

Prison Slang Words and Terminology

1. Action – Results received on any legal work in Federal Courts
2. Alley – Area behind bunk or cell
3. Aguas – C.O. approaching
4. Aqua¹ – Water in Spanish
5. Aqua² – Flush the toilet (courtesy flush)
6. Blacks – African American inmates
7. Bank – Inmate who is well financed and exchanges stamps for money or other services
8. Book – One book of twenty .39¢ postage stamps
9. Boss – C.O. (Correctional Officer(s)) or the civilian contract employees on the compound who have keys
10. Brother / brotha' – Friend
11. Brothers¹ – Inmates who are of the Christian faith
12. Brothers² – Reference to another African American amongst the race
13. Brothers³ – Reference to Arrayan Brotherhood prison gang (white / Caucasian).
14. Brothers⁴ – Reference to another American Indian / Native American amongst the race
15. Broke down – Inmate who has medical problems
16. Bunky – One's celly
17. Burrito-man – Cooks and sells burritos to other inmates
18. Catch-a-chain – Term used by inmates when they are waiting to for transfer from one institution to another. Example: I am waiting to catch a chain.
19. Caught-my-case / caught-a-case – When the inmate was arrested
20. Celly – One's bunkmate
21. Channel-check – Refers to changing the channel in dorm television rooms
22. Check-in – To admit one's self into the hole or SHU for personal safety reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily
23. Chiefs – American Indian / Native American inmates
24. Chinos (Spanish) – Asian inmates
25. Chow – Go eat at the cafeteria
26. Chow hall – Cafeteria or dining hall
27. Compound – Refers to the yard
28. Cook – Inmate who cooks for one or more inmates in exchange for something of value
29. County – The county jail one was detained at while awaiting Federal Procedure
30. Crib – One's bunk.
31. Day-room – Area inside range inmates are allowed to gather in
32. Diesel-Therapy – Term used to describe the transportation status of an inmate from one institution to another.
33. Discipline – Sanctioned placed on an inmate by other inmates by way of various restrictions to physical punishment
34. Dog - Gang member
35. Dorm – Housing facility containing 20+ inmates that all share common bathroom, kitchen, television rooms
36. Down / been-down – Amount of time the inmate has been incarcerated
37. Drive by – C.O. or other inmate walks by bed or cell, looking while passing
38. Driveway – Front of bunk or cell

39. Feds – Federal Bureau of Investigation or other federal agencies including the court system (U.S. Attorney)
40. Foo' – Inmate who says stupid things or performs stupid acts.
41. Getting-on-the-bus – Inmate who reduces their sentence by testifying against other inmates that are committing illegal offenses inside prison.
42. Holla'-at-ya' – 'I'll talk to you later.'
43. Hole – Solitary confinement or SHU – Special Housing Unit, also referred to as 'on vacation'
44. Homie – One from same hometown; 'home boy'
45. Hooch – a mix of orange juice, sugar, yeast, and cough medicine cooked for several days in a trash bag to make 'jail house alcohol'
46. House – One's bunk or cell
47. Ink – tattoo(s)
48. Institutionalized – Inmate who has been locked down for a long period of time and has accepted prison as a comfortable way of life
49. Jigger – Person who watches or stands point for a person or persons. A point man. One who watches for approaching C.O. and warns of potential danger.
50. Kin / folk – One who is from the continent of Africa
51. Kite – A message that is delivered containing information to either the C.O. (see snitch) or to another inmate elsewhere
52. Knife – razor blade (from shaving blades) or a tin lid sharpened to cut food or string
53. Laundry man – One who does laundry List – Needed items from the commissary
54. Lean – A mixture of orange juice, sugar, yeast, cough syrup, colodopins, serapuils, or other psycotropic medicine cooked for several days in a container to make 'jail house alcohol'.
55. Legal beagle – Inmate who helps other inmates with their legal work
56. Liquor license – Location of inmate who makes and sells hooch
57. List – Needed items from the commissary
58. Lookout – Person who watches or stands point for a person or persons; a point man. One who watches for approaching C.O. and warns of potential danger
59. Mail call – Passing out of mail after the 1600 hours (4:00 pm) stand up count Monday – Friday.
60. Mail room – Inmate post office
61. Money – Refers to postage stamps
62. Nut house – Area inmates with mental issues are contained
63. On vacation – Solitary confinement or SHU (Special Housing Unit)
64. Other place; other joint; last place – Last facility or institution one was last at or coming from
65. Out of bounds – Place one is not suppose to be
66. Paperwork – Referring to legal paper work about one's case or legal paperwork to contest a 'shot'
67. Party line – Three or more inmates involved in a conversation
68. Pile – workout facility
69. Paisa – Hispanic / Latino / Mexican inmates
70. Police – C.O. or staff of the B.O.P.
71. Pop-off – Beginning of a riot or dispute among inmates
72. Punish – Sanction issued on inmate by other inmates, always physical
73. Punk – Male inmate(s) who performs sexual acts for money with other male inmates.
74. Raided – Refers to a C.O. searching an inmate's locker or personal belongings
75. Range – Specific numbered dorm wings

76. Rec – Gym, track, weight pile
77. Region – B.O.P. (Bureau of Prisons) regional office
78. Rep – Spokesman for particular range, gang or race
79. School – Refers to the Education Department of the compound
80. Shank – object made into a knife
81. Short – Inmate who has very little time left to serve, usually less than two years
82. Short line¹ – Afternoon sales at the commissary during lunch from 1115 hours (11:15 am) to 1215 hours (12:15 pm) on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday
83. Short line² – Early lunch for diabetics – broke-down dudes
84. Short timer – One who is close to completing their sentence
85. Shot – Referring to an incident report filed against an inmate by B.O.P. staff for breaking B.O.P. rules
86. Shot caller – Spokesman for particular range, gang or race
87. Sick call – Journey to medical facility to set an appointment for any medical reason(s), illness(es) and/or question(s). Also referred to as a ‘waste of time’
88. Snitch – One who tells on other inmates doing ‘illegal activities’
89. Spook – referring to the B.O.P. staff who works in SIS (Gang Intelligence)
90. Stick – Stabbing of an inmate
91. Store¹ – An inmate who sells commissary within the dorms
92. Store² – Commissary
93. Take it to the stall – Settling a dispute in the shower area in the restroom of the dorm by means of physical assault or fighting
94. Tank – Housing facility containing 10-12 inmates with a bathroom and day room
95. Ten (10) minute move – Relocating between locations that occur five minutes before the hour and last until five minutes after the hour
96. The man – Inmate who has connections to all areas
97. Time – Length of sentence
98. Violation – One who has violated probation
99. Whites – Anglo / Caucasian inmates
100. Work – Referring to tattoo(s) or body artwork
101. Writ Writer – Inmate who helps other inmates with their legal work.
102. Yard – The entire areas of the dorm buildings, the recreation area, the chow hall. Any place for inmates within the fence at an institution

Revised: July 15, 2006