

Get your chicken strings out of my ditch box—Part 2



Director of Education
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Some years back, I wrote an article about the use of jargon and slang when writing for the union titled “Get your chicken strings out of my ditch box.” My point was that postal jargon, terms familiar to most postal employees and found in official postal communication, such as “casing mail,” “204-b” and “opting,” should be limited to things written to be read by postal employees, like grievances, newsletters and local memorandums. Postal slang, words or phrases that are only used in certain localities and not found in official communication, like “chicken strings” and “ditch box,” should be avoided. If you don’t know what a ditch box is, I rest my case.

Nevertheless, I find postal slang fascinating (I don’t get out much), so I asked carriers on a social media group to post the slang terms used in their offices. I received more than 400 comments in under 24 hours. Most of them were quite clever, others made me wonder, “How did they come up with that?” and some I can’t repeat, but I found them amusing. So I thought I’d share some of them with you:

Small parcels are called: *spurs, peeps, chunkies, goobers, lumpies, slugs, lumps, chunks.*

Sorting mail into a carrier case is called: *casing, racking, filing, sticking, poking, shuffling.*

When you get out of the truck on a mounted route to deliver mail to a box that is not located at the curb, it is called: *in-and-out, dismount, stop-and-hop, milk run, jump stop, get down, pop out, hop, scoot, shotgun.*

A route that is considered easy is a: *cake route, peanut route, retirement route, gravy route.*

A PS 3996 is referred to as a: *“96,” slough slip, bump slip,*

aux slip, OT slip, money slip, help slip.

A 3849 is called a: *peach puppy, pink slip, yellow slip, ditch slip, notice left.*

The tall container at your case that the clerks put your flats in is called a: *coffin, fiber dome, flat case, telephone booth, elephant ear, hod.*

Carriers who frequently carry routes faster than the regular are called: *runners, route killers, flamers, flashers.*

Full coverages that regularly occur are called: *Red Plums, Advos, shoppers, circulars, circs, box-holders, boxers, door-to-doors.*

A carrier technician assignment is called a: *jump-set, string, swing, key, roll, U-set.*

When you wrap letter mail for an address inside of the flat mail, rural-style, it’s called _____ the mail: *Chicagoing, booking, sandwiching, wrapping, shot-gunning, rolling.*

Some of the various pieces of equipment used to move mail around the office are called: *wire cons, cages, cons, wires, pumpkins, gondolas, nutting truck, bread carts, hampers, nutters, dock carts, battlegons, war carts, knockers, skids, tonkas, gaylords, pig pens, U-carts, laundry carts, APCs.*

The clear plastic bags containing mail that was damaged by postal equipment are called: *body bags.*

When you have to carry part of another carrier’s route, that part is called a: *pivot, drag, piece, piece of pie, bump, aux, push, slice, boost, split, leg, dog-leg, kick off, swing, hand-off, slough, pigtail, beef, ditch.*

And my favorite: When you come back thinking you will get off in eight hours and they hand you part of another route to carry, you just received a surprise pie.

And in case you don’t already know, *chicken strings* are tire chains in Wenatchee, WA, and a *ditch box* is what carriers in Butte, MT, call relay boxes.

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