How and when to use [and not use] apostrophes

We should really know when and where to use these… but in case you need a refresher, here are the issues seen most often in transcripts. You should know these rules in your sleep! Misuse of apostrophes should jump off the page and smack you in the face.

1) Don’t use an apostrophe with a non-possessive plural noun, unless it’s an acronym, letters, or something that’s hard to read otherwise.

INCORRECT:
How many kid’s do you have?
The Defendant’s rest, Your Honor.
When was the last time you saw the Brown’s?
I had some errand’s to run.
On Wednesday’s, I play golf with my friend’s [friend’s what? Mom? Dog?].

OKAY:
I get mostly A’s in school.
How many TV’s were stolen?

2) DO use an apostrophe with plural possessives — but make sure the apostrophe is in the right spot!

INCORRECT:
Did the kids room have water damage?
I went to my parent’s house. (…just one parent?!)
My parents house was broken into, too.

CORRECT:
The kids’ room had water damage.
My parents’ house was untouched.
The therapists’ notes were illegible.
3) **Don’t use an apostrophe with possessive pronouns.**

**INCORRECT:**
- I couldn’t take what was her’s.
- Which truck is their’s?
- How many of the paintings were your’s?

4) **Don’t use an apostrophe at the end of verbs that end in s.** (I’m sorry I even had to include this, but I’ve seen it way too often not to warn you about it!)

**INCORRECT:**
- And then can you tell me what the witness say’s?
- I don’t understand what she see’s in him.

5) **Don’t use an apostrophe in the possessive form of “it”.**

**INCORRECT:**
- It’s original form was much clearer.
- On it’s face, you could see a scar.

**CORRECT:**
- Its application is much easier than before.
- My husband disliked its new flavor.

**NOTE:** If you see these sorts of things in transcripts, it may not always be the reporter’s ignorance of the rules — if you see it over and over and over again, it probably is, though. OR, they may misunderstand what a proofreader is for and have simply neglected to edit properly, thinking you’ll “just fix it”. However, if you see a stray error of this sort, just mark it and move on. Remember, reporters type very quickly and it’s easy to accidentally type s instead of ’s.