

The Invitational Week 69: The Trite Stuff

Replace some well-worn phrases with better ones. Plus winning neologisms.

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AND

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This town turns less welcoming when its name gets tweaked as one of this week's neologism winners. See the Invitational results below.

Hello.

Welcome to Week 69, a new wrinkle on an old theme. We thought of it while reading a couple of news websites and being mildly nauseated by some of the tired, cliched language we saw.

Replace “The devil is in the details” with “The devil is in the terms of service.”

Avoid like the plague > Avoid like a coughing dentist in 2020.

Breathed a sigh of relief > Chugged a phew.

Burst out laughing > Saw Trump’s hair in a stiff wind.

It’s so easy — and so lazy — to reach for some overused phrase when you’re writing. Not that *we* would do that even once in a blue moon. Cliches in *our* writing are scarce as hens’ teeth!

For Invitational Week 69: Choose any writing cliché and propose a funny replacement, as in the examples above. Here are just a few that came to mind:

Fall in love

It all boils down to

Frightened to death

In the wake of

Walk you through

Drill down

It remains to be seen

You can use any of those, or any other you choose, so long as it is overused in speech or writing. (We are not looking for aphorisms! Send us no replacements for “an apple a day…” or “a stitch in time…”)

Deadline is Saturday, May 4, at 9 p.m. ET. Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, May 9.

[Click here for this week’s entry form](#), or go to tinyURL.com/inv-form-69. As usual, you may submit up to 25 entries for this week’s contest, preferably all on the same form. **Format them as “Old saying > new saying”** as in the examples above.

The winner gets a **bright green plush, googly-eyed nerve cell, 1 million times actual size**, which makes it about 3 inches long not counting its fringey feelers. If you've been singing "If I only had the noiv," like Bert Lahr, you could find out. Donated by the chronically neuronc Dave Prevar.



If you win, we'll make you really nervous.

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

Shift Happens: The back-to-front neologisms of Week 67

In **Week 67** we asked you to choose any word or short phrase, move its last letter to become the first letter, then define the result.

Third runner-up: AWALL AWALL: There's no "Welcome to" sign in this Washington town. (*Barbara Turner, Takoma Park, Md.*)

Second runner-up: OGIZM: An extremely exciting thingamajig. (*Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.*)

First runner-up: EW: "I don't see us as a couple." (*Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.*)

And the winner of the Nose Condom and some Loser Magnets:

BADLI: How one typically speaks when unprepared. (*Jesse Frankovich, Laingsburg, Mich.*)

Back Sassward: Honorable mentions

YALMIGHT: Introductory admonition: "Yalmight wanna get right with God before you wind up in a lake of fire, just sayin'." (*Jon Gearhart, Des Moines*)

SVENU: The Norse love god. (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

Y'MAMA'S B.O.: A smell only a big baby like you could love. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

EAT ON!: What you really want to do on Yom Kippur. (*Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.*)

DADJUDICATE: “Because I said so. Case closed.” (*Craig Dykstra, Centreville, Va.*)

SHIT: All the Top 40 songs since I graduated from college. (*Sam Mertens*)

D’OH, GOO!: What Homer Simpson says when he thinks things are going great and then he steps in a pile of it. (*Roy Ashley, Washington, D.C.*)

EARS: “My words go in here, but they always seem to come right out your other end.” (*Judy Freed*)

EEW: A sheep that tried to cross the highway. (*Barbara Turner*)

GEDIT IN!: Sure, you have to order your reporters to be fair and accurate, but mostly ... (*Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.*)

GEMPHASIZIN’: Showing off one’s bling. “Wanda was wavin’ her hand so much while gemphasizin’ that engagement ring, I expected traffic to stop.” (*Jeff Hazle, San Antonio*)

GLANS IN: The sex capital of Michigan. (*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore*)

ALABI: “I would have found my way around there if only I hadn’t lost my glasses.” (*Judy Freed*)

GOBJECTIN: Viscous substance emitted during angry shouting. (*Gary Crockett*)

COPE: “Gas prices are going up again — deal with it.” (*Sam Mertens*)

D-DONAL: “With this name you’d think I’d give stutterers a break, but not me!” (*Gary Crockett*)

DEJA CULATE: The feeling that you’ve already finished. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

TAT-TEMP: Someone who's just filling in at the body-ink studio. "Relax, I'm sure it will turn out fine. He took an art class at the community college." (*Pam Shermeyer*)

RUBE: Someone who tries to hail a ride from New York to L.A. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

MIB: Men in Blue. (*Craig Dykstra*)

'NOPE' RATIO: The fraction of men who will not even consider getting a vasectomy. (*Gary Crockett*)

O HELL: How you answer the phone when it's your ex calling. (*Jonathan Jensen*)

OPREST: What it's like to be a magician's rabbit. (*Craig Dykstra; Jesse Frankovich*)

OSCARJ: Megastar actress who lives in a trash can. (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

SCAT: A legendarily crappy movie. (*Duncan Stevens*)

SEXPENSE: Hush money — I mean "legal retainer." (*Leif Picoult*)

SHERPE: A known virus carrier. (*Kevin Dopart, Washington, D.C.*)

AEROTIC: The kind of magazines they read at the Mile High Club. (*Duncan Stevens*)

SPLATYPU: Australian roadkill. (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.*)

SUNDERPANT: To bust your rear — or long for a divorce. (*Ann Martin, Brentwood, Md.*)

TA-DA MAN: "See, I told you I could do it!" (*Judy Freed*)

TARROGAN: An assertive herb that leaves a bad taste in your mouth. “Jack was lots of fun at the barbecue until he started pouring on the tarrogan.” (*Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.; Jon Gearhart*)

TEXCREMEN: Greg Abbott, Ken Paxton, Ted Cruz ... (*Michael Stein, Arlington, Va.*)

TEXT-ROVER: Someone who sends rambling updates overflowing with intimate details. (*Jeff Contompasis*)

TWINGLE: The glint in the sky from a falling piece of a Boeing. (*Kevin Dopart*)

USN AF: When a major command screwup causes service members to sigh and say, “That’s so Navy.” (*Duncan Stevens*)

Hllanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogogoc: Possibly something really insulting in Welsh? (*Sarah Walsh, Rockville, Md.*)

The headline “Shift Happens” is by Jesse Frankovich; Frank Osen wrote the honorable-mentions subhead.

Still running — deadline 9 p.m. ET Saturday, April 27: our Week 68 wordplay contest to “breed” the names of this year’s Triple Crown-eligible racehorses and name the “foal.” Click on the link below.