

Your Questions Answered 2006

Send me any sweeping or contesting questions you would like answered. questions@contestqueen.com

Hello,

Happy Holidays. How closely do you read contest rules? What should one look for in the fine print? Finally, if one sees the phrase "no purchase necessary" does this mean it is safe to enter without being tricked into buying something?

Khang

Windsor ON

Hi Khang,

I scan the rules looking for the following information. (I must say I have disqualified myself the odd time by reading too quickly.) You are looking for the following:

- if you are eligible to enter.
- how many times you can enter.
- how many people in the household can enter.
- the start and end dates of the contest.
- any other rules specific to that contest.

I stop reading the rules after I know those five things.

No Purchase Entry (NPE) means No Purchase Necessary. Many promotions are now held online and you only need to submit your entry with the click of your mouse. Many promotions will have an easy purchase entry and a more difficult NPE such as a unique 500-word handwritten essay on the virtues of their product or service. Currently, I do not enter many longer NPE contests (ones that require essays, etc...) because I do not have the time, but if you do, I encourage you to enter.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

When entering on-line sweeps, many contests often ask if you want to receive further information from them, and include 'yes' and 'no' boxes. Do you decrease your chance of winning if you choose 'no'? I've just read one of your responses citing how random number generation is used and was wondering if somehow the ballot would be electronically flagged or considered ineligible because of the 'no' response.

Thanks,

Tessa

Oakville ON

Hi Tessa,

What you are referring to is opt-in or opt-out. Opting-in or opting-out does not alter the outcome of the sweepstake. Opting-in only allows a company permission to contact you in the future regarding their

products or services. However, read the rules because you may garner an extra entry into the sweepstake if you opt-in.

I hope that answers your question.
Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

I am recently "new" to the contesting scene and to date have not really won that much. I really like your suggestion of keeping track of every item you win in a spreadsheet, thank you for the tip.

I have a contesting question for you:

"If you have won something and they will be contacting you via telephone - do you have to answer the call or will they leave a message and you can call them back?"

Why I am asking is that whenever I receive a call from an unknown long distance phone # I do not answer it as we get so many telemarketers calling and I am afraid that I have maybe won something but because I did not answer the call they moved on and picked another winner.

Thank you.

**Tammie
Edmonton, AB**

Tammie,

You should always answer your phone if you can. They may or may not leave a message. Sometimes it even states in the rules that if they cannot get hold of the first person drawn they will move on to the next name selected. I have received messages that I have won a prize. There are times I have calls showing on my caller ID and no message and I wonder if I missed out on something really good... Also, I cut the telemarketers off, say "No thank you." and hang-up right away so they don't waste my time.

GOOD LUCK!

Carolyn

Hello,

I am both a dual citizen of Canada and of the USA and lived with my family in Toronto, Ontario. I am now in graduate school in the states but still keep residence in my home in Canada with my family since I visit there often. My question is since I am a resident of USA currently and a resident of Canada, can I enter contests that are for "Canadian residents only" with my Canadian address and also enter contests that are for "residents of USA only" with my USA address?

Izzy

New York NY & Toronto ON

Hello Izzy,

You could enter contests for both countries since you have residency in both countries. The question then becomes *what if you win?* The winning phone call or letter would arrive at the address given on the contest entry form. The affidavits/release forms would also be sent to the same address. They would then require your signature and be returned within a specified period of time. How would you handle a

winning notification arriving in Canada if you are living in the US? And visa versa? Also, in the US, if you win a prize with a dollar value over \$600 you are required to pay tax. You may only want to enter where you spend the most time since the logistics of receiving a prize may become cumbersome.

GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn

**Hi,
I just read a bit from your Winning EDGE newsletter. Awesome!**

I am a sweeper, and you had an article on online entries not being judged. But what if it's a skill contest/essay? Do you think they will read those entries since it was a written essay contest?

**Thank you in advance.
Vicki
Port Angeles,WA**

Hi Vicki,
That is true - if it is an essay writing style promotion they would be judged even though the entries came in via the Internet as opposed to the mail. The person that wrote the question was referring to sweepstakes where the winner is selected randomly. Those are not judged. Remember to always read the rules on essay/judged contests, because I have seen rules state that they will randomly select a specific number of entries and then judge between only those entries.

GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn

**Dear Carolyn,
Hope you have a good trip to Whistler and congrats.**

Could you please tell me if a contest says you can enter by mail and/or internet, but only once per day. Is it O.K. to do mail-ins during the week and enter by internet on Saturday and Sunday? Also, do you find that it is chancy to mail one per day or should we skip every other day?

**Thank you.
Adele
Montreal, QC**

P.S. I want to buy your book as soon as it comes out.

Hi Adele,
Why are you mailing in entries?? Did you know that most promotions take the mailed in entries and have someone enter them into the computer?! You are wasting your time and money. If you get an option to mail-in or enter online, just enter online. If the promotion says mail-in only, then by all means mail-in heaps of entries. Also, be sure to **read the rules**, because I have seen many promotions where you can

enter only once or once per day online, but you are allowed to mail-in unlimited entries in which case you can really boost your chances by mailing in entries if you want to spend the money.

Thanks for the congrats, and the book will be out soon (*see below*). YEAH!!
GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn

Hello, Carolyn!
I have a few questions for you.

A) If there is a contest one can enter on the Internet, and they have a limit of one entry per person per day for, let's say, two months, do you enter sixty times or do it for a week and then don't bother?

