

GET TO GRIPS WITH GRAMMAR

Help sheet four: contractions and a close look at “it’s/its”

RULES

1. A contraction is the shortened version of two words, caused when letters are left out. For example: I am becomes I’m.

2. The missing letters are shown by an apostrophe. For example: it is becomes it’s.

3. Contractions are often used in conversation because it is less formal and quicker to say **we’re** rather than **we are**. When writing, it is better to use the words in full.

4. Here is a list of the most common words you can contract:

- i. **Not:** I did not becomes I **didn’t**.
- ii. **Have:** they have gone becomes **they’ve** gone.
- iii. **Has:** she has gone becomes **she’s** gone.
- iv. **Had:** he had gone becomes **he’d** gone.
- v. **Will:** you will becomes **you’ll**. (Don’t forget the trick version of **will not** which becomes **won’t!**)
- vi. **Would:** they would becomes **they’d**.
- vii. **All the present forms of the verb “to be”:**
 - I am = I’m
 - you are = you’re
 - she, he, it is = she’s, he’s, it’s
 - we are = we’re
 - they are = they’re

Help sheet four: contractions and a close look at “it’s/its”

A. Write out these sentences, contracting the words which are underlined and putting in apostrophes:

1. We will get a better view of Robbie Williams from nearer the stage.
2. You should not have told Fern Cotton you could see her dark roots showing through.
3. If we leave from the back exit, the journalists and photographers will not be able to spot us.
4. I wish you had told me you had found a better paid job.
5. "Igor, Count Dracula wishes to see you. He is not at all happy."
6. It is just typical of a troll family to leave piles of bones outside their cave!
7. If we do not take cover behind the turrets they will be able to hit us with burning arrows.
8. She is a highly-educated human being, she is a teacher.
9. Please do not go into the lions' cage again, you could have been savaged.
10. "We will train the inter-galactic war heads on planet Zark and threaten to wipe them out if they do not agree to our plans. I am sure they will see our point of view."

B. Make up 14 sentences by contracting the words below:

1. I am
2. You are
3. She is
4. He is
5. It is
6. We are
7. They are

Help sheet four: contractions and a close look at "it's/its"

C. A close look at "it's" and "its".

To do this exercise, it will be helpful to have worked through “Get To Grips With Grammar: Help Sheet Three” on possessive apostrophes and the exception “its”.

Remember the rules:

- **“It’s” with an apostrophe stands for “it is”.**
- **“Its” without an apostrophe stands for “something belonging to it”.**

Copy out these sentences, either shortening “it is” or rewriting a clumsy sentence using “its”:

1. It is summer but it feels more like winter.
2. The dog bounded over a hedge. The dog’s back legs were very powerful.
3. It is only 10am but it feels more like 4pm.
4. The plane taxied down the runway then stopped. The plane’s undercarriage had got stuck.
5. It is refreshing to have a shower in the mornings.
6. It is very difficult to arrange an interview with Tony Blair.
7. The sabre-toothed tiger sprang at the cave man because the sabre-toothed tiger’s cubs were in danger.
8. It is possible, with a lot of hard work, to get 10 A-stars in your GCSEs.
9. The spiny anteater pulled out its tongue from the anthill. The spiny anteater’s tongue was covered in termites.
10. It is unkind to tell your uncle that he looks like the hunchback of Notre Dame.