

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