

## 20 Essential American Slang Words for English Learners and ESL Students

**Awesome** (adj) is such a popular slang word in English all over the world and you'll hear everyone from the young to old saying it. When you use the word *awesome*, you're expressing that you think something is wonderful or amazing. It can be used in a sentence or it could be used in a one word reply.

### Example 1)

*"What did you think of Wolf on Wall Street?"*

*"It was **awesome!** I loved it!"* (They thought it was a great movie).

### Example 2)

*"I'll pick you up at 1 pm, okay?"*

*"**Awsome.**"* (Here it shows you're cool with the idea and you agree).

### Example 3)

*"My friend Dave is an **awesome** single guy. You guys would be perfect for each other!"*

*"Really? I'd love to meet him."*

**Cool** (adj) like *awesome* means 'great' or 'fantastic'. It also shows that you're okay with an idea. Be careful the normal meaning of *cool* means a little cold so you have to listen to it in context to understand what's being said.

### Example 1)

*"How's the weather in Canada these days?"*

*"It's getting **cooler**. Winter's coming!"* (This is the **literal meaning** a little cold)

### Example 2)

*"What did you think of my new boyfriend?"*

*"I liked him. He seemed like a **cool** guy!"* (He seemed like a nice guy).

### Example 3)

*"I'm throwing a party next week for my birthday. Do you want to come?"*

*Cool! Sure, I'd love to!"*

**To be beat (adj)** In normal terms 'beat' would be used meaning 'to win' *Manchester United beat Liverpool*, or 'to hit' *Marko, stop beating your brother*, however, in slang or everyday English it means something completely different. If you hear your friend saying *I'm beat*, it means he or she is very tired or exhausted.

### Example 1)

*"Do you want to go out tonight? There's a cool new rock bar that's just opened."*

*"Sorry, I can't. I'm beat and I have to wake up early tomorrow."*

### Example 2)

*"You look beat, what have you been doing?"*

*"I've been helping my dad in the yard all morning."*

**To hang out (verb)** If someone asks you where you usually *hang out*, they want to know in which place you prefer to be when you have free time. And if your friend asks you if you want to *hang out* with them, they're asking you if you're free and want to spend some time together. And what about if you ask your friend what they're doing and they just answer *hanging out*? It means that they are free and not doing anything special.

### Example 1)

*"Hey, it's great to see you again."*

*"And you. We must hang out sometime."*

*"I would love that. I'll call you soon."*

### Example 2)

*"Paulo, where do you usually hang out on a Friday night?"*

*"If I'm not working, usually at the diner across the road from school."*

*"Cool, I've been there a few times."*

### Example 3)

*"Hi Simon, what are you doing?"*

*"Nothing much, just hanging out with Sally."* (In this case you can just use the word *hanging* without the *out* and say *"Nothing much, just hanging with Sally."*)

And if it's used as a noun? It refers to the place where you spend your free time.

#### Example 4)

*"Joey, where are you, guys."*

*"We're at our usual **hang out**. Come down whenever you want!"* (It could mean their favorite café, the gym or even the park).

**To Chill Out (verb)** Everybody loves to *chill out* but what does it mean? It simply means to relax. Usually it can be used with

or without the word 'out' and if you're speaking with a native English speaker they'll definitely understand.

#### Example 1)

*"Hey Tommy, what are you guys doing?"*

*"We're just **chilling (out)**. Do you want to come round?"*

#### Example 2)

*"Sue, what did you do in the weekend?"*

*"Nothing much. We just **chilled (out)**."*

But if someone tells you need to *chill out* it's not as positive. It means that they think you're overreacting to a situation or getting stressed about silly little things.

#### Example 3)

*"I can't believe that test we just had. I'm sure I'm going to fail."*

*"You need to **chill out** and stop thinking too much. I'm sure you'll be fine."*

**Wheels (noun)** We know there are many things that have wheels – a car, a motorbike, a bike and even wheelbarrow but when somebody refers to their *wheels* they are talking about their car.

#### Example 1)

*"Hey, can you pick me up at 3?"*

*"Sorry, I can't. I don't have my **wheels** at the moment?"*

Why?”

“I had to take it down to the garage, there’s something wrong with the engine!”

### Example 2)

“Nice *wheels!*”

“Thanks, it was a birthday present from my dad!”

**To be amped (adjective)** If you’re *amped* about something, you’re super excited or you can’t wait for something to happen.

### Example 1)

“I can’t wait to see Beyonce live!”

“Me too, I’m *amped.*”

It can also mean you’re really determined and you want something to happen. With this meaning you can also replace *amped* with *pumped*. In other words you’re full of adrenalin!

### Example 2)

“I’m so *amped* for the game tonight!”

“Yeah, I’m sure you are! You guys need to beat the Sox.”

**Babe (noun)** If you refer to someone as a *babe*, it means that you think they’re hot and attractive. Be careful though, you should only use this when speaking to another person and not the *babe* because they may get offended.

