

HOW TO MAKE THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS BY WINNING AT CONTESTS

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OVERVIEW

What does the average American usually dream about?

If you answered "getting rich", you're probably right!

All you have to do is look at some of the best-selling books of all time like "Wealth Without Risk" and "How To Make Millions Selling Real Estate" and you soon realize what's on everyone's mind.

And why not? That's the ultimate American adventure, isn't it? Look at the California and Alaska gold rushes. Or two of the more popular T.V. series in recent history: the Beverly Hillbillies and Dallas, where the heroes are oil barons; all indicating an interest in a short cut to wealth and fame. Becoming a millionaire is a worthy goal, though most confine it to their dreams and only a few pursue the dream vigorously enough to make it. Many people feel it's "not in the cards" for them. They have virtually no chance of ever making that much money, they feel, so they don't bother to even attempt it.

That's too bad, because there is a lot of wealth in this country still to be had. In fact, a substantial amount of money and merchandise is given away every year in this country -- in sweepstakes and other contests! This is not just the luck of the draw -- people try to win at these contests, so why shouldn't you? If there are people willing to give this wealth away, why not get in line for your share?

You, like others, may be skeptical of prize money and luxury items that are given away in these contests. Is that because you've never known anyone that's won? Because these giveaways actually happen.

Another reason for skepticism is the wonder at how anyone sponsoring the contest or sweepstakes can afford to give anything like these amounts away. Yet this is just another form of advertising for the sponsor. Each year, huge amounts of money are spent to reach the buying public. Some companies pay several million dollars to have a 30 second advertisement run during the Super Bowl. Others prefer to give that money away and try to get people to notice their name and ultimately buy their products.

Think about it! You receive tons of junk mail every year. When you get the million dollar giveaway envelope, do you open it to see what it says? Chances are if you read any of the junk mail, that's going to be the one you pick up as opposed to those flyers not giving anything away.

Advertisers understand this and that's why they run legitimate million dollar giveaways -- to advertise to people like yourself who might not otherwise have heard of this particular company. This is how the sweepstakes and contests got their start and continue to flourish and more and more people look for that ultimate millionaire dream!

Do you play the lottery every week? If so, why? To win the big prize money, obviously. There are long odds against winning but you play anyway because there's always that outside chance, right? If you don't play, your chances are 100% that you'll lose, but buying a ticket gets you at least an opportunity, no matter how small, of cashing in the ultimate check.

So what's the difference between playing the lottery and participating in sweepstakes and contests? Nothing! If you devoted a little energy into playing all of these contests that came your way, you have created more opportunities for yourself to win -- and win big! You can't win if you don't play. Here are opportunities that show up nearly every week for you to realize that dream of being wealthy. And the work effort involved is minimal considering the potential payoff you are striving to receive.

Look at it this way. Contest sponsors are going to give this money away to someone. Why not you? The company bottom line is to advertise their product(s). They will accomplish this through their promotion. If there's something to be won in the meantime, shouldn't you try for it?

What have you got to lose?

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WINNING

Winning is an attitude. Many of the best say that they can see themselves in a winning state long before they actually achieve that status. They can see the baseball go over the fence for a home run. They can see their name being called when the Oscars are handed out in Hollywood. They can see themselves reclining at their pool, having a meeting with their stockbroker about their recent successful investments.

It's a mind game. It's a belief. It's an attitude.

Whatever it's called, all the winners in this world possess it: an uncanny sense and confidence in their own abilities. This confidence instills an overwhelming desire to succeed that is impossible to deny. These individuals will strive for the best, reaching beyond what one thinks they are capable of to grab the brass ring.

It is this attitude that puts people in the winner's circle. If you believe that you will be successful, you will be.

This isn't a trick. All of the studies of winners have shown this same pattern: the belief that they would win no matter what the odds or the elements.

You can mold this same frame of mind and turn it into a personal success story. You have the same talent and ability as these winners. Many have risen beyond people's expectations, but that's what attitude does for you.

