



The Possessive Apostrophe

One way to show possession in English – that something belongs to a person, place, or thing – is to use the apostrophe ('). Make sure your base noun form is correctly singular or plural to start, and then apply the rules below.

- ▶ For singular and plural nouns that do not end in -s, form the possessive by adding -'s.

the cat's meow
the mummy's curse

the men's club
the women's lounge

- ▶ For singular nouns that end in -s, (whether pronounced or unpronounced), form the possessive by adding -'s.

the class's grades
Mr. Harris's guitar

Ms. DuBois's paycheque
The Iroquois's government

- ▶ For plural nouns that end in -s, form the possessive by adding only an apostrophe.

the girls' clothes
the two cities' efforts

the classes' schedules
the goddesses' tiaras

- ▶ For compound nouns, show possession at the end of the compound.

My mother-in-law's cooking is atrocious.
Steven King's novels are very popular.

- ▶ For joint ownership, show possession only on the last noun.

You can get anything you want at Arlo and Alice's restaurant.
The Hatfields and the McCoys' time-share condo is in Florida.

- ▶ For individual possession, show possession on all of the nouns.

Dr. Jeckyl's and Mr. Hyde's futures were quite bleak.
Mr. Sweeny's and Mrs. Todd's barber shops are both on Richmond Row.

- Do not use the possessive apostrophe with possessive pronouns such as hers, theirs, yours, whose, and its. Note: *it's* is a contraction of *it is*, not a possessive.

Practice Exercise

Rewrite each phrase using the possessive apostrophe:

Example: the book that belongs to John John's book

1. the son of Mr. Smith _____
2. the daughter of Mrs. Memechose _____
3. pies that belong to the clowns _____
4. the Picture of Dorian Gray _____
5. the breakfast of the dog _____
6. the project of Guillaume and Henri _____
7. the motorbikes of Janice and Phil _____
8. the door that belongs to it _____
9. the fleas that belong to the circus _____
10. the lair of the white worm _____
11. the hound of the Baskervilles _____
12. the ship of Sinbad _____
13. the treasure map of the pirate _____
14. the speech of the president _____
15. reflection of the mirror _____
16. the research of Dr. Cranium _____
17. books that belong to the library _____
18. the antlers of the deer (singular) _____

Answers

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| 1. the son of Mr. Smith | Mr. Smith's son |
| 2. the daughter of Mrs. Memechose | Mrs. Memechose's daughter |
| 3. pies that belong to the clowns | the clowns' pies |
| 4. the Picture of Dorian Gray | Dorian Gray's picture |
| 5. the breakfast of the dog | the dog's breakfast |
| 6. the project of Guillaume and Henri | Guillaume and Henri's project |
| 7. the motorbikes of Janice and Phil | Janice's and Phil's motorbikes |
| 8. the door that belongs to it | its door |
| 9. the fleas that belong to the circus | the circus's fleas |
| 10. the lair of the white worm | the white worm's lair |
| 11. the hound of the Baskervilles | the Baskervilles' hound |
| 12. the ship of Sinbad | Sinbad's ship |
| 13. the treasure map of the pirates | the pirates' treasure map |
| 14. the speech of the president | the president's speech |
| 15. reflection of the mirror | the mirror's reflection |
| 16. the research of Dr. Cranium | Dr. Cranium's research |
| 17. books that belong to the library | the library's books |
| 18. the antlers of the deer (singular) | the deer's antlers. |