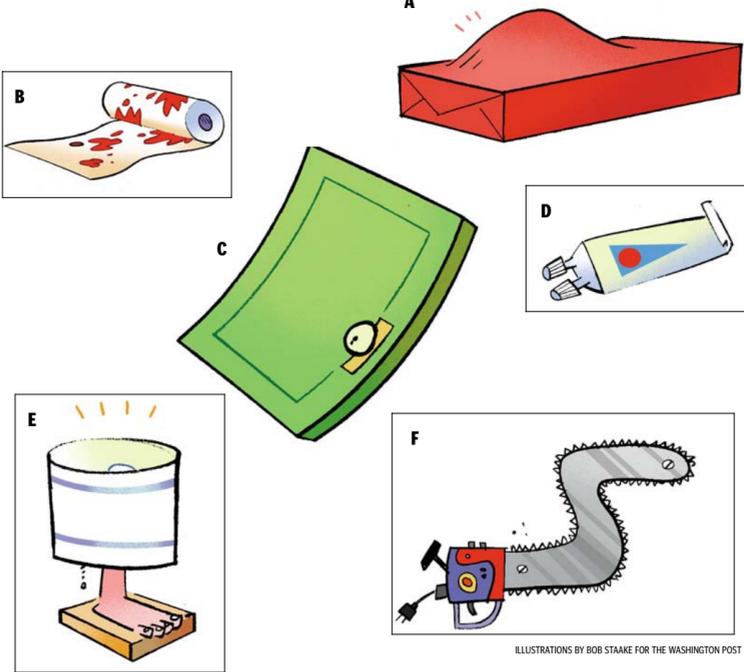


The Style Invitational

Week 520: I, Object

This Week's Contest: These items were ordered by well-known people. Who ordered them, and why? First-prize winner gets a Hubert Humphrey-shaped bottle, still in its box, from the 1968 presidential campaign.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

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, Sept. 1. 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 Phyllis Reinhard of East Fallowfield, Pa.

Report from Week 516, in which you were invited to come up with unwise things to say in given situations.

- ◆ Fourth Runner-Up: **To Saint Peter: "Ooooooh, big, bad traffic court judge. What are you going to do, FINE me?"** (Daniel Mauer, Silver Spring)
- ◆ Third Runner-Up: **To Saint Peter: "It's a pleasure to finally meet you! And how are Mrs. Claus and the elves?"** (Dan Steinberg, Falls Church)
- ◆ Second Runner-Up: **To your best client: "You're not wearing a wire, are you?"** (Roy Ashley, Washington)
- ◆ First Runner-Up: **In traffic court: "So I was holding that round thingie in front of me, pressing those buttons on the floor with my feet, when . . ."** (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)
- ◆ And the winner of the 1940s-era Bosom Friend mad-money pouch: **To a waiter: "You call this lemonade, jerko? Why, it's barely yellow! Bring me some better stuff."** (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

To Saint Peter

"Oh, c'mon, the only bad thing I ever did was rob some schmuck to pay Paul." (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)

"This reminds me of a joke. Gimme a sec." (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

"Where's the big guy? I don't want to talk to some flunky." (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

"Once you're in, you're in, right? I mean, it's not like anything you do on the inside can get you thrown out, right?" (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

"You got ID? Because you could be Saint BERNARD, for all I know." (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

At Traffic Court

"I couldn't stop because the coffee I was drinking would have spilled on the newspaper I was reading to a friend over my cell phone." (Steve Shapiro, Alexandria)

"Omigod, could you possibly talk any slower? I haven't got all day. Comeoncomoncomoncomon LET'S GO." (Michael Burgess, Germantown)

"Yes, your honor, I was speeding, but you have to understand that if the drug deal I was heading to fell through, the guy would squeal about the ho I had to kill last week." (Alan Middleton, Gahanna, Ohio)

"I was a little depressed that night, your honor. You know, the way you must feel about being a judge in traffic court." (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

"Your honor, when I entered the intersection the light was the color of this \$20 bill, if you get my drift." (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

"Your honor—I have of late, but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the Earth, seems to me a sterile promontory. Can you cut me a little slack?" (Dan Steinberg, Falls Church)

"Well, if I have to call you 'your honor,' then YOU have to call ME 'your majesty.'" (Fil Feit, Annandale)

"So I was carefully driving down the road—vroom, vrooom—when I gently turned—skreek erk errrr—and . . ." (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)

To a Waiter

"You silly Chinaman—there's no food too spicy for me!" (Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

To a Car Salesman

"Golly, the paint and interior are so nice. Is there anything I can do to protect them?" (Toby Bell, Lake Forest, Ill.)

