

The Style Invitational

Week 634: Mess With Our Heads



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Sex-Ed Panel's Makeup Is Challenged

Members' Messy Mascara 'Looks Like They Just Got Out of Bed,' Critics Charge

This week's contest: It's time again for one of the Empress's favorite pastimes, Making Losers Read The Washington Post. Take any headline, verbatim, appearing anywhere in The Post or on washingtonpost.com from today through next Sunday, and change its meaning by adding either a "bank headline," or subtitle (like the joke bank head under the actual Oct. 16 headline above), or the first sentence of the article that might appear under it. Please include the date and page number of the headline you're citing from the paper; for Web articles, give the date and copy a sentence or two of the story so it's clear what the original was about. Headlines in advertisements and subheads within an article can be used, too; photo captions cannot.

Winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets, via Dave Zarrow of Herndon, a longtime Loser who bills himself as "America's Funniest Office Products Dealer" (motto: "We Eat Staples for Breakfast"), a genuine Pickle Putter, which is a real, full-size golf putter with a green pickle-shaped head on the side away from the ball. This is not just any old Pickle Putter, however. This is an exclusive club: It's from the Edward Lowe Industries Pickle Barrel Invitational, in Cape Girardeau, Mo. The late Mr. Lowe was the inventor of Kitty Litter, see. You don't see. Neither do we. But it's a fabulous prize.

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, or, if you really have to, by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Nov. 7. Results will be published Nov. 27. Put "Week 634" 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. Entries 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. 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 Brendan Beary of Great Mills.

Report from Week 630, in which we asked you to make up a word that combines the beginning and end of any two multisyllabic words appearing in that week's Invitational:

- ◆ Third runner-up: **Lusted x deadline = Lust-line: The imaginary visual horizon below which no man's eyes should stray when he's talking with a female co-worker.** (B.J. Alexander, Minneapolis)
- ◆ Second runner-up: **Queuing x reality = Queu-ty: The blonde who's always allowed to cut into a line.** (Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.)
- ◆ First runner-up, winner of the CD of Cuban-style Beatles songs, "Here Comes El Son": **Ouija x any: Oui-ny: Un nerde.** (Chris Doyle, Tokyo)
- ◆ And the winner of the Inker: **Currently x converse = Cur-verse: Doggerel.** (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

Honorable Mentions:

De-pective: In need of chest implants. (Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City)

Gram-stand: To brag excessively about one's grandchildren. (Pam Sweeney, Germantown)

Ho-am: A competition for dilettante streetwalkers to vie with professional prostitutes for business. (Jeff Covell, Arlington)

Pub-scriptions: The original over-the-counter medications. (Kyle Hendrickson, Frederick)

Infor-less: Describing a convict who worked out a plea bargain. (Fred Dawson, Beltsville)

Affirma-bottom: What you'll have afta some more time on the StairMasta. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Carb-ule: The largest amount of non-protein allowed on the Atkins diet. (Andrew Hoenig, Rockville)

Mech-ymous: A windup Disney character. (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)

Contemp-teristics: Things I hate about you. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Lust-mit: What Jimmy Carter did in his Playboy interview confession. (Michelle Stupak)

Ho-job: A trade or profession in which one must degrade himself in exchange for money. Antonym: unemployment. (Phil Battey, Alexandria)

Posteri-mining: Searching for the lost thong. (Pam Sweeney)

Judg-lines: The eye makeup used by certain Supreme Court nominees. (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

Appropri-nastics: Maneuvers used to tack a pork barrel amendment onto unrelated legislation. (Pam Sweeney)

Annan-ymous: An unidentified U.N. official in the Oil for Food scandal. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

Theo-quatic: Baptist. (Dave Komornik, Danville, Va.)

Semi-bon: One-fourth of a bonbon. (Pam Sweeney)

Num-bottom: A long and boring meeting. "I've got an all-day num-bottom on process standardization." (Brendan Beary, Phil Battey)

Oui-ple: Yes-men. (Ted Weitzman, Olney)

Ro-lexandria: An upscale neighborhood adjacent to Old Town. (Chris Doyle, Tokyo)

Pseudo-raq: Implants. (Chris Doyle)

Ink-ville: Wherever Chris Doyle is writing from this week. (Tom Witte)

Snot-tumn: Ragweed season. (Brendan Beary)

Dum-munications: e.g., "I don't think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees." (Phyllis Reinhard)

Honor-assis, pl.: Down and out. (Charles Mann, Baileys Crossroads)

Lust-nets: Condoms. (Tom Witte)

Po-hinds: a Bayou delicacy that somehow has never become popular north of the Louisiana border. (Peter Metrinko)

Ink-bands: Plain brown rubber bands labeled "LoseStrong," instituted as Style Invitational prizes in the latest round of Washington Post cost-cutting measures. (Kyle Hendrickson)

Meta-dent: A dent in your dent. (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)

