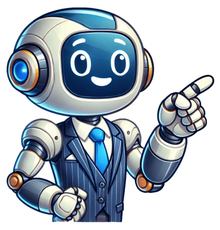
I'm not a bot



Did you know that possessive pronouns can do something strange? It's true! An English teacher named Elyse summed up the problem well in an email to me. Let's read her email and figure out what's going on. Here we go! Elizabeth,I've come across this situation a few times, and I can't find an explanation. I can't find my mom's keys. What is "my?" It seems to be an adjective modifying another adjective ("mom's"), but since that's not possible, is there another term for it? Or would we consider "my mom's" some sort of compound adjective modifying the noun "keys" and leave it at that? I'm intrigued, and any help is appreciated!Best,Elyse, English Teacher That's a great question! Before we dive deeper into Elyse's question, let's have a quick review of what nouns and adjectives are. Quick RefresherNouns name people, places, things, or ideas. (teacher, park, pencil, liberty)Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns. (happy teacher, fun park, yellow pencil) What are possessive nouns? Nouns have what are called cases. The case of a noun tells us more about what the noun is doing in the sentence. In English, the main noun cases are nominative, objective, and possessive. Nouns in the nominative case perform one of the noun jobs below. They can be modified by adjectives.1. Subjects (Cats meow.)2. Predicate Nouns (It is a cat.)3. Nouns of Direct Address (Cats, where are you?)4. Appositives to any of the above jobs (Marshall, the cat, meowed.)Nouns in the objective case perform one of the noun jobs below. They can be modified by adjectives.1. Direct Object (I like cats.)2. Indirect Object (I gave the cat a treat.)3. Objective Complement (I named my cat Marshall.)4. Object of a Preposition (Give it to the cat.)5. Adverbial Noun (Walk a mile with the cat.)6. Appositives to any of the above jobs (I like my cat Marshall.)Nouns in the possessive case show ownership/possession. They don't perform any of the noun jobs! So, what in the world do they do? Let's find out! Mom's keys, lady's books, building's doorbell The keys belong to Mom, the books belongs to the lady, and the doorbell belongs to the building. These are all showing possession. Let's look more closely at one of those examples and see it in a sentence. Mom's is a possessive noun. It's telling us whose keys we're talking about. What job is Mom's performing in this sentence? It's functioning as an adjective modifying the noun keys. Isn't that strange? It's not functioning as a noun. It's functioning as an adjective!Possessive nouns function as adjectives.We even diagram these nouns as adjectives. (That means they go under the noun that they are modifying.) I can't find Mom's keys! Now we know what job possessive nouns perform. (Do you remember what they do? I hope you easily remembered that they perform the job of an adjective.)However, there's something we need to consider: adjectives modify nouns. They don't modify adjectives. That means that we would not have an adjective modifying another adjective.Hmm...so can possessive nouns be modified by adjectives? Let's see. The Strange Thing Check out the sentence below and focus on the word my. I can't find my mom's* keys! * Psst! Did you notice that in this sentence, mom's starts with a lowercase m? You can learn about about this with capitalization rule #1A.What is my modifying? Where should we put it in the sentence diagram? My is a possessive pronoun, which functions as an adjective, but it doesn't seem to be modifying the noun keys. After all, they are not my keys, they are my mom's keys. My seems to be modifying mom's, and mom's is functioning as an adjective. But wait! Adjectives don't modify other adjectives! What is going on here? The trick is that possessive nouns can be modified by adjectives.Even though they function as adjectives, they maintain some of their "noun-ness" and can still be modified by adjectives, just like nouns in the nominative and objective cases.Diagram my on a slanted line under mom's. I can't find my mom's keys. Normally, we would only diagram an adverb underneath an adjective since adjectives are modified by adverbs. Because of that, you might need to look twice at this setup to remember that my is actually an adjective modifying a possessive noun...which is functioning as an adjective! Summary Did you find that helpful? I hope that it all made sense! Let's review what we covered on this page.Nouns name people, places, things, and ideas. Adjectives modify nouns. They don't modify other adjectives. Nouns in English can be used in three cases: nominative, objective, and possessive. Nouns in the nominative case and the objective case perform one of the noun jobs. They can be modified by adjectives. Possessive nouns don't perform any of the noun jobs! Possessive nouns function as adjectives. Possessive nouns maintain some of their "noun-ness" even though they function as adjectives. Their "noun-ness" makes them able to be modified by adjectives. This is original content from If you'd like to teach or learn grammar the easy way—with sentence diagrams—check out our Get Smart Grammar Program.It starts from the very beginning and teaches you grammar and sentence diagramming in easy, bite-size lessons. In the English language, possessive nouns are nouns used in a possessive form. They can also appear as possessive pronouns and plural or singular possessive nouns in certain situations and uses. These nouns are modifying meanings of things to be in possession of someone else. There are a few types of possessive nouns using possessive apostrophes, noun phrases, prepositions, compound possessives, collective nouns, proper nouns, possessive adjectives, determiners, compound nouns, adverbs and other plural forms in the use of possessive nouns. The addition of an apostrophe and "s" allows a noun to be made possessive. A noun is a person, place or thing as identified in a sentence. A possessive noun is a noun used in a sentence to show ownership. In the sentence "John's ball was lost the other day," the phrase "John's ball" indicates possession, and "John's" is the