PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

Rules by AP Stylebook, Bad Grammar/Good Punctuation,
Chicago Manual of Style, Gregg Reference Manual, and Morson’s

AP STYLEBOOK

**plurals** Follow these guidelines in forming and using plural words:

**MOST WORDS:** Add *s*: *boys, girls, ships, villages.*

**WORDS ENDING IN CH, S, SH, SS, X AND Z:** Add *es*: *churches, lenses, parishes, glasses, boxes, buzzes.* *(Monarchs is an exception.)*

**WORDS ENDING IN IS:** Change *is* to *es*: *oases, parentheses, theses.*

**WORDS ENDING IN Y:** If *y* is preceded by a consonant or *qu*, change *y* to *i* and add *es*: *armies, cities, navies, soliloquies.* *(See PROPER NAMES below for an exception.)*

Otherwise add *s*: *donkeys, monkeys.*

**WORDS ENDING IN O:** If *o* is preceded by a consonant, most plurals require *es*: *buffaloes, dominoes, echoes, heroes, potatoes.* But there are exceptions: *pianos.* See individual entries in this book for many of these exceptions.

**WORDS ENDINGS IN F:** In general, change *f* to *v* and add *es*: *leaves, selves.* *(Roof, roofs is an exception.)*

**LATIN ENDINGS:** Latin-root words ending in *us* change *us* to *i*: *alumnus, alumni.* *(Words that have taken on English endings by common usage are exceptions: prospectuses, syllabuses.)*

Most ending in *a* change to *ae*: *alumna, alumnae* *(formula, formulas is an exception).*

Most ending in *um* add *s*: *memorandums, referendums, stadiums.* Among those that still use the Latin ending: *addenda, curricula, media.*

Use the plural that Webster’s New World College Dictionary lists as most common for a particular sense of word.

**FORM CHANGE:** *man, men; child, children; foot, feet; mouse, mice;* etc.

Caution: When *s* is used with any of these words it indicates possession and must be preceded by an apostrophe: *men’s, children’s,* etc.

**WORDS THE SAME IN SINGULAR AND PLURAL:** *corps, chassis, deer, moose, sheep,* etc.

The sense in a particular sentence is conveyed by the use of a singular or plural verb.

**WORDS PLURAL IN FORM, SINGULAR IN MEANING:** Some take singular verbs: *measles, mumps, news.*

Others take plural verbs: *grits, scissors.*

**COMPOUND WORDS:** Those written solid add *s* at the end: *cupsfuls, handfuls, tablespoonfuls.*

For those that involve separate words or words linked by a hyphen, make the most significant word plural:
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—Significant word first: adjutants general, aides-de-camp, attorneys general, courts-martial, daughters-in-law, passers-by, postmasters general, presidents-elect, secretaries-general, sergeants major.

—Significant word in the middle: assistant attorneys general, deputy chiefs of staff.

—Significant word last: assistant attorneys, assistant corporation counsels, deputy sheriffs, lieutenant colonels, major generals.

WORDS AS WORDS: Do not use 's: His speech had too many "ifs," "ands" and "buts." (Exception to Webster's New World College Dictionary.)

PROPER NAMES: Most ending in es or s or z add es: Charleeses, Joneses, Gonzalezes.

Most ending in y add s even if preceded by a consonant: the Duffys, the Kennedys, the two Kansas Citys. Exceptions include Alleghenies and Rockies.

For others, add s: the Carters, the McCoys, the Mondales.

FIGURES: Add s: The custom began in the 1920s. The airline has two 727s. Temperatures will be in the low 20s. There were five size 7s.

(No apostrophes, an exception to Webster's New World College Dictionary guideline under "apostrophe.")

SINGLE LETTERS: Use 's: Mind your p's and q's. He learned the three R's and brought home a report card with four A's and two B's. The Oakland A's won the pennant.

MULTIPLE LETTERS: Add s: She knows her ABCs. I gave him five IOUs. Four VIPs were there.

PROBLEMS, DOUBTS: Separate entries in this book give plurals for troublesome words and guidance on whether certain words should be used with singular or plural verbs and pronouns. See also collective nouns and possessives.

