

# Ask about English

Apostrophe 's'



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## BBC Learning English – Ask about English

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### A question from Kath and Tracy, parents who don't want to make any mistakes when helping out with homework!

What is the correct way to put an 's' on the end of a name that ends in 's' - e.g. James, this is James's homework. Or Ross: "Where is Rosses homework?" Which one is correct or is it by putting an apostrophe in?

Thanks you for your time

### George Pickering answers:

Well Kath and Tracy, thanks for asking a very interesting question. In fact, this is one of those questions that is hard to answer definitively as usage is changing.

Most current guides to British English punctuation state that after names which end in **s**, you add an apostrophe and an **s**.

e.g. **Jones's book** – **Jones'** would end **s** + apostrophe **s**

However, names from the ancient world are often written with just an apostrophe

e.g. **Achilles' anger** – the ending would be **s** + apostrophe

It is also customary to make an exception for names that end with an 'iz' sound.

e.g. **Moses'** leadership. **Moses'** would end **s** + apostrophe

And **Wayne Bridges'** left foot, where **Bridges'** would end **s** + apostrophe

I hope that clarifies matters for you.

*George Pickering is an educational coach, consultant and trainer. He is an associate tutor at the University of Sheffield, and a British Council inspector of language schools in the UK.*

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