

## WHAT IS A POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE?

A **POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE** is a word that indicates ownership of, or relationship to, the noun it modifies. The owner is called the possessor and the noun modified is called the person or thing possessed.

Whose house is that? It's my house.

possessor noun possessed

My uncle is a lawyer.

## **IN ENGLISH**

Here are the forms of the possessive adjectives:

SINGULAR

1st person my 2<sup>nd</sup> person vour his 3<sup>rd</sup> person her its **PLURAL** 

1st person our 2<sup>nd</sup> person your 3rd person their

Possessive adjectives refer to the possessor.

What color is John's car? His car is white.

possessor singular

What color is the Smiths' car? Their car is white.

possessor plural

Although the object possessed is the same, car, the possessive adjective varies to agree with the possessor:  $John \rightarrow singular$  (his), the Smiths  $\rightarrow plural$  (their).

Possessive adjectives never change their form, regardless of the thing possessed.

Mary is reading my magazine.

object possessed singular

Mary is reading my magazines.

object possessed plural

Although the objects possessed are different in number (magazine  $\rightarrow$  singular; magazines  $\rightarrow$  plural), the possessive adjective is the same, my.

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## **IN ITALIAN**

As in English, an Italian possessive adjective refers to the possessor, but unlike English, it must agree, like all Italian adjectives, in gender and number with the noun it modifies, that is, the person or object possessed. Also, Italian normally uses the definite article before the possessive adjective. Therefore, the gender and number of the person or object possessed is reflected in both the definite article and the possessive adjective.

*Maria is reading my magazine.*Maria sta leggendo la mia rivista.

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object possessed fem. sing.
definite possessive article adjective
fem. sing.
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The possessive adjective **mia** is feminine singular to agree with the feminine singular noun **rivista**.

Maria is reading my magazines.

Maria sta leggendo le mie riviste.

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definite possessive article adjective
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The possessive adjective **mie** is feminine plural to agree with the feminine plural noun **riviste**.

These are the steps you should follow in order to choose the correct possessive adjective and its proper form:

- 1. Gender & number of noun possessed Identify the gender and number of the person(s) or item(s) possessed.
- 2. Possessor Identify the possessor. Except for **loro** and **Loro** the possessor is shown by the first few letters of the possessive adjective.

my miyour [fam. sing.] tuhis, her, its S11your [formal sing.] S11our nostryour [fam. pl.] vostrtheir loro your [formal pl.] Loro

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- 3. Definite article Depending on the gender and number of the noun possessed, place the appropriate definite article before the possessive adjective (see pp. 16-7 in *What is an Article?*).
- 4. Ending Depending on the gender and number of the noun possessed, add the appropriate ending to the possessive adjective (except for **loro** and **Loro** which are invariable).

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SINGULAR
masculine → -o
feminine → -a

PLURAL
masculine → -i (except for mi- which adds -ei, and
tu-, su-, and Su- which add -oi)
feminine → -e
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5. Selection — The definite article + the possessive adjective + the noun possessed should agree in gender and number.

Below are examples of how these steps are applied to sentences with each possible possessor.

"My"

I have my books.

1. Gender and number of noun possessed:

Libri books is masculine plural.

2. Possessor: my mi-

3. & 4. Definite article & ending: i + -ei

5. Selection: i miei libri

Ho i miei libri.

"Your" — In the case of the possessive adjective *your*, you will have to consider additional factors:

- a. Familiar or Formal Is the familiar or formal form of address appropriate (see pp. 32-4)?
- b. Number Does *your* address one person (singular) or more than one person (plural)?

t11-

Is this your house? [addressing a child]

1. Gender and number of noun possessed:

Casa house is feminine singular.

2. Possessor: your

a. Formal or familiar: familiar

b. Singular or plural: singular

3. & 4. Definite article & ending: la + -a

5. Selection: la tua casa

È questa la tua casa?

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Is this your house? [addressing more than one child] 1. GENDER AND NUMBER OF NOUN POSSESSED: Casa house is feminine singular. 120 Possessor: your a. FORMAL OR FAMILIAR: familiar b. Singular or plural: plural vostr-3. & 4. Definite article & ending: la + -a 5. Selection: la vostra casa È questa la vostra casa? *Is this your house?* [addressing an unfamiliar adult] 1. GENDER AND NUMBER OF NOUN POSSESSED: Casa house is feminine singular. 2. Possessor: your a. FORMAL OR FAMILIAR: formal 130 b. SINGULAR OR PLURAL: singular S11-3. & 4. Definite article & ending: la + -a 5. Selection: la Sua casa È questa **la Sua** casa? Is this your house? [addressing more than one unfamiliar adult] 1. Gender and number of noun possessed: Casa *house* is feminine singular. Possessor: your a. FORMAL OR FAMILIAR: formal b. Singular or plural: plural Loro 3. Definite article: la 4. Selection: la Loro casa 140 È questa **la Loro** casa? Since **Loro** is invariable, the gender and number of the possessive adjective are only indicated by the definite article. "His, her, its" — Since Italian possessive adjectives only agree with the noun possessed and do not identify the gender of the possessor, when translating into English you will have to rely on context to determine whether *his, her* or *its* is the appropriate possessive adjective. Marv reads her books. 1. Gender and number of noun possessed: 150 Libri books is masculine plural. Possessor: her S11-3. & 4. Definite article & ending: i + -oi5. Selection: i suoi libri Maria legge i suoi libri. Mario reads his books. 1. Gender and number of possessed: **Libri** books is masculine plural. 2. Possessor: his su-3. & 4. Definite article & ending: i + -0i 5. Selection: i suoi libri 160 Mario legge i suoi libri.

"Our"

Our house is downtown.

1. GENDER AND NUMBER OF NOUN POSSESSED: **Casa** *house* is feminine singular.

2. Possessor: our nostr-

3. & 4. Definite article & ending: la + -a

5. Selection: la nostra casa

La nostra casa è in centro.

"Their" — Since loro is invariable, the gender and number of the possessive adjective are indicated only by the definite article.

This is their house.

1. Gender and number of noun possessed:

Casa house is feminine singular.

2. Possessor: their loro
3. Definite article: la

4. Selection: la loro casa

Questa è la loro casa.

These are their houses.

1. Gender and number of noun possessed:

Case *houses* is feminine plural.

2. Possessor: their loro
3. Definite article: le

4. Selection: le loro case

Queste sono le loro case.

## **SUMMARY**

Here is a chart of the possessive adjectives you can use as reference.

	Singular		Plural	
Possessor	MASC.	FEM.	MASC.	FEM.
my	il mio	la mia	i miei	le mie
your [fam. sing.]	il tuo	la tua	i tuoi	le tue
his, her, its	il suo	la sua	i suoi	le sue
your [form. sing.]	il Suo	la Sua	i Suoi	le Sue
our	il nostro	la nostra	i nostri	le nostre
your [fam. pl.]	il vostro	la vostra	i vostri	le vostre
their	il loro	la loro	i loro	le loro
your [form. pl.]	il Loro	la Loro	i Loro	le Loro

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