

Differences between UK and US English

Spelling variations in UK and US English

Pattern of variation	Examples of UK spelling	Examples of US spelling
- ce/se	advice (noun), advise (verb) practice(noun), practise (verb) licence (noun), license (verb) defence, offence, pretence	advise (noun + verb) practice (noun + verb) license (noun + verb) defense, offense, pretense
-er/re	centre, fibre, litre, metre, lustre (BUT meter – <i>measuring device</i>)	center, fiber, liter, meter, luster
-our/or	behaviour, endeavour, rumour, colour, odour, labour, honour, favourable	behavior, endeavor, rumor, color, odor, labor, honor, favorable
-l/ll	fulfil, distil, enrol, enrolment, instal(l), instalment skilful, wilful	fulfill, distill, enroll, enrollment, install, installment skillful, willful
-ogue/og	analogue, catalogue, dialogue	analog, catalog, dialog
-ise/ize -isation/ization	emphasise, minimise, globalise, colonise, organise, standardise globalisation, colonisation, organisation standardization, civilisation <i>(The -ize/ization version can also be found in some UK texts.)</i>	emphasize, minimize, globalize, colonize, organize, standardize globalization, colonization, organization standardization, civilization
-yse/zye	analyse, catalyse, paralyse	analyze, catalyze, paralyze (BUT analysis, catalysis, paralysis)
-ae/e	encyclopaedia, mediaeval	encyclopedia, medieval
miscellaneous	aluminium, anaesthetic, grey, haemorrhage, mould, oesophagus, plough, (research, TV) programme, storey (of building), (car) tyre, inflexion (also inflection)	aluminum, anesthetic, gray, hemorrhage, mold, esophagus, plow, program, story, tire, inflection

Adapted from:

McCarthy, M. O'Dell, F. (2012). *Academic Vocabulary in Use*. Cambridge: CUP.

Yang, J. T. (1995). *An Outline of Scientific Writing: For Researchers with English as a Foreign Language*. Singapore: World Scientific.

British and North American academic context vocabulary

- numerous differences between UK (+ Ireland) and US (+ Canada) English
- great amount of mixing – mutual familiarity with usages
- American vocabulary is influencing and being imported into British, Irish and international English more and more (more into Irish than British)
- most differences concern especially words that are **part of the so-called basic vocabulary** (that is words used in both non-academic and academic contexts)

Examples of words and phrases that are commonly used in North American English academic contexts and their British/Irish equivalents

North American	British/Irish	Comment
co-worker	workmate	
doctor's office	surgery	
downtown	city centre, town centre	
district attorney	public prosecutor	
elementary school	primary school	"1./2. stupeň": AmE: lower/upper elementary school BrE: lower/upper primary school
elevator	lift	
eraser	rubber	
fall	autumn	
gas	petrol	
faucet	tap	
freeway	motorway	
high school	secondary school	
intersection	crossroads	
kindergarten	nursery	
operating room	operating theatre	hospital
mail	post	
mall	shopping centre	<i>Mall</i> is used more and more in BrE.
mass transit	public transport	
movie	film	
movie theatre	cinema	
normalcy	normality	
parenthesis	brackets	In AmE, the word brackets refers to []. In AmE, parenthesis are ().
penitentiary	prison	
period	full stop	
petroleum	crude oil	oil when it comes out of the ground
prenatal	ante-natal	"before birth"
railroad	railway	
resumé	curriculum vitae (or CV)	
sales clerk	shop assistant	
sales tax	VAT (value added tax)	tax added to goods and services at the point of purchase
schedule	timetable	
senior	pensioner, senior citizen	
store	shop	
subway	underground (railway)	A subway in BrE is an underground tunnel or passageway for pedestrians to cross the road.
takeout	takeaway	meals, food
trash, garbage	rubbish, refuse (more formal)	
truck	lorry, truck	
two weeks	fortnight	
vacation	holiday	<i>Vacation</i> is used in BrE universities to mean the period when no teaching takes place. In AmE, <i>holiday</i> refers to a national day of observance, for example New Year's Day.
zip code (USA), postal code (Canada)	postcode	

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