

# American English vs. British English



*“England and America are  
two countries divided by a  
common language.”*

George Bernard Shaw



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- **British English (BrE)** is the form of English used in the United Kingdom. It includes all English dialects used within the United Kingdom.





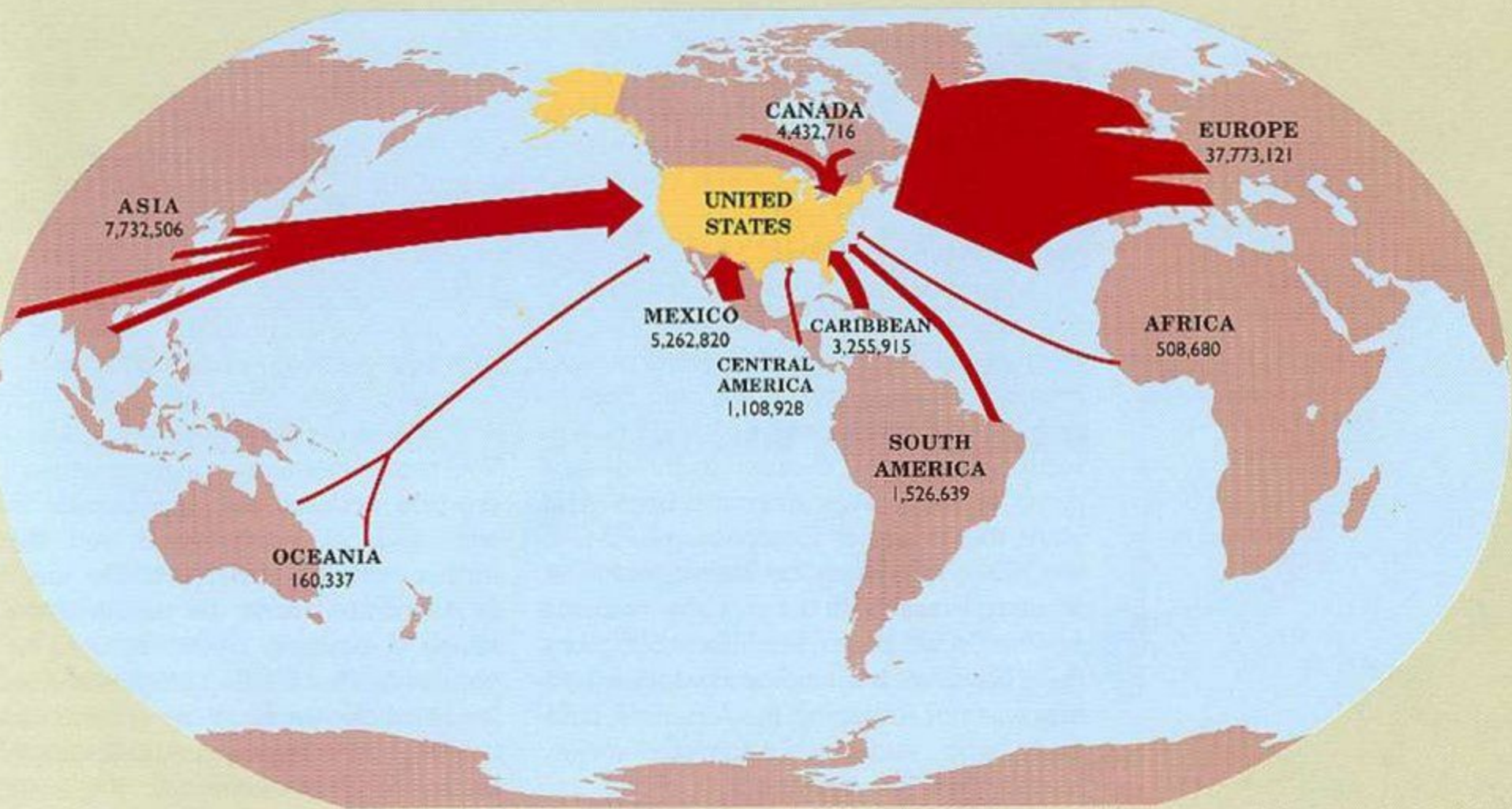
**American English (AmE)** is the form of English used in the United States. It includes all English dialects used within the United States.

