

APOSTROPHES

An **apostrophe** is primarily used as part of a word with the letter **s** to show **possession** or to indicate that letters in a **contraction** have been omitted.

POSSESSIVES (indicating ownership):

1. In English, the apostrophe (') plus **s** forms the possessive singular of all nouns and the possessive plural of all nouns not ending in **s**.

singular: man's role	John's party
plural: men's role	children's playground

2. Use the apostrophe alone to form the plural nouns ending in **s**.

dogs' fur	Aguilars' house*
boys' pants	Joneses' cars

*NOTE: If an "s" is added to a surname to refer to the whole family's belongings or as a greeting card signature, do not include an apostrophe: ex., The Aguilars (or Smiths or Joneses) live there. Season's Greetings, The Highsmiths

3. To form the possessive singular of indefinite pronouns, use the apostrophe plus **s**.

everyone's success	one's leg
somebody's house	anybody's home

NOTE:

- a. Use the **-s** possessive with nouns referring to persons and living things.

Use an **"of"** phrase for the possessive of nouns referring to inanimate objects.

Awkward: The chair's back was broken.

Improved: The back of the chair was broken.

- b. Nouns or pronouns which modify gerunds are usually possessive.

Mary's singing irritated Tom.

John's laughter attracted attention.

- c. When forming the possessive, avoid unpronounceable duplication of sound.

Awkward: conscience's sake

Improved: conscience' sake

Awkward: Claudins's feast

Improved: Claudins' feast

CONTRACTIONS:

Contractions are two words condensed into one by replacing a letter or group of letters with an apostrophe. (Remember, in formal/academic writing contractions should not be used.)

I am	I'm	you are	you're
it is	it's	he is	he's
will not	won't	they have	they've
should have	should've	there is	there's
you are	you're	we were	we're
they are	they're	who is	who's

APOSTROPHE EXERCISES

POSSESSIVES I: Change the phrases below into possessives by using 's or by adding an apostrophe.

EXAMPLE: the book of the professor the professor's book

1. the idea of my brother _____
2. the horse of the policeman _____
3. the canopy of my friend _____
4. the balloon of Mary _____
5. the obedience of Susan _____
6. the feeding of the babies _____
7. the lids of the cans _____
8. the sparkle of the lights _____
9. the home of my nephews _____
10. the car of Sue _____

CONTRACTIONS I: Write the contractions for the following words.

EXAMPLE: I am I'm

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. she is _____ | 6. they would _____ |
| 2. I will _____ | 7. he has _____ |
| 3. would not _____ | 8. they have _____ |
| 4. where is _____ | 9. should not _____ |
| 5. she has _____ | 10. there is _____ |

POSSESSIVES II: Change the phrases below into possessives by using 's or by adding an apostrophe.

1. the house of my grandmother _____
2. the bone of my dog _____
3. the toys of the children _____
4. the edge of the paper _____
5. the laws of the Kings _____
6. the laughter of the audience _____

7. the ends of the hoses _____

8. the success of everyone _____

9. the determination of the players _____

10. the oats of the horses _____

CONTRACTIONS II: Write the contraction for the following words.

1. we have _____

7. could have _____

2. it is _____

8. here is _____

3. can not _____

9. you are _____

4. you will _____

10. she will _____

5. he is _____

11. will not _____

6. I would _____

12. do not _____

ANSWERS: POSSESSIVES I

1. brother's idea
2. policeman's horse
3. friend's canopy
4. Mary's balloon
5. Susan's obedience

6. babies' feeding
7. cans' lids
8. lights' sparkle
9. nephews' home
10. Sue's car

ANSWERS: CONTRACTIONS I

1. she's
2. I'll
3. wouldn't
4. where's
5. she's

6. they'd
7. he's
8. they've
9. shouldn't
10. there's

ANSWERS: POSSESSIVES II

1. grandmother's house
2. dog's bone
3. children's toys
4. paper's edge
5. Kings' laws

6. audience's laughter
7. hoses' ends
8. everyone's success
9. players' determination
10. horses' oats

ANSWERS: CONTRACTIONS II

1. we've
2. it's
3. can't
4. you'll
5. he's
6. I'd

7. could've
8. here's
9. you're
10. she'll
11. won't
12. don't

Spring 2005
STUDENT LEARNING ASSISTANCE CENTER (SLAC)
Texas State University-San Marcos