

# American and British English: spelling

GRAMMAR

LEVEL  
Intermediate

NUMBER  
EN\_BE\_3907G

LANGUAGE  
English

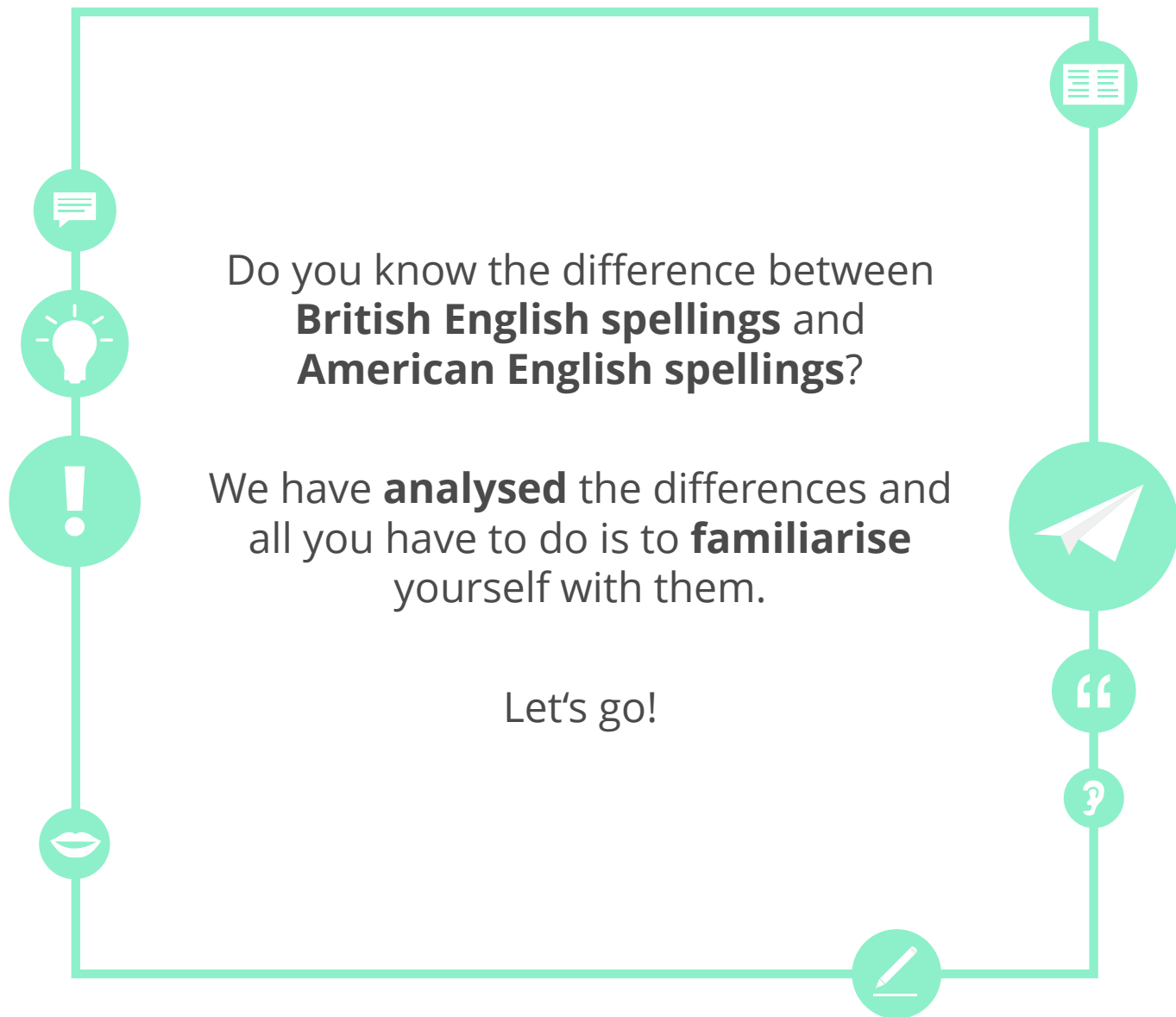




## Goals

- Can identify some key differences in spelling between American and British English, using examples.
- Can apply this knowledge to spell a range of words accurately in both varieties.