For questions not covered by this book, use the plural that Webster’s New World College Dictionary lists as most common for a particular sense of a word.

Note also the guidelines that the dictionary provides under its "plural" entry.

**collective nouns** Nouns that denote a unit take singular verbs and pronouns: class, committee, crowd, family, group, herd, jury, orchestra, team.

Some usage examples: The committee is meeting to set its agenda. The jury reached its verdict. A herd of cattle was sold.

Team names and musical group names that are plural take plural verbs. The Yankees are in first place. The Jonas Brothers are popular.

Team or group names with no plural forms also take plural verbs: The Miami Heat are battling for third place. Other examples: Orlando Magic, Oklahoma City Thunder, Utah Jazz.

Many singular names take singular verbs: Coldplay is on tour. Boston is favored in the playoffs. The Cardinal is in the NCAA tournament.
PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

But some proper names that are plural in form take a singular verb: *Brooks Brothers is holding a sale.*

PLURAL IN FORM: Some words that are plural in form become collective nouns and take singular verbs when the group or quantity is regarded as a unit.

Right: *A thousand bushels is a good yield.* (A unit.)
Right: *A thousand bushels were created.* (Individual items.)
Right: *The data is sound.* (A unit.)
Right: *The data have been carefully collected.* (Individual items.)

**possessives** Follow these guidelines:

PLURAL NOUNS NOT ENDING IN S: Add 's: *the alumni's contributions, women's rights.*

PLURAL NOUNS ENDING IN S: Add only an apostrophe: *the churches' needs, the girls' toys, the horses' food, the ships' wake, states' rights, the VIPs' entrance.*

NOUNS PLURAL IN FORM, SINGULAR IN MEANING: Add only an apostrophe: *mathematics' rules, measles' effects.*

(But see INANIMATE OBJECTS below.)

Apply the same principle when a plural word occurs in the formal name of a singular entity: *General Motors' profits, the United States' wealth.*

NOUNS THE SAME IN SINGULAR AND PLURAL: Treat them the same as plurals, even if the meaning is singular: *one corps' location, the two deer's tracks, the lone moose's antlers.*

SINGULAR NOUNS NOT ENDING IN S: Add 's: *the church's needs, the girl's toys, the horse's food, the ship's route, the VIP's seat.*

Some style guides say that singular nouns ending in *s* sounds such as *ce, x,* and *z* may take either the apostrophe alone or 's. See SPECIAL EXPRESSIONS, but otherwise, for consistency and ease in remembering a rule, always use 's if the word does not end in the letter *s: Butz's policies, the fox's den, the justice's verdict, Marx's theories, the prince's life, Xerox's profits.*

SINGULAR COMMON NOUNS ENDING IN S: Add 's unless the next word begins with *s: the hostess's invitation, the hostess' seat; the witness's answer, the witness' story.*

SINGULAR PROPER NAMES ENDING IN S: Use only an apostrophe: *Achilles' heel, Agnes' book, Ceres' rites, Descartes' theories, Dickens' novels, Euripides' dramas, Hercules' labors, Jesus' life, Jules' seat, Kansas' schools, Moses' law, Socrates' life, Tennessee Williams' plays, Xerxes' armies.*

SPECIAL EXPRESSIONS: The following exceptions to the general rule for words not ending in *s* apply to words that end in an *s* sound and are followed by a word that begins with *s: for appearance' sake, for conscience' sake, for goodness' sake.* Use 's otherwise: *the appearance's cost, my conscience's voice.*

PRONOUNS: Personal interrogative and relative pronouns have separate forms for the possessive. None involve an apostrophe: *mine, ours, your, yours, his, hers, its, theirs, whose.*
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Caution: If you are using an apostrophe with a pronoun, always double-check to be sure that the meaning calls for a contraction: you're, it's, there's, who's.

Follow the rules listed above in forming the possessives of other pronouns: another's idea, others' plans, someone's guess.