Class-wood: The reason many a boy would rather take an F than go up to the blackboard to work an algebra problem. (Kyle Hendrickson)

Ten-dot: Braille code for a real hottie. (Peter Metrinko)

North-bottom: Disoriented. "No wonder we're lost, you idiot, you got the stupid map all north-bottom." (Russell Beland)

Discrimi-negation: The perfunctory disclaimer "I'm not prejudiced, but . . ." that is invariably followed by an appallingly racist remark. (Brendan Beary)

Pain-ulum: Stop calling it a speculum and say what it really is! (Michelle Stupak)

Hy-by: A greeting designed to get you past that boring guy at the office without having to stop and chat. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

Bat-pus: A caldron ingredient that's a handy substitute for newt-eye. (Tom Witte)

Mc-manity: A sea cow burger, already supersized. (Dan Seidman, Watertown, Mass.)

Nip-ship: A bra. (Tom Witte)

Pract-ished: What Lucy Ricardo did to prepare for the Vitameatavegamin commercial. (Michelle Stupak)

Dead-livery: Alcoholism. (Ned Bent, Oak Hill)

Invitation-ure: Contents of the Empress's wastebasket. (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)

McPerts: Mass-produced breast implants. (Ted Weitzman)

her-MA: An in-law who's a disaster from Day One. (Steven J. Allen, Manassas)

Mc-Bottom: No all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions, or sesame seeds. Just bun. (Mark Eckenwiler, Washington)

Dum-assis, n, pl. People who use up a whole week they'll never get back trying to win items that other people paid good postage to give away. (Dan Seidman)

Intelli-vitational: Definitely some other contest. (Tom Witte)

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Clothes Minds

How can we tell when it is Halloween now that everybody is playing dress-up all year? Businesspeople dress up as vacationers. Urban residents dress up as cowhands. Travelers dress up as sunbathers. Respectable ladies dress up as hussies. Honest gentlemen dress up as thugs. Grownups dress up as children. Schoolchildren dress up as all of the above.

Miss Manners supposes she wouldn't mind if everyone were having a rollicking good time at this. She would still regret the confusion and the aesthetic mess, but she would manage to bear up. Etiquette is supposed to keep track of the proper dress for particular occasions, but if no one cares, she would gratefully retire to the hammock and let them play.

The problem is that people do care. The more liberty that is taken with dress, the more severe the etiquette problems that arise.

Some are complaints that people have about the way other people dress. Other people, Miss Manners is told, are indecent, disrespectful and just plain disgusting. They spoil the cityscape by going around half-naked. They spoil the workplace by making it look unprofessional. They spoil social events by refusing to dress up. They spoil public events by exposing those near them to smelly and unsightly body parts.

The rest are equally vehement complaints that people have about others who complain about the way they dress. Those people, Miss Manners is told, are shallow, narrow-minded and dictatorial. They judge by appearances instead of intrinsic worth. They have puritanical notions about the body. They think they can interfere with others' comfort and self-expression.

This is a classic etiquette fight, in that both sides are highly emotional and neither side really understands the subject. They work themselves up attacking or defending particular fashions and expand that to condemn one another's characters. But because they fail to understand the social function of clothing, they miss the point.

Everybody talks about comfort, especially those who are wearing pants too tight or too loose for them. And everyone talks about self-expression, especially slaves to fashion. What no one articulates

in these arguments is that clothing is a social language that everyone reads, consciously or not. Any job counselor, costume designer or defense lawyer will attest to that.

Is this shallow? Well, it is undoubtedly on the surface. But sometimes that is all one can see, and even those with the opportunity to dig deeper still have to deal with the surface.

Unlike beauty or other physical characteristics, dress is presumed to be subject to some degree of choice. You may choose to be as close or as remote from the prevailing convention of the time and occasion as you like, but the distance will be read as reflecting your attitude. This is why movie stars and hip-hop musicians dress so differently when they go to court. Such symbolism is powerful, and those who use it to lie should not be surprised or offended when others take these statements at face value and presume them to be childish or criminal.

Except on Halloween, of course. That's symbolism's day off.

Dear Miss Manners:

I learned that when I am dining and have to excuse myself from the table, I should place my napkin on my chair, so that my fellow diners do not have a used napkin sitting next to their dining plates and food.

However, in all my adult years, I have yet to see even one other person do this, even those with traditionally impeccable manners. Everyone puts his or her napkin on the dining table. Have I been misinformed?

Your information is correct. Miss Manners regrets to inform you that your friends, apparently, are not. Even in trivial matters, it is not a good idea to presume that what you see going on around you is the gold standard of behavior.

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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ASK AMY

Dear Amy:

My husband and I have been married for more than 15 years and have four children. Our marriage has not always been smooth sailing, but we have tried to work things out for the sake of our children. Recently, I noticed my husband stepping out of the house when his cell phone rings, so this weekend I confronted him by asking him who was calling.

