

Plural and Possessive

The correct usage of the plural and possessive forms is a common difficulty. Often, this problem stems from proper apostrophe use. Below are some hints to assist in correct usage of plural and possessive forms:

Plural forms—For most nouns, indicating more than one person, place or thing can be accomplished simply by adding an “s.”

Example: cat → cats

Nouns ending with “s,” “z,” “ch,” “sh,” or “x”—For nouns ending with these letters, indicating more than one person, place or thing can be accomplished by adding “es.”

Example: lunch → lunches

Nouns ending with “o”—For nouns ending with “o,” indicating more than one person, place or thing may require an “s” or an “es.”

*Examples: hero → heroes
memo → memos*

Nouns ending with “y”—For nouns ending with “y,” indicating more than one person, place or thing requires dropping the “y” and adding “ies.”

Example: story → stories

Misused apostrophes—Apostrophes indicate possession and form contractions. Never use apostrophes with possessive pronouns (“hers,” “theirs,” “yours,” “whose,” and “its”) or to form a plural.

It’s vs. its—“It’s” is short for “it is.” “Its” is the possessive of “it.”

Singular possessive—To indicate possession in a singular noun, an apostrophe followed by an “s” is added. For singular nouns ending in “s,” either add an apostrophe alone or add an apostrophe followed by an “s.” Either use is acceptable, but be consistent once making this choice.

*Examples: writer → writer’s pen
Thomas → Thomas’ pen
or Thomas’s pen*

Plural possessive—To indicate possession in a plural noun ending in “s,” simply add an apostrophe after the “s.” For a plural noun not ending in “s,” an apostrophe followed by an “s” is added.

*Examples: kids → kids’ story
children → children’s story*

Compound noun possessives—To indicate joint possession by two or more individuals, follow the above rules on the last noun. To indicate possession of like items (but not the same item) by two or more individuals, follow the above rules on each noun.

*Examples: Mary and John’s daughter
Mary’s and John’s books*

The Community Writing Center (CWC) has numerous books to aid with capitalization and grammar techniques in your own writing. Additionally, CWC Writing Assistants are available to assist you in any stage of your writing process. Just ask to sign up for an appointment.

Library Square Plaza—210 East 400 South. Salt Lake City, UT 84111

(801) 957-4992—www.slcc.edu/cwc

