

6 Possessive forms of nouns



1 Possessive forms

singular noun	+ 's	<i>Jane's apartment</i> <i>my uncle's job</i> <i>the bus's front lights</i>
names that end in -s	' or 's	<i>James' school</i> OR <i>James's school</i>
plural nouns that end in -s	'	<i>boys' team</i> <i>workers' union</i>
plural noun (irregular)	+ 's	<i>children's dinner</i> <i>people's rights</i>

I'd better go now. I've got to finish making the **children's** dinner.

2 Noun + 's or '

We usually use noun + 's (or ' only) for people and animals: *It's the **children's** dinner.*
*Where are the **cats'** bowls?* ***John's wife's** dress is lovely.*

If there are two people, we usually only add 's to the second person:
*What do you think of **Matt and Jane's** new house?*

We can use noun + 's without another noun

- when the meaning is clear: *'Can I borrow your pen?' 'It's **Steve's**. Ask him.'*
- for people's homes: *There's a party after the exam at **Abbi's**.*
- for some businesses and services: *Lester is at the **dentist's**.*
*Can you buy me some chocolate at the **newsagent's**?*

We can add 's / ' to a period of time:

*a **week's** holiday* (= a holiday of a week) ***six months'** travelling* ***yesterday's** news*

3 of + noun

We usually use *of* + noun for things and places:

*Would you like a map **of the city**?* *I don't know the time **of the next train**.*

With cities, countries and organisations, we can use 's or *of*:

***London's** parks are very pleasant.* / *The **parks of London** are very pleasant.*

***China's** economy is growing fast.* / *The **economy of China** is growing fast.*

*That needs the **World Bank's** approval.* / *That **needs the approval of the World Bank**.*

We can use *of* + noun and noun + 's together:

*It's the Lord Mayor **of London's** residence.* *She's the Head **of Marketing's** wife.*

⚠ We don't usually use *of* + noun for people:

*✗ He's **the uncle of Joan**.* ✓ *He's **Joan's** uncle.*

We don't usually use noun + 's for things:

*✗ I've **broken my shoe's** heel.* ✓ *I've broken the heel **of my shoe**.*

We often leave out *the* in *time of (the) day/night/year*, especially in spoken English:
*I'm usually working at this **time of day**.*

4 Compound nouns

Some compound nouns describe one person or thing that belongs to another:

table leg (= the leg of the table), *bedroom ceiling* (= the ceiling of the bedroom)

book cover (= the cover of the book), *college principal* (= the principal of the college)

*✗ The **bedroom's** ceiling needs painting.* ✓ *The **bedroom ceiling** needs painting.*

More on compound nouns ➤ Unit 98.1