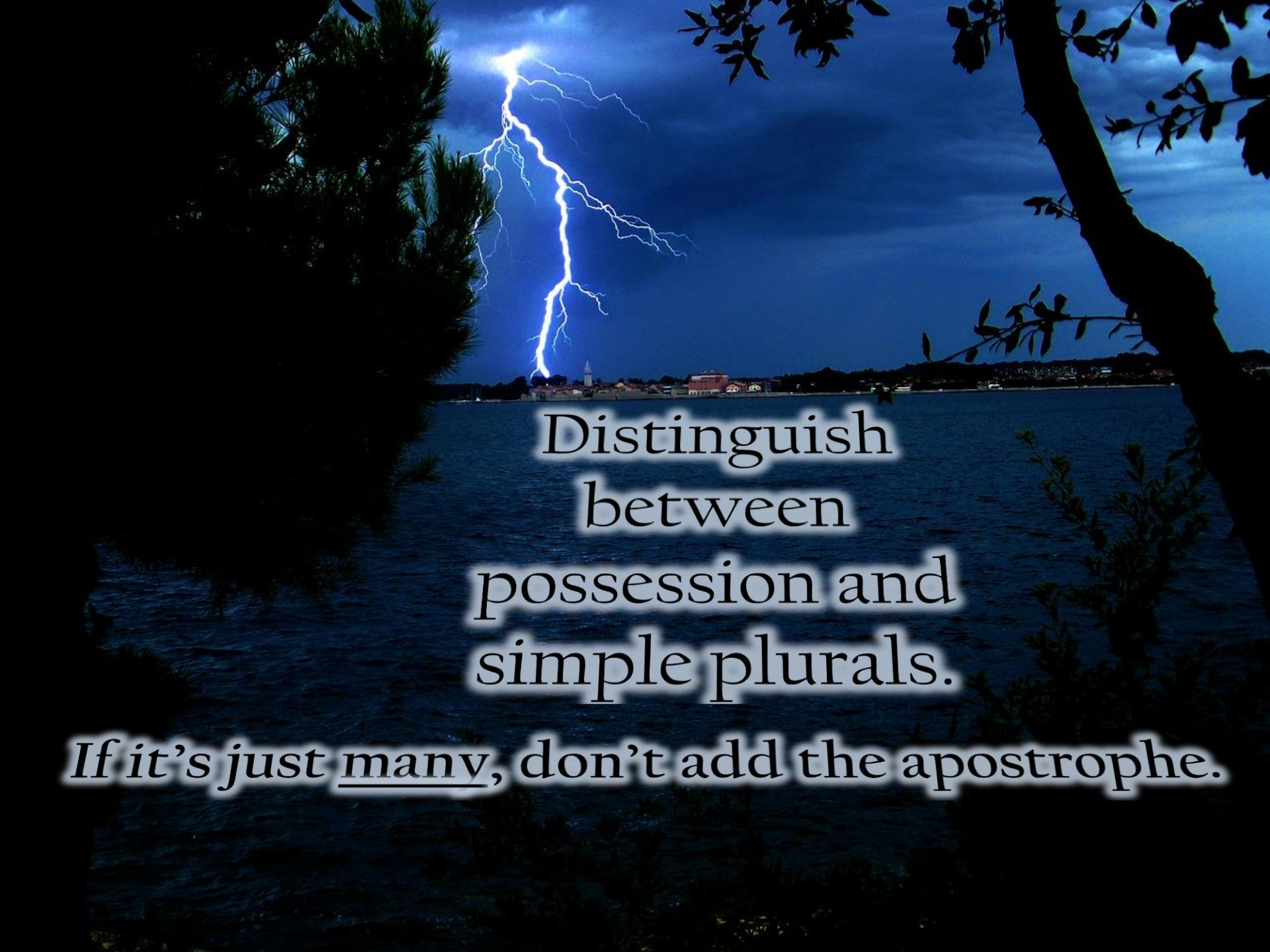


# Apostrophes

A dramatic landscape featuring a large, leafy tree in the center. A bright lightning bolt strikes the tree's trunk, creating a massive burst of orange and yellow light and fire. The tree is situated in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. In the background, there are rolling hills under a dark, stormy sky with heavy clouds. A faint, glowing path leads from the bottom of the frame towards the base of the tree.

