

Appropriate Apostrophes

One single little mark can give writers heartburn. They are either overused or underused, but generally have three purposes:

1. To form the singular possessive or plural possessive of a noun:

| Singular possessive | Plural possessive |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| The women's shoes | The womens' shoes |
| The Smith's car | The Smiths' car |
| The child's book | The children's book |

2. To show omission of one or more letters, words, or numbers:

Can't (cannot)
Class of '01 (2001)
Stock market crash of '29 (1929)

3. To show plurals of numbers, letters, and words when they're discussed as words:

Too few but's
Sleeping in my pj's

Note that apostrophes are generally not used after numbers or capital letters unless there will be confusion:

5s

As

POs

The professor gave too many A's (as opposed to "The professor gave too many As")

I took the I's and U's (as opposed to "I took the Is and the Us")

Apostrophes don't have to frighten anyone. They are simple, and simple to use once you understand how they work!