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Street cred

Professor David Crystal

Cred, short for 'credibility', that is, among your peer group. It started out in the late 1970s, in the phrase, 'street cred', which meant having reputation or status among your mates or your friends on the street.

And then it became more general, the phrase became fashionable, trendy, that was the meaning. It had an adjective use, people said things like, 'That's a cred show!' or 'You're wearing cred jewellery!' – meaning fashionable jewellery, trendy jewellery.

But it was mainly as a noun that it came into wide-spread use. It meant sort of belief, or persuasiveness, or something that goes down well with an audience. A politician might be said to have 'zero cred when it comes to matters of security'. In other words, nobody believes what he says at all. Or rappers might be said to be 'battling for cred', in other words, getting an audience that likes them. Shows, cinema shows, theatre shows, might be said to have 'lots of cred' if they go down well. And this website has got a lot of cred!



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