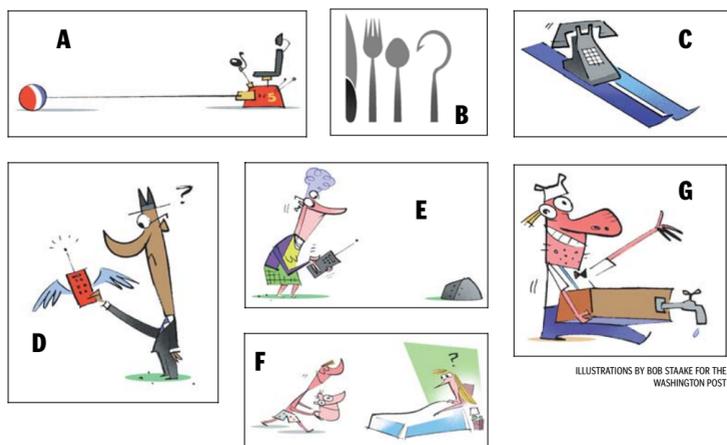


The Style Invitational

Week CXLIX: Inspect Our Gadgets



What are these gadgets? What do they do?

First-prize winner gets a vintage "I Love Lucy" clock and matching coffee mug. First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312 or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com. U.S. mail entries are no longer accepted. Deadline is Monday, Dec. 9. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and telephone number. E-mail

entries must include the week number in the subject field. Contests will be judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post.

Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published in four weeks. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Chris Doyle of Forsyth, Mo.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Report from Week CXLV, in which you were asked to come up with statements that would summarize the mind-set of your typical college freshman in the year 2020. Good answers too popular to reward: Monica has always been a verb, not a name. Also: Music has always been free.

◆ Third Runner-Up: **The U.S. Congress has always met in an undisclosed location.** (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

◆ Second Runner-Up: **The rules of spelling and grammar have always been known only by the authors of word-processing software.** (J.F. Martin, Naples, Fla.)

◆ First Runner-Up: **The Humvee has always been the only vehicle to comfortably seat the American family of four.** (Lori Washington, Washington)

◆ And the winner of the autographed Carl Kasell bobble-head doll: **Ted Williams has always played all three outfield positions for the world champion Red Sox.** (Tony Noerpel, Lovettsville)

◆ Honorable Mentions: **There have always been a lot of terrific Iraqi restaurants in the D.C. area.** (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

Cheap PCs, though quite functional, have always lacked a sense of humor. (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

The No. 1 sitcom in America has always been "That Aughts Show." (Brian Barrett, Bethesda)

Taxidermied birds and squirrels were always propped up in trees in suburban neighborhoods. (Colette Zanin, Greenbelt)

Major newspapers have always included cross-species commitment announcements. (Jonathan M. Kaye, Washington)

Facilidad en español siempre se ha requerido para la admisión universitaria. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

The smallpox vaccine has always been available in chewing gum form. (K. Napolitano, Gaithersburg)

A baseball cap worn backward will shade your eyes. (J.F. Martin, Naples, Fla.)

Literacy is a parlor trick that old people know. (Paul Kondis, Alexandria)

Tattoos are what your parents have. (Janet Millenson, Potomac)

Second base has always been oral sex. (Joseph Romm, Washington)

There has always been a Starbucks in the Sistine Chapel. (Lori Washington, Washington)

Fifteen has always been too late to start your autobiography. (Lori Washington, Washington)

Earrings have always come by the dozen. (Sarah W. Gaymon, Gambrells)

Parents have always threatened a visit from Katherine Harris to make their children behave. (Paul Dudley, Ellicott City)

Imspeak = ok grmr (Miles Townes, Arlington)

Israel has always been sealed in a transparent titanium dome. (Mark Young, Washington)

Thinking naughty thoughts has always been a felony. (Jonathan M. Kaye, Washington)

Huey Freeman of "Boondocks" has always been an Uncle Tom. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

The phrase "Do you want to supersize that?" was coined by the hostess of the TV show "Primetime Porn." (Roy Ashley, Washington)

