

The Apostrophe for Ownership Made Simple (Kind of)

Three Basic Situations to Show Ownership

When you are using the apostrophe to show ownership, there are only three basic situations to consider.

Situation One – Adding Possession to a Singular Noun

If the first noun is anything that is singular, then add both an apostrophe and an –s ('s) to the end of that noun to show that it owns the next noun.

My **brother's** car was in the shop. We entered the **teacher's** classroom.

My **boss's** instructions were very clear. We all liked **Mary's** new puppy.

Situation Two – Adding Possession to a Plural Noun

If the first noun is plural WITH an –s, then add only the apostrophe after the –s to show that the first noun owns the next noun.

All the students' papers were graded and returned on time.

Many of the employees' checks were mailed early.

Situation Three – Adding Possession to a Plural Noun Without an S

If the first noun is plural WITHOUT an –s, then add both an apostrophe AND an –s to the first noun to show that it owns the next noun.

The men's glee club is giving a recital on Tuesday.

All the children's toys were packed up and put away neatly.

Our cause was supported by many of the women's groups in the city.

Every politician usually praises the people's right of free speech.

If you simply think about what you have written and remember these three situations, then using the apostrophe to show ownership will be easy – and even fun!