Contractions

By definition, a contraction is a shortened form of a group of words. Contractions are used in both written and oral communication. When a contraction is written in English, the omitted letters are replaced by an apostrophe.

Here are some common contractions and the groups of words that they represent.

aren't → are not          
can't → cannot            
couldn't → could not      
didn't → did not           
doesn't → does not         
don't → do not            
hadn't → had not           
hasn't → has not           
haven't → have not         
he'd → he had; he would    
he'll → he will; he shall  
he's → he is; he has       
I'd → I had; I would       
I'll → I will; I shall     
I'm → I am                
I've → I have              
isn't → is not             
let's → let us             
mightn't → might not       
mustn't → must not         
shan't → shall not         
she'd → she had; she would 
she'll → she will; she shall 
she's → she is; she has    
shouldn't → should not     
that's → that is; that has

there's → there is; there has   
they'd → they had; they would 
they'll → they will; they shall 
they're → they are           
they've → they have          
we'd → we had; we would      
we're → we are               
we've → we have              
weren't → were not            
what'll → what will; what shall 
what're → what are           
what's → what is; what has    
what've → what have           
where's → where is; where has 
who's → who had; who would   
who'll → who will; who shall  
who're → who are              
who's → who is; who has      
who've → who have             
won't → will not             
wouldn't → would not          
you'd → you had; you would   
you'll → you will; you shall  
you're → you are             
you've → you have             

One contraction that is not on the above list is “it’s.” It is useful to note that “it’s,” a contraction, is often confused with “its,” a possessive pronoun. Remember,

it’s → it is               
and                        
its → possessive pronoun

Here they are used in sentences.

It’s really nice outside today. → It is really nice outside today.
The dog ate its food. (The food belongs to the dog.)

The list of contractions in this handout was adapted from http://grammar.about.com/od/words/a/EnglishContractions.htm
You probably use contractions when you speak to your friends and family members every day; however, it is important to note that contractions are often considered inappropriate in formal writing. Professors, employers, and other professionals like to see that you have taken your time on a document, and using contractions is sometimes seen as a shortcut. To be safe, never use contractions when writing for a class or when writing a professional document, such as a personal statement or cover letter.

**Exercises**

**Part 1:**
Each of the following sentences can be rewritten to contain one or more contraction(s). Using the provided list as a reference, re-write the following sentences.

1. I have been studying for hours, but I still do not feel ready for the exam.
2. You were not at the coffee shop yesterday.
3. The paint she picked out was a lovely color, but it did not match the trim.
4. We would go to the beach with you; however, we have got too many chores to do.
5. You should not use contractions in formal writing.

**Part 2:**
Each of the following sentences contains one or more contraction. Re-write each sentence, replacing any contractions with the groups of words they represent.

1. I can’t go with you because I’m busy that day.
2. It’s clear that the dog is frightened because it keeps placing its tail between its legs.
3. They’ve been trimming the trees at the park since this morning; I haven’t been able to sleep since they started.
4. You mustn’t pester your grandmother like that.
5. She’ll bring Jonathan with her if he’s willing to chip in for gas.

**ANSWERS:**

**Part 1:**
1.) I’ve, don’t  2.) weren’t  3.) didn’t  4.) We’d, we’ve  5.) shouldn’t

**Part 2:**
1.) cannot, I am  2.) It is  3.) They have, have not  4.) must not  5.) She will, he is