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Entertainment

# Style Invitational Week 1384: Of course there are stupid questions!

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'Should we send them to the Empress by May 25?' Plus words revealed in other words.



(Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

By Pat Myers

May 14, 2020 at 9:39 a.m. EDT

(Click [here](#) to skip down to the winning "reverse air quotes")

**"Will you hold my face mask for a sec? I have a big sneeze coming on."**

**"Do you have the peaches flambé for carryout?"**

The Style Invitational has been awarding unfabulous prizes for stupid questions since Week 217 in 1997 (one entry that week: "Just where do you get off telling me what to do, Your Honor?" by Elden Carnahan). But surely in recent months, we've developed all new and fascinating varieties. **This week: Give us stupid questions**, especially ones reflecting Our Current Situation. More general ones are welcome, but pleasee not old jokes like why we drive on parkways and park on driveways. Original stupid questions.

Submit up to 25 entries at [wapo.st/enter-invite-1384](http://wapo.st/enter-invite-1384) (no capitals in the Web address). Deadline is Monday, May 25; results will appear June 14 in print, June 11 online.



Loser Bill Dornier donated these before there even was a covid-19, back when we thought it was a joke to put visible shields on our offices. (MCPHEE.COM)

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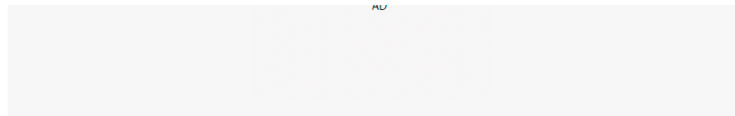
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**Winner gets the Lose Cannon**, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a pair of **Ear Guards**, miniature shower caps that stretch over your ears. Designed expressly for people who are afraid that while they're asleep — or, who knows, in the middle of the day — “ear-spiders, earwigs and other creepy ear dwellers” will take up residence in their ear canals. (Would you call those places auditoriums?) And now, of course, In These Uncertain Times, do YOU want who-knows-what flying down that little auditory funnel? They're from joke-stuff marketer Archie McPhee, and donated by Bill Dorner.

**Other runners-up** win their choice of our “**For Best Results, Pour Into Top End**” **Loser Mug** or our “**Whole Fools**” Grossery Bag. Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, “**Too-Weak Notice**” or “**Certificate of (de) Merit**.” First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” (**FirStink** for their first ink). See general contest rules and guidelines at [wapo.st/InvRules](http://wapo.st/InvRules). This contest is based on a suggestion by Loser Dan Helming. The headline “**Take-Out Orders**” is by Jon Gearhart; William Kennard wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](http://on.fb.me/invdev). “Like” the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at [bit.ly/inkofday](http://bit.ly/inkofday); follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.

**The Style Conversational:** The Empress’s weekly online column, published late Thursday afternoon, reviews each new contest and set of results; this week (May 14) it features the Invite’s Stupid Questions of Yesteryear. Check out this week’s Convo at [wapo.st/conv1384](http://wapo.st/conv1384).

And from [The Style Invitational](#) four weeks ago . . .

## Take-out orders: The winning deletions of Week 1380

In [Week 1380](#) we asked the Loser Community to delete one or a block of letters in a word to find something related in the remaining letters. Too many people suggested **Election** — eon — as duration of a campaign season.

### 4th place:

**Build the wall:** “Mexico will pay for it.” (*David Peckarsky, Tucson*)

### 3rd place:

**Weight:** How you learned that a glass of zinfandel has more calories than 12 sugar cubes. (*Chuck Helwig, Centreville, Va.*)

### 2nd place

and “*The Moustache Grower’s Guide*” plus a *bacon-scented fake mustache*:

**CLASSROOM:** The gaping difference, it turns out, between a professional elementary school teacher and you. (*Jeff Hazle, San Antonio*)

### And the winner of the Lose Cannon:

**Leadership:** Service provided to the states by the White House. (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

How can we get back into the Crawdads Sing, can we talk about the ending?



