

Curious Question #9 - Sweet

Transcript

Maura: Hey everyone out there, this is the Curious Questions podcast and I'm here with you—that's Maura—and I've got Harp, she's here with me too. We're going to look at a question today about a new word, wouldn't you say?

Harp: Yes, definitely. This next question is about a popular slang term. If you have spent any time in North America, or if you've been watching a lot of North American movies, then you've definitely heard this one. Let's listen to the question from Natasha in Moscow first:

Maura: *"**Sweet!**" Last week I was hanging out with a friend of mine from the States and she used the word "**sweet**" many times. From the context, I guessed that "**sweet**" is similar to "cool," but I wasn't sure. Can you explain how to use "**sweet**"?*

Harp: "**Sweet**" is exactly like "cool." It's an adjective.

Maura: "Cool" is the longest running slang term that I know. It has been used for a long time as meaning something great, interesting, or incredible. "**Sweet**" is a lot newer. I can even remember when I started hearing it, and it was only about five or ten years ago.

Maura: We will give you a couple of examples:

Harp: "Hey, that's a **sweet** bike,"

Maura: And "Hey, that's a cool bike," mean the same thing.

Harp: "I really like your new coat. It's **sweet**."

"Your new haircut is **sweet**."

Maura: Of course, there is also the literal, real meaning of "**sweet**." Do you know it already?

Harp: "**Sweet**" is used to describe the taste of something when a food contains a lot of sugar, or honey, or maple syrup. Desserts are almost always **sweet**. Cakes are **sweet**. Fruits are **sweet**. Candy is definitely **sweet**.

- Maura: We can also use “**sweet**” in another way. We also use it like the word “**nice**.” We can use it to talk about a person who is generous and kind. We can say that a person is “**sweet**.” When I think of calling someone “**sweet**,” I think of a **sweet** little grandmother or a **sweet** child. But really, anyone can be **sweet**. Harp is **sweet**!
- Harp: Thank you! Anything that is kind, or pleasing, or delightful can be called “**sweet**.” I can hear a **sweet** song. Or I can receive a **sweet** card in the mail. Or the bakery down the street can have a **sweet** smell.
- Maura: But Natasha wasn’t asking about the literal meaning of “**sweet**.” She was asking about “**sweet**” and how we use it as slang. You can use this word “**sweet**” about anything you think is great.
- Harp: I will point out though, that it is generally slang for younger people. But not too young! I think people still use this slang up into their mid-thirties. Probably, because it is a generally new slang term, older adults do not use it.
- Maura: There is some other slang that English speakers use in the same way, to mean something is interesting, or great, or exciting. In North America, we also use “awesome.”
- Harp: In the UK they say “brilliant.”
- Maura: And I had an Australian friend who said “grouse” when something was “cool.”
- Harp: How did you enjoy this episode? We hope you thought it was **sweet**.
- Maura: So, if you want to check your understanding of this podcast, go to our website, Culips.com, and click on *Lipservice* to find out more about “**sweet**.”
- Harp: **Sweet**, Maura!
- Maura: OK, see you guys next time!
- Harp: Bye!

Detailed Explanation

In this episode, we talked about the slang term “**sweet**.” I think we explained it pretty well. It is not a very complicated word.

“**Sweet**,” in its basic meaning, is something involving sugar or honey. In this case it is the taste that is **sweet**. We can also talk about people or music as “**sweet**,” and here we mean enjoyable and pleasant.

We were asked about using “**sweet**” as slang. This is also simply explained. “**Sweet**” is just like “cool,” or “awesome,” or “great.” When we call something “**sweet**,” we like it. It is generally reserved for younger people. It is probably not used often by people over 35 years of age.

Here are some other expressions or vocabulary with “**sweet**.”

Sweets

In the United Kingdom, they use the word “**sweets**” to mean “candy.” If a child wants some **sweets** it means that he or she wants candy.

In Canada, and maybe North America in general, we might say, “I want something **sweet**.” In this case, it could mean candy or cake or any kind of dessert. When we want something **sweet**, we want anything that tastes **sweet**!

A sweet tooth

This is an idiomatic expression for you. A **tooth** is one of the many white things you have in your mouth. The things that help you chew your food.

As with most idiomatic expressions, the words have nothing to do with the actual meaning. There are no real “**teeth**” in this definition. If someone has a **sweet tooth**, this only means that they like really **sweet** food, like candy and desserts.

I have a **sweet tooth**. I love having desserts and ice cream in the summer.

Another example:

Speaker 1: Does anyone want any chocolate?

Speaker 2: Give it to Jim. He has a **sweet tooth**.

We always use it like this. It is not possible to have “**sweet teeth**.” It is always singular: “**sweet tooth**.”

Sweet pea/Sweetheart

This is a term of endearment. What is a term of endearment? Good question. It is a name you call someone who you are close to, and who you like a lot. People who usually use terms of endearment are husbands and wives with each other, or parents with their children.

“**Sweet pea**” is generally a feminine term of endearment. A husband may call his wife “**sweet pea**.” A mother may call her child “**sweet pea**.” A grandfather may call his granddaughter “**sweet pea**.”

A **sweet pea** is literally a green vegetable. Here is a photo.



Photo credit: Wikipedia.org

There are many terms of endearment for people you love. People can create their own too. And some of these terms of endearment are more popular in certain parts of the world. “**Sweet pea**” is used most often in the southern states of the USA.

Another name for someone you love is “**sweetheart**.” Sometimes, when people are in love, they call each other “**sweetheart**” instead of using each other’s name.

Example:

Hi, **sweetheart**. How was your day?

He’s such a **sweetheart**.

You can also say “**sweetie**” when talking about, or talking to, someone you love. We use it just like “**sweetheart**.” Sometimes “**sweetheart**” can show a romantic link, but “**sweetie**” can be used by anyone, even if they are not in love.

Short and sweet

When something is “**short and sweet**,” it is short and to the point. We can say a meeting was **short and sweet**. This means that the meeting was **short**, and that the people speaking said only what was necessary. They did not talk for a long time about things that were not very important.

This expression is different from the others mentioned in this *Lipservice*. In this case we use “**sweet**” but it doesn’t mean that what we’re talking about is pleasurable.

Example:

I will keep it **short and sweet**: You didn’t get the job.

In this example above, there is no good news and nothing actually **sweet** about it. “**Short and sweet**” is a fixed expression. What the speaker said was **short and sweet**. He said, “You didn’t get the job,” which is **short**, very direct and to the point.

More “sweet” slang

Here is short list of words that have basically the same meaning as “**sweet**” and “cool.” This list may be regional, but should be acceptable everywhere in North America. Listen to the slang where you are, to see what local vocabulary they use.

- Awesome
- Great
- Amazing
- Excellent

Quiz (see the answers at the bottom of this Lipservice)

1. “Sweet” is exactly like which slang adjective?

- a) cold
- b) cool
- c) warm
- d) dirty

2. Which is the literal dictionary definition of “sweet”?

- a) sugary
- b) salty
- c) happy
- d) sad

3. Which of the following are generally sweet?

- a) desserts
- b) ice cream
- c) French fries
- d) a and b

4. Who usually uses the slang sweet?

- a) senior citizens
- b) adults
- c) young people
- d) babies

5. What is a slang term for something great or sweet in the UK?

- a) brilliant
- b) bonkers
- c) awesome
- d) radical

Answers: 1.a 2.a 3.d 4.c 5.a