

# The Style Invitational

Week 589: Hyphen the Terrible (New Edition!)



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**Sen-mo:** How college students tend to sign letters to their parents.

**Presi-crazy:** The spending of political capital.

**Bor-brew:** Budweiser gets a new name.

One of the Invitational's most frequent contests was one in which readers combined the halves of any two words that were hyphenated in that day's paper. This contest, however, didn't adapt well to the 21st century, because readers of the Invitational on The Post's Web site never see a hyphen. So for **this week's contest:** Combine the beginning of any multi-syllabic word in *this week's Invitational* with the end of any other multi-syllabic word in this column (or in this week's Web supplement) to coin a new word, and then define it, as in the examples above. If the word has more than two syllables, the "beginning" or "end" can be as long as you like (short of the whole word), but it must break at an actual syllable break. First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives—just in time to be too late for Christmas—a plush stocking sent by a studio hoping to gain publicity for "Christmas With the Kranks," the movie The Washington Post lovingly described as a "festering pile of celluloid." Inside this stocking we will add a genuine lump of anthracite coal.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or, if you really have to, by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Dec. 27. Put the week number in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are 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 Jan. 16. 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 Russell Beland of Springfield, who also offered the idea for this week's contest.

**Report from Week 585**, in which we asked for parodies of holiday songs in which you gave some advice to our nation's leaders or the Loyal Opposition. There were far too many worthy songs than would fit in the paper, so be sure to check out Volume 2 of the Honorable Mentions at [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com) (just type "Style Invitational" in the search bar at the top of the home page), where there's also a Special Holiday Bonus—a link to some genuine Style Invitational Losers attempting to warble a few of these songs into a microphone at this year's Loser Holiday Party.

◆ **Second runner-up: To "The Chipmunk Song"**

Congress, Congress,  
time is here,  
Time for payback,  
time for cheer.  
We came through and  
helped you win.  
Hurry now,  
we're cashing in.  
Want a justice  
on the court,  
One who won't  
let them abort.  
We can hardly  
stand the wait,  
So, Congress,  
don't be late.  
(Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

◆ **First runner-up, the winner of the door hanging made out of two straw hats: To "Winter Wonderland"**

We pledge death in elections!  
We kill crooks with injections!  
'Tis time that they go that mile down Death Row,  
Here in Texas' Penitentiary.  
They've used up their appeals,  
Now we'll serve their last meals,  
Because they did shoot, we'll execute,  
Push the needle in for all to see.  
Once upon a time we'd have some hangings,  
Put ropes around their necks and drop them down,  
Then we sat them in a chair and fried them,  
Until the crooks were golden crispy brown.  
Murderers get no pardon,  
Governors, their hearts harden,  
And then if we see another crime spree,  
It's more shots in our penitentiary.  
(Fred Dawson, Beltsville)

◆ **And the winner of the Inker: To "White Christmas"**

Start dreaming of your wife's kisses. You have to be the perfect mate.  
When you're chasing skirts, Bill, it only hurts Hil  
For prez in two thousand and eight.  
Start dreaming of your wife's kisses. Behave as if she's Mrs. Right.  
May you kiss and hold her real tight. And may your next residence be White.  
(Barbara Sarshik, McLean)

◆ **Honorable Mentions**

**To "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer"**

Putin the Red knows tactics  
He learned at the KGB.  
Rigging Ukraine's election,  
That's a covert specialty.  
He's not for spreading freedom,  
He just wants complete control.  
Mr. Bush, one suggestion:  
Look again into his soul.  
(Harvey Smith, McLean)

**To "Here We Come a-Wassailing"**

Kerry, don't be waffling  
while on the Senate floor,  
Kerry, don't be flip-flopping,  
or you'll get votes no more,  
Why'd you have to concede?  
You're the man that we need,  
Please come back to be pres'dent  
after four more painful years,  
Please come back after  
four more painful years.  
(Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)

**To "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree"**

Iraqing around the GOP  
at the Grand Old Party hop,  
Needing an exit strategy  
because the war won't stop.  
Iraqing around the GOP  
and rejecting the U.N.  
Bringing Iraq democracy,  
though we don't know how or when.  
You will get a sentimental  
feeling when we say,  
"Sunni clerics, come see how we  
Rig the voting for Allawi."  
Iraqing around the GOP  
while the war is far away.  
Wondering why the whole world hates  
The good . . . old . . . U . . . S . . . A!  
(Barbara Sarshik)

