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free and low-cost alternatives to mainstream garbage



*Some Assembly Required



Fall 2025

The Tip Jar Economy

Let's face it, you're unlikely to get rich off donations, but passing around a hat *can* leave you with some decent beer money. (But don't quit your day job.)



As a digital alternative to throwing cash in your guitar case, platforms have sprung up to accept "tips" for creatives. They'll take a cut, but you might consider [ko-fi](#) or [patreon](#).



Print up a QR code to your Venmo (and list your user id) to give those "sorry I don't use cash" cheapskates no excuse not to send you a couple dollars.



"What goes around comes around."

It's not always about cash. Got something else of value you can drop in the tip jar? (Smokes, poetry, gold?)

"Good tippers are better lovers."

Welcome, dear reader, to the Fall issue of our zine!

When did it get so expensive just to ... be? Even this free booklet probably has you asking "what do you want from me." Everything has a price, and it just keeps going up.

Been eyeing a lovely new 3d printer? It's not cheap. Do you have the tools to maintain it, or are you going to have to buy those, too? And then there's the software required to give it its instructions. Even free online services cost something ... your attention is being packaged and sold to advertisers.

It doesn't have to be this way.

Turn the page and begin a trip into free, cheap, and cooperative alternatives to the consumerist treadmill. When we band together, we can make things that benefit everyone, without costing a fortune.

Free your mind, and your pocketbook will follow.

- Buttons the Gnome
Fall, 2025



Finding a Zine Culture

Intrigued by little paper labors of love? Search your local area for zine meetups, festivals, and workshops. They're everywhere! Plenty of people would like to help you get started making your own, even.

Most independent coffee houses have a space for free newspapers and community postings. Share!

Leverage the right hashtags when posting on socials, e.g. ... #zine



If your zine is appropriate for the masses, try stashing a few copies in a nearby little free library!

Remember: some of the best zines are photocopied illicitly at work. (But don't use your own login!)

Got a digital version of your zine? You'll need to host it somewhere so that others can download it. Try freeloading off sites like Google Drive and Box.com. Alternately, many indie gaming sites host zines, for instance itch.io.



Industrial Cooperation



What if, instead of trying to buy all the tools and toys you need to make cool stuff, you banded together with friends and bought them as a group, then organized it so that you could use what you need just when you need it? Like, way cheaper, and you don't have to store it all yourself, and everyone wins ...

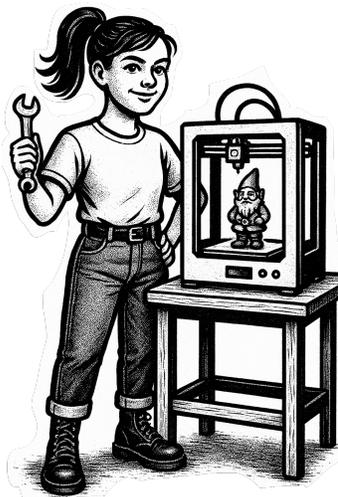
Congratulations, you just invented the co-op!

Here's what to search for in order to find the right kind of friends to make nearby.

"Maker spaces" tend to be people with heavy industrial equipment. Think welding, laser cutting, 3D printing, and other dangerous awesomeness.

"Bike co-ops" are just like they sound -- people with all the tools and skills to help fix your bike.

"Hacker spaces" blur the lines between physical and virtual. If you can run software on it, they're into it.



Leave a Penny

The gift economy goes both ways. Got something extra to pay forward? Here are some ideas to get involved.

"Seed libraries" let you "check out" seeds that you can plant. When they flower and fruit, it's your turn to "return" the seeds to the library for the next grower to use.

"So, how do you make money?" (You don't.)

Try sharing your work with a "Creative Commons" license agreement

Got a patch of dirt and a love of learning? Build your very own "little free library" where passers-by can borrow books and media from your shared stash.

Make sure to register with the [little free library map!](#)



No need to leave the couch ... have you considered editing a Wikipedia page? Search for "stubs" to get started.