At first, he wouldn't answer, but he eventually told me he was talking to a woman he played coed softball with this summer. I could maybe understand this if the season was still going on, but the season ended three months ago.

Later that morning, I picked up his cell phone and found that this woman has called more than 20 times these past few weeks — sometimes twice a day. My husband has also called her.

He has a very flexible job and makes his own daily schedule.

This woman has never called our house number and also calls him at the times when I am usually at work.

My husband insists that she is just an easy person to talk to and that there is nothing going on.

Even if this is on the up-and-up, I feel this is disrespectful and dishonest because it is not in the open. I am also hurt because we both work and it is a struggle to make time for each other as it is. What do you think?

Doubling in Connecticut

When it comes to opposite-sex friendships with married couples, a basic guideline is that these friendships are all well and good as long as the opposite-sex friend is invited and welcome to come to the house for dinner with the spouse and the kids.

I don't know what is going on here, but it almost doesn't matter because the sneakiness is the most important thing.

I hate to heap something more onto your plate because it sounds as if you are stretched very thin, but you really must try to get to the bottom of this.

Your husband will deny, deny, deny. So use this incident (you can even call it a "misunderstanding") as a reason to urge your husband to join you for marriage counseling.

Marriage counseling isn't fun. It can be hard work to bring up these painful issues to try to stitch your relationship back together. But counseling has saved many relationships — and can lead to great insight, even when the marriage doesn't survive. I hope that you will give it a try and that you will go even if your husband refuses.

Dear Amy:

We have four children — three teens. I have learned through a friend that my 16-year-old daughter and her 16-year-old boyfriend of several months are going to become sexually active.

I have been open and specific with all four of my children about sex. My daughter is aware that she should just say no, that 16 is too young, that pregnancy can happen even with birth control, and that STDs are rampant.

My question is, now that they have made the decision and are planning to get birth control, what can I do? Even if my daughter tells me and asks for my help in getting birth control, then what?

How does a parent provide birth control for their child without giving "permission" to have sex? I have talked and talked and talked. I have warned and discussed and shown videos, given her books and discussed those books. I've done my part, but I know that hormones, lust and 16-year-old-ness have won out. Help!

Mom

I understand the two sides to this argument. However, there is evidence that when young people are educated about sex and its consequences, and when they have access to reproductive health care, the teen pregnancy rate goes down. It may surprise you that teens report that their relationship with their parents is paramount in their decisions about sex.

You've done your best to educate your daughter, and now she should be given a thorough gynecological exam and receive birth control counseling by a professional. Planned Parenthood provides reproductive health services, education and counseling. Education about sex and access to birth control don't promote sex half as much as MTV, Paris Hilton and "American Pie" movies do.

Your daughter should understand that young women have to take responsibility for their reproductive health. You and your husband also should clearly articulate your "no sex" point of view to her boyfriend. Please continue to talk to your daughter, educate her, respect, trust and love her. You should include her boyfriend in your family's life, too. Your daughter will become sexually active — eventually. But your goal should be to delay this decision until she is older, more mature and better able to handle the consequences.

Write to Amy Dickinson at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ A 10 3 2
♥ J 9 4
♦ K 4
♣ J 10 6 4

WEST

♠ 9 6
♥ 8 5 3
♦ Q J 10 9 6
♣ K 9 2

EAST

♠ K Q 8 7 4
♥ A 7
♦ 8 5 3
♣ 8 5 3

SOUTH (D)

♠ J 5
♥ K Q 10 6 2
♦ A 7 2
♣ A Q 7

The bidding:

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

Opening lead: ♦ Q

"I was playing in a family game with my grandmother," a fan writes, "and I opened 1NT as South. Granny has her views on bidding. She said if I ever again opened 1NT with a five-card major suit as her partner, she'd disinherit me."

"When we landed at 3NT, West led the queen of diamonds, and I took the king and led a heart. East rose with the ace and returned a diamond, and I ducked and won the third diamond.

"I then had eight tricks — two diamonds, four hearts, a spade and a club — so I led a heart to dummy and returned the jack of clubs. West won and cashed two diamonds for down one, and my grandmother announced that four hearts was cold.

"I know this is a gray area of bidding, but are you on my grandmother's side?"

It's black and white to some experts, who never open 1NT with a five-card major. Others do so freely.

I wonder what Granny would have rebid as South if she'd opened one heart and heard one spade from North. Although South's 1NT opening missed a heart fit and a superior game on this occasion, it gave a good description of South's strength and pattern in one bid and avoided rebid problems.

South makes 3NT with careful play. At Trick Two he must let the jack of clubs ride, forcing out West's entry. When West leads another diamond, South plays low, and if West then leads a third diamond instead of shifting to a spade, South takes the ace and leads a heart. His good play may produce an overtrick: If East takes the ace, he has no more diamonds.

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Next Week: Picture This, or Draw Your Own Conclusions