**To "Sleigh Ride"**

They've got more ayatollahs  
And way more mountains than sand,  
What went wrong in Fallujah  
Would go 10 times worse in Iran.  
(Mark Young, Washington)

**To "O Little Town of Bethlehem"**

O little blue Northeastern state,  
We fear you do us wrong;  
Though we're the saved and you're  
depraved,  
We still should get along.  
You godless sons of Sodom,  
Your souls are damned, we know;  
You'll burn in Hell, but please do tell  
Why you resent us so.  
(Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

**To "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen"**

God rest ye, Joseph Lieberman,  
on every Sabbath day.  
The voters will respect a man  
who takes the time to pray.  
But won't you please sing songs about  
a one-horse open sleigh?  
A small thing to comfort a goy,  
comfort a goy,  
A small thing to comfort a goy.

According to the latest polls,  
the voters do agree  
It's fine to chant in Hebrew  
wearing your phylactery,  
As long as you will also light  
the White House Christmas tree.  
A small thing to comfort a goy,  
comfort a goy,  
A small thing to comfort a goy.  
(Barbara Sarshik)

**To "We Three Kings of Orient Are"**

We two queens of one common bed  
Wish to marry before we are dead.  
Please, oh Congress, right wing, nonetheless  
Legally, let us wed. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

**To "O Christmas Tree"**

O FCC, O FCC,  
How goshdarned moral must we be?  
O FCC, O FCC,  
Must we show naught but purity  
To keep from getting fined big dough  
When we go on a TV show?  
O FCC, O FCC,  
To [heck] with this insanity.  
(Fred Souk, Reston)

More Honorable Mentions appear on [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com).

Next Week: It's God's Will (or Won't), or Lord Have Mirthy

## MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

### Disturbing the Peace

**A** horrid burst of euphoria often follows an outburst of rudeness. The offender does his offensive little number and then compounds it by declaring, "I feel better now."

Well, sure. As in the case of other unfortunate bodily emissions, the person who does it feels relieved, while everyone else is suffering from the suddenly poisoned atmosphere.

Miss Manners suffers from this sequence of events even when she is not in the immediate vicinity. That people sometimes lapse from perfect behavior, she is all too aware. But why can't they at least feel ashamed of themselves?

Etiquette is generous in providing ways of dealing with failure to meet its standards. It not only makes allowances for newcomers who are not yet familiar with the particular etiquette forms they are encountering but also requires those who are to help spare them embarrassment.

It even has a mechanism for inexcusable lapses, a form of social whitewash called the apology. This requires some effort. The amount of self-condemnation has to be fitted to the error committed: too little, and the assumption is that the apology is insincere; too much, and the assumption is that the apology is sarcastic.

It is true that sincerity can be simulated, which many regard as a flaw. How can they know if the apologizer is really, really sorry in his heart of hearts?

They can't. But Miss Manners does not regard that as a flaw. Sincerity has its place among the moral virtues, but if everyone's truest feelings about everyone else were constantly being made obvious, civilization would collapse. Even the kindest of souls occasionally harbor unkind thoughts, but if they can plausibly deny them, no harm is done. To apologize is to recognize the legitimacy of the complaint, and usually that is all it takes to restore peace.

All the same, Miss Manners counts on a smidgen of commitment to the notion that peacefulness is desirable and that therefore one should refrain from actions that rile up others. And she counts on a conscience that produces a bad feeling, rather than a triumphant one, when one is guilty of such an action.

Unfortunately, there was a time, not so long in the past, when the society exerted itself to drum out these qualities. It condemned feelings of guilt, hardly bothering to distinguish between irrational ones and the valuable mechanism by which wrongdoers punish themselves. It deemed it courageous to say provocative things bluntly, with the misleading expectation that insults would be appreciated if they represented honest feelings. It promised health benefits to getting unpleasant things off one's chest, without considering that other people were then getting them in the face.

This was a sort of reverse child-rearing, teaching adults to forgo inhibitions and come straight out with—anything at all. It did not work out well. After all, there are still thoughts that are socially unacceptable, and you have to learn to control them.

You may have an occasional accident. In that case, excuse yourself, clean up as best you can, and for goodness' sake don't point to it with pride.

**Dear Miss Manners:**

**While dining out I asked myself and my dinner companion what would be the proper time during the meal to offer a taste to the other party? Would it be immediately following the first bite, midway through the meal, or at the end?**

All three are possible with the right dinner companion, but each has a different meaning.

An offer made after your first taste means, "This is wonderful, and I'd like you to share it." Offered mid-meal, it means, "Aren't you going to offer me some of what you're eating?" And at the end it means, "Here, why don't you have this; I can't finish it."

