

## Inside Jokes: Welcome Letter

Globes. Mother. Fisting. These were the three words that started a project that I want you to be a part of. It was those three words, read off a comic's set list, that made me realize how interesting a set list can be. The sequence of words on their own (and the juxtaposition to each other) are often hilarious, and in most cases give a very close look into the mind and life of the comic who wrote it.

The goal of the "Inside Jokes" project is to compile as many comedians' set lists as we can, to showcase them in the format that they are written (on a napkin, notebook, receipt, etc.) and then take a look at why those words happen to be there. This look at the jokes in the set list is kind of an "interpretation" of the list that can include a biography of the comic, details on why certain words are in the list, and even a single joke from the set (to begin to see how the whole act came together). Whatever sort of exploration of the set list that you can think of and create is possible - it's only limited by your imagination.

To kick-start this project it is being launched online as a blog. Every week, a new set list and comic are featured on the blog. Each post will contain the set list, the details on the particular words, a headshot of the comedian, links to that comic's web-site (and/or MySpace, Facebook, etc.), and anything else that helps to accomplish the goal of looking inside of the jokes and promoting the comic contributor.

From the blog, the end goal is to turn this project into a book. The book's introduction is attached as well as some ideas of what could be included on a blog page. This should help give you an idea of the final product and what the web-site will look like.

If you are interested in participating in this project the process is simple. Send all the files that you would like published (including a scan of the set list that you want to include, headshot, etc.) to me at [dd@insidejokesblog.com](mailto:dd@insidejokesblog.com) and the web-page will be created and published in the order the set lists are received. One will be published every week for as long as we have submissions from comics.

I am very excited about this project and hope that you can spend a few minutes to help with this goal. In exchange you will receive promotional opportunities from the web-site (via links, pictures, bio, credits, etc.) and a copy of the published book (when and if it makes it to print). If you have any questions, I can always be reached via e-mail.

Cheers,



Donovan Deschner  
Stand-Up Comic

## Book and Web-Site Introduction

I asked a wise person for a piece of advice on this, my very first book. They told me “Don’t do it” and when I ignored that, they said, “At least, don’t start with a cliché.” Priding myself on consistency, I decided to ignore that as well. So, here’s a bad start...

*“Just be yourself.”*

These are the three most common and cliché words of advice from veteran performers to the newbies. This usually comes whether the newbie is seeking advice, or not. And it comes with no instructions – no follow-ups or ideas how to accomplish this simple goal. Probably because very few veterans have actually managed to just be themselves, and the ones who have accomplished it, have done so with much practice and hard work.

Stand-up comics have one task. *Be funny.* That’s it. Nothing more. Sounds simple? Well, not really. It’s actually tougher than it sounds. That said, we’re probably the most unhindered artists in the world, limited only by our use of whatever language we speak in. Swahili is my personal favorite. Any topic goes – the only limitation on our comedy is imagination. Try filling that box with your job description.

So where do we get our material? Personal experience. (And undiscovered Bob Hope files.) What we talk about tells you a bit about us. It’s a variation on the age-old “write what you know” thing. Our comedy tells you what’s happening in our lives. Sometimes we talk about marriage. A year later we’re probably working the divorce angle. A few weeks later, awkward online dating. Humor knows no bounds.

That said, we do conform a bit. Before stepping on the stage, most comedians create a “set list.” This is a list of keywords that remind us what we want to talk about on stage. It doubles as a mini-autobiography of the comedian. A string of random words that reveal that comic’s character. A real-time snapshot of their life. And how their mind works.

And that’s what this book is all about. Looking at what makes us tick. Why we do this. And how we think. Frightening and amusing at the same time.

Welcome to *Inside Jokes*. Get ready to learn – to laugh – and to love.

Okay, just kidding on the love thing.

Donovan Deschner  
Calgary, Canada

## Ideas for Pages

*Note: these are just ideas for looking inside of your jokes. You don't have to apply them all (or any).*

### Anecdotal Ideas (Stories)

- **Keywords** - Circle or point out a single word on the set list and why it happens to be there. What event sparked that bit? Why do you put it on your set list? etc. Just point out which words you want to feature and we'll highlight them as appropriate.
- **Comedian Bio** - An updated bio on the comic which points out where in the life of the comic that set list happens to have been written. (You could use a historical set list as well and only provide a bio up until that point.)
- **Oldest Joke** - Point out the longest main-stay in your act and why it has stuck around.
- **Perform A Joke** - Submit one complete joke via audio file, video, or even written to give a sense of your personality and how the set list works as a whole.
- **Newest Joke** - Call attention to the bit you just wrote or are working on. What do you like about it? Why do you think it has potential?
- **Word Relation** - Why the word on the set list represents a particular joke. (Works especially well if the word seems to have no relation to the bit.)
- **Strictness** - Did you every vary from this list or was it set in stone?
- **Venue** - What venue did you use this set list? (This will mostly be comedy clubs - but if you have a unique venue, let us know about it.)
- **Comments** - What sort of comments did you get after the show from that set list? From comedians? From audience members?
- **Advice** - Any advice to give to new comedians? Something that this set list exemplifies?

### Statistical Ideas

- **Success Rating** - Highly subjective, but give yourself a number out of ten or percentage for how the set went on any given night.
- **Type of Set** - Where in the overall show did you use this set? Example: headliner, amateur, feature, middle, opener, MC, etc.
- **Use** - Did the set list come on stage with you? Did you write it pre-show and leave it backstage?
- **Percentage of New Material** - How much of the set list was new stuff versus tried and true jokes?
- **When was the set list written?** - Date that you created that set list (or ones very similar). When was it performed and seen stage time?