

# You say tomato: raising awareness of differences in English around the world

## Differences in vocabulary

UK English	USA English
plaster/Elastoplast	bandage/Band-aid
pharmacist	druggist
chemist	drug store
casualty department	emergency room
rubber	eraser
exclamation mark	exclamation point
named after	named for
full point, full stop	period
antenatal	prenatal
surgical spirit	rubbing alcohol
jab [injection]	shot [injection]
consultant [medicine]	specialist [medicine]
zed [letter]	zee [letter]
nought	zero
centre	center
disc	disk
formulae [plural]	formulas [plural]
analyse	analyze

## Differences in spelling

US English uses:

*e* for *ae* and *oe*: *ameba, estrogen, toxemia, hemoglobin*

*ense* for *ence*: *defense, offense, license* (noun and verb)

*er* for *re*: *center, goiter*

*f* for *ph*: *sulfur, sulfate\**

*k* for *c*: *skeptic, mollusc*

*ll* for *l*: *enrol, fulfill*

*o* for *ou*: *mold*

*og* for *ogue*: *catalog, dialog*

*or* for *our*: *color, labor, tumor*

*z* for *s*: *analyze, paralyze, cozy* but *advise, surprise*

\*check for the international non-proprietary name

## Differences in punctuation

In US (and often Canadian) English, commas and full points fall within quotation marks regardless of whether they are part of the quoted material.

() = brackets (UK English) = parentheses (US English)

[] = square brackets (UK English) = brackets (US English)

# What is in the Cochrane Style Guide?

## Commas

- You can use a comma before 'and' and 'or' in lists. Be consistent in your choice.
    - A comma before 'and' and 'or' is common in USA English.
    - No comma before 'and' or 'or' is common in UK English.
- I have read Cochrane reviews about malaria, tuberculosis, and vaccines. (with a comma)
- I have read Cochrane reviews about malaria, tuberculosis and vaccines. (no comma)

## Dates

- Spell months out in full in order to avoid confusion between different regional date formats.
  - Correct: 7 November
  - Incorrect: 7/11 (UK = 7 November; USA = 11 July)

## Decimal points

- Use full stops (called "periods" in USA English) for decimal points. Do *not* use commas for decimal points (used widely in Europe).
- 15.51 (*not* 15,51)

## Names: pharmaceutical drugs

- Use non-proprietary (generic) names. These are not registered with a trademark.
- Non-proprietary names should start with a lower case letter, trade names start with an upper case letter.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Clinical Evidence website. The page title is "Drug nomenclature and brand names" under the letter "P". It includes a key for abbreviations and a table of drug names across different regions.

**Key**

- \* Name that appears in the *Clinical Evidence* index
- † recommended International Non-proprietary Name (rINN) or proposed International Non-proprietary Name (pINN)
- ‡ British Approved Name (BAN) or British Pharmacopoeia (BP) 2002 name
- § United States Adopted Name (USAN), the United States National Formulary (USNF) 21<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2003 name or United States Pharmacopoeia (USP) 26<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2003 name
- ¶ Single ingredient products only

Clinical Evidence name*	International name†	UK name‡	USA name§	UK brand name¶	US brand name¶
Paclitaxel	Paclitaxel	Paclitaxel	Paclitaxel	Taxol	Onxol; Taxol
Palivizumab	Palivizumab	Palivizumab		Synagis	Synagis
Pamidronate	Pamidronate disodium	Disodium pamidronate	Pamidronate disodium	Aredia	Aredia
Pantoprazole	Pantoprazole	Pantoprazole	Pantoprazole	Protium	Protonix
Paracetamol	Paracetamol	Paracetamol	Acetaminophen	Alvedon; Anadin; Paracetamol; Calpol; Disprol; Elkamol; Fanalac; Fenings	Acephen; Aceta; Apacet; Apap; Arthritis Pain Formula Aspirin Free; Aspirin Free Anadin; Aspirin Free Pain Relief; Bromo Seltzer;

**Spelling: ‘-ize’ or ‘-ise’**

Note: -ize is generally associated with USA English; however, it is also used in UK English (for example, the Oxford English Dictionary uses -ize).