B) How many contests do you enter in a month, and what is your percentage of wins?

C) Do you find, on average, you win more snail mail contests than Internet contests or the other way around?

D) The local radio station has contests where one gets to play if one is, let's say, the tenth caller. I keep getting a busy signal. Do you have a strategy for that?

Thanks so much.
Mariana
Hornby Island BC

Hi Mariana,
Thanks for writing.

A) Enter everyday and your odds of winning increase. I also enter myself and my husband, if the contest is per person instead of per household, to increase our odds even more. On average about half the wins come in his name.

B) For any given month, I enter ~50+ daily entry contests; ~25+ weekly entry contests; and ~50+ one-time only entry contests and I will win anywhere between 5-15 prizes per month, so I win about 5%. But keep in mind that these aren't all grand prizes either! We get lots of free movie tickets where they are giving away 100+ passes or we get the smaller 2nd or 3rd prizes that are available.

C) I rarely enter snail mail due to the time it takes to enter and the cost of postage (in Canada it's 51 cents plus 4 cents TAX per letter). So, the majority of our wins come from the Internet contests.

D) I wish! I rarely ever get through. I won only one radio phone-in contest all of last year. It was for a CD. I do not discourage people from trying those, because I have met people that win more from radio contests than any other entry method. The point is to find what entry method you like, what works for you

and go with it. Someone did tell me once that the trick is to find a phone with the fastest redial button you can.

GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn

Hi Carolyn!

I really like your online newsletter! I am wondering...how many companies are there in Canada that choose the online/snail mail winners? Are there many or a few?

How does this industry work from the top down? What I mean by "top down" is, what is the process for a company to run a contest? Who holds the ultimate power and who runs them? I thought of another question. How much money does a company invest into running a contest, prizes aside?

I am curious! Also, do these companies recognize names of previous winners from other contests and then pick another winner instead of the one drawn?

**Thanks and good luck,
Trayah
Calgary AB**

Trayah,
I am so glad you like my newsletter.

There are too many marketing and promotional companies in Canada to know who they all are. I do have the largest ones listed in the [Resources](#) section of my website.

The ultimate power always lies with who's paying the bill, the sponsor. However, if they choose to hire a contest management company, they are doing so for that company's expertise and will probably follow the advice given to them by those sweepstake experts.

The amount of money spent depends on how big the company is that wants to run a promotion. Large companies can spend tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands and even millions. (Pepsi even ran a contest last year in the US to win a billion dollars. It was an insured contest. That means Pepsi bought insurance in case someone won and then the insurance company pays out.) The exact amount spent will be determined by several factors. A few of them are: 1) What is the company's entire marketing budget for the year? 2) How does a sweepstake fit into the overall annual corporate marketing plan? 3) What is the promotional purpose if they decide to run one? To attract new customers? Build an email permission marketing database? 4) Will they run it in-house or hire a contest management firm to run it for them?

I know they are very careful about their drawing process. Many told me not only do they have their lawyers present during the draw, sometimes the sponsor's lawyers are also present along with a video taping of the proceedings. They pride themselves on their honesty and integrity during the execution of the entire promotion.

I know they do not discard familiar names. Not only have I won multiple prizes from contests run by the same contest management company, I have also interviewed most of them for my book. I imagine I must have the most recognizable name out there. So if I can continue win, so can you.

GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn

Hi Contest Queen;

Can you please give me advice as to winning sweepstakes by mail? I've been entering and sweeping for over a year and have yet to win anything. I'm hooked on sweeping; so I'll keep plugging away. I think I've read somewhere; if you make your own colorful, textured envelopes the judges will more than likely select your envelope! Is this true? With the price of stamps having gone up; this would help. With more time on my hands now I would be able to do this. Let me know-it would be appreciated.

**Thanks much;
Wanda
Chicago IL**

Hi Wanda,

It depends on where you live. There are differences between Canada and the US when it comes to sweeping. In Canada about 80% of the promotions are online and 20% are mail in. In the US the percentage seems to be about 30-40% online and 60-70% mail-in. This is due to differences in the technology infrastructure and technology adoption between our two countries. Also, various contest management companies in Canada have told me that mail-in promotions will disappear in 5-10 years and I believe it will be 10-20 in the US.

So 1) my advice is to enter online as much as you can because you can generally get many more entries in (assuming once per day) for FREE! And 2) I have interviewed people that send in coloured and decorated envelopes and others that send in plain ones. Both swear that's how they win. One because the envelopes stick out and the other because they blend in. I think you should try both methods and decide for yourself. I personally send in plain envelopes because I usually don't have a lot of time to work on mail-in sweepstake entries. I find the mail in ones harder to win but I have interviewed people that swear by them and prefer them over the internet ones.

That's part of the hobby - try different things and figure out what works for you.

Try to save money by entering ballot contests in your local stores, enter online and if you have a cellphone, try text message contests too.

GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

I've had a 7 month dry spell...haven't won anything since last spring. I'm beginning to wonder if I'm spending enough time contesting each week. How much time would you recommend daily/weekly?

Thanks,

Louise,

Oshawa, ON

Hi Louise,

I spend about 1-2 hours per day everyday on online contests - I use a couple of software programs to speed things up to increase the number of entries I submit.

That said - it only takes one to win!!

