

## Possessive Nouns and Possessive Pronouns as Adjectives

There are five important points on this page:

- 1) Possessive nouns and possessive pronouns are often used as adjectives.
- 2) Possessive nouns are not always adjectives. They can also be used as nouns.
- 3) Some possessive pronouns are always adjectives.
- 4) Some possessive pronouns are always pronouns.
- 5) Some possessive pronouns can be adjectives sometimes and pronouns at other times.

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We reviewed earlier in the school year how to make nouns possessive by adding either <'s> or <'>. You have a chart to help you with this.

We also know that possessive *pronouns* take the place of such possessive *nouns*. For example, we could write either of the following sentences as long as we knew that both sentences referred to Martha's possessions:

1. Martha's coat is on Martha's chair.
2. Her coat is on her chair.

In the second sentence, "her" takes the place of "Martha's." In one sense, then, "her" is a possessive *pronoun* taking the place of a possessive *noun*.

However, in each sentence, the possessive words tell us which coat and which chair the sentence identifies. This means that both "Martha's" and "her" are acting as adjectives.

Because we assign a part of speech to a word according to what it does in a sentence, you would call both of them **adjectives** if you were working with the two sentences above.

Here are more examples where possessive nouns and pronouns (in bold) are acting as adjectives:

I saw **Bob's** mother at the mall. **Her** smile is always huge. She asked me why I was at the mall. I told her that I was spending **my** birthday money. She said that **my** birthday was the same as Bob's.

If you look carefully at the paragraph above, you may notice that the words "her" and "Bob's" show up more than once, but they are not in bold every time. This is because not every possessive noun and possessive pronoun is always an adjective. In the third sentence ("I told her that I was spending my birthday money"), the word "her" stands for the name of Bob's mother, so it is a pronoun. In the last sentence ("She said that my birthday was the same as Bob's"), the word "Bob's" stands for "birthday," so it is a noun.

It turns out that some possessive *pronouns* are always adjectives: *my*, *your*, *our* and *their*.

There are others that are always pronouns: *mine*, *yours*, *hers*, *ours*, *yours*, and *theirs*.

It is usually easy to see that each of these words operates in only one way in any sentence.

The possessive pronouns to watch out for are those that are sometimes pronouns and sometimes adjectives, depending upon how they are used in a sentence. They are *her*, *his*, and *its*.

(This page is about personal pronouns. There are other types of pronouns that can become possessive, but we will save those for another day.)