

The Apostrophe

We use apostrophes in two ways: for contractions and to show possession.

1. Contractions

This is where we use an apostrophe to show that a letter or letters have been taken out of a word to shorten it.

<i>cannot</i>	becomes	<i>can't</i>
<i>I will</i>	becomes	<i>I'll</i>
<i>could have</i>	becomes	<i>could've</i>

The apostrophe goes where the letters have been removed.

We use apostrophes this way in informal writing. We never use contractions in formal or academic writing.

NOTE: Sometimes words are shortened in an irregular way. The apostrophe, however, is still used to show where letters are missing; for example:

<i>will not</i>	becomes	<i>won't</i>
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2. Possession

Apostrophes are used to show that something belongs to something else. To show belonging, /'s/ is added when the noun is singular:

<i>The woman's car</i>	The car belonging to the woman
<i>The cat's milk</i>	The milk belonging to the cat
<i>Joanna's pens</i>	The pens belonging to Joanna

If the noun is plural (that is: more than one owner) and already ends in /s/, just add an apostrophe:

<i>The students' books</i>	The books belonging to the students
<i>The offices' furniture</i>	The furniture belonging to the offices
<i>The trees' leaves</i>	The leaves belonging to the trees

If the noun is plural (that is: more than one owner) and the word does not end in /s/, add /'s/ to show possession.

<i>The women's cars</i>	The cars belonging to the women
<i>The children's toys</i>	The toys belonging to the children

Final (but important) word:

Never use an /'s/ just because a word is plural, or to make the plural form of a noun that ends in a vowel. An apostrophe should also never be used to pluralize an acronym or a number. For example:

<i>vegetables</i>	but never	vegetable's
<i>photos</i>	but never	photo's
<i>1970s</i>	but never	1970's
<i>TVs</i>	but never	TV's

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