# How did this divergence occur?

The English language was introduced to the Americans through British colonization in the early 17th century and it spread to many parts of the world because of the strength of the British empire. Over the years, English spoken in the United States and in Britain started diverging from each other in various aspects. This led to two dialects in the form of the American English and the British English.



# Immigration to America



# The languages diverge...and converge

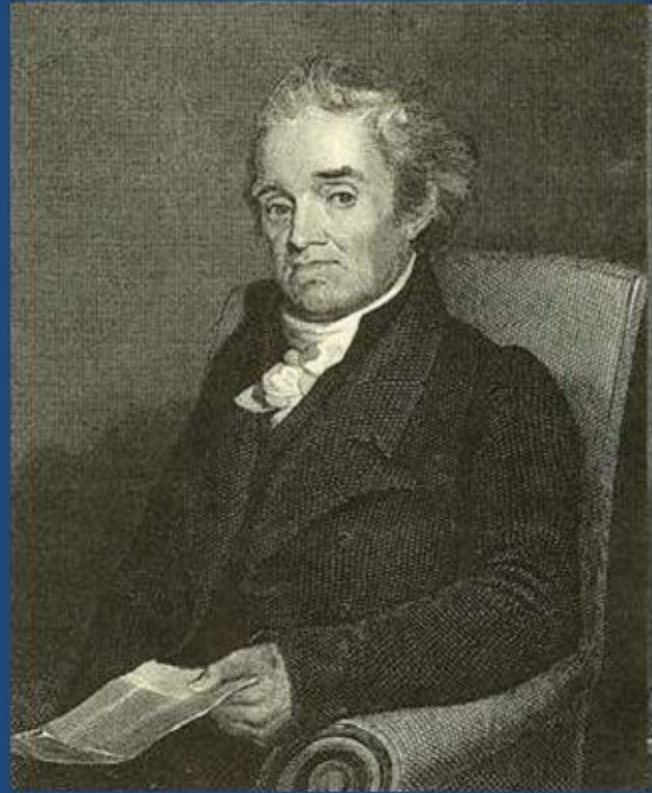
- The differences in the languages reached its peak right after the industrial revolution
- With the spread of modern technology, more terms are becoming common





# Noah Webster

- Writer of the first American dictionary in 1806
- Believed that Americans' language should reflect the way they spoke, and be distinct from British English
- Came of age during the American revolution, and therefore placed great emphasis on America's cultural separation from England





# Differences



British English

Phonetics

Vocabulary

Spelling

Grammar



American English

# Phonetics

- Vowels:

American English	Examples	British English
[æ]	plant, grass, half, bath	[a:]
[ɪ] или [ə]	civilization, specialization,	[ai]
[ʌ]	body, shot, hot	[o]
[u]	suit, duty, knew, Tuesday, student.	[ju]



# Phonetics

- Americans and Britons agree in most cases on where a word is stressed. For example, everyone says **PEncil** and **reLAX**, **CInema** and **consIDER**, but the following words from the table are stressed differently in two dialects:

American English	British English
<b>ballet</b>	<b>ballet</b>
<b>address</b>	<b>address</b>
<b>garage</b>	<b>garage</b>
<b>advertisement</b>	<b>advertisement</b>

# Vocabulary

American English includes a lot of:

