



Those Pesky Apostrophes

Apostrophes Do Three Things

- 1. Apostrophes indicate that some object or quality belongs to someone or something.
- 2. Apostrophes indicate that a letter or group of letters have been left out to create contractions.
- 3. Apostrophes create the plural of numerals or letters.

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 can be confused if you mean the possessive or the plural.
 - The chairs 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.
 - Cathy's car idles roughly.
 - The student's assignment is due.
 - James's love for his country is deep.
- 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 seniors' graduation date is finally here.
 - The girls' dresses are cute.
- If you use a plural noun which doesn't end in "s," add the apostrophe and the "s."
 - The men's tools were stolen.

Apostrophes Indicate Belonging

- 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

- 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 expectations of the work necessary to complete the assignment were very different.

Apostrophes Indicate Belonging

EXCEPT:

- Possessive pronouns which end in “s.”
- DO NOT use an apostrophe.
 - His books are heavy.
 - That desk is hers.
 - This house is ours.
 - Its tail is wagging.

Apostrophes Create Contractions

- When you leave letters out and create a word made by two different words, you use an apostrophe to indicate where the left out letters would go.
 - Can’t you understand?
 - He won’t do his homework.
 - She doesn’t want to go.
 - It’s raining.

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 were a time of upheaval in American history.

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; you have created a contraction. If the sentence doesn’t make sense, don’t use the apostrophe; you mean the 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.
 - Mothers’ care is important for an infant to develop.