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III - Possessive expressed with nouns –1

English language makes possession easy – just add apostrophe ‘s’ to the possessor and one instantly knows who owns what:

The way to say it in English:

She is Juan’s sister.

I see Juan’s older uncle’s blue car.

Where is María’s book?

I’m going to Ana’s house.

Not so in Spanish: an apostrophe “s” has no meaning whatsoever in Spanish, so save yourself the trouble and learn the simple rules provided in the following pages. The primary emphasis in expressing the Spanish possessive is the object possessed (this sounds weird – people aren’t possessed....)

(Spanish possessive pronouns are a different matter; see the Resource section for a summary of possessive pronouns, my, your, his, her, our, their, etc.)

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Possessive expressed with nouns – 2

To express the possessive in Spanish, emphasize the object possessed:

The way to say it in Spanish:

She is Juan's sister.

Ella es la hermana de Juan.

I see Juan's older uncle's blue car.

Yo veo el auto azul del tío mayor de Juan.

Where is María's book?

Dónde está el libro de María?

I'm going to Ana's house.

Voy a la casa de Ana.

But if you translate the Spanish back into the English literally, you get:

She is the sister of Juan.

I see the car blue of the uncle older of Juan.

Where is the book of María?

I'm going to the house of Ana.

See? The object possessed comes before all the other descriptive information.

But you can still understand what is being said, right?

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Possessive expressed with nouns - 3

So, the important thing to remember is to state the object possessed first, then work on the descriptive words, and these descriptive words may include color, size, age, or another possessive. (Check out the Vocabulary section for other rules on order with descriptive words.)

Juan's sister ----- think, "sister" first, then work on whose sister

uncle's car ----- think, "car" first, then work on whose car and what about it;

María's book -----think, "book" first, then work on whose book;

Ana's house ----- think, "house" first, then work on whose house.

In the following English possessives, which is the word that will be stated first in Spanish?

Carla's pencil

Felix's cat

Elvira's computer

Ivan's wife

Right:

Carla's pencil – el lápiz de Carla

Felix's cat – el gato de Felix

Elvira's computer – la computadora de Elvira

Ivan's wife – la esposa de Ivan

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Possessive expressed with nouns – 4

So let's practice: simple possession will emphasize the object possessed first, and then any descriptive words will be given for the object possessed:

I see Juan's older uncle's blue car. Yo veo el auto azul del tío mayor de Juan.
Where is María's book? Dónde está el libro de María?
I'm going to Ana's house. Voy a la casa de Ana.

She is Juan's sister. Ella es la hermana de Juan.
Think "sister" first: "la hermana"
Then think, whose sister –
The correct to say this becomes, "la hermana" ("the sister") "de Juan" ("of Juan")
Doesn't that make sense?

In the case of "Juan's older uncle's blue car," think "car" first and then work on the descriptive words, such as "Juan's older uncle's blue..."

The correct way to say this becomes, "el auto" ("the car") - then - what is the next important word? Right - "blue", so it becomes "el auto azul" - then -

Who owns it? Right - "the uncle," so it becomes "el auto azul del tío" - then -

What about the uncle - whose uncle, and what about him? Right, "Juan's older uncle," so it becomes "el auto azul del tío mayor de Juan."

All that simply to say a bunch of stuff about the car which happens to be blue and owned by Juan's older uncle....

If you will remember to do this, then you will not have any trouble with possessives in Spanish.

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Possessive expressed with nouns - 5

A related situation is compound words in Spanish grammar:

In English we just put the two words together and have a compound word: baseball cap, kiddy pool; computer desk; ice-cream store.

In Spanish, the main word is given primary status, with the subordinate words placed after the primary word, and joined by the word “of” (“de”). For instance:

“baseball cap” = “sombbrero de beisbol” = “cap of baseball”

“chicken soup” = “sopa de pollo” = “soup of chicken”

“television program = programa de televisión = program of television

“population statistics” – estadísticos de población = statistics of population

do you agree that you can understand what is said, but don't you also agree that each language has its own way of saying it??

FOOTER