



WRITING CENTER

Apostrophes

- For indefinite pronouns that end in **–body** or **–one** (**no one**, **anybody**, etc.), add **`s**
Examples: anybody's guess no one's loss
- For compound nouns, add **`s** to the last word.
Examples: sister-in-law's attitude Secretary of State's position
- For expressing joint ownership, add **`s** to the last noun of the group.
Examples: Gerry and Sue's marriage the sheep, horse and cow's barn
- To show individual ownership when more than one noun is used, add **`s** to each noun.
Examples: Ben's and Dan's cars Lizzie's and Joelle's horses

CONTRACTIONS

Use an apostrophe to indicate contractions. A contraction occurs when two words are combined to make one word. The apostrophe replaces the omitted letter or letters.

Examples: I am = **I'm** would not = **wouldn't**
he is = **he's** you are = **you're**

Some phrases can be contracted by replacing letters or numbers with apostrophes.

Examples: rock and roll = **rock 'n' roll** class of **1982** = class of **'82**

- Notes:** 1) Avoid the use of contractions in academic writing.
2) Do not confuse **you're** with the possessive pronoun **your**.

PLURAL FORMS OF ACRONYMS

It is optional to use or not use an apostrophe to indicate plurals of abbreviations and acronyms. Either is correct (although indicating plurals without an apostrophe is generally preferred). Regardless of which you choose, however, be consistent.

Examples: POWs PhDs CEOs DVDs JPEGs URLs UFOs
POW's PhD's CEO's DVD's JPEG's URL's UFO's

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SPECIAL TYPES OF PLURALS

It is optional to use an apostrophe to indicate certain special types of plurals; for example, when referring to plural upper-case letters, numerals, and terms. Either is correct (although indicating plurals without an apostrophe is generally preferred). Regardless of which you choose, however, be consistent.

Examples: He usually gets **A's** and **B's**. He usually gets **As** and **Bs**.
The skater scored **8's** and **9's**. The skater scored **8s** and **9s**.
He liked the **1950's**. He liked the **1950s**.

Note: To avoid confusion, it is best to use apostrophes for lower case letters.

Examples: CONFUSING: She's learning **as** and **is** in cursive handwriting.
BETTER: She is learning **a's** and **i's** in cursive handwriting.

POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

DO NOT use an apostrophe with the possessive pronouns **its, hers, his, ours, theirs, ours, whose, and yours**. The apostrophe is not needed because the meaning of these words indicates possession.

Examples: INCORRECT: The shiny new truck in the driveway is **your's**.
CORRECT: The shiny new truck in the driveway is **yours**.
INCORRECT: She would like that cute, fluffy puppy to become **her's**.
CORRECT: She would like that cute, fluffy puppy to become **hers**.
INCORRECT: The blue jay flapped **it's** wings.
CORRECT: The blue jay flapped **its** wings.

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PRACTICE

Make Singular Nouns Possessive

Form the possessive of the bold singular nouns in the following sentences.

1. Our **city** record in public housing is far from outstanding.
2. One **hour** delay is about all we can take at this point.
3. **Luis** new hat is the envy of all the men in the neighborhood.

Make Plural Nouns Possessive

Form the possessive of the bold plural nouns in the following sentences.

1. I always enjoy the reading of a good **children** story.
2. The **mothers** conversation always turned to their family plans for the weekend.
3. I look forward each year to three **weeks** stay in the country.

Make Indefinite Pronouns Plural

Form the possessive of the bold indefinite pronouns in the following sentences.

1. **Somebody** hat has been stolen.
2. **Everybody** desks must be cleared by quitting time.
3. Each **one** turn will come soon.

Make Compound Nouns Possessive

Form the possessive of the bold compounds in the following sentences.

1. My **brother-in-law** art gallery will soon close.
2. The **sergeant-at-arms** request for silence was ignored.
3. The **Chief Justice** opinion was beautifully phrased.

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Show Joint Possession or Ownership

Form the possessive of the bold nouns in the following sentences to show joint possession.

1. **Colgate and Skidmore** joint program should be terminated.
2. **Wentworth and Flexner** book on slang is almost a classic.
3. **Maria and Jose** relationship has lasted a long time.

Show Individual Possession for Multiple Nouns

Form the possessive of the bold nouns in the following sentences to show individual possession.

1. **Janet and John** tennis rackets need restringing.
2. **Carlos and Anne** intellectual interests are similar.
3. One of my chores was to prepare **Spot, Willy, and Louie** dinners.

Use Apostrophes to Form Contractions

Change the bold expressions in the following sentences to contractions.

1. He **would have** purchased it if he had enough money.
2. They **cannot** do any more than **they have** already done.
3. The class of **1980** is more employable than the class of **1977**.

Choose the Possessive *Its* and the Contraction *It's*

Supply either **its** or **it's** where indicated in the following sentences.

1. The squirrel buried _____ favorite acorns to eat later.
2. _____ more than a day's journey, I think.
3. The agent advised us to clean up the house to ensure _____ prompt sale.
4. Do you think _____ too late?