

*“The amount of good luck coming
your way depends on your willingness to act.”*
Barbara Sher

INTRODUCTION

Sweepstaking changed my life in ways I couldn't have imagined when I began entering daily as a hobby in 2001. I could envision the prizes, but I couldn't conceive of all the adventures I would go on nor the life long friends I would make. Honestly, the people I met were the biggest surprise of this hobby.

HOW IT STARTED

I had a penchant for winning from the beginning. As a kid, I loved party games where I could win a prize. I wouldn't always win, but I delighted in the excitement of trying. As a teen, I would spend hours near our rotary phone calling into our local radio stations to win. As an adult, I would always fill in an entry form if I found one. For an occasional 'sweeper,' I would win frequently. (For complete definitions, see the NOTE later in this chapter.)

In 2001, two things occurred that put me on the path to becoming a daily contestor:

- 1) I had been unemployed for the most prolonged period I have ever experienced in my professional life as I got caught in the dot.com bubble bursting.
- 2) I read an article in Reader's Digest about a couple who entered sweepstakes daily to enhance their lives.

I remember thinking, *“I don't have to work. I can just win what I need.”* It didn't work, and I have yet to earn my living winning, but it's sure fun trying!

I began my sweeping hobby by surfing the web and discovering an entire community of people who enjoy entering and winning. I joined a few groups, signed up for a couple of newsletters, and through trial and error, came up with an Internet-based sweepstakes entering system that really works. How did I know my system worked? My results, of course—I consistently win 5-15+ sweeps every month, month after month, year after year.

In 2004 I decided to write my first book, *You Can't Win If You Don't Enter*, after the 100th person asked me what my secret is to winning so much. I knew I was onto something with the system I have developed since I started entering daily, and I wanted to share my discoveries, ideas, thoughts, and enthusiasm with others.

Then someone asked me, *“Why would you give all your secrets away? Wouldn't teaching others how to be successful sweepers decrease your odds of winning?”* It was a tough question.

While driving to a friend's house, I contemplated whether or not I should continue to write the book. On the way, I passed a church. The service announcement board out front said, *“You Can't Lose Helping Others Win.”* I knew then, and there I was going to write the book. People ask for a 'sign from God', and he had sent my one, literally! (I wish I had taken a picture of the sign.)

ALMOST 20 YEARS LATER

In this edition, I will cover everything from the ins and outs of the five ways to enter sweepstakes, the Online Winning System I have developed over years of entering (and entering and entering...), stories from fellow sweepers, and what pitfalls to avoid along with many tips and tricks to increase your odds of winning.

Before my 1st Edition, most books on the hobby of sweeping focused on only three methods of entering; in-person, phone-in, and mail-in. This left out the current ways of entering online and mobile phone contests. In my 2nd Edition, I added in the social media contests, which have become a staple in a sweeper's daily hobby. In this 3rd Edition, I am updating all the entry methods as technology is always evolving.

When I began entering giveaways in 2001, there was no single source of sweepstake information. My goal was to create a hub of all the sweepstake resources available today in North America. In conjunction with my book, I launched ContestQueen.com.

I now have hundreds of links to sweepstake aggregates, newsletters, tools, along with all my blog posts, newsletters, videos, virtual classes, and books.

With all this information at your fingertips, you can choose which methods of entry you want to participate in, which groups and forums you may want to join, and what types of sweepstakes you want to enter.

Frequently I get asked what my favorite sweepstake resources are, and that doesn't matter. Why? It's not about me. It's about you and what you like. Check out different sites and formats. When you find one you enjoy, use that. When you are having fun, that's when you win. The moment this hobby feels like work, stop. Negative energy or drudgery won't bring you big prizes.

To me, sweeping is one of the best, most rewarding hobbies around, and I am sure you will feel the same way after your first win. By reading this book and using the many ideas, tips, and tricks included within, you may enjoy the hobby of sweeping as much as I do.

LET'S BEGIN

There are two adages given to the hobby of sweepstake: the 3Ps and 4Cs. Every sweeper needs **P**atience, **P**ersistence, and **P**ostage, and every sweeper would like to win **C**ash, **C**ars, **C**omputers, and **C**ruises.

To be a winner, you will also need the 3Ds.

Delighted because you will not win unless you are entering with an upbeat, positive attitude and expect to win.

Dedicated because similar to going to a gym or being on a diet, consistency is key. Entering every day will garner you winning results.

Discerning because you need to 1) know how to tell the difference between a scam and a legitimate sweepstake AND 2) what giveaways are worth spending your valuable time entering.

If you are new to the hobby, do not get overwhelmed by all the winning opportunities. Be aware there is a learning curve, but once you get going, you can enter dozens of sweepstakes each day.

If you are a seasoned sweeper, you know this hobby is ever-evolving, and you must regularly update your entry skill sets to continue winning.

COMMUNITY

While researching my first book, I discovered there was an Annual National Sweepstake Convention. Yes, an entire event around finding, entering, and winning sweepstakes attended by hundreds of people. The convention moves from city-to-city each year, depending upon the sweepstake club that volunteers to run it. In 2005 it was in Moline, IL and after reaching out to the hosts, not only was I going to attend, I was going to be a speaker. My then-husband Craig and I packed up the minivan and headed out on a road trip. I had no idea what to expect.

I have always felt like a duck out of water. Felt I didn't fit in—an outsider. I will never forget the first day at the convention, looking around and having the overwhelming feeling I *knew* everyone there. Once I

walked into the convention hall and saw 600+ people just like me, I felt like I had come home. I turned to Craig and said, "*We are coming back every year.*" Afterward, I learned I had found my soul group, my spirit family. Finally, I felt I fit in.

The sweepstakes friends I have made from this hobby:

- 1) far outweigh any prize I have ever won.
- 2) are the ones who have helped me grow, both in sweepstakes and in life.

I consider myself a seasoned sweeper, but I am not so arrogant to think I know everything. Yes, I am the Contest Queen, and I teach others how to win, but there is so much to learn, and the hobby is evolving so quickly, it's essential to be an active part of the sweepstakes community.

In addition to entering sweepstakes, I encourage you to make friends (see [Join a Sweepstakes Club](#)), join Groups (see [How to Win on Social Media](#)), and learn from other teachers (see [Resources](#)). Your life will never be the same. I guarantee it.