Apostrophes are a type of punctuation mark that are used to mark omitted letters in a word and to show possession in nouns and pronouns.

**WHEN TO USE APOSTROPHES**

**To make contractions**
Apostrophes are used in contractions to replace omitted letters in verb phrases or numbers in decades.

- Don’t = do not
- ‘90s = 1990s

Check with your instructor before using contractions as they can be too informal for certain genres.

**To show possession**
Apostrophes are used to indicate possession or ownership. Whether the noun is singular or plural impacts how you use an apostrophe to create possessive nouns.

If a noun is singular or is plural and does not end in an s, add an apostrophe and s (’s). If a noun is plural and ends in an s, add an apostrophe after the s (’s).

- The wind was so strong that the dog’s toy and Charles’s hat blew away while they were walking.
- The boys’ coats are all missing from the closet.
- Her children’s school is so big they have two campuses.

**WHEN NOT TO USE APOSTROPHES**

**To make pronouns possessive**
“It’s” is a contraction meaning it is or it has; “its” is the possessive form of “it.”

**To make nouns plural**
Plural forms of nouns only take an -s at the end. e.g., The phones (plural) or the phone’s cord (possessive)

**To indicate the plurals of alphabetical letters or numbers**
You will not use an apostrophe with abbreviations or numbers except in instances where an apostrophe helps with clarity.

- How many CDs do you still have?
- Do you have any 10s in your hand?
- Cross your t’s and dot your i’s. (Cross your ts and dot your is would look confusing!)