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Module : English

Session : Grammar

Lesson : Possessive 'S'

RULE

FORMING THE POSSESSIVE:

The possessive form is used with nouns referring to people, groups of people, countries, and animals. It shows a relationship of belonging between one thing and another. To form the possessive, add apostrophe + s to the noun. If the noun is plural, or already ends in s, just add an apostrophe after the s.

EXAMPLES

the car of John = John's car

the room of the girls = the girls' room

clothes for men = men's clothes

the boat of the sailors = the sailors' boat

* For names ending in s, you can either add an apostrophe + s, or just an apostrophe. The first option is more common. When pronouncing a possessive name, we add the sound /z/ to the end of the name.

EXAMPLES

Thomas's book (or Thomas' book)

James's shop (or James' shop)

the Smiths's house (or the Smiths' house)

FUNCTIONS OF THE POSSESSIVE

1. 'Belonging to' or 'ownership' is the most common relationship the possessive expresses.

EXAMPLES

John owns a car. = It is John's car.

America has some gold reserves. = They are America's gold reserves.

2. The possessive can also express where someone works, studies or spends time

EXAMPLES

John goes to this school. = This is John's school.

John sleeps in this room. = This is John's room.

3. The possessive can express a relationship between people.

EXAMPLES

John's mother is running late.

Mrs Brown's colleague will not be coming to the meeting.

4. The possessive can express intangible (insensible) things as well.

EXAMPLES

John's patience is running out.

The politician's hypocrisy was deeply shocking.

5. FIXED EXPRESSIONS

There are also some fixed expressions where the possessive form is used.

EXAMPLES WITH TIME

a day's work

a month's pay

today's newspaper

in a year's time

OTHER EXAMPLES

For God's sake! (= exclamation of exasperation)

a stone's throw away (= very near)

at death's door (= very ill)

in my mind's eye (= in my imagination)

6. The possessive is also used to refer to shops, restaurants and colleges, using the name or job title of the owner.

EXAMPLES

Shall we go to Luigi's for lunch?

I've got an appointment at the dentist's at eleven o'clock.

Is Saint Mary's an all-girls school?

PRACTICE

1. David and Sue are husband and wife. David is Sue..... husband.

2. This car belongs to Ann. It's Ann..... car.

3. The king lives in a very beautiful palace. The king..... palace is very beautiful.

4. I was at Elena at her house last night. I was at Elena..... house last night.

5. All the students have put their books on the table. All students..... books are on the table.

6. My sister was born on 28th June. The 28th June is my sister..... birthday.

7. Mrs Penn makes delicious cakes. Mrs Penn..... cakes are delicious.

8. My grandparents have a house next door to us. My grandparents..... house is next door to ours.

9. Mr and Mrs Smith have a daughter, Mary. Mr and Mrs Smith are Mary parents.