

American Expressions, Idioms and Slang

Awesome: amazing, fantastic

Barbecue (Bar-B-Que/BBQ): an outdoor party that features meat with sauce cooked over an open fire

Beat: very tired

Beat around the bush: to be evasive; not to speak openly about something

Big deal: sarcastic term to play down or belittle what someone has done

Biggie: something that is very important

Blow it: to do badly, e.g., "I really blew that exam."

Bogus: inferior quality; phony

Boonies: the countryside, far from the city

Bounce: to leave a place

Break the ice: to get acquainted, to make an awkward social situation comfortable

Broke: to be without money

Bummer: bad or sad situation; also bummed, bummed out: feeling very bad

Burbs: diminutive of suburbs, residential area outside of the city

Chill: to spend relaxed time, to "hang out" ("Come chill at my apartment.")

Chill out: to slow down, to relax

Cold feet, to have: to be nervous; to be uncertain about doing something

Come again? “Please repeat what you just said.”

Come off it: to stop what you are doing or saying

Cool: (adj.) term denoting approval for something or someone

Cool it: to slow down; to relax

Cop out: (v.) to quit; deny responsibility for; (n.) an excuse
Couch potato: person who spends all leisure time watching television

Cram: to study frantically just before a test; also eat a lot, to stuff yourself

Crash: to sleep or stay temporarily at someone’s place; also to go to a party uninvited

Cut it out, knock it off: a request or command to stop doing something

Date: (v.) to go out with another person; (n.) the person with whom you go

Down to earth: practical, straightforward; simple and honest

Drag: (n.) boring or unpleasant thing, (adj.) not much fun

Drive a hard bargain: to hold out for the best terms in a trade

Drop in, drop by: to visit unexpectedly

Drop off: to deliver to designated location

Drop out: (n.) someone who didn’t graduate from school; (v.) to quit before completing a goal

Dutch treat, go Dutch: each person pays for his/her own food or entertainment

Fat chance: very little chance

Fed up: sick of; disgusted with or tired of something

Fishy: suspicious; “There’s something fishy about his story.”

Flunk: to fail an exam or a course

Freak, freak out: to show great emotion, positive or negative

Funky: a term denoting approval, often used to describe items of clothing or design

Get it together, get one’s act together: to get organized

Get on one’s nerves: to cause irritation.

Get with it: to conform to the situation; make the necessary adjustment; also to “get with the program”

Give me a call, call me: “Telephone me”

Go for it: to take an active part in something, try to achieve some specific goal

Greeks: members of fraternities or sororities

Gross: term denoting something crude and extremely unpleasant or disgusting

Hang out: (v.) to spend time relaxing, not working or doing anything in particular; (n.) a place in which to spend leisure time

Hang-ups: inhibitions or worries about things

Hassle: (n.) trouble, difficulty; “Catching the 7 a.m. bus every morning is a hassle;” (v.) “Don’t hassle me”

Have it in for someone: to have a deliberate intention to cause trouble for another

Have it made: to be assured of success

Put one's foot in one's mouth: to say something for which you are embarrassed

Hit it off: become friends

In a bad way: the situation is getting very bad

In a big way: very much, a term to show emphasis as in, "he was hurting in a big way"

In your dreams: not possible; "It'll never happen"

Keep in touch: to phone or write occasionally

Keep your fingers crossed: a good luck gesture or expression

Know one's stuff: to be knowledgeable in a certain subject

Lay off: to stop bothering or nagging

Had it: to reach a limit of tolerance; "I've had it!"

Hang around: to wait, doing nothing in particular

Hang in there: "Don't give up"; "Keep trying"

Hang on: in reference to the telephone, "Do not hang up the receiver. I'll be back"; also "Keep trying"

Make ends meet: to budget within one's income

Mess around: to play, relax

No way: a response to a suggestion of something that is wrong or that one does not wish to do

Off the wall: crazy

On me: “I’ll pay,” also, “I’ll pick up the tab [pay]”

Out of it: not adjusted to the rest of the group, not fitting in; dazed

Out of sight: exclamation of approval

Peeved: irritated; disgusted

Piece of cake: easy

Pot luck: dinner where each person brings something to eat

Psyched: mentally prepared

Pull an all-nighter: stay up all night studying

Pull strings: to use personal influence to achieve an objective

Rain check: a deferred acceptance of an invitation with a promise to accept at a later date; “I can’t make it this Sunday but I’ll take a rain check.”

Ripped off: to be cheated of money

Uptight: nervous

What’s up? “What is new?” “What is happening?” Often used as a greeting in very informal settings