*Ownership & Short Cuts*



Distinguish  
between  
possession and  
simple plurals.

*If it's just many, don't add the apostrophe.*

A dramatic beach scene with a stormy sky and lightning. The sky is dark and cloudy, with several bright lightning bolts striking down. The ocean is turbulent, with white-capped waves crashing onto a sandy beach. The beach is in the foreground, and the ocean extends to the horizon. The overall mood is intense and powerful.

The dog my sister owns = My sister's dog

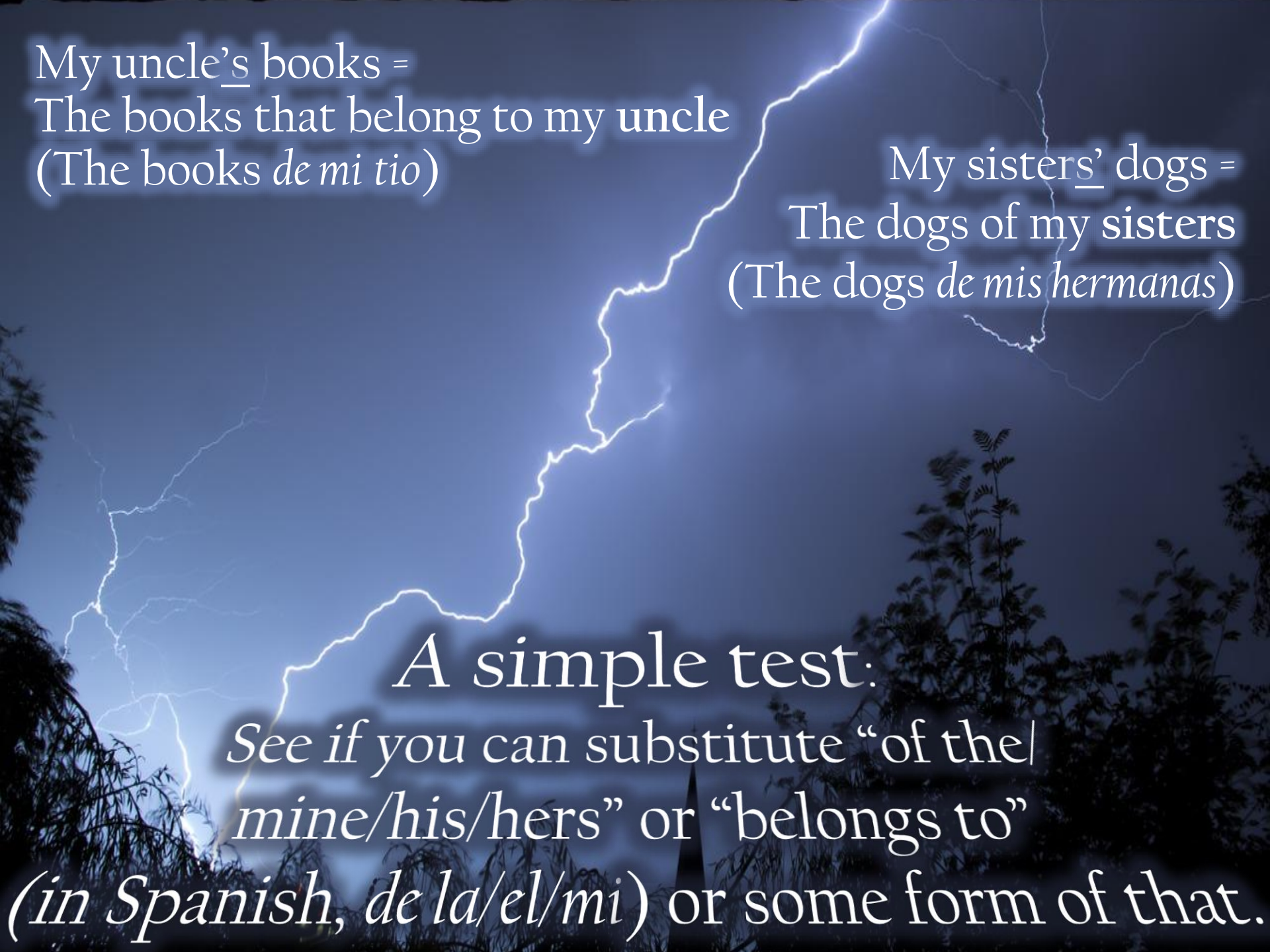
The books my uncle owns = My uncle's books

