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# Divided by a Common Language



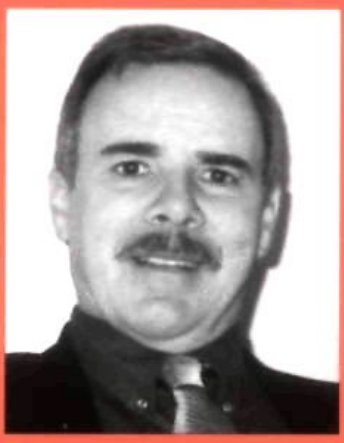
## A GUIDE TO BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH

Christopher Davies

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*Divided by a Common Language* offers a detailed comparison of the language and customs of the US and the UK. Author Christopher Davies also discusses all the important differences between the two countries in the practical details of daily life, and American readers in particular will enjoy his account of American culture as seen through an Englishman's eyes. Davies tops it off with an amusing list of expressions that sound innocent enough in one country but make quite the opposite impression in the other. The distinctive words of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa are explained in separate sections devoted to the many varieties of English spoken around the globe. Americans who enjoy contemporary British novels, movies, and television, as well as Britons who are interested in American culture, won't want to be without this handy guide to life on the other side of the Atlantic.

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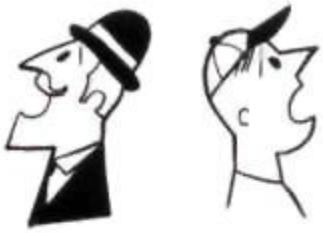
**CHRISTOPHER DAVIES** was born and raised in England and spent several years living in Australia and New Zealand. Since 1980, he has made his home in Florida, where he works in the field of information technology. The many unfamiliar expressions and pronunciations that he has encountered in American English led him to write *Divided by a Common Language.*

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**PUZZLED BY SIGNS** warning you to *mind the gap* in the London Underground? Wondering what will be on your plate if you order *toad in the hole* off the menu of a London café? Unable to *suss out* what people in the UK mean to say? Then *mug up* on your British English with *Divided by a Common Language: A Guide to British and American English.* Author Christopher Davies explains all of these expressions — along with hundreds more — and discusses the many differences in pronunciation, spelling, and vocabulary between British and American English. Two large glossaries help both American and British travelers translate easily from one variety of English to the other. With *Divided by a Common Language* in hand, Americans and Britons can leap the language gap between the US and the UK with confidence.

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BRITISH AND AMERICAN
ENGLISH

Christopher Davies

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# *Foreword*

Since my first trip to the United States in 1979, I have been struck by the magnitude of the differences between British and American speech. Some experts estimate that there are roughly 4,000 words in everyday speech that are used differently. One might assume that Australia and New Zealand, for example, might have equally big differences in language and culture from their mother country, but not so. I found the differences in these two countries to be quite superficial in comparison with those of the United States. Of course slang expressions are quite different, but spelling and word usage are much the same. In fact recently, with Australian television shows being broadcast in Britain, some Australian slang is finding its way back home. By contrast, Canada, with its major cities all within a few hours' drive of the US border, has only a vestige of its British speech remaining in the English-speaking sections (though it still uses mostly British spelling), and to most outsiders Canada seems thoroughly American. The aim of this book is to give Americans and Britons a better understanding of each other's variation of the English language.

# *Acknowledgments*

The author gratefully acknowledges the help and advice received from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, and from family and the many friends and acquaintances whose patience made this book possible.

## *Guide to Pronunciation and Other Symbols Used*

Pronunciations given for words appear in square brackets throughout this book. The pronunciations offered here attempt to stay as close to the spelling as possible, but it is necessary to use some special symbols in some cases to specify the pronunciation clearly. The following special symbols and letter combinations are used throughout the book.

| SYMBOLS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|
| ă | *hat* [hăt] |
| ā *or* ay | *hate* [hāte], *trait* [trayt] |
| ah | *father* [**fah**·ther] |
| ə | *sofa* [**so**·fə] |
| ĕ | *bed* [bĕd] |
| ee *or* ē | *bead* [beed] or [bēd] |
| ĭ | *bit* [bĭt] |
| ī | *bite* [bīt] |
| ŏ | *cot* [kŏt] (in British pronunciations—most Americans say *pot* [paht]) |
| ō *or* oh | *coat* [kōt], *adobe* [ə·**doh**·bee] |
| oo | *cool* [kool] |
| û | *cook* [kûk] |
| zh | *vision* [**vĭ**·zhən] |

A raised dot [·] is used to separate syllables in a word, as for example in *tomato,* pronounced [to·**mā**·toh] or [to·**mah**·toh].

The accented (stressed) syllable in words of more than one syllable is put in boldface type.

Labels identify regionalisms and slang words (words used regularly only in a region within a country, such as the South in the US or Queensland in Australia). For example, an entry such as *rotary (regional New England)* means that in New England the

word *rotary* is used instead of *traffic circle* (or *roundabout* in the UK).

In words lists comparing the vocabulary of two different varieties of English, words are listed in columns according to country. The addition plus sign (+) following a word indicates that the word or pronunciation is typical of the country represented by the column in which it appears, but it is also used and understood in the countries represented in the other column. When a plus sign (+) is found in both columns for a particular pair of words, it indicates that both terms are known in both countries, but that word given in the column is more common in the country described by that column. The asterisk (*) indicates that a word is discussed in Chapter 17, *Explanations,* on pages 220–227.

*England and America are two countries*
*divided by a common language.*

attributed to

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

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# 1

# *How Did British and American English Become So Different?*

A British reader looking at a newspaper or magazine from Australia or South Africa would not find too many unfamiliar words. Not so with American English. Words such as *caboose, bleachers,* and *busboy* are everyday words in the US, but they would perplex the average speaker of British English. On the other hand, there are words used in British English that an American might find a little strange: *mailshot, crosspatch,* and *gymkhana.* (These words can all be found in the US–UK and UK–US lexicons in this book.)

Most English-speaking people are unaware of the vast differences between British and American English. This book is designed to enlighten the reader about these differences and briefly explain how these differences came about.

## SOME ANSWERS

Why, when we have global communication on the Internet and we are all watching the same television shows, do we still have difficulty understanding one another? An estimated 4,000 words in everyday use in Britain have a different meaning or are used differently in the US. Let's go back in time to find some answers.

The early settlers in the US had no verbal contact with the folk they left behind in England, and the division of the language began. Over the years many Europeans settled in the US, bringing their languages with them. English remained the dominant language in America, although German was widely spoken in the 1800s. There were numerous French colonies, and New York was originally a Dutch settlement, called New Amsterdam. Each language left its mark on spoken English, with mainly the written word standardizing speech. Until the 1900s many books were imported from England, which did keep American English from straying too far.

Noah Webster, the well-known American lexicographer, forecast back in 1789 that eventually American English would be as different from British English as Dutch, Danish, and Swedish are from German, or from one another. This may sound preposterous, but Webster himself did initiate some of the biggest changes in American spelling. His *American Dictionary of the English Language* became the standard for spelling and word usage in America.

Webster, in his best-selling *American Speller* published in 1783, suggested giving every letter in a syllable its due proportion of sound. Attitudes such as this may be responsible for some of the many pronunciation differences between American and British English. Other differences result from the fact that all languages change over time, and since the separation of the two varieties, American English has not changed in the same way as British English has changed. One example of a consistent pronunciation difference between British and American English can be heard in words ending with *–ary, –ory,* and *–ery.* In British English, the first vowel in the ending is not pronounced, as in the word *secretary,* usually four syllables in the US but often just three in the UK (that is, *secretary* is pronounced something like *secret'ry*).

British and American English probably reached their greatest divergence just before the Second World War and since that time have been getting closer, or at least better understood by the other country.

Here are some expressions currently used in the US that were once well known in Britain but have long since gone out of use there: *son of a gun, I guess, in back of* (for *behind*).

Another word no longer used in Britain but still used in the US is *gotten*, a past participle of the verb *to get*. In Britain, the usual past participle of *to get* is *got*. The only place where a Briton would use *gotten* is in the expression "Ill-gotten gains." But to the American ear, a sentence beginning "It has got to the point where . . ." sounds grammatically incorrect. Americans would say "It has gotten to the point where . . ." instead.

Still more words and phrases that have died out in Britain but are still used in the US are *turnpike* (for *toll road*), *fall* (for *autumn*), and *a deck of cards* (for *a pack of cards*). Conversely the words *straight away* meaning "immediately" and *presently* meaning "in a short time" are no longer in common usage in the US, but are often used in British English.

## THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Then along came the Industrial Revolution, bringing with it a need for many new words such as *railroad, windshield,* and *grade crossing*. The US was no longer conforming to the British standard with new words. Britain was already using other words: *railway, windscreen,* and *level crossing*.

Each country had its own engineers and designers, who gave new creations their particular names. Hundreds of new terms were needed. Of course these words were scarcely in print at the time, so there was no written standard to follow. With the countries so far apart there was really no need for the US to follow British usage. The differences increased as time went on, even though more people were traveling back and forth across the Atlantic by then. Many educated people were aware of the differences in terminology, but no great effort was made to unify the terms. The differences between British and American English gradually increased, until greater communication between the countries in the 1940s

turned the tide. A good example of how far apart the languages had become is apparent in the list of railway terms (see page 70).

Despite all of the communication going on between Britain and the US today, it is amazing that new words being coined in one country are represented by another word in the other country. Some examples of relatively new American words and usages are *pound* (for the # symbol, as in "Press the pound key"), *beeper* (in the UK, a *bleeper*), and *cell phone* (in the UK, a *mobile phone*). Some newer British words that might not be understood by the average American are *video* (in the US, *VCR*), *flex* (in the US, *electrical cord*), and *bumf* (in the US, *unwanted papers and documents*).

The United States is a huge country. From the point of view of a Briton, it seems to have a surprisingly uniform speech pattern over a wide area if one considers its size. However, the United States has a diversity of accents and many different varieties of slang, much as Britain does. The lexicons in this book include many words that are particular to specific regions of the United States.

## COUNTRIES THAT ENRICHED THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE

In order to understand why British English is so different from American English, it is necessary to learn something about the settlement of the United States. English was not the native tongue of many settlers in North America in the Colonial period. After the United States won its independence, immigrants from around the world continued to come to its shores. These immigrants have contributed many of the words that distinguish American English from British English.

### *France*

Two hundred years ago, French rivaled English as the most widely used international language. There were several French

colonies in North America. The largest, and the one that had the most influence on what would later become American English, was in the Mississippi Delta. The state of Louisiana gets its name from the French king Louis XIV. There are several different groups of French speakers in Louisiana. The French-speaking people known as the Cajuns came to Louisiana from Acadia, Nova Scotia. (Somewhere along the way *Acadians* became known as *Cajuns.*)

Here are some words the French settlers gave the English language: *bayou,* "a marshy inlet"; *gopher,* "a kind of burrowing rodent"; and *levee,* "dike." Here are a few French place names and their American pronunciations:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Versailles,* in Kentucky | [ver·**sales**] |
| *Des Moines,* in Iowa | [duh·**moyn**] |
| *St. Louis,* in Missouri | [saint lewis] |
| *Pierre,* in South Dakota | [peer] |
| *Terre Haute,* in Indiana | [terra hote] |

### *The Netherlands*

By the mid-1600s, the Dutch had a large colony in what is now known as New York (originally New Amsterdam). The names of Brooklyn, Harlem, and the Bronx are all derived from Dutch. The Dutch left a legacy of the following words: *caboose, coleslaw, cookie,* and *waffle.*

### *Spain*

The Spanish conquistadors left a hefty legacy of place names behind. In addition, they left Americans many words that are associated with cowboys these days, such as *lasso, mustang, rodeo,* and *burro.* Today the country's growing Latino population is creating what is called *Spanglish* in certain parts of the US.

Some words of Spanish origin that are everyday words in American English are

| | |
|---|---|
| *coyote,* "a doglike wild animal" | [kie·**oh**·tee] |
| *adobe,* "a brick of clay and straw" | [a·**doh**·bee] |
| *mesa,* "a high piece of land" | [**may**·sa] |

Here are a few Spanish place names and their American pronunciations:

| | |
|---|---|
| *La Jolla,* in California | [la **hoy**·a] |
| *El Cajon,* in California | [el ca·**hone**] |
| *La Quinta,* in California | [la·**keen**·ta] |
| *St. Augustine,* in Florida | [saint **aug**·us·teen] |

### *Germany*

About seven million Germans have settled in the US. Not wishing to forget their country of origin, they have named twelve towns *Berlin* and seven *Germantown.* Germans have added a variety of words to American English, such as *bum* (shortened from *bummer,* from German *Bummler*) and the verb *to nix.*

### *Central European Countries*

Many Jews from Central Europe settled in New York. Yiddish expressions are widely used in the US, but New York still leads the field in the use of these words. Here are some examples:

| | |
|---|---|
| *chutzpah* | impudence/nerve |
| *kibitz, to* | give unsolicited advice/joke around |
| *kosher* | genuine/legitimate |
| *klutz* | clumsy person |
| *schlep, to* | trudge/lug |
| *schmaltz* | exaggerated sentimentalism |
| *schmooze* | chat/gossip |
| *schnoz* | a large nose |
| *tush* | backside |

## PRONOUNCING BRITISH PLACE NAMES

There are some cities and towns in England that are not pronounced phonetically. Here are a few examples:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Birmingham* | [**bir**·ming·um] |
| *Beaulieu* | [**beeoo**·lee] |
| *Bicester* | [**bis**·ter] |
| *Derby* | [**dar**·bee] |
| *Greenwich* | [**gren**·ich] |
| *Leicester* | [**les**·ter] |
| *Norwich* | [**norr**·ich] |
| *Warwick* | [**worr**·ik] |
| *Thames* (the river) | [temz] |



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## 2

# *Tips For The Tourist*

### AT THE AIRPORT

Britons visiting the US or Americans visiting the UK will encounter different terms as soon as they step off the airplane (or *aeroplane* as the British say).

- A *skycap* in the US is an *airport porter* in the UK.
- A *baggage cart* in the US is called a *trolley* in the UK.
- One *hires* a car in the UK, and *rents* one in the US.
- It's a taxi *rank* in the UK, rather than a taxi *stand.*

Did you know that English is the international language of aviation, but terms used in the US are different? If a pilot is requested to circle the airport in the US, he is asked to do a *360-degree.* In the rest of the world a pilot is requested to make an *orbit.*

### AT THE HOTEL

In the US, the floor of a building level with the ground is known as the *first floor;* in Britain it is called the *ground floor.* What is known in the US as the *second floor* is called the *first floor* in Britain; the *third floor* in the US is called the *second floor* in

Britain; and so forth. An *efficiency* in the US is a room with a small kitchen as well as a bathroom. The widely-used British hotel term *en-suite,* meaning "with a private bathroom," is not understood in the US. *Duvets,* which are found everywhere in Britain, are not at all common in the US. In a British hotel or bed-and-breakfast establishment, you may be offered *half board.* This is similar to the US term *American plan,* i.e., breakfast and dinner are included in the price. Motels are not common in England. Traveler's hotels are similar and they often use the word *lodge* in their name. Many more moderately priced British hotels will have rooms with a shared bathroom, and often no television or telephone in the room. They have a lounge with a television, and often a dining room. Curiously the word *accommodation* is never used in the plural in British English. In the US you make arrangements for *accommodations.*

Some British hotel terms can cause confusion for Americans:

- *Reception* means *front desk.*
- A *receptionist* is a *desk clerk.*
- A *flannel* is a *washcloth.*
- A *cot* means a *crib.*
- A *communicating door* is a *connecting door.*
- *Tariff* means *rate.*

Additionally, in Britain a faucet is called a *tap,* a twin bed is called a *single bed,* and a rollaway bed is known as a *fold-up bed.* In the US another term for a double bed is a *full-size bed.*

# 3

# *Practical Information*

## AUTOMOBILES

### *The British Automobile*

British rental cars do not usually come with automatic transmission unless you specifically request it. They are small by American standards but many do have air conditioning. All British cars have signal lights called *repeaters* on the side of the car. They come on when you signal that you are turning and allow the drivers of cars alongside you to be aware of your intentions. Controls on British cars are generally similar to American cars these days, but of course one drives a car sitting on the right. British cars come with a hand brake for parking, never a foot-operated parking brake.

### *The American Automobile*

All rental cars in the US have automatic transmission and air conditioning as standard equipment, and all but the smallest, known as *subcompacts,* will have power steering and power brakes. Manual transmission is usually available upon request. Compact cars are probably as big as the average British car. Mid-size and full-size cars will seem quite roomy, but the huge cars that were common in the 1970s are a thing of the past. The SUV (sport-

utility vehicle) has taken over the task of moving large families from one place to another.

Here are some words of advice for British drivers in the US. It is the law in most states to wear a seat belt when sitting in the front seat of an automobile. In some cars you may not be able to shift out of park without first putting your foot on the brake pedal. You will not find a hand brake in larger cars. These will be equipped with a parking brake pedal, located at the upper far left of the driver's left leg. Once engaged, the parking brake will remain set until it is released manually, usually by pulling the lever marked "brake release" located under the dashboard just above the parking brake pedal. In some cars, the parking brake is automatically released when you shift out of park. The parking brake pedal is equivalent to a hand brake, which is found in some smaller cars. Americans often refer to this brake as the *emergency brake*. The automatic transmission selector or *gearshift* is situated either on the steering column or on a console between the driver and passenger seats. Often, the key cannot be removed unless the selector is in park.

## GASOLINE (PETROL)

There are two grades of petrol (gasoline) commonly available in Britain today; premium unleaded is about 95 octane and super unleaded is about 98 octane. Premium unleaded, despite its name, has the lower octane, but it is suitable for most modern cars. Petrol is sold by the litre (liter).

All gas in the US is unleaded. It comes in three grades: regular, which is 87 octane; a middle grade of 89 octane, also known as unleaded plus; and premium or super, which may be as high as 94 octane, depending on the brand. Gasoline is still sold by the gallon in the US and is incredibly cheap by European standards. The US gallon is based on a 16-ounce pint, rather than the British 20-ounce pint, and therefore is smaller. A US gallon is just under four liters. Americans sometimes use the colloquial expression *to*

*gas up* a vehicle, meaning to refuel it. Payment can usually be made with a credit card at the pump.

## TELEPHONES

### *British Telephones*

Public telephones in Britain are mainly operated by British Telecom (BT). Local calls are not unlimited for a flat rate as they often are in the US. Some British pay phones will accept a variety of coins, but many require a *phone card* or *charge card.* Phone cards are readily available at shops and post offices in varying denominations. They are inserted into a slot on the phone and a display tells you how much value remains on the card. The card is thrown away when its value is zero. If you have a telephone account with British Telecom, you can obtain a BT charge card, which enables you to bill a call to your account from any telephone. Long-distance calls in Britain always start with the number 0. Local calls from a private home or business are usually charged by the minute. This naturally cuts down on telephone solicitation. However, evening and week-end rates are low and even free if you sign up with certain companies. A toll-free long-distance number is known as a *Freefone* or *Freephone* number, and usually starts with 0-800, 0-808, or 0-500. The British phones ring with a distinctive double ring. An area code, formerly known as an *STD code* (*subscriber trunk dialling code*), is often called a *phone code* or a *dial code.*

### *American Telephones*

A local call from a US pay phone is on average 35 cents for the first three minutes. Usually you pick up the handset, put in the money, and then dial the number. Some independently owned pay phones require you to dial the number first, then deposit the money. There is often no time limit on local calls. The ringing

tone is distinctive, because American phones do not ring with a double ring as do the British phones.

Local calls from a private phone are often free. Long-distance calls always start with the digit 1. Just because a number happens to be in the same area code as the one you are calling from doesn't mean that it is a local call. You may well have to dial 1 followed by the same area code and then the number you want, in order to reach that number. A recording will tell you if it is necessary to do this. To make a long-distance call from a pay phone using coins, dial 1, then the area code followed by the number. You will then hear a recording instructing you on how much money to deposit for a three-minute conversation.

There are no nationally available phone cards like those in the United Kingdom, but in some locations and at all airports, you will find phones that do accept *calling cards.* There are two major types of calling cards: those provided by a long distance carrier, with charges billed to your account, and prepaid phone cards that can be purchased at various shops. Most calling cards require you first to dial the company's toll-free number found on the card, then your account number, prior to dialing the number you want. With prepaid cards, charges are deducted until the card expires. Calling cards make long-distance phoning from a pay phone much easier.

Many businesses have *toll-free* numbers, which require dialing 1-800, 1-877, or 1-888 before the exchange number. These toll-free numbers, popularly known as *800 numbers,* are more common in the US than in Britain. Beware of the letter *o.* It is not the same key as the number 0 in the US. The abbreviation *Ph.* is often used for "telephone number" in the US as well as *Tel.*

Here are some comparisons of terms from the US and the UK relating to telephones.

- The symbol #, known as *pound* in the US, is called *hash* or *square* in the UK.
- *Caller ID* in the US is known as *caller display* in the UK.

- *Call forwarding* in the US is known as *call diversion* in the UK.
- A *calling card* is similar to the BT *charge card.*
- A *busy signal* in the US is known as an *engaged signal* in the UK.
- A *dial tone* is known in British English as a *dialling tone.*
- An *unlisted number* is known in British English as an *ex-directory number.*
- *Directory assistance* or *information* are known as *directory inquiries* in the UK.

# 4

# *For The Technically Minded*

## PLUMBING

The plumbing system and plumbing terminology in Britain differ slightly from their US counterparts. A *trap,* or *P-trap* to be more precise, sits below the sink in the US. This device is known as a *U-bend* in Britain, where the word *tap* is used for both indoor and outdoor plumbing. In the US, indoor taps are known as *faucets,* and outdoor taps are known as *spigots.* The term *tap water* is used in both countries, however. In the US, the cold faucet is uniformly on the right for safety reasons. This is not true in Britain, where it can be found on either side. Household hot-water systems differ slightly. In Britain, the hot-water tank (known as a *cistern*), is usually fed from a tank in the attic, so that an overheated tank cannot blow back into the main supply line. In the US, hot-water tanks are fed directly from the water supply (known as the *mains* in Britain) to the house. Thus the hot and cold water are at the same pressure, making mixer taps almost standard and very convenient.

Toilets in the US, though similar in appearance, have major differences. The equipment in the tank (known as a *cistern* in Britain) is very simple, consisting of a float and stop valve for maintaining the water level in the tank, and a rubber seal, known as a *flapper,* which sits over the outlet pipe at the bottom of the

tank. The flapper is connected by a chain to the handle. When the handle is pushed down, it pulls up the chain, in turn raising the flapper and releasing the water. The system works admirably, but as the flapper ages it does not always maintain a good seal, resulting in a waste of water. For this reason, this system is not permitted in Britain, where a diaphragm is used to start a siphon effect from the tank into the bowl. In the US, the toilet bowls are all of the siphonic type. As the tank empties into the bowl, a siphon effect forms in the S bend in the base of the toilet, resulting in a rapid emptying of the bowl, followed by a gurgle. This system gives a good flush and is reasonably quiet but tends to block up more readily than the standard British system that relies solely on a rush of water.

## ELECTRICITY

In the US, electricity at the electrical outlet is 120 volts AC, 60 hertz. Plugs are mostly two-pin, or three-pin if they have a *ground pin.* Outlets are usually paired, one above the other. There are two vertical slots with a hole below for the ground. Older two-slot outlets with no ground are still found in older buildings. Appliances are fitted with a molded plug. With high-wattage appliances, it is normal for the plug to get warm! Most kitchen appliances have only two flat pins. To make them safer, one pin is slightly wider than the other, and the outlet also has different slot sizes so that the plug can only be inserted right way up. These plugs are called *polarized* plugs. This way the appliance gets current only as far as its switch, until it is turned on. Refrigerators and microwave ovens, however, are all fitted with a ground pin. Light bulbs have a screw fitting rather than the British bayonet fitting, although the bayonet type is used in cars. Some light bulbs have two filaments, giving a possibility of three levels of brightness. These are known as *three-way bulbs.*

Electricity is usually carried to houses on overhead wires. Although this system cuts distribution costs, it does result in

more weather-related power failures, often called power *outages.* High-tension lines are supported by *towers,* or quite commonly, tall poles. All houses are equipped with two 120-volt lines in opposing phases. This enables 240 volts to be used for appliances, such as water heaters, kitchen stoves, and dryers. These plugs and outlets are not the same as the 120-volt plugs and outlets. Light-switch positions are down for off, up for on.

In Britain, electricity comes to the house through underground wires at 240 volts on one phase. Light switches go down for on, up for off. Electrical outlets are usually paired side by side. The *earth pin* (*ground pin* in the US) on plugs is larger and longer than the other pins, and as it enters the matching hole in the socket, it raises the cover over the other two pins, permitting them to go in. All appliances are either *earthed* (*grounded*), or double insulated for safety. Light bulbs often have a bayonet fitting, rather than a screw fitting as is normal in the US. The support towers that carry power across the country at high voltages are known as *pylons.* The supply of electricity to the house is referred to as the *mains,* just like the water supply mentioned earlier. Hence a small appliance may be either battery or *mains* operated.

The word *mains* is not used or understood in the US for electricity in the house, or for water or gas supplies (see Explanations, page 224).

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# 5

# *Institutions and Services*

Rather than presenting a table of British English/American English comparisons, I have chosen to give a brief description of various institutions. Terms that may be unfamiliar to Americans or Britons are given in italics.

## THE POSTAL SYSTEM

### *The British Postal Service*

The postal service in Britain is known as the *Royal Mail,* and the monarch's head appears on every stamp. The letter carrier, or postman, delivers mail once a day on foot in the cities and suburbs. Until recently, there were two deliveries a day. Letter carriers wear black boots, a navy blue uniform, and a badge with a crown that says *Royal Mail.* Temporary letter carriers do not wear a uniform, but wear an armband with the words *Royal Mail* on it.

Letters can go first-class or second-class. The stamps for first-class mail are more expensive but should guarantee next-day delivery. Second-class mail may take a few days. House numbers progress in numerical order, with even-numbered houses on one side of the street and odd-numbered houses on the other. Mail within Britain is called *inland mail.*

The *postcode* was devised around 1970 and consists of a combination of letters and numbers such as AB2 2BA. It is similar to the American *Zip Code* and goes on the last line of the address.

Mail that has the postage imprinted on it by machine is known as *franked mail.* In the US this is called *metered mail.* If a record of the receipt of the letter is required, one asks for *recorded delivery.* A *money order* is known as a *postal order* in the UK.

Books of stamps may be purchased at petrol stations or newsagents, as well as post offices.

### *The US Postal Service*

The American letter carrier, also known as the mailman or mail carrier, wears a blue uniform, which in the summer may consist of a short-sleeve shirt, short trousers, and knee socks. Mail delivery is much the same as in Britain, especially in cities and larger towns. However, in many suburbs and in all rural areas mail carriers drive a white jeep with the steering wheel on the "wrong" side. This enables them to deliver and retrieve mail easily at each house by pulling alongside *mailboxes* set on posts standing at the side of each driveway. Attached to the mailbox is a red piece of metal, commonly called a flag, which is set in a vertical position to indicate that there are letters in the box for the mail carrier to retrieve and post. There are not many public mailboxes available in rural areas. Where available, they are large, blue, freestanding metal boxes that have a combination receptacle/door at the top that pulls open. After letters are deposited on the door, it is closed, and the door drops the letter into the box. *Express mail* is faster than *priority mail.* American mail carriers have a *route* (a fixed course or area in which they deliver mail). There is only one delivery a day, six days a week.

To facilitate mail delivery, the Zip Code, an acronym for *Zoning Improvement Plan,* was introduced in 1963 and is required on each piece of mail. It consists of five numbers, a hyphen, and then four numbers. The last four numbers are often omitted, even though they do facilitate the handling of mail within their

designated zone. It will soon be compulsory to use all nine numbers. Two letters, indicating the state, precede the Zip Code.

Stamps may be purchased not only at the post office but also at vending machines, although the price is slightly higher. Post office vending machines sell stamps at face value. Most supermarkets also sell stamps. Small post offices abound, just as in Britain, and you rarely have to wait long to be served. Except in large cities, you won't find any glass partition between you and the clerk. This is true for banks as well. If you wish to have a receipt from the party you are mailing to, you must ask to send the mail *return receipt requested.* Mail sent and delivered entirely within the US is known as *domestic mail.*

## BANKING

British and American banks do not differ much these days. One big difference is that Americans do a lot of their banking at *drive-throughs.* Most banks have several drive-through lanes in which a pneumatic cylinder whisks your checks (spelled *cheques* in Britain), papers, and money into the bank (although too many coins in the cylinder can produce a rather interesting effect as they climb up the clear plastic tube). A short while later the cylinder returns with either money or a deposit slip and a voice through the speaker wishes you a nice day. Remember to put the cylinder back before driving off! A United States driving license, which has one's photo on it, is often required for proof of identity (ID) in the US. A British or American tourist will need a passport for proof of identity. Most British credit cards can be used at a cash machine (ATM) to withdraw dollars, but you will need your PIN number.

Below is a comparison of some American banking terms with some used in Britain.

- A *savings and loan* (commonly abbreviated S&L) is similar to a British *building society.*

- A *mutual fund* is known in Britain as a *unit trust.*
- *Common stocks* are known as *ordinary shares.*
- A *checking account* is also called a *current account.*
- A *savings account* is known as a *deposit account.*
- A *deposit slip* is known as a *credit slip.*
- A *routing number* is known as a *branch sort code.*
- A *checkbook register* is known as a *transaction record book* (although it is usually part of the checkbook in the UK).
- A *money market account* is known as a *high interest account.*
- CDs (*certificates of deposit*) are known as *savings certificates* in Britain.
- An ATM is called a *cash machine* in the UK.
- A *stub* on a check is also known as a *counterfoil* in Britain.

## THE CURRENCY

### *British Money*

In Britain all the currency *notes* (pieces of paper currency) are of a different size, and the higher the denomination, the larger the note. Different denominations also have different colors, so they cannot easily be confused. A five-pound note is known colloquially as a *fiver,* and a ten-pound note as a *tenner.* The monarch's head is on every note, the denominations being 5, 10, 20, and 50. The notes are changed every few years and a different design is used to prevent counterfeiting. Such units of currency as guineas, shillings, half crowns, florins, and farthings no longer exist. In the traditional system in use since the eleventh century, one pound equaled 20 shillings, and one shilling equaled 12 pennies. There were thus 240 pence in a pound. On February 15, 1971, a decimal system for the division of the pound was adopted, with 100 pennies to the pound. These pennies were called *new pence.*

The current silver coins have recently changed and have no pet names at this time. A *bob* was the slang term for a shilling. A *tanner* used to be the equivalent of six pence or half a shilling. The *halfpenny,* pronounced [**hay**·pnee] is no longer legal tender, nor is the *farthing,* a quarter of a penny, which was withdrawn in 1961. A *guinea* was worth one pound and a shilling, and was used when paying fees to professionals. The plural of *penny* is *pence*: *one penny,* but *two pence,* formerly pronounced [**tupp**·ənss]. The symbol £ stands for pounds, p for pence. The one-pound note has been replaced by the pound coin. (Scotland uses the Scottish pound, which is equivalent in value to the British pound, and accepted all over the UK. However, the notes and coins differ in appearance from the British notes. Unlike the British pound, the Scottish pound is still issued in a one-pound note in addition to a one-pound coin.)

If an article costs £1.65, it would be spoken "one pound sixty five." The pound is also referred to as the *pound sterling.* A slang term for a pound is a *quid.* Pounds (lbs.) are also a unit of weight in Britain, though the metric system is becoming widely used now.

### *American Money*

In the US, currency notes are called *bills* and are all the same size and color (green), hence the slang term *greenback.* They differ mainly in the pictures on the bill (mostly former US presidents) and the denomination, which is written in all four corners. It is advisable, therefore, to check the denomination of each bill carefully before spending it. American men often carry their bills in a *billfold,* a type of wallet, or in a *money clip.* The most circulated denominations are one, five, ten, twenty, fifty and one hundred. Very rarely you may come across a two-dollar bill. These were originally known as deuces and were reintroduced into circulation in the 1970s, along with a dollar coin called the Susan B. Anthony dollar. Although both the two-dollar bill and the Susan B. Anthony dollar coin are legal tender, neither one is in popular

use. In 2000 a gold-colored dollar coin, the Sacagawea dollar, was introduced with no better results. Americans tend to be resistant to any change in matters of money, miles, or gallons. The four most common coins in use have been around for a long time. The one-cent coin is called a *penny* and is similar in color and size to the British penny. The five-cent coin is called a *nickel.* It is silver in color and is roughly the size of a 20p coin. The *dime,* worth ten cents, is a tiny silver coin. The twenty-five cent coin is commonly called a *quarter,* and is the same size and color as the new 10p coin. As in Britain, coins are often referred to as *change.* If an article costs $1.65, the price would be read "a dollar sixty five." The symbol 0 (zero) is often read as "oh," and $2.05 would be pronounced "two oh five." The $ symbol comes before the dollar amount, and the ¢ symbol is placed after the cents if the amount is under a dollar (e.g., 79¢).

*Buck* is a very common informal word for "dollar," heard in such sentences as *Can you lend me a few bucks?* or *It cost about a buck fifty* ($1.50). The bills used to have names, often inspired by the Roman numerals on the corners, but these are no longer in common use. The two was known as a *deuce,* the five as a *fin,* the ten as a *sawbuck* (inspired by the Roman numeral X on each corner, which looks like a sawhorse, also known as a sawbuck in the US). The hundred-dollar bill was known as a *C-note* (from the Roman numeral C on each corner of the earlier bills).

## RESTAURANTS

### *The American Restaurant*

Restaurants are plentiful and quite reasonable in the US. Americans tend to eat out more than the British. Very often Americans will give directions using restaurants as landmarks. There are many restaurant chains, which serve the same fare wherever you go. To some, this uniformity may seem boring; to others it may provide a sense of security. Service tends to be good,

as food servers rely on tips to make a decent income. Tipping is expected. Fifteen to twenty percent is considered a basic tip throughout most of the United States. The tip is left at the table. An easy way to calculate an 18% tip is to divide the bill by six.

There are quite a few restaurants that serve buffet-style meals. Even at these, if you are waited on in any way, a tip is appropriate—perhaps 10%. Salad bars are common and usually quite extensive. Salad dressings come in many flavors. Often fruit and soup will be served at a salad bar, and even assorted flavored jellies, which in Britain might be considered a dessert.

