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When do I need to use an apostrophe?

1 Tick the correct sentence in each pair.

- 1 a I am sorry but I wont be able to come to your party on Saturday.
b I am sorry but I won't be able to come to your party on Saturday.
- 2 a Children's toys are much more sophisticated now than in the past.
b Childrens toys are much more sophisticated now than in the past.

We use apostrophes

- to shorten words and show that some letters have been left out:
cannot → *can't*; *could not* → *couldn't*; *do not* → *don't*; *he will* → *he'll*;
will not → *won't*; *she would* → *she'd*.

These contractions are mostly used in spoken or informal language:

I can't find Peter anywhere – he isn't in the staffroom or in his office.

- after people or animals to show possession: *Mary's hat, the cat's food dish*

We do not use an apostrophe

- with possessive pronouns, such as *its, ours, theirs, yours*:
The caterpillar stays in its cocoon until metamorphosis is complete. (not *it's cocoon*)
- when we add *s* to a singular noun to make it plural, even if we are using a commonly abbreviated word: *CDs, TVs* (not: *CD's, TV's*)
- to show possession with things. Instead, we use *of the*: *the leg of the chair* (not *the-chair's-leg*)

2 Correct the mistake below.



The male Emperor

3 Correct the mistakes in the sentences below. Some sentences may have more than one mistake, some may be correct.

- 1 I put Jack coat on a hanger in the cupboard.
- 2 I cant understand why older people dont like modern music.
- 3 I bought three new CD's this week.
- 4 The dog wagged it's tail when it saw the children.
- 5 Fresh avocado's on sale today!
- 6 Which one is mine and which one is her's?
- 7 Can you put this in the car's boot for me?
- 8 It's about time you fixed that car of yours.