possessive noun. John owns the ball, another noun, that got lost. This simple rule of adding an apostrophe and "s" can be used for most names in a possessive noun use. While there is no one correct way to make a noun possessive, this rule is often helpful in the use of possessive nouns. This grammar rule normally has the last word in what rules you can use in possession. The end of the word or noun is what is used to identify possession normally. Plenty of worksheets are available online with examples of possessive nouns in parts of speech. English grammar can be tough to learn for beginners, but this concept of possessive nouns is easy. Various Forms The simplest type of possessive noun is a singular noun with an apostrophe and an "s" added to the end of the noun, such as in the phrase "John's ball." Plural possessive nouns are a bit trickier. In the sentence "The families' tents were blown over by the wind," the plural version of "family" indicates that multiple families had their tents blown over by the wind. In this instance, a single apostrophe is added at the end of the plural version of the noun, because the plural ends in "s." However, in the sentence "The men's clothes were too small," the plural noun "men" doesn't end in "s." In such cases, an apostrophe and an "s" are added to make the plural. In a case like the name "Jones," you may use "Jones's or Joneses" depending on the use. Examples Some examples of possessive nouns in sentences include: "That is my mother-in-law's cake." "That is my dog's bone." "Those children's toys are cheap." In this article, we will explore what possessive nouns are, how to use them, and provide examples to help you better understand their role in the English language. We will cover the basic rules for forming possessive nouns, including the use of apostrophes and the placement of the possessive form in a sentence. By the end of this article, you will have a solid understanding of how to use possessive nouns effectively in your writing. So, let's get started! Pin Possessive nouns are a type of noun that indicate ownership or possession of something. They are formed by adding an apostrophe and the letter "s" to the end of the noun. For example, "dog's" indicates that the dog owns something. Possessive nouns can be used to show ownership of both concrete and abstract things. For example, "John's idea" and "the sun's rays" are both possessive nouns. It's important to note that possessive pronouns (such as "yours" and "theirs") do not use apostrophes to indicate possession. Instead, they have their own possessive form. For example, "yours" is the possessive form of "you" and "theirs" is the possessive form of "they". When using possessive nouns, it's important to remember that they can be singular or plural. For singular nouns, the apostrophe and "s" are added to the end of the word (e.g. "dog's"). For plural nouns that end in "s", only an apostrophe is added (e.g. "dogs'"). For plural nouns that do not end in "s", the apostrophe and "s" are added (e.g. "children's"). Possessive nouns can also be used to show joint ownership. In this case, the apostrophe and "s" are added to the last noun in the list. For example, "John and Mary's car" indicates that John and Mary jointly own the car. Overall, possessive nouns are a useful tool for indicating ownership and possession in writing. By following the rules for forming possessive nouns, you can ensure that your writing is clear and easy to understand. Possessive nouns are used to show ownership or possession of a person, place, or thing. There are four types of possessive nouns: singular possessive nouns, plural possessive nouns, possessive pronouns, and irregular possessive nouns. In this section, we will discuss the first two types of possessive nouns: singular and plural. Singular Possessive Nouns Singular possessive nouns are used to show that one person, place, or thing owns or possesses something. To form a singular possessive noun, add an apostrophe and an "s" to the end of the noun. For example, "the dog's bone" shows that the bone belongs to one dog. Here are some examples of singular possessive nouns: The teacher's desk John's car The book's cover Plural Possessive Nouns Plural possessive nouns are used to show that more than one person, place, or thing owns or possesses something. To form a plural possessive noun, add an apostrophe after the "s" at the end of the noun. For example, "the dogs' bones" shows that the bones belong to multiple dogs. Here are some examples of plural possessive nouns: The students' desks The cars' tires The books' pages It's important to note that not all plural nouns are formed by adding an "s" at the end. Some plural nouns are irregular and have different forms. For example, "children" is the plural form of "child," and to form a possessive noun, you would add an apostrophe and an "s" to the end: "the children's toys." Understanding the different types of possessive nouns is important for clear and effective communication. By using possessive nouns correctly, you can convey ownership and possession accurately and avoid confusion. Possessive nouns are used to show ownership or possession of a person, place, thing, or idea. They are formed by adding an apostrophe and the letter "s" ('s) to the noun. Here are some examples: The cat's toy John's car The company's logo Possession Possessive nouns are used to show that someone or something owns or possesses another thing. For example, "The book's cover" indicates that the cover belongs to the book. Relationship Possessive nouns can also be used to show a relationship between two things. For example, "The teacher's pet" indicates that the pet belongs to the teacher and that they have a close relationship. Origin Possessive nouns can also be used to show the origin of something. For example, "The city's history" indicates that the history is related to the city. Measurements and Time Possessive nouns can also be used to show measurements or time. For example, "An hour's time" indicates that the time is one hour long, and "A dollar's worth" indicates that something is worth one dollar. In