Sandwiches, which are enormous and are often a meal in themselves, are on the menu in many restaurants. They are usually served with a pickle and some chips or crisps (*fries* or *chips* in the US). You may state what kind of bread you would like (white, whole wheat, pumpernickel, or rye) and whether or not you would like it toasted. Sandwiches often consist of meat, lettuce and tomato, and mayonnaise. A *melt,* such as a *tuna melt,* is topped with cheese that is melted under a broiler or in a toaster oven. If you see the phrase *à la mode* on the dessert menu, it means "with ice cream." Some of the more interesting food names are *Buffalo wings, sloppy Joes,* and *pigs in a blanket* (for definitions see pages 26, 27, and 28). The servers often say "Enjoy!" after bringing your meal. It's short for "Enjoy your meal!" The main course is known as the *entrée,* the starter as the *appetizer,* and the sweet or pudding is only known as *dessert.* (*Pudding* in the US means a kind of soft custard.) The UK term *jacket potatoes* may not be understood. Ask for *baked potatoes.* In a fast-food restaurant you will hear the term *hold* used when a dish is ordered without a certain item, e.g., "Hold the onions."

Hot tea is available, but in the South you must specify that you want hot tea, since iced tea is more common. Hot tea usually comes as a pot of hot water, a tea bag, and a sturdy-looking cup. Quite often you will get tiny prepackaged containers of cream (*half-and-half*) instead of milk, so remember to specify milk or lemon, as desired. Soft drinks are served with lots of ice, especially in the summer. *Root beer* is a dark soft drink made with

juices extracted from roots, herbs, and bark. A *smoothie* is a drink of milk with blended fruits (usually bananas are the base).

Americans eat their food with the fork held in the right hand and the tines up, while Britons and other Europeans hold it in the left hand, tines down. The origin of these differences in the use of eating utensils is disputed. Soupspoons in the US tend to be smaller than those used in Britain, and desserts are eaten with a small spoon or a fork. (A *dessert spoon* is not used as a unit of measure in the US.) *Broiled* means grilled. You will sometimes encounter the term *broasted.* Broasted food has been cooked in a high-pressure fryer made by the Broaster Company.

Here are some British/American equivalents:

- Cutlery is usually called *flatware* or *silverware* in the US.
- A *serviette* is called a *napkin.*
- *Takeaway* food is known as *takeout* food in the US.
- A *salt cellar* is called a *salt shaker.*
- The *head waiter* is known as the *maitre d'.*
- The *wine waiter* is known as the *wine steward.*
- If you wish to take any food home with you, ask for a *box,* or a *doggy bag* (although this term is dying out).
- When you are ready for the bill, ask for the *check.*

The many ethnic groups that settled in the US have naturally influenced American food. Here are some explanations of some strange-sounding foods you may see on American menus:

*Some American Foods*

| | |
|---|---|
| *apple brown Betty* (or *apple Betty*) | apple crumble |
| *bagel* | a bread roll in a doughnut shape |
| *blackened food* | food cooked over a strong flame, very spicy |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols, see page vi.

| | |
|---|---|
| *bologna* [bə·**loh**·nee] | smoked, seasoned sausage |
| *Buffalo wings* | spicy chicken wings (first named in the Anchor Bar, Buffalo, NY) |
| *burrito* [bu·**ree**·toh] | meat and refried beans rolled in a tortilla (Mexican) |
| *caesar salad* | a salad consisting of romaine lettuce, grated cheese, croutons, anchovies, raw egg, and olive oil |
| *chowder* | a thick soup of clams, fish, or vegetables usually containing potatoes and milk |
| *club sandwich* | a double-decker sandwich filled with meat (usually chicken or turkey), together with tomato, lettuce, and mayonnaise |
| *cobbler* | fruit with pastry on top, cooked in a low pan |
| *coffeecake* | a flat glazed cake or sweetened bread (no coffee in it) |
| *corn bread* | bread made from cornmeal, usually baked in small loaves |
| *corned beef* | beef cured in brine, then cooked |
| *crêpe* | pancake |
| *Dagwood* | a thick sandwich filled with different types of meat, some cheese, and condiments |
| *English muffin* | something like a crumpet in appearance, but made from a light dough, usually served toasted at breakfast |
| *flapjack* | a thick pancake, quite unlike British flapjack (oats mixed with syrup) |
| *fried eggs* | these are ordered "over easy," "over hard," or "sunny side up" |
| *grits* | cornmeal cooked with water, usually served as a side dish at breakfast (Southern) |

| | |
|---|---|
| *gumbo* | a soup thickened with okra pods, usually found in the South |
| *gyro* | sliced beef or lamb served as a sandwich on pita bread (also called a *gyros*) |
| *hash browns* | shredded or diced potatoes, which are then fried |
| *hoagie/sub/ submarine* | meat and salad in a long bread roll (also known as a hero) |
| *home fries* | boiled potatoes that have been sliced and then fried |
| *hush puppies* | balls of fried corn meal (so called because they were originally fed to the dogs to keep them quiet) |
| *links* | breakfast sausages (sausages are also served as patties) |
| *lox* | salmon cured in brine |
| *nachos* [**nah**·chōz] | fried corn tortilla chips covered with some combination of melted cheese, salsa, or beans |
| *pancakes/ hot cakes* | thick pancakes served for breakfast with butter and syrup |
| *pastrami* | seasoned smoked beef |
| *pigs in a blanket* | frankfurters baked in pastry/sausages rolled in pancakes |
| *pretzel* | hard dough twisted into a fancy shape and salted, usually served as a snack |
| *Reuben* | a grilled sandwich of corned beef, Swiss cheese, and sauerkraut, usually made with rye bread (named after Arnold Reuben, Jr., who owned Reuben's Restaurant in New York) |
| *Salisbury steak* | minced steak made into a rectangular patty and covered with gravy |
| *scrod* | immature cod or haddock (weighing between 1½ and 2½ lbs) |

| | |
|---|---|
| *sloppy Joe* | barbecued beef, often on an open bun |
| *succotash* | beans (usually lima beans) and corn served together |
| *sweet roll* | a roll made with sweetened dough containing raisins and candied fruit, often topped with icing |
| *taco* [**tah**·coh] | a Mexican food consisting of minced meat, tomatoes, cheese, and onion in a hard crusty tortilla |
| *tamale* [tə·**mah**·lee] | well-seasoned minced meat, packed in cornmeal dough then wrapped in cornhusks and steamed |
| *tortilla* [tor·**tee**·ya] | thin flour or corn pancakes, a Mexican staple |
| *waffles* | light cakes made from batter cooked in a waffle iron to give it a honeycomb appearance, served for breakfast with hot syrup |
| *Waldorf salad* | chopped apple, nuts, and celery mixed with mayonnaise |

## *The British Restaurant*

British restaurants are more individual than their US counterparts. Tipping is less standardized, and often in a casual restaurant there is a jar for tips at the counter. Fifteen percent would be a generous tip. There are many teahouses in small towns and villages. There one can have *high tea* in the afternoon. This consists of sandwiches, scones and perhaps a light, cooked meal, usually served with a cup of tea. Sandwiches are usually small with a thin filling. Sherry trifle is sometimes served with high tea. It consists of fruit, sherry-soaked sponge cake, and sometimes jelly, topped with a custard sauce.

In a restaurant the entrée is often called the *main course,* and the appetizer the *starter.* Dessert may be called *sweet* or *pudding.* If you

have lunch in a pub you will probably be offered a *ploughman's lunch,* consisting of a hunk of bread, ham, cheese, and some pickles.

Here are explanations of some strange-sounding foods you may encounter in Britain.

*Some British Foods*

| | |
|---|---|
| *bangers and mash* | a slang term for sausages and mashed potato |
| *black pudding* | a black link sausage containing pork, suet, and pigs' blood |
| *bubble and squeak* | mashed potato and vegetables formed into a patty and fried |
| *corned beef* | processed canned beef |
| *crumpet* | made from a yeast mixture, similar in appearance to an English muffin, but doughy |
| *Eccles cake* | a flat cake made of pastry filled with currants |
| *fool* | a cold dessert of crushed fruit blended with cream or custard |
| *gateau* [**gă**·toh] | any type of rich cake |
| *kippers* | smoked herring |
| *lemon curd/ lemon cheese* | a preserve made from lemon, eggs, sugar, and butter |
| *Marmite* | a dark, salty vegetable and yeast extract spread on bread |
| *pease* [peez] *pudding* | split peas boiled with carrots and onions |
| *pikelet* [**pīk**·let] | similar to a thin crumpet |
| *ploughman's lunch* | bread, cheese, and a pickle or salad, often served in a pub |
| *pork pie* | minced pork covered in pastry (usually about the size of a cupcake), eaten cold |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| | |
|---|---|
| *rissole* | ground meat and spices, covered in bread crumbs and fried |
| *sago pudding* | a dessert similar to tapioca pudding, made from starch from the sago palm |
| *Scotch egg* | a hard-boiled egg covered in sausage meat and deep fried |
| *spotted dick* | a sponge or suet pudding with currants in it |
| *steak and kidney pudding* | chopped steak and kidney steamed in a pudding basin (bowl) lined with pastry |
| *summer pudding* | bread and fresh fruit allowed to set in a pudding bowl |
| *toad in the hole* | link sausages baked in a pan of batter |
| *Yorkshire pudding* | batter baked in a flat pan, usually served with roast beef |

## BARS

Beer is not ordered by quantity in the US. One asks for beer, either on tap, in a can, or in a bottle. If you do not specify how much you want, the bartender (usually *barman* in the UK) will choose for you. In Britain one orders a pint or half-pint. A variety of beer brands are available in most bars in both countries. There are three principal types of beer sold in Britain: *bitter, lager,* and *stout.* Bitter is a darkish-colored beer, usually served at room or cellar temperature; it has a fruity taste. Some pubs still serve this from barrels—beer served in this way from small breweries is known as *real ale.* Lager, a pale-colored beer favored by the younger generation, is often served chilled and may have a continental European name signifying its origin. Most American beers would be classified in this category. Stout is a strong, dark beer. The most famous stout is Guinness. Most cocktails are pretty

international, but you may like to try a local mix. If no mixer is to be added, drinks are ordered *straight up* in the US and *neat* in Britain. A *shandy* in Britain is half beer and half lemonade. A *liqueur* is also known as a *cordial* in the US. It is customary to leave the bartender a small tip in the US, but not in Britain. Toasts are similar in both countries. Cider is always alcoholic in the UK. In the US, on the other hand, cider (also known as apple cider or sweet cider) is not alcoholic, but *hard cider* is fermented and contains alcohol.

Here are some common American drinks defined:

- A *daiquiri* contains rum and lemon mix.
- A *highball* contains spirits and water or a soft drink and is served in a tall glass.
- A *Manhattan* contains whiskey, sweet vermouth, and bitters.
- A *piña colada* is made of pineapple juice, rum, and coconut.
- A *Tom Collins* contains gin, lemon mix, and soda water.
- *Long Island iced tea* is not as innocent as the name might suggest. It is a strong alcoholic drink the color of iced tea containing rum, tequila, gin, and vodka.
- A *mimosa* (champagne and orange juice) is called *Buck's Fizz* in Britain.

## SHOPPING

### *In Britain*

Many small British shops are independently owned, and there may be accommodations above the shop. VAT (value added tax), similar to sales tax in the US but higher, is included in the purchase price. No VAT is levied on uncooked food, books, or newspapers. Large American-style supermarkets are now very common. Sometimes they are built out in the country in order to

provide sufficient parking space for the customers. It is not usual to have your groceries bagged, although larger supermarkets will now bag groceries on request. Plastic bags are provided for your use however. A canvas awning often extends out from small shops to protect the customers from inclement weather. Shopping hours tend to be shorter than in the US. In Britain, the register is usually called the *till,* and *early closing* means a day when shops close in the afternoon. A shopping cart is known as a *shopping trolley,* and bags of groceries are always referred to as *shopping.*

### *In the US*

In the US your groceries are bagged for you at the checkout, and you may be offered assistance in carrying your groceries to the car. A sales tax, similar to VAT, is added at the register to all items, with the exception of unprepared food and medications in some states. This means the price marked on the product is not the price you pay at the register. The amount of this tax, a percentage of the price, varies from state to state and even from county to county within the state. When speaking about making a purchase, Americans are quite specific about where they are going. If they are going to the supermarket, Americans will say they are going to the *market* (supermarket), or going *grocery shopping* at the *grocery* or *grocery store.* Brits just go *shopping* at the shops for groceries or anything else.

Fresh foods are found in the *produce* [**prō**·doos] department, milk is found in the *dairy case,* and butter is sold in *sticks,* with four 4-ounce sticks in a box. *Soda water* is usually known as *club soda* (which may contain some trace potassium compounds) or *seltzer water* (pure carbonated water). A surprising number of English foods may be purchased in American supermarkets.

Shopping malls are the popular way to shop in the States. With huge parking areas, these may cover several acres and be on several levels. Many items of clothing and shoes are known by

different names. Note that shoe sizes are slightly different. For British shoppers to find the corresponding size in American shoe stores, they should add a size and a half to women's shoes and a half size to men's shoes. Men's shirts go by the same sizes, although long sleeve shirts have various sleeve lengths. Women's dress sizes are different. A UK size 10 is a US size 8 for example. Now that metric sizes have arrived in Britain, comparisons will be different.

Factory outlet malls, usually located by highways, are popular with the US shopper. They consist of stores selling selected brand names in clothing and household items at reduced prices. In American malls, a shop assistant is known as a *salesperson,* haberdashery is called *notions,* and outsize clothing is *extra large* or *XL.*

## PRONUNCIATION OF FOOD NAMES

The names of some foods are pronounced differently in the US and the UK, as you may discover if you ask the person serving you to describe an item on the menu in a restaurant. The American pronunciation of the word *herb* is actually the original one. *Herb* is one of a group of English words of French origin, like *honor* or *hour,* in which the *h* is silent. The *h* was reintroduced in pronunciation in the UK during the nineteenth century under the influence of the spelling of the word.

*Differences in the Pronunciation of Food Names*

| WORD | US PRONUNCIATION | UK PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| apricot | **ăpri**·cot | **āpri**·cot |
| basil | **bā**·zil | **bă**·zil |
| fillet | fil·**lay** | **fill**·et |
| herb | erb | herb |
| oregano | or·**eh**·ga·no | or·a·**gah**·no |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols, see page vi.

| WORD | US PRONUNCIATION | UK PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| paprika | pa·**pree**·ka | **păp**·ri·ka |
| pasta | **pah**·sta | **pă**·sta |
| tomato | to·**mā**·toh | to·**mah**·toh |

## SOME DIFFERENT COOKING MEASUREMENTS

A dessertspoon is unknown as a unit of measure in the US. (It is the equivalent of two teaspoonfuls.) A cup as a unit of measure is 8 fluid ounces in the US rather than 10 fluid ounces as in the UK. Similarly, a pint is 16 fluid ounces in the US rather than 20 fluid ounces. The US fluid ounce is also slightly larger than the UK fluid ounce.

## GROCERIES KNOWN BY DIFFERENT NAMES

In compiling this list of comparisons, I have come across several brand names that are as common as, or more common than, the generic name. I felt that it was essential to include these words. No endorsement is intended—or should be interpreted—by the use of these words.

*Grocery Names*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| 2% milk | semi-skimmed milk |
| beets | beetroot |
| biscuit | scone |
| brown sugar + | demerara sugar [dĕ·mə·**rair**·rə] |
| candy apple/caramel apple | toffee apple |
| chocolate-chip cookie | chocolate-chip biscuit |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| cilantro | coriander |
| cocktail wiener | cheerio |
| confectioners' sugar (4x powdered) | castor sugar |
| confectioners' sugar (10x powdered) | icing sugar |
| cookie | biscuit |
| corn | sweet corn |
| corned beef | salt beef |
| cornstarch | corn flour |
| cotton candy | candyfloss |
| crawfish | crayfish + |
| Cream of Wheat (brand name) | semolina |
| cured ham | gammon |
| eggnog + | egg flip |
| eggplant | aubergine [**oh**·ber·zheen] |
| endive | chicory |
| fava bean [**fah**·və] | broad bean |
| fish stick | fish finger |
| French fries/fries | chips |
| garbanzo bean | chickpea |
| ginger snap | ginger nut |
| graham cracker | digestive biscuit (similar to a graham cracker) |
| granola | muesli |
| green onion/scallion | spring onion |
| green plum | greengage |
| ground meat | minced meat |
| half-and-half | cream (single) + |
| hamburger + | beefburger |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| heavy/whipping cream | double cream |
| heel (on the end of a loaf) | crust |
| hot dog (without the bun) | frankfurter + |
| hot dog roll | bridge-roll |
| Jell-O (brand name) | jelly |
| jelly/jam | jam |
| jerky | strips of dried meat |
| jelly roll | swiss roll |
| large zucchini | marrow |
| layer cake | sandwich cake |
| lima bean [līma] | butter bean |
| liverwurst | liver sausage |
| molasses | treacle |
| oatmeal | porridge |
| pancake syrup | golden syrup (similar to pancake syrup) |
| patty | rissole |
| pickle (dill or sweet) | pickled gherkin |
| plum pudding + | Christmas pudding |
| pole bean | stick bean |
| Popsicle (brand name) | ice lolly |
| potato chips | crisps |
| pound cake | Madeira cake |
| roast + | joint |
| romaine lettuce | cos lettuce |
| rutabaga [**roo**·ta·bā·gə] | swede |
| seed/pit (in fruit) | pip/stone |
| self-rising flour | self-raising flour |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| sherbet | sorbet [**sor**·bay] + |
| shrimp + | prawns |
| smoked herring | kipper |
| snow peas + | mange-tout [**mahnzh**·too] |
| soda | fizzy drink/pop + |
| soda cracker | water biscuit |
| soybean | soya bean |
| stick candy | rock +/seaside rock |
| string bean | runner bean |
| sucker | lollipop + |
| Toll House cookie (brand name) | chocolate-chip biscuit |
| turnip greens | turnip-tops |
| Vienna sausage | chipolata |
| white or golden raisin | sultana |
| wiener [**wee**·ner] | frankfurter + |
| zucchini [zoo·**kee**·nee] | courgette [cor·**zhet**] |

*Squash* in Britain is an orange or lemon drink made from mixing a concentrate with water. *Sherbet* is a sweet white powder, mainly eaten by children. A *rasher* means a slice of bacon. A *chipolata* is a small sausage. Curiously the dish *macaroni and cheese* in the US is known as *macaroni cheese* in the UK, but *rum raisin* ice cream is known as *rum and raisin* ice cream in the UK. There are some British foods that are not eaten in the US. One example is Marmite, a dark, salty vegetable extract with the consistency of peanut butter that is used as a spread. Vegemite is the equivalent in Australia and New Zealand.

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## CLOTHING AND SHOES KNOWN BY DIFFERENT NAMES

When looking for a specific items in a clothing store, you should note that many articles of clothing have different names in the UK and the US. In some cases, the difference in terminology might even lead to a good deal of confusion. Note that *jumper, knickers, suspenders,* and *vest* have very different meanings in the UK and the US.

*Clothing and Shoes*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| ascot | cravat |
| beaded (dress) | diamanté |
| business suit + | lounge suit |
| canvas sneakers | plimsolls/pumps |
| collar stay | collar stiffener |
| coveralls | boiler suit |
| crew neck | turtle-neck |
| cuffs | turn-ups |
| derby | bowler hat |
| fedora | trilby |
| garters | suspenders |
| golfing knickers | plus-fours + |
| hose | stockings + |
| inseam | inside leg |
| jumper | pinafore dress |
| knee-highs | pop socks |
| knickers | knickerbockers |
| made-to-order | bespoke |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| nightgown | nightdress |
| off-the-rack | off the peg |
| oxfords | brogues |
| pantsuit | trouser suit |
| panties | knickers |
| pants + | trousers + |
| pantyhose | tights |
| parka + | anorak |
| pumps (for women) | court shoes |
| raincoat + | mac/mackintosh |
| rubber boots + | Wellingtons |
| ski mask | Balaclava |
| snaps (fasteners) | press-studs |
| sneakers | trainers |
| spike heels | stiletto heels + |
| sport coat | sports jacket |
| suspenders | braces |
| sweater + | woolly/jumper |
| sweater set | twin set + |
| turtleneck | polo-neck |
| tuxedo | dinner jacket |
| undershirt | vest |
| undershorts/Jockey shorts | underpants/Y-fronts |
| vest | waistcoat |

## SCHOOLS

### *The British School System*

In Britain there are many types of schools. Children may start in *kindergarten,* also known as *nursery school,* then go on to *primary* or *elementary school.* They then start *junior school* at the age of 7, where they stay until the age of 11 or 12. They may also go to a *preparatory school,* or *prep school.* Prep schools are privately run. They then proceed to their high school, which may be a *grammar school,* a *comprehensive school,* or a *grant-maintained school.*

Many *grammar schools* were founded as far back as the sixteenth century. Shakespeare went to a grammar school. In most towns grammar schools were abolished in the 1970s, being considered elitist because prospective students were required to take an entrance exam at age 11 called the 11-plus. A few grammar schools have survived, however, and remain very popular. *Comprehensive schools* (often just called secondary schools) divide pupils of differing abilities into *sets. Grant-maintained schools* are fairly uncommon and are funded by private grants and by the Department for Education. Schools funded by the government are known as *state schools.*

*Public schools* are elite high schools (often single sex), and are usually very expensive, contrary to what their name implies, although free scholarships are awarded for academic merit. The most famous public schools are Eton and Harrow. Pupils usually attend a prep (preparatory) school before going to a public school.

The school years are designated by *classes* up to high school, and then by *forms.* The highest level of schooling is the sixth form. The school principal is known as the *headmaster.* The school year is divided into three *terms.* A recess is called a *break.* A *tuck shop* sells drinks and snacks.

GCSE exams are taken at the age of 15 or 16, and A-levels, which are required to enter a university, are taken at the age of 17 or 18. GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education.

Fees are required to attend universities in Britain (but not Scotland), although scholarships are available. Measures of excellence for university degrees are as follows: *first, upper second, lower second,* and *third.* Students who go on for their master's or doctorate are called *postgraduate* students.

### *The American School System*

Just as in Britain, children start in kindergarten or pre-school, if their parents so choose. This is often referred to as K, when speaking of the grade. The children start school proper (first grade) at five or six years of age. This is called *elementary, grammar,* or *grade school.* In elementary school, younger children are encouraged to bring along to school items of interest, e.g., a caterpillar or butterfly, to show the other children. This is called *show and tell.*

Many children take advantage of the free school buses. During the school year, urban roads are fairly swarming with these yellow buses. Other drivers are required to stop behind *and in front* of the bus when it stops to pick up or drop off children, so this can slow down your commute if you get stuck behind one. In the morning many school children are required to recite the *pledge of allegiance.* Prayers are not permitted in public schools; however, some schools have a moment of silence for quiet reflection at the start of the day. The school day starts early and finishes early, sometimes by early afternoon. A late student is given a *tardy slip.* A break is known as a *recess.* There are private schools and *academies,* some of which resemble the British public schools. Universities and colleges are not free, but scholarships are available for some students. Americans call any learning establishment *school,* which can be confusing to Britons. The academic year is usually divided into two terms called *semesters.*

Pupils (often called *students*) normally progress a grade each year, but if they fail their exams (*get a failing grade*), then their GPA (g*rade point average*) is not high enough and they must

repeat a grade. After grammar school or elementary school, students attend either middle school or junior high school, depending on the system in use in their community. Middle schools start at grade six, and junior high schools at grade seven. Students enter high school at grade nine.

High school graduation is a big event for American school children. It is marked with a ceremony and is an important rite of passage for young adults. There is also a *prom,* or formal dance, in the senior year. At the successful completion of high school, students receive a *high school diploma,* which is required for further study at the university level. The SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test, which was known for many years as the Scholastic Aptitude Test) is the equivalent of A-levels. In high school and college (university), the first-year students are called freshmen, the second-year, sophomores, the third-year, juniors, and the fourth-year, seniors. The head administrator in an elementary or high school is known as the *principal.* A *letter jacket* is a windcheater style of jacket with the initial or initials of a school or college on the front.

The word *student,* which in British English is reserved for those studying at universities, is used in a broader sense in the US and covers anyone studying. An unexpected test in the US is called a *pop quiz.* In the US, if pupils skip a class they *play hookey* or *cut a class.* In the UK, they *skive off.* The expressions *to bunk off* and *play hookey* are known in both countries.

Measures of excellence for US university degrees are as follows: *cum laude, magna cum laude, summa cum laude* (s*umma cum laude* being the highest).

### *Comparison of University Terms*

Terms relating to university education are very different, as students from the US or the UK will discover if they decide to study abroad.

*University Terms*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| assistant professor | lecturer |
| associate professor | senior lecturer/reader |
| commencement | graduation |
| dormitory | hall of residence |
| freshman | fresher |
| full professor | professor |
| graduate student | postgraduate student |
| instructor | junior lecturer |
| major in (a subject) | read (a subject) |
| proctor | invigilator |
| president | vice-chancellor |
| review | revise |

In the US, a *frat house* is a residential house for members of a *fraternity.* This is a social organization of male students. The names of fraternities are composed of Greek letters. The equivalent organization for female students is called a *sorority.* Fraternities and sororities sometimes have secret rites, and one must take a pledge to belong. In the US the term *college* is often used interchangeably with *university. College* is usually restricted to other forms of higher education in the UK, such as professional or vocational schools.

## HEALTH CARE

The British National Health Service does take care of its citizens from cradle to grave, but a patient may have to wait several months, or even years, for a non-emergency operation. British

hospitals where the treatment is free are more austere than American hospitals. Emergency treatment is almost invariably undertaken in public hospitals, and ambulances, which are free in an emergency, will take you to one of these. Private hospitals tend to be used for minor surgery or for convalescing. The same doctors (*consultants*) often work in both the private and public sectors, so do not assume that the qualifications or experience of a surgeon or anaesthetist will be better at a private hospital. There are, however, many more trainee or junior doctors working in the public hospitals. The facilities at a private hospital are of course much better, offering the patient a private room, and the nursing staff may be less busy and so able to provide better attention. Perhaps most importantly, you have the ability to choose the day for your operation and avoid long waiting lists.

There is no national health system in the US, but health care is available to all. It is excellent, though very expensive. Those without insurance may have monthly payments to a hospital for many years. Senior citizens are eligible for Medicare, a government health insurance program. The Medicaid program gives health coverage to those with low incomes.

## THE POLITICAL SYSTEMS

### *The US Political System*

Legislative bills are presented to the President after being passed by Congress. He has the option of signing the bills into law or vetoing them. If he lets a bill sit on his desk for ten days (excluding Sundays and legal holidays) without either signing it or vetoing it, the bill automatically becomes law. The President is head of the military and also head of state. His term lasts for four years. Legislation must be approved by Congress before it reaches the President's desk to be signed into law or vetoed. Congress consists of two governing bodies, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Each state has two senators, but the number of

representatives is proportional to that particular state's population. The House of Representatives is often called *the House.*

The two main parties are the Republicans and the Democrats, which can be compared to the Conservative and Labour parties respectively. The Republicans are often called the GOP (Grand Old Party). The two parties are depicted in cartoons by an elephant and a donkey. The elephant represents the Republicans and the donkey represents the Democrats. When members of a legislative body get together to decide policy, this meeting is known as a *caucus.* A *plurality* occurs when the winning party has more votes than the other parties, but not a majority. In the US a candidate *runs* for office.

## *The UK Political System*

The UK has a parliamentary system of government. A Member of Parliament is often called an MP. (In the US an MP is a military policeman.) There are two houses, the House of Lords and the House of Commons, somewhat like the US Congress. The House of Lords used to consist of *peers,* men and women who belonged to the hereditary nobility or who had been *raised to the peerage,* which means they had been granted the title through merit. People with a title are collectively known as the *peerage.* The House of Lords has now changed with a supposedly more democratic mix of members. The House of Commons consists of elected members who represent their constituency. A *constituency* can mean a district in Britain as well as a body of voters. A candidate *stands* for office in the UK. The three main parties are the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, and the Liberal Democrats. Historically the Conservative Party is right-wing, the Labour Party left-wing. The Conservatives are also called Tories. The leader of the ruling party is known as the Prime Minister.

Britain also elects European members of Parliament known as MEPs (Members of the European Parliament). These represent British interests at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium.

## MUSEUMS

There are quite a few differences in pronunciation of terms heard in museums and art galleries. A mat around a picture is called a *mount* in the UK. Museum guides are sometimes called *docents* in the US. Here is a list of words often encountered or used in museums that are pronounced differently in the UK and the US.

*Pronunciation of Art Historical Terms*

| WORD | US PRONUNCIATION | UK PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| baroque | ba·**rōk** | ba·**rŏk** |
| Byzantine | **biz**·ən·teen | bi·**zan**·tīn |
| cloche | clōsh | clŏsh |
| dynasty | **dīn**·as·tee | **dĭn**·as·tee |
| Huguenot | **hyoo**·gə·not | **hyoo**·gə·noh |
| Marie Antoinette | mə·**ree** ahn·twa·**net** | **mah**·ree ăn·twa·**net** |
| Renaissance | **re**·na·sahns | re·**nay**·sens |
| Van Gogh | van **goh** | van **gof** |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols, see page vi.

## THE THEATRE

You may wish to take in a show if you are spending time in a big city. The seating is known by different names, so don't be surprised if you are asked if you would like seats in the *orchestra* in the US! They are referring to the seats at the front. If a play *bombs* in the US, it has not gone down well—quite the opposite meaning of the British expression *It went like a bomb,* meaning the play was a hit. The program is sometimes called a *playbill* in the US. The break between acts when the audience may leave their seats to socialize or have a drink is known as *the intermission,* or just *intermission* (without the article) in the US. It is called *the*

*interval* in Britain, where the bar in the theatre is known as a *crush bar*, for obvious reasons. The alternative US spelling *theater* is no longer as common as it used to be. The following conversion chart for theatre terms may be helpful.

*Theatre Terms*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| orchestra | stalls |
| mezzanine | circle |
| balcony | upper circle/balcony |
| top balcony | gallery |
| the peanut gallery | the gods |

# 6

# *Differences in Customs and Etiquette*

This is a difficult topic to sum up in one chapter, so I've selected some of the cultural differences that I find the most striking. The United States is a melting pot of nationalities. English may be the national language of the US, but many Americans have African, Asian, or Native American ancestors, or ancestors who came from other countries in Europe besides the United Kingdom. While we share the same language to a point, American culture is quite different from that of the UK. Americans use different body language, interact differently with others, and have different customs. Americans will strike up a conversation with a stranger much more readily than a Briton may be accustomed to, and an American may ask questions that a British person could find a little forward. They often terminate even a brief chat with "Well, it was nice talking to (with) you!" or "Have a nice day now!" Friends and acquaintances greet each other with "Hi" or "Hi there" or "How's it going?" Most Americans answer their phone by just saying "Hello," whereas most Britons give their name or phone number. On terminating a telephone conversation, an American might say "Well, I'll let you go now," rather than being blunt and saying "I have to go now." Americans often give a parting pleasantry, such as "Drive safely" or "Enjoy" that may seem rather like a command to a Briton.

"Thank you" always requires a response in the US. The most common response is "You're welcome." In a casual situation you may hear "You bet" or "Uh-huh." A Briton might respond with "Thanks very much," "Not at all," or perhaps "Cheers" in a casual situation. (Most Americans would find this use of the expression "Cheers" very odd, as it is usually used as a toast before drinking in the US.) Sometimes a nod of acknowledgment is considered sufficient response. "Sir" or "Ma'am" is used far more in the US than in Britain. You will hear it often when being served in a restaurant or in other businesses that provide services. It is also used to catch someone's attention, as in "Sir, you left your keys behind." If an American does not understand you, he or she may simply say "Sir?" or "Ma'am?" This means they want you to repeat your statement or "to run that by them one more time." If you are addressed as "Buster" or "Lady," it is probably not too friendly a form of address, and you have most likely offended the person.

As Henry Higgins put it in *My Fair Lady* by Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner, "An Englishman's way of speaking absolutely classifies him." In the US, the social pecking order is not always as apparent merely by accent as it is in the UK. However, differences between the accents of various social groups in the US can be heard, even by Britons unfamiliar with American dialects, especially in the large cities of the East.

Americans are more inclined to attend church regularly than Britons. An estimated 100 million Americans attend a church every Sunday. Synagogues, also called *temples,* are also well attended.

Drive-ins and drive-through services are popular in the US, especially with banks and fast-food restaurants, although drive-in movies have decreased in numbers since the 1980s. *The soda fountain* (beverage counter) in the local *drugstore* (general store) has all but disappeared. Until the 1960s, the soda fountain was a local meeting place for youngsters in small towns.

Most utility bills (water, electricity, phone, etc.) come

monthly in the US. They often come quarterly (every three months) in Britain, which can give one quite a surprise! Screens on the windows, central heating, and air conditioning are the norm in houses in the southern US. Screens are not found on British windows, and although air conditioning is now common in British cars, private homes, almost without exception, do not have air conditioning. Almost all American cars have air conditioning, automatic transmission, and cruise control. Top-notch American hotels and restaurants, especially in big cities, often provide valet parking. It is customary to leave a small tip when your car is returned.

The United States also has its share of legends and folktales. Americans have Bigfoot, the British have the Loch Ness monster. Bigfoot, otherwise known as Sasquatch, is a large hairy humanoid creature that is said to roam wilderness areas of the US, in particular the Pacific Northwest. From time to time people report sightings of this creature or traces of his enormous footprints.

Foods and eating habits also differ. These differences are covered in the section describing restaurants on page 23.

## AMERICAN SPORTS

Baseball is the national summer sport. It is played in a *ballpark,* which consists of an *infield* or *diamond* with the bases, and an *outfield* beyond that area. A person who bats both left-handed and right-handed is known as a *switch hitter.* The word *pitch* is unknown in the US for a playing field. The person who throws the baseball, however, is known as the *pitcher.* The *World Series* in baseball is similar to a *test match* in cricket. Many baseball expressions have made their way into everyday speech. These are listed in this book under Common Metaphorical Baseball Terms, page 125. Baseball players earn huge sums of money, as do football players. Soccer has become increasingly popular in the US recently. Ice hockey (usually just referred to as hockey) is also

popular, and of course football (American-style) is a national passion. Fans tend to be reasonably well-behaved and rarely get out of control. Football is played on a *gridiron,* presumably because of the appearance of the white lines on the field. The players wear helmets and lots of padding. American football was modeled on the British game of rugby football. Curiously the term *downfield,* which means deep in the opponents' part of the field, is known as *upfield* in the UK. A *marquee player* is a top player, who draws plenty of fans.

