

*Crucial American  
& British English  
Differences*

YOU WILL WANT  
TO KNOW





## BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH HAVE SOME DIFFERENCES,

which are not limited to pronunciation. In fact, translating into English or proofreading English texts begs a question:

### WHICH STANDARD SHOULD ONE FOLLOW — BRITISH OR AMERICAN?

Although these differences do not hinder the understanding of the texts, it is important to be aware of them.

In this eBook, we provide a list of the main differences, as well as a list of some of the vocabulary that differs in British and American English.

## DIFFERENT RULES

Bear in mind the following rules when writing.



### in written **American English**

- ❖ Clinicians and legal officers are to be found **on** Harley Street.
- ❖ Children are **in** school.
- ❖ People go **to the hospital**.
- ❖ The crowd chose **one thing or the other**.



### in written **British English**

- ❖ Clinicians and legal officers are to be found **in** Harley Street.
- ❖ Children are **at** school.
- ❖ People go **to hospital**.
- ❖ The crowd chose **one or other thing**.



# DIFFERENCES

Additionally, take note of these very simple differences that separate British English from American English.



## IN WRITTEN AMERICAN ENGLISH

- ❖ The so-called serial or Oxford comma is usually used: *oranges, apples, peaches, and pears.*
- ❖ Full stops are used with abbreviations in lower case (*a.m., p.m.*), and no full stops are used with abbreviations in capitals or small capitals (*US, UN, CEO*).
- ❖ Compound words are more common; notably, nouns made of two separate nouns are spelt as one word (*applesauce, newborn, commonsense*).
- ❖ Americans dispense with hyphens more rapidly.
- ❖ Double quotation marks ought to be used, and single quotation marks should be reserved for quotes within quotes (*“I had found a sheep, and it kept bleating ‘baa, baa’, in my barn.”*).





# DIFFERENCES

Additionally, take note of these very simple differences that separate British English from American English.



## IN WRITTEN BRITISH ENGLISH

- ❖ The serial or Oxford comma is used only to avoid ambiguity: *oranges, apples, peaches and pears* but *The children watched the following cartoons: Tom and Jerry, Kim Possible, and Chip and Dale.*
- ❖ Full stops are used after abbreviations (*abbr., adj. co.*) but not after contractions (*Dr, Mr, Mrs, St*).
- ❖ Compound words are not as common; notably, nouns made of two separate nouns remain separate or are hyphenated (*apple-sauce, new-born, common sense*).
- ❖ The British use hyphens as pronunciation aids, with repeated vowels (*pre-establish, re-enact*), and to join some prefixes to nouns (pseudo-pregnancy).
- ❖ Single quotation marks ought to be used, and double quotation marks should be reserved for quotes within quotes (*'I had found a sheep, and it kept bleating "baa, baa", in my barn.'*)





# DIFFERENCES



## IN WRITTEN AMERICAN ENGLISH

- ❖ All commas and full stops precede the final quotation mark – or, if there is a quote within a quote, the first final quotation mark (*She particularly enjoyed the article “Looking for the ‘New Man.’”*).
- ❖ The classical composite vowel in scientific terms is replaced by a single *e* (*eon, feces, anesthesia, archeology*).
- ❖ The final silent *e* or *ue* in several words is omitted (*analog, ax, catalog*).
- ❖ The silent *e* created when forming some adjectives with the *-eable / -able* suffix is often kept (*likeable, unshakeable*).
- ❖ Several words ending in *-ize* are spelt with a *z*. There are several exceptions, like: *advertise, arise, comprise, compromise, devise, exercise, improvise, surprise* etc.
- ❖ Several words end in a double *L*. The *L* remains intact, whichever the suffix (*skill / skillful, will / willfully*).



# DIFFERENCES



## IN WRITTEN BRITISH ENGLISH

- ❖ The punctuation is placed according to meaning (*She particularly enjoyed the article ‘Looking for the “New Man”’.*).
- ❖ Scientific terms often retain their classical composite vowel (*aeon, faeces, anaesthesia, archaeology*). There are exceptions (*fetus, estrogen*).
- ❖ The final silent *e* or *ue* in several words is not omitted (*analogue, axe, catalogue*).
- ❖ The silent *e* created when forming some adjectives with the *-eable / -able* suffix is often omitted (*likable, unshakable*), except when the *e* affects the sound of the preceding consonant (*traceable, manageable*).
- ❖ Several words ending in *-ise* are spelt with an *s*. However, some words are spelt with a *z*, like *analyze* and *paralyze*.
- ❖ Several words end in a single *L*. The *L* stays single when the word takes a suffix beginning with a consonant (*fulfil, fulfilment*). Words ending in *-ll* usually lose one *L* when taking one of these suffixes (*skill / skilful, will / wilfully*).

