

Free !

"Free is when you don't have to pay nothing or do nothing. I want to be free, free as the wind".

This is a quote from a song I once heard. It stayed forever in my mind. Who don't want to be free? Now freedom is more or less a state of the mind. Mostly it is up to yourself if you feel free. Some people are and others will never be free. The more materialistic way of free; like not have to pay for something, is more easy.

Companies have always offered samples of their products in the hope you will buy more if you like them. From tasting a grape before you buy the bunch to Avon Ladies offering makeovers at the doorstep there is nothing new to this.

But now the internet has changed the quantity and ease that a internet user can get hold of these free items. A search for free samples opens a world of possibilities. Now as the old saying almost goes "there's no such thing as a free lunchbox" and you generally have to do something to secure your goodies. This can be anything from signing up to a website, filling in a form or subscribing to a service. What's the catch? There is no catch - it's simply companies getting smarter.

Market research costs money, as does promoting new products. Finding out what people think is an expensive business. It's far cheaper to just put a form online and then give something to the people who can be bothered to fill it in. If you can only send product samples to people you know are interested - you are saving a lot of money. Signing up to a website, filling in a form or subscribing to a service on the internet let the companies know more about their products.

Competitions

Another familiar concept that has been given new life online is the competitions to win free stuff sector. There are now websites that look for the best free competitions available and link them together according to what categories the prizes fall into. The competitions take time to fill in, there is no guarantee you will win and the constant emails can be annoying - but there are some fantastic prizes on offer.

Vouchers

Put simply, if you plan to buy something (and I mean anything from weekly supermarket shopping to a TV or washing machine) and know where you are going to get it from, you can get money off. Most of the deals offer less than 10% discount - but when all you have to do is fill in a form and wait for vouchers in the post it seems silly not to take this. Some of these deals work through partnerships but many are free to sign up to and use their bulk buying power to let you get discounts for nothing.

Reward Points

There are also numerous ways online to get reward points, where users can either receive loyalty points that can be converted to goods (similar to airmiles on credit cards - but over a wider range of items or cashback and discounts when you buy through a specific website) or get reward cheques/cashback posted to them. One of the best [discount shopping](#) sites I've seen is the Clubshop mall. Of course you'll have to subscribe to a free membership. Maybe this is the future in shopping. By now they have over 5000 well known international companies in their online mall and aim to become the largest buyers organisations in the world. That's the kind of buying power to get discounts with.

Living for free is sadly not possible, but if you spend some time on it you can get a lot for nothing more than your time and/or your subscription, or at worst money off your shopping.

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