## BRITISH SPORTS

Football in Britain is synonymous with soccer. American football is slowly gaining acceptance in and around London. The padding worn by the players is somewhat amusing to the Brits, who can sustain nasty injuries in their games with little body protection. *Rugger,* or rugby football, is closer to American football, where you can run with the ball. A sporting event is called a *fixture* in Britain, and a *playing field* is also called a *pitch.*

Tennis terms are quite different in Britain. One calls *rough or smooth* to determine the server rather than *up or down.* The *toss* is frequently called the *throw up* in Britain. The call is *van in* rather than *ad in* after deuce, and before play one has a *knock-up* instead of a *warm-up.* If the ball falls in the *alley* it is said to have fallen in the *tramlines* in Britain. The terms *fifteen up,* meaning *fifteen apiece,* and *all tied up,* meaning the players are *tied,* are only used in the US. In American English, *Australian doubles* or *Canadian doubles* is a tennis game for three players.

Cricket is the big summer game in Britain. There are a few cricket terms used in everyday speech in Britain. Throwing the cricket ball is called *bowling,* and the expression *Well bowled!* means *Well done!* To be *on a good wicket* means to be in a good position. To be *on a sticky wicket* is not so good. *Knocked for six* means *thrown for a loop.* To *bowl a googly* means to throw a curve ball. Teams played cricket on a regular basis in Central Park, New York, years ago, but now baseball has taken over.

## PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

In Britain, the *bank holidays* include New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, and May Day, which honors workers, on the first Monday in May. The Spring Holiday occurs on the last Monday in May. There is also the August Bank Holiday, occurring on the last Monday in August. After Christmas there is Boxing Day. This is the day after Christmas unless Christmas falls on a Saturday, in which case Boxing Day is celebrated the following Monday. Mothering Sunday occurs on the fourth Sunday in Lent. This is also known as Mother's Day.

In the US, the term *legal holiday* is used instead of *bank holiday*. Legal holidays include New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which occurs on the third Monday in January, Presidents' Day, which occurs on the third Monday in February, and Memorial Day, formerly Decoration Day, which occurs on the last Monday in May and is in remembrance of men and women who were killed in war. Memorial Day is the unofficial beginning of summer. The Fourth of July, also called Independence Day, commemorates the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. It is celebrated with picnics and later, after sunset, with fireworks. Labor Day, which occurs on the first Monday in September, honors labor and is unofficially considered to mark the end of summer. Columbus Day, the second Monday in October, is celebrated in most states. Veterans' Day is on November 11.

There is a big celebration at Thanksgiving, another important US holiday. Thanksgiving occurs on the fourth Thursday in November. Thanksgiving Day, which became a national holiday in 1863, commemorates the first harvest of the Pilgrims in America in 1621. It is traditionally celebrated with turkey and pumpkin pie and is a time of family get-togethers and much feasting. Travel arrangements must be made well in advance if you wish to travel at this time. Christmas decorations usually appear in the shops around this time and sometimes even before.

The American flag is seen flying everywhere all year round, from outside post offices to on the backs of motorcycles. Flags must be illuminated at night or be taken down. Groundhog Day occurs on February 2. According to legend, if the groundhog emerges from hibernation on this day and sees its shadow, there will be another six weeks of winter weather. Mother's Day occurs on the second Sunday in May.

Paid *vacations* (*holidays* in the UK) are more generous in Britain on the whole.



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# 7

# *Transportation*

Terminology used in vehicles and on the roads is very different in the two countries. In addition to incorporating some terms while describing driving in the two countries, I have included complete lists of term comparisons at the end of this section.

## THE BRITISH ROAD

British roads consist of *B roads, A roads,* and *motorways.* B roads are roughly similar to *state roads* in the US, A roads are similar to *US highways,* and motorways are similar to *US interstates.* Motorways all have the designation M such as the M25. Apart from driving on the other side of the road, there are several other important differences between the UK and the US in the rules of the road. Traffic lights go from red to combined red and amber before turning green. This alerts the driver that the light is about to turn green. Pedestrian crossings with a traffic light are known as *pelican crossings,* from *pe*destrian *li*ght *con*trolled crossing. After red, the traffic light will go to a flashing amber light, which means that pedestrians have the right of way, but the cars may proceed if no one is on the crossing. The traffic light will then turn green. A round sign on a pole with a black diagonal stripe on a white background indicates the end of a speed restriction.

The maximum speed in Britain is 70 miles per hour. Seat belts must be worn in both front and rear seats. Signposts do not always give compass directions, so it is advisable to consult the map and note towns and cities through which you will be traveling for reference. It is prohibited to overtake from a slower lane. *Yield* signs say *Give Way.*

The signs on motorways are blue and are very similar to the signs on US interstates. Signs on other roads have black lettering on white or yellow on green. The ramps on and off the motorways are known as *slip roads.* Emergency telephones at one mile intervals are common on the motorways. Traffic circles are known as *roundabouts* and are very common in Britain. Usually the traffic on the roundabout has priority over traffic entering. A traffic back-up is frequently called a *tailback.* A sign saying *ramp* indicates there is a difference in the level of the road surface ahead, usually because of construction.

A divided highway is called a *dual carriageway,* and the median is known as the *central reservation.* A green arrow is often called a *filter.*

## THE AMERICAN ROAD

The *interstates* are the equivalent of the British motorways. The slip roads are called *on ramps* and *off ramps.* Emergency telephones on the interstates are rather sporadic. Sometimes they are at one-mile intervals, but very often you can go miles without seeing one.

The US equivalent of the British A and B roads are the US and SR roads. The US stands, of course, for United States, the SR for state road. The only difference between these roads is that the US roads continue from one state into the next, whereas the SR roads will only take you within the state you are in and are given a different number in the next state. C roads, or county roads, tend to have only one lane in each direction and usually are rural. Unlike the British, Americans never use the article with roads.

They say, "Take US 27 north," rather than "Take *the* US 27 north."

The center of the US road is marked with yellow lines; white lines are used as lane dividers. In many urban areas over the last 20 years, the *median* or *median strip* (known as the *central reservation* in Britain) has been made into a turn lane. This keeps the fast lane moving, although occasionally two cars from opposite directions will meet in the middle lane, blocking each other's view. A word of caution here: sometimes the right (slow) lane turns into a right-turn-only lane, with very little warning, necessitating a fast lane change if you don't want to turn. Overtaking (*passing* in the US) is permitted from a slower lane.

If you encounter a school bus that has stopped to pick up or set down children, you *must* stop if you are behind the bus and also if you are approaching the bus from the other direction when on a road without a central reservation.

Most towns and cities are laid out in a grid pattern. Thus in some cities or towns, avenues will intersect streets, while in others, numbered streets will intersect named streets with avenues running diagonally through the city. Yet no matter what the variation, there is usually a consistent north-south or east-west direction to all thoroughfares. Accordingly, street addresses are thereby simplified; for example, 2903 14th Street West will be very close to the corner of 29th Avenue and 14th Street West. The giving of directions is also simplified by this method. One might say, "Go north along 26th Street, turn right at the third light, go two blocks, then turn left"; or one could be more specific and say, "Go north along 26th street, turn east at 39th Avenue, then north at 19th Street." A *block* is often used for measuring distances in a city. It means the distance between intersecting streets. Even in the country one might hear the term *city block* used as a measurement.

The term *street* in the US is not restricted to urban areas as it is in Britain. The American equivalent of the British *high street* is *main street.*

In urban areas, almost every set of traffic lights will include turning arrows that allow for left turns before oncoming traffic proceeds. Traffic lights are also known as stop lights, red lights, or lights. One set of lights is known simply as a *light,* e.g. "Turn at the next light." The *amber light* is known as the *yellow light* in the US. Almost everywhere in the US you can turn right at a traffic light, even if it is red, unless otherwise indicated. You must, of course, stop first to see if it is safe to proceed. In fact, if you are sitting at a traffic light in the right lane with your right turn signal flashing, the car behind you may become impatient if you make no attempt to turn. Sometimes you may see a sign that says "No turn on red"; then, of course, you must wait for the light to turn green. This system had been used in certain states for many years, but after the oil crisis in 1973 making a right turn on a red light became almost universal as a means of reducing fuel consumption.

Each state has its own driver's license. This is the size of a credit card and has the bearer's photograph on the front. These cards are commonly used for identification purposes, especially when cashing a check or entering a bar. Some states only require one number-plate, called a *license plate* in the US, at the rear of the car.

In the UK, lorries (called *trucks* in the US) with a cab and a trailer are known as *articulated lorries.* Signs often use the term *HGV* (*Heavy Goods Vehicle*) or *LGV* (*Large Goods vehicle*) when referring to them. The term *LGV* was supposed to replace *HGV* in 1992, but now both abbreviations are used interchangeably.

## INTERSTATE DRIVING

Driving on the interstates is very similar to driving on the motorways. The interstate signs are shaped like a blue shield with the road number, such as I-95 or I-4, written in white letters inside the shield. In Hawaii the letter H is used instead of

I to indicate an interstate, e.g. H-2. In Alaska they use an A. The even-numbered interstates run east to west with the lower numbers in the extreme south of the United States and the highest numbers in the north. The odd-numbered interstates run north to south, with the lowest numbers in Hawaii (H-1) and the highest numbers on the eastern seaboard of the continental US. Spur roads and orbital roads around large cities are designated by three-digit numbers. Spur road numbers will start with an odd digit, e.g. I-395. Roads, such as bypasses, that link up with main roads at each end will start with an even number, e.g. I-295. Alaska has four interstate highways, A-1 through A-4. Even though these Alaskan routes are designated as interstate highways, they are generally not constructed to Interstate standards and marked as Alaska State Routes. The interstates have rather infrequent rest areas, which usually consist of toilets (restrooms), vending machines, and tables and chairs for picnics. They are generally quite attractive but rarely sell gasoline (petrol) or hot food as do the *services* in Britain. On some toll roads or turnpikes you will find rest areas with full services. Quite often these are located in the center of the road (on a large road divider), necessitating an exit from the fast lane. The fastest speed at which you may travel on the interstates varies from state to state. Occasionally a slip road will lead into the fast lane, which will require your quickly having to attain the speed of the other traffic. The slow lane in the US is known as the *outside* lane; quite the opposite of the slow lane in Britain which is known as the *inside* lane. The reason for the opposite term being used has apparently nothing to do with the fact that the two countries drive on different sides of the road. In South Africa, where left-hand rule applies (where you drive on the left), the slow lane is known as the outside line.

Speed limits in the US are observed quite well, mainly because the police are very vigilant. The highway police of the respective states through which the interstates run patrol these roads (sometimes from the air). These highway patrol officers are also known as *state troopers.*

Each state has counties, much like British counties. County roads outside the city limits are patrolled by *deputy sheriffs* (known commonly as *deputies* or *sheriffs*), urban areas by the city police. In some states there are also *state police.* If you have ever wondered where the word *Smokey* came from, here's the story: Smokey Bear was introduced on a poster by the National Forest Service in 1944 as part of a campaign to educate the public on fire prevention in forests and parks. The bear's big hat resembled that of the state troopers, and soon truckers were referring to a state trooper, or any traffic patrol officer, as a Smokey.

In the US, *articulated lorries* are called *tractor-trailers.* The more common term for a large rig is an *eighteen-wheeler* or *semi* [**sem**·ī]. As they travel the interstates, they are sporadically required to pull in at *weigh stations* in each state to be weighed. This is for safety reasons, since an overloaded truck could be a menace on the roads.

## RULES OF THE ROAD

Have you ever wondered why Americans drive on the right? Peter Kincaid has written an excellent book on the subject entitled *The Rule of the Road* (Greenwood Press, 1986). He thinks that right-hand rule probably goes back to the early wagons used in the US, where the driver either walked on the left side of the animals that pulled the wagon, or rode on the left rear animal. The reason for this is that most people are right-handed, mount a horse from the left, and prefer to lead a horse with their right hand. Because of this, the early travelers preferred to keep right so that they could more accurately judge the clearance between passing vehicles. In Britain, wagons were mostly driven from the box with the driver seated on the right so that he could use the brake and whip with his right hand. Mounting posts for horses in the UK were situated on the left side of streets, as horses are mounted from the left side. This resulted in a preference for a keep-left rule in Britain. No doubt European settlers also influenced drivers in the US to keep

right; and with the arrival of the automobile at the beginning of the twentieth century, the same rules were followed. Curiously, the early American cars had right-hand drive to help the driver see the deep ditches at the sides of the poorly maintained roads, and perhaps to facilitate entering and exiting the car. Interestingly, John McAdam, the inventor of tarmac, constructed a highway that used the left-hand rule until the mid-1800s. It was called the National Pike or the Cumberland Road and ran from Cumberland, Maryland, inland toward Saint Louis, Missouri. It is now known as US 40.

## TERMS FOR THE ROAD (UK–US)

This section treats terms relating to automobiles and roads which are particular to either the UK or the US. In compiling this lexicon I have come across several brand names that are as common as, or more common than, the generic name. Because the brand names may not be understood in the other country, I found it essential to include these words.

### *British Car Terminology*

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| accident + | wreck |
| articulated lorry | semi [**sem**·ī]/tractor-trailer/eighteen-wheeler |
| black spot | dangerous stretch of road |
| bollard* | traffic diverter |
| bonnet | hood |
| boot | trunk |
| bull bar/bullbar | grill/bumper guard |
| camper van/Caravanette (brand name) | conversion van |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| car park | parking lot |
| caravan | trailer |
| Cat's-eyes (brand name) | reflectors (on the road) |
| central reservation | median/median strip |
| chippings | gravel/small stones |
| coach | tour bus/motor coach |
| coupé [**coo**-pay] | coupe [coop] |
| crash barrier | guardrail |
| cut up (a driver) | cut off |
| derv (**d**iesel-engined **r**oad **v**ehicle) | diesel fuel for trucks |
| dipped headlights | low-beam headlights |
| diversion | detour |
| dog leg (in road) | jog |
| drink driving | drunk driving |
| drunk in charge | DUI (driving under the influence)/ DWI (driving while intoxicated) |
| driving licence | driver's license |
| dual carriageway | divided highway |
| estate car | station wagon + |
| excess (on insurance) | deductible |
| exhaust pipe + | tailpipe |
| filter light | green arrow |
| flat battery | dead battery |
| flyover | overpass |
| forecourt (at a filling station) | area around the gas pumps |
| gear lever | gearshift |
| give way | yield |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| HGV (heavy goods vehicle) | semi [**sem**·ī]/eighteen-wheeler |
| hand brake | parking brake +/emergency brake |
| hoarding | billboard + |
| indicator | turn signal |
| juggernaut | eighteen-wheeler |
| jump leads | jumper cables |
| lay-by | pull-off/turnout (seldom found in US) |
| lorry | truck |
| LGV | semi [**sem**·ī]/eighteen-wheeler |
| manual transmission + | stick shift/standard transmission |
| motorway | interstate/freeway |
| mudguard | fender |
| multi-storey car park | parking garage/parking ramp (regional North) |
| nearside lane/inside lane | outside lane (closest to the curb) |
| number-plate | tag/license plate |
| offside lane/outside lane | inside lane |
| on tow | in tow |
| overtake + | pass + |
| pantechnicon [pan·**tek**·ni·con] | moving van |
| pavement | sidewalk |
| pelican crossing | pedestrian crossing with lights |
| petrol | gas/gasoline |
| prang | fender bender |
| puncture + | flat/flat tire + |
| ramp | speed bump + |
| removal van | moving van |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| reverse + | back up |
| roadworks | road construction/road work |
| roundabout | traffic circle/rotary (regional New England) |
| services | service area |
| sidelights | parking lights |
| sleeping policeman | speed bump + |
| slip road | on ramp/off ramp |
| speed hump | speed bump |
| speedo | speedometer + |
| subway | pedestrian underpass |
| tailback | traffic backup |
| tailboard | tailgate |
| tarmac | blacktop |
| third-party insurance | liability insurance |
| traffic island | median |
| traffic lights/traffic light + | red light/stop light/light |
| traffic warden | parking enforcement officer |
| transport café | truck stop |
| unmade road | dirt road |
| verge | shoulder +/side median |
| way out | exit + |
| windscreen | windshield |
| wing mirror | side-view mirror |
| zebra crossing | crosswalk/pedestrian crossing + |

## TERMS FOR THE ROAD (US–UK)

There are also terms used in the US that British visitors to the US may not know or that may not be understood in the UK if an American visitor uses them.

### *American Car Terminology*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| antique car (See definition at the end of this section.) | vintage car |
| automobile/auto (rarely spoken) | car + |
| back up | reverse + |
| barrel along *(colloq.)* | belt along |
| bias-ply tires | cross-ply tyres |
| billboard + | hoarding |
| blacktop | tarmac |
| body man | panel beater |
| boot (wheel immobilizer) | wheel clamp |
| break in (engine) | run in |
| brights/bright lights | main beams |
| bumper guard | overrider or bullbar (The type is specified in the UK.) |
| carburetor [**kar**·bur·ay·tor] | carburettor [kar·**bur**·ĕ·tor] |
| cattle guard | cattle grid |
| conversion van | camper van |
| coupe [coop] | coupé [**coo**·pay] |
| crosswalk | zebra crossing/pedestrian crossing + |
| cruiser | police car + |
| cut off (someone) | cut up |
| dead battery | flat battery |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| deadhead *(verb)* | drive without a load |
| deductible (on insurance) | excess |
| defogger | demister |
| detail (clean a car thoroughly) | valet |
| detour | diversion |
| dimmer switch | dip switch |
| dirt road | unmade road |
| divided highway | dual carriageway |
| double clutch | double declutch |
| drive shaft | prop shaft |
| driver's handbook | highway code |
| driver's license | driving licence |
| DUI (driving under the influence)/ DWI (driving while intoxicated) | drink driving |
| dump truck | tipper truck |
| emergency brake | hand brake/parking brake + |
| exit + | way out |
| fender | wing/mudguard |
| fender bender | minor traffic accident |
| fender skirt | wheel spat |
| flat/flat tire + | puncture + |
| four-lane highway/four lane | dual carriageway |
| freeway | motorway |
| freeze plug | core plug + |
| gas/gasoline | petrol |
| gas mileage | fuel consumption + |
| gas pedal | accelerator |
| gearshift | gear lever |
| grease fitting | grease nipple |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| grille guard | bullbar |
| guardrail | crash barrier |
| hairpin curve/turn | hairpin bend |
| half shaft | drive shaft |
| headliner | headlining |
| high-beam headlights | main-beam headlights |
| high gear | top gear |
| hitch | tow bar |
| hood | bonnet |
| hood ornament | mascot |
| in tow | on tow |
| inside lane | offside lane/outside lane |
| interstate | motorway |
| jog (in road) | dogleg |
| jumper cables | jump leads |
| lemon (car) | dud/Friday-afternoon car |
| liability insurance | third-party insurance |
| license plate | number-plate |
| low-beam headlights | dipped headlights |
| low gear | bottom gear/first gear + |
| lug nut | wheel nut |
| make/hang a right (left) | turn right (left) + |
| median/median strip | central reservation/island |
| minivan | people carrier |
| motor home | Caravanette (brand name) |
| moving van | removal van |
| mudguard | mudflap + |
| muffler | silencer |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| no outlet | no through road + |
| no standing | no stopping |
| odometer + | milometer |
| oil pan | sump |
| outside lane (slow lane) | nearside lane/inside lane |
| parking garage/ramp (regional North) | multi-storey car park |
| parking lights | sidelights |
| parking lot | car park |
| parkway | tree-lined dual carriageway |
| patrolman | police officer |
| pavement | road surface |
| ping (engine sound) | pink |
| RV (recreational vehicle) | Caravanette (brand name) |
| rear-ended | hit by the car behind |
| red light | traffic light |
| reflectors (on the road) | Cat's-eyes (brand name) |
| rest area | lay-by/services |
| restroom | toilet/lavatory |
| rotary (regional New England) | roundabout |
| rumble seat | dickey seat |
| sedan | saloon |
| semi [**sem·ī**] | articulated lorry/HGV/LGV |
| shop | repair shop |
| side median | verge |
| side mirror/side-view mirror | wing mirror |
| sidewalk | pavement/footpath |
| Smokey *(slang)* | highway patrol officer |

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| US | UK |
|---|---|
| spark-plug wires | spark-plug leads |
| standard transmission | manual transmission + |
| station wagon + | estate car |
| stick shift | manual transmission + |
| stoplight | traffic light + |
| striping the pavement | white-lining the road |
| tag (regional) | registration sticker/number-plate |
| tailgate + | tailboard |
| tailgate *(verb)* | drive on someone's tail |
| totaled, was | is a write-off (expressed differently in each country) |
| traffic circle | roundabout |
| trailer | caravan |
| trailer hitch | tow-bar |
| transmission + | gearbox |
| trooper | highway patrol officer |
| truck | lorry/pick-up |
| trunk | boot |
| turning radius | turning circle |
| turnout (regional West) | lay-by |
| two-cycle engine | two-stroke engine |
| valve cover | rocker cover |
| vehicle inspection certificate | MOT (Ministry of Transport) certificate |
| vent window | quarter light |
| windshield | windscreen |
| wreck | accident + |
| yield + | give way |

The term *classic car* is used rather loosely in both countries. However, a car made prior to 1918 is a *veteran car* in the UK, and one made between 1918 and 1930 is known as a *vintage car.* In the US, a car made between 1925 and 1945 is known as a *classic car.* If a car is over 25 years old, it is classified as an *antique car.*

## PRONOUNCING CAR NAMES IN THE UK AND US

There are also a few names of car brands and models (including both British-made models and models made elsewhere) that are pronounced differently in the UK and the US, although both Americans and Britons will be familiar with the written forms of the names. In addition, a BMW car in the US is often affectionately called a *Beamer* or *Bimmer,* and a Mercedes in Britain is sometimes called a *Merc.*

*British Pronunciations of Car Names*

| BRAND OR MODEL NAME | UK PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|
| Daimler | **dām**·lə |
| Datsun | **dăt**·**sun** |
| Fiat | **fee**·ăt |
| Jaguar | **jag**·yu·ah |
| Mazda | **măz**·da |
| Mondeo | mon·**day**·oh |
| Nissan | **nis**·ən |
| Peugeot | **per**·zhoh |
| Renault | **ren**·oh |
| Vauxhall | **vox**·all |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

*American Pronunciations of Car Names*

| BRAND OR MODEL NAME | US PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|
| Bonneville | **bonna**·vil |
| Brougham | brome |
| Chevrolet | **shev**·ro·lay |
| Chrysler | **krīs**·ler |
| Ciera | see·**air**·ra |
| Daimler | **dīm**·ler |
| Datsun | **daht**·sun |
| DeVille | duh·**vil** |
| Fiat | **fee**·aht |
| Galant | ga·**lahnt** |
| Grand Prix | grand pree |
| Hyundai | **hun**·day |
| Jaguar | **jag**·war |
| Marquis | mar·**kee** |
| Mazda | **mahz**·da |
| Miata | mee·**ah**·ta |
| Nissan | **nee**·sahn |
| Peugeot | pyoo·**zhoh** |
| Renault | re·**nawlt** |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

## RAILROAD (RAILWAY) TERMS

There are a few differences in terminology relating to the railroad, or as they are called in the UK, the railway. The term *railroad* itself was once used in the UK, but it was replaced by the term *railway* already in the 19th century. *Amtrak* is the name of

the American national passenger rail system created by Congress in 1970. The name stands for *American Travel by Track.*

*Railroad Terminology*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| boxcar | goods wagon |
| bumpers | buffers |
| caboose | guard's van |
| car | carriage |
| coach (class of travel) | second class |
| conductor | guard |
| depot [**dee**·poh] | station + |
| dining car/diner | restaurant car |
| emergency cord | communication cord |
| engineer | engine driver |
| freight car | goods wagon |
| freight train | goods train |
| gondola car | truck |
| grade crossing | level crossing |
| layover | stopover + |
| one-way ticket | single ticket |
| passenger car | carriage |
| railroad crossing | level crossing |
| railroad ties | railway sleepers |
| roundtrip ticket | return ticket |
| switch *(noun)* | points |
| switch, to *(verb)* | shunt + |
| switch tower | signal box |
| switchyard | shunting yard |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| ticket agent | booking clerk |
| track 1 | platform 1 |
| track layer | platelayer |
| train station | railway station |
| trestle | wooden bridge supported by wooden trestles |
| truck (set of wheels) | bogie |
| whistle-stop* | halt (similar) |

# 8

# *Pronunciation and Grammar*

*An Englishman's way of speaking*
*absolutely classifies him.*

HENRY HIGGINS in *My Fair Lady,*
by Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner

Both Americans and Britons have many regional accents. The linguistic term *accent* refers to a variety of speech distinguished by pronunciation differences, whereas the term *dialect* includes varieties differing in grammar and vocabulary as well as pronunciation.

One important way in which dialects of English often differ is in the pronunciation (or lack of pronunciation) of the consonant *r*. A dialect is called *rhotic* [**roe**·tik] if the *r* is pronounced before a consonant or at the end of a word. (This linguistic term is derived from the name of the Greek letter *rho*.) Similarly, a dialect is called *non-rhotic* when consonant *r* is not pronounced before a consonant or at the end of a word. For example, in the present-day non-rhotic speech of Britain, *harm* sounds something like [hahm] and *farther* and *father* both sound like [**fah**·tha]. The weakening of *r* probably began in Britain in the 1600s, and the *r* began to be lost completely in the middle of

the 1700s. Completely *r*-less speech only became standard in Britain in the 1800s. (Note that the *r*'s are kept in British speech at the beginning of words and between vowels. *Rare* is pronounced something like [**ray**·uh], and only the first *r* is pronounced as an *r*; the second makes an *uh* sound, or is dropped entirely. When it is dropped completely, the word sounds something like [reh]. However, *rarer* is pronounced something like [**ray**·rə], and the second *r* is pronounced because it is now between two vowels.)

It is thought that some colonists in New England may have spoken a dialect of English in which the *r*'s were sounded weakly—that is, the dialect was beginning to become *non-rhotic*. The first Pilgrims arrived on the Mayflower in 1620 from Plymouth, England, but many of them were originally from the Midlands and East Anglia. English settlers in North America from these areas may have had weakened *r*'s or non-rhotic speech. In comparison with some other British colonies in North America, New England maintained closer ties with England during the Colonial period. During this period the *r*-less variety of English began to become common in the south of Britain. The continual influence from the British *r*-less standard would have reinforced the possible *r*-weakening tendencies of the original dialects of the Pilgrims, and this explains the non-rhotic speech in the New England area today. The *r*-less dialects in other areas of the United States, such as certain parts in the South, have a similar history.

Other colonists came from the West Country in England and settled further south than New England. They would have spoken with an accent probably not too unlike the present-day accent in the county of Devon, England, which has rhotic speech. Later Scots-Irish immigrants also had rhotic speech. The mixture of many different groups speaking rhotic dialects from Britain and Ireland explains the rhotic speech heard in most of the US today.

Most Britons have been so well exposed to American accents through the media and movies that they have little difficulty

understanding the various accents, although some of the Southern accents are hard even for fellow Americans to understand. Americans have a much more difficult time understanding British speech, so if a Briton wants to be understood easily, avoid slang—it is by no means universal—and speak slowly and clearly.

Vowel sounds are quite different. In Britain the vowel sound in such words as *paw, talk,* and *all,* etc., is similar to the sound in *bore* without pronouncing the *r.* In the US, it becomes *ah* in some dialects resulting in [pah], [tahk], and [ahl]. Also the *o* in *hot, top, on,* and so forth is pronounced in British English with rounded lips, quite different from the American sound. In some American dialects, the vowel sound spelled *au* in *caught* and *aw* in *caw* and the vowel sound spelled *o* in *cot* have become the same, as in the names *Don* and *Dawn.* However, Americans distinguish clearly between *talk* and *torque,* which are phonetically the same for British people.

In the US, a *t* is usually pronounced with a sound like *d* when it comes within a word between vowels or after *r* and before a vowel. Hence *thirty, dirty,* and *fruity* may sound like *thirdy, dirdy,* and *fruidy.* Sometimes the *t* is lost altogether in words like *dentist* and *interesting,* which can sound like *dennist* and *inneresting.* The *ai* in *rain* and *stain* is slightly shorter than its British counterpart, as is the *ew* sound in *few* and *grew.* In the US, the short *a* (the vowel in *cat*) is used in *chance* and *fast,* but it is more drawn out than its counterpart in Northern Britain. Words ending with *ary, ory,* and *ery* are not contracted as they are in British speech. Similarly the word *berry,* when forming part of the names of fruits such as *raspberry* and *strawberry,* is not contracted to [bree] in American speech. Americans may pronounce the *o* in words such as *orange* and *Florida* with a short *o* as the British pronounce it, or like the *o* in the word *or.* However, there is much variation as to which vowel is used in which words. In Maine the *or* sound as in *short* sounds like [ah]. Similarly the word *news* may be pronounced [nooz] or [nyooz], although [nooz] is more common. Americans pronounce the *u* in the words *mutual, cube, butane, Cuba,* and *Houston* as a *yoo* sound like the British.

The southern states in the US have an accent distinct from that of the northern states. The most noticeable characteristic is the long *i,* which becomes a drawn-out *ah* sound. For example, the word *wide* sounds like [wahd]. Often the final vowel in a word becomes an indeterminate vowel sound, e.g., *Miami* is sometimes pronounced [my·**am**·ə]. You will frequently hear the expression *y'all* in the South. This is a contraction of *you all* and is frequently used when addressing more than one person. *You-uns* is used in the same way in some areas, such as the Appalachians. Another Southern trait is putting emphasis on the first syllable in words such as *entire* and *insurance.*

In Britain, words such as *tune* and *dual* are sometimes pronounced *choon* and *jewel.* You will often hear an intrusive *r* in phrases such as *saw it* (sounding something like *sore it*) in Britain, but this is rarely heard in the US except in the New England area. *Issue* and *tissue* are sometimes pronounced [**is**·yoo] and [**tis**·yoo]. In the north of England the *u* sound in *putt* is almost the same vowel as in *put,* and *book* may have the vowel sound of *hoot.*

Aluminum is not only pronounced differently, but it is spelled differently in the two countries. Sir Humphrey Davy, who discovered the metal in 1908, called it *aluminum.* It was later changed in Britain to *aluminium* to conform to the spelling and sound of similar elements in the periodic table, such as titanium. However, in the US the old form still exists.

## SOME PRONUNCIATION DIFFERENCES

In discussing the differences in pronunciation between British English and American English, I have decided not to use the International Phonetic Alphabet, or IPA, simply because most readers are not familiar with the symbols.

In general, English words that have recently been borrowed from French are pronounced in the US with the emphasis on the last syllable. For example, *consommé* is pronounced [con·**som**·ay]

in the UK, but [con·sə·**may**] in the US. The past tenses of the verbs *to dive, to fit,* and *to sneak* are often *dove, fit,* and *snuck* in the US, but in the UK it is *dived, fitted,* and *sneaked.* The past participles of the verbs *to get* and *to mow* are *gotten* and *mowed* respectively in the US, rather than *got* and *mown* as in British English. The past tense of the verb *to plead* may be *pleaded* or *pled* in the US, whereas only *pleaded* is used in the UK.

Here are some common words that differ in pronunciation.

