

## Your Questions Answered 2008

Send me any sweeping or contesting questions you would like answered. [questions@contestqueen.com](mailto:questions@contestqueen.com)

Many of you wrote me requesting I pass on various tips and solutions for Ivy's camera problem. They were so good, after I sent them to Ivy; I decided to reprint them for everyone.

From Barb:

I have a tip for Ivy. Let her know that you must use good digital camera batteries with any digital camera. They draw a lot of power. Cheap batteries will not work and will cause problems. I won a Samsung 850 from the same contest and it is wonderful.

From Kelly:

There is a free program on the net that easily recovers photos deleted from a digital camera. [This is a link to it](#). I have used it a few times and it works very well if there have been no other pictures taken after the card was erased.

From Janice:

Here is something I started doing after winning a digital camera with "problems". When I win electronic items, I phone the maker, e.g. HP, and explain that I won the item and they will sign you up for the regular warranty you would receive if you purchased that item.

**Hi Carolyn,**

**What we often see is that even though it says "Open to U.S. and Canadian markets" does not necessarily mean that it is. One way to find out is when we see the contest form where it says STATE. When it says State/Province then its O.K. otherwise, even if it says in the rules that it's open to Canadians, which state are we to chose especially if there is no QC or ON?**

**Hope this helps.**

**Ed**

**Montreal, QC**

Hi Ed,

That's due to inexperienced marketing staff or poor QA. If it is open to Canadians, then the drop down menu should include our provinces. I have seen online entry forms updated once the Canadians spoke up. If they still don't respond, I chose the closest state to me which is NY.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

**Another thing, even if you write NY, you cannot enter your postal code because it only accepts five numbers. What if they mail the prize or a free sample (freebies), what then? Cheers!**

Ed

Hi Ed,

I always just use the first five digits of my postal code and it usually accepted. If not, I enter in five zeros. Remember to always read the full rules. Canadians may have to enter via an alternate entry method. I sent the following email out just before Christmas:

I decided to send out this contest and sweepstake tip after I received many emails regarding [Issue 26 of The Winning EDGE](#).

### **Always Read the Rules**

My number one tip is always read the rules, the full rules.

I stated that the Good Housekeeping Sweepstakes was open to both Canadians and Americans. Many wrote me stating the sweepstakes was only open to Americans. I thought I had made an error and today I rechecked the rules. It is, in fact, open to both Canadians and Americans.

What I assume most people were doing was reading the first paragraph's first line regarding the online and text message entry methods which is only open to Americans. If you did read further down, you would see the following statement:

*Sweepstakes open to legal U.S. and Canadian residents and to residents of other countries and U.S. territories and possessions only where offered & permitted by law.*

and

*Canadian residents, to win, must first correctly answer, unaided, a time-limited mathematical skill testing question administered by mail. Any litigation regarding the conduct & awarding of a prize in this publicity contest by a resident of the province of Quebec may be submitted to the Regie des alcools, des courses et des jeux.*

If you read the first paragraph very carefully, you will then discover the Canadian entry method:

*You may enter by mail in lieu of online or via text messaging by hand printing your name, address, daytime telephone number, & the Internet or other location*

*where you found these instructions on a postcard & mailing it to Sweepstakes Entry, PO Box 5772, Ellenton, FL 34222-5007.*

I hope this clears up any confusion regarding the Good Housekeeping promotion.

Remember, GOOD LUCK & HAVE FUN!!

*NOTE: The sweepstakes webpage has moved since I sent out that email (you can find it [here](#)) but the tip still applies: **Always Read the Rules!***

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Recently I have had several people write me regarding [Fast Sweeper](#). I am not a fan of auto-entry services because most rules disqualify you automatically for using such a service and I can submit more entries in a month than most of them claim. Plus, where is the fun? I like entering and dreaming about what I can win.

