

British and American English: expressions

GRAMMAR

LEVEL
Intermediate

NUMBER
B2_3022G_EN

LANGUAGE
English

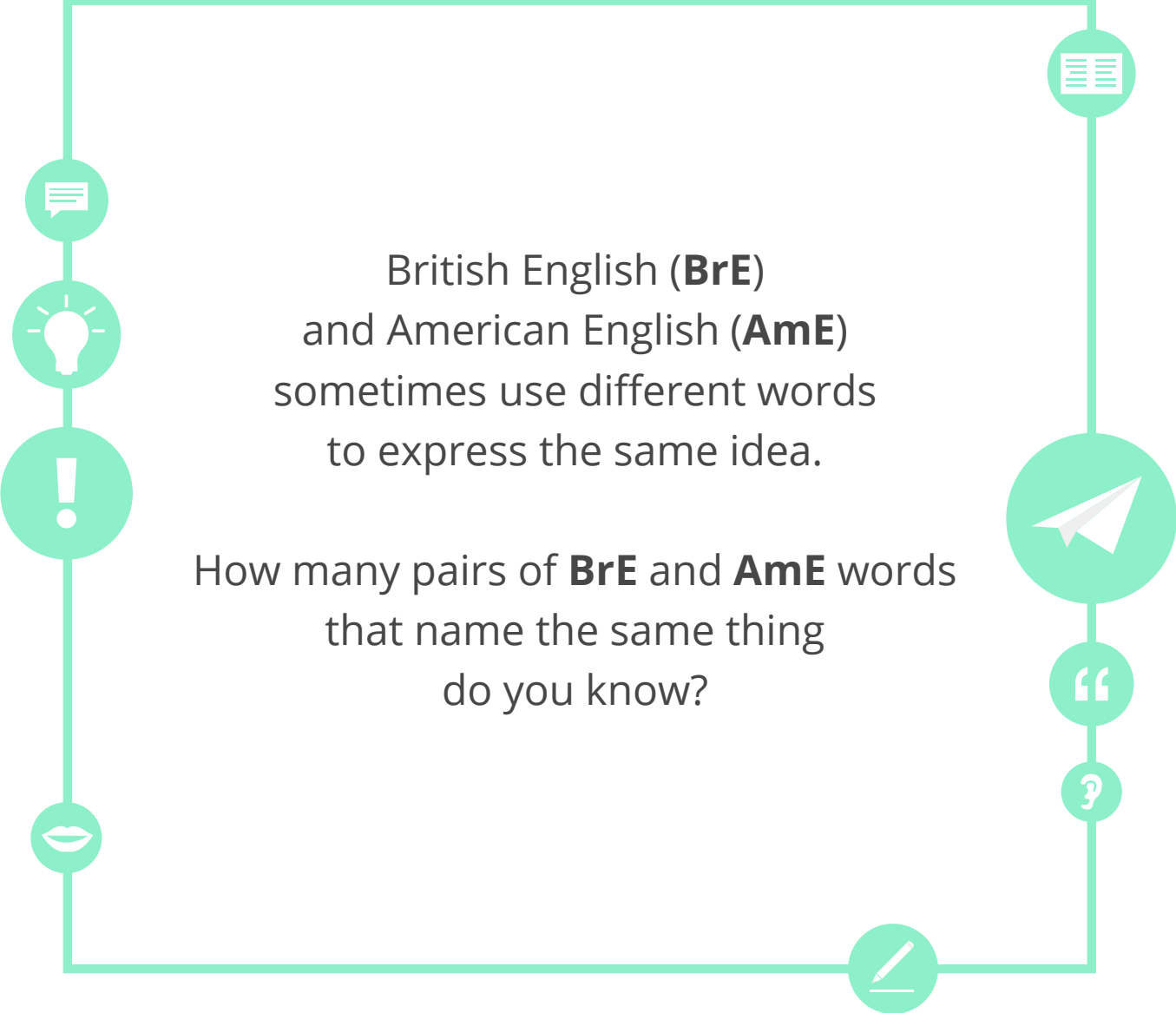




Goals

- Can identify the differences between British and American English.
- Can use a variety of British English and American expressions accurately in speech and in writing.





British English (**BrE**)
and American English (**AmE**)
sometimes use different words
to express the same idea.

How many pairs of **BrE** and **AmE** words
that name the same thing
do you know?



What are they called in British English?

1. sweater



2. pants



3. apartment



4. elevator



5. sidewalk



6. trash



7. French fries



8. first floor





British English or American English

Choose the correct word in each sentence, using the variety of English written in bold at the end of the sentence.

