

Lesson 44 – Common Slang

Slang is not usually taught in textbooks, and you won't hear it in academic or professional situations - but in movies, TV shows, and informal conversations, these words are used frequently. In today's lesson, you're going to learn 15 common slang words used in American English.

#1 - Awesome = great, wonderful, impressive

You can use the word "awesome" as an adjective to describe almost anything:

- **An object:** "Did you see his new motorcycle? It's awesome!"
- **An experience:** "I just got back from an awesome trip to Europe."
- **An accomplishment:** "Congratulations on your promotion! That's awesome!"
- **An action:** "That organization is doing some awesome work in the poor neighborhoods of the city."

#2 - Big deal = an important event... OR *not* an important event

This expression changes meaning depending on how you say it. Compare these two conversations:

"I'm going to be interviewed on local TV!"

"Congratulations! That's a **big deal**!"

"I'm going to be interviewed on local TV!"

"**Big deal** - I'm going to be interviewed on national TV."

In the first case, "big deal" describes an important event/accomplishment - and in the second case, "big deal" is used sarcastically to mean the opposite thing - to say that something is NOT important or impressive.

#3a - bombed = failed

#3b - the bomb = great

If you say, "That movie **bombed**" - it means the movie was a failure; it was not popular or successful. If you say, "That movie was **the bomb**!" - it means the movie was fantastic!

#4 - **bogus** = fake, not valid

Sometimes, teenagers try to buy alcohol using a "**bogus** ID" - a fake document that shows that they are over 21 years old, although they're not.

#5 - **buddies/pals/the crew** = friends

You can say, "I went surfing with a bunch of my **buddies**," or "Bob and I became **pals** after we did some volunteer work together."

"**The crew**" is often used to refer to friends that are part of a specific group: for example, if you are part of a basketball team, you can say, "I went out with **the basketball crew**." Some people also use "the crew" to refer to their general group of friends who spend time together frequently.

#6 - **bummer** = something unfortunate

This word is used to say "that's too bad" or "that's unlucky/unfortunate," for example:

"I won't be able to meet you guys at the bar. My boss has asked me to work until 8."

"Bummer."

Other variations of the phrase are "That's a real bummer" or "That's such a bummer." We usually use this for small or common things, not major tragedies:

"I was just diagnosed with cancer."

Don't say: "Bummer" (it sounds insensitive)

#7 - **dude** = man

"**Dude**" is a generic word for "man" (it can't be used for a woman) - often when we don't know who the person is, or when talking about men in general. For example:

- "Some **dude** at the party drank too much and got taken to the hospital."
(*I don't know the man*)
- "My sister always dates athletic **dudes**."
(*athletic men in general*)

#8 - **busted** = discovered doing something wrong/illegal

If a man is in bed with a woman who is not his wife, and then the wife comes home and discovers them, we say he was "**busted!**"

"Busted" can also be used for illegal activities: "The pastor was **busted** stealing money from his church."

Or any activity that you're not supposed to be doing: "My boss walked into my office while I was on Facebook. **I was busted!**"

#9 - **trashed/hammered/wasted** = drunk with alcohol

There are a number of ways to say someone is drunk, but these are three of the most common. The word "**wasted**" can also be used to describe someone under the influence of illegal drugs.

In the case of drugs, we also have two other words - a person is "**high**" if they have taken a drug that makes them feel happy or excited, and they are "**stoned**" if they have taken a drug that makes them feel relaxed.

#10 - **a hang-up** = an excessive preoccupation or obsession about some detail

If your roommate is obsessive about keeping all his DVDs in alphabetical order, you could say he "has a real **hang-up** about it."

Another situation is if your boss insists that all attachments e-mailed to him be in PDF format, not Word format, then he definitely "has a **hang-up** about file formats."

Although a hang-up can be a small and relatively unimportant detail, as in these examples, the word can also refer to a genuine psychological obstacle that makes life difficult in some way: "People have a lot of **hang-ups** about failure - a lot of us are so afraid to fail that we won't even try."

#11 - **mooch/freeload** = take advantage of the generosity of other people to get something for free

Imagine you have a friend who always eats some of your food in the restaurant, but never helps pay the bill; he always asks for rides because he doesn't have a car, and he lives with his parents but doesn't contribute to the household expenses.

We call this person "**a mooch**" or "**a freeloader**," or we say he's "**mooching** off his parents and friends." It's not a compliment!

#12 - **hassle (n.) = an annoying difficulty**

hassle (v.) = to bother or annoy someone

You can describe any complicated or bureaucratic procedure by saying "**it's such a hassle**" - because not only is it difficult, but it's also annoying.

This word is also used as a verb - for example, men sometimes "**hassle**" women on the street by making comments about their bodies; children often "**hassle**" their parents when the parents are trying to concentrate on something else.

#13 - **yeah, right = I don't believe you**

This expression, like the second meaning of "big deal," is a sarcastic one. It's used to say you don't believe what the other person said; you don't think it is true or probable. For example:

"I'm in *way* better shape than you!"

"**Yeah, right!** You can barely walk up the stairs without getting tired!"

"Maybe we'll get a raise this year."

"**Yeah, right!** The owners of the company want to keep all the profits for themselves."

#14 - **cool = great, popular, fashionable**

"**Cool**" is similar to "awesome," although not quite as strong. You can use it to describe objects, experiences, and also people. If you describe someone as "**cool**," it generally means the person is relaxed and popular.

#15 - **cheesy/corny = something that is ridiculous, unpopular, or stupid**

Cheesy and **corny** are the opposite of cool. They describe something that is ridiculous and terribly unfashionable; people would be embarrassed about it.

You can say a movie was "**cheesy**" if it had a typical and predictable story, that didn't seem realistic, interesting, or imaginative.

There are hundreds of slang words in English - and they're changing all the time. Every year, new slang words become popular and old expressions stop being used.

If you're watching a movie or TV show and you're having trouble with the slang, try to understand the word or expression from its **context**.

For example, if a man is looking at a beautiful woman, and says, "She's so hot!" then you can guess that "hot" in this case is a slang word for beautiful/sexy.

You've finished Lesson 44! There's no quiz or speaking task for today, but here are some resources for further study of slang:

- <http://onlineslangdictionary.com/>
- <http://www.urbandictionary.com/>
- <http://www.idiomquest.com/idioms/>