Miss Manners does not advise the second with any but an intimate friend, and the third with any but a spouse.

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

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## DEAR ABBY

**Dear Abby:**

**When we married in 1998, my husband, "Grant," and I agreed that we would never put our parents into a nursing home as long as we were physically able to care for them. After our home was built, my father-in-law, "Papa Jake," moved in with us. Papa Jake is now 73, uses a wheelchair because of a stroke and is an alcoholic.**

**He gets into his motorized wheelchair every day and heads out to the local bar, which is a mile away. When he returns, he's completely intoxicated, and sometimes falls. Papa Jake is also belligerent toward me, and I don't want our 2-year-old son living in this environment. I didn't bargain on this when I married Grant.**

**Grant refuses to tell Papa Jake that if he can't live by the rules he needs to leave. I have reached my limit. I love Grant, but I can't live like this anymore. When is enough enough?**

*Fed Up in New York*

Papa Jake appears to be a danger to himself. If you haven't already done so, inform his doctor about what's going on. It's extremely unfair of your husband to wimp out and allow his father to treat you so disrespectfully—let alone drive his wheelchair drunk on the roads.

The bargain you made with your spouse was that you would care for his father as long as you were physically able. Well, since you are not physically able to prevent Papa Jake's forays to the bar (which put his safety at risk), insist that the time has come for Jake to go, and do not back down.

**Dear Abby:**

**Before a game, my friend asked if I ever had a flame-shooter. Then he went into the bathroom and got a can of hair spray and some matches. He told me to light the match and hold it. While I was holding the match, he sprayed the hair spray on it, and then my hand caught fire. I wasn't burned, but it scared me.**

**I'm not sure what to do. I want him to still be my**

**friend, but I don't want him to get hurt. Should I let him keep doing it, or should I tell someone and have them tell him to stop?**

*Worried in Kansas*

Have you ever heard the saying that people who play with fire usually wind up getting burned? This applies to you and your friend. All you would need is for one of those "flame-shooters" to explode in your faces, and there would be lifelong consequences. The next time your "friend" suggests playing that game, tell him you'd prefer to do something else. Your mother or your teacher should inform his mother about what her son is up to. The boy is a tragedy waiting to happen.

**Dear Abby:**

**Early this year, I lost my precious father to cancer. Mom and Dad's 50th wedding anniversary would have been in a few weeks, and we had started planning a big celebration. Now that Dad is gone, how can we acknowledge this day? It seems a shame to do nothing, since in her heart, Mom will always be "with" my father.**

**Is there a way to have a special acknowledgement of any kind? Any suggestions would be welcome.**

*Grieving but Grateful in Atlanta*

Although a large celebration of your parents' marriage would not be appropriate, I see no reason why family members and close friends shouldn't take your mother out on this emotionally loaded occasion. Certainly, she should not be alone—and I am sure she would welcome the emotional support.

*Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at [www.DearAbby.com](http://www.DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069.*

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## BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Neither side vulnerable

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

The bidding:

South West North East

1 ♣ Pass 1 ♦ Pass

2 ♣ Pass 3 ♣ Pass

5 ♣ All Pass

Opening lead: ♥K

**H**ead about the trouble at the North Pole? Santa's helpers are suffering from depression: The problem seems to be low self-esteem.

If you can find the way to assure 11 tricks at today's contract, lack of self-esteem is probably not your problem. South had plenty of strength to go to game after North's invitational raise to three clubs, but South's leap to five clubs was indelicate: 3NT would have been easy, and six clubs might have been cold if North's hand had been slightly different. South could have probed with a bid of three diamonds at his third turn.

At the club game, South took the ace of hearts, drew trumps, cashed the A-K of diamonds and led a third diamond—his best play for three diamond tricks. Alas, East won with

the 10 and led the queen. South ruffed but had to start the spades, and no matter how he proceeded, he'd lose two spade tricks to go down.

Can South make five clubs against any defense or lie of the cards?

To preserve his self-esteem, South wins the first trick, draws trumps, takes the K-A of diamonds and leads dummy's last heart . . . pitching his last diamond!

The defender who wins must make a helpful return, conceding the contract. If for instance East wins and leads a spade, South plays low. West takes the king, but if he returns a spade, South gets a free finesse. If West leads a heart, South gets a ruff-sluff. If West had a diamond to lead, South would be sure of a third diamond trick.

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See **HOW TO SOLVE THAT DECORATING DILEMMA**

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