

Learning the Lingo

Does Your Teen Have a Secret Language?

by Tamekia Reece

Next time you hear your teen ask a friend if she has any Oxy, don't assume she's trying to zap a zit. Or if you overhear your son bragging about his ADIDAS, there's a chance he's talking about something a little more sensual than his muddy tennis shoes. Nowadays, teens have come up with all kinds of terms to talk about drugs, sex and other things without their parents (and other adults) being able to figure out the real topic of discussion. Guess what? You can crack the code and learn this secret lingo.

Why They Do It

When asked, a group of teens said they use code words and other jargon because sometimes they don't want others to know what they're talking about. Red flag? No. Wanting privacy doesn't mean they're up to something.

Erika Karres, Ed.D., author of [Mean Chicks, Cliques and Dirty Tricks](#) (Adams Media, 2004), says teens need their own lingo, even if it's just text messaging abbreviations. "It empowers them, helps them to know and grow," she says.

That doesn't mean you should take in everything as harmless slang. "If the language is dangerous or harmful, a parent has to step in," says Karres. How does a parent know when it's time to step in? You have to be in the know!



Teens Translated

Many parents would be shocked if they knew that the "bacon" they heard their son bad mouth the other night was actually a bash at police. Patricia Baronowski does know this. Because of her open relationship with her teen son and his friends, she can ask them what's what in the teen world. This keeps her well-informed and on top of her game.

But for parents who don't have open relationships with their teen, Karres says there are other ways to learn the lingo. She suggests parents network with other parents and swap some of the words they've heard. She also says parents should hit up the high school teachers and ask what lingo they've heard floating around the school.

Because Baronowski knows her son and his friends don't know every single word out there, they search the Internet and find tons of words that have double meanings. Internet safety experts at [CyberPatrol](#), a parental control software company, say this is a great idea, as the Internet is one of the main places teens have a secret language.

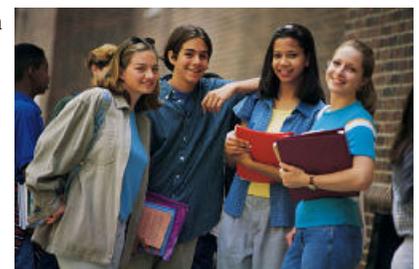
Nearly anyone who's ever logged onto the Internet knows A/S/L means age, sex and location, and BF stands for boyfriend, but others like NIFOC (naked in front of computer), IPN (I'm posting naked) and WTGP? (want to go private) would certainly cause an eyebrow to raise. With one out of 17 children being harassed or stalked online, such acronyms are ones parents should definitely keep an eye out for.

Using the Lingo

Learning the language doesn't mean a thing if you aren't going to use it. No, it doesn't mean you should hang out with your adult friends and try to throw these words into the conversation. That'll only get you a weird look. What you should be doing is keeping your ears open for the lingo. "Parents have to be alert, aware and fearless," Karres says. "Overhearing teen chatter and having one's eyes wide open are a requirement of being a parent."

If you do hear or see your teen use a word that you know is dangerous, don't be afraid to approach him about it. Many parents will hold back on speaking with their teen about certain issues, because they fear the teen will accuse them of eavesdropping or spying on them. Hesitating on something that could mean your child is in danger or might be involved in something you don't approve of can be a life-altering decision. If you hear or see something, bring it up!

"Teens love parents who aren't afraid," Karres says. According to her, the best way to handle this sticky situation is by simply confronting the teen and telling him you want to know what's going on. By arming yourself with a few of the most dangerous words and some of the most common



ones, you up your chances of being able to keep your teen out of trouble later. By being attentive and keeping your eyes and ears open, you cannot only learn the secret language, but you can also use it as a way to earn the admiration of your teen!

A Few Words to Get You Started

Don't worry! We're not going to leave you in lingo limbo. Here are a few words from the secret language database and their meanings:

- Oxy or OC: OxyContin or OxyCodone (a prescription drug that many teens are using for recreational purposes)
- ADIDAS: All Day I Dream About Sex (made popular by a song of the same title)
- 420: Time to smoke pot or April 20, "the hippie holiday" (the day to smoke all day)
- Deebo: To steal or jack
- Flossin': To show off material things or money
- Scilla: Money