

## Apostrophes

**Apostrophes have two main uses:**

**1) To show that a letter has been missed out in order to shorten a word.**

**2)**

Do not	Don't
That is	That's
You are	You're

Sometimes, more than one letter is taken out.

Cannot	Can't
Could have	Could've

**3) To show that something belongs to, or is somehow connected with something else.**

When the word is singular, add 's.

The girl has a bag	The girl's bag
The cat has a tail	The cat's tail
Jack has a book	Jack's book
Sophie has a friend	Sophie's friend

When the word is plural and ends in the letter s, add ' without an s.

The girls have dresses	The girls'dresses
The swans have a nest	The swans' nest
The dogs all have paws	The dogs' paws
Two weeks is the length of the holiday	Two weeks'holiday

When the word is plural but does not end in the letter s, add 's.

The children have toys  
The women have hats

The children's toys  
The women's hats

### Note

- The following possessive nouns do not have apostrophes:  
**his hers ours yours theirs**
- **Its** means 'of it', as in 'The dog wagged **its** tail.'
- **It's** means 'it is', as in '**It's** a terrible day today.'
- Some names end in s or ss and when you want to indicate ownership you can use 's or just use the apostrophe and drop the s.

Mr Jones's house or Mr Jones' house

Dickens's novels or Dickens' novels

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/game/en29punc-game-beat-the-clock-apostrophes>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/worksheet/en29punc-l1-w-football-newspaper-article>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/worksheet/en29punc-l1-w-tennis-newspaper-article>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/factsheet/en29punc-l1-f-apostrophes>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/game/en29punc-game-who-owns-what>

## Commas

Commas are really useful in helping us to add meaning and sense to our writing, but they are frequently misused. How you use commas in your writing is often up to you, as they are positioned where you want the reader to make a short pause, however leaving them out can dramatically change the meaning of your sentence.

Think about the two statements below:

*"Holly, my sister is coming to stay for the holidays," said John*

*"Holly, my sister, is coming to stay for the holidays," said John.*

In statement one John is speaking to Holly and telling her that his sister will be paying a visit. We know this because the comma is placed after *Holly*.

However in statement two, John is stating that his sister called Holly is coming to visit. The commas which enclose *my sister* demonstrate this meaning.

Consider how you would read the following sentence which has a missing comma:

*Sheep with lambs drive slowly.*

Commas should be used

1. To separate items in a list:

*I'd like to order chicken with chips, peas, onions and gravy.  
For dessert I'd like ice cream with chocolate sprinkles,  
wafer, banana and strawberry sauce.*

## Capital Letters

We should all learn to use capital letters correctly as they make our writing easier to read and show an understanding of the English language. You are probably familiar with some uses of capital letters. The most common uses are:

1. At the start of the first word in a sentence. For example: My book is finished.
2. For the first letter of a person's name. For example: David Beckham.
3. For the first letter of the name of a place. For example: Belfast, Craigavon.
4. For the first letter of a day of the week or of a month. For example: Monday, October.
5. For the word "I". For example: My friend and I went to the shops.
6. For the first letter of titles of books, Film and TV programmes. For example: Neighbours, Shrek and The Witches.
7. For words used to show a person's title. For example: Mrs Brown, Queen Elizabeth, Captain Ferguson.
8. For the first word of direct speech. For example: Mother said, " Close the door please."

For more help with capital letters go to:

[www.ask.com/capitalletters](http://www.ask.com/capitalletters)

[www.oxforddictionaries.com/words/usingcapitalletters](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/words/usingcapitalletters)

[www.grammarbook.com/english](http://www.grammarbook.com/english)

## Speech Marks

These punctuation items are also known as quotation marks or inverted commas i.e. upside down commas. They are placed before and after the actual words spoken by someone. So, they surround what we call direct speech.

Here is an example:

Mr Jones said, "Good morning everyone."

- The actual words spoken by Mr Jones are *Good morning everyone*.
- Notice that the first word spoken begins with a capital letter and a full stop is used at the end of the direct speech, before the speech marks appear.
- It is also important to note, a comma is used to separate the direct speech from the rest of the sentence.

Here are some more examples:

The conductor announced, "The bus is full."

The doctor asked, "Did you ever have the measles?"

"Who scored the last goal?" asked Ruth.

"Don't go without me!" shouted Tom.

"I am going to a party tonight." said Janet, "I need to bring a present."

**For more examples and a chance to test your knowledge click**

**[www.primaryresources.co.uk/online/speechmarks.htm](http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/online/speechmarks.htm)**

- **Note that direct speech can appear at the start or the end of a sentence.**
- **Punctuation must always be used to separate the actual words spoken from the rest of the sentence.**

Often, direct speech will be written as part of a dialogue, or conversation, between characters.

- It is important to remember to take a new paragraph for each new person speaking.

Read this example:

Mum shouted, "David, it's time to get out of bed. Breakfast's ready!" David opened one eye wearily and yelled,  
"I'm not going to school, I'm too tired." His mother replied,  
"Get up now or you will have to walk to school!"

For further explanation and practice of speech marks try:

[www.wiltshire.ac.uk/learning/study\\_skills/basic\\_skills/speechmarks.asp](http://www.wiltshire.ac.uk/learning/study_skills/basic_skills/speechmarks.asp)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSu9nVdE-s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSu9nVdE-s)

[www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/speech-marks/747.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/speech-marks/747.html)