

# The Invitational Week 45: The Perfect(ly ridiculous) Gift

Offer up some products for people-who-have-everything catalogs. Plus winning 'life lessons' to be learned from the movies, from Costco, and more.

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We can safely say that no one resembling this man will be buying this “whole body pedaler” from the Hammacher Schlemmer catalog. (From [hammacherschlemmer.com](http://hammacherschlemmer.com))

**The Shop Treatment: This week’s Invitational**

This week's contest asks you to come up with items to be sold in mail order catalogs such as Hammacher Schlemmer's, which we are leafing through right now. Do you get mail order catalogs? If you don't, it doesn't matter, because we are going to help you out right here. But just in case, many of them are easily found online. The thing is, very often the very best item these catalogs offer is the catalog itself.

This one, and many others, seem to be directed at a market that includes grannies and grampies with more disposable income than they know what to do with, middle-aged people with more disposable income than they know what to do with, but not young people, who are simply too hip for all of this stuff. The contents are corny, mostly useless, hilariously overpriced (\$89.95 for a [manual kitchen grater](#)), and largely absurd. The for-oldsters comfort items are frequently modeled by people who'd never touch these items were they not being paid to do so, such as the one at the top of today's Gene Pool, featuring a buff, handsome twentysomething giddily employing a [watered-down baby-type stationary bike you can use while sitting in a stuffed armchair](#).

Here is a list of other things taken specifically from the current Hammacher Schlemmer print catalog:

- A waffle iron that makes waffles in the shape of a toy train set (\$79.95).
- Q 19-foot inflatable lawn Grinch (\$399.95).
- A plush piggy bank that, with each deposit, wiggles and sings about the joy of saving money (\$39.95).
- A hand-painted rocking horse that neighs and whinnies and makes clip-clop noises (\$259.95).
- A handmade Irish shillelagh (\$89.95).
- A wireless computer keyboard that looks like a manual typewriter from 1935 and clacks and dings just like Grampy's but also for some anachronistic reason has LED lights on the keys (\$149.95).
- An Advent calendar that dispenses a little toy each day — for your dog (\$169.95).
- And, on the cover of the print catalog, a record turntable that operates

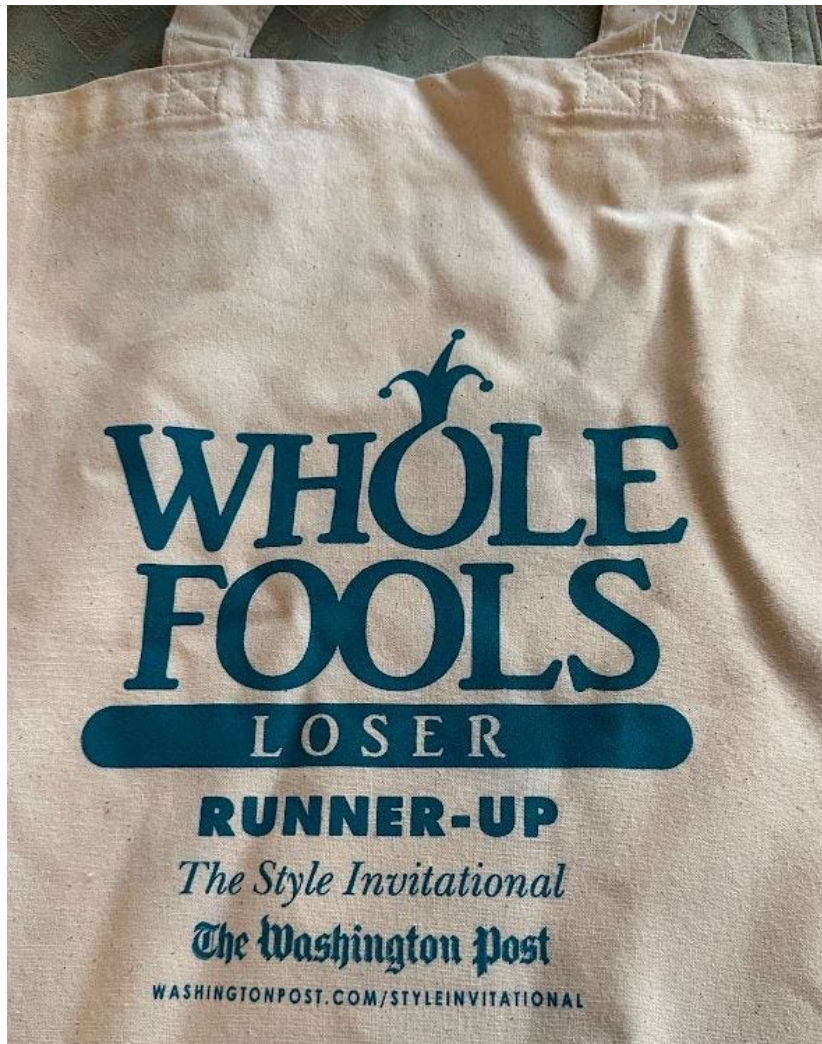
vertically; it looks like a guitar, and you hang it on the wall, and somehow it presses the tone arm against the record, sans gravity, with — as confirmed by online reviews — a fidelity level of two cans and a string. (\$349.99).

**For Invitational Week 45: Invent an item, with a catalog description, that would be a humorous addition to the Hammacher Schlemmer or a similar catalog (e.g., Harry and David, The Sharper Image, J. Peterman, Neiman Marcus).** Your entry may be any length at all, but shorter writing is often more entertaining.

