Possessive Apostrophes

A possessive apostrophe shows that a noun has ownership (or possession) of a person, object, idea, or quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If the word is a(n):</th>
<th>Add:</th>
<th>Example:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular noun</td>
<td>'s</td>
<td>girl’s, John's, baby's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular noun ending in -s</td>
<td>'s or '</td>
<td>Usage varies; 's is preferred, but using ' is acceptable for multi-syllable words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural noun ending in -s</td>
<td>'</td>
<td>mothers', babies', bosses'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural noun not ending in -s</td>
<td>'s</td>
<td>children's, mice's, geese's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite pronoun</td>
<td>'s</td>
<td>somebody's, nobody's, everyone's</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rules to Remember

- *It’s* is a contraction meaning “it is.” *Its* is possessive.
  - *It’s* too bad that she got sick during her vacation. (contraction)
  - The cat played with *its* toy. (possessive)

- Inanimate objects cannot be possessive.
  - Instead of saying, “the computer’s screen,” you can say, “the computer screen.”
  - Instead of saying, “the house’s color,” you can say, “the color of the house.”

- Add ’s to the last name in the case of joint possession.
  - Peter and *Jaime’s* dog got out of the yard.
  - Jim and *Peggy’s* car was totaled.

- Add ’s to each name if there is no joint possession.
  - *Eric’s* and *Kevin’s* grades are high this semester.
  - The girl’s dress and the boy’s pants matched.

- Add ’s to the end of a compound word.
  - My *sister-in-law’s* car broke down.
  - Her *mother-in-law’s* temper was terrible.
Activity
Correct the statements below by adding apostrophes (if they are needed).

1. Sarah's new car is a hybrid.
2. Pete has two dogs. The dogs toys are in the backyard.
3. The ducks flying pattern was beautiful.
4. Nate and Jackie's wedding is on Saturday.
5. The children's books are in the classroom.
6. That baby's name is Claire.
7. My sisters-in-law house is right on the beach.
8. The wolf snarled and showed its teeth.
9. Janes and Peters lunches were delicious.

Answer Key for Activity
1. Sarah's
2. dogs'
3. duck's
4. Nate and Jackie's
5. children's
6. baby's
7. sister-in-law's
8. no apostrophe needed
9. Jane's and Peter's

References