

Choices: Exploring Apostrophes

Krone

The following activities challenge you to find a connection between apostrophes and the world around you. Do the activity below that suits your personality best, and then share your discoveries with your class.

ART

Bigger Is Better

First, outline a giant apostrophe on poster board. Then, inside the apostrophe, write as many common and uncommon contractions and plurals (those that are formed with apostrophes) as you can. Naturally, you'll want to include a few that refer to your class, the students in it, and your projects. Why not make the apostrophes red or a contrasting color?

GAMES

Brothers But Not Sisters

Compile a list of irregular plural nouns, such as *oxen*. Make it a long list. Then, have some fun! With your teacher's permission, divide the class into two teams. Then, say each singular noun aloud. The first team to give the correct irregular plural and its possessive form wins! Oh, why is the title of this project "Brothers But Not Sisters"? The irregular plural for *brother* is *brethren*, but *sisters* doesn't have an irregular plural. Now, invent your own list of irregulars.

WRITING

The Challenge

Can you write a sentence that contains an apostrophe in every single word? Can anyone? You'll never know until you try. Try it! Better yet, have a contest to see who can write the longest sentence in which every word uses an apostrophe. Yes, of course, questions are allowed.

DISCUSSION

The I's Have It

Are there any words or types of words, such as parts of speech, that cannot be used with an apostrophe, either in a plural or a contraction? Hmmmm. With your teacher's permission, lead a class discussion. During the discussion, write example sentences on the chalkboard showing different parts of speech and the ways they take apostrophes.

BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Sioux Relatives

Compile a list of nouns that do not change forms when they are used as plurals. Then, write two sentences—one using the singular possessive and the second using the plural possessive of each noun. Alphabetize your list and print it out double spaced so that there's room for new entries. Give your classmates copies for their notebooks.

WRITING

Tongue Twister

Write a tongue twister using the words *whose* and *who's*. Increase the difficulty of your twister by using words that rhyme or almost rhyme with *who* and by using words that start with the same sound as *who*: Who knows? Your tongue twister may enter popular culture and outlive you by a century or two!

DISCUSSION

Listen Closely

Come up with a list of names that end with *s*. A book of baby names would be a good place to start. Then, for each name, decide whether the possessive of that name should be followed by just an apostrophe or by an apostrophe and an *s*. Explain your reasoning when you submit your list, item by item, for the class's approval. Expect some disagreement!

DRAMA

Center Stage

Take one particularly fine example of writing that includes dialogue containing a lot of contractions. Then, rewrite it without using contractions. Perform both versions of the dialogue (ask one or more friends to help out if more than one character is speaking). Finally, lead a discussion of what is gained or lost by changing all the contractions.

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Apostrophes B

14c. Possessive personal pronouns do not require an apostrophe.

EXAMPLES The red van is **ours**. **Its** headlight has been repaired.
Which bicycle is **yours**? Why, it's parked next to **mine!**

The possessive form of *who* is *whose*, not *who's*. Similarly, do not write *it's* for *its*, or *they're* for *their*.

EXAMPLES **Whose** footballs are these? **Who's** [Who is] on your team this year?

14d. Indefinite pronouns in the possessive case require an apostrophe and s.

EXAMPLES somebody's helmet another's idea no one's fault

EXERCISE A Underline the correct word or word group in parentheses in each of the following sentences.

Example 1. They found (someone's, someones) playbill on the floor.

1. (They're, Their) taking Grandpa to see *Fiddler on the Roof*.
2. (It's, Its) songs are so much fun to sing.
3. Isn't that musical based on (somebodys, somebody's) stories?
4. (Whose, Who's) the author of the Tevye stories?
5. I am familiar with that author; I believe (his, his') name is Sholem Aleichem.
6. (It's, Its) not easy for me to pronounce that name.
7. Noah said he enjoyed (no ones, no one's) stories better than Aleichem's.
8. I wonder (whose, who's) book Noah read.
9. It's (our's, ours) and you are welcome to borrow it.
10. Listen, (their, they're) playing "If I Were a Rich Man"!

EXERCISE B Proofread the following sentences for errors in the use of possessive pronoun forms. Cross out any incorrect form, and write the correct word above it.

Example 1. It's the first item on ^{their} ~~they're~~ list.

11. Somebody's pet turtle found ~~it's~~ way to our swimming pool.
12. Is anybody's opinion the same as ~~your's~~ yours?
13. Whose tools have been left outside—~~your's~~ or John's?
14. It's just got to be everybody ~~elses'~~ best chance.
15. The boy ~~who's~~ harmonica was stolen is a cousin of hers.

