

APOSTROPHE

Even for first English language speakers, apostrophes can sometimes be confusing. However, mastering this will be easy if you only remember a few rules.

Apostrophes mainly serve two functions: to contract and to show possession.

- **Apostrophes to show possession or ownership**

- A. When a singular noun is presented, ownership is shown by adding ‘s at the end of the letter.

Example:

1. Man’s pet *That is the man’s pet.*
2. Miggy’s bag *Miggy’s bag was lost when he went to the festival.*
3. Boss’s cap *He thought that his boss’s cap was bought from the city market.*
4. Mon’s mug *Mon’s mug has a colorful design.*

- B. When a regular plural noun is presented, simply put the apostrophe at the end of the pluralized subject or object.

Example:

1. Boys’ habits *The boys’ habits make me feel uncomfortable.*
2. Rabbit’s fur *Her carpet is made of rabbits’ fur.*
3. Busses’ trips *The busses’ move outside the city.*
4. Tables’ cover *I made sure that the tables’ covers were stain-free.*

- C. When an irregular plural noun is presented, ‘s is added at the end of the word.

Example:

1. Bacteria’s invasion *Due to the bacteria’s invasion in his tooth, the doctor decided to remove it.*
2. Media’s influence *The result of his depression was because of the media’s influence over his popularity.*
3. Women’s issues *His article focuses on women’s issues.*
4. Postmen’s jacket *Postmen’s jackets are usually made of leather.*

D. When the noun is a singular compound noun, 's is placed at the end of the word. On the other hand, if the noun is a plural compound noun, change the noun into plural first, then add 's at the end of the word.

Example:

1. Sister-in-law's charger (*singular*)
2. Mother-in-law's car (*singular*)
3. Fathers-in-law's phones (*plural*)
4. Brothers-in-law's (*plural*)

E. When two people own a single item, place 's after the second name only. However, if individual ownership is highlighted on two similar items, place 's at the end of both the words.

Example:

1. John and Mary's car is quite old. (*They both own the car*)
2. Meldy and Abe's big luggage is hard to carry. (*They only have 1 luggage.*)
3. Marie's and Belle's bikes were given by their supervisor. (*They both own bikes which were given to them.*)
4. Jeff's and Kelly's published books earned praise from their respective loyal fans. (*Each has published his/her own book.*)

F. When a noun is combined with a possessive adjective, 's is placed after the noun.

Example:

1. Mike's and your sandwich
2. His and Jennifer's colorful pens
3. John's and my house
4. Catherine's and his loyal fans

● **Apostrophes to show contraction**

Contractions happen when words are combined by removing a few letters. The removed letter is replaced by an apostrophe.

Example:

1. Don't (*do not*)
2. Should've (*should have*)
3. Won't (*will not*)
4. You're (*you are*)
5. I'm (*I am*)
6. Couldn't (*could not*)

❖ Other functions:

- ✓ Apostrophes can also be used if letters and numbers provide unclear meaning. However, if a group of letters is expressed, no 's is needed.

Example:

1. She always forgets to capitalize her *I's*. (*You don't mean Is*)
2. Her 0's look like O to me. (*You don't mean Os here*)
3. She got E's on her three subjects. (*Not Es*)
4. I need to get straight A's so I can apply for a scholarship. (*Not As*)
5. She never learned her ABCs. (*No apostrophe needed*)
6. I need to get it even if it ends with XYZs. (*No apostrophe needed*)

- ✓ When writing years in plural, an apostrophe is not needed. However, it can be used to abbreviate the year.

Example:

1. Since the 1970s, the Thomases made sure that their businesses would never go bankrupt.
2. The class of the '80s received an outstanding award during the school reunion.
3. It was in the mid- 90s when we built our first company.
4. I was very sure that the music was from the late '60s.

EXERCISES

- **Apostrophes to show possession or ownership**

- A. When a singular noun is presented, ownership is shown by adding 's at the end of the letter.

Underline the word to show possession or ownership.

1. He took (Julians, Julian's) book from the shelf.
2. (James', Jame's) bicycle was stolen yesterday.
3. Flor made sure that her (mum's, mums) keys were in the drawers.
4. My (grandmas, grandma's) plates are made of tin.
5. His (secretary's, secretaries) laptop is one of the latest models.
6. (Aurel's, Aurels) pillowcase is a gift from my mum.

B. When a regular plural noun is presented, simply put the apostrophe at the end of the pluralized subject or object.

Rewrite the following sentences to make sure that the apostrophes are properly placed on regular plural nouns.

1. The workers contracts have been renewed.

2. My parents new cellphones are identical.

3. The boys reports will be sent out tomorrow morning.

4. The kids summaries were boring.

5. The girls business was flourishing.

6. The dogs bones were gone.

C. When an irregular noun is presented, ‘s is added at the end of the word.

Transform the singular irregular noun into a plural noun then add ‘s to show possession.

