Grammar differences between British and American English

The following guide is meant to point out the principal differences between British and American English.

Use of the Present Perfect

In British English, the **present perfect tense** is the most common tense used to talk about recently finished actions and events. In American English, both **present perfect** and **simple past tense** are possible in this case.

- I have broken my arm. (British English)
- I broke my arm. / I have broken my arm. (American English)
- There has been an explosion near the bridge. (British English)
- There was an explosion near the bridge. / There has been an explosion near the bridge. (American English)

Note that past tense forms are more common than present perfect tense forms in American English.

In British English, the indefinite times adverbs **already, just** and **yet** are only used with the present perfect tense. In American English, these time adverbs are also used with the simple past tense.

- They have already arrived. (British English)
- They already arrived. / They have already arrived. (American English)

Have and have got

In British English, both **have** and **have got** are used to indicate possession. The forms with **have got** are more common.

- She has got a nice home. OR She has a nice home. (British English)
- Has she got a nice home?
  - No, she hasn’t got a nice home.

In American English, the forms with **have got** are not all that popular. They are possible, but Americans prefer using have without got. In this case, questions and negatives are made with **do**.

- She has a lovely daughter.
- Does she have a lovely daughter? (NOT Has she a lovely daughter?)
- No, she doesn’t have a lovely daughter. (NOT No, she hasn’t a lovely daughter.)