The apostrophe is used for two distinct purposes: to indicate contraction and to indicate possession.

Contraction
A contraction is the shortened form of two words. Using contractions can add an informal tone to your writing. Apostrophes are used in contractions to indicate the omission of letters.

When two words are shortened into one word and a letter is (or letters are) left out, the apostrophe goes in the place of the missing letter(s).

Examples:
they are = they’re
is not = isn’t
there is = there’s
did not = didn’t
let us = let’s
we are = we’re
did not = didn’t
it is, has = it’s
we will = we’ll
who is, who has = who’s
you would = you’d
she is, she has = she’s

The apostrophe is also used to show the omission of numbers.

Example: The class of 2005 = the class of ‘05

Exercise 1
Write the following set of words in their contracted form.

he will __________________ you will _________________ can not _______________
you have ________________ it is _________________ have not _______________
I am ___________________ Jill is __________________ we are _______________
do not _________________ they have _______________ should not _______________
would not _________________ you are _________________ will not _______________
where is _________________ has not__________________ could have _______________

Exercise 2
Place an apostrophe where necessary in these sentences.

1. Im sorry, but we wont be able to attend the party on Friday.
2. Whats wrong with Dave? He hasnt come to class in two weeks.
3. The exam didnt have any questions on it that I couldnt answer.

Possession
The apostrophe also shows ownership or possession. The owner is the first noun, and the apostrophe is given to the owner. It possesses the noun or nouns that come right after it.

Examples:
the student’s homework
the opera singer’s voice
a driver’s license

worker’s compensation
a day’s work
your money’s worth
Add an apostrophe and an s to singular and plural nouns that don’t end in s:

Examples:
- person +’s = the person’s opinion
- teacher +’s = the teacher’s lecture
- father-in-law +’s = my father-in-law’s house
- Bob +’s = Bob’s hat

Add an apostrophe and an s to singular nouns that end in s:

Examples:
- James +’s = James’s
- Paris +’s = Paris’s
- My boss +’s = My boss’s
- The business +’s = The business’s

Add only an apostrophe to plural nouns that end in s:

Examples:
- the Smiths +’s = the Smiths’ boat
- two girls +’s = two girls’ dolls
- boys +’s = boys’ washroom
- doctors +’s = doctors’ office
- musicians +’s = musicians’ instruments
- workers +’s = workers’ break

Exercise 3
Make the following words possessive.

1. students
2. businesswomen
3. boys
4. girl
5. no one
6. Humber College
7. summer
8. Canada
9. yesterday
10. prime minister

Warning!
Don’t assume that if a word ends in an s, it is possessive. Make sure that the word possesses something before you put in an apostrophe.

The workers were angry.
We invited the Kennedys over for dinner.

Notice that there are no apostrophes after the workers and Kennedys because these words do not possess the next.

Special Considerations:

Joint Possession
If more than one noun has ownership of the same thing, only the last noun should be possessive, as in the following:

Example: Jillian and Jordan’s new car is red.

To show individual possession of something, make each noun possessive.
Example: "Jillian's" and "Jordan's" expectations were different.

**Exercise 4**
Add an apostrophe where necessary to show either joint or individual possession.

1. This is Chris and Pams new house.
2. Brett, Nathan, and Adams team won the competition.
3. Billys and Jimmys dads work together.
4. Salls and Suzies trophies are in the display cabinet.

**Plurals of Numbers, Letters, and Abbreviations**
An *apostrophe* and an *s* can be used to pluralize single letters that appear in lowercase. This rule is meant to assist the reader’s understanding and maintain clarity.

Examples:
Wrong: Make sure to cross all your ts and dot your is.
Correct: Make sure to cross all your t’s and dot your i’s.

The second sentence is much easier to read because the apostrophe clarifies the lowercase.

It is not necessary to use apostrophes when indicating plurals on capital letters, numbers or abbreviations. (Keep in mind that some professors and instructors prefer apostrophes to be used.)

Examples: There have been many UFOs sighted in New Mexico.
My grandfather was born in the 1930s.

**Possessive Pronouns**
Note that the following words, which are called possessive pronouns, are *already possessive* in form and do not take an apostrophe or an *s*.

- my/mine
- your/your
- her/hers
- his
- its
- our/ours
- their/their
- whose