

Some common grammar problems: the possessive; present perfect or present simple?; word order

A Starting activities

1 Envy

The possessive with 's

Work as a class. Say a possession or characteristic of someone else in the class that you wish you had. Use the possessive with 's.

Examples:

(possession) *I wish I had Miss Jones's car.*

(characteristic) *I wish I had Maria's intelligence.*

2 Someone new

Present perfect or present simple?

- 1 Work in pairs. Someone new has just come to the town where you are learning English. (Think of a real person, if you want to.) Write present perfect or present perfect progressive sentences with *for* or *since* which the new person would use to say what she or he has done, or has been doing, since arriving in your town. Then write present simple sentences which the new person would use to say something about her/himself. Examples:
(present perfect) *I've been to three discos since I arrived.*
(present perfect progressive) *I've been staying with friends for the last three weeks.*
(present simple) *I come from Japan. I don't like coffee.*
- 2 Work as a class. Read your sentences to the other people in the class. Listen to other people's sentences and list any interesting ones. Decide whose new person you would most like to meet.

3 Word order game

Word order

Work as a class. The class is in two teams, A and B. Your teacher will say a whole sentence to Team A and then point to somebody in the team. That person says the first word only of the sentence the teacher said. The next person the teacher points to in Team A says the second word (only) of the sentence and so on. The teacher can point to the same person in Team A more than once if she or he wishes to. If anyone in Team A hesitates or says the wrong word, Team B gets a chance at the same sentence. When a team repeats the sentence correctly it gets a point and the teacher says another sentence, to Team B this time. Your teacher will decide how long the game lasts. Example: Teacher: *You left it on its side under the table last Monday.*

Person 1 from Team A: *You*

Person 2 from Team A: *left* (and so on)

NOTE TO TEACHER: Invent some sentences, or use sentences from this book or from a novel, magazine, newspaper etc. Make the sentences as hard or as easy as you like.

B Grammar guide

1 The possessive

- The possessive with 's is formed like this:
Tom's bicycle (singular) *The Robinsons' car* (plural)
It is used when something belongs to, or relates to, someone or something else. We use the possessive with 's to talk about:
 - a animate (living) things (e.g. people, animals): *the committee's decision, goat's milk*
 - b places: *London's biggest cinema.*
 - c time: *yesterday's paper, next week's timetable*
But if there is a number in the expression, use two nouns: *a forty-minute lesson, a ten-minute wait*
 - d shops: *the butcher's, the newsagent's*
 - The possessive with *of* means the same as the possessive with 's but we use it to talk about:
 - a expressions of quantity: *a loaf of bread*
 - b full containers: *a cup of coffee* (= a cup with coffee in it)
 - c inanimate things (e.g. houses, cars): *the roof of the house, the boot of the car*
 - Don't use 's when talking about types of things.
I must buy some cat food. (a type of food that is made for cats)
BUT *This is the cat's food.* (some food that belongs to one particular cat)
Also: *a wine bottle* (= a type of bottle), *a coffee cup* (a type of cup), *a garden chair, a car door*
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2 The present perfect or the present simple

- The most important point of contrast between these two tenses is that the present perfect describes the past until now and the present simple is used when the speaker thinks of something as a fact.
- a *I have lived here for six years.* (present perfect)
 - b *I live here.* (present simple)
- In (a) the action started six years ago and continues until now. In (b) the action is timeless and has no start or finish.
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3 Word order

- English usually has this word order:
subject–verb–object–manner (how?)–place (where?)–time (when?).
Smith scored a goal with his left foot at the match yesterday.
- Possible variants include:
- Putting the time first.
Yesterday I went to London.
 - *There is/are* (or *there was/were* in the past) to show the existence or non-existence of something.
There is a good story about that man.
By the time I got to the baker's there were no cakes left.
 - Impersonal *it* (*it is, it was* or *it will be*).
It's raining. It was Tim who fell. It will be fine tomorrow.

C Activities

1 Conversations

The possessive

Work in pairs. Decide who is A and who is B. You are going to hold conversations on the three topics below. Change partners between each conversation so that you talk to three different people altogether. Make sure there is always an A and a B in each pair. Before you start, read the Activity notes.

