

APOSTROPHE QUICK CLUES

Apostrophes form contractions.

Sometimes two words are shortened into one word. These are called contractions because they are contracted or made smaller. Put an apostrophe where a letter or letters have been left out.

Examples: He's here to fix the washer.
(He is here...)
I don't know her name.
(I do not know...)
I won't be there.
I will not be there.
In this case, letters are changed rather than left out.

The apostrophe takes the place of the missing letters, so be sure to put it in the right place in the contraction. One of the most common contractions is a combination of a verb with not when the o in not is left out.

Examples: could not = couldn't
does not = doesn't
were not = weren't

Another frequent use is the combination of a pronoun (we, you, I, etc.) with a verb.

Examples: he is = he's
she had = she'd
we would = we'd
I am = I'm
we will = we'll

Apostrophes show ownership (possession).

- I. If the word does not end in s, add 's .
Examples: Mr. Brown's letter
the man's hat
the men's department
a mother's job
the children's room
- II If the word already ends in s, just add ' .
Examples: the knives' cases
the heroes' families
two weeks' time
a stewardess' tray
James' car

However, if the word already ends in s, you may add 's if a double sound is heard, but it is also correct to follow rule II above.

Examples: the boss's report
 (or boss' report)
 James's car
 (or James' car)
 the bus's tire
 (or bus' tire)

NOTE: Never use an apostrophe with these possessive words:

hers	theirs
his	whose
its	yours
ours	

More about Apostrophes

For hyphenated words, add 's to the last word.

brother-in-law's hobby
secretary-treasurer's position

For shared possession, add 's or ' to the last word.

Linda and Fred's daughter
Bob and Joe's house
Betty and James' dog

For separate possession, add 's or ' to each word.

The secretary's and the treasurer's reports are both on the desk.
Bill's, Marsha's, and Betty's secretaries are all ill.
Charlie's and Chris' work is all caught up.

The words it's and its are often confused:

it's means it is or it has
its means belongs to it

Apostrophes are used to form plurals for individual letters and some abbreviations. An 's is used, especially if it could be confusing without the apostrophe.

Examples: She got three A's and two I's on her report card.