



### APOSTROPHES—SOME RULES AND EXERCISES

What is meant by possession? Possession means **ownership--a relationship** in which there is an owner and something that is owned. This relationship can be shown in two ways:

- 1) Use a phrase starting with the word OF--      The EDGE of the RAZOR is dull.
- 2) Use an apostrophe--                              The RAZOR'S EDGE is dull.

In the sentences below, decide which word represents the owner and which represents the owned.

- 1. Diana's husband is friendly.
- 2. I cannot remember the titles of those books.
- 3. The cries of the kidnapped child led the police to him.
- 4. The women's complaints caused their boss to change.
- 5. That shirt of Joe and the socks of Pete match OK.

#### HOW TO FORM A POSSESSIVE:

Nouns that show possession are used like adjectives. To show they are functioning as adjectives, not nouns, we usually add 's to the owner or owners.

Father's temper is violent.  
A week's pay was wasted.

The boss's desk is messy.  
The children's games got noisy.

Remember:

An owner may own one thing (singular):	one boy's frog
or more than one thing (plural):	one boy's frogs
Also, more than one owner (plural)	
may own a singular thing together:	two boys' frog
or they may own a number of things	
together:	two boys' frogs

If the owner is a plural noun that already ends in s, then just add the apostrophe, not the extra s to show possession. Some plural nouns do not end in s, so add 's (children's games).

Some singular nouns already end in s, but they are still treated like a regular singular noun and 's should be added (Mrs. Jones's car, the boss's desk).

Because of the confusion caused by s being used to form plural nouns and the extra s being used to show possession, you should make three decisions in this order:

---Do you want a singular or plural form of a noun?

---Is there any ownership involved?

---If there is ownership, is there one owner or more than one?

That is, do you need a singular or a plural possessive?

## **PRACTICE**

DECIDE WHETHER YOU WANT THE SINGULAR OR PLURAL FORM OF THE NOUN:

1. Many battery-operated (toy, toys) never work right.
2. There are four (car, cars) in the parking lot.
3. Several (essay, essays) had no name at the top.
4. That kind of (movie, movies) is just too violent.

DECIDE WHETHER YOU WANT THE PLURAL FORM OR THE POSSESSIVE FORM OF THE NOUN: (Is there ownership?)

5. His (papers, paper's) have a lot of spelling errors.
6. The (houses, house's) messiness angered the husband.
7. His (wives, wife's) job was no excuse.
8. All the (floors, floor's) were dirty.

DECIDE WHETHER YOU WANT THE SINGULAR POSSESSIVE OR THE PLURAL POSSESSIVE OF THE NOUN:

9. A (cat's, cats') cries were heard in the alley.
10. Four (senator's, senators') bank records were checked.
11. In the distance I saw the (plane's, planes') vapor trail.
12. All the (newspaper's, newspapers') stories about the accident were the same.

