

A CLOSER LOOK (1):

Commonly Used Contractions

One of the biggest complaints I hear from foreign students who come to America is that it always seems easier to speak than to understand. The main reason for this is the common use of contractions, which not only makes a series of words unrecognizable to the unsuspecting listener, but also speeds up the language, thereby adding to the burden of comprehension.

The following is a compilation of extremely common contractions which are all very popular and used by everyone! You will find these spelled out phonetically since they are usually only heard. However, some actually do appear routinely in novels, magazines, comic books, and other written works as well. These terms will be marked with an asterisk (*) in the following list.

Standard	Common Contraction
and	'n
are	'r
are you	ya
because	'cause (*)
can	c'n
come	c'm
could have could not have	could 'a couldn't 'a
did you	didja or 'dja
does she	dushi
don't know	dunno (*)
for	fer
give me	gimme (*)

Example	Notes
Do you know Nancy 'n David?	
My parents 'r on vacation.	
Ya going to the movie? Where ya going?	are you is contracted only when followed by one or more words. Therefore, it would be incorrect to contract, <i>How are you?</i> to <i>How ya</i> unless it were followed by one or more words such as: <i>How ya doing?</i>
I don't like her 'cause she's mean.	
I c'n be there in one hour.	
C'm over to our house around 9:00.	This contraction does not apply if <i>come</i> falls at the end of the sentence.
You could 'a hurt yourself! He couldn't 'a done it.	This also applies to the following: should have = <i>should 'a</i> shouldn't have = <i>shouldn't 'a</i> would have = <i>would 'a</i> wouldn't have = <i>wouldn't 'a</i>
How didja do it? How 'dja do it?	When followed by a word beginning with the letter "e," or "a," <i>dja</i> is commonly contracted to 'dj': Did you eat yet = 'dj'eat yet? Did you ask her = 'dj'ask 'er?
Dushi speak English?	
I dunno where you live.	
He works fer his father.	This also applies to the following: forgive = <i>fergive</i> • forget = <i>ferget</i>
Gimme that!	

Standard	Common Contraction
going to	<i>gonna</i> (*) (when followed by a consonant) <i>gonnew</i> (when followed by a vowel)
goodbye	<i>g'bye</i>
got to	<i>gotta</i> (*) (When followed by a consonant - pronounced: <i>godda</i>) <i>gottew</i> (When followed by a vowel - pronounced: <i>goddew</i>)
had better	<i>better</i>
have to	<i>hafta</i>
he	'e
he/she has	<i>he/she 'as</i>
her	'er
him	'im
his	'is
how did you	<i>how'dya</i> or <i>how'dja</i>

Example	Notes
I'm <i>gonna</i> give him a present.	When followed by a vowel, "going to" is commonly contracted to <i>gonnew</i> , although <i>gonna</i> is also acceptable. • SEE: got to = <i>gotta</i> or <i>gottew</i> .
I'm <i>gonnew</i> invite her to the party.	
I'll talk to you tomorrow. G'bye!	This also applies to the following: good night = g'night
I <i>gotta</i> give him a present	When followed by a vowel, "got to" is commonly contracted to <i>gottew</i> , although <i>gotta</i> is also acceptable.
I <i>gottew</i> invite her to my party.	
You <i>better</i> leave right now.	
I <i>hafta</i> go home immediately.	ALSO: (S)he <i>hasta/hadda</i>
Who is 'e?	This does not apply if <i>he</i> begins a sentence.
He 'as a house at the beach.	
This is 'er house.	This does not apply if <i>her</i> begins a sentence.
I like 'im a lot	
What's 'is name?	This does not apply if <i>his</i> begins a sentence.
<i>How'dya/How'dja</i> make that?	

Standard	Common Contraction
how do you	how'dy'a
how does	how's
in front of	in fronna
-ing	-in' (*)
is that	izat
just	jus'
leave me	lee'me
let me	lem'me (*)
of	a or o' (*)
old	ol' (*)
or	'r
out of	outta (*) (pronounced: <i>oudda</i>)

