



Apostrophes—Who Needs Them?

Apostrophes are the most widely misunderstood of all punctuation marks.

The rules are quite simple really. Apostrophes are used for three reasons:

1. To indicate that something has been **abbreviated**.
2. To indicate that something has been **contracted**.
3. To indicate **possession** (that something belongs to somebody or something).

In this topic we will look at the first case:

1. Using an apostrophe to indicate that something has been abbreviated.

If you shorten a word by omitting one or more letters, you should insert an apostrophe to show that something is missing.

“**1990s**” becomes “**’90s**”.

“Rock **and** roll” becomes “Rock **’n’** roll” (the “n” is surrounded by apostrophes, because two letters are missing).

“**Government**” becomes “**Gov’t**”.

“**cannot**” becomes “**can’t**”.

My daughter’s primary school teacher taught her pupils a marvellous little saying to help them remember this: “It’s as if a thief came and stole a few letters, and left a little footprint behind.” It’s a bit simplistic, but it works!

Next Topic In the next topic we discuss the use of an apostrophe to indicate the possessive case (that something belongs to somebody).

This is a sample page from The Grammar Cookbook. For more examples and information, please see www.trackerpress.com.