

# AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH



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**Australian English  
(AuE, AusE, en-AU) is  
the form of the English  
language  
used in Australia.**

- **Australian English began to diverge from British English shortly after the foundation of the penal colony of New South Wales (NSW) in 1788. British convicts sent there were mostly from large English cities, including the Cockneys of London. Joining them were many free settlers, military personnel, and administrators, along with their families.**
- **In 1827 Peter Cunningham, in his book *Two Years in New South Wales*, reported that native-born white Australians — known then as "currency lads and lasses" — spoke with a distinctive accent and vocabulary, with a strong Cockney influence. The transportation of convicts to Australian colonies ended in 1868, but immigration of free settlers from Britain, Ireland and elsewhere continued.**

**The first Australian gold rushes in the 1850s attracted a lot of immigrants.**

**During the 1850s, when Great Britain and Ireland suffered major economic hardship, about two per cent of their combined populations emigrated to the Colony of NSW and the Colony of Victoria .**

**Around the same time, many migrants who spoke English as a second language, mostly from German-speaking countries, also arrived.**

**Americanisation" of Australian English — borrowing of words, spellings, terms, and usages from North American English — began during the goldrushes. Among the words imported are some considered to be typically Australian, such as *dirt* and *digger*.**

**The influx of American soldiers in World War II brought more American influence, though most American words were short-lived. Only *okay*, *you guys*, and *gee* have persisted.**

**Since the 1950s**, the influence of US English via **pop culture, the mass media** — books, magazines, television programs, and computer software — and **the world wide web** have led to **a new wave of Americanisation.**

Some words, such as ***freeway* and *truck***, have naturalised completely so that few Australians recognise their American origin.

Both American and British English variants sometimes **occur side-by-side**, such as ***TV*** and ***telly*** as an abbreviation of ***television***.

Elsewhere British words **predominate**: ***mobile*** or ***mobile phone*** instead of ***cell*** or ***cellphone***, ***lift*** instead of ***elevator***.

In many cases — as in ***telly*** versus ***TV*** and ***SMS*** versus ***text***, ***freeway*** and ***motorway*** — regional, social and ethnic variation within Australia typically determines word usage.

**Because of the countries' shared history and geographical proximity, Australian English is most similar to New Zealand English.**

**But differences between the two spoken versions are clear to speakers of either country, mostly because of some vowels. There are also striking differences in vocabulary.**



# *Irish influences*

Many Australians are of Irish **descent**. Some Irish **influences** include the non-standard plural of "you" as "**youse**" /jʉ:z/, sometimes used informally in Australia, and the expression "**good on you**" or "**good onya**". Another Irish influence is use of the word **me** replacing **my**, such as in the phrase **Where's me hat?** This usage is generally restricted to informal situations.

# *Vocabulary*

Australian English has many words that Australians consider unique to their language. One of the best-known is *outback*, meaning a remote, sparsely-populated area. Another is *Bush*, meaning either a native forest or a country area in general.

Other similar words, phrases and usages were brought by the convicts to Australia. Many words used frequently by country Australians are, or were, also used in all or part of England, with variations in meaning.

The origins of other words are not as clear or are disputed. *Dinkum* (or "fair dinkum") means "true", or when used in speech: "is that true?", "this is the truth!", among other things, depending on context and inflection.

Similarly, *g'day*, a stereotypical Australian greeting, is no longer synonymous with "good day" in other varieties of English (it can be used at night time) and is never used as an expression for "farewell", as "good day" is in other countries.

Some elements of Aboriginal languages have been included into Australian English—mainly as names for places, flora and fauna (for example dingo).

Beyond that, little has been adopted into the wider language, except for some localised terms and slang. Some examples are *cooee* and *Hard yakka*. The former is used as a high-pitched call, for attracting attention, (pronounced /kʊ:.i:/) which travels long distances. *Cooee* is also a notional distance: *if he's within cooee, we'll spot him*. *Hard yakka* means *hard work* and is derived from *yakka*, from the Yagara/Jagara language once spoken in the Brisbane region.

Also from there is the word *bung*, meaning *broken or pretending to be hurt*. A person pretending to be hurt is said to be "*bunging it on*". A hurt person could say "*I've got a bung knee*".

# *Use of words by Australians*

Australian English makes frequent use of **diminutives**. They are formed in various ways and are often **used to indicate familiarity**. Some examples are *arvo* (afternoon), *servo* (service station), *bottle-o* (bottle-shop), *barbie* (barbecue), *cozzie* (swimming costume), *footy* (Rugby League or Australian rules football) and *mozzie* (mosquito).

Similar diminutives are commonly used for **personal nicknames** (*Johnno*, *Fitzzy*). Occasionally a **-za** diminutive is used, usually for personal names where the first of multiple syllables ends in an "r": so **Barry becomes *Bazza* and Sharon *Shazza***.