Use of the Apostrophe

The Apostrophe is used **ONLY** in the following situations:

**a) To indicate an informal contraction:**

- Terry’s here (= Terry is here)
- You’ve caught a cold (= you have caught a cold)
- I haven’t checked (= I have not checked)
- It’s a boy! (= it is a boy!)
- I don’t know (= I do not know)
- The cat’s gone (= the cat is gone)

**b) To indicate possession:**

For all singular nouns, and plural nouns not ending in s, add ’s: ¹

- the cat’s collar (= the collar of the cat)
- the road’s end (= the end of the road)
- the women’s movement (= the movement of the women)
- the princess’s crown (= the crown of the princess)
- the boss’s daughter (= the daughter of the boss)

For plurals ending in s, add ’:

- the cats’ collars (= the collars of the cats)
- the princesses’ crowns (= the crowns of the princesses)

**NOTE:** Possessive pronouns do not take an apostrophe:

- e.g. my, your, **yours**, **his**, **hers**, **its**, **theirs**

In particular, make sure you understand the difference between the following:

- **its** (= belonging to it)  **whose** (= belonging to whom)
- **it’s** (= it is)  **who’s** (= who is)

¹ There is an exception to this. Names of classical and biblical people ending in s have a **straight apostrophe in the possessive**. For example, Jesus’ disciples (not Jesus’s disciples), Pericles’ foreign policy, Plautus’ use of metatheatre, Maecenas’ literary circle.