conclusion, possessive nouns are used to show ownership, relationship, origin, measurements, and time. By using them correctly, you can make your writing clearer and more concise. Possessive nouns are used to show ownership or a direct connection between two nouns. They are formed by adding an apostrophe and the letter "s" at the end of the noun. Here are some general rules for using possessive nouns: General Rules For singular nouns, add 's at the end of the noun. Example: "The dog's bone." For plural nouns that do not end in s, add 's at the end of the noun. Example: "The children's toys." For plural nouns that end in s, add only an apostrophe at the end of the noun. Example: "The girls' dresses." For compound nouns, add 's only to the last word. Example: "My mother-in-law's car." Irregular Plurals For irregular plurals that do not end in s, add 's at the end of the noun. Example: "The men's shoes." For irregular plurals that end in s, add only an apostrophe at the end of the noun. Example: "The children's clothes." Compound Nouns For compound nouns that are written as separate words, add 's to the last word. Example: "My sister-in-law's house." For compound nouns that are hyphenated, add 's to the last word. Example: "The editor-in-chief's decision." For compound nouns that are written as one word, add 's to the end of the word. Example: "The bookshelf's height." Nouns Ending in S For nouns that end in s, add only an apostrophe at the end of the noun. Example: "The boss' office." For nouns that end in ss, add only an apostrophe at the end of the noun. Example: "The princess' dress." Remember to use possessive nouns to show ownership or a direct connection between two nouns. Use the rules above to help you form possessive nouns correctly. Using possessive nouns can be tricky, and it's easy to make mistakes. Here are some common mistakes you should avoid: 1. Confusing plural and singular possessive nouns One of the most common mistakes is confusing plural and singular possessive nouns. For example, "the childrens' toys" is incorrect because "childrens" is not a word. The correct way to write it is "the children's toys." Another mistake is using the singular possessive form for plural nouns. For example, "the dogs's leashes" is incorrect because "dogs" is a plural noun. The correct way to write it is "the dogs' leashes." 2. Using apostrophes incorrectly Another common mistake is using apostrophes incorrectly. Remember, apostrophes are used to show possession, not to make a word plural. For example, "banana's" is incorrect because it's not possessive. The correct way to write it is "bananas." Another mistake is using apostrophes with possessive pronouns. For example, "hers' and theirs'" are incorrect because possessive pronouns already show possession. The correct way to write it is "hers and theirs." 3. Forgetting the apostrophe Finally, some people forget to use an apostrophe when they should. For example, "the boys room" is incorrect because it's possessive. The correct way to write it is "the boy's room." Remember, using possessive nouns correctly is important for clear communication. Take the time to double-check your writing to avoid these common mistakes. Frequently Asked Questions Examples of plural possessive nouns Plural possessive nouns are used to show that more than one noun owns or possesses something. For example, "the dogs' toys" indicates that multiple dogs own the toys. Other examples of plural possessive nouns include "the teachers' lounge," "the children's books," and "the parents' meeting." Different types of possessive nouns There are different types of possessive nouns, including singular possessive nouns, plural possessive nouns, and compound possessive nouns. Singular possessive nouns indicate that one person or thing owns or possesses something, such as "the boy's hat." Plural possessive nouns indicate that more than one person or thing owns or possesses something, such as "the girls' backpacks." Compound possessive nouns are formed by combining two or more nouns that own or possess something, such as "the mother-in-law's car." List of common possessive nouns Some common possessive nouns include "the dog's bone," "the cat's whiskers," "the teacher's desk," "the student's notebook," and "the company's logo." Possessive nouns can be used to show ownership or possession of physical objects, as well as abstract concepts like ideas or emotions. What is the possessive case? For example, is it James or James'? Or is it Chris or Chris'? How do possessive case nouns work? How do possessive case pronouns work? These are all great questions when referring to the English language. Each question can get confusing, too. We'll break down possessive case in this comprehensive guide. Possessive case The idea of a possessive case in English talks about a noun, pronoun, or adjective's relationship with other elements present in a sentence. Usually, the possessive case refers to ownership or possession, such as Rick's car or the teacher's opinion. It is the only case where the noun can change its form (e.g.,, Rick to Rick's). This simple change can change a thing, a person, or a place in the possessor or owner. It is important to note that straight possession or ownership is not always defined by a possessive case. Sometimes it gives information about authorship or origin, measurement, source, and description. Apostrophe for PossessivesApostrophe for ContractionsAmy's swim classthey + have = they'veKaren's carare + not = aren'tRobert's vehiclethey + will = they'll A possessive case helps define possession. It applies to nouns, pronouns, and determiners. The expression helps understand that something belongs to someone or shows a relationship between one or more people. The ownership is depicted using the apostrophe and "s" to the noun if it is an animal or person. Sometimes the word "of" is used to define a relation between two or more things. FormDefinitionPossessive CaseA possessive or ktetic form is a word or grammatical construction used to indicate a relationship of possession in a broad sense. This can include strict ownership, or a