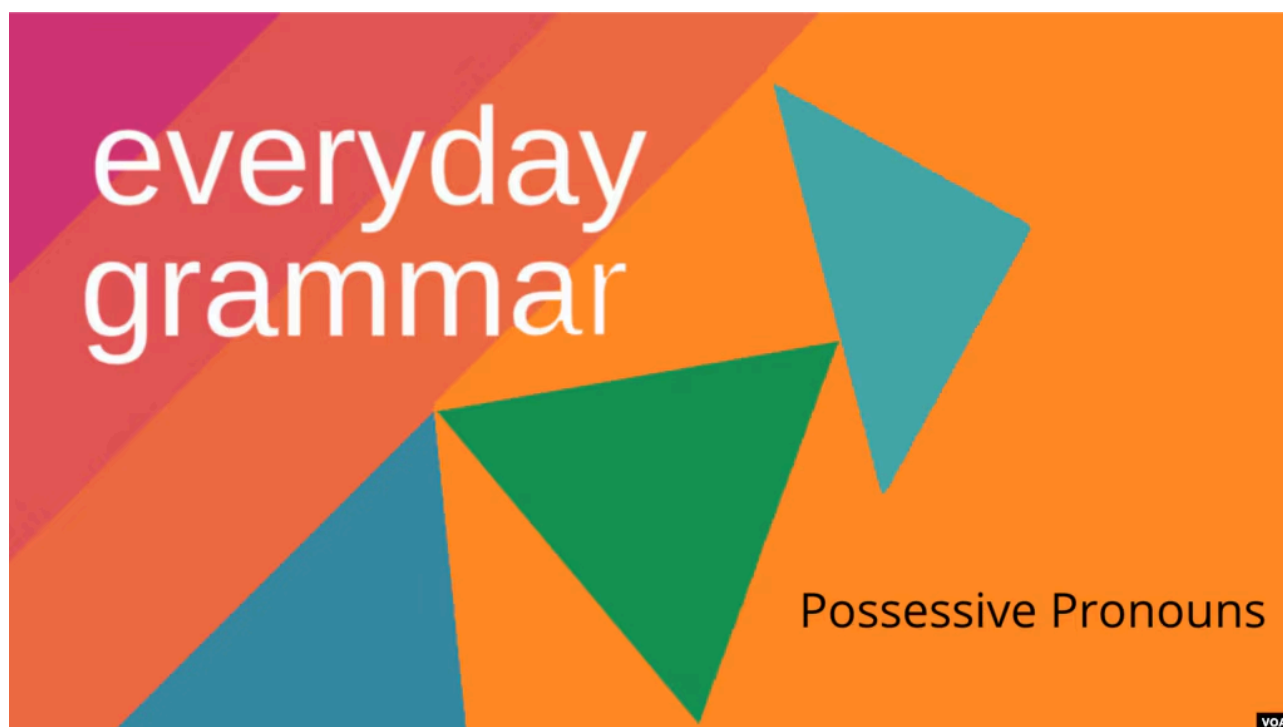


# Use Possessive Pronouns to Talk about Friends, Family



Imagine that you want to talk about your family or your friends. Perhaps you want to describe your parents or classmates. What kinds of structures should you use?

In today's report, we will explore a point of connection between grammar and relationships: **possessive pronouns**. You will learn the importance of these pronouns when talking about family, friends, and more.

## Terms

We divide pronouns into different groups: subject pronouns, object pronouns and possessive pronouns.

When we describe relationships, we often use possessive pronouns. Possessive pronouns take several forms and go by different names in English grammar books.

You might see terms such as dependent possessive pronoun, possessive **determiner** or possessive adjective.\*

The terms suggest the same basic idea. They act like determiners, appear before nouns and suggest relationships or belonging.

## Forms

Possessive pronouns take different forms depending on if they are used in the first, second, or third person.

In the first person we have the singular form “my” and the plural form “our.”

So, a boy describing his father might say:

My father is very kind.

Or a person speaking **on behalf of** a family might say:

Our father is very kind.

In the second person, someone describing another person's mother might say:

Your mother is very kind.

In the third person, we have singular forms: "his" and "her," as in:

His mother is very kind.

Her mother is very kind.

We also have the plural form "their," as in:

Their mother is very kind.

We can put possessive pronouns with the nouns that are important for describing relationships - friend, brother, sister, cousin, boss and so on.

So, you could say "My friend...", "your cousin...", "our boss..." and so on.

There are other kinds of pronouns that show possession and do not appear before nouns, but we will have to leave those for another program.

## **Practice**

Let's take some time to work with these ideas. Use the first person singular along with the following terms to make a complete sentence.

...brother is older than me

Pause the audio while considering your answer.

Here is one possible answer:

My brother is older than me.

Now use the third person singular to describe a friend.

...friend is very funny

Pause the audio while considering your answer.

Here are two possible answers:

Her friend is very funny.

Or:

His friend is very funny.

Now use the second person singular to describe a boss.

.... boss is friendly.

Pause the audio while considering your answer.

Here is one possible answer:

Your boss is friendly.

### Closing thoughts

It takes time getting used to first, second, and third person pronouns. But when you develop a strong sense of how to use them, you will find it very easy to describe all kinds of relationships. Unlike some **vocabulary** words and verb forms, possessive pronouns appear all the time in everyday speaking and in writing.

I'm John Russell.

*John Russell wrote this lesson for VOA Learning English.*

*\*The term possessive adjective is slightly misleading because possessive pronouns (my, his, their, etc.) function as determiners. They are function words, not content words.*

---

## Words in This Story

**possessive pronoun** – *n.* a pronoun that suggests possession and relationships

**determiner** – *n.* a word (such as an article, possessive, or quantifier) that makes specific the meaning of a noun phrase

**on behalf of** – *phrase* as a representative of, in the interest of

**vocabulary** – *n.* all the words known and used by a person