# Apostrophes

## Apostrophes do two things:

1. Stand in for missing letters or numbers.

Examples: can’t, ’98, fo’c’sle\*

1. Show that nouns are possessive.
   1. When a noun is singular, add ’s.

Example: Angela’s qualms, Marconi’s principle

Note: even when a singular noun ends in s, add ‘s.

Example: Charles’s limerick, class’s chatter

* 1. When a noun is plural and does not end in s, add ’s.

Example: watchmen’s walkway, children’s crusade

* 1. When a noun is plural and ends in s, add an apostrophe.

Example: pirates’ treasure, beasts’ claws

## Apostrophes do not belong in the following places:

1. In possessive pronouns. Words like *his*, *hers*, *theirs*, *yours*, and *its* are already possessive and do not need apostrophes added.
2. In plural nouns that are not possessive. Plural nouns like *masts*, *ocelots*, *kittens*, *androids*, and *bagels* do not need apostrophes.

**Note:** Do not use apostrophes to form the plural of acronyms, such as ICBMs or ATVs.

## People frequently use apostrophes incorrectly in these two cases:

1. The use of *whose* and *who’s*.
   1. *Whose* is a possessive pronoun. Use it like this: My cousin, *whose* table manners are shocking, has come home from the Crimea.
   2. *Who’s* is a contraction for *who is* or *who has*. Use it like this: My cousin, *who’s* (*who has*) come home from summer camp, has shocking table manners.
2. The use of *its* and *it’s*.
   1. *Its* is a possessive pronoun. Use it like this: The wildebeest expressed *its* displeasure with the manicure.
   2. It’s is a contraction for *it is*. Use it like this: The wildebeest thinks *it’s* (*it is*) a bad manicure.

Hint: If you’re not sure whether to use *whose* or *who’s*, or *its* or *it’s*, try replacing the words with *who is* or *it is*. If the sentence doesn’t work that way, choose the possessive form.

\*Fo’c’sle (forecastle): the part of a ship forward of the main mast.