Possessives and Plurals

Plurals

A plural refers to more than 1 of a noun. To indicate to your reader that there's more than 1 of something, you usually add "s" or "es," depending on the spelling of the noun you're trying to pluralize.

Examples
If the noun ends with a consonant, just add "s."
Dog     dogs
Student students

If it already ends with an "s," then add "es."
Class   classes
Glass   glasses

Possessives

A possessive refers to something or someone belonging to something or someone else. How you make a word possessive depends on whether the word is singular or plural.

1. If the "owner" is singular, add an apostrophe (') and an "s." Watch out! Sometimes a singular word ends with an "s."

Examples
Tom's daughter is playing soccer tonight.
Sarah's book is still in my car.
The pen's ink has dried out.

Their boss's rule is no texting unless they are on break.

2. **If the "owner" is a plural word that ends with an "s," simply add an apostrophe.**

   **Examples**
   The students' surprised looks told the professor he had mentioned the assignment only to his other class.

   The countries' representatives held different views on the production of nuclear weapons.

3. **If the "owner" is a plural word that does not end with an "s," add an apostrophe (') and an "s."**

   **Examples**
   The children's game was wild and noisy!

   The people's reactions were expressed in letters to the editor of the local newspaper.

   The geese's migration pattern caused them to come back home every spring.

4. **Sometimes in a sentence, you'll have something that belongs to 2 or more "owners." In this case, make only the "owner" closest to "the thing owned" possessive.**

   **Examples**
   My brother is painting James and Andrea's basement. (Both James and Andrea own the basement.)

   The cat and the dog's favourite spot to sleep is over the vent. (The cat and the dog like the same spot.)

   Micah and Timmy's toys are scattered across the living room rug. (Micah and Timmy share the toys.)
5. Sometimes you'll have 2 or more "owners" who own similar things but do not share ownership of specific things. In this case, add an apostrophe after each of the "owners."

Examples
Because both Chantelle's and Molly's books are on this table, I'm not sure which books I should bring. (Some books belong to Chantelle. Some books belong to Molly.)

Both Carolyn's and Julie's clothes are in that laundry pile on the couch. (Carolyn and Julie own different clothes.)

Exercises

In the following exercise, choose the correct answer in parentheses.

1. The (laptops or laptops') touch pads were all malfunctioning.
2. When our professor alluded to our favourite movie, I caught my (friend's or friends) eye and grinned.
3. (Melissa's or Melissas) assignment showed that she had put a lot of time and thought into her work.
4. I heard the (fire trucks' or fire truck's) sirens before I saw their flashing lights.
5. My brother's love for the sun reminded me of an (iguana's or iguanas).
6. The (colleges or college's) vice president addressed the audience at the Canadian Perspectives event.
7. From one end of my yard to the other, the (trees or trees') branches, heavy with snow, dip down toward the ground.
8. Because the (buildings' or building's) foundation was beginning to rot, no one wanted to buy the property.
9. (Braden's or Braden) and (Janelle's or Janelles') duet was so fantastic that we went to buy (Janelles' or Janelle's) CD, but the CDs were already sold out.
10. My (uncles or uncles') are going on a canoe trip next summer.
In the following exercise, correct any misuses of apostrophes and add apostrophes where necessary. Be careful. Some of the sentences might use an apostrophe correctly. Write "C" over any apostrophes that are used correctly.

1. In Twelfth Night, the countess' servant Malvolio was tricked by a mischievous maids note into believing that the countess was in love with him.
2. The rings shine had dulled over time and the letters ink had faded.
3. The Manitoba Physicians' Association is meeting next week to discuss the organizations budget.
4. Both of the student's work was organized and neat, and their assignments were handed in on time.
5. My brother and sister's dreams are very different.
6. His parents' plan is to drive up to Edmonton together next weekend to watch his brother's hockey game.
7. To meet her criminology professors' expectations for her research paper, she had to find over thirty useful sources.
8. Are you able to go to Luke's and Justina's wedding in June?
9. Walking slowly and being distracted by the temptation to have stick sword fights, the boys' finally had to run in order to make it to school on time.
10. Could you bring these paper's to his office for me? I have to hurry because I have an appointment at the doctors at 2:00.

(Answers on next page)
Answers

1. laptops'
2. friend’s
3. Melissa’s
4. fire trucks'
5. iguana’s
6. college's
7. trees'
8. building's
9. Braden, Janelle’s, Janelle’s
10. uncles

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2. The ring’s or rings’ shine had dulled over time and the letter’s or letters’ ink had faded.
3. The Manitoba Physicians’ C Association is meeting next week to discuss the organization’s budget.
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