

ESL Brains

Ate and left no crumbs (Gen Z slang)

1. Look at the meme and say what the joke is about.



2. Discuss the questions.

- How often do you come across Gen Z slang in English or other languages? Do you ever have trouble understanding it? Can you give examples?
- How often do you use slang from your generation, whether in English or your first language? Do you enjoy using it?
- Why do younger generations often create and use their own slang?
- Should people of older generations learn the slang of younger generations? Why/Why not?

Gen Z slang:

informal language used primarily by people born roughly between 1997–2012, heavily shaped by social media

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3. In statements A–H, find the phrases for the definitions 1–8.

- A. People who avoid slang completely sound out of touch, especially when speaking to younger generations.
- B. Using slang is one of the best ways to fit in and feel part of a particular social or cultural group.
- C. Slang can help convey nuance when standard language can't fully capture emotions or attitudes.
- D. Once a slang expression becomes too widely used, it often starts to feel forced and quickly loses its appeal.
- E. No one can reliably predict which slang will catch on and which will disappear unnoticed.
- F. In formal environments, using slang crosses the line more often than it works.
- G. The term 'slang' carries negative connotations, implying that it is somehow improper or of lower quality.
- H. Using slang can help people come off as creative and expressive, rather than improving communication.



- 1. seem or appear to others in a particular way _____
- 2. feel accepted and be similar to others in a group _____
- 3. seem unnatural or not genuine _____
- 4. to express small or subtle differences in meaning or feeling _____
- 5. become popular or widely used _____
- 6. have certain meanings or associations _____
- 7. go too far and become inappropriate or unacceptable _____
- 8. seem unaware of current trends or how people speak or think _____

4. Look at the opinions in ex. 3 again and choose four that you find the most interesting. Say to what extent you agree or disagree with them. Think about different types of slang (used by different social groups or people of different ages), both in English and in your first language, or in any other languages you know.

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5. For each topic below, create a sentence containing at least one of the phrases in the box.

EXAMPLE: social media trends: *Some social media trends **feel forced**, especially when brands try to copy them.*

- A. public speaking
- B. social media trends
- C. job interviews
- D. different generations in the workplace
- E. email communication
- F. controversial topics

carry connotations	cross the line
catch on	feel forced
come off as	fit in
convey nuance	sound out of touch

6. Read more about Gen Z slang and discuss the questions below.

Gen Z slang is different from previous generations' slang in one key way: much of it was born and spread online. Platforms like TikTok, X (formerly known as Twitter) and Instagram allowed words and phrases to travel across communities and countries almost instantly, giving this slang an unusually wide reach.

But where do these expressions actually come from? Two communities have had a particularly significant influence. Many terms originate from African American English (AAE/AAVE), a fully developed language variety with its own grammar, history and cultural roots, spoken by Black Americans for generations. Others come from LGBTQ+ slang, a vocabulary developed within queer communities as a form of identity and in-group expression.

Source: [San Francisco Foghorn](#)

- Why do you think Gen Z slang draws so heavily from these two communities in particular?
- What else do you know about Gen Z slang?
- Do you know if Gen Z slang has had any influence on your language?
- What happens to a word or phrase when it travels from one community to another?

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7. Look at the Gen Z slang expressions in bold and say what you think they mean.

- A. You've been arguing online for hours so maybe it's time to **touch grass**.
- B. He's kind of a **normie**, to be honest, because he always picks the most popular options and never tries anything new.
- C. That performance was **goated** – everyone was talking about it afterwards.
- D. You're telling me you ran 10 km before work? Stop **capping!**
- E. He tried to tell a joke, but no one laughed. He definitely lost some **aura** in that moment.
- F. He doesn't talk much, but his ideas are **low-key** brilliant.
- G. She walked into the meeting and took control straightaway. Honestly, she **ate and left no crumbs**.
- H. I was really excited about the movie, but it turned out to be pretty **mid**.

8. Look at the meme in ex. 1 again and create your own caption using at least three phrases in the box.

- Me when...

ate and left no crumbs	low-key
aura	mid
cap	normie
goated	touch grass

9. You are going to watch a video of an Australian senator using slang in a speech in parliament. Watch the [video](https://youtu.be/uQi9uFPEOWY) [https://youtu.be/uQi9uFPEOWY] and answer the questions.

- A. Why did she decide to use slang?
- B. What was her main message?

10. Watch the [video](#) again and write down the slang expressions from ex. 7 that the senator uses.

11. Discuss the questions.

- Do you think the speech might have made young Australians more interested in politics or encouraged older generations to take more interest in younger people?
- Do you think younger generations are taken more seriously and heard more than in the past? If so, why might that be? If not, what might help change the situation?

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- Is using slang a good strategy when trying to engage a younger audience? Can you think of some other ways that might help to engage them?

12. Imagine you want to attract more Gen Z participants to one of the projects below. Create a short message promoting it, using some slang in a natural way (similar to how the senator in the video did). Use at least two phrases from the box.

EXAMPLE: digital detox month – *Constant notifications got you **low-key** stressed?
Time to **touch grass** and join our digital detox month.*

- career workshop
- fitness challenge
- mental health awareness week
- book club
- new science museum
- foreign languages conference
- public speaking club
- community volunteering

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