

Your Questions Answered 2005

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

Hi Carolyn

My question has to do with "How many times can you enter a contest"

Most contest rules read something like this:

- 1. One entry per person, email address and household**
- 2. One entry per person, or per email address.**
- 3. One entry per person for one valid email address.**

Let's hypothetically put Dick and Jane in one (1) household and each of them have several web email addresses, how many times can they enter in the above mentioned examples?

Also, I would like your opinion on, when contest rules say "email address" are they referring to jane@abc.com type of address or are they referring to your 123.456...computer address.

Happy Contesting,

Grant

Campbellford ON

Great question Grant.

The confusion about the number of entries comes from the legalese required by companies to protect themselves. Here is a quick way to determine how many times you can enter. If the words "one entry per household" are anywhere within the rules, such as your first example, it is one entry per household. If the rules are "one per person or email address", it is one entry per person. So if Dick and Jane want to enter contests, as per your examples, only one of them could enter one time for the first example, and they could each enter one time for the following two examples.

If you see the words email address or electronic address they mean email address.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hello, Carolyn

Thank you for producing your informative newsletter. I have a question about mail-in contests.

I have been entering contests for nearly 20 years. Over that period of time I have noticed that some judging organizations must take to what an envelope looks like. Reason being, I have won contests that have unlimited entry by using decorated envelopes and coloured envelopes. I do not decorate for contests limited to one per day or one per person. I do not decorate them if the contest is open to internet entries which mention all mail-in and electronic entries are lumped into a database. Do you honestly think that the look and feel of an envelope have anything to do with winning? There must be something to it.

Thanks a bunch and have a winning day!

Sue

Victoria BC

Hi Sue,

You bring up a good point Sue. I have interviewed many contest management companies and how they draw is they have someone reach into a drum and pull out an envelope. Or if the contest has an online and mail in component, they number the envelopes and the winner is drawn by a random number generator. Statistically, embellished envelopes will not increase your odds of winning. However, I do believe in the Laws of Attraction.

The Laws of Attraction are a reap what you sow idea or what goes around comes around. If you put out into the universe your thoughts and feelings of winning, that's what you get back. You said you win a lot of contests you entered with decorated envelopes. I think you put out winning karma and it comes back to you.

HAPPY CONTESTING,
Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

I just recently started subscribing to your newsletter. I have a couple of questions.

- 1) Have you ever won any vehicles?**
- 2) What percentage of your winnings in 2004 was internet versus mail-in?**
- 3) How many hours do you spend a day on the internet?**
- 4) Why do the contest newsletters over inflate the value of prizes to be won? Is that the winner giving them the dollar amount, or is that the newsletter vying to get new memberships?**

**Thank you,
Cathy**

Hi Cathy,

Thank you for subscribing. I hope you are enjoying EDGEbeat. You asked several good questions, so I am going to answer them all.

1) I am waiting to win my first vehicle. I have interviewed many people for my book that have won several, WOW! It only takes one to win, so keep entering. :-))

2) That is not a fair question and I'll explain why.

When I first started contesting on a regular basis I entered everything. As our daughter and our business grew, entering contests via mail was getting too time consuming. I also noticed I didn't win very much via mail vs. the cost of postage and effort. So in 2004 I only entered the one time per person or household mail-in contests. Most of my wins in 2004 were via the internet, some from in-store or in-person draws, some from SMS text messaging contests, a few from the radio and a couple from the odd mail in one we did. (I say we because most of the mail-in contests were colouring contests my daughter entered.)

Now, I do not want to discourage you from entering mail-in contests. It seems as companies move away from mail-in contests to the internet (due to the cost difference) and people get busier (less time to spend

filling out forms, etc...), the odds of winning are increasing for those that do. I have spoken to people that LOVE entering mail-in contests and win quite frequently.

