



The holidays are full of writing pitfalls, especially when it comes to last names and apostrophes. Here are a few rules that will help you avoid some common faux pas. Of course, they'd be helpful for all kinds of correspondence and occasions—wedding invitations come to mind—so feel free to bookmark this for use throughout the year.

- 1) Don't use an apostrophe when you're making a last name plural.

This is probably the most widespread holiday card mistake: putting an apostrophe where it doesn't belong. Last names are like any other word—when you make them plural, you don't need an apostrophe. Just add an "s." But somehow, people who would never dream of adding an apostrophe to other plural nouns suddenly panic when faced with a last name. For some reason, this tends to happen even more with names that end in "y" or a vowel. These names don't have special rules—just add an "s."

**Incorrect:**

The holiday light's are beautiful in that neighborhood.  
Happy holidays from the Smith's and Salvio's!

**Correct:**

The holiday lights are beautiful in that neighborhood.  
Happy holidays from the Smiths and Salvios!

- 2) To make a last name plural, you might have to add "es."

Again, just like with any other noun, if the last name ends in -s, -z, -ch, -sh, or -x, you add an "es" instead of an "s." Sometimes this can look awkward, especially if the last name already ends in "es." If uncertainty starts to set in, you might think you should leave the name singular because it already ends in an "s"—or add an apostrophe to somehow make it right. Resist these temptations!

**Incorrect:**

The Jones' hosted the office party.  
The Gonzales arrived with the Charles around noon.

**Correct:**

The Joneses hosted the office party.

The Gonzaleses arrived with the Charleses around noon.

**An easy fix for -es awkwardness is to say, “the Gonzales family arrived with the Charles family.”**

- 3) The apostrophe on a plural possessive last name goes after the “s.”

If you panic a little when making a name plural, your brain might go haywire when dealing with a plural possessive name. There are a variety of ways to go wrong here, but often the instinct is to add an apostrophe and “s” to the singular name. And there are even more ways to goof up when the singular name ends in -s or -es.

**Incorrect:**

The holiday brunch was at the White’s house.

The holiday brunch was at the William’s house.

The holiday brunch was at the Williams house.

The holiday brunch was at the Williamses house.

**Correct:**

The holiday brunch was at the Whites’ house.

The holiday brunch was at the Williamses’ house.

- 4) There are many other words and phrases to look out for during the holidays.

Beyond names, lots of other common holiday greetings are often mis-apostrophized and capitalized. Here are some examples:

**Incorrect:** Happy holiday’s from the Lopezes!

**Correct:** Happy holidays from the Lopezes!

**Incorrect:** Seasons greetings from the Joyner family!

**Correct:** Season’s greetings from the Joyner family!

**Incorrect:** The Newmans had a very Happy Hanukkah.

**Correct:** The Newmans had a very happy Hanukkah.

**Incorrect:** We wish you a Merry Christmas.

**Correct:** We wish you a merry Christmas.

**Sources:**

- [Grammarly: The 3 Most Common Writing Mistakes on Holiday Greetings](#)
- [Grammar Girl: Are Your Holiday Cards Grammatically Correct?](#)
- [Axios.com: Read this before using apostrophes in holiday cards](#)