Apostrophes: Three Uses

1. to form possessives of nouns
   The dog’s tail
   The students’ assignment
   MSUM’s academic requirements

2. to indicate the omission of letters
   Feet & inches: ‘and ”

3. to form plurals of single letters
   Possessives
   Apostrophes are used to indicate that someone or something possesses something:
   - The dog’s tail
   - The students’ assignment
   - MSUM’s academic requirements

   Add [‘s] to the singular form of a noun unless the next word starts with [s].
   - The teacher’s books
   - The witness’s testimony
   - *BUT: The actress’ story

   When a singular name ends in [s], add only an apostrophe – unless common pronunciation dictate otherwise.
   - Jesus’ words
   - BUT Russ’s camera (pronunciation; single-syllable names are often exceptions here)

   Add only an apostrophe [‘] to show possession by plural nouns ending in S.
   - The horses’ hooves
   - The Hansons’ house
   - The students’ papers

   Add ’s] to irregular plural nouns (those that don't end in S) to show possession.
   - The bison’s feeding ground
   - The children’s toys

   When two or more entities jointly possess something, add [‘s] to the last noun.
   - Mary and John’s home
   - Democrats and Republicans’ preferences

Possessive pronouns — its, theirs, his, hers, ours, yours, whose — NEVER use apostrophes. Never!

Contractions

Apostrophes are used in contractions to indicate where letters have been left out. Think of them as placeholders.

- Can’t = cannot
- It’s = it is
- Won’t = will not
- Who’s = who is

When an apostrophe is at the beginning of a word or number, note that the use of an opening single quote (‘) is incorrect.

- ’rithmetic = arithmetic
- the ’80s = the 1980s (Note: no apostrophe in [1980s])
- NOT’rithmetic
- NOT [the’80s] or [the 80’s]

Plurals

Words are never pluralized with an apostrophe. Never!

- The Hansons, not the Hanson’s
- The products, not the product’s

*Exception – RARE

Single letters are pluralized with an apostrophe: A’s, B’s and C’s, p’s and q’s
- This does not apply to numbers: 100s, G4s, 747s, 1960s
- Rarely an apostrophe is used to clarify plurals of short words: [no if’s, and’s or but’s]. This is very rare.
Apostophe Practice

1. The Olson's/Olsons and the Roer ses/Roers's attended the dedication.
2. The NDSU Bisons'/Bison's mascot Thundar stole the show.
3. It's/its a surprise that the winning entry is theirs/their's/there's.
4. The three cat's/cats/cats' tails entwined as they sat at the window.
5. MSUM professor's/professors prefer to make their/they're own choices.
6. Ross'/Ross's credits include an original screenplay and two books/book's of poetry.
7. Connie claims the lunch is hers/her's.
8. Who's/Whose volunteering first?
10. I'm looking for Roger Maris'/Maris's baseball statistics.
11. Tim Tebow quoted Jesus'/Jesus's words from John 3:16.
12. The students who's/whose papers are late will be penalized.
13. Cindy Lauper's biggest hit's/hits date back to the '80s/'80s/80's.
15. Everyone in this class is getting As/A's and Bs/B's.
17. The choice is your's/yours.
18. The product's/products offer many innovations.
19. Are the Gonsalezes/Gonsalez's going to be leading the campaign?
20. Art and Mary Ann Phillips (first reference) own a business: the Phillip's company