Three good newsletters for snail mail contests are:

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

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

<http://www.contestcanada.com/index.php?go=snailmail>

I do want to ensure that you read the rules. Many contests now have multiple methods of entry. The promotion companies usually assign a number to every entry, regardless of how it was entered. At the end of the contest period, a random number generator selects the winning number. That entry could have come in free via the internet or for 50¢ via Canada Post. *Do not waste money mailing in entries when you can enter for free.*

3) Funny, that question was just posed in one of the groups I belong to. I spend an average of 2 hours a day entering contests. I was shocked to see some people spend up to 8 hours a day entering contests. WOW!! I am too busy to spend any more time at my hobby. Also, some days I do not contest at all if life is just really hectic (traveling, running errands, business administration, etc...).

4) The newsletters do not inflate the value of the prizes. The company sponsoring the contest does (sorta). Companies do this for 2 reasons:

a) The cost of a prize may vary across Canada or fluctuate (e.g. cost of DVD players drop over the course of the contest) so they use MSRP (the Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price). This is the highest price that the manufacturer suggests a company sells their product for. Shops rarely sell items at MSRP. So when you see the value of a prize, say \$400 for a digital camera, and you can go to the local electronic store and buy the same camera on sale for \$295, it seems the product is overvalued.

b) Contests are one part of a company's marketing plan. Since all departments have budgets, the company must assume the maximum cost for the promotion.

Interestingly enough, a company may not spend all its budget. Let's use the Tim Horton's Roll Up The Rim To Win contest or the McDonald's Monopoly Game promotion. The company has budgeted to give away X number of prizes valued at X dollars. On average these types of contests only give away 50-70% of the prizes. Many people do not think they will win so they (unknowingly) throw away the winning cup or game piece. The sponsoring company does not purchase the prizes until they are claimed.

The other type is the insured contest. The prize is so big (e.g. the Pepsi Win \$1 Billion contest run last year in the US) the company buys insurance, so if there is a winner, the insurance company pays for the prize, not the sponsoring company. With the Pepsi contest, you had to drink Pepsi and get a code, enter that code on the internet to see if you won. Several codes were selected and

won \$1 million. Those winners competed to win the \$1 billion. These are rarely ever won and companies love them because they garner a lot of publicity (free advertising).

Thanks for the great questions Cathy and GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn

Hello Carolyn:

When do you think your book will be available? How about the price? I've been contesting for 2 years, will it still help me?

Regarding UPCs and HDFs. How accurate do you think the HDFs should be? My dictionary defines a facsimile as an exact reproduction, yet some people say you don't need to do the wide lines, just all single lines. I sure would like to get to the bottom of this because I do quite a few of them. Naturally, I don't want to be disqualified, but I don't want to spend too much time on them either. What about using a ruler?

**Thanks for any help,
Bob
Surrey, B.C.**

Great questions Bob,

My goal is to have the book completed by June 1st (See right side bar on book's progress.) I think it will help because I discuss things in the book I have never seen in any other book on contesting; Attracting Luck, Contest Management Companies, Contesting Software, etc... I am targeting \$14.95 for the e-book and \$22.95 + S&H for the soft cover (plus, I must charge GST and for some, PST) so I think the book is reasonably priced. (Prices are in Canadian dollars.)

Most companies I have talked to said all twelve numbers must be correct and both the thick and thin lines should be used. (I use a skinny marker and a fat marker.) I free hand the UPCs and I have won using my method. You can use a ruler if you wish. Check out my website under LINKS, CONTESTING SOFTWARE and download BUPA. It's a great little package to help with UPCs.

I hope this helps
HAPPY CONTESTING,
Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

When you are consulting with companies about their contests please suggest the following when they advertise one entry per person; ask them to use the software that says "You have already entered this contest." when an email is entered into the contest form more than once. Sometimes the contests have a long time frame and I forget if I have entered or not. I don't want to enter more than once and disqualify myself; this software would help me and help them!

Also, do you have any tips for people to remember when and if they enter a contest so they will not enter more than once? I need a good idea to record this info somewhere.

Thanks!

Jan

Thornhill ON

Good questions and suggestions Jan.

Your question covers several problems in the execution of contests.

The first problem is that most contests are not run by the contest development firms but by the companies themselves. This is where many of the problems arise because the skilled development companies know how to run a promotion well.

