



# Money for nothing

Free lunches may be rare, but here are 25 ways to get money and cheques for nothing

**I**t's difficult to get something for nothing these days, but if you know where to look it's possible. Whether they're government allowances, freebies from banks, employee perks or incentives for consumers, we've found many ways to get hold of cash for you and your family – at no cost.

## GOVERNMENT GIFTS

### 1 Child trust funds

Children born on or after 1 September 2002 get at least £250 at birth and more at age seven. This can be invested as cash or in

stocks and shares, and family members or friends can add up to £1,200 a year. Children get the money when they're 18. Even if you only invest the £250 in a cash-based account paying 6 per cent, after 18 years it will be worth more



### 2 Child tax credit

If you have kids and a household income of up to £58,175, you'll probably qualify for child tax credit. Amounts vary – one-child families on around £25,000 get £545 a year. Claims can be backdated three months. To apply call 0845 300 3900 or go to [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)

than £700, rising to £39,000 if the family pays in £100 a month.

### 3 Working tax credit

You can claim if you have a job but are on a lower income, regardless of age or whether or not you have children. You can claim if you earn £11,558 a year or less and are single and childless, or as a couple if you earn £15,990 or less and are childless. If you qualify, up to £1,665 is given, depending on earnings.

### 4 Individual savings accounts (Isas)

Consider putting your spare money into a tax-free cash Isa rather than just investing it in a regular savings account. If you put your full £3,000 allowance into a Best Buy cash Isa with the Kent Reliance Building Society, paying 5.46 per cent, you'll be £90 better off each year than if you had just put it into an average savings account.



**Put your spare money into a tax-free cash Isa**

### 5 Higher personal tax allowance

Once you hit 65, you may be able to have a higher income before paying tax. Between 65 and 74 you can have £7,280 before tax and those 75 or over can have £7,420 – as long as your total income falls below £20,100. If you're turning 65 in the next tax year, contact HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) for information on 0845 077 6543 or [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk).

### 6 Missed allowances

If you didn't claim a tax allowance you were eligible for in a previous year, you can still claim it – even if the allowance no longer exists. You have until 31 January 2007 to claim allowances you were eligible for in the 2000-2001 tax year. See *Which? Tax Saving Guide 2006-2007*, p7, for more details.

### 7 Tax-free savings

If your income is too low to pay tax, register to have your savings interest paid tax-free by filling in form R85, from your bank or building society. This is also important for children's savings. If you've got £5,000 in a Best Buy savings account paying around



## EXTRA CASH BY SWITCHING

### Rebecca Kwok 24, payroll administrator

Rebecca's £1,350 salary goes into her Halifax Easycash basic current account every month.

She could get 6.1 per cent interest on her money, instead of the 0 per cent she gets at the moment, by switching to Alliance & Leicester's Premier Direct Current Account.

Rebecca makes several transfers to other accounts. These include £50 to a Halifax joint Web Saver account, into which her partner, Thomas, also pays £50 a month. By changing their account, which pays 4.75 per cent, to an Icesave Easy Access account, they would get 5.45 per cent.

Rebecca also puts £450 a month into a Halifax Isa, from which she pays off the £100 she spends on her NSPCC credit card each month.

By switching to Kent Reliance Building Society's Direct Isa she would get 5.46 per cent interest, compared with Halifax's 5 per cent.

She should not pay her credit card bill from her Isa as she is wasting some of her £3,000 a year tax-free cash allowance.

She could also switch to the Egg Money cashback credit card to make £12 a year on her £1,200 of purchases.

## Make £50 by switching your home insurance



though – these cards aren't necessarily the cheapest available, so pay off your balance each month.

## 12 Current account interest

If you bank with one of the big four – HSBC, Barclays, Lloyds TSB or NatWest – chances are you're getting no more than 0.1 per cent interest if your account is in credit. Our Best Buy accounts pay decent interest. With an average monthly balance of £750 in Alliance & Leicester's Premier Direct account, which pays 6.1 per cent, you'd have £46 more each year.

## 13 Savings account interest

If you put £5,000 in our Best Buy – Icesave's Easy Access account, which pays 5.45 per cent – you'd be £248 a year better off before tax compared with the poorest accounts, such as Derbyshire Building Society's Cash Account, at 0.5 per cent.

## 8 Claim your benefits

As much as £8 billion was not claimed in 2004-2005. If you're 60 or over, you might be entitled to pension credit, and will get at least £114.05 a week if you're single or £174.05 if you have a partner. Families with a member aged 60 or over qualify for winter fuel payments. Older and younger people might get council tax benefit, home improvement grants or disability benefits.



5.45 per cent, this can save £55 a year. If you've paid tax when you shouldn't have, you can claim it back using form R40. Contact HMRC for details.

