



万水英语工具书系列

# TALKIN' AMERICAN

A Dictionary of Informal  
Words and Expressions

## 生活美语词典

[美] Ronald Harmon 著

懿心等译

THOMSON  
LEARNING



中国水利水电出版社  
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## 内 容 提 要

这是一本由美国加利福尼亚州立大学罗纳德·M·哈蒙教授为母语不是英语的读者精心编写的一本有关生活美语的词典。

词典包括6200多个词条,向读者展示了美语中常见的口语、俚语、粗话等。词条配有清楚的定义和生动的例句以及词条在美国社会生活中使用频率的标注。适合大中专院校学生、准备到美国留学、工作、定居的人使用。

Talkin' American, A Dictionary of Informal Words and Expressions (0-8384-5804-1), Signal Press.

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*In memory of Mel and Canela*

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# Introduction

*Talkin' American — A Dictionary of Informal Words and Expressions* is a descriptive compilation of more than 6,200 terms and expressions commonly used in informal American English. It is both a reference and a learning tool. Its entries have definitions or explanations, example sentences, and frequency-of-use markers determined by a team of native speakers of American English.

The United States is the largest community of English speakers in the world, and the terms and expressions listed in this book are the common stock of language used in everyday circumstances in American society, including conversation in almost all situations (among friends, family members, even strangers), much writing (contemporary fiction, much nonfiction, plays, and letters) and the media (television, radio, and movies).

*Talkin' American* focuses on the informal language of the United States. While it is also largely relevant to Canadian English, the selection of its entries is based solely on U.S. usage. Its entries are not necessarily *exclusively* American. Many of them occur in informal English throughout the world, but their inclusion here affirms their use in the U.S.

This book was designed for users who were not born and raised in the United States, especially those whose first language is not English. But to benefit from it, the user should have at least a basic knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary.

## Informal Language

*Talkin' American* has sought to include all common terms and expression that are generally used only in informal circumstances and avoided in formal speech or writing (in meetings, conferences, reports, etc.). Of course, many terms are informal when they have special

*meanings* in informal circumstances, while they are not informal when they have their basic meanings. For example, *buy* is informal when it means “believe” or “accept”, but is not informal when it means “purchase.” While much language is neutral in style (i.e., it may be used, with the same meaning, in formal or informal circumstances), this dictionary includes only those items with meanings generally limited to informal situations.

### **Common Usage**

*Talkin’ American* includes only terms and expressions that have widespread use in the United States, that is, items that a majority of Americans know and understand. Thus, it does not include strict regionalisms, ethnic speech, jargon, or slang that is restricted to special groups of speakers. It does include items coming from such groups if they are widely understood throughout the country and among the general population. The team of frequency-of-use evaluators has determined that all entries meet this criterion.



## Additional Format Notes

### Frequency-of-use indicators:

Entries with two asterisks (those rated as frequently heard or read) constitute 12% of the total number of entries, those with one asterisk (rated as regularly heard or read) make up 42%, and those with a dash (rated as occasionally heard or read) represent 46%.

### Entries:

When more than one entry is listed under a key word, entries that are just that key word are listed first, and nouns come before verbs. After that, multi-word entries are listed alphabetically by their first word, taking into account words in parentheses (optional parts of an expression), but not words in brackets (grammatical indicators).

Some entries contain variants, indicated by a slash that separates them. For example, “**like a million dollars/bucks**” may be used in the form “**like a million dollars**” or in the form “**like a million bucks**.”

Entries made of letters pronounced separately are listed as capital letters with periods after them (for example, “P.C.P.”). This spelling is generally used throughout, although such terms may be seen written elsewhere without periods or, at times, with lowercase letters.

### Usage indicators:

The three main usage indicators are *colloq.* (for “colloquial”), *sl.* (for “slang”), and *vulg.* (for “vulgar”):

\* **Colloquial** terms and expressions are those that can be used in any informal setting. They are not characteristic of specific groups in society and are widely accepted and used in everyday language. They do not have the “youth-oriented” and “in-group” dimensions that slang items do, they are not taboo in polite social settings as vulgar items are, and they are less informal than items in these other two categories.

