

BRITISH VS AMERICAN ENGLISH

A Collection Of Differences Between
British and American English



efb

A Collection Of Differences Between British and American English

SPELLING

American English is used in the United States and British English in the rest of the world.

GENERAL RULES	BRITISH	AMERICAN
-ise not -ize, e.g. 'familiarise' not 'familiarize'	Familiarise	Familiarize
-yse not -yze, e.g. 'analyse' not 'analyze'	Analyse	Analyze
-isation not -ization, e.g. 'organisation' not 'organization'	Organisation	Organization
-re not -er, e.g. 'centre' not 'center'	Centre	Center
-ce not -se (noun), e.g. 'licence' not 'license', as in 'we own the trademark licence to the -se not -ce (verb), e.g. 'license' not 'licence', as in 'we've licensed other companies to 'adviser' rather than 'advisor'.	Licence	License
Verbs in British English that end in 'yse' are always spelled 'yze' in American English:	analyse breathalyse paralyse	analyze breathalyze paralyze
In British spelling 'L' is doubled in verbs ending in a vowel plus 'L'. In American English, the 'L' is not doubled:	travel travelled travelling traveller	travel traveled traveling traveler
British English words ending in 'our' usually end in 'or' in American English:	colour flavour humour labour neighbour	color flavor humor labor neighbor
British English words that are spelled with the double vowels <i>ae</i> or <i>oe</i> tend to be just spelled with an <i>e</i> in American English: Although there are exceptions to the rule. For example archaeology is spelt in the same way as British English but archeology would be acceptable in America but is incorrect in the UK:	leukaemia manoeuvre oestrogen paediatric	leukemia maneuver estrogen pediatric
Some nouns that end with 'ence' in British English are spelled 'ense' in American English:	defence licence offence pretence	defense license offense pretense
Some nouns that end with 'ogue' in British English end with either 'og' or 'ogue' in American English	analogue catalogue dialogue	analog or analogue catalog or catalogue dialog or dialogue
Other spelling and word choice examples.	maths trapezium cancelled football kilometre centimetre metre	math trapezoid canceled soccer kilometer centimeter meter

A Collection Of Differences Between British and American English

VOCABULARY

BRITISH ENGLISH	AMERICAN ENGLISH
flat	apartment
university	college
theatre	theater
holiday	vacation
crisps	chips
chips	(french) fries
the cinema	the movies
soft drink / fizzy drink	soda / pop
trainers	sneakers / tennis shoes
jumper	sweater
postbox	mailbox
plaster	band-aid
chemist	drugstore
football	soccer
biscuit	cookie
quid (slang for multiple pounds)	buck (slang for a dollar) revenue or sales
turnover	A firm goes bankrupt
A firm goes into administration / A firm goes into liquidation / An individual goes bankrupt	An individual goes bankrupt
repossession	foreclosure
Curriculum vitae (or CV)	Resume
(railway) coach, carriage	(railroad) passenger car
bendy bus	articulated bus
taxi	cab, taxi
marshalling yard	classification yard
metalled road	cobble-stone road; paved road
roadworks	construction zone, roadwork
convertible top, soft/hard top	hood, soft/hard top

BRITISH ENGLISH	AMERICAN ENGLISH
crosswalk	pedestrian crossing
divided highway	dual carriageway
driver's license	driving licence
fender	mudguard, wheel arch, wing
fire truck	fire engine
fork (in the road)	junction
motorway	freeway, highway or expressway
goods wagon/truck	freight car
goods train	freight train
accelerator	gas pedal, accelerator
petrol station	gas station
petrol	gasoline or gas
gear lever	gear shift
crash barrier	guardrail
bonnet	hood
ticking over	idling
jump lead	jumper cable
number plate	license plate
silencer	muffler
flyover	overpass, flyover
car park	parking lot
overtake (a vehicle)	pass (a vehicle)
police car	patrol car, cop car
public transport	public transportation, public transit, mass transit
racing car	race car
railway	railroad
rental car	rental
holiday	road trip

A Collection Of Differences Between British and American English

VOCABULARY

BRITISH ENGLISH	AMERICAN ENGLISH
semi-trailer, semi	semi-trailer truck
pavement	sidewalk
estate car	station wagon
manual	stick shift
underground	subway
exhaust pipe	tail pipe
tyre	tire
tow truck	tow truck
gearbox	transmission

