

How to Win at Pickleball

Move up to the kitchen. Do not step inside. Stay on your toes. Brace for a volley of dinks and missiles.

Hold your paddle with fingers loosely wrapped like the handshake you offer to trusted companions. You do not need that heavier grip, the tension you use on the clueless souls you maybe decide to impress.

Keep the other hand relaxed and easy, at the ready to offer balance and ballast. Wait for the ball to sail over the net.

Let the ball do the work, the pushing and thwacking. Save your thrust for the serves you will send to the farthest back quadrant. Pivot just a bit. Put your paddle into position behind the ball. Direct the point of contact.

This is it, that perfect moment now to send the ball back left right or center to that very sweet spot where your opponent isn't.

How to Read a Book

You should start this experiment when you are young, when you still are counting your age in fractions, say maybe when you are four-and-a-half going on seven.

Choose a good book. Snuggle up into a comfortable chair. Sound out the words. Taste the syllables. Feel how they run together like friends holding hands, how they make room for their neighbor to finish a sentence. Let the words you are reading slide over your tongue, tease out ideas you didn't know were coming. Let these words settle in, satisfy your hunger the way cookies do when you sneak them out of the jar when you are sure there is no one watching.

If you are lucky you will enter worlds you would never have had opportunities to visit and on each journey you will also collect knowledge information and wisdom that surpasses all the years you have previously spent.

Make this experiment a daily commitment and when you are 68-and-a-half going on 77 you still will have exciting adventures waiting for each new day to open.

How to Celebrate a Birthday

Chapter 1

Help your mother bake a cake.
Watch the egg whites slither.
Measure out a cup of flour.
Dump in an extra scoop of sugar.
Lick the beaters clean.
Put the cake into the oven.
Take it out to cool.

Cover the cake with sticky sweet icing
the same way your mother covers
you and your brothers with healthy
helpings of hugs and kisses.

Set the table. Use your best
spoons and forks and the fancy
embroidered linens. Take a big
slice of cake. Add a scoop of
chocolaty ice cream. Sit down to eat.

Chapter 2

Help your mother bake a cake.
Whip up the butter and sugar.
Drop in two eggs. Let them
break. Slide the cake into the
oven. Take it out to cool.
Put a big number on top.

Take your mother's hand and
give it a squeeze. Help her
find her place at the table.
Make sure you have used her
favorite linens, the ones she
embroidered when she was seven.

Cover your mother with hugs and
kisses. Know that somewhere
she will always remember she
loves whoever it is that you are.

God Hasn't Taken Me Yet

Heaven is advertised as a model community, like the HOAs you see in brochures and those friendly neighborhoods you see on TV where every window is clean and polished, all the curtains are open, the yards are tidy, everyone follows the rules, and no one ever dares to create any kind of trouble.

So this perhaps is the reason why that God in their superior wisdoms has never scooped down and taken me yet. It might just be that no one up there is ready now for all the havoc I might want to make.

History Seen Through the Eyes of Someone Who Is 23

So now she was telling this story made short
about the river we were straining to find
and how what followed behind in its wake
was this great big canyon we had come to admire.

Something happened along the way
before a name was attached to this place.
As the story goes there were three young explorers
who went out on their own in search of some way
to get into and through the canyon.

They never were seen again she said
and their names perhaps were never recorded.
But that doesn't matter I hear her say
they would be dead now anyway
and because we already were late for our dinner
she moved us along with a hurried reminder
that we barely had time for the obvious things
before we got back on the bus.