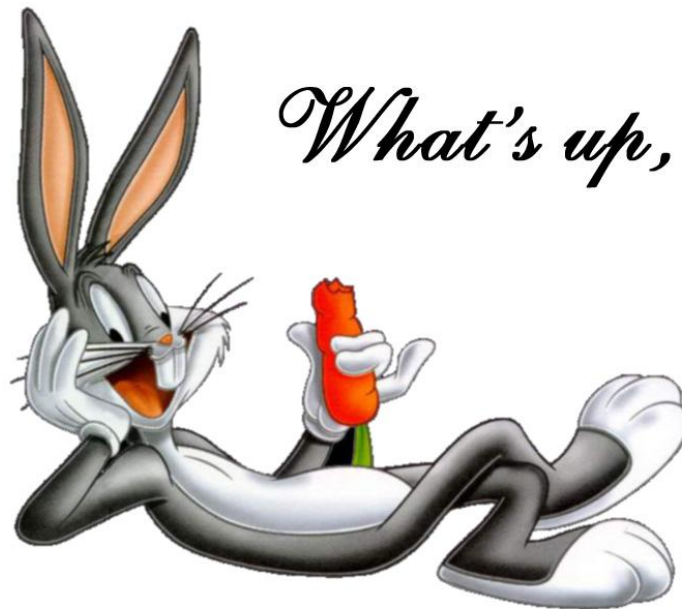


Slang words are kind of like jargon; they are used in certain groups and understood by the group members.



What's up, Doc ?

Defining Slang

- Slang refers to words or phrases that begin to be used in a widespread way. This way, our language renews itself and changes with the times. Slang words show the attitudes of the group or sub-culture that uses them.
- Slang can appear as a brand new word, a new meaning for an existing word, an abbreviation for a word, or a word that becomes more generalized than its former, narrow meaning.
- It may help to go over what is not considered slang. Slang is not [dialect](#), colloquialism, or catch phrases, where both parties are familiar with the references, like “Beam me up, Scotty” from Star Trek. It is not jargon, which is limited to a certain field, or slogans used in advertising. Graffiti is not slang, nor is any special language used in a secret group.
- By the 18th century, the differences between America and other English speaking countries prompted the evolution of slang. For a time, any words not used in Britain were considered slang. Originally considered to be the language of foreigners and criminals, slang began to be used by writers in the 1900s.

Why Slang Is Used

- It can be used just for fun or as a way to be witty or clever.
- You can use it to be different or startling.
- Even if you don't know it, slang enriches the language.
- Many use it as a way to be friendly, or to show that they belong to a certain group or profession.
- Some engage in slang usage to be secretive, like those in secret societies, children, students, or prisoners.

Slang is a way of using descriptive or figurative language. It sometimes is irreverent and humorous. Slang expressions describe activities or objects. There is a high number of slang terms associated with the activity or object if it is prevalent. In 1901, G. K. Chesterton wrote "All slang is metaphor, and all metaphor is poetry," in *Defence of Slang*.

Examples of Slang Words

- “bad” has been used to mean “good” since 1897
- “dude” which means a “guy”, first appeared in the 1870s

Each decade has had slang words appear during that time. Here are five common slang words and expressions from each recent decade:

- From the 1950s: boo boo - mistake; cool - alright or slow, romantic music; garbage - nonsense; hot - sexy or attractive; neck - hug or kiss
- From the 1960s: bread - money; far out - amazing; hassle - annoy; spacey - odd, eccentric; vibes - feelings
- From the 1970s: bogus - unfair; gross - disgusting; horn - telephone; no brainer - easy problem; zip - nothing
- From the 1980s: crib - where you live; go postal - go crazy; melt down - total collapse; wannabe - someone who wants to be something; wicked - excellent or very cool
- From the 1990s: bling - glitter; hood - juvenile delinquent; loot - money; po-po - police; senior moment - memory loss
- From the 2000s: buzz - shave your head; cougar - older woman dating younger man; holla - call on the phone; peep - person; tat - tattoo