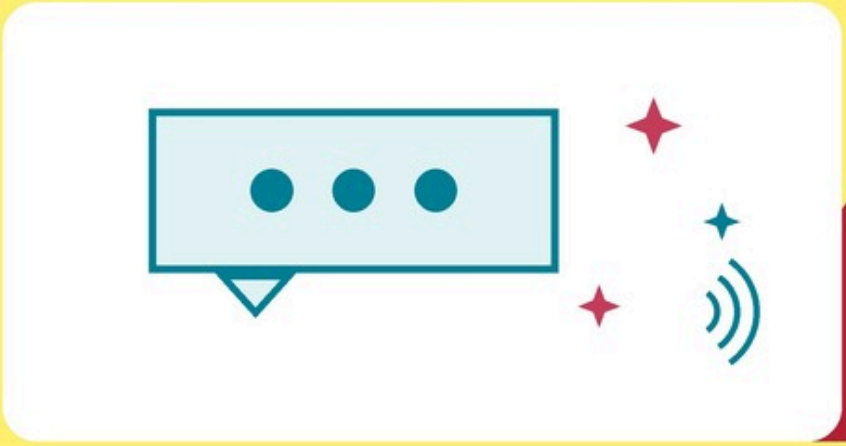
THE PROOF SERIES

Millennial Proof

A playful guide to millennial slang



PROUDLY CANADIAN

John Marshall



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Millennial Proof: A Playful Guide to Millennial Slang

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

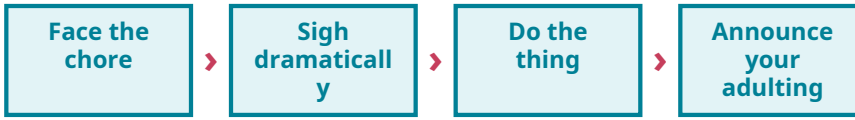
By John Marshall

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THE DREADED VERB

Adulting

Doing your taxes, defrosting the freezer, calling the dentist before the toothache wins — that's adulting. It's what millennials call the act of being a grown-up, usually said with the weary pride of someone who has just ironed a shirt successfully.



1. **What it means** Performing responsible grown-up tasks, especially the boring ones nobody teaches you. Paying a bill on time is adulting. Remembering to buy toilet paper before it runs out is advanced adulting.
2. **How it's used** Usually as a verb, often with exhaustion attached: 'I can't come over, I'm adulting today.' The sentence that follows is almost always about paperwork, plumbing, or panic.
3. **Why it's funny** Because their parents did the same chores without needing a trophy word for it. Millennials know this. The word is the joke — and the therapy.
4. **Say it today** Try it next time you book your own dentist appointment: 'Sorry I'm late, I was adulting.' Older relatives will laugh. Millennials will respect the grind.

Good to know: The word peaked around 2016, when half the internet was simultaneously congratulating itself for folding laundry. It stuck around because the feeling never left.

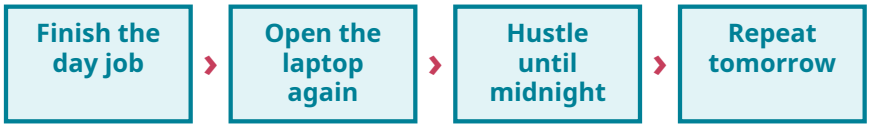
Take care: Don't tease them about it — they're in on the joke. Rolling your eyes at 'adulting' is like heckling someone at their own roast.

> **A familiar moment:** A millennial in Saskatoon called her mom in tears of joy because she had successfully unclogged a sink with a plunger on the first try. Her mom said, 'That's just plumbing, dear.' The daughter replied, 'No, Mom. That's ADULTING.'

THE SECOND PAYCHEQUE

Side hustle

The job after the job. A side hustle is the freelance gig, Etsy shop, weekend catering gig, or reselling business a millennial runs on top of their actual employment — because one salary rarely covers the rent anymore.



1. **What it means** Any income stream outside the 9-to-5. Walking dogs, designing logos, selling vintage finds — if it pays and happens after hours, it's a side hustle.
2. **Why it exists** Millennials entered the workforce during a recession, watched house prices sprint away from wages, and adapted. The side hustle isn't ambition — it's arithmetic.
3. **How it's spoken of** With a mix of pride and fatigue. 'How was your weekend?' 'Great — I finished 40 custom orders.' Nobody says 'side hustle' cheerfully at 11 p.m. on a Sunday.
4. **Say it today** Ask a millennial about theirs and mean it: 'What's your side hustle these days?' You'll get a 20-minute answer. Clear your schedule.

