

2. Apostrophes are used where one or more letters are missing from a word, often in situations where two words are contracted (reduced) into one:

- e.g. I've (= I have)
I'm (= I am)
We're (= We are)
They've (= They have)
Mustn't (= Must not)
- O'clock (= Of the clock)
Ne'er-do-well (= Never-do-well)

And in some cases where two letters have been missed out, one at the beginning and one at the end of a word, then two apostrophes may be used:

- e.g. Rock'n'roll (= Rock and roll)
Salt 'n' vinegar (= Salt and vinegar)

And in dates, where a number is contracted:

- e.g. The summer of '69
The '05 bombings in London

Unlike the earlier use of *its* (see section 1) where it is possessive, when *it's* is a contraction of two words, *it is* or *it has*, it does have an apostrophe:

- e.g. It's been ages since we last spoke.
It's only a week until we meet.

Now check your understanding:

Word or phrase without an apostrophe	Insert below the equivalent phrase that does contain an apostrophe
1. I cannot imagine	
2. It is not fair	
3. We are nearly there	
4. That will be the best time	
5. She is the best of the bunch	

The answers are at the bottom of the page

Section 1 answers

1. Jim's coat
2. The budgie's cage
3. The parents' advice
4. The children's books
5. In modern usage: James' food / In traditional usage: James's food

Section 2 answers

1. I can't imagine
2. It's not fair
3. We're nearly there
4. That'll be the best time
5. She's the best of the bunch