

DATES AND TIME

There are a number of differences between American and British English when describing dates and giving the time. Below are two examples, the main difference being the placement of the day and the month.

- September 29, 2009 (AE)
29th September 2009 (BE)
- 9/29/2009 (AE)
29/9/2009 (BE)

Helpful Hint: It may be a good idea to write a date out in full, to avoid confusion:

Is 3/9/2003 the 3rd of September 2003 or March 9, 2003?

- What time is it? It's a quarter after five. (AE)
What time is it? It's quarter past five. (BE)
- It's a quarter till six. (AE)
It's quarter to six. (BE) (AE)

COMMAS

The use of commas in lists is also different. Note the missing comma in the UK version of the following sentence:

The company has not issued any bonds, shares, stock options, or securities this year. (AE)

The company has not issued any bonds, shares, stock options or securities this year. (BE)

GRAMMATICAL DIFFERENCES

Below are some examples of divergences in grammar and country-specific structures in 'British' and 'American' English.

AE/BE

- I will write them next month / I will write to them next month
- It was nice to talk with her / It was nice to talk to her
- I am meeting with the union representatives today / I am meeting the union representatives today
- I live on First Avenue / I live in First Avenue
- Let's go see a movie / Let's go and see a film
- Different than/different from / Different from / different to
- I already ate / I have already eaten
- Look out the window / Look out of the window
- Hudson River / River Thames
- He's in the hospital / he's in hospital
- Sure can / Leave it with me
- Will do / Yes of course

A POCKET GUIDE TO

US vs UK English



US vs UK English

"Two countries divided by a common language"

George Bernard Shaw

- Over the past 400 years, the form of the language used in the Americas—especially in the United States—and that used in the United Kingdom has changed in many ways, leading to the dialects now commonly referred to as American English and British English.
- The difference between the two includes pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, idioms and dates and so on. A small number of words have completely different meanings.



Some differences between British English (BE) and American English (AE) vocabulary but with similar meanings

AE : BE

Two weeks : Fortnight
Legal holiday : Bank holiday
Regular/special shareholders' meeting : Ordinary/extraordinary general meeting (of the shareholders)
(Articles of incorporation and) bylaws : (Memorandum and) articles of association
Income statement : Profit and loss account
Currency exchange : Bureau de change
President/Chairman : Chairman
Chief Executive Officer : Managing director
Realtor : Estate agent
Real estate : Property
Zip code : Postcode
Run (for office) : Stand (for office)
Checking account : Current account
Check : Cheque
Mutual fund : Unit trust
Penitentiary : Prison

Different spelling but same pronunciation between American English (AE) and British English (BE)

Color : Colour
Center : Centre
Check : Cheque (bank)
License : Licence
Maneuver : Manoeuvre
Defense : Defence

Further differences exist where American spelling uses 'z' and 'or' and British 's' and 'our'

z – organize : -s organise
or – favor, behavior : our - favour, behaviour

COLLECTIVE NOUNS

Collective nouns like jury, team, family, government etc., can take both singular and plural verbs in British English. In American English they normally take a singular verb.

- The committee meets tomorrow. (AE)
The committee meets/meet tomorrow. (BE)
- The team is going to lose. (AE)
The team is/are going to lose. (BE)

POSSESSION

British normally uses **have got** to show possession. In American English **have** (in the structure do you have) and **have got** are both possible.

- Do you have a car? OR Have you got a car? (AE)
- Have you got a car? (BE)

USE OF THE VERB GET

In British English the past participle of get is got. In American English the past participle of get is gotten, except when have got means have.

- He has got a prize. (BE)
He has gotten a prize. (AE)
- I have got two sisters. (BE)
I have got two sisters. (=I have two sisters.)(AE)

MID-POSITION ADVERBS

In American English mid-position adverbs are placed before auxiliary and other verbs. In British English they are placed after auxiliary verbs and before other verbs..

- He probably has arrived now. (AE)
He has probably arrived now. (BE)
- I seldom am late for work. (AE)
I am seldom late for work. (BE)