

How and when do we use the Possessive Forms?

Possessive forms are used in order to show a **relationship between nouns**. In most cases, **ownership** is expressed. The advantage of using this grammatical form is that it is **shorter** than other alternatives. For example, instead of saying „the car which belongs to my uncle“ you can quickly say „my uncle's car“.

The form which was just used, is called the **„s-Genitive“**. However, there is another possessive form called the **„of-phrase“**. Now we will break down the main differences between them.



The s-Genitive

We use it if we want to know to **whom** something belongs.
This includes **people** and **animals**.

The noun we refer to is always placed **after** the referring one. We add either an **„s“** or **„ ' “** to the referring noun and place the other one behind it.

Example: *Steve's car*

Below, you can see the rules in detail.



The of-Phrase

We use it if we want to know to **what** something belongs.
This includes **inanimate objects**.

The noun we refer to is always placed **before** the referring one. Between them, we place an **„of“**.

Example: *the colour of the hat*

How to use the s-Genitive

owner + s-Genitive + owned item

kind of noun	addition	example
singular	's	my mother's friend
name ending with „s“/„x“	'/s	Max' sister James's pen
plural ending with "s"	,	the students' homework
plural not ending with „s“	's	the children's book

How to use the of-Phrase

of-phrase = owned item + of + owner

Example:

the end of the film



the dog's ball



the dogs' ball



Further usage of the s-Genitive

You can use pronouns such as **anyone, everybody, someone** etc. instead of a noun. You can also **leave out** the noun.
Example: „Whose rubber is this?“ - „It's Maria's (rubber).“

It can also indicate a **location**.
Example: „I'll have dinner at the Millers' (house).“

Time can be specified, as well.
Example: „I skipped yesterday's class.“



Further usage of the of-Phrase

The of-Phrase can be used for **measurements and quantities**.
Example: *two bottles of water, a liter of juice, a slice of pizza*

Moreover, you can use it for specific **contexts and sayings**.
Example: *a postcard of Berlin, the month of July, the role of the teacher*

Please keep in mind that...

... when you would usually use the of-phrase, but a **connection to people** is obvious, the **s-Genitive** should be used. Example: *Spain's economy, the government's decision*

...you use the **of-genitive** for people in case they are further specified in a **subclause**.

Example: *She is the Mom of the student which has straight A's.*

...both forms are **combined** when using **indefinite articles, numerals and other determiners**.

Example: *a friend of Tim's* instead of *Tim's friend*

Exercises

- ① Use the given words in brackets to form the correct possessive form!

Tom talks to his mother about his plans tonight. „Mom, this evening, my friends and I would like to watch the soccer game at _____ (the Spencers, house). We want to try out

_____ (Phil, new TV).“ „Who is Phil?“ „_____ (a friend,

Alex).“ „Alright. Whose father will take you home again?“ „_____ (John).“ „So, Darling, would you like to

bring _____ (a bag, chips) and _____ (two bottles,

coke) then?“ „Yeah, why not. I hope this time it will go much better than _____

(last week, game).“ „Who is even playing tonight?“

„_____ (Germany, team) and _____ (Sweden, team). Oh, no!

I'm late! See you, Mom.“

- ② Imagine you are a radio host commenting on a soccer game. Write down what you would say. Don't forget to use as many different kinds of possessives as you can! Feel free to use your dictionary. Afterwards, present your text in front of the class.

- Here is some vocabulary you might want to use:
defense, offense, midfield
kickoff, corner kick, penalty kick, throw-in
foul, pass, referee