I have decided to test the service, enlisting the help of a non-contestor friend, to see if they live up to their claim of a guaranteed win within three months or the next three months is free. I'll write about the results of this experiment in three months, or if she wins something, whichever comes first.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

**Hi Carolyn,**

**I was just reading a previous question regarding having a passport when entering contests for trips. My husband and I do have our passports and we got a change to use them in 2005 when I won a trip to Paris. I now have an 8 1/2 month old daughter. I always read the rules and research the resort to make sure it isn't "couples only" and other than that I always assumed if I won another trip we could take her with us and get her passport then. I'm assuming this even though it's usually a "trip for 2", as the cost of the hotel part of the trip would not cost extra to have a baby in the room with you and we would pay for her travel. Would I have to let the sponsor know I was planning on taking a baby with me? I appreciate any input you can give me.**

**Thanks,**

**Maddie**

**London ON**

Hi Maddie,

Yes you would have to let the sponsor know. Everyone getting on a plane has to have a ticket, even lap babies. Once she is over two, she must have a seat, so they would need to book all three tickets at the same time to ensure you were all on the same flight, sitting together. We did that when we won our trip to Whistler. I just asked to buy an extra ticket for my daughter, gave them my credit card and we were good to go.

Also, you should get your daughter's passport right away due to the processing time. My daughter Nicole has had her passport since she was 3 months old. When we won the trip to England they were shocked when we said we were all good to go. I guess not many people are as prepared to travel as we are.

Do you have anyone you could leave your daughter with for a week? If so, do not discount couples only trips as some of the best holidays we won, it was just Craig and I spending some much needed couple time together.

GOOD LUCK,  
Carolyn

**Carolyn:**

**I was at your contest website and notice your endorsement of the RoboForm software. I am wondering if there are any draw backs in down loading this software on to my computer. Is the free version adequate? Do you recommend buying the Pro version? Is this RoboForm purchase a one time event or is there an annual fee? After you purchase it, will you automatically receive upgrades as well from them?**

**Please advise, I have look through your website and you do not appear to have written an article on the software program.**

**Thanks,  
Jerry  
Edmonton, AB**

Good Question Jerry,

I recommend downloading the free version, taking the free online tutorials RoboForm offers and then when you are comfortable buying the Pro version. I say that because the free version limits you to the number of Identities and Passcards you can have. My entire time-saving online entering system is based on Passcards, so I feel the one-time fee was well worth the amount of time I save each day along with all the prizes it has helped me win.

GOOD LUCK & HAVE FUN,  
Carolyn

**Hi Carolyn,**

**I read with great interest your reply to Gerry in Edmonton regarding RoboForm, but you lost me when you started talking about "Passcards". Could you explain what they are and what they do? Also, do you have a price for the Pro Version? Thanks for your assistance.**

**Sincerely,  
Lillian  
Calgary AB**

Hi Lillian,

Passcards are when you save an online form with data more than just your contact information such as a skill testing question answer, a questionnaire or quiz. RoboForm is \$29.95 USD (one-time fee), and if you use the code QUEEN, you can save 10%.

GOOD LUCK & HAVE FUN,

Carolyn

**Hi Carolyn,**

**In trying to keep positive and motivated, I started keeping a calendar journal of draw dates of all contests I enter. For each day and time, I write down the name of the sponsor, the prize and what it's worth and how many are being given away. I've been doing this for a couple of months. It's exciting to see all the possible prizes that I could win each day. Anyway, my question is how long does it take from the time they draw the winner to when they actually contact them. I start checking my email soon after thinking that someone immediately emails or calls the winner following the draw. Is that realistic? I've read in some rules that the winner will be contacted within 48 hours (for example) after the draw. What would be the norm for contacting winners and do they also draw on the date and time they state in the rules?**

**Thanks,**

**Alexis**

**Mississauga ON**

Hi Alexis,

What I tell people is that on average, from the time you begin entering it takes about 90 days for your first win notification to arrive. Then if you are entering consistently, you will win consistently. That said, you could go online today, play a game and instantly win a prize. Companies are also very busy sometimes juggling multiple promotions. You may not be notified for weeks. Early April I won a prize from a contest that finished mid-December!