number of other types of relation to a greater or lesser degree analogous to it. (Wikipedia) Possessive case The possessive case in nouns is updated by adding "s" or an apostrophe to the noun. It is also established that employing an "of" – beginning adjectival prepositional phrase to denote a relationship is often known as the genitive case. The book's content (here, a possessive relationship exists between the noun and another noun.)The content of the book (a prepositional object expresses the relationship.)The student's uniform (a possessive relationship exists between a noun and another noun.)The uniform of the student (a prepositional object expresses the relationship.)Possessive nouns will have 's' when they are singular (book's) and when plural (books') Book's contentBook's contentsBooks' contentBooks' contents It is important to note that if a possessive word in the plural does not conclude with s, it will contain a 's: student's, book's If a possessive noun in the singular or plural ends in "s," the style guide will differ on whether to use an apostrophe or "s." In the English language, either of the possessive markers is correct. Many people tend to choose possessive noun pronunciation. When a possessive noun is compounded with shared possession, the possessive is added to the second-to-last noun. Joseph and Mary's house(the house is owned jointly). Both nouns will have a possessive marker if the compound has a separate possessor. Similarly, the possessive form is used for the final word of the compound when the possessive noun is a hyphenated compound. Sometimes, there is no need to indicate possession if the possessive noun is an animated object, such as a building. Possessive case pronouns When it comes to possessive case pronouns, the pronoun usually replaces then no one when indicating possession or ownership. In English, there are 6 possessive case pronouns. hismineyourshersourstheirs The idea is exclusively John'sThe recommendation is exclusively his (here, John's is replaced by the possessive word his.)My name is Anne, and that bicycle belongs to meThe bicycle is mine. (Anne is replaced with the possessive pronoun mind.)The umbrellas are the FranksThe umbrellas are theirs. (Frank is replaced with theirs as the possessive pronoun.) One important factor is that possessive case pronunciation never contains an apostrophe. It is important to note that the pronoun is never used to replace a non-living item as a possessive pronoun. The possessive case determiners are used to denote who is the owner or possessor of a thing. Example: your, my, his, her, our, their. Just as all determiners possessive determiners come at the beginning of a noun phrase, they are present before any adjectives. Possessive case examples This is my bag.His name is Jonathan.Her first name is Maria.The cat licked its paw happily.We have sold our land.The students thanked their teacher.I like your way of working.Both your children are very responsible.Examples of the possessive caseThis is Astry's car.This is his machine.Jordan's name is written on the bench.His name is written on the rock.Is this your friend?What is your address?This is Robert's house.This is his school.This assignment is Anne's.This is his project.Is she your sister?This is Robin's writing.This is his writing.This is Adam's book.This is her dog.This jewelry is mine.We are at his place now.Bobby lives at his uncle's place.We are coming to your place tonight.Everyone enjoys Florida's climate.Diabetes symptoms should be treated immediately.House's roof should be checked at regular intervals.The laundry's smell can be very annoying.Today's newspaper contains the news.We have a month's work left.How much is the lawyer's fee?Frog's croaking can be heard from a distance.We like the juice's flavor sold here.My father-in-law's advice.Yellowstone National Park's hours.We want a new t-shirt's logo.Cat's toy is lying on the sofa.The winner's edge is all in attitude, not attitude.Nicole's brother is a doctorMary's dog has gone missing for a week nowMy brother's friend will come home this weekendMark and Pete's room is relatively small for all of them.My mother's recipe for chicken curry has always brought my favorite.The chef's new creation was an instant hitThe judge's verdict was not well acceptedNobody was able to find the child's toyThe earth's climate has changed significantly after global warming.His house looks like a royal palaceMy brother in laws cousin got a job in the USA.Are you going to Adam's bachelorette party?I borrowed my uncle's car for the event.The Malayalam movie's rating is very high.Can you fetch me your bottle?The student's project works were submitted according to the roll numbers.The boys' team is very competitive.All the clocks need to be changed.The child's parents kept looking for him for 3 days and still could not find him.Nobody is in a fever of the bank's policies in recent times. In English, a compound noun is often seen as a noun with more than one noun and a plural meaning. There are different ways of using them depending on the compound noun. There is a possibility of combined and separate ownership in these types of sentences. FormExampleSingular nounSarah'sPlural nounWomen's2 or more peopleKim and Adam'sSingular noun ending in "s"James's and James'Plural noun ending in "s"Parent's2+ peopleKim's and Adam's Consider the following examples. There are different sides of the s, but both uses are correct. The cow's shedThe cows' shed The apostrophe will be before the s for a singular possessor. It will be after the s when there multiple processors. Here "cow" and "cows" are the processors. The placement of the apostrophe has nothing to do with the shed. The thing under possession can be either singular or plural. It will not affect the apostrophe. With the noun, the possessive case is typically denoted when preceding with of or by adding 's at the end. The possessive case is mainly used for showing possession. It is applicable for nouns, pronouns, and determiners. The possessive case help determine relationships between a person, place, or thing. However, experts refer to it as a genitive case. It is denoted in either of two ways—singular noun followed by an apostrophe and the letter -s. Apostrophe alone follows a plural noun ending with -s or -es. 1. When denoting occupation, ownership, or possession. For example, "John's car is under repair." The noun to which the apostrophe or the Apple stores and s are attached is the dependent or modifier. 