## Preview

- In this lesson, you will learn spelling differences between **American English** and **British English**.



When I was writing a letter to my **mum**, my classmate from America advised me to correct the spelling to **mom**.



## Warm-up

1. Jessica feels ill because she ate too much.
2. Jessica feels ill because she's eaten too much.
3. Is Jose here? – No, he just left.
4. Is Jose here? – No, he's just left.
5. Can I see your project? – No, I didn't do it yet.
6. Can I see your project? – No, I haven't done it yet.

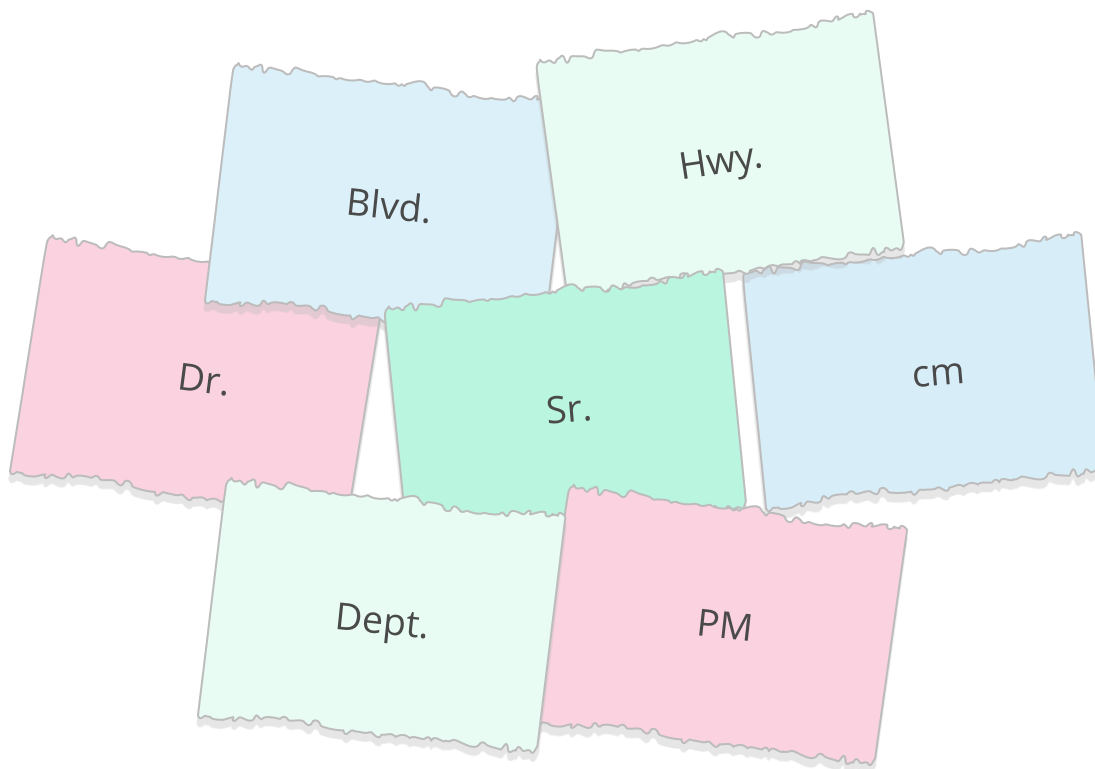
**Can you tell the difference between British English and American English?**



## Abbreviation

**An abbreviation is a shortened or contracted form of a word or phrase that is used to represent the whole.**

**Do you know what these abbreviations stand for?**





## BrE vs AmE

Depending on where you study English, your pronunciation, spelling and word choices can be different. BrE is an abbreviation for British English and AmE is for American English.

Read the sentences below and notice the difference.

British English  
(BrE)



American  
English  
(AmE)

I went to the  
*theatre* last  
night.



I went to the  
*theater* last  
night.



**Do you know the difference between British English and American English words? Write down the different words that you know such as flat versus apartment.**

[illegible]

## BrE vs AmE







## Before you start

	BRITISH ENGLISH	AMERICAN ENGLISH
1. Colour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Realize	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Center	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Catalogue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Apologise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Analyze	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Why different?

Even though they are the same language, British English and American English are different in many ways. Which English are you more familiar with? Do you know which English Lingoda lessons are based on?