Also, I think you are focussing on the wrong things. I enter and forget about it. I win what I win. Did you ever see Star Wars? Yoda said, "Do or do not... there is no try." What I read in your email is you are trying to win. Stop trying and just win. Have you seen The Secret? You are focussing on your lack of prizes so what you are attracting is more lack of prizes. Let it go. Forget about it. Focus on the fun and the prizes will appear.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

**Carolyn,**

**I never looked at it that way. I have won in the past; I've been entering for a few years. I haven't won anything since I've been keeping track of draw dates. Good advice.**

**There was one more thing I forgot to ask. On March 25<sup>th</sup> I was notified by email that I had won a blender from Styleathome.com (Mocha Sofa). I faxed the release papers the next day and have yet to receive the prize. All the other contests that I've won the prize was sent out and received usually**

**within a week. I emailed back to the person that had sent the notification a week later asking if she had received my fax, as I was getting worried. She responded and told me I would receive it in 2 to 3 weeks. It's been almost two months now, should I be worried? My husband wants me to email her, but I'm sure she doesn't want to hear from me again. I know I'm probably being impatient, I just find it to be a long time. What do you think, have you ever had a problem with receiving your prize?**

**Thanks again**

**Alexis**

Hi Alexis,

4-8 weeks to get a prize is normal. Now that it has been eight weeks, contact them and gently ask when you could expect your prize. Sometimes it takes the company a while to get the prizes from the sponsor. I am sure you will get your prize soon.

Email something like this:

Hello NAME HERE,

I am the lucky winner of PRIZE HERE from THE CONTEST HERE. Thank you. It has been eight weeks since I send in my release forms. I am wondering when I can expect to receive my prize?

I look forward to your reply,

Alexis

YOUR FULL NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

You will usually get a pretty speedy reply.

Carolyn

In [Vol. 4 Issue 3 of The Winning EDGE](#) I began testing [Fast Sweeper](#) after several readers wondered if the service was worth the quarterly payment of \$28.99. After three months of entering my friend Janet didn't win a thing. (I used a non-contesting friend as my test subject so I wouldn't disqualify myself from any promotions.) Over the same period, I continued entering using my Internet Sweeping System and won a total of 31 prizes worth \$1359.08. As I stated before, I am not a fan of the pay-to-enter services. I like hunting for new promotions, dreaming about the prizes and entering. Why would I want to give away my fun?

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

**Hi Carolyn,**

**First of all more power to you and to you family. I started to be a contestor two years ago, but I did not keep it up, so I am still a newbie to contesting. I have read your book and it inspired me a lot. My**

question is how much percentage of that 200 per day (I read in your book that you average around 200 entries per day, but I can't remember the exact numbers.) is re-entry for those daily contest and how much percentage is new (either daily or weekly or monthly).

I am still adjusting the system that I learned for your book.

Thank you for taking time to read my email.

Sincerely,

Mike

Mississauga, ON

Hi Mike,

I am able to enter so many contests per day because I use both RoboForm and RoboForm Companion (two separate software packages). You must have RoboForm, and be comfortable using it, before you add in RoboForm Companion.

I save all my entry forms (even Flash based contest links) in RoboForm. 200 entries per day is the average. Sometimes it's higher and sometimes it's lower. Right now it is higher. So every day I manually enter about 150 forms, not contests, because I may enter more than one person into each contest (such as myself, my husband and daughter).

I then use RoboForm Companion to enter another 170 entry forms. On Mondays I do my weeklies and twice per month (1<sup>st</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>) I do my one time only entry contests. I spend close to two hours per day entering online.

[RoboForm](#) is well worth the onetime fee of \$30. [RoboForm Companion](#) is free.

GOOD LUCK!

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn

I've just became aware that on the entry form of the SC Johnson, it states "Please note that you may be required to show proof of purchase to claim your prize." What exactly does it mean? Do they want you to send them the UPC or the receipt? If you do win and you used a UPC you got online, do you have to find the product with the exact same UPC. I have plenty of SC Johnson products at home but I don't have the receipts for them and I don't bother getting the UPCs off them either if I can get them online. *And* they also say "...you may be required...." so will you or won't you? If it's what they want they can at least say "you will be required..."so you are prepared in case you win. Have you ever won anything from them or any other contest where they wanted proof of purchase? I wanted to email them myself but they only provide a number to call. I thought maybe you would know. Thanks.

