



Plurals versus Possessives

Plurals : The plural form of a noun is typically signified by adding -s or -es to the end of a word.

Ex. Book → Books
Church → Churches

However, be aware that some nouns take irregular plural forms:

Ex. Child → Children
Sheep → Sheep

Possessives: The possessive form of a noun indicates ownership or a close relationship.

If a noun is singular, add -'s.

Ex. Prison → the prison's exit
Bus → the bus's seats

Note: Different style guides may suggest that adding only an apostrophe is appropriate when a singular noun ends in the letter -s: the bus' seats. This handout follows MLA guidelines. If you are using a different formatting style, be sure to consult your handbook.

If a noun is plural and ends in the letter -s, add only an apostrophe.

Ex. Birds → the birds' nest
Artists → the artists' gathering

If the plural form of the noun is irregular and *does not* end in the letter -s, add -'s.

Ex. Women → the women's hospital
Syllabi → the syllabi's print

If nouns listed in a series share ownership, place an -'s after the last noun only.

Ex. Papa Bear, Mama Bear, and Baby Bear's house (indicates that the three bears share a house)

Julius Caesar and Marcus Brutus's friendship (indicates that the two men share a friendship)

But if ownership is separate, place an 's after *each* noun.

Ex. Maggie's and Anne's shoes (indicates that each girl has her own shoes)