

American English

WWlib was a project to collect and publish details of WWW pages in the United Kingdom. The text of all catalogue entries conformed to normal British spelling and usage.

If you are more familiar with American usage you may find the following list helpful.

It is not meant to be exhaustive. [Links to further information](#) about the differences between British and American English are available, especially if you are interested in colloquial and slang usages.

The first part of the list shows differences between American and British spelling of common words. An asterisk indicates that the pronunciation differs as well as the spelling. A plus sign indicates a British usage that is, apparently, not unknown in North America.

American	British	Notes
aluminum *	aluminium	Interesting discussion at
analog	analogue	
anesthesia	anaesthesia	
archeology	archaeology	
boro	borough	"boro" is informal and is sometimes seen in British road markings. In Scotland the word is "burgh" but it is pronounced "burr" or, sometimes, "borough" NOT "berg".
bylaw	bye law	
catalog	catalogue +	
center	centre	
color	colour	
curb	kerb	Edge of roadway or pavement. "curb" in the sense of "restrain" is used in British and American English.
defense	defence	
dialog	dialogue +	
donut	doughnut	"donut" is informal and is quite commonly used in BE to suggest that the bun is of a typical American character.
draft	draught	
encyclopedia	encyclopaedia	
favorite	favourite	
gage	gauge +	American usage is obsolete
gray	grey +	
gynecology	gynaecology	
hauler	haulier	
honor	honour	
humor	humour	
jewelry	jewellery	
license	licence	British usage is license for the verb and licence for the noun

maneuver	manoeuvre	
meter	metre	British usage is "meter" for a measuring device and "metre" for the unit of length. A correspondent suggests that the US military prefers "metre".
mold	mould	
mustache	moustache +	
nite	night	"nite" is informal in both AE and BE.
omelet	omelette +	
pajamas US	pyjamas	
practice	practise	British usage is "practise" for the verb and "practice" for the noun
program	programme	British usage is "program" for computers and "programme" for television or radio.
routing	routeing	
specialty	speciality	
story	storey	of building
sulfur	sulphur +	According to a correspondent the American spelling is now "official" British spelling for use by professional chemists but it is unlikely to be recognised by any other British English speaker.
thru	through +	American usage is obsolescent but may still be seen on road signs etc.,
tire	tyre	part of wheel in contact with road
vise	vice	tool

Generally American English *-or* as a word ending is equivalent to *-our* in British English, American *-er* as a word ending is sometimes equivalent to *-re* in British English. In American English the final *e* is removed from verbs before adding *-ing*, in correct British English this is not done giving "routeing" (British) and "routing" (American), however the American practice of dropping the "e" is becoming quite common in British English. If a verb ends in a single 'l' then the American *-ing*, *-ed* and *-er* forms also have a single 'l' whereas the British forms have a double 'll'. For example American English has *signaler*, *signaling* and *signaled* whereas British English has *signaller*, *signalling* and *signalled*. American English tends to prefer *-ize* and *-ization* whereas British English prefers *-ise* and *-isation* contrary to statements by certain well-known British authorities and much spell checking software.

Canadian spelling seems to be intermediate between the British and American (US) forms but is generally closer to British practice. There are variations from province to province. A quiet half-hour spent perusing the Vancouver Yellow Pages suggested that "aluminium", "gauge", "jewellery" and "mould" are preferred. [OK - I know there are better things to do in Vancouver !]. Some correspondents have suggested that Canadians normally use "aluminum".

There are, of course, exceptions to the above rules. American usage is "glamour" not "glamor" and "advertising" not "advertizing". British usage has "honorary" and "honorific" without the "u". Several correspondents have also noted that the British usages "centre" and "theatre" are displacing the American usages, particularly where the establishment in question wants to suggest that it is of superior quality.

When spelling out words (and 'phone numbers) it is British practice to say things such as "double e" for "ee" and "treble 3" for "333".

Please note that "tonne" is **not** a British spelling of "ton" but a quite separate metric unit equal to 1000 kg as distinct from the British ton of 2240 lbs (= 1016.96 kg).

As I receive more information from American correspondents it is becoming clearer that there are quite widespread regional variations in both the US and Canada, this looks like an interesting topic for further study.

The second part of the list shows common differences in usage. I.e. those cases where different words are used to describe the same thing. The primary purpose of this list is to indicate American usages that would be unfamiliar to speakers of British English. The following indications appear alongside some of the American and Canadian usages.

- ***** Many American usages are familiar to British English speakers. This asterisk indicates American usages that are comparatively unfamiliar or unknown.
 - **obs** These are American usages that are, according to correspondents, obsolete or obsolescent. American English speakers now use the same words as British English speakers.
 - **Can** These usages are, I believe, confined to Canada. In general Canadian English is more similar to American English than British English. Where Canadian usage is the same as British usage as distinct from American usage this is indicated.
 - **US** These usages are confined to the USA and are not known in Canada or the UK.
 - **?** I'm not certain about the meaning of the American usage, further information will be welcome.
- **AE** American English
 - **BE** British English
 - **CE** Canadian English

American/Canadian	British	Notes
A		
airplane *	aeroplane	
alligator pear <i>Obs</i>	avocado	
AM	Medium Wave	Radio stations broadcasting using amplitude modulation on frequencies in the range 555-1600 kHz. In Europe (and the UK) the actual frequency range is 531 to 1611 kHz with 9KHz channel spacing. Stations do not have distinctive callsigns. There are (in the UK) a number of national stations (not all operated by the BBC) that can be heard anywhere in the country.
antenna	aerial	Electronics. A correspondent has suggested that AE uses "aerial" for rod type antennae such as the "rabbit ears" sometimes used with TV sets.
apartment	flat	A flat occupying more than one floor is called a "maisonette" in BE and a "duplex" in New York. A correspondent suggests that CE uses "flat" to refer to accommodation with some shared facilities and another suggests that AE uses " townhouse " to refer to a multi-level apartment. Another correspondent suggests that AE reserves the word "apartment" to refer to rented accommodation. BE does not

		distinguish between owned flats and rented flats.
apartment house/building	block of flats	See entry for " condominium ".
appetizer	starter, hors d'oeuvre	"hors d'oeuvre" is rather posh.
area code	dialling code	Telephone. The obsolescent BE phrase STD (Subscriber Trunk Dialling) code may be encountered.
arugula	rocket	Edible plant used in salads.
asphalt	Tarmac	The BE term is proprietary. A composite of bitumen (a tarry substance) and gravel used for surfacing/paving roads etc. In American usage "tarmac" is used to refer to surface of airport runways etc. A macadamised road is one with a surface of carefully graded stones first devised by John Macadam in the early 19th century. "Tarmacadam" refers to the same form of road construction with a final layer of a tarry substance designed partially to prevent vehicles throwing up dust and small stones and partially to prevent rainwater seeping into the road structure. According to a correspondent oil men use "asphalt" to refer to something found down an oil well.
attached home <i>obs</i>	semi-detached house	A pair of dwellings sharing a single common wall. There are, apparently, significant regional US variations in the names of types of housing.
attorney	lawyer	See notes on " lawyer ".
auto, automobile <i>obs</i>	car	The word "auto" is still sometimes seen in notices and road signs. The American usages would sound strange to British ears.
automated teller machine (ATM)	cashpoint	A "hole in the wall" machine from which you can get money.
B		
baby carriage	pram, perambulator	The word "perambulator" is very pompous. This is a substantial crib or cot-like container kept well clear of the ground on large wheels.
backpack/backbag	rucksack	Carrier for camping equipment etc., usually with a metal frame, worn on the back.
back-up light *	reversing light	AE prefers "reverse light" according to a correspondent.
baked potato	jacket potato	A potato cooked without removing the skin.
baking soda	bicarbonate of soda	Sodium bicarbonate (Na ₂ CO ₃) used in cooking.
ball-point pen	Biro	The BE term is proprietary. Invented by the Hungarian Laszlo Jozsef Biro in the 1940's.
Band-Aid	sticking plaster	The AE term is proprietary. The word "bandage" referring to an "ad-hoc" wound dressing made of cloth, gauze etc., is common to AE and BE.

bandshell	bandstand	British bandstands do not have sound reflecting shields or enclosures and are just fenced, roofed and raised enclosures in public parks. A correspondent suggests that bandshell is a West Coast usage.
bangs	fringe	Hair style. In BE a "fringe" is hair hanging straight down beneath the normal hair line and usually trimmed to a straight edge; "bangs" refers to a fringe at the side with sharply swept forward ends.
bankroll <i>US</i>	foot the bill	
bar	pub, public house	An establishment where drinks can be purchased for consumption on the premises as distinct from an off-licence (BE) or liquor store (AE). In BE a "bar" is either a room within a public house, cafe, club, hotel etc., where drink is sold or the actual counter over which drinks are sold. Public houses often have several rooms with differing standards of furnishing and comfort and prices to match. In order of increasing facilities these are quite commonly called the "public bar", "saloon bar" and "lounge bar" although there are many variations. Public houses, although intended primarily to sell drink, often sell meals nowadays. Many public houses are "tied", which means they are actually owned by a brewery, and the landlord really is just a landlord. "Tied" houses give preference to the owner's brands although recent legislation and consumer pressure has made it much more likely that "guest" beers will be on offer. You may occasionally come across a "beer house" which is a public house only licensed to sell beer and similar drinks but not wines or spirits. See notes on "beer" . The AE terms "tavern", "roadhouse" and "saloon" referring to various types of drinking establishment have no direct British equivalent.
barrette*	hair slide	
baseboard	skirting board	A plank fixed along bottom of wall. In BE a "baseboard" is a board on which something, such as a model railway layout, is built. "cove" is sometimes used with the same meaning in AE/CE but in BE this refers to a curved moulding between wall and ceiling.
bathrobe	dressing gown	
bathroom	toilet	Especially in a domestic context. In BE a bathroom is a room containing a bath in a private house or hotel. See discussion under "washroom" .
bathub	bath	
battle stations <i>US</i>	action stations	The US Navy now refers to "general quarters".
beater *<i>obs, Can</i>	banger	Decrepit car. AE also has "clunker", "jalopy" (obs?), "hooptie" and "junker". Both BE and AE refer have

