



Should I put an apostrophe in the following?

*Ladies toilet, Dogs home*

You might. It depends what you mean.

The simple test is: is the thing for the use of or used for plural entities (no apostrophe) or is it owned by plural entities (apostrophe, please).

Here are some examples to help:

*There are two house-proud, old biddies living upstairs and the ladies' toilet is kept very clean in case a visitor calls.*

*The old ladies also keep two slavering, vicious Rottweilers in the garden and the dogs' home is pretty much wherever they want to sleep.*

Both these cases require the apostrophe because the noun has to show the genitive – particular ladies and particular dogs.

However, in the case of Battersea Dogs Home and most uses of Ladies Toilet, the words *dogs* and *ladies* are being used adjectivally. The implication is that the *toilet* is for the use of more than one lady and the *home* houses more than one dog.

Compare these:

*Margate's Airport*

*Margate Airport*

Only the second of these would be used on a sign pointing to it.

We don't write *Margate's Airport* preferring to use *Margate* as an adjective but if we are talking about it, e.g., in something like

*Margate's Airport is very pleasant*

then we could happily use the genitive.