

# Apostrophes

---



Apostrophes are used to indicate omission, to indicate possession, or to form certain plurals.

## To Indicate Omission

An apostrophe indicates the omission of letters or numbers.

**Example:** coming = comin'

**Example:** 1969 = '69

Apostrophes are also used in contractions to indicate the omission of letters.

**Example:** should not = shouldn't

**Example:** how is = how's

## To Indicate Possession

An apostrophe is used to indicate possession. **For most nouns (either singular or plural without a final s),** add 's to the word.

**Example:** the bird's nest

For plural nouns ending in s, only add an apostrophe (') to the word to indicate possession.

**Example:** the birds' nest

## Joint possession

If something belongs to two or more people, add an 's to the last name listed.

**Example:** Peter and Wendy's book report.

If two or more people own separate but similar objects that are listed together, add 's to all applicable names.

**Example:** Peter's and Wendy's favorite books. (They each have different favorite books.)

## Singular nouns ending in S

Common practice allows for the use of a single apostrophe after a singular noun ending in s. However, usage depends on the discipline and specific style guide. Writers should consult writing and writing resources from their discipline to determine appropriate usage.

**Example:** the boss' office

**Example:** Thomas's bicycle

**Example:** Jesus's sermons (*The Chicago Manual of Style*)

Jesus' sermons (*The Associated Press Stylebook*)

## To Form Certain Plurals

Apostrophes are almost never used to form a plural; however, using apostrophes to form plurals is acceptable when pluralizing lowercase letters.

**Example:** a's, b's, and c's

**Note:** For additional information on apostrophes, see section 6.116 in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17<sup>th</sup> edition