10 things to know

American holiday traditions

1 The holidays are coming!

In America the holiday season officially begins on Thanksgiving Day, which is always the fourth Thursday in November. Macy's, a New York City *department store*, holds an annual parade with Santa arriving on the last *float* to officially start the holiday season. The day after Thanksgiving is the biggest shopping day of the year as shoppers take advantage of the after-Thanksgiving *sales* and start their holiday shopping early.

2 Decorating inside and out

Many people also use Thanksgiving weekend to buy and put up their *Christmas trees*. They might also decorate the *outside* of their house with lights and put out *lawn* decorations. The result is that each night the *neighborhoods* have an almost *fairy-like* quality with all the *twinkling* lights.

3 Holiday cards

Many Americans send out holiday *greeting cards* in December to their friends and family. Christmas is the greeting card industry's biggest holiday, *accounting for* 60% of all greeting card *sales* each year. Most of the time a Christmas card will also have a photo or letter *telling of* the family's activities over the past year. For those distant friends and relatives, it's a nice way *to catch up*.

4 Classics

There are many holiday films and *stories* that Americans *enjoy* year after year. *Throughout* December these Christmas classics *are shown* on television with something different on almost every night. Many families will read the biblical story of Christmas on Christmas Eve. The Christmas poem 'T'was the night before Christmas' is another common *reading*.

5 Christmas Eve

Usually *Christmas Eve* is spent with the immediate family. Some families go to a *church service*, have a nice *meal*, drive around the neighborhood to see the lights or open some *gifts*. However, families with small children often *wait* until Christmas morning to open their gifts. After all, Santa Claus has *to deliver* them during the night! Children will often leave a *plate* of cookies and a *glass of milk* for Santa, and maybe even a carrot or two for his *reindeer*!

department store	un grand magasin
float	un char
sales	les soldes
Christmas tree	un arbre de Noël
outside	l'extérieur
lawn	une pelouse
neighborhood	un quartier
fairy-like	comme féerique
twinkling	clignotant
greeting card	une carte de vœux
to account for	représenter
sale	une vente
to tell of	évoquer
to catch up	rattraper le temps
story	une histoire
to enjoy	aimer
throughout	tout au long de
to show	diffuser
reading	une lecture
Christmas Eve	le réveillon
church service	une messe ou un culte
meal	un repas
gift	un cadeau
to wait	attendre
to deliver	livrer
plate	une assiette
glass of milk	un verre de lait
reindeer	un renne

6 Time for presents!

Presents are usually *wrapped* in pretty paper with ribbon and placed under the tree or in *stockings*, which *are hung* on the *mantle* over the *fireplace*. Occasionally, though, Santa will leave large presents, such as bicycles, unwrapped.

7 Christmas dinner

Christmas dinner is celebrated with the *extended family* and is very similar to the Thanksgiving dinner just a few weeks before. There is *roast turkey* or *ham*, *potatoes, green beans, cranberry sauce* and many different *pies* for dessert. The main meal on Christmas day is eaten as a *late lunch* at around 2pm to give families time to open their gifts at home and then travel to the home the meal is held.

8 Happy Hanukkah!

Hanukkah is an eight-day festival of light celebrating a Jewish victory over the Syrian-Greeks. A miracle *allowed* one day's *supply* of oil *to burn* for eight days. It is celebrated starting on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev, which *falls* on December 21st this year. Each night a *candle is lit* in the menorah and a small gift is given to children. Traditional foods eaten during this celebration are latkes (fried potato *pancakes*) and *donuts*. Children play a game with a **dreidl**, which looks like a *spinning top*.

9 Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is an American holiday created in 1966 to serve as an alternative to Christmas for black people. It has *since* evolved into a seven-day holiday between Christmas and New Year's Eve. *Borrowing* from Jewish tradition, a candle is lit each night in a *stand* that resembles a menorah. Each candle and day of Kwanzaa *stands for* a principle. The principles are unity, *self-determination*, responsibility, cooperative economics, *purpose*, creativity and *faith*.

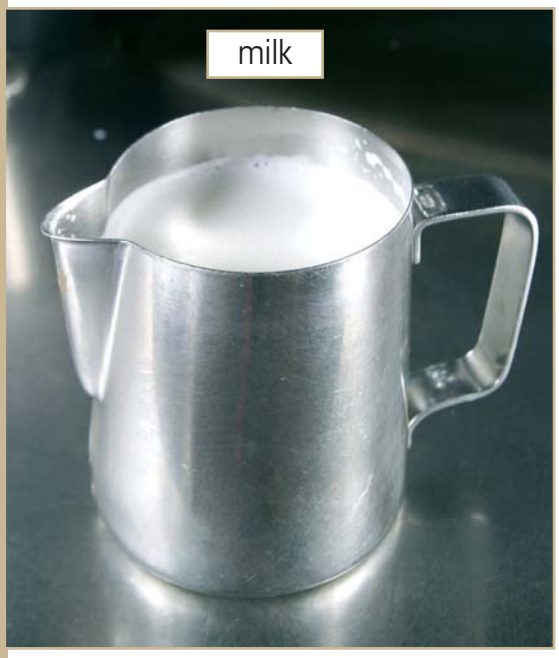
10 It's New Year's Eve!