		"lemon" in this context.
beer	lager	The drink referred to as "beer" in American usage would not be recognised as such by many British drinkers. In British usage "beer" is a mildly alcoholic beverage served at a temperature that does not freeze your taste buds. "Real Ale" is beer prepared with the minimum of chemicals in a traditional fashion, usually in small local breweries. In BE lager is beer brewed using low temperature fermentation, it is typically lighter and clearer than normal beer and often served chilled. The word "lager" has some negative connotations being associated with drunken youths known as "lager louts". The word "ale" is slightly archaic and now means the same as "beer". The word "stout" describes a strong dark beer brewed with roasted malt or barley and particularly popular in Ireland (Guinness is the best known brand). See notes on " bar ".
bell pepper *	red pepper, green pepper	Yellow ones are also available. A variety of capsicum. There is some evidence of US regional variations. CE has "red sweet pepper" and is generally as BE. A correspondent has, rather confusingly, suggested that in AE a "red pepper" is hot whereas a "red bell pepper" is mild.
beltway, loop	ring road, circular road	A road circling a city. There are various other regional and local North American names. CE as BE.
bill	note	In the sense of a piece of paper currency. British currency notes currently in general circulation are £5, £10, £20 and £50. The £5 and £10 notes are frequently called "fivers" and "tenners". The different notes are of different sizes, colours and general appearance which makes things a bit easier for the visually handicapped unlike the paper currency of a certain North American country.
billfold <i>Obs</i>	wallet	The AE term is becoming obsolescent and being replaced by "wallet"
billion	thousand million	<p>The old British usage in which a billion was a million² is now largely obsolete and most British speakers would assume the American meaning. Careful users avoid the words altogether and use exponent notation. The usage continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trillion = tri+(m)illion = million³ = 10¹⁸ • quadrillion = quad+(m)illion = million⁴ = 10²⁴ • centillion = cent+(m)illion = million¹⁰⁰ = 10⁶⁰⁰ <p>The American naming seems to work on the principle 10^{3+(number×3)}</p>

binder clip	bulldog clip	Spring loaded device for holding sheets of paper together.
birdcage	no equivalent	Net covering over swimming pool.
biscuit	scone	
blacktop	Tarmac	See notes on "asphalt". AE usage may be primarily rural to distinguish from "dirt roads".
blinders	blinkers	
blinkers	indicators	Part of a car. See note on "turn signals". In BE blinkers are used on horses to prevent them being distracted by things going on on either side.
blood sausage	black pudding	The AE term "chorizo" has a similar meaning.
blush	rosé	light pinkish wine
bobby pin *	hair grip, Kirby grip	"Kirby Grip" is proprietary.
boneyard <i>obs</i>	scrapyard, junkyard	Place where old machinery etc., gently rots away. "boneyard" is a regional US usage.
bouillon cube	stock cube	
boxcar	<i>no equivalent</i>	A covered railway wagon with a door for loading. British railways use either open trucks, wagons built for specific loads such as oil or, most commonly "container flats" which are flat trucks with no side panels adapted to carry the ubiquitous containers.
braid	plait	Hair style. British geographers would refer to "braided streams" and British electronic engineers would refer to "braided conductors".
breakdown lane	hard shoulder	Lane at edge of multi-lane limited access road. A correspondent suggests that "breakdown lane" is specific to the North East of the US.
brewpub *	no equivalent	British usage would simply refer to a "pub that brewed its own beer" although the word "microbrewery" is now becoming common in both BE and AE.
Brit	Briton	"Britisher" sounds rather Germanic (especially in stereotypical WW2 films). "Briton" is not widely used. We are Englishmen, Scotsmen, Welshmen and Irishmen (and women!) and confusing them causes offence. The correct name of the country is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, often abbreviated to the United Kingdom. Great Britain is a large island off the North West coast of Europe, it includes the kingdoms of England and Scotland and the principality of Wales. England and Scotland share the same monarch but Wales has a prince of its own. Northern Ireland is just a province, don't confuse it with Ulster which includes the counties of Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal in the Irish republic. The Isle of Man and the Channel

		Islands (Jersey, Guernsey etc) are not legally part of the United Kingdom. The word "Brit" is rapidly coming into popular usage. The correct adjectives for things from Scotland are "Scottish" for most things, "Scots" for the people and a sort of pine tree and "Scotch" for the whisky.
broad jump	long jump	
brown bag lunch	packed lunch	Lunch obtained from supermarket or, more usually, made at home and taken to work. In US practice supermarkets and grocery stores give/sell customers brown paper bags to take the groceries home in, in UK practice plastic bags, with handles, are used, a practice now becoming common in North America.
bun	bap, roll	A small round loaf, often used to make hamburgers. In BE buns are often sweet and deliciously sticky and there are many varieties such as the hot cross buns traditionally served on Good Friday.
bureau <i>Obs</i>	chest of drawers +	A piece of furniture consisting of a number of wide shallow drawers one above another mainly used for storing clothes and linen. A correspondent has suggested that the US usage is regional. In BE "bureau" refers to a piece of furniture typically found in old-fashioned offices with both drawers and a fold-down writing surface.
burglarize	burgle, steal	"Steal" is now the commoner AE usage.
burlap	hessian	coarse fabric used for sacking, bags and, sometimes, wall covering.
bus	coach	In British usage for journeys between towns and cities its a coach, always single decker. Within towns and cities it's a bus, often double-decker.
busboy	<i>No equivalent</i>	In British restaurants the waiter clears tables.
busy signal	engaged tone	Telephone system.
butterfly blade	flick knife	
C		
caboose *	guard's van	A caboose traditionally includes sleeping and messing facilities is painted red and has a sort of H-shaped chimney, a guard's van does not.
cadaver	corpse	A dead body. AE seems to increasingly reserve the word "cadaver" for medical and forensic use.
cafeteria	canteen	Place, especially in a factory or school, where meals are served. BE also uses "canteen" for a small water bottle used by soldiers and campers and also for a collection of cutlery.
candy	sweet	The word "candy" refers to a particular crystallised sugar confection in British usage.

canine cookie <i>Obs</i>	dog biscuit	
car	carriage, truck	A railway vehicle for carrying passengers (carriage in BE) or freight (truck in BE). On the road its a "car" in both BE and AE.
caravan <i>obs</i>	convoy	Group of vehicles travelling together. The American usage "caravan" is rare/archaic except when the vehicles are camels. In BE a "caravan" is a mobile home or trailer. A correspondent has told me that American estate agents (Realtors) refer to groups of viewers of properties as "caravans".
carnival	travelling fair or circus	In British usage a carnival is a period of widespread public celebration often associated with street processions, this also applies in a few American cities such as New Orleans. A fair is travelling entertainment with sideshows and rides such as dodgems, ferris wheels, helter-skelters etc. A circus has seating round a ring (or several rings) where clowns and animals perform. The tent covering the ring of a circus is called the "big top".
carousel	merry-go-round	Fairground ride consisting of wooden (or plastic) horses on poles which rise up and go down as the whole rotates. I have seen examples with up to five rings of horses.
carpenter's level	spirit level	
cart	trolley	Shopping. BE does not use the word "cart" in this context reserving it for a wheeled trailer pulled by a vehicle or horse.
casket	coffin	The American style casket looks very elaborate and in rather poor taste to British eyes. Coffins are invariably very plain affairs.
cattle guard	cattle grid	
cell phone, cellular phone	mobile phone	Often just called "the mobile" in BE and "cell" in AE.
check <i>US</i>	cheque	Banking. Same pronunciation, different spelling. CE as BE.
checkers	draughts	Board game.
checking account	current account	Banking. The American facility is technically called a "demand deposit account". It is called a "chequing account" in CE.
cheesecloth	muslin	
chesterfield	settee	See entry for " couch ".
chicken wire	wire netting	
chicory	endive	
chief executive officer (CEO)	managing director (MD)	Head of day to day operations of a commercial organisation. The American usage is creeping in in the UK.

chifforobe *	gentleman's wardrobe	A wardrobe with hanging space on one side and drawers on the other.
chips	crisps	"Thin fried slices of potato usually sold in bags as snacks or "nibbles". According to a correspondent there is now US legislation requiring that the word "crisp" be used to describe those made from moulding chopped potato.
chorizo		See entry for blood sausage.
cilantro	coriander	herb
city	town	In American usage "city" is used for any "incorporated" area, which seems to mean that it has some form of local government, as such the population may be only a few hundred. There are state-by-state regional variations in the precise meaning of the American term. In British usage an urban area is only a city if it has a cathedral or has a royal warrant saying it's a city. If it isn't a city it's a town (or a village). My own city, Wolverhampton, has a population of about 250,000, a bishop, a university, a main-line railway station, trams and over a thousand years of history but it didn't become a city until December 2000.
closet	fitted wardrobe	Especially a walk-in wardrobe or small storage room that is a permanent fixture not a piece of furniture.
closing out	closing down	Sale of goods when shop or company ceases regular trading. AE also uses this to refer to stock clearance of particular lines of merchandise.
clothes pin	clothes peg	Holds washing on a line.
coach	economy	Inexpensive class of accommodation on a train or aeroplane. In BE a "coach" is a single decker bus like vehicle that carries booked passengers or is booked for a party of passengers, unlike a 'bus' it does not stop to pick up custom at the roadside.
collect call *	reverse charge call	Telephone.
comfort station <i>Obs</i>	public convenience, toilet	See discussion under "washroom". I have also seen "comfort house" applied to a portable toilet on a building site. A correspondent reports "port-a-potty" for temporary facilities. This would probably be called a "portaloo" in BE, although this is a proprietary term. According to a correspondent this term has re-appeared in AE as a fold-down table for changing a baby's nappy.
comforter	quilt, eiderdown, bedspread	Warm covering on top of bed that is made up traditionally using sheets and blankets as distinct from a duvet.
concert master	leading or first violin, leader	Orchestra.