*Use an  
apostrophe to show that  
something belongs to a  
person or thing.*

The dogs my sistersu own = My sisters'u dogs

The books my unclesu own = My uncles'u books

If the  
owner is  
plural, the  
apostrophe  
goes after the -s.



My uncle's books =  
The books that belong to my uncle  
(The books *de mi tío*)

My sisters' dogs =  
The dogs of my sisters  
(The dogs *de mis hermanas*)

A simple test:  
See if you can substitute “of the/  
*mine/his/hers*” or “belongs to”  
(*in Spanish, de la/el/mi*) or some form of that.



The master-at-arms's speeches

My brother-in-law's truck

In compound words, add the apostrophe to  
the last part, but remember the  
rule about words ending in -s.



Jasmine and Chris' last class

Elron and Gimli's plan

Joint possession—  
when you indicate one thing is  
owned by more than one person or  
thing—use the apostrophe only with  
the last owner.

Jasmine's and Chris' last classes

Elron's and Gimli's plans

Multiple  
possession—  
when you indicate many  
of the same things are  
owned by more than one  
person or thing—use the  
apostrophe for each  
owner.

If a word ends in -s

This is the one place where the apostrophe usage gets muddy.

That can get tricky in terms of pronunciation. What should these sound like?

- witness's
- mathematics's
- Descartes's
- Jones's
- Jesus's
- Texas's

If a word ends in -s

This is the one place where the apostrophe usage gets muddy.

MLA says to always add an apostrophe to a word ending in -s.

- witness's
- mathematics's
- Descartes's
- Jones's
- Jesus's
- Texas's

If a word ends in -s

APA agrees, except when it comes to proper names, saying to only add an apostrophe and an -s when the name's last -s is unpronounced.

