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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## 6 Minute Vocabulary

### British and American English



*NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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#### **Catherine**

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary. My name is Catherine, and I'm here today with our special guest presenter Doug. Welcome to the show Doug.

#### **Doug**

Hi Catherine, how are you?

#### **Catherine**

I'm fine thank you. How are you Doug?

#### **Doug**

Fine.

#### **Catherine**

Tell us a bit about yourself Doug – you're originally from Canada, right?

#### **Doug**

Yes, I'm from Vancouver, which is in western Canada, but I moved here a long, long time ago.

#### **Catherine**

But you've still got an American English accent I noticed.

#### **Doug**

Yes, I haven't lost that.

#### **Catherine**

And that's cool, because this show is all about the differences between British English and American English vocabulary. So, tell me Doug, do Canadians like you speak American English?

#### **Doug**

I don't think Canadians would say that. Let's say they speak North American English. But it is very similar.

### **Catherine**

Fantastic. So American English and British English aren't really that different; I'm British and me and Doug can understand each other perfectly – yes?

### **Doug**

Yes, usually. No, of course we can. Of course we understand you.

### **Catherine**

We can. But there are a few vocabulary differences between American and British English that it's very helpful to learn. And today, with Doug's help, we're going to take you through some of them. So, over to you Doug...

### **Doug**

OK, thanks Catherine. Let's start with some examples. This is John, from the US, talking about his recent visit to Britain. Here's a question for you while you're listening: Did John enjoy his visit? Here's John.

### **INSERT**

#### **John**

I went to Britain for two weeks last **fall**. Actually, British people don't say **fall**, they say **autumn**. In the States we pay the **check**, but in Britain they pay the **bill**... we **mail** a letter, but the British **post** a letter... we go to a **store** to buy **candy** and **cookies**, but the British go to a **shop** to buy **sweets** and **biscuits**. But I had a great time there.

### **STING**

#### **Doug**

So, the question was: according to John, did he enjoy his visit?

#### **Catherine**

And the answer is: yes, he did. He said he had a great time. Well done if you got that right at home. Now, let's have a closer look at some of the vocabulary John used. Here's a clip, and another question for you: what's the name of the season after summer?

### **INSERT | CLIP |**

British people don't say **fall**, they say **autumn**...

#### **Catherine**

So, in Britain the season after summer is called **autumn**.

#### **Doug**

Yes, but in American English it's called **fall because the leaves fall**.

**Catherine**

Fall.

**Doug**

Next question: when you're in a restaurant, and you've finished the meal, what do you ask for, what do you pay? Listen again:

### **INSERT 1 CLIP 2**

In the States we pay the **check**, but in Britain they pay the **bill**...

**Doug**

In America, the word is **check**. You pay the **check** at the end of a meal.

**Catherine**

You pay the check. But in Britain, we pay the **bill**.

**Doug**

Here's another difference between British and American English: what do we do when we 'send a letter'? Can you remember the British word, or the American word, or both? Listen again:

### **INSERT 1 CLIP 3**

...we **mail** a letter, but the British **post** a letter...

**Catherine**

So, in Britain we **post** a letter, but Doug, North Americans say...?

**Doug**

**Mail** a letter. OK, now, John said that British people go to a **shop** to buy **sweets** and **biscuits**. Well, where do Americans go, and what do they buy there? Listen one more time:

### **INSERT 1 CLIP 5**

...we go to a **store** to buy **candy** and **cookies**...

**Catherine**

The British say **shop**...

**Doug**

...but the Americans say **store**...

**Catherine**

...the British say **sweets**...

**Doug**

...but the Americans say **candy**...

**Catherine**

...the British say **biscuits** ...

**Doug**

...and in North America, that's **cookies**.

**IDENT**

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**Doug**

And our topic for today is British and American vocabulary.

**Catherine**

Doug - a question for you: A lot of learners of English want to know which one is better – is it British English or American English? What do you think?

**Doug**

To be honest, there's no difference -just use the one you like.

**Catherine**

Good. And now it's time for a quiz. Doug is going to say an American English word, and you have to say the British English word with the same meaning.

**Doug**

Ok, so, the first American English word is **check**. What's the British word for **check**?

**Catherine**

And the answer is: **bill**.

**Doug**

Next word: **candy**. What do British people say instead of **candy**?

**Catherine**

And the British word for **candy** is **sweets**.

**Doug**

Good, and the last American word is **mail**. What's the British word for **mail**?

**Catherine**

The British word for **mail** is **post**. And that's all our questions for today. Before we go, here's a tip to help you with your vocabulary studies.

**Doug**

Yes - people speak English with many different accents: Australian, Indian, Nigerian, Singaporean, West Indian... so, it's a good idea to practice listening to lots of accents, not only British accents or American English! It's easy to find examples of many different accents, just go online!

**Catherine**

Top tip Doug, thanks very much and thanks for being with us today. Well, that's the end of the programme, but there's lots more about this at [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com). Join us again soon for more 6 Minute Vocabulary.

**Both**

Bye!

## Vocabulary points to take away

American English	British English
the <b>fall</b>	the <b>autumn</b>
the <b>check</b>	the <b>bill</b>
to <b>mail</b>	to <b>post</b>
a <b>cookie</b>	a <b>biscuit</b>
a <b>store</b>	a <b>shop</b>
some <b>candy</b>	some <b>sweets</b>