

UK & US ENGLISH

A2-B1 | Vocabulary and spelling differences

1 Words with the same meaning

In each row, the UK and US words normally mean the same thing.

Both versions are correct. Choose the version that suits your audience.

2 Compare the vocabulary

HOME, TRAVEL & DAILY LIFE

UK English	US English
flat	apartment
rubbish	trash
lift	elevator
holiday	vacation
post	mail
pavement	sidewalk
motorway	freeway
petrol	gas
car park	parking lot

FOOD, SCHOOL & CLOTHES

UK English	US English
chips	fries
crisps	chips
biscuit	cookie
sweets	candy
shop	store
maths	math
timetable	schedule
mobile phone	cell phone
trousers	pants

3 Watch out

chips usually means thick fried potato pieces in the UK.

Thinner pieces are usually called (French) fries.

In US English, chips usually means crisps.

pants usually means trousers in the US, but underwear in the UK.

Language changes by region, so you may hear other versions too.

UK & US ENGLISH

A2-B1 | Common spelling differences

1 Spelling can change too

The words below normally have the same meaning, but the spelling changes.

Use one spelling system consistently in a piece of writing.

2 Compare the spelling

COMMON SPELLING DIFFERENCES	
UK English	US English
colour	color
favourite	favorite
honour	honor
neighbour	neighbor
centre	center
metre	meter
theatre	theater
defence	defense
travelling	traveling
cancelled	canceled
programme	program
cheque	check
jewellery	jewelry
catalogue	catalog
aeroplane	airplane
organise	organize

3 One useful note

Both organise and organize are used in British English. In US English, organize is standard.

Use program for computer software in both UK and US English.