

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.

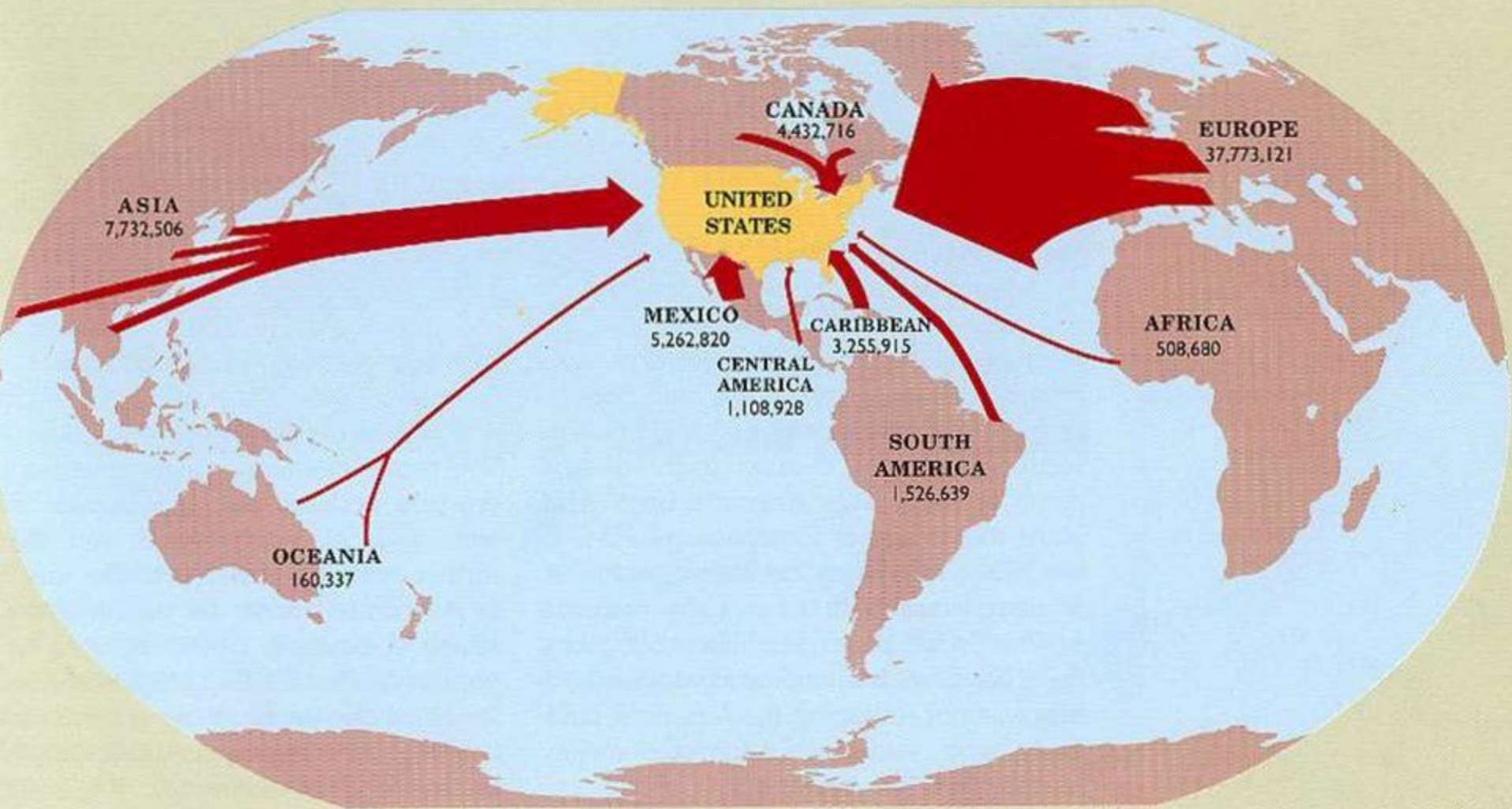


American English (AmE) is the form of English used in the United States. It includes all English dialects used within the United States.

