

## Rules in using apostrophe

### Rule 1

Use the apostrophe with contractions. The apostrophe is always placed at the spot where the letter(s) has been removed.

**Examples:**

*don't, isn't*  
*You're right.*  
*She's a great teacher.*

### Rule 2

Use the apostrophe to show possession. Place the apostrophe before the *s* to show singular possession.

**Examples:**

*one boy's hat*  
*one woman's hat*  
*one actress's hat*  
*one child's hat*  
*Ms. Chang's house*

**NOTE:** Although names ending in *s* or an *s* sound are not required to have the second *s* added in possessive form, it is preferred.

**Examples:**

*Mr. Jones's golf clubs*  
*Texas's weather*  
*Ms. Straus's daughter*  
*Jose Sanchez's artwork*  
*Dr. Hastings's appointment (name is Hastings)*  
*Mrs. Lees's books (name is Lees)*

### Rule 3

Use the apostrophe where the noun that should follow is implied.

**Example:**

*This was his father's, not his, jacket.*

### Rule 4

To show plural possession, make the noun plural first. Then immediately use the apostrophe.

**Examples:**

*two boys' hats two women's hats*  
*two actresses' hats*

*two children's hats*  
*the Changs' house*  
*the Joneses' golf clubs*  
*the Strauses' daughter*  
*the Sanchezes' artwork*  
*the Hastingses' appointment*  
*the Leeses' books*

### Rule 5

Do not use an apostrophe for the plural of a name.

#### Examples:

*We visited the Sanchezes in Los Angeles.*  
*The Changs have two cats and a dog.*

### Rule 6

With a singular compound noun, show possession with 's at the end of the word.

#### Example:

*my mother-in-law's hat*

### Rule 7

If the compound noun is plural, form the plural first and then use the apostrophe.

#### Example:

*my two brothers-in-law's hats*

### Rule 8

Use the apostrophe and s after the second name only if two people possess the same item.

#### Examples:

*Cesar and Maribel's home is constructed of redwood.*  
*Cesar's and Maribel's job contracts will be renewed next year.*  
Indicates separate ownership.  
*Cesar and Maribel's job contracts will be renewed next year.*  
Indicates joint ownership of more than one contract.

### Rule 9

Never use an apostrophe with possessive pronouns: *his, hers, its, theirs, ours, yours, whose*. They already show possession so they do not require an apostrophe.

#### Correct:

*This book is hers, not yours.*

**Incorrect:**

*Sincerely your's.*

**Rule 10**

The only time an apostrophe is used for *it's* is when it is a contraction for *it is* or *it has*.

**Examples:**

*It's a nice day.*

*It's your right to refuse the invitation.*

*It's been great getting to know you.*

**Rule 11**

The plurals for capital letters and numbers used as nouns are not formed with apostrophes.

**Examples:**

*She consulted with three M.D.s.*

**BUT**

*She went to three M.D.s' offices.*

The apostrophe is needed here to show plural possessive.

*She learned her ABCs.*

*the 1990s **not** the 1990's*

*the '90s or the mid-'70s **not** the '90's or the mid-'70's*

*She learned her times tables for 6s and 7s.*

**Exception:**

Use apostrophes with capital letters and numbers when the meaning would be unclear otherwise.

**Examples:**

*Please dot your i's.*

*You don't mean is.*

*Ted couldn't distinguish between his 6's and 0's.*

You need to use the apostrophe to indicate the plural of *zero* or it will look like the word *Os*. To be consistent within a sentence, you would also use the apostrophe to indicate the plural of *6's*.

**Rule 12**

Use the possessive case in front of a gerund (-ing word).

**Examples:**

*Alex's skating was a joy to behold.*

*This does not stop Joan's inspecting of our facilities next Thursday.*

**Rule 13**

If the gerund has a pronoun in front of it, use the possessive form of that pronoun.

**Examples:**

*I appreciate your inviting me to dinner. I appreciated his working with me to resolve the conflict.*

"As chairman of the Apostrophe Protection Society ([www.apostrophe.org.uk](http://www.apostrophe.org.uk)), I had to write and express my pleasure at seeing your view on the apostrophe and names ending in an s." —John Richards