condominium, condo *	block of flats	Both BE and AE use "condominium" to refer to a territory governed jointly by two nations. In referring to a block of flats BE does not distinguish between rented flats and individually owned flats. "condominium" usually means that the flats are individually owned rather than rented.
conductor	guard	A railway official. In London, buses have both a driver and a conductor whose job is to sell tickets.
consignment *	second hand goods	The American term refers to goods sold on commission, a concept unknown in the United Kingdom.
cookie	biscuit (sweet)	In British usage "cookie" is sometimes used to refer specifically to a biscuit with chips of chocolate included known, I believe, as a "chocolate chip cookie" in AE.
cooler	cool box	a well insulated box used for food etc., Both BE and AE also use "cooler" as a slang word for a detention cell.
cord	lead, flex	Flexible electrical cable joining an electrical appliance or telephone to a socket. For power connections British practice uses the same colours as are used in Europe, brown for live, blue for neutral and green with yellow stripe for earth. Older British practice still used for permanent cables is red for live, black for neutral and green (or bare copper) for earth. American practice is black for live, white for neutral and green for earth, although it is not normal for the cord from the outlet to the appliance to have colour coded wires.
corn	sweet corn, maize, corn-on-the-cob	In British usage "corn" is used fairly generically to mean "wheat" or "oats".
corn starch	corn flour	
cotton batting <i>obs</i>	cotton wool	
cotton candy	candy floss	
cotton swab	cotton bud	Q-Tip is a proprietary US term.
couch	settee	An upholstered seat for two or more people. BE has several variants with no specific words for two or three seated versions. A "chesterfield" has buttoned leather upholstery. "Sofa" is a fairly common alternative. A "chaise longue" has an arm at one end only so you can lie down on it. In BE a "love seat" has two seats side by side but facing in opposite directions in a sort of "S" shape, suitable only for the most chaste amatory activities. "couch potato" means the same in BE as AE.
county		American usage would, typically, be "Orange County". Apart from "County Durham" the word

		would not be used in referring to a British administrative division, the suffix "-shire" means that it's a county anyway. The use of the word "County" is normal in referring to Irish administrative divisions. They're called "parishes" in Louisiana, in British usage a "parish" is the lowest level unit of government (rural areas only) or ecclesiastical organisation. There are no standard geographical subdivisions between the nations of the UK and the counties. Unlike the states of the USA and the provinces of Canada there are no standard postal abbreviations for British counties, and their names are frequently omitted from addresses, a practice that is accepted by the Post Office if a post code is included.
cow pie	cow pat	Something you don't want to put your foot in.
coworker	workmate	"coworker" is also understood in BE as a slightly more formal term. BE also has "Workmate" as a proprietary term for an adjustable workbench.
crackers	biscuits	In British usage "cracker" can refer to a particular type of biscuit used with cheese or the usage "crackers" can imply that somebody is mentally deranged. BE speakers would be unaware of any racially offensive connotations.
crane fly	daddy-long-legs	Insect with long legs (<i>Tipula Maxima</i>). [My dictionary suggests that AE uses daddy-long-legs to refer to something called a harvestman (Order <i>Opiliones</i>) that lives in leaf litter and is a sort of spider with very long legs.]
crawl space	under floor void	
crazy bone *obs	funny bone	
cream of wheat	semolina	
creek	stream, brook	in British usage a "creek" is a small inlet of the sea. I am told the American word can also be spelt "crick", reflecting common pronunciation, although this would be considered uneducated.
crosswalk	pedestrian crossing	Specially marked part of roadway used by pedestrians crossing the road. The British usage "zebra crossing" is obsolescent. Many such crossings are controlled by traffic lights, some are still uncontrolled but indicated by large orange globes on striped posts known, after the presiding minister who first installed them, as Belisha beacons.
cuban	no equivalent	Floridan term for a sandwich with roast pork, ham, and swiss cheese.
cuffs	turn-ups	At bottom of trouser legs. Shirts (with long sleeves) in both AE and BE have cuffs.
cupcake	fairy cake	Small individual cake.

custom made	bespoke, made to measure	This refers to clothing, otherwise "custom made" is normal British usage. BE also has "bespoke software" (for computers).
D		
davenport	bed-settee	The AE term is probably proprietary. In BE a davenport is a type of desk.
daylight saving(s) time	(British) summer time	In AE "summer time" refers to any period of time during the summer.
dead end	cul-de-sac	BE also has "no through road", meaning a road that just stops. "cul-de-sac" is largely confined to suburban roads and usually implies a turning circle at the end, often with houses built round it. People live in cul-de-sacs not on them. "no outlet" is also sometimes seen in North America.
deck	pack	of playing cards
deck	<i>no equivalent</i>	A part of a house consisting of wooden boards on the outside of the building at ground or first floor level (or higher) allowing people to walk around. British houses simply do not have such things, the nearest equivalents are "patio" meaning an unroofed area adjacent to a building paved with slabs, "verandah" a covered and glassed walkway along the side of a building and "conservatory" a room-like extension entirely walled and roofed in glass. Wooden decking for use in gardens was introduced to the British market in 1998 and is being heavily promoted as "decking".
deductible	excess	Of insurance payouts.
deep freeze	freezer	Domestic appliance for storing frozen food.
delivery tanker	tanker	A vehicle that transports and delivers liquids such as milk and petroleum products.
delivery truck	van	
denatured alcohol	methylated spirits, meths	Ethanol (C ₂ H ₅ OH) that has been made unfit for drinking by the addition of methanol (CH ₃ OH), pyridine and purple colouring. See also "rubbing alcohol".
desk clerk	receptionist	In hotel. Both BE and AE use "receptionist" to mean the person in a commercial office who greets visitors.
dessert	pudding	Course after main course of a meal other than breakfast. "Pudding" usually implies that it has been cooked, otherwise "dessert" is often used. Calling the course "afters" is thought rather common by most British people. It is also sometimes called a "sweet" in BE. A correspondent has suggested that AE uses "pudding" with the same meaning as the BE "jelly", see entry for "Jell-O" . CE as BE.
detour	diversion	

diaper *	nappy	
differ... than	differ... from	The American usage "different than" grates terribly in British ears, in British English it's "different from" and "differing from".
dime	no equivalent	10 cent coin. For notes on British money see the entries for "nickel" and "loonie".
diner	café	Strictly there is no British equivalent of the traditional 12' wide American diner. In British usage the spelling "caff" (and pronunciation) is used to indicate a rather lowly establishment.
dirt road	unpaved road	BE would more usually call this a "track".
discount	concession	Reduced admission prices to cinemas, theatres etc., for students, pensioners etc. Advertisements often quote a regular admission price and a price for "concessions". Other uses of "discount" are the same in AE as BE.
dish pan	washing up bowl	
district attorney	public prosecutor	The "procurator fiscal" in Scotland. Many state variations in the US.
divided highway	dual carriageway	
docent *	curator, guide	In a museum, historic house or art gallery. Correspondents have suggested that "docent" implies a volunteer and also that "curator" refers to the director or administrator of a museum in AE/CE.
doctor's office	surgery	Contrary to the usage actual surgery is only done by surgeons in hospitals. British senior surgical staff are often referred to as "Mr." rather than "Dr." no matter how highly qualified. This probably dates back to the time when doctors were qualified but surgeons were little more than barbers unworthy of the honorific title. British dentists and veterinarians never use the title "Dr.".
double whole note	breve	Music.
downtown	town centre	The word "center" is, apparently, common usage in New England. Geographers sometimes refer to the central business district or CBD, but this isn't a general BE usage.
(the) draft	conscription	Enforced membership of military forces. It was also called "national service" in the UK but was abolished in the 1950's.
drapes *	curtains	
dresser	chest of drawers, dressing table	A dressing table is a table, usually with 2/3 small drawers and a large adjustable mirror used by ladies for doing their make-up.
driver's license <i>US</i>, driver's permit <i>Can</i>	driving licence	
drug store	pharmacy,	Pharmacy refers specifically to a place where

	chemists	medicines can be obtained both on and off prescription. A chemist's shop as well as incorporating a pharmacy will also sell a variety of personal products such as soap, tooth brushes, toothpaste, combs etc.
druggist <i>obs</i>	chemist, pharmacist	The word "chemist" is more common in BE.
dry goods store	drapery, haberdashery	A shop selling, cloth, thread and related items.
dump	tip	Throw something away. Also the place where things are thrown away.
Dumpster *	skip	Waste storage and transportation. AE term is proprietary.
duplex (house) *	semi-detached house	A pair of dwelling houses sharing a common wall. The single-storied version, which is very unusual, is called a "semi-detached bungalow" in BE. An apartment with two floors would be called a "maisonette" in BE. CE as BE. According to a correspondent CE uses "duplex" and "triplex" to mean a building containing two or three self-contained flats. A correspondent has also mentioned "shared-wall dwelling" as AE bureaucrat-speak.
E		
editorial	leader	Article in newspaper or magazine expressing the opinions of the editor. The American usage is not uncommon in BE.
eggplant *	aubergine	
eighth note	quaver	Music.
electrician's tape	insulating tape	Sometimes called "electrical tape" or even "sticky tape".
elementary school	primary school	Attended by children from about 5 to 10.
elevator	lift	If it's for goods only BE has the word "hoist". A "grain elevator" is called a "silo" in BE.
engineer	engine driver	Person controlling a locomotive. Otherwise BE uses "engineer" in the same way as AE.
England	United Kingdom	The American habit of saying "England" when the United Kingdom is meant is mildly annoying to people who live in England and EXTREMELY annoying to people who live in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. A correspondent has suggested that this American habit is becoming less common. See notes on "Brit" .
entrée	main course	In British usage "entree" means first course sometimes known as starter or in posher circles "hors d'oeuvre".
eraser	rubber	Used to remove marks made by pencils, British pronunciation is eraZer, American is eraSer.

excise laws	licensing laws	
exit	junction	Usually numbered location where you enter (BE) or leave a limited access highway. In North America exit numbering normally reflects the distance in miles (US) or kilometres (Canada) from the start of the highway except on the East Coast. In the UK junctions are numbered successively with new junctions built since the road was first laid out having numbers such as 7a and 11b. Exit in the sense of "way out" inside a building is the same in BE and AE.
expressway	main road	See notes on "interstate" .
Exxon	Esso	Petrol company. Now ExxonMobil.
eyeglasses	spectacles, specs	Usually just plain "glasses" in both AE and BE. Now where did I put them ?
F		
fair	show	There is no direct British equivalent of a state or county fair. The nearest are agricultural shows held in rural districts. In BE a fair is a travelling collection of rides and amusements that is set up for a few days in a convenient location.
fall	autumn	Both words are used in CE.
fanny pack	bum bag	Small bag worn around the waist and resting on the bottom. In BE "bum" is a slightly vulgar word for "bottom" and "fanny" is a distinctly vulgar word for the female genitalia.
faucet *	tap	Strangely in AE tap water comes out of the faucet unless you're in Pennsylvania where, apparently, its the register.
fava bean	broad bean	Vegetable (<i>vicia faba</i>).
fedora	trilby	Soft felt hat. There are slight differences.
feminine napkin	sanitary towel	The word "tampon" has the same meaning in both British and American usage. "Maxi Pad" is an American proprietary term.
fender	wing	Part of car.
	mudguard	Part of bicycle.
field	pitch	A sports ground.
fire hall <i>Can</i>	fire station	
firehouse	fire station	
fire starter	fire lighter	Small packet of readily combustible material.
fire truck *	fire engine or fire appliance	Professional fire fighters deprecate the usage "fire engine" and refer to "fire appliances" (BE) or "fire apparatus" (AE). The phrase "fire engine" is also used in America.
first floor	ground floor	In British usage the floors of a building are numbered