*American and British Pronunciations Compared*

| WORD | US PRONUNCIATION | UK PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| accent | **ak**·sent | **ak**·sənt |
| advertisement | adver·**tīz**·ment | ad·**vert**·is·ment |
| agile | **a**·jəl | **a**·jīl |
| albino | al·**bī**·nō | al·**bee**·nō |
| alternate *(adj., noun)* | **ault**·er·nət | aul·**tern**·et |
| altimeter | al·**tim**·ə·ter | **al**·ti·mee·ter |
| amenity | a·**mĕn**·ə·tee | a·**meen**·ə·tee |
| anchovy | an·**chō**·vee | **an**·chə·vee |
| anti | **an**·tī/**an**·tee | **an**·tee |
| apparatus | ap·a·**ră**·tus | ap·a·**ray**·tus |
| aristocrat | a·**ris**·to·crat | **a**·ris·to·crat |
| asphalt | **as**·fault | **as**·felt |
| ate | āte | ett |
| ballet | bal·**ay** | **bal**·ay |
| barrage | bə·**rahzh** | **bă**·rahzh |
| baton | bə·**tŏn** | **bă**·tŏn |
| been | bin | been |
| beta | **bay**·ta | **bee**·ta |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| WORD | US PRONUNCIATION | UK PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| bitumen | bī·**too**·men | **bĭ**·cher·men |
| brassiere | brə·**zeer** | **brăs**·eeə |
| buoy | **boo**·ee | boy |
| byzantine | **biz**·an·teen | bi·**zan**·tīn |
| capillary | **cap**·il·ar·ee | ca·**pil**·ə·ree |
| caramel | **cahr**·ə·mel | **căr**·ə·mel + |
| caribbean | kə·**rib**·ē·an | kar·ĭ·**bee**·an + |
| carillon | **kar**·i·lon | kə·**ril**·yon |
| charade | sha·**rād** | **sha**·rahd |
| chassis | **cha**·see | **sha**·see |
| chimpanzee | chim·**pan**·zee (regional) | chimp·ən·**zee** |
| clerk | klerk | klark |
| clientele | clī·en·**tel** | clē·ən·**tel** |
| cobra | **cō**·bra | **cō**·bra/**cŏ**·bra |
| combatant | com·**băt**·ant | **com**·bə·tant |
| composite | kəm·**pŏz**·it | **kŏm**·pə·zit |
| compost | **com**·pōst | **com**·pŏst |
| condom | **con**·dəm | **con**·dŏm |
| conduit | **cŏn**·doo·it | **cŏn**·dit |
| consommé | con·sə·**may** | con·**som**·ay |
| contractor | **con**·trac·ter | con·**trac**·ter |
| controversy | **con**·trə·ver·see + | con·**trŏv**·er·see |
| cordial | **cor**·jəl | **cor**·dee·al |
| cremate | **cree**·māte | crə·**māte** |
| croquet | crō·**kay** | **crō**·kay |
| cuckoo | **koo**·koo | **kû**·koo |
| cyclamen | **sīk**·lə·men | **sĭk**·lə·men |
| dahlia | **dă**·lee·ə | **dā**·lee·ə |

| WORD | US PRONUNCIATION | UK PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| debris | də·**bree** | **deb**·ree |
| depot | **dee**·pō/**dĕ**·pō | **dĕ**·pō |
| detail | de·**tail** | **dee**·tail |
| devolution | dĕ·va·**loo**·shn | dee·va·**loo**·shn |
| dislocate | dis·**lō**·cate | **dis**·lo·cate + |
| diverge | dĭ·**verge** | **dī**·verge |
| docile | **dŏ**·səl | **dō**·sīl |
| double entendre | **du**·bəl on·**tahn**·dra | **doo**·blə on·**tahn**·dra |
| dressage | drə·**sahzh** | **dres**·ahzh |
| dynasty | **dī**·nas·tee | **dĭn**·as·tee |
| entrepreneur | on·tra·prə·**noor** | on·tra·prə·**ner** |
| era | **ĕr**·ə | **ear**·ə |
| err | air | er |
| figure | **fig**·yer/**fi**·ger | **fi**·ger |
| foliage | **fō**·lē·əj/**fō**·ləj | **fō**·lē·əj |
| forsythia | for·**sĭth**·ē·a | for·**sīth**·ē·a |
| fragile | **fra**·jəl | fra·jīle |
| frequent *(verb)* | **free**·kwent | free·**kwent** |
| frustrate | **frus**·trāt | frus·**trāt** |
| gala | **gă**·la/**gā**·la | **gah**·la |
| garage | ga·**rahzh** | **gar**·ij/**gar**·ahzh |
| geyser | **gī**·zer | **gee**·zer |
| glacier | **glay**·sher | **glăs**·ē·er |
| glazier | **glay**·zher | **glay**·zēer |
| gooseberry | **goos**·bĕ·ree | **gûz**·bə·ree |
| hoof | **hûf** | **hoof** |
| hostile | **hos**·təl | **hos**·tīl |
| hurricane | **hurr**·i·kane | **hur**·ri·kən |

| WORD | US PRONUNCIATION | UK PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| idyllic | ī·**dĭll**·ik | ĭ·**dill**·ik |
| inquiry | **in**·kwĭ·ree/in·**kwīr**·ee | in·**kwīr**·ee |
| interesting | **in**·ter·est·ing | **in**·trest·ing |
| iodine | **ī**·oh·dine | ī·**oh**·deen |
| jaguar | **jag**·wahr | **jag**·u·ah |
| junta | **hûn**·ta | **jun**·ta |
| khaki | **kă**·kee | **kah**·kee |
| laboratory | **lab**·ra·tor·ee | la·**bor**·a·tree |
| lasso | la·**soh** | las·**oo +** |
| lavatory | **lav**·ə·taur·ee | **lav**·ə·tree |
| leisure | **lee**·zhure | **lĕzh**·ure |
| lever | **lĕv**·er | **leev**·er |
| lieutenant | loo·**ten**·ant | lef·**ten**·ant |
| lilac | **lī**·lăk | **lī**·lək |
| liposuction | **lī**·pō·suk·shən | **lĭ**·pō·suk·shən |
| literally | **li**·ter·a·lee | **lit**·ra·lee |
| macho | **mah**·chō | **mă**·chō |
| mambo | **mahm**·bo | **măm**·bo |
| marquis | mar·**kee** | **mar**·kwis |
| mauve | mauv/mōv | mōv |
| metallurgy | **mĕ**·tə·lur·jee | me·**tăl**·ə·jee |
| methane | **mĕ**·thane | **mee**·thane |
| migraine | **mī**·grane | **mee**·grane |
| miniature | **min**·ē·ə·choor | **min**·ə·chə |
| missile | **mis**·əl | **mis**·īle |
| mobile | **mo**·bel | **mo**·bīle |
| mocha | **moh**·kə | **mŏ**·kə |

| WORD | US PRONUNCIATION | UK PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| multi | **mul**·tī/**mul**·tee | **mul**·tee |
| myopic | mī·**ŏp**·ic | mī·**ŏp**·ic |
| niche | nich | neesh |
| omega | ō·**may**·gə | **ō**·mə·gə |
| ordinarily | or·di·**nar**·i·lee | **or**·di·ner·i·lee |
| paparazzi | pa·pa·**rah**·tsi | pa·pa·**răt**·see |
| papier maché | **pāp**·er ma·**shay** | **păp**·ēay **mash**·ay |
| pecan | pə·**cahn** | **pē**·căn |
| perfume | per·**fume** | **per**·fume |
| pipette | pīp·**et** | pī·**pĕt** |
| poinsettia | poin·**se**·tə | poin·**se**·tēə + |
| premature | prē·mə·**t(y)oor** | **prĕ**·mə·tyoor |
| premier | prə·**meer**/pree·**meer** | **prĕm**·ē·air |
| primarily | prī·**mar**·i·lee | **prī**·mĕr·ə·lee |
| privacy | **prī**·va·see | **prĭ**·va·see |
| process | **prŏ**·ses | **prō**·ses |
| produce | **prō**·doos | **prŏ**·dyoos |
| progress | **prŏ**·gres | **prō**·gres |
| protester | **prŏ**·tes·ter | prŏ·**test**·er |
| puma | **poo**·mə | **pyoo**·mə |
| python | **pī**·thŏn | **pī**·thən |
| quinine | **kwī**·nīn | **kwĭ**·neen |
| ration | **ră**·shən/**rā**·shən | **ră**·shən |
| regatta | re·**gah**·tə | re·**gă**·tə |
| renaissance | **ren**·ə·sens | re·**nay**·sens |
| reveille | **rĕv**·a·lee | rə·**văl**·ee |
| route | rout/root | root |

| WORD | US PRONUNCIATION | UK PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| salve | săv | sălv |
| samba | **sahm**·ba | **săm**·ba |
| saucepan | **saus**·păn | **saus**·pən |
| schedule | **sked**·ule | **shed**·ule |
| semi | **se**·mī | **se**·mee + |
| shallot | **shăl**·ot | shə·**lot** |
| shone | shōn | shŏn |
| simultaneous | sī·mel·**tān**·ē·us | sĭ·mel·**tān**·ē·us |
| sloth | slŏth | slōth |
| snooker | **snûk**·er | **snook**·er |
| solder | **sŏdd**·er | **sōld**·er |
| St. (in names such as *St. Albans*) | saint | sənt |
| status | **stă**·tus | **stā**·tus |
| strychnine | **strik**·nīn | **strik**·neen |
| tarpaulin | **tar**·pə·lin/tar·**pau**·lin | tar·**pau**·lin |
| temporarily | temp·or·**ar**·i·lee | **temp**·or·i·lee |
| thorough | **thû**·rō, **thu**·rō | **thu**·ra |
| tourniquet | **tour**·ni·ket | **tour**·ni·kay |
| trait | trayt | tray/trayt |
| trauma | **trah**·ma | **trau**·ma |
| trespass | **tres**·păs | **tres**·pəs |
| vase | vās (vahz if over $50) | vahz |
| vicarious | vī·**cair**·ē·us | vĭ·**cair**·ē·us |
| vitamin | **vī**·ta·min | **vĭ**·ta·min |
| vivacious | vī·**vā**·shas | vĭ·**vā**·shas |
| wigwam | **wig**·wahm | **wig**·wăm |

| WORD | US PRONUNCIATION | UK PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| wont (custom) | wŏnt | wōnt |
| wrath | răth | rŏth |
| yogurt | **yō**·gert | **yŏ**·gert |
| z | zee | zed |
| zenith | **zē**·nith | **zĕn**·ith |

## SOME PERSONAL NAMES WITH DIFFERENT PRONUNCIATIONS

Here are a few names that are pronounced differently in the UK and the US. Sometimes Americans use the British pronunciations of personal names, however, when they are making reference to a specific person of British or Irish origin, such as George Bernard Shaw.

*Pronunciation of Personal Names*

| WORD | US PRONUNCIATION | UK PRONUNCIATION |
|---|---|---|
| Bernard | ber·**nard** | **ber**·nəd |
| Cecil | **cē**·cil | **cĕ**·cil |
| Marie | mə·**ree** | **mah**·ree/mă·ree |
| Maurice | mau·**rees** | **morr**·is |
| Michel | mĭ·**shel** | **mee**·shel |
| Notre Dame | **nō**·ter dame | **nŏ**·tra·dahm + |
| Raleigh | **raw**·lee | **rah**·lee + |
| Renee | rə·**nay** | **rĕ**·nay |
| St. Augustine | saint **aug**·us·teen | sənt au·**gus**·tin |
| Van Gogh | van goh | van gof |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

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# 9

# *Spelling*

The lexicographer Noah Webster is responsible for many of the differences that distinguish American spelling from British spelling. His *American Dictionary of the English Language,* which came out in 1828, became the standard for US spelling. He originally wanted Americans to use much more strictly phonetic spelling, but he later compromised with only minor modifications. British spelling has also undergone reform since 1828. Most notably, *terror* and *horror* have lost their *–our* endings. The *–ise* suffix is relatively new to British spelling (see below).

The American spellings below are those preferred by *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language,* while the British spellings are those recommended by the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary,* except in the case of words ending in *–ise* (see below). There are alternative ways of spelling some words.

*Spelling Differences*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| abridgment | abridgement |
| accouterment | accoutrement |
| acknowledgment | acknowledgement |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| adapter + | adaptor |
| aging | ageing |
| aluminum | aluminium |
| ameba | amoeba + |
| analyze | analyse |
| anesthetic | anaesthetic |
| apologize + | apologise |
| appall | appal |
| appetizer + | appetiser |
| arbor | arbour |
| ardor | ardour |
| armor | armour |
| armorer | armourer |
| armory | armoury |
| artifact | artefact |
| authorize + | authorise |
| behavior | behaviour |
| behoove | behove |
| caliper | calliper |
| calisthenics | callisthenics |
| canceled | cancelled + |
| candor | candour |
| capitalize + | capitalise |
| catalog | catalogue |
| center | centre |
| chamomile | camomile |
| check (bank) | cheque |
| checkerboard | chequer-board |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| chili | chilli |
| civilization + | civilisation |
| civilize + | civilise |
| clamor | clamour |
| clangor | clangour |
| clarinetist | clarinettist |
| color | colour |
| counselor | counsellor |
| cozy | cosy |
| curb (on a street) | kerb |
| czar | tsar |
| defense | defence |
| demeanor | demeanour |
| dependent *(noun)* | dependant |
| dialing | dialling |
| diarrhea | diarrhoea |
| disk | disc |
| distill | distil |
| dolor | dolour |
| draft | draught |
| economize + | economise |
| enamor | enamour |
| endeavor | endeavour |
| enroll | enrol |
| enthrall | enthral |
| equalize + | equalise |
| favor | favour |
| favorite | favourite |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| favoritism | favouritism |
| fervor | fervour |
| fiber | fibre |
| flavor | flavour |
| fulfill | fulfil |
| furor | furore |
| gage | gauge + |
| gemology | gemmology |
| gray | grey + |
| harbor | harbour |
| harmonize + | harmonise |
| honor | honour |
| honorable | honourable |
| humor | humour |
| initialize + | initialise |
| inquiry + | enquiry |
| installment | instalment |
| instill | instil |
| jail | jail/gaol |
| jeweler | jeweller |
| jewelry | jewellery |
| judgment | judgement |
| labor | labour |
| license | licence |
| liter | litre |
| maneuver | manoeuvre |
| marvelous | marvellous |
| memorize + | memorise |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| misdemeanor | misdemeanour |
| mobilize + | mobilise |
| mold | mould |
| molding | moulding |
| mom | mum |
| mustache | moustache |
| naught | nought |
| neighbor | neighbour |
| neighborhood | neighbourhood |
| normalize + | normalise |
| odor | odour |
| organize + | organise |
| pajamas | pyjamas |
| paralyze | paralyse |
| parlor | parlour |
| pasteurize + | pasteurise |
| peddler + | pedlar |
| percent | per cent |
| persnickety | pernickety |
| plow | plough |
| polarize + | polarise + |
| practice (verb) | practise |
| pretense | pretence |
| program | programme |
| pulverize + | pulverise |
| rancor | rancour |
| realize + | realise |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| recognize + | recognise |
| rigor | rigour |
| rumor | rumour |
| savor | savour |
| savory | savoury |
| skeptic | sceptic |
| skillful | skilful |
| specter | spectre |
| spilled | spilt |
| splendor | splendour |
| story (of a building) | storey |
| succor | succour |
| sulfur | sulphur |
| symbolize + | symbolise |
| sympathize + | sympathise |
| theater | theatre + |
| tire | tyre |
| traveler | traveller |
| tumor | tumour |
| utilize + | utilise |
| valor | valour |
| vapor | vapour |
| vaporize + | vaporise |
| vigor | vigour |
| vise (tool) | vice |
| willful | wilful |
| worshiper | worshipper |

When adding a suffix to a word ending with an *l* in the US, remember to double the last *l* only if the stress is on the second syllable of the root word, e.g., ***trav·el,*** *traveler* but *pat·**rol,*** *patrolling.* In Britain one always doubles the *l* in these words, e.g., *snorkel, snorkelling.*

Most words ending in *–our* in British spelling end in *or* in American spelling. Words ending with *–re* in British spelling usually end with *–er* in American spelling. *Theatre* is often spelled the British way.

The suffix *–ize* is still preferred by some British dictionaries for the following common words: *apologize, capitalize, equalize, finalize, legalize, mobilize, organize, pasteurize, popularize, realize, standardize, symbolize,* and *vaporize.* However, most Britons prefer the alternate *–ise* suffix with these words, which reflects the French influence on British English in the last 200 years. Some other common words that Americans spell with *z,* but Britons with *s,* include *analyze, cozy,* and *paralyze,* which are spelled *analyse, cosy,* and *paralyse* in British English.

Most words that have an *a* directly followed by an *e* in British English, such as *orthopaedics* and *anaesthesia,* are spelled without the *a* in American English. Similarly, the *o* is omitted in words such as *oedema, oestrogen, foetus,* and *oesophagus* in American English.

## ONE-LETTER DIFFERENCES

Some words of special interest are those whose American and British spellings differ by just one letter, which, however, makes a difference in pronunciation. For the explanation of the origin of the difference between American *aluminum* and British *aluminium,* see page 76.

## *One-Letter Spelling Differences*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| aluminum [a·**loo**·mi·num] | aluminium [al·yoo·**min**·ee·um] |
| carburetor [**kar**·bur·ay·ter] | carburettor [kar·bu·**re**·ta] |
| costumer | costumier [cos·**tyoo**·meeə] |
| crotch | crutch (crotch is also used) |
| divorcé/divorcée [di·**vor**·say] | divorcee [di·**vors**·ee] |
| doodad | doodah |
| greenskeeper | greenkeeper |
| hot flashes | hot flushes |
| jimmy | jemmy |
| mom | mum |
| muss up | mess up + |
| noodle (meaning "the head") | noddle |
| persnickety | pernickety |
| pita [**pē**·tə] (bread) | pitta [**pĭ**·ta] |
| plunk (down) | plonk |
| pudgy | podgy |
| putter | potter |
| salesroom | saleroom |
| sappy | soppy |
| specialty [**spesh**·al·tee] | speciality [spe·shee·**al**·i·tee] |
| tidbit | titbit |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

## SOME DIFFERENCES IN PREPOSITIONAL USAGE

The preposition *of* is used more readily in the US following the word *all*, e.g., *all of my life, ouside of the US.* The use of the preposition *up* is not very common with the verb *to phone.* Most Americans would just say *I phoned him.* However, Americans do not use *ring* as a verb meaning "to call on the telephone," as in such phrases as *I will ring him tomorrow,* although they might say *I will give him a ring.* Sometimes Americans may say *pass up* instead of *pass* (e.g., *We passed them up a mile back*). Sometimes you may hear *change out* instead of *change* (e.g., *We had to change out the oil pump last year*), but this is not the preferred usage. Here are some other differences in prepositional usage.

*Differences in the Use of Prepositions*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| clue in | clue up |
| cut off (in traffic) | cut up |
| do over (make over) | do up |
| hold for ransom | hold to ransom |
| hold up/wait up | hold on + |
| in heat | on heat |
| in tow | on tow |
| sell out (property) | sell up |
| top off | top up |
| wait on (await) | wait for + |
| wait on (tables) | wait at |

A plus sign [+] after a term indicates that the term is known in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

## SOME DIFFERENCES IN THE USE OF SUFFIXES

British English and American English sometimes differ in the use of the suffixes *–ing* and *–ed.* In order to sound truly like a native, you should note the following differences.

*Differences in the Use of Suffixes*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| dance class | dancing class |
| dial tone | dialling tone |
| drainboard | draining board |
| driver's license | driving licence |
| file cabinet | filing cabinet + |
| fry pan | frying pan + |
| headed for | heading for + |
| race car | racing car |
| race meet | race meeting |
| rowboat | rowing boat |
| sailboat | sailing boat |
| sawed-off | sawn-off |
| scrub brush | scrubbing brush |
| swinging door | swing door |

A plus sign [+] after a term indicates that the term is known in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

## SOME DIFFERENT TERMS FOR PUNCTUATION

The British and American names for punctuation marks and other writing symbols also differ. The decimal point in the US is

the same as a full stop, unlike the British decimal point, which is usually positioned halfway up the line, as in £1·50.

*Punctuation Terms*

| US TERM | UK EQUIVALENT |
|---|---|
| [ ] brackets + | square brackets |
| { } curly brackets | braces |
| ( ) parentheses | brackets |
| / slash + | stroke, oblique |
| ✓ check mark | tick |
| ! exclamation point | exclamation mark + |
| . period | full stop |
| " " quotation marks + | inverted commas |

*A plus sign* [+] after a term indicates that the term is known in both the United Kingdom and the United States.



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# 10

# *Sundry Terms*

## SOME DIFFERENT FURNISHING TERMS

Terms for different kinds of fabric and home furnishings may pose problems to Britons in America or to Americans in Britain. The following list should help sort the different words out.

*Furnishing Terms*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| area rug | rug (large) |
| baby carrier | carrycot |
| baseboard | skirting board |
| bassinet | crib |
| breakfront | display cabinet |
| buffet | sideboard |
| bureau | chest of drawers |
| cot | camp bed |
| couch + | settee + |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| credenza [cra·**den**·za] | sideboard/cabinet for papers or supplies in an office |
| crib | cot |
| davenport | sofa + |
| drapes/draperies* | curtains |
| dresser | chest of drawers (often with a mirror) |
| dust ruffle | valance |
| floor lamp | standard lamp |
| hassock | pouffe |
| highboy | tallboy |
| hutch | dresser |
| lowboy | small dressing table |
| Murphy bed | foldaway bed |
| ottoman | footstool |
| pass-through | hatch |
| secretary desk | bureau/davenport |
| sheer curtains/sheers | net curtains |
| side server | sideboard + |
| trundle bed | truckle-bed |
| valance | pelmet |

## SOME DIFFERENT TERMS FOR TOOLS

Britons in the US or Americans in the UK who are lucky enough to extend their stay long enough to purchase a house or car may find this list useful.

*Tools*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| alligator clip | crocodile clip |
| blowtorch + | blowlamp |
| bone wrench | box spanner |
| boot (wheel immobilizer) | wheel clamp |
| coping saw | fretsaw |
| monkey wrench | pipe wrench + |
| Skilsaw (brand name) | circular saw + |
| utility knife | Stanley knife (a brand name) |
| wall anchor | Rawlplug (a brand name) |
| wrench + | spanner |

*A plus sign* [+] after a term indicates that the term is known in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

## SOME DIFFERENT MEDICAL TERMS

It is always unfortunate when we fall ill—or as Americans often say, *get sick*—but when it happens while we are staying in a foreign country, it can be particularly distressing when you don't know correct terms used to describe medical conditions and remedies. As a help to you in the doctor's office and elsewhere, here are some medical terms that differ between the US and the UK.

*Medical Terms*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| acetaminophen/Tylenol (brand) | paracetamol |
| anesthesiologist | anaesthetist |
| appendectomy + | appendicectomy |
| Baker-acted *(regional slang)* | sectioned |

*A plus sign* [+] after a term indicates that the term is known in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| charge nurse | ward sister (female)/charge nurse (male) |
| chronic fatigue syndrome + | ME (myalgic encephalomyelitis) |
| circulating nurse | theatre sister |
| crib death | cot-death |
| diaper | nappy |
| doctor's office | doctor's surgery |
| EKG | ECG + |
| emergency department + | A and E/Accident and Emergency |
| gurney | stretcher + |
| IV | drip |
| in isolation | in a barrier/isolation ward |
| intern | houseman |
| internist | specialist in internal diseases |
| lidocaine | lignocaine |
| locum tenens (rarely used by a layperson in the US) | locum |
| infectious mononucleosis + | glandular fever |
| operating room | operating theatre/theatre |
| pacifier | dummy |
| physical therapist | physiotherapist |
| PMS (premenstrual syndrome) + | PMT (premenstrual tension) |
| podiatrist | chiropodist (similar) |
| Q-Tip (brand name) | cotton swab + |
| prenatal + | antenatal |
| resident doctor | registrar |
| RN + | sister |
| scrubs/scrub suit | theatre whites/theatre garb |
| shot (*colloq.*, injection) + | jab |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| specialist | consultant (similar) |
| sponge bath | blanket bath |
| (a) surgery | operation + |
| tongue depressor | spatula |
| visiting nurse | district community nurse |
| walker | walking frame/Zimmer frame |

Some medical terms are also spelled differently in the UK and the US. See page 90.

## CARNIVAL (FUNFAIR) TERMS

One interesting area in which British and American usages differs is in the words used at carnivals, or as the British call them, funfairs.

*Carnival Terms*

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| big wheel | Ferris wheel |
| candyfloss | cotton candy |
| Dodgem cars | bumper cars + |
| merry-go-round + | carousel |
| sideshow location | midway |
| steam organ | calliope [ka·**lī**·ō·pee] |
| switchback | roller coaster + |
| toffee apple | candy apple/caramel apple |

*A plus sign* [+] after a term indicates that the term is known in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

## SOME DIFFERENT GARDENING TERMS

Americans often think of Britons as people devoted to gardens and skilled at maintaining them. Here are a few gardening terms that differ between the two countries. (Many plant names are pronounced differently in the US and the UK as well. See pages 77–83.)

*Gardening Terms*

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| busy Lizzie | impatiens |
| casuarina | Australian pine |
| dead-head | remove dead flower heads |
| Norfolk pine | Norfolk Island pine |
| rockery | rock garden + |
| secateurs | pruners/pruning shears |
| trug | shallow gardening basket |
| minimal-irrigation landscaping | Xeriscaping |

*A plus sign* [+] after a term indicates that the term is known in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

# 11

# *What Not to Say*

## WORDS AND TERMS THAT A BRITON SHOULD AVOID IN THE US

Britons and Americans can usually understand each other very well with a little effort. Any casual misunderstandings that occur can usual be sorted out quite quickly. However, there are a few words and expressions that sometimes pose more serious problems. The following is a list of common British terms and phrases that can mean something quite different in the US.

*What Not to Say in the US*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Brilliant* (slang) | Use *great* or *cool.* |
| *Carry on* | Use *go ahead* or *after you.* |
| *Cheers* | Use *thanks* or *goodbye* if used in a slang sense. |
| *Dear* | This is not used often in the US for *expensive.* |
| *Estate agent* | Could be misunderstood. Use *realtor.* |
| *Fag* | This is an offensive term meaning "gay man" in the US. Use *cigarette.* |
| *Fagged out* | This phrase will remind Americans of the words *fag* and *faggot.* Use *beat* or *whipped.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Faggot* | This is an offensive term meaning "gay man" in the US. There is no exact equivalent for the name of the traditional English dish called a *faggot,* so the British expression must be explained with a phrase such as *meatball made from pork liver, onions, and bread.* |
| *Give me a tinkle* | Could sound vulgar. Try *Give me a call* or G*ive me a jingle* instead. |
| *Homely* | This means *unattractive* in the US. Try *homey.* |
| *I've knocked myself up* | Vulgar in the US. Try *I've knocked myself out.* |
| *Keep your pecker up* | Vulgar in the US. Try *Keep smiling.* |
| *Knock up* | When playing tennis, use *warm up.* |
| *Knock me up* | A vulgar expression in the US. Try W*ake me up.* |
| *Lay the table* | Use instead *Set the table.* |
| *May I top you up?* | Would not be understood in the US. Try *Want me to top that off?* or *May I freshen your drink?* |
| *My mate* | A *mate* in the US usually refers to a marriage partner. Try *my buddy.* |
| *No naked lights* | Use *No open flames.* |
| *Pot plant* | This would mean a marijuana plant to most Americans. Try *house plant.* |
| *Potty about* | Would not be understood in the US. Try *crazy about.* |
| *Ring me up* | Use *Give me a call.* |
| *Rubber* | This is an informal word for a condom in the US. Use *eraser.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Sleeping partner* | Use *silent partner.* |
| *Solicitor* | Use *attorney* or *lawyer.* |
| *Tramp* | Use *hobo* or *homeless person. Tramp* can also mean "loose woman." |
| *Wash up* | In the US this expression means "to wash your face and/or hands." Use instead *wash the dishes.* |
| *Where's the ladies'/ gents'?* | Use *Where's the ladies'/women's/men's room?* or *Where's the restroom?* |

## WORDS AND TERMS THAT AN AMERICAN SHOULD AVOID IN THE UK

The following is a list of common American terms and phrases that may confuse or offend Britons.

*What Not to Say in the UK*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Vest, suspenders,* and *pants* | These refer to undergarments in the UK. Instead, use *waistcoat, braces,* and *trousers* respectively. |
| *Knickers* | This term means "panties" in the UK. Use *knickerbockers.* |
| *Get the poop on* | Use instead *Get the low-down on.* |
| *I'm stuffed* | Possibly vulgar. Use *I'm full.* |
| *Bugger* | An offensive word in British English. |
| *Bummer* | Use instead *nuisance* or *disappointing.* |
| *Bum steer* | Use instead *bad advice* or *bad directions.* |
| *Fanny* | Vulgar. Use *bottom* or *behind.* |
| *Fanny pack* | Possibly vulgar. Use *bumbag.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Get a bang out of someone* | Possibly vulgar. Use *get a kick out of someone.* |
| *Tramp* | Only use this if you mean "hobo." It is never used to refer to a loose woman in the UK. |
| *School* | This is not used for *university* or *higher education* in the UK. |
| *Shagging flies* | This might not only sound obscene, but impossible. Try *retrieving and returning baseballs.* |
| *Wash up* | This means "wash the dishes" in Britain. Try *wash your hands* instead. |

## SOME WORDS WITH DIFFERENT MEANINGS

The following words have quite different meanings in the United States and the United Kingdom.

*Words with Different Meanings*

| WORD | US MEANING | UK MEANING |
|---|---|---|
| *academician* | an academic | member of an academy |
| *basket case* | exhausted person | insane person |
| *billion* | one thousand million | one million million |
| *bomb* (especially of a play) | go badly | go very well |
| *bucket shop* | disreputable high-pressure brokerage firm | travel agency specializing in discount tickets |
| *bureau* | chest of drawers | secretary desk |
| *casket* | coffin | small ornamental box |

| WORD | US MEANING | UK MEANING |
|---|---|---|
| *cohort* | colleage/supporter | group of people representing a common cause |
| *cordial* | liqueur | concentrated fruit juice |
| *cot* | makeshift bed | baby's bed |
| *cranky* | irritable | eccentric |
| *crockery* | earthenware pots | plates and dishes |
| *creek* | stream | narrow tidal inlet |
| *cruet* | small vinegar container | container for condiments |
| *cutlery* | knives | eating utensils |
| *cut up* | fool around | feel upset |
| *davenport* | sofa | writing desk |
| *deadhead* | drive without a load | dead flower |
| *diddle* | waste time | swindle |
| *dormitory* | building used for sleeping | room used for sleeping |
| *dresser* | chest of drawers | display cabinet for china |
| *dry goods* | fabrics and clothing | foodstuffs |
| *fag* | *(offensive slang)* gay man | cigarette |
| *garden* | cultivated area for plants | lawn and flower-beds |
| *green card* | permanent resident card | motorists' foreign insurance |
| *hassock* | round stuffed cushion on the floor | church kneeling cushion |
| *homely* | ugly | cozy/unpretentious |
| *jug* | tall vessel with a narrow neck and perhaps a stopper | any vessel with a pouring lip (called *pitcher* in the US) |

| WORD | US MEANING | UK MEANING |
|---|---|---|
| *jumper* | pinafore dress | sweater |
| *knickers* | knee-length trousers | panties |
| *knock up* | *(vulgar slang)* make pregnant | wake up |
| *leery* | wary | sly |
| *loft* | open, elevated area in a room | attic |
| *luminary* | candle used to light the way | leader in a subject |
| *marquee* | illuminated promotional sign | outdoor tent for parties |
| *mean* | nasty | stingy |
| *momentarily* | in a moment | for a moment |
| *mutt* | mongrel | dog *(slang)* |
| *nervy* | impudent | nervous |
| *outhouse* | outdoor toilet | shed near a house |
| *pantomime* | show performed by a mime artist | Christmas theatrical performance |
| *pavement* | road surface | paved pedestrian pathway |
| *phonograph* | record player | early musical player operating off cylinders |
| *pissed* | angry | drunk |
| *proctor* | exam supervisor at a university | disciplinary officer at a university |
| *pumps* | ladies' dress shoes | canvas sneakers |
| *ratty* | shabby | irritable |
| *redcap* | railway porter | military police officer |
| *school* | any learning institute | institute for teaching children |

| WORD | US MEANING | UK MEANING |
|---|---|---|
| *shingle* | asphalt roof tile/ small sign | wooden roof tile/ beach pebble |
| *skivvies* | underwear | maids (A *skivvy* is a maid.) |
| *slate (verb)* | put on an agenda | criticize |
| *slot machine* | gambling machine | vending machine |
| *snifter* | brandy glass | small alcoholic drink |
| *snookered* | conned | trapped |
| *Social Security* | government pension for retirees | Welfare |
| *solitaire* | card game for one person | board game with pegs |
| *suspenders* | trouser supports | stocking supports |
| *table (verb)* | put a bill aside temporarily | bring forward for discussion |
| *tick off* | annoy | reprimand |
| *twister* | tornado | swindler |
| *valance* | covering over a curtain rod | skirt around a bed |
| *vest* | sleeveless garment worn under a jacket | undershirt |
| *video* | videotape | videotape/tape player |
| *wash up* | wash oneself | wash the dishes |
| *yard* | lawn around a house | paved area |

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# 12

# *Idioms and Expressions*

## SOME BRITISH EXPRESSIONS

Here is a list comparing British expressions with similar expressions used in the US. Sometimes there is no common equivalent. In this case, the equivalents given in italics are simply explanations of the expression and are not idioms.

*British Expressions*

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| at the end of one's tether | at the end of one's rope |
| bang on | right on (the nose) |
| basket case | insane person |
| bat an eyelid | bat an eye |
| beat them hollow | clean their clocks |
| belt up! | shut up! + |
| blot one's copybook | *hurt one's reputation* |
| blow the gaff | spill the beans + |
| Bob's your uncle! | And there you have it! |
| bright spark | smart cookie |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| browned off | teed off |
| bung it on | blow smoke |
| bunk off | play hookey |
| carry the can | hold the bag |
| channel-hop | channel-surf |
| chat up | come on to |
| cheesed off | teed off |
| chock-a-block full | chock-full |
| clapped out | *worn out* |
| clock up | rack up |
| clue up on | clue in on |
| come a cropper | *fall down* |
| common or garden | garden-variety |
| cot-case | basket case |
| (a) dab hand at something | a crackerjack at something |
| daylight robbery | highway robbery |
| (a) dead cert | You can take it to the bank. |
| different as chalk and cheese | *comparing two very different people* |
| do a moonlight flit | *sneak out in the night* |
| do the dirty on someone | give someone the shaft |
| down at heel | poor/unkempt |
| drive round the bend | drive up a wall + |
| drop a clanger | *make a big faux pas* |
| drunk as a lord | drunk as a skunk |
| dull as ditchwater | dull as dishwater |
| feel hard-done-by | *feel that you were treated unfairly* |
| feel peckish | have the munchies |
| fit someone up | frame someone |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| from the year dot | from the year one |
| full marks for | deserves an A for |
| get off with someone | make out with someone |
| get the gen on | get the poop on |
| get the wind up | get all shook up *(colloq.)* |
| get your come-uppance | get your just deserts |
| get your knickers in a twist | have a hissy fit |
| give it a miss | skip it/pass it up + |
| give someone the pip | annoy someone |
| give someone their cards | give someone a pink slip |
| give someone their marching orders | give someone their walking papers |
| give someone the vees/ V sign | give someone the finger/bird (In the UK, both the index and the middle finger, spread in a V-shape, are used to make a vulgar gesture.) |
| go bust | go broke |
| go like the clappers | *go at great speed* |
| go spare | go berserk + |
| happy as a sandboy | happy as a clam |
| Hard cheese! | Tough! |
| have a lie-in | sleep in + |
| have a natter | shoot the breeze |
| have no truck with | *have no dealings with* |
| have your guts for garters | you'll be dead meat |
| heap of | bunch of |
| Heath Robinson device | Rube Goldberg device |
| hell for leather | hell-bent for leather |
| home and dry | home free |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| if the cap fits | if the shoe fits |
| in a funk | *frightened* |
| in a trice | in a heartbeat/in a New York minute |
| in donkey's years | in forever |
| in future | in the future |
| in queer street | up the creek + |
| in someone's good books | in someone's good graces + |
| jump the lights | run a red light |
| keep your pecker up | keep your chin up + |
| knock-on effect | domino effect + |
| knock spots off | knock the socks off |
| knocked for six | thrown for a loop |
| land someone with | stick someone with |
| land up | end up + |
| left holding the baby | left holding the bag |
| left to carry the can | left holding the bag |
| long in the tooth | *old* |
| look at someone old-fashioned | give someone a disapproving look |
| look like death warmed up | look like death warmed over |
| lumber someone with | *encumber with* |
| make heavy weather of something | *make an ordeal out of something* |
| money for old rope | *easy money* |
| much of a muchness | *much the same* |
| mug up on | bone up on |
| Not on your nelly! | No way! + |
| not the done thing | not socially acceptable |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| Now you're *for* it! | You're dead meat! |
| off one's trolley | off one's rocker + |
| off the beaten track | off the beaten path |
| on my tod | on my lonesome |
| on tenterhooks | on pins and needles |
| on the dole | on unemployment |
| on the never-never | in installments |
| on toast | over a barrel + |
| out on the tiles | *out having a wild time* |
| over the moon | ecstatic |
| Pack it in! | Stop it! |
| packed up | went kaput |
| panic stations | *pandemonium* |
| parson's nose + (on poultry) | pope's nose |
| past praying for | *beyond hope* |
| peg out (die) | check out |
| play gooseberry | chaperone someone |
| potter around | putter around |
| pull your socks up | try harder |
| put it on the slate | put it on the tab |
| put paid to | *put an end to* |
| put someone's nose out of joint | *upset someone* |
| Rolls Royce of | Cadillac of |
| rough diamond + | diamond in the rough |
| rub up the wrong way | rub the wrong way |
| run with the hare and hunt with the hounds | play both ends against the middle + |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| sale or return | on consignment |
| save one's bacon | save one's skin |
| send someone to Coventry | give someone the silent treatment |
| sharp as a needle | sharp as a tack |
| skeleton in the cupboard | skeleton in the closet |
| slap-up (of a meal) | bang-up |
| slowcoach | slowpoke |
| small beer | small potatoes |
| snookered [**snoo**·kerd] | behind the eight ball |
| Sod it! | Screw it! |
| soldier on | press on + |
| spend a penny | use the bathroom/go potty |
| spot on | on the money/on the nose |
| stand for office | run for office |
| Stone the crows! | Holy cow! |
| stop on a sixpence | stop on a dime |
| storm in a teacup | a tempest in a teapot |
| sure as eggs are eggs | sure as shootin' |
| suss it out | scope it out |
| take a recce [**rek**·kee] | check it out + |
| take the biscuit | take the cake + |
| take the mickey out of someone | razz someone |
| talk nineteen to the dozen | talk up a blue streak |
| talk the hind legs off a donkey | talk up a storm |
| tart up + | gussy up |
| ten a penny | a dime a dozen |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| the book of words | *the instruction book* |
| The game's up! | The jig is up! |
| The penny dropped. | The light came on. |
| the tricky bit | the tricky part |
| thin as a rake | skinny as a rail |
| third time lucky | three times a charm |
| throw a spanner in the works | throw a monkey wrench in the works |
| tick off (See *tick off* in the list of American expressions below.) | *reprimand* |
| tinker's cuss | tinker's damn |
| too big for his boots | too big for his britches |
| top off | *assassinate* |
| twopenny-halfpenny [tuppeny-haypenny] | two-bit (inferior) |
| up my street | up my alley |
| went like a bomb | *took off, was a hit* |
| when it comes to the crunch | when push comes to shove + |
| with knobs on | in spades |
| wouldn't touch it with a barge pole | wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole |
| yell blue murder | yell bloody murder |
| You're having me on! | You're putting me on! |

## SOME AMERICAN EXPRESSIONS

Here is a list comparing US expressions with similar expressions used in Britain. Sometimes there is no common equivalent. In this case, the equivalents given in italics are simply explanations

of the expression and are not idioms. Pronunciations are enclosed in square brackets.

