

Slang of the 1920's

The 1920's were fertile years for language in America; dozens of new slang words and expressions sprang into existence.

Your task is to write a letter to a friend from the point of view of a teenager from the 1920s, using at least 10 slang words from the list provided – please underline each slang word. You should write about one of the four changes we discussed during the 1920s – the onset of Prohibition, the changing role of women, the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance, or the newest transportation methods. Feel free to add in elements of your 'daily life' – talking about school, cars, love interests, fashion, etc.

Applesauce	A term of derogation; nonsense; same as baloney, bunk, banana oil, hokum, or horsefeathers
Baloney	Nonsense; something not to be believed
Banana oil	Nonsense; something not to be believed
Bee's knees	A superb or awesome person/thing
Belly laugh	A loud, uninhibited laugh
Berries	Anything wonderful; similar to bee's knees
Bible belt	An area in the South or south Midwest where Fundamentalist religion prevails
Big cheese	An important person
Blind date	A date with an unknown person you've never met, usually arranged by a mutual friend
Bronx cheer	A loud derisive noise from an audience (coined by the humorist Bugs Baer, who credited Bronx rooters at athletic events with inventing the loud crowd cheer)

Bull session	An informal group talk or discussion
Bump off	To murder
Bunk	Nonsense (a shortened form of "bunkum", which is also spelled "buncombe", from the name of a North Carolina county whose representative in Congress in 1820 explained the irrelevance of a speech he was making by saying that he was "talking to Buncombe")
Cake-eater	A ladies' man
Carry a torch	To suffer from unrequited (unreturned) love
Cat's meow	Anything wonderful, similar to bee's knees
Cheaters	Eyeglasses, often used primarily for reading
Copacetic	All good; things being as they should be
Crush	An romantic infatuation with a person
Darb	An excellent person or thing
Dogs	Human feet
Drugstore cowboy	A fashionably dressed loiterer who hangs around public places trying to pick up girls
Dumb Dora	A stupid girl
Fall guy	A scapegoat; someone who takes the blame
Flapper	A typical young girl of the '20s, usually with bobbed haircut, short skirts, and rolled stockings
Flat tire	A dull, boring person
Frame	To cause a person's arrest by giving false evidence to convict them
Gams	Girls' legs
Gatecrasher	A person who attends a party without an invitation, or a show without paying admission
Giggle water	An alcoholic drink
Gin mill	A speakeasy; a place to illegally buy and consume alcohol
Gold digger	A woman who uses feminine charm to get money from a man

Goofy	Silly
Gyp	To cheap someone out of something (short for Gypsy, a person who at the time was thought of as cheap or thieving)
Hard-boiled	Tough; without feeling or sentiment
Heebie-jeebie	The jitters, the creeps
Hep	Wise
High-hat	To snub someone
Hokum	Nonsense; something not to be believed
Hooch	Bootleg liquor (from Hoochinoo, a tribe of Alaskan Indians who made strong distilled liquor)
Hooper	Chorus girl
Horsefeathers	Nonsense; something not to be believed
Hotsy-totsy	Pleasing
Jake	Okay (most commonly used in the phrase "everything's jake")
Jalopy	An old, busted-up car
Keen	Attractive, appealing
Kiddo	A familiar form of address to another person
Kisser	The mouth
Line	Insincere flattery
Lounge lizard	A ladies' man
Lousy	Bad, contemptible
Main drag	The most important street in a town or city
Neck	To snuggle, kiss, or caress intimately
Nerts	An interjection showing disgust or annoyance
Ossified	Drunk
Peppy	Full of vitality
Pet	To snuggle, kiss, or caress intimately
Pinch	To arrest someone
Pushover	A person or thing easily overpowered or overcome
Raspberry	A loud derisive noise from an audience

Ritz	Elegant (from the very expensive and lavish hotel chain the "Ritz", originally in Paris)
The Real McCoy	A genuine person or thing (derivation is disputed, comes from either a Scottish clan leader named MacKay; a boxer named Kid McCoy who had a rival with the same name, or a bootlegger names McCoy who did not water down his liquor like most did)
Run-around	Deceptive or delaying in action, especially in response to a request
Scram	To leave hurriedly (from "scramble")
Screwy	Crazy; eccentric
Sex appeal	Physical attractiveness
Sheba	A young woman who is very attractive
Sheik	A young man who is very attractive
Smeller	The nose
Sob sister	A woman reporter who leans toward sentimentality in the discussion of her subject matter
Speakeasy	A saloon or bar selling bootleg alcohol illegally
Spifflicated	Drunk
Spiffy	Having an elegantly fashionable appearance
Struggle buggy	A car, particularly used by boys when trying to seduce girls
Stuck on	Having a crush on
Swanky	Elegant, fancy
Swell	Excellent
Torpedo	A hired gunman
Upchuck	To vomit, particularly from excessive alcohol
Whoopee	Boisterous, convivial fun, sometimes referring to fun had while being with a romantic partner