1. I'm starving. Could I have a (biscuit / cookie) please? - **BrE**
2. Why don't you put your suitcase in the (boot / trunk) of the car? - **BrE**
3. People (queue / stand in line) on the platform while waiting for the train. - **AmE**
4. Please do not leave your candy wrappers on the desk. Put them in the (dust bin / trashcan). - **AmE**
5. My sister forgot to send our (mum / mom) a birthday card so she had to phone her instead. - **AmE**





Preview

- In this lesson, you will practise **comparing the differences in British and American English** expressions.



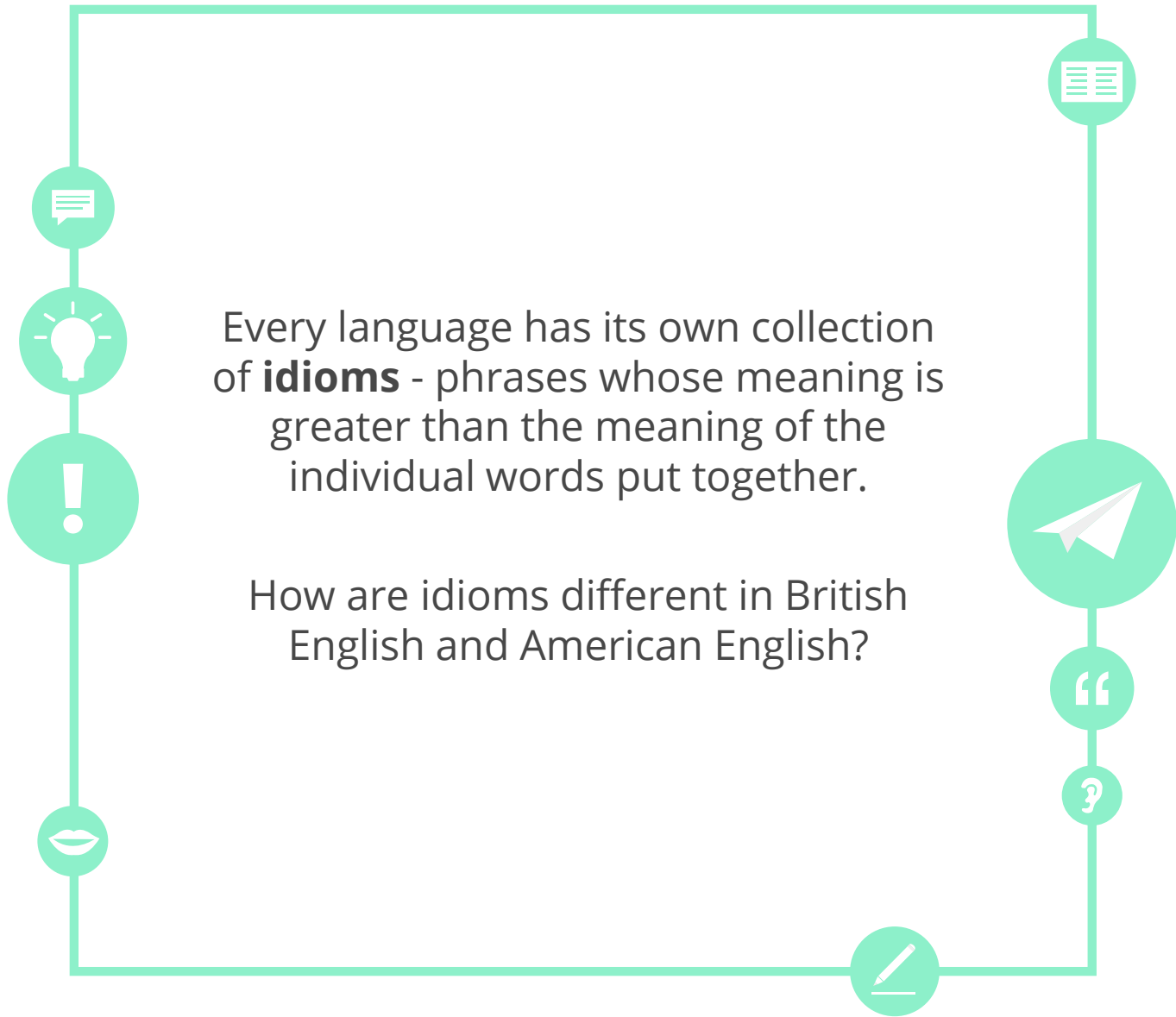
An **idiom** is a manner of speaking that is natural to native speakers of a language. How many English **idioms** do you know?



