

Gangster Glossary

Words & phrases to help you out with the father of the bride and his associates

A

- A friend of ours: mob shorthand for introducing one made guy to another made guy. "A friend of mine" is just another jamook on the street.
- Action: a bet that a bookie "writes" and for which you pay him his "vig."
- Administration: the upper-level power structure of an organized crime Family, composed of the boss, underboss, and consigliere.
- Associate: an almost-there; someone who works with and for wiseguys, but who hasn't been sworn in as a member of the Family.

B

- Babbo: a dope, idiot, useless underling.
- Beef: a complaint or disagreement within the organization, usually discussed during a sit-down with higher-ups in the Family.
- Big earner: someone who makes a lot of money for the Family. A LOT of money.
- Books, the: euphemism for membership in the Family, since nothing is ever written down. When there is an availability (when someone dies), the books are "opened." When no one is being "made," the books are "closed."
- Boss: the head of the crime Family; he is the only one who gives permission to "whack" or "make" someone, and he makes money from all Family operations; synonyms: don, chairman.
- Boss of Bosses; Capo di tutti capi: The press awards this title to whomever they feel is the boss of the strongest of the five Families of New York, who is also said to preside over Commission meetings.
- Broken: demoted in rank; "knocked down."
- Brugad: a crime family; borgata.
- Buon' anima: salutation meaning rest his soul.
- Burn: to murder; synonyms: break an egg, clip, do a piece of work, hit, ice, pop, put out a contract on, whack.
- Button: a "made" member of the Mafia; soldier, wiseguy, goodfella, Man of Honor.
- Buttlegging: bootlegging untaxed cigarettes.

C

- Cafo:** a phony or embarrassment to himself and others; “gavone” (slang pronunciation)
- Capo:** the Family member who leads a crew; short for capodecina.
- Capo di tutti capi:** see Boss of Bosses
- Chased:** to be banished from the Mafia and barred from associating or doing business with any made members. The punishment is merciful in that the offender is spared death.
- Cleaning:** taking the necessary steps (driving around, stopping in various locations) to avoid being followed.
- Clip:** to murder; see burn
- Clock:** to keep track of someone’s movements and activities.
- Code of silence:** not ratting on your colleagues once you’ve been pinched—no longer a strong virtue in organized crime families. Also see Omertá.
- Comare:** a Mafia mistress; “goumada” (slang pronunciation).
- Come heavy:** to walk in carrying a loaded gun. You shouldn’t have lunch with a Russian drug dealer unless you “come heavy.” **Come in:** To go see the boss when summoned.
- Commission, The:** the Mafia “ruling body”, typically a panel made up of the bosses of the five New York Families, Gambino, Genovese, Lucchese, Colombo, and Bonanno sometimes with representatives from other U.S. Families, such as Chicago.
- Compare:** crony, close pal, buddy. Literally, “godfather” in Italian.
- Confirm:** to be made; see made guy.
- Consigliere:** a trusted Family advisor, who is always consulted before decisions are made. **Consigliere:** the counselor in a crime Family; advises boss and handles disputes within the ranks.
- Contract:** a murder assignment.
- Cosa Nostra:** Italian for “this thing of ours,” a mob family, the Mafia.
- Crew:** a group of soldiers that takes orders from a capo.
- Cugine:** a young tough guy looking to be made.

D

- Do a piece of work:** to murder; see burn.
- Don:** the head of the Family; see boss.

E

- Earn:** someone whose expertise is making money for the Family.
- Empty suit:** someone with nothing to offer who tries to hang around with mobsters.
- Enforcer:** a person who threatens, maims, or kills someone who doesn’t cooperate with Family rules or deals.

F

- Fence: someone with worldwide outlets to liquidate swag.
Friend of mine: introduction of a third person who is not a member of the Family but who can be vouched for by a Family member.
Friend of ours: introduction of one made member to another.

G

- G: a grand; a thousand dollars; also see large.
Gavonc: see cafone.
Get a place ready: to find a burial site.
Gift: a bribe.
Give a pass: to grant a reprieve from being whacked.
Going: about to be whacked.
Going south: stealing, passing money under the table, going on the lam.
Goumada: see comare.
Guests of the state or Guests of the government: going to prison, doing time.

H

- Hit: to murder; also see whack.
Hot place: a location suspected of being the target of law enforcement or surveillance.

I

- Icc: to murder; see burn.

J

- Joint, the: prison; synonyms: the can, the pen, go away to college.
Juice: the interest paid to a loanshark for the loan; also see vig.

L

- Large: a thousand, a grand, a G.
Loanshark: someone who lends mob money at an exorbitant interest rate; a shylock.

M

- Made guy: an indoctrinated member of the Family. Essentially, you pledge your allegiance to the boss and the family for life. To even qualify, your mother has to be Italian.
- Madonn': Madonna, common expression meaning holy smoke, holy cow, etc.
- Make a marriage: to bring two parties together for legitimate or illegitimate Family issues.
- Mannagge: going to war with a rival clan or family.
- Message job: placing the bullet in someone's body such that a specific message is sent to that person's crew or family; see through the eye, and through the mouth.
- Mattresses, hitting the, taking to the: going to war with a rival Family or gang.
- Meat eater: a corrupt cop (not exclusively mobspeak).

N

- Nut, the: mobspeak for "the bottom line"; also the gross profit figure.

O

- Omertá: the code of silence and one of the premier vows taken when being sworn into the Family. Violation is punishable by death.
- Off the record: an action taken without the knowledge or approval of the Family.
- On the record: an action sanctioned by the Family.
- Outfit: a clan, or family within the Mafia.

P

- Paying tribute: giving the boss a cut of the deal.
- Piece: a gun.
- Pinched: to get caught by the cops.
- Points: percent of income; cut.
- Pop: to murder; see burn
- Problem: a liability, someone likely to be whacked.

R

- Rat: a member who violates Omertá; synonyms: squealer, canary, snitch, stool pigeon, yellow dog.

Till Death Do Us Part

S

- Shakedown: to blackmail or try to get money from someone; also to give someone a scare.
- Sly: the interest charged on loans by loansharks.
- Slylock: see loanshark
- Sit-down: a meeting with the Family administration to settle disputes.
- Skim: tax-free gambling profits, as in the money taken that is not reported to the IRS.
- Skipper: a capo.
- Stand-up guy: someone who refuses to rat out the Family no matter what the pressure, offer, or threat.
- Swag: stolen goods, also an acronym for "stolen without a gun."

T

- Taste: a percentage of the take. *ex: Tony gets a big taste from bookmaking or racketeering but only a little taste from medical fraud.*
- Tax: to take a percentage of someone's earnings.
- This thing of ours: a mob family, or the entire mob.

U

- Underboss: the second in command to the boss.

V

- Vig: the interest payment on a loan from a loanshark (short for "vigorish"). Synonym: juice.
- Vouch for: to personally guarantee--with one's life--the reputation of someone dealing with the Family.

W

- Walk talk, take a walk: to conduct a sensitive discussion while striding up and down the block to avoid being overheard on those pesky eavesdropping devices.
- Wearing it: showing off one's status in the organization by dressing the part. "Wearing it" usually involves an Italian suit, a pinky ring, a hankie in the breast pocket, gold cufflinks, and other ornamentation. Silvio has his own inimitable way of wearing it.
- Whack: to murder; also clip, hit, pop, burn, put a contract out.
- Wiseguy: a made guy. Whack: to murder; see burn.