

The Style Invitational

Week 522: Being There



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

This Week's Contest was suggested by Hank Wallace of Washington: Set the agenda for a flash mob, one of those existential, Web-arranged, sudden, pointless, instantaneous but brief gatherings of people at odd places, to do odd things. (Recent D.C. example: Seventy-five strangers met at a bookstore, went to the magazine rack and began reading aloud to each other.) First-prize winner gets an elaborate Jackie Chan action figure that was distributed to the media by Tri-Star Pictures in the hope of good publicity for Jackie's new film, "The Medallion," which is, we have been informed, crap.

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. 15. 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.

Report from Week 518, in which you were asked to complete the phrase "You know it's time to ---- when ----."

- ◆ Second Runner-Up: **You know it's time to think of another excuse when the dog actually eats your homework.** (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
- ◆ First Runner-Up: **You know it's time to quit drinking when your clothes are constantly chalky from outlines drawn by the smart-aleck neighborhood kids.** (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)
- ◆ And the winner of the coupons from Canadian Tire: **You know it's time to feel good about yourself when, in a contest of arbitrary rules, one group of strangers whom you probably wouldn't like very much if you actually knew them defeated another group of strangers employed by a corporation from a city geographically farther from your home than the corporation employing the first group of strangers. Yep, that really validates your existence.** (Mike Connaghan, Alexandria)

◆ Honorable Mentions: **You know it's time to get that toothache looked at when your diet consists of Cheez Whiz and poi.** (Sue Lin Chong, Washington)

You know it's time to get a new financial adviser when your first \$300 million doesn't last you through your thirties. (M. Tyson, Bethesda)

You know it's time to buy your wife a \$4 million ring when the best explanation you have is that it wasn't a felony, it was just a cheap sex act in a hotel room. (Josh Borken, Bloomington, Minn.)

You know it's time to stop doing Mad Libs when crotchety howitzers bounce over your skanky pandemonium. (Mark Young, Washington)

You know it's time to cut back on the gambling when the casino owner says, "Maybe you should take a break." (Mark Young, Washington)

You know it's finally time to move out of your parents' home when you start sharing the denture cream. (Rebecca Wolfinger and Donn Viviani, Arlington)

You know it's time to change the battery in the smoke detector when J. Lo gets married again. (April M. Musser, Arlington)

You know it's time to get off the 'Net when you start counting the Orbitz games as exercise. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

You know it's time to clean the fridge when something says "Turn off the light!" every time you open the door. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

You know it's time to cut down on coffee when you can hear the dog-whistle. (Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)

Next Week: **Propositional Phrases**

TODAY'S HOROSCOPE | Jeraldine Saunders

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
You're in a soul-searching frame of mind. Perhaps you should spend time helping out with a charity organization. Much could be learned from listening to those younger.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
There's subconscious preparation in progress involving dreams and their meaning; it also concerns editing written material. You want to escape to the ocean, lake or a theme park.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): You want to get away from it all as spouse, lover or children could dig their heels in and cause problems. Spending time with someone with the same interests proves relaxing and rewarding.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
You could be overly sensitive today and have surplus energy. Maybe going for a long hike or working out will keep you out of trouble and calm you down.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
Dreams having to do with video, photography or keeping fit could be coming true as someone offers his or her know-how and assistance.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
The moon in your sign today sees you dreamy and a little melancholy. You want to make changes, but where to begin? The journey starts with a single step. Keep expectations high.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
You find it difficult to conceal your feelings, especially as you may distrust someone. No good jumping to conclusions. Enjoy the party as partners want to see you happy.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
You're in the mood for a change and have been working fiendishly. Friends come out of the blue offering you a good time, and you take a well-earned break.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
Behind a proposal is a hidden agenda. Advice from those close is well meant, but do they have all the facts? Think it over well as it may become troublesome.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
You're busy with pre-autumn chores, like clearing out cupboards and reorganizing the garage. Someone or something is getting in the way. Beware of breakages in the home.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
Leaping to conclusions, you may well have to control your anger and emotions. Travel today could be beset with difficulties. You feel obliged to family members.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
You feel betrayed as someone you trusted is now ordering you around, which could result in having to fork out money to pay the piper. You want to divulge a secret.

IF SEPT. 7 IS YOUR BIRTHDAY: You're idealistic and a dreamer who would be good at writing fiction. Overly sensitive and particular at times, you don't make friends easily, but once accepted, you keep them for life. Your tough childhood strengthened you. This year sees new ideas taken on board with some major changes and travel ahead. There are lucky breaks in October and November; romance in December. You're a music lover.

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Richard's Poor Almanac DELETED BIRDS by Richard Thompson
Note to birdwatchers—The following are no longer recognized by the Audubon Society.

<p>COMMONPLACE DULLARD</p> <p>No distinguishing marks of any kind. Hangs around other, cooler birds who wish it wouldn't.</p> <p>CALL— "Hey wait up wait up c'mon guys wait up."</p> 	<p>EASTERN POTTYMOUTHED SNARK</p> <p>Assails bird-watchers with vicious insults & profanity.</p> <p>CALL— "Get a LIFE you what're you lookin' at take your binoculars and take."</p> 
<p>GREAT DOWNY EVERMOLT</p> <p>Difficult to actually see as it's always surrounded by a suffocating cloud of feathers.</p> <p>CALL— "Cough cough cough cough cough cough."</p> 	<p>FLIGHTLESS GROUSE</p> <p>Plods up and down the Eastern U.S. whining the whole damn time.</p> <p>CALL— "ow ow ow ow MY FEET hurt my FEET hurt ow ow ow ow."</p> 
<p>UNMITIGATED GULL</p> <p>This one's a show-off little creep.</p> <p>CALL— "Look at this plumage! Great, huh? You guys from National Geographic? How about a picture? You wanna see my mating dance?"</p> 	<p>VIRGINIA GLEBE</p> <p>A duck-like fowl that wanders erratically across Northern Virginia. Possibly apocryphal.</p> <p>CALL— "Glebe glebe. Glebe. Glebe. Honk. Glebe glebe glebe."</p> <p>IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE</p>

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Conversational Meltdown

What's wrong with plain-spokenness? Why don't people—especially those in positions of authority, responsible to their constituencies—stop all that fancy obfuscating and say what they really mean?