Definition of idioms

An idiom is a group of words. Each of the words means one thing when used separately (literal meaning) and something else when the words are all put together (figurative meaning). In other words, these words gain a new meaning when used in combination. Here are some commonly used idioms. Do you know the meaning of them?







BrE vs AmE: idioms

- The main difference between **British** and **American idioms** stems from the use of a particular key word in a given phrase that is more common to one culture or the other.

BrE	AmE
Sweep under the carpet	Sweep under the rug
See the wood for the trees	See the forest for the trees
Put a spanner in the works	Throw a monkey wrench (into a situation)
A drop in the ocean	A drop in the bucket A spit in the ocean
Lie of the land	Lay of the land



BrE vs AmE: idioms

	BRITISH IDIOM	AMERICAN IDIOM
1. I wouldn't touch you with a ten-foot pole.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Touch wood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Put in your two pennyworth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. A home away from home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Take it with a pinch of salt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. A skeleton in the closet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



BrE vs AmE: idioms

gone pear-shaped (BrE)

gone south (AmE)

queue up (BrE)

wait in line (AmE)

a drop in the ocean (BrE)

a drop in the bucket (AmE)

(not) my cup of tea (BrE)

(not) my thing (AmE)

full-stop (BrE)

period (AmE)



These are more examples of the difference between British and American idioms. Practise the pronunciation and make yourself sound like a native!



Create the context

These are some more British idioms that are commonly used. Create situations where you could use these idioms. Be creative!

1. Talk the hind legs off a donkey – *a person who talks far too much*
2. Popping out – *when leaving your spot for a little while*
3. Raining cats and dogs – *raining a lot*
4. A piece of cake – *something that does not require much effort*
5. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush – *having one certain thing is better than having two possibilities that might not happen*



Fish or beef?

You are on an aeroplane and the flight attendant asks you, *Fish or beef?*
What would your answer be? Which do you think sounds more polite?



I don't mind.
(BrE)

I don't care.
(AmE)



BrE vs AmE: could vs can

We have already learnt that *could* is more formal and polite than *can*. American expressions are more direct than British ones. What do such differences in expressions tell you about British and American culture?

//
Could I please have a cup of
coffee?
(BrE)
//

//
Can I get a coffee?
(AmE)
//





BrE vs AmE: the verb *get*

- In **BrE**, the three forms of **get** are **get – got – got**.
- In **AmE**, the three forms of **get** are **get – got – gotten**.

BrE got – past participle	AmE gotten – past participle
Static situation (possessing or needing)	Dynamic situation (acquiring or becoming)
The host <u>has got</u> everything we need.	The weather <u>has gotten</u> warmer this week.
I've <u>got</u> a new laptop.	I've <u>gotten</u> a new laptop.





BrE vs AmE: the possessive

In BrE, *have got* is often used for the possessive sense of *have* and *get*, which is less common in AmE.

Read the dialogue below and note the differences. (BrE: Nigel, AmE: Chad)



Hey Chad, **have you got** the time? I would like to see if I'm running late, but I have no idea what time it is right now.

Yeah, sure. It's a quarter past three. Why are you in such a hurry, Nigel? **Do you have** anything important?



You know **I've got** two sisters and one of them is tying the knot. So some of her friends and I are throwing a surprise hen do. If **you've got** nothing to do, you are more than welcome to join us.

Thanks for the invite, but **I have** a big exam coming up. So I really have to study for it. Enjoy it and say hello to your sister for me.





Answer the questions

Answer the questions, using the variation of English written in bold.

Do you have
change for a
hundred?

- **AmE**

Are you doing
anything this
evening?

- **BrE**

Have you got
many friends?

- **BrE**

Do you have a
minute?

- **AmE**



BrE vs AmE: the verb *get*

- **Get + to-infinitive** is commonly used in **AmE** to refer to **achievements**, meaning *manage to* or *be able to*.
- This usage is less common in **BrE**.

- Did you **get to see** your favourite singer at the concert?
- I **got to see** a lot of wild boars when I went camping with my family last weekend.





BrE vs AmE: the present perfect

- **American English** speakers use the **present perfect tense** (*has/have + past participle*) far less than British English speakers.
- In **American English**, it's common to use the **past simple tense** as an alternative in situations when the present perfect would usually be used in British English.