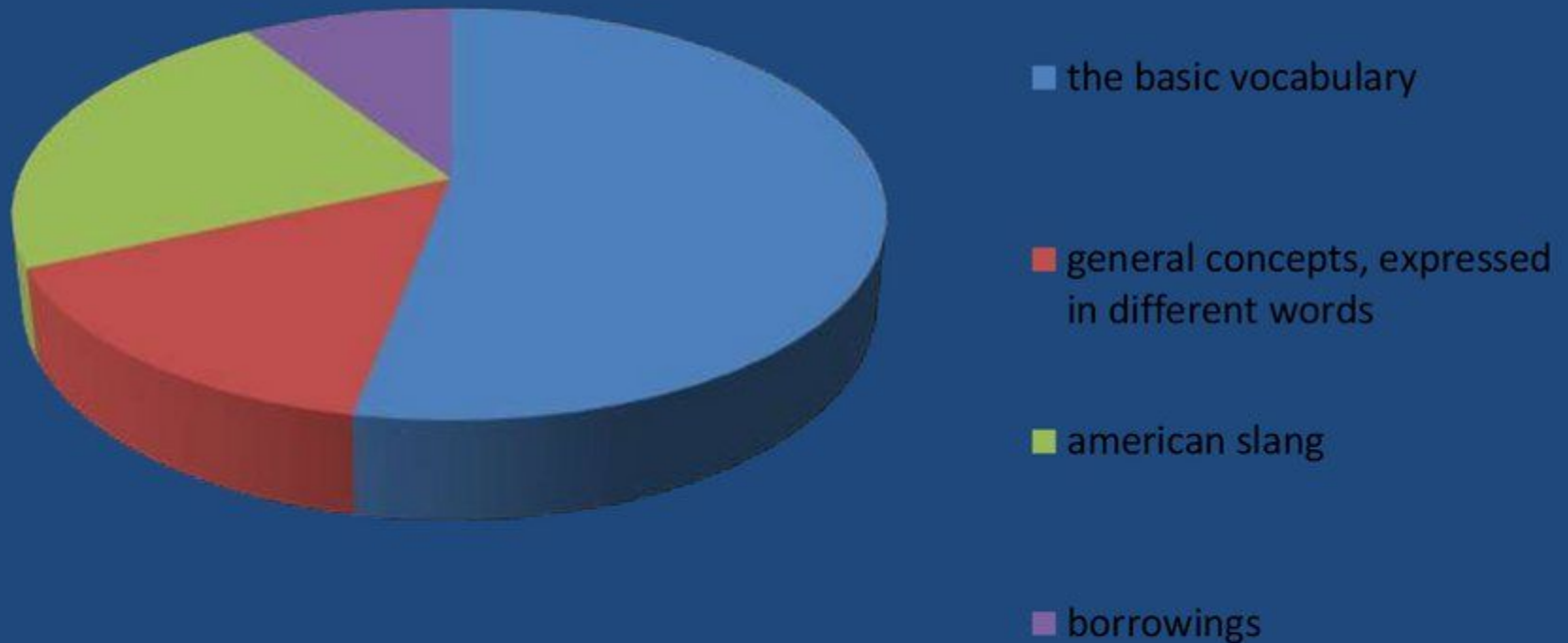
- Neologisms
- Abbreviations
- Borrowings (from the European and Indian languages)



# Borrowings



# In American English there are the following types of the lexical units:





There are many words that are used almost exclusively by Americans which are understood by most Britons, and vice versa. But there are others which can cause difficulty.

