

# THE APOSTROPHE

**Use an apostrophe to indicate that a noun is possessive.**

## **When to add –’s**

If the noun does not end in –s

### **Examples:**

- Thank you for refunding the children’s money. If the noun is singular and ends in –s
- Lois’s sister spent last year in India. Note: If pronunciation would be awkward with the added –’s, some writers use only the apostrophe. Either use is acceptable.
- Euripides’ plays are among my favorites.

## **When to add only an apostrophe.**

If the noun is plural and ends in –s

**Example:** Both diplomats’ briefcases were stolen.

## **Joint possession**

### **Examples:**

- Have you seen Joyce and Greg’s new camper?  
(Joyce and Greg jointly own one camper.)
- John’s and Marie’s expectations of marriage couldn’t have been more different.  
(John and Marie individually have different expectations.)

**Use an apostrophe and –s to indicate that an indefinite pronoun is possessive.**

### **Examples:**

- Someone’s raincoat has been left behind.
- This diet will improve almost anyone’s health.

**Use an apostrophe and –s to pluralize numbers mentioned as numbers, letters mentioned as letters, words mentioned as words, and abbreviations.**

**Examples:**

Peggy skated nearly perfect figure 8's.

The bleachers in our section were marked with large red J's.

We've heard enough maybe's.

You must ask to see their I.D.'s.

Exception:

- the 1980s.

Source: Hacker, Diana. *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*. Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1991