

How to use the genitive in English?

The genitive in English ('s and of)

In English, the genitive (or possessive case) makes it possible to indicate possession, origin, that there is a relationship between two things, a family relationship, or that one thing belongs to another:

The genitive can be indicated by:

- the addition of the apostrophe S after the name: Paul's car
- the addition of OF before the name: a pack of cigarettes

How to use it :

The addition of the apostrophe depends on whether the name is singular, plural or ends with an S:

- **Singular name** → the boy's room
- **Plural name** → the boys' room
- **Singular name ending in -s** → Thomas' car ou Thomas's car (les deux sont corrects)
- **Irregular plural** → children's books

In a sentence with several names, add one ' or 's only to the last name:

- I'm going on a two weeks' trip to Vietnam.
- Sam and Lucy's friend.

If each name has something, you have to put ' or 's to both names:

- Scott and Simon's factory
- Scott's and Simon's factories

Sometimes the name after 's is not necessary, if the context is familiar or clearly implied (or to avoid repetitions!):

- My car is older than Patrick's. (= Patrick's car)
- We ate at Sam's last night. (= Sam's restaurant or Sam's house)
- She's at her mother's (= her mother's place)
- Whose phone is this? It's Kevin's. (= Kevin's phone)
- Is it your turn? No, it's Linda's (= Linda's turn)

Be careful of the position of the adjective:

- The beautiful girl's hair
- The girl's beautiful hair

You don't need 's to be with things:

- a door handle

- the tool box
- a tennis shoe
- a kitchen table

We use the possessive 's with words like one, anyone, someone, someone, anybody, somebody:

- I've just found someone's phone on the table.

When we use *else* with these words, the 's is added to else:

- Everyone else's opinion is not important to me.

⚠ We don't use 's with possessive pronouns:

- Is that book yours? ✓
- Is that book your's? ✗
- That car is theirs. ✓
- That car is theirs' ✗

Some examples

- I like Betty's hair
- Jason's father
- This is Karen's jacket.
- Three hours' delay
- Friday's party.