



Possessive Form

What is the Possessive form?

The possessive form is used when you want to show ownership by one noun (person, place, or thing) over another.

How do you make a word take the possessive form?

There are a few possibilities.

1. For **nouns** you will need to use an apostrophe ‘ and sometimes an s in order to make the noun possessive.
2. For **pronouns** (a word that takes the place of a noun) you will need to change the entire form of the word.

General Guidelines for making Nouns Possessive

1. For singular nouns, add ‘s

a. Examples:

- i. The dog’s collar.
- ii. The doctor’s office.
- iii. Mary’s bike.
- iv. The President’s speech.

2. For singular nouns that already end in s still add ‘s.

a. Examples:

- i. The glass’s crack.
- ii. James’s coat.
- iii. The boss’s chair.

NOTE: There is some debate over rule #2. Some perspectives state that you do not add an ‘s but instead just an ‘ to a singular word that already ends in s if the pronunciation is difficult with the ‘s.

3. For plural nouns (more than one) that end in s add only an ‘.

a. Examples:

- i. The homes’ decorations.
- ii. The books’ prices.
- iii. The boys’ games.

4. For plural nouns that do not end in s add ‘s.

a. Examples:

- i. All the children’s toys.
- ii. The women’s coats.
- iii. The men’s shoes.
- iv. The mice’s cheese.

5. When you need to show that many nouns have *joint* ownership of an item, add ‘s to the last noun only.

a. Examples:

- i. Jill, Mike, and Anne’s project.

6. When you need to show that many nouns show *separate* ownership over an item, add ‘s to each noun.

- a. Examples:
 - i. John’s and Kelly’s cars.
 - ii. The cat’s and dog’s food.

General Guidelines for making *Pronouns Possessive*

(These pronouns never use apostrophes)

1. I → my or mine

- a. **My** dog just had puppies.
- b. That dog is **mine**.

2. we → our or ours

- a. **Our** new home is very cozy.
- b. That home over there is **ours**.

3. she → her or hers

- a. **Her** new car is red.
- b. That car over there is **hers**.

4. he → his

- a. **His** father just got a promotion.
- b. The red coat in the closet is **his**.

5. they → their or theirs

- a. **Their** vacation was won in a contest.
- b. Those two kids on the swings are **theirs**.

6. who → whose

- a. **Whose** jacket is this?

7. it → its

- a. The tiger ate **its** meal this morning.

EXCEPTION

- 1. The pronoun “**one**” uses an ‘s when it needs to take the possessive form.

- a. **One’s** ultimate goals should be considered when changing careers.

The following resource was consulted in the design of this handout:

Harris, Muriel. *Prentice Hall Reference Guide*. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006.

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