

British English (BE) and American English (AE) are the two main varieties of English. They are classified as different in dictionaries and are defined with different spell-checkers in computer software and should always be kept apart. It is best to be consistent and use one variety only.

Though BE and AE are about 80 - 90 % the same, the main differences can be summarized as follows:

## Pronunciation

There are wide regional differences of pronunciation even within both BE and AE. The way BE and AE speakers pronounce the vowels of words like: *new*, *Tuesday*, *clerk*, *data* and *dance/grass* (in southern BE), reveals some of the main differences between BE and AE. Also, the pronunciations of *fertile* and *missile* are a good indication of BE/AE differences: /fɜ:tail/, /mɪsail/, /fɜrtl/, in BE and /mɪsl/ in AE).

## Stress

Many words are stressed differently in BE and AE. Some typical differences are BE *ad'vertisement* and AE *adver'tisement*; BE *alu'minium* and AE *a'luminum* (note also the difference in spelling); and BE *la'boratory* and AE *'laboratory*.

## Grammar

The AE past participle of *get* is *gotten* when it means acquired; in BE it is *got*. AE: "I've gotten a new automobile"; BE: "I've got a new car". There are some other irregular verb differences.

Many differences occur in the use of prepositions. Examples:

BE	AE
a quarter past three	a quarter after three
a quarter to four	a quarter of four
at school	in school
check something	check something out
fill in a form	fill out a form
Friday to Sunday	Friday through Sunday
meet somebody	meet with somebody
stay at home	stay home
visit somebody	visit with somebody

## Spelling

Some of the most common differences, by type:

BE	AE
-ce defence*	-se defense*
-eable saleable	-able salable
-ll- travelling	-l- traveling
-mme programme	-m program (program in EDP)
non- non-profit	nonprofit
-oe- diarrhoea	-e- diarrhea
-ogue catalogue	-og catalog
-oul- mould	-ol- mold
-our colour	-or color
neighbour	neighbor
-re centre	-er center
metre	meter
litre	liter
-yse analyse	-yze analyze

\*Ministry of Defence (BE) and Defense Department (AE) should always be spelt in these ways, as they are proper names.

Spelling differences in some common words:

BE	AE
cheque	check
draught	draft
grey	gray
kerb (pavement)	curb (sidewalk)
manoeuvre	maneuver
pyjamas	pajamas
skilful	skillful
speciality	specialty
storey	story
tyre	tire

Note that some words that are hyphenated in BE are written as one word in AE. Example: non-linear (BE) and nonlinear (AE).

## Vocabulary

Some of the most common differences:

BE	AE
aeroplane	airplane
anywhere	anyplace
autumn	fall
banknote (note)	bill
barrister, solicitor	attorney
bill (in a restaurant)	check
bonnet (of a car)	hood
boot (of a car)	trunk
bumper (of a car)	fender
biscuit	cookie
car	automobile
carriage (railway)	car (railroad)
chemist	drugstore
cupboard	closet
draughts	checkers
drawing-pin	thumbtack
dustbin, rubbish bin	garbage can, trash can
estate (car)	station wagon
estate agent	realtor
flat	apartment
gear-lever	gear-shift
ground floor	first floor
handbag	purse
hoarding	billboard
lift (for people)	elevator
maize	corn
maths	math
motorway	expressway, freeway
nappy	diaper
off-licence	liquor store
pants	underwear, shorts
paraffin	kerosene
pavement	sidewalk
petrol	gas/gasoline
postal worker	mail carrier
purse	pocketbook
railway(s)	railroad
return ticket	round-trip ticket
road surface	pavement
roundabout	traffic circle

saloon (car)	sedan
single ticket	one-way ticket
spanner	wrench
sweets	candy
tap	faucet
toll road	turnpike, toll road
trousers	pants
turn-ups (on trousers)	cuffs
vest	undershirt
waistcoat	vest
wallet	pocketbook

**Note the difference in weights and measures:**

British/metric scale:	American scale:
tonne (1000 kg)	short ton (907 kg)
also called metric ton	
long ton (1016 kg)	
fluid ounce (28.4 ml)	fluid ounce (29.6 ml)
pint (0.57 l)	pint (0.47 l)
gallon (4.55 l)	US gallon (3.78 l)