

Using the Apostrophe Correctly

Punctuation for possessive nouns can be baffling. The following five steps can help you better understand apostrophe placement.

- 1. Look for two nouns together. If the first noun shows ownership of, or a special relationship to, the second noun, the first noun requires an apostrophe.**

the girl['s] car
one month['s] time
the employees['] duties

- 2. Reverse the nouns using a prepositional phrase.** Examine the ownership noun. Does it end in an "s" sound?

car of the girl (ownership noun, *girl*, does not end in an "s" sound)
time of one month = (ownership noun, *month*, does not end in an "s" sound)
duties of employees (ownership word, *employees*, does end in an "s" sound)

- 3. If an ownership noun does NOT end in an "s" sound, add an apostrophe and "s."**

car of the girl (ownership word does not end in an "s") = girl's car
time of one month (ownership word does not end in an "s") = one month's time

- 4. If an ownership noun DOES end in an "s" sound, add only an apostrophe.**

duties of employees (ownership noun ends in an "s") = employees' duties
rent of six months (ownership noun ends in an "s") = six months' rent

- 5. If an extra syllable can be easily pronounced in the possessive form, add an apostrophe and "s" to singular nouns.** Relatively few words fall in this category.

station of the waitress = waitress's station (extra syllable can be pronounced)
desk of the boss = boss's desk (extra syllable can be pronounced)

Try your skill in making words possessive in the below sentences. Mark the sentence with a C if it is correct.

1. We must answer this customers text immediately.
2. Is Marlons report ready to be submitted?
3. In six months time you will have forgotten about this event.
4. Some customers felt they didn't get their moneys worth.
5. All applicants must pay two months rent in advance.
6. Our companys policy is to issue credit, not cash, refunds.
7. All new depositors qualify for free checking accounts.

8. The goal of the IRS is to simplify all taxpayers returns.
9. Passengers concerns about extra fees on plane trips are valid.
10. Every passengers luggage must be X-rayed, and some bags will be opened.
11. The profits of all companies are being affected by developing technologies and worldwide competition.
12. Five dollars worth of gas will not take you very far these days.
13. Nearly all management firms tailor their services and charges to customers needs.
14. Police officers checked all drivers licenses at two checkpoints.
15. A company website usually has a tab containing news releases about its activities.