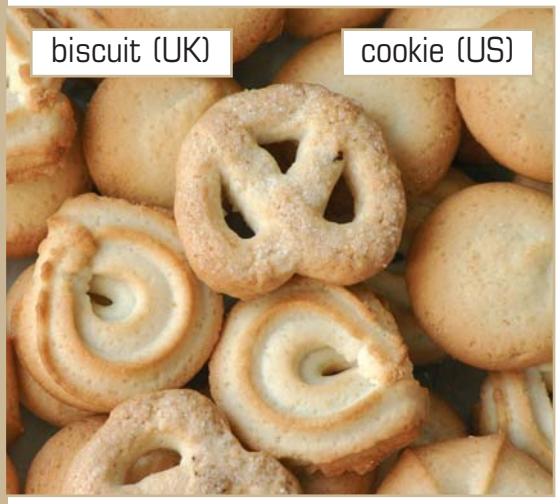
Considered the last night of the Christmas season, New Year's Eve is a night for parties with friends. Dressed in festive clothes, *party-goers* watch the clock and *count down* the last ten seconds for midnight. At midnight, everyone *shouts*, "Happy New Year!" and gives kisses all around.

present	un cadeau
to wrap	emballer
stocking	un bas
to hang	suspendre
mantle	un manteau de cheminée
fireplace	une cheminée
extended family	la famille au complet
roast turkey	une dinde rôtie
ham	du jambon
potato	une pomme de terre
green bean	un haricot vert
cranberry sauce	une sauce aux canneberges
pie	une tarte
late lunch	un déjeuner tardif
to allow	permettre
supply	une ration
to burn	brûler
to fall	tomber
candle	une bougie
to light	allumer
pancake	une crêpe
donut	un beignet
spinning top	une toupie
since	depuis
to borrow	emprunter
stand	un emplacement
to stand for	représenter
self-determination	l'autodétermination
purpose	la motivation
faith	la foi
party-goer	un fêtard
to count down	compter à rebours
to shout	crier

WHAT'S ITS NAME?

At a coffeeshop





Words to impress your friends:

It's delicious!
How's yours?

To order a drink
= commander une boisson
To pay for your order
= payer sa commande
To add milk
= ajouter du lait
To add sugar
= ajouter du sucre
To stir
= remuer / touiller
To take a sip
= boire une petite gorgée
To sit in a chair
= s'asseoir dans une chaise

Did you know?

If you want two shots of espresso in your drink, you can say, "Make mine a double." If you want to take your drink with you, say, "Make mine to-go."

If there's something you don't want in your coffee drink, you can say, "Hold the whipped cream," or, "Hold the milk."

THE APOSTROPHE – when and how to use it

How does one little punctuation mark cause so much difficulty? That's a hard question to answer. Fortunately, there is an easy solution to the problem. Let's take a look at how to use apostrophes correctly in English.

Rule number 1:

Apostrophes are used to form possessive nouns.

Add 's to the singular form of the word.

– The bag belonging to the girl = the girl's bag

– The idea belonging to Ann = Ann's idea

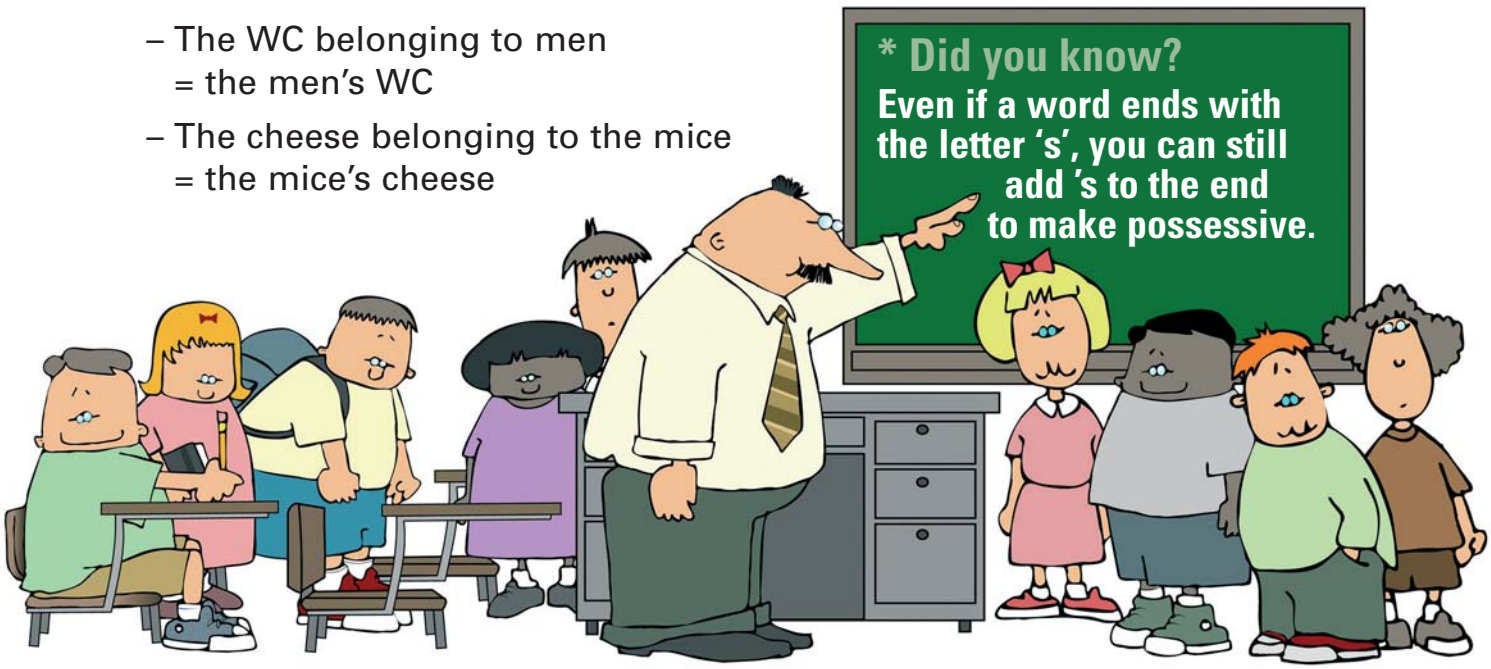
– The project belonging to the class = the class's project

