BRACKEN BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS CLINIC

GRAMMAR

PLURALS and POSSESSIVES

Both plurals and possessives (ownership) require an s at the end of a noun, but only the possessive requires an apostrophe (’) in addition to the s.

PLURALS

General Rule
Add an s to the singular noun form:
e.g., house—houses idea—ideas club—clubs fund—funds menu—menus flight—flights

Exceptions to the general rule
• For a singular noun ending in s, x, ch, sh, or z, add es to form the plural.
  e.g., virus—viruses tax—taxes match—matches dish—dishes business—businesses
  sketch—sketches
  Note: When the ch sounds like a k, just add an s.
  e.g., stomach—stomachs.

• For a singular noun ending in y that is preceded by a consonant, change the y to i and add es.
  e.g., city—cities country—countries policy—policies proxy—proxies copy—copies

• For a singular noun ending in o that is preceded by a consonant
  o sometimes you add an s: e.g., zero—zeros photo—photos
  o sometimes you add an es: e.g., potato—potatoes hero—heroes

• For singular nouns ending in f, fe, or ff
  o sometimes you add an s: e.g., safe—safes tariff—tariffs belief—beliefs
  o sometimes you change f or fe to ve and then add an s.
    e.g., wife—wives thief—thieves leaf—leaves life—lives

• For lower case letters, add an apostrophe followed by an s.
  e.g., “dotting the i’s, crossing the t’s”

Nouns with irregular plurals
• Some nouns are simply irregular and their plurals must be learned.
  e.g., woman—women man—men deer—deer moose—moose goose—geese mouse—mice foot—feet

• Some nouns derive from Latin or Greek and their plurals must be learned.
  e.g., index—indices syllabus—syllabi curriculum—curricula criterion—criteria
**Abbreviations**

- For abbreviations that are capitalized, just add a lowercase *s*. e.g., VIPs, PCs, MDs.

*Do not hesitate to consult a dictionary to double check whether you are using the correct plural form.*

**POSSESSIVES**

The possessive form of a noun indicates ownership. To form a possessive, add an apostrophe followed by an *s*. If the noun ends with an *s*, generally just add an apostrophe (’).

**General Rule**

To make a singular or plural noun possessive, add an apostrophe followed by an *s*. e.g., my uncle’s hat Montana’s mountains the boy’s hand the children’s toys Joe’s car

**Rules for nouns ending in *s***

- Use the sound of the word to form its possessive.
  - If the *s* is silent, just add an apostrophe. e.g., Illinois’ highways the corps’ leader
  
  - If a new syllable is created when the possessive is pronounced, add an apostrophe followed by an *s*. e.g., the boss’s approval Dallas’s airport Congress’s vote
  
  - If adding a syllable makes the word difficult to pronounce, add only an apostrophe. e.g., Texas’ panhandle Moses’ story goodness’ sake

- To make a plural noun ending in *s* or *es possessive*, add only an apostrophe. e.g., witnesses’ testimonies attorneys’ fees agencies’ rules boys’ habits heroes’ awards knives’ handles committees’ agendas

*Note: Do not mistake the contraction it’s (it is) for the possessive pronoun its.*