Note: -ise is generally associated with UK English

- Both ‘-ize’ and ‘-ise’ are acceptable as long as you are consistent.

organize - organise

randomize - randomise

- If you choose ‘-ize’, then be aware that some words are spelt with ‘ise’. For example, in some words in which the stem is a noun, or words in which the ‘-ise’ or ‘-ize’ is not pronounced ‘eyes’, are spelt with ‘ise’.

For example: precise

**Spelling: UK English or USA English**

- Both are acceptable as long as you are consistent.

**Spelling: names**

- World Health Organization (*not* organisation)

- Centers for Disease Control **and Prevention** (*not* Center or Centre)

**Spelling: statistical terms**

- Chi square(d): the correct UK English name is **chi squared** (lower case chi, two separate words, and squared in the past tense, ie with a ‘d’). Correct USA English usage, however, is **chi square** (no ‘d’).

**Names: The Cochrane Collaboration**

- Cochrane Centre (*not* Center)

Australasian Cochrane Centre	Iberoamerican Cochrane Centre
Brazilian Cochrane Centre	Italian Cochrane Centre
Canadian Cochrane Centre	Nordic Cochrane Centre
Dutch Cochrane Centre	South African Cochrane Centre
German Cochrane Centre	UK Cochrane Centre

- Cochrane Center (*not* Centre)

Chinese Cochrane Center
US Cochrane Center

## Strategies used by other journals and publishing houses

### ***Oxford University Press***

“In editing US texts, it is the policy of OUP at Oxford to anglicize at least US spelling and punctuation in the absence of explicit instructions to the contrary. US grammar and vocabulary, on the other hand, are normally kept, though editors should query or alter wording that is impenetrable or misleading. Naturally, phraseology specific to the USA is retained in dialogue and quotations, as are proper nouns.”

### ***Springer-Verlag***

“The language an author employs is a personal choice, and our editorial input can only be defended if it leads to better or clearer communication. Consistency within an article is important for the sake of preserving a tidy appearance...”

“Springer house style is to prefer American English, hence “-ize” forms. But if an author writes an article in British English (or Australian English, which is usually closer to British than American English), our policy is not to try to change it to American style, since many British authors would regard this as a needless mutilation. For such papers, we seek only to make the usage internally consistent (for example, by changing any occasional “-ize” spellings that may appear).”

### ***The British Journal of Neurosurgery***

**Spelling** should be in English not American style, e.g. tumour and haemorrhage as opposed to tumor and hemorrhage. When referring to scales such as the Glasgow Outcome Scale, outcome should be referred to in words and not numbers in order to avoid ambiguity.

### ***Hong Kong Medical Journal***

Use Arabic numerals for numbers above nine, for designators (eg case 5, day 2, etc) and for units of measure; numbers should be spelled out if below 10, at the beginning of sentences, and for fractions below one. All papers should be written in English, and the spelling should be in British form (eg anaemia, physiological) and conform to the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English Usage.

### ***Pediatrics International*** (Official English Journal of the Japan Pediatric Society)

#### *Style of Manuscripts*

All contributions should be written in English. Spelling should be either British or American (current English usage), but must be consistent throughout the manuscript. Manuscripts should follow the style of the Vancouver agreement detailed in the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors' revised 'Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication', as presented at <http://www.ICMJE.org/>. Editor reserves the right to modify manuscripts to eliminate ambiguity and repetition and improve communication between author and reader. Manuscripts should be as concise and clear as possible. Manuscripts not following the Instructions for Authors shall be returned to the authors.

## **Other resources**

Cochrane Style Guide. <http://www.liv.ac.uk/lstm/ehcap/CSR/CSG.html>

Ritter RM. The Oxford guide to style. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

US: Merriam-Webster Dictionary (<http://www.m-w.com/>)

UK: Oxford English Dictionary

Australian: Macquarie Dictionary (<http://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/>)

Many web-based dictionaries available.