

Possessives and demonstratives

I.

164 Possessives

A Introduction

In this conversation four people are discussing a date for a meeting.

- Emma: *What about Friday?*
 Luke: *I'll just look in my diary.*
 Emma: *Have you got your diary, Tina?*
 Tina: *I think so.*
 Jason: *I haven't got mine with me.*
 Luke: *I can't come on Friday. We're giving a party for one of our neighbours. It's her birthday.*

We use possessives to express a connection, often the fact that someone has something or that something belongs to someone. *My diary* is the diary that belongs to me. The possessive form of a noun has the same meaning.

Luke's diary *our neighbour's birthday*

There are possessive determiners (*my, your, etc*) and possessive pronouns (*mine, yours, etc*). Possessive determiners come before a noun.
our neighbour *her birthday* *some of your friends*
my diary (NOT *the-diary-of-me* OR *the-my-diary*)

Possessive determiners are sometimes called 'possessive adjectives'.

We leave out the noun when it is clear from the context what we mean, for example when the noun has just been mentioned. We use a possessive pronoun (e.g. *mine*) instead of a possessive determiner + noun (e.g. *my diary*).

- I'll just look in my diary. ~ I haven't got mine with me.*
I took Lisa in my car because hers had broken down.
I've got my opinion, and I'm sure you've got yours.

A possessive pronoun can be a complement.
Is this diary yours? ~ No, I think it's Luke's.
 (NOT *Is this diary to you?* OR *Is this diary of you?*)

B Form

	Determiners		Pronouns	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
First person	<i>my pen</i>	<i>our house</i>	<i>mine</i>	<i>ours</i>
Second person	<i>your number</i>	<i>your coats</i>	<i>yours</i>	<i>yours</i>
Third person	<i>his father</i> <i>her decision</i> <i>its location</i>	<i>their attitude</i>	<i>his</i> <i>hers</i>	<i>theirs</i>

His is male, and *her* is female.

- Luke's father* → *his father*
Emma's father → *her father*

Its refers to something not human or to a place or an organization.

- the roof of the car* → *its roof*
the country's exports → *its exports*

Their is the plural of *his, her, and its*.

- Luke and Emma's father* → *their father*
the interests of the two countries → *their interests*

His can be either a determiner or a pronoun.

- Has James got his mobile?*
I've got my mobile, but James hasn't got his.

Its is a determiner but not a pronoun.

- The restaurant is famous for its good food.*

We avoid using *its* without a following noun.

- The east-coast route has its advantages, and the west-coast route has its advantages too.* (NOT *the-west-coast-route-has-its-too.*)

We do not use an apostrophe with a possessive. (NOT *your's*).

Note that *it's* is a short form of *it is* or *it has*.

C Possessives with parts of the body

We normally use a possessive with people's heads, arms, legs, etc, and their clothes, even if it is clear whose we mean.

- What's the matter? ~ I've hurt my back.* (NOT *I've hurt the back.*)
We all got out of the car to stretch our legs.
He just stood there with his hands in his pockets.

But we usually use *the* in this pattern where a person is the object.

	Verb	Person	Prepositional phrase
<i>The stone</i>	<i>hit</i>	<i>the policeman</i>	<i>on the head.</i>
<i>Someone</i>	<i>pushed</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>in the back.</i>
<i>Tom</i>	<i>took</i>	<i>Karen</i>	<i>by the arm.</i>

We use *the* in the equivalent passive sentences.

- A policeman was hit on the head.*

Compare these examples.

- The stone hit him on the head.*
He had a bandage round his head.

A person is the object (*him*) only in the first example.

D A friend of mine

My friend means a definite person, the person I am friends with. To talk about a person I am friends with, we say *one of my friends* or *a friend of mine*.

	Definite	Indefinite
Singular	<i>my friend</i>	<i>one of my friends</i> / <i>a friend of mine</i>
Plural	<i>my friends</i>	<i>some of my friends</i> / <i>some friends of mine</i>

Here are some examples of this of-structure.

- I like The Strokes. I'm a fan of theirs.*
My brother has just seen an old girlfriend of his.
Didn't you borrow some CDs of mine?
I don't think my private life is any business of yours.

We can also use the possessive form of names and other nouns in the of-structure.

- We met a cousin of Nicola's.*
These are just some papers of my flatmate's.

NOTE

In informal speech we can use *this, that, these, or those*.
I've been thinking about that suggestion of yours.

E Own

We can use *own* after a possessive determiner.

- I'd love to have my own flat.*
Students are expected to contribute their own ideas.
My own means 'belonging to me and not to anyone else'.

There is also a structure with *of*.

- I'd love a flat of my own.*
 (NOT *an-own-flat*)

Sometimes *own* expresses the idea of doing something yourself without help.

- You'll have to make your own bed.*
 (= You'll have to make your bed yourself.)

We can miss out the noun if the meaning is clear without it.

- The ideas should be your own.*

On your own and *by yourself* mean 'alone'.

- I don't want to walk home on my own/by myself.*

NOTE

Very own is more emphatic.
I never expected a little village to have its very own zoo.
Hannah's dream was to have a pony of her very own.

165 Demonstratives

A In this conversation Debbie is choosing a birthday gift for her mother.

- Debbie: *I just want to look at these jugs. I might buy one for my mother.*
 Lauren: *Those glass ones are nice.*
 Debbie: *Yes, this one looks the sort of thing she might like.*
 Lauren: *What about this?*
 Debbie: *I don't like that so much.*



We use demonstratives to 'point to' something in the situation. *This* and *these* refer to something near the speaker. *That* and *those* refer to things further away. *This* and *that* are singular. *These* and *those* are plural.

	Near	Further away
Singular	<i>this colour</i>	<i>that car</i>
Plural	<i>these flowers</i>	<i>those hills</i>

We also use *this* and *that* with uncountable nouns as well as singular ones.

- this coffee* *that music*

For uncountable nouns, > 137.

We leave out the noun when it is clear from the context what we mean. When we do this we use a pronoun.

- Determiner: *What about this jug?* *I like those pictures.*
 Pronoun: *What about this?* *I like those.*