Person A: Read Activity note 41 on page 148.

Person B: Read Activity note 56 on page 154.

Conversation 1: Persuasion

A and B are going on holiday together. A wants a quiet holiday near the sea. B wants a more active, exciting holiday in the mountains. Use specific holiday places that you know and can describe, if you want to.

Conversation 2: Argument

A borrowed some money from B. (How much? And what was the money borrowed for?) B says that A only paid some of it back. (When?) A says that she or he paid all of it back. (When?) Find a friendly solution to the disagreement.

Conversation 3: Co-operation

The place where you are studying English has been damaged by a storm and you want to help. List all the work that needs to be done and discuss what you and the class can do to help to put things right.

2 Parole board

Present perfect or present simple?

- 1 Work as a class. Make sure you know this crime vocabulary: *murder, armed robbery, blackmail, sentence, cell, prison, warder, prisoner, visitor, release (from prison)*.

Three prisoners have applied to be released on parole. (That is, they have asked to be let out of prison for a short time before their permanent release.) Decide on the names, ages and crimes of the three prisoners then write questions that

the parole board could ask the three prisoners. The questions should be about their behaviour in prison and about the reasons why they have asked to be released on parole. All the questions must be present perfect, present perfect progressive or present simple. Examples:
How long have you been a model prisoner?
Do you help in the prison library every day?

- 2 Work in pairs or groups. If you are in pairs, one of you is one of the prisoners and the other person is a member of the parole board. If you are in groups, there are three prisoners and three parole board groups. Each prisoner goes to all three parole board groups in turn, to be interviewed. Using the questions from part 1 to help you (but adding new questions too) the parole board asks the prisoners why they should be released on parole. If you are working in groups and you are interviewing more than one prisoner, choose the best one to release on parole.

3 The wild thing from the woods

Word order

Work in pairs. The 'wild thing from the woods' grew up alone in the forest but is now learning to live in an English town. He or she can say only two words at a time. Each of these two words is from one of these categories: subject, verb, object, manner, place and time. For example, the 'wild thing' can say *I go* (subject, verb) or *go quietly* (verb, manner) or *him tomorrow* (object, time). Take it in turns to be 'the wild thing'. Say two words, one from each category. The other person completes the 'wild thing's' sentence. Example:
A (wild thing): *I carefully* (subject, manner)
B: *I will cross the road carefully.*

D Accuracy practice

1 Make possessive sentences with *'s*, *of* or two nouns together. More than one answer is sometimes possible.

- 1 Don't shut the door yet. (car)
- 2 The football match is the last of the season. (Saturday)
- 3 There's some bread on the table. (loaf)
- 4 Put it in the room, would you, please. (corner)
- 5 Can you wash the cups up, please? (coffee)
- 6 Would you like an orange juice? (glass)

2 Change the present perfect sentences to present simple and the present simple sentences to present perfect using the words in brackets.

- 1 I am a Beatles fan. (since I was twelve)
- 2 She doesn't like rock music. (never)
- 3 Do you ever go to the cinema? (a late-night cinema show)
- 4 We haven't seen her for ages. (much these days)
- 5 Have you ever had any serious health problems? (at the moment)

3 Put in *there is/are*, *there was/were* or *it is/was/will be*.

- 1 Look, _____ raining.
- 2 _____ a good film on next week.
- 3 _____ a rainy day in October when it happened.
- 4 _____ a notice about that on the noticeboard last week.
- 5 _____ four things you must try not to forget, but _____ a miracle if you remember them all.

4 These sentences are from a holiday postcard from Niki to her brother Ben. Complete them by putting the words in the right order.

- 1 We are having _____
time a really here at the moment great
- 2 The weather has been brilliant, though _____
some clouds there in the sky were today
- 3 The hotel is not too bad, but _____
there are too many tourists and fed up are getting the staff
- 4 The food, however, _____
is good exceptionally
- 5 Tomorrow we hope to go _____
and on a trip organized the local sights some by the hotel of see