ITS VERSUS IT’S

Don’t make the mistake of confusing the possessive “its” with the contractive “it’s.” “Its” is a pronoun meaning “belonging to it.” Like the other possessive pronouns (my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, ours, theirs), “its” does not take an apostrophe. Conversely, “it’s” with an apostrophe is a contraction meaning “it is” or “it has.”

Here is the simple rule: if you mean “it is” or “it has,” use “it’s” with an apostrophe. Otherwise, always use “its” without the apostrophe.

- *Example:* It’s important to let justice take its course. (first “it’s” is a contraction meaning “it is,” so use the apostrophe or write it out; second “its” is possessive, so no apostrophe)
- *Example:* It’s been a long time since he visited the site. (contraction meaning “it has,” so use the apostrophe or write out the words “it has”)
- *Example:* The company will not voluntarily release its financial records. (possessive, so no apostrophe)
- *Example:* The court heard its first case this week. (possessive, so no apostrophe)

Because legal writing is a formal style of writing, however, you will rarely use contractions like “it’s.” Thus, you will normally write out “it is” or “it has” and use only the possessive “its.”