Maddie

London ON

Hi Maddie,

I have seen that in the rules and I have won one contest with those rules and they never asked for the proof. (I kept those empty bread bags for months!) If you do win, and they ask for proof, just say you have a cupboard full of their products, can't remember which UPC you used and you don't keep your grocery receipts. What would they like you to do? They will let you know. I wouldn't worry about it. Just focus on the fun!

GOOD LUCK,  
Carolyn

Hi,

**When you are entering "one time only" sweeps, how do you keep track to know which ones you have already entered?**

**Franklin  
Prince Edward Island**

Hi Franklin,

I don't bother tracking my one time only entries. I have a good memory plus many promotions have Repeat Entry Blocks. If I do double enter, my attitude is, "Oh Well".

Others create a bookmark/favourite in their browser and put it in a special folder they can refer too. Some people keep a calendar (you can buy little book style ones at the dollar store – one week per two pages or one day per page) and write down when each promotion ends.

GOOD LUCK!  
Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

**I've noticed that a few of the contests I've been entering online recently have a series of 3 or 4 questions about product use that must be answered before submitting the entry. I've been feeling a bit conflicted because occasionally, the product in question is one that I have not used and the questions asked do not offer an option to state this. For example, one contest has a question that asks when you use their product, morning? noon? at night? but no answer that would allow me to respond truthfully. What is your opinion or thought on this? I don't want any "bad karma" for responding in an untruthful fashion.**

**Received your book, which I pre-ordered from your website, a week ago and read it all within a couple of hours! Thanks! Lots of good information--I especially liked reading everyone's success stories.**

**Michelle  
Fort Wayne IN**

Hi Michelle,

I say it is bad marketing. If they don't format the survey correctly then their answers will be skewed. Just answer the best possible way and forget about it. That's what I do.

Glad you liked the book.

GOOD LUCK!

Carolyn

**Hi Carolyn,**

**There are a couple of local contests for the Vancouver area I found and entered. There were no rules posted on the websites for the contests and it doesn't say anywhere what the limit on entries in. In this case would you assume it is unlimited entries? If so, how do you decide how many entries are fair to put in? I don't want to "cheat". Is one entry per day reasonable or is 10 per day okay?**

**Thanks,**

**Caroline**

**Surrey BC**

Hi Caroline,

If no entry limits are posted, you can send in unlimited entries. Unlimited means unlimited. More than 10 is not cheating. Be warned. One year I found such a contest so I began sending in over 1000 entries per day. Suddenly the rules changed to one entry per person. The marketing department realized their error. I didn't win. I am guessing they deleted all of my entries or they removed all but one.

Carolyn

**Hi Carolyn,**

**I also thought that if I sent in huge numbers of entries that they would realize their error and post rules. There was one contest that I sent in 10 entries for me and 10 for my husband every day, then one day there was a note posted on the site that said, "Only one entry per person will be counted".**

**Caroline**

Hi Caroline,

I see you found the same issue. It does frustrate me when it is the contestors educating the marketing people how promotions should be run. I want write a contesting book for marketers to to help prevent errors like that in the future.

Carolyn

**Carolyn,**

**Now that RoboForm Companion is no longer being updated, how can we be sure when we introduce new people to the system that they are using the right version of RoboForm? Are there any other programs similar to RoboForm Companion that are good to use?**

**Thanks for your help.**

**Clare**

**Port Charlotte FL**

Hi Clare,

I keep updating my [RoboForm Pro](#) when prompted and it is working fine with [RoboForm Companion](#), even though RoboForm Companion is no longer being updated. Currently there are no other programs on the market similar to RoboForm Companion. However, [Sweepstakes Tracker](#) plans to add an autofill component in the future. I will post any updates in the Contestor News section of this newsletter. I hope that helps.

