

# THE APOSTROPHE AND THE POSSESSIVE CASE

## Use an apostrophe to show possession.

- Use 's when the noun possessing something is singular.

Examples: the man's dream, the man's dreams, the child's toy, the child's toys.

- Use s' when the noun is plural, and ends in s.

Examples: the students' papers (two or more students), three cars' brakes.

- Use 's when the noun is plural, but does not end in s.

Examples: the children's games, the men's ideas, the women's meeting.

Two tests to ensure that an apostrophe is needed:

1. Turn the phrase in question around. For example, when we change "the man's dream" to "the dream of the man," we can more clearly see that since the dream belongs to the man, the possessive form of the phrase needs an apostrophe.
2. See if what is possessed comes right after what possesses it. Almost always, there are two nouns together when you need an apostrophe. For example, in the phrase "the man's dream," there are two nouns together, which often indicates possession.

You will NEVER see an 's for possessive just before the verb:

The students went to school. (no 's)

You will NEVER see an 's for possessive just before a preposition like of, to, with, or for:

The students of my school are doing very well. (no 's)

**In the phrases below, place the apostrophe either before or after the 's'**

Example: the writers intent—the writer's intent

1. two writer's works
2. one instructor's assignments
3. Today's youth
4. Tomorrow's dream
5. America's promise
6. America's future
7. the old lady's house
8. the computer's keyboard

**Change the wording of these phrases so that they show possession.**

Example: the keyboard of the computer—the computer's keyboard

1. the residence of the president **the president's residence**
2. the problems of American cities **American cities' problems**
3. the pencils chewed by the nervous student **the nervous student's pencils**
4. the typewriter of the Writing Lab **the Writing Lab's typewriter**
5. the car of Joyce **Joyce's car**
6. both cars of Joyce **Joyce's cars**
7. the taste of the meal **the meal's taste**
8. the prose of Shelley **Shelley's prose**

**Possessive pronouns need no apostrophe. For example:**

her dress

his chore

its task (Note: it's means it is, and its' does not exist.)

our class

my paper

your problem

their dancing elephants

**Use an apostrophe to indicate where a letter(s) has been left out of a contraction.**

Example: She couldn't attend the party. (the apostrophe takes the place of the 'o' in not)

**Put the apostrophe in the following contractions.**

For example: I cant—I can't

1. She couldn't
2. They'd come
3. I'll be there
4. Aren't you ready
5. That's enough
6. It's all in the game
7. She'd do it
8. It's time to go

# APOSTROPHES AND THE POSSESSIVE CASE

DIRECTIONS: Rewrite each of the following word groups as a noun or a pronoun preceded by another noun or pronoun in the possessive case.

Example:

a friend of everybody

Answer:

everybody's friend

1. the history of our country **our country's history**
2. the population of the United States **the United States' population**
3. the income of their parents **their parents' income**
4. a poem by Wallace Stevens **Wallace Stevens' poem**
5. problems of today **today's problems**
6. tuition at the university **the university's tuition**
7. a party given by my sister-in-law **my sister-in-law's party**
8. the toys of the babies **the babies' toys**
9. an address by the governor of Texas **the governor of Texas' address**
10. the position of the women **the women's position**
11. a camper belonging to Sam and Calvin **Sam and Calvin's camper**
12. a reunion of the Coopers **the Coopers' reunion**
13. decisions made by one **one's decision**
14. the restaurant at the airport **the airport's restaurant**
15. the temple of Zeus **Zeus' temple**
16. the riddle of the Sphinx **the Sphinx's riddle**
17. the column of the editor-in-chief **the editor-in-chief's column**
18. the cars of Kevin and Troy **Kevin and Troy's cars**
19. the picture of Charles **Charles' picture**
20. the gills of the fish **the fish's gills**