EVERYDAY ENGLISH CENTRE

GBUS

BRITISH & AMERICAN ENGLISH

The Differences That Matter

FREE LEARNING SAMPLE

Spelling • Vocabulary • Everyday misunderstandings • Practice & answers

MARSHALL APPOH

First Edition • 2026

Welcome to GBUS

British and American English share a language, but they do not always share the same words, spellings or everyday expressions. This sample introduces some of the differences explored in GBUS: British & American English — The Differences That Matter.

Neither variety is inherently more correct. The goal is to recognise common preferences, avoid misunderstandings and choose a consistent variety when writing formally.

In this free sample

1. Common spelling patterns
2. Everyday vocabulary
3. Same word, different meaning
4. Short practice activities
5. Complete answer key

This sample is adapted from Parts 1–3 of the published book. The exercises below are specially selected and arranged for this downloadable edition.

Tip: Try the activities before turning to the answer key.

1. Same language, different spelling

A British writer might write my favourite colour. An American writer would normally write my favorite color. Many differences follow recognisable patterns.

BRITISH ENGLISH	AMERICAN ENGLISH
colour	color
favourite	favorite
centre	center
theatre	theater
travelling	traveling
cancelled	canceled

Watch out: These are patterns, not universal rules. For example, acre stays acre in both varieties. British English also accepts some -ize spellings; the distinction between -ise and -ize is not absolute.

Useful principle: Choose one variety and stay consistent in formal writing.

2. Different words, same thing

Some everyday vocabulary differs across the Atlantic. These are common preferences, not strict linguistic borders.

BRITISH ENGLISH	AMERICAN ENGLISH
flat	apartment
lift	elevator
queue	line
trainers	sneakers
mobile phone	cell phone
torch	flashlight
shopping trolley	shopping cart

Examples

British: Take the lift to the third floor.
American: Take the elevator to the third floor.

Important: Floor numbering can also differ. The British ground floor generally corresponds to the American first floor. So a building instruction may require more than swapping one word.

Words such as pharmacy, receipt and homework are used on both sides of the Atlantic.

3. Same word... different meaning!

Some of the funniest misunderstandings happen when speakers use the same word but mean different things.

RUBBER
In a British classroom, a rubber is an eraser. In American English, rubber can be informal slang for a condom. In an American classroom, ask for an eraser!

PANTS
In American English, pants usually means trousers. In British English, it commonly means underpants or underwear. So an innocent compliment can go badly wrong.

JUMPER
A British jumper is usually a knitted top or sweater. In American English, jumper can refer to a type of sleeveless dress. The usual American word for the British garment is sweater.

FOOTBALL
In Britain, football normally refers to the sport Americans commonly call soccer. In the United States, football normally means American football.

The lesson? Learn vocabulary in context, not just in isolated word lists.

4. Your turn — quick practice

A. Write GB or US for the variety most associated with each spelling.

1. colour _____
2. center _____
3. travelling _____
4. favorite _____
5. theatre _____

B. Replace the highlighted term with the usual American equivalent.

1. We live in a small flat.
2. Take the lift.
3. There is a long queue.
4. I need new trainers.
5. Have you got a torch?

C. What could go wrong?

1. A British student asks an American classmate for a rubber.
2. An American says to a British colleague, “I like your pants.”
3. Two people agree that they love football, but have not said which sport they mean.

Try answering in complete sentences before checking the next page.

5. Answer key

A. Spelling

1. GB — colour
2. US — center
3. GB — travelling
4. US — favorite
5. GB — theatre

B. Everyday vocabulary

1. We live in a small apartment.
2. Take the elevator.
3. There is a long line.
4. I need new sneakers.
5. Have you got a flashlight?

C. Possible misunderstandings

1. In British English, rubber means eraser; in American English, it can have a slang meaning unrelated to stationery.

2. The American means trousers, but the British colleague may understand underwear.

3. One person may mean association football (soccer), while the other means American football.

Enjoyed the sample?

The complete GBUS book explores many more differences in vocabulary, food, usage and everyday situations, with practical activities and explanations.

Find the paperback and Kindle editions on Amazon, or visit everydayenglishcentre.com.

Copyright © 2026 Marshall Appoh / Everyday English Centre. Free promotional learning sample. All rights reserved.