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



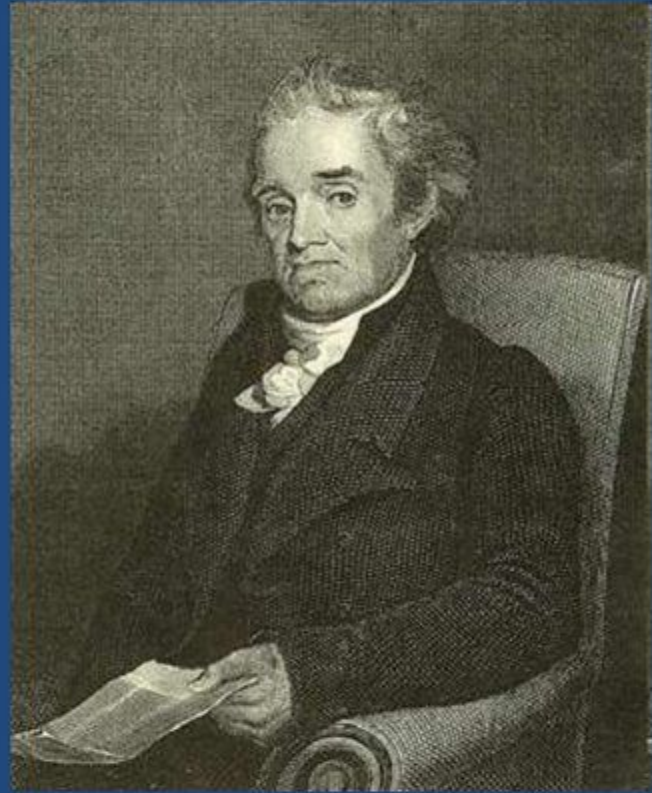
The languages diverge...and converge

- 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,	[aɪ]
[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:

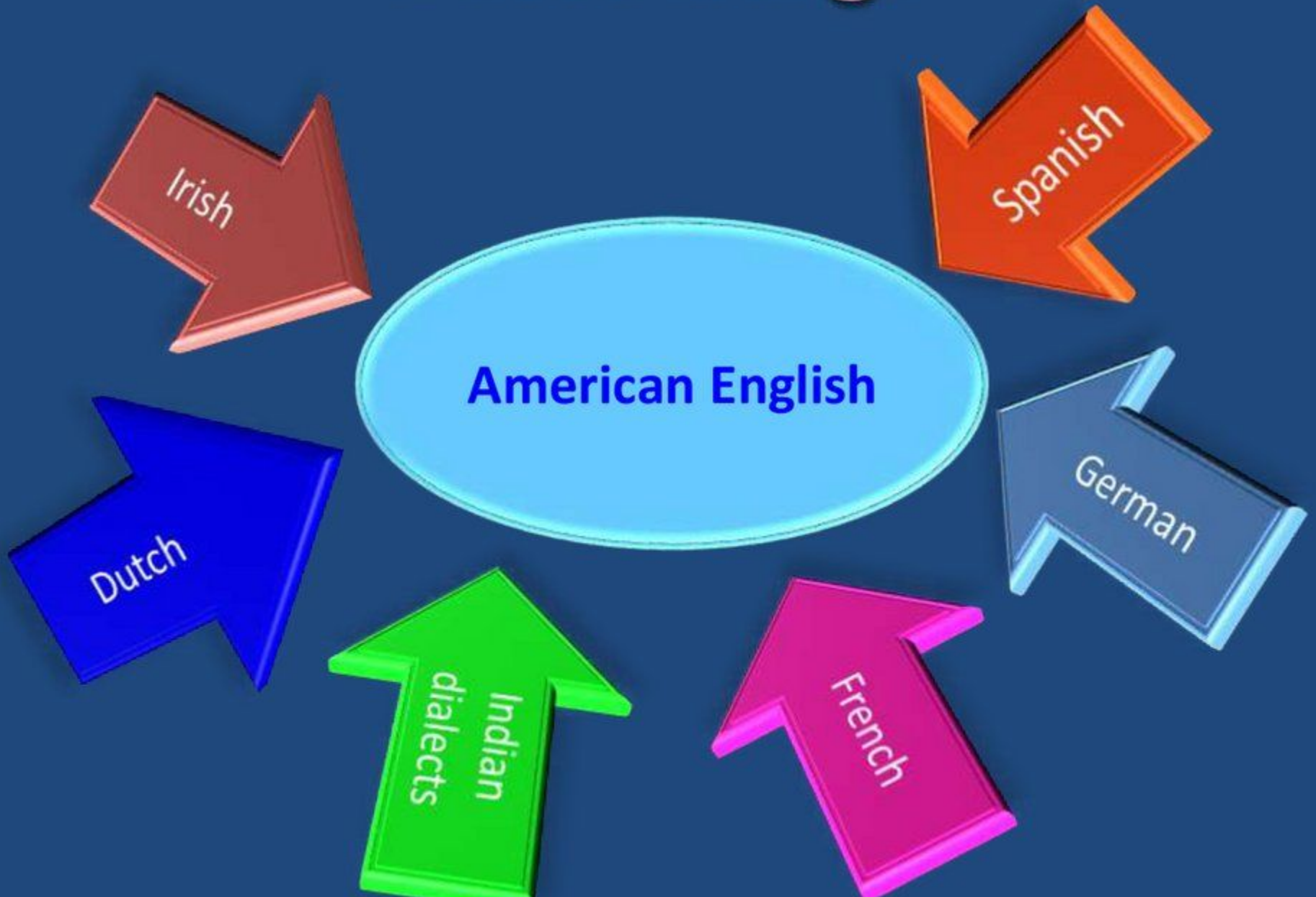
American English	British English
ballet	ballet
address	address
garage	garage
advertisement	advertisement