\* **Slang** terms and expressions are very informal. They tend to be more contemporary, playful, inventive, and youth-oriented than colloquial items and generally serve to enhance group identity.

\* **Vulgar** terms and expressions are considered coarse or obscene and are offensive to many people. They are inappropriate in polite society and may even be censured in some social circumstances.

Other usage indicators, which may be added to the three above, are *pej.* (for “pejorative”), *hum.* (for “humorous”) and *sarc.* (for “sarcastic”):

\* **Pejorative** terms or expressions degrade or belittle a person or group on the basis of gender; race; age; occupation; sexual orientation; physical traits; or national, religious, ethnic, or regional background. They are offensive to most people, and there may be social and even legal sanctions against their use in some situations (for example, in the workplace).

\* **Humorous** terms or expressions are generally used in a funny or playful way.

\* **Sarcastic** terms or expressions are generally used in an ironic or mocking way.

### **Definitions/explanations:**

Parts in parentheses are more explanatory than definitional and include such phrases as “(used esp. [especially]...)”, “(freq. [frequently] used ...)”, and “(intens. [intensifier] to ...)”.

### **Example sentences:**

The tone of the example sentences reflects the circumstances of usage indicated for the entry item. Shortened *-ing* forms (for example, *givin'* instead of *giving*) and combined forms (for example, *gonna* instead of *going to*) are used in sentences for slang and vulgar entries to reflect extra informality. Also, nonstandard forms (for example, *Him and me* for *He and I*, *them* for *those*, and double negatives) appear occasionally in example sentences to reflect the informality of the content.

## Suggestions for the User

### Finding an entry:

The exact boundaries or listed form of an expression that one hears or reads may not be easily determined. So if the expression is not readily found where expected, you should check all entries under the key word, since an optional part of a variant may have it listed in another place. If it is still not found, you should check entries under other possible key words, including compound words (e.g., the expression “**it’s no big deal**” is found under “**BIG DEAL**”, not under “**BIG**” or “**DEAL**”). Not all that you hear or read and do not understand is necessarily informal; consulting a conventional dictionary may be in order.

You should note that many compound words do not have a standardized spelling in English. Compounds may be seen written as one word, separate words or hyphenated words. Also, the spelling of informal words is not always standard (for example, words ending in -y, -ey, or -ie). Although *Talkin’ American* includes many cross-references with alternate spellings, you should apply some flexibility regarding spelling.

Common derivatives of entries are not generally listed (for example, the -ing gerund or the -er marker for agent [or doer] of verbs); the user should keep derivatives in mind when comparing forms heard or read with entries in this dictionary.

### Using the frequency-of-use markers:

The frequency-of-use markers are especially valuable as guides for making this book a learning tool and not just a reference. You may first select items marked for highest frequency of use to learn and incorporate into your active vocabulary, either systematically or as they are encountered and looked up. Later, items marked for lower frequency can

be learned.

### **Using caution with vulgar and pejorative items:**

Language is a powerful tool and must be used with caution. Since vulgar and pejorative terms do exist in American English and are widely used in restricted circumstances, it is important that this work list and describe them; you need to have a means with which to recognize them and their meanings. But it is equally important that you realize that using them in inappropriate circumstances may have very negative consequences. Some people are offended by vulgar terms and expressions in any circumstances, and most people use them with moderation. Similarly, most people avoid using pejorative terms and expressions. Inappropriate use of such items may not only offend others and reflect poorly on you, but may also make you subject to social and even legal sanctions.

### **Suggestions for Teachers:**

*Talkin' American* is a useful reference for all adult ESL learners of American English at an intermediate or higher level. As a descriptive work, it documents all the types of informal language that learners will continually hear and read in real, everyday circumstances. For this reason it includes terms that may be offensive because they are vulgar or pejorative. Because of the inclusion of such items, this book may not be appropriate for secondary or younger students, but it will make information on all types of language encountered in American English more accessible to adult learners.

