Apostrophes

Apostrophes (‘) are typically used to indicate possession and/or the omission of letters and numbers.

Possession

- Add 's to singular forms or plural forms that do not end in s to indicate possession.
  Ex: the owner’s house, the children’s play house

- Add only an ‘ to the plural nouns that end in s to indicate possession.
  Ex: three friends’ houses

- Add 's or only an ‘ to singular proper nouns that end in s to indicate possession.
  Ex: James’s house or James’ house

- Add ‘s to the end of compound words or to the last noun in a group to indicate possession.
  Ex: my brother-in-law’s house, Todd and Anne’s house

Omission of Letters and Numbers

In contractions, one or more letters have been omitted, and an apostrophe shows this omission.
  Ex: didn’t = did not        let’s = let us        it’s = it is

Contractions are common in speaking and informal writing but should not be used in formal writing.

Add an ‘ to the beginning of a year when the first two numerals are omitted.
  Ex: ’98 = 1998

When Not to Use Apostrophes

Do not use apostrophes for possessive pronouns or, in most cases, to form plurals.

Wrong: his’ house         Right: his house
Wrong: kind’s of houses   Right: kinds of houses
Wrong: it’s door          Right: its door
(Note: “its” indicates possession; “it’s” is a contraction of “it is”)
Wrong: 1920’s             Right: 1920s
Wrong: VCR’s              Right: VCRs
Wrong: ABC’s              Right: ABCs
Wrong: all four’s         Right: all fours

Please note that the MLA handbook says to use apostrophes to indicate plurality of single letters.
Ex: I made all A’s last semester.
The Turabian manual says to omit apostrophes in such cases, and the APA manual does not specify.