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Apostrophes

An apostrophe is a punctuation mark: ‘

Apostrophes appear as part of a word to show possession, make a plural number, or make a contraction.

Possession:

In most cases an apostrophe is used to show possession. In these cases, one noun will always be followed by another noun. The first noun possesses the second noun:

Example: Gloria’s hat

Example: Chase’s red car

Gloria possesses the hat and Chase possesses a red car.

To Show Possession with Singular and Plural Nouns:

To make a singular noun that does not end in “s” possessive, add an apostrophe and an “s.”

Example: The man’s cat is orange.

To make a plural noun that does not end in “s” possessive, add an apostrophe and an “s,” just like above.

Example: The men’s restroom is closed for repairs.

Nouns Ending in “S:”

To make nouns ending in “s” possessive:

Example, singular: Carlos’s daughter has a new car.

Example, plural: The birds’ owner wears a hat.

If a singular noun ends with an “s” and contains an additional “s” sound elsewhere in the noun, add only the apostrophe to make the noun possessive.

Example: Jesus’ birth is celebrated at Christmas.

Compound Words or Group Words:

To make compound words, or groups of words, possessive, add an apostrophe and an “s” to the last word.

Example, Singular: The chairman of the board’s decision was final.

Example, Plural: The bridesmaids’ dresses were ready for the wedding.

Note that the plural example does not contain an additional “s” because the “s” is found elsewhere in the word, like the example with Jesus and the stable.

Separate and Joint Possessions:

To make two nouns that possess something separately possessive, add an apostrophe and an “s” after each possessive noun.

Example: Kari's and Lynn's bikes are in excellent condition.

Note: They each have a bike.

To make two nouns that jointly possess something possessive, add an apostrophe only to the second unit.

Example: Cameron and Mitch's car broke down last week.

Note: They share a car.

Plural Times and Money:

To make units of time and money plural, use possession rules for singular and plural nouns.

Example, Singular: A day's wage, an hour's wait, the dollar's value, etc.

Example, Plural: Two days' wages, two hours' wait, two dollars' value, etc.

To make letters or numbers used as words plural, add an apostrophe and an "s."

Example: Cathy had straight A's.

Example: Trey aced his classes with three 94's and a 92.

Example: Mindy completed the work with no if's, and's, or but's.

Contractions:

To form contractions, use an apostrophe in place of the omitted letters.

Example: He can't find his wallet.

Note: The apostrophe takes the place of the omitted letters "n" and "o" from "cannot."

Remember, do not use contractions in academic papers, they are considered unprofessional. Spell contractions out.