

Two forms of the possessive

The possessive has two forms:

my / mine

your / yours

his / his

their / theirs

our / ours

The forms my, your, his, their and our are called possessive adjectives. They are used to modify nouns.

That is my car.

His mother bought him a nice present.

I went to their place yesterday.

The forms mine, yours, his, theirs and ours are called possessive pronouns. They can be the subject or complement of a verb.

Compare:

This is my pen. OR This pen is mine. (NOT This pen is my.) (NOT This is mine pen.)

My dog is very smart. What about yours? (NOT What about your?)

This land is ours. OR This is our land. (NOT This land is our.) (NOT This is ours land.)

Double possessive

We cannot use an article and a possessive together. We cannot, for example, say 'He is a my friend'. Instead we say 'He is a friend of mine'. Here the structure 'a friend of mine' is an example of what is called the 'double possessive'.

A cousin of mine got into the civil service last year. (NOT A my cousin ...)

He got the President's award for a novel of his.

When used with that, this, these and those the double possessive may express slight contempt or indignation.

Two forms of the possessive

Those dirty fingers of yours have stained my walls.

That boy of yours has broken my window again.

That cat of yours has drank up all the milk.