

Apostrophes

An apostrophe is a form of punctuation. It is used to indicate the omission of one or more letters from a word and also to identify a noun in the possessive case.

The two main uses for apostrophes

Firstly, use them to show that you have missed some letters out.

For example:	can not becomes can't	are not becomes aren't	we are becomes we're	it is, or it has becomes it's
--------------	---	--	--	---

Remember to insert the apostrophe in the exact place that you have omitted letters and only use this kind of contraction when writing **informally**. **For most academic work contractions are not acceptable.**

Secondly, use apostrophes to show that something belongs to someone or something else

For example:	Alice's coat (the coat belonging to Alice) or Jack's friend (the friend belonging to Jack).
--------------	---

Add 's to singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in s, such as children and people.

For example:	the dog's dinner the children's play area
--------------	--

Just add an apostrophe to plural nouns that already end in s:

For example:	ladies' room parents' evening
--------------	----------------------------------

Warning! **It's** should only ever be written to shorten **it is** or **it has**. When **its** is being used as pronoun (like his or her) it **never** takes an apostrophe.

For example:	Right: Never judge a book by its cover Wrong: Never judge a book by it's cover
--------------	---

References and further reading:

Trask, R.L. (1997) *The Penguin guide to punctuation*. London: Penguin Books.