

Talk a Lot

Foundation Course

These pages show 100 examples of words where spelling differs. Can you find any more words in each category?

Lesson 2 – Comparing British English and American English Spellings

Problem: there are too many unnecessary silent letters in British English spelling – especially vowel letters. American English spelling gets rid of some of them (see below). NEA spelling gets rid of **all** of them!

British English Spelling	American English Spelling	How is the British English spelling simplified?
anaesthetic	anesthetic	silent vowel letter "a" is deleted
archaeology	archeology	
encyclopaedia	encyclopedia	
gynaecology	gynecology	
leukaemia	leukemia	
mediaeval	medieval	
orthopaedic	orthopedic	
paediatric	pediatric	
palaeontology	paleontology	
toxaemia	toxemia	silent vowel letter "e" is deleted
ageing	aging	
axe	ax	
blonde	blond	
judgement	judgment	
likeable	likable	
loveable	lovable	
sizeable	sizable	
storey	story	
diarrhoea	diarrhea	silent vowel letter "o" is deleted
foetus	fetus	
moustache	mustache	
oestrogen	estrogen	
mould	mold	silent vowel letter "u" is deleted
analogue	analog	silent vowel letters "u" and "e" are deleted
catalogue	catalog	
dialogue	dialog	
doughnut	donut	silent letters "u", "g", and "h" are deleted (archaic spelling) in the AmE spelling "f" represents f instead of "ght"
draught	draft	
centre	center	"er" represents the schwa sound uh better than "re"
fibre	fiber	
kilometre	kilometer	
litre	liter	
lustre	luster	
manoeuvre	maneuver	
theatre	theater	
armour	armor	silent vowel letter "o" is deleted too
behaviour	behavior	
colour	color	
favour	favor	
favourite	favorite	
flavour	flavor	
harbour	harbor	
honour	honor	
honourable	honorable	
humour	humor	
labour	labor	
neighbour	neighbor	
odour	odor	
rumour	rumor	
savoury	savory	

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British English Spelling	American English Spelling	How is the British English spelling simplified?
analyse	analyze	“s” changes to “z”, which better represents the sound z
apologise	apologize	
appetiser	appetizer	
breathalyse	breathalyze	
atalyse	catalyze	
civilise	civilize	
colonise	colonize	
cosy	cozy	
criticise	criticize	
emphasise	emphasize	
harmonise	harmonize	
memorise	memorize	
organiser	organizer	
paralyse	paralyze	
popularisation	popularization	
prise	prize	
realise	realize	
recognise	recognize	
defence	defense	
licence	license	
offence	offense	
practice	practise	an “i” is deleted where two letters represent one i sound the AmE spelling “enroll” is an exception to this rule! silent vowel letter “e” is deleted too
pretence	pretense	
cancelled	canceled	
chilli	chili	
enrol	enroll	
equalling	equaling	
fulfill	fulfil	
jewellery	jewelry	
modelling	modeling	
traveller	traveler	
woollen	woolen	“ck” or “k” are more rational ways of representing the hard k sound. “licorice” is an exception – if “c” is acceptable here, why is it not in “disc”?
cheque	check	
disc	disk	
liquorice	licorice	
sceptical	skeptical	both spellings are valid, representing different pronunciations of the same word
dreamt	dreamed	
learnt	learned	“i” is a more rational way to represent a vowel sound
cypher	cipher	
sulphur	sulfur	“f” is a more rational way to represent f
omelette	omelet	
programme	program	silent letters “t” and “e” are deleted
aluminium	aluminum	silent letters “m” and “e” are deleted
aeroplane	airplane	2nd “i” is deleted which cuts out y sound
speciality	specialty	2nd (weak) syllable is deleted; “aer” changes to “air”
mum	mom	2nd & 3rd syllables deleted; stress changes to 1st syllable
grey	gray	<i>both spellings are valid, representing different accents</i>
mementoes	mementos	<i>in my opinion “ey” represents ei better than “ay”</i>
pyjamas	pajamas	<i>in my opinion “oes” represents euz better than “os”</i>
tyre	tire	<i>I don't like either spelling; p Jar mz is more accurate!</i>
		<i>there is a y sound in “tyre”, so I prefer the British English</i>