What are you entering?? I win a lot of local, short entry period contests. If you are only entering for trips or cars, I would have only won a few contests over the past few years and I plan to win my new car this year. ☺ So, if I had only been entering for very large prizes, I too would have had a long dry spell. Sometimes entering smaller contests with a bunch of prizes for tickets to local movies and attractions can keep you inspired between the big wins!

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hello,

I'm new to online contests. I was wondering how safe it is to enter contests online? Do you consequently receive a lot of junk mail, as a result of giving out your e-mail address? What about your name, address and phone number? Have you ever had a problem with unwanted mail or phone calls?

Thanks for your input.

Jo-Anne

Toronto, ON

Hi Jo-Anne,

I feel very safe. I have been entering all my standard contact information online for years. I do get a lot of junk mail (spam) but I know people that don't enter contests online that get more than I do. You need to invest in a good spam filter - you can find links to some on my site [here](#). Many ISP services will also include spam filtering in their e-mails services as well.

I believe you can safely enter your name, address, and phone number, etc. into promotions because that is already public information. Especially if you are listed in the phone book! Plus, it's not enough information for identity theft. Also, large companies have very strict privacy policies and will not sell or give out any of your information.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

After reading the recent newspaper article on you I've revived my interest in contests. I had won a few things and then I guess my interest flagged. I would like to download software that fills in the information for me but having looked at some of the sites I'm overwhelmed! Can you tell me which contesting software you use in order to facilitate filling out the contest forms?

Thank you,

Mairi

Pickering ON

Hi Mairi,

I know it can be a bit overwhelming at first. It took me three years of trying different methods and systems before I found one that suited me.

Go to the Resources section on my website and look under [Contest Sites](#) to determine which site(s) you like. This is where you find the websites that post contests you may wish to enter. The secret to this hobby is to find what you like. Do you want to enter online, call-in, mail-in, test messaging, or in-person? Most people find a favourite and stick with it.

Then go to [Contesting Software](#) and use one (or a combination of) package(s) you feel helps you enter faster. I recommend RoboForm because it will auto-fill online forms with the click of a button, plus they have an online tutorial so you can learn how to use their software very quickly. When I started using it, it cut my contesting time in half. Many contests are now using forms that are based on Flash technology, and these cannot be filled automatically. So, even running an auto-fill program will not save you from typing out your information on every contest.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi, Carolyn

[CanadaSweeps](#) has a question for you: How do you find balance between family, contesting and career? We'll be watching for your answer in The Winning Edge. :)

Hugz,

~!Pat

Hi Pat,

This was an interesting question posed to me and the entire CanadaSweeps online group. I had an opportunity to read answers from fellow contestors and was really amazed at the variety of answers posted. It was also touching to get a wee glimpse into someone's life and why they started and then continued to enter contests. For most it seemed to be the same; it was a good way to escape from their too busy and too stress-filled lives. They found it fun to be able to enter, dream and sometimes win!

I found it to be a really difficult question to answer because at the moment I don't feel I have quite found the exact balance. When I first began contesting on a daily basis, I was unemployed and had no children so it was really easy. Once Nicole was born I would enter while she napped. It was a good stress reliever from being a new mom. When she got older, I began working part-time in our business so we hired a nanny and I used to sneak in my entering time while she was looking after Nicole. When our business

took a wee bit of a downturn and we let the nanny go, I put my laptop in the kitchen and would enter one here and one there throughout the entire day. Since my book has been published I spend little or no time entering. I really miss it. I hope to settle into a new family/work routine soon and I will be able to begin entering again for an hour or two a day.

I promise to let everyone know if I find the secret to a balance life :)
Carolyn

Hello Carolyn,

Watched you on the morning show. You looked great. Sounded calm. The book is not available yet in Barrie at Chapters, I asked for it. I'll hound them for you!

I have a question. I'd like to enter for my husband, and family members, but when I try, I always get "You have already entered". Is there a special way you clear your machine?

How do you "mask" alternate entries? I'm thinking of using my Roger's email. Do you find problems on Hotmail?

If you like, use my questions, love your answers. Very much appreciate the help.

Thanks,

Cathy

Barrie, ON

Hi Cathy,

Good questions.

1) I am working furiously on getting retail distribution!! I should have a contract signed this week and Indigo has placed a verbal order so I am hoping to start having books in retail locations with in 30 days.

2) That means they are either using browser cookies to determine that you have already entered on that computer or they are logging your IP address. IP address logging is not very popular, but can definitely block you and possibly many other users from entering a contest.

Typically contest sites will save a cookie on your browser that will indicate to the website that you have entered the contest already from that machine. While you can delete the cookies from your browser, this will clear all cookies from the machine – which means that sites where you have selected “remember me on this computer”, to avoid having to login every visit will also be cleared along with any other cookies that have been saved on your computer. If you want to try this in Internet Explorer (IE), click on TOOLS, select INTERNET OPTIONS, click on DELETE COOKIES - depending on the contest site you may have to do it after each entry.

Another option is to try running multiple browsers on your PC – each web browser that you install on your PC has its own directory of cookies specific to sites that you visited in that browser. If IE is your primary browser, you could install [Firefox](#) and/or [Opera](#) as secondary browsers and use them for alternate entries or install one alternate browser to use for contest sites where you know you are going to be deleting the cookies frequently so that it won't disrupt the cookies you need from sites that you visit regularly in your primary browser.

3) I think the Roger's mail would be better, but I always recommend that you set-up a separate email for contesting only - most Internet and email packages give the user 5-10 email addresses - try something easy like imawinr@email.com. Keep it short as you will be typing it often!