Apparently, some of these folks have come around to that point of view. During one short midsummer heat wave, Miss Manners noticed the following news reports:

■ On the international scene, the Italian prime minister, speaking as president of the European Union, said that a certain German lawmaker was well suited to play a Nazi concentration camp guard. Then the Italian undersecretary responsible for tourism said Germans in general were arrogant blonds, and that a particular German deputy in the European Parliament "probably grew up taking part in noisy burping contests after drinking gigantic amounts of beer and gorging himself on fried potatoes."

■ On the national scene, one member of the House Ways and Means Committee told another one to shut up, to which that congressman replied, "Come over here and make me. I dare you—you little fruitcake. I said you are a fruitcake." This followed a staged walkout, after which the chairman called the paged, who set an isolated example of restraint by withdrawing.

■ On a local scene, a priest speaking at the funeral Mass for a former town councilman in New Mexico adapted some text from the book of Revelation and told the assembled mourners, "The Lord vomited people like [name of the deceased] out of his mouth to Hell."

Miss Manners does not quite see how any of this plain-spokenness made the world go around faster, unless you count its sending everyone involved into a tailspin. What followed were recrimination, retaliation and a lawsuit.

She would like to believe that these instances represented merely a seasonal meltdown. Heat does make people irritable, as we know from the number of midsummer national holidays, including our own, that commemorate successfully rash acts of defiance.

But she fears that this summer's less heroic outbursts are only examples of the trickle-up effect of the general degradation of speech. When discourse was conducted at a politer level, it was chiefly rebels and comedians who broke the rules to seem refresh-

ingly frank and funny. However, the novelty of rudeness has long since worn off, and it no longer produces shock or laughter. Lacing argument with insult and commemoration with criticism is simply commonplace.

But dignitaries took a while to catch up, or rather down. Miss Manners considered that they might be inhibited by the notion that a dignitary should be dignified, but told herself not to be silly. There were the practical considerations: When you are in a position of authority, you need the respect, goodwill and cooperation of both your constituents and your colleagues.

Political campaigns began to get rude when the participants figured that they could impress voters with their indignation but not have to deal with their targets if they won. And, although there is considerable posturing of the kind by those in office, a cooperative form of government, nationally or internationally, requires that they not antagonize peers whose votes they may need.

But if anyone concluded that it was safe to speak ill only of the dead—no, it isn't. Their survivors are suing.

Dear Miss Manners:
At a formal afternoon tea, does the server stand to the right or the left of the person he is serving? The teacup was on the right of me, but, being left-handed, I moved the teacup to the left.

Well, then, it would have been kind of messy if the server had continued to pour from the right, wouldn't it?

At private teas, the guest hands the teacup to the hostess, who is seated, so Miss Manners presumes you are speaking of service in a tearoom. In a commercial establishment, it would be considerate, not to mention safer, to move the cup to the right, where the server expects to find it, when receiving a refill.

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
♠ Q 7 4
♥ 6 3 2
♦ K Q J
♣ A K 7 2

WEST
♠ 10 8 5
♥ 7 5 4
♦ 10 7 6 4
♣ 8 6 5

EAST (D)
♠ A K J 9 6
♥ K 10 9 8
♦ A
♣ Q J 10

SOUTH
♠ 3 2
♥ A Q J
♦ 9 8 5 3 2
♣ 9 4 3

The bidding:

East	South	West	North
1 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
2 ♥	3 ♦	All Pass	

Opening lead: ♠ 5

"There is no escape. I have you at last."

Professor Moriarty spoke triumphantly. It was the last deal of a challenge match, and Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson needed a plus score to win.

"Not even the great Holmes can make this one," Moriarty gloated. Against Holmes's three diamonds, Moriarty had led a spade, and East took two spades and shifted to the queen of clubs. Holmes won, finessed in hearts and led a trump. East won and led another club to dummy, and Holmes took another heart finesse and led a second trump. East threw a spade.

"Down one," said Moriarty. "Your pattern is 2-3-5-3. You have a club to lose, and I get a trump trick with my ten."

"I fear he's right for once, Holmes," Dr. Watson sighed.

"Patience," the great detective remarked. He ruffed a spade, took the ace of hearts and at the 11th trick led a club, leaving him with the 9-8 of trumps, dummy with a high trump and a club, and Moriarty with the 10-7 of trumps.

East then led a spade, Holmes ruffed, and Moriarty found that his "sure" trump trick had vanished. If he overrudded with the ten, dummy would overruff in turn, and Holmes's nine would win the last trick. If instead Moriarty discarded, dummy's high trump would win Trick 13.

"He couldn't have done it without the nine of clubs," the Professor scowled. "If I have it, East can discard a club on the trumps, and I win the third club."

"I wouldn't have bid so much without the nine of clubs," Holmes told him solemnly.

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