

Owned!

Owned was born online. It was first used by hackers, was picked up by online gamers, and online gamers took it with them to online game forums. Game forum readers started *owning* each other and talking about how stuff “*owns*” in entertainment forums like IGN.com (a video game site) or IMDB.com (Internet movie data base). IGN and IMDB are pretty mainstream media sources. The rising popularity of these sites coincided with the development of Xbox Live (an online service for console based games that allows people to play together as if they were playing online) and fantasy sports. It was natural for internet savvy gamers and fanboys* to make the transition from managing a sports team on their PlayStations and Xboxs to managing “real” fantasy sports teams on the internet.

The more personal aspect of fantasy sports and Xbox Live made it possible for friends to *own* each other in online games or win a fantasy sports league on their home computers. Then later, upon seeing each other in person, further gloating could lead to talk of *ownage*. Thus the transition from the shadowy world of hackers and crackers to the glitzy pages of ESPN.com and finally into the common speech of electronically minded individuals was made. Today owned is defined in a number ways and a variety of owned derivatives have sprung up. A few examples of common colloquial definitions follow.

OWNED – according to my friend Tapioca Golden:

1. The description of a person who just got caught not knowing what’s going on.
2. Said to a person who is badly beaten in a game or competition.
3. A term you use among friends in a congenial way; as to sportingly rub in the fact that someone has just lost at something or has been insulted.
4. It is used as an actual insult online or in online gaming (both computer or console based gaming).

....According to Derek Markland:

5. It can be a way to express that you've defeated someone.

...My personal definition:

6. To own someone is to subjugate their pride or self esteem.

7. To perform an unrebutted sleight against another (like drink their beer, eat food that they had planned to eat, slap them in the face or publicly shame them).

Here is an illustrative story to highlight the rich context surrounding the use of *owned*:

In high school my friend Jack tried to give my other friend Derek a stink palm (which is where you wipe your hand between your sweaty butt cheeks before shaking someone's hand). To Jack's great dismay, and the delight of everyone else, his hand came out of his pants with a little piece of poop on his hand! Everyone laughed at Jack and he ran to the bathroom in shame.

Lots of *owning* went on in this story. First, Jack *owned* himself by revealing that he had a poopy butt and then compounded the *owning* by revealing the poop while *simultaneously* trying to own Derek. Thus Jack suffered 3x the *ownage*: once for having a poopy butt, once for showing everyone, and once for the reversal of fortune at having failed in his attempt to own Derek. Second, Derek *owned* Jack, or as some might say, he "*owned the shit out of Jack*", by immediately making fun of him for having poop on his hand in front of everyone else in class. Finally, I am *owning* Jack right now by telling you this story, and he gets *reowned* every time anyone tells this story.

As you can imagine, Jack was *really* embarrassed by this traumatic event, more embarrassed than he might have been if he had just tripped for instance. Events like this explain why a gradient of *ownage* exists (*ownage* is a noun that encapsulates the events that transpired during an owning – ex: "Did you see the Superbowl score? That was pure *ownage*!"), we can say that some thing has been *owned*, *owned HARD*, or we can use an *owned* derivative to express the degree of *ownage* that an event constitutes.

There are at least six leet*-based online spelling derivatives, but we will ignore those for now and focus instead on spoken derivatives. My friends and I commonly use these four owned-like terms, ranked in order of ascending severity: owned → pwined → raped → trowined.

Pwned is pronounced powned and came from people typing owned too fast and putting a p in at the beginning of owned instead of an o (they are close together on the keyboard). Pwned is nearly equal to owned in strength of ownage; but due to the fact that gamers unintentionally owned themselves by misspelling *owned*, *pwned* was adopted, and is now exchanged intentionally on message boards. *Pwned* is also used to lure unwitting “noobs”* into attempting to correct your misspelling, then *owning* them for not knowing what *pwned* means. This is why it has been assigned a slightly higher degree of severity.

Raped, like *owned*, when taken out of context, is nearly an unutterable word. However, in the online gaming context, where sexually charged young men play war games, *raped* means “I really really really owned you!” Here the speaker/typer intentionally pushes the limits of acceptable vulgarity to accentuate their opponent’s terrible defeat.

Trowned is a very clever word that Jack made up. It stands for “totally raped and owned” and is the additive sum of the disrespect one should feel if one were to both raped and owned at the same time. This term is used rarely, as there are not many cases when someone truly gets *trowned*, but for the witness and/or perpetrator of said *trowning* it is a glorious and often memorable event.

As I mentioned, when *owned* or *raped* are taken out of context, they sound really offensive. For most “outsiders” *owned* sounds like a racist term, reminiscent of slavery. “Insiders” do not associate any racist or actual slavish meaning with the word. A very subtle indicator of this fact lies in *owned* usage.

When a gamer tells someone that they, “just got *owned*”, they are referring to a transient event. The person who got owned was proverbially knocked down, but there is nothing keeping them from standing up and continuing on with what they were doing; they are bruised but not enslaved. The racist usage would be something like, “I own you - human being; you are my possession.” A person in this position is left permanently subjugated and has no hope of ever rising back up to their previous status.

I have to admit that offering a devil’s advocate’s defense of a word that even *sounds* like a racist term makes me feel uneasy. My goal here is not to defend or endorse

the usage of *owned*; it is simply to provide rich context for the interpretation of usages so that the reader may catch nuances that could otherwise be lost.

Owned is a controversial term when used in the presence of “outsiders”, so usage outside the home is restricted to places populated by those who share a common understanding of the word. It should never be said to anyone who has ever *actually been owned*. And commonsense discourages flagrant utterance anywhere. The sensitive alternative definitions of *owned* make it an unlikely addition to common speech and I think that that is part of the fun of the word. *Owned* is an insider term that identifies the speaker as someone who likes some very specific things. Two people could be sitting at a bar watching football and one guy says, “*Owned!!*” The other guy looks at him and smiles; now they know what each other are about – they are potential friends. It’s also possible that the second guy would take offense and punch the first guy in the face – owning him. It just goes to show that insider or outsider, everyone can get in on some ownage.

NOTES

**Fanboys* are defined as blind followers of a specific product, company, brand, or team; regardless of quality. They shun other products, and are vocal proponents of how great their favorite product is.

Leet is another internet term, which is a contraction and alteration in spelling of the word “elite.” Leet is the ever-changing dialect of internet lingo, it includes, but is not limited to: intentional misspellings, acronyms, spacing between letters, using numbers and punctuation as letters, alternating upper and lower case, and words which hold a different context online than IRL (in real life). Leet itself is modified often, and is sometimes written as 1337, in which 1=L(although 1 can be an I, and sometimes a t, depending on context), 3=E, and 7=T. This also helps individuals get around filters that would otherwise block out certain words, @\$\$, \$hit, etc.

Noobs, (or *n00bs*) is a colloquial version of the term *newbie* which is, in and of itself, a colloquialism referring to a person who is new to something, be it a game, a specific message board, etc. The term can have both pejorative and endearing contexts; the latter

more the case when used to describe oneself, as in “I’m still a n00b, so plz don’t own me too hard.”