POSSESSIVES AND PLURALS OF NOUNS

Possessives are sometimes confused with simple plurals of nouns. The trick to identifying possessives is to ask yourself the question, “Who does it belong to?” (or if you want to be very precise, you can say, “Whom does it belong to?” or “To whom does it belong to?”). If the answer to your question does not end in s, then add an apostrophe and s. If it does end in s, simply add an apostrophe.

one boys bike  Who does it belong to?  boy  Add ‘s  boy’s bike

two boys bikes  Who do they belong to?  boys  Add ‘  boys’ bikes

the mans hat  Who does it belong to?  man  Add ‘s  man’s hat

the mens hats  Who do they belong to?  men  Add ‘s  men’s hat

This trick will always work, but you must ask the question each time. If you just look at the word, you may think the name of the owner ends in an s when it really doesn’t. See if you can write the following possessives correctly. (Note: even inanimate things like dollars and days can take the possessive.)

the womens ideas  the womans dress  Dicks apartment  James apartment

the Smiths house  Mr. Smiths house  my sister-in-laws shop  someone elses turn

two dollars worth  a days work  Saturdays game

Possessive pronouns are already possessive and don’t need anything added to them:  my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, its, our, ours, their, theirs, whose.

Note particularly its, their, whose, and your. They are already possessive and do not take apostrophes. The contractions it’s, they’re, who’s, and you’re stand for two words (it is, they are, who is, and you are) and so need apostrophes.

Sentences for practice:

1. My cousins love their grandfathers house.
2. Students grades depend on their tests.
3. I invited James to my parents house.
4. My parents went to James house.
5. Anns job pays more than yours.
6. Last years crop was the best yet.

Plurals of nouns. The plurals of most English nouns are made by simply adding -s. However, there are a number of exceptions:

A. Some plurals can be pronounced only by adding a full syllable. Add s if the noun already ends in silent e, otherwise add es:  birches, edges, misses, dishes.

B. Most common nouns ending in y preceded by a consonant or qu change y to i and add es:  beauties, bodies, caddies, soliloquies. Words ending in y preceded by a vowel add s:  bays, boys, toys.

Form the plurals of the following words. Use the dictionary when the above rules don’t tell you how to form the plural.

belief  genius  story  radius  speech

theory  bath  wish  scarf  child

church  hero  forty  wife  handful

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