

Slang is very informal language which is often used by young people. It's hard to keep up to date with slang, but this article will help you learn a few words that your teacher may not know!

Language changes all the time. New words and phrases appear and evolve. The words and pronunciations used by young people in the UK can be very different to those used by adults. Living in a multicultural society has an effect on language, especially on young people, whose friends are often from a mix of backgrounds. Television and music also have a big impact on the language of the young. Often UK singers sing in American accents without realising.

Young British people use lots of language that you usually can't find in most dictionaries. These extremely informal words and expressions are known as 'slang'. It is not possible to make a complete list of modern British slang: by the time the list was finished, it would be out of date! New words come and go like fashions. However, here are a few examples:

- **Safe, sorted, sound, cool** or **wicked** all mean *That's good* or *I understand*.
- Instead of using different tag questions like *isn't it?*, *can't you?* or *don't they?*, people use **innit** (e.g. 'It's hot here, innit!', 'He can dance really well, innit!' or 'They always say that, innit?').
- Instead of saying *very*, *really* or *completely*, you can use **well** (e.g. 'I'm well tired' or 'You got it well wrong!').
- **Whatever** means *I don't care* (e.g. A: 'But the teacher says we can't leave until we've finished.' B: 'Whatever. I'm going!').
- 'He's **fine**' or 'She's **fit**' both mean *good-looking*. These words can describe a boy or a girl.
- A **hoodie** is a young person who wears a jacket with a hood (a hood keeps your head dry in rainy Britain!). It is a negative word and suggests that the young person might be a troublemaker or even a criminal.

However, not everybody uses slang and not everybody likes it. A school in Sheffield, in the north of England, recently instructed its pupils to stop using slang words such as **hiya** (*hello*), **cheers** and **ta** (both mean *thank you*). The head teacher says that if young people learn to speak 'correctly', it will help them get a place at university and a good job.

When British people use language like this, it's no surprise that some students say they can't understand native speakers. But perhaps learners don't need to worry about communicating with native speakers so much. Research shows that most of the English spoken in the world today is spoken between non-native speakers of the language. In fact, when we think about 'International English', there is no such thing as a native or non-native speaker.

So, how important is it to understand these slang words and expressions? If you watch films or television programmes in English, read magazines in English, chat online in English or are interested in English song lyrics then understanding slang can be very useful. You probably won't see much slang in your English exam though.