

Year 2 · Free resource

Contractions and the possessive apostrophe

Year group: 2

Source: DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling*, National Curriculum for England (2013) — Year 2

Curriculum requirement: Statutory

Part A: Contractions

A **contraction** is two words joined together with letters missing. An **apostrophe** (') shows where the missing letters were.

*I am → **I'm** (apostrophe replaces the a of am)*

*do not → **don't** (apostrophe replaces the o of not)*

*she will → **she'll** (apostrophe replaces wi of will)*

The apostrophe always sits in the **exact position** where letters have been removed — not between the two words.

Common contractions – full list for Y2

Full form	Contraction	Letters removed
I am	I'm	<i>a</i>
I will	I'll	<i>wi</i>
I have	I've	<i>ha</i>
I had / I would	I'd	<i>ha or woul</i>
you are	you're	<i>a</i>
you will	you'll	<i>wi</i>
you have	you've	<i>ha</i>
you had / you would	you'd	<i>ha or woul</i>
he is / he has	he's	<i>i or ha</i>
he will	he'll	<i>wi</i>
she is / she has	she's	<i>i or ha</i>
she will	she'll	<i>wi</i>
it is / it has	it's	<i>i or ha</i>
we are	we're	<i>a</i>

Full form	Contraction	Letters removed
we will	we'll	<i>wi</i>
we have	we've	<i>ha</i>
they are	they're	<i>a</i>
they will	they'll	<i>wi</i>
they have	they've	<i>ha</i>
that is	that's	<i>i</i>
there is	there's	<i>i</i>
here is	here's	<i>i</i>
who is / who has	who's	<i>i or ha</i>
do not	don't	<i>o</i>
did not	didn't	<i>o</i>
does not	doesn't	<i>o</i>
is not	isn't	<i>o</i>
are not	aren't	<i>o</i>
was not	wasn't	<i>o</i>

Full form	Contraction	Letters removed
were not	weren't	<i>o</i>
will not	won't	<i>ill no – special case! (will not → won't)</i>
would not	wouldn't	<i>o</i>
could not	couldn't	<i>o</i>
should not	shouldn't	<i>o</i>
have not	haven't	<i>o</i>
has not	hasn't	<i>o</i>
had not	hadn't	<i>o</i>
cannot	can't	<i>no</i>
let us	let's	<i>u</i>
I would	I'd	<i>woul</i>

Special case — *won't*: *will not* becomes **won't**, not *willn't*. The vowel changes. This is the only common contraction where the base word changes significantly. Teach it separately.

The *it's* / *its* trap

Form	Meaning	Example
it's	contraction of <i>it is</i> or <i>it has</i>	<i>It's raining. (= It is raining)</i>
its	possessive – belonging to it	<i>The dog wagged its tail.</i>

Memory rule: if you can expand it to *it is* or *it has*, use *it's* with an apostrophe. If it means "belonging to it," use *its* with no apostrophe.

Same logic applies to: **who's** (who is) vs **whose** (belonging to whom); **they're** (they are) vs **their** (belonging to them) vs **there** (a place).

Part B: The possessive apostrophe (singular nouns)

An apostrophe + s shows that something **belongs to** someone or something.

the cat's tail — the tail belonging to the cat
Sam's book — the book belonging to Sam
the teacher's chair — the chair belonging to the teacher

The rule for singular nouns: add 's to the noun.

*dog → **dog's** (the dog's bowl)*
*girl → **girl's** (the girl's coat)*
*James → **James's** (James's bag) — add 's even after s*

Possessive vs plural – the most important distinction in punctuation

Sentence	Meaning	Correct?
<i>The dog's are barking.</i>	???	NO – <i>dog's</i> cannot be a plural
<i>The dogs are barking.</i>	More than one dog	YES – plural, no apostrophe
<i>The dog's bowl is empty.</i>	The bowl belonging to the dog	YES – possessive, apostrophe + s

Rule: apostrophes are NEVER used to make plurals. *Apple's* means "belonging to the apple."

Apples (no apostrophe) is the plural.

Common mistakes

Wrong	Right	Reason
<i>dont</i>	don't	apostrophe replaces the <i>o</i> of <i>not</i>
<i>its raining</i>	it's raining	<i>it's = it is</i> – contraction needs apostrophe
<i>the cats bowl</i>	the cat's bowl	possessive – needs <i>'s</i>
<i>apple's for sale</i>	apples for sale	plurals never take apostrophes
<i>wont</i>	won't	special contraction of <i>will not</i>
<i>there're going</i>	they're going	<i>they're = they are</i>

Word sort

Expand each contraction to its full form.

Words: I'm · don't · she'll · it's · we've · won't · couldn't · they're · he's · I'd

Contraction	Full form
I'm	
don't	
she'll	
it's	
we've	
won't	
couldn't	
they're	
he's	
I'd	

Dictation sentences

I'm sure **it's** going to rain — **I've** checked the forecast twice.

Don't forget **that's** the teacher's book on the desk.

She'll bring **James's** bag back when **she's** finished.

We're not sure where the dog's lead is — **it's** been missing since Monday.

They're the best at this — **we've** never seen anyone do **it** quite so well.

Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). Contractions and possessive apostrophe are explicitly cited in Year 2 statutory content.