Reading isn't illegal yet!

News flash: your city's central library might have cool stuff too!

"Tool libraries" are the O.G. lenders of saws, wrenches, drivers, and some frankly scary equipment.

Take a Penny

A penny doesn't seem like much, until your purchase comes to just over an even dollar amount and you're about to get a pocket full of change. Then it's essential, and having a friend with a penny changes everything. (Or being that friend.)



Believe it or not, lots of folks have "pennies" they'd like to get rid of. The time honored option for finding free stuff is your local Craigslist's "Free Stuff" section, of course.

"Nobody knows you, when you're down and out."



And a growing number of people are taking part in "buy nothing" movements. Some items are given for free and others are traded in barter. Search for a local group on socials!



"This stone soup sure would be better with some carrots."

Don't remember the "take a penny, leave a penny" tray? Your grandparents left a



Digital Liberation

Corporate media have only one purpose in life, to keep you glued to them and watching advertisements. And corporate *software* has one goal -- to keep you subscribed to the platform. But there are alternatives! Free, decentralized options (think: can't be manipulated by billionaires or governments) abound!



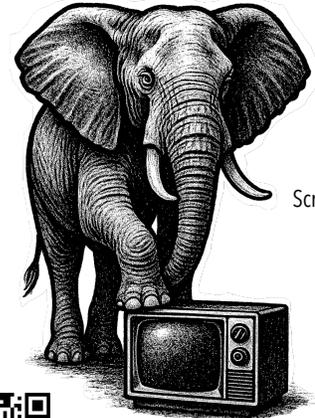
Care to rot your brain with images and videos? Check out [Pixelfed](#).



Like your media short-form and text-based? There's [Mastodon!](#)



Need to edit images but don't have the cash for Adobe? Try [The Gimp](#).



Screw Microsoft and Google. Try [Libre Office](#) instead!



Generate QR codes without ads, trackers or up-sells at [justaqrcode.com](#).



Chat Oui-Ja-T

What does your future hold? Ask the oracle!



Harvest Moon -- October 6
Beaver Moon -- November 5
Cold Moon -- December 4

Aquarius, you keep humming a tune that no one else remembers. This fall, déjà vu comes from a dream you forgot you had. Try putting your keys in the wrong pocket.



Pisces, you'll mistake a stranger for an old friend. They may mistake you back. This fall, tears arrive in public places. An unopened letter haunts you.

Aries, you rush ahead, only to find another starting line. An argument sparked in an exitway follows you down the street. Lace your shoes now for an unexpected sprint.

Mercury is retrograde:
November 9 - 29
X-giving dinner could get ugly ...

Taurus, you cling to the steady rhythm even as the tempo shifts. A locked drawer opens without warning, revealing something you didn't plan to confront.

Gemini, you speak with echoes, and somehow they answer back. This fall you'll overhear a secret meant for both of you. A bird in flight portends luck -- watch for it.

Cancer, you retreat into your shell and discover it has new rooms. This fall, a visitor carries a memory you thought you'd buried out back. Meanwhile, a cracked teacup insists on one more use.



Leo, you shine even when you swear you're keeping it casual. Soon, you'll get caught rehearsing in a reflection that wasn't a mirror. An audience will appear where you least expected one.

Virgo, you keep finding typos in places no one else dares to read. A forgotten list resurfaces this fall, demanding to be completed. You will follow a thread farther than expected.



Libra, keep rehearsing both sides of the argument, just in case. A choice you postponed will make itself in your absence. A tilted picture frame demands more attention than the painting inside it.



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Scorpio, you recognize truths that others only dare whisper. This fall, a secret slips into the open, wearing someone else's name tag.

Sagittarius, you aim at horizons that move just to tease you. This fall, a wrong turn becomes your favorite story. Your map folds itself, hiding a path you swore you'd follow.

Capricorn, this fall an unfinished task returns charging interest. The clock ticks louder when you're not looking. You'll find a ladder leaning where no one admits placing it.

