



HOW TO USE THE APOSTROPHE

The apostrophe (') is mainly used to show possession and abbreviation. Sometimes it is used in time phrases and sometimes it simply helps with readability.

Possessive apostrophes show that something or someone belongs to something or someone else.

John's bat = the bat that belongs to John.

Jilly's bike = the bike that belongs to Jilly.

One: In the singular (referring to only one owner) use the apostrophe +s.

1. the spade of the gardener → *the gardener's spade*
2. the cow of the farmer → *the farmer's cow*
3. the engine of the car → *the car's engine*
4. *the poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge* → *Wordsworth's and Coleridge's poems*

Note. Where two or more people share ownership the apostrophe goes on the last name:

the collaboration of Smith and Brown → *Smith and Brown's collaboration*

Two: When the plural ends in -----s or -----es (referring to more than one owner) add the apostrophe only

1. the pencils of the boys → *the boys' pencils*
2. the pupils of the schools → *the schools' pupils*
3. the hats of the ladies → *the ladies' hats*

Three: When the plural does not end in s add the apostrophe + s.

1. The performance by Funky Feet → *Funky Feet's performance*
2. the anoraks of the men → *the men's anoraks*
3. the homework of the children → *the children's homework*



Related resources:
Checklist of Grammar Problems
Some Rules of 'the'

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Four: Some words showing possession never take an apostrophe.

These are: **its** **hers** **his** **ours** **yours** **theirs** **whose**

eg. Those chairs are *ours* | The dog wagged *its* tail. | This book is *theirs*. That book is *hers*.

Some apostrophes show abbreviation

1. Who **has** been eating my porridge? ➔ *Who's been eating my porridge?*
2. I **have** never seen anything like it in my life. ➔ *I've never seen anything like it in my life.*
3. She said she **would** come as soon as she was ready. ➔ *She said she'd come as soon as she was ready.*
4. The courier **has** been but there is a problem because he did **not** deliver the part we need.
➔ *The courier's been but there's a problem because he didn't deliver the part we need.*

Some apostrophes help the reader

Sometimes we use apostrophes to help the reader.

1. In this situation you should mind your p's and q's.
2. Dot your i's and cross your t's.
3. Her phone number has four 5's in it.
4. There are two c's in 'occasion' but only one s.

Remember, however, that upper case words like CD or LCD don't have an apostrophe when we make them plural. We just add an s: CDs, LCDs.

Apostrophes are used in some time phrases

A month's leave

Three weeks' leave

A day's work