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.

Common Contractions

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

aren’t → are not
can’t → can not
couldn’t → could not
didn’t → did not
doesn’t → does not
don’t → do not
dhadn’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’d → 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.

### Examples of It’s and Its

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It’s nice outside today.</th>
<th>It is nice outside today.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The dog ate its food. (The food belongs to the dog.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Contraction Usage

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.

### Activity 1

Each of the following sentences can be rewritten to contain one or more contraction(s). Using the provided list as a reference, rewrite 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.

### Answer Key for Activity 1

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

### Activity 2

Each of the following sentences contains one or more contraction(s). Rewrite 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 he keeps placing his tail between his 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.
**Answer Key for Activity 2**

1. can not, I am  
2. It is  
3. They have, have not  
4. must not  
5. She will, he is  

**References**