*American Expressions*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| (to be) a day late and a dollar short | *miss out on something* |
| a dime a dozen | ten a penny |
| all kinds of (colloquial meaning) | *a large number of* |
| all tied up (in sports) | tied + |
| any more you don't | these days you don't |
| at the end of one's rope | at the end of one's tether |
| bang-up | slap-up |
| barhopping | going on a pub crawl |
| basket case | cot-case |
| be all shook up | get the wind up |
| beat up on | beat up + |
| beat up on oneself | *berate oneself* |
| behind the eight ball | snookered/*without options* |
| bigtime | in a big way/and how! |
| blow off someone | *dismiss/ignore someone* |
| blow smoke | bung it on |
| bone up on | mug up on |
| bring someone up to speed | *bring someone up to date* |
| broke me up | cracked me up + |
| buffalo *(verb)* | *to confuse for gain* |
| bug out | scarper/sneak out |
| (a) bum rap | a raw deal + |
| (a) bum steer | *bad advice/bad directions* |

For a guide to pronuciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| bummed me out | *upset me* + |
| burned me up | browned me off |
| Butt out! | Stop butting in! |
| Cadillac of | Rolls Royce of |
| call the law (regional South) | *call the police* |
| can't get blood out of a turnip | can't get blood out of a stone + |
| catch some rays | get some sun |
| catch some z's [zeez] | have a zizz |
| catty-corner from | *diagonally across from* |
| check out (to die) | peg out |
| Chill out! *(slang)* | Calm down! + |
| chock-full | chock-a-block full |
| clean their clocks | beat them hollow |
| close call + | close shave + |
| close the barn door after the horse is out | close the stable door after the horse has bolted |
| close, but no cigar | nearly made it! + |
| clue in on | clue up on |
| come on to | chat up |
| come unglued | *go crazy* |
| compare apples and oranges | *compare two different things* |
| compare apples with apples | *compare things in a similar category* |
| cool one's jets | *dampen one's ardour* |
| cotton-pickin' hands | filthy hands |
| cotton to someone | *take a liking to someone* |
| cotton up to | suck up to + |
| crack a window | *open a window a crack* |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| crackerjack at something *(noun)* | a dab hand at something |
| crazy as a loon | have bats in the belfry/batty |
| cry uncle | *admit defeat* |
| cut loose | *go wild* |
| cut up | act the fool/muck about |
| (a) diamond in the rough | a rough diamond |
| do a double take | *take a closer look at something surprising that had gone unnoticed* |
| do a number on | hurt/damage |
| do a snow job | *attempt to deceive or persuade through flattery or exaggeration* |
| do over | do up |
| doesn't know beans about it | knows bugger all about it |
| dog and pony show | *farcical happening* |
| doggone | ruddy |
| Don't go there! | *Keep off that topic!* |
| Don't take any wooden nickels! | *Beware of strangers! Watch out for yourself!* |
| down the pike | down the line + |
| down to the wire | *running out of time* |
| duke it out | *fight it out* |
| dull as dishwater | dull as ditchwater |
| every which way | *in all directions* |
| exact same | very same |
| feel punk | *feel unwell* |
| fill out a form + | fill in a form |
| first dibs on | first option on |
| first off | *firstly* |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| fit to be tied | *beside oneself with rage* |
| flip someone the bird *(slang)* | give someone the vees |
| fresh out of | *just ran out of* |
| from soup to nuts | *all-inclusive* |
| from the get-go | from the word go + |
| from the year one | from the year dot |
| garden-variety | common or garden |
| get a charge/bang out of | get a kick out of + |
| get the best of | get the better of + |
| get the skinny on | get the lowdown on + |
| gets old | gets tedious/dull + |
| Give me some sugar! | Give me a kiss! |
| give someone a licking | give someone a hiding |
| give someone a pink slip | give someone their cards |
| give someone the berry | snub someone |
| give someone the bum's rush | abruptly dismiss someone |
| give someone the finger + | make a V sign |
| give someone the shaft | do the dirty on someone |
| give someone the silent treatment | send someone to Coventry |
| give someone his/her walking papers | give someone his/her marching orders |
| go ballistic | go berserk |
| go belly up | go under + |
| go broke | go bust |
| go Dutch treat | go Dutch |
| Go figure! | *Try and figure that one out!* |
| go potty | spend a penny |
| goof off *(verb)* | skive off |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| grandfathered in | *permitted because of preexisting conditions* |
| graveyard shift | night shift |
| grossed me out *(hip slang)* | *disgusted me* |
| gussy up | tart up |
| hang a right/hang a left | *turn right/turn left* |
| happy as a clam | happy as a sandboy |
| haul ass *(vulgar)* | *move along* |
| have a hissy fit | get your knickers in a twist |
| have a tin ear | be tone-deaf + |
| Have at it! | Go to it! |
| have the munchies | feel peckish |
| held for ransom | *held to ransom* |
| hell-bent for leather | hell for leather |
| hem and haw | hum and ha |
| hightail it | *go at top speed* |
| highway robbery | daylight robbery |
| hit the sack | hit the hay + |
| hogtied | *restrained/thwarted* |
| Holy cow! | Stone the crows! |
| home free | home and dry |
| I wouldn't bet the ranch on it. | I wouldn't stake my life on it. |
| I'll have your job. | *I'll get you fired.* |
| if the shoe fits | if the cap fits |
| in a (blue) funk | *feeling depressed* |
| in a heartbeat/in a New York minute | in a trice/in two ticks |
| in back | in the back + |
| in back of | behind + |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| in forever | in donkey's years |
| in hock | *pawned* |
| in the loop *(hip)* | *in the know* |
| just shy of | *almost/coming up on* |
| kick butt *(hip slang)* | *stir people up* |
| kitty-corner from | *diagonally across from* |
| Knock yourself out! | Go for it! |
| left holding the bag | left holding the baby |
| let go | made redundant |
| lie like a rug *(verb)* | lie through one's teeth + |
| like gangbusters | *with a lot of energy* |
| like it's going out of style | *selling fast* |
| look like a train wreck | *look disheveled* |
| look like death warmed over | look like death warmed up |
| low-rent | low-class |
| luck out | *be very lucky*/be in luck + |
| make out (with someone) | get off (with someone) |
| make out like a bandit | *to get a bargain/be very successful* |
| make over *(noun)* | face-lift + |
| make over *(verb)* | do up |
| more bang for your buck | *more for your money* |
| nip and tuck | touch and go + |
| Now we're cooking with gas. | *Now we're on track.* |
| off the beaten path | off the beaten track |
| off the rack (clothing) | off the peg |
| on consignment | sale or return |
| on my lonesome | on my tod |
| on pins and needles | on tenterhooks |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| on the fritz | on the blink + |
| on the lam | on the run + |
| on the money | spot-on |
| on the nose | spot-on |
| on the wrong side of the tracks | *in the wrong part of town* |
| out of pocket (Southern) | *can't be reached* |
| out of town | away |
| paint oneself into a corner | drive into a corner |
| party animal | raver, someone who acts rowdily at parties |
| party pooper | *someone who spoils a party* |
| perk up one's ears | prick up one's ears + |
| Philadelphia lawyer | *genius* |
| pick up a room | *tidy a room* |
| pig out | *make a pig of oneself* |
| play both ends against the middle + | run with the hare and hunt with the hounds |
| play hookey | bunk off |
| play phone tag | *to call each other's answering machine without speaking in person* |
| pooped | knackered |
| press the flesh | *shake hands with supporters* |
| put in one's two cents | *give unsolicited advice* |
| put it on the tab + | put it on the slate |
| put out *(vulgar slang)* | make oneself sexually available to someone, be sexually active |
| put the moves on | chat up |
| putter around | potter around |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| rack up | clock up/notch up |
| railroad someone (convict hastily and unjustly) | press-gang someone |
| rattled my cage | wound me up |
| razz someone | take the mickey out of someone |
| ride shotgun *(verb)* | to ride in the passenger seat |
| right on | spot on/bang on |
| rub elbows with | rub shoulders with + |
| rub the wrong way | rub up the wrong way |
| Rube Goldberg device | Heath Robinson device |
| run a red light | jump the lights |
| run for office | stand for office |
| Run that by me again? | *Would you repeat that?* |
| same difference | same thing + |
| scarf down | scoff down |
| scope it out | take a recce/suss it out |
| set up housekeeping | set up home |
| sharp as a tack | sharp as a needle |
| shine up to | suck up to + |
| shoo-in *(noun)* | dead cert (certainty) |
| shoot from the hip | tell it the way it is |
| shoot hoops | *play basketball* |
| shoot the breeze/bull | have a natter |
| Shoot! | Bother (it)! |
| skeleton in the closet | skeleton in the cupboard |
| skinny as a rail | thin as a rake |
| skip it/pass it up + | give it a miss |
| sleep over *(verb)* (children's term) | *spend the night* |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| slip someone a Mickey | slip someone a Mickey Finn |
| slowpoke | slowcoach |
| small potatoes | small beer |
| smart cookie | bright spark |
| snookered [**snû**·kerd] | conned + (see *snookered* UK) |
| Son of a gun! | Well, I never! |
| Sounds like Greek to me. + | It's all double Dutch to me. |
| stand on/in line | stand in a queue |
| step up to the plate | come forward and make a stand |
| stick someone with | lumber/land someone with |
| stop on a dime | stop on a sixpence |
| sure as shootin' | sure as eggs |
| take the cake + | take the biscuit |
| talk up a storm | talk the hind legs off a donkey |
| teed off | browned off/cheesed off |
| tempest in a teapot | a storm in a teacup |
| The light came on. | The penny dropped. |
| the whole ball of wax | the whole (kit and) caboodle + |
| the whole nine yards | the whole (kit and) caboodle + |
| three times a charm | third time lucky |
| throw a monkey wrench in the works | throw a spanner in the works |
| throw someone a curved ball | bowl a googly |
| thrown for a loop | knocked sideways/knocked for six |
| tick off (See *tick off* in Some British Expressions, page 114.) | cheese off/*annoy* |
| to go (at a fast-food restaurant) | to take away |
| too big for his britches | too big for his boots |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| toss one's cookies | *vomit* |
| Tough! | Hard cheese! |
| two-bit (inferior) | twopenny-halfpenny (pronounced [tuppeny-haypenny]) |
| up and at' em | up and at it |
| up my alley | up my street |
| up the creek + | in queer street |
| wait on line | stand in a queue |
| want out | want to get out |
| water over the dam | water under the bridge + |
| Way to go! | Good going! |
| way too | much too |
| We're history. *(slang)* | Let's get going. |
| went kaput | packed up |
| What a bummer! | *What a nuisance!* |
| What a stitch! | What a hoot! + |
| When pigs fly! | Pigs might fly! |
| when push comes to shove + | when it comes to the crunch |
| whipped | knackered |
| wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole | wouldn't touch it with a barge pole |
| yea high | so high + |
| yell bloody murder | yell blue murder |
| You can take it to the bank. | It's a dead cert. |
| You'll be dead meat. | They'll have your guts for garters. |
| You're dead meat! | Now you're *for* it! |
| You're putting me on! | You're having me on! |

To *put one's best foot forward* means "to do one's best" in the US. In Britain it also means to walk briskly. To *cotton to* someone means to take a liking to someone in the US. In British English to *cotton on* means to catch on to an idea. To be *at loose ends* in the US means to be in a dither. If you are *at a loose end* in Britain it means that you have nothing much to do. To *feel one's oats* means to feel lively in British English, but in American English it means to feel self-important. If you are *snookered* in Britain, you are unable to get out of a difficult situation. If you have been *snookered* in the US, you have been conned. *Tick off* in the US means "annoy," but it has a totally different meaning in the UK, where it means "reprimand."

## COMMON METAPHORICAL BASEBALL TERMS

Americans often use sports terms in conversations. One sport from which a lot of terms are borrowed is baseball, which, by the way, evolved from the British game called *rounders.*

*Baseball Expressions*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| a ballpark figure | a rough estimate |
| a tough call | a difficult decision |
| The bases are loaded. | It's a make-or-break situation. |
| batting a thousand | going great guns |
| batting zero | getting nowhere |
| cover all bases | take care of everything |
| didn't get to first base | didn't accomplish anything |
| get to home base | achieve one's goal |
| go to bat for someone | be someone's advocate |
| off-base, to be | to hold a mistaken idea |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| out in left field | off track |
| screwball (a ball pitched with reverse spin) | eccentric or irrational person |
| step up to the plate | make a stand |
| strike out | fail |
| switch hitter | bisexual person |
| throw someone a curve (ball) | throw someone a googly |
| touch base | get in touch with someone |
| whole new ball game | completely different situation |
| You're up./You're at bat. | It's up to you./It's your turn. |

In the US, playing *pepper* means warming up by catching and returning balls. Practicing catching balls in the outfield is known as *shagging flies.*

## SOME OLDER BRITISH WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

The following old-fashioned words are sometimes encountered in older books and films, and you can sometimes even hear them being used by some people in speech, occasionally in jest.

*Older British Expressions*

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| Bath chair | wheelchair |
| bathing drawers | bathing suit |
| beaker | mug |
| bottom gear | first gear |
| bounder | scoundrel |
| carriage rug | lap robe |
| char/charwoman | cleaning lady |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| Cheese it! | Stop it! |
| charabanc | tour bus |
| cloth-eared | hard of hearing |
| counterpane | bedspread |
| (a) gas | a laugh |
| geyser | instant hot water heater |
| hangover (a relic) | holdover |
| identification parade | lineup (police) |
| ironmonger | hardware store |
| keypuncher | card punch operator |
| old lag | habitual convict |
| outside (on a bus) | upstairs |
| push-bike | bike |
| ripping | terrific |
| rum | odd/strange |
| shape | Jell-O (brand name) |
| shooting brake | station wagon |
| wireless | radio |
| wood-wool | excelsior |

## SOME OLDER AMERICAN WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

Older Americans may continue using regional pronunciations of words such as [**may**·zhure] and [**play**·zhure] for *measure* and *pleasure. Rations* may be pronounced [**ray**·shns], and *long-lived* may sometimes be pronounced [long-līved] with a long vowel as in *alive.* This is actually the "correct" pronunciation from a historical point of view, since the word was formed from the noun *life*

in Middle English using the same pattern as *hook-nosed* or *ruddy-faced.* The common modern pronunciation with a short vowel is a more recent development based on an association of the phrase *long-lived* with forms of the verb *to live.*

Here is a list of some old-fashioned expressions that may be encountered in novels and films and under other such circumstances, and some older people may occasionally be heard to use these expressions. Younger people may even use some of them from time to time in jest.

*Older American Expressions*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| aforenoon | morning |
| apple polisher | one who curries favour with another |
| barnburner | an exciting event |
| blues harp | mouth-organ |
| bodacious | remarkable/outstanding |
| broad/gal/dame | chick/bird |
| bumbershoot | brolly |
| C-note/C | one-hundred-dollar bill |
| card punch operator | keypuncher/keypunch operator |
| cheaters | reading glasses |
| chew the fat/chew the rag | have a natter |
| church key | a beverage can or bottle opener |
| colored glasses | sunglasses |
| comfort station | public convenience |
| copacetic | A-OK + |
| cowpoke | cowboy |
| (to) cut a rug | to dance |
| dimestore/five-and-ten | low-cost general store |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| dime-store glasses | reading glasses purchased without a prescription |
| directional | indicator |
| dressing (with poultry) | stuffing |
| druggist | pharmacist |
| excelsior (former brand name) | wood-wool |
| fireplug | fire hydrant |
| five-spot/fin | a five-dollar bill |
| fly window (of a car) | quarter-light |
| For land's sake! | Oh, my giddy aunt! |
| gandy dancer | platelayer (railway) |
| gobs of | bags of |
| goose egg (a score of zero) | duck/duck's egg |
| have one's druthers | have one's way |
| high-test (gas) | high-octane |
| hoofer | professional dancer |
| icebox | refrigerator |
| in a coon's age | in donkey's years |
| in the back forty (humorous) | at the bottom of the garden |
| lap robe | rug (light blanket) |
| lickety-split | hell for leather |
| light bill | electricity bill |
| milquetoast | wimp |
| monkeyshines | monkey tricks |
| normal school | teacher training college |
| oleo | margarine |
| phonograph | gramophone |
| phosphate | soft drink |
| pill | a disagreeable person |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| pocketbook | purse/handbag |
| puff | eiderdown |
| put on the dog | put on side |
| quinine water | Indian tonic water |
| ride herd | supervise/boss |
| ride Shank's mare | take Shanks's pony |
| sawbuck | ten-dollar bill |
| sawing logs | sleeping |
| seltzer bottle | soda siphon |
| shag | dance |
| sock hop | 1950s-style dance |
| soda jerk | someone who works at a soda fountain |
| spider (regional North and Atlantic) | frying pan |
| steamer rug | rug |
| strike pay dirt | on the scent |
| swell | dandy |
| trade-last/TL | a compliment that one person passes on to another in exchange for a compliment about himself or herself |
| two bits | twenty-five cents (25¢) |
| Victrola (brand name) | wind-up gramophone |
| visiting fireman | special visitor in town |
| warm over (food) | warm up |
| What the Sam Hill? | What the hell? |
| white gas | unleaded petrol |
| wing window (car) | quarter-light |
| wood alcohol | methyl alcohol |

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# 13

# *Notes on Symbols and Abbreviations*

## THE ℞ SYMBOL

The symbol ℞ (often written as R with a small x to the side) is seen a lot in the US. It was originally an abbreviation for the Latin word *recipe,* the command form of the verb *recipere* "to take," used by doctors when writing prescriptions. A large ℞ symbol is sometimes displayed on the street sign identifying a business as a pharmacy. In general, the symbol serves to convey the idea of a prescription or remedy. It is often used in everyday print, e.g., *Do you have heartburn? ℞: a short walk after meals.*

## THE $ SYMBOL

One often hears that the dollar symbol ($) was created by superimposing the letter *U* over the letter *S* with the bottom of the *U* cut off. An interesting idea, but it has no validity. Several other theories have been proposed.

During the 1700s, a Spanish coin (the *peso*) popularly called a dollar was the most widely used form of currency both in the original 13 colonies governed by Britain and also in the newly independent United States. The word *dollar* at that time was used for various coins that were modeled on a Bohemian coin

called the *Joachimsthaler,* named after the silver mine at Joachimstal (now Jáchymov). This town, which is now in the Czech Republic, first minted coins in 1519. The Spanish dollar had various other names, such as *the pillar dollar* or *a piece of eight.* The name *pillar dollar* came from the image engraved on the front of the coin, which represented two pillars, the Pillars of Hercules at Gibraltar, draped in a banner. This image may have developed into the dollar sign, the pillars somehow becoming the vertical lines. Other theories about the origin of the symbol $ have been advocated, however. For instance, it may have developed from the letter *P,* an abbreviation for Spanish *peso,* plus a small *s* written beside it to indicate the plural.

The Spanish coin was frequently cut like a pie into eight wedge-shaped pieces, hence the name *piece of eight.* Until recently, this way of making change was reflected in the practice of using quarters and eighths of a dollar in trading on the American stock market. However, American stock markets switched to a decimal system using cents in April 2002. An old slang term for the 25-cent coin is *two bits*—of a *piece of eight,* that is—and the coin is still almost always called a *quarter* in everyday speech. The first US dollar was minted in 1794 and is known as the *flowing hair dollar* from the image of a man with long flowing hair featured on the coin.

## THE £ SYMBOL

The pound, also called the *pound sterling,* is represented by the symbol £. It is an elaboration of an *L* standing for Latin *libra* meaning a pound (the unit of weight). Historically, the terms *pound* and *pound sterling* originated in medieval times, when a coin called a *sterling* was the basic monetary unit. The sum of 240 sterlings, which weighed a pound, was known as a *pound of sterling,* and later a *pound.* The pound was initially convertible into silver and later into gold. The gold standard was abandoned in 1931.

## THE # SYMBOL

In the US the symbol # before a number means "number," rather like "no.," which is used in both countries. If placed after a number, it means pounds (weight). For example, #3 means "number 3," whereas 3# means "three pounds." This symbol is usually called the *pound sign* in the US. Many years ago it was known as the *tick-tack-toe sign* or the *number sign.* The pound sign is rarely used in Britain, and the British terms for the symbol #, *hash, gate,* and *square,* are unknown in the US. The American term *pound sign* can cause confusion, since this term can refer either to the symbol # or to the symbol £.

## PLC/LTD

The abbreviation *plc* stands for *Public Limited Company* and is often seen at the end of a company's name in the UK. The abbreviation *Ltd* is also used. These abbreviations have a similar meaning to the abbreviation *Inc.,* often seen at the end of an American company's name. There is usually a comma preceding the letters *Inc.,* but not preceding *plc* or *Ltd.*

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## *Miscellaneous Information*

I have noticed several other differences between British English and American English that either do not fit into any particular category or are more of general interest than any practical use.

- Americans will often say "two times" rather than "twice," as in "We saw the show two times."
- When spelling a word aloud that has two consecutive identical letters, most Britons will use the word *double.* For example, to spell *canned,* Britons will say *"c-a-double n-e-d."* Most Americans, however, will pronounce each letter separately: *"c-a-n-n-e-d."*
- The date on a form or a letter in Britain is expressed by putting the day, the month, then the year (10 December, 2004). In the US the month comes first, followed by the day and then the year (December 10, 2004).
- Hours and minutes are divided by a period in Britain, but by a colon in the US (9:30 a.m. in the US, 9.30 a.m. in the UK).
- *To feel sick* in British English means to feel nauseated. To express this feeling an American would say he *felt sick to his stomach.*

- The term *tarmac* is used in the US only when speaking of airport runways. *Asphalt* or *blacktop* is the term used for a road surface for automobiles. In the UK, however, *tarmac* is often used when referring to a road surface as well.
- The American and British legal systems are somewhat different. A trial attorney is the rough equivalent of a British *barrister.* In the US, a person can confer directly with a trial attorney. In Britain, you confer with your solicitor, who in turn confers with your barrister. Since 1970 the term *paralegal* has been used in the US for someone trained to perform certain legal tasks for a lawyer. An *articled clerk* performs similar duties in Britain.
- In both countries, some words are mainly written but seldom spoken. In the US if you look through the yellow pages for a car rental agency, you will need to look under *Automobile Rentals,* even though the term *car* is much more common than *automobile.* Similarly, a sign at the side of the road might read *Next Signal: Rose Street,* but in speaking, a person would say "next *light.*" In Britain an equivalent is found in the WC sign. The average Briton does not ask where the WC is (although a foreign visitor might). Instead they might ask where the *loo* is.
- In many US colleges, the first-year course that introduces a particular is given the course designation number 101, as in Physics 101 or Spanish 101. The term *101* is often used in American speech to indicate a basic course in a jocular sense ("He needs to take Etiquette 101").
- Among the words first used in America that have made their way back to Britain are *lasso, moccasin, outlandish, widget,* and the extremely common expression *OK.*
- In speech, Americans sometimes specify the country in which well-known cities are located and say *Paris, France* or *Rome, Italy* rather than just *Paris* or *Rome.* This may be in

order to avoid confusion, since many towns in the US have been named after European cities, such as *Athens, Georgia.*

- Some nicknames of American men are not used in Britain, such as *Bud, Buzz, Chip, Chuck, Hank, Butch, Randy* and *Bubba* (this last name is especially associated with the South).
- *Ate:* The pronunciation of *ate* is a little tricky. Americans say this word exactly like *eight.* In Britain one is taught to pronounce it *et.* This is confusing, but if you wish to have a command of English wherever you are, it is necessary to change the way you pronounce *ate.*
- The letters PTO for *Please Turn Over* are often used when writing in Britain. Americans use the words *Over* or *See over,* sometimes with an arrow added to reinforce the meaning. The letters *NB* (from the Latin *nota bene,* "note well") are often used in Britain, particularly in an instruction manual.
- Some expressions that, surprisingly, are used in both countries are *not my cup of tea, in your neck of the woods, it cost a pretty penny* and *penny wise, pound foolish.*

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# 15

# *UK–US Lexicon*

A plus sign (+) after a term indicates that the term is known in both the United Kingdom and the United States. If this sign is on both the US and UK sides, the difference is purely in customary word usage. A plus sign is not used when the entry on the US side of the column is merely a definition or an explanation of the term rather than an American equivalent, since the explanation will be understood on both sides of the Atlantic.

Brackets indicate the pronunciation of a word. For a complete guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi. An asterisk [*] indicates that further information about a term can be found in *Explanations,* pages 220–227. A slash [/] separates two different American equivalents of the same British term. The label *(colloq.)* indicates that the word is used in colloquial speech.

An entry of the form "homey (see *homey* US)" indicates that the word *homey* is used in one sense in the UK but in another in the US. The reader should consult the US–UK lexicon for the American meaning.

All words are nouns unless otherwise indicated. Where confusion may arise the part of speech has been given.

In compiling this lexicon I have come across several brand names that are as common as, or more common than, the generic names. Because the brand names may not be understood in the other country, I found it essential to include these words.

No endorsement is intended—or should be interpreted—by the use of these words.

