British or American English?

Speakers of British and American English display some striking differences in their use of grammar. In this detailed survey, John Algeo considers questions such as:

* Who lives on a street, and who lives in a street?
* Who takes a bath, and who has a bath?
* Who says Neither do I, and who says Nor do I?
* After “thank you”, who says Not at all and who says You’re welcome?
* Whose team are on the ball, and whose team is?

Containing extensive quotations from real-life English on both sides of the Atlantic, collected over the past twenty years, this is a clear and highly organized guide to the differences – and the similarities – in the grammar of British and American speakers. Written for those with no prior knowledge of linguistics, it shows how these grammatical differences are linked mainly to particular words, and provides an accessible account of contemporary English as it is actually used.

John Algeo is Professor Emeritus in the Department of English, University of Georgia, Athens. His previous posts include Fulbright Senior Research Scholar, University College London (1986–7), Guggenheim Fellow (1986–7), and University of Georgia Alumni Foundation Distinguished Professor (1988–94). Over the past forty years he has contributed papers to a wide variety of books and journals, including 91 book reviews.
The aim of this series is to provide a framework for original studies of English, both present-day and past. All books are based securely on empirical research, and represent theoretical and descriptive contributions to our knowledge of national varieties of English, both written and spoken. The series covers a broad range of topics and approaches, including syntax, phonology, grammar, vocabulary, discourse, pragmatics and sociolinguistics, and is aimed at an international readership.

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The study on which this book is based began about forty years ago as a casual interest in the subject engendered by Thomas Pyles’s history textbook, *The Origins and Development of the English Language* (now in its fifth revised edition, Algeo and Pyles 2004). It was focused during a year (1986–7) the author spent in the Survey of English Usage at University College London as a Fulbright Senior Research Scholar and a Guggenheim Fellow. In those days, the Survey was only beginning to be converted into electronic form, so at first research involved hunting through paper slips and copying information by hand. Later, as the Survey was computerized, electronic searches became possible, initially only at the Survey office and later through a CD anywhere.

The present study later benefited from the collection of citations made by Allen Walker Read for a historical dictionary of British lexical items. My wife, Adele, and I then set out to supplement Read’s files with citations we collected from more recent material than he had used, including citations for grammatical as well as lexical matters. Our own corpus of British citations is now about three million words in size. That is not large for a contemporary data file, but it consists entirely of citations that we had reason to suspect exemplified British use.

Work on this book was delayed by a variety of other duties to which its author had fallen heir. It is now presented, with painful awareness of its limitations, but, as the French are fond of saying, *faute de mieux*. Undoubtedly, British and American English are grammatically different in ways not reported here. And some of the grammatical differences reported here may be less certain than this book suggests because of difficulties in identifying and substantiating those differences or because of the misapprehension of the author. Nevertheless, I hope that it will be helpful in pinpointing various areas of structural difference between the two major national varieties of the language.
The debts owed for help in producing this book are more than the author can pay. The greatest debt for a labor of love is to his wife, Adele Silbereisen Algeo, who has assisted him in this, as in all other activities during the nearly fifty years of their married life. In particular, she has been the major collector of British citations that compose the corpus from which most of the illustrative quotations have been taken. She has also critiqued and proofed the text of the book at every stage of its production.

Gratitude is also due to a succession of editors at the Cambridge University Press who have, with kind hearts and gentle words, tolerated a succession of delays in the book’s preparation. Likewise gratitude is due to the Cambridge University Press for permission to use the Cambridge International Corpus, without which statements of relative frequency in British and American use would be far more intuitional and far less data-based than they are.

I am indebted to a variety of scholarly studies, both general and specific, for their insights into British–American differences. These are cited in the text of this book and listed in the bibliography of scholarly works at the end. I am particularly indebted to the works by Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik (1985), Michael Swan (1995), and Pam Peters (2004). For existing scholarship that has not been cited here, I can only say “mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.”

Individuals who, over the years, have kindly sent Adele and me quotations that have been entered into our corpus include notably Catherine M. Algeo, Thomas Algeo, L. R. N. Ashley, Carmen Acevedo Butcher, Ronald Butters, Tom Creswell, Charles Clay Doyle, Virginia McDavid, Michael Montgomery, and Susan Wright Sigalas.

Finally, and in a sense initially, I am grateful for the support of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the Fulbright Senior Research Scholar Program for support at the Survey of English Usage, University of London, during the academic year 1986–7, when the project was begun, and to the now departed Sidney Greenbaum, who as Quain Professor of English Language and Literature invited me to the Survey.
Introduction

British and American as national varieties

There are many varieties of English other than British (here the English of the United Kingdom) and American (here the English of the United States). All of those other varieties are intrinsically just as worthy of study and use as British and American. But these two varieties are the ones spoken by most native speakers of English and studied by most foreign learners. They have a special status as the two principal national varieties of the language simply because there is more material available in them than in any other variety.

British is the form of English now used in the country whence all other forms of English have ultimately derived. But present-day British is not the origin of any other variety of the language; rather it and all the other varieties are equally descendant from a form of English spoken in the British Isles in earlier times. In some respects, present-day British is closer to the common ancestral form of the present-day varieties than is American or other varieties; but in other respects the reverse is true, and American, for instance, preserves older uses that became obsolete in British use. To mistake present-day British for the ancestor of all other forms of English is a logical and factual error.

The focus of this study is on how contemporary British English differs from American. That is, in comparing two varieties of a language, it is convenient to take one as the basis for comparison and to describe the other by contrast with it. This study takes American as its basis and describes British in relation to that basis. The reason for this approach is that American has more native speakers than British and is rapidly becoming the dominant form of English in non-native countries other perhaps than those of Western Europe. Much European established academic bias favors British as a model; but evolving popular culture is biased toward American. This widespread dissemination of the American variety makes it a reasonable basis for describing British.
2 Introduction

Differences between British and American

The most obvious difference between British and American is in the “tune” of the language, that is, the intonation that accompanies sentences. When a Briton or an American talks, they identify themselves primarily by the tunes of their respective varieties. In singing, the prose tune is overridden by the musical tune, making it much harder to distinguish British and American singers.

Other pronunciation differences exist in stress patterns and in consonant and vowel articulation and distribution. Those differences have been described in fine detail. Vocabulary differences have been very widely noted between the two varieties, and they are fairly extensive, although also often subtler than most lists of supposed equivalences account for. Popular awareness probably centers more on lexical differences than on any other sort, partly perhaps because they are the easiest for the layperson to notice. Subtle differences of national style also exist, but have been but little and only incidentally noted (Algeo 1989, Heacock and Cassidy 1998).

Grammatical differences have been treated, but mainly by individual scholarly studies focused on particular grammatical matters. Extensive and comprehensive treatment is rare. Popular writers on grammar are aware that British and American differ in their morphosyntax but tend to be sketchy about the details. Anthony Burgess (1992), who is one of the linguistically best informed men of letters, settled on a few verb forms as illustrations. The grammatical differences between the two principal national varieties of the language are, however, manifold. Some general treatments of British-American grammatical differences, from various standpoints, are those by Randolph Quirk et al. (1985), John Algeo (1988), Michael Swan (1995), Douglas Biber et al. (1999), Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey Pullum (2002), Gunnel Tottie (2002, 146–78), Peter Trudgill and Jean Hannah (2002), and Pam Peters (2004).

Although many, few of the grammatical differences between British and American are great enough to produce confusion, and most are not stable because the two varieties are constantly influencing each other, with borrowing both ways across the Atlantic and nowadays via the Internet. When a use is said to be British, that statement does not necessarily mean that it is the only or even the main British use or that the use does not occur in American also, but only that the use is attested in British sources and is more typical of British than of American English.

The basis of this study

A distinction is often drawn between intuition and data as the basis for statements about language. That dichotomy, like most others, is false. Intuition is needed to identify matters to comment on, and data is (or, as the reader prefers, are) needed to substantiate intuition. My wife and I have spent twenty years
gathering citations of what intuition told us were British uses. Then I set out to substantiate those intuitions by consulting corpora of data. In most cases, our intuitions proved correct, and the corpora yielded statistics to support our hunches. In some cases, however, what intuition told us was a Briticism turned out to be nothing of the sort, but instead just to be a rare or peculiar use – rare and peculiar in both British and American English. And in a few cases, we were spectacularly wrong. Linguistic intuition is invaluable but unreliable.

Corpus data is likewise invaluable, but it has its own unreliability. The statistics from any corpus should be used with care and reservations, especially in comparing statistics from different corpora or even statistics derived from the same corpus but in different ways. A bit of folk wisdom has it that there are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics. The problems with statistics based on language corpora include the fact that two corpora may not be comparable because they are of different sizes or because they are composed of different kinds of texts. Academic printed texts and conversational oral texts will have strikingly different characteristics.

The way one phrases a search in a corpus can also produce different results; for example, if the search engine is sensitive to capitalization, asking for examples and statistics of a form with a lower-case initial letter may produce rather different results than a query asking for the same information of the same form, but with an upper-case initial letter. In this study, capitalization was taken into consideration when it seemed potentially influential, but not otherwise.

Moreover, many grammatical items are difficult to find in a corpus unless it has been extensively and accurately tagged, and few corpora, especially the larger ones, have the sort of tagging that would make grammatical searches easy. Instead, one must come up with ways of asking the corpus about instances of something that its search engine can find and that will give at least implicit, albeit incomplete, information about grammatical structures. Thus if one wants information about the form of negation in sentences with indefinite direct objects (They had no money) versus those with definite direct objects (They didn’t have the money needed), barring sophisticated grammatical tagging, it is necessary to ask about particular constructions (such as those just cited) and extrapolate a generalization from them. This study generally eschews such broad extrapolation, but some was unavoidable.

Finally, however, one relies on whatever is available. For the entries in this study, such evidence as was convenient to extract from corpora has been cited. But when that evidence was not readily available, intuition was still used. Any entry with no substantiating evidence is an intuitional guess, as far as its Britishness is concerned. In those, as well as other, cases it is advisable to keep in mind the wise words of Oliver Cromwell to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland: “I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken.” The author intones those words as a mantra.
4 Introduction

Sources of comparative statistics and citations

Statistics

In the body of this work, several corpora have been used and are cited by name, but the one most used, especially for comparative statistics, is the Cambridge International Corpus (CIC). Statistics from it are sometimes cited as ratios or percentages; in those cases, the base number is of a size to make such form of citation appropriate and easy to follow. CIC statistics are also sometimes cited by an arcane abbreviation: “iptmw,” that is, “instances per ten million words,” which is the way the CIC reports frequencies from its nearly two hundred million words. The accompanying table shows the composition of this great corpus and the relative sizes of its component parts. As can be seen, the British corpus totals 101.9 million words, of which 83 percent are written texts and 17 percent spoken texts; the American corpus totals 96.1 million words, of which 77 percent are written texts and 23 percent spoken texts.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>corpus group</th>
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<td>25.0</td>
<td>60224</td>
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<tr>
<td>written</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ACAD_BR</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>1260</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>84.7</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>BRSPOK2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>1652</td>
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<tr>
<td>spoken</td>
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<td>911</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>ACAD_AM</td>
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<td>American</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
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In consulting the CIC, all textual categories were weighted equally, even though only 17 percent of British texts and 23 percent of American texts are spoken versus written, and 11 percent of British written texts and 5 percent of American written texts are academic versus general. That equal weighting emphasizes disproportionately the fewer spoken over written texts and academic over general writing. Different weightings would very likely have produced at least somewhat different results.
Because the focus of this study is not on speech versus writing or academic versus general style, and because British and American are treated alike in this respect, ignoring the differences in text types probably does not greatly affect the general conclusions concerning British versus American use. Thus a statement such as “daren’t is 13.9 times more frequent in British than in American” refers to a combination of spoken and written texts in both varieties, although it is in the nature of things that contractions are more frequent in speech than in writing. That, however, is not the concern of this study.

The CIC is especially useful for a statistical comparison of British and American because of its large size and because it has roughly comparable samples of British and American texts. As mentioned above, statistics from it are often cited in terms of “instances per ten million words” (iptmw). When some form or construction is cited as occurring X times more or less often in one variety than in the other, or in percentages, the basis for that comparison seemed adequate, and that style of comparison easier to understand.

Citations

In keeping with the focus on British English mentioned above, all of the illustrative citations are of British use. Most of them are drawn from a corpus of British examples compiled by Adele and John Algeo over a period of some twenty years. That corpus consists of British citations gathered because they were suspected to contain characteristically British features, chiefly lexical but also some grammatical ones. Most of the citations are from newspapers or popular fiction. The corpus is stored electronically in word-processor format.

Illustrative quotations are generally limited to one for each entry. In many cases the files that underlie this study contain a great many more, but space was not available for them. Several of the chapters depend heavily on prior studies by the author and draw both examples and exposition from articles reporting those studies.

The sources cited are heavily in the genre of mystery novels and other light fiction, chosen because the initial reading was for lexical purposes, and those genres have a rich store of colloquialisms and informal language (in which British–American differences are most pronounced) whereas serious fiction contains fewer such items.

British fiction that has been adapted for American readers provides a useful source to document the words and expressions that publishers change for the American market. In the case of the Harry Potter books, a website (www.hp-lexicon.org/) provides a list of such changes. Quotations from these books in this work note the American adaptation when it was recorded on that site.

Many of the quotations cited here were computerized by graduate assistants at the University of Georgia. They sometimes made mistakes in transcribing a quotation that suggest the quotation’s use was at variance with their own native
use; such mistakes are occasionally noted as evidence for the Britishness of a particular form.

Examples cited from publicly available corpora are identified appropriately. Those cited from the Survey of English Usage (SEU) have corpus identification numbers preceded by either “s” for spoken or “w” for written.

**Conventions and organization of this study**

Illustrative quotations are abridged when that can be done without distortion or losing needed context. Matter omitted in the middle of a quotation is indicated by ellipsis points; matter omitted at the beginning of a quotation is indicated only if the retained matter does not begin with a capital letter; matter omitted at the end of a quotation is not indicated.

In the illustrative quotations, periodical headlines have arbitrarily been printed with initial capital letters for each word, as a device to facilitate their recognition.

The abbreviation “iptmw,” which is widely used, has been explained above as meaning “instances per ten million words” in the CIC texts. An asterisk before a construction (as in *go sane*) means that the construction is impossible in normal use. A question mark before a construction (as in ?They dared their friends solve the puzzle) means that the construction is of doubtful or disputed possibility in normal use. Cross-references from one chapter to another use the symbol §; thus §2.2.2.3 means “chapter 2 section 2.2.3”. Abbreviations of titles of dictionaries, grammars, and corpora are explained in the bibliographies of scholarly works and of citation sources.

Studies and dictionaries are cited either by title abbreviations (e.g., *CGEL*), which are identified in the bibliography, or by author and year (e.g., Peters 2004). Citation sources are cited by date and author (e.g., 1977 Dexter) and short title, if necessary (e.g., 1937 Innes, *Hamlet* or by periodical date and title (e.g., 2003 June 12 *Times* 20/2; for location in a periodical, “2 4/2–3” means “section 2, page 4, columns 2 to 3”).

In headwords and glosses to them, general terms representing contextual elements are italicized, e.g., **pressurize someone** means that the verb **pressurize** takes a personal object.

A comment that a construction is “rare” means that the Algeo corpus contains few examples, often only one, and that CIC has no or very few instances of it. Such constructions are included because they illustrate a pattern. The term “common-core English” designates usage common to the two varieties, British and American, and not differing significantly between them.

Of the seventeen following chapters, the first ten deal with parts of speech, and the final seven with matters of syntax or phrase and clause constructions. Because the verb is central to English grammatical constructions, it is considered in Chapter 1. Thereafter, the elements of the noun phrase are taken up: determiners, nouns, pronouns, and adjectives. Adverbs and qualifiers (i.e., adverbs of degree) follow, succeeded by prepositions and conjunctions, with the highly
miscellaneous category of interjections coming last in the chapters on parts of speech.

In the chapters on syntactic constructions, no effort is made to treat all matters of English syntax, most of which vary little between British and American use. Instead, chapters have been devoted to those relatively few syntactic matters that do show significant differences between the two national varieties: complementation (*agree [on] a plan*), mandative constructions (*insisted he was/be there*), expanded predicates (*have/take a bath*), concord (*the team have/has won*), propredicates (*I haven’t finished but I could [do]*)), tag questions (*he would, wouldn’t he*?), and other constructions, such as focusing (*it’s right tasty, is Webster’s*).
I

Parts of Speech
1 Verbs

1.1 Derivation

British has some verbs lacking or comparatively rare in American, many of which are denominal.

bath  Bathe: In CIC British texts, *bathe* is 5 or 6 times more frequent than *bath* as a verb, whereas the verb *bath* is very rare in American use, *bathe* occurring about 40 times more often. 1. *intransitive* Wash oneself in a (bath) tub  

*<We must all bath twice a day.> 1990 Aug. 13 Times 10/2.*  

2. *transitive* Wash (someone) in a (bath) tub  

*<He got her to bath herself.> 1992 Dexter 292.*

Note: In common-core English use, transitive *bathe* also means “apply water or other liquid to something to clean or soothe it,” but in British English it does not usually mean “wash someone in a bath,” for which *bath* is used; that difference in meaning explains the following:  

*<“Is it all right” she asked. “Not gone gangrenous, has it? I can’t see very well.” [¶] I assured her it wasn’t gangrenous, that I’d bathe it and that it would be better left exposed. [¶] She misunderstood or pretended to. “A bath,” she said. “I haven’t had a bath for two years. I need someone to get me out. You’ll bath me.”> 1991 Green 40.

beast  Behave like a beast: The verbal use of *beast* is very rare.  

*<...provost sergeants appear at work at 8am and don’t stop shouting, bullying and beasting until they clock off at 4.30.> 1995 Aug. 28 Independent 2 7/5.*

bin  Trash; junk; put into a bin “trash can”: The noun *bin* is not used in American English of a container for trash, so no corresponding verb exists.  

*<Junk mail? Don’t bin it, enjoy it.> 1990 Aug. 20 Evening Standard 22/3–4.*

burgle  Burglarize: *Burgle* is frequent in British use; CIC has no tokens of British *burglarize*. Both forms are used in American, but *burglarize* is about 20 times more frequent than *burgle*. Of a random CIC sample of 250 tokens of British *burgle*, 96 were active and 154 were passive; of the active uses, 57 had places as their objects, 3 had persons, 11 had things (*burgle a radio*), abstractions (*burgle a victory*), or were indeterminate, and 25 were intransitive. Of the passive uses, 1 applied to a thing, 56 to places, and 97 to persons. Thus the verb is more likely to be passive than active, and when active to take a noun of place as
its object, but when passive to have a personal noun as subject. <But if they 
burgle a country house, they can be miles away in minutes.> 1994 Sept. Tatler 
147/1. <People over 60 who are burgled are more likely to die or be moved 
into residential care.> 2003 June 26 Guardian international ed. 8/7.

cellar wine Stock wine in a cellar: This use is rare though recorded in both 
NODE and MW. < . . . we have not been in the habit of cellaring Rhone 

chair Carry on the shoulders of a group as an acclamation: This use is identi-
fied as British in MW and NODE. <And the choir themselves were being 
chained round the cricket pitch – > 1988 Trollope 217.

cheek Be cheeky [impudent] toward: CIC has 0.6 iptmw of the verb in British 
texts and none in American texts. <Thersites was not a traitor, but a rank 
officer in the Iliad, who got a bloody nose for checking other officers.> 1998 
Jan. 3 Times Metro 17/2. Cf. § 5.2 cheeky.

pressurize someone Pressure someone: CIC American tokens of pressurize out-
terior number British by 2 to 1, but of all the American tokens, only 3 have personal 
objects; on the other hand, two-thirds of the British tokens have personal 
objects, with which American would use the verb pressure. <She could have 
arranged to meet her lover . . . to pressurize him into marriage.> 2003 James 
342.

sculpture Sculpt: CIC has 4.5 times as many tokens of sculpt as of the verb 
sculpture in British texts, but 7.5 times as many in American texts. Although 
sculpt is the usual verb in common-core English, to sculpture is relatively 
more frequent in British. <Even tiny plastic chocks of Lego can be agglom- 
erated to make a sculptured figure.> 1991 Apr. 25, Evening Standard 
23/3.

slob CIC has 0.6 iptmw of this verb in British texts and none in American. 
<She [Camilla] . . . can go home to Wiltshire and slob in front of the television 
without the butler spying on her.> 2004 Dec. 15 Daily Telegraph 18/6.

treble Triple: CIC has about 1.3 times as many treble as triple in British texts, 
and 18 times as many triple as treble in American texts. < . . . the figure could 
easily be doubled or trebled.> 1989 July 28 Times 2/1.

workshop a play Perform a play for the purpose of critiquing and improving 
it: This use is rare (it is in NODE, but not MW). <Yasmin was written by 
Simon Beaufoy . . . and nobody can question the nobility of his motives in 
“workshopping” it first with the Muslim community in northern England.> 

1.2 Form

1.2.1 Principal parts

The inflected forms of verbs show some variation, with the irregular -t forms used 
more in British than they are in American (Johansson 1979, 205–6; LGSWE 396;
Peters 2004, 173). Conversely, however, British favors the regular preterit and participle of some verbs ending in \( t \) for which American often uses unchanged irregular forms. In the following list, verbs are listed under their dictionary-entry form, with their preterits and past participles following. If the second two principal parts are identical, only one is given.

**awake/awoke/awoken**  In CIC, \textit{wake (up)} is 6 times more frequent than \textit{awake} in British texts, and 9 times more in American texts. The present tense is comparatively rare in both varieties, but the preterit is frequent in both (1.3 times more frequent in British than in American texts); the participle is 3.9 times more frequent in British than in American texts. <Hopefully the tsunami has awoken the true spirit of human compassion the world over.> 2005 Jan. 9 Sunday Times 3 1/6.

**beat/beat/beaten**  Beat/beat: CIC has 270.2 iptmw of the participle \textit{beaten} in British texts and 179.8 in American texts. <... months of dreary slog, only to find . . . that the other chap had beaten you to it.> 1982 Simpson 111. Cf. § 5.1.3 beaten-up.

**bet/betted**  Bet/bet: Betted is rare in British use (0.5 iptmw), but non-occurring in American (CIC). <Every woman in England had betted on him [Derby winner My-Love].> 1994 Freeling 99.

**bid/bidded**  This is a rare variant of \textit{bid/bid}, not in NODE. <... the prices are bidded up all the time.> 1987 June 8 Evening Standard 24/6.

**broadcast/broadcasted**  Broadcast/broadcasted: CIC has no tokens of \textit{broadcasted} in British texts and 0.6 iptmw in American texts. <He broadcast this afternoon.> 1971 Mortimer 34.

**burn/burnt**  Burn/burned: Of 501 tokens in the American \textit{Miami Herald}, 95 percent were \textit{burned} and 5 percent \textit{burnt}; of 277 tokens in the British \textit{Guardian}, 56 percent were \textit{burned} and 44 percent were \textit{burnt}. Thus although both national varieties prefer the regular form, the American preference for it is significantly stronger (Hundt 1998, 24). CIC has about equal numbers of the two forms in British texts, but 11 times more tokens of \textit{burned} than \textit{burnt} in American texts. <Moving past the burnt-out garage . . . she saw that he was working in Mrs. Clutton’s garden.> 2003 James 292.

**burst/burst**  Burst/bursted: \textit{MW} lists \textit{bursted} as an option, but there are no examples in CIC. <... there had also been damage from a burst pipe.> 1989 Autumn Illustrated London News 74/2.

**bust/busted**  Bust/busted: CIC has 9.2 iptmw of \textit{busted} in British texts and 32 in American texts. <... it was the ending of the Cold War that bust his business.> 1989 July 29 Spectator 22/3.

**catch/catched**  nonstandard for Catch/caught: CIC has 0.8 iptmw of \textit{caught} in British texts and none in American texts. <Harry gets catched, quietly.> 1987 Oliver 200–1.

**cost/costed**  Estimate the cost of: CIC has 6.3 iptmw of \textit{costed} in British texts and 0.2 in American texts. <The Alliance planned to channel £500,000 to
the inner city in a carefully costed programme.> 1987 May 28 Hampstead Advertiser 7/6.

dive/dived  Dive/dove: CIC has 70 times as many tokens of dived as of dove in British texts, but only 1.6 times as many in American texts.

dream/dreamt  Dream/dreamed: Of 167 tokens in the American Miami Herald, 95 percent were dreamed and 5 percent dreamt; of 104 tokens in the British Guardian, 69 percent were dreamed and 31 percent were dreamt (Hundt 1998, 24). CIC has twice as many tokens of dreamed as of dreamt in British texts but nearly 13 times as many in American texts. <I dreamt mixed-up dreams.> 1991 Bishop 138.

dwell/dwelt  Dwell/dwelled: CIC has dwelt 14 times more often than dwelled in British texts but only 1.3 times more often in American texts. Past forms are 3 times more frequent in British than in American texts. <Danny’s . . . mind dwelt lovingly now on those accumulated spondulicks [“money”].> 1993 Dexter 195.

eat/ate/eaten  The British preterit is typically /ɛt/, the American /et/. In American, /ɛt/ is nonstandard.

fit/fitted  Fit/fit: In American use, the preterit and participle are fit, except in certain contexts, such as The tailor fitted him with a new suit and They fitted (out) the ship with new equipment. CIC has more than 7 times as many tokens of fitted in British as in American texts. <There were houses . . . that fitted the description.> 1994 Symons 145. <. . . it [a coat] had been reduced by 50 per cent and, what’s more, fitted perfectly.> 2003 July 8 Times T2 13/1.

forecast/forecast  Forecast/forecasted: Forecasted has only minority use in common-core English, but CIC has it 5 times more often in American than in British texts. <. . . he would suffer bouts of the “depression” he forecast after his resignation.> 2004 Dec. 17 Independent 6/2.

forget/forgot/forgotten  Forget/forgot: NODE labels the participle forgot “chiefly US,” and CIC has nearly twice as many tokens of forgotten in British as in American texts. In American, participial forgot is particularly likely to be used in perfect verb phrases (we must have forgot), but not as a subject complement or in the passive voice (*the inventor is / has been forgot). In the following, however, American could have forgot as well as forgotten: <They must have forgotten to send it.> 1994 Sept. Tatler 100/3.

get/got  Get/got/gotten or got: CIC has 32 times as many tokens of gotten in American as in British texts, in which the form is sometimes dialectal and occasionally used interchangeably with got: Haven’t you gotten your key? = “Don’t you have your key?” American uses both participles, but often in different senses: got typically for static senses like “possess” in I’ve got it = “I have it” and “be required” in I’ve got to go = “I must go”; and gotten, typically for dynamic senses like “acquire” in I’ve gotten it = “I have received it” and “be permitted” in I’ve gotten to go = “I have become able to go.” The American use of gotten is more common in conversation than in written registers (LGSWE 398). The following examples show British got in a variety of senses, all involving
a dynamic change of state, for which American would typically have gotten. American use fluctuates, however, in contexts where either got or gotten can occur without difference in meaning: He hasn’t got/gotten beyond the beginner’s stage (Gilman 1994, 482). In other contexts, however, with a possible semantic contrast, the two forms are used differently: I’ve got a cold = “I have a cold”; I’ve gotten a cold = “I’ve caught a cold.” A. transitive 1. Acquire <And what have we got? . . . just more unnecessary bills through our letterbox.> 2005 Jan. 14 Daily Telegraph 28/3–4. 2. Cause (someone/something) to become/come <Ron obviously realised that he’d got Harry into trouble.> 1999 Rowling 9 (US ed. gotten). 3. Procure <A typical high street price is about 50p to 60p . . . , but they [strawberries] can be got for half that.> 1985 June 13 Times 3/3. 4. Produce <The duty of the pilots was to get results. They hadn’t got them.> 1940 Shute 26. 5. Receive <Had the match been played, he says, Mrs T would have been invited – “and she would have got a good game”>. 1986 Oct. 11 Times 16/1. 6. Succeed in causing (someone) to come <Once they’d got him in for questioning they’d twig that the late Helen Appleyard wasn’t our Jenny.> 1985 Bingham 42. 7. Succeed in obtaining <If Mrs–Duggins–what-does had answered the door she’d have got a good look at her.> 1985 Bingham 159. – get back Reacquire possession of <I had got the mortgage back.> SEU w8–1.227. B. intransitive 1. Become; come to be <I’ve got quite used to it.> 1987 May 7 Evening Standard 35/1. 2. Succeed in going <Some have got no farther than the entrance.> 1988 Mar. Illustrated London News 27/3. – get along/on without/with Succeed in living without/with <. . . he had got along without women for quite a long time.> SEU w16-7.312. <. . . he had liked Colonel Garrett, had got on well with him.> SEU w16-8.296. – get away with Succeed in avoiding undesired consequences from <We’ve got away with it.> 1985 Mortimer 271. – get in the habit Acquire the habit <He had got in the habit over the years.> SEU w16-7.37. – get into 1. Enter <I was very relieved . . . to get five CSEs. If I hadn’t, I wouldn’t have got into sixth form.> 1994 Oct. 5 Evening Standard 12/1. 2. Become involved with <. . . how on earth had she got into this mess?> 1987 Mar. 22 Sunday Times 4/7. – get out/round Become known <Somehow word had got round among the nannies of England.> SEU w16-3.34. <I should have thought word of your U. D. I. plans could easily have got out.> 1985 Mann 118. – get round Get around <Until now this problem has been got round.> 1988 Apr. 10 Sunday Telegraph 35/2. – get round to Get around to <. . . dividend would have been limited, even if Ethical Financial had got round to paying one.> 2005 Jan. 14 Daily Telegraph 40/5. – get through Succeed in finishing (with) <. . . in my experience you’ve scarcely got halfway through [serving a group], when those to whom you dished out first are already crying for seconds.> 1987 Dec. Illustrated London News 68/1. – get to Come to <I have got to know a lot of songs from jazz records.> 1985 July 16 Times 10/6. – get up to Achieve <. . . mastering this season’s trends is simple – once you have got up to speed with the new looks.> 2005 Jan. 14 Daily Telegraph 27/2.
hang/hung/hanged or hung  In CIC texts, hung and hanged are used in similar proportions in both British and American texts, with hung 5 to 6 times more frequent than hanged. In news reports, however, British favors hanged, whereas American favors hung (LGSWE 397). <A boy of two hanged himself while playing.> 1994 Sept. 30 Daily Telegraph 11/5.

hew/hewed/hewn Hew/hewed: CIC has more than twice as many tokens of hewn in British as in American texts. Conversely, American uses participial hewed slightly more than twice as often as British does. <The last film . . . has rough-hewn Geordie Jimmy Nail in the lead.> 1987 Mar. 13 Evening Standard 31/5.

lean/leant Lean/leaned: In CIC, 23 percent of the British and less than 1 percent of the American past forms are leant. <Harry leant further over the banisters.> 2003 Rowling 73 (US ed. leaned).

leap/leapt Leap/leaped: In CIC, 80 percent of the British past forms are leapt and only 32 percent of the American. <Two cocker spaniels leapt out.> 1962 Lodge 70.

learn/learnt Learn/learned: Of 3104 tokens in the American Miami Herald, all were learned and none were learnt; of 1259 tokens in the British Guardian, 78 percent were learned and 22 percent were learnt (Hundt 1998, 24). In CIC, 34 percent of the British past forms are learnt and less than 1 percent of the American. <I learnt that traffic humps are not only damaging ambulances and fire engines but are also slowing them down.> 2004 Jan. 4 Sunday Times 13/6.

light/lit Light/lighted: In CIC, 83 percent of the British past forms are lit and 77 percent of the American. < . . . the blue touch paper was lit on July 14.> 1989 July 20 Midweek 19/3. Cf. SPOTLIGHT below.

mow/mowed/mown Mow/mowed: In CIC, mown occurs in British texts 33 times more often than in American texts; mowed occurs in American texts 2.3 times more often than in British texts. <During the hols The Man had got a patch of grass mown up behind the stables.> 1983 Dickinson 47.

prove/proved Prove/proved/proven: In one study of 424 tokens of the past participle in the American Miami Herald, 65 percent were proven and 35 percent proved; of 548 tokens in the British Guardian, 20 percent were proven and 80 percent were proved (Hundt 1998, 28). In CIC, proven occurs 2.4 times more often in American than in British texts. <From the beginning she had proved herself to be a tireless church worker.> 1995 Charles 58.

quit/quitted Quit/quit: Four British dictionaries (CED, CIDEL, LDEL, NODE) give quitted as the preterit, with quit as a variant, three calling the latter (chiefly) American. MW lists “quit also quitted.” CIC has 36 times more tokens of quitted in British texts than in American.

saw/sawed/sawn Saw/sawed: CIC has nearly 6 times as many tokens of sawn in British texts as in American. < . . . the keys to one of the ballot boxes were lost and it had to be sawn open.> 1987 July Illustrated London News
21/2. – sawn-off shotgun Sawed-off shotgun <So long as it doesn’t involve a balaclava and a sawn-off shotgun.> 1995 Jones 49.

sew/sewed/sewn Sew/sewed: CIC has nearly half again as many tokens of sewn in British texts as in American. <. . . when they organize anything they get it sewn up from A to Z.> 1954 Ellis 118.

shave/shaved/shaven Shave/shaved: CIC has twice as many tokens of shaven in British texts as in American. <Sam Langford drove his Jag slowly . . . stopping to ask shaven, surly youths the way to the British Legion Hall.> 1991 Critchley 177–8.

shine/shone Shine/shone: CIC has 3 times as many tokens of shone in British texts as in American and nearly 4 times as many tokens of shined in American texts as in British. American shone usually rimes with own rather than with on. <A single chandelier shone feebly.> 1991 Green 25.

shit/shat or shitted Shit/shat: CIC has more than 3 times as many tokens of shat in British texts as in American. It has 0.4 iptmw of shitted in British texts and none in American. <My only choice was to smile while you shat on me.> 1992 Walters 37. <That shitted them up.> 1995 Bowker 24.

short-cut/short-cutted Shortcut/shortcut: This form is rare. <He short-cutted across the grass towards them.> 1985 Price 212.

smell/smelt or smelled Smell/smelled: In CIC, the two past forms, smelt and smelled, occur with similar frequency in British texts, but in American texts, smelled is nearly 21 times more frequent. <The air smelt, a sour-sweet stink.> 2003 James 74.

spin/span/spun Spin/span: Span as the preterit of spin is labeled “archaic” in both British and American dictionaries, yet it has some rare use in current
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British. <Two teenage friends were killed . . . when their car span out of control in torrential rain.> 2000 Dec. 14 Times 11/1.

spit/spat or spit  In CIC, British texts use spat more than half again as often as American texts do. It is primarily a written form in both national varieties, but almost exclusively so in American. <[American resident in London about her child:] . . . he’d say, ‘She spat at me.’ Can you imagine kids saying that in America?> 1990 Critchfield 74.

spoil/spoilt  Spoil/spoiled: In CIC, British texts use spoilt in 54 percent of the tokens, and American texts use spoiled in 95 percent. <She spoilt this spasm of marital solidarity.> 1985 Barnard 24. – spoil for choice, be  Have too many options <There were, he calculated, eleven different buttons which he might press. He was spoil for choice.> 1993 Greenwood 35.

spotlight/spotlit  Spotlight/spotlighted: CIC British texts have the two past forms about equally; American texts have only spotlighted. < . . . the odd spotlit bit of Wedgewood.> 1979 Cooper 227.

spring/sprang or sprung  Although sprung is labeled American by NODE, in CIC it is used in British texts in 45 percent of the incidences and in American texts in 47 percent, so there is only a small, probably insignificant difference.

stave/stove  Stave/staved: Stove is a rare form in both national varieties; staved is about a third more frequent in CIC American texts than in British. <You mean . . . he just killed her, stove her head in afterward, and left her.> 1979 Snow 86.

stink/stank or stunk/stunk  In CIC, stank accounts for 85 percent of the forms in British texts, and stunk accounts for 52 percent in American texts.

strive/strove/striven  Strive/strived: In CIC, British uses strove about twice as often and striven 6 times as often as American does; American uses strived about half again as often as British does. <Troy . . . strove to think of something perceptive and intelligent to say.> 1987 Graham 112. <Joshua had once striven hard for political promotion.> 1991 Critchley 4.

tread/trod or treaded/trodden or trod  In CIC, British texts use trod and trodden respectively nearly 4 and 14 times more often than American texts do. The verb in all its forms is more than twice as frequent in British as in American. <Someone trod on her foot.> 1992 Granger 3. < . . . powder was trodden deep into the carpet.> 1994 Symons 187.

wake/woke/woken  The verb is, on the whole, about a third more frequent in British than in American CIC texts. However, woken is nearly 10 times more frequent in British. <Most companies and advertisers have not yet woken up to it.> 1996 Aug. 6 Times 27/8.

wet/wet or wetted  Wetted is more than 3 times as frequent in CIC British texts as in American. < . . . at last we got the flock moving – but not one of them wetted its feet, for the mob split to skirt the pool on either side.> 1987 Nov. 8 Manchester Guardian Weekly 29/1.

write/wrote/written or writ  Writ is an archaic past participle still used for effect occasionally but nearly twice as often in British as in American CIC
texts. <They must be kicking themselves and wishing they’d never writ those letters.> 1987 July 5 ITV morning talk show.

1.2.2 Contraction

The basic rules for contraction in British and American are the same, but their applications differ somewhat.

1.2.2.1 Contraction involving have

Unlike the uncontracted verb have (cf. § 1.4.1 below), the contraction ’ve differs in frequency between the two varieties. The LOB and Brown corpora (Hofland and Johansson 1982, 36) have 1.3 times as many tokens of ’ve in British as in American; a 1000-item sample of the CIC corpus has 1.58 times as many in British. In both national varieties, the overwhelming use of ’ve is as an auxiliary (British 96.5 percent, American 99.2 percent). But it is more than 5 times as frequent in main-verb use in British (1.1 percent versus American 0.2 percent). The remaining percentages are indeterminate because of interruptions, syntactic inconsistency or incoherence, etc.

When one of the personal-pronoun subjects I, you, we, or they is followed by have and not (e.g., I + have + not), two patterns of contraction exist: contraction of the verb with the subject (e.g., I’ve not) and contraction of not with the verb (e.g., I haven’t). The second pattern is more frequent in common-core English; however, it is only 2.5 times more frequent than the first pattern in British but is almost 26 times more frequent in American. Thus the pattern I’ve not is a statistical Briticism. <We’ve not seen any evidence of copy-cat crimes being committed.> 1987 Feb. 8 BBC2 “Did You See . . . ?”

The past tense had is rarer, but its use is similar. The second pattern (e.g., he hadn’t) is the norm in common-core English but is nearly 20 times more frequent than the first pattern (e.g., he’d not) in British English and nearly 140 times more frequent in American. <I’d not heard the story before.> 1987 Mar. 30 Evening Standard 24/1.

1.2.2.1.1 As a main verb

’ve Have: In CIC, British uses ’ve a more than 7 times as often as American does, and ’ve no close to 11 times more often than American does. <Mum, I’ve a boil on my bum.> 1999 Mar. 21 Sunday Times Magazine 14/3.

’ve not Don’t have: CIC has 1.4 iptmw of ’ve not the/a/any in British texts and none in American texts. <He knew bloody well I’ve not the faintest idea.> 1982 Lynn and Jay 123.

’d Had: CIC has 8.6 iptmw of ’d a and 6.9 of ’d no in British texts; it has none of ’d a and 0.2 of ’d no in American texts. <Maybe they’d a better map.> 1986 Knox 48.
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’d not Didn’t have: The construction is rare. < . . . sitting there like he’d not a care in the world.> 1997 popular fiction CIC.

’ve to Have to: This form is 9 times more frequent in CIC British texts (8.2 iptmw) than in American (0.9). <I’ve got a supervision tomorrow, and I’ve to turn in two thousand words on Cowper.> 1985 Benedictus 90–1.

’d to Had to: CIC has 6.2 iptmw of this form in British texts and none in American texts. < . . . I’d to hand wash and boil for six children, my husband and myself.> 1987 May 10 (Scotland) Sunday Post 33/2.

In British use, not sometimes contracts with have, whereas American use strongly favors its contraction with the auxiliary do.

havent’t Don’t have: Cf. CamGEL 112. The British texts of CIC have 6 times as many tokens of don’t have a as of haven’t a and 10 times as many tokens of don’t have any as of haven’t any, thus confirming the observation of the lexicographer Paul Beale: “Apparently quite unremarked has been the substitution of . . . ‘We don’t have . . . ’ for the former Brit. usage . . . We haven’t any . . . It seems to me that the ‘do’ formation is almost universal in what passes for Standard English nowadays” (1995 Dec. 6 personal letter). Nevertheless, the do-less forms are still characteristically British because CIC American texts have a ratio of 55:1 for don’t have a versus haven’t a and of 60:1 for don’t have any versus haven’t any. < . . . they haven’t a clue what it means.> 2003 June 28 Times Weekend 9/2.

hadn’t Didn’t have: CIC has 6.2 iptmw of hadn’t a and 1.5 of hadn’t any in British texts; it has 1.4 of hadn’t a and 0.4 of hadn’t any in American texts. <As far as I know he hadn’t any enemies.> 2003 James 176.

haven’t to Don’t have to: CIC has 0.4 iptmw of this rare form in British texts and none in American texts. <I haven’t to read it all.> CamGEL 112.

hadn’t to Didn’t have to: CIC has 0.3 iptmw of hadn’t to in British texts and none in American texts. <I wish it hadn’t to happen.> 1997 popular fiction CIC.

1.2.2.1.2 As an auxiliary

The auxiliary have contracts with its subject in both British and American provided the sentence is positive: We’ve done that; but when it is negated by not, have usually contracts only in British: We’ve not done that; whereas in American, not contracts with have: We haven’t done that. However, British may use an unstressed but uncontracted have in the phrase have got: She has got a cold; whereas American normally uses only stressed have: She has got a cold or contracted have: She’s got a cold (cf. § 1.4.1).

’ve/’s not Haven’t/hasn’t: In CIC this construction is about 3 times more frequent in British than in American texts. <I’ve not read it.> 1992 Dexter 28.
've/’s not got  Don’t/doesn’t have: CIC has 23.2 iptmw in British texts and 0.3 in American texts. <I’ve not got a breath pack.> 1986 Aug. 27 Times 10/5.
’d not  Hadn’t: In CIC this construction is about 4 times more frequent in British than in American texts. <I’d not heard the story before.> 1987 Mar. 30 Evening Standard 24/1.
’d not got  Didn’t have: CIC has only 0.2 iptmw of this rare construction in British texts and none in American texts. <She’d not got anything much laid on for next day.> 1989 Dickinson 85.

Have also contracts in common-core colloquial English with a preceding modal, notably must and the preterit modals could(n’t), might, should(n’t), and would(n’t) or ’d. That contraction is often represented as ’ve in CIC British printed matter (in 73.1 iptmw) but not in American, in which the frequent contracted pronunciation is not usually represented in standard writing. The contraction is also represented as of in both national varieties in nonstandard spelling.

We should’ve given it out.> 1971 Mortimer 67. <. . . you’d think he’d ’ve made some kind of effort, wouldn’t you?> 1985 Bingham 138.

1.2.2.2  Contraction involving be

When a personal-pronoun subject is followed by a present-tense form of be and not (e.g., he + is + not), two patterns of contraction exist: contraction of the verb with the subject (e.g., he’s not) and contraction of not with the verb (e.g., he isn’t). The first pattern is more frequent in common-core English; however, it is 20 times more frequent than the second pattern in British and only 10 times more frequent in American. <You’re not telling me she wasn’t hot stuff.> 1991 Jan. 26 Daily Telegraph Weekend 1/4.

ain’t  The term is often taken as a shibboleth of the uneducated; but among certain groups and areas, educated speakers use it informally, as they have since the eighteenth century (Gilman 1994). CIC has twice as many American tokens as British, but more British uses appear to be in otherwise standard-English contexts. <[Jeffrey Archer to his wife, who is conducting the interview:] I wouldn’t say more to any other interviewer and you ain’t getting it out of me on the record, young lady.> 1989 Sept. 9 Times 33/7.

aren’t I  At one time some Americans supposed this to be a Briticism, but it was naturalized long ago in much American use (Gilman 1994). However, CIC has about 1.3 times as many British tokens as American. <Why aren’t I satisfied?> 1995 Lodge 22. Cf. § 16.2.3 for its use as a tag question.

int, in’t  Isn’t: CIC has 3.9 iptmw of this form in British texts and none in American. A variant of the form is frequent as part of the tag question innit “isn’t it” (cf. § 16.2.3). <[Yorkshire man:] Aye, . . . and there’s summat else – why in’t Boycott captain?> 1985 Ebdon 145.
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Is X not? Isn’t X? The negative interrogative pattern of forms of be followed by a personal pronoun subject and uncontracted not is nearly twice as common in CIC British texts as in American. <Is she not?> 1989 Nicholson 90.

there’s not There isn’t: CIC British texts have 3 times as many tokens of there’s not as of there isn’t; American texts have only 1.3 times as many. < . . . there’s not an agenda.> 1986 Oct. 11 TV news.

’tis; ’tisn’t Contraction of it with a following is, “formerly common in prose, now poet., arch., dial., or colloq.” (OED), still turns up as a stylistic feature. CIC has no tokens in either British or American, but it is probably more frequent in British. <’Tisn’t often an editor dares disagree with his proprietor.> 1987 Apr. 1 Evening Standard 6/3. <And bring the cream jug. ’Tis over on the dresser.> 1992 Granger 8.

Contraction with who, either interrogative or relative, is more frequent with is than with are, and is primarily a British feature. Thus, CIC British texts have 319.0 ipmtw of who’s and 5.2 of who’re; American texts have 8.6 of who’s (mainly in headline style or citing the titles of programs, films, etc.) and none of who’re.

who’s < . . . it’s not just an old tart talking who’s getting elbowed off the street by young scrubbers.> 1980 Kavanagh 91.

1.2.2.3 Contraction involving modals

For the functions of modals, see § 1.4.4.

cannot, can not; can’t ([kaːnt] in standard British English; /kænt/ in standard American): Can’t is more frequent than cannot in common-core English: nearly twice as frequent in British, but nearly 3 times as frequent in American. The open spelling can not is nearly 6 times more frequent in British than in American.

daren’t; dare not In CIC, daren’t is 13.9 times more frequent in British than in American; dare not is 2.3 times more frequent in British than in American. < . . . the English Department dared not give tenure to a man who publicly admitted to not having read Hamlet.> 1975 Lodge 136. <You . . . daren’t use the phone to find out.> 1992 Dexter 39.

mayn’t The contraction of the negative with may, although rare in British (CGEL 11.8n), is more so in American. CIC has 2.2 ipmtw of mayn’t in British texts and none in American. The monosyllabic pronunciation of mayn’t ([meɪn̩t]) is apparently more common than the disyllabic one in British; as far as the word is said at all in American, it would usually have two syllables. <He mayn’t have believed his life would actually be in danger.> 1989 Underwood 115.

mightn’t This form is 10 times more frequent in British than in American. <It mightn’t have been one of the people I mentioned at all.> 1984 Gilbert 166.
mustn’t  The contraction is more than 5 times as frequent in CIC British texts as in American. Uncontracted *must not* is only about twice as frequent. <I mustn’t keep you.> 1987 Oliver 18.

needn’t; need not  *Needn’t* and *need not* are each twice as frequent in British as in American. 1. Do(es)n’t have to <He needn’t eat it, then.> 1988 Lodge 233. 2. needn’t/need not have Didn’t have to <I needn’t have bothered, need I?> 1986 Dec. 20 BBC1 Bergerac. 3. Better not <You needn’t think you’re dosing there.> 1991 Graham 137.

ought not to; oughtn’t to  Uncontracted *ought not* is more frequent than contracted *oughtn’t* in common-core English, about one-fourth more frequent in British than in American. Another notable difference, however, is in its complementation. *Ought* is usually followed by a marked infinitive (e.g., *ought to try*) in common-core English; the negative, however, is followed by an unmarked infinitive (e.g., *oughtn’t* or *ought not try*) in 10 percent of CIC British tokens, but in about 20 percent of the American tokens. Also, American uses *ought* about 89 percent as often as British does, but its negative only about 74 percent as often. The reason for that difference is probably the fact that American prefers shouldn’t as a negative, using it 1.3 times as often as British does. <Well, you bloody well oughtn’t to be.> 1969 Amis 207.

shalln’t  This is a rare form. <I shalln’t try to be a mother.> 1979 Price 177.

shan’t  *Shan’t*, although rare everywhere, is more used in Britain than in the US (*CGEL* 3.23). It is 17.9 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American, whereas *shall not* is only about 3.6 times more frequent. 1. With the first person for both simple and emphatic futurity. <I’m sure I shan’t.> 2003 James 236. 2. With the second or third person for determination. <Well, this one shan’t happen.> 1931 Benson 13.

usen’t to  Didn’t use to: Because of the normal pronunciation [ju:stu] the spelling of *use(d) to* is highly variable, even in standard edited texts (Gilman 1994). The *OED* has no tokens of *usedn’t*, which might be expected. CIC has no tokens of *use(d)n’t* with or without the *d*. In CIC, the negative of *used to* is rare, but *used not to* occurs 11 times more often in British than in American texts, and *didn’t use(d) to* occurs 1.39 times more often in American than in British texts. <They usen’t to take Laura?> 1991 Dickinson 269.

will = ’ll  The contraction ’ll is 1.39 times more frequent in British than in American. Although it is normal after pronouns in common-core English, it is less usual, at least in writing, after other forms, especially in American. <... one of you lot’ll have to buy me another drink to console me.> 1985 Clark 157.

will not = ’ll not  Won’t: In British CIC texts, ’ll not occurs once for every 36 tokens of *won’t*, but in American, once for every 346 tokens. <They’ll not be able to set foot outside their gates without being hounded.> 1992 Walters 97.

would have = ’d’ve  Such double contractions are normal in common-core English, but seem more often represented in British writing than in American.
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CIC has 4.8 iptmw of ’d’ve in British texts and none in American. <Most uncommon, I’d’ve said.> 1988 Mortimer 206.

**would not = ’d not** In CIC, ’d not (representing both would not and had not) occurs 4 times as often in British texts as in American. <I’d not touch them as a lass.> 1991 Glaister 53.

1.2.3 Ellipsis

The copula and verbs of motion may be omitted in certain constructions.

**be omitted** <The next thing that happened [was (that)] the black lad had crossed a good ball, fifty-fifty between the keeper and Graham.> 1976 Raphael 200. <Smoking [is] absolutely out.> 1986 Oct. 7 Times 15/7. <[Lady Elizabeth Anson, cousin of the Queen:] Normally I would stay on until 4am or 5am when the last guests were leaving and the plates [were] being stacked up.> 1991 Mar. 2 Daily Express 14/3.

**go/come/return** <Let’s [go] to our beds.> 1977 Barnard 41. <I’ll be twenty minutes late [coming] in, there’s something I have to do.> 1988 Stoppard 24. <... large numbers of Iraqi soldiers allowed [to return] home from the front line are refusing to go back to their posts.> 1991 Feb. 3 Sunday Times 2/4.

1.3 Verb phrases

“Verb phrase” here refers to a simple verb or combinations of a main verb and auxiliaries.

1.3.1 Present tense

A passive present tense is sometimes used in British to report a generally current situation, for which American would use the present progressive, the present perfect, or a future tense.


British also uses the active present tense with future meaning in contexts where American would favor an overtly marked future form or a progressive.

<We had to miss an invitation. . . . So we make it another time.> 1976 Bradbury 23. <This summer he moves just three miles away.> 1989 Aug. 13 Sunday Times Magazine 42/4.
In contrast to the British preference for perfect tenses (cf. § 1.3.4 below), a simple present may occur where a present perfect might be expected.

<It’s some years since we actually met.> 1985 Bingham 52.

**1.3.2 Progressive aspect**

According to a corpus-based study (*LGSWE* 462), American uses the progressive aspect more than British does by a ratio of approximately 4:3. American preference for the progressive is strongest in conversation.

Progressive forms are not usual with stative verbs (that is, those verbs that indicate a state or condition rather than an action: *She had [stative] a cold but was treating [dynamic] it*). However, some British examples exemplify such use, in which cases the verb expresses a process.

<Breeches are being popular among hill-walkers.> 1988 Sept. 3 *Times* 59/1.

<Let’s be seeing you. Soon.> 1989 Daniel 86. <It is looking crazy for any man without an income even to contemplate supporting a family.> 1989 Sept. 2 *Spectator* 9/1.

The juxtaposition of two tokens of *be*, as in the progressive passive (*be being*), is not frequent in British: CIC has 6.2 iptmw in British texts, but that is more than twice as many as in American (2.8).

<Collins . . . is now understood to be being courted for a major position.> 1996 July 24 *Times* 22/6.

**1.3.3 Future time**

English has two main verb signals of future time: (1) *will* or *shall* (the modal future) and (2) *be going to* (the periphrastic future). In general, British favors *will* or *shall*, and American *be going to*, notably in American conversation and fiction (*LGSWE* 488). The *be going to* future is more recent and is still expanding in both varieties (Mair 1997). Benedikt Szmrecsanyi (2003) has identified the following differences in corpora of the two national varieties (parenthesized statistics are from CIC for comparison):

1. *Shall* is rare in both varieties, but is more frequent in British than in American (in CIC, 6 times more frequent after personal pronouns).
2. The enclitic ‘*ll’ is more frequent in British than in American (in CIC, nearly 1.4 times more frequent).
3. *Be going to*, on the other hand, is more frequent in American than in British, especially in informal style (in CIC, nearly 2.3 times more frequent).
4. The negative contraction *won’t* is more frequent in British than in American (in CIC, on the contrary, it is more than 1.5 times more frequent in American).
5. The negative enclitic 'll not, although rare in British, is not used at all in American (CIC American texts have 5.4 iptnw, but British have 32.9).

6. A negated form of be going to, e.g., I’m not going to, is more frequent in American than in British (more than 2 times as frequent).

7. Be going to, however, is relatively more frequent than will or shall in British English in subordinate clauses, compared with main clauses, but less so in American, and is especially more frequent in conditional if-clauses.

British also uses the modal future perfect for events in the past, especially probable ones. Thus will have left is the equivalent of “(have) (probably) left.”

"<I think he’ll have killed himself.> 1982 Brett 122. <[with reference to the speed of driving:] ‘What car were you in?’ [¶] ‘My Jag.’ [¶] ‘Then you won’t have been hanging about, will you?’> 1988 Ashford 25.

Another use of the modal future is as a polite circumlocution instead of a simple present tense.

"<What was that one about loose talk? . . . You’ll know the one I mean.> 1989 Burden 115.

1.3.4 Perfect aspect

According to a corpus-based study (LGSWE 462), British uses the perfect aspect more than does American by a ratio of approximately 4:3. British preference for the perfect is strongest in news media.

British normally uses the perfect in the environment of adverbs like already, ever, just, and yet (CGEL 4.22n; CamGEL 146n, 713; Swan 1995, 563) and adverbial clauses introduced by the temporal conjunction since (CamGEL 697), as well as in contexts where the verb can be considered as referring to either a simple past action (preterit) or one with relevance to the present (perfect): I returned the book versus I’ve returned the book (Swan 1995, 423). American has a tendency to use the simple preterit in such cases, although the perfect is also acceptable.

"<He pulls open the hamburger bun and there indeed is the worm coiled neatly on top of the meat . . . . Everyone agrees that he has had a narrow escape.> 1988 May Illustrated London News 19/4.

The difference is, however, perhaps not so great as is often supposed. In CIC, the sequences have had, has had, and had had occur only about 1.7 times more often in British than in American. Moreover, American seldom shares a British use of the perfect with reference to a specific past time (CGEL 4.23n).

"<Look, the bike’s been invented in 1890.> 1987 May 31 Sunday Times Magazine 76/1. <Sharapova also tried to play down the significance of the vocal
tic which has already got her into trouble on her first visit to England.> 2003 June 25 Guardian international ed. 22/2.

The perfect form have got is used in common-core English in the present-tense sense “have” and have got to similarly in the sense “must.” In both cases, have may be (and usually is) contracted: I’ve got a cold and He’s got to go. The constructions are, however, on average about 1.5 times more frequent in British. The constructions are also similarly used in the past perfect with past-tense sense: I had got a cold and He had got to go. Such use is rare in American, which uses instead had and had to. British uses had/’d got about 15 times more than American, and had/’d got to about 20 times more.


British is especially more likely to use the past perfect where it is logically called for, to denote an action or state that existed prior to some other past action or state. There is nothing un-American about the tense in the following: <Mrs Derrick was astounded that all this had been going on under her nose and she hadn’t had a clue about it.> 1986 Oct. 12 Sunday Times 52/1–2. Yet American would be more likely to use was going on and didn’t have. The American preference for a nonperfect form is shown by the first two citations below, in which American typists substituted a preterit for a past perfect; such errors show the natural preference of the typist.

<The days when he had felt that the cops were one of the great obstacles to civilized progress were long past.> 1976 Hill 193. <Simeon seemed to find the news less catastrophic than she had expected.> 1985 Mortimer 151. <But you hadn’t really got to know Mrs Norris.> 1998 Rowling 111 (US ed. hadn’t got).

In the following examples, the past perfect is not clearly appropriate by the usual interpretation that it signals an action or state anterior to some other action or state. Instead, a simple preterit form seems appropriate. The British preference for the past perfect appears to have produced it even when the context does not suggest it.

<Amy came in and stared at me until I had noticed the dirty sweater and holed jeans she had exchanged for her earlier get-up.> 1969 Amis 52. <I’d said – or meant – I’d be there as usual on Saturday, but I hadn’t gone.> 1989 Burden 76.

British uses the past perfect and especially the would perfect for an unrealized circumstance in the present or future, for which a common-core option preferred in American is a nonperfect form. “If my mother had been alive, she would have been 80 next year. (Or If my mother were alive, she would be . . . ) / It
would have been nice to go to Australia this winter, but there’s no way we can do it. (Or it would be nice. . .) / If my mother hadn’t knocked my father off his bicycle thirty years ago, I wouldn’t have been here now. (Or . . . I wouldn’t be here now.)” (Swan 1995, 248).

1.3.5 Voice

The passive voice has some distinctive uses in British English.

be let (to) do something  Be allowed to do something: The theoretical passive of let someone do something is someone is let do something, but that is marginal in American use, in which someone is allowed to do something is more idiomatic. CIC has pre-1900 examples in British with a marked infinitive: <I . . . hope I shall be let to work.> 1854 Dickens, Hard Times. Later examples with an unmarked infinitive are <. . . the younger children were let sleep on.> 1891 Hardy, Tess of the D’Urbervilles, and <Would he expect to be let bring that woman back with him?> 1995 Joseph O’Connor, Desperados.

Ditransitive verbs have two objects: indirect and direct: They gave me this watch. Such verbs have two possible passive forms: one with the active indirect object as the passive subject: I was given this watch, and another with the active direct object as the passive subject: This watch was given me (CGEL 2.21). American English is less likely than British to have the second construction.

<It was told me in confidence.> 1985 Mortimer 231.

British English uses the passive verb be drowned as a semantic equivalent of the intransitive drown: He (was) drowned while trying to swim across a river (Swan 1995, 166). American journalism is reported as conventionally using intransitive drown for accidental drowning and the passive of transitive drown for intentional drowning: He was drowned by his kidnappers (Gilman 1994, 373). However, any context in which transitive drown is implied permits the passive, whether or not intention is involved, for example, The rising waters drowned him might underlie He was drowned. Consequently, the semantic distinction may be difficult to draw. CIC British texts have 4 times as many tokens of was/were drowned without a following by phrase as do American.

A British idiom for “become unwell” is the passive (be) taken ill, rather than the active took ill (with 15 tokens of the former versus 2 tokens of the latter in the OED, and 9.3 versus 1.7 iptmw in CIC British texts). This construction is not a normal passive; He was taken ill has no corresponding active *Someone/something took him ill. Rather, be taken in this use is a verb passive in form but functioning as a copula with a limited range of adjective complements. British uses either verb form with sick instead of ill only occasionally (0.5 iptmw); American seldom uses the idiom in any form, having only 1.6 iptmw of taken/took sick/ill.
1.3.6 Imperative

The first person plural imperative is marked by let’s in common-core English. CIC has 2.4 times as many tokens of let’s in American texts as in British (cf. also LGSWE 1118). For let us not and let’s not cf. § 1.3.8.

1.3.7 Sequence of tenses

Sequencing of tenses occurs notably in reported speech: She says they are happy versus She said they were happy, and in conditions: If it rains, we will stay home versus If it had rained, we would have stayed home. That is, the tense of the verb in the reporting clause or the condition clause attracts the verb of the report or result into a harmonious tense. An exception is the statement of timeless truth or of current events, for which a present tense may be used, even following a past tense. Tenses may be sequenced in some other contexts also.

British, especially reportorial use, strongly favors tense sequencing, even in cases of timeless truth and current events. American is more likely to break the sequence.

She said that there was nothing in the Bible that had anything to do with ordination as we knew it today. 1986 Oct. 6 Times 18/2.

The tendency to sequence tenses is so strong that occasionally a following verb may be put in the past even when the preceding verb is not past or no condition for sequencing tenses exists.

...we can not be surprised if they [prisoners] are already planning their next crime before they came out. 1987 June 18 Times 3/5.

Sometimes, both verbs are put in the past, even when the context is clearly present, as in the following naive speech.

Mind, nowadays you couldn’t tell whether they were a boy or girl. 1987 Apr. 13 elderly lady in a London Post Office line to her neighbor about a small child wandering around.

A different sort of tense-sequence rule is that for catenative verbs, in which, if the first verb is perfect, a following infinitive is not perfect: They could have refused to come. But, perhaps because of tense sequencing under other circumstances, infinitives sometimes appear also as perfects.

Anyway, we would have refused to have been on the same bill as Sting. 1989 Sept. 4 Evening Standard 30/3.

1.3.8 Operators

The operator is a verb (the auxiliaries be, do, have, or one of the modals) that inverts with the subject in yes-no questions (Are you there?) and other
environments calling for subject-verb inversion, that not can follow or contract with in negations (You are not / aren’t there), and that carries the nuclear accent in emphatic statements (You are there). In common-core English the copula be also functions as an operator, as in the preceding examples. In British, the main verb have can similarly function as an operator: I hadn’t any; American generally uses do with have: I didn’t have any (CGEL 2.49; 3.21, 34; 10.55; 11.5, 15; Swan 1995, 231, 355). Operator use of the main verb have applies also to the combination have to, as in Have we to get up early tomorrow? That use is said to be somewhat old-fashioned British (CGEL 3.48), but it is hardly imaginable in American.

**have (main verb as operator)**

1. have + subject <Nor had> he an ounce of curiosity. > 1989 Bainbridge 31. <Had> he any looks in those days? > 1991 Mar. 17 Sunday Times 1 23/1. 2. haven’t <I haven’t> a clue where she is. > 1993 Smith 176. 3. have not <The village cricket team has not enough players for the match.> > 1988 Brookes and Fraenkel 5.

**have to**

As noted above, the have of have to is not generally used as an operator, especially in American English, perhaps because have to is regarded as a single item, as its pronunciation “hafta” suggests, and therefore speakers resist treating its two parts as separate syntactical words that can be separated by other words. For that reason, also, there is resistance to inserting adverbial modifiers between have and to, especially in American English. A comparison of CIC British and American academic texts suggests that British is about 1.5 times more likely to separate have and to by an adverb. <The fact that he had, unlike his predecessors, to fight an election to get the job is an indication that there were doubts from the beginning.> > 1986 Aug. 25 Times 1/2. To take a specific comparative example, of the two expressions, have still to and still have to, CIC British texts consist of 27 percent have still to, and American texts of only 2 percent. <. . . he wanted to end the receivership but some legal problems had still to be sorted out.> > 1986 May 21 Sun 2.

The stressed auxiliary do can also be used to emphasize a positive imperative, especially in British, where it is often judged to be more characteristic of female than of male speech (CGEL 11.30, which cites as an example Do have some more tea).

<Do meet Mark Hasper, our director.> > 1987 Bradbury 93.

The inclusive imperative with let’s can also take the emphatic do, but in the negative a difference between British and American arises: don’t let’s is 7 times more frequent in British than in American, and let’s don’t is 4.5 times more frequent than don’t let’s in American, but is not represented in the British CIC texts.

<Don’t let’s talk about it any more.> > 1962 Lodge 202.

Do let’s not has no representation in CIC, but occurs:
<Do let’s not chitter–chatter on the green, Caldicott.> 1985 Bingham 100.

The construction let X not is used without do support (i.e., don’t let X) chiefly in the first person plural and then primarily with contraction: let’s not, especially in American English. CIC American texts have almost 2 times as many tokens of let’s not as British texts do; and British texts have more than 1.5 times as many tokens of let us not as American texts do. Third-person pronouns or me, instead of us, in this construction are rare, especially in American English.

<... let him not think that we have a long way to go.> 1987 Mar. 18 Evening Standard 35/1.

Exceptionally, other verbs sometimes behave like operators, particularly in being followed by not, but also with subject inversion in questions. This use is about twice as frequent in British as in American, though it is not common in either.


1.4 Functions

1.4.1 Have

Have occurs with somewhat similar frequency in the two national varieties. Although the LOB and Brown corpora (Hofland and Johansson 1982, 501) have about 1.16 times more tokens of have in British than in American, the larger CIC corpus has about 1.03 times more tokens of have in American. The uses of have seem, however, to be different in the two varieties. In a 500-item sample from CIC British corpus, 53 percent of the have forms are auxiliaries in function, 34 percent are main verbs, 11 percent are the semi-auxiliary have to, and 2 percent are indeterminate. In a similar sample from CIC American corpus, 42 percent are auxiliaries, 43 percent are main verbs, 14 percent are have to, and 1 percent are indeterminate. Among the reasons for the larger use of have as an auxiliary in British may be the stronger British preference for perfect verb forms over American simple preterits and the British preference for have got (in which have is an auxiliary) over American simple have (as a main verb). For the contraction ’ve, cf. § 1.2.2.1.2 above.

have and have got British English has traditionally made a distinction between have and have got, using have for habitual or repeated events or states and have got for single events or states. Thus, They have appointments on Mondays, don’t they? versus They have got an appointment today, haven’t they? In the following citation, presumably the first clause is about a general situation (there is never a bin-end sale), and the second clause is about a present-time situation (the inexpensive wines are currently available): <Majestic Wine does not have a bin-end sale,
but they have got two ridiculously good-value sparkling wines.> 1998 Jan. 3 Times Magazine 65/2.

American does not make this distinction, giving rise to such jokes as this supposed conversation: an American to an English woman: “Do you have children?” English woman: “Not oftener than every nine months” (Andersen 1972, 857). The British distinction, however, seems no longer to be rigorously observed.

British uses have/has got 2.7 times more frequently than American does and had got 9.7 times more frequently. British uses the contracted forms ’ve/’s got 1.8 times more frequently than American and ’d got 26.6 times more frequently. In both national varieties, as a main verb, have is far more frequent than have got, particularly in American. However also in both, the contracted form ’ve got is more frequent than simple ’ve as a main verb.

A corpus-based study (LGSWE 216; also Johansson 1979, 206–7) of the three interrogative forms exemplified by Do you have any . . . , Have you any . . . , and Have you got any . . . shows American preference for the first of those options and British preference for the last two. In CIC, do you have any is overwhelmingly the most frequent option in American texts with comparatively few tokens of the other two options. In CIC British texts, do you have any and have you got any are of about equal frequency, and have you any occurs about three quarters as often as either of the other two options. In the preterit, both varieties strongly favor did you have? with only a few examples of had you got? in British and none in American.

With negation, the favorite form in British is have no, which (at 621.8 iptmw) is more than twice as frequent as its closest British rival, don’t/doesn’t have. The latter is the favorite form in American (at 1495 iptmw), where it is more than twice as frequent as have no. A distant third in both varieties is haven’t/hasn’t got, which is 2.3 times more frequent in British (at 63.4 iptmw) than in American. An even more distant fourth is ’ve/’s not got, which is 77 times more frequent in British (at 23.2 iptmw) than in American. CIC has a few tokens of ’d not got in British texts and none in American. Fifth in line is have/has not got, which is 8 times more frequent in British (at 14.5 iptmw) than in American. The preterit had not got is even rarer, with 5.1 iptmw in British texts and none in American. Another corpus-based study (LGSWE 161) presents evidence that have no is used before indefinite objects, as in They have no idea, and that do not have is used in American before definite objects, as in They do not have the answer, but have not got in British, as in They have not got the answer.

In the sense “must,” have/has to is overwhelmingly favored over have/has got to in common-core English. The latter option is, however, about a third more frequent in British than in American. And the contracted forms ’ve/’s got to are much more frequent in both varieties than the full form, especially in British. The contracted form ’ve to is rare in both varieties, but is more frequent in British.

have/has got  Have/had; ’ve/’s got <We have got defibrillators in offices and one-stop shops.> 2005 Jan. 14 Daily Telegraph 14/8.
had got  <It [the wall] had got safety notices and postcards and a map of London taped to it.> 1989 Nicholson 19.
've/'s got  <He’s got a bit of previous form [“criminal record”], I know.> 2001 Mortimer 188.
'd got  <Because he hadn’t got the opportunity in Poland he’d got here!> 2000 Granger 335.

have/has got?  Do have: <‘Have you got your own chapel?’ [¶] ‘I do.’ [¶] Laverne was baffled by this Americanism. ‘I didn’t ask to marry you. I asked if you’d got a chapel.’> 1995 Bowker 130. Do is also used as the operator with main verb have in British English. <Do you work? Do you have children?> 1986 Oct. sign in the London West Hampstead Post Office.

had got?  <...how on earth had she got into this mess?> 1987 Mar. 22 Sunday Times 4/7.

have/has/had?  <Had he any enemies...?> 2003 James 195.

have/has no  <I have no problem with them.> 2003 June 20 Times 40/4.

haven’t/hasn’t got  <I haven’t got siblings.> 2003 James 178.

hadn’t got  <...he worked, illegally of course – he hadn’t got any papers.> 1991 Dickinson 275.

've/’s not got  <You’ve not got t’nous [the brains] you were born with.> 1985 Byatt 164.

'd not got  <She’d not got anything much laid on for next day.> 1989 Dickinson 85.

have/has not got  <If you... have not got your card, are you going to be detained?> 2004 Dec. 13 Times 21/4.

had not got  <To his dismay Sam realized that he had not got an answer to this.> 1955 Tolkien 216.

have/has got to  Have to; ‘ve got to; must <Have we got to wait till Tuesday before making a start?> 1940 Shute 140.

had got to  <He had got to go out... He had got to be alone and he had got to be on the move.> 1984 Gilbert 184.

've/’s got to  <Not that you’ve got to be that old to have grandchildren – there must be some grannies under thirty.> (American typist wrote “you have to be” for “you’ve got to be”) 1991 Dickinson 11.

'd got to  <...he was told he’d got to wait for two or three days.> 1991 Feb. 3 Sunday Times 2/4.

d have to?  In questions (Have you to attend lectures?), have is not favored as an operator in either British or American, but it is more often used in British (Johansson 1979, 209).

haven’t got to  Don’t have to: This form is not very frequent in British use (about 4.4 iptmw), but it is very rare in American. <We haven’t got to do anything yet!> 2003 Rowling 617.

have had  The perfect have had or had had is used in British English in the sense of acquisition: “have/had received.” For this sense, American prefers have/had gotten.
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’ve had Have gotten '<[of invitations:] She’s just sent out – oh, you’ve had yours.'> 1994 Dickinson 187.
’d had Had gotten '< . . . they said they’d had one bid already.'> 1987 May 27 Punch 34/3.

1.4.2 Been

been Come '<Has the telly–man been yet? I meant to ask you yesterday.'> 1977 Dexter 82.
been and (gone and) This expression, which is a quasi-adverbial modifier of perfect-aspect verbs, with the sense “despite what might be expected or what is advisable,” has three variants. 1. gone and This common-core variant is nearly 3 times as frequent in CIC British texts as in American. '<Now he’d gone and overshot the entrance.'> 1993 Mason 4. 2. been and British English has another such pseudo coordination using been and, which may be used alone or followed by gone and (CGEL 13.98n). Been and may have the sense of “finally,” as in the following citation. '<Well [we] have been and done it and our . . . e-mail address is . . . .'> 2004 June 14 personal e-mail. 3. been and gone and '<‘Well, it’s like this, dad,’ said Peregrine, ‘I’ve been and gone and shot a professor.’ ['¶'] Mr Clyde-Browne’s eyes bulged in his head. ‘I’m not hearing right,’ he muttered, ‘It’s those fucking Mogadons. You’ve been and gone . . . Where the hell did you pick up that vulgar expression?’'> 1982 Sharpe 206.

1.4.3 Participles and gerunds

Present participles occasionally appear in British where past participles might be expected in common–core English.

owing Owed; due (to one) '<You haven’t any holiday owing?'> 1992 Walters 198.

preached, being Preached '<I’ve heard many sermons being preached on that event.'> 1989 Sept. 24 sermon in the Camberley Baptist church.

stuffing with Stuffed with '<Heads full of letters and diaries and heaven knows what scribblings that they imagine the place [a library] must be stuffing with.'> 1983 Innes 26.

On the other hand, the following citation of sat has the reverse.

sat Sitting '<I remember spending three days once sat in a tree.'> 1987 June 17 Times 23/6.

disappeared, be The construction is disappeared is rare, but is represented in CIC also. '<Queen Bess herself was thrilled with the invention [a flushing lavatory] and had one installed in Richmond Palace. It is long disappeared.'> 1988 Feb. Illustrated London News 28/3.
The following citation contains an active gerund without a subject, *paying*, where other constructions might be expected: *your paying, being paid, payment.*

<“Please, Kate, just give me a few more days. . . . I’ll pay extra.” [¶] “It’s not just the money,” I said hurriedly, “although I could do with *paying* for these two days.”> 1992 Green 30.

### 1.4.4 Modals

The marginal modals like *dare* and *need* are very rare and practically confined to British English (*LGSWE* 484). For modals like *would* and *should* in adverbial phrases, cf. § 6.1 1 + MODAL + VERB OF OPINION.

**can**  *Can have*, when used to question possibilities, as in *Can they have missed the bus?* is more often *could have* in American (*CGEL* 11.13).

**dare**  *Dare without to* is British, rare, and mainly negative as in *dare not, daren’t* or interrogative as in *dare I?* (Peters 2004, 139). In American, its modal use is rare (Johansson 1979, 208). CIC has 5 times as many tokens of *dare I?* in British texts as in American. <Dare we say it, he’s a bit of a drug-crazed, boring git [“contemptible person”].> 1995 Sept. 6–13 *Time Out* 38/1.

**may**  *May* is used in British English in expressions of unrealized possibility in the past, for which American (and most British usage) would require *might* (Swan 1995, 325; 1990 Howard, 176). <. . . if they had been left to their own devices without interference from outside influences they may well be sitting down right now and planning just how to get that title back.> 1986 Oct. 1 *Times* 42/8.

**must**  *Must* is somewhat more frequent in British than in American, by about 1.7 times in CIC. It has several uses that are common–core English, but are more characteristic of British than of American. 1. To express necessity, certainty, or obligation; have to (Swan 1995, 343–5). <. . . he felt he had done nothing for which he must climb down.> 1987 Jan. 16 *Times* 12/2. 2. In the negative, to express what is not allowed or reasonable; can’t (Swan 1995, 344). <Now you’ve got false teeth, . . . you mustn’t expect to eat toffee.> 1969 Rendell 120.

**need (not)**  (Don’t) have to: The modal use of *need*, although uncommon in British English, is even more so in American (*CGEL* 3.42; Johansson 1979, 207–8). It occurs primarily in negative contexts. <Mrs Haines need not then have been embarrassed in any way.> 1989 Aug. 29 *Times* 15/3.

**ought to**  Should: In CIC, *ought* is about 1.13 times more frequent in British than in American, but *ought* immediately followed by *to* is about 1.08 times more frequent in American, perhaps because in American, *ought* is more likely to be affirmative than either negative (cf. § 1.2.2.3) or interrogative (Johansson 1979, 211). In a corpus study of fiction (*LGSWE* 218), interrogative *ought to* was rare in British fiction, but wholly lacking in American, which uses *should* instead. <Ought you to have been listening?> 2003 James 101.
shall  In pronunciation, British shall is often weakly stressed with a reduced [ə] vowel, whereas American shall, when it occurs, is typically strongly stressed with a full [æ] vowel. In CIC, shall approaches a frequency in British 5 times that of American. American use of shall is greatest in academic discourse and is generally restricted to a few formal contexts: (1) in legalistic language to express a mandative sense: Minority groups shall receive preferential consideration, (2) in a suggestion that seeks the agreement of the addressee but also implies the speaker’s preference: Shall we leave now? and (3) rarely in a strong expression of determination: I shall return! The greater British frequency of shall is due to the infrequency in American of a number of its British uses, for example, its use for simple futurity with the first person and its volitional use with the second and third persons (CGEL 4.42, 11.13), albeit that is not now majority use (Peters 2004, 495). An example of such older British use is the following, which shows simple futurity in shan’t and volition in shall with the third person but in won’t with the first person: <I shan’t raise a finger against her, if she behaves. But she shall ring the bell, and I won’t be dictated to, and I won’t be called Lulu.> 1931 Benson 110. Such a clear traditional distinction in the use of shall and will is hard to find nowadays, and indeed the rule stating it has been declared to be invalid (CamGEL 195). 1. For future time, shall is relatively frequent in British use with the first person, whereas will is used with the second and third person. <. . . passive drinking . . . will be the next target on the list of liberties we shall be robbed of.> 1993 Feb. 13 Spectator 41/2. 2. Volitional shall is used with the first person when asking about the will of the addressee (CGEL 11.13). This type of use is shared by American, but the pragmatics often differ. <Shall we call it a night? I’m keeping you up.> 1983 Dickinson 63. 3. Shall may be used with the second and third persons with an implication of determination by the speaker. <Every time some terrible accident occurs . . ., everyone agrees that we must learn lessons from it so that it shall never happen again.> 1987 Mar. 28 Daily Mail 6/1. 4. First-person shall is occasionally used in a strongly emphatic sense, like the American sense (3) above. <|A:] You must please yourself, dear. [B:] Bernard: I shall! I bloody shall!> 1974 Potter 174. 5. Shall is also used, exceptionally, with the second and third persons for simple futurity. Note the inconsistent use of will and shall in apparently the same sense: <The buffet will open in about 5 minutes. A further announcement shall be made.> 1987 announcement over the PA system on a train.

should  Should is significantly much more frequent in British than in American, by 1.4 times in CIC. Its greater British frequency is due to several factors. The British use of should in mandative constructions is a factor (cf. § 12), as are various other particular conditions (Swan 1995, 252, 345, 518–9, 542), including a preference for first-person should in the main clause of a conditional sentence (CGEL 14.23): If I had been at home last night, I should have heard the noise. The rare abbreviation shd is also more British than American: <Translate into Argentinian if you shd wish.> 1989 Oct. 26 London Review of Books 8/3.
Verbs

The putative meaning of *should* (that is, signaling that an action has an assumed reality) is more frequent in British than in American (*CGEL* 3.39n; 4.64; 14.25; 16.30): *I regret that he should be so stubborn.* <Robert Barrow’s have installed certain machines for those ladies who need them once a month on the 2nd and 4th floors. Please feel free to use them if the case should arise.* 1990 Mar. 22 notice in a women’s toilet at a brokerage house, London.

British uses of *should* are particularly common with the first person, where American would more often have *would*. In CIC, British percentages of *I should* versus *I would* are 28 versus 72; American are 13 versus 87. <I should think she’ll get a good talking to.* 1987 Oliver 73. (Cf. § 6.1 1 + MODAL + VERB OF OPINION.)

used to 1. Neither American nor British favors used as an operator, although British is somewhat less averse to it than is American (Johansson 1979, 209). In CIC, it is about 1.3 times more frequent in British than in American. 2. The negative of used to generally requires *do* as an operator in American, whereas it can itself serve as an operator in British. When the *do* operator is used in British, the form didn’t used to has greater acceptance than it does in American (Gilman 1994, 933–4; Johansson 1979, 209). In CIC, used not to is 3.25 times more frequent in British than in American. <I used not to dream.* 1987 Bawden 187. Cf. also § 1.2.2.3. used to. 3. Although rare in British English, used without to occurs. <I wish you would trust me, as you used.* 1954 Tolkien 43.

will In CIC, the verb *will* occurs 1.14 times more often in American than in British texts, but following a personal pronoun subject, it is very slightly more frequent in British.

would In CIC, *would* is used about equally in British and American, but some uses seem more characteristic of British. 1. Supercilious *would* “A comment on the annoyingly typical” (*LDEL*). <... the rain came in sharp windy gusts, blowing as it does on the streets of Brussels. Well, it would be the same rain, wouldn’t it, blown by the same west wind.* 1994 Freeling 4. 2. Polite *would* “Used . . . to soften direct statement” (*LDEL*). <When would they want to come?> 1985 Clark 135. 3. Contingent *would* <He [G. B. Shaw] was a vegetarian most of his life. ‘God help us if he would ever eat a beef-steak,’ opined Mrs Patrick Campbell.* 1984 Smith 217. 4. *I would(n’t) have thought* <I’d have thought you a fool if you had.* 1983 Brooke-Taylor 78. <I wouldn’t have thought so.* 1989 Dickinson 115.

1.4.5 Subjunctive

The subjunctive in English is not an inflected form of the verb, but a cover term for certain uses of the uninflected base or present form of the verb (*be*, *go*), and of the preterit (*was* or *were*, *went*) and past perfect forms (*had been*, *had gone*). Those uses are as follows.
The present subjunctive is used in mandative constructions: *It is necessary that he be/go there*. This use had become rare in British English, surviving mainly in formal and legalistic styles and generally replaced by a modal form (*It is necessary that he should be/go there*) or more recently by an indicative form (*It is necessary that he is/goes there*), for which see § 12. The use of the mandative subjunctive has, however, been revived in British use, doubtless through American influence (CGEL 3.59; 10.55n; 16.30, 32).

(2) The present subjunctive is also used in certain traditional formulas or constructions, such as *God save the Queen!* and *Lord help us*. Such use is formal and old-fashioned (CGEL 3.60).

(3) The present subjunctive also has an obsolescent use in conditional and concessive clauses: *If this be treason, . . . and, in American English, a current use in clauses introduced by *lest*: . . . lest he be/go there (CGEL 3.61, 15.48).

(4) The preterit subjunctive is used in conditions contrary to fact at the present time: *If he were/was here now, we could ask him*. In such use, the invariant form *were* is traditional for all persons and numbers, but in British use especially, *was* and *were* are both used in their usual agreement pattern with the subject. A less common option is the indicative as in <In America Neil Jordan’s new film, Mona Lisa, is doing business as if it is the only movie in town.> 1986 Sept. 6 Times 16/5.

(5) The past perfect subjunctive is similarly used in conditions contrary to fact at past times: *If he had been here yesterday, we could have asked him.*

The latter two subjunctives use back-shifting of the verb forms to indicate an unreal state: the preterit in present time, and the past perfect in past time. Characteristically British uses of these forms follow.

1.4.5.1 Preterit subjunctive with subject concord

In common-core English, *was* is sometimes used with first and third person subjects in conditions contrary to fact, where traditional use calls for *were*. But that use seems to be more prevalent in edited British English than in edited American English. This introduction of subject concord into subjunctive use is one indication that the subjunctive is marginal in the system. That is, the traditional subjunctive is being assimilated to the concord pattern of indicative verbs, leaving only past time shift as a mark of subjunctiveness.

*was* counterfactual subjunctive <Does he [Prince Charles] seriously believe that if the A Team *was* taken off television, the people in Brixton market would start taking old ladies across the road tomorrow?> 1988 Sept. 25 Manchester Guardian Weekly 24/3. <“Are you Canadian or American?” he [Jeffrey Archer] asked. [¶] “American.” [¶] “I’d keep rather quiet if I *was* you.”> 1990 Critchfield 290. <We have solved the problem by bunging an ’s at the end of the phrase, as though it *was* a single word.> 1990 Howard 67.
1.4.5.2 Preterit subjunctive form in past time

The preterit subjunctive *were* is used for counterfactual conditions in present time, traditionally without subject concord. British English, however, sometimes uses *were* with third person singular subjects for past time in constructions that traditionally call for the indicative. Thus in the following citation <Sometimes he wondered if it *were* worth it.> 1927 Firth 58, the condition is an open one: “he” does not know about the worthiness of “it,” but is wondering. Traditionally the construction would be expected to be *Sometimes he wondered if it *was* worth it*. Through their departure from traditional use, these constructions attest the marginality of the preterit subjunctive.

These pseudo subjunctive uses are primarily in clauses introduced by *if*, which is often a signal for a counter-factual condition, as in *If I *were* you.* . . . *This occurrence of *if* seems to trigger the form *were*, even when it is traditionally inappropriate. Other subordinating conjunctions with a similar effect are *unless* and *whether or not*. Pseudo subjunctives are part of standard, especially British, English, because they occur in a variety of edited uses. They do, however, indicate the marginal status of the past subjunctive in present-day English.

*were* pseudo subjunctive <But the joke, if it *were* a joke, came too late.> 1985 Mortimer 12. <Now if ever there *were* a gilt-edged education for a girl, then that is it.> 1994 Oct. 4 *Daily Telegraph* 25/3.

1.4.5.3 Past perfect subjunctive form in present time

The past perfect subjunctive is rare. The following use of the form is inappropriate because the time reference is present, not past. The final clause would traditionally be *if he *were* here now*. The past perfect is generally more frequent in British use than in American, but here it is used in a context where it is traditionally inappropriate.

*had been* past perfect for preterit <I think Neil would have counted me a friend – and I promise you he would have answered if he’d *been* here now.> 1972 Price 94.

1.4.5.4 Anomalous present subjunctive forms

Pseudo subjunctives exist also for *be*. In the following, instead of *be*, one might expect *should be* or an indicative form. Because the mandative subjunctive, recently introduced back into British use by American examples, has those options (*We insist he *be* / should *be* / is here*), *be* has apparently been extended to contexts that are not mandative.

<Housing chairman Alan Woods said that it was a national disgrace that the flats *be* left empty when their [sic] *were* people sleeping rough outside.> 1987 Apr. 16 *Hampstead Advertiser* 1/2.
Some constructions seem to misinterpret the subjunctive *be* in a mandative construction as an infinitive and consequently introduce the infinitive marker *to*.

< Hilary Torrance suggested that a letter from the parents **to be** sent to County Hall. > SEU w.6.4c.13.

The subjunctive is a marginal form in common-core English, so variations from its traditional use are found in American as well as in British. But British seems to have variations of the sort illustrated here with greater frequency in edited use.

### 1.4.6 Verb adjunct

Because of the freedom with which verbs and nouns shift use, it is sometimes not possible to say whether the first element in a compound is a noun (as in §3.3.1.1) or a verb adjunct.

**backing track** Back-up recorded music as background for a singer or soloist

< He did the **backing tracks** when the groups weren’t good enough to do them themselves. > 1994 Walters 46.

**close season** Closed season; a time of the year when certain sporting events are not held

< Marigold spends the **close season** on yachts with Albanian or Greek flags on them. > 1989 Daniel 46.

**dialling tone** Dial tone

< The **dialling tone** changed to a sardonic whine. > 1993 Stallwood 277.

**draining board** Drain board

< He approves the logical placing of double sink and **draining-board.** > 1994 Symons 2.

**driving** < Do you have your **driving licence** and log book, sir? > 1992 Green 180.

< Alice could see his smeary wet red face reflected in the **driving mirror.** > 1989 Trollope 7.