		starting at zero rather than one. So an American reference to the "second floor" would correspond to a British reference to the "first floor".
First Nations *<i>Can</i>	American Indians, Indians	The native (pre-Columbian) population of America.
flagstaff <i>obs</i>	flag pole	"flagpole" as a single word is common American usage.
flashlight	torch	With a bulb and batteries.
flatware	cutlery	
float home <i>obs</i>	house boat	
float plane <i>Can</i>	sea plane	An aeroplane adapted to land on and take off from water. The British usage "flying boat" is obsolete. There are differences in nomenclature depending on whether the main fuselage is intended to touch the water (a flying boat or sea plane) or whether the only part intended to touch the water are floats in more or less the position where a normal aircraft would have wheels (a float plane).
floor lamp	standard lamp	Domestic lighting appliance consisting of a tall pole with a lamp on top.
football	American football	See "soccer".
four way (stop)	cross roads	A place where two roads intersect. In America in the absence of traffic lights, priority is given to vehicles in order of arrival and, if two arrive at once, to the vehicle on the right. In the United Kingdom one or other of the roads will have priority, priority is indicated by road markings.
freeway	motorway	Limited access high speed trunk road. American usages "freeway", "highway", "beltway", "causeway", "express way", "parkway" all have similar meanings that are not differentiated in British usage. "freeway" often implies that it isn't a toll road or turnpike. Apart from a few bridges, toll roads are currently unknown in the UK, although the country's first toll motorway is opened north of Birmingham in 2004. See "interstate" entry for details on British road numbering.
freight elevator	hoist, goods lift	
french fries	chips	Sometimes just plain "fries" in AE. The variants "home fries", "steak fries" and "shoestring fries" don't map into BE, they're thick-cut chips, thin-cut chips and whatever you get in MacDonal'd's.
freshman	<i>no equivalent</i>	In BE "freshman" or "fresher" is sometimes used to refer to a first year undergraduate at a university. See notes on " high school ".
fridge pack	no equivalent	See entry for " two-four ".

funeral director	undertaker	
furnace *	central heating boiler	Domestic use only. In BE "furnace" is industrial.
G		
galoshes	Wellington boots, wellies	Tall rubberised boots.
garbage, trash	rubbish, refuse	
garbage can	dustbin	
garbage collector <i>obs</i>	dustman	BE computer scientists talk about "garbage collection". Political correctness has now given AE "sanitation engineer", in BE this term would refer to somebody who designs and builds sewers and associated facilities, a specialised form of civil engineer.
garter belt	suspender	Used to support ladies' stockings. In British usage a "garter" is a band, usually elastic, that goes around the leg to support a sock or stocking. There are no gender specific connotations.
gas	petrol	Fuel for motor vehicles. British usage reserves "gas" to mean an inflammable gas such as methane or carbon monoxide piped to domestic and industrial premises as a fuel. The word gasoline would not be widely understood in Britain. "Petroleum" is sometimes seen in legal and official notices. British aeroplanes are fuelled with "avgas" however, unless they're jets, of course.
gear shift, gear stick	gear lever	Part of car.
generator	dynamo	It converts mechanical energy to electrical energy. The American usage would be familiar to British ears. I was once told that a dynamo only generates DC whereas the machine that generates AC is called an alternator.
German shepherd	alsatian	breed of dog
girl scouts <i>US</i>	girl guides	
goaltender	goalkeeper	"goalie" is common in both AE and BE.
goatsucker	nightjar	bird
golden raisin <i>US</i>	sultana	A dried grape.
goose bumps	goose pimples	
goose egg *	duck	Score of zero in a game. The BE usage is confined to cricket.
gotten	got	"gotten" is sometimes used in BE to suggest an American rustic.
grade	gradient (slope)	The American usage of the word to refer to a stage in a child's progress through school is unknown in the UK. AE has "sixth grade" and "sixth graders" whereas CE has "grade six" and "grade sixes". See

		entry for " high school ".
grade crossing *	level crossing	Road/railway crossing.
graham crackers	digestive biscuits	Biscuits made from whole wheat flour. Also available part coated with chocolate or as a pair sandwiching a cream filling.
grease pencil	chinagraph pencil	
green thumbs	green fingers	good at gardening
ground	earth	Electrical.
ground	minced	meat, but mincemeat is something completely different composed mainly of fruit and used for making delicious small pies at Christmas time.
GST <i>Can</i>	VAT	Goods and Services Tax / Value Added Tax. A tax levied "at the point of consumption". In the UK shop prices are almost always quoted inclusive of VAT (currently 17.5%) so what you see is what you pay. In Canada shop prices are quoted exclusive of this tax so you're in for a surprise when you get to pay, you can always blame "the government". Canadian GST is currently 7% but the provinces levy their own provincial sales tax (PST), typically at about the same level as the government tax.
gumboot *<i>obs</i>	wellington	Boot, usually rubber or rubberised, reaching well up the calf worn in agricultural contexts.
gurney *	<i>no equivalent</i>	It's not that wheeled stretchers are unknown in British hospitals, it's just that there is no common name for them.
H		
half note	minim	Music.
hardware store	ironmonger	
hat check girl	cloakroom attendant	AE may be obsolescent, since few people wear hats now.
headlamp <i>obs</i>	headlight	Car.
heavy cream	double cream	
hex	cast a spell on	
Hidabed, hideaway	bed-settee	A couch or sofa that can be converted to a bed. Hidabed is proprietary. May also be called "daybed" in both BE and AE.
high school	secondary school	The British system of education for those under 18 is quite different from the US system. From 5 to 11 children attend a primary school, often starting in a class called "reception". From 11 to 18 they will attend a secondary school, in some areas they may transfer to sixth form colleges at the age of 16. The stages are referred to as years starting at 1 (at age 5) up to 11. After the 11th year children may join the

		6th form (don't ask !). The phrase "high school" when used refers to a school, often for girls, with selective entry via competitive examination. A similar school for boys is often a "grammar school", many of these are fairly ancient foundations and in recent years have become co-educational. AE references to "freshmen", "sophomores", "K12" etc., would not be understood in the UK. In Scotland "high school" means any secondary school.
high tea <i>Obs</i>	afternoon tea	A light meal taken in the late afternoon. Usually cakes and similar confectionary with a pot of tea. Widely available in British restaurants and "tea shops" which specialise in this sort of meal. In BE "high tea" refers to a more substantial meal taken at the same sort of time but with at least one cooked course.
highboy	tallboy	Tall chest of drawers.
highway	main road	In British usage the word "highway" is confined to formal and legal contexts. See entry for "interstate".
hoagie *	roll	There is really no direct BE equivalent. The alternative AE usage "submarine" or "sub" is not uncommon in British usage. "grinder" (mid west esp Pittsburgh), "hero" and "poor boy" (New Orleans) are regional US variants. The usage "hoagie", according to one correspondent, is specific to the Philadelphia area.
hobo *	tramp	Some AE speakers use "hobo" to mean a casual or itinerant worker as distinct from a "bum" or "tramp" who lives by begging and handouts. There is no word in BE to convey this precise distinction.
hog	pig	In British usage a "hog" is a person that claims exclusive use of something, i.e. hogs it. Farmers use "hog" to mean a male pig and "sow" to mean a female pig, the use of "hog" to mean a pig of either gender is probably obsolescent.
honor box	honesty box	Where you put money in return for small items.
hood	bonnet	car
hope chest	bottom drawer	Where a women keeps garments etc., against the possibility of matrimony.
hopper ball	space hopper	Large bouncy ball with ears. May be proprietary.
horny	randy	<i>slang</i> . Eager to engage in sexual congress. Americans called Randolph should not introduce themselves in British circles by saying "Hi, I'm Randy", unless, of course,
(house numbering)		British houses are usually numbered serially starting from one end of a road or street with even numbers on one side and odd numbers on the other side, however it is not uncommon to find them numbered sequentially up one side of the road and down the

		other. Subsequent subdivision of plots results in houses with numbers such as 60A, 60B, 60C etc., fractional house numbers are more or less unknown in British usage. North American numbering seems to be a sort of co-ordinate system related, probably, to land subdivisions giving rise to frequent gaps. Driving along a country road and passing house number 82357, half a mile of open countryside and then house number 85163 is very puzzling to the British visitor who will wonder where 82359, 82361, 82363 etc., are. According to a correspondent the Post Office or Local Government allocates such numbers on a basis of one number for every 25 feet of frontage. There are, as in many things American, regional variations.
house-trailer *	caravan	See entry for "trailer".
hutch	chest, Welsh dresser	A piece of furniture with open shelves, a flat surface and a single row of drawers, usually used for storage and display of plates etc. In BE a "hutch" is a small, usually outdoor, structure where rabbits, ferrets or similar animals live.
I		
icebox <i>Obs</i>	refrigerator	In BE "icebox" refers to the part of the refrigerator kept below freezing point and a "cool box" is a well insulated box for carrying food and drink. The American practice of garages and supermarkets selling ice to replenish a cool box is unknown in Britain.
ice chest <i>Obs</i>	cool box	
incorporated	limited	British firms often have titles ending in "Ltd" meaning limited liability or "Plc" meaning public limited company. "Public" implies that the company's shares are publicly traded. There are also private companies.
industrial park	industrial estate	An unlovely area of factories and other commercial premises. BE also has "trading estate".
installment plan	hire purchase	A scheme for paying for something by a series of payments after you've obtained the item.
instant replay	action replay	Use of video recordings to replay highlights immediately after the event particularly during TV coverage of sporting events.
intersection	cross roads	A place where four roads meet or two roads cross depending on your point of view. See also notes on "four-way".
intermission	interval	Break in performance in theatre, cinema or on TV. "Intermission" sounds rather old-fashioned to British ears.
interstate *<i>US</i>	main road, major	A major highway joining different parts of the

	road, trunk road	<p>country.</p> <p>The usage "trunk road" is largely confined to road planners and road system administrators but most closely captures the meaning of "interstate". The specific usage of "interstate" to mean roads funded under a particular legislative act would be unknown to BE speakers. Interstate highways are arranged in a more or less regular geographic fashion with even numbers for those running east-west and odd numbers for those running north-south.</p> <p>Roads in Great Britain have numbers whose initial digits are based on a radial zone system based on London and Edinburgh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A1 - London to Edinburgh • A2 - London to Dover • A3 - London to Portsmouth • A4 - London to Bristol • A5 - London to Holyhead • A6 - London to Carlisle • A7 - Edinburgh to Carlisle • A8 - Edinburgh to Greenock • A9 - Edinburgh to John O'Groats <p>Roads, for example, between the A1 and A2 all have numbers starting with 1. An initial A means a major road, an initial M means a motorway, an initial B a minor road. A T after the number means a trunk road. An A road number will sometimes have the suffix M, indicating that it has been built to motorway standards. [E.g. A40(T), A1(M)] There is also an extensive network of unclassified roads sometimes called class C roads. Road numbering is unique, the more the digits, the less important the road.</p> <p>Broadly speaking an "A" road (not trunk) is equivalent to a "federal" road, a "B" road to a state road and the others are equivalent to "county" roads.</p> <p>See also entry for "freeway". E numbers are European designations, although many of these have been designated for the UK, they are more or less unknown in the UK.</p>
intimate apparel	underwear	
Inuit	Eskimo	<p>Most British people are unaware of the preferred usage and are equally unaware of any negative connotations associated with the word "Eskimo". There are very few Inuit in the British Isles. A Slovak colleague of mine told me that in a recent census in</p>