"Jackass and Juliet," starring Johnny Knoxville, is the famous Shakespearean play in which Romeo commits suicide by riding a tricycle off a cliff. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

Airline passengers flying coach have always been knocked unconscious at check-in, and stacked in the cargo hold like cordwood. (John Griessmayer, Roanoke)

"Y2K" has always been slang for a problem that takes 10 years to manifest. (Marc Liebert, New York)

Dick Cheney has always had four hearts. (Marc Liebert, New York)

In retrospect, it was always obvious that Larry King was a cyborg. (Marc Liebert, New York)

The Orioles' stadium has always been Kentucky Fried Chicken Park at Camden Yards. (Jeff Evan, Millsboro, Del.)

Football linemen never weighed less than 450 pounds. (Mel Loftus, Holmen, Wisc.)

Affirmative action is a necessary evil; we can't allow white Americans to linger on as a permanent underclass. (Steve Fahey, Kensington; Noam Izenberg, Columbia)

Bald eagles have always been natural residents of oil-drilling sites. (Eryk B. Nice, Ithaca, N.Y.)

Chatting has never meant actual oral communication. (Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

Power belching has always been an Olympic sport. (Brian Barrett, Bethesda)

Jogging along the Beltway shoulder has always been a good way to travel if you are in a hurry. (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

A prescription has always been needed to purchase coffee. (Danny Bravman, Potomac)

The first Wednesday after the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November has always been the federal holiday Lawyers' Day. (Danny Bravman, Potomac)

Iraq's official language has always been Hebrew. (Jonathan M. Kaye, Washington)

Microsoft's strategic nuclear doctrine has always been one of deterrence. (Jonathan M. Kaye, Washington)

There has always been a war on terrorism, and we have always been winning. (Matthew Long, Washington)

It is inconceivable that anyone could ever have gotten along without a personal satellite. (Matthew Long, Washington)

Guns don't kill people; plasma-phasers kill people. (J.D. Berry, Springfield)

Jerry Falwell has always been a gay activist. (Tony Noerpel, Lovettsville)

The Style Invitational has always been on Page 1 of The Washington Post. (Mark Brackett, Washington)

TELL ME ABOUT IT

TELL ME, *From F1*

settle down. Should he be doing this, or are some people just naturally more calm than me?
—*Spring Break Mentality?*

Some people are just naturally more calm than you are.

There's no "all men" anything, though, beyond the Y-chromosome and maybe a propensity not to know where stuff is around the house. At 24 a lot of people of either sex need to get their ya-yas out, or learn by trial and error, or whatever. But you can usually read it on them, either because their eyes are wandering or because they're trying so hard to keep their eyes from wandering. If this guy strikes you as genuinely at peace, then it seems unfair, even presumptuous, to project various generalized needs on him. Enjoy.

Carolyn:
I'm dating a wonderful woman, perhaps far too soon after breaking up with my fiancée this past summer. I find that, naturally, I need some time to myself, but am somewhat reluctant to broach this topic because I've previously given her signals of positive and happy emotional health—which I want, but find hard to attain after such a short time. How to finesse a conversation about needing some me-time and not send signals that might push her away—even though part of me feels like that's not SO bad?
—*Washington, D.C.*

Don't finesse, SAY. If nothing else, you will ensure that any partner who sticks with you will be someone with whom you don't feel

you have to finesse everything. The longer you're with her, the more desirable a feature that will be.

