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VOCABULARY PRACTICE
INTERMEDIATE | B1-B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Tick which variety of English each spelling belongs to.

Word | British | American | Both

1 colour [ ] [ ] [ ]
2 color [ ] [ ] [ ]
3 organise [ ] [ ] [ ]
4 organize [ ] [ ] [ ]
5 theatre [ ] [ ] [ ]
6 theater [ ] [ ] [ ]
7 travelling [ ] [ ] [ ]
8 traveling [ ] [ ] [ ]

2 Correct the spelling to match the variety indicated.

1 (American) colour → _____
2 (British) organize → _____
3 (American) theatre → _____
4 (British) traveling → _____
5 (American) centre → _____
6 (British) analyze → _____
7 (American) programme → _____
8 (British) defense → _____

3 Choose the word or spelling appropriate for the variety given.

1 (British) autumn / fall
2 (American) autumn / fall
3 (British) football / soccer
4 (American) football / soccer
5 (British) mobile phone / cell phone
6 (American) mobile phone / cell phone

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4 Complete the sentences choosing the word that matches the variety indicated.

apartment | elevator | flat | lift | sneakers | trainers | underground | subway

1 (British) She lives in a 1 _____ near the city centre.
2 (American) She lives in an 2 _____ near downtown.
3 (British) Take the 3 _____ to the fourth floor.
4 (American) Take the 4 _____ to the fourth floor.
5 (British) He wore his new 5 _____ for the run.
6 (American) He wore his new 6 _____ for the run.
7 (British) They travelled by 7 _____ across the city.
8 (American) They travelled by 8 _____ across the city.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Why British and American English diverged

Linguists studying the divergence between British and American English note that the split largely reflects centuries of separate development following colonial settlement, rather than any deliberate attempt by either community to differentiate itself linguistically. Some American spellings, such as 'color' without the 'u', actually preserve older English forms that British English later modified, meaning the popular assumption that American English simply 'simplified' British spelling oversimplifies a more complex historical picture involving changes on both sides of the Atlantic independently. Vocabulary differences often arose from distinct environmental and cultural contexts, as American settlers needed new terms for unfamiliar plants, animals and social institutions that simply did not exist in Britain.

1 What does the divergence between British and American English largely reflect? _____
2 What does the text say some American spellings actually do, contrary to popular assumption? __
3 What popular assumption does the text challenge? _____
4 What does this popular assumption oversimplify? _____
5 Where did vocabulary differences often arise from? _____
6 What example is given of why American settlers needed new terms? _____

6 Rewrite each British sentence using American English vocabulary.

1 She lives in a flat. → _____
2 He took the lift upstairs. → _____
3 They put rubbish in the bin. → _____

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4 She wore trainers to the gym. → _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 100-120 word account comparing British and American English vocabulary or spelling, using at least ten examples.

[ ] Use at least ten target expressions. [ ] Include polite, precise wording. [ ] Organise the account clearly.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Categories

1 British 2 American 3 British 4 American 5 British 6 American 7 British 8 American

2 Corrections

1 color 2 organise 3 theater 4 travelling 5 center 6 analyse 7 program 8 defence

3 Suitable words

1 autumn 2 fall 3 football 4 soccer 5 mobile phone 6 cell phone

4 Sentences

1 flat 2 apartment 3 lift 4 elevator 5 trainers 6 sneakers 7 underground 8 subway

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Centuries of separate development following colonial settlement.
2 Preserve older English forms that British English later modified.
3 That American English simply 'simplified' British spelling.
4 A more complex historical picture involving changes on both sides of the Atlantic independently.
5 Distinct environmental and cultural contexts.
6 They needed terms for unfamiliar plants, animals and social institutions that didn't exist in Britain.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 She lives in an apartment. 2 He took the elevator upstairs.
3 They put garbage in the trash can. 4 She wore sneakers to the gym.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check range, respectful register and clear organisation.