

# PUNCTUATION RULES: APOSTROPHES

## THREE DIFFERENT WAYS TO CORRECTLY USE APOSTROPHES:

### TO SHOW POSSESSION (ONE NOUN BELONGS TO ANOTHER NOUN)

*If the noun is singular and/or a plural noun not ending in "s," add an apostrophe + s to show possession*

Grandma's house      Sophie's paper      children's pool      sheep's wool

*If a proper noun ends in an "s," add an apostrophe + s to show possession*

Alexis's cat      Lewis's novel      St. Louis's Arch      Memphis's music

*If a plural noun ends in an "s," follow the "s" with an apostrophe*

drivers' cars      students' books      teachers' meeting      tutors' table

*If using a list of nouns, placement of the apostrophe(s) affects the meaning:*

John, Paul, and George's songs      (the songs belong to John, Paul, and George together)

John's, Paul's, and George's songs      (the songs are unique to each individual)

### TO FORM A CONTRACTION (COMBINING TWO WORDS INTO ONE)

**\*NOTE:** Contractions are usually not acceptable in academic writing. You should spell out the two words.

*The contraction takes the place of the removed letter(s), which is usually a vowel in the second word.*

cannot ⇒ can't      do not ⇒ don't      should have ⇒ should've

*The difference with "it":*

It's ⇒ it is      its ⇒ the possessive of "it" (this does not follow the first apostrophe rule)

### TO INDICATE THE LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET

*Plural forms of letters (A, B, C...) need apostrophes to indicate the plural.*

I earned three A's and one B.      There are two l's in the word "yellow."

### DO NOT USE AN APOSTROPHE TO MAKE A NOUN (INCLUDING NUMBERS AND ACRONYMS) PLURAL:

CD's → CDs      Congratulation's → Congratulations      1920's → 1920s

☆An exception with acronyms: if the acronym uses periods, use an apostrophe: Ph.D.'s

### DO NOT USE AN APOSTROPHE TO PLURALIZE A FAMILY NAME:

Happy New Year from The Barry's → ...the Barrys

# Apostrophes