2. When denoting relationships, as in the case the department's head is retiring this month. The same sentence can also be written without using the apostrophe. The department head is retiring this month. The meaning will be slightly different. In the second sentence, the reference is to a person identified as the department head. However, in the genitive form, the department and the person are treated as separate entities. 3. The genitive form can also determine agency or representation. The board's members consulted before the meeting. The member of the board consulted before the meeting. Here the emphasis is slightly different and more accurate. 4. The description is another purpose of the genitive. She admired the jeweler's sheen. Here the sentence talks about the fabric, but the phrase is a description. 5. Relating to a person or place that serves as the subject. The officer's report was complete. In this case, there can be slide distinction in meaning even with similar construction. 6. For describing the role of a person, place, or thing identified as the object of a sentence. The baby's birth was uneventful. 7. The most complex of the lord is the one where a phrase including of is truncated. For example, "The employee was given two weeks" notice. In place of "The employee got notice of two weeks. Most people make the mistake of treating "two weeks" as the modifier for notice. The correct approach is to place the apostrophe correctly to indicate the genitive case. A possessive case indicates ownership or possession. With the correct placement of 's or sometimes only the apostrophe in the form of a noun can change from a simple place, person, or thing to a thing that owns or possesses something. What are the 7 possessive nouns? The 7 possessive nouns are mine, ours, yours, his, hers, theirs, and its. How many possessive cases are there? The possessive case indicates ownership or possession. It is typically divided into seven categories based on the genitive case. How many cases are there in grammar? In English grammar, there are five cases: genitive, nominative, accusative, vocative, and dative. How do we form the possessive case? Singular nouns form possessive cases with the inclusion of apostrophes and s. Plural nouns form possessive cases with only the inclusion of an apostrophe. How do you know if a case is possessive? Along the noun, the possessive case usually gets a proceeding "off" or by adding s or just an apostrophe at the end. In communication, we often need to show that something belongs to someone or something. That's where possessive nouns come in. It's a noun that shows ownership or a relationship between one noun and another. For example, in Lisa's book, the noun Lisa's tells us who owns the book. The apostrophe plays an important role in showing this connection.A possessive noun is a noun that shows ownership or a relationship to something else. It tells us that something belongs to someone or is connected to something.You form a possessive noun by adding an apostrophe, sometimes followed by an s, to the noun.Mona's backpack → the backpack belongs to LisaThe dog's bone → the bone belongs to the dogThe children's toys → the toys belong to the childrenIn each case, the possessive noun tells us who or what owns something.Possessive nouns can refer to both people and things, and they are used regularly in both spoken and written English.Possessive nouns are formed by adding an apostrophe, sometimes followed by s, depending on the structure of the noun. The rules differ slightly for singular and plural nouns.For most singular nouns, add 's to the end.Examples:a girl's notebookthe teacher's penmy brother's carFor regular plural nouns (those ending in s), add only an apostrophe after the final s.Examples:the students' projectsthe dogs' bowlsthe houses' roofsFor irregular plural nouns, add 's just like a singular noun.Examples:the children's toysthe men's jacketsthe women's restroomAdd the apostrophe + s at the end of the entire compound noun.Examples:my father-in-law's opinionthe editor-in-chief's articleIf two people own the same item, add 's to the second noun only.Example: Jack and Emma's apartment (They share one apartment)If each person owns something individually, add 's to both nouns.Example: Jack's and Emma's phones (Each has their own phone)Some nouns form irregular plurals, and their possessive forms don't follow the usual "add only an apostrophe" rule. Instead, you add 's—just like you would with a singular noun.Examples:children → children'sThe children's shoes are muddy.men → men'sThe men's jackets were hanging by the door.women → women'sShe runs a women's health clinic.These are exceptions because they do not end in "s" in their plural form. Always treat them like singular nouns when adding possession.Both possessive nouns and possessive pronouns show ownership, but they do it in different ways and follow different grammar rules.A possessive noun uses an apostrophe—sometimes with an added s—to indicate that something belongs to someone or something. For example, in the sentence "Emma's dress is new," the possessive noun Emma's shows that the dress belongs to Emma.On the other hand, possessive pronouns replace nouns entirely and never use apostrophes. Words like mine, yours, hers, his, ours, and theirs are all possessive pronouns. You might say, "That seat is hers," where hers stands in for a noun phrase like Sarah's seat.It's important not to confuse the two. For instance, "her's" and "their's" are always incorrect because possessive pronouns don't take apostrophes. Apostrophes are only used with possessive nouns, not pronouns.A good rule of thumb: if the word replaces a noun entirely, it likely doesn't need an apostrophe.Possessive NounPossessive PronounMaria's phonehersthe boy's shoeshisthe team's bannertheirsEven native speakers sometimes make mistakes when using possessive nouns. Here are some of the most frequent errors, and how to avoid them:This is one of the most common mix-ups."its" (no apostrophe) is a possessive pronoun.Example: The cat licked its paw."it's" (with apostrophe) is a contraction of "it is" or "it has."Example: It's raining today.