FREELOADER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

How to Scam, Bargain, Hustle, Swindle and Fleece Your Way to the Good (or at Least Cheap) Life

by Michael Allen

Many Americans are brought up to believe that there is "no such thing as free lunch." Fortunately, that just isn't so. Not only are free lunches available, but also free money, free parking and much more! We've assembled some of the best ways to get freebies.

#1 FREE MONEY FOR YOUR BODY

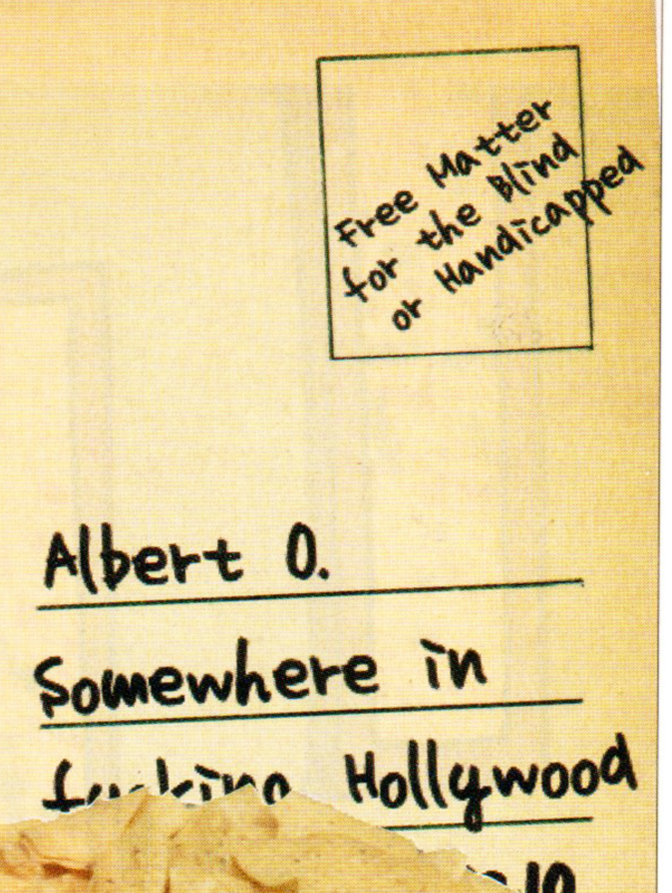
Unfortunately, it's illegal to sell bodily organs in the United States, but the good news is that it's reportedly occurring in countries such as China and Taiwan. Critics deride "trans-plant tourism," but why shouldn't you be allowed to sell your organs? Some folks sell a kidney and live off the spare, but the big money is in livers. It's a self-regenerating organ, so God must have intended for you to sell most of it on the black market, grow the remainder back, sell it again, grow it back again, etc. It's like having an ATM right next to your gallbladder!