"So what's it gonna take for me to drive off this lot today in one of these babies?" (Kevin Cuddihy, Fairfax)

"Options? Just give me whatever you think I need." (Andrew Hall, Highland, Md.)

In a Job Interview

"I dunno. What did I claim in my résumé?" (Larry Phillips, Falls Church)

"The supervisor in my last job will be able to give you a good assessment of what I can do. Here's her home phone number. If you don't want her husband to answer, let it ring once, hang up, and call back five minutes later." (Mike Hammer, Arlington)

"Do employees get their own gun lockers?" (Mike Hammer, Arlington)

"I like to think of myself as a secretary AND a poet." (David Ronka, Charlottesville)

"Am I correct you are not allowed by law to ask me if I have a prison record?" (Scott Campisi, Wake Village, Tex.)

"I know it's a 3 p.m. interview, but I was waiting here since 12:30. I'm not saying anyone is gonna come asking, but in case they do, I've been here the whole time, okay?" (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

"So, what games are pre-installed on your hard drive?" (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

"Will I be given frequent breaks so I can apply salve to my carbuncles?" (Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

Next Week: Insert Foot Here

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Eat Some, or Else

Perhaps it was not a good idea to make feasting the touchstone of cultural identity and respect.

If you are one of us (the test goes), you naturally relish our food. And if you are not one of us, you had better make it clear to us that eating what we offer is the treat of your lifetime. If not, we will be dangerously insulted. Finish up and beg for more, or we'll know you don't love us.

Miss Manners was not consulted when that standard was instituted. It happened somewhere around the dawn of civilization, before she had her coffee.

No doubt it sounded like fun—the ancient combination of offering hospitality to strangers while sizing them up as candidates to become allies or enemies. Interviews over lunch, as it were. And, incidentally, a great excuse for overdoing it yourself.

Also, it stood to reason: Anyone who doesn't like our cuisine must be nuts. If you find our treats distasteful, or are squeamish about what we consider edible, or show only tepid enthusiasm by limiting your intake—well, we know what the symbolic meaning of that is.

And so, for thousands of years now, enthusiastic gobbling has been the sign of approval and acceptance. Hosts and parents take pride in offering more than is necessary to merely sate hunger, and consider it their obligation to urge others to keep going after they declare they have reached their limits. At weddings, wakes and holidays, serious eating is expected. Diplomats and politicians understand that it is no small part of their jobs to shovel in the food and shovel out the admiration.

Miss Manners would have no objection if there were not so many who have difficulty participating. Among those whose goodwill is larger than their capacity are now too many people who want to lose weight, or who have medical, religious or philosophical restrictions on what they eat, or who can't help being squeamish about certain things, or who are just plain not that hungry.

Etiquette did institute rules to protect them.

It is rude to notice what a guest leaves untouched or unfinished, and while it is hospitable to offer food, it is rude to insist.

But these rules are directed at the providers, and they become too much aglow with their own magnanimity to pay any attention. "Oh, come on," they keep repeating to rising gorges.

The etiquette burden then passes to these reluctant beneficiaries. Their part is to keep repeating "No, thank you" until the bullying stops, but they don't seem to have the staying power. When they know they will be unable to make a meal from what will be provided and still want to attend for social reasons, they should deal with their hunger both before and after the event.

Unfortunately, many have turned to reciprocal rudeness. They call their hosts in advance to order the food they want, they bring their own food, they lecture others on why the food provided is morally or medically bad.

Thus, instead of a legitimate minority deflecting rudeness, they help create the same etiquette-free standoff that exists between non-smokers and smokers. And Miss Manners cannot stomach another helping of that.

Dear Miss Manners:

When did it become against the "law" to wear pearls in the daytime? Is it okay to wear pearls to a big fancy luncheon?

Wearing pearls day or night was illegal under periodic sumptuary laws in Venice and Florence between the 16th and 18th centuries, but Miss Manners understands that they have since been repealed. Pearls are now properly worn at any hour. Just don't let her catch you running around decked in diamonds before dusk.

Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at MissManners@unitedmedia.com or mail to United Media, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH		EAST	
♠ A 5 4	♥ K 2	♠ Q 10 7 2	♥ Q 6 5 3
♦ A 8 7 6	♣ K 10 7 4	♦ Q 4	♣ A 6 2
WEST		SOUTH (D)	
♠ K 9 6	♥ J 10 9 7 4	♠ J 8 3	♥ A 8
♦ J 3 2	♣ 5 3	♦ K 10 9 5	♣ Q J 9 8

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1 ♣	Pass
2 NT	Pass	3 NT	All Pass

Opening lead: ♥ J

A snail is robbed by a turtle. The police arrive and ask the snail to describe the perpetrator. "I can't," he says. "It all happened so fast."

Every player has his own pace. Some players ponder so long, you wonder what they could be thinking about. Others operate at ramming speed. Never let yourself be stampeded by a speed demon. Maintain your own comfortable pace of play.

In today's deal, South's 3NT looked impossible. He won the first heart with the ace and continued at lightning speed by leading the queen of clubs to East's ace, winning the next heart in dummy and cashing the K-J of clubs. West, trying to keep up, threw a spade. South next led another club, and West threw . . . a diamond. South then took four diamonds, making

the "impossible" game with an overtrick.

South managed the play well. If he leads the fourth club from dummy, East, discarding before West, can throw a high spade, and West can safely bare his king of spades. As it was, West had a tough problem but would have won no extra points for solving it in a hurry. He must play at his own pace, not at South's, and reason out the answer.

West knows South had four clubs and two hearts. Since South won't have bid 2NT with a four-card spade suit, West can place South with four diamonds.

If South has the king of diamonds, West must keep his J-3-2. To pitch a second spade won't cost unless South's spades are Q-J-3, and even then, South must guess well to take three spade tricks.

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DEAR ABBY

Dear Abby:

My 16-year-old son came home from his job working at the concession stand at a movie theater and said that a woman customer had told him he would never achieve success in life. When I asked why someone would say such a horrible thing, he replied, "She asked me for an extra empty popcorn bag, and I told her I wasn't allowed to give them out."

Don't you think that nasty woman should have taken it up with management instead of saying such a cruel thing to a kid who was just doing his job? My son happens to be hearing-impaired and also has epilepsy. He has won gift certificates for the past three consecutive months for making the most sales of all the concession workers.

My son ALREADY is a success—in spite of her vicious mouth. What's wrong with people like this? Proud of My Kid in Pennsylvania

Immaturity and cowardice. The woman was out of line to take her frustration out on your son. She didn't call the manager because she didn't have the nerve.

This would be a better world if people only stopped and thought twice before spewing poison out on others. It takes so little effort to give someone a boost instead of a knock. Read on:

Dear Abby:

I want to address my comments to a wonderful young man who tossed a football with my dad just before Father's Day in Girsh Park in Goleta, Calif.:

My dad is 75. He played football in college, but has not played for many, many years. When he saw you and your pal tossing the football in the park, I watched him look on with envy. I asked him if he wanted to play, and he said yes. When I asked you if you'd toss the ball with him, you kindly agreed. You spent some time playing catch with him even though he can't throw the ball like he used to—and he can't catch like he used to, either. You even assured him YOUR throwing was bad when he flubbed a catch.

Your tossing the ball with my dad meant the world to him. Not only did he talk about it all through dinner that night, but even now he talks about how he threw the ball again.

We were in the park that day for my daughter's birthday. My parents had driven up from Los Angeles to be with us as we needed to be together as a family.

What you didn't know was that Dad had been diagnosed with cancer the week before. The doctors hope to shrink the tumor before operating. Dad has now started chemotherapy and radiation and will undergo extensive surgery in a few weeks.

My mom and I are so grateful to you for stopping your own activity to spend some time with a 75-year-old man who needed it. May you always be blessed with the same kindness you showed my dad.

Grateful Daughter in Santa Barbara

Your letter says it all. We rarely know the circumstances of the people we meet in life. My thoughts and prayers are with your father.

Dear Abby:

I would like to send a message to the blond woman driving the black Lexus from Massachusetts: Hang up your cell phone, put down the bagel, place both hands on the steering wheel and pay attention to the road. My life and the lives of other commuters depend on it! Motorcyclist in Massachusetts

Your message applies to many thousands of drivers—female and male. A distracted driver is as much of a menace as one who is under the influence or overtired.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeane 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.

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

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