Hope that helps,
Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

I haven't won anything yet :-) but just in case I do... **If I win a prize from a contest based in the United States, will have to pay GST and duty? And if the prize is money? Are all prizes of contests in Canada tax free?**

Thanks,

Tracey

Brampton, ON

Hi Tracey,

The tax laws in Canada and the United States are very different.

In Canada we do not pay tax on winnings of any kind; lottery, sweepstakes, contests, etc... You may be obligated to pay some taxes depending on the promotion, so always read the rules. For example, when we checked out of a hotel on a trip we had won, we discovered the room was free but we had to pay all the taxes.

In the United States, any prize over \$600 must be declared on your income tax. (I am learning more and more about this topic as I am researching the American Edition of You Can't Win If You Don't Enter.)

Now, if you are a Canadian that entered a contest open to both Canada and the U.S., the contest sponsors must follow Canadian contest law and you are not obligated to pay tax on the prize. However, if the prize is shipped from the U.S., Canada Customs may charge you duty and taxes. For example; I had to pay \$23 in duties and taxes on a pair of \$150 runners I won. You can [make a GST claim](#), [a duty claim](#) and attempt to get the funds back based on the fact that the item was a prize.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi,

I am moving soon and I want to try and win the early bird draw of \$5000 or the \$1,000,000 from the 1FOR15.com promotion you were working on. Can you help? I do not move until early May and I will keep my present phone number but until then, will it stop or decrease my chances of winning?

Thank you,

Lise

Kingston, ON

Hi Lise,

This is a great question because it doesn't just affect this one contest you entered but all of the contests you entered over the past few months (as some of them will be selecting the winner after your move-in date). I had the same problem when we moved three years ago.

You were OK for this one because they selected the early bird winner on April 28th. Here is what I discovered. Canada Post forwards your mail but not necessarily packages. UPS, Purolator and FedEx will return the package to the sender. Bell Canada announces your new phone number change for three months unless you pay them not to. (With this newsletter going out to several different countries, make sure you check with your local postal and phone companies as to what services they offer for their customers who are moving.)

I suggest you be really nice to the new people moving in and leave them your new information to pass on to couriers or they can call you to come pick anything up. I left a nice bottle of wine and it seemed to have worked because I did pick up a few stray (small) prizes after we had moved.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hello Carolyn,

I have been reading your book while I was at the Brier in Regina. I am really enjoying it and have had trouble putting it down. I also saw the article in the Toronto Star that someone posted on the contest site. Way to go for following your dream. It is amazing what dreams contesting have helped to come true for me too. I was able to meet two other contestors which I find always gives me a boost. We were talking about contesting and one of the women thought that you had to be on a site for 30 seconds for your entry to go through and be accepted. I had never heard of this before and was wondering what you thought? Also are you entering American contests? I have not done them as concerned about all of the tax implications.

Bye for now and thanks for the good read.

Bev

Morden, MB

Hi Bev,

Glad you are enjoying the book! No, I have never heard that you have to be on a site for a certain amount of time to enter and win. I use RoboForm a lot and I go very quickly from site to site filling out entry forms. I am sure I don't stay on some sites for more than for 15 seconds and we have won from many of those contests I entered using RoboForm.

If the contest is open to Canada and the US, the rules must follow both Canadian and American contest law - that means if an American wins they pay tax and if a Canadian wins they must answer an STQ (Skill Testing Question) and not pay any tax.

Now, the caveat to this is that it also may depend on the company awarding the prize. If a Canadian wins a contest and a US promotions company is handling the prizing you may have to pay duties and taxes on prizes shipped across the border or if the prize is cash, they may automatically withhold 30% tax and you have to fill out forms to get that money back.

Just remember, there are 300,000,000 Americans and 30,000,000 Canadians so your odds are better in Canada only contests. That said, **it only takes one to win** and I have won from promotions open to both the US and Canada. (And yes, I did pay the tax and duties when my prize was shipped across the boarder.)

GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

If a contest says you may enter as often as you wish, what do you feel is a reasonable number of times to enter per day? Also, how much time would you recommend between entries? I don't want to be unreasonable about the number of times I enter but I want to enter often enough to increase my chances of winning. I read through all the back issues of your newsletter but I couldn't see a previous reference to this issue.

Thanks!

**Carolee
Sherwood Park AB**

Hi Carolee,

Some people read that and will enter 1000s of times in a day. Tribute.ca is a good example of the type of site that offers unlimited entries. I only enter 1x per day because that's all I have time for and remember; *it only takes one to win!* If you only have short periods of time to enter, try salting in a few entries every time that you sit down to contest. Even though others may sit and churn out 1000s of entries, you can still get picked!

GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

When entering a mail-in sweepstake the rules frequently say:

Day and Evening Telephone Number or Day and Evening Phone Number or Daytime and Evening Phone Number, etc..., Birthdate or Date of Birth, etc...

My question is: when writing out my 3x5 card (or whatever) do I have to use those exact words, or can I shorten it to Day & Eve Phone (or similar) or DOB when either birthdate or date of birth are requested?

**David
Atlantic Beach FL**

Hi David,

Actually, I do not write any of that information on the 3x5 card. I just write the data as they ask for it and do not bother putting those words on the card.