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## STupendous INK: Honorable mentions

**ANTIBIOTICS** – they don't actually help in fighting a virus. (*Jeff Loren, Seattle*)

**erROK**: If the president does it, it's not a crime. (*Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.*)

**ANALYTICAL**: "I told you I need more time to go over the details!" (*Mark Calandra, Wenham, Mass.*)

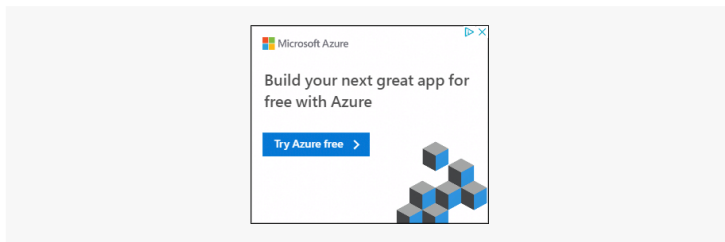
**GROcery shopping**: Feeling around the back of the top shelf for any remaining mac and cheese. (*Emma Daley, Harrisburg, Pa., a First Offender*)

**DISPLEASED**: What the president's actions have made a lot of Americans. (*Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.*)

**BOOSTER**: What many a lifelong Redskins fan has become during the Snyder era. (*Raymond Gallucci, Frederick*)

**PenitENCE**: How the Democrats would have been made to pay if impeachment had succeeded. (*Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.*)

**TyrANT**: Leader who encourages supporters to "LIBERATE" states whose governors he doesn't like. (*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)



**antiquITIES**: Things men wore around their necks in the days before everyone just gave up and wore pajamas all day long. (*Gary Crockett*)

**Chief of StAFF**: What was left after Trump fired John Kelly. (*Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.*)

**CRAFTsmanship**: "Presenting our new line of particle board furnishings . . ." (*Ben Aronin, Washington*)

**DISINFECTANT**: How far from your lungs you should keep the Lysol. (*Dave Zarrow, Reston, Va.; Chris Doyle*)

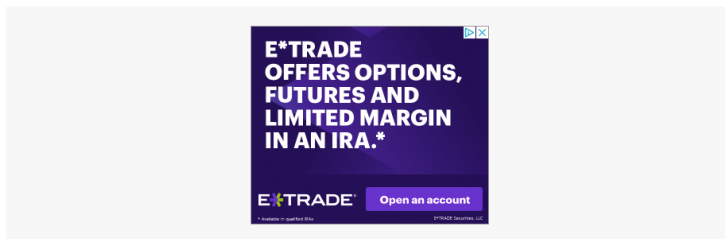
**DistANCE**: The Six-Foot Shuffle in the Cereal Aisle (*Joanne Free, Clifton, Va.; Pia Palamidessi, Cumberland, Md.*)

**EgocENTRIC**: Like father, like son. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

**FAITHFUL**: "Honey, it was just once, and my biological imperative made me do it." (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

**FingerNAILS**: Results of stay-at-home French manicures. (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

**FLoridaMAN**: A soft, tasty treat for alligators. (*Duncan Stevens*)



**GiRAFFE**: An animal composed of irregular parts. (*Selma Ellis, Rolling Meadows, Ill.*)

**GARBAGE**: Where lots of useless junk ends up. (*Jeff Hazle*)

**HEADACHE**: Sometimes laughter IS the best medicine. (*Ben Aronin*)

**HORoscope**: What an astrologer needs to offer for a profitable business. (*Raymond Gallucci*)

**INject household cleaner**: Trump's advice, day by day. (*William Kennard, Arlington, Va.*)

**INtroVERT**: Being a couch patriot isn't so hard. (*Kathy El-Assal, Middleton, Wis.*)

**MEgga**: The most important person in the road, one who's entitled to be first in line. (*Tom Witte,*

Montgomery Village)

**MicroPHONE:** "I know they asked *you* the question, Dr. Fauci, but I'll take all the science ones from here." (Erika Ettin, Washington)

**Midwife:** Right now, the person I fear is going to deliver my baby. (Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.)



