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.