

Functional Skills

English

Level 1 Writing W5a(iii)

Ensure Written Work Includes Generally Accurate
Use of Apostrophes

V2

Functional Skills English:

Level 1

Skill Standard:

Writing W5a(iii)

Coverage and Range:

Accurately punctuate texts using apostrophes.

'A high level of accuracy is expected in certain applications and contexts. In a formal letter of application, there should ideally be no errors.

'Errors must not alter the intended meaning of the writing, and should not substantially diminish the impact, validity or seriousness of the document.'¹

¹ QCA Functional Skills guidance: amplification of the standards June 2008 QCA/08/3700

Omissive Apostrophes

Apostrophes are used for two main purposes. The omissive apostrophe is used to show the shortening (contraction) of a word, with the apostrophe put in place of the missing letter(s). For example, *it is* becomes *it's* when shortened, with the apostrophe taking the place of the missing *i*. This usually only occurs in informal texts.

Here is a table of some of the most common examples:

I	I am	I'm
	I would	I'd
	I will	I'll
	I have	I've
It	it is	it's
	it has	it's
	it will	it'll
	it would	it'd
	it had	it'd
You	you are	you're
	you will	you'll
	you would	you'd
	you have	you've
Not	is not	isn't
	are not	aren't
	could not	couldn't

There is a regular pattern to omissive apostrophes, which is shown below:

had	'd	e.g. <i>I had = I'd</i>
would		e.g. <i>I would = I'd</i>
are	're	e.g. <i>We are = we're</i>
not	n't	e.g. <i>Would not = wouldn't</i>
will	'll	e.g. <i>I will = I'll</i>
shall		e.g. <i>I shall = I'll</i>
is	's	e.g. <i>It is = it's</i>
has		e.g. <i>She has = she's</i>
have		've

However, be aware of exceptions to the above patterns: e.g. **will not** becomes **won't**.

Exercise 1

Shorten the following words using **omissive** apostrophes.

1. Do not _____
2. Would not _____
3. She had _____
4. Would have _____
5. Were not _____
6. Who will _____

Exercise 2

Rewrite the sentences below, applying an omissive apostrophe to the underlined words.

1. I do not know what bacilli are.

2. She cannot do that!

3. I am serious.

4. I have had enough of that!

5. I will not make the same mistake twice.

6. It is a really bright and sunny day.

Exercise 3

Write out the sentences below, shortening words with omissive apostrophes where needed.

1. I am going to buy a new phone.

2. They are replacing their car with an electric one.

3. Sorry, I was not listening to you.

4. I really do not like their music. It is terrible!

5. You will make an excellent astronaut.

6. The writer, Mark Twain, did not have his autobiography published until after he died.

7. They will regret messing with me.

8. It is a really miserable day outside.

9. You are a good friend to me.

Exercise 4

Write out four sentences of your own that have at least one omissive apostrophe per sentence. Ask your tutor to mark your work.

1.).....
.....

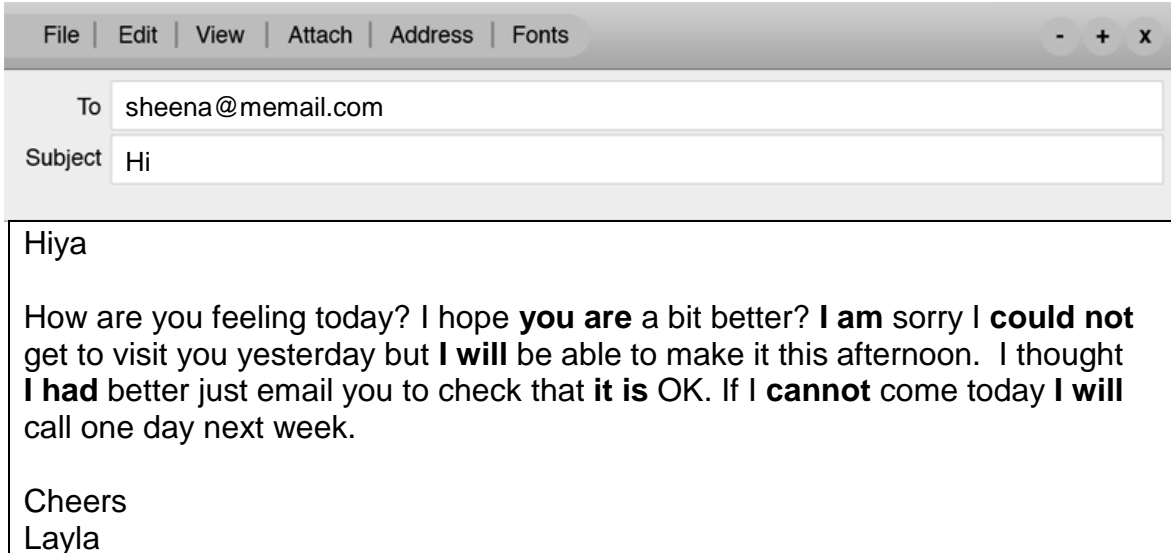
2.).....
.....