COMPOUND WORDS: Applying the rules above, add an apostrophe or 's to the word closest to the object possessed: the major general's decision, the major generals' decisions, the attorney general's request, the attorneys general's request. See the plurals entry for guidelines on forming the plurals of these words.

Also: anyone else's attitude, John Adams Jr.'s father, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania's motion. Whenever practical, however, recast the phrase to avoid ambiguity: the motion by Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania.

JOINT POSSESSION, INDIVIDUAL POSSESSION: Use a possessive form after only the last word if ownership is joint: Fred and Sylvia's apartment, Fred and Sylvia's stocks.

Use a possessive form after both words if the objects are individually owned: Fred's and Sylvia's books.

DESCRIPTIVE PHRASES: Do not add an apostrophe to a word ending in s when it is used primarily in a descriptive sense: citizens band radio, a Cincinnati Reds infielder, a teachers college, a Teamsters request, a writers guide.

Memory Aid: The apostrophe usually is not used if for or by rather than of would be appropriate in the longer form: a radio band for citizens, a college for teachers, a guide for writers, a request by the Teamsters.

An 's is required, however, when a term involves a plural word that does not end in s: a children's hospital, a people's republic, the Young Men's Christian Association.

DESCRIPTIVE NAMES: Some governmental, corporate and institutional organizations with a descriptive word in their names use an apostrophe; some do not. Follow the user's practice: Actors' Equity, Diners Club, the Ladies' Home Journal, the National Governors Association. See separate entries for these and similar names frequently in the news.

QUASI POSSESSIVES: Follow the rules above in composing the possessive form of words that occur in such phrases as a day's pay, two weeks' vacation, three days' work, your money's worth.

Frequently, however, a hyphenated form is clearer: a two-week vacation, a three-day job.

DOUBLE POSSESSIVE: Two conditions must apply for a double possessive – a phrase such as a friend of John's – to occur: 1. The word after of must refer to an animate object, and 2. The word before of must involve only a portion of the animate object's possessions.

Otherwise, do not use the possessive form of the word after of: The friends of John Adams mourned his death. (All the friends were involved.) He is a friend of the college. (Not college's, because college is inanimate.)

Memory Aid: This construction occurs most often, and quite naturally, with the possessive forms of personal pronouns: He is a friend of mine.

INANIMATE OBJECTS: There is no blanket rule against creating a possessive form for an inanimate object, particularly if the object is treated in a personified sense. See some of the earlier examples, and note these: death's call, the wind's murmur.
In general, however, avoid excessive personalization of inanimate objects, and give preference to an *of* construction when it fits the makeup of the sentence. For example, the earlier references to *mathematics' rules* and *measles' effects* would better be phrased: *the rules of mathematics, the effects of measles.*

**BAD GRAMMAR/GOOD PUNCTUATION**

(coming soon)

**CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE (16TH EDITION)**

5.19 Genitive case

The genitive case denotes (1) ownership, possession, or occupancy {the architect’s drawing board} {Arnie’s room}; (2) a relationship {the philanthropist’s secretary}; (3) agency {the company’s representative}; (4) description {a summer’s day}; (5) the role of a subject {the boy’s application} {the boy applied}; (6) the role of an object {the prisoner’s release} {someone released the prisoner}; or (7) an idiomatic shorthand form of an *of*-phrase (e.g., one hour’s delay is equal to a delay of one hour). The genitive case is also called the possessive case, but possessive is a misleadingly narrow term, given the seven different functions of this case. The genitive is formed in different ways, depending on the noun or nouns and their usage in a sentence. The genitive of a singular noun is formed by adding ‘s {driver’s seat} {engineer’s opinion}. The genitive of a plural noun that ends in -s or -es is formed by adding an apostrophe {parents’ house} {foxes’ den}. The genitive of an irregular plural noun is formed by adding ‘s {women’s rights} {mice’s cage}. The genitive of a compound noun is formed by adding the appropriate ending to the last word in the compound {parents-in-law’s message}. See also 7.15–28.