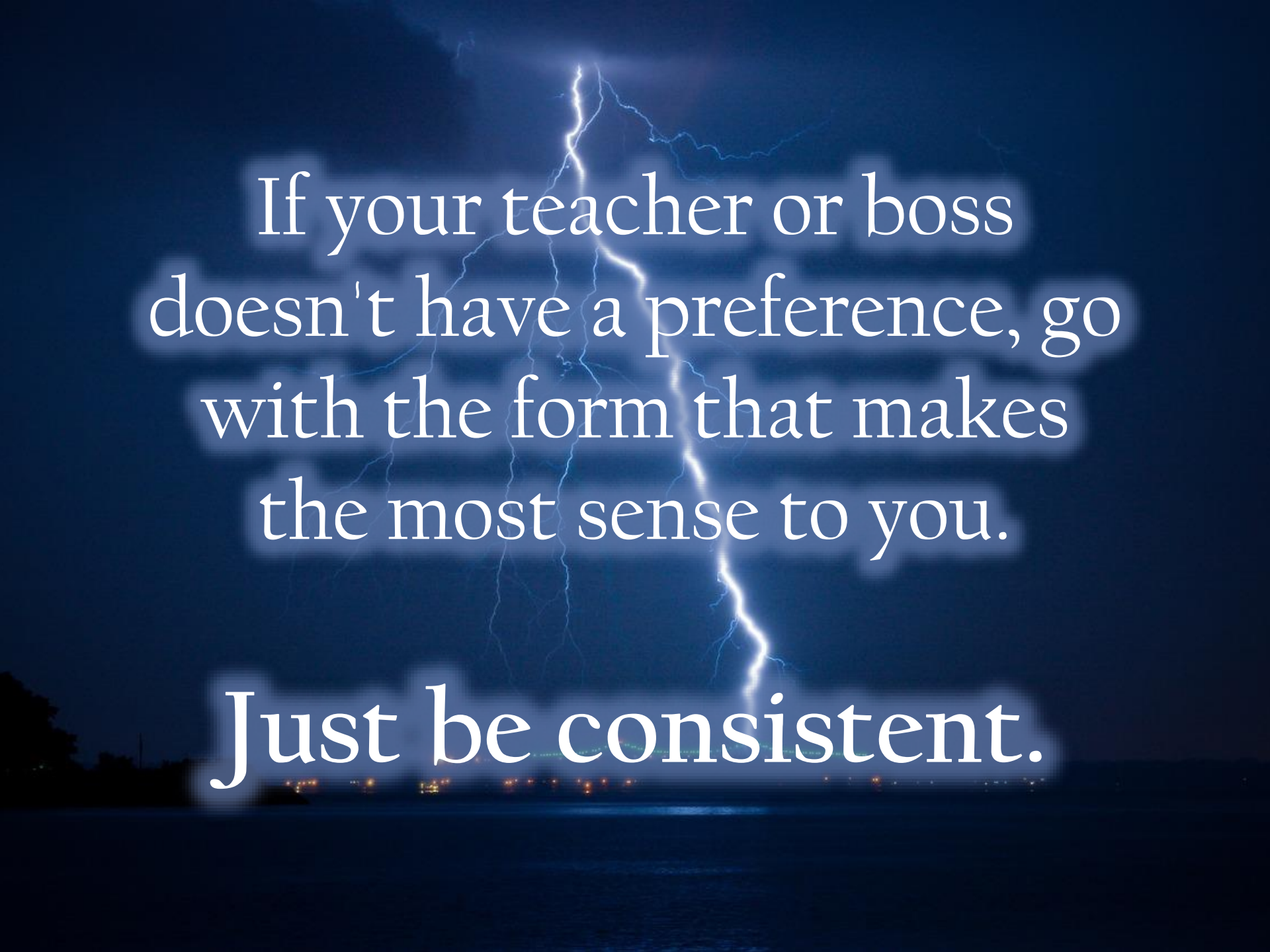
- witness's
- mathematics's
- Descartes's
- Jones'
- Jesus'
- Texas'

If a word ends in -s

Other sources say that if a name ends in an -s or -z sound, do not add the extra -s after the apostrophe.

- witness'
- mathematics'
- Descartes's
- Jones'
- Jesus'
- Texas'

So, what's a writer to do?



If your teacher or boss  
doesn't have a preference, go  
with the form that makes  
the most sense to you.

Just be consistent.