Add 's to the plural forms that do not end with the letter 's'.

– The book belonging to the children
= the children's book

– The WC belonging to men
= the men's WC

– The cheese belonging to the mice
= the mice's cheese



ABOUT IT

For plural nouns that end with the letter 's', simply add ' at the end of the word.

– The house belonging to the Johnsons = the Johnsons' house

– The car belonging to the Smiths = the Smiths' car

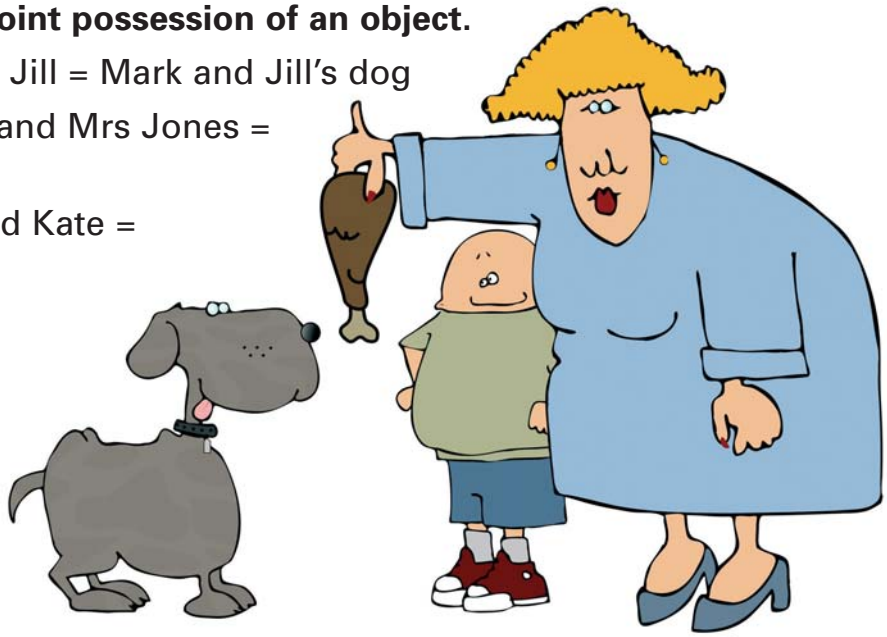
– The tool belonging to the workers = the workers' tool

Add 's to the last noun to show joint possession of an object.

– The dog belonging to Mark and Jill = Mark and Jill's dog

– The computer belonging to Mr and Mrs Jones = Mr and Mrs Jones's computer

– The apples belonging to Tim and Kate = Tim and Kate's apples



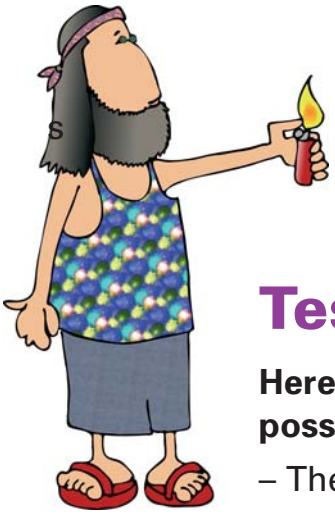
*** Did you know?**

For compound word, add 's to the end. For example, my sister-in-law's book.

Rule number 2:

Apostrophes show omitted letters.

In a contraction, apostrophes stand in for the letter or letters that have been removed.



do not = don't	I am = I'm
cannot = can't	could have = could've
he will = she'll	it is = it's

*** Did you know?**

Apostrophes can also be used in numerical contractions. For example, the 1960s becomes the '60s.

Test yourself!

Here's a little challenge for you. How would you make the following possessive, using an apostrophe?

– The keys belonging to my sister- and brother-in-law =

_____

Solution: my sister- and brother-in-laws' keys