



A dog howled, ~~braeking~~ the
comma → *breaking*

stillness. Someone was behind me...
← *period* *ellipsis*

Apostrophes



Why do we use apostrophes?

The **apostrophe** (') is the most commonly misused punctuation mark.

They are used for two purposes:

1. to show that one or more letters have been removed from a word
(**contractions**)
2. to show that something belongs to someone
(**possession**)



Contractions are words which have been shortened or merged together, where an apostrophe is used in place of the missing letters.

For example: **can't**  is short for **cannot**

isn't  is short for **is not**

they're  is short for **they are**

don't  is short for **do not**

What are the shortened forms of these sets of words?

will not

she is

are not

we will

I have

should not

Can you think of any other contractions?

Why do you think contractions are used?

Read the following statement.

“I cannot do my homework tonight because I do not have my text book and, anyway, it is not due until Monday.”



How would it sound if no contractions were used?

We use contractions when speaking because they save time. They make our speech sound **informal** and **conversational**.

Contractions should be avoided in formal writing such as essays and letters because they make the text sound too casual.



Apostrophes to show possession

Apostrophes are also used to show possession (who or what owns something).

Singular possession is shown by adding an apostrophe and then an 's' to the end of a **noun** (a person, animal, place or thing).



Tom's skateboard

the car's tires



the dog's bowl



When a singular noun already ends in 's,' we can add an apostrophe and then an 's' to show possession.

For example:

Caitlin is reading James's book.

However, if the singular noun has more than one syllable and ends with a 's' sound, we can just add an apostrophe.

For example:

Josh is listening to Travis' music.



To show possession with a **plural noun**, we just add an apostrophe to the end of the word.

1. Both the **films'** soundtracks are excellent.
2. The **girls'** skills at basketball have improved a lot.



We do not add an extra 's' to a plural noun because, in general, we do not pronounce it.

Some plural nouns don't end in 's'. For example, 'children'. In this case, both an apostrophe *and* an 's' are added to show possession: 'the **children's** playground'.

Can you think of any other plural nouns that do not end in 's'?

The exception to the apostrophe rule are these **possessive pronouns** which show possession without apostrophes:

yours → not *your's* **My phone is better than yours.**

his → not *he's* **His new haircut is awful.**

hers → not *her's* **The book is mine, not hers.**

its → not *it's* **The bird flapped its wings.**

ours → not *our's* **The planet is ours to protect.**

theirs → not *their's* **The mess is all theirs.**

whose → not *who's* **Whose soccer ball is it?**



Why do you think possessive pronouns are written without apostrophes? What could they be confused with if they used apostrophes?

Apostrophes to show unusual plurals



'It's' – an exception

Many people get confused about when to use **'it's'** and when to use **'its'**.

Do you know when to use each form?

'It's' is used only for the **contraction** of the words **'it is'**.

It's too late to change your order.

'Its' is used to show **possession**.

**My cat does not like wearing
its collar.**



Decide whether each sentence should contain 'it's' or 'its' and then press on the answer of your choice.

The cat is eating
_____ dinner.

its

it's



Can you correct the errors in this piece of text? Many apostrophes are missing and some have been used where they shouldn't be. Press on the mistakes to either add or remove an apostrophe. There are nineteen mistakes to find.

My dad was born in the 1960's. He always wanted to be a race car driver, but he couldnt because his mom wouldnt let him. He argued with her all the time saying it was his life, not her's, but she won the argument. He still love's cars though. Hes got an old Porsche that he's been restoring. I really like cars too. After graduation Im going to go to technical college to be a mechanic.



show all