GOOD LUCK,  
Carolyn

**Marsha of Katy, TX sent in this answer regarding her RoboForm research:**

**I've been using RoboForm for ages - my comment about how much I loved it use to be on their front page! Anyway, one day, I contacted several large corporations to get their input on using RoboForm. They said they understood that some people might use form fillers because of disabilities and that was fine by them. The big point for them was that RoboForm didn't keep you from visiting their website and visiting their website was all they were concerned about. If you visited the website you were bound to get some information, brand recognition, etc. from being there, even if you weren't sitting there keying in. I thought this made a lot of sense and is hard to argue with.**

Hello,

**I purchased your book off of [Amazon](#) and wanted to thank you for all of the valuable information. I am brand new at this. I am 48 years old and have been severely ill for past five years with money issues. I know you are busy but if I could ask a question about [Prize Happy](#). It is extremely difficult for me to enter sweepstakes and this site does not have much information but many prizes. After reading your book, I figured you would know if I was wasting my time or not with this site. I really appreciate your time and thanks again for a great book!**

**Sincerely,  
Stacey  
Escondido CA**

Hi Stacey,

I am glad you liked the book!

Funny you should ask me about Prize Happy as a few members of my contest club and I were recently discussing it. It is a relatively new site. We studied the site and have chosen not to enter any of their sweepstakes. The reason being, after reading their [Privacy Policy](#) it appears they make their money selling your information, specifically, name and email address. Each of us contacted Prize Happy to confirm the legitimacy of their site and their policies. Not a single email was responded to.

I recommend you do not enter any of their promotions. There are many legitimate sites that list sweepstakes open to Americans. [They can be found here.](#) Visit a few, or all of them, and find one you like. One secret to winning is to make this hobby your own.

GOOD LUCK,  
Carolyn

Dear Carolyn:

I've been reading *The Winning Edge* for a few months and, even though I have been entering contests and sweeps since long before the computer era, find it to be rather informative. Much of the information you pass along has been examined, chewed and digested by at least a couple of generations. However, I recognize that there are new contestants constantly entering the pool and, I'm sure, much that you write about is "new" to them. Keep up the good work!

I have three questions which I hope you might respond to. The first is: do you feel that the odds of winning have *decreased* since the use of computers began? As I said, I have been doing this since long before electronic entries were possible and spent a lot of time and money mailing them off, day after day. Interestingly enough, however, I seemed to win far more regularly during those years than I have since the age of the computer. I believe that the primary reason is simple: the sheer number of entries has mushroomed. I can't think of any other reason why my wins have decreased so dramatically in recent years. I would welcome your views on this.

Secondly, do you think that filling-in the optional information on an entry form puts you into a more "specialized" category...one in which potential winners are actually selected from? I'm thinking about all of those forms with 3 or 4 questions at the bottom...most of which are YES or NO. For example...would you like to receive our newsletters? Or, may we send you brochures which we think would be of interest to you? It seems only logical to me that if I were a sponsor of, say, a \$25 thousand prize, I would be certain that the winner chosen had, at least, opted to receive my catalogues or said YES to receiving my newsletters, etc. Yes, yes...we know from reading the fine print that "checking YES to this question will not affect your odds of winning," etc. But do you really think this is the case? Even though major marketing firms conduct many of these sweeps and would swear, under oath, that the odds are the same for every entrant, it seems very unlikely that major prizes would ever be awarded to a person who has expressed no interest whatsoever in the sponsor's product or service. Again, I would appreciate your feedback on this.

And, finally, have you or any of your fellow sweepers, EVER won a so-called "instant" prize? I haven't...and I've never known anyone who has. I'm about to permanently abandon sweeps with "games" ... the spin-the-wheel or line-up-the-pictures sort of sweeps. As far as I'm concerned, they are simply a waste of time.

Thanks for reading this, Carolyn, and I hope you might find time to respond.

Cheers!

A Reader from Minnesota

Hi,

Thanks for your support!

