

# Apostrophes

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## What is an apostrophe?

An apostrophe can play an important role in the reader's understanding of your intent, especially when showing possession. Carefully place apostrophes to express yourself clearly.

## Apostrophes can be used...

In contractions where the letter(s) has been removed.

*"You're my friend." (You are my friend.)*

*"He's a mean person." (He is a mean person.)*

Before the s to show possession by one person.

*"The boy's ball is red."*

When more than one person has possession of similar items. Make the noun plural first, and then use an apostrophe where appropriate.

*"one woman's hat" -to- "two women's hats"*

*"one actress's dress" -to- "two actresses' dresses"*

When two people possess the same item. Add the apostrophe and s after the second name.

*"Courtney and Nathan's relationship is solid."*

To show possession for proper nouns. If the noun ends in s (or an s-sound), then listen carefully to the pronunciation. If a new syllable is needed to say the noun in possessive form, add both an apostrophe and s. However, if a new syllable is not needed, simply add an apostrophe. (Always make the noun plural first if referring to more than one person or place.)

*"Mr. Hastings' jeans had a tear at the knee."*

*"Ms. Jones's house is next to Ms. Staus's on my street."*

*The Hineses' home is always clean."*

To show possession with compound nouns. For singular nouns add an apostrophe and s at the end of the word. To show possession with a plural noun, make the noun plural first and then use an apostrophe.

*"my mother-in-law's kitchen"*

*"my three sisters-in-law's coats"*

With abbreviations. It is optional to use an apostrophe with plural numbers, letters, and figures—be consistent in your writing. However, centuries or decades do not need an apostrophe.

*“She visited three separate M.D.’s (or M.D.s).”*

*“The 1920s were better than the 30s.”*

With the possessive form of a noun in front of a gerund (-ing word).

*“Brian’s skating was terrible today.”*

*“I appreciate your inviting me to the party.”*

### **Apostrophes cannot be used...**

With possessive pronouns. They already show possession and do not require an apostrophe. Also, the only time an apostrophe is used for *it’s* is when it is a contraction for *it is*.

*“The bag is hers, not yours.”*

*“The dog hurts its paw.”*

*“It’s a beautiful day.”*

*“The house is theirs.”*