*Talkin' American* is recommended as a supplemental text in conversation and vocabulary-building classes. You can either treat all terms and expressions in designated categories (e.g., all colloquial entries with two asterisks) or glean specific items for treatment based on some other criterion (e.g., entries derived from sports terminology or verbs with prepositional particles). It is recommended that vulgar and

pejorative items not be targeted for active vocabulary acquisition, although they may be studied for recognition.

This work and its usage indicators can be used to teach important basic sociolinguistic principles regarding language register and style, such as the use of nonstandard forms and taboo language and the importance of language appropriateness by situation. Regarding items labeled vulgar and pejorative, you should emphasize 1) the need to recognize them and their meanings, 2) the restricted circumstances in which they are generally used, and 3) the possible negative consequences of using them.

The definitions/explanations can be used for practice and testing of entries, and example sentences can serve as models for students to generate their own sentences using entry items and for creating broader contexts in which the example sentences might occur.

For students who speak nonstandard dialects of English, *Talk' American* may be used in "reverse" fashion, where students learn more formal ways of expressing informal words and expressions that they already know by studying entry definitions, in the manner of a thesaurus. In this way, it could be a useful tool for vocabulary expansion from a casual register to a more formal standard usage.

Finally, *Talkin' American* serves as a basic instructor resource for exploring informal language use and for the creation of dialogues, specific vocabulary lists and other pedagogical materials.

## Pronunciation Key

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>As in:</i>	<i>Symbol:</i>	<i>As in:</i>
a	<b>apple, hat</b>	n	<b>new, dinner</b>
ā	<b>say, page</b>	ng	<b>thing, singer</b>
â	<b>hair, bare</b>	o	<b>pot, bottle</b>
ä	<b>father, start</b>	ō	<b>open, low</b>
b	<b>book, ribbon</b>	ô	<b>organ, law</b>
ch	<b>chair, reach</b>	oi	<b>point, boy</b>
d	<b>dog, paddle</b>	ou	<b>down, out</b>
ó	<b>that, brother</b>	p	<b>put, rapid</b>
e	<b>bed, second</b>	r	<b>red, marry</b>
ē	<b>tea, party</b>	s	<b>sell, muscle</b>
ə	<b>along, butter</b>	sh	<b>shell, motion</b>
ə	<b>ti()<b>re</b>, sou()<b>r</b></b>	t	<b>take, better</b>
f	<b>food, tough</b>	th	<b>think, author</b>
g	<b>get, bigger</b>	u	<b>under, bus</b>
h	<b>here, behave</b>	ù	<b>look, put</b>
hw	<b>why, everywhere</b>	ū	<b>food, who</b>
i	<b>sit, public</b>	û	<b>urban, turn</b>
ī	<b>light, reply</b>	v	<b>value, movie</b>
j	<b>job, magic</b>	w	<b>way, aware</b>
k	<b>kind, bacon</b>	y	<b>yet, million</b>
l	<b>lot, pillow</b>	z	<b>zip, easy</b>
m	<b>man, hammer</b>		

## 简 介

《生活美语词典》是美国加利福尼亚州立大学的罗纳德·M·哈蒙教授经过多年苦心研究，并在征求诸多同行的意见后，专为那些不是在美国成长，尤其母语不是英语的使用者精心编写的一本有关生活美语的词典。这本词典有以下几个显著特征：

1. 内容丰富。6200多个词条，包括了美国社会日常生活中几乎所有场合的对话（包括朋友之间、家庭成员间、甚至陌生人之间）、许多不同体裁的作品语言（包括当代小说、非小说、剧本及信件），以及媒体用语（包括电视、收音机及电影）等。

2. 语言通俗易懂。词条的定义清晰，例句丰富，易学易用，触类旁通。

3. 实用性强。1) 词条具有使用频率的指示。这些指示符是由专家组成的词条使用频率评估小组通过评估后确定的，充分体现了这些词条在美国社会生活中的使用普遍性，对学习者的学习和使用非常有帮助；2) 具有语意特征的描述性指示。如 (pej.) 表示带有贬抑色彩, (colloq.) 表示口语, (sar.) 表示带有讽刺意味, (vulg.) 表示粗话等，方便读者正确、得体地用词。

