

How to Become a Royal Winner With the Contest Queen

[Aaron Broverman](#)

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Carolyn Wilman's been entering contests since she was 15 years old. Always fighting to be the seventh caller for concert tickets, tethered to a rotary dialer in the kitchen with nowhere to go and no redial.

"You had to be good in those days, but I loved the rush," she says. She loved it so much she committed to entering contests daily right into adulthood, pulling in wins big and small almost as consistently.

"My husband used to tell me this was a waste of time and it was just a silly hobby, but then I won him the right to be a judge at the Miss Hawaiian Tropic Bikini Contest and he shut up pretty fast. Suddenly, it became 'When are you going to enter that contest?'" Now, Wilman calls herself the [Contest Queen](#) and offers her years of contest winning experience to companies who need to find out if their sweepstakes will be successful.



Carolyn Wilman -Her Majesty, The Contest Queen

Through appearances on *Breakfast Television*, *The Mom Show* and *Canada AM*, along with her book [You Can't Win If You Don't Enter](#), Wilman has been sharing the secrets to her winning ways and now she's ready to impart her wisdom to you. Just don't call her a professional: "I hate the word professional, that's reserved for doctors and lawyers. I'm just a hobbyist or enthusiast." Whatever she is, she wants you to know you can't get rich by entering, but you can have a lot of fun.

Read the Rules - If you want to have a hope of winning anything, it's best not to shoot yourself in the foot from the get go. "If you disqualify yourself and your name is drawn, you won't win -- simple as that," says Wilman. "If you're not paying attention, you're just wasting your time." The big ones are knowing the start date and the end date and how many times you can enter. If a contest lasts for a month and you start entering on the first day, you'll be able to maximize your chances to enter. There are also promotions out there that are just for kids, so if you're not between the ages of 6-17, you're done. Determine whether the competition is open to Canadian residents and even if it is, many contests are closed to Quebec.

"In order to protect its residents from scams, companies must jump through hoops to hold a contest there," she adds. A promotion must be registered with the Regie des alcools des courses et des jeux 30

days before the contest starts if the prize is worth more than \$100. Companies must pay a \$600-\$700 registration fee plus 3% of the prize value. A letter from your bank or a money order must also be presented to show the prize money is set aside. "They make it so tough that companies can't be bothered with Quebec. It doesn't matter who you are," she says.

Know Where to Look - There are tons of Canadian contest sites out there. Many are available on Carolyn Wilman's [homepage](#), like [this one](#) and [this one too](#). "Go to the sites that you like and don't go to too many," she says. "I'd say no more than two because a lot of times there's duplication and you're going to get confused." Many of these sites include groups and forums where contest entrants can collaborate and give each other hints. "That's something I really like," says The Queen. "The human interaction. But you have to be careful because sometimes it's like high school: sometimes it can be cliquy and people can get snippy." The key is surrounding yourself with positivity and support, picking a site that's easy to navigate and something that appeals to you.

Join a Community - The 'strength in numbers' adage definitely applies here, as sweepstakes are getting tougher than ever. "More and more they're looking for UPC codes, they want skill testing questions and you can get help from other people," confirms Wilman. Taking her cue from the U.S., The Queen convened the first meeting of a contest club in Canada. Hobbyists get together at a restaurant or a member's house to talk shop once a month. "If you start winning and you work in an office people will start to roll their eyes," she insists. "You find the right group and everyone is happy for you, you don't get the eye-rolls and the jealousy."

Utilize Contest Tools - The Queen herself isn't afraid to use technology to help her win, so why should you be? "My all-time favourite tool for sweepstakeing is [Roboform](#) and I use it for both entering and organizing." For \$30 US, Roboform will automatically fill out entry forms that aren't using flash software and even if they are, the Roboforms program can still be used to organize all of your entry forms from one central hub. Though, exactly how is a trade secret as far as Wilman's concerned. "If I told you that, no one would pay the \$10 to buy my book," she says. Let's just say that since paying the \$30 for the program in 2001, she's won \$200,000 in prizes.

Enter, Enter, Enter! - Wilman would be the first to tell you that this is a numbers game. She's depositing anywhere from 100 to 300 entries a day and wins five to fifteen prizes a month. "I win 1% of what I enter," she says. "People think I'm so lucky, I win everything, but 99% of those prizes go to other people." She says all you have to do is stay consistent. "I don't know anyone who didn't start entering seriously, like on a daily basis, who didn't start winning regularly."

Don't Cheat - Seems like an obvious piece of advice, but Wilman believes there's a karmic element to attracting luck to your side, and cheating will do wonders to mess that up. "People say, 'If I only spend an hour a day entering, I'll never win anything.' You won't win anything, until you have the attitude that you're a winner." It's the same idea found in books like [The Secret](#) and [The Luck Factor](#). "I expect to win every month, and I do win every month," Wilman admits. She's only ever had one off-month and that was when she was sick, but as soon as she started feeling better, the wins started coming back. Winning the little things can help keep you going and dreaming of the bigger things. "I tell people that half the hobby is in your head," says Wilman.