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Chapter Thirty Four

Contractions (Short Forms)

When we speak English, we often use **contractions**. Contractions are also common in informal writing: emails and letters to friends and colleagues. They are not so common in written English. If you have to write an essay in an exam, do not use contractions.

1. When we use the **present simple** or the **present continuous**, we use the following contractions with the verb **to be**:

be	positive	negative
I am	I'm	I'm not
you, we, they are	you're, we're, they're	you, we, they aren't
he, she, it is	he's, she's, it's	he, she it isn't

- I'm starving! I'm having lunch now.
- You're late- but at least you **aren't** the last one.
- He's 84! Peter's 84? He **isn't**, is he?

2. 's is also the contraction for **he**, **she** and **it has**. We use contractions with the verb **have** in the **present perfect**:

have	positive	negative
I, you, we, they have	I've, you've, we've, they've	I, you, we, they haven't
he, she, it has	he's, she's, it's	he, she it hasn't

- It's been (has been) two weeks since he left. He **hasn't** called.
- I've (I have) had too much to drink.
- They've (they have) never been to Corsica.
- They **haven't** booked their holiday yet.

contractions

3. 'd = **would** or **had** (past perfect) [I'd, you'd, he'd, she'd, we'd, they'd]

- I'd (I would) like a gin and tonic and a packet of salt and vinegar, please.
- He'd (He had) been in Miami for three hours when his credit card was stolen.

Negative forms: I **wouldn't**, you **wouldn't**, etc.; I **hadn't**, you **hadn't**, etc.

4. 'll = **will** [I'll, you'll, he'll, she'll, it'll, we'll, you'll, they'll]

- I'll be with you in a minute./ She'll be back soon. (Negative form: **won't**)

5. Some of these short forms are also used after question words

(**what**, **where**, **who**, etc.) and **that**, **there** and **here**:

- Who's (who is) that girl?
- There's (there is) a hole in my bucket.
- Who'd (who would) have thought it?

Informal Contractions

Informal contractions are short forms of other words that people use when speaking casually. We do not use them in "correct" speech, and we almost never use them in writing. We normally use them only when speaking fast and casually, for example with friends. Some people never use them, even in informal speech. Such informal contractions are more common in American English and internet chatting.

For example,

contraction	meaning	sentence
gimme	give me	Gimme your money.
gonna	going to	What are you gonna do?
gotta	(have) got a	I have gotta gun.
lemme	let me	Lemme go!
wanna	want to	I wanna go home.
wanna	want a	I wanna coffee.
whatcha	what are you?	Whatcha going to do?
whatcha	what have you?	Whatcha got there?
ya	you	Who saw ya?