Use of the Apostrophe

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

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

e.g. 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

e.g. 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 ’:

e.g. 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)  
**it’s** (= it is)  
whose (= belonging to whom)  
**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.