

# Possessives: Time, Places, and Joint Ownership

## INTERMEDIATE

**Focus: Time markers, periods of duration, plural time periods, organization/place ownership, and compound/joint possession.**

When we think of possessives (apostrophe 's), we usually think of people (e.g., *John's car*). However, at the intermediate level, we also use the possessive structure for time expressions, places, organizations, and groups of people.

### 1. Possessives with Time Expressions

We use 's (or ') with words indicating time to describe duration or a specific point in time.

- **Singular Time Words:** Add 's.
  - *Have you seen **yesterday's** newspaper?*
  - *We have a **week's** holiday next month.*
- **Plural Time Words:** Add only the apostrophe ' after the s.
  - *It is only **ten minutes'** walk from here.* (The walk of ten minutes).
  - *She has **three years'** experience in marketing.*

### 2. Possessives for Organizations and Places

We can use 's with organizations (companies, governments, teams) and places (cities, countries, the world). This is often used in news and formal writing.

- **Organizations:**
  - *The **government's** decision was controversial.*
  - *The **company's** success is due to its staff.*
- **Places:**
  - *London is famous for the **city's** museums.*
  - *It is the **world's** highest mountain.*

*Note: We can also use "of" (the decision of the government), but the 's form is very common in English.*

### 3. Compound and Joint Possession (Two or more nouns)

When two or more people possess something, the placement of the apostrophe changes the meaning.

- **Joint Ownership (Shared):** If two people share **one** thing, add 's only to the **second/last** name.
  - *Jack and Karen's car.* (They own **one** car together).
  - *This is Ben and Jerry's ice cream shop.* (One shop owned by both).
- **Separate Ownership:** If two people have **separate** things, add 's to **each** name.
  - *Jack's and Karen's cars.* (Jack has a car, and Karen has a car = two cars).
  - *Bach's and Mozart's compositions are very different.*

## Practice Exercises

**Instruction:** Complete the sentences by creating the correct possessive form using the words in brackets. Pay attention to whether the possession is singular, plural, shared, or separate.

1. Don't worry about the cost; it's on the company. It is the \_\_\_\_\_ (company / expense).
2. We need to decide quickly. The meeting is in \_\_\_\_\_ (one hour / time).
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (Europe / economy) is facing some new challenges this year.
4. They are a very musical family. \_\_\_\_\_ (Jean and Pierre / guitars) are in the corner; Jean has a red one and Pierre has a blue one.
5. I am really tired. I need at least \_\_\_\_\_ (two weeks / holiday) to recover.
6. Did you hear about \_\_\_\_\_ (yesterday / storm)? It was terrible.
7. My parents bought a house together in 1990. We are going to \_\_\_\_\_ (mom and dad / house) for dinner.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ (The government / plan) for the new railway was announced on TV last night.
9. It is a long journey. It is about \_\_\_\_\_ (seven hours / drive) from here to Scotland.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ (The world / population) is increasing every year.
11. I read a magazine article about \_\_\_\_\_ (Germany and France / borders). They share a long history.
12. Excuse me, is this \_\_\_\_\_ (tomorrow / schedule)? I need to know when I am working.
13. We are celebrating tonight! It is \_\_\_\_\_ (Alice and Tom / wedding anniversary). They have been married for ten years.
14. The teacher graded the tests. \_\_\_\_\_ (David and Sarah / scores) were both excellent, but David got 95% and Sarah got 98%.
15. If you walk fast, the station is only \_\_\_\_\_ (five minutes / walk) away.

## Answer Key

1. company's expense
2. one hour's time
3. Europe's economy
4. Jean's and Pierre's guitars (Separate ownership - two different guitars)
5. two weeks' holiday (Plural time)
6. yesterday's storm
7. mom and dad's house (Joint ownership - one house shared)
8. The government's plan
9. seven hours' drive (Plural time)
10. The world's population
11. Germany's and France's borders (Separate entities possessing borders, or borders of each country) OR Germany and France's borders (referring to the shared borders between them is acceptable, but separate possessive emphasizes the borders belonging to each nation). *Key accepts: Germany and France's borders / Germany's and France's borders*
12. tomorrow's schedule
13. Alice and Tom's wedding anniversary (Joint/Shared event)
14. David's and Sarah's scores (Separate scores)
15. five minutes' walk (Plural time)