

THE APOSTROPHE IS A PUNCTUATION MARK (') USED TO INDICATE EITHER POSSESSION OR THE OMISSION OF LETTERS OR NUMBERS.

# APOSTROPHE *for possession*

The apostrophe is probably the most misused element of punctuation. Learn the following rules and you will never make embarrassing errors with this little curved mark.

## SINGULAR POSSESSION

To show possession by **one** owner, add an apostrophe and the letter 's' to the owner.

FOR EXAMPLE:

This is John's hat.

Here, the hat *belongs* to John, and so we use the apostrophe and 's' to indicate this possession.



WAIT! What if the word is a regular singular noun but already ends with 's'? Such as *class, dress, lens* or *bus*?

We treat these the same as any singular noun and add an apostrophe and another 's'.

EXAMPLE ➔ The bus's brakes were failing.

But what if it is a PROPER NOUN which ends in a 's'? Such as *James, Mrs. Jones, or Kansas*?

Believe it or not, this is often debated in grammar circles. You could write *James's apple* or *James' apple*. The key is consistency.

## PLURAL POSSESSION

The plurals of most nouns already end with the letter 's'. To show possession of these words, you **don't add** an 's' - all you do is add an apostrophe **after** the existing 's'.

FOR EXAMPLE:

The boys' coats littered the floor.

Here, there are *many* boys (hence the 's' at the end of the word), and so we place the apostrophe after the 's'. The coats belong to them.



WAIT! What about those plurals in English which are *irregular* and for which we don't add 's' to the end - words such as *children, teeth, men* or *mice*?

To indicate possession of these, we add an apostrophe and a 's'.

EXAMPLE ➔ The children's drawings were endearing.