

## **Punctuation:**

### **Taking the mystery out of apostrophes**

---

An apostrophe looks like this ' and is used to indicate a contraction or to show ownership.

#### **1. Contractions**

Apostrophes show a **contraction** of two words into one such as

they're	from	they are
won't	from	will not
would've	from	would have

The apostrophe indicates where letter/s have been left out.

**Its** is an important word that is sometimes confusing.

The only time it is written with an apostrophe is when **it's** is a contraction and really means '**it is**'.

The pronoun **its**, doesn't need an apostrophe because it is already possessive - the ownership is built into the word in the same way it is built into my, his, her, their, our and your. For example,

Its battery was dead.                      They knew its function.                      His iPod was broken.

#### **2. Ownership and belonging**

Apostrophes are also used to show that somebody or something owns a particular thing.

If, for example, we want to show that an essay belongs to a student, we would say

This is the **student's** essay.

This also applies to things that are not technically owned but are still in possession of someone or something. For example, if an offender steals a car for a joy ride and then, after pursuit by police, hits a wall, we say:

The **offender's** car hit the wall.

This rule also applies to concepts, so we say:

A **prisoner's** rights were violated.

A quick formula to show where to put an apostrophe showing ownership is

1. **Ask who or what "owns" the object, place, person or concept.**
2. **Write the answer and put a box around it**
3. **Add an apostrophe *outside* the right side of the box.**
4. **Add an 's' if it is needed.**

- For the example where there is a **single owner**, *The students essay*

1] Question: Who owned the essay?

2] Answer

The student

3] Add ’

The student ’

4] Add s

The student

’s → The student’s essay was excellent.

- Note-This also works for plural nouns. This occurs when there is **more than one owner**. Use the formula to check where to put the apostrophe when writing *the dogs kennel*, where more than one dog shares the same kennel.

1] Who or what "owns" the kennel?

2] Answer:

the dogs

3] Add ’ outside the box

the dogs

4] No extra 's' is needed →

The dogs

’ = The dogs’ kennel is crowded.

- The same approach works for **collective terms** like sheep, crowd, men and women.

Write the whole word, box it, then add ’s if it’s needed.

Example: The womens refuge

