



# The Writing Centre's Guide to Apostrophes

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# Apostrophes – The Beginning

- There are two distinct purposes of the apostrophe:
  - Contractions
  - Indicating Possession




# Contractions

What is it? 

- It is a shortened form of two words.
- It can add an informal tone to your writing.
- Use caution when using contractions in essays.



# Contractions

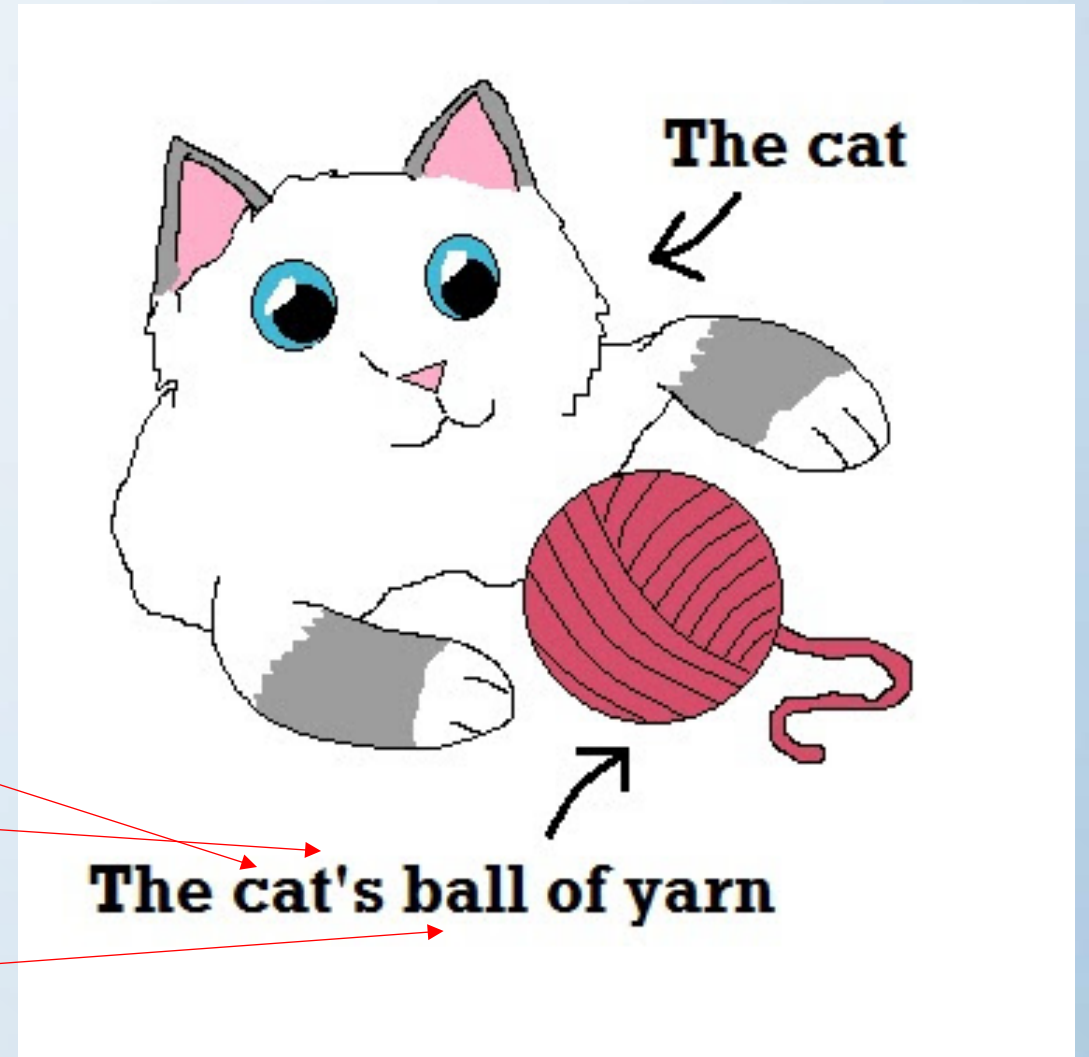
- When two words are shortened into one and one or more letters are left out, the apostrophe goes in the place of the missing letter(s).
- The apostrophe is also used to show the omission of numbers
  - The class of 1997 = The class of '97
- Here are examples 

Original	Contraction
They are	They're
Did not	Didn't
Will not	Won't
Who is, who has	Who's
Is not	Isn't
Let us	Let's
It is, it has	It's
You would	You'd
There is, there has	There's
We are	We're
We will	We'll
She is, she has	She's

# Possession

What is it? 🤔

- The apostrophe also shows ownership.
- In these cases there are two nouns.
- The owner is the first noun.
- The apostrophe is given to this noun.
- It possesses the noun or nouns that come right after it.



