



7th in a
series of
useful
tips

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Correspondence Writing Tips

**A COMPANION TO THE
MCPS CORRESPONDENCE MANUAL**



Singular noun with a plural possessive

To avoid ambiguity, use a singular noun with a plural possessive when only one of the things possessed could belong to each individual.

- Forbes knew most of them by their first name.
- Four pilots crashed to their death.
- Think of the last name of five pupils in the room.
- The steam line ruptured, causing the death of seven longshoremen.

However, take care not to apply the rule to the wrong noun.

Wrong: It is pretty clear that the smile on the face of the delegates, whenever they look at each other, is not a sincere one.

Right: It is pretty clear that the smile on the faces of the delegates, whenever they look at each other, is not a sincere one.
(Smile is the noun the rule applies to.)

Taken from *Words into Type*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Prentice-Hall. 1974

**Look for more
tips in the near future!**

*E-mail us for a quick response
to your grammar and
style questions:*

Donna_M_Marks@mcpsmd.org

*Our Editorial Help Desk also appreciates
your phone calls and visits:*

301-517-8139

CESC, Room 20

*We are also your contact for
a copy of the MCPS
Correspondence Manual.*