APOSTROPHES

To make a noun possessive, you need to use an apostrophe.

Here is a way to make sure you need an apostrophe: Ask the question “Does the second word **belong** to the first word?” If the answer is **yes**, then put an apostrophe on the first word, using the following rules:

- If the noun is singular, add ‘s.
  
  *dog’s bone*
  *boy’s bike*

- To form the possessive of a singular noun that ends in an “s” sound, be guided by the way the word is pronounced. If you add the “s” sound to the word, add an apostrophe plus “s.”
  
  *boss’s office*
  *witness’s memory*

- If the noun is plural, add the apostrophe after the s.
  
  *dogs’ bones*
  *boys’ bikes*

- If an extra syllable makes it hard to pronounce, add only the apostrophe.
  
  *Archimedes’ invention*
  *the Poconos’ resorts*

- Add ‘s only to the last word of compound words or word groups.
  
  *My brother-in-law’s job*
  *Somebody else’s idea*

- Show joint ownership by putting the apostrophe on the last name.
  
  *Mary and Joe’s car needs to be repaired.*

- Show separate ownership by putting the apostrophe on each name.
  
  *Mary’s and Joe’s cars are both expensive.*

- Don’t confuse plural nouns with possessives
  
  *Some students seem confused by the assignment.*
  *The teacher’s assignment is confusing.*

- Some words do not need an apostrophe because they are already possessive.
  
  *Yours, ours, his, hers, theirs, its, whose*  
  
  (Do not confuse these with contractions that have apostrophes: it’s, who’s, they’re)
Other uses for the apostrophe:

- **Numbers**
  - Use an apostrophe in place of the century.
    
    *Class of '05 (for 2005)*
  
  - If you use the whole date, do not use an apostrophe before the *s.*
    
    *In the late 1800s*

- **Letters**
  - For lowercase, put ‘s after the letter.
    
    *Dot your i’s and cross your t’s.*
  
  - Capital letters do not always need an apostrophe (although some professors and editors may prefer you use them).
    
    *Your Bs look like 13s.*

- **Abbreviations**
  
  *She has two PhDs.*
  
  *DVDs are replacing VCRs.*

- **Symbols**
  
  *Do not use apostrophes with &s and $s.*