5.20 The “of”-genitive

The preposition *of* may precede a noun or proper name to express relationship, agency, or possession. The choice between a genitive ending and an *of* construction depends mostly on style. Compare the *perils of Penelope with the saucer of the chef.* Some nouns can readily take either the genitive form or the *of*-genitive {the theater’s name} {the name of the theater}, but others sound right only in the *of*-genitive. Compare *everything’s end with the end of everything.* The *of*-genitive is also useful when a double genitive is called for {an idea of Hill’s} {an employee of my grandfather’s business}.

7.5 Standard plural forms

Most nouns form their plural by adding *s* or—if they end in *ch, j, s, sh, x,* or *z*—by adding *es.* Most English speakers will not need help with such plural forms as *thumbs, churches, fixes,* or *boys,* and these are not
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listed in standard dictionary entries, including those in *Webster’s Collegiate*. (All inflected forms are listed in *Webster’s Third New International*; moreover, the online versions of most dictionaries accommodate the correct plural forms in their search engines.) Most dictionaries do, however, give plural forms for words ending in *y* that change to *ies* (*baby*, etc.); for words ending in *o* (*ratio*, *potato*, etc.); for certain words of Latin or Greek origin such as *crocus*, *datum*, or *alumna*; and for all words with irregular plurals (*child*, *leaf*, etc.).

7.6 Alternative plural forms

Where *Webster’s* gives two forms of the plural—whether as primary and secondary variants, like *zeros* and *zeroes*, or as equal variants, like *millennia* and *millenniums*—Chicago normally opts for the first. In some cases, however, different forms of the plural are used for different purposes. A book may have two *indexes* and a mathematical expression two *indices*, as indicated in the *Webster’s* entry for *index*.

7.7 Plurals of compound nouns

*Webster’s* gives the plural form of most compounds that are tricky (*fathers-in-law*, *coups d’état*, *courts-martial*, * chefs d’oeuvre*, etc.). For those not listed, common sense can usually provide the answer.

- bachelors of science
- masters of arts
- spheres of influence
- child laborers

7.8 Plurals of proper nouns

Names of persons and other capitalized nouns normally form the plural by adding *s* or *es*. Rare exceptions, including the last example, are generally listed in *Webster’s*.

- Tom, Dick, and Harry; *pl.* Toms, Dicks, and Harrys
- the Jones family, *pl.* the Joneses
- the Martinez family, *pl.* the Martinezes
- the Bruno family, *pl.* the Brunos
- Sunday, *pl.* Sundays
- Germany, *pl.* Germanys
- Pakistani, *pl.* Pakistanis
- but
  - Romany, *pl.* Romanies
PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

An apostrophe is never used to form the plural of a family name: “The Jeffersons live here” (not “Jefferson’s”). For the apostrophe in the possessive form of proper nouns, see 7.16.

7.9 Plural form for Native American group names

According to current preference, names of Native American groups usually form their plural by adding s. In earlier writings the s was often omitted (indeed, Webster’s has continued to present both forms as equal variants).

- the Hopis of northeastern Arizona (not Hopi)
- the language spoken by Cherokees
- but
- the languages of the Iroquois

7.10 Singular form used for the plural

Names ending in an unpronounced s or x are best left in the singular form.

- the seventeen Louis of France
- the two Dumas, father and son
- two Charlevoix (or, better, two towns called Charlevoix)

7.11 Plural form of italicized words

If italicized terms—names of newspapers, titles of books, and the like—are used in the plural, the s is normally set in roman. A title already in plural form, however, may be left unchanged. In case of doubt, avoid the plural by rephrasing.

- two Chicago Tribunes and three Milwaukee Journal Sentinels
- several Madame Bovarys
- too many sics
- but
- four New York Times

The plural endings to italicized foreign words should also be set in italics.

- Blume, Blumen
- cheval, chevaux
- señor, señores
PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

7.12 Plural form for words in quotation marks

The plural of a word or phrase in quotation marks may be formed in the usual way (without an apostrophe—a departure from Chicago’s former preference). If the result is awkward, reword. Chicago discourages a plural ending following a closing quotation mark.

How many more “To be continueds” (not “To be continued”s) can we expect?

or, better,

How many more times can we expect to see “To be continued”?

