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 \rightarrow are not there's \rightarrow there is; there has $can't \rightarrow cannot$ thev'd → they had; they would **couldn't** \rightarrow could not **they'll** → they will; they shall $didn't \rightarrow did not$ they're → they are they've → they have $doesn't \rightarrow does not$ $don't \rightarrow do not$ $we'd \rightarrow we had: we would$ $hadn't \rightarrow had not$ we're \rightarrow we are $hasn't \rightarrow has not$ $we've \rightarrow we have$ **haven't** \rightarrow have not weren't \rightarrow were not $he'd \rightarrow he had; he would$ **what'll** \rightarrow what will; what shall **he'll** \rightarrow he will; he shall **what're** \rightarrow what are $he's \rightarrow he$ is: he has **what's** \rightarrow what is: what has $I'd \rightarrow I had$: I would what've → what have $I'II \rightarrow I$ will: I shall where's \rightarrow where is: where has $I'm \rightarrow I$ am **who's** \rightarrow who had; who would $I've \rightarrow I have$ $\mathbf{who'll}$ → who will: who shall isn't \rightarrow is not **who're** \rightarrow who are let's \rightarrow let us **who's** \rightarrow who is: who has mightn't might not **who've** \rightarrow who have $mustn't \rightarrow must not$ won't \rightarrow will not $shan't \rightarrow shall not$ **wouldn't** \rightarrow would not **she'd** \rightarrow she had: she would you'd → you had; you would $she'll \rightarrow she will; she shall$ you'll → you will; you shall **you're** → you are she's \rightarrow she is: she has **shouldn't** \rightarrow should not you've → you have **that's** \rightarrow that is: that has

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 \rightarrow it is and its \rightarrow 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

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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

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