

Funky, Feisty Английский
Lydia Razran Stone

The list that follows is a result of two motivations important in my life – to be of use to readers and to keep myself amused. The immediate impetus for it occurred when a Russian born translator I was chatting with at the recent conference, one who has an outstanding command of English, did not understand a word I had used – either grungy or grubby. I can't remember which but since they are near synonyms, I don't suppose it matters. Although some –y adjectives are mainstream standard English – easy, funny, witty, etc., the language turns out to have a largish group of adjectives ending in –y, ranging in style from rather informal/colloquial, e.g. *flighty*, *tawdry*, to downright slangy *cruddy*, *geeky*, to babytalk, *nummy*, *bitsy*. With the exception of savvy, none or vanishingly few of these, at least the ones I chose to include, appear to have ties to Latinate substrate of our language. With the exception of two of clearly German origin, cranky and kitschy, and a handful from Yiddish, they look to my unexpert eye as if they are all indigenous to English, although who knows now what may have been or might be borrowed into another language from English at the slightest provocation. It therefore seemed reasonable that some or many of these words might remain mysterious or at least confusing to some of our non-native English speaking members and I decided to compile a list.

My criteria for inclusion were that the words be –y adjectives from the styles noted above, and that their meaning would not be transparently derivable from the corresponding standard English noun. I thus ended up with three classes: 1) adjectives with clear standard English nouns as roots, but meanings that, though related, cannot easily be derived from the basic noun meaning, e.g., batty, breezy, or catchy; 2) adjectives with no discernible noun root daffy, feisty, finicky, grody etc. 3) adjectives with corresponding nouns that are also slang and may in some cases be secondary derivations from the adjectives, e.g. funky, grouchy, spunky and so forth. Many of them seem to straddle the border between classes.

The meaning dimension turned out to be interesting as well. A majority of them and arguably all can be described as having a meaning with a strong emotional or evaluative component. Several largish meaning clusters emerged. A fair number of the adjectives described the quality of being anywhere from charmingly eccentric to downright certifiable -- a sublist that starts with batty and ends with zany. A similarly largish cluster contains words meaning dirty, messy, disgusting, worn out, or generally of poor quality. A much smaller number describe the opposite qualities and only those like rather negative stodgy make any reference to being sane. Finally there's a group of words referring to rude and generally irascible behavior or character, grouchy, crabby, rowdy, snippy and so forth; one describing the unattractive, overweight, or unfashionable— tubby, frumpy, gawky, etc., one, which shades into the eccentric category, that refers to being high energy and spirited, and in particular having a disproportionate amount of “spunk” for one's intrinsic size or power, feisty, plucky, etc. (no one ever talks about a plucky superhero or giant.) Last there is a class of these words denoting the spurious, ostentatious, and overdone, flashy, glitzy, etc. as well as words like cutesy and folksy. I have no idea what general conclusion can be drawn from all this, but it does strike me that a great many of these words seem to have been generated in accordance with what an old psych textbook of mine called the “poo-poo” theory of the origin of language.

1. antsy – impatient and restless, possibly from anxious but more likely from ants in the pants
2. artsy- affecting or exaggerating the trappings of an artistic lifestyle, artsy-fartsy is even more negative-arty is a somewhat less negative variant of artsy
3. baggy- loosely fitting (or clothing or even skin) –generally considered negative unless it is a current fashion norm
4. ballsy-tough and courageous, frequently recklessly or offensively so, from slang term for testicles
5. batty – crazy, eccentric, perhaps with a touch of affection
6. bawdy-references that are humorously and good-naturedly, obscene, or at its mildest, sexually suggestive
7. beady-negative description of someone’s eyes-small and usually dark
8. beefy – fleshy to or just before the point of obesity
9. bitchy -- malicious, spiteful and domineering, almost always of a female
10. bitsy -- tiny, from bit (also bitty or itty-bitty)
11. bleary-refers to the blurred vision of someone with not enough sleep or just awakened or possibly weepy
12. blotchy-a complexion characterized by irregular coloration or blemishes
13. blubbery-with a great deal of unattractive fat (reference to the fat of a whale)
14. blustery – swaggering of a person; of weather, very windy
15. blowzy-disheveled and frequently also overweight
16. bolshy-tending to be quite or very left wing, negative connotation
17. blowsy-coarse and messy looking, especially of a woman
18. bossy-prone to give others order and tell them what to do
19. boxy-squarish
20. brassy-tastelessly loud and/or showy in appearance, especially of a woman
21. breezy—brisk, informal, offhand
22. broody – moody and depressed
23. bubbly-having effervescent high spirits
24. buggy-of a computer program or a system compared to it, full of problems
25. busty-of a woman, having a large chest-perhaps one out of proportion to the rest of her
26. burly – strongly built
27. cagy—wary and shrewdly protective of one’s own interests
28. campy- absurdly exaggerated, artificial, or affected usually in a humorous way
29. catchy – likely to attract the attention and stay in memory, of a slogan or tune
30. catty – sharp-tongued, spiteful and gossipy
31. chary-cautiously or suspiciously reluctant to do something-rather old fashioned
32. chancy-full of risk
33. chatty – prone to chatter, may not be negative
34. cheesy – cheap and of poor quality, also cheap and shabby in behavior
35. chintzy – cheap of an item or stingy of a person
36. choosy-selective (with less negative connotation than picky)
37. churchy –extremely pious, possibly with the negative connotation of intolerance
38. classy-first class i.e. good in general, or characteristic of the upper classes
39. chummy-friendly, often with connotation of inappropriate so

