



Use of Apostrophes

Apostrophes are integral for the correct punctuation of your paper. They are used for two main purposes: to **mark possession**, and to **indicate contraction**. In this handout, we will look at both functions of the apostrophe and their usage with examples.

Possession-Singular & Plural

For singular words, possession is indicated by adding ‘s immediately after the possessor.

- 1- Rimsha’s notebook
- 2- The child’s sandcastle

Note: you don’t add an apostrophe before the possessive-s with the following pronouns.

Its, hers, yours, ours, theirs.

- If the possessor consists of more than one word, the ‘s comes after the last word.
 1. My distant relative’s son is in the same college.
 2. Ms. Aliya’s daughter achieved a distinction in mathematics.
 3. Humna and Yasir’s essay entry won the competition.
- Plural possessors which end in –s only take the apostrophe ’. Plural possessors that end in some other letter take ’s.
 1. The girls’ soccer team came in second place.
 2. Giraffes’ diet consist of shrubs and leaves.
 3. Children’s diet should be well balanced.



*Note: It is the written letter, not the sound, that determines whether just an apostrophe or ‘s will be placed after the word. There are plural nouns such as **dice** and **geese** that end in the s sound, but since their written last letter is e, ‘s will be placed after them.*

1. Mice’s fur was used in the experiment.
2. The geese’s wings are similar to ducks.

Contractions

An apostrophe is used with contractions and is positioned in place of omitted letters, such as *he’s* (omitted the letter **i**). Words that are often written in their contracted form are: be, has (**’s**), have (**’ve**), will (**’ll**), would (**’d**) as well as the negative particle not (**n’t**).

Following is a list of common contractions:

1. I am – I’m
2. You are- You’re
3. She is- She’s
4. He is- He’s
5. We are- We’re
6. They are- they’re
7. It is- It’s
8. Do not- Don’t
9. Does not- Doesn’t
10. Should not- shouldn’t
11. Would not- wouldn’t
12. Cannot- can’t
13. Will not- won’t
14. Shall not- shan’t
15. I have- I’ve



16. I had, I would, I should- I'd

17. I will and I shall- I'll.

Important note:

An apostrophe is not used in the case of the possessive form of pronouns; it is a common error to use an apostrophe with the following pronouns: *its, yours, hers, theirs, ours*.

- 1- I have misplaced my book. May I borrow yours?
- 2- Their house is much better than ours.
- 3- The house is shabby; its wallpaper is peeling off.
- 4- The house is shabby; it's wallpaper is peeling off (*Incorrect. Remember that the apostrophe also indicates a missing letter – in which case this will read as: the house is shabby; **it is** wallpaper is peeling off.*)