

## Appendix XII

### UK vs. US English

The most important differences between the English of the United Kingdom and the English of the United States are in pronunciation and vocabulary, especially colloquial vocabulary. Neither of these differences is important for scientific writing. Here there is a list of the few differences between the two varieties that can affect scientific writing.

#### Spelling

Differences between American and British spelling tend to be systematic and relatively easy to learn. Be sure to select the correct variety of English in your word processor's toolbox and to add new words to a personal dictionary for each variety. Although most journals accept manuscripts written in either variety, nearly all caution against mixing British and American spellings in the same document. The following table lists the most common differences and a few examples for each.

UNITED KINGDOM	UNITED STATES
RE	ER
calibre	caliber
centre	center
fibre	fiber
goitre	goiter
litre	liter
metre	meter
theatre	theater
titre	titer
OU	O
behaviour	behavior
colour	color
favourite	favorite
humour	humor
tumour	tumor
AE	E
aetiology	etiology
anaemic	anemic
anaesthetic	anesthetic
caecum	cecum
haemolysis	hemolysis
paediatrics	pediatrics

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UNITED KINGDOM	UNITED STATES
OE	E
diarrhoea	diarrhea
dyspnoea	dyspnea
foetus	fetus
manoeuvre	maneuver
oedema	edema
oesophageal	esophageal
oestradiol	estradiol
S	Z
<i>But note that Z is becoming more common in British English</i>	
analyse	analyze
catheterisation	catheterization
criticise	criticize
ionising	ionizing
organisation	organization
randomised	randomized
specialise	specialize
tranquilliser	tranquillizer
visualise	visualize
LL	L
bevelled	beveled
callipers	calipers
cancellation	cancelation
labelling	labeling
panellists	panelists
traveller	traveler
tunnelled	tunneled
L	LL
enrolment	enrollment
fulfil	fulfill
instalments	installments
skilful	skillful
PH	F
<i>The Royal Society of Chemistry recommends the F spelling.</i>	
sulphur	sulfur
sulphuric	sulfuric
sulphatase	sulfatase
sulphonamides	sulfonamides

UNITED KINGDOM	UNITED STATES
C	K
sceptical	skeptical
leucocyte	leukocyte
leucopenia	leukopenia
leucorrhoea	leukorrhea
<i>But note leukaemia</i>	leukemia
C and S	C or S
defence	defense
licence (noun), license (verb)	license (noun and verb)
offence	offense
practice (noun), practise (verb)	practice (noun and verb)
pretence	pretense
X	CT
connexion	connection
inflexion	inflection
<i>Connection and inflection are also common</i>	<i>But note flexion</i>
MISCELLANEOUS	
acknowledgements	acknowledgments
analogue	analog ( <i>analogue is also common</i> )
artefacts	artifacts
cheque (money)	check (all uses)
grey	gray
judgement	judgment
per cent ( <i>two words</i> )	percent ( <i>one word</i> )
programme ( <i>for congresses, concerts, etc. But computer program</i> )	program ( <i>all types</i> )
speciality	specialty
COMPOUND MEDICAL WORDS	
<i>Tend to be hyphenated, though there is a strong current trend to write these words without hyphens</i>	<i>Tend to be written without hyphens</i>
pancreato-duodeno-cystomy	pancreatoduodenocystomy
sterno-cleido-mastoid	sternocleidomastoid
ventriculo-peritoneal	ventriculoperitoneal

Continue

## Grammar

There are also a few differences in grammar between UK and US English.

The use of the definitive article in some common expressions differs:

UNITED KINGDOM	UNITED STATES
In future	In the future
In/to hospital	In/to the hospital
In the light of	In light of
In the press	In press
At university	In/at the university

There are also a few differences in the use of prepositions:

UNITED KINGDOM	UNITED STATES
At weekends	On weekends
At school	In school
Different to (from is also common)	Different from
The hospital is in the High Street	The hospital is on Main Street
Monday to Friday	Monday through Friday
On heat (in estrus)	In heat
Up to chapter 3	Through chapter 3

## Collective nouns

In the English of the United Kingdom, collective nouns can take either the singular or plural verb forms, depending on whether the emphasis is on the collective as a whole or on the individual members respectively. Some collective nouns, such as the Government or staff, nearly always take the plural form of the verb. By contrast, in the English of the United States, collective nouns nearly always take a singular verb. When a speaker wants to emphasize that the individuals are acting separately, a plural verb is possible, but it is much more common to change the construction to avoid this usage (Instead of “The audience are taking their seats” “The members of the audience are taking their seats”).

United Kingdom: *The team are operating on a fifty-five-year-old woman with breast cancer.*

United States: *The team is operating on a fifty-five-year-old woman with breast cancer.*

Collective nouns with plural forms take a plural verb in both the United Kingdom and the United States. *The Rolling Stones are doing a concert to raise money for Doctors without Borders.*

There are also minor differences in the use of some verbs; for example, past participles sometimes change, some verbs are transitive in one and intransitive in the other, and phrasal verbs are sometimes used differently. These differences are unlikely to present problems in scientific writing.

## Punctuation

A few differences in punctuation practices are worth mentioning.

UNITED KINGDOM	UNITED STATES
The punctuation mark to end a sentence is called a full stop.	The punctuation mark to end a sentence is called a period.
The abbreviations Mr, Mrs, Ms, and Dr are not followed by full stops.	The abbreviations Mr., Mrs., Ms., and Dr. are followed by periods.
(between brackets)	(between parentheses)
[between square brackets]	[between brackets]