Example	Notes
<i>How'dy'a</i> do it?	When pronounced as two syllables, <i>how'dya</i> , the tense changes from present to past. Although subtle, this difference is easily detected by any American. <i>How'dya do it?</i> = How did you do it? <i>How'dy'a do it?</i> = How do you do it?
<i>How's</i> she feel today?	
He parked in <i>fronna</i> the house.	
I'm <i>goin'</i> to the store.	
<i>Izat</i> your new car?	ALSO: <i>Zat your new car?</i>
<i>Jus'</i> get it later.	
<i>Lee'me</i> alone!	
<i>Lem'me</i> have it.	
He's sorta strange It's made <i>o'</i> wood	Although you will occasionally see the conjunction <i>of</i> contracted to <i>o'</i> , it is pronounced like <i>a</i> . Therefore, <i>It's made o' wood</i> would be pronounced, <i>It's made a wood</i> .
There's the <i>ol'</i> church.	
Do you like ice cream'r candy?	As you may have noticed, 'r is a contraction not only of <i>are</i> but of <i>or</i> as well. The connotation depends on the context: I c'n invite Tom'r Peggy. = I can invite Tom or Peggy. Tom'n Peggy'r invited. = Tom and Peggy are invited.
Get <i>outta</i> here!	Pronounced: <i>Ged oudda here!</i>

Standard	Common Contraction
probably	<i>prob'ly</i> (*)
should not have	<i>shouldn'a</i>
some	<i>s'm</i>
sure	<i>sher</i>
them	<i>'m / 'em</i> (*)
to	<i>ta</i>
want to	<i>wanna</i> (*) (when followed by a consonant or vowel) <i>wannew</i> (when followed by a vowel only)
what	<i>wud</i>
what are you	<i>wachya</i> or <i>wacha</i>



Example	Notes
He'll <i>prob'ly</i> come for dinner.	
You <i>shouldn'a</i> done that.	
Want <i>s'm</i> breakfast?	
<i>Sher</i> , I like chocolate!	A common expression indicating agreement is <i>For sure!</i> Pronounced: <i>Fer sher!</i>
I like <i>'m</i> a lot. / I like <i>'em</i> a lot.	
I don't know what <i>ta</i> do now.	NOTE (1): This applies to any word that begins with the combination "to" and whose accent does not fall on the first syllable: <i>today</i> , <i>tomorrow</i> , <i>tobacco</i> , etc. pronounced: <i>ta-day</i> , <i>ta-mor-row</i> , <i>ta-bac-co</i> . NOTE (2): When preceded by a word which ends with an "r" or "o" sound, <i>to</i> is commonly pronounced <i>da</i> : I dunno where <i>da</i> go now.
I <i>wanna</i> go outside. I <i>wanna</i> eat something. I <i>wannew</i> avoid the subject.	<i>Wanna</i> may be used either before a consonant or a vowel, whereas <i>wannew</i> may only be used before a vowel. It would sound strange to the ear to use <i>wannew</i> before a consonant such as <i>I wannew go</i> .
<i>Wud</i> if we went to the movies?	"What" is pronounced <i>whad</i> only when followed by a vowel.
<i>Wachya/Wacha</i> doin'?	This contraction can only occur if it is followed immediately by one or more words. It cannot stand alone: <i>What are you? Crazy? It would be incorrect so say: Wachya? Crazy?</i>



Standard	Common Contraction
what did you	<i>wudidya</i> or <i>wudiya</i> or <i>wudja</i>
what do you	<i>what cha</i> or <i>what chya</i> or <i>wuddy'a</i>
what does	<i>what's</i> (*)
what is the	<i>what's a</i>
would not have	<i>wudn'a</i>
you	<i>ya</i> (*) <i>ja</i> (common pronunciation when preceded by the letter "d") <i>y'</i> (common contraction when followed by a vowel)
why did you	<i>whyd'ya</i> or <i>whydja</i>
why do you	<i>why'dy'a</i>

Example	Notes
<i>Wudidya/Wudiya/</i> <i>Wudja</i> buy?	
<i>What cha/What chya/</i> <i>Wuddy'a</i> doing?	When <i>wuddya</i> is pronounced as two syllables, <i>wud' dya</i> , it becomes past tense. When pronounced as three syllables, <i>wud' dy'a</i> , it changes to present tense. This subtle difference is easily detected by any American.
<i>What's</i> he do for a living?	Although a common colloquial contraction for "what does," <i>what's</i> is traditionally a contraction for "what is."
<i>What's a</i> matter?	ALSO: <i>Wassa matla?</i> (*)
I <i>wudn'a</i> done that if I were you. How are <i>ya</i> ? Would <i>ja</i> like some ice cream? Did <i>ja</i> see that? If <i>y'ever</i> need me, just call. Did <i>y'ever</i> see the movie?	
<i>Why'dya/Why'dja</i> tell him to leave?	
<i>Why'dy'a</i> work so hard?	When <i>whydya</i> is pronounced as two syllables, <i>why' dya</i> , it becomes past tense. When pronounced as three syllables, <i>why' dy'a</i> , it changes to present tense. This subtle difference is easily detected by any American.

Practice Commonly Used Contractions

A. In the following paragraph, write the contraction (or common pronunciation) of the word(s) in italics.

I *just* _____ heard that Nancy *and* _____ Dominic *are* _____

going to _____ have a baby! *Is that* _____ great *or* _____ what?!

