

The Possessive Case of Nouns

I General Rule

The possessive Case is formed by adding “ ’s ” (the apostrophe **s**) or only “ ’ ” (the apostrophe) to the noun denoting a living being.

N's / N'

II Ways of Pronunciation

’s: [s] the cat’s name }
 [z] the dog’s tail } = “The Plural of Nouns”
 [ɪz] George’s son }

III Some Particular Cases of Spelling, Pronunciation and Use

1) Sometimes ’s may refer to a whole group of words. In this case ’s is added to the final element.

E.g. Jane and Mary’s room
Inspector Megre’s pipe
George Bush’s wife

Note: If the word group is too long to be followed by “ ’s ”, the preposition “ of ” is used instead.

E.g. What is the name of the man who lent us the money?
(~~What is the man who lent us the money’s name?~~)

2) After a plural noun ending in -s /-es only « ’ » is used

E.g. The girls’ father

But: If a plural noun does not end in -s /-es we use “ ’s ” in the possessive case.

E.g. The children’s father

3) If a noun (a proper noun as a rule) ends in -s which is not an inflexion we use either form

(“ ’s ” is more common). However, it does not influence the pronunciation.

E.g. Dickens’s novels }
 Dickens’ novels } [ˈdɪkɪnsɪz]

St. James's Park }
 St. James' Park } [ˈdʒeɪmzɪz]

4) Note that we say:

a woman's hat = a hat for a woman
 a boy's name = a name for a boy
 a bird's egg = an egg laid by a bird
 a children's book = a book for children, etc.

IV Use of Possessive Case with Lifeless Things

For things, ideas, etc. we normally use **"of"**

E.g. the roof of the garage (~~the garage's roof~~)
 the name of the book (~~the book's name~~)
 the owner of the restaurant (~~the restaurant's owner~~)

Sometimes we can use the structure "noun + noun"

E.g. the garage door
 the restaurant owner

However " 's " is often used:

1) for an organization (=a group of people)

E.g. the government's decision
the company's success

2) a) for a place where man lives or works

E.g. I like to dine at my aunt's
 We buy pills and tablets at the chemist's (the baker's,
 butcher's, grocer's, tobacconist's)

b) for some other places

E.g. St. Paul's (Cathedral)
St. James's (Park)

3) with nouns expressing:

a) time

E.g. Have you still got yesterday's newspaper ?
Next week's meeting has been cancelled.
 (today's, tomorrow's, this evening's, Monday's, last year's, etc.)

b) periods of time

E.g. a day's wait
 I've got a week's holiday starting on Monday.
 Jill has got three weeks' holiday.
 I live near the station - it's only about ten minutes' walk.

c) distance

E.g. It's a mile's walk from here. (a yard's, a foot's, an inch's, etc.)

d) weight

E.g. a pound's, a stone's, etc.

e) worth

E.g. I want a shilling's-worth of apples. I will not take a pound's-worth.

4) with nouns denoting natural phenomena and unique objects:

the world

the sea

the town

the sun

the country

the city, etc.

E.g. Nature's children slept needless of the wind's sighing, and the ocean's roar.

5) with geographical names

E.g. England's greatest poet
Italy's largest city
Virginia's hills and waters.

6) with nouns often called "she", "he"

E.g. The ship's passengers were all aboard.
What's your car's number?

7) in poetry

E.g. The berry's cheek is plumper
Too long - how long!
We've spent our strength
On wars and wars' alarms.

8) in some set expressions

E.g. for heaven's (God's) sake
to one's heart's delight
at one's wit's end
a stone's throw
within a hair's breadth