

## WHAT IS A POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE?

A **POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE** is a word that describes a noun by showing who possesses that noun. 1

Whose house is that? It's *my* house.

*My* shows who possesses the noun *house*. The possessor is "me." The object possessed is *house*.

### IN ENGLISH

Like subject pronouns, possessive adjectives are identified according to the person they represent (see p. 32).

#### SINGULAR POSSESSOR

1 <sup>ST</sup> PERSON	my	10
2 <sup>ND</sup> PERSON	your	
3 <sup>RD</sup> PERSON	MASCULINE his	
	FEMININE her	
	NEUTER its	

#### PLURAL POSSESSOR

1 <sup>ST</sup> PERSON	our
2 <sup>ND</sup> PERSON	your
3 <sup>RD</sup> PERSON	their

A possessive adjective changes to identify the possessor, regardless of the objects possessed. 20

Is that John's house? Yes, it is *his* house.

Is that Mary's house? Yes, it is *her* house.

Although the object possessed is the same (*house*), different possessive adjectives (*his* and *her*) are used because the possessors are different (*John* and *Mary*).

Is that John's house? Yes, it is *his* house.

Are those John's keys? Yes, they are *his* keys.

Although the objects possessed are different (*house* and *keys*), the same possessive adjective (*his*) is used because the possessor is the same (*John*). 30

### IN SPANISH

Like English, a Spanish possessive adjective changes to identify the possessor, but unlike English it also agrees, like all Spanish adjectives, in gender and number with the noun possessed.

For example, in the phrase **nuestro hermano** (*our brother*) the possessor (*our*) is indicated by the first letters of the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural possessive adjective **nuestr-**, and the gender and number of the noun possessed, **hermano** (*brother*), which is masculine singular, is reflected in the masculine singular ending **-o**. Let us see what happens when we change *our brother* to *our sister*.

We love **our** sister.

Queremos a **nuestra** hermana.

┌───┐  
 1<sup>st</sup> pers. pl.    fem. sing. ending  
 possessor

The first letters **nuestr-** remain the same because the possessor is still the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural, but the ending changes to **-a** to agree with **hermana** (*sister*) which is feminine singular.

Spanish has two sets of possessive adjectives: the **STRESSED POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES** and the **UNSTRESSED POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES**. The short, unstressed forms are the most common and will be considered first.

### SPANISH UNSTRESSED POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES

**My, your** (*tú, usted, ustedes* forms), **his, her, their**

In Spanish, each of the above possessive adjectives has two forms, a singular and a plural form. You will choose the one that agrees with the number of the noun possessed.

To choose the correct form of the possessive adjective:

1. Indicate the possessor. This is shown by the first two letters of the possessive adjective.

<i>my</i>	<b>mi</b>
<i>your [tú form]</i>	<b>tu</b>
<i>his</i>	}
<i>her</i>	
<i>your [usted form]</i>	
<i>their</i>	
<i>your [ustedes form]</i>	
	<b>su</b>

2. Choose the ending according to the number of the noun possessed.

- noun possessed is singular → the form of the possessive adjective does not change

Ana lee **mi** libro.                      Ana reads **my** book.

└───┘  
noun possessed singular

Ana lee **tu** libro.                      Ana reads **your** book.

Ana lee **su** libro.                      Ana reads **her (his, your, their)** book.

- noun possessed is plural → add -s to the possessive adjective

Ana lee <b>mis</b> libros.	<i>Ana reads <b>my</b> books.</i>
noun possessed   plural	
Ana lee <b>tus</b> libros.	<i>Ana reads <b>your</b> books.</i>
Ana lee <b>sus</b> libros.	<i>Ana reads <b>her (his, your, their)</b> books.</i>

Because the possessive adjective **su** has many meanings, Spanish speakers often replace it with the phrase: noun + **de** + pronoun.

su libro	{	el libro <b>de él</b>	<i><b>his</b> book</i>
		el libro <b>de ella</b>	<i><b>her</b> book</i>
		el libro <b>de Ud.</b>	<i><b>your</b> book</i>
		el libro <b>de ellos</b>	<i><b>their</b> book</i>
		el libro <b>de ellas</b>	<i><b>their</b> book</i>
		el libro <b>de Uds.</b>	<i><b>your</b> book</i>

You will have to rely on context to establish the English equivalent of the possessive adjectives **su** and **sus**.

Let us apply the above steps to examples:

*I am looking for **my** car.*

1. POSSESSOR: *my* → 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing. → **mi**
2. NUMBER NOUN POSSESSED: **coche** (*car*) → singular
3. SELECTION: **mi**

Busco **mi** coche.

