



Apostrophes

Apostrophes 1

Objectives:

To be able to spell:

- Apostrophes for contraction
- The possessive apostrophe (singular nouns)

Subject knowledge / Conventions

There are two distinct types of apostrophes.

Apostrophes of contraction

These show that letters have been removed and often two words have been combined into one
E.g. **do not/don't**

Children sometimes have a tendency to want to position the apostrophe in between the two original words that have been joined. Help them to see that in fact the apostrophe is put in the place where letters have been removed.

A few words containing apostrophes of contraction are homophones. E.g. **it's (it is), you're (your), they're (there / their)**. To prevent confusion, it is really helpful for children to understand clearly the meaning of these words.

Words that are commonly contracted:

Not - wouldn't, shouldn't, couldn't, weren't, hadn't, hasn't

Will - I'll, we'll, you'll, they'll

Are - we're, you're, they're

Have - I've, we've, you've, they've

Had/would - I'd, you'd, he'd, she'd, we'd, who'd, they'd

Some older words containing apostrophes have stayed in use whilst their full forms have gone out of use. E.g. **o'clock / of the clock**.

Apostrophes of possession

These show that something belongs to someone. E.g. **The dinosaur's claw**.

When children first encounter apostrophes of possession, they often begin overusing them and placing them wherever a word ends in s. Don't worry unduly about this overuse in the short term. Instead, gradually work on helping children to stop putting 's everywhere and instead think about when an apostrophe of possession is needed and when a word ends in /s/ for other reasons and needs to be spelt in a different way.

Children should already be able to:

- Securely segment words, including Phase 5 words
- Confidently spell HFW that contain apostrophes - it's, I'm, didn't, that's, let's, there's, couldn't, he's, I'll, I've, we're
- Confidently read words containing apostrophes

Revisit, assess and adapt – suggested activities

Ask pupils to discuss with a partner anything that they know about apostrophes. Discuss as a class what we know about already.

Rehearse reading HFW containing apostrophes (these were tackled in Phase 5d). Can children soundtalk and blend them? **it's, don't, I'm, didn't, can't, I'll, I'm, couldn't, I've, there's, he's, we're**

Apostrophe Countdown – HFW (Apostrophes of contraction)

Printable word cards available

Informal whiteboard spelling test of words containing apostrophes that children have previously learned to spell as HFW **it's, don't, I'm** and some words that we will be looking at in this unit **didn't, couldn't, I've, we're, can't, I'll, they're, you're**

Adapt planning based on observations.

Supporting and extending



To support – look back to
HFW containing apostrophes

To extend – look ahead to
Apostrophes 2



Teach & Practise – suggested activities

Show what happens when words are contracted by writing each letter of **I have** on small separate pieces of paper and sticking them on the board. Ask children to experiment with putting these words in sentences and try saying the sentences slowly and quickly. Imagine saying these sentences very formally (shaking hands / bowing etc can help get in role) and also try

saying them informally as if speaking to a friend. Discuss the fact that when we speak quickly and informally we don't tend to say both full words. Instead we contract them. Explain that, in writing, we use apostrophes to show that we have contracted a word.

Model taking the letters that aren't needed (h & a) off the board, crumple them up together and squish them up into an apostrophe shape and stick this back on the board in the place where the letters were. Model shuffling up the remaining letters to make it into one word. Repeat with other words. Alternatively watch the demonstrations in [The Apostrophe with the Big Appetite](#).

Talk about the word won't (will not) and discuss the fact that this word is unusual because the vowel changes. Talk about the word shan't and discuss the fact that this word is unusual too as ll is removed without it being marked by an apostrophe.

Ask children to identify general rules for using apostrophes for contraction. E.g. The apostrophe goes where the missing letters were. The letters are shuffled together to make one word. Contracted forms are used most commonly in speech and informal writing.

Children play a matching game (pairs, pelmanism, snap, giving each child a word and asking them to move around the class to find partners etc) pairing up the extended forms with the contracted word. [Apostrophe Matching Printable word cards available](#) (use just the first sheet of cards for a simpler task or add in the second sheet for a greater challenge). These games can be tricky as so many of the words are similar. With the interactive game, it may be helpful to challenge particular children/pairs/tables/groups to remember the location of one particular word, think about what its matching pair would be and keep a look out for it.