So, for example, where yours may look like:

NAME: David

DAY PHONE: 888-555-4444

EVE PHONE: 888-333-9999

DOB: February 16 1970

Mine would look like:

Carolyn Wilman

905-579-2668

same

Jan 9 1967

Companies know the information that they are asking for, and can generally pick out what refers to what based on what they requested in the rules. I have found that even when putting both a daytime and evening phone number, they will likely still try both numbers regardless of the time of day to try and notify you.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

It is frustrating to go to enter a contest and have them state no PO Boxes. Living in a rural area that's all we have, even though we could give a delivery address if a prize was won. Do you know why?

Thanks,

Janet

Peace River, AB

Hi Janet

Yes, because couriers will not deliver to P.O. Boxes. Many times the company will just courier out the release forms to the winner so if you have a "street" address, you really should use it when entering.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

If the contest does not stipulate "hand written" essay, can you send in a "typed" essay? Also, if hand written, should it be printed or can it be written?

Thanks for your response!

Maureen

Saskatoon, SK

Hi Maureen,

I always type my essays if they don't specify because 1) many now are emailed in and 2) you can get the exact word count (as many specify a word count, e.g. 100-word essay). I only hand-write if it specifies.

Also many people have terrible handwriting so when it is printed from a computer it can be easily read. If you do choose to handwrite your entries, ensure that you write clearly.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Carolyn,

I enter contests daily. Am trying to win a vacation, I dearly want to get away. Any suggestions about how to win one of these contests and the best ones to enter?

**Regards,
Elizabeth
XXX NS**

Hi Elizabeth,

Funny you should write about trying to win a trip. I have been "trying" to win a car. I have a chapter in my book called *Attracting Luck*. I happened to be watching Wayne Dyer today, *The Power of Intention*. You need to focus on winning and going on the trip, not the lack of traveling. You attract what you focus on. Enter all the trip contests you can, intent to win a trip, let it go to the Universe and allow it to happen. I recommend several books on the art of attracting what you want in life:

The Law of Attraction by Michael Losier

The Attractor Factor by Joe Vitale

Ask and it is Given by Esther and Jerry Hicks

Read [my newsletter](#) on my intending to win a trip. Trust that your trip will come too. Visit www.contesthound.ca or www.contestcanada.com for listings of trip contests.

**GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn**

Hi Carolyn,

I was notified that I won a weekly prize May 26. I responded right away and sent in a signed release form. Since then I sent two emails to the email address of the media group that notified me, just asking what I won and when I might expect it, but haven't gotten any response. I am listed as a weekly winner on the company's website. Just wondering what you might suggest I do. Should I just go on waiting for this prize? Or should I follow up on it, and who I should follow up with?

Thanks.

Regards,

Tony

Oakville ON

Hi Tony,

It normally takes 4-8 weeks to receive a prize. However, since they are not responding to your inquiries, I would call the receptionist; ask for the owner/President/etc. and explain your problem just as you did to me. Things always seem to happen from the top down. Let me know what happens.

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn

I received my prize this morning. It took eight weeks and two days to receive it after I was notified of winning. You were pretty much right on with your 4-8 weeks answer. And this company took it to the limit. I did call the contest sponsor company management, as per your suggestion, and they got somebody from the media company to call me. The person from the media company basically told me the same thing you did; 4-8 weeks. And that I should receive it in approximately two weeks. I went back and read through the contest rules and they stated nothing about 4-8 weeks to receive a

**prize, so it must be a kind of unwritten assumption that a contesteer needs to make. Thanks again.
Have a great day. :)**

**Regards,
Tony**

Hi Tony,

Glad you got your prize. I just got one last week I won in March. They had a problem getting the prize (a TV) so they finally just sent a gift certificate for Best Buy. That worked for me because what I had really wanted to win was a portable DVD player so it was worth the wait. Actually Tony, you make a good point – the rules don't always state the timeframe prizes will be delivered in, but 4-8 weeks is a good rule of thumb to go by. It's another great reason to keep track of all your winnings. You can then know exactly when to expect a prize and when you may need to contact the company regarding your win.

**GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn**

Hi Carolyn:

I have question in regards to using Roboform to fill out contest entries. In some contest rules I have read..."any use of agencies or robotic, repetitive, automatic, programmed or similar entry methods will void all entries by that entrant." So would this include using RoboForm and if yes how can they tell that a person has used this to enter the contest?

Thanks,

**Kim
Calgary AB**

Hi Kim,

They can't tell if you manually typed in the information into the online form or you used a software package like RoboForm. They just put that in the rules to discourage you from using the software. However, using a service like acuwinn.com will disqualify you because 1000s of entries are coming from one IP address. I have won hundreds of prizes worth thousands of dollars using RoboForm. If it was illegal or would disqualify me I wouldn't use it.

**GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn**

Hi Carolyn,

My luck is improving and I have won the National Post trip to Vancouver for two nights and tickets to the CanWest ComedyFest! The flight does not include 'flight taxes and fuel charges'. Just wondering if this is standard when winning flights? I remember you saying when you win a trip "it's a cheap trip, not a free trip", but looking thru some of the other rules for trips I am entering doesn't mention not paying the taxes, if fact some say including taxes, is this the norm?

Thanks for all of your advice so far!

**Tracey
Brampton ON**

Hi Tracey,
CONGRATULATIONS!!

