

= Ain 't =

Ain 't is a contraction for am not , is not , are not , has not , and have not in the common English language vernacular . In some dialects ain 't is also used as a contraction of do not , does not , and did not . The development of ain 't for the various forms of to be not , to have not , and to do not occurred independently , at different times . The usage of ain 't for the forms of to be not was established by the mid @-@ 18th century , and for the forms of to have not by the early 19th century .

The usage of ain 't is a perennial subject of controversy in English . Ain 't is commonly used by many speakers in oral or informal settings , especially in certain regions and dialects . Its usage is often highly stigmatized , and it may be used as a marker of low socio @-@ economic or regional status or education level . Its use is generally considered non @-@ standard by dictionaries and style guides except when used for rhetorical effect , and it is rarely found in formal written works .

= = Etymology = =

Ain 't has several antecedents in English , corresponding to the various forms of to be not and to have not that ain 't contracts . The development of ain 't for to be not and to have not is a diachronic coincidence ; in other words , they were independent developments at different times .

= = Contractions of to be not = = =

Amn 't as a contraction of am not is known from 1618 . As the " mn " combination of two nasal consonants is disfavoured by many English speakers , the " m " of amn 't began to be elided , reflected in writing with the new form an 't . Aren 't as a contraction for are not first appeared in 1675 . In non @-@ rhotic dialects , aren 't lost its " r " sound , and began to be pronounced as an 't .

An 't (sometimes a 'n't) arose from am not and are not almost simultaneously . An 't first appears in print in the work of English Restoration playwrights . In 1695 an 't was used as a contraction of " am not " , in William Congreve 's play Love for Love : " I can hear you farther off , I an 't deaf " . But as early as 1696 Sir John Vanbrugh uses an 't to mean " are not " in The Relapse : " Hark thee shoemaker ! These shoes an 't ugly , but they don 't fit me " .

An 't for is not may have developed independently from its use for am not and are not . Isn 't was sometimes written as in 't or en 't , which could have changed into an 't . An 't for is not may also have filled a gap as an extension of the already @-@ used conjugations for to be not . Jonathan Swift used an 't to mean is not in Letter 19 of his Journal to Stella (1710 ? 13) : It an 't my fault , ' tis Patrick 's fault ; pray now don 't blame Presto .

An 't with a long " a " sound began to be written as ain 't , which first appears in writing in 1749 . By the time ain 't appeared , an 't was already being used for am not , are not , and is not . An 't and ain 't coexisted as written forms well into the nineteenth century ? Charles Dickens used the terms interchangeably , as in Chapter 13 , Book the Second of Little Dorrit (1857) : " ' I guessed it was you , Mr Pancks , " said she , ' for it 's quite your regular night ; ain 't it ? ... An 't it gratifying , Mr Pancks , though ; really ? ' " . In the English lawyer William Hickey 's memoirs (1808 ? 1810) , ain 't appears as a contraction of aren 't ; " thank God we 're all alive , ain 't we ... "

= = Contractions of to have not = = =

Han 't or ha 'n't , an early contraction for has not and have not , developed from the elision of the " s " of has not and the " v " of have not . Han 't appeared in the work of English Restoration playwrights , as in The Country Wife (1675) by William Wycherley : Gentlemen and Ladies , han 't you all heard the late sad report / of poor Mr. Horner . Much like an 't , han 't was sometimes pronounced with a long " a " , yielding hain 't . With H @-@ dropping , the " h " of han 't or hain 't gradually disappeared in most dialects , and became ain 't .

Ain 't as a contraction for has not / have not first appeared in dictionaries in the 1830s , and

appeared in 1819 in Niles ' Weekly Register : Strike ! Why I ain 't got nobody here to strike Charles Dickens likewise used ain 't to mean haven 't in Chapter 28 of Martin Chuzzlewit (1844) : " You ain 't got nothing to cry for , bless you ! He 's righter than a trivet ! "

Like with an 't , han 't and ain 't were found together late into the nineteenth century , as in Chapter 12 of Dickens ' Our Mutual Friend : " ' Well , have you finished ? ' asked the strange man . ' No , ' said Riderhood , ' I ain 't ' ' You sir ! You han 't said what you want of me . ' "

= = Contractions of to do not = =

Ain 't meaning didn 't is widely considered a feature unique to African American Vernacular English , although it can be found in some dialects of Caribbean English as well . It may function not as a true variant of didn 't , but as a creole @-@ like tense @-@ neutral negator (sometimes termed generic ain 't) . Its origin may have been due to approximation when early African @-@ Americans acquired English as a second language ; it is also possible that early African @-@ Americans inherited this variation from colonial European @-@ Americans , and later kept the variation when it largely passed out of wider usage . Ain 't is rarely attested for the present @-@ tense constructions do not or does not .