BRITISH ENGLISH	AMERICAN ENGLISH
lorry	truck
transport café	truck stop
boot	trunk (of a car)
indicator	turn signal; blinker
single carriageway	undivided highway
windscreen	windshield
spanner	wrench
give way	yield

IDIOMS

BRITISH ENGLISH	AMERICAN ENGLISH
not touch something with a bargepole	not touch something with a ten-foot pole sweep
sweep under the carpet	under the rug
touch wood	knock on wood
(can't) see the wood for the trees	(can't) see the forest for the trees
to put (or stick) your oar in to put (or stick) your oar in	throw a (monkey) wrench in(to) (a situation)
to put your two penn'orth (or tuppence worth) in	to put your two cents (or two cents' worth) in
skeleton in the cupboard	skeleton in the closet
a home from home	a home away from home
to blow one's own trumpet	to blow (or toot) one's own horn
a drop in the ocean	a drop in the bucket
flogging a dead horse	beating a dead horse
haven't (got) a clue	don't have a clue or have no clue (the British forms are also acceptable)
couldn't care less	could care less or couldn't care less
a new lease of life	a new lease on life
take it with a pinch of salt	take it with a grain of salt
a storm in a teacup	a tempest in a teapot (rare)
slowcoach	slowpoke

A Collection Of Differences Between British and American English

GRAMMAR

	BRITISH	AMERICAN
<p>PREPOSITIONS</p> <p>The differences below are only a general rule. American speech has influenced Britain via pop culture, and vice versa. Therefore, some prepositional differences are not as pronounced as they once were.:</p>	<p>I'm going to a party at the weekend. What are you doing at Christmas? Monday to Friday. It's different from/to the others.</p>	<p>I'm going to a party on the weekend. What are you doing on Christmas? Monday through Friday. It's different from/than the others.</p>
<p>THE PAST PARTICIPLE OF GET</p> <p>In the U.K., "gotten" as the past participle of "get" is considered archaic and was abandoned long ago in favor of "got." However, in the U.S. people still use "gotten" as the past participle.</p>	<p>get — got — got</p> <p>I've not got any news about him.</p>	<p>get — got — gotten</p> <p>I haven't gotten any news about him.</p>
<p>PAST SIMPLE vs PRESENT PERFECT</p> <p>Americans tend to use the past simple tense when describing something that has recently occurred, while people in the U.K. are more likely to use the present perfect tense.</p>	<p>I've eaten too much. I've been to the shop. Have you got the newspaper?</p>	<p>I ate too much. I went to the store. Did you get the newspaper?</p>
<p>COLLECTIVE NOUNS: SINGULAR OR PLURAL?</p> <p>In British English, a collective noun (like committee, government, team, etc.) can be either singular or plural, but more often is plural, emphasising the members of the group. Collective nouns in the United States, by comparison, are always singular, emphasising the group as one whole entity.</p>	<p>The government are doing everything they can during this crisis. My team are winning.</p>	<p>The government is doing everything it can during this crisis. My team is winning.</p>
<p>REGULAR OR IRREGULAR VERBS?</p> <p>This is a subtle difference that can be easily overlooked in speech but is much more apparent in written form. Many verbs that are irregular in the past tense in Britain have been made regular in America.</p>	<p>leapt dreamt burnt learnt</p>	<p>leaped dreamed burned learned</p>

Another grammar difference between American and British English relates to auxiliary verbs.

Auxiliary verbs, also known as helping verbs, are verbs that help form a grammatical function. They "help" the main verb by adding information about time, modality and voice.

Let's look at the auxiliary verb shall. Brits sometimes use shall to express the future.

For example, "I shall go home now." Americans know what shall means, but rarely use it in conversation. It seems very formal. Americans would probably use "I will go home now."

In question form, a Brit might say, "Shall we go now?" while an American would probably say, "Should we go now?"

When Americans want to express a lack of obligation, they use the helping verb do with negative not followed by need. "You do not need to come to work today."

Brits drop the helping verb and contract not. "You needn't come to work today."