Possessives & apostrophes

A possessive shows ownership and needs an apostrophe: a singular noun adds 's (the...



Lesson `rw.conventions.W7`

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The idea

A possessive shows ownership and needs an apostrophe: a singular noun adds 's (the dog's leash); a plural noun ending in s adds only an apostrophe (the dogs' leashes); an irregular plural adds 's (the children's toys). Possessive PRONOUNS never take an apostrophe – its, whose, theirs, yours, ours, hers.

Does the word show ownership (possessive) or stand for two words (contraction)? Is the owner singular or plural?

Ownership by a pronoun -> no apostrophe (its, whose). 'It is'/'who is' -> it's/who's. Singular owner -> 's; plural owner ending in s -> s'.

Watch every step

___ been an unusually dry year for the entire valley.

Which choice conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- **A.** It's
- **B.** Its ✗ *its / it's confusion*
- **C.** Its' ✗ *misplaced possessive apostrophe*
- **D.** It ✗ *plural vs possessive*

Why **A** — "It's." Write the form that matches ownership vs contraction and singular vs plural.

Now a harder one

The conservation group has expanded ___ efforts to restore the wetland.

Which choice conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

- **A.** its
- **B.** it's ✗ *its / it's confusion*
- **C.** its' ✗ *misplaced possessive apostrophe*
- **D.** it ✗ *plural vs possessive*

Why A — "its." Write the form that matches ownership vs contraction and singular vs plural.

The method, in one line

Possessives & apostrophes

Ownership by a pronoun -> no apostrophe (its, whose). 'It is'/'who is' -> it's/who's. Singular owner -> 's; plural owner ending in s -> s'.

Could I replace it with 'it is'/'who is'? If not, no apostrophe. Is the owner singular or plural?

Watch out: two traps to dodge

its / it's confusion
Uses it's (it is) for the possessive, or its for the contraction.

whose / who's confusion
Uses who's (who is) for the possessive, or whose for the contraction.

Name the trap before you pick — most wrong answers are one of these two.

Try it, then watch the walk-through

Explore this live

Watch the walk-through