Apostrophes

> The apostrophe serves only one function: **it stands in for letters that have been removed**.
> In modern English, this translates to two main uses—contractions and possessives.

● Contractions ●

Contractions leave out letters to make pronunciation more convenient, using apostrophes instead. We use these constantly:

<p style="text-align:center">*do not* -> **don't**　●　*cannot* -> **can't**　●　*I am* -> **I'm.**</p>

It's important to realize the difference between contracted pronouns and their possessive forms, which can be tricky for the ones that sound the same:

Pronoun	Contraction	Possessive
They	They're (they are)	Their
You	You're (you are)	Your
It	It's (it is)	Its

● Possessives ●

It may not seem like it, but the possessive apostrophe rule is the same as the contractions rule: It used to be that possession was indicated by an -es at the end of a word, very similar to how -s and -es denotes plurality today. But that -es was abbreviated to an ['s] over time, and we retain the ['s] possessive apostrophe rule.

The standard form of possessive apostrophe use is very familiar: **adding ['s] indicates plurality.**

<p style="text-align:center">the **stone's** coloration　●　**Marie's** new boyfriend　●　my **brother's** haircut</p>

When plurals and possessives interact with each other, things get confusing. As we saw above, plurals and possessives function under almost the same rule, except that **the <u>possessive</u> -es is contracted with an apostrophe** and **the <u>plural</u> -s/-es is not.**

> For a <u>singular</u> noun like **the stone**, the <u>plural</u> is **the stones** and the <u>singular possessive</u> is **the stone's**.
>
> Putting the two rules together, we might expect the plural possessive to look like "stones's," but it doesn't. To reduce redundancy, we remove the final -s, making the <u>plural possessive</u> **the stones'** (see chart below).

But when the singular noun already ends in an -s, things get complicated. Take a noun like **princess**. According to the general rule, the <u>singular possessive</u> should be **princess's**—and this is acceptable. But the <u>singular possessive</u> can also be **princess'** without the final -s, to avoid redundancy.

Singular Noun	Singular Possessive	Plural Noun	Plural Possessive
Stone	Stone's	Stones	Stones'
Princess	Princess's/Princess'	Princesses	Princesses'