< And it was she . . . who got into the **driving seat.** > 1972 Rendell 89.

**extending ladder** Extension ladder

< Hung on the wall was an **extending ladder.** > 1992 Green 166.

**hijack bus** Hijacked

< Pupils And Nuns In **Hijack Bus** > 1988 Sept. 14 Times 1/2.

**kidnap** < Tears Of Joy As Kidnap Girl Is Found Safe > 1990 Aug. 15 Daily Telegraph 1/7–8.

< **Kidnap Man** Shot > 1986 May 21 Sun 16.

**pay bed** < . . . people can pay for their health care, through private clinics or NHS **pay beds.** > 1987 June 5 Evening Standard 7/1.

**paying-in slip** Deposit slip


**pre-pay card** < Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to switch to the [Transport for London] **pre-pay Oyster card.** > 2004 Jan 5 Times 4/5–6.
punch bag; punchball  Punching bag <He used her as his personal punch bag whenever he was drunk.> 1992 Walters 30. <Harry . . . had served as Dudley’s first punchball.> 2003 Rowling 15 (US ed. punching bag).
rushed job  Rush job <It’s a rushed job.> 1993 Cleeves 57.
sailing boat  Sail boat “chief Brit. a boat propelled by sails” (NODE).
signalling failure  Signal failure <The . . . [train’s] late arrival, “. . . was due to a signalling failure near Tring”.> 1995 Lodge 37.
skimmed milk  Skim milk <Long life skimmed milk with non milk fat> 1996 label on a milk container.

sniff youth  <Sniff Youth Found Dead> 1986 Aug. 29 (Newcastle) Evening Chronicle 1/2.
soured cream  Sour cream <Serve hot with a dollop of creme fraiche, soured cream or yoghurt.> 1989 Aug. 2 Evening Standard 31/6.
sparking plug  Spark plug <. . . there is no obvious legitimate purpose in carrying the shattered top of a sparking plug in one’s pocket.> 1987 Dec. Illustrated London News 20/1.
stab girl/victim  <Stab Girl Cathy To Go Home Soon / Schoolgirl stab victim Catherine Humphrey may be allowed home next week.> 1987 Feb. 3 Evening Standard 3/5.

washing line  Clothesline <In the last cottage garden, a rubber sheet blew on the washing line.> 1989 Trollope 198.
2 Determiners

2.1 Definite article

2.1.1 Definite article versus no determiner

2.1.1.1 With nouns of time

British English may use *the* in certain expressions of time where American English would have no determiner.

**all the afternoon/morning/evening** All afternoon/morning/evening: The forms without *the* are common-core English. CIC has 5.9 iptmw with *the* in British texts but none in contemporary American use. <I slept all the afternoon.> 1970 Johnson 18.

**all the day long** All day long: The definite article is optional in British use (*CGEL* 8.63n). CIC has 0.3 iptmw of the phrase with *the* in British texts and none in American.

**the month** The implication of this construction, without any posthead modifier, is “this month of some implied year.” In a random sample of 150 tokens of *January* in CIC British texts, 6 were preceded by *the*; a similar American sample had none. <A settlement . . . was proposed by the MPs in the June, before the legal costs had started to mount.> 1986 Oct. 19 *Sunday Times* 1/2.

**the date of a month; month the date** Month date: See § 17.4.

**in the night** At night: CIC has nearly twice as many British tokens of *in the night* as American; *at night* is nearly 6 times as frequent as *in the night* in British texts, but nearly 10 times as frequent in American. <. . . he gets up in the night for [his child].> 1993 Neel 70.

**the once** Once: The adverbial use of *the once* is about 14 times more frequent in British than in American. <Well, just the once.> 1989 Rendell 31. Cf. § 6.1 ONCE.

**the weekday** In British English, the definite article *the* is sometimes used with days of the week to imply “this day of that particular week.” Although regarded by some as nonstandard, this construction is popular (*CGEL* 5.67n). The
construction is generally the object of the preposition *on*, although other prepositions also occur. <He and his lady wife walked the dog . . . on the Saturday, and on the Sunday morning they put the dog in kennels.> 1991 Neel 210. <By the Saturday afternoon he was back.> 1993 Feb. 13 *Daily Telegraph* 11/2.

**at the weekends** On the weekend; on weekends: *At the weekends* and *on the weekend* have similar frequencies in British, and *on weekends* is twice as frequent as either of them. In American *on the weekend* and *on weekends* have similar frequencies, and *at the weekends* is very rare. <Getting out the barbie and ghetto blaster then popping some nice cold tubes at the weekends.> 1996 Graham 157.

**all the year** All year: CIC shows that both British and American prefer this expression without the definite article, but the American preference is much stronger. CIC has 7.8 iptmw of *all the year* and 63.8 of *all year* in British texts (8 times as many). It has 0.5 of *all the year* and 49.1 of *all year* in American texts (98 times as many). Cf. also § 5.4 *ALL (THE) YEAR ROUND.*

**over the cardinal number years** Over *cardinal number* years < . . . it was well over the five years since he had followed his doctor’s advice and given it [smoking] up.> 1987 Amis 3.

### 2.1.1.2 With nouns of place

The use of *the* with names of lands has become variable, with a tendency away from *the*. Until recently, *the Congo, the Sudan, and the Ukraine* were normal in both British and American; now, however, *the*-less forms are normal or frequent. Lands that, at least until recently, sometimes had the definite article in British use, but rarely American, are the following:

**the Argentine** Argentina <1959 *Evening Standard* 31 Dec. 8/6, I am home from the Argentine.> *OED* s.v. *the* a. 3.b.

**the Gambia** <I hear they have very cheap packages to the Gambia in January.> 1988 Lodge 62.

**the Lebanon** <He has helped . . . to evacuate the Lebanon.> 1987 Oct. *Illustrated London News* 28/2.

**the Yemen** <1981 *Church Times* 6 Nov. 14/5 The Hoopoo had nested in his walls when he was in the Yemen.> *OED* s.v. *the* a. 3.b.

The names of certain streets and roads are also sometimes preceded by *the*:

**the A + number** *A* designates a major road (other than a motorway); an American analog is *US* (as in *US1*). However, the designation for *A*-roads regularly includes the definite article; that for *US*-roads does not. < . . . the Grade One-listed building . . . lies close to the A1.> 2005 Jan. 23 *Sunday Telegraph* (Web ed.).

**the Broadway** <A Jack Russell terrier crossed the Broadway looking neither to its left nor right.> 1991 Critchley 168.
the Earl’s Court Road <They acquired a small flat in the Earl’s Court Road.> 1980 Archer 86.

the High Street: If high street is a generic term for the principle street of a town, it normally takes a determiner, as does its American analog, main street: They do their shopping on the high/main street. But if it is the proper name of a street, no determiner would be expected in American use: They do their shopping on Main Street. However, it is not always possible to tell from the linguistic context or the capitalization whether the term is generic or proper in British use. <St Michael’s Church of England School was in the High Street.> 2002 Smith 17.

the King’s Road <Pedalling to work along the King’s Road . . . .> 1987 Sept. Illustrated London News 16/1.

the M + number M designates a multilane, restricted-access road; an American analog is I (for interstate highway, as in I75). However, the designation for M-roads regularly includes the definite article; that for I-roads does not.

<. . . a diesel tanker ran into the back of a queue of slow-moving traffic on the M61.> 1987 Nov. 8 Manchester Guardian Weekly 4/4.

the Tottenham Court Road <. . . . . . . . Kentucky Fried Chicken sold in the Tottenham Court Road.> 1987 Aug. Illustrated London News 34/3.

The names of some other places or institutions may also take the in British use:

the Grammar As a generic, grammar school [in England, a prestigious secondary school] would take a determiner. The following use, however, appears to be a clipping of a proper name. <Peter . . . was . . . having a tough time at the Grammar.> 1980 Drabble 20.

the Medway Town <However in the Medway Town it is still possible to purchase 2 and 3 bedroom properties for under £35,000.> 1986 Dec. 4 Midweek 30/3.

the munitions <They evacuated everyone . . . . . I was working in the munitions at the time and it caused quite a scare.> 1989 Quinton 9–10.

2.1.1.3 With personal names and titles

The definite article is used before personal names and titles under certain circumstances in English (CGEL 5.64, 66), but the following are exceptional:

<He twisted his neck to contemplate the exhibit which the Merkalova had cast on the bed and then straightened it to observe the more compelling exhibit of the Merkalova herself.> 1937 Innes, Hamlet 149. <Mr Tucker and Sir Ronald sat down with the Mr and Mrs Thatcher to discuss the lastest poll findings.> 1987 June 13 Times 28/4.

In the following instances, use of the before title and name is normal in British, but less so in American:

the Prince N <The Prince Edward was received by Her Majesty’s Lord-Lieutenant for the City of Glasgow.> 1990 Aug. 13 Times 12/2.

2.1.1.4  With other nominals
A number of other miscellaneous examples show the in British use where American would have nothing:

at the back of  In back of; behind < . . . a used car lot at the back of Shire Hall.> 1990 Rowlands 172.
the cricket  The cricket game <1961 New Statesman 10 Feb. 210/3 It all began with la Starkie clutching her brandy in front of the Tavern at Lord’s with her back to the cricket.> OED s.v. la.
the emotion  <James Munro, who is involved in a victim support scheme in south–east London, has to fight his way through layers of the emotion before he can explain his work to solitary elderly women.> 1987 Nov. Illustrated London News 75/3.
the falafel  <In designer flats they talked, over the falafel, of financing a film . . . and getting divorced.> 1987 Bradbury 15.
the half of it  CIC has 3.4 iptmw in British texts and 1.3 in American. <Nobody heard him. . . . Mrs. Hannigan had, but she didn’t pretend to understand the half of it.> 1987 Mar. 2 London Daily News 17/3.
the most of  This sequence is common after make, but not otherwise. <As you succumb to once-a-year foodie treats this Christmas, spare a thought for the unsung professionals who have spent the most of the past year sampling them.> 1997 Dec. 13 Times Weekend 10/1.
the moths  <There isn’t anything of value there unless you count the Mothers’ Union banner . . . which incidentally I’ve promised to repair. It’s got the moths in it, or something.> 1975 Price 123.
the one son  <She had the one son.> 1979 Snow 15.
the pumps  In the following description of a small garage, there has been no prior mention of pumps. <The garage stood on a corner . . . Just the two pumps.> 1987 Hart 14.
the sales  <. . . she barges into the crowd like a shopaholic at the sales.> 2003 July 15 Times T2 7/3. – in the sale(s) On sale <It was so gorgeous that I would have bought it even if it hadn’t been in the sale.> 2003 July 8 Times T2 13/1.
the social services  <. . . public spending on the social services has been cut.> 1988 May Illustrated London News 7/3.
the television  <Once, politicians got on the television only to talk about an Issue.> 1987 Nov. Illustrated London News 98/1.
all over the town  CIC British texts have 5 times as many tokens without the as with the, but American texts have none with the. <Why, ’tis all over the town, Miss.> 1981 Lemarchand 16.
the welfare  <Scrounging on the welfare.> 1985 Mortimer 320–1.
if the worst comes to the worst CIC has no British tokens of worse comes to worst and no American tokens of the worst comes to the worst. <Think carefully about each option so that, if the worst comes to the worst, you will be prepared.> 1989 BNC.

2.1.2  **Definite article versus indefinite article**

The following postdeterminers frequently follow the in British.

the occasional The closest American equivalent is an occasional, but American might also have the adverb occasionally, as in “blizzards, freezing winds, and occasionally earthquakes” instead of “blizzards, freezing winds and the occasional earthquake.” In CIC, the occasional is more than twice as frequent in British texts as in American. <After they [child visitors] have gone, I find sticky fingerprints everywhere, . . . not to mention the occasional breakage.> 1998 Jan. 3 Times Weekend 30/1.

the odd An occasional: American has no simple equivalent to this collocation; an odd is likely to suggest “a strange.” In CIC, the odd, as a sequence, is nearly 6 times as frequent in British texts as in American. <I can recall the odd fishfnger or beefburger for high tea.> 2003 Nov. 12 Times T2 3/2. Cf. § 2.5.2 THE ODD.

the sporadic A sporadic < . . . there were actually poppies bobbing at the verges. Even the sporadic cornflower.> 1989 July 18 Times 14/6.

Other constructions using the in British are either set collocations or syntactic structures.

off/on/to the boil Expressions with the boil are more than 20 times as frequent in British CIC texts as in American; expressions with a boil are more than 9 times as frequent in American as in British. <His play went off the boil.> 1991 Feb. 2 Times 23/3. <It is instructive to see what sets local loyalties on the boil.> 1991 Feb. 9 Telegraph Weekend Magazine 8/1.

the clergyman’s  <His father had the clergyman’s interest in Darwinism.> 1988 Oct. Illustrated London News 59/1–2.

the day  A day <If I could have an animal head on my body for the day I’d be a cat so I could lick my own bits.> 2004 Dec. 8–15 Time Out 8/1.

the draw, agree  Agree to a draw <Karpov . . . refused to agree the draw.> 1986 Oct. 9 Times 2/7.

the half hour  Half an hour is the dominant form in common–core English. CIC American texts have more than 5 times as many tokens of a half hour as British texts do. British texts have nearly 4 times as many tokens of the half hour as American texts do. < . . . within the half hour he was sitting disconsolately in the accident room of the Radcliffe Infirmary.> 1975 Dexter 79.
the hell of a  A hell of a is the dominant form in common-core English. CIC British texts have some tokens of the hell of a; American texts do not. < . . . there’s the hell of a lot more we need to know.> 1989 Underwood 181.

the market  <Smart dresses for this age group are thin on the ground partly because . . . there simply isn’t the market.> 2003 June 21 Times Weekend 9/1.

the power of good, do one  CIC British texts have 3.3 iptmw of a power of good and 0.9 of the power of good. Neither option appears in CIC American texts. However, DARE has many examples of a power of in the sense “a lot of,” but labels it chiefly Southern, South Midland, and old fashioned. <I think a little drop of Scotch would do me the power of good.> 1975 Dexter 29.

the world of good/difference  CIC British texts have similar numbers of the world of good and a world of good; American texts have no tokens of the world of good. CIC British texts have 8 times as many tokens of a world of difference as of the world of difference, but American texts have 14 times as many. <Choosing the right travel insurance can make the world of difference.> 1998 June insurance ad poster on a London underground train.

2.1.3 Definite article versus possessive

Occasionally, in both British and American, the is used where a possessive pronoun is more appropriate. Among the following examples, only the third (the machismo) seems impossible in American (and perhaps unusual in British as well), but these examples are included because they are part of a larger pattern of the use of the.

the girl friend  <He had arranged to meet the girl friend in the evening.> 1940 Shute 28.

the home  <[In] Switzerland, . . . every male . . . has to have a semi-automatic rifle in the home by law.> 1988 Aug. Illustrated London News 27/1–2.

the machismo  <Some . . . eager for trouble and anxious to prove the machismo . . . swaggered past and made two-fingered gestures to the unheeding police.> 1985 Ebdon 79.

the work  <Only something to do with the work.> 1940 Shute 37.

2.1.4 Definite article versus demonstrative

for the matter of that  For that matter: CIC British texts have 0.3 iptmw of the longer form; American texts have none. < . . . she bore every appearance of being able, at need, to put young people through it still – or elderly people too, for the matter of that.> 1983 Innes 63.

on the day  CIC has 1.7 times as many tokens of on the day in British texts as in American; British texts have 4.3 times as many tokens of on the day as of
on that/this day; American texts have only 2.3 times as many tokens of on the day as of on that/this day. <Of the four only Roberts was not sent off by the referee on the day.> 1987 Nov. 8 Manchester Guardian Weekly 30/1. Cf. §§ 2.1.1; 8.1 ON (THE) DAY.

on the night CIC has 1.7 times as many tokens of on the night in British texts as in American; British texts have 7.9 times as many tokens of on the night as of on that/this night; American texts have only 4.9 times as many tokens of on the night as of on that/this night. <. . . viewers will be encouraged to pledge money on the night [of a BBC1 charity program].> 1988 Feb. Illustrated London News 24/4. Cf. § 8.1 ON THE NIGHT.

2.2 Indefinite article

2.2.1 Form of the indefinite article: a/an

For all of the following, majority British use has a rather than an. However, for all except historic(al), CIC American texts have no tokens of an at all. British preference for each form is given in parentheses as the percentage of iptmw for a followed by that for an.

an hallucination (50/50) < . . . an hallucination, nothing more.> 1985 Benedictus 13.
an hilarious (85/15) < . . . an hilarious hour with an inspired tutor.> 1993 Feb. 1 Times 15/6.
an horrendous (70/30) < . . . an horrendous blunder.> 1988 Apr. 10 Sunday Telegraph 48/1.
an horrific (71/29) < . . . such an horrific offence.> 1988 Sept. 6 Daily Telegraph 3/5.
an hotel (93/7) <The woman . . . was living with her daughter in an hotel for the homeless.> 1987 Jan. 21 Daily Mail 2/1.
an Hussar (no CIC tokens) <Nicholas Soames, an Hussar and all of sixteen stone, grabbed hold of Worthington Evans.> 1991 Critchley 146.

2.2.2 Indefinite article versus no determiner

2.2.2.1 With mass nouns

Most mass nouns can also be used as count nouns under appropriate circumstances (much bread : a rye bread). However, some uses of the indefinite article with nouns that are normally mass are distinctively British. Cf. § 3.2.3 for such nouns in plural form.
Many of these constructs seem to be fairly recent. Sidney Greenbaum, who was in the United States from 1968 to 1983, remembered being struck by a nonsense on his return to England (Greenbaum 1986, 7). The first example of the count use of nonsense in the OED is by Evelyn Waugh in 1942, but it doubtless took about a generation to move into frequent use.

In the following entries, the parenthesized figures following the entry form are the British/American iptmw, respectively, of the noun preceded by a(n). Where no figures are given, the number of tokens in both national varieties was too small to make comparison useful.

cheek (3.0/0.1) Cheek in the sense “insolent boldness” is usually a mass noun, but can take the indefinite article in British use with the sense “an act of insolent boldness” or, in have a cheek, the sense of “nerve, presumption.” Other collocations are got a cheek, a bit of a cheek, and What a cheek. Cheek in all these uses is more British than American, which is likely to prefer other terms, such as gall, nerve, or chutzpah. <What a cheek.> 1995 Stoppard 17.

coffee (24.3/2.9) Coffee is usually a mass noun, but may be used as a count in both British and American, as in I’ll have two coffees, or a coffee may refer to a social event at which coffee is served. Each national variety, especially American, prefers a cup of coffee for countable use, British by 1.2 times and American by 6.9 times. <Nescafe Gold Blend coffee commercials [featured] courting neighbours who never seem sure whether to share a coffee or a bed.> 1993 Feb. 8 Times 27/2.

curry (2.7/0, probably reflecting the fact that curry is far more popular in Britain than in America) <Anyway they went out for a curry.> 1992 Green 132.

eye liner <I used to spend . . . £14 on an eyeliner.> 1995 Sept. Marie Claire 245/2.

fly spray Fly spray, like mass nouns generally, can be countable in reference to a type of the substance; but here it means a unit (bottle/can) of it. <I’ve never bought a flyspray.> 1990 Aug. 18 Daily Telegraph Weekend 5/5.

gingerbread <There were scones and a gingerbread.> 1993 Cleeves 95.

gossip (0.6/0.1) <Just in time. Coffee and a gossip.> 1990 Hardwick 114.

heroin <The American musician . . . had taken a heroin.> 1986 Oct. 9 Hampstead Advertiser 7/1.

ice-cream (3.8/1.6) A dish/cone/serving of ice cream <Having consoled myself for my ruined omelette with a croque-monsieur and a chocolate ice cream . . . . > 2000 Caudwell 189. Cf. § 3.2.3.

isolation (1.1/0.3) <. . . if a man in a sensitive job went sick, he was liable to be whisked into an isolation.> 1987 Rutherfurd 888.

lasagne <I had a cappuccino and a lasagne.> 1987 May 27 Punch 38/2.

lettuce (0.8/0) A head of lettuce <Joanna’s doing something to a lettuce.> 1989 Daniel 49.
mascara (0.5/0) <I used to spend £15 on a mascara.> 1995 Sept. Marie Claire 245/2.

misery (9.7/0.5) Instead of make (something) a misery, American is likely to have make (something) miserable. <MPs . . . demand police action against a handful of demonstrators armed with megaphones who are making their working lives a misery.> 2003 June 20 Times 13/1.

nonsense (11.8/0) – be a nonsense Be (a) nonsensical (action). <It was a military nonsense mounted under political pressure.> 1986 Sherwood, Mantrap Garden 110. – make a nonsense of something Make something nonsensical.

persecution <If a health official or a teacher expresses that homosexuality is abnormal or immoral he is subjected to a great persecution.> 1987 Feb. 10 Evening Standard 35/5.

good service (3.7/0.3) <We [a garage] give a good service.> 1989 Wainwright 126.

sleep (5.7/0.9) <I understand the doctor wanted you to have a sleep.> 1991 Neel 59.

medical training <If . . . she’d had a medical training . . . , she’d have a better chance of being competent.> 1991 Greenwood 78.

wood <. . . my husband . . . turned round to see a huge pile of a sawn wood already done by his elderly mother-in-law.> 1987 May 27 Punch 14/3–15/1.

2.2.2.2 With days of the week

on a day of the week The alternative to on a Sunday is on Sundays (on Sunday is very frequent but may refer either to Sundays generally or to a particular Sunday). In CIC, British texts prefer on a Sunday by 1.3 times, and American texts prefer on Sundays by 1.8 times. The other days of the week follow generally the same pattern. <In the old days . . . we got paid weekly on a Thursday.> 1999 Mar. 21 Sunday Times 10/7.

2.2.2.3 With plural nouns

An unusual construction is a with a plural noun as head. In the following cases, the noun head logically refers to “a building housing . . . ,” and the implied reference to a building doubtless favors the indefinite article in British use.

a Council Offices < . . . the Council first built a dramatic new Council Offices.> ca. 1988 (exact date n/a) In Britain, 18/2.

a public baths <It was . . . a lousy description, admittedly, of a public baths.> 1991 Feb. 26 Times 14/1.
2.2.3 *Indefinite article versus possessive*

**a lip**  <Wilcox curled a lip. ‘Nancy boys?’> (An American clerk, in copying this citation from the original, mistyped “his lip.”) 1988 Lodge 114.

2.3 *Possessive construction*

A possessive pronoun or occasionally a possessive noun phrase is used as a determiner in British English where American would have other options.

2.3.1 *Possessive versus definite article*

One of the most characteristically British constructions of this type is *in their [large numbers]*, for which the American analog would be *by/in the [large numbers]*. In CIC, 60 percent of the British tokens of such constructions have *their*; 99 percent of the American tokens have *the*. Cf. § 8.1 IN THEIR LARGE NUMBERS.

- **dozens**  <. . . one of those mass-produced plaster ornaments to be seen in their dozens at every motorway junction garden centre.> 1989 Rendell 44.
- **droves**  <. . . they flocked here in their droves.> 1998 Joss 31.
- **hordes**  <. . . the office workers started scurrying home in their hordes.> 1987 Fraser 26.
- **hundreds**  <Residents . . . turned out in their hundreds to welcome the Prince.> 1998 June 19 Times 5/5.
- **hundreds of thousands**  <Sikhs have suffered and died in their hundreds of thousands.> 1999 Mar. 24 Independent Review 5/3.
- **millions**  <They subscribe in their millions to women's magazines.> 1967 Frost and Jay 112.
- **scores**  <Labour voters and MPs will be encouraged to turn up in their scores.> 2004 Jan. 2 Times 25/2.
- **thousands**  <Party workers . . . quit the conference hall in their thousands.> 1992 Critchley 32.

A rare construction also has a British possessive corresponding with *the* in common-core English use.

**make their most of**  Make the most of  <The Sandinistas have made their most of both qualities.> 1985 June 14 Times 15/1.

2.3.2 *Possessive versus indefinite article*

**one’s bit of fun**  In CIC British texts, fewer than 3 percent of *bit of fun* have a possessive; most of the rest have the indefinite article; all of the American
texts have the indefinite article. <Your mother’s only having her bit of fun.>
(An American clerk, in copying this citation from the original, mistyped “a bit of.”) 1985 Mortimer 264.

2.3.3 Possessive versus no determiner

A characteristic of colloquial British is the use of our with a given name. In American, this construction would normally imply a contrast between two particular persons of the same name, an implication not made in the British use.

our Name  <For them she’s “our Maggie” – a term of endearment as insulting in its way as “that bloody woman,” since nobody, but nobody, would ever have dreamed of calling Churchill “our Winnie.”> 1990 Hazleton 110. <Our Kenny told me all about it. . . . He’s a cousin of mine.> 2000 Granger 237.

2.4 No determiner versus some determiner

British English has no determiner with some nouns for which American English would require one, either definite or indefinite depending on the context, or else a plural noun.

2.4.1 In collocations

Some of these constructions occur in particular collocations. Most of these nouns are normally countable.

to boiling point  Of tokens of boiling point following a preposition, CIC British texts have 14 percent without a determiner, and American texts have 3 percent. <. . . processed white bread. . . is usually enough to bring any modern self-respecting whole-foodie to boiling point.> 1986 Sept. 24 Times 15/3.

at/in/out of college  The expressions at, in, and out of college occur in American English, but in general senses such as “attending a college” and “finished with college education.” Senses like “located at/in the college” and “away from the college building” take a determiner in American use. <Mr Knellie had had his lunch and gone out of college.> 1956 Lewis 47. <Dr. Alan Hardinge decided that Monday evening to stay in college.> 1992 Dexter 202. <“Is she there. . .?” [¶] “No, not at college. Can I take a message?”> 1993 Smith 182.

on condition (that)  CIC British texts have 3 times as many tokens of on condition that as of on the condition that; American texts are about evenly divided between the two. <Lawrence had been awarded a Fellowship by All Souls on condition he wrote a history of the Arab Revolt.> 1988 Nov. In Britain 36/3.

at dead of night  CIC British texts are about evenly divided between at dead of night and in the dead of the night; American texts have only the latter. <. . . there is just no evidence that the Bank of England is dumping French
francs and Danish kroner, at dead of night, on the Tokyo market.> 1993 Feb. 13 Spectator 14/2.

death of night The devil there is <If there was a dead body around, you know, it would be another matter. But devil there is – unless it has been stuffed up a chimney.> 1983 Innes 38.

down at heel CIC has 0.7 iptmw of down at heel in British texts and none in American; it has 0.7 iptmw of down at the heels (plural) in American texts and none in British. <Teesside, then as now a down at heel seaside resort.> 1990 BNC.

in future The collocation in future “from now on” contrasts with in the future, which has either the same sense or means “at some time in the future” (CGEL 8.59n). CIC has 80 iptmw of adverbial in future in British texts and 3.6 in American. <Put me in a taxi, tell me not to be a naughty girl in future and send me home?> 1991 Grant–Adamson 219.

on holiday Holiday in the sense “a period away from home or work for travel or relaxation” is a Briticism. CIC has 136.7 iptmw of on holiday in British texts and 6.8 in American. The ICE-GB corpus has 27 tokens of holiday in British constructions as the head of a noun phrase without a determiner (It’s the second Monday that we get back from Easter holiday). In 22 of those tokens, holiday is the object of the preposition on (You’re going on holiday). In American use, on vacation is possible, but primarily in a general sense (We’ll be on vacation in July); in a specific sense (We’re taking the family on a vacation to Alaska), the determiner is likely. <. . . an actress who is believed to have gone on holiday to Spain.> 1993 Feb. 13 Daily Telegraph 1/6–7.

Hospital British uses hospital without a determiner after certain prepositions of location (CGEL 5.44) but also as the direct object after verbs implying motion from or to a hospital (leave and rarely attend). CIC has 143.4 iptmw of adverbial in hospital in British texts and 9.1 in American texts. It has 25.3 iptmw of in the hospital in British texts and 74.3 in American. <. . . they didn’t send for an ambulance to take him to hospital.> 1966 Priestley 122. <I had been out of hospital for six weeks.> 1985 June 2 Sunday Telegraph 11/2. <. . . she was taken into hospital.> 1986 Aug. 29 (Newcastle) Evening Chronicle 12/4. <. . . where would I hide a knife in hospital?> 1991 Green 184. <She . . . received a telephone call to attend hospital.> 1991 Feb. 20 Times 4/5. <. . . the Department of Environment bans the use of Housing Corporation money to provide supported housing for people leaving hospital.> 1994 Sept. 12 Guardian 20/5.

on hunger strike Although on strike is idiomatic in American English, on hunger strike is less so. CIC has 2.3 iptmw of it in British texts and 1.0 in American; it has 0.2 of on a hunger strike in British texts and 2.8 in American. <The Rev Jesse Jackson has gone on hunger strike.> 1993 Feb. 17 Times 11/8.

for/at interview also after/refused interview CIC has 6.4 iptmw of for interview and 1.8 of at interview in British texts and 0.1 of the former and none of the latter in American. <Many graduates are made to feel ashamed of a
2.2 at interview. 1993 Feb. 13 Spectator 21/3. <St Benedict’s . . . invited him for interview.> 1999 Mar. 22 Times 15/3. < . . . he had been refused interview.> 1999 Mar. 22 Times 15/3. <If, after interview, you still feel he’s not right, I will accept it.> 1999 Mar. 22 Times 15/3.

**a bit of ladies man** Something of a ladies man <Stephenson, known as “a bit of ladies man”, may be travelling with another woman.> 1986 Sept. 4 Daily Telegraph 40/5.

**on look-out** On the lookout <He and a white accomplice, who was on look-out outside the victim’s home escaped with two suitcases.> 1987 Apr. 8 Daily Telegraph 32/4.

**on mortgage** CIC has 0.4 iptmfw of mortgage without a determiner in British texts and none in American. 1. With a mortgage; mortgaged <The big advantage of buying a home on mortgage is that it provides a roof over your head while you pay for it.> 1986 Oct. 4 Times 32/1. 2. In a mortgage <She had about £50,000 on mortgage, which was far too high in relation to her salary.> 1991 Neel 219.

**next day** In random CIC samples of next day, British had 42 tokens out of 250 without a determiner and American had only 1. < . . . he thought he’d better speak to his aunt and uncle about getting to King’s Cross station next day.> 1997 Rowling 67 (US ed. the next day).

**next moment** In CIC samples, 11 percent of the British tokens of next moment were without a determiner; none of the American were. <Next moment, Professor Dumbledore was there.> 1999 Rowling 120 (US ed. A moment later). <Next moment – > 1999 Rowling 227 (US ed. Then again).

**on offer** Available: This collocation, although parallel to several other common-core English ones (on display, on sale, on view), is a Britainicism. In CIC, it is 42 times more frequent in British texts than in American. <There is still time to apply for one of the 45 MSC scholarships on offer.> 1986 Sept. 23 Guardian 12/8.

**pound a minute** This use is rare. <And his standard charge is pound a minute.> 1985 Price 146.

**at source** In CIC, at the source is of approximately equal frequency in British and American; at source is 27.3 times more frequent in British than in American. <BT could . . . deal with the problem at source.> 1991 Mar. 10 Sunday Times Magazine 3/3.

**at/on/to/etc. table** In CIC texts, at/on table without a determiner is 7 times more frequent in British than in American. <It was the presence of the head of the order which cast a blight over High Table.> 1977 Barnard 100. < . . . send them [muffins] very quickly to table.> 1983 Brooke-Taylor 104. <[Barbara Cartland:] One day . . . there were thirteen at table.> 1990 Critchfield 296. <I dined on High Table.> 2000 Caudwell 322.

**to/at/out of/leave university** University is much like hospital and college with respect to its use without determiners, typically after certain prepositions of location or verbs of motion. In American use, however, whereas college can
be so used in general statements (When she finishes high school, she’s going to college) but not specific ones (She’s going to the college by train), university and hospital usually have a determiner in all cases. In CIC texts, university in such constructions is 17 times more likely to be without a determiner in British than in American. <I haven’t the slightest regret about leaving university.> 1986 Aug. 19 Times 8/3. <Raymond dropped out of university last year.> 1988 Lodge 238. <Something strange happened to Joanne at university.> 2002 Smith 89. <Today, of course, she would have gone to university.> 2003 James 10.

2.4.2 With count nouns

In British English, a number of count nouns, in addition to those exemplified above, are exceptionally used without determiners. Cf. § 3.2.4.

 accusation  <... he can betheron about accusation of dishonesty.> 1986 Sept. 15 Times 12/7.

-ache (CIEL 5.49n) See backache, earache, stomachache, toothache below.

 allotment  The term allotment is not used in this sense in American, but if it were, a determiner would be expected. <He’s up on allotment today. . . . A little plot of land . . . like an extra garden where people grow vegetables.> 1991 Glaister 28–9.

 backache  In CIC British texts backache has no determiner in about 71 percent of its occurrences; in American texts in about 50 percent. <Many people who work in offices get backache because they do not sit at their desks properly.> CIDE.

 ball  The term good ball is used mainly in sports reporting, often as an exclamation; in CIC British texts, approximately 3 uses out of 5 have no determiner. American texts have very few such uses. <Wasps’ international wings . . . showed what they can do when good ball comes their way.> 1989 Feb. 19 Manchester Guardian Weekly 32/3.


 break  CIC has 8 British tokens without a determiner to 22 with the in the constructions in/during **** break. It has no comparable American examples without the. <... phone me in first break.> 1988 Stoppard 22.

 breaking point  In CIC British texts, this expression is 10 times more likely to be used without a determiner than with one; in American texts, it is 15 times more likely to be used with a determiner than without one. < Relatives go on looking after them [the elderly] through and beyond breaking point.> 1988 Sept. 18 Sunday Telegraph 3/3.

 bursting point  In CIC British texts, this expression is 17 times more likely to be used without a determiner than with one; in American texts, bursting
Determiners 57

*Point* does not occur. <... stands that were packed to **bursting point**.> 2000 Rowling 427 (US ed. the bursting point).

**Car bomb**  <... Ian Gow’s death by **car bomb**.> 1991 Critchley 193.

**Carriageway** Highway: In CIC British texts, about 4 percent of the tokens of *carriageway* are without a determiner. <A contra-flow will be in operation on the A2 Bexleyheath affecting westbound **carriageway** between Danson interchange and the borough boundary.> 1987 Mar. 25 Evening Standard 5/1.

**Certificate**  <We did it [*Paradise Lost*] for higher **certificate**.> 1975 Dexter 90.

**Century** In CIC British texts, about 10 percent of the phrase *of (the) last century* are without the determiner; in American texts, none are. <... a magazine of **last century**.> 1988 Nov. In Britain 16/1.

**In chambers** In CIC, the phrase is nearly 5 times more frequent in British texts than in American; it usually refers to a law office in British, but to a judge’s office in American. <Let’s have a woman in Chambers.> 1971 Mortimer 72.

**Chapter**  <‘I understand the new dean is sworn to restore proper Catholic worship to the cathedral.’ [¶] ‘What do **chapter** think of that?’ ... [¶] ‘In general, they’re against anything which lengthens the services.’> 1993 Greenwood 66.

**Collision** In CIC British texts, a determiner is 2 times more likely than not before the noun of the phrase *in collision*; in American texts, it is 9 times more likely. <... her official Jaguar ... was in **collision** with a police car.> 1993 Feb. 3 Times 4/1–2.

**Common room**  <... the assistant masters emerged from **common room** and took charge.> 1959 Innes 25.

**Concussion** In CIC British texts, 84 percent of the uses of *concussion* are without a determiner; in American texts, 81 percent have a determiner. <I thought it was **concussion**.> 1992 Walters 251.

**Contract** In CIC British texts, 59.5 percent of the phrases of *contract* have a determiner; in American texts, 76 percent do. <I am suing the Strand Theatre for termination of **contract**.> 1989 July 27 Evening Standard 31/2.

**Control**  <... in room 10 you have to sit well up in bed to see the screen and **control** is manual.> 1987 July Illustrated London News 72/4.

**Convoy** In CIC British texts, 66 percent of the phrases *in convoy* have a determiner; in American texts, 96 percent do. <I’d like to hear ... why his ship wasn’t in **convoy**.> 1940 Shute 27.

**Diet**  <... many obese girls ... have ruined themselves with bad **diet**.> 1991 Feb. 16 Weekend Telegraph 7/1–2.

**Diocese** In CIC British texts, when *diocese* is preceded by a proper place name (e.g., Canterbury, London, Rochester), 60 percent of its tokens have no determiner; in American texts, 97 percent have one. <In other dioceses, ... the congregations may then be more worryingly low than even those in London **diocese**.> 1990 Aug. 21 Times 9/3.

**Doorsteps**  <I suppose you’d better come in then, rather than stand there nattering on **doorsteps**.> 1994 Freeling 105.
drink  See § 3.2.4.
driver  <By 1902 the self-propelled forty-two-inch mower with saddle for driver was being used by Cadburys.> 1984 Smith 147.

earache  In CIC British texts earache has no determiner in about 71 percent of its occurrences; in American texts in about 43 percent. <When I was a child I used to get terrible earache(s).> CIDE.

exchange of contract  <[comment on gazumping:] If at any time before exchange of contract someone makes a higher offer to the agent he is duty bound to take his principal’s instructions.> 1987 Apr. 10 Evening Standard 45/1.

favourite  In CIC British texts favourite is used after forms of be without a determiner in 8.2 iptmw; in American texts, favorite is not so used. <Miss Jo Richardson...is favourite to hold the cabinet post if Labour wins the election.> 1987 Apr. 8 Daily Telegraph 4/5.

fire  In CIC British texts, the phrase with (an) open fire has no determiner in about 22 percent of its occurrences; in American texts that phrase does not occur. <That red room with open fire flanked by lion statues...is classic bourgeois.> 1987 Feb. 2 Evening Standard 24/3, 25/1.

flu  In CIC British texts flu has no determiner in 88.5 percent of its occurrences, and in American texts in 63 percent. <He’s got flu.> 1998 Rowling 96 (US ed. the flu).

freezing point  In CIC British texts, freezing point has no determiner in 73 percent of its occurrences; in American texts it always has the. <From the moment they [strawberries] are picked...they are kept at just above freezing point.> 1987 June 20 Times 13/7.

gas service  <Turn off the whole supply at the meter and call gas service.> 1980s poster of instructions on leaking gas.

golf-course  <...the local Inspector who played such a steady game on golf-course.> 1949 Tey 17.

grant  <...the Arts Council may intervene and make reasonable access for broadcasters a condition of grant.> 1988 Sept. Illustrated London News 64/3.

grounds  In the sense “area of land used for a particular purpose,” ground(s) may be either singular or plural: parade ground(s). But when it is unmodified, it is usually plural and takes a determiner: the grounds. British, however, sometimes has grounds without a determiner especially when it is the object of a preposition. CIC has 1.7 iptmw of in/from grounds in British texts and none in American texts. <In spite of policing measures taken in grounds, ...the Government says there are still too many incidents of violent hooliganism in grounds.> 1989 Mar. 5 Manchester Guardian Weekly 31/1.

hall  CIC has 2.8 iptmw of in hall(s) in British texts and none in American texts. <Like many students spending their first year in halls. . . .> 1994 Oct. 3–9 Big Issue 16/3.

head office  In CIC British texts head office has a determiner in 58 percent of its occurrences; in American texts in 89 percent. <...the JVC showroom
had closed some years ago, presumably without telling head office. I wrote to head office.> 1989 July 31 Times 12/2.

**home** From home is normal in many uses in common-core English, but in *remove a child from home* it appears to be a British social-work idiom. <... a child who has been abused . . . should be removed from home.> 1991 Feb. 24 Sunday Times Magazine 58/1.

**hornbeam** British often uses terms for trees in the singular without a determiner. CIC British texts have 3.7 iptmw of singular hornbeam, with no determiner in 79 percent of the tokens, and no tokens of plural hornbeams; American texts have no tokens of the singular and 0.2 iptmw of the plural. <Here oaks vie with hornbeam.> 2003 July 12 Times Weekend 1/4.

**house** CIC has 0.2 iptmw of *share house* in British texts and none in American texts. It has forms of *move house* in 19.3 iptmw in British texts and none in American, which uses the verb *move* alone in this sense. <... her demanding . . . mother, with whom she shared house.> 1979 Dexter 27–8. <He had moved house.> 1989 Rendell 36.

**honeymoon** CIC British texts have 57 percent of *on honeymoon* with a determiner, and American texts have 96 percent; British texts have 63 percent of *from honeymoon* with a determiner, and American texts 100 percent. <... the lovers got back from honeymoon.> 1993 Feb. 1 Times 12/4.

**jug** Prison <Unfortunate chaps who look after homicidal maniacs in jug.> 1973 Innes 32.

**kettle** CIC British texts have 0.3 iptmw of *put kettle* without a determiner and 13.0 with a determiner (*put the kettle on*, etc.); American texts have none without a determiner, and 0.7 with *the*. Quite apart from the use of determiners, it is apparent that British people put kettles on a good deal more than Americans do. <Go and put kettle on.> 1987 Feb. 9 ITV Coronation Street.

**line** <... the traffic had to filter into single line.> 1975 Dexter 165.

**manner** <The papers require to be signed and sworn . . . in similar manner.> SEU w.7.10.14.

**mortgage** CIC has 0.4 iptmw of *on mortgage* in British texts and none in American. <She had about £50,000 on mortgage.> 1991 Neel 219.

**moustache** <He is a big man . . . with bushy sideboards and RAF-style moustache.> 1988 Lodge 70.

**newsreel** <The vulnerability of the crew . . . was all too obvious in the cuts taken from wartime newsreel.> 1989 Sept. 7 Times 13/6.

**party conference** CIC British texts have *party conference* without a determiner in about 2.5 percent of its occurrences, but no American use of the analogous *political convention* is without a determiner. <His speech . . . was adequate, but too serious – more suited to party conference.> 1993 Feb. 13 Daily Telegraph 11/3.

**off plan** <... half of the 252 homes . . . have been sold off plan.> 2000 Jan. 19 Times 27/2–3.
plant  <Plant tends to be better used, and teaching staff are deployed less luxuriously.> 1987 Dec. 20 Manchester Guardian 6/2.

post  Mail: Although the expressions are rare, CIC British texts have equal numbers of by (the) first/second post, with and without the determiner; American texts have neither (with the analog mail). <The eleven pounds, etc., came by second post.> 1985 Townsend 65.

post  Job: CIC British texts have 11 times as many tokens of in post in the sense “in office” or “on the job” as American texts do. <You’re hoping that . . . there might be someone still in post who knew her.> 2001 James 319.

practice  <The task force was established . . . to spread best practice among schools.> 1999 Mar. 19 Times 43/6.

race  <. . . the only point in taking part in race was to win.> 1999 Mar. 16 Independent Review 4/6.

radar screen  <It [an airplane] . . . disappeared from radar screen.> 1989 Aug. 4 BBC1 news.

record, on  On record “recorded” is common-core English, although it is 2.7 times more frequent than on the record in CIC British texts and only 1.5 times so in American. <I’m not making a bet on this election because the odds are probably the meanest on record.> 1987 June 5 Evening Standard 6/4. In the following citation, on record means “on a phonograph record,” in which sense, a determiner would be expected in American. <I don’t even think I’ve heard it on record, though I did see Rosenkavalier in Amsterdam.> 1993 Smith 60–1.

roll  <Autumn Term . . . begins today with 330 girls on roll.> 1986 Sept. 6 Times 17/3.

saddle  See driver.

send up  <. . . this 1850 pantomine is played perfectly straight. Any attempt at send up would ruin the inherent humour of the piece.> 1987 Feb. 5 Hampstead Advertiser 2/4.

shot  Camera shot: CIC British texts have 0.8 iptmw of in shot and 0.4 of out of shot; American texts have none. <Henry, get out of the way, you’re in shot.> 1987 Bradbury 135.

spring  CIC has in (the) spring without a determiner in 40 percent of the British tokens, and in 21 percent of the American. <. . . in spring I did the Season and curtseyed to Her Majesty and the Duke.> 1991 Barnard 61.

standard  <Shell have put great emphasis on standard of service.> 1987 Jan. 29 Deptford & Peckham Mercury 8/4.

stomachache  CIC British texts have 5 times as many tokens of stomachache without a determiner as American texts do. American texts have 3 times as many tokens of a stomachache as British texts do. <. . . the orange juice was giving him stomachache.> 1988 Taylor 158.

system  <Mr Bill Phillips . . . will oversee new management information system.> 1987 Feb. 26 Hampstead Advertiser 6/2.

term  CIC has 11.3 iptmw of the phrase of term in British texts and none in American texts with the sense “a division of the school year.” <. . . the last
Herbology lesson of term was cancelled.> 1998 Rowling 147 (US ed. the term).

toothache  In CIC British texts, toothache has no determiner in 72 percent of the tokens; in American texts, it has a determiner in 83 percent of the tokens. <People get toothache in Tangiers.> 1988 Apr. 10 Sunday Telegraph 17/1.

train <. . . a frantic Kennedy took train to Gatwick in order to fly north.> 1989 Feb. 19 Manchester Guardian Weekly 27/5.

uproar  CIC has 1.7 iptmw of cause uproar and 2.9 of in uproar in British texts; it has neither in American texts. <Mr Clinton risks further alienating the military, already in uproar over the issue of homosexuals.> 1993 Feb. 15 Daily Mail 10/4–5.

value  CIC has 1.5 iptmw of be + value and 12.9 of be + good value in British texts; it has 0.5 and 0.2 respectively in American texts. <. . . the admirable book by Robert Sommers called The US Open–Golf’s Ultimate Challenge . . . is wonderful value at £12.95.> 1987 Dec. 20 Manchester Guardian 31/4.

window, out of  CIC shows that out of the window is the overwhelmingly dominant form in common-core English, but out of window is 5 times more common in British than in American. <I noticed Jamie’s head sticking out of window one floor below.> 1997 fiction CIC.

A number of nouns of this category denote articles of clothing, and they tend to collocate with the verb wear or the preposition in, being in that respect like the nouns of § 2.4.1.

boiler suit; balaclava  <Eyre, . . . dressed in boiler suit and balaclava, was confronted by the young policeman in the darkness.> 1987 June 20 Times 2/4.

cap; muffler  <Green . . . had found him there, wearing woollen cap and muffler.> 1985 Clark 129.

suit; trilby  <. . . more conservatively dressed in dark suit and trilby.> 1987 Feb. 20 Guardian 3/2.

uniform  Combinations like common–core in uniform and British wear uniform (1.7 iptmw in CIC British texts and none in American) have no determiner. When uniform has no determiner but another modifier after in, such as in school/full/military/army/police uniform, CIC British texts have more than twice as many tokens as American texts do. <. . . he took delivery of a bag . . . from a man in airline uniform.> 1986 Sept. 16 Times 1/2. <Louise . . . wondered whether Soppy would ever wear uniform again.> 1989 Dickinson 80.

2.4.3 With proper or quasi-proper nouns

Some items of this general category are proper names (such as that of the former royal vessel Britannia) or are quasi-proper names, that is, common nouns or noun phrases that serve, in a particular context, to identify their referents uniquely.
The latter are often capitalized in recognition of their proper-like function. They also may (and in American usually do) take a definite determiner, typically the.

**Big Bang** A 1986 change in Stock Exchange practices [. . .] the redevelopment of the City after Big Bang offers a chance to make ample amends. > 1988 May *Illustrated London News* 40/1.

**Britannia** <In the morning there will be a sail past by Dutch and British yachts before Her Majesty The Queen and Prince Philip in Britannia.> 1988 June *In Britain* 20/1.

**Cabinet** CIC British texts have more than 9 times as many tokens of in Cabinet without a determiner as American texts do. <This analysis was accepted in cabinet.> 1989 Dec. 23–1990 Jan. 4 *Economist* 61/2.

**casualty** The emergency room; ER: CIC British texts have about 3.8 iptmw of in casualty and 0.5 of in the casualty department. <A woman of 79 with peritonitis was kept in casualty for four hours.> 1987 Feb. 19 *Hampstead Advertiser* 1/2.

**Cathedral** <You weren’t in Cathedral on Saturday, were you, Bert?> 1984 *Gilbert* 118.

**Central Office** This term is very frequent as a proper noun in CIC British texts, but has no CIC American tokens. <He will take over responsibility for running Central Office.> 1986 Sept. 6 *Times* 1/7.

**Cosmos** <Nothing happens in Cosmos except interactions.> 1987 Feb. 1 lecture in London.

**Council** <If Council invite you to take the chair, . . . it will be because they are going to make me Vice-Chancellor.> 1980 *Archer* 183–4.

**Court** <A College porter . . . directed him to his rooms in Third Court.> 1976 *Raphael* 16.

**government** <. . . some MPs believe last weeks reshuffle . . . will make a privacy law more attractive within government.> 2003 June 16 *Guardian* 1/4.


**Hall** In British use, Hall after a preposition is often without a determiner; in American use, rarely. <‘One hell of a chap,’ remarked an undergraduate queueing for lunch outside Hall.> 1988 Nov. *In Britain* 36/1.

**Labour Party** <Mr Chenery was appointed to these posts by Westminster South Labour Party.> 1987 May 27 *Evening Standard* 2/1.

**London Underground** <The letter of thanks to London Underground must surely have been a send up?> 1987 Feb. 2 *Evening Standard* 29/1.

**National Service, on** In the army <After leaving school each of them spent eighteen months on National Service.> 1979 *Dexter* 94.

**public institutions** A CIC sample has the following tokens of the names of public institutions without/with a determiner. British: *Waterloo Station* 22/1; *Salisbury Cathedral* 25/0; *Birmingham Airport* 11/0; *Bristol Zoo* 7/0; *Manchester City Council* 15/0; *Liverpool Football Club* 12/0. American: *Pennsylvania Station* 10/1; *National Cathedral* 4/22; *San Francisco Airport* 2/6; *San Diego Zoo*
Determiners 63

0/39; New York City Council 0/12; Pacific Coast League 0/18. Only with train stations does American practice agree with British (Swan 1995, 68).

reception The reception desk; the reception lobby/area <Back in Reception, Mrs Stapleton is at her diplomatic best dealing with a family of seven who have arrived two and a half hours early.> 1988 Apr. In Britain 11/3.

Senate <I don’t remember it coming up at that meeting of Senate.> 1988 Lodge, Nice Work 85.

Star Chamber <Cecil Parkinson, recently promoted to head of Star Chamber... will get one of the important jobs.> 1988 Aug. Illustrated London News 16/1.

synod The General Synod of the Church of England <... 20 per cent of the members of synod.> 1993 Feb. 27 Times 15/3.

2.4.4 With mass nouns

air CIC British texts have more than 3 times as many tokens of off the air as of off air, but American texts have none of the latter and 4 times as many of the former as British does. <He seemed rather to have discharged the weapon warningly and wrathfully in air.> 1983 Innes 89. <Anne and Nick [broadcasters] went off air for their summer break.> 1994 Oct. 5 Evening Standard 61/1.

cabling <... a fire burnt through cabling [in a hovercraft].> 1986 Aug. 25 Times 1/7.

commission <... how do we know we are being sold the right product and they are not simply telling us to take it to get commission?> 2005 Jan. 15 Daily Telegraph 10/6.

honour <Maurice... is sent down on a thin pretext for the sake of college honour.> 1987 Nov. Illustrated London News 89/1.

play The cricket game: CIC has 1.4 iptnw of start of play in British texts and 0.1 in American. <If we left at once, we could be back for the start of play.> 1985 Bingham 78.

2.4.5 With predicate nouns

Some nouns without determiners are used as subject complements, equivalent to adjectives. This construction is unexceptional in British English, but rare in American.

champion Great <‘I’ve got some [chips] in, would you like them for your tea with a couple of sausages?’ ... [¶] ‘Yes, that’d be champion.’> 1995 Jones 73.

necessity Necessary <... it was agreed that it would be necessity for the Foundation to continue to receive a certain amount.> 2004 Jan. minutes from a financial meeting, London.

wizard Expert <She appears to be wizard at the job.> 1986 Sept. 15 Times 12/1.
2.5 Predeterminers and postdeterminers

2.5.1 Predeterminers

A noun phrase or pronoun followed by *of* and a determiner, if there is one, may signify a quantity or quality of the following noun. One of those, namely *various of*, as in *Candidates came from various of the schools*, is listed without comment in *MW*, but has a usage note in *NODE* commenting that “it is sometimes regarded as incorrect” in British use.

**all** (of) Common-core English strongly prefers *all the* to *all of the*, but that preference is somewhat stronger in British than in American. Of the two options, *all the* predominates in CIC British texts by 96 percent and in American by 89 percent. The pattern with other determiners, such as *these* and *those*, is similar.

<He was standing in front of an estate agent’s window, studying all the cards with house details.> 2000 Granger 295. Cf. both (of) below.

**a bit of** + count noun Something/somewhat of: CIC British texts have this construction 5 times more often than American texts do. < . . . on weekend evenings when they aren’t having a bit of a “do” themselves, they are probably round at their friends’ houses for dinner.> 2003 June 21 Times Weekend 1/2.

**a bit of** + mass noun Some; a little: CIC British texts have this construction nearly 4 times more often than American texts do. <I’d fancy a bit of that.> 2002 Feb. 19 poster ad on an underground train. – a blind bit of <I’ll tell him what I think of him – not that it’ll do a blind bit of good.> 1991 Dickinson 188.

**both** (of) Common-core English preference is strongly for *both the* over *both of the*, also when the determiner is a possessive pronoun (*my, our, your, his, her, its, their*). But with the demonstratives *those* and *these* and the relative *whose*, the frequency of these forms in CIC is more complex. Both national varieties have a preference for *both of those over both those*, British only slightly (by 51 percent) and American somewhat more (68 percent). Similarly, both prefer *both of whose* over *both whose* (although the first option is quite rare, in the 0.2 to 0.6 iptpmw range); CIC British texts have no tokens of *both whose*, and American texts prefer *both of whose* by 2.5 to 1. For *both (of) these*, however, the two national varieties differ. CIC British texts prefer *both these* by 58 percent; American texts prefer *both of these* by 64 percent. In the American Michigan Corpus, *both of these* is 3 times more frequent than *both these*. <Today, melde . . . is known as “Fat-hen” in Britain and as “Lambs-quarter” in America. . . . Both these names refer to its farm food value.> (an American typist substituted *both of* in copying) 1965 Aug. 29 Observer 22/3. Cf. all (of) above.

**bunch of** This quantifier is nearly twice as frequent in American as in British CIC texts. When applied to a group of people, it is usually disparaging in the BNC, according to Pam Peters (2004, 83). The following citations illustrate the disparaging use: <. . . a bunch of Sloanes [upper middle-class, snobbish
young people who frequent fashionable Sloane Square] and show-offs in lavish
restaurants.} 1991 Feb. 13 Daily Mail 7/3–4. < . . . she makes the rest of
them [other models] look like a bunch of trannies [= transvestites].> 2003
July 13 Times Style 58/2.

but  Only: The predeterminer use of but in phrases like the following is twice as
frequent in CIC British texts as in American. <I am but a crooked, amoral,
il- educated, clapped out old drunk.> 1989 Daniel 66.

close on  Close to; nearly before expressions of duration: CIC British texts have
about 4.4 iptmw, but American texts only about 0.1. <We were left in the bar
to study the menus for close on an hour.> 1989 July 25 Evening Standard
31/1.

a couple of  Both British and American use couple of, British slightly (about 1.0
times) more than American in CIC texts. American also uses couple alone,
as in a couple samples and the first couple chapters (Gilman 1994, 303–4; Peters
2004, 131). – a good couple of CIC has 11 times as many tokens of this
expanded form in British texts as in American. <For a good couple of years
there’ve been any number of whispers about a possible “hostile” takeover of

ever such  CIC British texts have 6.3 iptmw of ever such a; American texts have
0.4. <Ever such a mess she made.> 1980 Sharpe 223.

half  CIC British texts have nearly twice as many tokens of half a(n) as American
texts do. American texts have somewhat more tokens of a half than British texts.
With pint, British uses both half a pint and a half pint, but with other nouns:
half a dozen, half an hour, etc., British prefers half as a predeterminer, whereas
American uses it more freely as a postdeterminer: a half dozen, a half hour, etc.
(Peters 2004, 239). <But the sport did not take on, and only half a century
later was it introduced in its present form.> 1987 Sept. Illustrated London
News 40/1.

lashings of  CIC British texts have 4.8 iptmw of lashings of; American texts have
0.2. <Her . . . lips glistened under lashings of lip-gloss.> 1994 Oct. 5 Evening
Standard 3/2.

a load of  CIC British texts have 86.4 iptmw of a load of; American texts have
12.4. <Well, that was a load of rubbish.> 1983 Radley 140.

near  Nearly <John Braine began to talk, the voice near a parody of the gravelly
“trouble oop at t’ mill” Yorkshireman of Room at the Top.> 1986 Oct. 30 Times
18/3–4.

no less  CIC has 1.67 times as many tokens of no less a in British as in American
texts. < . . . no less a personage than the 51-year-old Duke of Kent fell foul

quite  The form quite is more British than American; CIC has nearly 3 times
as many tokens in British as in American texts. As a predeterminer before
nouns in the combinations quite a and quite the, it is about 1.7 times more
frequent in British than in American CIC texts. When its predeterminer sense
is evaluative, quite is common-core English: quite a bore, quite a genius, quite the
hero. In these uses, it is semantically equivalent to the adjective real: a real bore. Other senses, however, such as “completely” or “a lot of” or “just” or “only,” seem to be British. < . . . half a dozen people have probably brought men-
servants – some quite strangers to the Scamnum staff.> 1937 Innes, Hamlet
111. <It might be quite fun.> 1959 Innes 5. <I’ve known him, of course,
since he was quite a lad.> 1988 Mortimer 202. And even in common-core
uses, colloquial American would be more likely to use a different construction.
Thus for British That’s quite a bike, American might have That’s some bike
(Swan 1995, 547). When quite is in predeterminer position before an adjective-
noun construction, it is equivalent to the qualifier use of quite (§ 7.1): quite a
tall building = a quite tall building.

rather CIC has more than 3 times as many tokens of rather a in British as in
American texts. <It is all rather a mess.> 1995 Aug. 29 Evening Standard
8/1.

right the way Right; all the way: CIC has 12.7 iptmw of right the way in British
texts and none in American texts. <I tailed them right the way down to the

a spot of Some / a little: CIC has 8.4 times as many tokens of a spot of in British
texts as in American. <And then a chap . . . called out to ask me if I’d like a
spot of fishing before dinner.> 2000 Caudwell 143.

such + another CIC has twice as many tokens of such another in British texts
as in American, and a few more tokens of another such in American than in
British. <Twenty–one years before . . . he had commanded just such another
trawler.> 1940 Shute 72.

2.5.2 Postdeterminers

(a) further An additional: CIC has nearly 6 times as many tokens of a further in
British texts as in American. If a noun follows, a further can also be paraphrased
as another; if a number follows, the paraphrase can also be {number} more, as
in the entry for (an)other NUMBER below; if a following noun is one of
measurement, such as hour, either paraphrase is possible, with retention of the
article in the second case (an hour more). <On October 4 a further 50 people
were injured.> 1987 Nov. Illustrated London News 14/2–3. <A further patrol
car had arrived.> 1993 Graham 141.

the (rarely an) odd CIC has nearly 6 times as many tokens of the odd in British
texts as in American. 1. An occasional; a . . . occasionally: <I don’t mind the
odd ticket but I haven’t got time to hang around getting the car unclamped.>
1993 Smith 167 2. Some; a . . . or so (an approximate number or amount)
< We’ve simply got to get the odd bob together.> 1993 Greenwood 172. Cf.
§ 2.1.2 THE ODD.

(an)other number Number more: CIC has 1.6 times as many tokens of expres-
sions like another six in British texts as in American. Conversely, it has 1.6 times
as many tokens of expressions like six more in American texts as in British.
another five companies make material for the suits.> 1990 Aug. 23 Times 4/1.

**plural number more** When the number before *more* is plural (*hundreds, thousands, millions*), the American preference for the *number more* construction is even stronger (2.7 times as frequent as in CIC British texts). However, American also has an alternative construction in such cases: *costing hundreds of more workers their jobs; the lives of thousands of more Americans; millions of more customers come onto our networks.* This alternative is rare in American, but is not attested in CIC British texts, which have only the construction without *of.* <We’re taking on hundreds more staff to keep stations spick and span. We’re putting in hundreds more litter bins.> 1990 Aug. 14 London poster on tube trains.

**one or other** CIC has 49 times as many tokens of *one or other* in British texts as in American. American prefers *one or another* and *one or the other*, both of which are more frequent in American than in British. <... children ... who are unloved, beaten and abused by one or other parent.> 1990 Aug. 19 Sunday Times Books. 2/2. Cf. § 4.6.
3 Nouns

3.1 Derivation

The derivation of words of one part of speech from those of another is universal. In Modern English, it has been common to make such derivation without an overt signal in the stem of the word, but rather merely by shifting it to a new part of speech. This is a common feature of English, but the particular items so shifted may be characteristic of one or the other variety of the language.

3.1.1 From verbs

Some British nouns are derived from verbs.

3.1.1.1 By simple functional shift

The derivation may be a simple shift of the function of a verb form to noun use by analogy with many others of that type in English, for example, to strike is to a strike as to go slow is to a go-slow.

barrack Jeering: *MW* does not enter the noun but labels the verb chiefly British. 

<1949 P. Newton *High Country Days* 46 The other four, full of noisy barrack, were playing pitch and toss with a set of old horse shoes.> *OED* s.v. barrack n.


brush Brushing (of the hair): CIC has 2.4 iptmw of the noun in collocation with hair in British texts and 0.8 iptmw in American texts. “Your hair wants a good brush” (Swan 1995, 615).

capsize CIC has 1.1 iptmw of a/the capsize in British texts and none in American. <Increasing the metacentric height of the intact ro-ro would do little to make her safer against capsize.> 1987 June 15 *Times* 11/3.
carry-on  Carrying-on: *MW* labels it British. CIC has a few British tokens. <If she told him about the carry-on at Monk’s Mead he would become masculine and protective and make a huge chivalrous fuss.> *1986 Sherwood 76.*

cheat  CIC has 3.5 times as many tokens of a cheat in British texts as in American, and equal proportions of the two senses “act of deception” and “deceiver.” <It was a bit of a cheat having Gerry to play for House as he wasn’t really.> *1994 Dickinson 29.*

chuck  Rejection: *NODE* labels the sense “Brit. dated.” <I suppose this is a chuck.> *2003 James 126.*

clean  Cleaning: *NODE* labels it chiefly British. <If the ultimate spring clean is going on around you it’s not something you can fail to notice.> *2003 Nov. 8 Times 7/8.*

clearout  Auction sell-off <The clearout will finance a continuing programme of restoration.> *1994 Oct. 5 Times 18/3.*

cover  Coverage: *MW* labels it British. <. . . an estimated one in three of American executives has insurance cover against abduction.> *1988 Sept. 15 Times 6/1.*

cuddle  CIC has 7.4 iptmw of a cuddle in British texts and 0.3 in American. <A kiss and a cuddle.> *1994 Sept. 28–Oct. 5 Time Out 178/1.*

delve  Act of delving; exploration: CIC has 0.1 iptmw in British texts and none in American. <Ask him what makes him tick – I was going for a psychological delve here.> *1989 Sept. 8 Evening Standard 44/3.*

distort  The use is rare. <. . . on shortwave radio . . . voices . . . have a slight distort.> *1988 Stoppard 1.*

do  *NODE* labels this sense chiefly British. <I expect the wedding’ll be a posh do. Marquees and all that?> *1987 Graham 88.*

draw  Drawing; a chance selection of names to select a prize winner <Enter our Free Prize Draw and you could win up to £50,000.> *1999 Mar. 10 sign in Barclays Bank, Swiss Cottage branch, London.*

drink  Drinking; excessive consumption of alcohol: This use of drink is found also in American English; nevertheless the British use seems more frequent and wider in its contexts. <Drink had made George sentimental.> *1969 Rendell 12–3.*

dust  Dusting <This could do with a good dust.> *1989 Sept. 5 BBC1 EastEnders.*

feed  Feeding; the action of feeding a baby at regular intervals; also metaphorical <She taught herself all about . . . formula feeds.> *2001 Drabble 172.*

fire, hire and  Hiring and firing <Heads are now having to take serious notice of their governors, who do have the power of hire and fire.> *1990 Aug. 20 Times 25/1–2.*

fly past  Flyby, flyover: *MW* labels it chiefly British. <There will then be a fly past by a Hurricane and a Spitfire fighter.> *1985 May 24 Times 2/7.*

go  In some contexts it is difficult to distinguish the following first two senses of go. 1. A turn; an opportunity to do or use something <I had a go on Nigel’s racing bike.> *1985 Townsend 61. 2. An attempt; a try <Christine had said to
try and get that green stain off the marble and he had had a go with soap and water but unsuccessfully.> 1989 Rendell 14. 3. An attack, often verbal: NODE labels this sense chiefly British. <This year, they had a go at Jewish protesters and Western journalists trying to cover their demonstration.> 1987 Dec. 20 Manchester Guardian 10/4. – in one go All at once: CIC has 18.6 iptmw in British texts and 0.7 in American. <. . . he’d swallowed a bottle of hot Butterbeer in one go.> 1999 Rowling 316 (US ed. in one gulp). – on the go CIC has 11.9 iptmw of various senses in British texts and 7.3 in American. <Celia climbed the stairs; she was fully awake now and Arabella would almost certainly have a pot of tea on the go.> 1988 Taylor 36.
go-slow  Slowdown: MW labels it British. <I think they’ve got a sort of strike or go-slow.> 1992 Granger 32.
graze  CIC has 0.6 iptmw of a graze in British texts and 0.2 in American. <I have a graze on my leg which I will cover with plasters.> 1995 Aug. 30 Daily Telegraph 21/5.
hire  Rental: MW labels it British. Cf. § 3.3.1.1. <AGS Vehicle Hire> 1999 March 20 sign on the side of a truck.
hold-ups  Hose with an elastic top <. . . delicate black lace tights and hold-ups.> 1994 Sept. 25 Sunday Times Magazine 64/3.
kidnap  Kidnapping <Fear of kidnap is . . . strong among the international business community.> 1988 Sept. 15 Times 6/1.
laugh  “informal a cause for derision or merriment” (LDEL). <. . . she’s probably the sort of person it’d be a laugh to have a few drinks with of an evening.> 1995 Sept. 6–13 Time Out 20/2.
lie-down  Rest; nap: NODE labels it “chiefly Brit.” <I thought you’d gone for a lie-down.> 1992 Granger 87.
lie-in  Time spent in bed past the usual hour of rising: NODE labels it “chiefly Brit.” <Having a lie in, dear? So sorry to disturb you on a Sunday morning.> 1992 Green 114.
listen  CIC has 7.0 iptmw of listen as a noun in British texts and 4.5 in American. <. . . take the LP . . . home for a listen.> 1987 May 29 Evening Standard 28/2.
look-in  Consideration, chance: CIC has 3.4 iptmw in British texts and none in American. <An opponent wouldn’t have got a look in.> 1989 Williams 190.
look (a)round  <Go there and have a look round.> 1986 Sherwood 3.
meet  Meeting, assignation <The meet at the pool came unstuck this morning. We have to consider you blown as our joe. The Russians must consider you blown as their sleeper.> 1988 Stoppard 10.
moan  Complaint: CIC has 0.5 iptmw of have a moan in British texts and none in American. <Blast the Navy. . . . They’ve always got a moan.> 1940 Shute 23.
nose round  <. . . there’s no reason why we shouldn’t . . . have a thorough nose round.> 1985 Bingham 83.
overspend  <. . . he expected a £1.5 million overspend by the end of the financial year.> 1994 Sept. 20 Times 6/2.
picket Picketing <In Liverpool, another mass picket is planned for this morning.> 1988 Sept. 15 Times 2/3.


read CIC has about 1.5 times as many tokens of a read in British texts as in American. 1. Something that is read <What’s a good read this year?> 1989 July 22 Times 40/1. 2. “chiefly British: a period of reading <it was a night . . . for a read and a long sleep . . . . . . . .>” (MW). <. . . a relaxed holiday read spread over several days.> 1995 Mar. 22 Financial Times p n/a.

read-through <. . . a thorough read-through of the paper.> 1969 Amis 23.

rebuild Rebuilding <. . . this process of decay, collapse, and rebuild created large mounds that we call ‘tells’.> 1996 Knight and Lomas 82–3.

refit CIC has 1.4 iptmw of a refit in British texts and none in American. <In a refit costing £110 million the 18-year-old ship gets new engines.> 1987 Apr. 9 Times 9/4–6.

re-mark Remarking; reevaluation <. . . the board . . . has stuck by its judgment through three re-marks.> 1996 Aug. 6 Times 2/5.

rethink Instance of rethinking; a reconsideration: CIC has 6.6 iptmw of a rethink in British texts and 0.2 in American. <Provident has had a rethink and offered to continue insuring her.> 2003 July 9 Times 29/5.

revolve <Exclusive [a play] had rather a wobbly start because we have an amazing set . . . that revolves on two levels in two directions. . . . By Manchester, they’d mastered the revolve.> 1989 Sept. 9 Times 33/1.


sail past <. . . there will be a sail past by Dutch and British yachts before Her Majesty.> 1988 June In Britain, 20/1.

sell Disappointment because of being oversold <Hawaii’s a bit of a sell as far as tit goes.> 1991 Lodge 244.

shoot Shooting party <This is the first formal shoot of the season.> 1989 Quinton 237.

shop Shopping <Tomorrow I shall have to do a big shop.> 1992 Charles 105.

sift <. . . he had a good sift through his brown leather executive case.> 1987 May 19 Times 22/7.

sit CIC has 1.4 iptmw of a sit in British texts and none in American. <A sit on the beach.> 1953 Mortimer 49.

sit down Rest <Cecily reckoned she was due for a sit-down.> 1998 Joss 148.

sleep A period of sleeping: CIC has 6.3 iptmw of a sleep in British texts and 4.5 in American <I told him to have a sleep.> 1991 Green 301.
spend  Amount of money spent; expenditure; income <The average spend per bottle was a miserly £3.89.> 2003 June 21 Times Weekend 1/1.
surround  “Chiefly Brit a border” (CED). CIC has 25 times as many tokens in British texts as in American. <I planted it in a terracotta pot and it made a wonderful surround for a Deutzia rosea.> 1994 Oct. 1 Times Weekend 11/2.
take-away  Takeout: MW labels the sense chiefly British. <Why don’t I pick up something at the take-away for both of us?> 1990 Rowlands 142.
take-up  CIC has 6.9 iptmw in British texts and 0.2 in American. <. . . take-up of services had dropped noticeably.> 1994 Sept. 27 Guardian 2/5.
undershoot  <The figures and the likely undershoot this year suggest that buoyant tax revenues will continue through into the next financial year.> 1987 Jan. 20 Guardian 1/4.
walkabout  NODE labels it chiefly British. CIC has 6.9 iptmw in British texts and 0.7 in American. <But she [Camilla] is not obliged . . . to shake the hands of hundreds of people on walkabouts.> 2004 Dec. 15 Daily Telegraph 18/6.
wander (round)  Act of wandering (around) <. . . a leisurely wander among the tombstones.> 2001 Lodge 232.
wash  An instance of washing oneself <He went upstairs for a wash.> 1994 Freeling 83.
weed  Weeding <The approach to the front step and garage could do with a weed.> 1996 Graham 48.
whip round  Collection of money for a charitable purpose: MW labels it chiefly British. <. . . the passengers all chipped in when a “whip round” was organized by the crew.> 1987 Apr. 23 Times 2/6.
work-to-rule  A labor protest that slows down work by adhering punctiliously to work rules: NODE labels it chiefly British. CIC has 0.8 iptmw of the noun and 0.4 of the verb in British texts, and 0.4 of the phrase as a modifier in American texts. <. . . an additional cause of serious delay . . . a work-to-rule by air traffic controllers.> 1991 Lodge 4.

3.1.1.2 By affixation

Other nouns are formed by adding affixes to a verb to form a related noun. One frequent affix in this use is the suffix -ing. It is sometimes difficult to be sure whether the stem to which that suffix is added is a verb or a noun (§ 3.1.2).

barracking  Jeering <Once in the House, women have to survive the public school humour and barracking and the unsocial hours.> 1993 Feb. 1 Times 12/1.
fitting  Fit (of shoes): CIC has 26.9 iptmw of all noun senses of fitting in British texts and 8.8 in American. <Size eight . . . and a narrow fitting. I never realised what dainty feet he had.> 1992 Walters 115.
parting  Part in the hair <. . . the pin-thin scrupulous parting – not a single hair straying to the wrong side.> 1993 Graham 151.
turning  Turn (off or onto a road) <Uncle Vernon would take a sharp turning and drive in the opposite direction for a while.> 1997 Rowling 35 (US ed. turn).

Another type of deverbal noun is that derived from a verb–particle combination, with the agent suffix -er (as well as the plural ending -s) infixed.

handers-out  <We’ll need some more handers-out . . . Len and I can’t do it all.> 1985 Gilbert 104.


3.1.2  From other nouns

The suffix -ing (§ 3.1.1.2) can also be added to a noun, and the resulting construction is typically a collective mass noun (although both guttering and gutterings are attested).

cabling  Cables: CIC has 20.1 iptmw in British texts and 1.6 in American. < . . . pollutants such as asbestos and polychlorinated biphenyls in the electrical cabling.> 2003 Nov. 13 Times 3/2.

chippings  Chips: CIC has 5.1 iptmw in British texts and none in American. < . . . chippings of stone flew.> 1993 Graham 71.

curtaining  Curtains: CIC has 0.6 iptmw in British texts and none in American. <Di’s also done the upholstery and curtaining.> 1992 Walters 80.

fencing  Fence: CIC has 32.9 iptmw in British texts and 24.2 in American. <The expense . . . to sell it [wood] to furniture dealers, or fencing designers . . . would always be considerable.> 1992 Dexter 109.

guttering(s)  Gutters: CIC has 6.6 iptmw in British texts and 0.5 in American. <He secured the top of the ladder to the gutterings.> 1999 Dexter 237.
piping  Pipes <There were also numerous lengths of . . . piping lying around.> 1992 Walters 79.
schooling  School <Kristina – still only eighteen – was in her last year of schooling.> 1992 Dexter 168.
shelving  Shelves < . . . she noticed . . . the white shelving of a kitchen unit.> 1992 Dexter 85.
tiling  Tiles: CIC has 8.9 iptmw in British texts and 1.2 in American. <A circular bath . . . sat like a giant shell, surrounded by walls of expensive tiling.> 1992 Green 127.
towelling  Towels: CIC has 7.1 iptmw in British texts and none of toweling in American. <She taught herself all about . . . birth weights, . . . and terry towelling.> 2001 Drabble 172.
**troughing**  Troughs, gutters: CIC has 0.2 iptmw in British texts and none in American. <... he used to anchor the top of his ladder to the *troughing*.> 1999 Dexter 355.

For two of the preceding forms, context is crucial. *Schooling* and *shelving* as general collective nouns are common also in American, as in *She was a self-made woman, without benefit of formal schooling* and *The library is running out of shelving for its collection*. However, in the specific sense of the citations above, “her last year of schooling” and “the white shelving of a [particular] kitchen unit,” the -ing forms would be less expected than “her last year of school” and “the white shelves.”

Another productive suffix is -er(s), which began as public-school and Oxbridge slang, added usually to the first syllable of a word. The best and only widely known of the forms in America is *soccer* (from *association football*), though most Americans would be unaware of its origin.

**brekker(s)**  <... a kindly gent could rise from his bed, ... step into the shower and enjoy a good hosing-down before *brekkers*.> 1991 Feb. 7 *Midweek* 5/1.

**champers**  Champagne: CIC has 1.7 iptmw in British texts and none in American. <They’d drunk a bottle of far-from-vintage champers.> 1994 Dexter 188.

**Duggers**  <This is my colleague Douglas C. Douglass, known to one and all as *Duggers*.> 2001 Lodge 55.

**ethnickers**  Ethnic garments <What do they wear? Wampum beads and *ethnickers*?> 1993 Graham 295.

**fresher**  Freshman: CIC has 1.6 iptmw of *freshers* in British texts and 0.3 in American (news reports of the schooling of Prince William). <Oxford University JCR [“Junior Common Room”] distributed *Freshers’ Handbooks* this summer.> 2003 Nov. 11 *Times* 6/4.

**gratters**  Congrats <... congratulations became *gratters*.> 1989 Honey 49.

**rugger**  Rugby: CIC has 4.4 iptmw in British texts and none in American. <He looked more like a professional *rugger* player than a lawyer.> 1997 James 145.

**shockers**  <In American English shock absorbers are known colloquially as ‘shocks’, whereas in Britain they are often called ‘*shockers*’.> 1982 *Trudgill* 29.

**starkers**  Stark naked: CIC has 1.1 iptmw in British texts and none in American. <Do they dance *starkers* under the moon?> 1993 Graham 294.

Another suffix:

**nuddy, in the**  In the nude: <I had to do battle with the old dragon in the *nuddy*.> 1992 Walters 207.
3.1.3 From adjectives and adverbs

**Chinese** Restaurant with Chinese food to go: NODE labels it British. <Joyce had said would he mind terribly . . . getting something from the Indian or Chinese for his supper.> 1989 Graham 305.

**illegal** An illegal or undercover agent: Recorded in the *OED* s.v. illegal B.2. <. . . a network of “illegals”, spymasters working under cover away from Cuban embassies.> 1988 Sept. 18 *Sunday Telegraph* 5/3.

**Indian** Restaurant with Indian food to go: NODE labels it British. See Chinese.

**medical** Medical examination <I had to have two very thorough medicals: heart, lungs, blood pressure, Aids, everything.> 1990 Aug. 17 *Evening Standard* 24/1–2.

**speciality** Specialty: CIC has 57.8 iptmw of *speciality* in British texts and 2.6 in American. It has 11.2 iptmw of *specialty* in British texts and 111.5 in American. <IBM . . . was rated the leader . . . in every area of their specialty.> 1993 Jan. 16 *Economist* 24/3.

An instance of conversion from an adjective, with the addition of the suffix -s (as in *apologetics* or *athletics*) is *electrics* “the system of electrical connections in a house or vehicle”:

**electrics** Electrical system: CIC has 11.3 iptmw in British texts and 1.5 in American. <. . . the coroner did say a lot of fatherly things about getting properly qualified workmen to mess around with gas and electrics.> 1994 Dickinson 231.

Nouns from adverbs are fewer.

**abroad** “Br informal places outside one’s country” (*LDEL*). <On balance, abroad has probably done the Englishman more good than harm, and the fact that some six hundred million now speak his lingo bears eloquent testimony to the peripatetic restlessness of his forebears; even as it makes him one of the world’s worst linguists.> 1984 Smith 12.

3.2 Form

3.2.1 Plural for singular count noun

In some cases, British English uses the plural form of a count noun for which American customarily uses the singular.

**ban(n)isters** The *OED* says the word is usually in the plural; *MW* has no statement about plural use. *BBI*-97 enters for *banister* “to slide down a – (BE also has to slide down the bannisters).” In CIC, the single *n* spelling is favored in both varieties, slightly more in American. Singular and plural forms are about equal in British texts; American texts favor the singular by almost 4 to 1.
baths plural in form, plural or singular in construction A place with bathing facilities or a swimming pool: *MW* labels the sense and plural form British. <... a lousy description, admittedly, of a public baths.> 1991 Feb. 26 *Times* 14/1.

classes CIC British texts slightly favor *classes*, and American texts *class*. The British *chattering classes*, meaning “liberal intellectuals,” was widely misunderstood in America as referring to media people. <Her [Margaret Thatcher’s] humor comes out mean and cutting, like her taunting of liberal critics as “moaning minnies” or “the chattering classes.”> 1990 Hazleton 108. <The chattering classes, as sociable Hampstead folk are sometimes known, are as fond of writing letters as they are of holding forth about the evils of Thatcherism at dinner parties.> 1990 Aug. 15 *Daily Telegraph* 15/3. <Just as some Asian homes keep a bottle of Heinz tomato ketchup on the table as a Western status symbol, today no card-carrying member of the chattering classes would be without their prominently displayed bottle of extra-virgin [olive oil].> 1999 Mar. 20 *Times* Weekend 6/1. Other classes identified by British journalism are the *banner-bearing classes, landowning classes, lower classes, lower-middle classes, middle classes, monied classes, scoundrel classes, scribbling classes, taxi-driving classes, The Times letter-writing classes, upper classes, and working classes*.

favours, do someone In CIC, both British and American favor the singular, but British does so by only 2.4 times, whereas American does so by 4.3 times. <We are doing them no favours.> 2003 Nov. 12 *Times* T2 3/3.

flies Fly; trouser opening at the crotch: *NODE* says “Brit. often *flies.*” <... black woollen breeches tied with a drawstring at the top . . . there’s none of that nonsense about wrestling with your flies – a quick tug of the drawstring is all that’s needed.> 2003 Nov. 11 *Times* T2 13/2–3.

(football) pool(s) In CIC British texts, the plural is about 40 times more frequent than the singular, both usually in collocation with *win*. American texts have neither. <Perhaps he’s won the pools.> 1992 Walters 2.

holidays Vacation: *NODE* labels the sense “extended period of recreation” chiefly British and adds that the form is often plural. Note the singular agreement of *that* in the citation. <There was a short cricket tour that holidays.> 1994 Dickinson 17.

impressions Both British and American CIC texts favor singular *first impression* over plural *first impressions*, but British by only 1.5 times and American by 2.6 times. <She appeared, on first impressions, a decided cut or two above her horticultural spouse.> 1992 Dexter 120.

innings CIC British texts have 118.3 iptmw of plural-form *innings* and 1.1 of singular-form *inning* (mainly in reference to American baseball); American texts have 90.7 of the plural form and 109.7 of the singular. 1. Plural in form, but singular in concord, a cricket term for the time at bat of a player or team: In American use, an *inning* is a part of a baseball game during which the teams have their turns at bat. <... coming off the cricket field after a
successful innings. > 1994 Dickinson 138. 2. Also metaphorical, the period during which anything lasts. <Surely the word “bloody” has had a long enough theatrical innings (how old is Pygmalion?) not to cause a laugh when used quite naturally in an extremely well-written emotional scene.> 1935 Nov. 28 Oxford Magazine 222/2. – a good innings A long, satisfying life or career <[Name] has died. . . . At 93 he has had a good innings.> 2004 May 31 private letter from East Sussex.

kennels NODE observes that the term is usually plural; MW makes no such observation. CIC has approximately equal numbers of singular and plural in British texts, but 2.75 times as many singular as plural forms in American texts. In nominal use, kennels usually takes a determiner (sometimes singular), unless it is the object of prepositions like in and into. <It is a kennels, a boardinghouse for dogs.> 1935 Nov. 28 Oxford Magazine 222/2. –

maths Math: CIC British texts have 112.3 iptmw of maths and 4.2 of math; American texts have 363.3 of math and only a scattering of the plural form. <I’d always thought anyone doing your type of job had to be good at maths.> 1993 Mason 11.

moustaches The OED has two subsenses for moustache: “1. The hair which grows upon the upper lip of men. a. The hair on both sides of the upper lip taken to form a single moustache . . . b. The hair covering either side of the upper lip; one half of a ‘pair of moustaches’.” American English, in addition to spelling and pronunciation differences for mustache, uses primarily only the first subsense. CIC British texts have 44.2 iptmw of moustache and 7.2 of moustaches; American texts have 35.5 of mustache/moustache and 2.9 of the plural, most referring to mustaches on different persons. <“What lovely moustaches, nurse,” said Lettice, unable to think of a more suitable comment [on being shown a picture of the nurse’s brother].> 1942 Thirkell 23.

nights, at At night: CIC British texts have 4.7 iptmw of at nights and American texts have 0.5; they have almost exactly the same iptmw (291.0) of the singular. <The Times’s lawyers sleep easy at nights.> 1994 Oct. 1 Times Weekend 5/3.

qualifications usually plural “a pass of an examination or an official completion of a course, especially one conferring status as a recognized practitioner of a profession or activity” (NODE), a sense not used in American. <A student who wanted to study history at Oxford University would continue to take a specialised A-level course, while others might acquire a wider variety of qualifications.> 1994 Sept. 22 Times 4/3.

roadworks Road repair: NODE labels the sense British. In CIC British texts, the plural is 22 times more frequent than the singular. <Road works on the A217.> 1987 Feb. 24 Evening Standard 5/6.

stables pl. in form, sing. in construction A stable: CIC British texts have 0.6 iptmw of a stables. <He trained racehorses for a friend at a stables outside Johannesburg.> 1994 Sept. 30 Daily Telegraph 27/3.
standards, by any In CIC British texts, the plural is 3 times more frequent than the singular in this phrase; in American texts, the singular is 2.5 times more frequent than the plural. < . . . he was a lovely baby, by any standards.> 1991 Dickinson 8.

thoughts, on second In CIC British texts, the plural is 8 times more frequent than the singular in this phrase; in American texts, the singular is 3 times more frequent than the plural. <I might work it up into a sermon. On second thoughts, perhaps not.> 2001 James 148.

(traffic) lights (Traffic) light: In CIC British texts the plural is 7.8 times more frequent than the singular; in American texts the plural is also more frequent, but only by 1.4 times. The American plurals, however, generally refer to multiple sets of traffic lights at different intersections, whereas the British plurals generally refer to the lights of one set. < . . . at the bottom of the road there was a lorry waiting at the traffic lights.> 1998 Sayers and Walsh 187.

3.2.2 Singular count noun for plural

Nouns listed here can be used with a determiner like a/an. Cf. § 3.2.4.

accommodation CIC British texts have 511.0 iptmw of accommodation and 8.5 of accommodations; American texts have 48.8 of accommodation and 88.1 of accommodations. <Sir John Chadwick . . . gave her two days to leave her accommodation.> 1998 Jan. 6 Times 3/4.

Bakewell tart <The more humble queue . . . for cold cuts and Bakewell tart.> 1992 Critchley 32.

barrack CIC British texts have nearly 9 times as many tokens of barracks as of barrack; American texts have nearly 17 times as many. MW notes “usually used in plural in all senses.” <The dormitory was a long, dark, bare, barrack-like room.> 1985 Mortimer 31.

birch Birch trees <Here . . . little silver birch struggle up to reach the light.> 2003 July 12 Times Weekend 1/4.

boot <Riding boot? Well, . . . anyone who rides seriously would need a boot.> 1988 May In Britain 14/3.

brace Orthodontic appliance: MW indicates that in this sense the noun is plural; NODE has it singular. <. . . they wanted me to carry on with my brace. You know, they’re dentists.> 2000 Rowling 353 (US ed. braces).

chop In CIC British texts, the plural pork chops is 1.5 times more frequent than the singular; in American texts, it is 2.7 times. <Harry nodded and tried to keep eating his chop.> 2003 Rowling 110 (US ed. chops).

eel worm <It was full of insects too: leather jackets and chafer grubs; pea thrips and eel worm.> 1993 Graham 34.

final MW says of the deciding event in a contest “usually used in plural”; NODE makes no such comment. <If this week’s “grand final” . . . was anything to go
by, the entire concept of piano competitions may as well be written off. . . . In the final, however, he had clearly sensed that a slick performance would go down a treat.> 1994 Sept. 30 Daily Telegraph 23/4.

**firework**  American use avoids the singular, using instead the plural or singular terms for particular varieties of firework: firecracker, sparkler, pinwheel, etc. CIC British texts have 4.6 iptmw of the singular *a firework*; American texts have 0.2. <It was November the fifth [Guy Fawkes Day]; the neighbours thought it was a firework.> 1987 Oliver 190.