Vocabulary

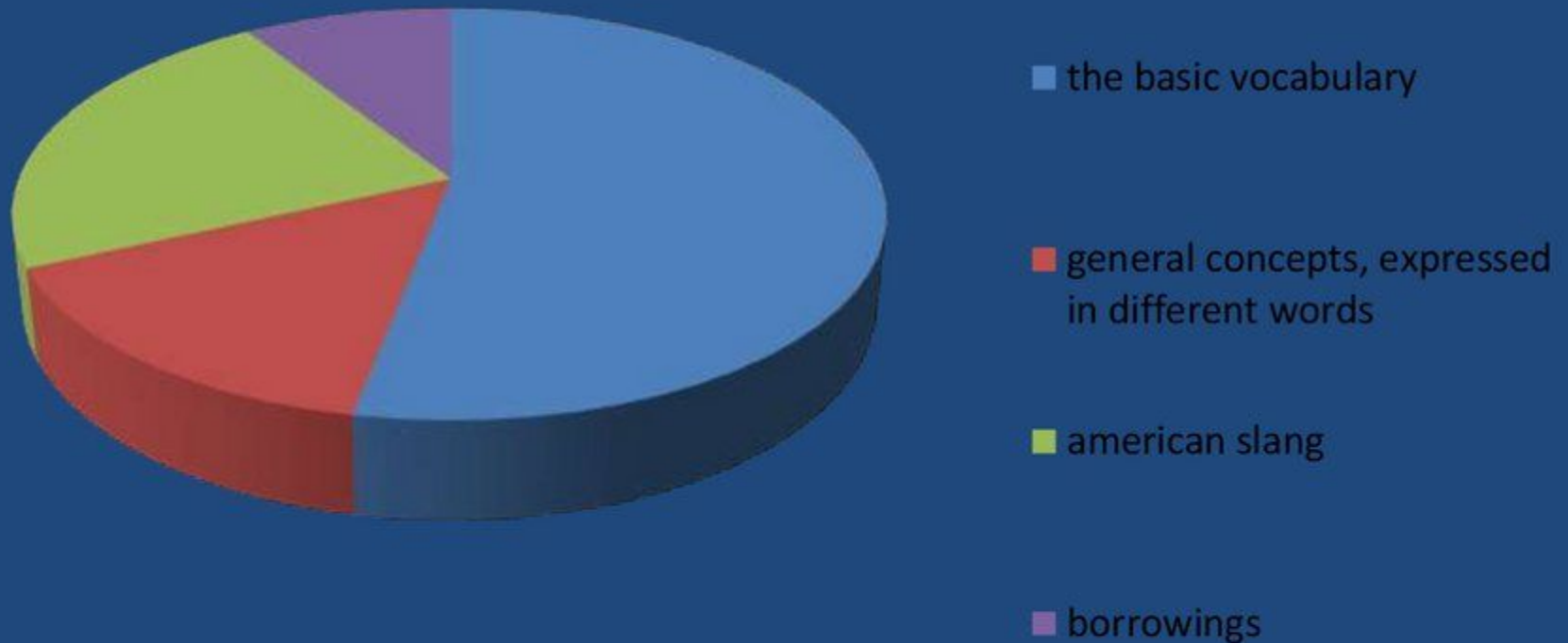
American English includes a lot of:

- 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.

