

GENITIVE FORMS

Various Pronouns		‘all, every’ ‘this, that’		‘our’		‘my’	
N	všech	toho	našeho	mého			
A	všech	toho	našeho	mého			
M	všeho	toho	našeho	mého			
F	vší	té	naší	mé			
N	všech	těch	našich	mých			
A	všech	těch	našich	mých			
M	všech	těch	našich	mých			
F	všech	těch	našich	mých			

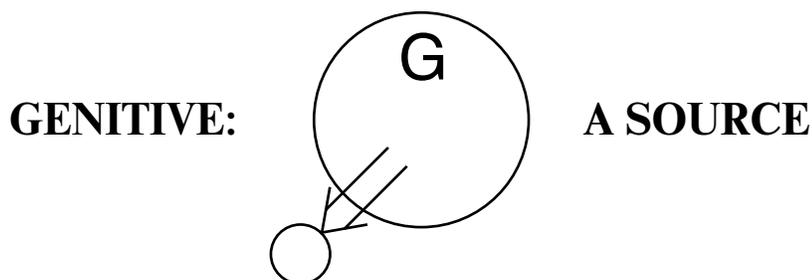
Adjectives		Nouns	
HARD	SOFT	HARD	OTHERS
	singular		
dobrého	prvního	města	náměstí
dobrého	prvního	studenta	hrdiny
dobrého	prvního	románu	
dobré	první	knihy	židle/koleje věci
	plural		
dobrych	prvních	měst	náměstí
dobrych	prvních	studentů	hrdinů
dobrych	prvních	románů	
dobrych	prvních	knih	židlí/kolejí věci

Numerals	
‘one’	‘two’
N jednoho	dvou
A jednoho	tří
M jednoho	čtyř
F jedné	pěti

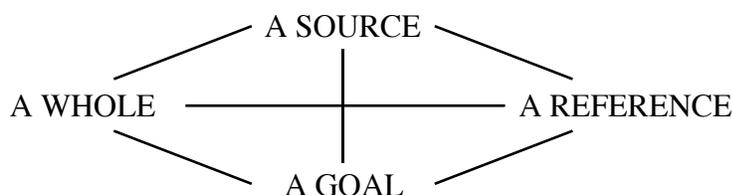
Interrogative Pronouns		‘who’		‘what’	
	koho	čeho			

Personal Pronouns		‘I’		‘you’ (sg)		‘we’		‘you’ (pl)	
	mě (mne)	tě (tebe)	nás						vás
	‘he/she/it’								
N	ho, jeho (něho)	jich (nich)							
A	ho, jeho (něho)	jich (nich)							
M	ho, jeho (něho)	jich (nich)							
F	jí (ní)	jich (nich)							

KEY:
 N neuter
 A animate masculine
 M inanimate masculine
 F feminine



The genitive network:



PROLOGUE

Let's start by looking at an example:

- (1) Předseda **Komunistické strany Čech a Moravy** Miroslav Grebeníček řekl, že se komunisté nevzdávají **představy** o vstupu do **vlády**.
 [President-NOM **Communist Party-GEN Bohemia-GEN and Moravia-GEN** Miroslav Grebeníček-NOM said, that self-ACC communists-NOM not-give-up **idea-GEN** about entry-LOC to **government-GEN**.]
 The president of **the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia** Miroslav Grebeníček said that the communists are not giving up **on the idea** of getting into **the government**.

Here we see five uses of the genitive case in a single sentence, one that is not even particularly long or unusual. Communism these days is probably more like sand in your bathing suit — it's hard to get rid of it entirely, but it's not really a threat either. The genitive case, however, is quite pervasive and cannot be ignored. Here are some of its characteristics:¹

- The genitive is the most used case in Czech. The likelihood of finding sentences with five uses of any other case is considerably smaller.
- The genitive is used with over sixty prepositions (about two dozen simple prepositions and about 50 complex ones), vastly more than all the other cases combined.
- The genitive is the only case that forms chains of consecutive uses, as in our example above: Předseda **Komunistické strany Čech a Moravy** [President-NOM **Communist Party-GEN Bohemia-GEN and Moravia-GEN**] 'The president of **the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia**'

The genitive case is the most frequent case, has the most prepositions, forms chains of words, and has the most complex meaning.

- The genitive is probably the most complex case in Czech, and the basic idea of the genitive is perhaps the hardest to grasp.

These might look like formidable hurdles, but our strategy is to tackle the last item on the list, the meaning of the genitive. After that, all the other “problems” will become opportunities for easy success.

