

YOUR THREE WISHES: F.A.Q.

BY DAVID OWEN

You have been granted three wishes—congratulations. If you wish wisely, your wishes may bring you great happiness. Before wishing, please take a moment to read the following frequently asked questions.

1. *Do my wishes have an expiration date?*

No. Your wishes are good until used. Once you have made a wish, however, you cannot revoke it, except by using another wish, should any remain.

2. *May I wish for absolutely anything?*

A wish, if it is to be granted, must not violate the physical laws of the universe. You may wish for a particular co-worker to be fired (for example), or for Mt. Everest to collapse into a heap of rubble; you may not wish to live literally forever, or for the speed of light to be lowered to five miles an hour.

3. *May I use one of my wishes to wish for more wishes?*

No. You have been granted exactly three wishes. You cannot increase that number by wishing.

4. *What happens if I merely think a wish?*

No wish will be executed until you speak it out loud, so “wishful thinking” does not count. Note: If you inadvertently use one of your wishes to render yourself permanently speechless—by turning yourself into a pig, for example, or by wishing that you were dead—you will be unable to use your remaining wishes, if any are left, to correct the error.

5. *How specific do I have to be? If I wish for “world peace,” will you know what I’m talking about?*

As a practical matter, no one ever wishes for “world peace.” But it is always

best to be specific. “I wish for my penis, when erect, to measure eighteen inches in length and six inches in diameter” is clear and concise—and it counts as one wish only, because length and diameter are two dimensions of the same object. “I wish for my penis, when erect, to measure eighteen inches in length and six inches in diameter, and I want it to be erect all the time” is two wishes. “I wish to be a global celebrity, but not Michael Jackson or Tom Cruise” is three.

6. *If I wish for money, how much may I wish for?*

There is no preset limit. However, you should keep in mind that money has value only in a functioning economic system. If you wish for “all the money in the world,” you may have no opportunity to spend your fortune. It is best to be both realistic and unambiguous. If you wish merely for “great wealth” or “untold riches,” you could end up with (for example) attractive grandchildren, stimulating hobbies, or a clean bill of health.

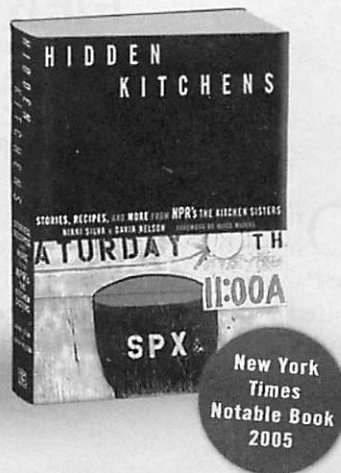
7. *How come people who get three wishes always seem to wish for something that they regret, big-time—like that woodcutter and the sausages?*

The grantor of your wishes does not take ironic pleasure in human folly. Nevertheless, you alone are responsible for the outcome of your wishing. Hint: Avoid phrases that are open to catastrophic interpretation, such as “for the rest of my life.” Also, keep in mind that the media tends to focus on wishes that turn out badly. “Man gets three wishes and lives happily ever after” is not considered news.

8. *Can I use one of my three wishes to guarantee that neither of my other wishes will have negative consequences that I failed to foresee?*

Hmm. I’m going to say no. ♦

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