APOSTROPHES
Or, How to Avoid Silly Mistakes That Make Your Professors Crazy

I. Showing possession
   A. ALL single nouns: add an apostrophe and -s
      bikebike’s    bossboss’s    Betsy HicksBetsy Hicks’s

   B. Plural nouns NOT ending in –s: add an apostrophe and –s
      Menmen’s    sheepsheep’s    childrenchildren’s

   C. Plural nouns ending in –s: add an apostrophe
      the dancers’ costumes    three dollars’ worth of candy

   D. More than one noun
      My mom and dad’s house is thirty years old. (They live together)
      Ben’s and Jodi’s jobs are very different. (They have different jobs)

II. To signal contractions (avoid them in formal writing!)
    Remember that the apostrophe takes the place of the missing letter(s).
    So didn’t but not did’nt
    rock and rollrock ‘n’ roll

    And remember—

    its = possessive (The cat licked its paws.)
    it’s = it is, it has (It’s a crime to make apostrophe mistakes at the college level).

III. To form plurals of letters, numbers, symbols, and the like
    She picked all the M’s out of her alphabet soup.
    Your 4’s look too much like your 9’s.
    He has too many but’s in this sentence.

DO NOT use apostrophes
   In ordinary plurals (It’s raining cat’s and dog’s.)
   In verbs (Keith want’s too many things from her.)
   With possessive pronouns (Is that container her’s?)