3.).....
.....

4.).....
.....

Exercise 5

Shorten the **bold** words in the email and rewrite it below.



File | Edit | View | Attach | Address | Fonts

To sheena@memail.com

Subject Hi

Hiya

How are you feeling today? I hope **you are** a bit better? **I am** sorry I **could not** get to visit you yesterday but **I will** be able to make it this afternoon. I thought **I had** better just email you to check that **it is** OK. If I **cannot** come today **I will** call one day next week.

Cheers
Layla

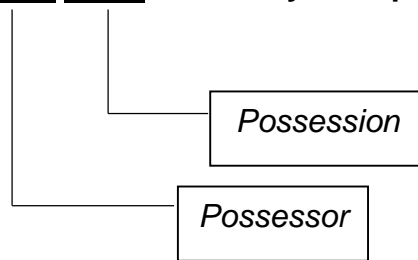
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Possessive Apostrophes (Singular)

The second kind of apostrophe shows the relationship between one thing and another. These possessive apostrophes are used to demonstrate a sense of belonging between a *possessor* and a *possession*. The possession **always** follows the possessor.

Look at the example below:

The cat's paws were dirty after playing outside.



The apostrophe in the example above shows that the possessor is the cat and that the paws are the cat's possession.

Be aware: not all words that demonstrate possession require a possessive apostrophe. For example, possessive pronouns such as *yours*, *his*, *hers*, *its*, *theirs* and *ours* do not include apostrophes.

Exercise 7

Read the sentences below and select which statement is correct.

1. Olivia's dog liked to roll in mud and other things.
 - a. The dog is the possessor and the mud is the possession.
 - b. Olivia is the possessor and the dog is the possession.
 - c. Olivia is the possessor and the mud is the possession.

2. The child's toy was smashed in a temper-tantrum.
 - a. The toy is the possessor and the smashed is the possession.
 - b. The temper is the possessor and the tantrum is the possession.
 - c. The child is the possessor and the toy is the possession.

3. Jack broke his car's bumper.

- a. Jack is the possessor and the car is the possession.
- b. Jack is the possessor and the bumper is the possession.
- c. The car is the possessor and the bumper is the possession.

4. The parrot was demanding Polly's cracker.

- a. Polly is the possessor and the parrot is the possession.
- b. Polly is the possessor and the cracker is the possession.
- c. The parrot is the possessor and Polly is the possession.

5. The footballer wasn't happy with the club's fans.

- a. The footballer is the possessor and the club is the possession.
- b. The club is the possessor and the fans are the possession.
- c. **Thee** footballer is the possessor and the fans are the possession.

Exercise 8

Re-write the sentences below and add possessive apostrophes in the correct places.

1. The bands latest album was a critical success.

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.....

2. Imrans washing machine had flooded his kitchen during the night.

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3. The crowd couldn't believe how good the teams mascot could dance.

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.....

4. Englands weather this year looks like it's going to be the worst in the countrys history.

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.....

5. Londons urban foxes are getting much bigger and bolder. One stole Kennys sandwich!

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Possessive Apostrophes (Plural)

A plural is a word that refers to more than one of something, e.g. the plural of cat is cats. When using possessive apostrophes with plurals, it is important to ensure that the apostrophe is placed in the correct position.

Look at the example below.

The students' field trip was a great success.

The apostrophe is placed after the s so that it remains a plural. For example, *student's* is singular, as the apostrophe comes after the singular *student*. *Students'*, however, has the apostrophe placed after the plural.

Exercise 9

Rewrite the sentences below and correctly add apostrophes to the plural possessors.

Example:

The fans season tickets were all lost in the post. They couldn't believe their bad luck.

Becomes:

The fans' season tickets were all lost in the post. They couldn't believe their bad luck.

1. All of the computers keyboards were faulty.

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2. The guinea pigs cages were off limit at my school. They loved to bite fingers too much.

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3. The countries leaders met in Oslo to discuss important dates.

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4. The gang of turkeys food was stolen by rampaging chickens.