**fruit-machine**  <. . . bars blessedly free from juke-box and fruit-machine.> 1996 Dexter 24.

**gear, changing**  Shifting gears: CIC British texts have 15 times as many tokens of *gear* as of *gears* in this construction; American texts have no singulars. <Changing gear without a clutch.> 1999 Mar. 13 Times Magazine 41.

**ground**  Grounds; sports area <. . . plans to install extra seating at the Kenilworth Road end of the ground would enable the club to accommodate away supporters.> 1990 Aug. 17 Daily Telegraph 30/1.

**handicap**  <Fragile X syndrome . . . causes mental handicap and behaviour problems.> 1991 Feb. 16 Daily Telegraph 9/3.

**head or tail, make**  Make heads or tails: CIC British texts have only the singular; American texts have only the plural. <I, an innumerate, cannot make head or tail of them [figures].> 1992 Apr. 5 BNC.

**heel, down at**  CIC British texts have only *down at heel*; American texts have only *down at the heels*. <. . . nothing on her feet but an old down-at-heel pair of court shoes.> 1996 Neel 7–8.

**juke-box**  See fruit-machine.

**minute**  *MW* labels the noun sense “record of the proceedings of a meeting” as plural; *NODE* does not. <No minute of this gathering has ever been made public.> 2003 Nov. 7 Daily Express 40/2.

**motorway**  <Ministers were cutting the ribbon to open small new stretches of motorway.> 1987 Bradbury 12.

**pickle, Branston**  The singular is the only form attested in CIC British texts; the term does not occur in American texts. In a sample of CIC texts, the simple term *pickle* occurs in this mass-like use in 42 percent of the British tokens and in 8 percent of the American. <Major sent Gummer out to the kitchen in search of Branston pickle.> 1992 Critchley 164.

**reception**  Reception rooms: *NODE* labels the full term British and comments “(chiefly in commercial use) a room in a private house suitable for entertaining visitors.” Neither the full term nor the clipping are used in American. <What did we want with five bedrooms and three reception?> 1992 Granger 83.

**saving of, a**  A savings of: CIC British texts have 5.3 iptmw of the singular and no plurals; American texts have 0.5 of the singular and 3.4 of the plural.
Nouns

snipe  CIC British texts have some tokens of plural *snipe*; American texts have none. <There are also Dartford and grasshopper warblers, *snipe*, curlews and otters.> 2005 Jan. 23 *Sunday Telegraph* http://www.telegraph.co.uk/.

track  <... privately-owned carriages are pulled by BR locos [British Rail locomotives] on public *track*.> 1987 Mar. 25 *Evening Standard* 2/5.

uniform  In the construction *in modifier uniform(s)*, CIC British texts have 3 times as many tokens of *uniform* as of *uniforms*; American texts have approximately the same number of singular and plural forms. <Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle resembled nothing so much as three gigantic slugs squeezed into Hogwarts *uniform*.> 2003 Rowling 761 (US ed. uniforms).

wood  In the construction *to the wood(s)*, CIC British texts have 2.5 times as many tokens of *wood* as of *woods*; American texts are the reverse, with 2.5 times as many *woods* as of *wood*. <And [tell them] not to let the badger out. . . . He’s not well enough to go back to the *wood* yet, poor thing.> 2000 Aird 177.

A particular construction in which British often has a singular noun where American tends to have a plural is the pattern *type(s) of* (Johansson 1979, 212). This construction involves general nouns like *class*, *kind*, *sort*, *type*, and *variety*.

class of  <... the élite who could be described as “a nice *class of person*.”> 1986 Brett 12.

kind(s) of  <In every crowded alley were the roughest *kinds of pickpocket*.> 1998 Winchester 3.

sort(s) of  Pam Peters (2004, 507–8) found that *sort(s) of* is usually, but not invariably, followed by a plural noun and is more common in British than in American, which prefers *kind of*. <... it ought . . . to give an impression not unlike a tabby cat, or certain *sorts of lizard*.> 1989 Sept. 14 *Daily Telegraph* 20/6.

type(s) of  <There are three *types of child trust fund*: those using cash deposits, share-based funds, and stakeholder plans.> 2005 Jan. 15 *Daily Telegraph* B 4/1.

varieties of  The plural rather than the singular *variety* seems likely to be followed by a singular noun. <Norfolk has . . . *varieties of terrier, herring, plover*, and *jacket*.> 1994 Sept. 24 *Spectator* 24/3.

### 3.2.3 Plural for mass noun

Some words that are normally mass nouns are used in British English as count nouns and therefore have a plural. Cf. §2.2.2.1 for such nouns with the indefinite article. This construction has distinguished precedents, one of which is the King James version of Isaiah 64.6: “All our *righteousnesses* are as filthy ragges.” In the following entries, the figures following the entry forms are the percentages of
plural forms in British/American in CIC. They show that for these forms, the plural is more frequent in British.

**attendances** (12/0) <We notice a peak in attendances that other museums don’t experience.> 1991 Feb. 17 Sunday Times Magazine 15/1.

**brains** (19/14) <Hamilton . . . described the Princess of Wales as “a very lucky woman with not many brains.”> 1987 Feb. 24 Evening Standard 6/1.


**envies** (1/0) <I thought I detected a touch of the envies back there.> 1989 Quinton 239.

**excitements** (3/1) <. . . after the initial excitements the Scrolls have left things pretty much where they were.> 1987 Oct. 25 Sunday Telegraph 18/8.

**ice creams** (11/1) Ice cream; ice cream cones <Carrie . . . asks Ralph to go with the children to buy ice-creams.> 2001 Lodge 241. Cf. § 2.2.2.1.

**ices** (1/0) <I’m going for ice creams. . . . you can’t have an afternoon at the beach without ices.> 1998 Taylor 11.

**insurances** (1/0) <Extended insurances can cost up to £230 for five years’ cover.> 1993 Feb. 7 Sunday Times 5 4/8.

**lettuces** (13/3) <Then she looked at the kitchen, . . . the trug [“basket”] of lettuces on the table.> 1993 Trollope 16.

**newses** (0/0) This unusual plural is a shortening of news programs or the like. <I crash out and watch the first 10 minutes of one of the newses.> 1993 Feb. 7 Sunday Times Magazine 58/4.

**nonsenses** (1/0) <I simply wanted to draw attention to the nonsenses in Labour’s policies.> 1992 Critchley 124.

**overheads** (20/2) Overhead; overhead expenses <The coffee-pushers will argue that their overheads are higher.> 2005 Jan. 14 Daily Telegraph 24/4.


**wallpapers** (7/2) <Spring sunlight lit up the house so beautifully that nobody remembered it needed a coat of paint and new wallpapers.> 1934 Travers 161.

**weathers** (1/0) In all weather <He sits out there all weathers now.> 1985 Mortimer 317.

**yoghurts** (10/2) <. . . the firm makes ingredients for frozen desserts, yoghurts, and ice creams.> 1995 Sept. 4 Daily Telegraph 27/3.

### 3.2.4 Mass noun for plural

Some otherwise plural nouns are used as mass nouns. Cf. §§ 2.4.2; 3.2.2.

**art and craft** Arts and crafts is usually plural in both British and American, but CIC has 2.9 iptmw of singular art and craft, whereas American has 0.4.
... students who took art and craft.> 1989 Sept. 10 Sunday Telegraph 7/1.

beetroot The American equivalent, beet, is a count noun. <There’s good pickled beetroot.> 1989 June In Britain 16/2.


blossom <... children and their mums ... are paid £2 a kilogram for [elderflower] blossom collected in the lanes and fields.> 2003 July 12 Times Weekend 7/3.

cloud <The weather is poor with cloud and bad visibility.> 1989 Sept. 9 Times 1/5.

dog-biscuit <... laying in an immense stock of dog-biscuit, because he said it didn’t go mouldy as fast as human food.> 1994 Dickinson 31.

drink <And why should he keep spiked drink ready? ... What a fool to accept drink at all.> 1990 Hardwick 104.

egg <We’ll buy potatoes and eggs and have a bit of a fry up. Egg and chips.> 1998 Trollope 55.

finance <... as long as I have been in academic life, colleges have been grumbling about finance.> 1987 May 14 Evening Standard 7/4–5.

moth <Fraud appears everywhere once you’ve got it – like moth.> 1993 Neel 183.

potato <... dishing great mounds of mashed potato on to everyone’s plates.> 2003 Rowling 143 (US ed. potatoes).

spirit <... a unit is either half a pint of beer, one small glass of wine, or one measure of spirit.> 1999 Mar. 20 Times Weekend 6/6.

sport British uses the singular sport as a mass noun denoting sports in general; American uses the plural sports for that sense. <He is a bit of a loner and no good at sport.> 1998 Jan. 3 Times Vision 5/4.

tax <It suddenly must find an extra £8,000 a year in tax.> 2003 June 28 Times Weekend 1/3.

water cannon <Use of CS gas and water cannon was advocated yesterday by a leading authority on the police as a better way of breaking up disorderly crowds than traditional methods.> 1989 July 19 Times 7/1.

3.2.5 Plural formation

Several plural formations are notable. When a noun consists of more than one word, the position of the plural marking suffix -s may be variable.

courts martial Its grammar as noun-plus-adjective is sometimes masked by hyphenating it as court-martial and favoring the alternative plural, court-martials. Dictionaries record both plurals. <Uncle Johnny said you’d done loads of courts martial.> 1987 Feb. 16 ITV Rumpole of the Bailey.
gins and tonics  The common expression *a gin and tonic* suggests that the compound is taken as a lexical, not a grammatical unit, in which case *gins and tonics* is the expected plural. CIC has 0.1 iptmw of *gins and tonics* in British texts and none in American. <The landlord had once told her that if anyone ordered “gins and tonics” instead of the universal “gin and tonics” – he really *was* a don.> 1975 Dexter 65.

Lords Justices of Appeal In this case, both nouns are made plural. <Sir John . . . as one of 31 Lords Justices of Appeal earns £134,551 a year.> 1998 Jan. 6 Times 3/4.

Words that are loans from other languages may keep their foreign plurals, more characteristically so in British English than in American. In particular, nouns borrowed from Latin may have either native or Latin plurals: singular *persona*, plurals *personas* or *personae*. Preference for native or Latin plural forms varies considerably among nouns; however a national preference is also apparent (Peters 1999, a study based on 129 questionnaires). British respondents were more inclined to use Latin plurals than Americans (or Australians). Notable was a British preference for *formulae* over *formulas* (86 to 14 percent), whereas American preference was the reverse (21 to 79 percent). The American preference may be influenced by the fact that *formula* is an American term for a milk or milk substitute food for infants, for which only the native plural is normal. A reverse preference exists for the plurals of *syllabus*: British preferring *syllabuses* by 62 to 38 percent, and Americans *syllabi* by 64 to 36 percent.

appendices In CIC texts, both national varieties prefer *appendices* over *appendixes*, British by 90 to 10 percent, American by 75 to 25 percent.

bureaux In CIC texts, British prefers *bureaux* over *bureaus* by 94 to 6 percent; American, *bureaus* by 98 to 2 percent. <Their disappointment is revealed by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.> 1989 Sept. 12 Daily Telegraph 10/8.

milieux In CIC texts, British prefers *milieux* over *milieus* by 84 to 16 percent; American, *milieus* by 67 to 33 percent.

stadia In CIC texts, both national varieties prefer *stadiums* over *stadias*, British by 58 to 42 percent, American by 99 to 1 percent. <. . . with all-seater *stadias*, . . . the better off are being attracted to football as they have not been in the past.> 1995 Sept. 9 Times Magazine 30/3.

Some nouns have unchanged plurals, depending on a variety of circumstances, which differ between British and American use.

birch  <. . . little silver *birch* struggle up to reach the light.> 2003 July 12 Times Weekend 1/4.

duck Words for animals considered as game sometimes have unchanged plurals (*CGEL 5.87*), a use that seems more widespread in British than in American. <. . . men grumble because they are no longer allowed to shoot things – unless, indeed, there are *duck* around.> 1983 Innes 54.
flight  The unchanged plural of *flight* seems exceptional, and may be by association with birds considered as game. <...> three *flight* of duck came over — a vast assemblage of seven hundred birds or more.> 1985 Ebdon 161–2.

foot  (*+ adjective*) “The plurals *feet* and *foot* both occur between a number and an adjective. ... In present-day American printed use, *feet* is more common than *foot*, and is prescribed in many handbooks. *Foot* seems to be more frequent in British English” (Gilman 1994, 455–6). A comparison of two corpora (Peters 2004, 213–4) reports that in expressions like *six foot/feet tall*, although *feet* is the major choice in both varieties, British has twice as many tokens of *foot* as does American. <Give them a month and Hagrid’ll have them twenty-foot-high.> 2000 Rowling 478 (*US ed.* twenty feet high).

pound  In citing cost or income, an unchanged plural is possible for this unit of British currency. <[a waitress in Bradford:] And [the salary was] just seven pound a week.> 1990 Critchfield 217.

quid  Pound <... you can sit down to a main course for three *quid*.> 2003 Dec. *Square* 41/1.

stone  Fourteen pounds <... he was at least four *stone* lighter than Burns.> 1992 Critchley 175.

Conversely, in some cases, British has the normal plural where an unchanged plural might be expected.

*feet + high/tall + noun* “In hyphenated adjectives used before a noun, *foot* is the only possible form ... a six-foot-tall man” (Kahn and Ilson 1985); “the plural *foot* ... regularly occurs (and *feet* does not) between a number and noun. ... the 15-foot high statue” (Gilman 1994). Yet *feet* is attested in some, probably divergent British use. <I could have looked in at the pub ... with its 130-foot-tall chimney.> 1988 Apr. *In Britain* 14/1–2.

Some nouns ending in *-f* have a plural in *-ves*. This morphological variation goes back to a phonetic variation in Old English but has been preserved in a number of nouns and even extended to a few for which it is an innovation. For the most part British and American treat these nouns alike, for example *loaf/loaves* is the common-core norm. But a comparative study of British and American corpora (Peters 2004, 198) has shown differences of at least 10 percent for the following nouns (percentages cited are for the *-ves* forms). For comparison, CIC percentages are given in parentheses. The differences between them and Peters’s figures are sometimes striking, but may be explained by differences in the corpus samples and by the fact that the total occurrences are sometimes few, so a small difference in numbers can produce a large difference in percentage. Cf. also *pooves* below.

*dwarves* British 17 percent vs. American 4 percent (CIC 37 vs. 15 percent). This noun did not participate in the Old English /f/t alternation. The oldest example of *dwarves* in the OED is from 1818; the popularity of the form may be due to its adoption by J. R. R. Tolkien.
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**hooves** British 82 percent vs. American 66 percent (CIC 80 vs. 84 percent).

**scarves** British 97 percent vs. American 76 percent (CIC 93 vs. 91 percent).

Like *dwarves*, this is an analagical form, *scarf* itself being a sixteenth-century word with the plural *scarves* dating only from the eighteenth century.

**turtles** British 45 percent (CIC 29 percent) vs. American no occurrences of a plural. This plural is also not of Old English provenience but dates from the thirteenth century.

A few special cases warrant notice.

**overall** Overall(s) may have different meanings in British (“a protective smock worn over other clothing”) and American (“heavy-cloth trousers with a bib and shoulder straps”) that affect the word’s grammar. British use is as a normal count noun, and it has the usual plural denoting more than one item of the same kind. American use of *overalls* is as a summation plural, like *trousers*. <He was a mournful-looking man . . . wearing a beige-coloured working overall.> 1983 Dexter 149.

**pee** “Since the decimalization of British currency and the introduction of the abbreviation p, as in 10p, . . . the abbreviation has tended to replace *pence* in speech, as in 4p [pi:]” (CED s.v. *pence*). <All right, clever clogs, you owe me sixty pee.> 1993 Mason 8.

**pence** *Pennies* is the plural for coins; *pence* is used for prices, sometimes as a singular, as in *That’ll be three pounds and one pence, please* (Swan 1995, 523). <The cost is still thirty pence.> 1985 Bingham 9.

**pooves** *Poof* (perhaps from French *pouffe* “puff”) is not used in American, but is a derogatory Briticism for “effeminate man; male homosexual” with the usual plural *poofs*. There is also, however, a variant singular *poove*, plural *pooves*, as well as a verb *poove* “to act like a poof.” The singular *poove* may be a backformation from the plural *pooves*, itself formed by analogy with plurals from Old English that voice final fricatives (*hoof, hooves*), and the verb similarly by analogy with denominal verbs like *prove* from *proof*. < . . . a lot of pooves don’t form these establishments [i.e., living together as spouses]>. 1988 Amis 256.

3.3 Function

3.3.1 Noun adjuncts

Noun adjuncts (of which *noun adjunct* is an example) have been common in English throughout its history. However, certain uses are characteristic of British English. Although not limited to newspaper style, noun adjuncts are characteristic of journalese and are rife in British newspaper headlines. The British vogue for noun adjuncts as a concise method of expression in headlines has doubtless promoted their use in ordinary prose as well.
3.3.1.1 Singular noun adjuncts

It has been traditional in English for a noun adjunct to be singular, even if its referent is logically plural: a book list customarily has more than one book on it. That pattern is followed by many constructs that are characteristically British.

In some cases, it is difficult or impossible to say whether the initial item in a combination is a noun or a verb adjunct (§ 1.4.6). When a noun adjunct is used with various head nouns, even though only one may be illustrated in the following list, only the adjunct is used as the lemma here; when a particular combination of noun adjunct and head noun is notable, both words are used as the lemma.

British and American may also differ with respect to which item in a combination is the head and which is the adjunct, for example, British Leeds town centre and American downtown Atlanta, as in <Every Saturday we’d go into Leeds town centre.> 1987 Nov. Illustrated London News 84/3. The pattern City-name city centre occurs in CIC British texts at 8.6 iptmw; the pattern downtown City-name occurs in American texts at 181.7 iptmw.

alleyman A criminal who stalks alleys looking for women victims <The Alleyman was finally brought to book.> 1987 June 3 Sun 4/6.

barrack room In nominal use, barracks is usually plural. But as a noun adjunct, it is usually singular. The OED records barrack-field, -flat, -life, -master, -rat, -room (often used as a compound noun adjunct), -school, -shed, -square, -wing, and -yard. American noun-adjunct use, on the other hand, tends to the plural, as in barracks bag. <Even an old barrack room bruiser like Nicholas Winterton . . . had some kind words for the Government.> 1993 Feb. 4 Daily Telegraph 2/6.


centre party Central party <. . . there may well be 6,179 normally loyal Tories in the constituency ready to lodge a protest vote with the centre party.> 1993 Feb. 27 Times 15/1–2.

check Checked <. . . immaculate as ever in check trousers.> 1996 Aug. 4 Sunday Times 3 8/2. Among many other similar compounds are check cap, check cloth, check gingham, check jacket, check-patterned sports coat, check shirt, check suit, check tablecloth, and check waistcoat.

Christ fantasy A fantasy that one will die and be resurrected <Christ Fantasy Of Death Leap Man> 1988 Sept. 6 Daily Telegraph 4/2.


drink A frequent collocation is drink-driving, for which American would have DUI (driving under the influence) or DWI (driving while intoxicated). <The report proposes a lowering of the drink-drive limit.> 1991 Feb. 20 Times 1/4. Other combinations have other probable American equivalents: drink bill/bottle/shop might be liquor bill/bottle/store; drink driver might be drunk driver or driver over the limit; drink problem might be drinking problem.

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drug <Police Not To Charge Drug Man’s Mother> 1986 Aug. 30 Times 4/7–8.

entry <The flow of people into the building is checked by entry phone.> 1994 Oct. 3–9 Big Issue 24/3.

exam <Worried Exam Girl Died From Anxiety> 1987 June 20 Times 2/3.


founder member Founding member <Mr. Carter was a founder member of the community.> 1993 Graham 10–1.

hire Rental: Hire purchase is American (buying on the) installment plan. <Hire purchase and other forms of borrowing have shot up by more than four times since 1982.> 1991 Mar. 2 Daily Express 40/3. Other compounds with this adjunct in the American sense “rental” are hire boat, hire car, hire clubs (golf), hire culture, hire firm, hire papers, and hire shop.

holiday <... a holiday father marooned with his family five miles from the nearest telephone.> 1975 Price 24.

horror hospital Hospital whose closing caused “horror stories” <Row Over Horror Hospital> 1987 Feb. 19 Hampstead Advertiser 1/1.


murder <Murder Girl Was Bank Job Grass> 1993 Smith 131. In the foregoing, murder is the equivalent of “murdered”; in the following, of “murder-site”: murder house and murder monastery.

nurse training Nurse’s training; training as a nurse <... during my nurse training the beds had been covered identically.> 1991 Green 226.

pedigree dog Pedigreed dog <Last week ... he found a pedigree dog – and got a reward.> 1987 Oliver 77.

pot plant Potted plant <Broderick Bode, 49, was ... strangled by a pot plant.> 2003 Rowling 482 (US ed. potted-plant).

£ twenty-thousand earnings Earnings of £20,000; a £20,000 income <They are the young men ... who have set their sights on £20,000 earnings this year.> 1989 Aug. 27 Sunday Telegraph 2/6.

rape husband  Husband charged with the rape of his wife <$\text{Rape Husbands}

‘Must Not Be Identified’$> 1991 Jan. 29 $\text{Daily Telegraph}$ 5/1.

removal van  Moving van <$\ldots$ the removal vans went in.$> 1993$ Graham 365.

safari  <$\text{Two wildlife rangers are to be charged with the murder of safari girl Julie Ward.}$> 1991 Feb. 13 $\text{Daily Mail}$ 2/6. Also safari woman.

saleroom  Salesroom <$\ldots$ there is a complete range of different types of shop to buy from – department stores, $\ldots$ auction salerooms.$> 1988$ Brookes and Fraenkel 70.

shock  In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the adjunct shock “shocking” had vogueish use on both sides of the Atlantic. British examples: <$\text{Liberal Democrats voted last night to decriminalise the use of cannabis in a shock decision.}$> 1994 Sept. 20 $\text{Times}$ 1/1. Also shock choice, shock confession, and shock vote.

skirting board  <$\text{Harry heard something scuttling behind the skirting board.}$> 2003 Rowling 59 ($\text{US ed.}$ baseboard).

sport  <$\text{The gym at Swiss Cottage sport centre will be out of action for at least a month.}$> 1987 Feb. 19 $\text{Hampstead Advertiser}$ 7/4.

suicide  <$\text{Suicide Stepfather Murders Daughter}$> 2003 July 9 $\text{Times}$ 5/8.

Sunday working  Working on Sundays <$\text{Sunday working} \ldots$ would become a condition of employment.$> 1989$ Aug. 29 $\text{Times}$ 15/2. Cf. weekend working below.

thatch cottage  Thatched cottage <$\ldots$ the house was a beauty, a totally rebuilt thatch cottage.$> 1989$ Burden 127.

trim, chrome-  Chrome-trimmed <$\ldots$ here beneath the flyover of London’s Westway the gipsies park chrome-trim caravans on concrete.$> 1987$ Aug. $\text{Illustrated London News}$ 48/1.

weekend working  Working on weekends <$\text{They are the young men prepared to turn a blind eye to union rules on weekend working.}$> 1989 Aug. 27 $\text{Sunday Telegraph}$ 2/6. Cf. sunday working above.

youth continental  Member of a youth team from the continent of Europe <$\text{Of the youth Continentals at Ryhope this week, names worth noting include Sergio Esclusa and Angel Nebreda, of Barcelona.}$> 1990 Aug. 17 $\text{Daily Telegraph}$ 30/6.

3.3.1.1.1  Multiple noun adjuncts

Multiple noun adjuncts, although often thought to be typical of American use, are not unknown in British. Such sequences of two or more noun adjuncts are sometimes difficult to interpret, specifically to analyze for their internal constituent structure. For example, is a management information system (see below) a system of management information (i.e., information about management) or an information system for management (i.e., information about various matters for management to use)? Such multiple adjuncts are frequent.
death leap man  Man who jumped to his death from a building <Christ Fantasy Of Death Leap Man> 1988 Sept. 6 Daily Telegraph 4/2.
drink trade paper  <. . . it would be morally wrong to “grass” on customers, reports the drink trade paper Morning Advertiser.> 1988 Sept. 18 Sunday Telegraph 4/8.
drug-plot husband  Husband who drugged his second wife to end their marriage <Drug-plot husband . . . has found romance again – with his first wife.> 1987 Feb. 23 Daily Mirror 5/2.
four hours traffic chaos  <Tuesday’s Royal’s comings and goings caused four hours traffic chaos in the West End and beyond.> 1987 Mar. 27 Evening Standard 47/1.
high-pay high-profit company; low-pay low-profit concern  <. . . it was not the high-pay high-profit companies that contributed to our economic decline – it was and is the low-pay low-profit concerns.> 1987 June 19 Times 16/3–4.
home alone girl  Girl left at home by herself while her mother vacationed <Home Alone Girl, 11, Left By Mother> 1993 Feb. 13 Daily Telegraph 1/6–7.
hunger-strike Baptist minister  <Supporters of a hunger-strike Baptist minister disrupted a Haringey council meeting when it refused to hear their views on its gay and lesbian policies.> 1987 Feb. 24 Evening Standard 5/5.
local development agency scheme  <A Whitehall source said last night that the Home Office would “pull the plug” on all local development agency schemes.> 1987 Oct. 25 Sunday Telegraph 3/6.
low-pay economy  <Successive governments contributed to the establishment of a low-pay economy.> 1987 June 19 Times 16/3–4.
management information system  <Mr Bill Phillips . . . will oversee new management information system.> 1987 Feb. 26 Hampstead Advertiser 6/2.
murder hunt man  Man hunted on a charge of murder <Murder Hunt Man Gives Up> 1986 Sept. 5 Times 1/7.
sex change dad  <It tackles the big subjects: cancer, flab, the sex change dad who became a mum.> 1989 Aug. 31 Midweek 11/1.
three year wait patient  <Agony Of 3 Year Wait Patient> 1986 Sept. 12 Daily Mirror 1/1.
two-point-five metre diameter gravity-fed circular ring main  &lt;The plan proposes nearly 60 kilometres of 2.5 metre diameter gravity-fed circular ring main.&gt; 1985 Apr. 24 Times 4/4.


3.3.1.1.2 Nation noun adjuncts

A characteristic feature of British construction is the use of the name of a nation as a noun adjunct in connection with sports teams, particularly cricket and soccer. In all the following examples, American English would have an adjectival form of the nation’s name (Bulgarian, English, Romanian) or else a prepositional phrase (for Great Britain). Cf. § 5.1.2.

Bulgaria &lt; . . . a small model figure wearing Bulgaria Quidditch robes.&gt; 2000 Rowling 386.


Great Britain &lt; . . . the Great Britain centre [soccer player] . . . almost settled the issue a few minutes from the end when he was held inches short.&gt; 1987 Nov. 8 Manchester Guardian Weekly 31/5.

Romania &lt; Don’t miss the chance to see some of the world’s best women athletes in action at Crystal Palace . . . . England Women v Romania Women.&gt; 1985 Aug. London tube-station billboard.

The use of a noun denoting a nation in place of the corresponding adjective is not limited to sports, however, but extends to general use as well.

Romania baby couple Couple seeking to adopt a baby from Romania &lt;Romania Baby Couple Told To Pay £2500&gt; 1990 Aug. 22 Evening Standard 15/1–3.

Spain drugs haul &lt;12 Britons In Spain Drugs Haul&gt; 1988 Sept. 3 Times 1/2.

Turkey carpet &lt;In the centre of the floor was a blue and red Turkey carpet.&gt; 2000 Granger 180.
3.3.1.2 Plural noun adjuncts

Nouns modifying other nouns have generally been in the singular form in English: pencil sharpener, peanut candy. Recently, however, British and, to a lesser extent, American have been favoring plural attributive nouns (CGEL 17.108–9). Although this new pattern occurs in both varieties, it is most frequent in British (Johansson 1979, 213), and notably in news reports (LGSWE 594).

American fluctuating use of the plural adjunct is doubtless due to British influence, which is strong in certain channels, such as reportage. For example, an issue of the New York Times (July 3, 2004) had several articles on employment statistics (A1-B3 and B1–3). The texts of these articles used primarily singular adjuncts (job base, job creation 3 times, job figures 2 times, job growth 4 times, job report, job market 2 times, job numbers, job survey) and only occasionally plural adjuncts (jobs data, jobs front, jobs survey). The headlines, however, had a reverse proportion, with only one singular adjunct (on the front page, Job Growth) and three plural adjuncts (Jobs Growth, Jobs Report 2 times). Headlines and their articles are written by different persons.

In some cases, adjunct nouns may be spelled variably with an apostrophe (appointments’ board, drinks’ cabinet, trades’ unionist), so that it might be argued that it is in fact a genitive determinant rather than a noun adjunct. However, the apostrophe spelling is relatively rare and both the syntax and the semantics of the constructions point to the noun-adjunct construction, so the apostrophe is probably just an indication that the writer was subconsciously aware that the plural noun adjunct is a departure from the norm, and thus “corrected” its written form to that of the genitive.

Goods in the sense of “products,” “material,” or “freight” occurs only in the plural, so there is no possibility of its use as a singular noun adjunct. In its adjunct use, the usual American equivalent is freight. Similarly, Guards, in the sense of “troops originally to protect the monarch” is normally plural. Although such nouns have no singular, their occurrence as adjuncts provides not only additional tokens of plural noun adjuncts but also reinforces that pattern.

Athletics and maths (American math, as the short form of mathematics) are not plurals at all, their final -s being a noun-forming suffix (as also in astronautics, physics, etc.). Yet because they have the appearance of plurals, their use as adjuncts also reinforces the plural noun adjunct pattern.

As a collective term for competitive activities of physical skill, sports is usually plural in American, but may be singular in British. Its British use as a plural noun adjunct, as in sports hall, is therefore noteworthy in this context, even though it would be usually plural also in American, as in sports arena.

The part of speech of thinks in thinks bubble is not clear (it might be a verb). However, it might also be a noun, as in give it a think, and an American equivalent might be thought balloon.

accounts Accounting department <... she has started work ... in the accounts department.> 1995 Aug. 30 Daily Telegraph 4/6.
Accommodations < . . . in the Civil Service, by some quirk of official irony, dealing with bombs came under the Accommodations Officer. > 1977 Aird 57.

Admissions < . . . some admissions tutors expect an above-average increase when this summer’s results are published next week. > 1996 Aug. 9 Daily Telegraph 7/4.


Airports < The lounges are run on the FO's behalf by the British Airports Authority. > 1987 Jan. 16 Times 1/3–4.

Animals < I was never much of an animals person. > 1994 Sept. Tatler 58/1.

Antiques < Kate and Piers entered it gingerly, as if venturing into an overstocked antiques market. > 2003 James 200. Also antiques shop.

Appointments < . . . changes to create a supreme court and independent judicial appointments commission. > 2003 June 21 Times 2/5. Also appointments advertising, Appointments' Board, Appointments Card, Appointments Department, appointments diary, and appointments list.

Arrarss < Arrear Officer . . . Do you have the determination, patience, experience and sensitivity to recover rent arrears from former tenants? > 1990 Aug. 20 Evening Standard 14/3.

Arrivals In CIC, arrivals hall/lounge outnumbers arrival hall/lounge by 26 to 3 in British texts. Arrival(s) lobby is not attested in CIC. < Instead of distributing the luggage among all the carousels in the arrivals hall, four or five flights have to share the only one working. > 1996 Aug. 8 Times 21/2. Also arrivals lobby and arrivals lounge.

Arts < In 1976 it opened as an arts venue. > 1998 Jan. 6 Times 17/6. Also arts centre, arts editor, arts graduate, and arts programme.

Assisted Places < . . . the assisted places scheme . . . subsidises the private school fees of bright children from poorer backgrounds. > 1994 Oct. 3 Times 41/6.

Athletics < Fame has its price. Ask . . . ITV’s athletics commentator. > 1995 Aug. 28 Daily Mail 43/4. Also athletics coach and athletics team.

Awards < . . . at the awards’ breakfast, Sigourney told me she started the organisation. > 1988 May In Britain 58/2. Also awards committee and awards programme.


Benefits < . . . people can . . . pass on information about suspected cheats to Benefits Agency staff. > 1996 Aug. 4 Sunday Times 1/1.


Boroughs Grants < The chairman of the London Boroughs Grants Committee warned that voluntary organisations will have to send out redundancy notices by the end of the month. > 1987 Feb. 12 Evening Standard 5/1.
brains trust “A few idiomatic differences in colloquial phrases are apparently of recent origin, as are the phrases themselves; thus Mr H. G. Nicholas (in The American Government, 1948) follows BBC usage in speaking of Mr Roosevelt’s New Deal experts as his ‘Brains Trust,’ whereas the form actually always used in America was ‘Brain Trust’ ” (Partridge and Clark 1951, 318–19). Some Brains Trust at Reading University.> 1996 Dexter 219.

breeds, rare- <...> you can get a very acceptable bacon by post from Heal Farm, a rare-breeds survival establishment.> 1988 June Illustrated London News 80/4.

bricks-and-mortar <From the end of this year it will be possible for private individuals to own shares in . . . large bricks-and-mortar investments.> 1987 Aug. Illustrated London News 54/1.

buildings <...> no charge for building maintenance has been carried to the accounts, and . . . at least £75,000 a year should have been placed to buildings reserve [“depreciation”].> 1993 Neel 45.

burns <Mr. McArdle was detained in the burns unit.> 1986 Aug. 29 (Newcastle) Evening Chronicle 2/7.

careers Although singular career may be used as a noun adjunct in American English, other expressions are more likely: careers advice might be American guidance or counseling; careers office might be counseling office (or in a military context, recruiting/recruitment office); careers adviser/master/officer/teacher might be guidance counselor. <Careers Advice [chapter title]> 2003 Rowling 574 (US ed. Career Advice). Also careers brochure, Careers Convention, and careers-opportunities booklet.

chemicals <...> a career in the oil and chemicals industry.> 1983 magazine CIC.

cloaks <Sitting/Dining-Room; Fully Fitted Modern Kitchen; Cloaks/Shower Room.> 1994 Dexter 51.


complaints <Studying his complaints list is a way of defining why.> 1989 July 20 Midweek 6/3.

components <Mr Channon refused to say how many jobs were at risk in the components industry.> 1987 Feb. 20 Guardian 1/3.

costs collection Bill collection <Mr Parrish has asked me to deal with all costs collection matters.> 1995 Jones 40–1.


cuttings Clipping <His cuttings file bulges with tabloid headlines.> 1987 June 4 Independent 8/5. Also cuttings book.

damages <If they won, the legal aid fund would be able to claw back from the damages award all its outstanding expenses, with nothing or very little left for compensation.> 1987 June 4 Independent 1/7.
days, seven <... similar Syrian wedding-songs and customs ... obtain today, during the seven days festivities, when the bride and bridegroom are represented as a royal couple.> 1908 Mead 16.
deed <Mr. Ounce replaced the stiff ivory parchment folds in a metal deeds box and snapped the lock.> 1989 Graham 265.
departures <Morse ... stood under the high Departures Board and noted the time of the next train.> 1996 Dexter 209. Also Departures Concourse and Departures Lounge.

Descriptions, Trade(s) <A picture, surely in breach of the Trades Descriptions Act, showed bikini-clad girls running across a golden beach.> 1983 Mann 14.
dominoes <He ... adopted the name of a chap in his father’s dominoes team.> 1995 Aug. 28 Daily Mail 20/3.
drinks <He had held the obligatory farewell drinks party before luncheon.> 2003 James 31. Also drinks allowance, drinks-bar, drinks cabinet, drinks cans, drinks company, drinks cupboard, drinks dispenser, drinks industry, drinks-list, drinks machine, drinksmanufacturer, drinks market, drinks order, drinks table, drinks trade, drinks tray, drinks trolley, and drinks writer.
drugs <Meanwhile, the politicians make a meal out of the problem because at the wrong end of the drugs ladder [range of drug problems] there are dreadful social problems and major criminality.> 2000 Jan. 18 Times 17/3. Also drugs baron, drugs bill, drugs Briton, drugs company, drugs don, drugs economy, drugs haul, Drugs Intelligence Unit, drugs market, drugs menace, drugs officer, drugs overdose, drugs problem, drugs raid, drugs ring, drugs-smuggler, drugs smuggling, drugs squad, drugs test, drugs trade, and drugs trafficking.
earnings <... it is likely your house will increase in value much more quickly than your earnings power.> 1987 July Illustrated London News 63/4.
engagements <At first they did not even appear in the Prime Minister’s engagements diary.> 1987 June 13 Times 28/4.
entertainments <The first 10 years of his working life were spent on board the Queen Mary as the ship’s entertainments purser.> 1995 Aug. 30 Daily Telegraph 13/3–4. Also entertainments industry.
exams <... the biggest shake-up of the exams system for 50 years.> 2004 Dec. 17 Independent 7/1.
expenses <... the [European] Parliament ... last month voted itself an expenses regime that would send an English district councillor to jail.> 1999 Mar. 17 Times 20/4. Also expenses cheque, expenses claim, and expenses fiddle.
ex-pensions <... we’ll have to start recruiting ex-pensions salesmen.> 1994 Sept. 21 Times 16/2.
families, happy <The secretarial assistant was today at the heart of a happy families scene at the Highland estate and looked perfectly at home among the Royal Family.> 1995 Aug. 29 Evening Standard 3/3.
fares <London commuters face swingeing fares increases of up to four times the rate of inflation.> 1994 Sept. 15 Evening Standard 7/1. Also fares rises.
features “I was absolutely furious at first,” features editor Richard Williams admits.> 1987 Feb. 16 Evening Standard 6/2.

feeds If you need larger quantities of fertilizer, then go to an agricultural feeds merchant.> 2003 June 21 Times Weekend 13/4.

fees Among the other papers in Grunte’s personal file was a letter from the Commons’ fees office, the department responsible for the payment of MPs’ salaries and expenses.> 1991 Critchley 19.

finals Its [Oxford University’s] finals students are required to traipse to their exams in lounge suits, white ties and scratchy gowns.> 1994 Sept. 27 Evening Standard 28/6. Also finals papers.

finances The unit fines system also aims to fine on the basis of better information.> 1989 Aug. 4 Times 5/2.

fixtures Their names positively don’t appear on the school fixtures list.> 1985 Bingham 121.

forces Theoretically they [contact lenses] were supplied only to forces personnel.> 1987 Mar. 9 Evening Standard 29/3.

Galleries . . . the recent item in the diary of your newspaper about myself and the Royal Fine Art and Museum and Galleries Commissions encouraging freer movement of art treasures across EEC boundaries is more than usually absurd.> 1986 Sept. 10 Times 13/5.

games The games field is the place where all classes can cooperate.> 1990 Aug. 16 Times 11/6. Also games afternoon, games cupboard, games facilities, games player, games room, games staff, games table, and games teacher.

gays and lesbians . . . the gays and lesbians issue is costing us dear amongst the pensioners.> 1987 May 11 Evening Standard 24/5.

gilts . . . a huge booming industry generating pop-star-scale salaries for Eurobond and gilts traders.> 1990 Critchfield 141.

goodies They tend to have been the bad boys at school, not the goodies swots.> 1986 Oct. 26 Sunday Times 48/6.

goods Freight . . . goods vehicles, oil tankers and military transport littered the highway like the giant carcasses of animals hunted down in the night.> 1991 Feb. 1 Times 1/3. Also goods access, goods entrance, goods lift, goods train, goods waggon, and goods yard.

Grants Committee Take, for example, the Universities Funding Council, which replaces the University Grants Committee.> 1987 Dec. 20 Manchester Guardian 6/4.

greetings card . . . she . . . collects and sells a huge range of paper ephemera from greetings cards to small purse calendars.> 1988 Dec. In Britain 26/2.

groundnuts Peanut We use best quality fresh fish fried in pure groundnuts oil.> 2000 sign at Big Bite Fish & Chips Shop on Walm Lane, Willesden Green, London.

Guards officer . . . men who looked like retired Guards officers and probably were.> 1992 Granger 52.
holidaymakers, working  <Tens of thousands of men and women under 30 from the Commonwealth are to be allowed to work full-time in professional jobs under an overhaul of the two-year working holidaymakers scheme.> 2003 June 21 Times 2/6.
ideas  <Being on television, though, is nothing compared with the terror of a Tatler ideas meeting.> 1999 Mar. 13 Times Magazine 9/3.
improvements  <And top of the improvements list is the swimming-pool.> 1989 July 29 Times 5 1/1.
incomes policy  <Mr Kinnock made an oblique but not insignificant hint to what used to be called an incomes policy.> 1986 Oct. 1 Times 13/2.
insects  <Derek’s wife would be away running a course for infants teachers.> 1998 Joss 14.
interests, special  <...a succession of policy climbdowns... have signalled to special interests groups that this is a government well worth standing up to.> 1993 Feb. 13 Daily Telegraph 10/1–2.
islands  <Her income of £8,500 is bumped up with a £500-a-year islands allowance.> 1986 Oct. 16 Times 40/2.
jobs  <Jobs Offer / Tens of thousands of men and women under 30 from the Commonwealth are to be allowed to work full-time in professional jobs.> 2003 June 21 Times 2/6. Also jobs list, jobs market, jobs programme, jobs scheme, jobs search, and jobs shortfall.
lettings Rental  <It is quite normal for lettings agents to handle the routine management.> 1986 Winter For Sale Magazine 56/2.
machines, cigarette vending  <Don had his own cigarette vending machines business.> 1989 June In Britain 11/4–12/1.
materials  <...materials suppliers who reap a healthy harvest from spending on building and repairs.> 1987 May 10 (Scotland) Sunday Post 7/4.
maths  <What is he, after all? An ex-maths teacher.> 1990 Hardwick 38.
meals  <...up until this week at least one [new school] didn’t even have a proper meals service arranged.> 1989 Sept. 13 Times 15/3–4.
meetings  <Enquiries about the meeting should be sent to the Meetings Secretary.> 1988 first circular Autumn meeting, Linguistics Association of Great Britain.
men, three-  <Ballesteros, who captains the three-men Spanish team at St Andrews.> 1986 Sept. 24 Times 40/5.
enences  <Gave Barry Kent his menaces money.> 1985 Townsend 42.
mergers  <Mr Channon...will meet Tory backbenchers tonight over mergers policy.> 1987 Jan. 20 Guardian 1/8.
meths  <...you might as well take in meths drinkers from the streets.> 1980 Drabble 86–7.
metres, 400  <Victory smiles from Britain’s 4 × 400 metres team.> 1989 Aug. 7 Times 1/4–8 (caption to picture of four team members). Also ten metres line.
minutes, 15 <Most centres will give staff 75 minutes off and it is up [to] the individual whether he takes it all in one go, has 45 minutes for lunch and two 15 minutes breaks or has several short breaks.> 2003 July 10 Times Appointments 4/3.

Monopolies and Mergers <He faces severe criticism over his decision . . . not to refer the bid by BTR . . . to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.> 1987 Jan. 20 Guardian 1/8.

Museums <Now it is the silly season, may I recommend a suitable game for Museums Year. It is to search the shops attached to museums and tourist attractions for the most irrelevant souvenir.> 1989 Aug. 7 Times 13/6.

no-claims < . . . boat owners laying up their craft should . . . review their insurance to take advantage of no-claims bonuses.> 1994 Sept. 25 Sunday Times 4/5.

obituaries < . . . they were not convinced that these sympathies justified mutilating a copy of the Daily Telegraph – least of all its obituaries page.> 1991 Feb. 9 Daily Telegraph 13/5.


opportunities, equal <The Armed Forces are Equal Opportunities Employers.> 1987 Oct. 25 Sunday Telegraph 2/3. Also equal opportunities manager.


palaces < . . . families could wait ten years on the council housing list to fulfil the dream of a nice modern purpose-built flat somewhere like the palaces estate.> 1991 Grant-Adamson 112.

paratroops <He’s wearing a scruffy salt-and-pepper tweed suit and a paratroops tie.> 1989 Daniel 109.


passes, A level <Its schools have about as much chance of topping the A level passes league as the driver of a family saloon has of winning the Monaco Grand Prix.> 1987 Sept. Illustrated London News 86/2.

payments <Outdated payments rules mean, for example, that the cost to the Royal Mail of delivering letters sent from Moscow is not fully borne by the Russian authorities.> 1992 Nov. 7 Economist 73/2.

pensions <If you are in the dark about the whereabouts of some of your pensions money, contact the Pensions Tracing Registry.> 1995 newspaper CIC.

phones <There will be no formal talks to end the phones dispute until the strikers go back to work, British Telecom said today.> 1987 Jan. 28 Evening Standard 2/4.
pinnacles, eight- <Here is rustic England at its best, a little eight-pinnacles church, a war memorial, a maypole.> 1938 Crawford 18.

places, assisted <Delegates at Blackpool this week may cheer pledges to scrap the assisted places scheme that subsidises the private school fees of bright children from poorer backgrounds.> 1994 Oct. 3 Times 41/6.

plates, printing <The prestigious Rolls-Royce car . . . looks set to be overtaken this year by the sharp acceleration of profits from the group’s more mundane printing plates business.> 1987 Feb. 23 Evening Standard 41/1.

points <. . . a “tariff system” . . . would give a single points total for progression to higher education.> 1994 Sept. 22 Times 4/3. Also points victory.

pools <. . . rises and falls in tone informed viewers, with heads down over their pools coupons, which team had won even before the visitors’ score was given.> 1995 Aug. 28 Independent 10/1. Also pools win and pools winners.

profits <The profits performance was achieved despite a 14pc increase in the price of milk.> 1995 newspaper CIC.

railways <Michael Meacher, shadow transport secretary, said he would ask the railways inspectorate division of the Health and Safety Executive to review safety procedures.> 1995 Sept. 4 Daily Telegraph 5/1.

rates <The unpopularity of the domestic rates system in Scotland came about because of its unfairness.> 1986 Dec. 10 Times 4/7.

real-terms <William Hague will also commit the Conservatives to real-terms increases in health spending.> 2000 Jan. 18 Times 1/2.

records <This licence is not valid until it is initialled and properly stamped by the officer issuing it at a post office or the National TV Licence Records Office.> 1987 May 18 TV license.

removals <. . . the Gilbert twins: one of them a housing agent; the other a removals man. Sell some property – and recommend a highly reputable and efficient removals firm.> 1983 Dexter 153.

roads protest <Although senior figures in the industry tried to deter drivers from staging a roads protest, they said that the action was “inevitable”.> 1999 Mar. 19 Times 2/1–2.

runners-up <Win . . . One Of These Runners-Up Prizes.> 1991 Jan. 31 Midweek back cover.

scenes-of-crime officer <Indeed it was . . . the dreams . . . of the hardened Scenes-of-Crime Officers, that would be haunted by the sight of so much blood.> 1996 Dexter 52.

schools <My prize was for writing a schools booklet.> 1991 Feb. 9 Daily Telegraph Weekend 3/7. Also Schools Council, schools crossing warden, post-schools director of education, schools drama, Schools Minister, schools problem, schools programme, schools system, and schools year.

seconds <Their [Royal Doulton’s] smaller seconds shop sells genuine seconds from all the group’s companies at reduced prices.> 1989 June In Britain 40/3.

secrets <Britain has no Freedom of Information Act. What it does have is the Official Secrets Act of 1911, which makes it an offence for government officers
to give or receive official information.> 1989 Feb. 12 Manchester Guardian Weekly 20/1. Also secrets bill.

**securities** <... the banks were wondering whether to go nap on the great new business of securities trading in London.> 1989 Apr. 1 Spectator 25/2.

**services** <... we are looking for a Public Services Officer to patrol a designated area of the Borough.> 1990 Aug. 20 Evening Standard 14/1. Also services rationalisation.

**ships** <Mr Ray, ... director of a ships instrument repair business, said he had a premonition.> 1987 Mar. 9 Evening Standard 1/5.

**signals** <Antoine Lurot drifted into estate agency after completing ... French national service with a signals parachute regiment.> 1986 Winter For Sale Magazine 28/3.

**sittings** <The backlash that has developed against the 12-month-old change in the sittings hours of the Commons is more to do with the convenience of MPs than with the effectiveness of Parliament.> 2004 Jan. 5 Times 8/7.

**skills** <Skills shortages ... are having a profound effect on the training, career development and influence of personnel managers.> 1990 Aug. 21 Times 25/1.

**sounds** <Prices ... include VAT, Car Tax, front/rear seat belts and sounds system.> 1989 Aug. 28 Daily Telegraph 7.

**sports** <And there’s a supermarket and restaurants and sports halls.> 2001 Lodge 40. Also sports centre.

**standards, trading** <My local trading standards officer informs me that terms such as “traditional” are not legally defined.> 1994 Sept. 22 Times 19/5.

**stores** <I left the stores man wondering if it was him or me who was mad.> 1991 nonfiction CIC.

**students** <It is a chance for students ... of involving themselves in the Students Union in a more positive way than simply going to the Union Bar for a drink.> 1991 Mar. UCL News (University College London magazine) 11/1.

**sweets** Candy (shop/stand) <I was regularly given the job of paying the takings from my grandmother’s sweets kiosk, into the bank.> 1999 Mar. 21 Sunday Times News Review 4/4.

**swings** <Wexford’s car ... was parked [near] a children’s playground. ... [¶] The men who had come to search for him stood about in groups, some in the swings field.> 1972 Rendell 10–11.

**talks** <George Mitchell, the former US senator ... is chairing the talks process.> 1997 newspaper CIC.

**thinks bubble** Thought balloon <... we fell silent for a minute or two. The thinks bubbles over our heads filled up.> 2001 Lodge 252.

**tours** <... we got your address from the tours manager – the coach company fellow.> 1974 Price 131.

**towns** <... all self employed towns people, working from home, should pay no rates, at least on their work premises or garages.> 1987 Feb. 13 Evening Standard 9/1.
trades <... she’s an ... active trades’ unionist.> 1992 Walters 67. Also Trades Descriptions Act, trades union, and trades unionism.

under-fives <Special play-groups and under-fives clinics for “homeless” children have been set up in hotel basements and church halls.> 1987 Mar. 18 Guardian 25/4.

universities <... the Universities Funding Council ... replaces the University Grants Committee.> 1987 Dec. 20 Manchester Guardian 6/4–5.

utilities <I picked up a hammer ... from the tool-box in the utilities cupboard.> 1969 Amis 152.

wages <... his total wages bill was still a mere £15 a week.> 1984 Smith 116.

weapons <... someone sold Downing Street duff goods about Iraq’s weapons programme last year.> 2003 June 20 Times 22/5. Also weapons policy.

weights <“... lift, you’re not waving goodbye to your mum, you know.” The dark-haired instructor loomed menacingly over Loretta as she lay on her back in a corner of the weights room.> 1993 Smith 41.

works <My favourite memories are of our works outings.> 1998 Jan. 3 Times Magazine 18/4. Also works access, works party, works schedule, and works yard.

3.3.2 Object of preposition for noun adjunct

In a few cases, British English has the structure noun^1 of noun^2 for the structure noun^2 noun^1.

Captain of Games Team captain <He became Captain of Games in my house [at Eton].> 1994 Dickinson 15.

hall of residence Residence hall <They ... went off together ... towards the hall of residence.> 1993 Neel 123.

3.3.3 Individual and collective meanings

Some nouns refer either to individuals who are part of a collection or to the collection as a whole. Cf. § 2.4.2.

crew Crew members <The presence of British air crew as prisoners of war in Baghdad means the RAF Benevolent Fund is having second thoughts.> 1991 Feb. 11 Daily Telegraph 17/1.

police Policemen: In common-core English, the plural noun police normally has a collective sense “the police force.” That rule, however, has occasional exceptions in British use. <In the subsequent brawl ... four police were injured.> 1987 Nov. Illustrated London News 78/1.

staff Staff members <... she is looking for office premises and ... hopes to employ two staff.> 1994 Oct. 3 Evening Standard 14/3. Cf. § 14.1.
3.4 Names and titles

3.4.1 Personal names

A difference in the treatment of personal given names is in the use of initials. British tends to reduce all given (or Christian) names to initials, as in J. R. R. Tolkien or J. K. Rowling. That pattern is clear from bibliographies, reference lists, and other formal lists of names in British sources. American, on the other hand, tends to favor a full first name and middle initial (CGEL 5.66), as in Harry S. Truman.

British use of a double-barreled surname is sometimes mistaken by Americans for a middle name followed by surname, as in the case of Andrew Lloyd Webber. The double-barreled surname was largely unknown in America until recent times, when it was adopted on an ad hoc basis by couples who combined their surnames as a statement of the equality of the sexes. There is, however, not much evidence that such combined names will be handed on through the succeeding generations. The British motivation was often to combine one surname with another of a more prominent, related family. An example is the novelist and politician Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who was the son of William Bulwer and Elizabeth Lytton, but adopted the surname Bulwer-Lytton in 1843 when he inherited the Lytton family estate at Knebworth.

A practice once common in both countries, in correspondence and in certain social situations, was the familiar use of a man’s surname in place of his given name by his equals or superiors. This practice is said to have arisen out of public school practice in England; in America it was known particularly in a military context. It is now rare in American use and is doubtless less frequent in England than formerly.

<Dear Rogers, [¶] I was interested to meet you last Tuesday and would have liked to talk longer.> 1983 Dickinson 13.

In America it is, or once was, common to pass on a father’s full name to a son, usually the first-born son. In such cases, suffixes were used to distinguish the generations: Sr. for the parent and Jr. for the offspring. In the case of later successive generations bearing the same name, roman numerical suffixes were used: III, IV, etc. The practice is now rare. A distinctively British custom is the use after the surname of major and minor for, respectively, an older and younger brother in the same public school, often although not always capitalized.

<It was by this odd closeness to Dobbs minor that I had been able to recall that a Dobbs major must have existed.> 1983 Dickinson 13.

3.4.2 Titles

The use of occupational titles as a name title, as in Secretary of State Colin Powell and Prime Minister Tony Blair is more characteristic of American than of
British use (*CamGEL* 520). Social titles, however, are more used in British than American. The parenthesised figures are those of British/American iptmw in CIC texts.

**ma’am** (57.4/22.8) <‘Would you care to lead in to lunch now, ma’am?’ inquired someone politely. ‘I don’t think quite yet,’ replied Her Majesty.> 1989 March *In Britain* 37/3.

**madam** (38.3/7.2) <“Would you stop calling me madam, Sergeant, and suggest whom I could see regarding a criminal matter?” [¶] “No need to get shirty, madam,” he said.> 1992 Green 21.

**Miss** (1135.7/331.2) <[young girl to teacher:] I saw it in a magazine. Honest, Miss. Honest.> 1989 Aug. 30 *Guardian* 38/2–3.

**Mr** (6438.1/3555.2) 1: British newspapers have a greater tendency than their American counterparts to use titles for persons. <Mr [Graham] Greene, whose first play this was, probes the spiritual consequences of an affair between a married, 45-year-old psychology lecturer and a 17-year-old Roman Catholic orphan.> 1987 Nov. 8 *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 25/4. 2: The general titles of Mr., Mrs., and Miss have less prestige in American use than professional titles like Prof. and Dr. <[Hagrid writes:] Dear Mr Dumbledore, . . . > 1997 Rowling 43 (*US ed. Professor*).

**Sir** (1460.6/142.1); **sir** (435.8/126.8) 1. A general term of address, used formerly between upper-class social equals or by inferiors to superiors <. . . the only people now aware of the distinction between the classes are the upper class; the rest of us are confident the whole thing has been abolished. “I don’t have to call you ‘Sir’ do I?” says the party worker to the Cabinet Minister, the waiter to the famous playwright, the train driver to the chairman of a nationalized industry, the gamekeeper to the scrap metal millionaire.> 1967 Frost and Jay 29. <When I was at Cambridge the split personality role of the college porter was summed up in one sentence when he caught me climbing in illegally late at night. ‘What the hell do you think you’re doing (pause) Sir?’> 1983 Brooke-Taylor 77. 2. A title of honor for knights and baronets <. . . excuse me, Sir Thomas – Tom . . . But I’ll put the kettle on for a cup of tea while I’m about it.> 1986 Price 65.

### 3.4.3 Place names

Place-naming patterns in the two countries are also distinct. In the following rhapsody on Englishness, most of the place names (*Broadway* excepted) are characteristically British:

<Broadway and  *Moreton-in-Marsh, Bourton-on-the-Water*, where the dog in the pub was called Winston, *Stow-on-the-Wold*, the Swells and the Slaughters – such a glut of thatched streets, tea-rooms and cottage gardens, swans on village streams and manor houses in that bright honey stone: after the busloads
of trippers, the empty village street of Minster Lovell, sweet village, freshened things.> 1988 Nov. In Britain 48/1–2.

Similarly, the name of Harry Potter’s Muggle hometown, Little Whinging, Surrey, is unmistakably English, and generally not understood by Americans, who do not use the verb whinge.

3.4.4 Institutional names

The personal name of a shop’s proprietor may be used for the shop itself. The grammatical significance of this substitution is that a personal nominal is used for an inanimate referent.

<The place she heads for . . . is Elizabeth King, the local delicatessen, fishmonger, greengrocer and bakery.> 1998 Jan. 3 Times Weekend 4/1. <Turn up to Navajo Joe (34 King St, WC2, Covent Garden tube) on Thursday 11 to take part in history’s biggest ever tequila slam.> 1999 Mar. 10–17 Time Out 7/1.

When a proper name is used for a business, it may be plural, yet when it is followed by a generic term, it may be singular, despite the British tendency toward plural noun adjuncts.

<Barings’ modest bet on the Far Eastern markets, Baring Securities, is now paying off like a fruit-machine, and competitors wonder whether Barings may float the securities business as Hambros did with Hambro Life.> 1989 Apr. 1 Spectator 25/2.

When the name of a business firm is that of its proprietor, the proprietor’s name may be followed by an explanatory appositive, the head of which is a plural noun identifying the sort of workers characteristic of the business.


3.5 Genitive constructions

3.5.1 Enclitic ’s and periphrastic of

The two main forms of the genitive construction are (1) that with the grammatical enclitic ’s (originally an inflectional suffix) and (2) that with the periphrastic of. Anette Rosenbach (2002) has studied the frequency of the two forms historically and the factors that affect their choice in present-day English.

Reports of differences between British and American English in their use of the two constructions have been contradictory. Rosenbach (40, 45–6) points to
an unpublished 1980 Oslo thesis and also to a study by Marianne Hundt (1998a), both showing that American is more likely than British to use ‘s genitives with inanimate possessors, but also to a study by Magnus Ljung (1997) showing that the opposite is true in texts from the British Independent newspaper and the American New York Times and Time magazine. Rosenbach’s own study (166) indicates that ‘s with inanimate possessors is more frequent among Americans and younger British than among older British speakers; she therefore concludes that the ‘s genitive is extending its domain into British English from American influence. In that case, a smaller proportion of inanimate ‘s genitives would be a characteristic of conservative British usage. However, until the discrepancy between this conclusion and Ljung’s findings has been resolved, the question must be regarded as open.

One possible explanation suggested by Ljung is that the difference is correlated with formality (of being more formal with inanimates than ‘s). Ljung cites Douglas Biber (1987) in support of the greater formality of American written news texts over their British counterparts in the matter of abstraction (as measured by the number of nominalizations and prepositions). Biber’s study, however, shows a complex of differences in style that he suggests amounts to a greater adherence to stylistic prescriptions in British than in American texts. In that case, one might expect inanimate genitives with of rather than ‘s in British, as according closer with prescriptions.

3.5.2 Shopkeeper’s versus shop

British English has a preference for designating a place of business with the genitive of the term for its shopkeeper (or the term for the shopkeeper alone), whereas American prefers a term for the store.

**baker’s (shop)** Bakery <They seem to be staring at the world through plate-glass, like a child in the baker’s unable to decide between a caramel slice and a fondant fancy.> 2001 May 10 London Review of Books 39/3.

**chemist’s (shop)** Pharmacy, drug store <Perhaps one of you could drop this prescription in at the chemist’s.> 1986 Hardwick 90.

**confectioner’s (shop)** Candy store <Laverne stepped out of a confectioner’s in Low Petergate.> 1995 Bowker 29.

**(green)grocer’s** Grocery, supermarket <... saw me at the grocer’s with a long list.> 1985 Townsend 306. <... there’s a greengrocer’s in West End Lane that’s even open on Sundays.> 1989 Sept. 13 Evening Standard 29/1.

**ironmonger’s** Hardware store <Shout if there’s an ironmonger’s.> 1986 Gash 212.

**newsagent’s (shop)** Newsstand <Loretta . . . remembered that the newsagent’s shop was in the opposite direction.> 1993 Smith 45.

**tobacconist’s (shop/store)** Cigar store <The two youths . . . started shopping for knives in a tobacconist’s store.> 1997 Dec. 12 Evening Standard 5/1.
Sometimes, however, the shop term may lack the genitive apostrophe or even the s.

<The ironmongers . . . have sold out to yet another boutique.> 1989 Mar. 19 *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 23/2. <. . . confectioners, tobacconists and newsagents, specialist food shops and traditional hardware shops [will be] among the losers over the next five years.> 1989 Aug. 28 *Daily Telegraph* 3/2–3. <Sam Langford drove his Jag slowly past chip shops, launderettes and tired greengrocers.> 1991 Critchley 177. <In the end his mother fixed him up with a job in a Cambridge ironmongers.> 1993 Feb. 27 *Times* Saturday Review 46/5. <Family doctors will be able to set up lunch-hour surgeries in high street chemists under radical proposals to be announced by the Government this month.> 1999 Mar. 13 *Times* 1/4.

<Anyway in the newsagent, I happened to glance at some of those, er . . . you know, those things they have in there.> 1986 Brett 69. <In the main street were a supermarket and a fishmonger’s, a dairy, a bakery, and a very basic greengrocer.> 1989 Graham 82. <. . . a long street of shops: supermarket, chemist, video shop, off-licence, wine bar, Chinese takeaway, Italian restaurant.> 1991 Barnard 146. <He sat like a lumpy Guy Fawkes in the doorway of a tobacconist in Southampton.> 1992 Walters 67. <Dolphin Square has its own shopping arcade, including an off-licence, a dry cleaner, a hairdresser, a newsagent, a chemist and a grocer.> 1993 Feb. 7 *Sunday Times* 2 7/4.

The lack of a genitive sign extends also to proper names for shops, although practice is inconsistent.

<Fortnum’s or Claridge’s or Rolls Royce or White’s or Harrods aren’t going to sue for a few hundred pounds.> 1967 Frost and Jay 192. <The battle between Yorkshire grocer Hillards and its would-be owner Tesco is descending into the realm of knocking copy. [¶] ‘Quite untrue, quite ridiculous,’ splutters Hillard’s chairman Peter Hartley as he decries the Tesco arguments.> 1987 Apr. 4 *Daily Mail* 37/5. <The nylon cord . . . was of a type readily obtainable in . . . all branches of Woolworths.> 1983 Radley 28. <Imagine never prowling round Woolworth’s.> 1985 Cannell 9.
4 Pronouns

4.1 Personal

In the first person, the use of *me* as a nonstandard form of *my* is doubtless the result of vowel reduction under low stress, with consequent confusion or merger of the vowels in the two words.

*me* My <Patrick, me boyo, we’ve had our break.> 1989 Quinton 37.

*meself* Myself: CIC has 7.8 iptmw in British texts, principally speech, but also written representations of speech, and only 0.5 in American texts. <I’d put meself in an old people’s home just for the peace and quiet.> 1990 Critchfield (quoting TV’s *EastEnders*) 83.

*CGEL* (6.18n) reports two uses of the first person plural that are British rather than American. (1) The “royal *we*” is said to be “virtually obsolete . . . traditionally used by a monarch, as in the following examples, both famous dicta by Queen Victoria: / *We* are not interested in the possibilities of defeat. / *We* are not amused.” (2) A nonstandard use of plural *us* for singular *me* is exemplified by “Lend *us* a fiver.” This use is also reported by Michael Swan (1995, 432): “In very informal British speech, *us* is quite often used instead of *me* (especially as an indirect object) / *Give us a kiss, love.*” The contraction of *us* to ’s in such constructions is an additional British feature. For the use of *our* with personal names, see § 2.3.3.


Since the loss of the second person singular/plural distinction that *thou* and *ye* represented in earlier English, the language has been trying to fill the lacuna, generally by taking the originally plural *you* as a singular and constructing new plurals based on it. America has *youse*, a typically Northern, urban form and *you ‘uns*, a Southern Mountain rural form – both uneducated. It also has *y’all*, a standard Southern form, which, though regionally marked, is socially unrestricted.
in Southern dialect and is a phonological variant of the universally standard *you all*. It tends to be used as a pronoun of solidarity to indicate that the speaker considers those so addressed as forming a community with the speaker. Hence it would not be used where formality or social distance is appropriate. A more recent colloquial form is *you guys*, applied to males, females, or mixed groups; it is younger generation in use but widespread in the United States and has spread to British use as well (Wales 1996, 73).

In addition to various dialect forms, some similar to those used in America (Wales 1996, 73), British has *you lot*, which is affectively marked: it often indicates annoyance or disdain or impatience with the referents. Occasionally, it is an affectionate form, although even then tinged with a tone of condescension. Because of their difference in emotional tone, the new British and American plural pronouns are by no means equivalent.

### *you lot*
CIC has 22.8 iptmw in British texts, principally speech, but also written representations of speech, and only 0.5 in American texts. <[student:] ‘What about you? Are you writing anything?’ [teacher:] ‘No, not really,’ I said. ‘I’ve been too busy with you lot.’ > 2001 Lodge 306.

A variant of *you lot* is *your lot*, which makes the form into a syntactically normal noun phrase.

### *your lot*
CIC has 5.8 iptmw in British texts, principally speech, but also written representations of speech. Some of the tokens, however, are noun phrases (e.g., “You have thrown in your lot with the forces of evil”) so the actual number of pronoun uses is smaller. American uses are all of noun phrases. <*Your lot* [the police] frightened him off!] 1992 Granger 135.

Another variant is *you chaps*, which is a friendly option, close to American *you guys* in tone, though not in the typical age of its users. It is also rare and old-fashioned.

### *you chaps*
CIC has 1.3 iptmw in British texts, principally speech, but also fictional representations of speech. It has no American tokens. <*You chaps* don’t believe in that.> 1988 Stoppard 70.

The following examples of abnormal gender concord of third-person pronouns are exceptional.

### *he*
*It* (a car): Personification of cars is not unusual, though feminine rather than masculine, and the object form is often contracted (*ër, 'im*). <Yes, I parked *him* [a car] outside the chip shop, and when I came out again, beggar me, he’d [the car had] gone!] 1994 Sept. 16 *Times* 39/1.

### *it*
*S Singular to agree with *one*, although plural *they* is frequent in such constructions; the neuter for a human referent is odd. <One in six *employers* said that *it* was not hiring any graduates this year and
almost 40 per cent had openings for 25 people or fewer.> 2003 July 16 Times 9/2.

its His: The neuter pronoun suggests a lack of human identity in the adolescents, who are thereby identified as objects rather than persons. <. . . social workers on shift work worry their guts out in case some runty adolescent with manipulative skills persuades another runty adolescent [sic] to stick a safety pin through its nostril.> 1989 July 21 Punch 43/2.

In common-core English, *it* is “used with many verbs and prepositions as a meaningless object *<run for ~ > <footed ~ back to camp>"* (LDEL). Particular tokens of this use, however, are variety-specific.

< Crookshanks [a cat] leapt lightly from the basket . . . and sprang onto Ron’s knees. . . . [*¶*] ‘Get out of it!’> 1999 Rowling 62 (US ed. Get out of here!).

The contraction of *it* with forms of *be* (’tis, ’twas) is called “now poet., arch., dial., or colloq.” in the OED. CIC has 39.8 British iptmw of ’tis and 17.9 of ’twas, principally in written texts, especially literary ones, but also academic texts, where the forms generally occur in literary quotations. It has only 8.1 American iptmw of ’tis and 1.4 of ’twas. An example of its British dialect use follows.

< Why, ’tis all over the town, Miss. . . . ’Twas Bert Luke, the milkman, knocked [woke] me up.> 1981 Lemarchand 16.

The contraction is, however, sometimes a stylistic affectation in standard use.

< ’Tisn’t often an editor dares disagree with his proprietor.> 1987 Apr. 1 Evening Standard 6/3.

Pronoun order differs somewhat between British and American.

CIC has 287.2 iptmw of *them all* in British texts and 171 in American texts. It is preferred by 2 to 1 over *all of them* in British texts, but by only 1.2 to 1 in American texts.

< What’s the matter with *them all* tonight?> 1940 Shute 89.

When two objects (direct and indirect) follow a verb, the indirect object comes before the direct object (give the students a test), unless it is preceded by a preposition, when it comes after the direct object (give a test to the students). When both objects are pronouns, those options are still available (give them it or give it to them), although American prefers the second as avoiding two sequential pronoun objects (indirect + direct), which is more typically British. A search in ICE-GB for the function-category combination “indirect object realized as a pronoun” followed immediately by “direct object realized as a pronoun” results in 110 examples, such as Connie hadn’t told them that.

< So – what are you going to do with it? Give me it back?> 1990 Hardwick 100.
However, British also uses the reverse order for two sequential pronoun objects (direct + indirect), as in *give it them* without a preposition (*CGEL* 10.17n, 18.38n; *CamGEL* 248n). This construction is foreign to American use. It seems to occur with a limited number of verbs, of which *give* is the most frequent.

<How I love hearing you talk Italian. . . . Will you teach *it me*?> 1931 Benson 154. <Made my will. . . . Show *it you*, if you like.> 1940 Shute 146. <Skynner finally got the order to give *them me* this morning.> 1995 Harris 240.

If the indirect object is a noun, but the direct object is a pronoun, as in *I gave *Kim it*, the prepositional option *I gave it to *Kim is generally favored, the first option being “inadmissible for most speakers, especially in AmE” (*CamGEL* 310).

Standard British English does not use the ethical dative (also called “dative of interest or advantage,” Wales 1996, 88), as in such colloquial and lyrical American examples as *We’ve elected *us a President, and now we’re stuck with him and I’m gonna cry *me a river.*

A noun phrase functioning as the direct object of a phrasal verb (verb and adverbial particle) can be ordered either before or after the particle: *send the letter off* or *send off the letter*. However, a pronoun in that function normally is ordered only before the particle: *send it off* but not *send off it*. Occasionally, however, the exceptional order occurs.

<Sylvia had *rung up me* . . . about booking for a meal.> 1992 spoken text CIC.

4.2 Impersonal

*One* in an impersonal sense is frequent in British use; it is less common in American, in which it is perceived as formal or mannered. The typical American options are *you* or various paraphrases. The line between a genuinely impersonal sense and self-reference (see below) is often difficult to draw, but some uses are genuinely impersonal in intention.

<“*One* doesn’t say such things,” *you* are told.> 1990 Hazleton 25.

The uses and history of impersonal *one* have been treated by Anne Seaton (2005) with evidence that the *one . . . he/him/his* construction, which had been common–core English, fell out of British after the seventeenth century but continues in American. In British use, *one* is repeated for coreference (*CGEL* 6.56; 10.50; 19.51): *One cannot control one’s temper easily if one is discussing a matter over which one has feelings of guilt.* American prefers *he/him/his* for subsequent references (Johansson 1979, 198; Swan 1995, 394). Or, at least, American used to prefer the masculine pronoun in that use. Recent sensitivity to gender neutrality has promoted alternative expressions, including sometimes *one*, although Americans as a whole are uncomfortable with it.
Nor is it difficult to drown oneself with a millstone round one’s neck – if one’s intent on leaving behind one as much mystery and anxiety as possible.> 1959 Innes 49.

The impersonal use of one shades into a personal, first-person use that is characteristic of upper-class and intellectual usage, especially British, but very rare in American (Swan 1995, 394). Even in British English, this self-reference is often regarded amusedly or satirically. L. R. N. Ashley (personal letter, 27 June, 1990) noted such British response: “I like the Londoner who described one as ‘the first person singular in Kensington and Chelsea.’”

He [Sir John Tooley, General Director of the Royal Opera House] refers to himself as “one” (as in “one’s parents used to take one to the opera when one was a child”).> 1987 Feb. 12 Evening Standard 29/2. <Did Roy Jenkins really say, after winning the Oxford chancellorship at the weekend: “One is immensely pleased”? [¶] One can believe it. Mr Jenkins has long looked and sounded like a duke.> 1987 Mar. 16 Evening Standard 9/1. <On November 24th the queen made a rare appeal for sympathy, dubbing 1992 an annus horribilis (the Sun’s translation: “One’s bum year”).> 1992 Nov. 28 Economist 63/1.

4.3 Demonstrative

The basic semantic distinction between the demonstratives this and that is nearness versus distance. But nearness and distance are matters of perception rather than of physical measurement. American English thus tends to use this in contexts where British prefers that. Michael Swan (1995, 41 and 581) observes this/that national difference with respect to telephone language, in which Britons ask Who is that? and Americans Who is this? John Kahn and Robert Ilson (1985, 630) also comment that in many contexts it is possible to use either this or that, e.g., This/That is true and This/That is the problem; they also note that some people (presumably British) object “often with surprising strength of feeling” to this. (On that with a propredicate, cf. § 15.2.)

Extended forms of the demonstratives are these ones and those ones. Curiously, the only token of these ones in the text of the OED is in a 1934 citation (s.v. jinx v.) from the American writer J. T. Farrell. There are no tokens of those ones. CIC, however, has 7.2 iptmw of these ones in British, chiefly spoken, texts and 0.6 in American texts. On the other hand, it has 4.8iptmw of those ones in British, also chiefly spoken, texts and 3.2 in American texts. It appears that these ones is more characteristic of British than of American English, but that the frequency of those ones is closer in the two national varieties.

There are family photographs all over the house, and these ones are Susan’s favourites.> 1993 Feb. 13 Telegraph magazine 66/1.
4.4 Relative

In standard English, *as* is used as a relative pronoun when it is preceded by *such* or *same* (Gilman 1994, 122: *such poor things as are our own and the same people as objected*). Otherwise, relative *as* is marginal, though it has both nonstandard and formulaic use in British. Some British uses appear to be jocularly Dickensian, especially in the formula *though X says it as shouldn’t*. On one academic occasion (in April 1987), that formula was volunteered as an example of colloquial speech by Prof. John Honey: “He’s a good lad, though I’m his father who says it as shouldn’t.”

*as* That, who <My friend has got some info as’ll open your eyes all right.> 1972 Rendell 112–3. <’E’s [He is] brother-in-law to one of the ambulance men as came.> 1981 Lemarchand 16.

*Whose* as a relative pronoun was relatively late in developing. An earlier option was *that* (or still earlier Anglo-Saxon *pe*) followed by a genitive personal pronoun, an option still occasionally used in standard English.

*that* + *genitive pronoun* Whose <[actor Simon Callow:] William Rees-Mogg is the kind of person that just his [whose very] existence depresses one.> 1990 Critchfield 306.

The use of *what* as a relative pronoun in place of *which, who, or that* is nonstandard in both British and American. It is sometimes used as a literary signal of nonstandard use, as in the following citation from a British soap. However, it is more common in conversation than the relative *as* (*LGSWE 609*).

*what* Which; that; who <I’ve got a mate turning up next week what owes me; then I’ll be quids in.> 1986 Dec. BBC1 *EastEnders*.

In accord with the British tendency to treat collective nouns as animate plurals that take plural verb concord (cf. § 14), British also is more likely than American to use *who* as a relative with collective nouns.

*who* with a collective noun as antecedent That <But it was a subdued group who headed back to the fireside.> 1998 Rowling 52 (*US ed. that*).

In common–core English, a relative pronoun other than the subject may be lacking in a restrictive clause, thus *This is the book [which/that] I bought* but *This is the book which/that was sold*. British has some subjectless relative clauses that seem less likely in American use, such as the following.

Because objective case forms in English are limited to the first- and third-person personal pronouns and *who(m)*, it is inevitable that confusion in their use should arise on both sides of the Atlantic. Such common-core confusion can often be explained by the syntagmatic environment of the word. Occasionally, such a use emerges that is noteworthy, such as the following use of hypercorrect *whom*, illustrating that the quality papers also fumble: "Sylvia [Plath] and Ted [Hughes]. Even those *whom* have not so much as glanced at a stanza of their oeuvres have a powerful reaction to their names." 2003 Nov. 8 *Times* 31/1.

The relative pronouns *which* and *that* have variable uses (Gilman 1994, 894–5). In descriptive (i.e., nonrestrictive) relative clauses, *which* is normal: "‘Hamlet,’ *which I saw last night* . . . but *‘Hamlet,’ that I saw last night* . . . On the other hand, either pronoun is normal in restrictive relative clauses: *the play that/which I saw last night* . . . Writers who recommend usage often aim for a neater complementarity and therefore recommend the sole or primary use of *that* in restrictive clauses to balance the use of *which* in descriptive clauses. The facts, however, are otherwise, as Ward Gilman has shown.

Nevertheless, it is possible that the recommendations of usage writers have been more effective in American than in British English. Or it may be that American is in this respect more conservative than British because *that* is older as a relative than *which*. In any case, restrictive *which* is more frequent in British than American. British news uses restrictive *which* 3 times more often than American news does; and in conversation, American uses restrictive *that* about twice as often as British does (*LGSWE* 616).

<We were both members of a club *which* meets in Caroline Dupayne’s flat.> 2003 James 362.

Paul Heacock and Carol-June Cassidy (1998, 95) report their experience in adapting a British dictionary to an American version:

We noted a number of words and phrases that were perfectly acceptable in American English, but which were used with such abandon in British English that they in fact marked the text as being British. Words like *which*. . . . Americans very often use *that* to introduce restrictive clauses. Writers and speakers of British English use *which* to introduce just about any clause they want to, restrictive or nonrestrictive. So in CIDE [*Cambridge International Dictionary of English*] the definition for *gold*, for instance, reads “a soft, yellow, heavy, metallic element *which* is quite rare and very valuable,” whereas in CDAE [*Cambridge Dictionary of American English*] it’s “a soft, yellow metal that is highly valued.”
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4.5 Interrogative

The use of how? in the sense “what?” occurs in both British and American. The OED documents the interrogative use from 1382 and the exclamatory use from even earlier, and calls both archaic, but has examples of How do you mean from Sheridan (1777), Thackeray (1849), and Wodehouse (1942). In the expression What/How do you mean, CIC British texts use How in 10.9 percent of the tokens; American texts use it in 3.9 percent.


4.6 Indefinite

For indefinite pronouns referring to persons, English has a choice between compounds with -body (anybody, everybody, nobody, somebody) and with -one (any-one, everyone, no one, someone). One study (LGSWE 352) reports that, in fictional texts, British strongly prefers the compounds in -one over those in -body (anyone 4:1, everyone 2.3:1, no-one nearly 2:1, someone 3:1) and that American is more equally divided, with a slight preference (11:9) for anyone, everyone, and someone, but a reverse preference (11:9) for nobody. CIC texts, however, show little overall difference between British and American preference for forms with -one over those with -body: 1.79 to 1.73, respectively, nor are there striking differences for any of the individual compounds with any-, every-, no-, or some-.

The OED has 483 tokens of one or other in its text and only 28 tokens of one or another. CIC British texts have 24.5 iptmw of one or other, nearly 6 times as many as of one or another. American texts have only 0.5 iptmw of one or other, but more than 12 times that many of one or another. Cf. § 2.5.2 one or other.

<And ahead of me along the road were three cottages, no doubt once tied to one or other of the various farms in the area.> 1991 Barnard 196.

Several distinctively British forms exist among indefinite pronouns. Most of them are marginal, being limited stylistically or regionally.

a bit A little; something: The form bit, in all of its uses, is half again as frequent in the British LOB corpus as in the American Brown corpus (Hofland and Johansson 1982, 478). CIC has 2.7 times as many tokens of a bit in British texts as in American. <... you still put by a bit each week to ensure you could pay for a decent funeral.> 2003 James 12.

fuck all Nothing at all: CIC British texts have 2.7 iptmw of this expression, most in this sense; American texts have none in this sense. <He knows fuck all about it.> 1989 Drabble 176.

no-one spelling variant No one: In the BNC, no-one outranks no one by 3:2 (Peters 2004, 375); the hyphenated spelling is rare and nonstandard in American. CIC
shows the same difference in national preference, although not the same British preference for no-one. It has, in British written texts, 645.5 iptmw of no one, 149.1 of no–one, and 2.5 of noone, and in American written texts, 849.3 iptmw of no one, 3.2 of no–one, and .03 of noone. Thus both national varieties prefer no one, but British has no–one as a strong alternative and noone as a weak option. American hardly uses the other two forms at all.

**nowt**  *Northern form of naught; nothing: CIC British texts have 28.2 iptmw of this form; American texts have none.* <... the three monkeys were see nowt, hear nowt, and say nowt.> 1988 Ashford 40.

**summat** *Northern form of somewhat; something: CIC British texts have 49.4 iptmw of this form; American texts have none.* <Do you want to know summat else?> 1981 Dexter 130.

### 4.7 Expletive

The two main expletive pronouns are *it* and *there*. Certain uses of expletive *it* are common-core English, such as <... it was not done to ask him questions.> 1986 Dec. 9 *Times* 12/2. The only thing slightly British about that clause is the use of done in the sense “socially acceptable.” But other uses, in which *it* can be replaced by *there*, are characteristically British.

**it**  *There (or a paraphrase with the notional subject as grammatical subject)*  
<[speaker from Leeds:] Aye, . . . it’s quiet enough now but it were quite a do at weekend round Chapeltown.> 1985 Ebdon 145. <[Eddie, twenty-one, of Liverpool:] It’s no one’s to blame.> 1990 Critchfield 208. <[cartoon of two elderly ladies scraping ice off a TV:] Keep scraping – it’s the weather forecast in a minute.> 1991 Feb. 5 *Daily Telegraph* 1/7.

Verb concord with expletive *there* is variable in both British and American, so it is hard to identify a distinctive use in either variety. The following examples show variation from alternative patterns.

**there** 1. *with a singular verb and a plural noun* <... there was families at the pit who traced their connection with coal back to the last century.> 1989 Sept. 7 *Midweek* 32/1. 2. *with a singular verb and a singular quantifier for a plural noun* <There is a further five bedrooms and a second bathroom.> 1986 Aug. 21 *Hampstead Advertiser* 40/2. 3. *with a plural verb and a plural noun of measurement* <In London, for instance, there have been three inches of rainfall this month.> 1987 June 22 *Times* 1/4.

A colloquial and dialect construction consists of the expletive *there’s* followed by an adjective, a subject and verb, and an optional complement to the adjective (*There’s sorry I am to hear it*), which is the equivalent of the subject and verb followed by the adjective and its complement (*I am sorry to hear it*). The construction focuses the adjective.
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there’s <You two had a lot on your minds, but there’s glad I am I remembered.> 1987 Oliver 217.

An unusual construction is illustrated by expletive that in the following example, for which there could be substituted.

that There <But Malloch is positively an Ober-Gott. Better brain. . . . [¶] But that’s not all that’s to Malloch.> 1937 Innes, Hamlet 182.

A catch-phrase pattern is there PRONOUN BE, as in there you are and there it is (OED s.v. there adv. 16). This catch phrase comments on a state of affairs regarded as inevitable and therefore to be accepted: <c 1921 D. H. Lawrence Mr. Noon viii, in Mod. Lover (1934) 266 It’s just like him – but there you are. Those that won’t be ruled can’t be schooled.> OED s.v. rule v. 1b. Or it is used in presenting someone with something desired or calling attention to a completed matter: <1925 J. Metcalfe Smoking Leg 26 There you are, old horse; don’t say I never did you a good turn> OED s.v. horse, n. 4. The American equivalent might be Here you are. Cf. § 6.1 THERE WE/YOU ARE.

<“But there one is, alone. . . . Well, there it is,” with which philosophy she went down to breakfast.> 1942 Thirkell 5.

4.8 Case

British and American do not differ substantively in their use of subject and object case forms of pronouns. In both national varieties, the prescribed forms are often more honored in the breach (Gilman 1994, s.v. pronouns and the other lemma cited there). How acceptable the following proscribed forms are in actual use varies according to the form. Some are normal in both British and American; others would be rare in standard use in either variety. But use of the objective form of pronouns where the nominative is prescribed seems to be more accepted in Britain than in America, where copyediting often corrects that use.

The norm in both varieties favors the object form in It’s me and She’s as tall as me. As Michael Swan (1995, 435–6) observed, the subject form is “extremely formal” and “is usually considered over-correct (especially in British English).” Fewer British voices than American ones are raised in protest against such forms.

<Most of his friends were older than him.> 1986 May 21 Sun 8. <They were as puzzled as me.> 1989 July 21 Private Eye 13 (a letter from Ivan Fallon, deputy editor of the Sunday Times).

Other constructions, however, are less normal. Katie Wales (1996, 100) cites British use of the objective form of pronouns, under certain circumstances, even in the subject function. Other examples:
<“Only us can save this country!” perorated an excited lady delegate, making one glad the Liberals were not yet running the nation’s schools.> 1989 Sept. 14 Daily Telegraph 38/7. <Asked if he had tried to keep his marriage vows . . . [Prince Charles] replied: ‘Yes, . . . until it became irretrievably broken down – us both having tried’.> 1994 June 30 Evening Standard p n/a.

Use of the subject form where the object form is prescribed is less frequent and largely restricted to particular contexts: especially when *I* follows a coordinating conjunction or when a personal pronoun is next to a word like *who*, which attracts the pronoun into the subject form.

5 Adjectives

British and American use of adjectives shows little systematic variation between the two varieties. Most of the differences are associated with particular lexical forms.

5.1 Derivation

The adjectival use of other parts of speech, with or without derivational affixes, is common in English. Some particular examples, however, are indicative of Britishness.

5.1.1 From nouns + -ed

British and American differ in their use of the suffix -ed to form adjectival modifiers from nominals. British uses certain forms that American does not, such as *booted*. But differences between British and American use of individual items are less significant than the apparent over-all more frequent British use of the pattern. There are, to be sure, exceptions such as *teenage(d)*. In CIC, 1 percent of the British tokens are *teenaged* and 99 percent are *teenage*, whereas 4 percent of the American tokens are *teenaged* and 96 percent are *teenage*. It would be difficult to ascertain the frequency of all denominal -ed forms in the two varieties, but on the whole it seems to be greater in British.

*aged number* For this construction, American might have simply the number, e.g., 20, or such expansions of it as *20 years old* or *20 years of age* or even *age 20*, depending on the syntactic use of the construction. 1. As an appositive: *Number* (years old, years of age), *age number* < . . . the would-be robber hit Mr Paul Harry, aged 23, over the head with his gun and made off.> 1989 July 28 Times 2/2. 2. As a subject complement: *Number* (years old, years of age) <His father was on the staff of the castle and he was aged 13 at the time.> 1989 Aug. 29 Times 15/4. 3. As a complement of described as: *Number* (years old, years of age) <The raider is described as aged about 30.> 1987 Feb. 5
As a post-head modifier: Of number (years old, years of age), of age number <The pair aged 40 entered by the unlocked back door.> 1993 Feb. 3 Times 4/7.

As an adverbial: At number (years old, years of age), at age number <Rudolf Hess, Hitler’s former deputy, died aged 93.> 1987 Oct. Illustrated London News 20/2.

Other predominantly British noun + -ed adjectives are the following, some of which have no precise American equivalent:

**alarmed** Protected with an alarm <Spotted on a swanky, burglar-proofed BMW in a London street: “This car **alarmed** by Mike Wells car stereo systems.”> 1989 Aug. 10 Times 12/1.