How many times have you seen people with a lot of natural talent and ability fail to win? Quite often, actually. The difference between them and those that win (who may possess less natural ability) is attitude. You're born with natural talents, but attitude is something you develop yourself.

You alone can control your own mind. If you set your mind to win, it can and will happen for you.

If you set your mind to win at these contests, eventually you can do it!

On the other hand, if you don't believe in yourself, if you don't think that you can win at these sweepstakes and contests, then you probably won't win. Attitude plays such

a large part in winning, that your frame of mind can dictate success or failure almost exclusively.

You also must believe that if you win at these contests, it will be because you worked hard at it and deserved to win them. The money you make from these winnings will be more than you've ever seen, but it's yours to have and spend. Don't think for a minute you shouldn't have it! You earned it, you made it, now you can spend it as you please. You must believe that you were destined to get this money or you won't fully have achieved the winning attitude you need to earn this money and stay on top!

If you've conditioned yourself all your life to believe that you're not a winner, that you couldn't possibly ever be rich, you will likely fulfill this self-prophecy. But it's not too late to de-program yourself and turn your attitude around.

A constant reinforcement of positive thinking can alter this losing mindset. You must be vigilant in your internal promotion of a winning attitude, however, to be able to maintain this feeling on a regular basis. You can't afford to sink back into the negative abyss you have created. The longer you've taken to build a low self-image, the longer it will be before you can break it.

Don't give up! Winning all starts in your mind. Keep at it! The positive can overwhelm the negative if you want to believe in it enough. Once one idea stream begins to dominate the other, your continual reinforcement of thoughts will be based on the new dominant force. If that force is positive, that's what your outlook will be.

Don't let the doubts wear you down. Doubting can bring down all the positive thinking you've trained yourself to do. The phrase, "we have nothing to fear but fear itself" simply illustrates this point. It may be well within your power to be a winner now, but self-doubt will crowd out the winning attitude you need. In this battle, you are your own worst enemy. Everything is within your grasp, only you can prevent it from happening. "I

can't do it" is a claim that will inevitably come true if you allow it to dominate the winning attitude of "I can -- and will -- do it!". It's up to you. Are you a winner?

This new attitude will help you in everyday life. Things that seemed impossible in the past will now seem within your reach. Your personality will undergo a positive change that will help you in whatever you do or become. People react to positiveness. A cheerful, outgoing attitude is almost contagious and people will remember you. You'll be a winner in every respect.

This doesn't mean success will come easy!

But success will never arrive if you're not mentally ready for the challenges being successful and being wealthy present. It must be something you're prepared to undertake and to keep at no matter how long it takes.

Remember: successful, winning attitudes of people have them seeing themselves in various forms of winning poses long before they actually get there. But these images give them a "tangible" to strive for; a goal they believe is theirs to have -- and hold. You, too must believe this. You, too, must have your eye on the prize and believe that it's only a matter of time before you collect it.

In this case, it's the jackpots given away by willing advertisers. Close your eyes and see yourself shaking hands with the executive of the company who's just handing you a check for \$1,000,000.00.

Hold this image in your mind. It's your new, positive goal for the future.

THE SWEEPSTAKES GAME

One of your visions may be of Ed McMahon walking up your steps, ringing the front door and presenting you with that million dollar check. Great! Ed is a spokesperson for one of the longer running sweepstakes contests in America.

But it is by no means the only one. Read your mail and see. There are giveaways of all kinds, all the time! This is simply corporate advertising at work.

In exchange for the chance to win something, the sponsors are getting the opportunity to plug their product. If it's a product you might use anyway, chances are you may buy it from these giveaway folks. Because so many do, advertisers can afford to give away the amounts of cash and merchandise that they do. Everybody's a winner in the sweepstakes game!

Sweepstakes are legal in every state today and they are regulated by the Federal Trade Commission, who requires that the sweepstakes sponsors print all those rules you see in these contests. It's the legal fine print, but it underscores the fact that these contests are legitimate. If not, the companies run afoul of the FTC, a fate no corporation or entity wishes to face.