		the Czech Republic over 10,000 people described themselves as Inuit so forcing the government to make special provisions. CE prefers "Inuit".
J		
janitor *	caretaker	BE has no distinction between a "live-in" caretaker and one who comes in on a daily basis.
jack	socket	Connector for telephone. In BE "jack plugs" and "jack sockets" are particular types of multi-pole electrical connectors. See entry for "outlet".
jelly	<i>No equivalent</i>	Spread for toast or bread not incorporating preserved fruit only fruit juice. See discussion under "preserves".
jelly roll	Swiss roll	A sort of cake made by spreading jam on a square cake base and then rolling it up into a cylinder.
Jell-o	jelly	<p>US term is proprietary. A wobbly edible gelatine based substance often flavoured with fruit and used as a dessert. In British usage it is often served with ice cream and is a children's favourite.</p> <p>I cannot resist quoting the following from a correspondent</p> <p><i> pudding is in no way related to jello, other than the Jell-O brand makes pudding (which is best described as a kind of down-market mousse that you can make by adding milk to a powder, or buy it premade in little sealed cups). It will often be called jello pudding snacks, just to tell the brand. But jello in general is the gelatin 'jelly,' as you call it. Pudding would never be used to describe the breadly dessert thing such as 'christmas pudding'. that would be called fruitcake.</i></p>
john	toilet	See discussion under " washroom ". One correspondent suggested that "the ladies" may be called "the jane" in the interests of political correctness, I'm not sure I believe it.
jump rope <i>US</i>	skipping rope	
jumper	short dress	In British usage "jumper" means a sweater.
K		
kerb side	near side	Side of a vehicle nearest the kerb. In the UK this would be the left hand (port) side. It would still be called the near side if you were standing in the middle of the road when you would be nearest the off side of the vehicle. Sometimes written "nearside" and "offside".
kerosene	paraffin	A flammable liquid. "paraffin" in AE refers to a solid waxy substance known as "paraffin wax" or just plain "wax" in BE and used for making candles etc.
kindergarten	nursery	See discussion under "high school".
Kleenex	tissues	American term is proprietary.

knickers/knickerbockers	plus fours	Rather old-fashioned loose fitting trousers especially worn by golfers. In BE "knickers" refers to an undergarment covering the body from the waist to the top of the thighs, it can also be used as a slang word implying contempt or annoyance. In BE a "knickerbocker glory" is a rather splendid ice cream, fruit and cream dessert served in a tall glass.
--------------------------------	------------	---

L

last name	surname	
lawyer, advocate, attorney	lawyer, solicitor, barrister	In BE "lawyer" is a general purpose term, broadly synonymous with "solicitor" for a legal practitioner. A "barrister" is a more highly qualified (and paid!) practitioner who specialises in pleading (advocacy) in higher courts. Until very recently only barristers were allowed to practice in higher courts but this is slowly changing. In England and Wales, justice is administered via a hierarchy of magistrates' courts, county courts, crown courts and high courts with an ultimate appeal to the House of Lords. In criminal cases proceedings are initiated and led by the public or crown prosecutor (known as the procurator fiscal in Scotland). The legal system in Scotland is different from that in the rest of the United Kingdom. CE as BE.
lead	cable	Permanent electrical wiring. See entry for " cord ". "cable" meaning TV distributed by cable is common to both AE and BE.
legal holiday	bank holiday	Current bank holidays in England are (for 2002) Jan 1st (New Year's Day), March 29th (Good Friday), April 1st (Easter Monday), May 6th (May Day), Jun 3rd Spring Bank Holiday, don't confuse with Whitsun which is a religious festival), Aug 26th (Summer Bank Holiday), Dec 25th (Christmas) and Dec 26th (Boxing Day). [In 2002 June 4th is also a bank holiday to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth 2nd.] The May day holiday is always the first monday in May, not May 1st.
lemonade	real lemonade, squash, cordial	In British usage "lemonade" often refers to a sort of carbonated sugar water.
license plate / license tag	number plate	It indicates the identity of a vehicle. British number plates are permanent for the life of the vehicle. There is a single nationwide system of numbering. The payment of annual road tax is indicated by a small paper disc fixed to the windscreen.
Lifesavers *	Polo	Both terms are proprietary and refer to a hard round white mint, sometimes fruit flavoured, with a hole in the middle.
lightning bug	fire fly	

lima bean	butter bean	
line *	queue	Group of people waiting in an orderly fashion. AE "waiting in line" is equivalent to BE "queueing".
line cord *	mains lead	Flexible cable joining electrical appliance to supply.
liquor	spirits	Alcoholic drink whose preparation involves distillation. Includes whisky, brandy, gin, vodka.
liquor store	off licence	A shop selling alcoholic drinks for consumption off the premises. There are regional variations in both AE and CE. Many British supermarkets and grocery shops also sell alcoholic beverages. In some North American regions (e.g. British Columbia) the sale of alcohol in this fashion is a monopoly. See notes on "bar".
lobby	foyer	First main room you encounter on entering a hotel, theatre or cinema. Both terms may be encountered in all versions of English. In BE a "lobby" is a group of people attempting to influence an organisation or decision making process, especially parliament.
locker room	changing room	
long distance	trunk call <i>Obs</i>	Telephone. There is no general word for this in BE.
longshoreman	docker	Apparently a West Coast term.
loon	great northern diver	Bird pictured on Canadian one dollar coin.
loonie <i>Can</i>	no equivalent	<p>This refers to a one dollar coin. In BE and AE "loony" is a colloquialism for lunatic.</p> <p>Fortunately I'd read the Air Canada in-flight magazine when the airport bus driver asked me "Have you got a Looney?"</p> <p>The British pound coin is simply called a "pound coin". Pound notes were last issued in England in about 1985. Scottish banks issue their own notes which are different from those issued by the Bank of England and their one pound notes may sometimes be encountered. They are widely accepted in England.</p> <p>Referring to a pound as a "quid" is rapidly becoming uncommon in BE. Intriguingly the plural of "quid" is "quid". See entry for "bill" for details on British paper currency.</p>
lorry <i>obs</i>	hand cart, dolly	
lost and found	lost property	
lot	plot	Parcel of land that can be bought and sold and is, usually, partly occupied by a building.
love seat	settee	see entry for "couch".

low fat milk	semi skimmed milk	In the UK there is no defined meaning for phrases such as "fat free" and "low fat" although consumer groups are campaigning for such standards.
luggage rack	roof rack	On the roof of a car. In BE luggage racks are found in trains and aeroplanes but not cars.
lumber	timber	AE distinguishes standing timber (i.e. trees that haven't been chopped down) from lumber (which is what they become after they've been chopped down and the logs cut to shape and size). BE uses "timber" in both contexts. In BE "lumber" refers to unwanted items hence "lumber room" and "to lumber somebody" i.e. give them an unwanted task and also means to proceed slowly and clumsily.
lunch pail	lunch box	
M		
M & M	Smarties	Both terms are proprietary and refer to small sweets with hard coloured sugary coatings. Both words are also sometimes used to mean any small item. Smarties have hard chocolate centres are shaped vaguely like flying saucers. A correspondent tells me there is a US sweet called Smarties that do not have chocolate centres.
mail	post	What you do to a letter or parcel to send it on its way. Whilst on its way its "in the mail" (AE) or "in the post" (BE).
mail man	postman	"mail lady" sounds improbable to British ears. In Britain she's called a post woman. "mail carrier" is an alternative American usage and has the official approval of the US Postal Service.
mail slot	letter box	Aperture for delivery of postal items to premises. Note that in British English, "letter box" also refers to a box in public place where letters etc., are deposited for onwards transmission by the Postal Service, sometimes known as a pillar box.
main street	high street	A common name for the most important road in a town or city. Often used to refer generally to the shops and retail outlets of a town or city.
maize	sweet corn	"maize" is apparently uncommon in AE. Also known as "corn on the cob". The use of "maize" to mean a shade of yellow is not known in BE.
mall	shopping centre	The obsolescent British usage "shopping arcade" means a group of shops fronting on to a covered pedestrian way. "Shopping centre" usually implies covered access in British usage whereas American usage uses "mall" to imply covered access and "center" to imply non-covered access. A "parade of shops" in British usage refers to a row of shops

		fronting on to a road, this usage is largely confined to Southern England. "mall" can also mean a large public park-like area such as Independence Mall in Philadelphia.
Mason jar	Kilner jar	Both terms are proprietary.
mass transit	public transport	
Master Card	Access	Credit card company. The British arm has been called "Master Card" since 1998 but many British people still refer to "Access".
master of ceremonies	compere	The person who introduces the performers in a TV or stage variety show. However BE uses "master of ceremonies" for the person "orchestrating" a wedding reception or similar social occasion.
mean	bad tempered	In BE "mean" means stingy, unwilling to spend money, miserly. In AE "mean" can also mean "good" but this is probably obsolete.
meat grinder	mincer	
median (strip)	central reservation	Dividing strip down the middle of a dual carriageway. Also called "median strip" in AE.
military time	24 hour clock	Times expressed using numbers in the range 0-23 for the hours.
mimosa *	Buck's Fizz	A drink made by mixing champagne and orange juice.
mobile home	caravan	See notes on "trailer" .
modeling clay	Plasticine	BE term is proprietary.
mortician *	undertaker	There are regional variations in American usage. A correspondent tells me that "mortician" is still used for a hospital employee working in the morgue.
Mother's Day	Mothering Sunday	In the UK this is the fourth Sunday in Lent (21st March in 2004), in the US it's the second Sunday in May. "Mother's Day" is widely used in BE as a synonym for Mothering Sunday.
movies	films	The productions themselves. In BE you go to the cinema.
movie theater	cinema	"cinema" is also used in both BE and AE to refer to the art and culture of films.
moving company	removal company	A company that will move your personal effects etc.
moving van	pantechnicon, removal van	Lorry adapted for moving personal effects when moving house. Sometimes called a "panel truck" in AE.
muffler	silencer	Part of vehicle exhaust system. In British usage a muffler is a sort of scarf. In AE a silencer is something you put on a gun.
mutual fund	unit trust	A scheme whereby the investor buys shares or units in a fund which, in turns, buys shares in many