7.13 Plurals of noun coinages

Words and hyphenated phrases that are not nouns but are used as nouns usually form the plural by adding s or es. (If in doubt, consult an unabridged dictionary like Webster’s Third New International, which indicates the preferred inflected forms for most nouns, including all of the examples below.)

ifs and buts
dos and don’ts
threes and fours
thank-yous
maybes
yeses and nos

7.14 Plurals for letters, abbreviations, and numerals

Capital letters used as words, numerals used as nouns, and abbreviations usually form the plural by adding s. To aid comprehension, lowercase letters form the plural with an apostrophe and an s. For some exceptions beyond those listed in the last three examples, see 10.43; see also 10.55 (for the International System). For the omission of periods in abbreviations like “BS,” “MA,” and “PhD,” see 10.4.

See also 7.58–65.

the three Rs
x’s and y’s
the 1990s
IRAs
URLs
BSs, MAs, PhDs
vols.
eds.
but
p. (page), pp. (pages)
n. (note), nn. (notes)  
MS (manuscript), MSS (manuscripts)

7.15 Possessive form of most nouns

The possessive of most singular nouns is formed by adding an apostrophe and an s. The possessive of plural nouns (except for a few irregular plurals, like children, that do not end in s) is formed by adding an apostrophe only. For the few exceptions to these principles, see 7.19–21. See also 5.19.

- the horse’s mouth
- a bass’s stripes
- puppies’ paws
- children’s literature
- a herd of sheep’s mysterious disappearance

7.16 Possessive of proper nouns, letters, and numbers

The general rule extends to proper nouns, including names ending in s, x, or z, in both their singular and plural forms, as well as letters and numbers.

**SINGULAR FORMS**
- Kansas’s legislature
- Chicago’s lakefront
- Marx’s theories
- Jesus’s adherents
- Berlioz’s works
- Tacitus’s Histories
- Borges’s library
- Dickens’s novels
- Malraux’s masterpiece
- Josquin des Prez’s motets

**PLURAL FORMS**
- the Lincolns’ marriage
- the Williamses’ new house
- the Martinezes’ daughter
- dinner at the Browns’ (that is, at the Browns’ place)

**LETTERS AND NUMBERS**
- FDR’s legacy
**PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES**

1999’s heaviest snowstorm

### 7.17 Possessive of words and names ending in unpronounced “s”

In a return to Chicago’s earlier practice, words and names ending in an unpronounced s form the possessive in the usual way (with the addition of an apostrophe and an s). This practice not only recognizes that the additional s is often pronounced but adds to the appearance of consistency with the possessive forms of other types of proper nouns.

- Descartes’s three dreams
- the marquis’s mother
- François’s efforts to learn English
- Vaucouleurs’s assistance to Joan of Arc
- Albert Camus’s novels

### 7.18 Possessive of names like “Euripides”

In a departure from earlier practice, Chicago no longer recommends the traditional exception for proper classical names of two or more syllables that end in an eez sound. Such names form the possessive in the usual way (though when these forms are spoken, the additional s is generally not pronounced).

- Euripides’s tragedies
- the Ganges’s source
- Xerxes’s armies

### 7.19 Possessive of nouns plural in form, singular in meaning

When the singular form of a noun ending in s is the same as the plural (i.e., the plural is uninflected), the possessives of both are formed by the addition of an apostrophe only. If ambiguity threatens, use of to avoid the possessive.

- politics’ true meaning
- economics’ forerunners
- this species’ first record (or, better, the first record of this species)

The same rule applies when the name of a place or an organization or a publication (or the last element in the name) is a plural form ending in s, such as the United States, even though the entity is singular.

- the United States’ role in international law
- Highland Hills’ late mayor
- Callaway Gardens’ former curator
PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

the National Academy of Sciences’ new policy

7.20 “For . . . sake” expressions

For the sake of euphony, a few *for . . . sake* expressions used with a singular noun that ends in an *s* end in an apostrophe alone, omitting the additional *s*.

- for goodness’ sake
- for righteousness’ sake

Aside from these traditional formulations, however, the possessive in *for . . . sake* expressions may be formed in the normal way.

