

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

APOSTROPHE *for omission*

When we deliberately leave out a letter in a word, we use the apostrophe to indicate that omission.

ABBREVIATION

Whenever we shorten a word by leaving out certain letters, we replace those letters with an apostrophe.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Because – 'Cause

It is – 'Tis

Johannesburg – Jo'burg

Government – Gov't



CONTRACTIONS

When we combine two words, we often leave out certain letters. This is called contraction and in place of the omitted letters, we place an apostrophe.

FOR EXAMPLE:

We can't go because we haven't finished our work.

Here, the 'n' and 'o' have been left out of the words 'cannot' and 'have not', and are replaced with apostrophes.

NUMBERS

Often when we abbreviate numbers (especially in dates), we use an apostrophe to indicate the omission.

FOR EXAMPLE:

She was born in '87.

Here, 1987 has been shortened to '87 and the apostrophe is used to indicate the abbreviation.

ITS or IT'S

Be careful with this one – it is a common error!

You only put an apostrophe in the word *its*, if it is a contraction of 'it is' – in which case, you *must* add the apostrophe. If it is not a contraction of 'it is', but is indicating possession, you do not add the apostrophe.

It is his toy. ✓

It's his toy. ✓

Its his toy. ✗

The cat stretched its legs. ✓

The cat stretched it's legs. ✗

The cat stretched it is legs. ✗