The second issue is a matter of a contests marketing perspective. Some contests have one entry per person because the company is collecting marketing data and they do not want any overlap in the information that they collect. Some promotions you can enter every day because the purpose of the contest is to create brand awareness. They will select which ever mode suits their particular marketing campaign.

The third problem is cost. It costs a company more money to add the "repeat entry block" so many do not use it.

The last issue you describe is about building a personal contesting system. You should come out and take my class at The Learning Annex this summer or fall (it's a one-evening, 2 to 3-hour session). The details will be on my site and in my newsletter as soon as the class info is posted by The Learning Annex online. I show people how to use both manual and technological methods to enter and track their contests.

I hope this answers your questions.

HAPPY CONTESTING,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn:

The following is a contest I would LIKE to enter.

EMI Music: Win \$1000000. To enter this contest you require an "Official Scratch Card." To obtain a card send a SASE to: EMI Request, P.O. Box 250, Pickering, Ontario, L1V 2R4. Also send along a 50 word essay on: "Why Music is Cool." This contest is open to all of Canada and is unlimited to # of entries. Note: each essay must be original. Contest expires July 31/ 05.

I sent them a SASE at the above address (but no essay) expecting they would send me an "Official Scratch Card." It has been quite a few weeks and they have not replied. Then it occurred to me that how could they differentiate between a request for a scratch card and a contest entry, if the letter was unopened, which would probably be the case if it was a contest entry. Yes, I'm confused. Hope you're not.

**Thank you,
Bob
Surrey BC**

Hi Bob,

If you did not send the essay as per their rules, you will not get the scratch card. If what you wrote is correct then they want a original 50-word essay with every SASE request. The contest developers are getting very sticky with the rules, especially if the prize is very large. They will disqualify anyone for the smallest "infraction". Send in another request with an essay and let me know what happens.

I hope this helps.
HAPPY CONTESTING,
Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

Does the size of an envelope matter? I have always used a regular business envelope (9 1/2" by 4 1/4") Feeling that using irregular sized envelopes might disqualify me. Often, it is stated what size is required, but when it isn't stated, does it matter?

**Thanks,
Margaret
Brampton ON**

Good Question Margaret.

It depends on the rules. Many simply say a "mailed in entry", and are not specific as to a type or size of envelope to use. Some contests specifically state you must use a #10 business sized envelope. I suggest you always use a plain #10 business sized envelope because:

1) If you use a larger envelope it may not fit through the opening in the drawing drum. The company may remove your entry form and put it in a #10 envelope so it will fit, or they may discard it.

2) If you use a smaller envelope, you lose surface area for someone's hand to select it.

I hope this helps.
GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn

Hi There!

I am a long time tester, but my husband has recently retired and joined me. He has his own computer, email address and in fact, has a different service provider.

I have always adhered strictly to the rules of all contests, e.g. "one entry per household", but when a contest gives bonus entries for referring friends and does not have this rule, could I be disqualified for referring my husband as a friend. He is my best friend, after all.

Thanks for any advice you can give me.

Margaret

Brampton, ON

Hi Margaret,

I do not refer my husband when it is a one entry per household contest in case he enters and disqualifies us. I refer him (and visa versa) for all other promotions that will give me/us a bonus entry for referring a friend. If a contest does not give bonus entries for referring, I do not refer anyone. Remember, there are refer-a-friends that automatically give you a bonus and there are those that require the other person to enter from the referring email for you to get the bonus entry.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

P.S. My husband is my best friend too ☺

Hi Carolyn,

I have been told by a few contestors that you have the best chance of winning if you enter as close to the end of a contest as possible. I would think this might be true for small contests. What is your opinion on this?

Thank you,

Bev

Abbotsford BC

Hi Bev,

It really depends. If it is a one entry per person or household contest, either mail-in or Internet, it doesn't matter. The playing field is even because everyone only has one chance.

If the contest is by mail only, then all of the entries are put into a drum and one is selected. If thousands of entries come in, they will select a handful of entries from each mail bag and they go into the drum. (That's why it is important if you can enter every day that you mail-in entries over the entire contest period so you have more opportunity to win.)

