

APOSTROPHE

The possessive case shows ownership. Use the apostrophe to show the possessive of nouns and indefinite pronouns.

Singular Possession Rules

1. Add 's to singular nouns

Harry's book

school's enrollment

FBI's files

2. Add 's to indefinite pronouns

anybody's lesson

somebody's car

everyone's personality

3. Add either ' or 's to proper singular nouns ending in s, but the ' alone is preferred

Keats' poem or

Keats's poem

Ms. Evans' house or

Ms. Evans's house

4. Add 's to only the last word in singular compound nouns

her mother-in-law's hat

his brother-in-law's tools

Plural Possession Rules

1. Add only the ' to plural nouns ending in s

the girls' coats

the boys' shoes

the Joneses' cars

2. Add 's to plural nouns not ending in s

the men's hats

the women's purses

the children's toys

3. Add the ' to only the last word in plural compound nouns that end in s

the Dean of Students' office

the Vice President of Legal Affairs' speech

Other Possession Rules

1. Add the 's when indicating **individual** ownership of two or more individuals

Mary's and Jane's books

Jim's and Bob's houses

2. Add an ' to only the final name when indicating joint ownership

Mary and Jane's books

Peter and Paul's car

3. Use both the word **of** and 's to show one possession among several of the same kind

an old hat of Tom's

a new dress of Jane's

4. Do not use the ' with the possessive form of personal pronouns. The personal pronouns *his*, *hers*, *theirs*, *its*, *ours*, *yours*, and the pronoun *whose* are possessives as they stand and do not require the apostrophe

his father

a book of hers

a friend of theirs

its nest

5. Do not confuse the possessive pronoun **whose** with the contraction **who's (who is)**

Who's coming over to dinner?

Whose plate is this?

6. Do not confuse the possessive **its** with the contraction **it's (it is)**

*We know **it's** a robin.*

*We couldn't find **its** nest.*

Other Apostrophe Uses

1. Use an ' to indicate the omission of a letter (contraction)

doesn't

can't

won't

o'clock

2. Use an ' to indicate the omission of a number

the blizzard of '89

3. Use an ' to show that a word is given a loose or colloquial pronunciation and spelling

"An' one o' the boys is goin' t' sick," he said.

4. Use an 's or s to form the plurals of letters and numbers used as words

Cross your t's and dot your i's

Count to 10,000 by 1000's

You have too many of 's in your sentence.

1900's or 1900s