

The Real Stories Behind Everyday Internet Slang

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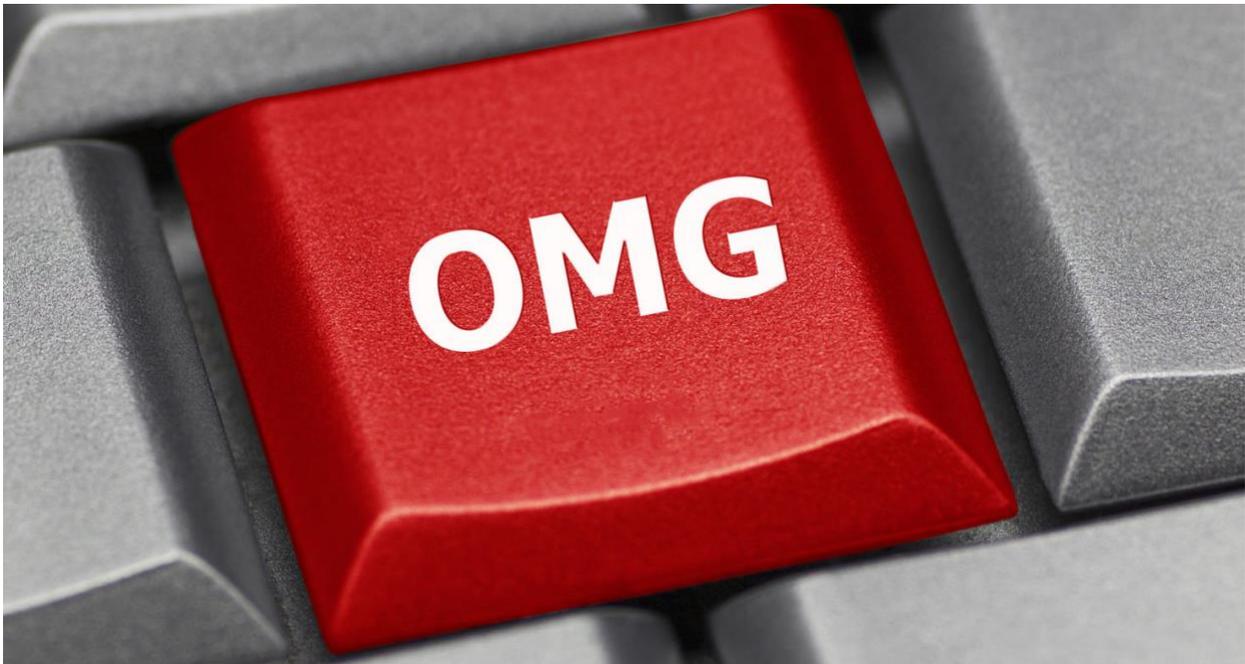
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The Real Stories Behind Everyday Internet Slang

By Stacie Houglan



SHUTTERSTOCK

Ever wonder how TBT (Throwback Thursday) started, where emojis came from or why the pound sign turned into a hashtag? We have the answers! Be an internet n00b no longer.

Emojis



[WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://www.wikimedia.org/)

Remember emoticons like ;-) made out of punctuation marks? The first emoticons were used in the 1800s in a satirical magazine called *Puck*. The word *emoji* is Japanese for "picture character" (its resemblance to the word "emoticon" is purely coincidental) and they originated on Japanese phones in 1997. Americans didn't start using them widely until the 2010s.

LOL



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Emojis weren't available to 1980s bulletin board users, who used terms like *smile* and >laugh< to express emotion. In 1989, a Canadian guy named Wayne Pearson became the first to type "LOL" on a Usenet board to describe how he was giggling to himself at a friend's gag. Today something extra funny might make you ROFL - "Roll on the Floor Laughing."

Troll



[DE.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://de.wikipedia.org)

This term for a jerk who posts dissenting comments intending to create discord dates back to 1992 on the Usenet group *alt.folklore.urban* when a poster suggested going "trolling for newbies" - meaning to make fun of people who aren't in on the joke. One of that group's most well-known trolls went on to create Snopes.com.

Hashtag

#hashtag

[WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

The pound sign was a way netizens in the early '90s grouped topics or discussions on chat boards, but it wasn't until 2007 when developer Chris Messina suggested the # be used on Twitter (the character was easy to reach on his Nokia phone). Twitter made the # official in 2009.

FTW



[EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

"FTW" is an acronym for "For the Win." It dates back to game shows of the 1970s, whose hosts would say it before the final question or big reveal. As the internet evolved, online gamers adopted it around the 2000s to show dominance.

FOMO



[FR.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://fr.wikipedia.org)

Ever have that uneasy feeling that you're not in on the joke or not understanding the conversation? That "fear of missing out" is called FOMO, and the acronym was first used in a Harvard magazine article way back in 2004.