British English has kept the spelling of words it has absorbed from other languages.



American English has adapted the spelling to reflect the way that the words actually sound when they are spoken.





## BrE vs AmE: *-our* vs *-or*

- In **British English**, words ending in **-our** are preferred while the **u** is dropped from the word in **American English**.

BrE: -our	AmE: -or	BrE: -our	AmE: -or
favourite	favorite	behaviour	behavior
harbour	harbor	neighbour	neighbor
labour	labor	honour	honor
humour	humor	flavour	flavor
rumour	rumor	colour	color



## BrE vs AmE: *-ise(-yse)* vs *-ize(-yze)*

- **American English** uses the **-ize** spelling at the end of words while those same words are spelt with the **-ise** ending in **British English**.

BrE: -ise(-yse)	AmE: -ize(-yze)	BrE: -ise(-yse)	AmE: -ize(-yze)
to realise	to realize	to generalise	to generalize
to analyse	to analyze	to customise	to customize
to criticise	to criticize	to familiarise	to familiarize
to utilise	to utilize	to paralyse	to paralyze
to apologise	to apologize	to recognise	to recognize



## BrE vs AmE: -ce vs -se

- While the **British** use the **-ce** ending nouns, **Americans** generally prefer **-se**.
- The spelling depends on whether the word **is a noun or a verb**.

BrE (-ce)	→	AmE (-se)
defence	→	<b>defense</b>
licence (n) license (v)	→	<b>license (n, v)</b>
offence	→	<b>offense</b>
pretence	→	<b>pretense</b>
practice (n) practise (v)	→	<b>practice (n, v)</b>



## BrE vs AmE: -ogue vs -og

- **-ogue** can also be used in AmE, but **Americans** prefer the use of **-og**.

BrE (-ogue)	AmE (-og)
catalogue	catalog
demagogue	demagog
pedagogue	pedagog
analogue	analog
monologue	monolog



## BrE vs AmE: ending in a vowel with *double l*

- **Americans** have dropped the *double l* when adding suffixes to verbs that end in the letter l.
- The **British** still use the *double l* approach to their spelling.

BrE	AmE
travelling/traveller/travelled	traveling/traveler/traveled
fuelling/fuelled	fueling/fueled
cancelled	canceled
marriage counsellor	marriage counselor



## BrE vs AmE: American English spellings with *double l*



- There is an exception to the rule in **American English**.
- These words are spelt with ***double l*** in **AmE** and not in **BrE**.

BrE	AmE
skilful	skillful
wilful	willful
to fulfil	to fulfill
instalment	installment
enrolment (to enrol)	enrollment (to enroll)





Always with a *single l*

**While some significant differences exist between BrE and AmE spellings, the two variants also share plenty of spellings.  
Can you think of any more?**

almighty

altogether

welfare

useful



Fill in the blanks and then practise using each word in a sentence.

BrE	AmE
1. duelling	1. _____
2. tunnelled	2. _____
3. _____	3. spiraling
4. unrivalled	4. _____
5. _____	5. woolen
6. appal	6. _____
7. _____	7. enthrall
8. _____	8. distill



My grandpa  
knitted me a lovely,  
**woollen** scarf.



## BrE vs AmE: *ae* and *oe* vs *e*

- The **British** retain more complex spelling of words with **Greek** or **Latin** roots, using the **orthodox spelling**.
- The **Americans** like their **terminology simplified**.

BrE (ae and oe)	AmE (e)
leukaemia	leukemia
manoeuvre	maneuver
oestrogen	estrogen
paediatric	pediatric



## *ae* and *oe* vs *e*

**Apply the rules from the previous slide on *ae* and *oe* vs *e* of BrE and AmE to write the British style of spellings of the words below.**

1. eon

2. celiac

3. encyclopedia

4. fetus

5. homeopathy



## BrE vs AmE: *-re* vs *-er*

- Words that end in **-re** in **British English** often have those letters **reversed** when spelt in **American English**.

BrE(-re)	AmE(-er)
centre	center
fibre	fiber
theatre	theater
litre	liter
metre	meter



## BrE vs AmE: *-re* vs *-er*



- Sometimes words also end in **-er** in BrE, too.
- See the examples below.

