At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

ONLINE SLANG

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Slang moves fast – and for many young people, it's not just how they talk, but how they share their identity and feelings. Learning key terms helps adults connect and show understanding, even if the lingo seems baffling at first.

GENERATIONAL MISCOMMUNICATION

Words like 'rizz' or 'slaps' can be misunderstood by adults, leading to awkward moments or a breakdown in trust. These phrases often carry subtle social meanings among young people.

PERFORMING FOR THE ALGORITHM

Slang often reflects what's popular on platforms like TikTok. Young users might exaggerate or act out for likes, creating online personas that don't match their real selves.

RAPIDLY SHIFTING MEANINGS

Slang changes quickly. A term like 'bop' might sound innocent one week and be repurposed the next. This makes it easy for adults to fall behind and for children to misstep.

CONTENT MODERATION WITH CODED SPEECH

To avoid content filters, young people sometimes use slang or emojis to talk about serious topics – for example, saying 'unalive' instead of other death-related terms. This makes harmful content harder to spot.

SHIELDING BULLYING OR EXCLUSION

Inside jokes and trending terms like 'simp' or 'NPC' can be used to mock or exclude others. What looks like harmless fun might actually reinforce social divisions or bullying.

LONG-TERM DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

A slang-filled post might seem funny now but could resurface years later during job checks or university applications – possibly out of context, but still damaging.

Advice for Parents & Educators

KEEP UP, DON'T CATCH UP

Follow youth culture pages or ask your child about new slang. Staying informed shows that you're engaged and open to understanding their world.

FOCUS ON CONNECTION OVER CONTROL

Being someone your child can talk to is more valuable than using strict filters or monitoring apps. Openness builds trust.

ASK, DON'T INTERROGATE

Use open questions to invite conversation. You're not quizzing them – just trying to learn more about their online lives.

ENCOURAGE CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY

Talk about where slang comes from, how it spreads, and how it can impact others. This helps young people use language more thoughtfully.

ONLINE SLANG CHEAT SHEET -

The following slang terms are common examples – please be aware this isn't an exhaustive list and both meaning and prevalence can change swiftly.

COMMON SLANG:

- **Sigma** – Independent, self-reliant (often male) mindset; proud outsider status. Often celebrated in motivational memes.
- **Skibidi** – Nonsense word from the viral 'Skibidi Toilet' meme; expresses chaos or fun. Usually harmless but pervasive.
- **Chat** – The collective audience or group of viewers (e.g. on a livestream). Used when addressing followers directly.
- **Lock in** – To focus, commit or get serious (e.g. before gaming or sports). Positive encouragement to concentrate.
- **Cooking** – Doing something exceptionally well or gaining momentum. Opposite of 'cooked'.
- **Rizz** – Charisma or flirting ability (short for charisma). Can praise social confidence.
- **Aura or aura farming** – One's perceived 'energy' or vibe; 'farming' means manufacturing clout.

POTENTIALLY CONCERNING SLANG

- **Bop** – An adult content creator (e.g. OnlyFans). Indicates exposure to 18+ material.
- **Gyat or gyatt** – Sexualised exclamation about someone's backside. Objectifies appearance.
- **Tralalero tralala / bombardino crocodilo / tung tung tung sahur** – Spammy references to AI-generated creatures with 'Italian-sounding' names. Can clog chats, derail discussion, and harass others.
- **Glazing** – Overpraising or obsessively defending a streamer or celebrity.
- **Crash out** – To lose control, give up or have a meltdown; sometimes hints at self-harm.
- **Cooked** – Ruined, exhausted or in serious trouble; sometimes mental health-related.
- **Unalive** – Euphemism for death or suicide; used to avoid content filters.
- **NPC** – Used to suggest someone is lacking independent thoughts or is repetitive and predictable.

Meet Our Expert

Keith Broni is a globally renowned emoji expert and the Editor in Chief of emojipedia.org, the world's number one emoji resource. He has an MSc in Business Psychology from University College London and an MBA from Quantic School of Business and Technology.

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