



THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A FREE LUNCH

A NEW USER GUIDE TO FREEMARKET'S GIFT ECONOMY

Gift giving, or gifting, is a cornerstone of FreeMarket's curious culture, touching on aspects of trade, networking, open source design and social currency. For the new user, it can be a confusing and intimidating process. But there are some guidelines to help you both give and accept gifts while observing proper etiquette.

A good way to establish yourself on the station is to meet people, engage with them on a personal level and make yourself available as a prospective MRCZ member. Anything you own, even the most insignificant personal item, should be considered as potential social currency. Not only is it a quick and easy way to earn flow, it's an excellent way of cementing a new friendship or business transaction. The hazard is in offering the wrong gift to the wrong person in the wrong way.

The user's guide to good gifting

Gifts are things: consumables, data, tools, materials and objects that can be used, manipulated and recycled. Hardware, software code, new mobs, pets, drones and cultivated food or drink are all good gifts. Data makes a great gift for the user who has everything. Knock-offs and copies, no matter how clever, are often viewed with suspicion or hostility. If your MRCZ designs a similar piece of technology to that of another MRCZ, gifting that item to them is the equivalent of a baboon displaying its bright red bum to a rival.



Welcome to FreeMarket, have some pie

Cultivated tech is always cooler than printed tech. Anyone with flow can print a tomato plant: Just download the schematics and churn out a few dozen before lunch. But not everyone has the knowledge, skill or patience to grow a tomato plant from a seed.

Similarly, anything consumable or perishable is always more interesting to gift. It's more personal and it says to the recipient, "Hey, there aren't a lot and they won't last forever so why don't you have them?"

Hand-wrapped gifts are considered more thoughtful than unwrapped gifts. If you cultivated a wrapped gift, even better! That's like the trifecta of gifting: wrapped, cultivated and perishable.

Don't gift ephemera

Avoid gifting music, poems, stories, paintings and other forms of ephemera. These things are too personal, too insubstantial. You won't earn flow and you could risk the ire of the recipient. Especially because they don't need your errant meme clogging up their day-to-day thoughts. Ephemera is best delivered in an impersonal, informal setting, where people are free to consume it at their leisure and according to their own whims.

Regifting is rude gifting

Regifting is just rude. It shows both a lack of respect and a lack of thought on your part. Recycling is fine, even encouraged! Make something old new again. That's cool and a lot of people will admire your clever solution to the problem of an unwanted gift.

Gifting to a user

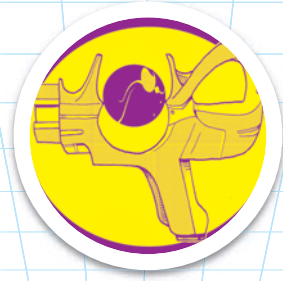
Don't gift random users. Would you accept strange tech off the street? I didn't think so. Most users, if they have half a brain, view strange tech with suspicion. It could be buggy, infected with a virus or tagged with ghosting hardware. Don't gift stuff to kids. Gift their parents instead. Don't worry, you'll still get your flow and the kid will get that tiger-striped gerbil you printed for her.

Gifting to a MRCZ

When gifting a MRCZ, it's thoughtful to gift what they need. If they're a printing MRCZ, gift them some cultivated consumables. If they're a negotiation MRCZ, gift them some interface upgrades.

Be careful of trade imbalances. Let's say you're part of a high-tier MRCZ and you want to gift a rating 3 piece of tech to a user from a low-tier MRCZ. What does that say about them? About you? Are they now beholden to your generosity?





Are you displaying your bright red ass to them? And flip the situation: You gift something to someone with lots of flow. They probably have much better tech and now you're putting them into a difficult situation: Accept your piece of crap tech or refuse and risk being labeled ungracious. Don't be that guy. Follow this general rule: Gift to users on the same tier, one tier higher or one tier lower.

Don't gift at the wrong time or the wrong place. If your gift is to a user's MRCZ, feel free to gift in public. It's good advertising! If it's not, don't make that user's MRCZ feel like a bunch of dust bunnies. Save it until you can gift to that user in private. Regardless, keep it simple and to the point. No need for grand ceremony, just gift the tech and be done with it. Oh, and be sure to specify whether a gift is from you personally or from your MRCZ. It is assumed that if you offer something your MRCZ produces, it is given by your MRCZ and not yourself. You are your

MRCZ's public face, so be sure you clear it with your mates before gifting away all your tech to your friends.

Be sure to gift your MRCZ before you join! It's considered good manners to bring something to a MRCZ upon joining. This could be off-market technology or something created by your former MRCZ. It's not rude to gift your MRCZ after you join, you just won't earn any flow from it.

Accepting gifts

If you are given a gift, make sure to make a big deal out of it, even if it's nothing special (if it's just a pile of grey goo, just don't take it!). There's an unspoken acknowledgement that you'll return the gesture in kind. Not right away, but eventually. And don't make any promises to gift back. Just let it be and find the right time, place and item to gift. Keep it real.

Declining gifts

You're well within your rights to decline buggy, ugly, uninspired or unwanted gifts. Remember that accepting a gift means it becomes your property and you can only have so much technology registered to your key.

It's okay for someone to politely insist you accept his gift. After all, he's giving you a chance to save face and not look like a greedy gift monkey. You should give him a few attempts before flat out refusing and walking away. Some people just can't take no for an answer.

Other tips

Don't give with one hand and take with the other. Offer a gift with both hands. Using one hand implies you are reserving the other hand to get something in return. Don't do that.

Once given, gifts are considered "out of sight, out of mind." Do not mention the gift after it's





been given. That's like a reminder to the recipient that you're this awesome, generous Freemer and that he either forgot that or didn't appreciate the gift.

Enthusiasm is great, and everyone needs flow, but take it slow. There's no need to start printing dozens of tchotchkes in a desperate attempt to win friends and bump your flow. Establish yourself before you gift, then gift to cement the relationship. Friendship cake takes time to bake.

