

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
 - sometimes you add an *s*: e.g., zero—zeros photo—photos
 - sometimes you add an *es*: e.g., potato—potatoes hero—heroes
- For singular nouns ending in *f*, *fe*, or *ff*
 - sometimes you add an *s*. e.g., safe—safes tariff—tariffs belief—beliefs
 - 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 lower case *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**.*