

FOUNDATIONAL GRAMMAR

LESSON ELEVEN: QUOTATION MARKS and THE POSSESSIVE CASE (APOSTROPHES)

Quotation Marks

Many people think that Quotation Marks are tricky, but they really are not. There are just a few things you need to know before you feel comfortable with them.

Rule 1: Use quotation marks before and after a direct quotation. A direct quotation is a person's exact words, just as he has spoken them.

Eg: "Flowers always make me happy," said Grandma.

Pay Attention

- i) A direct quotation begins with a capital letter, whether or not it begins the sentence.
- ii) Use commas to separate a direct quotation from the words telling who said it.
- iii) End marks and commas following a direct quotation are placed inside the closing quotation mark.
- iv) If you have two or more speakers exchanging dialogue, their direct statements **cannot** be in the same paragraph. You need to create a new paragraph for each new speaker.

eg:

Mom said, "Go to bed at eight."

"Wow!" yelled Marie.

"Why do I have to?" growled Pete.

Notice how things change slightly in terms of capitalization and punctuation if you reverse the quote with the words describing the speaker:

"Go to bed at eight," Mom said. [Mom is capitalized here only because it is a proper noun, her name; otherwise, it would be lower case.]

Marie yelled, "Wow!"

Pete growled, "Why do I have to?"

Rule 2: Use quotation marks before and after the titles of short stories, poems, songs, chapters, and magazine or newspaper articles.

**Note, book titles, films, plays, television programs, periodicals (like newspapers), works of art, names of ships should be in italics.*

Apostrophes

Apostrophes also confuse people.

Rule 1: Use apostrophes in contractions. A contraction is an abbreviation. It is a word made by combining two words and leaving out some letters.

Eg: I'm = I am

We're = We are

Don't = Do not

Rule 2: Use an apostrophe and an "s" to show ownership. This is a short way to say that something belongs to someone.

Rule 2 a):

Generally speaking, if you want to show the possession/ownership of a word that ends in any letter other than "s," you add an apostrophe and an "s."

Case 1: For a singular noun, it is very straightforward: add an apostrophe and an "s."

Eg: **Tara's** bag (bag of Tara)

The **cat's** toy (toy of the cat)

Case 2: The few plural nouns that do not end in "s" form the possessive in the same way: by adding the apostrophe and an "s" just as singular nouns do:

Eg: **women's** tournament (tournament of the women)

children's playground (playground of the children)

Case 3: Indefinite pronouns (one, everyone, everybody, etc.) in the possessive case require an apostrophe and an "s."

Eg: **Everyone's** vote counts equally. (vote of everyone)

She consented to **everybody's** request for a class meeting. (request of everybody)

Rule 2 b):

Generally speaking, whether singular or plural, if you want to show the possession/ownership of a word that ends in "s," the apostrophe goes after the letter "s."

Case 1: When showing ownership with a singular noun that already ends in the letter “s,” you put the apostrophe after the “s.” This is done to avoid too many “s” sounds.

Eg: The **crocus**' stem grew taller. (stem of the crocus)

The **seamstress**' work (work of the seamstress)

Odysseus' travels (travels of Odysseus)

The **dress**' hem (hem of the dress)

Case 2: When showing ownership and form the possessive case of a plural noun ending in “s,” add only the apostrophe as well.

Eg: The **Jones**' new car is beautiful. (car of the Jones family)

The **cars**' horns were broken. (horns of many cars)

girls' team (team of the girls)

backpackers' supplies (supplies of the backpackers)

Rule 2 c):

Personal pronouns in the possessive case (*his, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs,* and the relative pronoun *whose*) do not require an apostrophe.

Incorrect: That coat is hi's.

Correct: That coat is **his**.

Incorrect: We thought the top score was her's.

Correct: We thought the top score was **hers**.

Incorrect: I have witnessed democracy at it's best.

Correct: I have witnessed democracy at **its** best.

Incorrect: Our's is the white blanket on the bottom.

Correct: **Ours** is the white blanket on the bottom.

Incorrect: I will put your's in the fridge.

Correct: I will put **yours** in the fridge.

Incorrect: Can you find their's too?

Correct: Can you find **theirs** too?

Incorrect: Who's notebook is this?

Correct: **Whose** notebook is this?

Hint: If you are having trouble figuring out if a word is a possessive personal pronoun vs. a contraction, substitute the words the contraction takes the place of to see if it makes sense:

Don't you think **it's** a little strange?

Don't you think [**it is**] a little strange? [This works, because *it's* is a contraction]

That's a beautiful bike; I like **it's** color.

That's a beautiful bike; I like [**it is**] color. [Doesn't work because this is the possessive]

Correction: That's a beautiful bike; I like **its** color.

Who's notebook is this?

[**Who is**] notebook is this? [Doesn't work because this is the possessive]

Correction: **Whose** notebook is this?

In the following list, which of the possessives are correctly formed and which need to be fixed?

Everyone's share

A street of lawyer's offices

At the Gibb's home

Bus' windows

Children's books

That nation's debts

Those nation's debts

This school's reputation

Pants' cuffs

Found it's way home