

Bracken Business Communications Clinic

PLURALS and POSSESSIVES

Usually, to make a noun plural (for more than one person, place, or thing), add an *s*, except with certain sounds and irregular words. On the other hand, to show possession or ownership, add an apostrophe (’), an apostrophe followed by an *s* (’*s*), or an *s* followed by an apostrophe (*s*’). Remember, an apostrophe is used to make a noun possessive; it is almost never used to make a noun plural (see exception below).

Plurals

- To make a word plural you usually add an *s*.
house—houses idea—ideas
club—clubs bomb—bombs
menu—menus
- There are many special rules. So, don’t hesitate to use a dictionary or *The Gregg Reference Manual*. Here are the most common of those special rules:
 - For nouns ending in **s**, **x**, **ch**, **sh**, or **z**, you add **es**. (virus—viruses, tax—taxes, match—matches, dish—dishes).
 - For nouns ending in **y** preceded by a vowel, just add **s**. (boy—boys, guy—guys). But if the word ends in **y** preceded by a consonant (a,e,i,o,u), change the **y** to **i** and add **es** (city—cities, fly—flies).
 - For nouns ending in **o** preceded by a consonant, sometimes you add an **s** (zero—zeros, photo—photos) and sometimes you add an **es** (potato—potatoes, hero—heroes).
 - Nouns ending in **f**, **fe**, or **ff** sometimes are made plural by adding an **s** (safe—safes, tariff—tariffs) and sometimes by changing the **f** or **fe** to **ve** and adding an **s** (wife—wives, thief—thieves, leaf—leaves).
 - Some nouns which are simply irregular (woman—women, deer—deer, goose—geese).
- An **’s** is used to make plurals **only** when adding an **s** alone would be confusing.
dotting the *i*’s minding your *p*’s and *q*’s

Possessives

- To make a singular noun possessive, add an apostrophe plus an *s*.
my uncle’s hat the boy’s hand the idea’s author
Joe’s car the color’s tint Montana’s mountains
Illinois’s highways boss’s approval the march’s cattails
Exception: When a singular word ends in **s** and adding an apostrophe **s** would make the work hard to pronounce, add only the apostrophe.
Mr. Hastings’ car Texas’ panhandle Achilles’ heel
- To make a plural noun ending in **s** or **es**, add an apostrophe.
houses’ porches attorneys’ fees the agencies’ conflicting rules
boys’ unusual habits ladies’ organizations heroes’ awards
legislators’ actions pianos’ makers knives’ handles
- To make plural nouns not ending in **s** possessive, add an apostrophe and an *s*.
children’s room women’s dresses deer’s range
geese’s flight path