



Shan't and **won't** are the contracted forms of **shall not** and **will not** (*won't* comes from *woll not*, an archaic version of *will not*). They are both used to make predictions about what will happen in the future. In American English **won't** can be used with first, second and third person pronouns, while **shall** and **shan't** in this sense are used only with first person pronouns, **I** and **we**. Contemporary American English usually avoids 'shan't'; 'won't' covers both meanings. So you could also say '**we won't be able to get there in time**' with little or no difference in meaning. In British English, by contrast, "**shan't**" retains its original function of expressing the speaker's intentionality, and is therefore used as a strong denial of permission, while "**won't**" is just a statement of fact, that is, something beyond the speaker's control.

***You shan't go to the party!
(because I don't want you to)***

***You won't go to the party.
(because it has been cancelled)***

Reading old books you might also stumble upon other spelling variations. Samuel Johnson's Dictionary (printed in 1855), has **wo'n't**, as do some (modern) editions of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Likewise, **sha'n't** was commonplace in the old days; this is because an apostrophe was used to denote all missing letters. Now, however, the general rule is to use the **apostrophe** in place of **missing sounds**.

Victorian Slang: N°1

NOW WE SHALL BE SHAN'T



Derived from 'Now we shan't be long'
to having no specific meaning

Colloquial Victorian English brought to you by **Typelark**