

11. Possessive Nouns

The possessive forms of nouns show possession, or ownership. We can show possession without changing the noun itself:

the dog belonging to the *boy*

the talent of the *singer*

But a simpler, more common way is to change the noun that does the possessing:

the *boy's* dog

the *singer's* talent

With a few exceptions, the following two rules cover nearly all you need to know about forming possessives:

1. To form the possessive of a noun, add apostrophe + s:

the books of the *student* = the *student's* books

the toys of the *girl* = the *girl's* toys

2. If the noun already ends in s, just add an apostrophe:

the books of the *students* = the *students'* books

the toys of the *girls* = the *girls'* toys

If a proper noun (a name) ends in s, you may choose to add either apostrophe + s, or just the apostrophe alone, depending on whether you would pronounce the extra s.

For instance:

Moses' followers OR *Moses's* followers

Reminder: Do not use 's when you are just showing plural form:

correct: Charbroiled hot dogs are served here.

incorrect: Charbroiled hot dog's are served here.

Exercise 1

Rewrite each underlined group of words in the space provided, using apostrophes to show possession.

Examples: He liked the looks of the car.

the car's looks

He remembered the names of all of the dogs.

all of the dogs' names

1. I liked the features of the car.
2. I liked the features of the cars.
3. We admired the stars of the show.
4. We admired the stars of the shows.
5. John was surprised at the skill of the players.
6. He was not surprised at the record of the team.
7. The new governor was not the choice of the people.
8. They liked the clothing of the store.
9. Sheila feeds the pets of her neighbors.
10. I unexpectedly ran into the daughter of my boss.
11. James edited the essay of Carlos.
12. He agrees with the foreign policies of the government.

Other Forms of Possessives

Here are some guidelines for other types of possessives that you will encounter from time to time.

Joint Possession: The following pairs of nouns show joint ownership; two or more people own the same thing.

the duck belonging to *Sid and Eddie* *Sid and Eddie's* duck

the children of *Tina and Al* *Tina and Al's* children

Rule: Nouns showing joint ownership have apostrophe + s added to the noun nearest to the thing possessed.

Individual Possession: The following pairs of nouns show individual ownership. (Sid and Eddie probably do not own the same shoes, nor do Tina and Al use the same toothbrush.)

the shoes belonging to *Sid and Eddie* *Sid's and Eddie's* shoes

the toothbrushes of *Tina and Al* *Tina's and Al's* toothbrushes

Rule: Nouns showing individual ownership have apostrophe + s added to each noun.

When NOT to use 'S:

Do not use 's to form possessive pronouns:

<u>Pronouns</u>	<u>Possessive Pronouns</u>
he	his
she	her/hers
it	its
we	our/ours
you	your/yours
they	their/theirs
I	my/mine

What possessive pronouns belong in the following examples?_

This is Doris'book._

This is her book.

This book is_____.

These are Fred's and Ted's bikes.

These are their bikes.

These bikes are_____.

Exercise 2

Rewrite each underlined group of words in the space provided, using apostrophes to show possession.

Examples: The flavor of the coffee was unusual. *the coffee's flavor*

I live in the home of my parents. *my parents' home*

We went to the wedding of Joe and Kay. *Joe and Kay's wedding*

She ironed the clothes of Pete and May. *Pete's and May's clothes*

1. The combined losses of the North and South were the greatest in any American war.
2. The president took away some of the responsibilities of the chief-of-staff.
3. We loved the shoes of George and Sara.
4. She was insulted by the rude remarks of her sister-in-law.
5. I couldn't stand the behavior of George and Sara.
6. The information of the ambassador was mostly incorrect.
7. The voyages of Magellan and Columbus were controversial.
8. The novels of Hemingway and Faulkner are among the most admired in modern literature.

9. One of the most famous events in American history is the journey west of Lewis and Clark.
10. Don't forget the birthday of your mother-in-law.

Exercise 3

Rewrite each underlined group of words in the space provided using apostrophes to show possession.

Example: Professional wrestlers attract the enthusiasm of their fans.

their fans' enthusiasm

1. The images of many professional wrestlers are outrageous.
2. But the image of no one has ever been weirder than that of George Wagner.
3. The nickname of George Wagner was Gorgeous George.
4. He was the most popular wrestler of the Forties and Fifties as well as the biggest television attraction of Los Angeles.
5. He was sometimes called "The Human Orchid," but the color of an orchid seemed drab compared to the magnificent costumes of George.
6. After leaving the house of his parents in Houston at age nineteen, George worked at odd jobs and wrestled the other tough kids of Houston.
7. He drifted to Oregon, winning the light-heavyweight crown of the state.
8. The income of George was not increasing as a result of these activities, so he decided to become a professional wrestler.

9. In this field, the income of the leading wrestlers is determined by their popularity.
10. The turning point of the career of George came when he hit upon the gimmick that no one else had tried, dressing in outrageously-colored clothes with frills and rhinestones.

Exercise 4

Proofread the sentences below. They contain both plural nouns (nouns that do not require apostrophes) and possessive nouns (nouns that do require apostrophes). When a noun is both plural and possessive, it requires an apostrophe. Underline any noun ending in -s, and decide if it is possessive. If it is, add an apostrophe in the correct place.

Example: George packed his clothes in his wifes car._

correct: George packed his clothes in his wife's car._

1. George soon began wearing the loud outfits that made him famous.
2. His managers daughter created robes for him made of fur, feathers and lace to match his wrestling trunks shocking pink color.
3. His personal valets duties included spraying Georges corner as well as his opponents face with Chanel No. 9.
4. Gorgeous Georges long, curled, bleached blond hair was his two Hungarian hairdressers handiwork.
5. His hairs true color was brown, and he always wore his hair long to imitate George Washingtons long-haired wig.
6. His imitators efforts to copy him all fell short.

7. The critics jeers failed to shake his fans affection.
8. Of course, wrestling fans affections have always been drawn to outlandish costumes and outrageous behavior.
9. Gorgeous Georges fans were no different than the fans of numerous other wrestlers who have worn bizarre costumes or taken on strange identities.

Exercise 5

Proofread the following passage for possessives, adding apostrophes where necessary to show possession. Do not rewrite the section on a separate piece of paper.

Lake Superior is the worlds largest body of fresh water, surpassing all other inland lakes in size except the salt water Caspian Sea. Superior, like the other Great Lakes, was part of the Mississippi Rivers drainage system until Ice Age glaciers gouged deep holes in the rocks. The Glaciers handiwork shows in the shorelines rugged cliffs, (the cliffs heights reach 1500 feet) and in the ancient granite exposed there, some of the earths oldest rocks, rivaled only by those at the Grand Canyons base.

Lake Superiors first European visitor, the French explorer Brule, arrived in 1623. Of course, he didn't really discover the lake, as the Chippewa Indians had long lived on the shores of what they called Gitche Gumee. While the Indians name for the lake must have sounded strange to the Europeans, the Indians probably found the Europeans behavior stranger still, as fur traders outposts and the missions of Jesuit priests were established within decades of Brules first visit. The white mans towns and industries made the former Gitche Gumee less and less clean,

until by the 1960s, the waters oxygen level was so low that fish were suffocating. But in 1972, Canada and the U. S. agreed to clean up the Great Lakes. The two nations cleanup efforts paid off in just a few years, as beaches reopened and fishermens nets again began to fill. The revival of Lake Superior demonstrated once again natures truly amazing ability to repair itself.