

Possessive Pronouns

We begin this lesson with a review of the difference between an adjective and a pronoun.

adjective: describes a noun

pronoun: takes the place of a noun

Look at the following sentence pairs. One has an adjective, while the other has a pronoun.

My book is large. (adjective, describes book)

Yours is small. (pronoun, takes the place of noun)

Your car is green. (adjective, describes car)

Mine is red. (pronoun, takes the place of noun)

Now, let's look at each sentence a little more closely.

My book is large.

My is an adjective because it modifies, or describes the noun "book." Furthermore, it is a "possessive" adjective because it tells who owns, or possesses, the book.

Yours is small.

Yours is a pronoun, because it replaces or takes the place of a noun. In this case, the previous sentence tells us that "yours" is replacing the noun "book." Furthermore, it is a "possessive" pronoun because it tells who owns, or possesses, the noun it is replacing.

Your **car is green.**

Your is an adjective because it modifies the noun "car." Furthermore, it is a "possessive" adjective because it tells who owns, or possesses, the car.

Mine is red.

Mine is a pronoun, because it replaces or takes the place of a noun. In this case, the previous sentence tells us that "mine" is replacing the noun "car." Furthermore, it is a "possessive" pronoun because it tells who owns, or possesses, the noun it is replacing.

So far, we have been talking about the difference between the possessive adjective and the possessive pronoun. You will recall that in a previous lesson, you already learned about the possessive adjectives.

mi(s)

my

mi libro

mis plumas

tu(s)

your (fam. sing.)

tu libro

tus plumas

su(s)

his, her, your (formal), their
 su libro
 sus plumas

nuestro(-a, -os, -as)

our
 nuestro libro
 nuestras plumas

vuestro(-a, -os, -as)

your (fam. pl.)
 vuestro libro
 vuestras plumas

The possessive pronouns are similar to the possessive adjectives, but they are normally used with the definite article.

mine

el mío / la mía
 los míos / las mías

yours (familiar)

el tuyo / la tuya
 los tuyos / las tuyas

yours (formal), his, hers

el suyo / la suya
 los suyos / las suyas

ours

el nuestro / la nuestra
 los nuestros / las nuestras

yours (familiar)

el vuestro / la vuestra
 los vuestros / las vuestras

yours (formal), theirs

el suyo / la suya
 los suyos / las suyas

Now let's translate our model sentences:

Mi libro es grande My book is large.
 El tuyo es pequeño..... Yours is small.
 Tu carro es verde Your car is green.
 El mío es rojo Mine is red.

The previous translations assume that you are talking to a friend, or someone you know well, and are using the informal "tú" form of speech. But remember, Spanish also has a more formal form of speech. Notice how the same sentences change if we assume that you are talking to someone in a position of authority, using the more formal "usted" form of speech.

Mi libro es grande. (no change)..... My book is large.
El suyo es pequeño. (formal) Yours (formal) is small.
Su carro es verde. (formal)..... Your (formal) car is green.
El mío es rojo. (no change) Mine is red.

The definite article is usually omitted when the possessive pronoun comes after the verb *ser*:

El carro grande es mío..... The big car is mine.
El carro pequeño es suyo..... The small car is hers.

Notice the following ambiguity:

El carro grande es suyo The big car is his.
El carro grande es suyo The big car is hers.

El *suyo*, la *suya*, los *suyos*, las *suyas* can be clarified as follows:

El carro grande es suyo The big car is his. (unclarified)
El carro grande es de él The big car is his. (clarified)
La casa pequeña es suya The small house is hers. (unclarified)
La casa pequeña es de ella The small house is hers. (clarified)
Los carros grandes son suyos..... The big cars are theirs. (unclarified)
Los carros grandes son de ellas..... The big cars are theirs. (clarified)
Las casas pequeñas son suyas..... The small houses are theirs. (unclarified)
Las casas pequeñas son de ellos The small houses are theirs. (clarified)

NOTE: *de + el* are contracted to form "*del*," however, *de + él* are not contracted.