

The Writing Lab

Apostrophes

Handout courtesy of Angela Gulick

An apostrophe is a punctuation mark that has three main uses:

- An apostrophe replaces a letter in a contraction (it's = it is, don't = do not)
- An apostrophe is used in a name or an hour (O'Connor, O'Callahan, seven o'clock)
- An apostrophe is used to indicate a case of ownership or possession as discussed below.

Tip One: Determine if you need an apostrophe by rephrasing this way: The _____ owned/possessed by _____.

- My friends blue scarf >>> The blue scarf owned by my friend >>> This phrase needs an apostrophe.
- Parkland Colleges new computers >>> The new computers owned by Parkland College >>> This phrase needs an apostrophe.
- The dogs at the end of the road >>> The dogs owned by the end of the road >>> This doesn't make sense; a road can't own dogs. This phrase **does not** need an apostrophe.

Tip Two: Once you have determined that you need an apostrophe, follow these steps in order:

1. Write the word (singular or plural) without adding any apostrophe.
2. Think of the apostrophe as a "+" sign. Add the "+" to the end of the word you just wrote. c. Change the "+" to an apostrophe.
3. If the word is singular, then add an "s" after the apostrophe.
4. If the word is plural (and already ends in an "s") omit the final "s." ****See exception below.**

Write out the word	Add the "+" sign	Change "+" to apostrophe and add s
cat	cat+	cat's toy
cats	cats+	cats's >>> cats' toys
company	company+	company's policies
companies	companies+	companies's policies >>> companies' policies
business	business+	business's profits
businesses	businesses+	businesses's profits >>> businesses' profits
woman	woman+	woman's shoes
women	women+	women's shoes
man	man+	man's wallet
men	men+	men's wallets
child	child+	child's book
children	children+	children's books
Karen	Karen+	Karen's airline ticket
Mr. Bradley	Mr. Bradley+	Mr. Bradley's parking ticket
Chris	Chris+	Chris's sandwich*
Ms. Jenkins	Ms. Jenkins+	Ms. Jenkins's DVR player*
The Bradleys (> one)	The Bradleys+	The Bradleys's pool** >>> The Bradleys' pool
The Jenkins (> one)	The Jenkins+	The Jenkins's car** >>> The Jenkins' car
<p>* If a singular word ends in s, (Chris or Los Angeles), add 's. >>> Chris's, Los Angeles's. **If a word is plural and ends in s, (the Bradleys or the Williams), omit the final "s" >>> Bradleys's, Williams's >>> the Bradleys' pool, Williams' annual Christmas party</p>		

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