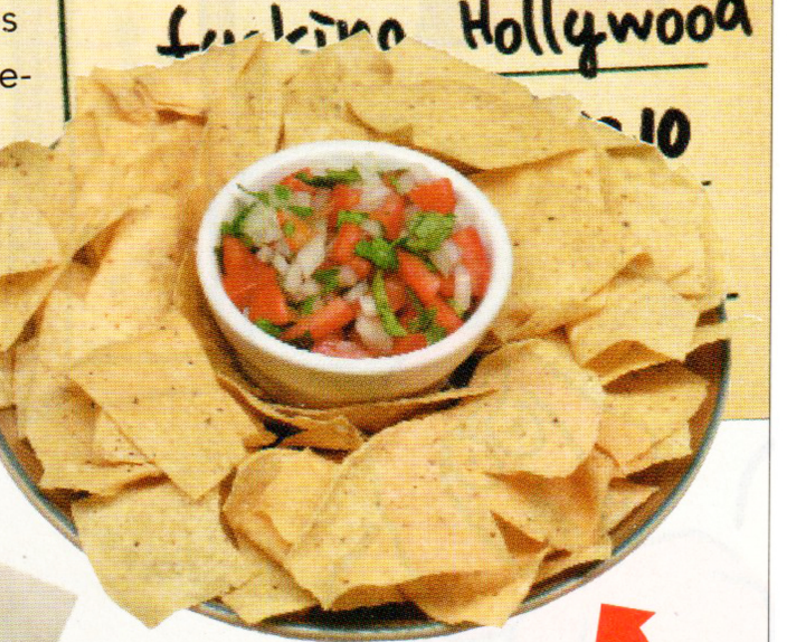
#2 FREE BOOZE

Hooch can be expensive, especially if you like wine. So what's a modern drunkard to do? A good place to get some alcohol is at your local place of worship. Wine is served periodically at different religious institutions; you just need to know the code words. "Communion" means "open bar" at Protestant churches. "Mass" is another word for "get sloshed" at Catholic cathedrals. And "Shabbat" is Hebrew for "happy hour" at synagogues. Thank God or (G-d) for religious rituals!

#3 FREE POSTAGE

Those jackbooted thugs at the post office keep raising the price of stamps, and does your mail arrive any faster? Noooo! Hardly seems fair, does it? But not everyone has to endure this government-sanctioned fleecing. United States Postal Code E040 allows for free postage for (and to) those who are blind or physically impaired. We trust that none of our dear readers will abuse this free-postage-for-life option, which simply requires that one write the recipient's address on the envelope, then scrawl "Free Matter for the Blind or Handicapped" where one would normally put that pricey stamp.





#4 FREE FOOD

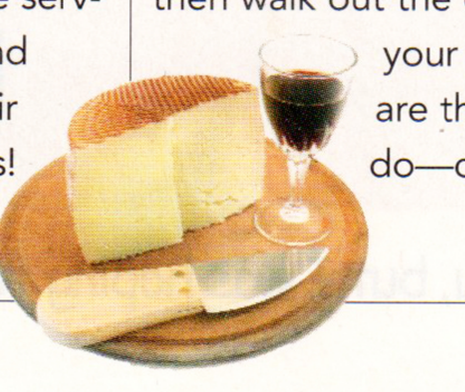
Mexican restaurants have a wonderful atmosphere, diverse menus, salsa music and, best of all, free chips! Simply go to your local eatery and tell them you are meeting a "friend." Most likely, the waiter will bring you some water and a basket of free chips. Chow down and check your watch periodically for your "friend." Keep up the act long enough, and they will bring you a second basket. Finish that off and walk out with a dejected expression because you got "stood up."

#5 FREE TIPPING

No one feels more sympathy for the working man (and woman) than we do, but what about the poor customer? Eating out is expensive these days, and on top of that, there is sales tax, and naturally, the gratuity for the service. An easy solution to this financial burden is "second-generation tipping." When no one is looking, simply take a tip off of someone else's table and transfer it to yours. If the service was especially good, be generous and transfer *several* tips. The server gets their tip, you get good service; everyone wins!

#6 FREE WINE AND CHEESE

In major cities, particularly in New York and Los Angeles, book readings abound. At these events the author usually reads from his or her work, which is followed by a serving of wine and cheese and/or other food. What a wonderful opportunity to expose yourself to literary works and get some free grub! Of course, the book store and author are hoping you will buy the book. Just tell them you need a little time to "think about it" before making such a major purchase, then walk out the door. (Don't forget to stuff your pockets first!) Hey, what are those eggheads going to do—chase you down?



#7 FREE MONEY FOR STANDING IN LINE AT THE DMV

In between jobs? Need some extra cash? Simply go down to the DMV and stand in line. When you get to the front, offer to sell your coveted place to the folks at the end of the line. Weary DMV visitors will gladly bid for your space. Pocket the cash, get back in line and start all over. Be sure to bring comfortable shoes with arch support and plenty of Tylenol for your aching feet. After about a year, you may have enough cash to make a down payment on that snazzy Corvette (minus the cash you'll spend at the podiatrist).

