

ENGLISH

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MATTERS



DODATEK

ENGLISH MATTERS

You know how it is. You've spent your entire life leafing through English grammar textbooks, doing homework, passing tests, learning key vocabulary and practising conversations with family, friends and colleagues. You truly feel like you've got a firm grip on the King's English, so you've booked a ticket to London or New York, breezed through passport control and hailed a taxi.

You settle into the backseat, and confidently shout out where you want to go. But then the cabbie (taxi driver) starts nattering away at you (talking non-stop) in some unusual lingo (vocabulary), and so you haven't a scooby (clue) what the dickens they're going on about (what subject they are speaking about). You nod quietly at the driver in the rear-view mirror, feeling slightly deflated: "What was the point of all of those hours spent learning English if these crazy people aren't even going to bother speaking it themselves?!".

Well, fear not, because in this special supplement we'll be taking a tour across all sorts of English slang, i.e. informal language you're more likely to hear spoken than see written down. You'll learn about Shakespearean and Dickensian slang, hear about how different cities generate their own linguistic identities, and develop a strong sense of the modern everyday slang you can expect to hear on the streets. Let's go!

to leaf through sth | kartkować coś, przeglądać
to book sth | za/rezerwować coś
to breeze through sth | przejść gładko przez coś
to hail sth | przywołać coś
confidently | z pewnością siebie
to shout out | wykrzykiwać, wykrzyknąć

to have no clue/not have a clue | nie mieć pojęcia
what the dickens | co u diaska
to nod | potakująco kiwać głową
rear-view mirror | lusterko wsteczne
deflated | sflaczały, przygnębiony
point | *tu*: sens
to bother | starać się, silić się
identity | tożsamość

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Ye Olde Slang

As anybody who has sat through a Shakespeare play, or determinedly absorbed a Dickensian novel will tell you, most of the language used in such works is archaic, and may appear to have little obvious connection to contemporary everyday English.

But look a little closer and you'll find many common slang words still very much in use which can trace their origins back to the penmanship of some of the English language's finest writers.

novel | powieść
archaic | archaiczny
obvious | oczywisty

contemporary | współczesny
penmanship | kaligrafia, *tu*: pisarstwo

■ Cold-blooded

This term has always had a literal biological meaning describing cold-blooded animals, but William Shakespeare is attributed as the first to use the phrase in its metaphorical sense, which describes somebody who is ruthless and lacks sensitivity or empathy towards others when making decisions.

“He sacked thirty people at once. He's cold-blooded”.

literal | dosłowny
ruthless | bezwzględny
to lack sth | nie posiadać czegoś

empathy | empatia
to sack sb | *pot.* wylać kogoś, zwolnić kogoś z pracy

■ Swagger, swag

In *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, Shakespeare uses the word swaggering to describe amateur actors casually engaging in a street performance. These days, the word swagger is used to describe a way in which somebody behaves that shows confidence or self-assurance. More recently, this has been modified into the word swag, which is an utterance more likely to be used by contemporary hip-hop poets than theatrical bards. Swag is something which one can possess, and has a similar meaning of having a sense of stylish self-confidence.

casually | *tu*: dorywczo
confidence | pewność siebie
self-assurance | pewność siebie
utterance | wypowiedź

■ By the book

The expression to do something ‘by the book’ is another term widely attributed to Shakespeare, and means to do something according to rules. In the play *Romeo and Juliet* the two forbidden lovers demonstrate their passions for one another by kissing, and, impressed, Juliet tells Romeo that he “kisses by the book”, i.e. divinely or by instruction of God. This phrase is still used to describe somebody following rules.

according to sth | zgodnie z czymś, według czegoś

rule | zasada, reguła

forbidden | zakazany

divinely | cudownie, bosko

■ Weapon, Thing, Manhood

Shakespeare’s works in particular are famous for their sexual slang, particularly numerous words which make reference to a – *ahem* – fundamental part of the male anatomy. You can still very much expect to hear all of the words listed above, first found in the play *Henry IV*, from lotharios and their lovers.

numerous | liczny

male | męski

lothario | rozpustnik

■ The creeps

Charles Dickens, the great Victorian author, was the first to use the phrase ‘the creeps’ to describe feelings of fear or revulsion that something or somebody might give you. Today, this term is very commonly merged into the expression ‘to give me the creeps’ to highlight how unsettled a person may feel due to a certain situation. For example, “that movie gave me the creeps” or “the way he looked at me gave me the creeps!”.

