Apostrophes


The apostrophe indicates possession and/or omission of a letter/letters on nouns or verbs.

Uses: The apostrophe has several uses within a phrase or sentence:

- Shows possession (ownership) of something or to show a relationship.
  
  **Possession Example:** The dog ran under **Jill’s** bed.  
  **Joan’s** being sick cancelled the wedding.  
  **Relationship Example:** My **neighbor’s** children play in my yard.

- Indicates traits or features of animals, plants, objects, and abstract nouns.
  
  **Example:** The **cat’s** ears pinned back when he felt threatened.

- Appears on the second noun only when showing collaboration or joint ownership.
  
  **Example:** The senator and **representative’s** decision to vote against the bill was wise.

- Indicates separate ownership where individuals contribute to each noun.
  
  **Example:** The **carpenter’s** and **plumber’s** tools are expensive. (These tools may not be the same for these jobs.)

- Occurs with an s when a singular noun ends in s.
  
  **Example:** Henry **James’s** novels reward the patient reader.  
  The **business’s** customers filed suit.

- Occurs with an s when a plural noun DOES NOT end in s.
  
  **Example:** The **men’s** clothing store went out of business.  
  The **children’s** toys were bought at a yard sale.

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- Occurs without an s after a plural noun ends in s.
  Example: The boys’ bicycles were left out in the rain.
  The Joneses’ house has been vacant for years.

Tips:
The pronouns its, their, and whose are possessive forms. Do not confuse them with the common contractions it’s (it is), they’re (they are), and who’s (who is).
  Incorrect: The bird ate all of it’s food. (Translated: The bird ate all of it is food.)
  Correct: The bird ate all of its food.

Incorrect: Their going to the park. (Possession is not being used here.)
Correct: They’re going to the park.

Incorrect: Who’s jacket is this? (Translated: Who is jacket is this?)
Correct: Whose jacket is this?