

Serbian Possessive Pronouns (Prisvojne zamenice)

As the name says, **possessive pronouns** generally denote possession: *moja knjiga* 'my book', *njihove cipele* 'their shoes'.

Just like personal pronouns, possessive pronouns have distinct forms for each person (first, second, third) and for number (singular, plural), as well as for case ([nominative](#), [accusative](#), [genitive](#), [dative](#), [locative](#), [instrumental](#)).

Possessive pronouns also distinguish gender (feminine/masculine/neuter). Moreover, since possessives usually modify the following noun the gender of the possessive also depends on the gender of the following noun.

For instance:

feminine noun	masculine noun	neuter noun
njen-a knjiga 'her book'	njen kaput 'her coat'	njen-o ogledalo 'her mirror'
njen-e knjige 'her books'	njen-i kaputi 'her coats'	njen-a ogledala 'her mirrors'

You can see how the possessive meaning 'her' changes its final vowel depending on the gender (and also number!) of the noun. In this respect, possessives behave like [demonstrative pronouns](#) and [adjectives](#), which also 'agree' with the following noun in case, gender and number.

The following table gives the whole declension paradigm for possessive pronouns. I didn't spell out all the possible forms since it would appear overwhelming (to you and the paper). Instead, only the masculine singular possessive forms are shown (in red) while the endings for other forms are given in parentheses. All you need to do is take that masculine form as the base and expand it with the corresponding vowel endings in parentheses.

Table 2 below gives some examples that would help make sense of the declensional paradigm of Table 1.

The abbreviations used in Table 1:

f =feminine gender	they-m = they referring to masculine persons/things
m =masculine gender	they-f =they referring to feminine persons/things
n =neuter gender	they-n =they referring to neuter persons/things
sg = singular	pl = plural

Table 1: Declension of Serbian Possessive Pronouns

SINGULAR	1st person moj 'my' m.sg, n.sg, f.sg / m.pl, n.pl, f.pl	2nd person tvoj 'your' m.sg, n.sg, f.sg / m.pl, n.pl, f.pl	3 rd person (m) njegov 'his' m.sg, n.sg, f.sg / m.pl, n.pl, f.pl	3 rd person (n) njegov 'it's' m.sg, n.sg, f.sg / m.pl, n.pl, f.pl	3 rd person (f) njen 'her' m.sg, n.sg, f.sg / m.pl, n.pl, f.pl
Nominative	moj (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	tvoj (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	njegov (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	njegov (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	njen (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)
Accusative	moj (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	tvoj (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	njegov (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	njegov (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	njen (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)
Genitive	moj-eg (-eg, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	tvoj-eg (-eg, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	njegov-og (-og, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	njegov-og (-og, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	njen-og (-og, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)
Dative	moj-em (em, -oj / -im, -im, im)	tvoj-em (em, -oj / -im, -im, im)	njegov-om (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	njegov-om (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	njen-om (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)
Locative	moj-em (em, -oj / - im, -im, -im)	tvoj-em (em, -oj / -im, -im, im)	njegov-om (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	njegov-om (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	njen-om (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)
Instrumental	moj-im (-im, -om / -im, -im, im)	tvoj-im (-im, -om / -im, -im, -im)	njegov-im (-im, -om / -im, -im, -im)	njegov-im (-im, -om / -im, -im, -im)	njen-im (-im, -om / -im, -im, -im)
PLURAL	naš 'our'	vaš 'your'	njihov 'their'- m	their 'their'-n	their 'their'-f
Nominative	naš (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	vaš (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	njihov (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	njihov (-e, -a / - i, -a, -e)	njihov (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)
Accusative	naš (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	vaš (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	njihov (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	njihov (-e, -u / - e, -a, -e)	njihov (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)
Genitive	naš-eg (-eg, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	vaš-eg (-eg, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	njihov-og (-og, -e / -ih, - ih, -ih)	njihov-og (-og, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	njihov-og (-og, -e / -ih, - ih, -ih)
Dative	naš-em (em, -oj / -im, -im, im)	vaš-em (em, -oj / -im, -im, im)	njihov-om (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	njihov-om (-om, -oj / -im, - im, -im)	njihov-om (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)
Locative	naš-em (-em, -oj / - im, -im, -im)	vaš-im (-im, -om / -im, -im, im)	njihov-om (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	njihov-om (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	njihov-om (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)
Instrumental	naš-im (-im, -om / - im, -im, -im)	vaš-im (-im, -om / - im, -im, -im)	njihov-im (-im, -om / - im, -im, -im)	njihov-im (-im, -om / -im, -im, -im)	njihov-im (-im, -om / -im, -im, -im)

Reflexive Possessive Pronouns - svoj

In addition to these possessive forms, Serbian also has a reflexive possessive pronoun **svoj** 'self's' which declines exactly like the personal possessive pronouns above. However, this pronoun doesn't distinguish gender (**svoj** works for all three genders).

Also, there is a possessive interrogative pronoun: **čiji** 'whose', which is used to ask questions about the possessor. For more details see [serbian interrogative pronouns](#).

