

LESSON ONE. USE APOSTROPHES CORRECTLY FOR POSSESSION AND CONTRACTION.**The Possessive Case of Nouns**

1. The possessive case of nouns is formed by adding an *apostrophe* and an *s* to words which do not end with an *s* or a *z* sound:

the boy's room, the children's school;

and by adding only the apostrophe to words which do end with an *s* or a *z* sound: *the boys' room, Dickens' novel.*

If, however, the word ending in *s* or *z* is a proper noun with only one syllable, an apostrophe and an *s* are added to the word: *Keats's sonnets, Santa Claus's reindeer.*

NOTE: Some classical names and other names that would be awkward to pronounce with an added apostrophe and *s* use only the apostrophe: *Xerxes' chariot, Moses' tablets.*

2. Care must be taken in forming the possessive form of nouns ending with *y* because although the singular and plural forms sound the same way, they are spelled differently.

the baby's cry [one baby's cry]

the babies' murmurings [the murmurings of several babies]

3. When possession is shared by two or more nouns, this fact is indicated by using the possessive case for the last noun in the series: *Jose, Fred, and Edward's canoe.*

But when two or more nouns each possess different objects, use apostrophes for each: *Joe's and Ernie's cars, Mary's and Tiffany's jobs*

4. When two nouns refer to the same person, the second noun is in the possessive case.

the mother of the bride's yellow dress [The bride probably wore white. If the phrase sounds awkward, the use of two possessives does not improve it much: *the bride's mother's yellow dress.*]
Better: *The yellow dress of the bride's mother.*

5. Inanimate things do not normally "possess" anything. The possessive form using the preposition *of* is used in order to express an arrangement or part of inanimate things.

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|--------------------|
| piles of coats | NOT | *coats' piles |
| the edge of the chisel | NOT | *the chisel's edge |

However, writers have long made exception to this rule in such matters as time, money, and transportation: *a day's work, a dollar's worth, the ship's compass.* Today more and more inanimate things are taking the apostrophe form of the possessive: *the razor's edge, the book's success, education's failure.* Obviously, no clear rule can be stated where *the razor's edge* is approved and *the chisel's edge* is not.

6. To form the possessive of a plural noun that does not end in s, add an apostrophe and an s.

women + 's = women's people + 's = people's trout + 's = trout's

7. To form the possessive of indefinite pronouns, use an apostrophe and an s.

everyone + 's = everyone's no one + 's = no one's

Personal Pronoun Possessives *hers, its, theirs, yours,* and *oneself* never have an apostrophe.

8. Use an apostrophe in a contraction. An apostrophe replaces one or more letters that are left out.

she's = she is hasn't = has not shouldn't = should not it's = it is

it's is always it is

9. Use an apostrophe to show the omission of numbers in a date.

the class of '85 (the class of 1985) *an '84 Chevy* (a 1984 Chevy)

10. Use an apostrophe and s to form the plurals of letters, figures, and words used as words.

two A's three 10's no if's, and's, or but's

POSSESSIVE CASE OF NOUNS: Exercise 1

A possessive relationship is indicated in each of the following by the use of the words *belonging to*. Whenever it is correct to do so, rewrite the phrase using the possessive case with an apostrophe. When the use of the apostrophe is incorrect, rewrite the phrase using the preposition *of*.

EXAMPLES:

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| The hat belonging to John | <i>John's hat</i> |
| The roof belonging to the house | <i>The roof of the house</i> |

1. The dress belonging to the woman _____
2. The club belonging to the women _____
3. The broom belonging to the janitor _____
4. The room belonging to the janitors _____
5. The novel belonging to Hughes _____
6. The chair belonging to the secretary _____
7. The suite belonging to the bosses _____
8. The mast belonging to the ship _____
9. The floor belonging to the room _____
10. The gyroscope belonging to the airplane _____
11. The essay belonging to John Abrams _____
12. The canoe belonging to Dick and John _____
13. The sweater belonging to Dick and the sweater belonging to John

14. The works belonging to Shakespeare _____
15. The house belonging to the Smiths _____
16. The rails belonging to the fence _____

17. The firm belonging to Salter, Stone, and Atlas _____

18. The firms belonging individually to Salter, Stone, and Atlas

19. The books belonging to Amos _____

20. The ring belonging to John's mother-in-law _____

21. the gift of the class of 1999 _____

22. the repeated letters in "Mississippi" _____

23. the rings of the two girls _____

24. the idea of someone _____

25. the right of everyone _____

26. contraction of *let us* _____

27. five of the letter "b" _____

28. the fault of the binary system _____

29. contraction of *are not* _____

30. the RAM of the computer _____

In each of the following, replace the of-phrase with the idiomatic expression using the apostrophe.

EXAMPLE:

work of a day *a day's work*

31. a tour of three weeks _____

32. worth of seven dollars _____

33. time of one hour _____

34. a vacation of two months _____

35. worth of his money _____

POSSESSIVE CASE OF NOUNS: Exercise 2

Directions: Provide the proper corrections to the following:

1. The shirt will not lose its color when its washed.
2. Our house is almost exactly like theirs.
3. All the mens names should be signed on the last page.
4. We called two doctors offices, but couldnt find any help.
5. The guide showed their friends the secret passage.
6. January sales in stores are often of womens coats.
7. We cant find a phone number in John Hollis name.
8. Theres a mistake in Mrs. Blacks bank account.
9. We like to watch the wild geeses flight each fall.
10. Where can I get a coat like yours?
11. Our records good, but theirs is better.
12. I want to ask for James advice.
13. Where did you put Mrs. Fergusons letter?
14. Both of my two bosses children were cute.
15. The letters mistakes should be sent to the newspapers section on retractions.
16. The 60s were a hippies delight.
17. To make the schools honor roll, you need all As and Bs.
18. How many roads must a man walk down, before you call him a man?
19. How many snow days did we get in the Blizzard of 96?
20. Ben and Jerrys ice cream is the best.