**badged** Decorated in a way indicating status: CIC has 2.0 iptmw in British texts and 0.4 in American texts. <Bruno Lazlo’s office was . . . plumply furnished and **badged** with the symbols of mild success in the film business.> 1976 Raphael 154.

**bedded, double/two-** With two beds: CIC has no American tokens. <The master bedroom is a **double bedded** room.> 1988 Sept. In Britain 46/3. <I was back in the **two-bedded** room.> 1995 Lodge 11.

**bedroom(ed), number-** Number bedroom: With the numbers one, two, and three, CIC British texts have 43.5 iptmw of **number(-)bedroom** and 13.9 of **number(-)bedroomed**; American texts have only **number bedroom** (58.7 iptmw).

<Roger and Jennifer Crawford lived . . . in a modern four-**bedroomed** house.> 2003 James 52.

**bibbed overalls** Overalls (American overalls usually have a bib, so the combination would be redundant.) <The one in the **bibbed overalls**.> 1989 Wainwright 137.

**booted** With a car trunk; having space at the rear of a car to carry luggage or other things <. . . the next generation Ford Escort, and its **booted** sister model, the Orion.> 1990 Aug. 24 Times 33/1.

**branded** Brand name: CIC has 18.6 iptmw of **brand name** in British texts and 44.7 in American texts. It has 68.4 iptmw of **branded** in all senses (including “with a brand name”) in British texts and 34.0 in American texts. <**Branded** Label Fashion / Less than Half Price> 1990 Aug. 23, sign outside clothing shop, Green Street, Oxford.

**breeze-blocked** Cement block <Inside the **breeze-blocked** houses, the sparse furniture and personal belongings have been left untouched.> 1986 Aug. 30 Times 1/4.

**bricked** <. . . she walked slowly . . . before arriving at a row of two-storey, yellow-**bricked**, newish properties.> 1992 Dexter 85.

**buttoned** <Barbara . . . was lying on one of the twin **buttoned** chesterfields.> 1976 Raphael 260.

**capped, flat-** <Every Sunday more than 17 million fans watch actor Richard Wilson, left, play **flat-capped** moaning groaner Meldrew.> 1993 Feb. 12 Sun 11/2.
ceilinged, low-/high-  CIC has 5.8 iptmw of low- or high-ceilinged in British texts and 3.2 in American texts. <The low-ceilinged living-room would have been a good setting for a more fey, more folk-tale-type figure than Freya.> 1985 Mann 24.
corded  CIC has 3.1 iptmw of corded (in various senses) in British texts and 1.1 in American texts. <... a convenient convertible corded/cordless model [iron].> 1989 Aug. 5 Times Review 41/4.
crewed  (Of a bus) with a driver and a conductor; (of a boat) with a crew: CIC has 21 tokens of crewed as an attributive adjective in a random sample of a thousand British texts, and 2 tokens in a similar sample of American texts. <There may still be scope for crewed buses in the centre.> 1987 Feb. 18 Evening Standard 31/6. <Sometimes six to 10 people hire a crewed boat for three days.> 1987 Feb. 23 Evening Standard 19/3–4.
flagged  Flagstone: CIC has 24 tokens of flagged in the sense “paved with flagstones” in a random sample of a thousand British texts, and 19 tokens of flagstone as an attributive adjective. It had no such tokens of flagged and 14 of flagstone in similar American texts. <Access to the dustbins was by a flagged path.> 1987 Hart 77.
footed, left-/right-  CIC has 8.0 iptmw of left- or right-footed in British texts and 0.7 in American texts. <... when a shipload of desperately needed footwear arrived it was discovered that the hold was filled with left-footed boots.> 1983 Brooke-Taylor 113.
garaged, double-  With double garages <... the powerful commercial developer wanting to build double-garaged executive houses ... gets the planning permission.> 1989 Aug. 13 Sunday Times Magazine 43/4.
gravelled  Gravel: CIC British texts have 3.1 iptmw of gravelled; American texts have 0.6 of graveled. <A gravelled drive ran up one side of a curved lawn and down the other.> 1980 Sharpe 70.
haired, golden-  CIC has 2.2 iptmw in British texts and 1.0 in American texts.
headed, swollen-  Big-headed: CIC has 0.2 iptmw of swollen-headed in the sense “conceited” in British texts and 0.4 of big-headed in the same sense in American texts.
holed  Holey; with holes in them <I had noticed the dirty sweater and holed jeans.> 1969 Amis 52.
iced  Ice (water); cold (drink): CIC has 1.4 iptmw of iced water and 0.8 of ice water in British texts and none of iced water and 6.0 of ice water in American texts. <Nor do I always relish American drinking habits with meals: ... iced water and weak coffee.> 1991 Feb. 16 Daily Telegraph Weekend 7/3.
lavatoried, number-  Number-bathroom <... the five-bedroomed, four-lavatoried, neo-Georgian house.> 1988 Lodge 160.
lensed  <Hardinge took a pair of half-lensed spectacles from their case.> 1992 Dexter 172.
minded, bloody-  Uncooperative: CIC has 3.5 iptmw in British texts and 0.8 in American. However, the American sense is “inclined to violence or bloodshed.”
<... the boatmen were being “bloody minded” and didn’t see why they should pay the government anything for the right to fish.> 1989 July 22 Times 53/3–4.

**nosed, snub-** CIC has 1.5 iptmw in British texts and 0.6 in American. In addition, all British tokens except one refer to facial features; all American tokens refer to revolvers.

**parqueted** Parquet <He left the cadet at the urn and came across the parqueted floor.> 1987 Hart 45.

**patterned, check-** <He... thought he recognized someone... dressed in grey flannels and a check-patterned sports coat.> 1981 Dexter 95.

**polo-necked** Turtleneck <Barbara, wearing... a white polo-necked sweater, was lying on one of the... chesterfields.> 1976 Raphael 260.

**receipted** <We have a system where drivers are not paid for the trip unless they can produce a receipted document signed at the proper waste-tipping site.> 1988 Dec. 30 Independent 3.

**resourced** <The... medical and scientific fronts are seriously underresourced and under-manned.> 1986 Dec. 10 Times 14/7.

**roomed, number-** Number-room: With the numbers one, two, and three, CIC has 1.4 iptmw of number-roomed and 6.7 of number-room in British texts. It has no tokens of number-roomed and 18.4 of number-room in American texts. <They... moved together into a one-roomed flat in their second year.> 1990 Byatt 11.

**sized, similar-** Similar-size; of similar size: CIC has 1.3 iptmw of similar-sized in British texts and 1.0 tokens in American texts. Similar size is used attributively in 7 percent of its British occurrences and in 12 percent of its American ones. <And because the houses are often freehold, there are none of the service charges associated with similar-sized flats.> 1987 Mar. 11 Evening Standard 21/3.

**sprung, sagging-** With sagging springs <Nonie Anholt sat down on a sagging-sprunged sofa.> 1985 Mann 49.

**storeyed, number-** Number-story: Forms like three-stor(e)y are dominant in both varieties. However, CIC has 2.0 iptmw of the -ed form in British texts and none in American texts. <The amalgamation... had the advantage of giving the Shaws a well-appointed, three-storied house in a smart part of Dublin.> 1988 Holroyd 28.

**suited, x-type** In an x-type suit <The visitor... will within encounter a number of three-piece suited figures... talking loudly about money.> 1987 Apr. 6 Guardian 12/2.

**tarmacked** CIC has 1.3 iptmw of tarmacked in British texts and none in American texts, which use forms like tarmac road. <Dalgliesh drove down a tarmacked drive so narrow that two cars would have difficulty in passing.> 2003 James 14.

**terraced (house)** Row house: CIC British texts have 12.4 iptmw of terraced house and none of row house; American texts have 0.3 of terraced house (in
fiction set in England) and 5.3 of row house. <She was . . . born in a two-storey terraced house in a narrow street in Stepney.> 2003 James 49.

turfed Sodded: CIC has no American tokens of turfed “covered with turf” and no British tokens of sodded “covered with sod.” <Fully fitted kitchens with fridge freezer, . . . turfed lawns, garage and security system.> 1988 Apr. 10 Sunday Telegraph 41/6.

unstepped Without steps; on the same level <Exhibition continues / For unstepped access please retrace your route past the entrance and follow signage> 2002 Feb. 18 sign at Hayward Gallery, South Bank, London.

waisted CIC has 1.6 iptmw of waisted “having a waist” in British texts and none in American texts. <. . . looking like a schoolmaster in his waisted, off-the-peg suits, Neil Kinnock grabs every opportunity to be snapped in his weekend wear.> 1987 June 1 Evening Standard 26/2.

wheeled, number- Number-wheel: For combinations of two, three, or four with wheel(ed), CIC British texts have 27 percent with wheeled; American texts have 13 percent. <Beside him was a mother with a swaddled baby in a three-wheeled pram.> 2003 James 23.

zipped Provided with a zipper: CIC has 40 tokens of this meaning in 95 randomly selected examples of the form in British texts and 2 tokens (from a single text about couture) in 95 such American examples. <The cover is zipped for easy removal to facilitate cleaning.> 1989 Sept. 7 Times 13/6–8.

5.1.2 From place names + -an

The use of adjectival forms of certain place names as attributives of nouns is British. In all the following examples (mainly US state names), American English would have the place names themselves as noun adjuncts (California, India, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia). This British use of adjectives for place-name modifiers is in contrast with the British use of some nation-name noun adjuncts (§3.3.1.1.2).

Californian In 154 randomly selected examples of Californian from British texts, CIC has 119 tokens in which California would be possible in American use. In a similar sample of the same size from American texts, it has 32 tokens of Californian in contexts in which California would also be possible. <. . . the Californian student Jeannie.> 1991 Lodge 55.

Indian ink India ink: CIC has 2.6 iptmw of Indian ink in British texts (none in American) and 0.3 of India ink in American texts (none in British). <yes, think of a woman in a house of net / that strains the oxygen out of the air / thickening the night to Indian ink.> 1995 Stoppard 11.

Oklahoman <He levered trees of 18ft or so into a removal van and drove off into the west as purposefully as any Oklahoman pioneer.> 1991 Feb. 9 Telegraph Weekend Magazine 51/1.

Serbian Serb: A corpus-based study (Peters 2004, 493) reports adjectival Serbian to be more than twice as frequent as Serb in British texts, but the reverse
in American, in which *Serb* is especially collocated with military and *Serbian* with nonmilitary terms.

**Texan** <Here in Wimbledon our borough council promises us a hideous Texan-style shopping precinct on the site of our town hall.> 1987 May 28 *Evening Standard* 41/4. CIC has no tokens of Texan-style but 0.7 iptmw of *Texas(-)style* in American texts. <Fortunately for Britain the Ambassador of the United States at the Court of St James is Mr Henry Catto, a highly respected and very able Texan oil millionaire.> 1989 July 19 *Times* 9/6. CIC has no tokens of Texan millionaire but 0.2 iptmw of Texas millionaire in American texts.

**Virginian** <. . . Pat Robertson, the other Virginian preacher who is vulgar enough to say he will run for President next year.> 1987 Apr. 6 *Guardian* 21/2.

### 5.1.3 From verbs and predicates

**beaten-up** Beat-up: CIC has 1.0 iptmw of beaten-up and 1.3 of beat-up in British texts. It has 0.8 of beaten-up and 6.6 of beat-up in American texts. <. . . the only way [television] can ensure a character’s individuality is to burden him with a tic, deface him with a quirk — . . . Rockford’s beaten-up trailer.> 1974 *Potter* 15.

**drink-drive** CIC has 3.5 iptmw of adjectival drink-drive in British texts and none in American. <Eastenders star Pam St Clement says her life has been turned into a nightmare because of her character’s drink-drive shame in the soap. . . . Pam backs the plot because it highlights drink-drive dangers.> 1993 Feb. 12 *Sun* 3/4. Cf § 3.3.1.1 *drink*.

**have-a-go hero** This use is of an expanded predicate (§ 13) as an adjectival. CIC has 1.8 iptmw in British texts and none in American texts. <Footie boss is have-a-go hero> 2004 May 29 sign in Hereford concerning a football manager who foiled a crime.

**laden** Loaded: CIC has 36.3 iptmw of laden in British texts and 20.9 in American texts. <Here, I think fondly of the driver of a police coach laden with prisoners who rammed a bit of the Old Bailey.> 1987 Apr. 14 *Evening Standard* 7/2.

**lock-up garage** Locked garage; garage with a lock <Neville Dupayne has been burnt to death in his Jag in a lock-up garage at the museum.> 2003 *James* 124.

**sawn-off** Sawed-off: CIC has 5.4 iptmw of sawn-off and none of sawed-off in British texts. It has none of sawn-off and 5.2 of sawed-off in American texts. In both cases, the main collocation is with shotgun. <Years ago, a good villain would cross the pavement with a sawn-off shotgun to rob a bank.> 1994 Sept. *Tatler* 147/1.

**shaming** Shameful <It’s too shaming to retire to bed alone before midnight, but really, she’s almost had enough.> 2001 *Drabble* 87.
unladen Unloaded; empty: CIC has 2.1 iptmw in British texts and none in American texts. <This contributed to the accident, and the effect was increased by . . . the fact that the lorry was unladen.> 1986 Oct. 11 Times 3/6.

5.1.4 From adverbs

all-round All-around: Of the options, CIC British texts have 99 percent all-round; American texts have 56 percent. <1958 New Statesman 6 Dec. 802/3 An excellent all-round performance by the Guildford Repertory Company.> OED s.v. all round C. Cf. §§ 6.1 ALL-ROUND, ROUND and 8.1 ROUND.

eyearly days In adverbial use, early days is well established in British use (§ 6.1). It has little American use as either adjective or adverb. <In spite of the inevitable early days hiccups, I think we’ve done it.> 1989 Sept. 12 Evening Standard 29/4.

down for “on the list to enter (e.g., a race or school)” (LDEL); American has a similar but distinct use: “being on record <you’re down for two tickets>.” (MW). <My name was down for Eton.> 1998 Rowling 73.

on – be on about something Go (on and) on about: In CIC British texts, the verb that most often collocates with on about (something) is be, occurring in hundreds of tokens. The second most frequent is go (which is the most frequent in American texts); others in British use include bang, blather, bleat, dream, drone, giber, gush, harp, jabber, moan, mope, mumble, nag, prattle, rabbit, rabbage, rave, run, scream, spout, start, waffle, wank, whine, and yammer. In CIC American texts, be on about occurs in only about 5 tokens. <What are you on about?> 1997 Rowling 193 (US ed. talking about). – be on at someone “Brit. informal nag or grumble at someone” (NODE). <1952 A. Baron With Hope, Farewell 94 Well, now the second one’s on at him to get married.> OED s.v. on adv. 11.b. – not on “on adj . . . chiefly Br informal possible, practicable – usu negative <you can’t refuse, it’s just not ~>” (LDEL). <1975 Guardian 20 Jan. 4/3 Reductions in the standard of living were not on.> OED s.v. on adv. 13.f.

5.1.5 From adjectives and nouns + -ish

Adjectives are freely and spontaneously formed by adding -ish to adjectives, nouns, and a few other forms.

-ish <It was a biggish bit of wooded country, surrounded by a wire fence.> 2001 Lodge 39. Also 1850-ish, 1930ish, bitterish, bluntish, boffinish, C. P. Snow-ish, cheapish, donnish, dullish, earlyish, elevenish, fastish, flattish, fullish, goodish, grayish, Greek-ish, highish, Kandinsky-ish, largeish, latish, live-ish, longish, lowish, Mod-ish, more-ish, newish, oddish, poorish, quaintish, quietish, Rightish,
school-dinnerish, sharpish, shortish, Sloaneish, slowish, slummish, smallish, smartish, softish, stuntish, thinnish, Thirties-ish, toughish, yellowish, youngish, etc.

5.1.6 With the suffix -making

Adjectives are formed with -making suffixed chiefly to other adjectives and nouns.

-making < . . . what a blush-making time that poor fellow must have had during rehearsals.> 2005 Jan. 14 *Daily Telegraph* 24/4. Also anxiety-making, cringe-making, giddy-making, mad-making, programme-making, safe-making, shy-making, sick-making, squirm-making, etc.

5.2 Frequency and collocation

Sometimes the difference between British and American adjectives is in their frequency or collocational probabilities.

away attributive adjective Visiting (of a sports team or fan): The sports use of away (contrasting with home) in reference to a game played on the opponent’s grounds is common-core English. But its American use is primarily in collocation with game. CIC has 2.5 iptmw of away game in American texts and 8.3 in British texts. British use also combines away with many other nouns, such as defeat, defence, enclosure, fan, fixture, form, goal, ground, kit, leg, match, performance, point, record, setback, side, strip, success, supporter, team, ticket, trip, victory, and win. British use of adjectival away is both more frequent and wider in collocation than American use. <Luton Town, who tried . . . banning away fans, are planning . . . to accommodate away supporters at the Oak Road end.> 1990 Aug. 17 *Daily Telegraph* 30/1–2.

bloody Bloody is the all-purpose British vulgarism, though it has lost the power to shock that G. B. Shaw relied on for comic effect in *Pygmalion*. A contemporary lexicographer would be unlikely to label its use as “foul language,” as the OED did; more recent dictionaries call it “slang” or “slightly rude.” The word is of grammatical interest for the variety of syntactic functions it fills: adjective, interposed adjective, adverb (§ 6.1), qualifier (§ 7.1), and interjection (§ 10). 1. attributive < . . . many of the bloody kids and their parents are Scots or Geordies on their annual hols.> 1989 Mar. 5 *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 5/1. – Bloody Monday An October 19, 1987, precipitous drop in the stock market. 2. interposed An interposed word or other structure is one used in the middle of a syntactic structure or set expression (brand god-dam new or West by God Virginia). James McMillan (1980) has treated this phenomenon with both British and American examples. A favorite British interposed word is bloody. < . . . and the investigation of a possible crime committed perhaps a year earlier in either Blenheim Park or Wytham Woods or where bloody ever . . . was not going to be the number-one priority.> 1992 *Dexter* 184.
cheeky This adjective is almost 9 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American ones. <He may be trying to shake off his cheeky-chappie image.> 2003 June 19 Times 6/4.


last/next but + number ordinal adj. or postdeterminer (Swan 1995, 101). If we take the OED’s evidence as typical, it appears that last but and next but are used primarily by lexicographers. The text of the OED has 11 tokens of last but in this use, of which 8 are from OED definitions and 1 is in a quoted definition from an eighteenth-century dictionary. Of the 2 remaining tokens, 1 appears to be an invented example: <Mod. . . He is last but one in the class> OED s.v. but C.2. A typical example from a definition is “antepenult . . . Preceding the penult; the last but two.” By contrast, the MW definition of the same term is “the next to the last member of a series; esp : the next to the last syllable of a word.” Next but is similar. Of 7 tokens, 4 are in OED definitions and 1 in a quoted definition. A typical definition is “meta . . . Characterized by or relating to (substitution at) two carbon atoms separated by one other in a benzene ring; at a position next but one to some (specified) substituent in a benzene ring.” The corresponding MW definition is “involving substitution at or characterized by two positions in the benzene ring that are separated by one carbon atom.”

effing CIC has 2.6 iptmw in British texts and none in American texts. <Double entendres? But that’s meant to be the Sun and Mirror’s stock in trade. Fleet Street can be a confusing place. I rest my effing case.> 1999 Mar. 17 Evening Standard 63/5. (Cf. § 7.1.)

obliged to do something Obligated to do something: The adjectival use of obliged (usually with an infinitive complement) is much more frequent than obligated in British English; in American they are used about equally (Peters 2004, 387). CIC has 170.9 iptmw of obliged to and 1.9 of obligated to in British texts. It has 37.8 of obliged to and 28.7 of obligated to in American texts. <. . . as I’m against the Gulf War I’m not morally obliged to send food parcels to the troops.> 1991 Feb. 15 Evening Standard 25/1.

opposite Across; on the other side, e.g., of the road (Swan 1995, 397). <Uncle Vernon, waving at Mrs Number Seven opposite, who was glaring from behind her net curtains.> 2003 Rowling 10 (US ed. [deleted]).

proper Complete, real: CIC has 583.9 iptmw in British texts and 359.5 in American texts. <I’m in charge of the case for months, and then Morse here comes along and solves it in a fortnight. Made me look a proper Charley, if you ask me.> 1979 Dexter 224.

right intensifier Real <I shall look a right pig’s ear.> 1991 Graham 33. – right one “Brit. informal a silly or foolish person” (NODE). Cf. also § 7 right.
ruddy  euphemism for bloody: CIC has 21.4 iptmw of ruddy in all senses in British texts and 6.0 in American texts. <All right, your kitchen’s a ruddy marvel.> 2000 Granger 236. (Cf. § 6.1.)

shot of, be/get  The common-core expression be/get shut of has a British variant with shot instead of shut. <. . . one can understand why the likes of Labour Women Against War would be annoyed about the Prime Minister and want to be shot of him.> 2003 July 14 Times 16/1.

soluble  Solvable: Soluble means “dissolvable” in common-core English; the meaning “solvable” is characteristically British. The word form is more frequent in British: CIC has 25.4 iptmw in British texts and 6.8 in American texts. The American sample contained no tokens with the meaning “solvable”; the British sample contained 16 such tokens, about 6 percent. <Media psychos talk as if “the problem” (such as depression or obesity) is soluble by following a particular strategy.> 1988 Sept. 6 Daily Telegraph 15/6.

unbeknown  Unbeknownst: CIC has 3.0 iptmw of unbeknown and 0.9 tokens of unbeknownst in British texts, and 1.0 of unbeknown and 4.1 of unbeknownst in American texts (Cf. Peters 2004, 556).

underhand  Underhanded: CIC has 6.1 iptmw of underhand and 0.6 of underhanded in British texts. It has 1.2 of underhand and 3.8 of underhanded in American texts.

voluntary work  Volunteer work: CIC has 11.0 iptmw of voluntary work and 1.0 of volunteer work in British texts. It has 0.3 of voluntary work and 12.1 of volunteer work in American texts. <. . . it was just an argument about her voluntary work. She never really had enough time for me.> 1991 Green 84.

5.3  Comparison

5.3.1  Comparison of equivalence

The usual signal of a comparison of equivalence is as . . . as. . . . The standard of comparison (the item following the second as) is sometimes a catch phrase or proverbial expression.

as thick as a plank  This catchphrase has several variations. British thick is a synonym for “stupid, dense” hence the pun in the comparison. <. . . she’s as thick as two short planks.> 1993 Smith 148.

as adjective as makes/made no difference  This catchphrase is not common in CIC, being represented by 0.3 iptmw in British texts and 0.1 in American texts. <As far as brain is concerned, . . . he [Bertie Wooster] is as near to being null and void as makes no difference.> 1984 Smith 262.

as daft as a brush  CIC has 0.9 iptmw in British texts and none in American. <You’re as daft as a brush.> 1995 CIC fiction.
as sick as the manager’s proverbial parrot  The manager’s proverbial parrot, sick or otherwise, is not to be found in the British or American texts of CIC. The allusion is to a game program “Sick as a Parrot,” described on the Web page www.machoward.com/saap.html as “the thinking fan’s soccer management game.” Both university departments study similar fields in spite of their names and each will be sick as the manager’s proverbial parrot if they fail to establish dominance on the football pitch.> 1993 Feb 26 Guardian 3/2.

5.3.2 Comparative and superlative forms

The way adjectives are compared, by inflection (−er, −est) or periphrasis (more, most), is primarily correlated with the number of syllables – monosyllables by inflection and polysyllables by periphrasis. Two-syllable adjectives vary both within and somewhat between the two national varieties. The comparison of monosyllabic adjectives does not vary greatly between British and American English according to the LOB and Brown corpora. In both varieties, although there is greater complexity than simple descriptions imply, inflection with −er and −est is the rule (Fries 1993, 30).

A study by Hans Lindquist (1998) of the 1995 issues of two newspapers, the British Independent and the New York Times, shows that both British and American favor inflectional comparison for adjectives ending in −y: −er by percentages in the 80s and −est by percentages in the high 90s, but also that the American percentage is slightly higher in both cases.

CIC percentages for the following two adjectives support Lindquist’s conclusion:

more healthy  In CIC British texts, 91.7 percent of comparative forms of healthy are healthier, and in American texts 94.7 percent; in British texts 91.8 percent of superlative forms are healthiest, and in American texts 93.7 percent. But it’s a bit of healthy blood-letting in order to ensure that the patient becomes more healthy.> 1989 Autumn Illustrated London News 19/3.

more easy  CIC shows that in British English 99.6 percent of both comparative and superlative forms of easy are inflectional easier/easiest, and in American English 99.7 percent of comparative forms are easier, and 100 percent of superlative forms are easiest. Good women find it more easy to come through the national party [than through local politics].> 1987 Jan. speech by Ian Twinn, Conservative MP.

Other two-syllable adjectives differ.

commoner  In CIC British texts, more common is 10 times as frequent as commoner, but in American texts, it is 55 time as frequent. So commoner is comparatively more common in British.
A number of one-syllable adjectives may also occasionally form periphrastic comparison.

**juster** The comparative *more just* accounts for 74 percent of British comparative forms of *just* and 86 percent of American forms. Apparently the form *juster* is found to be awkward by all English speakers, but British speakers have a slightly greater tolerance for it. The superlative is too rare for generalizations. *<... we can make a great advance ... in a juster distribution of the fruits of Labour.> 1990 CIC nonfiction.*

**more soft** In contrast with *just*, *soft* is generally inflectional in its comparison, as *softer/softest*. The following periphrastic comparative is therefore all the odder, occurring as it does in a series of otherwise inflectional forms. *<There [West Riding county districts] the speech sound is warmer, slower and more soft.> 1985 Ebdon 156.*

**most twee** *Twee* occurs rarely in American use, sometimes with an explicit acknowledgment of its British identity. It generally resists comparison of any kind, and in particular there are no tokens in CIC of inflected forms *tweer/tweest*, and only a few tokens of analytical comparison. *<This year’s most twee toy is Dozzy, a £60 electronic teddy bear with light-up eyes that goes on sale in the summer.> 1987 Mar. 2 Evening Standard 22/7.*

The irregular comparison of *old* (*elder, eldest*) is more common in British use than in American (Swan 1995, 9; Peters 2004, 175–6). That is especially the case when the forms are used as attributive modifiers with reference to seniority in a family (*CGEL* 7.76): *my elder sister, his eldest son*. In CIC British texts, 15.8 percent of compared forms of *old* are irregular *elder/eldest*, and in American 9.4 percent.

**elder** *<His elder brother was frowning, clearly taking the matter extremely seriously.> 1985 Mortimer 67.*

**eldest** *<Vic ... has frequent rows with his eldest son, Raymond.> 1988 Lodge 16.*

Double comparison, using both inflectional and periphrastic for the same adjective, occurs occasionally and exceptionally in both national varieties. CIC has 1 British token of *most simplest*, from an orally delivered lecture by an academic. British CIC texts have 0.6 iptmw of *least worst*, half of which are in the collocation *least worst option*. Those particular forms of double comparison have no tokens in CIC American texts.

*<A cucumber sandwich is the most simplest thing there is and the most tastiest.> ca. 1980s TV interview with a butler on Wogan.* *<Brace yourself for the least worst imports coming from the States.> 1989 July 23–29 Sunday Telegraph magazine 37/1–2.* *<The licence fee ... had proved to be “the least worst way to pay for the BBC”.> 1995 Aug. 28 Independent 4/4.*
5.4 Adjective order

Noun + adjective

Positioning an adjective modifier after its noun head is a feature of common-core English in certain constructions, such as *time immemorial* and *devil incarnate* (CGEL 7.21). Other constructions are characteristically British.

**Air Officer Commanding**  Air Force commanding officer *<He would have to see the Air Officer Commanding and tell him all about it.>* 1940 Shute 27.

**decade gone**  Ten years ago *<He bought it a decade gone.>* 1986 Gash 17.

**weekday last/next**  Last/next *weekday*: A search for the word sequences *Monday* (*Tuesday*, etc.) *next* and *Monday* (*Tuesday*, etc.) *last* in limited samples of CIC produced 13 relevant tokens with *next* and 14 with *last* in British texts. A comparable search in American texts produced only 2 tokens.

**all (the) year round**  All year long: In CIC texts, British prefers *round* to *long* in this construction by 35 to 1; American prefers *long* to *round* by 2 to 1 (and also does not use *the* in this construction, cf. § 2.1.1.1 *ALL THE YEAR*). *<... the public can enjoy them all the year round.>* 1989 July 25 Evening Standard 3/2.

**time spare**  *Time free, time to spare, (a) free time* *<... whenever I had ten minutes spare, I’d pop in somewhere for pens or knickers.>* 1990 Aug. 24–30 Good Times 5/7.
6 Adverbs

6.1 General

British and American differ somewhat in form, frequency, and use of adverbs. American has certain characteristic uses, such as *some* in *The wound bled some* and *any* in *That doesn’t help us any*. The common-core adverbs *anywhere, everywhere, nowhere, and somewhere* have minority American options *anyplace, everyplace, no place* (usually spelled as two words), and *someplace* (*CamGEL* 423).

The aphetic form *most* from *almost* has been used since the sixteenth century. Originally Scottish, it is now limited to American and some British dialects (*Burchfield* 1996, 504). American nondialectal use is chiefly in spoken English as a modifier of *all, always, any, every*, and compounds of *any* and *every* with *body, one, and thing* (*MW* s.v. *most*).

The use of “flat” adverbs, that is, adverbs identical in form with corresponding adjectives (such as *fast*) rather than distinguished by the suffix *-ly*, is said to be particularly widespread in American colloquial use, as opposed to British (*LGSWE* 542). Historically, however, flat adverbs are the older traditional form. The ending *-ly*, which we think of as marking adverbs, is more recent in that function than adverbs like *fast*. Other adverbial uses of adjectives, such as *good, bad*, and *real*, now thought to be characteristic of American (*LGSWE* 542–3; *Peters* 2004, 62), developed between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries in Britain.

Other adverbial forms identified as distinctively American include *in back* with reference to the rear seat of a car (*Burchfield* 1996, 85; *Peters* 2004, 60–1) and *pretty much* (*LGSWE* 547).

Distinctively British forms are the following:


**about** Around *<Drive carefully and slowly when there are pedestrians about.* > 1996 *Highway Code*, 16. Cf. § 6.5 ABOUT.
actually  CIC has more total uses of actually in British texts than in American (3625.9 iptmw versus 2406.7). But as Swan (1995, 6, 7, 158) points out, important differences are in context and implication. 1. Used to break bad news <I’m sorry, Raymond. . . . But we do rather mind, actually. There is a significant risk of getting lung cancer from passive smoking, you know.> 1989 Mar. 19 Manchester Guardian Weekly 6/2. 2. Used to confirm or disconfirm expectations <‘Miss yer train mate?’ asked one of them. [¶] ‘Yes, I did actually,’ replied the newcomer, blushing. There was a general laugh. Someone echoed the ‘actually’.> 1962 Lodge 33. <‘Constable, can you kindly tell me what’s happened?’ [¶] ‘I was hoping you’d tell me that, sir, actually.’> 1974 Price 24. 3. Used to identify additional information <“Is it more fun to play pranks on British people or Americans?” [¶] [British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen:] “It depends on the class, actually.”> 2004 July 15 New York Times B 1/1.

additionally  conjunct In addition: CIC has 46 iptmw in British texts and 37.3 in American texts. <Additionally her phone runs on an ‘airware’ system, powered by a battery box in her hallway.> 1994 Sept. 28–Oct. 5 Time Out 29/1–2.

after  Used nonstandardly with a progressive verb form instead of a perfect for a recent event, as in am after attending “have (just) attended” <See, I’m just after attending the post mortem.> 1989 Turnbull 38.

all round  All around <The show is bloody good. What it’s particularly good at is giving stick all round: to Asians who try to be English, to the English who try to be Asian, to the people who try too hard to understand other cultures and to the people who don’t try at all.> 1998 Jan. 7 Evening Standard 53/2. Cf. §§ 5.1.4 all-round and 8.1 round.

along  Further on/down: Peters (2004, 30) notes that in the Brown Corpus, along in the sense of accompaniment (They came along with us) is twice as frequent as any other sense; that is not true in British, in which spatial and other senses predominate. <As we settled into our places, I noticed a young man on the other side of the table and two along, slight and decidedly handsome.> 1994 Dickinson 133.

always  An expression of inevitability with a progressive verb form, as in be always going to “be bound to; be inevitably going to” <It was always going to be a hard task in a place like that to find who fired the fatal shots.> 2003 June 28 Times 1/1.

and no mistake  Make no mistake about that: CIC has 3.3 iptmw in British texts and none in American texts. <But then it was out of the fryin’ pan an’ into the fire, an’ no mistake.> 1974 Price 161.

any more  In CIC texts, British favors any more over anymore by 563 to 55.7 iptmw, and American favors anymore over any more by 450.4 to 283. Anymore is generally used in negative or interrogative contexts, but an expanding use in America is in positive statements with the sense “nowadays”: “Everybody’s cool anymore” (MW).
any road, anyroad  northern English dialect, but found in general texts  Anyway: CIC has 0.4 iptmw of the solid spelling anyroad in British texts and none in American texts. <I don’t care where you park, but you can’t leave that van here. Anyroad, who are you?> 2002 Sept. Square 22.

anywhere  CIC has 500.3 iptmw of anywhere in British texts and 472.9 in American texts; it has no British tokens of anyplace and 14.2 in American texts. Anyway is the norm in both national varieties, but anyplace is a minority American option, listed from 1916 without comment by MW.

apart  The word apart is more frequent than aside in British, and aside more frequent in American (Hofland and Johansson 1982, 475; Peters 2004, 50). CIC has 420.6 iptmw of the adverb apart in British texts and 347 in American texts. It has 331.3 of the adverb aside in British texts and 393 in American texts.

as well  Also (Swan 1995, 38): CIC has slightly more tokens of as well in British texts than in American, and slightly more of also in American. <He smoked as well.> 1995 June 8 London Review of Books 9/1.

a treat  Very well: CIC has 34.1 iptmw of a treat in all senses in British texts and 13.8 in American texts. CIC has 4.9 iptmw of some form of work a treat in British texts and none in American texts. <Actually, this is a tactic I don’t strongly disapprove and it worked a treat on this occasion.> 1994 Sept. Tatler 57/2. Cf. § 8.1 APART FROM.

at speed  At high speed: CIC has 15.2 iptmw of at speed and 11.9 of at high speed in British texts and 0.2 and 5.8, respectively, in American texts. American presumably favors other expressions for high-speed automotive movement, but when this one is used, the form with high is typical. <She was hurled into a stolen car which was then driven at speed at two policemen who tried to stop it.> 1987 Mar. 5 Evening Standard 5/6.

away  On one’s way <[to policeman:] ‘I’m just away home, sir.’ The girl stepped off the steps with a flourish at her skirt and walked away quickly into the night.> 1989 Turnbull 39.

awfully, most  Very much <Oh I say, ta [“thanks”] most awfully.> 1987 Feb. 23 ITV Rumpole of the Bailey.

backwards  Backward: CIC has 163.9 iptmw of backwards and 61 of backward (including some adjectival uses) in British texts and 52.3 and 93.2, respectively, in American texts.

been and (gone and)  See § 1.4.2.

bleeding  The frequency of the form bleeding is not greatly different between British and American (111.5 versus 93.9 iptmw), but the intensive use is notable
in British texts and extremely rare in American. <Well, that bleedin’ narrows it down.> 2000 Granger 281.

bloody  <Of course I’m trying to bloody scare you.> 1993 Smith 171. Cf. hell below and §§ 5.1.1 minded, 5.2, 7.1, 10 bloody.

bloody well  CIC has 15 iptmw of bloody well (intensive in use) in British texts and 0.8 in American texts. <“I bloody well don’t.” He didn’t say it aggressively but quietly as someone who hears bad news.> 1987 Oliver 85. Cf. §§ 5.2, 7.1.

clean  Completely; all the way <It’s said you can chop its head off and it will still run clean round the fowl yard.> 1983 Innes 69.

close  Closely <But the Prime Minister is worried that Parliament does not share her obsession with secrecy and may narrow the focus of the [Official Secrets] Act too close.> 1987 June 3 Evening Standard 7/1.

close on  Nearly <India . . . has been given close on £1 billion over the past five years.> 1987 Dec. 20 Manchester Guardian 9/1.

close(r) to  Close(r) up; up close(r) <Closer to, the cottage looked even more decrepit than it had from the car.> 1987 Hart 31. <. . . but close-to Harry thought he looked rather weak and foolish.> 2003 Rowling 142 (US ed. up close).

come to that  For that matter; as far as that goes <. . . Captain Prosser had not seen fit to mention the fact to the police. [¶] Nor, come to that, had the two workmen.> 2002 Aird 103. There is also a finite clausal form in <What had Emma been up to after she left Charles Harvey? If it came to that, what had Harvey been doing in the hours between two and eight a.m.?> 1991 Critchley 201.

early days  Early so that other things might yet happen: CIC has 7.1 iptmw of it is (or it’s) early days in British texts and 0.4 in American texts. <They didn’t know too much about AIDs at that time; it was early days.> 1993 Greenwood 151.

early next  Early next year <Paul Hutchins will end his reign as the supremo of British tennis early next.> 1987 Feb. 18 Evening Standard 52/1.

early on  At an early period of time: MW (abridging Gilman 1994) comments: “This adverb is sometimes objected to in American writing as an obtrusive Briticism. It is a relative newcomer to the language, having arisen in British English around 1928. It seems to have filled a need, however. It came into frequent use in American English in the late 1960s and is now well established on both sides of the Atlantic in both speech and writing.” CIC has 90.8 iptmw in British texts and 110.5 in American texts (both including a few with other senses). This form is therefore an example of a historical Briticism (still perceived as such by some older Americans) that has been fully naturalized statistically into American use. <I realised early on that when you do impressions you get people’s attention very quickly.> 1994 Sept. 14–21 Time Out 21/1. – earlier on The OED derives early on from earlier on by backformation, and earlier on from later on by analogy (early 5.b). <Now you mention it,
there was a woman hanging about at the top of the stairs earlier on.> 1969 Amis 29.

doom. Otherwise <must be coming; they’d have phoned else> LDEL.

detail. “Am also endwise” (CIDE). CIC has 0.2 iptmw of endways in British texts and none in American texts; it has no tokens of endwise in either national variety. MW lists both without comment, but defines the latter by reference to the former. They are both marginal forms.

evening, in the Evenings <evenings . . . esp. Am • What time do you get home evenings (= in the evening)?> CIDE.

ev, the moment . . . Whenever; the very moment <. . . they came, it could be guaranteed, the moment he ever went near the lavatory.> 1987 Bradbury 72. Cf. also only ever below.

ever so Very much <Ooh, my, thanks ever so!> 1990 Rowlands 25. Cf. LGSWE 566.

everywhere “everywhere . . . Am infml everyplace” (CIDE). Everywhere is the norm in common-core English. CIC has 1.5 iptmw of everyplace in American texts and none in British texts.

fairly British is partial to fairly as an emphasizing adverb with the sense “it is no exaggeration to say” (CGEL 8.88, 100): “He fairly jumped for joy.”

firstly First: “Our evidence also suggests that firstly is more frequent in British English than in American English” (Gilman 1994, 447). “In practice many different patterns are used: First, . . . second, . . . third; Firstly, . . . secondly, . . . thirdly; . . . (AmE) First of all, . . . second of all, . . . and numerous others” (Burchfield 1996, 298). “. . . in enumerations, the phrases first of all and last of all are probably now acceptable variants of first and last throughout the English-speaking world, but second of all, third of all and the like are regarded as Americanisms” (Kahn and Ilson 1985, 239). CIC data supports the foregoing conclusions: the ratios of British to American iptmw of firstly, secondly, and thirdly are, respectively, 115.5 to 2.2, 181.8 to 56.3, and 51.2 to 7. On the other hand, those of first of all and second of all are respectively 159.3 to 176.3 and 0.3 to 6.1. There has also been controversy about mixing forms of enumeration: first, second, third; first of all, second of all, third; etc., but “. . . it does appear that consistency in this specific usage has not always had a particularly high priority with good writers” (Gilman 1994, 447).

flaming emphasier <Says Closed, doesn’t it? Can’t you flaming read?> 1974 Potter 93.

forwards Forward: CIC has 151.5 iptmw of forwards in British texts and 28.2 in American texts. <Harry darted forwards to pick up the letter.> 2003 Rowling 40 (US ed. forward).

frigging CIC has 4 iptmw of frigging (in all uses) in British texts and 2.2 in American texts. <At least I assume she is. I can’t frigging see, can I?> 1994 Sept. 28–Oct 5 Time Out 8/2.
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full on  Head on <[In deliberately running down a pedestrian with a car:] ‘You hit them full on.’> [¶] ‘Amidships, so to speak?’> [¶] ‘Between the headlamps,’ said Harpe seriously. ‘You wouldn’t break any glass then.’  > 1968 Aird 95.

getting on Nearly; getting on to (with measurements of time or space) <“What’s the time?”> [¶] “Getting on two.”> 1989 Dickinson 146.

going on with, to be Temporarily; to start with <We’ve charged the guy who hit Barton with driving under the influence. Just to be going on with, mind you.> 2000 Aird 69–70.

gone Ago <Well, it’s ’ome, in’t it, Benny? Course my Fred an’ me always wanted a place at Southend. And, six months gone, whole street thought it was gonna be out on its lug’ole.> 1988 Cannell 88.

half-ways Halfway: CIC has no tokens of halfways (solid or hyphenated) in either British or American texts. The OED’s only token of the form is the proper name Mr. Halfways from C. S. Lewis’s 1933 Pilgrim’s Regress (s.v. escapist 2). It seems to be a marginal form made by analogy with other adverbs in -s. <And he...had no one like that on whom he could half-ways depend.> 1984 Price 129.

hell, the bloody In hell: Following a wh-word, the hell has similar frequencies in British and American (with a somewhat greater frequency in American, 130.0 to British 119.9 iptmw in CIC). The addition of bloody makes it British: 7.6 to American 0.3 iptmw. However, in hell is favored in American, with about 4.5 versus British 0.8 iptmw. <But he wanted to phone Jaggard again, and ask him what the bloody hell was actually happening.> 1986 Price 106.

how Why, how it was that <I was being rather po-faced about the seals being slaughtered. And I asked how he [the Secretary of State for Scotland], as a man who had the power to revoke the culling licences, had not done so.> 1987 Nov. Illustrated London News 64/2.

I + modal + verb of opinion Comment clauses of this pattern have a verb of opinion, which is usually think or say (after dare) but may be a negated verb of unbelief (be surprised, imagine, wonder). In initial position, such clauses are best interpreted as main clauses followed by noun clauses as direct objects (cf. § 1.4.4 SHOULD, WOULD), but in medial and final position, they are clearly adverbal. Final position is most typical for these clauses. <You’ll be old enough, I daresay, to remember that militia call-up of lads a few months before war broke out.> 1985 Clark 139. <SIS were always treading on SOE’s toes, accidentally on purpose, I shouldn’t be surprised, and vice versa.> 1985 Taylor 135. <He’ll be here presently to have a word with you, I shouldn’t wonder.> 1987 Aug. 23 ch. 8 Athens GA Jewel in the Crown rerun. <Several hundred miles, I should think. Getting on a thousand.> 1989 Dickinson 136. <It was a mews house in Kensington, expensive, well above her bracket I’d have thought, but what did I know?> 1989 Nicholson 32. <He won’t be in till Monday, I shouldn’t think, but I promised to keep him fully informed.> 1992 Dexter 238.
I + verb of opinion  In comment clauses of this pattern, the verbs think and suppose have been reported as somewhat more common in British conversation than in American, whereas I guess is almost exclusively American (LGSWE 983). The “American” I guess is well represented in Chaucer and other pre- and early seventeenth-century texts as I gesse, of which the OED has 33 examples, as well as 221 examples of the modern spelling I guess, most of them British. In CIC, I think and I guess are predominantly American, with respectively 8713 and 1101.9 iptmw, compared with British 4113.1 and 120.2. However, I suppose and I reckon are predominantly British, with respectively 588.2 and 85.8 iptmw, compared with American 180.4 and 6.2. Reckon in the sense “suppose” is dialectal in American English. <It’s just that the Ranulph business is tiresome, I suppose.> 1945 Innes 52. <They say he’s bent, but everyone’s bent nowadays I reckon.> 1980 Kavanagh 101. A different picture emerges for the intransitive negative I don’t think used adverbially in medial or final position. CIC British texts have nearly twice as many of it as American texts do. <“Had she got nice legs?” “Not so nice as the other’s, I don’t think.”> 1975 Dexter 100.

if needs be  CIC indicates that if need be is the usual form in both British and American, with 7.6 and 7.1 iptmw, respectively. However, if needs be has 1.8 British and no American tokens. <I’ll take him round and introduce him to a few people, if needs be.> 1985 Barnard 50.

I’m sure  <. . . the vicar’s redoubtable housekeeper appeared in the doorway. [¶] ‘Excuse me, I’m sure,’ she said.> 2000 Granger 297.

indeed  emphasizing, often in final position  <However, once you go down the road towards the kind of censorship he envisages you can end up in exceedingly dangerous waters indeed.> 1990 Aug. 20 Evening Standard 31/5.

in the event  conjunct  As it turned out; as it was; as it happened: The conjunctive use of this expression seems to be about 10 times more frequent in British use than in American. “Br when it actually happens or happened <I was very frightened beforehand but in the event I didn’t fall>” (LDEL s.v. event). Common-core English uses in the event that followed by a present tense, referring to a future event. <If the remainder of the magazine had been free from potential libel, this might have been sufficient. In the event, we decided it was not.> 1993 Feb. 27 Times 15/5.


just 1. following an echoic tag question  <‘Well, that bleedin’ narrows it down,’ said Hayes sarcastically. [¶] ‘Doesn’t it just?’> 2000 Granger 281. 2. Barely <Lennon seems not to have inspired the same level of loathing and comes off rather better, ending the book, just, a hero.> 1988 Sept. 25 Manchester Guardian Weekly 27/5. The word order is also notable; an expected American version would be “ending the book as a hero, but only barely.” 3. modifying expressions of time and place  Right: LGSWE (547) suggests that before conversational expressions of time and place, British has just and American has right.
The situation is, however, complex. For example, when just now is used in a context of past time, right is not possible. So, <You didn’t half go it just now.> 1988 Lodge 168, could not have American right now. Indeed the American idiom would be completely different, something like You didn’t hold back just then [or a moment ago]. However, if the context is present time, American right for just is a likely possibility: <Finally my central heating packed up [i.e., broke down], and it is very cold here just now.> 1990 April 4, personal letter from a Londoner. This use is particularly frequent after a lot on my plate: <I’ve got a lot on my plate just now.> 1985 Gilbert 133, for which American might have I’ve got a lot to do [or I’m very busy] right now. Similarly, American right may replace British just as a modifier of after or before in <Just after nine.> 1989 Quinton 113. <Just before they went off for their dirty weekend.> 1984 Brett 70. But American right seems less probable than just before then in <Just then>, the police constable on duty outside the flat opened the front door to admit Grimes.> 1985 Bingham 19. In combinations of just versus right before now, after, and before, CIC has 378.8 iptmw of just and 156.5 of right in British texts, and 284.3 of just and 1146.2 of right in American texts. Thus British prefers just and American right in these combinations. Before then, however, both national varieties prefer right over just, British by 38.8 to 22.2 iptmw and American by 19.6 to 11. Similarly, before the expressions of place here and there, both British and American prefer right, although American does so far more clearly. As modifiers of here, CIC has 7.6 iptmw of just and 22.4 of right in British texts, but 7.9 of just and 122.1 of right in American texts. As modifiers of there, CIC has 17.2 iptmw of just and 25.3 of right in British texts, but 13 of just and 114.7 of right in American texts.

just on  British dictionaries define this expression before numbers as “exactly.” <I followed a police Range-Rover for several miles up the motorway and my speedo read just on 70.> 1989 July 21 Evening Standard 9/3.

less soon  Opposite of rather: This use has no examples in CIC for either British or American. <. . . he would less soon watch television than, in his own phrase, have a lump of vegetable marrow shoved into his skull instead of a brain.> 1969 Amis 24.

like  nonstandard As it were; so to say: This use has something in common with the colloquial use of like as a meaningless filler (presumably an Americanism originally), but it is older. <1778 F. Burney Evelina II. xxiii. 222 Father grew quite uneasy, like, for fear of his Lordship’s taking offence.> OED s.v. like adv. 7. <It was a commune like, everyone paid something, more if they were in work, and we made like improvements.> 1994 Symons 251–2.

like as not, (as)  Probably: CIC has 1.6 iptmw in British texts and 0.5 in American texts. The omission of the first as is not a distinguishing feature, being found in both varieties. The variant (as) likely as not is also more frequent in British, but by a smaller proportion (1.5 to 1). <‘What happened to Paul
Morris?’ asked Morse. ‘Buggered off with Joseph’s wife, like as not.’

mark you comment clause (CGEL 15.54) This is a rare expression in British, occurring only in some 0.7 iptmw, but not at all in the American texts of CIC. <They aren’t dissembling, mark you: they haven’t a clue themselves what they are going to do.> 1996 Aug. 4 Sunday Times 3 4/3.

mind (you) comment clause See § 10.

momentarily Although the characteristic American sense of this word is “in a moment; very soon,” as in The plane will be landing momentarily, its oldest attested and still primary British sense is “for a moment; lasting a brief time.” <James was momentarily distracted.> 1991 Cleeves 117.

near enough Nearly; almost: The expression, in all uses, is 3 times more frequent in British than in American, and this particular use is unusual in American. <But it might yet amount to the same thing, near enough.> 1986 Price 155–6.

near on Nearly: This is rare in British (only 0.2 iptmw of CIC), but does not occur in any CIC American texts. <My last Subaru . . . had clocked up about 50,000 miles when I bought it and near on 90,000 when I part-exchanged it.> 1994 Sept. 17 Times Weekend 13/1.

never Not by any means <‘I’m from Rummidge University. I’m, er, taking part in, that is to say . . . I’m on a kind of educational visit.’ [¶] The man freezes in the act of stowing away his wallet. ‘You’re never Vic Wilcox’s shadow?’> 1988 Lodge 102.

never ever CIC has 19.5 iptmw in British texts and 7 in American texts. <Believe it or not, but there has never, ever, been a lodge called the Goose and Gridiron.> 2004 June Square 17/2.

nights, of At night <What d’you say I come and sleep here of nights?> 1949 Tey 121.

nobbut Northern English dialect Nothing but; only: CIC has 0.7 iptmw in British texts and none in American texts. <He looked a lot like his uncle when he was nobbut a lad.> NODE.

none the less Nonetheless: Although the solid spelling is the primary or only entry in most British and almost all American dictionaries, the OED text contains 38 tokens of the spaced spelling, 21 of the solid spelling, and 3 of a hyphenated spelling. CIC has 46.9 iptmw of the spaced spelling and 143.9 of the solid spelling in British texts and 3.2 and 189 respectively in American texts. The spaced spelling accounts for nearly a quarter of the British spellings, but for only an insignificant proportion of American spellings. <None the less, the guarantee of some degree of subsidy is a victory for Channel 4.> 1989 July 23–9 Sunday Telegraph magazine 17/1.

nor Neither <And she is adamant she cannot foresee a day when she will stop spending. [¶] But then once upon a time nor could John de Lorean.> 1989 Sept. 11 Daily Express 21/6.
northwards  Northward: CIC has 21 iptmw of northwards and 12.4 of northward in British texts, and 1.5 and 24.7 respectively in American texts.  <I was driving northwards to the ring road so that I could go south from Oxford.> 1978 Jan. 18 *Punch* 97/2.

not a bit of it  Not at all: CIC has 6 iptmw of this expression in British texts and 0.2 in American texts.  <Given our present circumstances, you might think we would first ask whether there was oil, or gas, or cheap fertiliser on Mars. Not a bit of it.> 1976 Aug. 11 *Punch* 207/1.

not before time  None too soon: CIC has 3.5 iptmw of not before time and 0.4 of none too soon in British texts, and none of not before time and 0.7 of none too soon in American texts.  <‘So I’ve been telling her things are clearing up.’ [¶] ‘Not before time,’ Giles Tancock said.> 1983 Innes 134.

not half  The qualifying combination not half is both a downtoner and an amplifier.  1. As a downtoner, it modifies the determiner enough (CGEL 5.17n): *He hasn’t half enough money*, and adjectives or verbs (CGEL 8.107n): *I’m not half satisfied*, i.e., “I am only partially satisfied (or, in fact, I am dissatisfied).” In these uses, it is equivalent to not enough money by half and not satisfied by half.  2. It also has use as an amplifier. *I’m not half satisfied* can also mean “I am fully satisfied.” Similarly, *She doesn’t half swear* may be “She swears a great deal (that is, fully).” A similar American use is the qualifier in the collocation *not half bad* “very good.” In some cases the British order of the expression is unlike anything to be found in American: *It hasn’t half been cold today.*  <You seen that Yamaha he’s got? I wouldn’t half like a go on that!> 1992 Granger 207. 3. The expression is also an emphaser.  <A nurse came with cups of tea for both of them. Bridget whispered, ‘Old Smurthwaite doesn’t half keep her running.’> 1985 Mortimer 338.

not to worry  Don’t worry  <Not to worry. . . . I was just ringing to let her know . . . he’s out of the country till next week.> 1993 Smith 176.

now especially after a tag question  <I don’t want wet and mud all over my shop, do I now?> 1974 Potter 94.

on  Later, afterwards: CIC contains only a few examples of this use in American texts, but a great many in British texts.  <It is still owned by a descendant of the founder six or seven generations on.> 1989 July 28 *Times* 33/1.  <Seven years on from that party at No 11, Mr Blunkett again surprised Labour MPs with his brazen self-confidence.> 2004 Dec. 16 *Daily Telegraph* 4/1.

once, the  Once  <She seemed determined, having met Roper’s eye the once, not to do it again.> 1987 Hart 161. Cf. § 2.1.1.1 THE ONCE.

only ever  Only; always only; merely: CIC has 40.5 iptmw in British texts and 2.8 in American texts.  <. . . he only ever surmounted the first hurdle.> 1989 Aug. 5 *Times Review* 34/2.  <Henry Fowler . . . insisted . . . that protagonist is a word that can only ever be used in the singular.> 1998 Winchester 30.  <He was only ever going to be involved in football.> 2005 Jan. 9 *Sunday Times* 4 3/8.
only just  Barely: CIC has 113.1 iptmw in British texts and 17.6 in American texts. <Yes he passed, . . . but only just.> 1962 Lodge 161.

on the whole  For the most part: CIC has 119.4 iptmw of on the whole in British texts and 44.4 in American texts. Conversely, it has 70.3 iptmw of for the most part in British texts and 128.8 in American texts. <“Do you want to go in, sir?” [¶] “No. No, on the whole I think not.”> 1949 Tey 111.

perhaps  CIC has 3054 iptmw of perhaps in British texts and 1698.5 in American texts. Conversely, it has 1342.9 iptmw of maybe in British texts and 2327.8 in American texts. British prefers perhaps, and American maybe.

quite  1. Very much; completely; fully: CIC has 4761.8 iptmw of quite (in all uses) in British texts and 1604.2 in American texts. <Then my wife quite likes foreign food.> 2004 Jan. 4 Sunday Times Magazine 70/4. 2. Exactly <Quite what she did for the next seventeen years remains far from clear.> 1994 Mark Bevir (British scholar) Journal of the American Academy of Religion 62:749. 3. Fully <. . . the knots . . . had been tied so effectively . . . that Sergeant Forsyte struggled with them for quite ten minutes.> 1977 Barnard 80.


really  <I’ve really no idea, old man.> 1985 Bingham 61.

right enough  CIC has 79 iptmw in British texts and 0.5 in American texts. <It was a shell right enough.> 1974 Price 137.

rough  CIC has 8 iptmw of sleep rough and 3.4 of live rough in British texts and no American tokens. <. . . the rather harsh conditions under which excavationists work – living fairly “rough” on overseas digs is another example.> 1986 Oct. 28 Times 37/2. <His explosives were soaked with snow as he wandered around Moscow and slept rough at stations.> 1993 Feb. 1 Times 8/4.

round  Around: CIC has 1408.8 iptmw of adverbial round in British texts and 98.4 in American texts. In addition, although the number of senses listed for a word in dictionaries may represent the style of the lexicographer as much as the semantics of the language being described, it is noteworthy that NODE has 14 senses or subsenses for the adverb round but only 6 for the adverb around, whereas MW has 1 for round and 13 for around. <I think I’d like to take a few days’ leave, from the months owed to me, which I shall never get round to taking.> 1984 Price 20. <Slavin trundled round with him a huge 20-inch by 24-inch Polaroid.> 1987 Mar. 12 Evening Standard 25/3. <Mrs Figg had recently taken to asking him round for tea.> 2003 Rowling 8 (US ed. around). Cf. §§ 5.1.4 ALL-ROUND and 8.1 ROUND.

round about  Nearby <Larking [a village] shared . . . a doctor with a cluster of small communities round about.> 1968 Aird 6.

ruddy well; the ruddy hell  CIC has 0.3 iptmw of these expressions in British texts and none in American texts. <‘I should ruddy well think not,’ growled
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Hagrid. > 1998 Rowling 46. <... who the ruddy hell are you?> 2003 Rowling 385. (Cf. § 5.2.)
sideways on  CIC has some 15 tokens in British texts and none in American texts. <He had . . . a beaky nose that plunged downwards to meet his tiny oral orifice. If he had a girlfriend he could only have managed to kiss her sideways on.> 1992 Green 32.
so  So much <The old sweetie would adore it so.> 1969 Amis 226.
sort of  adverb of imprecision British conversational use of this sort of is 3 times as frequent as American; on the other hand, the adverbs of imprecision or doubt kind of, like, and maybe are about 5 times more frequent in American conversation than in British (LGSWE 869–70). – sort of thing As it were <‘How old is she sort of thing?’ Shirley asked Brian Everthorpe. [¶] ‘I dunno. Young.’> 1988 Lodge 107.
specially  Especially: Specially is less common than especially in both British and American English (Peters 2004, 509) but especially in American; CIC has a British ratio of 1:10 versus an American ratio of 1:26. <I helped collect the soiled plates . . . and to stack them in the kitchen ready for the domestic help, who was coming in next morning specially to attend to them.> 2001 Lodge 143.
straight away, straightaway  Right away: CIC has 14.8 iptmw of straightaway (plus 91.7 of straight away) in British texts and 5.2 of straightaway (plus 3.7 of straight away) in American texts. By contrast, CIC has 37.8 iptmw of right away in British texts and 117 in American texts. <Better get these ready-prepared meals from M and S into the freezer straight away.> 2001 James 112.
straight on  Straight ahead: CIC has 31.4 iptmw in British texts and 7.5 in American texts. <Straight on for Bakerloo and Jubilee Lines> 1999 Mar. 10 sign in the Baker Street tube station.
surely  CIC has 455.0 iptmw in British texts and 200.7 in American. <Nothing that a couple of nice lunches at The Ivy wouldn’t put right, surely.> 1999 Mar. 17 Evening Standard 61/4.
thank you (very much)  emphizer <... most Britons are, despite everything, well enough pleased, thank you, not to be numbered among the foreigners.> 1990 Critchfield 83.
then  In all positions, then as a linking adverb is nearly twice as frequent in British conversation as in American; on the other hand, so in the same use is half again as frequent in American conversation as in British (LGSWE 887). A distinctive British use of then is in terminal position: <Who’s a clever boy, then?> 1987 Fraser, Your 35. <Well, there you are then.> 1988 Mortimer 265. Cf. also there we are 1992 below.
there we are  comment clause CIC has 43.9 iptmw in British texts and 2.3 in American. <“And The French Lieutenant’s Woman.” [¶] “Ah. I’m with you. Saw that at the pictures with the wife . . . Or was it on the box?” [¶] “Well, there we are then,” said Morse lamely.> 1992 Dexter 6. Cf. § 4.7.
there you are  comment clause  CIC has 91.3 iptmw in British texts and 10.4 in American. \(<\ldots\) we have got accustomed to the idea \ldots\) that musicals can sound good as well as make sense. But there you are.> 1986 Oct. 12 Sunday Times 55/8. \(<[\text{response to the answer of a question:}]\) Well, there you are. Learned something anyway.> 1989 Jan. 28 Mystery: Inspector Morse ch. 9 San Francisco. Cf. \$ 4.7.

too right  Of course; certainly: CIC has 5.5 iptmw in British texts and none of this use in American texts. \(<\text{"That’s not usual, is it?” [¶] “Too right it isn’t.”}> 1985 Taylor 77.

unawa res  Unaware (Peters 2004, 556): CIC has 11.6 iptmw of unawa res in British texts and 1.5 in American. \(<\text{This development took me entirely unawa res.> 2000 Caudwell 276.}\)

undoubtedly; doubtless; doubt lessly:  These three are listed in the order of their frequency in common-core English. American has proportionately a stronger preference for undoubtedly, and doubt less is proportionately a stronger second choice in British than in American. (Cf. also Peters 2004, 557.) \(<\text{This body \ldots doubt less includes a number of wild-eyed cyclists.> 1988 June Illustrated London News 7/3.}\)

up (from/on/to)  \(<\ldots\) he had travelled up from London on the same train as Tim.> 1989 Quinton 100–1. \(<\text{He’s up on allotment today. \ldots Same plot he’s had since 1934.}> 1991 Glaister 28–9. \(<\text{Though it would be theoretically possible to travel up to London and back in the morning, it would be an awful fag.}> 2001 Lodge 224.

very  \(<\text{The United States is not, to be sure, part of the Economic Community, but is present in Brussels, very, and what does it do there? Spying on us, obviously.}> 1994 Freeling 34.

-wards  Adverbs in -wards are typical of British, the ending -ward being preferred in edited American use (CGEL I.41; CamGEL 615; Swan 1995, 615–16). Cf. backwards, forwards, northwards.

-ways  See endways, half-ways. As an option to -ways (as in endways), -wise is primarily American, as it is also in the recent sense of “with regards to” as in healthwise, moneywise, plotwise, and weatherwise (CamGEL 567). It has recent use with phrases, notably on the Internet: \(<\text{The hostels in London are \ldots centrally located, which makes them great location and staying there wise. \ldots [a British example from a Web site on youth hostels]> (bracketed matter in original) 2005 American Speech 80:108.}\)

well and truly  This is a legal phrase in common-core English dating from the fifteenth century at least. The OED (s.v. truly adv. 4.b), however, has a usage note: “now also for colloq. emphasis: decisively, ‘good and proper,’” which use is more characteristic of British than of American use. CIC has 21.4 iptmw of well and truly in British texts and 1.1 in American texts. \(<\text{I should think the mechanism’s well and truly seized up by now.}> 1991 Graham 159.
wherefore CIC has 7.9 iptmw of wherefore in British texts and 1.6 in American texts. <[receptionist to booking clerk in next room:] There’s a lady here to see you, Lynn. [booking clerk, fem., age ca. 35:] Wherefore?> [probably a joking use] 1990 Feb. 1 London House (Univ. of London).

while(s), the The whole/entire time <Rooks were . . . producing a great deal of clamour the while.> 1983 Innes 131. <. . . she followed the Order of Mass that early Sunday morning, glancing the whiles around her at the familiar stations of the cross.> 1992 Dexter 190.

whilst While, meanwhile: CIC has 380.8 iptmw in British texts and 8.8 in American texts. <Whilst over the coming months, Central [Television] promises several memorable nights.> 1986 Oct. National Theatre program for Dalliance [23].

with it As well; in addition <She is sincere, but funny with it.> 2003 June 28 Times Weekend 9/2.

you + verb of perception <But that wasn’t quite what I asked, you see.> 1977 Barnard 38. <There is a significant risk of getting lung cancer from passive smoking, you know.> 1989 Mar. 19 Manchester Guardian Weekly 6/2. Cf. § 10 YOU SEE.

6.2 Disjuncts

A syntactic category of adverbials is the disjunct (CGEL 8.121–2). Disjuncts are semantically superordinate to the clauses in which they occur. Thus, It has rained, obviously = “It is obvious that it has rained”; or Frankly, this is not working = “I am frank in saying that this is not working.” Disjuncts, as a category, are part of common-core English. But in British, there appear to be a greater propensity to use them and a greater variety of forms with disjunctive function. Most, if not all, of the following can be found also in American. Yet the category as a whole is suggestive of Britishness. CIC shows each of the following to be more frequent in British use than in American (except for more like, which is too rare as a disjunct for a judgment of frequency). The British/American iptmw is shown within parentheses after each lemma.

amazingly (62.1/34.2) <Amazingly – that is, it amazed me – she smiled with an almost impish good humour.> 1987 Bawden 82.

arguably (71.9/48.5) <He will retire as arguably the greatest race horse in the world.> 1986 Oct. TV sports report.


awkwardly (42.7/16) <Awkwardly, this tax encourages the rich colleges to minimise their cash incomes.> 1989 July 8 Economist 54/2.

exceptionally (86.7/37) <It was, exceptionally, a state restaurant, which taught us not to make assumptions.> 1989 Aug. 28 Daily Telegraph 17/7–8.
famously (45.6/33.7) <The Prince of Wales is famously a welly-booted and Barbour-suited champion of the countryside who farms organically in muddy Gloucestershire.> 1999 Mar. 20 Times Weekend 12/1.

funnily (18.5/0.2) <[Clive Bradley:] Funnily enough, a Brit like me found himself relatively shy turning up for the case method of teaching [at Yale Law School].> 1990 Critchfield 257.

importantly, more (69.3/47.6) <I had momentarily forgotten that she probably didn’t know who George was, nor, more importantly, who his daughter was.> 1987 Bawden 60.

interestingly (64.3/33.6) <Interestingly, he [John Major] says of her [Margaret Thatcher], “Apart from admiring her, I like her. She is a jolly nice woman.”> 1990 Critchfield xxiv.

irony, by an (0.2/0) Ironically <By an irony, it was Grade’s peremptory departure from the Beeb the previous year that had cleared the way for him.> 1988 Apr. Illustrated London News 58/1.

more like More likely <Called by cockerels more like.> 1987 Feb. 2 Evening Standard 23/2.

regrettably (17.8/9.5) <And, regrettably, many colleges only teach their students to type at the bare minimum words per minute; what’s needed is over 60wpm, and an accurate 60wpm, plus.> 1988 Sept. 15 Times 41/1–2.

remarkably (148.4/94.9) <Remarkably, this was upheld in 1983 in the High Court.> 1988 Sept. 14 Times 18/2.

sadly (241/58.6) <. . . the Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mary. Sadly, they are no more.> 1988 Dec. In Britain 35/4.

seriously (570.8/494.7) Really <My God, . . . you haven’t seriously locked the door?> 1976 Raphael 132.

surprisingly (265.2/177.3) <In March he surprisingly accepted the job of managing director of BBC Television.> 1988 Apr. Illustrated London News 58/1.

unexpectedly (78.1/64.3) <More unexpectedly, she shares an allotment on the south side of the river with a retired postman called Prime.> 1987 Bawden 17.

uniquely (47.9/30.5) <[World Cup rugby:] Of course, extra time is added (in Australia, uniquely, by timekeepers who record it from the referee’s signals and sound a hooter at the end).> 1987 June 18 Times 40/8.

unusually (103.7/98.4) <I noticed that Tim, unusually, asked for a double Scotch.> 1991 Barnard 76.

usefully (34.5/5.5) <More usefully, perhaps, the guide clearly shows students wishing to study, say, dentistry which 16 institutions offer it, what A-level subjects they need to have passed and how stiff the competition is.> 1987 June 20 Times 24/2.

worryingly (12.1/0) <Worryingly, he then tries convincing me that my arm’s lost feeling.> 1994 Sept. 28–Oct. 5 Time Out 8/4.
6.3 Comparison

Only a few differences in the comparison of adverbs have been noted.

**far/further/furthest** Far/farther/farthest: CIC shows a British/American preference for *further* (2756.7/1402.9) over *farther* (90.6/169.8), with the British preference being stronger, and a British preference for *furthest* (27) over *farthest* (10.5), with a slight American preference for *farthest* (13.9) over *furthest* (10.7). <Lewis drove half a mile or so *further.*> 1992 Dexter 101. <Career worries were *furthest* from the former marine’s mind.*> 1987 Feb. 27 *Evening Standard* 13/1.

The choice between inflectional or periphrastic comparison is variable in common-core English, but some choices are more characteristic of one variety than the other.

**badly, more** Worse: Although the normal comparative of *badly* is *worse,* *CGEL* (7.83) reports that periphrastic comparison is required in British after *need* and *want:* *I really need that job *more badly* than you.* CIC has 1.2 iptmw of *more badly* in British texts and 0.4 in American.

**oftener** More often: CIC has 5.7 iptmw of *oftener* in British texts, and 0.7 in American. <You ought to do this *oftener.*> 1940 *Shute* 145.

Also the choice between positive, comparative, and superlative forms is sometimes characteristic of national varieties.

**best** Better <Well, I’d best hop along to class.*> 1989 Oct. 5, undergraduate English major at University College London.

**best pleased** Well pleased: CIC has 3.6 iptmw of *best pleased* and 10.1 of *well pleased* in British texts; it has none of *best pleased* and 2.4 of *well pleased* in American texts. <His editor had not been *best pleased.*> 1991 *Critchley* 151.

6.4 Adverb order

Different adverbs have different typical positions in a clause (*CGEL* 8.14–23, 150–2). Although there is often considerable latitude in positioning an adverb, certain positions may be more preferable for a given adverb than others. The positions of adverbs can be identified with the following symbols (*CGEL* 8.14), in which *I* or *i* is initial, *M* or *m* is medial, and *E* or *e* is end:

\[ I \text{ They } iM \text{ must } M \text{ have } mM \text{ been } eM \text{ watching } iE \text{ us } E. \]

The order of adverbs of probability (such as *certainly* and *probably*) before or after an operator (such as *has*) differs between British and American (*Swan* 1995, 26; *Johansson* 1979, 200). Those adverbs have the following order distributions in CIC texts (the numbers are iptmw):

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These figures do not take account of whether or not the operator was emphasized (which Swan reports as an influencing factor), but they support the generalization that American prefers the iM position rather than the M (or later) position for these adverbs and British has the opposite preference.

Adverbs of frequency (generally, never, usually), like those of probability, tend to occur in medial position, after the first auxiliary, if there is one. However, with these also American has a higher tolerance for placement before the first auxiliary than does British: She usually is at work from nine to five versus She is usually at work from nine to five (Johansson 1979, 200). In the next example, the adverb of frequency would be expected in the medial position, after the first auxiliary verb (Previously he had always been . . .); here it occurs instead before the main verb.

always <He had previously been always negotiating with Islamic Jihad.> 1987 Jan. 27 BBC1 morning news.

An adverb of time—when typically occurs initially or at the end of its clause. The initial position is favored except in relative clauses, where the initial position of the relative has priority. However, in the following examples, adverbs of time occur in one of the medial positions (like previously in the immediately preceding example). These examples are from journalistic (or in one case advertising) prose, which may explain the shift of the time adverb, since journalistic writing prefers the subject in first position.

during the week <He . . . lives during the week in a grace-and-favour residence in Admiralty House . . .> 2003 June 25 Guardian international ed. 9/2.

earlier in the week <We did earlier in the week publish a complete costing of our manifesto.> 1987 May 18 BBC1 morning news (Alliance spokesman).

last night/year <A girl aged four was last night waiting for a life-saving liver transplant in a London hospital.> 1987 Apr. 23 Times 2/6. <Priscilla . . . is a Brit living in America, where she last year earned £30,000.> 1987 May 11 Evening Standard 27/4–5.

now <Eric can now hold a saucepan.> ca. 1987 tube train poster ad for arthritis treatment.

this afternoon <The Home Office was this afternoon going to the High Court to try to overturn the judge’s ruling.> 1987 Feb. 18 Evening Standard 2/3–4.
today  <The conference is today to give its assent to the joint strike.> 1987 Apr. 20 Times 1/3.  <The Government will today announce an innovative structure for the £1 billion-plus flotation of BAA.> 1987 June 22 Times 1/7.

yesterday  <Retailers were yesterday ordered not to stock a so-called “Viagra pop” due to go [on] sale in Britain next week, which claims to use herbs to boost sexual performance.> 2003 June 26 Guardian international ed. 8/6.  <Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell yesterday announced plans to bring some democracy into the lottery.> 2003 July 4 Daily Express 12/2.

In the following example with two adverbs of time, an alternative is to put the larger time unit first, followed by the smaller one (last year in February) or to subordinate the larger time unit to the smaller one (in February of last year).  <. . . the vice-chancellors . . . argue that the 1988 pay round was covered by a settlement negotiated in February last year.> 1988 Oct. 16 Sunday Telegraph 2/6.

When an adverb of time or duration cooccurs with an adverb of place, the expected order is place + time/duration. The reverse order is exemplified by the following citations.

late home  Late home occurs in CIC British texts a little more than one-third as often as home late but not at all in American texts.  <His missus would go on a vinegar trip if he was late home again.> 1989 Bainbridge 150.

longer here  Here longer  <What a pity you can’t stay longer here!> 1986 Benson 53.

As a modifier of the subordinating conjunction since, ever usually precedes: ever since. The reverse order, however, is exemplified in the following citation.

since ever  <He has a cottage near the church, and since ever anybody can remember he’s been saying he has lived in it for eighty-seven years.> 1983 Innes 109.

Other matters of order are illustrated by the following citations.

anyway  The usual positions for anyway are clause initial or final. But medial position is also attested, albeit exceptionally.  <But the measure . . . would subsidise many of those who would anyway go private.> 2003 June 12 Times 20/2.

better had  Had better (Swan 1995, 226). The same order of better first is possible in American, though the CIC has no American examples and 9 in British texts. Two are from fiction:  <Somewhere along the line, Rosemary supposed, there might have been a question raised about whether the wife had been informed, and a bit of perhaps we better had.> and  <I’m sure you’re astute enough to work it out, and for all your sakes you better had.>. The others are from spoken texts, such as  <Yes you better had>.

defiantly  <Marjorie looked defiantly at him.> (an American clerk in copying the quotation typed: “at him defiantly”) 1988 Lodge 234.
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just <Have just a think on your own, OK? [i.e., “We’ll give you a moment to think about it.”]> 1989 Jan. 28 ch. 9 San Francisco Mystery: Inspector Morse.

marginally <“Anyway, I’m too old and fat to model a fur coat,” she said.
   [¶] “Of course not,” said Hugo, gallantly, while thinking that in fact she, marginally, was.> 1980 Drabble 7.

matter not, to Not to matter: There are no tokens of to matter not in CIC for either British or American texts. <It seemed to matter not to Ball that it was the filthy elements that reduced Portsmouth’s attendance from the hoped-for biggest of the season to one of under five figures.> 1986 Oct. 25 Times 41/4.

6.5 Adverbial particles

Although British and American share a common inventory of adverbial particles, with only a few differences of form (e.g., on and off vs. off and on), they differ significantly in their use of those particles. The following list is of a few adverbial particles. For many others that complement particular verbs, see §11.1.6.

about Around (Andersen 1972, 861; Swan 1995, 53–4) <They don’t like being shunted about. You start moving men about from one job to another, and they start complaining.> 1988 Lodge 124. <... apart from occasionally being knocked about a bit it has not been physically or psychologically menacing.> 1988 May In Britain 39/4. Cf. § 6.1 about.

down Away from an important place (cf. up) <In more hierarchical days, ... London was generally accepted as the most important centre in the United Kingdom, and all journeys ... away from London were down, even if they went north. In 1846 Lord Chancellor Campbell wrote: ‘At Christmas I went down (from London) into Scotland and, crossing the Cheviots, was nearly lost in a snowstorm.’ Miss La Creevey, miniature painter and London landlady in Nicholas Nickleby: ‘You don’t mean to say that you are really going all the way down into Yorkshire this cold winter’s weather, Mr Nickleby?’ British trawlermen used to speak of making a trip down north, even when they were heading to the Kara Sea or somewhere else within a few degrees of latitude of the North Pole, very rightly regarding Grimsby or Aberdeen as the centre of the world, and all voyages from there as by definition down. ... To go up to Oxford means to take up residence at the beginning of term, until you come down at the end of term, unless you have had the bad luck to be sent down (expelled) earlier. But if your parents come to visit you, they will come down to Oxford from London, and you will take a trip up to London for the day. This is merely an extension of the hierarchical system of up and down. As a member of the university, you go up to the centre of your universe. As an ordinary citizen, you go up to London from Oxford or Cambridge.> 1990 Howard 107–8.

in 1. Inside <They’ve got real cream-horns and brandy snaps with cream in.> 1986 Clark 202–3. 2. “Brit. (of a fire) alight: do you keep the fire in all night?” (CED s.v. in). 3. In the middle of a quarrel <Well, as I said, we quarrelled,
Hereward and I, as we always did. We were well in, when Dersingham barged in.> 1991 Greenwood 200.

**on and off** Off and on; intermittently: Although *on and off* is the favored order in both national varieties, American is relatively more favorable to *off and on*, particularly in the sense “intermittently.” *MW* so defines *off and on*, with only a cross reference to that form from *on and off*. The *OED* documents *off and on* from 1535, but *on and off* only from the nineteenth century. CIC has 4.5 times as many tokens of *on and off* as of *off and on* in British texts, and only twice as many in American texts. <He lived for forty five years in Italy *on and off* but never learnt to speak Italian.> SEU w1-1.106.

**number out** *Number off* <As it turned out, she was correct on the first two counts, but on the last she was *one out*.> 1994 Oct. 1 *Times Magazine* 54/5.

**over to someone** Up to *someone* <They are happy to have done their bit in rescuing a historic building that was well on its way to oblivion. But now it is *over to* someone else to complete the task.> 1991 Feb. 9 *Daily Telegraph* Weekend 20/5.

**up** Toward an important place (cf. DOWN) <Saves a special journey *up* to town.> 1985 Bingham 47.

6.5.1 **Omission of a particle**

**home from home** Home away from home: CIC has 5.0 iptmw of *home from home* in British texts and 0.1 in American texts. It has 0.4 iptmw of *home away from home* in British texts and 4.2 in American texts. <Home from home was what people wanted then and they achieved that by taking their holidays in English ghettos eating chips.> 1991 Feb. 18 *Girl about Town* 10/1.
Qualifiers (also called degree adverbs) are expressions that modify adjectival or adverbial constructions. They seem to be more frequently used in British than in American, a generalization that is statistically supported for *quite* and *very* according to the LOB and Brown corpora. On the other hand, some qualifiers are characteristic of American, such as *kind of* in *The argument was kind of compelling*, mighty in *It’s mighty hot today*, *plenty* in *The nights were plenty cold* (a MW usage note points out that, despite advice against the use, it is more precise in some contexts than the alternatives, although it is informal), and *some* in *He’s feeling some better today*. Other qualifiers identified as primarily American are *pretty*, *real*, *really*, *so*, and *totally* (*LGSWE* 564–7).

7.1 Modifying adjectives or adverbs

(a) *bit* A little; rather: CIC has 1833.7 iptmw in British texts and 670.7 in American texts. <After the judge had said he hoped that the women would “be able to arrive at some sort of truce”, Lady Archer, 58, remarked to her solicitor: “That’s a bit rich.”> 2003 July 4 *Times* 7/1.


*as near as makes no difference/matter/odds* Very nearly: CIC has no American tokens but a number of British ones. <There are new options. These are mostly based upon the realisation, which has come upon the Irish like a cloudburst at a race meeting, that the country is as near as makes no odds bankrupt.> 1987 Feb. 9 *Evening Standard* 7/2.

*at all* Very in a negative context <He didn’t feel he knew either at all well.> 1983 Innes 55.

*awfully, most* Very <“Well . . .” The man paused diffidently “. . . it’s most awfully kind of you – ”> 1975 Price 28.

*barking* Completely, before *mad*; *barking* is also used alone as an adjective in the sense “mad.” CIC has 3 iptmw of *barking mad* in British texts and none in American texts. <The man’s *barking mad*, thinks Faro.> 2001 Drabble 252.
best, not  (before pleased) Very little; not at all: CIC has 3.6 iptmw in British
texts and none in American texts. <They weren’t best pleased about that;
what with her being new and them being so busy just now.> 2000 Aird
76.

blasted  Damned <Well, don’t look so blasted boot-faced about it, then! That’s
the trouble with you, you’ve no bloody sense of humour.> 1968 Porter 13.

bleeding  euphemism for bloody <Just bleedin’ bored and nosey.> 1985 Ebdon
86.

bloody  Very: CIC has 709.7 iptmw of bloody in all uses in British texts and 150.5
in American texts. <I’d forgotten about that bloody awful one-way system.>
1993 Smith 167. <The show is bloody good.> 1998 Jan. 7 Evening Standard
53/2. Cf. §§ 5.1.1 minded, 5.2, 6.1, 10 bloody; LGSWE 564.

bloody sight  Much <Bloody sight too interesting, if you ask me.> 1940 Shute
111–2.

blooming  euphemism for bloody <Our geraniums are fantastic this year . . . and
so are our roses / In fact the whole garden is blooming lovely!> (here a pun)
1997 July 10 “Fred Basset” (British comic strip) Chicago Tribune 5 12.

crashingly  <Bernard Shaw had seized on the crashingly obvious point that
no Englishman can open his mouth without being despised by some other

cringingly  <To compensate for their lack of thought, he accuses [TV] writers
of “fobbing us off with cringingly appalling anecdotes about bottoms and
urinals, with a lot of arm-waving and screaming.”> 1987 May 29 Evening
Standard 31/2.

dead  Extremely <Paul and Fatima who run it [a café] are dead friendly and

deuced  <He painted my grandfather – deuced well.> 1937 Innes, Hamlet 233.

devilish  Very <We know devilish little about that sort of thing, after all.> 1983 Innes 69.

effing  CIC has 2.6 iptmw in British texts and none in American texts. <Oh yes,
I’m good with people. I’m effing brilliant.> 1994 Sept. 24 Guardian Weekend
84/1. Cf. § 5.2.

ever  post-head qualifier of superlative adjectives  Although originally an American-
ism as a qualifier in connection with superlatives, ever is now common-core
English. The OED reports this use (s.v. ever adv. 7.f) with early American
examples, such as <1906 ‘O, Henry’ Four Million (1916) 71 Anna and Mag-
gie worked side by side in the factory, and were the greatest chums ever>,
in which ever is at the end of a noun phrase containing a superlative adjective.
However, later British citations place ever immediately after a superlative
adjective within a noun phrase. The use of ever as a post-head modifier of
the adjective is 2.3 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American.
<Neil Kinnock had one of his best ever results with 22,947 majority
in Islwyn, David Owen had his biggest ever win in Plymouth Devonport by
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ever so  CIC has 56.5 iptmw in British texts and 14.6 in American texts.  <You’re
ever so close to a “Touch of Pine” store.> 1995 May 26 radio commercial.

fair  <By the time they arrive north of the border, . . . they have worked them-
selves up into a fair old lather.> 1999 Mar. 6 Economist 37/1.

flipping  <I had caught a flipping awful cold.> 1960 Feb. Lilliput 61/2.

frightfully  CIC has 10.3 iptmw in British texts and 2 in American texts.  < . . . it
really was frightfully good.> 1989 Mar. In Britain 37/4.

full Very: Full well is about 1.5 times more frequent in British CIC texts than in
American.  <The letter centre is that way, as I’m sure you know full well.> 1987 Apr. 20 ITV Crossroads.

full on  On full; fully on: In the sense “all the way on” (of lights, sound, heat, 
water, etc.), on full is the norm in common-core English, as opposed to full on
“precisely on” as in full on the lips or “directly, straight ahead” as in hit the car
full on. But full on is more than 3 times as frequent in CIC British texts as in
American.  <Although it was a warm day the radiators were full on.> 1987
Graham 97.

hellish  <These things are always hellish difficult to decide.> 1976 Bradbury
29.

hugely  CIC has 73.3 iptmw in British texts and 28.8 in American texts.
<Graduates are hugely important to us.> 1994 Sept. 25 Sunday Times 3
2/6.

incredibly  <It’s . . . incredibly lyrical.> 1986 Dec. 4 Midweek 21/1–2.

jolly  CIC has 76 iptmw in British texts and 11.7 in American texts.  <That was
jolly clever of you!> 1990 Rowlands 57.  <’Tis the season to be jolly . . . pleased
that everything you’re looking for is in one place.> (syntactic pun) 2002 Nov.
17 underground train car poster for John Lewis store. Cf. § 6.1. – jolly good
CIC has 21.1 iptmw of jolly good in British texts and 1.1 in American texts.
<So you found Ryan, Mrs. Clutton. Jolly good.> 2003 James 242. – jolly
well  CIC has 4.8 iptmw of jolly well in British texts and none in American
texts.  <If he’s the one who did it in the first place, you should jolly well make
him do it in his own time.> 1990 Rowlands 22.

near  Nearly < . . . it has sadly made it near impossible to watch the film with
an open mind.> 1988 Sept. 13 Metropolitan 10/1–2. – near enough  CIC has
18.3 iptmw in British texts and 6 in American texts.  <At night, provided the
alarm system was switched on, Cort Place was near enough impregnable.> 1987
Hart 85.

nothing like  Not nearly <None of them would have ever been asked to . . .
Holland House, nothing like clever enough.> 1979 Snow 226.

over the top  < . . . she’s always been a bit over the top vitriolic about Hermionie
Orwell.> 1987 Bawden 57.

proper(ly)  Really, very  <Proper upset, he was.> 1968 Aird 122.

quite  The word quite is significantly more frequent in British than in American
English. LOB has 484 occurrences, compared with Brown’s 281 (Hofland and
Johansson 1982, 522; also LGSWE 566). CIC has 4523.6 iptmw in British
texts and 1541.4 in American texts. <Quite> Another of those English words that has been not only changing but is now even reversing its meaning. Thus, while it originally meant ‘totally’ (‘I was quite alone’), it also meant ‘actually’ (‘she was quite ill’); and out of this second sense has grown the use of quite to mean ‘fairly’ or ‘somewhat’. So, when we say ‘his work is quite satisfactory’ do we mean it ‘somewhat’ or ‘totally’ satisfies? Americans still, and not only in this instance, tend to prefer the old sense; in England the original meaning now sounds distinctly affected – and not just quite affected.> 1984 Smith 198. 1. with simple adjectives <... they have been known to get quite nasty.> 1989 Mar. 19 Manchester Guardian Weekly 24/5. 2. with superlatives Certainly, decidedly, much <Greenbaum’s book provides quite the best discussion of the problem that I have read.> 1989 Apr. English Today (5.2) 48/1. 3. with numbers Fully <Sergeant Forsyte struggled with them for quite ten minutes.> 1977 Barnard 80. 4. with adjectival nouns Really <It might be quite fun.> 1959 Innes 5. 5. with adverbs Very <... it can drip away quite happily.> 1987 Oliver 81.

rather CIC has 3880.3 iptmw in British texts and 1943.8 in American texts. <I’m afraid they were rather good, weren’t they?> 1988 Stoppard 20.

right 1. with adjectives Very; real <At the photo-shoot, the band suggested a right royal knees-up round the old Joanna.> 1994 Sept. 28–Oct. 5 Time Out 6/3. – right little CIC has 1.5 iptmw in British texts and none in American texts. <In fact, those banks could be right little hotbeds of alien intelligence.> 1985 Clark 61. – right old CIC has 3.3 iptmw in British texts and none in American texts. <She was a right old so-and-so, his mum.> 1992 Charles 128. 2. with adverbials Completely; altogether; all <“We’ve scared them away.” [¶] “Right away?”> 1987 Nov. Illustrated London News 82/4–84/2. – right the way <We costume you in frock coats right the way through.> 1987 Bradbury 24.

ruddy “Informal, chiefly Brit. ... bloody” (CED). <Ruddy> great engine in front of you to keep the bullets off.> 1940 Shute 112.

seriously Very: CIC has 1.4 times as many of this use in British texts as in American. <... if the Labour Party ever gets back into power, she will be a seriously important adviser to Downing Street.> 1988 June Illustrated London News 36/3.

sincerely Very <Stay put while I phone my editor. Don’t budge if you want to be sincerely rich.> 1991 Critchley 175.

spanking In common-core English, this qualifier collocates mainly with clean and new. CIC has 3.8 iptmw of spanking new in British texts and 1.5 in American texts. It has no tokens of American spanking fine or spanking good. <The Sun in Scotland had a spanking good exclusive story about the President of the Scottish Conservative Association and an Edinburgh prostitute.> 1989 Sept. 14 Times 17/4.

stone-bonker <Tomorrow we all try to make stone-bonker sure that Hopcraft was shanghaied from here.> 1985 Clark 124.

