

Period Slang

Here's a brief list of gangster-era slang, especially useful for a period **LEVERAGE** game. It's mostly street and underworld terms, with only a few "general usage" bits of slang for color. Pepper your Supporting Characters' speech with these words to add some authenticity, but remember that less is more; use too many bits of period slang at once and you could sound corny, or unintelligible. If your Supporting Characters sound like they came out of the classic *Star Trek* episode "A Piece of the Action," you've gone too far.

Big house: Federal or State Prison.

Brace (someone): to grab, or shake down.

Broad/dame/doll/skirt: a female, usually young or attractive.

Bulls: police (or, more commonly, prison guards).

Button man: a professional killer.

Canary: a female singer.

Carry a torch: unrequited love.

Cats/hepcats: fans of swing music.

Cheese it!: hide, or hide incriminating evidence.

Chicago overcoat: a coffin.

Chicago typewriter: a Thompson submachine gun.

Chisel: to swindle, or cheat.

Copper: a police officer.

Dick/gumshoe/flatfoot: a detective, private or otherwise.

Dingus: thing.

Duck soup, piece of cake: an easy task.

Gat/rod/heater: a gun (these words were apparently not as commonly used in real life as they were in the movies).

Good egg/bad egg: a good or bad person.

Grilled: questioned intensely, interrogated.

Gun moll: a female thief (from the yiddish gonif), sometimes also used to refer to a mobster's girlfriend.

Gunsel: a submissive homosexual male (the term is used as an insult, not a literal description). Due to a common misunderstanding of dialog in *The Maltese Falcon*, most people today think this word refers to a gunman or a low-level criminal.

Flathead: someone who doesn't tip.

Hock shop: a pawn shop.

Hooch/booze: liquor.

Horn: a telephone.

June bug, vigorish: the interest on a loan shark's loan.

Keystone: folding money.

Lothario: a sleazy "romantic" type.

Newsie: a newspaper vendor.

On the make: looking for a sexual encounter.

Packing heat: carrying a gun.

Pal: used insincerely, toward someone who is not an actual friend.

Palooka: a boxer with limited skills, but lots of endurance.

Rube: an unsophisticated person.

Skid row: a slum street frequented by homeless drunks.

Stool pigeon: a police informant.

Tomato/dish: a very attractive woman.

Torpedo/trigger man: a hired gunman.

Yegg: a safecracker with limited skills.



New Talents for Leverage

New Talents are provided below for a **LEVERAGE** game set in the gangster era. Many of them are tailored to a specific feature, technology or social role for the time period, but some of them could be added into a modern **LEVERAGE** game with a bit of tweaking.

Even the period-specific Talents might be useful for a Crewmember who maintains an antiquated skill set because it might turn out to be useful, or for someone who is just “old school.” (Jimmy Ford, I’m looking at you.)

While many of these assume male characters because of the time period, feel free to adjust them to suit the Crewmember you want to play.

Open Talents

These Talents work for any Crewmember active in the ‘20s through the post-war ‘40s. While most Talents represent things a Crewmember knows how to do, these represent who a Crewmember is, and how society reacts to that.

Of this set, only Hardboiled, Rube (likely renamed “Hick”), and Wise Guy work well for a modern-day Crewmember.

Hardboiled

You’ve seen it all, out here on the mean streets. Not much ruffles your feathers any more.

ROLE: Any

ACTIVATION: You are the target of an intimidation attempt through violence or the threat of violence.

EFFECT: Add a **D8** to your roll. Spend a Plot Point to make it a **D10**.

Just a Dame...

It’s a sad fact that the further back in history you go, the harder it is to be taken seriously when you’re a woman. Still, women of any time period learn to use the tools available to them to their advantage.

ROLE: Any

ACTIVATION: You’re female (or disguised as a female) interacting with one or more males, and trying to appear innocuous.

EFFECT: Add a **D6** to any Face Action that depends upon your “helpless/hapless female” persona. Step it up to a **D8** if you actively flirt with one (or more) of the men in the scene.

Juvenile Delinquent

Crooks often get their start at a young age, either mentored by an older criminal, or out of necessity by living on the streets. It’s a rough life and a dangerous one, but you learn things that most adults never know. Simple survival becomes a crash course in theft and con-artistry. There are advantages to being small and easily overlooked.

ROLE: Any

ACTIVATION: You’re a child (or small enough to be mistaken for one), and trying to look like an innocent bystander.

EFFECT: You gain **JUST A KID** as a **D6** Asset; this can be stepped up with Plot Points normally. The Asset is lost if you take an Action that shows your true nature.



Rube

Well, in your case, ex-rube. You were born in a small town, somewhere far away from the bright lights of the big city. Like a moth to a flame, you were drawn to those lights. Nowadays you're as savvy as any city slicker, but the "Yes, sir; no, ma'am" way of speaking and the country-fried accent are always right on the tip of your tongue. In this business, the best thing of all is to be underestimated.

ROLE: Any

ACTIVATION: You're rolling in a Face Action that involves pretending to let someone take advantage of you.

EFFECT: Add a die equal to your Grifter die to the roll. If the Fixer gives you an Opportunity when he tries to raise the stakes, step up the additional die (maximum of **D12**) for the rest of the Action.

Wise Guy

You are, or were, a close associate of organized crime. Maybe you were a member of one of the Five Families, or maybe you just know people who know people. Knowing who's connected to who gives you an edge when you're navigating the city's dark underworld.

ROLE: Any

ACTIVATION: You spend a scene making contacts with the seamy side of society (or spend a Plot Point to narrate a flashback to such a scene).

EFFECT: Create a **D8** Asset that describes how you are "in the know" about the current situation. Alternatively, step back a Complication related to organized crime that is affecting a member of your Crew.



Hitter

Hitters throughout history have all done the same things. Only the tools change—and those don't change very much. A gun is a gun, modern laser-sights or no; and a knife is a knife all the way back to the Bronze Age.

Hitters in this time period can use almost all the Talents in the **LEVERAGE** rulebook and the *Hitters, Hackers, and Thieves* supplement, except some of the modern fighting styles; most fights are settled with straightforward boxing, or less civilized moves.

Firearms are common and easy to get, and mobsters aren't reluctant to use them. A Hitter in your game might be, though; killing people attracts attention from the cops, and killing the wrong people can attract attention from the mob—very, very bad attention.

Most of the new Talents listed here can make the transition into the modern day unchanged.

Covering Fire

Killing is all too easy, and all too permanent. Usually you can find better ways to solve your problems. When there's a lot of lead in the air, though, anything can happen—most of it bad. One good thing about all those bullets: it makes the other guys keep their heads down.

ROLE: Hitter

ACTIVATION: You are taking a Fight Action using a firearm.

EFFECT: Create a **D8** RAINING BULLETS Asset. If you have an automatic weapon (such as a **TOMMY GUN**) in hand, spend a Plot Point to make it a **D10** Asset.

Enforcer

You've got mob associations; maybe you even have a fancy nickname. That comes with a downside, sure, but striking terror into the hearts of anyone you get introduced to is a pretty potent upside.

ROLE: Hitter

ACTIVATION: When you take an Action to intimidate someone, and you mention your name.

EFFECT: Add a **D6** to your die roll, and include a third die in your result.