Apostrophes: Possessives and Contractions

The apostrophe forms possessives of noun, shows the omission of letters in contractions and indicates the plural form of certain letters.

Forming Possessives:

- Add (’s) to singular nouns and indefinite pronouns (everyone) even if the word ends in an “s”.
  - the woman’s hat  Charles’s house  the boss’s rules  everyone’s favorite
- Some possessive proper nouns are commonly spelled without an apostrophe (e.g. Walgreens, Governors Island), but others include it (McDonald’s, Macy’s Department Store).
- For plural nouns that do not end in “s”, add ’s. Example: children’s games
- For plural nouns that end in “s”, add only an apostrophe. Example: My two cats’ food
- When two or more nouns show joint possession of an object, only the last noun is punctuated.
  - Example: Nathan and John’s timesheets
- Don’t make the common mistake of mixing it’s (“it is”) with its, the possessive pronoun. Possessive pronouns like his, hers, its, theirs, yours, and ours never take an apostrophe.

Contractions:

- A contraction is a word (or set of numbers) in which one or more letters have been omitted. The location of that omission is marked by an apostrophe.
  - don’t = do not  I’m = I am  could’ve = could have  ’57 = 1957
- Use contractions carefully, usually only if you are quoting someone, writing dialog or writing informally. Academic or formal writing should not contain contractions.

Plurals with Certain Letters:

- Use an apostrophe when writing the plural of lowercase letters.
  - Example: Mind your p’s and q’s.
- Some authorities also prefer the use of an apostrophe when writing the plural of numerals and uppercase letters. Example: The student got all A’s and B’s.
- Uppercase acronyms do not take an apostrophe.
  - Example: I made two CDs.
- For years, no apostrophes
  - Example: In the 1960s