Good to know: This generation turned the gig into a badge of honour. Where their parents had one career, millennials have a portfolio — and a spreadsheet tracking all of it.

Take care: Never call it 'just a hobby.' To them, it is a second job with receipts. Dismiss it and you'll hear about the tax forms.

> **A familiar moment:** A Toronto millennial worked days at a bank and nights restoring old furniture. When a coworker asked why, she said, 'My mortgage needs a side hustle, so I have one.' The dresser she refinished now sits in her grandmother's living room.

THE WORKPLACE SHUFFLE

Gig economy

The vast machine of app-based odd jobs: driving, delivering, designing, dog-walking — work doled out in gigs rather than careers. Millennials didn't invent it, but they were the first generation to graduate straight into it.



1. **What it means** An economy of short-term tasks instead of permanent jobs. No pension, no water cooler, no 'see you Monday' — just the next gig pinging on your phone.
2. **The upside** Flexibility. Work when you want, where you want, in whatever pants you want. For a generation that values freedom over corner offices, that matters.
3. **The downside** No safety net. The gig economy pays for the gig and nothing else — no sick days, no benefits, no guarantee tomorrow has work at all.
4. **Say it today** Use it as the umbrella term: 'The gig economy really changed how people work, eh?' You will sound informed. You will also sound like the news, but that's fine.

Good to know: Estimates say a huge share of millennials have done gig work at some point. For many it was the first job; for some it became the only job.

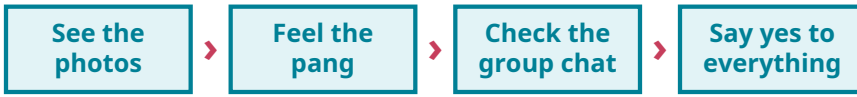
Take care: Don't romanticize it and don't pity it. Some millennials love the freedom; others are trapped by it. Ask which one before opining.

> **A familiar moment:** A millennial in Vancouver drove for a ride app, delivered groceries, and did freelance design — three apps, one phone, zero bosses. When his dad asked what company he worked for, he held up his phone and said, 'All of them. None of them.'

THE FEAR OF MISSING OUT

FOMO

Fear Of Missing Out — the low-grade panic that everyone else is at a better party, a better brunch, a better life. Pronounced 'foh-moh,' it's the reason your millennial relative checks their phone at the cottage.



1. **What it means** The anxious feeling that something fun is happening without you. Four letters that explain why nobody can just enjoy a quiet evening anymore.
2. **Where it lives** Social media, obviously. Every photo of a rooftop patio is a tiny dagger. Millennials know the photos are staged and feel the FOMO anyway — that's the cruel genius of it.
3. **The physical symptoms** Restlessness, compulsive scrolling, and saying yes to plans you don't actually want. The classic cure is going to the thing and discovering it was fine, actually.
4. **Say it today** Perfectly deployed as a joke: 'I have FOMO about your bridge club, is there a waiting list?' Self-aware FOMO is basically a personality trait now.

Good to know: The term was coined around 2004 and exploded with smartphones. Millennials were the first generation to carry everyone else's highlight reel in their pocket.

Take care: Don't confuse FOMO with shallowness. It's a real anxiety — laughing at it is fine, dismissing it isn't.

> **A familiar moment:** A millennial skipped a weekend trip to save money, then spent the whole weekend watching her friends' cottage photos roll in. By Sunday she had booked the next trip, the trip after that, and — briefly — a canoe she did not need.

THE JOY OF MISSING OUT

JOMO

The Joy Of Missing Out — FOMO's calmer, better-adjusted sibling. JOMO is the deep satisfaction of staying home in your pyjamas while everyone else is at a loud bar, and knowing you made the right call.

Decline the invite › **Lock the door** › **Embrace the quiet** › **Feel smug about it**

1. **What it means** Choosing to skip the thing and loving your choice. Pronounced 'joh-moh.' It's FOMO after therapy, a yoga class, and a good night's sleep.
2. **The vibe** Candle lit. Phone on silent. Leftovers that are somehow better than the restaurant. JOMO is not giving up — it's opting out on purpose.
3. **Who embraces it** Tired millennials, mostly. After a decade of FOMO-driven brunches, an entire generation discovered that the couch is, in fact, the best seat in the house.
4. **Say it today** When you decline plans with zero guilt: 'Sorry, can't — I'm having a JOMO night.' Millennials will nod like you've just quoted scripture.

