Possessive 's'



Wow! Do you like John's new car? <?xml:namespace prefix = "o" ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

We use a possessive 's' to indicate possession.

This file belongs to Sophie. This is Sophie's file.

We add an apostrophe and the letter 's' after a singular noun and an apostrophe after a regular plural noun. <?xml:namespace prefix = "o" ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

	One dog	More than one dog
One boy	The boy's dog.	The boy's dogs.
More than one boy	The boys' dog.	The boys' dogs.

Uses

Uses	Examples
To replace 'of'	This is the coat of the girl. [This structure is rarely used - see note below.] This is the girl's coat.
To mean 'belong to'	These dogs belong to Jeremy. These are Jeremy's dogs.

As a subject complement	**The cup on the left is mum's and the other one is dad's.**
As a subject	**Peter's is the red car and Jane's is the blue one.**

Note that

1. If the subject noun is a building or an object, we do not normally use a possessive 's':

Please shut the car door.
Do you like your hotel room? **Do you like your hotel's room?**
The file is in my desk drawer. **The file is in my desk's drawer.**

There are some exceptions, for example when talking about ships; when using an adjective or with plural object nouns. For example:

We took a walk on the ship's deck.

The desk's top drawer is stuck.

All the hotel's bedrooms were occupied that night.

2. We add an apostrophe and the letter 's' after irregular plural nouns and an apostrophe after irregular plural nouns that end in 's'. For example:

the children's playground
the men's washroom
the people's opinion
ladies' bikes
babies' changing room

3. Proper nouns that end in an 's' are usually followed by an apostrophe 's'. However, you will sometimes see them followed by just an apostrophe, particularly with older names:

Jesus' disciples
Charles' wedding [Charles's is also correct.]

4. For compound nouns, the apostrophe 's' or the apostrophe comes after the last word.

I like my brother-in-law's new car.
I was dissatisfied with the bank clerk's response.

5. The possessive 's' is never used with a pronoun or the possessive adjective 'its':

This is Sue's.	**This is hers.** ✗	**This is her's.** ✗
The company's profits increased.	**Its profits increased.** ✗	**It's profits increased.** ✗

6. If more than one person owns something, we add the apostrophe 's' or the apostrophe to the last name.

I'm going to mum and dad's wedding anniversary party at the weekend.
Penny and James's dog had four puppies.
Brian, Lisa and Osborne's birthdays are all in June.

7. When in doubt about where to place the apostrophe, put it directly after the person/people/thing(s) to which the object of the sentence belongs.

8. Sometimes we use possessive 's' in time and measurement phrases. Here are some examples:

At the end of his contract, they gave him two weeks' salary as a bonus.
The contractor needs a month's notice before he can start.
They only paid him two dollars for an hour's work.
He put fifty euros' worth of petrol in the car.

Using 'of'

1. We do not normally use a possessive 's' for:

a. Position/location:

the top of the mountain
the bottom of the page
the top of the stairs
the back of the room
the front of the building

b. Some expressions:

on the tip of my tongue
the dish of the day
the winner of the award/prize

the end of the world
the love of my life
a friend of a friend

2. **We use 'of' to clarify that we are speaking about one of a group rather than a single person or thing:**

   He\'s the company's employee. [The company only has one employee.]

   He\'s one of the company's employees.
   or
   He\'s an employee of the company.

   She\'s my sister's friend. [This sounds like my sister only has one friend.]

   She\'s one of my sister's friends.
   or
   She\'s a friend of my sister.

3. **We use 'of' when the apostrophe 's' may be confusing:**

   This is John's photo. [John is in the photo or the photo belongs to John.]
   This is a photo of John. [John is in the photo.]
   This photo belongs to John.
   This photo is John's. [It belongs to him.]

Omitting the object

When we talk about certain buildings and places, we can omit the object but we keep the possessive 's' form. Here are some examples:

I went to my sister's last night. [her home]
I've got an appointment at the doctor's/dentist's/vet's. [surgery]
I'm going to the hairdresser's tomorrow. [salon]

See also whose and who's.



Anita runs a babies' clothes shop in the town centre.



We go to my mother's house for dinner every Sunday.



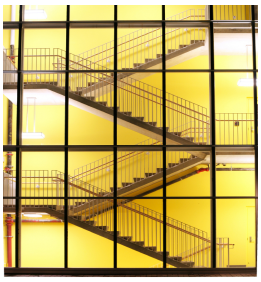
The children's Halloween costumes were adorable.



They're celebrating Mary's birthday.



The Queen of England's grandson got married in 2011.



All the bosses' offices are on the top floor.

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