

BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH

Task 1. READING

Read the text below and answer questions. Check any words you don't know on your mobile phone.

1. Why do you have to be careful whether you use British or American English words?
2. What did [George Bernard Shaw](#) say about American English and British English?
3. What did Oscar Wilde say about American English and British English?
4. What did Henry Sweet predict?
5. Which words did you have to check using your phone?

This divergence between American English and British English has provided opportunities for humorous comment, e.g., [George Bernard Shaw](#) has a character say that the United States and United Kingdom are "two countries divided by a common language"; and [Oscar Wilde](#) that "We have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, the language" (*The Canterville Ghost*, 1888). [Henry Sweet](#) incorrectly predicted in 1877 that within a century American English, Australian English and British English would be mutually unintelligible (*A Handbook of Phonetics*). It may be the case that increased worldwide communication through radio, television, the Internet and [globalization](#) has reduced the tendency towards regional variation. This can result either in some variations becoming extinct (for instance, *the wireless*, being progressively superseded by *the radio*) or in the acceptance of wide variations as "perfectly good English" everywhere.

Although spoken American and British English are generally mutually intelligible, there are occasional differences which might cause embarrassment—for example, in American English a *rubber* is usually interpreted as a *condom* rather than an *eraser*, and a British *fanny* refers to the female pubic area, while the American *fanny* refers to an *ass* (US) or an *arse* (UK).

Task 2. GRAMMAR

Complete the text with the missing prepositions.

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Reading

Teachers' Notes

These activities have been designed to be used before the workshops as introduction and a way of getting students interested in the topic. You may also use the material as a follow up activity after the students have attended the event.

Before giving the worksheets to the students you may ask them to brainstorm the same idea.

1. How similar or how different are British and American English?
2. Why are they different, from the historical perspective?
3. Will British and American English become even more different in the future, or will they be the same?
4. Will Prince Harry's children speak British or American English?
5. Which do you prefer, British and American English?

You can arrange the students in such a way that they change partners all the time and discuss each question with someone else.

The full version of the text can be found at

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_American_and_British_English