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Apostrophes D

Apostrophes are often used to form the possessive case of nouns and pronouns.

SINGULAR NOUN	sparrow's nest
PLURAL NOUN ENDING IN S	sparrows' nests
POSSESSIVE PERSONAL PRONOUN	her nest
INDEFINITE PRONOUN	one's nest
COMPOUND WORD	English sparrow's nest
ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES	The Happy Sparrow's menu
JOINT POSSESSION	the cardinal and sparrow's birdbath
INDIVIDUAL POSSESSION	the cardinal's and sparrow's nests

EXERCISE A On the line provided, rewrite each of the following items, using the possessive case.

Example 1. a prank of Lorenzo and Tyler Lorenzo and Tyler's prank

1. the overalls belonging to them their overalls
2. the collection of the Reform Society The Reform Society's collection
3. the mandate of the CIA the CIA's mandate
4. one dog belonging to Marcy and one belonging to Sally Marcy's and Sally's dogs
5. the duet performed by Sergio and you Sergio's and your duet
6. the bunk bed of the twins the twins' bunk bed
7. the state constitution of Texas Texas' state constitution
8. the accuracy of the guess the guess' accuracy
9. the habitat of the geese the geese's habitat
10. the citizens of the Netherlands the Netherlands' citizens

EXERCISE B On the line provided, write the possessive form of each of the following words or word groups.

Example 1. the Mullinses the Mullinses'

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 11. flock <u>flock's</u> | 16. Josh <u>Josh's</u> |
| 12. oysters <u>oysters'</u> | 17. trout <u>trout's</u> |
| 13. DOT <u>DOT's</u> | 18. islands <u>islands'</u> |
| 14. the Garcias <u>the Garcias'</u> | 19. Han and they <u>Han's and their</u> |
| 15. Sioux <u>Sioux's</u> | 20. anyone else <u>anyone else's</u> |

Apostrophes F

In general, you should not use an apostrophe to form the plural of a noun.

EXAMPLES **forces** [*not* force's] **sardines** [*not* sardine's] **Smiths** [*not* Smith's]

- 14h.** To prevent confusion, use an apostrophe and an *s* to form the plurals of lowercase letters, some capital letters, numerals, symbols, and some words that are referred to as words.

EXAMPLES I have to remember to dot my *i*'s and *j*'s.
 He got A's on both social studies exams.
 When she writes by hand, her 8's sometimes look like &'s.
 Add *and*'s, *but*'s, and *so*'s to the compound sentences.

EXERCISE A On the line provided before each sentence, write the plural form of the underlined item or items.

Example *n*'s, *m*'s 1. Sometimes your *n* and *m* look alike.

so's 1. Your first sentence contains four *so*.

r's 2. Does Tamara have a hard time pronouncing *r*?

4's 3. Add up all the *4*.

1980's 4. Was that popular in the *1980*?

?'s 5. The teacher wrote *?* beside the errors.

3's, *8*'s 6. My *3* sometimes look like *8*.

and's 7. Add semicolons before the *and*.

ABC's 8. Has your little brother learned his *ABC*?

X's 9. My sister can write *X* now.

I's, *L*'s 10. Do you mix up *I* and *L*?

EXERCISE B Proofread the following sentences for errors in the use of plural forms. Cross out any incorrect form, and write the correct word above it.

Example 1. We're planting ^{*azaleas*} ~~azalea's~~ and ^{*camellias*} ~~camellia's~~ next spring.

11. I don't know whether forty ^{*apples*} ~~apple's~~ will be enough for the display.

12. I think we'll find more *o*'s than ^{*9's*} ~~8's~~ in this alphabet soup.

13. Her ^{*voice-overs*} ~~voice-over's~~ would have been better without so many *um*'s.

14. Did I leave the ^{*is*} ~~Is~~ out of *I formation* and *IC 4-A*?

15. How many ^{*ll's*} ~~lls~~ and @'s are written on that page?

Apostrophes H

14g. Use an apostrophe to show where letters, numerals, or words have been omitted in a contraction.

EXAMPLES He is.....He's 2002.....'02 they have.....they've had not.....hadn't

14h. To prevent confusion, use an apostrophe and an s to form the plurals of lowercase letters, some capital letters, numerals, symbols, and some words that are referred to as words.

EXAMPLES All of those *Mississippi's* should have four *s's* and two *p's*.
Cross out all the *7's*.

EXERCISE A Proofread the following sentences for errors in the use of contractions and plural forms. Cross out any incorrect form, and write the correct word above it.

Example 1. ^{Who's} Whose the fellow with the parrot on his shoulder?

