

## Nouns: Possessive Case

There are two ways of expressing ownership, origin, authorship and measurement in the English sentence: the use of apostrophe and the prepositional phrase. Consider the following phrases:



Norman Gorecho's camera (showing ownership)



Switzerland's citizens (showing origin)



J.R.R. Tolkien's novels (showing authorship)



three year's time (showing measurement)

*or their equivalent phrases*

the camera of Norman Gorecho

the citizens of Switzerland

the novels of J.R.R. Tolkien

the time of three years

Normally two nouns appear together. The 1<sup>st</sup> noun shows ownership of the 2<sup>nd</sup> noun. If you have a doubt about using an apostrophe, always change the expression into an 'of' phrase.

1st Noun      2nd Noun  
pharmacist's advice

advice of pharmacist

1st Noun      2nd Noun  
dentist's instruments

instruments of dentists

If the noun showing ownership doesn't end in **s** then add an apostrophe and s.

the boy's computer

If the noun showing ownership ends in **s** then add an apostrophe.

the doctors' offices

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- To test how much you have learned, click [here](#).

## Separate/Combined Ownership

When two names express separate ownership, make both names possessive. When two names express combined ownership, make only the second name possessive.

Separate Ownership	Combined Ownership
Alvin's and Dennis' laptops	my grandfather and grandmother's house

students' and teachers' rights

the husband and wife's baby



Look at the subject owned by the nouns. If it is singular, the ownership is usually combined.

## Compound Nouns

The possessive noun of a compound noun is formed on the last word of the compound. Place the apostrophe based on the rules learned

*His father-in-law's business is flourishing.*

*Checking daily time record is someone else's job.*

*Alex is the secretary of the personnel managers' association.*

When nouns provide description or identification only, the possessive form is not used. This means that no apostrophe is needed just as none is necessary in *Requisition Department*.

Los Baños swimming pools (not Los Baños' swimming pools)

Sales Department (not Sales' Department)

electronics industry (not electronics' industry)

dental instruments (not dental's instruments, but dentist's  
instruments)

If ownership is involved use apostrophe, otherwise omit the apostrophe.

Descriptive nouns don't need apostrophes. Ask the following questions:

Does department belong to Sales?

Is industry possessed by electronics?

If the answer is **NO**, delete the apostrophe.

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## Double Possessives, Double Apostrophes

Avoid awkward possessives by using prepositional phrases.

Awkward	Better
my brother's engineer's opinion	opinion of my brother's engineer
your neighbor's dentist's email	email of your neighbor's dentist
my professor, Md. Mildred Go's, office	office of my professor, Dr. Mildred Go

## Problems Proper Nouns Ending in **S** Sounds

Among possessive forms, individual's names ending in s sounds are most confusing to students and professionals alike. Even the experts don't agree.

The following table presents the difference between the traditional and popular forms of forming the possessive case of proper nouns ending in s.

Singular Name	Singular Possessive – Traditional	Singular Possessive – Popular	Plural Possessive
Mrs. Times	Mrs. Times's	Mrs. Times'	Mrs. Timeses'
Mr. Jones	Mr. Jones's	Mr. Jones'	Mr. Joneses'
Ms. Aboitiz	Ms. Aboitiz's	Ms. Aboitiz'	Ms. Aboitizes'

One may choose to either style of forming the possessive case of singular nouns, but be consistent.

This concludes the module on Nouns: Possessives.

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