*I am looking for **my** keys.*

1. POSSESSOR: *my* → 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing. → **mi**
2. NUMBER NOUN POSSESSED: **llaves** (*keys*) → plural
3. SELECTION: **mi-** + **-s**

Busco **mis** llaves.

### **Our, your** (vosotros form)

In Spanish, the two possessive adjectives above have four forms, a masculine singular, a feminine singular, a masculine plural, and a feminine plural. You will choose the one that agrees with the gender and number of the noun possessed.

To choose the correct form of the possessive adjective:

1. Indicate the possessor. This is shown by the first letters of the possessive adjective.

<i>our</i>	<b>nuestr-</b>
<i>your</i> [vosotros form]	<b>vuestr-</b>

2. Choose the ending according to the gender and number of the noun possessed.

- noun possessed is masculine singular → add -o

Ana lee **nuestro** libro. *Ana reads **our** book.*

noun possessed masc. sing.

Ana lee **vuestro** libro. *Ana reads **your** book.*

- noun possessed is feminine singular → add -a

Ana lee **nuestra** revista. *Ana reads **our** magazine.*

noun possessed fem. sing.

Ana lee **vuestra** revista. *Ana reads **your** magazine.*

- noun possessed is masculine plural → add -os

Ana lee **nuestros** libros. *Ana reads **our** books.*

noun possessed masc. pl.

Ana lee **vuestros** libros. *Ana reads **your** books.*

- noun possessed is feminine plural → add -as

Ana lee **nuestras** revistas. *Ana reads **our** magazines.*

noun possessed fem. pl.

Ana lee **vuestras** revistas. *Ana reads **your** magazines.*

Let us apply the above steps to examples:

*We are looking for **our** car.*

1. POSSESSOR: *our* → 1<sup>st</sup> pers. pl. → **nuestr-**

2. GENDER & NUMBER NOUN POSSESSED: **coche** (*car*) → masc. sing.

3. SELECTION: **nuestr-** + -o

Buscamos **nuestro** coche.

*We are looking for **our** keys.*

1. POSSESSOR: *our* → 1<sup>st</sup> pers. pl. → **nuestr-**

2. GENDER & NUMBER NOUN POSSESSED: **llaves** (*keys*) → fem. pl.

3. SELECTION: **nuestr-** + -as

Buscamos **nuestras** llaves.

Notice that unstressed possessive adjectives are placed before the noun they modify.

**CAREFUL** — Make sure that the ending of possessive adjectives agrees with the noun modified and not with the possessor.

### SPANISH STRESSED POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES

Spanish also has another set of possessive adjectives called **STRESSED POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES**. They are used to add emphasis to the possessor and correspond to the English “of mine,” “of yours,” etc.

Where is that *dress of mine*?  
instead of *my dress*

Where are those *books of yours*?  
instead of *your books*

The use of these stressed forms is more common in Spanish than in English.

The stressed possessive adjectives have four forms, a masculine singular, a feminine singular, a masculine plural, and a feminine plural. You will choose the one that agrees with the gender and number of the noun possessed.

To choose the correct stressed possessive adjective:

1. Indicate the possessor. This is shown by the first letters of the possessive adjective.

mine, of mine	<b>mí-</b>
your, of yours [tú form]	<b>tuy-</b>
his, of his	} <b>suy-</b>
her, of hers	
your, of yours [usted form]	
our, of ours	<b>nuestr-</b>
your, of yours [vosotros form]	<b>vuestr-</b>
their, of theirs	} <b>suy-</b>
your, of yours [ustedes form]	

2. Choose the ending according to the gender and number of the noun possessed.

- noun possessed is masculine singular → add -o

Ana lee un libro **mío**.  
noun possessed masc. sing.  
*Ana is reading a book of mine.*

- noun possessed is feminine singular → add -a

Ana lee una revista **mía**.  
noun possessed fem. sing.  
*Ana is reading a magazine of mine.*

- noun possessed is masculine plural → add -os

Ana lee unos libros **míos**.  
noun possessed masc. pl.  
*Ana is reading some books of mine.*

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- noun possessed is feminine plural → add **-as**

Ana lee unas revistas **mías**.

noun possessed fem. pl.

Ana is reading some magazines **of mine**.

Let us apply the above steps to examples:

*My car is in the garage.*

- 1. POSSESSOR: *my* → 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing. → **mí-**
- 2. GENDER & NUMBER NOUN POSSESSED: **coche** (*car*) → masc. sing.
- 3. SELECTION: **mí-** + **-o**

El coche **mío** está en el garaje.

*These chairs of yours are very comfortable.*

- 1. POSSESSOR: *of yours* → 2<sup>nd</sup> pers. sing. → **tuy-**
- 2. GENDER & NUMBER NOUN POSSESSED: **sillas** (*chairs*) → fem. pl.
- 3. SELECTION: **tuy-** + **-as**

Estas sillas **tuyas** son muy cómodas.