Sweepstakes entries are everywhere from the mail to the mall. Magazines carry offers. You can even find a sweepstakes game in a supermarket check-out line. They're everywhere!

The giveaway estimates are even more staggering. Experts put the amount of cash and merchandise given away annually at more than 200 million dollars! As long as there are people willing to participate, there is no reason to believe this number is going to reduce, just the opposite!

Like any advertising campaign, corporations work to "one-up" the competition. This is good news for contest players since it means even bigger and better prizes to come. Corporations that know these campaigns are successful for them are not going to abandon them in the future. If anything, they will figure out a way to multiply this success story

and offer even more sweepstakes contests and prizes for people to win. The sky may not be the limit!

More than 10 million prizes are awarded every year! That gives you some pretty good odds at being among the winners since many people don't bother to participate. There are people who are very adept at playing the sweepstakes game and this is now your goal: to learn how to organize a game plan for winning!

There are tips for success in sweepstakes playing. To a certain degree, playing these contests is an art form. There are certain things you can do to raise your chances of winning dramatically.

Consider some of these thoughts:

- the best time to enter
- what colors attract the most attention
- how often to send in an entry form
- how the drawing is done

All of this information and more is what you need to learn and be successful at the sweepstakes game. You've already seen yourself in the winner's circle. You know you are going to win. Now it's time to do something about the end result!

Look for sweepstakes entries in magazines, newspapers, stores and in your mailbox. There are hundreds of chances to win at the sweepstakes game. Collect every entry you can lay your hands on!

Enter the contests that have a prize you really want. Even if you don't like the prize, recognize that the prize has a value. This means that you can always sell it at a reduced rate and still come out way ahead. There are all kinds of prizes from vacation getaways to jewelry to cars to homes to stereos to motorcycles and, of course, cash. If you win it and you don't want it, advertise it and sell it! If there is a strong cash value to the prize, it's worth entering!

Many sweepstakes are geared towards the fall with an end of the year deadline for submitting your entry form. This is because people are often looking to buy at this time of year as the holidays approach. Remember, sweepstakes are advertisements in disguise, so this is the time of year when the companies haul out their big guns to promote their products.

The holiday season is also the time people are busy and likely won't take the time to prepare and send in their entry form. Good! All the more reason for you to spend your time sending in as many entries as you can to increase your chances of winning. Send in a bunch at this time of year. It's a decisive advantage!

The big prizes are most often up for grabs at year end sweepstakes, so the increase in your number of entries is well-timed to take advantage of these all-star giveaways. Cars, vacations and the million dollar checks are most common in the last quarter of the year.

Don't depend solely on your own ability to find all the sweepstakes offers you can. Ask for some help. Get family members, friends and work associates to accumulate these contest entries for you. The more people that are looking on your behalf, the greater the number of entries you'll make. You may also find several sweepstakes offers that you haven't -- and wouldn't -- have seen.

As you stockpile the entry forms, organize them into a logical pattern. On a separate pad, write down a summary of information about the sweepstakes entry, including:

- name of the sweepstakes
- name and address of the advertising sponsor
- the specific prizes being given away
- date of the drawing
- date of sponsor notification of winning entries
- number of entries you submit for this sweepstakes
- amount of postage you've spent on this sweepstakes

- date of each mailing of your entry forms

This will give you an easy checklist to refer to on any given sweepstakes. You may want to also have cross-checking records in the form of ledger sheets and monthly calendars, so you can record expenses and dates again for easy reference for those particulars.

For every sweepstakes you enter, you must read all of their rules carefully. Only by following the given rules will you be able to have a qualified entry. If you ignore the rules, your entry will never be placed in the bin for drawing. You will not know this, either. Advertising sponsors aren't going to take the time to tell you they've discarded your entry form. If you don't do it right, that's not their problem.

So, be careful! Here are a few examples of the types of rules that often appear in sweepstakes contests:

- No purchase necessary. This is part of the FTC regulations. You don't have to buy anything to submit a correct entry form that may be drawn. You may not be able to use the entry form attached to the sweepstakes offer, but you have every right to follow the directions and submit the necessary information on a separate piece of paper or index card.