## BANK AND BUILDING SOCIETY EXTRAS

### 9 Claw back your charges

If you have been charged for unauthorised overdrafts or late credit card payments you might be able to claim back, like other *Which?* members. Go to [www.which.co.uk](http://www.which.co.uk) for details.

### 10 Cash for an account

If you have a Best Buy Alliance & Leicester Premier Direct or Premier current account you could make £50 by getting a friend to open an account as well.

### 11 Cashback on credit

Many credit cards pay cashback when you use them. This can be up to 1.5 per cent of what you spend, although often the higher amounts are available only if you use your card at certain shops or websites. Watch out,

## 14 Less mortgage interest

Switching your mortgage is one of the best ways to save. If you're on your lender's standard variable rate, you could be quids in if you switched to a new deal. Switching a £100,000, 25-year repayment mortgage at 7 per cent to one with a fixed rate of 4.74 per cent would give you an extra £2,799 over two years, after taking the £695 switching costs into account.

## 15 Insurance assurance

Make £50 by switching your home or car insurance to Barclays, a Best Buy for both. It promises to beat your current renewal quote by lowering its quote by up to £100.

## BENEFITS FROM YOUR BOSS

### 16 Childcare vouchers

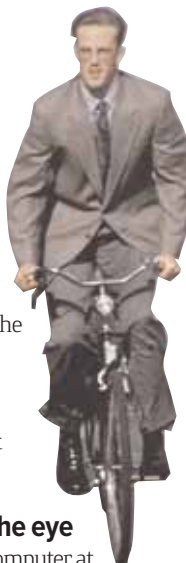
If one or more of your children is being looked after by a registered nursery or other approved childcare scheme, your employer could help you cut costs. Childcare vouchers let you claim the first £55 a week of childcare costs, free of tax and National Insurance. But vouchers could affect the tax credits to which you are entitled, so check whether they are worth it.





## 17 Interest-free travel

Employers increasingly offer interest-free loans to buy season tickets or bikes. So you could pay the least for travel tickets or, under the government's cycle-to-work scheme, benefit from tax-exempt bikes and equipment.



## 18 Easier on the eye

If you use a computer at work, your employer should pay for an eye test, which costs around £18.



## 19 Pick up a pension

If your employer provides an occupational pension scheme, it will pay to join. Your employer usually makes contributions on top of yours, and you won't pay tax on any of them.

## 20 Other work benefits

If your employer offers other benefits, such as life or sickness insurance, you should sign up – why pay for such insurance yourself if your employer offers it already?

### CASH FOR CONSUMERS

## 21 Book bonanza

You can make £15 in Amazon gift certificates simply by making your first purchase on an Amazon.co.uk MasterCard.



## 22 Survey sums

A number of websites, such as [www.yougov.com](http://www.yougov.com), will pay you to complete questionnaires. Each time you do, you get paid – 50p for most, but up to £2.50 or more for longer ones – and at least one survey a month offers entry into a prize draw, not cash. When you have earned £50 you receive a cheque. You should get at least two surveys a month.



## 23 Shopping cashback

Websites including [www.ecashback.co.uk](http://www.ecashback.co.uk), [www.greaspalm.co.uk](http://www.greaspalm.co.uk), [www.mrscashback.com](http://www.mrscashback.com) and [www.quidco.com](http://www.quidco.com) will give you cashback if you buy goods and services through them. This can be anything from CDs to car or home insurance. When we looked at [www.ecashback.co.uk](http://www.ecashback.co.uk) it was offering up to 3 per cent cashback on John Lewis purchases.



## 24 Reviewers' reward

You could make £10 by being one of the first 500 people to make a video review of any product on shopping website [www.ciao.co.uk](http://www.ciao.co.uk) and upload it to the site.



### INCOME FROM THE INTERNET

#### Marian Cuckson 59, secretary

Signing up to the YouGov and Greaspalm websites was quick and easy, according to Marian. It took 15 minutes to sign up as a YouGov survey panel member. She did not receive paid-for survey questions in the first week, but Marian was entered into a prize draw for answering questions on her opinions of Halloween trick or treating. So she earned only £1 for joining, but YouGov says members can expect to complete several surveys a month.

'I don't think you could earn much,' says Marian, 'but it would be of interest if you are the type of person who likes to complete surveys.'

It took two minutes to sign up to Greaspalm, which earned Marian £2.50, but she would prefer to go to suppliers' websites direct when buying items online and the number of suppliers on the site was limited. She adds: 'You are not really earning cash – it is just a way of getting discounts.'

## 25 Offload on eBay

Have a spring clean this year by selling unwanted items on eBay. Last spring, research showed that you could make as much as £500 from a clear-out sale.