#8 FREE MONEY FROM CHECKING OUT MOVIES FROM THE LIBRARY

There's nothing more fun than having a group of friends come over to watch a movie. And here's a way to make it more fun. Check out a movie for free at the public library, then tell your buddies that you had to "pay for the rental." Hint loudly that you "sure would appreciate it if they could chip in." Is this deception? Not really. You're just finding out which of your chums is greedy or giving, determining who your *real* buddies are, and that's money well spent. As long as it's theirs.

#9 FREE SPEEDING AND RED-LIGHT RUNNING

We certainly don't advocate that any of our readers violate traffic laws, but if you do happen to get a ticket, here's the best way to beat it. Any inmate on death row knows this mantra: delay, delay, delay. Ask the judge for an extension to pay your ticket (also known as your bail), then ask for another extension and another… When that runs out, ask for an extension on the trial date, and another, and another. It is actually possible to delay the traffic court date for half a year. By that time, the officer who ticketed you may have quit, been shot or gone on vacation; if he or she doesn't show up at your court date, the ticket is dismissed.

#10 FREE MONEY IN PUBLIC FOUNTAINS

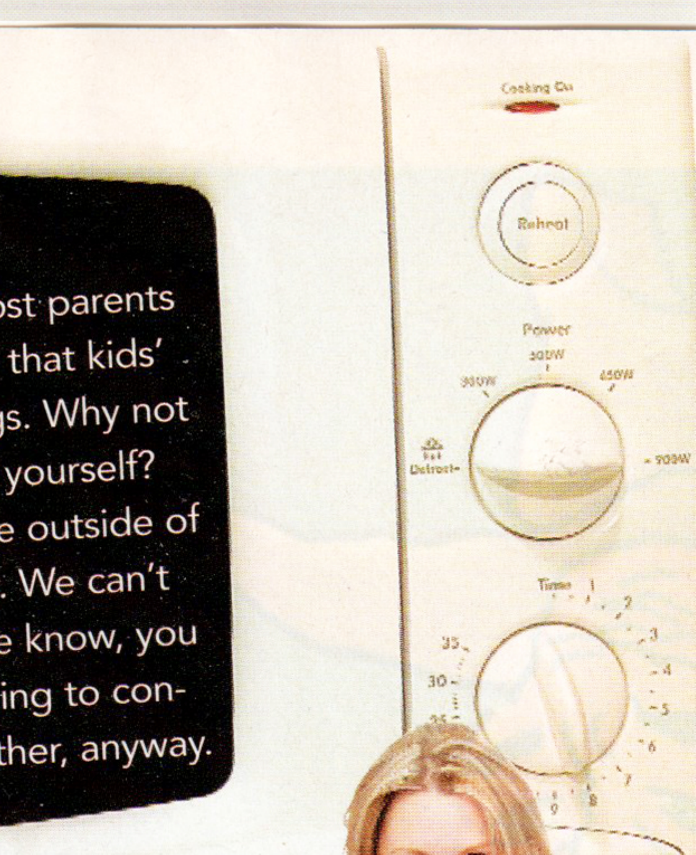
Optimistic dreamers often toss coins into public fountains and wish for something wonderful. We all know that their wish isn't going to come true—but yours can, if you're willing to wade into the freezing water at night. Just pretend you are a pirate looking for not-so-buried treasure. Is it legal? Who knows? Besides, you're a pirate, when did Long John Silver ever follow the law?

#11 FREE MONEY BY TURNING YOUR YARD INTO A PARKING LOT

If you happen to be lucky enough to live near a stadium, then you can rent your lawn out as a parking lot on game day. Sure, your yard will be destroyed with tire marks and oil leaks, but that's a small price to pay for free cash. Heck, your kids can even get into the act and pretend to be valets, asking for tips. The only drawback is the noise from the stadium, but who needs sleep when you're chasing a fortune?

