

NEWS LESSON

Why Is "Mogging" the Word of the Year?

BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Can a word lose its original meaning completely?
2. Why do new words spread so quickly online?
3. Should dictionaries record slang, or only formal language?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**outperforming**	☐	A	online spaces where some men talk about status and dominance
2	**upstaged**	☐	B	very impressive to look at
3	**spectacular**	☐	C	showing that you are happy about something good
4	**manosphere**	☐	D	invented a new word or phrase
5	**coined**	☐	E	a shorter form of a word
6	**clinicians**	☐	F	doing something better than someone else
7	**shortening**	☐	G	having your attention taken by someone else
8	**celebrating**	☐	H	doctors and nurses who treat patients

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Collins has chosen a word that teenagers use about dogs and footballers. It started somewhere much less friendly.

1 Collins announced its word of the year on 3 November, and the winner was mogging. The dictionary defines it as outperforming or outshining someone or something else, and says usage rose by 210% over the year. Alex Beecroft, Collins' managing director, said younger speakers tend to use it playfully and ironically, for the moment when somebody is upstaged. A spectacular goal mogs the rest of the match. A dog mogs the family photograph.

2 Like most slang, its meaning depends almost entirely on who is speaking and to whom. And this particular word has travelled a long way to arrive at the dog.

3 Mogging is believed to be a shortening of AMOG, from alpha male of the group. It appears around 2016 as a bodybuilding term for the most physically dominant man in a gym, and from there it became a verb in the manosphere, the loose collection of online spaces where some men discuss status, dominance and attractiveness. In that setting, to mog somebody was to make them look inferior in appearance, confidence or standing. The teasing was not affectionate.

4 That history has not vanished simply because the word is now funny. Some appearance-focused communities still encourage users to score faces and study individual features in detail. Clinicians at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital have warned about the related trend of looksmaxxing, and Dr Jasmine Reese, who runs its adolescent clinic, has described a sharp rise in teenagers and even pre-teens presenting with eating disorders and body dysmorphia, often after following restrictive advice found online. Some apps use artificial intelligence to give a face a rating.

5 The two ideas are related but they are not the same. Looksmaxxing is about trying to improve how you look. Mogging is about outshining somebody else. One can exist perfectly happily without the other.

6 None of this means that everyone using the word shares the beliefs of the people who coined it. The great majority do not, and a comment about a dog is just a comment about a dog. The more useful question is what happens when comparison runs constantly in the background. Celebrating somebody who has done something brilliantly is enjoyable. Being sorted into winners and losers by appearance, repeatedly, is a different experience.

7 Collins reaches its choice by tracking how often words turn up across a very large collection of written and spoken English, which is why a sharp rise matters more than whether a word is new. Mogging has been in circulation for roughly a decade, quietly, until this year.

8 It is worth saying that Collins and Dictionary.com made separate choices this year, and there is no single official word of the year. Collins also shortlisted firewave, ghost job and carspreading, which is the habit of carmakers building every new model longer, wider and heavier than the last.

Sources: Collins Dictionary, Word of the Year 2026; Associated Press, Collins Dictionary chooses mogging as its 2026 word of the year; Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, Looksmaxxing trend poses risks for boys and teens. Picture: .

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Collins reported that use of the word rose by 210% over the year. T F NG
2. The article says looksmaxxing and mogging mean the same thing. T F NG
3. Dr Jasmine Reese has published a book about the trend. T F NG
4. Collins and Dictionary.com made separate choices this year. T F NG
5. The article says everyone using the word shares the beliefs of its inventors. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

affectionate	dominance	heavier	inferior	ironically	nervous	rating	widespread

1. Younger speakers tend to use the word playfully and _____ .
2. In the manosphere, men discuss status, attractiveness and _____ over others.
3. To mog somebody was to make them look _____ in appearance or confidence.
4. Some apps use artificial intelligence to give a face a _____ out of ten.
5. Carspreading means carmakers make each new model longer, wider and _____ than the last.
6. The teasing in those online spaces was not _____ at all, because it was meant to make people feel small.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Collins _____ its word of the year on 3 November. (ANNOUNCE)
2. Mogging is _____ to be a shortening of AMOG. (BELIEVE)
3. That history has not _____ simply because the word is now funny. (VANISH)
4. The word had _____ quietly for about ten years before Collins chose it. (CIRCULATE)
5. One of the two ideas can _____ happily without the other. (EXIST)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Many adjectives, verbs and nouns need a fixed preposition. Learn them as chunks, such as depend on and a rise in.

about against by of on towards with

1. Its meaning depends almost entirely _____ who is speaking.
2. Looksmaxxing is _____ trying to improve how you look.
3. The word is believed to be a shortening _____ AMOG.
4. Doctors have seen a rise in teenagers presenting _____ eating disorders.
5. Collins reaches its choice _____ tracking how often words appear.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Does it matter where a word came from if nobody using it knows?
2. Why might apps that rate people's faces be harmful?
3. Which of Collins' other words would you have chosen: firewave, ghost job or carspreading?

9 Role-play: is it just a joke?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the parent

You read that mogging began in gyms and online groups that ranked people by looks. Your teenager uses the word all the time. Ask what it means to them. Decide if they can keep using it.

Student B · the teenager

You use mogging as a joke about dogs, football and photos. Explain why it's harmless. Say what your friends mean by it. Try to keep using it.

Useful phrases

I read where that word comes from.
What do you and your friends mean by it?
It's just a joke, I promise.
I'm not sure it's harmless, though.
Would you say it to someone who wasn't laughing?
Let's agree to be careful with it.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the parent change their mind, and why?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 F · 2 G · 3 B · 4 A · 5 D · 6 H · 7 E · 8 C

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 ironically · 2 dominance · 3 inferior · 4 rating · 5 heavier · 6 affectionate

6 Verb forms

1 announced · 2 believed · 3 vanished · 4 circulated · 5 exist

7 Language focus

1 on · 2 about · 3 of · 4 with · 5 by

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