Generational Slang

From Groovy to Rizz and Skibidi | Level B1 | EnglishBridges.com

Before You Read

Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. What is a slang word that you or your friends use? What does it mean?
2. Can you think of a word that your parents or grandparents say but you never use?
3. How might slang differ by age, country, or online community?

Reading: Generational Slang

At a family dinner, a teenager says that the soup is "bussin" tonight. Her grandfather says that good things used to be "groovy" in his day. Her mother laughs, because she used to say "rad" as a teenager. They all mean the same thing: this is good. Every **generation**, a group of people born around the same time, has its own **slang**. Slang is **informal** language that people use with friends.

Baby Boomers, born from about 1946 to 1964, used to say "groovy" and "far out." For them, a "bummer" was a **disappointment**. Generation X, born from about 1965 to 1980, said "rad" for great. Millennials, born from about 1981 to 1996, gave the world "YOLO" and "FOMO" in the 2000s and 2010s. Gen Z, born from about 1997 to 2012, says "no cap" when they tell the truth. A person with "rizz" has **charm**. Gen Alpha, born since about 2010, have **puzzled** many adults with words like "skibidi" and "6-7" in recent years. Oxford chose "rizz" as its Word of the Year for 2023. An online dictionary chose "6-7" for 2025.

There is a clear **pattern**. Every generation needs a word for "excellent," like groovy, rad, or bussin. Every generation needs a word for "not good enough," like lame, basic, or mid. Slang helps young people **belong** to a group, and it keeps **outsiders**, like parents, out. So a word often begins to **fade** when adults start using it. Yet a few words **survive**. "Cool" became popular among jazz musicians in the 1940s, and people of almost every age still use it.

Many words called Gen Z slang are older than Gen Z. "Cap," meaning a lie, and "bussin" come from African American English. The internet did not **invent** these words, but it **spread** them around the world very quickly. Slang is not only English, either. In France, young people make slang called verlan by turning words backwards, so "femme" becomes "meuf" in verlan. When some verlan words became too common, speakers **reversed** them again. Next time you see an older **relative**, ask what words they used to say at your age.

Vocabulary: Fill in the Blank

Complete each sentence with a word or phrase from the box. Use each one once.

puzzled	**charm**	**disappointment**	**invent**	**slang**	**belong**	**fade**	**relative**	**informal**	**pattern**
survive	**spread**	**reversed**	**outsiders**						

1. Teenagers often use _____ that their parents do not understand.
2. You can wear _____ clothes to the party. There is no need for a suit.
3. The film was a big _____. It was much worse than the first one.
4. The old hotel has a lot of _____, and guests love it.
5. The strange message _____ everyone in the office.
6. Look at the sales numbers and you can see a clear _____: people buy more ice cream in summer.
7. New students often worry that they will not _____ in their new class.
8. The village is friendly, but _____ can find it hard to make friends there.
9. The colors of the old photo began to _____ in the sun.
10. Only a few of the old letters _____ today. The rest were lost.
11. She wants to _____ a machine that cleans windows by itself.
12. The news _____ quickly through the school last week.
13. The teacher _____ the order of the letters, so "god" became "dog."
14. My aunt is my favorite _____. She visits us every summer.

Word Partners: Collocations and Word Families

Part A. Collocations

Match the two halves to make common phrases. Write the letter on the line.

1. the younger	_____	**a.** relative
2. a big	_____	**b.** like wildfire
3. turn on the	_____	**c.** fade
4. feel like an	_____	**d.** pattern
5. follow a	_____	**e.** outsider
6. memories begin to	_____	**f.** disappointment
7. spread	_____	**g.** generation
8. a close	_____	**h.** charm

Now choose three of the phrases and write your own sentences.

Part B. Word families

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the word in brackets.

1. Many teenagers want a sense of _____ in a group. (*belong*)
2. The telephone was an important _____. (*invent*)
3. We were very _____ when the concert was canceled. (*disappointment*)
4. Only three people lived after the crash. The _____ went to the hospital. (*survive*)
5. He is a very _____ person, and everyone likes him. (*charm*)
6. The question was _____, and nobody could answer it. (*puzzled*)

Comprehension Questions

Answer in full sentences.