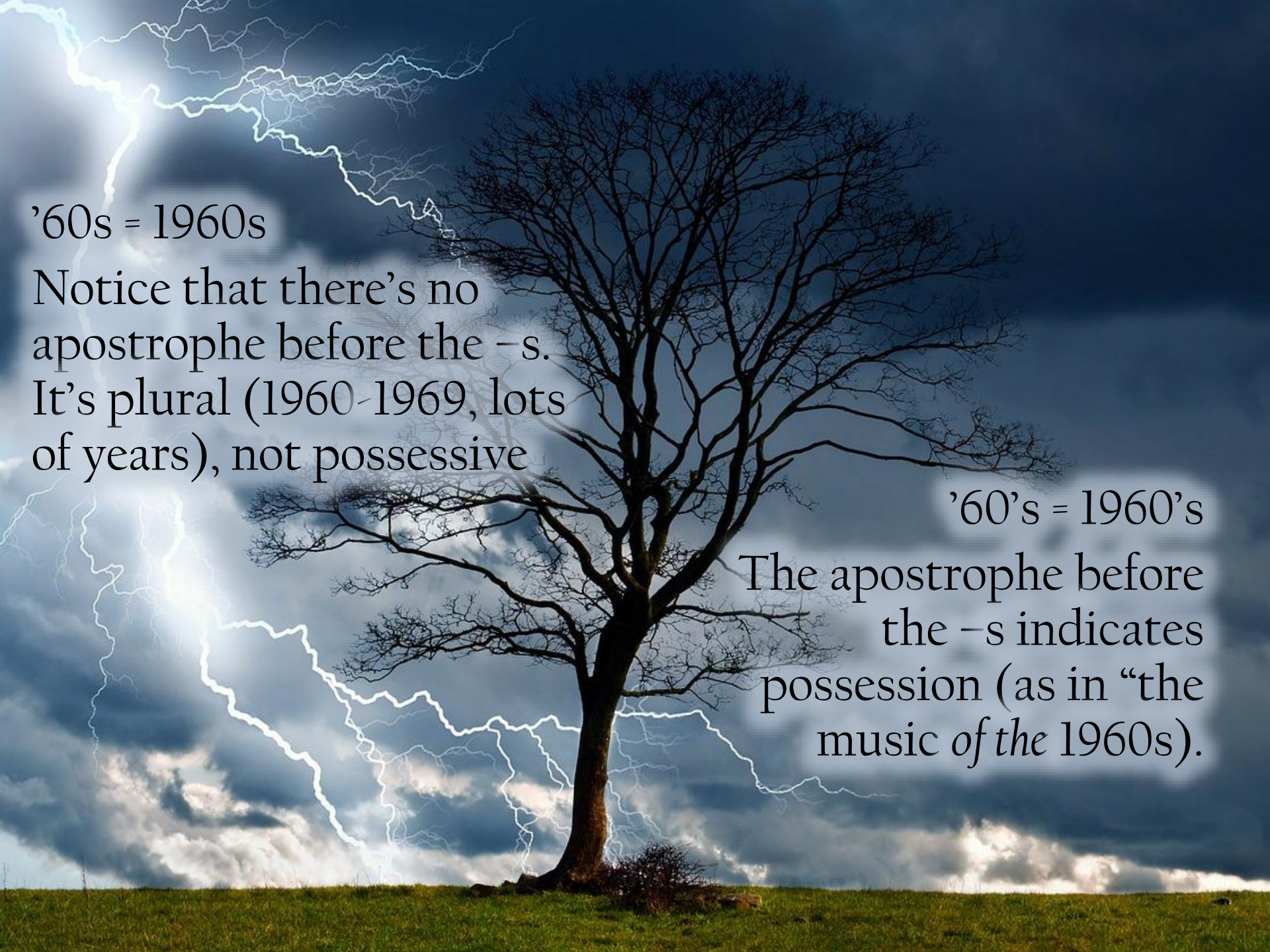
# SHORTCUTS

When you shorten words  
by creating contractions,  
leaving letters out, use the  
apostrophe to indicate  
missing letters.

Can't = cannot  
Shouldn't = should not  
There's = there is  
You're = you are  
It's = it is

Make sure you don't contradict subject/verb agreement rules  
with this one!

There's two candy bars on the counter. =  
There is two candy bars on the counter. (should be *are*)



'60s = 1960s

Notice that there's no  
apostrophe before the -s.  
It's plural (1960-1969, lots  
of years), not possessive

'60's = 1960's

The apostrophe before  
the -s indicates  
possession (as in "the  
music *of the* 1960s).



Confusing: He practiced his ps and qs.  
Use: He practiced his p's and q's.

Confusing: Here are some dos and don'ts.  
Use: Here are some do's and don'ts.

