

1920's Slang Dictionary

A

Alderman: A man's pot-belly.
Ameche: Telephone
Ankle: (n) Woman; (v) To walk

B

Babe: Woman
Baby: A person, can be said to either a man or a woman
Bangtails: Racehorses
Barber: Talk
Be on the nut: To be broke
Bean-shooter: Gun
Beef: Problem
Bee's Knees: An extraordinary person, thing or idea.
Beezer: Nose
Behind the eight ball: In a difficult position, in a tight spot
Bent Cars: Stolen cars
Big Cheese, Big Shot - The boss: Someone of importance and influence
Big House: Jail
Big One: Death
Big Sleep: Death
Bim: Woman
Bindle: the bundle in which a hobo carries all his worldly possessions
Bindle punk or bindle stiff: Chronic wanderers, migratory harvest workers, and lumber jacks.
Bing: Jailhouse talk for solitary confinement
Bird: Man
Bit: Prison sentence
Blip off: To kill
Blow: Leave
Blow one down: Kill someone
Blower: Telephone
Bluenose: A prude.
Bo: Pal, buster, fellow.
Boiler: Car
Boob: Dumb guy
Boozehound: Drunkard
Bop: To kill
Box: A safe or a bar
Box job: A safecracking
Brace (somebody): Grab, shake up
Bracelets: Handcuffs
Break it up: Stop that, quit the nonsense
Breeze: To leave, breeze off: get lost
Broad: Woman
Bruno: Tough guy, enforcer
Bucket: Car
Bulge, The: The advantage

Bulls: Plainclothes railroad cops; uniformed police; prison guards
Bum's rush, To get the: To be kicked out
Bump: Kill
Bump Gums: To talk about nothing worthwhile
Bump off: Kill; also, bump-off: a killing
Burn powder: Fire a gun
Bus: Big car
Butter and egg man: The money man, the man with the bankroll, a yokel who comes to town to blow a big wad in nightclubs
Button: Face, nose, end of jaw
Button man: Professional killer
Buttons: Police
Butts: Cigarettes
Buzz: Looks person up, comes to persons door
Buzzer: Policeman's badge

C

C: \$100, a pair of Cs = \$200
Cabbage: Money
Caboose: Jail
Call copper: Inform the police
Can: Jail, Car
Can house: Bordello
Can-opener: Safecracker who opens cheap safes
Canary: Woman singer
Carry a Torch: Suffering from an unrequited love.
Case dough: Nest egg
Cat: Man
Cat's Meow: Something splendid or stylish
Cat's Pajamas: term of endearment as in "I think you are really really cool".
Century: \$100
Cheaters: Sunglasses
Cheese it: Put things away, hide
Chew: Eat
Chicago lightning: gunfire
Chicago overcoat: Coffin
Chick: Woman
Chilled off: Killed
Chin: Conversation; **chinning:** talking
Chin music: Punch on the jaw
Chinese squeeze: Grafting by skimming profits off the top
Chippy: Woman of easy virtue
Chisel: To swindle or cheat
Chiv: Knife, "a stabbing or cutting weapon"
Chopper squad: Men with machine guns
Chump: person marked for a con or a gullible person.
Clammed: Close-mouthed (clammed up)
Clean sneak: An escape with no clues left behind
Clip joint: In some cases, a nightclub where the prices are high and the patrons are fleeced
Clipped: Shot

Close your head: Shut up
Clout: Shoplifter
Clubhouse: Police station
Con: Confidence game, swindle
Conk: Head
Cool: To knock out
Cooler: Jail
Cop: Detective, even a private one
Copped, to be: Grabbed by the cops
Copper: Policeman
Corn: Bourbon ("corn liquor")
Crab: Figure out
Crate: Car
Croak: To kill
Croaker: Doctor
Crush: An infatuation.
Crushed out: Escaped (from jail)
Cut down: Killed

D

Daisy: None too masculine
Dame: Woman
Dance: To be hanged
Dangle: Leave, get lost
Daylight, as in "fill him with daylight": Put a hole in, by shooting or stabbing
Deck, as in "deck of Luckies": Pack of cigarettes
Derrick: Shoplifter
Dib: Share (of the proceeds)
Dick: Detective (usually qualified with "private" if not a policeman)
Dingus: Thing
Dip: Pickpocket
Dip the bill: Have a drink
Dish: Pretty woman
Dive: A low-down, cheap sort of place
Dizzy with a dame, To be: To be deeply in love with a woman
Do the dance: To be hanged
Dogs: Feet
Dope fiend: Drug addict
Dope peddler: Drug dealer
Dough: Money
Drift: Go, leave
Drill: Shoot
Drop a dime: Make a phone call, sometimes meaning to the police to inform on someone
Droppers: Hired killers
Drum: Speakeasy
Dry-gulch: Knock out, hit on head after ambushing
Duck soup: Easy, a piece of cake
Dummerer: Someone who pretends to be deaf and/or dumb to appear a more deserving beggar
Dump: Roadhouse, club; or, more generally, any place
Dust out: Leave, depart

E

Egg: Man

Electric cure: Electrocuting

Elephant ears: Police

F

Fade: Go away, get lost

Fakeloo artist: Con man

Fella: a man

Fin: \$5 bill

Finder: Finger man

Finger, Put the finger on: Identify

Flaming Youth: Male counterpart to a flapper.

