CONTRACTIONS IN INFORMAL ENGLISH

It's quite common and natural in everyday English to use such forms as *it's* /ɪts/, *I've* /aɪv/, *isn't* /ɪznt/, *there's* /ðeəz/ and others. These are **contractions** and are shortened forms of a word or words. They represent the grammar or spelling of **informal writing**, and the pronunciation of **informal speech**. Though found in informal language only, they are, nonetheless, important when writing informal letters, postcards and notes to friends or even informal emails. Of equal importance is not only using but pronouncing contracted forms correctly when speaking English. Contractions help make your speech sound natural.

> ### STUDY TIPS
>
> Communicating effectively and naturally in English means using contractions in everyday conversational speech.
>
> It is also beneficial to put this into practice for the IELTS Speaking test to capture the rhythm of English in your speech.
>
> Extending the use of contracted forms to informal writing is important because it is common, correct and natural for that style of writing.

Identifying contractions

Contractions are formed with **auxiliary verbs** *be*, *have* and *do*, and **modal auxiliaries**, including *can*, *could*, *might*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, *would*, *ought*, *must* and the semi-modal *need*. They are also formed with **irregular verbs** *be*, *have* and *do* when they're not auxiliary verbs.

There are two kinds of contractions.
For example:

pronoun / noun / question word / other + (auxiliary) verb
They're travelling in China.   The **weather's** cold.   **Where's** the party?   **Here's** the book.

(auxiliary) verb + not
She **won't** be attending the meeting.   John **can't** have the car tomorrow.

Here is a list of contracted forms.

IRREGULAR VERBS

BE /biː/

Forms	Contractions			Negative Contractions
	Pronouns	**Nouns**	**Question Words**	
present tense - 1st person singular **am** /æm/ **'m** /m/	I'm /aɪm/	Ø	Ø	
3rd person singular **is** /ɪz/ **'s** /z/ or /s/	he's /hiz/ she's /ʃiz/ it's /ɪts/	friend's /frɛndz/ Jack's /dʒæks/	where's /wɛəz/	isn't /ɪznt/ she isn't compare: she's not
		other words: here's /hɪərz/ there's /ðɛəz/ now's /nauz/		
other **are** /aː/ **'re** /ə/ or /ər/	you're /jʊ(ə)r/ we're /wɪə(r)/, /wɜ/ or /wɪə(r)/ they're /ðɛə(r)/ or /ðeɪə(r)/	friends're /frɛndzər/ or /frɛndzə/ sisters're /sɪstəzər/ or /sɪstəzə/	what're /wɒtə/ or /wɒtər/	aren't /ant/ or /arnt/ they aren't compare: they're not
		other words: here're /hɪərər/ or /hɪərə/ there're /ðɛərər/ or /ðɛərə/		
Past tense 1st and 3rd person singular **was** /wɒz/ or /wəz/	Ø	Ø	Ø	wasn't /wɒznt/ I wasn't he wasn't she wasn't it wasn't
other **were** /wɜ/ or /wə/	Ø	Ø	Ø	weren't /wɜnt/ or /wɜrnt/ you weren't we weren't they weren't

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HAVE /HÆV/

Forms	Contractions			Negative Contractions
	Pronouns	**Nouns**	**Question Words**	
present tense - 3rd person singular **has** /hæz/, /həz/ or /əz/ **'s** /z/, /s/	he's /hiz/ she's /ʃiz/ it's /ɪts/	friend's /frɛndz/ Jack's /dʒæks/ other words: there's /ðɛəz/	where's /wɛəz/	hasn't /hæznt/ he hasn't compare: he's not
other – singular and plural **have** /hæv/, /həv/ or /əv/ **'ve** /v/ or /əv/	I've /aɪv/ you've /juv/ we've /wiv/ they've /ðeɪv/	tables've /teɪblzəv/ sisters've /sɪstəzəv/	what've /wɒtəv/	haven't /hævnt/ they haven't compare: they've not
Past tense singular and plural **had** /hæd/, /həd/ or /əd/ **'d** /d/ or /əd/	I'd /aɪd/ you'd /jud/ he'd /hid/ she'd /ʃid/ it'd /ɪtəd/ we'd /wid/ they'd /ðeɪd/	friends'd /frɛndzəd/ sister'd /sɪstəd/ other words: there'd /ðɛəd/	who'd /hud/	hadn't /hædnt/ he hadn't compare: he'd not

DO /DU/

Forms	Contractions			Negative Contractions
	Pronouns	**Nouns**	**Question Words**	
present tense - 3rd person singular **does** /dʌz/ or /dəz/	Ø	Ø	Ø	doesn't /dʌznt/ he doesn't compare: he does not
other – singular and plural **do** /du/ or /də/	Ø	Ø	Ø	don't /doʊnt/ I don't you don't we don't they don't compare: they do not
Past tense singular and plural did /dɪd/	Ø	Ø	Ø	didn't /dɪdnt/ I didn't you didn't he didn't she didn't it didn't we didn't they didn't compare: he did not