### Example 1)

“What do you think of James’ new girlfriend?”

“Total *babe!* And you?”

“Agreed!”

### Example 2)

“Oh man, Justin Timberlake is such a *babe*, don’t you think?”

“Not really, he looks like a little boy. I prefer Jonny Depp – now that’s a real man!”

**Busted (adjective/verb)** If you *bust* someone, you've caught them doing something they shouldn't be doing/saying/hiding. The police *bust* people every day translates to they catch all the bad guys and charge them or put them in prison.

### Example 1)

"Did you hear that Sam got **busted** speeding?"

"No, but I'm not surprised. I'm always telling him he needs to drive slower!"

### Example 2)

"There were two kids who were **busted** cheating in their exams!"

"Really? What happened?"

"I'm not sure, but they'll definitely be punished. Our school takes cheating really seriously."

**To have a blast (verb)** The normal definition of the word *blast* refers to a big explosion and it's a phrase that we could often see or hear in the news for example *Two men have been seriously injured and taken to hospital from a suspected bomb blast*. But if you use this among your friends, it's a lot more positive and means that something is great or you had an amazing and fun time.

### Example 1)

"How was the Jack Johnson concert?"

"It was awesome. Everyone **had a blast**."

"Even John?"

"Yeah even John. He was even dancing!"

"Wow, it must've been good!"

### Example 2)

"Thanks for inviting me to your party last night, I **had a blast**."

"Thanks for coming and I'm glad you enjoyed it."

**To have a crush (on somebody) (verb)** To have a crush on somebody is a great feeling and it means that you're attracted to somebody and would like them to be more than just your friend. And if somebody has a crush on you, well it's the same – they like you in a more intimate way.

## Example 1)

*"I have the biggest **crush** on Simon. He's so cute!"*

*"Isn't he dating Jenny Parkes?"*

*"No, not anymore, apparently they broke up a few weeks ago!"*

*"Cool!"*

Instead of saying *have a crush* you can also just say *crushing on* – it means the same thing but it's usually used among the younger generation and teenagers.

## Example 2)

*"Oooh, you're so **crushing on** Michael right now!"*

*"I am not! We're just friends!"*

*"Liar! I can tell you like him."*

*"Is it that obvious?"*

**To dump somebody (verb)** If you dump somebody, you're probably going to break their heart. If you dump your boyfriend or girlfriend it means you stop having a romantic relationship with them for some reason. And if you're dumped, it means that somebody doesn't want to date you anymore – don't worry, there are plenty more fish in the sea! (There are many more great single people out there to date).

## Example 1)

*"What's wrong with Amy? She's been walking around the campus all day looking sad and like she's going to start crying anymore."*

*"Didn't you hear? Alex **dumped** her last night! Just don't mention his name at all!"*

*"Wow, I'm surprised. They always looked so happy together!"*

## Example 2)

*"Landon looks so mad! What happened?"*

*"He and Samantha broke up."*

*"Oh no, who **dumped** who?"*

*"I'm not sure, but I have a feeling it was Sam!"*

**Ex (noun)** Usually if you hear to a friend referring to their *ex*, they're referring to their old boyfriend or girlfriend who they no longer date. But if you put it with another noun for example 'boss' *ex-boss* it means your boss from before. *I met my ex-boss in the supermarket the other day and he asked me to come back and work for him. I'm not going to now I've found this awesome new job.*

### Example 1)

*"Who was that guy you were talking to before?"*

*"Oh Cam? He's my ex!"*

*"And you're still friends?"*

*"Kind of, we only broke up because he moved to LA."*

### Example 2)

*"My ex always sends me messages on Facebook. I wish she'd stop, it's really annoying!"*

*"Tell her, or just delete as your friend!"*

**Geek (noun)** Depending on how you use this word will depend on whether you're being nice or not! If you refer to a person as a *geek* it's referring to a person in a negative critical way because they like to study too much or spend too much time on the computer and not socialize. But if you call your friend a *geek* it could be in a fun more playful way.

### Example 1)

*"What do think of the new girl Amanda?"*

*"Not much, she seems like a geek. She spends all her time in the library!"*

*"Maybe because she feels lonely. She's new!"* (Mean and negative meaning).

### Example 2)

*"Let's go Ted's house party tonight! Everyone's going to be there!"*

*"I wish I could, but I have to study for my finals!"*

*"Ah, man, you're such a geek!"*

*"I know. But if I don't pass Coach Jones is going to kick me off the team!"* (Fun and more playful meaning).

**To be hooked on something (verb)** If you're *hooked on something* or just *hooked*, it means that you're addicted to something and you can't get enough. You can be *hooked on* chocolate,

basketball, a new TV show or something more dangerous like smoking (which is not cool by the way!)