		companies thereby spreading risk. Dividends received by the fund are aggregated and paid to the fund's investors in proportion to the number of units they have purchased.
N		
napkin	serviette	
native americans	american indians	
nickel	no equivalent	<p>5 cent coin.</p> <p>The traditional names for British coins such as tanner (6d), bob (1/-), florin (2/-) and half-a-crown (2/6) all disappeared when the currency was decimalised in 1972. Surprisingly new names for the new coins have not emerged apart from the 1p coin being called a "penny". Mercifully the habit of referring to 5p as "five pee" that was common immediately after decimalisation is now dying out and most people would simply say "five pence".</p> <p>The current coin set is 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p, 20p, 50p, £1 and £2. The 1p and 2p are copper plated steel, sometimes called "coppers", the 5p and 10p are "silvery", the 10p being bigger than the 5p (unlike the nickel and dime). The 20p and 50p are curious seven-sided "silvery" affairs with curved edges, these having the interesting geometrical property of constant width (similar to the eleven-sided loonie). The £1 coin is small thick and rather yellowy, nobody calls it a sovereign. The recently introduced (1999) £2 coin is similar to the Canadian \$2 coin having a "silvery" bit and a "yellowy" bit.</p> <p>The US government has, apparently, made several efforts to issue dollar coins in recent years but these have proved to be remarkably unpopular.</p> <p>I was at a meeting at the European Commission recently and we were all comparing our shiny new small change ('euro' coins have national symbols on the reverse) and commenting that I'd got a Luxembourg 'euro' when a German colleague asked if I had any British euros. Not yet.</p>
nightstick	truncheon	Blunt cosh-like weapon carried by policemen.
normalcy	normality	
notions	haberdashery	Accessories such as buttons and zips used in the manufacture of garments. In BE "haberdashery" also refers to a shop selling such things.
number sign	hash mark	See notes on "pound sign" .
O		

oatmeal	porridge	
offense players	forwards	Players who lead attack in certain team sports such as football.
oh	nil	Used in reporting the scores of sports fixtures. Where AE would say "two-oh" or "two to nothing", BE would say "two-nil" for a score of 2-0.
oil pan	sump	Part of engine of motor vehicle.
on-ramp, off-ramp	sliproad	How you join or leave a limited access highway. Sometimes called "exit ramp" in AE.
operating room	operating theatre	
orchestra seat	stalls	seat in a theatre on the same level as the stage and orchestra
outhouse	privy	In British usage an outhouse is just that. A small, usually brick, building used for storage or similar purposes with no through access from the main building.
overalls	dungarees	In British usage an "overall" is a one-piece sleeved garment used to cover one's normal clothes when working in a dirty place or job. In British usage "dungarees" often refer to such a garment worn by children or women, especially when pregnant, it consists of trousers integral with a bib-like top.
outlet	socket	<p>Connector for telephone or electrical power. In BE these are sometimes referred to as "telephone points" or "power points".</p> <p>British telephone sockets are similar to American ones except that the little latching thingy is on the side rather than the top. Technically the American connector is an RJ11, the British plug is a BT/431A or a BT/631A depending on whether there are 4 or 6 wires, the socket is a BT/601A although there are variants. RJ45's are used in both the UK and North America for data connections.</p> <p>British power sockets have three thick flat pins in a sort of T-shaped arrangement, plugs are large clumsy things whose only saving grace is a fuse in the plug, the user has to find a screwdriver to connect a plug to a cable. American power sockets use thin flat blades, sometimes with a round earth pin, plugs are almost always moulded on to the cable. In very old British buildings an extraordinary variety of round pin sockets may sometimes be encountered. British domestic electric power is nominally 230V at 50Hz, whereas American is nominally 117V at 60 Hz</p> <p>British light bulbs use a two pin bayonet fitting of similar size to the large screw fitting used on</p>

		American light bulbs. Light fittings have two spring loaded pins that hold the bulb in place. Less likely to come undone than a screw fitting. Screw fitting light bulbs are quite widely obtainable for use in imported fittings.
overpass	flyover	Road system.
P		
pacifier	dummy	Artificial nipple used to stop small children crying.
paddle	bat	For "ping-pong" and similar games.
panhandler *	beggar	
pantihose/pantyhose	tights	An American correspondent tells me that "pantihose" are translucent whereas "tights" are opaque. This distinction is not known in BE.
pants	trousers	The word "pants" refers to an undergarment in BE.
paraffin	wax	See entry for "kerosene".
parka	anorak	In British usage the word "anorak" is also used pejoratively to refer to somebody with a seemingly obsessive hobby interest in something mechanical.
parkade <i>Can</i>	multi-storey car park	
parking garage/ramp	multi-storey car park	
parking lot	car park	
parking stall	parking bay	
party tent	marquee	Large tent for social or commercial functions.
pass	overtake	When a faster vehicle passes a slower one travelling in the same direction, especially when the manoeuvre involves crossing into a lane normally used by vehicles travelling in the other direction.
pastor	minister, vicar, rector	There are subtle differences but you have to understand the ancient and complex administrative hierarchy of the Church of England to understand them. There are also curates, rural deans (even in urban areas), archdeacons, wardens, vergers, readers and sextons.
paved shoulder	hard shoulder	At side of road. See entry for "pull out".
pavement	paved area	Many British people think, incorrectly, that the American usage "pavement" refers to the surface of a road. In fact, it refers to any area that is paved and sealed against water by asphalt or concrete. Such areas can be for foot traffic as well as vehicular traffic.
penitentiary	prison	"prison" is also common American usage except in the proper names of such institutions where "penitentiary" or "correctional institute" is used.
penny	cent	Referring to a 1 cent coin as a "penny" confuses

		British visitors.
period	full stop	Punctuation at end of sentence, otherwise its just a dot or decimal point.
personalty <i>Obs</i>	personal property	Presumably by analogy with "realty".
petroleum	crude oil	As it comes out of the ground. See entry for "gasoline".
phonograph <i>Obs</i>	record player, gramophone	"gramophone" is distinctly archaic. Of course gramophone records (aka "vinyl") are themselves pretty much obsolete now, although keen audio types may still have a "turntable" to play them on.
pitcher	jug	Nothing to do with baseball (!).
plastic wrap	clingfilm	Thin transparent film used for wrapping food. "Saran wrap" is a US proprietary term.
playhouse	Wendy house	
plexiglass	perspex	Also known as lucite.
pocketbook <i>obs</i>	wallet, purse	The AE word "pocketbook" is reported as being synonymous with "handbag"
polliwog * <i>Obs</i>	tadpole	Baby frog.
pool	snooker, billiards	Really three very different games, the only similarities are the use of long narrow wooden cues to push balls around on a cloth covered table usually in a smoky club.
popsicle	lollipop	Frozen confectionary made of ice cream or fruit juice. The British version usually has a spatula like wooden stick printed with execrable jokes. The old fashioned version consisting of flavoured crystallised sugar may also be encountered. "Popsicle" is proprietary.
pork rinds	pork scratchings	
postal code <i>Can</i>	post code	See entry for "zip code".
postal outlet <i>Can</i>	sub post office	A shop that includes a counter providing postal services as well as its normal trade (it may be a pharmacy, a grocery or, especially in rural areas, a general store). Post Offices (sometimes called General Post Offices or Crown Offices) are owned by the Post Office (or Post Office Counters Ltd.) and handle only postal services, although they're increasingly branching into the sale of stationery, greetings cards etc.
potato chips	crisps	See also entry for "French Fries".
pot holders	oven gloves	Padded mittens for holding hot dishes. Oven mitts in CE.
pound sign, number sign	hash sign	This refers to the symbol #. To British people a pound sign is, of course, the currency symbol £. Confusion is heightened by the fact that the #

		symbol appears in the same place on American keyboards as the £ symbol on British keyboards (above the 3). You're probably wondering where the # symbol appears on British keyboards, that's another story.
powdered sugar <i>US</i>	icing sugar	
pre-natal	ante-natal	For mothers to be.
preserves	jam, marmalade	Fruit, usually chopped in, mixed with sugar and boiled then cooled and bottled. Used as a spread on toast, bread etc, and as a cake filling. In AE it is suggested that "jam" implies pulped fruit whereas "preserves" implies recognisable chunks of fruit, in BE both would be called "jam". In BE "preserves" refers to fruit preserved whole, usually in a sugar solution or syrup, without being first chopped up. "marmalade" is the same thing made using citrus fruits such as oranges and is widely used on toast at breakfast.
pressure	pressurise	To try and force somebody to do something.
private school	public school	You have to pay to go there. In BE "private school" means pretty much the same thing as "public school".
proctor	invigilator	College or university official charged with supervising the conduct of an examination.
professor	lecturer	Teacher in university or college. In BE the title "Professor" is awarded to lecturers who have a particularly distinguished record in administration or research (usually the administration of research). A correspondent has suggested that "professor" implies that the title holder has tenure.
property check (girl)	cloakroom attendant	See also "hat check girl" .
prong	pin	Business part of electrical connector, especially the large flat blades on North American mains connectors.
pruning shears	secateurs	small gardening tool
public school	state school	You don't have to pay to go there. The state, in the guise of local authorities, pay. OK, you ultimately pay via taxes.
pulley cords	sash ropes	Part of window.
pullout, pulloff	lay by	Place where you can park temporarily at the side of a road. This is not to be confused with the "shoulder" or "hard shoulder" that runs continuously at the side of major roads and motorways.
pump	court shoe	A low-cut slip-on woman's shoe. In British usage "pump" is a regional name for what is now called a "trainer" or "running shoe". In Scotland "pump", apparently, means to pass wind.

