

## Punctuation Rules: Apostrophes

There are three different ways to correctly use apostrophes:

### 1. 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' meetings      tutors' tables

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

Joe, Nick, and Kevin's songs      (the songs belong to Joe, Nick, and Kevin together)  
 Joe's, Nick's, and Kevin's songs      (the songs are unique to each of them)

### 2. To form a contraction (combining two words into one)

*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)

**Note:** Contractions are usually not acceptable in academic writing. You should spell out the two words in their entirety.

### 3. 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 m's in the word "common."

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 (example: Ph.D.'s)*

Do not use an apostrophe to pluralize a family name.

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