Good to know: JOMO rose as the antidote to FOMO around the mid-2010s. It's less a slang term than a lifestyle philosophy with an acronym.

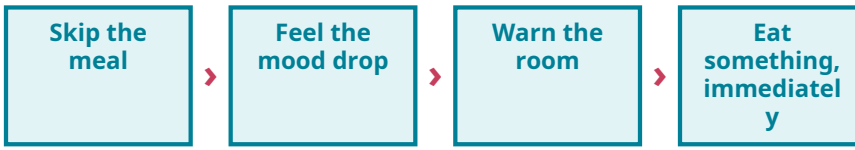
Take care: JOMO is a choice, not an excuse — don't use it to dodge every obligation. Even joy has a calendar.

> **A familiar moment:** A millennial dad turned down a stag weekend in Montreal, stayed home, and spent Saturday building a blanket fort with his kids. He posted one photo with the caption 'JOMO.' It got more likes than any bar photo he'd ever posted.

THE HUNGER-ANGER

Hangry

Hungry plus angry — the state where your stomach is empty and your patience is emptier. Millennials didn't invent being cranky without lunch, but they gave it a name and a medical-sounding legitimacy.



1. **What it means** That specific irritability that arrives when lunch is late. You're not mad at anyone; you're mad at the concept of waiting. Snacks are the only diplomacy.
2. **The science** It's real, by the way. Low blood sugar genuinely makes people grumpy. Millennials just diagnosed a universal human condition and turned it into a personality trait.
3. **How it's used** As a warning label: 'I'm getting hangry.' This is not a complaint — it's a weather advisory. Heed it or face the storm.
4. **Say it today** Use it before a family dinner runs late: 'Folks, I'm getting hangry.' You'll be handed a dinner roll within 90 seconds. Guaranteed.

Good to know: The word actually dates back to the early 1900s, but millennials mainlined it into everyday speech in the 2010s. Old word, new fame.

Take care: Never tell a hangry person to calm down. Feed them first, philosophize later. This is a law of nature.

> **A familiar moment:** A millennial in Calgary once ended a perfectly good date because the restaurant lost their reservation and the wait stretched past an hour. She apologized later: 'I wasn't mad at you. I was hangry at the universe.' They're married now. He keeps granola bars in the car.

THE AFTER-FEAST SIESTA

Food coma

That heavy, glorious drowsiness after eating far too much — the Thanksgiving-turkey feeling, available year-round. Millennials upgraded 'I'm stuffed' to a full medical-sounding event.

Eat everything › Feel the heaviness › Claim the couch › Wake up in 40 minutes

1. **What it means** The deep lethargy that follows a massive meal. Your body has diverted all resources to digestion, and your brain is officially off duty.
2. **Peak scenarios** All-you-can-eat sushi, your grandmother's Christmas dinner, a poutine the size of a hubcap. The food coma is earned, never accidental — well, rarely.
3. **The protocol** Couch. Blanket. No plans. Attempting productivity during a food coma is like swimming in a snowsuit — technically possible, spiritually wrong.
4. **Say it today** After any big family meal: 'I'm in a food coma.' Everyone over 60 will understand instantly, even if they never called it that.

Good to know: Doctors call it postprandial somnolence — which is just 'food coma' wearing a lab coat. The turkey-tryptophan story is mostly myth; it's the sheer volume that does it.

Take care: A food coma after every meal isn't a lifestyle — it's a nap schedule. If it happens daily, the portions might be the problem.

> **A familiar moment:** At a Boxing Day dinner in Winnipeg, a millennial ate three plates, announced 'food coma incoming,' and fell asleep on the couch mid-sentence. His grandfather covered him with a blanket and whispered, 'In my day we called that Tuesday.'

THE HOME VACATION

Staycation

A vacation spent at home — or at least in your own city. Millennials took the old 'we can't afford to go away this year' and rebranded it as a lifestyle choice with its own hashtag.

