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Apostrophes



An apostrophe is a [punctuation](https://www.grammar-monster.com/glossary/punctuation.htm) mark used to replace a missing letter(s), to show the [possessive form of a noun](https://www.grammar-monster.com/glossary/possessive_noun.htm), or to show a tricky plural.

**Using its vs. it’s**

Remember:

* **It’s** is short for **it is.**
* **Its** indicates that something belongs to it.

**Tip!** If ever you’re unsure, remember that ***its*** is just like ***his****.* You wouldn’t write ***hi’s***. When in doubt, replace the ***it*** in question with the word ***his*** and see if it still makes sense.

*For example:*

**“The dog ran across the park. [Its/His] tail was white but [its/his] paws were dirty.”**

Here, both make sense – so you would use its.

**Droppin’ Letters**

Apostophes are used when a word is shortened, or two words are contracted to form one:

**I Am 🡪** **I’m**

**Do Not 🡪 Don’t**

**Can Not 🡪 Can’t**

**You Are**  🡪 **You’re**

**She Is 🡪 She’s**

**They Are 🡪 They’re**

**Have Not 🡪 Haven’t**

**Should Have 🡪 Should’ve**

**Would Have 🡪 Would’ve**

**Possession**

The rules about forming possessives probably cause the most apostrophe confusion. They vary a little bit, depending on what type of noun you are making into a possessive. Here are the rules of thumb:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type | Rule | Example |
| Singular Nouns | Add an **apostrophe + s** | The **dog’s** lead  The **writer’s** desk  The **planet’s** atmosphere |
| Plural Nouns | Add only an **apostrophe** | The **dogs’** leads (multiple dogs)  The **writers’** desks (multiple writers)  The **planets’** atmospheres (multiple planets) |
| Plural Nouns that do NOT end in s | Add an  **apostrophe + s** | The **children’s** toys  The **geese’s** migration route |

Style guides vary in their recommendations of what to do when you have a singular proper noun that ends in **s**. Some recommend adding only an **apostrophe**:

Charles **Dickens’** novels

**Kansas’** main airport

Others say to add **apostrophe + s**:

Charles **Dickens’s** novels

**Kansas’s** main airport

Use whichever style matches the style guide you use for your writing. If you don’t have a style guide, it’s okay to just pick one of the methods, as long as you don’t switch back and forth within the same piece of writing.

**Abbreviations**

There is no need to use apostrophes with abbreviations.

For example:

**Dos and Don’ts**, **Ps and Qs**

**TVs**, **WCs** and **DVDs**

The same also goes for numbers – **100s**, **1,000s, 1970s**… etc