

## TWO WORDS

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[Assignment: Define a currently popular slang term or phrase. You may use several techniques to develop your definition: exemplification, comparison, description, narration, negation. Or you may wish to use more than one defining strategy. Through the process of definition your readers must have a clear understanding of the term you have chosen.]

(1) My favorite slang term of late has come to symbolize much more than its initially crude connotation; it has grown to envelop and define a very private, intimate circle of friends. What began a few months ago as a way to insult some one without stooping to the gauche, unrefined, and high-schoolish "F--- you!" has surpassed any possible preconception or wildest expectation of what its germination might yield and has blossomed into a virtual dictionary of nonverbal communication. The term "Two words . . ." has come to convey any one of a hundred different messages. "Two words" is the "aloha" of Valparaiso University (or at least my little corner of VU).

(2) Although the term's origin cannot be traced back to a single time or event, it seems to have come about in much the same way as the phrase, "Get a haircut," which is equally ambiguous yet still full of meaning. At one point or another, the term "Two words," must have slipped through the gap between someone's lips and, quite by chance, entered into a conversation. Since then, the extension of two fingers (in the same style as Churchill's "V for Victory" sign) has come to nonverbally signify the term. At the same moment, however, this slang expression is not an attempt to identify with the past but rather a straightforward shot toward communicating with both simplicity and efficiency--and perhaps more than a little fun.

(3) "Two words!" said with a dropped jaw and bulging eyes most often means surprised pleasure or a display of general approval. The proper English equivalent might parallel such expressions as, "All right!" "Looks good!" or "I like-it!" ("Like-it," according to one source, is a complex compound word that qualifies for the official count of "one word.") On the other hand, "Two words?" intoned in a quiet manner that could easily be mistaken for a question (due to the intensity of pitch and the accompanying raised eyebrows) usually flags an implicit statement that is pertinent to the immediate situation, and is singularly affirmative and polite in nature. Examples include, "Thank you," "Would you?" "It's appreciated," and the concern-laden, "Are you okay?"

(4) Admittedly, the term has retained some of its original connotation, but even in this instance we ex-

press ourselves in such a manner only to our closest friends. Parents may never fully understand the implications of profanity in their fullest scope, but to many of us, even the dreaded "F--- you!" has both a positive and a negative connotation, just as an apple tree has both sweet and sour apples. Such is the case with the term "Two words." Enemies might be ignored, but friends will be surely cursed at.

(5) On more than one occasion, "Two words" has been said without having first had the words pass through the brain for interpretation and/or information. In such cases, each party has supplied his or her own meaning and significance to the term, and the connotation that best fits the particular situation is usually the one that is adopted as having been intended. But, as with the Hawaiian "aloha," our "Two words" has grown more complex and more centered in its definition with each new day of the term's existence.

(6) Through some sort of socialization process, the term has developed its own code of proper etiquette, and there are times to use and times not to use. Seemingly, only those of us comprising the "in" crowd have evolved to the degree that we might differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate situations in which the Valpo vernacular may be used without repercussion or misunderstanding. For instance, one would not use the phrase in a particularly delicate or emotion-ridden situation, because it is not intended to be a serious substitute for the sort of communication that is best handled by our hands and our hearts; rather it is intended as a symbol of unity. As busy as my friends and I may become, this slang term will always indicate to us an era when we gathered freely and spontaneously to contemplate the dicta of our time, or to make a less serious but equally meaningful Seven-Eleven raid. Passing one another amid the vastness of the Tundra, we will sense the significance of the simple phrase, "Two words, my friend." (Or in certain instances, "Two words, Babe.")

(7) Perhaps it is the unfinished infinity of the circle that grips at me as I realize that, regardless of its origin, "Two words" has borne fruit, and its seeds continue to be planted around this campus, away from Dau-Kreinherder, through a pollination process that bears no regard for academic class or place of residence. I've heard the phrase "Two words," spoken at the Union, the AC/CC, over at Neils, and even in far-off DeMotte. (My sources have confirmed a whispered "Two words" having been heard in the Moellering Library periodical room.) Truly, we will soon have a second, largely nonverbal, common language. A picture may paint a thousand words, but the term "Two words" says volumes--at least to those of us who look and listen.