**English Conversation | British vs American English**

Whenever I come across an English conversation on the differences between American and British English, I picture these two great nations arguing over the ‘u’ in color, while the rest of the world looks on in confusion. Well, this one goes out to those of us looking on in confusion.

It turns out that despite sharing a common language, there are many differences between the English spoken in the U.S and in the U.K. Besides the difference in pronunciation, the terminology (jumper or sweater), spelling (favourite or favorite), cultural references (cricket vs. baseball), idioms, heck, even their sense of humor is different.

The major differences in American and British English spelling essentially stem from the fact that American English emphasizes maintaining consistency between the pronunciation and spelling of a word. British English, on the other hand, has kept a more historical style of spelling words that it derived from other languages (such as Latin or French).

Let’s take a look at some of the common differences in the way American and British words are spelt. I mean, spelled! I think?

##### **-our vs. -or**

Words that are generally spelled with *our* in the U.K., are replaced with *or* in the U.S.

| **British Spelling** | **American Spelling** |
| --- | --- |
| Favour | Favor |
| Neighbour | Neighbor |
| Colour | Color |

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##### **-ise vs. -ize**

Another common distinguishing factor in both spellings is the use of ‘z’ in American spelling of certain verbs. Whereas, their British variants use either ‘s’ or ‘z’.

| **British Spelling** | **American Spelling** |
| --- | --- |
| Realise | Realize |
| Organise | Organize |
| Legalise | Legalize |

##### **-re vs. -er**

Words that end with ‘re’ in British English are reversed to ‘er’ in American English in order to keep the spelling consistent with its pronunciation.

| **British Spelling** | **American Spelling** |
| --- | --- |
| Centre | Center |
| Theatre | Theater |
| Fibre | Fiber |

##### **Verbs ending with a vowel + l**

In British English, verbs such as travel, cancel, signal that end with a vowel + l, the ‘l’ is doubled when endings like -ing or -ed are added to the root form of the verb. Here’s an example:

| **British Spelling** | **American Spelling** |
| --- | --- |
| Cancel | Cancel |
| Cancelling | Canceling |
| Cancelled | Canceled |

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##### **-logue vs. -log**

Some words that end in *-ouge* in British English are changed to *-og* in American English.

| **British Spelling** | **American Spelling** |
| --- | --- |
| Analogue | Analog |
| Catalogue | Catalog |
| Dialogue | Dialog |

It is worth noting that some American style guides recommend the usage of ‘dialogue’ in reference to a conversation between two people. ‘Dialog’ on the other hand is more commonly used as a technical term, such as a ‘dialog box’ on your computer.

##### **Irregular past tense forms**

Some verbs that are regular in American English, are irregular in British English.

| **British Spelling** | **American Spelling** |
| --- | --- |
| Dreamt | Spelling |
| Spelt | Dreamed |
| Learnt | Spelled |

Similarly, some verbs that are irregular in American English, are regular in British English.

| **British Spelling** | **American Spelling** |
| --- | --- |
| Dived | Dove |
| Wetted | Wet |
| Quitted | Quit |

So which of these two are we supposed to use for learning English? Honestly, there is no straightforward answer to that, and luckily the vast majority of words have no spelling variation and do not sound different during an English conversation. However, if writing professionally, it’s a good idea to identify your target audience. For instance, British English is predominantly used in some European countries, India, and some parts of Asia and Africa. In that case, make sure that you use British spelling.

Also, make sure that the English variant (U.S. or U.K.) you picked is used consistently. Switching from one style to another can confuse the audience and lower the credibility of your presentation.

The language variants do not matter as far as English conversation is concerned. In a professional setting, the standard way to go is to speak clearly, confidently and professionally.