

Its? It's? Or Its'?

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Those three little letters cause a lot of confusion, but once you master a couple of basic rules, the choice becomes simple.

1. *Its'* is never correct. Your grammar and spellchecker should flag it for you. Always change it to one of the forms below.
2. *It's* is the contraction (abbreviated form) of "it is" and "it has." *It's* has no other meanings--only "it is" and "it has."
3. *Its* is the form to use in all other instances when you want a form of i-t-s but you are not sure which one. *Its* is a possessive form; that is, it shows ownership the same way *Javier's* or *Santosh's* does.

Example: The radio station has lost *its* license.

The tricky part of the *its* question is this: If we write "Javier's license" with an apostrophe, why do we write "its license" without an apostrophe?

Here is the explanation: *Its* is like *hers*, *his*, *ours*, *theirs*, and *yours*. These are all pronouns. Possessive pronouns do not have apostrophes. That is because their spelling already indicates a possessive. For example, the possessive form of *she* is *hers*. The possessive form of *we* is *ours*. Because we change the spelling, there is no need to add an apostrophe to show possession. *Its* follows that pattern.

Its used correctly:

- You can recognize Rene's music by its abrupt tempo changes.
- The golden retriever is known for its gentle personality.
- Golfing has lost its appeal for Gene because of his arthritis.

Test yourself. Decide which form is correct in these sentences.

1. **Its / It's** easy to get to the ballpark by car or bus.
2. This restaurant is known for **its / it's** emphasis on regional cooking.
3. **Its / It's** become very difficult to find parking near the library since it moved from **its / it's** Maple Street location.

Remember: When the word is a contraction of "it is" or "it has," the correct choice is *it's*. Otherwise, the correct choice is *its*.

Correct answers:

1. The word is a contraction in this sentence, so the correct form is *it's*.
2. The phrase "it is" doesn't make sense in this sentence, which needs a possessive form: *its*.
3. The sentence begins with a contraction of "it has" (*it's*) and then needs a possessive form (*its*).

I hope my explanation of *its / it's* works well for you. Just remember: ***Its' is never correct.***