*UK–US Lexicon*

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| abattoir | packinghouse/slaughterhouse + |
| abseil [**ab**·sīl] | rappel |
| academician | member of an academy (see *academician* US) |
| advert | ad + |
| aerial + | antenna + |
| aeroplane | airplane |
| afters *(slang)* | dessert |
| aggro *(colloq.)* | aggravation |
| agony column | advice column |
| air-rifle + | BB gun/air gun |
| airing cupboard* | small closet over the hot-water tank for storing linens |
| akela (from the name of the leader of the wolf pack in Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*) | den mother/adult leader of a pack of Cub Scouts |
| allotments | community gardens |
| Alsatian (dog) | German shepherd |
| amenity tip/dump + | landfill |
| amongst | among + |
| anorak | parka + |
| anticlockwise | counterclockwise |
| appraisal* | evaluation |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| approved school *(obsolete)* | school for delinquent children |
| argy-bargy | a lively or disputatious discussion |
| arse *(vulgar)* | ass |
| articled clerk | paralegal (similar) |
| articulated lorry | tractor-trailer truck/semi [**sem**·ī] |
| assault course (military) | obstacle/confidence course |
| assessor (insurance) | adjuster |
| assurance | life insurance |
| aubergine [**oh**·ber·zheen] | eggplant |
| autumn + | fall |
| badge | pin |
| bailiff (see *bailiff* US) | person appointed by a judge to confiscate personal property |
| Balaclava | ski mask |
| banana skin | banana peel |
| banger (dilapidated car) | heap + |
| banger (firework) | firecracker |
| banger (food) | sausage + |
| barmy | nutty + (crazy) |
| barrister | trial lawyer/trial attorney |
| barrow | pushcart |
| bash up | beat up + |
| basin (bathroom) | sink |
| bat (table tennis) | paddle |
| bath | bathtub |
| bathing costume | swimsuit + |
| baths | public swimming pool + |
| batty *(slang)* | nuts |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| beach hut | cabana |
| beak *(slang)* | magistrate/schoolmaster |
| beaker | mug + (especially a plastic mug) |
| bedside table | nightstand |
| bedsitter | efficiency apartment |
| beefburger | hamburger + |
| beetroot | beets |
| bell-boy + | bellhop |
| berk *(slang)* | idiot |
| besotted | smitten + |
| bespoke (clothing) | made to order |
| billion* | a million million (The US *billion* is a thousand million.) |
| bin *(verb)* | toss/pitch |
| bird *(offensive slang)* | girl |
| Biro (brand name) | ballpoint pen + |
| bish | screwup |
| Black Maria + | paddy wagon |
| bleeper | beeper |
| blighter *(slang)* | idiot |
| blind (pull-down) | shade/window shade |
| blinking *(slang)* | goddamn |
| block letters | capital letters + |
| block of flats | apartment building |
| bloke *(slang)* | guy |
| bloody *(slang)* | damn |
| bloomer (mistake) | blooper/boo-boo |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| bobby | cop + |
| boffin *(colloq.)* | research scientist, egghead (originally World War II slang) |
| bog *(slang)* | john (toilet) |
| bogey *(slang)* | booger [bû·ger] *(colloq.)* |
| boiled sweets | hard candy |
| boiler (central heating) | furnace |
| boiler suit | coveralls |
| bollard* | stanchion/illuminated traffic diverter |
| bolshy *(slang)* | ornery |
| bolt-hole | hideaway + |
| Bonio (brand of dog biscuit) | Milk-Bone (brand name) |
| bonnet (on a car) | hood |
| boob (mistake) | boo-boo *(colloq.)* |
| book token | gift certificate for a book |
| bookstall | newsstand |
| boot (on a car) | trunk |
| boot sale | tailgate sale (not common in the US) |
| booze-up | drinking spree |
| Borstal | reform school + |
| bottle (fruit and vegetables) *(verb)* | can* |
| bottom drawer | hope chest |
| bottom of (street or garden) | far end of |
| bowler hat | derby |
| braces | suspenders |
| bracken | a coarse kind of fern, often growing thickly in patches |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| brainwave | inspiration/great idea |
| brass *(colloq.)* | money |
| breeze-block | cinder block |
| bridge-roll | hotdog bun |
| brilliant *(slang)* | great/cool |
| bring up (a child) | raise |
| broad bean | fava bean [**fah**·və] |
| brogues (shoes) | oxfords |
| brooch | pin |
| brothel-creepers *(slang)* | rubber-soled suede shoes |
| bucket-shop *(colloq.)* | travel agency selling discount travel tickets (see *bucket shop* US) |
| buckshee *(slang)* | free/for free |
| budgerigar + | Australian parakeet |
| builder | owner of a building company/construction worker |
| building site | construction site + |
| bulrush | cattail |
| bum *(slang)* | butt/fanny/buns |
| bumbag | fanny pack/belly bag/belt bag |
| bumf *(colloq.)* | unwanted papers and documents |
| bun fight *(colloq.)* | bash/party |
| bung *(slang verb)* | throw |
| bungalow* | any one-story house |
| bunk off | play hookey + |
| bureau | secretary desk |
| burgle | burglarize |
| busker | street musician |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| busy Lizzie (flower) | impatiens |
| butter-bean | lima bean [lie·ma] |
| buttonhole | boutonniere |
| cack-handed | awkward, clumsy |
| camp bed | cot |
| candyfloss | cotton candy |
| canteen | cafeteria + |
| car-boot sale | tailgate sale (not common in the US) |
| car park | parking lot |
| caravan | trailer/mobile home |
| caravan site | trailer park |
| carer | caregiver |
| carrier bag | tote bag/shopping bag + |
| carry-cot | baby carrier |
| cash machine/cash dispenser | ATM (automatic teller machine) |
| cashier | teller in a bank or post office (cashier in other businesses) |
| cashpoint | cash machine/ATM |
| casket | small ornamental box (see *casket* US) |
| castor sugar | confectioners' sugar |
| casualty (hospital) | emergency |
| catapult + | slingshot |
| Catherine wheel (firework) | pinwheel |
| catmint | catnip + |
| cattle-grid | cattle guard |
| catwalk (for modeling clothes) | runway |
| caustic soda | lye |
| CCF (Combined Cadet Force) | ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps.) |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| central reservation | median/median strip |
| chap | guy*/fellow + |
| charity shop | thrift shop |
| chartered accountant | CPA (certified public accountant) |
| chartered surveyor | licensed surveyor |
| chat show | talk show |
| cheeky | nervy/fresh/sassy |
| cheerio | goodbye |
| cheers* | thanks/bye |
| chemist (person) | pharmacist + |
| chemist (shop) | drugstore/pharmacy + |
| chick-pea | garbanzo bean |
| chicory | endive |
| chipolata | small sausage |
| chippings | gravel/small stones |
| chips | French fries/fries |
| chivvey *(verb)* | badger/keep after |
| choc-ice | Klondike (brand name) |
| chock-a-block full | chock-full |
| Christian name | first name/given name |
| Christmas pudding | plum pudding + |
| chuffed *(colloq.)* | delighted |
| CID (Criminal Investigation Department) | FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) |
| cigarette end | cigarette butt + |
| cinema + | movie theater |
| city centre | downtown |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| cladding (on a building) | siding |
| cling film (plastic food wrap) | Saran Wrap (brand name) |
| clinker | something admirable or first-rate |
| cloakroom | restroom/checkroom |
| clobber *(slang)* | clothing/equipment |
| clock *(slang)* | face |
| clockwork (of a toy) | wind-up |
| clod (*slang* for *idiot*) | dipstick |
| (a) close [klohz] | a short dead-end street |
| cloth-cap *(adj.)* | blue-collar + |
| clothes-peg | clothespin |
| cobble together | patch together + |
| cockshy | mark aimed at in throwing contests, an object of ridicule |
| cock-up *(noun, slang)* | foul-up |
| codger | old man |
| cohort | a group of people representing a common cause (see *cohort* US) |
| commercial traveller | traveling salesman + |
| commis waiter | busboy |
| commissionaire | uniformed doorman |
| common (*adj.*, of a person) | low-life |
| common *(noun)* | public parkland |
| compère | m.c./master of ceremonies + |
| concession (when paying for admission) | discount |
| conjurer | magician + |
| conk | nose, head |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| conkers | buckeyes (similar to horse chestnuts)/horse chestnuts |
| conscription | draft |
| constable | police officer |
| cooker | range/stove + |
| copper *(slang)* | cop + |
| cordial (drink) | nonalcoholic drink made from fruit juice (see *cordial* US) |
| coriander | cilantro (refers to leaves only; the seeds are called *coriander* in the US) |
| cornflour | cornstarch |
| corner shop | convenience store |
| cornet (for ice cream) | cone + |
| cornfield* | wheat field |
| cos lettuce [koss] | romaine lettuce |
| cosh | club +/nightstick |
| costumier | costumer |
| cot | crib |
| cottage hospital | country hospital with no resident doctor |
| cotton swab | Q-Tip (brand name) |
| cotton wool | cotton |
| council estate | public housing project |
| councillor | councilman |
| courgette [kor·**zhet**] | zucchini [zoo·**kee**·nee] |
| court shoes | pumps (dress shoes for ladies) |
| covering letter | cover letter |
| cow gum | rubber cement |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| cowboy *(slang)* | disreputable workman |
| crackers *(slang)* | nuts + |
| cranky | eccentric (see *cranky* US) |
| crash barrier (on a road) | guardrail |
| cravat | ascot |
| crayfish + | crawfish |
| crazy paving* | patchwork paved surface |
| cream cracker | soda cracker |
| create *(verb, slang)* | make a fuss |
| creek | narrow tidal inlet (see *creek* US) |
| creeper | vine |
| crematorium + | crematory [**cree**·ma·tory] |
| crisps | potato chips |
| crock *(colloq.)* | worn-out person or thing |
| crockery | plates and dishes (see *crockery* US) |
| crosspatch | grouch + |
| cruet | small container for condiments at the table (see *cruet* US) |
| crush barrier | barricade + |
| crust (on the end of a loaf) | heel |
| CS gas | Mace (brand name) |
| cubicle (toilet) | stall |
| cupboard + | cabinet |
| cuppa *(slang)* | cup of tea |
| curate | assistant church minister |
| curate's egg | something with both good and bad qualities |
| curtains + | drapes/draperies |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| custom (as in *I will never give that shop my custom again*) | business, patronage |
| cutthroat razor | straight razor |
| cut up *(colloq.)* | upset/distressed (see *cut-up* US) |
| cutlery | flatware/silverware |
| cutting (newspaper) | clipping + |
| c.v. (curriculum vitae) | resumé (In the US, a c.v. is typically longer than a resumé.) |
| daft | dumb |
| dandelion-clock | dandelion flower head |
| death duties | estate taxes |
| decorator | house painter + |
| demerara sugar | brown sugar |
| diary (for appointments) | calendar |
| diddle *(verb)* | cheat/swindle |
| digestive biscuits | graham crackers (similar) |
| digs *(colloq.)* | student accommodations (see *digs* US) |
| dinner jacket | tuxedo/tux |
| dish *(verb)* | ruin, foil, or defeat |
| dish up | serve |
| dishy *(colloq.)* | cute |
| dismantle + | disassemble |
| disorientated | disoriented |
| diversion (on a road) | detour |
| DIY shop | home improvement store |
| do up | make over/do over |
| dodgy | uncertain/risky |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| doggo *(colloq.)* | motionless/uncooperative |
| dogsbody | gofer |
| (the) dole | unemployment benefits |
| domestic science | home economics/home ec + |
| donkey-work | grunt work |
| doodah | doodad |
| dormitory | room used for sleeping (see *dormitory* US) |
| dormitory suburb | bedroom suburb |
| doss-house | flophouse |
| dotty | nutty + (crazy) |
| double saucepan | double boiler + |
| double-barrelled surname | hyphenated last name |
| down-and-out *(noun)* | bum |
| drainpipe + | rainspout/downspout |
| draper | dry-goods retailer |
| draughts | checkers |
| dressing-gown | bathrobe |
| drink driving | drunk driving |
| dripping | fat left in the pan after roasting meat |
| dry goods | foodstuffs (see *dry goods* US) |
| duds *(slang)* | clothes |
| dumb waiter* | lazy Susan |
| dummy (for a baby) | pacifier |
| dustbin | trash can/garbage can |
| dustbin day | garbage day |
| dustcart | garbage truck |
| dustman | garbage collector |
| Dutch courage | alcohol-induced courage |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| earth wire | ground wire |
| eiderdown | comforter |
| Elastoplast (brand name) | Band-Aid (brand name) + |
| elevenses | morning tea break |
| emulsion paint | latex paint |
| en suite (of a room) | with a bathroom |
| envisage | envision + |
| estate agent | realtor*/real-estate agent |
| estate car | station wagon |
| evening classes | night school |
| excess (on insurance) | deductible |
| expiry date | expiration date |
| fag *(colloq.)* | cigarette (see *fag* US) |
| faggot | a traditional English meatball made from pork liver, onions, and bread |
| fairy cake | cupcake + |
| fancy *(colloq.)* | feel in the mood for (something)/ be sexually attracted to (a person) |
| fancy-dress party | costume party |
| Father Christmas + | Santa Claus + |
| fender (on a boat) + | bumper |
| fête [fayt] or [fett] | village fair |
| film + | movie + |
| fire (gas/electric) | heater |
| fire brigade | fire department |
| fish fingers | fish sticks |
| fish slice | spatula/pancake turner |
| fitted carpet | wall-to-wall carpet |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| fixture (sporting) | sporting event + |
| fizzy drink | pop/soda |
| flagon (old-fashioned) | jug (see *jug* UK) |
| flannel | washcloth/facecloth |
| flannel *(slang)* | BS *(vulgar slang)*/hogwash |
| flash *(colloq.)* | showy |
| flask + | thermos + |
| flat | apartment/condominium/condo |
| flatmate | roommate |
| flat out | all out |
| flautist | flutist |
| fleapit | a cheap or squalid cinema/movie theater |
| flex (electrical) | cord |
| flick-knife | switchblade |
| flipping *(slang adj.)* | darn |
| flog *(slang)* | sell |
| flummox *(colloq.)* | confuse |
| flutter *(colloq.)* | wager |
| fly-past | flyover |
| foot-and-mouth disease + | hoof-and-mouth disease |
| football | soccer (game)/soccer ball |
| football pitch | football field |
| football pools | British gambling consortium with the winnings based on the outcome of certain football matches |
| footer *(colloq.)* | soccer |
| footpath | sidewalk/trail |
| forecourt | area around the gasoline pumps |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| forthcoming | upcoming |
| fortnight | two weeks |
| foyer + | lobby + |
| Freephone/Freefone | toll free |
| freehold | outright ownership of land |
| French pleat (hairstyle) | French twist/French roll |
| fringe (hair) | bangs |
| frock | dress + |
| frog-spawn | frogs' eggs |
| frowsty | having a stale smell/musty |
| fruit machine | slot machine |
| fug | stuffy or smoky atmosphere |
| full marks | full or due credit or praise |
| full stop (punctuation) | period |
| further education | continuing education |
| gammy (leg) | game/injured |
| garden + | yard* |
| gasometer | gas-storage facility |
| gawp *(verb)* | rubberneck |
| gazump *(colloq.)* | raise the price of real estate after having accepted an offer |
| gin (alternative meaning) | trap (see *gin* US) |
| ginger-nut | gingersnap |
| girl guide | Girl Scout |
| git *(noun, slang)* | jerk |
| golden handshake | retirement present (for long service) |
| good books | good graces |
| goods lift | freight elevator |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| goose-pimples/goose-flesh | goose bumps + |
| goosegogs *(colloq.)* | gooseberries |
| granny flat | mother-in-law apartment |
| greaseproof paper | wax paper |
| green card | motorists' international insurance document (see *green card* US) |
| green fingers | green thumb + |
| greengage | green plum |
| greengroceries | produce [**prō**·doos] |
| greenkeeper | greenskeeper |
| greens *(slang)* | vegetables |
| grill + | broil* |
| grotty *(slang)* | scuzzy + |
| ground floor | first floor |
| group litigation order (legal term) | class-action suit |
| guide dog | Seeing Eye dog |
| gum-shield | mouth guard |
| guttering | gutters + |
| gymkhana | horse show |
| hair slide | barrette |
| half-moon glasses | half glasses |
| handbag + | purse/pocket book |
| hard graft | laborious work |
| hardback (book) | hardcover |
| hash (#) | pound sign |
| hassock | kneeler/church kneeling cushion (see *hassock* US) |
| hatch (in a house) | pass-through |

| U.K | US |
|---|---|
| haulier | person or firm that moves things/hauler + |
| head waiter | maitre d' |
| headmaster/headmistress + | principal |
| heath | open parkland |
| hedgerow | row of bushes forming a long hedge |
| hen party | girls' night out |
| hessian | burlap |
| het up | agitated |
| hide (for animal watchers) | blind |
| hip bag | belt bag |
| hire* *(verb)* | rent |
| hire purchase, buy on *(verb)* | make payments/installments on |
| hive off | separate from/break away from |
| hoarding | billboard + |
| hob | range top/stove top |
| holiday* | vacation |
| holiday-maker | vacationer |
| homely* | homey (see *homely* US) |
| hooter *(slang)* | nose (see *hooters* US) |
| Hoover (brand name) | vacuum + |
| horse blinkers | horse blinders |
| horsebox | horse trailer |
| horse riding | horseback riding |
| hot flush | hot flash |
| hotchpotch | hodgepodge |
| house builder | homebuilder |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| house-trained | housebroken |
| housing estate | subdivision |
| the hump | depression, an emotional slump |
| ice lolly | Popsicle (brand name) |
| icing +* | frosting |
| identity/identification parade | line up + |
| immersion heater | hot water heater (electric) |
| indicator (on a car) | turn signal |
| inheritance tax | estate tax |
| Inland Revenue | Internal Revenue Service (IRS) |
| insect + | bug + |
| inverted commas | quotation marks + |
| invigilator (at university exams) | proctor (see *proctor* UK) |
| ironmonger | hardware dealer |
| jam jar | jelly jar |
| jammy *(colloq.)* | lucky |
| jelly | Jell-O (brand name) |
| jemmy | jimmy |
| jiggery-pokery *(colloq.)* | trickery |
| jim-jams *(colloq.)* | jammies |
| jobber | a middleman in the exchange of stocks and securities among brokers |
| Jobcentre | employment office |
| Joe Bloggs | Joe Blow |
| joiner | cabinetmaker |
| joint | roast + |
| jollies *(colloq.)* | laughs/kicks |
| judder | vibrate and shake |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| jug* | pitcher |
| jumble sale | rummage sale + |
| jumper | sweater + |
| kerfuffle | commotion |
| kettle + | teakettle |
| key money | a month's rent plus deposit |
| kieselguhr | diatomaceous earth + |
| kiosk + | concession stand |
| kip *(colloq.)* | sleep |
| kirby-grip (originally the brand name Kirbigrip) | bobby pin |
| knacker | someone who buys old horses for slaughter |
| knacker's yard *(colloq.)* | glue factory |
| knackered *(slang)* | beat/exhausted |
| knickerbockers | knickers |
| knickers | panties |
| knock up* *(colloq.)* | wake up/warm up (in tennis)/put together (see *knock up* US) |
| knocking-off time | quitting time |
| labour exchange (now Jobcentre) | employment office |
| ladder (in stockings) | run |
| ladybird | ladybug |
| larder | pantry + |
| lashings of *(colloq.)* | gobs of |
| launderette | laundromat |
| lavatory + | bathroom/rest room |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| lead (electrical) | cord |
| lead (for a dog) + | leash + |
| leading article | editorial |
| lean-to | a building with a sloping roof abutting a larger building (see *lean-to* US) |
| leasehold property | property that may be bought and sold but is ultimately owned by another party |
| leery (glance) | sly/knowing (see *leery* US) |
| let (property) | lease/rent out |
| letter-box | mailbox/mail drop |
| Liberty (humans rights organization) | ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) |
| lido | public outdoor swimming pool |
| lifebelt/lifebuoy | life preserver |
| lift | elevator |
| lightning-conductor | lightning rod |
| Lilo [**lie**·low] (brand name) | air mattress + |
| lino [**lie**·noh] *(colloq.)* | linoleum (originally a brand name) |
| lipsalve | Chap Stick (brand name)/lip balm |
| listed building | historic building |
| litter bin | trash can |
| Little Bear (constellation) | Little Dipper |
| liver sausage | liverwurst |
| local authority | city/county (similar but not an exactly equivalent level of government) |
| lodger | boarder/roomer |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| loft | attic + |
| lollipop + | sucker (for children) |
| long-sighted | farsighted |
| loo *(slang)* | john |
| loud-hailer | bullhorn |
| lounge | family room |
| lounge suit | business suit + |
| lovebite | hickey |
| lucerne | alfalfa + |
| lucky dip | grab bag |
| luv *(slang term of endearment)* | hon [hun] |
| mac/mackintosh | raincoat |
| mad *(hip slang)* | rad |
| Madeira cake | pound cake |
| mailshot | flier (sent through the mail), mass mailing |
| main course (in a restaurant) | entrée |
| mains* | main |
| maisonette | an apartment with a private front door accessible from the exterior (usually in a two-story apartment complex) |
| maize | corn + |
| manager (in business) | vice president |
| managing director (in business) | president/CEO |
| mange-tout [**mahnzh**-too] | snow peas + |
| market gardener | truck farmer |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| marks (in school) | grades |
| marquee* | large tent (see *marquee* US) |
| marrow | large zucchini |
| mate *(colloq.)* | man/bud |
| maths | math |
| me *(colloq.)* | my |
| mean | stingy (see *mean* US) |
| measuring jug | measuring cup + |
| Meccano set (brand name) | Erector set (brand name) |
| megaphone | bullhorn |
| mercy flight | medevac flight |
| methylated spirits/meths | denatured alcohol |
| milk churn | milk can |
| milk float | milk delivery truck |
| minced meat | ground meat |
| mincer | meat grinder |
| mind *(verb)* | watch for/look out for |
| Mind the Gap! (sign and automated announcement in the London Underground subway system) | Watch your step! (when exiting or boarding the train) |
| mobile (phone) | cell (phone) |
| momentarily | for a moment (see *momentarily* US) |
| mortise lock | dead bolt |
| mount (around a picture) | mat |
| mouth organ | harmonica + |
| mozzie (*slang* for *mosquito*) | skeeter (*slang*, regional South) |
| muck about *(colloq.)* | cut up |
| muck in *(colloq.)* | pitch in |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| mudguard | fender |
| mug up | bone up |
| multi-storey car park | parking garage |
| mum | mom |
| music hall | vaudeville |
| musical box | music box |
| mutt *(slang)* | dog (see *mutt* US) |
| NAAFI (Navy, Army, and Airforce Institutes) | PX (Post Exchange) (similar organization) |
| naff | unstylish, outmoded, worthless |
| nail varnish | nail polish + |
| nappy | diaper |
| narkey *(slang)* | irritable |
| natty | spiffy |
| navvy | laborer on a public project |
| neat (of a drink) | straight |
| nervy | nervous (see *nervy* US) |
| net curtains | sheer curtains/sheers |
| New Year's Eve | New Year's *(colloq.)* |
| newsagent | newspaper store/newsstand + |
| newsreader | newscaster |
| nick *(slang)* | steal |
| nightdress | nightgown |
| nil | zip/zero + |
| nipper *(colloq.)* | kid/young shaver |
| Nissen hut (trademark) | Quonset hut (trademark) |
| nod *(colloq.)* | big shot |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| noddle | noodle + |
| normal/usual + | regular |
| nosey parker *(slang)* | busybody |
| nosh up *(slang)* | feast |
| note (currency) | bill |
| notice-board | bulletin board |
| noughts and crosses | tic-tac-toe |
| number-plate | license plate |
| o.n.o. (or near offer) | o.b.o. (or best offer) |
| OAP (old age pensioner) | senior citizen + |
| oblique (the/symbol) | slash + |
| off-licence | liquor store |
| off-putting | deterring |
| oik | hood/lout + |
| old age pension | Social Security (see *social security* UK) |
| one-off | custom-made |
| ordinary shares | common stock |
| outhouse | shed near or next to a house (see *outhouse* US) |
| outsize | extra-large + |
| overspill | movement of people from overcrowded cities to less populated areas |
| overtake (a car on a road) + | pass + |
| P&P (postage and packing) | S&H (shipping and handling) |
| P.T.O. (please turn over) | (over) |
| pack (of cards) + | deck |
| paddle (walk through shallow water) | wade + |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| paddling pool | wading pool |
| palaver [pə·**lah**·ver] | commotion |
| panda car | police cruiser |
| pantomime | theatrical Christmas performance (see *pantomime* US) |
| paper round | paper route |
| paraffin | kerosene |
| paralytic *(slang)* | wasted/very drunk |
| parky (regional North) | chilly |
| parting (in hair) | part |
| patience (card game) | solitaire (see *solitaire* UK) |
| pavement | sidewalk (see *pavement* US) |
| pavilion (alternative meaning) | main building on a sports field |
| paving-stone | concrete slab/paver |
| pawky | shrewd and cunning, often in a humorous manner |
| peaky | peaked [**pee**·kid] |
| pebble-dash | pebble-coated stucco |
| peckish *(colloq.)* | hungry |
| pelmet | valance (see *valance* UK) |
| pelt down (with rain) | bucket down |
| pen-friend | pen pal |
| penny-farthing (type of bicycle) | high wheeler |
| pensioner | senior citizen + |
| Perspex (brand name) | Plexiglas (brand name) |
| petrol | gas/gasoline |
| phonograph | early phonograph using cylinders (see *phonograph* US) |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| physiotherapist | physical therapist |
| Pianola (brand name) | player piano |
| (the) pictures | movies |
| piffle | nonsense/garbage |
| pillar-box | mailbox |
| pin | straight pin (in New England a *common pin*) |
| pinafore dress | jumper |
| pinch *(slang)* | steal |
| pip | seed/pit (in fruit) |
| pissed *(vulgar slang)* | drunk (see *pissed* US) |
| pitch (sporting term) | field + |
| pith | pulp |
| plait | braid |
| planning permission | permit |
| plaster (for a wound) | Band-Aid (brand name) + |
| Plasticine (brand name) | Play-Doh (brand name) |
| play up | act up + |
| plimsolls | canvas sneakers |
| plonk *(slang)* | cheap wine |
| plot + | lot + |
| Plough (constellation) | Big Dipper |
| pneumatic drill + | jackhammer |
| podgy | pudgy |
| point (to add mortar to brickwork) | tuck-point |
| polisher (electric) | buffer |
| polo-neck | turtleneck |
| Polyfilla (brand name) | Spackle (brand name) |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| polystyrene | Styrofoam (brand name) |
| pong | stink + |
| pontoon (card game) | blackjack + |
| poppet | dear, darling |
| porridge | oatmeal (cooked) |
| post +* | mail + |
| post-mortem + | autopsy + |
| postcode | Zip Code |
| postie | mailman/postman |
| pot plant | potted plant/houseplant |
| potholer | spelunker (cave explorer) |
| potter (around) | putter |
| pouffe | hassock/ottoman |
| power point | electrical outlet |
| pram/perambulator | baby carriage/stroller |
| prat | fool |
| prawns + | shrimp + |
| prefect (in a school) | monitor + |
| presently | soon + |
| press-studs | snaps (fasteners) |
| press-ups | pushups + |
| primary school | grammar school/grade school |
| prise open | pry open |
| prison warder | corrections officer |
| proctor | disciplinary officer at a university (see *proctor* US) |
| produce [**prŏd**-yoos] | all agricultural products (see *produce* US) |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| propelling pencil | mechanical pencil |
| property | real estate |
| prospectus | brochure (*prospectus* is only used for finances in the US) |
| proud (as in *proud flesh*) | projecting slightly above, swollen, overgrown |
| pub | bar + |
| public prosecutor | district attorney/DA |
| public telephone box | pay phone + |
| public transport | public transportation |
| pudding basin | pudding bowl + |
| pumps | canvas sneakers |
| puncture | flat (tire) |
| punnet | container for fruit or vegetables |
| punter | customer/someone who bets on horses/prostitute's client |
| purse | change purse |
| push-bike | bicycle + |
| pushchair | stroller |
| put-you-up | sofa bed/Hide-A-Bed (brand name) |
| pylon | high-tension tower |
| quay [kee] | wharf + |
| query *(verb)* | question |
| queue up | line up |
| quid *(slang)* | pound (money) |
| quieten down | quiet down |
| rabbit on *(verb, colloq.)* | rattle on + |
| racecourse + | racetrack |
| rag *(verb, colloq.)* | razz |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| rag *(noun)* | newspaper |
| railway | railroad |
| ramble | hike + |
| randy *(slang)* | frisky/sexually aroused |
| rasher | slice of bacon + |
| rates | property taxes |
| ratty *(colloq.)* | irritable (see *ratty* US) |
| redcap *(colloq.)* | MP (a member of the military police) (see *redcap* US) |
| redundancies | layoffs |
| reef-knot | square knot |
| reel of cotton | spool of thread |
| registrar (legal and university) | senior administrative officer |
| removal van | moving van |
| retirement pension | Social Security |
| return ticket | round-trip ticket |
| reverse-charge call | collect call |
| ride-on mower | riding mower |
| ring up (phone) | call |
| rise (in pay) | raise |
| road surface + | pavement |
| rock/seaside rock | stick candy |
| rockery | rock garden |
| roomer | lodger |
| rota | roster + |
| round (delivery) | route |
| roundabout (for children) | merry-go-round |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| roundabout (traffic) | traffic circle/rotary (New England) |
| rowlock [rŏ·lŏk] | oarlock |
| royal *(slang adj.)* | fabulous + |
| RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) | ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)/ SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) |
| rubber | eraser |
| rubbish | garbage/trash |
| Rubbish! | Nonsense! |
| ruddy *(slang adj.)* | darn |
| rug (light blanket)* | throw |
| rumbustious | rambunctious |
| rumpus + | ruckus |
| runner beans | string beans |
| sack *(verb)* | fire/can |
| saddle (on a bicycle) | seat |
| (on) sale* | for sale |
| saleroom | salesroom |
| sales talk | sales pitch |
| saloon bar | lounge bar + |
| salt beef | corned beef |
| sandpit | sandbox |
| sandwich-cake | layer cake |
| sanitary towel | sanitary napkin |
| sapper | British soldier specializing in rebuilding destroyed structures |
| saucy | impudent/sassy |
| scarper | run away |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| scatty | scatterbrained |
| scheme (financial) | plan + |
| scone | biscuit |
| screw | salary, wages |
| scribbling block | scratch paper |
| scrum | scrimmage (in sports); confusion |
| scrump *(verb)* | steal fruit off trees |
| scrumpy | locally made, rough hard cider (contains alcohol) |
| scullery | room off a kitchen for washing dishes |
| scupper | ruin, destroy |
| seaside | beach + |
| secateurs | pruners/pruning shears |
| secondary glazing | storm window |
| self-raising flour | self-rising flour |
| Sellotape (brand name) | Scotch tape (brand name) |
| semi-detached (house) | duplex* (similar) |
| semolina | Cream of Wheat (brand name) |
| send up | imitate/ridicule |
| service flats | apartment hotel |
| serviette | napkin + |
| settee + | couch/sofa + |
| shambolic | in a shambles/disorderly/chaotic |
| shandy | a drink that is half beer and half lemonade |
| sheltered accommodation | assisted-living facility/ALF |
| sheriff | a person who performs public duties similar to a mayor (see *sheriff* US) |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| shin-pad | shin guard |
| shin up + | shinny up |
| shingle* | beach pebbles (see *shingle* US) |
| shirty | irritable |
| shoeblack | bootblack |
| shop *(colloq.)* | turn in to the authorities |
| shop assistant | salesperson |
| shop steward | labor union representative |
| shopping centre + | mall* |
| shopping trolley | shopping cart |
| shop-soiled merchandise | display merchandise |
| short-sighted (vision) | nearsighted |
| sideboards | sideburns + |
| sidesman | usher (in a church) |
| simnel | Easter fruitcake with marzipan |
| single ticket | one-way ticket |
| singlet | men's sleeveless undershirt |
| skint (*slang*, as in *I'm skint*) | broke + |
| skip *(noun)* | Dumpster (brand name) |
| skip *(verb)* | jump rope |
| skipping-rope *(noun)* | jump rope |
| skirting-board | baseboard |
| skive off *(verb)* | play hookey + |
| skivvy | female servant performing menial tasks |
| slate *(colloq.)* | criticize (see *slate* US) |
| sleeping partner | silent partner |
| slice/fish slice | spatula/pancake turner |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| slim *(verb)* | slim down/diet + |
| Sloanes/Sloane Rangers *(slang)* | yuppies (usually Londoners) |
| slops | cheap, ready-made garments |
| slot machine | vending machine + (see *slot machine* US) |
| small print + | fine print + |
| smalls *(colloq.)* | underwear |
| smashing | awesome/cool/neat |
| snakes and ladders (game) | Chutes and Ladders (brand name) |
| sneak *(noun)* | tattle-tale |
| snip *(noun)* | bargain/deal |
| snog *(slang)* | kiss amorously |
| snuggery | snug position or place |
| social security | welfare (see *Social Security* US) |
| sod *(vulgar)* | son of a bitch |
| soft drink + | soda/pop/tonic (in Boston)/Coke (in the South) |
| soil + | dirt |
| solicitor | lawyer/attorney |
| solitaire | peg solitaire (see *solitaire* US) |
| soppy | sappy |
| sorbet [**sor**·bay] + | sherbet + |
| sort code | routing number |
| sous chef | commis chef |
| soya beans | soybeans |
| spanner | wrench + |
| speciality | specialty |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| spectacles + | glasses +/eyeglasses |
| spitting (rain) | sprinkling + |
| spiv | small-time operator/shyster |
| spod | someone who spends an inordinate amount of time in computer chatrooms, newsgroups, or bulletin boards |
| sponge bag | toilet bag |
| sports jacket | sport coat |
| spot of | small amount of |
| spring onion | green onion/scallion |
| squash (orange) | fruit concentrate mixed with water |
| stabilisers (on a child's bike) | training wheels |
| Stanley knife (brand name) | utility knife |
| state school | public school |
| STD (subscriber trunk dialling) | long distance (see *STD* US) |
| stick beans | pole beans |
| sticker + | decal [**dee**·cal] or [de·**cal**] |
| still (of a beverage) | noncarbonated |
| stirrer *(colloq.)* | troublemaker |
| stockings + | hose |
| stockist | commercial retailer or wholesaler that stocks merchandise |
| stone (in fruit) | pit |
| stone (unit of weight) | fourteen pounds |
| stopover + | layover |
| straight away | immediately + |
| stream | course of study to which students are tracked |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| Strimmer (brand of grass trimmer) | Weed Whacker (brand name) |
| stroke (the / symbol) | slash + |
| stroppy | easily offended or annoyed, ill-tempered or belligerent |
| stuffing + | dressing |
| subsidence (in the ground) | depression/settling |
| subway | underpass |
| sultanas | white or golden raisins |
| summer time | daylight-saving time |
| sundowner | drink taken at sundown |
| superannuation | pension plan |
| supply teacher | substitute teacher |
| surgery | room where a doctor sees his patients |
| surname + | last name + |
| survey *(verb)* | inspect and determine the structural condition of (a building) |
| suspenders | garters |
| suss out *(colloq.)* | scope out/figure out |
| swallow dive | swan dive |
| swan | travel around from place to place |
| swede | rutabaga [**roo**·ta·bā·gə] |
| sweet | dessert + |
| sweets | candy |
| swipe *(slang)* | steal |
| swish *(colloq.)* | fancy/elaborate |
| Swiss roll | jelly roll |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| swizz | scam/disappointment |
| swot up (on) | bone up on/study up on |
| ta *(slang)* | thanks |
| ta-ta *(slang)* | goodbye |
| table *(verb)* | bring forward for discussion at a meeting (see *table* US) |
| take-away (food) | takeout |
| tap | faucet |
| tarmac (on a road) | blacktop |
| tart *(vulgar slang)* | female prostitute/hooker *(vulgar slang)* |
| teatime | late afternoon |
| tea towel | dishtowel/kitchen towel |
| teat (on a baby's bottle) | nipple |
| telegraph pole | telephone pole |
| tell-tale *(noun, adj.)* | tattletale |
| telly *(slang)* | TV + |
| terraced house | row house |
| terraces (at a sporting event) | stands + |
| third-party insurance | liability insurance |
| tick off | reprimand (see *tick off* US) |
| tick over | idle/operate at a minimal level |
| tick *(noun)* | check mark |
| tick *(verb)* | check |
| tiffin | meal at midday, a luncheon |
| tights | pantyhose |
| till + | cash register + |
| timber | lumber |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| tin | can |
| tin-opener | can opener + |
| tip | dump + |
| Tippex (brand name) | Wite-Out (brand name) |
| tit (bird) | chickadee |
| titbit | tidbit |
| toady *(colloq.)* | brownnoser *(vulgar)* |
| toboggan* | sled |
| toerag | jerk |
| toffee apple | candy apple |
| toffee-nosed *(slang)* | stuck-up |
| togs *(colloq.)* | clothes |
| toilet | rest room/bathroom/men's room/ women's room |
| tombola | ticket lottery held at a fair |
| top up (for a drink) | top off/freshen |
| torch | flashlight |
| tortoiseshell cat | calico cat (similar) |
| tot up | add up + |
| tout *(noun)* | scalper |
| towards + | toward |
| tower block | high-rise + |
| trading estate | industrial park |
| traffic fine | ticket |
| traffic warden | parking enforcement officer |
| trainers | sneakers |
| tram | streetcar |
| tramp + | bum/hobo |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| transfer + | decal [**dee**·cal] |
| trapezium | trapezoid |
| trapezoid | trapezium |
| travelling party | progressive dinner |
| treacle | molasses |
| tread in (dirt) | track in |
| tread on + | step on + |
| trilby (hat) | fedora |
| tripper | someone taking a short pleasure trip |
| trolley | cart |
| trousers + | pants + |
| trug | a shallow gardening basket |
| truncheon | billy club/nightstick |
| trunk + (large suitcase) | steamer trunk |
| tube (train) | subway |
| tuck in (to food) | dig in + |
| tumble-drier | dryer |
| turf + | sod + |
| turn-ups (on trousers) | cuffs |
| turnip-tops | turnip greens |
| turtle-neck | crew neck |
| twee | excessively dainty |
| twice + | two times |
| twig *(colloq.)* | catch on/realize |
| twister *(colloq.)* | swindler (see *twister* US) |
| tyre lever + | tire wrench/tire iron |
| undercarriage (on a plane) | landing gear |
| undercut (a cut of meat) | beef tenderloin, fillet |

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| underground (train) | subway |
| unit trust (financial) | mutual fund |
| upfield (in sports) | downfield |
| upmarket | upscale |
| valance (on a bed) | dust ruffle/bed skirt (see *valance* US) |
| valet (a car) *(verb)* | detail |
| valuer | appraiser* |
| valves (electronic) | tubes |
| verge (on a road) | shoulder +/side median |
| vest | undershirt |
| veterinary surgeon* | veterinarian |
| vicar | minister + |
| video | VCR/videotape |
| visiting card | calling card |
| voluntary work | volunteer work |
| VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) | Peace Corps |
| waistcoat | vest |
| walking-stick + | cane |
| warder | prison officer/guard |
| wash up | wash the dishes (see *wash up* US) |
| water biscuit | soda cracker |
| water pistol + | squirt gun |
| way out (on a sign) | exit |
| WC | restroom |
| weatherboard | clapboard |
| wedding ring + | wedding band |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| UK | US |
|---|---|
| weir (in a river) | low dam |
| Wellingtons | rubber boots + |
| wet *(colloq.)* | sappy |
| whacked *(slang)* | whipped/beat |
| whacking *(slang)* | very large |
| whilst | while + |
| whinge *(verb, slang)* | bitch |
| whip-round | collection (usually in an office) |
| white goods | household appliances |
| white horses (on waves) | whitecaps |
| white spirit | liquid solvent |
| wind (flatulence) | gas |
| wind [wĭnd] *(verb)* | burp (a baby) |
| windcheater | windbreaker |
| Windowlene (brand name) | Windex (brand name) |
| windscreen | windshield |
| winkle out *(verb)* | pry out |
| witness box | witness stand |
| wodge | a large amount of something |
| wonky *(colloq.)* | unstable |
| woolly | sweater + |
| yard* | paved area around a house (see *yard* US) |
| yeti | Bigfoot (similar) |
| yob/yobbo | hood/lout + |
| zebra crossing [zĕ·bra] | crosswalk/pedestrian crossing + |
| zip *(noun)* | zipper |

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# 16

# *US–UK Lexicon*

A plus sign [+] after a term indicates that the term is known in both the United Kingdom and the United States. If this sign is on both the US and UK sides, the difference is purely in customary word usage. A plus sign is not used when the entry on the UK side of the column is merely a definition or an explanation of the term rather an American equivalent, since the explanation will be understood on both sides of the Atlantic.

Brackets indicate the pronunciation of a word. For a complete guide to pronunciation symbols, see page vi. An asterisk [*] indicates that further information about a term can be found in Explanations, pages 220–227. A slash [/] separates two different British equivalents of the same American term. The label *(colloq.)* indicates that the word is colloquial. Many Americans may not be familiar with all the slang or colloquial words listed.

An entry of the form "crockery (see *crockery* UK)" indicates that the word *crockery* is used in one sense in the US but in another in the UK. The reader should consult the UK–US lexicon for the British meaning.

All words are nouns unless otherwise indicated. Where confusion may arise the part of speech has been given.

In compiling this lexicon I have come across several brand names that are as common as, or more common than, the generic names. Because the brand names may not be understood

in the other country, I found it essential to include these words. No endorsement is intended—or should be interpreted—by the use of these words.

