



Written by [Lenore Skenazy](#) on May 28, 2024

How to Become a Clue on ‘Jeopardy!’

“Wow!!!!” “Congrats!” “Next step: New York Times crossword puzzle!”

The texts started coming thick and fast on Friday after I achieved the modern-day equivalent of immortality: I became [a clue on “Jeopardy!”](#)

The category was “Points of View,” and the clue was this:

“Lenore Skenazy, who wrote of letting her 9-year-old ride the NYC subway alone, moved this term from raising chickens to raising kids.”

If you can’t guess the answer, just Google my name. OK, OK, I’ll make it easier. It’s “What is free-range?”



Lenore Skenazy
Lenore Skenazy

So, how does one become a “Jeopardy!” clue? It’s easy! Just let your 9-year-old do something the world considers dangerous — in my case, ride the New York City subway alone. Then write a newspaper column about why the world is wrong. Then write some more columns about it and appear on the “Today” show, MSNBC, Fox News, National Public Radio, Good Morning America, The Daily Show, BBC, CBC (that’s Canada), ABC (Australian Broadcasting Company), Le Monde, Der Spiegel, the South China Post — I think you get the idea — defending yourself. Then graciously accept the nickname “America’s Worst Mom.”

Then start a blog about the issue and give it that catchy name, manage to trademark said name (shoutout to Dale Cendali, America’s top intellectual property lawyer and my dear friend from college) and write a book with the same title. Do it fast, fearing your social capital may evaporate.

Next, speak at about a million schools, as well as corporate behemoths like Microsoft and DreamWorks.

Keep finding new ways to spread the word. Do a reality TV show (“World’s Worst Mom,” now on YouTube). Headline the Bulgarian Happiness Festival. (In the process, learn to make Shopska salad — fantastic Bulgarian tomato salad.) Speak in Bendigo, Australia — a town you reach by passing through Kangaroo Flats. (I HIGHLY recommend Bendigo. It was a gold rush town just after California’s, and it looks like a movie set of Victorian San Francisco.)

Never stint in the hunt for new readers and leaders! For instance, about 10 years ago I wrote to Matt Welch at the Libertarian magazine Reason to propose a new content line:

“Hi Matt! Looking over all the topics on the Reason blog — ever fascinating — I see one that’s not covered much: Parenting.... “And yet, I was angry to learn about parents who’d been arrested for letting their kids wait in the car, or walk to the pizza parlor, or play in the park. I couldn’t believe some daycare workers had to check in on sleeping babies every 15 minutes to record their sleep positions. I heard from teachers who had to fill out hazardous materials reports for each different brand of baby wipe and dish soap in their classrooms.”

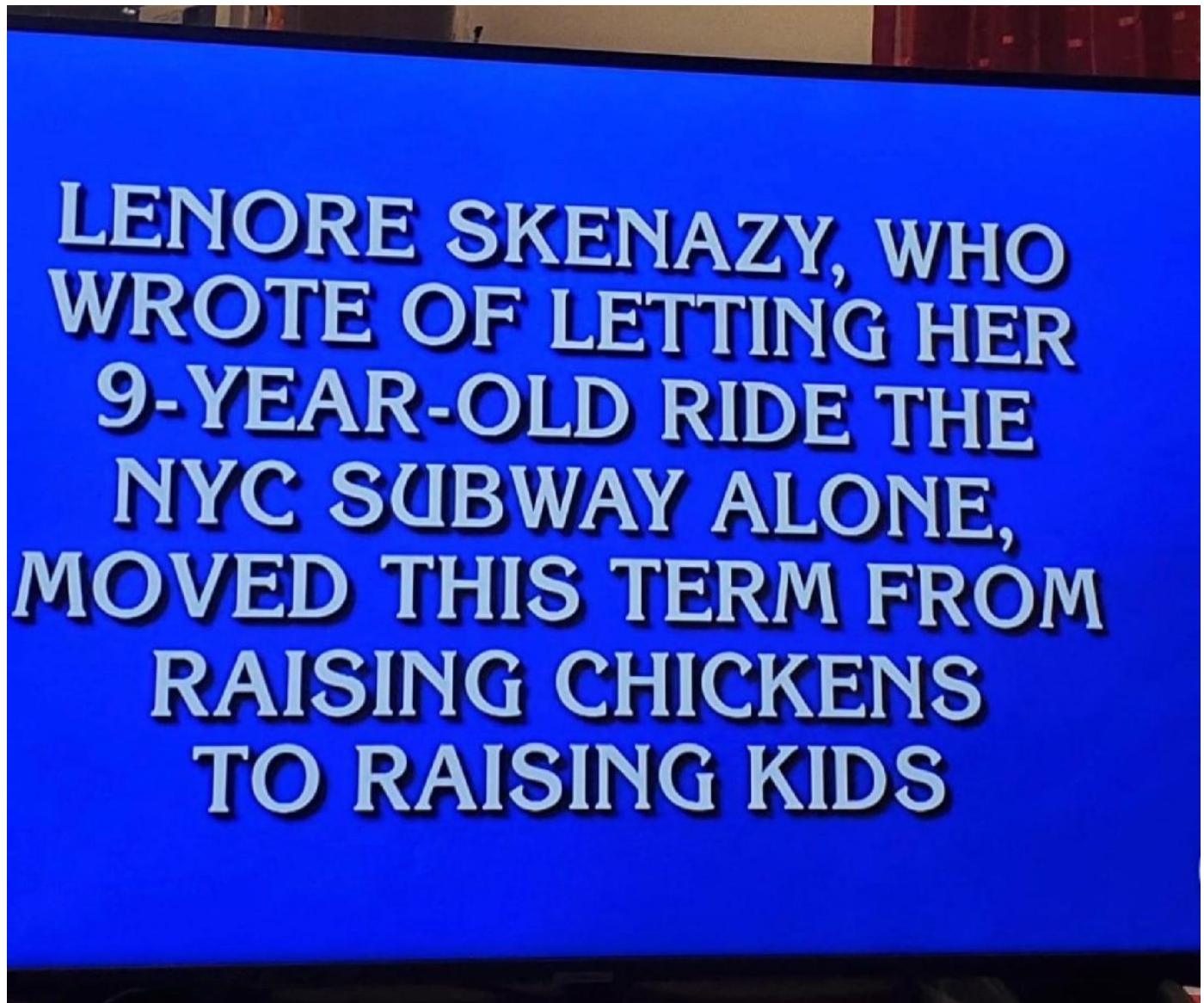


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Reach out to everyone else you can think of, too, including this very newspaper! And while you're at it, get bills passed in eight states that say it is not against the law to be a Free-Range Kid. Or to be a Let Grow kid, as Let Grow is the nonprofit that grew out of "Free-Range Kids."

In short: if you want to be on "Jeopardy!" ("Jeopardy! Masters," actually), and have the contestant answer the clue correctly, just dedicate about 16 years to one specific topic and all its strange, infuriating ramifications, become the world's leading expert on the topic, and write about it nonstop, including in sometimes self-referential, syndicated columns.

Voila: You are now a part of pop culture. It's just that simple!



I was a clue on "Jeopardy!"

Lenore Skenazy is president of Let Grow, a contributing writer at Reason.com, and author of Has the World Gone Skenazy? To learn more about Lenore Skenazy (Lskenazy@yahoo.com) and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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