

THE APOSTROPHE

How to use an apostrophe

Apostrophes are mostly used to show ownership or when a letter or a number has been omitted.

SINGULAR POSSESSIVES:

- An apostrophe must be used when an 's' is added to a name or word to indicate possession—to refer to something belonging to or of that person or that thing:

Amanda's book

The school's reputation

Canada's population

Poe's "The Raven"

The Prime Minister's campaign

One year's work



SPECIAL CASE: NAMES ENDING IN 'S':

- Traditionally, the possessive form of a name ending in 's' is formed by adding only an apostrophe as shown in the left-hand column below.
- Recently, many editors have begun including final 's' (as shown on the right). Both versions are correct.

Mr. Ross' idea

or

Mr. Ross's idea

Luis' car

or

Luis's car



PLURAL POSSESSIVES:

- It becomes more complicated when a word is both plural and possessive.
- In that case, an 's' is added (as usual) to form the plural. Instead of adding a second 's' after the apostrophe, this final 's' is omitted:

Three girls' money

Two teachers' classes

Four companies' employees

Five days' labour



- However, in the case of irregular plurals which are formed without an 's', possession is shown by simply adding apostrophe 's', just like a singular possessive:

The children's toys

Two women's experiences

The people's

Some men's attitudes



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Continued

CONTRACTIONS:

- The other common use of the apostrophe is to indicate where letters have been omitted in contractions:
 - can't (cannot)
 - who's (who is; who has)
 - doesn't (does not)
 - it's (it is; it has)
 - won't (will not)
 - aren't (are not)
- Take care not to confuse word pairs such as **whose** and **who's**, or **its** and **it's**.
- In all cases, the form with the apostrophe is the contraction.

DATES:

- An apostrophe is used to indicate omitted numbers: May 4, '21.



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O'CLOCK:

- O'clock, a contraction of the phrase **of the clock**, is now a part of standard English used in all contexts, always written with an apostrophe.

FICTION:

- Apostrophes are used to indicate unpronounced letters in dialogue when a character is speaking casually or in dialect.

"C'mon now! Th' truth is, I'm not gettin' any younger y'know."



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APOSTROPHES AS DIVIDERS:

- Traditionally, an apostrophe was used as a divider when referring to letters or figures in the plural. Recently, editors have begun to omit these apostrophes. Both versions are correct, but you should be consistent.

• the 1960's	or	the 1960s
• the 80's	or	the 80s
• three X's	or	three Xs
• three 6's	or	three 6s

APOSTROPHES IN OTHER CONTRACTIONS:

att'n (attention) reg'd (registered)
 l'il Kim (contraction of little)



NO ONE UNDERSTANDS ME...

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