purse	handbag	In BE a purse is used by women to carry currency notes, credit cards etc., whereas a handbag is used by women to carry a vast assortment of oddments including their purses.
Q		
quarter	no equivalent	25c coin.
quarter note	crotchet	Music.
Quonset hut *	Nissen hut	Building shaped as a half-cylinder with walls and roof formed from corrugated iron. American term is proprietary.
R		
radio	wireless	"radio" is now normal in BE, "wireless" sounds pleasantly archaic except when applied to non-wired local area networks.
Radio Shack	Tandy	The same catalogue of electronic goods. Tandy has recently been taken over and the name is likely to disappear from British High Streets.
railroad	railway	
rain check	<i>no equivalent</i>	There is no BE equivalent of the "strict" meaning of a ticket for re-admission at a later date or a chit issued by a shop to entitle you to purchase a reduced price item that is temporarily out of stock.
rappel	abseil	
Realtor *	estate agent	"Realtor" implies membership of a professional body, the National Association of Realtors or its local branches
Realty *	estate agency	
recess	break	Gap in proceedings, usually for refreshment when BE might specifically refer to a "lunch break" or a "dinner break", however British courts recess. Both terms are also used in schools as a rather grown-up version of "play time".
reforestation	reafforestation	
rent	hire	Of cars.
restroom	toilet	See discussion under " washroom ".
résumé	curriculum vitae (CV)	Document prepared to impress prospective employers. "curriculum vitae" is sometimes used by American academics. In British usage a résumé is used to mean a summary or summing up in any context.
retirement fund	superannuation	certain type of contributory pension scheme, usually involving regular deductions from a monthly salary.
(American) Revolutionary War	American War of Independence	Spot of unpleasantness in the late 18th century.
roast	joint	Meat. In American usage "joint" refers to a preparation incorporating illegal drugs (or "certain

		substances" as the British police call them), this and other usages of "joint" are not uncommon in BE.
robe	dressing gown	See "bath robe". The use of the word "robe" for a particularly rich and special garment is common to British and American English.
roll	tube	Cardboard cylinder, especially for certain sweets.
rooming house	lodging house	Also "roomer" and "lodger".
rotary	roundabout	Road system. Also known as a "traffic circle" in AE. "rotary" is, apparently, common usage in parts of New England but unknown in other parts of North America. Sometimes called a "traffic island" in BE. In the UK you'll also find mini-roundabouts which are white painted humps at road junctions, car drivers treat them as roundabouts but drivers of large and awkward vehicles can drive straight over them with due caution. Near Swindon there is a wonderful road system called the "magic roundabout" which consists of a large roundabout with small satellite roundabouts where each side road joins it. In some parts of the UK there is a modern practice of placing large and bizarre items of sculpture in the centre of roundabouts.
round trip <i>US</i>	return	ticket to get you there and back.
row house *	terrace house	see entry for " townhouse ".
rubber boots	wellingtons	"Welly/Wellies" are common informal BE. Very long boots reaching above the knee and worn by fishermen/anglers are called "waders" in both British and American usage.
rubbers <i>obs</i>	condoms	Contraceptives. "Rubbers" is colloquial/archaic. "Durex" is a BE brand name. "Trojan" is a AE brand name. "Rubbers" is, apparently, used for rubber boots in New England.
rubbing alcohol *	surgical spirit	Used for sterilizing.
Rube Goldberg	Heath Robinson	Early 20th century humourists and cartoonists specialising in drawings of implausible and eccentric machines tied together with string and sticky tape.
run	ladder	Defect in ladies' tights (pantihose) or stockings.
run for office	stand for election	If you succesfully stand for election to parliament you become the sitting member.
runners <i>Can</i>	trainers	
running shoes	trainers	There are interesting regional variations in both British and American usage. "Pumps", "Plimsolls" and "Daps" are all British regional variations. American regional variations include "Sneakers" (New England and Mid-Atlantic states) and "Tennis Shoes".

rutabaga *	swede	
S		
sack lunch	packed lunch	
sales clerk	shop assistant	The rather grander sounding "sales associate" is appearing in AE.
sales tax	VAT	see entry for "GST".
sand box *	sand pit	Where children play. In BE a "sand pit" is also a place where sand is extracted for commercial and industrial use, children don't play in such sand pits.
sanitary napkin	sanitary towel	"Tampons" are the same in British and American usage. Pantyshield and Kotex pad are proprietary AE terms.
Saran wrap	clingfilm	The AE/CE term is proprietary.
savings and loan trust	building society	Organisation originally devoted to making loans to help members purchase their own homes. Until fairly recently British building societies were owned by their members, i.e. were "mutual", many have now converted to banks and are owned by their shareholders. In the process of conversion substantial numbers of shares were issued free to members who then sold them. The resulting money is called a "windfall" in the British press and has also resulted in the appearance of "carpetbaggers" who join a still unconverted society in anticipation of easy profits. Technically building societies that have converted to banks are no longer building societies but this subtlety would probably be lost on most British people.
sawbuck * <i>Obs</i>	sawhorse	The usage of "sawbuck" for a 10\$ bill has no British equivalent. "workhorse" and "trestle" have very similar meanings.
scab	blackleg	Strike breaking worker.
scale	weighbridge	Facility for weighing commercial vehicles. Sometimes called a "weigh station" or "truck scales" in AE.
scallion	spring onion	
schedule	timetable	In BE "schedule" is used to refer to forward planning of, usually personal, activities with a very similar meaning to the word "plan".
scheme	plot	both terms have overtones of deviousness. "scheme" lacks such overtones in BE.
Scotch Tape	Sellotape	Both terms are proprietary. "Sticky tape" is also sometimes used. This refers to thin transparent tape used for parcels, mending torn paper and fixing notices in such a way that the paint comes off the wall.
scratch pad <i>Obs</i>	note pad	
seaboard	coastline	"coastline" is apparently now common AE usage.

second floor	first floor	In British buildings the ground floor is, effectively, floor zero.
sedan	saloon	Type of car.
seeing eye dog *US	guide dog	An animal specially trained to help blind people. CE is as BE. AE term is proprietary. AE also sometimes refers to a "dog guide".
semi-trailer *	articulated lorry	
server	waiter or waitress	The word "server" has overtones of gender non-specific political correctness.
senior	pensioner	"Senior citizen" is common in both AE and BE.
shade	blind	Specifically "shade" in American usage refers to a continuous piece of fabric that can be rolled or unrolled, known as a "roller blind" in British usage. The arrangement of adjustable horizontal slats is known as a "venetian blind" in British usage. There is no specific BE term for the vertical slats known, apparently, as "verticals" in AE. BE also has "shades" as a colloquial reference to dark sun-glasses.
sherbet	sorbet	Water ice made from fruit juice etc. In British usage "sherbet" is a fruit-flavoured effervescent powder, often eaten with liquorice by children.
shoestring <i>Obs</i>	bootlace, shoelace +	Used for tying up shoes and boots. Both BE and AE have "doing something on a shoestring" to mean with the least expenditure of resources.
shoulder	hard shoulder	See entry for "breakdown lane".
shrimp	prawn	In British restaurants "shrimps" are larger (and more expensive) than "prawns" which is contrary to normal zoological practice. AE restaurant usage is equally confusing with regional variations.
sidewalk	pavement or footpath	
silverware	cutlery	knives, forks and spoons. Modern AE/CE reserves "silverware" for the best cutlery.
sixteenth note	semi-quaver	music
ski mask	balaclava	Head covering popular with terrorists and bank robbers.
skivvies <i>obs</i>	underpants & vest	"Skivvy/skivvies" in BE refers to a menial domestic worker.
sled	sledge	A sledge hammer is the same in both BE and AE.
slingshot	catapult	
slowpoke	slowcoach	
smoked herring	kipper	Very nice too apart from all those little bones.
snaps	press studs	Metal or plastic fixings that snap together.

sneakers	trainers	See discussion on "running shoes".
snowbird	no equivalent	Tourist from some cold (e.g. Ontario) who spends the winter in somewhere warm (e.g. Florida). In the UK there are people who spend every winter in cheap accommodation in Spain.
snowpack	lying snow	
snow peas *	mangetout	
soccer	football	Do not confuse with American football.
social security number <i>US</i>	national insurance number	Unique personal identification used by state benefits and taxation schemes. British national insurance numbers consist of two letters, six digits and a further letter (no spaces). Known as "social insurance number" in Canada and consisting of nine digits like its US counterpart.
soda	soft drink	Sometimes called "pop" or a "fizzy drink" in BE. Correspondents have suggested that Americans use "soda", "soda water", "soda pop", "soft drink", "coke", "cola" and "pop" fairly interchangeably with distinct regional preferences, e.g. "pop" in the mid-west, "coke" in the south and "soda" in the north-east. There is no BE equivalent of the delicious sounding dessert/treat called "soda" and made from ice cream and fruit juice.
soother *<i>obs</i>	dummy	Artificial nipple used to stop small children crying, usually called a "pacifier" in AE.
sophomore	<i>no equivalent</i>	
spool	reel	Sewing thread etc.
sports utility vehicle (SUV)	pick up	Essentially a small lorry.
spur line	branch line	Characterful and uneconomic part of railway system.
squash *	vegetable marrow	Slightly different but related vegetables. In British usage "squash" often means "fruit juice". The game "squash" is the same in both British and American usage.
stalk	stick	of celery.
standings	table, league table	lists showing relative performance of sports teams.
state school ?	special school	School for those with learning and/or behavioural difficulties. Such schools are sometimes described as offering "special education", "special needs" in BE. "learning center" and "educational annexe" are also used in AE. The AE term can also, apparently, refer to a University that is funded by the state.
station wagon	estate car	
statutory holiday <i>Can</i>	bank holiday	
stemware *	wineglasses	

stevedore	docket	
stick shift	gear lever	Part of car; "stick shift/stick" can also refer to a car with manual transmission.
stocking stuffer	stocking filler	small Christmas gift
stop lights	traffic lights	
store	shop	In British usage a store is a place where things are stored such as a warehouse, however the American usage is not uncommon in Britain although confined to larger establishments.
stove	cooker, oven	Used for cooking not heating. In British usage a domestic "cooker" comprises both a heated "hob" comprising burners or hotplates on the top of the cooker ("cooktop" in AE) and a heated "oven" which forms the main part of the cooker.
straight	neat	Drinks, undiluted with mixers such as water and tonic.
streetcar	tram	<p>Americans seem to use the words "streetcar", "tramway" and "trolley" almost interchangeably to mean any form of public surface transport not powered by an internal combustion engine. In British usage there are a number of quite distinct usages.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. cable car A vehicle without an engine or motor that is moved by a hauling cable. Apart from the unique system in San Francisco, these are suspended from a stationary overhead cable. They are sometimes called "gondolas" or "air trams" in AE/CE. "Chair Lifts" and similar arrangements used by winter sports enthusiasts are not referred to as "cable cars" in BE. 2. tram This is a vehicle that uses steel wheels running on steel rails let into the surface of a normal road. It is usually powered by electricity taken from overhead conductors. They were once driven by steam engines or pulled by horses. Modern systems are sometimes referred to as "light railways" or "metros" especially when a substantial portion of the route is on a private track rather than public roads. 3. trolley bus This is a bus-like vehicle with normal rubber tyres but powered by electricity taken from overhead conductors. These quiet, clean vehicles are, alas, obsolete in the United Kingdom, however extensive systems still operate in Vancouver and several other North American cities.
strip mall	parade of shops	See entry for "mall"