Notice that stressed possessive adjectives are placed after the noun they modify.

SUMMARY

Here are two charts you can use as a reference.

POSSESSOR	UNSTRESSED POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES		
	NOUN POSSESSED		
		SINGULAR	PLURAL
<i>my</i>	MASC. FEM.	<b>mi</b>	<b>mis</b>
<i>your</i> [tú form]	MASC. FEM.	<b>tu</b>	<b>tus</b>
<i>his, her, your</i> [usted form]	MASC. FEM.	<b>su</b>	<b>sus</b>
<i>our</i>	MASC. FEM.	<b>nuestro nuestra</b>	<b>nuestros nuestras</b>
<i>your</i> [vosotros form]	MASC. FEM.	<b>vuestro vuestra</b>	<b>vuestros vuestras</b>
<i>their, your</i> [ustedes form]	MASC. FEM.	<b>su</b>	<b>sus</b>

POSSESSOR	STRESSED POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES		
	NOUN POSSESSED		
		SINGULAR	PLURAL
<i>my, of mine</i>	MASC. FEM.	<b>mío</b> <b>mía</b>	<b>míos</b> <b>mías</b>
<i>your [tú form]</i>	MASC. FEM.	<b>tuyo</b> <b>tuya</b>	<b>tuyos</b> <b>tuyas</b>
<i>his, her, your [usted form]</i>	MASC. FEM.	<b>suyo</b> <b>suya</b>	<b>suyos</b> <b>suyas</b>
<i>our</i>	MASC. FEM.	<b>nuestro</b> <b>nuestra</b>	<b>nuestros</b> <b>nuestras</b>
<i>your [vosotros form]</i>	MASC. FEM.	<b>vuestro</b> <b>vuestra</b>	<b>vuestros</b> <b>vuestras</b>
<i>their, your [ustedes form]</i>	MASC. FEM.	<b>suyo</b> <b>suya</b>	<b>suyos</b> <b>suyas</b>

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## STUDY TIPS — POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES

**Pattern** (see *Tips for Learning Word Forms*, p. 5)

**Flashcards**

1. Create one card for each of the persons (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> sing. and pl.) with an example of the different forms of the unstressed possessive adjectives.

**mi** coche, **mis** coches

**mi** casa, **mis** casas

**tu** coche, **tus** coches

**tu** casa, **tus** casas

**nuestro** coche, **nuestros** coches

**nuestra** casa, **nuestras** casas

*my* car, *my* cars

*my* house, *my* houses

*your* car, *your* cars

*your* house, *your* houses

*our* car, *our* cars

*our* house, *our* houses

2. On the card for the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, to reinforce the fact that *his*, *her*, *your*, and *their* can be either **su** or **sus** and that possessive adjectives agree with the thing possessed and not with the possessor, write short Spanish sentences with 3<sup>rd</sup> person possessive adjectives modifying masculine and feminine nouns in the singular and plural.

Juan vende **su** libro.

Ana vende **su** libro.

Juan vende **su** casa.

Ana vende **su** casa.

Juan vende **sus** libros.

Ana vende **sus** libros.

Juan vende **sus** casas.

Ana vende **sus** casas.

*John sells his (her, your, their) book.*

*Ana sells his (her, your, their) book.*

*John sells his (her, your, their) house.*

*Ana sells his (her, your, their) house.*

*John sells his (her, your, their) books.*

*Ana sells his (her, your, their) books.*

*John sells his (her, your, their) houses.*

*Ana sells his (her, your, their) houses.*

3. Repeat steps No. 1 and 2 above with the stressed possessive adjectives.

**Practice**

1. Sort out your noun flashcards and select a few masculine and feminine nouns.

- Look at the Spanish side and go through the cards writing down or saying out loud the noun preceded by the correct forms of the unstressed possessive adjectives.

el cuarto	<i>room</i>
mi cuarto, tu cuarto, su cuarto, nuestro cuarto, vuestro cuarto	
la casa	<i>house</i>
mi casa, tu casa, su casa, nuestra casa, vuestra casa	
los libros	<i>books</i>
mis libros, tus libros, sus libros, nuestros libros, vuestros libros	

- Look at the Spanish side and go through the cards writing down or saying out loud the noun with the correct forms of the stressed possessive adjectives.

el cuarto	<i>room</i>
el cuarto mío, el cuarto tuyo, el cuarto suyo, el cuarto nuestro, el cuarto vuestro	

2. Use these noun cards to practice the forms for the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sing. and pl. (*his, her, your, their*) going from English to Spanish.

<i>his room, her room, your room, their room</i>	<b>su</b> cuarto
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