40. chunky – short and stout, sometimes a euphemism for fat; also as applied to jewelry and other fashion accessories, blocky and undelicate, but in style
41. cinchy—extremely easy, as of a task or test
42. clammy – damp, cold, and sticky or slimy
43. classy-first class i.e. good in general, or characteristic of the upper classes
44. clubby-clannish, exclusive, as of members of an exclusive club
45. clunky-large, squarish and awkward, the opposite of streamlined, not necessarily negative, for example of shoes that may be in fashion
46. cocky—conceited, overly pleased with oneself
47. comely-attractive, especially of a woman-rather old-fashioned term
48. courtly-having formal “perfect” manners as those of a 19th century member of a royal court
49. corny—banal, overused
50. crabby – irritable, bad-tempered and negative, either acutely or chronically
51. crafty-sly in getting what one wants; may also refer to people etc. liking to engage in various craft projects
52. crappy – bad, horrible in any sense
53. creepy – weird, eerie, refers to the sensation of insects crawling on the skin
54. crinkly-wrinkled, or creased
55. cruddy – of poor quality or dirty, evidently from crud meaning dried semen
56. crummy – poor in quality
57. crusty – old and irascible
58. cushy—soft, pleasant, undemanding
59. cutesy – intentionally, self-consciously and/or excessively cute, always negative
60. daffy – silly, foolish, giddy, probably with a tinge of affection
61. dewy-fresh as the morning dew, especially of a young woman’s complexion
62. dicey – risky, dangerous
63. diddly --vanishingly small, insignificant
64. dingy—dirty, dim, and/or squalid
65. dinky – small and insignificant
66. dippy – foolish, slightly insane, eccentric
67. ditzy – foolish, giddy, superficial
68. dodgy-of a person, dishonest or unreliable; or an activity apt to be dangerous or otherwise disappointing
69. dotty-eccentric, crazy in a generally harmless way
70. dowdy – lacking in style or taste or even slovenly, particularly of a woman’s appearance
71. dumpy – short and stout, lacking grace, particularly of a woman
72. dreamy-characteristic of one’s fondest dream, especially those of a young woman
73. dressy-usually of an occasion, requiring relatively formal clothes.
74. dusky-darkish, used to describe people’s skin color as a euphemism
75. earthy-of a person or how a person expresses himself-direct and uninhibited.
76. edgy – original meaning, high strung, nervous, too easily irritated; new-meaning, innovative on the “cutting edge”
77. feisty – spirited and lively, especially of a small or elderly person
78. fidgety – with many nervous movements, habits or behaviors
79. finicky – overly exacting in one’s demands or tastes, frequently with regard to food; also overly scrupulous

