

APOSTROPHES

There are two main uses for apostrophes – 1) for **possession** and 2) for **omission**.

Possession is quite easy – if you know the rule.

When we write about someone (the **possessor**) possessing **something**, then this is shown by an apostrophe. The rule is:

PUT THE APOSTROPHE AFTER THE POSSESSOR (AND ADD AN 'S' IF THE SOUND REQUIRES IT). SO,

One boy's books	<i>The books of one boy</i>
Two boys' books	<i>The books of more than one boy</i>
A woman's rights	<i>The rights of an individual woman</i>
Women's rights	<i>The rights of (all) women</i>
Dogs' behaviour	<i>How dogs (in general) behave</i>
A dog's behaviour	<i>How one particular dog behaves</i>
The USA's voting record	<i>It depends on how you pronounce it</i>
The States's record OR The States' record	<i>It depends on how you pronounce it</i>
James's bike OR James' bike	

Omission is quite easy. If you leave letters out of words, then show you have left them out by putting an apostrophe instead.

Warning: In academic English try to avoid the use of the contracted (shortened) words. Use the full forms where possible.

Common Examples:

he is	=	he's
will not	=	won't
is not	=	isn't
you are	=	you're

PAY ATTENTION: it's = it is and its = of it

Warning: plural nouns which are not possessors NEVER need apostrophes

— even if they are abbreviations like GPs, or dates, like the 1960s.

