



GRAMMAR GROWLS WITH THE GRAMMAR OWL – WHO’S or WHOSE



The Grammar Owl recently pointed out (with those rather sharp talons) that although we’ve dealt with who and whom in a PDF, we’ve not yet talked about who’s and whose.

Since the Owl is particularly interested in who words, we’re going to take a look at these two often-confused sound-alikes now.

Who’s is one of those tricky words where the use of the apostrophe isn’t the usual possessive that we often expect, and that’s where the confusion generally comes in.

Who’s is a contraction of who is. Who is going to read this post? becomes Who’s going to read this post?

Since who’s is already taken as a contraction, we have to have a different form of the word to indicate possession. The word that asks which person something belongs to is whose. Whose shoes are these?

If you’re trying to figure out which of the two words to use, ask the question using the non-contracted version of who is. If it makes sense: Who is coming with me to get ice cream? then use who’s.

If the question doesn’t make sense when you use who is: Who is ice cream just fell out of the cone? then use whose. Whose ice cream just fell out of the cone? (I hope it wasn’t yours!)

(By the way, whos without either an apostrophe or an e on the end can only be used if you’re talking about “all the Whos in Whoville” as written about by Dr. Seuss. In the day-to-day use of the language, there’s no space for whos.)

I hope this is helpful for you.

Now — did someone mention ice cream? I wonder if owls like ice cream. Hmm...