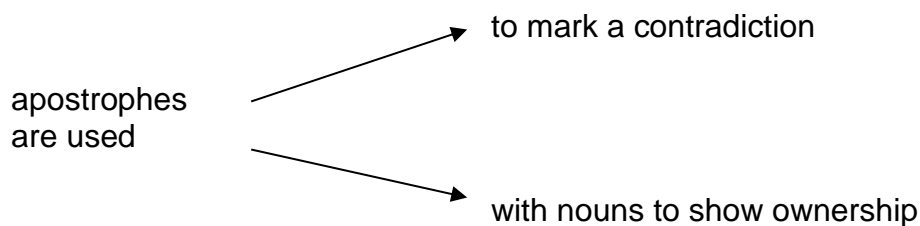


## Apostrophes

An apostrophe is a raised comma (') which shows that a letter or letters have been omitted from a word or it is used to indicate ownership.

People often worry about using apostrophes, however, they should not cause any problems as there are clear guidelines and, if you understand the basic uses, they are easy to deal with.

### When to use the apostrophe



Apostrophes are used to indicate:

Omission of a letter or letters.

*It's* important that you *don't* forget your textbook for all lessons.  
(It is) (do not)

Singular possession or ownership

the toy belonging to the child	the <b>child's</b> toy
the purse belonging to the woman	the <b>woman's</b> purse
the car belonging to the director	the <b>director's</b> car
the desk belonging to the manager	the <b>manager's</b> pen

Plural possession or ownership

the toys belonging to the children	the <b>children's</b> toys
the purses belonging to the women	the <b>women's</b> purses
the cars belonging to the directors	the <b>directors'</b> cars
the desks belonging to the managers	the <b>managers'</b> pens

Note that sometimes the apostrophe is placed before the 's', sometimes after the 's'. A good rule of thumb is to separate the root word, as in these examples:

the child's toy	the children's toys
child = singular	children – plural

the director's car    the directors' cars  
director – singular    directors – plural

#### EXAMPLES:

I'm is the shortened form of I am.

I'll is the shortened form of I will/shall.

I'd is the shortened form of I would/should.

I've is the shortened form of I have.

#### Apostrophes to show ownership

Richard picked up the **baby's** toys. It was his **wife's** night out and he was in charge. The **twins'** coats were on his favourite chair, his eldest **son's** football kit was strewn on the table and the floor was covered in **dog's** hair. He would ignore the mess and read. As he picked up his book, he noticed greasy smears on the **book's** cover and his **daughter's** unmistakable signature inside the front cover.

He had suffered enough problems at work today. Three of his **cashiers'** calculators had disappeared, the **photocopier's** key had been mislaid and all the canteen **assistants'** overalls had shrunk at the laundry. All that had kept him going was the thought of a peaceful **night's** reading.

#### 's

An 's' with an apostrophe immediately before it usually indicates that the noun to which it is attached owns something.

An '**s**' has been placed after the owner's name to show the reader that something is owned.

The word or words immediately following the owner's name are the items which are owned.

If there is one owner,

write the word for the owner, place an apostrophe after it, and add 's'.

**If there is more than one owner, the apostrophe must go after the 's'.**

#### Helpful Hints

There are occasions when we leave out the word that is owned by the owner.

e.g. I hurried to the greengrocer's.

The word telling us what the greengrocer owned has been omitted. We do not really need 'shop' as we all know what is meant.

e.g. This evening I'm going to Hilary's.

This sentence probably refers to Hilary's home. The word 'house', 'flat' etc. has been omitted. Make certain you always include the apostrophe in such situations.

Names ending in 's'

**When people's names end in 's', you can either:  
write the name and put an apostrophe after it**

EXAMPLES:

<b>Giles'</b> bedroom	<b>Charles'</b> briefcase
<b>James'</b> grandmother	<b>Mrs Sykes'</b> employer

**or write the name, put an apostrophe after it and add an 's'.**

EXAMPLES:

<b>Giles's</b> bedroom	<b>Charles's</b> briefcase
<b>James's</b> grandmother	<b>Mrs Sykes's</b> employer

**The choice is yours.**

Helpful Hints

This only applies to proper nouns. It does not apply to common nouns ending in 's' or 'ss'. Here you must obey the apostrophe guidelines.

EXAMPLES:

I shall refer to the **atlas's** index.

The jury did not believe the **witness's** story.

The **bosses'** wishes must be considered.

Possessive pronouns

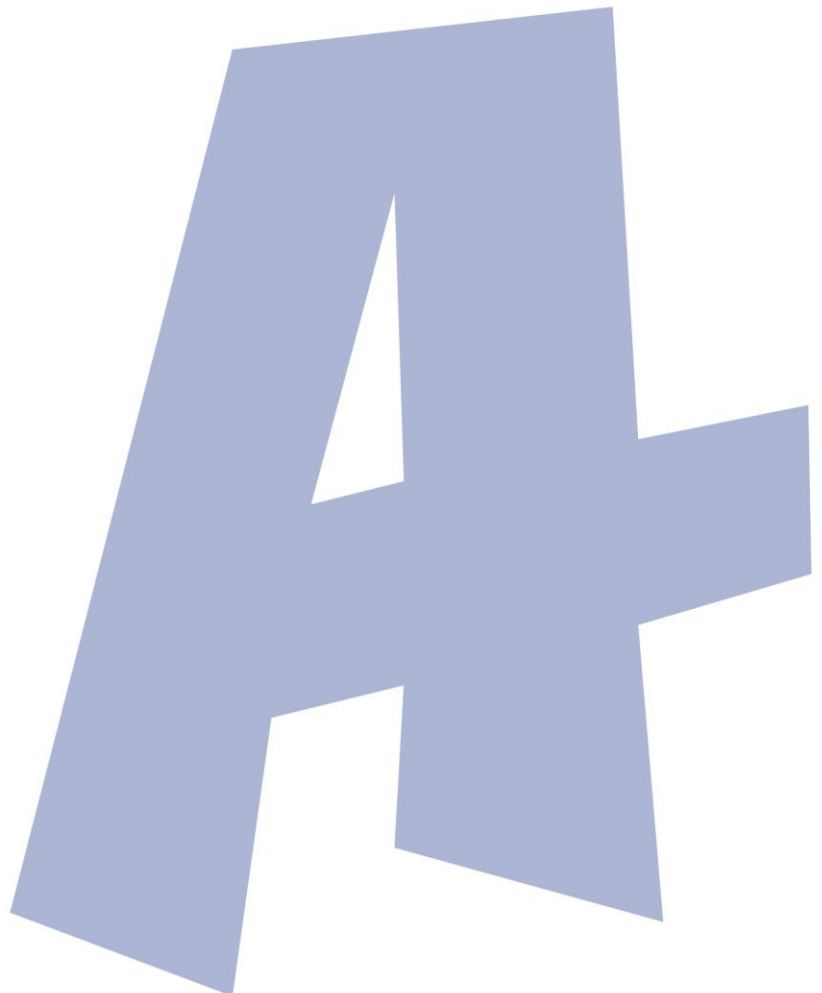
The use of the apostrophe to show ownership only applies to nouns.

**Hers, its, ours, theirs, his** and **yours** are possessive pronouns. They are words used instead of nouns and show that someone owns something.

e.g. This is Paula's handbag.

This is **hers**. ('hers' replaces the proper noun 'Paula')

**Possessive pronouns are never used with an apostrophe.**



## 4.11 Checking apostrophes

If you are doubtful about an apostrophe you have written, then carry out checks. Check all routes:

