RULES IN THE FORMATION OF POSSESSIVE CASE OF NOUNS

1. Most nouns show possession by adding apostrophe s (‘s) to the given noun.
   Ex. Dan's version, Leo's composition, baby's skin

2. Nouns of two or more syllables ending in sibilant sounds (s, ss, ch, sh, x, z) show possession by adding apostrophe (’) only (cf. USGPO, OUP, WS)
   Ex. Maritess’ dream, Hamish’ car, Beatrix’ gown, Mariz’ creation, boys’ group.
   Exceptions: Achilles’ heel - commonly replaced by “heel of Achilles”
   Jesus’ preachings, preaching of Jesus
   Moses’ laws – the laws of Moses
   Isis’ temple – temple of Isis

3. One syllable Proper nouns ending in sibilant sounds show possession by adding ‘s.*
   Ex. James’ wish, Trish’s hobby, Rex’s friends, Tess’s adventure

4. The signals apostrophe (’) and apostrophe –s (‘s) are used only with human beings, personified beings or objects and certain idiomatic expressions.
   Ex. Lanie’s ambition, Luis grades’, the sun’s smiling face, (personified object) a stone’s throw away (idiomatic expression), the court’s decision (personified collective noun), my heart’s desire (synecdoche- a figure of speech that uses a part to represent the whole.) for appearance’/righteousness’/conscience’ sake

5. Non-living things, plants, lower forms of animals, in general, use the “of phrase” to show possession or the main noun can be used as attributive adjective/ noun adjunct in which case the signal(s) of possession disappear.
   Ex. the edge of the blackboard /blackboard edge, the thorns of a rose/ rose thorns, the cocoon of the butterfly/ butterfly cocoon, the tower of the church/ church tower

6. Collective nouns that are personified may use the possessive signal apostrophe (’) or apostrophe –s (‘s)
   family’s decision, the band’s repertoire, the flock’s response, cortege’s route.

7. Nouns in a series that indicate joint possession will only have the last noun carrying the signal.
   Ex. Marian, Ninfa and Alice’ project, Alan, Ramie and Tex’s friendship, Carmen, Bettina and Julie’s mother

8. A series of nouns that indicates separate possession will have every noun carrying the signal (s) of possession
Ex. Marian’s, Ninfa’s and Alice’ projects, Nancy’s, Cora’s and Janice’ houses
but: Louis and Clark’s expectations were very much the same. (same set of expectations)
Louis’ and Clark’s expectations were altogether different.

9. Time, distance, value and measure when used as an idiomatic expression will carry the signal of possession which is apostrophe –s (’s) for singular number and apostrophe (’) only for plural number.

Ex: a vacation of three weeks – three weeks’ vacation
a delay of one hour – an hour’s delay
gasoline worth twenty pesos – twenty pesos’ worth of gasoline
a distance of 2 kms – 2 kms’ distance
three months’ salary
an evening’s entertainment

10. Nouns that end in an unpronounced sibilant sound show possession by adding apostrophe –s (’s) (cf. New York Public Library Guide to Style and Usage)

Ex. the Marine Corps’s policy, Illinois’s constitution, Arkansas’s former governor
Albert Camus’s novel (pronounced AL’bear Ka moo), Alexander Dumas’ s first novel,
(pronounced doo mä)

11. Non-English nouns (nouns derived from foreign language) ending in sibilant sounds show possession by adding apostrophe only (’)

Ex. Bordeaux’ bouquet, the sisters’ beaux’ relatives

12. The possessive forms of nouns and personal pronouns are used to modify a gerund.

Ex. I am glad to hear of Livian’s passing the board examination for nurses. (the emphasis is on passing, Livian is the modifier)
but: I am glad to hear of Livian passing the board examination for nurses. (the emphasis is on Livian, passing is a present participle modifying Livian)

13. Plural nouns ending in –s show possession by adding apostrophe (’) only.

Ex. ladies’ garden club, girls’ drama costumes, the roses’ fragrance, princes’ royal titles, the students’ participation; the parents’ contribution, witches’ brooms, the babies’ nappies, the lions’ roars, the Joneses’ home, the elves’ occupation

14. Nouns with irregular plural form show possession by adding apostrophe –s (’s)

the women’s clothes, children’s toys, the feet’s calluses, the cacti’s thorns
15. Some plural nouns that have the same spelling as their singular form (particularly animals) add –s or –es to indicate secondary plural form before affixing the signal of possession.

   Ex. the fish’ caudal fin = one fish
       the fish’ caudal fins = several fishes of the same species.
       the fishes’ caudal fins = several fishes of different kinds.

   Some other nouns with secondary plural forms: cod- cod/cods; shrimp –shrimp/shrimps;
   quail – quail/quails; fish- fish/fishes; person- people/peoples

16. Some nouns derived from foreign languages have the same plural and singular form but varies in their pronunciation. (link with rule #11)

   Ex. bourgeois- bourgeois (silent –s for singular; -z sound for the plural;
       the bourgeois’ farmland (one person)  the bourgeois’ rebellion (the masses)
       chassis’ construction; the corps’ routine; the précis’ subject matter; the pince-nez’
       design; faux pas’ glaring error; our rendezvous’ romantic moment.

17. Holidays idiomatically show possession.

   Ex. Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, New Year’s Day, Valentine’s Day,
   but the following holidays don’t show sign of possession
   People Power Anniversary not People’s Power Anniversary
   Bonifacio Day  not Bonifacio’s Day
   Rizal Day not Rizal’s Day
   Christmas Day not Christmas’ Day

   When one of the possessors in a compound possessive is a personal pronoun, both possessors should show sign of possession.

   Funny sentence: Bill and my car had to be towed last night. Bill and the car were both towed.
   Bill’s and my car had to be towed last night, (one car or two cars?)
   Improved sentence: Our car, Bill’s and mine, had to be towed last night. (one car)
   Bill’s car and mine had to be towed last night. (two cars)