BrE	AmE
John feels nauseous because he <u>has eaten</u> too much.	John feels nauseous because he <u>ate</u> too much.
I can't find my phone. <u>Have you seen</u> it anywhere?	I can't find my phone. <u>Did you see</u> it anywhere?
It's already 10 o'clock. <u>Have you done</u> your homework?	It's already 10 o'clock. <u>Did you do</u> your homework?



BrE vs AmE: the present perfect

- In **BrE**, the **present perfect tense** is used predominantly with adverbs such as **yet, already, just, today** and **recently**.
- The same adverbs are used with the **past simple tense** in **AmE**.

BrE	→	AmE
Have you finished your project <u>yet</u> ?	→	Did you finish your project <u>yet</u> ?
What do you do for a living? Oh wait, have I <u>already</u> asked you that?	→	What do you do for a living? Oh wait, did I <u>already</u> ask you that?
I have <u>just</u> submitted the application.	→	I <u>just</u> submitted the application.
Have you bought a house <u>recently</u> ?	→	Did you buy a house <u>recently</u> ?



BrE vs AmE: use of auxiliaries and modals

- In BrE, when replying to questions, **the auxiliary *do* is often used** as a substitute for a lexical verb after the modal verb.
- In AmE, we **skip the auxiliary *do*** after the modal verb in responses to questions.

auxiliary
+ do



auxiliary
without *do*

A: Are you coming to the party
with us?

B: I might do, but I doubt it.

A: Are you coming to the party
with us?

B: I might, but I doubt it.



BrE vs AmE: use of auxiliaries and modals

Answer these questions in a British way, with the auxiliary *do*.

1. Do you want to go swimming with us at 5 am tomorrow?
2. Are you drinking with us on this beautiful Sunday evening?
3. Are you going to drive over the speed limit if you are late?
4. Will you empty the bin in my room?
5. Are you joining us for the farewell party of my best friend?



BrE vs AmE: use of *shall*

Another big difference between BrE and AmE is the use of *shall*.



1

In **BrE**, *shall* is sometimes used (with *I/we*) as an alternative to *will* to talk about the future (to express predictions, decisions and intentions).

2

In **BrE**, *shall I/we* is often used to ask for advice or an opinion.

3

Americans use *will* instead of *shall*, and *should I/we* instead of *shall I/we*.



BrE vs AmE: use of *shall*

Rewrite these American sentences into British English, using *shall*.

1. I will be back in a couple of hours.
2. We will be there on time.
3. Should I ask the receptionist for more information?
4. Should we try to solve this problem on our own?





BrE vs AmE: use of prepositions

- In **BrE**, **at** is used with many **time expressions** while **on** is always used when talking **about the weekend** in **AmE**.
- In **BrE**, **at** is used when **talking about universities**, and **Americans** use **in**.
- In **AmE**, **through** is used instead of **until** or **till**.

BrE	→	AmE
At Christmas	→	On Christmas
She will be coming home at the weekend.	→	She will be coming home on the weekend.
He studied English at university.	→	He studied English in university.
I'm working Monday until/till Friday.	→	I'm working Monday through Friday.



How are you?

Americans often use *good* as an adverb.

However, the AmE form is getting more and more common in BrE.
What is your answer to how are you? Which response do you prefer?



I'm well, thanks.
(BrE)

I'm good, thanks.
(AmE)



Share your memories

Everyone loves the holiday season. Tell your teacher about the most memorable Christmas holiday of your life.

Make sure you answer these questions: Who did you spend it with, where were you, and what did you do?

Don't forget to use British words and grammar!





Reflect on the goals

Go back to the second slide of the lesson and check if you have achieved all the goals of the lesson.

yes

no





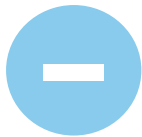
Reflect on this lesson

Think about everything you have seen in this lesson.
What were the most difficult activities or words? The easiest?









If you have time, go over
the most difficult slides again





Answer key

1. I shall be back in a couple of hours, 2. We shall be there on time, 3. Shall I ask the receptionist for more information?, 4. Shall we try to solve this problem on our own?

