

The Use of Apostrophes

1. Use an apostrophe and –s to form the possessive of a noun, singular or plural, that does not end in –s.  
Man's coat  
Women's suits  
Child's toy
2. Use an apostrophe alone to form the possessive of a plural noun ending in –s.  
Girls' clothes  
Dogs' food  
The Browns' house
3. Use an apostrophe and –s (only when you would pronounce the –s) or the apostrophe alone to form the possessive of singular nouns ending in –s.  
James' hat or (if you would pronounce the –s) James's hat
4. Use an apostrophe and –s to form the possessive of certain indefinite pronouns.  
Everybody's  
One's  
Another's
5. Use an apostrophe to indicate that letters or numbers have been omitted.  
I can't stop now.  
Six o'clock  
In the '80s.
6. Use an apostrophe to indicate the plural of letters, numbers, and words used as words.  
Five 8's  
And's  
Dot your i's.
7. Use an apostrophe with pronouns only when you are making a contraction.  
Who's the leader now? (a contraction of *who is*)  
It's a big problem (a contraction of *it is*).  
I'd like to have a cup of coffee (a contraction of *I would*).  
You'd better see the dentist (a contraction of *you had*)  
He'd rather watch a movie than do his math homework (a contraction of *would rather*).  
She's been teaching English for ten years (a contraction of *has been*).

**Reference:**

Brandon, L. (1994). *Paragraphs and Essays*. (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.) Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company.