

Expressing possession

1. Possessive adjectives and pronouns

Possessive adjectives and pronouns are, as their name suggests, words used to show possession as in:

My car is red. The red car is **mine**.

Her black dog. The black dog is **hers**.

The **possessive adjective** is placed before the noun, and the **pronoun** is placed after.

He gave **my** pen back to **me** when **he** realized it wasn't **his**.

Personal pronoun (subject)	Personal pronoun (object)	Possessive adjectives	Possessive pronouns
I	me	my	mine
you	you	your	yours
he	him	his	his
she	her	her	hers
it	it	its	its
we	us	our	ours
you	you	your	yours

2. Genitive structure

Another way of expressing possession is by means of the **genitive** or **apostrophe s**. This is added to a **noun** and **not** to a pronoun.

Janet's car is red but **mine** is blue.

My car is blue but **Janet's** is red.

Her car is red and **my car** is blue.

Hers is red and **mine** is blue.

All the above sentences mean the same thing.

A typical mistake is the use of **it's** instead of **its**. **It's** is not a pronoun but a contracted form of **it is** or **it has**: **It's** my car and **its** doors are locked.

The use of the **apostrophe s** also depends on **singular** or **plural** nouns.

My **neighbour's** dog. (*one neighbour, one dog*)

My **neighbour's** dogs. (*one neighbour, more than one dog*)

My **neighbours'** dog. (*more than one neighbour, one dog*)

My **neighbours'** dogs. (*more than one neighbour, more than one dog*)

Note that in speech there is **no difference in pronunciation**.

3. Things possessing things

We do not usually use the **genitive** (apostrophe s) when talking of a part of an object.

Example:

The door of the car = **The car door** (not the car's door)

The leg of the table = **The table leg** (not the table's leg)

4. Other use of genitive structure

When using the **genitive structure** we are not always indicating possession.

The artist's work (*the work of / by the artist*) > In the above case, the artist does not *possess* his or her work (in fact they usually try to sell it).

Children's songs (*songs for children*) > The children do not possess the songs, they sing them.

When speaking of a home or a surgery or a small shop, we often use the genitive without indicating the noun.

He's going to the **dentist's**. (*surgery*)

She's going to the **doctor's**. (*surgery*)

I'm having lunch at **my sister's**. (*home*)

We're staying at a **friend's** this weekend. (*house*)

I have to go to the **butcher's**. (*shop*)

The **baker's** is on the High Street. (*shop*)