OMG



[PIXABAY](#)

You might respond OMG ("Oh My God!") at a shocking story, or the most adorable cat photo you've ever seen. But would you believe the shortening of that term dates back to 1917? A British admiral used OMG in a letter to Winston Churchill, probably because he was in the habit of using naval acronyms.

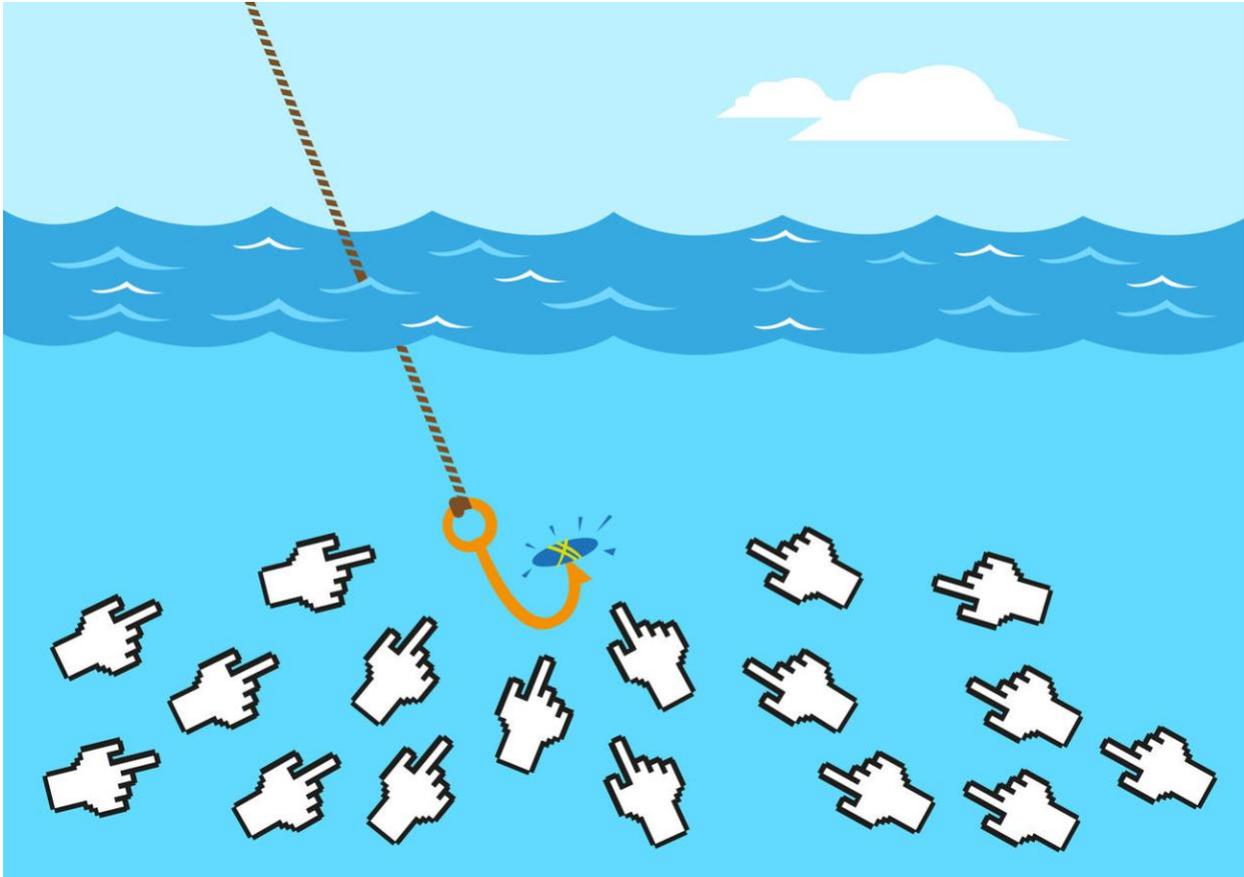
Throwback Thursday



[COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org)

"Throwback Thursday," when you post old photos of your childhood, your parents or that vacation in the Poconos in 1975, was coined by the basketball sneaker blog *Nice Kicks* in 2006. It didn't become the popular #TBT we know and love until Kim Kardashian started using it on Instagram in 2012.

Clickbait



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Back when honest reporting was a thing, you'd have called misleading and lurid article headlines and thumbnail photos "yellow journalism." The term "clickbait" is likely derived from the earlier use of "linkbait" to describe words used to get people to click a link.

Snail mail



[COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org)

The post office introduced ZIP codes in the early 1960s, suggesting to people their mail would "zip" through the system quicker than ever with them. Without these codes, the USPS warned, your mail would move at a snail's pace. Today we use the term for actual mail, as opposed to electronic mail.

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