



APSU Writing Center

Apostrophes & Contractions

Apostrophes

- a punctuation mark (') used to indicate either possession or the omission of letters or numbers.

When should I use them?

- Apostrophes should be used to show possession, to show omission of letters (contractions), or to form plurals of letters, numbers, and symbols.
- Apostrophes should **not** be used to form possessive pronouns (my/mine, our/ours, your/yours, his, her/hers, their/theirs, its, whose) or noun plurals that are not possessives.

When you want to make two or more nouns possessive, follow these two rules:

- If both nouns possess separate things, make both nouns possessive.
 - **Example:** Mary-Kate's and Ashley's acting careers began when they were only infants.
- If both nouns possess the same exact thing, make only the last noun possessive.
 - **Examples:** I am my mom and dad's second child. I am my dad and mom's second child.

To Show Possession

- To see if you have a possessive, turn the phrase around and make an "of ..." phrase.
 - **Example:** the newspaper's column = the column of the newspaper
- To show possession by a singular noun, add 's to the singular form of the word (even if it ends with the letter s.)
 - **Example:** the owner's car.
 - **Example:** James's hat.
- Add 's to the plural forms that do not end in s.
 - **Example:** the children's game
 - **Example:** the geese's honking
- Add 's to the end of plural nouns that end in s.
 - **Example:** the houses' roofs
 - **Example:** three friends' letters
- Add 's to the last noun in a group to show joint possession of an object.
 - **Example:** Todd and Anne's apartment.

To Form Plurals of Letters, Numbers, and Symbols

- Two A's = two letters that happen to both be A.
 - **Example:** Nita got A's on her Biology quizzes.
- Six 5's = six numbers that are each 5.
 - **Example:** There are six 5's in my SSN.
- Many &'s = Many ampersands
 - **Example:** That printed page has too many &'s on it.



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Contractions

- A contraction is a shortened form of a group of words. It combines two or more words by removing certain letters and replacing them by an apostrophe. Only specific words can be contracted:

When should I use them?

- Contractions are typically used in a more conversational tone between friends and family members. They can also be used when writing dialogue in a short story or everyday speech.
- Contractions are typically **not** used when using formal writing. This includes professional documents, cover letters, resumes, etc.

Common Contractions:

aren't → are not

can't → can not

couldn't → could not

didn't → did not

doesn't → does not

don't → do not

hadn't → had not

hasn't → has not

haven't → have not

he'd → he had; he would

he'll → he will; he shall

he's → he is; he has

I'd → I had; I would

I'll → I will; I shall

I'm → I am

I've → I have

isn't → is not

let's → let us

mightn't → might not

mustn't → must not

shan't → shall not

she'd → she had; she would

she'll → she will; she shall

she's → she is; she has

shouldn't → should not

that's → that is; that has

there's → there is; there has

they'd → they had; they would

they'll → they will; they shall

they're → they are

they've → they have

we'd → we had; we would

we're → we are

we've → we have

weren't → were not

what'll → what will; what shall

what're → what are

what's → what is; what has

what've → what have

where's → where is; where has

who'd → who had; who would

who'll → who will; who shall

who's → who is; who has

who've → who have

won't → will not

wouldn't → would not

you'd → you had; you would

you'll → you will; you shall

you're → you are

you've → you have

Its and It's

- Its (possessive pronoun, used before a noun. Think of my, her, or your)
 - **Example:** This town is famous for its beautiful buildings.
 - **Example:** The film has been shown in its entirety for the first time.
 - **Example:** A bird may be known by its song.
- It's (contraction of "it is" or "it has")
 - **Example:** It's necessary to avoid stress.
 - **Example:** I think it's a wild goose chase.
 - **Example:** It's likely that she'll succeed.



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References

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