Curious Question #6 – Want vs. Won’t

Transcript

Robin: Hello everyone this is Robin…

Maura: And Maura.

Robin: And we’re back again with our Curious Questions podcast that we do each and every week.

Maura: And here we answer any questions that you might have that you’re not sure about, so keep sending your questions in!

Robin: Remember the email, that is questions@culips.com. That’s C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Now the next question we have is from Mariko in Japan and she asks:

Maura: I’m having difficulty in correctly pronouncing the following two. Would you help me to improve my pronunciation and give me some tips?

Here are the examples:

I won’t go, as:
I won’t go out with him any longer because he is a jerk!

And, I want to go, as:
I want to go out and have a good time tonight.

Robin: So just to be clear, the first example was won’t, that is will not as a contraction, W-O-N’-T. The second example was the verb want and want is often followed by the preposition to. They sound the same because they almost look the same. They both are W and then a vowel and then a N and a T.

Maura: I wonder if you can hear the difference in this episode? I hope so. If you’re having any trouble hearing the difference and want to understand this pronunciation episode, go to our website Culips.com and see the transcripts in Lipservice.

Robin: So with won’t we have an O and the second example with want we have an A. This is a big distinction to make because if you listen closely these
vowel sounds are pronounced differently and can help you distinguish between them.

Maura: In won’t we hear wo. The mouth looks like an O, the lips move out and back in a little, but they don’t lose the O shape.

Robin: In want we hear a short A sound: ah. The mouth is more open, and the corners of the mouth are lower. The bottom lip drops when you are pronouncing the sound ah. Again, this is hard to visualize, so it may be a good idea to get an image at our website. Try saying it yourself and pay attention to the shape of your mouth.

Maura: Mariko asks about won’t and want to. Want with to following it. This is even easier to hear the difference between if we look at the syllables. Do you know the word syllable? It’s the number of beats in a word. Or in this case, more than one word.

Robin: An easy way to count syllables while speaking is to use your fingers, that’s what I do.

Maura: That’s what Maura does.

Robin: We say won’t and we count one. We say want to and we count to two, we count one-two. Even if we say want to really fast it still has two syllables, two beats. Even if we say want to, sometimes we don’t pronounce the to properly, it has two syllables. Even if we say wanna, which is a really, really fast way to say want to, we still have two syllables.

Maura: Do you know wanna? If you listen to movies or films in English or speak with any native English speakers, then I am sure you have heard it. It is never appropriate to write this, unless you are writing to a good friend or especially in text messaging.

Robin: Here are some examples of wanna being used:

I don’t wanna go to the party.
She said she didn’t wanna come.
Do you wanna dance?

Maura: That last one is actually the title of a famous song.

Robin: Is it?

Maura: Yeah!
Robin: I didn't know that.

Maura: *Do you do you do you wanna dance?* That's how it goes.

Robin: OK. Now back to *won't* and *want*.

Maura: Is it any clearer now?

Robin: Listen closely again:

Maura: I *won't* go.
    I *want to* go.

Robin: If you still can't hear the difference, listen to this episode again. To keep practicing is the best advice.

Maura: If you *want* to check your comprehension and knowledge of this podcast go to our website and check out the Lipservice.

Robin: Well, thanks again everyone for listening and I hope we answered a question that really helps you out in your day-to-day life. And we'll be back again next week, so until then have a wonderful week.

Maura: And keep sending us your questions.

Robin: Bye-bye everyone!

Maura: Bye!
Detailed Explanation

Here are some photos that help distinguish between the pronunciation of won’t and want.

![Won’t and Want](image)

The best advice given in this episode was about syllables. Here is what we meant, in case it was unclear. Won’t has one syllable, or beat, and want has two syllables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Won’t</th>
<th>Want to</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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Another thing is the to. Won’t is never followed by a to, but want is often followed by a to. So if you listen for the to then you will be able to tell them apart.

Slang

But we do talk fast and sometimes it is hard to hear what we say. Like I said, sometimes there is no quick fix, you just need to practice.

When we speak fast we often say wanna in place of want to. Wanna is the slang for want to. In this case, it should be easier to distinguish between won’t and wanna because in the slang there is no T sound.

We don’t always talk fast though! Sometimes we pronounce want with the proper T sound. But we also change the sound of the to that follows. It then sounds like te.

For example:

I want te go te the store. (te = slang for to)

*We never write this. I am only writing it so you can understand the sound.

Do you wanna dance?

Maura said in this episode that this is the name of a song. Robin didn’t know it. She was right. The song lyrics, or the words to the song, were written by Cliff Richard. It is not a new song. It is an oldie. An oldie is slang for a song from the 1970s or before.

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Other contractions


Won’t is a contraction of will and not. I have had some students forget this because will almost disappears. What I mean is that there is no -ill from will, it becomes -on.

We have two possibilities with will not when we make a contraction. We can say:

She won’t, OR
She’ll not

The first example is more common and we may use the second example when we want to stress the negative.

Here are some other contractions that are not so simple:

I’d  This could be I had or I would. We know which one it because the sentence gives us more information.
I’d had enough. I had had enough. (-’d is followed by a past participle)
I’d go now. I would go now. (-’d is followed by the simple form of the verb)

It’s  This could be it is or it has. We know which one it is from the rest of the sentence.
It’s a fun party. It is a fun party. (-’s is followed by a noun)
It’s been fun. It has been fun. (-’s is followed by a past participle)

*has is never a contraction when it is the main verb of the sentence. Example of what not to do: He’s a car. When we use -’s to replace the main verb, we think it is is.

In the examples above we looked at pronouns. We don’t usually write contractions with pronouns but we say them. They sound, and look, like these examples.

Jess’ll  Jess will
Rob and Jon’re Rob and Jon are

And we have contractions with modals and conditionals. Here are the examples:

Should’ve  Should have -’ve can also sound like the word of
Would’ve  Would have -’ve can also sound like the word of
Could’ve  Could have -’ve can also sound like the word of

The -’ve sound can also sound like a.

We even have an expression: Shoulda, woulda, coulda.
We say this when there are regrets or a variety of possibilities in the past, but nothing you can do about it now.

There are tons more contractions to get to know. We use them all the time when speaking so they are good to know for comprehension.

Quiz (see the answers at the bottom of this Lipservice)

1. Which sentence best describes what Myrna is going to do?

Myrna: I don't like this guy. I am not going to the movies with him.

a) She wants to go to the movies with him.
b) She will go to the movies with him.
c) She willn't go to the movies with him.
d) She won't go to the movies with him.

2. How many syllables does the word “fingers” have?

a) None  
b) One  
c) Two  
d) Three

3. Which of the following is correct?

Tamara: I wanna go to the film tonight.

a) Tamara won't go to the film tonight 
b) Tamara will not go to the film tonight 
c) Tamara wants not to go to the film tonight 
d) Tamara wants to go to the film tonight

4. How does your mouth look when you pronounce “won't”?

a) your mouth is closed 
b) your mouth is rounded 
c) your mouth is open widely 
d) you don't use your mouth
5. How does your mouth look when you pronounce “want”?

a) your mouth is not rounded
b) your mouth is rounded
c) your mouth is closed
d) you don't use your mouth

Answers: 1.d  2.c  3.d  4.b  5.a