TEN APOSTROPHE RULES

The principle uses of the apostrophe are to show possession and omission.

1. The possessive of a singular noun that does not end in S is formed by adding an apostrophe and an S.

   - John's car
   - Mary's house
   - The sun's heat
   - The dog's house

2. The possessive of a singular noun ending in S is formed by adding either an apostrophe or an apostrophe and an S.

   - Thomas's mother or Thomas' mother
   - E.E. Cummings's poems or E.E. Cummings' poems
   - Mr. Davis's office or Mr. Davis' office

3. The possessive of a plural noun ending in S is formed by adding only an apostrophe.

   - The boys' club
   - The girls' dormitory
   - The Smiths' home

4. The possessive of a plural noun not ending in S is formed by adding an apostrophe and an S.

   - The women's club
   - The men's group
   - The children's toys

5. The possessive of compound words is formed by adding the apostrophe and S to the last element of the compound.

   - mother-in-law's advise
   - daughter-in-law's job
   - someone else's books

6. Separate ownership is indicated by adding an apostrophe and an S to the name of each owner.

   - John's and Henry's cars (individual ownership)

7. Joint ownership is indicated by adding an apostrophe and an S to the last name in the joint ownership.

   - Emma and Elsie's store. (one store jointly owned by Emma and Elsie)

8. The apostrophe is never used in writing the possessive pronouns. Always write:

   - yours
   - his
   - hers
   - its
   - ours
   - theirs
   - whose

9. The possessive of indefinite pronouns is formed by adding an apostrophe and an S.

   - everybody's opinion
   - one's life
   - anyone's thoughts
   - someone's answer
   - everyone's answer

10. Use an apostrophe to show the omission of a letter or letters in words and numerals.

    - who's (who is)
    - o'clock (of the clock)
    - isn't (is not)
    - wouldn't (would not)
    - they're (they are)
    - can't (cannot)
    - we're (we are)
    - Spirit of '76 (Spirit of 1776)