Examples

Čija je ovo knjiga? Whose book is this?
Ovo je **moja** knjiga. This is my book.

Table 2 below illustrates the usage of possessive pronouns in sentences. The abbreviations used there are as follows:

fem =feminine gender	sing = singular	acc = accusative	inst =instrumental
masc =masculine gender	pl = plural	dat =dative	loc =locative
neut =neuter gender	nom = nominative	gen = genitive	refl = reflexive pronoun

Table 2: Some examples of possessive pronouns used in sentences

	Serbian	English (the relevant pronoun is underlined)	Case, gender and number of the possessive pronoun
1.	Njegova mama je lepa.	<u>His</u> mother is beautiful.	njegova = nom. fem. sing.
2.	Njegov otac je visok.	<u>His</u> father is tall.	njegov = nom. masc. sing.
3.	Njihov ujak je umro.	<u>Their</u> uncle died.	njihov = nom. masc. sing.
4.	Naše sestre su srećne.	<u>Our</u> sisters are happy.	naše = nom. masc. pl.
5.	Naš brat živi u Americi.	<u>Our</u> father lives in America.	naš = nom. masc. sing.
6.	On je video moj * stan.	He saw <u>my</u> apartment.	moj = acc. masc. sing.
7.	On je video mojeg ujaka.	He saw <u>my</u> uncle.	moj/mojeg = acc. masc. sing.
8.	On se plaši mog * ujaka.	He is afraid of <u>my</u> uncle.	mog = gen. masc. sing.
9.	Ja sam dao ovo njenim sestrama.	I gave this (to) <u>her</u> sisters.	her = dat. masc. sing.
10.	Knjiga je na mom * stolu.	The book is on <u>my</u> table.	mom = loc. masc. sing.
11.	Mi putujemo sa njegovim roditeljima.	We are traveling with <u>his</u> parents.	njegovim = inst. masc. sing.
12.	Ona čuva svoje sestre.	She watches <u>her</u> sisters.	svoje = refl. acc. sing.

Examples 6, 7 and 8 warrant some explanation.

Notice that in examples 6 and 7, the possessive is accusative, masculine, singular meaning 'my', but the forms are different!

Hopefully, you'll recall my note when we discussed the [accusative case for nouns](#) which explains that for the accusative masculine singular nouns, the ending depends whether the noun is animate or non-animate. If the noun is non-animate, like stan 'apartment' in example 6 above, then the accusative ending equals the nominative ending. And this rule applies to the possessive pronoun since it agrees in whatever features the following noun has.

So, in 6. we have: On je video **moj*** stan (He saw my apartment)

But in 7, since the noun is animate (ujak 'uncle'), the accusative form must equal the genitive form. Hence: On je video **mojeg** ujaka (He saw my uncle).

Here we have an extra **-eg** added to **moj**.

But what about 8? Why do we have: On se plaši **mog** ujaka, but not: On se plaši **mojeg** ujaka, as in 7?

Actually, both versions are perfectly correct, with 'mog' in 8 being a truncated version of 'mojeg' in 7.

In general, the following possessive forms for first and second person can be shortened:

mojeg	mojem	tvojeg	tvojem	svojeg	svojem
mog	mom	tvog	tvom	svog	svom
'my' gen. or acc.	'my' dat. or loc.	'your' gen or acc.	'your' dat. or loc.	'self's' gen or acc.	'self's' dat. or loc.

Exercise 1 – Fill out the appropriate case forms of possessive pronouns in sentences below

Using the pronouns below (underlined in the English gloss) insert their appropriate case forms. For convenience, I have indicated which case of a pronoun goes with which sentence. For this exercise, use both full and short forms of pronouns, if applicable.

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. genitive | 4. dative | 7. instrumental |
| 2. genitive | 5. nominative | 8. genitive |
| 3. accusative | 6. nominative | 9. accusative |

1. Ja se bojim _____	I'm afraid of <u>his brother</u> .
2. On se setio _____	He remembered <u>my sister</u> .
3. Marija voli _____	Marija likes <u>their songs</u> .
4. Dragan je dao ružu _____	Dragan gave a rose to <u>your mother</u> .
5. One su _____	They are <u>my girlfriends</u> .
6. _____ je star.	<u>His coat</u> is old.
6. Volim _____	I love <u>your house</u> .
7. Marija ide sa _____	Marija is going with <u>your aunt</u> .
8. Zorica stalno sedi pored _____	Zorica always sits by <u>my window</u> .
9. Milan stoji uz _____	Milan is standing by <u>your house</u> .

Exercise 2 – Translate the following sentences

For this exercise you need to know both the [present tense](#) and [past tense](#). If you don't have a bi-directional Serbian-English-Serbian dictionary, you may go to the website: <http://www.krstarica.com/dictionary/> to get the words you need for this exercise.

1.	He played with their father.
2.	Her mother doesn't talk to her.
3.	My friends are going to Serbia.
4.	Our mother gave him a cake.
5.	Her husband hates her mother.
6.	His brother doesn't like my girlfriend.
7.	Your house is nice.
8.	His wife is singing with my father.