1) The answer to your first question is both yes and no. Yes, odds have decreased overall because computers have made it easier for more people to enter. Remember, companies are not running contests out of the goodness of their hearts. They are running them as part of a larger marketing mix which in turn is designed to increase sales. The more people they can reach with their marketing

message the better. No, because more companies are running promotions. Last year companies in the US spend \$1.89 billion on sweepstakes. That number is expected to triple by 2012. There will only be an increase in the number of promotions and the number of prizes available so it should get easier to win.

I will also say I think half the hobby is in one's head. You have to think you will win before you win. I expect to win. I have been entering on a daily basis for the past several years and I have consistently won 5-15+ prizes, every month, month after month. Now the size and value varies, but the number doesn't. Think win.

2) Answering yes or no does not decrease or increase your odds of winning. (That is actually law – re: the Criminal Code and the Competition Act.) The questions are put within the entry so the sponsor can begin permission marketing with its customers and prospects. That's all. No more, no less. I do always answer yes to receiving the company's information because they usually announce a new promotion to its subscribers first, sometimes they have exclusive promotions and once in awhile I get a free sample. Once, I told the contest sponsor, Downy, that their new scent stank, it smelled like bubble gum to me, and I would never buy it. I still won the \$2000 Roots gift certificate. They cannot disqualify you for not accepting their newsletter, etc. Again, it's illegal.

3) Yes. I have won many instant prizes. For example, my husband won an Orange Crush t-shirt this month. (Wish we had it when we won tickets to the REM concert!) The reason they add a gaming component to the contest is to get you to spend more time thinking about their product or service. Always read the rules. Sometimes the more you play, the more chances you get at an instant prize or entries into the grand prize drawing. If I have the time, I like to play the games. I find them fun.

GOOD LUCK,  
Carolyn

**Good Morning Carolyn:**

**As I read your email this morning, a question that I have been pondering came to mind...and I thought I would pose it to you.**

**Have you ever written about identity theft in any of your columns? [I vaguely recall that you have, but can't seem to locate it in any of your previous postings. We've all heard much about it...and what a threat it is. Fortunately, I've never been a victim of it but I recently met someone who was. All you have heard about this topic...all you have read about it...cannot *begin* to describe what a nightmare it is once you have become a target. The gentleman I met has spent MONTHS trying to re-establish his credit rating and *real* identity...to say nothing of what it has cost him, financially.**

**Occasionally, when filling out an entry form, I wonder why, for example, we must give our *exact* birth date. It would seem to me that MONTH and YEAR only would be adequate. With that, they can establish (give or take 30 days) how old we are. There is no reason to require the exact day of our birth. And---if we actually should be selected as a potential winner---they could easily establish whether or not we were of "legal" age when we entered the sweep.**

**At any rate, I would be interested in your perspective on this and other areas of concern when entering sweeps.**

**Cheers!**

**Reader from Minnesota**

**PS---Another thought: I wonder if any sweepstakes organizations have ever considered running surveys among sweepers about issues which most concern them. Many industries solicit input from "customers" for obvious reasons and I should think it would be most beneficial to the marketing departments of sweepstakes companies, as well.**

Hello,

You are right. [I did write about identity theft a long time ago](#). It mainly stems from the US laws regarding how alcohol companies can run promotions. Then the promotional companies just extend the same entry format to all their clients. You are right. They do not need your exact birth date. If you are really worried, adjust your date by a few days or one month off. I have never been asked to verify my birth date on any release forms I have had to sign for prizes I have won. I have only ever been asked my age.

As per your P.S., they may be in the near future. I am hoping to work with some of those companies soon and encourage they type of activity.

GOOD LUCK,  
Carolyn

**Ann of XXX, XX wanted to share her tip regarding exact birthdates from [Issue 23](#).**

**I saw the question re: Why do we need to give the exact birth date when entering? I always put my husband birth date but the year I was born and use my birth date for his entry forms. I switch my daughter's birth dates also. This way I can always remember what I put down. I have never been asked to verify my birth date either but my daughter was asked for proof once but, that might be because she was only 16.**

Good idea Ann!  
GOOD LUCK,  
Carolyn