#	<i>Singular Irregular Noun</i>	<i>Plural Irregular Noun with ‘s</i>
<i>example</i>	<i>person</i>	<i>People’s belief</i>
1	medium	
2	syllabus	
3	phenomenon	
4	foot	
5	Child	
6	mouse	

D. When the noun is a singular compound noun, ‘s is placed at the end of the word. On the other hand, if the noun is a plural compound noun, change the noun into plural first, then add ‘s at the end of the word.

Place the apostrophe to where they appropriately belong based on the label.

	Label	Compound Noun	Possessive case
<i>example</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Brother-in-law</i>	<i>Brother-in-law's company</i>
1	Singular	Sister-in-law	
2	Plural	mother-in-law	
3	Singular	Sibling-in-law	
4	Plural	Parent-in-law	
5	Singular	Cousin-in-law	
6	Plural	Son-in-law	

- E. When two people own a single item, place ‘s after the second name only. However, if individual ownership is highlighted on two similar items, place ‘s at the end of both words.

Place ‘s to the correct place based on the given context.

1. John and Mary pets are very much alike. (*They both own 2 similar pets.*)
2. Martha and Jake house is located near the hill. (*They live in the same house.*)
3. Those bikes are John and Tommy. (*They bought two different bikes.*)
4. Jake and Mr. Lindt individual sessions finished early. (*Both have different sessions.*)
5. Clyde and Norma room is quite spacious. (*They only have 1 room.*)
6. Belle and Ana long travels are quite expensive. (*They have their own individual travel.*)

- F. When a noun is combined with a possessive adjective, ‘s is placed after the noun.

Underline the noun and place the apostrophe after it.

1. Mike and her breakfast were bought from the food stall nearby.
2. What he bought is Minar and my lunch.
3. Paula and his trolley was taken by the man wearing a red coat.
4. Ribka and my mousepads were gifts from our schoolmates.
5. His and Jonathan apartment was paid by their company.
6. Her and Cole calendar book looks like a diary book.

- **Apostrophes to show contraction**

Contractions happen when words are combined by removing a few letters. The removed letter is replaced by apostrophe.

Contract the following words correctly.

1. Shall not
2. We are not
3. Could not go
4. Must not
5. She has
6. We have

- ❖ Other functions:

- ✓ Apostrophes can also be used if letters and numbers provide unclear meaning. However, if a group of letters is expressed, no ‘s is needed.

Determine whether the underlined words need apostrophe or not. If yes, place ‘s where it is necessary.

1. Her ABCs will surely go far away.
2. The IPs should be monitored.
3. Her As on her report card will help her secure a scholarship.
4. She got 0s in her writing tests.
5. Her XYZs could get us into trouble.
6. His letter Os looked like 0.
7. In the 1920s, the Japanese took over our homeland.
8. She likes to listen to 80s music.
9. It was in the mid- 90s when I got engaged to my husband.
10. I was born in the 1970s.

ANSWER KEY

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4. My **grandma’s** plates are made of tin.
5. His **secretary’s** laptop is one of the latest models.
6. **Aurel’s** pillow case is a gift from my mum.

B. When a regular plural noun is presented, simply put the apostrophe at the end of the pluralized subject or object.

Rewrite the following sentences to make sure that the apostrophes are properly placed on regular nouns.

1. *The workers’ contracts have been renewed.*
2. *My parents’ new cellphones are identical.*
3. *The boys’ reports will be sent out tomorrow morning.*
4. *The kids’ summaries were boring.*
5. *The girls’ business was flourishing.*
6. *The dogs’ bones were gone.*

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#	<i>Singular Irregular Noun</i>	<i>Plural Irregular Noun with ‘s</i>
<i>example</i>	<i>person</i>	<i>People’s belief</i>
1	medium	Media’s power
2	syllabus	Syllabi’s outline
3	phenomenon	Phenomena’s outcome

4	foot	Feet's powder
5	Child	Children's party
6	mouse	Mice's playground

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2	Plural	mother-in-law	<i>mothers-in-law's</i>
3	Singular	Sibling-in-law	<i>Sibling-in-law's</i>
4	Plural	Parent-in-law	<i>Parents-in-law's</i>
5	Singular	Cousin-in-law	<i>Cousin-in-law's</i>
6	Plural	Son-in-law	<i>Sons-in-law's</i>

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Contract the following words correctly.

1. Shan’t
2. Weren’t
3. Couldn’t go
4. Mustn’t
5. She’s
6. We’ve

❖ Other functions:

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Determine whether the underlined words need apostrophe or not. If yes, place ‘s where it is necessary.

1. Her ABCs will surely go far away. NO
2. The IP’s should be monitored. YES
3. Her A’s on her report card will help her secure a scholarship. YES
4. She got 0’s in her writing tests. YES
5. Her XYZs could get us into trouble. NO
6. His letter O’s looked like 0. YES
7. In the 1920s, the Japanese took over our homeland. NO
8. She likes to listen to ‘80s music. YES
9. It was in the mid- ‘90s when I got engaged to my husband. YES
10. I was born in the 1970s. NO