- chapter
- disaster
- filter
- enter
- letter
- member





## Different spellings for different meanings

- Some words don't just have different spellings, but have a difference in meaning as well.

Words	BrE	AmE
<b>dependant/dependent</b>	Dependant is a noun while dependent is an adjective.	<b>Only the -ent spelling.</b>
<b>programme/program</b>	Program is generally only used to refer to computer programs.	<b>Only program.</b>
<b>ensure/insure</b>	Two clearly differentiated uses: to make sure vs to protect against something	<b>Insure is taking over the use of ensure. Ensure is only used when there is a guarantee.</b>



## American English *drops the e*

- There are **three cases** when **Americans** will **drop an e** and the **British** will keep it.

Cases	BrE	AmE
1. verb + -ment	judgement	<b>judgment</b>
2. adjective with -able	sizeable	<b>sizable</b>
3. gerund	ageing	<b>aging</b>





## How would Americans spell these words?

1. abridgement



---

---

2. acknowledgement



---

---

3. blameable



---

---

4. hireable



---

---

5. likeable



---

---



## BrE vs AmE: miscellaneous words

There are some words that don't fit into the categories.  
Compare and discuss how they are different.

1. Carat (*BrE*) vs Karat (*AmE*)
2. Grey (*BrE*) vs Gray (*AmE*)
3. Mollusc (*BrE*) vs Mollusk (*AmE*)
4. Pyjamas (*BrE*) vs Pajamas (*AmE*)
5. Sceptic (*BrE*) vs Skeptic (*AmE*)
6. Tyre (*BrE*) vs Tire (*AmE*)





## More exceptions

**These are some words that have more letters in British English, usually due to retainment of an original spelling from a foreign language.  
How would Americans spell them?**



1. aeroplane

2. cheque

3. doughnut

4. draught

5. jewellery

6. omelette

7. plough

8. speciality

9. sulphur



## Make your own sentences with these English spellings.

1. colonise



---

---

2. programme



---

---

3. humour



---

---

4. fulfil



---

---

5. quarrelling



---

---

6. symbolise



---

---

7. practise (verb)



---

---

8. litre



---

---



## Quick fire round!



Without checking back on the previous slides, try to think of as many AmE and BrE spelling differences as you can.

When you have thought of a word, spell it out loud!

Dialogue is spelt d-i-a-l-o-g-u-e in British English and d-i-a-l-o-g in American English!



## Reflect on the goals

Go back to the second slide of the lesson and check if you have achieved all the goals of the lesson.

yes

no




## Reflect on this lesson

Think about everything you have seen in this lesson.  
What were the most difficult activities or words? The easiest?



If you have time, go over  
the most difficult slides again



## Answer key

### Activity p. 5

1, AmE, 2. BrE, 3. AmE, 4. BrE, 5. AmE, 6. BrE

### Activity p. 9

1. A, 2. B, 3. B, 4. A, 5. A, 6. B

### Activity p. 18

1. dueling, 2. funneled, 3. spiralling, 4. unrivaled, 5. woollen, 6. appall, 7. enthrall, 8. distill

### Activity p. 20

1. aeon, 2. coeliac, 3. encyclopaedia, 4. foetus, 5. homoeopathy

### Activity p. 25

1. abridgment, 2. acknowledgment, 3. blamable, 4. hirable, 5. likable

### Activity p. 27

1. airplane, 2. check, 3. donut, 4. draft, 5. jewelry, 6. omelet, 7. plow, 8. specialty, 9. sulfur







## Homework: How do you spell these words in BrE?

1. Demeanor

a. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Odor

b. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Centimeter

c. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Somber

d. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Epilog

e. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Marvelous

f. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Appetizer

g. \_\_\_\_\_



## Homework: writing activity

**Do you think living in an urban city is better than living in a rural area? State your opinions supported by details and examples. Remember to use only British English spellings.**

○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	



## Homework answer key

### Activity p. 33

1. Demeanour, 2. odour, 3. centimètre, 4. somber, 5. epilogue, 6. marvellous, 7. appetiser



## About this material

Find out more at  
[www.lingoda.com](http://www.lingoda.com)



This material is provided by

**lingoda**

### **lingoda** Who are we?



Why learn English online?



What kinds of English classes do we offer?



Who are our English teachers?



How do our English certificates work?



We also have a language blog!