

In English, please

JERSEY OR NEW JERSEY?

IS YOUR ENGLISH BRITISH, OR AMERICAN?

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At the beginning of the last millennium, there was ... French. It was spoken at the court of the King of England ever since William of Normandy conquered the land, following the decisive Norman victory at Hastings in 1066. Then, around the end of the 14th century, English started creeping back again and ended up being the language you can hardly leave home without. Over the years and around the world, it developed specificities to fit the needs of its many users.

Although **British English** and **American English** are two varieties of the same language, differences do exist and mistakes can be embarrassing, for example when the same word has two completely different meanings. You don't make the same use of a rubber, or you don't feel the same if you are pissed, in **Jersey** or in **New Jersey**.

The differences between the two languages can be categorized into 4 groups: grammar, spelling, vocabulary and pronunciation.

Grammar

The main difference in grammar comes with tenses. The British advocate the use of the present perfect in sentences where actions which occurred in the past have an effect on the present, when Americans prefer the simple past: Eliot **has cleared/cleared** the runway. He requests taxi instructions. The same rules apply when "already", "just" or "yet" is part of a sentence: **I have just checked** notams/**I just checked** notams.

Another grammatical difference appears when the verb "to have" expresses possession: the British **"have got"** and the Americans just **"have"**: Have you got/Do you have my flight plan destination LFPL?

Last but not least, the past participle of the verb

"to get" can be either **"got"** or **"gotten"**: Eliot has **got/gotten** much better at flying over the years.

Spelling

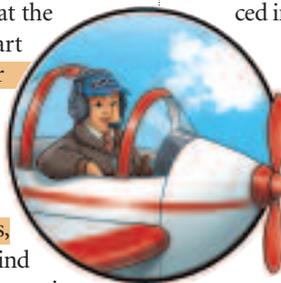
The words in the table below have the same pronunciation in **Jersey** as in **New Jersey**, but with a different spelling and occasionally a slightly different meaning. The major differences are found in double consonants, words ending in "- re/-er" or "-our/-or", spelling of the "zee" sound, and of course the inevitable exceptions.

UK	US
Refuelling	Refueling
Traveller	Traveler
Centre Kilometre	Center Kilometer
Colour Neighbour	Color Neighbor
Organisation Recognise	Organization Recognize
Draught Enquiry	Draft Inquiry
Licence Tyre	License Tire

Vocabulary

It's definitely in this category that the main differences are found. Apart from the well-known **lift/elevator** or **flat/apartment** opposition, other less obvious concepts have different labels. If you talk about a **fortnight** to an American, he will ask: "that's a couple of weeks, right?" In the table below you'll find more of these more or less aeronautically-related words that can draw a blank if used on the wrong side of the Atlantic.

UK	US
Aerial	Antenna
Air hostess	Flight attendant
Car park	Parking lot



Dialling code	Area code
Engaged phone line	Busy phone line
Fire brigade	Fire department
To hire	To rent
Petrol	Gas
Silencer	Muffler
Windscreen	Windshield

Pronunciation

Every language has different regional accents, and English, which is spoken in so many countries, is no exception. It is quite easy to differentiate the famous **Texan accent** from the very formal **Received Pronunciation**, also called BBC English. For example Texans do not diphthong the "i" in words such as "night" which is pronounced more like "naht". Just imagine what it sounds like when a Texan asks if you want some ice in your tea!

But some differences can be more subtle, with words stressed on a different syllable (**va'cate/vacate**, **de'tail/de'tail**, **ga'rage/ga'rage**), or pronounced in a different way (either, tomato).

As always, Americans are more relaxed about it all. They often accept both versions, when the British are more likely to stick to their convictions. A general rule to follow would be to choose a version and be consistent with its use. It is best to avoid something like: "the **aeroplane** at the **refueling** pump **has got** a strange **color**"!

If push comes to shove, however, you can always blame it on the other language and say "the **Brits/Yanks** do it that way". Just make sure the person you are talking to **hasn't got/doesn't have** a PhD in English. ●

Vocabulary

TO ADVOCATE	PRÉCONISER
TO BE PISSED (SLANG)	ÊTRE IVRE/ÊTRE FURIEUX
TO CREEP	RAMPER
TO DRAW A BLANK	SUSCITER DE L'INCOMPRÉHENSION
IF PUSH COMES TO SHOVE	AU PIRE
NEIGHBOUR/NEIGHBOR	VOISIN
PHD	DOCTORAT
RUBBER(SLANG)	GOMME/PRÉSERVATIF
SILENCER/MUFFLER	SILENCIEUX (ÉCHAPPEMENT)

MORE TIPS

More on the subject:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/american_and_british_english_spelling

www.english-zone.com/vocab/ae-be.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_and_British_English_pronunciations

www.howjsay.com