

## Some key differences in American and British English

There are some clear differences in British English (BE) and American English (AE), which relate to spelling, grammar and vocabulary. It should be remembered, however, that most native English speakers will understand most American English because all films (AE: movies) and TV in the English-speaking world are shown in the original.

### Key spelling differences:

Suffixes like “ise” and “isation” in BE become “ize” and “ization” in AE.

Words ending with “our” in BE just use “or” in AE: e.g. colour (BE)/color (AE); honour/honor, etc.

Words that end in “re” in BE (from French) use “er” in AE: centre (BE)/center (AE); metre/meter; theatre/theatre

Words ending in a vowel and an “l” double the “l” in BE, but not AE: travelling(BE)/traveling(AE); enrolling/enrolling

### Key grammar differences:

It is more acceptable to use some contractions in written AE than in BE, such as: it’s (it is in BE), won’t, can’t.

Collective nouns in BE can take a singular and a plural verb: e.g. The team are playing well, but in AE “the team is...”

The past tense of irregular verbs in BE often takes “t”, but “ed” in AE: learnt (BE)/learned (AE); dreamt/dreamed.

It is better not to “split infinitives” in BE, but this is common in AE: to read quickly (BE)/ to quickly read (AE)

BE tends to use “have got” to indicate possession: e.g. I have got a bicycle (BE)/I have a bicycle (AE)

### Vocabulary. Lots of words differ between BE and AE. Here are some common examples:

| British English | American English |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Aeroplane       | Airplane         |
| Anticlockwise   | Counterclockwise |
| Aubergine       | Eggplant         |
| Autumn          | Fall             |
| Bank holiday    | Public holiday   |
| Bill            | Check            |
| Biscuit         | Cookie           |
| Bonnet          | Hood             |
| Boot            | Trunk            |
| Car park        | Parking lot      |
| Caravan         | Trailer          |
| Cashpoint       | ATM              |
| Chemist         | Pharmacy         |
| Cheque          | Check            |
| Chips           | French fries     |
| Cinema          | Theater          |
| Courgette       | Zucchini         |
| Crisps          | Potato chips     |
| Crossroads      | Intersection     |
| Curtains        | Drapes           |
| Diversion       | Detour           |
| Draught         | Draft            |
| Dustbin         | Trash can        |
| Estate car      | Station wagon    |
| Film            | Movie            |
| Fizzy drink     | Soda             |
| Flat            | Apartment        |
| Football        | Soccer           |
| Fortnight       | Two weeks        |
| Full stop       | Period           |
| Garden          | Yard             |
| Holiday         | Vacation         |
| Hoover          | Vacuum cleaner   |

| British English | American English     |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Jumper          | Sweater              |
| Lift            | Elevator             |
| Lorry           | Truck                |
| Mad             | Angry                |
| Mobile phone    | Cell phone           |
| Motorbike       | Motorcycle           |
| Motorway        | Highway              |
| Mum             | Mom                  |
| Pavement        | Sidewalk             |
| Petrol          | Gasoline             |
| Plaster         | Band-Aid             |
| Postcode        | Zip code             |
| Public school   | Private school       |
| Pudding         | Dessert              |
| A queue         | Line                 |
| To queue        | Stand in line        |
| Railway         | Railroad             |
| Railway station | Train station        |
| Rubber          | Eraser               |
| Rubbish         | Garbage              |
| Rubbish bin     | Trash can            |
| Shop            | Store                |
| Sweets          | Candy                |
| Subway          | Underpass            |
| Takeaway        | Takeout              |
| Tap             | Faucet               |
| Telly           | TV                   |
| Torch           | Flashlight           |
| Trolley         | Shopping cart        |
| Trousers        | Pants                |
| Underground     | Subway               |
| Windscreen      | Windshield           |
| Zebra crossing  | Pedestrian crosswalk |