Flapper: A stylish, brash young woman with short skirts and shorter hair.

Flat Tire: A dull-witted or disappointing date.

Flattie: Flatfoot, cop

Flimflam: Swindle

Flippers: Hands

Flivver: A Ford automobile

Flogger: Overcoat

Flop: Go to bed or fallen through, not worked out

Flophouse: A cheap transient hotel where a lot of men sleep in large rooms

Fog: To shoot

Frail: Woman

Frau: Wife

Fry: To be electrocuted

Fuzz: police

G

Gal: Woman

Gams: A Woman's Legs

Gasper: Cigarette

Gat: Gun

Get Sore: Get mad

Getaway sticks: Legs

Giggle juice: Liquor

Giggle Water: Liquor

Gin mill: Bar

Glad rags: Fancy clothes

Glaum: Steal

Goofy: Crazy

Goog: Black eye

Goon: Thug

Gooseberry lay: Stealing clothes from a clothesline

Gowed-up: On dope, high

Grab (a little) air: Put your hands up

Graft: Con jobs or cut of the take

Grand: \$1000

Grift: Confidence game, swindle
Grifter: Con man
Grilled: Questioned
Gumshoe: Detective
Gumshoeing: Detective work
Gun for: Look for, be after
Guns: Pickpockets, Hoodlums
Guy: a man

H

Hack: Taxi
Half, a: 50 cents
Hard: Tough
Harlem Sunset: Some sort fatal injury caused by knife
Hash House: A cheap restaurant
Hatchet men: Killers, gunmen
Have the Bees: To be rich
Head doctors: Psychiatrists
Heap: Car
Heat: Police
Heater: gun
Heebie-Jeebies: The jitters.
Heeled: Carrying a gun
High-Hat: To snub.
High Pillow: Person at the top, in charge
Highbinders: Corrupt politician or functionary
Hinky: Suspicious
Hitting the pipe: Smoking opium
Hitting on all eight: In good shape, going well
Hock shop: Pawnshop
Hogs: Engines
Hombre: Man, fellow
Hooch: Liquor
Hood: Criminal
Hooper: Dancer.
Hoosgow: Jail
Horn: Telephone
Hot: Stolen
Hotsy-Totsy: Pleasing.
House dick: House/hotel detective
House peeper: House/hotel detective
Hype: Shortchange artist

I

Ice : Diamonds
Ing-bing, as in to throw an: A fit
Iron: A car

J

Jack: Money
Jalopy: An old car.
Jam: Trouble, a tight spot
Jane: A woman
Java: Coffee
Jaw: Talk
Jerking a nod: Nodding
Jingle-brained: Addled
Jobbie: Man
Joe: Coffee, as in "a cup of joe"
Johns: Police
Johnson brother: Criminal
Joint: Place, as in "my joint"
Juice: Interest on a loanshark's loan
Jug: Jail
Jump, The: A hanging

K

Kale: Money
Keen: Attractive or appealing.
Kick off: Die
Kiss: To punch
Kisser: Mouth
Kitten: Woman
Knock off: Kill

L

Lammed off: Ran away, escaped
Large: \$1,000; twenty large would be \$20,000
Law, the: The police
Lead: "fill ya full of lead": the term used for bullets
Lead poisoning: To be shot
Lettuce: Folding money
Lid: Hat
Line: Insincere flattery.
Lip: (Criminal) lawyer
Looker: Pretty woman
Look-out: Outside man
Lousy with: To have lots of

M

Mac: a man
Made: Recognized
Map: Face
Marbles: Pearls
Mark: Sucker, victim of swindle or fixed game
Maroon: person marked for a con or a gullible person.

