

UNIT 79

... 's (apostrophe s) and ... of ...

a We normally use 's when the first noun is a person or an animal:

the **manager's** office (*not* 'the office of the manager')
Mr **Evans's** daughter the **horse's** tail a **policeman's** hat

Other (with things) we normally use ... of ...:

the door **of the room** (*not* 'the room's door')
the beginning **of the story** (*not* 'the story's beginning')

Sometimes you can use 's when the first noun is a thing. For example, you can say:

the **book's** title or the title **of the book**

But it is safer and more usual to use ... of ... (but see also section b).

b You can usually use 's when the first noun is an organisation (= a group of people). So you can say:

the **government's** decision or the decision **of the government**
the **company's** success or the success **of the company**

It is also possible to use 's with places. So you can say:

the **city's** new theatre the **world's** population
Britain's system of government Italy's largest city

c After a singular noun we use 's. After a plural noun (which end in -s) we use only an apostrophe ('):

my sister's room (*one* sister) Mr Carter's house
my sisters' room (*more than one* sister) the Carter's house (*Mr and Mrs Carter*)

If a plural noun does not end in -s, we use 's:

a children's book

- Tom's flat is much larger than Ann's. (= Ann's flat)

d You can also use 's with time words (*tomorrow* etc.):

- Tomorrow's meeting has been cancelled.
- Have you still got last Saturday's newspaper?

You can also say: yesterday's... today's... this evening's... next week's... Monday's... etc.

We also use 's (or only an apostrophe (') with plural) with periods of time:

- I've got a week's holiday.
- I've got three weeks' holiday.
- I need eight hours' sleep a night.
- My house is very near here - only about five minutes' walk.

Compare this structure with 'a three-week holiday' (Unit 78f).

Jack and Jill's wedding... Mr and Mrs Carter's house
- I've got three weeks' holiday.

