

APSU Writing Center

Apostrophes

When Should I Use Apostrophes?

- Use apostrophes (') to:
 - indicate possession.
 - show omission of letters or numbers.
 - form plural of letters, numbers, and symbols.
- Do not use apostrophes to:
 - form possessive pronouns (my/mine, our/ours, your/yours, his, her/hers, their/theirs, its, whose).
 - form noun plurals that are not possessives.

Multiple Nouns Showing Possession

- If the nouns possess separate things, make each noun possessive.
 - **Example:** Mary-Kate's and Ashley's acting careers began when they were only infants.
- If the nouns jointly possess one thing, make only the last noun possessive.
 - **Example:** 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 to make an "of the..." 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.

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Plural nouns not ending in s

- Add 's.
 - **Example:** the children's game
 - **Example:** the geese's honking

Plural nouns ending in s

- Add only an apostrophe (').
 - **Example:** the houses' roofs
 - **Example:** three friends' letters

Joint Possession

- Add 's to the last noun only.
 - **Example:** Todd and Anne's apartment.

To Form Plurals of Letters, Numbers, and Symbols

- Use apostrophes to make letters, numbers, and symbols plural for clarity.
 - **Example:** Nita got A's on her Biology quizzes.
 - **Example:** There are six 5's in my SSN.

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Contractions

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 with an apostrophe. Only specific word combinations can form contractions.

When Should I Use Contractions?

- Use contractions when:
 - You want a conversational or informal tone
 - You are writing dialogue in stories
 - You are writing everyday speech
- Avoid contractions when:
 - Writing formal or professional documents
 - Writing cover letters, résumés, business writing, or academic essays (unless quoting)

Its and It's

- **Its** is a possessive pronoun meaning belonging to it.
 - **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** is a 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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Contractions

Common Contractions

- aren't → are not
- can't → cannot
- 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



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References

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<https://www.suu.edu/writingcenter/undergraduate/pdf/tip-sheets/apostrophe.pdf>

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