APOSTROPHES

Possessives
- Singular add ‘s
- Plural ending in -s add ‘
- Plural nouns not ending in -s, add ’s

Singular possessor

Tony’s car is not running well
Marx’s theories are certainly...
He got it straight from the horse’s mouth
The baby’s toys are all over the floor.
The doll’s eyes looked sad.
A second’s head start...
His theory’s influence has been enormous.
My mother-in-law’s recipe...

The car that belongs to Tony...
The theories of Marx...
...from the mouth of the horse.
The toys that belong to the baby...
The eyes of the doll...
A head start of a second...
The influence of his theory...
The recipe that belongs to my mother-in-law...

Plural possessor

The Rosses’ house is collapsing.
My friends’ car broke down.
He looked into the horses’ mouths
The psychologist disapproved of the babies’ toys
In two months’ time...

The house that belongs to the Rosses...
The car that belongs to my friends...
...the mouths of the horses
... the toys that belong to the babies.
In a time of two months...

Irregular plural

The children’s mother was worried.

The mother of the children...

Joint possession

My aunt and uncle’s house (Same thing possessed by both.)
Lucy and Maud’s terrible adventure

but

Her niece’s and nephew’s bicycles
Possessive pronouns never have apostrophes!

Its handle is broken
I saw whose car hit the truck
Perry noted its effect.
It is hers. It’s hers.
Mary knows those books are theirs.

Special cases
By tradition:
Jesus’ name Moses’ tablets

Because of pronunciation:
Names of more than one syllable ending in -eez sound
Euripides’ play Ramses’ sarcophagus

Practice Exercises

Add an apostrophe where needed in the following sentences:

1. My mothers heirloom dishes are missing.
2. Phils two old cars gave him headaches.
3. Not surprisingly, as Susans practice time increased, her scores improved.
4. The little shop lost its lease.
5. All the womens suitcases were stolen from the bus.
6. Some people felt the students concerns had been ignored.
7. Her cats fur was matted. (1 cat)
8. Her cats fur was matted. (3 cats)

Find and correct the errors in the sentences below. Some sentences have no errors; mark these “correct” in the space provided.

1. Its about time that you passed this test.  
   ____________________
2. Pamela won a years worth of groceries  
   ____________________
3. My parents’ car is 12 years old.

4. The babies’ hand was hurt by the hot water.

5. The men’s section is behind the escalator.

6. Damocles’ sword was quite worrisome.

7. Doris’s book received excellent reviews.

8. Stanley lived above the only café, Jacks Java Joint.

9. Three teenage boy’s can eat an enormous amount of pizza.

10. Sara and Joe spent a great deal of time helping a friend of their’s.

11. They cleared the night’s accumulation of ice from the roof’s of the houses.

12. Joe’s Fine Meat’s is the best place for quality steak’s!

Practice Exercises (Answers)

Add an apostrophe where needed in the following sentences:

1. My mothers’ heirloom dishes are missing.
   mother’s

2. Phil’s two old cars gave him headaches.
   Phil’s

3. Not surprisingly, as Susans practice time increased, her scores improved.
   Susan’s
4. The little shop lost its lease.  
   No apostrophe in its when possessive noun

5. All the women's suitcases were stolen from the bus.  
   women's

6. Some people felt the students concerns had been ignored.  
   if one student: student’s OR if more than one: students’

7. Her cat's fur was matted. (1 cat)  
   cat’s

8. Her cat's fur was matted. (3 cats)  
   cat's

Find and correct the errors in the sentences below. Some sentences have no errors; mark these “correct” in the space provided.

1. It's about time that you passed this test.  
   It is (formal) or It’s (informal)

2. Pamela won a year’s worth of groceries  
   year’s

3. My parents’ car is 12 years old.  
   Parents'

4. The baby's hand was hurt by the hot water.  
   baby’s

5. The men’s section is behind the escalator.  
   no error

6. Damocles' sword was quite worrisome.  
   Damocles’

7. Doris's book received excellent reviews  
   Doris’s

8. Stanley lived above the only café, Jack's Java Joint.  
   Jack’s Java Joint

9. Three teenage boys can eat an enormous amount of pizza.  
   boys

10. Sara and Joe spent a great deal of time helping a friend of their's.  
    theirs
11. They cleared the night’s accumulation of ice from the roof’s of the houses.

12. Joe’s Fine Meat’s is the best place for quality steak’s!

Joe’s Fine Meats/steaks