

Possessive nouns.

To show possession or ownership in English, meaning that one thing belongs to another, we put an apostrophe and an s at the end of a noun, like this, 's. You might have noticed that I sometimes use apostrophes in the course subtitles to highlight a specific word or sentence, but that is completely unrelated to this topic and is only meant to stress a specific word or show you that I'm giving an example. Let's look at some example sentences using the possessive s.

'That is Kallan's book'. Who does it belong to? Kallan. Whose is it? It's Kallan's. It belongs to Kallan, me, and Kallan is a noun so we put an 's at the end.

'That is the student's book'. Who does it belong to? The student. Whose book is it? The student's. It belongs to the student.

Now for singular common nouns that end with an s, like bus and witness, it's common to write the 's unless the next word also starts with the letter s. We do this so the reader doesn't get confused by all of the different s's in a sentence. So, 'The bus's windows are large' but 'The bus' seats are uncomfortable'. And, 'The witness's testimony was believable' but 'The witness' story was well told'. Notice that I pronounce the possessive s even when it's not written.

But what if we're talking about a person named Chris, many students, some girls or several black holes? If a proper noun ends in an s, like Chris, it's your choice to write only the ' or 's. That means you can write 'That is Chris' book' or 'That is Chris's book'. Chris is a proper noun, so it's your choice to write the s or not. 'Paris' weather is nice' or "Paris's weather is nice'. With proper nouns like Paris, you can choose to write only the ' or an 's, but this doesn't change the pronunciation.

If a plural common noun ends in an s, like students, girls and black holes, and is followed by a word that starts with a consonant, like book and shoes, you only write the '

at the end of the word. 'Those are the students' books' and 'Those are the girls' shoes'. In these examples, the plural common nouns were followed by words that started with consonants, so I only wrote the ' and not the s.

If a plural common noun that ends in s is followed by a word that starts with a vowel, you have two options, you can write only the ' or 's. Like in, 'The black holes' energy is massive' or 'The black holes's energy is massive'. We have two options since 'energy' starts with a vowel. Next, 'The girls' organization is allowing new members' or 'The girls's organization is allowing new members.' We have two spelling options after girls because organization starts with a vowel, but the spelling doesn't change how we say the possessive words.

Before we finish, I should mention that if you're going to be doing a lot of writing the spelling rules for the 's change from region to region, university to university, business to business, so ask what 'style guide' your institution uses to make sure you're following their specific rules.