(= It is raining today)Tip: If you can replace it with "it is," use it's. If you're showing possession, use its.Don't add apostrophe + s to regular plural nouns.Incorrect: The teachers's loungeCorrect: The teachers' lounge (many teachers)Tip: For plural nouns that end in s, just add an apostrophe at the end.Possessive pronouns never take an apostrophe.Incorrect: That's her's.Correct: That's hers.Leaving out the apostrophe can confuse the reader.Incorrect: The dogs collar was red.Correct: The dog's collar was red.Here are some sentence examples showing different types of possessive nouns in action:The girl's bicycle was parked outside.I borrowed Mark's pen for the exam.The students' projects were displayed in the hallway.All of the dogs' bowls were empty.The children's toys were scattered everywhere.We visited the men's locker room.My sister-in-law's opinion was helpful.The editor-in-chief's decision was final.Liam and Zoe's apartment is downtown. (joint)Liam's and Zoe's keys were lost. (separate)Apostrophes can show possession or contraction, but not both at the same time. Knowing the difference helps you avoid confusing mistakes.Possession means something belongs to someone or something.Example: The dog's leash is on the table. (The leash belongs to the dog.)Contraction means shortening two words into one.Example: It's raining today. (It's = It is)Common confusing pairs include:its (possessive) vs. it's (contraction of it is)your (possessive) vs. you're (contraction of you are)their (possessive) vs. they're (contraction of they are)Tip: If you can expand it into two words, it's a contraction. If it shows ownership, it's possessive.Yes. When a plural noun ends in s, you simply add an apostrophe after the final s. Example:The teachers' lounge refers to a lounge used by multiple teachers. For irregular plurals (like children or men), add 's as you would with a singular noun: children's books, men's shoesBoth of the following are generally accepted:Charles's bookCharles' bookStyle guides vary. If you're following modern American usage, Charles's is preferred. If you're using a more traditional or journalistic style, Charles' may be used.Possessive nouns show ownership and typically come before another noun. Example: Lisa's carPossessive adjectives are pronouns that describe possession. Example: her car, my book, their house. They serve similar functions but are formed and used differently. A possessive noun is a noun that shows ownership or a direct connection, usually identified by 's. Possessive nouns help communicate the relationships between nouns. For example, in the phrase the student's notes, the word student's is a possessive noun, showing that the notes belong to the student. Plural possessive nouns follow different rules depending on their ending letters. Compound and hyphenated possessive nouns follow the same rules as singular and plural possessive nouns. Possessive pronouns can be used in place of possessive nouns. Possessive nouns can get confusing, especially when you're making a noun ending in s possessive or learning to use the correct possessive forms of plural nouns. Below, we explain everything you need to know about possessive nouns and give plenty of examples. The AI writing assistant for anyone with work to do Table of contents What is a possessive noun? Singular possessive nouns Plural possessive nouns Possessive pronouns Irregular possessive nouns Possessive noun rules Common mistakes with possessive nouns Possessive nouns FAQs What is a possessive noun? Possessive nouns are nouns that show ownership or a direct connection. Typically, singular possessive nouns use an apostrophe (') and the letter s at the end of the word to take the possessive form. Almost any noun can become possessive, even abstract nouns. dog -> dog's Maria -> Maria's The Empire State Building -> The Empire State Building's Pay close attention to that apostrophe: In English, we also add s to the ends of words to make them plural. So the apostrophe can determine whether a noun is possessive or plural, as with boys versus boy's. Here, boys means more than one boy (plural), but boy's means one boy has ownership over something (singular possessive). Possessive nouns are followed by the object of the possessive. In this possessive example, the desk is the thing that Kali owns because it comes directly after the possessive noun: There are three books on Kali's desk. In other words, Kali owns the desk. The object of the possessive is the first noun after the possessive noun, usually immediately afterward. However, you can still include some adjectives to describe the object of the possessive. Kali's messy desk has been cluttered for as long as I've known her. Possessive nouns can also show a relationship between two people or the relationship between a person and a place or an idea. For example, Sally's husband and Tahiv's cosmic theory are also phrases that contain possessive nouns. What is the possessive case? The possessive case is used to show ownership of something (Sanjay's phone) or a direct connection to something (Sanjay's sister). Let's look at some examples of possessives in a sentence. Aiguo grabbed his hat from Tony's car. There are two possessives in this sentence. The possessive adjective his, which reflects Aiguo, shows ownership of the hat. The possessive noun Tony's, identified by the 's, shows ownership of the car. What is a possessive adjective? Like possessive nouns, possessive adjectives show ownership or a direct connection. They correspond to English pronouns, matching person, gender, and number. Additionally, the possessive adjective whose acts as the possessive form of the relative pronoun who, and it can introduce relative