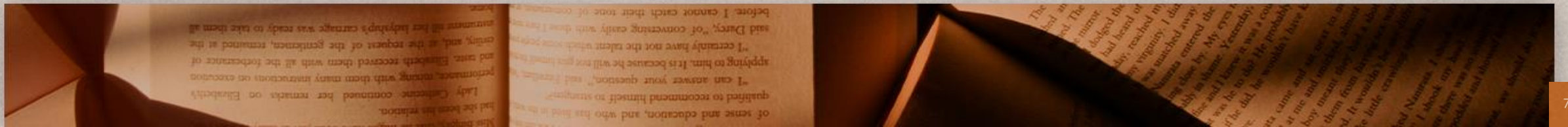


# DIFFERENCES



## IN WRITTEN AMERICAN ENGLISH

- ❖ In words ending in *-m* or *-mme*, Americans tend to use the shorter form of the ending (*program*).
- ❖ The *-or* ending is preferred (*splendor, behavior, favor, color, flavor, endeavor*). A major exception is the word *glamour*.
- ❖ The *-er* ending is preferred (*center, fiber, meter, theater, liter*). There are some exceptions, namely *acre, cadre, lucre, massacre, mediocre, ogre*.
- ❖ Both forms of the past tense (*-t / -ed*) are acceptable, however, the *-ed* form is dominant (*burned, learned, spelled*).
- ❖ The infinitive spelling is used (*quit, sweat*).



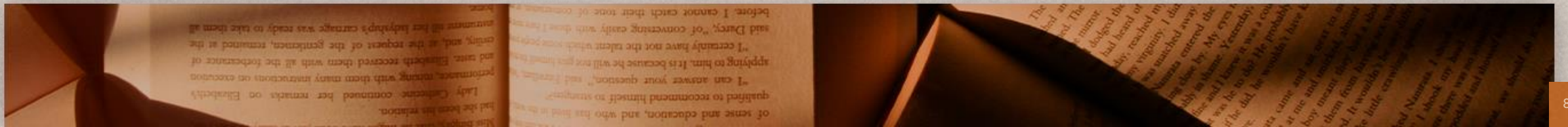


# DIFFERENCES



## IN WRITTEN BRITISH ENGLISH

- ❖ In words ending in *-m* or *-mme*, the British tend to use the longer form of the ending (*programme*, but *program* when referring to a computer program).
- ❖ The *-our* ending is preferred (*splendour, behaviour, favour, colour, flavour, endeavour*).
- ❖ The *-re* ending is preferred (*centre, fibre, metre, theatre, litre*).
- ❖ Both past tense forms (*-t / -ed*) are acceptable, however, the *-t* form is dominant (*burnt, learnt, spelt*).
- ❖ *-ed* is used for the past tense and past participle of certain verbs (*quitted, sweated*).





# VOCABULARY

## AMERICAN ENGLISH

## BRITISH ENGLISH

### ACCOUNTING, BANKING AND FINANCE

Purchase accounting

Real estate

Amortisation

Net income

Revenues

Acquisition accounting

Property

Depreciation

Profit for the financial year

Turnover

### BABY ITEMS

Pacifier

Diaper

Baby carriage, stroller

Baby's dummy

Nappy

Pram, push-chair

### CLOTHES

Closet

Underpants

Wardrobe

Pants

Plaid

Pantyhose, (opaque) tights

Undershirt

Vest

Sneakers

Suspenders

Sweater

Zipper

Tartan

Tights

Vest

Waistcoat

Trainers

Braces

Jumper/pullover

Zip

### FOOD, COOKING AND EATING

Eggplant

Check

Cookie

French fries

Plastic wrap

Cilantro

Zucchini

Aubergine

Bill (restaurant)

Biscuit (sweet)

Chips

Cling film

Coriander

Courgette



# VOCABULARY

## AMERICAN ENGLISH

Potato chips

Corn syrup

Fruit and vegetable store

Powdered or confectioners' sugar

Sweet pepper, bell pepper, capsicum

Soy

## HOMES AND OTHER BUILDINGS

Movie theater

Apartment

First floor

Homey

Bathroom, restroom, washroom

Tap

Elevator

Stove

## BRITISH ENGLISH

Crisps

Golden syrup

Greengrocer's

Icing sugar

Pepper (red, green etc.)

Soya

Cinema

Flat

Ground floor

Homely

Lavatory, toilet

Faucet

Lift

Cooker

## TRAVEL, TRANSPORT AND PEDESTRIANS

Gas pedal

Parking lot

Airplane

Trailer, motorhome, RV

Intersection

Dead end

Driver's license

Transmission

Main street

Railroad

Turn signal

Truck

License plate

Rider

Taxi

Accelerator

Car park

Aeroplane

Caravan

Crossroads/junction

Cul-de-sac

Driving licence

Gearbox

High street

Railway

Indicator

Lorry

Number plate

Passenger

Cab



# VOCABULARY

## AMERICAN ENGLISH

Overpass

Subway

Gasoline

Windscreen

## BRITISH ENGLISH

Flyover

Tube

Petrol

Windshield

## OTHER WORDS AND PHRASES

Counterclockwise

On weekends

Fall

Public holiday

Drugstore, pharmacy

Smart

Calendar

Journal

Washcloth

Movie

Anti-clockwise

At weekends

Autumn

Bank holiday

Chemist

Clever

Diary (appointments)

Diary (record)

Flannel

Film

Two weeks

Vacation

Cell phone

Regular, normal

Public school

Dumb

Figure out

Physician

Schedule

Flashlight

Crazy, insane

Fortnight

Holiday

Mobile phone

Ordinary

State school

Stupid

Work out (problem)

Doctor

Timetable

Torch

Mad



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