= = Linguistic characteristics = =

Linguistically , ain 't is formed by the same rule that English speakers use to form aren 't and other contractions of auxiliary verbs . Most linguists consider usage of ain 't to be grammatical , as long as its users convey their intended meaning to their audience . In other words , a sentence such as " She ain 't got no sense " is grammatical because it generally follows a native speaker 's word order , and because a native speaker would recognize the meaning of that sentence . Linguists draw a distinction , however , between grammaticality and acceptability : what may be considered grammatical across all dialects may nevertheless be considered not acceptable in certain dialects or contexts . The usage of ain 't is socially unacceptable in some situations .

Functionally , ain 't has operated in part to plug what is known as the " amn 't gap " ? the anomalous situation in standard English whereby there are standard contractions for other forms of to be not (aren 't for are not , and isn 't for is not) , but no standard contraction for am not . Historically , ain 't has filled the gap where one might expect amn 't , even in contexts where other uses of ain 't were disfavored . Standard dialects that regard ain 't as non @-@ standard often substitute aren 't for am not in tag questions (e.g. , " I 'm doing okay , aren 't I ? ") , while leaving the " amn 't gap " open in declarative statements .

= = Prescription and stigma = =

Ain 't has been called " the most stigmatized word in the language , " as well as " the most powerful social marker " in English . It is a prominent example in English of a shibboleth ? a word used to determine inclusion in , or exclusion from , a group .

Historically , this was not the case . For most of its history , ain 't was acceptable across many social and regional contexts . Throughout the 17th , 18th , and 19th centuries , ain 't and its predecessors were part of normal usage for both educated and uneducated English speakers , and was found in the correspondence and fiction of , among others , Jonathan Swift , Lord Byron , Henry Fielding , and George Eliot . For Victorian English novelists William Makepeace Thackeray and Anthony Trollope , the educated and upper classes in 19th century England could use ain 't freely , but in familiar speech only . Ain 't continued to be used without restraint by many upper middle class speakers in southern England into the beginning of the 20th century .

Ain 't was a prominent target of early prescriptivist writers . In the 18th and early 19th centuries , some writers began to propound the need to establish a " pure " or " correct " form of English . Contractions in general were disapproved of , but ain 't and its variants were seen as particularly " vulgar . " This push for " correctness " was driven mainly by the middle class , which led to an

incongruous situation in which non @-@ standard constructions continued to be used by both lower and upper classes , but not by the middle class . The reason for the strength of the prescription against ain 't is not entirely clear .

The strong prescription against ain 't in standard English has led to many misconceptions , often expressed jocularly (or ironically) , as " ain 't ain 't a word " or " ain 't ain 't in the dictionary . " Ain 't is listed in most dictionaries , including the Oxford Dictionary of English and Merriam @-@ Webster . However , Oxford states " it does not form part of standard English and should never be used in formal or written contexts , " and Merriam @-@ Webster states it is " widely disapproved as non @-@ standard and more common in the habitual speech of the less educated " .

Webster 's Third New International Dictionary , published in 1961 , went against then @-@ standard practice when it included the following usage note in its entry on ain 't : " though disapproved by many and more common in less educated speech , used orally in most parts of the U.S. by many cultivated speakers esp. in the phrase ain 't I . " Many commentators disapproved of the dictionary 's relatively permissive attitude toward the word , which was inspired , in part , by the belief of its editor , Philip Gove , that " distinctions of usage were elitist and artificial . "

= = Regional usage and dialects = =

Ain 't is found throughout the English @-@ speaking world across regions and classes , and is among the most pervasive nonstandard terms in English . It is one of two negation features (the other being the double negative) that are known to appear in all nonstandard English dialects . Ain 't is used throughout the United Kingdom , with its geographical distribution increasing over time . It is also found throughout the United States , including in Appalachia , the South , New England , the Mid @-@ Atlantic , and the Upper Midwest . In its geographical ubiquity , ain 't is to be contrasted with other folk usages such as y 'all , which is confined to the South region of the United States .

