Possessives show ownership. This handout will help you learn the different ways to make various parts of speech possessive.

**Nouns**

**Singular Nouns**
To make a singular noun possessive, add an apostrophe and an “s.”

**Examples:**
- the child’s toy
- a patient’s bed

Use the singular form with collective nouns (the name of a company, organization, or other group) and personal names.

**Examples:**
- my family’s home
- Nike’s logo
- Bob’s restaurant

**Singular Nouns Ending in “S”**
When a singular noun ends in “s,” some style guides require an apostrophe followed by an “s.” Others require only an apostrophe. Still others do not have specific guidelines on this issue.

**Examples:**
- the boss’s office
- the boss’ office
- Chris’s desk
- Chris’ desk

**Plural Nouns**
For regular plural nouns (ending in “s” or “es”), add only an apostrophe to show possession.

**Examples:**
- doctors’ fees
- countries’ laws
- birds’ nests

For irregular plural nouns, add an apostrophe plus “s” to show possession.

**Examples:**
- children’s museum
- people’s choice
- the women’s association

*Note: For more information about regular and irregular plural nouns, please see our “Plurals” handout.*

**Compound Nouns**
To make a singular compound noun possessive, add an apostrophe plus “s.”

**Examples:**
- sister-in-law’s car
- grandfather’s house

Making a plural compound noun possessive changes depending on whether or not the plural ends in “s.”

**Examples:**
- sisters-in-law’s cars
- grandfathers’ houses
Joint Possession
To show joint possession of a noun, add an apostrophe only to the word closest to that noun.

Examples: his mother and father’s marriage Siskel and Ebert’s rating

However, if there is separate possession of the same noun, add an apostrophe to both words.

Example: The boy’s and the girl’s lunches were the same.

“Of”
You can also use “of” to show possession. Place “of” and the possessor noun after the possessed noun.

Example: the registrar’s office ➔ the office of the registrar

Pronouns and Adjectives
Each subject pronoun has a corresponding possessive adjective and pronoun—none of which use an apostrophe. Remember that an adjective modifies a noun, but a pronoun takes the place of a noun.

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Possessive Adjective: I am waiting for someone to eat my pie.
Possessive Pronoun: Put yours next to mine.

Its and It’s
Since “it” is a pronoun, its possessive form is “its.” “Its” has no apostrophe—just like “his” and “her.”

Example: The computer needs its monitor replaced.

“It’s” is a contraction that means either “it is” or “it has.”

Example: You should take biology next semester. It’s a very interesting class.

You can try substituting the words “it is” or “it has” in your sentence to check which form to use.

Whose and Who’s
Similarly, “whose” is the possessive form of the pronoun “who.”

Example: Whose is this?
“Who’s” is a contraction that means either “who is” or “who has.”

**Example:** Who’s going to finish this job?

You can try substituting the words “who is” or “who has” in your sentence to check which form to use.