Turkish Language Recipe Cards

Nominative and Accusative Cases

Nouns have six cases. Nominative, Accusative, Genitive, Dative, Locative, Ablative. These are summarised together on another card.

The nominative case is the usual (dictionary) form of a noun. It is used for the subject of a sentence. The accusative case is used for the object of a sentence.

In English, the subject and object of a sentence are known from their position. The word order is subject - verb - object. I (subject) am seeing (verb) the cat (object).

In Turkish, the verb is at the end, so the subject and the object have to be distinguished somehow. This can be adequate by position or by using personal endings: I - the cat - am seeing. If it's obvious which is the object, and if it is not a specific object, then 'the cat' in the sample sentence can be left in the nominative.
Ben kedi görüyorum I the cat I am seeing.
If that is not enough, or if the object is specific, then the object must be put in the accusative.

To make the accusative of a noun, add the suffix *-i*, which follows i-type vowel harmony, and so has variants *-ı, -u, -ü*. Nouns ending in some consonants have consonant harmony (like *köpek* below). Nouns ending in vowels need a consonant separator, which is *-y-*. A personal suffix comes before the accusative suffix.
Examples

English	Nominative	Accusative	Note
House	*Ev*	*Ev-i*	
Road	*Yol*	*Yol-u*	
Grape	*Üzüm*	*Üzüm-ü*	
Cat	*Kedi*	*Kedi-y-i*	separator *-y-*
Dog	*Köpek*	*Köpeğ-i*	consonant harmony
Table	*Masa*	*Masa-y-ı*	separator *-y-*
Your table	*Masa-nız*	*Masa-nız-ı*	personal suffix used

Kedi-m köpeğ-iniz-i görüyor My cat (subject) your dog (specific object) he is seeing.

Unfortunately, an *-i* suffix is also used in the 3rd person possessive (*his/her/its ...*), and in compound nouns. And, if a possessive/compound could be an object, could we need two of the same suffixes?

One difference, but only for nouns ending in a vowel, is that the consonant separator for possessives is *-s-* and not the *-y-* used for the accusative. But if you have to use both endings, then the second consonant separator changes to *-n-*.
Examples:
Araba Car (subject). *Araba-y-ı Car* (object).
Araba-s-ı His/her/its car (subject). *Araba-s-ı-n-ı His/her/its car* (object).
Ev House (subject). *Ev-i House* (object).
Ev-i His/her/its house (subject). *Ev-i-n-i His/her/its house* (object).
Topkapı Saray-ı (compound, subject). *Topkapı Saray-ı'-n-ı* (compound, object)