

PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES

Plurals and possessives both receive an S at the end the word, but only possessives require an apostrophe before the S.

PLURALS

To make a noun “plural” means to refer to more than one of that type.

The general rule for plurals is to add an S to end of the singular noun:

- Student → Students
- Cat → Cats
- Plaintiff → Plaintiffs

Exceptions

- Nouns ending in S, X, CH, SH, or Z all receive an ES for their plural form
 - Jones → Joneses
 - Tax → Taxes
 - Match → Matches
 - Wish → Wishes
 - Waltz → Waltzes
 - Witness → Witnesses
- For nouns that end in Y, replace the Y with an I and add ES
 - Policy → Policies
 - Copy → Copies
- For nouns that end with a O preceded by a consonant
 - Sometimes add a S: Photo → Photos
 - Sometimes add an ES: Hero → Heroes
- For nouns that end with an F, FE, or FF
 - Sometimes add an S: Belief → Beliefs
 - Sometimes change the F, FE, or FF to a VE and add an S: Thief → Thieves
- Plural lowercase letters DO receive an apostrophe
 - “Dot your t’s and cross your i’s.”
- Capitalized Abbreviations receive ONLY an S: VIPs, MDs, TRRACs

Irregular Plural Nouns

- Woman → Women
- Man → Men
- Mouse → Mice
- Goose → Geese
- Deer → Deer

Plural Nouns from Greek or Latin

- Index → Indices
- Syllabus → Syllabi
- Curriculum → Curricula
- Criterion → Criteria
- Datum → Data

POSSESSIVES

To make a noun possessive means something belongs to that noun

The general rule for possessives is to add an apostrophe and an S:

- The student's grades
- A cat's toy
- The plaintiff's argument

Singular Possessive Nouns that End in S

Style guides differ regarding whether one should add an apostrophe and S or just an apostrophe to singular possessive nouns that end in S. My preferred method is to add the apostrophe and S unless doing so creates a third sibilant (S or Z) sound. Generally, one can rely on their ear; add the S if you would include it when pronouncing the word.

- Witness's
- Illinois's
- Jess's
- Congress's
- Texas'
- Moses'
- Goodness'

Plural Possessives ending in S or ES receive ONLY an apostrophe

- Witnesses' testimonies
- Attorneys' fees
- Committees' agendas

Plural Possessives that DO NOT end in S receive both the apostrophe and S

- Children's books
- Men's basketball
- People's court

Compound Nouns take an apostrophe and an S after the second noun

- Tom and Tania's mother picked us up from practice.
- Luis and Gary's dog is very friendly.

NOTE: Possessive pronouns do not receive an apostrophe and S:

- It's = It is
- Its = Something belongs to it.