It is the norm. We have won trips and paid nothing, others where we paid some of the taxes and some we paid all the taxes. Don't say anything until they ask you to pay for the taxes because the rules almost always say you will pay the taxes but sometimes we were not asked to pay! CONGRATS and have fun!! (My in-laws live in BC so we go to Vancouver at least once per year. What a great city!!) If you can afford it, ask to extend the trip a night or two. We do that on almost every trip we win, and then we only have to pay for the hotel.

HAVE FUN!!

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn

As I just turned 55 (boo, I HATE ageing), I am wondering if my chances of winning certain kinds of contests may be diminishing or they are even disqualifying me due to my advancing age? For example, if the prize is to a Club Med resort, I would think their main advertising would be geared to singles, from 18-32 yr. So, if on the ballot, either online or a snail mail, I am asked my age, date-of-birth or to check what age range category I fall into, I must be honest and either write my correct age, 55, the exact date or the 55-70 age range. Most of the time until I turned 55, I was able to check off an age range used most often as: 40-54 yr. The majority of the times that age categories are indicated on a ballot, I have noticed that a new age range seems to almost always start at 55 and naturally end up quite high in years. I am feeling that the older I'm becoming, the less of a chance I have to win any type of prize associated with being younger. Is this true? Have I contested my way out of most sponsors target demographic of their products, services, etc., simply by getting older?

Also, since I don't have any children of my own, when I see a contest for a "Family Trip for 4" to any destination, I assume that the sponsors really do desire a family of 2 adults and 2 children to win and because that's not me, I won't have a chance to win. Again, what do you think about this?

Some contests will say you and 3 of your friends, which I believe is different than a "family", as the 3 friends can be friends and/or relatives; whereas a "family" to me means not even relatives as cousins, but preferably a husband, wife and 2 small children. It can get confusing. Do you have any other definitions or advice for me about entering these mostly trip/event type contests that specify the number of people who can also partake and what exactly is a "family" in contest terms?

With regard to smaller wins in city where I live. If it's to a movie premiere or another exact dated event, whether or not I have yet picked up or been sent the prize, but I realize that either something bigger, better, or I better show up at other thing if I want to live (just kidding) or I just came down with a totally disruptive cold, flu and hacking cough and really can't get to the movie premiere or use whatever winning tickets on that particular night, do I still make an effort to obtain or is it more polite to call sponsor to say thanks but no thanks with your reason and hope that they will contact next on the list to give to? That way you don't have to drag your sick ass out of bed to pick up some tickets. You won't be able to use or do you still pick up and hope to find someone who can use them. If you can't give them away, the tickets may just go to waste then. Remember that I probably deal with sponsor on a fairly regular basis and don't want to have any bad vibes between

us as I want to win something from them some other time. What's the right move in the case of illness or conflicting dates?

Just to let you know that I did read all of the 2005 and 2006 questions and answers that a newcomer to your newsletter is encouraged to do and I didn't see any other questions that were just like or similar to mine that a previous person had already asked you.

With much anticipation I await your responses to my questions and thank you in advance!

Laura-Ellen

CITY STATE

WOW Laura!

Your long email filled with such good questions! I will answer each point separately.

1) Unless the prize has an age limitation (such as a Contiki trip for 18-35 years olds) age doesn't matter. I know many seniors that win children's contests. They give the prizes to their grandchildren even though the promotion is targeted to kids. All contestants have the same odds regardless of age, gender, location, etc... so enter away and GOOD LUCK!!

2) You can enter any contest and win. I know many people that just take the trip and go without children. If you are a big kid like me, you can enjoy Disney as much as a 5 year old! You can also take grandchildren – I think you would win the World's Best Grandma title! If you like the prize, enter - you have nothing to lose.

3) Yes, friend style promotions are designed differently than family style ones. When one thinks of friends we think of girl's spa weekend or the guy's golfing weekend. The contest sponsor would expect you to take your spouse and another couple or a few of your girlfriends/sisters/daughters/etc... They really don't care as long as the people going on the trip fit the marketing budget so if you take friends instead of family it doesn't matter because the cost will be the same to the promotions company.

4) If I can't go to an event I have won tickets or passes for I always try to let the sponsor know. I think it's just good manners and good karma. If I already have the tickets, I give them away. My friends love it when I call and ask if they are available for such and such a time. You seem to be using your common sense which, in my books, will take you far.

5) I started posting the archive of Q&A because I began to get the same questions over and over so it cut down on my retyping...I don't mind new questions.

BTW, 55 is not an advanced age!

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

I have seen this question posted several times to various online groups. *Can Roboform slide past all the "no electronic entries" applied to so many contests today?* I know it is acceptable as I have read that in your book (which I have and think is GREAT) and you have answered it in your newsletter but some haven't read those. It would be great if you could repost the answer.

Thanks in advance,

Shelly

Castlegar BC

Hi Shelly,

Glad you like my book! I will put the answer here and then also repost it to all the online groups for those that may not read it here. (You mean there are people that have yet to subscribe?! LOL!!)

For this answer, let's assume we are talking about sweepstakes that can be entered on a daily basis. If a company really does not want someone to use a software program like RoboForm, they will just create the entry form using Flash (multimedia design software) and then all the fields must be filled out manually. Some companies chose to use a standard form along with a verification/authentication code so the form can be filled in using RoboForm but the code must be entered manually. Some companies try to add additional fields such as a questionnaire that can be filled in the first time manually. Then, if you save the form using the Passcard feature you can use one click to re-enter the form from then on. Finally, some companies create straight forward plain old entry forms asking for very basic entry information. The computer cannot tell if you filled in the data yourself or if a program like RoboForm did it for you.

