

An Adults' Guide to Using Apostrophes for Possession

In key stage 2, children are expected to correctly use apostrophes for possession and contraction. Apostrophes are used to show possession when one thing belongs to another. For example:

The Queen's shoes.

However, the position of the apostrophe (and an additional s) can vary depending on whether the noun is singular or plural. It can also differ when the noun itself already ends with an 's'. Use this guide to help you to understand where to place the apostrophe to show possession.

Apostrophes with Singular Nouns

To show possession by a singular noun, an apostrophe is usually placed after the **final letter** of a word followed by an s. For example:

The pencil belonging to Sarah was on the table.
Sarah's pencil was on the table.

Nouns Ending in 's'

With singular nouns that end in -s, you should add an apostrophe plus 's' when you would naturally pronounce an extra 's' if you said the word aloud. For example:

Dickens's novels always make great reads.
Thomas's brother was born in 2009.

However, regional accents can have a bearing on word pronunciation in certain circumstances.

Apostrophes with Plural Nouns

If the noun is plural and already ends with an 's', simply add an apostrophe after the 's'. For example:

The howls belonging to the wolves.
The wolves' howls.

However, not all plural nouns end in 's'. Some plural nouns are irregular, e.g. children, people, mice. In cases such as these, add an apostrophe and an 's' to the end of the word. For example:

The books belonging to the children.
The children's books.
The votes belonging to the people.
The people's votes.