POSSESSIVE NOUNS:

When creating possessive form nouns there are 8 simple rules:

1. If a singular noun does not end in s, add 's
   
   • The delivery boy's truck was blocking the driveway.
   • Bob Dole's concession speech was stoic and dignified.
   • The student's attempts to solve the problem were rewarded

2. If a singular common noun ends in s, add 's—unless the next word begins with s. If the next word begins with s, add an apostrophe only. (This includes words with s and sh sounds.)
   
   • The boss's temper was legendary among his employees.
   • The boss's sister was even meaner.
   • The witness's version of the story has several inconsistencies.
   • The witness's story did not match the events recorded on tape.

3. If a singular proper noun ends in s, add an apostrophe.
   
   • Chris's exam scores were higher than any other students.

4. If a noun is plural in form and ends in an s, add an apostrophe only, even if the intended meaning of the word is singular (such as mathematics and measles.)
   
   • The instructor asked us to analyze ten poems' meanings.
   • The dog catcher had to check all of the dogs' tags.
   • It is hard to endure the Marine Corps' style of discipline.

5. If a plural noun does not end in s, add 's

   • Many activists in Oregon are concerned with children's rights.
   • Everyone was disappointed with the American media's coverage of the Olympics in Atlanta.

6. If there is joint possession, use the correct possessive for only the possessive closest to the noun.
   
   • Clinton and Gore's campaign was successful.
   • She was worried about her mother and father's marriage.
   • Beavis and Butthead's appeal is absolutely lost on me.

7. If there is a separate possession of the same noun, use the correct possessive form for each word.
The owner's and the boss's excuses were equally false.  
The dog's and the cats' owners were in school when the fire broke out.

8. In a compound construction, use the correct possessive form for the word closest to the noun. Avoid possessives with compound plurals.

- My father-in-law's BMW is really fun to drive.
- The forest ranger's truck is painted an ugly shade of green.
- Your neighborhood letter carrier's job is more difficult than you imagine.

Another explanation….  

http://www.meredith.edu/grammar/plural.htm#apostrophe

**Possessive forms** (Bedford 36a/Hodges' 15a)
A possessive form of a noun signifies that the noun owns something:

A musician's talent  
A woman's ambition

Possessive forms call for a properly placed apostrophe. The placement is different for singular and plural nouns. For this reason, you must know the correct singular and possessive nouns before you can make them possessive.

**Singular possessive**
The possessive form of a singular noun is an apostrophe followed by the letter "s."

Kramer's hair  
Daphne's patience  
the car's engine

*Words ending with s, z or x generally omit the "s."

Dr. Seuss' sense of humor

**Plural possessive**
In order to place the apostrophe correctly in plural nouns, you must first be certain of the plural form. If you have questions about these forms, you may want to browse the section on plural nouns above.

*For plural nouns ending in "s," add only an apostrophe:*

Singers' voices  
The cousins' favorite uncle

*For plural nouns not ending in "s," add an apostrophe and "s."

Men's clothing  
Children's books
**Compound nouns** (Bedford 36/Hodges' 15a3)
When a sentence indicates joint ownership in a compound construction, the possessive form is attached only to the second noun:

Deanna and Brandi's vacation plans
Tim and Bethany's wedding invitation

Note that individual ownership is marked by a double possessive:

Courtney's and Mem's grade point averages

Tim and Bethany share the same wedding invitation, whereas Courtney and Mem each have their own grade point averages.

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**From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**

**Apostrophe**


An apostrophe

The apostrophe (’) is a punctuation mark, and sometimes a diacritic mark, in languages written in the Latin alphabet. In English, it has two main functions: it marks omissions; and it assists in marking the possessives of all nouns and many pronouns. (In strictly limited cases, it is sometimes also allowed to assist in marking plurals, but most authorities are now against such usage.) The word comes from Greek ἡ ἀπόστροφος (prosōidia), through Latin and French.

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**English language usage**

**Basic principles: possessive apostrophe**

- An apostrophe is used to indicate possession.
  - For most singular nouns, the ending 's is added, e.g. the cat's whiskers.
  - If the word is plural and already ends in an s, then instead only an apostrophe is added, for example my nieces' weddings. (This does not apply to plurals that do not end in an s, for example the children's toys.)
  - If the word ends in an s but is singular, practice varies as to whether to add 's or only an apostrophe. (For discussion on this and the following points, see below).
  - In general, a good practice is to follow whichever spoken form is judged best: Boss's shoes, Mrs. Jones' hat (or Mrs. Jones's hat, if that spoken...
form is preferred). In many cases, both spoken and written forms will differ between people.

- Some people like to reflect standard spoken practice in special cases like these: for convenience’ sake, for goodness’ sake, for appearance’ sake, etc. Others prefer to add ’s in the standard way: for convenience’s sake. Still others prefer to omit the apostrophe when there is an s sound before sake: for morality’s sake, but for convenience sake. Authorities can be found to support each of these solutions. The best policy is at least to be consistent in one’s usage (here, and with use of punctuation in general).

- No apostrophe is used in the following possessive pronouns and adjectives: yours, his, hers, ours, its, theirs, and whose. (Very many people wrongly use it’s for the possessive of it; but authorities are unanimous that it’s can only properly be a contraction of it is or it has.) All other possessive pronouns ending in s do take an apostrophe: one’s; everyone’s; somebody’s, nobody else’s, etc. With plural forms, the apostrophe follows the s, as with nouns: the others’ husbands (but compare They all looked at each other’s husbands, in which both each and other are singular).

- To illustrate that possessive apostrophes matter, and that their usage impacts on the meaning of written English, consider these four phrases (listed in Steven Pinker’s The Language Instinct), each of which has a meaning distinct from the others:
  - my sister’s friend’s investments
  - my sisters’ friends’ investments
  - my sisters’ friend’s investments
  - my sister’s friends’ investments

- Kingsley Amis, on being challenged to produce a sentence whose meaning depended on a possessive apostrophe, came up with:
  - “Those things over there are my husbands.” { instead of }
  - “Those things over there are my husband’s”