Plurals & Possessives

Plural Nouns

Just because a plural noun ends in *s* doesn't mean it needs an apostrophe. Use the apostrophe only for a possessive noun.

Here are some sentences with plural nouns ending in *s*, but no possessive connection is shown. Apostrophes would be incorrect:

The **brothers** are **partners** in computer consulting **businesses.**

The **Browns** each play a few instruments in several **orchestras.**

The **Joneses** wear straw **hats** on **holidays.**

Your **records** indicate the **Lees** made several **errors.**

The **Nguyens** own **factories** in both small **towns.**

PLURAL NOUNS ENDING IN *S*

Add only an apostrophe to make a PLURAL noun that ends in *s* possessive.

One – Word Possessives

The **dentists'** desk are on wheels. (more than one dentist)
The **witnesses'** statements are false. (more than one witness)
Send the **technicians'** report to the lab. (more than one technician)
Three **days'** work is needed to complete the job. (more than one day)
The **Hawkeses'** offices are in Visalia. (more than one person named Hawkes)

EXCEPTION

There are none! The exception rule shown under the Singular Nouns heading is for singular possessive only – *not* for plurals.

PLURAL NOUNS NOT ENDING IN *S*

If a plural noun does not end in *s*, add *'s* to make it possessive.

Notice that the underlined irregular nouns are plural but don't end in *s*.

Men's suits are very colorful this year.
The trustee controls the children's assets.
The alumni's contributions were small.

COMPOUND PLURAL POSSESSIVES

Some compound words become plural by adding *s* to the first word – as in *sons-in-law*. This plural does not end in *s* but in *w*.

If a plural compound noun is possessive, first spell the plural. Then add the *'s* to the end of the compound noun.

Newspaper reporters listened attentively to five **editors in chief's** speeches. [The *s* after *editor* makes the compound expression plural. The *'s* after *chief* makes it possessive.]

My **brothers-in-law's** appetites amaze me. [plural possessive]