

## ADG 30 Improv: A GLOSSARY OF IMPROVISATION TERMS AND SKILLS

<b>Accepting</b>	<b>Blocking</b>
<p>To <b>accept</b> an offer is to acknowledge it and then if possible advance it. It is vitally important to accept all offers instead of blocking them otherwise a scene is likely to go nowhere.</p> <p>To <b>extend</b> an offer is to take it and then make it the central aspect of the scene. If somebody initially talks about cooking, the scene can then be all about cooking with characters, setting and problems all related to it.</p>	<p>A <b>block</b> is the rejection or refusal of an offer. Blocking can be quite humorous, especially extreme blocking, but at what expense? After the block has been given the flow of the scene has been halted and the entire story has to be re-routed.</p> <p><b>Cancelling</b> is a form of blocking where one player negates the action of another player, making it irrelevant. An example: Player one walks out on stage. Player two enters on all fours, barking, wagging and generally acting like a puppy. Player one cancels the action by saying: "Cut out the puppy dog act. It's time to bake cookies."</p> <p><b>Blocking</b> comes from a fear or refusal to give up control of a scene.</p>

<b>Offers and Advancing</b>	<b>Wimpering, Waffling and Shelving</b>
<p>An <b>offer</b> is any action or dialogue that creates or advances a scene. <b>Offers</b> create a direction for the scene. When a player walks onto the empty stage and says: "It's time to make dinner," that player has just made an offer to create a scene centred on the activity of cooking.</p> <p>Offers do not need to be verbalized. They can be verbal, emotional or physical.</p> <p>Once offers have been made, the other players must accept them or no advancement is possible in the scene.</p> <p><b>Advancing</b> a scene is when an offer is made that pushes the scene forward to the next logical stage of the story. Advancing is often about showing "what comes next."</p> <p>When thinking of accepting and advancing, it is helpful to simply say, "Yes and..."</p>	<p><b>Wimpering</b> is failing to progress a scene by not adding to another improviser's offer. A wimper might accept an offer (aka, says "yes"), but does not add to the offer (does not say "and").</p> <p>Examples of <b>Wimpering</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking questions</li> <li>• Saying "Yes," but forgetting to add the "and..."</li> </ul> <p><b>Waffling</b> is postponing by lack of ideas; you just keep on babbling in the hope you'll have an idea. When wimpering and waffling, one is forcing their scene partner to do all the work.</p> <p>Examples of <b>Waffling</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refusing to make a decision.</li> <li>• Babbling in the hope you'll have an idea.</li> </ul> <p>Often blocking, wimpering and waffling are the main reasons that scenes become frustratingly uneventful.</p> <p><b>Shelving</b> is when you accept an offer, but put it aside for "later use," but then it never gets used.</p>

<p><b>Physicalizing</b></p> <p><b>Physicalizing</b> is the act of turning intent into action and movement. Commit to any actions that your scene involves and act it out in a physical way.</p> <p>Using objects in an environment is often a great way to illustrate setting.</p>	<p><b>Talking Heads</b></p> <p>A scene that involves a lot of standing (or worse yet, sitting) around talking rather than engaging in physical action; when the players do not engage in the action, but rather talk about doing it.</p> <p>Examples of talking heads include <b>gossiping</b>, which involves talking about the activity instead of doing it, and <b>hedging</b> which involves making small talk rather than advancing.</p>
<p><b>Sincerity</b></p> <p><b>Sincerity</b> is acting fully in the moment and being as true to the character as possible. To be sincere, one needs to be honest and truthful and show their character as a real human being and not a stereotype.</p> <p>It is important to remember that a sincere character can still be funny (often because they themselves don't know they're funny).</p>	<p><b>Mugging and Gagging</b></p> <p><b>Mugging</b> is making silly faces instead of acting truthfully.</p> <p><b>Gagging</b> is joking, doing funny things and/or using verbal wit that does not advance the scene or pulls you or your scene partners out of it. It might make you popular with the audience but not with your fellow players.</p> <p><b>Commenting</b> is when a player makes a sort of "wink" to the audience to show them that they know what is happening in a scene is funny, silly or stupid. It pulls the audience out of the world of the scene. Many players do this out of a sense of self-consciousness.</p>

A **crossover** is the act of entering a scene, making a strong offer that advances the scene, and then exiting.

**Chivalry** means not clinging to your own ideas, your own status, or even your own life (as a character). Chivalry is daring to give up control. As Keith Johnstone teaches, players should allow themselves to be changed by other players. "Be happy to be forced to change, and change."

**Driving or Bulldogging:** Improvisers who drive scenes control all of the actions and advances of the scene, rarely allowing others to speak or make offers.

**Editing:** An edit is the act of interrupting or ending a scene. Sometimes, the host or director will edit scenes to cut them short. In Long Form, players can edit a scene to start a new scene. Example edits include: Blackout, Revolving Door, Downstage Sweep, Tag-out, Voice-over edit, etc.

**Endowing** is the act of assigning attributes to another performer's character.

**Feeding** is the act of creating an opportunity for action, characteristics, or stakes to be created. Feeds are also advances that are given to other players for them to use, often not for yourself. This is very important, especially when the lead in a scene is out of ideas.

**Justification:** Finding an explanation or rationale for every offer and every element introduced in the scene regardless of how ridiculous or out of left field it may be. The idea is to justify everything within the internal logic of a scene. This is a good thing, obviously. Justification is often used to turn a “mistake” into an offer.

**Marrying:** To take two or more disparate ideas and make them work together within the context of the scene. This can be used with suggestions or with offers.

**Pimping:** Playfully getting another player to do something unpleasant or difficult. Not really a good thing as it doesn't show much Chivalry. Used sparingly if can be quite funny (if accepted).

**Platform:** The who (relationship), what (activity and/or initial routine) and where (setting) of a scene. Success of a scene often depends on a solid and clear platform, so we probably want to establish the platform as early as possible.

**Raising the Stakes:** Making the scene personally important or of greater consequence to your characters. This is also a technique for advancing the scene.

**Reincorporating:** Recycling or re-using ideas or situations from earlier in the scene, or from previous scenes. While it's always interesting to use elements that were introduced earlier and were neglected or forgotten, you don't want to overdo this, and turn things into running gags.

**Sidetracking** is changing the main story line for no reason. Happens usually for one of two reasons: **i) Overloading:** Throwing of unnecessary elements into a scene; this will usually lead to Sidetracking. **ii)** Another common cause of overloading is the introduction of a new and un-needed character, which will usually prevent whatever was going to happen from happening.