

American Dialect Society

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Grant Barrett's Nominations for Words of the Year 2005

blame game n. mutual reproach or an exchange of accusations among people who refuse to accept (sole) responsibility for a failure or other undesirable outcome. Dating to at least as early as 1937, *blame game* became far more common in the 1970's. This year, the blame game was played between state and federal officials debating who was responsible for the failures to evacuate, protect, and rebuild New Orleans.

crotchfruit n. a child; children. Perhaps inspired by the expression *the fruit of one's loins*, this term began among proponents of child-free public spaces, but has since spread to parents who use it jocularly.

counter recruiter n. a person who actively discourages enlistment in the armed forces. Counter recruiters seek equal time in high schools to oppose recruitment there.

CXO n. any executive with a title on the pattern of CEO, CFO, CTO, CIO, etc. Increasingly, corporate head-honcho positions pass between a variety of top-level executives with different areas of expertise.

dirka dirka n. a derogatory mimicry of spoken Arabic. Also use attributively to connote things Muslim, Arabic, or Middle Eastern, or those related to terrorists or terrorism. This was first used by a caricature of Osama bin Laden in the animated television show *South Park*, episode 509, "Osama bin Laden Has Farty Pants," which originally aired Nov. 7, 2001. It was popularized by the satirical 2004 movie *Team America World Police*. Both the movie and television program were created by Matt Stone and Trey Parker.

ecuavolley n. a blend of *Ecuador* and *volleyball*. There are usually three players per side and the rules permit the palming or cupping of the ball when volleying. It originated in Ecuador in the 1960's. Among Hispanophones, it is sometimes spelled *ecuavoli* or *ecuaboli*.

facebook v. to search, browse or add to the Facebook web site, a hugely popular online community for university students.

floodweiser n. a jocular name for water distributed in cans as disaster aid by the Anheuser-Busch corporation. This term first appeared during floods in North Dakota in 1997, although there are earlier examples of similar wordplay.

futility music n. very loud music, especially heavy metal, played for military prisoners as part of psy-ops. It is said to encourage detainees to consider the futility of their condition.

fobbit n. soldier or other person stationed at a secure forward operating base; (hence) a person who is reluctant or afraid to leave a military base (also known as *leaving the wire*). A blend of the acronym for **F**orward **O**perating **B**ase and the hole-dwelling *hobbit*. Similar terms include **desk-chair** (or **armchair**) **commando** and **REMF**, an acronym for **r**ear-**e**chelon **m**other-**f*******r**, sometimes euphemized as **rear-echelon commando**.

FSMism n. a pseudo-religion invented to counter the theory of Intelligent Design. The word from the acronym of *Flying Spaghetti Monster*, the joke-cult's deity. Started by Bobby Henderson in 2005, among other ideas it establishes that there is a correlation between global average temperature and the number of pirates in the world. Members are sometimes said to be **Pastafarians**.

intelligent design n. the theory that life is could only have been created by a sentient being. Often acronymized and pronounced as **ID**, the theory is being pushed by proponents of *creation science* as a necessary part of school curricula alongside explanations of evolution. ID is seen by opponents as an attempt to teach religion in public schools and as an attack on science and the scientific method. The term dates to at least as early as 1847; the relevant sense of *evolution* dates to 1832.

jump the couch v. to exhibit strange or frenetic behavior. Inspired by the couch-bouncing antics of Tom Cruise on Oprah Winfrey's talk show in May. It derives from an earlier term, *jump the shark*, meaning to (irretrievably) diminish in quality; to outlast public interest or popular support.

lifhack v. to make one's day-to-day behaviors or activities more efficient. Also as a noun. Lifehacks apply the make-do, can-do, what-will-it-do attitude that originated in computer hacking.

machinima n. movies made within a digital universe, especially within multiplayer role-playing games. A blend of *machine* and *cinema*, pronounced *mah-SHEE-nuhma*. There are now film festivals devoted to machinima.

office wife n. originally, a female secretary or executive assistant; later, a female worker devoted to a (powerful) man to which she is not married, especially a man in a senior position; most recently, a female coworker who is a friend. Many political commentators have speculated that Harriet Miers and Condaleezza Rice are work wives to President Bush.

oil spot strategy (or **theory**, **approach**) n. a political or military tactic that secures an area as a launch site for campaigns to other areas. The French version of this term, *tache d'huile*, was used in a military context in Indochina prior to 1895. The French term was also used in English at least as far back as 1864 in a more general political context as a metaphor for something that spreads. *Oil spot strategy* was popularized among American militarists during the Vietnam War.

Paris Hilton tax cut n. a Democratic name for the repeal of what Republicans call the *death tax*, known more formally as the *estate tax*, which applies a levy to inherited wealth.

peak oil hypothesis n. a theory that world oil production and discovery of new reserves will soon fall or are already falling behind consumption. In *Beyond Oil*, Kenneth Deffeyes predicts that by 2019 production will be down to 90 percent of the peak level.

power hour n. celebratory or recreational drinking in which a shot of alcohol is taken each minute for 60 minutes. Dating to 1991 or earlier, power hours can be a rite of passage for some young adults on their twenty-first birthdays.

quinceañera n. a coming-out party held for a girl's 15th birthday. As a formal occasion, the event can be similar to a debutante ball or cotillion. In Spanish quinceañera also means "a fifteen-year-old girl." The Spanish pronunciation is similar to *KEEN-say-ah-NYAIR-ah*.

rootkit n. a surreptitious high-level software program that gives total control over a computer system. *Root* is the traditional name for the master user account on Unix systems. A rootkit-controlled computer is said to be *rooted*, *owned* or *pwned*.

sudoku n. a number puzzle in which numbers 1 through 9 must be placed into a grid of Cells so that each row or column contains only one of each. Also known as **Su Doku** or **Number Place**, which is a literal translation from the Japanese. Although many similar puzzles have existed throughout history, the current craze started in Japan, caught on in the U.K. in 2004, and then exploded in the U.S. in 2005. A more complex form is known as **samunamupure**.

trucker bomb n. a roadside bottle (or other small container) filled with urine. Also **torpedo**. This year Colorado followed the lead of other states by increasing fines for illegal disposal of human waste along highways.

slump-buster n. something expected to stop a losing streak, improve sports performance, or to increase sexual activity. In baseball, a slump-buster is an unattractive woman sought by a man for sexual relations. This term's recent popularity stems from baseball player Jose Canseco's book *Juiced*, although Mark Grace famously used the term in a 1998 interview on Jim Rome's syndicated sports talk show.

whale tail n. the appearance of thong or g-string underwear above the waistband of pants, shorts, or a skirt.

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