

WEBSITE RESOURCE WP1.1

Standard English quiz

This will be accompanied by a sound file reading out the sentences/phrases in different regional accents.

	'Standard' formal English	'Non-Standard English'
He and I were going to town.		
She done it because she was in a hurry.		
He's never been there.		
I'm taking me kids out later.		
We were hopping mad.		
I'm goin' abed now.		
I don't know anything.		
I ain't seen anything.		
They was hoping to get away with it.		
You're going to cop it.		
I didn't do it.		
We don't get nothing of that like.		
He weren't a bad man.		

Try putting the sentences you have identified as 'non-standard' into 'standard' formal English.

You may notice that it's not the accent, nor the use of informal language but often the verb forms that makes the difference between 'standard' and 'non-standard' forms of English. Similarly, you may notice that 'standard' formal expressions are more like written English.

One of the key things to notice is that the 'non-Standard' forms can be heard every day in homes and workplaces and people understand them perfectly well.

Answers – hide these until quiz has been completed

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She done it because she were in a hurry.		
He's never been there.		
I'm taking me kids out later.		
We were hopping mad.		
I'm goin abed now.		
I don't know anything.		
Him and me went to the café.		
I ain't seen nothing.		
They was hoping to get away with it.		
You're going to cop it.		
I didn't do it.		
We don't get nothing of that like.		
He weren't a bad man.		

She done it because she were in a hurry.

She did it because she was in a hurry.

The verb tenses and singular/plural have been changed.

I'm taking me kids out later.

I am taking my children out later.

The pronoun has been changed and the more informal 'kids' has been changed to more formal use of 'children'.

I'm goin abed now.

I am going to bed now.

'Goin' and 'abed' are shortened forms of 'going' and 'to bed' as usually heard in speech.

Him and me went to the café.

He and I went to the café.

The pronouns have been changed from subject to object forms.

Subject and object: The simplest sentences are made up of a subject, a verb and an object:

The girl ate the cheese.

subject verb object

The subject does the action of the verb and the object is on the receiving end.

Subjects and objects are either nouns or pronouns, for example, changed to pronouns the sentences above would be:

She ate it.

subject verb object

I ain't seen nothing.

I haven't seen anything.

ain't is a contraction usually heard in spoken language (although it was current in formal written English at the turn of the 19th century!). 'Using 'nothing' here makes this sentence a double negative. Taken literally, it means I have seen something.

They was hoping to get away with it.

They were hoping to get away with it.

'get away with it' is fine as part of a Standard English sentence.

'was' is the singular form of the verb in Standard English and 'were' is the plural so fits with the plural 'They'.

We don't get nothing of that like.

We don't get anything like that.

Again, nothing is a double negative and 'of that like' is a dialect way of saying 'like that', for example, in Norfolk.

He weren't a bad man.

He wasn't a bad man.

Again, the use of a plural instead of singular verb makes this non-Standard.

You may have thought that 'We were hopping mad.' and 'You're going to cop it.' were non-Standard sentences. These two are examples of sentences that follow standard grammatical patterns but use less formal vocabulary.