

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AMERICAN AND BRITISH ENGLISH

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Abstract: *This article is dedicated to introducing the main differences in vocabulary between British and American English. Additionally, it concentrates on comparing the choice of specific terms between variants of standard written English and providing learners with further information on the ways to differentiate them.*

Key words: *American English, British English, spelling differences, grammar, vocabulary choices, dates, prepositions*

The English language which is recognized as the leading one in many fields such as business, media, tourism, science plays an irreplaceable role in our life. Since it is widely used in the process of communication across the world, its importance as an international language is growing over time. Furthermore, English is mainly chosen as a primary language for learning and teaching purposes and also widely utilized in the literature and media departments to publish books or articles. Consequently, most writers compose and express their ideas more effectively in English, but the majority of readers are only aware of the language to a small extent.

Essentially, there are two main variants of standard written English used in the world today, British English and American English, with variants subordinate to one or both of them. Although these standard varieties differ in terms of their pronunciation, there are few differences in grammar between them. American English is spoken in the United States which contains all English dialects used in the United States of America, British English is spoken in the United Kingdom and includes all English dialects in the United Kingdom. However, there are significant differences between both these standard varieties.

Paragraphs below illustrate common ones:

1. **Spelling differences.** There are a number of spelling differences between British and American English. For instance, words like "color" and "favorite" in American English are written like "*colour*" and "*favourite*" in other parts of the world such as in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Another difference is that the words in American English are preferred to end with *-ize* rather than the British English *-ise* such as the word "*organize – organise*". Other spelling differences are given on the table below:

British English	American English
-re (centre, theatre)	-er (center, theater)
-l (enrol)	-ll (enroll)
-ence (licence, defence)	-ense (license, defense)
-t (burnt)	-ed (burned)
-ogue (catalogue)	-og (catalog)
-y- (tyre)	-i- (tire)
-ae- (anaemia)	-e- (anemia)

2. **Difference in grammar.** In British English it is necessary to use the present perfect tense for describing current actions, e.g.

"Pardon me. I have not brought your lunch with me."

Although American English accepts the present perfect as a correct tense, the past simple tense is widely used.

"Pardon me. I did not bring your lunch with me."

3. **Vocabulary differences.** There are some differences in vocabulary and it is essential to differentiate them while using. For instance:

British English	American English
trousers	pants
flat	apartment
holiday	vacation
crisps	chips
chips	French fries
trainers	sneakers
fizzy drink	soda
postbox	mailbox
biscuit	cookie
lift	elevator
high street	main street
queue	line

Additionally, the vocabulary preference differs in them. The British people more likely to use *"shall"* in the formal speech whereas the Americans prefer the informal *"will"* or *"should"*.

Some words are written similarly in both American English and British English but vary in meaning. For instance, the word *"homely"* means *"unattractive"* in American English but in British English it means *"cozy or comfortable"*.

4. **Past tense verbs.** There are also some minor differences with past tense forms of irregular verbs. In American English, the verb *"learn"* in the past tense is *"learned"*. *"Learned"* or *"learnt"* is an option of British English. The same rule applies to the verbs *"dreamed-dreamt"* and *"burned-burnt"*. Americans prefer to use the *-ed-* ending, while the British prefer the *-t-* ending.

For some irregular verbs Americans will use the *-en-* for ending in the past participle form. For instance:

“I have gotten really hungry”. (American version)

“I have got really hungry”. (British version)

For the past participle, Americans use both *“got”* and *“gotten”* but the British only use *“got”* and consider *“gotten”* as an incorrect version.

5. **Punctuation.** While writing abbreviations of American English, full stop (.) is used after the shortened form. For instance:

Dr. , Mr. , Mrs. (American English)

Dr, Mr, Mrs (British English)

“Mr. Brown, you have an urgent appointment”. (American English)

“Mr Brown, you have an urgent appointment”. (British English)

Additionally, in American English we use the double quotation mark (“...”) in sentences, but single quotation mark ('...') is preferred in British English.

“Would you like to eat candies?”

'Would you like to eat candies?'

Besides, while counting more than three things, serial commas are used before conjunctions in American English but not in British English except where there is necessity of clarification.

“Could you please bring a pen, a notebook, and a ruler with you?” (American version)

“Could you please bring a pen, a notebook and a ruler with you?” (British version)

6. **Subject- verb agreement with collective nouns.** .In American English, collective nouns are considered as a singular form.

“The band is playing a song”. (“is” should be used, not “are”.)

But in British English, collective nouns are considered as both singular and plural.

“The band is/are playing a song”. (Both options are correct.)

7. **Dates.** Another difference between American English and British English is how they format dates. The way dates are written is one simple difference that may cause some misunderstanding between versions. . For instance, July 13, 2022

in the United States are written in the order of month-day-year: 7/13/2022

But in the United Kingdom, dates are written as day-month-year 13/7/2022

8. **Usage of prepositions.** “At” is used in order to describe a place or time in British English. However, in American English, the words “on” and “in” are widely used. For instance, at weekends (British English) - on weekends (American English)

There are also a number of differences while using prepositions in sentences because each prefers different ones. For instance:

Can I talk to Margaret? (British English)

Can I talk with Margaret? (American English)

The car is behind the hotel. (British English)

The car is in the back of the hotel. (American English)

In American English, omitting prepositions is acceptable but in British English it is less common.

I will write you. (American version)

I will write to you. (British version)

In conclusion, English is the most widely spoken language on the planet and the official language of many countries. Knowing how to differentiate variants of standard written English is essential while learning the language in order not to make mistakes and create misunderstandings between speakers.

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