The uses of the genitive will be described in terms of four categories: GENITIVE: A SOURCE, GENITIVE: A GOAL, GENITIVE: A WHOLE, and GENITIVE: A REFERENCE. The four labels used here hint at both what the basic meaning of the genitive is and why it is so hard to make sense of it. The genitive is by nature an elusive beast, a sort of “back-seat driver” that is always handing off the responsibility of focusing attention to something else. When we say that something comes from a source, we generally aren’t as interested in the source as we are in the something that comes from it. The same goes for goals; while a goal is important, what we really care about is the person or thing that is headed for it. In the GENITIVE: A WHOLE use, there is always another item that plays the role of the “part”, and of course when we are talking about something that is part of a whole, we are focusing our attention on the part more than on the whole. A reference point is something that we use to locate something else, and in its GENITIVE: A REFERENCE use, the genitive serves as a mental address for other things. Rather than turning focus to the item it marks, the genitive deflects our focus away from it. It is this habit of retreating into the background that makes the genitive so hard to pin down. Passing the buck, by the way, also makes the chaining of genitives possible, allowing focus to bounce from one item to the next.

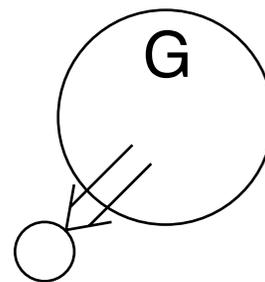
Looking at the labels, however, it is at first hard to understand what they have in common. After all, a source and a goal seem to be opposites, and both involve movement, whereas whole and reference do not. If we compare the diagrams of the four uses, we see that the GENITIVE: A GOAL is really the same as the GENITIVE: A SOURCE, just run in reverse, and furthermore the GENITIVE: A WHOLE and GENITIVE: A REFERENCE are simply the two endpoints of GENITIVE: A SOURCE and GENITIVE: A GOAL. More abstractly, we could say that all of the diagrams support the following definition:

The genitive is a backgrounded item (big circle) that yields focus of attention to something else (small circle) which exists or maneuvers in its proximity.

In order to make sense of this definition we will have to examine the many faces of the genitive in action.

GENITIVE: A SOURCE 1 — *Z, s* ‘from’

The GENITIVE: A SOURCE meaning is always triggered by a preposition or word indicating removal or withdrawal from the genitive item. The preposition *z* ‘from’ is the most versatile, and is used to express departure from most physical (and metaphorical) locations, including all locations that are expressed with both *v* + LOC ‘in’ and *na* + LOC ‘on, at’ when an item is at rest. Here are some examples of the use of *z* to indicate a container or location from which something is removed:



An item (small circle) departs from a GENITIVE: A SOURCE (circle labeled G)

An overview of the genitive case.

The genitive case diverts attention to another item.

An abstract definition of the genitive.

z + GENITIVE: A SOURCE ‘from’ in the domain of space.

- (2) Ona není z **Prahy**.
[She-NOM not-is from **Prague-GEN**.]
She is not from **Prague**.
- (3) Vše mi zmizelo z **mozku**.
[Everything-NOM me-DAT disappeared from **brain-GEN**.]
Everything disappeared from my **brain**.
- (4) Z **mikrosvěta** vesniček se vydali do světa velkých hvězd.
[From microcosm-GEN villages-GEN self-ACC set-out to world-GEN big stars-GEN.]
From **the microcosmos** of the villages they set out for the world of the big stars.

In these three examples, the city of Prague, the speaker's brain, and the microcosm of village life serve as containers from which various items ('she', 'everything', and 'they') emerge.

Z can also be used metaphorically to describe the sources of phenomena in the absence of physical movement through space.

- (5) Z **jakého prostředí** váš otec pochází?
[From **what background-GEN** your father-NOM comes?]
What kind of background does your father come from?
- (6) Svět zná Václava Havla z **dálky**.
[World-NOM knows Václav Havel-ACC from **distance-GEN**.]
The world knows Václav Havel from **a distance**.
- (7) Předtím jsem toho herce znal jenom z **blbejch filmů**. (CCz)
[Previously AUX that actor-ACC knew only from **stupid movies-GEN**.]
I previously knew that actor only from **stupid movies**.

Although none of these examples involves real movement from a source, they are understood as metaphorical parallels to movement, and note that this is just as true of English as it is of Czech, because all of these examples can be translated with English 'from'.

