

## Punctuation - 2

# Apostrophes

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### Apostrophes Generally Do Two Things:

1. Indicate that some object or quality belongs to someone or something.
2. Indicate that a letter or group of letters have been left out to create contractions.

### Apostrophes Help the Reader Understand More Easily

Apostrophes are necessary to help your reader understand, on first reading, what you mean.

👉 Won't and wont mean two different things.

👉 Can't and cant mean two different things.

Readers may not understand whether you mean the possessive or the plural.

👉 "The **chairs** legs are broken," as opposed to, "The **chair's** legs are broken."

### Apostrophes Indicate Belonging

Apostrophes are added to nouns and names to indicate ownership or possession of a thing or quality.

If the owner is singular, add an apostrophe and an "s."

**Bob's** book got wet.

The **student's** assignment is due.

When the owner of the object or quality is a plural noun which ends in an "s," the apostrophe goes after the "s."

The **players'** uniforms got lost.

The **girls'** dresses are cute.

Note: This has been recently disappearing when the owner's name ends in an "s," and is more frequently seen with "s's."

**UPS's** deliveries are never on time.

*Bridget Jones's* Diary was a great movie.

If you use a plural noun which doesn't end in "s," add the apostrophe and the "s."

The **men's** tools were stolen.

The **deer's** wide eyes were large and brown.

If something belongs to two or more people, use the apostrophe and "s" only with the last noun.

**Bill and Carol's** new camper sleeps six.

If you want to show that each individual owns something, make all the nouns possessive.

**Tommy's and Mark's** houses were very different.

Sometimes it is hard to see the ownership:

A day's work

To determine if a noun is possessive, try turning it into an *of* phrase:

The work of a day

## Apostrophes Indicate Belonging (cont.)

### EXCEPTIONS:

Possessive pronouns which end in “s” **DO NOT** use an apostrophe.

**His** books are heavy.

This house is **ours**.

That desk is **hers**.

**Its** tail is wagging.

### Apostrophes Create Contractions

When you leave letters out and create a word made by two different words, use an apostrophe to indicate where the left out letters would go.

**Can't** you understand? (Can not) He **doesn't** care. (does not)

He **won't** do his homework. (would not) **It's** a problem. (It is)

### Apostrophes MAY Be Used to Create Plural Numerals or Letters

Traditionally apostrophes have been used to create the plural form of numerals and letters. Lately, this use has been disappearing.

Peggy skated nearly perfect figure **8's** (or **8s**).

He owns many **CD's** (or **CDs**).

### Be consistent in which way you use them!

#### Making a Plural of a Decade

When using numbers, the apostrophe is omitted when creating the plural form of a decade.

The **1960s** birthed new forms of music.

#### Apostrophe Problem Areas

When do you use **its** and when do you use **it's**?

When editing, most people have to stop and read the sentence saying, “it is.” If the sentence makes sense, use the apostrophe, creating a contraction. If the sentence doesn't make sense, don't use the apostrophe, meaning it's a possessive pronoun.

**It's** confusing in the Evans Building that each level doesn't have **its** own floor number.

#### Apostrophe Problem Areas

Don't confuse plural nouns with possessive ones.

The **mothers** spoke at the school board.

Don't make your reader decide if you mean the plural or the possessive.

**Mother's** house is clean.

The **mothers'** plans included going to the park.