

2 Possessive 's

Form rules for possessive 's, e.g. *boy's/boys'*

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1 Special rules with possessive 's

We can have two possessive 's forms together:

*We're fed up with our **neighbour's tenant's** loud music.*

If the possessive form consists of a compound noun (► Unit 70.1) or two or more nouns which form a single team or group, we add the 's to the last noun only:

*Are you coming to my **brother-in-law's** party?*
(compound noun)

*I'm a great fan of **Lerner and Lowe's** musicals.*
(They both wrote as a single team.)

When the nouns do not form a single group we must use 's with both nouns:

***Schrodinger's and Heisenberg's** versions of quantum mechanics had seemed different.*
(two versions of the theory)

If the possessive noun is part of a prepositional phrase, we usually put the 's at the end of the phrase:

✗ *The woman's in the corner baby began to cry.*

✓ *The woman in the corner's baby began to cry.*

(= The baby belonging to the woman in the corner ...)



According to legend, Vermeer's 'Girl with a Pearl Earring' shows the artist's maid wearing a Turkish turban and a pearl earring of his wife's.

2 Double possessives

We can use a double possessive – noun + *of* + noun (with possessive 's) – to show that the first noun means 'one of several'. We usually use the indefinite article with this pattern:

*I heard the story from **a friend of my brother's**.* (= one of my brother's friends)

We do not always include the possessive 's with the second noun:

*They got the information from **a friend of the owner**.*

! The double possessive is common with pronouns. We always use the possessive pronoun:

✗ *She's a friend of us. She's a friend of our.*

✓ *She's a friend of **ours**.* (= We have several friends. She is one of them.)

3 Specifying and classifying possessives

Specifying possessives show a relationship with something specific such as a person or place. They usually answer the question 'Whose ...?':

*Marion washes **the children's clothes** on Thursdays.* (= the clothes belonging to the children)

! An adjective in front of a specifying possessive only describes the noun immediately following it:

*Marion washed **the older children's clothes** in the machine.* (= the children are older)

*Marion washed **the children's older clothes** in the machine.* (= the clothes are older)

Classifying possessives describe the type of thing something is. They answer the question 'What kind of...?' and are similar to compound nouns (► Unit 70):

*Janice has opened a shop specialising in **children's clothes**.* (= clothes any children can wear)

! An adjective in front of a classifying possessive describes the whole phrase:

*Janice's shop had a large selection of **expensive children's clothes**.*

(= The children's clothes are expensive, not the children.)