Just as in English we can say that we make things *from* various raw materials, in Czech we can use *z* to refer to this process of creation, although sometimes Czechs will use *z* even when we wouldn't say *from*, as in *hrad z písku* [castle-NOM from **sand-GEN**] which is simply 'a **sand** castle'. Here are a couple of examples:

- (8) V USA se už tehdy kontaktní čočky dělaly, ale pouze z **tvrdých látek** na bázi plexiskla.
[In USA-LOC self-ACC already then contact lenses-NOM made, but only from **hard substances-GEN** on basis-LOC plexiglas-GEN.]
At that time in the USA contact lenses were already being made, but only from **hard substances** derived from plexiglass.

Z + GENITIVE: A SOURCE 'from' in metaphorical domains.

Z + GENITIVE: A SOURCE can indicate what an item is made from.

z + GENITIVE: A SOURCE 'from' in the domain of time.

- (9) Potah vějíře se obvykle vyráběl z **kuřecí kůže**, **hedvábí** nebo **papíru** a žebra z **rohoviny**, **slonoviny**, **kosti** nebo **dřeva**.

[Cover-NOM fan-GEN self-ACC usually made **chicken skin-GEN**, **silk-GEN** or **paper-GEN** and ribs-NOM from **horn-GEN**, **ivory-GEN**, **bone-GEN** or **wood-GEN**.]

The cover of a fan was usually made from **chicken skin**, **silk**, or **paper**, and the ribs were made from **horn**, **ivory**, **bone**, or **wood**.

Time is a domain that we all have to deal with, but because we have no direct experience of time (only of its effects on us and our surroundings), most human beings understand time in terms of space. This use of space as a source for understanding time is very evident in Czech, and we will see many examples of this throughout the case system. Czech *z* 'from' can identify a period of time in the past that is the source of knowledge or experience, usually *z mládí* 'from/since **one's youth**' or *z dětství* 'from/since **childhood**', as in this example:

- (10) Její kamarádka z **dětství** ji také opustila.

[Her friend-NOM from **childhood-GEN** her-ACC also abandoned.]

Her **childhood** friend also abandoned her.

z + GENITIVE: A SOURCE to indicate selection of something from a group.

A group can serve as a container or source from which one or more items are picked out, and *z* is often used to express selection from a group, most frequently in the phrase *jeden z* 'one of', although other words are associated with this meaning as well. Here are a few examples:

- (11) Syn Václava Klause se stal ředitelem jednoho z **nejúspěšnějších českých soukromých gymnázií**.

[Son-NOM Václav Klaus-GEN self-ACC became director-INST one-GEN of **most-successful Czech private high-schools-GEN**.]

Václav Klaus' son became the director of one of **the most successful Czech private high schools**.

- (12) Marie Pechová bývala jednou z **nejbližších kamarádek** Lucie Bílé.

[Marie Pechová-NOM was one-INST of **closest friends-GEN** Lucie Bílá-GEN.]

Marie Pechová used to be one of Lucie Bílá's **closest friends**.

- (13) Málokdo z **lékařů** naši radu poslechl.

[Few-NOM of **doctors-GEN** our advice-ACC listened.]

Few of **the doctors** listened to our advice.

- (14) Nikdo z **řidičů**, kteří před přechodem zastavili, mu nepřišel na pomoc.

[No-one-NOM of **drivers-GEN**, who-NOM before crosswalk-INST stopped, him-DAT not-came to help-ACC.]

None of **the drivers** who stopped at the crosswalk came to his aid.

Here the sources are the following groups of items: the most successful Czech private high schools, Lucie Bílá's closest friends, doctors, and drivers at the crosswalk. From among those groups we mentally extract one, few, or no members, and we treat this mental exercise as if the items involved were actually leaving their groups, though of course they aren't.

In the next two sentences we see another kind of metaphorical use of *z*, in which ideas serve as sources inspiring the work of institutes and the behaviors of politicians.

- (15) Ústavy vycházejí z **hodnot, morálky a ideálů**, které si společnost osvojila.
[Institutes come from **values-GEN, morals-GEN** and **ideals-GEN**, which-ACC self-DAT society-NOM adopted.]
Institutes are based on **the values, morals, and ideals** that society has adopted.

- (16) Jejich postup vychází z **neomezeného sebevědomí**, které získali, když byli zvoleni.
[Their attitude-NOM comes from **unlimited self-confidence-GEN**, which-ACC acquired, when were elected-NOM.]
Their attitude results from **the unlimited self-confidence** they acquired when they were elected.

