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## 10 Pennsylvania Dutch words you didn't know were unique to Lancaster County


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By Andrew Bossi

If you call yourself “doplic” after tripping over a curb, you may just be from Lancaster County.

And, if you are, you might find that there are some common local words and phrases you use that may be confusing people from outside the 

county.

We have compiled a list of some of these common words and phrases so that next time someone tells you “it’s making down outside,” you don’t leave your umbrella inside.

Dr. Mark Loudon from the University of Wisconsin who wrote a book titled, “Pennsylvania Dutch: The Story of an American Language,” was consulted to help dive deeper into the history and origins behind each of these words and phrases.

“The main ways that languages influence each other is through what are known as loanwords, loan translations and loan shifts,” Loudon said.

Loanwords are words borrowed from another language with minimal to no changes, Loudon said. Loan translations are phrases that are closely translated from one language to another and loan shifts are words that are modified to match a similar word in a different language, Loudon further explained.

If you’re ready to brush up on your Lancaster County slang, check out the list below.

### **Doplic:**

Doplic is a loanword. It comes from the Pennsylvania Dutch adjective “dappich,” which means clumsy, according to Loudon. Another variant is “doppy.”

### **Rutsching:**

Rutsching is another loanword that comes from the Pennsylvania Dutch verb “rutsche,” meaning to squirm. The term rutsching utilizes the English suffix “ing,” Butch Reigart, the dialect teacher at Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, explained. Reigart also mentioned that “rutschy” is used as an adjective to mean “can’t sit still.”

### **Spritz:**

This is another loanword that comes from the Pennsylvania Dutch word “schpritze,” meaning to sprinkle, spray, squirt, etc. This word can also be



found in the [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#).

## **Fasnacht:**

This is also a loanword that was taken directly from Pennsylvania Dutch word "[Faasnacht](#)," meaning Shrove Tuesday or a type of [doughnut](#) prepared on Shrove Tuesday.

## **"Make down"**

"Make down" is an example of a loan translation and comes from the Pennsylvania Dutch verb, "nunnermache," which means almost exactly what Lancaster natives say: "to make down." This phrase is used in reference to precipitation.

"Make down" can also be found in the [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#) as a verb meaning to rain or to snow.

## **"What for..."**

This is another loan translation from the Pennsylvania Dutch phrase "[Was fer...](#)," meaning "What kind of...," Louden said. Used in a sentence in these parts, one might hear "What for book is that?"

## **"How's that come?"**

"How's that come" directly translates from the Pennsylvania Dutch phrase "[Wie kummt sell](#)," meaning "why is that."

## **"Make the light out."**

Another loan translation meaning to turn the light off, the phrase "make the light out" originates from the Pennsylvania Dutch phrase "[Mach's licht aus](#)."

## **"Read up the room."**

"Read up the room" comes from a Scottish/Northern English dialect verb and was brought to Pennsylvania during colonial times, meaning to tidy up. Louden said it has Pennsylvania regionalism and is likely related to "rid" or "ready."

## **All:**



“All,” is an example of a loan shift and, as an adverb in German dialect, means “all gone.”

Merriam-Webster Dictionary's seventh entry also defines “all” as “used up” or “entirely consumed.”

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