stroller	push chair, baby buggy	A device with four (small) wheels for the conveyance of small children in a sitting position. The version with three large wheels is now being seen occasionally in the UK.
stub	counterfoil	In British usage a "stub" is a shortened end of something, often implying that the rest of the object has been broken off, the usage "stub one's foot" means to bring the foot into sudden, often accidental, contact with some obstacle. "counterfoil" is becoming uncommon in BE but my cheque book still has counterfoils.
submarine, sub		Unless you're in the Navy, see entry for "hoagie" .
subway	underground railway	In British usage a "subway" is a means by which pedestrians can cross from one side of a road to another by means of tunnel or underground passageway. The American usage of "Underground Railroad" to refer to the smuggling of escaped slaves from the South by Harriet Tubman would be unknown to the vast majority of British people.
suspenders	braces	In British usage "suspenders" are used to keep ladies' stockings in the right place. Braces are elastic straps passing over the shoulder and used to keep gentlemen's trousers from falling down although the use of a belt or elasticated waist-band is now much more common. Both AE and BE also use "brace" to refer to a device for supporting something or holding components at a precise distance in both dentistry and general engineering.
sweeper *Obs	vacuum cleaner	Also often called a "hoover" in BE, although the word is proprietary.
switch	points	Part of railway. BE uses "switch" in the same way as AE in other contexts.
switchback	hairpin bend	Sudden reversal in direction of road. In BE a "switchback" refers to a road that goes up and down a lot, also known as a "roller-coaster".
switchblade knife	flick knife	Also known as "butterfly blade" in AE.
switcher	shunter	Small railway locomotive.
switchyard	marshalling yard	Place where goods trains are assembled from individual trucks.
T		
takeout	takeaway	
telephone pole	telegraph pole	Although the provision of a public telegram service by the then Post Office is a distant memory, the poles that support the overhead wires are still quite frequently called "telegraph poles". See notes on "utility pole" .
teleprompter	autocue	Device that saves politicians and actors the chore of memorising their lines. US term is proprietary and

		should be "TelePrompTer".
teller	cashier	banks, shops. CE uses "bank teller" otherwise CE is as BE.
texas gate * <i>Can</i>	cattle grid	System of bars let into surface of road to prevent passage of animals whilst allowing free passage of vehicles.
thread	cotton	Used for sewing. In British usage "thread" is sometimes used in this context to identify something stronger than the normal product.
thumbtack	drawing pin	
tic-tac-toe	noughts and crosses	
tie	sleeper	Piece of timber or concrete supporting the rails of a railway.
tie	draw	sport
toonie <i>Can</i>	<i>no equivalent</i>	Two dollar coin. Variant spellings including "twoonie", "twonie" and "twoony" are now, apparently, rare. For notes on British money see the entries for " nickel " and " loonie ".
townhouse *	terrace house	A house, usually of more than one storey and with other houses sharing common walls on both sides. It will have its own door onto the street. In British usage "terrace housing" sometimes implies low quality housing reflecting the large number of small dwellings of this type put up to house the workers of the newly industrialised towns of the 19th century. In British usage "town house" usually indicates an up-market variant of the humble terrace found in and near city centres.
tractor-trailer	articulated lorry or "artic"	
traffic circle <i>US</i>	roundabout	Road system.
trail	track, footpath	Especially away from roads.
trailer, trailer home	caravan	Mobile living accommodation towed behind a vehicle. Caravans, sometimes called just plain vans by their users, are subdivided into touring caravans which are towed by people travelling from place to place and static caravans which stay more or less permanently on a site but can be moved on the back of a lorry. AE "trailer park" is equivalent to BE "caravan park".
train station	railway station	The logical American usage is replacing the illogical British usage.
transit	public transport	
transmission tower	electricity pylon	Metal lattice tower supporting high voltage electric power cables.
trapezoid	trapezium	Wonderfully confusing, according to my dictionary,

		BE and AE apply opposite meanings to these two terms. In BE a trapezium is a quadrilateral with (at least) one pair of parallel sides.
trash	rubbish	
trash can	dustbin	
trolley		See discussion under " streetcar ".
truck	lorry	In BE "fallen off the back of a lorry" means acquired in dubious circumstances.
truck stop	transport café	
trunk	boot	of car
tub	bath	See " bath tub ".
tube	valve	Electronics.
turn signals *	indicators	Part of car. Very old British cars used "trafficators", which were small illuminated mechanical arms that emerged from the top of the door pillar.
turtle neck	polo neck	A sweater that fits closely round the neck and has a turned over collar.
tuxedo	dinner jacket	"tuxedo" refers to the jacket and trousers combination
two-four <i>Can</i>	no equivalent	This refers to selling beer in packs of 24 bottles or cans. Beer is sold in such packs in the UK, but there is no specific name for such packages. Apparently a "slab" or "carton" in Australian.
two weeks	fortnight	I.e. 14 days
U		
under basement <i>obs</i>	cellar	Underground room beneath house, entirely beneath local ground level and usually without windows, used just for storage. Rare in British houses built later than about 1920. CE is as BE.
undershirt	vest	
unemployment compensation/insurance	dole, unemployment pay/benefit	Money paid via state run insurance schemes for those out of work. "unemployment pay" is the official title. "pogey" is a Canadian word.
union suit * <i>obs</i>	long johns, combinations	Thermal underwear. "Union suit" and "combinations" refer to a one-piece garment covering the whole body.
utility pole	telegraph pole	Pole, usually wooden, supporting power and communications cables especially for final distribution to domestic premises. In the UK electric power is almost always distributed underground and communication cables are increasingly underground. British visitors are often surprised by the untidy tangles of overhead wire in North American cities.
V		
vacation	holiday	BE does not distinguish between "public" or

		statutory holidays (sometimes called "bank" holidays because banks are not open for business) and individual holidays from work. CE as AE. In BE the verb is "to go on holiday".
vacationer	holidaymaker	
vacuum	hoover	A suction domestic cleaning device. The BE term is proprietary but is surprisingly common.
valance	pelmet	Decorative box like construction at top of window to conceal the tops of the curtains and the rail they run on.
vanilla extract	vanilla essence	
variety meats	offal	Entrails and internal organs used as food.
verticals	no equivalent	See entry for " shade ".
vest	waistcoat	In British usage "vest" refers to an undergarment worn underneath a shirt.
veterans' day	remembrance day	Day for remembering former soldiers. In Britain this is celebrated on the Sunday nearest November 11th with parades and church services. The custom of observing 2 minutes silence at 1100 on November 11th has recently been re-introduced and is now observed by most British people, especially the young, this is most impressive and moving. Canadian practice is similar to British practice. Around remembrance day British people wear paper poppies as a mark of remembrance.
W		
walker	Zimmer (frame)	BE term is proprietary.
wall to wall (carpet)	fitted carpet	
wallet	purse	In British usage a wallet is a small folding holder for paper money (not coin), cards etc. Men usually carry wallets in a pocket (trouser or jacket).
wash cloth	(face) flannel	"face cloth" in CE.
washroom	toilet	Both AE and BE have numerous euphemisms for the place where one urinates or defecates. "Toilet" is generally acceptable in British usage as is "loo". "WC" (meaning water closet) is also acceptable but usually means the actual apparatus rather than the room in which it is located. "Lavatory" sounds rather old-fashioned. In British English a washroom is a place where one goes to wash. The words "john" and "jakes" perhaps both derive from the French "Jacques". "washroom" seems to be the preferred Canadian usage. Public facilities are called public conveniences in BE. They are also commonly called "the gents" and "the

		ladies" in BE.
water heater	immersion heater, geyser	Arrangement for producing domestic hot water other than as part of a central heating system. An immersion heater uses an electric heating element in a tank. A geyser, sometimes known by the proprietary name "Ascot", is a gas operated device, which bursts, rather frighteningly, into action when you turn the tap on.
wax paper	greaseproof paper	
weed wacker, weed eater	strimmer	Powered garden tool that consists of a rapidly spinning nylon line that chops down weeds. US terms are proprietary.
welfare	benefit	A variety of state payments to the poor and needy.
well-to-do	well-off	
wheat bread <i>US</i>	brown bread	I.e. it isn't white. There are many variants some of which are just coloured, most of which are "wholemeal" meaning that all the wheat including the husks is used in making the bread, not just the grain. CE is pretty much as BE.
whiskey	whisky	"whisky" is distilled in Scotland, the drink distilled in Ireland and other places is called "whiskey".
White-out	Tippex	Both terms are proprietary, the non-proprietary "correcting fluid" is sometimes used.
whole note	semi-breve	Music.
windshield	windscreen	Part of car.
wire	telegram	A text message sent via a public telegraph system. In BE the verb is "to send a telegram" and in AE the verb is "to wire a telegram" as the noun "telegram" replaces "wire". The British Post Office stopped providing a public telegram service many years ago.
wrench	spanner	A tool with a claw shaped aperture used for tightening or loosening nuts. An adjustable version is called an "adjustable spanner" or a "monkey wrench" or a "Stilson" in BE. Most British nuts and bolts are now in European standard metric sizes although the American UNC and UNF sizes are not uncommon as are the older British Association (BA) and Whitworth sizes. You need a lot of spanners to cover all eventualities. Most nuts are, of course, hexagonal. You'll find octagonal nuts on some plumbing fixtures and square nuts are also seen occasionally. I'd never seen a pentagonal nut until I went to Florida and looked at a fire hydrant.
XYZ		
yard	garden	In British usage "yard" means an area of ground adjacent to a building with a hard surface adapted for use by vehicles and horses, a "garden" is a place

		where plants are grown. In American usage "yard" covers both, referring to that part of the property not covered by buildings. I've received some suggestions that AE uses "garden" to refer to that part of the property where crops, especially vegetables, are grown for private domestic use. This would be a "vegetable garden" or a "kitchen garden" in BE.
zee <i>US</i>	zed	last letter of the alphabet. Canadians call it "zed".
zip code <i>US</i>	post code	Used to speed sorting mail. US zip (properly ZIP = Zoning Improvement Plan) codes consist of 9 digits with a dash after the fifth. The dash and the final four digits are often omitted. British and Canadian codes use both letters and digits e.g. WV1 1SB (this university), V8W 1Y2 (a good book shop I once visited) and are correctly shown with a gap between the two parts and no full stops since they are not abbreviations.
zipper	zip	
zucchini	courgette	
Numerical		
911	999	Telephone number for emergency services. Actually 99 is usually sufficient. The extra 9 is in case you're on a private branch exchange when the first 9 gets you an exchange line. British telephone systems will also recognise the European standard emergency services number 112. A correspondent has told me that 911 also works in the UK but I've never had the courage (or the need) to try it.