The apostrophe has three principal uses: to show possession or ownership; to form contractions; and to form plurals of letters or numbers.

**POSSESSION OR OWNERSHIP**

Use an apostrophe to show possession or ownership.

If you are unsure about using an apostrophe to show possession, try the “of the” test, i.e. the tree’s branches = the branches of the tree. If the test phrase makes sense, then you know it is a possessive form of the noun and needs an apostrophe.

- For singular nouns, add ‘s.
  
  **Examples:** the dog’s bowl the flower’s petals  
  the song’s lyrics the professor’s class

- For singular nouns ending in s, there are two options. Choose the one that is easiest to pronounce. Either is correct.
  
  **Examples:** Chris’s car Chris’ car  
  the class’s assignment the class’ assignments

- For plural nouns ending in s, add only an apostrophe.
  
  **Examples:** many students’ views both partners’ investments  
  seven days’ vacation three hours’ work

- For plural nouns that do not require s (children, women, etc.), add ‘s.
  
  **Examples:** geese’s honking children’s toys  
  men’s team women’s restroom
Apostrophes

• For indefinite pronouns that end in –body or –one (no one, anybody, etc.), add ‘s
  Examples: anybody’s guess no one’s loss

• For compound nouns, add ‘s to the last word.
  Examples: sister-in-law’s attitude Secretary of State’s position

• For expressing joint ownership, add ‘s to the last noun of the group.
  Examples: Gerry and Sue’s marriage the sheep, horse and cow’s barn

• To show individual ownership when more than one noun is used, add ‘s to each noun.
  Examples: Ben’s and Dan’s cars Lizzie’s and Joelle’s horses

CONTRACTIONS

Use an apostrophe to indicate contractions. A contraction occurs when two words are combined to make one word. The apostrophe replaces the omitted letter or letters.

Examples: I am = I’m would not = wouldn’t
           he is = he’s you are = you’re

Some phrases can be contracted by replacing letters or numbers with apostrophes.

Examples: rock and roll = rock ‘n’ roll class of 1982 = class of ’82

Notes: 1) Avoid the use of contractions in academic writing.
        2) Do not confuse you’re with the possessive pronoun your.

PLURAL FORMS OF ACRONYMS

It is optional to use or not use an apostrophe to indicate plurals of abbreviations and acronyms. Either is correct (although indicating plurals without an apostrophe is generally preferred). Regardless of which you choose, however, be consistent.

Examples: POWs PhDs CEOs DVDs JPEGs URLs UFOs
           POW’s PhD’s CEO’s DVD’s JPEG’s URL’s UFO’s
SPECIAL TYPES OF PLURALS
It is optional to use an apostrophe to indicate certain special types of plurals; for example, when referring to plural upper-case letters, numerals, and terms. Either is correct (although indicating plurals without an apostrophe is generally preferred). Regardless of which you choose, however, be consistent.

Examples:  
He usually gets A’s and B’s.  
The skater scored 8’s and 9’s.  
He liked the 1950’s.

He usually gets As and Bs.  
The skater scored 8s and 9s.  
He liked the 1950s.

Note: To avoid confusion, it is best to use apostrophes for lower case letters.

Examples:  
CONFUSING: She’s learning as and is in cursive handwriting.  
BETTER: She is learning a’s and i’s in cursive handwriting.

POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS
DO NOT use an apostrophe with the possessive pronouns its, hers, his, ours, theirs, ours, whose, and yours. The apostrophe is not needed because the meaning of these words indicates possession.

Examples:  
INCORRECT: The shiny new truck in the driveway is your’s.  
CORRECT: The shiny new truck in the driveway is yours.

INCORRECT: She would like that cute, fluffy puppy to become her’s.  
CORRECT: She would like that cute, fluffy puppy to become hers.

INCORRECT: The blue jay flapped it’s wings.  
CORRECT: The blue jay flapped its wings.
PRACTICE

Make Singular Nouns Possessive
Form the possessive of the bold singular nouns in the following sentences.
1. Our city record in public housing is far from outstanding.
2. One hour delay is about all we can take at this point.
3. Luis new hat is the envy of all the men in the neighborhood.

Make Plural Nouns Possessive
Form the possessive of the bold plural nouns in the following sentences.
1. I always enjoy the reading of a good children story.
2. The mothers conversation always turned to their family plans for the weekend.
3. I look forward each year to three weeks stay in the country.

Make Indefinite Pronouns Plural
Form the possessive of the bold indefinite pronouns in the following sentences.
1. Somebody hat has been stolen.
2. Everybody desks must be cleared by quitting time.
3. Each one turn will come soon.

Make Compound Nouns Possessive
Form the possessive of the bold compounds in the following sentences.
1. My brother-in-law art gallery will soon close.
2. The sergeant-at-arms request for silence was ignored.
3. The Chief Justice opinion was beautifully phrased.
Show Joint Possession or Ownership
Form the possessive of the bold nouns in the following sentences to show joint possession.

1. **Colgate and Skidmore** joint program should be terminated.
2. **Wentworth and Flexner** book on slang is almost a classic.
3. **Maria and Jose** relationship has lasted a long time.

Show Individual Possession for Multiple Nouns
Form the possessive of the bold nouns in the following sentences to show individual possession.

1. **Janet and John** tennis rackets need restringing.
2. **Carlos and Anne** intellectual interests are similar.
3. One of my chores was to prepare **Spot, Willy, and Louie** dinners.

Use Apostrophes to Form Contractions
Change the bold expressions in the following sentences to contractions.

1. He **would have** purchased it if he had enough money.
2. They **cannot** do any more than **they have** already done.
3. The class of **1980** is more employable than the class of **1977**.

Choose the Possessive *Its* and the Contraction *It’s*
Supply either *its* or *it’s* where indicated in the following sentences.

1. The squirrel buried _____ favorite acorns to eat later.
2. _____ more than a day's journey, I think.
3. The agent advised us to clean up the house to ensure _____ prompt sale.
4. Do you think _____ too late?