- Marie said that not enough ~~chapter's~~ ^{chapters} have been completed.
- These *Mississippi's* need dots above all four ~~s~~ ^{'s}.
- Why are there ~~is~~ ^{'s} and ~~is~~ ^{'s} randomly scattered through this poem?
- ~~It's~~ ^{'s} color is the result of a particularly embarrassing incident involving our painter's best friend.
- Hania, can you tell the difference between these two ~~is~~ ^{'s}?
- ~~There's~~ ^{'s} not very much of ~~Michael's~~ ^{Michael's} sandwich left over, Atietje.
- Jade had been practicing her signature, so there were ~~Jades~~ ^{Jade's} written all over the page.
- Are there ~~8's~~ ^{'s} and ~~3s~~ ^{'s} in that equation?
- I really ~~didn't~~ ^{'d} think you would notice that we had moved all the hats.
- Back in '99, I had a reliable and comfortable hatchback that I never should've sold.

EXERCISE B In each of the items below, fill in the blank with a contraction or plural word, letter, or symbol that logically completes the sentence.

Example 1. The company hasn't responded to our letter yet, has it?

- I like the way that actress pronounces her _____.
- _____ going to be the first to audition for the lead role?
- The collie puppy _____ been trained to sit yet.
- Do we need to add _____ before the amount on each of these price tags?
- _____ you going to bring your notebook with you?

answers
will
vary

Review B: Apostrophes

EXERCISE A On the lines provided, write the singular and plural possessive forms of each of the following nouns.

	Singular Possessive	Plural Possessive
Example 1. stowaway	stowaway's	stowaways'
	Singular Possessive	Plural Possessive
1. gentleman	gentleman's	gentlemen's
2. lady	lady's	ladies'
3. dollar	dollar's	dollars'
4. student	student's	students'
5. ox	ox's	oxen's
6. audience	audience's	audiences'
7. mouse	mouse's	mice's
8. Rodriguez	Rodriguez's	Rodriguezes'
9. planet	planet's	planets'
10. sister-in-law	sister-in-law's	→ same

EXERCISE B Each of the following sentences contains at least one error in the use of possessives, plurals, or contractions. Cross out each incorrect word, and write the correct word above it.

Example 1. Since ~~hes~~^{he's} not a citizen yet, he can't vote in this ~~years~~^{year's} election.

- Aren't you going on a field trip with Ms. Garcia's class?
- Call me in an hours time if you still want a ride to Kay and Bills house.
- Please write clearly, and leave some space around ~~you're~~^{you} +s and -'s.
- In sure all the other students' books are in better condition than mine.
- If the book isnt ours, it probably belongs to Kim.
- Whats the theme of the story Joe calls "A Dogs Tale"?
- Try not to overuse ands and buts in ~~you're~~^{you} writing.
- Were excused from school on Election Day, arent we?
- The basketball teams coach was proud of his award as this years best instructor.
- We cant go swimming today because the weathers too cold.

Proofreading Application: Newspaper Article

Good writers are generally good proofreaders. Readers tend to admire and trust writing that is error-free. Make sure that you correct all errors in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation in your writing. Your readers will have more confidence in your words if you have done your best to proofread carefully.

Proper use of apostrophes is especially important in informative writing, in which accurate and clear information is essential. However, when a writer uses apostrophes improperly, the meaning of information can become fuzzy and readers can become confused and frustrated. Provide accurate and clear information for your readers by proofreading your writing carefully to avoid errors in the use of apostrophes.

PROOFREADING ACTIVITY

In the following newspaper article, find the errors in the use of apostrophes and replace the incorrect words. Use proofreading symbols to make your corrections. A sentence may contain more than one error:

Example The student^s now have an Exploratorium!

Last Friday was opening day for the new Exploratorium for Winn Elementary's students. At two o'clock, Principal Brenda Jaffe cut the big red ribbon, and dozens of third-graders streamed into the show. "The future's yours," Ms. Jaffe told her students.

Twenty-four colorful displays lined the walls of a portable classroom devoted to the project. Jason Perez~~s~~ and Celia Emerson's giant soap-bubble machine drew oohs and ahs from the pint-sized scientists. Jim Washington wasn't surprised to see the eager visitors flock to his~~s~~ rainbow machine, which dazzled onlookers. Kyle Smith^t and Lisa White Deer's smiles drew almost as big a crowd as their magnet displays, which appeared to fascinate their fan^ss. Another group of student~~s~~ clustered around the mice's cage in which an energetic pair of rodents powered a tiny windmill.

Planning, funding, and completing the exhibit's construction took an entire semester of the Young Scientists' Saturday afternoons. Take your bow, Young Scientists~~s~~; all that work was worth it!

x = no apostrophe

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