For an Internet-based contest, all of the entries are coded. A Random Number Generator selects a winning code. They then find the person whose entry matches the winning code. (Again, if you can enter everyday or once a week, it is important to enter as often as you can because your odds do go up with more entries "in the pot".)

I think your friends may be referring to very small ballot-style draws. The winner may be selected from the top of the ballot box if the entries do not get mixed very well.

I hope this helps,
Carolyn

Hello Contest Queen!

How do you keep track of one time entries? Writing them out or using a spreadsheet is time consuming. Any tips?

Thanks!

Tanya Calgary, AB

Hi Tanya,

I don't. I know many people that do use a spreadsheet or a notebook and find those entry tracking methods to be very successful. I rely on my memory, which thankfully is very good. Also, many companies put a Repeat Entry Block in the online entry software so you won't disqualify yourself by accident.

GOOD LUCK,

Carolyn

Hi Carolyn,

I'm having a disagreement/confusion amongst three testers regarding the following snail-mail question: When you draw UPCs, can you use a ruler? Here's the Duncan Hines contest we're currently discussing, the UPC rules:

No Purchase Necessary, one (1) original hand drawn facsimile of any Duncan Hines layer cake UPC symbol, not mechanically reproduced, mail to: Duncan Hines and Cuisinart Sweepstakes, P.O. Box 250-A, Pickering, Ontario, L1V 2R4.

Dear Contest Queen, what is your pronouncement? I need an authority here! I'm real new, and I don't want to mess up my precious entries, I want one of those food processors!!! One of us said she has heard of people winning with ruler-assisted UPCs. Please, please, be my tie-breaker!

Here's the link to the [full rules](#). Contest January 31st.

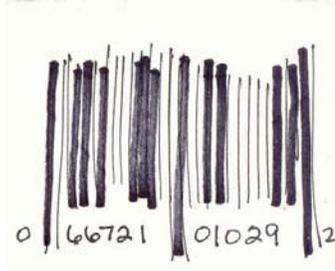
Warm regards, and high hopes

Leigh

Vancouver BC

Hi Leigh,

You can use a ruler if you wish. I freehand my UPCs. The important part is the twelve numbers. They must be correct and clear as the contest management companies do check the potential winning entries. Please see an example below of one of my freehanded HDF (Hand Drawn Facsimile). (*It is not from a Duncan Hines product.*). Ruler-assisted is not considered mechanical. They really just don't want you to use photocopiers or other means of automated reproduction of the UPC code. So long as the HDF looks like you drew it with pen or marker by hand and the actual code numbers match a qualifying product, then you will qualify.



GOODLUCK,
Carolyn

Carolyn,
Do you know where I can find any article on how online sweepstakes are judged, in other words, how they pick the winners? I would like to share an article at my next sweepstakes group meeting.
Diane
Southampton NJ

Hi Diane,

I do not have any articles on the subject but I do have the answer for you from the interviews I conducted with various contest management companies for my book.

Online sweeps are not judged. The winner is selected by computer using a type of software called a random number generator. All online entries are tagged with a number. When it is time to select the winner, the database parameters are input into the computer (the first and last numbers the program can possibly select) and then it is allowed to run. It will then produce a number and the number is matched to a file. The file contained all the contact information input for the sweepstake. The winner is then contacted. Simple as that.

This is really good news for sweepers and contestors because I have spoken to many that are worried about being flagged by the contest management company and not being allowed to win. Since the computer is so impersonal, and as long as you follow the rules, you have just as much chance of winning as anyone else.

I know this to be true because most of my entries are online and I won over 125 sweepstakes last year and over 150 this year. I am definitely a contestor and I have also interviewed most of the Canadian contest management companies for my book so they all know who I am. If I was "flagged and/or banned" then I certainly would not win as much as I do. Entering online is my favourite method because it is the easiest and I know the odds are very even because the winner selection is unbiased.

GOOD LUCK,
Carolyn