

Placing that Dratted Apostrophe

Rule Number 1: Letters that are missing are replaced with an apostrophe.

Examples:

•You're silly. •They're coming to the party. •He's a very courteous and considerate person. •We've heard that before.

For each sentence below, write the correct version of the word(s) shown in bold in the space after the word. Sometimes there are two options and you have to choose between them.

- a Where did you put **your** gloves?
- b I think **they're** on the table.
- c I **don't** want to wear them anyway.
- d **You're** going to the football, aren't you?
- e **We're** feeling very sad today.
- f **He's** having a difficult time at the moment.
- g **His** violin is a beautiful instrument.



Rule Number 2: Show possession by placing an apostrophe before the "s" when a single owner possesses something.

Examples: •The woman's cries were heart-rending. •The puppy's toy was quickly torn apart. •The lady's coat is being dry-cleaned.

For each sentence below, type/write the correct version of the word in bold. Each object is owned by only one person, animal or thing.

- a My **friend's** mother is in hospital.
- b The **rat's** fur is fine and soft.
- c My **mother's** driving is better than my **father's**.
- d The **cow's** milk is remarkably creamy.
- e My **brother's** football team won the grand final.
- f The **dog's** collar was old and tattered.
- g The **family's** name is ruined.

Rule Number 3: When the owner is a plural noun and the word is a regular plural, the apostrophe is placed after the "s".

Examples: •My two brothers' rooms are a dreadful mess. •My parents' room is the largest in the house. •All the ladies' dresses sparkled in the bright lights.

For each sentence below, write the correct version of the word in bold. Each object is owned by a regular plural noun.

- a Both of my **sisters'** boyfriends are musicians.
- b My **parents'** holiday had to be cancelled.
- c All the **builders'** tools were scattered on the ground.
- d The **criminals'** time in gaol was shortened due to good behaviour.

Rule Number 4: Irregular plurals like "men", "women", "sheep" and "children" require you to place the apostrophe before the "s".

Irregular plurals are those that have no "s" at the end, but a change in the form of the word itself. Sometimes the word does not change at all, but is still a plural, as in the case of "sheep".

Examples: •The men's fascination with fishing is startling. •The women's conversation rapidly became spiteful. •The children's party was entertaining.

For each sentence below, write the correct version of the word in bold. Each object is owned by an irregular plural noun.

- a The **sheep's** bleating woke me up.
- b The **children's** music was a pleasure to hear.
- c The **women's** voices were high and urgent.
- d The **men's** behaviour was unacceptable.

Rule Number 5: Possessive pronouns like hers, his, their, theirs and its do not require an apostrophe.

Problem Word: The word "its" is possessive, but it requires no apostrophe. The word "it's" always means "it is" or "it has".

In the sentences below, write the correct version of the word shown in BOLD.

Caution: The corrected word might look exactly the same as the word in BOLD. It may NOT require an apostrophe.

- a The mouse ran into **its** hole.
- b **It's** a serious problem.
- c I've done my homework, but they haven't done **theirs**.
- d **It's** exactly the type of thing she would say.
- e **He's** a very good friend of mine.
- f Every family has **its** own idiosyncrasies.

Rule 6: Plurals that don't possess anything require no apostrophe.

Plural nouns only require an apostrophe when they own something, as in the sentence: "The boys' football gear stank to high heaven."



The short text below contains many plural nouns and some singular nouns. Some need an apostrophe and others do not. Write each noun in the space beside it in its correct form.

The **students** of 8E were aghast when their **teachers** insisted on giving them four **tests** on one day.

"My **parents** believe **it's** wrong to pressure students too much," cried Joshua. "They are concerned that the **students' grades** will suffer because of the stress."

"Your **parents** worry too much," said Jessica. "My **parents'** belief is that the more pressure **students** experience, the more they will be able to cope with adult life."

Jonah spoke very confidently. "Both **sets** of parents are wrong," he stated emphatically. "Four **tests** in one day is a horrible ordeal, but it's worse to hear everyone talking about them endlessly."