

*Orientation for International Teaching Assistants  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR THE CLASSROOM: STUDENT SLANG

The following are some slang terms and phrases you may hear from your American students. Note: Most of these are too informal for you to use in speaking to students!

Slang Term or Phrase	Definition and Example
A blow-off course/Mickey Mouse course	A very easy course: "X is a blow-off course."
A pop quiz	An unannounced quiz: "The TA gave a pop quiz today."
A makeup exam	Exam taken after the date it was given due to illness or some other excuse: "I had to get a doctor's report before I could take a makeup exam."
To blow off someone or something	1) To not take someone or something seriously: "He blew off that course." 2) To not show up for a class, meeting, etc.: "He stayed in bed and blew off the class."
To blow something/to screw up/to bomb	To fail, do badly: "I bombed the quiz."
To nail someone or something	1) To perform well: "I nailed that question." 2) To discredit by detecting or exposing: "The TA nailed her for cheating."
To ace	To get an A, do well: "She aced the final."
To book	To study: "I booked for 4 hours last night."
A piece of cake	Something that's very easy: "The quiz was a piece of cake."
To cram	To try to learn a lot in a short time: "She crammed all night for the exam."
To be swamped	To have a lot of work to do: "With work plus midterms I'm totally swamped."
To freak out	To become very upset: "He freaked out when his girlfriend left."
To freeze	To be unable to think, function, perform: "I froze on the test and couldn't write anything."
To be stressed out	To be worried, overworked: "I'm really stressed out about this test."
To be bummed/bummed out	To be unhappy, sad: "She was bummed out about her grade."

*pick on someone*

*single someone out*

Slang Term or Phrase	Definition and Example
To b.s. (also used as a noun)	To act as if you know something when you don't: "I b.s.'ed that question."
To breeze through something	To do something quickly, easily: "The prof breezed through those problems."
To tune out/zone out/space out	To be distracted, lose concentration: "Can I borrow your notes? I spaced out during class."
To pull an all-nighter	To stay up all night to study: "I'll have to pull an all-nighter to study for the test."
To catch something	To hear or understand something: "I didn't catch what you said about X."
To get something across	To explain something successfully: "The TA is really good at getting the material across."
To brown nose/suck up/kiss up	To be friendly and interested in someone in order to receive special treatment: "He brown noses the teacher by bringing coffee to class for him."
To chill/chill out	To relax: "I'm going to chill tonight."
To crash	To sleep: "I'm going to crash for a couple of hours."
To be hung over/to have a hangover	To suffer after drinking too much: "I was too hung over to go to class"
To be or get wasted	To get high on alcohol or drugs: "We got wasted last night."
What's up?/What's new?/How's it going?	How are you? (Answers to the first two are usually, "Not much." Answer to "How's it going?" is usually "Fine" or "OK")
Cool	Calm, very good: "She's a cool teacher."
Greek	An association with the fraternity & sorority system: "He's Greek."
Rush/rushing (also a verb)	To go through the process of becoming a member of a fraternity or sorority: "Rush is going to keep me very busy for the next two weeks."
Jock	An athlete: "He's a real jock."