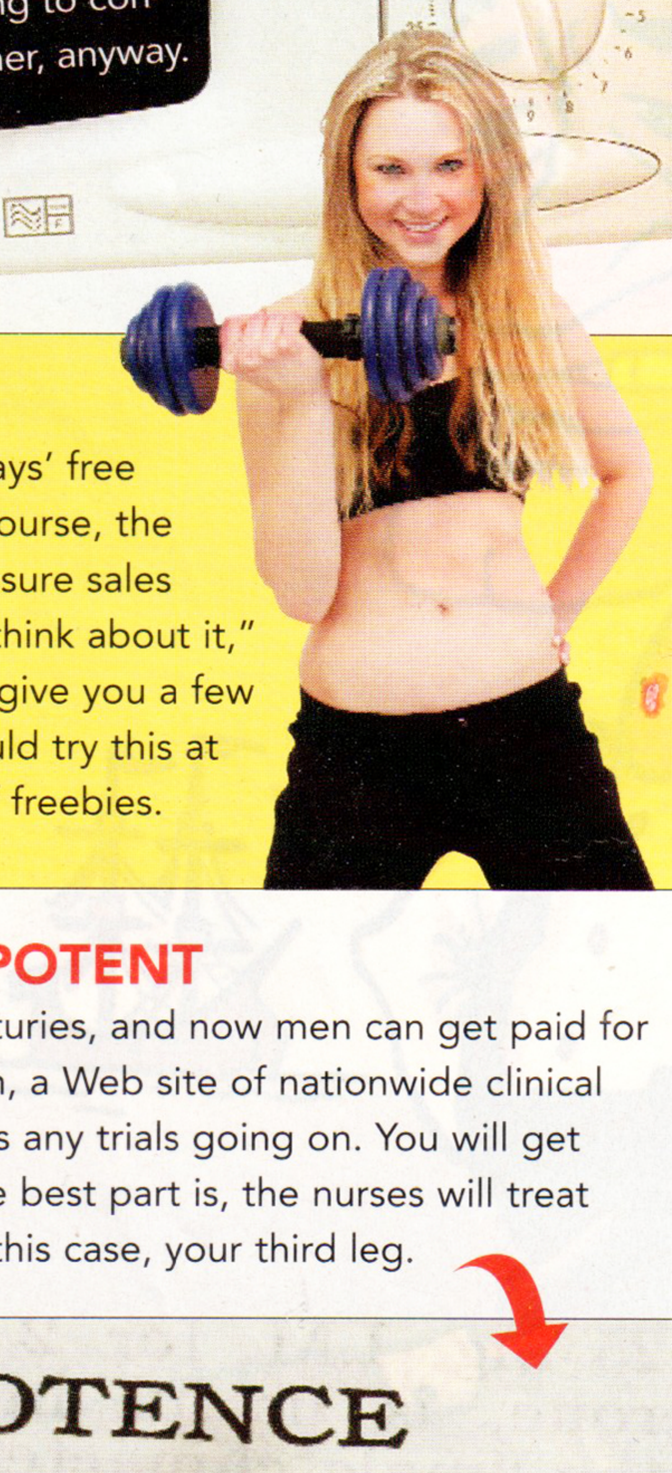
#12 FREE MONEY OFF RELIGIOUS FOLK

We've all heard those stories about the Virgin Mary appearing in a blueberry muffin or on the side of an office building. Once the media gets the word out, throngs of devout Catholics trek from all over the country to view the "miracle." And what a true miracle it would *really* be if you could paint an outline of the Virgin Mary on your garage door and charge the faithful admission! You need not have artistic talent to pull this off; the cruder and more ambiguous your rendering is, the more believable it will be. Of course, you could burn in eternal hell later on, but why worry about that today?