80. fishy—dubious, unconvincing, questionable, the reference is to the smell of fish
81. fizzy – effervescent, either in a physical or metaphorical sense
82. flaky – foolish, silly, irrational
83. flabby-of a person or a body, having substantial amount of loose fat; of an action, performance, etc. not tightly controlled, powerful or effective
84. flashy -- ostentatious
85. flighty- volatile, capricious
86. flimsy—lacking in strength, substance, or value
87. flinty-strong and stern
88. floppy-tending to hang limply, or move in a loose, limp way
89. folksy -- strikingly, artificially or exaggeratedly informal, friendly and familiar, may be positive, but more likely negative
90. foxy—original meaning sly and devious; newer meaning sexually attractive of a female, originally African-American usage
91. frilly-decorated with frills or overdecorated and elaborate
92. frisky – frolicsome, playful, playfully amorous
93. frizzy –tightly curled
94. frumpy – dull, dowdy
95. fuddy-duddy-of a person old-fashioned and fussy-frequently used as a noun
96. funky – smelling bad, computer use, functioning inelegantly but functioning; out of the main stream, odd-ball (peculiar) but appealing; “strange but cool;”bohemian
97. fussy – ill-tempered or irritable; fastidious, paying excessive attention to small details; over decorated
98. fusty-smelling of mildew, or by implication out moded
99. fuzzy—fluffy (like a plush toy or baby chick); indistinct in outline, vague (of a concept); of thinking, confused, muddled
100. gabby—overly talkative
101. gamy-of food or the like, smelling or tasting as if it has begun to rot
102. gangly-awkwardly tall and usually thin
103. gassy-used of a person, bombastic, boastful
104. gaudy – ostentatious, garish
105. gawky – awkward, large and gangling
106. geeky-socially inept without being reticent
107. giddy – overly exuberant and lighthearted, may also mean dizzy
108. gimpy—lame or crippled
109. glassy-in the phrase glassy-eyed-of a person dull and uninterested without animation
110. glitzy – ostentatious and shiny
111. gnarly-difficult, problematic, may also be used as general praise
112. gooey – sticky and viscous, fatuously sentimental or romantic
113. goofy-silly, foolish, or harmlessly eccentric
114. goony – foolish, dopey
115. goosy-goofy
116. grabby—grasping, over obvious or aggressive in the pursuit of one’s interests, having roving hands
117. gritty-of a person, showing courage and resolve; of, an opinion or treatmenttough and uncompromising

118. grody -- disgusting
119. groggy—not fully conscious or focussed from sleepiness, drugs, illness etc.
120. groovy—wonderful, pleasurable, euphoric, slang of the 1960s and 70's
121. grouchy – bad-tempered
122. grubby—dirty, soiled, possibly with a trace of affection as for a small child
123. grumpy –bad-tempered
124. grungy –filthy, covered with ingrained dirt
125. gunky-greasy
126. gushy-excessively complimentary
127. gutsy—courageous and spirited
128. hairy—in addition to primary meaning of covered with hair, difficult and complex, having numerous tedious and labor consuming details that must be dealt with
129. hammy-of an actor or acting; exaggerate, overly theatrical
130. handsy-tending to put one's hands uninvited on someone
131. hangry-angry or in a bad mood because of being hungry
132. hefty – large in quantity, strong and rugged
133. homey-of a place, cozy and comfortable, more broadly, unsophisticated, unpretensions
134. hokey—fake, spurious
135. horny – desirous of sexual intercourse, either at a particular moment, as a general character trait, or because of prolonged deprivation
136. huffy-easily annoyed or irritated, apt to take offence
137. husky – large and sturdy, may be used as a euphemism for overweight
138. icky – disgusting in any sense
139. iffy-hypothetical, uncertain; according to my mother, this word was popularized by President Roosevelt, who used to say, "Now, that's an iffy question."
140. indy-short for independent of a movie, meaning not backed by a big film company
141. itchy – aside from basic meaning, filled with restless craving, prurient, impatiently eager
142. itsy—tiny(also itsy-bitsy)
143. jaunty—cheerfully nonchalant in manner of appearance
144. jazzy—unrestrained, animated, flashy
145. jerky-marked by abrupt movement; of a person, contemptible
146. jittery-nervous, unable to relax
147. juicy-aside from full of juicy, interestingly scandalous
148. kinky—basic meaning is tightly curled; having some, possibly major, foible or peculiarity; associated with unusual or exotic sexual practices
149. kitschy—of a designed object, in poor taste, intentionally created to appeal to the lowest taste
150. klutzy-clumsy (from Yiddish)
151. kooky—eccentric, crazy, frequently with a tinge of affection
152. lanky—tall, lean and loose jointed
153. lippy-prone to argue, talk back
154. logy-sluggish in thought, or action
155. loony—crazy, irrational
156. loopy—crazy, eccentric, giddy
157. lousy-aside from full of lice, bad, poor quality
158. matchy-matchy-too coordinated, in a way that is no longer in style

