



The Richmond Times Dispatch

Stumped by teen slang? Turn to the Web for help

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Q: Yesterday we overheard our teenage daughter talking on her cell phone, and she said, "My rents are so random." She spends a lot of time in Internet chat rooms. Is this geek-speak?

A: You were wise to consult the PropellerHeads. Although your daughter is not speaking geek, nor is she a slumlord, she is using a specialized language known as teen slang. The same kind of thing you spoke when you were a teenager. Think of "groovy" and "far out."

Fortunately, you have a tool your parents didn't have to decipher your daughter's lingo. We are speaking, of course, of Al Gore's greatest invention: the Internet. Reference is one of the things the Internet does really well, and the immediacy of the Web makes it well-suited for rapidly changing subjects like slang.

Take a peek at the Urban Dictionary (www.urbandictionary.com) and you'll see that "rents" is short for parents. That's you! You can look up "random" on your own.

The Urban Dictionary is one of a growing number of handy Internet references. Many of them are collaborative: They rely on the public to post new words and suggest definitions. The rest of us then rate the definitions. Can't you just feel the groovy waves of collaboration flowing over you?

We've all heard of Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), where anybody can create or edit entries. Although each submission is reviewed for accuracy, people have managed to post incorrect information. Can you believe it? Consequently, we wouldn't use Wikipedia as the sole reference for any subject.

But there are scores of perfectly reliable sources available on the Internet. For general reference, try www.reference.com or www.bartleby.com, which also offers the entire Harvard Classics Library online.

Looking for more specialized information? No matter how arcane your area of interest, chances are there's a dictionary for it on the Internet. Do you need to understand tech buzz-words? Try www.techdictionary.com.

Can't tell an adagio from an arpeggio? Go to Virginia Tech's music dictionary (www.music.vt.edu/musicdictionary). How about rhinophyma from a roentgen? Then Medicine.Net is for you (www.medterms.com).

Do you need to know the Russian word for cigar? Surf over to www.wordreference.com or www.freedict.com for language translations. Google's Language Tools is also good in this area.

Less, practical, but just as fun, is a dictionary of one-letter or all-vowel words. Both are at www.oneletterwords.com along with a dictionary of magic words. Shazam! Speaking of which, check out the Super Heroes Dictionary at <http://shdictionary.tripod.com>.

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Still having problems? We said: What did you say? Need help to get with the lingo? Then any of the following sites should help you understand the latest in TTT (teen/tech/text) vernacular: www.netlingo.com, www.lingo2word.com or www.noslang.com. But be warned, some of the words and definitions found there are NSFW (Not Suitable For Work), if you catch our drift.

A'ight, gotta bounce. cu l8r qt3.14

Send questions to questions@askthepropellerheads.com. Or contact them at Data Directions, Data Directions Inc., 8510 Bell Creek Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23116 or at (804) 427-2426.