Look at o'clock. Explain that it is short for 'of the clock' but that we no longer use this extended phrase.

Play Quickwrite. Read words out. Children write the word on a whiteboard. Show the correct spelling and read out the letters. Ask children to tick/cross each letter that they got right/wrong and correct any mistakes. Choose appropriate words to challenge the children based on assessments/observations from earlier sessions.

wouldn't, shouldn't, couldn't, weren't, hadn't, hasn't, shan't

we'll, you'll, they'll

we're, you're, they're

I've, we've, you've, they've

I'd, you'd, he'd, she'd, we'd, who'd, they'd

Children play a spelling board/card game E.g. Monster Moves that involve one child reading the word whilst another child writes the word on a mini-whiteboard and then all children work together to check the spelling against the original card. Use the [Printable word cards](#) from the matching game above.

Possessive apostrophe – Explain that although possessive apostrophes look the same as apostrophes of contraction, they do a totally different job. You can work out what the word means and what job the apostrophe is doing by listening to all the words in the sentence.

Move around the class pointing at things and saying 'This is Bob's jumper.' 'This pencil case is Lucy's.' etc. and showing that we add 's to the person or thing who is the owner. Write some similar sentences down so that children can try reading them and reflect on who/what is being

owned and who/what is doing the owning. Alternatively watch the demonstration and play 'Pet muddle up' in [Possessive Apostrophe \(Demonstration & Pet muddle up game\)](#).

Point out briefly that lots of words that the children already know how to spell end in the letter s for other reasons – they just happen to end in s (bus) or are plurals (toys) or some third person verbs (jumps). Be clear that none of these words need an apostrophe. 's is only needed when we are showing that something/someone belongs to something/someone else.

Match up pictures of apostrophe monsters and hats that they could choose to buy from a hat shop. Write sentences about the matches using the possessive apostrophe. E.g. *Posie's red hat is very flowery.*

[Possessive Apostrophe \(Hat shop game\)](#)

Printable resources available

Alternatively, look at pictures of monsters and their pets. Decide which monster would like which pet. Write sentences about the matches using the possessive apostrophe. E.g. *Hal's pet is a snarrot.* **Printable resources available.** When children become confident, encourage them to try to vary the order in which the sentences are written. E.g. The snarrot's owner is Hal. This snarrot is Hal's. Is Hal's pet a snarrot? Hal's snarrot is very friendly. This snarrot of Hal's does a lot of hissing.

Apply and assess – suggested activities

Pretend to be palaeontologists on a quest to find evidence of a previously undiscovered dinosaur. Explain that a huge new footprint has just been discovered. Dictate an informal email to be sent to a colleague and ask children to write it down.

You've got to come now. We've found a huge footprint. It's got three claws but they aren't very long. The toes haven't been damaged but we think we've spotted a scar across the pad. We'd guess it's been injured in the past but we're sure you'll be able to tell us a lot more when you've seen it yourself.

Printable resource available

Children work in pairs to mark/correct their spelling of words containing apostrophes.

Ask children to imagine they had to rewrite the email as a more formal report to a boss (using extended versions of contractions). Looking at each contraction in turn, can they write the more formal extended version on a whiteboard. E.g. She'll would become she will.

Look back through books and find examples of words containing apostrophes. Keep a score chart of how many correct examples can be found. Correct any that have not been spelt correctly.

Use informal whiteboard spelling tests to determine whether children are correctly spelling words containing apostrophes.

Dictate a short text containing possessive apostrophes and also some words that end with the /s/ phoneme for other reasons. Children write it down. In pairs check carefully to see that the possessive apostrophes are in the right place and that no other apostrophes have sneakily appeared where they shouldn't be.

Posie's new hat has spots and stripes on it. The hat shop's owner put Posie's new hat in a box but when she tried to close the box's lid, the hat's purple feathers stuck out.

Applying across the curriculum

See the section of the website on applying across the curriculum for ideas. Try to build in lots of modelling, planned opportunities and support in the learning environment for applying across the curriculum. Without this, it is easy for children to simply forget what they have learned in spelling sessions.