phrases and clauses. Unlike the possessive nouns below, possessive adjectives do not use apostrophes. This is especially pertinent for the possessive adjective its, which is notoriously confused with the contraction it's, meaning "it is." Prepositional alternatives You can also show ownership or connection without possessive nouns by using the preposition of. Shaima revered the desk of Kali. In this case, the owner (Kali) is the object of a prepositional phrase with of, and the thing that is owned (the desk) comes first. You do not need an apostrophe or the letter s when using this construction. When a sentence is constructed this way, it generally highlights the object rather than its owner. In the example above, positioning the desk as the focal point underscores Shaima's reverence for it. This construction is often found in academic and formal contexts, as it also conveys a formal tone. The four types of possessive nouns There are four types of possessive nouns: Singular possessive nouns: These are standard singular nouns that become possessive by adding an apostrophe and the letter s. Example: We rode in Javier's car. Plural possessive nouns: These are plural nouns that end in s. They are made plural by adding an apostrophe after the s. Example: It was the students' last day. Possessive pronouns: Like all other pronouns, these stand in for possessive nouns and follow antecedents to make sentences flow more easily. Example: Derek offered Brenda a soda, which was in his refrigerator. Irregular possessive nouns: Irregular nouns, like teeth, become irregular possessive nouns by following rules unlike those for regular nouns. Example: The heroes' capes are yellow. Read on to learn more about each type of possessive noun. Singular possessive nouns Singular possessive nouns are regular nouns that are made possessive by adding an 's. The most basic form of possessive nouns is the singular possessive noun. The formula for singular possessive nouns is: [singular noun] + ['s] Nouns that end in s, especially proper nouns, can cause a lot of confusion. However, it's OK to add an 's after an s, as long as the noun is singular (the boss's chair). Keep in mind that this includes both mass nouns and collective nouns. Mass nouns are nouns that are uncountable and don't have a plural form, like sand or money. Collective nouns are singular nouns that represent multiple things, like team or family. Singular possessive noun examples Carlos's school is three miles away. The soccer team's captain was injured in a game. Studying economics helped me understand money's value. I adjusted the dog's collar. Shira and Kyle planned Amit's birthday party. Plural possessive nouns Plural possessive nouns are plural nouns that end in s. Plural nouns are more challenging to make possessive because they already have an s at the end. As you can see below, the proper construction adds only an apostrophe to the end. The formula for plural possessive nouns is: [plural noun] + ['] However, proper nouns and general nouns that end in s, such as Carlos or class, still use 's. Plural possessive noun examples The glasses are under the bottles' shelf. It was perfect weather for the teams' tournament. You'll need at least three years' experience for this role. The monkeys' calls rang out through the canopy. Her company designed the books' covers. Possessive pronouns Possessive pronouns are the noun form of pronouns that show possession. Like regular pronouns, they are used instead of other nouns to avoid repetition. Unlike other possessive nouns, possessive pronouns do not come before the object of the possessive. Usually, what a pronoun refers to is mentioned earlier, and you use the possessive pronoun instead of repeating the original word. Be careful to not confuse possessive pronouns with the possessive adjectives mentioned above. Possessive pronouns act as nouns, not adjectives. You must use them as nouns. Mine computer has caused me nothing but trouble. That computer of mine has caused me nothing but trouble. Possessive pronouns examples I don't have a calculator. Can I borrow yours? I wish I had hair like hers. Sarah's parking spot is closer than mine. Their house isn't as nice as ours. Our vacation is in September. When is theirs? Irregular possessive nouns Not all nouns take a plural form by adding s. Irregular plural nouns, like children or teeth, each have unique plural forms. The possessive form of irregular plural nouns depends on whether or not they already end in an s. If the irregular plural noun has an s at the end, add only an apostrophe. Example: knives' handles If the irregular plural noun does not have an s at the end, add both an apostrophe and an s. Example: teeth's reflection Irregular possessive noun examples We followed them back to the geese's flock. (singular: goose's flock) That's the site of the wolves' den. (singular: wolf's den) We enjoyed a heroes' feast. (singular: hero's feast) The band played children's music. (singular: child's music) The tomatoes' color was vibrant. (singular: tomato's color) Possessive noun rules Possessive nouns follow consistent rules. These rules exist to make possessive nouns' meanings clear, as they can become muddled when writers make mistakes. This is especially true in sentences that contain compound possessives or hyphenated possessive nouns. Want to make sure you're using possessive nouns correctly in your writing? Grammarly can save you from grammar and punctuation mistakes. It even checks your spelling and proofreads your text, so your work is polished wherever you write. 