

Some differences between US and UK English

Note that I started keeping these notes some twenty to thirty years ago, and much of the usage may be a little outdated.

3. Vocabulary

These are some commonly used words and idioms that are either spelled differently or have different meanings in American English and British English. In many cases there is a mutually acceptable alternative, but be warned - some of the words on this list may be confusing to speakers of the 'other' variety of English.

UK	US		
adopt (a candidate)	nominate	chequered	checkered
aerial (television)	antenna	(pattern)	
air hostess	flight attendant	chicken leg	drumstick
aluminium	aluminum	chickpea	garbanzo bean
anti-clockwise	counterclockwise	chilli/chillies	chili/chilis
apple puree	applesauce	chips	French fries
at weekends	on weekends	choux bun	cream puff
aubergine	eggplant	cinema	movie theater
autumn	fall	clarinettist	clarinetist
baby's dummy	pacifier	clever	smart
baking tray	baking sheet	cling film	plastic wrap
bag	purse	coach	bus
banknote	bill	coriander (fresh)	cilantro
barrister	trial lawyer	corn	wheat
behind	in back of	cornflour	cornstarch
behave	behoove	cosy	cozy
bicarbonate of soda	baking soda	cot	crib
bilberry	blueberry	country	nation
bill	check	courgette	zucchini
biscuit (sweet)	cookie	crayfish	crawfish
biscuit (savoury)	cracker	crisps	chips
black treacle	molasses	crossroads/junction	intersection
blind (for windows)	shade	crystallised	candied
bowler (hat)	derby	cupboard/wardrobe	closet
braces	suspenders	demerara sugar	light-brown
building society	savings and loan association	sugar	
calibre	caliber	dessicated coconut	shredded
camp bed	cot	coconut	
car, estate	station wagon	dialled	dialed
car, saloon	sedan	digestive biscuit	graham cracker
car accelerator	gas pedal	district	neighborhood
car bonnet	hood	doctor	physician
car demister	defogger	double cream	heavy cream
car dipswitch	dimmer	draught	draft
car jump leads	jumper cables	dressing gown	bathrobe/
car park	parking lot		housecoat
car silencer	muffler	drug	narcotic
car windscreen	windshield	dual carriageway	four-lane (or divided)
car wing	fender		highway
caravan	house trailer	dyke	dike
cheque (bank)	check	essence (e.g. vanilla)	extract or flavoring

estate agent	realtor/real estate agent	modelled	modeled
ex-serviceman	veteran	motor-racing	auto-racing
eyrie	aerie	motorway	superhighway, freeway, expressway
flan tin	pie pan		
fillet	filet	mould	mold
flour, plain	flour, all-purpose	moulder	molder
		moult	molt
flour, self-raising	flour, self-rising	mum/mummy	mom/mommy
flour, wholemeal	flour, whole-wheat	muslin	cheesecloth
		nappy	diaper
flyover	overpass	nominate, predict	slate
from ... to ...	through	oblige	obligate
frying pan	skillet	omelette	omelet
fuelled	fueled	ordinary	regular, normal
full stop (punctuation)	period	outside	outside of
furor	furor	paddling pool	wading pool
give way	yield	panelled	wood-paneled
golden syrup	corn syrup	pants	underpants
greengrocer's	vegetable market	pastry case	pie shell
		pavement	sidewalk
grey	gray	pepper (red, green, etc.)	capsicum or sweet pepper
grill (verb)	broil		gasoline, gas
grill (noun)	broiler	petrol	seeds (in fruit)
ground floor	first floor	pips	pita bread
handbag	pocketbook	pitta bread	semisweet or unsweetened chocolate
high street	main street	plain/dark chocolate	
hire (of car)	rent		braid
holiday	vacation (but public holiday)	plait	plow
home from home	home away from home	plough	pudgy
homely	homey/homy (homely = plain)	podgy	polyethylene
icing sugar	powdered or confectioners' sugar	polythene	mail, mailbox
		post, post box	electrical outlet
in (Fifth Avenue, etc.)	on	power point	stroller
increase	hike	pram, push chair	snap fastener
jeweller/jewellery	jeweler/jewelry	press stud	program for computers)
jumper	sweater	programme (except	real estate
keep a promise	(deliver (on) a promise)	property (land)	squash
		pumpkin	pajamas
kerb/kerbside	curb/curbside	pyjamas	quit
ketchup	catsup	quitted	hiker
labelled	labeled	rambler	moving van
ladder (in stocking)	run	removal van	flag stop
lawyer	attorney	request stop	downsizing
lease of life	lease on life	rationalisation	horseback riding
lift	elevator	riding (horses)	beltway
liquidiser	blender	ring road	rivalled
lorry	truck	rivalled	rowboat
lustre	luster	rowing boat	break in
maize/sweetcorn	corn	run in (car, engine)	scalawag
manoeuvr	maneuver	scallywag	skeptical
manoeuvrable	maneuverable	sceptical	pie dough
marvellous	marvelous	shortcrust pastry	stenographer
meet	meet with	shorthand typist	light cream
metre (unit of distance)	meter	single cream	sizeable
minced meat	ground meat	sizeable	skillful
		skilful	railroad ties
		sleepers	

smoulder	smolder	tap	faucet
soda water	seltzer	terraced house	row house
solicitor	attorney	till	check-out
sombre	somber	titbit	tidbit
soya	soy	tomato purée	tomato paste
spanner	wrench	towards	toward
specialist shop	specialty shop	transport	transportation
speciality	specialty	traveller/travelled	traveler/traveled
sponge finger biscuits	ladyfingers	trousers	pants/slacks
spring onion	scallion	trunk call	long-distance
stand (for election)	run	call	
stocks	inventory	turning (road)	turnoff
stone	rock	tyre	tire
stoned (cherries, etc.)	pitted	underground (tube)	subway
storey (of building)	story	vest	undershirt
stupid	dumb	vice (tool)	vise
subway	pedestrian	waistcoat	vest
underpass		walk	hike
sulphur (ous)	sulfur(ous)	water biscuit	cracker
sultana	golden	way out	exit
	(seedless) raisin	woollen/woolly	woolen/wooly
suspenders	garters	work out (problem)	figure out
sweated	sweat	zip	zipper
sweet shop	candy store		

Clearly this list is far from complete (and is open to various interpretations and qualifications !) and says nothing about pronunciation but it may be useful for reference .

Martin Eayrs <martin@eayrs.com>