

How to understand different Englishes

In this lesson you will learn ways in which British English differs from American English and other varieties of English around the world.

Starter

- 1 'English is the language of the world.' Do you agree? In your opinion is this a good thing or not?
- 2 Would you prefer to speak 'International English' or is it better to speak with the vocabulary and pronunciation of one specific English-speaking country, such as the UK, the USA, or Australia?



Challenge

- 1 Listen to the same sentences being said by a British speaker and an American speaker. What differences can you identify in pronunciation? In each case, you will hear the British speaker first.
 - 1 He's a new clerk.
 - 2 I'll just get a glass of water.
 - 3 I can't do that advertisement.
 - 4 The mall's too hot.
 - 5 Is the garage on route 63?
 - 6 What's the address of the leisure park?
- 2 Listen to two dialogues. They are almost identical except that the first conversation is in American English and the second is in British English. Find one important piece of factual information that is different between the two dialogues.
- 3 Listen again. Make notes of different words in American and British English that have the same meaning.
- 4 Listen to ten different people at a conference giving their opinion of the talk advertised opposite. Which people feel positive about the speaker?

Language box

American English grammar differs from British English grammar in a number of ways, although increasingly, American or British native speakers may understand and use both varieties.

The present perfect tense is often used in British English to talk about events that have happened close to now. In American English the past simple is also possible, and *already*, *yet*, and *just* can be used with the past simple:

AmE and BrE: He's just taken the visitor next door.

AmE: He just took the visitor next door.

The past participle of *got* is *gotten* in American English, although this is not used to talk about possession. Some other past participles differ in colloquial American English:

BrE: She's finally got an answer.

AmE: She's finally gotten an answer.

BrE: The new part has fitted well.

AmE: The new part has fit well.

Have got and *have* are used to talk about possession in both British and American English, but *have got* is more common in the UK:

BrE: Have you got a webcam?

AmE: Do you have a webcam?

Preposition use sometimes varies between British and American English:

BrE: We'll do it at the weekend.

AmE: We'll do it on the weekend.

BrE: I'd hate that to happen.

AmE: I'd hate for that to happen.

BrE: Please write to Helen.

Hint

Spelling sometimes differs in BrE and AmE:

Br Eng: colour, publicise, defence, centre, draught

Am Eng: color, publicize, defense, center, draft

Hint

Write short dates as day / month / year in BrE but month / day / year in AmE:

25/12/2009 in BrE is 12/25/2009 in AmE

13 June

14.00 Mr. Brendan Dennis discusses his draft proposals for the new center to develop food dyes and colorings.

5 Listen again. Can you identify which accent each person has? For each one, decide which of the two countries below they come from.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------|
| 1 the USA | England |
| 2 Australia | Ireland |
| 3 Russia | Korea |
| 4 Jamaica | the USA |
| 5 India | Brazil |
| 6 South Africa | the USA |
| 7 Canada | Australia |
| 8 Germany | Spain |
| 9 France | Norway |
| 10 England | Scotland |

Practice

1 Look at the sentences by a speaker of British English. What words would change in the sentences if they were spoken by a speaker of American English?

- 1 We're importers of biscuits and sweets.
- 2 The shop's low on aubergines, courgettes, tomatoes, potatoes, and crisps.
- 3 If it's not in the boot of the car, check under the bonnet.

2 Look at the sentences by a speaker of American English. What words would change if they were spoken by a speaker of British English?

- 1 A round-trip ticket downtown, please.
- 2 I'll write you when I've gotten home.
- 3 We've got to pay the check. Do you have any bills?

AmE: Please write Helen.

In certain cases in British English, *shall* is used for *will* or *should* when making questions and sentences with *I* and *we*. *Shall* is rarely used in modern American English:

BrE: What shall we do?

AmE: What should we do?

In British English, the structure *go / come and do something* is usually *go / come do something* in American English:

BrE: Let's go and speak to him now.

AmE: Let's go speak to him now.

Look

Look at listening script 44.2 on pages 137-138. Find more examples of differences between British and American English grammar.

Lesson record

3 new words from this lesson

3 useful phrases from this lesson

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|---------|---------|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |

Things to remember

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