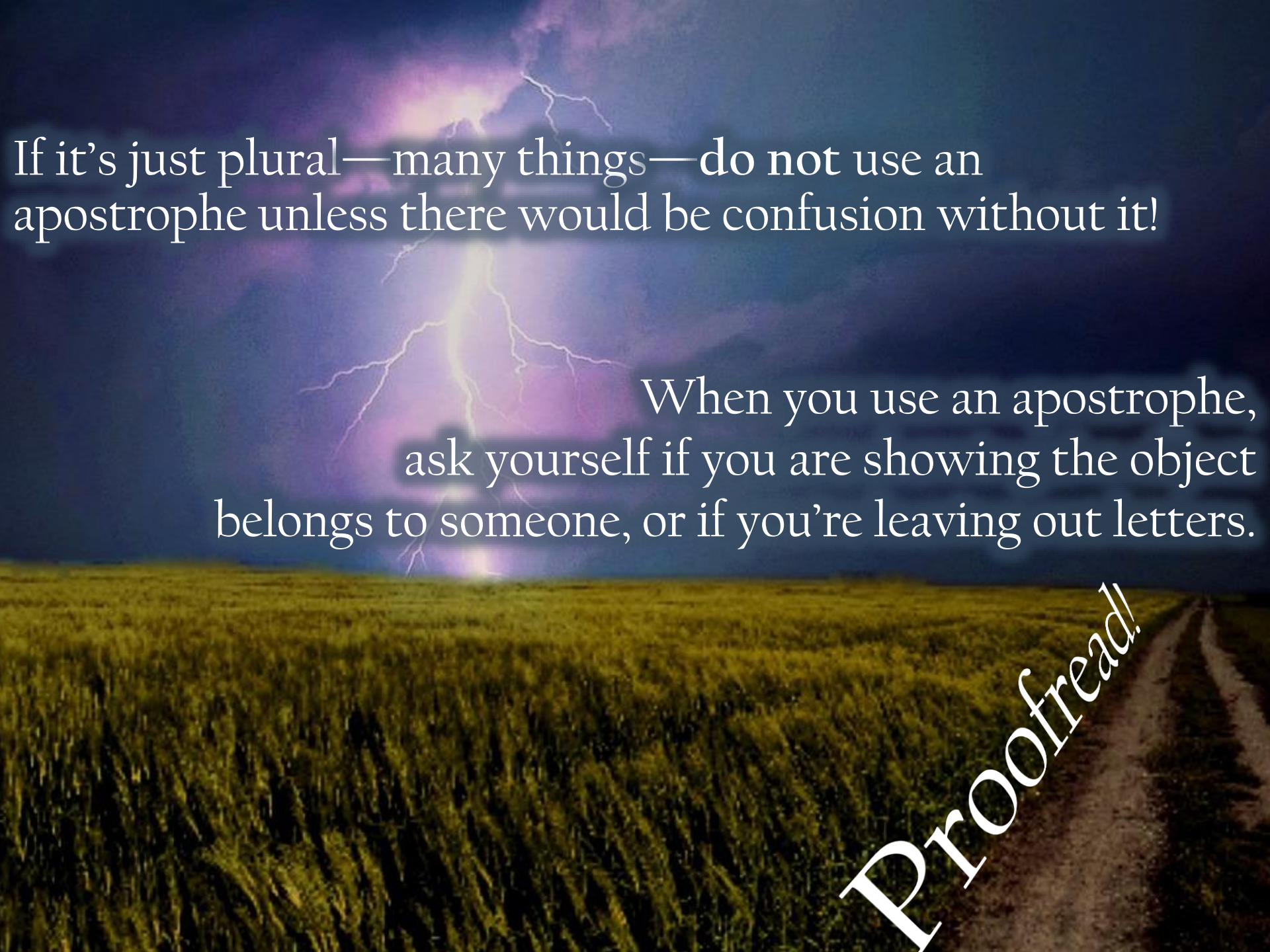
When you use  
a single lowercase letter,  
use the apostrophe to avoid  
confusion.



The CDs are over there.

As are what you're aiming for.  
A's are what you're aiming for.

Don't  
use an apostrophe if  
the letters used are capitalized  
and you're only talking about a  
plural unless it would create  
confusion.

A dramatic landscape featuring a dark, stormy sky with multiple bright lightning bolts striking down. Below the sky is a vast, flat field of tall, golden-brown grass. A dirt road with visible tire tracks runs from the bottom right corner towards the horizon. The overall mood is intense and atmospheric.

If it's just plural—many things—do not use an apostrophe unless there would be confusion without it!

When you use an apostrophe, ask yourself if you are showing the object belongs to someone, or if you're leaving out letters.

Proofread!