

= Grill (jewelry) =

In hip hop culture , a grill (most commonly spelled as grillz also fronts or golds) is a type of jewelry worn over the teeth . Grills are made of metal and are generally removable . They began to be worn by hip hop artists in the early 1980s , and upgraded during the 90s in Oakland , but they became more widely popular during the mid @-@ 2000s due to the rise of Southern hip hop rap and the more mainstream pop culture status hip hop attained . Though grills are fitted to the tooth impression of the wearer , whether they are safe for long @-@ term wear is unknown .

= = Characteristics and wearer demographics = =

Grills are made of several types of metal (often silver , gold or platinum) that are sometimes inlaid with precious stones ; they are generally removable , though some may be permanently attached to the teeth . Gold grills can be made from 10 karat , up to 24 karat gold . The gold can be tinted yellow , white and rose color .

Grills can cost anywhere from one hundred dollars to thousands of dollars , depending on the materials used and the number of teeth covered .

As of 2006 , grills were most often worn by 18- to 35 @-@ year @-@ old African American male hip @-@ hop listeners , and one commentator argued that grills will never become mainstream . However , grills received mainstream attention , including on network television , when , during the 2012 Summer Olympics , Olympic swimmer Ryan Lochte posed with a grill that sported stones in the design of an American flag ; he had previously worn diamond grills after earlier competitions .

= = History = =

The insertion of gems into teeth has long predated hip hop culture , with rich Mayans drilling pieces of jade into their teeth . Hip hop artists began wearing grills in the early 1980s ; New Yorker Eddie Plein , owner of Eddie 's Gold Teeth , is often credited with starting the trend . Plein made gold caps for Flavor Flav , and then outfitted New York rappers including Big Daddy Kane and Kool G. Rap . He later moved to Atlanta , where he designed ever @-@ more @-@ elaborate grills for rappers like OutKast , Goodie Mob , Ludacris , and Lil Jon . Other writers have cited Slick Rick and Afrika Bambaataa as an important early contributor to the popularity of grills .

Grills remained popular in the Southern U.S. , especially in Houston or Memphis , even as they rose and fell from popularity elsewhere , and the rise of Dirty South rappers in the 2000s spurred a nationwide grill trend . During this time , grills frequently appeared in hip hop music , most notably in the 2005 number one single " Grillz , " by Nelly , Paul Wall , Big Gipp , and Ali , and in other Paul Wall songs . Wall is known for his grill business as well as his rapping ; his clients include Kanye West and Cam 'ron .

Grills maintained their popularity into the 2010s , with French grillmaker Dolly Cohen creating custom oral jewelry for Rihanna , Cara Delevingne , and Rita Ora . In 2015 , DJ Khaled created a song based around grills , " Gold Slugs " (feat . Chris Brown , August Alsina & Fetty Wap " Gold Slugs also is used as a term similar to grills with the same meaning .

= = Manufacture = =

While early grills could not be removed easily and involved reshaping the tooth itself to fit the grill , grills are today made from custom dental molds . For more expensive grills , a dentist takes a mold of the wearer 's front teeth with a quick set alginate . A tooth mold is obtained by filling the alginate negative with buff stone , then the buff stone is used to fit the grill to the unique set of teeth . However , for inexpensive novelty grills , a jeweler may make an impression by having the wearer bite into dental putty or wax softened in water , or the wearer may do this himself . Such grills may be less comfortable or dependable than grills that are professionally fitted , and in several instances jewelers manufacturing grills in this manner have been charged with practicing dentistry without a

license .

= = Criticism and health hazards = =

According to the American Dental Association in June 2006 , no studies have shown whether the long @-@ term wearing of grills is safe . If the grills fit properly and are worn only intermittently , wearers are at a low risk for dental problems , according to the ADA . The ADA has warned , however , that grills made from base metals could cause irritation or allergic reactions , and that bacteria trapped under a grill worn on a long @-@ term basis could result in gum disease , cavities , or even bone loss . School districts in Alabama , Georgia , and Texas have banned grills for reasons both disciplinary and health @-@ related .

Just as other hip hop fashions have been criticized , grills have been denounced by some commentators as expensive , ostentatious , and superficial displays that strain the finances of poor youth .