

This Skill Sheet lists the main differences that exist between American English and British English writing style and spelling. A number of different conventions and meanings are identified in Table B.8a. Table B.8b lists the most common spelling differences between the two variants of English. Do not use a mixture of both forms in the same text. Note that in social sciences (not in fiction writing) American English spelling is becoming prevalent, even with British authors and publishers, due to the dominance of the American market in international scientific publications. Decide which variant you feel comfortable with. The tables include spare rows for you to add your own notes.

Table E.8a Differences in writing or meaning

British English	American English
Punctuation	Punctuation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use single quotation marks. Reserve the use of double quotation marks for quotes within quotes; ○ A single space after a full stop; ○ Tends to retain hyphenation: man-made, tree-like; ○ Keeps words separate: per cent, any more. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use double quotation marks. Reserve the use of single quotation marks for quotes within quotes; ○ (Sometimes) a double space after a full stop; ○ Generally, hyphenation is not used: manmade, tree-like; ○ Runs words together: percent, anymore.
Bibliographies	Bibliographies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Usually list only place and date of publication; ○ Entry on the basis of Family name: Hippel, E. von (1988); ○ Article and chapter titles are with essential capital letters only, in single quotation marks: 'Life in the fast lane'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Usually list place of publication, publisher and date of publication; ○ Entry on the basis of Prefix: Von Hippel, E. (1988); ○ Article and chapter titles are typed with initial capital letters for keywords and in double quotation marks: "Life in the Fast Lane".
Abbreviated dates	Abbreviated dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 8 July 1996 = 8-7-1996 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 8 July 1996 = 7-8-1996
Professor	Professor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ holds a chair in a particular science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ scientist who works at the university (not necessarily a full tenure Prof.)
Corporation	Corporation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (semi) government institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a private company
Half	Half
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> half an hour, half a dozen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a half hour, a half dozen
Different words with the same meaning	Different words with the same meaning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ traineeship ○ autumn ○ ill ○ university ○ holiday ○ curriculum vitae 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ internship ○ fall ○ sick ○ college ○ vacation ○ résumé

Notes

Notes

Table E.7b Common words spelt differently

British English	American English	British English	American English
words ending in ‘-el’ with emphasis on the first syllable, double ‘l’	single ‘l’		
○ equalled	○ equaled		
○ labelled	○ labeled		
○ marvelled (marvellous)	○ marveled (marvelous)		
○ modelled (modelling)	○ modeled (modeling)		
○ travelled (traveller)	○ traveled (traveler)		
○ tunnelled (tunnelling)	○ tunneled (tunneling)		
ending in ‘our’	ending in ‘or’		
○ behaviour	○ behavior		
○ labour	○ labor		
○ harbour	○ harbor		
○ favour	○ favor		
○ neighbour	○ neighbor		
ending in ‘ical’	ending in ‘ic’		
○ analytical	○ analytic		
○ geographical	○ geographic		
○ histological	○ histologic		
ending in ‘-tre’	ending in ‘-ter’		
○ centimetre	○ centimeter		
○ kilometre	○ kilometer		
○ centre	○ center		
○ theatre	○ theater		
ending in ‘mme’	ending in ‘m’		
○ programme	○ program		
ending in ‘ce’	ending in ‘se’		
○ defence	○ defense		
○ licence (as noun)	○ license		
○ offence	○ offense		
(exceptions do exist)	(exceptions do exist)		
ending in ‘gue’	ending in ‘g’		
○ catalogue	○ catalog		
○ analogue	○ analog		
spelt	spelled		
skilful	skillful		

Source: partly based on McNab, 1988; Van Dale, aid of Pearson corrector gratefully acknowledged