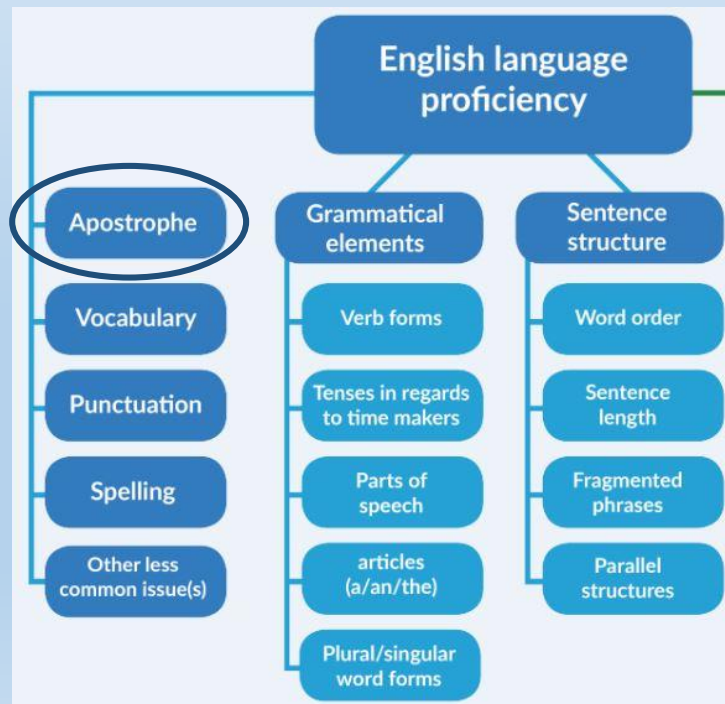


Apostrophe



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Re-visit

The apostrophe is a small punctuation mark that sits above a letter in a word.

's

don't

s'

There are two important uses for the apostrophe:

1. To indicate belonging (the possessive)

Eg: *These are the student's books.*

2. To indicate that something has been left out of a word or number.

| | |
|--|----------------|
| <i>I don't catch the bus to school.</i> | Don't = do not |
| <i>The last time I caught the bus was back in '99.</i> | '99 = 1999 |

Words like *don't*, *what's*, *it's* are known as **contractions**.

Please note that contractions are not used in academic writing!

Apostrophe denoting possessive: whose?

Here the apostrophe shows who owns something.

Ask yourself whether it is a plural or singular noun and use the apostrophe appropriately:

| | |
|--|---|
| Use 's if there is only one (singular). | <i>The student's questions</i> – there was one student asking questions |
| Use s' if there are more than one (plural). | <i>The students' questions</i> – there were several students asking questions |
| Use 's after irregular plural nouns | <i>Children's questions</i> – there were several children asking questions |

It's or its?

1. *It's* is always a contraction, like *don't* or *isn't*.

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| <i>It's a lovely day.</i> | It's = it is |
| <i>It's got four legs.</i> | It's = it has |

2. *Its* = a possessive pronoun like *yours*, *his*, *hers*, *theirs* or *ours*.

Example: *The school and its furniture look new.*

Quick tips

Quick tips

Apostrophes are used in contractions (is not = isn't). Full forms (not contractions) are usually used in formal academic writing.

Check if apostrophes are used appropriately with singular and plural nouns to show possession (*Tom's chair* or *all students' assignments*).

It's means "it is" or "it has".
Its is a possessive pronoun (like "hers" or "yours").

Learn more

Useful links on the apostrophe

[Using English for Academic Purposes - Punctuation](#)

[EF English First - Apostrophe](#)

[English Club - Apostrophe](#)

[University of Sussex – Apostrophe](#)

Face-to-face support

Who can help with English at Monash?

[English Connect](#) –
conversational circles,
peer feedback on your
writing and grammar
workshops



Resources – grammar books



Azar, B. S. & Hagen, S.A. (2009). *Understanding and using English grammar (4th ed.)*. USA: Pearson Longman.

Borjars, K. & Burridge, K. *Introducing English grammar (2nd ed.)*. London: Hodder Education.

Foley, M. & Hall, D. (2012). *MyGrammarLab (Advanced)*. England: Pearson.

Hewings, M. (2012). *Advanced grammar in use: a reference and practice book for advanced students of English (2nd ed.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Murphy, R. (2011). *English Grammar in Use (Intermediate) (3 ed.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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