4. 强调普通性。词典中包含了在美国普遍使用的词条，即为大多数美国人所知道并理解的词条，而不包括仅限于特殊群体的方言、族语、行话或俚语。但为普通大众所接受的方言、族语等则被收录其中。词条使用频率评估小组确保本书所收录的词条都符合上述标准。

本词典适合有一定的英语语法和词汇基础知识的读者使用。即将到美国留学、访问、定居的人，美语爱好者以及大中专院校的学生都有必要拥有这样一本参考书和工具书。它能帮助读者克服语言和文化的障碍，尽快融入美国的社会生活，顺利达到预定目标。

读者可以把它带在身边，经常查查背背，日积月累地增加对美语的理解。

这本词典中许多词条属于贬抑词和粗话。对这些词条，读者能够识别即可，建议不要将其作为日常积累的目标。在翻译过程中，我们尽量避免将这些粗话直译，不想让这本词典成为传播粗话的工具，读者明白意思即可。

这本书是许多人智慧和劳动的结晶。从翻译、修订、校对、编辑到出书，经过了一年多的时间，参与编译工作的有：张洁、张雪、郭洪巍、吴聪聪、李晓光、李霞、李岩、宋宇虹、胡昌勇、谭福红、赵迎秋、杨永强、段军华、林迎春、迟小凡、王菊、高珊、杨瑞杰、张勇、白桦、刘艳伶等，因为篇幅有限，不能一一列出，在此一并感谢。

虽然每个细节我们都力争做好，但由于能力所限，疏漏和谬误之处仍在所难免，敬请读者和专家多提宝贵意见。



# 格 式

星花用来表示词条在美国社会生活中的使用频率：两个星花表示频繁使用，一个星花表示使用频率较高，破折号表示偶尔使用

每个词条都用大写字母列在中心词条的下面

用于指示词条适宜的场所

## LOSE

\* lose [one's] shirt (colloq.) (口语): suffer a big financial loss, lose all that [one] has 赔光本钱, 输光所有的钱

对词条的定义或解释, 介绍词条的应用范围和语气, 同时也能反映出词条的语法功能

两个或三个词条具有同样的形式但却有不同的意思时, 用上角标来区分

## PICK

\*\* pick up<sup>1</sup> (vt) (colloq.) (口语): learn informally or through experience 非正规地学习或通过经验学习 > *Patty picked up quite a bit of Spanish when she lived in Mexico.* 帕蒂住在墨西哥时顺便学了很多西班牙语。

(vt) 表示及物动词, 即可以直接接宾语的动词, (vi) 表示不及物动词, 即不可以直接接宾语的动词

例句用斜体表示, 前面有一个箭头, 它以一种典型、自然的方式来应用词条, 帮助读者掌握词条的含义和用法。有的词条有两个例句, 第二个例句通常用于表示词条其他语法功能的使用方法, 或者用于显示词条的不同含义

## BIG DEAL

\*\* (it's) no big deal (colloq.) (口语): it's not so important, it's not worth being concerned about, it's no problem 并不那么重要, 不值得为它担心, 没问题 > *It's no big deal if you get there a little late.* 如果你到那儿的时候有些迟了; 没什么大不了的。

中心词条是合成词时, 可写成分开的单词, 如BIG DEAL, 也可写成一个单词, 如RUBBERNECK, 还可连字符连接, 如KNOCK-DOWN-DRAG-OUT

词条可自由选择的部份用括号表示

音标以括号的形式标注, 帮助读者掌握词条在非正规场合的发音, 同时也帮助读者区分有多种发音的词条的具体发音方法

## BUMMER

\*\*bummer (bum'ər) (sl.) (俚语): disappointment, upsetting or unpleasant thing or occurrence (also interj.) 失望, 令人伤心或不快的事情或事件 (也作感叹词用)

额外的语法功能以括号的形式标注在定义的后面