American Slang

American Cultural Slang

(To) ace (v.) (a test, exam, etc.): To pass a test, exam, etc. really easily. ex: "Robert aced his physics exam."

All-ears: When someone says "I'm all ears", they are telling you that they are listening to you; that they are giving you their undivided attention.

All-nighter (n.): A period of work or study that lasts all night. Most often used with the verb "pull" (To pull an all-nighter) - ex: "We pulled an all-nighter in order to finish the project."

Around-the-clock: 24/7, all day and night, non-stop; ex: "The house was being watched around the clock."

B.O.: Short for "body odor" - the smell one secretes from one's armpits, especially when one doesn't shower/wash. ex: "The woman sitting beside me had really bad B.O."

Blow or Bomb: To fail or to be unsuccessful.

Blue or Have the Blues: To feel depressed or sad.

Buck: One dollar.

By the skin of your teeth: Just barely.

Cash (n.): Money. ex: "You got any cash on you?"

Catfishing (v): A deceptive activity involving a person creating a fake social media presence in order to mislead someone else.

Cheesy (adj.): Cheap, tacky. ex: "A cheesy pick-up line", "A cheesy song", etc.

Chick (n.): Young woman, girl, etc. *this term is considered derogatory (offensive) by some, so if you're not sure - don't use it.

Cool (adj.): Nice, great, impressive ex: "a cool dress", "a cool guy", "a cool bar".

Cop (n.): Police officer. ex: "My brother is a cop."

Creep (n.): An unpleasantly weird/strange person. ex: "I don't like Tom. He seems like a creep."

Couch Potato: A lazy person, one who sits on and watches TV.

Cram: To study feverishly before an exam.

Crash: To go to sleep; or to show up without invitation ex: "Can I crash here tonight?"

Dead: Empty; quiet (said about restaurants.) ex: "It's really dead in here tonight" (It's empty in here tonight/there are very few people here tonight).

Drama queen: Someone who gets overly emotional/sentimental about things. Someone who thrives on the dramatic. ex: "Betty is such a drama queen!"

Down to earth: Practical; simple.

Drive up the wall: To irritate; “He is driving me up the wall.”

Dude: young man, boy, etc. ex: “That dude and I have the same shirt.”

Dutch or go Dutch: Each person pays for his/her own meal.

Gonna: Short for "going to". ex: "I'm gonna call you tomorrow."

Gotta: Short for "have got to" or "have to". ex: "I gotta go."
**Gotcha**: Short for “I got you” meaning to understand one's point.

**Get under one's skin**: To bother.

**Give the cold shoulder**: To ignore.

**Hyped (adj.)**: Really excited. ex: "We're all hyped about the concert next weekend."

**Hang out**: To gather in a casual; and social manner.

**Hit the books**: To study.

**Hold your horses**: Be calm!

**In no time**: Very soon. ex: "Don't worry - We'll be there in no time."

**Jock**: An athlete.

**Later**: Short for "See you later."

**Lighten up (v.)**: To relax; to not take things too seriously. ex: "You gotta learn to lighten up a bit!"

**Munchies (n.pl)**: Chips and other types of junk food. ex: "I picked up some munchies on my way home from work."

**No way**: 1) Phrase used to say that something is definitely not going to happen. ex: "P1: Are you going to see her again? P2: No way!"; 2) Phrase of awe/disbelief. ex: "She gave you her phone number? No way!"

**Over**: "Over" is often used to emphasize location. ex: "I live over on Orange Street." (I live on Orange Street).

**(To) overstep (v.)**: To be out of line. To say/do something that's inappropriate to a situation. ex: "I'm sorry; I overstepped. I shouldn't have said those things to your parents."

**Once in a blue moon**: Infrequent.

**Oops**: Often said after a small mistake.

**Piece of cake**: Easy or effortless.

**Pig out**: To overeat.

**Pop quiz**: An exam that is not announced.

**Ride shotgun (v.)**: To ride in the front passenger seat of a car. ex: "I wanna ride shotgun!"

**Rip-off**: Overcharge or steal.

**R.S.V.P.**: The formal reply to an invitation, by phone, email, or mail.

**Screw up (v.)**: To make a mistake, do something badly/wrong ex: "I really screwed up my audition."

**Sweet (adj.)**: Very nice. ex: "That is a sweet car."

**Shoot the breeze**: To talk.

**Spill the beans**: To reveal a secret.

**Take off (v.)**: To leave, to get going, to be on one's way. ex: "We have to take off. See you soon!"

**That hit the spot**: (When talking about food/drinks) That was really good; That's just what I needed.

**Trash (v.)**: To destroy. "The band trashed the hotel room."

**Turn-off (n.)**: Something that makes you lose your interest. ex: "The fact that she smoked so much was a real turn-off."
24/7 (Twenty-four seven): Non-stop, around the clock. ex: "That place is open 24/7. It never closes."

Take a rain-check: To do at another time.

Watch your back: Be careful; Watch out *this is often meant as a threat or warning*

Weirdo (n.): Strange person. *fairly negative*

Wimp (n.): Weak, cowardly person.

Work up the courage (to do something): To build up enough confidence (to do something); not concrete; ex: "She finally worked up the courage to ask him out."

Wrap (something) up (v.): To finish (something); To bring something to a close. ex: "OK, let's wrap things up for today."

What's up: An informal greeting which implies “How are you? or “What are you doing?” It is not a question about things that are above you like the sky or the ceiling.


“You can say that again!”: Phrase meaning "I agree with you completely."

“You're telling me!”: Phrase meaning "I know exactly what you mean"; Similar to "Don't I know it!"; ex: "P1: My son's in Iraq. I miss him so much! P2: You're telling me! I've got two sons over there!"