

# Learning together

## The Apostrophe: What? Why? When? Where?

### ACTIVITY #5

SEQUENCE: SPELLING RULES  
5<sup>TH</sup> AND 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADES (3<sup>RD</sup> CYCLE)

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### Purpose of the activity

The aim of this spelling activity is to learn what an *apostrophe* does, when to use it, where to put it, and how to decide.

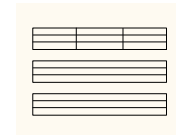


### Relevance of the activity

The apostrophe is an important symbol in English spelling, and you need to learn how to use it in spelling. What does it mean to put an apostrophe in a word? Understanding this will help you determine when to use one in writing. In this activity, you will also learn where to place it in a word (depending on its meaning) and how to decide.



### Supplies



- word lists 43 to 44 (see appendix)
- optional: your child's vocabulary word list or words from a book your child has read

## LET'S GO!

### Explain the activity:



In this activity we will learn the three main uses of the apostrophe:

- possession (means “*belongs to someone or something*”).
- contractions (shows where letters are missing).
- plural of letters, sounds and very short words (two e’s).

### Explain why:



When speaking, we don’t hear apostrophes. We simply listen to the meaning of what is being said. When you attach spelling to meaning, you will understand where the apostrophes should be. You might already know where an apostrophe should go, but you don’t know why.

If you read a sentence and one or more words have an apostrophe, you see it, but you never hear it (ex. cats – cat’s). If you understood that sentence, your brain understood implicitly (without knowing it) the meaning of the word with the apostrophe. For spelling, we must think of the word’s meaning in order to decide if we add an apostrophe to a particular word, or not, when you hear the final sound /s/ or /z/.

### Explain when:



The apostrophe is used when we want to mark ownership/belonging to... It is used when contracting words (shortening two words into one), and when we want to mark the plural of various letters, sounds, and short words (1 -2 letters).



## 1 Possessives – the apostrophe marks ownership : “belongs to...”

**WHAT:** The apostrophe is an orthographic marker you add to a *possessive* word.

**WHY:** To show that something belongs to someone, you add the sound /s/ or /z/ at the end of the noun that describes the owner. Example: **the dogs** and **the dog’s toy** (shows the toy belongs to the dog)

The 2 words /dogz/ sound the same but the final S-sound in the first one means “more than one dog” (the dogs, plural), and the final S-sound in the second one means “the toy belongs to the dog” (the dog’s, possessive). When writing those words in a sentence, you must add an apostrophe to the *owner*, the “*possessor*” (the dog possesses the toy).

**WHEN:** To mark the meaning of possession (ownership), you add an apostrophe.

**WHERE:** For singular nouns, the possessive marker is ‘**s**. You add the apostrophe before the s (Jack’s dogs), but for plural nouns, the possessive marker is **s’**. The plural word already has an **s** (dogs), so to avoid having two s’s in a row, you just add the apostrophe (the dogs’ toys – more than one dog owns more than one toy).

See word list 43

## 2 Contractions – the apostrophe marks missing letter sounds

**WHAT:** A contraction is the shortening of a word or an expression by removing one or more letters (one or more sounds). The apostrophe is used as a marker for contracted words. Contractions apply to a relatively small number of words, usually involving a verb (he is → he’s).

**WHY:** In shortened forms of written words (contractions), the apostrophe marks the spot where a letter or letters have been removed.

**WHEN:** You often contract (shrink) two spoken words into one. You remove a vowel sound from one of the words without changing its meaning (*cannot* → *can’t*, *removed the* /o/). When you write a contracted word, you use the apostrophe to mark the spot of contraction.

**WHERE:** The apostrophe is placed in the spot where the contraction occurred.

Ex: did not → didn’t ; she is → she’s ; s → she’s. The apostrophe is placed where the vowels were removed.

See word list 44

### 3 Plural letters, sounds and very short words – the apostrophe is used to prevent confusion

**WHAT:** The apostrophe marks the plural

**WHY:** It prevents confusion when adding the S at the end of very short words.

**WHEN:** When you want to use the plural forms of letters, letter sounds or very short words, you place an apostrophe before the **s**. Ex: *There were 2 a's and 3 ar's in my sentence. Don't forget to dot your i's.* Without the apostrophe, it's more difficult to know what to pronounce (*as, ars, ls*).

**WHERE:** The apostrophe is placed before the plural S.



#### Quick tips!

When practicing reading or spelling words with apostrophes, try to do so in full sentences. Use short sentences at the beginning, making them longer (more challenging) as your child masters the spelling rule.

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## List 43

## 43 – POSSESSIVES

Singular noun	Singular possessive nouns
the sun	the sun's rays
his hen	his hen's chicks
the bus	the bus's door
the queen	the queen's crown
her bike	her bike's seat
your hair	your hair's length
one goat	one goat's beard
my friend	my friend's weight
Jupiter	Jupiter's moon
the moon	the moon's glow

Plural nouns	Plural possessive nouns
the mountains	the mountains' peaks
your eye's	your eyes' colour
the owls	the owls' wings
those trucks	those truck's tires
our parents	our parents' parents
my houses	the houses' roof
the toys	the toys' owner
the buses	the buses' drivers
the oysters	the oysters' shell
the computers	the computers' drives

Homophone: its

## List 44

## 44 - CONTRACTIONS

Without contraction	With contraction
I am	I'm
you are	you're
he is	he's
she is	she's
it is	it's
we are	we're
they are	they're
I will	I'll
she will	she'll
he would	he'd
we would	we'd
they would	they'd
what is	what's
cannot	can't
is not	isn't
do not	don't
does not	doesn't
has not	hasn't
will not	won't
Bob is running.	Bob's running.
Sara is here.	Sara's here.