**[Click here for this week's entry form.](#)** Or go to **[bit.ly/inv-form-45](http://bit.ly/inv-form-45)**. For formatting, all we ask is our standard request that you type each individual entry as one line — in other words, don't push Enter anywhere in the middle of that entry. As usual, you can submit up to 25 entries for this week's contest, preferably all on the same form.

**Deadline is Saturday, Nov. 18, at 4 p.m. ET.** Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, Nov. 23. Yes, that is Thanksgiving. We will be there for you.

The winner gets, speaking of shopping, a vintage but brand-new Whole Fools Grossery Bag, designed by the renowned funny artist Bob Staake for The Style Invitational, this contest's previous incarnation; Pat used to give these to runners-up. This canvas tote, made of genuine plant matter, is also available for purchase in the Invitational Wish Book™ for \$799.95 plus shipping.



Runners-up get autographed fake money featuring the Czar or Empress, in one of [ten nifty designs](#). Honorable mentions get bupkis, except for a personal email from the E, plus the [Fir Stink for First Ink](#) for First Offenders.

## Learning the Har Way: The ‘life lessons’ of Week 43

In [Week 43](#) we asked you to give us some observational humor in the form of “life lessons” to be gleaned from various situations — the movies, the gym, Costco, or any other milieu.



*Third runner-up: In the kitchen:* Whoever says “easy as pie” never made anything involving flour, buttery fingers, and a rolling pin. (*Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.*)

*Second runner-up: In Las Vegas:* You can meet a lot of women in bars who honestly don’t care how you look. (*Steve Smith, Potomac, Md.*)

*First runner-up: At the gynecologist:* When your feet are in stirrups, your private parts fully exposed, and you think your ass is about to slide off the edge of the table, it will still be possible to “scoot down just a bit more.” (*Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.*)

*And the winner of the cat-leg socks: From being an insomniac with ADHD:* The dorid nudibranch has a plume of gills around its anus. Turtles can also absorb oxygen from their butts. In fact, butt-breathing is fairly common in amphibians and reptiles. It’s true, the technical term for butt breathing is cloacal respiration. Birds have a cloaca. Speaking of birds, did you know owls can’t move their eyes? That’s why their heads turn so far. An owl can rotate its head through 400 degrees in full rotation. Tarsiers can rotate their heads 360 degrees, which is impressive for a mammal... (*April Musser, Georgia*)

## **None the Wiser: Honorable mentions**

**From online dating profiles:** No man is 5-11. (*Jesse Rifkin, Arlington, Va.*)

**At the movies:** Anytime a bullet is removed from a victim, it must be dropped into a metal container of some kind, producing a resonant clink. (*Cindy Clendenning, Colorado City, Colo., a First Offender*)

**From listening to WTOP’s traffic reports:** There exists a way for someone named Dave Dildine to survive middle school. (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

**From online dating:** Nobody is searching for a partner who shares a disdain of moonlight walks on the beach. (*Judy Freed*)

**From observing Kevin McCarthy:** It is possible to sell your soul to the devil and still not get anything worth having. *(Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)*

**At an [Eagles vs. Commanders game in D.C.](#):** What it's like at a Commanders vs. Eagles game in Philly. *(Jon Ketzner, Cumberland, Md.)*

**At shopping malls:** You don't have to be in peak physical condition to get hired as a security guard. *(Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.)*

**At the movies:** Never use an alley as a shortcut, unless you're prepared to climb a chain link fence. *(Steve Smith)*

**At a restaurant:** The time it takes to order, receive, and finish eating your food is usually equal to the time it takes the server to bring the check. *(Lee Graham, Reston, Va.)*

**At the therapist's office:** Your most urgent, emotionally laden issues will surface 47 minutes into the session. *(Judy Freed)*

**Reading "Beetle Bailey":** Trees grow horizontally from the sides of cliffs, and are quite sturdy, so it's easy to grab on and be supported if you fall over the edge, even if you are a fat sergeant. *(Roy Ashley, Washington, D.C.)*

**Feminine hygiene product ads:** The first thing I should be thinking of when I feel a cool autumn breeze is the smell of a woman's genitalia. *(Mark Raffman)*

**Fox News:** Biden is increasingly old and feeble. **MSNBC:** Trump is increasingly old and feeble. **The U.S. Census:** Everybody is increasingly old and feeble. *(Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)*

**From Costco:** It is possible for one person to consume an entire one-foot-diameter pumpkin pie between the Sunday and Wednesday before Thanksgiving. *(Jeff Contompasis)*

**From lying in a gutter with a bottle of Ripple:** Wine is coldest at 3:47 a.m. *(Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)*

**From the 2020 presidential election:** The “some of the people” you can fool all of the time turns out to be about 47 percent of the population. (*Michael Stein, Arlington, Va.*)

**From The Washington Post:** [Jeff Bezos owns The Washington Post](#). (*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore*)

**From Trump trials:** When faced with jail time, Trump’s former colleagues pee out the Kool-Aid very quickly. (*Leif Picoult*)

**The book “Hillbilly Elegy”:** “Flyover country” is populated by real-life flesh and blood human beings with hopes and dreams that are just as deplorable as I thought. (*Mark Raffman*)

**While doing your taxes:** Even though he calls only when he needs money, it still feels all warm and fuzzy inside to call your college kid a “dependent.” (*Karen Lambert, Chevy Chase, Md.*)

*The headline “Learning the Har Way” was submitted independently by Beverley Sharp, Jesse Frankovich, and Chris Doyle; Tom Witte wrote the honorable-mentions subhead.*

**Still running** — deadline 4 p.m. ET Saturday, Nov. 11: **Our Week 44 contest for monorhymes** — poems in which all the lines rhyme on the same sound. [Click here](#) for details.