- for expedition’s sake
- for appearance’s sake (or for appearances’ sake [plural possessive] or for the sake of appearance)
- for Jesus’s sake

7.21 An alternative practice for words ending in “s”

Some writers and publishers prefer the system, formerly more common, of simply omitting the possessive *s* on all words ending in *s*—hence “Dylan Thomas’ poetry,” “Etta James’ singing,” and “that business’ main concern.” Though easy to apply and economical, such usage disregards pronunciation and is therefore not recommended by Chicago.

7.22 Joint versus separate possession

Closely linked nouns are considered a single unit in forming the possessive when the thing being “possessed” is the same for both; only the second element takes the possessive form.

- my aunt and uncle’s house
- Gilbert and Sullivan’s Iolanthe
- Minneapolis and Saint Paul’s transportation system

When the things possessed are discrete, both nouns take the possessive form.

- my aunt’s and uncle’s medical profiles
- Dylan’s and Jagger’s hairlines
- New York’s and Chicago’s transportation systems
- Gilbert’s or Sullivan’s mustache
7.23 Compound possessives

In compound nouns and noun phrases the final element usually takes the possessive form, even in the plural.

- student assistants’ time cards
- my daughter-in-law’s address
- my sons-in-law’s addresses

7.24 Possessive with genitive

Analogous to possessives, and formed like them, are certain expressions based on the old genitive case. The genitive here implies of.

- in three days’ time
- an hour’s delay (or a one-hour delay)
- six months’ leave of absence (or a six-month leave of absence)

7.25 Possessive versus attributive forms

The line between a possessive or genitive form (see 7.24) and a noun used attributively—to modify another noun—is sometimes fuzzy, especially in the plural. Although terms such as employees’ cafeteria sometimes appear without an apostrophe, Chicago dispenses with the apostrophe only in proper names (often corporate names) that do not use one or where there is clearly no possessive meaning.

- children’s rights
- farmers’ market
- women’s soccer team
- boys’ clubs
- taxpayers’ associations (or taxpayer associations)
- consumers’ group (or consumer group)
- but
- Publishers Weekly
- Diners Club
- Department of Veterans Affairs

7.26 Possessive with gerund

A noun followed by a gerund (see 5.110) may take the possessive form in some contexts. This practice, usually limited to proper names and personal nouns or pronouns, should be used with caution. For an excellent discussion, see “Possessive with Gerund,” in Fowler’s Modern English Usage (bibliog. 1.2).
possessive is most commonly used when the gerund rather than the noun that precedes it can be considered to be the subject of a clause, as in the first four examples below. In the fifth example, Fathers is clearly the subject of the sentence and assuming is a participle (verb form) rather than a gerund (noun form); the possessive would therefore be incorrect.

Fathers’ assuming the care of children has changed the traditional household economy.

We all agreed that Jerod’s running away from the tigers had been the right thing to do.

Our finding a solution depends on the nature of the problem.

Eleanor’s revealing her secret (or Eleanor’s revelation) resulted in a lawsuit.

but

Fathers assuming the care of children often need to consult mothers for advice.

When the noun or pronoun follows a preposition, the possessive is usually optional.

She was worried about her daughter (or daughter’s) going there alone.

I won’t put up with him (or his) being denigrated.

The problem of authors (or authors’) finding the right publisher can be solved

7.28 Possessive with italicized or quoted terms

As with plurals, when an italicized term appears in roman text, the possessive s should be set in roman. When the last element is plural in form, add only an apostrophe (see 7.19). Chicago discourages, however, attempting to form the possessive of a term enclosed in quotation marks (a practice that is seen in some periodical publications where most titles are quoted rather than italicized).

the Atlantic Monthly’s editor

the New York Times’ new fashion editor

Gone with the Wind’s admirers

but

admirers of “Ode on a Grecian Urn”

9.54 Plural numbers

Spelled-out numbers form their plurals as other nouns do (see 7.5).

The contestants were in their twenties and thirties.

The family was at sixes and sevens.

