

How to Use Contractions

Here is how to correctly use contractions and avoid common mistakes.

Remember the apostrophe

Every contraction has an apostrophe in it. The apostrophe takes place of the letter(s) taken out.

- "You're" means "you are". The apostrophe takes the place of the letter "a".

Don't mistake homophones for contractions

If it doesn't have an apostrophe, then it isn't a contraction.

- "Your" and "you're" sound alike, but don't mean the same thing. "Your" does not mean "you are"- there is no apostrophe. It means "belonging to you". This doesn't make sense: "Make sure your happy." That would be the same as writing: "Make sure the happy that belongs to you."

Understand that some contractions have several letters missing

- "We've" means "we have". The apostrophe stands for the letters "ha".
- "He'll" means "he will". The apostrophe here stands for the letters "wi".
- "She'd" means "she would". Here, the apostrophe stands for "woul".

Remember that the apostrophe goes where the missing letter(s) would be

- In the word "wouldn't", the apostrophe goes where the missing letter "o" would be from "would not".

Proofread to make sure your sentence makes sense

Be sure you're using the contracted words when you mean to.

Tips

- The word "won't" is actually the words "will not". This doesn't follow the usual contraction rules- you'll just have to remember it.
- The easiest thing to remember about using contractions is that **every contraction has an apostrophe in it**. Knowing that will help you a lot. Always use an apostrophe in every contraction.
- "Wanna" and "gonna" aren't contractions. They are slang- okay for informal speech, but not recommended for writing. Correct English for these would be "want to" and "going to".
- A common mistake is confusing "you're" and "your". Proofread carefully! Be sure you're using the correct term.
- Don't add spaces around the apostrophe, like "couldn ' t", "couldn 't" or "couldn' t."

Warnings

- Be careful with the contractions "there's" and "here's" which stand for "there is" and "here is" respectively. One should avoid writing "Here's my friends" or "There's the cups." Since friends and cups are both plural nouns, the correct form of the verb is "are" and no contraction should be used in either case ("here are my friends; there are the cups"). It is not considered correct to form contractions like "here're" (here are) or "there're" (there are), but this is a slightly grey area, and these contractions are still used sometimes in informal writing. They should be avoided.

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