A related idiomatic use of *z* is the expression *ze všech sil* [from **all strengths-GEN**] 'with **all one's might**', as in:

- (17) Křičel ze **všech sil**, ale hudba byla tak hlučná, že ho stejně nikdo neslyšel.
[Shouted from **all strengths-GEN**, but music-NOM was so loud-NOM, that him-ACC still no-one-NOM not-heard.]
He shouted with **all his might**, but the music was so loud that no one heard him anyway.

Lectures, courses, and examinations are taken from a given subject matter, and this relationship is also expressed using *z*, as in:

- (18) Lze těžko porovnávat maturitní zkoušku z **matematiky** se zkouškou třeba z **designu**.
[Possible hard compare graduation test-ACC from **mathematics-GEN** with test-INST for-instance from **design-GEN**.]
It's hard to compare a graduation test on **mathematics** with a test on **design**, for instance.

Taking this sort of logic one step further, we can understand a source also as a cause, as something that motivates movement to a consequence. In English we can sometimes say things like *They did it out of concern for our safety*; in the following Czech example we see *z* used to express causation in this fashion:

- (19) Z **bezpečnostních důvodů** ve Velké sportovní hale sekt bude podáván v plastových lahvích.
[From **security reasons-GEN** in Great Sports Hall-LOC wine-cooler-NOM will-be served-NOM in plastic bottles-LOC.]
For **security reasons**, wine cooler will be served in plastic bottles in the Great Sports Hall.

z + GENITIVE: A SOURCE TO indicate inspirations, sources of knowledge, and causes.

z + GENITIVE: A
SOURCE to
indicate
transformations.

It is common for people to understand states of being as locations that people and other items move to and from. In English, for example, we can say that *Sally has gone from being a lowly factory worker to CEO of the company*. Czech often uses *z* with the verb *stát se* ‘become’ to describe transformations. As these examples show, this meaning of *z* also continues the logic of the examples we saw above concerning making items out of raw materials, but here the raw materials are people:

- (20) *Z taxikáře se stal jezeďákem.* (CCz)
[From **taxi-driver-GEN** self-ACC became cooperative-farmer-INST.]
He went from **being a taxi driver** to a cooperative farmer.
- (21) *Byl to takový čas Václava Havla. Deset let tomu, co se z **disidenta** stal prezidentem.*
[Was that-NOM such time-NOM Václav Havel-GEN. Ten-NOM years-GEN that-DAT, what-NOM self-ACC from **dissident-GEN** became president-INST.]
That was Václav Havel’s time. It’s been ten years since he went from **dissident** to president.
- (22) *Takže díky špatným fotkám se z **vás** stal milionář.*
[So thanks-to bad photographs-DAT self-ACC from **you-GEN** became millionaire-NOM.]
So thanks to the bad photographs **you** became a millionaire.

With the verb *být* ‘be’ we see only the endpoint of a transformation, the situation in which a person or object has attained a new state of being. Here is a typical example:

- (23) *Byla z **nich** známá dvojka.*
[Was from **them-GEN** famous pair-NOM.]
They were a famous pair.
- (24) *Před deseti lety by nikdo nevěřil tomu, že z **té nenápadné dívky** bude jednou nejžádanější filmová herečka.*
[Before ten years-INST AUX noone-NOM not-believed that-DAT, that from **that inconspicuous girl-GEN** will-be once most-desired movie actress-NOM.]
Ten years ago no one would have believed that **that inconspicuous girl** would one day be the most desired movie actress.

The preposition *z* is associated with the verbs in the following table (note that English *from* often parallels this association). These examples show how these verbs and *z* interact:

- (25) *Kvůli mrakům by se Venušané nikdy nemohli těšit z **pohledu** na krásy hvězdné oblohy.*
[Due-to clouds-DAT would self-ACC Venusians-NOM never could-not enjoy from **view-GEN** on beauties-ACC starry sky-GEN.]
Due to the clouds, Venusians could never enjoy **a view** of the beauty of a starry sky.

Verbs associated with *z* + GENITIVE: A SOURCE

‘accuse of, indict for’ <i>obvinít/obviňovat z</i>	‘exclude, remove from’ <i>vyloučit/vylučovat z</i>	‘excommunicate from’ <i>exkomunikovat z</i>
‘enjoy, derive pleasure from’ <i>po-těšit se z</i>	‘discard, remove from service’ <i>vyřadit/vyřadovat/vyřazovat z</i>	‘extricate oneself from’ <i>vymanit/vymaňovat se z</i>
‘recover from’ <i>zotavit/zotvovat se z</i>	‘ostracize from’ <i>vyobcovat z</i>	

- (26) John Lennon byl ze **školy** vyloučen a věnoval se výhradně hraní.
[John Lennon-NOM was from **school-GEN** expelled-NOM and devoted self-ACC exclusively playing-DAT.]
John Lennon was expelled from **school** and devoted himself exclusively to playing.

