

Grammar Worksheets: Apostrophe Errors

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it's vs. its: A common error in our writing is using the apostrophe (or NOT using it) incorrectly when trying to show that something belongs to someone. Here is a common mistake:

Error: The dog lost it's collar.

It is correct to refer to a dog using "it." A dog is not a person, and despite our sometimes inordinate love for our pets, pets are not human. Only humans deserve "his" or "her."

There are two different words: **its** and **it's (it is)**

The word **its** is the possessive form, the one that shows ownership. The other word, **it's**, is actually a contraction of two words, **it is**.

Correct Form: The dog lost its collar.

In formal writing, it is best (not "it's best") not to use contractions. Use the expanded form **it is**, instead of the contraction **it's**. The form **its'** does not exist. Do not use it, ever.

who's vs. whose: Another common error is confusing **whose** with **who's**.

Error: The post office manager, who's mother is in the hospital, retired.

Again, these are two words that sound the same but are spelled differently and mean different things, **homophones** (or **homonyms**). The word **whose** indicates possession; **who's** is a contraction for who is.

Correct Form: The post office manager, whose mother is in the hospital, retired.

you're vs. your: Some students confuse **your** with **you're**. Use the word **your** to indicate that something belongs to the person you're speaking to (hmmm). Use **you're** when you are saying something about the person you are speaking to.

Error: The brown dog ran away with you're raincoat.

Think about this. Would you rewrite the sentence "The brown dog ran away with you are raincoat"? So the correct form is

Correct Form: The brown dog ran away with your raincoat.

The word **your** shows possession. **You're** means "you are."

they're, their, there: Here we have another error that confounds some student writers.

Error: Their not going to the movies until tonight.

Correct: They're not going to the movies until tonight.

The intended meaning is "Those people" (they) are not going to the movies until tonight. The word **their** shows possession (their parking lot); **they're** means "they are"; **there** indicates location or a state of being, as in "There are three letters in the word cat."

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1. If you think your going to the movies, your mistaken!

2. The boy who's dog was sent to the pound cried uncontrollably.

3. A good dog always cleans its' food bowl.

4. The Sisters of Saint Joseph support they're convent with outside employment.

5. Its never as good a deal as the salesperson makes it out to be.

6. The rugby players promise that their not going to stop playing after August.

7. Their not going to the carnival, and your not either.

8. Its never too late to apply, even when the registrar's office closes it's doors.

9. Its' important to realize whose actually using the computers in the lab.
