

## Serbian Possessive Pronouns (Prisvojne zamenice u srpskom)

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
<b>njen-a knjiga</b> 'her book'	<b>njen kaput</b> 'her coat'	<b>njen-o ogledalo</b> 'her mirror'
<b>njen-e knjige</b> 'her books'	<b>njen-i kaputi</b> 'her coats'	<b>njen-a ogledala</b> '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:

<b>f</b> =feminine gender	<b>they-m</b> = they referring to masculine persons/things
<b>m</b> =masculine gender	<b>they-f</b> =they referring to feminine persons/things
<b>n</b> =neuter gender	<b>they-n</b> =they referring to neuter persons/things
<b>sg</b> = singular	<b>pl</b> = 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 <sup>rd</sup> person (m) njegov 'his' m.sg, n.sg, f.sg / m.pl, n.pl, f.pl	3 <sup>rd</sup> person (n) njegov 'it's' m.sg, n.sg, f.sg / m.pl, n.pl, f.pl	3 <sup>rd</sup> person (f) njen 'her' m.sg, n.sg, f.sg / m.pl, n.pl, f.pl
<b>Nominative</b>	<b>moj</b> (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	<b>tvoj</b> (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	<b>njegov</b> (-e, -a/ -i, -a, -e)	<b>njegov</b> (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	<b>njen</b> (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)
<b>Accusative</b>	<b>moj</b> (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	<b>tvoj</b> (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	<b>njegov</b> (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	<b>njegov</b> (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	<b>njen</b> (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)
<b>Genitive</b>	<b>moj-eg</b> (-eg, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	<b>tvoj-eg</b> (-eg, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	<b>njegov-og</b> (-og, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	<b>njegov-og</b> (-og, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	<b>njen-og</b> (-og, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)
<b>Dative</b>	<b>moj-em</b> (em, -oj / -im, -im, im)	<b>tvoj-em</b> (em, -oj / -im, -im, im)	<b>njegov-om</b> (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	<b>njegov-om</b> (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	<b>njen-om</b> (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)
<b>Locative</b>	<b>moj-em</b> (em, -oj / - im, -im, -im)	<b>tvoj-em</b> (em, -oj / -im, -im, im)	<b>njegov-om</b> (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	<b>njegov-om</b> (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	<b>njen-om</b> (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)
<b>Instrumental</b>	<b>moj-im</b> (-im, -om / -im, -im, im)	<b>tvoj-im</b> (-im, -om/ -im, -im, -im)	<b>njegov-im</b> (-im, -om / -im, -im, -im)	<b>njegov-im</b> (-im, -om / -im, -im, -im)	<b>njen-im</b> (-im, -om / -im, -im, -im)
<b>PLURAL</b>	naš 'our'	vaš 'your'	njihov 'their'- m	their 'their'-n	their 'their'-f
<b>Nominative</b>	<b>naš</b> (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	<b>vaš</b> (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	<b>njihov</b> (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)	<b>njihov</b> (-e, -a / - i, -a, -e)	<b>njihov</b> (-e, -a / -i, -a, -e)
<b>Accusative</b>	<b>naš</b> (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	<b>vaš</b> (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	<b>njihov</b> (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)	<b>njihov</b> (-e, -u / - e, -a, -e)	<b>njihov</b> (-e, -u / -e, -a, -e)
<b>Genitive</b>	<b>naš-eg</b> (-eg, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	<b>vaš-eg</b> (-eg, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	<b>njihov-og</b> (-og, -e / -ih, - ih, -ih)	<b>njihov-og</b> (-og, -e / -ih, -ih, -ih)	<b>njihov-og</b> (-og, -e / -ih, - ih, -ih)
<b>Dative</b>	<b>naš-em</b> (em, -oj / -im, -im, im)	<b>vaš-em</b> (em, -oj / -im, -im, im)	<b>njihov-om</b> (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	<b>njihov-om</b> (-om, -oj / -im, - im, -im)	<b>njihov-om</b> (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)
<b>Locative</b>	<b>naš-em</b> (-em, -oj / - im, -im, -im)	<b>vaš-im</b> (-im, -om / -im, -im, im)	<b>njihov-om</b> (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	<b>njihov-om</b> (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)	<b>njihov-om</b> (-om, -oj / -im, -im, -im)
<b>Instrumental</b>	<b>naš-im</b> (-im, -om / - im, -im, -im)	<b>vaš-im</b> (-im, -om / - im, -im, -im)	<b>njihov-im</b> (-im, -om / - im, -im, -im)	<b>njihov-im</b> (-im, -om / -im, -im, -im)	<b>njihov-im</b> (-im, -om / -im, -im, -im)

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).

The abbreviations used in Table 2:

<b>fem</b> =feminine gender	<b>sing</b> = singular	<b>acc</b> = accusative	<b>inst</b> =instrumental
<b>masc</b> =masculine gender	<b>pl</b> = plural	<b>dat</b> =dative	<b>loc</b> =locative
<b>neut</b> =neuter gender	<b>nom</b> = nominative	<b>gen</b> = genitive	

**Table 2: Some examples of possessive pronouns used in sentences**

	<b>Serbian</b>	<b>English</b> (the relevant pronoun is underlined)	<b>Case, gender and number of the possessive pronoun</b>
1.	<b>Njegova</b> mama je lepa.	<u>His</u> mother is beautiful.	njegova = nom. fem. sing.
2.	<b>Njegov</b> otac je visok.	<u>His</u> father is tall.	njegov = nom. masc. sing.
3.	<b>Njihov</b> ujak je umro.	<u>Their</u> uncle died.	njihov = nom. masc. sing.
4.	<b>Naše</b> sestre su srećne.	<u>Our</u> sisters are happy.	naše = nom. masc. pl.
5.	<b>Naš</b> brat živi u Americi.	<u>Our</u> father lives in America.	naš = nom. masc. sing.
6.	On je video <b>moj*</b> stan.	He saw <u>my</u> apartment.	<u>moj</u> = acc. masc. sing.
7.	On je video <b>mojeg</b> ujaka.	He saw <u>my</u> uncle.	<u>moj/mojeg</u> = acc. masc. sing.
8.	On se plaši <b>mog*</b> ujaka.	He is afraid of <u>my</u> uncle.	<u>mog</u> = gen. masc. sing.
9.	Ja sam dao ovo <b>njenim</b> sestrama.	I gave this (to) <u>her</u> sisters.	<u>her</u> = dat. masc. sing.
10.	Knjiga je na <b>mom*</b> stolu.	The book is on <u>my</u> table.	<u>mom</u> = loc. masc. sing.
11.	Mi putujemo sa <b>njegovim</b> roditeljima.	We are traveling with <u>his</u> parents.	<u>njegovim</u> = inst. masc. 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 [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</u> brother.
2. On se setio _____	He remembered <u>my</u> sister.
3. Marija voli _____	Marija likes <u>their</u> songs.
4. Dragan je dao ružu _____.	Dragan gave a rose <u>to your</u> mother.
5. One su _____.	They are <u>my</u> girlfriends.
6. _____ je star.	<u>His</u> coat is old.
6. Volim _____.	I love <u>your</u> house.
7. Marija ide sa _____.	Marija is going with <u>your</u> aunt.
8. Zorica stalno sedi pored _____.	Zorica always sits by <u>my</u> window.
9. Milan stoji uz _____.	Milan is standing by <u>your</u> house.

### 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.