Numerals form their plurals by adding s. No apostrophe is needed.

Among the scores were two 240s and three 238s.

Jazz forms that were developed in the 1920s became popular in the 1930s.
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GREGG REFERENCE MANUAL (SIXTH EDITION)

POSSESSIVE SINGULAR NOUNS ENDING IN “S”

631a To form the possessive of singular nouns that do end with an s sound, be guided by your pronunciation. If you create a new syllable when you pronounce the possessive, add an apostrophe plus s.

your boss’s approval
Dallas’s parks
our coach’s strategy
Phoenix’s suburbs

631b To form the possessive of singular nouns that do end with an s sound, be guided by your pronunciation. If adding an extra syllable makes the word hard to pronounce, add only an apostrophe.

for goodness’ sake
New Orleans’ chefs
Massachusetts’ roads
Los Angeles’ freeways

634 To form the possessive of singular compound nouns, add an apostrophe plus s to the last element of the compound.

an eyewitness’s story
my stockbroker’s advice
my son-in-law’s job
the attorney general’s plan

MORSON’S

RULE 127

Use an apostrophe and s to show the plural form of uncapitalized letters, and uncapitalized abbreviations.

EXAMPLES

a. Are there two s’s in your name?
b. She never closes the a’s and o’s when she writes.
c. He keeps mixing up his a.m.’s and p.m.’s in telling you the story.
d. Her neatness about everything drives me crazy. She’s the kind who dots all her i’s and crosses all her t’s and expects everyone else to do the same.
PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

RULE 128

Use an apostrophe and s to show the plural form if any word that is unfamiliar or likely to be misread.

EXAMPLES

a. He mailed all the thank-you’s so late that it was an embarrassment to the firm.
b. She was told all the do’s and don’ts on the first day.
c. We altered all the owners of pubs and go-go’s in town about the counterfeit money.

If the pluralized form is quoted, keep the entire expression inside the quotes.

EXAMPLES

d. The only thing we’re getting from your witness is a lot of “I guesses” and “me too’s.”
e. When I tell my doctors how sick I am, I get a chorus of “you’re not alones.”

NOTE

Words that are common are still made plural by adding s or es.

EXAMPLES

f. She told us there would be no ands, ifs, or buts regarding lateness.
g. There were a lot of whereas discusses, but they were complicated.
h. I checked out all the ways and wherefores before signing.
i. He explained all the ins and outs to the associates.
j. Tell me the pros and cons of doing it your way.
k. We had our ups and downs, but they weren’t too serious.

If there is a chance of misreading, use quotation marks.

RULE 129

The plurals of numbers and capitalized abbreviations can be written without an apostrophe and s if there is no chance of misreading. When abbreviations are lowercased, use the apostrophe and s.

EXAMPLES

a. We thought our company would take off in the 1990s.
b. This clock dates back to the 1700s.
c. The 2-by-4s fell off the truck.
d. All of my IOUs were paid.
e. There were so many Ph.D.s in the room that I was intimidated and did not talk much.
f. He was admitted, suffering from the DTs.
PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

g. All the c.o.d.’s were routed through my department; all the f.o.b.’s were routed through Cora’s; all the s.o.b.’s were routed through Mr. Kane’s. I’m just kidding about the s.o.b.’s. (See Rule 113.)

NOTE

Some writers still use the apostrophe and s for the plural of all numbers and capitalized abbreviations, but the trend is to omit this form. Consult a dictionary for abbreviation choices.

RULE 130

Use an apostrophe before adding a suffix to show that a letter, number, or abbreviation has become a verb form.

EXAMPLES

a. Can you tell us who X’d out the total on this page?
b. We evaluate a person’s character and then determine if he can be ROR’d. (released on recognizance)
c. The officer star-69’d the phone and got the number.
d. When the company started RIF’ing, my husband became agitated. (reduction in force)
e. After a lof of bs’ing, they UPS’d the reports.
f. He OK’s all the charts for distribution with that special stamp.

Examples a and f are the literal descriptions of placing the letter X on a page and the letters O and K on a chart. If the meaning is that someone gives approval or writes a signature, then the sentence should be written as follows: He okays all the charts for distribution.

