Apostrophes perform two main roles in writing: they help form possessive nouns, and they help form contractions. If a word is being made plural with an “s”, an apostrophe is not needed unless it is *also* possessing something.

Forming Possessive Nouns

## Singular Nouns

A combination of an apostrophe and the letter “s” are used together at the end of a singular noun to show that it is possessing something. This rule applies even when the singular noun ends in an “s.”

### Examples:

|  |
| --- |
| “Mary’s essay is due today.”  “The student’s homework is missing.”  “James’s homework was turned in on time.” |

## Plural Nouns with “s”

When a noun is made plural by adding an “s” at the end, an apostrophe is used by itself after the “s” to show that the plural noun is possessing something. The only time an apostrophe is placed alone after an “s” is when the “s” is making the noun that is doing the possessing plural.

### Examples:

|  |
| --- |
| “The students’ desks needed to be moved.” In this example, there are multiple students possessing multiple desks, so the apostrophe is placed after the “s.”  “The students’ classes were let out early.”  “Some of the students’ emails weren’t working.” |

## Plural Nouns with without “s”

Some nouns have plural forms that do not use “s.” These words are made possessive by adding an apostrophe and the letter “s” together at the end of the word.

### Examples:

|  |
| --- |
| “The children’s classes were canceled due to weather.”  “All seven of the sheep’s wool was shorn.”  “The people’s decision was upheld by the committee.” |

## Multiple Nouns Possessing a Single Object

When multiple nouns are possessing the same thing, it is called “joint possession.” When this happens, the last noun is made possessive. Whether you use apostrophe “s” or just an apostrophe will depend on whether or not the last noun is singular or plural.

### Examples:

|  |
| --- |
| “It was time for Bob and David’s presentation.” In this example, “presentation” is being possessed by both Bob and David at the same time, so only the last noun, “David,” is made possessive.  “The Library and Writing Center’s joint presentation was very helpful.”  “The professor and students’ classroom was locked from the inside.” |

## Multiple Nouns Possessing Multiples of a Single Object

If two or more nouns are possessing multiples of the same object, each of the nouns is made possessive. This typically happens when each noun is possessing one of or part of the multiple objects. Whether you use apostrophe “s” or just an apostrophe will depend on whether or not the nouns are singular or plural.

### Examples:

|  |
| --- |
| “The History Department’s and Biology Department’s coffee machines are next to each other.”  “The Tutors’ and the Writing Consultants’ nametags are all mixed up in the bag.”  “Garrett’s and Mary’s backpacks got switched after class.” |

## Multiple Nouns Possessing Different Objects

If two or more nouns within a sentence are possessing different objects, then each object would be listed after its corresponding noun.

### Examples:

|  |
| --- |
| “The History Department’s microwave and the Biology Department’s fridge were next to each other.”  “The Tutors’ molecule kits and the Writing Consultants’ grammar guides are in stored in the cabinet.”  “Garrett’s phone and Mary’s notebook are now in the same backpack.” |

## Possessive Pronouns

Pronouns are words that can stand in for a noun that has already been named in a sentence, which include words like she, they, he, it, and we. Pronouns have their own possessive forms, which indicate possession of an object without needing the addition of an apostrophe or an apostrophe and “s.” Below is a list of the most common possessive pronouns you might use.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pronoun | Possessive Form |
| She/Her | Hers |
| He/Him | His |
| They/Them | Theirs |
| It | Its |
| We | Ours |
| I | My |
| You | Yours |

### Examples:

|  |
| --- |
| “The History Department’s microwave and the Biology Department’s fridge were next to each other.”  “The Tutors’ molecule kits and the Writing Consultants’ grammar guides are in stored in the cabinet.”  “Garrett’s phone and Mary’s notebook are now in the same backpack.” |