

# APOSTROPHES

## ■ The Apostrophe for Possession

Use an apostrophe to show possession, but be aware that “possession” may not always mean “ownership”: it may simply suggest an association. Either way, add an **-’s** if a noun or indefinite pronoun (like someone, anybody, and so on) does not already end in **-s**.

**Not sure where to put the apostrophe?** Turn the words inside out by asking, “Who does this thing belong to?” or “what is this thing associated with?” Put the apostrophe after the word you end with.

Ownership of an object	I cannot find my <b>friend’s book</b> .	the book that belongs to my <b>friend</b> (one friend)
“Ownership” of something more abstract	I can’t go on my <b>friends’ road trip</b> .	the road trip of my <b>friends</b> (more than one friend)
Parts of a person or object	My <b>school’s library</b> was flooded.	the library that’s part of my <b>school</b> (one school).
Qualities of a person or object	Our <b>schools’ safety</b> is well-rated.	the safety that’s a quality of our <b>schools</b> (more than one school).
Something produced by someone.	<b>Julio’s speech</b> was applauded.	the speech made by <b>Julio</b> .
Personal relationship	<b>Juan and Julio’s</b> sister is here.	the sister of Juan and <b>Julio</b> .
Something associated with a time period.	We’re proud of this <b>summer’s growth</b> .	the growth associated with this <b>summer</b> .

Use **-s** to show ownership for all singular nouns, even those already ending with **-s**, and for all plural nouns that don’t end with **-s**. For plural nouns ending in **-s**, use an apostrophe alone.

<b>Mike’s</b> mother is visiting	<b>Mike</b> is singular: add <b>-s</b>
<b>Marlys’s</b> mother is visiting	<b>Marlys</b> ends with <b>-s</b> but is singular: add <b>-s</b> .
The <b>women’s</b> room is upstairs	<b>women</b> is plural but doesn’t end in <b>-s</b> : add <b>-s</b>
The <b>students’</b> tests were hard.	<b>students</b> is plural and ends with <b>-s</b> : add an apostrophe only.

## ■ The Apostrophe for Contractions

Use the apostrophe in a contraction to show that letters have been left out.

She **doesn't** type.

I'll buy that coat if it goes on sale.

(**Doesn't** is a contraction of **does** and **not**)

(**I'll** is a contraction of **I** and **will**)

Be especially careful in writing contractions that contain pronouns, such as:

let + us = let's

you + have = you've

it + is or has = it's

they + are = they're

we + are = we're

who + is or has = who's

## ■ Misuses of the Apostrophe

Never use an apostrophe with an ordinary plural.

**Two cats** are in the yard.

**Those exams** were easy!

Never use an apostrophe with a possessive pronoun such as **his**, **hers**, **its**, **theirs**, or **ours**.

The book is **hers**.

The dog scratched **its** back.

## ■ Practice

Add, move, or remove apostrophes and **-s** wherever necessary.

1. A weeks' vacation in Paris is just what you need.
2. Those orchids color is very unusual.
3. Apparently, nobodys read todays horoscope's.
4. My countries most important crop is pineapples.
5. Please hang the twins coats on the wall hook's.
6. Once a month, the board of directors discusses' the workers suggestions.
7. Ulysses travels make for fascinating reading.
8. Somebody's wedding and engagement ring's were left on the sink.
9. These must be Charles kid's, but who's son is that?
10. Its a sad day when a dog cant play with its own toys.

## ■ Answers

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|--------------------------|--|
| 1. week's                | 6. directors, discusses, workers', suggestions |
| 2. orchids'              | 7. Ulysses's, travels                          |
| 3. nobody's, horoscopes  | 8. Somebody's, rings                           |
| 4. country's, pineapples | 9. Charles's, kids, whose                      |
| 5. twins', coats, hooks  | 10. It's, can't, its, toys                     |