- Postmarked by OR Received by rules. This is important to note. Get your entry out in plenty of time to ensure that it will qualify as a correct entry form and place you in the drawing for the grand prize. Don't time it too closely. Beat the dates by a comfortable margin.

- Non-transferability. You must take the prize that you win. You can't trade it for another prize.

- One prize per household. This increases your chance to win since contest rules forbid more than one winner from the same family.

- Age/Geographic limits. Some sweepstakes have age limitations and/or regional boundaries. The contest may only be available to people who live in the home state of the advertiser, for example. Watch these limitations! If you don't qualify, toss this entry form!

- Multiple entries: You usually can enter as often as you'd like but remember: you must submit all entries separately! One entry to an envelope is the usual rule. It will cost you more postage, but the more often you enter, the better the chances of you having a winning entry.

- Envelope size: There may be a specification as to envelope size. If there is, don't ignore it. Get down to your office supply store and be sure you have the right size envelope. Otherwise -- disqualification!

- Penmanship: You must print legibly on the entry form or the sponsor could throw it out. If they can't read it, you won't win.

- Inclusions: Quite often, there are attachments you must include with your entry form to have a qualified entry. Often, this is a sticker that must be affixed to the entry form. It may also be a bar code, a label or some other identifier, often bearing the product name. Advertisers like to know you saw and read the name of the product line being pushed. Don't miss the instructions on inclusions. Otherwise, your entry form will be tossed.

- Original form: Entry forms must be the originals. You can't use photocopies of them. If it isn't the original, it won't be placed in the drawing.

- Distractions: Unless specifically instructed to do so, do not use staples, tape or paper clips to attach any inclusions or otherwise mark up your entry form. This is likely to get the entry disqualified.

Yes, there are a lot of rules. But -- follow them exactly! You'd be surprised at how many people that try to enter a sweepstakes but are ruled ineligible simply because they

missed one rule. Don't let that happen to you. No matter how silly the rule sounds, the sponsor has it in there for a reason. Don't judge! Just follow the exact instructions and you'll have a qualified entry.

There are several types of sweepstakes. The primary ones are: random drawing, card game and second chance.

Random drawing sweepstakes accept sealed envelope entry forms only and store them in large bins until drawing time. An official sweepstakes judging agency often does the honors of selecting the winning name. You might even receive a letter in advance of the drawing identifying the people who are charged with selecting the winning entries.

Some of these draws may be televised. Sponsors like that exposure as well as the excitement of an official drawing. If a computer is used to select the winning entries, the high drama is often missing. There's nothing like a staged event to attract a little more attention to a company's product.

Card game sweepstakes are emerging in popularity. Here, you follow the instructions on the card to have a chance to win. You may have to scratch off a portion of the card to reveal a prize or an entry or a number or some other identifier that tells you what to do next.

The instant winner form of the card game tells you immediately what you have or haven't won. Companies like McDonald's do this to give away food, prizes and cash. Or you may have seen a Pepsi bottle cap with a prize on the inside. These are example of instant winnings.

Another form of card entry is the matching type. Here, you get a card with a number or picture on it and have to match it to the master number or picture which has a pre- assigned prize. If your number or picture is identical, you win the prize associated with that number. Supermarkets do this frequently and you have to check in the store to see the weekly winning number or picture display.

Collection games are becoming more common in this card format sweepstakes. In this game, you have to collect a series of cards that solve a puzzle. It may take four, five, six or more cards needed to solve the entire maze and there's always one or two cards that are hard to obtain.

Speaking of puzzles, another card game form involves decoding information or numbers to correctly put together a winning card. Clues to the decoding are often available on the back of the advertising sponsor's product(s).

The third primary sweepstakes game is referred to as a second chance effort because it gives you the opportunity to win prizes you might have lost out on in an earlier game. There are many unclaimed prizes in sweepstakes and this is the way of distributing them. You send in a completed and usually sealed entry form (or dozens of them, preferably) and there is a random drawing held to assess winners. There are almost always fewer entrants to this type of sweepstakes, thus increasing your chances of winning. So, be on the lookout for this type of game.

