

Showing Possession

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Apostrophes can be used to show that something belongs to someone or something. This is called **possession**.

When we are talking about one thing we call this **singular**.

For example, a boy or a bike.

When we need to say that something belongs to something singular, we put **an apostrophe and then an 's' at the end** of the name that it belongs to.



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For example

Person: The **boy's** bike.

Common noun: The **bike's** handlebars were bent in the crash.

Proper Noun: **India's** national flag has three horizontal stripes.



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If the noun is singular and ends in -s, add -'s, as in the following examples:

My **boss's** job disappeared due to budget cuts.

The **class's** average score was impressive.

Robert Burns's poetry is difficult to understand.

Charles Dickens's novels are many and varied.

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Traditional **exceptions** to this tend to be old names which end with a vowel then s:

In Sunday school, we studied **Jesus'** miracles and **Moses'** parting of the Red Sea.

Sophocles' plays portray interesting relationships.

Often it is hard to find an official agreement, and there are eternal arguments over which is correct:

St Thomas's Hospital

St Thomas' Hospital

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When we are talking about **more than one thing** we call this **plural**.

For example, a pack of **wolves** or a group of **countries**.

If the noun is plural and ends in –s, add only an apostrophe.

For example, the **wolves'** prey was a deer.



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If the noun is plural and does not end in -s, add -'s.

The **children's** play is on Friday evening.

The **geese's** flight in formation was amazing.

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Plural nouns can be spelt using a variety of different letter endings. As long as the noun ends with an 's', we still show an apostrophe of possession using an apostrophe without an 's' after it.

Here are some examples...



The **ponies'** diet is mostly grass.



The **boys'** fancy dress costumes attracted a lot of attention.



The **loaves'** glaze is shiny.



Two of the cascade **volcanoes'** summits are visible in the photo.



The **houses'** chimneys are all made from brick.

Points to remember:

Do not use an apostrophe in the possessive pronouns *his, hers, its, whose, ours, yours, or theirs*.

Do not use an apostrophe in nouns that are plural but not possessive, such as *CDs, 1000s, or 1960s*.

When do cats need an apostrophe?

Is there more than one cat?

yes

no

Is the next word something that belongs to the cats?

Is the next word something that belongs to the cat?

yes

no

no

No apostrophe needed!

yes

Apostrophe needed after the letter s.
e.g. The cats' hats were very cool in the 1920s.

(Apostrophe after the letter s because there is more than one cat.)

Apostrophe needed before the letter s.
e.g. The cat's hats were very cool in the 1920s.

(Apostrophe before the letter s because there is only one cat.)

The word 'hats' does not need an apostrophe in the above example as the letter s is only there to make the word plural.

Which sentence shows the apostrophe put into the correct place to show possession?

Along the street, the houses' chimneys were painted all different colours.

Along the street, the house's chimneys were painted all different colours.

Along the street, the houses chimney's were painted all different colours.

Which sentence shows the apostrophe put into the correct place to show possession?

The heroe's medals were presented at the ceremony.

The heroes' medals were presented at the ceremony.

The heroes medal's were presented at the ceremony.

Which sentence shows the apostrophe put into the correct place to show possession?

The dog's tails wagged as they waited for him to throw the ball.

The dogs' tails wagged as they waited for him to throw the ball.

The dogs tail's wagged as they waited for him to throw the ball.

Which sentence shows the apostrophe put into the correct place to show possession?

Amy cleaned out the ponies' stables.

Amy cleaned out the ponie's stables.

Amy cleaned out the ponies stable's.

