

How British is your Academic English?

Student's instructions

Without looking at the list below, listen to your teacher define some words and expressions etc and write the form that you would most often use. When there is more than one option, write only the thing you use most or would be most likely to use, i.e. one thing only. If there's anything you have no idea about, leave it blank until you hear the options at the second stage.

Compare with your partner, but only change what you have written if you are sure it is actually wrong as there are many possible answers.

Listen again but this time with options to choose from. Choose just one option, only changing your mind from the previous round if you are sure you would use that other thing more often. If you've never used any of the options, just choose the one you like the sound of.

What is the distinction between the two options each time?

Compare with your partner again. Who do you think has more British English?

Check which is which as a class and see if you were right about who had more British English.

Do the same for spelling, making sure you still write only the form that you would use more often.

Compare your answers in pairs and then as a class. Which of you had more British spelling and which had more American spelling?

What are the general patterns in the words that you have checked your answers to?

Try to think of other British/ American spelling differences, e.g. other examples of the differences above. You get one point for each correct difference, and two points for any which are particularly academic.

Your teacher will read out some other words from their list. You get one point for each correct statement you can make about spelling, variations, other parts of speech etc about those words, but play passes to another person or group if you say anything wrong.

How British is your Academic English – Teacher’s Script

Choose between 15 and 20 from the lists below to dictate to your class, following the instructions on the Student’s Instructions sheet above. The ones in bold below are British.

Part One: Academic Vocabulary

People

- A new undergraduate student – **first year student/ fresher/** freshman
- A student in the year after that – **second year student/** sophomore
- Someone who continues studying after they finish their first degree – grad student/ graduate student/ **postgrad student/ postgraduate student**
- The normal way to address a basic-level lecturer – **Doctor + family name/** Professor + family name
- A group noun for the people who have teaching and research roles in the university – **academic staff/** faculty

Places

- The first school you go to, after kindergarten – **elementary school/** primary school
- The opposite of a private school – public school/ **state school** (a British “public school” is a very expensive and historic private school)
- Accommodation for students – dorm/ dormitory/ **halls/ student halls**

Times

- The periods that academic years are divided up into – semester/ **term**
- The time between lessons – **break/** recess
- The document telling you when your classes are – schedule/ **timetable**
- A special period with no work, e.g. Xmas – **holiday/** vacation

Testing

- Much less important and/ or much shorter than an exam – quiz/ **test**
- A symbol that means you got the answer right, the opposite of a cross – check/ check mark/ **tick**
- Look at what you have studied in order to remember it, perhaps before an exam – review/ **revise**
- Work that needs to be done before the next lesson – assignment/ **homework**
- A number or letter representing how well you did your work, e.g. “B+”, “distinction” or “63%” – grade/ **mark**

Miscellaneous

- Money you have to pay for being taught – tuition/ **tuition fees**
- A common abbreviation of “mathematics” – math/ **maths**
- Another word for the most common meaning of “quite” – **fairly/** very
- Fill _____ a form – **in/** out
- Enrol(l) _____ a course – in/ **on**
- Places where you can stay such as an apartment or a hotel – **accommodation/** accommodations
- The punctuation mark used at the end of a statement – **full stop/** period

Part Two: Academic Punctuation

- The short forms of “mister”, “misses” and “doctor” – **Mr Mrs Dr/ Mr. Mrs. Dr.**
- **The walls were coated with wallpaper, paint and tiles./** The walls were coated with wallpaper, paint, and tiles.
- **The man stopped: he had forgotten his hat./** The man stopped: He had forgotten his hat.
- The performance took place on the second of February 2006. – **The performance took place on 2 February 2006./** The performance took place on February 2, 2006.
- **(For further discussion see Richardson's excellent analysis (1999) and Danneburger's survey (2000))/** (For further discussion see Richardson's excellent analysis [1999] and Danneburger's survey [2000])

Part Three: Spelling of Academic Word List vocabulary

Choose at least ten from the list below, making sure there are at least two of each kind if you want them to go on and make generalisations. You can define the words, give the root forms, or just dictate the words. The first in each pair is British. Note that –ize and –ization are also fine in British English – the point is included here because –ise and –isation is more common and it brings out lots of lovely academic vocabulary.

-ae/ -e

- A book or CD ROM that has factual entries on almost everything, e.g. Britannica and Encarta – encyclopaedia/ encyclopedia
- anaemia/ anemia
- anaesthesia/ anesthesia
- orthopaedic/ orthopedic
- paediatric/ pediatric

-ise/ -ize and –isation/ -ization

- Another way to say “use” – utilise/ utilize, utilisation/ utilization
- Free up, get rid of restrictions such as red tape – liberalise/ liberalize, liberalisation, liberalization
- Put into order by how important they are – prioritise/ prioritize, prioritisation/ prioritization
- The increasing interconnectedness and independency across borders – globalise/ globalize, globalisation/ globalization
- To list – itemise/ itemize, itemisation/ itemization
- category – categorise/ categorize, categorisation/ categorization
- colony – colonise/ colonize, colonisation/ colonization
- computer – computerise/ computerize, computerisation/ computerization
- concept – conceptualise/ conceptualize, conceptualisation/ conceptualization
- context – contextualise/ contextualize, contextualisation/ contextualization
- drama – dramatise/ dramatize, dramatisation/ dramatization
- external –externalise/ externalize, externalisation/ externalization
- institute –institutionalise/ institutionalize, institutionalisation/ institutionalization

- internal – internalise/ internalize, internalisation/ internalization
- maximum – maximise/ maximize, maximisation, maximization
- minimal – minimise/ minimize, minimisation/ minimization
- neutral – neutralise/ neutralize, neutralisation, neutralization
- normal – normalise/ normalize, normalisation/ normalization
- rational – rationalise/ rationalize, rationalisation/ rationalization
- stable – stabilise/ stabilize, stabilisation/ stabilization
- standard – standardise/ standardize, standardisation/ standardization
- visual – visualise/ visualize, visualisation/ visualization

(Just) -ise/ -ize

- Cause a huge change or improvement – revolutionise/ revolutionize
- emphasis – emphasise/ emphasize
- final – finalise/ finalize
- hypothesis –hypothesise/ hypothesize
- philosophy – philosophise/ philosophize
- recognition – recognise/ recognize
- summary – summarise/ summarize
- symbol – symbolise/ symbolize

-ll/ -l

- channelled/ channeled
- counsellor/ counselor, counselling/ counseling
- equalling/ equaling
- initialled/ initialed
- labelled/ labeled
- libellous/ libelous
- modelling/ modeling
- panellist/ panelist
- signalling/ signaling

-our/ -or

- A word meaning manual work that is also the name of the main centre-left party in the UK – labour/ labor
- The person who lives in the house next to yours – neighbour/ neighbor
- behave – behaviour/ behavior

-re/ -er

- One hundredth of a metre – centimetre/ centimeter
- There are 330 in a small water bottle – millilitre/ milliliter
- fibre/ fiber