

The Apostrophe

...is used to show possession or ownership as well as to indicate omitted letters and numerals.

A. Possession

1. Add an 's to form the possessive of singular and plural nouns and indefinite pronouns that do not end in s or with an s or z sound.

Kari's house the child's toy somebody's shoe the children's toy

2. Add only an apostrophe to form the possessive of singular nouns ending in s or with an s or z sound.

Chris' binder Prince Lorenz' castle the boss' decision princess's tiara

*Add only an apostrophe as the extra s creates awkward pronunciation.

3. Add only an apostrophe to form the possessive of plural nouns ending in s or with an s or z sound.

The boys' coats The Smiths' car The students' answers the runners' speeds

4. To form the possessive of compound nouns, add 's to only the last word:

My brother-in-law's foot my sergeant-at-arm's command

5. To show joint ownership, make only the last noun possessive.

Jerry and Tom's practical joke. (They share the joke.)

Jerry's and Tom's practical jokes. (They each have their own joke.)

B. Omitted letters or numbers in contractions

I am = I'm can not = can't ham 'n eggs the hurricane of '05

C. Plural of letters, numbers, abbreviations, and words cited as words.

Watch your p's and q's. There are three ATM's in the mall.

Count to 1000 by 10's. I've had enough of your no's for today.

I received 5 A's and 2 B's.

Shorthand version of the possession rules.

The cat's toy	The cat's toys	The cats' toy	The cats' toys
one cat, one toy	one cat, many toys	many cats, one toy	many cats, many toys