GENITIVE: A SOURCE 2 — *s* ‘off of, down from’, *zpod* ‘from beneath’, and *zpoza* ‘from behind’

The three prepositions *s* ‘off of, down from’, *zpod* ‘from beneath’, and *zpoza* ‘from behind’ are all closely related to *z* ‘from’ both in meaning and use.

The preposition *s* ‘off of, down from’ can be thought of as a version of *z*, used only to describe physical removal from on top of (or off of) a source location, and it is always possible to replace *s* with *z*. The following examples show how *s* is usually used:

- (27) Já se tu válím s Honzou po kopcích, do kopce funím a s **kopce** se kutálím.
[I-NOM self-ACC here roll with Honza-INST along hills-LOC, to hill-GEN puff and from **hill-GEN** self-ACC roll.]
I’m bounding about the hills here with Honza, puffing uphill and rolling downhill.
- (28) Sňal po jídle mandolínu se **zdi** — byla pověšena na zlaté lněné šňůře.
[Took-off after meal-LOC mandolin-ACC from **wall-GEN** — was hung-NOM on gold flaxen cord-LOC.]
After the meal he took the mandolin from **the wall** — it was hanging on a golden flaxen cord.
- (29) Spadl jsem se **stromu** zády na kořen a páteř se prolomila dovnitř do těla, takže došlo k porušení míchy.
[Fell AUX self-ACC from **tree-GEN** back-INST on root-ACC and spine-NOM self-ACC broke into to body-GEN, to happened to injury-DAT spinal-cord-GEN.]
I fell out of **a tree** landing on my back on the root and my spine broke inward in my body, so the spinal cord was injured.

s + GENITIVE: A SOURCE ‘off of, down from’ can always be replaced by *z* + GENITIVE: A SOURCE.

However, the tendency is to use *z* instead of *s* even in contexts that have the specific meaning associated with *s*, as we see in these examples:

- (30) Loni v červenci sesadil Peta Samprase z **tenisového trůnu**.
[Last-year in July-LOC unseated Pete Sampras-ACC from **tennis throne-GEN**.]
In July of last year he unseated Pete Sampras from **the tennis throne**.
- (31) Ze **stěny** sundává paní Kuželková obraz v rámečku.
[From **wall-GEN** takes-off Mrs. Kuželková picture-ACC in frame-LOC.]
Mrs. Kuželková takes a framed picture off of **the wall**.

Zpod ‘from beneath’ is used just as one would expect:

- (32) Hasič zpod **trámů** vytáhl dítě s přeraženou nohou a mrtvého muže.
[Firefighter-NOM from-beneath **beams-GEN** pulled-out child-ACC with broken leg-INST and dead man-ACC.]
The firefighter pulled a child with a broken leg and a dead man out from under **the beams**.
- (33) V noci byla taková zima, že se nedala vystrčit ani ruka zpod **peřiny**, aby neumrzla.
[In night-LOC was such cold-NOM, that self-ACC not-gave stick-out even hand-NOM from-beneath **comforter-GEN**, so-that-AUX not-froze.]
It was so cold in the night, that you couldn’t even stick your hand out from under **the comforter** without it freezing.

Since seeing and looking are understood metaphorically as visual journeys, it is also possible to look out from beneath something using the Czech preposition *zpod*:

- (34) Jason neříkal nic, jen se na ni díval zpod **kšiltu** své baseballové čepice.
[Jason-NOM not-said nothing-ACC, just self-ACC on her-ACC looked from-beneath **brim-GEN** own baseball cap-GEN.]
Jason didn’t say anything, he just looked at her from under **the brim** of his baseball cap.

The preposition *zpoza* describes motion ‘from behind’ something marked as GENITIVE: A SOURCE. This preposition can also describe the virtual motion of looking as well as the movement of sound from a source:

- (35) Malé dítě vykouklo zpoza **vozu**.
[Small child-NOM peeked-out from-behind **vehicle-GEN**.]
A small child peeked out from behind **the vehicle**.
- (36) “Nemám čas,” ozvalo se zpoza **dveří**.
[“Not-have time-ACC,” responded self-ACC from-behind **door-GEN**.]
“I don’t have time,” came the reply from behind **the door**.

zpod + GENITIVE:
A SOURCE ‘from
beneath’.

zpoza + GENITIVE:
A SOURCE ‘from
behind’.