

# Apostrophes

Apostrophes are used  
for two main  
purposes...

Firstly, apostrophes can be used to replace missing letters:

I **cannot** come to the party.

I **can't** come to the party.

*Cannot* becomes ***can't***.

The apostrophe shows that there are letters missing. This is called a '**contraction**'.

**In this case, they are used to shorten words that are used a lot and joined when speaking.**

## Other examples of apostrophes for contraction are...

Jack would not play with his baby brother.

Jack **wouldn't** play with his baby brother.

Emma did not want to eat the chocolate cake.

Emma **didn't** want to eat the chocolate cake.

# Apostrophes for possession

**Secondly, apostrophes are used to show that someone owns (possesses) something, for example:**

***Mrs Clarke's computer*** – the computer belongs to Mrs Clarke and there is only one Mrs Clarke, so the apostrophe goes before the 's'.

# What do these words become when you shorten them?

have not

haven't

they will

they'll

shall not

shan't

I have

I've

you are

you're

# More possessive apostrophes:

Oliver's book bag – the book bag belongs to Oliver.

Bob's football boots – the boots belong to Bob.

Julie's toy dalek – the dalek belongs to Julie.

# Where should the apostrophe go?

Janes shoes

Jane's shoes

Nicks new car

Nick's new car

The cats whiskers (one cat)

The cat's whiskers

The horses stables (6 horses)

The horses' stables

The raiders boat (lots of raiders)

The raiders' boat



# When things belong to more than one person

**When more than one person is involved, the apostrophe comes after the 's'.**

The boys' cloakroom – the cloakroom 'belongs' to more than one boy.

The players' changing room – the changing room 'belongs' to more than one player.

The teachers' staffroom – the staffroom 'belongs' to more than one teacher.

Some common errors  
and exceptions to the  
rules...

# Never use an apostrophe in plurals

When writing a word that ends in 's' to show that there is more than one thing (a plural), you never need to use an apostrophe

## Incorrect

Fish and chip's

The car's were on the road.

Half price clothe's

I saw a dog with it's bone.

Lucys book's were on the table.

## Correct

Fish and chips

The cars were on the road.

Half price clothes

I saw a dog with its bone.

Lucy's books were on the table.

# It's/Its

In this situation, the apostrophe is only used to replace the 'i' when the word stands for 'it is', for example:

- **It's** sunny today.
- **It's** very kind of you to give me your last sweet.

At all other times, you simply write 'its', for example:

- The monster was scary, **its** jaws dripping with drool.
- The dog wagged **its** tail.

**Rover's collar**

**My dad's trousers**

**The boys' coats were  
filthy.**

**You're not welcome here.**

**My gran's flowers needed watering.**

**I didn't know we had homework.**

**Pierre's** uncle was flying  
to Canada.

**It's** time to go home.

**The ladies'** toilets are  
on the left.