

What is 'standard' English?

In formal situations, people expect English speakers and writers to use *standard language*. Standard language is the kind which is taught as 'correct' in schools, using a special 'correct' grammar and avoiding slang words and expressions. Standard language is written in a 'correct' form of spelling and it is spoken in a 'standard' accent, such as English **Received Pronunciation** or **Scottish Standard English Pronunciation**.

What is 'non-standard' English?

In informal situations, many people use *non-standard* varieties of British English, using grammars and words and accents which are special to a particular place. Non-standard language often contains expressions which are regarded as 'incorrect' in standard language even if they seem quite sensible, for example, the form *youse* for the plural of 'you', which is found in a number of places where English is spoken. It is important to realise that non-standard English is just as organized as standard language – it is just that the systems are different.

Examples of non-standard English

There are a number of non-standard varieties of British English, such as Scouse (the language of Liverpool), Geordie (the language of North-eastern England), so-called 'Estuary English' (found in the South-east of England, but spreading from there), and Scots, which has descended from Northern dialects of Old English.

➤ *See also* **Language Study** panel on **English in Britain and Ireland**.

Non-standard varieties are also found in other English-speaking communities.

➤ *See also* **Language Study** panels on **English in Britain and Ireland, English in North America** and **English worldwide**.