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MODALS

WILL /wɪl/

Forms	Contractions			Negative Contractions
	Pronouns	**Nouns**	**Question Words**	
singular and plural **will** /wɪl/ or /wɪll/ **'ll** /l/ or /əl/	I'll /aɪl/ you'll /jul/ he'll /hil/, /hɪl/ she'll /ʃil/ it'll /ɪtl/ we'll /wil/, /wɪl/ they'll /ðeɪl/	friend'll /frɛndəl/ Jim'll /dʒɪməl/ ___ other words: there'll /ðɛəl/	who'll /hul/	won't /woʊnt/ he won't compare: he will not

WOULD /wʊd/, /wəd/

Forms	Contractions			Negative Contractions
	Pronouns	**Nouns**	**Question Words**	
singular and plural **would** /wʊd/ **'d** /d/ or /əd/	I'd /aɪd/ you'd /jud/ he'd /hid/ she'd /ʃid/ it'd /ɪtəd/ we'd /wid/ they'd /ðeɪd/	friends'd /frɛndzəd/ Sally'd /sælid/ ___ other words: there'd /ðɛəd/	where'd /wɛəd/	wouldn't /wʊdnt/ he wouldn't compare: he would not

OTHER MODALS

Form stressed and unstressed pronunciation	Negative Contraction	Meaning
can /kæn/, /kən/	can't /kænt/ (Australian English, North American English), /kant/ (Australian English), /kɑnt/ (British English)	cannot
could /kʊd/, /kəd/	couldn't /kʊdnt/	could not
might /maɪt/	mightn't /maɪtnt/	might not
shall /ʃæl/, /ʃəl/	shan't /ʃant/ (British English)	shall not
should /ʃʊd/, /ʃəd/	shouldn't /ʃʊdnt/	should not
ought /ɔt/	oughtn't /ɔtnt/	ought not
must /mʌst/, /məst/	mustn't /mʌsnt/	must not
need /nid/	needn't /nidnt/	need not

Here is a summary of question and other words, which are commonly contracted.

what's	when's	who's	where's	how's
what'll	when'll	who'll	where'll	how'll
		who'd		
here's	there's	that's		

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there'll   that'll

Stress in contractions

In spoken English the following type of contraction is unstressed. These contractions are pronounced shorter and quicker, and, therefore, sometimes difficult to hear. It is an important aspect of casual, conversational English.

pronoun noun question word other } +   (auxiliary) verb
They'll /ðeɪl/ be living in Thailand. The **weather's** /wɛðəz/ been warm. **How've** /haʊv/ you been? **There's** /ðəz/ been a fire.

When an auxiliary verb is stressed at the end of a sentence or clause, contractions cannot be formed. For example,

Is he upset?
Yes, **he is**. ~~Yes, he's.~~

The other type of contraction can be stressed. These are auxiliary verbs in negative contractions, which can, in distinction, be stressed at the end of sentences or clauses. Negatives are stressed in English, and so a contraction containing a negative is usually stressed.

(auxiliary) verb   +   not
He **won't** /woʊnt/ be sitting the test. You were late today? No, I **wasn't** /wɒznt/.

STUDY ENGLISH

Contractions – confusing forms

Though spelt differently some contractions have the same pronunciation as other grammatical forms. This can cause confusion and misspellings.

Here is a list of such forms.

Word	Pronunciation	Grammar	Example
it's = 'it is' or 'it has'	/ɪts/	contraction	**It's** been raining all day.
its		possessive	The tree lost **its** leaves.
you're = 'you are'	/jɔ/	contraction	**You're** driving too fast.
your		possessive pronoun	**Your** driver's licence expires today.
they're = 'there are'	/ðeə/	contraction	**They're** sightseeing today.
their		possessive	They've postponed **their** holiday.
there		adverb	They'll be travelling **there** tomorrow.
who's = 'who is'	/huz/	contraction	**Who's** going tonight?
whose		possessive	**Whose** tickets are these?

Remember that 'is' ('to be') and 'has' ('to have'), as well as 'had' ('to have') and 'would' ('would'), when used as auxiliary verbs contract to the same form **'s** and **'d**, respectively. For example:

It**'s** burnt. →   It **is** burnt. I'm sorry, I'll lower the setting on the toaster.
It**'s** burnt. →   It **has** burnt. I'm sorry, I wasn't watching the time.

They**'d** travelled to China. →   They **had** travelled to China.
They**'d** travel to China. →   They **would** travel to China.

If there is any confusion, the context and grammar would make the meaning clear.