

Genitives and Possessives

For a change, things are going to be quite straightforward. This is about what happens when you get a possessive pronoun between two nouns.

We all know what happens when the definite article comes between two noun - the article and the second noun appear in the genitive, e.g.

Taigh nan Cumantan
The House of Commons

But what happens when we get a noun phrase that involves a possessive such as 'the house of my mother'? The same thing really:

taigh mo mhàthar
my mothers house

And this is where life gets easier for a change. You probably remember that a verbal noun is followed by the genitive - if it's a definite noun that is e.g.

a' dèanamh aran
making bread

a' briseadh an dorais
breaking the door

Traditionally, because verbal nouns like dèanamh are grammatically nouns any noun following one would have to be in the genitive eg a' dèanamh arain, but this usage today is definitely marked - meaning that it's so old fashioned that nobody uses it in spoken Gaelic and few people in very high register texts. So a definite no-no for text messages and letters of complaint to An Comann Gàidhealach because their website hardly has any Gaelic.

But what does this have to do with possessives? Well, you can have a possessive after a verbal noun - and this is where you're in luck because it doesn't require the genitive:

a' bualadh mo mhàthair
beating my mother

a' moladh do thaigh
praising your house

Sin agad e!