



'A veritable Madame Tussaud's of the vulgar language'  
New Statesman

The **Concise New**  
**Partridge Dictionary of**

# SLANG

and Unconventional English

**Tom Dalzell** (Senior Editor) and  
**Terry Victor** (Editor)

**advertise** *verb* 1 to signal your intention plainly US, 1931. 2 to dress or behave in a se manner; to pluck and pencil the eyebrows. 3 premise that it pays to advertise US, 1972. 3 manner that is intended to be caught, all in bluff US, 1949. 4 in gin, to discard in a man lure a desired card from an opponent US, 19 siren and/or flashing lights of a police car U

**CASE** *noun* 1 a promiscuous woman Au with a sexually transmitted infection US. 3 a engage in an adulterous relationship

**crack** *noun* 1 cocaine US, 1953. 2 crack co 1980s a lesbian US. 5 a homosexual ma mining machine Australia. in a deck of play

**crack** *noun* 1 addiction US, 1962. 2 an yearning US, 1970. 3 heroin US, 1970. 4 the p

**paper** *noun* 1 money US. 2 a cigarette pa personal identification papers US. 4 promot produced as part of a telephone sales swind a performance US. 6 a cheque US

**sniffer** *noun* 1 the nose UK, 1858. 2 an am US. 3 a cocaine user US. 4 a device planted pipe to measure the pollutants in the emiss investigator of unemployment and other be computer program that surreptitiously reco and other log-in data US, 1994. 7 an outsider of the pornography industry US. 8 a handke

## The Concise New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English

The *Concise New Partridge* presents, for the first time, all the slang terms from the *New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* in a single volume.

With over 60,000 entries from around the English-speaking world, the *Concise* gives you the language of beats, hipsters, Teddy Boys, mods and rockers, hippies, pimps, druggies, whores, punks, skinheads, ravers, surfers, Valley girls, dudes, pill-popping truck drivers, hackers, rappers and more.

The *Concise New Partridge* is a spectacular resource infused with humour and learning – it's rude, it's delightful, and it's a prize for anyone with a love of language.



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## PREFACE

Eric Partridge made a deep and enduring contribution to the study and understanding of slang. In the eight editions of *The Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* published between 1937 and 1984, Partridge recorded and defined the slang and unconventional English of Great Britain, and to a lesser extent her dominions, from the 1600s to the 1970s. For the years up to 1890, Partridge was by his own admission quite reliant on Farmer and Henley's *Slang and its Analogues*, which he used as an 'expandable framework'. When it came to the slang for the years 1890 to 1945, Partridge was original and brilliant, especially in his treatment of underworld and military slang. His attitude towards language was scholarly and fun-loving, scientific and idiosyncratic. His body of work, scholarship and dignity of approach led the way and set the standard for every other English-language slang lexicographer of the twentieth century.

Our respect for Partridge has not blinded us to the features of his work that have drawn criticism over the years. His protocol for alphabetising was quirky. His dating was often problematic. His etymologies at times strayed from the plausible to the fanciful. His classification by register (slang, cant, jocular, vulgar, coarse, high, low, etc.) was intensely subjective and not particularly useful. Furthermore, his early decision to exclude American slang created increasingly difficult problems for him as the years passed and the influence of American slang grew. Lastly, Partridge grew to lose the ability to relate to the vocabulary he was recording. In 1937, Partridge was a man of his time, but the same could no longer be said in 1960. There is a profound relationship between language and culture, and neither Partridge nor Paul Beale, editor of the 8th edition, seem to have assimilated the cultural changes that began at the end of World War 2. This left them without the cultural knowledge needed to understand the language that they were recording. Their lack of cultural understanding accelerated with time, and this is sadly reflected in the later entries. Beatniks and drug addicts, and their slang, baffled Partridge and Beale, who lacked either the personal experience or historical perspective needed to understand underlying countercultures.

Partridge himself observed, 'More than almost any other kind of book, a dictionary constantly needs to be revised; especially, of course, if it deals with the current form of a language and therefore has to be kept up to date'. With *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* we tried to do just that. We picked up where Partridge left off, recording the slang and unconventional English of the English-speaking world since World War 2 with the same scholarship and joy in language that characterised Partridge's work. We are not, and cannot be, Partridge: but we can strive to be proud heirs of Partridge and to speak with a voice that Partridge would recognise as an echo of his own. We have worked hard to continue the Partridge tradition, observing high standards of lexicography while producing an accessible work informed by, and infused with, the humour, mischief

and energy that are endemic to slang. This Concise version of the New Partridge contains every entry in New Partridge as well as several hundred new words that have come into the slang lexicon since 2005. The Concise is presented without the hundreds of thousands of citations in the New Partridge, creating an affordable alternative to our update of Partridge. Lastly, we improved dating information given on hundreds of headwords.

### Criteria for inclusion

We use three criteria for including a term or phrase in this dictionary. We include (1) slang and unconventional English, (2) used anywhere in the English-speaking world and (3) after 1945.

Rather than focus too intently on a precise definition of slang or on whether a given entry is slang, jargon or colloquial English, we take full advantage of the wide net cast by Partridge when he chose to record 'slang and unconventional English' instead of just slang, which is, after all, without any settled test of purity. We have considered for inclusion all unconventional English that has been used with the purpose or effect of either lowering the formality of communication and reducing solemnity and/or identifying status or group and putting oneself in tune with one's company. A term recorded here might be slang, slangy jargon, a colloquialism, an acronym, an initialism, a vulgarism or a catchphrase. In all instances, an entry imparts a message beyond the text and literal meaning. This approach is especially useful when dealing with world slang and unconventional English. A broader range has permitted inclusion of many Caribbean entries, for instance, which merit inclusion but might not meet a stringent pure-slang-only test. Our only real deviation from Partridge's inclusion criteria is a much diminished body of nicknames. The regiment nicknames that populate Partridge's work no longer fulfil the language function that they did in the United Kingdom of Partridge's day.

If there was a question as to whether a potential entry fell within the target register, we erred on the side of inclusion. We generally chose to include poorly attested words, presenting the entry and our evidence of usage to the reader who is free to determine if a candidate passes probation.

Partridge limited his dictionary to Great Britain and her dominions. We elected the broader universe of the English-speaking world. Globalisation has affected many facets of life, not the least of which is our language. There are words that are uniquely Australian, American or British, but it is impossible to ignore or deny the extent of cross-pollination that exists between cultures as regards slang. We were aided in our global gathering by indigenous contributors from Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, Ireland and New Zealand. We also include pidgin, Creolised English and borrowed foreign terms used by English-speakers in primarily English-language conversation. We include slang and unconventional English