

The Apostrophe

1. The apostrophe is used to indicate omitted elements.
 - in contractions (isn't = is not, I'm = I am, don't = do not, etc.)
 - in dates (In '94, the music of the '70s came back.)
 - in poetic language ('til = until, o'er = over, e'er = ever)
2. The apostrophe is used to show possession.
 - Add an apostrophe and an *s* to all singular nouns and to plural nouns that **do not** end in *s*.
Bill's coat teacher's desk Doris's job
children's toys men's clothing teeth's enamel
 - Add an apostrophe to plural nouns ending in *s*.
ladies' room nurses' station shoes' laces
 - Add the apostrophe after the last part of hyphenated words.
mother-in-law's car editor-in-chief's decision
 - With two or more nouns, use the apostrophe after the last noun to show joint possession, but use apostrophes after each noun to show individual possession.
Carol and Dan's son will go to Italy.
Carol's and Dan's businesses are both expanding.
 - Use an apostrophe and an *s* to make indefinite pronouns possessive.
someone's car everyone's responsibility
 - **Do not** use apostrophes with possessive pronouns (hers, his, its, theirs, yours, mine, ours, my).
3. The apostrophe is used with certain expressions relating to time, distance and value.
a day's work a week's vacation one minute's notice
fifty miles' distance one mile's distance a nickel's worth
a few minutes' quiet

Beware! Not all plurals are possessive. Do not add an apostrophe if the final *s* only indicates plurality (more than one).

- Siddhartha sat by the river's edge and listened to its many voices.

To determine if a word ending in *s* is possessive or not, try to place the word following it before it and the word *of* before it.

The preposition *of* often indicates possession. *The sun's rays* can also be written as *the rays of the sun*.

- Siddhartha sat by the edge of the river and listened to its many of voices. (*Voices* is not possessive, but *rivers* is.)