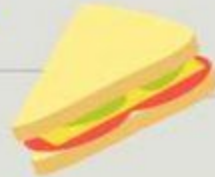
## FOOD

**BISCUIT**



**COOKIE**

**BUTTY**



**SANDWICH**

**CHIPS**



**FRIES**

**CRISPS**



**CHIPS**

**CUPPA**



**CUP OF TEA**

**FAIRY CAKE**



**CUPCAKE**

**JACKET POTATO**

**BAKED POTATO**

**PECKISH**

**HUNGRY**

**BUBBING**

**DESSERT**



# CLOTHING

**COZZY**



**SWIMSUIT**

**JUMPER**



**SWEATER**

**KNICKERS**



**PANTIES**

**MUFFLER**



**SCARF**

**PANTS**

**UNDERWEAR**

**TRAINERS**



**SNEAKERS**

**TROUSERS**

**PANTS**

# MISCELLANEOUS

**BEEB**



**NICKNAME FOR BBC**

**CHEMIST**



**DRUGSTORE**

**CINEMA/FILM**



**MOVIE THEATER/MOVIE**

**DOSH**

**MONEY**

**ELASTOPLAST/PLASTER**

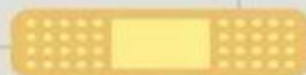


**BAND-AID**

**LIFT**

**ELEVATOR**

**LOO**



**RESTROOM**

**PAVEMENT**



**SIDEWALK**

**QUEUE**

**STAND IN LINE**

**QUID/FIVER/TENNER**



**£/£5/£10**

**THE TELLY**

**TELEVISION**

**UNDERGROUND/TUBE**



**SUBWAY**



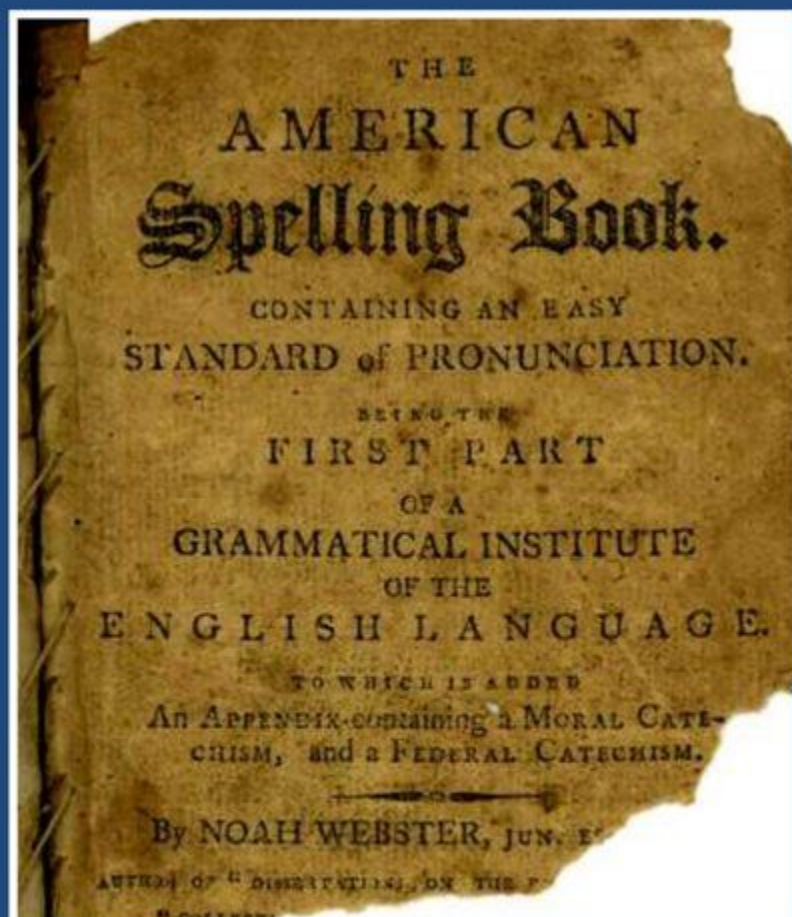
# Spelling

The main differences between American and British spelling are originated in the **Dictionary of the English Language published in 1828 by Noah Webster.**

He simplified spellings of many words, such as *plough* → *plow*  
*centre* → *center* *colour* → *color*.

He added uniquely American words, such as *squash* and *chowder*

- **-or** instead **-our**
- **-er** instead **-re**
- **-se** instead **-ce**
- **-z-** instead **-s-**
- **-l-** instead **-ll-**



# Spelling

American English	British English
color, neighbor, honor	colour, neighbour, honour
caliber, center, fiber	calibre, centre, fibre
defense, offense	defence, offence
organize, realize	organise, realise
traveling, jewelry, program	travelling, jewellery, programme



# American vs. British Spelling Differences

## Quick Reference Chart

### Common Words

American	British
• jewelry	• jewellery
• draft	• draught
• pajamas	• pyjamas
• plow	• plough
• program	• programme
• tire	• tyre
• aluminum	• aluminium
• mustache	• moustache
• mommy	• mummy
• specialty	• speciality

