

THE BEST SAT PREP COURSE EVER

POSSESSION

SAT Reading: Cheat Sheet

RULES FOR POSSESSIVES

For the SAT you'll need to know when it's appropriate to use possessives (including 's or s'), as well as errors between homophones and possessive forms, i.e its VS it's OR their VS they're VS there.

Remember, **it's** means "**it is**." (imagine the apostrophe is a letter "i")

Its' is ALWAYS wrong (Think "itsi" isn't a word!).

Its is the possessive form of it.

To determine possession, think about:

1. Is the word in question possessing anything?

- a. If no, then nothing needs an apostrophe by the "s."

Remember **apostrophes should (almost***) NEVER be used to make something plural**. They make something possessive. We spend a lot of time "with the Joneses" **not** "with the Jones's." The second version is wrong.

- b. If yes, then add an apostrophe and if appropriate, an "s"

2. Is the word in question singular or plural?

Most common cases:

- a. **If singular** (and not a proper noun ending in "s"**) **add an apostrophe then s** (dog's, Kennedy's (when referring to a single Kennedy), duchess's*, dress's*)
- b. **If plural, and a word not ending in "s,"** add an apostrophe then "s" (people's, fish's)
- c. **If plural ending in s, add a single apostrophe at the end** (the two dogs' favorite park, the Hansons' annual party)

Less common situations:

- d. ****If singular, and a proper noun ending in "s,"** you can either add an apostrophe then "s" (Jonas's, Dickens's) just as in rule a. above, OR you can simply add an apostrophe (Dickens', Jonas', Thomas')
- e. **If plural, and a proper noun ending in "s,"** add an apostrophe (The Kennedys' legacy, the Joneses' success) (note this is the same as rule b. above). Remember to make the proper name plural before you add the apostrophe!
 - i. Some names take an "es" to become plural: names that end in "x," "z," "ch," "sh," and "s."
 - ii. In other words, if you're discussing the whole Kennedy family, "the Kennedy's legacy" would be wrong. "The Kennedys' legacy" would be right.
- f. ***If singular, a common noun, and ending in "s" AND followed by a word that starts with s,** you can either add apostrophe "s" (dress's satin buttons) or simply add an apostrophe ("dress' satin buttons" could be correct if the next word after the apostrophe starts with "s" according to AP style guide...but that's unlikely to show up on the ACT, and in any case, dress's satin buttons would be correct).

***** 's** could be used to make a plural of single letters, such as "I got all **A's**," or to make abbreviations with periods in them plural, like "**M.D.'s**."

3. When two subjects are before a noun, ask whether they share that noun or they each have one of that noun. Make only on the second subject possessive if the item is shared. If item(s) is/are not shared, each subject should be possessive. I.e.

"Dan and Erin's dogs..." means Dan and Erin share more than one dog together.

"Dan's and Erin's dogs" implies both Dan and Erin have a dog each or multiple dogs and they are not co-owned.