### Example 1)

*“What did you think about the new sitcom with James Franco?”*

*“Loved it. I’m **hooked** already!”*

### Example 2)

*“I miss George!”*

*“George’s your ex. You’re **hooked on** him and it’s not healthy. It’s time to move on!”*

**Looker (noun)** If somebody says that you’re a *looker*, you should definitely be flattered – they are paying you the ultimate compliment and saying that they think you’re good looking. They’ll probably never say it to your face but you could hear it from someone else.

### Example 1)

*“That Marni girl is a real **looker** don’t you think?”*

*“She’s a nice girl but not my type!”*

### Example 2)

*“Have you seen the new history professor yet?”*

*“No, but I hear he’s a real **looker!**”*

*“You hear right. He is!”*

**To be in (adjective)** You probably already know the meaning of *in* as a preposition. It’s one of the first things you probably learned in your English class e.g. *the boy’s in the house, my pencil is in my pencil case*. But it can be used to mean something completely different – it means to be in fashion or trending at the moment. Things that are *in* at the moment may not be *in* in a month – why? Because trends always change!

### Example 1)

*“Jordan, why do you keep listening to that music? It’s awful!”*

*“Mom, you don’t know anything. It’s the **in thing** now!”*

### Example 2)

*“So, what’s **in** at the moment?”*

*“Seriously Dad?”*

*“Yeah, come on I wanna know what’s cool and what’s not!”*

**To be sick (adjective)** Cough cough sneeze sneeze...no not this kind of sick. If your buddy says that the party was *sick* he’s saying he thought it was really cool, awesome or the best. In this case it has a similar meaning to the word *awesome*, however, you probably will only hear teenagers and college students saying this – oh and maybe those Californian surfers!

**Example 1)**

*“When are you going to Hawaii?”*

*“Next week! Have you been?”*

*“Yeah, a few times, it’s **sick!**”*

**Example 2)**

*“You missed a **sick** party last night!”*

*“Oh, man, I knew I should have gone!”*

**Epic Fail (noun)** The word *epic* means ‘huge’ and you know what the word ‘fail’ already means. Put the two words together and that’s what it is – a ‘big failure’ or ‘complete disaster/failure’. You’d used this noun when something hasn’t gone the right way as expected and it’s used to exaggerate the idea of failing or doing something wrong.

**Example 1)**

*“The school basketball team lost the game by 30 points, can you believe it?”*

*“Yeah, **epic fail!**”*

**Example 2)**

*“Did you get your test marks back?”*

*“Yeah, it was an **epic fail** and I have to redo the classes again next semester!”*

*“Oh too bad, I’m sorry!”*

**To be ripped (adjective).** In normal everyday English *ripped* means ‘torn’ – you can rip your jeans or a piece of paper, but... ..in slang it’s got nothing to do with that. If a person is *ripped* (usually men/guys, but not always) means they have great muscles and bodies – probably because they work out a lot the gym or are into sport.

**Example 1)**

*“Dude, you’re so **ripped!** What’s your secret?”*

*“Gym two hours a day!”*

**Example 2)**

*“Have you seen Martin lately?”*

*“No, why?”*

*“He’s done something to himself! He totally **ripped!**”*

*“What? No way! He used to be so overweight!”*

**Dunno (verb)** Simply speaking, *dunno* means ‘I don’t know’. It’s a quicker and lazier way of saying it and it’s very popular among young people. However, do be careful who you say this to – if you say it to someone in a higher position than you it could come across as rude. So to play it safe just use it around people your own age or younger.

**Example 1)**

*“Where’s Jane? She’s supposed to be here by now.”*

*“**Dunno**, she’s always late!”*

**Example 2)**

*“What are you doing for Spring Break?”*

*“**Dunno**, I was thinking Mexico again. You?”*

*“**Dunno** yet!”*

**Loser (noun)** In a game we have winners and we have losers, but if your friend says a person is a *loser*, it doesn’t mean they lost a game or a competition it means that they don’t like him or her because of their actions and behavior.

**Example 1)**

*“Ray is such a **loser** for breaking up with Rebecca.”*

*“Yeah, I know, he’s never going to find a girl as good as her!”*

**Example 2)**

*“Victor’s turning into a real **loser** these days.”*

*“Why?”*

*"I dunno but he's turned really arrogant since he's gone to college!"*

**Rip off (noun) To be ripped off (verb)** If you find a simple t-shirt and the price tag says \$80 on it, you'd be shocked, right? That t-shirt is a *complete rip off* which means that it is way too expensive for what it is. And if a person *rips you off* they're cheating you out of money and charging you a lot more than you should be paying for example: *tourists often get ripped off by locals because the locals want to make money and the tourists have no idea.*

**Example 1)**

*"I'm not going to the J-Lo concert anymore."*

*"Why not?"*

*"The tickets are way too expensive. They're \$250 each."*

*"Oooh, that's such a **rip off!** Who can afford that these days?"*

**Example 2)**

*"How much did you buy your wheels for bro?"*

*"\$2000!"*

*"Dude, you were so **ripped off.** This car's worth only half of that!"*

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