# Examples:

Ask yourself, who possesses what?

The student's homework

The opera singer's voice

A driver's license

Worker's compensation

A day's work

Your money's worth



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# Other rules to remember

Add an apostrophe and an "s" to singular and plural nouns that don't end in "s":

- Person + 's = the person's opinion
- Teacher + 's = the teacher's lecture
- Father-in-law + 's = my father-in-law's house
- People + 's = people's choice
- Women + 's = women's coat
- Children + 's = children's toys

Add ONLY an apostrophe to the end of plural nouns that end in "s":

- James + ' = James' dog
- Boys + ' = the boys' washroom
- Two girls + ' = two girls' dolls
- Doctors + ' = doctors' office
- Workers + ' = workers' break
- Bridget Jones + ' = Bridget Jones' Diary

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# Remember!

- Don't assume that if a word ends in "s", it is possessive.
- Make sure that the word possesses something before you give it an apostrophe.

Examples:

- The hunters were angry.
- We invited the Johnsons over for dinner.

**Notice there are no apostrophes in the words "hunters" and "Johnsons" because these words do not possess anything.**

# Remember!

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Examples:

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**Notice there are no apostrophes in the words "hunters" and "Johnsons" because these words do not possess anything.**

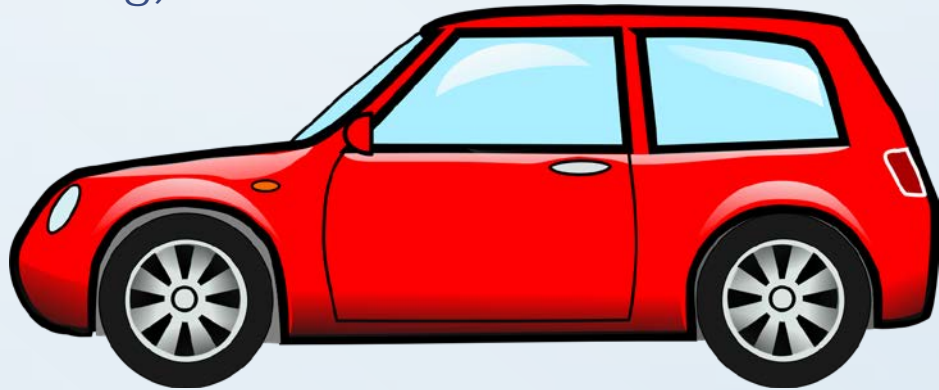
# Special Considerations

## Joint Possession

- If more than one noun has ownership of the same thing, only the last noun should be possessive.

- Joyce and Greg's new car is red

(The car belongs to both Joyce and Greg)



- To show individual possession, make each noun possessive.

- Joyce's and Greg's opinions were different.

(The opinions that Joyce had were different from the opinions that Greg had)



# Special Considerations

## Plurals of Numbers, Letters, and Abbreviations

- An apostrophe and an “s” can be used to pluralize single letters and abbreviations with punctuation.

Examples:

- Make sure to cross your t’s and dot your i’s.
- Three students got A’s on the test.
- It took Joanne many years to earn their Ph.D.’s.

- You only need to add an “s” to make numbers and abbreviations without punctuation plural.

Examples:

- My grandfather was born in the 1930s.
- Isabelle loved to skate figure 8s.
- There have been many UFOs sighted in New Mexico.

# Possessive Pronouns

- Note that in the following words, which are called possessive pronouns, are already possessive in form and do NOT take an apostrophe or an "s"

Chart of possessive pronouns		
My/Mine	Its	His
Her/Hers	Their/Theirs	Your
Whose	Our/Ours	

Let's Review what we've learned:

1. Contractions
2. Possession
3. Joint Possession
4. Plurals of Numbers, Letters, and Abbreviations
5. Possessive Pronouns

You're finished!

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