

## Apostrophes

### MASTER THE APOSTROPHE (') – SEVEN RULES

An apostrophe (') shows possession:

*the child's toy*                      *the film's star*  
*the teacher's desk*                *the store's prices*  
*the city's drug problem*        *the dog's tail*

You can also use apostrophes to create special relationships between words: *a night's sleep, two months' pay.*

### SEVEN RULES FOR USING THE APOSTROPHE

**Rule 1:** Use the apostrophe to show possession; add –'s to a singular .

*Monrovia, Liberia's capital, was named after U.S. president James Monroe.*

Add –'s to a singular noun that ends in –s or –z, as long as doing so does not make the pronunciation of that noun awkward. If doing so creates awkwardness, add only the apostrophe.

*Jazz's origins go back to Afro – American spirituals.*

### BUT

*Jesus' teachings can be found in the New Testament.*

**Rule 2:** Use the apostrophe to show possession; add only –' if the noun is plural and ends in /-s.

*The two countries' borders were in dispute.*

**Rule 3:** Use the apostrophe to show joint possession in a series; add –'s only to the last noun.

*Groucho, Chico, and Harpo's films are still funny.*

**Rule 4:** Use the apostrophe to show individual possession in a series; add –'s to each noun.

*Boston's and San Francisco's waterfronts are interesting, but I prefer Seattle's.*

**Rule 5:** Use the apostrophe in     in place of omitted numbers or letters.

*She will graduate with the class of '99.  
Because it's raining, we can't go to the park.*

**CAUTION:** *It's* = it is; *can't* = cannot.

**Rule 6:** Use the apostrophe to form the *'s* of a hyphenated word; add *'s* after the last letter.

**Not:** *My mother – in – laws home*

**Not:** *My mother's – in – law home*

**But:** *My mother – in – law 's home*

**Rule 7:** Add an apostrophe to *'s* and letters and numbers to make them *'s*.

*Syed received three A's and two B's as final grades.*

*Three 747's sat on the runway.*

**CAUTION:** In general, do not use an apostrophe to form plurals.

**Not:** *Hitler planned to conquer the nation's of Europe.*

**But:** *Hitler planned to conquer the nations of Europe.*

**CAUTION:** Do not add an apostrophe to a pronoun that is already possessive.

**Not:** *Under Hitler, Germany sought it's place in the sun.*

**But:** *Under Hitler, Germany sought its place in the sun.*

Sample Quiz questions:

1. Choose the correct sentence.
  - a. It's time to stand up for what you believe, because if you don't, you'll be left behind.
  - b. It's time to stand up for what you believe, because if you don't, you'll be left behind.
  - c. Its time to stand up for what you believe, because if you don't, you'll be left behind.

Answer: b. It's time to stand up for what you believe, because if you don't, you'll be left behind.

2. Choose the correct sentence.
  - a. Hes so ill that he cant complete the homework.
  - b. He's so ill that he can't complete the homework.
  - c. He's so ill that he cant complete the homework.

Answer: b. He's so ill that he can't complete the homework.