## *US–UK Lexicon*

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| academician | an academic (see *academician* UK) |
| accommodations | accommodation |
| ace *(verb, colloq.)* | defeat an opponent |
| ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) | Liberty (a similar organization) |
| adjuster (insurance) | assessor |
| adobe [ə·**doh**·bee] | brick made from mud and straw |
| afghan | crocheted or knitted blanket or shawl |
| airplane | aeroplane |
| ALF (Assisted Living Facility) | sheltered accommodation |
| alfalfa + | lucerne |
| alternate [**alt**·er·net] *(adj.)* | substitute + |
| Amtrak (stands for *American Travel by Track*) | American passenger-train system |
| antebellum | pre-Civil War (1861) |
| antenna + | aerial + |
| antsy *(slang)* | restless/agitated |
| anyplace *(colloq.)* | anywhere |
| anyways *(colloq.)* | anyway |
| apartment (for rent) | flat (to let) |
| apartment building | block of flats |
| apartment hotel | service flats |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| applejack | liquor distilled from fermented cider |
| appraisal* | valuation |
| armoire | large, ornate wardrobe |
| ascot | cravat |
| ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)/SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) | RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) |
| ATM (automatic teller machine) | cash machine/cash dispenser |
| attaboy *(noun, slang)* | commendation |
| attitude *(slang)* | uncooperative disposition |
| attorney | lawyer +/solicitor/barrister |
| autopsy + | post-mortem + |
| auxiliary (alternative meaning) | an organization of volunteers |
| awesome *(hip slang)* | mad/brilliant |
| baby carriage | pram/perambulator |
| back talk | backchat |
| badmouth | criticize someone |
| bag lady | female tramp |
| bailiff | person who keeps order in a courtroom (see *bailiff* UK) |
| baloney *(slang)* | codswallop |
| banana peel | banana skin |
| bangs (on hair) | fringe |
| bankroll *(verb)* | give financial support |
| banner (year) | outstanding |
| barber + | men's hairdresser + |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| barf *(slang)* | vomit |
| barrel along *(colloq.)* | belt along |
| barrette | hair slide |
| barrio *(colloq.)* | Spanish-speaking district of a town |
| baseboard | skirting board |
| bassinet | crib |
| bathtub | bath |
| bathrobe | dressing gown |
| bathroom (in a public building) | toilet/lavatory |
| bayou (regional South) | marshy inlet |
| BB gun/air gun | air rifle + |
| beat *(slang)* | whacked |
| bedroom suburb | dormitory suburb |
| bee (as in *spelling bee*) | a meeting held to work or compete with others |
| beeper | bleeper |
| beets | beetroot |
| bellhop | bell-boy + |
| belt bag | bumbag |
| benefits (job) | health insurance/pension |
| Big Dipper (constellation) | Plough |
| bikini* | men's or women's brief swimsuit |
| billboard + | hoarding |
| billfold | notecase/wallet |
| bills (currency) | notes |
| billy club/nightstick | truncheon |
| birder | bird-watcher + |
| biscuit (the kind served with gravy) | (a quickbread similar to a) scone |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| bitch *(verb, slang)* | whinge |
| blacktop (on a road) | tarmac |
| blah | drab |
| bleachers | terraces/stands + |
| blind (for animal watchers) | hide |
| block | the distance between streets in a city |
| block party | neighborhood party with the street closed to traffic |
| blooper (mistake) | bloomer |
| blotter | report of police arrests |
| blowout (alternative meaning)* | a big party |
| boarder + | lodger |
| boardwalk | wooden walkway |
| bobby pin | flat hairpin |
| bodacious *(colloq.)* | outstanding |
| bombed *(colloq.)* | failed + |
| bone up on | swot up (on) |
| bone wrench | box spanner |
| boo-boo (*colloq.*, for *mistake*) | boob |
| booger [**bû**·ger] *(colloq.)* | bogey *(slang)* |
| boondocks/boonies *(slang)* | the back of beyond |
| boot camp | military-style basic training camp |
| bootblack | shoeblack |
| box cutter | a thin type of Stanley knife |
| braid (hair) | plait |
| branch water | plain water (not carbonated) |
| break *(colloq.)* | reduction/discount |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| break down (alternative meaning) | give in/relent |
| breeze (an easy task) | cinch + |
| breezeway | covered outdoor passageway |
| brochure (for institutions) | prospectus |
| broil* | grill + |
| brown-bagger | someone who takes a homemade lunch to work |
| brownstone | a terraced house, fronted with sandstone |
| bubbler (regional North) | drinking fountain + |
| buck *(colloq.)* | dollar |
| bucket shop *(colloq.)* | disreputable high-pressure brokerage firm (see *bucket-shop* UK) |
| buckeyes (seeds of trees like the horse-chestnut) | conkers |
| buffalo *(colloq.)* | confuse someone for gain |
| buffer (electric) | polisher |
| bug + | insect + |
| building site | vacant lot for building on (see *building site* UK) |
| bulletin board | notice-board |
| bullhorn | loud-hailer |
| bum | tramp |
| bum (*adj., colloq.* as in *bum leg, bum steer)* | bad |
| bumper (on a boat) | fender + |
| bunch of | heap of |
| bungalow* | small, plain one-storey house |
| buns *(slang)* | bum |
| burbs *(slang)* | suburbs |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| bureau | chest of drawers |
| burglarize | burgle |
| burlap | hessian |
| burro | donkey used as a pack animal |
| busboy/busser | waiter's assistant/commis waiter |
| bushed | knackered |
| business suit + | lounge suit |
| busted *(slang)* | broken + |
| butt *(slang)* | bum *(slang)* |
| button* (with a message) | badge |
| buzz saw | circular saw |
| cabana | beach hut |
| cabinet | cupboard + |
| cabinetmaker | joiner |
| café | coffee-shop/nightclub |
| Cajun | pertaining to the people of southern Louisiana who came from Acadia |
| calendar (for appointments) | diary |
| calico cat | tortoiseshell cat (similar) |
| call (phone) + | ring up |
| calling card | visiting card |
| calliope [ka·**lie**·ow·pee] | steam organ |
| can (metal container) | tin |
| can (toilet) | loo |
| can *(verb, slang)* | sack |
| can opener + | tin-opener |
| can* (in a Mason jar) *(verb)* | bottle (in a Kilner jar) |
| candy | sweets |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| candy apple | toffee apple |
| candy striper | young volunteer in a hospital |
| cane | walking-stick |
| card (someone) *(verb)* | check someone's age by means of an ID card |
| caregiver | carer |
| carnival | funfair |
| cart (that is pushed) | trolley |
| cash wrap | counter (in a shop) |
| casket | coffin + (see *casket* UK) |
| cathouse *(vulgar slang)* | brothel |
| catnip | catmint |
| cattail | bulrush + |
| cattle guard | cattle-grid |
| catty-corner/kitty-corner | diagonally across |
| CD (certificate of deposit) | savings certificate |
| cell phone | mobile phone |
| CEO (chief executive officer) | managing director |
| chalkboard | blackboard + |
| change purse | purse |
| chaparral (regional Southwest) | tangled brushwood |
| Chap Stick (brand name) | lipsalve |
| charley horse | cramp (in a limb) |
| licensed surveyor | chartered surveyor |
| check (in a restaurant) | bill |
| check mark *(noun)* | tick |
| check *(verb)* | tick |
| checker | cashier in a supermarket |
| checkers | draughts |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| checkroom | cloakroom |
| cherry picker *(colloq.)* | hydraulic boom on a truck that raises a person in the air |
| chew out *(colloq.)* | scold/reprimand |
| chickadee | tit (bird) |
| chigger | harvest mite |
| chinook [shi·**nûk**] | a warm dry wind on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains/a warm moist wind blowing in from the sea in the Northwest of the US |
| chipper | chirpy |
| chopper *(colloq.)* + | helicopter |
| Chutes and Ladders (game) | snakes and ladders |
| CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) | espionage bureau |
| cilantro (refers to leaves only; the seeds are called *coriander*) | coriander |
| cinder block | breeze-block |
| circular file *(slang)* | waste-paper basket |
| clapboard | weatherboard |
| class-action suit (legal term) | group litigation order |
| clear across *(colloq.)* | all the way across |
| clinker | failure |
| Clorox (brand name) | bleach + |
| closet | cupboard + |
| clothespin | clothes-peg |
| clunker *(colloq.)* | old bomb |
| co-ed *(colloq.)* | female undergraduate at an educational institution for both men and women |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| coffee *(colloq.)* | social gathering where coffee is served |
| coffee klatsch | coffee group + |
| cohort | colleague/supporter (see *cohort* UK) |
| college (as in phrase *in college*) | university or other college |
| Colonial | pertaining to the period when Britain ruled the original 13 colonies |
| comedic (evoking laughter) | comical + |
| comforter | eiderdown |
| commissary (military) | general store |
| commode *(colloq.)* | toilet |
| complected | complexioned |
| concertmaster | leading first violin player |
| concession stand | snack bar/kiosk + |
| condominium*/condo | flat |
| confidence course (military) | assault course |
| continuing education | further education |
| convenience store + | corner shop |
| cookout | barbecue party |
| cool* *(slang)* | super/brilliant |
| cooler | insulated box for keeping food cool |
| cordial (drink) | liqueur (see *cordial* UK) |
| corn (the grain) | maize |
| corn dog | batter-covered hot dog on a stick |
| corned beef | salt beef |
| cornstarch | cornflour |
| corrections officer | prison warder |
| costume party | fancy-dress party |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| costumer | costumier |
| cot | camp-bed |
| cotton | cotton wool |
| cotton candy | candyfloss |
| coulee (regional West) | deep ravine |
| councilman | councillor |
| counterclockwise | anticlockwise |
| cover letter | covering letter |
| coveralls | boiler suit |
| coyote [kie·**oh**·tee] | wild wolflike animal |
| CPA (certified public accountant) | chartered accountant |
| crack *(verb, colloq.)** | open slightly (window or door) |
| cranky | irritable (see *cranky* UK) |
| crawfish | crayfish + |
| crazy bone (regional) | funny-bone + |
| crazy quilt* | patchwork quilt |
| cream *(slang)* | smash up/beat up |
| Cream of Wheat (brand name) | semolina |
| creamer | cream jug |
| creek | stream (see *creek* UK) |
| crew neck | turtle-neck |
| crib | cot (see *cot* US) |
| critter | a wild animal |
| crockery (see *crockery* UK) | earthenware pots |
| crosswalk | pedestrian crossing + |
| crotch (body part) + | crutch |
| crud *(slang)* | grime + |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| cruet | glass bottle for vinegar (see *cruet* UK) |
| cuffs (on pants) | turn-ups |
| cuss *(slang)* | swear/curse + |
| cut up *(noun, colloq.)* | joker/buffoon |
| cut up *(verb, colloq.)* | muck about (see *cut up* UK) |
| DA | district attorney |
| dandy | super/exceptional |
| davenport | large sofa |
| daylight-saving time | summer time |
| DC | Washington, DC |
| deadbeat | someone who is always in debt |
| dead-bolt | mortise lock |
| deadhead *(verb)* | to travel without a payload |
| debark | disembark + |
| decal [**dee**·cal] or [dee·**cal**] | transfer/sticker + |
| deck (of a house or building) | paved area or wooden platform adjacent to a house or building |
| deck (of cards) | pack |
| deductible (insurance) | excess |
| den mother | akela [ah·**keh**·lə]/Cub Scout leader |
| denatured alcohol | methylated spirits/meths |
| deputy/deputy sheriff | county police officer |
| derby (rhymes with *herby* in the US) | bowler hat |
| desk clerk | receptionist |
| dessert + | pudding/sweet |
| detail (a car) *(verb)* | valet |
| detour | diversion |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| diaper [**die**-per] | nappy |
| diatomaceous earth + | kieselguhr |
| dicker | haggle/bargain |
| diddle around *(colloq.)* | fiddle around/waste time |
| digs *(colloq.)* | accommodation (see *digs* UK) |
| dirt (as in a yard) | soil + |
| dis *(verb, hip slang)* | disrespect/snub |
| disassemble* | dismantle + |
| discombobulated *(slang)* | disconcerted |
| dishtowel | tea towel |
| dishpan | washing-up bowl |
| dishrag | dishcloth + |
| disoriented | disorientated |
| district attorney/DA | public prosecutor |
| ditsy *(colloq.)*/ditzy | muddleheaded |
| docent | guide in a museum/lecturer |
| dog *(colloq.)* | nasty person |
| dog tag | soldier's identification tag |
| doghouse | kennel + |
| doodad | doodah |
| doohickey | small mechanical object |
| (a) doozie *(slang)* | something outstanding or overwhelming |
| dork *(slang)* | idiot |
| dormitory | building used for sleeping (see *dormitory* UK) |
| double date | date on which two couples go out for enjoyment together |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| double header | two games played back to back |
| double saucepan | double boiler |
| down spout | drainpipe + |
| (a) downer | something depressing |
| downfield (in sports) | upfield |
| downtown | city centre |
| draft (as in *draft dodger*) | conscription |
| drag *(verb, colloq.)* | race cars, as in a drag race |
| drapes/draperies* | curtains |
| dresser | chest of drawers |
| dressing (food) | stuffing + |
| drool + | slobber + |
| drugstore | chemist/pharmacy + |
| drunk driving | drink driving |
| dry goods | fabrics and clothing (see *dry goods* UK) |
| dude ranch | cattle ranch for holiday-makers |
| dumb *(slang)* | daft |
| dummy | twit |
| Dumpster (brand name) | skip |
| duplex* | semi-detached house |
| dust ruffle | valance (see *valance* US) |
| eavestrough (regional North) | gutter + |
| Ebonics (from the words *ebony* and *phonics*) | any of the varieties of English spoken by many African-American communities in the US |
| editorial | leading article |
| efficiency apartment | bedsitter/bedsit |
| eggplant | aubergine [**oh**·ber·zheen] |
| elevator | lift |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| emergency (room in hospital) | A and E/Accident and Emergency |
| endive | chicory |
| english (on a pool ball) (regional) | sidespin |
| envision + | envisage |
| eraser | rubber |
| Erector set (brand name) | Meccano set (brand name) |
| evaluation | appraisal* |
| exclamation point (punctuation) | exclamation mark |
| expiration date | expiry date |
| eye candy *(slang)* | something or someone visually appealing |
| eyeglasses | spectacles/glasses + |
| facecloth | flannel |
| facility | building built for a specific purpose |
| factor in *(verb)* | take into account |
| fall | autumn + |
| family room | lounge |
| fanny *(slang)* | bum *(slang)* |
| fanny pack *(colloq.)* | bumbag |
| farsighted | long-sighted |
| faucet | tap |
| fava bean [**fah**·və] | broad bean |
| favor (*verb,* regional South) | to look like + |
| FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) | CID (Criminal Investigation Department) |
| fedora (hat) | trilby |
| felony | arrestable offense (similar though not exactly the same) |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| fever blister | cold sore + |
| fifth | a bottle of liquor, formerly containing a fifth of a gallon (757 ml) but now often containing 750 ml |
| figure *(verb)* | think/reckon |
| fill out (a form) + | fill in |
| fine print + | small print + |
| fire department | fire brigade |
| firehouse | fire station + |
| fire truck | fire engine + |
| fire *(verb)* | sack |
| firecracker | banger |
| first floor | ground floor |
| fish sticks | fish fingers |
| fixing to (regional South) | intending to/about to |
| fixings *(slang)* | trimmings |
| flashlight | torch |
| flat (tire) | puncture |
| flatware | cutlery |
| flip-flop *(colloq.)* | backward somersault |
| floor lamp | standard lamp |
| flophouse | doss-house |
| flunk *(slang)* | fail |
| flutist | flautist + |
| flyover (aircraft) | fly-past |
| food stamps | coupons that can be exchanged for groceries (given to the needy) |
| football field | football pitch |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| foul-up *(noun)* | cock-up |
| fourth | quarter + |
| frappe (regional New England) | milk shake |
| freeloader *(colloq.)* | sponger |
| freight elevator | goods lift |
| French doors | French windows + |
| French fries | chips |
| French twist (hairstyle) | French pleat |
| fries | chips |
| frogs' eggs | frog-spawn |
| frosting* | icing + |
| funky (of an odor) | stinky |
| furnace (central heating) | boiler |
| gander + *(slang)* | dekko |
| garage sale* | jumble sale/rummage sale |
| garbage | rubbish/kitchen waste |
| garbage can | dustbin |
| garbage day | dustbin day |
| garbage truck | dustcart |
| garbanzo bean | chickpea + |
| garters | suspenders |
| gas (flatulence) | wind |
| gasoline/gas | petrol |
| geek *(hip slang)* | dull, studious person |
| German shepherd | Alsatian |
| GI (thought to come from *government issue*) | an enlisted person in the US military forces, especially a soldier in the US army |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| gin (as in *cotton gin*) | a machine for separating cotton from its seeds (see *gin* UK) |
| ginger snap | ginger nut |
| Girl Scout | Girl Guide |
| girls' night out | hen party |
| given name | Christian name |
| glue factory *(colloq.)* | knacker's yard |
| goddamn *(slang)* | bloody/blinking |
| gofer/gopher | general dogsbody |
| golden raisins | sultanas |
| golfing knickers | plus-fours + |
| goof off *(colloq.)* | slack off |
| goose bumps + | goose-pimples/goose-flesh |
| gouge/price gouging | overprice |
| grab bag | lucky dip |
| grade school | primary school |
| graham crackers | digestive biscuits (similar) |
| grammar school | primary school |
| grandfather clause | exemption because of preexisting circumstances |
| grandstand *(verb)* | act in a showy way to sway an audience |
| grease monkey *(slang)* | car mechanic |
| great room | combined living and dining area |
| green *(slang)* | money |
| green card | US permanent-resident card (see *green card* UK) |
| green onion | spring onion |
| greenback *(slang)* | dollar bill |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| greenskeeper | greenkeeper |
| gridiron (sporting term) | football field |
| grocery store | supermarket + |
| gross *(slang)* | disgusting |
| ground meat | minced meat |
| ground wire | earth wire |
| groundhog | woodchuck |
| grunt work *(colloq.)* | donkey-work |
| guardrail (on a road) | crash barrier |
| gubernatorial | pertaining to a state governor |
| guess (*verb,* as in *I guess so*) | suppose/imagine + |
| gulch | ravine with seasonal water flow |
| gurney | stretcher on wheels |
| half-and-half | single cream |
| half glasses | half-moon glasses |
| hard candy | boiled sweets |
| hardcover | hardback |
| hassock | pouffe (see *hassock* UK) |
| hayseed | hick |
| haze *(verb)* | bully/upset |
| headed for | heading for + |
| heater (gas/electric) | gas fire/electric fire |
| heel (on the end of a loaf) | crust |
| heinie *(slang)* | buttocks |
| heist *(slang)* | robbery |
| hickey | lovebite |
| high roller | big spender + |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| hike (at a slow pace) | ramble |
| hobo | tramp |
| hock | pawn + |
| hodgepodge | hotchpotch |
| hoedown | festive country dance |
| hogtied *(slang)* | restrained/thwarted |
| hokey | not credible/overly sentimental |
| holdover | relic + |
| holler | yell + |
| homebuilder | house builder |
| homely | plain/ugly (see *homely* UK) |
| homer *(colloq.)* | home run in baseball |
| homey *(slang)* | mate |
| hooch *(colloq.)* | cheap liquor |
| hood (*colloq.*, for *ruffian*) | hoodlum/tearaway |
| hood (on a car) | bonnet |
| hoof-and-mouth disease | foot-and-mouth disease |
| Hoosier | someone from Indiana |
| hooters *(vulgar slang)* | women's breasts (see *hooter* UK) |
| hope chest | bottomdrawer |
| horse blinders | horse blinkers |
| horse trailer | horsebox |
| horseback riding | horse riding |
| hot flash | hot flush |
| hot-dogger *(colloq.)* | stunt performer |
| housebroken | house-trained |
| hunker (down) | crouch + |
| hutch | dresser (see *dresser* US) |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| hyphenated last name | double-barrelled surname |
| ID | identification |
| industrial park | trading estate |
| installment plan | hire purchase |
| Internal Revenue Service (IRS) | Inland Revenue |
| jackhammer | pneumatic drill + |
| jackrabbit | any of several species of large hares |
| jag | unrestrained expression of emotion |
| jam *(verb)* | play improvised music (usually as part of a group) |
| jammies *(colloq.)* | jim-jams |
| janitor | caretaker |
| java *(slang)* | coffee |
| Jell-O | jelly |
| jelly | jam + |
| jelly roll (the pastry) | Swiss roll |
| jemmy *(verb)* | jimmy + |
| jerk + | twerp/idiot + |
| jerky | dried strips of meat |
| joe *(slang)* | coffee |
| Joe Blow | Joe Bloggs |
| john* *(slang)* | loo |
| John Hancock *(slang)* | signature + |
| John boat | small, square-ended boat |
| josh *(colloq.)* | tease |
| jug* | large vessel usually with a cap |
| jump rope *(noun)* | skipping rope |
| jump rope *(verb)* | skip |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| jumper | pinafore dress |
| jungle gym | climbing-frame |
| kerb store (regional) | corner shop |
| kerosene | paraffin |
| kibble | pelleted pet food |
| kibitz (*colloq.*, from Yiddish) | give unsolicited advice |
| kitty-corner/catty-corner | diagonally across |
| Klondike bar (brand name) | choc-ice |
| klutz (*colloq.*, from Yiddish) | clumsy person |
| knickers | knickerbockers |
| knock up *(offensive slang)* | make pregnant |
| kook *(colloq.)* | eccentric or crazy person |
| ladybug | ladybird |
| lanai (word of Hawaiian origin) | screened porch |
| landfill | amenity tip/dump + |
| landing gear | undercarriage |
| lap robe | rug* (light blanket) |
| last name + | surname |
| latex paint | emulsion paint |
| Laundromat | launderette |
| lavatory | basin/washroom |
| layover | stopover |
| La-Z-Boy (brand name) | recliner + |
| lazy Susan | dumb waiter* |
| lean-to | a shelter supported at one side by trees (see *lean-to* UK) |
| leash + | lead + |
| leery | wary + (see *leery* UK) |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| legal holiday | bank holiday |
| liability insurance | third-party insurance |
| license plate | number-plate |
| life preserver | lifebuoy |
| life vest | life-jacket + |
| light bill *(colloq.)* | electricity bill |
| lightning bug | firefly + |
| lightning rod | lightning conductor |
| lima bean [lī·ma] | butter-bean |
| Limey (This slang term comes from the lime juice that was given to British sailors to prevent scurvy.) | a British person |
| line up | queue up |
| lineup (of suspects) | identity parade |
| Little Dipper (constellation) | Little Bear |
| liverwurst | liver sausage |
| loft | an open elevated area above the main level of a building (see *loft* UK); such a space used as a private flat (apartment) |
| lonesome (implies melancholy) | lonely + |
| longshoreman | docker + |
| lumber | timber |
| luminary | candle set in a bag in sand, used at night to guide the way (regional) |
| lush *(noun)* | drunkard |
| Mace (brand name) | CS gas |
| mail drop | letter-box |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| main drag *(colloq.)* | main thoroughfare |
| maitre d' | head waiter |
| make out *(slang)** | snog/get off with someone |
| make over | do up |
| mall* | a large shopping center |
| man, dude (form of address) | mate |
| Marcite (brand name) | a compound used for surfacing swimming pools |
| marquee* (see *marquee* UK) | large, internally illuminated outdoor sign (such as seen outside cinemas) |
| mash (*verb,* Southern slang) | press |
| Masonite (brand name) | fibreboard |
| mat (around a picture) | mount |
| math | maths |
| maverick | unbranded calf/wild character |
| MC/master of ceremonies + | compère |
| mean | nasty (see *mean* UK) |
| measuring cup + | measuring jug |
| meat grinder | mincer |
| mechanical pencil | propelling pencil |
| medevac flight | mercy flight |
| median (on a road) | central reservation |
| Medicaid* | health-care program for indigents |
| Medicare* | federal health insurance program |
| merry-go-round (for children) | roundabout |
| midway | sideshow location at a fairground |
| milk can | milk churn |
| Milk-Bone (brand of dog biscuit) | Bonio |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| misdemeanor | nonarrestable offense (similar) |
| mobile home | caravan |
| molasses | treacle |
| mom | mum |
| mom-and-pop *(adj.)* | family-owned |
| momentarily | in a moment (see *momentarily* UK) |
| monkey wrench (now obsolete) | adjustable spanner |
| motel | motor hotel, accessed by an exterior door |
| mother-in-law apartment | granny flat |
| mouth guard | gum-shield |
| movie theater | cinema + |
| MP | military police/redcap (see *redcap* US) |
| mudroom | vestibule used for removing soiled shoes/porch |
| mums *(colloq.)* | chrysanthemums |
| Murphy bed | foldaway bed |
| music box | musical box |
| muss up | mess up + |
| mutt *(slang)* | mongrel + (see *mutt* UK) |
| mutual fund | unit trust |
| Naugahyde (brand name of fabric) | PVC (polyvinyl chloride) |
| nearsighted | short-sighted |
| neat *(colloq.)* | terrific |
| nerd | boring, studious person/square |
| nervy | cheeky/bold (see *nervy* UK) |
| New Year's | New Year's Eve |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| newscaster | newsreader |
| newsstand | bookstall |
| night crawler (regional) | large worm |
| night school | evening classes |
| night stick | truncheon |
| nightgown | nightdress |
| nightstand/night table | bedside table |
| nipple (on a baby's bottle) | teat |
| nix *(verb)* | veto + |
| no-see-ums (regional) | biting midges |
| notarize | certify |
| nutcracker (at Christmas) | Russian sentinel doll |
| o.b.o. (or best offer) | o.n.o. (or near offer) |
| oarlock | rowlock [**rol**·lok] |
| oatmeal (cooked) | porridge |
| obstacle course (military) | assault course |
| one-way ticket | single ticket |
| open house (realtor's term) | house for sale that may be viewed |
| operator (alternative meaning) | devious/manipulative person |
| order of (in a restaurant) | portion of |
| ornery *(colloq.)* | difficult (person) |
| ottoman | footstool/pouffe |
| outhouse | outside toilet (see *outhouse* UK) |
| overseas + | abroad + |
| oxfords (shoes) | brogues |
| pacifier (for a baby) | dummy |
| pack rat | hoarder |
| package store | off-licence |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| packinghouse | abattoir |
| paddle | spank + |
| paddle (table tennis) | bat |
| paddy wagon | Black Maria + |
| panhandler | beggar |
| panties | knickers |
| pantomime | show performed by a mime artist (see *pantomime* UK) |
| pants + | trousers + |
| pantyhose | tights |
| paper route | paper round |
| paraffin | paraffin wax + |
| paralegal | articled clerk (similar) |
| pardner *(slang)* | mate |
| pardon me | excuse me/pardon |
| parka + | anorak/windcheater |
| parking garage | multi-storey car park |
| parking lot | car park |
| part (in hair) | parting |
| pass-through | hatch |
| patsy | sucker + |
| pavement | road surface |
| Peace Corps | VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) |
| peaked [**pee**·kid] | peaky |
| peg solitaire | solitaire |
| pen pal | pen-friend |
| penitentiary | prison + |
| period (punctuation) | full stop |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| permit (for construction) | planning permission |
| pesky (slang) | annoying |
| phonograph | gramophone (see *phonograph* UK) |
| physical therapist | physiotherapist + |
| piazza (regional) | veranda/porch |
| picture ID | proof of identity and age with photograph |
| pigpen | pigsty + |
| pin (on lapel) | badge |
| pinkie | little finger |
| pinwheel (firework) | Catherine wheel |
| pissed *(vulgar)* | furious (see *pissed* UK) |
| pistol *(colloq.)* | lively person |
| pitcher | jug (see *jug* US) |
| Playbill (trademark) | theatre programme + |
| Play-Doh (brand name) | Plasticine (brand name) |
| player piano | Pianola (brand name) |
| plea bargain | an admission of guilt to a crime in exchange for a reduced sentence |
| Plexiglas (brand name) | Perspex (brand name) |
| plum pudding + | Christmas pudding |
| pocketbook* | financial resources/handbag |
| pole beans | stick beans |
| polliwog (regional) | tadpole + |
| pooch *(colloq.)* | lap-dog |
| pop/pa | dad + |
| Popsicle (brand name) | ice lolly |
| potholder | oven glove |
| potato chips | crisps |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| pound/pound sign (the # symbol) | hash |
| pound cake | Madeira cake |
| preppy *(colloq.)* | a well-dressed preparatory school student (seen as typifying the upper and upper-middle classes) |
| principal | headmaster/headmistress + |
| prioritize *(colloq.)* | establish priorities |
| proctor | invigilator (see *proctor* UK) |
| produce [**prō**·doos] | greengroceries (fruit/vegetables) |
| professor | university lecturer or professor |
| (the) projects *(slang)* | council estate |
| property tax | council tax/rates |
| pry open | prise open |
| public housing project | council estate |
| public school | state school |
| public transportation | public transport |
| pudgy | podgy |
| pulp (in orange juice) | pith |
| pumped *(slang)* | excited |
| pumps (dress shoes for ladies) | court shoes |
| punkies (regional) | biting midges |
| purse | handbag |
| put out *(vulgar slang)* | make oneself sexually available to someone else; be sexually active |
| PX (Post Exchange) | NAAFI (Navy, Army, and Airforce Institutes) |
| Q-Tip (brand name) | cotton swab + |
| quiet down | quieten down |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| quitting time | knocking-off time |
| Quonset hut (trademark) | Nissen hut (trademark) |
| quotation marks + | inverted commas |
| racetrack | racecourse + |
| rad *(hip slang)* | mad/brill |
| railroad | railway |
| railroad flat | a long, narrow flat |
| railroad *(verb, colloq.)* | to rush something in order to prevent objections or careful consideration |
| rain check | postponement ticket or invitation |
| raincoat + | mac/mackintosh |
| raise (in pay) | rise |
| raise (a child) | bring up + |
| ramada (regional Southwest) | shelter with wooden slats or thatched palms for a roof |
| rambunctious | rumbustious/rowdy/exuberant |
| range | cooker/stove |
| rap group | discussion group |
| rappel | abseil |
| rattle on *(slang)* | rabbit on/ramble on |
| ratty *(slang)* | tatty (see *ratty* UK) |
| razz *(slang)* | make fun of/rag |
| real-estate | property |
| realtor*/real-estate agent | estate agent |
| redcap | railway porter (see *redcap* UK) |
| redd up (*colloq.*, regional Midwest) | tidy up |
| redneck* *(colloq.)* | oik/yobbo |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| reform school + | Borstal |
| register (heating or cooling) | grille controlling air flow into a room |
| regular | normal/usual + |
| restroom | toilet/lavatory |
| resumé | c.v./curriculum vitae |
| roast + (cut of meat) | joint |
| Rolodex (brand name) | index card holder |
| romaine lettuce | cos lettuce |
| rookie *(colloq.)* | novice |
| roomer | lodger |
| ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) | CCF (Combined Cadet Force) |
| round-trip ticket | return ticket |
| route (delivery) | round |
| routing number | sort code |
| row house | terraced house |
| rubber *(colloq.)* | condom |
| rubber cement | cow gum |
| rubberneck *(verb, slang)* | gawk/turn and gaze (as at a traffic accident) |
| rubbing alcohol | isopropyl alcohol |
| ruckus | rumpus + |
| rug *(slang)* | hairpiece/toupee |
| rugrats *(derogatory slang)* | children |
| rumble *(colloq.)* | gang fight |
| run (in stockings) | ladder |
| runway (for modeling clothes) | catwalk |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| rutabaga [**roo**·ta·bā·gə] | swede |
| S&H (shipping and handling) | P&P (postage and packing) |
| SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) | RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) |
| sailplane | glider + |
| salesperson | shop assistant |
| salesroom | saleroom |
| sandbox | sandpit |
| sanitary napkin | sanitary towel |
| Santa Claus + | Father Christmas |
| sappy | soppy |
| Saran Wrap (brand name) | cling film (plastic food wrap) |
| sassy *(colloq.)* | cheeky |
| scallion | spring onion |
| scalper | tout |
| scarf down | scoff down + |
| schedule (bus or train) | timetable + |
| schlep *(regional slang)* | slog/trudge/lug |
| schnoz *(slang)* | nose (especially a large one) |
| school *(colloq.)* | school, college, or university |
| schoolyard | school playground |
| scofflaw | a person who disregards the law |
| Scotch tape (brand name) | Sellotape (brand name) |
| scratch paper | scribbling block |
| secretary desk | bureau |
| seeds/pits (in fruit) | pips/stones |
| self-rising flour | self-raising flour |
| semester | half of an academic year |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| server (in a restaurant) | waiter + |
| shade/window shade | blind |
| shades *(hip slang)* | sunglasses |
| shanty | shed/cabin |
| sharecropper | tenant farmer who gives a portion of each crop to the landowner in lieu of rent |
| sheers/sheer curtains | net curtains |
| Sheetrock (brand name) | plasterboard + |
| sherbet | sorbet [**sor**·bay] + |
| sheriff | chief of police outside city limits (see *sheriff* UK) |
| shill | someone who poses as a gambler or satisfied customer in order to encourage the participation or business of others |
| shin guard | shin-pad |
| shingle* | asphalt or wooden tile/small sign (see *shingle* UK) |
| shinny up | shin up + |
| shoeshine | the act of polishing shoes |
| Shoot! | Darn it! |
| shop *(colloq.)* | workshop/garage |
| short-order cook | cook in a basic restaurant |
| shower (bridal, baby) | women's gift-giving party prior to a big event |
| shrimp + | prawns + |
| shtick | comedian's or other entertainer's routine |
| shuck (oysters) | prise open |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| shut-in | housebound person |
| shyster | unethical or unprofessional person (often a lawyer) |
| side (order) | side dish |
| sidewalk | pavement (see *pavement* US) |
| siding (on a building) | cladding |
| silent partner | sleeping partner |
| silverware | cutlery |
| skeeter (*slang,* regional South) | mozzie *(slang)* |
| ski mask | Balaclava |
| skillet | small frying pan |
| Skilsaw (brand name) | circular saw + |
| skinny-dipping | swimming nude |
| skivvies (*plural*) | underwear |
| skosh *(slang)* [skōsh] | a small amount |
| skycap | airport porter |
| slam-dunk *(noun)* | easy victory |
| slam-dunk *(verb, slang)* | force through |
| slash (/) + | stroke/oblique |
| slate | set down for nomination/schedule an event (see *slate* UK) |
| sled | toboggan |
| slew | a lot of |
| slicker | raincoat/mac |
| slim down | slim |
| slingshot | catapult + |
| slot machine | fruit machine (see *slot machine* UK) |
| smarts *(colloq.)* | intelligence |
| smoking gun | proof positive |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| smudge pot | outdoor paraffin heater, used to protect plants from freezing weather |
| snake oil *(colloq.)* | quack remedy |
| snaps (fasteners) | press-studs |
| snap *(noun, colloq.)* | cinch + |
| sneakers | trainers |
| snippy | curt +/ratty (see *ratty* US) |
| snow peas + | mange-tout [**mahnzh**·too] |
| snowbird (informal) | a winter vacationer in the south |
| soccer ball | football |
| Social *(colloq.)* | Social Security Number |
| Social Security | old age pension/retirement pension (see *social security* UK) |
| sod + | turf + |
| soda (soft drink) | fizzy drink/pop +/soft drink + |
| soda cracker | water biscuit |
| soda fountain | snack bar in a general store |
| solicitor | canvasser |
| solitaire (card game) | patience (see *solitaire* UK) |
| some (*colloq.*, used at the end of a sentence) | a little |
| someplace | somewhere + |
| sow bug | woodlouse |
| soybeans | soya beans |
| Spackle (brand name) | Polyfilla (brand name) |
| spatula/pancake turner | fish slice/slice |
| specialty | speciality |
| Speedo (brand name) | brief swimming trunks for men |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| spelunker (cave explorer) | potholer |
| spiffy | natty |
| spigot | outdoor tap/stopcock |
| spit up (of a baby) | vomit |
| split *(verb, slang)* | get moving/scarper |
| spook *(verb, colloq.)* | scare |
| spool of thread | reel of cotton |
| sport coat | sports jacket |
| square knot | reef-knot |
| squirrelly *(slang)* | eccentric/capricious |
| squirt gun | water pistol + |
| stall (in a restroom) | cubicle |
| stand-off | deadlock + |
| Stateside | in the US |
| STD (sexually transmitted disease) | VD/venereal disease + (see *STD* UK) |
| steamer trunk | trunk + |
| stick candy | rock/seaside rock |
| stiff *(verb, slang)* | fail to tip someone |
| stir-crazy *(slang)* | restless from confinement |
| stogy/stogie | a long, thin, inexpensive cigar |
| stoked *(slang)* | worked up |
| stool (alternative meaning) | toilet |
| stoop | porch + |
| store | shop or department store |
| storefront | retail outlet/shop window |
| storm window | secondary glazing (similar) |
| stove + | cooker |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| straight pin | pin |
| straightaway (on a course) | straight |
| streetcar | tram |
| string beans | runner beans |
| stroke *(colloq.)* | compliment |
| stroller | pushchair/pram/perambulator |
| studly *(hip slang)* | handsome/macho |
| Styrofoam (brand name) | polystyrene/expanded polystyrene |
| subdivision | housing estate |
| substitute teacher | supply teacher |
| subway (train) | underground |
| sucker (candy on a stick) | lollipop + |
| surgery | operation + (see *surgery* UK) |
| suspenders | braces |
| swale | marshy depression |
| swan dive | swallow dive |
| swap meet (mostly used in the West) | sale of old cars and machinery at an outdoor venue/flea market |
| sweater set | twin set + |
| swimsuit + | bathing costume |
| swing shift | evening shift + |
| switchblade | flick-knife |
| table *(verb)* | put a bill or motion aside for discussion at a later time (see *table* UK) |
| tacky *(colloq.)* | tatty/tasteless + |
| taffy | small pieces of seaside rock |
| tag | label + |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| tag (regional) | number plate/registration sticker |
| tag office (regional) | vehicle licence office + |
| tag sale | rummage sale |
| tailgate sale | boot sale |
| takeout (food) | take-away |
| talk show | chat show |
| tank (regional Texas) | pond |
| Tarheel | someone from North Carolina |
| tarp | tarpaulin + |
| tattletale *(noun, adj.)* | tell-tale |
| teakettle | kettle + |
| teamster | lorry driver |
| teardown (an old building) | knock-down |
| teeter-totter | seesaw + |
| telephone pole | telegraph pole |
| teller | cashier (in a bank or post office) |
| temblor | earthquake + |
| temple | synagogue + |
| thread | cotton + |
| thrift shop | charity shop |
| through (as in "Monday through Wednesday") | up to and including |
| throw (light blanket) | rug* |
| thumbtack | drawing-pin |
| thunderboomer *(colloq.)* | thunderstorm |
| tick off | annoy (see *tick off* UK) |
| tic-tac-toe | noughts and crosses |
| tidbit | titbit |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| tightwad | stingy person |
| (to have a) tin ear | (to be) tone-deaf + |
| tire wrench | tyre lever |
| titled (used of a book) | entitled + |
| toilet bag | sponge bag |
| toll free | Freephone/Freefone |
| top off | top up |
| totaled (vehicle) | a write-off |
| toward + | towards + |
| track in (dirt) | tread in |
| trackless trolley | trolley bus + |
| trade | swap + |
| traffic circle | roundabout |
| trailer park | caravan site |
| training wheels | stabilizers (on a child's bike) |
| tram | parking lot conveyance (see *tram* UK) |
| tramp + | slut/down-and-out |
| transfer | ticket permitting a bus or train passenger to change to another vehicle to complete their journey |
| trapezium | trapezoid |
| trapezoid | trapezium |
| trash | rubbish |
| trash (*verb*) | destroy + |
| trash can | litter bin |
| trolley | tram/bus resembling a cable car |
| truck farmer | market gardener |
| trunk (on a car) | boot |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| tube (electronic) | valve |
| tuckered out | knackered/fagged |
| tuck-point (to add mortar to brickwork) | point |
| turkey *(colloq.)* | an inept person/something that fails or does not meet expectations |
| turn signal (on a car) | indicator |
| turnkey (house or apartment/flat) | fully equipped |
| turnpike | toll-road + |
| turtleneck | polo-neck |
| tuxedo | dinner jacket |
| twister *(colloq.)* | tornado (see *twister* UK) |
| two-family | a property divided into two residences |
| Uncle Sam | the US government |
| undershirt | vest |
| up (sporting term) | apiece + |
| upchuck *(slang)* | vomit |
| upcoming | forthcoming |
| upscale | upmarket |
| usher (in a church) | sidesman |
| utility bills | electricity/gas/water bills |
| VCR | video (player) |
| vacation | holiday |
| vacationer | holiday-maker |
| valance | pelmet (see *valance* UK) |
| vamoose *(slang)* | rush off |
| vanilla *(hip slang)* | ordinary |