**that** So; very “dial Br to such an extreme degree” (LDEL). <I’ll be that grateful.> 1995 Sept. 11 BBC1 “The Chamber.” <I’m that excited.> 2003 July 4 *Times* T2 2/2.

**that bit** A bit; somewhat < . . . she was wrongly dressed: her powder-blue suit and hat were that bit too formal and old-fashioned for the fête.> 1985 Barnard 54.

**thumping** CIC has 0.5 iptmw of *thumping great/good* in British texts and none in American texts. <. . . we insist on a thumping great order or a high price.> 1988 Lodge 76.

**thundering** “Br informal very 1 – chiefly in thundering good and thundering great” (LDEL). <A prolonged round of applause from the ground distracted Charters. ‘Someone out, by the sound of it.’ [¶] ‘Or a thundering good six,’ said Caldicott.> 1985 Bingham 179.

**too . . . by half** Much too <Mavis didn’t seem the type to kill herself. Too self-satisfied by half.> 1991 Charles 199.

**very** Although very is common–core English, it is more often used in British than in American; LOB has 1229 tokens, and Brown 796 (Hofland and Johansson 1982, 540). CIC has 12,966.6 iptmw in British texts and 9442.5 in American texts.

**well +** alone Well enough + alone, after *leave* or *let*: CIC has 7.7 iptmw of *well alone* in British texts and 0.2 in American texts. CIC has 4 iptmw of *well enough alone* in British texts and 18 in American texts. 1. *with intransitive* verb <Good God, Pam, leave well alone.> 2000 Granger 43. 2. *with transitive* verb <It would be possible, and much more comfortable, to backtrack now, this minute, out of the whole conversation and leave things well alone.> 1998 Joss 242.

**well +** in with “Brit. informal. on good terms (with): the foreman was well in with the management” (CED). <I am well in with the police.> 1986 Dec. 4 *Midweek* 7/2.

**well** posthead modifier of emphasizing *adverbs* bleeding, bloody, ruddy, etc., see § 6.1.

**whacking +** great “Informal, chiefly Brit.” (CED). <We’d still need a whacking great bank loan.> 1988 Lodge 372.

### 7.2 Modifying prepositional phrases

**a bit** A little; rather < . . . it looks a bit like brown-nosed sucking-up to shower your boss with frequent individual presents.> 2003 June 28 *Times* Weekend 2/5.

**anything** As much as: CIC has 10.5 iptmw of *anything up to* in British texts and 1.2 in American. <Express mail which normally took three days to arrive
was now taking anything up to eight weeks.> 1987 May 28 Evening Standard 10/5.

*bang* Exactly; completely *< . . . brings the story bang up to date.*> 1999 Mar. 13 BBC1 News.

*hard* Close; right *<If you’re running a pub hard against a 2,000-acre privately owned estate, it would ill-behove you to slag off the owners.*> 1998 Jan. 3 Times Weekend 3/4.

*quite* *<Nothing quite like the Commonwealth has ever been created or evolved before.*> 1990 Mar. 12 a printed program for “An Observance for Commonwealth Day.”

*right* *<She’s in two parts, sir – right in two separate pieces.*> 1940 Shute 232.

*spot* + on *<Exactly at Mrs Denny, the medium, came in spot on two o’clock.*> 1989 Sept. 1 Times 12/6.

*too* Too much *<Embarrassed, feeling too like a Peeping Tom for comfort, he scrambled to the floor.*> 1988 Lodge 108–9.

*very* Very much *<Both men, safely on the other side of the door, felt very like naughty schoolboys who had avoided a wigging but had been given a talking down which was almost worse.*> 1977 Barnard 142.

### 7.3 Modifying comparative structures

#### 7.3.1 Equivalences

*nothing like* modifying “*as/so . . . as*” constructions: Although *not nearly* is the norm in common-core English, CIC British texts have 4.8 iptmw of *nothing like* and American 0.1. *<The food is nothing like as imaginative in content or in preparation as it is in neighbouring Spain.*> 1992 newspaper CIC.

*nowhere near* CIC British texts have 9.2 iptmw and American 3.9. *<They [New York unions] are nowhere near as Luddite as British unions were at their worst.*> 1994 Sept. Tatler 92/2.

*quite* Just *<He took a taxi across to Waterloo, although the tube would have been quite as quick.*> 1959 Innes 21.

#### 7.3.2 Superlatives

*much the most* The very most; by far the most: CIC has 3.8 iptmw in British texts and 0.2 in American. *<Much the most difficult bit was hiding them in the cupboard.*> 1998 Rowling 160 (*US ed.* By far the hardest part).
Dieter Mindt and Christel Weber (1989) concluded from a comparative study of prepositions in the Brown and LOB corpora that 99.9 percent of all prepositional tokens are of forms used in both British and American and that the six most common prepositions (of, in, to, for, with, on) have the same rank order in both varieties and account for nearly three quarters of the occurrences of prepositions in the two corpora. It is clear that prepositional differences are not mainly of form. There are, however, a good many differences in collocation and frequency.

8.1 Choice of preposition

The most significant prepositional differences are in the choice of one preposition over another in particular contexts, that is, the meaning of the preposition in context or its idiomatic use or collocational probabilities, especially in regard to the preposition’s object. Cf. also §§11.1.1.2, 11.1.6.1, 11.1.6.2.1, 11.2.1, and 11.4.1.

Prepositions that are primarily American include (in) back of (Burchfield 1996, 85; Peters 2004, 60–1). CIC has 0.5 iptmw of in back of in British texts (four–fifths of them oral and the other fifth from popular journalism) and 7.3 in American texts (in all text categories except oral talk about lexicography, which is the smallest of all text categories and therefore unrepresentative).

about 1. Around; in the vicinity of <I am aware that all about me people are watching, assessing, storing up tit-bits of information to pass on.> 1977 December 7 *Punch* 1120/2. 2. Around; on every side or in every part of <“The trouble with your hair,” he sniffed as he faffed his fingers about in it, “is that it’s not saying anything.”> 2005 Jan. 15 *Daily Telegraph* 27/5. 3. With; on; on the person of: The idiom keep/have one’s wits about one is more frequent in CIC British texts (5.7 iptmw) than American (0.7). <Was glad Ross had his wits about him sufficiently to watch out for traffic when visibility was so dodgy.> 1983 Radley 144. In the sense of physical possession, the use is clearly
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British. *I haven’t any money about me.* CED. *have you a match ~ you?* LDEL. Cf. § 11.1.6.1 GO ABOUT WITH.

across  On the other side of *A large Asda superstore stands across the road.* 1995 June 8 *London Review of Books* 8/3. – across to Across from; opposite

against 1. For; in anticipation of *He sent some of his books and papers for Mr Caldicott to keep in storage against his return.* 1985 Bingham 16. 2. In accordance with *Mr Rhodes also says that your department insists on ordering all pens . . . centrally, and then distributing them against departmental requisitions.* 1982 Lynn and Jay 170. 3. In compensation for *Charters glared at him. ‘Official Mourner? What’s that?’ [¶] ‘Appointed by the Home Office, Unpaid, of course, though one receives a small honorarium against expenses – black tie allowance and so on.’* 1985 Bingham 58. 4. Because of; to protect from *He . . . put on his tweed coat against a blustery autumnal morning.* 1986 James 18. 5. Next to *On your answer sheet, indicate the letter A, B, C or D against the number of each item 26 to 40 for the answer you choose.* 1987 May directions on a sample Cambridge Syndicate examination. – hard against Very near; right next to *If you’re running a pub hard against a 2,000-acre privately owned estate, it would ill-behove [*Amer. “behoove”*] you to slag off the owners – particularly when several of the estate staff were in the bar.* 1998 Jan. 3 *Times Weekend* 3/4. – claim something against tax Claim something as an exemption; claim something on one’s taxes . . . actors will be taxed at source and will not be able to claim a whole range of vital expenses against tax.* 1993 Feb. 7 *Sunday Times* 8 18/3.

along  (a road or passageway) Down (from one location to another on a road, etc.); on (a road, etc.) *Straight into the school, through the swing doors. Right, and all the way along the passage.* 1991 Dickinson 41. – along at At *Perhaps this afternoon, along at the cottage hospital.* 1987 Hart 18. – along to To *Simply visit a local bank or building society or go along to your post office.* SEU w7-16.78.

amidst Amid; in the middle of (Peters 2004, 35): In CIC, British amidst is less than one-third as frequent as amid; but American amid is approximately 23 times more frequent than amidst. *Even amidst the solemnity and dead seriousness of this stake-out, there was something very funny about the man from the Star.* 1995 June 8 *London Review of Books* 8/4.

amongst Among (Peters 2004, 35): The BNC has 4447 instances (17 percent) of amongst versus 22,441 instances (83 percent) of among. The Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) has 19 instances (12 percent) of amongst versus 146 instances (88 percent) of among. LOB has 45 instances (13 percent) of amongst versus 313 instances (87 percent) of among; Brown has 4 instances (1 percent) of amongst versus 370 instances (99 percent) of among. Similarly, CIC has 13 percent of amongst versus 87 percent of among in British
texts, but 1 percent of amongst versus 99 percent of among in American texts, the same percentages as in LOB and Brown. A dozen or so newspapers . . . lay in a staggered pile on a table just inside the breakfast room – The Sunday Times not amongst them.> 1992 Dexter 82.

**apart from** Aside from; except for; in addition to; other than: The BNC has 6411 instances of apart from, and only 298 of aside from, and the text of the OED has 606 instances of apart from, and only 113 of aside from. (A majority of the OED’s citations are British, as is all of its editorial language, in which apart from features prominently.) CIC has 563.7 iptmw of apart from in British texts and 109.3 in American texts. It has 46.8 of aside from in British texts and 89.1 in American texts. <Apart from anything else, it is not fair on the little people to make them sit quietly while great-uncle Tony and his friends rabbit on about Iraq and the European constitution.> 2003 July 9 Times 2/3–4. Cf. § 6.1 apart.

**as from** As of: CIC has 40 iptmw of as from in British texts and 27.1 in American. Conversely it has 74.1 iptmw of as of (in all uses) in British texts and 234.7 in American texts. <As from the beginning of this term, Professor Sidney Greenbaum has taken early retirement as Quain Professor of English Language and Literature.> 1991 Mar. UCL NEWS (University College London magazine) 19/1.

**at** The at of British English often corresponds to different prepositions in American. In some cases, the entire prepositional phrase introduced by at is expressed otherwise in American.

**at an attempt** On an attempt <She . . . got caught (and prosecuted) at her first attempt.> 1990 Aug. 24–30 Good Times 5/7.

**at the back (of)** In back (of): CIC has 257.4 iptmw of at the back in British texts and 39 in American. Conversely it has 6.1 iptmw of in back in British texts and 35.9 in American texts. <Their council flat, in a high-rise block, had garages for the tenants at the back.> 1989 Williams 179.

**at a bungalow** In <He knew that she lived at a bungalow outside Taunton, Somerset.> 1994 Oct. 4 Daily Telegraph 3/1.

**at college** In: CIC has 27.9 iptmw of at college in British texts and 15.9 in American texts. Conversely it has 9.9 iptmw of in college in British texts and 147.9 in American texts. <My biggest thieving phase was when I was at college in a small town.> 1990 Aug. 24–30 Good Times 5/7.

**at dead of night** In the dead of night: CIC has equal British and American frequency for in the dead of night, but 0.8 iptmw for at dead of night in British texts and none in American. <. . . there is just no evidence that the Bank of England is dumping French francs and Danish kroner, at dead of night, on the Tokyo market.> 1993 Feb. 13 Spectator 14/2.

**at the double** On the double: The idiom, with either preposition, is more frequent in British than in American, but whereas on the double occurs only sporadically in either variety, CIC has 2.8 iptmw of at the double in British texts and none in American. <The Government is moving at the double to
increase the maximum penalty for insider trading from two to seven years.> 1987 Jan. 20 Guardian 12/3.

at *some election (campaign)* In some election: An American clerk, transcribing a British citation with *at*, mistyped *in*. <At *this election* people will have a clear choice. . . . What I’m concerned about is that people understand the nature of the choice that people have at the *election*.> 2005 Jan. 16 BBC1 Breakfast with Frost.

at *an examination, grades* Grades on *an examination* <The diploma will be awarded to students at four levels of ability. . . . foundation level would be the same as the lower *grades* at GCSE.> 2003 July 16 Times 1/3.

at *half-cock* Halfcoocked: In CIC, *half-cocked* occurs with approximately equal frequency in British and American, but *at half-cock* (used with about the same frequency as *half-cocked* in British) is not used at all in American.

at *hand* On hand, available: In CIC, *at hand* is used with approximately equal frequency in British and American; but *on hand* is almost twice as frequent in American as in British. <. . . about two dozen hospitals already have GPs *at hand* in casualty departments.> 1999 Mar. 13 Times 1/6. Cf. To *hand* below.

at *Home Office* In: According to random samples of CIC citations, British favors *at* over *in* with *home office* by more than 2 to 1; American favors *in* over *at* by 4 to 3. <But we have a liaison officer *at the Home Office*.> 1986 Clark 30.

at *interview* In/during an interview: Two factors are involved in this construction: the choice of preposition and the presence or absence of an article before the noun. CIC has no instance of *at interview* in American texts and 1.8 iptmw in British texts; it has 0.5 iptmw of *in interview* in American texts and 1.3 in British texts. When one word (generally a determiner) falls between the preposition and the noun, CIC has 11 iptmw of *at a/the/etc. interview* in British texts and 2.6 in American texts, but 51.8 of *in a/the/etc. interview* in British texts and 300.0 in American texts. <Many graduates are made to feel ashamed of a 2.2 *at interview*.> 1993 Feb. 13 Spectator 21/3.

at *the moment* Right now: CIC has 655.3 iptmw of *at the moment* in British texts and 146.9 in American texts. By contrast, it has 138.7 iptmw of *right now* in British texts and 1035.8 in American texts. <At *the moment* companies can make their claims and it is up to the Trading Standards officers to dispute them.> 2003 June 28 Times Magazine 57/2–3. Cf. For *the moment* below.

at *a pinch* In a pinch: CIC has 4.3 iptmw of *at a pinch* in British texts and none in American. It has 0.3 iptmw of *in a pinch* in British texts and 3.7 in American.

at *place name* British uses *at* with place names more than American does (OED s.v. *at* 2; CGEL 9.17 for the contrast of *area in which* versus *point at which*). CIC has 1.5 iptmw of *at the Isle* in British texts and 0.1 in American. <I was actually on board with regular commuters – the staff of the Daily Telegraph, which is now based at the Isle of Dogs.> 1988 Dec. In Britain 19/1.

at *risk* In danger: Although *at risk* was popularized in America as part of a 1983 report about education and is used in medical contexts, it is used in wider
contexts in Britain and may have originated there. The oldest citation for it in the *OED* is <1965 New Statesman 10 Dec. 951/2 (Advt.), The appointment should be of interest to those who are prepared to assist in training child care officers and actively supervising casework of ‘at risk’ families.> *OED* risk *n.* 1.d. All four of the *OED*’s citations of the form without an adjective are from British sources; its first American citation is *at high risk* from a 1973 issue of *Scientific American* magazine. The expression appears to be a Briticism that extended to American use through professional fields like education and medicine. CIC, however, has more citations in American texts (161.6 ippmw) than in British (130 ippmw). <The caretaker of the block said that Gemma was “only alone for about a day. She wasn’t really *at risk*”.> 1993 Feb. 13 Daily Telegraph 1/6.

**at school** In school; (while) enrolled in a school: In British *Sid is at school* is likely to mean he is enrolled in a school, rather than being physically located there instead of at home; the equivalent American expression for enrollment is *Sid is in school* (*CGEL* 9.17). CIC has 244.9 ippmw of *at school* in British texts and 83.9 in American texts. It has 56.9 ippmw of *in school* in British texts and 189.5 in American texts. <A single certificate . . . would radically reduce the number of exams students take and encourage more 16-year-olds to stay *at school*.> 2003 June 29 Times 26/1.

**at second reading** On/during a second reading <It is possible that an amendment is tabled at second reading but would almost certainly be defeated.> 1999 Mar. 12 Times 14/4.

**at source** (Of tax) on gross wages <. . . actors will be taxed at source and will not be able to claim a whole range of vital expenses against tax.> 1993 Feb. 7 Sunday Times 8 18/3.

**at speed** At high speed; fast; quickly: CIC has 15.2 ippmw of *at speed* in British texts and 0.2 in American texts. It has 11.9 ippmw of *at high speed* in British texts and 5.8 in American texts. The use of the prepositional phrase, rather than an adverb such as *quickly* or *fast*, is British, but when the prepositional phrase is used in American it usually takes the adjective. <Francesca . . . was excusing herself and leaving at speed with the girl.> 1993 Neel 130.

**at stall** In the next stall <*En route* from the crush bar Joshua paused at the palatial Gents. His neighbor at stall was Charles Harvey.> 1992 Critchley 59.

**at table, serve/wait** Wait (on) tables: CIC has 2.1 ippmw of *serve/wait at table(s)* in British texts and none in American texts. It has 0.8 ippmw of *wait (on) table(s)* in British texts and 4.2 in American texts. <The outside caterers, who wore teeshirts with the word GNOSH on them as they served at table, were as noted for their nouvelle cuisine as they were for their nouveau Beaujolais.> 1987 Bradbury 18.

**at (the) weekend(s)** Over/on/during (the) weekend(s): Cf. *CGEL* 9.34, 40. CIC has 66 ippmw of *at weekends* and 77 of *at the weekend* in British texts, and 0.8 and 12 respectively in American texts. It has, on the other hand, 35.2 ippmw of *over (the) weekend(s)* in British texts and 110.8 in American texts,
26.8 of on (the) weekend(s) in British texts and 92.6 in American texts, and 3.8 of during (the) weekend(s) in British texts and 12.9 in American texts. Thus, at is the favored British preposition in this construction, but over, on, and during are favored in American. <Shall I buy a new pair of jeans? Yes, it will give me more chance of pulling ["sexually attracting women"] at the weekend.>


at past cardinal o’clock After cardinal o’clock: There are no instances in CIC. <At past three o’clock on a Sunday, the public dining-room was empty.> 1969 Amis 229.

bar Except; except for, leaving out of consideration; unless there are: The preposition bar is recorded from the early eighteenth century, but is more frequent in British (4 iptmw) than in American (0.1 iptmw), except for restricted contexts, such as the collocation bar none, which is slightly more frequent in American use according to CIC texts. <When all was over, bar the disappointment, the only enthusiast I could find was Michael.> 1996 July 24 Times 15/2–3.

before time Ahead of time: CIC has 6 iptmw of before time in British texts, including 3.7 of not before time. It has only 1 iptmw of before time in American texts, and none of not before time. <1961 M. Spark Prime of Miss Jean Brodie iii. 71 She had been retired before time.> OED s.v. retire v. 11a. – not before time None too soon <Swavesey provides – not before time – the encouragement I need to continue this quest for evidence that the meridian means anything to the people who live along it.> 1999 Mar. 20 Times Weekend 3/8.

beneath The CIC has 423.9 iptmw in British texts and 270.4 in American.
1. Underneath <From a cupboard beneath the stairs were exhumed a silver multi-tier cake stand . . . and a leather ledger.> 1996 Aug. 9 Daily Telegraph 16/2. 2. Beside but lower than <They came to South Harting presently, a village close beneath the down.> 1940 Shute 143.

but Except: British and American prepositional use of but is similar, except in certain contexts, for example expressions like last but one, for which CIC has 2.5 iptmw in British texts, but only 0.1 in American texts. <. . . for several moments they sat silently together, the last pair but one in the dining room.> 1992 Dexter 17. Cf. from last below, § 8.2.2 second last, § 11.3.1 last but.

by British by has various American alternatives in a few expressions.

by auction At auction: The word auction, in all of its inflected forms as noun and verb, is used more frequently in American texts of CIC (225.9 iptmw) than in British texts (182.6 iptmw). However, by auction is 7.5 times more frequent in British (1.5 iptmw) than in American (0.2 iptmw). <Millend was advertised for sale by auction on several occasions.> 1989 nonfiction CIC.

by oneself With; near: By meaning “near” with a pronoun object coreferential with the subject, as in She wants to have a book by her with stressed by, is characteristically British, and is distinct from the same sentence with unstressed by and stressed, non-coreferential her, meaning “written by some other woman,”
which is common-core English (CGEL 9.9). <I’ll keep it by me – you never
know, I may need to force a lock.> 1986 Oct. 27 Times 15/5.

by reference to With reference to: Pam Peters (2004, 464) reports that by refer-
ence to “is used across a range of writing styles in the UK, whereas in the US
it’s mostly found in academic writing.” In CIC texts, by reference to is about
6.5 times more frequent in British use than in American. With reference to is
also more frequent in British than in American, but only about 3.3 times more
so. <For obvious reasons, it is desirable that the termination of a trust should
NOT be by reference to the death of the settlor.> 1960 Feb. 12 Evening
Standard 3/6.

by the sea On; next to: By the sea is not usual in present-day American English;
compare the following definitions of coaster: “One who dwells by the sea coast”
(OED); “a resident of a seacoast” (MW). CIC has 22.4 iptmw of by the sea in
British texts and 3.4 in American texts.

by way of In CIC texts, by way of is about twice as frequent in British use as in
American. 1. Into; given to <“Do you know that as a young man he went in for
extravagant hoaxes?” [¶] “I . . . shouldn’t suppose him to be much by way of
that sort of thing now.”> 1959 Innes 158. 2. In the way of (gear/equipment)
<. . . most had arrived with only sleeping bags and little else by way of kit to
keep out the cold of an English winter.> 1991 Feb. 2 Times 4/6.

cum This loanword, which was a preposition in Latin, is so identified in many
English dictionaries. For that reason, it is treated here among the prepositions.
MW, however, more appropriately calls it a conjunction. It sometimes func-
tions like the preposition with (cf. bedsitter-cum-bathroom-cum-kitchen below).
It more often functions like the conjunction and (cf. friend-cum-housekeeper
below). But it most often functions like a lexical formative making dvandva
compounds (cf. study-cum-den below); a dvandva compound denotes coequal
aspects, such as prince-consort or secretary-treasurer. Cum is very popular in
British, but much less so in American. The following examples are arranged
alphabetically. <. . . a woman was seated alone in an upstairs flat, bedsitter-
cum-bathroom-cum-kitchen.> 1983 Dexter 29. <Mairead, the family’s
friend-cum-housekeeper, lives with them now.> 1989 Sept. 11 Daily
Express 15/1. <And off the sitting room . . . is the writer’s study-cum-den.>

down American has an archaic or regional use of down cellar “in/into the cellar”
and a contemporary regional use of down-home “back home; of one’s home
area” (usually attributive) that have something in common with the British
locational uses. Common-core English uses down as a preposition when its
object is a path (as contrasted with a goal), as in the following: <I strolled
back down the lane.> 2001 Lodge 232. Cf. up below. 1. At; down at <When
he sells it [condemned meat] down the Jockey, the entire estate gets food
poisoning.> 2004 Dec. 17 Independent Arts & Books Review 2/2. 2. To; down
to: “Br nonstandard ” (LDEL). <‘We’d better go down the chippie then.’ . . .
They all . . . trail off dispiritedly down the hill to the chip shop.> 1991
Glaister 8. 3. **down the (tele)phone** On/over the (tele)phone: CIC has 8.7 ip tmw of *down the (telephone)* in British texts; it has only a few examples in American texts (one from a novel set in England, and another of data coming down the phone line). <...> the negligent printer... could have been called on at any time within reason or even castigated **down the telephone** without much loss of effect.> 1988 Amis 256. 4. **down the years** Through the years: CIC has 7 ip tmw of *down the years* in British texts and 0.7 in American texts. On the other hand it has 8.5 of *through the years* in British texts and 24.7 in American texts. <Sassoon... gave voice to an anguish that has screamed *down the years*>. 2003 Nov. 11 Times T2 3/4.

**down to, be (all)** 1. Be attributable to (cf. *put something down to a cause*, which is common-core English) <...> But now I can see the menu as clearly as I can my fellow diners and the waiter hovering in the distance. And it’s **all down to** my Varilux spectacle lenses.> 1999 Mar. 20 Times Magazine 28. 2. Be up to; be the responsibility of <...> Whitehall would have a part to play in promoting good health, but it would also be **down to** the public.> 1991 Apr. 25 Evening Standard 2/4.

**for** British *for* has American variants in a few expressions, and a few distinctive combinations.

**for cost a time** At *cost each*: CIC has a few examples in British texts but none in American texts. <Mr Christian [descendant of Fletcher Christian] registered Pitcairn as a domain on the Internet and planned to sell the “PN” electronic addresses **for £100 a time**.> 1998 Jan. 3 Times 3/1.

**for hour (o’clock)** By *hour (o’clock)*: This construction is common-core English in other senses, for example, one can set an alarm, book a table, order a cab, or schedule a meeting *for* a particular hour. But only in British English will a train get one in *for* three o’clock, or will one have been in bed for eight o’clock last night. CIC has approximately 7.2 ip tmw of the construction with *for* in this distinctive sense in British texts and none in American texts. <I’ve got to be back up at the castle **for one o’clock**.> 2000 Rowling 284 (*US ed.* by).

**for it** In *for it* “chiefly Br informal likely to get into trouble <*you’ll be for it when teacher catches you*>” (*LDEL*). “Brit. informal, liable for punishment or blame: *you’ll be for it if she catches you.*” (*CED*). This construction, with or without *in*, is rare; queries of CIC produced just one instance of *be for it* and one of *be in for it* in British texts and none in American texts. *MW* has a run-on entry under *in adv.*: “*in for*: certain to experience <*in for a rude awakening*>,” which underlies *be in for it*. <“I’ve made you some real coffee.” She filled two mugs. [¶] “*You’ll be for it.* We’re a caffeine-free zone here.”> 1993 Graham 190.

**for long enough** For a long while: CIC has 11.4 ip tmw in British texts and 2 in American texts. <My missus has been trying to get hold of one of those **for long enough**.> 1986 Clark 121.
for the moment  Right now: CIC has 101.2 iptmw of for the moment in British texts and 57.5 in American. By contrast, it has 138.7 of right now in British texts and 1035.8 in American. <Confined though he is for the moment by shadow cabinet elections every autumn, he will have more latitude in office.> 1994 Sept. Tatler 96/3. Cf. AT THE MOMENT above.

for a period of time  In a period of time (CamGEL 707) <He’s an extremely pleasant dog, the first I’ve had for 20 years.> date n/a newspaper CIC.

for one’s view  In one’s view: No examples with for were found in CIC; the construction with in is common-core English. <‘Do you gents want something to drink?’ though said in a perfectly friendly manner, was not, for my view, the right way for a wine waiter to address First Class passengers.> 1967 Frost and Jay 65.

hour for hour  Specifying the earliest hour for arrival at an event (such as a meal) and the hour at which the event is to begin <I’m going to be late. It’s seven for seven-thirty.> 1985 Mortimer 102.

number for number  A pattern for specifying cricket scores, specifically “With the result of (so many runs), at the cost of (so many wickets) . . . (Cricket) The score stood at 150 for 6 wickets” (OED s.v. for prep. 15). <. . . the score rose to 63 for 3.> 1985 Ebdon 138.

from a date  From a date onward; after a date <Euros will be issued in both coin and note form from 1st January 2002.> 1998 Barclays Bank leaflet Economic and Monetary Union: What It Will Mean to You 4. <. . . the television series Dad’s Army . . . ran for nine years from 1968.> 2004 Jan. 4 Sunday Times Money 6 8/1.

from a month to/until/till a time  From a month through a time: The preposition makes it clear that the end point in from May through July is the last of that month. The other prepositions leave the end point ambiguous (CamGEL 708). CIC shows that until and till are minor options for this construction in common-core English, although both of those prepositions are more frequent in British than in American. The major options are to and through. CIC has 45.5 iptmw of from [a month] to [a time] in British texts, and 21.2 in American texts. It has 0.9 of from [a month] through [a time] in British texts, and 14.6 in American texts. Thus to is the most often used preposition in both national varieties, but through is a strong second option in American but a weak one in British Cf. TO A DATE below.

from last, second  Next/second to last: CIC has 0.3 iptmw of second from last in British texts and none in American texts. It has 0.4 of next to last and 0.9 of second to last in British texts, and 7.6 of next to last and 2.6 of second to last in American texts. <Their second from last exam . . . > 1999 Rowling 234 (US ed. to). Cf. but above, § 8.2.2 SECOND LAST, § 11.3.1 LAST BUT.

gone 1. an hour of the day After/past an hour of the day <Loretta looked at her watch. “Just gone six.”> 1993 Smith 140. 2. an age Over an age “I’d
never have thought he was gone 60 – he looks amazingly young for his age” (CIDE).

in  British in often corresponds to different prepositions in American. In some cases, the entire British prepositional phrase introduced by in is expressed otherwise in American.

in so many acres  On so many acres: CIC has 12.3 iptmw with in and 2.6 with on in British texts. It has 0.6 with in and 19.6 with on in American texts. <Spikemead Farm, a 16th-century listed detached cottage in two acres, priced at £195,000.> 1995 Aug. 30 Daily Telegraph 36/3.

in arrivals  In CIC, with arrivals or arrival(s) hall/lounge, in outnumbers at by 6 to 1 in British texts. The American evidence is sparse, other expressions, such as at the gate, being favored. <People are likely to say goodbye to friends at passport control, but would they not wait for friends in International Arrivals?> 2001 Apr. English Today 29/1.

in Cambridge  At: When Cambridge refers to the town, the preposition in is common-core English. When it refers to the university, however, at is usual in common-core English, but in occurs in a number of CIC citations, some of which are ambiguous in reference to town or university. <When he goes for his interview in Cambridge and they ask him why he thinks he should be accepted as an undergraduate, he will reply, with his usual charm: “Because I am a ghastly little oik, Sir.”> 1991 Feb. 5 Daily Telegraph 16/6.

in a card  On <Of course, you might write “Best Wishes” in the card (if it is big enough or folded).> 2001 Apr. English Today 30/2.

in care  Under supervision by the child welfare system: This expression is about 4 times more frequent in British than in American, in all its uses. <Despite their earnings, many were homeless and almost half who had started begging had been in care.> 1994 Sept. 14 Times 3/1.

in chambers  At a lawyer’s office: The expression is frequent in British English, but not used in American. <Miss Aldridge could be in Chambers in about twenty minutes.> 1997 James 133.

in college  At the college: In American use, in college typically means “enrolled in a college” not “physically present at a college.” <Dr. Alan Hardinge decided that Monday evening to stay in college.> 1992 Dexter 202.

in construction  Under construction. The preposition under is more frequent for this expression in both British and American, but especially in the latter. <... the new Ackroyden Estate [is] part complete, part in construction.> 1954 Aug. 8 Observer 6/3.

in a date  At; on: This use is rare and may result from blending with in which year. <The show was founded in 1863 and revived in 1952, in which date many events seem to have become stuck.> 1995 Aug. 28 Daily Telegraph 17/3.

in the decline  On the decline: In CIC British texts, on the decline is more than twice as frequent as in the decline; in American texts, it is 4 times as frequent. <However, do not infer from this that vegetarianism is in the decline.> 1987 May 29 Evening Standard 26/4.
**in discussion with** Talking with: *In discussion with* is slightly more frequent in CIC British texts than in American; but *talking with* is more than 4 times more frequent in American texts than in British. <We are listening to the arguments and are in discussion with English Heritage and the Corporation of London.> 1991 Mar. 17 *Sunday Times* Magazine 3/3.

**in dock** (Of cars) in a repair shop; (of people) in a hospital: CIC has 1.9 iptmw of *in dock* (in various uses) in British texts and none in American texts. <Morse’s old Jaguar was in dock again (“Too mean to buy a new one!” his colleagues claimed).> 1993 Dexter 46.

**in drink** Drunk: CIC has 2.3 iptmw in British texts and none in American texts. <Anyway, a man in drink might babble any old nonsense.> 2000 Granger 403.

**in education** In school: In American use, the sense of this expression is often “in the field of education,” not the sense illustrated here. <There are a million young people not in education, not in work.> 2005 Jan. 16 BBC1 *Breakfast with Frost*.

**in employment** Employed: The expression is about twice as frequent in British use as in American, and has no American use in the sense illustrated here. <He had four children, not all of whom were in gainful employment.> 1991 Critchley 5.

**in a farm** At/on a farm: In both British and American CIC texts, *on a farm* is usual in constructions like the following; however, British texts have 0.5 iptmw of *in*, and American texts have none. <We always stayed in the Peter Aragons’ farm.> 1983 Mann 82.

**in the force** On the force: CIC has 6.1 iptmw of *in the force* in British texts and 2.3 in American texts. It has almost exactly the opposite distribution of *on the force*, namely 2.4 in British texts and 6.1 in American texts. Also, American use of *in the force* is primarily military rather than police. <How long have you been in the [police] Force?> 1981 Dexter 83.

**in gate** CIC has no instances of this sequence; it is, as the text comment suggests, probably a syntactic blend. <Wait in Gate 5 / – announcement at UK departures at London’s Heathrow Airport. / [text comment:] This announcement seems to have overlapped with “please wait in the departure lounge”.> 2001 Apr. *English Today* 29/1.

**in goal, play** Play goal: CIC has 1.8 iptmw of *play in goal* in British texts and only a single example in American texts. It has none of *play goal* in British texts and 0.5 in American texts. <None of this changes the fact that I [former soccer player] have only one eye . . . that I’ll never be able to play in goal again.> 1991 Bishop 38.

**in (the) grounds** On (the) grounds: CIC has 40.2 iptmw of *in [some] grounds* in British texts and 1.4 in American texts. Of the latter, only 6 instances are in the use illustrated by the following British citations, and 5 of those are in reference to locations in Britain. 1. The area surrounding and belonging to a house <There’s an old potting shed in the grounds.> 2000 Granger
270. 2. An area used for sporting events. <In spite of policing measures taken in grounds, . . . the Government says there are still too many incidents of violent hooliganism in grounds, in town centres, and on trains involving rival spectators.> 1989 Mar. 5 Manchester Guardian Weekly 31/1.

**in hand, task**  Task at hand: CIC has 5.9 iptmw of task in hand in British texts and 0.1 in American texts. It has 1.1 of task at hand in British texts and 5.8 in American texts. <. . . the task in hand seemed possible.> 1985 Byatt 163.

– **time in hand**  Free time: CIC has 0.2 iptmw of time in hand in British texts and none in American texts. <But having a bit of time in hand I thought I’d pull in here for a few minutes.> 2001 Lodge 149.

**in the hearth**  On the hearth: CIC has 1.6 iptmw of in the hearth in British texts and 0.6 in American texts. On the hearth is 3.5 times more frequent than in the hearth in British texts; the two prepositional phrases are about equal in use in American texts. Britons talk about hearths nearly 5 times more often than Americans do. Hearth may refer either to the fireplace (hence in the hearth) or to the floor of the fireplace or the area in front of a fireplace (hence on the hearth).

**in the holidays**  During/over the holidays: The preposition most frequently collocating with holidays in British texts is in; and in American texts, during. CIC has the following British/American iptmw: in 5.1/0.3, during 3.6/8.0, over 1.5/3.2. <We gave balls for her and she had friends to stay in the holidays.> 1990 Aug. 26 Sunday Times Magazine 9/1.

**in (a) job(s), be**  Working: CIC has about 2 iptmw of this use in British texts and none in American texts. <But many people might choose periods of their lives when they are not in jobs.> 1991 Feb. 11 Girl about Town 4/3.

**in loss**  In the red; losing money: The expression is rare in both varieties. <. . . 1990 will see Lloyd’s in loss for the first time since 1966.> 1990 Aug. 2 Evening Standard 18/2.

**in the lunch hour**  On/during the lunch hour: CIC has the following British/American iptmw: in 2.2/0.1, on 0.0/2.0, during 0.7/1.5. <Once, in the lunch hour, he invited her to accompany Bunny and himself to church.> 1989 Bainbridge 84.

**in mistake**  By mistake is more frequent in both varieties, but CIC has 1.2 iptmw of in mistake in British texts and none in American texts. <It could even explain why that wretched Helen Appleyard was murdered in mistake for poor Jenny.> 1985 Bingham 53.

**in a month**  1. In is used with months (in January) in common-core English, but if the name of the month is modified, for example, in the January before last (CGEL 9.40), American tends to omit the preposition altogether or to use some other. <. . . the child is registered in the January of the year when it will be three.> 1987 Mar. 16 Times 11/7. 2. ordinal weekday in the month  Ordinal weekday of the month: CIC has 1.1 iptmw of in a month in British texts and none in American texts. It has 3.4 of a month in British texts and 1.1 in American texts. <. . . the School holds regular introductory meetings on the
first and fourth Thursday and the third Sunday in the month.> 1999 Mar. 10 sign on a London tube train.

in the newsagent(‘s) At the newsstand: CIC has 1.5 iptmw of in the newsagent(‘s) in British texts and no instances of newsagent in American texts. It has no instances of at the newsstand in British texts and 0.5 iptmw in American texts. <Anyway in the newsagent, I happened to glance at some of those, er . . . you know, those things they have in there.> 1986 Brett 69.

in the night, get up CIC has 1.5 iptmw of get up in the night in British texts and 0.4 in American texts. <... he gets up in the night for William.> 1993 Neel 70.

in particular category of person occupation Occupied by a particular category of persons: CIC has 0.3 iptmw of this use in British texts and none in American texts. <Even to owners determined to keep their houses in family occupation – and open to the public – the temptation to sell land and/or contents to keep the show on the road is overwhelming.> 2003 June 28 Times Weekend 2/1.

in one go At once; at the same time: CIC has 18.6 iptmw of in one go in British texts and 0.7 in American texts. <... when it comes to furniture, . . . they want to rush out one Saturday afternoon and get it all in one go.> 1987 Apr. 1 Evening Standard 26/1.

in the order of On the order of: CIC has 11.4 iptmw of in the order of (in several senses) in British texts and 4.9 in American texts. It has 2.4 of on the order of (also in several senses) in British texts and 12.9 in American texts. <In early February London hotels would expect to be quiet. But quiet means something in the order of 60 per cent occupancy.> 1991 Jan. 28 Times 1/2.

in/of patter, line Line: CIC has 0.3 iptmw each of line in patter and line of patter in British texts. It has no instance of either form in American texts. American use is more likely to be simply line “a glib often persuasive way of talking” (MW). <Dark strangers and unexpected fortunes – I ask you. But you’ve got a nice line in patter, we can work on that: it’s worth its weight in gold.> 1988 Taylor 32.

in the porch On the porch: CIC has 6.8 iptmw of in the porch and 3.5 of on the porch in British texts, and 0.1 of in the porch and 18.3 of on the porch in American texts. <... in my rush left the boots in the guest-house porch.> 1987 Apr. 9 Times 14/6.

in post On the job: CIC has 2.6 iptmw of in post in a relevant sense in British texts and 0.3 in American texts (when the contexts are telegraphic in style). CIC has 23.2 iptmw of on the job in British texts and 107.8 in American texts. <You’re hoping that . . . there might be someone still in post who knew her and would remember incidents of twelve years ago.> 2001 James 319.

in the pound Per dollar: CIC has 11.7 iptmw of in the pound in uses comparable to the following citation in British texts and 0.1 of in the dollar in American texts. It has 2.6 comparable British uses of per pound and 5.2 American uses of per dollar. <The party also wants to slap national insurance on all earnings,

in practice Practicing <The girls duly don their ear muffs while I am in practice [playing the saxophone].> 1991 Mar. 10 Sunday Times Magazine 58/3.

in the premises On the premises is the dominant form in both varieties, but more so in American. In CIC texts, the American ratio of on to in with premises is 20:1, whereas in British it is 8:1. The word premises is 4.5 times more frequent in British than in American. <... we had every reason to believe he was in the premises.> 1991 Feb. 20 Times 4/7.

in(to) profit In the black; profitable; into profitability <The Royal Mail has announced that it is back in profit. ... “We hope we can stay in profit ... move into profit ... make itself in profit.”> 2003 Nov. 13 BBC News.

in the Riviera On the Riviera is usual in both varieties. <The weather caught the south of France by surprise, with snow up to 8in deep in the Riviera.> 1991 Feb. 9 Daily Telegraph 1/2.

in the sale(s) On sale; at the/a sale: In the sense of “at a reduced price,” British uses in with sale; American does not. <I would have bought it even if it hadn’t been in the sale.> 2003 July 8 Times T2 13/1.

in some shelf On some shelf: Both varieties customarily use on in this construction, but CIC has sporadic British instances of in, but no American ones. <I’m just putting a book back in my shelves.> 1994 Sept. 24 Spectator 63/2. Cf. into some shelf below.

in a ship On is usual in both varieties. <Uncle Ernest, in the Iron Duke – he’s coming to see us tomorrow night, and I said I’d be home early. His ship came in yesterday.> 1940 Shute 40.

in a side On a team: With reference to sports teams, on is usual in American English. <Fraser is now the best bowler in the England side.> 1990 Aug. 24 Times 38/1.

in street/avenue/drive/lane/road/roadway (and proper names of streets) On: For specifying the position of something relative to a street, British generally uses in, and American on. When the street in question is noted as a shopping location, British uses on or in. Thus, CIC has approximately equal numbers of British in the High Street and on the High Street, but no instances of American in Main Street, only on Main Street. <Houses in Fentiman Road are relatively inexpensive and very spacious. ... Having a gastropub in the street is handy, too.> 2004 Dec. 12 Sunday Times Bricks and Mortar 16/2–5. <I’m not desperate, and neither are any of the others who live in the street.> 2005 Jan. 9 BBC1 Frost on Sunday.

in the street, man Man on the street: CIC has in for this idiom 13 times more frequently than on in British texts, and on 3 times more frequently than in with American texts. <For all her much-vaunted support of the small businessman, the Prime Minister has done bog all for the man in the street.> 1989 July 29 Times 28/1.
in some table  At some table: Although in combination with in, table often has the sense of "tabulation" rather than an article of furniture, it is notable that in CIC, the frequency of at + table is similar in British and American, but in + table is 4.5 times more frequent in British than in American. <Some non-University guests sitting in high table for the first time took their verbal battles seriously.> 1987 Archer 181.

in some team  On some team: CIC data indicate that British in + team is 3 times more frequent than on + team, but American on + team is 4 times more frequent than in + team. <Students would also get credit for extra curricular activities. . . . Mr Tomlinson said last week that even playing "in the local village cricket team" should be recognised.> 2003 July 16 Times 1/3. Cf. out of team below.

in one’s own terms  CIC data suggest that on one’s own terms is the most frequent version of this expression and is equally common in British and American, but that in one’s own terms is three time more frequent in British than in American. <Here are some ‘on’s that are current, and sound wrong, or rather novel, to me: . . . children’s learning ought to be evaluated on its own terms. . . . I should have used . . . in.> 1990 Howard 104–5.

in some test, mark  Mark on some test: This is not a frequent construction, but CIC has 0.2 iptmw of marks/results in + test in British texts and 0.8 of marks/results on + test in American texts. <[question from the Singapore Primary School Leaving Examination:] The highest mark _____ the Mathematics test was 76 out of 100. . . . The correct answer . . . is . . . in, but the norms for prepositions in Standard American English would dictate . . . on.> 2001 Peter L. Lowenberg in Thumboo, Three Circles of English 391–2.

in their large numbers  By/in the large numbers: In CIC, 79 percent of the British instances of such constructions have in (their); the American instances are nearly evenly divided with 51 percent by (the) and 49 percent in (the). <Merely within the last 90 years, Sikhs have suffered and died in their hundreds of thousands.> 1999 Mar. 24 Independent Wed. Review sec 5/3. Cf. § 2.3.1.

in some timetable  On some timetable: In CIC British texts, in and on occur about equally with timetable, but American texts have 5 times as many instances of on as of in. <There’s been a cock-up in the first-year timetable.> 1987 Smith 79.

in trade  On the Trade Commission; in business <‘What was he doing in Hong Kong?’ [¶] ‘He was in Trade.’ [¶] ‘Shopkeeper?’ [¶] ‘The British Trade Commission,’ said Charters severely.> 1985 Bingham 15.

in two minds  Of two minds; unsure: CIC has 5.8 iptmw of in two minds in British texts and 0.1 in American; it has 1.5 iptmw for of two minds in American texts and none in British. <David Swan was in two minds: should he return . . . or should he hang around . . . ?> 1992 Critchley 173.

in the university  At the university: In the university is of approximately equal frequency in CIC British (10.1 iptmw) and American (11.6) texts, but at the
university is more than twice as frequent in American (41.9 iptmw) as in British (18.1). <I occasionally go to films or lectures in the university.> 1990 Aug. 26 Sunday Times Magazine 54/3.

in the uptake On the uptake is the usual version of this expression in both varieties with approximately equal frequency; in the uptake occurs sporadically in British, but not in American CIC texts. <... the illusion that the Westcountry is inhabited by... straw-sucking yokels... slightly slow in the uptake, is still perpetuated and cherished.> 1985 Ebdon 170.

in vacations On/during vacations: In vacations occurs occasionally in British CIC texts, but not in American; on vacations occurs at a frequency of 2.2 iptmw in American CIC texts, but not at all in British. During vacations occurs in both varieties. <And he talked about his holidays in expensive and remote places that other students wouldn’t be able to travel to, at least not in vacations.> 2001 James 7.

in the week During the week: Although both expressions are common-core English, in constructions like the following, in the week seems improbable in American use. <Kate Garely... runs a free aerobics class here in the week as well.> 1989 Williams 37.

in work This expression is 3.3 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American. It is not used in either of the following senses in American. 1. With a job; employed <There are a million young people not in education, not in work.> 2005 Jan. 16 BBC1 Breakfast with Frost. 2. At work <I broke down in work today because I heard the news on the radio and my son’s in the 7th Armoured Brigade.> 1991 Feb. 26 Times 5/2.

in aid of For; in support of; for the purpose of: CIC has 20.1 iptmw of in aid of in British texts and 1.2 in American texts. Moreover, the American uses tend to be more literal references to aid and cannot be adequately paraphrased by for. <It’s in aid of Survival International (which supports tribal peoples).> 1994 Sept. 28–Oct. 5 Time Out 7/2.

in case of This complex preposition can be used in either of two senses: to indicate a possible later event, as in The house has a smoke detector in case of a fire (smoke detector first, fire possible later), or to indicate a prior condition, as in In case of a fire, use the stairs not the elevator (fire first, consequent action later). British favors the first sense; American uses both (Peters 2004, 271–2). Cf. §9.2 in case.

in front of apparently financial jargon Before (in time) <Apart from a slight dip in front of the New York opening futures were well supported. Dealers felt there was some buying in front of today’s Uruguay tender.> SEU w2-2. 227–8.

in reference to See with reference to below.

in respect of With respect to: CIC British texts have 96.6 iptmw of in respect of and 66.0 of with respect to; American texts have, respectively, 1.2 and 102.9. <£3,592 was paid. It was only some months after this main settlement that you received a further £350 in respect of the pearl necklace.> 2005 Jan. 15 Daily Telegraph B8/2.
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**into** “Into is commonly confused with the combination in to, where in is an adverb. In to is correctly used in *<we went in to breakfast> <they came in to see me> <reports should be sent in to the chief executive>” (LDEL). The confusion is common to British and American (Gilman 1994), but here are British examples of it in both directions: in to for into “<I pulled in to the next lay-by.>” 1996 Aug. 9 *Daily Telegraph* 15/2 and into for in to “<. . . a petition . . . will be handed into the House of Commons next Wednesday.>” 1986 Oct. 30 *Times* 22.

**into the bargain** In the bargain: CIC has 11.8 iptmw of *into the bargain* in British texts and 0.5 in American texts. *In the bargain* occurs in both varieties in similar frequencies (British 4.8, American 4.1). “<1962 *Guardian* 7 Aug. 5/1 A child can have ten days skiing for under £25 and be kitted out by Moss Brothers *into the bargain*.>” *OED s.v. kit* v. 2.

**into some shelf** Onto/on some shelf: Both varieties customarily use onto (or on) in this construction, but there are sporadic instances of into, CIC American examples involving a closet or beneath a bar. “<He slotted the book back into its shelf.>” 1977 *Dexter* 61. Cf. in *some shelf* above.

**into work** Find work: The expression *into work* is about 1.7 times more frequent in British than American CIC texts; the general British sense is rare in American, which generally uses the expression in reference to a particular job as in “<I’m going into work [“to my job”] today.>” However, we deplore the muddled thinking which suggests that helping a minority *into work* requires further reductions in incapacity benefits. “<1998 Jan. 3 *Times* 23/3.>

**next** Next to: The sequences *next me/him/her* occur in CIC British texts at the rate of 1.3 iptmw, and not at all in American texts. “<The Irishman wedged in next him.>” 1994 *Freeling* 1.

**of** British *of* has a few characteristic uses, notably with times of the day. On the other hand, American uses *of* as the second element in compound prepositions: *off of*, *out of*, and *inside of* and *outside of* in locative senses (CamGEL 639). British uses these combinations also, but not as frequently as American does; notably *out of* is 4 times more frequent in American than in British in CIC.

**of an evening** In the evening: *Of an evening* is almost 4 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American. “<To quell these moments of panic she hardened her resolve . . . by joining Annie and Rosie in the boot-room of an evening to watch television.>” 1980 *Sharpe* 202.

**of a lunch time** At lunch time “<In my town council days we used to get four or five of us bright lads in there of a lunch time.>” 1953 *Mortimer* 11.

**of a month** In a month “<Sunday was fine, a windy sunny day of late February.>” 1940 *Shute* 141.

**of a morning** In the morning: *Of a morning* is 4 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American, very few of whose instances were in this sense. “<He has four children. “It’s a fight of a morning to see who gets certain track suits and shirts.”>” 1991 Feb. 15 *Evening Standard* 51/1.
of nights  At night: Of nights in this sense is extremely rare in American texts; at night is frequent. <What d’you say I come and sleep here of nights? No meals, just sleeping night watchman.> 1949 Tey 121.

of a weekday (afternoon/evening)  On weekdays / [no preposition] weekday (afternoons/evenings) <George always went for a drink about nine o’clock of a weekday.> 1974 Price 67. <But while we were tolerated in the bar of the George and Pilgrims of a Saturday afternoon, the travellers [“Gypsies”] were barred.> 1993 Feb. 10 Evening Standard 23/1.

Other nontemporal differences:

of some education  With some education <I always doubt whether someone of a public school education gains much from Borstal training.> 1983 Brooke-Taylor 90.

of that order, something  Something on that order: CIC British texts have only of in this expression, and American have only on. <Two or three hundred doctors to each rep, I believe. Something of that order, anyway.> 1986 Clark 51.

off  This preposition has some characteristic British uses, including “not inclined towards: I’m off work; I’ve gone off you” (CED). A characteristic American colloquial compound is off of “off.”

off one’s head  Out of one’s mind: Off one’s head in this sense is frequent in British and rare in American. <Peach had stated frankly that the prospective sitter was off his head.> 1974 Innes 20.

off plan  From a plan; on the basis of a house plan before construction <Gone are the days when a contractor could build a row of identical box-like houses, fill them with identical fixtures and fittings and expect them to sell off plan.> 1993 Feb. 17 Times 18/2.

off the ration  Unrationed; without ration coupons: This expression is dated in British, but non-occurring in American. <. . . a poor quality coal, obtainable off the ration.> 1959 Opie and Opie 163.

off retirement  From retirement <No job for . . . someone ten years off retirement.> 1998 Joss 40.

off school  Out of / off from school: In CIC texts, off school is 5.3 times more frequent in British than in American; out of school is 2.5 times more frequent in American than in British; off from school is the rarest combination of the three in both varieties, but is 12 times more frequent in American than in British, where it is very rare. <You’ll just get some days off school.> 1994 Symons 140.

off a source  From a source <I get ties and shirts anywhere – some of my best are off the airport at Milan, and my handkerchiefs are off Paddington station.> 1989 Aug. 13 Sunday Times Magazine 66/1. <Took us three weeks to get a new door off the council.> 1990 Sept. Evening Standard magazine 37/2.
off the train, meet someone  Meet someone at the train: This expression is rare in British, but non-occurring in American. <Luke and Marie met me off the train.> 1997 James 245.

off work  This expression is more than twice as frequent in British as in American CIC texts. 1. Away from work; off adv. <Mrs Routley had been off work for a week with a back problem.> 1994 Oct. 1 Times 3/2. 2. Out of work; not working <When I was first off work I was in a bad state and I knew something had gone wrong in my head.> 1999 Mar. 15 Daily Telegraph 7/3.

on  This preposition is one that has many differences in use between British and American English, most of which are lexically linked, either to its following object or to a preceding word that it complements (cf. § 11 passim).

on “compared with another person or thing: This essay is a definite improvement on your last one. | Sales are 10% up on last year” (LDOCE 18). 1. (of a decrease in percentage) From; below <Experts estimate that prices are down 5 per cent on last year.> 1989 Aug. 11 Times 29/7. 2. (of an increase in percentage) Over; above <However, graduate salaries were rising fastest in Northern Ireland, up 9.1 per cent on last year.> 2003 July 16 Times 9/2.

on some account  In some account <An imbalance on the tuition account was a familiar problem.> 1993 Neel 46.

on any view(s)  In any view: CIC has 0.5 iptmw of on any view in British texts and none in American texts. <On any views, it would have been discourteous to Mr Barker, who was Lord Archer’s friend.> 2003 June 21 Times 1/3.

on addresses  At addresses: CIC has 0.3 iptmw of raids on addresses in British texts and no instances of on addresses in American texts. <British Transport Police said last night that they were found in dawn raids on addresses in Acton, west London, on Tuesday.> 1989 Sept. 14 Times 5/1–2.

on behalf of  In behalf of: On behalf of is the overwhelming choice in common-core English; however, the minority option, in behalf of, is 12 times more frequent in American than in British CIC texts. “In current British use, on behalf of has replaced in behalf of; both are still used in American English” (MW usage note). Pam Peters (2004, 67–8) reports also a British variant without an initial prepositional element: to speak behalf of individual students. No American instances of the short form are known.

on some benefit(s)  With/receiving some government financial help: CIC has 24.2 iptmw of this sequence in British texts and 13.5 in American texts (many of which have a different sense). The usual American analog would be on welfare, which is 10 times more frequent in American use than in British. <... she needed money to feed and clothe Jessica, especially now she was no longer on benefits.> 2002 Smith 173.

on the bins  With the garbage department: CIC has only sporadic British instances of this expression and no American ones. <... their own children, who have double firsts in Latin, can’t get a job on the bins.> 2005 Jan. 9 Sunday Times 4 4/7.
on the cards  In the cards: In CIC, on the cards is 15 times more frequent in British than in American; in the cards is nearly 7 times more frequent in American than in British. <Dr Dabbe says the disease is always on the cards if you don’t take the proper precautions when handling the contents of a mummy case.> 2000 Aird 198.

on some car park  In some parking lot: The salient national difference for this expression is in the noun: British car park versus American parking lot. With either of those terms, the most frequent preposition in both varieties is in. However, British uses the minority preposition on more often than American does. <You theorized they would take [“abduct”] him on the car-park.> 1985 Clark 146–7.

on some catalogue  In some catalog: The overwhelmingly dominant British spelling of the noun is catalogue; American uses catalog about 3 times more frequently than the longer form. The most frequent preposition in both varieties is in. British uses the minority preposition on about twice as often as American does; however, since British also uses catalog(ue) about twice as often, the prepositional difference may be incidental. <. . . you should find virtually everything except the collection of ritual material, which is not yet available on the catalogue.> 2003 Dec. Square 40/1–2.

on the cheap  Cheaply: Now a part of common-core English, on the cheap seems originally to have been British. It is still somewhat more frequent in British texts (British 8.8 to American 6.9 iptmw). <Alan Beith, home affairs spokesman, criticised the “privatisation of police work” as a botched attempt to do everything on the cheap.> 1994 Sept. 21 Times 11/3–4.

on closing time  At closing time: This combination is rare, having no instances in CIC. <. . . we shall have to decide on the best time to go in. . . . Just on closing time in the afternoon?> 1985 Clark 174.

on some computer  In some computer: Both on and in are used with computer in common-core English, and on predominates. British uses on about 64 percent of the time; American 56 percent. <His name went down on the Eurotunnel computer as someone whose support should not be overlooked.> 1994 Sept. 30 Daily Telegraph 15/3.

on some concourse  In some concourse: Both on and in are used with concourse in both varieties; on is somewhat more frequent in British (1.6 iptmw of on to 1.1 of in), and in is only slightly more frequent in American (0.7 iptmw of in to 0.5 of on). <Le Cafe de Piaf . . . transformed into a French restaurant and one of the first private caterers allowed on the station concourse.> 1987 July 1 Daily Telegraph 5/4.

on some count  By some count: On is more frequent than by with count in both varieties, but in British it is nearly 4 times more frequent, and in American less than twice. <Even on the most conservative count . . . there were 7,780 racially motivated attacks last year.> 1992 Dec. 5 Economist 59/1.

on some course  In some course (an educational program): On + course (in all senses) is some 2.3 times more frequent in CIC British texts than American
ones. In the use exemplified below, the difference would be even greater. <Plus there are assorted spouses . . . enrolled on the chateau’s cook-ery course.> 2005 Jan. 9 Sunday Times 5 1/3–4. Cf. § 11.1.7 GO ON A COURSE.

on some crossing At some crossing: British talks more about crossings (level or railway or grade, pedestrian, pelican, zebra) than American does, probably because they are more prominent in Britain than in America. The British choice of preposition to use with such crossings is 2.5 times on versus at; the American choice is 3 times at versus on. <They crossed on the pelican crossing.> 1993 Stallwood 170–1.

on (the) day Day; that day; the day of a particular event: An analysis of British news reports (LGSWE 800) concludes that prepositions are generally used with names of the days of the week to form adverbial phrases, whereas American news reports tend to use the days of the week without a preceding preposition: Br. on Monday versus Am. Monday (cf. also Swan 1995, 451). <. . . having sampled so many turkeys, we’d all rather have goose on the day.> 1997 Dec. 13 Times Weekend 10/4. Cf. also ON THE NIGHT below and §§ 2.1.4, 11.2.1 WEEK ON DAY OF THE WEEK.

on day of the week, a period of time (e.g., a week on Friday) A period of time from a day of the week: This method of specifying dates in the future is 4 or 5 times more frequent in British than in American. And when British uses it, the preposition on is about 26 times more frequent than from, whereas when American uses it, from is 27 times more frequent than on. <. . . school resumes after half-term a week on Monday.> 1993 Feb. 13 Daily Telegraph 3/2.

on some desk(s) At some desk(s): The use of on rather than at with desk is rare in British, but even more so in American. <Slowly the voters shuffled forward to give their names to the lady clerks sitting primly on their desks.> 1991 Critchley 97.

on some door At some door <Tickets Booked in Advance: £2.50 . . . Tickets on the Door: £3.00> 1987 London flier advertising a play.

on some drill In some drill <He hadn’t been on a fire drill since he was at school.> 1977 Dexter 34.

on some estimate 1. At/for some estimated amount <. . . lot 232 in Christie’s sale of garden statuary . . . sold, not on its estimate of £3,000–£4,000, but for £715,000.> 1989 Sept. 14 Daily Telegraph 1/8. 2. By some estimate <On a generous estimate, there are at most ten possible future Cabinet ministers among middle-ranking and junior ministers.> 2003 June 19 Times 20/1.

on some figures According to some figures <On the Government’s figures, the cost will be twice as high as rates, although experts predict the true cost to be substantially higher.> 1987 Oct. Illustrated London News 14/4.

on some file(s) In some file(s) <Of course we always knew in the Exchange that nothing on the files was dead certain – intelligence work isn’t like that.> 1994 Dickinson 90.
on (the) film(s) 1. In the movies <Love [a character] . . . was played on film by David Niven.> 1989 July 22 Times 41/5–6. 2. For camera film <Boots Film Processing Same Day Monday to Friday on films handed in before 9.30 am ready for collection after 5 pm.> 1990 May 31, sign outside Boots, Charing Cross Road.

on Foodworth At/of Foodworth <Magistrates have also made an emergency closure on Foodworth, a large supermarket at 244 Kilburn High Road NW6.> 1987 Mar. Camden Magazine no. 46 7/3.

on (some) form 1. In (top) form/shape <‘I ’ope I find you well?’ [ ¶ ] ‘On excellent form, I thank you.’> 2000 Rowling 215 (US ed. in). <Baroness Blackstone is on top form this evening.> 2003 June 29 Sunday Times News Review 7/1. 2. Judging by / according to past experience <On form, it would have ended round about nine-thirty or ten.> 1986 Barnard, Political 177.

on full scale At/in full scale <Looking at the remarkable set for the first time on full scale, I was able to recognise an old favourite prop from Merry Widow.> 1986 Sept. 25 Hampstead Advertiser 21/3.

on some grade(s) At/in some (pay) grade(s) <You start moving men about from one job to another, and they start complaining, or demanding to be put on a higher grade.> 1988 Lodge 124.

on Greenland In Greenland: Both British and American use in Greenland, treating the place as a land; British has on Greenland, treating it as an island, only rarely. <A thousand years ago the Vikings established a settlement on Greenland. Financial Times 13 Jul 99.> 2001 Apr. English Today 66 30/1.

on the halls In vaudeville (houses) <Father was an acrobat and is in the Middle East now. Name of Valoroso. It’s an old name on the halls.> 1942 Thirkell 25.

on heat In heat; sexually excited: Except for a few sporadic instances of in heat in British texts, on heat is British and in heat American. <Kingsland may have been a kitten on heat, but he was a shameless seducer.> 2003 July 13 Times Culture 45/2.

on income(s) With / [start] at income(s): For the phrase on/with (x) income(s), CIC British texts favor on by nearly 3 times; American texts have approximately equal numbers of the two prepositions, with a slight preference for with. <Graduates from 1996, who started on an average of £14,774, were now earning an average of £17,000. Recruits from 1994, who started on £13,500, were now on £21,000.> 1998 Jan. 6 Times 8/3. <All too often people on very low incomes with debts face a barrage of threats designed to bully and intimidate.> 2003 July 16 Daily Express 31/1. Cf. also on some salary below.

on insurance 1. For insurance <She has two monthly standing orders: £30 for her pension, £15 on house insurance.> 1991 Feb. Evening Standard magazine 20/3. 2. With/through insurance <Father Leo treats religious addicts in clinics across America and charges them £5000 a month. “Most of them get it on medical insurance.”> 1989 Sept. 4 Evening Standard 26/1–2.
on a junction  At a junction: At in this construction is common-core English. CIC has 2.7 iptmw of on in British texts and none in American texts. <In Maida Vale, on the junction of Castellain and Lauderdale Roads, there are three Redwood Trees.> 1994 Sept. 14–21 Time Out 39/2.

on the lorries  Driving trucks: CIC has a few examples in British texts; there is no direct analog in American. <How the rich live. . . . I must want my head tested sorting mail all day when I could be picking up wads of it on the lorries.> 1969 Rendell 10.

on certain lunches  At certain lunches <On monthly Saturday lunches (in March, April and June) Mr Tucker and Sir Ronald sat down with the Mr and Mrs Thatcher to discuss the lastest poll findings.> 1987 June 13 Times 28/4.

on some market  At/in some market <There are other secrets at Smithfield, suggestions that “famous gangsters” have worked on the market, but no one names names.> 1988 June Illustrated London News 70/2.

on marriage  After marriage <On marriage, I could buy food at the same time as washing powder.> 1986 Oct. 1 Times 11/7.

on a meter  At a meter; in a metered parking place: British uses both on and at in this rare construction; American uses only at. <. . . where’s the best place to park in Cambridge? I’m on a meter at the moment.> 1995 Wilson 99.

on National Service  In the army: This expression is rare in British use. <After leaving school each of them spent eighteen months on National Service.> 1979 Dexter 94.

on the night  American English would be inclined to omit the preposition but would require a modification of night to identify it: either a phrase like the one in square brackets or a determiner like that rather than the. <. . . viewers will be encouraged to pledge money on the night [of a BBC1 charity program].> 1988 Feb. Illustrated London News 24/4. Cf. also ON (THE) DAY above and § 2.1.4.

on the North-East  In the northeast: In CIC, the expression is rare in British texts and does not occur in American. <Jobclubs, pioneered on the North-East five years ago, are open to anyone unemployed for more than six months and looking for a job.> 1989 Aug. 7 (Durham) Evening Chronicle 8/4.

on oath  Under oath: In CIC, both prepositions are used in British texts, with a slight preference for under; American texts have only under oath, which occurs 18.5 times more frequently than the same expression in British texts.

on cardinal number o’clock  At cardinal number o’clock: The preposition at is usual in both British and American. CIC has 1.0 iptmw of on in British texts; the only such instances in American texts are 0.3 in the idiom going on, i.e., “nearing,” which does not occur in the British texts. <Mrs Denny, the medium, came in spot on two o’clock.> 1989 Sept. 1 Times 12/6. <Pick it up on nine o’clock on a Wednesday.> 1996 spoken text in a tearoom CIC.
on offer  Available; being offered: In CIC, on offer occurs 42 times more frequently in British texts than in American. <... you’ll buy whatever’s on offer.> 2005 Jan. 15 Daily Telegraph Books 5/3.

on some park  In/at some park: In is the most frequent locative preposition with park in common-core English. CIC has some 5.1 ipmw of on with park in British texts, but only 0.1 in American texts. <Dribbles [a giraffe] is 104 in human terms, the oldest animal on the [zoological] park.> 1993 Feb. 13 Daily Telegraph 12/4–6.

on a party  At/in a party: CIC has a few instances in British texts, but none in American texts. <Don’t catechize people on a swimming party.> 1985 Byatt 83.

on certain patterns  With/by/according to certain patterns: CIC has very few instances in British texts, and none in American texts. <On present smoking patterns, the future is going to be considerably worse than the past.> 1994 Sept. 20 Times 6/3.

on some photograph  In some photograph: CIC has a few examples in British texts, but none in American. <“Are you on this photograph, Mrs Prokosch?” “Do I look as if I’m on it?”> 1976 Bradbury 78。

on a place  See on FOODWORTH, TYNESIDE, THAMES.

on some plans  According to some plans: CIC has a few instances of on current plans in British texts, none in American, and at least one instance of according to current plans in American texts, none in British. <Nonetheless, it [a new bank building] has thirty-eight storeys on current plans.> 1982 Lynn and Jay 139.

on the pools  The whole expression is British; a somewhat parallel American expression, on/in the lottery, uses either preposition, but on the pools is the regular British form rather than *in the pools. <... my dad, Selwyn, won a couple of thousand pounds on the pools.> 2004 Dec. 12 Sunday Times Bricks and Mortar 3/1.

on prescription  By prescription: With prescription, CIC British texts have on nearly 9 times more often than by; in American texts, the two prepositions are approximately equal in frequency. <It’s not on prescription, so you can buy it across the counter.> 1990 Hardwick 145.

on a rehearsal  At/in a rehearsal: At and in are more frequent with rehearsal in both varieties, but on occurs only in British in CIC texts. <OK, everybody, what can we do, on one rehearsal?> 1993 Neel 191–2.

on release  1. go on release  Be released; premiere: This idiom is found in British with the adjectives controlled, general, limited, and national; it is not usual in American. <The leaflets, which will be handed out at cinemas all over Scotland when the film goes on general release on Friday, have a picture of Gibson as Wallace.> 1995 Sept. 4 Daily Telegraph 2/4. 2. be on release  Be playing: This idiom is applied to films in British but is not used in American CIC texts. <And that afternoon I had to queue to see Four Weddings and a Funeral, a British movie that is still packing them in, despite having been on release for months.> 1994 Sept. Tatler 92/3.
**on some salary**  At *some* salary: In CIC, *on* is used with *salary* about equally in British and American texts, but *at* is used about twice as often in American texts as in British. *<She [Connie Chung] recently jumped ship at NBC News to become [sic] an anchor at CBS on a starting salary of $1.3m a year.> 1989 Sept. 10–16 Sunday Telegraph magazine 17/2. Cf. also on *INCOME(s)*.

**on sale**  For sale: In American English, *on sale* has two senses, the common-core “for sale” and “for sale at a reduced price.” *<... a three-bedroom period semi ... is on sale for £99,000.> 1995 Aug. 30 Daily Telegraph 36/2.*

**on some score**  With/at *some score*: This use, which occurs in CIC British texts, appears to be rare in American. *<Tied in first place, on eighty-five points ... In second place, on eighty points. ... > 2000 Rowling 439 (US ed. with).*

**on the scrounge**  Scrounging; on the prowl: Although not common in CIC British texts (0.4 iptmw), this idiom does not occur in CIC American texts. *<Always on the scrounge for money, always in trouble with the law.> 1994 Fyfield 66.*

**on some periodical section**  In *some periodical section*: This construction is rare. *<If we have space, some opinions may appear on the Letters section.> 2002 Sept. Square 27.*

**on show**  Being shown/displayed: CIC has 54 iptmw of *on show* in British texts and 2.2 in American texts. *<... hardly any of the work on show is of the twig-woven variety.> 1995 Sept. 6–13 Time Out 56/2.*

**on some skip**  In *some Dumpster*: *On (versus in) is rare with *skip* in British texts, a 1:13 ratio, but only *in* occurs with the American analog *Dumpster*. <Dumping your aubergine bidet on someone else’s skip is fly-tipping, a criminal offence.> 1997 Mar. 19 Evening Standard Homes & Property 17/2–3.*

**on some stall**  In *some stall*: CIC has 5.6 iptmw of *on + stall* in British texts and none in American texts. It has 1.6 iptmw of *in + stall* in British texts and 6.2 in American texts. *<But the question remains, since you were rarely on the stall, where were you?> 1985 Barnard 148.*

**on some (train) station**  In/at *some (train) station*: CIC has no instances of *on* for this construction in American texts. *<He was last seen getting off a train on Waterloo station.> 1992 Walters 71.*

**on some suburb(s)**  In *some suburb(s)*: This use of *on* is clearly exceptional; the *OED* text and CIC have many instances of *in* with *suburb(s)*, but no relevant example of *on*. The exceptional use is perhaps a blend with *live on the [Hampstead] Heath*. *<Residents of Hampstead Garden Suburb say that they live on the Suburb, perhaps to distinguish themselves from lesser breeds who live commonly in the suburbs.> 1990 Howard 105.*

**on income support**  With income support: In CIC British texts, *on* is 27 times more frequent than *with* in this construction. The construction does not occur in CIC American texts. *<A single mother on income support describes how she goes scrimping at markets and jumble sales.> 1994 Oct. 3 Times 47/3.*
**on some system, fault/leak** Fault/leak in *some system*: In CIC British texts, *in* is more frequent than *on* with this construction. CIC American texts have no instances of the construction with *on* and only 1 with *in*. <An electrician who allegedly failed to spot a *fault on a central heating system* faced a manslaughter charge.> 1989 Aug. 31 *Times* 1/2.

**on some table** At *some table* <I dined on High Table.> 2000 Caudwell 322.

**on tank maintenance** In tank maintenance: The construction is rare. <Mary and Terry have been putting on a brave front; they’ve a son on tank maintenance somewhere in the Saudi desert.> 1991 Feb. 23 *Telegraph Weekend Magazine* 8/1.

**on taxis** In taxis: The construction is rare. <Here are some ‘on’s that are current, and sound wrong, or rather novel, to me: . . . he rode on taxis (rather than buses). I should have used . . . in [taxis].> 1990 Howard 104–5.

**on + telephone** 1. *on a telephone number* At a number; by calling: This use is frequent in British and lacking in American. <I suggest you ring the dean on 4673140.> 1993 Greenwood 53. 2. *be on the telephone* Have a telephone: Judging from CIC, this sense is now rare in British, with only a few instances in the negative (*not on the telephone*). The sense “be using the telephone” is, however, common-core English. <Of course that is not including those who are not on the telephone.> 1977 Dec. 7 *Punch* 1144/1.

**on some temperature** At *some temperature* <If you pop a quilted bedspread in the freezer overnight, this will kill the dust mites and means you can wash it on a cooler temperature.> 2004 Jan. 4 *Sunday Times* Home 7 24/1.

**on-Thames, Henley-** This naming pattern is characteristically British. <Henley-on-Thames. . . Prepositions and place-names are two of the most erratic elements in the English vocabulary.> 1990 Howard 106.

**on a roasting tin** In a roasting pan: CIC has about equal numbers of British *in a roasting tin* and American *in a roasting pan*, and no instances of *on* for this construction in either variety. <Arrange the potatoes and lamb on a roasting tin.> 1994 Oct. 3 *Evening Standard* 60/3.

**on the top of some scale** At the top of *some scale*: CIC has no instances of *on* for this construction in either variety. <. . . senior registrars on the top of their salary scale will get an extra £400 taking their salaries to £27,210.> 1993 Feb. 13 *Daily Telegraph* 6/4.

**on tow** In *tow*: CIC has similar numbers of *in tow* from British and American texts. It is the overwhelmingly dominant form, used chiefly of people, but also of land and water vehicles and other objects. *Under tow* is rare in both varieties, used mainly, though not exclusively, of ships. *On tow* does not occur in CIC texts of either variety. <The Aberdeen coastguard said that the rig was on tow in rough seas.> 1990 Aug. 21 *Times* 16/7.

**on Youth Training** In *Youth Training*: CIC has twice as many instances of *on* as of *in* with *Youth Training scheme* in British texts. *Youth Training* does not occur in CIC American texts, but those texts have more than twice as many instances of *in + training* as of *on*. <Just 4 per cent of girls on *Youth Training*
were in jobs such as construction, engineering and computing.> 1994 Sept. 12 *Independent* 6/2.

**on one’s travels** In *one’s travels*: CIC has about 7 times as many instances of *on* as of *in* with *travels* in British texts. It has about twice as many instances of *in* as of *on* with *travels* in American texts. <She . . . wrote . . . a slim guide to the unusual water closets she had encountered on her travels.> 1985 Richardson 101.

**on present trends** This is a set phrase in British English; there are no instances of it in CIC American texts, which use instead *if/should present trends continue/persist*. <On present trends, the jobless total will top 3m in a year.> 1991 Mar. 17 *Sunday Times* 1/14/6.

**on Tyneside** CIC British texts have more than 12 times as many instances of *on Tyneside* as of *in Tyneside*, and 3 times as many of the latter as of *at Tyneside*. By contrast, CIC American texts have twice as many instances of *in Riverside* (a comparable place name) as of *at Riverside*, and none of *on Riverside*. <A startled horse trampled a bus driver . . . on Tyneside today.> 1989 Aug. 8 (Durham) *Evening Chronicle* 1/3.

**on the Underground** In *the subway*: CIC British texts have twice as many instances of *on* as of *in* with *Underground*; its American texts have 1.5 times as many instances of *in* as of *on* with *subway*. <Customers are reminded that smoking is not permitted (on any part of the *Underground* /–Tube announcement, Surbiton Station, Greater London, 14.6.00).> 2001 Apr. *English Today* 29/1.

**on some ward** In *some ward*: CIC British texts have about equal numbers of *on* and *in* with *ward*; its American texts have about 4 times as many instances of *in* as of *on*. <Nor did the deceptively cheerful lemon-coloured decor and ample supply of toys on the children’s ward raise his spirits one little bit.> 2002 Aird 94.

**on last year, up/down** Up/down from/over last year: In *up/down _____ last year*, the dominant form in CIC British texts is *on*, with *from* a distant second, and no instances of *over*. In CIC American texts, the dominant form is *from*, with *over* a very distant second, and no instances of *on*. <. . . 50 of its London staff would get a Christmas bonus of £1 million each, substantially up on last year.> 2000 Dec. 18 *Times* 1/2. <[income is] well down on last year.> 2002 Feb. 25 BBC1 evening news.

**on to, onto** The spelling *on to* is the older one, dating from the sixteenth century, but *onto* has been used since the eighteenth century. A distinction is now made between the two forms comparable to that of *in to* and *into*, that is, an adverbial particle followed by the preposition *to* and a compound preposition (Gilman 1994). In CIC’s British texts, the spaced spelling *on to* outnumbers the solid *onto* by 2.25 to 1; in its American texts, the ratio is more nearly even: 1.15 to 1. The spaced spelling sometimes gives rise to a confusion by which the adverb plus preposition is spelled solidly: <She was a precocious child, . . . the first of her family to go onto grammar school.> 1993 Feb. 15 *Daily Mail* 26/2.
<... they... had moved with their glasses [from inside the riverside pub] out on to the almost deserted decking.> 2003 James 128.

onto "chiefly Br in or into contact with <(been ~ him about the drains)” (LDEL). “especially Br E to get in contact with someone: Get onto the hospital and see if they can spare extra nurses” (LDOCE 1995).

onto a degree course Into a degree program <... if I were applying for a university place today I could get onto a degree course in engineering or even physics.> 1994 Sept. 21 Times 16/2.

onto a flat Into an apartment <The apartment has the benefit of a lift giving private access directly onto the flat.> 1988 Nov. Illustrated London News 71/3.

opposite (to) Opposite has been used alone as a preposition since the eighteenth century and is common-core English; however, it is more frequent in British than in American (Peters 2004, 396). A random sample of 250 British and 250 American instances of the form opposite in CIC found 50 in prepositional use in British texts and 25 in American texts (many of which involved statements about one actor playing opposite another, or one structure being opposite another on a street or river). CIC has 19.1 iptmw of opposite to in British texts and 2.6 in American texts. American seems to prefer other wordings for the concept: across from, different from, facing, on the other side of the street from, etc. <Lorton sat down opposite Dougal.> 1988 Taylor 97. <The woman... was so opposite to David’s expectation that he almost cried out in protest.> 1991 Charles 72.

out / out of The preposition out is used chiefly with door and window, but also in American with other objects occasionally and as “not quite part of the mainstream” (Gilman 1994). A study (Estling 1999) based on parts of four corpora reports that in collocation with door and window, the norm in British is out of and in American, out. Specifically, British uses out of twice as often as out (67 to 33 percent) whereas American uses out between 6 and 7 times as often as out of (87 to 13 percent). However, the dominant British form in spoken texts is out (72 percent), and in written texts out of (80 percent), indicating a striking divergence between written and spoken usage. In that study, out is favored in American English and in British speech; out of, in British written material. An examination of the frequency of the two prepositions with door and window as objects in CIC texts agreed with Estling’s general conclusions, but differed in the percentages. In CIC texts, both British and American prefer out over out of with door and window, but American more strikingly so: British by 68 to 32 percent (roughly 2 to 1) and American by 91 to 9 percent (roughly 10 to 1). There is also a notable difference with the two objects. In American, out is preferred with both door and window by fairly similar percentages (93 and 89 percent respectively); in British, the preference for out with door is less (70 percent), but with window, British preference is actually for out of (57 percent), thus making the object apparently a significant factor. With regard to writing versus speech, CIC data also agrees in general conclusions with the earlier study: American texts, both written and spoken,
have a preference for *out* by 90 and 94 percent, respectively; British spoken texts also prefer *out* by 91 percent, but British written texts prefer *out of* by 58 percent. – *out* Out of: “*Br E* used in a way which some people think is incorrect, to say that someone or something is removed from inside something, leaves somewhere etc: *Get out the car and push with the rest of us!*” (LDOCE 1995). In CIC British texts, *out the car* accounts for 8 percent and *out of the car* for 92 percent of the total uses; American texts have no instances of *out the car*. <... *out* the way, Fang... *out* the way, yeh dozy dog.> 2003 Rowling 372. – *out of* Some British uses of *out of* also seem less likely in American: 1. From: CIC British texts have about equal numbers of *out of* and *from* with *King’s Cross*; American texts have no instances of either preposition with *Grand Central*. <Consider this report in an English newspaper: “Princess Margaret travelled last night to Balmoral as an ordinary first class passenger in the Aberdonian night train *out of King’s Cross.*”> 1967 Frost and Jay 31. 2. After (hours): In CIC British texts, *out of hours* accounts for 21 percent and *after hours* for 79 percent of the total uses; American texts have no instances of *out of hours*. <The new council will reward further-education colleges for... keeping libraries open *out of hours.*> 1992 Dec. 5 *Economist* 61/3. 3. Out of (a team): In CIC British texts, *out of the team* accounts for more than 96 percent and *off the team* for less than 4 percent of the total uses; American texts have no instances of *out of the team*. <He missed two practice sessions and now he’s *out of* the team.> 1995 CIDE. Cf. in *some team* above. 4. Beyond: In CIC British texts, *out of all recognition* accounts for 28 percent and *beyond all recognition* for 72 percent of the total uses; American texts have no instances of *out of all recognition*. <If the situation did not improve *out of all recognition*, it did, nevertheless, at last improve – but very, very slowly.> 1993 Mason 165.

*outside* Outside of: These two related forms have been the subject of usage controversy (Gilman 1994, 702–3); *outside* has been said to be “overwhelmingly the normal use in BrE” (Burchfield 1996, 562); yet *outside of* has also been said to be “established in British English, and used across a range of prose styles for the general reader” (Peters 2004, 401). In random samples from CIC, British texts had approximately equal numbers of *outside* and *outside of* (49 and 51 percent, respectively); American texts had slightly more than a third as many instances of *outside* as of *outside of* (26 and 74 percent, respectively). <... a service station *outside* Hull.> 2003 June 14 *Times* 26/1.

*over* 1. Across; on the other side of: <Most of us probably look at the house *over* the road more often than our own.> 2003 June 21 *Times Weekend* 12/1. 2. Over/across to: <“Are you in this evening, Mr. Daley?” asked Morse. [¶] “Wha’ – I usually go *over* the pub for a jar or two at the weekends but – ”> 1992 Dexter 119. 3. Above; more than: <He admired John O’Hara *over* all writers.> 1986 Oct. 30 *Times* 18/5. – *over the odds* Above (the) average: In CIC, *above average* is the more common expression in both varieties and of approximately equal frequency in both, but British has almost half as many
instances of over the odds, and American has none. <Health-conscious consumers are paying over the odds for “inferior” imported cooking oil.> 1993 Feb. 13 Daily Telegraph 5/1.

over so many floors  On so many floors: CIC British texts include 5 times as many examples as American texts do, and the latter all refer to spreading or scattering something, not to area measurement. <Boasting 13,957 square foot, over five floors, the store will house the famous footwear alongside accessories and men’s and women’s clothing.> 1994 Sept. 21 Times 17/3.

over that score, lose no sleep Lose no sleep on that score <They knew their standards were almost anachronistic, probably “pi”, but they lost no sleep over that score.> 1963 Ashford 44.

over a season  During a season: In CIC texts, during is more common with seasons in both varieties; but British has 6 times as many instances of over as American does. <We get housewives with kids who . . . need six weeks off over summer.> 1994 Sept. 24 Guardian Careers 3/2.

over the top  Exaggeratedly, unreasonably: In CIC, this expression is 2.75 times more frequent in British texts than in American. <The widow of one of the most famous alcoholics of the 20th century behaving a touch over the top as her husband’s coffin made its way six foot down seems to me pretty small beer in the great scheme of unacceptable behaviour.> 1994 Sept. 17 Times Magazine 3/4.

over to someone  Up to someone: As an expression meaning “the responsibility of,” up to is common-core English; CIC British, but not American, texts also have over to as an occasional variant (approximately 0.9 iptmw). <But now it is over to someone else to complete the task.> 1991 Feb. 9 Daily Telegraph Weekend 20/5.

past an hour  After an hour: In CIC, with hours (including noon and midnight), British texts have past in 31 percent of the instances and after in 69 percent; American texts have past in 16 percent of the instances and after in 84 percent. “In American English after is often used instead of past (e.g. ten after six)” (Swan 1995, 582).

qua  Disregarding sine qua non, which has about equal use in the two varieties, qua is twice as frequent in CIC British texts as in American. <Anita Roddick, supremo of the eco-friendly Body Shop, has written her memoirs, Body and Soul, due out in September. However, there is precious little in the book about Roddick qua woman.> 1991 Feb. 17 Sunday Times Books 7/5.

round  Around: In combined prepositional and adverbial uses, round outnumbers around 7:6 in the British LOB corpus; in the American Brown corpus, around outnumbered round 40:1 (Peters 2004, 48). CIC classifies 954.6 iptmw of round in British texts as prepositional and 59.3 in American texts (compared with 2561.1 iptmw of prepositional around in British texts and 2883.3 in American texts). British notably uses round for circular movement or position (walk round the car, sit round the table) and for everywhere (look round the house), but uses around for indefinite movement or position in the sense “here
and there in” (wander/stand around the place) (Swan 1995, 53): <And so he [comedian Steve Coogan] turned down the naff jobs and concentrated on a new, character-based routine and took it around arts centres.> 1994 Sept. 14–21 *Time Out* 21/3. American uses *around* more widely. Although the number of senses listed for a word in dictionaries may represent the style of the lexicographer as much as the semantics of the language being described, it is noteworthy that MW has 7 senses or subsenses for the preposition *round* but only 2 for the preposition *round*, whereas NODE has 5 for *around* and 8 for *round*. 1. Around <The boyfriend greased *round* her by giving back all her things – and the money he’d nicked. . . . So she decided not to do him for assault.> 1996 Neel 45. 2. Around to <My father . . . has gone *round* Pandora’s house to borrow a bottle of spirits.> 1985 Townsend 151. 3. On <The Thurso Boy . . . cheeked two bobbies in a cafe and one of them gave him . . . a cuff *round* the back of the head.> 1989 Sept. 6 *Evening Standard* 7/2. – *round the twist* Eccentric <And she is a bit *round the twist.*> 1991 Neel 121. Cf. §§ 5.1.4 ALL-ROUND and 6.1 ALL ROUND and ROUND.

*save (for)* Except (for) <However, the party agents, middle-aged men with hairy tweeds and bad teeth, who read nothing *save for* the *Daily Mail*, always insisted on holding public meetings.> 1991 Critchley 54.

*saving* Except <He had done the round so often that he didn’t need a clock to know that, *saving* Christmas and a General Election, he would finish his . . . delivery at a quarter to eight in the furthest farmhouse.> 1968 Aird 6.

*since (when)* Since (which time): The sequence *since when* is about 5 times more frequent in British than American according to CIC. Two of its uses are as an interrogative and as a relative. In British texts, the relative is 2.5 times more frequent than the interrogative; in American texts, the interrogative is about 5.5 times more frequent than the relative. (Cf. also *CGEL* 15.29n, 57.) <. . . he gained his BA in Fine Art from 1963 to 1989, *since when* he has devoted himself to his painting.> 1993 *Artist’s and Illustrator’s Magazine* (BNC).

*till* Until; to: In CIC, British and American texts have roughly the same number of instances of *until*, but British has about 5 times more instances of the preposition *till* than does American. <She’s in the casino *till* nearly dawn most nights.> 1992 Walters 141. Cf. § 9.2 TILL.