#13 FREE STERILIZATION

Children can bring joy, but most of the time they cost parents financially and psychologically. In fact, studies show that kids' toll on society is far greater than that of illegal drugs. Why not do your part to eliminate the problem and sterilize yourself? One could try standing with one's pelvis against the outside of a microwave oven while it's on, several times a day. We can't prove that you'll actually become sterile—for all we know, you might even get testicular cancer—but if you're willing to consider this, you probably wouldn't make an ideal father, anyway.

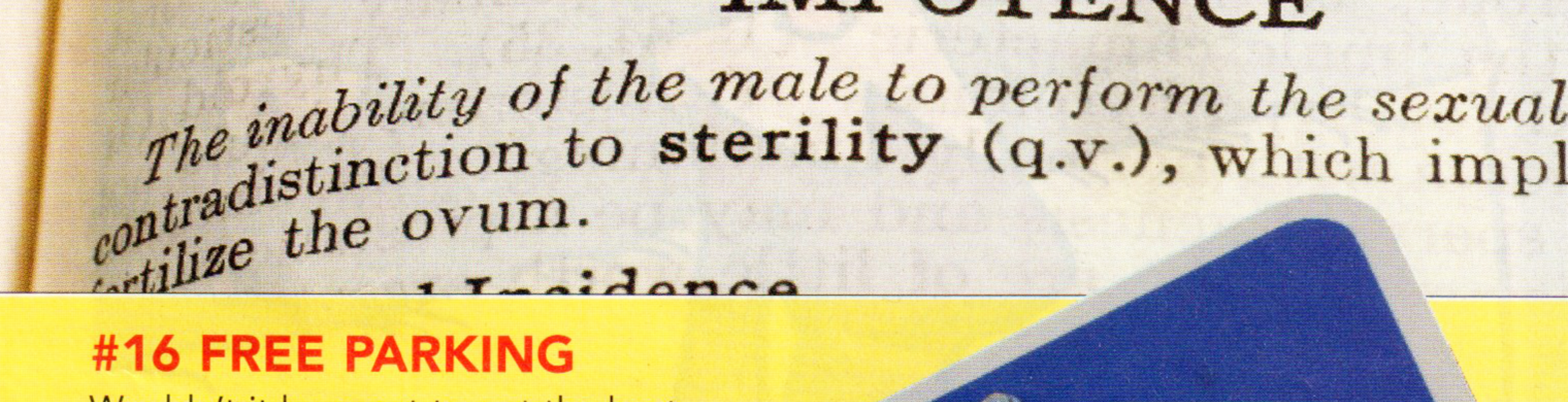


#14 FREE GYM MEMBERSHIP

National chains like Bally's often offer two to four days' free memberships for you to "try out" the facilities. Of course, the downside to this is having to sit through a high-pressure sales talk, but if you act indecisive and say you need to "think about it," the desperate employees will be only too happy to give you a few more days for free. If you live in a large city, you could try this at several gyms, and possibly lock in a whole month of freebies.

#15 FREE MONEY FOR BEING IMPOTENT

Women have been getting paid to have sex for centuries, and now men can get paid for *not* being able to. Just go to www.Centerwatch.com, a Web site of nationwide clinical trials. Look up "impotence" and see if your state has any trials going on. You will get paid for your malady and given free medication. The best part is, the nurses will treat you with a lot of sympathy, as if you lost a limb—in this case, your third leg.



#16 FREE PARKING

Wouldn't it be great to get the best parking place every time? You don't have to be a movie star or a foreign diplomat to get royal treatment. Simply get yourself handicapped plates. Of course, each state has its own requirements. Wisconsin, for instance, has pretty lax guidelines. If you "cannot walk 200 feet or more without stopping to rest," then you could be legally eligible for handicapped plates. 200 feet? Hey, that's a long way, especially in freezing Green Bay!