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| vanity | dressing-table + |
| vaudeville | music hall |
| veg out [vej] *(hip slang)* | loll about |
| vest | waistcoat |
| vet* | war veteran/veterinary surgeon |
| Vienna sausage | small frankfurter |
| villa (regional East) | house within a condominium* |
| vine | creeper |
| visit with* *(colloq.)* | chat with/visit |
| Visquene (brand name) | heavy-duty plastic sheeting |
| volunteer work | voluntary work |
| vo-tech | technical institute |
| walk-up *(noun)* | above ground flat with no lift |
| wall-to-wall carpet | fitted carpet |
| want ad | newspaper classified advert |
| washcloth | flannel |
| wash the dishes | do the washing up |
| wash up | wash yourself (see *wash up* UK) |
| washroom (regional North) | public toilet |
| WASP | White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (often used disparagingly) |
| wastebasket | waste-paper basket |
| water cooler | cold-water dispenser |
| wax paper | greaseproof paper |
| wedding band | wedding ring + |
| Weed Whacker (brand name) | Strimmer (brand name) |
| welfare | social security (see *Social Security* US) |
| whipping cream | double cream |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| US | UK |
|---|---|
| whippoorwill | a variety of nightjar |
| whistle-stop | small town on a railway line |
| whitecaps (on water) | white horses |
| wiener [**wee**·ner] | frankfurter + |
| wind-up (of a toy) | clockwork |
| windbreaker | windcheater |
| Windex (brand name) | Windowlene (brand name) |
| windshield (on a car) | windscreen |
| Wite-Out (brand name) | Tippex (brand name) |
| witness stand | witness box |
| wood alcohol | methanol + |
| wuss [wûs] | wet or ineffectual person |
| Yankee | someone who lives north of the Mason-Dixon line, seen as the traditional boundary between the North and South of the US |
| yard* | garden (see *yard* UK) |
| yardman | gardener |
| yard work | gardening |
| yellow jacket | paper-wasp + |
| Zamboni (brand name) | ice-cleaning machine (on a rink) |
| zero + | nil/nought |
| zilch | nothing |
| zip *(slang)* | nothing |
| Zip Code | postcode |
| zipper | zip |
| zit | pimple |
| zucchini [zoo·**kee**·nee] | courgette [cor·**zhet**] |

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# 17

# *Explanations*

**Airing cupboard** In the UK most houses have the hot-water storage tank in a small closet with shelves mounted above it. The shelves are made of wooden slats to allow the air to circulate. This keeps linens warm and dry. This is called the *airing cupboard.*

**Appraise** In the US a house is *appraised* by an *appraiser.* In the UK it is *valued* by a *valuer.* Conversely, job performance is usually *evaluated* in the US rather than *appraised* as it is in Britain.

**Bikini** The word *bikini* in the US can mean a man's brief swimsuit or a woman's two-piece swimsuit. In the UK it is only used in referring to a woman's two-piece swimsuit.

**Billion** This word can have two different meanings in the UK. One meaning is a million million: 1,000,000,000,000 or $10^{12}$. The other meaning is the same as the meaning found in the US, a thousand million: 1,000,000,000 or $10^{9}$. A thousand million has traditionally been called a *milliard* in Britain. To prevent confusion, in 1972 the British government began using the term *billion* to indicate 1,000,000,000 in its financial statistics. The older sense of *billion* seems to be going out of use in the UK, and the BBC (British Broadcasting Company) also now uses *billion* in the sense familiar to Americans.

**Blowout** A blowout has several meanings in the US. It can mean a tire suddenly losing air. It can also mean a big party. A blowout sale means a big sale with great price reductions.

**Bollard** A common word in British English, *bollard* can either mean a traffic diverter or a short upright metal post to secure a ship at a wharf. This word is only known in the US by nautical folk, for the latter meaning. It is unfamiliar to the average American.

**Broil/Grill** In the US *broiling* implies cooking something directly under the flame, while *grilling* implies cooking something over the flame. The term *grill* in the US may also mean frying something on a large, solid metal plate called a *grill.* In British English the word *grill* covers both the American words *broil* and *grill. Broasted* is an American word describing food that has been cooked in a high-pressure fryer made by the Broaster Company.

**Bungalow** In British English the word *bungalow* refers to any one-story house. A bungalow in the US indicates a small, modest one-story house, often made of wood and often prefabricated. Sears, Roebuck and Co. sold a mail-order bungalow kit known as a Craftsman bungalow between the years 1900 and 1930. These bungalows had built-in cupboards and bookcases.

**Café** The word *café* in American English can mean "nightclub" as well as "coffee shop."

**Call** If an American says "They're calling for rain," he means the forecast indicates that rain is likely. If a thermostat is set high enough for the heat to come on, the thermostat is said to be *calling for heat.*

**Can** In the UK one *bottles* fruit, often in a Kilner jar. In the US one *cans* fruit, often in a Mason jar.

**Cheers** This is sometimes used as a toast before taking a drink in the US. In the UK, however, *cheers* is often used as a friendly, informal way of saying thanks. The American *Thanks, buddy* might be translated as *Cheers, mate.* Britons also frequently end informal e-mails with *Cheers* before their signature or initial.

**Chemist** In the UK *chemist* can refer to a laboratory chemist, a pharmacist, or the pharmacy itself.

**Cider** In the UK cider is an alcoholic beverage. In the US cider is usually unfermented apple juice but *hard cider* is alcoholic.

**Condominium/Condo** (From the Latin words *com-* "with" and *dominium* "domain.") In the US, this common word indicates a complex of individually owned houses or apartments whose owners belong to a legal association for the proper and continued maintenance of all commonly owned property on which their residences are located. The term refers either to the entire complex or to a single unit in the complex. Owners often time-share or lease their condos to others.

**Cool** Americans use *cool* in a variety of ways. It can mean "modern, liberal, up-to-date" (*She's cool, That's cool*) or "acceptable, not a threat, in-the-know" (*He's cool*), or it can be an exclamation of approval, appreciation, or delight (*Cool!*).

**Cornfield** A cornfield in the US is a field of maize. A cornfield in the UK, however, is a field of wheat or oats. Maize is not grown on a large scale in the UK.

**Crack** If an American asks you to *crack* a window, he wants you to open it slightly.

**Crazy** The British term *crazy paving* is as perplexing to most Americans as the term *crazy quilt* is to most Britons. In both cases the term *crazy* means *patchwork.*

**Cross ventilation** In the US, a room is said to have good *cross ventilation* if it has windows at opposite ends, permitting a good movement of air through the room.

**Disassemble** In the US *disassemble* and *dismantle* are often used interchangeably regarding something tangible, such as a tent. However, one *dismantles* a regime or a social service. In the UK only the verb *dismantle,* never *disassemble,* is used.

**Drapes** *Drapes* and *draperies* are both used for "curtains" in the US. *Draperies* is considered the preferred word by some people, but *drapes* is still the more common word. The term *window treatments* covers all the material at a window. Curtains in the US usually do not draw.

**Drugstore/Pharmacy** While these terms are often used interchangeably in the US, there is a distinction to be made. A *pharmacy* is a section in a large department store, while a *drugstore* is a separate or privately owned shop.

**Dumbwaiter/Dumb waiter** In both countries, a *dumbwaiter* (*dumb waiter* in the UK) is a device for transporting food between floors. However, in Britain, *dumb waiter* can also mean a revolving food holder at a dining table. This object is known as a *lazy Susan* in the US.

**Duplex** The word *duplex* (also known as a *two-family*) refers to two semi-detached single houses on one lot. The houses are often separated in the middle by two garages. Duplexes are often rental properties. In some areas a duplex may be two rental properties, one above the other.

**Guy** If used in the plural this word can refer to men *and* women in the US.

**Hire/Rent** The terms *hire* and *rent* are often used interchangeably in Britain. However, in the US *hire* refers to people, while *rent* usually refers to things, such as a videotape or car. *Lease* implies a long-term legal obligation in the renting of items. The term *let* has pretty much fallen from popular use in the US. Normally the term *rent out* is used instead of the term *let,* although *rent* alone is often used. The distinctions in meaning are easily understood in context.

**Holiday** A *holiday* or *legal holiday* in the US is usually what the British call a *bank holiday.* The expression *the holidays* in the US generally refers to the period between Thanksgiving, which occurs at the end of November, and New Year's Day. *Vacation* is the usual equivalent of the British word *holiday.*

**Hospital** In Britain, if one is admitted, one goes *to hospital.* If one is visiting a patient, one goes *to the hospital.* In the US, there is no distinction. It is always *the* hospital. Similarly, Americans say "The child is in the hospital," rather than "The child is in hospital," when the child is receiving treatment there.

**Icing and Frosting** These words are often used interchangeably in the US, although more accurately *icing* refers to a smooth topping and *frosting* to a whipped or creamy topping. *Frosting* is not used in Britain.

**John** The word *john,* in the US, has several meanings. The *john* means the toilet (originally a term used for an outdoor toilet for men, the women's being the *Jane*). A *john* also means a hooker's (prostitute's) client (*punter* in British English). A *dear John letter* is a letter requesting a divorce or the end of a relationship.

**Jug** A *jug* in British English would be known as a *pitcher* in American English. A jug in the US is a large vessel with a handle and a narrow neck, usually with a stopper.

**Knock up** The phrase *knock up* can be used in a variety of ways in British English. One can *knock up* a person, meaning wake them up. One can *knock up* at tennis (warm up). One can *knock up* a meal in a hurry, and one can even *knock oneself up* (knock oneself out). The only meaning of *knock up* in American English is a vulgar slang expression meaning *to make a woman pregnant.*

**Luminary** In both countries, the word *luminary* can mean a leader in a scientific field or artistic profession. In the US, especially in the South, this word is also used to mean a candle set inside a paper bag for illuminating a path at night. These candles are also called *luminarias,* which is a Spanish word.

**Mail** In general, the word *mail* may be substituted in the US for the British term *post.* However, there are some exceptions, such as *postmark, post office,* and *the postal service.*

**Mains** Water and electricity are shut off at the *main* in the US, but at the *mains* in Britain. The term *mains pressure* (for water)

might just be called the *water pressure* or simply the *pressure* in the US, as in "The water pressure on the upper floors was low." The relative terminology reflects differences between the US and the UK in the hot and cold water systems usually found in houses. The expression *run off the mains* (for electricity) has no good equivalent in the US.

**Mall, Plaza** In the US a *plaza* [**plah**·za] is a shopping center with a collection of individual shops and stores sharing parking facilities. A *mall* [mawl] is a collection of individual shops and stores constructed under one roof with a common indoor, air-conditioned, or heated promenade. It is usually much larger than a plaza, and contains a mixture of large department stores and smaller shops and restaurants.

**Marquee** The word *marquee* probably originated in a false attempt at making a singular word from *marquise* around 1680. *Marquee* was originally used for a shelter for a marquis or marquise. The word came to mean a large outdoor tent in British English, and an awning projecting over an entrance in American English. Younger Americans tend to use the word mostly to describe an illuminated sign either over a theatre or by the road.

**Medicare/Medicaid** *Medicare* is a US government program of medical insurance for people age 65 or older and some people under age 65 who are sick or disabled. *Medicaid* is a federal and state program for people with low incomes.

**Pocketbook** This word is mostly used by older Americans to mean a handbag, also called a purse in the US. To younger Americans the term is usually applied to financial resources, as in "That white sports car is too much for my pocketbook."

**Porch** A porch in England is a small sheltered area outside a building. It is similar to a *mudroom* in the US. An American porch can be a much larger, often elevated area at the front or back of the house where one can sit. This would be called a *verandah* in Britain.

**Precinct** The word *precinct* is used in very specific but different ways. A *pedestrian precinct* in British English is a shopping district in a town or city where vehicles are not permitted. In the US *precinct* refers to a district within the jurisdiction of a fire or police department.

**Realtor** The word *Realtor* is trademarked, although it often appears lowercase. It refers to a real estate agent who is a member of the National Association of Realtors. It is commonly used by Americans to refer to any real estate agent.

**Redneck** This slang term, which can be quite offensive, refers to an intractable, crude person with set ideas and opinions. It may also connote a lack of education or intelligence, but not necessarily. The word itself was originally a deprecatory term for white laborers in the South who had sunburned necks from bending over in the fields.

**Rug** In the UK the word *rug* can be used to describe a light blanket used to cover oneself, or to sit on at a picnic. This is known in the US as a *throw.* A large carpet may be referred to as a *rug* in the US. In American English, a *rug* is also a slang term for a hairpiece.

**Sale** In the US, the word *sale* is used in many ways:

| | |
|---|---|
| *blowout sale* | clearance sale |
| *closeout sale* | closing-down sale |
| *garage sale* | sale of used household items held outdoors or in a garage |
| *tag sale* | same as the British jumble sale |
| *trunk sale* | sale of last season's merchandise in a clothing store |
| *yard sale* | same as a garage sale |

**Shingle** A *shingle* in the US is either an asphalt or wooden tile or a small sign outside a business—quite different from the British meaning of beach pebbles.

**Tap** A tap in the house is known as a *faucet* in the US. An outdoor tap or a stopcock is called a *spigot.* However, water from the faucet is called *tap water.*

**Teeth** The Brits *clean* their teeth, whereas the Americans *brush* their teeth. *Teeth cleaning* in the US is done at the dentist's office.

**Toboggan** A *toboggan* in the US is a specific kind of sled without runners and with a front that curves up. *Sled* is the US term for the British word *toboggan.*

**Vet** The word *vet* in the US can either mean a veterinarian or a war veteran. In Britain it is an abbreviation for *veterinary surgeon.*

**Visit with** In the US, this can either mean "visit" in the British sense (to go and socialize with), or it can be used in place of to *chat with.* It is a rather informal expression.

**Warden** In British English, the term *warden* refers to the governor of a hospital, college, or YMCA. A prison governor is called a *warden* in American English.

**Whistle stop** A *whistle stop* is a small town along a railway line in the US. It can also mean a short appearance by a performing group or a politician in such a town.

**Yard** The word *yard* in the US refers to the area around a house and roughly equates to the British word *garden.* The word *garden* in the US is used in reference to a cultivated area such as a rose garden or a vegetable garden, in contrast to other areas around the house where only grass, landscaping bushes, and trees grow. A *yard* in British English is a paved area.

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# 18

# *Other Varieties of English*

British English is spoken in many countries as a second language, although South Americans usually learn American English. Here are some terms that are only found in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

## CANADA

English and French are the two official languages of Canada. The English spoken in Canada strongly resembles American English, although the spelling conforms in large part to British English. Words such as *car park, cutlery, holiday* (a *vacation* in the US), *jelly, porridge, serviette, tick* (a *check mark* in the US), *till,* and *top up* are a reminder of Canada's links to Britain. Canadians often use the British pronunciations when it comes to words such as *apricot, process, project,* and *produce.*

## *Canadian Terms*

| CANADIAN TERM | MEANING |
|---|---|
| ABM (Automatic Bank Machine is occasionally seen as well as ATM) | ATM/cash machine |
| blue box | recycling bin |
| boxliner (in the bed of a pick-up) | bedliner |
| broadloom | wall-to-wall carpet |
| canopy (over the bed of a pick-up) | topper |
| chesterfield | sofa or couch (used mostly by older Canadians) |
| chip wagon (regional) | van at the side of the road from which snacks are sold |
| CPP (Canadian Pension Plan) | Social Security (US)/OAP (UK) |
| fire hall | fire station |
| Garburator (brand name) | kitchen waste disposer |
| gunny sack | burlap bag (US)/hessian bag (UK) |
| had the biscuit (as in "He's had the biscuit.") | had it (as in "He's had it. He's finished.") |
| hydro | electricity (often generated from hydroelectric plants) |
| Inuit | Eskimo (The term *Inuit* is preferred to *Eskimo* by many groups of indigenous Arctic peoples.) |
| Joe Lunchpail | the average man, Joe Sixpack |
| landed immigrant | a foreigner who is a legal resident of Canada, but is not a Canadian citizen |
| laneway | alleyway |
| mail person | mail carrier |

| CANADIAN TERM | MEANING |
|---|---|
| Mountie | a member of the RCMP (similar to a federal law enforcement officer in the US) |
| on pogey *(slang)* | unemployed |
| parkade | multilevel parking structure |
| provincial | pertaining to a Canadian province or to the provinces (This is the main meaning in Canada, rather than "countrified" or "parochial.") |
| RCMP | Royal Canadian Mounted Police |
| riding | constituency/electoral district |
| RRSP | Registered Retirement Savings Plan (similar to an IRA in the US) |
| SIN | Social Insurance Number (similar to a Social Security Number in US) |
| washroom | restroom/lavatory |
| wicket | counter or window |

## AUSTRALIA

Australian English closely resembles British English in the written form, although some of the slang terms that are commonplace in everyday speech in Australia can sound quite strange to a Briton. Some accents resemble British speech, whereas broader accents are typified by the *oi* sound for the long *i* as in *fine* [foin]. Where other varieties of English have the long *a* vowel [ā], broader Australian accents may have a sound like long *i* [ī]. The broad Australian pronunciation of word *hate* may thus sound like the word *height* to Americans and Britons. From a Briton's point of view, regional accents in Australia are not very great despite the large size of the country—although regional variation does exist, such as in the names for the different sizes of beer glasses. Australians love their

beer, which is generally served in jugs (pitchers in the US), and beer glasses have interesting names. A *schooner* is usually 15 ounces, a *butcher* is 7 ounces, and a *pony* is 5 ounces.

*Australian Terms*

| AUSTRALIAN TERM | MEANING |
|---|---|
| Aussie [ozzy] | an Australian *(noun)*/Australian *(adj.)* |
| bag | criticize |
| barrack for *(verb)* | cheer for (a team) |
| Beauty! | Terrific! |
| Besser Block (brand name) | cinderblock |
| big smoke, the | a large city |
| bludger | someone who lives off others |
| blue | mistake/fight |
| bluey | summons (to a court) |
| bonzer | terrific |
| bower-bird | pack rat/hoarder |
| brumby | wild horse |
| bullbar (on a car) | grille guard (US) |
| bung it on | put on airs |
| bunyip | mythical people-eating monster |
| bushwacker | unrefined country person |
| chaulkie | schoolteacher |
| chook [chûk] | chicken |
| cobber (old-fashioned) | pal |
| cocky | farmer |
| cossie [**coz**·zy] | bathing suit |
| crook | sick |
| dag | dull person |

| AUSTRALIAN TERM | MEANING |
|---|---|
| dobber | informant |
| docket | sales slip |
| domain | park |
| dunny | outhouse/outside toilet |
| ear-bash *(verb)* | harangue |
| Esky (brand name) | cooler/ice chest |
| fair dinkum *(adj.)* | genuine |
| Fair dinkum! | You don't say! |
| freezing works | slaughterhouse |
| first up | firstly |
| G'day! | Hi! |
| Good as gold! | Doing fine! |
| hard yakka | hard work |
| home and hosed | safely completed |
| home unit | condominium |
| Hooray! (regional) | Goodbye! |
| hotel *(colloq.)* | bar |
| jackaroo/jilaroo (female) | novice on a sheep or cattle station |
| larrikin | hooligan |
| lash | bash/try |
| metal road | dirt road |
| ocker/okker | unrefined Australian man |
| over the fence | unreasonable |
| paddock | field |
| pawpaw | papaya + |
| poker machines/pokies | slot machines (US)/fruit machines (UK) |
| pom/pommie | someone from Britain |
| port (regional Queensland) | suitcase |

| AUSTRALIAN TERM | MEANING |
|---|---|
| postie *(colloq.)* | postman |
| prime mover | truck cab and engine (on a cab and trailer vehicle) |
| retrenched | laid off from work |
| sand-shoes | tennis shoes |
| screw *(colloq.)* | prison guard |
| sealed road | paved road |
| She's right!/She'll be right! | It's all right! |
| sheila *(slang)* | girl |
| smoko | coffee break |
| squiz *(noun)* | peek |
| station | ranch/large farm |
| stickybeak | nosy person |
| strides | trousers |
| Strine (from *'Stralian*) | uncultivated Australian speech |
| stubbie | beer bottle (small) |
| this arvo | this afternoon |
| tinnie | beer can |
| tip-truck | tipper truck |
| truckie | trucker |
| tucker | food |
| ute/utility truck | pick-up |
| verandah (additional meaning) | solid awning over the front of retail outlets |
| Wait on! | Hang on (a minute)! |
| weekender | weekend cottage |
| wharfie | stevedore/docker |
| (the) wog | prevailing cold virus |

| AUSTRALIAN TERM | MEANING |
|---|---|
| Woop Woop | the middle of nowhere |
| yabbies | tiny crayfish |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

## NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand English is also very similar to British English in the written form. New Zealanders think they speak in a more refined manner than Australians, but the average foreigner would be hard-pressed to tell the difference. Rising inflection is also common there. A short *i* (as in *lift*) often has a distinctive schwa-like sound. The short *e* often sounds like a long *e,* hence *set* and *seat* can sound similar to someone not from New Zealand.

### *New Zealand Terms*

| NEW ZEALAND TERM | MEANING |
|---|---|
| batch | weekend cottage |
| blue | mistake |
| (the) Bot | prevailing cold virus |
| butchery | butcher's shop |
| cattle-stop | cattle-grid (UK)/cattle guard (US) |
| Chilly Bin (brand name) | cooler/ice chest |
| chook [chûk] | chicken |
| dairy | convenience store |
| dobber | informant |
| docket | sales slip |
| domain | park |
| emergency (in a team sport) | substitute/alternate |
| Fred Dagg | unrefined New Zealander |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| NEW ZEALAND TERM | MEANING |
|---|---|
| haka | Maori ceremonial dance |
| Jandals (brand name) | flip-flops |
| kiwi [**kee**·wee] | flightless New Zealand bird/ a person from New Zealand |
| paddock | field |
| pakeha [**pah**·kay·hah] | white (non-Maori) person (The Maori are the indigenous people of New Zealand.) |
| pavlova [păv·**loh**·va] | a meringue cake filled with fruit, cream, and ice cream |
| section | plot of land |
| sheila | girl |
| smoko | coffee break |
| strides | trousers |

## SOUTH AFRICA

Written South African English is also similar to British English. Spoken South African English has a vague resemblance to New Zealand English with the short *e* sounding almost like a long *e*. Here are a few interesting words that are unique to this country.

### *South African Terms*

| SOUTH AFRICAN TERM | MEANING |
|---|---|
| bakkie [**buk**·ky] | pick-up truck |
| bioscope (old-fashioned) | cinema |
| boetie | brother/buddy |
| bottle store | liquor store |
| braai [bry] *(noun, verb)* | barbecue |

For a guide to pronunciation symbols and other signs, see page vi.

| SOUTH AFRICAN TERM | MEANING |
|---|---|
| Catch me a brew! | Give me a beer! |
| china (see Cockney Rhyming Slang, page 238). | friend/acquaintance |
| donder [donn·er] | wallop |
| donga [**don**·ga] | hole in the ground |
| drift | ford/causeway |
| It's tickets! | It's curtains! |
| just now | in a short while |
| larney | posh |
| lekker | tasty/good |
| middle line | strip in the center of the road |
| naartjie [**nah**·chee] | tangerine |
| okie/outjie [**o**·kie] | buddy |
| ous [ohz] *(plural)* | folks |
| packet | bag |
| robot | traffic light |
| rondavel [ron·**dah**·vəl] | a traditional African dwelling consisting of a circular hut with a thatched roof (This style is now used as accommodation at game reserves and many holiday resorts.) |
| Shame! | Too bad!/A pity! |
| spanspeck/sponspek | cantaloupe |
| takkies | canvas shoes |
| veld [felt] | open grassland |
| veldskoen [**felt**·skoon] | soft leather shoe that comes up over the ankle |

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# 19

# *Cockney Rhyming Slang*

Since the sixteenth century Cockney rhyming slang has been heard in the East End of London. Its origins are somewhat obscure, but it allowed workers to hold a private conversation within their ranks without the bosses knowing what they were talking about. The person speaking uses a rhyming word or expression like a code to replace the word he or she really means to say. For example, *whistle and flute* is used to stand for *suit.* When it is shortened to *whistle,* it becomes even more obscure, because the rhyming word is not there from which to guess the meaning. In the beginning Cockney rhyming slang was mainly used by seamen and itinerant laborers, but it is now used by many blue-collar Londoners. It not only includes an extensive number of expressions but is constantly changing like many other aspects of language. Below is a representative sample.

*Cockney Rhyming Slang*

| RHYMING SLANG EXPRESSION | MEANING |
|---|---|
| apples and pears | stairs |
| April showers | flowers |
| Auntie Ella | umbrella |
| bacon and eggs | legs |

| RHYMING SLANG EXPRESSION | MEANING |
|---|---|
| Baden Powell | towel |
| Barnet (Barnet fair) | hair |
| bird (bird lime) | time (in prison) |
| boat (boat race) | face |
| bread (bread and honey) | money |
| bread and butter | gutter |
| bucket and pail | jail |
| bull and cow | row (an argument) |
| butcher's-hook | look |
| canoes | shoes |
| china (china plate) | mate |
| daft and barmy | army |
| daisy roots | boots |
| dicky bird | word |
| dig in the grave | shave |
| dog and bone | phone |
| donkey's ears | years |
| dustbin lids | kids |
| fine and dandy | brandy |
| frog and toad | road |
| ginger beer | queer (odd) |
| gold watch | scotch |
| half inch | pinch (to steal) |
| Hampstead Heath | teeth |
| hit and miss | kiss |
| Holy Ghost | toast |
| horse and carriage | marriage |
| jam jar | car |

| RHYMING SLANG EXPRESSION | MEANING |
|---|---|
| loaf (loaf of bread) | head |
| marbles (marbles and conkers) | bonkers (See *conkers* in UK–US lexicon.) |
| Mother Hubbard | cupboard |
| near and far | bar |
| north and south | mouth |
| old bag | hag |
| on the floor | poor |
| Peckham Rye | tie |
| pen (pen and ink) | stink |
| Persian rugs | drugs |
| pillar and post | ghost |
| pitch and toss | boss |
| plates of meat | feet |
| pork pies | lies |
| rabbit (rabbit and pork) | talk (*pork* rhymes with *talk* in UK) |
| read and write | fight |
| rub-a-dub-dub | pub |
| sausage and mash | cash |
| sky rocket | pocket |
| tea leaf | thief |
| ten-speed gears | ears |
| titfer (tit for tat) | hat |
| Toby jug | mug (fool) |
| tod (Tod Sloane) | alone (on one's tod) |
| toe rag | slag (prostitute)/fag (cigarette) |
| two and eight | in a state |

# *Afterword*

Many people who speak British English feel that American English is taking over as a form of global communication, and they may be right. The Internet is dominated by American websites that naturally promote American English. The Commonwealth and former Commonwealth countries comprise a huge number of speakers of different varieties of English, and in many ways people living in these countries feel somewhat threatened by American English. Many consider American English to be rather sloppy, and they are concerned that American spelling may dominate and somehow contaminate their language.

Americans often accept these attitudes uncritically and consider British English to be the proper or real English. But the differences between American English and the other varieties do not result from sloppiness. Since the United States gained independence from Britain much earlier than most other former colonies, American English has had longer to develop separately from British English than other varieties. In more recent times, the immigration and trade ties among Britain, India, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa have been stronger than those between Britain and America, even though America is geographically closer to the British Isles. Noah Webster also helped shape the spelling differences between British and American English through his *American Dictionary of the English Language,* which became the main reference source for many US school teachers and newspaper editors back in the 1800s. Spelling reform has taken place in Britain too, most noticeably with the preference for the *–ise* suffix in words such as *apologize* and *realize.*

Although new words from American English (many of them slang) creep into British English subtly but surely each year, I cannot foresee a day anytime soon when an Englishman will use the term *check mark* instead of a *tick* on his to-do list or call a *period* a *full stop* when dictating notes. In some ways British English is even gaining ground. In India, for example, many

recently coined British terms have been adopted, like *LGV* as the word for a large truck. I have a hunch that British English will be around for many years to come.

Even though the relationship between American English and other varieties of English in the world is often depicted as a fight to the finish between us and them (or between us and the US!), in all fairness I cannot say that one version of English is superior to the other. From America to South Africa to Australia, English-speaking people around the globe can learn to understand each other quite well with a little effort and help from books like this one. In this sense, the United Kingdom and its former colonies, including the United States, remain united by a common language.

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# *Index*

Readers who wish to find a specific word or phrase in British or American English should first consult the three large lexicons in Chapters 12, 15 and 16. If the expression cannot be found in these lexicons, readers can use this index to find words and phrases discussed elsewhere in the book.


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