*to* *To* is the fourth most frequent word in the LOB corpus (after the, of, and and) and the second most frequent preposition. Its British–American differences involve cooccurrence with objects.

*to budget* Within budget: CIC has 0.4 iptmw of this use of the phrase in British texts and none in American. <Thus, thirdly, any given National production is under that much greater pressure to keep *to budget*; which Lear has duly done.> 1991 Feb. *Evening Standard* magazine 53/3.

*to camera* On camera: CIC has 4.3 iptmw of this use of *to camera* in British texts and none in American. It has 8.1 iptmw of *on camera* in British texts and 23.1 in American. <The resulting work is strange and disturbing: a sequence of
oddballs wearing wigs and masks confess their innermost secrets to camera. > 1998 Jan. 3–9 Times Metro 22/2.

to commission  On commission: CIC has 0.3 iptmw of to commission in British texts and none in American. It has 0.2 of work on commission in British texts and 1.1 in American. <You have to remember that they were professional painters, they worked to commission.> 1993 Smith 91.

to contract, out  Up for bid: CIC has 0.5 iptmw of out to contract in British texts and none in American. It has no instances of for bid in British texts and 3.3 iptmw in American, often in the combination up for bid. <London Regional Transport...has put many of its other routes out to contract.> 1989 Autumn Illustrated London News 26/2.

to a date  Through a date: For indicating inclusive time periods, British and American differ notably in five ways. British characteristically uses the following four constructions (the figures are iptmw in CIC British texts, followed by those in American texts after a virgule): from [a month] to [a later period of time] 45.9 / 22.3; from [a period of time] to the end of [another period of time] 3.5 / 0.5; from [a period of time] through to [another period of time] 3.1 / 0.6; from [a period of time] to [another period of time] inclusive 0.6 / 0.0. The characteristic American construction is from [a period of time] through [another period of time]: American 53.7 iptmw, British 1.3. <But even the news that annual wage rises to August had reached 9.25 per cent did little to disturb the equanimity of the party faithful.> 1988 Oct. 16 Sunday Telegraph 23/5. Cf. FROM A MONTH above.

to a design  In/from a design <Three generations have worn the same style [of ring] to an old family design.> 1994 Sept. 25 Sunday Times Magazine 48/4.

to some direction  At/by/following/according to some direction <But they were all easy-mannered, answering Sarah’s questions readily as they placed files in piles to her direction.> 1993 Neel 66.

to form  According to form <... it was Lewis’s job that day to ferry the chief inspector around; doubtless, too (if things went to form) to treat him to the odd pint or two.> 1993 Dexter 46.

to hand  1. On/at hand; available: In CIC texts, to hand is about 1.5 times more frequent in British texts than in American; on hand is about twice as frequent in American texts as in British; at hand is about equally frequent in both varieties. <Having your national insurance number to hand will speed up the process.> 2003 June 21 Times Money 6/8. 2. In hand <By ten past nine the entrance and drive-way of the Grand Hotel had filled up with eager Tories, ... conferences agendas to hand.> 1992 Critchley 76. Cf. AT HAND above.

to hour  Of: In expressions like a quarter to/of nine, British CIC texts have to more than 7 times as often as American texts do. American texts have of 15 times as often as British texts do; however, British uses of rarely (0.1 iptmw), so of in the American construction is minor (1.5 iptmw). Moreover, other prepositions (before, till) in this construction are also of minor or negligible importance in British and are unrecorded in CIC American texts. Thus it
appears that American prefers other constructions for telling time, such as 8:45, which constructions are about 1.4 times more frequent in American than in British CIC texts. <[traveler on platform:] Train to King’s Cross? . . . Leaves when? [traveler on train:] Quarter to.> 1990 Jan. 29 conversation at the Cambridge station.

to interview  For an interview; to be interviewed <Local Tory worthies often harbour ambitions to be selected as their association’s candidate; parish pump courtesies dictate that many of these are called to interview, but few are, in fact, ever chosen.> 1991 Feb. 9 Daily Telegraph 10/1.

to a meal  At/for a meal; Common-core English collocations are invite to dinner, sit down to dinner, etc. Others exist in British English; e.g., entertain to dinner, for which American is more likely to have entertain at dinner or a completely different construction, such as invite for dinner. <They had been a large party to dinner.> 1956 Robinson 27. Cf. § 11.1.1.2 ENTERTAIN SOMEONE TO A MEAL.

to some meeting  For some meeting; to go to some meeting <Mr Clarke, Education Secretary, was leaving his office to the Cabinet meeting when the attack happened.> 1991 Feb. 8 Daily Telegraph 2/6.

to one’s peak  At one’s peak <They believe a person needs the right environment to perform to his peak.> 1989 July 19 Daily Mail 7/5–6.

to someplace  Someplace: CIC has 0.4 iptmw of go someplace (without to) in British texts, and 7.1 in American texts (cf. also Swan 1995, 452).

to plan  As planned: CIC has 5.2 iptmw of go to plan in British texts, and none in American texts. It has 1 iptmw of go as planned in British texts, and 6.9 in American texts. <Everything was working to plan.> 1989 Quinton 261.

to ransom  For ransom: CIC has 2.5 iptmw of hold to ransom in British texts and 0.2 in American texts. It has 0.5 iptmw of for ransom in British texts and 3.9 in American texts. <The gazunderer is making a conscious decision to hold somebody to ransom.> 1989 July 30 Sunday Times A-9/4.

to schedule  On schedule: The ratio between the prepositional phrases to sched-ule and on schedule in CIC British texts is 1:10, and in American texts, 1:18; moreover, in the American texts, nearly two-thirds of the instances of to sched-ule are according to schedule, which represents less than one-third of the British instances. <. . . sailings . . . had operated to schedule.> 1986 Aug. 30 Times 2/3.

to the highest/higher standard(s)  This expression is almost 6 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American. <The work of the carpenter . . . has been . . . all to the highest standard.> 1990 Sept. 1 Times (Saturday) Review 31/3–4.

to a timetable, work  This construction is rare in British, but has no instances in CIC American texts. <During the long vacation both worked to a gruelling timetable.> 1987 Archer 167–8.

to wife  As a wife: This phrase echoes Leviticus 21.14: “he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife”; the construction, which comes from Old English, is
used archaically in British English; there are no instances in CIC American texts. <Be glad you’ve got Jean and not Lee Garfield to wife.> 1989 Quinton 239.

towards Toward: Towards in LOB outnumbers towards in Brown by 318 to 64; toward in Brown outnumbers toward in LOB by 386 to 14 (Hofland and Johansson 1982, 537). Christian Mair (1997, 144) reports the following ratios for towards:toward in limited portions of the 1961 LOB and Brown corpora: 45:3 and 6:67; and in the 1991 or 1992 FLOB and Frown updates: 32:0 and 2:41. Their ratios in CIC are British 14:1 and American 1:4.4. These figures indicate that towards is predominantly British and toward American on a continuing basis. <‘Over here,’ says Helen, taking her arm and guiding her towards the downstairs cloakroom.> 2001 Lodge 136.

under A few collocational differences distinguish British and American use.

under one’s face Under one’s nose is common-core English. CIC has 0.3 iptmw of under one’s face in British texts and none in American texts. <Should your partner fail to maintain the level of devotion you consider essential, these yellowing fragments of newsprint should be . . . thrust under his face.> 1991 Feb. 11 Ms London 4/2.

under offer CIC has 0.3 iptmw of under offer in British texts and 0.2 of sense 2 below (none of sense 1) in American texts. 1. Contract pending; with an offer received, but awaiting the signing of a contract <Its “For Sale” board is a hopeless bit of cardboard . . . . On it he has written, “Under Offer: £172,000”>. 1990 Aug. 18 Daily Telegraph Weekend 14/2. 2. Available for sale <Superb offices under offer> 1999 March sign at a Hampstead estate agency.

under place name <Newcastle-under-Lyme. Prepositions and place-names are two of the most erratic elements in the English vocabulary: if you try to find logic in them when they are combined, you will surely go mad.> 1990 Howard 106.


underneath the down Next to a low hill: Neither the preposition nor the noun is used in these senses in American English. <Three hours later they dropped down a muddy lane into Cocking, another hamlet underneath the down.> 1940 Shute 143.

up This prepositional use corresponds to an optional adverbial up followed by various prepositions of location. 1. (Up) at <He wanted nothing to do with his father’s brick semi up the Liverpool bypass.> 1993 Greenwood 20. 2. (Up) to “Br nonstandard (up) to <going ~ the West End>” (LDEL). <He’s going up the post office to cash his giro.> 1991 Glaister 21. 3. (Up) on <The dog . . . jumped up the policeman’s tunic with its muddy paws.> 1985 Townsend 15. – up the spout Pregnant: This phrase has several other senses in British English: “pawned”; “useless or ruined”; “lost”; “dead”; (of a bullet) “in a gun
barrel ready for shooting.” CIC has 1.98 iptmw of the phrase (in various senses) in British texts and one instance in an American text, in which it is glossed “vanished.” <Harriet described her boyfriend . . . and the fright they’d had in May when Harriet had thought she was up the spout.> 2001 Drabble 235. Cf. down above.

upon Christian Mair (1997, 145) reports that, in limited portions of the 1961 LOB and Brown corpora and of their 1991–1992 FLOB and Frown updates, upon was more common in American than in British use at the earlier time but has declined in frequency in both varieties, and so much more in American that now the two varieties show no significant difference in its use. CIC, however, shows a difference: whereas British and American have similar frequencies of the preposition on, British has almost twice as many instances of upon as American (2105.8 versus 1112.6 iptmw); because on is so much more frequent (more than 62,000 iptmw in each variety), American upon/on occur at the respective percentages of 2/98, and British upon/on at 3/97.

upon some bottom On some bottom: Upon here is rare and may be obsolete. <. . . the discovery of a terribly battered car upon the concrete bottom of an empty dry dock, with two dead naval officers in it.> 1940 Shute 60.


upon some side On some side: CIC British texts have about 5 times as many instances of upon (some) side as American texts do. <A middle-aged lady . . . sat opposite to her upon the far side of the fireplace.> 1940 Shute 213.

upon the telephone On; by telephone: Upon here is rare and may be obsolete. <I’ll get in touch with you upon the telephone after I’ve been to Emsworth.> 1940 Shute 162.

upsides Beside: CIC has 0.4 iptmw of upsides in British texts and none in American texts. <I could tell tales of being upsides Terry Biddlecombe on Fearless Fred at Warwick [racecourse].> 1999 Mar. 16 Independent Review 4/6.

with Several collocations with this preposition involve British–American differences.

with some bank, deposit something Deposit something in a bank: CIC has 0.5 iptmw in British texts and 0.1 in American texts. For the construction using in instead of with, it has 0.3 iptmw in British texts and 0.8 in American texts. <I’ll deposit it with your bank.> 1985 Bingham 116.

with next/last time period, start Start next/last time period: CIC has 0.5 iptmw of the construction using with in British texts and none in American texts. For the construction lacking with, it has 19.9 iptmw in British texts and 32.1 in American texts. <Interviews should have started with last April.> 1989 Sept. 10 Sunday Telegraph 7/8.

with effect from In effect from: CIC has 4.4 iptmw using the preposition with in British texts and 0.1 in American texts. For the construction using in instead of with, it has no instances in British texts and 0.6 iptmw in American texts.
The following members of staff have been promoted to chairs, with effect from October 1. 1990 Aug. 22 Times 12/7.

**with it** As well; in addition: The construction in this sense is listed in NODE, but not in MW. <She’s a pretty lady and fast with it.> 1991 Critchley 201.

**with reference to** CIC British texts have 2.3 times as many instances of with reference to as of in reference to; American texts have 1.4 times as many of in reference to as of with reference to (the latter primarily in academic texts). A sampling of British texts collected by Algeo and Read for lexical purposes has with reference to outnumbering in reference to by 3:1. <It first appeared with reference to the Iraq dossier.> 2003 July 9 Daily Express 27/1.

**with/in regard(s) to** CIC texts show a British preference for with versus in of about 4.5 to 1, but an American preference of little more than 2 to 1. British preference for singular regard is about 19.4 to 1, and American preference is also for the singular, but only about 4.3 to 1. Therefore, although both varieties have more instances of with regard to than of the other three options combined, it accounts for 82 percent of all the British forms, but only 68 percent of the American forms.

**within the hour** In less than an hour: CIC has 4.4 iptmw of within the hour in British texts and 2.0 in American texts. It has 1.9 iptmw of in less than an hour in British texts and 2.8 in American texts. <He hobbled and hopped across to the telephone and rang Lewis, and within the half hour he was sitting disconsolately in the accident room of the Radcliffe Infirmary.> 1975 Dexter 79.

**without** “Outside of, beyond (in various senses): opp. to within prep. Now only literary or arch.” (OED). <Without the house and within there was much mellow opulence on view.> 1973 Innes 113.

### 8.2 Omission of any preposition

#### 8.2.1 In collocation with a following object

The omission of a preposition in the following citations leaves what would have been its object as a noun phrase functioning adverbially.

**bottom** At the bottom <... opinion polls regularly place them bottom of the royal league.> 1989 July 25 Evening Standard 22/3.

**care of** In care of “In the address of a letter or package ‘care of’—. in care of (US): = care of” (OED s.v. care n. 4.a).

**century** With a shorter period of time (year, month, week), omitting any preposition is common-core English, but with century it is more typically British. In CIC, British texts have approximately 2.8 times as many instances of both last century and this century used adverbially as do American texts. – last century In/during/of the last century <Nash got involved in the canal scheme early last century when he became entranced by the idea of boats sailing through
his newly-designed Regent’s Park.> 1986 Aug. 28 *Hampstead Advertiser* 8/1.
– this century In/during/of this century <Our report concluded that up to 200,000 houses a year were likely to be built this century in England and Wales.> 1990 Aug. 24 *Times* 11/5.

corner, fight one’s Defend one’s interest: This idiom is British; CIC has 2.8 iptmw of it in British texts and 0.1 in American texts (specifically in a Cable News Network report, where British influence is likely). If an American version existed, one would expect fight for one’s corner. <If he hadn’t seen him with his back against the wall fighting his corner, . . . he might well have got the impression that the DCI was a touch soft-headed.> 1996 Graham 220.

dead, this At/on this end: A sampling of CIC American texts produced no instances of adverbial this end; a sampling of British texts did. <. . . it wasn’t Beevers I should have been worried about – it was who Beevers was dealing with this end.> 1985 Bingham 142.

fashion, a valedictory In a valedictory fashion <. . . he actually shook hands with me a valedictory fashion.> 1983 Innes 70.

front In front <It was looks that first led her front of screen when she was a researcher on *Wogan.*> 1991 Mar. 9 *Telegraph Weekend Magazine* 18/1.

late, too Until too late <No one could talk to them about things like that. If I could have done, I might have been able to get an abortion. I left it too late.> 1987 Bawden 82.

latest At the latest <Only if he doesn’t fit me in at half-past one sharp, he can’t fit me in at all. So that means leaving ten past one latest.> 1985 Bingham 19–20.

period, this In/during this period <The vendor is asked to undertake not to accept any other bids this period.> 1987 Apr. 20 *Times* 18/8. Cf. CENTURY above.

side, some On some side: In random samples of 100 instances of either side from both British and American CIC texts, the British instances included 19 in which either side functioned adverbially without a preposition, and the American instances included 2. <Kingsley Shacklebolt and a tough-looking wizard . . . were positioned either side of the door like guards.> 2003 Rowling 538 (*US ed.* on either side).

time, a At a time <In any event, concentration was limited to ten seconds a time.> 1994 Fyfield 9.

weather, this In this weather <“The other two were in a little rubber boat.” [¶]“Too bloody cold for that this weather.”> 1940 Shute 33. – all weathers In all (kinds sorts of) weather <He sits out there all weathers now.> 1985 Mortimer 317.

8.2.2 In collocation with a preceding word

born year Born in year <Beatrix, born 1866, was a plain and sickly child, starved of companionship.> 1986 Oct. 30 *Times* 15/1.
buttered A proverbial expression with three grammatical variations is (on) which side one’s bread is/ was buttered (on). The variations are in the presence and location of the preposition on. 1. Without the preposition on: <1863 Kingsley Water Bab. 289 He . . . understood so well which side his bread was buttered, and which way the cat jumped.> OED s.v. cat n. 13.e. 2. With on at the end of the clause: <Brenda Maddox has a funny story about the American publisher of her biography of James Joyce’s wife, Nora: [block quote] Not only were they trying to copy edit me, they were trying to edit Joyce. He’s got this line: “Earth knows which side her bread is buttered.” And this editor came back with a query, “Surely he meant ‘buttered on’?”> 1990 Critchfield 251. 3. With on before the relative: <1834 Macaulay in Trevelyan Life I. 373, I quite enjoy the thought of appearing in the light of an old hunks who knows on which side his bread is buttered.> OED s.v. light n. 9. The BNC has 7 instances of the expression and CIC British texts 5 instances, which are, respectively: 4 and 2 of which side one’s bread is buttered; 2 and 2 of which side one’s bread is buttered on; 1 and 1 of on which side one’s bread is buttered. CIC American texts have only 1 instance, of on which side one’s bread is buttered; despite that evidence, the most usual American form is doubtless with the terminal preposition, which side one’s bread is buttered on, as indicated by the reaction of the American editor under 2. above.

fortnight day Two weeks from day <President Mitterrand’s daughter-in-law Elizabeth Mitterand is standing in the French senate elections a fortnight today.> 1989 Sept. 10 Sunday Telegraph 8/7.

half hour Half an hour after hour; half past hour; e.g., half eleven = 11:30: A search of CIC produced some 441 instances in British texts and none in American texts. <Make him bring you home by half eleven – anyhow, by midnight.> 1940 Shute 136. <I went in just before half twelve.> 1996 Graham 209.

month day Month from day <First rehearsal call – one month today.> 1987 Apr. 16 Hampstead Advertiser 14/3.

second last Second to/from last (cf. common-core second best): A search of CIC produced 27 instances in British texts and 2 in American texts. <Even further behind was the fancied second favourite, Shadeed, . . . which bumbled home second last in a field of 14.> 1985 June 6 Times 1/3. Cf. § 8.1 but and from last, § 11.3.1 last but.

sides, both Both sides of <I say, have you considered acquiring all the rights to Noel Coward? . . . I should nobble him, if nobbleable, on both sides the Atlantic: if I were a publisher.> 1938 Lawrence 696.

week day Week from day: CIC has 6.0 iptmw in British texts and none in American (cf. CamGEL 1562). <I've got cakes to bake – the fête is a week today, you know!> 1991 Charles 76. Cf. § 17.4 day week.

year last time period Year ago/before last time period: CIC has 0.3 iptmw in British texts and none in American texts. <We presented him with one [a gold watch] a year last December for general good work.> 1986 Clark 41.
year next time period Year from time period: CIC has no instances in either British or American texts. <If I want to search Wytham Woods I’ll bloody well search ’em till a year next Friday.> 1992 Dexter 93–4.

8.3 Omission of the prepositional object

The use of prepositions without an expressed object, when the implicit object is expressed earlier in the clause, has been reported with such examples as My socks have got holes in (them), I’d like a piece of toast with butter on (it), All the trees have got blossom on (them), and He was carrying a box with cups in (it) (Swan 1995, 174, 433). CIC has sporadic instances of this construction in its British spoken corpus: <... the speech therapist suggested ... that she made flashcards with letters on.> 1998 CIC spoken corpus. No American instances have been located.

8.4 Prepositional phrase versus noun adjunct
captain of games Team captain: CIC has 0.1 iptmw of captain of games in British texts and none in American texts. It has 6.3 iptmw of team captain in British texts and 5.6 in American texts. <He became Captain of Games in my house [at Eton] and used the position to pick on me unjustly, more than once.> 1994 Dickinson 15.

hall of residence Residence hall: CIC has 3.0 iptmw of hall of residence in British texts and none in American texts. It has no instances of residence hall in British texts and 2.7 iptmw in American texts. <They ... went off ... towards the hall of residence.> 1993 Neel 123.

8.5 Order of numbers with by

In specifying a two-dimensional size, British tends to put the larger size first, and American the small size. For the three pairs of dimensions 4 by 2 versus 2 by 4, 5 by 3 versus 3 by 5, and 6 by 4 versus 4 by 6, CIC British texts have 2.0 iptmw of the larger size first and 0.3 of the smaller size first; American texts have 0.1 of the larger size first and 2.7 of the smaller size first.

<The most common size is $28 \times 18$ cm ($11 \times 7$ in), but it is also useful to have a slightly larger size, $33 \times 23$ cm ($13 \times 9$ in).> 1986 Pettigrew 19. <We’re still working in the conventional manner with six by four cards.> 1988 Edmund Weiner, co-editor Oxford English Dictionary, at MLA in New Orleans Lexicography Discussion Group. <I ... send a written-up entry on a 3” $\times$ 5” flimsy (we say 5” by 3”!) back to her for eventual keying in to her machine.> 1989 July 25 private letter from British lexicographer Paul Beale.
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9.1 Coordinating conjunctions

_and_ 1. When numbers such as _310_ are written out or spoken, they may be either _three hundred and ten_ or _three hundred ten_ (Swan 1995, 385). In random samples of 1000 tokens of the word _hundred_ from British texts, CIC’s ratio of _hundred and_ followed by another number to _hundred_ followed directly by another number was 329:10; from American texts, the ratio was 149:42. In both national varieties, the norm is _hundred and_, but in American there is a greater tendency to omit _and_. 2. Before the introduction of decimal currency, the expression _X (shillings) and X (pence)_, with optional omission of _shilling(s) or of both currency terms_, was common. The pattern is now historical only. <Diva scuttled away to the other table without even waiting to be paid the sum of _one and threepence_ which she had won from Elizabeth.> 1931 Benson 216. <Did you know, in 1958 you could get bed and breakfast in a one-star hotel in Morecambe for _seven-and-six_ a night?> 1988 Lodge 174.

Certain paired-word collocations with _and_ have different preferred orders for the paired words in British and American.

_board and lodging_ The American analog is _room and board_. In CIC texts, each national variety has only sporadic tokens of the term regularly used in the other variety, often with reference to life in the other country. <workhouse . . . a public institution in which the destitute of a parish received _board and lodging_ in return for work.> NODE, s.v. _workhouse_.

egg(s) and bacon; e&b  _Bacon and eggs_ is the norm in common-core English; but _egg(s) and bacon_ accounts for 31 percent of the tokens in CIC British texts and only 23 percent in American. <I myself only rarely tuck into _e&b_ [eggs and bacon] by choice.> 1988 June Illustrated London News 80/4. <By two in the morning Annabelle was eating _egg and bacon_ in a huge kitchen.> 1996 Neel 10.

_on and off_ Off and on: _On and off_ is the norm in common-core English, but accounts for 90 percent of the occurrences in CIC British texts and for only
69 percent in American. <[They] have been phoning me on and off all day with questions about the house.> 2001 Lodge 86.

**out and in** In and out (of) is the norm in common-core English, but out and in has sporadic representation in CIC British texts and none in American. <[Glaswegian Jimmy Boyle:] ...we kids were out and in each other’s houses as if they were our own.> 1990 Critchfield 174.

**there and then** Then and there: There and then is the choice by more than 2:1 in CIC British texts; then and there is the choice by more than 4:1 in American texts. <Bernard made a telephone call there and then to the Chaplain’s office at St Joseph’s, and arranged it.> 1991 Lodge 305.

British prefers asyndetic compounds in some cases.

**macaroni cheese** Macaroni and cheese: CIC British texts prefer the conjunction-less form by nearly 3:1; it is unknown in American texts. <...such larder standbys as... macaroni cheese.> 2003 June 12 Times 9/1.

Double coordinating conjunctions and nor and but nor are characteristic of British, corresponding to common-core English and neither and but neither. CIC has 9.8 iptmw of and nor versus 3.4 of but nor in British texts, and 0.6 versus 0.4 of the two forms respectively in American texts. Those figures accord with the Algeo corpus, in which and nor outnumbers but nor by 2 to 1. Cf. also nor more, or nor below.

**and nor** And neither <You haven’t had supper and nor have I.> 2003 James 144.

**but nor** But neither <Mrs Pargeter didn’t know much about computers, but nor apparently did the reception staff at Brotherton Hall.> 1992 Brett 47.

**neither** When it serves as a conjunction between sentences, neither is typically followed by inverted operator-subject order: A: They don’t gamble. B: Neither do I. However, it may exceptionally occur in British English with subject-operator order. CIC had no examples of this exceptional order in a random sample of 100 tokens of sentence-connector neither in all texts, nor in a random sample of 85 tokens in spoken texts. <Neither he will, my dear, if he knows it.> 1935 Firth 310. Cf. no more 2, nor 3 below.

**no more** Neither; nor 1. Used to introduce a sentence with operator-subject order that responds to a preceding negative sentence (CGEL 10.58n). In a randomly selected sample of 1000 examples of sentence-initial No more, CIC had 12 tokens of this construction. <He... doesn’t see much of her. No more do her father and mother for that matter.> 1994 Symons 28. 2. Used similarly, but with subject-operator order (CGEL 10.58n). In a randomly selected sample of 1000 examples of sentence-initial No more, CIC had 6 tokens of this construction, 5 of them from nineteenth-century fiction. <No more it was.> 1981 Innes 16. Cf. neither, nor 3.

**nor** As a clause coordinator, nor is slightly more characteristic of British than of American. CIC has 278.2 iptmw of clause initial Nor in British texts and
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200.7 in American texts. 1. Neither (contrasting the subjects of two clauses) <"And she won’t like the fact that Tolby’s involved.” [¶] “Nor do I,” Lorton snarled. > 1988 Taylor 66. 2. And . . . not (either) (emphatically contrasting the predicators of two clauses) <‘In referring to Jock Beevers’ cricket accomplishments, you said his school batting average had never been surpassed.’ [¶] ‘Nor has it.’ > 1985 Bingham 10–1. 3. followed by noninverted subject-operator order < . . . that blasted baby feels his parents do not understand him as she does. Nor do we, I’m afraid. > 1993 Neel 78. Cf. neither, no more 2.

nor more And . . . not either/anymore: This is a rare construction; neither the BNC nor CIC has any examples of it. <She says you’re not yourself. Nor more you are.> 1988 Lodge 316.

only As a conjunction, only is common-core English in the sense “but, however, except,” as in We intended to be there. Only it rained. However, in the following example, its use was sufficiently odd to cause the American publisher to omit the word altogether: <Madam Hooch? Is it OK if Harry has the Firebolt back? Only we need to practise.> 1999 Rowling 188 (US ed. [deleted]).

or nor Or not: CIC has 0.4 iptmw of the form. <Believe it or nor, they even buy in bottles of midges.> 1999 magazine CIC.

For the pseudo coordination in They’ve been and (gone and), cf. § 1.4.2.

9.2 Subordinating conjunctions

Like is used as a subordinating conjunction in both British and American English as an alternative to as in sentences such as You talk like my mother (does) and to as if/though in sentences such as You look like you need a drink. Though sometimes castigated, the use is standard. It has been reported as somewhat more widespread and less exclusively informal in American use than in British (CamGEL 1158).

The conjunctive use of other than in the sense “except” is entered without comment by MW and dated to 1605, but it is sometimes criticized (Kahn and Ilson 1985, 414–5; Gilman 1994, 699–700) or is said to sound awkward to British ears (Peters 2004, 399). Nevertheless it occurs in British use: <The Yard does not break down the cost of individual murders other than by overtime.> 1993 Feb. 3 Times 3/3.

Some subordinating conjunctions with characteristic British uses are listed below.

as 1. That <If he’s there, [come] back into the office and tell Trixie as I sent you.> 1991 Dickinson 41. 2. As it <Well, sir, that’s as may be.> 1983 Innes 93. 3. as was As he/she was <I got a call from Elsie Prosser. Elsie Inglefield as was.> 2001 Mortimer 80.

cos Because: The American spelling is ’cause. CIC has 2077.4 iptmw of cos in British texts and 0.3 in American texts. <I am sure he won’t mind me letting you know, ’cos it’s what he always says.> 2002 Sept. Square 26.
directly  As soon as (CGEL 14.12, 15.25; Kjellmer 1997) <I cycled back home here directly work was finished.> 2000 Granger 17.

for all (that)  Despite the fact that <You look at two respectable women in their eighties, but on the posh side for all they’re skint.> 2000 Granger 308.


in case  If; lest: *In case* has two uses, depending on the priority in time of the main and subordinate clauses. In *Have an extinguisher in your house in case a fire breaks out*, the main clause has temporal priority and the subordinate clause is a future contingency; and *in case* = “lest” or “as an anticipation of the possible event that.” In *Use the fire extinguisher in case a fire breaks out*, the main clause is a result following upon the prior condition of the subordinate clause; and *in case* = “if.” The Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English has more than twice as many tokens of the “if” sense of *in case* as of the “lest” sense. Among 50 examples in the BNC, none had the “if” sense. The “lest” sense is the norm in British; American has both senses. <It’s typical of Ron Gladstone to keep it to himself in case we were upset.> 2000 Granger 188.

Cf. § 8.1 in case of.

lest  In the mid twentieth century, *lest* was apparently 5 times more frequent in American English than in British, the ratio in the Brown and LOB corpora being 17:3. CIC, however, now shows *lest* to be actually more frequent in British use than in American. It has 53.7 iptmw in British texts, mainly fiction, and 32.6 in American texts, mainly academic.

no matter  Even though: The common-core use of *no matter* as a subordinating conjunction is in the sense “without regard to; irrespective of” (*MW*), followed by a relative or conjunction (*how, what, when, where, whether, which, why, or more rarely if, that, or though*), as in *We will come, no matter what the weather is* or *We will come no matter if it rains* (or as a preposition followed by a noun phrase, as in *We will come, no matter the hour*). The following use is apparently a reduction of the rare common-core conjunctive use with *if, that, or though*, having the sense “even though”: <Frederick Clinton was too important to waste his time merely putting the boot into the CIA, no matter it was a recognised international sport.> 1975 Price 166. CIC has 1 such token out of a randomly selected 1000 British examples with *no matter*: <No matter they had, or aspired to, Bentleys and Rolls and MGs and Rovers . . . it was somehow too vulgar.> 1989. A comparable American sample contained no tokens of the construction.

not but what  Granted that: The *OED* says it “often occurs . . . and is still dial. and colloq.” *MW* lists it without comment in a different sense (“that . . . not”), as in *I don’t know but what I will go.* <“Tain’t so difficult to make a ship the way he done it. . . . Not but what he made a good job of it.> 1940 Shute 137.
Now  Now that: The simple form now has such use also in American, but generally only in highly colloquial contexts in which phonological reduction and elision are also found, so the forms are not stylistic equivalents. <Now Potter and Weasley have been kind enough to act their age, . . . I have something to say to you all.> 2000 Rowling 336 (US ed. Now that). <Now the venerable briefcase has been consigned to the status of endangered accessory, why should metrosexuals be forced to endure the hardship of lopsidedly bulging pockets?> 2003 July 8 Times T2 13/4.

seeing as  Since; in as much as: In comparable random samples, CIC has 7.5 times more British than American tokens of this use (152 to 20). <The agent gave his consent, seeing as it was doing nothing. I did hear, mind, that Sir Marcus was none too pleased.> 1989 Burden 86.

since  In its temporal sense, since is often modified by ever. In common-core English, ever comes first: ever since, but CIC British texts have a few (0.3 iptmw) examples of since ever, whereas American texts have none. <He has a cottage near the church, and since ever anybody can remember he’s been saying he has lived in it for eighty-seven years.> 1983 Innes 109.

so (that)  The OED’s first citation of so [swa] used in this way without that is from Beowulf, but the editors add (sense 23), “so that (also so alone), denoting result or logical consequence; also sometimes = ‘in order that’. In the revived use of so alone, orig. U.S.” The OED’s modern citations of so, rather than so that, are evenly divided between British and American. Ward Gilman (1994, 856–7) finds no difference in formality between so and so that. Robert Burchfield (1996, 721–2) comments on the history of the two forms: “Constructions using so alone are recorded from medieval times, but are no more than sporadic. First in America in the 19c., and gradually elsewhere, so alone has gradually established itself in standard use, esp. in spoken English.” John Kahn and Robert Ilson (1985, 570) distinguish the forms semantically in British use: “There is a slight preference in British English for so that to indicate purpose [He filled the tank so that he could drive all the way without stopping], and so to indicate result [The tank was full, so he drove all the way without stopping]; it is possible to use them the other way round.”

straight after  Immediately after; as soon as: Although the two national varieties use immediately after with similar frequency, CIC has 10.2 iptmw of straight after in British texts and 2.6 in American texts. <Straight after he’d finished he spirited off his Rent-A-Tottie for a naughty weekend at his country cottage.> 1984 Brett 90.

suppose/supposing (that)  What if; “if by way of hypothesis : on the assumption that” (MW s.v. supposing, conj.). As signals of a hypothesis, an assumption, or a suggestion, these terms differ in frequency of use between British and American, with the suppose forms more frequent in British use, and the what if form in American. – suppose CIC has 64.8 iptmw of clause-initial Suppose in British texts and 32.2 in American texts. This use of the verb in
expressions like *Suppose it rains* and *Suppose we stay home* is common-core English, although more frequent in British. However, in the following British example, it appears to be a subordinating conjunction with the sense “even if,” introducing an initial concessive clause: `<Suppose you’ve got official business with God Almighty, you can’t leave your car here.> 1984 Gilbert 29.

– **supposing** The LOB corpus has 14 tokens of *supposing* to Brown’s 2. Of 50 randomly selected tokens of the form *supposing* out of 504 total in the BNC, 7 or 8 are interpretable as suggestions (although the context is often ambiguous). The Michigan Corpus (MICASE) is much smaller, but of its 6 tokens of *supposing*, none appears to be a suggestion. CIC has 14.8 iptmw of clause-initial *Supposing* in British texts and 1.3 in American texts. It also has 41.9 iptmw of noninitial *suppose* in any use in British texts and 6.3 in American texts, thus confirming the LOB/Brown statistics that the verb *suppose* is more frequent in British than in American. – **suppose that** CIC has 6.2 iptmw of clause-initial *Suppose that* in British texts and 2.6 in American texts. `<Suppose that* the strontium rate in grass . . . goes bumping up sharply just after the Russians have done a series of experiments.> 1959 Innes 7. – **supposing that** CIC has 1.1 iptmw of clause-initial *Supposing that* in British texts and none in American texts. – **what if** On the other hand, CIC has 109.3 iptmw of *what if* in British texts and 170.6 in American texts.

**that** in noninitial clause position Though; as: Common-core English has constructions like *Fool that he was, he managed to evade his pursuers* = “Even though he was a fool . . . ,” with a noun subject complement front shifted (minus its article), followed by the conjunction *that*. British in addition can front shift an adjective followed by *that* rather than *as*: *Poor that they were, they gave money to charity* = “Even though they were poor . . . ” (CGEL 15.39).

**till** Until: CIC has 3727.2 iptmw of *until* in British texts and 3688.3 in American texts, making that form approximately equal in the two varieties. However, CIC has nearly 5 times more tokens of *till* in British texts than in American (369.7 to 74.5). `<. . . the porter wouldn’t let them into Dr. Bennett’s room till he’d spoken to the warden.> 1993 Smith 256. Cf. § 8.1 TILL.

**whether or nor** Whether or not: This construction is rare, occurring not at all in the text of the *OED* and only once in the BNC (in *The Alton Herald* of Farnham, Surrey). CIC has `<**whether** they’re satisfied or nor>` in a quotation from Dickens. The following citation also attests it. `<. . . computer-assisted sperm analysis (Casa) . . . predicts . . . whether or nor it is able to fertilise the egg.> 1993 Feb. 27 *Times* (Saturday) Review 6/1–2. Cf. § 9.1 OR NOR.

**whilever** While; as long as: This parallel to *wherever* is rare. The *OED* has 2 tokens of *while ever*, 1 of *while-ever*, and 1 of *whilever*; the BNC has 3 tokens of *while ever* in this use and none of *while-ever* or *whilever*. Similarly, CIC has 3 tokens of British *while ever* and none of the other two spellings, as well as no American forms. `<Nor do I believe in fairies. . . . But whilever he’s
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firmly fixed to the top of the Christmas tree, what else? > 1989 Wainwright 43.

**whilst** While: *Whilst* is a popular form in British English although secondary to *while*, with 1388 versus 11,180 tokens of the two forms in the *OED*, 5775 versus 54,778 in the BNC, and 379.8 versus 5890.1 iptmw in CIC British texts, compared with 8.8 versus 6674.2 in American texts. The Michigan Corpus (MICASE) has no tokens of *whilst* versus 458 of *while*. In LOB the number of tokens are 66 versus 590; in Brown, 0 versus 680. In American English *whilst* is rare. < . . . whilst I see you as a dear and valued friend, I don’t see myself as your wife. > 2000 Granger 296. <Ron was . . . at a loss for anything to say, whilst Hermione looked on the verge of tears. > 2003 Rowling 64 (*US ed.* while).

### 9.2.1 Omission of a subordinating conjunction

Subordinating conjunctions are sometimes omitted before clauses with various functions in their sentences. This is a common-core possibility, but seems to be more prevalent in British than in American.

**DIRECT OBJECT**

**appreciate [that]** <The “tankies” appreciate they are going to war and so treat the vehicles better. > 1991 Feb. 16 *Daily Telegraph* 4/5.

**check [that/if]** <Check no one’s watching. > 1998 Rowling 56 (*US ed.* Check that no one’s). <He likes to . . . check I’m happy. > 1999 Rowling 317 (*US ed.* check if I’m happy).

**complain [that]** <Of those who received substituted items, more than 40% complained they were often of a poorer quality to those ordered. > 2004 Dec. 12 *Sunday Times* 1 1/5.

**confirm [that]** <The Office of Fair Trading (OFT), the government’s consumer watchdog, confirmed this weekend it had launched an inquiry into the online services of Tesco and Sainsbury’s. > 2004 Dec. 12 *Sunday Times* 1 1/1.

**ensure [that]** <He repeated that the Government wanted to ensure vulnerable groups would take proper steps to keep warm. > 1991 Feb. 13 *Daily Mail* 3/1.

**SUBJECT COMPLEMENT**

**be [that/if]** <[Baroness Warnock:] . . . one of the things that would motivate me [to die] is I couldn’t bear hanging on and being such a burden on people. > 2004 Dec. 12 *Sunday Times* 1 1/2.

**APPPOSITION**

**fact [that]** <[a sometime head of Mrs. Thatcher’s policy unit:] She used the fact she was a woman very powerfully to get her way. > 1990 Critchfield 437.
EXTRAPOSED SUBJECT

it . . . [that]  <It's Malfoy’s problem he wasn’t listening.> 1999 Rowling 92 (US ed. problem that he).

COMPLEMENT OF AN ADJECTIVE

frightened [that]  <And they’re frightened other people have got a tool [weapon].> 1987 Nov. Illustrated London News 76/3.
sure [that]  <Harry felt sure there ought to be a security person there.> 2003 Rowling 678 (US ed. sure that there).

ADVERBIAL

operator subject  If SUBJECT OPERATOR <. . . she would take her drink in with her to dinner should dinner be ready.> 1984 Drabble 24. <Had they gone to the pub, William and Darryl would doubtless have discussed music over a pint of Strongbow.> 2003 June 20 Times 11/3. <The running costs of any new Centre would need to be assessed and form part of a business plan were the purchase of a new Centre to be seriously considered.> 2004 Jan. minutes from a financial meeting, London.
10 Interjections

Interjections, whether single-word or multiword forms, are numerous and are particularly apt to vary between national varieties. The class of interjections is close to open-ended. The following list is therefore of examples only. Some of the items occur also in American use, and some are old-fashioned in use but nevertheless seem characteristic of British English.

Characteristically American interjections include *uh huh* (CIC 3478.4 iptmw in American texts versus 30.9 in British texts) and *wow* (CIC 282.8 iptmw American versus 78.9 British). For *huh*, see EH below. For *hi* and *howdy*, see *hello* below. The form *OK* or *okay*, which has been called America’s most successful export to the world, has approximately equal use in British and American English; CIC has 2720 iptmw in British texts versus 2710.1 in American texts.

*aargh, aaargh* CIC has 25.3 iptmw in British texts versus 0.2 in American texts. <‘I think we’re doing the drawing room tomo – *AARGH*!’ [¶] With two loud cracks, Fred and George . . . had materialized out of thin air in the middle of the room.> 2003 Rowling 66.

*ah* This interjection has been reported as nearly 4 times more frequent in British conversation than in American (*LGSWE* 1097). CIC has 1247 iptmw in British texts versus 262.8 in American texts.

*ahe* This interjection has been reported as more than 4 times as frequent in British conversation as in American (*LGSWE* 1097). CIC has 247.3 iptmw in British texts versus 6.8 in American texts. Cf. also *ha* and *ooh* below.

*aye* Used as a response in discourse, *aye* is a distinctively British form seldom used in American (*LGSWE* 1098). CIC has 606.9 iptmw in British texts versus 21.4 in American texts, many of them parliamentary language.

*blast (it)* CIC has 8.4 iptmw of the exclamatory collocation *blast it* in British texts and none in American.

*blimey* CIC has 36.7 iptmw in British texts, often in the collocations *cor blimey* or *oh blimey*, and no American tokens. <Blimey. . . . That sounds even more dangerous.> 2005 Jan. 15 *Daily Telegraph* Weekend 18/1.

*bloody hell* CIC has 52.1 iptmw in British texts, often in the collocation *oh bloody hell* and occasionally *cor bloody hell*, and 1.3 in American texts. <He
recalls his poetry classes by the Christian Brothers of St Illtyd as characterised by ‘Daffodils, Skylarks, Cuckoos, Jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo! Bloody hell, it was, I thought, cissy stuff.’ > 1988 Apr. In Britain 43/3. Cf. §§ 5.1.1 Minded, 5.2, 6.1, 7.1 Bloody.

Bob’s your uncle Everything works out as expected or desired: CIC has 1.8 iptmw in British texts (as well as a few examples of Bob’s your auntie) and no American tokens. The expression is often used as a concluding comment but also as an interjection. <I was getting out of the car when – Bob’s yer uncle – there was Peter Finch paying off his taxi.> 1994 Oct. 3 Times 19/7.

brilliant This word, in all of its uses, is more frequent in British English than in American. CIC has 535.4 iptmw in British texts and 184.8 in American texts. There is also a British popular clipping to brill, as in <Youths: “Brill”, “Excellent!”> 1991 CIC. <“Daddy has gone to live with Elaine,” I burst out. [¶] “Brilliant. Now I can stay up and watch Red Dwarf.”> 1994 Sept. 24 Guardian Weekend 84/3.

bugger me “a general excl. of surprise, annoyance, alarm” (Green 1998). CIC has 2.4 iptmw in British texts and no American tokens.

cheerio “When leaving people: . . . Cheerio” (Swan 1995, 543). An American comparable expression is take care (LGSWE 1097). CIC has 20.4 iptmw in British texts, including the collocation Cheerio now, and 0.4 in American texts. Cf. also CHEERS and TATA below.

cheers CIC has 62.5 British tokens of Cheers, most being interjections in one of the following senses, and 20.3 American tokens, most being references to a popular TV program. 1. Goodby “Cheers, see you” (CIDE). 2. Used as a toast when drinking alcohol; skoal, here’s to you (Swan 1995, 545). 3. Thanks <‘Cheers,’ said George, taking the slip of parchment Bagman handed him and tucking it away into the front of his robes.> 2000 Rowling 82.

come on (then) An exclamation used to introduce an utterance (LGSWE 1118). CIC has 247.7 iptmw of Come on in British texts, including 31.7 of the collocation Come on then, and 110 in American texts, including 0.4 of Come on then. Cf. also OH and RIGHT below.

cor Gosh! from God, euphemistic expression of surprise: CIC has 79.6 iptmw in British texts and no American tokens. <“Cor,” I thought to myself, “look who’s talking!”> 1976 Mar. 17 Punch 461/1.

crkey Golly! from Christ, dated euphemistic expression of surprise: CIC has 14.1 iptmw in British texts, including the frequent collocation oh crikey, and no American tokens. <Crikey, he is Barclays’ . . . worst nightmare.> 2005 Jan. 15 Daily Telegraph 34/2.

eh /ei/ “exclamation infml used to express surprise or confusion, to ask someone to repeat what they have said, or as a way of getting someone to give some type of reaction to a statement that you have made • ‘Janet is leaving her husband.’ ‘Eh?’ • ‘Did you hear what I said?’ ‘Eh? Say it again – I wasn’t listening.’ • Going overseas again, eh? – it’s a nice life for some!’ (CIDE). It is relatively rare in American although common in Canadian. An American analog is huh,
which is rare in British (LGSWE 1097). CIC has 380.4 iptmw of *eh* in British texts and 87.1 in American texts. For *huh*, on the other hand, CIC has 169.8 iptmw in British texts and 391.8 in American texts. <Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy claims that there was never any strain between the upper-class ‘What’, the lower-middle ‘Pardon’ or the working-class ‘Eh’> 1979 Cooper 80.

**er; **erm These British spellings represent, respectively, an oral and nasal vocalic sound that marks a hesitation in discourse. The typical American equivalents are spelled *uh* and *um*, which represent exactly the same sounds respectively as the British spellings (LGSWE 1053, 1096). Americans unfamiliar with *r*-less British pronunciation sometimes pronounce the British spelling *er* with rhotic quality when they encounter or adopt it, a pronunciation consequently recorded in *MW*. 1. er Uh: CIC has 13,822.5 iptmw of *er* in British texts and 59 in American texts, which however include tokens of the suffix -*er* and ‘*er* (for *her*). On the other hand, CIC has 85.3 iptmw of *uh* in British texts and 5410.3 in American texts. <I’m from Rummidge University. I’m, *er*, taking part in, that is to say . . . I’m on a kind of educational visit.> 1988 Lodge 102. <Well, *er*, no.> 2005 Jan. 9 Sunday Times 4 31. 2. erm Um: CIC has 9912.6 iptmw of *erm* in British texts and 3.5 in American texts. On the other hand, it has 134.6 iptmw of *um*, *umm*, and *ummm* in British texts and 2942.2 in American texts. <Well . . . erm . . . well, you know why you’re here.> 2003 Rowling 303. Cf. also **MM** below.

**God** As an expletive, *God* has been reported to be used twice as often in British conversation as in American (LGSWE 1098).

**good-oh** CIC has 1.3 iptmw in British texts and no clear American tokens. <**Good-oh.** Which is it to be? Lord’s or the Oval?> 1985 Bingham 78.

**ha** As an interjection, *ha* is four times as frequent in British conversation as in American (LGSWE 1097). CIC has 409.3 iptmw in British texts, some of which are in a sequence representing laughter, and 146.3 in American texts. Cf. also **AHA** above.

**hear, hear** CIC has 5.3 iptmw in British texts and no American tokens. <The raucous give-and-take of parliamentary debate, with frenzied shouts and jeers of “Question! Question!” “Reading!” “*Hear, hear!*” as the Speaker furiously cries, “Order! Order!” is something totally out of the American experience.> 1990 Critchfield 114.

**hello** The most usual British greeting, *hello* has been reported as half again as frequent in British conversation as in American (LGSWE 1097). CIC has 533.7 iptmw in British texts and 202.1 in American texts. A predominantly American greeting is *hi*, which is eight times as frequent in American conversation as in British according to LGSWE (1097); CIC has a smaller spread, with 183.3 iptmw in British texts and 315 in American texts. A less frequent American form is *howdy*, for which CIC has 0.3 iptmw in British texts and 11.8 in American texts. Cf. also **HIYA** below.

**hey presto** CIC has 6 iptmw in British texts and no American tokens. <. . . all you need is the shell of an old local authority college of further education and,
hey presto, you can syndicate university degrees around the world.> 1995 Sept. 2 Spectator 16/3.

hiya  This is a less frequent British greeting (LGSWE 1097). CIC has 24 iptmw in British texts and 1.3 in American texts. Cf. also HELLO above.

I say  <Oh I say, ta most awfully.> 1987 Feb. 23 ITV Rumpole of the Bailey.

[lawks]  Lordy! “dial. or archaic Br – used to express surprise” (LDEL). CIC has no British or American tokens. <Oh, lawks!... There, look. Just to the left of my fringe, a nasty little breeding colony of silvery grey hairs.> 1998 Jan. 3 Times Weekend 6/3–4.

lor  CIC has 1.3 iptmw in British texts and no American tokens. <Lor, how they go on.> 1978 Jan. 18 Punch 98/3.

mate  A particular kind of interjection is the vocative use of nouns, either proper names or common nouns, chiefly for persons. Mate is the most characteristic British common noun so used. American analogs are bro, bud, buddy, dude, folks, guys, man, and pal.

mhmm  CIC has 1380.4 iptmw of this response signal in British texts and 373.4 in American texts. See also MM below.

mind (you)  According to CIC data, Mind you is about seven times more frequent in British than in American. Two-thirds of the British uses are clause initial, but only about a quarter of the American ones. <Mind you, I don’t say I mightn’t have chatted her up a bit even if I hadn’t had to – she was looking quite fanciable.> 1984 Caudwell 80. <“I gather you also do a Good Samarian act with stranded caravans.” [...] “About twice a year when idiots cut the corner. It’s good for business, mind. They usually feel obliged to come in and eat something.”> 1992 Walters 94–5. <Mind you, people do get raped on the Inner Circle [tube], these days. Even men.> 1995 Lodge 16. <He still loves his son, mind. He just feels he should have been hanged [for two murders and 26 assaults].> 2003 July 3 Times T2 28/2.

mm, mm, mmmm  Used as a response in discourse, the prolonged nasal mm is the major distinctively British form and is 4 times more frequent in British conversation than in American (LGSWE 1096). In a wider spread of texts, CIC finds the form much more distinctively British, with 8325.8 iptmw in British texts and 131.6 in American (including abbreviations for millimeter). Cf. also AYE, MHH above.

never mind  CIC has 128.5 iptmw in British texts and 63.7 in American texts. <Archer, short, wiry, athletic, came striding out, telling me I was too early, never mind, ordering coffee and shouting to his secretary.> 1990 Critchfield 287.

not a bit of it  CIC has 6.0 iptmw in British texts and 0.2 in American texts. <Recalling the intellectual snobbery which has, once or twice, crept into this
column, you may have thought that I disapprove of Pugin jewellery and Pugin

**not at all** A reply to an expression of thanks. CIC has 53.4 iptmw of Not at all in British texts and 26.4 in American. “British people, especially, do not usually answer when they are thanked for small things. If a reply is necessary, we can say Not at all (rather formal), You’re welcome, Don’t mention it, That’s (quite) all right or That’s OK (informal British)” (Swan 1995, 439). Most of the alternatives seem to be common-core English. A relatively recent alternative among the younger generation is No problem.

**now** Used to indicate a transition in the discourse, now is more than twice as frequent in British conversation as in American (LGSWE 1097). Cf. also you see below.

**ooh, oohh, ooooh** As an interjection, this form is three and a half times as frequent in British conversation as in American according to LGSWE (1097). CIC has 627.7 iptmw in British texts and 83.9 in American texts. Cf. also aha above.

**oy, oi** A characteristically British, although rare, interjection to gain attention. CIC has 64.3 iptmw in British texts and no clear American tokens, although the quite different Yiddish expression of surprise or concern oy vey is not unusual in American. <Oy, where do you think you’re going?> 1985 Bingham 90. An American equivalent is hey, which is six times as frequent in American conversation as in British (LGSWE 1097), and for which CIC has 249.4 iptmw in British texts and 472.5 in American texts.

**pardon** An apology seldom used in American according to LGSWE (1098), although CIC shows the extended form Pardon me to be somewhat more frequent in American than in British, by 12.4 to 10.5 iptmw. Cf. also sorry below.

**please** As an interjection, please is twice as frequent in British conversation as in American (LGSWE 1098).

**quite (so)** Right: a response of agreement in the sense “I quite agree” or “It is quite so” (in which quite is an adverb or a qualifier) (CGEL 8.120n, 130n). CIC has 4.4 iptmw of Quite so in British texts and no American tokens. <“So sad. . . . An entire home going under the hammer.” [¶] “Quite so.”> 1988 Taylor 3. <“I hope the news from the infirmary will be . . .” [¶] “Quite, quite.”> 1990 Aug. 25 BBC1 Miss Marple: Nemesis.

**quite right** Some speakers of British English think right used as a response signal of agreement to be an Americanism. But in the modified form quite right, it is British. CIC has 8.1 iptmw of Quite right in British texts and only 0.4 in American texts. <“It doesn’t bother me.” [¶] “Quite right.”> 1987 Oliver 53–4.

**rather** “often used interjectionally, esp by British speakers, to express enthusiastic affirmation <“will you come?” “Rather!”>” (LDEL). <‘That is what you meant, isn’t it, Cantrip?’ ‘Oh rather,’ said Cantrip.> 1984 Caudwell 43.
right An exclamation used to introduce an utterance. Characteristically American analogs, in their order of frequency are well, okay, and yeah (LGSWE 1118). <‘Right,’ I said, ‘into my office and we’ll get this sorted out.’> 1986 Simpson 77. Cf. also come on above.

right, right oh; righty ho/oh; right you are; too right CIC has 7.5 iptmw of righto and right oh in British texts and 0.6 in American texts. It has 0.5 iptmw of righty ho/oh in British texts and no American tokens. It has 4.9 iptmw of Right you are in British texts and 0.8 in American texts. It has 5.5 iptmw of too right in British texts and no American tokens. An American analog is all righty, of which CIC has no British tokens and 5.6 iptmw in American texts. <‘Come to Larking Post Office and then fork left and she’s about a quarter of a mile down the road on the bad bend.’ [¶] ‘Right you are. You get back to her then.’> 1968 Aird 7. <‘Right-oh,’ roared the chaps as time was called, ‘but do up your flies – it’s cold outside!’> 1985 Ebdon 131. <“That’s not usual, is it?” [¶] “Too right it isn’t.”> 1985 Taylor 76–7.

sod it Expletive: CIC has 5.9 iptmw in British texts and 0.2 in American texts. <Barnaby grabbed the paper just before it knocked over a coffee cup. There was a lengthy pause, then Christopher said, “Sod it.”> 1993 Graham 232.

some hope(s) <He wanted Swan to settle down, raise a family and do a bit of good for himself. Some hopes!> 1972 Rendell 92.

sorry An apology used four times as often in British conversation as in American (LGSWE 1098). It is also used as a polite request for repetition or clarification of a remark. <‘We’re going out,’ he said. [¶] ‘Sorry?’ [¶] ‘We – that is to say, your aunt, Dudley and I – are going out.’> 2003 Rowling 45. Cf. also PARDON above.

ta A less common expression for thank you or thanks. The latter expressions are twice as frequent in American conversation as in British according to LGSWE (1098); however, in a wider range of texts, CIC shows them to be similar, with British incidents slightly more numerous. <It is always “Please, Mrs Spilling” and “Ta, Mrs Spilling” whenever he’s offered a cup of tea.> 1994 Sept. 25 Sunday Times Magazine 32/1. Cf. also NOT AT ALL above.

ta ta, tata, tara Goodbye. CIC has 11.9 iptmw of these forms in British texts and no American tokens. <Ta ta for now, Liz.> 1982 Symons 135. <Time for zizz! Ta-ra! Nighty-night!> 1991 Feb. 2 Times (Saturday) Review 6/4. Cf. also CHEERIO above.

tchah “An exclamation of impatience or contempt” (OED). CIC has no tokens. <‘There are directories too,’ Butler snapped. [¶] ‘But not walking ones.’ [¶] ‘Tchah!’> 1974 Price 54.

urgh Ugh (cf. ER, ERM above), a spelling representing “the sound of a cough or grunt or to express disgust or horror” (MW). CIC has 45.5 iptmw in British texts and no American tokens. It also has 47 iptmw of ugh in British texts and 10.4 in American texts. The use of either spelling is more characteristic of British than American, but the r-spelling is exclusively so. <‘Urgh!’ . . . A
jumble of assorted rags and smelly old blankets were piled on the floor.> 2003 Rowling 445.

**well done** CIC has 46.4 iptmw of *Well done* in British texts and 2.6 in American texts. <Well done! Did you get rid of them?> 1990 Critchfield 287.

**you see** Used to indicate a transition in the discourse, *you see* is eight times more frequent in British conversation than in American (*LGSWE 1097*). The most characteristic American term in this function is *you know*, which is more than twice as frequent in American as in British (*LGSWE 1096*). Cf. also **NOW above and § 6.1 YOU + VERB OF PERCEPTION**.
II

Syntactic Constructions
Complementation concerns the forms or constructions required by other forms or constructions. For example, the verb *postpone* normally requires a noun phrase as its direct object complement (*They postponed a decision, *They postponed*); the approximately synonymous verb *delay* does not (*They delayed a decision, They delayed*). Complementation is thus a particular type of collocation.

11.1 Complementation of verbs

11.1.1 Noun phrase complement

11.1.1.1 As direct object

A verb may have a direct object in British English that would not collocate with it in American. An instance is *pull a cracker*; crackers containing hats and small gifts are not part of American Christmas celebrations. The American holiday association of crackers is with the Fourth of July, and they are firecrackers, which are not pulled, but set off.

**pull a cracker**  
<At Christmas> They sat now, with the food eaten and the crackers pulled, round the table.> 1985 Mortimer 263.

**shit oneself**  
An example of a verb that is more often reflexive in British than in American is *shit*. In CIC, the reflexive use – as in <I remember when Rufus bit me I was shitting myself.> 1994 CIC spoken corpus – occurs once in approximately every 3 tokens of the verb in British texts versus once in every 27 tokens of the verb in American texts.

11.1.1.1.1 Versus prepositional complement

A number of verbs in contemporary British take a nominal complement, whereas in American (and older British) use, they would normally have a prepositional complement instead. One of the most frequent is *agree*. The transitive use of *agree* is recent, and its acceptability is still debated. *LDOCE* 1978 labeled *agree*
a plan nonstandard in the sense “accept after unwillingness or argument.” Kahn and Ilson 1985 say that British usage “allows – just –” the omission of the prepositions on, upon, or about, but that omission of to is informal and unacceptable to careful users of English. Gilman 1994 finds British transitive agree corresponding to either agree on or agree to. LDOCE 1995 calls agree a plan more formal than agree on a plan. Burchfield 1996 finds transitive agree to be “common but somewhat controversial”. Despite divided opinions about the acceptability of the construction, it is widespread in standard use. The inferable prepositions are usually on and its synonyms, but sometimes also to, as in the 1986 Oct. 9 citation below, for which American and older British would typically have agree to a draw.

A random sample of 100 instances each of CIC British and American texts produced the following numbers of complementations (intr. = intransitive use; inf. = infinitive complement; nom. = noun or pronoun complement). A larger sample would certainly refine the comparative figures, but noun or pronoun complements of agree are primarily British:

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<th>intr.</th>
<th>that</th>
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<td>British</td>
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The unusual 1986 Oct. 10 construction below is based on a complex transitive use of agree. The corresponding active, pruned of irrelevancies, would be They agreed the game drawn. Although consultants judge the construction in the citation to be odd and constructing plausible transformational analogs for it is difficult, its occurrence is certainly due to the vogue for transitive agree.

**agree something** Agree on/upon/about/to something <Kasparov . . . refused to agree the draw.> 1986 Oct. 9 Times 2/7. <The twenty-fourth and final game of the World Chess Championship was agreed drawn yesterday.> 1986 Oct. 10 Times 2/8. <European Union foreign ministers . . . agreed the outline of a deal.> 1994 Sept. 12 Guardian 22/1. The vogue for transitive agree extends also to its use as a participial modifier of nouns: <. . . at some agreed date in the future.> 1986 Aug. 23 Times 23/1. – sales agreed Sale pending; sold <Sales Agreed> 1994 Sept. sign on a lot, London.

A number of other verbs can also be used with a noun phrase direct object in British. In American too there has been a recent tendency to omit prepositions: vote (for the) Democratic (Party), shop (at) Macys, fly (by) United, joke (with) someone, which individually may seem odd or marginal to some Americans. The innovative pattern is shared by the two national varieties, but the specific realizations of the pattern often differ. One of the following constructions, graduate college, is also in American use, though uncommon in edited prose (Gilman 1994); some such overlap is to be expected, as is variation within a national variety.

**ask something** Ask for something: In 750 comparable samples each from CIC British and American texts, British was nearly 3 times more likely to use this
construction than American and to have a larger number of different complements after *ask* (in order of frequency): *advice, permission, pardon, help, directions, forgiveness, leave, opinions, things, and views* versus American *permission, directions, and information*. <...> she had to *ask* the day off school in order to play.> 1985 July 2 *Times* 25/3.

*bitch* *something*  Bitch about *something* <For the next hour or so, he *bitched* everything in sight.> 1986 Oct. 5 *Sunday Times* 54/4.

*disapprove* *something*  Disapprove of *something* <Actually, this is a tactic I don’t strongly *disapprove* and it worked a treat on this occasion.> 1994 Sept. *Tatler* 57/2.

*dispose* *something*  Dispose of *something*; discard *something* (*somewhere*) <Please don’t *dispose* nappies in toilets.> 2003 Nov. 13 sign in lavatory at Heathrow airport.

*excuse* *something*  Excuse from *something* “*Br* to free from (a duty) *<the class was excused homework>*” (*LDEL*). <As usual, the grammar of cricket is tricky. (American readers are *excused* this paragraph.)> 1990 Howard 106.

*flunk university*  Flunk out of college: The construction is rare. <I *flunked* university at Newcastle, but then I took a degree at the Army College of Science at Shrivenham and got a First.> 1991 Feb. 16 *Daily Telegraph* 4/1–2.

*fuss* *someone*  Fuss at/with *someone* <The way she was *fussing* him, I wouldn’t bet on that.> 1975 *Price* 223.

*graduate* *an educational institution*  Graduate from *an educational institution* <... it was assumed that once Charles had *graduated* Oxford, he would succeed his father at Hampton’s Bank.> 1984 *Archer* 8.

*operate* *a tradition*  Operate in/by/according to *a tradition*; follow *a tradition* <MP’s are continuing to *operate* the tradition whereby one MP does not handle the affairs of a constituent of another MP.> 1986 Aug. 21 *Guardian* 41/2.

*run* *fuel*  Run on *fuel* <... cars which *run* leaded fuel account only for fewer than four in 100 sales.> 1989 July 28 *Times* 31/7.

*slum* *a place*  Slum in/along *a place* <I’d *slummed* that same route long before, mostly hitch-hiking and sleeping semi-rough.> 1985 *Price* 134.

*squat* *a place*  Live in *a place* as a squatter <A black theatre group faces eviction today from a Camden Town church hall they have *squat* for more than a year.> 1987 Apr. 2 *Hampstead Advertiser* 1/4.

In the following instances, an implicit goal is left unspecified in the British examples.

*hand* *something*  Hand *something to someone / somewhere*: The construction is rare. <They sat down together to dinner, served by a maid with fat red hands, who breathed heavily as she *handed* the vegetables.> 1940 *Shute* 166.

*relegate* *someone*  Relegate *someone to somewhere*; consign to an unimportant position: Of 50 random CIC tokens of *relegate*, British texts had 12 without a
to complement; American texts had none. <A few token extremists have been expelled, those many more who remain are to be relegated.> 1986 Oct. 1 Times 13/1.

11.1.1.1.2 Versus a different verb

In some cases, the British construction of a particular verb would be unusual in American, which would have a different verb and sometimes different complementation as well.

attend hospital  Go to the hospital: *Attend* “to be present at” is general English when the verb collocates with objects like *church, college, meetings, school*, but the collocation with *hospital* is rare. <She . . . received a telephone call to attend hospital.> 1991 Feb. 20 Times 4/5.

buy shopping  Do shopping: Rare in CIC British texts and lacking in American. <I tend to buy the weekly shopping with a debit card.> 2004 Jan. 4 Sunday Times Money 6 8/2.

drink soup  Eat soup: *Eat soup* is the norm in common-core English, but *drink soup* is about twice as frequent in British as in American. <You’ll have to drink the soup yourself.> 1985 Benedictus 164.

hire something  Rent *something*: British uses *hire* of things, either as “hire from” or “hire out to” for shorter periods of time but *rent* and *let (out to)* of dwellings for longer periods (*LDOCE* s.v. *hire* usage note). American may use *hire* similarly as “hire from” (not “hire to”) but generally prefers *rent* of things and *hire* for beginning to employ a person. In a sample of 100 tokens each of *hire* from CIC British and American texts, British used *hire* of things in 64 percent of the tokens and of persons 36 percent; American used it of things in 2 percent and of persons 98 percent. <. . . the only car to be seen was their family-sized four-door saloon hired from Pisa airport.> 1988 Mortimer 51.

hop it  Leave quickly: Rare in CIC British texts and lacking in American. <My girlfriend hopped it.> 1992 Walters 207.

pull a face  *Pull a face* is slightly more frequent than *make a face* in CIC British texts; but *make* is 3 times more frequent than *pull* in American. <Daphne pulled a face.> 1991 Charles 131–2.

sit an exam  *Take with exams* is about 1.5 times more frequent than *sit* in CIC British texts, but is practically the only option in American. <. . . it was the easiest exam any of them had ever sat.> 1999 Rowling 233 (*US ed.* taken).

take fright  Become/be frightened: The construction is almost 12 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American. <President Saddam Hussein has taken fright.> 1991 Feb. 16 Daily Telegraph 2/1.

want something  Want *something*: Want is from Old Norse *vanta* “to lack, be lacking,” which was the word’s earliest sense in English. What one lacks, one needs; and what one needs, one desires. And so those two later senses developed, and all three senses are still attested in common-core English, as
in, respectively, He wants [lacks] common sense; They want [need] a little more experience; She wanted [desired] a better life. Although all three senses still exist, the last (and most recent, dating only from the eighteenth century) is now the usual sense, the others being less common, especially in American use. British seems to preserve especially the “need” sense more actively, as in the following. <What you want, Rumpole, . . . is a complete makeover.> 2001 Mortimer 69.

11.1.1.1.3 Versus other complement

draw someone Draw someone out <The smooth and urbane Rose is not foolish enough to be drawn on whether he thinks that the profit warning marks the bottom for M&S.> 2005 Jan. 9 Sunday Times 3 5/1.

obsess someone Obsess is generally transitive, usually in passive constructions (in more than 90 percent of its uses in the BNC, Peters 2004, 387). CIC British texts have only a few tokens of obsess followed by a noun phrase beginning with the; American texts have none. In both British and American texts, obsessed with is the norm; obsessed by is 3 times more frequent in British than in American. An intransitive use, as in You are just obsessing, is labeled chiefly North American by NODE. <M Duhamel spends 275 pages . . . exercising the demons obsessing the populace.> 1993 Feb. 3 Times 16/7. <. . . men are obsessed by the size of women’s breasts.> 1993 Feb. 12 Sun 28/1.

11.1.1.2 As direct object with prepositional phrase

commit someone against something Commit someone to oppose something: The construction is rare. <. . . the SLD voted overwhelmingly against attempts to commit them against the use of nuclear weapons in any circumstances.> 1989 Sept. 13 Times 1/5.

compare one thing with another Compare one thing to another: The BNC has 5502 citations of compared with and 2176 of compared to. The Merriam–Webster files “show that with and to are used about equally after the past participle” (Gilman 1994). CIC has 342.2 iptmw of compared with in British texts and 211.9 of compared to; it has 413.9 of compared with in American texts and 283.7 of compared to. Compared with is favored in common-core English, but slightly more strongly in British. <And compared with the way they used to live, the Gersons’ simple-lifery is just a sham.> 1985 Mann 84 (an American typed “compared to” in copying the citation). Cf. § 11.3.1 comparable.

direct someone at a place Direct someone to a place: The construction is rare. <. . . people who needed advice . . . were simply directed at the casualty department.> 1986 Sept. 30 Guardian 2/7.

drive a vehicle on headlights Drive a vehicle with headlights on: The construction is rare. <‘Was it being driven on headlights?’ ‘My client . . . did have his headlights on in the dipped position.’> 1978 Underwood 20.
**entertain someone to a meal** Invite/have someone for a meal: CIC British texts have *entertain to tea/lunch(eon)/dinner/coffee*; American texts have none of those. <He would entertain his local Party members to lunch on Thursday.> 1992 Critchley 14. Cf. § 8.1 TO A MEAL.

**give an answer to** Give an answer for: Of 16 Americans consulted informally, 8 preferred for and 8 preferred to, several expressing doubt about the choice; of 4 Britons resident in the UK, all preferred to without hesitation, and one commented “to . . . would be the English/English. I don’t know which the American/English would be.” The sample is too small to be reliable, but it is suggestive. <Give one answer only to each question.> 1987 May directions to a sample Cambridge Syndicate examination.

**hire a car from a place** See 11.1.1.2 HIRE SOMETHING.

**hold someone to ransom** CIC British texts have 11 times as many tokens of *hold to ransom* as of *hold for ransom*; American texts have 5 times as many *hold for ransom* as of *hold to ransom*. <The gazunderer is making a conscious decision to hold somebody to ransom.> 1989 July 30 Sunday Times 9/4.

**invest a sum on a company/product/etc.** Invest in is the norm for this construction in common-core English. CIC British texts have a few tokens of *invest on*; American texts have none. <My advice to every cricket team captain is to invest £3.95 on “Howzat” [a book] . . . , then leave it lying around the changing room.> 1987 May 10 (Scotland) Sunday Post 15/4.

**kick someone up the backside** Up the backside is not used in American, where the usual expression is *in the ass*, whose variant *in the arse* is used also in British. <Fox-Strangways . . . kicked Bevan up the backside.> 1987 Feb. 10 Evening Standard 6/2.

**laid to lawn** Planted with grass: Rare in CIC British texts and lacking in American. <The garden . . . was laid to lawn.> 1993 Smith 7.

**leave somewhere to** Leave somewhere for: CIC texts have approximately the same frequency of *leave for* in British and American texts, but 1.6 times as many tokens of *leave to* in British texts as in American. <Mr Clarke, Education Secretary, was leaving his office to the Cabinet meeting when the attack happened.> 1991 Feb. 8 Daily Telegraph 2/6.

**make something to a recipe** Make something from /according to a recipe: Rare in CIC British texts and lacking in American.<. . . it really can’t claim its toffee is “made to a traditional recipe”>. 1994 Sept. 22 Times 19/5.

**market something at** Rare with *at* in CIC British texts but lacking in American.

1. a purpose Market something for a purpose <. . . it [Dairylea cheese] has been ruthlessly marketed at children’s packed lunches.> 2003 July 2 Times 3/4.


**name someone/thing after someone/thing** Name someone/thing for someone/thing (Peters 2004, 364): CIC British texts have 6.5 times as many iptmw of named after as of named for; American texts have 1.3 times as many of named for as of named after.
persuade someone of something to be done  Persuade someone to do something; persuade someone that something needs to be done <Mr Gorbachev has persuaded Mr Reagan of a long agenda of business to be done.> 1988 June 12 Manchester Guardian 1/2.

place an amount to an account  Place an amount in an account; credit an amount to an account <... at least £75,000 a year should have been placed to buildings reserve.> 1993 Neel 45.

plant an area with vegetation  CIC British texts overwhelmingly favor planted with, the alternative planted in occurring in less than 3 percent of the tokens. American texts also favor planted with, but less strongly, planted in occurring in 29 percent of the tokens and planted to in 7 percent. <... the garden carefully planted with Aubretia and spiky little tulips.> 1985 Levi 94.

put someone off doing something  Discourage someone from doing something <A Labour council has been accused of trying to put tenants off buying their homes.> 1987 Feb. 27 Evening Standard 13/2.

put one’s hand to something  Put one’s hand on something; come up with something <... he had first to invest money in it, more money than he could put his hand to.> 1989 Quinton 265.

save something off doing something  Save something by doing something <I promised to give her that bit of sugar I saved off not having it in my coffee since the war.> 1942 Thirkell 7.

spare someone to something  Spare someone for something <... a mathematician who was no longer producing creative work ... could also be best spared to the task.> 1993 Neel 14.

strike someone blows to  Strike blows on someone’s (head) <He ... was struck several blows to the top of the head.> 1987 July 1 Daily Telegraph 3/5.

take a child into care  Take into care is not used in American texts. <A boy has been taken into care.> 2004 Dec. 13 Times 22/6.

take it in turns (to do something)  Take turns (doing something): In CIC British texts, 54 percent of the tokens are take turns and 46 percent, take it in turns; in American texts, 99.4 percent are take turns, and 0.6 percent are take it in turns. <Each day she and her husband take it in turns to deliver James to his secondary school.> 2005 Jan. 14 Daily Telegraph 8/4.

take it out of “exact satisfaction from” (OED s.v. take v. 88f). Take it out of one’s hide is common-core English. The common-core take it out on “vent one’s anger, frustration, etc., on an object other than the cause of it” (OED s.v. take v. 89) seems to be the sense in the following two citations from the same source: <He wouldn’t allow for mistakes, he used to take it out of himself, his equipment ...; and, of course, the nearest guy at hand.> <I had to take his sand-iron off him because he was threatening the guy with it. He really took it out of this photographer, and I can tell you he’s lucky to be alive today.> 1990 nonfiction CIC.

take something off someone  Take something from someone <Lib Dems – they took the seat off the Tories at the last election.> 2001 Lodge 129.
The following are instances with an exchange of roles between the direct object and the object of the preposition.

**circulate somebody with something**  Circulate something among/to somebody

<Sir Jeffrey has circulated his staff with some critical remarks about . . . the Zeebrugge disaster.> 1989 July 21 Private Eye 5/2.

**exchange X for Y**  Exchange Y for X; change into X from Y: An earlier thing is usually exchanged for a later thing; the reverse order is, however, exemplified in the *OED* (s.v. *exchange* 1c) and in the following: <Amy came in and stared at me until I had noticed the dirty sweater and holed jeans she had exchanged for her earlier get-up.> 1969 Amis 52.

**issue someone with something**  Issue something to someone (frequently passive: *someone* is issued with *something*): Although uncommon in the LOB Corpus (with only 1 example), the construction is highly acceptable in British use. In a completion test by Christian Mair, 24 respondents added with to “They issued all visitors — identity badges,” and 1 added their. This response confirms the judgment of one consultant that the straight ditransitive use (*issue someone something*) is marginal in frequency. <. . . the Serbs were issued with a fresh ultimatum to accept Nato peacekeepers.> 1999 Mar. 19 Times 16/4.

**notify something to someone**  Notify someone of something <He must notify details of his earnings to the Official Receiver during the period of his bankruptcy.> 1996 Aug. 7 Daily Telegraph 3/3.

**recommend a patient/client to a specialist**  Recommend a specialist to a patient/client <And they in turn recommended me to Eric Gustavson, a long-established consultant plastic surgeon.> 1991 Feb. 3 Sunday Times 3 4/5.

**substitute X with Y**  Substitute Y for X; replace X with Y <We recently printed a letter in *The Times* that advised ‘substituting junk food with fresh fruit’.> 1990 Howard 173.

11.1.1.3 As predicate noun

A group of copular verbs (*feel, look, seem, sound*, etc.) have predominantly adjectival complements in common-core English, but also have nominal subject complements in British more frequently than in American.

**appear**  Appear to be / like <As he did so, what had appeared an outside chance of Britain winning its first track gold of the Games moved closer to evens.> 1996 Aug. 3 Times 45/1.

**come top**  Be at the top; be first; hold the highest place: *Come top* is a collocation, frequently used of academic standing, but also of any ranking, as in *Diana came top*. In various uses, it is represented by 59 citations in the BNC. <Hermione, of course, came top of the year.> 1997 Rowling 204 (*US ed.* had the best grades of the first years).
feel  Feel like <I felt a fool, my breasts wedged up like a buxom serving wench.>
1994 Sept. Tatler last page.

get  Get to be; become <People tend to invent all sorts of nouns and verbs and
make words that shouldn’t be. I think we have to be a bit careful; otherwise the
(quotting Prince Charles).

look  Look like <Names [“Lloyd’s insurance underwriters”] . . . look a dying
breed.> 1994 Oct. 5 Times 16/6. – look a treat Look very good <Their
five acres of garden looked a treat.> 1991 Feb. 2 Times Saturday Review
35/3.

prove  Prove to be <But the lone wildebeast proves a better proposition [for a
hunting lion to catch].> 1989 July 22 ch. “Kingdom of the Sun.”

seem  Seem to be / like <Mr. Shapiro’s unfortunate encounters . . . seem
an astonishing excuse.> 1960 Nov. 6 Newcastle Sunday Sun 8/6. – seem
certainties The construction is rare. <Essex seemed certainties to win
when Northants left them needing only 147.> 1986 Aug. 20 Daily Mirror
28/4.

sound  Sound like <It sounds a good idea but research evidence shows that
these programmes do not work.> 1993 Feb. Woman’s Journal 40/2.

turn  Turn into; become <. . . the hole in the wall turns fruit machine and

11.1.1.4  As adverbial

drop someone home  Drop someone (off) at home <She was dropped home
about 10.30 p.m.> 1993 Neel 38.

go walkies  Go for a walk (with a dog) <Hilda and Stanley [dogs] . . . are on
24-hours notice to go walkies with any guest who fancies a turn around Green

11.1.2  Double noun phrase complement

11.1.2.1  As indirect and direct objects

do someone food  Do/fix food for someone <Course I can do you bangers and
mash!> 2000 Granger 284.

recommend someone something  Recommend something to/for someone: Di-
transitive use of recommend is not often attested. There is only one example
in the OED, taken from an 1826 novel by Disraeli: “Let me recommend you
a little of this pike!” Historically it is perhaps a syntactic backformation from
the prepositional construction recommend something to/for someone. <Can you
recommend me a nice hotel?> 1985 Apr. 8 Times 10/1.

write  Ditransitive use of write (I wrote them a letter) is common-core English.
But some ditransitive verbs can also be used with either object alone: I told
them a story. I told a story. I told them. In American English, *write* belongs to that category: *I wrote a letter. I wrote them.* In British English, however, if *write* has a single object, it is normally the ditransitive direct object, and when the ditransitive indirect object occurs instead, it is the object of a preposition: *I wrote to them.* Also in British, if the direct object function is filled by direct or indirect discourse, the same prohibition against the ditransitive indirect object exists: *I wrote to them, “I’ll come on Sunday,” not? I wrote them, “I’ll come on Sunday.”* *I wrote to them that I would come on Sunday* (CGEL 16.59; LGSWE 662; Swan 1995, 614; Peters 2004, 583).

11.1.2.2 As direct object and object complement

**appoint someone something** Appoint *someone* as *something* <Mr. T. Thirkill, Labour M. P. for Leicester East, has been *appointed* an additional Financial Secretary to the Treasury.> 1979 Snow 201.

**describe something something** Describe *something* as *something* <The man accused of melting down bullion from Britain’s biggest robbery in his back garden can now return to . . . the timeshare scheme he has *described* a “little goldmine”>. 1987 Apr. 2 *London Daily News* 5/2–4.

**promote someone a rank** Promote *someone* to *a rank* “British English sometimes omits prepositions where American English retains them, whereas the reverse is rare: for instance, . . . (almost universal) British ‘he was *promoted* colonel’ for American ‘he was promoted to colonel’ ” (Partridge and Clark 1951, 317).

**reckon someone something** Reckon *someone* to be *something* <In LA he [André Previn] is *reckoned* a champion of British music.> 1987 June 19 *Times* 20/4.

**think something something** Think *something* to be *something*; think that *something* is/was *something* <Despite the inventor’s assurances of the safety of this new tomato I do not *think* it a very good idea.> 1989 July 22 *Spectator* 18/1.

**11.1.3 Noun phrase and adjectival complement**

11.1.3.1 As direct object and object complement

**expect a business in profit** Expect *a business* to be *profitable* <Arnault has announced he is prepared to sink £22 million into Lacroix before he *expects* it in profit.> 1989 July 24 *Times* 3/6.

**order someone off work** Order *someone* to stay away from work <A psychiatrist *ordered* him off work for nine months.> 2003 July 14 *Times* 5/2.

**think something adjectival** Think (that) *something* is *adjective* <[of skinny-dipping:] My children *thought* it weird that they should be in the water with bare bums and bits.> 1989 Sept. 13 BBC1 *Points of View*. 
11.1.3.2 As direct object and subject complement

strike someone adjective Strike someone as adjective; seem adjective to someone
<[of the temperature in a flat:] Does it strike you warm? ... I’m glad it struck you warm.> 1989 Oct. 29 English woman in conversation.

11.1.4 Noun phrase and verbal complement

11.1.4.1 Passive participle

know someone/something done Know someone/something to be done <I’ve known as many as two hundred and fifty deck-chairs occupied along there.> 1985 Clark 131.

need something done Need to have something done <I suggest to Heald that he needs his head examined, getting involved in this sort of stunt.> 1989 July 23 Sunday Telegraph 43/1.

want something done Need to have something done <... whoever she is, she wants her head seen to.> 2000 Granger 143.

11.1.4.2 Present participle

get someone/thing doing something Get someone/thing to doing something / to (be able to) do something <Freezing August has got even Russia’s famous Bolshoi Ballet shivering.> 1986 Aug. 27 Daily Mirror 4/3.

need something doing Need (to have) something done: Need can be followed by a noun phrase and a present participle, with the latter having the semantic effect of a passive participle. LDOCE labels this use as North of England English, but it seems to be widely acceptable. It is recorded without limitation by Kahn and Ilson. <High Trees [a house] ... needed a lot doing to it.> 2003 James 35.

want something doing Want something (to be) done: Want, like the verb need, can be followed by a noun phrase and a present participle. Kahn and Ilson (1985) cite letters from the popular press defending the usefulness and propriety of constructions like I want the car parking = to be parked, but call the use regional. <Where do you want it putting, miss? By the coffin?> 2000 Aird 47.

want something doing Need to have something done <Vic ... said I wanted my eyes testing.> 1986 Hardwick 213.

11.1.4.3 Infinitive

A significant difference between British and American is whether the infinitive is marked by to or is a bare infinitive.

ask someone do something Ask someone to do something: This construction is rare. <On St Valentine’s Day, she asked me marry her.> 1993 Feb. 12 Sun 22/1.
**have someone to do something** Have someone do something < We’re having this man to come and . . . to do some things to the kitchen. > SEU s.7.1a.41. – have someone to stay Have someone stay: The parallel construction with the to-less infinitive is common-core English, and American consultants disagree about the acceptability of the construction with to. One British consultant suggested a semantic difference: She had her to stay implies an invitation, whereas She had her stay suggests an unwilling imposition. < We gave balls for her and she had friends to stay in the holidays. > 1990 Aug. 26 Sunday Times Magazine 9/1.

**help someone to do something** Help someone do something: After help, both options are possible in common-core English: Sarah helped us (to) edit the script. However, preferences for the two variations are almost exactly opposite in the two national varieties (CGEL 16.52). British (in LOB) uses the to infinitive 73 percent of the time (out of 44 tokens); American (in Brown) uses the to-less infinitive 75 percent of the time (out of 75 tokens). < I helped collect the soiled plates and glasses from various rooms on the ground floor, and to stack them in the kitchen. > (note that both options are used) 2001 Lodge 143.

**know someone do something** Know someone to do something: After know, British can use a to-less infinitive, which is less likely in American. There are 5 examples of the construction in LOB and none in the Brown Corpus. < I’ve known you eat a cheeseburger yourself, sir. > 1994 Symons 31.

**tip someone to be/get something / as something**; tipped to be something Suggest that someone is going to be/get something; rumored as being/getting something: Tip in the sense “regard as a likely choice” is a British lexical item with grammatical consequences (CGEL 16.50). It has a direct object followed by an infinitive (or possibly as): They tipped him to be the next president. Unlike similar verbs (report, rumor), however, it cannot have a that-clause as complement: * They tipped that he would be the next president. Moreover, the verb is used more often and more naturally in the passive: He was tipped to get the appointment.

### 11.1.5 Adjectival complement

One of the senses of *go* in common-core English is “become” or “turn,” restricted to certain complements; the principles of the restriction are unclear. In many cases the complement has a negative value or is a departure from a norm. One can go crazy, but not *go sane. One can go sound asleep, but not *go wide awake (though it is possible to *come wide awake). However, one can also go straight, but not *go crooked. And one can either go limp or go rigid (with fear), but neither *go happy nor *go sad.

In British, the choice of possible complements after *go “become” is somewhat different from that in American. A currently fashionable collocation, which has
also been the subject of popular comment and is now appearing in American (Safire 2004), is *go missing*. But other adjectival complements are also used after *go* “become, turn” in British that are less probable in American.

After each of the following lemmas, British/American iptmw figures are given in parentheses. If only one figure is given, it is British, and American texts had no tokens. If no figures are given, there were no CIC tokens or the construction could not be conveniently identified.

**go absent** (0.7) <... a confused elderly gentleman who had *gone absent* from an old people's home in Kinnisport.> 2000 Aird 22.

**go bonkers** (1.4/0.9) Go crazy <... the kids can get up and spend all day going bonkers in the sea, without the mothers having to move off their fat arses.> 2005 Jan. 9 *Sunday Times* 5 22/1–2.

**go clean** (0.7) <[boy who has fallen into the water:] Gar, I’ve *gone all clean*.> 1985 Apr. 5 TV cartoon.

**go cold** (8.1/3.7) <... his hands had broken out in sweat and his feet had *gone cold*.> 1953 Mortimer 102.

**go color** (4.7/0.4) Turn color (Cf. Swan 1995, 112) <Two weeks later I started radiotherapy. I *went red*, but otherwise it didn’t bother me either.> 1995 Sept. *Marie Claire* 275/1–2.

**go dead** (1.4 other than of lines, phones, etc.) <... the blasted chap has *gone dead* on us.> 1983 Innes 145.

**go fat** <I knew I looked sinister, like an unfrocked parson or a spy *gone fat* in a neutral country.> 1953 Mortimer 18.

**go fuzzy** <Prussian ideas on orderly change go fuzzy when it comes to describing a point at which East Germans will be happy with an extra ration of freedom, without asking for more.> 1989 Oct. 7–13 *Economist* 14/2.

**go green** (1.2/0.7) Become sensitive to environmental issues <Ministers share their concern that, with more people “*going green*”, there is a danger of some firms exploiting the trend by using misleading claims that their goods are environment friendly.> 1989 Aug. 3 *Evening Standard* 3/4.

**go into profit** (0.3) Become profitable <The party was ambitiously conceived and the guests’ sartorial aspirations were high. . . . Costume hire shops went into profit overnight.> 1994 Sept. *Tatler* 140.

**go mad** Get mad “angry” <Mum *went mad* at them . . . . she’s furious at them.> 2000 Rowling 52.

**go missing** (31.7/6.1) <Mr Wren said he is attempting to locate the money which *went missing*.> 1990 Aug. 18 *Daily Telegraph* 19/2.