In Example 130f, the expression OK’s is the verb form. The plural form would not have an apostrophe.

EXAMPLE

g. I can count over a dozen separate OKs on this one invoice.

NOTE

Words like emceeing and deejaying are replacing the older form of abbreviation and apostrophe.

EXAMPLES

h. I was deejaying at Phil’s last night. (formerly written as DJ’ing)
i. Who emceed the award ceremony? (formerly written as MC’d)

Consult a dictionary often to see which words follow which patterns.

Dictionaries also use the hyphen before adding a suffix to show that a letter or abbreviation has become a verb form.
PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

EXAMPLES

j. bs bs’d bs’ing bs-ing
k. od od’d od’ing od-ing OD OD’d OD-ing
l. x x’d x’ed x’ing x-ing

When a shortened word that ends in “c” becomes a verb, add the letter “k” to keep the hard “g” sound.

EXAMPLES

m. You attended the picnic in the park. Had you picnicked there before?
n. We did their job on spec. Actually, we had specked another job for them last year.
o. They found the book in the rec area shortly after the prisoners had recked outside for an hour.
p. He was contracted to dry-vac an area that had never been dry-vacked before.
q. The trauma team was medevacking the patient to St. Barnadas.

RULE 131

Use an apostrophe and s to show possession in most singular nouns.

EXAMPLES

a. Your client’s testimony is inaccurate.
b. That woman’s testimony has never been proved.
c. The defendant’s testimony has many discrepancies.
d. Counsel’s remarks are stricken.
e. The Court’s position is clear.
f. Camille’s sister called me often.
g. I have often said that Ms. Ricordino’s talents seem limitless.

RULE 132

When a singular noun ends in s or z, the possessive may be made by adding an apostrophe and s if an extra s syllable is heard and written in the notes of the court reporter.

EXAMPLES

a. The witness’s memory was vague about the day of the trip. (Spoken as three syllables.)
b. We feel J.P. Cross’s wife was understaffed
c. Mr. Martinez’s wife was permanently disabled.
d. We gave Boaz’s medical history to the attending physician.
PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

If the court reporter does not hear the speaker use the extra s syllable and, therefore, does not include it in the notes, the singular possessive is made by just adding the apostrophe.

EXAMPLES

e. Mr. Reynold’s car was blocking my driveway. (OR: Reynolds’s if spoken as three syllables.)
f. Mrs. Jones’ car was on the shoulder of the road. (OR: Jones’s if spoken as two syllables.)
g. The topaz’ luster was marred by the scratches.
h. We gave Moses’ medical history to the attending physician.

RULE 133

Use an apostrophe after the s in most plural nouns to show possession.

EXAMPLES

a. You have heard the girls’ testimony supported by their school principal.
b. The ladies’ addresses were not given.
c. Your witnesses’ stories are all different and contradictory.
d. I was driving the Joneses’ car when the accident happened.

NOTE

Often the singular possessive and the plural possessive of a word will sound the same. The court reporter must then read the context very carefully for clues as to which form is intended. Read the pairs of examples below out loud, and you will hear the same sounds. However, usually only one of the two is acceptable based on the context.

EXAMPLES

e. The plaintiff’s case is weak. (only one plaintiff is named in the suit)
   The plaintiffs’ case is weak. (more than one plaintiff is named in the suit)
f. My witness’s story is complex.
   My witnesses’ story is complex.
g. The girl’s version is false.
   The girls’ version is false.
PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

AP Stylebook
(online subscription: http://apstylebook.blogspot.com/ Also try: http://apstylebook.blogspot.com/)

Chicago Manual of Style
(online subscription: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/subscription_opts.html)

Gregg Reference Manual
(online subscription: http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0073545430/information_center_view0/)

Lillian Morson's English Guide for Court Reporters
(can be found on Amazon)

Margie Wakeman Wells' Court Reporting: Bad Grammar/Good Punctuation
(order here: https://www.margieholdscourt.com/products/court-reporting-bad-grammargood-punctuation/)