

# The Differences Between American and British English 180-192

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# Range of Dialects

## British English

- Around 16 dialects within this category
- Spoken in Britain for about 1,500 years
- Not difficult to understand across dialects
- Most difficulty in understanding comes from the vocabulary
- Some examples include:
  - Northeast
  - Lower North
  - East Central
  - South Midlands
  - Central Lancashire
  - And more...

## American English

- Remarkably uniform in comparison
- Has only existed for 300 years
- Less factors in American settlement
- Many immigrants came into America, resulted in diluted dialects
- Only separated into three major dialects:
  - Northern
  - Midland
  - Southern

# Pronunciation Differences

Some common trends in pronunciation differences stem from Vowels:

a, er, ile, are all utterances that with a distinctly different trend between AmE and BrE.

In AmE the a vowel is typically pronounced /æ/, whereas in the UK it tends to be the longer a sound /ɑ:/, though this isn't true in some northern UK dialects.

Similarly, er is usually /ɜ:/ in AmE but the same a,/ɑ:/, in BrE while ile is /əl/ or just /l/ in AmE and /ail/ in BrE

# Pronunciation Differences: Word Stress

One of the clearest examples of differences across the pond is in word stress, falling into several categories.

## French Loanwords

- AmE stresses the end, BrE the beginning.

## 3-4 syllable words

- AmE stresses 2nd, BrE stresses 1st

Words ending in any of the following: ary, ery, ory, or mony.

- AmE gives more attention to penultimate syllables, leading to 'quite different rhythmic patterns'.

# Pronunciation differences

- Americans tend to give the *-day* suffix stress and use the full diphthong /εɪ/, while Brits reduce the vowel to a short /i/
- British speakers give less stress to word-final syllables.
- Overall Americans retain more distinct syllables while Brits often reduce syllables in multisyllabic words. (because they are more lazy)
  - One exception is the group of words ending in *-ate*. British English emphasises the suffix while American English stress the root. DICtate vs. dicTATE.

# Vocabulary Differences

There is no systematic rationale governing the differences between American and British English.

Many of these differences are harmless, but some could cause a fair bit of confusion, so beware!

AmE	BrE	AmE	BrE
Railroad	Railway	Underwear	Pants
Bar	Pub	First Floor	Ground Floor
Thumbtack	Drawing Pin	Second Floor	First Floor

# Grammatical Differences

## Prepositions

American English and British English prefer one preposition over another

- American English: I partied **on** the weekend
- British English: I partied **at** the weekend

## Verb Pairs

- **Gotten** is used in American English and has multiple uses (obtain, become, moved) but not used in British English

- **Shall** is used in British English but **ONLY** in first person construction: “Shall I go home now?” vs “Will you go home now?”

# Grammatical Differences

## The Definite Article

American English uses articles in some cases where British English doesn't

- American English: in **the** hospital
- British English: in hospital

## Group Nouns

- American English uses a singular verb with group nouns to indicate a collective unit: The government **is** corrupt
- British English uses a plural verb to indicate collection of individuals in the group: The government **are** corrupt

## Tag Questions

Regular questioning expression tagged onto a sentence is used in both American and British English, but is more used in British English:

“That’s not very nice, is it?”