

Lunches may not be free, but calls are on the internet!

There's an old maxim: 'there is no such thing as a free lunch'. Essentially, it is derived from economic theory that states in a free market economy everything has a price; so if someone offers you something 'free' then there are usually hidden costs somewhere.

The phrase is believed to have originated as a result of the practice of saloon keepers in the USA in the late 19th century who offered a 'free lunch' to those who bought at least one drink. Of course, the saloon keepers continued in business because their customers invariably bought more than the obligatory drink and thus not only covered the cost of their lunch but added to the barkeeper's profits. Indeed, the saloon owner would also factor the cost of providing food into the price of all his drinks. So, although his customers appeared to be getting their lunch for free, they or other customers were paying for it.

The principle applies universally; even public services for which we do not pay directly are ultimately paid for through taxation. Most of us are familiar with the theory and the phrase has been so widely used that we have become very sceptical about any 'free' offers that might come our way. We are on our guard when considering such offers and waiting for the hidden cost to appear.

So, how is it then, that the principle doesn't apply when it comes to making [free calls](#) using the internet? By signing up with one of the internet services that provides message and call services you really can make free calls! As many as you like and you don't even have to buy a drink to use the service. And there are no hidden charges, no hidden costs; it is totally free.

Ever since the advent of the internet, entrepreneurs have sought ways to develop businesses online and have brought a whole host of innovative services to the web. Using the internet is dependent upon being plugged into telephone lines so it was only a matter of time before some genius worked out how to make voice calls using their computer.

And now that our summer holidays are approaching we can use that technological leap to keep in touch with family and friends, especially during the school break; it's a time when families and friends scatter to different corners of the globe, and keeping in touch with each other the traditional way can prove very expensive.

Although mobile tariffs for calling from abroad have reduced lately, they are still not free and landline telephones can be equally expensive. However, open your laptop near a public WiFi spot, plug in your headphones and microphone and you can get in touch instantly with your friends and family; better still, it's free!

About the Author

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