

Punctuation

Apostrophes

Possessives (See pages 189 – 192 in the Little, Brown Compact Handbook)

Student's or students'	One student's paper was used as an example. Several students' papers are placed on the bulletin board.
Day's or days'	This day's homework is assigned each afternoon. All five days' homework is assigned on Mondays.
Teacher's or teachers'	All the teachers' report were due last week. Each teacher's classroom will be cleaned over the summer.

You do NOT use an apostrophe when making simple nouns plural.

Two students walked down the hall (NOT two student's walked).
The school days and weeks go by in a certain rhythm (NOT day's, week's).

You do NOT use an apostrophe to make *its* possessive. (The rabbit caught its foot in the fence.)

You DO use an apostrophe to make *it's* a contraction. (It's important to watch carefully.) [If substituting it is make sense, use it's.]

Contractions (See pages 191 – 192 in the Little, Brown Compact Handbook)

it is it's	you are you're(NOT your)
they are they're	who is who's(NOT whose)
	we are we're(NOT were)

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**Commas** (See pages 173 – 180 in the Little, Brown Compact Handbook)

Use a comma before these words when they act as coordinating conjunctions linking main clauses – NOT every time you see them.

for and or but nor yet

Don't separate parts of the subject just because you see 'and'.

The senior girls and the junior girls sponsored the pep rally. (NOT: The senior girls and the junior girls...)

Don't separate a subject and verb with commas without a specific reason.

John and Mary went to school. (NOT: John and Mary, went to school.)

The main mistake is not placing comma between two independent main clauses. This causes a run-on sentence.

The steering was stiff, but the car rode smoothly.

OR

I would have attended the concert and the reception, but I had to baby-sit.

**Other uses of the comma:**

\*To set off most introductory elements:

*Unfortunately*, the only tenant pulled out.

\*To set off nonrestrictive elements (p. 175)

The empty building symbolizes a weak local economy, *which affects everyone*.

The main cause, *the decline of local industry*, is not news.

\*To separate items in a series (p. 179):

The city needs *healthier businesses, new schools, and improved housing*.

\*To separate two or more adjectives (p.180):

A *tall, sleek* skyscraper is not needed.

\*To set off nonessential elements such as absolute phrases, parenthetical expressions, and phrases expressing contrast (p. 178).

\*To separate parts of dates, addresses, and long numbers (p. 181).

\*To separate quotations from words such as *she said* (p 181).