I have seen various online discussions about how a company could add a hidden field that RoboForm would fill yet a person entering manually would not. We contacted RoboForm about this and they stated their software does not "see" hidden fields and therefore does not fill them. Our own testing has proven this to be true. The other way a company could tell if you were using RoboForm is to place a timer on the entry server. If the amount of time from when you open the page to the time you click the submit button is ridiculously fast, they can assume you are using an entry software package. However, since every single additional feature to sweepstake management costs money - very few companies will bother to track how quickly someone is entering online. They are more concerned with people breaking the rules than with how fast your entry is submitted.

The true definition of an automated or electronic entry is when you pay a company like acuwin.com to enter hundreds or thousands of sweepstakes for you. I do not recommend using such services because: 1) you will be disqualified as it is very easy to detect a flood of entries from the same ISP address and more importantly 2) it takes away from the fun of the hobby and in turn you do not have an opportunity to put our your winning or lucky karma on your entries. I have won dozens of sweepstakes over the past three years using RoboForm so I recommend every contestor and sweeper use it.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Carolyn,

How can WE make the US companies think we are important enough to include us in their amazing contests? I am so ticked off every time I receive an invite to enter, and then learn that it is ONLY eligible to US residents. I purchase the same products. Let's let them know....WE COUNT TOO!!!!

Thanks for letting me let off steam

Susan

Richmond Hill ON

Susan,

Don't get too hot under the collar! We have so many contests here I can't even enter them all. Plus, and here is the biggie, the Americans pay 30%+ income tax on any prize over \$600. That's one of the reasons they have to have such amazing prizes - to entice people to enter despite the potentially high taxes. Also, check the Canadian version of the company websites - you will probably find some pretty good contests for us too. Check out mysoup.com vs. mysoup.ca as a good example of a company creating similar promotions for both countries.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

Since you've won a lot of prizes, I thought you would be the best person to ask. When you win a prize, does a real person call to notify you of the prize, or do you get an automated voice message, telling you to hold the line? e.g. "You've won a prize to the Caribbean, please hold the line to claim your prize?" I received a call like that today and wondering if it was a real prize notification or just a scam to sell me stuff; either way I hung up, but now I'm wondering.

Thanks,

Trupti

Brampton ON

Hi Trupti,

Stop worrying. What you did was save yourself a headache. A real person calls you, emails you or sends you a letter with verifiable information. I hang up when I get those calls myself.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

If you're filling out a ballot, on-line or a print ballot, if there is some extra space on the ballot, does it make any sense to write in something like you love prize so much or for another example, you've just experienced a tragic event and winning their contest will cheer you up. Does writing that type of thing do anything at all to increase chances of winning or just a waste of writing time to do that? Sponsors have not asked to write anything like that on ballot, so I was just wondering if writing something like I have mentioned will increase chances of winning or not? How about writing a simple "Thank You" on ballot? Does sponsor notice this or even care that you are trying to be polite & merely thanking them for having this contest?

Bye for now,

Laura

Toronto ON

Hi Laura,

That is a great question. I never thought of that. I don't think it would increase your chances in the statistical sense. I do however believe it would increase your chances in the karmic sense. I really believe in the law of attraction because since March my entries have dropped by 50%. I have been waiting for a dry spell that has never come. I still win 5-15+ contests every month, month after month. I am passionate about contesting and that passion draws in the wins/prizes. I think putting your enthusiasm, excitement and passion on the ballot will attract someone to your ballot. Do not use a tragic event (negative), rather use anything upbeat (positive) when you are writing.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

I won something from Quick and Simple Magazine (a US based publication) and I had to pay close to \$50 in taxes on the win. (It was a cream set from EmerginC that was apparently worth approximately \$260USD). I promptly made a GST/duty claim, as suggested in one of your newsletters, however, it was denied. I ended up calling the number provided in the rejection letter and talked to someone who proceeded to tell me that prizes won from the US are not tax exempt. Would you be able to point me to a Law that states specifically that goods won from the US are tax exempt? The woman I spoke to said that they would re-consider the decision if I was able to provide supporting documentation.

Thanks,

Vlado

Barrie ON

Hi Vlado,

I had my accountant answer that question for you:

The Act provides that prizes “bestowed, received or accepted” outside Canada will be exempt from GST. However there is no indication regarding if this test is met with prizes won over the internet.

These goods are also duty free provided they are not “usual merchantable goods”, for which no definition is provided, however one can infer that consumer goods that are sold on a regular basis such as the cream set would be considered a “usual merchantable good”.

I hope that helps.

Regards,

[Arden Vanderhorst, CA](#)

Hi Carolyn,

This might sound like a silly question, but I honestly don't understand this. When a mail-in contest asks you to send in your info to them on a 3.5 x 5 postcard – where do you get the postcard from? Is it supposed to be a tourist postcard that you can pick up at a convenience store (i.e. Toronto, Ontario w/ photo of CN Tower, etc.)? Or is it a blank card that you get from somewhere else? Do

you put this card into an envelope or do you mail it on its own w/ the postage attached to the actual card?

