



Apostrophes

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

Uses

- ▶ The apostrophe is used in the following situations:
 - ▶ to indicate possession
 - ▶ To indicate the omission of one or more letters
 - ▶ to form the plural of plural lowercase letters
 - ▶ to form the plural of single-digit numbers expressed numerically

Possession

- ▶ **Add an apostrophe –s to singular nouns.**
 - ▶ The musician's guitar; Lois's cat
- ▶ **Add only an apostrophe to plural nouns that end in –s.**
 - ▶ The students' test scores; the families' ancestries
- ▶ **Add an apostrophe –s to plural nouns that do not end in –s.**
 - ▶ The children's pageant; the women's conference

Possession

- ▶ **To show joint possession, add the apostrophe only to the final noun; however, to indicate individual possession, add an apostrophe to all nouns.**
 - ▶ Maria and Joseph's new car is blue.
 - ▶ Maria's and Joseph's expectations were quite different.
- ▶ **Add the apostrophe to the last element in a compound word.**
 - ▶ Her sister-in-law's surgery was successful.
- ▶ **Add an apostrophe –s to make indefinite pronouns possessive.**
 - ▶ Everyone's medical insurance plan was reviewed.

Contraction

- ▶ An apostrophe is used to replace the letters omitted within a contraction.
 - ▶ It's a shame Johnny can't make it to the concert.
 - ▶ Note: *It's* stands for *it is*; *can't* stands for *cannot*.
- ▶ An apostrophe is also used to mark the omission of the first two digits of a year.
 - ▶ The dean presented the class of '99.

Conventional Uses

- ▶ **Use an apostrophe to form the plural of lowercase letters.**
 - ▶ Mind your p's and q's.
- ▶ **Use an apostrophe to form the plural of a single-digit number expressed as a numeral.**
 - ▶ You get 5 points for rolling double 6's.

Misuses

- ▶ **Do not use an apostrophe in plural nouns, singular verbs, or possessive personal pronouns.**
 - ▶ The plural of *Jones* is *Jones* or *Joneses*.
 - ▶ The singular verb *breaks* remains *breaks* (not *break's*).
 - ▶ *His, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs,* and *whose* never take apostrophes.
- ▶ **Do not use an apostrophe to form plural nouns.**
 - ▶ **Incorrect:** The book's are now available.
 - ▶ **Correct:** The books are now available.

Misuses

- ▶ **Do not add an apostrophe to singular verbs ending in –s.**
 - ▶ **Incorrect**: That man never leave's his house.
 - ▶ **Correct**: That man never leaves his house.
- ▶ **Do not use an apostrophe to form the possessive of personal pronouns.**
 - ▶ **Incorrect**: That hat is her's. The horse follows it's owner.
 - ▶ **Correct**: That hat is hers. The horse follows its owner.

Examples

Plural Possessives

The workers' compensation

The children's schools

The houses' foundations

Singular Possessives

The dog's hair

Someone's hope

Billy's skill

Contractions

It is = It's

They are = They're

You are = You're

Who is = Who's

Who has = Who's

More Examples

1. Four attorneys' expertise provided a solid defense for the defendant.
2. There are four s's and two p's in the word *Mississippi*.
3. Their two son-in-law's dealership was in financial difficulty.
4. Both Jason's and Jeremy's fathers coached the softball team.
5. Smith and Johnson's product is selling at a high profit.
6. The senator-elect's office was staffed primarily by volunteers.
7. Both diplomats' briefcases were stolen.
8. Mrs. Jones' sister spent the last year in Italy.
9. Several MDs came together to open a clinic downtown.
10. Several companies' balance sheets showed deficits.