159. matey—(overly) friendly and familiar in personal relationships
160. measly—poor, blighted contemptibly or unacceptably small or trivial, as a measly tip
161. mingy—cheap, stingy
162. moony – abstracted or dreamy particularly as a result of being in love
163. mopey—depressed, droopy
164. motley-incongruously varied
165. mousey—drab, timid, and quiet, used particular of a non-prepossessing female
166. mouthy-inclined to talk a lot and/or aggressively
167. muggy—hot, humid and uncomfortable
168. mushy—excessively tender, romantic or sentimental, mawkishly amorous, always used negatively
169. murky-dark and gloomy, not clear either of a liquid or something like an explanation
170. musty—moldy, mildewed, trite and old-fashioned
171. muzzy—confused, befuddled, groggy, indistinct
172. nappy-of hair, very frizzy
173. natty—smart and tidy in dress
174. nerdy—involved in scientific, technical, or other unusual or non-cool pursuits; socially inept or different and indifferent to the impression made on “cool” people
175. nervy-brazen (having a lot of nerve) not nervous
176. nifty-particularly good, effective, stylish, etc.
177. nitty-gritty=referring to necessary if uninteresting details
178. noodgy—importunate and annoying, nagging, from Yiddish
179. nosy—prying or overly inquisitive
180. nummy—delicious, usually a baby word
181. nutty—crazy, eccentric, frequently with tinge of affection
182. ornery-- stubborn
183. owly-disagreeable, negative, and uncooperative
184. pasty—pale and unwholesome looking, suggesting lack of fresh air and exercise
185. paunchy-having a protruding stomach
186. peachy-the color and texture of a peach, more generally very good, fine
187. peppy-full of energy possibly to excess
188. perky—sprightly, cheerful and energetic, used either positively or negatively
189. persnickety—excessively meticulous or fussy, of a task, requiring such qualities
190. pesky – persistent and annoying, especially of something small like a mosquito or younger sibling
191. picky-overly fastidious
192. piddly-extremely trivial
193. picky – overly fussy or choosy, especially about food
194. pissy—becoming drunk; irritable and overly critical
195. plucky—courageous, brave, especially applied to someone small or with little intrinsic power
196. plummy—choice, desirable
197. poky –small and cramped, prim and prissy; lacking style, interest, or excitement; annoyingly slow
198. poofy-puffed out of hair or clothing
199. portly-stout

200. pouty—sullen, sulky
201. preachy—having an annoying tendency to give moral advice
202. preppy—characteristic of those who attend expensive Eastern boarding schools, a certain style of conservative clothes, accent, etc. clean-cut, conservative, and upper class, possibly snobbish
203. prickly—causing or having a mild tingling sensation, of a person, prone to take offense readily
204. pricy—rather expensive
205. prissy—prim and precise; self-consciously proper; effeminate
206. pudgy—short and plump
207. pukey—nauseating
208. punchy—dazed, like a fighter who has taken too much punishment
209. punny—referring to a play on words meant to be but not necessarily considered funny
210. puny—slight or inferior in power and size
211. punchy – groggy as if from being punched in the head
212. pushy—over aggressive, especially in furthering one’s own interests
213. queasy—feeling mildly to moderately sick to one’s stomach
214. quirky—full of eccentricity, frequently affectionate
215. racy—risque
216. randy—lecherous, horny
217. rangy—long-legged and slender
218. ratty—in bad shape, unkempt, tattered or of poor quality
219. raunchy—lewd, vulgar
220. reedy –long and thin, frail, weak, of sounds, like a reed instrument
221. rickety – shaky, wobbly, unsound
222. ritzy—ultrafashionable, ostentatiously elegant
223. roomy—having a lot of space (as a noun,informal, roommate)
224. rowdy—boisterous, rough and unruly, as a crowd
225. sassy—fresh, impertinent, jaunty
226. salty—provocative, risqué
227. saucy—impudent, bold and lively
228. savvy—in the know, shrewd, “street smart”
229. scary—frightening
230. scatty—crazy, eccentric (British)
231. schlocky—of poor quality, especially if passed off as high quality or expensive, from Yiddish
232. schmaltzy—excessively, mawkishly sentimental, from the Yiddish word for chicken fat
233. scrappy—argumentative, belligerent
234. scraggly—ragged and unkempt
235. scrawny—gaunt and bony
236. screwy—somewhat crazy, eccentric; with something wrong about it, see fishy
237. scruffy—shabby, untidy
238. scummy—contemptible
239. scuzzy – disgusting, in any sense
240. seamy—sordid and disreputable