There are other types of sweepstakes which, though less popular, can earn you some substantial winnings. One of these is the automatic entry sweepstakes. Here, you complete a coupon which you use at a store to receive a discount on a product. That coupon automatically becomes a sweepstakes entry when the coupon is sent in by the store to be redeemed. It's one way to get you to buy a product and still hold a sweepstakes, but because the primary intent is the coupon value, the sweepstakes is valid and an extra bonus, actually, above and beyond the value of the coupon.

There is also the early bird game where an advertiser wants to know how a promotional kick-off is faring and gives an early deadline after the campaign kickoff to mail back a form to enter a sweepstakes. Watch the deadlines here!

Finally, the sweepstakes entry form may have a multiple choice quiz, requiring you to answer the question in addition to completing the entry form. Only those entries identifying the right answer will be eligible for the drawing. If you know the answer, enter

as many times as you can. If you are unsure, you may want to pass on the contest since your entry form with an incorrect answer will not be used. You could also send entries in with several assigned to each possible answer. Then you know that at least one set of entries will be correct and they will be used for the drawing.

Even though you may find the same sweepstakes in different places, don't take a chance that the rules are similar. To be safe, read every one and check it against the information you have to be sure.

It can take up to six months to notify you of your winning entry, so don't lose hope. Usually the sweepstakes rules spell out the length of time from drawing to notification.

Send in a steady stream of entry forms over the entire length of the contest. You have better odds at winning then if you simply mailed all of your entries at one time.

If you have a choice, use a colored envelope to submit your entry. This may well increase your chance of winning. Only do this if the sweepstakes rules don't require a certain color.

Being organized is the key to sending multiple entry forms. When you have the time, pre-address envelopes and complete entry forms. It's O.K. to do them in advance. Just mail them out in a systematic fashion as previously suggested. Remember your zip code! Don't leave this out or your entry won't make it.

Make sweepstakes entry a regular part of your day, like exercising. Put aside an hour a day just to work on your entries and mailings. The time you invest will pay off in the long run. Note all your mailing and entry data in the forms we've suggested for easy reference. You can also write up a mailing schedule on a weekly basis to remind you of what has to be mailed when.

Write to every advertising sponsor and request a "winner's list". This way you can see if all the prizes were awarded. It will also clue you into when a possible second chance sweepstakes would occur.

People are notified every day of their winning entry in a sweepstakes. You usually have to sign an affidavit first and return it to claim your prize. It is important that you keep the post office aware of your whereabouts. If you move, leave a forwarding address. The sponsors aren't going to the ends of the earth looking for you. Make yourself easy to find.

The Federal Trade Commission does regulate the drawings to ensure they are held fairly and competently. If you win, you will be notified. Save this letter! It's your evidence in case the prize doesn't follow within the specified period of time. Keep a record of all your expenses incurred in sending out your entry forms. Your postage, envelopes, pens and some other office items will be deductible IF you win a prize. Since you will be taxed on the value of the prize, the expense deductions will help reduce your tax liability.

The sweepstakes game is definitely one you can win if you believe in yourself and spend the necessary time submitting all the entries. Good luck!

THE CONTEST GAME

American contests are a 20th Century preoccupation. Initially, they were featured by general magazines and newspapers. From modest beginnings, contests now claim a wide variety of styles with some noteworthy prizes to back up correct solutions.

The difference between a contest and a sweepstakes is the need for skill. A sweepstakes is merely an entry with only the rare opportunity to answer a multiple choice question in order to have a correct entry form. A contest requires you to solve something -- a crossword puzzle, a maze, a diagram, a photograph or to create something like an advertising slogan or a poem or a song to promote a specific product.