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Exercise 10

Whilst most plurals end in *s*, some do not. These are called irregular plurals, and they are words that refer to more than one of something, but do not end with an *s*. This means that the apostrophe should go between the noun and the *s*, just like a singular noun.

Look at the example below:

The children's toys were very expensive.

As with the singular, the apostrophe comes after the noun and is followed by an *s*.

The mice's food has run out.

As with the singular, the apostrophe comes after the noun and is followed by an *s*.

Re-write the sentence below with a possessive apostrophe in the correct place.

1. The womens clothes shops in town had lots of choice.

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.....

2. The charity shop had a mens clothes section.

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3. All the sheeps wool was wet.

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.....

4. The Peoples Republic held a week-long celebration in honour of its success.

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.....

Tricky Apostrophes

To show possession you typically put an apostrophe and an s after a singular noun. This is not always the case, however, when a single possessor ends in s. For example, it can sometimes sound awkward and unnatural if an apostrophe and another s are added on to the end of the word.

Take a look at the example below:

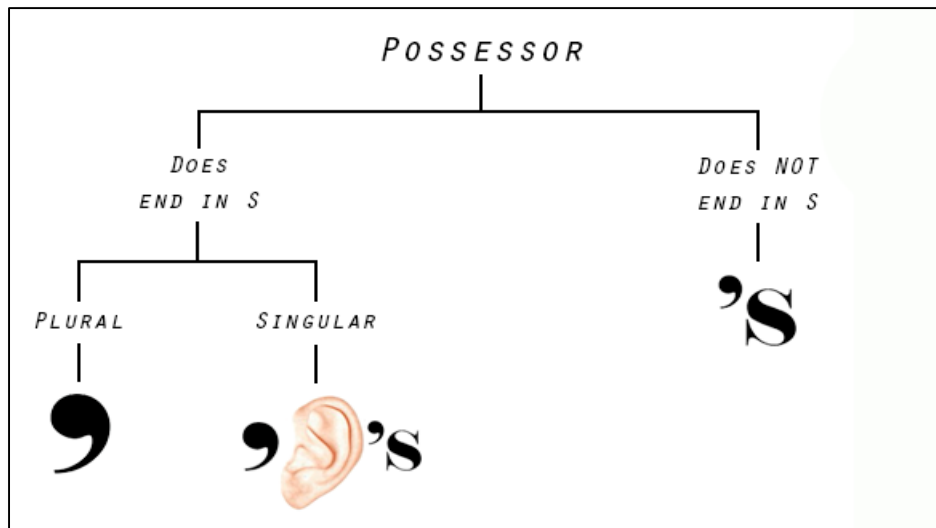
I live near St. Johns's street

With this example, the additional 's and corresponding 'zz' sounds unnatural.

Thomas's poetry is sometimes difficult to understand.

However, in this instance the additional 's and 'zz' sound when said aloud, sounds natural.

With examples such as the above, it is important to think about how the word would sound with an apostrophe and an s at the end. Follow the flow chart below as you complete the following exercises.



Exercise 11

Select the sentences with the possessive apostrophes used in the way shown above.

1. There is one correct sentence. Tick the one that is correct.
 - a. The Thames' barrier prevents London from flooding.
 - b. Pass me James' toy bear please.
 - c. I've pranged my boss' car.

2. There are two correctly punctuated sentences below. Tick those that are correct.
 - a. Is that Lois's pet dog?
 - b. Grange-over-Sands' town council meets on a Wednesday night.
 - c. I can't find Charles' sock that he lent me!

Sometimes a sentence will contain multiple possessors, but only one item. Depending on what you want the sentence to mean, it is important that you use apostrophes correctly.

Look at the example below.

Jimmy and Jenny's car needed a set of new tyres.

You should notice that although there are two possessors above, there is only a single apostrophe in the sentence. This is because ownership of the car is shared between them; the car belongs to Jimmy *and* Jenny together.

Now look at the next example below.

Stewart's and Hugh's cars needed taking to the garage.

You should notice on this occasion that *both* the possessors in this instance have apostrophes. This is because they each own a car.

In this way then, apostrophes clarify the sentence and allow you to understand who possesses what.

Exercise 12

Read the sentences below and select which of the accompanying statements is correct.

1. Joseph and Len's garden never needed mowing – it was artificial grass!

- a. Only Len owns the garden.
- b. Both Joseph and Len own the garden.
- c. Joseph and Len own different gardens.

2. Frankie's and Ronald's restaurants couldn't be more different.

- a. Frankie and Micha both own the same restaurant.
- b. Only Frankie owns a restaurant.
- c. Frankie and Micha own different restaurants.

