

# Teaching Possessives

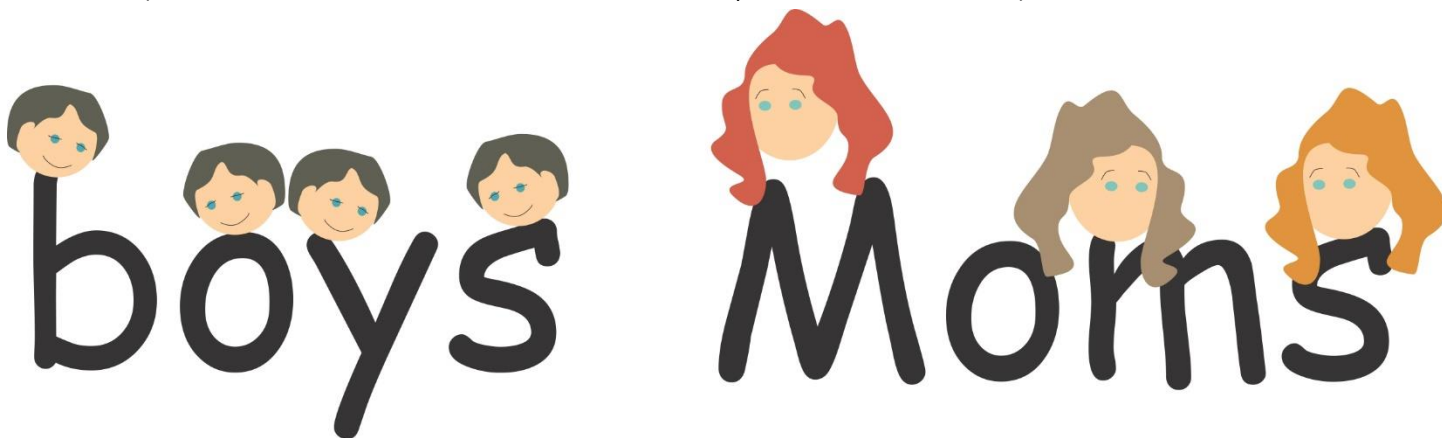
Possessive tense can be really confusing for young children. My students had a terrible time distinguishing between the possessive and the plural form of a word. Boys vs. boy's, houses vs. house's, and Moms vs. Mom's proved to be too much for them. Just TELLING the kids to use an apostrophe for possession didn't cut it either. A child would think, "I remember you are supposed to use the apostrophe for ONE of them, but I can't remember which!"

That's when we turn to our helpful list of ideas for making concepts fun:

- Use a story to explain elements of learning
- Relate each part of the lesson to known objects
- Act it out whenever possible
- Practice with a game

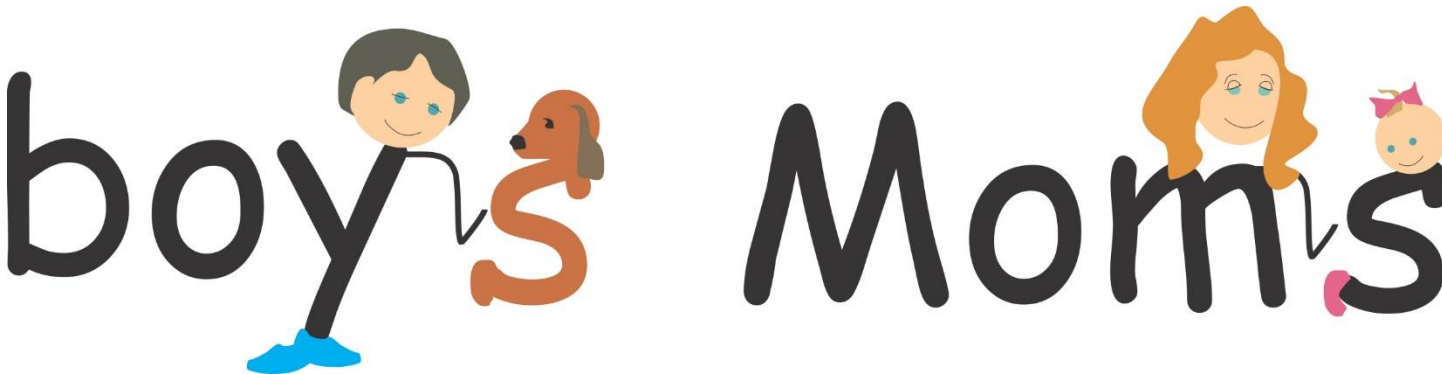
## Plural

Plural means more than one. In our example, we are showing what "boys" and "Moms" mean – more than one of them. Our visual shows four boys and three moms. Most of the time, we can just add an S to the end of a word to make it mean "more than one." Practice this skill briefly. Look around the room and find one of something and then say its plural form by adding an S: "A book. Books," etc. (The visuals can be found at the end of this lesson and printed for classroom use.)



## Possessive

Possessive means belonging. In our visual, we see a boy and a dog. The word is "boy's" and the boy's arm reaching toward the dog is the visual for the apostrophe. "Boy's" shows it is the boy's dog. In the second instance, Mom's arm represents the visual for the apostrophe as well. This is Mom's baby. The baby belongs to Mom.



## Trouble Spots

It gets a bit tricky when it comes to “its” and “it’s.” In this case, “its” shows possession, while “it’s” is a contraction of “it” and “is.” A clue to share with the kids is that when reading the sentence, if it makes sense to change “it’s” to “it is,” then they are dealing with a contraction.

Example: “It’s Tom!” or “Its foot.” It makes perfect sense to say, “It is Tom,” but it doesn’t make sense to say, “It is foot.”

Another area that can cause confusion is plural possessives. Some are easy and understandable, such as men (plural) becomes men’s (plural possessive) when more than one man owns or possesses something. You simply add an apostrophe and S as you do for singular possessives. When a plural already ends in an S, it can be confusing for kids to know what to do to show possession. It is likely that students will add an apostrophe and an S. (The students’s teacher was absent.) However, the correct way to show possession in this instance would be to add just an apostrophe. (The students’ teacher was absent.)

## Act It Out

Have each child find something to “possess.” If Rosanna picks up a doll, she will say, “This is Rosanna’s doll.” Her arm would be around the doll showing she possesses the doll. If you have multiple children, you could put the doll on the rug and have one child pick it up as though finding it laying there. He would ask, “Whose doll is this?” One of the other children would answer, “It’s Rosanna’s doll.” Then the child who found the doll would give it to Rosanna who would wrap her arm around it, showing it belonged to her.

## Play a Game

To let children practice writing the possessive, write the names of the children in the class on the board, or if the names are displayed on the word wall, instruct the class to choose a name of a classmate, and then choose an object that will belong to that person. They can write “Jane’s bear” and illustrate it. Next, they will choose another name and another object to write and illustrate. Depending on the amount of time you have, children could cut pictures of objects out of old magazines and use them in their illustrations.

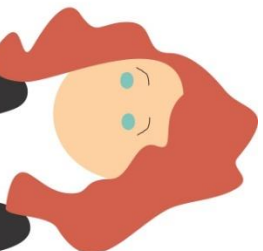
Boys



boy



Moms



Mom

