

## A Rough Guide to British v. American Spelling

a non-exhaustive summary

British	American
<b>Endings in –our *</b> colour, favour, honour, labour, Saviour colouring, favouring, honoured, laboured	<b>-or</b> color, favor, honor, labor, Savior coloring, favoring, honored, labored
<b>Endings in -re</b> centre, centring, metre, kilometre, theatre <i>but light meter, speedometer</i>	<b>-er</b> center, centering, meter, kilometer, theater
<b>Endings in -ce</b> defence, offence <i>but defensive, offensive</i> licence (noun), license (verb), licensing	<b>-se</b> defense, offense license, licensing
<b>Doubled l after single vowel before -ing and -er</b> travel, travelling, traveller fulfil, fulfilling, fulfilment enrol, enrolling, enrolment instil, instilling	<b>Double l only on stressed syllables</b> travel, traveling, traveler fulfill, fulfilling, fulfillment enroll, enrolling, enrollment instill, instilling
<b>French influence</b> axe, catalogue, cataloguing, Decalogue cheque (£), chequing account <i>but check your facts, spot check</i> programme (or program), manoeuvre	ax, catalog, cataloging, Decalog check, checking  program, maneuver
<b>Miscellaneous</b> practice (noun), practise (verb), practising co-ordinate, co-ordination grey analyse, mould, sceptic, sceptical, sulphur car tyre (noun), to tire (verb) gaol (or jail) kerb (roadside), curb (horse's bit, restraint) connexion (or connection) per cent, for ever encyclopaedia paediatrician mediaeval or medieval	practice, practicing coordinate, coordination gray <i>but Greyhound Bus</i> analyze, mold, skeptic, skeptical, sulfur tire jail curb connection percent, forever encyclopedia pediatrician medieval

### \*Words ending in “-our” usually lose the silent “u” when adding syllables

colour	coloration
glamour	glamorous, glamorous, glamorize
honour	honorary, honorarium, honorific
humour	humorist, humorous
labour	laborious
odour	odorous, odoriferous
rigour	rigorous

### Additional notes:

**British** usage divides into two camps on the ending of verbs:

- Oxford uses “-ize” where the verb derives from a Greek root -ίζω, otherwise “-ise” (particularly for verbs from Latin or French)
  - e.g. recognize, organizing, organization, supervise, revise
- Cambridge uses “-ise” almost exclusively
  - e.g. recognise, organising, organisation, supervise, revise

Word processor **spell checkers** are useful tools, but cannot replace careful proof-reading. They cannot distinguish different uses of words (e.g. verb v. noun).