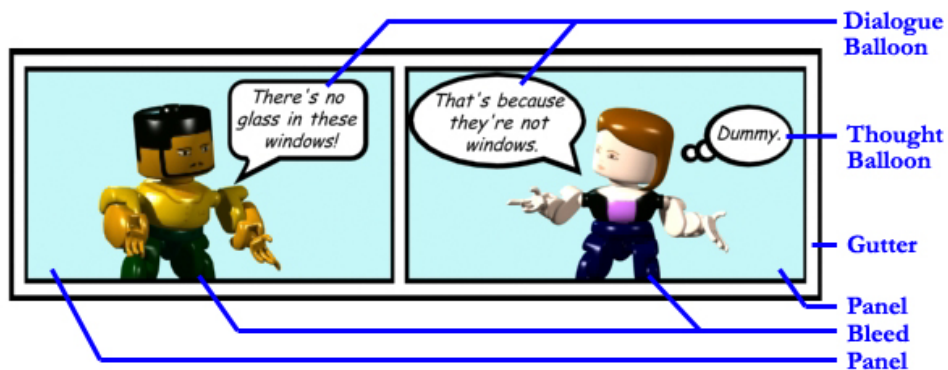There are certain key elements that are a part of every comic book or comic strip. Knowledge of these elements is necessary for any cartoonist. This document will have you talking like a comic business professional in no time.

Panel –   The **Panel** is where all the action happens. Panels are the rectangles where the artists draw their comics.

Gutter –   The space between the panels is known as the **gutter**.

Bleed –   When a character does not entirely fit in the panel, the part of the panel that cuts them off is called **bleed**. In the comic above, the character's legs are bleeding through the bottom.

Balloons –   There are several ways a character can communicate in a comic strip. Almost all of them involve balloons. What a character says is usually placed in a **Dialogue Balloon**. Thoughts, unspoken ideas going on in the character's head, are usually placed in a **Thought Balloon**.

Dialogue Balloons are usually drawn with a **Pointer** (sometimes called a tail or tag) that points to the character who is doing the speaking. Thought Balloons point to their character with little round circles called **Bubbles**. Notice how, in the above example, Dave's dialogue is in a rectangular balloon, and Becca's dialogue is in an oval balloon. There's no real difference in the two. The decision to use rectangular or oval balloons is entirely up to the cartoonist. Below are some more examples of different types of communication balloons.

Balloon Type — Example

Regular Speech. — Two Tacos, Please.

A Statement... with an addendum. — The beef taco looks pretty good... ...but so does the chicken.

Thought — Hmmm... Which one should I choose?

Interjection or Exclaimation! — YIKES! That's one HOT Taco!

Onomatopoeia – Hey don't get mad at me, I didn't make up this word. Onomatopoeia is any word that represents a real sound. Sometimes onomatopoeia appears in balloons, and sometimes they do not. For instance, if a cow says, **"Moo"** that onomatopoeia may appear in a balloon with the pointer pointed to the cow. If a character falls off a ladder with a crash, the **"CRASH"** onomatopoeia may fill up an entire panel to show that it was a loud crash.

Emanata- Emanata are symbols that show what's going on in the character's head. If a character has an idea, and suddenly a light bulb appears, that's the use of Emanata. Incidentally, if a comic character swears the **@&%$#** that you see in the word balloon is also a form of emanate sometimes called grawlixes.

Narrative Block-Text that appears in a square block in the panel that talks directly to the reader is usually called a caption or a narrative block. This text isn't a part of the action, but it helps to tell the reader what's going on. This is also sometimes called a **Caption**.

Comic book makers use some of the same terms used in movie making. Movie scripts often describe where the camera should be located in the scene. In comic books, the camera is imaginary, but it is very important for describing where the reader's eye should be located in order to see all of the action.

Close up-   Just like in the movies, a close-up is when the camera zooms in really tight on an object or the character's face. This shot puts the reader's eye just a few inches away from the action.

Medium Shot- If you can see all or most of a character's body, or a couple of character's bodies, in a shot, it is described as a medium shot. This shot puts the reader's eye just a couple of feet away from the action.

Long Shot-   If you can see almost the entire scene in just one panel of the comic, then that panel is probably a long shot. Sometimes, a long shot stretches across the entire page. This is often called a wide shot or even a panoramic long shot. In a long shot, the camera is far away from the action, but long shots are used to help establish location.

Splash Page- Artwork that is not in a panel, but that takes up the entire page is often called a splash page. Usually, splash pages are found at the beginning of a comic book, and they give the book a feeling of drama right at the beginning.

On the next page is an example of some of the terms listed above. When you look at them, think of your eye as a camera lens. Think about how far away, how high or how low you're camera would need to be in order to see the picture in the panel.

Narrative Block

Panaramic Long Shot

Extreme Close-up

Splash Page

Medium Shot

Medium Close-up

Meanwhile, back on planet Earth, two arch enemies prepare for terrible battle...

Tonight, This Ends!

Funny, I was thinking the same thing.