Activity p. 24

1. AmE, 2. BrE, 3. BrE, 4. AmE, 5. BrE, 6. AmE

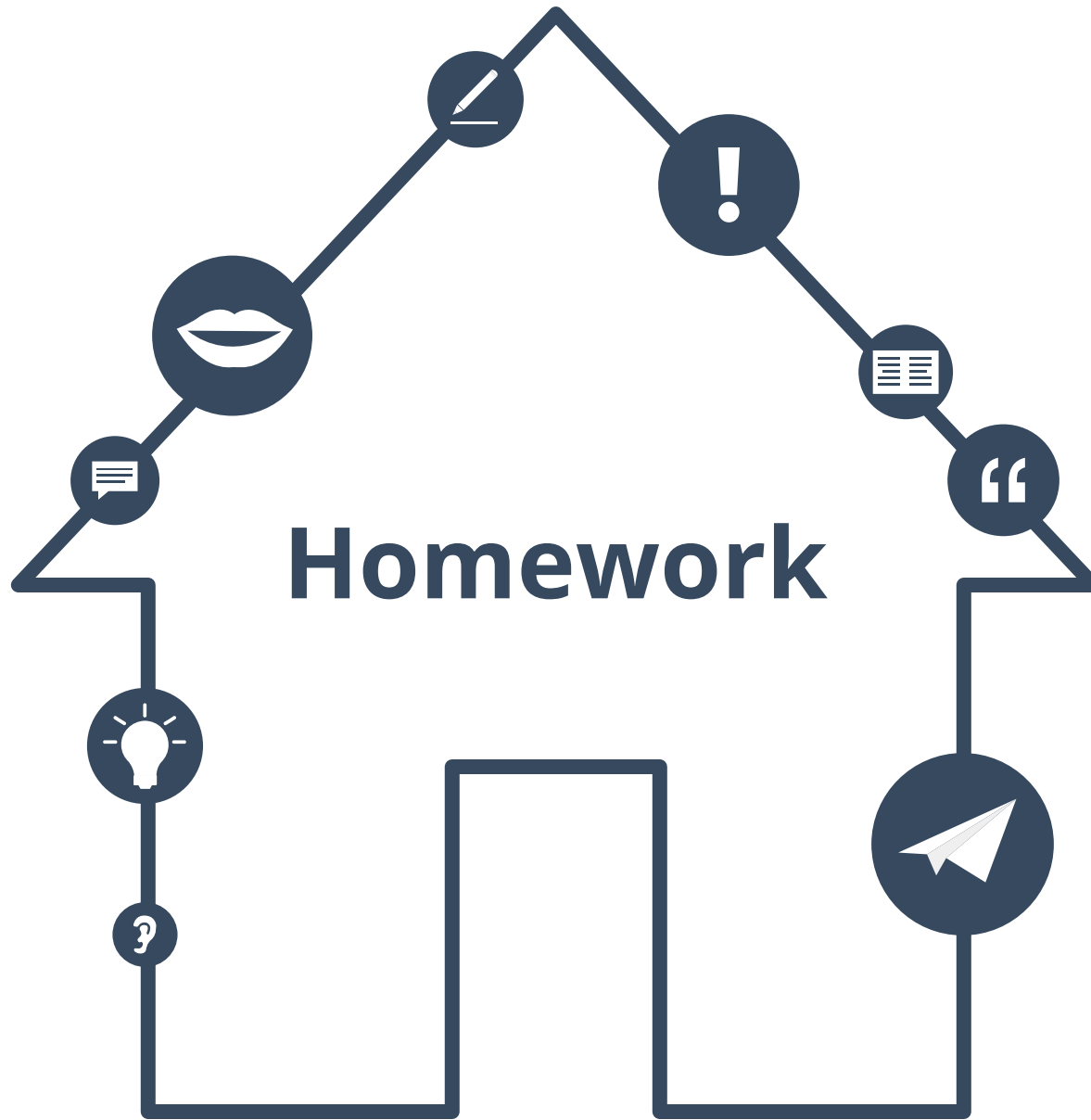
Activity p. 10

1. biscuit, 2. boot, 3. stand in line, 4. trashcan, 5. mom

Activity p. 5

1. jumper, 2. trousers, 3. flat, 4. lift, 5. pavement, 6. rubbish, 7. chips, 8. ground floor

Activity p. 4





Homework: matching activity (BrE to AmE)

1. Going to play some footy.

2. I will give you a bunch of fives.

3. That was a right bodge job.

4. I'm knackered.

5. I was gobsmacked.

6. She's as bright as a button.

7. It's brass monkeys out.

a. That job went wrong.

b. You're going to get a punch in the face.

c. Going to play soccer.

d. It's cold outside.

e. She's clever.

f. I was shocked, lost for words.

g. I'm tired and exhausted.



Homework: create a dialogue

Write a script of a casual dialogue between two people. One person is from London and the other is from California. Each person has to say at least four lines, each including one grammar difference covered in the lesson.





Homework answer key

Activity p. 32
1. c, 2. b, 3. a, 4. g, 5. f, 6. e, 7. d



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