

fungibility. Fungible means merely 'substitutable', in origin a legal term meaning 'such that any unit is substitutable for another' (Latin *fungor*: 'do, discharge'). A debt for example can be discharged with any money, not merely moneys from a particular account. A low-level administrator wants to make accounts fungible with each other, so that pencil money may be spent for office parties when required; a high-level administrator wants to prevent this. Mother cannot give money 'for' a new refrigerator. The gift merely raises the child's income. The World Bank rule that the items 'financed by' the Bank must achieve a certain level of social return lacks point. The \$100 million given to government will be used anyway for the marginal project in the government's list. The project 'for which the money is given' can be claimed to be an earlier, high-return one which would have been carried out anyway.

Because money services are fungible, easily-sold assets such as bonds are in part fungible for money. Because demands for grain are fungible a cut in Soviet orders for American grain did not cause a one-for-one fall in demands on American suppliers. Because the assets for old age are fungible the prospect of a government pension will reduce the incentive to save privately. Because points are fungible, the last, 'winning' points in a football game are in no coherent sense *the* winning points. Because reasons are fungible, asking people 'why they changed jobs' or asking a nation 'why it went to war' are incoherent, too.

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See also ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE; CREATIVE ACCOUNTING; INDIVIDUAL RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS.