



# The Apostrophe

by Debra Baxley, South Campus Learning Center, Communications Lab 04-14-05  
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A. In contractions, apostrophes show

that letters have been left out. Some of the most common contractions are listed below.

are + not = aren't  
could + not = couldn't  
do + not = don't  
he + will or shall = he'll  
I + have = I've  
it + is or has = it's  
she + is or has = she's  
they + are = they're  
you + have = you've

can + not = can't  
did + not = didn't  
have + not = haven't  
I + am = I'm  
I + will or shall = I'll  
let + us = let's  
they + have = they've  
you + are = you're  
you + will or shall = you'll

**\*\*NOTE: CONTRACTIONS SHOULD NEVER BE USED IN FORMAL WRITING. THIS MEANS IN ESSAYS!**

**\*\*NOTE: AIN'T, THE CONTRACTION FOR AM NOT, IS NOT, ARE NOT, HAS NOT, AND HAVE NOT, SHOULD NOT BE USED IN FORMAL WRITING.**

B. Ownership and possession are also shown by using apostrophes.

1. If a noun or indefinite pronoun does not already end in -s, add an 's to show ownership or possession.

CORRECT EXAMPLES: My dog's water dish is always overturned.  
Someone's books were left out in the rain.  
Doug and Dan's father is in the hospital.

2. If the word already ends in -s, add only an apostrophe to show ownership.

CORRECT EXAMPLES: My brothers' junk is always cluttering up the house. (more than one brother's junk)  
My cats' fur flew when they fought. (more than one cat's fur)  
Mrs. Lewis' apple pies are the best. (singular noun already ending in -s)

3. An apostrophe is never used with the possessive pronouns such as his, hers, ours, yours, and its.

CORRECT EXAMPLES: The books on the table are his.  
Her teacher told her not to wait until the last minute to prepare her paper.

The dog was lost, and its owner was very upset.

4. Certain expressions of time also require apostrophes.

CORRECT EXAMPLES: Today's society is burdened with many self-inflicted problems.

The engagement ring cost him a month's salary.

The youths of today are tomorrow's leaders.

5. Words that do not usually have plurals require an apostrophe to make them plural.

CORRECT EXAMPLES: You use too many "you's" in your essays.

Always dot your "I's."

Your "b's" are too similar to your "6's."

6. An apostrophe should be used to show omitted numbers.

CORRECT EXAMPLES: The most destructive hurricane of '92 was Andrew.

### APOSTROPHE EXERCISES

DIRECTIONS: Tell whether apostrophes are used correctly in the following sentences by placing a C in the blank for correct or an I in the blank for incorrect.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. My three son's bikes are all blocking the driveway.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. The red jacket is her's.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. I'm not going anywhere with you.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4. The boys' teeth were knocked out when he ran into the pole.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Everyone's assignments should be completed on time.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Mr. Haye's mother is coming for a visit.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 7. It's mother carried the kitten gingerly in it's mouth.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 8. My husband has just requested a month's vacation.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Some people cross their "7s."  
\_\_\_\_\_ 10. Capital Q's are the most difficult letters for some young writers to make.

## ANSWER KEY FOR APOSTROPHE EXERCISES

1. I-there is more than one son's bike-sons' is the correct answer
2. I-never use apostrophes with possessive pronouns
3. C
4. I-only one boy's teeth were knocked out
5. C
6. I-apostrophe goes after the -s in proper nouns that end in -s; Hayes' is the correct answer
7. I-never use apostrophes with possessive pronouns
8. C
9. I-an apostrophe should be used to pluralize 7
10. C