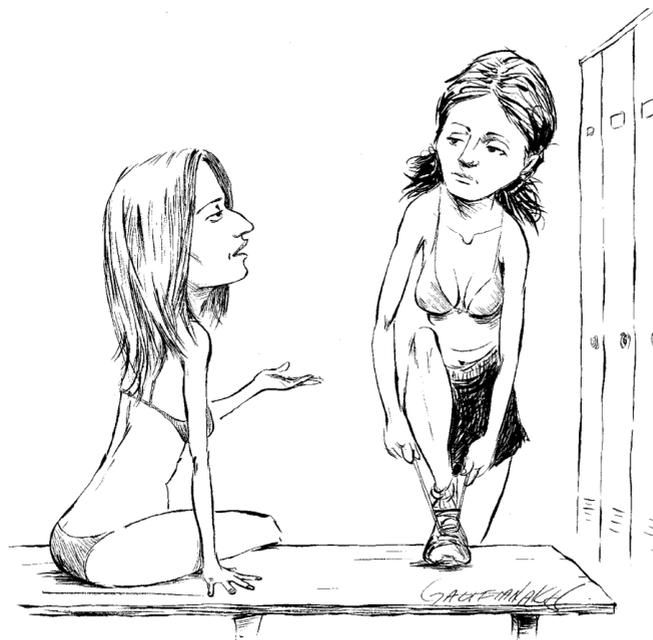
Carolyn:
So, is there anything wrong with wanting a man who is "possessive"? Or do you think that leads to "controlling" later on in life?
—*Possessive-ville, USA*

I think it already is controlling. Healthy people with healthy feelings for each other don't feel the need to stand between their loved ones and the rest of the world, because they don't live in fear that the world will steal their loved ones away. They understand implicitly that the world will do what it does, and loved ones will do what they do, and they accept that—by loving, trusting, enjoying, grieving, rejecting, or whatever the situation calls for.

Carolyn:
Is it okay to use the leftover Christmas cards from the last several years? I have a lot of friends that I want to send cards to—but things are a little tighter this year and I have a lot of leftovers. If you got the same Christmas card you got last year, would you be offended?
—*North Pole*

If I did get offended, you would have my permission to regard me as a petty jerk who is not worth the recycled card.

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or tellme@washpost.com, and join Carolyn's live discussion at noon Fridays at www.washingtonpost.com/liveonline



BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Richard Thompson is away. Richard's Poor Almanac will resume when he returns.

DEAR ABBY

Dear Abby:
I am a 21-year-old college student. This year I'm living with three sorority sisters in a house off campus. We get along fine except for one thing. The mother of one of our roommates comes to stay with her daughter and the rest of us every single weekend—from Friday night to Sunday night. She is always underfoot. She is always in the bathroom when we need to use it. She uses the last of the toilet paper and never replaces it. In fact, she uses all the household supplies we buy as a group. We are struggling students and cannot afford to pay for a fifth roommate. To add insult to injury, last weekend not only did this woman come to stay, but Grandma came with her! Never once has our roommate asked if these visits were convenient for the rest of us, nor have Mom's sleepovers been brought to our attention beforehand. When we finally addressed the problem with our roommate, she promised her mother would start getting hotel rooms when she came to town. Unfortunately, that hasn't happened yet. We don't expect her to always stay in a hotel because of the expense, but none of us signed up to live with a housemother. Please help us!
Irked Coeds in Waco, Tex.

I feel sorry for your roommate. Either the mother is unable to let her daughter grow up and separate from her, or she may be seeking to escape an abusive environment. However, the current arrangement is unfair to you and your other roommates. So stick to your guns and insist that the mother keep her promise to make arrangements for other accommodations.

Dear Abby:
My son is going through separation and divorce. It is not a friendly one. He is now serving in the military overseas. His wife and two children are here in the United States and live close to my husband and me. She allows us to see our grandkids whenever we want. However, since the divorce, she's fallen on hard times—economically and emotionally—and it kills us to know she is suffering the consequences of her decision to break up the marriage. The issue, Abby, is loyalty to our son. He is very upset by what she did, bringing the children back to the States and destroying his military career. He is bitter and adamant that our relationship with his ex-wife come to a halt. He says when he returns home, she is not welcome in our house. The children won't be an issue, as they have joint custody. I love both my son and daughter-in-law. I feel terrible that our relationship with her must end. What would you do in our shoes?
Hurting in Huntsville, Tex.

I'd remind my son that his almost ex-wife is still the mother of your grandchildren, and that whom you invite into your home is your decision, not his. This is not his choice to make. For the sake of the children, do not burn any bridges.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069. © 2002, Universal Press Syndicate

Next Week: Risky Businesses