Apostrophes

Angela Gulick
CAS Writing Specialist
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Apostrophes

Apostrophes have three main uses:

1. An apostrophe replaces a letter in a contraction (it’s = it is, don’t = do not, we’ve = we have, can’t = can not, and so on).

2. An apostrophe is used in a name or an hour (O’Connor, O’Callahan, seven o’clock).

3. An apostrophe is used to indicate a case of ownership or possession. This use will be discussed in the next slides.
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Tip One: Determine if you need an apostrophe by rephrasing your expression this way:
_________ owns/possesses/has _________.

My friends blue scarf is lost. >>> My friend owns/possesses/has a blue scarf. >>> This sentence needs an apostrophe. My friend’s blue scarf is lost.

Parkland Colleges new computers are due on Friday. >>> Parkland College owns/possesses/has new computers. >>> This sentence needs an apostrophe. Parkland College’s new computers are due on Friday.

Many students homework assignments got lost in the classroom. >>> Many students own/possess/have homework assignments. This sentence needs an apostrophe. Many students’ homework assignments got lost in the classroom.

The dogs at the end of the road won’t stop barking. >>> The dogs own/possess/have the end of the road. >>> This doesn’t make sense; dogs can’t own roads. This sentence does not need an apostrophe.

The Super Bowl fans are out of control. >>> The fans own/possess/have the Super Bowl. >>> This doesn’t make sense; fans can’t own the Super Bowl. This sentence does not need an apostrophe.
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Tip Two: Once you have determined that you need an apostrophe, follow these steps in this order:

1. Write the word (singular or plural) as you normally would without adding any apostrophe. Just write the word first: friend, Parkland College, and brothers.

2. Think of the apostrophe as a “+” sign. Add the “+” to the end of the word you just wrote: friend+, Parkland College+, and brothers+.

3. Change the “+” to an apostrophe: friend’, Parkland College’, brothers’.

4. Add an “s” after the apostrophe: friend’s, Parkland College’s, brothers’s.

5. If you end up having two s’s in a row (brothers’s), omit the final “s” after the apostrophe: brothers’s >>> brothers’.
Apostrophes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Word</th>
<th>“+” sign</th>
<th>Change + to ’</th>
<th>add s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cat (one)</td>
<td>cat+</td>
<td></td>
<td>cat’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cats (&gt; one)</td>
<td>cats+</td>
<td></td>
<td>cats’s &gt; omit extra s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>company (one)</td>
<td>company+</td>
<td></td>
<td>company’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>companies (&gt; one)</td>
<td>companies+</td>
<td></td>
<td>companies’s &gt; omit extra s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman (one)</td>
<td>woman+</td>
<td></td>
<td>woman’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women (&gt; one)</td>
<td>women+</td>
<td></td>
<td>women’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen (one)</td>
<td>Karen+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Karen’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris (one)</td>
<td>Chris+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chris’s *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Jenkins (one)</td>
<td>Mr. Jenkins+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Jenkins’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiths (&gt; one)</td>
<td>Smiths +</td>
<td></td>
<td>Smiths’s &gt; omit extra s **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Usage varies when it comes to words ending in “s.” The most commonly stated rules are as follows:

* If a singular word ends in s, add ’s. >>> Chris’s, Mr. Jenkins’s, Los Angeles’s.
**If a word is plural and ends in s, omit the final “s” >>> Bradleys’, Smiths’, Guicks’
Do You Still Have Questions?

If you still have questions, please stop by the Writing Lab (D120.)