In England , ain 't is generally considered a non @-@ standard or illiterate usage , as it is used by speakers of a lower socio @-@ economic class , or by educated people in an informal manner . In the nineteenth century , ain 't was often used by writers to denote regional dialects such as Cockney English . Ain 't is a non @-@ standard feature commonly found in mainstream Australian English , and in New Zealand , ain 't is a feature of Maori @-@ influenced English . In American English , usage of ain 't corresponds to a middle level of education , although it is widely believed that its use establishes of lack of education or social standing in the speaker .

The usage of ain 't in the southern United States is distinctive , however , in the continued usage of the word by well @-@ educated , cultivated speakers . Ain 't is in common usage of educated Southerners . In the South , the use of ain 't can be used as a marker to separate cultured speakers from those who lack confidence in their social standing and thus avoid its use entirely .

= = Rhetorical and popular usage = =

Ain 't can be used in both speech and writing to catch attention and to give emphasis , as in " Ain 't that a crying shame , " or " If it ain 't broke , don 't fix it . " Merriam @-@ Webster 's Collegiate Dictionary gives an example from film critic Richard Schickel : " the wackiness of movies , once so deliciously amusing , ain 't funny anymore . " It can also be used deliberately for what The Oxford Dictionary of American Usage and Style describes as " tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek " or " reverse snobbery " . Star baseball pitcher Dizzy Dean , a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame and later a popular announcer , once said , " A lot of people who don 't say ain 't , ain 't eatin ' . "

Although ain 't is seldom found in formal writing , it is frequently used in more informal written settings , such as popular song lyrics . In genres such as traditional country music , blues , rock n ' roll , and hip @-@ hop , lyrics often include nonstandard features such as ain 't . This is principally due to the use of such features as markers of " covert identity and prestige . "

Ain 't is standard in some fixed phrases , such as " You ain 't seen nothing yet " .

= = Notable = =

" Ain 't I a Woman ? " , 1851 speech by abolitionist Sojourner Truth .

" If you want to know who we are " , from The Mikado lyrics by W. S. Gilbert " We figure in lively paint : Our attitude 's queer and quaint ? You 're wrong if you think it ain 't . " (1885) .

George Bernard Shaw 's play Pygmalion " I ain 't done nothing wrong by speaking to the gentleman . "

Great baseball hitter Wee Willie Keeler 's advice to young hitters was : " Keep your eye clear , and hit ' em where they ain 't . "

" Say it ain 't so , Joe ! " , apocryphal quote from a young baseball fan to Shoeless Joe Jackson after the fan learned about the Black Sox scandal involving throwing the 1919 World Series . " Say it ain 't so " was subsequently used as the title of a song by Weezer and an album by Murray Head , among other artistic works .

" You ain 't heard nothing yet ! " spoken by Al Jolson in The Jazz Singer (1927) , the first feature @-@ length motion picture with synchronized dialogue sequences .

" It Ain 't Necessarily So " , song from Porgy and Bess (1935) ; music by George Gershwin , words by Ira Gershwin .

" He ain 't heavy , he 's my brother " has been used as the motto of Boys Town since 1943 , and inspired a song He Ain 't Heavy , He 's My Brother , written by Bobby Scott and Bob Russell , and recorded by The Hollies , Neil Diamond , and other artists .

" Ain 't That a Shame " is a song written by Fats Domino and Dave Bartholomew , released by Imperial Records in 1955 , which went on to sell over a million copies and introduced Fats Domino to a wider audience .

" Ain 't No Mountain High Enough " is a song written by Nickolas Ashford & Valerie Simpson , recorded by Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell for Motown Records in 1967 , and again by Diana Ross for Motown in 1970 .

" You Ain 't Seen Nothing Yet " is a song written by Randy Bachman and performed by Bachman ? Turner Overdrive (BTO) on the album Not Fragile (1974) .