Meat wagon: Ambulance
Mickey Finn: A drink drugged with knock-out drops
Mill: Typewriter
Mitt: Hand
Mob: Gang (not necessarily Mafia)
Mohaska: Gun
Moll: Girlfriend
Monicker: Name
Mouthpiece: Lawyer
Mugs: Men (especially refers to dumb ones)

N

Nailed: Caught by the police
Nevada gas: Cyanide
Newshawk: Reporter
Newsie: Newspaper vendor
Nibble one: To have a drink
Nicked: Stole
Nippers: Handcuffs
Noodle: Head
Number: A person

O

Off the track, said about a person who becomes insanely violent
Op: Detective
Orphan paper: Bad checks
Out on the roof: To drink a lot, to be drunk
Oyster fruit: Pearls

P

Packing Heat: carrying a gun
Pal: a man
Palooka: Man, probably not very smart
Pan: Face
Paste: Punch
Patsy: Person who is set up; fool, chump
Paw: Hand
Peaching: Informing
Peeper: Detective
Peepers: Eyes
Pen: Penitentiary, jail
Peterman: Safecracker who uses nitroglycerin
Piece: Gun
Pigeon: Stool-pigeon
Pinch: An arrest, capture
Pins: Legs
Pipe: See or notice
Pipes: Throat

Plant: Someone on the scene but in hiding, Bury
Plug: Shoot
Plugs: People
Poke: Bankroll, stake
Pooped: Killed
Pop: Kill
Pro skirt: Prostitute
Puffing: Mugging
Pug: Pugilist, boxer
Pump: Heart
Pump metal: Shoot bullets
Punk: Hood, thug
Pushover: A person easily convinced of something.
Puss: Face
Put down: Drink
Put the screws on: Question, get tough with

R

Rags: Clothes
Ranked: Observed, watched, given the once-over
Rap: Criminal charge
Rappers: Fakes, set-ups
Rat: Inform
Rate: To be good, to count for something
Rats and mice: Dice, i.e. craps
Rattler: Train
Red-light: To eject from a car or train
Redhot: Some sort of criminal
Reefers: Marijuana cigarettes
Rhino: Money
Right: Adjective indicating quality
Ringers: Fakes
Ritzy: Elegant.
Rod: Gun
Roscoe: Gun
Rub-out: A killing
Rube: Bumpkin, easy mark
Rumble, the: The news

S

Sap: A dumb guy
Sap poison: Getting hit with a sap
Savvy: Get me? Understand?
Sawbuck: \$10 bill (a double sawbuck is a \$20 bill)
Schnozzle: Nose
Scram out: Leave
Scratch: Money
Scratcher: Forger
Send over: Send to jail

Shamus: (Private) detective
Sharper: A swindler or sneaky person
Sheba: A woman with sex appeal
Sheik: A man with sex appeal
Shells: Bullets
Shiv: Knife
Shylock: Loanshark
Shyster: Lawyer
Sing: Make a confession
Sister: Woman
Skate around: To be of easy virtue
Skid rogue: A bum who can't be trusted
Skirt: Woman
Slant, Get a: Take a look
Sleuth: Detective
Slug: a bullet or to knock unconscious
Smoked: Drunk
Snap a cap: Shout
Snatch: Kidnap
Sneeze: Take
Snitch: An informer, or to inform
Snooper: Detective
Speakeasy: An illicit bar selling bootleg liquor.
Spiffy: Looking elegant
Soak: To pawn
Sock: Punch
Soup: Nitroglycerine
Soup job: To crack a safe using nitroglycerine
Spill: Talk, inform
Spinach: Money
Spitting: Talking
Square: Honest
Squeeze: a female companion or girlfriend.
Squirt metal: Shoot bullets
Step off: To be hanged
Stiff: A corpse
Sting: Culmination of a con game
Stool-pigeon: Informer
Stoolie: Stool-pigeon
Stuck On: Having a crush on
Sucker: Someone ripe for a grifter's scam
Sugar: Money
Swanky: Ritzy
Swell: Wonderful

T

Tail: Shadow or follow

Take a powder: Leave

Take on: Eat

Take for a Ride: Drive off with someone in order to bump them off

Take the air: Leave

Take the bounce: To get kicked out

Take the fall for: Accept punishment for

That's the crop: That's all of it

Three-spot: Three-year jail term

Throw lead: Shoot bullets

Ticket: P.I. license

Tiger milk: Some sort of liquor

Tighten the screws: Put pressure on somebody

Tin: Badge

Tip a few: To have a few drinks

Tomato: Pretty woman

Tooting the wrong ringer: Asking the wrong person

Torpedoes: Gunmen

Trap: Mouth

Trigger man: Man whose job is to use a gun

Trouble boys: Gangsters

Twist: Woman

Two bits: \$25, or 25 cents

U

Under glass: In jail

W

Weak sister: A push-over

Wear iron: Carry a gun

Wise head: A smart person

Wooden kimono: A coffin

Wop: derogatory term for an Italian

Worker, as in "She sizes up as a worker": A woman who takes a guy for his money

Wrong gee: Not a good fellow

Wrong number: Not a good fellow

Y

Ya Follow: do you understand?

Yap: Mouth

Yard: \$100

Yegg: Safecracker who can only open cheap and easy safes

Z

Zotzed: Killed