

While we have all heard of the apostrophe, sometimes we are not sure when (or where, for that matter) to use this pesky little punctuation mark in our writing. But never fear: some helpful tips are here!

When and Where Should I Use an Apostrophe?

- 1) Use an apostrophe to **show possession**. Does someone or something **own** a noun (person/place/thing) in your sentence? If you answered yes, use an apostrophe!

- ❖ **Singular Possessive**

Example: Bob's burgers are both creative and delicious.

Explanation: The burgers **belong to** Bob, who is singular in that he is only one person, so we add an **apostrophe and –s** to Bob's name. (Bob is the **owner** of his name, and so forth.)

- ❖ **Plural Possessive of Words Ending in –s**

Example: The Belchers' apartment is above their restaurant.

Explanation: Remember Bob from our example above? His last name is "Belcher." Now, since we are talking about the apartment owned by his family (more than one person), the **Belchers**, we need to make a plural possessive. Since "Belchers" already ends in –s, we place the apostrophe at the end of the word, after the –s.

- ❖ **Plural Possessive of Words NOT Ending in –s**

Example: The children's names are Tina, Gene, and Louise.

Explanation: **Children** is the plural form of the singular "child," but it does **not** end in –s, so we have to add an **apostrophe and –s** to "children" when we want to show that they own something (in this case, their names).

- ❖ **Possessive of Compound Words**

Example: Bob's mother-in-law's visit with the family was a complete disaster.

Explanation: Since **mother-in-law** is a compound word (one larger word/meaning made up of smaller words), we only need to add an **apostrophe and –s** to the last word/part of the compound word.

- 2) Use an apostrophe to **make contractions**. Are you combining two words and leaving out a letter or letters? If so, **replace the missing letter(s)** with an apostrophe!

it is	<i>Bob's Burgers</i> is one of my favorite shows because it's so funny.
they are	The Belcher children are amusing because they're always making mischief.
you are	You're not going to believe who does the voice acting for Linda's character.
who is	Who's your favorite TV family?
cannot	Bob's restaurant often can't compete with Jimmy Pesto's Pizzeria.
does not	Louise doesn't mind dragging her brother and sister into her schemes.
were not	Bob and Linda weren't a perfect couple; they were a realistic couple.

Misuses of the Apostrophe

Okay, now that we know when and where we *should* use an apostrophe, let's talk about apostrophe mistakes to avoid.

When and Where Should I *NOT* Use an Apostrophe?

- 1) Do **NOT** place the apostrophe **before** the –s in plural words ending in –s.

Don't	When Gene and a classmate almost start a playground fight, the boy's fathers get involved.
Do	When Gene and a classmate almost start a playground fight, the boys' fathers get involved.

Since we are talking about each boy's father, we have to pluralize **boy** first by adding an –s; then, we add the apostrophe to the word.

- 2) Do **NOT** use an apostrophe to form plural nouns.

Don't	Bob likes to give his burger's creative and often outrageous name's.
Do	Bob likes to give his burgers creative and often outrageous names.

When we need to pluralize a noun (make it more than one person/place/thing), we simply add –s (unless we are dealing with a noun whose plural form has a changed letter or ending instead of –s). Either way, though, we **never** use an apostrophe to make a noun plural.

- 3) Do **NOT** use an apostrophe with verbs ending in –s.

Don't	Bob cook's an unusually delicious burger for his landlord. Unfortunately, Mr. Fiscoeder choke's on his food.
Do	Bob cooks an unusually delicious burger for his landlord. Unfortunately, Mr. Fiscoeder chokes on his food.

When a verb ends in –s, we do **not** need to add a punctuation mark to the word.

- 4) Do **NOT** use an apostrophe to form possessives of personal pronouns.

Don't	<i>Bob's Burgers</i> is becoming a popular show because of it's unique sense of humor and family dynamic.
Do	<i>Bob's Burgers</i> is becoming a popular show because of its unique sense of humor and family dynamic.

Possessives of Personal Pronouns: his, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs, whose

Note: Use an apostrophe with the word “its” **only** to indicate the contraction of “it is.”