1. What does the teenager mean when she says the soup is "bussin"?
2. What is a generation?
3. Name one slang word that Baby Boomers used to say and one that Generation X used to say.
4. What do Gen Z speakers mean when they say "no cap"?
5. Which slang words were chosen as Words of the Year for 2023 and 2025?
6. What pattern does the writer see in the slang of every generation? Give two examples.
7. Why does a slang word often begin to fade?
8. Where do "cap" and "bussin" come from, and what did the internet do to words like these?
9. How does verlan work? Give the example from the reading.
10. **True, False, or Not Given:** *"The word cool first became popular among jazz musicians in the 1960s."* Explain your answer using the reading.
11. **Yes, No, or Not Given:** *"The writer believes that the internet invented most Gen Z slang."* Explain your answer using the reading.
12. **Author's purpose:** Why does the writer begin with a family dinner? Is it (a) to show that people of different ages use different words for the same idea, (b) to explain how to cook soup, or (c) to prove that older people do not understand any slang?

True or False

Circle T (true) or F (false). Be ready to correct the false sentences.

1. Every generation has its own slang. **T / F**
2. Baby Boomers used to say "groovy" and "far out." **T / F**
3. Generation X was born from about 1981 to 1996. **T / F**
4. "No cap" means that someone is telling the truth. **T / F**
5. Oxford chose "6-7" as its Word of the Year for 2023. **T / F**
6. Slang helps young people belong to a group. **T / F**
7. A slang word usually becomes more popular when parents start using it. **T / F**
8. The word "cool" disappeared after the 1940s. **T / F**
9. The internet invented the word "cap." **T / F**
10. In verlan, "femme" becomes "meuf." **T / F**

Language Focus: Used To for Past Habits and States

Used to + base verb talks about a habit or a state in the past that is not true now.

Positive: *She used to say "rad."* **Negative:** *I didn't use to like coffee.* **Question:** *Did you use to play outside?*

From the reading:

"Her grandfather says that good things **used to be** "groovy" in his day."

"Next time you see an older relative, ask what words they **used to say** at your age."

Tip: After *did* or *didn't*, write *use to*, not *used to*. Do not use *used to* for one single event: say *I visited Paris in 2019*, not *I used to visit Paris in 2019*.

Part A. Sentence starters

Finish each sentence so that it is true for you.

Positive (a past habit or state)

1. When I was a child, I used to _____

2. At my old school, my friends and I used to _____
3. My family used to _____

Negative (didn't use to)

4. I didn't use to like _____
5. I didn't use to be _____

Part B. Questions

Answer each question in a full sentence. Try to answer using used to. *Then ask a partner.*

6. What games did you use to play when you were a child?
7. What words or expressions did you use to say a lot in middle school?
8. What did you use to watch on TV or online when you were ten?
9. What food did you use to hate when you were young?
10. Where did you use to go with your friends on weekends?

Discussion Questions

Discuss with a partner or in a small group. Give reasons and examples.

1. Where do you learn new slang words: from friends, social media, games, or somewhere else?
2. Which slang words used by older people in your family make you laugh?
3. Do words that younger people use ever confuse you? Give an example.
4. Do you use English slang when you speak your first language? Which words?
5. Is there a slang word you used to say a lot but have stopped using? Why did you stop?
6. How do you feel when a parent or teacher uses your slang?
7. Why do companies sometimes use young people's slang in advertisements? Does it work?
8. Should slang be allowed in school essays or work emails? Why or why not?
9. Should English classes teach slang? What are the benefits and the risks?
10. Many words called Gen Z slang came from African American English. Why is it useful to know where words come from?
11. Does social media make slang change faster than in the past? Why?
12. Is slang a sign that a language is healthy, or a sign that it is getting worse? Explain your view.
13. Which slang words from today will still be used in 50 years? Why those words?
14. Do labels like Boomer, Millennial, and Gen Z help us understand people, or do they create stereotypes?

Online Practice

Scan the code or visit **englishbridges.com/lessons/generational-slang** for the full reading, vocabulary activities, the Speed Challenge, typing practice, and AI conversation prompts.