241. seedy –run down and shabby, squalid, weak or unwell; the reference is to plants going to seed
242. shabby—old, worn out, threadbare but not necessarily dirty or originally of poor quality; of behavior, ungenerous or dishonorable
243. shady –unreliable, likely to be dishonest or involved in crime
244. shifty –given to deception, evasion and fraud; furtive
245. shirty-British, irritable, prone to argue
246. shoddy—of pure quality
247. showy-ostentatious
248. shrimpy-undersized
249. skanky—disgusting, associated with whorish
250. skimpy-deficient in quantity or quality, meager
251. sleazy-flimsy, of poor quality, shabby, cheap behavior, marked by low ethical standards
252. slimy—covered with slime, highly distasteful in any sense
253. slinky-sleek and sinuous, of a woman, having somewhat serpentine attractiveness
254. smarmy-gushing, oily, insinuating
255. smutty-obscene or lascivious
256. snarky-ill-tempered
257. snazzy-stylish and attractive
258. snippy—curt, snappish
259. snooty—snobbish, supercilious
260. snotty—contemptible, showing unjustified arrogance or pride
261. soppy—wet and sloppy, mawkishly sentimental
262. soupy-too sentimental
263. spacey—vague and dreamy, absent-minded
264. spiffy –smart looking, splendid
265. spooky-eerie, uncanny
266. splotchy-having unpleasant irregular coloring
267. spunky—spirited and courageous, especially of someone small and devoid of intrinsic power
268. squirrely—unpredictable, impulsive, jumpy, nervous
269. squishy-unpleasantly soft and moist
270. stagy-excessively theatrical
271. starchy-of clothing or food, full of starch; of manner-unpleasantly formal
272. stately-having a dignified, unhurried and grand manner-of movement-unhurried
273. steamy—aside from basic meaning of hot and humid, marked by sexual heat
274. steely-of a person, coldly determined
275. sticky –basic meaning adhesive glutinous, also hot and humid, balky, disagreeable, and especially awkward to solve, as a sticky situation
276. stingy-ungenerous, miserly, cheap
277. stocky-compact, sturdy and relatively thick, more descriptive and less negative than other words with similar meaning
278. stodgy—boring, pedantic, unadventurous, extremely old fashioned
279. stubby-short and blunt, of a pencil, for example, or someone’s build
280. stuffy—of a room, stale and close, of a person, narrowly inflexible in standards of conduct, self-righteous

281. stumpy-short and thick
282. sulky –moodily silent, morose
283. surly-ill-natured, abrupt and rude
284. swanky—ostentatious, elegant, expensive, ritzy
285. tacky—1) sticky in the physical sense’ 2) low-class in any sense, cheap, shoddy; marked by cheap gaudiness
286. tatty-cheap, inferior
287. tawdry-cheap and gaudy, tastelessly showy
288. teensy—very tiny
289. testy—easily annoyed, quick tempered, caustic
290. tetchy-bad-tempered, extremely touchy
291. thorny-causing distress, difficult or trouble
292. tiddly—slightly drunk
293. tinny—aside from basic meaning of resembling the metal, empty, wordy, insignificant
294. toasty—cozy and warm, from the expression warm as toast
295. touchy-likely to take offense at the slightest cause
296. touchy-feely-marked by (non-aggressive) excessive touching, openness and sharing of emotions,
297. trashy—cheap and worthless, especially of a woman, behaving in a cheap and immoral way
298. trendy-the very latest style or fad, someone who slavishly follows styles and fad
299. trippy-suggestive of a “trip” on psychedelic drugs or the culture associated with them
300. tubby-fat, rotund
301. twangy-of a tone of voice, sharply nasal and drawling
302. tweedy-suggestive of the academic life
303. uppity-self-important, arrogant
304. wacky – crazy, unconventional, frequently used affectionately
305. weedy –lean and scrawny
306. weensy-tiny
307. willowy-of a person, tall, slender and graceful
308. wimpy—cowardly, weak, indecisive
309. wishy-washy-lacking in strength of character or purpose
310. wispy-insubstantial, frail
311. wonky-describing someone preoccupied with arcane details in a specialized field or those details themselves
312. worldly-experienced and sophisticated; concerned with the material rather than the spiritual
313. woozy—dizzy, slightly nauseous and weak, as after anesthesia, befuddled
314. wussy-weak and timid
315. yucky- disgusting, unappetizing
316. yummy—tasty, delicious
317. zany—offbeat, exuberant, eccentric
318. zesty--piquant
319. zingy –lively
320. zippy—brisk, full of energy, or dash