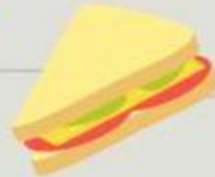
FOOD

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

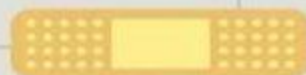


BAND-AID

LIFT

ELEVATOR

LOO



RESTROOM

PAVEMENT

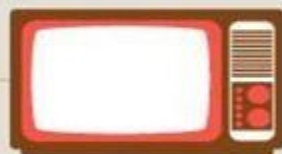


SIDEWALK

QUEUE

STAND IN LINE

QUID/FIVER/TENNER



£/£5/£10

THE TELLY

TELEVISION

UNDERGROUND/TUBE



SUBWAY

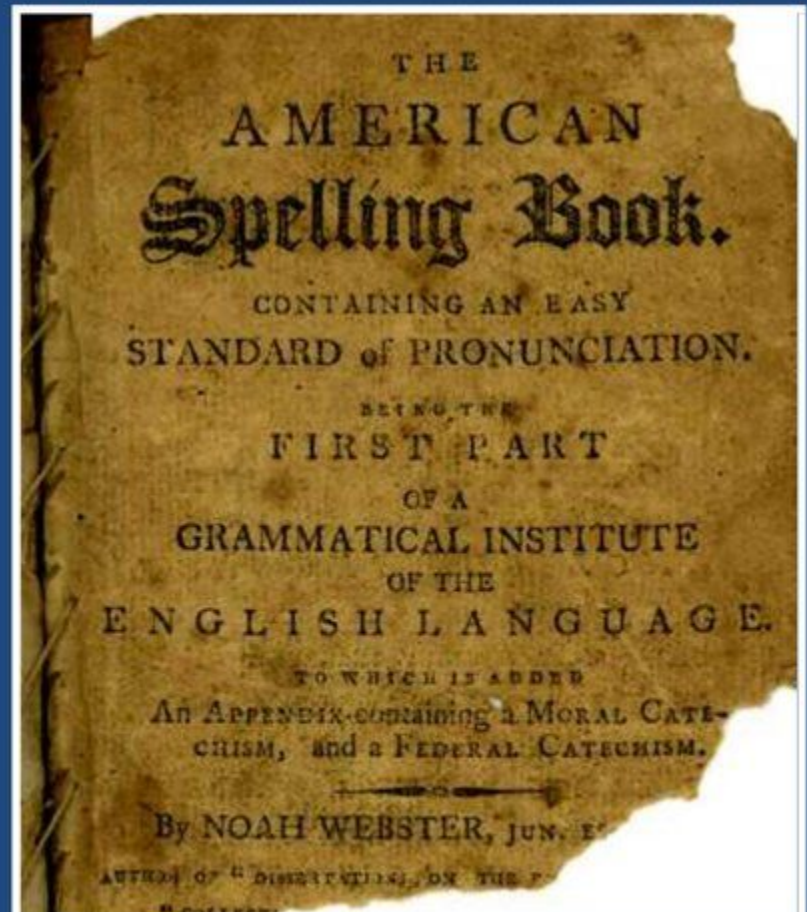
Spelling

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	colou <u>r</u> , neighbour <u>u</u> , honou <u>r</u>
caliber, center, fiber	calib <u>re</u> , cent <u>re</u> , fib <u>re</u>
defense, offense	defen <u>ce</u> , offen <u>ce</u>
organize, realize	organ <u>ise</u> , realis <u>e</u>
traveling, jewelry, program	travell <u>ing</u> , jewell <u>ery</u> , programm <u>e</u>

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 see «Redheat» with Arnold?</i>	<i>Have you seen «Redheat» with Arnold ?</i>
<i>I just saw him</i>	<i>I've just seen him</i>
<i>Where's Ann? - She just went out</i>	<i>Where's Ann? - She's just gone 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 is playing well this season.</i>	<i>The team are playing well.</i>
<i>The government is</i>	<i>The government are</i>
<i>The police is</i>	<i>The police are</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 got
will	I shall , we shall
I haven't seen you in 3 years	I haven't seen you for 3 years
on (street names)	in (street names)
real	really
I am good.	I am well .
Likely be...	Likely to 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 st	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