Nancy said that Dominic was calm about it. How *can he* _____

be so relaxed?! He *has* _____ a lot *of* _____ control, that's *for* _____

sure _____ ! *What* _____ if she gives birth *to* _____ twins? I *don't know*

_____ what they'd do! They'd *probably* _____ move

out of _____ that house. Maybe they'll *let me* _____ help

them _____ find something in my neighborhood.

A CLOSER LOOK (2):

Commonly Used Initials

Oddly enough, initials make up a large part of American speech and are in constant use. In fact, some initials have almost completely replaced the word(s) that they represent. For example: T.V. (*television*), V.C.R. (*video cassette recorder*), A.S.A.P. (*as soon as possible*), and many others are just a few samples.

The following list should be learned A.S.A.P. since they are all extremely popular and are bound to be encountered within a very short time.

-A-

A.A. • Alcoholics Anonymous.

A.A.A. • (referred to as:

Triple A) Automobile Association of America.

A.B.C. • This is a very popular television network; American Broadcasting Corporation.

A.C/D.C. • alternating current - direct current.

• NOTE: This term is used in slang to signify "bisexual."

A.I.D.S. • Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

A.M. • ante meridiem (morning).

A.O.K. • absolutely.

• NOTE: This is used as a stronger form of *O.K.*

A.P.B. • all points bulletin (police).

A.S.A.P. • as soon as possible.

A.W.O.L. • (army term) absent without leave.

-B-

B.A. • Bachelor of Arts degree.

B.L.T. • bacon lettuce and tomato sandwich.

B.O. • body odor.

B.S. • 1. This is a common euphemism for the expletive *Bullshit!* meaning

"Nonsense!" • 2. Bachelor of Science degree.

B.Y.O.B. • bring your own bottle.

• NOTE: This is a common expression applied to a party at which each person brings his/her own alcoholic beverage to drink.

-C-

C.B. • citizen band radio.

C.B.S. • This is a popular television network; Columbia Broadcasting System.

C.D. • 1. compact disc • 2. Certificate of Deposit.

C.E.O. • Chief Executive Officer.

C.H.P. • California Highway Patrol.

C.I.A. • Central Intelligence Agency.

C.N.N. • (television) Cable News Network.

C.P.A. • Certified Public Accountant.

C.P.R. • cardio pulmonary resuscitation.

C.R.T. • cathode-ray tube • This refers to a computer terminal.

-D-

3-D • three dimensional.

D.A. • District Attorney.

D.C. • District of Columbia • This refers to Washington, D.C.

D.J. • disk jockey.	• NOTE: This is a common adjective to describe a man who is very handsome like the models in G.Q. magazine • <i>He's very G.Q.</i> ; He's very handsome.	L.C.D. • liquid crystal display.	-P-
D.O.A. • dead on arrival.		L.P. • long-playing recording.	P.B.&J. • peanut butter and jelly sandwich.
D.Q. • (sports term) disqualified		-M-	
D.T.'s • delirium tremors • withdrawal symptoms from alcohol addiction.		M.A. • Master of Arts degree.	P.C. • personal computer. NOTE: This has actually become the accepted term when referring to a personal computer.
D.U.I. • (traffic citation) Driving under the influence.		M.C. • master of ceremonies.	P.D.Q. • pretty damn quick (immediately).
D.W.I. • (traffic citation) Driving while intoxicated.		M.D. • medical doctor.	P.E. • Physical Education. • ALSO: Phys. Ed.
-E-		M.I.A. • missing in action • said of a soldier.	P.I. • private investigator.
E.R. • emergency room.		M.P. • mounted police / military police.	P.J.s • pajamas.
E.S.P. • extra sensory perception.		M.S. • Master of Sciences degree.	P.M. • post meridiem (evening).
E.S.P.N. • Entertainment Sports Network.		-N-	P.M.S. • pre-menstrual syndrome.
-F-		N.F.L. • National Football League.	P.O. • post office.
F.B.I. • Federal Bureau of Investigation.		N.H.L. • National Hockey League.	P.O.'d. • pissed off. • NOTE: This is slang for "angry."
F.C.C. • Federal Communications Commission.		N.B.A. • National Basketball Association.	P.O.W. • prisoner of war.
F.D.R. • Franklin Delano Roosevelt.		-O-	P.S. • postscript. • NOTE: This is added to the end of a correspondence when the writer decides to add a closing remark. If an additional remark is to be added, the initials <i>P.P.S.</i> are added.
F.M. • (radio) Frequency modulation.		Ob. Gyn. • Obstetrician Gynecologist.	
F.Y.I. • for your information.		O.D. • overdose.	
-G-		O.J. • orange juice.	
G.I. • 1. gastrointestinal • 2. Government Issue.		O.K. • all right (used as an affirmation; also <i>okay</i>).	
G.Q. • Gentleman's Quarterly magazine.		O.R. • operating room.	
		O.T. • overtime. • NOTE: <i>to put in some O.T. at work</i> ; to do some overtime at work.	
		L.A. • Los Angeles.	
		L.A.X. • Los Angeles Airport.	