revulsion | wstręt, obrzydzenie

merged into sth | włączany w coś

to highlight sth | podkreślić coś

unsettled | niespokojny

due to sth | z powodu czegoś

■ Devil-may-care

Another fabulous Dickensian creation is the expression ‘devil-may-care’, which refers to a person who is reckless or carefree, so therefore either feels comfortable doing what they want to do without caring about the opinion of others, or is just generally a fun and free-minded person. The expression is presumed to be shorthand for ‘the devil may care, but I don’t’. Today, people are often described as having a devil-may-care attitude to life if they seem relaxed at all times.

fabulous | bajeczny

reckless | lekkomyślny, nieostrożny

carefree | bez troski

therefore | dlatego

either...or... | albo...albo...

comfortable | komfortowo

without sth | bez czegoś

free-minded | wolny od zmartwień

shorthand | skrót

attitude | postawa, nastawienie

to seem | wydawać się

Cockney Rhyming Slang

You may have heard about cockney rhyming slang during your English lessons, a type of slang using rhymes which was once extremely well-used amongst working class Londoners. Although less common now, as those working communities have dispersed, there are still some key phrases remaining in frequent use across parts of England and Australia.

working community | społeczność klasy robotniczej

to disperse | rozproszyć się

■ Have a butcher’s/Giz a butcher’s

This expression derives from the rhyme *butcher’s hook > look*, which means to have a look at something or someone and ‘giz’ is a shortened slang version of the term ‘please give to me’. If you want to ask to see somebody’s new tattoo for instance, you might say “go on, giz a butcher’s at your new tattoo!”

butcher | rzeźnik

to derive from X | pochodzić od X

■ **Barnet**

The Barnet Fair was a horse parade that once took place in the town of Barnet each September, and which via the rhyming pair *fair*>*hair* has since become a very common way in which British people refer to their hair or hairstyle. “Do you like my new barnet? I had it done this morning.”

fair | targi

via sth | po/przez coś

■ **Here comes trouble**

A rather outdated expression on the basis of its unflattering depiction of traditional familial gender roles and stereotypes, some married men will still refer to their wives as ‘trouble’. Why? *Trouble and strife* > *wife*.

trouble | kłopot/y

outdated | przestarzały

unflattering | niepochlebny

depiction of sth | odmalowanie, przedstawienie czegoś

gender | płeć

■ **It’s all gone Pete Tong!**

Despite the fact that much cockney rhyming slang is now generally perceived to be somewhat unfashionable, modern iterations of rhyming slang phrases do emerge from time-to-time. In the UK, there is a famous DJ called Pete Tong who focuses on electronic and club music. In the late 1990s, he became the subject of a popular phrase “it’s all gone Pete Tong” which is still used today when something doesn’t go as planned.

despite sth | po/mimo czegoś

perceived | postrzegany

iteration | powtórzenie

to emerge | pojawiać się

Exercise:

Fill the gaps using the ten slang phrases you've just learned.

1. Cold-blooded	A My son is very about his exams. He doesn't seem very stressed or worried at all.
2. Swag	B Uh oh! I haven't cleaned the dishes. The won't be pleased at all!
3. By the book	C 'Can you help? My phone is broken' 'Sure,, I'll see what I can do'.
4. Gives me the creeps	E Look how stylish she is. That girl has got some serious!
5. Devil-may-care	F Argh! The dogs have run in and destroyed my Lego masterpiece.
6. Giz a butcher's	G We do our taxes absolutely No funny business!
7. Barnet	H Last night, I walked home alone through the park. Just thinking about it
8. Trouble	I Her ex-husband was extremely in the divorce proceedings. He took everything!
9. It's all gone Pete Tong!	J I'm going to do something fancy with my for my best friend's wedding.

ANSWERS: 1. I, 2. E, 3. G, 4. H, 5. A, 6. C, 7. J, 8. B, 9. F

G'day mate

When discussing different versions of the English language, people tend to focus on contrasts between British and American English. But what about the Aussies (Australians)? Down under, they have a rich and varied slang all of their own. Let's have a look at some of their biggest hitters.

to focus on sth | skupiać się na czymś
hitter | *tu*: hit, przebój

■ Bogan

Bogan is generally a pejorative noun for somebody who is perceived as unsophisticated, unrefined and of low social status. It is however commonly used as a joke insult between friends: “you’ve spilt coffee down yourself, you bogan!”

pejorative | pejoratywny, o negatywnym zabarwieniu
unsophisticated | prosty, nieskomplikowany
unrefined | *tu*: bez ogłady, nieokrzesany
commonly | powszechnie
insult | obelga
to spill sth down | rozlać coś

■ Arvo

Arvo is short for the word afternoon. Australians are much more likely to ask you “what’re you up to this arvo (afternoon), fancy a barbie (barbecue)?” than to ask you using the more formal words.

■ A bikkie for brekkie?

