

Name _____

Possessives – How To Avoid an Apostrophe Catastrophe!

☞ A noun that precedes another noun and names the owner of the second noun is said to be in the **possessive case**. Nouns in the possessive case **use an apostrophe to show the relationship of ownership**.

E.g. = Sandy's paws

Rule #1: ✍ To form the possessive of a singular noun, add 's.

For example: *Bob's shoes*
the man's shoes
*the boss's shoes**

* **Caveat:** There is a split of opinion about this rule as it pertains to *singular nouns that end in "s."* The *MLA Handbook* says to add an 's to all singular nouns (Mr. Jones's shoes, Jess's Porsche; my boss's bad attitude). However, *Evergreen* advises that only an apostrophe be added (Mr. Jones' shoes, Jess' Porsche; my boss' bad attitude.)

✍ To form the possessive of a **plural noun that doesn't end in s** (e.g., children, men, women, oxen, people), add 's.

For example: *the children's shoes*
the people's choice

This is the **only** time when you wouldn't add 's to show possession

This rule triggers the most errors.

✍ To form the possessive of a **plural noun that ends in s**, add **only an apostrophe**.

For example: the shoes of 2 or more boys = *the boys' shoes*
the principles of our founding fathers = *our founding fathers' principles*.

Rule #2: Possessive personal pronouns (his, hers, its, yours, theirs, ours) never take an apostrophe.

*This book could be **his** book, but I suspect it is **hers**.*
*The cat licked **its** paws.*

Rule #3: Separate and Joint Possession

✍ To indicate separate ownership—that is, to show that each person possesses something independently of the other—the 's is used after each noun.

Megan's and Leah's essays were insightful and clearly written.

✍ If two or more nouns are used together to indicate joint ownership—that is, to show that something is possessed by the pair or group jointly—the 's is used after the last noun only.

Andrew and Jack's report was a masterpiece.

Rule #4: If the noun isn't naming an owner—if it's just a plural noun—don't use an apostrophe!

The students and the teachers walked past the flowers.
The students' shoes and the teachers' shoes crushed the flowers' blossoms.

Notes:

In class practice:

Write a phrase that uses correct apostrophe punctuation to show the following owners of a Porsche:

1. Nick = _____ Porsche
2. Sophie = _____ Porsche
3. Deanna = _____ Porsche
4. Kyle Jones = _____ Porsche
5. the man = _____ Porsche
6. the woman = _____ Porsche
7. the family = _____ Porsche
8. the Tillmans = _____ Porsche
9. Cam and Katie (they own it jointly) = _____ Porsche
10. Ali and Ciara (they each own one separately) = _____ Porsches

What is the difference in meaning between:

- *my brother's Porsche*
- *my brothers' Porsche*

- the students' grades
- the student's grades

HW: Fix its-- Fix anything that needs fixing)

1. We just celebrated Barack's and Michelle's wedding anniversary.
2. Sigfried's and Roy's tiger ran amok on stage.
3. Beethoven's and Mozart's symphonies were played on the radio last night.
4. The childrens playground was flooded after the snowdrifts melted.
5. I love the theories of Ben Bloom, and I frequently cite Blooms taxonomy in my essays.
6. A dog is mans best friend; diamonds are a girls best friend.
7. This iPod is theirs; we gave ours to Taylor.
8. Dinners at Mr. Jones house are always more delicious then dinners at the Scott's house.
9. When your writing a paper, its very important to use possessive pronouns correctly. Whose going to take you're writing seriously if theirs a mistake in every sentence?