1 How to form possessives with two or more nouns Forming a possessive with two or more nouns depends on whether the nouns relate to the same or different things. These are known as compound possessives. What if more than one person owns something? If multiple nouns own or connect to the same object, only the last one in the series is possessive. We watched Karlie and Jessie's band play. That's the soccer team and field hockey team's field. What if two or more nouns each own different versions of something? In this case, make each separate noun possessive. We visited the science teacher's and art teacher's rooms. America's and Canada's political policies are aligned. Julie's and Juanita's cats are black. Notice how, in these examples, the objects of the possessive are also plural (rooms, policies, cats) because there's more than one. 2 How to form possessives with hyphenated and compound nouns Hyphenated and compound nouns can seem tricky, but they're actually pretty simple. If they're singular, just add an apostrophe and an s to the final word. They raised the trash can's lid. I love my mother-in-law's cooking. If the nouns are plural with a regular s at the end, add only an apostrophe to the final word. He's always reading news blogs' articles. X-rays' images are a critical diagnostic tool. However, if the word is plural without an s at the end, add both an apostrophe and an s to the final word. We both examined our mothers-in-law's behaviors. These are the academically advanced children's textbooks. 3 How to add emphasis with the adjective own Use the adjective own before the object of the possessive to add a special emphasis. This is useful when you want to draw attention to the ownership or connection to communicate your meaning more effectively. Abel's own brother betrayed him! Napoleon's own mansion is now a national museum. I was so proud that my own team showed up for my award. After moving in, they built their own garden. Can you believe she ratted out her own sister? Common mistakes with possessive nouns Familiarizing yourself with common mistakes writers make with possessive nouns can help you avoid them in your own writing. Here are a few examples of common possessive noun mistakes: Its vs. it's Contrary to other possessive pronouns, the possessive form of it is its. This is because it's (with the apostrophe) is a contraction for it is. Possessive: The duck flapped its wings. Contraction: I should go. It's getting late. Singular vs. plural possessives Singular possessive nouns end with an apostrophe plus s. Plural possessive nouns that end in s end with an apostrophe—with these, the apostrophe goes after the s. Singular: The boy's shirt was red. Plural: The boys' shirts were red. Overuse of possessive forms You can also show possession with the possessive form of. For example, you might write of the dog instead of dog's. This is not grammatically incorrect, but it can be awkward, especially when used excessively. Possessive nouns FAQs What are possessive nouns? Possessive nouns are used to show ownership or a direct connection. They are commonly recognized by the apostrophe and letter s at the end, as in Charlotte's Web or the tree's branches. What are the four types of possessive nouns? There are four kinds of possessive nouns: singular possessive nouns (one dog's bone), plural possessive nouns (many dogs' bones), possessive pronouns (bones of theirs), and irregular possessive nouns (the wolves' bones). When should you use possessive nouns? Use possessive nouns to communicate the relationship between two nouns, such as a person and an item they own, two people, or a person and an idea. Example: Emma's book is on the table. Can you use possessive nouns with inanimate objects? Possessive nouns can be used with inanimate objects, especially to indicate a direct connection or ownership. However, in some formal or academic writing, it might be preferable to use prepositional phrases like the engine of the car. Examples: The car's engine or The book's cover. How do you use possessives with joint ownership? If two or more nouns jointly own something, only the final noun should be in the possessive form. Example: Jake and Emily's house (they share one house). If each noun owns something separately, make each noun possessive: Jake's and Emily's houses (two different houses). Your writing, at its best.Works on all your favorite websitesImprove your writing with a Grammarly Free accountWrite without mistakesGenerate text with AI promptsLearn your writing toneGet Grammarly It's freeRelated Articles Understanding possessive nouns is essential for mastering English grammar. These nouns help indicate ownership or relationships between people and things. Many learners struggle with using possessives correctly, leading to confusion in writing and speech. This blog post will guide you through the rules, usage, and common mistakes related to possessive nouns, ensuring a strong grasp of the concept.Possessive nouns show that something belongs to someone or something. They help express relationships and ownership in a sentence.A possessive noun is a noun that shows ownership or possession by adding an apostrophe ('') or an apostrophe with "s" ('s).Different types of possessive nouns, along with detailed explanations and examples.1. Singular Possessive NounsA singular possessive noun shows that one person, place, or thing owns something. To form a singular possessive noun, add 's to the singular noun. Rule: Singular noun + 'sAisha's book (The book belongs to Aisha.)The dog's bone (The bone belongs to the dog.)The teacher's desk (The desk belongs to the teacher.)2. Plural Possessive Nouns (Ending in 's')A plural possessive noun shows that something belongs to more than one person, place, or thing. If the plural noun already ends in s, just add an apostrophe ('') at the end. Rule: Plural noun (ending in s) + 'The teachers' lounge (The lounge belongs to multiple teachers.)The students' books (The books belong to multiple students.)The girls' dresses (The dresses belong to multiple girls.)3. Plural Possessive Nouns (Not Ending in 's')Some plural nouns do not end in "s" (irregular plural nouns like children, men, women). In these cases, add 's just like singular nouns. Rule: Irregular plural noun + 'sThe children's toys (The toys belong to the children.)The men's shoes (The shoes belong to the men.)The women's handbags (The handbags belong to the women.)4. Compound Possessive NounsA compound noun is a noun made of two or more words (e.g., mother-in-law, editor-in-chief). To show possession, add 's to the last word. Rule: Compound noun + 's (on the last word)My father-in-law's car (The car belongs to my father-in