

# 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