APOSTROPHES

The apostrophe has three uses:

- To show possession
- To form a contraction
- To indicate plurality of letters, numerals, symbols, and certain abbreviations

POSSESSION

Use an apostrophe followed by an “s” to form the possessive case of a singular noun that does not already end in “s”.

Example: The woman’s dog chased the neighbor’s cat.

Use only an apostrophe to form the possessive case of a plural noun that already ends in the letter “s”.

Examples: The ladies’ hats were attractive. The students’ books were heavy.

The bosses’ coats and the Adamses’ hats were woolen.

Add apostrophe and an “s” if the word is plural but does not end in “s.”

Examples: The people’s coats were in the closet. The children’s toys were old.

For compound nouns, use the apostrophe and the letter “s” on the word closest to the object possessed.

Examples: my mother-in-law’s pen; somebody else’s pet

Use only an apostrophe OR an apostrophe and an “s” to form the possessive of singular nouns ending with the letter “s”:

Examples: James’ books (or James’s books), Jesus’ (or Jesus’s)

CONTRACTIONS

Use a contraction to indicate letters left out: Do not = don’t, I am = I’m, should not = shouldn’t

PLURALITY: USUALLY, AN APOSTROPHE IS NOT USED TO SHOW PLURALITY

Use an apostrophe and an “s” only to form the plural of letters, numerals, and certain abbreviations.

Examples: I was born in the 1990’s. I got all A’s in English. I earned two M.B.A.’s

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: its and it’s

The possessive forms of the third person pronoun are hers, his, and its, while it’s = the contraction of it is.