

Canadian English

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Once you cross the border into the Great White North, colors begin to take on a different hue with an added *u*, and some words invite you to linger a little longer with an extra *l*, now two.

Canadian English is a mix of American English and British English, sharing spellings with both types. Since we're already pretty familiar with the American side of the mix, we need to know when Canada wants to hop across the pond.

Spelling

United States	Canada	United Kingdom
color	colour	colour
center	centre	centre
globalization	globalization	globalisation
realize	realize	realise
analyze	analyze	analyse
traveling	travelling	travelling
defense	defence	defence
computer program, concert program	computer program, concert program	computer program, concert programme
gray	grey	grey
fulfill	fulfill	fulfil
aluminum	aluminum	aluminium

French-derived words in American English that end in *-or* and *-er*, such as *color* or *center*, often retain British spellings: *colour*, *centre*.

Some nouns, as in British English, take the ending *-ice* while matching verbs take the ending *-ise*.

Noun	Verb
practice	practise
licence	license

Sometimes, Canadian spelling doubles the consonant when adding suffixes to words, especially when the final syllable is not stressed: travelled (*TRA-velled*), counselling (*coun-SE-lling*), marvellous (*mar-VE-l-lous*).

In American English, this consonant is only doubled when stressed. It's controllable (*con-tro-LLAB-le*) and enthralling (*en-THRALL-ing*) in both Canadian and American English.

Vocabulary


Additionally, Canadian English has a number of “Canadianisms,” words and expressions that originated in and/or are completely unique to Canada. Below, you’ll find a list of the more popular ones that you may see in your daily workflow and use in customer content where appropriate.

Apparel

Canadianism	U.S. meaning
bunny hug (Saskatchewan)	a hooded sweatshirt
dressing gown, housecoat	bathrobe
runners	sneakers or tennis shoes
toque (or tuque)	a knitted winter hat, similar to a beanie

Daily Life

Canadianism	U.S. meaning
BFI bin (or just “bin”)	dumpster (named after a prominent Canadian waste management company, BFI Canada)
biffy	toilet
chesterfield	sofa
cutlery	silverware or flatware
eavestrough	rain gutter
flush (noun)	toilet
garburator	garbage disposal
hydro	synonymous with electrical service (e.g., “I didn’t pay my hydro bill, so they shut off my lights.”)
loonie	Canadian one dollar coin; also used to refer to Canadian currency
serviette	paper table napkin
tap	faucet
toonie	Canadian two dollar coin

 In casual references to money, especially in large amounts, continue to use “dollars.”

A source familiar with the deal said it would save millions of dollars for the city over the next five years.

Education


Canadianisms	U.S. meaning
college	community college; technical or vocational institution
college student	someone pursuing an associate degree
composite school	a secondary school offering commercial, industrial, and academic courses
frosh	freshman
going to university	going to college
grade one, grade two, etc.	as in first grade, second grade, etc.
marks	grades (both are used)
public school	elementary school
university student	someone pursuing a bachelor's degree
to write an exam	to take an exam

i In Canada, the four years of high school are designated grades nine through 12 rather than freshman to senior year. In fact, the terms “sophomore,” “junior,” and “senior” aren’t used at all.

Expressions

Canadianisms	U.S. meaning
“back east”	typically refers to Ontario or Quebec
“beaut”	a beauty (typically referring to an object or animal, not a person)
Canuck	nickname for a Canadian (uncommon; neutral in Canada but used as a pejorative in the States)
“down east”	typically refers to Newfoundland and/or the Maritimes
“drop the gloves”	to begin a fight
“Eh?”	“Don’t you think?”; “Right?”
“for sure”	“definitely”
“give’r”	“Give it all you’ve got”; “go for it”
“given’r”	Present participle of “give’r”
“going out to camp”	going to a summer cottage or home
gong show	crazy, crowded, chaotic event or environment; “like a zoo”
hooped	screwed up so badly it can’t be fixed; hopeless

hoser	unsophisticated person
keener	boot-licker, suck-up, someone extremely enthusiastic about something; also refers to nerds and geeks
kerfuffle	commotion; flurry of agitation
Newfie	someone from Newfoundland
“out for a rip”	going out to have a good time
the States	United States of America; always used in any reference

 Yes, “Eh?” is a real thing. Use it sparingly.