Many thanks for your help,

Anna

Mississauga ON

Hi Anna,

I have never seen rules for 3.5 x 5 postcard. Most rules say 3x5 card and I just buy the plain ones from Staples. I get my postcards free from restaurants downtown or IKEA. They have displays with advertising and free cards. Also, try the dollar store for inexpensive postcards. If a promotion asks for a 3.5 x 5 postcard it must be placed in an envelope when you mail it or the post office doesn't guarantee it will arrive since it is smaller than the required postal standard. Remember to always check [Canada Post](#) or [USPS](#) for the current mailing standards if you are unsure if you can mail something so small.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn

Just a quick question as to the Hypersweep Sweepstakes, Daily Sweepstakes and the Women Only ones I've just found. I entered them but have reservations as to whether they're on the up and up. Most of the ones I entered are the ongoing kind for the end of each month and the filling in form is the exact same one as last month. I don't want to waste my time filling these in every day unless you can tell me if they're are people in Canada who actually win some of these contests.

Thanks for your help

Mimi

Qualicum Beach BC

(P.S. I love your book!!)

Hi Mimi,

Can you send me a few of the links so I can look at them myself? It will be easier for me to answer the question once I have seen the website the contest is on. If the contest is open to both US & Canada it is a bit harder to win since so many more people can enter. That said, it only takes one to win. I have won prizes from contests open to both countries. Most of my wins are "small" CDs, movie passes, gift baskets, gift cards, etc...and a few times a year I hit a "biggie", like a trip.

I hope that helps so far,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn

<http://www.hypersweep.com/eventhandler2.cfm?eventid=35559>

<http://www.hypersweep.com/eventhandler2.cfm?eventid=35734>

<http://www.sweepfriends.com/>

<http://www.winprizesonline.com/prize07.html>

<http://www.mastermails.com/sweepstake/ipodphoto.html>

<http://www.recipesgold.com/kitchenaid.html>

These are just a very few of the ones that I've entered but they are so time consuming I hate to waste my time if these sweepstakes are in any way bogus. Actually, the Hypersweeps comes to me every day and all I have to do is open each contest that's either International or for Canada and fill the forms in but I still wonder every time if I'm being foolish. Thank you so much for your time I can't tell you how much I appreciate it.

Following your book's recommendations I have signed up for the Roboform Pro and use it happily but it seems there must be another program I need called Robo Form Companion in order to make use of the passcards for filling in the daily's and sending them out all at once. When I first read the book it was all like another language. Since I've started using the program it's English but with a really huge accent so I'm still trying to figure it out. Again Thanks.

Your contest buddy,
Mimi

Hi Mimi,
Here's what I discovered...

<http://www.hypersweep.com/eventhandler2.cfm?eventid=35559>

This one was located on HyperSweep and it links you to The Celebrity Café website. I have actually interviewed Dominick Miserandino owner of The Celebrity Café and I can tell you that all of their promotions are on the "up and up". They award dozens and dozens of prizes on a monthly basis. I recommend signing up for the free Celebrity Café e-newsletter so you can be notified when new promotions are listed.

<http://www.hypersweep.com/eventhandler2.cfm?eventid=35734>

This one seems legit but the odds are terrible as it is open to both Canada and the US along with running for months and months. I would only enter it using RoboForm Companion so I wouldn't be wasting my time. I would enter because you never know if you will be the one to win!

I have also spoken with Scott Bourgeois owner of HyperSweep. I like his website and think it's a great resource especially since sweepstakes are emailed directly to you.

<http://www.sweepfriends.com/>

This is a forum for like minded sweepers and contestors to trade links to promotions, ideas, feedback ,etc...I like groups and forums because it's a virtual nationwide sweepstakeing club. This particular forum is relatively small as there are fewer than 300 members. I have links to many groups and forums ([Canadian](#) and [American](#)) on my website you can also check out.

<http://www.winprizesonline.com/prize07.html>

<http://www.mastermails.com/sweepstake/ipodphoto.html>

<http://www.recipesgold.com/kitchenaid.html>

For all of these I am going to give you the same advice as the second link and I entered all of them as it only takes on e to win...

I LOVE RoboForm Companion. It was written by Vincent Lavoie to help his aging father enter online contests without retyping his information over and over. Vincent has not been able to upgrade the

program so it currently will only work with older versions of RoboForm and plain entry forms. If there is a verification code or the entry is in Flash it will not work.

I hope I answered all of your concerns regarding links to promotions not put on by large national companies.

GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn

Hi,
I recently read in some contest rules that cookies must be enabled to enter. Please explain.
Clyde
Toronto ON

Hi Clyde,
I had my husband Craig answer your technical question.

Clyde, Carolyn has asked me to answer your questions about the use/need for cookies with some contest sites. It isn't very often that you will see these sorts of rules states, but they are becoming more prevalent as contests continue to move online and contest providers build up mechanisms to prevent accidental disqualification.

The site is likely designed to drop a cookie onto your PC related to the contest site itself. This will likely contain information about your entry status. In many cases, these are used to allow the contest site to check your entry status for the contest and allow them to ensure that you don't disqualify yourself by entering more often than the rules allow. If the entry allowed daily or weekly, they will drop a cookie on your machine which will expire when the next entry is allowed.

In some cases this can be a hassle - it may also prevent you from entering friends and family into the same contest. The server side will know if it was successful at putting the cookie on your system. So if they rules require cookies, they are likely checking for successful delivery of the cookie and they will likely disqualify and dump entries form PCs that are blocking their cookies.

Let me know if this answers your question, or if you have more questions.

[Craig W. Borysowich](#) MCSE, ECNE, LCP

Chief Technology Tactician

[Imagination Edge Inc.](#)