Australians clearly enjoy shortening formal sounding words, and casualising them with slang diminutives. Would you prefer a bikkie (biscuit) for brekkie (breakfast), or would you prefer avo (avocado) and mushies (mushrooms) on toast?

to casualise sth | *tu*: upowszechniać
diminutive | zdrobienie

■ She'll be apples

Worried about something? Well, Australians will try to reassure you by saying “she’ll be apples” or “it’ll be right”, meaning ‘don’t worry, things will be alright’. Nice of them, eh?

to reassure sb | uspokoić kogoś



Exercise:**Quick Test – Match the Australian slang words to their formal counterparts**

1. Chewie or Chuddie	A – Ice pop
2. Chokkie	B – Aussie Rules Football
3. Footy	C – A sick day at work
4. Polly	D – Mosquitoes
5. Lolly	E – Politician
6. Sickie	F – Chocolate
7. Servo	G – Chewing Gum
8. Mozzies	H – Gas or service station

ANSWERS: 1. G, 2. F, 3. B, 4. E, 5. A, 6. C, 7. H, 8. D



East Coast, West Coast

One of the great things about slang is how different population centres in different geographical areas come up with and create languages all of their own. We're going to look at some of these differences by comparing the colder US east coast (New York City) with its perpetually sunny west coast counterpoint in Los Angeles, California.

to come up with sth | wymyślić coś
perpetually | ciągle
counterpoint | kontrpunkt, odpowiednik

■ Kid/Son

In New York, if somebody refers to you as kid or son, then you should be pleased as this is a term of endearment. They see you as a close friend: "Hey kid, what's going on tonight?"

endearment | czułe słowo, czułości

■ Brick

Definitely not a phrase you're likely to hear in sunny California, if somebody tells you that it's brick outside then they'll probably be advising you to dress warmly because it's cold and icy out.

definitely | zdecydowanie
to advise sb to do sth | doradzać komuś z/robienie czegoś

■ Schvitz

Nodding towards New York City's Jewish population, the word schvitz is actually derived from Yiddish but is now used ubiquitously. It means to sweat, so in the humid summer time, unfamiliar to New Yorkers emerging from the chilly winter, you might well find yourself schvitzing as you make your way to work on the packed subway.

Jewish | żydowski
actually | w rzeczywistości
ubiquitously | wszegobecnie
humid | wilgotny

unfamiliar | nieznan
emerging | wyłaniający się
subway | metro

■ Stoop

Imagine the quintessential New York City apartment block, or your typical tower block out in the Harlem projects, and you'll no doubt think of the steps that lead up to the buildings from the street. These are actually a popular place to hang out and chat with neighbours, and New Yorkers call this stepped area the stoop.

quintessential | *tu: typowy*

no doubt | bez wątplenia

to lead up to sth | prowadzić do czegoś

to hang out | spędzać czas

■ Tight

When New Yorkers say “tight”, they’re usually talking about something they think is cool. You can combine it with the adjectives mad or hella when you think something is *really* cool. “The new Jay-Z album is mad tight”, “those sneakers are hella tight”.

■ May Gray, June Gloom

In LA, a lot of the local lingo has been inspired by the close proximity of the ocean and its associated beach culture. Angelenos, people from LA, will talk about May Gray when cloudy spring days limit opportunities for sunbathing at the beach, and June Gloom if such inclement conditions persist into the following month.

proximity | bliskość

inclement | surowy, ostry

to persist into sth | utrzymać się aż do czegoś

■ Kickback

Sometimes, after a long day of surfing, the idea of having a party just seems a little too organised. Want to invite your friends for a more chilled out get-together at home? Then this is known as a kickback. What grub (food) will you serve?

to seem | wydawać się

get-together | spotkanie

■ Stoked

If somebody is stoked about something, then they are very excited about it. This word has been exported and adopted by wannabe surfer dudes and dudettes the world over: “How do you feel about your holidays bro?” “Stoked, man”.

wannabe | aspirujący

dude | pot. koleś

■ Righteous

When something is righteous, it can be thought of as a synonym for ‘excellent’. Commonly used to talk about awesome waves, the word has transcended the beach and is now used much more widely in praise of cool things.

awesome | świetny, rewelacyjny

in praise of sth | w pochwałę czegoś, ku chwale czegoś

■ Gnarly, rad

The SoCal (southern California) equivalent of NYC’s tight, gnarly and rad are both words to express that something is cool. Gnarly also has an alternative meaning based on its original 1960s definition, which described waves that were big and scary. If somebody has an injury from skating or breaks a bone playing sport, it can be described as a gnarly injury.

equivalent | odpowiednik

injury | uszkodzenie, uraz



Exercise:

