THE OTHER NETWORK WRITERS' ROOM
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BARREL - More than one reference to (or joke about) the same thing. i.e., if you have a joke about Jews on one page and a joke about the Holocaust on the next, you're in a Jewish barrel.

BEAT (THE JOKE) - Punch it up. Make it funnier. i.e., That joke isn't working yet.

BLOW - A joke that ends a scene.

CLAM - A hackneyed or over-used joke. i.e., 'Houston, we have a problem'.

GO-TO SCENE - A scene where one character 'goes to' another and tells them what's happening. Usually used to elaborate plot or back-story.

HANG A LANTERN ON IT - Do something to make the joke or info stand out more.

JOKE BANK - A file where you put jokes that don't fit into a script for one reason or another, for use at some later date. Also known as the 'outs' file. Jokes get deposited, but rarely withdrawn.

A MARMEL - Landing really hard on the punchline of a joke. Named after comedian Steve Marmel. i.e., "If that last Batman movie was any gayer, the suit would've had a ZIPPER ON THE ASS!" (example courtesy of Seth MacFarlane)

NAKAMURA - A running joke in a script that isn't getting laughs. Named after a script (potentially from an episode of "Cheers") with a running gag about a character named Nakamura. When the first joke in a string doesn't work at a table read or in front of an audience and it recurs throughout the script, you've got a Nakamura.

PIGGY-BACKING - Repeating what someone else just said in different language, usually in the writers' room. Don't do it!

RUNNER - A gag in a script that recurs but doesn't rise to the level of a storyline.

SHRINK IT - Literally, physically shrinking a script to make it shorter (and fit in more content) by adjusting margins and/or font. Normal, tight or very tight.

STALL - A section of a script where the plot isn't moving. i.e., There's a stall in the first act before the turn.

TWO-PERCENTER - An erudite joke that only 2% of the audience will get.

URG BURG - An 'urgency burglar', usually a joke that undercuts a serious beat in a script. i.e., don't have a fart joke in the middle of a 'heart moment'.

WACKY STACK - Too many jokes right on top of each other.

ZIP CODE - The general area of an idea or story. i.e., this isn't right, but it's in the zip code.

These terms are distilled from The Other Network Writers' Room, a series of interviews with great TV writers. If you have any terms to add, any questions or comments, or are interested in hearing the series, go to http://www.othernetwork.com or e-mail: info@othernetwork.com