There are numerous contests sponsored throughout the country. One of the most popular is a word game where there are two possible correct answers and you simply have to choose between them. There might be 20 of these answers from week to week. If no one correctly identifies all 20 answers, the cash jackpot rolls over and more cash is added. This can go on for weeks and the longer the game, the more entries that are filed as some big money can come into play. It's almost pot-luck, though, as it isn't a matter of selecting a wrong answer since both answers (given) are correct. You must pick the one the editors of the puzzle settle on as the best answer. That makes it tough, but challenging and fun, too. There are a lot of people in town who look forward to playing that game each week.

And for the newspaper that sponsors it, it means more sales of the paper as people who might not ordinarily buy the tabloid, do so to get the puzzle. Sales mean dollars and thus the chance to give away prize money to increase subscriptions. Increased circulation can mean more advertising revenue. And the beat goes on!

Puzzles like these make contests fan favorites. One can participate in hundreds of contests given the time. The more you compete in, the better the chance to win one or more prizes.

To get organized, simply make this an extension of your sweepstakes work. Maybe an hour per day is devoted to sweepstakes, another hour for contests. You'd use the same supplies you accumulated for the sweepstakes and keep the same type of records to ensure that you'll have proper records to deduct the expenses should you win any prizes.

Divide your contests up into type. Crosswords will go in one file, mazes in a second file, advertising jingles in a third, and so forth. Place them in date order and construct a list of the next two month's dates followed by any contest answer that has to be mailed by then. Leave yourself plenty of time so you won't miss any deadlines.

As with sweepstakes, follow the instructions. They likely won't be as detailed as sweepstakes, but the guidelines should still be followed to qualify your entry for a prize.

Above all, enjoy the contests! They can be more fun than sweepstakes because there is a skill involved. They may be more time-consuming than sweepstakes, too. After two or three months, you'll have a better idea of how many contests and sweepstakes you can keep up with on a regular basis.

You will also get better at one type of contest or another. If you find yourself adept at crosswords, but lousy at coming up with advertising jingles, then prioritize your contest work around the puzzles. Given a couple of deadlines, you'll know to work on the puzzles first and the jingles later. This way you have a better chance of winning the prize offered.

As you do more and more of these contest games, you will find yourself getting better and better at it and cutting down the time it takes to complete the forms. Puzzles, especially, have a number of clues that are used universally, meaning you'll know a few answers each time simply because you've seen them before.

You'll also come to recognize a style or a particular pattern of a given company which could give you the key to the correct contest answer. For example, if one company tends to have contest answers that involve their own products, you will be able to concentrate on a smaller number of possible answers than the individuals who are infrequent players in the contest game.

The more you play, the better your chances of winning. Not only will your skills improve, but you will also be playing amongst fewer participants than a sweepstakes. Contests that require skill generally discourage many people from playing. The ones that stay in it will be good, but there will be less entrants among which prizes must be spread. This should give you some extra incentive to hone your contest skills accordingly. Good players who consistently return entries can win huge dollar amounts!

Keep a pen and pencil handy at all times. You should even put one next to your bed! There are times when a contest answer may come to you in the middle of the night. If you have something close by to write on, you ensure that the answer will still be with you in the morning.

When you win, be sure to keep track of all the prizes. Cash is relatively easy to record, but merchandise carries a different price tag. You will need to assign the good a value. The sponsor of the contest can help, but do a comparison with other products on the market to be sure the assigned value is fair since you will have to pay taxes on it.

You should check with an accountant to be sure that you are doing the correct job of reporting your prize totals less any business expenses deductions.

SUMMARY

Are you ready? Wealth is out there for the taking and you are just the person who can reel it in. It's time to stop reading and take up the fight to earn these valuable prizes.

Hopefully, you have been reinforcing your reading with the positive thoughts of a winner. You will not be a winner unless you believe it yourself first. This confidence and winning attitude can help you through any trouble spots you encounter.

Yes, just a few hours per week of concentration on sweepstakes and contests can earn you a substantial amount of money. Someone is out there right now winning the prizes you deserve! It's time to do something about that!

What do you have to lose? Time and a few dollars in postage and supplies? A small investment for such a gigantic potential return.

Start looking for those entry forms today! Good luck!