Decide if you think the described term is from the northeast English city of Newcastle (Geordie dialect) or the northwest city of Liverpool (Scouse dialect)

1. “Am clammin” = I’m so hungry	Geordie or Scouse?
2. “Scran” = food	
3. “I divvina” = I don’t know	
4. “Arl fella” = father	
5. “What ye uptee the neet?” = What are you doing tonight?	
6. “In a fettle” = In a bad mood	
7. “Boss” = amazing, awesome, incredible	
8. “Canny” = nice, pleasant, enjoy- able	
9. “The bizzies” = the police	
10. “Kecks” = trousers	

ANSWERS: 1. Geordie, 2. Scouse, 3. Geordie, 4. Scouse, 5. Geordie, 6. Geordie, 7. Scouse, 8. Geordie, 9. Scouse, 10. Scouse

Trendsetters

Slang is the closest that language comes to fashion. Words come in and out of style with each generation, and the words that you used with your friends at school would probably sound corny (old) or cringe (modern) to the ear of your own teenager. Let's finish our tour by taking a look at some contemporary Gen Z slang.

teenager | nastolatek

■ To live rent free

If somebody has annoyed you or managed to bother you with their behaviour, or if you're preoccupied with something, then you can say that they/it are living rent free in your head.

to manage to do sth | poradzić sobie ze z/robieniem czegoś

to bother sb with sth | przeszkadzać komuś czymś

behaviour | zachowanie

■ Glow up

If somebody or something has had a glow up, then they/it has had a makeover or renovation. It started out being used to refer to the transformation in a girl's appearance, but it can now refer to any manner of things – bedrooms, cars, wardrobes – to have undergone aesthetic improvement.

to have a glow up | wyładnieć

appearance | wygląd

to undergo sth | przejść coś

improvement | polepszenie, ulepszenie

■ Stan

Stan is a combination of the words 'stalker' and 'fan', and refers to the idea of loving something so much that you're obsessed with it. The word does not have creepy connotations. "I stan for Beyonce"

creepy | przerażający, upiorny, straszny

■ Ghosting

This term is common during the early talking stages of a new relationship, usually via a dating app or social media platform. Ghosting someone means you start ignoring them or stop texting them back without explanation.

dating app | aplikacja randkowa

■ Lowkey

If you're a bit embarrassed or ashamed about wanting to do something, but you still want to do it anyway, you might describe yourself as lowkey wanting to do it. "I lowkey want to eat the entire box of biscuits" = "I slightly ashamedly want to eat the entire box of biscuits".

embarrassed | zakłopotany

ashamed | zawstydzony

■ Dead

If you find something so funny that it almost kills you through laughter? Well, you can simply exclaim: "OMG dead". You'll also often hear this one used by people who are too cool to *actually* laugh out loud. They'll simply respond by saying the word, but whilst not moving a single facial muscle.

facial | twarzy

■ To adult

To adult refers to having to perform tasks or responsibilities that are expected of grown-ups. Going to work, feeding oneself, doing the laundry? "OMG I don't want to adult anymore".

grown-up | dorośli, dojrzały

to feed oneself | samodzielnie się żywić

to do the laundry | robić pranie

Exercise

Match the teenage slang from previous generations to their meanings. These terms have survived into the modern day.

1. It's a drag (1960s)	A – To describe somebody who is an amateur at something, or is obviously new and still learning a basic activity.
2. The man (1970s)	B – A way of saying so what? Who cares? Why is it important?
3. Hipster (1950s)	C – To describe something which is either very boring, sad, or depressing.
4. To veg out (1980s)	D – If you want to show that you're not interested in what has to say to you, you can use this phrase.
5. Noob (1990s)	E – The essential facts, gossip or information about something.
6. Flake (1960s)	F – A word used to describe somebody who has a dream to be something they are not currently; sometimes used pejoratively.
7. Big deal! (1950s)	G – A name given to the political and cultural establishment in your country.
8. Bling (2000s)	H – This phrase allows you to express your wish to have a party, a good time; probably involving alcohol.
9. The lowdown (1970s)	I – Somebody who is unreliable as a friend.
10. Let's get crunk (2000s)	J – Somebody who is cool and fashionable in an alternative way, and keen to demonstrate this through clothing or music.
11. Wannabe (1980s)	K – To relax by doing activities that don't require too much brain power; TV, video games, etc.
12. Talk to the hand (cos the face ain't listenin)' (1990s)	L – A noun which describes glitzy jewellery, shiny objects and expensive items.

ANSWERS: 1. C, 2. G, 3. J, 4. K, 5. A, 6. I, 7. B, 8. L, 9. E, 10. H, 11. F, 12. D

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