

Missing-letter detectives: how 'do not' becomes 'don't' — a Year 2 family guide

Key points

- The Department for Education's English Appendix 2 includes introducing apostrophes for missing letters in Year 2.
- A contraction is a shortened form, such as 'don't', and its apostrophe (') marks where letters have been left out.
- In 'do not' → 'don't', the apostrophe replaces the 'o' in 'not', and the space between the words disappears.
- In 'I am' → 'I'm', the missing letter is 'a'; in 'we are' → 'we're', it is also 'a'.
- Appendix 2 describes when ideas are introduced, rather than when children must fully understand them, so revisiting them is expected.
- Schools can organise teaching differently, so ask your child's teacher which examples they are using and when.

Things to try at home

- Make three pairs of paper cards — 'do not' and 'don't', 'I am' and 'I'm', 'we are' and 'we're' — and invite your child to match them with you.
- Play missing-letter detective: compare a matched pair, point to the missing letter and put an apostrophe where it was.
- While sharing a book, spot one familiar contraction and say its full words together to check which letter is missing.
- Make up a silly spoken sentence with 'I'm' or 'we're', then try saying it with 'I am' or 'we are'.
- Keep play brief and optional, with pointing, speaking or an adult writing the cards; ask the teacher about adaptations for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), or support for a child learning English.

Find out more

- Department for Education: [English Appendix 2] (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7d913aed915d3fb959486f/English_Appendix_2_-_Vocabulary_grammar_and_punctuation.pdf), including Year 2 apostrophes and guidance on revisiting learning.
- GOV.UK: [English programmes of study] (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study>), including Year 2 learning and schools' flexibility over teaching order.
- Your child's teacher: ask for familiar examples and simple ways to make the game comfortable for your child.