



UK Terminology: British & American English

An Outlandish Extra PDF

OutlandishScotland.com

A Novel Holiday Travel Guidebook

Outlandish Scotland Journey

UK Terminology: British and American English

Many English words mean something different in the US than they do in the UK, and vice-versa. This guide identifies UK terms that have meanings different from what Americans are used to—words you are most likely to encounter while traveling in Great Britain.

The following Wikipedia links offer a more extensive list of British vs American English terms:

Wikipedia's American & British English Words

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_words_having_different_meanings_in_American_and_British_English

Wikipedia's Glossary of British terms not widely used in the United States

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_British_terms_not_widely_used_in_the_United_States

Word	UK Meaning	US Equivalent or Consideration
A&E	the Accident and Emergency (aka "Casualty") department of a hospital	Emergency Room
anorak	a parka; or (slang) a socially awkward person obsessively interested in something	hooded, rainproof outerwear that lacks a full-length zipper in the front; or (slang) a geek, nerd, dweeb, etc
banger	sausage	link sausage
bap	small bread roll	sandwich bun or bread roll
bin	a waste container; or to throw away	trash can
biscuit	baked sweet or savoury cake-like item (colloquially <i>bikkies</i> for sweet biscuits)	cookie (sweet biscuit), or cracker (savoury biscuit)
bonnet	hinged cover over the engine of a car	hood
boot	storage compartment of a car	trunk
broolly	slang for an umbrella	umbrella
bum bag	a bag worn on a strap around the waist, resting on the buttocks	fanny pack [Avoid using this term while in the UK! See Fanny.]
cafetière or cafeteria	a glass coffee-making cylinder: put in ground coffee and boiling water, steep, then plunge the filter device down, pressing the grounds to the bottom	French press, press pot, coffee press, coffee plunger
caravan	a towed vehicle used for lodging while on holiday; aka travel trailer	mobile home, camper, or RV (recreational vehicle)
chemist	pharmacist or pharmacy	pharmacist or drugstore
chips	long cuts of deep fried potato	French fries
cider	an <i>alcoholic</i> drink derived from apples	hard cider
cling film	thin plastic film for wrapping food	plastic wrap, Saran™ or Reynolds™ wrap

Word	UK Meaning	US Equivalent or Consideration
------	------------	--------------------------------

closet	a room containing a flush toilet; aka, water closet	bathroom or restroom
concession	reduction in price (discount) for children, seniors or students	discount ticket— not a <i>food vendor</i> or <i>souvenir shop</i>
cracker	a small paper parcel that makes an explosive report when pulled from both ends—a Christmas or Birthday tradition	a thin, hard, unsweetened biscuit (now sometimes used in the UK)
crisps	thin, deep-fat-fried potato slices, commonly salted	potato chips
dual carriageway	two lanes of opposing traffic separated by a median	divided highway
faggot	seasoned meat shaped into balls and baked; often served cold	meat ball, rarely served cold
fanny	vulgar slang reference to female genitalia	Avoid using this term while in the UK! To make a slang reference to <i>buttocks</i> , use <i>bum</i> , or <i>butt</i> , or the like.
fortnight	a period of 14 days (and nights)	two weeks
half-	thirty minutes past the hour, as in “half-eight”	thirty minutes past the hour, as in “eight-thirty”
high street	primary business and shopping street	main street
hood	folding fabric top on a convertible car	the metal hood over a car’s engine
hump	a mound built into a road for the purpose of slowing down vehicles	speed bump
jumper	a knitted upper body garment	sweater
knickers	women’s or men’s underwear	panties or briefs
knock up	to awaken or summon by knocking, such as knocking on a door	(does not mean <i>to impregnate</i>)
lay by	roadside parking or rest area for drivers	rest area
lift	platform or cage that travels vertically between floors in a building	elevator
lolly	frozen, water-based dessert on a stick	popsicle
loo	a room containing a toilet	bathroom, restroom
Mackintosh	raincoat— often shortened to <i>Mac</i> (some consider <i>raincoat</i> to mean <i>condom</i>)	raincoat
mad	eccentric	insane (does not mean <i>angry</i>)
mobile	mobile phone	cell phone
motorway	a major highway with multiple lanes of opposing traffic separated by a median	freeway, expressway, interstate highway, interstate
napkin	a diaper <i>or</i> a lady’s sanitary pad	a piece of fabric or paper used to protect garments from spilled food
Word	UK Meaning	US Equivalent or Consideration

pants	men's underwear, knickers	(not <i>trousers</i>)
paracetamol	a widely available drug for treatment of headaches, fever, minor aches and pains	acetaminophen, Tylenol
pecker	courage, pluck	(not slang for <i>penis</i>)
peckish	slightly hungry, wanting a snack	(not <i>irritable</i>)
Pensioner	a retired individual	Senior Citizen
pissed	intoxicated, drunk	(not <i>angry</i> , or <i>irritated</i>)
plaster	an adhesive bandage used to protect a minor cut or scrape	Band-Aid
pudding	(1) dessert course of a meal; (2) used in the name of some savory dishes (black pudding, pease pudding)	(1) any desert, whether cake, fruit, ice cream, etc. (2) similar to turkey stuffing and the like.
queue	a group of persons waiting for something, lined-up in order of arrival	line
restroom	a room for staff to take their breaks in	break room
return ticket	a ticket that takes you to, and back from, a location	round-trip ticket
rubber	pencil eraser	(not <i>condom</i>)
rubbish	(1) garbage; (2) something that is bad or worthless	(1) trash; (2) something that is disliked
Sellotape	transparent adhesive tape (from "Cellophane")	Scotch™ tape
single ticket	a ticket that only takes you <i>to</i> a location	one-way ticket
subway	pedestrian underpass	(not <i>underground railway</i>)
toilet	room containing a toilet	restroom
torch	handheld device that emits light	flashlight
trainer	a padded sport shoe	sneaker or tennis shoe
trunk	primary road	(not the <i>storage compartment</i> of a car)
tube	the London subterranean railway system	(a term not used for any other city's subway system)
underground	subterranean railway system	subway
Water Closet or "WC"	a room containing a toilet	bathroom, restroom
windscreen	the glass across the front of a vehicle	windshield
wing	panel of a car that encloses the wheel area	fender
zebra (zebra crossing)	a pedestrian crossing marked by white stripes	(pronounced ZEB-rah, not ZEE-brah)

FLOOR NUMBERING in the UK & Europe

In the US, the “first floor” is another name for a building’s ground floor. But, in Britain (as well as most of continental Europe), the first floor refers to the first floor *above* the ground floor—what would be called the “second floor” in the US.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storey>

British/European Convention	American Convention
Ground floor	1st floor
1st floor	2nd floor
2nd floor	3rd floor
3rd floor—And so on ...	4th floor—And so on ...