Apostrophes

The apostrophe is used to indicate an omission, to indicate possession, or to form certain plurals.

To Indicate an Omission
An apostrophe indicates the omission of letters or numbers.

**Examples:**
- Coming = comin’
- 1969 = ’69

Apostrophes are also used in contractions to indicate the omission of letters.

**Examples:**
- should not = shouldn’t
- how is = how’s

To Indicate Possession
An apostrophe is used to indicate possession. **For most nouns (either singular or plural without a final s), add ’s to the word.**

**Example:** the bird’s nest

For plural nouns ending in s, only add an ’ to the word to indicate possession.

**Example:** the birds’ nest

**Joint possession**
If something belongs to two or more people, add an ’s to the last name listed.

**Example:** Peter and Wendy’s book report.

If two or more people own separate but similar objects that are listed together, ’s is added to all applicable names.

**Example:** Peter’s and Wendy’s favorite books. (They each have different favorite books.)

**Singular nouns ending in S**
Common practice allows for the use of a single apostrophe after a singular noun ending in s. However, usage depends on the discipline and specific style guide. Writers should consult writing and writing resources from their discipline to determine appropriate usage.

**Examples:**
- the boss’s office
- Thomas’s bicycle

**Example:** Jesus’s sermons (Chicago Manual of Style)
- Jesus’ sermons (Associated Press Style Book)
Do NOT Use Apostrophes in the Following Situations:

To create plurals of **words, letters, and symbols** that are used as **nouns**.

**Correct:**
- dos and don’ts
- 3s and 4s
- @s and #s

**Incorrect:**
- do’s and don’t’s
- 3’s and 4’s
- @’s and #’s

**Note:** the use of ’s is acceptable when the construction would be awkward or confusing.

**Example:** yes’s and no’s, not yesses and nos

To create **plurals of capital letters** and **abbreviations** without any internal punctuation.

**Correct**
- As, Bs, and Cs
- IRAs
- PhDs

**Incorrect:**
- A’s, B’s, and C’s
- IRA’s
- PhD’s

**Note:** the use of ’s is acceptable to create plurals of lowercase letters and abbreviations with two or more periods.

**Correct:** a’s, b’s, and c’s; Ph.D.’s; M.A.’s

To indicate a **time period**.

**Correct:**
- the 1990s
- ‘40s

**Incorrect:**
- the 1990’s
- ‘40’s

To create **possessive pronouns**.

**Correct**
- its
- yours
- theirs

**Incorrect:**
- it’s
- your’s
- their’s

**Note:** It's with an apostrophe is a contraction of it is.

To **pluralize** regular nouns.

**Correct**
- There are many dogs in the yard.
- Who ate my sandwiches?

**Incorrect:**
- There are many dog’s in the yard.
- Who ate my sandwich’s?

**Note:** a singular noun with an ’s creates a singular possessive noun.