### -ED vs. -T

American	British
• dreamed	• dreamt
• learned	• learnt
• leaped	• leapt
• burned	• burnt

### -DG vs. -DGE

American	British
• aging	• ageing
• abridgment	• abridgement
• judgment	• judgement

### -ENSE vs. ENZE

American	British
• defense	• defence
• license	• licence
• pretense	• pretence

### -ER vs. -RE

American	British
• center	• centre
• meter	• metre
• theater	• theatre

### -OG vs. -OGUE

American	British
• analog	• analogue
• catalog	• catalogue
• dialog	• dialogue

### -K vs. -QUE

American	British
• bank	• banque
• check	• cheque
• checker	• chequer

### -OR vs. -OUR

American	British
color	• colour
favorite	• favourite
honor	• honour
armor	• armour

### -LL vs. -L

American	British
• enrollment	• enrolment
• fulfill	• fulfil
• skillful	• skilful

### -E vs. -OE or -AE

American	British
• encyclopedia	• encyclopaedia
• maneuver	• manoeuvre
• medieval	• mediaeval
• leukemia	• lukaemia

### -ZE vs. -SE

American	British
• analyze	• analyse
• criticize	• criticise
• memorize	• memorise



# Grammar

- British English and American English grammar are mostly in agreement; there are however some interesting variations. For example there are differences in certain verb forms.

In British English the Present Perfect Tense is used for situations in which American English would typically use the Past Simple.

American English	British English
<i>Did you go <b>see</b> «Redheat» with Arnold?</i>	<i>Have you <b>seen</b> «Redheat» with Arnold ?</i>
<i>I just <b>saw</b> him</i>	<i>I've just <b>seen</b> him</i>
<i>Where's Ann? - She just <b>went</b> out</i>	<i>Where's Ann? - She's just <b>gone</b> out</i>

# Grammar

- Americans are much more likely to be technically correct in the agreement of collective noun and verb form than Britons.

American English	British English
<i>The team <b>is</b> playing well this season.</i>	<i>The team <b>are</b> playing well.</i>
<i>The government <b>is</b></i>	<i>The government <b>are</b></i>
<i>The police <b>is</b></i>	<i>The police <b>are</b></i>

# Grammar

Past forms of the verbs may also differ

American English	British English
burned, learned, dreamed	burnt, learnt, dreamt
fit	fitted
gotten	got



# Grammar

There are some other miscellaneous differences

American English	British English
have	have <b>got</b>
will	I <b>shall</b> , we <b>shall</b>
I haven't seen you in 3 years	I haven't seen you <b>for</b> 3 years
on (street names)	<b>in</b> (street names)
real	really
I am good.	I am <b>well</b> .
Likely be...	Likely <b>to</b> be...

# Time telling

Both languages have a slightly different structure of telling the time.

American English	British English
<i>quarter after ten (10:15)</i>	<i>quarter past ten (10.15)</i>
digital times with a colon 6:00	digital times with a point 6.00
Month/day/year 12/31/2014	Day/month/year 31/12/2014
April, 21 <sup>st</sup>	21 April

# Americanisms in British English

Over the last few decades, British English has come under increasing influence from American English. This is because the majority of television programmes, films and music are exported to the UK from the States and people pick up words and expressions they are commonly exposed to, thus bringing them into general usage.





# Americanisms in British English

American English	British English
Can I get a...	Can I have a...)
Two times	Twice
Period	Full stop
Write me	Write to me
Movie	Film
Take a shower	Have a shower

# Final point

- While there may be certain differences between British and American English, the key takeaway is that the two have more similarities.
- Accidentally using one instead of the other will not automatically lead to miscommunication.
- Americans and Brits can usually communicate with each other without too much difficulty, so **don't be too hard on yourself** if you are unable to memorise the nuances of both languages.

# English Speaking Countries

The United Kingdom

The USA

Canada

Australia

Ireland

New Zealand

Malta

Cyprus

