



STUDY NOTES

EPISODE 9: WHALE SHARKS

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.

| | | |
|---|-----|------------------|
| 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 /bi/

| Forms | Contractions | | | Negative Contractions |
|--|--|---|---------------------------|--|
| | Pronouns | Nouns | Question Words | |
| present tense - 1 st person singular am /æm/ 'm /m/ | I'm /aɪm/ | ∅ | ∅ | |
| 3 rd person singular is /ɪz/ 's /z/ or /s/ | he's /hɪz/ she's /ʃɪz/ it's /ɪts/ | friend's /frɛndz/ Jack's /dʒæks/ other words: here's /hɪəz/ there's /ðɛəz/ now's /naʊz/ | where's /wɛəz/ | isn't /ɪznt/ she isn't compare: she's not |
| other are /a/ 're /ə/ or /ər/ | you're /jɔ(r)/ we're /wɪə(r)/, /wɜ/ or /wɛə(r)/ they're /ðɛə(r)/ or /ðeɪə(r)/ | friends're /frɛndzər/ or /frɛndzə/ sisters're /sɪstəzər/ or /sɪstəzə/ other words: here're /hɪərər/ or /hɪərə/ there're /ðɛərər/ or /ðɛərə/ | what're /wɒtər/ or /wɒtə/ | aren't /ant/ or /arnt/ they aren't compare: they're not |
| Forms | Contractions | Negative Contractions | Forms | Contractions |



| Forms | Contractions | | | Negative Contractions |
|---|--------------|-------|----------------|---|
| | Pronouns | Nouns | Question Words | |
| Past tense 1 st and 3 rd person singular was /wɒz/ or /wəz/ | ∅ | ∅ | ∅ | wasn't /wɒznt/ I wasn't he wasn't she wasn't it wasn't |
| other were /wɜ:/ or /wə-/ | ∅ | ∅ | ∅ | weren't /wɜ:nt/ or /wɜ:nt/ you weren't we weren't they weren't |

HAVE /hæv/

| Forms | Contractions | | | Negative Contractions |
|--|--|--|--------------------|---|
| | Pronouns | Nouns | Question Words | |
| present tense - 3 rd 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 /ju:v/ we've /wi:v/ 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 /ju:d/ he'd /hed/ she'd /ʃɪd/ 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 - 3 rd person singular does /dʌz/ or /dəz/ | ∅ | ∅ | ∅ | doesn't /dʌznt/ he doesn't compare: he does not |
| other – singular and plural do /du/ or /dʊ/ | ∅ | ∅ | ∅ | don't /daʊnt/ I don't you don't we don't they don't compare: they do not |
| Past tense singular and plural did /dɪd/ | ∅ | ∅ | ∅ | 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 |





MODALS

WILL /wɪl/

| Forms | Contractions | | | Negative Contractions |
|---|---|---|----------------|---|
| | Pronouns | Nouns | Question Words | |
| singular and plural will /wɪl/ or /wəll/ 'll /l/ or /əl/ | I'll /aɪl/ you'll /ju:l/ he'll /hi:l/, /hɪl/ she'll /ʃi:l/ it'll /ɪtl/ we'll /wi:l/, /wɪl/ they'll /ðeɪl/ | friend'll /frɛndəl/ Jim'll /dʒɪməl/ other words: there'll /ðeəl/ | who'll /hu:l/ | won't /wɒnt/ 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 /ju:d/ he'd /hi:d/ she'd /ʃɪd/ it'd /ɪtəd/ we'd /wi:d/ they'd /ðeɪd/ | friends'd /frɛndzəd/ Sally'd /sæli:d/ other words: there'd /ðeəd/ | 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), /kɒnt/ (British English) | cannot |
| could /kʊd/, /kəd/ | couldn't /kʊdnt/ | could not |
| might /maɪt/ | mightn't /maɪnt/ | 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 | | |
| 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 /weðəz/ been warm. How've /haʊv/ you been? There's /ðeəz/ 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 /wɒnt/ be sitting the test. |
| You were late today? |
| No, I wasn't /wɒznt/. |

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.