**go nap on something** Commit oneself wholly to *something*; go all out for *something*; bet everything on *something* (From nap “a bid to win all the tricks in a card game”; though etymologically a noun, nap here seems adjectival) <Again, a road-building policy designed for closer links with Europe might not be expected to *go nap on* the Conway estuary.> 1989 Sept. 2 *Spectator* 21/2.
go off  Go bad; spoil  <There are only two reasons for irradiating food. One is to clean up dirty food. . . . The other is to stop it going off in storage.> 1999 Mar. 21 Sunday Times 11/7–8.


go pale  (1.0)  <Seamus . . . was going pale.> 2003 Rowling 197 (US ed. turning).


go rogue  <. . . cancer is caused by a cell in the body going rogue.> 1985 Clark 88.

go rural  <. . . they tended to offer such jobs to . . . single girls with no particular ties, who were willing to go rural for the sake of a few extra pounds a week.> 1985 Clark 51.

go rusty  (0.5) Become rusty; rust  <. . . they [hedge-clippers left out in the rain] have gone all rusty.> 1985 Townsend 26.

go shapeless  <Somewhere there is an outfit that we have had for five years, which never seems to go shapeless or tatty.> 1993 Feb. Woman’s Journal 28/1.

go sick  (1.0) 1. Become/get sick  <. . . all of a sudden Rolley had gone sick inside, dreading the pain from a fractured rib or collar bone.> 1953 Mortimer 102. 2. Take time off work on sick leave  <Each time her bosses . . . send her a warning letter she puts in a brief appearance at work – before going sick again.> 1993 Feb. 5 Daily Express 3/3.

go spare  (1.6) Become angry or distraught  <Hermione was going spare, she kept saying you’d do something stupid if you were stuck all on your own without news.> 2003 Rowling 61.

go woolly/wrinkly  <Try to ripen them and, overnight, they suddenly become geriatric – the flesh goes woolly, the skin goes wrinkly – and you might as well eat a prune.> 1996 Aug. 3 Times Weekend 3/1.

go wrong  (177.6/101.6) Go bad  <However, the marriage went wrong. She claimed that Mr Dale was becoming more violent.> 1989 July 20 Times 3/2.

Other verbs also have adjectival complements.

come expensive/valuable  Are expensive/valuable  <And mind that Ali Baba vase as you go. . . . They can come valuable, too.> 2000 Aird 9.

come good  (6.3/0.3) Turn out well  <I risked everything for the company and it’s come good.> 2005 Jan. 15 Daily Telegraph 34/2.

leave well alone  Leave (someone/thing) (well (enough)) alone: The BNC has 54 tokens of leave (X) well alone (where X is a single word) and 4 of leave (X) well enough alone. CIC has 6.7 iptmw of leave (X) well alone in British texts and 0.3 of leave (X) well enough alone. It has 0.1 iptmw of leave (X) well alone in American texts and 1.7 of leave (X) well enough alone.  <If I were you I’d leave well alone.> 1992 Green 22.
look adjective  Look like / as though pronoun is adjective: CIC British texts have 1.4 times as many tokens as American texts do. <Tom Hanks looks set to get another Oscar.> 1994 Sept. 25 Sunday Times Style 42/4.

look done  Look like / as if pronoun is done <The fiction looks put in to embellish the ideas.> 1987 Nov. 8 Manchester Guardian Weekly 24/5.


look likely  (19.6/2.2) Seem likely <. . . interest rates look likely to remain high because of consumer spending.> 1989 Feb. 12 Manchester Guardian Weekly 6/1.

look set  (43.6/3.2) Look as if pronoun is set <[The bill] was stalled in the Commons . . . and now looks set to fail.> 2003 June 25 Guardian international ed. G2–7/1.

need doing  Need to be done: Need can be complemented directly by a present participle in a construction for which American would have a passive infinitive. <The [TV] licence fee . . . needed raising.> 1995 Aug. 28 Independent 4/4.

need done  Need to be done: According to Kahn and Ilson, the past participle directly after need is limited to regional dialect. <She and her husband Lloyd . . . have just bought their house and there’s lots needing done.> 1987 May 10 (Scotland) Sunday Post 12/3.

say sorry  (9.5/0.6) Say one is sorry <Harry Says Sorry For Dressing Up As Nazi> 2005 Jan. 13 Daily Telegraph 1/5–6.

seem set for  (1.6/0.5) Seem to be set for <Harry seems set for success.> 1991 Feb. 17 Sunday Times Magazine 19/1.

strike lucky  (2.9) Become lucky <. . . the 54-year-old nuclear scientist still had to . . . strike lucky when his name was drawn from more than 20,000 entries.> 2003 June 21 Times Travel 4/2.

want rid of  (1.3) Want to be/get rid of <He just wanted rid of them.> 1998 Joss 244.

want shot of  (0.2) Want to be rid/shut/shet/shed of <I just wanted shot of her.> 1986 Simpson 212. The construction with the infinitive expressed also occurs. <Mr Lawson . . . clearly wants to be shot of his other house.> 1991 Jan. 29 Daily Telegraph 8/5–6.

11.1.6 Adverbial particle complement

be off  Be out; be off work <We’ve two chief inspectors and two DIs off with flu.> 1993 Neel 25.

begin off  Begin; start off <I once wrote up for an autograph . . . Well I began off ‘I am heartily ashamed to write up but – ’> 1971 Mortimer 76.

break down  (of a marriage) Break up <So you don’t think he was too upset about his marriage breaking down?> 1986 Simpson 60.
brew up “Brit. . . . to make tea” (CED). <Afternoon tea is one of those quintessentially English rituals that time seems to have forgotten. Thankfully, at some London venues brewing up is still an event.> 1988 May Illustrated London News 96/1.
budge up Move over <Budge up, yeh great lump.> 1997 Rowling 39.
clock on Arrive at work, esp. by registering the time on a sheet or clock; clock in; punch a time clock <The head waiter had said that Wayne was due to clock on at five.> 1991 Critchley 233.
come through Come in <Shall I tell her to come through?> 1996 Dexter 215.
come with Come along <Sorry about tonight. Tina insisted on coming with.> 1985 Mortimer 319.
cut along “Brit. informal. to hurry off” CED. Cf. American cut out. <1949 ‘M. Innes’ Journeying Boy ii. 25 ‘And now you’d better cut along.’ Captain Cox was a great believer in the moral effects of abrupt dismissals on the young.> OED s.v. cut v. 19.b.
fall about Fall down <It’s nice to think of those [cigarette-smoking] foreigners coughing themselves silly and falling about all over the place.> 1977 Dec. 7 Punch 1095/1. Cf. § 11.1.6.4.1 FALL ABOUT LAUGHING.
get on Get along; make out <How did you get on?> 1992 Granger 181.
give in Give up: Give in and give up are both common-core English, but they are used in different contexts in the national varieties. In the following contexts, American is likely to have give up: <You’ll never guess the answer – do you give in?> CIDE. <1805 Sporting Mag. XXVI. 56 According to the boxing phrase, [he] shewed the white feather and gave in.> OED s.v. give 59.a.
give over Give up; stop it <Oh, give over, will you?> 1972 Rendell 112.
pack in Be packed in; crowd in <Normally more than 100 customers would pack in to watch the game.> 1998 Jan. 3 Times 19/2.
pay out Pay up <My 21-year-old son’s E-reg Vauxhall Astra was stolen but his insurer is refusing to pay out on the grounds that the company was not told he had fitted his car with alloy wheels.> 1999 Mar. 14 Sunday Times 415/2.
phone through Phone <1932 T. S. Eliot Sweeney Agonistes 13 She says will you ring up on Monday. . . . All right, Monday you’ll phone through.> OED s.v. phone v. b.
potter about Putter around <We all know some people who . . . potter about and do not know what to do.> 1925 Leadbeater 223.
pull in Pull over <She was trying to wave down cars and my first thought was that she was in danger of being run over. I pulled in, wound down the window and asked what on earth she was doing.> 1993 Smith 222.
ring through Call <Just before twelve the hospital rang through to say that Carpenter was now fit for a brief interview.> 1986 Simpson 140. Cf. § 11.1.6.1 RING THROUGH TO.
rub up  Jack off; masturbate <1963 C. Mackenzie My Life & Times II. 115 Just as I was going down the steps into our area B— asked me if I ever rubbed up . . . In bed that night I tried the experiment recommended by B—.> OED s.v. rub v. 14.d.
sell up  Sell (out/off) <We also discussed . . . how we’d sell up – offer each other first refusal and use the average of three estate agents’ quotes or put it on the open market.> 2000 Jan. 16 Sunday Times Money 9/5. Cf. § 11.1.6.2 SELL SOMETHING UP.
sign on  Sign up (for unemployment compensation) “(Br infml) To sign on is to report to a government unemployment office that you are unemployed and wish to receive unemployment benefit” (CIDE).
stay off  Stay out (of school) <OK, you’d better stay off today.> 1991 Glaister 127.
strip off  Strip down <Of the three doctors . . . Paul Mari . . . is so timid that when he introduces himself he is mistaken for a patient and told to strip off.> 1987 Mar. 25 Punch 59/3. Cf. § 11.1.6.2 STRIP SOMEONE OFF.
turn in  Turn up; come in <In the old days when we got paid weekly on a Thursday we used to go out for some beer at night and not bother to turn in Friday.> 1999 Mar. 21 Sunday Times 10/7.
wash up  In British this combination refers to washing dishes after a meal; in American, to washing one’s hands (and face). <After supper . . . Charlotte said she would wash up.> 1991 Trollope 131.
write up  Write off/away <I once wrote up for an autograph . . . ‘Am heartily ashamed to write up but – ’> 1971 Mortimer 76.

11.1.6.1 Adverbial particle and preposition

be on about something  Be going on about something <Good Lord, girl, I wondered what you were on about!> 1992 Granger 12.
call out at someone  Call out to someone <. . . men . . . would call out at him, asking him questions about his uneventful sex life, which he pretended not to hear.> 1985 Mortimer 82.
carry on with something  Go on or continue with something <. . . they wanted me to carry on with my brace. You know, they’re dentists.> 2000 Rowling 353.
drop back to someplace  Drop back by/in/at someplace; come back to someplace <. . . drop back to the vicarage for a sherry.> 1985 Bingham 118–19.
get on for an age/time  Get on to an age/time; CIC British texts have 7.1 iptmw of get on for; American have 0.3. <He must be getting on for fourteen now. Doesn’t look much like a teenager, does he?> 1999 Apr. 5 “Fred Basset” (British comic strip) Chicago Tribune 5 6.
get on with something  Do something; go ahead with something; CIC British texts have 184.8 iptmw; American have 48.1. <They are not trying to convince us
to let them wed; we need to tell them [Charles and Camilla] that they should get on with it.> 2004 Dec. 15 Daily Telegraph 18/7.

**get up to a baby** Get up with a baby <The New Man . . . gets up at night to the crying baby.> 1987 Apr. 6 Guardian 10/1.

**give on to someplace** Open onto someplace “Brit. (of a window, door, corridor, etc.) overlook or lead into: a plate glass window gave on to the roof” (NODE).

**go about with someone** Go around/out with someone <Anthea has been allowed to go about with young men ever since she was fifteen or sixteen.> 1985 Pym 83.

**going on with, be** Get started with <It’ll do to be going on with. . . . It gives us enough to get him to the police station for questioning.> 1993 Cleeves 194.

**pop down to someplace** Stop by or drop in at someplace <Just popping down to the tavern for a quick drink.> 1997 June 20 “Fred Basset” (British comic strip) Chicago Tribune 5 6.

**ring through to someone** Call/phone someone <Sergeant Robinson rang through to Walsh.> 1992 Walters 253. Cf. § 11.1.6 RING THROUGH.

**rub up on something** “Chiefly Brit. . . . to refresh one’s memory (of)” (CED).

**sign up to something** Sign on for something <Mr Leighton believes that he is not getting the reforms that he needs – even if union leaders sign up to them.> 2003 July 9 Times 1/3.

**turn up to an event/place** Turn up at/for an event/place <Hamnet turned up to No 10 wearing an outsize T-shirt.> 2003 June 28 Times Weekend 9/1.

11.1.6.2 Adverbial particle and noun phrase

**answer someone back** Talk back to someone <There were Fenians, Suffragettes, daughters answering back their parents.> 1987 June 8 Evening Standard 24/3.

**bring someone on** Bring someone in <Mrs Margaret Thatcher’s changes aimed at . . . bringing on new blood.> 1989 July 24 Times 1/1.

**buy something in** 1. Buy something (from a subcontractor) <If your company buys in mailing lists, you may sometimes wonder why they cost so much.> 1998 Jan. 7 Times 35/1. 2. Stock up on something <I can’t afford to start buying things in.> 1990 Hardwick 120.

**catch someone out** The expression occurs also in American use but is more than 5 times as frequent in British CIC texts. 1. Take someone by surprise <‘The other road?’ countered the man on the telephone, who had been caught out by bad directions before.> 1968 Aird 7. 2. Catch someone <Blunkett’s real gaffe was to be caught out> 2004 Dec. 15 Daily Telegraph 18/1.

**catch someone up** Catch up to/with someone <An investigation by two London University experts has revealed that the [GCSE] exam fails to help boys catch up girls.> 1991 Feb. 15 Evening Standard 5/3.
chase someone/thing up  Track someone/thing down <Obstinately he’d worked on the matter over the weekend, chasing up every lead.> 1992 Granger 14.
cover something over  Cover something (up) <In the outer office . . . two other girls were covering over their typewriters.> 1968 Aird 50.
cut a driver up  Cut a driver off <The most common grievance is motorists saying they have been cut up, followed by complaints of tail-gating.> 1996 Aug. 3 Times Car 96 9/1–2.
do someone down  Do someone in; take advantage of someone <You couldn’t make out that I was to blame. Trying to do you down.> 1990 Hardwick 100.
do something up  Do something over; redecorate something <. . . property values have risen, and it is not so easy now to find a cheap house to do up.> 1989 Mar. In Britain 15/1.
dosh out food/drugs  Dish up food; give out drugs (Dosh out is not recorded in dictionaries.) <‘How much did you hear?’ [¶] ‘Not a lot. I was busy doshing out Lonnie’s seconds.’> 1985 Mortimer 345. <He’d sooner get to the root cause of it . . . and he’ll treat that rather than just dosh out the Valium.> 1993 spoken citation CIC.
draft someone in  Draft someone <Then last November, . . . Jones was drafted in [for a round-the-world balloon trip].> 1999 Mar. 21 Sunday Times 14/5.
dust someone/thing down  Dust/brush someone/thing off <So bring them out, dust them down, and give them a new lease of life.> 2005 Jan. 15 Daily Telegraph Weekend 3/6.
eye something up  Eye something; look intently at something <Yesterday, Kensie [a terrier] was eyeing up the big swans grazing by the Round Pond.> 1999 Mar. 17 Evening Standard 31/1.
fill a form in  Fill a form out <“And . . . and you’ve had the forms, you say?” [¶] Morse nodded. [¶] “And . . . and you’ve actually filled ’em in?”> 1994 Dexter 16.
fill someone in  “Brit. slang. to attack and injure severely” (CED). <1959 Times 3 Mar. 3/4 A naval rating accused of murdering . . . an antique dealer . . . was alleged to have said: ‘I filled in a chap and took his money.’> OED s.v. fill v. 15.f.
fit someone up  Incriminate someone <If Mr Daniloff was fitted up, Mr Zakharov was set up, just a week earlier.> 1986 Sept. 12 Daily Mirror 6/4.
give prizes away  Give prizes out <. . . Sir Ralph’s kind suggestion that he might one day give away the prizes at the school’s speech day.> 1991 Critchley 144.
give something in  Turn something in “Brit. hand in a completed document to an official or a piece of work to a supervisor” (NODE).
give a player out  (of an umpire in cricket) To declare a man at bat to be out in response to an appeal by the other side <The Majarajah of Kashmir . . . tampered with the laws of cricket with the effect that he could only be given out lbw [leg before wicket, grounds for giving out].> 1983 Brooke-Taylor 74.
glance something over  Glance over [prep.] something; look something over <He picked up the sheets of buff typewritten paper, and glanced them over rapidly.> 1940 Shute 62.

hatch something out  Hatch something: Hatch out is nearly 3.5 times as frequent in CIC British texts as in American. <. . . hatching Aragog out in a cupboard wasn’t his idea of being innocent.> 1998 Rowling 208 (US ed. hatching).

have a day off  Take a day off <Yes, he was having a day off to take the twins to Mum and Dad’s.> 1991 Charles 37.

have someone round  Have someone come around; ask someone in <Have some people round in the evening.> 1985 Barnard 28.

hide something up  Hide something away <There’s a dozen places and more where you could easily hide up any amount of drugs.> 2000 Aird 165.

hire someone in  Hire someone <With three of the remaining Bad Seeds, he decamped to Paris . . . to start writing for the album, and there struck on the idea of hiring in gospel singers to enhance the songs.> 2004 Dec. 16 Daily Telegraph 15/4.

invite someone along  Invite someone; ask someone to come along <Charles Richards should be invited along to talk about the small publishing business.> 1981 Dexter 215.

knit something up  Knit something <He had been especially enamored of a multicolored Fair Isle beret, and an aunt had knitted it up for him.> 1991 Graham 92.

lay something on  “chiefly Brit. provide a service or amenity” (NODE). <. . . he can lay on some Falkland veterans for you to be photographed talking to.> 1989 Dickinson 81.

lay up tables  Set tables <Wayne was due to . . . begin laying up the tables in the Members’ and Strangers’ dining rooms.> 1991 Critchley 233.

look something out  Look for and find something <I’m fine to . . . look out the spanner they need for tinkering.> 1991 Grant–Adamson 15.

measure something up  Measure something <The [bowling] lanes were apparently measured up by laser.> 1989 Sept. 5 Evening Standard 31/2.

mess someone around  1. Mess around with someone; play games with someone; give someone problems <I’m supposed to be getting a flight to Moscow but those wankers at the embassy are messing me around about a visa.> 1993 Smith 266. 2. Mess around with someone; i.e., engage in casual sexual activity with someone <− If you’re messing her around . . . − I’m not messing her around.> 1999 Mar. 22 BBC1 EastEnders. 3. Mess someone up; confuse someone <I do think you can mess children around by having theories about them.> 1991 Dickinson 78.

miss out someone/thing  Miss/omit/overlook someone/thing; leave someone/thing out <The islands are rightly popular, but miss out Dubrovnik and you miss a rare gem of a tourist town.> 2003 June 21 Times Travel 1/1.

pack (it/something) in  Stop (it/working/doing something) <Well, . . . they don’t like it, so pack it in.> 1991 Graham 132. <Your pancreas has packed in completely.> 1996 Dexter 234.
pack a place out Pack a place; fill a place up <They packed the restaurant out, moved the chairs, rearranged the tables.>

pass something through Pass something on <I would like to think they [the savings] would be passed through to the consumer.>

pay someone/thing out Pay someone/thing back; get even with someone or for something <Killed is just what he was. But I'll pay them out.>

phone someone up Phone someone; call someone (up) <I’ve got this jeweller friend who’s going to phone you up.>

post something on Mail something; send something on <You dropped it on the station, did you, and some kind soul’s posted it on?>

put something away, save something: <... you still put by a bit each week to ensure you could pay for a decent funeral.>

put an amendment down Put forward or propose/move an amendment <The bill is short, just three clauses, but already the antis have put down hundreds of amendments.>

put the (tele)phone down CIC has 23.7 iptmw of this expression in British texts and 1.8 in American texts. The American option is likely to be hang the (tele)phone up, which also occurs in British use, though only about one-fifth as frequently.

put the (tele)phone up Phone someone; call someone (up) <I’ve got this jeweller friend who’s going to phone you up.>

post something on Mail something; send something on <You dropped it on the station, did you, and some kind soul’s posted it on?>

run a machine in Break a machine in: MW labels the sense “chiefly British.”

rub someone up the wrong way Rub someone the wrong way <In his determination to be a modern prince, he [Prince Charles] rubs many modern commentators up the wrong way.>

rub up something 1. Bone up on something; review something <1885 Pall Mall G. 9 June 1/2 Now is the time for all fiddle lovers to go and rub up their fiddle lore.>

run typeset matter on Run typeset matter in: Hence also the derived noun and adjective denoting such matter in dictionaries are British run-on and American run-in. Both variations are used in both varieties, but the preferences seem to
be as stated. *MW* has a cross-reference from run on to run in, but not vice versa; *NODE* defines run on in the relevant sense, but not run in.

**run someone over** Run over someone; run someone down <I could arrange to run you over in University Avenue. Make it look like an accident.> 2001 Lodge 283.

**sell something on** Resell something <Classic cars can be sold on fairly easily.> 2000 Aird 105.

**sell something out** Sell out of something <It had been said of Essex that ‘even the newsagents were white’. But the fact would not prevent them from selling out the *Essex Bugle* were it ever to carry the story.> 1991 Critchley 26–7.

**sell something up** Sell something (off) <I told one Indian shopkeeper in Crawley recently that all he could do if he wanted to make money was to sell up his shop and get out.> 1994 Oct. 1 *Times* Weekend 13/3. Cf. § 11.1.6 SELL UP.

**send someone down** Send someone to prison <... the press fantasising the while about the pretty blonde policewoman and what a story it would all make when Mr Stagg was sent down.> 1994 Sept. 24 *Spectator* 8/3.

**share something out** Share something; pass something out; divide something up <Could it be . . . that Lizzie has all the emotional, sensual and reproductive instincts that should by rights have been shared out between us?> 1993 Trollope 63.

**spend money out** Spend money (foolishly) <You’re always spending out your money on the boy.> 1985 Mortimer 102.

**stock something up** Stock up on something <... shoppers, fearing even worse weather to come, stocked up food.> 1991 Feb. 9 *Daily Telegraph* 1/4.

**strip someone off** Strip someone down <He smelt rotten so we stripped him off and put him in the bath.> 1985 Townsend 356–7. Cf. § 11.1.6 STRIP OFF.

**take a phone out** Take a phone off the hook: Rare. <Oh, we were in. We were in all right. I’d of taken the phone out.> 1991 Dickinson 244.

**take time out** Take time off: CIC British texts have approximately the same frequency of take a year out and take a year off (respectively 2.8 and 2.6 iptmw); American texts have almost only take a year off (4.1 iptmw), with very few take a year out (0.1 iptmw). <He has been taking a year out from Edinburgh, but returns this autumn to complete his degree in psychology.> 1989 July 19 *Daily Mail* 17/2.

**take someone through** Take someone in; admit/escort someone <That’s the last patient gone . . . . Come along, Inspector. I’ll take you through.> 1996 Graham 113.

**take up premises** Occupy/rent premises <Whether Tobacco Dock will live up to its claim to be the new Covent Garden remains to be seen, but virtually all the shop and restaurant space has been taken up.> 1988 May *Illustrated London News* 67/3.

**throw in a job** The particle up is usual in common-core English; CIC has no examples of throw in a job. <He was unusual to the degree that, aged 51, he threw in his job on a farm in Kent, left a note for his wife and five children
saying that he wasn’t coming back and became a rough-sleeping tramp.> 1993 Feb. 15 Daily Mail 39/2.

**throw up the sponge**  The norm in common-core English is *throw in the towel*, with *sponge* as a minor variant. The particle *up* instead of *in* is not represented in CIC.  <It would be absolutely unlike Elizabeth . . . to throw up the sponge like that.> 1931 Benson 220.

**tidy something away**  Put *something* away/up “The children were expected to tidy away their toys / to tidy their toys away (= put them in the correct place)” (*CIDE*).

**tidy drawers out**  Straighten *drawers* up “(Br) Next week I’m going to tidy out my drawers / tidy my drawers out (= tidy them up by removing unwanted things)” (*CIDE*).

**trigger something off**  Trigger *something*; set *something* off: CIC British texts have 8.1 iptmw of *trigger off*; American texts have none.  <1983 Daily Telegraph 23 Apr. 21/4 The arrival of the new pound coin has triggered off something.> *OED* s.v. *pound* n. 4.b. *pound coin*.

**try it/something on**  Try *something* <I’m not just threatening you, Daley – I’ll bloody kill you if you try it on again.> 1992 Dexter 235.

**tuck someone up (in bed)**  Tuck *someone* in(to bed)  <And tucked up in bed.> 1991 Critchley 217.

**turn someone off**  “Brit. informal. to dismiss from employment” (*CED*).  <1892 Temple Bar Mag. Mar. 321 A packer had been turned off for carelessness.> *OED* s.v. *turn* v. 74.b.

**turn heat out**  Turn *heat* off <Turn the heat out [under a pan of rice].> 1995 Sept. 6 BBC2 Delia Smith’s Summer Collection: “The Summer Kitchen Garden.”

**turn a place over**  Rob a *place* <The room must already have been turned over.> 1993 Apr. 22 GPTV ch.  *Mystery: Inspector Morse*.

**turn someone up**  Cause *someone* to vomit (*CED*); cf. *turn off* “disgust” <If there was one thing that turned him up, it was white women dressing like blacks.> 1993 Graham 212.

**turn something up**  Turn down / pass up *something* <Alan Clark, a former Tory minister, asserted that Churchill was a warmonger who had turned up opportunities to get “first reasonable, then excellent, terms from Germany”>. 1993 Jan. 9 Economist 82/2.

**wind someone up**  “Brit. informal tease or irritate someone” (*NODE*); put *someone* on <He looked at her, saw the amused lift of her lips and laughed. “. . . You’re winding me up.”> 1992 Walters 248.

In the preceding citations, the nominal functions as direct object. In the following, however, it functions adverbially.

**go down a storm**  Be enthusiastically received; go over like gangbusters: CIC has 1.8 iptmw in British texts and none in American.  <. . . the Screen Two film ‘Priest’ . . . is currently going down a storm at festivals.> 1994 Sept. 28–Oct. 5 *Time Out* 16/2.
go down a treat  Go over well: CIC has 1.5 iptmw in British texts and none in American. <It went down a treat with the studio audience too, apparently.> 1995 Lodge 320. Cf. § 6.1 A TREAT.

In the following, the object is a subject-headed gerund:

find out someone doing something  Find/discover someone doing something <There is a mood of uncomfortable deafening silence. It’s as if your granny has been found out shagging the butler.> 2004 Dec. 8–15 *Time Out* 8/1.

11.1.6.2.1 With preposition

bring someone out in a rash  Cause a rash (on someone): CIC British texts have 0.4 iptmw; American texts have none. <These plants bring you out in an unpleasant, spreading rash.> 1982 Trudgill 19.

do something out in a style  Decorate something in a style: CIC British texts have 1.3 iptmw of done out in; American texts have none. <There was the same dull reception foyer done out in light oak veneer and worn-looking splay-legged furniture.> 1988 Lodge 194.

learn/know something off by heart  Learn/know something by heart <. . . trying to . . . learn charms and spells off by heart.> 1997 Rowling 179 (*US ed.* learn spells by heart). <. . . we know it off by heart.> 1999 Rowling 142 (*US ed.* know by heart).

put something out to contract  Put something out on/for bid <London Regional Transport, the body set up . . . to run London’s public transport, has put many of its other routes out to contract.> 1989 Autumn *Illustrated London News* 26/2.

11.1.6.3 Adverbial particle and adjective

come over all adjective  Begin to feel adjective <Annie, 68, comes over all funny.> 1994 Sept. 14–21 *Time Out* 8/4.

cut up rough  “Brit. informal. to become angry or bad-tempered” (*CED*). <Did Mlle Bardot Cut Up Rough? / Brigitte Bardot, the film star turned animal rights defender, has been accused of castrating a neighbour’s pet donkey, Charly, to end a romance with her own donkey Mimosa.> 1989 July 23 *Sunday Telegraph* 3/1–3.

11.1.6.4 Adverbial particle and verbal

11.1.6.4.1 Present participle

carry on doing something  Continue doing something / to do something: In CIC British texts this construction is about 10 times more frequent than in
Complementation 241


fall about laughing Fall down laughing <They fell about laughing when we told them what we were doing.> 1989 June In Britain 8/2. Cf. § 11.1.6 FALL ABOUT.

11.1.6.4.2 Infinitive

come on to do something Start/begin to do something <She would look much more sensible in her comfortable blue felt [hat] if it came on to rain.> 1985 Pym 108.
tell someone off to do something Tell/order someone to do something <You know that David has been told off to help me?> 1985 Price 148.

11.1.7 Prepositional complement

admit to doing something Admit doing something: The construction with to is about 10 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American. <I certainly wasn’t going to admit to touching the bowl in the kitchen.> 1992 Green 43.
affiliate to In CIC British texts, affiliate to is 4.5 times more frequent than affiliate with; in American texts, affiliate with is 27.5 times more frequent than affiliate to. <Unions . . . ask to join [the Trades Union Congress], to be ‘affiliated’ to it.> 1988 Brookes and Fraenkel 91.
aim for Aim at: In CIC British texts, aim for is about twice as frequent as in American texts. <Suggest that he aims for a compromise.> 1989 Dickinson 115.
allow of Allow <By this definition, then, a word has the kind of stability which does not allow of further reduction in form.> 1987 Carter 5.
answer to interrogation Answer some questions <In the old days I could have said, would you answer to some interrogation?> 1994 Freeling 6.
appeal against According to one count (Hundt 91), of 100 randomly selected tokens of appeal in the British Guardian, 99 were followed by against, and only 1 by a nominal; in contrast, the American Miami Herald contained no tokens of appeal against in an entire year’s issues.
average at a sum Average a sum <. . . prêt-à-porter evening dresses average at £1,200.> 1987 Oct. Illustrated London News 64/2.
be on income Have income <. . . women and older pensioners . . . are more likely to be on a low income.> 2003 July 16 Daily Express 35/1.
be on the phone Have a telephone <This week he’s gone to visit his sister in Scarborough. . . . And she’s not on the phone.> 1995 Jones 302.
breathe on some air Breathe in some air <Morse breathed deeply on the early-morning air – cigarettes were going to be out that day.> 1992 Dexter 20.
bucket with rain  Pour down rain <God, it was a foul night – bucketing with rain.> 1995 Wilson 110. Cf. pour with rain below.
call into  Visit; drop by <Call into your local Barclays branch or ring 0 800 000 929> 1999 Mar. 13 poster for Barclays Bank in a London underground station.
cater for someone/thing  Cater to someone/thing: In CIC, cater for is more than 100 times as frequent in British texts as in American; cater to is 3 times as frequent in American texts as in British. In the sense “provide food (at a party)” British prefers cater for or possibly cater at; American also uses the verb transitively: cater a party. <Abbey National, another of the biggest high street lenders, does cater for people who buy abroad.> 2005 Jan. 23 Sunday Telegraph http://www.telegraph.co.uk/.
chat to someone  Chat with someone: CIC British texts have comparable numbers of to and with after chat (with slightly more tokens of to); American texts have 26 times as many tokens of with as of to. <[Prince] William chatted to the residents on subjects ranging from garage music to trendy hairdos.> 2003 June 20 Times 11/1.
claim for  Claim; file a claim for <Anyone over 16 can claim for low-income benefits.> 1986 July Family Income Supplement, FIS.1 (leaflet issued by the Department of Health and Social Security), back page.
claim on insurance  Claim insurance; file a claim on insurance <He’ll just claim on his insurance.> 1993 Stallwood 71.
comprise of  The complementation of comprise is one of the shibboleths of prescriptive usage guides. The range of options in standard use (Gilman 1994) are these (using “whole” and “parts” in a wide sense): (a) the whole comprises its parts = “consists of”; (b) the parts comprise their whole = “make up, constitute,” or the whole is comprised of its parts = “is made up of, is constituted by”; (c) a thing or things comprise(s) or is/are comprised of another thing or things = “is/are.” The citation below illustrates yet another alternative to (c): comprise of (“consist of”). CIC British texts have 0.2 iptmw of comprise of; American texts have none. <These [gifts] comprise mostly of tee shirts.> 1989 Aug. 31 Midweek 13/2.
consist in  Consist of (Peters 2004, 124): In CIC British texts, consist has of 15 times more often than in; in American texts, 22 times. <... a quaintly-named duty which consisted in parading with the guard in steel helmets and peeling potatoes for two hours.> 1962 Lodge 59.
could do with doing something  Would like to do something / have something done: This construction is fairly common in British, accounting for about 10 percent of the tokens of could do with in a sample from CIC. It is very rare in American. <I could do with paying for these two days.> 1992 Green 30.
dabble on the stockmarket  Perhaps a blend of dabble in and on the stockmarket. <... he had broken the resolution of a lifetime not to dabble on the stockmarket.> 1980 Sharpe 131.
dine off food  Dine on food: This construction is rare in British, but has no CIC American tokens. “<dined ~ oysters>” (LDEL).

do for someone  Do someone in <No, whatever they tell us today, it wasn’t really Nannygate that did for Blunkett... [¶] So what was it, then, that did for Blunkett?> 2004 Dec. 16 Daily Telegraph 22/6–7.

do with, to  Having to do with; about <... there was some strange footage to do with a man who had once tended Adolf’s boiler and sitting-room fires.> 1989 Sept. 8 Evening Standard 30/6. Cf. § 11.1.8.2.2 BE TO DO WITH.

doing with, not be  Not put up / be bothered with <I can’t be doing with spending an enormous amount of money on clothes.> 1994 Sept. Tatler 24/1.

engaged on  In common-core English, engaged in is the norm, but engaged on is 4 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American. <... someone here... can cook when not engaged on overcomplicating the food.> 1995 Sept. 9 Times Magazine 77/5.

enrol on a course  In CIC British texts, enrol is followed by in 2.5 times as often as it is by on. But American texts have no tokens of enroll on. <Annette enrolled on an intensive course to become a childminder.> 2004 Jan. 4 Sunday Times News Review 5 5/5–6.

enter tickets to a draw  Enter tickets in a draw: Rare construction. <Thousands of tickets [were] never entered to the prize draw.> 1993 Feb. 22 Evening Standard 17/2.

get up a place  Get (up) to a place <[Of a ripple in a swimming pool:] It’s prob’ly doing 20 miles an hour, time it gets up the deep end.> 1991 Feb. 26 Times 14/3.

go off someone/something  Begin to dislike someone/something <Gone off me a bit, hasn’t she?> 2000 Rowling 532.

increase on  Increase over <Calls have been increased by 77 on last year.> 2005 Jan. 13 BBC News24.

lay about  Lay into; criticize <Howard has laid about the prime minister in the Commons.> 2004 Jan. 4 Sunday Times 13/4.

look like doing something  CIC British texts have 12.5 iptmw of look like being; American texts have 0.1. <Middleton’s merger... looks like causing a boardroom crisis.> 1995 Aug. 28 Daily Telegraph 22/1.

matter to  Chat with <Sir Andrew said he had just been mattering to his brother.> 1994 Sept. 22 Times 18/3.

operate to something  Operate according to / by something: CIC British texts have 3.5 times as many tokens of operate to as of operate according to; American texts have nearly 3 times as many tokens of operate according to as of
operate to. <...> she operates to a formula that invariably incorporates certain ingredients.> 1991 Feb. 10 Independent Sunday Review 4/3.

play to the rules In common-core English, play by the rules is the norm. <...> the inability to play to the rules ... amounted to a sort of conspiracy.> 1987 Mar. 25 Punch 60/4.

play at Although CIC American texts have a marginally higher number of tokens of the verb play, British texts have 1.3 times more tokens of play at. <He ... recalled playing at cowboys.> 1992 Granger 14.

point at Point to is the norm in common-core English; but in CIC British texts it exceeds point at by 3.3 times, whereas in American texts it does so by 5.3 times. <Eight of the [clock] hands were currently pointing at the ‘home’ position, but Mr Weasley’s, which was the longest, was still pointing at ‘work’.> 2000 Rowling 135 (US ed. pointing to).

pour with rain In CIC British texts pour with rain has 3.0 iptmw, and in American texts none. <...> it was pouring with rain.> 2003 Nov. 7 Daily Express 3/5. Cf. bucket with rain above.

presume upon something In CIC British texts presume upon has 0.6 iptmw, and in American texts none. <Mrs. Thatcher replied: “What happens to Mr Kinnock is a matter for the British people. I would not presume upon their choice.”> 1986 Dec. 10 Times 1/5.

protest against/at/about/over Protest: According to one count (Hundt 90), the British Guardian typically complements protest by a preposition: against 45.5 percent, at 26.5 percent, about 20 percent, over 6 percent, and with a nominal only 2 percent of the time; American, on the other hand, complements with a nominal 97 percent of the time, and with the preposition against by only 3 percent. <They were protesting about my proposed new legislation.> 1981 Lynn and Jay 122. <More than 200 French removal vans choked the centre of Paris yesterday ... to protest against new public allowance cuts for families moving house.> 1986 Oct. 30 Times 7/3–6. <Those who ... protested over its waste ... can say a simple hurrah.> 1999 Mar. 17 Times 20/3. <...> a consultant gynaecologist was protesting at a reduction in the number of beds for women patients.> 2005 Jan. 14 Daily Telegraph 27/2.

reckon to/on CIC American texts have no tokens. “have a specified view or opinion of: What do you reckon on this place?” (NODE). <What do you reckon to the old boy? Think he was genuine?> 2000 Granger 280.

sit on a working party CIC British texts have 31.9 iptmw of working party and 0.3 of on before it; American texts have 0.2 of the noun but none with a preceding preposition. <...> members would normally expect to sit ... on a ... working party.> 2001 Apr. English Today 30/1.

speak to Speak to is the norm in both varieties, but it is 7 times more frequent than speak with in CIC British texts and only 2 times more frequent in American. In the BNC also, speak to is between 7 and 8 times more frequent than speak with. Cf. Swan 1995, 553.
stay to a meal Stay for a meal <They stay to tea and supper.> 1988 Brookes and Fraenkel 4.

subscribe for Subscribe to: CIC British texts have 3.5 iptmw of subscribe for and 35.6 of subscribe to; American texts have 0.2 and 68.1 respectively. <The thrust of the privatisation campaigns has been to persuade individuals to subscribe for shares.> 1991 journal CIC.


whip round Make an informal collection of funds from <She . . . whipped round the family, parents, uncles and aunts, bullied a bank manager, and produced enough to buy and furnish a boarding house.> 1987 Bawden 8.

work at something Work at is a characteristic British option to work on (CGEL 9.46n): “She is working at her new play.” For Americans work at may imply resistance, difficulties, obstacles to be overcome: “It’s a problem, but I’m working at it!” <. . . a fourth-class degree . . . was something of a class-conscious badge of not having worked at studies, or having been a swot.> 1976 Grotta-Kurska 35.

work to 1. a schedule/plan Work by/on/according to <Primary teachers have to work to rigid targets set by the Department for Education and Skills.> 2005 Jan. 23 Independent (Web edition). 2. a person Work for/under <Mr Duncan Smith has built a strong team at the top . . . . chosen by and working to him.> 2003 July 14 Times 16/5.

11.1.8 Verbal complement

11.1.8.1 Gerund

11.1.8.1.1 Catenative gerund

become accepting of Accept <Daniel is gradually becoming more accepting of his handicap.> 1991 Mar. 10 Sunday Times Magazine 49/1–3.

face being arrested Face arrest <Thousands of motorists . . . face being arrested this week . . . to collect unpaid parking fines.> 1988 Oct. 16 Sunday Telegraph 2/7.

intend doing something Intend to do something <Having got this far I do not intend giving up.> 1991 Feb. 2 Spectator 16/2.

like doing something Like to do something: Michael Swan (1995, 285) suggests that in British like doing implies enjoyment, whereas like to do implies habitual choice, as in I like climbing mountains and I like to put the milk in first when I pour tea. Stig Johansson (1979, 212) concludes that there is a weak tendency for Britons to choose a gerund complement and Americans an infinitive. <Beckham is a nice lad who likes being with kids.> 1999 Mar. 17 Evening Standard 83/3.
need doing  Need to be done: In both acceptability judgments and choice of alternatives, British tends to favor the gerund complement and American the infinitive (Johansson 1979, 212). \(<P. needs editing out.> 1992 Walters 249.

show willing  Show oneself willing (to do something) \(<He asked me to make a private retreat. . . . To show willing, I went to a Carmelite monastery.> 1991 Lodge 211.

want doing  1. Want to be done \(<We just want leaving in peace. Goodbye.> 1990 Byatt 303. 2. Need to be done \(<You homicidal maniac. You want bloody locking up.> 1991 Graham 252. 3. Want/need to be done: In some cases, it is impossible, without larger context, to distinguish between the “desire” and “need” senses of want. In some cases, the senses may be indistinguishable; see the discussion of their history above (§ 11.1.1.1.2 WANT SOMETHING). \(<A proper chartered accountant, who is going to want paying properly.> 1993 Neel 64.

11.1.8.1.2 Gerund with subject

benefit someone doing something  Benefit someone in doing something \(<. . . can Mr Tebbit say whether the agreement on exhaust emissions will benefit this country selling cars?> 1985 July 4 Times 4/6.

correct someone doing something  Excuse someone for doing something \(<You will excuse me speaking, won’t you? . . I wouldn’t have done as a rule, of course.> 1977 Barnard 9.

prevent someone/something doing something  Prevent someone/something from doing something: The option without the preposition from is a relatively recent British innovation, not used in American (Mair 1998, 150). \(<. . . traffic humps are not only damaging ambulances and fire engines but are also slowing them down so much as to prevent them doing their work.> 2004 Jan. 4 Sunday Times 13/6. Cf. stop someone / something doing something below.

recommend someone doing something  Recommend that someone do something \(<But I would not recommend women walking alone at night.> 1987 Feb. 23 Mirror Weekend 7/3.

stop someone/something doing something  Stop someone/something from doing something: British prefers the construction with from by a ratio of 3 to 2 (according to 10 examples in the LOB Corpus), but there are no similar from-less examples in the Brown Corpus. \(<. . . he had to blink to stop his eyes watering.> 2003 Rowling 117 (US ed. stop his eyes from). Cf. prevent someone / something doing something above.

11.1.8.2 Infinitive

In common-core English, the verbs dare and help can be complemented by an infinitive with or without a preceding to: They dared/helped (to) solve the puzzle.
The infinitive may also have a separate subject or not: *They dared/helped (their friends) to solve the puzzle.* Helped may also be complemented by a *to*-less infinitive with a subject: *They helped their friends solve the puzzle.* Dare is less likely to be so complemented: *They dared their friends solve the puzzle.*

However, these options are not used equally by the two varieties. According to a corpus-based study (*LGSWE* 735), both varieties prefer the bare infinitive over the *to*-infinitive, but American does so more strongly. After *help*, American preference for the bare infinitive is greater than 9:1 in conversation, and 14.5:1 in news sources. By contrast, British preference is 4:1 and 3:1, respectively. Moreover, the preference for bare infinitives over *to*-infinitives grew over the three decades of 1961–91 in both British and American English (Mair 1998, 148–9).

**11.1.8.2.1 Catenative infinitive**

In common-core English, when a verb is complemented by a subjectless infinitive, the infinitive is usually preceded by *to*. The following, however, seem characteristic of British.

**accept to do something** Accept an offer to *do something*; agree to *do something*

<Olivier . . . had accepted to do [the film] *Term of Trial* because he had been offered nothing better.> 1994 Oct. 1 *Times* Weekend 1/4.

**afford to install something** Afford *something*; afford the installation of *something*< . . . she had afforded to install a proper open fire.> 1991 Dickinson 5.

**be to do with** See § 11.1.8.2.2.

**begin to do something** Begin *doing something*: Although the infinitive complement is the majority choice in both British and American, American has a higher percentage of gerund complements, and that percentage has been increasing, especially in the press (Mair 1998, 151). Cf. start to below.

**come to think** Come to think of it: The long form is the norm in common-core English, and the short form rare. <And perhaps there’d been a streak of puritanism in Eamonn’s Irishness, because come to think, he couldn’t remember Eamonn ever making that sort of joke.> 1994 Freeling 17.

**could do to do something** Would like to *do something*: This construction is rare. <Please – yeah, please try to make it, will you? I really could do to see you.> 1989 Daniel 74.

**enjoy to do something** Enjoy *doing something* <We thought you would enjoy to have Ianthe Hoskins herself come and talk to us.> 1987 chair introducing a London lecture.

**feel to have** Feel that one has <Each of us feels in our ordinary being to have a unitary consciousness.> 1986 Oct. London lecture.

**invest to save** Invest in order to save <The trouble is that the Treasury and the MoD never learnt to invest to save.> 1991 Feb. 16 *Daily Telegraph* 4/6.
know to do something  Know enough to do something: The construction with enough is more than twice as frequent in CIC American texts as in British. <Dunkirk showed the Brits . . . as game-players who know to give luck a chance.> 1984 Smith 83.

look to be/do something  Seem to be/do something <It looked to have got it all right.> 1989 July 23 Sunday Telegraph 28/7.

look to do something  Hope/expect/work to do something: In 1990 Philip Howard (Word in Time 44) called this use a recent innovation from sports jargon. <Brighton is now looking to achieve city status, after merging with its neighbouring local authority.> 1996 July 24 Times 20/4.

omit to do something  Omit doing something; fail/neglect to do something: This construction occurs 5 times in the LOB Corpus but only once in Brown. CIC has only 0.1 iptmw in British texts, but none in American. The Algeo corpus has some 15 examples from popular fiction and periodicals. <. . . she omitted to tell the police it was there.> 1992 Walters 51.

ordered to be done, be  Be ordered done This doubly passive verb construction, as in The incinerator was ordered to be closed immediately, is more usual in British than in American; CIC British texts have 6.9 iptmw of it, and American texts 1.2. An American analog, as in The incinerator was ordered closed immediately, has no tokens in some 400 CIC British citations of ordered, but a comparable number of American citations include 4.3 iptmw.

reckon to do something  Think/intend to do something: Reckon is more frequent in British use than in American; CIC British texts have 522.3 iptmw, and American texts have 16.7. Use of the verb in the sense “believe, suppose” is dialectal in American English, chiefly Southern and South Midland (DARE). CIC has 2.5 iptmw of reckon to in British texts and none in American texts. <. . . so she’s reckoning to spend most of her time sailing.> 1984 Caudwell 83.

require to do something  Need to do something: Require in the sense “need” with an infinitive complement is a construction with no examples in the Brown Corpus, but 9 in LOB. CIC has 10.2 iptmw of require(s) to in British texts and 2.7 in American. <He [Lord Chief Justice Taylor] said: “Judges do require to have decent vacations.”> 1993 Feb. 7 Sunday Times 22/5.

seen to, be  Appear to: CIC has 124.5 iptmw in British texts and 24.4 in American. <. . . it’s a line [of merchandise] that we cannot be seen to be undercut on.> 1994 Oct. 5 Times 21/1.

settle to do something  Settle on doing something <Lucia had settled to leave Riseholme without the least thought of what injury she inflicted on him.> 1931 Benson 159.

sound to be something  Sound like / as though clause <. . . you sound to have been very moderate with him.> 1990 Hardwick 39.

start to do something  Start doing something: British uses both complementations, about equally; American prefers the gerund and that preference has been growing, especially in press reports (Mair 1998, 152). <Any minute now
the telephones would start to ring with complaints from car owners.> 1993 Mason 97. Cf. begin to above.

think to do something  Intend to do something; think about doing something: The construction is about 50 percent more frequent in British than in American CIC texts. <The boys took it back to their home in Clapton, where they wiped it down, and thought to keep it.> 1995 June 8 London Review of Books 8/3.

want to do something  Need to do something: <You don’t want to worry about that.> 1991 Cleeves 195.

11.1.8.2.2  Infinitive with subject

The verb want is complemented by an infinitive with a subject in common-core English: They want us to meet only twice a year. In some American dialects, want may be complemented by a that-clause: They want that we should meet only twice a year (CamGEL 1422).

be (anything/more/nothing/something) to do with  Have (anything/more/nothing) to do with: In this construction, the norm in common-core English is the verb have. Use of the verb be is a recent Briticism, appearing in less than 20 percent of the tokens in the BNC (Peters 2004, 380). A random check of the OED text found 100 tokens of have and none of be for this construction. In the more recent texts of CIC, however, the be construction is gaining ground, accounting for more than 33 percent of the tokens in British texts. In CIC American texts, the be construction accounts for only 6 percent of the whole, and have for 94 percent. <Tough luck. It’s nothing to do with us.> 2005 Jan. 11 BBC News24. <It is to do with common sense.> 2005 Jan. 16 BBC1 Breakfast with Frost.

know someone do something  Know someone to do something: Complementation of know by a to-less infinitive occurs in British English in the perfect aspect. <I’d never known him lose his temper before.> CamGEL 1244.

permit someone be affected  Permit someone to be affected <... a flimsily clad female “spirit” would ... glide between members of the audience, permitting herself be groped in the process.> 1991 Feb. 7 Midweek 17/1.

recommend someone to do something  Recommend (that) someone do something: This British construction corresponds to an American mandative subjunctive; its oldest date in the OED is 1856. The construction is entered without comment in LDOCE. <Mrs Barefoot ... would certainly recommend younger women to look ahead.> 1993 Feb. 1 Times 12/4.

11.1.8.3  Participle

need done  Need to be done <She and her husband ... have just bought their house and there’s lots needing done.> 1987 May 10 (Scotland) Sunday Post 12/3.
11.1.8.4 Verbless nonfinite clause

allow someone back to  Allow someone to go back to/someone back in(to): This verbless clause structure is rare in British English, but has no tokens in CIC American texts. <My father . . . told him that if he didn’t allow me back to school in whatever colour socks I liked he would protest to his MP.:> 1985 Townsend 83.

11.1.9 Clausal complement

Some verbs can be complemented either by a noun phrase or by a that-clause. For the following verbs as a group, CIC British texts have clause complementation 3.6 times more frequently than American texts do. The subordinating conjunction that is optional.

absorb that something is the case  <Girls, on the other hand, absorb early on that in the most profound sense they must rely on themselves as there is no-one to take care of them emotionally.:> 1986 Oct. 7 Today 15/4.

accept that something is the case  <Michael Howard and Mr Letwin accept that moves have to be made.:> 2005 Jan. 14 Daily Telegraph 1/3.

appreciate that something is the case  <The “tankies” appreciate they are going to war and so treat the vehicles better.:> 1991 Feb. 16 Daily Telegraph 4/5.

denounce that something is the case  <This is a country where humbug is a great virtue. You denounce something is being done and rush to read about it.:> 1990 Critchfield 424.

reinforce that something is the case  <John Broome . . . has reinforced that the Battersea scheme will remain dominated by the leisure park concept.:> 1989 Sept. 12 Evening Standard 17/1.

Similarly, depend can be complemented by a preposition (on, upon) or by an indirect interrogative clause. In CIC British texts, the clause is 4 times more frequent than it is in American texts.

depend what happens  <I think it depends what they’re offered.:> 2003 Rowling 81.

11.1.10 No complement

Occasionally, verbs that would normally have some complementation are used without any. The lack of complementation is of several different sorts. The complement may be understood: She’s been (here/there). Or there may be a change in role relationship, so that a verb’s subject is what, in other uses, would be its object: She closed the door / The door closed. The latter sort, sometimes called “ergative,” may be more frequent in British than in American (McMillion 1998).
been Been here; come <Later maybe, after Audrey’s been.> 1993 Smith 97. 
deliver Be delivered <The delivery of first-class mail within 24 hours is a hit 
and miss affair and it is not unusual for properly addressed and pre-stamped 
mail to take three days to deliver.> 1988 Sept. 25 Manchester Guardian Weekly 
2/5. 
feature Be featured <Ancient craft restored to at least river-worthiness will be 
back in their element. . . . Modern craft, too, will feature.> 1986 Oct. 30 
Times 16/2. 
go Go off; make a sound <Your alarm’s gone.> 1991 Dickinson 165. 
make Be made <Ransome has always had a key to the gates and although we 
 knew that fresh keys were making we didn’t think they would be forthcoming 
so soon.> 1937 Innes, Seven 180. 
otice Be noticed <They’ve got half a dozen already so one more won’t 
notice.> 1987 Graham 44. 
pREPare Be prepared <Even now, strange events are preparing.> 1937 Innes, 
Hamlet 12. 
settle Settle down/in <He was a good worker and he steadied down as he got 
older. He seems to have settled well, to have fitted in.> 1993 Cleeves 147. 
tidy Tidy (something) up: In a random sample of 143 tokens of the verb tidy 
(and its inflected forms), the BNC has 89 tokens of tidy (something) up, 37 of 
simple tidy something (tidy a house/room/drawer/etc.), 9 of tidy away, and 8 of 
tidy as intransitive. <Give lavender bushes a light trim now to tidy, but leave 
their main cut until the spring.> 1994 Oct. 1 Times Weekend 11/4. 

11.2 Complementation of nouns 

11.2.1 Prepositional complement 

advantage from/in/of doing something Advantage to doing something: CIC 
texts have comparable proportions of the four prepositions from, in, of, and 
to after advantage in British and American texts, with not more than one 
percentage point difference between the two varieties (respective percent-
ages of British/American: 1.2/0.3, 9.9/9.0, 81.4/82.2, and 7.5/8.5). However, 
when the object of the preposition is a gerund, to is notably more frequent 
in American texts, and the other three prepositions are somewhat more fre-
cent in British texts (percentages as before: 1.4/0.5, 41.0/35.5, 49.0/40.0, 
and 8.6/24.0). <For Mr Kinnock there are advantages from being brought 
back into the fold.> 1991 Feb. 9 Daily Telegraph 5/2. <There are additional 
advantages in setting up a timeshare.> 1989 nonfiction CIC. <. . . students 
see significant advantages of entering the workforce after two instead of three 
years.> 1989 Aug. 5 Times 10/7. 
appointment to the sovereign, by This use does not occur in American 
English. <By Appointment To Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II / Soft
Drink Manufacturers / Schweppes International Limited / London> 1989 Sept. 17 notice on a can.

**appreciation of** Appreciation for: In CIC British texts, *of* occurs in 94 percent and *for* in 6 percent of the tokens; in American texts, in 55 and 45 percent, respectively. <Then he sits nervously twining his long fingers until I walk in and express appreciation of his efforts.> 1989 Daniel 2.

**audience of** Audience with <The Right Hon Margaret Thatcher, MP (Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury) had an audience of The Queen this evening.> 1985 May 1 Times 18/1.

**bruising to** Bruises on: In CIC British texts, *bruising to* is nearly twice as frequent as *bruising on* (2.0 to 1.1 iptmw); *bruising does not occur with either preposition in American texts. Bruises on is preferred over bruises to in both varieties, somewhat more in American (British 3.6 iptmw to 0.4, American 4.6 to 0.4). <... she came home with bad bruising to her handicapped leg.> 1994 Sept. 30 Daily Telegraph 2/4.

**burns to** Burns on: In CIC texts, national preferences for the two prepositions after *burns* is opposite (British to 3.4 iptmw and on 1.5, American 1.7 and 3.9, respectively). <He was taken to hospital with burns to his hands and knees.> 1995 Aug. 28 Independent 2/8.

**chat to** Chat with: CIC British texts have more than 2.0 iptmw of *to* after the noun *chat*, but American texts have none. <I had a brief chat to him to say that I hoped they turned up and that the kids returned safely home.> 2003 Nov. 7 Daily Express 6/5.

**change to** Change in <... the editor ... is famous for her last-minute changes to the mix.> 1991 Feb. 10 Independent Sunday Review 5/1.

**claim to something** Claim for *something* <These figures will have to be specific to items such as ... claims to reliefs.> 1994 Oct. 1 Times 29/3.

**closure on a business, make an emergency** Close a business as an emergency measure: The construction is rare. <Magistrates have also made an emergency closure on Foodworth, a large supermarket.> 1987 Mar. Camden Magazine (local London borough), no. 46, 7/3.

**contribution to** Contribution for: CIC has a slightly larger percentage of *for* versus *to* after *contribution* in American texts (4.4 versus 95.6) than in British (2.3 versus 97.6). <... his efforts to raise contributions from other countries to the British effort in the Gulf.> 1991 Feb. 8 Daily Telegraph 2/1.

**decision over** Decision on/about <Without having a decision over it, we had to abide by the university regulation.> SEU s3-4.966-8.

**defence to** Defense against <... merely being depressed did not amount to a defence to that charge.> 1991 Feb. 13 Daily Mail 2/3.

**delight to** Delight in <So skilfully was I able to blend [the dog] Addo into the plot, though, that even Nicol eventually began to enjoy the audience’s delight to him.> 1994 Oct. 5 Times 14/2.

**difference of** Difference in <I greatly doubt whether anyone but an expert can tell the difference of flavour between a pasteurized cheese and the unpasteurized varieties.> 1987 July Illustrated London News 73/1.
difference to, make a  Make a difference in: In CIC British texts, *to* is 7.4 times more frequent than *in* for this construction; in American texts, *in* is 2.2 times more frequent than *to*. <That [being an Arabic speaker] makes a distinct difference to his reporting.> 2005 Jan. 16 BBC1 *Breakfast with Frost*.
divorce to  Divorce to, rather than from, is rare in British use, the only examples being journalistic. <They popped into a supermarket but the petite star [Felicity Kendall] was saying nothing about her divorce to Michael Rudman.> 1991 Mar. 2 *Daily Express* 15/3.
doubt at/of  Doubt *about* is the norm in common-core English. But CIC British texts have 3 times as many tokens of *doubt at* as American texts do, and 4.4 times as many of *doubt of*. <Hilary Steinberg saw the film in the making and has no doubt at its brilliance.> 1986 Aug. 28 *Hampstead Advertiser* 17/2–3. <Convicted defendants were left in no doubt of his disapproval.> 1995 newspaper CIC.
degree on one’s voice  Edge to *one’s voice*: In this construction *to* is the norm in common-core English. CIC British texts have only 0.1 iptmw of *on*; American texts have none. <The sudden sharp edge on Morse’s voice made Walters look up anxiously.> 1981 Dexter 83.
end on it, an  An end to it: In this construction *to* is the norm in common-core English. CIC British texts have only 0.1 iptmw of *on*; American texts have none. <I’ll not do it and there’s an end on it.> 1989 Daniel 71.
example to  Example for: CIC British texts have 61 percent with *to* and 39 percent with *for*; American texts have 27 percent with *to* and 73 percent with *for*. <Club officials should set an example to their players!> 1987 Jan. 29 *Deptford & Peckham Mercury* 10/1.
experience of  Experience with: CIC British texts favor *of* by 2.8 times, and American texts favor *with* by 2.3 times. <I now have some experience of the subject.> 1999 Mar. 8 *Guardian* 16/2.
files of  Files on: This construction is rare. <West End vice squad officers closed their files yesterday of “Operation Circus” > 1987 Feb. 18 *Daily Telegraph* 3/3.
fuss of, make a  Make a fuss over: The construction with either preposition is rarer in CIC American texts (0.9 iptmw) than in British (6.4); British texts prefer *of* by 7 to 1, and American texts prefer *over* by 2 to 1. <Get off home as early as you can, and make a proper fuss of him.> 1993 Mason 147.
grip of  Grip on: In this construction *on* is the norm in common-core English. CIC British texts have 3.0 iptmw with *of*; American texts have 0.4. <After just a few seconds, I got a grip of myself.> 1997 Sept. 3 CNN British speaker.
guide on  Guide to: In this construction *to* is the norm in common-core English. CIC British texts have 1.9 iptmw of *on*; American texts have none. <. . . a complete guide on where to find what is particularly timely.> 1997 Apr. *Businesslife* (British Airways) 6.
increase of an amount on a time  Increase of an amount over a time: In CIC British texts, 71 percent have *on* in this construction and 29 percent have *over*; in American texts all have *over* and none have *on*. <Average starting salaries
have risen . . . to £20,300, an increase of 4.1 per cent on 2002.> 2003 July 16 Times 9/1.

key of a place Key to a place: In common-core English, to is the norm in this construction. CIC British texts have of in 2.6 iptmw, and American texts in 0.4. < . . . you must have a key of the house.> SEU s1-10.1031.

kick up the backside/arse/bum Kick in the ass; a reproof, esp. one serving as motivation to act: The British and American idioms differ in both the preposition and its object. CIC British texts have up in 4.3 iptmw; American in only 0.1. Other objects of up in British use include behind, fundamentals, pants, rear, and rump, of which pants and rear also occur in American texts after in, along with butt and tail. <Snivelling little oik needs a kick up the backside.> 1995 Aug. 29 Evening Standard 11/2.

lease of Lease on: CIC British texts have of after lease 3.2 times more often than on; American texts have on 2.3 times more often than of. <He had . . . the lease of the flat.> SEU w16-7.36. – new lease of life New lease on life: The phrase is 3 times more popular in British use than in American. In CIC British texts, the ratio between of and on is 43:1; in American, nearly 1:10. <So bring them out, dust them down, and give them a new lease of life.> 2005 Jan. 15 Daily Telegraph Weekend 3/6.


luck on someone, bad Bad luck for someone: This construction is infrequent in CIC British texts, but there are no tokens of it in American texts. <I think she identified the school with the Union Jack, which was rather bad luck on the school.> 1994 Sept. 25 Sunday Times Magazine 10/1–2.

member for Representative from: Both noun and preposition differ between the two varieties. < . . . that instinct for survival . . . had kept the Member for Arden in Parliament for so long.> 1992 Critchley 27–8. Cf. also MP for.

membership of Membership in: CIC British texts have of in this construction 7 times as often as in; American texts have in 33 times as often as of. < . . . my membership of the London Library eventually determined the direction of my interest.> 2005 Jan. 15 Daily Telegraph Books 2/5.

Minister for CIC British texts have Minister of (as also in the American analog Secretary of) twice as often as Minister for, which occurs in 30.0 iptmw. <Cornelius Fudge, Minister for Magic . . . > 2003 Rowling 537 (US ed. of).

misconception on Misconception about: The construction is rare. <There is one very common misconception on this.> 1987 Aug. Illustrated London News 47/2–4.

MP for CIC British texts have this construction in 91.1 iptmw. The American analog is Representative from. <David Harris, the Tory MP for St Ives, could bear it no longer.> 1993 Feb. 7 Sunday Times 2 3/2. Cf. also MEMBER FOR.

name to a book Name on a book: The construction with to is rare. <Rather jolly to have one’s name to a book.> 1973 Innes 21.
one thing for it, only  The norm in common-core English is only one thing to do; CIC has 0.5 iptmw of only one thing for it in British texts and none in American. <Only one thing for it. He hobbled and hopped across to the telephone and rang Lewis.> 1975 Dexter 79.

pass at a particular grade  The construction, which is normal in British, does not occur in CIC American texts; if it did one might expect with rather than at. <The intermediate diploma would be roughly equal to five GCSE passes at grade C or better.> 2003 July 16 Times 1/3.

pattern to  Pattern for: The construction is rare. <... activism ... set a pattern to their future lives together.> 1994 Sept. 25 Sunday Times Magazine 25/1–2.

preference for, in  CIC British texts have 0.9 iptmw; American texts have 0.1. X in preference for Y means “not X, but Y, by preference” as in <... they avoid salaries in preference for commission payments or fees directly related to their performance.> 1994 nonfiction CIC.

processing on  Processing of/for: The construction is rare. <Boots Film Processing Same Day ... on films handed in before 9.30 am> 1990 May 31 sign outside Boots, Charing Cross Road.

recommendation to  CIC British texts have only a few examples with to in the sense “for” or “in favor of.” Recommendation for is the norm. <They dispersed ... to get a recommendation to a security firm.> 1993 Neel 145.

report into  The norm in common-core English is report on or investigation into. CIC British texts have 12.1 iptmw of report into; American texts have 0.7. <Ministers are currently completing a green paper on children at risk, in response to the Laming report into the death of Victoria Climbié.> 2003 June 25 Guardian international ed. 17/1.

respect of, in  CIC British texts have 96.6 iptmw of in respect of and 66.0 of with respect to; American texts have, respectively, 1.2 and 102.9. <... the position taken by local government in respect of community care.> 1989 Aug. 9 Times 15/3.

return of investment  This construction with of is rare; the norm is on. <... donations which can yield a threefold return of investment.> 1987 Jan. 20 Guardian 1/6.

room for manoeuvre  CIC British texts have 7.0 iptmw with for and 1.5 with to. American texts have 1.5 of room for maneuver and 5.0 with to. <Mr Brown may seem to have plenty of room for manoeuvre.> 1999 Mar. 6 Economist 36/1.
Secretary for cabinet office  The norm in common-core English is Secretary of, which is notably more frequent in CIC American than British texts (362.9 versus 150.9 iptmw). Thus although the frequency of Secretary for is not very different in the two varieties (American 5.4, British 6.7), Secretary for accounts for only 1.5 percent of the two options in American texts but for 4.2 percent of them in British texts. <Secretary for Employment.> 1987 Feb. 4 Evening Standard 13/4–5. Cf. minister for above.

substitution of $X$ by/with $Y$  This construction appears 2.5 times more often in British than in American CIC texts, and with four variations in British versus two in American. The norm in common-core English is the substitution of $X$ for $Y$, with a minor variation, the substitution of $X$ in place of $Y$, in both of which $X$ replaces $Y$. They are the only such constructions in CIC American texts. CIC British texts have two other constructions: the substitution of $X$ by $Y$ and the substitution of $X$ with $Y$, in both of which $X$ is replaced by $Y$, the reverse of the usual relationship. <... the substitution of Jefferys by Moore was greeted with boos.> 2000 newspaper CIC. <Most changes ... are the substitution of old-fashioned words with others regarded as new.> 1987 June 7 Sunday Telegraph 20.

trawl of  CIC British texts have 6.6 iptmw of the noun trawl, most metaphorical; American texts have 1.2, all references to fishing, and none for trawl of. <... they will run software checks – such as a trawl of the electoral register.> 2004 Dec. 14 Daily Telegraph 31/3.

value for money  Value; one’s money’s worth: CIC British texts have 76.4 iptmw of value for money; American texts have 0.5. <... we’re not giving value for money.> 2003 James 38.

week on day of the week  Week from day of the week: CIC British texts have 10.9 iptmw with on; American texts have none. <... school resumes after half-term a week on Monday.> 1993 Feb. 13 Daily Telegraph 3/2.

win on  Win in: This construction is rare, but the few tokens in CIC British texts have on, and the few in American texts have in. <‘But I’ll tell you what would have helped her. ...’> 1996 Dexter 67.

word on something  The construction with on is rare; in CIC British texts it is usually word about something; American texts have no tokens of either form. <May we have a word on this?> SEU s3–4.583.

11.2.1.1  With verbal object

opportunity of doing something  Opportunity to do something: Opportunity to do is the norm, but opportunity of doing is a secondary British alternative (Peters 2004, 396), of which CIC British texts have 53.2 iptmw and American texts 6.9. <One must never let slip an opportunity of teasing the next man about his geographical origins. Geordie, Scouse, Taff, Paddy, Jock.> 1962 Lodge 65.

preparation for doing something  Preparation to do something; CIC British texts have 4.7 iptmw of the construction; American texts have 2.6. <... an IRA
man who worked as a police informer was being interrogated in preparation for being shot. > 1991 Feb. 20 Times 8/6.

11.2.2 Verbal complement

omission to do something Not doing something: This relatively rare construction is 3 times more frequent in CIC British texts than American (0.6 to 0.2 iptmw). <The omission to ask Stephen was another instance of Mrs Annick’s tact.> 1970 Johnson 148.

something to be going on with Something to work/deal with: Enough and plenty are frequent as heads in this construction. CIC has 0.6 iptmw in British texts and none in American. <With both a dead body and a missing person on his plate, he had more than enough to be going on with.> 1996 Graham 106.

11.2.3 Clausal complement

time (that) someone did something Time (that) someone does / (should) do something: In a small sample (28 tokens) of CIC British texts with this construction, the ratio of preterit to nonpreterit verbs was 8:1; in a smaller sample (13 tokens) of American texts, the ratio was 1:2. <It is high time the local education authorities got their act together on these issues and agreed some guidelines.> 1986 Oct. 6 Times 12/7.

11.3 Complementation of adjectives

11.3.1 Prepositional complement

In common-core English, enough and sufficient may be followed by a prepositional phrase with for, as in They have enough/sufficient money for a taxi or by an infinitive complement, as in They have enough/sufficient money to take a taxi. American English has, as a minority option, a that-clause as complement (CamGEL 396; Peters 2004, 183): They have enough/sufficient money that they can take a taxi. This option is also available for enough as a pronoun and enough and sufficiently as qualifiers (CamGEL 969).

bored of Bored with is the usual collocation in common-core English, but bored of is an option (Peters 2004, 76), of which CIC British texts have 3.1 iptmw and American texts 0.7. <Gary . . . got bored of having so little to do.> 2004 Dec. 17 Independent 10/3.

comparable with Although compared with and compared to have similar relative frequencies in British and American, and with is preferred in both, comparable with/to is different, to being preferred in both varieties, but much more strongly in American. In CIC British texts, to is more frequent than with by
1.8 times, but in American texts, by 11.7 times. <They [civil service jobs] should be for fixed-term contracts, with pay comparable with the private sector.> 1991 Jan. 31 Times 13/2. Cf. § 11.1.1.2 COMPARE.

concerned at/for Concerned about: CIC has the following British/American iptmw for about 133.3/375.3, at 17.1/3.5, for 14.5/9.5. <The Prince . . . has become concerned at some of the opinions of his unpaid adviser.> 1987 Mar. 13 Evening Standard 6/1–2. <Thompson is now secretly concerned for his health.> 1993 Feb. 7 Sunday Times 5 2/3.

cover in Cover with: American generally prefers with and British in. < . . . the far end of Alice’s office with the walls covered in bookshelves and her desk piled with proofs.> 1990 James 126.

different to Different than: Both British and American also use the prescribed different from (cf. CGEL 16.69n). According to one count (Hundt 1998, 87), the percentage of tokens in which different is followed by various prepositions in the British Guardian and the American Miami Herald is as follows: from, British 89 percent, American 65 percent; than, British 3 percent, American 35 percent; to, British 8 percent, American none. A study based on a corpus of American English spoken by professional people (Iyeiri, Yaguchi, and Okabe 2004) found 98 tokens of different from and 91 tokens of different than (followed by a nominal). CIC British texts have the following iptmw of from, to, and than after different: respectively, 242.7, 44.3, and 5.0; American texts have 234.2, 1.0, and 91.1. <. . . the sort of detailed information that patients need . . . will be different to the kind of information the NHS thinks patients ought to want.> 2003 July 16 Times 16/7. Cf. § 11.4 DIFFERENTLY TO.

down to Up to; be the responsibility of <The ethics of sex selection [of babies] should not be down to the public.> 2003 Nov. 12 Times 22/6.

due to Due: British is said to favor the prepositional complement in $750 is now due to you and American the nominal complement in $750 is now due you (CamGEL 546).

earlier to Earlier than < . . . the arching braces . . . are of an earlier type to those in the kitchen block.> 1990 Aug. 15 Daily Telegraph 26/5.

exempt something Exempt from something <More than 40 soldiers . . . applied to be exempt service.> 1991 Feb. 5 Daily Telegraph 1/1.

fair on Fair to: CIC has 8.2 iptmw with on in British texts and 0.4 in American. < . . . it is not fair on the little people to make them sit quietly while great-uncle Tony and his friends rabbit on about Iraq and the European constitution.> 2003 July 9 Times 2/3–4.

fed up of Fed up with: CIC has 6.2 iptmw with of in British texts and 0.5 in American. <It’s a different form of exercise, good for the horses who are fed up of their daily runs.> 1988 Apr. In Britain 51/1.

furious at Furious with: CIC British texts have 11.4 iptmw of at and 9.7 of with; American texts have respectively 4.8 and 5.1. < . . . she’s furious at them.> 2000 Rowling 52.
good on  Good for: CIC British texts have a few tokens with on; American texts have none. <Nick said they’d stolen the name from a manor house in Somerset. . . . If so, good on them.> 2001 Drabble 146.

good to one’s word  As good as one’s word <He vowed he would return with a vengeance. He has been good to his word.> 1991 Jan. 29 Daily Telegraph 34/5.

identical with  Identical to is the norm in common-core English, but identical with is an option, especially in British (Peters 2004). CIC British texts have half as many tokens of identical with as of identical to; American texts have only a third.

last but cardinal number  CIC British texts have 2.5 iptmw of last but one and 0.4 of next to last; American texts have respectively 0.1 and 7.6. <The last week but one in May.> 1969 Rendell 69. Cf. next but, second (to) last below, § 8.1 but, from last, § 8.2.2 second last.

lined in  The preposition with is the norm for this construction in both British and American, but CIC British texts have 2.1iptmw of lined in and American texts 0.8.

nervous of  Nervous about: CIC British texts have more than 2 times as many tokens with about as with of; American texts have more than 55 times as many. <We are nervous of financial advice -> 2005 Jan. 15 Daily Telegraph B 10/6.

next but number  CIC British texts have 3.3iptmw; American texts have 0.3. <I happen to live next door but one to a bicycle shop.> 1987 Aug. Illustrated London News 14/1–2. Cf. last but above, second (to) last below, § 8.1 but, from last, § 8.2.2 second last.

nuts on  Nuts about is the norm in common-core English, but CIC British texts have a few tokens of nuts on; American texts have none. <I got my Eton Schol on a Greek epigram I translated right when all the others made a mess of it, because the Captain was nuts on the Anthology.> 1983 Dickinson 60–1.

oblivious of  Oblivious to: Oblivious of is the older form but is being replaced by oblivious to, which is now the norm in common-core English, with nearly 3 times as many tokens in CIC British texts and nearly 8 times as many in American texts. <Audley was . . . oblivious of all nuances when it suited him.> 1986 Price 281.

opposite to  Opposite to is more frequent than opposite from in both varieties, but 19 times so in CIC British texts and only 3 times so in American. <The three floors of the building are connected by a lift shaft situated at the opposite side of the atrium to the entrance.> 2001 Lodge 44.

reserved to  Reserved for is the norm in common-core English, but reserved to is twice as frequent in British as in American. <. . . names usually reserved to the upper classes.> 1969 Rendell 54.

second (to) last  Next to last: CIC British texts have nearly 9 times as many tokens of second last as American texts do. <We pass Dronero at the second last [jump].> 1989 Daniel 25. <There it was, on the second to back page.> 1991 Greenwood 187. Cf. last but, next but above.
separate to  Separate from is the norm, but CIC British texts have 0.7 iptmw of separate to; American texts have none. <Practicalities and ease of living also call for . . . showers separate to the bath where possible.> 1991 Feb. 25 Nine to Five 20/2. Cf. different to above.

shy of  1. Shy with/around <He . . . was shy of women and his idea of fun was a four-week holiday with his wife at a hotel in Eastbourne.> 1989 Oct. 7–13 Economist 109/1–2. 2. Shy about <She’s not shy of discussing her sex life.> 1996 magazine CIC.

smitten with/by  The prepositions are used about equally in British, but CIC American texts have twice as many tokens of with as of by.

starved of  Starved for: CIC British texts have 53 times as many tokens with of as with for; American texts have 9 times as many with for as with of. <. . . the poor guy must have been starved of affection by his ruthless career wife.> 1995 Sept. Marie Claire 46/2.

suited to something  Suited for something: In general CIC British texts use terms like suited, suitable, and suitability 2 to 4 times more often than American texts do; the exception is the combination suited for, which is 1.7 times more frequent in American. <Mr Harris, still in his mid-thirties, appears ideally suited to the job.> 2003 Nov. 13 Times 1/5.

supportive to  Supportive of: CIC British texts have to in 1.0 iptmw and of in 12.3; American texts have no tokens with to and 49.2 with of. <I made a deliberate effort not to contact our friends, so they would be supportive to Sarah.> 1993 Feb. Woman’s Journal 44/3.

tight on  Tight at <He needed, he decided, to get some weight off, his jaw and neck had thickened, and his shirt was tight on the collar.> 1996 Neel 21.

unfair on  Unfair to is the norm in both varieties, but CIC British texts have 3.6 iptmw with on; American texts have none. <It would be very unfair on Mark to read anything too deep into that.> 1994 Sept. 20 Times 3/2.

violent to someone  Violent with someone: CIC British texts have about the same numbers of to and with in this construction; American texts have with 6 times as often as to. <Had he ever been violent to you before?> 2003 James 202.

worst thing for years  Worst thing in years: CIC British texts have similar numbers with for and in; American texts have 45 times as many with in. <The bug recently led to Australia suffering its worst flu outbreak for five years.> 2003 Nov. 7 Daily Express 17/5.

11.3.1.1  With verbal object

nervous of doing something  Nervous about is the norm in common–core English, but CIC British texts have 7.6 iptmw with of and American 0.6. <. . . he’s nervous of going to see a doctor.> 1991 Feb. 4 Nine to Five 6/3.

terrible with doing something  Terrible about / when it comes to doing something: CIC British texts have with in 1.2 iptmw; American texts have
none. <[British actor:] I’m terrible with talking about myself.> 2004 Apr. 2 USA Today 2D/1–2.

11.3.2 Adverbial particle complement

packed out Packed: CIC British texts have 4.3 iptmw with out; American texts have none. <It’s a rabbit-warren of a place and it was packed out.> 1992 Granger 170.

11.3.3 Verbal complement

accustomed to do something Accustomed to doing something: CIC British texts have similar numbers of infinitive and to + a gerund complement after accustomed (respectively 53 and 47 percent); American texts have the to + a gerund complement overwhelmingly (94 percent to 6 percent infinitives). <He was accustomed to work long hours.> 1940 Shute 165.

cconcerned to do something Concerned about doing something: CIC British texts have a ratio of 5.3:1 for complements of concerned by an infinitive versus about + a gerund; American texts have a ratio of 4:1 in favor of about + a gerund. <The Chancellor . . . is concerned to keep the lid on pay.> 1989 July 23 Sunday Telegraph 1/2.

far to seek Hard to find: CIC British texts have 1.7 times as many tokens of far to seek as American texts do; American texts have 1.7 times as many of hard to find as British do. <The reason is not far to seek.> 1984 Smith 122.

interested to do something Interested in doing something: CIC British texts have nearly 3 times as many tokens of an infinitive complement after interested as of in + a gerund; American texts have nearly 2.5 times as many of in + a gerund as of an infinitive. < . . . she was interested to learn all about her pupil’s experience.> 2003 June 14 Times 29/6.

worth doing something CIC British texts have more than twice as many tokens as American texts do (cf. also Swan 1995, 631). <But it is worth reminding the braying brigade that the aristocrat treads a narrow path between over-refinement and coarseness.> 1993 Feb. 13 Daily Telegraph Weekend 36/3–4.

11.4 Complementation of adverbs

differently to Different(ly) than/from: CIC British texts have 3.5 iptmw of differently to and 1.1 of differently than; American texts have none of differently to and 20.0 of differently than. The two varieties are closer in their use of differently from: British 12.9 iptmw and American 11.0. <They may want to live differently to most people.> 1987 June 16 Evening Standard 5/6. Cf. § 11.3.1 different to.
12 Mandative constructions

A mandative construction consists of a verb, noun, or adjective (personal or impersonal) that expresses an order, direction, requirement, necessity, preference, etc. and is complemented by a subordinate clause whose verb is – variably – modal, present subjunctive, or indicative.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{She insists} & + \quad \text{should leave} \\
\text{Her insistence} & + \quad \text{that he} & + \quad \text{leave} \\
\text{She is insistent} & + \quad \text{leaves} \\
\text{It is imperative}
\end{align*}
\]

It is necessary, when the complement verb is indicative, to distinguish the mandative sense of the governing expressions from the factual sense. That is, \textit{She insists that he leaves} may have either the mandative sense “She insists that he should/must/ought to leave” or the factual sense “She insists that it is a fact that he leaves.”


The modal option (\textit{should leave}) is a frequent choice in British English; it is acceptable but little used in American.

The present subjunctive option (\textit{leave}) is the norm in American English and is a frequent choice in British, especially in passive constructions.

The indicative option (\textit{leaves}) is approximately as frequent a choice in British English as the modal but it is very rare in American.

That is, British English uses all three of the options; American uses primarily the subjunctive but accepts the modal. The indicative option is characteristically British.

In a completion test conducted by Christian Mair on 29 January 1987, 25 students at University College London who were native speakers of British English were asked to complete the sentence \textit{Now that the disarmament talks have been bogged down it is absolutely essential}\ldots
Their responses were as follows:

- *that* + a clearly indicative verb: 7
- *that* + a verb ambiguous in mood: 8
- *that* + a clearly subjunctive verb: 3
- *that* + *should*: 2
- *to* infinitive: 5

This evidence is too restricted to project it to British English as a whole, but it is suggestive. If the verbs that are ambiguous in mood are divided according to the same proportions as those that can be identified, the result is that just over half the respondents used the innovative form of an indicative verb, a fifth used the revived subjunctive, a fifth avoided the question of modality by using the infinitive, and only about a twelfth used the traditional alternative, the *should* modal.

The mandative construction has also been the subject of corpus studies. A comparison of *should* versus subjunctive forms in mandative constructions (Hundt 1998a, 163) shows that in 1961 the Brown corpus favored the subjunctive in 88.1 percent of the cases, whereas LOB favored *should* in 87.1 percent. Some thirty years later, the Frown corpus showed a slight increase in American preference for the subjunctive to 89.5 percent, whereas FLOB showed a decline of preference for the modal to 60.4 percent (with the subjunctive accounting for the other 39.6 percent). These statistics do not include the mandative indicative. It is clear from them, however, that American use of the mandative subjunctive has spread to British, which is now using it in more general contexts than it would have formerly (171).

According to another count by Marianne Hundt (1998, 78) of 252 tokens of mandative constructions in an American newspaper, the *Miami Herald*, 88 percent used the subjunctive, 8 percent modal *should*, and 4 percent the indicative; by contrast, of 262 tokens in a British paper, the *Guardian*, 35 percent used the subjunctive, 55 percent the modal *should*, and 10 percent the indicative.

The mandative indicative is the most characteristically British form, in that it is the rarest in American use and is frequently a source of confusion for Americans, who may interpret tokens of it as either factual statements or as unacceptable. When the mandative indicative is used in British, the verb of the complement clause is usually preterit when the general context is past time or else nonpreterit when the general context is present or future time. Instances of these variants are cited below. In all of the following examples, the first American choice for the verb of the subordinate mandative clause is likely to be a present subjunctive form.

### 12.1 Mandative present indicative

#### 12.1.1 *After verbs*

advise ←*Some other customers . . . may well have been . . . there to purchase replacement filters which the manufacturers advise are changed every three months.* → 1998 June 20 *Times Weekend* 3/4–5.
argue <Nobody would argue that at the end of every day every stall-holder
solemnly writes down the day’s takings . . . and forwards the figures to his
demand <Success in the movies has demanded that Rachel Weisz . . . acts
as if she is in a Japanese game show.> 1999 Mar. 22 Times 20/7.
insist <New York’s Mayor Giuliani . . . insists that crime is fully reported.
[i.e., “must be” not “in fact is”]> 1998 Jan. 8 Times 18/2.
propose <Heseltine is proposing the counters division, which runs the [post]
offices, remains in the public sector.> 1994 Sept. 25 Sunday Times 1 5/2.
recommend <I’ll recommend she gets the crime prevention lot over and she
can go through the whole security management issue with them.> 1998 Joss
138.
suggest <Might we suggest he becomes a permanent fixture?> 2003 June 20
Times T2 4/1.
wish <We wish that each man over twelve years old gives the oath that he
would not be a thief or a thief’s accessory.> (translation of OE law II Cnut 21)
1989 Aug. 7–11 International Society of Anglo-Saxonists meeting, Durham.

12.1.2 After nouns

ambition <. . . the highest ambition of many mothers is that their son
becomes a doctor or dentist.> 1986 Oct. 10 Times 1/5.
condition <He is currently free on bail on condition that he does not leave
demand <Problems are also looming over Mr Major’s demand that the IRA
makes a ‘significant gesture’ towards decommissioning its arms.> 1995 newspaper CIC.
request <Further offences will then lead to a request that the official is trans-
ferred or withdrawn.> 1985 Apr. 24 Times 6/2.
requirement <It is a requirement in most European countries that motor
vehicles are constructed by the manufacturers to meet certain design and con-
struction requirements.> 1998 Jan. Registering and Licensing Your Motor Vehi-
cle, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Dept of the Environment, Transport
and the Regions 4/2.
understanding <Naturally, this is on the understanding that the church
remains open as a church.> 1989 Williams 96.
wish <Gilbert’s last wish is that he lives to see his treasures safely installed.>

12.1.3 After adjectives

Personal adjectives

cconcerned <. . . he is concerned that his girlfriends are protected from the
media spotlight.> 2003 June 21 Times 7/2.
266 Syntactic Constructions

Impersonal adjectives

**essential**  < . . . it is *essential* that more decisions are taken by majority vote, rather than by unanimous vote.> 1985 Mar. 31 *Sunday Times* 16.

**important**  <It’s very *important* that . . . he shoulders the responsibility for his behaviour and *understands* the upset that this has caused.> 2005 Jan. 15 *Daily Telegraph* 2/6.

**vital**  <. . . it is *vital* that he *receives* daily treatment.> 1991 Feb. 13 *Daily Mail* 35/2.

12.2 Mandative past indicative

12.2.1 After verbs

**demand**  <I remembered gasping and running forward to *demand* he told me what was happening.> 1991 Grant-Adamson 63.

**insist**  <Apart from *insisting* they *kept* it clean and tidy . . . she did not interfere.> 2001 Lessing 4.

**matter**  <This was the time when it *mattered* so desperately that he *said* and did [= should say and do] exactly the right things.> 1979 Dexter 184.

**propose**  <I did what I thought was the sensible and the appropriate thing to do, which was to *propose* to my son that we *went* to the police.> 1998 Jan. 3 *Times* 1/3.

**recommend**  <Eventually, her GP *recommended* that we *took* her to see a specialist.> 1996 July 14 *Sunday Telegraph Review* 4/3.

**request**  <Only one laureate, Henry Pye, was hard-headed enough to *request* that his wine allowance was *translated* into cash.> 1988 Dec. *In Britain* 28/2.

**suggest**  <Then I rang the friends we were due to meet and *suggested* that they *came* to our place.> 2003 June 30 *Times* T2 8/2.

**want**  <All I *wanted* was that Tanner *got* my request quickly and I *got* the visiting order quickly.> 1991 Grant-Adamson 172.

12.2.2 After nouns

**condition**  <. . . council officers offered him a home improvement loan on *condition* he *used* a particular firm of builders.> 1999 Mar. 10–17 *Time Out* 42/2.

**order**  <. . . in *order* that the premises were not left vacant, they were used as an antiques shop.> 1986 Aug. 25 *Times* 11/5.

**suggestion**  <She [a political candidate] . . . was criticised about her appearance, with *suggestions* she *wore* a mini-skirt, and “re-do her highlights” to win votes.> 2005 Jan. 15 *Daily Telegraph* 10/4. (The coordinated verb “re-do” is subjunctive.)
12.2.3 After adjectives

Personal adjectives

anxious  <. . . he was anxious that aid to people in Africa and other third-world regions did not dry up.> 2005 Jan. 9 *Sunday Times* 3 1/6.

Impersonal adjectives

essential  <Mr McAuslan said it was essential that the crew knew who the marshal was.> 2004 Jan. 5 *Times* 4/3.

important  <. . . it was important she returned to a tidy desk.> 1995 Sept. 4 *Daily Telegraph* 13/7.

necessary  <. . . a set of domestic crises rendered it necessary that she went home for an hour.> 1993 *Neel* 100.

vital  <It was vital that Harvey made contact with Emma.> 1991 *Critchley* 140.
Expanded predicates

Hovering between grammar and lexis are constructions like \textit{have a look}, which are approximately equivalent to a simple verb, such as \textit{look}. The construction and its varieties have received several discussions, some primarily general (Allerton 2002, Brinton and Akimoto 1999, Claridge 1997, Wierzbicka 1982), some based on British corpora (Stein 1991, Stein and Quirk 1991), and others dealing also with British-American variation (Algeo 1995).

The verb in the expanded predicate may be relatively “light” (that is, general or nonliteral) in meaning with respect to its object (\textit{be a challenge, do a dance, get a view, give a yawn, have an argument, make one’s way, pay attention, put an end to, take trouble}), or it may be relatively “heavy” semantically, being appropriate to its object (\textit{ask a question, breathe a sigh, effect an alteration, find a solution, grant permission, heave a sigh, offer an apology, reach an agreement, submit an application, tender one’s apologies, utter a curse}).

