

The History of English

English is sometimes called a mongrel language. It did not even originally come from England; Old English was brought by invaders from Germany and Denmark in around 500AD. This form of English – which we could not understand today – was spoken in England until 1066, when the Normans conquered the country and brought their language: French. Over the next 400 years, the two languages mixed. This is why there are often grammar rules that contradict each other or two ways of saying something: the rules actually come from two different languages!

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Around 1500, the pronunciation of English started to change significantly as England had more contact with the rest of the world. However, this was also when printed books became available, and so the spelling of English words stayed the same, which is why English words are sometimes spelled very differently to how they are pronounced.

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Finally, in the 19th century, as the British empire spread across a third of the world, many new words were added to the language – from India, China, Africa, Australia, and even the native tribes of America – to form modern English.

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Where did English originally come from?

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What other language was mixed with Old English to create the language we speak today?

English has changed a lot; is it still changing?