

Quick Guide to Apostrophes

The **apostrophe** has three uses:

1. to form possessives of nouns
2. to show the omission of letters (contractions)
3. to indicate certain plurals of lowercase letters

Possessives of Nouns

How to test if you need to make a possessive:

Turn the phrase around and make it an "of the . . ." phrase.

For example:

the boy's hat = the hat of the boy

If the noun after "of" is a building, an object, or a piece of furniture, then no apostrophe is needed!

Possessives – Rules of Use

- ✓ add **'s** to the singular form of the word (even if it ends in -s):
the owner's car James's hat
James' hat (also acceptable)

For plural, proper nouns that are possessive, use an apostrophe after the 's':

"The Egges' presentation was good."

- ✓ add **'s** to the plural forms that do not end in -s:
the children's game the geese's honking
- ✓ add **'** to the end of plural nouns that end in -s:
houses' roofs three friends' letters

- ✓ add **'s** to the end of compound words:
my brother-in-law's money

- ✓ add **'s** to the last noun to show joint possession of an object:
Todd and Anne's apartment

Contractions

A contraction is a word (or set of numbers) in which one or more letters (or numbers) have been omitted.

don't = do not

he'll = he will

shouldn't = should not

'60 = 1960

could've = could have (NOT "could of")

I'm = I am

who's = who is

didn't = did not

Plurals of Lowercase Letters

Apostrophes are used to form plurals of letters that appear in lowercase.

"three p's."

To form the plural of a lowercase letter, place 's after the letter.

Nita's mother constantly stressed minding one's p's and q's.

Don't use apostrophes for possessive pronouns or for noun plurals.

His, her, its, my, yours, ours are all possessive pronouns.

Proofreading for apostrophes

- ✓ Check every word that ends in **-s** or **-es** to see if it needs an apostrophe.
- ✓ Check every apostrophe to see if you can justify it with a rule for using apostrophes.