The object noun in the construction may be “eventive,” that is, correspond to a verb of similar meaning, with or without some change of form from the verb (\textit{do a dive = dive, give an answer = answer, take a walk = walk, but also have a bath = bathe, and make a discovery = discover}). Or the object noun may not correspond to a verb because (a) there is no equivalent single-word verb (\textit{do homework} but *\textit{to homework}, \textit{have mercy} but *\textit{to mercy}, \textit{make peace} but *\textit{to peace}) or (b) the semantically equivalent verb is not cognate with the eventive noun (\textit{have sex = copulate, take cover = hide, do a favor for = help}) or (c) a cognate simple verb is not semantically equivalent with the eventive noun (\textit{make love (to/with) $\neq$ to love, have a bite “eat a little” $\neq$ to bite, take a chance $\neq$ to chance “happen”).

Central expanded predicates are those with a “light” verb followed by an eventive noun cognate with a semantically equivalent verb (e.g., \textit{have a look = look}). Constructions that depart from either of those characteristics are, for that reason, related but not central examples.

British and American have some different forms of the construction. The two national varieties often differ, however, in the frequency with which they use a common form rather than in the forms used. In the following entries, the figures in parentheses after the entry form are the iptmw in CIC British and American
texts, thus (54.2/0.6) indicates that British texts have 54.2 tokens per ten million words of the construction, and American texts have 0.6. Lack of such figures indicates an absence of the construction from CIC texts.

13.1 Five “light” verbs in British and American

A comparison of expanded predicates with the “light” verbs do, give, have, make, and take in the Brown and LOB corpora shows that the construction is at home in both national varieties, though not equally so. The Brown Corpus has 199 tokens, representing 133 types (different verb and eventive object combinations) compared with the LOB Corpus’s 245 tokens and 149 types. Brown Corpus types are used an average of 1.50 times each; LOB Corpus types are used an average of 1.64 times each. To the extent that these two corpora are representative of their national varieties, we can say that, although the expanded predicate is a shared feature, British English uses it somewhat more than American.

A more striking difference, however, is in the particular verbs used in expanded predicates. The accompanying table shows that the difference between British and American is minor for four of the verbs, but not for have. British uses have as the verb of an expanded predicate nearly twice as often as American does and in about 1.75 times as many different constructions. Have is the British verb of preference, in this sample accounting for 41 percent of both types and tokens of expanded predicates, whereas in American, it accounts for only 28 percent of tokens and 26 percent of types.

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<tr>
<th>Expanded Predicates in the LOB and Brown Corpora</th>
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<td>Summary of tokens/types</td>
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Here follow some examples of the five “light” verbs in British expanded predicate constructions, not all of which are central examples:

do a bunk  (1.2/0.1) Make a sudden departure; run away <Daley had done a bunk.> 1992 Granger 47.
do the car hire  Rent the car <I did the car hire.> 1988 Mortimer 157.
do a course  (8.8/0.2) Take a course: In American use, do a course may mean “teach a course.” <Having done a short course, which costs about £800, a graduate with a qualification to teach English as a foreign language can cross the Channel for a subsistence wage.> 1993 Feb. 13 Spectator 21/2.
do a deal  

(22.8/2.8) Make a deal <... having done a deal ...> I decided this weekend to consider my various options.>  1982 Lynn and Jay 11.

do a flit  

(0.3/0) Run away; secretly move <I hope they get him. Only, the last I heard, he’d done a flit.> 1990 Hardwick 140.

do a rethink  

Think again (about) <His chairmanship ... puts him in a powerful position to nudge the Tories into doing a policy rethink.>  1989 July 27 Evening Standard 7/5.

do one’s round  

(1.3/0) Go on / make one’s rounds <He would now be doing his round of locking up, before descending for the night to his bedsitter in the basement.> 1986 Brett 32.

do a runner  

(4.7/0.1) Run away; run off; disappear; escape <His girlfriend has done a runner with a work-experience boy.> 2003 Nov. 8 Times 29/6.

do a Virgin  

Imitate the practices of the Virgin enterprise <According to one senior manager in Branson’s Virgin empire ... “When I read about Forgan’s letter, I thought, ‘She’s trying to do a Virgin’.”> 1993 Feb. 7 Sunday Times 2 6/2.

do a wiggle  

<Then go across Wandsworth Bridge ... and then do a wiggle.> SEU s1/1 11.872–4.

give someone aggravation  

(0.1/0) Aggravate someone <“Why on earth did you lose your temper like that?” [¶] “He gave me aggravation, didn’t he?”> 2003 James 241.

give a baby a feed  

(2.8/0) Give a baby a bottle <Staff changed shifts as the babies were given a feed.> 1993 Feb. 27 Times 6/1.

give someone/thing a go  

(13.4/2.0) Give someone/thing a try or chance <Surely it’s worth giving it a go.> 1994 Sept. 13 TV ch. 4 Brookside.

give a lead  

(2.5/0) Take the lead (57.2/46.9) <What we do say ... as the opposition is this: for heaven’s sake, give a lead and try and break down this dreadful suicidal wall where no one will yield an inch.> SEU s5.4:67.

give a look  

(1.2/0.2) Take a look <Barrington giving a look round the field.> SEU s10.1:1.

give something a look-in  

Try something <... and do give fruit and vegetables a look-in.> 2004 Jan. 4 Sunday Times 10/2.

give something a look-over  

<He had a mind to let his cousin ... give it a look-over.> SEU w16.4:40.

give something a miss  

(6.3/0.1) Skip something <Chutney Mary (the chichi restaurant) gave a miss to toasted Wonderloaf and processed Cheddar.> 1993 Feb. 27 Times Saturday Review 31/5.

give something a respray  

Repaint something <I could give your car a respray.> 1994 Sept. 27 Evening Standard 56/2.

give something a rest  

(4.6/1.9, but: give it a rest 1.0/0.9) Give something a break; let something go <Can’t you give it a rest? ... You’re always having a go at each other.> 2003 Rowling 212.

give someone a ring  

(34.7/1.8) Telephone someone; give someone a call <Let me give you a ring tomorrow, all right?> 1992 Dexter 80.
give something a wipe  (0.7/0) <Would you like me to give the books a wipe with a duster?>  1993 Dexter 142.

have a bath  (24.2/1.4) Take a bath <You can have a bath and a sit-down there.>  1998 Joss 15.

have a bitch (about)  (0.5/0) <It’s good to be able to have a moan and a bitch about things.>  1997 Dec. 15 Times 17/4.

have a chat  (32.5/2.2) <She could have a chat with his doctor.>  1990 Rowlands 63.

have a feed  (0.7/0.1) Get fed <They’d [babies would] have a feed.>

have a game of something  (3.7/0.4) Play a something game / a game of something <. . . all the drivers will be . . . having a chat and a game of cards.>

have a giggle  (1.4/0.1) <It is one thing to have a giggle at the office party, groaning lasciviously through a rendition of Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas . . . , quite another, to think that the result is a piece of art.>  2000 Dec. 15 Times 2 13/2.

have a(nother) go (at)  (107.2/3.7) 1. Try 1a. have a go Give it a try; make an attempt <Jean de Florette and the other Pagnol films did have a go but . . . failed.>

1b. have a go at Make an attempt at <Who . . . suggests the tomboy might like to have a go at ballet?>

2a. have a go Take violent action <What would you commit murder for . . . Money, reputation, revenge? [¶] ‘I might have a go for revenge.’>

2b. have a go at Attack someone physically <This year, they had a go at Jewish protesters and Western journalists trying to cover their demonstration.>

2c. have a go at Break into; tear apart something <The clip-on wrecked stereo kit, complete with dangling wires and broken plastic, makes robbers think that someone else has already had a go at the car.>

2d. have a go at Attack someone verbally; criticize <It’s the hunting debate . . . It’s having a go at the class system.>

3. have a go (of it) Suffer/undergo an illness <Ted says malaria isn’t any worse than flu. He usually works on through when he has a go.>

4. have a go Take a turn <I had a go on Nigel’s racing bike.>

5. have a go Take a chance <I’ve only been to one race meeting in my life . . . but London Standard looked such a super horse we felt we had to have a go.>

6. have a go at Try to get information from <They [police] might have a go at me about Vanessa not giving them a statement.>

7. have a go at Work on; tackle <Richard Compton–Miller returned with a largish file for Stephen fifteen minutes later. [¶] “Have a go at that.”>
have (a) holiday(s) (11.0/0) Take a vacation (in some location) <I decided to have a week’s holiday in the very selfsame place.> 1974 Potter 135.

have a laugh (21.6/3.3) <People with GSOH [“good sense of humour”] are always on the lookout for a passing joke, there is an ever-readiness to have a laugh.> 2003 June 21 Times Weekend 9/3.

have a lie-in (1.1/0) Sleep late/in <We’re both dead-beat. Have a lie-in.> 1972 Rendell 59.

have a listen (3.4/0.1) <You could have a really tricky problem, . . . and Steve would come along, have a listen and say, ‘Ah yes, that’ll be the . . .’ whatever it was.> 1986 Simpson 61.

have a look (268.4/20.5) Take a look (57.6/144.0) <I’ll have a look first.> 1991 Green 39.

have a moan (0.8/0) <Having a moan can be very therapeutic.> 1998 Taylor 141.

have a moult <They seem to be permanently losing a feather or two, instead of having a good moult.> 1993 Feb. 13 Spectator 7/1.

have a nap (1.3/0.4) Take a nap <. . . his pregnant mother . . . was having a lunchtime nap.> 1994 Sept. 30 Daily Telegraph 11/5.

have a peck Peck <I can’t use a bird table [feeder] . . . because we’re so exposed to the westerlies. It would be blown off before the birds had a peck.> 1993 Feb. 13 Daily Telegraph Weekend 2/3.

have a piss (0.7/0) Take a piss <. . . there’s Terry Wogan having a piss in the hedge!> 1988 Oct. Illustrated London News 59/3.

have a place Have been admitted (to an educational institution): The sequence of words occurs more than twice as often in American: 14.7/32.0, but none of the CIC American tokens have the British educational use. <We are pleased to inform you that you have a place at Hogwarts School.> 1997 Rowling 42 (US ed. have been accepted).

have a rant and rave (rant: 0.4/0, rave: 0.2/0) <Meldrew . . . is never happier than when he is having a good rant and rave.> 1993 Feb. 12 Sun 11/2–3.

have a rest (10.3/0.9) Take a rest <We both had a rest.> SEU s11/1.717.

have a rethink (1.0/0) Give it another thought <We’ll have to have a rethink on policy.> 1987 Mar. 15 ITV morning news.

have a root (around) (0.1/0) <I had a bit of a root around. It was all pretty well in order, clothes hung up all nice and tidy, no mess.> 1989 Nicholson 7.

have a shave (2.6/0.3) <I had a bath and shave every day.> 1993 Feb. Woman’s Journal 39/2.

have a shower (11.5/1.2) Take a shower <I must have a shower.> 1998 spoken text CIC.

have a sit-down (0.6/0) Take a rest; sit down for a while <While I’m having a bit of a sit-down, I might as well tell you what this feels like.> 1994 Sept. 28–Oct. 5 Time Out 8/3.
have a skim (0.1/0) <The Palace will be ringing with the Guidance around ten – we'll have a skim through the diaries and see if there's anything we want to make a fuss about.> 1989 Dickinson 13.

have a sleep (5.6/0.5) Take a nap <Ben wants you to . . . keep her here for a few hours until he's had a sleep.> 1992 Green 10.

have a surf Go surfing <. . . you go and have a surf.> 1991 Lodge 295.

have a swim (2.1/0.1) Go for a swim; go swimming <Why don’t you come down and have a swim?> 1988 Mortimer 54.

have a tease (0.1/0) <As we lay there perfectly still, with his noble head using my bum cheeks for cushions, I thought I'd have a tease.> 1994 Oct. 3 Times 19/1.

have a test-drive (0.1/0) Take a test drive <So I had a test-drive. And of course I liked the car.> 1995 Lodge 35.

have a think (7.1/0.5) Give it some thought <I'm wondering where they dumped the waste. . . . You know this area well. Have a think for me.> 1989 Burden 155. – have got another think coming (0.7/0.3) <If you think I'm washing those dishes you’ve got another think coming.> 1987 May 10 (Scotland) Sunday Post 23/3.

have a tidy up (0.1/0) <tidy up [=] tidying up (e.g. – Having a bit of tidy up.)> 1988 How to Speak EastEnders.

have a trawl Look around; make a search <Something is incorrectly set up . . . in your autoexec.bat or config.sys or system.ini files . . . Have a trawl and see what it could be.> 1998 Jan. 7 Times Interface magazine 10/3.

have a try (3.2/0) Give it a try <Hoped to specialize in it once. Might still have a try.> 1966 Priestley 45.

have a walk (6.2/1.0) Take a walk <I thought it would be nice to . . . go up on to the Downs and have a walk.> 1940 Shute 132.

have a wander (round) (1.2/0.1) <I'll just have a bit of a wander here, have a look at the stalls.> 1998 Joss 28.

have a wash (3.5/0.1) <Davey was having a wash.> 1989 Burden 95.

have a whisper (0.1/0) <We had a wisper [sic] for a few minutes but you know what libraries are like.> SEU w7/32.149.

have a word (57.6/6.5) Talk (with someone about something) <By all means have a word.> 1999 Mar. 21 Sunday Times 10 46/1.

have a worry (1.0/0) <. . . the television industry was having another Worry about the Future.> 1994 Sept. 12 Guardian 13/7.

made bankrupt, be (1.6/0) Go bankrupt <. . . her father was made bankrupt.> 2003 Nov. 10 Times 15/2.

make a closure (on a business) Close a business <Magistrates have also made an emergency closure on Foodworth, a large supermarket.> 1987 Mar. Camden Magazine no. 46 7/3.

make a cockup (0.1/0) Make a mistake/booboo <In the article on the delights of Sardinia . . . David Wickers made a bit of a cockup.> 1993 Feb. 21 Sunday Times 2 7/2.
make a loss(es)  (13.1/2.0) Take a loss(es)  <I found it hard to sell. I can’t remember how long it took but I can remember I made a loss.> 2004 Dec. 12 Sunday Times 6 12/6.

make a punt  (0.1/0) Take a chance  <... any restaurant that took such a course would be making a rash punt.> 1993 Feb. 27 Times Saturday Review 31/2.

make savings  (1.4/0) Achieve savings  <... defence chiefs are under pressure to make savings after Wednesday’s announcement that four famous Army regiments will not be axed.> 1993 Feb. 5 Daily Express 10/2.

take a copy/copies/carbon  (2.4/1.1) Make (carbon) copies  <Suppose the copiers were slower than they are now? Then people . . . would take carbons, wouldn’t they? Rather than hang around by the copier for ages?> 1993 Mason 176.

take a decision(s)  (53.6/8.4) Make a decision(s)  <The Bill enables patients suffering from illnesses such as Alzheimer’s to appoint a relative or friend to take decisions on their behalf.> 2004 Dec. 15 Daily Telegraph 1/2.

take dinner  (1 token/none) Have dinner  <... the lady of the establishment interrupted her with the evening’s menu, and asked if she were taking dinner.> 1992 Dexter 11.

take exercise  (2.4/0) Get exercise  <... squash has now spread to all classes and most countries, and is one of the most concentrated modes of taking exercise in huge dollops known to man.> 1984 Smith 223.

take into care  (usu. taken into care)  (7.1/0) Place in the guardianship of Social Services  <He . . . has the kind of background you might expect . . . taken into care, placed with foster parents, ran away.> 1995 Lodge 117.

take a look up  (0.1/0) <I just took a look up while I was writing, and she gave me a great big smile.> SEU s2/7.1296.

take the mickey (out of someone)  (9.4/0.3) Tease, ridicule, or make fun (of someone)  <They haven’t stopped taking the mickey out of me since I got made a prefect.> 2003 Rowling 245.

take the piss (out of someone/something)  (16.0/0.7) Disparage or mock; deflate someone, run someone/something down  <He had started turning up at events with Sting. His natural constituency was taking the piss out of all that. Certainly, he was on the circuit in the ’60s, too. But then he’d have The Beatles round to dinner and be taking the piss out of them on telly at the same time. By the end of his life, he wasn’t in a position to take the piss – he was simply a member of the celeb club.> 2004 Dec. 8–15 Time Out 26/3.

take a place (at)  (0.1/0) Become a student; get into <She took a place at Oxford.> 1992 Walters 48.

take a punt  (0.7/0) Take a chance; gamble (from a gambling term in some card games, hence to punt “to bet, speculate”)  <Given the dullness of this administration, I really would take a punt on Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare to do the job for a three-year stint.> 1993 Feb. 2 Evening Standard 13/1.
Syntactic Constructions

take supper (0.3/0) Have supper "Neither he [Tony Blair] nor Cherie wants to sit around and talk about the Social Justice Commission all evening," said a friend who has taken supper in front of the Blairs’ Aga.> 1994 Oct. 4 Daily Telegraph 19/4.

take up work (0.8/0.3) Go to work; get a job <Mr Lilley [Social Security Secretary] said 50,000 people were expected to take up work as a direct result of the change [in child-care benefits].> 1994 Oct. 4 Daily Telegraph 6/3.

take a wander (0.2/0) <[traffic wardens passing on information about where to find good pickings in traffic violations:] Colleagues would pass on the names and tell me to ‘take a wander up so and so street at 6.00 pm. It’s brilliant up there,’ all of which was gratefully received at the start of an afternoon shift.> 1990 Sept. Evening Standard magazine 65/2.

13.2 Modification and complementation of the expanded predicate noun

If the noun in the expanded predicate is modified, the modifier may assume various forms in the corresponding construction with a semantically heavy verb. At the simplest, an adjective in the expanded predicate may correspond to an adverb with the semantically heavy verb:

<Let’s squat down and have a closer look.> (= look more closely) SEU s10/8.240–1.

In other cases, the modifier in the expanded predicate has a more complex adverbial correspondence. A frequent modifier, good serves as an intensifier and corresponds to various adverbs, according to the sense of the semantically heavy verb:

<You just sat and had a jolly good giggle at the things he was saying.> (= giggled a lot) SEU s1/6.773-4. <A surgeon gets right in there and has a good look at it.> (= looks intensely) SEU s2/9.671. <Have a good scan round.> (= scan thoroughly) SEU s10/8.318. <. . . sharp minds are having a good try.> (= trying assiduously) SEU w11/4.104. <I had a good think about that one [i.e., whether to be hypnotized].> (= thought carefully) 1987 Jan. 20 Guardian 26/7.

Other adjectives similarly have adverbial paraphrases:

<We were going to do a little tour round West Cumbria.> (= tour a little) SEU s8/4.923-4. <So I took one look at it and sort of gave a great scream.> (= screamed loudly) SEU s1/9.935-6. <We had an advance look-in, too, on some of his inimitable podgy character’s future quips.> (= looked in advance) SEU w8/3.88. <I had a long talk to her about two weeks ago.> (= talked at length) SEU s5/8.99.
When the verb of the expanded predicate is ditransitive give, its indirect object is the direct object of the semantically heavy verb:

<It might give them a bit of a prod.> (= prod them a bit) 1987 Bawden 136.

Alternatively, the semantically heavy verb may be prepositional, adverbal, or adverbial-prepositional, rather than simply transitive:

<... give them a shout.> (= shout to them) 1988 Apr. 10 Sunday Telegraph 37/4. <I think I’ll give it a miss for once.> (= miss it out) 1976 Raphael 41. <... television... hardly ever gives industry a look-in except as a factor in politics.> (= looks in on industry) 1967 Frost and Jay 80.

If the noun of the expanded predicate is followed by a prepositional phrase, its object may be the direct object of the semantically heavy verb:

<Do you want to take a note of my name?> (= note my name) SEU s9/ 1.77.

13.3 Other expanded-predicate-like constructions

Many other combinations are structurally similar to expanded predicates, but differ in that their verbs are “heavy,” that is, semantically more specific and appropriate to their objects or in that those objects are not eventive. Some such combinations might also be treated as matters of complementation (cf. § 11). A few of such combinations are illustrated here. Their number is large.

**come a cropper** (4.4/0.5) Fail utterly <Predictably, it all **came a cropper.**> 1993 Feb. 7 Sunday Times 6 9/1.

**cop a goggle (at)** <[literary satire on Orwell’s Burmese Days:]... when luscious Elizabeth Lackersteen arrives in Kyauktada for the wet T-shirt and vodka-gargling marathon, her Burma’s not the only thing Flory **cops a goggle at!**> 2003 June 21 Times 16/2.

**go a bomb (on)** (0.2/0) Be a great success (with); to appeal greatly (to) <Franco detested the Basques, never forgiving them for their staunch republicanism during the Civil War. They didn’t go a bomb on him either (other than literally).> 1993 Feb. 10 Evening Standard 27/3.

**go walkabout** (2.4/0.2) Ramble around <Somewhere in the distance, ... he could hear the high-pitched sounds of a bleeper, and bleepers didn’t go walkabout by themselves.> 1993 Mason 105.

**hitch a lift** (3.8/0) Hitch a ride (2.7/5.2) <Surely she wouldn’t try to hitch a lift.> 1993 Graham 213.

**move house** Move (19.3/0) <He had moved house without giving Christine his new phone number.> 1989 Rendell 36.

**pull a face** Make a face (9.8/2.4) <As she **pulled a face** at her reflection, the doorbell rang.> 1993 Stallwood 131.
put the boot in(to) Treat cruelly (6.3/0.2) <Belgians put boot into Wellington / A group of taxpayers are taking Belgium’s Finance Minister to court in an attempt to curtail the handsome rewards still being reaped by the Duke of Wellington’s descendants 185 years after his victory at the battle of Waterloo. [¶] Those bringing the action cannot accept that . . . the present Duke is still receiving nearly £100,000 a year in Belgian francs.> (a pun on Wellington boot “knee-high waterproof rubber boot” and put the boot in “kick someone when they are down”) 2000 Jan. 19 Times 3/1–7.

put paid to (12.0/0) End, stop; put an end to <Looking fondly at Sheryl, Gazza, 25, put paid to press reports that they had split up.> 1993 Feb. 12 Sun 12/3.

sit an examination (8.7/0.2) Take an examination <Those sitting finals [at Oxford] say they are more hardworking and financially stretched than those five years before them.> 1999 Mar. 17 Evening Standard 11/4.
14 Concord

14.1 Verb and pronoun concord with collective nouns

A collective noun is singular in form but denotes a referent (a group, such as a business, committee, team, etc.) composed of separate members and can therefore be thought of as either singular or plural. A collective noun functioning as a subject may govern a verb that is either singular or plural. Pronouns referring to a collective noun may be either animate or inanimate (who or which) and either plural or singular (they or it) (CGEL 5.108; 10.48n, 50; 17.11). British collective nouns are more likely than American ones to take animate and plural concord (CamGEL 502; Johansson 1979, 203–5; Levin 1998, 2001; Peters 2004, 24). Practically every British collective noun sometimes takes plural concord (LGSWE 188).

As a rough comparison of verb concord with collective-noun subjects, CIC texts were examined for seven collective nouns immediately followed by is, was, has versus are, were, have. The results are as follows, in percentage of plural concord with each noun subject. The CIC iptmw of the sequence of noun plus verb, whether singular or plural, is given in parentheses, because the larger that number, the more significant is the percentage based on it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective-noun subject</th>
<th>British plural concord</th>
<th>American plural concord</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>team</td>
<td>41% (149.0)</td>
<td>.35 of 1% (227.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>military</td>
<td>32% (5.6)</td>
<td>1.7% (60.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>press</td>
<td>29% (45.6)</td>
<td>1.9% (52.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>council</td>
<td>22% (143.8)</td>
<td>.28 of 1% (71.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>union</td>
<td>16% (70.1)</td>
<td>.12 of 1% (82.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>government</td>
<td>9% (376.6)</td>
<td>.26 of 1% (573.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>company</td>
<td>8% (305.6)</td>
<td>0.0% (473.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures suggest that plural concord with collective-noun subjects is a pronounced difference between British and American English. The semantic
category of the noun is, however, a factor. The following categories are exemplified by an alphabetical list of common nouns first, followed in each category by an alphabetical list of proper nouns.

**Sports organizations:**
Plural and animate concord with both common and proper nouns referring to sports teams is regular in British English (*LGSWE* 189).

**club** <. . . the club are in a Catch–22 position; they need money to renovate the crush–barriers, but are unable to draw the crowd to gain this.> 1986 Dec. 10 *Times* 38/5.

**side** <. . . a side who have won their last seven Test matches [cricket].> 2004 Dec. 14 *Daily Telegraph* 2 1/1.

**team** general as well as sports use <Kaufman’s Team Are On The Ball.> 2003 June 20 *Times* T2 19.

**Australia** <Australia have named three new caps in their team.> 1989 July 2 *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 31/5.

**Blackheath** <Blackheath were founded in 1858.> 1986 Sept. 26 *Times* 30/4.

**City** <The City were playing at home. . . First match of the season.> 1991 Greenwood 74.

**England** <It is rare for an entire [cricket] team to under–perform, but England were not far off that nadir.> 2004 Dec. 14 *Daily Telegraph* 2 1/1.

**Everton** <Saturday afternoon traffic through the tunnel . . . is greater when Everton are at home.> 1988 Apr. 10 *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 5/5.

**Hockey Association** <. . . the Hockey Association were founded 100 years ago.> 1986 Oct. 17 *Times* 31/1.

**Leeds** <Crooks landed the goal and Leeds were level.> 1987 Nov. 8 *Manchester Guardian Weekly* 31/5.

**Luton** <Luton, who are considering taking out a High Court injunction against the management committee’s decision, have barred all away fans.> 1986 Sept. 24 *Times* 1/6.

**Middlesex** <Middlesex are in good form.> 1985 Bingham 78.

**Palace** <Palace are one of four clubs Wimbledon managing–director Hamman has talked with.> 1987 Feb. 18 *Evening Standard* 52/3.

**Perthshire County Cricket Club** <At the moment, Perthshire County Cricket Club pay almost as much as Lord’s, and Kirkcaldy Rugby Club . . . was charged £5,500 a year.> (concord changes from plural to singular) 1986 Oct. 19 *Sunday Times* 22/8.

**Saffron Walden** <Saffron Walden were founded in 1963.> 1986 Sept. 26 *Times* 30/4.

**Sweden** <Sweden a young side who also just missed out of the world championships.> 1986 Sept. 19 *Times* 34/4–5.

**Viking** <Viking argue, too, that Marnham’s name gives them an additional edge.> 1987 Oct. *Illustrated London News* 46/1.
Wales <Wales were labelled an underdog.> 1987 June 13 ITV morning news.

Wigan <Wigan are regarded as currently the most progressive side in the league.> 1986 Dec. 10 Times 38/5.

**Business organizations:**

In British use, common and proper nouns referring to business firms often take plural verbs, but not invariably so.

**airline** <The airline say it will be delivered within 6 hours of arrival.> 1985 Apr. Airport magazine 53/3.

**bank** <I don’t think it will be long before the bank insist that I sell it, and when they do . . . it’s curtains for me.> 1976 Archer 66.

**company** <A Canadian forestry company are involved, too.> 1987 May 10 (Scotland) Sunday Post 5/3.

**firm** <. . . the firm publish a 120,000 circulation magazine.> 1987 Sept. Illustrated London News 78/3.

**head office** <Head Office are expecting to hear from me.> SEU w7-9.38.

**industry** <. . . the British Phonographic Industry fear it could take hold in the pirate strongholds of Camden, Portobello and Petticoat Lane markets.> 1987 Feb. 9 Evening Standard 19/1–2.


**union** <. . . the union have to make up only three-sevenths of the weekly wage.> 1985 Apr. 8 Times 1/2.

**Chaumet** <Chaumet were a firm making very fine jewellery.> 2000 Dec. 17 TV Antiques Roadshow.

**Citroen** <Citroen are now offering the Visa five door hatchback.> 1987 Jan. 21 Daily Mail 4/1.

**City of London** <The City of London don’t understand it.> 1986 Oct. TV report of MP speaking in Parliament.

**Cox** <Cox are building on five sites in a 30-mile radius of Evesham. . . . > 1987

Earlier this year Cox was absorbed by the Crest Nicholson group. (concord changes from plural to singular) 1987 Nov. 7 Daily Express 24/2.

**Dan-Air** <Dan-Air are going places in the UK> 1986 Aug. poster on London tube train.

**David Morris** <David Morris are offering up to 50% Discount on selected models of . . . watches.> 1987 Feb. 12 Evening Standard 6/5–6.

**Discovery Oil** <“What price are Discovery Oil this morning?” [¶] “They have fallen to $7.40,” the broker replied.> 1976 Archer 46.


**Horizon** <Horizon are introducing . . . safaris in Kenya and fly drive holidays in the United States.> 1989 Sept. 4 Girl about Town 24/1.
London Electricity Board <... the London Electricity Board were charging 3.5p per unit.> 1987 Jan. 16 Times 17/4.

Marconi <GEC Marconi are Britain’s largest defence contractors. Marconi is engaged on major contracts.> (concord changes from plural to singular) 1987 Oct. 25 Sunday Telegraph 1/3.

Olympia & York plc <Olympia & York plc are a Canadian-based company who have bought out... Canary Wharf development.> 1987 Oct. Illustrated London News 92/2.

Peachey <Carnaby Street... was bought by Peachey, who have been making an honest effort to upgrade it.> 1987 Mar. 16 Evening Standard 34/2.

Shell <Shell have put great emphasis on standard of service.> 1987 Jan. 29 Deptford & Peckham Mercury 8/4.

Travellers Fare <Travellers Fare operate a wide range and a large number of modern fast food outlets at main line stations.> 1987 Feb. 12 Evening Standard 24/3.

If the collective noun is plural in form, it sometimes takes singular verb concord but may take either plural or animate pronoun concord:

<Designer Homes, of Swindon, which was set up in 1985... won with their first scheme at Shipston-on-Stour.> 1987 Nov. 7 Daily Express 25/3.

<Jenny Moody Properties is based in Ingatestone, but her brief is to cover the whole of East Anglia. She is on the lookout for thatched cottages.> 1986 Nov. 7 Daily Express 23/1.

**GOVERNMENTAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS:**

council Municipal council <The Council have agreed... to have the Postal Address of Twatt changed to Dounby.> 1977 Dec. 7 Punch 1144/2.

government <It’s going to be very safe... as long as the British government don’t get greedy and try and take control of it themselves.> 1976 Archer 41.

jury <The jury have decided that... you were not in control of your mind.> 1987 June 11 Times 3/7.

CID <CID [Criminal Investigation Department] were doing the rounds of the houses, dressed in grey suits and carrying clipboards.> 1995 June 8 London Review of Books 8/40.

Department of Environment <The Department of Environment do this sort of thing magnificently.> 1976 Aug. 11 Punch 221/2.

Government <Government aim to slash your bus services.> 1985 poster on a bus, Sheffield. But: <The British Government has given immediate authority to its mission in Cameroon to spend up to £10,000 on assistance.> 1986 Aug. 27 Times 1/3.

Labour <Labour were well acquainted with these statistics.> 1988 Sept. Illustrated London News 24/1.
National Front  <But were the National Front not still active in the area?>  1987 Nov. Illustrated London News 82/4.
Scotland Yard  <Scotland Yard were unable to obtain extradition papers for him.>  1976 Archer 52.
Security  <Security have got in on the act and his phone’s being tapped.>  1989 Dickinson 36.
United States  <This has been particularly true in fields of technology and of management techniques in which the United States have been pre-eminent.>  1986 Mort viii.

Despite its plural form, Libyan Revolutionary Cells has singular concord here:

Libyan Revolutionary Cells  <The “Libyan Revolutionary Cells” has never been heard of before.>  1986 Sept. 6 Times 1/4.

Military organizations:

crew  See § 3.3.2.
military  <The military do not use their airways all the time. . . . The military controls the majority of the airspace.>  (concord changes from plural to singular) 1987 July Illustrated London News 33/4.
squadron  <. . . the squadron were temporarily short of pilots.>  1940 Shute 19.
Air Force  <The Air Force have made him pilot for these trials.>  1940 Shute 166.
Postings  <I can’t think what Postings were about.>  1940 Shute 161.

Educational, scholarly, artistic, entertainment, cultural, and religious organizations:

chapter  <‘What do chapter think of that?’ [¶] ‘In general, they’re against anything which lengthens the services.’>  1993 Greenwood 66.
choir  <And the choir themselves were being chaired round the cricket pitch — >  1988 Trollope 217.
staff  <Staff [at Eton] are divided into three scales.>  1988 Oct. 16 Sunday Telegraph 2/5. Cf. § 3.3.2.

By contrast, audience here takes inanimate and singular concord, and films is a plural count noun that has singular concord:

<Boyd is the author of . . . novels pitched at a sophisticated audience which turns to him with relief after working its way through more taxing reads.>  1990 Aug. 26 Sunday Times Magazine 40/1.
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<Well, films is just one more verse metre, one more style.> 1976 Raphael 158.

Council  <If Council invite you to take the chair, . . . it will be because they are going to make me Vice-Chancellor.> 1987 Archer 183–4.

Covent Garden  <Covent Garden are very keen that we should like them [surtitles].> 1987 June 19 Daily Telegraph p. n/a.

Franz Ferdinand  <Franz Ferdinand [a guitar band] were nominated for five Brit awards.> 2005 Jan. 11 Daily Telegraph 7/7.

Hollywood  <Hollywood are gearing up to hand out their gongs.> 2004 Dec. 13 BBC1 Breakfast news.

Judas Priest  <Judas Priest are one of the most successful heavy metal outfits in the States.> 1987 Feb. 18 Evening Standard 20/2.

Media and publishing organizations:

press  <We always get a bit upset when our Press have a go at the USA.> 1991 March 5, letter from an Englishwoman.


Cobuild  <Cobuild have steered a middle course between the baffling and the uselessly simple.> 1990 October English Today 6.4:56.

Merriam  <Merriam homograph by etymology and part of speech; . . . Merriam do not homograph by morphology alone.> 1986 Hartmann 133.

Press Syndicate  <. . . the Press Syndicate have now agreed to publish the series.> 1987 Nov. 3 letter from an editor.

In the following example, the name of a publisher, taken as plural, has attracted a preceding appositive into the plural form:

Collins  <She has been prised away from her long-standing publisher, Century Hutchison, by rivals Collins.> 1987 Mar. 17 Evening Standard 6/1.

Public service organizations:


hospital  <The hospital were very cross about it.> 1940 Shute 215.

Road works, although plural in form, may take singular concord:

<Road works . . . has reduced both carriageways to one lane.> 1987 Feb. 24 Evening Standard 5/6.


RSPCA  <My father got the dog drunk on cherry brandy at the party last night. If the RSPCA hear about it he could get done.> 1985 Townsend 13.
**General and Miscellaneous Human Groups:**

**committee** «The . . . Committee have recently met the Metropolitan Police.» 1987 Apr. 22 *Times* 13/4.

**crowd** «. . . the crowd roar at his delts or pecs.» 1994 Sept. 12 *Guardian* 2 3/1.

**family** «. . . his family were hard up.» 1987 Mar. 16 *Evening Standard* 13/2.

**gang** «The Polish gang were responsible for the numbers racket.» 1976 Archer 3–4.

**panel** «The panel were considering the cutbacks in education.» 1985 Benedictus 18.

**party** «. . . your local Party want you to take her place?» 1992 Critchley 118.

**public** «Odd how the public always expect the police to be notably more virtuous than the society from which they’re recruited.» 2003 James 130.

**race** «“Oh to be in England, now that April’s there”: the island race know what it is to be homesick.» 1984 Smith 120.

*Majority* is a collective noun for which plural concord might be expected, but it also takes a singular verb:

«. . . ideas which the majority does not like.» 1988 Apr. 10 *Sunday Telegraph* 29/7.

### 14.2 Verb Concord in Other Problematical Cases

Several constructions involve other decisions in subject-verb concord. Although it is not clear what decisions predominate in British and American usage, below are examples of several such constructions.

Some subjects involve a quantifying noun followed by an *of*-prepositional phrase. In such cases, the verb may agree either with the quantifying noun, which is often singular, or with a plural object of the preposition, often the notional subject of the verb. Ward Gilman (1994, 52) observes that “experts and common sense agree that the plural verb is natural and correct, [but] actual usage still shows a few holdouts for the singular verb.” Examples of such holdouts are the following:

«Only a faithful sprinkling of bedraggled spectators was standing along the west-side terrace, their umbrellas streaked with rain.» 1979 Dexter 78. «There is a handful of verbs.» 1986 Burton-Roberts 171. «. . . an increasing number of school leavers is turning to careers in which . . . ability . . . exists entirely in the eye of the beholder.» 1986 Aug. 19 *Times* 8/1. «When we are told that a third of them claims to have learned the facts of life from teachers, I suspect that most of that third is lying.» 1989 Sept. 3 *Sunday Telegraph* 16/5.
However, plural verb concord sometimes occurs in cases for which both formal and semantic concord might favor the singular, as in the following, in which what was agreed upon was the package:

< A four million pound package of health cuts have been agreed. > 1986 Nov. TV news.

Similarly, the pronouns any, each, either, neither, and none may be followed by an of-prepositional phrase with a plural object. In these cases, verb agreement may be either formal or notional. Formal agreement has been reported for British English in formal style, and notional agreement for American and informal British style (Swan 1995, 534); or formal agreement is presented as the norm, although “sometimes contextual considerations lead to the use of a plural verb” (Burchfield 1996, 35). The following example attests British use of a plural verb in this construction:

< Each of these [guest rooms] have telephone points. > 1989 May In Britain 43/2.

With expletive there, the question is whether the verb agrees with a following plural nominal serving as notional subject or with there, taken as a singular pronoun. Pam Peters (2004, 537) reports that agreement with the following nominal is “strictly maintained in academic writing” but that there is and there’s are found before plural nominals “in narrative and everyday writing” and that there’s is commoner than there are in conversation. The following are examples of there with singular verb concord before a plural nominal:

< . . . there was about five French guys who actually tackled him at the same time. > 1985 Feb. 2 transcription of a radio commentary of an England-France Rugby match. < There is a further five bedrooms and a second bathroom. > 1986 Aug. 21 Hampstead Advertiser 40/2. < There’s not a lot of jobs about now, is there? > 1986 Nov. waitress in Lancaster. < There has been some terrible incidents because people were confused. > 1987 Feb. 4 Evening Standard 10/2–3 (quoting health committee chairman Vivienne Lukey of Hammersmith and Fulham). < . . . there was families at the pit who traced their connection with coal back to the last century. > 1989 Sept. 7 Midweek 32/1.
15 Propredicates

In a clause commenting on or continuing a preceding clause, the predicate may be abbreviated to an auxiliary or several auxiliaries, either echoing those of the preceding clause or newly introduced, sometimes with additional predicate items: “I thought we had been there before, and we had (been)” [i.e., had been there before]. “The first trip exhausted us, and the second probably will too” [i.e., will exhaust us]. “He was thinning out his collection [of books]: authors often do” (1986 Oct. 30 Times 18/2). These second, isolated auxiliaries serve as propredicates, implying the full predicate of the preceding clause.

In addition to such common-core instances, a more limited pattern with a present participle of an auxiliary has been reported as acceptable in some varieties of British (CGEL 12.22n, CamGEL 100, 1523): A: Why don’t you sit quietly? B: I AM doing. Kim is being investigated by the police, and I think Pat is being too. I’ve been Rex’s mistress for some time now, and I shall go on being, married or not. They have all volunteered, but I think some of them regret having. None of these seem possible in American, and the last, with having, is said to be acceptable to very few British speakers.

15.1 Propredicate do

In common-core English, intransitive do is used as a propredicate for verbs without any auxiliaries: She volunteered, and he did too. When there are auxiliaries in the clause with the propredicate, however, a difference arises between British and American use (CGEL 12.22–3, 26; CamGEL 1524). Then British uses intransitive propredicate do in ways American does not. These characteristically British uses are relatively recent, at least in widespread popular use (Butters 1983), and they are at best marginal in American English (Butters 1989, Di Paolo 1993).

15.1.1 After dynamic verbs

If the verb to which propredicate do refers is dynamic (listen rather than stative hear, or watch rather than stative see), British may use auxiliaries, especially
modals and the perfect have, followed by intransitive propredicate do. American uses only the auxiliaries or else the auxiliaries followed by transitive do (with the object so, it, that, or the like). None of the following would be normal in American, which would have instead (in the case of the first citation): I felt I was or I felt I was doing so/that/ etc. The citations are listed by the auxiliary of the propredicate.

<Did I talk too much? I felt I was doing.> 1990 Hardwick 111. <Of course you’re very lucky, Mr Noble, living so near you can walk into work. Not many people can do nowadays.> 1993 Greenwood 194. <Well, Leonidas still maintains that he kept on a heading of 295 degrees, ... but from what happened afterwards it seems that he can’t have done.> 1984 Caudwell 142. <‘Doesn’t it cause breathlessness and, in an extreme attack, death?’ [¶] ‘It could do, certainly.’> 2001 Mortimer 58. <‘That is what you said about Maureen, do you remember?... ‘I couldn’t have done.’> 2001 Lessing 161. <Jeffrey Barnett drives an FX4S and has done for just over nine years.> 1987 May 31 Sunday Times Magazine 71/2. <I cannot honestly say that I have reported this monologue with absolute accuracy. If I had done it would have been very much longer.> 1987 Bawden 57–8. <He might do something if inspired... – he may do.> 1987 Mar. 10 Evening Standard 6/3–4. <You are too young to remember some old mathematician saying that in an air raid he took refuge under the arch of probability. He may have done, but I confess I never could.> 1974 Snow 323. <Does it [eucharistic bread] turn into flesh, during the service? ... It might do.> 1985 Mortimer 29. <But he didn’t notice. He might have done if you hadn’t rung about Tim.> 1987 Bawden 186. <‘So she lives in London?’ [¶] ‘Oh, yes. Well, she must do if she’s always in the Muckrakers.’> 1988 Mortimer 102. <She looked round the walls and wondered if Ruth and Joe had ever sold any paintings. She supposed they must have done.> 1987 Oliver 34. <If you haven’t read it, Howard, then you ought to have done.> 1984 Price 102. <I’m on holiday, actually. Staying at the Viking Hotel. ... The carpets come up to my ankles. ... Mind you, they should do, the prices they charge.> 1995 Bowker 93. <So I lied – well I realised I shouldn’t have done.> 1990 Aug. 26 poster at train station, Didcot Parkway. <Her pa works in the dockyard, or used to do before the war.> 1940 Shute 119. <- So you’ve forgiven Uncle Tom, have you? – Well, I suppose so. I will do, if I have the chance.> 1987 Jan. 28 ITV Coronation Street. <Laura Danby, their solicitor, had told them a court would almost certainly find against Jan and they were not to worry. She would do, wouldn’t she?> 2000 Granger 152–3. <I was hoping you’d write or at least send a wire for Christmas. I would have done.> 1986 Nov. TV miniseries Lost Empires.

15.1.2 After stative verbs

On the contrary, if the verb to which propredicate do refers is stative (hear rather than dynamic listen, or see rather than dynamic watch), British may still
use the same pattern as above, with intransitive propredicate do. However, states are something one is in, not something one does. So Americans tend to avoid propredicate do in this environment and use instead (in the case of the first citation): I may have. The distinction is not one of verb form, but of stative versus dynamic senses, and the same verb may have both senses in different uses. The citations are listed by the verb to which the propredicate refers.

**believe**  <Oh, well, I may have done. . . . I dare say I did believe in it once, but I’ve changed my mind now.> 1985 Pym 154.

**care**  <You don’t care who my father was, do you? Any more than I do. Oh, I might have done once.> 1987 Bawden 158.

**exist**  <Like Mr Average with his 2.3 children and other statistical nonsense, the absolute gentleman has never existed. He couldn’t have done.> 1983 Brooke-Taylor 31.

**feel**  <I don’t think David feels guilty at all. I have done occasionally but I’ve argued myself out of it.> 1987 Apr. 10 Evening Standard 19/5.

**find**  <And how had Marcus found something like that out? And if he had done, wouldn’t he have told me?> 1985 Barnard 142.

**go for**  “like” <I suppose it depended on whether you went for the older man, which . . . Rosie didn’t and never had done.> 1988 Mortimer 101.

**grant**  “believe” <If you grant that the Brontës are important as a family – and Cambridge, for instance, gives them a single entry, so it must do – it might just be worth mentioning that Evelyn Waugh was descended from Henry Cockburn.> 1989 Jan. 22 Manchester Guardian Weekly 29/3.

**grasp**  “understand” <I couldn’t grasp what had happened. And I don’t think many people could have done.> 2003 June 20 Times T2 5/2.

**hate**  <I do hate wet feet, always have done.> 1987 May 27 Punch 34/1.

**have**  <I have someone else [as a sexual partner], have done for years.> 2003 James 203.

**hear**  <[reply to a question about having heard something:] No, I haven’t. . . . Should I have done?> 1988 Mortimer 178.

**hurt**  <“It hurts like hell when they do my arms.” [¶] . . . “It must do.”> 1940 Shute 225.

**justify**  <“You think the end justifies the means?” [¶] “It must do!”> 1992 Brett 68.


**like**  <. . . Mary Coughlan whom I like very much, and have done for quite a while.> 1989 Sept. 7 Midweek 24/2.

**long**  <Don’t you long for it, Molly Coddle? You must do.> 1988 Mortimer 65.

**love**  <I even love prunes, and always have done.> 1987 Mar. 25 Evening Standard 35/6.

**mean**  <“I always thought it meant a sort of portable ghost.” [¶] It may have done.> 1980 Household 77.
mind  <She didn’t mind that (though I would have done).> 1988 Dec. Illustrated London News 58/1.
recognize  <Did she recognise her? Helen thought she must have done.> 1985 Benedictus 175.
require  <‘So putting the burglar alarm out of action would have required special skills?’ [¶] ‘It would have done.’> 2001 Mortimer 20.
think  “understand”  <“Don’t you think how she must feel at all?” [¶] I hadn’t done.> 1987 Bawden 108.
think of  “remember”  <“Never thought of it.” [¶] “Then you should have done.”> 1985 Clark 180.
trust  <“Of course I trusted you. . . .” [¶] “You ought to have done.”> 1979 Snow 252.
understand  <Miss Theca Meijer . . . admits that local people understand little of Daum or Lalique. “But they will do,” she adds.> 1989 Aug. 4 Times 3/3.

15.1.3 After comparative expressions

Similarly, if the propredicate do construction follows a comparative expression, British uses the same pattern, whereas American typically uses only the auxiliaries without propredicate do. In place of the following, American is likely to have instead (in the case of the first citation): as much as I should have unassisted.

as much as  <I thus ended up spending three times as much as I should have done unassisted.> 1989 Aug. 4 Times 10/7.

as promptly as  <Mr Nigel Lawson, Chancellor of the Exchequer, censured the Bank of England yesterday for failing to act as promptly as it should have done to avert last year’s £248 million collapse of Johnson Matthey Bankers.> 1985 June 21 Times 1/2.

more than  <Had Blader taken more champagne on board than he should have done?> 1982 Symons 34.

However, if the verb implied by the British do propredicate is a form of have and the propredicate is in the perfect, the American equivalent expression would typically be has/have had. A simple has/have would be misinterpretable in tense. Thus for the following, the American corresponding expression would be than the Egyptians seem to have had instead of than the Egyptians seem to have.

< Athenians of the Classical period had a much clearer picture of Minoan Crete. . . than the Egyptians seem to have done.> 1980 Gill xi.

15.1.4 In other comparisons

Likewise, if the propredicate do construction follows as (meaning “in the way that”) or expressions like in the way that, the number/amount that, or the same
(as), British uses the same pattern, whereas American typically uses only the auxiliaries without propredicate do. In place of the following, American would have instead (in the case of the first citation): as I believe most of my readers would (have).

as  <I would have given them three years each [for assault], as I believe most of my readers would have done.> 1987 May 7 Evening Standard 23/1.

in (the) way(s)  <... you go to all these different places and get to know them in ways that you otherwise wouldn’t do.> 1990 Aug. 26 Sunday Times Magazine 12/2.

in the numbers  <Women have not come to us in the numbers they should have done.> 1987 June 11 BBC1 Ken Livingston on election report.

same  <Do you think your image still has the same impact it used to do?> 1986 Oct. TV interviewer.

15.1.5 After the adverb so

If the propredicate expression is preceded by the adverb so, propredicate do is possible in British, but not in American. Thus in the following, the corresponding American would be and so I would have or, alternatively with the pronoun so following, and I would have done so. Both initial adverb so and postverbal pronoun so would not normally occur in the same construction: ?*and so I would have done so.

   <... not one sonofabitch had the decency to tell me. Afraid I’d bite their fucking heads off, I suppose, and so I would have done.> 1975 Lodge 127.

15.1.6 In relative clauses

If propredicate do occurs in a relative clause whose relative pronoun (who, which, that, or null) functions as direct object of the propredicate do, American has only the auxiliary as propredicate. Thus in the following, American would have (that) he should have.

   <If Trueman had played all the Test matches [that] he should have done. . . he would have taken 400 wickets, not just 307.> 1990 Aug. 24 Times 36/2.

15.1.7 In passive constructions

If the propredicate verb is passive, British can (somewhat rarely) still use propredicate do. American is more likely to have in the following citation It has been, often. If, however, the context had been active, American would have two options: They can give an account of Mill’s “Essay on Liberty” in a double period. They have (done so), often.
has been done  <An account of J. S. Mill’s “Essay on Liberty” can be given in a double period with the sixth form. It has been done, often.> 1986 Oct. 27 Times 17/6.

15.2 Complements of propredicates

British uses that dialectally as a complement of a propredicate where it is not usually found in American.

be that  <‘Ah, officer! Is that Mr Charters’ court?’ [¶] ‘It is that [i.e., is Mr Charters’ court]’.> 1985 Bingham 90.

do that  <Don’t like the rain, do you? (Grim chuckle.) No. You don’t that.> 1974 Potter 92.

have that  <“’Evening, Sister,” said Loring. “Got a new accident case, I see.” [¶] “We have that,” said the Scotswoman dourly.> 1940 Shute 196.

Substitutes for that-clauses functioning as direct objects are so and not. The verbs often followed by so in common-core English are hope, say, and think, and in British suppose and in American guess (LGSWE 752–3). The construction as a whole is more frequent in CIC British texts than in American, notably in the forms say so (British 69.9 iptmw to American 31.6), suppose so (23.4 to 3.5), suppose not (5.4 to 1.5), n’t think so (45.9 to 10.7), and think not (24.8 to 14.7). British is significantly outnumbered by American only in the forms guess so (by 1 to 5) and guess not (by 1 to 3.6), frequencies that are relatively somewhat greater than that of the verb guess in all its uses in British and American (1 to 3.4).


n’t so  <[A:] Can you explain this in some way I’d understand it? [B:] No, I don’t think so.> 1988 Stoppard 28.

so  <‘And he’s such a handsome chap, isn’t he, Rumpole?’ . . . [¶] ‘I suppose so. . . . Although I couldn’t fancy him myself.’> 2001 Mortimer 104.
16  Tag questions

16.1  Canonical form

A tag question is a subordinate interrogative clause consisting of the operator of a preceding (often main) clause, typically with reverse polarity (if the preceding-clause operator is affirmative, the tag-clause operator is negative, and vice versa), followed by a pronoun whose antecedent is the subject of the preceding clause: *Julia can help, can’t she? James can’t help that, can he?* When the tag is negative, the contraction *n’t* is usual. The tag question normally occurs at the end of the preceding clause, as in the examples cited. It may have either the rising intonation often associated with *yes/no*-questions, or the falling intonation associated with statements. In written form, a terminal question mark does not necessarily indicate intonation, but may be only conventional. A terminal period, however, is likely to suggest falling intonation. If there is no operator in the preceding clause, the appropriate form of *do* is used in the tag question: *They came, didn’t they?*

The tag question is a common-core English construction, but it has some specifically British forms and uses (Algeo 1988a).

16.2  Anomalous forms

16.2.1  Constant polarity

16.2.1.1  Affirmative polarity

Constant affirmative polarity, although not the norm, is nevertheless quite normal, in the sense of being acceptable and not infrequent. Constant affirmative-polarity tag questions ask for confirmation of a statement whose truth is assumed, especially when they have falling intonation.

*are you*  <Anyway, you’re letting them go, are you?>  1977 Barnard 132.
*did you*  <You put your heart into it, did you?>  1985 Mann 165.
*do they*  <They do, do they?>  2003 Rowling 441.
do you  <You think that, do you?>  1985 Bingham 69–70.  

is it  <This is your flat, is it, Miss Sutton?>  1987 Hart 129.  

is there  <There’s going to be a divorce, then, is there?>  1976 Raphael 136.  

was it  <“You remember, there was an accident.” [¶] “That was the same pilot, was it?”>  1940 Shute 215.  

would you  <‘Something of a squirrel, our Jock,’ Caldicott whispered. [¶] ‘You’d say that, would you?’>  1985 Bingham 48.  

16.2.1.2 Negative polarity

Constant negative polarity is rarer and disputed. The construction has been reported for British English (Huddleston 1970, 221; CamGEL 892, 895), and examples of it have been cited: You’re not going, aren’t you? (O’Connor 1955, 102) and He hasn’t tried, hasn’t he? (F. R. Palmer 1968, 41). Constant-polarity double-negative tags have been reported for regional British dialects, such as Scots: He wouldnnae do it, wouldn’t he no? (Millar and Brown 1979, 30) and Tyneside Geordie: You can’t do it, can’t you not? (Burton-Roberts 1986, 243). A normal-sounding instance is a short mirrorlike sentence with heavily ironic meaning: You can’t catch me. – I can’t, can’t I? (cited by Jespersen 1940, 496). Quirk et al. (CGEL 11.9n) conclude that the construction “has not been clearly attested in actual use.” It is at best marginal; there are instances, but all are exceptional in various ways.

can’t he  <[speaker from Leeds:] ‘He’s not much cop wi t’bat, or behind timbers neither, but blurry ’ell – he can’t ’arf sup ale, can’t he?’> (nonstandard dialect use) 1985 Ebdon 139.  

tentine  <Our most downwardly mobile politician gave us his jaundiced view of the nation in The Benn Diaries . . . an anagram of He is’n’ rabid ent ’e?> (a stunt rather than an actual use) 1988 Oct. 9 Sunday Telegraph 48/5.  

isn’t she  <I’m afraid that Kylie, however good a fighter she is, is unlikely to be worth that much, isn’t she?> (negative prefix un- rather than not or no) 1995 Jones 88.  

oughtn’t you  <You oughtn’t to say that now, oughtn’t you?> (rare use of interrogative oughtn’t) 1979 Snow 189.  

16.2.2 Elements omitted from preceding clause

In some sentences, the subject and operator (when there is one) have been omitted from the preceding clause but can be inferred from their echo in the tag question.

With reverse polarity:

<Thought it was worth it, didn’t he?>  1991 Graham 44.  

With constant polarity:

< I hope I get the right number. Number 35, is it?>  1989 July 29 BBC1.
16.2.3 Variation in the operator or subject

The operator in the tag question may vary from that in the preceding clause. The most frequent such anomaly is the tag **aren’t I?** The history and social acceptability of **aren’t I?**—like those of **ain’t**—are complex (Gilman 1994, 115–6, 60–4). It is standard in British (Burchfield 1996, 97) and was once thought by American commentators to be a Briticism, as it may well have been historically, though it is now widely used colloquially in America. Cf. § 1.2.2.2.

<**I’m talking too much, aren’t I?**> 1987 Hart 139.

In the following uses of **have to, have got, and have got to**, British has the option of treating **have** as an operator and thus using it in the tag question or of treating it as the main verb and thus inserting **do** in the tag question instead (Swan 1995, 480). American regularly uses **do** in such constructions.

<**I had to see her, hadn’t I?**> 1979 Snow 34. <**I’ve got to do something right, haven’t I?**> 1986 Oct. 19 Sunday Times 25/4. <**I’d still got the hots for her, hadn’t I?**> 1987 Hart 101. But also: <**They have to look as though they’re earning their money, don’t they?**> 1979 Snow 190.

Other operator anomalies also occur:

<**What’s this about . . . the American Civil War, was it?**> (The tense has changed.) 1984 Price 23. <**I shall have to ask him, won’t I?**> (The operator has changed.) 1986 Dec. 21 Masterpiece Theatre Paradise Postponed.

In some cases, the preceding clause that the tag question echoes is not the main clause but a subordinate one, whereas an echo of the main-clause operator and subject might be expected.

<**Grand office you’ve got here, haven’t you?**> 1979 Snow 256. <**It’s Mr Lincoln’s war we’re curious about, aren’t we?**> 1984 Price 84. (The expected tag in both cases would be **isn’t it?**)

Although a negative operator in the tag question is usually formed with the contraction **n’t**, the full form **not** may be used after the subject pronoun instead.

<**The new man at Private Eye, he is a dreadful little man, is he not?**> 1987 Mar. 25 Punch 55/1.

The tag question **isn’t it?** may be colloquially assimilated in pronunciation and reduced to two syllables, spelled variously but usually **innit**. Similarly, other tags such as **ain’t it, didn’t it, and isn’t he** have parallel colloquial forms. Cf. § 1.2.2.2.

**innit** Isn’t it: CIC British texts have 35.5iptmw of **innit**; American texts have none. <“Shopping, for me, meant a sample sale or advance ordering from designers’ collections at wholesale prices.” Coo, another world, **innit**? > 2003 June 20 Times T2 3/3. Other spellings: <**That’s three in’it?** [reference to
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in’e Isn’t he <Well, Mick, ’e’s on the sick, like us, in’e.> 1995 Jones 132.
dinnit Didn’t it <Came in the post this morning, dinnit?> 1992 Dexter 235.

16.3 Frequency of use

Although comparative statistics on the use of tag questions in the two national varieties are not available, their frequency in British seems greater than in American, so Americans think of it as characteristically British. British speakers also note the prevalence of the tag question in British use, responding to it with the same annoyance that Americans have for the rhetorical use of you know as a filler and emphasizer. The use of the tag question is certainly an old rhetorical device, but the negative response it generates suggests that its frequency may have been increasing in recent years or that some uses may be social markers:

<‘So you decided to stay silent?’ [¶] ‘It was my right, wasn’t it?’ [¶] Judge Chaytor turned in Tanner’s direction. ‘Do you think you could give your evidence without adding a question to the end of every answer?’ [¶] Ian Tanner [19-year-old London school dropout, incipient criminal] gave him a blank look. [¶] ‘Sorry. I don’t get you.’ [¶] ‘You said, “it was my right, wasn’t it?” and before that, “didn’t have any choice, did I?” [¶] ‘Well I didn’t, did I?’ [¶] ‘There, you did it again! Just try and answer the questions without asking your own.’> 1978 Underwood 122. <“Yeah, well, that’s right, isn’t it, luv? We shoulda kept it, I know. Still, as I said – well, we all do things a bit wrong sometimes, don’t we? And we said we was sorry about everything, didn’t we, luv?” [¶] Morse was beginning to realize that the last three words, with their appropriate variants, were a rhetorical refrain only, and were not intended to elicit any specific response.> 1992 Dexter 127.

The frequent use of tag questions is a particularly downmarket British phenomenon.

<Look, we had to work together, didn’t we? . . . And I’d had another bird in between, hadn’t I? No point in bearing grudges, is there?> 1987 Hart 101. <Well I was tempted wasn’t I . . . not paying I mean . . . so I said I’d come a couple of stops, more like ten . . . they’d been checking hadn’t they. Silly. £400 fine for a 50p ticket – and a day off work at court – I haven’t told them at work. Tricky . . . I work in accounts – it’s not exactly a reference is it . . . .> 1988 London tube train poster on the consequences of not paying for an underground ticket.
Indications of the voguishness of the tag question are the still resounding echoes of Mandy Rice-Davies’s 1963 sardonic riposte:

Mandy Rice Davies, told in court during the Profumo scandal that Lord Astor had denied her allegations, gave a reply that has passed into the language:

‘He would, wouldn’t he?’ > 1984 Smith 199.  ‘Seems he spent a blameless life grooming horses down on some stud farm.’ [ ¶ ] ‘Grooming? He told me he was a vet.’ [ ¶ ] ‘Well he would, wouldn’t he?’ > 2000 Granger 315.  <Well, they would say that, wouldn’t they.? > 2003 Mar. 21 BBC World Service reporting the Turkish response to an avowal by the Kurds that they do not intend to form a separate Kurdish state.

The following list illustrates various tag questions:

aren’t they  <I’ve grown out of that sort of book. They’re all rubbish really, aren’t they?> 1984 Lodge 258.
can’t we  <We can do that, can’t we?> 1974 Snow 7.
did he  <As for his schooling, well! . . . Didn’t go, did he.> 1991 Green 266.
have I  <The girl behind the counter, a stringy and exhausted blonde, was selling a packet of cigarettes to a handsome young labourer from a nearby building site. The man had held out a ten-pound note. ‘Oh Christ,’ said the girl, ‘haven’t you got anything smaller? I’ll have to go next door for some change.’ ‘So what?’ he grinned. ‘Aren’t I worth it?’ ‘Dunno,’ said the girl, without a change of expression. ‘Haven’t tried you yet, have I?’ > 1982 Brookner 70.
is it  <Only it’s not there now, is it?> 2000 Granger 261–2.
need I  <I needn’t tell you what all this is in aid of, need I?> 1979 Snow 273.
shan’t we  <We shall see, shan’t we, one way or the other?> 1974 Snow 37.
shouldn’t you  <Well, you should have thought of that before you married me, shouldn’t you.> 1989 Sept. 10 ITV preview of a coming program.
was I  <The Super rang me, sir. You told him I was running you back home.’ [ ¶ ] ‘So what?’ [ ¶ ] ‘Well, I wasn’t, was I?’ > 1993 Dexter 12.
will you  <‘I don’t know what my own speed was.’ [ ¶ ] ‘What car were you in?’ [ ¶ ] ‘My Jag.’ [ ¶ ] ‘Then you won’t have been hanging about, will you?’ > 1988 Ashford 25.
would I  <I didn’t think about taking the [car’s licence] number, but I wouldn’t anyway, would I?> 2003 James 147.
wouldn’t she  <Laura Danby, their solicitor, had told them a court would almost certainly find against Jan and they were not to worry. She would do, wouldn’t she? thought Damaris grimly.> 2000 Granger 152–3.

16.4 Rhetorical uses

The tag question has several rhetorical uses in common-core English. They include (1) the informational tag question, whose purpose is genuinely to
ask for information (The Bakerloo train goes to Maida Vale, doesn’t it?) and (2) the conversational tag question, whose purpose is to signal that the speaker is including the addressed person as a participant in the discourse and is inviting a confirmatory reply (It’s a lovely time of year, isn’t it?). These two kinds typically have rising, questioning pitch.

British English has other rhetorical uses, which are comparatively rare in American. Increasingly characteristic of British English are the following three types, all of which are rhetorical questions: (3) The punctuational tag question is used to emphasize a preceding statement. It typically has a falling, assertive pitch. Two other uses of the tag question are even more specifically British and also more recent, or at least have recently increased in the notice taken of them and therefore presumably have increased in frequency. They are (4) the peremptory tag question, which follows a statement of obvious truth and is intended to close off further discussion of the topic; and (5) the antagonistic tag question, which follows a statement whose truth the addressee does not know and often cannot know, but which is treated as though it were a statement of obvious truth. Because these kinds of tag questions are rhetorical uses, they are distinguished, not by their own form, but by their contexts, either verbal or situational.

Any of these rhetorical uses may be difficult to identify in a given instance. In the following dialog, Jean is using the tag question in a friendly, conversational way, but her husband, who is annoyed with her for other reasons, reacts negatively to her tags as a verbal mannerism and interprets them as an argumentative signal:

Jean: I suppose I’d better unpack. [¶] Bernard: There’s no hurry. Why are you always in such a hurry? [¶] Jean: We don’t want our clothes to be creased, do we? [¶] (His whole posture, his whole expression, shows that he has gone far beyond mere irritability into something approaching dangerous hypertension.) [¶] Bernard: Why are you so damned argumentative, Jean? It gets on my nerves. [¶] Jean: Argumentative? Me? [¶] Bernard: About the blasted clothes. [¶] Jean: All I said was that we don’t want our clothes to be creased. [¶] Bernard: No, you didn’t. You said, ‘We don’t want our clothes to be creased, do we?’ It’s that bloody, never ending ‘do we?’ The way you seem to make a perfectly ordinary, perfectly reasonable statement sound combative and – [¶] (He stops, hearing the grating excess in his own tongue, feeling the tense irritability in his own limbs. She looks at him, sad.)> 1974 Potter 142.

16.4.1 Informational tag questions

Informational tag questions, which call for an active response from the addressee, are sometimes ways of making a request, as in the first example below. Otherwise, they seek information.

<You wouldn’t be a dear and collect it on the way back, would you?> 1975 Price 123. <You know my daughter Elizabeth, I think, don’t you?> 1974 Snow 17.
16.4.2 Conversational tag questions

(Bit of trouble, back there on the Pentonville Road, wasn’t there?) 1987 Bawden 174.

16.4.3 Punctuational tag questions

The punctuational tag question is sometimes recognizable by its use in a soliloquy, where no response or interaction with an addressee apart from the speaker is possible:

(Bit didn’t tell me — I found out about his fare fiddling through a court letter . . . No job and this won’t help. So what now? I don’t know, things have changed, haven’t they.) 1989 Aug. 29 poster on London tube train.

Another sign of the punctuational tag is a medial position within its sentence, which inhibits its being taken as an invitation for a response:

(We’re all terribly keen, aren’t we, on ethnic cultures.) 1989 July 21 Punch 6/3.

Typically, punctuational use is merely a matter of emphasis without either encouragement or discouragement of a reply by the addressee. In some contexts, British might also use mind you, and American might use you know:

(I don’t want wet and mud all over my shop, do I now?) 1974 Potter 94.

(Because you say no to everything, don’t you?) 1988 Mortimer 182. (You can be a prat, can’t you.) 1989 Jan. 28 ch. 9 San Francisco Mystery: Inspector Morse. (Why should you? They don’t tell even you everything, do they?) 1992 Dexter 66.

16.4.4 Peremptory tag questions

Whereas the conversational tag is used to include the addressee in the discourse, the peremptory tag question is intended to close off discussion and discourage the addressee. At its gentlest, spoken with a falling pitch, it merely puts off a questioner: [A:] Who do you think will win the game? [B:] We’ll know at the end, won’t we. In its more aggressive form, sometimes spoken with a low level pitch, it is rudely abrasive: [A:] When will the taxi arrive? [B:] We’ll know when it gets here, won’t we.

The peremptory tag is not recent. The following comment on British use of tag questions was written shortly after the turn of the twentieth century and illustrates both the conversational and peremptory tags:

(English people end almost every sentence with a question. Your grand lady says: “It looks like rain, doesn’t it? We shall have a muddy ride, sha’n’t we?” You say to the girl in the shop, “These gloves are hard to get on”); and
she replies: “But all gloves are hard to get on at first, aren’t they? And they soon wear easier, don’t they?” > 1901 Harper’s Monthly Magazine 103:448.

The grand lady’s comments on the weather use the polite conversational tag. The shop girl’s response, on the other hand, uses what is apparently a gentle peremptory tag, designed to stifle the customer’s complaint. In this instance, the peremptory tag may seem to be a working-class feature; however, it extends to all social levels. In the following example, Prince Philip’s annoyance during a royal tour in China was occasioned by previous press reports of his utterance of racial slurs concerning slanted eyes:


The Duke’s tag question was clearly intended to close off, not open up, discourse. The Queen’s consort and the shop girl are fellows under the skin.

Peremptory tags typically follow statements of generally acknowledged, obvious, universal, or analytical truth. The implication of the aggressive variety is that everyone knows such obvious truths, and consequently even someone as dim-witted as the addressee must also know them. As a way of informing the hearer about what everyone is expected already to know, the peremptory tag is a form of insult, a put-down:

<[A:] Will it take long, the tea? [B:] It has to boil, doesn’t it.> 1986 Oct. Peter Barnes’s adaptation of G. Feydeau’s Scenes from a Marriage, Barbican Theatre.

The purpose of the peremptory tag, whether gentle or aggressive, is to leave no room for a response, as in the following bit of rhetoric:

<Lord Wilson [Harold Wilson, former prime minister] won’t say. If the Lords debate defence, “I’ll have a chance to say what I think then, won’t I. You’ll have to wait.”> 1987 Mar. 11 Evening Standard 6/3.

A telephone query to Her Majesty’s Post Office about a wrong customs charge on a package of personal stationery material that postal inspectors had treated as commercial import produced the following exchange, in which the purpose of the response was to prevent what the postal official interpreted as a complaint about improper service:

<[A:] It was my property sent to me for my use. [B:] Well we couldn’t know that, could we.> 1986 fall telephone conversation with a Post Office official, London.

Television programs with lower-class settings also provide examples:

<Well, we don’t know, do we. That’s what we’re waitin’ to find out.> 1987 Feb. 2 ITV Coronation Street. <Well, if you look through these now, you’ll get an
Tag questions

idea, won’t you.> 1987 Feb. 3 BBC1 EastEnders. <I work here, don’t I.> 1987 Mar. 17 BBC1 EastEnders. <They demolished our street, so we had to move, didn’t we.> 1987 Mar. 23 ITV Coronation Street.

Other examples of peremptory tags:

<‘...you seemed in a bit of a hurry to go away again.’ [¶] ‘Well, I would, wouldn’t I?’ countered Taunton sullenly. ‘You’re the bloody Bill [police], aren’t you?’> 1987 Hart 99. <[mystery writer Ruth Rendell:] I am British. I was born here. And my mother was a Swede. . . . At the time of the Falklands War I said to my aunt – my father’s sister, the English side – something about thinking that it was an unfortunate waste of life, time, energy, and money. And she said to me, “Oh well, you would feel like that. You’re not really English, are you?”> 1990 Critchfield 277. <Sky Television commented. “You’d better talk to News International about it,” a spokesman tells me. “It’s not really a Sky issue, is it?”> 1990 Aug. 20 Evening Standard 6/3. <[At least I assume she is. I can’t frigging see, can I?] 1994 Sept. 28–Oct. 5 Time Out 8/2.

16.4.5 Antagonistic tag questions

Still farther removed from the politeness of conversational tags is the antagonistic tag, which resembles the peremptory tag, except that its pitch is characteristically low falling. The statement that it follows is one whose truth or falseness the addressee does not and could not know. Because the addressee is incapable of knowing the truth of the statement, which the tag nevertheless implies everyone should know, the addressee is cast in the role of someone who is willfully stupid (CGEL 19.63).

Millar and Brown (1979, 35) ascribe use of this tag to Edinburgh Scots and illustrate it with this example: I’ve got a headache, haven’t I? Since addressees cannot know the internal state of the speaker, but are expected by the tag to do so, they are put into a dilemma. The effect of such a tag, Millar and Brown say, is “reprimanding, hostile and aggressive.” As the following examples illustrate, the antagonistic tag is by no means a Scots monopoly, although it is characteristically British:

<‘Nice-looker, sir?’ ventured Lewis after a couple of miles. [¶] ‘I didn’t bloody see her, did I?’ growled Morse. ‘She’s in Spain.’> 1981 Dexter 158. <‘You know its [the word commando’s] origin?’ [¶] It was a small innocent challenge to an ex-history teacher. ‘We took that from the Boers, who fought us in South Africa, didn’t we?’> 1985 Price 38. <I talked to him all right. There was just one problem. He wasn’t bloody listening, was he.> (The person addressed has no knowledge of the situation.) 1986 Dec. 20 BBC1 Bergerac. <‘You didn’t see Vera Jackman? Down by the front gate, say?’ [¶] ‘I went the other way, didn’t I?’> 1987 Hart 101. <Oh, you stupid woman – it’s his child, isn’t it.> (The speaker is aware that addressee does not know the fact.) 1987 Apr. 1
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16.5 Other forms and uses

16.5.1 After imperatives

After affirmative imperatives, British English often has a tag question: will you or won’t you (Swan 1995, 480). An American question after a positive imperative like Help yourself (for which British might use will you or won’t you) might be why don’t you? (CamGEL 942).

After a negative imperative, will you is also possible:

<You use the handkerchief for display purposes only. . . . Don’t go and blow your nose on it, will you?> 1985 Mortimer 100.

After let’s, British English uses shall we (Swan 1995, 306), but other modals also occur:

<Let’s give her another five minutes, should we?> 1972 Drabble 20.

16.5.2 Invariable tag questions

Invariable tag questions are occasionally used in English. The following are two well-established ones:

eh? Although associated by Americans with Canada, the invariable tag eh? is also found in British, which is doubtless the source of the Canadian use.


British teenagers have been reported by Anna-Brita Stenström (1997) as using yeah and innit as invariable tags. Examples she cites include these: And they’re not gonna stay with me, yeah? Just gonna go off. Yeah? I was talking to you earlier on innit. Also (LGSWE 1122–3), Teachers are very unfair in this school innit? These
examples do not show subject or tense concord and so are indeed instances of invariant use, although negative *innit* seems to follow the principle of reverse polarity in occurring after positive statements. Invariable *innit* is nonstandard but not restricted to teenager use. In CIC British texts, 38 percent of the tokens of *innit* (most of which are in nonstandard contexts) are invariable.


A number of other expressions can be pressed into service as invariable tag questions, of which the following are examples:

*don’t you think?*  <There’s a terrible tendency to think of the Jacobean dramatists as parochial and elitist, *don’t you think?* > 1985 Taylor 199.


*right*  <I’m unemployed, *right?* And it’s free here, *right?* > 1987 Fraser, *Your* 29.
17 Miscellaneous

17.1 Focus

A number of patterns are available for focusing information in a sentence, and of those patterns, several seem to be particularly characteristic of British English.

1. The specific subject of the sentence may be stated first as an isolated noun phrase, followed by the sentence with a pronoun representing that subject in its normal position. This pattern emphasizes the subject as the topic of discourse. In effect this pattern says, “Here’s what I’m talking about, and this is what I’m saying about it.”

<**Doreen, she** only works part time down the betting shop.> 1995 Jones 132.

2. The specific subject of the sentence may be shifted to the end of the sentence as a tag, leaving a pronoun in its normal place at the beginning of the sentence. This pattern also focuses an item (the subject) that is normally old information. In effect it says, “Here’s what I’m saying, and this is what I’m saying it about.” Cf. *CGEL* 18.59.

<**She** was a right old so-and-so, **his mum.**> 1992 Charles 128.

This pattern is also used in questions.

<**Will it take long, the tea?**> 1986 Oct. Peter Barnes’s adaptation of G. Feyerabend’s *Scenes from a Marriage*, Barbican, London.

If the subject that is extraposed as a tag is a pronoun identical with the one in the subject position, the effect is one of emphasis and perhaps annoyance.

<**You** hauled me out to come here at very short notice, **you.**> 1985 Clark 102.

3. A variation on pattern (2) is to repeat the operator after the subject in the tag. The effect is emphasis, especially when the extraposed subject is a pronoun identical with the pronoun in the subject position.

<**That’s rubbish that is.**> 1985 Ebdon 174. <**It’s usually a better motive than sex, money is.**> 1993 Neel 233.
Alternatively, the operator may be repeated before the subject in the tag.

<It’s right tasty, is Websters.> 1986 Nov. 15 TV ad.

If the main clause contains no operator, dummy *do* is used in the tag, either after or before the extraposed subject.

<. . . she likes her mince, Mrs H does.> 1985 Ebdon 103. <. . . she got about a bit, did the duchess.> 1999 Mar. 14 *Sunday Times* 10 54/4.

4. Instead of repeating the subject and a linking-verb *be* as a tag, they may both simply be shifted to the end of the subject complement.

<Six days in an open boat, my dad was.> 1985 Mortimer 31–2. <Fifty-eight, he is.> 1989 Drabble 9.

This shift occurs also in questions, in which the operator therefore precedes the subject.

<Bad on the motorway was it this morning, Brian?> 1988 Lodge 192. <In there, is she?> 1993 Smith 285.

5. A combination of the question versions of patterns (4) and (2) produces a sequence of subject complement (with the omission of *a* before an indefinite nominal), followed by operator and subject pronoun, followed by the extraposed subject noun phrase.


6. A variation on pattern (4) is to shift the subject, but omit the linking verb altogether, producing a pattern consisting of a subject complement followed by its verbless subject.

<. . . after the war he couldn’t get into Raffles Hotel. Sad, that.> 1989 July 22 *Spectator* 41/1. <Comforting thought, that, isn’t it?> (with a tag question) 1995 Sept. tube train poster ad for an insurance company.

This pattern occurs also for questions.

<Certain to have scarpered to the capital, don’t you reckon, the lad?> 1992 Dexter 276.

7. A combination of patterns (6) and (2) produces a sequence of subject complement, followed by subject pronoun, followed by the extraposed subject noun phrase.

<Good for trade, that, a good-looking barmaid.> 1987 Hart 22.

8. The subject may be extraposed as a tag, leaving the verb in initial position.

<The old Porky Porsche? Yes. Goes all right, this one.> 1986 Brett 151.
9. In a pattern related to (8), the extraposed tag subject is accompanied by the operator and sometimes other auxiliaries. The result has a Star-Wars Yoda-speak quality.

<Fair kicking himself he’ll be.> 1940 Shute 52. <Turned his mind for life, you have.> 1986 Bradbury 44. <Always contradicting me, my sergeant is!> 1992 Dexter 121.

The accompanying operator may be dummy do.


In the following imperative, the implicit subject you is lacking, as expected.

<Sit down, do.> 1986 Sherwood 113.

Did occurs in nonstandard use as an operator with ought, especially in the negative didn’t ought to for “ought not to have,” but also in the following example of this pattern.

<Ought to be grateful for the way he stood by her, she did.> 1993 Mason 134.

In questions, the extraposed operator and subject resemble a tag question.


In the following negative, the negation has been replicated by n’t in the tag.

<Never wanted to mix, he didn’t.> 2000 Rowling 8.

10. A combination of the question versions of patterns (9) and (2) produces a sequence of main verb and complement, followed by operator and subject pronoun, followed by the extraposed subject noun phrase.

<Got his own stormtroopers, now, has he, the VC?> 1988 Lodge 85.

11. A variety of other exceptional patterns are illustrated by the following. The subject is extraposed, and the verb (have or the like) is omitted altogether.

<No ties, most of ’em. And look at the bloke over there, he’s got his shirt hanging out.> 1988 Lodge 343.

The object of a preposition is extraposed to initial position as a topic.

<The selling of council houses, the party couldn’t wait to get on with.> 1989 Sept. 9 Times 33/3.

There’s (adjective) I am in the sense “I’m glad that” is doubtless a regionalism. Neither CIC nor the OED has examples.

<... but there’s glad I am I remembered.> 1987 Oliver 217.
17.2 Phatic language

Phatic language consists of expressions used as a basis for social intercommunication. Phatic expressions are not intended to be and, when correctly perceived, are not taken to be literal statements, but are merely conventional formulas of etiquette. For example, the greeting on meeting someone How do you do? is not a question about how one does anything or even how one is, but is a formal acknowledgment of an introduction.

Many phatic expressions are common-core English, but British and American differ in their choice of some others. The following is a list of samples, far from extensive. Many such items are treated by Michael Swan (1995, e.g., 82, 539, 543–6, 581).

What one says to ask another speaker to repeat or explain something varies, and may involve questions of propriety. British options include (I beg your) pardon? Sorry? and What (did you say)? American options are Excuse me? and Pardon me? (CGEL 11.34n). As some of the following citations make evident, Britons disagree about the proper thing to say.

**Pardon? (I beg your)** &lt;“James p’d the old q.” [¶] “I beg your pardon?” [¶]
“Popped the question. Proposed.”&gt; 1984 Brett 174. &lt;“There are lots of examples, fact and fiction, of upper-class siblings having it off. . . . Just like poor Annabella’ [¶] ‘What?’ said Barnaby. . . . [¶] ‘Pardon dear, not what.’ [¶] ‘Annabella. You know . . . in Tis Pity.’&gt; 1987 Graham 249.

**Sorry?** &lt;“I’ll take a shaft [var. of shufti “look”] at this lot. You go and see what’s in the Max.” [¶] “Sorry?” [¶] Stan Fogden grinned triumphantly. “Maximum Headroom – Bedroom.”&gt; 1984 Brett 38. &lt;Dermot taught me to say ‘What?’ instead of ‘Pardon?’ (although David Rocksavage, heir to the Marquess of Cholmondeley, said it was probably better to say ‘I’m sorry . . . ?’)&gt; 1990 Sept. Evening Standard magazine 22/2.

**What?** &lt;Samantha Upward’s au pair comes in very red in the face, saying, ‘Zacharias refuses to say “Pardon”.’ [¶] Whereupon Samantha goes even redder and stands on one leg, saying, ‘Well actually we always say “What”. I don’t know why.’&gt; 1979 Cooper 79. &lt;“Did you give him a glass of that malt?” [¶] “What?” [¶] “You didn’t give him a drink?”&gt; 1992 Dexter 210.

A British advance apology is excuse me and a retroactive apology is sorry, whereas Americans use the former also for an apology after the fact (Swan 1995, 544).

**excuse me** &lt;Then there were the pompous Beb cameramen who frantically ran around shouting things like: “Excuse me, there’s a crew coming through.”&gt; 1987 Mar. 23 Evening Standard 27/6. &lt;“Excuse me, lads!” A middle-aged woman . . . pushed by them.&gt; 1991 Lodge 62.

**sorry** &lt;Americans . . . say ‘Excuse me’ when they mean ‘Sorry’.&gt; 1982 Trudgill 134. . . inadvertent bodily contact is a moral gaffe and a squashed restaurant
in London where neighbouring tables brushed arms would resound with the perpetual echo of “sorree”.

Agreeing with a request that one do something is also signaled variably and differs between varieties (CGEL 8.100, 19.48). Characteristic British responses are Righto and Will do with pitch falling on the first syllable and rising on the second, compared to an American Sure with falling pitch (405.8 iptmw of sure in CIC American texts, 147.6 in British). Another response option, Right, is sometimes thought of as American, but is nearly 1.7 times more frequent in British texts. Other characteristically British responses of agreement are Quite and Quite so, with falling pitch, and Rather with falling-rising pitch (CGEL 8.130n). For these as well as Righto and its variants, cf. § 10.

**Will do** (about 10 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American)

‘I want you to call the public health people.’ . . . ‘Will do,’ said Fielding.

_Thank you_ and _Thanks_ are the principal expressions in common-core English. A British form is _Ta_, occurring initially in 15.7 iptmw of CIC British texts and in 0.5 of American.

A favored British response to _Thank you_ or its equivalents is Not at all, which is 2 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American; a favored American response is _You’re welcome_, which is 2.7 times as frequent in CIC American texts as in British.

On being introduced to someone, a British response is _How do you do_, which is nearly 4 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American, where it would be considered formal, a more usual response being _Nice to meet you_, which is 1.7 times more frequent in American texts than in British.

On meeting someone whom one knows, a British greeting is _How are you_, which is 1.74 times more frequent in CIC British texts than in American, whereas the response _How (are) you doing_ is 1.4 times more frequent in American texts than in British.

For bidding farewell, the common-core English forms are _goodbye_, its minor spelling variation _goodby_ (9.5 times more frequent in American than in British CIC texts), and its short form _bye_ (about a quarter more frequent in British than in American). Distinctively British forms with little or no American use are _cheers_ and _ta ta_, with the spelling variant _ta ra_,

The salutation in a letter is normally followed by a comma in British use, but by either a comma or a colon in American use. The latter is often said to be more formal (CGEL III.11), but it predominates, even after given names, in CIC American texts (which consist, however, not of letters directly but of published versions of letters in periodicals or fiction). The British complementary close to a letter is said to be typically _Yours faithfully/sincerely/truly/ever_, in contrast with the American reverse order of _Cordially/Sincerely/Truly yours_ (CGEL 8.91n, III.30). The published versions of American letters in CIC have
very few complementary closes, probably partly because letters published in 
periodicals generally do not use them; but among the few examples, Sincerely 
yours and Yours truly are equal in representation and both are outnumbered by 
Yours forever. The comparative paucity of evidence and its secondary nature do 
not allow firm conclusions.

17.3 Numbers

In names for numbers, British and American differ in several respects. In CIC 
texts, British uses nought nearly 30 times more often than American does, and 
a good many of those uses are for the number 0. American prefers the spelling 
naught, but uses it mainly as a pronoun synonym of nothing rather than as a 
number. American uses zero about 1.6 times more often than British does. British 
uses nil 8 times more often than American does, notably in reporting the scores 
of sporting events.

CIC British texts have nearly 20 times as many tokens of double plus a number 
as American texts do, thus 5644 might be five six double four.

Terms for major units above a million formerly differed between British and 
American, but the American system has now been generally adopted in England. 
The more frequent older uses are as follows:

milliard 1,000,000,000, now one billion.
billion 1,000,000,000,000, now one trillion.

For higher numbers and their history, see the MW Table of Numbers.

17.3.1 Time of day

In telling time, for minutes under ten after an hour, the number oh has been 
 omitted in the following so that seven five appears for seven oh five or five after 
seven.

<It appears she stayed in the bus station until the Larking bus left at seven-
five.> 1968 Aird 100.

A matter of punctuation only, hours are separated from minutes by a period 
or dot in British use, but by a colon in American. Thus British 10.30 would be 
American 10:30.

<This Sunday at 3.00 the film is appropriately HG Wells’ ‘Things To 

Cf. also § 8.1 gone for constructions like gone six for after/past six and § 8.2 
for constructions like half five for half past five.
17.4 Dates

For a day that is a week after a specified day, British uses the following patterns:

\textit{day week} A week from \textit{day}: CIC has 18.8 iptmw in British texts and none in American texts, but the construction also exists in some American dialects.

\begin{quote}
<Barnsley’s postponed quarter-final tie with Tottenham will now take place \textbf{tomorrow week}.> 1999 newspaper CIC. Cf. § 8.2.2 \textit{week day}.
\end{quote}

To express a time in the past, British can use the formula \textit{year(s) last (month/week)}, in the sense “year(s) ago last (month/week)”: <McGuigan relieved Eusebio Pedroza, from Panama, of his World Boxing Association title in London a \textbf{year last June}.> 1986 Oct. 1 \textit{Times} 42/7. And it uses the same formula to express a period of time up to some point in the past, in the sense “year(s) as of last (month/week)”: <I’ve been there a \textbf{year last week}.> 1998 spoken text CIC.

British uses several patterns for specifying dates. The most frequent is exemplified by \textit{1/1st/first September}, which is 12 times more frequent than in American. The most frequent in American is \textit{September 1/1st/first}, which is about 1.3 times more frequent than in British. If a year follows in the second pattern, it is set off by commas, but not in the first pattern. This difference in order creates ambiguity when numbers are also used for months:

\begin{quote}
\textit{9-11} is September 11 in America but \textit{9 November} in Britain (\textit{CGEL} 6.66). British forms are illustrated below.
\end{quote}

< . . . the church would be closed from \textbf{27 July to 1 September}.> 1982 Pym 240. <The next counterfoil after these recorded a withdrawal from a bank in St. Malo on the \textbf{first of May}.> 1989 Caudwell 276. < . . . term starts on \textbf{September the first}.> 1998 Rowling 17 (\textit{US ed.} September first). <During the Westland affair, back on \textbf{the February 15}, 1986, she had held the first of a number of secret meetings at Chequers.> 1987 June 13 \textit{Times} 28/3.

Common-core English can use cardinal numbers for days either before or after months: \textit{9 November or November 9}. It also can use ordinal numbers with or without \textit{the} after months: \textit{November (the) 9th} or before in the formula \textit{the 9th of November}. British may, in addition, use a simple ordinal number before the month: \textit{9th November}; this is rare in American.

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