

Worksheet for Apostrophe Use

The apostrophe has three uses:

1. To form possessives of nouns
2. To show the omission of letters -- contractions
3. To form plurals of numbers, letters, and symbols

Possessive apostrophe: This apostrophe shows that one thing is "owned" by another. To see if your word calls for a possessive apostrophe, turn the phrase around to make it an "of the..." phrase. Sentences that call for an "of the..." phrase need a possessive apostrophe. For example:

1. The dog's bowel -- The bowel of the dog.
2. The boss's report -- The report of the boss.
If your word is singular and already ends in an "s," you can still add another "s" to make the word possessive (as in sentence #2).
3. The dogs' bowels -- The bowels of the dogs.
If your word is plural [dogs], then you do not need to add an extra "s" -- you place the apostrophe *after* the original "s" (as in sentence #3).
4. My father-in-law's car is quite expensive.
For compound nouns, make the *last* word in the group possessive.
5. Angela's and Tommy's papers were really well done.
To show individual possession by two or more owners, make *each* noun possessive.
6. Angela and Tommy's house is lovely.
To show joint possession, make only the *last* noun possessive. In sentence 6, both Angela and Tommy own the house together.

The possessive form of personal pronouns **do not** need apostrophes -- so the words yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs do not need apostrophes.

Omission of Letters -- Contractions: This type of apostrophe indicates that letters or parts of a word are missing.

Examples: it is, it has / it's	I would / I'd	will not / won't	was not / wasn't
he would / he'd	let us / let's	I am / I'm	do not / don't
can not / can't	you will / you'll	would have / would've (not would of!)	

Be careful to distinguish between it's and its: "Its" is the possessive form of it and does not need an apostrophe. "It's" is the contraction for it is or it has and does need an apostrophe.

1. The book was old and tattered. **Its** binding was almost falling off.
2. Sometimes **it's** profitable to buy old books, even if they are worn and frayed.

Plurals of numbers, letters, and symbols: Use an apostrophe and an "s" to form the plurals of numbers, letters, and symbols.

1. Many 80's and 90's were scored on the test.
Note that an apostrophe is not needed when indicating years. Cars of the 90s were nondescript. Fashion of the 80s was very unusual.
2. I'm always happy when the students I tutor make A's.
3. The student's paper used many &'s instead of the actual word and.