P.U. • This is a play-on-words of sorts since *Pew!* is an interjection used to signify an unpleasant odor. However, when *Pew!* is said slowly, it sounds like *P.U!*

-R-

R. & B. • (music) rhythm and blues.

R. & R. • 1. rest and relaxation
• 2. rock and roll.

R.I.P. • rest in peace.
• NOTE: It is common to see these initials on tombstones.

R.N. • registered nurse.

R.P.M. • revolutions per minute.

R.S.V.P. • répondez s'il vous plaît.

• NOTE: These initials are common at the close of an invitation requesting a response of attendance.

R.V. • recreational vehicle.

-S-

S.O.B. • This is a popular euphemism for *son of a bitch*.

S.O.S. • (nautical term) save our ship.
NOTE: This is also used as a general distress call.

S.T.D. • sexually transmitted disease.

-T-

T.A. • teaching assistant.

T.B. • tuberculosis.

T.D. • (football) touchdown.

T.G.I.F. • thank God it's Friday.

T.K.O. • (boxing term) technical knockout.

T.L.C. • tender loving care.

T.N.T. • (high explosive) tri nitro toluene.

T.P. • toilet paper.

T.V. • television.

-U-

U. • university.

U.F.O. • unidentified flying object.

U.H.F. • ultra high frequency.

U.K. • United Kingdom.

U.P.S. • United Postal Service.

U.S. • United States.

U.S. of A. • United States of America.

U.S.A. • United States of America.

-V-

V.A. • Veteran's Administration.

V.C.R. • video cassette recorder.

V.D. • venereal disease.

V.H.F. • very high frequency.

V.I.P. • very important person.

V.P. • vice president.

V.W. • Volkswagen.

-W-

W.W.I • World War 1.

W.W.II • World War 2.

Practice Using Commonly Used Initials

A. Replace the blank with the appropriate initial.

V.P.

I.D.

D.J.

P.J.s

T.A.

M.C.

C.D.

O.T.

T.P.

B.O.

L.A.

U.F.O.

1. I have to put in some _____ at work tonight.

2. Be on your best behavior at work today. The _____ is coming!

3. I couldn't prove my age because I forgot my _____.

4. This show is going to be great. I wonder who the _____ is tonight.

5. Look up in the sky! Is that a _____?

6. I need to go to the store and pick up some _____ for the bathroom.

7. He smells terrible. What _____!

8. She's the _____ in our English class.

9. I've lived in _____ all my life.

10. It's time to go to bed. Go put on your _____.

11. Come listen to this radio program. The _____ is really great!

12. Is that the song from your new _____?

Just For Fun...

The following paragraph is an entertaining way to demonstrate the many popular initials that are heard spoken by members of *any* age group. Note that the following initials are extremely popular and common to all native Americans.

"Get a **B.L.T.** and an **O.J.** for the **V.P.** **A.S.A.P.**, **O.K?** Then go pick up the **T.V.** and **V.C.R.** and go borrow the **P.C.** from your father's **C.P.A.** and the **C.D.** from your friend the **D.J.**, the one with **B.O.** **P.U!** If you can't fit it all in your **V.W.**, then use my **R.V.** but don't touch the **C.B.** I got really **P.O.'d** at the last guy who drove my car 'cause he was wearing nothing but **P.J.s** then got a **D.U.I.** from the **C.H.P.** and ended up in the **E.R.** in a hospital in **L.A.** hooked up to an **I.V.** and that's no **B.S!**"

Translation:

"Get a **bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich** and an **orange juice** for the **vice president** as soon as possible, okay? Then go pick up the **television** and **video-cassette recorder** and go borrow the **personal computer** from your father's **certified public accountant** and the **compact disc player** from your friend the **disc jockey**, the one with **body odor**. **P.U!** If you can't fit it all in your **Volkswagon**, then use my **recreational vehicle** but don't touch the **citizen band radio**. I got really **pissed off** at the last guy who drove my car 'cause he was wearing nothing but **pajamas** then got a citation for **driving under the influence** from the **California Highway Patrol** and ended up in the **emergency room** in a hospital in **Los Angeles** hooked up to an **intravenous** and that's no **bullshit!**"