**PANGELIN:** That feeling of sickness, then guilt that first guy got after eating a critter from the Wuhan wet market. (Marc Shapiro, Kathmandu, Nepal)

**PARLIAMENT:** "No, you DON'T get to vote on when it's your bedtime!" (Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

**PestilENCE:** Unresponsiveness to a raging infection. (Ann Martin, Brentwood, Md.)

**PICKPOCKETING:** Social distance is problematic when you're doing this. (Gary Crockett)

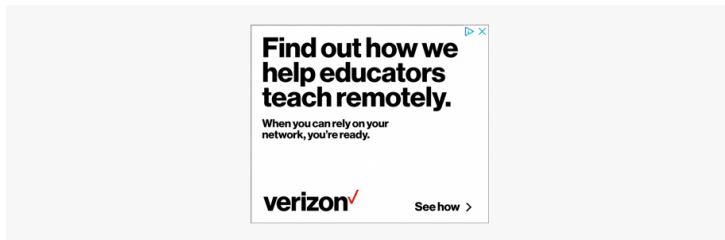
**PompeTUS:** A word with no known or apparent meaning, like "covfefe." (Chris Doyle)

**POTato fungus:** A blight that can ruin a country. (Kevin Dopart)

**PopeORN:** A guilty pleasure involving watching videos at home. (Tom Witte)

**PRAGmatism and compromISE:** What the president really wants from his advisers. (Frank Mann, Washington)

**PrepogANDA:** VERY WEAK and clumsy animal that we only think is cute because of the TERRIBLE Chinese government. Many are saying it caused the coronavirus! — D.J.T. (Duncan Stevens)



**ProtEST:** Someone who demands the right to endanger others while endangering others. (Amanda Yanovitch, Midlothian, Va.)

**RECITAL:** Stuart's piano performance wasn't just bad. it was ... (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

**SarcasIC:** Yes, that IS what he said he was with his medical recommendations. (Michelle Christophorou, Guildford, England)

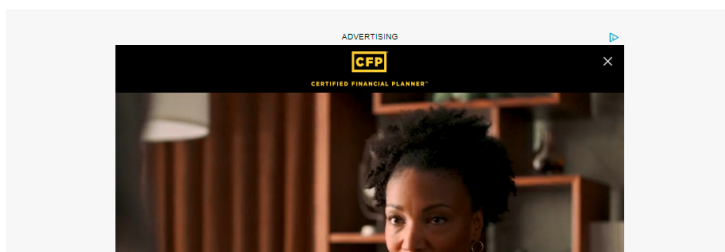
**SomethING:** A tune you don't know all the words to, like your state song. "Something something something, Maryland my Maryland." (Eric Nelkin, Silver Spring, Md.)

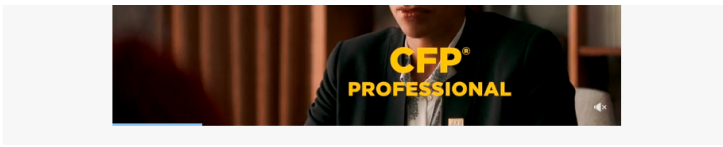
**Speaker of the HOUSE:** Just because I'm the only other person here doesn't mean I always want to listen to you. (Emma Daley)

**SUNbLOCK:** What your day will do if you use SPF 2. (Mark Calandra)

**Trump:** Alas, the shelves are empty. (Rivka Liss-Levinson, Washington)

**Trump:** Millions of Americans would like to find this and expose their nether regions to it. (Gary Crockett)





**WindOW:** Where your newlywed neighbors really ought to hang some curtains. *(Danielle Nowlin, Fairfax Station, Va.)*

**ZOOm-MEETING:** When your cat blithely jumps onto your laptop during the weekly staff briefing. *(John Bunyan, Cincinnati)*

**DivisiON, DisruptiON, DeregulatiON, DysfunctiON, DeportatiON, DeceptiON, DestructiON, DisinformatiON:** A few of the president's favorite things. *(Jesse Frankovich)*

**And Last: PAThOLOgY:** The dismal science of figuring out which toilet jokes the Empress will think are funny. *(Ira Allen, Bethesda, Md.)*

**And Even Laster: EMPowered talkiSTRESS:** Kind of like Nurse Ratched, but not as sweet. *(Steve Smith, Potomac, Md.)*

**Still running — deadline Monday night, May 18: our Questionable Journalism contest. See [wapo.st/invite1383](http://wapo.st/invite1383).**

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1 Comments



**Pat Myers**

Pat Myers is editor and judge of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's page for clever, edgy humor and wordplay. In the role since December 2003, she has posted and judged more than 700 contests. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. Follow [👤](#)

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**Review**

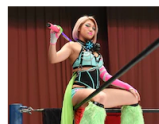
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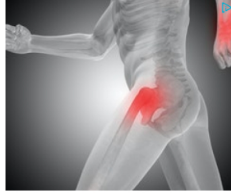
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