Common Slang Terms

As in every part of the world, Americans have developed certain oddities or slang terms in their everyday language. Regardless of how long you have studied English, you will hear and see words with which you are not familiar. Listed below are some of the most common slang terms used in America.

**awesome:** very good, interesting, or appealing

**big deal:** important event; may be used sarcastically to refer to something that is not important

**blast or It’s going to be a blast!** It’s going to be a lot of fun

**bomb:** to be unsuccessful

**blow it off:** to ignore or avoid someone or something

**blue or have the blues:** feel depressed

**bogus:** 1) nonexistent, fake 2) bad, awful, unsatisfactory

**to book:** 1) to hurry up or do something very quickly 2) to reserve a ticket to an event or on transportation

**born again:** to hold strong, fundamentalist, Christian beliefs

**bounce a check:** to overdraw a checking account

**broke:** having no money

**buddy:** friend

**bum a cigarette:** to borrow a cigarette

**bummed out:** depressed

**bummer:** unpleasant experience

**burned:** rejected, insulted, or otherwise negatively treated

**dude:** a fashionable man

**burned out:** 1) exhausted 2) dull or lifeless as a result of excessive work or drug use

**busted:** 1) to be caught by anyone in authority while misbehaving, or by the police while using drugs 2) to be “broke” or out of money

**check out:** 1) to sign out materials from a library 2) to try to find out something

**check it out:** to look over a situation

**chill out or cool it:** a command to stop what you are doing, relax

**cop out:** to not face the issue

**couch potato:** a lazy person who spends a large amount of time (perhaps on a couch) watching television

**cram:** To study frantically the night before a test

**crash:** 1) to stay overnight in someone else’s dwelling, usually without notice or formal arrangement 2) to go to sleep after becoming extremely tired

**cruising:** Driving around for pleasure with no particular destination

**to have a crush on someone:** To be extremely infatuated with someone

**cut it out!** Stop it!

**dead:** 1) very tired 2) not living

**dork:** an unfashionable and awkward male

**dorm:** dormitory

**dough:** money

**down in the dumps** depressed

**drop in** to visit unexpectedly
fire up  to get excited about something; to motivate

fix up  to arrange a date for a friend

fed up or sick of  disgusted with; tired of

freak out  to lose control of oneself

fuzzbuster  device used by some motorists to determine when police are using radar to detect drivers who are speeding

gEEK  unattractive, unstylish, socially inept person

get a kick out of someone/something  find someone or something amusing or enjoyable

get on someone’s case  to annoy

get off someone’s case  to stop annoying a person

give someone a break  to stop criticizing or teasing

Give me a break!  Expresses disbelief

Give someone a buzz, a ring  to call someone on the telephone

goofing off  acting silly; doing something that has no particular purpose

give up  to quit

go bananas  to be so excited that one loses control of oneself

gross  something crude, usually unpleasant

hang in there  keep trying; do not be discouraged

hang out  1) to waste time
  2) a regular meeting place for friends

hang-up  fear; phobia or worry

mooch  to borrow frequently and/or take things from others, usually without the intention of

hassle  1) a problem or inconvenience
  2) cause another person to have a problem or inconvenience

head  another name for the bathroom or toilet facilities

hick  someone from a small town or rural area (usually uncomplimentary meaning unsophisticated)

hit the road  to leave a place

hit the sack or turn in  to go to bed

hitch a ride  to get a ride from another person

hung up  to be in conflict over a problem

ID  identification card

in a nutshell  very briefly and concisely

jerk  person who cannot do things correctly; a mildly derogatory term

jock  an athlete or athletic person, or one who is not very intelligent

john  another name for the toilet or bathroom facilities; head

Knock it off!  Stop doing that! Usually expressed when you are doing something annoying

Lighten up!  Relax, don’t be so serious

loaded  someone who has had too much to drink; someone who has a lot of money

Loosen up!  Relax

lose it  to lose control of oneself

luck out or get lucky  to have something good happen due to luck or chance

Don’t mess with me!  Leave me alone

Mind your own business!  Do not ask questions or make statements about this matter; it is my concern and not yours returning or repaying
nerd — a strange or socially inept person

on the house — free, no cost

Oops! — An exclamation used when a small mistake is made

to be open — to be accepting of something or someone; to speak frankly about oneself

out of one’s mind (head) —
1) crazy
2) doing something ridiculous

out of it — tired and not concentrating

pal — friend

pig out — overeat

pop, soda pop, soda, or soft drink — carbonated beverage (Coke, Pepsi, Sprite, et al)

psych up — prepare oneself mentally or emotionally for something

psyched up — enthusiastic

pull someone’s leg — to tease

put someone on — to tease or try to fool

take a raincheck — postpone; accept the same invitation but for a later date

raunchy — vulgar, crude

relationship — a close affiliation with someone; usually romantic

right-hand — an important and reliable assistant

rip off —
1) steal
2) anything too expensive and not worth the price

Way to go! — That’s very good! Sometimes used sarcastically

What’s up? What’s happening? What’s going on? —
1. What event is taking place?
2. What are you doing?

rowdy — noisy, loud, obnoxious

scoop — gossip, recent news

see eye-to-eye — having the same opinion

show — television program, movie, film, or theater performance

shush! — Be quiet, don’t make so much noise

slam — insult a person

slob —
1) a lazy, fat person
2) a person who is not dressed neatly
3) an untidy person

spaced out — unable to concentrate

split — to leave

stood up — to be left waiting for someone who never arrives

tacky — in poor taste

Take a hike! — Go away and leave me alone

to be crazy about — to like someone or something very much

to be into something — to be very interested in or concerned with something; “I can really get into this song.”

touch base — verify information with someone

tough luck — it’s too bad that happened to you

turn over a new leaf — adopt a better course of conduct

unreal — unbelievable

uptight — worried, tense

wimp — weakling

zero in on — to focus or concentrate on

zonked or zonkered — completely exhausted