Book the week off › **Ban the chores** › **Tour your own city** › **Brag about the savings**

1. **What it means** Time off without the travel. You sleep in your own bed, skip the airport, and play tourist in your own town — the museum you always meant to visit, the restaurant you've walked past for years.
2. **Why it caught on** Money, mostly. Flights cost a fortune, and the 2008 recession taught millennials to find joy within driving distance. Also: no jet lag, no lost luggage, no middle seats.
3. **The rules** A proper staycation bans chores and email. You're 'away' even though you're home. Laundry during a staycation is a violation of the treaty.
4. **Say it today** 'We're doing a staycation this year — finally trying all those downtown spots.' Say it with pride. You've earned the time off, wherever you spend it.

Good to know: The word surged after the 2008 recession and never really left. Tourism boards now market staycations officially — your hometown wants your vacation money too.

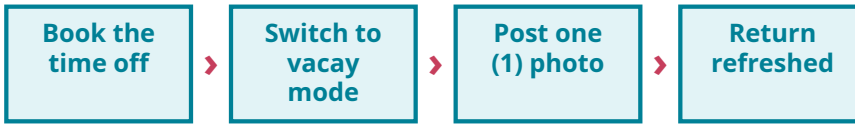
Take care: A staycation still needs boundaries. If you spend it renovating the bathroom, that's not a vacation — that's a project with snacks.

> **A familiar moment:** A millennial couple in Halifax took a staycation and did everything they'd never done: the harbour tour, the fancy brunch spot, the art gallery. Total cost: less than one plane ticket. They posted photos so good their friends assumed they'd gone to Europe.

THE SHORTENED ESCAPE

Vacay

Vacation, with the middle chopped out. 'Vacay' is what millennials call time off — shorter to say, easier to hashtag, and somehow more exciting than the full word ever managed.



1. **What it means** Exactly what 'vacation' means, minus two syllables and plus a whiff of sunshine. 'We're on vacay' sounds like fun; 'we're on vacation' sounds like paperwork.
2. **The millennial cut** This generation shortens everything: vacay, inspo, adorbs, totes. It's not laziness — it's efficiency. Why use three syllables when two will do?
3. **Where you'll hear it** Out-of-office emails, Instagram captions, group chats. 'VACAY MODE: ON' is practically a legal status among millennials under 40.
4. **Say it today** Drop it casually: 'We're taking a little vacay up north.' You'll sound relaxed, modern, and like someone who owns sunglasses.

Good to know: Vacay has been around since the 1890s, believe it or not. Millennials didn't invent it; they just gave it a beach umbrella and a social media account.

Take care: Saying 'vacay' about a two-day trip to fix your parents' fence is a stretch. The word promises sunshine — deliver at least a little of it.

> **A familiar moment:** A millennial's out-of-office reply read: 'On vacay. Back Tuesday. For emergencies, define emergency.' Her boss — a Gen Xer — replied, 'Enjoy your vacay.' and quietly updated his own email signature.

THE PINTEREST FUEL

Inspo

Inspiration, trimmed for speed. 'Inspo' is the spark millennials go hunting for online — outfit inspo, kitchen inspo, wedding inspo — a whole aesthetic economy running on a two-syllable word.

Feel stuck › **Scroll for inspo** › **Save 40 photos** › **Do 1 of the things**

1. **What it means** Anything that sparks an idea: a photo, a room, a stranger's jacket. 'I need some inspo' means 'show me something beautiful so my brain starts working.'
2. **Where it's gathered** Pinterest, Instagram, mood boards. Millennials collect inspo the way their grandparents collected recipes — in vast, organized, never-actually-used archives.
3. **The categories** Home inspo, travel inspo, hair inspo, life inspo. If it can be photographed, it can be inspo. Your living room is someone's inspo right now. Congratulations.
4. **Say it today** 'I saw your garden — total inspo!' It's a compliment and a confession in one: I admire this and I am absolutely copying it.

Good to know: Inspo culture turned 'mood board' from a designer term into a household activity. Some millennials have inspo boards for lives they have no intention of living.

Take care: Inspo is a starting point, not a standard. Comparing your real kitchen to someone's inspo kitchen is a fast track to the sads.

> **A familiar moment:** A millennial spent three weeks gathering kitchen reno inspo — 200 pinned photos, colour swatches, a spreadsheet. Then she painted one wall yellow and called it done. 'The inspo was the journey,' she said. Her contractor disagreed.

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