Food and Drink

Canadianisms	U.S. meaning
all-dressed	adjective meaning all optional garnishes on fast food items (e.g., all-dressed sandwich, all-dressed pizza)
back bacon	Canadian bacon
Beaver Tail	deep-fried dessert pastry (a donut) resembling a beaver's tail; origin of name stems from a brand, hence the capitalization
the bill	the check, as in “Can I have the bill, please?”
brown bread	whole-wheat bread
butter tart	a small pecan-pie-like tart
chocolate bar	candy bar
donair	a pita containing spiced meat and a sauce made from sugar, vinegar, milk, and garlic
double-double	a cup of coffee with two measures of both cream and sugar
Freezies	equivalent to Otter Pops; not interchangeable with Popsicle
homo milk	whole milk
icing sugar	powdered sugar
ketchup chips	ketchup-flavored potato chips
mickey	a 375 mL or 12.7 fl oz bottle of hard liquor; about enough to fill a pint glass or flask
milk in a bag	comes in a group of three bags
Nanaimo bar	a three-layer dessert of chocolate and custard cut into squares; named after Nanaimo, British Columbia
pop (or soft drink)	soda; Coke
poutine	french fries topped with cheese curds and brown gravy

rubaboo	a stew of pemmican, flour, and various other things on hand; used figuratively to mean a mishmash of varied stuff
six-pack (or half-sack, half-case, poverty-pack)	a case of six beers
Smarties	candy-coated chocolate pieces similar to M&Ms; not the same as the roll of tart discs sold in the U.S.
tortiere	a French-Canadian meat pie
two-four	a case of 24 beers; also called a case or a <i>flat</i> ; also a bottle of liquor
two-six	even larger bottle of liquor
whisky	preferred spelling of “whiskey”
whitener	non-dairy coffee creamer

Location


Canadianisms	U.S. meaning
bachelor apartment (or bachelor)	a studio apartment
dépanneur (or dep)	convenience store
fire hall	fire station
gas bar	gas station
parkade	parking garage
Timmie's	slang for Tim Hortons
washroom	restroom; bathroom

Transportation

Canadianisms	U.S. meaning
metro	subway
railway	railroad
return ticket (or round-trip ticket)	a two-way ticket
transport truck	semi; 18-wheeler

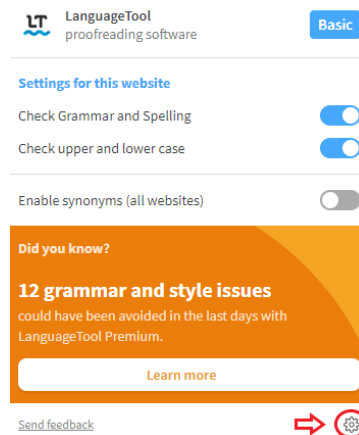
Language Tool

If you're worried you're still going to get tripped up by *ou*'s and *ll*'s, the Language Tool Chrome extension has a Canadian English setting.

 In addition to the tool's usual likes and dislikes, it may not recognize some of the above Canadianisms. Use this page to double-check and clear the marked error as necessary.

Download the Chrome extension here: <https://languagetool.org/>

1. After you've downloaded the extension, click on its icon in the taskbar at the top of the page.
2. Click on the advanced settings icon in the bottom right-hand corner.



3. This should open up a new tab in your Chrome browser. In the tab, click on the dropdown menu entitled “Experimental settings.”
4. In the dropdown menu underneath “Interpret English as,” select “English (Canadian).”

5. Click “Save.”

⚠ After you make the switch to Canadian English in the Language Tool, you'll have to refresh any page you're writing on for those changes to take effect.