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# The Write Stuff

**A quarterly compendium of writing tips and other useful information**



JEFF RUBIN

## CALLING ALL APOSTROPHES

**T**he apostrophe is bewildering. For example:  
♦ To make a singular word show possession, use an apostrophe-s ('s) even if the word already ends in s or x or z. "Roger Maris's bat."

♦ If a plural noun doesn't already end in s, also add 's. "The children's story." But if a plural noun does end in s, simply add an apostrophe. "The Millers' house."

Teacher/author Jay Davidson explains its use inside.

Also ... learn how to deal with graphic designers from Michael Zipkin, one of the Bay Area's best.

## MYSTERIES OF GRAPHIC DESIGNERS REVEALED

By Michael Zipkin

**S**o, you have a product or service you want the world to know about. Maybe there's a crucial message you need to impart to your employees or sales force. You need a logo, snappy stationery package and a boffo website.

You've defined your audience, scored a mailing list of potential clients, and pulled your copy together. You're ready for a professional graphic

designer to give a face to your world.

Where do you look for a good designer? Agencies like Aquent ([www.aquent.com](http://www.aquent.com)) and Visuals ([www.visualsonline.com](http://www.visualsonline.com)), or professional organizations like Artists in Print ([www.artistsinprint.org](http://www.artistsinprint.org)) can connect you. The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) is also a great source.

Also, ask your associates to recommend designers. Get a few names,

> **Inside**



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**ADVERTISING MAGIC**, (ad specialties), Walnut Creek, 800/862-4421 (Hari).

**ALPHAGRAPHS**, Walnut Creek, 925/937-4700 (Greg or Kristin).

**CRAFTSMAN TRADE PRESS**, (printer), Concord, 925/521-0156 (Ric).

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**PINOLE COPY CENTER**, Pinole, 510/223-8901 (Judy).

**QUALITY 1 HOUR PHOTO**, Walnut Creek, 925/935-6655 (Dave).

**SCAN ART GRAPHICS**, (pre-press), Richmond (Hilltop), 510/223-3248 (Fred or Ron). ■

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## APOSTROPHE TIPS (NOT TIP'S)

By Jay Davidson

**T**he apostrophe is little, but oh my, its misuse is rampant.

When we speak, people don't see our apostrophes. But misusing them when we write will turn off those who read our materials.

According to the Harbrace College Handbook:

◆ It shows ownership (boy's hat, girl's book).

◆ If the plural of a noun ends in an "s" or "z" sound, add only the apostrophe (farmers' plows, cows' bells).

◆ If there is joint possession, the apostrophe goes with the last name ("Marge and Tom's children" indicate that the children are both of theirs, as contrasted to "Marge's and Tom's children," which means that some belong to one and some to the other.)

◆ It is not used with pronouns its, his, hers, ours, yours, theirs, whose. (It's means either "it is" or "it has." If you write, "The dog hurt it's leg," you are saying, "The dog hurt it is leg," or "The dog hurt it has leg," neither of which makes sense.)

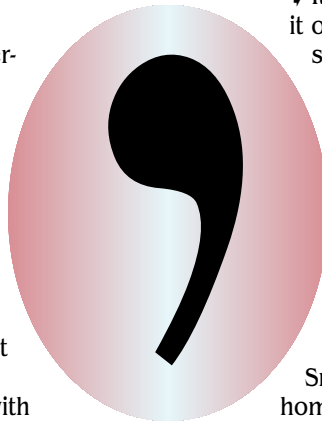
◆ It is used to indicate miss-

ing letters in contractions (don't, isn't, wouldn't).

◆ It forms the plural of letters, numerals, and symbols (the word has six T's in it). The apostrophe is sometimes omitted when there is no danger of ambiguity: the 1930's, or the 1930s; two B's and three C's, or two Bs and three Cs; all CSPs are invited.

◆ It is incorrect to use it on a house sign such as "The Smith's." In this case, you are saying that one person, named "The Smith" owns the house. It is correct to write either The Smiths (The Smiths live here) or The Smiths' (This is the home of all the Smiths).

— Jay Davidson has been a public school teacher in San Francisco since 1969. He is the author of *Teach Your Children Well: A Teacher's Advice for Parents*, which is available at Amazon.com and wherever books are sold. He writes a weekly column, *Teacher Talk*, for the *Palo Alto Daily News* and several parenting publications. He can be reached via e-mail at [teacher@jaydavidson.com](mailto:teacher@jaydavidson.com). His web site is [www.jaydavidson.com](http://www.jaydavidson.com).



## MYSTERIES OF GRAPHIC DESIGNERS REVEALED

➤ **From front page** and make some phone calls.

Most designers will have online portfolios, or can mail you printed samples of their work. Set up a meeting with one or two whose work and style you like.

Designers might be willing to give you a fee range over the phone; many want to meet and discuss the project in more detail first. For rates and information on how designers work, see the Graphic Artists Guild Pricing and Ethical Guidelines ([www.gag.org](http://www.gag.org)).

At your first meeting, find out what the designer contributed to each work sample they show you. Did he/she act as project leader, developing concepts and systems, creating original illustrations or informational graphics, acting as liaison between printers and other vendors, or did he/she merely implement someone else's design?

Observe the designer's listening and communicating skills. Is this someone you can talk to easily, who can listen and ask you the right kind of questions? Bring samples of pieces you like, and ones to avoid, to the meeting. Tell the designer exactly what reaction you want from the audience.

### The Agreement

Once you've found the designer of your dreams, you need to agree on a price. If



MICHAEL  
ZIPKIN

you have a budget to work with, begin there. You may not be able to get everything you need for that figure, but savvy designers can break the process down into manageable stages to help you stay on track. Of course, solicit bids from more than one designer. Most are willing to work with you to reach a mutually acceptable fee.

Get your agreement down in black and white. That means a written agreement form, a combination proposal and estimate, which delineates what the designer and the client bring to the arrangement – scope of work, usage rights, fee and payment schedule, and delivery date. The clearer you can be about these details, the more accurate the estimate will be, and the less chance a

conflict will develop.

Do you want your designer to broker the printing and adjust and approve the job as it comes off the press? Are you planning on translating, or repurposing for the Web or other interactive media? These issues affect the designer's contribution, and the fee he or she charges.

Unless stated otherwise, the estimated fee is for design services only; out-of-pocket expenses like scanning and other pre-press, models, props, other materials, and stock or commissioned art will be charged separately. Have your designer provide an estimate of expenses.

Also define duties, responsibilities, and contingencies. Will you provide text and/or images for a brochure, or will the designer conceptualize and/or create these or commission an illustrator or photographer to do so? How many comps (prototypes usually provided as color or black and white laser proofs) can you expect? How many updates of the chosen version will the designer render?

Get specific, work it out, sign it, and let the creative process begin.

— Michael Zipkin owns *Lucid Design*, a graphic design firm in Berkeley. [mz@luciddesign.net](mailto:mz@luciddesign.net) or 510-665-4797.

