

Home
content

Help support
World Wide Words

Click to learn how

World Wide Words

Michael Quinion writes about international English from a British viewpoint

HOME PAGE

SEND PAGE TO A
FRIEND

YOU ARE IN THE
TURNS OF PHRASE
SECTION

SECTION INDEX

PREVIOUS PAGE

NEXT PAGE

OTHER SECTIONS

ARTICLES

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

REVIEWS

TOPICAL WORDS

WEIRD WORDS

FINDING THINGS

INDEXES AND SEARCH

SURPRISE ME!

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

E-MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS

SUBSCRIBE VIA RSS

GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS

SUPPORT PAGES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CONTACT THE AUTHOR

OTHER WORDS SITES

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

MY RECENT BOOKS ...

OLOGIES & ISMS

POSH

FREECYCLING

What do you do with all the stuff you collect that you no longer want but which is too good to throw away? At one time you might have given it to some charity; these days you could sell the more presentable items on eBay, but a new alternative is to **freecycle** it. This initiative was invented last May by Deron Beal, who works for an American nonprofit organisation called RISE, Inc, whose aim is to reduce waste. Local communities form groups, each with a volunteer organiser and an electronic forum on which members can post details of items they don't want, or of things they do. Members whose needs match then organise a hand-over. The only rule, strictly enforced, is that no money must change hands and there must be no bartering.

In the face-to-face world, it's often hard to find that deserving person who needs your specific load of useless castoffs. Enter the Internet, which not only makes such networking easy but also has long been suffused with an ethic that promotes gift giving. Since May, the Freecycle concept has exploded, spreading from city to city with the speed of a grass (roots) fire.

[*Salon*, 25 Nov. 2003]

A couple of freecycling abuses have been identified. Illegal drug paraphernalia has turned up on some sites across the country, and donated items occasionally are snatched up for resale elsewhere by visitors exploiting the free-for-all spirit of the arrangement.

[*Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service*; 26 Jan. 2004]

World Wide Words is copyright © Michael Quinion, 1996–2006.
All rights reserved. **Contact the author** for reproduction requests.
Comments and feedback are always welcome.
Page created 21 February 2004.