG and must be changed to "an domhain". The same goes for any noun following transa, chun or timpeall.

6. When there is a connection between two nouns.

For example > School bag = Mála scoile

^Normally, school is "scoil", but because it is connected to/describing the "bag", it gets put into the genitive case and becomes "scoile".

How?

Now you know *when* to use the TG, but next you need to know *how*. Using the genitive case forces a noun to change its form and spelling slightly.

The way the noun changes in the TG varies depending on its form, gender and spelling.

For Feminine Nouns:

The general rule for feminine nouns is that "an" changes to "na", you drop the h/séimhiú and you make the noun slender (i.e. changing the end of the noun so that it ends on an "e").

For example > the restaurant's menu = **biachlár na bialainne**.

^Normally, the restaurant is "an bhialann", but when it is put in the TG, "an" changes to "na", the h is dropped, and the end of the noun is made slender so that's it's "na bialainne"

However, Irish always has exceptions, so of course there are other cases where the noun is feminine but the word is not changed like this.

Other cases are:

- Words ending in (a)íocht.

These are nearly always feminine, but when they are put into the TG, the end of the noun takes an "a".

For example > the drama club = **an club dramaíochta**.

- Feminine nouns ending in "(e)ach".

When put into the TG, the "(e)ach", changes to "(a)í".

For example > The moon's light = solas na gealaí

^Normally, the moon is "an ghealach", but in the TG, the "an" changes to "na", the h is dropped and the end is changed to "aí", so that it reads "na gealaí".

Finally, there are some completely special cases altogether (sorry), which follow no rules. The most common one to know is:

An bhean (the woman) = mala **na mná** (the woman's bag)

For Masculine Nouns:

When it's a masculine noun you're dealing with, the general rule to follow, is to add a séimhiú (h) and make the noun slender (add an "i" to the end).

For example > beside the hurley = in aice an chamáin

^Normally, the hurley is "an camán", but the TG adds on a "h" and an "i", so that it's "an chamáin".

Again, of course there are exceptions as well for masculine nouns.

One is for professions ending in "ir" (which are nearly always masculine), like doctor (dochtúir), farmer (feirmeoir), plumber (pluimbéir), etc., instead of employing the "add a h and i" rule, you instead remove the last i and add an a.

For example > the doctor's bag = mala an dochtúra

^Normally doctor is "an dochtúir", but because it's a profession and ends in "ir", the i is removed, no h is added, but an a is added to the end instead so that it becomes "an dochtúra".

Another is masculine nouns ending in -(e)ach (yes there are both masc. and fem. nouns ending in this, sorry!! You just have to learn them).

Instead of employing the normal rules for masculine nouns or using the rule for these type of nouns for the feminine TG, the noun changes from -ach to -aigh.

For example > the smell of the smoke = boladh an deataigh

^Normally, smoke is "an deatach", but in the masculine TG, it doesn't take a h and the end changes to -aigh, so that it becomes "an deataigh".

So there's an explanation of when, why and how to use the TG.

Here's a shorter version to refer to once you've grasped the explanation:

When to use it:

- When talking about possession
- When using quantities/amounts.
- After a verbal noun . (after "ag")
- After a complex preposition
- After "Trasna/Chun/Timpeall"
- When there is a connection between two nouns.

How to use it:

Feminine nouns:

- "an" changes to "na"
- make the noun slender (+i+e)
- if it ends in "-íocht", change to "-íochta"
- if it ends in "-(e)ach", change to "-aí"

Masculine nouns:

- "an" stays as "an"
- put a séimhiú (h) on the beginning of the noun.
- make the end of the noun slender by adding an "i".
- for professions ending in "ir", remove "i" and add "a" to the end
- for nouns ending in "-(e)ach", change ending to "-aigh"

I know this is a lot to grasp and it all seems very confusing and pointless, but it's just a case of learning it and practising it until it eventually becomes natural and makes sense.

You can use this sheet as a reference anytime you see a word in the TG and wonder why, or any time you need to change a word into the TG and need to know how.

Here are some common **masculine** nouns in the tuiseal ginideach.

1. Ainm an fhir
2. Deireadh an scéil
3. Ar fud an domhain
4. Ag léamh an dáin
5. Doras an tí
6. Carr an bhuachalla
7. Barr an leathanaigh
8. Timpeall an chontae (words ending in a vowel don't change)
9. I rith an lae
10. Gúna an chailín (cailín is masculine as Gaeilge)

Here are some common **feminine** nouns in the tuiseal ginideach

1. Ar fud na tíre
2. In aghaidh na bliana
3. I rith na míosa
4. Ag deireadh na seachtaine
5. Ag oscailt na fuinneoige
6. Ag freagairt na ceiste
7. Ag réiteach na faidhbe
8. Muintir na hÉireann
9. Timpeall na háite
10. Geataí na scoile