An apostrophe (’) is used to form the possessive case, to indicate omissions in contractions, and to form certain plurals.

**Forming Possessives**

Use –’s to form the possessive of a singular noun, even one that ends in –s. However, if the pronunciation of the possessive form is awkward, form the possessive by adding an apostrophe only after the -s.

Example: John’s car      Doris’s dog      Jesus’ journey (not Jesus’s journey)

Use an apostrophe only to form the possessive of a plural noun that ends in –s.

Example: The boys’ bicycles   the dogs’ toys

Use an –’s to form the possessive of a plural noun that does not end in –s.

Example: The children’s room

Put only the last word of a compound noun in the possessive form.

Example: The secretary of state’s office   her sister-in-law’s house

If two or more individuals possess something together, use the possessive form only with the last person mentioned.

Example: Becky and Jane’s book collection

If two or more individuals possess something individually, use the possessive form with each person mentioned.

Example: John’s and Jim’s boats

**Forming Contractions**

Use an apostrophe in place of letters omitted in contractions. Common contractions combine a subject and a verb or a verb and an adverb.

Example: he is/he has = he’s          we are = we’re

**Common Misuse**

The possessive pronouns its and whose are often confused with the contractions it’s (it is or it has) and who’s (who is or who has). For these types of possessive pronouns, it is not necessary to use an apostrophe to show possession.

Example: Possessive pronoun its

The department received its funding

Contraction it’s

It’s getting very cold.

Possessive whose

Whose car is parked outside?

Contraction who’s

Who’s taking John to school?