

Apostrophes

What is an apostrophe? An apostrophe is a punctuation mark (‘) that appears as part of a word to show possession, to make a plural number, or to indicate the omission of one or more letters.

Three Uses of Apostrophes: In most cases an apostrophe is used to show possession. In such cases, one noun will always be followed by another noun, i.e., the one it possesses:

Ex: Gloria’s hat

Ex: Chase’s red car

1. To Show Possession: Singular and Plural Nouns

To make a singular noun that does not end in “s” possessive, add an apostrophe and an “s”

Ex: The cat’s master loves his cat.

To make a plural noun that does not end in “s” possessive, add an apostrophe and an “s”

Ex: The men’s restroom is closed for repairs.

Nouns Ending in “S”

To make a singular noun ending in “s” possessive, add an apostrophe and an “s”

Ex: John Keats’s death inspired Shelly’s famous elegy, “Adonais.”

If a singular noun ends with an “s” and contains an additional “s” sound elsewhere in the noun, add only the apostrophe to make the noun possessive.

Ex: Jesus’ birth in a stable symbolizes the close relationship between man and nature.

To make a plural noun ending in “s” possessive, add an apostrophe

Ex: The cat’s master loves his cats.

Compound Words or Group Words

To make compound words or groups of words possessive, add an apostrophe and an “s” to only the last word.

Ex: Singular: The chairman of the board’s decision was final.

Ex: Plural: The daughters-in-law’s dresses were ready for the wedding.

Separate and Joint Possessions

To make two nouns possessive that possess something separately, add an apostrophe and an “s” after each possessive noun.

Ex: Kari’s and Lynn’s bikes are in excellent condition. (They each have a bike.)

To make 2 nouns possessive that possess something jointly, add an apostrophe only to the second unit.

Ex: Cameron and Mitch’s car broke down last week. (They share a car.)

2. To Make Plural: Time and Money

To make units of time and money plural, use possession rules for singular and plural nouns.

Ex of Singular: A day’s wage, an hour’s wait, the dollar’s value

Ex of Plural: Two days’ wages, two hours’ wait, two dollars’ value (letter, number, and word plurals)

To make letters, numbers or words used as words plural, add an apostrophe and an “s”

Ex: Cathy had straight A’s.

Ex: Trey passed his classes with three 94’s and a 92.

Ex: Mindy completed the work with no if’s, and’s, or but’s.

3. To Indicate Omission: Contractions

To form contractions, use an apostrophe in place of the omitted letters.

Ex: He can’t find his wallet.

(The apostrophe takes the place of the omitted letters “n” and “o.”)

Ex: She isn’t here.

(The apostrophe takes the place of the omitted letter “o.”)